

Executive Summary - Digital Sales & Marketing in Chemicals - Terry Kaufman

[Episode Replay](#) - July 19, 2022 10 am ET

[Executive Roundtable for Materials Growth](#)

Hosted by: [Growth Arc Advisors LLC](#)

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Related White Paper: [Going Digital - Why the Materials Industry Struggles](#)

Summary

Terry Kaufman has spent 10 years in Digital Sales and Marketing, first as Avient's digital marketing Sr. manager, and subsequently as Director Inside Sales. His love for the topic was ignited early in his career, and he has spent time on both sides of the fence, building a digital ecosystem (including CRM, data structure, web and marketing automation) in Marketing, and then becoming a consumer of that same system in Sales. He has witnessed dramatic change in the field during that time.

Two major themes he sees are the geometric increase in digital sales interactions, and the rise of data analytics and data-driven decision making. He sees a rising proportion of customer decision makers and influencers from the millennial generation. Being digital natives, they often prefer and even demand digital channels for their interactions with suppliers. The significant increase in digital interactions means that there is a significant uptick in the amount of data available from those interactions, and this has demanded an increase in data analytics skills, with a concurrent increase in the use of data to drive decision making.

The challenging future ahead is one where digital presence and fluency are mandates and are necessary to maintain competitive advantage. Given the current and projected demand to use digital channels, those players who are slow to compliment existing operations now face obsolescence.

Digital (Inside) Sales

Avient's model has shifted from a business-unit alignment to a consolidated corporate group serving all business units. This structure requires partnerships with the BU that are critical to the success of the group.

Terry emphasized the need to operate in a "digital first" mode with IT systems and corresponding sales processes being designed around the technology. The sell is more closely aligned to the customer problem or pain point rather than a solutions-first approach, which changes the focus of the first part of the sales interaction. Additionally, with the wealth of information available digitally, reps need to operate in a mode of helping customers make sense of the information rather than solely as a provider of that information.

Keys to Success of Digital Sales & Marketing

Terry highlighted 4 key issues that he believes are critical to success of any digital sales & marketing effort.

1. **Alignment** - clear expectations and roles between marketing, inside sales and traditional field sales is crucial to proactively manage conflicts and issues. A silo'd or "throw it over the fence" culture won't succeed.
2. **Exploiting data** - the wealth of data available is an opportunity to gain customer insight, but only if it's analyzed and actioned. This requires an increase in data analytics capability and an institutionalization of data-based sales management.
3. **Digital Skills + Selling Skills** - While selling skills remain core, the need to augment those with digital skills (systems, analytics, social selling, and comfort with data-based management) becomes crucial.
4. **Codified systems** - where many organizations in the past, may have relied on individual knowledge, craft and practice to materialize a strong selling organization, IT systems cannot be overlayed against systems and processes that don't exist and are not well-understood by everyone. In order to adopt technology, the required level of explicit codification of systems increases.

Technology Stack

The Marketing Technology (martech) space continues to grow at an astonishing rate, making it hard to keep up with change. Currently over 9000 solutions exist across 6 major solution categories and 49 sub-categories, up 25% from 2020. The proliferations of solutions continues to grow. Chiefmartec.com studies and reports on the change and growth in marketing technology solutions.

Two critical prerequisites to consider before adopting any technology solutions:

Sales processes should be well-developed and codified prior to significant technology adoption. Don't attempt to lay technology solutions on broken or non-existent sales process.

Develop a content strategy and capacity plan. Remember that the "fuel" for any digital marketing and sales system is *content*. Without it, a new system will be unable to help convert prospects.

Core solutions include:

- ERP & Data strategy
- CRM
- Web & Social Media presence and analytics/coordination
- Data visualization for sales
- Sales productivity tools: telephony, video, etc.

A recent trend in the last several years is the integrated platforms that are emerging from industry consolidation (e.g. Salesforce, HubSpot, Zendesk, etc.). These provide bundles of core solutions with a good on-ramping subscription options. They are better for companies with little tech infrastructure in place, as once a company has assembled their own stack, it's hard to remove a component to convert to a fully integrated solution.

Once a team begins making use of technology, there will be a shift in the required skill set of the people who staff it. The emphasis will shift more toward analytics and systems skills in addition to core sales competencies, and may impact selection and staffing choices. In addition, leadership needs to shift their focus, with more emphasis on data-driven decision making, and driving culture of empowerment and experimentation. When data can help reps drive their own progress, leadership needs to focus on instituting the measurement systems, and allowing more experimentation within the ranks.

Digital Marketing

With the idea that content strategy is critical and a key starting point to a successful digital marketing program, Terry observed 3 key trends in marketing that result from the shift to a digital approach:

1. Content shift from product toward customer pain and insight

A more traditional awareness approach, i.e. simply making customers aware of your solutions, has proven to be ineffective. At this point in the buying process, customers don't yet care about your solutions. Instead, Marketing needs to orient content toward customer problems and pain points. Customers are interested in insights that help them research, frame problems before they are interested in specific solutions.

2. Feedback and experimentation

Given the amount of data available as customers interact with your content, digital marketing messaging and content must continuously evolve. They do so by establishing a feedback loop with the goal of improving conversion. Investment direction then is driven by learnings about conversion. To make this approach successful, it requires a commitment to data analytics, and to changing tactics and investment based upon what the analysis reveals works most effectively.

3. Handoffs

The sales journey no longer belongs exclusively to Sales or a single individual to manage. Conversion steps commonly shift from digital to in-person and back again. In order to drive conversion, everyone must work together to own the whole funnel. One function can't throw things over the fence to another and wash hands of it. That will not succeed.

Clean handoffs between steps requires clear understanding of the handoffs and responsibilities of each person in the chain. This is not something that is common in more traditional commercial thinking where individual reps commonly act as orchestrators of their account plans across functions.

Once you have a system that is converting, only then one can focus on productivity, efficiency and reach.

Terry suggested that the industry still struggles to get the right talent, both staff and leadership, to effectively run their digital marketing programs. Investment needs to occur, whether in retraining staff, or in selection for new skills as part of recruiting.

About Terry Kaufman

Terry Kaufman is the Director of Inside Sales at Avient Corporation and former Sr. Manager, Digital Marketing and Customer Experience. He's spent the last decade working at the intersection of marketing, sales, and technology building digital ecosystems to accelerate B2B growth.

Avient's Inside sales team is a global team of reps responsible for account revenues across Avient's divisions.

Prior to that, he was Sr. Manager of Digital marketing with responsibility for the commercial tech stack and accelerating digital marketing tactics.

He has a passion and talent for blending traditional commercial principles with emerging technologies, generating scalable strategies for an evolving landscape.

Terry earned MBA and law degrees from Penn State University.

About Growth Arc Advisors LLC

After a 30 year career as an executive in the chemical industry, founder Kendall Justiniano started Growth Arc Advisors to help chemical business leaders implement the new thinking required for changing fundamentals. We're experienced industry operators who know the old playbooks, their gaps, and the new pages required.

The firm delivers customized engagements for Materials Executives in 3 key areas:

Commercial Effectiveness: increasing growth revenue through proven next-level commercial practices, including digital sales & marketing.

Strategy: helping clients navigate threats generated by sustainability, digital, and global demand shifts.

Innovation: accelerating return on innovation through focused investment.

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