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Inside Sales: State of the art

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Lisa Project and WP2

Technological evolution and the pandemic situation due to Covid-19 have changed the needs for professionalism highlighting the need for new professional figures. As noted by various studies (Cuevas, 2018) and with reference to Business to business SMEs, 2 important changes are highlighted that have impacted the strategies of companies and, consequently, on the search for new professional skills of a commercial nature: on the one hand, technology and artificial intelligence have changed the dynamics of the market and changed the context in which activities are carried out commercial and for this reason the skills and competences necessary for these professional figures have changed, adapting to the new needs of buyers and technology and starting the path of INSIDE SALES (Cardinali, 2021); on the other hand, the pandemic situation has accelerated some changes (Sharma, 2020). According to a study by McKinsey, companies globally have reacted to the health emergency due to Covid-19 by internalizing activities sales (remote selling), today, three years later and with an emergency over, the needs of these figures become structural and this also for the purposes of the competitive capacity of sales organizations.

Among the most sought-after figures in the world of work, according to the LinkedIn Emerging Jobs 2023 report, are sales roles such as inside sales and business development. Despite this high demand for specialized professionals in commercial activities, there is a severe lack, if not absence, of structured educational offerings.

The LISA Project (Learning for Inside Sales Agents) aims to bridge this gap by addressing the training needs of companies and supporting the new educational requirements of universities. To achieve this goal, the starting point is to understand the current state of the inside sales role, its skills, and activities, and

how it fits within the organization. This will be done by collecting academic and non-academic literature from the last 40 years on the subject and highlighting the various themes and most useful concepts.

The project aims to respond to the growing demand for skills within the inside sales person. This application has been registered at European and international level and is for verification it is sufficient to consult the most recent reports on the state of the professions promoted by LinkedIn in 2023 (called profile of the business developer or customer success manager) but also by Manpower and others.

Another aspect not to be underestimated is the fact that inside sales should not be confused with telemarketing as in the first case the seller plays his role professionally, but at a distance. The internal seller cannot therefore in no way be compared to telemarketers who have the sole objective of concluding the sale without taking any interest in no way to the relational aspect with the customer which, instead, characterizes the distance selling process. In other words, talking about internal sales means referring to a real sales process that starts from the identification of potential customers at the conclusion of the contract and the activation of all the after-sales services that the customer may need.

Process developed entirely with the help of the tools and technologies available, therefore nothing to do with the mere activity carried out by call centers that operate in a short-term perspective since the aim is only to conclude the transaction. It is precisely these new tasks of the internal salesperson, from lead generation to after-sales service, that have led to new professional profiles and greater specialization of internal sales.

According to the study carried out by Inside Sales Italia in the months from November 2021 to March 2022, through the research of "inside sales job offers" in various portals such as: LinkedIn, Infojobs, Indeed and Google, the relevance of this emerges phenomenon in Italy but also describes which skills are most in

demand. Just to get a first picture of the situation from the study emerges that approximately 334 ads are published on LinkedIn, on Indeed, 446 on Infojobs.

Furthermore, the main skills required including: sales experience and negotiation skills, Technological/digital skills (social media, CRM, etc.) and among the soft skills problem solving, team working, empathy and flexibility. Based on the data analyzed, the inside seller must have excellent communication and negotiation skills, from be able to exploit organizational skills in remote contacts with customers, to be able to organize the different activities carry out and furthermore, embrace a result orientation by pursuing the objectives set with the organization and with the commercial department.

The scope of WP2 is to systematize the knowledge present on the scientific side and create a state of the art on the evolution of this new figure inserted in the context of modern commercial networks or to identify figures related to it connected and which may have a common root in terms of training content, skills and competences (think in this sense to the figure of the customer success manager).

The objective is also to describe the skills and abilities needed to achieve a 5ECTS training course and the related syllabus which will represent the basis for the development of subsequent WPs.

The main results of WP2 will be:

- the creation of a study containing the systematic review of the academic literature also in the form of white paper presentable for the purposes of dissemination and dissemination also in academic conferences and conventions and this in order to raise awareness among the academic community and push other universities to increase sales education paths.
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raise awareness in the community academic and push other universities to increase sales education paths.

- The creation of a syllabus and the training path also based on the results of the previous tasks.
- Identification of the appropriate methodology for the teaching in question. A detailed plan for developing the content of training, including format (online, offline elements and quantity), technical needs and delivery method.
- Definition and implementation of 4 main modules to be developed in the subsequent WP.

Through this document, businesses and students will have access to a detailed and comprehensive understanding of inside sales, an essential starting point for understanding and specializing in this increasingly emerging profession.

Introduction

Remote sales have long become an integral part of the sales process of many companies in various sectors. This phenomenon is certainly not as recent as one might think. In fact, while the conditions set by covid19 have increased its adoption, the reality is that inside sales have been used within companies for a long time.

On the academic side, the first research dates to 1986 when Narus and Anderson began to investigate this phenomenon of inside sales, trying to understand how this sales methodology was used and supported by field salespeople (outside) in large industrial companies. On the business side, the first company that seems to have used a remote sales approach is TheDialAmerica Marketing, Inc. (Kroguer, 2013). It was clear from the outset that the use of inside sellers would change the strategy and organizational options available to companies (Marshall and Vredenburg, 1991) and that an inside seller needed different skills and traits compared to the more traditional outside seller (Boyle 1996). This is particularly because the ways of approaching and managing sales changed. Although early studies like that of Marshall and Vredenburg in 1991 compared inside sales to telemarketing, this aspect was questioned a few years later by Boyle in 1996, debunking the various myths that had arisen over time about this discipline, first and foremost that the inside seller was a simple "order taker" demonstrating instead that it was something more and that it could take care of the entire sales process. So much so that with the right level of training and skill development, the inside seller increased customer satisfaction and business performance.

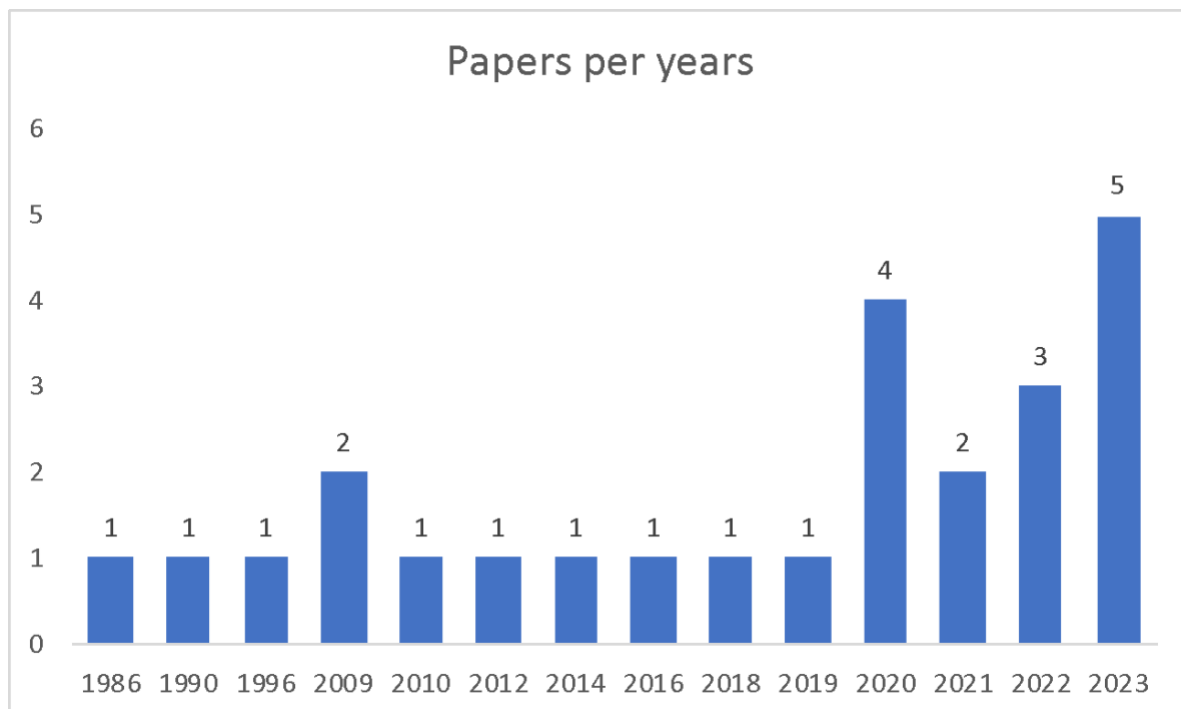


Figure 1 – Number of papers published per years.

Until the early 2010s, academic research in this field was completely absent, as can also be seen from Figure 1. From 2010, research resumed and gradually increased. This went hand in hand with the constant increase in the adoption of this methodology within companies. Sleep et al., in their 2020 paper, identify three main factors that have favored this adoption. First, the advancement of communication technologies such as computers, webcams, and video conferencing software, which have allowed sellers to extend their communication, making it richer and more effective. The second reason was the change in consumer approach to making purchases; an increasingly massive use of the internet to gather necessary information has changed the role of the seller. The third reason lies in a general increase in competition that has driven companies to adopt a more cost-effective approach like inside sales. Specifically,

in 2010 Masloski highlighted how inside sales were an effective strategy for companies to increase customers and keep operational costs low.

Thanks to this increase in adoption by companies, researchers have had more data to process, so much so that starting from the 2020s many authors have analyzed and studied the main commercial configurations considering the inside-outside mix, their roles, the required skills, the advantages/disadvantages for companies, and the success factors that will be analyzed in the following chapters. (Sleep et al., 2020, Ohiomah et al. 2020, Terho et al., 2023).

In addition to the role and organizational aspects in the literature on inside sales, after 2020, two other research strands began to emerge. The first concerns the incentive and control mechanisms of an inside sales network, which are different from an outside network due to the methods of approaching the sale and the customer (Conde and Prybutok, 2020; Homburg et al., 2021; Conde R., et al., 2022). The second instead focuses on the impact and use of technology, specifically on the use of social media and tools such as lead management systems and CRM. (Gessner and Scott, 2009; Ohiomah et al., 2019; Chaker et al., 2022)

Organizational aspects of inside sales

Salesforce configuration

An organization can choose a different commercial mix of inside and outside sellers by deciding how to assign responsibilities and activities to different types of sellers. An alliance between the two different types of sales can indeed bring various benefits to the company, increasing its overall performance while keeping general costs under control (Britton Manasco and Anneke Seley, 2017). Sleep et al. in their 2020 article identified four main types of inside sales B2B salesforce configuration:

- Inbound sales or sales support;
- Sales development;
- Team/Hybrid;
- Discrete.

In Table 2, you can see a summary of these four types of commercial configurations and their relative costs/benefits, both from the point of view of the company and the customers and from the dynamics internal to the commercial mix.

These four organizational types correspond to different and increasing levels of interaction with the customer by the inside seller.

Benefits and costs	Dimensions	Inbound sales or sales support	Sales development	Team/hybrid	Discrete
	Description	Technical or product experts, typically an overlay resource to outside sales	Lead qualifiers who set appointments for outside sales	Inside sales using an overlay quota while working with outside sales; may travel to meet clients	Inside salespeople selling without involvement of outside sales
Company and customer benefits and costs	Customer acquisition effectiveness	(Low) Dedicated support and cross-selling opportunities by inside sales (+/-)	(Moderate) Qualification step completed by inside sales, but inconsistencies exist (+)	(High) Inside-outside work together as a team	(High) Dedicated customer acquisition, sometimes even large customers (+)
	Customer retention effectiveness	Improve services. Customer may receive conflicting information from each sales force (+)	Primarily performed by outside sales	Cross-sell, upsell, maintain strong relationships by working as a team	Focus on previously underserved customer segment
Intra-sales force benefits and costs	Sales process leanness/efficiency	Reduces time spent by outside sales on customer support and cross-selling (-)	(+) Reduces time spent by outside sales on qualifying leads (-)	(-) More coordination as a team	(+) Separation shortens the cycle, allows for more flexibility (NA)
	Inside-outside relationship quality	Inside-outside miscommunication	Minimal relationship between inside and outside sales Limited inside-outside information sharing	(+/-) Relationship between inside and outside sales requiring a high level of customer information sharing	Separate incentives Clear sales credit assignment
	Inside sales turnover issues	(-) Difficult to find and retain combination of service and sales skills	(-) High rejection rate Low investment by the firm	(-) Compensation differentials can be demoralizing Conflict with outside sales	(-) High rejection/failure rate Low compensation
	Inside sales development opportunities	(-) Learning is narrowly focused on product and technical issues	(-) Learning is narrowly focused on qualifying prospects	(+) Learning is broader/more training Indirect customer-oriented learning	(+) Direct customer-oriented learning Inside sales as a stepping stone

Table 3 – Extracted from Sleep – 2020 – Benefits and costs of various inside salesforce configuration.

Inbound sales or sales support configuration

This first configuration proposed by Sleep et al. in their 2020 article sees the inside seller as a support and back-end figure for the outside sellers. With particularly advanced technical and product skills, the inside seller manages to provide an additional and dedicated service to customers, thereby increasing satisfaction and retention.

The interaction with the final customer is the lowest compared to the four configurations and is limited to support activities or at most cross-selling with already acquired customers. Thanks to this configuration that limits the

responsibilities of the inside sales agents, the company still manages to obtain an additional sales channel, increasing the opportunities for up and cross selling and freeing up time for outside sellers.

This type of configuration, although very simple, presents three limitations:

- Communication and exchange of information between inside and outside sellers could be difficult and not always fluid;
- Inside sellers focus only on support aspects, making their development difficult;
- Finding qualified sellers for this role that are not just telemarketers is not always easy as sales and support skills are required.

Sales Development configuration

This second configuration proposed by the authors sees the inside sellers playing a very specific role and tasks: finding and qualifying new leads that will then be managed by the field sellers.

Thanks to this configuration, the company can gain three important advantages: It's a particularly effective configuration for generating new prospects, freeing up time for the outside sellers who will take care of managing the relationship and retaining existing customers.

Communication and collaboration between inside and outside sellers occur in a fluid and effective manner since the roles are well-defined.

The sales process is more efficient and streamlined.

Despite these advantages, such a configuration presents some limitations to consider carefully:

- The relationships between inside and outside sellers are not long-term but situational, making it difficult to exchange truly valuable information.

- The turnover rate of inside sellers increases as they are exposed to a high level of rejection from prospects, and this can generate stress in the long term.
- The performance of inside sellers is typically measured by behavioral metrics such as the number of calls made at the expense of a more strategic focus on the customer.

Hybrid configuration

This third configuration involves direct collaboration between inside and outside sellers on specific customer groups. Both therefore have the same goals and responsibilities as they have to manage the same customer throughout their lifecycle.

The integration between these two sales modes can lead to various benefits as it allows to capitalize on the synergy between traditional sales strategies and new digital engagement strategies (Thaichon et al., 2018) and allows to leverage the cost efficiency of inside sellers with the strong relational capabilities of outside sellers (Shi et al., 2023).

This type of configuration according to Shi et al. (2023) is particularly effective for particularly sales processes and particularly complex and multifaceted customer needs. Thanks to a close collaboration and integration of skills of your types of sellers, it is possible to achieve greater results in managing this type of customers.

Thanks to this configuration, it is therefore possible to have greater effectiveness in customer management and its relationship but according to Ramos et al. (2023), several aspects need to be careful. The first concerns the creation of an effective coordination model between inside and outside sellers to facilitate the

exchange of information and collaboration. The second aspect concerns the correct management of incentives and types of remuneration for the two sellers as the objectives are common and different managements can lead to discontent. The third aspect concerns the need to provide sellers with a set of advanced technological tools. The fourth and last aspect concerns the need for constant development of new skills in sellers.

Discrete configuration

The last type of configuration is called discrete. In this configuration, the inside salespeople manage the entire sales process autonomously and completely without the support of field salespeople. Therefore, in this configuration, the inside salesperson will have to identify prospects, propose solutions, and manage the post-sales support part; all remotely.

This type of configuration is usually used to manage small and medium sales opportunities, leaving the more important opportunities like key accounts to the field salespeople.

The main advantage of this configuration is its efficiency without losing effectiveness, especially in sales cycles that are not particularly long and complex.

This configuration, like the others, has its limitations:

1. The proactivity in generating new opportunities by the inside salespeople can be lower than that of the outside ones.
2. The lack of face-to-face relationships with the customer risks not allowing the salesperson to perceive the implicit needs, requiring new types of skills.

3. For managers, it is more difficult to find talented and experienced people for this configuration. First of all, because of a different management of the remuneration and secondly because for now this position is still seen as entry-level and attracts more young people.

Role and characteristics of the inside seller

The role of inside sellers, as seen also in the previous chapter, can change considerably based on the configuration chosen by the company. The first research on the specific traits and skills of inside sellers dates back to the 90s. Boyle in his 1996 article was the first to analyze the traits that characterized inside sellers. Two traits particularly considered important by customers for both inside and outside sellers are honesty and customer knowledge. However, there are other specific traits for inside sellers that prove to be crucial to achieve effective performance: listening, communication skills, analysis ability, technical knowledge of the product and enthusiasm. As the inside seller primarily uses digital tools like a telephone or a computer to interact with the customer, they also need to develop particularly advanced listening and analysis skills compared to the outside seller who can also rely on other elements during the negotiation. A very important study to understand the role and characteristics that an inside seller must have been carried out by Sleep et al. (2020). The authors highlight the specifics of inside sellers and how they vary compared to outside sellers. In Figure 2 you can see a summary of the different dimensions taken into consideration by the authors.

Higher-order dimensions	Lower-order dimensions	Contemporary inside salespeople	Outside salespeople
Job characteristics	Skill variety	Moderate to high, depending on configurations	High
	Task identity	Low to high, depending on configurations	High
	Task significance	Moderate to high, depending on configurations	High
	Task autonomy	Moderate	High
Technical knowledge	Feedback	More, from supervisors, customers and outside sales	Most, from supervisors and customer
	Sales-related knowledge	Broad	Deep
	Social media use	Regularly	Limited
Selling skills	Analytics	Regularly	Limited
	Solution selling	Solution identification and support	Solution development
Interpersonal skills	Adaptiveness	Higher	Highest
	Cognitive empathy	Voice, video, text and other digital cues	Voice and body language
Aptitude	Cognitive ability	Moderate to high	High
	Emotional intelligence	Moderate to high	High
Organizational skills	Teamwork and navigation	Customer, outside sales and internal functions	Customer, inside sales and internal functions
Sales force control system	Control strategy	Behavioral based to hybrid	Outcome based
	Compensation plan	Salary with performance-based component	Performance based
Salesperson characteristics	Profile	Younger, less experienced	Older, more experienced
	Extraversion	Moderate	Highest

Figure 2 – Extracted from Sleep et al. 2020 – Sales traits

Regarding the characteristics of the work of an inside salesperson, it can be noticed how it varies depending on the different chosen configurations. However, in general, an inside salesperson has a wide variety of activities to carry out and a good level of autonomy, although not comparable to that of an outside salesperson.

Regarding technical skills, an inside salesperson has a broad knowledge of sales techniques, although not as in-depth as an outside salesperson, as they are only able to follow the entire sales process in a few cases. In relation to the technological aspect, such as the use of social media, digital tools, and data analysis tools, an inside salesperson must have particularly advanced skills, as they are part of their primary activities.

Taking into consideration interpersonal skills and sales aptitude, an inside salesperson must adapt to understand the customer's needs through the use of a third-party tool. Therefore, they must not only understand the customer's voice but also their writing and all the digital traces they leave behind.

An important difference between an inside salesperson and an outside salesperson lies in organizational skills. Inside sellers, as they typically never leave the office, must also be able to effectively manage relationships with colleagues and internal relations.

In addition to the specific traits of inside salespeople in B2B sales, there are specific critical success factors to consider. Ohiomah et al. (2020) have developed a framework (fig.1) that considers four macro dimensions that are crucial for B2B sales, both inside and outside.

These four dimensions are:

- Salesperson level
- Organization level
- Customer level
- Environment level



Figure 3. Extracted from Ohiomah et al. 2020. B2b sales success framework

The Salesperson dimension is subdivided into cognitive, functional, social, and meta competencies. Cognitive competence refers to the salesperson's ability to understand and process information effectively, leading to informed decision-making. Functional competence includes the essential salesmanship skills, effort orientation, and job satisfaction that enable salespeople to perform their duties effectively. Social competence encompasses interpersonal skills, adaptive selling, and the motivation that facilitates meaningful interactions with

customers. Meta competence is about the broader understanding of the sales role within the organizational context and includes self-efficacy, commitment to goals, and age, reflecting the maturity and experience of the salesperson.

The Organization dimension focuses on elements within the firm that support the sales process. This includes sales strategy, control systems, training, and leadership, all of which provide the structural backbone for sales operations. Organizational support is critical in empowering salespeople to achieve their targets and align their efforts with the company's goals.

The Customer dimension recognizes the importance of building and maintaining strong customer relationships. This includes elements such as market dynamics, customer trust, relationship quality, and customer satisfaction. Understanding and navigating the complexity of customer needs and leads is vital for long-term success in sales.

The Environment dimension addresses external factors that influence sales activities. These include economic trends, industry-specific dynamics, and technological advancements that shape the market landscape in which salespersons and organizations operate.

Mechanisms of motivation, incentivization and control of inside sellers

In a competitive environment like the one we find ourselves in today, to achieve above-average commercial performance it is not enough just to choose the right people and the right commercial mix, but it also requires their correct management.

As was seen in the previous chapters, inside sellers play roles and activities that are partly different from outside sellers. This entails a different mode of management by the manager to ensure better productivity but above all greater satisfaction and retention of talents.

For the correct management of inside sales agents, it is possible to manage three strategic levers (Conde and Prybutok, 2020; Homburg et al. 2021; Conde et al. 2021-22):

- Management of motivation.
- Management of incentives.
- Management of control

Management of inside sales motivation

Before understanding which type of motivation has the greatest effect on the performance and satisfaction of inside sellers, it is necessary to understand the meaning of the three main types of motivation: intrinsic, extrinsic, and autonomous.

Ryan and Deci (2000) offer a detailed definition of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is defined as engaging in an activity for its own sake, for the inherent satisfaction and enjoyment it brings, rather than for some separable consequence. When someone is intrinsically motivated, they are moved to act because of the fun, challenge, or joy involved in the activity itself, not because of external rewards or pressures. This form of motivation is characterized by a natural curiosity and desire to learn or engage in an activity. It's an important factor in learning, creativity, and overall mental well-being. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, refers to performing an activity in order to attain a separable outcome. This means the action is driven not by the activity itself being enjoyable or interesting, but by what comes as a result of the activity, such as rewards, approval, or avoidance of negative consequences. Extrinsic motivation can vary greatly in how autonomous it feels – from actions done under duress or obligation to those that are aligned with personal values and goals. While extrinsic motivation is often seen as less ideal than intrinsic motivation, it plays a significant role in many aspects of life, especially in situations where tasks are not inherently enjoyable or interesting.

Regarding autonomous motivation, a specificity of the other two types of motivation, In a workplace context, occurs when employees identify with the value and importance of their work. This leads to greater work motivation and positive work outcomes. For example, an inside sales agent who has control over their time and can personalize their training plan is likely to experience a greater sense of autonomy and control, enhancing their autonomous motivation. (Conde and Prybutok, 2020).

Autonomous motivation plays a very important role in the satisfaction of inside sellers. Conde and Prybutok (2020) have highlighted how this type of motivation allows to increase sales performance in an inside sales model and also decreases the turnover of salespeople. This happens because by giving more decision-

making autonomy to people they tend to identify more with the values and business objectives, thus increasing their productivity.

The other type of motivation that has a significant impact on the satisfaction and retention of inside sellers is intrinsic motivation. In fact, Conde R., et al. (2022) have shown how this type of motivation increases the overall satisfaction of the inside seller, increasing their productivity regardless of the context and cultural factors. Conversely, extrinsic motivation, such as rewards for the sales target, increase satisfaction in the short term but do not favor the long-term relationship and engagement between the seller and the company, therefore increasing turnover.

Incentive mechanisms for inside sellers

In addition to managing motivation and strategies to increase it in salespeople, another lever available to sales directors of inside sellers is the use of incentive mechanisms.

Typically, the incentive mechanisms used in sales are of an economic and individual nature. Homburg et al. (2021) went on to study the impact of these more traditional mechanisms in inside sales networks, highlighting very interesting aspects. First of all, the authors have shown how incentives given to the entire sales unit can also increase their overall performance. On the contrary, incentives given to the individual seller decrease the overall performance of the team. Personal incentives focused only on individual performance can lead to internal competition, thereby reducing collaboration and therefore the effectiveness of the entire team.

As seen in the previous chapters, this type of incentive is particularly important when the type of commercial configuration chosen requires a higher level of collaboration between inside and outside sellers.

Internal seller control mechanisms

The last strategic lever that allows effective management of an inside sales network are control mechanisms. Also in this case, compared to an outside network, they are different and varied.

Specifically, from the most recent research, there are two control mechanisms that have the most effect in an inside sales configuration: cultural control and operational control.

Cultural control refers to business practices and norms that influence people's behavior within it. An example of these practices could be leaving freedom in time management, the choice of training opportunities, or the development of a company culture based on values. Conde R., et al. (2023) have shown that this type of control allows internal sellers to achieve greater sales results and at the same time feel more satisfied. Control based on culture indeed allows to increase autonomous motivation, that is, feeling to have control over what one is doing, which as seen before is fundamental for an inside sales network to achieve excellent performance.

Since the work of the inside seller is mediated by technological tools such as computers and telephones, new methods of operational control emerge. Conde et al. (2021) studied these types of control traditionally based on sales goals in the inside sales context. The authors proposed introducing other forms of operational control over sales and new metrics such as the number of calls

made, demonstrating that these forms of control allow to increase autonomous motivation and ultimately job performance.

The main challenge for a manager is therefore to balance cultural controls with more operational controls. It is necessary to create an environment that promotes motivation by encouraging inside sellers to feel in control of their own actions and time while respecting the guidelines and company culture. To do this, it may be useful to follow these guidelines:

- Define clear objectives to achieve and suitable metrics to measure them;
- Provide constructive feedback that allows the person to improve;
- Recognize company performance, both of the individual and the entire team;
- Provide training and development opportunities, thus increasing skills and a sense of autonomy.

The use of technology for inside salespeople

The work of the inside seller is by its nature mediated by technology. It is the very evolution of new digital tools that have allowed the increase in the adoption of this sales methodology (sleep et al., 2020) reducing operational costs without however reducing commercial performance.

Analyzing the technology used by inside sellers means understanding what tools are used, their purpose, and the impact on performance.

To do this, first of all, we need to divide the technology into:

- Tools that make the work of the inside seller more efficient and effective;
- Tools that allow being in contact and improving the relationship with the customer.

Regarding the tools that allow optimizing the work of the inside sales agents, the lead management system (LMS) certainly falls into this category, which allows gathering, consolidating, and systematizing data and details about potential clients to streamline and enhance the lead management process. Specifically, Ohiomah et al. (2019) have shown that thanks to this contact management system it is possible to improve sales performance and in general sales efficacy. This happens because through an LMS sellers can adapt more effectively to the customer, improve the follow-up process, and increase technical and sales skills. Thanks to these tools, sellers and more generally the company have the opportunity to obtain a large amount of data that once analyzed and studied allow for greater operational effectiveness and increase sales (Gessner and Scott, 2009).

Regarding the tools that instead allow contacting new customers and cultivating the relationship we find social media. They are widely used in sales as a social selling technique, trying to apply digital and content marketing strategies in sales (Ancillai et al., 2019).

Specifically, Chaker et al. (2022) have studied how specifically inside sellers can use this powerful tool and what strategies to adopt. They identified four:

1. Use existing communities on social media. The internet has allowed the spontaneous creation of vertical communities on specific topics where people interact and discuss. A seller can enter these digital communities related to their sector to understand the needs of their targets and qualify them as well as actively interact and get to know.
2. Create a digital persona. Online the seller can create the so-called digital twin. That is a presence on social media that allows to reflect his personality and his values. Through the creation of targeted content, it is possible to effectively manage your digital presence in such a way that it supports reaching potential customers.
3. Communicate indirectly. This strategy focuses on using social media for indirect communications, such as posting content, sharing updates, and interacting with others. Through this strategy, the inside seller can stay in the minds of customers and continue communication with them without doing so directly, risking appearing invasive.
4. Know the customers. Given that inside sellers do not visit customers and therefore the possibilities to know them thoroughly are limited, they can use social media to bridge this gap. Thanks to social media platforms, an inside seller can understand the needs, desires, and problems of his customers by looking at the content they share.

These four strategies, which can also be used jointly, allow sellers to obtain two important benefits: Expand their network and make it of greater value (Chaker et al., 2022). Thanks to social media, the possibilities of interaction with current and potential customers increase significantly, favoring the generation of new opportunities and facilitating the maintenance of existing ones.

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