AFTER THE PERFECT STORM:

B2B SALES AND CONSULTING REPRESENTATIONS
IN SERVICE-DOMINANT MARKETS

Competitive paper
Special Track: Representing multiplicity in markets - multiple representations of markets

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Abstract

A perfect storm is emerging and disaggregating the discipline of marketing from practice calling traditional marketing practice into question. In addition to environmental and financial disruptions, key phenomena of interest to B2B marketers combining to form the perfect storm and change the representation of the salesperson are:

1. Leveraging B2B social networking through rapid deployment of online relationships, communities and social graph (Owyang 2007) generation via popular tools and social network services (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn).

2. Service orientation from a technological (Pulier & Taylor 2005) and managerial perspective (Vargo, Maglio & Akaka 2008) undermining traditional B2B buying habits.

3. The trend towards "preparing for a world without salespeople" (Carr 2009) to achieve lower cost of sales.

This research paper focus shows the market representation pre- and post- storm to be very different in terms of markets and the actors therein. The tipping point for the storm is echoed in the call to a Service-Dominant (Vargo & Lusch 2004) perspective moving rapidly to become reality. For instance, previous investments in software products are increasingly made as recurring "Software as Service" (SaaS) investments akin to rental and emphasising the utility value of the product as opposed to the technological nature of the product and deployment services expended. The financial crisis is facilitating greater desire in non technological projects to embrace similar models in government infrastructure projects and public-private partnerships.

The key dilemma for resolution is the difference in actors and networks in a world in which skills and knowledge is the core of service networks relative to the world of exchanging goods and services i.e. pre & post-storm. The authors use a bricolage technique (Sood & Pattinson 2006) comprising social graphing and gist analysis characterising the dynamic perspectives of B2B salespersons and consultants in service and product led examples.

Narrative analyses and social graphing facilitate an understanding of the extent of the difference in supply and service networks. Research findings give consideration to appliances (non-human actors) and the changing role of the sales person to be a representation or team leader of the many selves (experts and skills) within organisations. Authors use the metaphor of the "Perfect-Storm" to express the dire straits the emergent gap between current and future thinking faced by practitioners and academics.

Keywords:

Markets, Service Dominant, Service Orientation, Social graph, Actors, Customers, Bricolage

Introduction

A perfect storm is driving sales representation from a transactional to conversational focus, and thus a change in representation of B2B sales actors and activities (see Figures 1 and 2). While financial and environmental disruptions are already challenging the place of marketers in business, additional phenomena is turning such turbulence to a destructive hurricane force.
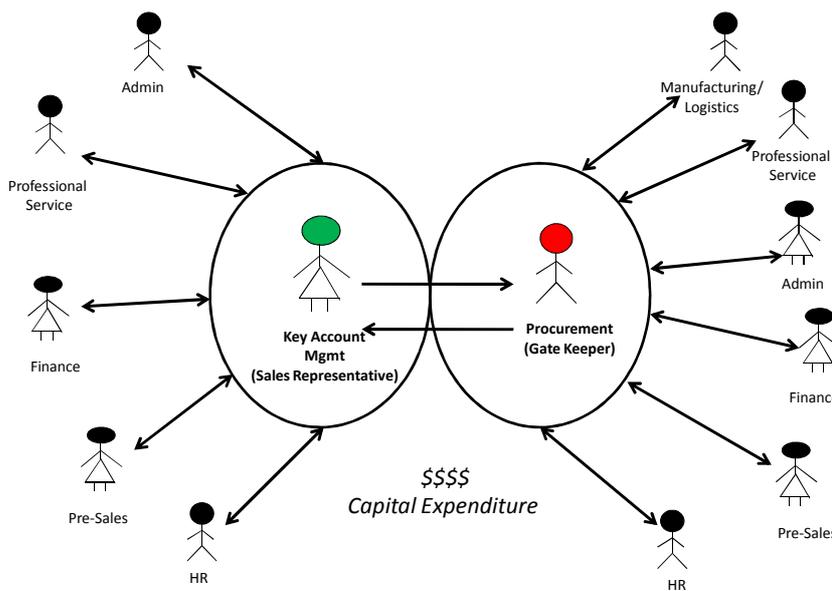
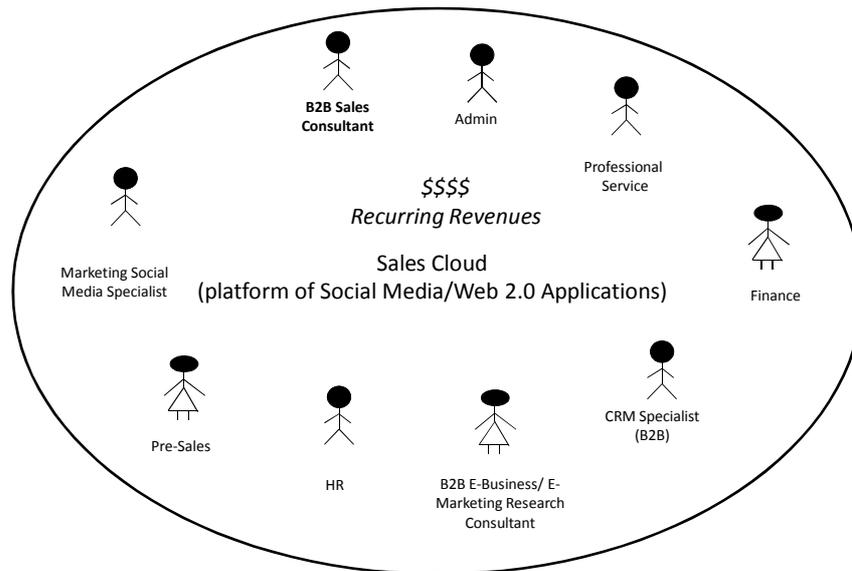**Figure 1: Sales Actor Map – Pre-Storm**

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Figure 2: Sales Actor Map – Post-Storm

Sales, Online Social Networking, Service Focus and the Perfect Storm

In particular, the rapid deployment of online relationships, communities and social graph generation (Owyang 2007) via popular social tools and applications, a service orientation from technological (Pulier & Taylor 2005) and managerial perspectives (Vargo, Maglio & Akaka 2008) are contributing the changing B2B landscape of process, technology and actors.

The "social graph is the network of connections and relationships between participants" (Sodera and Radeztsky 2009) departing from the more complex notion of business interaction (Ha kansson, Harrison and Waluszewski 2004) with no change or transformation of the actors and activities (ibid). The social graph while a simpler abstraction of IMP tradition (ibid) aligns with the research cluster stalked out as "The 'New' Science of Networks" (Watts 2004) following "a long tradition of network analysis in sociology and anthropology" (ibid).

Social graphing (Fitzpatrick 2007) provides a consistent means of representing objects and the connections between them. In the case of Facebook the objects are not restricted to people but include photos, events, and fan pages with the connections communicating friend relationships, shared content, and photo tags (Facebook Inc 2010). From a relationship perspective "The Social Graph is the representation of our relationships. Today, these graphs define our personal, family, or business communities on social websites" (Owyang 2007).

Social website (especially the gang of 3: LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter) communities are now diffusing at a disruptive pace throughout Business-To-Business environments, but there is a further "flattener" (Friedman 2006) as attention shifts towards reducing the B2B cost of sales. In the process, companies and sales representatives are identifying and developing single, consistent B2B social graphs. This requires a significant change in mindsets and redesign of marketing information systems to integrate the variety of social graphs in existence across Facebook, LinkedIn and the variety of CRM systems.

Service orientation in the form of marketing based on a Service-Dominant-Logic (SDL; Vargo and Lusch 2004) perspective is emerging as tipping point for the perfect storm offering a comprehensive view of how value is created through in the 21st century through utility versus a traditional Goods Dominant Logic Perspective. This change is heavily witnessed amongst companies across a variety of industries from software to furniture.

Companies witness the SDL perspective in 3 key areas:

1. Software procurement and Public-Private Partnerships

   For instance, previous investments in software products are increasingly made as recurring "Software as Service" (SaaS) investments akin to rental and emphasising the utility value of software as opposed to the technological nature of the software and deployment services. The financial crisis is facilitating greater desire in not only technological projects to embrace similar models in government infrastructure projects and public-private partnerships.

2. Switch to Skills and Knowledge

   Companies recognise the business they serve require value beyond the box sale and request complex after sales service solutions.

3. Customer Touch Points for B2B

   New technology device offerings of Apple Iphone, iPad and Amazon Kindle offerings are more clearly understood from a SDL technological and management perspective as the devices and related software technologies are enablers or appliances providing users value through creation and sharing of information and additional applications. In a Web 2.0 view, the Web is a platform and software that either creates more information or offers information is viewed as a "service".

Further service orientation developments include effective description of Business Services expressed in present and futures scenarios, supported by Roadmapping of supporting systems and resources including Service-Oriented Architecture (Pattinson and Sood 2009).

How does Social Graphing and Service Dominant Logic transform B2B Selling? This research paper explores identification and representations of B2B networks – issues networks and people networks – from pre and post storm perspectives. Tools applied to developing and validating B2B issues and people networks include a bricolage approach using semantic text analysis (Carley and Diesner 2005) and expert panel inputs.

B2B Sales/Marketing Representation Method and Analysis

A bricolage approach (Sood & Pattinson, 2006; Pattinson & Sood 2008) informs development of representation in the form of B2B Sales/Marketing Maps. Bricolage assets draw upon artefacts from experience, teaching and research, classified by expertise to create a set of B2B Sales/Marketing Maps. Figure 3 outlines the overall Bricolage meta-analysis approach.

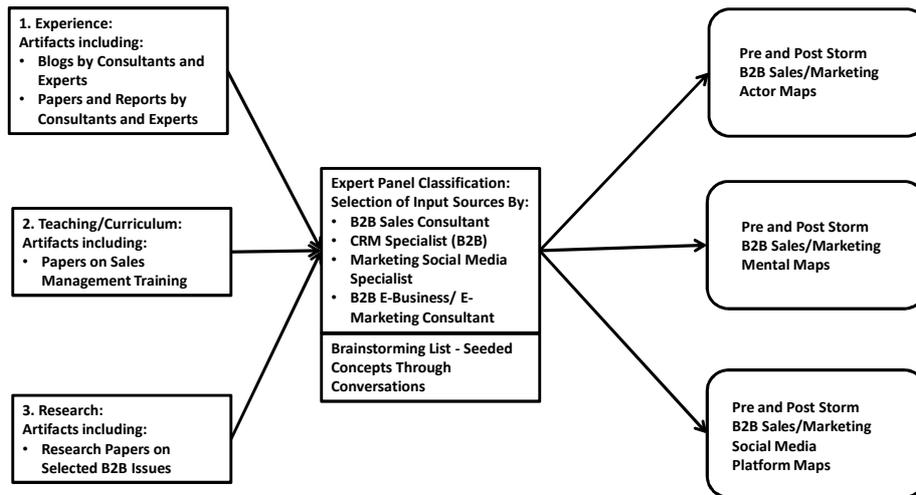**Figure 3: Bricolage Approach: Meta-analysis of Development of B2B Sales/Marketing Maps**

A five-step strategy for undertaking B2B Sales/Marketing Representation Method and Analysis was developed and is presented in Figure 4 incorporating:

1. Interpretative Analysis
2. Concept Analysis
3. Iterative analysis between interpretative developed mental maps and online concepts
4. Gist Difference Analysis
5. Social Graph (B2B Experts)
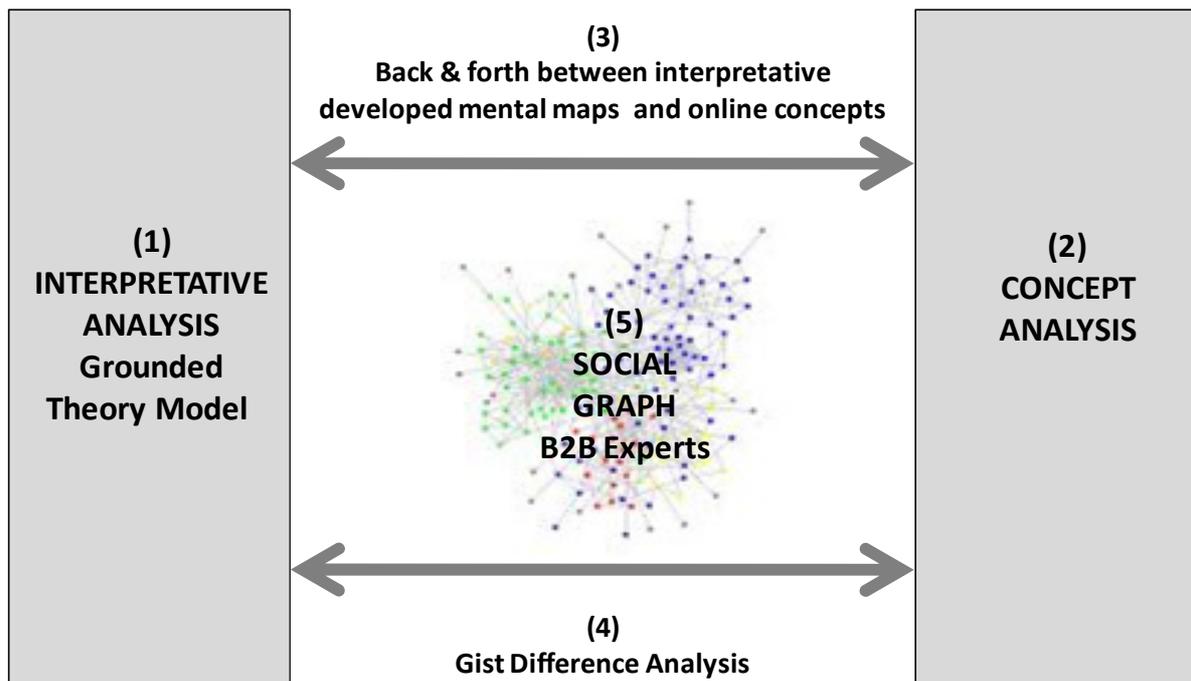
Figure 4: B2B Sales/Marketing Representation Method and Analysis

The Pre and Post-Storm B2B Sales/Marketing Interpretative Map (see Figure 5) represents an initial interpretative review based on researcher expertise and knowledge drawn from professional B2B teaching, curriculum development, professional experience and research. This map represents the theory model and subsequent steps generate research data with the researchers working back and forth between the model and data in an iterative grounded approach (Sarker et al 2001) to uncover emergent (Sood and Pattinson 2004) concepts. Figure 1 highlights a Pre-Storm B2B Sales/Marketing Mental Model driven by "Transactions" and a Post-Storm Mental Model driven by "Conversations", with concepts deemed to be relevant to each driver.

Focusing on the Post-Storm B2B Sales/Marketing Mental Model presented in Figure 5, research was directed toward online information sources. Online communications and materials are explored including online conversations of B2B experts taking place on blogs (Sood 2005) and other published online material on emerging B2B Sales and Marketing issues and activities. The method for achieving further insights from exploring online information sources and applying text/semantic analysis to the collected corpus, including application sensemaking and additional cognitive mapping (Pattinson & Woodside 2007), to produced additional insights is discussed below.
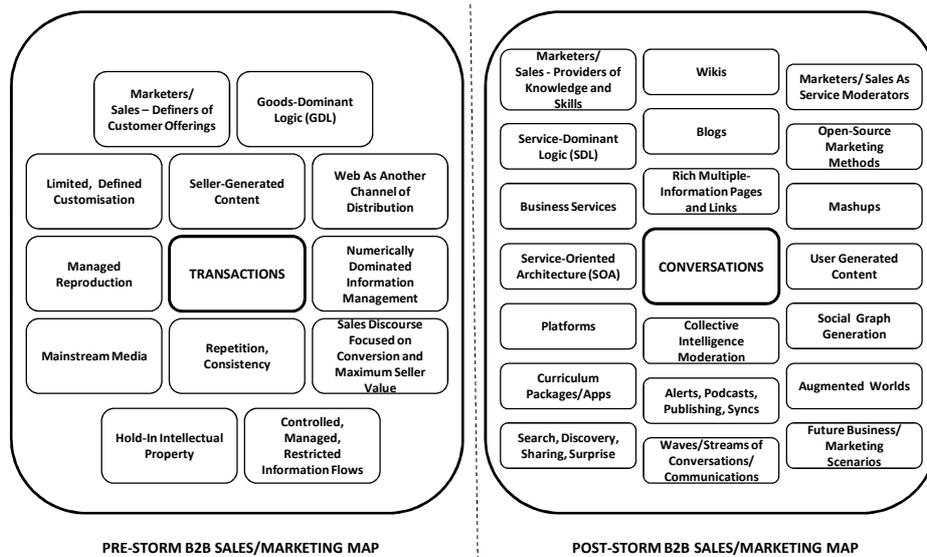
PRE-STORM B2B SALES/MARKETING MAP

- Marketers/ Sales – Definers of Customer Offerings
- Goods-Dominant Logic (GDL)
- Limited, Defined Customisation
- Seller-Generated Content
- Web As Another Channel of Distribution
- Managed Reproduction
- TRANSACTIONS
- Numerically Dominated Information Management
- Mainstream Media
- Repetition, Consistency
- Sales Discourse Focused on Conversion and Maximum Seller Value
- Hold-In Intellectual Property
- Controlled, Managed, Restricted Information Flows

POST-STORM B2B SALES/MARKETING MAP

- Marketers/ Sales - Providers of Knowledge and Skills
- Wikis
- Marketers/ Sales As Service Moderators
- Service-Dominant Logic (SDL)
- Blogs
- Open-Source Marketing Methods
- Business Services
- Rich Multiple-Information Pages and Links
- Mashups
- Service-Oriented Architecture (SOA)
- CONVERSATIONS
- User Generated Content
- Platforms
- Collective Intelligence Moderation
- Social Graph Generation
- Curriculum Packages/Apps
- Alerts, Podcasts, Publishing, Syncs
- Augmented Worlds
- Search, Discovery, Sharing, Surprise
- Waves/Streams of Conversations/ Communications
- Future Business/ Marketing Scenarios

Figure 5: Pre and Post-Storm B2B Sales/Marketing Interpretative Map

Automap and ORA, developed by Carnegie Mellon University's Center for Computational Analysis of Social and Organizational Systems (CASOS), were selected as the text mining and semantic analysis visualizer tools (CASOS 2010). Prior experience with Automap as a dynamic network analysis tool pointed toward greater capability in identifying key concepts, semantic networks, and semantic lists when compared to tools such as NVIVO, Leximancer and other older applications.

Automap was tested for concept identification through an initial run of ten papers in MS-Word and PDF form converted into Text Files and aggregated into a Text Metafile. The papers were drawn from a collection of areas including Sales Management Training, Marketing Scenarios, open-source Marketing, Semantic Marketing, Sales Gist Analysis, and developing Technology Entrepreneurship Education. The initial trial indicated that Automap was appropriate for producing Key Concepts and Semantic Concepts Lists (see Appendix 1 for List of Information Sources inputted to Automap).

Selection of information for full processing through Automap was partly linked to concepts in the original maps but also to experts considered relevant to emerging B2B Sales/Marketing thought and practice. The Expert Panel Classification includes the following categories:

- B2B Sales Consultant
- CRM Specialist (B2B)
- Marketing Social Media Specialist
- B2B E-Business/ E-Marketing Research Consultant

Table 1 classifies information sources by Expert Panel Classification. Several information sources are experts across multiple classifications. Sources of relevant information cover a variety of whitepapers, reports and blogs. In B2B, Blogs have emerged as a major source of conversation, discussion, debate and knowledge development.

Table 1 Information Sources For Analysis by Expert Panel Classification

Information Source	Source Type	Expert Panel Classification
Miller Heiman (2010), "Business Services Datagrid"	Company Report Paper	Sales Consultant
Priolo, Dario, and Bethany Schultz (2007), "Process Excellence Inject Science into the Art of Selling", Miller Heiman	Company Training Material	Sales Consultant
Reese, Sam Reese, and Damon Jones (2006), "Prospecting Toolkit - Life Beyond the Product Pitch", Miller Heiman	Company Training Material	Sales Consultant
Stuart, Anne (2006), "Secrets of High Performance Sales Organizations - Secrets of High Performance Sales Organizations", Miller Heiman	Company Training Material	Sales Consultant
Jones, Damon (2006), "The Art and Science of Big Deals: A Four Part Strategy", Miller Heiman	Company Training Material	Sales Consultant
Pattinson Hugh.M., and Suresh.C. Sood, (2009), "Marketers Expressing The Future: Scenario Planning For Marketing Action"	Published Research Paper	Sales Consultant/B2B Research Consultant
Sood, Suresh C., Hugh M. Pattinson (2006), "The Open Source Marketing Experiment: Using Wikis to Revolutionize Marketing Practice on the Web"	Published Research Paper	Sales Consultant/B2B Research Consultant/ B2B E-Business/ E-Marketing Research Consultant
Pattinson, Hugh M., Suresh C. Sood (2005), "Deciphering Storylines in B2B Selling-Buying Interactions"	Published Research Paper	Sales Consultant/B2B Research Consultant
Sood, Suresh C., Hugh M. Pattinson (2005), "Semantics in Marketspace: Emerging Semantic Marketing Computer-Mediated Environments"	Research Paper	Sales Consultant/B2B Research Consultant / B2B E-Business/ E-Marketing Research Consultant
Pattinson, Hugh M., Sood, Suresh C.(2008), "Knowledge Elicitation of Technology Entrepreneurship for a Web 2.0 Service".	Research Paper	Sales Consultant/B2B Research Consulyant/ B2B E-Business/ E-Marketing Research Consultant
Sood, Suresh, Hugh M. Pattinson (2004), "Patterns of Negotiation: A New Way of Looking at Marketplace B2B Negotiations"	Published Research Paper	Sales Consultant/B2B Research Consultant
Vargo, Stephen, and Robert Lusch (2006), "The Service-Dominant Mindset"	Online Research Paper	B2B Research Consultant
Greenberg, Paul (2010), "Thinking it Through Some More: More on What Else? Social CRM"	Blog	CRM Specialist (B2B)
Gordon, Josh (2010), "The Top Ten Lessons of Selling 2.0"	Blog	Sales Consultant
Allthingscrm.com (2010) "Improving Sales with Cloud Computing",	WebPage	CRM Specialist (B2B)
Google Inc. (2009), "How Google Wave Can be Used In a Business"	Company Webpage	Marketing Social Media Specialist
Justus, Karlie (2010), "4 Ways to Bridge the Social Media Gap With B2B Sales Teams"	Blog	Marketing Social Media Specialist/Sales Consultant
Albert, Shana (2008), "Using Social Media as a Sales Channel",	Online Research Paper	Marketing Social Media Specialist/Sales Consultant
Garrat, Chris (2008), "Sales Lead Blogs – The Art of Selling with Your Blog"	Blog	Marketing Social Media Specialist/Sales Consultant
Decker, Sam, and Chad Bockius (2007), "Driving Channel Sales with User-Generated Marketing	Online BusinessWeek Resource	Marketing Social Media Specialist/Sales Consultant
Duggan, Kris (2006), "Sales Meets Wiki	Blog	Marketing Social Media Specialist/Sales Consultant
Oracle Inc. (2007), "MDM as a Foundation for SOA	Company White Paper	CRM Specialist (B2B)

Blogs classification extends to direct emic or etic stories or interpretation accounts by bloggers who may be experts as consultants, customers, users or knowledge disseminators (note that this notion is somewhere between researchers, teachers and trainers – but constitutes a legitimate information sources for these artefacts). Indeed blogs could be seen as being as effective as direct interviews for exploring key concepts, issues and insights. Furthermore, the ability to leave comments and questions with the bloggers online and obtain answers is a very efficient mechanism in the mind of the researchers.

All input files were converted and aggregated into a text metafile and inputted to Automap. Pre-processing actions included development and application of Delete Lists and removing spaces, punctuation marks and symbols. Concept lists were generated and further edited to remove prepositions, pronouns and stray symbols or noise – and then pruned to the Top 40 Concepts. Table 2 highlights the Top 40 Concepts.

Table 2 Key Concepts List – Top 40

CONCEPT	FREQUENCY		CONCEPT	FREQUENCY
sales	267		B2B	69
marketing	210		company	67
customer	174		selling	66
customers	124		Make	61
process	120		use	60
scenario	110		years	59
products	97		Web	58
planning	96		development	58
information	95		people	58
product	87		Social	54
data	86		application	54
reviews	84		media	51
social	83		companies	50
other	82		research	49
Sales	80		organizations	48
Marketing	79		technology	48
SOA	79		management	46
MDM	78		applications	45
future	78		content	43
services	76			

Further "pre-processing" was required for generating Semantic Networks and Semantic Lists. Setting the analysis direction to "bidirectional" picked up two entries for each semantic captured sequentially in the data output which was easier read, but resulted in much greater numbers of links. An important setting was a unit of assessment that could be set at sentence, paragraph or "all". Applying sentence or paragraph pushed more prominent analysis of each input source, whereas an "all" setting pushed analysis across the whole metafile, reducing visibility of concepts and issues that may have been heavily emphasised in individual input sources. Semantic Network files were inputted to ORA to produce visualizations of Semantic Networks, but the maps were considered to be too dense or complex to be subjected to further analysis.

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visibility of concepts and issues that may have been heavily emphasised in individual input sources. Semantic Network files were inputted to ORA to produce visualizations of Semantic Networks, but the maps were considered to be too dense or complex to be subjected to further analysis.

The generated Semantic Concepts List was regarded as valuable highlighting Automap's capability to link key concepts – and especially where two words were key to conceptual definition e.g. Scenario Planning, Social Media, Web 2.0. This pairing formed an integrity check of the output. The original Semantic Concept List was further edited to remove prepositions, pronouns and stray symbols – and a cut-off was established at the Top 30 Semantic Concepts. Table 3 highlights the Top 30 Semantic Concepts.

CONCEPT	CONCEPT	FREQUENCY
scenario	planning	958
social	media	718
products	services	321
sales	organizations	242
sales	process	233
planning	marketing	230
technology	entrepreneurship	207
sales	performance	178
scenario	marketing	178
marketing	scenario	143
b2b	sales	168
performance	sales	155
big	deals	154
semantic	marketing	146
marketing	action	142
marketing	ontology	139

b2b	social	137
winning	sales	133
high	sales	118
media	b2b	118
high	performance	117
marketing	strategy	117
web	services	115
our	customers	108
sales	marketing	108
social	B2b	106
b2b	media	105
web	20	101
future	faster	98

Further analysis of the Top 30 Semantic Concepts highlighted seven Concepts acting as a spine or backbone or bus which other concepts connect into. The "main-bus" contains the Key Concepts:
- social
- media
- b2b
- sales
- marketing
- scenario
- planning

Two Concepts acted as a sub-spine or backbone or bus but at least within the Top 30 Semantic Concept List, but they were not linked to the main spine or backbone or bus. The "sub-bus" contains the Key Concepts:
- Web
- Services

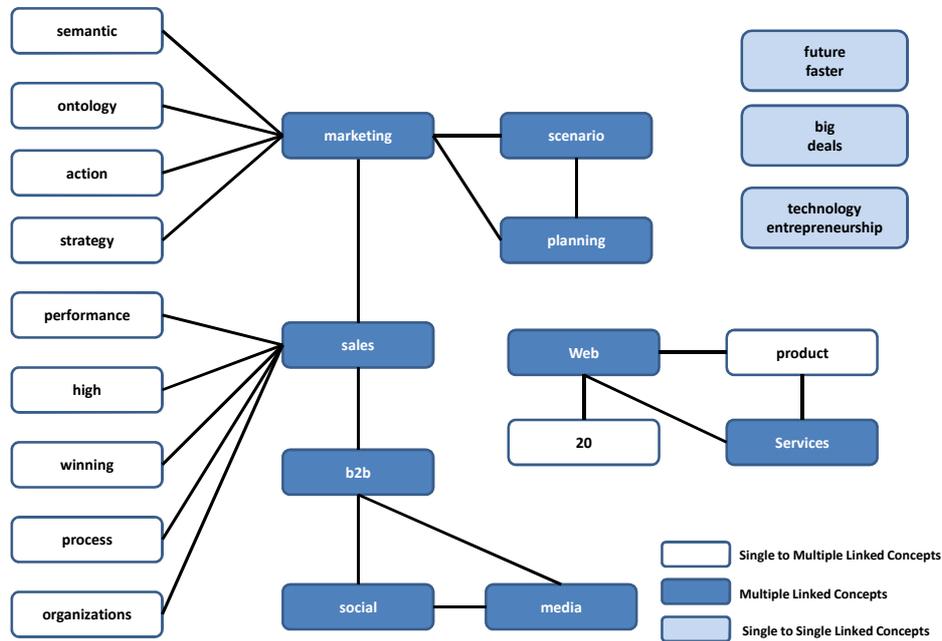The analysis was turned into visualised output in the form of a Semantic Concepts Map (see Figure 6).

Figure 6: Semantic Concepts Map – Spines, Backbones and Buses with Linked Concepts

Gist Difference Analysis (GDA)

The researchers compare outputs derived from text/semantic analysis in the Semantic Concepts with the Post-Storm B2B Sales/Marketing Mental Model in the Interpretative Map using Gist Difference Analysis (GDA). Pattinson & Sood (2005) developed a Gist Difference Analysis as a simple comparative analysis of different Mental Maps on B2B Sales Marketing, providing insights and lessons in B2B selling and marketing in changing online environments, and applied to the Post-Storm B2B Sales/Marketing Mental Model Interpretative Map and the Semantic Concepts Map (See Figure 7).
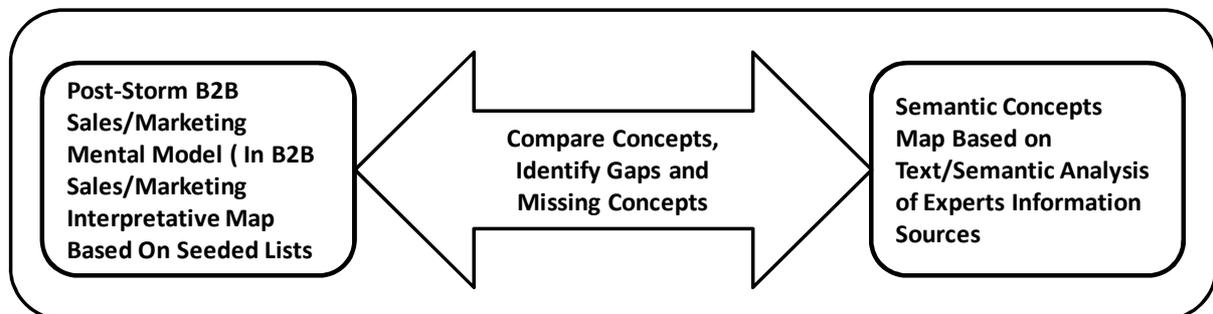

Figure 7: Gist Difference Analysis For B2B Sales Marketing

The Semantic Concept Map highlighted emerging B2B Sales and Marketing issues as focused on Social Media and to a lesser extent, the Web and Services. These semantic

concepts at a higher level can encompass most of the concepts highlighted in the Post-Storm B2B Sales/Marketing Mental Model.

Almost all of the concepts in the original interpretative map were in one or more of the information sources used in the text/semantic analysis, but were not picked up at a high level in a metafile analysis (i.e. within the 50 Key Concepts and the Top 30 Key Semantic Concepts). Such an outcome may be due to the way Automap conducts metafile text analysis (and the settings for analysis), but is more likely due to a limited established vocabulary and thesaurus for sales and marketing issues and activities. If this is so, then definition, development and application of sales and marketing within a more sophisticated semantically-driven online environment will be very limited.

Discussion on Representations of B2B Marketing and Sales Networks

So far analysis has been focused on producing a form of networking analysis to issues and concepts, but in order to assess the online networks of actors the researchers undertook a social graphing of relationships expressed online that foster information sharing both conversations on the changing landscape of sales and marketing, and conversations expressing actions on the sales and marketing transformation.

The initial Experts Panel Classification represented an attempt to set up archetypes or terms for development into a social graph. A significant switch to online collaboration and conversation is driving towards a conversational form of communications through blogs, wikis, self-publishing and collections of expert views in websites. Could networking be expressed through social graphing of experts – including customers?

Following this logic, out of the Experts' Classification, the researchers identify experts with blogs, and generate a social graphing of Online B2B Experts. Experience with research and visualization of blog content and links to other blogs and online content prompts the selection of netblography as a method (application of netnography to blogs; see Kelleher & Helkkula, 2009) for social graphing. Touchgraph (Touchgraph 2010) social mapping technology is used for netblography. Andrew Shapiro created the original visual browser for Google and developed that application into Touchgraph in 2001. An open-source version of Touchgraph application was applied to project (SourceForge 2010). A preliminary social graphing of B2B experts and online communications is presented in Figure 8.
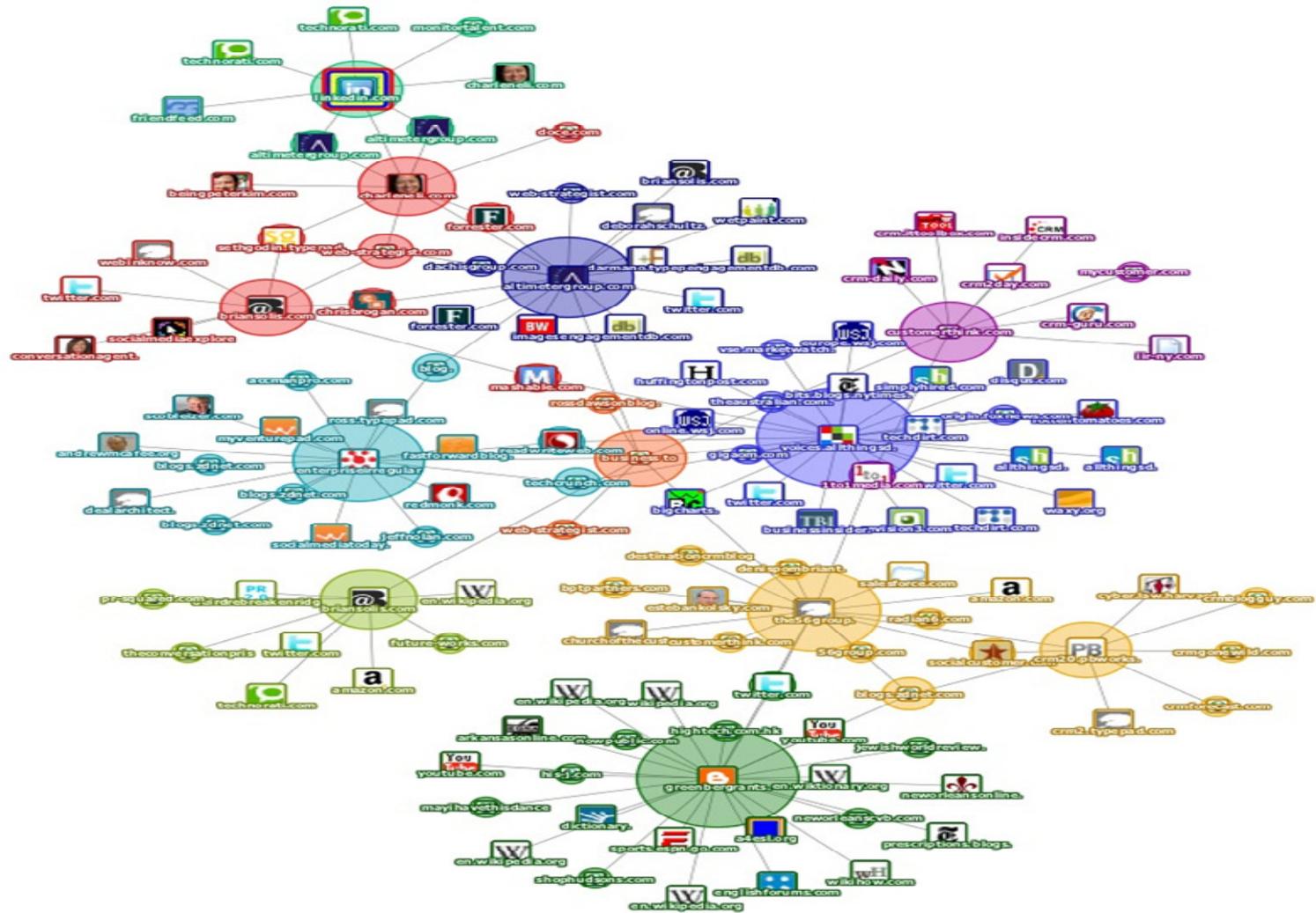
Figure 8: Preliminary Social Graph of Online B2B Experts

Although a small number of expert blogs were inputted to Touchgraph, the application identified and maps the web environment centric around the experts. The output presents a large number of linked blogs, wikis and other online communities – highlighting the depth, richness and dynamism of online B2B sales and marketing conversations. Examples of linked Social Media and other online applications highlighted in the Social Graph include Wikipedia, Twitter, YouTube, Technorati, and a large number of blogs on related topics and issues. Exploration and analysis of the visual social graph indicates a new and very different network of conversations and activities the existing B2B fraternity is unaware of.

The Social Graph highlights key experts linked through common online applications and frequently conversing on B2B related topics ranging from ideation, putting ideas into practice and actual accounts of enacting B2B sales and marketing activities.

Further interpretative analysis of the visual social graph and associated content of online discussions about B2B reveals further key insights:

- B2B interactive marketing is growing rapidly

- Lots of discussions regarding skills shortage amongst B2B marketers to execute online social marketing campaigns

- B2B marketers themselves and consultants feel B2B marketers are unique and the priority of marketing objectives are not well understood

- Strong feeling all B2B activities are high touch which flies in the face of consumer activities

- Struggle to meet the B2B sales demands of multiple decision-makers

- B2B marketing online assists distributors while creating a consumer demand

- Strong recognition that B2B buyers use wikis, discussion forums, and blogs

- Next new new things in B2B activities are strong moves to use Twitter extensively, and Virtual exhibition hosting via Virtual worlds

- Expertise location via social networks

- Free or low cost tools are popular amongst B2B informants on the blog sites e.g. Twitter and LinkedIn

An area to watch is how Social media will emerge in B2B selling and marketing with services expressed through Web 2.0. Representation of B2B issues and actor networks are required to create and use effective social graphing techniques. However, who will actually own or moderate such social graphing to produce clear, consistent and effective support and development of relevant business relationships? Perhaps the real job descriptions for Salespersons and Marketers in a B2B Sales/Marketing 2.0 world include the graphing tasks. After all, this is a natural step from collecting business cards.

Two online conversations recounted below underscore our views on changing roles and activities for B2B Salespeople and Marketers.

Conversations taking place with a hearing sales specialist and consumer electronics salesperson reflect the growing sentiment (see Appendix 2 for two etic representations online of conversations). The expectation is more real time sales conversations are becoming available online as customers share with other customers areas of dissatisfaction with the existing sales model:

> *"Aside from the total BS [slang] he came up with, I can't understand why someone in sales or customer service with a product manufacturer would say something like that to anyone expressing an interest in being a customer.*
> *Not sure what to think other than I doubt if I'll ever look at another Linksys product ever again" (iBill 2008)*
> *Or*
> *"…but it seems like it would be somewhat like asking the Maitre D' at a restaurant if the food in his establishment was good. Cheerleading and salesmanship doesn't interest me. I'm interested in facts regarding the efficacy of this company's product to improve sound tolerance" (Rob 2006).*

(The Hyperacusis Network Message Board, 2006; The Mac Observer, 2008)

The sales representative can no longer be the single point of contact and B2B just as high value consumer sales companies have embraced social media must move to faster adoption even if the entire cycle is no longer high touch. Customer businesses as our sales conversations and preliminary research point towards do not require gatekeepers or order takers but instead need access to skills and expertise over and above the availability of detailed information consulting and conversing with clients using social technologies are key drivers the storm is taking us towards.

Conclusions and Future Research

A new online communications network based on conversation has emerged producing new forms and networks of B2B Sales and Marketing Knowledge Creating, Sharing and Practice, and networks of actors. While this research highlights a number of key concepts associated with this rapid transformation, the storm has not yet passed – online conversation environments are still developing with new social media applications becoming available, new conversations as actors use the applications, new descriptions of activities and expression of views on those activities – and new actors contributing to developing knowledge, practices and services.

Further research is urgently required to both contribute to and analyse networks of information and actors associated with real time online conversations for B2B Sales and Marketing as well as taxonomic clarification of social graphing ((Sodera and Radeztsky 2009)), IMP networking (Ha kansson, Harrison and Waluszewski 2004) and the "new" networking (Watts 2004). Failure to pursue such research impedes B2B Sales and Marketing with outdated mental models for the new generation of sales professionals in online worlds.

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Appendix 2: Two Conversations with Sales Reps

Appendix 2.1: Conversation with a Neuromonics Sales Rep by Rob, 14 November 2006
(http://www.chat-hyperacusis.net/)

Today, I received a call from a sales rep for Neuromonics. I explained that I was trying to get specific information from the company about its results to date in treating hyperacusis [sensitivity to sound e.g. hyperacusis, recruitment, hyperacute hearing, tinnitus and misophonia.] I further explained that I have repeatedly asked for, and not received, specific answers to specific questions regarding the use of Neuromonics (the rep told me they no longer refer to the treatment as "ADP") to improve sound tolerance. I was hoping the rep would be kind enough to shed some much-needed light on my questions.

The rep, who said she was also an audiologist, told me the following.
"Neuromonics is specifically used to treat tinnitus. We have noticed improvement in sound tolerance, but under FDA standards in the US we cannot make claims about hyperacusis. But we have noticed in our private practice results, that there are improvements in decreased sound tolerance. So, again, we can make claims about improving tinnitus, but not about decreased sound tolerance. But we have seen significant improvement in that area."
Fair enough. I tried to explore what "significant improvement" meant to her. I mentioned my understanding is that her company found an improvement of just 5 dB in loudness discomfort levels and that this would be a negligible amount to someone with serious or average hyperacusis.
"Do you mean true LDLs, or a phonophobic response?", she asked me.
"True LDLs", I said.
"At what frequency?", she asked. Over the ten minutes we spoke, I noticed that her technique was to ask me a question each time I asked her one.
"Let's say at 4 kHz", I said. "Let's also say that a particular hyperacusic has an LDL of just 40 at that frequency. Are you saying that you believe a 5 dB improvement in LDLs at 4 kHz represents significant improvement for a hyperacusic with an LDL of 40?"
"Yes."
"Uh huh."
"5 dB is the mean", she offered. "Results from clinical trials indicate the lowest average improvement is 5 dB."
"So you're saying that an improvement of 5 dB for LDLs is the mean result and that you consider this to be significant improvement for a hyperacusic?"
"Yes."

The rep pretty much cut off our conversation at this point, but mentioned that I would be well-served by asking my questions to folks who practice Neuromonics in the US.
In my home state of GA, she recommended that I speak with Norma Mraz (a name I've heard before). She also recommended that I speak to Dr. Craig Newman in Cleveland and Dr. Gail Brenner in Philadelphia. I will report back on any further information I can glean from these folks, but it seems like it would be somewhat like asking the Maitre D' at a restaurant if the food in his establishment was good. Cheerleading and salesmanship doesn't interest me. I'm interested in facts regarding the efficacy of this company's product to improve sound tolerance.
In one of Neuromonics' online papers, I read that Neuromonics conducted four clinical trials for over 200 subjects. The second clinical trial involved 90 participants who were randomly assigned to four treatment groups over a 16-week baseline and 56 weeks of treatment.

According to the paper, "Hyperacusis levels typically improved for the music groups, and worsened for the counseling alone group." I was planning to discuss these results in greater detail, but it appeared the rep wasn't going to pursue our conversation much longer.

I'm not impressed with what I've been able to find out about Neuromonics in terms of treating decreased sound tolerance, but I'm going to continue to speak to folks about it. It seems to me that an improvement of LDLs by only 5 dB is virtually insignificant. While I don't view Neuromonics as the equivalent of the laser frauds, I'm not convinced that this treatment is as efficacious as TRT or the correct use of pink noise under the guidance of an informed hearing healthcare professional. And it is certainly far more expensive than a $15.00 pink noise CD and more expensive than TRT. I should add that, unlike the noise emitted by the generators worn in TRT, virtually no technical information is available about the sound/noise source used in Neuromonics' treatment. I'm assuming it is a combination of some sort of broadband noise and music. But unlike, say, the GHI generators, where I've seen a generalized readout of the noise source, I'm in the dark about what Neuromonics uses -- technically speaking.
I have written to Dr. Davis about Neuromonics (the equivalent of writing to Dr. Jastreboff about TRT) and will post his response if I receive it.

Appendix 2.2: Bizarre phone conversation with Linksys sales rep by iBill (Mac Genius),
14 February 2008
(http://www.macobserver.com/)

I had a really odd experience on the phone today with someone in sales or customer service at Linksys and feel compelled to write about it. I hope this is the right forum for this story.
Comp USA is going belly up as most of you probably know, and I stopped in at my local store to see what they have left at 50% off. I was looking at wireless N pcmcia adapters, of which they have several brands at bargain prices. Of course none of them list Mac compatibility on the box (naturally). I thought I'd do some research, thinking that some of them might work on my Pismo even though they aren't supposed to.

One of them is the Linksys WPC300N Wireless N notebook adapter. I called Linksys to inquire about possible Mac compatibility. The person I spoke with checked, and eventually said that they were Windows only. When I asked if he knew why, the first words out of his mouth were Steve Jobs.. *I'm thinking, oh boy, this is going to be good*

(paraphrasing the response somewhat from memory)
Steve Jobs has a monopoly, and has his software locked down so nobody else can get access to it. We can't write drivers for his system because we don't have access.
Well, I didn't call him on his BS because I didn't see the point, but I did suggest that in fact I was looking for Mac compatibility for what amounts to a legacy interface (cardbus), and since Apple notebooks no longer use that interface, Apple really doesn't have much incentive to prevent third parties from implementing Mac compatibility..

He wasn't touched by that line of reasoning and went on to bash Steve some more (something to the effect of "control freak"), blah blah blah. After this point we parted company.
All in all he was essentially polite but also (I thought) intentionally insulting. Aside from the total BS he came up with, I can't understand why someone in sales or customer service with a product manufacturer would say something like that to anyone expressing an interest in being a customer. Not sure what to think other than I doubt if I'll ever look at another Linksys product ever again.