

Cisco | Gold Winner

Enabling Sales to Accelerate Growth

Cisco Launches Digital Seller of the Future Initiative to Retain Customers for Life

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

We are now living in the era of the completely connected customer – a time in which total digitization of our culture has taken hold. This is revolutionizing the way businesses need to engage with their customers, sell to them and above all, retain them. To transform for the rapid pace of digitization in the B2B technology market, in 2017 Cisco launched the Digital Seller initiative, a company-wide, global effort aimed at empowering Cisco’s virtual sellers to retain customers for life.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Cisco is focused on moving customers to choose its products, use them, love them and make Cisco their preferred and most trusted brand. With that in mind, this initiative is designed to empower Cisco virtual sellers to give customers what they want: less friction and digital frustration, more immediacy and personalization, fewer hassles and more options for self-help to take control of their own buying journey. To do that, Cisco built a strong technology foundation including a massive digital framework; new digital sales processes, tools and platforms; and groundbreaking analytics and data science to optimize the way sellers communicate with customers. Recognizing that people hold the ultimate power, the initiative was also fueled by a movement within Cisco to build the sales team of the digital future.

PROGRAM EXECUTION

Through this initiative, Cisco enabled its virtual sales teams to overcome the challenges and legacy practices of the traditional sales model, which required that sellers dedicate up to 70% of their time to non-sales tasks. It includes these three areas of focus:

1. **Innovation:** To give Cisco sellers more time to do what they do best—sell, Cisco used machine learning, predictive insights, prescriptive actions and data science models. It also developed and deployed a Data Science Recommendation Engine to empower Cisco sellers to predict the actions that customers should take next. This combination of technology represents a groundbreaking step forward in digital selling and allows Cisco sellers to anticipate customers’ needs, communicate

with them in real time, optimize value delivery and nurture product and service adoption and consumption.

2. **Sales-Specific Platforms and Tools:** Next, Cisco set a course for identifying intelligent and easy-to-use platforms, scaling customer and partner engagement practices, and implementing sales training and support. The goal was to create a sustainable infrastructure focused on streamlining and simplifying buyer and seller workflows through the introduction and adoption of state-of-the-art digital tools.
3. **Transforming the Sales Culture:** Recognizing that the human element is the most important differentiator in the digital economy, Cisco established a Digital Advisory Board and Digital Selling Days events to transform its sales culture. With a mission to design the next generation of Cisco tools for sellers and by sellers, the Digital Advisory Board is made up of over 150 sales leaders representing 146 countries globally. These individuals commit to piloting, testing and providing feedback on new digital selling tools and data science models and meet regularly to define and drive the roadmap for future capabilities.

The Digital Selling Days events take place across all Cisco global regions and have reached thousands of sellers and customer success managers. The focus is expanding Cisco sales teams' knowledge about the importance of digital sales transformation as well as the tools, platforms, techniques and data science models that will help them become the best digital B2B sales force in the world. One example of the success of these events was a 3000% increase in usage of digital selling tools.

BUSINESS RESULTS

Cisco is setting the pace for change in today's technology-driven culture by applying B2C selling motions to a B2B business at scale and doing so successfully. Blazing a trail for customer health and retention, Cisco built a customer-obsessed sales culture designed to outpace the demands of today's increasingly digital society. In one year's time it demonstrated agility at a level never seen before for a company its size. By positioning Cisco virtual sellers all around the globe to compete more effectively in the digital age, Cisco has been able to advance its mission to fuel higher levels of customer retention and, ultimately, to create customers for life.