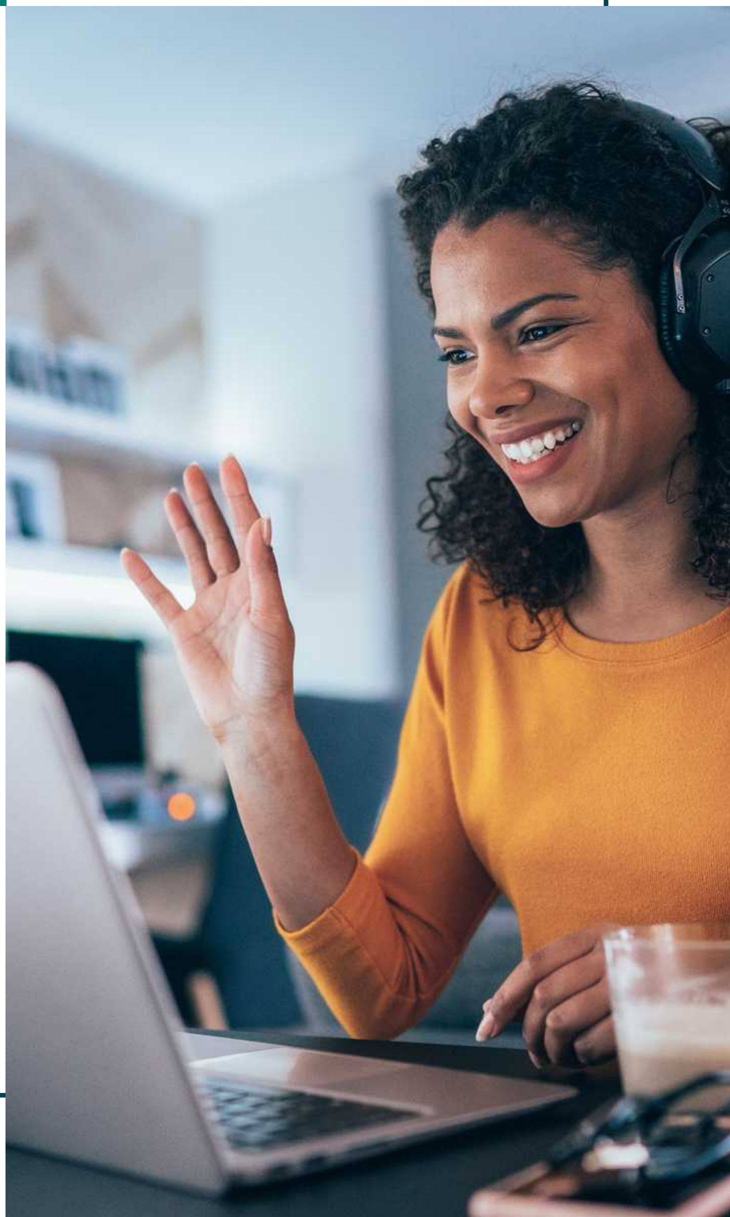
Top Ten Tips for Virtual Sales

How to Create a Successful Strategy for Online Sales Meetings



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How are you getting on with the shift to virtual sales meetings?

For many of us, logging on to Zoom, Teams or other remote meeting platforms has become part of our daily routine and our sales activities.

According to McKinsey, Covid-19 has changed B2B sales forever:

"70-80% of B2B decision makers say that they prefer remote human interactions or digital self-service (vs in person meetings). Why? Ease of scheduling, savings on travel expenses and safety. Only about 20% of B2B buyers say they hope to return to in-person sales. This is even in sectors where field sales have dominated, such as the pharmaceutical industry."

This is also reflected in the rise of virtual selling opportunities, from online pitching events to a flood of new solutions designed at making our virtual, work-from-home office lives easier.

So, as virtual sales meetings are probably here to stay (like it or not!), we've put together our ten top tips to help you win more business and grow great relationships.

1. Get Zoom Ready

Online meeting platforms such as Zoom can be tricky to get used to. There's a lag effect, which means the conversation is less fluid than in a face-to-face setting. Interacting in this way can get very tiring and according to a recent BBC report:

"Delays on phone or conferencing systems of 1.2 seconds made people perceive the responder as less friendly or focused."

This means that we may have to work doubly hard to build rapport compared with an informal meeting over a coffee.

Maximise your chances of sales success by getting prepared for selling in a virtual meeting – run through the following checklist before you start.

- Make sure your webcam is working and is ideally HD (you can get good USB webcams from around £35).
- Check your sound settings on your PC or laptop – if they're low then invest in a secondary microphone.
- Spend some time positioning your webcam properly and looking at your backdrop. It should ideally be well lit and not too distracting, and your whole face should be visible – but not too close!
- Spend some time getting used to the video platform settings and doing a 'dummy' meeting before the real thing, so you don't feel flustered during the meeting itself.

2. Sales Preparation for Success

Seeing yourself on screen can be really stressful, according to the BBC:

"When you're on a video conference, you know everybody's looking at you; you are on stage, so there comes the social pressure and feeling like you need to perform. Being performative is nerve-wracking and more stressful."

Firstly, we highly recommend turning off the 'self view' if you can so that you're less distracted by seeing yourself and more focused on the other people in the meeting. We also recommend you do the following before every sales meeting starts:

- Get your pitch deck or key information about your services ready to present in case you need to.
- Practise speaking to the camera dot and not the screen. Also practise using your hands like you would in a usual face-to-face meeting and ensure they're visible on screen. Try and avoid touching your face or hair too much and definitely do not check your phone halfway through!
- Prepare a meeting agenda and cover this off in your introduction so everyone knows where they stand.
- Spend time researching the person and the business you're speaking to, finding out their latest news (social platforms are often more up to date than websites) and preparing some questions (see below for suggestions).
- Practise SMILING and showing your enthusiasm. Positive facial expressions can go a long way to building rapport, particularly at the beginning of the meeting.

3. Lead Your Sales Meetings with Vision and Purpose

As a purpose-driven or ethical business you have a unique opportunity to get across your mission and vision for the future.

If you can take your prospective customers or clients on a journey with you then they're much more likely to buy into what you're selling or proposing. Here are a few tips for how to do this:

- Take time to really listen and be curious – if you come away from a meeting with very little idea of what your prospect's challenges are or what they are trying to achieve then you've not asked enough questions.
- Tell a relevant story. This could be your founder story or a recent story about client work you've done. Focus on the change that occurred and the outcome.
- Share your mission statement, key values or vision for your business. Don't assume they will know this because they've looked on your website etc.
- Show your passion, enthusiasm and excitement for a) your prospect's business and products or services and b) your own business mission.

Take your prospective clients or customers with you by building a shared experience. Help them to feel part of your team and business and show them that you want them to succeed by helping them.

Provide some useful advice, give honest feedback and be open with your expertise. This will demonstrate that you're the expert in your field and that you're confident in what you're proposing.

Share your networks or add value. If you uncover a need that you know you cannot help with, be generous by sharing some possible solutions (if you know of any) and offer to make introductions to trusted people in your networks. Referrals always work in your favour in the long run.

4. Best Ice Breakers for Sales Meetings

The start of any meeting can be the hardest, particularly if you've never met the person or people before. It can really help to have some friendly conversation starters or opening questions to get the meeting started on a positive note.

- How are you?
- How's your day going so far?
- I saw on *LinkedIn/Instagram/Twitter* that you have a *new dog/team member/funding round/promotion/premises,* that's *fantastic/congratulations/how's it going/can you tell me more about this*?
- How are you finding remote working/how are you finding the return to the office post-Covid?

If you're still struggling, have a think about some conversation starters based around these themes:

  - Find a reason to give some praise or congratulations
  - Find a source of common ground between you
  - Talk about current or newsworthy events

5. Best Open Questions to Ask: First or Introductory Meetings

It's worth remembering that, whether it's a first sales call or introductory meeting, it's highly unlikely you'll 'close the deal' in that first interaction.

Take the pressure off by preparing for this first meeting in an appropriate way: focus on building rapport, finding common ground and discovering if there are indeed synergies between you that could lead to a possible future relationship.

Here are a few open questions to consider asking during this introductory meeting:

- How is business for you?
- Out of interest, how did you hear about us? (relevant for incoming enquiries only)
- What challenges are you currently facing/what keeps you awake at night?
- Can you tell me more about the top three challenges you are experiencing this year?
- What are your key priorities for this *quarter/six months/year*?
- I'd love to find out more about your approach to X *(their current product or service needs)* if you could tell me more about it?
- Are you considering or talking to any other providers for X? *(their current product or service needs)*
- Can you tell me more about how you make decisions to bring on new *suppliers/partners/contracts* in X (*their current product or service needs)*?
- What's the timeline for this?
- What would success look like?
- Who are you working with to achieve this?
- What's your role in the project?
- When do you need to get started?
- When do you need to see results?
- What do you *need from me/how can I help*?
- We've agreed to check in again on X date, in the meantime can we stay in touch by adding you to our newsletter?

B2B decision makers globally say that online and remote selling is as effective as in-person engagement, or even more so.

MCKINSEY RESEARCH, OCTOBER 2020

7. Best Next Steps or Moving Forward Questions to Ask

Sometimes meetings can get ‘stuck’ and they go round in circles. Here are a few questions to consider if you’re finding it difficult to get the final decision or an agreement for how to move forward:

- What happens next?
- I think we’re nearly out of time – where shall we go from here?
- What do you need from us in order to move forward with X? (product or service need)
- We've been *playing phone tag/had a few meetings now* but we've not yet reached an agreement. Am I right in assuming this isn't a priority for your business at the moment?

8. Follow Up

It’s really important to follow up immediately from a sales meeting, at the very least within 24 hours of the meeting to stay fresh in your mind and theirs.

We'd recommend sending a brief summary of what was discussed and any proposals or product information that was agreed upon.

9. Stay Connected to Build Relationships

We can forget to stay connected in today’s world, as we’re so busy and moving onto the next meeting or project. But staying connected in sales is a huge part of building long-term relationships.

We highly recommend you dedicate enough time to connecting with your warm contacts and prospective clients. Here's a few ideas for you to try when following up:

- Responding and commenting to their posts on LinkedIn
- Sending update emails with useful new information (the focus here is adding value and staying front of mind, not selling).
- Get on the phone for a friendly check in if you haven’t heard back from your initial follow up (use some of the suggested questions above).
- Ask if you can add them to your regular newsletter.

Make sure you use use a pipeline management system or a simple Google/Excel sheet to track progress and set reminders for follow ups.

10. Keep Going for Sales Success!

It’s worth noting that it can take time to secure a new customer or client. You’ll most likely need to be gently persistent after that first introductory meeting or follow-up email.

Use the staying in touch tactics above to help keep front of mind and don’t forget to ask for the sale directly when you get the opportunity. You'll enjoy your fair share of 'yeses' but even a ‘no’ is useful as it gives you the opportunity to ask the question ‘why?’, which is hugely valuable.

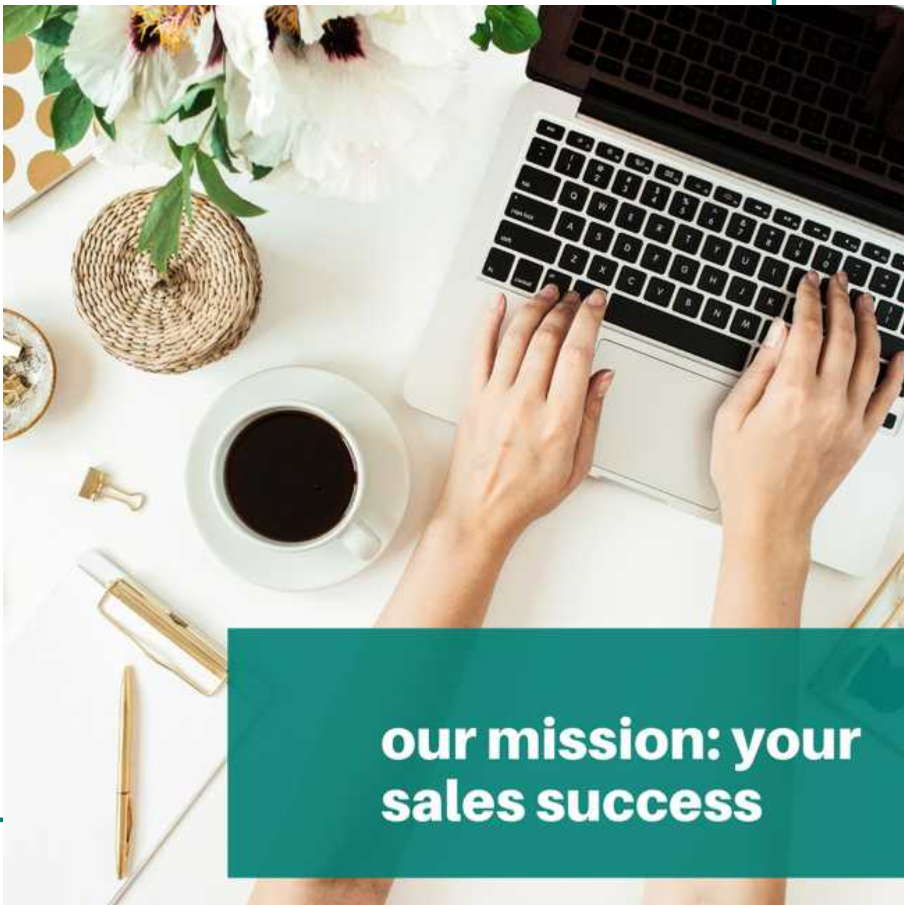
Our team of at Ethical Sales is highly experienced in a wide range of virtual sales techniques and strategies. Our sales activities are rooted in meaning and purpose, ensuring that we stay true to our clients ethical values. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss your current sales challenges with the team.

Further Reading

8 Top Tips for Improving Your Body Language During Virtual Calls

26 Closing Phrases To Seal a Deal in 2021

How to Make Virtual Sales Meetings More Engaging and Memorable



Ethical Sales

Do you need to improve your sales pipeline, enter new markets or secure valuable partners while staying true to your ethical values?

We are B2B sales specialists for purpose-driven business. We're proud to be the world's first 'ethical' sales agency and work exclusively with purpose-driven businesses all over the globe. A pending B Corp, we aim to demystify sales by sharing free sales resources and best practice examples from the natural, organic and green market sectors.

We can help you to:

- Grow your customer base with bespoke and targeted sales campaigns.
- Set growth goals and create practical sales roadmaps that work.
- Gain insight and support at Sales Director-level when you need it most.

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