

Sales transformation

**7 sales challenges
and 7 sales virtues
in B2B companies**

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Danish B2B companies can exploit large growth potentials

New research shows that Danish B2B companies can release their full growth potential by working more strategically and professionally with their sales processes. This research was carried out by a researcher at the Copenhagen Business School (CBS) and Customer Agency in collaboration with the Danish Commercial Industries Federation and Business Denmark.

The research project “Future of Sales” has identified optimisation opportunities for how Danish B2B companies can strengthen their sales – and achieve greater growth. This is truly ground-breaking research in a field like sales, where much less research is carried out than in other disciplines.¹

In concrete terms, the research has identified 7 challenges in selling as it is practiced today. For example, businesses can become far better at “thinking” sales throughout the company and to a much greater degree let sales contribute to the company's development. As a response, the researchers have formulated 7 sales virtues that can counter the challenges and that have a direct link to the company's growth and bottom line. They are, for example, exploiting technologies that support the sales process and that make evident the value generated in the sales process.

The research shows that few Danish companies comply with the 7 sales virtues. In other words there is a great growth potential if Danish businesses work more strategically with selling, putting sales expertise at the forefront and renewing/revising the roles of the salesperson and the sales manager. This would benefit the businesses' growth and earnings and enhance the role of selling in Denmark generally.

1. This is the conclusion of the bibliometric preliminary analysis conducted by CBS and Customer Agency, which shows that there is 10 times less research in sales than in marketing. Read more about the bibliometric preliminary analysis on page 9.



Keys to companies' work with sales and growth

In this white paper we have collated important conclusions from the research project Future of Sales, and we give selected examples of companies that work strategically on raising their sales.

The research project Future of Sales is run by Business Danmark, the Danish Commercial Industries Federation (DI Handel), Copenhagen Business School (CBS) and Customer Agency. The aim of the project is to develop and raise the understanding of what sales is and

which values sales can generate – e.g. by developing and raising the sales skills of the member companies of the Danish Commercial Industries Federation and the members of Customer Agency.

The project thus provides new knowledge and applicable tools for making sales management, the sales process and the work of selling more effective, professional and better able to create value for Danish commercial industries.

Stakeholders in Future of Sales



DI Handel is the branch community in the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI) for commercial industries. It works to strengthen innovation and competitiveness in sales, marketing, customer service and e-commerce. The branch community has more than 1,800 members that sell everything from liquorice, rubber boots and soap to sand, steel and machinery. DI Handel's mission is to give commercial industries the best possible conditions and further the interests of Danish commercial industries.



Business Danmark is the only trade union in Denmark that specialises in sales and marketing. Business Danmark strives for the commercial agenda that will strengthen our society, businesses and our members' market value. At the same time the union develops, inspires and guides its 28,000 members and their businesses so they can navigate in a global, digital world and stand in a stronger position.



Mogens Bjerre, associate professor at the Copenhagen Business School, is the lead researcher on the project Future of Sales. He has many years of research and teaching experience in B2B marketing and sales – both at CBS and elsewhere. Mogens Bjerre has written articles and books on the value of customer focus, strategic selling and not least establishing and developing B2B customer relations.



Customer Agency assists market-leading B2B businesses in Europe to generate growth by differentiating themselves through superior value creation. Customer Agency maps customer journeys and conducts customer and competitor analyses. Based on insight from customers and the market, they create enhanced customer experiences in critical touch-points through optimisation of customer processes as well as through training and design of customer-oriented employee behaviour.

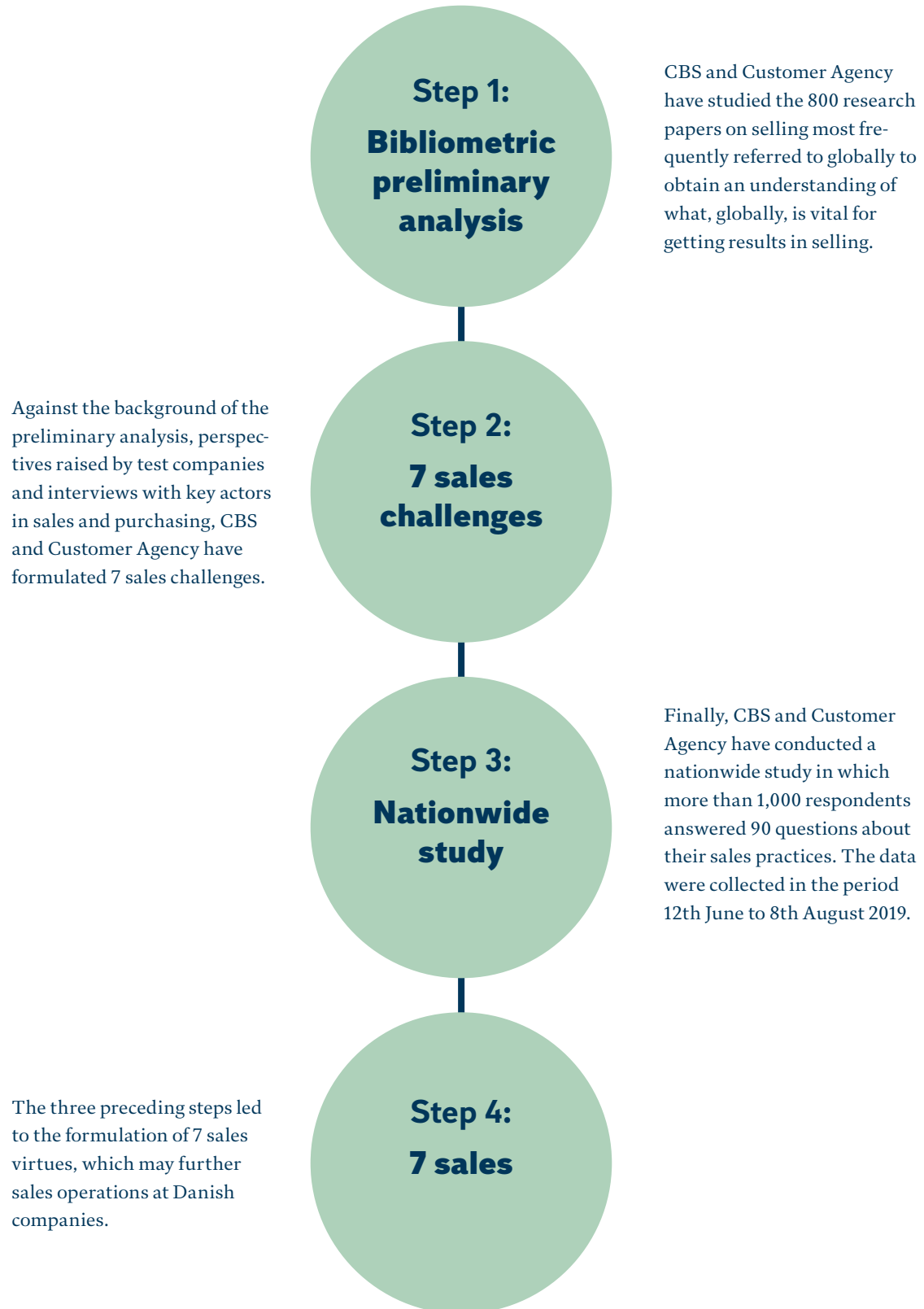
Research and practice connected

The research presented in Future of Sales is quite unique, as it is the first time we identify both what actually works in the sales process and the state of health of the sales process today. The research project builds on both research and practice-oriented experience from Danish companies, gathered from 10 test businesses that were involved in the project.

10 test businesses have provided practice-oriented experience

- bObles Aps
- DLF Seeds A/S
- Oh! By Copenhagen Fur A/S
- RV Unique Aps
- Schneider Electric Danmark A/S
- Solar A/S
- Stark A/S
- Telia Erhverv A/S
- Zwilling J.A. Henckels Scandinavia A/S
- Unidrain A/S

How the research project is built up



Nationwide study

The nationwide study comprised 90 questions and was conducted among 1,008 employees and managers responsible for sales at B2B companies in various branches and functions. The study's overall conclusions do not differ across job function, branch or size of business.

The representative data were collected via questionnaires distributed by e-mail to databases comprising Business Danmark's members, DI Handel's members, Customer Agency's clients and collaborative partners as well as a business panel.

Responsibility and place in the organisation

- 21% of the answers came from sales directors
- 20% came from sales managers
- The remaining 59% came from sales people without management responsibility

Branch

- 34% of the answers came from businesses in commerce and wholesaling
- 20% came from businesses in industry and production
- The remaining 46% came from businesses in service and consulting, IT and other technology, medico and medical equipment, foodstuffs and ingredients, as well as other sectors

Size of business

- 9% of the answers came from respondents in businesses with more than 10,000 employees
- 5% of the answers came from respondents in businesses with 3,000–10,000 employees
- 6% of the answers came from respondents in businesses with 1,000–3,000 employees
- 6% of the answers came from respondents in businesses with 500–1,000 employees
- 6% of the answers came from respondents in businesses with 250–500 employees
- 10% of the answers came from respondents in businesses with 100–250 employees
- 11% of the answers came from respondents in businesses with 50–100 employees
- 17% of the answers came from respondents in businesses with 20–50 employees
- 21% of the answers came from respondents in businesses with 5–20 employees
- The remaining 9% came from respondents in businesses with 1–5 employees

What happens now?

The next step in the research project Future of Sales is to spread the conclusions about the 7 sales challenges and the 7 sales virtues to Danish companies and sales organisations.

Strengthening companies' sales skills will also require new sales-focused training courses – including new academy-level courses in sales management based on the 7 sales virtues, and the findings and conclusions of the

research project will also form part of the graduate diploma line in Marketing management in the elective subject Sales management at CBS.

In addition, Business Danmark and DI Handel will host debates and discussions, workshops and talks around the country on the sales challenges and virtues to inspire companies to work more on professionalising their sales processes.

7 sales virtues that can impact on

On the following pages we will study the 7 sales challenges – one at a time. We also give you checklists and hints for how your company can live up to the 7 sales virtues.

In the white paper we use the categories **strong sales practices** and **weak sales practices**, which cover the 20% with the strongest sales and weakest sales practices respectively. And there are large differences. Our results show that businesses that live up to the 7 sales virtues have higher growth than businesses that don't.

In the white paper we use infographics to show what difference there is in the answers from businesses with **strong sales practices** and **weak sales practices**.

We have cross-checked the relationships between the sales virtues and growth by relating the data to random samples of growth figures taken from the most recently published annual reports. The random samples confirm that 8 out of 10 businesses in the category **strong sales practices** have reported growth in recent accounting years, and 5 out of 10 businesses in the category **weak sales practices** have experienced falls in turnover.

8 out of 10

businesses in the category
strong sales practices have
reported growth in turnover.

5 out of 10

businesses in the category
weak sales practices have
experienced falls in turnover.

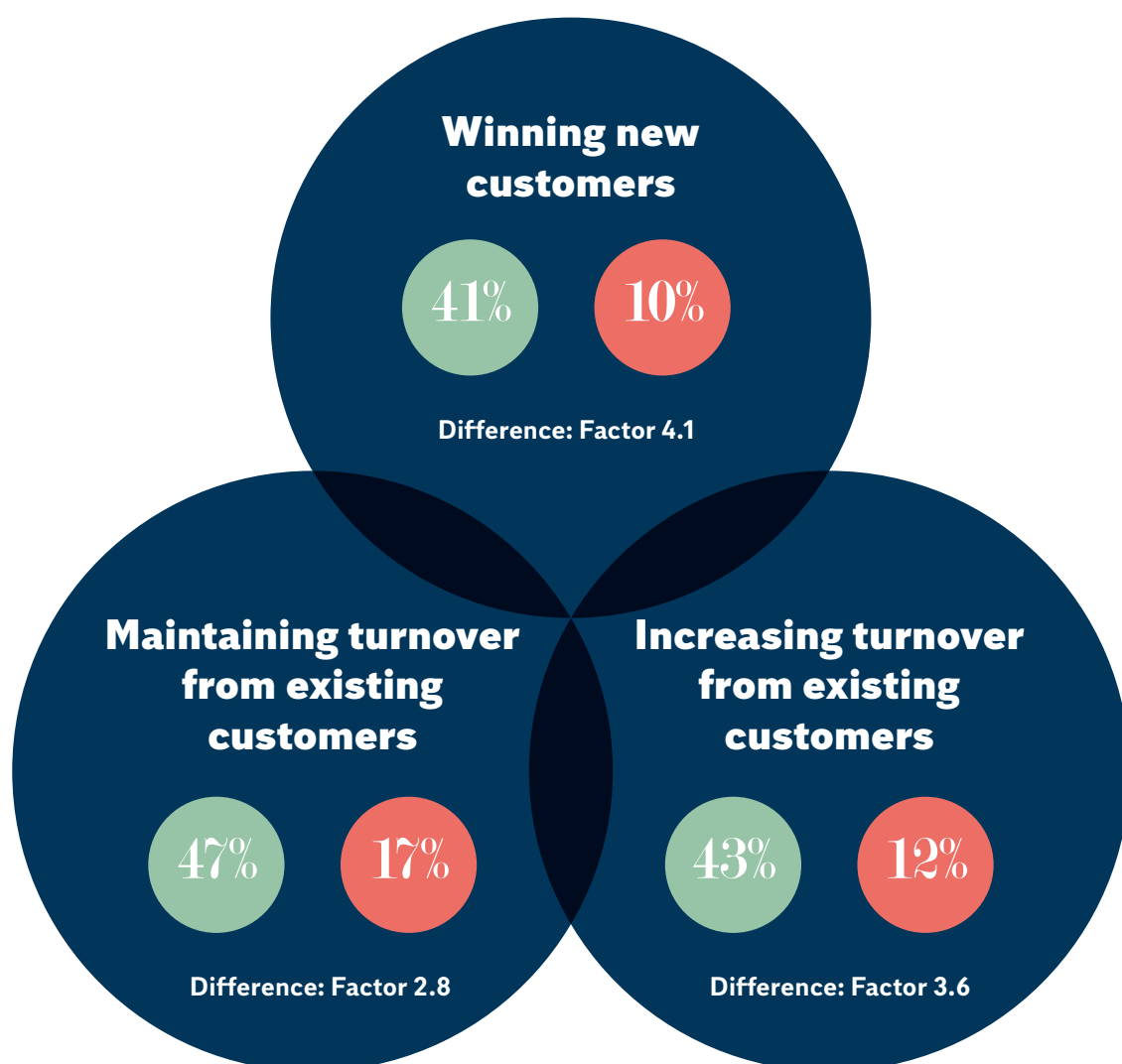
The research results also show that businesses with **strong sales practices** to a significantly greater degree than businesses with **weak sales practices** live up to the three vital drivers for growth:



- Winning new customers
- Maintaining the turnover from existing customers
- Increasing the turnover from existing customers

3 vital drivers for growth

Our results show that businesses with **strong sales practices** are significantly better at applying the 3 drivers for growth than businesses with **weak sales practices**. This is what the percentage figures in the circles below indicate.

For example, 43% of businesses with **strong sales practices** are good at increasing their turnover from existing customers, while just 12% of businesses with **weak sales practices** are good at that.



-  Businesses with strong sales practices
-  Businesses with weak sales practices

7 sales challenges

In this white paper we identify 7 challenges that impede successful selling in Danish businesses. Ask yourself whether you recognise one or more of the following 7 challenges:

1. **Customer-centricity is low.**
2. **The sales department co-operates too little with the rest of the organisation.**
3. **Sales management is weak.**
4. **The sales organisation lacks business-oriented training.**
5. **The company is not good enough at getting payment for the value it creates.**
6. **The resources in the sales process are insufficiently exploited.**
7. **Proven sales-supporting technologies are not exploited sufficiently.**

7 sales virtues

The 7 sales challenges lead to 7 sales virtues that you and your company should live up to if you are to be in the vanguard of selling. All the sales virtues are of equal value for generating growth and should be regarded as inspiration for every sales manager and the individual sales people.

- 1. We are so customer-centric that all our customers can clearly see and appreciate the difference between us and our greatest competitors.**
- 2. All functions in the organisation have a good understanding of what they must contribute with to ensure that we successfully meet our growth targets.**
- 3. Our sales managers are at the forefront in activating, enforcing and developing the approach of the sales people to selling.**
- 4. We have a common understanding of the value that the sales team must generate for our customers, and our training and education in sales is always designed with the clearest focus on value generation.**
- 5. We make manifest and get payment for the value we generate.**
- 6. Our sales resources are closely related to the company's strategic goals, and the individual profiles and resources in the sales organisation are measured on their individual contributions towards these goals.**
- 7. We are better than our competitors in using internal data on customers and markets to support our customer-centric functions and create clear value for customers.**

Customer-centricity is low

Customers are vital to the business's sales and growth. Nevertheless, we see that there is not enough focus on the customers.

The limited customer centricity indicates that businesses need to ask themselves what customer orientation actually means to them. This suggests the need for a radical paradigm shift in the understanding of one's own performance towards the customers and the market.

What can your company do?

- Instead of asking yourself whether your business is good at things that are important to customers, you should be asking yourself is whether the customers actually experience that your business is better than your competitors in areas important to the customers.
- The sales organisation should take the initiative to ensure that the whole organisation is customer-centric and that the customer has a good experience on every visit.
- The sales organisation should be engaged in 'walking the talk': being customer-centric externally rather than solely in the internal discourse.

Research results:

32%

work constantly to generate greater and more manifest value for the customer.

21%

experience that they regularly lose sales because of bad customer experiences.

Among businesses with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:

Strong sales practices 5%

Weak sales practices 48%

Checklist for your business

- ✓ Are we aware who in the business knows the customers' total journey with us – seen from outside as well as inside?
- ✓ Do we have a picture, common to all our internal functions, of how the customers should experience us as a business?
- ✓ Have we thoroughly understood the needs of all our stakeholders – also across the customers' journey with us?
- ✓ Have we, during the past couple of years, analysed the customers' total journey with our company?
- ✓ Can we formulate the customers' “pains” and desired “gains” – and thereby the tasks that we should prioritise?
- ✓ Can our customers formulate a clear difference between us and our competitors in areas where it is important to them?

#1 sales virtue

If you can answer "Yes" to the questions in the checklist, your business probably lives up to the sales virtue:

**We are so customer-centric
that all our customers can
clearly see and appreciate
the difference between us
and our greatest competitors.**

Increased customer focus has given Stark more loyal customers

Stark A/S, a building supplies store chain, has implemented several activities to gauge the customers' meeting with and satisfaction with the business. This has equipped the company to deliver the best service to its customers – no matter their needs.

In recent years Stark has experienced growing loyalty from their customers. According to the company's Sales Excellence Director, Jørn Fogh, a dedicated effort lies behind the progress:

“We are constantly adapting both our product range and our service solutions to the customers' needs and wishes. Every half-year we do an in-depth analysis of the customer journey – and that is the starting point for many of the initiatives that are implemented over the following half-year,” he says.

From the half-yearly analysis Stark can extract data showing where they have touchpoints with the customers and how they successfully interact with them. Apart from the half-yearly analyses Stark also conducts a high-frequency measurement of customer loyalty on a day-to-day basis, asking a percentage of the customers about their experience with the company:

“Our weekly survey is followed up with a form of 'service recovery'. Customers with a poor experience are contacted within 24 hours – first and foremost to deal with the situation that triggered their feedback. But we also do it so that we can learn about our pitfalls and so that the customers' feedback and experiences come as close as possible to the sales organisation and the sales people as possible. We poll between 2,000 and 2,500 of our professional B2B customers every month,” says Jørn Fogh.

“From our analyses we know that one of our most important tasks is to ensure that the customers get everything they need for a job the first time round, so they don't have to come back unnecessarily.



Common understanding of good customer behaviour

As a starting point, Stark operates on the backdrop of the customer promise: 'At Stark it shall be easier and better every time.' And that is reflected in the guidance that the sales people must be able to give to the customers:

“From our analyses we know that one of our most important tasks is to ensure that the customers get everything they need for a job the first time round, so they don't have to come back unnecessarily. Therefore we focus very closely on clarifying the task that the customer is dealing with. For us the challenge lies in delivering good and thorough service every time,” says Jørn Fogh. He adds that, at the same time that Stark must deliver consistent service, the company must also be flexible and help the customers when ad hoc tasks arise – which they often do in the building industry.

“We must help those customers who come into the outlet with urgent tasks. But we must also have a uniform bot-

tom level that we don't fall through when new customers for instance enter the outlet while we're busy dealing with an urgent task for a loyal customer. We must therefore systematise our processes but not so much that we can't help the customer in the situation they are in. That is the balance we must focus on all the time.”

To create that balance Stark has established a common definition of what constitutes good behaviour towards customers – and has put it in writing in so-called minimum standards for selling and providing the customer experience that all business units in Stark are trained in.

“We have created a set-up where the framework is defined by overall guidelines, but which at the same time creates room for free conduct. We have tried to soften the purely structured approach – so we can create a type of balance enabling us to meet our customers exactly where they are,” says Jørn Fogh.

“We must help the customers who come into the outlet with urgent tasks. But we must also have a uniform bottom level that we don't fall through when new customers for instance enter the outlet while we're busy dealing with an urgent task for a loyal customer.



The sales department co-operates too little with the rest of the organisation

The sales department in your company is not alone in generating success in sales. If your company is to live up to its full growth potential, the rest of the organisation must therefore support and accept input from the sales department. However, the research results show that the sales department's role in day-to-day operations is often not big enough. Thus there is an unexploited potential in the company giving the sales department a more central role – including the department itself articulating and initiating a stronger co-operation with the other functions.

What should your company do?

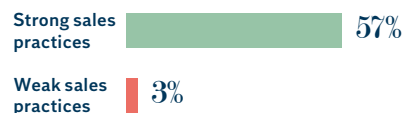
- The sales department should know what value it can create for the company's other functions – including providing insight into customers and markets. Only when this is so does it give meaning to make this insight available to the rest of the organisation.
- When the sales department knows precisely what value it provides it should activate its customer knowledge and sales skills in the rest of the organisation – both in terms of business development and other sales-promoting areas in the company.

Research results:

21%

say that customer service and sales co-ordinate efforts and work together.

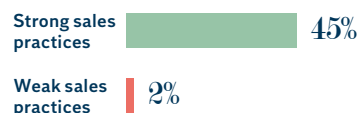
Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:



17%

say that the company's marketing effort supports sales.

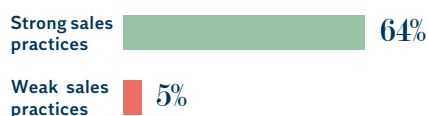
Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:





experiences that the sales department has great influence on the company's business model.

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:



Checklist for your company

- ✓ Do customer interactions from e.g. customer service and marketing support our opportunities for upselling?
- ✓ Is it obvious to our customers who to contact if problems arise with the products and services they have bought?
- ✓ Do the customer service, logistics, production and marketing departments request insight from our sales department?
- ✓ Has the sales department recently discussed the development of the business model or new products and services with other colleagues in the company?

#2 sales virtue

If you can answer "Yes" to the questions in the checklist, your business probably lives up to the sales virtue:

All functions in the organisation have a good understanding of what they must contribute with to ensure that we successfully meet our sales targets.

Sales management is weak

The research results show that the management of the sales department is insufficient in many places, and that there is an unfulfilled potential in developing and professionalising the sales department's sales management.

What should your company do?

- Managing the sales department implies not only managing the sales people themselves, but also co-operating with other functions in the company. Sales management should therefore strengthen relations with other functions in the organisation – for example through providing relevant information about competitors and other business intelligence to colleagues in the logistics, marketing, HR, IT and product development departments.

Research results:

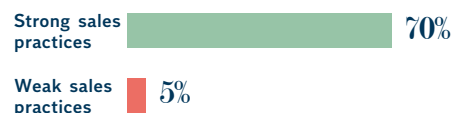
14%

experience that their successes are analysed, so they understand what

32%

experience that they always get qualified sparring with their own management about how best to generate sales

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:

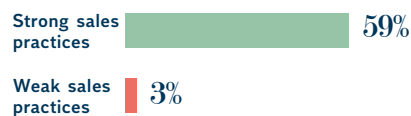


- The company should establish and follow principles for selling that determine the framework and demands for the sales people in relation to their internal and external stakeholders. The term 'governance' is used in several connections regarding management, follow-ups and control of the company's management – and here there is an opportunity to establish similar frameworks and procedures for the company's sales management.
- The sales management should work with change management, where e.g. sparring and the sales manager's own practices must contribute to a meaningful toolbox for the sales people.

23%

say that the manager also follows the procedures for approaching the act of selling in the company.

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:



24%

say that sales department has great influence on next year's sales budget.

Checklist for your company

- ✓ Do we experience that our sales process and visits are planned with a view to achieving specific targets?
- ✓ Do we know what the other functions in the company require in terms of knowledge and insight from customers and markets?
- ✓ Does the sales management follow our sales processes and models?
- ✓ Do we use systematic sparring with the sales management as a tool to develop the sales people in the right direction?
- ✓ Is the sales management involved sufficiently in budget planning?

#3 sales virtue

If you can answer "Yes" to the questions in the checklist, your business probably lives up to the sales virtue:

Our sales managers are at the forefront in activating, enforcing and developing the approach of the sales people to selling.

The sales organisation lacks business-oriented training

The skills levels of the sales people have decisive importance for the development of the sales organisation. However, in only a few cases is there a target for what it is the sales people's development process is to improve.

What should your company do?

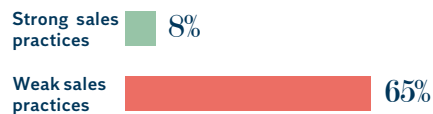
- You should ensure that understanding the company's business model is included in the sales organisation's training.
- It should be the sales organisation's responsibility that customers experience a connection between what is sold and those to whom it is sold. The company can beneficially strengthen the sales department's toolbox and skills by mapping what is actually needed for the act of selling to support the company's own development.
- The sales organisation's education should include targets and identifying priorities of expected results, so it is possible to judge whether the investments in education are successful.

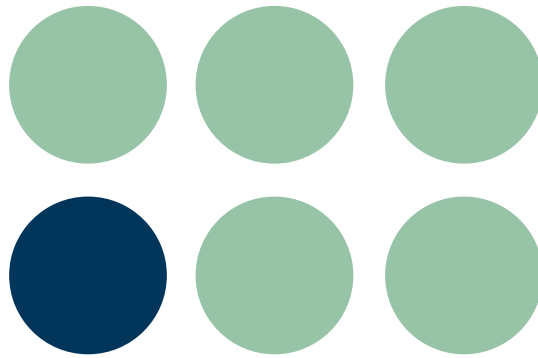
Research results:

28%

say the sales department does not have a good understanding of the

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:



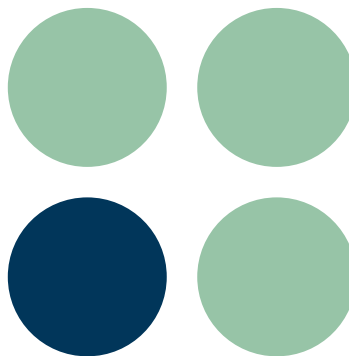
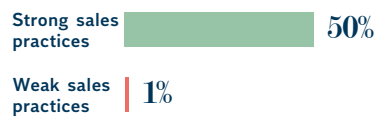


Almost

Every 6th

says that the sales people's skills are constantly strengthened to be able to meet sales targets.

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:

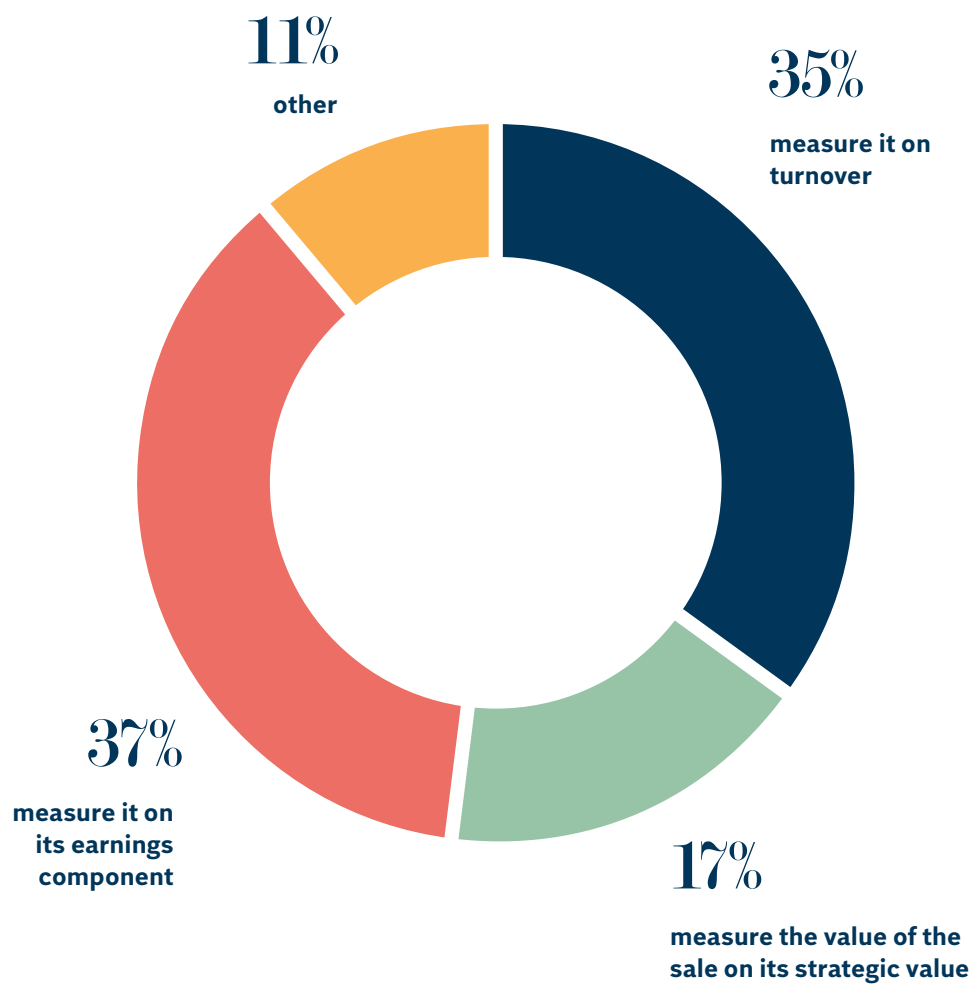


About

Every 4th

say they have influence on the company's business model.

How do the respondents measure the value of the individual sales?



Checklist for your company

- ✓ Do we know who in the company knows the company's business model – and how it is articulated?
- ✓ Do we have a common clarification of what values we create and how they should be measured?
- ✓ Can we formulate which new demands can be made on the sales department based on the company's strategic ambitions?
- ✓ Do we know which skills must be added to be able to meet the strategic ambitions?

#4 sales virtue

If you can answer "Yes" to the questions in the checklist, your business probably lives up to the sales virtue:

We have a common understanding of the value that the sales team must generate for our customers, and our training and education in sales is always designed with the clearest focus on value

At Schneider Electric everyone is part of the sales team

Schneider Electric Danmark A/S is working to make the whole organisation a part of the sales process. This gives all employees a stronger customer focus – and an even clearer role for the sales people: To give the customers the special experience that differentiates Schneider Electric from its competitors.

At Schneider Electric, which supplies energy and digital automation solutions for housing, buildings, data centres, infrastructure and industries, it is always the customer who should be in focus – no matter whether it's a matter of buying electrical sockets through e-commerce or project sales of large data centre solutions.

Therefore, according to sales director Tina Schou, it is also vital that the whole company shares in the sales process.

“Schneider Electric Danmark is a sales organisation, so selling is the number one focus area. That means that everyone in the organisation is involved in selling and understands to think 'sales'. We are all involved in creating a customer preference, and on the background of that preference we make new sales. That is the nerve of the whole of our business,” she says.

Know the end-customers

Schneider Electric works to couple the physical sale and the digital sale, so the customers get a direct advantage. This facilitates structuring the overview for the broad and complex business. This means the company is not only on the market with direct sales, but it also uses partners and distributors.

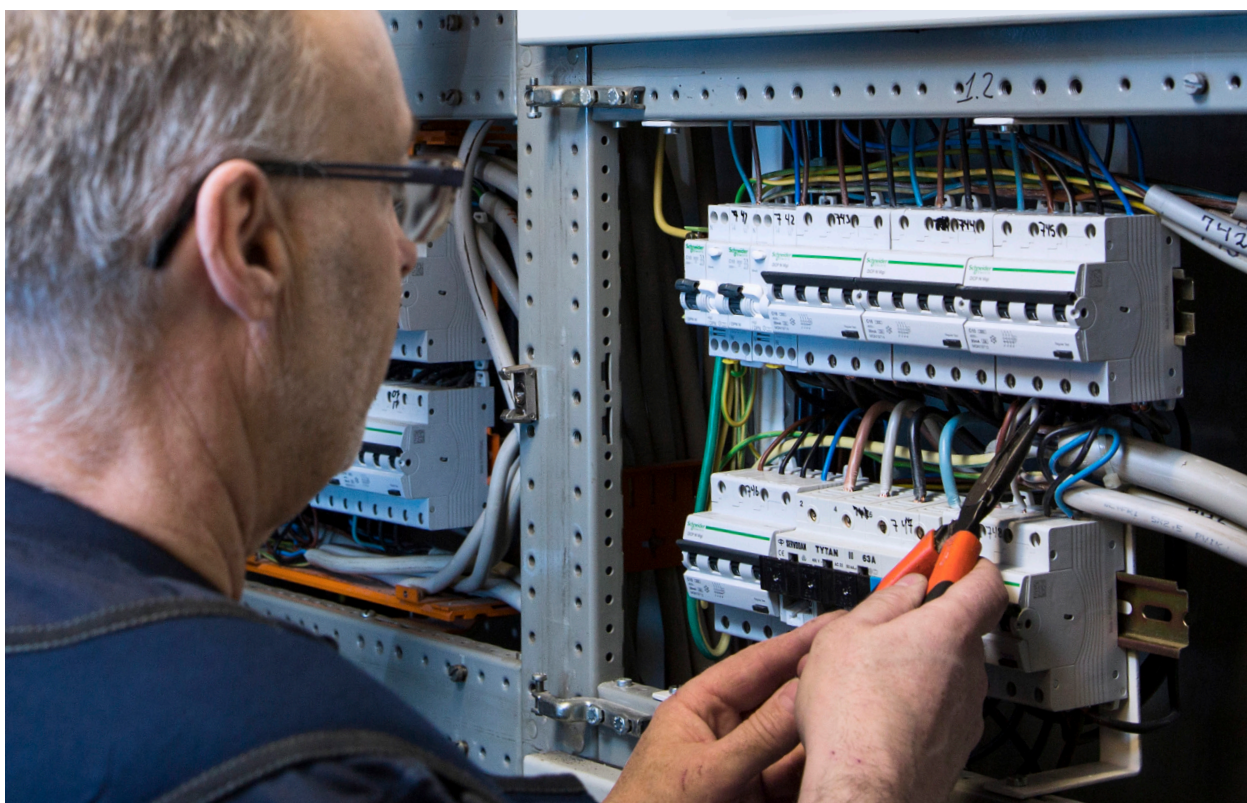
According to Tina Schou, the possibilities of the Internet of Things (IoT) have meant that the company has got greater clarity as to where the products end – which also gives a greater knowledge about the end-customers. Thereby the company can better meet the need for services, and this gives them an opportunity to collate all the information and see how products and solutions are used in the real world:

“When we know our end-customers, their needs and their patterns, we can help them better. That means we are trusted advisors both in sales and service,” says Tina Schou.

She explains that the many digital opportunities – including IoT – mean that Schneider Electric's complex business can appear simpler in the future: It will become easier for the customers to understand the company's range of offers when they have a need. And at the same time it will be easier for the company's employees to link solution and service together with other areas in the organisation because everyone has the possibility of drawing on the same knowledge.

And when everyone can draw on so much knowledge, it gives the company a far greater opportunity for cross-selling.

“We are all involved in creating a customer preference and on the background of that preference we make new sales. That is the nerve of the whole of our business.



The company is not good enough at getting payment for the value it creates

Companies live off the values they sell to their customers. Therefore it is precisely the term 'value' that is completely essential to your company. But the research results show that the majority of Danish companies do not work continuously with creating greater and clearer value for their customers. There is therefore a burning necessity for working systematically with value creation and establishing a common understanding of the term. This is a prerequisite for your company being able to make values visible – and get paid for it.

What should your company do?

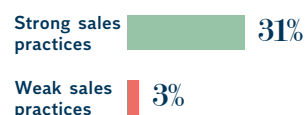
- Make evident the differences between your own company and your competitors, so it will be clearer where you create value for the customers.
- The term 'value' can be unfolded in many different ways – by both the seller and the buyer – and it is up to the management to choose precisely the method that is meaningful for the company.
- If your company is to assess whether the value's benefits can be realised and demonstrate this to customers, you should clarify which parameters you are measuring and which benchmarks you are using for comparisons.

Forskningsresultater:

11%

say they set the price in accordance with the true value created for the customers.

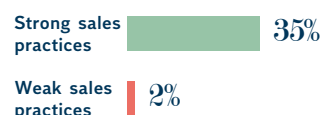
Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:

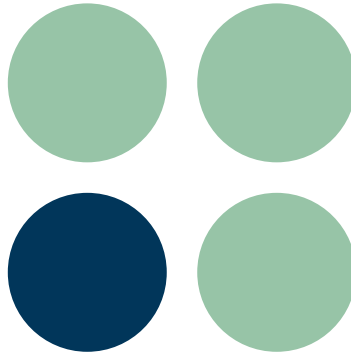


13%

measure whether the products/services create added value for the customers.

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:

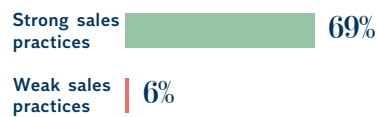




Every 4th

Say that in the sales department they agree how they understand the term 'value' in relation to specific

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:



Checklist for your company

- ✓ Do we have a common picture across the internal functions of what the customers experience as valuable?
- ✓ Have we formulated ambitions for the experiences customers are to have that make visible and flesh out the value that we supply?
- ✓ Have we thoroughly studied the needs of all stakeholders at our customers – across the customers' journey with us?
- ✓ Can customers formulate a clear difference between us and our competitors, where the value is most important for the various stakeholders?

#5 sales virtue

If you can answer "Yes" to the questions in the checklist, your business probably lives up to the sales virtue:

We make manifest and get payment for the value we create.

Unidrain uncovers customer needs in the whole value chain

The customer image has changed markedly for Unidrain A/S in recent years – and that makes demands on the way the sales organisation approaches the customers if the company is to create value. For Unidrain the key in this process has been needs analysis.

For Unidrain, a company that develops design solutions in the area of floor drains, you can't say sale without also saying needs analysis. In the most recent five to six years alone, the company has seen its sales and customer image become more fragmented – and if the company is to create value for all types of customer, the needs must be uncovered, says Henrik Handschuh, Unidrain's managing director.

“It's become more difficult to talk about the customer in the singular. Although we sell through a wholesaler, we must today focus on several different types of end-customer, who must know us and know what values we

give. And here it is absolutely vital that we are able to speak to all types of stakeholders and in all aspects of the sales process,” he says.

“We must communicate to the whole value chain,” he adds. “For us an end-customer can be a hotel on Funen. But it could also be the firm of architects in Copenhagen that has designed the hotel. And it could also be the construction company from Jutland building the hotel. In this way the customer image is diffuse. And that means simply that it is enormously important that we uncover everyone's needs in our sales work if we are to be relevant.”

New demands to sales

The need to be relevant for the customers in the whole value chain is something that Unidrain is also aware of directly at the customers. Increasingly they demand that the sales people have familiarised themselves with the customer's specific needs and that the sales people can also function as sparring partners:

“The customers are not interested in sales people who drop by with a gimmick and a handful of products. They expect the sales people to have acquainted themselves with the customer's issues and that the sales people can be professionally competent sparring partners. For one thing that means we must be in a position to give advice beyond our own product, if that is the right thing to do in the situation,” says Henrik Handschuh. He explains that Unidrain's focus on uncovering the needs of all types of customer seems to have had a positive effect on the company's bottom line:

“Because the sales process has so many links, it is difficult for us to get data on where a sale comes from. But in terms of turnover, things are going really well for our company, and that can also be attributed to our advice and the work of the sales people towards our customers,” he says.

“We must communicate to the whole value chain. For us an end-customer can be a hotel on Funen. But it could also be the firm of architects in Copenhagen that has designed the hotel.



The resources in the sales process are insufficiently exploited

If the sales process in your company is to be strengthened and meet its full potential, it is a requirement that the sales resources are used optimally. However, there are many indications in the research results that this is not always the case, and this points at the need to scrutinise the use of resources in the sales process.

What should your company do?

- The sales organisation should think differentiation into both its planning and allocation of resources – so the diversity and complexity of the customers can be reflected better.
- There is a great potential in increasing the value of sales visits. The company should therefore create concrete objectives for both the company's and the customers' benefit from the sales visits.
- You should incorporate governance-like structures and processes in the sales organisation so the basis for decisions becomes clearer and easier to communicate. Clear processes will also be able to create more strength in selling.

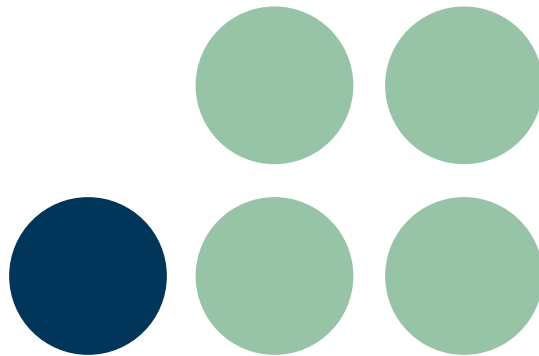
Research results:

27%

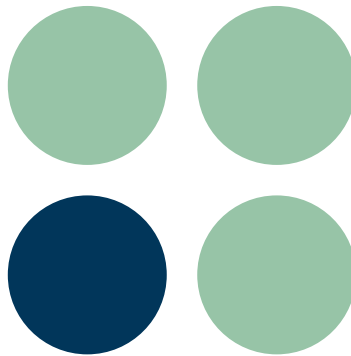
believe they are good at maintaining their turnover from existing customers.

64%

say they cannot make decisions on their own at customers meetings.



Fewer than
Every 5th
say they are good at acquiring customer



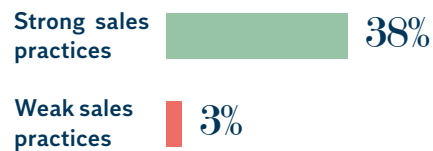
Fewer than
Every 4th
believe they are good at selling more to
existing customers.

#6 sales challenge

12%

believe they get a lot out of all sales visits.

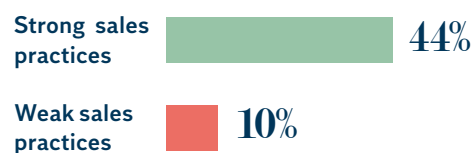
Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:



21%

say they use most energy on customers with the greatest potential.

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:



Checklist for your company

- ✓ Do we prioritise how the resources are distributed between selling to existing customers and selling to new customers?
- ✓ Do we differentiate the efforts towards our different types of customer?
- ✓ Do we use differentiated KPIs depending on customer type and employee profile?
- ✓ Can the sales department's priorities be coupled directly to our company's strategic ambitions and objectives?
- ✓ Do we adjust our sales approach and sales process periodically?
- ✓ Do we have clear pictures of the customers' stakeholders and functions in the customers' purchasing functions and do we have the resources to match these?

#6 sales virtue

If you can answer "Yes" to the questions in the checklist, your business probably lives up to the sales virtue:

Our sales resources are closely related to the company's strategic goals, and the individual profiles and resources in the sales organisation are measured on their individual contributions to these goals.

Proven sales-supporting technologies are not exploited sufficiently

Digital tools have long been on the agenda in logistics, purchasing and finance, less so in sales. And where digitalisation entered many B2C markets long ago, the research results show its inclusion in B2B companies' sales practices has yet to occur.

This is problematic as it is precisely digital sales-supporting tools that can provide the sales organisation with relevant data and analyses, enabling the company to take proactive and value-generating actions towards the customers – and which enable the company to analyse whether profitable decisions are made.

What should your company do?

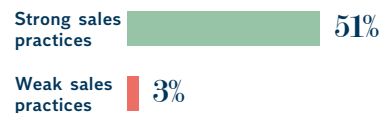
- Digitalisation's possibilities in relation to sales practices must be incorporated more to create value for customers. Many customers still wish to continue the direct personal relationship with their most important suppliers. Digitalisation should therefore be used to strengthen the starting point for the human interaction that is still necessary for being proactive and managing challenges in the often-complex trading patterns on the market.

Research results:

20%

say that all relevant employees in the company at any time can inform customers about ongoing work.

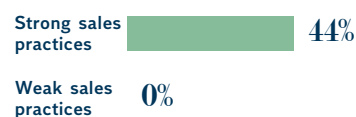
Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:



14%

say they are proactive towards customers because they have relevant knowledge about them in their IT systems.

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:

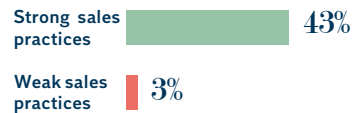


- You should digitalise your touch-points with the customers, as this can contribute to a strengthened formalisation of the internal collaboration that the customers expect.
- To ensure a good starting point for sharing and using data, you should make CRM and data recording a requirement for sales people and other employees with direct customer contact.

15%

believe that the sales department has good tools for assessing whether the department takes profitable decisions.

Among companies with strong sales practices and weak sales practices, the responses are:



Checklist for your company

- ✓ Is your data recording discipline sufficiently high for us to use data in the dialogue with our customers?
- ✓ Do we know in concrete terms which data are relevant for our internal functions to create clear value for the customers and articulate the possibilities of upselling?
- ✓ Do all internal functions with customer contact have access to all relevant insight on the customers they are in contact with?
- ✓ Are we better than our competitors at using data on customers in customer-oriented functions?
- ✓ Do we use insight on customers and the market in a way that creates clear value for the customers?

#7 sales virtue

If you can answer "Yes" to the questions in the checklist, your business probably lives up to the sales virtue:

We are better than our competitors in using internal data on customers and markets to support our customer-oriented functions and create clear value for customers.

Digital tools bring new opportunities to Solar

At Solar A/S digitalisation has clearly made its mark. The company has developed a number of digital tools that provide new knowledge on customers – and new opportunities for using sales work to differentiate the company from its competitors.

Digitalisation has been a key word for the sourcing and service company Solar in recent years. Previously, the company's selling activities occurred primarily face to face, but as digital technologies developed the company experienced a need to move the business to digital platforms. Today over half of the company's annual turnover comes from digital platforms – and that has changed the company's sales process.

According to Claus Sejr, Director of Strategy Execution at Solar, it was necessary for the company to turn to digital solutions. And that has been successful, he says:

“We have invested many resources in adapting to digitalisation, which implies, among other things, that we

have a website, a webshop, a mobile solution and a number of digital solutions that our customers can integrate into their own systems.

But what has been especially successful for us is mainly that we have managed to combine value-creating services with our digital solutions,” he says.

Digital platforms give new knowledge on customers

Digitalisation at Solar has two pillars: One is to enable customers to access products and services online at Solar more easily and effectively, while the other is about enabling Solar to use digital tools to extract various data about customers. The data makes it possible to analyse customers' purchasing patterns, ultimately enabling Solar to create more value for the customer.

“We work with big data where we gather data from all our platforms and try to crystallise what happens digitally. We can give these inputs to our sales people who can use them when meeting customers. We also use the data to assess which customers are ready to purchase and which aren't – and thus where an extra effort is needed,” says Claus Sejr.

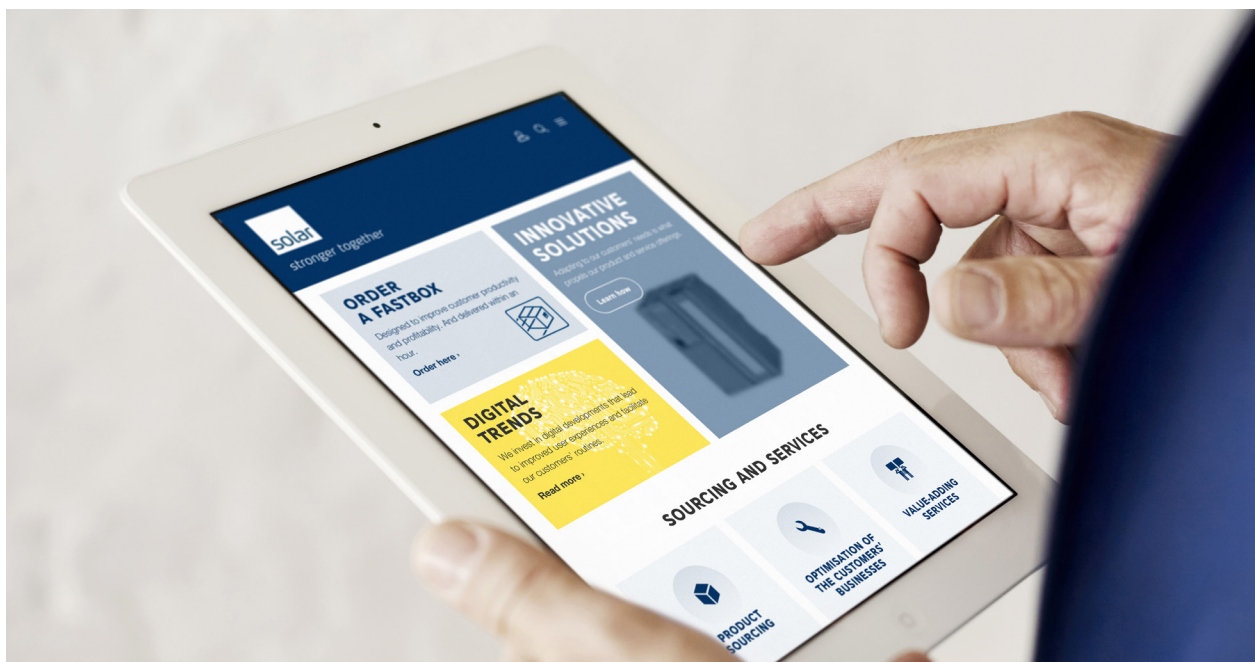
Digital selling must be given a face

Although the day-to-day business at Solar primarily takes place online, there is still a great need for the sales people's customer dialogue and understanding:

“For the customers, the digital reality has a negative aspect – they often lack advice in the wide landscape of opportunities with high complexity. 'What is the best solution for us?' they ask themselves and that's where the sales process can play a decisive role. But that means we must understand that selling has changed,” says Claus Sejr. He continues:

“Selling is no longer transactional, rather it's 'sense-making'. We therefore train our sales people in creating commercial sense and understanding for the customers among their many alternatives. If the customers, with our help, can manage to work in the right way digitally with their purchasing and logistics, then they'll be more effective and productive, which will make them more competitive – and that makes Solar a beneficial partner for them.”

“We have invested time and money in digital legwork so we can now act on an informed basis in our sales work and make profitable decisions.





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