SMM
SALES & MARKETING MANAGEMENT

FOCUS REPORT

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# A CLOSER LOOK AT SALES ENABLEMENT

It means different things to different people, but in the end, it's anything that helps close a deal

FEATURE STORY

# Everything Is Sales Enablement, and Sales Enablement Is Everything

## Inefficiency, ineffectiveness and indecision are sure signs your enablement strategy needs fixing

BY PAUL NOLAN

The numbers around B2B sales can be discouraging.

Average quota attainment for B2B organizations is less than 50%. (Salesforce research stated as much as 84% of sales reps missed their quota in 2024.)

Sales reps spend only about one-third of their time selling. The emergence of AI tools is helping increase reps' time selling, but they still get bogged down in administrative grind.

The sales cycle remains lengthy. More than a quarter of reps (28%) cite a sales process that takes too long as the No. 1 reason prospects back out, according to Lead Forensics.

B2B sales are increasingly complex, with seven to 10 people having a role in purchase decisions.

Perhaps most daunting is the fact that buyers rarely identify themselves as ready to purchase until they are well beyond 50% complete with their research, and eight in 10 already have a top vendor identified.

### Enablement = Increased Efficiency

It's no wonder B2B selling requires an all-hands-on-deck mindset. Sales enablement, broadly defined as the process of providing sales teams with the proper content, training, technology and coaching to help them be more effective, is vital to today's sales process. Enablement refers to every aspect of making a sale – from hiring and onboarding to lead generation, lead scoring, development and deployment of marketing content, and skills training in how to have productive, ongoing conversations with prospects.

Everything is enablement, and enablement is everything in today's highly competitive environment.

Sellers' inclination is to bring buyers into market on sellers' timeline, but savvy selling teams understand that buyers call the shots and sellers need to have the right information when the right time strikes for the buyer.

"Today's B2B buyers are informed, empowered and independent. They conduct the majority of their research on their own, long before speaking to a sales team," states "The State of Prospecting 2026" report from Sopro, provider of a B2B multi-channel prospecting and lead generation service.

Too often, salespeople abandon a prospect after reaching out three or four times and not getting a response. Kondo, a company that provides a tool for managing LinkedIn messages, reports that most B2B deals require five to 12 touchpoints, yet a staggering 48% of reps never make a second follow-up attempt.

"Buyers don't go into market because they get a call from a business development rep, or even because they get a call from an AE. They go into market to buy something when their business has a need that they can put budget behind," said Kerry Cunningham, head of research and thought leadership at 6Sense, a sales enablement platform provider.

### 3 Pillars of Modern Outreach

The old tenets of outreach can't keep up, the Sopro report on prospecting states. "Modern outreach needs a new foundation – a connected system that joins every part of the process and mirrors how buyers want to engage, not how sellers want to sell."

Sopro provides three pillars of modern outreach:

**Coverage –** Most outreach models miss up to 40% of the total addressable market (TAM). Proper coverage requires identifying every relevant company and all the people within them that influence buying decisions, then ensuring your outreach connects with them in the right way.

"Star with clean, accurate data, carefully curated and segmented by ideal customer profile and market," the report states. Use that to plan outreach, determining who to reach when and with what message.

**Relevance –** AI tools allow for personalization of every communication. Act on signals that indicate a buyer is ready to engage, and tailor content to their unique business challenges. And address aspects that are pertinent to all members of a buying team. According to the Sopro report, research shows a deal is abandoned in 40%-60% of purchase attempts because the buyer group couldn't align.

"Automation gets you in the room. A human keeps you there," said Lynn Lester, senior vice president of events and marketing for The Drum, a global publisher for the marketing and media industries. "The second a brand sounds real, trust starts to build."

**Consistency –** This gets back to not getting discouraged if you don't hear back from a prospect after some initial outreach. It's not about sending more messages, the Sopro report states. It's about sending messages with intent and ensuring they are relevant to the recipient, so when they do start evaluating vendors, your name is already top of mind.

"The brands that win are the ones that show up with value over time, not just when they need the sale," Lester said.

## Keys to Successful Sales Enablement

**Buyers decide when the conversation starts.** Self-directed research, closed platforms and AI-driven evaluations mean decisions often form before outreach is answered. Prospecting must align with how buyers already behave.

**Brand familiarity and consistent outreach lift performance.** When buyers recognize the sender, reply rates, meeting rates and deal velocity increase. Visibility isn't cosmetic – it's commercial.

**Quality beats quantity every time.** Sharper audience definition improves inbox placement, boosts engagement, and makes messaging feel relevant. The best results come from tighter lists, not bigger sends.

**Integration beats accumulation.** Most companies have the right tools, but misstep on integration. The strongest performers unify channels, workflows and reporting around a single view of the buyer.

**In an AI-driven world, people still buy from people.** Automation can start conversations, but humans close them. Credibility, proof, and real responses now separate meaningful engagement from ignored noise.

Source: Sopro "The State of Prospecting 2026"

### Follow the Buyer's Journey

Creating and providing content that tracks the buyer's journey improves the customer experience. Highspot's "Definitive Guide to Sales Enablement" identifies five stages of the customer journey to keep in mind:

- **Consideration –** product information for comparison purposes
- **Awareness –** Prospects are identifying the problem they need to solve
- **Purchase –** Addressing informational needs of all members of a buying team
- **Retention –** Helping maximize product deployment and RoI
- **Advocacy –** Turning positive customer experiences into case studies

## Automation gets you in the room, but being human keeps you there.

Allow each prospect to dictate what conversation you have with them. Rory Sadler, co-founder and CEO of Trumpet, which provides technology for B2B sales teams, is quoted in the Sopro report stating, "Buyers have never had more control over when conversations start, how they happen, and what they already know. Technology has flipped the dynamic, as buyers arrive informed and opinionated long before sales gets involved. The best vendors now focus less on selling and more on enabling, creating an environment where buyers feel confident, in control, and ready to move forward on their own terms."

The success of a sales enablement strategy requires continuous measurement and complete alignment of sales goals with business objectives. It's not just about more reps making quota – or coming closer to doing so. Yes, a high-performing sales enablement strategy will boost revenue, but it also increases reps' efficiency, improves the customer experience and leads to greater job satisfaction and retention. It's everybody's job and it's to everybody's benefit. SMM

# The State of Sales in 2026: AI Raises the Bar, but People Still Win

BY MICHELLE DAVIDSON, ALLEGO

Most people begin the new year fresh. Not sales organizations. In 2026, they're carrying forward economic uncertainty, aggressive growth expectations and a wave of AI that has already reshaped how sellers work.

"The new norm is uncertainty," said Erik Fowler, chief revenue officer at Allego, provider of a sales enablement platform, during a recent webinar on the state of sales. "We still have aggressive growth expectations, we still have economic pressures and budget concerns, and we have AI that we all need to rapidly adopt and figure out how it changes our business."

AI has raised the bar across sales organizations. Buyers arrive more informed thanks to increased use of AI engines. And sellers are expected to respond faster, personalize outreach, and demonstrate value earlier in the cycle.

AI has helped sellers with that, improving productivity and efficiency. However, performance gains have been uneven. The reason, according to both sales leaders and new research, is straightforward: Technology can scale activity, but people still determine outcomes.

## AI Has Changed Expectations for Everyone

Sales leaders largely agree that AI is already influencing day-to-day execution. In live polling during the webinar, about half of participants said AI had improved efficiency or increased sales activity, while a smaller share said it had elevated seller performance.

That gap reflects what many organizations are experiencing. AI tools can draft emails, analyze calls and surface insights faster than any human team ever could. But higher activity doesn't automatically translate into better selling.

"With AI, sales cycles and self-paced buying are increasing. The customer can get further and faster" on their own now, said Lauren Bailey, founder of the sales training company Factor 8, during the discussion. As a result, she noted that sellers are being held to a higher standard much earlier in the sales process. What used to be entry-level selling has shifted up a level, putting pressure on organizations to upskill their teams faster.

The result is pressure at every level of the sales organization. Sellers must add value beyond what AI can provide, managers are expected to coach more effectively, and leaders must prove ROI from increasingly complex tech stacks.

## Efficiency Is Up. Effectiveness Is Not.

Despite record investment in sales technology, Fowler and Bailey described growing frustration with results. Training programs are in place, but adoption is inconsistent. Tools are deployed, but meaningful behavior change has been harder to achieve.

That frustration, Bailey noted, stems from a lack of impact. When training doesn't stick or translate into behavior change, organizations struggle to justify continued investment.

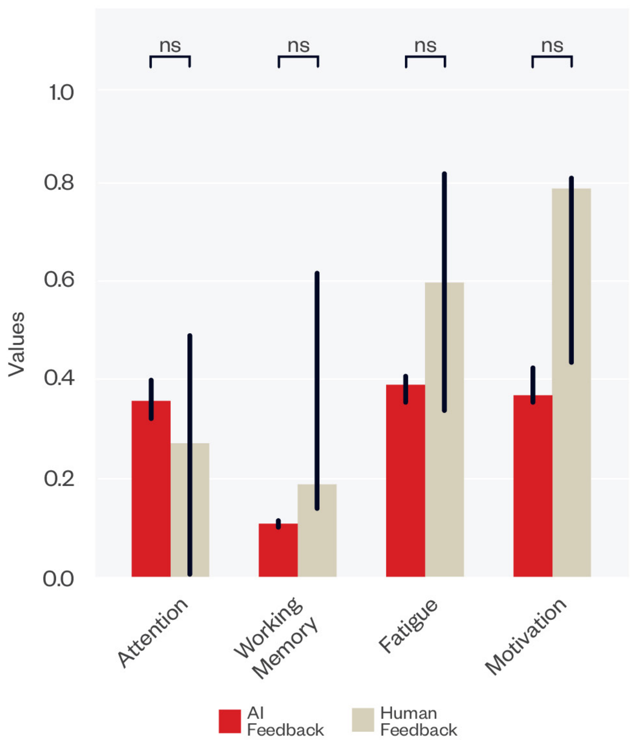
Part of the challenge is structural. Frontline managers are being asked to do more coaching, enforce process discipline, and support skill development. Often, they must do that without receiving formal training themselves. At the same time, hybrid work has reduced informal learning. When sellers work remotely, they can't see and learn from one another. That makes coaching even more critical, but at the same time more difficult.

AI promises to help, but understanding how it helps matters. That's where recent neuroscience research offers some clarity.

## What Neuroscience Reveals About Coaching

In a [2025 neuroscience study](), neuroscientist Dr. Carmen Simon examined how sellers responded to feedback delivered by either an AI coach or a human coach following simulated sales conversations. The findings were instructive. Sellers who received feedback from an AI coach remembered 50% more information after 48 hours than those who received human feedback. The structured, written nature of AI feedback appeared to improve memory retention and consistency.

### Cognitive Responses in the Training Phase: AI vs. Human Feedback




Qualitatively, cognitive variable comparison during the training phase. Sellers expecting human feedback reported higher motivation—but also more fatigue. AI feedback led to less emotional strain and more mental consistency.

At the same time, sellers who expected human coaching experienced greater relaxation, motivation and emotional well-being during training. They spoke more during simulations – an indicator of engagement – though that increased verbal activity did not translate into stronger recall.

Fowler emphasized that the takeaway isn't about choosing one approach over the other. AI excels at delivering consistent reinforcement at scale, while human coaching plays a critical role in motivation, trust and development.

The research underscores a critical point for 2026: Learning is both cognitive and emotional. AI excels at reinforcing structure and consistency. Humans excel at motivation, trust and confidence, all of which drive behavior change over time.

## Why People Still Win

As AI becomes embedded across sales workflows, the differentiator is shifting. Tools can raise the floor by standardizing best practices and accelerating learning. But they can't replace the human elements that define great selling.

Bailey emphasized that customer experience is ultimately shaped by people. As buyers rely more heavily on AI-driven research, sellers must be able to deliver insight, judgment and empathy that technology cannot provide.

The same principle applies internally. While AI can analyze calls, identify trends and suggest coaching priorities, it cannot replace the manager's role in developing people.

"Let your AI coach the deal. Let your manager coach the rep," Bailey said. "Rep coaching is about engagement, skill development and career growth. It's the human side. AI isn't going to do that very well."

The neuroscience research reinforces this division of labor. AI reduces social pressure and supports recall. Human coaching provides emotional resonance and connection. Together, they create more durable learning.

## The Winning Model for 2026

Sales leaders heading into this year face a clear choice: They can continue to layer tools onto already stretched teams, or they can redesign how people, process and technology work together.

The most effective organizations are doing the latter. They use AI to scale insight and consistency, analyzing conversations, reinforcing frameworks, and shortening ramp time. At the same time, they invest in human coaching to ensure those insights translate into behavior change.

Leadership ownership is critical to making that happen, Fowler noted. Adoption, he said, starts with visible commitment from senior leaders.

"If leaders don't sponsor it … it's going to fail," Fowler said. You can have the best technology in the world, but if leadership doesn't show it's a priority, it won't stick, he added.

## Looking Ahead

AI has become table stakes in sales, as with other areas of business. But in 2026, the organizations that stand out won't be the ones that simply use it or the ones with the most AI-powered tools. They will be the teams that use technology to elevate their people.

The science is clear: AI improves memory and consistency. Humans drive motivation, trust and performance. Sales leaders who design for both will be better positioned to meet rising expectations, both internally and with customers.

Bailey summed it up simply: "The winning team will not just have the best systems. Their people will be the differentiator."

Michelle Davidson is the content marketing manager at Allego, provider of an AI-driven platform for sales teams to manage training, content and coaching.

# How to Meet the B2C Expectations of B2B Buyers

BY MICHAEL NETTO

The modern consumer has come to expect seamless, intuitive experiences, whether they're ordering groceries or buying software for work. Instead of wasting time navigating clunky portals, skimming static catalogs or waiting for salespeople to send updated pricing, consumer experiences have trained B2B buyers to compare products and place orders in a single click. According to Gartner, 83% of B2B buyers prefer purchasing through digital commerce, and 62% prefer to restock their supplies online.

There's a huge opportunity for B2B ecommerce businesses to deliver the frictionless experience consumers crave. It's not about whether B2B needs to offer personalized, digital-first experiences; it's how soon they can make the transition.

## Outdated Experiences Are Turning Buyers Away

According to Forrester, 86% of B2B sales stall during the buying process, and 81% of customers are dissatisfied with their provider. Holding strong to outdated practices and legacy systems alienates buyers and causes you to fall behind.

For example, 75% of B2B buyers prefer to purchase without talking to a salesperson. Yet, many B2B ecommerce companies offer static catalogs with thousands of SKUs to sort through, requiring a sales rep to move the purchase along. This forced dependence can cause buyers to ghost.

Personalized catalogs are a great way to cater to buyer preferences. Customized product listings with enhanced search functions and customer-specific price terms put control in the buyer's hands and streamline their experience. In Sana Commerce's B2B Online Insights 2025, 59% of respondents say a lack of personalized pricing is a principal obstacle to buying. Sites that offer customized, flexible, secure payment options stand a better chance at closing B2B business than ones that don't.

Ecommerce sites that don't prioritize intuitive experiences throughout the buying process are more likely to lose potential customers. To capture interest, ecommerce sites can tailor features to the specific needs of B2B buyers.

For instance, sites can simplify the complexity of a buying committee by enabling multiple persistent carts, allowing stakeholders to work on multiple returns and orders without losing progress. Also, saved preferences for checkout and shipping can make transactions as simple as one click.

Creating a seamless B2B ecommerce customer experience is possible, but it requires leaving legacy systems behind. Businesses that embrace automation and integration are better equipped to meet the needs of modern B2B consumers.

## How To Improve Customer Experience With Tech Integration

Given how complex traditional B2B buyer journeys can be, some may worry that a B2C-grade customer experience isn't possible. After all, buying cycles are longer, higher-value purchases magnify mistakes, and there are so many use cases to consider.

However, you can use integration to elevate your B2B customer experience. Here's how.

**Create a single source of truth** – By integrating ecommerce platforms with essential business data sources (ERP, CRM, inventory management system, etc.), information can synchronize across the business. That means product information, pricing and inventory levels remain consistent across channels. This enhances the buying experience by making it easy to discover old and new products based on price, size or other factors, even if buyers don't know the exact name.

**Leverage data to power personalized recommendations** – The data in the single source of truth can be used to create a profile of customer preferences. With insight into customers' favorite products, purchase frequency and what they put in their cart, you can create personalized recommendations that present the most relevant products to the right buyers. These buyer recommendations can be automated and customized to enable personalization at scale.

**Enable cart continuity for personalized checkout management** – As systems interconnect, making changes to pricing or product details in one source automatically updates it across all relevant channels. This means buyers won't have to update their cart manually. Instead, they will be able to resume shopping with updates to stock levels or pricing. By autosaving shipping and payment preferences, you remove extra data entry steps and create the personalized feel buyers love.

## Ecommerce That Doesn't Step Up Gets Left Behind

B2B buyers know what a seamless customer experience feels like, and they aren't willing to settle for anything less. Across industries, consumers expect an experience tailored specifically to them.

But outdated technology and traditional sales processes won't get you there. Competitive B2B companies can use customer data and strategically integrated software to create golden records for customers and deliver personalized recommendations and buying experiences. With younger generations stepping into decision-making positions, flexibility, convenience and personalization have shifted from competitive advantages to prerequisites for doing business. smm

Michael Netto has spent decades helping enterprises navigate complex technology transitions. He is executive vice president of E-commerce Solutions at k-ecommerce, an all-in-one enterprise resource planning (ERP) platform that helps small and mid-size businesses sell online. Michael is also a part-time lecturer at Concordia University in Montreal.

# The Leads Are Weak? Of Course They Are.

## Single leads are not the holy grail for business development teams

BY PAUL NOLAN

"The leads are weak? You're weak!" shouts Blake, Alec Baldwin's irascible character in "Glengarry Glen Ross."

Kerry Cunningham, head of research and thought leadership at 6Sense, who is decidedly more affable than Blake, and who has more than 25 years of experience in B2B demand generation, would likely retort, "Of course the leads are weak. Leads, by definition, are weak."

6sense is a provider of AI-powered revenue intelligence software. As the company describes it, its SaaS tool "helps B2B revenue teams do more of what actually drives results and less of what doesn't by using AI to reveal what matters, when it matters and make it instantly actionable."

What too many B2B sales and revenue development teams don't understand, Cunningham states, is that on the continuum of the B2B selling process, a lead is at the far end of a closed deal.

Of course, closing on a real estate transaction, as the salesmen in "Glengarry" are scrambling to do, is decidedly different than closing multimillion-dollar B2B deals. A lead in the B2B world, Cunningham said, typically refers to any expression of interest from a single person at what may or not be a prospective customer.

A prospect isn't a strong prospect – "in market," as Cunningham puts it – until several members of a buying team are pursuing more information from a provider. The challenge, however, according to 6sense research on buyer behavior, is that prospects conduct 70% of their research before identifying as being in market. What's more, four out of five deals are won by the vendor that the customer identified as a favorite before it even made clear it was in market.

This research makes clear that business development reps (BDRs) must be persistent and patient when communicating with prospects early in the buying process.

Buyers engage when they are ready to engage, Cunningham said. The best BDRs are less focused on setting purely informational meetings and more focused on maintaining continual, informational communication with prospects.

"The one who will get to the top of a short list will be showing up during the non-contact process from the buyer. What companies get wrong many times is the BDR chases down someone who is not ready to talk with someone yet, and they are abandoned too quickly as not being a serious prospect," said Cunningham. "Instead, when you know the account is in market but early, be patient. Deliver the best content you have and do all you can to ensure the account has the best buying experience you can provide."

### Understanding the Buyer Experience and How to Respond

6sense surveyed nearly 4,000 B2B buyers. Here are key insights from "The 2025 Global B2B Buyer Experience Report."

**Buying groups are large, experienced and their journeys span nearly a year.** Typical purchases include 10+ people, average 10.1 months (down from 11.3 months in 2024), and almost always draw on prior vendor experience.

**Buyers are contacting sellers earlier, but it's still well down the decision-making process.** The point of first contact shifted from 69% of the journey to 61% – a difference of six to seven weeks.

**Vendor selection is largely decided before sellers are engaged.** 95% of the time, the winning vendor is already on the buyer's shortlist, and four out of five deals are won by the first vendor the buyer contacts.

**Price and technical fit are the main triggers for reconsideration.** Nearly half of buyers said they were either very likely or somewhat likely to consider a different vendor after reaching group consensus. Technical fit (29%) and price (28%) are the top reasons buyer considered a switch.

**Past relationships heavily influence vendor choice.** 85% of buyers report prior experience with the winning vendor, and 75% say they personally know sellers from the vendor organizations they evaluate.

# Feedback Is the New Forecast

## How buyer feedback improves sales performance

BY TIM RIESTERER, CORPORATE VISIONS

Sales forecasts are useful for tracking whether you're going to hit your number. But they don't tell you why you missed it – or what your team should do differently in the next set of deals.

For the people responsible for performance – sales leaders – that's the frustrating part. You can't coach a forecast. You can only coach behavior. But only if you can see what's really happening in the conversations between your buyers and sellers.

That's why buyer feedback is one of the most underrated components of modern sales enablement. Not because it's trendy. Because it's corrective.

Buyer feedback turns hindsight into a forward-looking performance management system.

### The Sales Performance Blind Spot

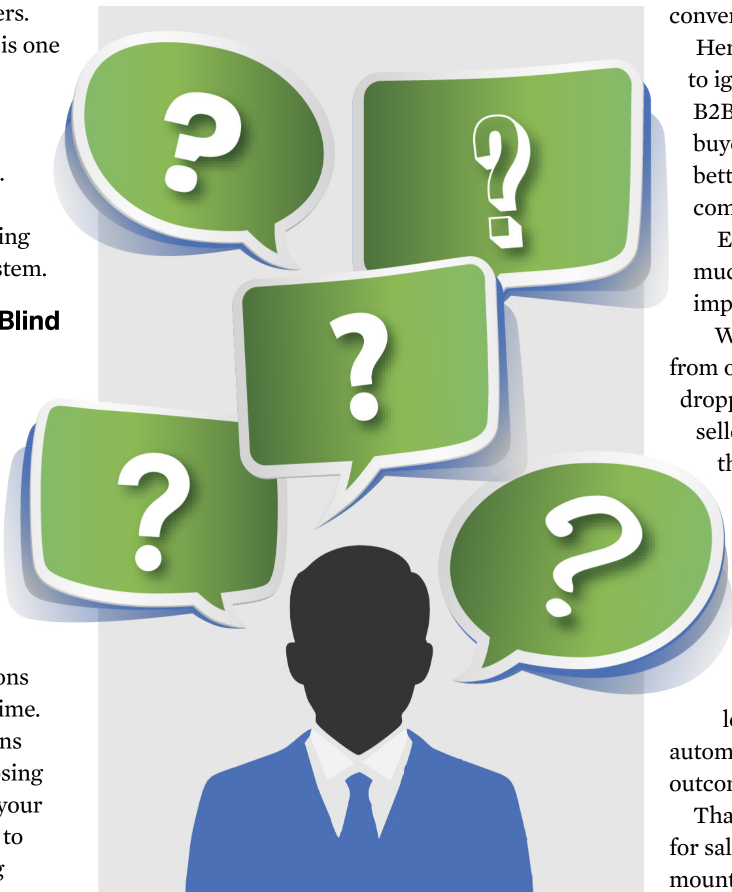
When a deal is marked as lost in your CRM, the story usually comes from the rep. Sometimes it's accurate. More often, it's incomplete.

In fact, across win-loss data from over 150,000 B2B deals, we found that sellers and buyers cite different reasons for losing 50% to 70% of the time.

Think about what that means operationally. If you're diagnosing performance gaps using only your sellers' opinions, you're going to place smart bets on the wrong problems. Buyers confirm the cost of getting it wrong. In our buyer feedback analyses, buyers report that more than half of lost deals were winnable if sellers had avoided fixable missteps during the sales experience.

That should change how you interpret, "We lost on price" or "They went with the incumbent." Those can be true and still be an incomplete explanation.

The real enablement question isn't "What did the rep think happened?" It's "What did the buyer experience – and what did they need that we didn't get right?"



### Buyer Feedback as Performance Data

Most organizations treat buyer feedback like a periodic win-loss project: gather some interviews, summarize themes, hold a meeting, file it away.

But feedback becomes far more powerful when you treat it as regular input for sales enablement and coaching – the same way you treat pipeline coverage or conversion rates.

Here's one data point that's hard to ignore: In an analysis of 6,984 B2B deals, sellers who received buyer feedback achieved 40% better win rates year-over-year compared to sellers who did not.

Even more instructive is how much feedback it takes to see impact.

When sellers received feedback from only two deals, their win rates dropped year over year. But when sellers received feedback from three deals, performance improved.

Three deals became the threshold – enough signal to learn from, without so much noise that it gets ignored. After that, performance gains began to level off. More feedback didn't automatically translate into better outcomes.

That's a useful design principle for sales leaders. You don't need a mountain of feedback to change outcomes. You only need a small number of clear, comparable data points to see a pattern of performance gaps.

### Turn Feedback into a Performance Plan

Buyer feedback only becomes actionable if you translate it into sales behaviors you can coach.

That's where many organizations stumble. They might collect feedback, but they don't have a consistent framework for interpreting it, so the output becomes a list of themes – interesting, but easy to interpret 10 different ways.

When different managers draw different conclusions from the same feedback, coaching becomes inconsistent, and reps get mixed signals about what "good" looks like.


A better approach is to map feedback to the specific "make-or-break moments" buyers evaluate during the sales process. Based on our analysis, there's a specific set of sales competencies that show up consistently as the moments that predict wins and losses. We call it the Great 8 Sales Competency Framework – an evidence-backed collection of observable behaviors and capabilities that buyers reward in the sales process:

- Align solutions to needs
- Make a case for change
- Demonstrate clear differentiation
- Articulate meaningful value
- Help justify decisions
- Negotiate creatively
- Resolve concerns responsively
- Deliver compelling communications

What's striking is how often organizations miss these predictive competencies in favor of more generic skills.


For example, buyer feedback shows that "make a case for change" is 31.6% more predictive than measuring "industry knowledge," and "align solutions to needs" is 21.9% more predictive than measuring "product knowledge."

Buyers reward the sales skills that help them make better decisions.

If you want better win rates, don't start with generic soft skills and hope your training lands.

Pinpoint the few buyer-relevant behaviors that are impacting win rates, and then coach to those behaviors with precision.

### How to Put Buyer Feedback to Work

This is where "sales enablement" often drifts into "sales activity." Lots of motion. Lots of assets. But not nearly enough behavior change.

If you want to use buyer feedback to improve sales performance, use a simple loop that managers can run without turning it into a second job:

- **Collect** feedback routinely from closed deals (won, lost and no-decision).
- **Assess** performance at the rep level to see which competencies are consistently weak.
- **Link** those assessment scores to win/loss outcomes.
- **Coach** to one or two behaviors that need to change.
- **Reinforce** in deal reviews: look for those behaviors as the deal unfolds.
- **Re-check** with fresh feedback to see how buyer perceptions change.

Companies rarely fall short on step one. They typically collect feedback and stop. Or they run training and skip reinforcement. Or they coach but never re-check whether buyers experienced improvement. But you can only improve performance if you follow every step in the process.


If you want a simple starting point, run this loop on three closed deals per rep each quarter. That's enough volume to spot patterns, set a shared definition of what "good" looks like, and keep coaching consistent across managers.

That way, you connect insight to action – and action to outcomes.

### Feedback Becomes the New Forecast

Forecasting is about predicting outcomes. Feedback is about improving them.

For sales leaders trying to improve performance, that's the point. You can use buyer feedback to get an unobstructed view into the experience that determines results – and a way to coach the next deal differently, instead of just reporting on the last one.

In a world obsessed with forward-looking numbers, the most forward-looking move might be the simplest: Ask the people who decided the deal what they experienced. SMM

Tim Riesterer is chief strategy officer at Corporate Visions, a provider of evidence-based sales training, messaging and enablement solutions for B2B revenue teams. For more evidence-backed insights like this, visit the Corporate Visions resource library.

# B2B Marketing: From Linear to Loop

BY IRA OZER, SALES & MARKETING MANAGEMENT

For years, B2B marketing was focused on companies and sales reps sending mass email campaigns to prospects, supported by brand advertising to raise awareness. These emails were sent in a series of campaigns with call-to-actions based on the sellers' objectives. The common message was, "buy from us now."

Sellers personalized emails with the prospect's name, title and company, and then followed up with a phone call, and not much more. Marketers supported their email campaigns with advertising to raise brand awareness and continuously bought leads to feed their email engine.

These campaigns tended to be "spray and pray" mass marketing, until the internet changed the game dramatically. Companies developed websites to tell their brand stories, which allowed them to provide a lot of product features and benefits that prospects could sort through to find what they were interested in based on their objectives. Over time, prospects became less responsive to email campaigns, finding that they could do their own research, although it was complicated and time consuming to learn of a seller's actual capabilities and differentiators from competitors, but better than being sold by sales reps.

### A New Inbound Marketing Strategy

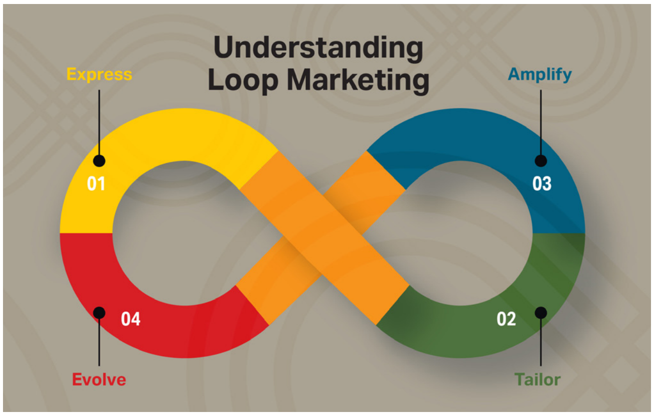
When Hubspot introduced its inbound marketing methodology and technology platform in 2006, it changed the B2B marketing paradigm. The focus was on providing content of interest to prospects, when it is of interest to them, instead of outbound emailing and advertising. Marketing messages could be personalized based on the click pathways that prospects chose when engaging with content. This allowed companies and their sales reps to better understand prospects' needs and tailor their sales pitches accordingly. Inbound content engagement replaced outbound advertising, improving efficiency and effectiveness while lowering customer acquisition costs.

Now, with the advent of embedded AI and more comprehensive databases, the game is changing again. At its 2025 INBOUND Conference, Hubspot presented a new marketing paradigm known as Loop Marketing.

Angela DeFranco, general manager and vice president of Hubspot Product Marketing, explained in her session about "Reclaiming Purpose in Marketing," that marketers need to reimagine marketing because the old tactics are no longer working and that "authenticity is the new currency." DeFranco said marketers need to move from a linear to loop approach because there have never been more challenges as well as opportunities for marketers.

The shape of the conventional sales funnel, in which prospects move from awareness to consideration to conversion, has changed. Now, prospects spend even more time on awareness, less on consideration and then more on conversion. They are using AI tools like ChatGPT and Claude to become more educated than ever, and they spend less time engaging with sales reps until they are ready to convert. Only then are they open to guidance.

According to DeFrance, with AI "the volume of content is much greater than before and much of it is not very good." With buyer behavior changes, the six-month linear marketing campaigns that companies typically run are no longer working effectively. Marketing needs to be more agile and personalized, switching from one generic playbook for all to quick testing, iteration and implementation that creates marketing campaigns targeted to each individual prospect. Companies find that they are getting increased revenue from existing customers, yet converting new prospects is more challenging than before.




## Common Loop Marketing Mistakes

Hubspot officials have identified these Loop Marketing traps that can drag on performance and delay results:

**1. Trying to perfect all four stages simultaneously.** Research shows only 26% of companies have AI capabilities to move beyond proofs of concept and generate tangible value. Start with the stage where you see the most issues and can achieve quick wins. Mastering one stage before expanding to others allows your team to build confidence and expertise incrementally.

**2. Neglecting human oversight.** Human review of AI-produced content is not optional, especially in customer-facing communications. AI accelerates creation, but you need to establish clear workflows in which humans guide and approve final outputs.

**3. Focusing on vanity metrics instead of revenue impact.** Impressive e-mail open rates are great to have, but meaningless if they don't impact revenue. Customer satisfaction and retention are the most important customer experience metrics. For each loop stage, establish activities and outcomes. Track how "Express" activities lead to better "Tailor" performance, how "Tailor" improvements drive "Amplify" results, and how the entire loop impacts customer lifetime value and revenue growth.

**4. Creating disconnected channel experiences.** Customer conversations with agents should flow seamlessly from one channel to the other without repeating information. Use unified customer profiles that update in real time across all systems, and test the customer experience from start to finish, not just individual channel performance.

**5. Ignoring the feedback and lessons learned.** AI-generated content is faster and more successful than content created without AI, but organizations must still schedule review cycles in which teams analyze performance data and identify optimization opportunities.

**By combining a strong human identity (Express) with data-driven adaptation (Tailor, Amplify, Evolve), you build a marketing strategy that is relevant, efficient and authentic.**

### Understanding Loop Marketing

Loop Marketing is the name Hubspot developed for its four-stage playbook for marketers to adapt and grow in the digital age. It combines AI efficiency with human authenticity and builds momentum.

1. **Expressing your message** – First, understand your ideal customer profile (ICP) by using AI powered sales enablement tools and analyzing your customer data. Mine the data from multiple sources, including the CRM system, purchase data, customer service information, etc. Then, craft your unique style guide, to best express your unique differentiators vs. your competitors. Define why you are different and provide more value. Finally, create campaign concepts.
2. **Tailor your campaigns** – Use AI to improve personalization of messaging based on context and relevance to different customer segments. Understand customer needs and desires, and continually enrich customer data to fully understand the segments. Create personalized content for emails, landing pages and other communications using AI tools, but make sure to have humans review to ensure quality control before implementing.
3. **Amplify your message** – Use AI tools to scale content creation and amplify your messages across multiple channels, including social media platforms where prospects are doing their research. Create a content strategy for each channel and remix content for each format such as ChatGPT, Claude, TikTok, Youtube, LinkedIn, etc. Use creators and influencers to put you into the right conversations and optimize each channel for conversion, so each contextualized Call-to-Action is frictionless.
4. **Evolve in real time** – Use AI to make changes quickly and continuously iterate messages, moving from six-month linear campaigns to an agile loop marketing approach.

As traditional marketing methods continue to lose their effectiveness, marketing and sales leaders need to take a new approach to increase sales to new and existing customers. It starts by leveraging the power of AI and data from multiple sources to create targeted customer segments that fit their ICP, meet the customers where they are doing their research, and use sales enablement technology platforms to efficiently transition messaging from mass marketing to one-on-one relationships. **smm**

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