



# Everything Everywhere All at Once

Making sense of today's sales tech boom



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## Making sense of today's sales tech boom

BY PAUL NOLAN

Technology has never played a more vital role in companies' go-to-market strategies. The tools in each sales team's tech stack can make the difference between blowing past competitors or falling short of quota – again!

Relationship building will always be a key component of selling, but handshakes and hobnobbing alone don't cut it in today's competitive environment.

Choosing the right technology is among the most important decisions that sales leaders make. Software is used for everything from screening applicants and onboarding new hires to providing veteran rainmakers with highly qualified leads and the data to create the type of finely tailored messages that close deals.

Consider the role of tech sales and marketing tools as you take in these statistics from the LinkedIn Sales Solutions [“State of Sales Report:”](#)

- **Digital buying is here to stay** – 55% of buyers say that working remotely has made buying easier, while nearly 40% of sellers say they have closed deals over \$500,000 without ever meeting the buyer face to face.
- **Top salespeople conduct more research** – More than three-quarters (82%) of top performers say they perform research “all the time” before reaching out to prospects (compared to 49% for other sellers).
- **Technology turbocharges sales** – Four out of five (80%) sellers who reached 150% of quota or more use sales tech

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at least once a week. Only 58% of other sellers use sales tech once a week.

- **Top performers embrace technology** – By about 30 percentage points, top sellers are significantly more confident in their CRM data than other sellers are. Similarly, by about 20 percentage points, top sellers say they are significantly more likely to use their CRM systems more often than other sellers are.

### Getting the Tech Stack Right

A [2021 survey](#) by B2B sales software provider GetAccept and Pavilion Data Systems indicates that businesses have between four and 10 tech tools in their sales stack. It's common to have significantly more.

Gartner coined the term “sales tech mayhem” in 2021 to define the bull market in sales tech investment and the influx of sales tech providers. When the world went remote due to the COVID pandemic, businesses poured money into digital tools. Budgets have tightened since then, but there is still intense pressure for leaders to keep their teams technologically competitive.

“People are all-in on sales technology,” said Jarod Greene, a Gartner alum who is now vice president of product marketing at sales enablement provider [Highspot](#). “Sales leaders are looking for the confidence that if they invest \$10 into their revenue tech stack they’ll get \$100 in return. There are about 1,500 sales tech solutions to help teams be more productive. I don’t think any of them are wrong, but we just don’t know how it all fits together.”

Sales technology, broadly defined, is any IT infrastructure, software or other program aimed at enhancing sales reps’ performance. Sales tech tools assist with lead generation and qualification, prospecting, sales funnel organization, account tracking, predicting buyer readiness, analysis of multichannel communication with prospects and existing customers, demo automation and more.

Gartner surveyed more than 3,000 business leaders in sales, marketing, supply chain management and HR in 2022, asking them which software purchases for sales revenue within the last two years made the most impact. CRM/salesforce automation was the top performer (15% of respondents), with sales predictive analytics (13%) and sales enablement platforms (12%) finishing second and third. (See chart on page 4.)

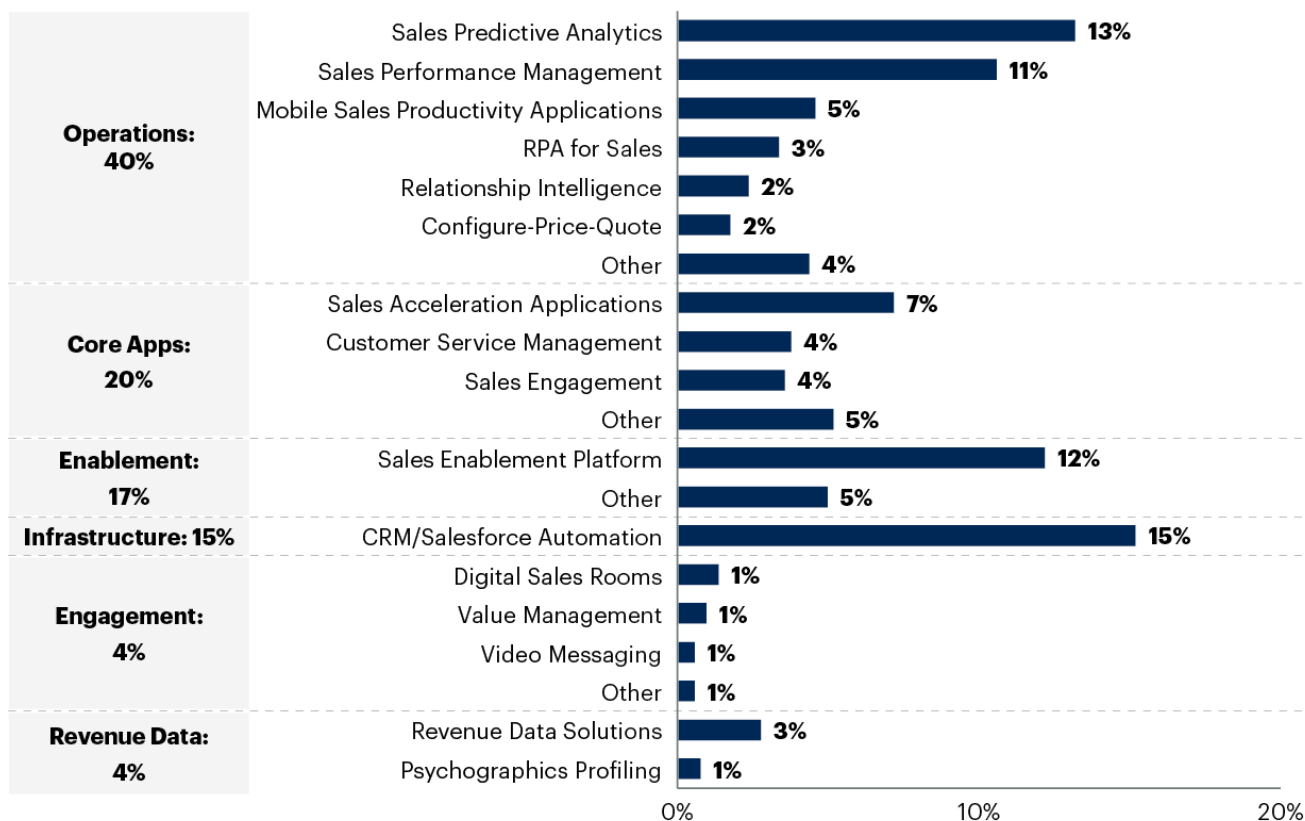
Gartner divides the 16 different categories of software identified in this survey more broadly into six categories. Operations, the most impactful category, is software that is used to “streamline and automate processes from early pipeline generation stages through post purchase.” Forty percent of respondents stated this category of sales software was the most impactful.

Twenty percent of respondents identified “core apps” as their most impactful software purchase within the last two years. Core apps is identified as “those that help organizations meet the core automation, workflow and buyer engagement needs of highly specialized go-to-market roles.” The category includes sales acceleration applications, customer service management, and sales engagement software.

Enablement runs a close third with 17% of respondents citing it as their most impactful purchase. Although infra-



### Most Impactful Sales Technology Purchases



n = 499; Sales Function Leaders

Q. What was the specific type or category of software purchased?

Source: 2022 Gartner Functional Business Buyers Survey

Note: Objective percentages may not sum to category percentages due to rounding.

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structure has the most cited type of software — CRM/sales force automation — it is only the fourth-most-impactful category in the survey.

“What jumped out to me is the investment in core applications, specifically sales engagement and sales acceleration applications,” said Dan Gottlieb, senior director analyst in the Gartner for Sales practice. “It makes a lot of sense because you’re seeing more attention given to the end-user experience. It’s also not surprising to see analytics higher up, especially as pressure to demonstrate the ROI of a variety of initiatives will show up in sales analytics results.”

#### Getting Reps to Use Tech

Choosing the right sales technology can be vexing. Getting sales reps to use the technology that companies invest in can be even more challenging. A number of reports have found that nearly

half of all software as a service (SaaS) installed by companies (sales and non-sales oriented) is not used.

Some salespeople bristle at ever-expanding sales tech stacks, arguing that time spent entering data into CRM systems or reviewing data from analytics tools is time spent not selling. However, statistics from the LinkedIn “State of Sales Report” and others like it should go a long way toward convincing salespeople that today’s tech tools can help them be more productive and efficient.

Gottlieb said endorsement of sales tech software from peers is among the most effective means of converting non-users to users. Also, formal and thorough training on any new software is essential to ensuring adoption. One client successfully drove adoption by creating exclusivity. Software was initially offered to only five managers, then expanded in phases to those who would commit to its use.

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The expansion of technology and data combined with a lack of training has resulted in a skills gap, according to Gartner. Sales leaders should create a road map that identifies the tech skills necessary to achieve sales operations goals and develop a skill acquisition strategy that provides those capabilities.

By 2027, 50% of total sales operations roles will be filled with talent that has either an MBA or science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) background, according to Gartner's 2022 State of Sales Operations and Revenue Operations Survey. Within that same time frame, statistical analysis, application development, data visualization and strategic planning will be the top skills for sales operations.

"Whenever you buy software, it should come with a training component as part of the price. If that's not the case, there

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**72% of respondents to a survey by Learning Experience Alliance feel that the market is lacking sales enablement professionals with the necessary sales tech, data, sales content or sales operations skills and knowledge.**

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should be someone internally at a large firm who is responsible for training," said Shavon Jones, a Miami-based attorney who coaches lawyers on the selling side of their profession. (See story on page 13.) "You shouldn't rely on your team to just explore and figure out the features, especially if they have an existing system that they don't consider as being broken. They'd rather spend their time generating commissions instead of learning and migrating onto new technologies."

In a *Wall Street Journal* article on mistakes that leaders make when introducing technology, writer Katherine C. Kellogg emphasized the importance of rotating training responsibilities among senior and junior team members if training is handled in-house. Too often, training that is assigned to junior team members only leaves more experienced workers questioning the trainers' capabilities as well as the necessity of the technology, Kellogg said.

Training your sales team on new technology is not a "one and done," added John Eitel, chief sales officer at [Demandbase](#), a provider of account-based marketing software.

"You need to continuously think about how you train, teach and enable your sellers on the tools at their disposal. Make

training and enablement part of your sales team's DNA. Do not just train on launch and move on to the next priority. Have a plan that supports the launch and continues throughout their lifecycle as a seller."

Eitel says lack of commitment from frontline leaders to teach, train and hold teams accountable for tech usage contributes to non-usage of tech tools. "It is important to make your sales leadership team a part of this journey, get their feedback and buy-in early, and have them be active in the rollout strategy. If they don't buy in or see the value it adds to their teams, it will struggle to get adoption and falter."

### Audit Your Tech Stack

The pressure to remain technologically current can lead to adopting too much tech too fast, said Eitel.

"Updating your sales tech stack is very much a change journey, and oftentimes I see teams purchase and implement multiple tools at the same time without proper training or repeatedly changing tools based on new leadership. Too much too fast — and without proper training — can lead to tool adoption fatigue with your sales team."

Zendesk, providers of customer support and service software, recommend in a [guide to sales technology](#) that sales managers ask these questions to help determine what software to purchase:

- Are they a good fit for our company's size, industry and customer base?
- Do our reps spend time on any manual processes that can be streamlined or eliminated?
- Where is there more opportunity for more engagement?
- What key performance indicators (KPIs) are we focusing on?

Sales leaders should audit their sales tech stacks regularly to identify gaps and cull the SaaS that is unused, redundant or unnecessary. If unattended, sales tech stacks can grow beyond the point of tracking, like streaming and other subscriptions that are placed on autopay and forgotten. However, Gottlieb cautions, sales leaders should focus more on the ROI of sales technology they invest in and less on how often specific software gets used.

"One of the fool's errands you'll run into is an expectation that we need to use a lot of the technology to get value out of the contract when value in adoption is really based on whether it delivers some degree of lift in your sales process. If I have a sales process that is long and complex, and I use a technology that's only built for a certain part of that process, that may mean I only need to log into the tool once or twice a week to get value," Gottlieb said. "If I'm using it effectively and it can improve just a couple percentage points of lift, that's worth it."

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### AI Promises Continued Evolution

The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) such as ChatGPT and other generative AI software has dramatically shifted the possibilities of tech tools in all aspects of business. Sales software providers are incorporating generative AI into existing platforms as quickly as possible.

Maura Kautsky, president of [Sales Xceleration](#), a company that outsources sales leadership to companies that need to turn around flagging sales, said her company invited workplace futurist Rick Von Feldt to its annual conference in Las Vegas. He moderated discussions by breakout groups about the biggest disruptors to sales in the years ahead and technology was the unanimous No. 1 choice.

“Machines using AI and predictive data are merging with better algorithms to change the experience of sales process tracking, forecasting and closing insights. Because every strategy will have to be proven with data and analytics, the future of sales will need to leverage new tools in the market to support a data-first mindset,” Kautsky stated in a [blog post](#).

The ability of AI-driven tools to collect and analyze an almost infinite amount of data means sales personas could be a thing of the past, Kautsky said. Using the data collected on each prospect or customer, marketing messages can be tailored to specific recipients and address their unique needs.

Effective implementation of new technology in sales organizations begins with smart selection — perhaps seeking the voice of sellers as part of the software selection process. From there, make it clear to sellers how the new tools will help them, and provide them with thorough and ongoing training.

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**Sales teams powered with sales enablement tools for more than two years have experienced 48% higher customer engagement.**

SOURCE: SALES ENABLEMENT PRO

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Get influencers on board to help promote the use of these tools. Have milestones for objectives and key results. Offer incentives and create short-term contests that encourage adoption of the technology. Be sure to welcome candid feedback throughout implementation and continued use of any technology.

In this era of self-educated buyers who prefer digital interaction with sellers through a significant chunk of their buyer journey, new technology is critical to getting in front of them with the right message at the right time. Sales leaders are understandably focused on the technology needed to help them achieve this. However, they must also be conscious of the seller experience they create as they adapt their selling process to digital-first customers. **SMM**



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# Warming Up to Automation

Technology can actually humanize customer engagement

BY HANG BLACK AND GAVIN FINN

Recent rapid shifts in three primary strategic forces have made it imperative to change how enterprise sales teams engage with customers.

First, the macro-economic dynamics related to the global remote work phenomenon have forced sales teams to adopt remote selling as their primary process, compared with traditional in-person meetings that have dominated sales strategies for decades. This is a paradigm that will continue well after the severity of the COVID-19 pandemic wanes.

The second critical change is the demand for frictionless customer-driven engagement. This was underway well before the 2020 pandemic and has been significantly influenced by individuals' B2B online research and buying behaviors. As e-commerce has grown dramatically since the mid-2000s, consumers have become more and more insistent on a high-performance digital customer experience, which is now translating into their expectations for their buying processes at work.

The third revolution in the modern enterprise is the co-existence of four generations of employees within the same

organization, each exhibiting different operating behaviors. These multi-generational requirements have made it imperative for companies (and their vendors and partners) to create flexible engagement models suited to optimizing how different individuals consume information and make decisions.

What implications do these changes have with respect to the processes, roles and technologies on which enterprises rely?

## One Size Does Not Fit All

The products and solutions that B2B companies offer range from simpler (sometimes more commoditized) products to highly complex (often custom engineered) solutions. It makes sense to create engagement models tailored to the kinds of questions and decisions that customers need for these distinctive offerings.

At the lower end of complexity, the market will shift to a highly self-service model, where customers interact with digital systems at all stages of their omnichannel problem-solving journeys, from early-stage research, up to and including the final transaction stage. Digital systems are also appropriate post purchase to provide all the guidance and assistance that



customers need to track their orders, perform installation functions, troubleshoot problems and perform maintenance operations.

At the high end, where more complex products or services require specific engineering services, computer-assisted processes will form a basis for customers and vendors to share information, evaluate alternatives and inform decisions. Specialists and experts from both organizations will play key roles in these processes (as they do today), but they will also benefit from the optimization of the solutions and the processes due to increasingly intelligent and interactive digital platforms.

In between these extremes of complexity, a digitally augmented process will become the primary engagement model, wherein customers can use either human or digital interactions depending on the individual's level of knowledge, their preference for self-guided or assisted workflows, and their own psychographics and behaviors.

These transformations are not just technological, they are also role transformations for enterprise sales professionals such as sales development representatives (SDRs), account executives (AEs), systems/sales engineers (SEs), and even post-sales services. Rather than answering questions about speeds and feeds, all seller personas are now required to provide strategic analysis of a customer's situational fit. Particularly with more complex solutions and processes, they become an integral part of the customers' problem-solving process, further building trust and alignment between the customer and the vendor/partner.

The primary technology enablers for these different engagement levels are visually interactive digital customer experiences, customer engagement platforms, artificial intelligence and digital collaboration solutions.

### **Interactive Digital Customer Experiences**

Cognitive science has shown that humans do not absorb or retain complex information unless they are highly focused. This is especially true in distracting environments such as websites or virtual events. In order to help prospective buyers understand and remember a company's complex competitive differentiators, it is important to ensure that they are paying attention.

When sales or marketing communicates highly complex information in the same manner to a variety of people, this will result in a lack of consistency in audience comprehension of these key facts. That is the exact moment in time to provide individuals with the ability to interactively discover relevant information for themselves, rather than relying on a message delivered to them by a person or a Web page.

Interactive engagement is a key requirement because research has shown that when individuals are passive in an information transfer process (such as watching a video or a slide presentation), they lack the attention needed to learn, understand and retain complex information. By being actively involved, their attention is highly focused, allowing them to learn at their own pace and in their own sequence. Understanding and retaining information is based on a combination of:

- 1. Multi-sensory interaction** – Touch, mouse actions, sight, sound, etc.
- 2. Relevant knowledge transfer** – They choose where to go in the experience based on their interests
- 3. Building an emotional connection** – Their sense of agency and control releases higher amounts of dopamine, resulting in heightened pleasure

This kind of digital interaction serves the needs of customers and vendors by creating consistency for both sales and marketing in how customers engage with the company at all phases of their omnichannel journey.

### **The Emergence of Artificial Intelligence**

In 21st century corporations, judicious investment in automation to augment the sales experience is critical to providing agility and consistency at scale. According to Gartner, 68% of sales organizations are planning to increase their sales tech spend. In 2022, they identified seven sales tech disruptions as:

- Multi-sensory sales experience
- Generative AI of outbound messages
- Metaverse-ready with AR/VR
- Emotion AI
- Digital Twin of the Customer – predictive customer engagement
- Digital Humans – augmented customer experience
- Machine Customers – human-to-machine and machine-to-machine selling

**Service Providers** – Human-to-human relationship selling is still very much alive when deep technical knowledge of complex solutions remain paramount. However, they may choose to meet in the “real-verse” for a multi-sensory demo or in the Metaverse to design solutions for bespoke outcomes.

**Enterprise** – Human-to-human enhanced selling with a tool stack provides omni-channel communication to meet customers in their preferred manner (from Web to virtual collaboration, to in-person) while evolving from just-in-time enablement to serving up predictive in-workflow customer engagement that may include content created by generative AI.

**Mid-Market** – Augmented selling with a healthy tool implementation can automate the mundane parts of engagement to provide efficiency for when human buyers choose to engage with human sellers only after they've hit the limit of their own self-service with or without the aid of a digital human. Think AI-assisted sales cadence, call coaching, calendar integrations, mutual action plans, etc.

**SMB** – Automated selling with a robust tool stack across marketing, sales, and customer success is already taking shape to save time on renewals and other frictionless transactions where AI can provide predictive sizing, contract, payment, and fulfillment for machine to machine transactions.

As digitally native generations who prefer no or low live interaction with sellers mature into roles as influencers and even decision makers, we must respect how and when they want to interact, whether asynchronously or in-person. A generation of YouTube learners has a voracious appetite for efficient consumption of digitally curated experiences and low tolerance for navigating through inefficient processes.

### Digital Collaboration and Consensus Building

Research has shown that enterprise buying has become significantly more complex. As the increasing number of roles has become integral to making purchase decisions (e.g. IT, operations, procurement, security, facilities, customer experience, etc.), sales cycles have increased correspondingly.

Much of the increase in sales cycles is due to the linear nature of interdepartmental problem-solving and decision-making. Once a solution is evaluated by one group, it is sent along to the next group for its review, and so on. The compounding factor is the inherent iteration of the process — when one group asks questions or makes changes, the previous buying/decision-making teams must re-engage to accommodate these new factors.

It would be optimal to find ways to help teams engage in problem-solving and decision-making together — sharing their groups' needs, requirements and concerns so the collective team can evaluate alternatives concurrently.

Because of the remote nature of much of the enterprise workforce, bringing disparate teams together has become increasingly difficult, while simply hosting a video conference has been shown to be less effective as a problem-solving forum. What is needed are digital collaboration solutions that address the key needs and value for each stakeholder while allowing for engaging participation. This new generation of interactivity (i.e. multi-user, concurrent interactions in the same digital

workspace) will transform the company's internal decision process and reduce unnecessary decision-making delays.

### Digital-Enabled Process and Transformation

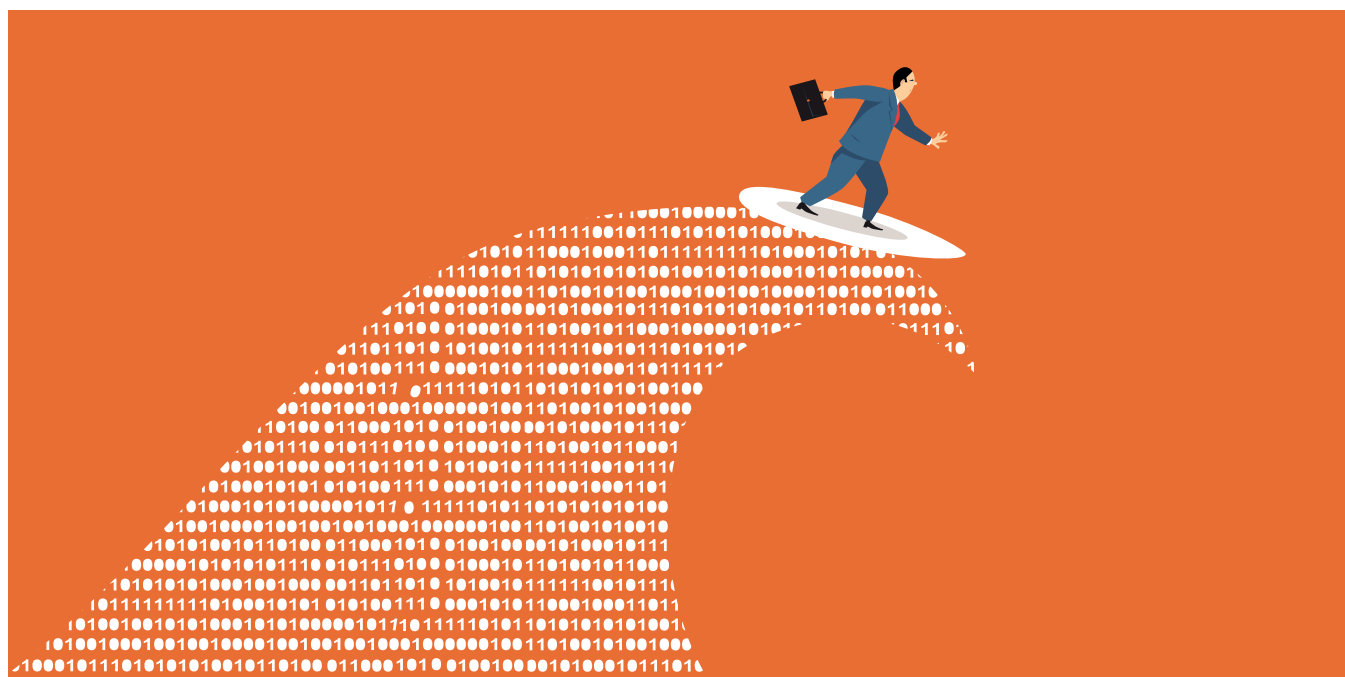
The next generation of enterprise sales and marketing organizations will thrive not because they have tactically adjusted their methods and tools, but because they have strategically revolutionized the way they do everything. At the heart of this revolution is the need to focus on customer outcomes and experience rather than what the company is trying to sell. Based on this philosophy, the sales process is designed around who customers are, what critical challenges they face, when and where they prefer to interact with the vendor, and how they make decisions.

These transformations are digitally-enabled, but they are not limited to the technology. They include all aspects of the go-to-market strategy. The foremost priority regarding how the next generation sales and marketing teams work is to facilitate a digitally augmented frictionless customer's experience at the center of every decision, giving them control of the process, timing and venues for how they collaborate with their partners/vendors.

This transformation will require a confluence of key digital platforms, technologies and bold vision that is not for the faint-hearted. Rather, this future will be built by those who believe in creating a culture of continuous innovation. **SMM**

Hang Black is vice president of revenue enablement and sales tech evangelist at [ZoomInfo](#), whose suite of modern go-to-market software, data and intelligence enables sales, marketing and recruiting teams to uncover opportunities.

Gavin Finn is president and CEO at [Kaon Interactive](#), which provides interactive marketing and sales solutions for the world's largest B2B enterprises.





# How Demo Automation Brings Sales Teams Into the 21st Century

BY EVAN POWELL

It's no secret that businesses can't use the same sales tactics they did a decade ago. Today's enterprise buyers are tech savvy and have more information readily available than their predecessors. They complete thorough buying research, but they frequently lack time for a sales call.

According to [Gartner](#), in the process of enterprise buying, customers spend almost half their time on their own online and offline research. A sales representative will have, on average, about 5% of a customer's time. That doesn't leave much time for making a good impression, but it does raise the question, if the old tactics don't work, what approach should sales teams take today?

In a few short years, demo automation and its technology has upended the sales process. There are a number of different sales demo automation solutions available on the market, most of which are low- or no-code.

## A Closer Look at Demo Automation

Demo automation uses low-code demos to showcase a product. Unlike a freemium, where businesses essentially give customers a blank canvas as a product trial, demo automation can be customized to show as much or as little of the software as the sales team needs.

Demo automation is key for companies navigating today's challenging labor market and tighter budgets. [Reprise](#) recently surveyed SaaS experts and found that most are seeing an extended sales cycle, which can frustrate sales and marketing teams.

In economic downturns, it takes several layers of approval to make large-ticket purchases. Demo automation can shorten sales cycles because prospective buyers no longer need to schedule a new meeting for every level of approval. The information is there, customized and on demand, for anyone

who wants to see or interact with the product. The buyer becomes your champion and the sales team is there to provide support and guidance through the process.

Most product demos fall into two categories: a live demo, which is intended for sales calls and one-to-one interactions, or a guided experience, which can be embedded on a company website or shared via email. Demos can quickly be adjusted to a specific industry or use case, and “sandbox” versions of the product can easily be shared with prospects so they can experience a robust environment built for their needs.

There are several benefits and core reasons to use sales demo automation. First, it can free up sales reps to focus on more strategic activities, such as building relationships with prospective clients and, importantly, close deals. Second, it can help to ensure that demos are consistent and accurate, assisting in creating a consistent message and brand which can lead to better outcomes and revenue. Third, it can help to track and measure demo performance, which can be used to improve the overall sales process.

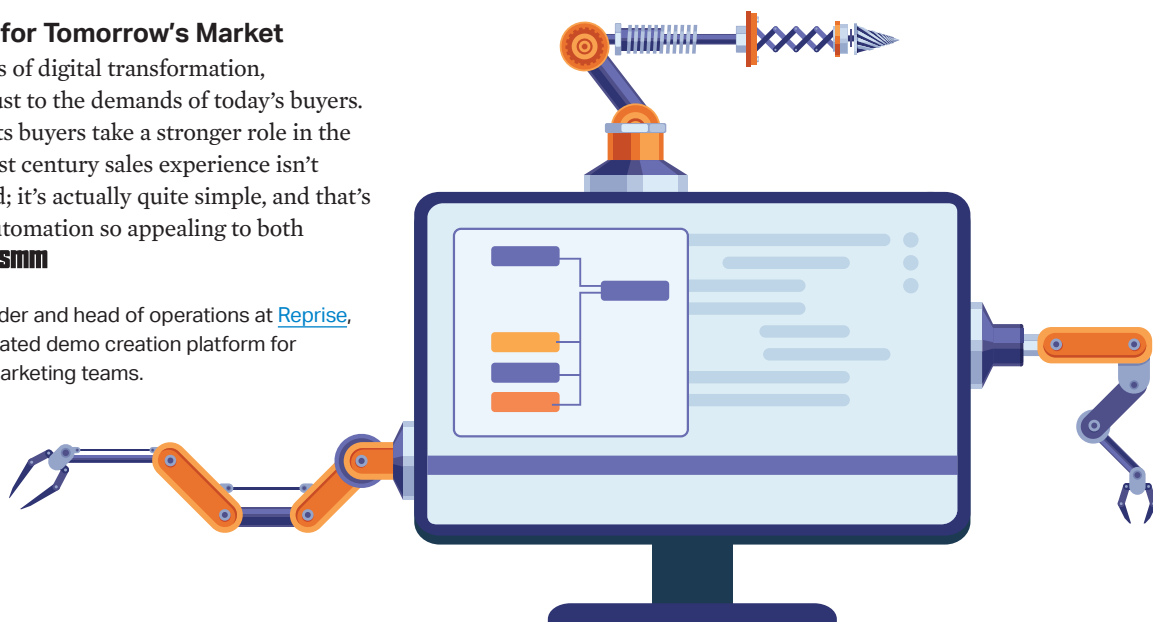
Additional benefits of using sales demo automation include:

- **Increased sales productivity** – Sales reps can save time by not having to create and deliver demos manually. This can free them up to focus on other tasks, such as prospecting and closing deals.
- **Improved sales accuracy** – Demo automation can help to ensure that demos are consistent and accurate. This can lead to better outcomes, such as increased sales and improved customer satisfaction.
- **Better lead qualification** – By providing prospects with a self-guided demo, sales reps can get a better understanding of their needs and whether they are a good fit for the product or service.
- **Increased customer satisfaction** – A self-guided demo lets prospects learn about the product or service at their own pace and in their own time. This can lead to a more positive experience and a greater likelihood of a sale.

## Today's Solution for Tomorrow's Market

As with other aspects of digital transformation, companies must adjust to the demands of today's buyers. Demo automation lets buyers take a stronger role in the sales process. The 21st century sales experience isn't flashy or complicated; it's actually quite simple, and that's what makes demo automation so appealing to both buyers and sellers. **SMM**

Evan Powell is co-founder and head of operations at [Reprise](#), makers of a fully integrated demo creation platform for enterprise sales and marketing teams.



## Finding the Right Demo Automation Product

The demo automation industry [has exploded](#), with almost two-thirds of vendors starting up in 2020 and 2021. It can be dizzying to identify which product best meets your needs. Here are three key questions to ask yourself before purchasing demo automation software.

### What is our business size?

Small businesses have uniquely different needs — and budgets — from enterprise companies, and that also applies to software selection. [Storylane](#), for example, is a newcomer to the space that is well suited to solopreneurs and small businesses, while [Consensus](#) focuses more on enterprise. Others, like [Reprise](#), offer flexible solutions for mid-size businesses that are looking to scale.

### How will we use demos?

Demo automation isn't one-size-fits-all. For example, [Testbox](#) specializes in sandbox-style demos preconfigured with real use cases so prospects can experience what it would be like to use the software, while [Demoboost](#) enables customers to create a demo library that can be quickly and easily restructured for various applications.

### What integrations do we need?

Software that stands alone is not efficient. You need to ensure it can talk to and easily integrate with other systems, from Slack to Salesforce. Before selecting demo software, make a list of integrations you'll need and ensure the software is up to the task.

# Tech Training for Non-Techies

Shavon Jones teaches lawyers about sales and technology, two things that many of them are decidedly disinterested in.

BY PAUL NOLAN

If you think it's challenging to onboard new hires who are intent on becoming top salespeople, try generating excitement about developing a prospect funnel, nurturing leads, tracking progress and knowing how to close to a professional cohort that has no interest in sales.

Shavon Jones has turned that challenge into a business. She is the founder of [Sales for Lawyers](#), a sales coaching consultancy that aims to turn attorneys into rainmakers by teaching them how to spot opportunities, generate new business through referrals and learn how to convert inquiries into paying clients. Jones' attorney pupils are not only frequently hesitant to accept that selling is part of their role, they also are, on the whole, notoriously adverse to embracing technology.

Jones, an attorney herself who continues to practice administrative law, launched Sales for Lawyers in 2019 after writing a book of the same name.

"I interviewed a leading real estate developer about what he wanted to see from lawyers and I realized he wasn't getting any of it," she said. "I wanted to teach law firms to be less paternalistic to young people coming in and more client-focused."

She initially offered multiple-day, in-person workshops from her Miami home base, but transitioned to e-learning when COVID cut off business travel and in-person training. That opened the door to global customers, which she says now constitute a significant percentage of her clientele. She focuses on legal services because she is a lawyer, but she said her training could be applicable for any professional service.

Her Rainmakers e-curriculum covers everything from branding and market awareness to fee negotiation and dealing with competitors. There is also a section on using sales technology, which Jones said trains lawyers on the basics of CRM, Bloomberg Law's customer technology platform and other software tailored to the legal industry.

Convincing lawyers to embrace technology can be difficult. According to an annual survey of in-house general counsel attorneys coordinated by [Ari Kaplan Advisors](#), a legal industry analyst, 67% of GCs polled in 2021 believe that attorneys do not



Shavon Jones

have adequate technical competence. That's up from 45% who felt attorneys were not technically competent in 2020!

Jones' explanation why technological proficiency is getting worse, not better, in her profession should serve as a cautionary tale for leaders in all industries. It starts with a lack of proper training on new technology.

"You shouldn't rely on your team to explore and figure out the features, especially if they have an existing system they don't view as being broken," Jones said. "Salespeople would rather spend their time generating commissions instead of learning and migrating onto new technologies.

"Whenever you buy software, it should come with a training component as part of the price. If that's not the case, there should be someone internally at a large firm who is responsible for training."

Jones recommends accompanying any training — tech-oriented or otherwise — with something fun. It's not a big leap from "Sesame Street" to corporate training, she said.

"If I'm teaching business development, I may also bring in a corporate stylist to stage a mini fashion show. Attorneys have fun seeing how they can spruce up their wardrobe and still look professional. They get excited about the rest of what they take in. You have to figure out what you can do to make your people more interested in what you want them to learn." **SM**



# The Sales Manager Dilemma: Too Much Technology, Too Little Leadership

BY RICHARD CONDE

In today's fast-paced business environment, sales managers are under constant pressure to meet targets and increase revenue. In response, many rely profoundly on their sales tech stack to help manage their salespeople and improve sales performance. One estimate states the sales technology landscape has evolved from just over 300 technological software sales tools in 2015 to over 1,200 in 2022, providing sales managers with a plethora of specialized tools to drive sales performance.

As technology is embedded in all parts of the sales process and sales funnel, there is a growing concern that sales managers are relying too heavily on these tools at the expense of developing their leadership skills.

The Peter Principle states that individuals within an organization tend to rise to a level of respective incompetence, meaning they are promoted to positions for which they are not suited. The best worker is only sometimes the best candidate for management.

and scrutinize data that they neglect to heed the importance of building personal relationships with their team members. They may also rely too heavily on performance management tools to track sales performance rather than spending time coaching and motivating their team to reach their goals. This practice can lead to a lack of engagement and motivation among team members, negatively impacting sales performance.

In addition, the over-reliance on technology can also lead to the erosion of emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills among sales managers. These skills are essential for effective leadership and include empathy, self-awareness, and building and maintaining relationships. These skills are necessary for sales managers to build trust and rapport with their team members, which can harm team morale and performance.

Sales managers need to understand the importance of creating a culture that maximizes a salesperson's autonomy and the ability to learn while building strong relationships with

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**Rather than spend time behind a computer screen evaluating numbers, sales managers should spend time side-by-side, coaching and mentoring their team members.**

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In a study of 38,843 salespeople, Benson, Li, and Shue (2020) showed a 33% impact on sales outcomes when companies place greater promotional weight on a salesperson's sales performance rather than on managerial potential. As a result, sales managers may be promoted to leadership positions despite having little experience in developing people. This practice likely leads to their use of technology as a crutch rather than focusing on the human skills that are essential for effective leadership.

Sales management is a people-centric role that relies on the manager's ability to motivate, inspire and coach their team. Today, however, technology has changed the way sales teams work and, more importantly, how sales managers use technology to monitor their salespeople. For example, a sales manager can monitor an outside salesperson's exact location while at the same time recording, evaluating and scoring every word spoken by an inside salesperson. While these tools can be incredibly helpful in monitoring salespeople, they can create a "Tayloristic" work environment, where salespeople do something to obtain a reward or avoid the punishment that leads to limited sales performance.

Sales managers may become so reliant on customer relationship management (CRM) systems to constantly evaluate

their team. Rather than spend time behind a computer screen evaluating numbers, sales managers should spend time side-by-side, coaching and mentoring their team members.

Sales managers must also be willing to invest time and effort in developing their leadership skills, such as communication, coaching and creating an employee-centric culture. There are many tools available to help sales managers be more people focused. At the same time, companies need to provide their sales managers with training focused on people-oriented skills.

These programs can provide valuable insights into the latest best practices and techniques for building high-performing teams and help sales managers develop the emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills essential for effective leadership.

Technology can be incredibly helpful in monitoring sales performance, but sales managers must be careful not to rely too heavily on these tools at the cost of neglecting people management skills. It's important to always remember that sales managers lead people. **SM**

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# The Technology Advantage Requires Proper Application

Technology has had an impact beyond just a seller's ability to connect with their prospects. It has allowed for better tracking and more efficient workflows for sellers. Salespeople can be better organized and more efficient with their limited time. Sales managers can have a much clearer grasp of what is happening with their sales teams. These tools allow for better coaching and more effective intervention when needed.

Many companies, however, make the mistake of focusing too much on getting the "right" tech stack and often ignore the overarching goals that technology is supposed to enable. For example, sales management tools should help make sales coaching and managing easier. There are a lot of applications and tools that sound exciting but don't necessarily have a direct impact on activities that determine the bottom line.

There are many overarching goals that sales and marketing technology can help achieve, but in this article we will focus on one of the main engines of sales: conversations. [Conversations with a prospect](#) or a client are what move the deal forward. The tech stack should be a tool that helps sellers have more conversations that are effective at moving a sale forward. With that in mind, here are three sales areas that technology can impact on improving the rate and effectiveness of a seller's conversation with their prospects.

## Technology For Research

One of the biggest advantages technology provides sellers is access to information. Before the internet was prevalent, sellers had to dial blindly or knock on doors without knowing much about the prospect. Thanks to tools like LinkedIn and other social media platforms, sellers can learn about prospects and their companies before ever reaching out to them.

At this point, researching a prospect is standard for any high-performing sales organization. On top of tools like LinkedIn, technologies like ZoomInfo or DiscoverOrg allow sellers to get the most accurate contact information for their prospects. Companies should be aware of the mistake of thinking that merely providing access to these tools is enough for their sellers to be successful. Sales leaders need to ensure that sellers know the purpose behind these tools. The training also needs to cater to leverage these tools to increase the rate of effective sales conversations.

## Technology For Organization

Another way that sales and marketing technology can enable more sales conversations is through its ability to help salespeople stay more organized. People have been using calendars for a long time, but many aspects of sales can be automated. Follow-ups can be scheduled and automated.

CRMs and outreach tools can help sellers by reminding them to reach out to a prospect that's gone cold. It's common for

prospects to tell sellers to reach out to them at a different time. It is also common for sellers to forget about these follow-ups after a few months. Tech tools can help sellers stay organized and ensure these tasks don't fall through the cracks. Sales tech that helps sellers stay more organized allows them to have more conversations that close deals.

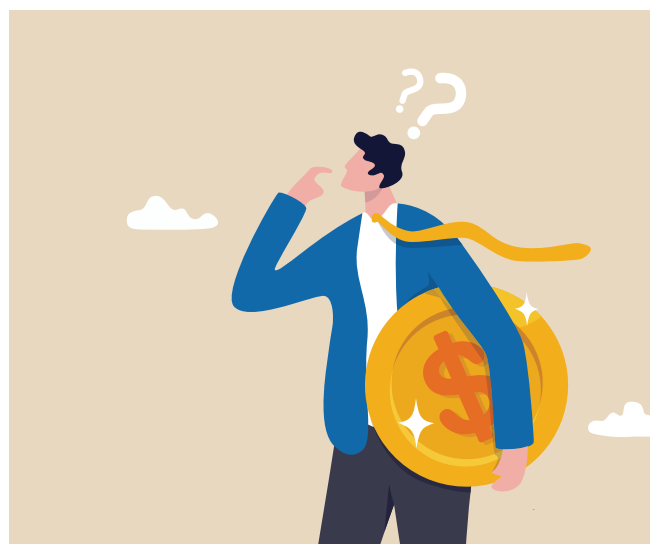
## Technology For Continuous Learning

One of the most underutilized tools in sales is call recordings. Plenty of sales and marketing tools in the market allow sales teams to record their conversations. Companies might record their conversations, but many must leverage them for training and coaching.

Using call recordings is just one example of technology that enables continuous learning. Many learning platforms easily integrate with a company's existing CRM. This is a great way to add skill development and learning as part of a regular cadence for salespeople. Sales conversations are a skill, and like any other skill, it needs to be practiced. Technology can certainly be leveraged to help sellers continuously learn and hone their conversation skills.

Having better conversations is a goal. Helping sellers gain more prospecting skills is a goal. Buying as much technology as possible is not the end goal of the tech stack. Sales teams should always remember the results they are trying to achieve and use this as the lens to determine if they need additional tech tools. When evaluating which vendors to partner with, sales leaders should consider these end goals. **SMM**

Tom Snyder is the founder and managing partner of [Funnel Clarity](#), a sales consulting and training company that focuses primarily on the areas of sales strategy, sales skills and sales process for sales leaders.



# 7 Technology Disruptors

“Technology is taking on an even more central role in the sales process, and chief sales officers (CSOs) need to get ahead of a series of innovations that will significantly disrupt sales strategy, engagement, pricing and enablement,” said Noah Elkin, VP Team Manager in the [Gartner Sales practice](#). He identified seven key disruptions that executives need to prepare for in the next five years.

**1. Machine Customers** – Non-human economic actors that obtain goods or services in exchange for payment. Sales leaders should begin developing sales forces that can effectively navigate the challenges of human, machine and hybrid selling environments.

**2. Generative AI** – By 2025, 30% of outbound messages from large organizations will be synthetically generated.

“Generative AI means sales teams will never have to beg for content again,” said Elkin.

**3. Digital Twin of the Customer** – A dynamic virtual representation of a customer. It ingests data from personas and runs tests for sales messaging, sales processes and marketing campaigns to predict what does and doesn’t work for that customer.

**4. AR/VR** – By 2025, 80% of B2B sales interactions between suppliers and buyers will occur in digital channels. Sales organizations need to actively look for new ways to engage with customers.

**5. Digital Humans** – Digital humans are interactive, AI-driven representations that exhibit some of the characteristics, personality, knowledge and mindset of a human. By 2026, half of

B2B buyers will interact with a digital human in a buying cycle.

**6. Emotion AI** – Emotion AI technology can help by disrupting sellers’ empathic ability and alter buyer engagement. It’s a system that analyzes, processes, and responds to user emotion. By 2024, AI identification of emotions will influence roughly half of the online ads buyers see. It will be able to read faces and emails, and determine which ads are going to work on a given buyer.

**7. Multimodality** – Multimodality means that there will be multiple modes for sellers to log activities, helping sales leaders to address data challenges. By 2025, 70% of all B2B seller-buyer interactions will be recorded to extract competitive, deal and market insights using AI, machine learning (ML) and natural language processing (NLP).

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