

Abstract

The expectations of B2B customers in technical market environments are becoming very similar for B2C customers. Constant availability (24/7), short response time and the need for sustainable solutions, profile the new customer journey in B2B sales for technical goods and services.

The purpose of this research study is to assess what impact the digital transformation implies on employees in technical sales jobs, and which competencies are required from sales employees, today and in future. Furthermore, this thesis investigates critical success factors in industrial sales.

The first part of the paper outlines the current status of research followed by an empirical study which has been conducted in the form of nine expert interviews with sales managers and CEOs in different technical industries.

The qualitative method of content-structuring content analysis with deductive-inductive category formation was used for the evaluation. The study concludes with management implications.

Building trust remains for both, analogue and digital, the central success factor in B2B sales for technical goods and services. The study shows that in addition a new basic competence is needed in technical B2B sales – the digital competence. Digital competence is made up of five sub-competencies: Digital Technology, Digital Marketing & Sales, Data Competence, Digital Social-Communication Skills and Digital Leadership. Traditional competencies such as sales skills, technical competence and social-communication skills remain very important. However, strategic account management and intercultural understanding is becoming more important in the future because of internationalisation of companies and markets.