



Consultative Selling in the
**Digital Marketing
Universe**



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From Campaigns to Consultations: The Evolution of Marketing Agencies

Traditional marketing agencies have long been the go-to solution for companies looking to boost their brand presence, drive sales, and captivate their audiences. These agencies have perfected the art of crafting compelling ads, designing stunning visuals, and executing campaigns that resonate. **But here's the catch: the market has changed significantly, and so have client expectations!**

Forward-looking agencies are rebranding themselves as strategic consultancies, offering a cerebral approach to brand growth... to break into new markets.

Smart old-school agencies haven't remained static; they've upped their game big time. A lot of them have jumped on the digital bandwagon, mixing in new online trends with their tried-and-true methods. In their journey from being crafty mad men to becoming thought leaders, agency professionals are pivoting from pure execution to high-level strategy formulation.

So, What's Causing the Big Shift to Consultative Models?

Did you know that more than 89% of buyers describe their sales reps as “trusted advisors”?

(LinkedIn, State of Sales, 2021)

The digital takeover has changed everything. There is a lot of information available now about what customers do, like, and want. Agencies that can crunch these numbers and turn them into smart moves are winning the game.

The TRUST factor reigns supreme—today's sellers want to be the ones clients turn to when they need solid advice or a fresh take on things.



Top-performing salespeople spend far more of their time researching their industry, learning about their competitors, understanding trends, reading about ancillary things that affect their industry, and being thought leaders and consultants in their space than they do pounding phones, sending emails, and prospecting.

Sahil Mansuri, CEO, Bravado

Introduction

Marketing has become so complicated that agencies are embracing breakthrough technologies, like AI (artificial intelligence), data privacy, hyper-personalized customer experience, etc., faster and more readily to stay relevant.

Unlike traditional marketing agencies that operate on a project-by-project basis, **consultative agencies** dive deep into their clients' businesses, getting the full picture. They come up with solutions that are visionary; game plans that are smarter. These agencies are betting on delivering AI-driven precision, aiming to become a part of the client's inner circle.

Becoming a Next-Level Agency by Adopting Consultative Selling

Why just change your sales approach when you can revolutionize your entire business model?! The benefits are clear: more money, better clients, happier team members, and a rock-solid foundation for future growth.

Diverse Revenue Streams	Superior Client Outcomes	Steady, Sustainable Growth	Boosted Expertise and Industry Knowledge
Stand-Out Competitive Edge	Superior Client Outcomes	Rock-Solid Client Relationships	Top Talent Recruitment and Retention

We've used the term "digital marketing agency" as a representative audience in this guide, but the guide is for anyone who sells marketing or other digital services, whether they sell for themselves, for an internet marketing agency, digital marketing agency, media company, website infrastructure company, or otherwise.

Understanding the Consultative Selling Approach

Definition and Principles of Consultative Selling

Consultative selling flips the script on traditional sales. Instead of focusing on features and pushing products, it prioritizes understanding the client's unique challenges and business goals. This approach is all about building relationships, becoming a trusted advisor, and demonstrating the value you can bring to the table.



Closing deals and winning clients ultimately come from building trust, and that's at the core of consultative selling. This trust tends to sustain the relationship over the long term, resulting in increased client retention.



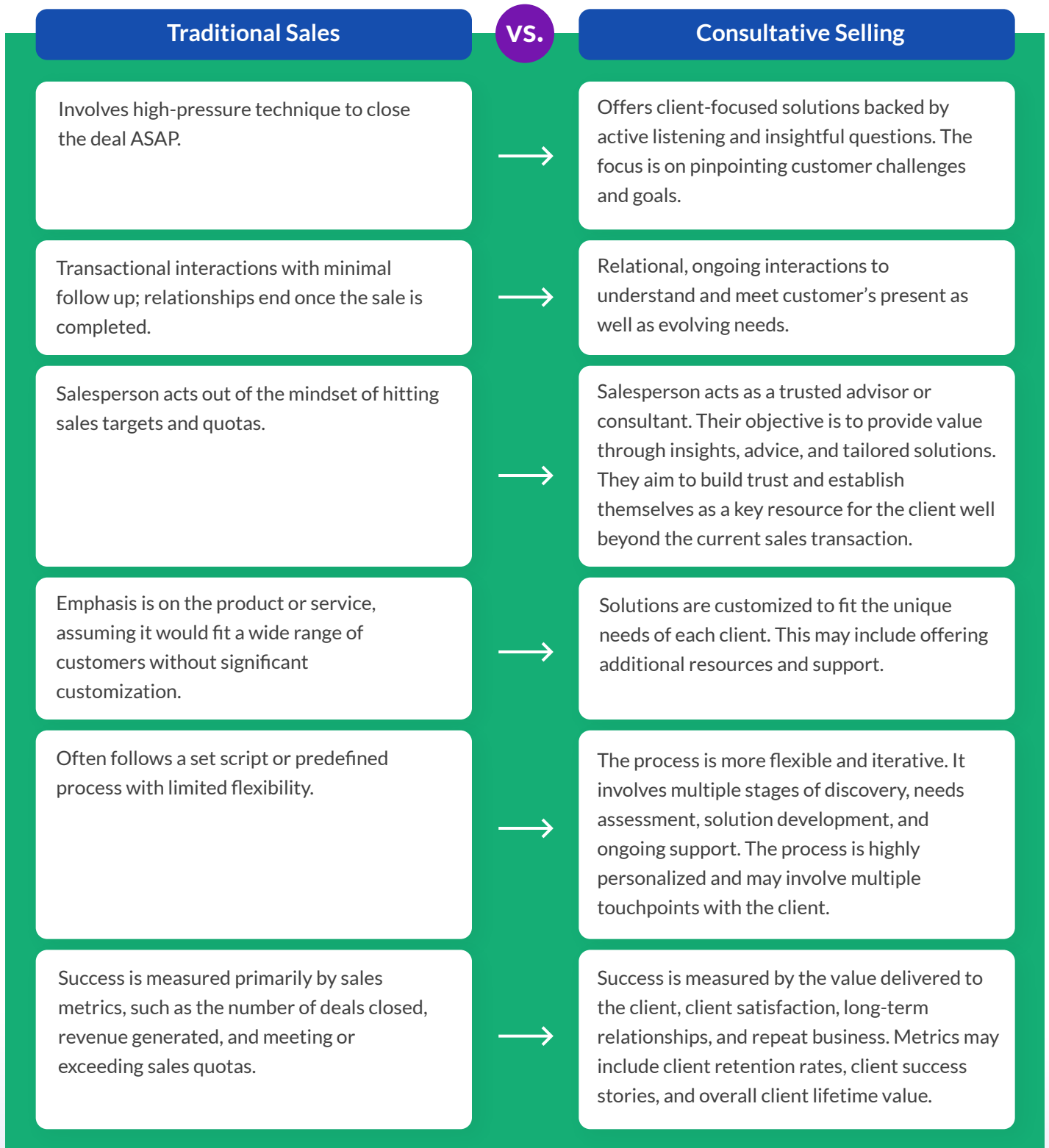
Differences Between Traditional Sales and Consultative Approaches

The truth is, nobody likes a pushy salesperson!

So, when the focus is strictly on closing the sale, it can lead to a perception that the salesperson is more interested in their own targets than the customer's needs. And that's exactly what traditional sales technique does!

Consultative selling doesn't involve persuading customers to buy what you sell. Instead, it's about **developing and offering strategies that effectively solve your client's problem mainly through question-answers, active listening, deep research, and ultimately presenting tailored solutions that speak directly to their pain points.**

Understanding the Consultative Selling Approach



Developing a Consultative Mindset With Challenger Sales

What Is the Challenger Sales Model?

The Challenger Sales Model emerged as a response to the changing dynamics of B2B sales. Contrary to common assumptions, a specific archetype was found, known as the Challenger, that consistently outperformed other sales profiles, such as the Relationship Builder or the Hard Worker.



To be clear, most prospects have a good sense of what their decision (to buy or not) will be before a pitch is finished. But by providing unexpected information or a fresh perspective, sales reps can better steer the conversation toward a purchase.

“ Sales organizations can increase business by challenging customers—delivering customer interactions specifically designed to disrupt their current thinking and teach them something new. It’s not just about selling something anymore, ”

Brent Adamson, Distinguished VP,
Advisory, Gartner

What Sets the Challenger Sales Model Apart?

It’s the alignment with fundamental principles of human psychology. As a seller, you need to have control of the conversation with your prospect in order to guide it in the right direction, right? And to do this, you must have more than the obvious information on your prospect’s company and industry.

Gartner found that almost **40%** of star performers were Challengers, and that number rose to **54%** in complex situations.

(Gartner, *The Power of the Challenger Sales Model*)

How to Become a Challenger Seller

Challengers lead with insights and have the ability to disrupt customers’ assumptions, pushing them in an intellectual way. They teach, tailor, and take control, allowing them to excel at building constructive tension. They have a different view of the world. They know their customers’ worlds better than their customers know themselves.

Developing a Consultative Mindset With Challenger Sales



As a challenger, you can teach your customers something new about how they can compete more effectively and offer fresh perspectives about their specific business needs. You can effectively tailor the message in a way that is both compelling and assertive—that drives action. This can be done by providing education through free advice, consultations, and marketing tools—allowing for an easy buying experience for customers. They can adjust and adapt their sales strategy, at the industry, market, and company levels.

By challenging the status quo and bringing real value to every conversation, you naturally become more of a consultant than a traditional salesperson—this is where the Challenger Sales Method seamlessly transitions into a consultative selling approach.



Challengers position themselves as trusted advisors rather than just salespeople.



This tailored approach ensures that the solution proposed is relevant and compelling, increasing the likelihood of a successful sale and ongoing repeat business.



The challenger method helps to keep the sales process on track and ensures that the customer makes the best decision for their business.

A Real Challenger Is a True Consultant.

Exploring New Technologies and Innovations

Why Does Consultative Selling Work for Digital Marketing Services?

Imagine a sales situation where an agency sends out a version of the following generic email to its prospects list, hoping someone will take the bait.

Subject: Local Marketing Strategies for [Prospect's Business Name]

Hi [Prospect Name],

My name is Justin and I'm the Digital Strategist at XYZ agency.. We specialize in helping small businesses like [Prospect's Business Name] leverage digital marketing to attract more local customers and reach their goals.

We understand that navigating the ever-changing world of digital marketing requires customized marketing strategies designed to help local businesses like yours.

Would you be interested in a quick 15-minute call to discuss your current marketing strategy and how we can help you reach more local customers? There's no obligation involved, just a valuable resource for your business.

Thanks for your time, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best regards, Justin

With over 100,000 marketing agencies in the US alone, trying to find their best-matched small business clients, such emails only distance them from landing that deal.

Smarter, ambitious, and tech-savvy agencies are making constant efforts to differentiate themselves by shifting from a transactional, vendor-like mindset to a collaborative, advisory role—to deepen client relationships and drive greater business impact.

The good news? There's a more effective way to email that can truly set you apart; we'll get there soon.

Exploring New Technologies and Innovations

Your target small businesses (SMBs) often operate within unique frameworks. Their needs, challenges, and even their paths to success differ substantially from larger corporations and from one another. Consequently, generic marketing strategies often miss their targets.

What works for an organic mushroom seller might not work for a small-town coffee shop, making it essential to design customized marketing solutions specific to their needs and expectations.

The benefits of consultative selling for digital marketing agencies selling to small businesses are numerous:

- 1 Increased Trust and Credibility
- 2 Improved Sales Efficiency
- 3 Differentiation in a Crowded Market
- 4 Higher Client Retention

The Step-by-Step Consultative Selling Process for Digital Agencies

1. Prospect Research and Qualification

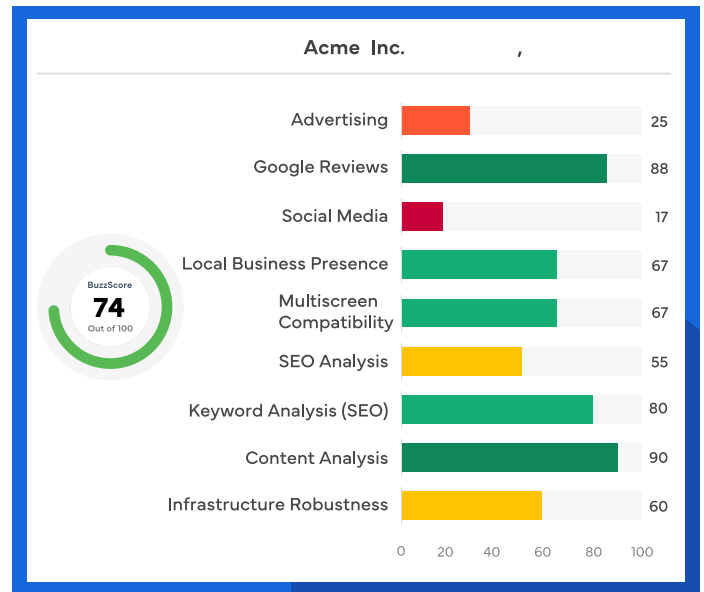
The groundwork for successful consultative selling starts before the first conversation. Research your target market (estimating market size for different industries in your area can be helpful here). Understand the common challenges faced by businesses in your region. Develop buyer personas that outline the ideal client profile for your agency. This will help you target businesses that are most likely to benefit from your services.

Look for snags, like are your prospects burning cash on Google and Facebook ads when they have a number of negative online reviews that are not being managed? What good will it be for them to receive yet another proposal for more digital ads?! Instead, start your discussions about a robust reputation management service that will help position them as a more credible business, in turn bringing them more conversions on their ad investments.

How about gathering data and conducting research without exhausting your time and precious resources?

Exploring New Technologies and Innovations

With BuzzBoard's [Small Business Digital Audit Tool](#), you can access a simple-to-understand, yet comprehensive digital audit to support your research and preparations. These digital health metrics comprise an in-depth analysis of your prospect's online presence, website robustness, social credibility, advertising effectiveness, and more! This generative AI-powered tool is absolutely FREE and a much faster way to arm up with on-point insights that position you as an indispensable partner during your consultative selling session.



2. Landing the First Call Via Email

Prospects can smell a mass email a mile away. It screams "I didn't care enough to personalize this." Do note that cookie-cutter emails rarely offer anything new or useful. They make you look lazy or clueless about your prospect's needs. Not a great first impression.

✗ Missed opportunities: Every generic email is a wasted chance to showcase your expertise and relevance.

✗ Poor ROI: The spray-and-pray approach yields dismal results. It's a waste of time and resources.

✗ Brand damage: Constantly sending impersonal emails can hurt your brand reputation over time.

✗ They're forgettable: In a sea of sameness, generic emails blend in. And blending in is the kiss of death in sales.



Prospects expect—and respond to—emails that show you've done your homework and have something genuinely valuable to offer. And BuzzBoard makes it happen for you!

Exploring New Technologies and Innovations

BuzzBoard lets you generate high-converting emails easily on the go with just one click!

Simply enter the URL of your prospect, and save time on reaching your target.

Your prospect's url (e.g., www.businessname.com)

Submit

BuzzBoard takes only **5 seconds** to aid you with personalized, insight-driven, engaging emails for your prospects.

For instance, if your agency is aiming for dental clinics, your emails might look something like this.

You can even choose between tones—go humorous if you like or keep it conversational.

Email 1: Humorous tone

Subject: Unlock a New Smile for Your Site with the Magic of Digital Alchemy!

Hello Dr. Nahon,
Heard about the fairy tale where websites turn into profit-making wizards with just a snap? At A New Smile Dental Center, your online tooth-fairy awaits. Whiz-bangs! Presto! But uh-oh... that PageSpeed score is slower than a sloth after Thanksgiving dinner. Swap your tortoise-paced speed for hare-like hustling with our website design services.

Best,
John Doe

Email 2: Conversational tone

Subject: Don't Miss Out - Your Dental Center Deserves a Speed Boost!

Hello Dr. Nahon,
I noticed A New Smile Dental Center has quite a impressive digital maturity score of 65. However, our data shows room to improve page speed — crucial for keeping site visitors engaged. As a Digital Media Strategist, I specialize in turbocharging websites like yours. Let's chat about making browsing speed- delightful for Miami's smiles.

Best,
John Doe

Exploring New Technologies and Innovations

3. Discovery and Needs Assessment

The initial sales interaction is all about listening and learning. Prepare open-ended questions that delve into the client's business goals, target audience, current marketing efforts, and any pain points they're experiencing. Focus on active listening and demonstrate genuine interest in their success.

This is your chance to showcase your expertise by providing valuable insights, analyzing the client's current marketing efforts, and identifying areas for improvement. This not only highlights your agency's capabilities but also demonstrates the potential value you can bring to the client's business—making it easier to convert them into long-term clients.

And the best part is, you don't have to spend hours preparing for that!

BuzzBoard's auto-generated SWOT analysis tool is fast and user-friendly, and it's designed for trusted advisors like you!

This business need discovery tool automatically generates product recommendations for your prospects that match your offerings to their needs and pain points. Produce and share with your prospects compelling SWOT analysis reports that move the conversation toward closing while adding rich competitor insights to create a powerful story.

Let's understand better with examples!



A New Smile Dental Center

📍 _____ 📞 _____

✉ _____ 🌐 _____

Strengths:

- Strong local business presence with accurate listings on Google My Business and other key directories.
- Mobile-friendly website with responsive design and excellent page load times.
- Robust infrastructure with caching enabled, minimal page redirects, and optimized website pages.
- Active social media presence on platforms like Facebook, YouTube, and Instagram.
- Positive Google reviews and high overall Google rating, indicating high customer satisfaction.

Weaknesses:

- Lack of image alt text and text content for SEO optimization.
- Limited presence in online advertising, particularly in Google Ads, Facebook ads, and Yelp ads.
- Incomplete content analysis with missing privacy policy, about page, and services page on the website.
- No image size optimization and text compression affecting page speed and user experience.
- Low trust flow score, indicating potential issues with perceived trustworthiness on backlinks.

Opportunities:

- Expansion of advertising efforts, including Google Ads, display ads, Facebook ads, and Yelp ads to reach a wider target audience.
- Implementation of image size optimization, text compression, and image alt text for better page speed and SEO performance.
- Addition of missing content elements such as privacy policy, about page, and services page to improve website engagement.
- Further enhancement of local SEO with location in title tags and richer snippets for better visibility in search results.
- Improvement of trust flow score through high-quality backlink building and enhanced website security measures.

Threats:

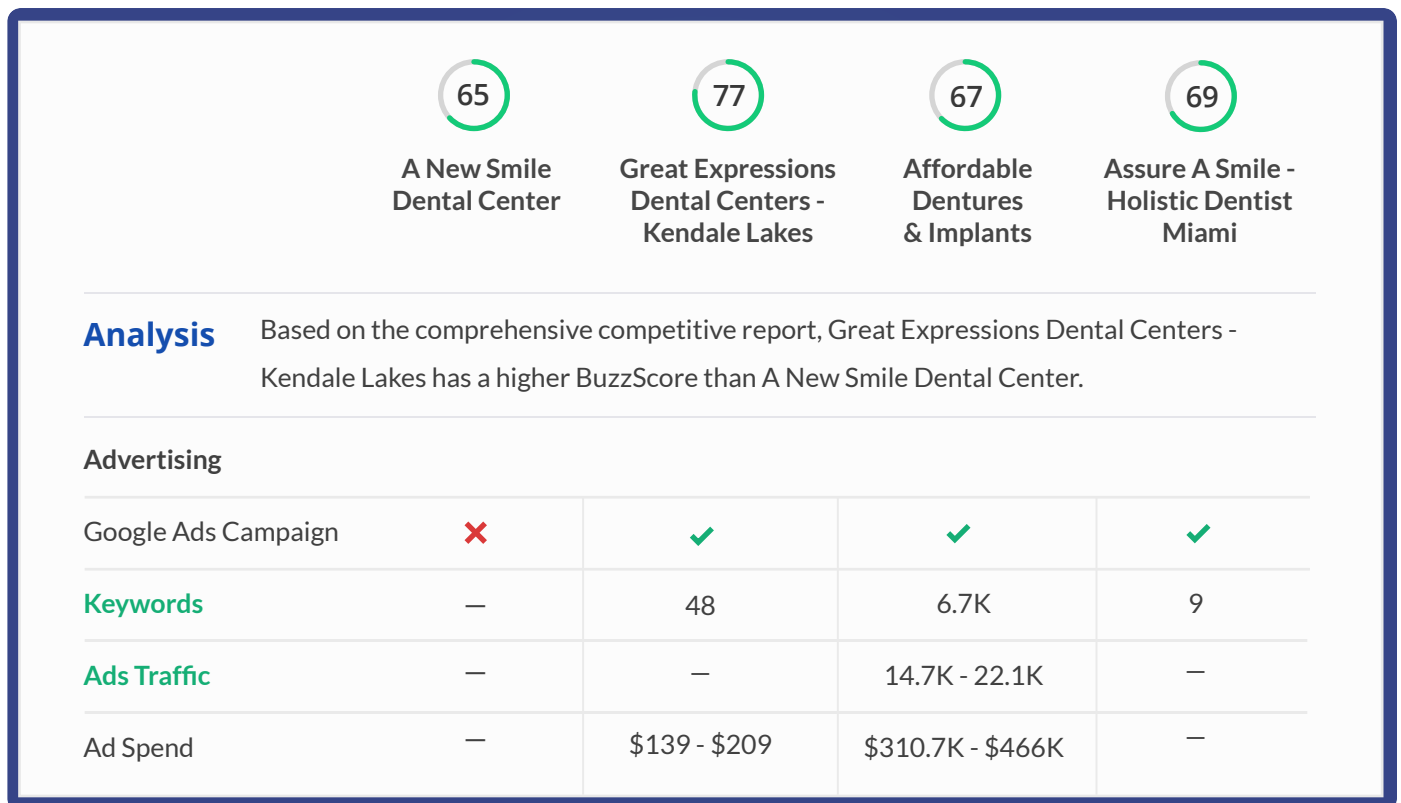
- Competition from other dental centers with higher digital maturity scores and more advanced online advertising strategies.
- Potential negative impact on reputation from lack of complete content analysis and missing privacy policy.
- Risk of losing potential customers due to slower page speed and suboptimal mobile browsing experience.
- Decreased visibility in search results and local directories compared to competitors with stronger local business presence.
- Challenging to compete with competitors with stronger SEO performance, including higher domain authority and more backlinks.

Exploring New Technologies and Innovations

4. Analyze and Offer Solutions

Once you have a clear understanding of the client's situation, further analyze their digital deficiencies. Identify areas where your agency's expertise can make a significant impact on their business. [Develop a highly customized proposal](#) that outlines specific solutions tailored to their goals, not just a generic list of services.

But in order to start the right service with them, you will need to pay attention to details and not be hasty about closing a deal. **Consultative selling allows you to adopt this mindset of being buyer-centric at all times, and this is where BuzzBoard's competitive assessment provides you with unwavering support.**



You can also use data and case studies to showcase how your agency has helped similar businesses achieve success.

Exploring New Technologies and Innovations

5. Collaboration and Transparency

Consultative selling entails an approach that's collaborative. Encourage open communication and feedback from the client throughout the sales cycle. Be transparent about pricing and deliverables. Focus on building a long-term partnership rather than just a one-off transaction.

6. Objection Handling and Value Proposition

Price is a significant concern for most small and local businesses. Be prepared to address cost concerns by clearly communicating the value proposition of your services. Focus on the return on investment (ROI) the client can expect by highlighting how your agency will help them achieve their business goals. It's really about selling on value, not price. And it's easier for prospects to accept that when you have developed a trusting relationship.

Become a Trusted Advisor Beyond the Sale

Consultative selling doesn't end with a signed contract. Building trust and acting as a trusted advisor is a continuous process. Regularly communicate with your clients, provide ongoing support and strategic guidance, and keep them informed about industry trends and opportunities.



By exceeding expectations and demonstrating your commitment to their success, you'll earn the place of a trusted partner, and your agency will break free from the commoditized digital marketing pack.

Measuring Success

Define Key Performance Indicators

Your journey remains incomplete without its evaluation. This transition to consultative selling is a significant shift that can yield substantial benefits for your agency. Ensure it is successful by establishing clear performance indicators or key metrics, and regularly evaluate your progress.

1 Client Satisfaction and Retention

Happy clients are a strong indicator of successful consultative selling. Measure client satisfaction through surveys, feedback, and direct communication. High levels of satisfaction and improved client retention rates suggest that your consultative approach is resonating well.

Key Metrics: Net Promoter Score (NPS), Client Satisfaction Score (CSAT), client retention rate, and customer testimonials.

2 Sales Performance and Revenue Growth

Track your sales performance and revenue growth to gauge the financial impact of the transition. Consultative selling should lead to larger deal sizes, higher win rates, and increased revenue from existing clients.

Key Metrics: Revenue growth, average deal size, win rate, and upsell/cross-sell revenue.

3 Client Engagement and Relationship Depth

Measure how deeply and frequently your clients engage with your agency. Strong, consultative relationships often result in more frequent interactions, deeper collaborations, and longer-term engagements.

Key Metrics: Frequency of client meetings, length of client engagements, number of touchpoints per client, and engagement scores.

4 Problem-Solving Success

A key aspect of consultative selling is effectively solving client problems. Track the success rate of your proposed solutions and how they impact your clients' businesses.

Key Metrics: Client-reported success rates of implemented solutions, case studies, and ROI for clients from your solutions.

Conclusion

As we've explored throughout this comprehensive guide, the benefits of adopting a consultative approach are substantial. It's like the best of both worlds—the solid reputation of traditional media and the quick-moving vibe of tech-enabled digital platforms.

So, embrace change, foster a culture of innovation, and never stop asking, "How can we add more value?"

Your Next Steps:

- 1 Assess your current sales model honestly.
- 2 Identify gaps in your team's consultative skills.
- 3 Start small—pick one client to test your new approach. Ask [BuzzBoard](#) for help.
- 4 Gather feedback, iterate, and improve.
- 5 Gradually scale your consultative services across your client base. Take a [BuzzBoard FREE Trial](#) today!

For years, BuzzBoard has empowered digital agencies with confidence and connections. The BuzzBoard Ignite platform replaces ineffective templated sales outreach messages with hyper-personalized 1:1 communications to open new doors, win more customers, and close bigger deals.

About BuzzBoard

BuzzBoard is fueled by over 20 years of acquired intelligence on 30+ million small-to-medium businesses to help solution providers deeply understand their customers and build trusted relationships in today's digital-first selling environment. BuzzBoard's AI-powered intelligence engine powers account-based marketing and sales performance using its proprietary SMB signal stack and category classification system to identify, segment, and score the accounts with the highest revenue potential. With BuzzBoard account intelligence fueling CRM and marketing automation platforms with ideal customers, demand generation and sales teams now have the insights and recommendations they need to acquire and retain customers with highly personalized interactions at scale.