Death of a **Traditional Salesman**

Understanding the changing landscape of sales

Introduction

We're living in the Age of the Customer – and the landscape of sales is changing. Customers simply aren't looking to salespeople the way they used to, and the power of traditional sales relationships is on the decline.

Salespeople need to change with these times and understand how the nature of their leads is calling for more nurturing. They need to leverage the power of data science in their day-to-day activities. And they need to look beyond the transaction to own the customer's whole experience.

But they're not in it alone. A Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) can help them succeed on a new level in this new landscape.

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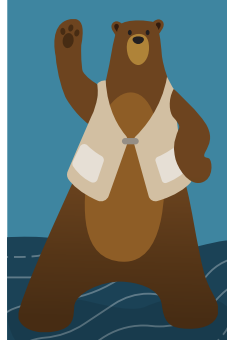
Meet Astro and friends!

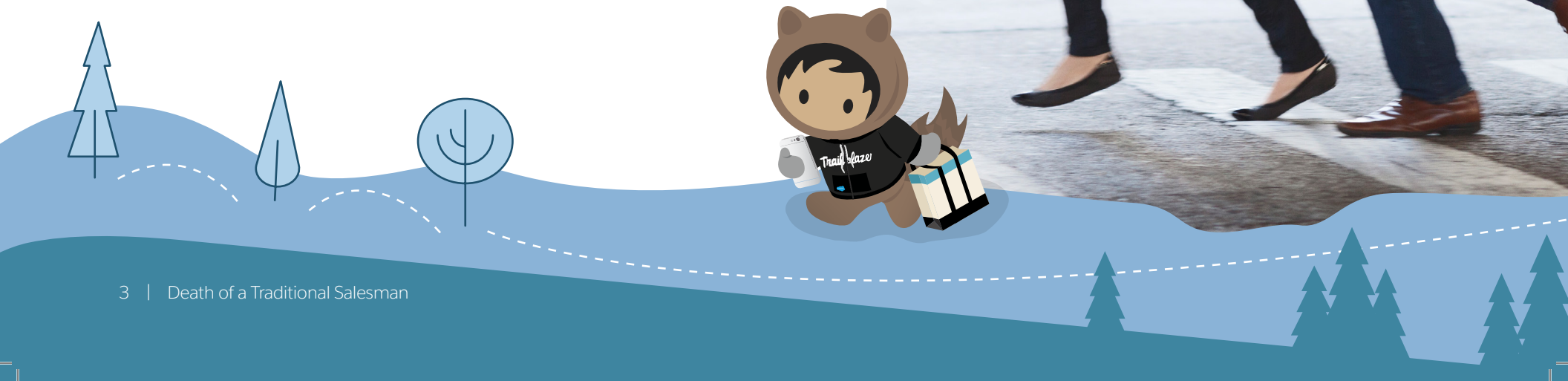
They're here to help guide you through the great outdoors (and this e-book) in the spirit of fun, adventure, and exploration. Why? Because that's what Salesforce is all about - empowering people to blaze their own trails and being part of somtething greater.

If you want to know more, check out Trailhead, the fun was to learn about Salesforce. Get started today at salesforce.com/trailhead



The Way it's Always Been is Over

We are living in the Age of the Customer. What's that mean? It means customers are more empowered than they've ever been. Everyone and everything is connected – and the information driving buying decisions no longer rests with salespeople. In fact by the time a customer talks to a sales rep, the customer is 57% of the way through the sales cycle. That's good news, in that customers are self-qualifying. But it's bad news too.



Once upon a time, customers went to salespeople early in the process, and those salespeople moved the customer through the sales funnel and primed them to purchase. In the Age of the Customer, customers move at their own pace through the funnel and 50% of the qualified leads that eventually reach salespeople still aren't ready to buy. The result? A purchase takes 22% longer overall than it did just 5 years ago.

But that's not all. In an era of customer empowerment, the onus on salespeople to add value is at an all-time high. Gone are the days of closing a sale by covering lunch and green fees – educated customers have a better gauge of ROI than ever and unless sales reps are connecting in a meaningful way, the sale will go away.

+50%

Qualified leads still aren't ready to buy

+22%

Longer purchase time

SO THE QUESTION IS SIMPLE:

What do salespeople need to do to survive in this new age?

Make Nurturing the New Norm

As customers become more and more informed, the traditional picture of the sales funnel is more and more problematic. Because 50% of qualified leads aren't ready to buy, half of the prospect pool is orphaned between Marketing and Sales.

But the fact is those prospects are closer to Sales than Marketing. So Sales needs to close the gap in the funnel by embracing a new role – nurturing qualified prospects in a way that pulls them forward. The key is providing relevant content at the right time to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the prospect's business needs and the value of the salesperson's solution in the context of those needs.

For many, if not most sales organizations, this will call for a constantly growing arsenal of targeted micro-tools, like eBooks, white papers and online seminars. But the alternative is a massive percentage of sales leads turning up dead in the water – so making this investment is nothing short of critical.

How can CRM help?

With qualified leads demanding a variety of distinct sales tactics, it is essential that your team has a tool that makes it easy to reliably categorize those leads by need and consistently target them with the right kinds of messages. A CRM is that tool. It puts all your customer information and communication in one easily accessible location and allows salespeople to sort leads and automate key engagement tasks.

Tame the Data

Customer data has always been valuable to salespeople. That hasn't changed. What has changed is the amount of that data available. There was a time when the challenge was getting enough – these days, it's an avalanche. From the customer's nuanced buying history, to your sales rep's emails and phone calls, to those of their co-workers, to customer announcements on various social channels, there is simply too much information to make sense of. But revenue is hiding in that tangled mess – 89% of executives agree that salespeople are missing opportunities because they can't keep up with the information.

A tool that helps them do so will allow them to understand their customers' businesses and identify the key stakeholders on an unprecedented level. More importantly, analysis of customer histories, pipeline health, etc. can yield deep insights as to which customers should be prioritized and what actions should be taken with those customers.

Of course, Salespeople aren't analysts by nature. But once they understand what's at stake, they will be highly motivated to meet this challenge. So they simply can not be without a tool that powers this kind of analysis.

How can CRM help?

It goes without saying that your analytics tool needs to be as powerful and easy-to-use as possible. But ideally, it would also integrate seamlessly with your CRM. If salespeople are able to draw smart, actionable insights without ever leaving the system in which they're spending most of their time, they will draw those insights and reap the benefits more often and more efficiently.

Transcend Transactional Thinking

In an era of heightened customer expectations, salespeople need to prove their commitment to clients on a deeper level. This means owning the entire customer experience – from initial consideration, to re-orders, to service calls. Salespeople need to stop thinking about "closing the sale," and strive for an open channel with customers.

As Salesforce EVP of Sales Tony Rodoni puts it, "We've all been at a point in our career when we've talked to a customer and the customer will say 'The only time I hear from your sales rep is at the end of the month or the end of the quarter when they're trying to sell me something.'"

Rodoni acknowledges that quotas and commissions tend to breed this behavior, but it is critical that salespeople think beyond those factors, because customers need to believe their long term success is at the heart of your team's efforts. That means truly considering the customer's needs outside the set sales cycle – which incidentally, will generate sales outside that cycle, in addition to strengthening the relationship.

Sales rock stars have always taken this longer view, but in the modern era, the exceptional has become the expected.

How can CRM help?

A focus on the customer's whole experience obviously requires more time and attention. But your sales team is likely already running at or near their capacity. So once again, the efficiencies delivered by a CRM are invaluable. The power to automate key activities and prompt timely communication will give your team the edge they need to build more substantial long term relationships with each client.

Conclusion

We're here to help. Nothing we've talked about here is theoretical. It's not about the future. It's about right now. And our business proves it. Our average customer sees an increase in sales of 37% for one reason: Salesforce is built from the ground up to meet the challenges salespeople are facing in the Age of the Customer.

From making all your information on customers, prospects, and leads available on a single mobile-first platform, to automating nurturing activities, to delivering insights through ground-breaking, built-in analytics, we want to help you succeed.

Want to know more?
Call a sales representative at 1-800-667-6389.