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The Workforce of the Future: The Force Awakens in 2016

HELLO . . . ! We're back with our annual trend report, and the theme for 2016 is all about building the Workforce for the Future. No, that doesn't mean building your own AI Butlers or Pepper Robots. Nah, we sales humans are much more interesting than that. In fact, this is the first time in history when five generations are working together side by side. These multi-cultural, multi-generational, multi-sexual, and multi-talented tribes all want to share the stage. Managing and growing this talent is central to the long-term success of business and the Internet of Things Economy.

At [TeleSmart](#), we are proud to be entering our eleventh year of trend spotting, and making our #SmartSelling innovative sales predictions for the future. Did I mention that 99% of the time, we are scary-right? [Just check out our forecasts from 2005 to 2016.](#)

As everyone continues to Build Faster, Stay Smarter, and Lead Better, inside sales continues to invigorate sales organizations and grow at a steady clip of 300% per year.

1. Field Sales Is Looking Inside

Remember the time when ambitious inside sales people wanted a direct career path to the field? Well, now the field is trading in their frequent flyer miles, learning how to use their CRM, and knocking at our sales door. In 2016 an increasing number of sales organizations will opt to transition some of their field reps to inside sales roles.



No surprise there: We already have 54.4% in inside sales versus 45.5% in field sales. By 2020 there will be over 6 million inside and field salespeople in the US – and the vast majority will be inside sales.

2. Digital Tech Will Replace Some B2B Salespeople

Today's educated and independent buyers research expensive products through websites, algorithms, and other services online. They buy on their own terms and continue to disrupt the sales cycle. Guess what? They don't really need salespeople. Forrester forecasts that 1 million B2B salespeople will lose their jobs to self-service eCommerce by the year 2020.

Don't get too comfortable doing your routine-based, repetitive, and rules-based "high touch" sales job – it won't be long until a cute little automated robot will step in and take your place. Mobile and web-based apps are being developed for more and more applications, and a transition from people-based sales to digital technology is already taking place. You might need to make room for virtual armies of bots working in inside sales centers.

3. Talent Growth Will Be Exponential, not Linear

Salespeople already know that the average employee tenure has dropped from five to seven years down to two to three years. Talent is in demand—but where's the supply? As the very nature of employment keeps changing, and talent wars continue to rage, it's important to think exponentially about talent rather than linearly.

Think: What will the job look like in the next three months? What about the next three years? Job descriptions will need to be revised because when they are not, you create a major "role corruption" that impacts productivity and expectations.

4. True Authority Will Be Defined by Merit, not Position

Some people are having trouble keeping up with our fast-changing world, including some managers who believe job title is everything. There is a huge shortage of leaders who know how to inspire, manage, and lead in a fast-changing global environment.

Instead of building hierarchies and reporting channels and monitoring inside sales teams, effective managers must foster connection, education, and growth



and help their teams navigate through the tough times. Redefining leadership is about initiative, judgment, values and personal responsibility.

This year, merit, not position or structure, will define true authority. Leaders will increasingly rotate, sharing responsibility with others depending on the task.

5. Reap the Benefits of the Longevity Boom

A whopping 40% of the massive Boomer workforce is planning to retire. But this group of 78 million strong, who still have a youthful image of themselves, are not going to disappear quietly. They have no plans to slow down. They are not just going to live longer, they are determined to live better.

The over-50 market is now 100 million people strong, and that means a longevity boom with real power. They control 80% of the US aggregate net worth, and are responsible for propelling economic growth. Companies that can help them live the way they want to live, even as they age, will reap the benefits.

6. Millennial Managers Will Grow Up

Millennials are next in line to lead, and they are ready. Their style is transformational versus autocratic, which is good news: they don't want to be in a leadership position for the power; instead, they choose to "empower others to succeed." But the bad news is they are still being misunderstood. And no matter how compassionate they are, they fall short when it comes to technical expertise and influence.

Millennials want to flatten hierarchies, do meaningful work and force companies to make an impact on society. This is starting now, and will continue.

7. Here Comes Gen Z – Watch Out for the M2s

Watch your back, Millennials: Gen Z, also called M2 – teens and tweens born between 1994 and 2010 – will enter the workforce this year, and they are primed to become the dominant youth influencers of tomorrow. They are jaded because of the 2000 and 2008 economic crashes, suffer from excruciating student loans, and they are the first generation to be raised in the era of smartphones.

They are extremely entrepreneurial, loyal, flexible and realistic in their approach to careers. They live in an era of Snapchat, emoji, and 6-second Vine videos. They want it fast and they want it now.



8. Productivity Will Depend on a Cross-Gen Cohort

With so many generations in the workplace, the walls are crumbling. The traditional age and generational antagonism is dead. Instead, we're now building tribes with similar passions. This will create a landscape of productivity and collaboration instead that works far better than the old atmosphere of skirmishes across the generational divide.

9. Sales and Marketing Still Can't Avoid the No-Po's

The No-Po's haven't left the building. They still are still timewasters with **no power** and **no potential** and they will never provide you with a **purchase order**. They are voracious information and data hounds – that's their job. They hit every white paper and webinar on the site, so lead-scoring market them as serious prospects and potential to buy.

The marketing organization pressures the sales department to follow up on leads as quickly as possible, so the scored leads get priority attention. When nobody stops to question why they are downloading so much material – and few do – the No-Po passes through the gates and infiltrates the process. They are like whack-a-moles: as soon as you eliminate one, another pops up to take their place.

The lack of organization and qualification, combined with the speed in which hand-off must happen, make it easy for the No-Po to effectively travel through a direct B2B sales organization. In 2016, with competition so fierce, we need to raise our No-Po awareness more than ever.

10. Distance Is Officially Dead

Everyone's working remotely. Salespeople are already attending sales meetings and sales kick-offs via conference phone and Skype. Now they will make the personal virtual. More and more raw video content will provide an uncensored look into the inner workings of brands. People still want hybrid experiences, and that's what augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) will do.

The doors are opening for innovation, immersive work experiences, and adventures. It won't be long before salespeople will experience "a day in the life" of another person from the past to the future.



11. The Gig Economy Rules

Seems like everyone has a side-gig these days, whether it's as an Uber or Lyft driver, an Airbnb host, or a TaskRabbit. It's not so much for the money as much as it is to gain more control over their lives and have flexibility. By 2020, about 40% of Americans will be part of the Gig Economy. With the rise of freelancing and access to technology, freelance workers already 53 million strong will continue to grow.

The world will be dominated by contract workers, fluid teams, human-centered work, and generally blurred work-life boundaries. These contract workers will overtake the single-employer workforce by 2040. Businesses will consist of owners, talent assemblers, and contract workers for everything else. Contractors will get instantly matched with talent assemblers.

12. Stealing Micro-moments While Doing Something Else

Short attention span buyers shop in spare moments, search while on the go, and buy on a break by picking up their mobile phone. They make decisions instinctively and focus on solving a specific need at a particular time and place. They do this whenever they have a “micro-moment” of time, often while doing something else. Salespeople will need to take advantage of these multitaskers—seize the moment to sell!

13. As Space Is Shrinking, Workspaces Are Popping Up Everywhere

Inside sales has always worked in their own protective bubble where everyone has their assigned space but that's about to change. As collaboration technologies, generational preferences, globalization, and employee desire for work-life balance increase, the office is becoming more decentralized. The amount of office space per employee is shrinking from 400 square feet to 150 square feet.

But as more people work remotely, they will mainly use the office for team gatherings. Others will choose to work...wherever. Some employees work better in cubicles and others work better in a lounge or cafeteria. As long as it is distraction-free. Pop-up work spaces – temporary venues designed to be quickly deployed and host short-term retail experiences or cultural events – will be much more common.



14. Shifting from Work-Life Balance to Work-Life Integration

No More Working from 9-5. The 40-hour workweek is a thing of the past because we bring our work lives home and our personal lives to work. With the rise of telecommuting, co-working spaces, globalization and new technology tools, workers are demanding more flexible work environments.

We are seeing the emergence of a landscape in which people are reframing the entire meaning of work, exploring careers across different disciplines and functional areas, embracing their creative and entrepreneurial spirits, and finding what they are passionate about. The increased complexity, ambiguity, and volatility in business coupled with shifting employee values are causing career paths to unfold in unexpected ways.

They are also demanding that their worlds become seamlessly integrated. This helps them adapt to the rapidly merging landscapes of education, life, work and play. Metrics will be based on desirables and outcomes rather than fixed time and efforts.

15. MOOCs Find Their Way in Corporate Sales Training

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have contributed to an educational reform. This way of learning lets students participate on their own terms via the Internet. On-site corporate sales training will always provide team building and cohesive opportunities but the real learning may happen online.

The self-paced eLearning market is expected to reach \$49.9 billion this year. The online corporate training market is expected to grow by 13% this year. Watch my [Lynda.com](#) course launch Summer of 2016 .

16. Mobile Apps Addiction to Increase

Today there are 1.8 billion worldwide smartphone users and 280 million of these launch apps 60 times more per day. The Future of Intelligent Selling is about smartphone ownership and app usage because customers want to meet on their mobile turf with real-time experiences.

The explosive growth in mobile will continue as more will switch from desktop computers to mobile devices. At this point, any business that fails to take advantage of the mobile landscape is truly doing itself a disservice. Now is the



time to harness the opportunities afforded by mobile commerce — and reap the rewards!

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