

# The sales game will evolve in 2021, but how do we adapt?

 By Louise Robinson

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For anyone in sales, 2020 has been a challenging year and most notably the sales function within large ICT vendors across the continent. Going forward, we will see this hardship continue into 2021 and how we respond to the new demands will be critical for the sector. For the sales function to evolve, it must move away from its reliance on technology and return to relationship management.



Source: [www.pexels.com](http://www.pexels.com)

The way in which companies sell has to change, sales people have to be re-skilled to understand the fundamentals of cold-calling, digital engagement and the art of positioning their products to fit the purpose of the client they are approaching.

Just because every company needs sales, does not mean that employees have the skills or can be gung-ho about it. There are a lot less leads and more competition in the current economic environment. Businesses must therefore give value by understanding their clients and the marketplace.

Simply relying on Facebook or LinkedIn as sales tools is not enough. No organisation is going to buy expensive solutions on a social network. Establishing a relationship on LinkedIn might start the process, but it still requires a salesperson to pick up the phone and talk to a potential lead.

It comes down to putting in more time and energy in establishing, nurturing, and strengthening relationships. Yes, remote working is now the status quo for business, but sales was never bound to the office to begin with.

Telemarketing still works if you target your clients correctly. What is different now is that face-to-face communication might be difficult to do effectively. Phone calls are therefore imperative to maintain contact. Email is functional, but we are all being bombarded with emails and don't have the time to read them all. There is a lack of a personal touch when one reads a message on a screen.

### **So how do you cut through the clutter?**

Data. Data is how you cut through the clutter. Having the right person on the other side of the line (phone, email or social) is going to be what drives business forward for 2021.

Now, more than ever, companies must refocus and differentiate themselves. Vital to this is having new and an updated database to continuously generate new leads from. It makes little sense to have data rich systems that contain people centric information, with accurate, relevant personal details that lead to having the right conversations; empowering your sales force with the insights they need.

The sales function in this new normal must therefore become more proactive, more engaged with people and not reliant on the tools of technology. Building contact databases in the right markets, with the right audience is what we need to do.

However, the sales team must still do the hard graft of building relationships and selling, after all people buy from people.

Sales is about the experience, with the brand, and the person doing the selling, and it takes time to do successfully. This is where managers must become more hands on with their junior staff and show them the ropes. It is almost as if the younger generation must be taught how to sell from scratch, sales is an art after all.

Digital solutions are all good and well, but for high price items, it is about engaging with an individual who knows what they are talking about. The nuances between hardcore selling and providing relevant information must be better understood especially from those not used to traditional sales.

Much of what sales will be in the future will come down to having patience and the tenacity to keep at it. It's a numbers game! There are very few quick wins to be gained in a post-Covid-19 world, it is showing commitment to hard work, building relationships, and dealing with people more directly than simply a reliance on the likes of email, Facebook, or other digital platforms. The spray and pray email method doesn't work either.

Understanding your market and realising that the lay of the land has changed in 2020 is key. If you are a technical focused company and sales isn't your forte then outsource your sales arm to the people who can do this function instead of losing valuable leads.

## **ABOUT LOUISE ROBINSON**

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