



The Power of **SOCIAL SELLING**



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Social selling: An Overview

Today, almost every type of business—from food delivery companies to bitcoin exchanges—has a social media presence in order to promote its brands. Social media marketing is no longer a new concept. In fact, a brand that doesn't have a **Facebook, Twitter, or a LinkedIn** profile might be seen today as stuck in a previous era!

As these companies leverage modern platforms to reach out to their customers and brand enthusiasts, a new and interesting concept has emerged: businesses using social media not only to spark interest in their products or services across a wide audience, but also to humanize their brand and develop a more meaningful and personal relationship with customers.

(This is called social selling)

If you're looking at implementing social selling for your organization, this book is a good start. Here you'll learn what social selling is, look at a few examples, understand the challenges involved, and discover the best tools that can be deployed to overcome these challenges and implement social selling effectively.



What is social selling and how does it differ from social media marketing?

In simple terms, social selling is the practice of identifying, engaging, and building meaningful relationships with prospects on social media.

Let's now take a step back and look at how a generic customer journey works for any business. It begins when a company runs campaigns to promote their products and services. This is typically a marketing function, and its purpose is to generate prospects—that is, people who might be interested in the brand.

Next, prospects generated through these campaigns may get in touch with the company to make an inquiry, which is followed up by the sales teams. Answering inquiries and nurturing a prospect therefore typically becomes a sales function. A sale is then pursued until it's closed, and then passed on to the product/service teams for further steps.

Therefore, marketing teams generally generate leads for a business, while sales teams pursue those leads to convert them to sales.

So how do social media marketing and social selling differ?

Both concepts use the same means to achieve different ends. While social media marketing is practiced to create brand awareness across a wide audience, social selling is implemented to foster better relationships with that audience.

For instance, a marketing team's objective while using the platform will typically be to maximize buzz around a single post, idea, or message. The number of views, comments, and likes—these are the metrics that marketing teams value. The marketing objective is fulfilled once they've reached a wide range of prospects and made them aware of the product.

When a typical sales team uses the platform, their objective will be to engage with prospects (even if it's only a handful), continue meaningful conversations with them, educate them about their products/services, and establish a deeper connection with the prospects. This increases the chances that a lead will end up as a sale.

In fact, according to LinkedIn Sales Solutions' internal data, social selling leaders create 45 % more opportunities than peers who choose not to capitalize on this strategy. Additionally, salespeople who use social selling are 51% more likely to hit their quotas, and 78% of them outsell peers who don't use social media to sell.

45% more opportunities

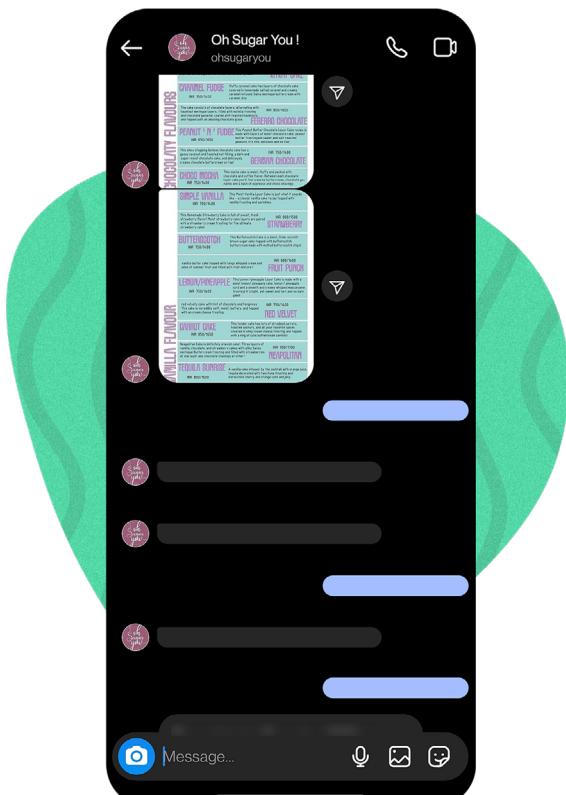
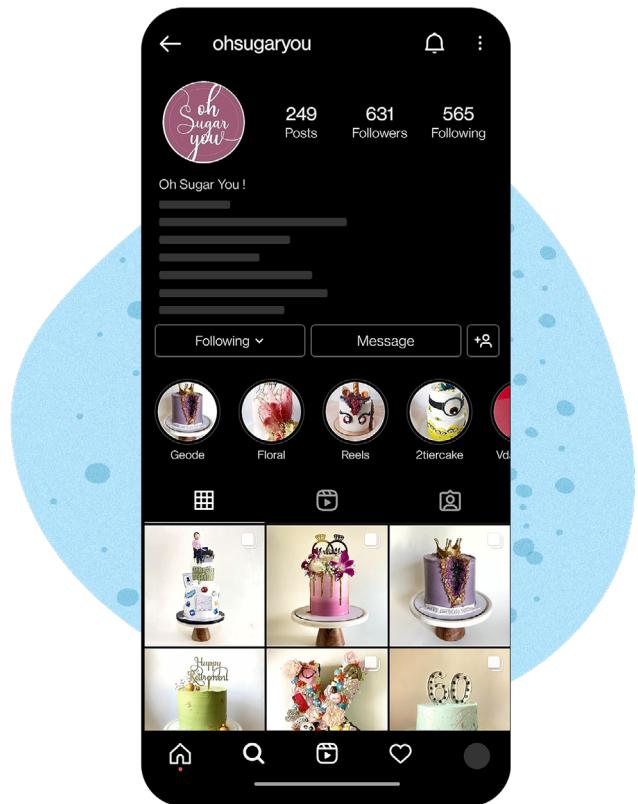
51% more likely to hit their quotas

78% outsell peers

Social selling is also a great way to organically increase your followership, as you are essentially establishing your authority over a subject or a solution and will also come across as sincere in conversations with your audience—as opposed to merely baiting them for likes and comments.

An example

Consider the example of **Oh Sugar You**, a Chennai-based brand that customizes cakes and other desserts. The company markets its cakes on Instagram and other social media platforms in the form of advertisements and posts to educate people about their products and therefore increase sales.



However, the brand doesn't limit its use of social media merely to market its cakes. Customers get in touch with the sellers via these platforms, engage in casual interactions, and make a purchase.

While the channels are the **same for both social selling and social media marketing**, the objectives, the nature of the conversation, and the people involved in both activities are quite different.

Aspect	Social media marketing	Social selling
Objective	Creating product/brand awareness for a larger audience for the purpose of generating prospects	Establishing interpersonal relationships with prospects/customers for the purpose of selling
Nature of conversations	Making announcements, answering questions, giving out advice	Conducting informed conversations with specific individuals & organizations
People involved	Marketing teams	Sales teams

Challenges in social selling

Social selling is certainly an effective tactic, but it does come with its own set of challenges. To begin with, it only works if it's done right.

While social selling is recognized as a strategy to enhance sales targets, you certainly can't be obvious about your objective as you execute the strategy—meaning you genuinely need to devote your time and effort to selecting and interacting with prospects, and not merely posting obnoxious messages about discounts, sales, and offers. Blatant sales messaging will only yield the opposite of your desired result. Your sales teams must engage with prospects over a long period, answer their questions and concerns, and educate them—just as they would over emails, over calls, or in person. It can be quite a challenging task to put social selling into practice as a method to maximize sales without stating that it is one.

Social selling also poses a few more challenges, as outlined below. But don't worry—we'll also discuss the solutions right after.

Lack of sales context

The primary challenge of selling—or marketing, for that matter—on social media, is the lack of any business context. When you use a standalone social platform, you don't really know who's who, why they're there, or whether they're interested in buying. With no knowledge of previous interactions, the prospective customer's history, or any understanding of their sentiments, sales teams won't be able to sell at all. In fact, the lack of context makes it more difficult for the reps to identify which prospects or customers to prioritize.

Department silos

While organizational silos are inevitable, siloing can harm a business in a variety of ways if left unchecked. Communication between teams is crucial for a business to run successfully. Imagine that a marketing team reaches out to a customer via social media and makes an offer. When the customer approaches the company's support team to discuss the offer, they're disappointed by the team's complete lack of awareness of it.

A principle of effective marketing is to be customer-centric, and **inconsistency** in customer service can repel customers.

Another consequence of working in silos is redundancy. For instance, imagine a sales team communicates information about its new campaign package to the company's leads and customers. The social media marketing team, on the other hand, messages the very same prospects and customers via social media, thus potentially irritating those who may have received the same information from both sources. This disconnect—often due to various factors, such as using different tools and a lack of shared sales context—wastes company resources, affects its follow-up process, and eventually diminishes its revenue.

Social media clutter



A cluttered social media page can impact a business negatively, because it makes it harder for the company to get its message across to prospects and customers who probably participate in discussions about the brand, comment on posts, or even like or share them, resulting in a lot of noise on the page.

For a business to run, merely marketing packages and campaigns is not enough. Sales teams also have to follow posts and conversations between their prospects or customers on these social media platforms to engage with them more effectively.

Another outcome of a cluttered timeline is the possibility of missing out on some good leads who may get lost in all the noise.



Inability to track conversations about your brand

It's always important to keep track of what's being said about your brand online, whether it's your customers or your competitors. Imagine being completely in the dark about broad discussions taking place about your brand. You'll be missing opportunities to learn where your competitors are in the market and to understand your customers so you can provide them with what they actually need.

There are many challenges that businesses face while managing a social media profile and using it to try to sell. While that in itself is difficult, it becomes much worse when the company has to manage multiple social media profiles.

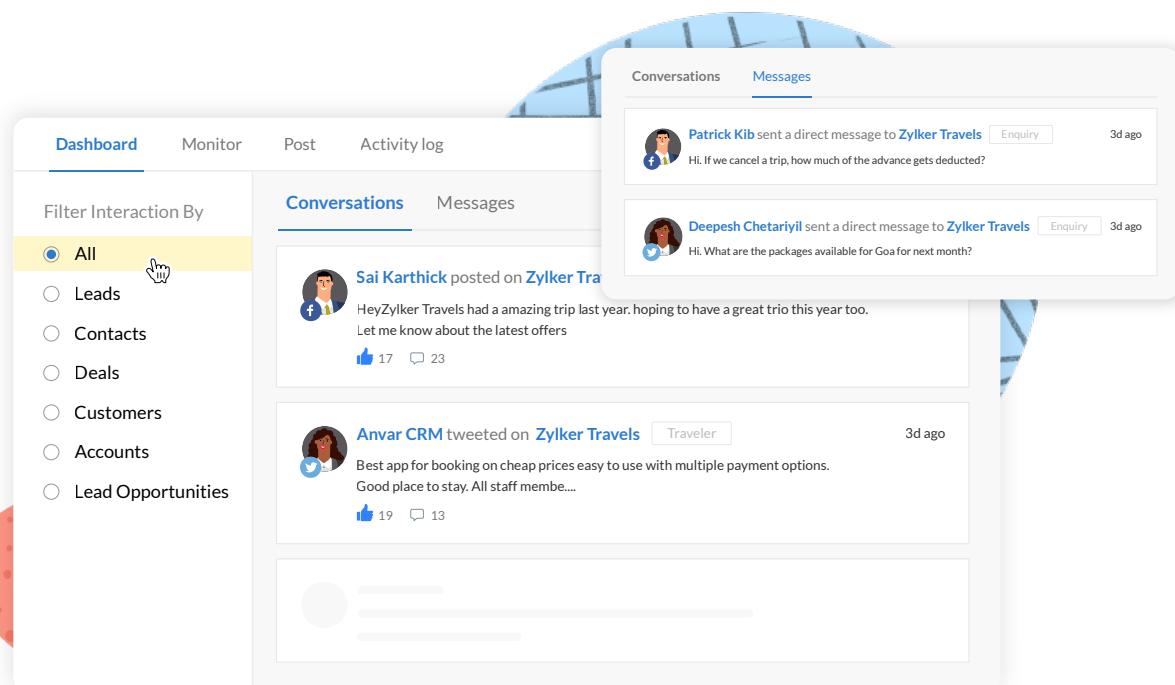
Therefore, to overcome these challenges, it's important to understand that social selling and social media marketing must not be seen as separate paths, but as two arms of a single campaign. A business might have good content up on social media, but unless it reaches out to customers and builds relationships with them, it won't succeed at making sales. There are a range of tools that help businesses get the most out of social media platforms—one of which is a customer relationship management (CRM) tool.

Solution

Bring sales context to your social selling activity

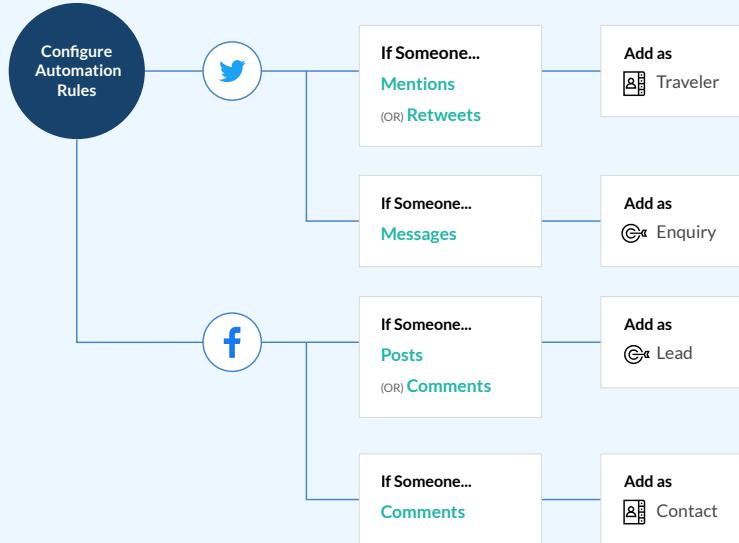
When a customer messages your company on Twitter and enquires about your product's pricing, you don't have to go through the trouble of logging in to that one social media platform to view and respond to that specific customer's enquiry instead, you can log into your CRM, where you can view and directly respond to customer messages from every social media platform you use for marketing. CRMs serve to unite all of your sales and marketing functionalities in one convenient space.

To further simplify the process of tracking your interactions, you can filter them. It will help you differentiate between your leads and contacts. For instance say a sales rep wants to look through the social media activities of prospects who have made an enquiry about various packages. By selecting the **Enquiry** filter, they can see a list of prospects based on what type of message they've sent the company.



The screenshot shows the Zoho CRM interface. On the left, there's a sidebar with options like Dashboard, Monitor, Post, and Activity log. Below that is a 'Filter Interaction By' section with a radio button selected for 'All'. Other options include Leads, Contacts, Deals, Customers, Accounts, and Lead Opportunities. The main area is titled 'Conversations' and shows a list of interactions. One interaction is highlighted: a message from 'Patrick Kib' to 'Zylker Travels' asking about advance cancellation fees. Another message from 'Deepesh Chetariyil' asks about Goa packages. A third message from 'Sai Karthick' on Facebook discusses travel offers. A fourth message from 'Anvar CRM' on Twitter recommends the app for booking cheap flights. At the bottom, there's a partially visible message from another user.

The automation rules set up in the Social module.

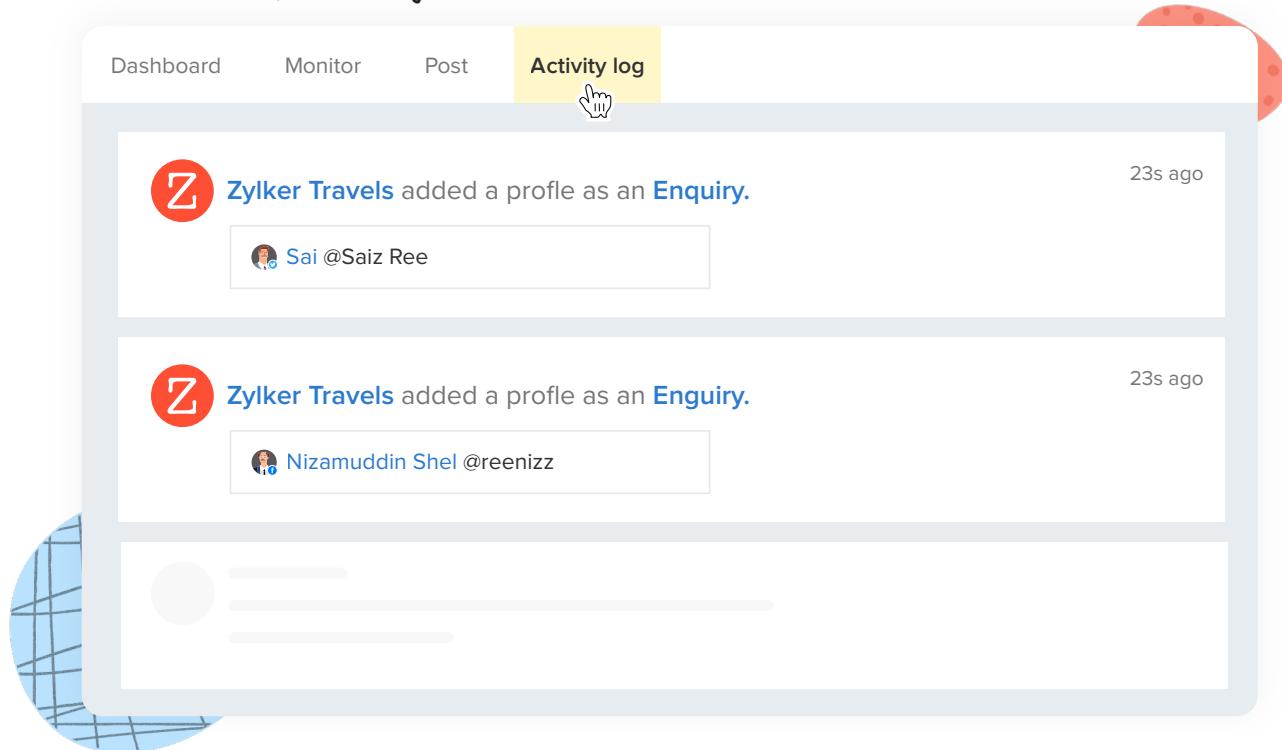


Per the automation rule that was configured during integration with its CRM (if someone messages on Twitter, label the communication as an “Enquiry”), every message a customer or prospect sends via Twitter automatically gets marked as an Enquiry (Lead) in the company’s CRM account.

No more inconsistency or redundancy

Any interactions that prospects/customers may have with sales representatives or the marketing team will get recorded in a single place. This will help reduce data inconsistency and duplication.

All interactions/activities get recorded within CRM.



Declutter your social media profiles

From your Facebook and Twitter mentions to your messages and likes, you can view your company's social media activities all at once by simply selecting which activity you wish to view in your Social module.

You can select what columns should be displayed in your Social module.

The screenshot shows the Zoho Social module interface. At the top, there are tabs for Dashboard, Monitor (which is selected), Post, and Activity log. Below the tabs, there are two main sections: 'Mention' and 'Mentions'. The 'Mention' section displays a post from 'Megan' about booking cheap prices with multiple payment options. The 'Mentions' section displays a post from 'Zylker Widgets Incorpor...' about a trip last year. To the right of these sections is a sidebar titled 'Select a column type' with various options like Mentions, Timeline, Likes, and Keyword/People search. The sidebar also includes a 'Lists' section with a 'Check' button.

Enable social listening

Imagine being kept up to date with information that is important to you and your business. For instance, a travel agency would want to keep track of how competitors are performing, or—given the COVID-19 situation—what the travel restrictions around the world are; or they might want to follow all the updates issued by the governmental institutions governing tourism. Instead of actively searching on Twitter for information, they can merely enable social listening. By doing so, columns on these topics will be displayed on their timeline, making it easy for them to view.

You can enable social listening.

The screenshot displays the Zoho CRM software's social listening feature. It shows three separate keyword search results:

- Travel Restrictions in India:** A post from "Distant Frontiers" welcoming tourists back to India. The post includes a link to mohfw.gov.in. The post has 18 likes, 23 shares, and 67 comments.
- Covid cases:** A reply from "@DrEricDing" to a post about COVID cases. The reply discusses Danish media coverage. The post has 28 likes, 23 shares, and 27 comments.
- Tourism:** A post from "Gigit Baltistan Tourism." about the Karakorum Highway. The post includes a photo of a truck on a winding mountain road. The post has 8 likes, 33 shares, and 47 comments.

Conclusion

Considering the sheer volume of people using social media, the potential for brands to make social sales is immense. As mentioned, however, this can be achieved only by combining the right kind of marketing with the ability to build relationships with customers. After all, both selling and social selling are all about giving people an amazing experience and building relationships instead of rambling about your company's products and services.

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