

4/6/09

ES Research Group Survey: Social Media Tools Not Ready for Prime Time in Helping Sales Teams Win B2B Deals

Bottom Line: Sales Methodologies, CRM Most Effective; Hoovers/OneSource, LinkedIn Most Useful of Social Media Tools

WEST TISBURY, MA -- April 6, 2009 — According to a recent study by [ES Research Group](#), Inc. (ESR), one of the nation's leading research and advisory firms on sales effectiveness, social media tools such as [Jigsaw](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Twitter](#), [Plaxo](#), [Facebook](#), [Hoovers](#) and [OneSource](#) may be useful for other purposes, but most of them aren't helping sales teams close many B2B deals today. The survey was developed in cooperation with [The TAS Group](#).

In fact, based upon ESR's research, sales methodologies used in conjunction with CRM systems are far more effective in this regard.

Based on a survey of nearly 400 sales professionals in the U.S., ESR's "The New Social Media: Do They Enable B2B Selling?" report found that only LinkedIn (86%) and Hoovers/OneSource combined (61%) were used by more than half of respondents in their selling efforts. Facebook (50%), Plaxo (48%), Twitter (31%), and Jigsaw (26%) trailed in use. Note: Hoovers and OneSource are separate companies but were combined for survey purposes because of their similar services.

Of respondents actually using the tools for sales, Hoovers and OneSource were the only tools helping more than half (54%) of them win B2B sales sometimes or often. LinkedIn was next at 42% and Jigsaw followed at 35%. Worst were Facebook (15%), Plaxo (13%) and Twitter (13%).

"The results demonstrate that with all the hype and buzz, most social network tools aren't helping sales teams sell more yet," said Dave Stein, CEO and founder, ES Research Group. "For example, Twitter has not come into its own as a salesperson's tool. It is presently a marketing tool that can potentially benefit the sales organization by contributing to the generation and nurturing of new sales leads. For now, the use of sales methodologies integrated with CRM systems and other sales enablement tools are proving far more successful in driving sales."

Other key findings include the following:

- LinkedIn is clearly the favorite among B2B salespeople surveyed.
- The established for-pay information services (Hoover's and OneSource) came in second.
- Free/low-cost information sharing services such as Jigsaw will rise in popularity over time.
- Twitter is an anomaly. It will have a high degree of uptake, but in a very narrow market. Marketing will find the tool much more valuable than sales for the foreseeable future. Presently it is not a valuable mainstream medium for B2B salespeople.
- For the time being, Facebook is best reserved for the personal and family sides of one's life.

The ESR survey of sales representatives in a broad set of industries examined the prospecting process, the selling process, and the storage and retrieval of customer and prospect information.

“The New Social Media: Do They Enable B2B Selling?” contains ESR’s insights into each of the tools surveyed. Free highlights of the survey can be found at The TAS Group’s www.thetasgroup.com/esr.html. The full report is available for a fee at ESR Research’s www.ESResearch.com/socialmedia.

About ES Research Group

Based in West Tisbury, Massachusetts, ES Research Group (ESR) is a business advisory firm that helps companies evaluate, select, implement and measure their sales training and sales performance improvement programs. ESR publishes the highly acclaimed annual Sales Training Vendor Guide comparing and contrasting 23 of the leading sales training companies. Visit www.ESResearch.com.

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