

## Technology Simplifies the Sales Process

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Technology is pervasive in our lives. CNN reported that we spend more than 10 hours a day in front of a computer screen. That doesn't take coffee makers, fitness trackers, and most recently devices like Alexa. Yet all this technology will never replace human interaction. Technology requires people to operate and interact with it. More important, regardless of the technology, people still crave interaction with other people, especially when it comes to sales.

Technology simplifies life by putting virtually everything on autopilot – your stove, CrockPot® and oven, automatic sprinklers, door locks, lights, and bathrooms faucets – at home, work, and on the go. Even airplanes have autopilot that lets planes fly themselves. But, all this technology still requires people to control it, change it or interact with it. This is especially true with technology in fast food sales, a model some say other industries should emulate.

A digital cash register provides the cashier with a menu of options. When complete the order is sent to a screen for the cook and a receipt prints ensuring every item is complete. Each step of the process requires people – a customer, cashier, cook, and server. Customers ask questions or discuss options and cashiers provide information that helps the cook prepare food exactly the way the customer wants it, and it's served. Technology simplifies the process.

Most sales, however, are more complex than eating at a fast food restaurant. Many larger purchases like cars and homes are an investment. Technology simplifies the process and helps consumers prepare to make a decision before they talk to a salesperson. Most consumers today spend hours researching online, talking to friends, reading, checking pricing and financing options, and more. While this speeds the process, it doesn't replace the human interaction.

For example, an article in *USA Today* reported findings from a study on car buying behavior. It showed that consumers spend an average of 16.7 hours researching their next new car online and that despite this research, “84% of women and millennial consumers want to buy their car in person.” Why? They want human interaction, “to see, touch and experience the vehicle...to talk to experts to learn more about the product they intend to purchase.”

There are clear messages here for salespeople.

- First, there is value in investing in mobile apps and digital tools, processes that speed and smooth the final transaction steps. Digital marketing, blogs, social media, and easily navigated mobile-friendly websites are essential in delivering information directly to consumers. While technology will never replace personal interaction – a phone call, hand-written thank you card – the study concludes that a good online experience will bring buyers into a business more often. Additionally, in-house technology that provide traffic counts, automatically collects customer data, creates reports and provides analysis, is important in driving your improvements.
- Second, continually educating salespeople as experts is vital, in finding the right balance between technology and human interaction. Businesses must constantly develop the product and service expertise of their salespeople while continually training and educating them on basic sales processes; ways to better interact with customers, and the right way to enhance the customer experience through technology.

Over-using technology dehumanizes the sales process, which in almost every case is a deeply human and emotional experience. This means never losing sight of your most valuable assets: salespeople, customers and the human relationship that binds them together.



**Richard F. Libin** has written two acclaimed books that help people of all walks of life improve their sales skills, because as he says, “everyone is a selling something.” His most recent book, *Who Knew?* ([Who-Knew.com](http://Who-Knew.com)), was published in early 2017. His first book, “*Who Stopped the Sale?*” ([WhoStoppedTheSale.com](http://WhoStoppedTheSale.com)), is now in its second edition. As president of APB-Automotive Profit Builders, Inc., a firm with more than 48 years experience working with both sales and service professionals, he helps his clientele, through personnel development and technology, to build customer satisfaction and maximize gross profits in their businesses. Mr. Libin can be reached at [rlibin@apb.cc](mailto:rlibin@apb.cc) or 508-626-9200 or [www.apb.cc](http://www.apb.cc).