

# The Impact of Social Media on the Sales Cycle and Prospecting

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## Abstract

Sharing information and networking with business contacts are the crux of social media in sales. The use of social media platforms (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter) for all phases of the sales cycle is a relatively new technique, about 20 years since the arrival of the internet and associated technologies. Research to measure the impact of social media on the sales cycle time is not adequately addressed in the current literature. Our research highlights the impacts of social media on this important business function and examines individual performance aspects associated with the use of social media.

The paper focuses on a short history of sales and the results of a survey administered to sales associates in several industries regarding their use of social media in their profession and its impact on their performance. Limitations, implications and plans for further research will also be discussed, including assessment of University Sales Graduates on the expected use and impact of social media.

Our original hypothesis was that social media would shorten the sales cycle and especially the prospecting part of the process. This study did not support that hypothesis. Perhaps the lack of formal strategy to implement social media platforms in companies or the lack of formal training is to blame. Further research must be done to discover what impact social media actually has on the sales process.

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**Keywords:** prospecting, sales cycle, sales training, social media

**Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners:**  
Determination of the impact that social media has on the sales process.

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**TRACK: Professional Sales/Sales Management**