

salesforce

FIFTH EDITION

State of Sales

Insights from more than
7,700 sales professionals
on driving productivity in
today's economy



What You'll Find in This Report

For the fifth edition of our "State of Sales" report, Salesforce Research surveyed more than 7,700 sales professionals worldwide to discover how sales organizations are:

- Maximizing value amid economic headwinds
- Meeting changing buyer expectations more efficiently
- Leaning more into sales operations as a strategic partner in business success
- Using enablement tactics to turn all reps into MVPs

Data in this report is from a double-anonymous survey conducted from August 24, 2022, through September 30, 2022. The survey generated 7,775 responses from a range of sales professionals across North America, Latin America, Asia-Pacific, and Europe. All respondents are third-party panelists. See page 25 for further survey demographics.

Due to rounding, not all percentage totals in this report equal 100%. Comparison calculations are made from total numbers (not rounded numbers).



Terms Used in This Research

In this research, we refer to several sample respondent groups, defined as follows:

- **Sales reps:** Front-line sales representatives
- **Sales operations:** Includes sales operations, sales enablement, revenue ops, and deal desk professionals
- **Sales leaders:** Revenue and sales executives and managers
- **Sales professionals or sellers:** All salespeople, inclusive of the groups above
- **Sales organizations:** Sales professionals answering on behalf of their team

Sales Performance Levels

Throughout this report, we classify respondents across three tiers of sales organization performance.



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Foreword



Adam Gilberd

Executive Vice President, Sales

The no. 1 piece of advice I give my team for winning deals: know your customer's challenges.

For many of our customers, the past couple of years were all about figuring out how to grow faster. Today, that's changed drastically. We now live in an era of tighter budgets and higher operating margins. The challenge isn't about finding growth, but about maximizing efficiency.

This may be startling, but as sellers, we're used to it. In fact, 82% of sellers surveyed in this report say they've had to quickly adapt to new ways of selling in the face of global challenges, including supply chain issues, inflation, and health precautions.

That puts us in a unique position to help our customers overcome – to share opportunities for efficiency, cost savings, and added productivity. To be a trusted advisor in their pursuit of business goals.

This year's "State of Sales" dives into how sellers are doing exactly that. More than 7,700 sales professionals from around the world shared their opinions on everything from shifting buyer behaviors to the tactics they use to drive growth for their customers.

Some findings may be surprising, while others may reinforce what you already know. All, however, prepare you to answer the critical sales question of the moment: How do you help your customers do more with less?

Executive Summary

It's an age-old tale: Economic hardships arise, forcing sellers to adapt.

Nonetheless, most sellers see a clear path forward. The most successful teams are working smarter – using artificial intelligence, surfacing insights for greater efficiency, and encouraging team selling. They're also looking to improve the employee experience every way they can.

But it isn't easy. Times are uncertain; budgets tight. This report reveals just how companies are finding success now through productivity and efficiency.

- 01 The New Sales Mantra: Maximizing Impact**
Companies are moving away from high-risk strategies as they battle inflation, supply chain bottlenecks, regulatory uncertainty, and political disruption. And yet, sales reps are under pressure to hit targets. It's a huge challenge. **Sixty-nine percent of sales professionals say selling is harder now.**
- 02 Reps Strive to Meet Rising Buyer Expectations**
Buyers are looking for sales reps to meet them wherever they are, regardless of channel: ecommerce platforms, social media networks, and personal assistants. Buyers then expect sales reps to act as sophisticated, trusted advisors. **Organizations connect with buyers on an average of 10 channels.**
- 03 Sales Operations Boosts Efficiency**
Operational efficiency is taking on growing importance. Sales ops is expanding into a more strategic role, tasked with enabling reps to spend more time in customer conversations. **Sales reps spend only 28% of their week actually selling.**
- 04 The Seller Experience Gets a Second Look**
Companies are reviewing training programs and benefits, while optimizing territories and sales enablement tools to set employees up for success. New headcount is limited, and **25% turnover is expected in sales organizations over the next 12 months.**



01

The New Sales Mantra: Maximizing Impact

The results are in: Selling has gotten harder.

Sales professionals are adjusting to a world that is both more competitive and resource-constrained. Supply chain issues are delaying deliveries. Inflation is pinching budgets. Shifting regulations and political instability are introducing fresh rounds of uncertainty, making buyers more cautious. And let's not forget, health is still a concern.

Yet sales teams need to keep hitting targets. The pressure is on to keep revenue coming, no matter the circumstances.

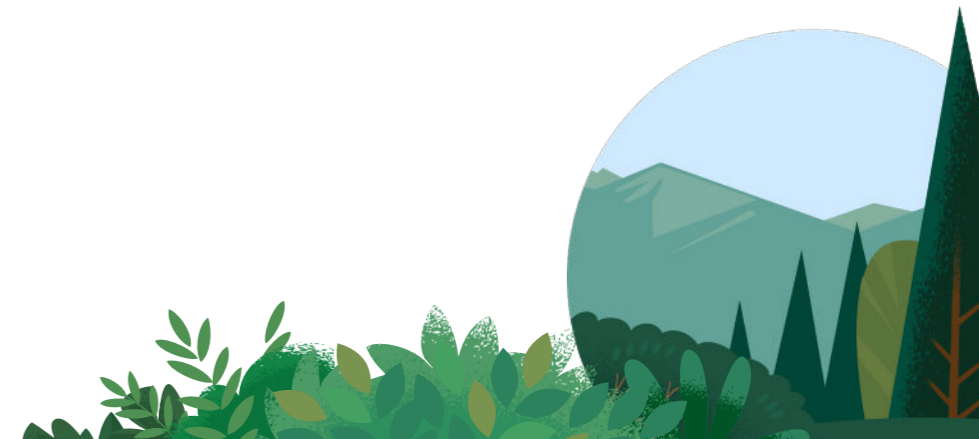
With no time to pause, companies are adapting – and fast – with a renewed focus on productivity and efficiency.

69% of sales professionals agree their job is harder now.

Sellers Adapt to a Dynamic Sales Environment

Top 5 External Factors Making Sales More Challenging

- 1 Supply chain issues
- 2 Inflation
- 3 Shifting regulations
- 4 Political instability
- 5 Health precautions



01

The New Sales Mantra: Maximizing Impact

Revenue and sales leaders are hunkering down, shifting their focus to factors within their control to drive predictable revenue.

Some sales leaders are still willing to target risky, high-growth initiatives. But the majority are now emphasizing dependable growth – even when it’s modest.

Leaders are turning to a range of tactics to support these initiatives. The primary one: improving alignment between departments and tearing down business-slowing silos. Other top tactics include evolving operations to meet the demand for hybrid or virtual selling, and making sure company data and tools are up for the new challenges.

70% of sales leaders say their sales organization is taking fewer risks now.

Leaders Focus on Dependable Growth

Sales Leaders Who Say They’re Prioritizing the Following:



Sales Leaders’ Top 5 Tactics to Drive Growth

- 1 Improve cross-functional alignment
- 2 Adapt to hybrid or virtual selling
- 3 Improve data accuracy and quantity
- 4 Target new markets
- 5 Modernize tools/technologies



02

Reps Strive to Meet Rising Buyer Expectations

Buyers expect sales organizations to show up wherever they are – on email, social media, and whatever emerging channels may come.

Indeed, 57% of buyers prefer to engage with companies through digital channels.* Companies report that nearly one-third of the deals they close are completely virtual.

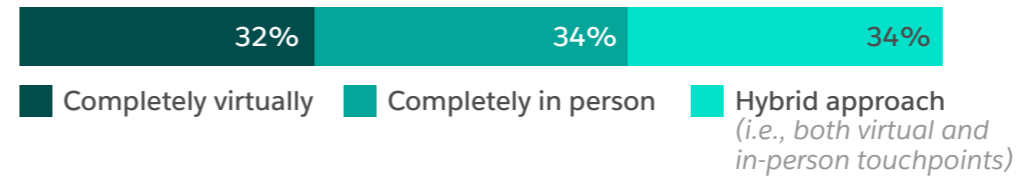
Top-performing sales organizations are more likely to engage with customers across channels. Online portals, in particular, can offer self-service options that free up sellers to spend more time on strategic accounts, new customer acquisition, and current customer satisfaction.

Organizations use an average of 10 channels to sell to customers.

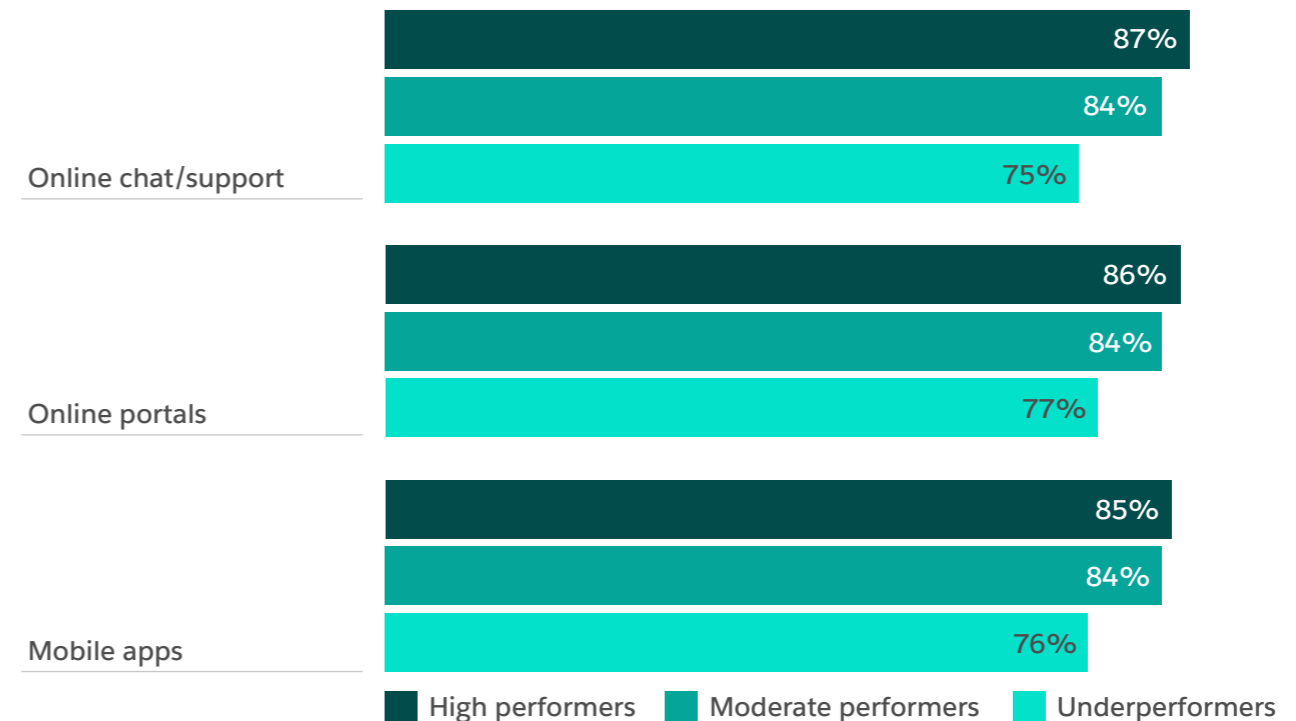
* Salesforce [State of the Connected Customer](#), May 2022.

Digital Channels Surge to Meet Customer Demand

Sales Deals Closed the Following Ways Over Past 12 Months



Sales Organizations Using the Following Channels:



02

Reps Strive to Meet Rising Buyer Expectations

Sales reps are under pressure to show up with sophisticated insights for buyers, who often conduct research on their own before connecting. Canned scripts won't cut it when dealing with informed buyers. Reps need to act as trusted advisors with insights and guidance on which products deliver the best value.

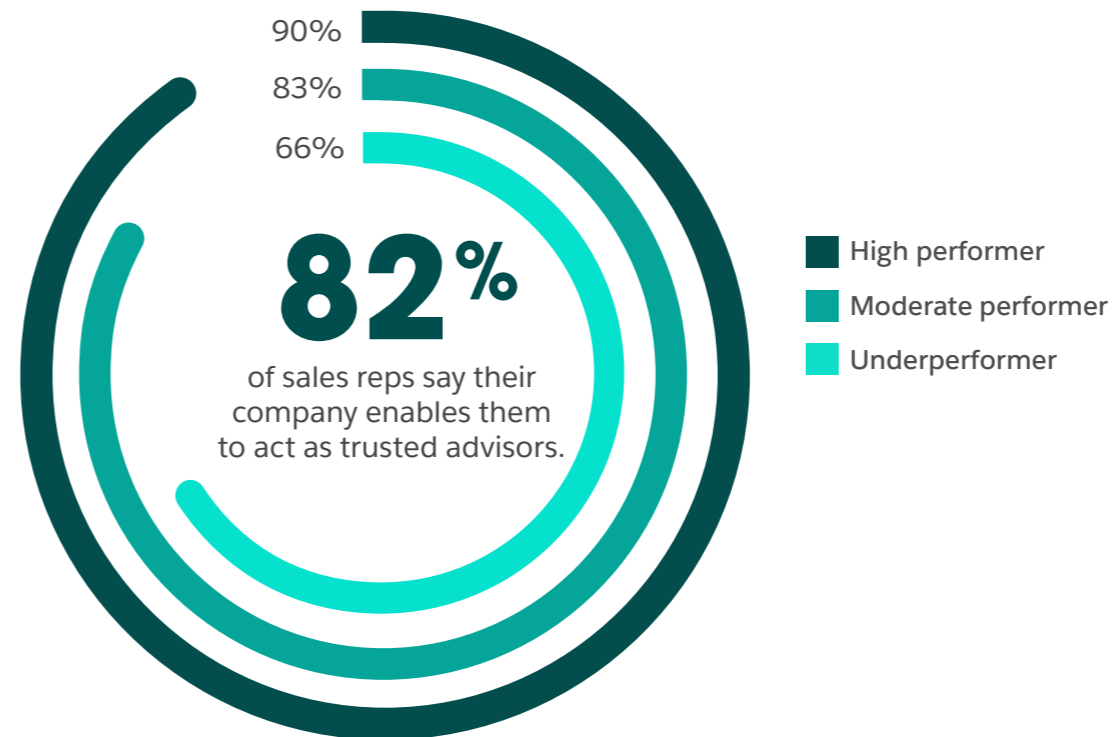
Compared to underperformers, the top sales organizations are much more likely to equip their reps with what they need to succeed – whether through technology and tools, training, or other organizational support. This enables reps to build trusting relationships with customers, opening the door to recurring sales.

81% of sales reps say buyers increasingly conduct research before they reach out.

Reps Serve as Trusted Advisors

87%

of business buyers expect sales reps to act as trusted advisors. *



* Salesforce [State of the Connected Customer](#), May 2022.



02

Reps Strive to Meet Rising Buyer Expectations

Sales reps commonly collaborate across the company to close deals with other teams – including marketing and customer service, as well as sales operations and other reps. Buyers respond favorably: 83% say they're more loyal to companies that provide consistency across departments.*

While most reps say team selling helps them close deals, it isn't always easy for everyone to sync up. Teams across the company come equipped with different points of view, goals, and information on the customer, which can make collaboration a challenge.

Fortunately, sales leaders have taken note and say that improving alignment with other teams is a priority.

Cross-functional alignment is sales leaders' #1 tactic for driving growth.

* Salesforce [State of the Connected Customer](#), May 2022.

Top Teams Collaborate to Close Deals

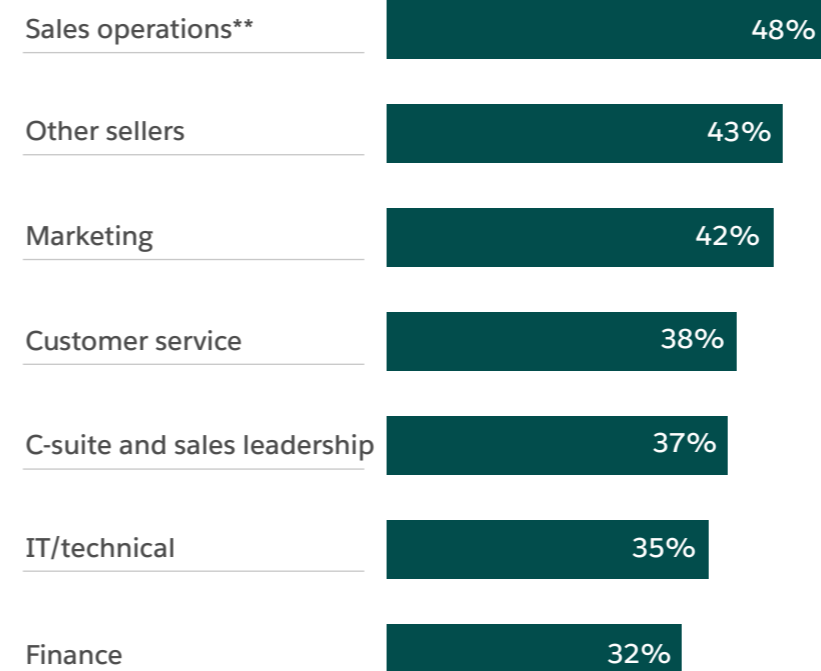
81%

of sales reps say team selling helps them close.

82%

of sales reps say alignment with other sellers is at least somewhat challenging.

Reps Commonly Partner with the Following:



** Base: Sales reps at companies with sales operations.



02

Reps Strive to Meet Rising Buyer Expectations

Customer satisfaction is front and center as companies focus on steady, predictable growth. Short-term wins are taking a back seat to long-term relationship building, tracked with post-sale metrics like customer retention.

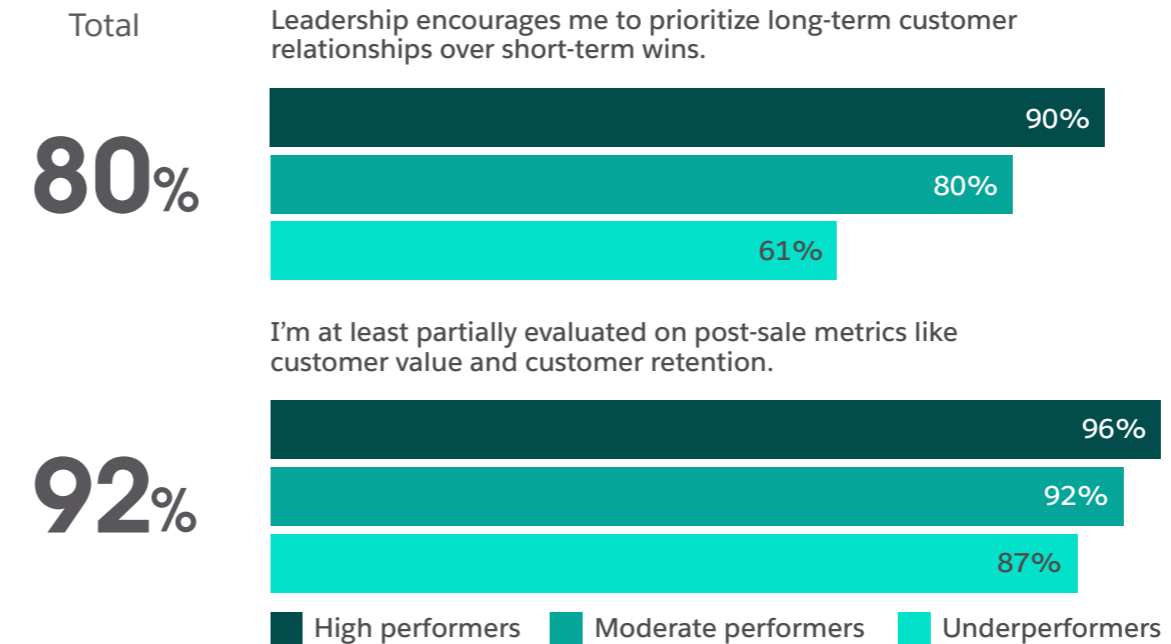
The ultimate goal? To forge customer loyalty that can lead to recurring sales and predictable revenue. This is critical, especially in uncertain economic times.

Reps draw on a combination of techniques to deepen customer relationships. The top one, value-based communication, is focused on solving buyer problems instead of leading with product pitches. Reps are pausing to actively listen to customers and are staying in touch regularly, so customers know they have an accountable contact to turn to.

80% of sales reps say maintaining customer relationships after the close is increasingly important.

Customer Retention Becomes a Key Performance Indicator

Sales Reps Who Say the Following:



Top 5 Ways Reps Maintain Relationships After a Sale

- 1 Value-based communication
- 2 Active listening
- 3 Follow-through/accountability
- 4 Seeking feedback on the selling experience
- 5 Troubleshooting/customer service

03

Sales Operations Boosts Efficiency

The role of sales operations is growing increasingly important to sales organizations. In 2020, 54% of sales leaders said sales operations was key to defining strategy – a number that's since jumped to 65%.

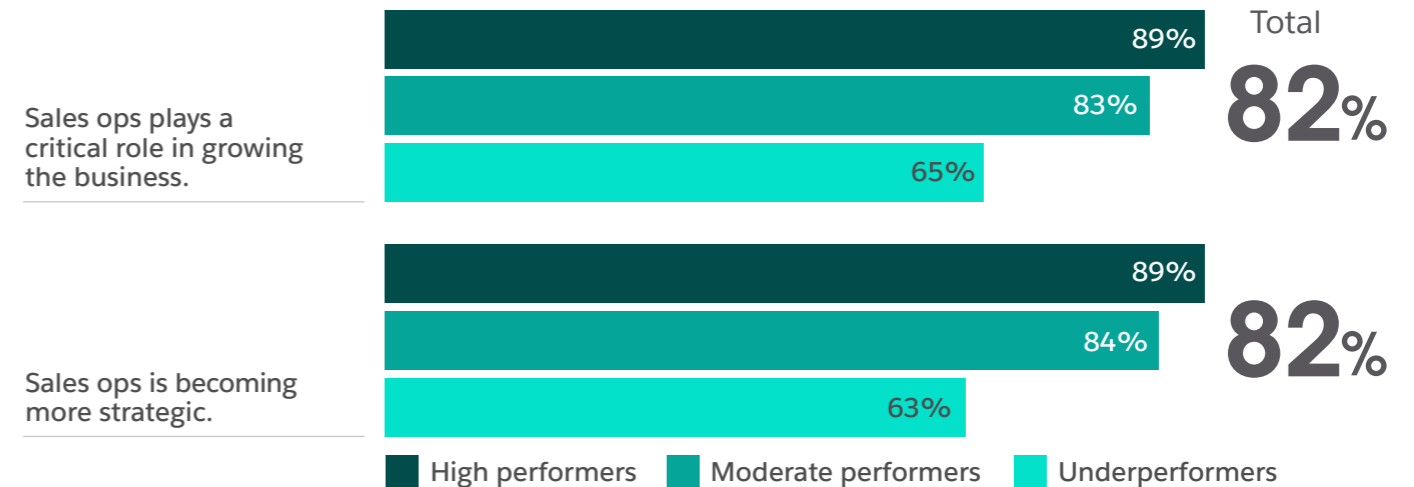
While sales ops has traditionally been seen as a behind-the-scenes player, times are changing. Their focus has always been on sales tools and processes, but these are now center stage in the drive toward efficiency and cost savings. For businesses prioritizing these efforts, sales ops is important to include in strategic conversations.

More than eight in 10 sales professionals say sales operations plays a critical role in growing the business – with professionals in high-performing organizations even more likely to say so.



Sales Ops Increasingly Influences Sales Strategy

Sales Professionals Who Say the Following:



Sales Leaders Who Say Sales Ops Is a Key Player in Defining Sales Strategy



All data on this page is based on companies with sales operations.

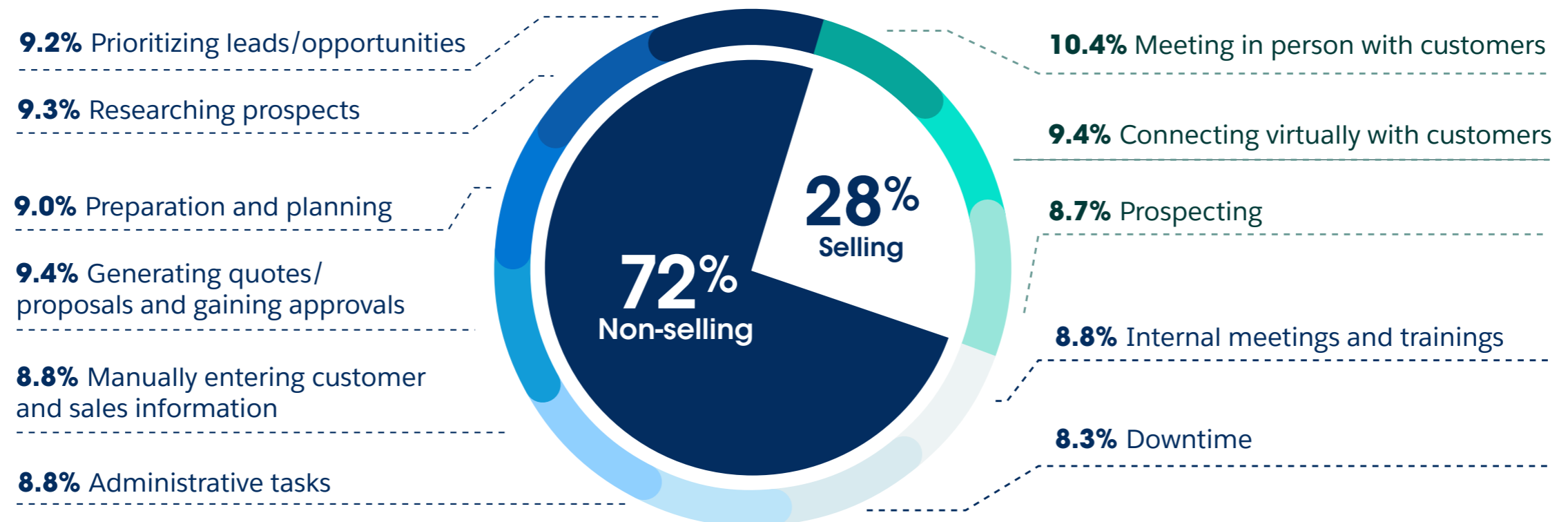
03 Sales Operations Boosts Efficiency

With their expertise in process and efficiency, sales ops professionals spend considerable time helping reps focus on what they were hired to do: sell.

As it now stands, reps spend only 28% of their week actually selling. The rest is made up of critical, but tedious tasks like deal management and data entry.

The challenge? Removing unnecessary nonselling tasks from reps' to-do lists so they can spend more time connecting with customers and closing deals.

How Sales Reps Spend Their Time During an Average Week





SPOTLIGHT CRM Utilization

At first blush, it seems sales orgs are taking full advantage of their customer relationship management (CRM) systems: 83% of sales pros agree that's the case.

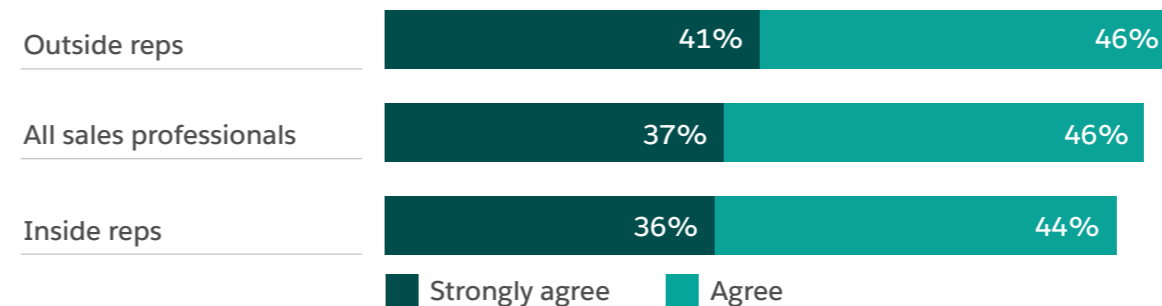
With CRMs now commonly including automation and intelligence features that cut down on non-selling tasks, a question arises: Why are reps still spending more than 70% of their time on manual to-dos?

The case may be that there's room for better CRM utilization. Only 37% of sales professionals strongly agree that their organization fully utilizes their CRM. Inside sales reps in particular have noticed an opportunity for improvement.

Where to start? Reps nod to the features that sellers would find most useful; not surprisingly, automation and intelligence functions top the list.

Most Useful CRM Features: Automation and Intelligence Insights

Sales Professionals Who Feel Their Organization Takes Full Advantage of Its CRM



Most Useful CRM Features for Sales Reps

- 1 Process/workflow automation
- 2 Data entry automation
- 3 Intelligent customer insights
- 4 Integration with internal systems
- 5 Ability to replace other sales tools



03

Sales Operations Boosts Efficiency

Sales teams are drowning in tools: analytics platforms, account management and forecasting tools, lead management tools – the list goes on. Many of these are vital to the sales process. But they can be expensive, and the sheer number of resources can create click overload. No wonder two-thirds of reps say they're overwhelmed by all the sales apps.

In response, sales organizations are planning to streamline their tech stack. This could enable reps to focus more on the human side of selling, and less time switching from tool to tool.

To promote efficient selling, sales ops can prioritize their consolidation around features most popular with sales organizations: reporting, CRM functionality, and account/contact management, among others.

94% of sales organizations plan to consolidate their tech stack in the next 12 months.*

* Base: Sales operations professionals.

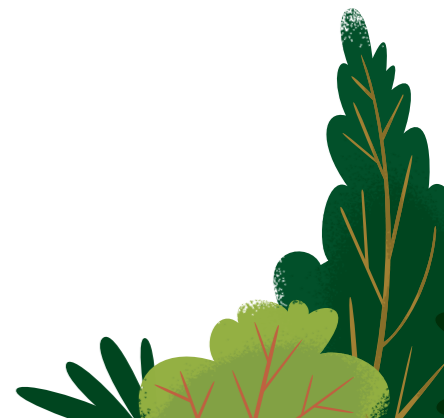
Reps Are Overwhelmed by Too Many Tools



Sales teams use an average of **10 tools** to close deals.

Top 5 Tools Used by Sales Organizations

- 1 Sales reporting/analytics
- 2 Customer relationship management (CRM) system
- 3 Account and contact management
- 4 Mobile sales app(s) for employees
- 5 Sales forecasting tools



SPOTLIGHT

AI at a Tipping Point

A focus on efficiency and cost savings may bring greater urgency to the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI).

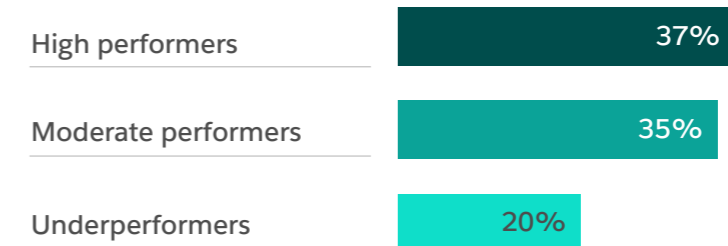
Only one-third of sales organizations currently use artificial intelligence (AI). In the next two years, an additional 20% of organizations plan to do so.*

Top performers are the most likely to have already embraced AI. The reported benefits are wide-ranging, touching on everything from improved lead prioritization to more accurate forecasting. Eight in 10 leaders and sales ops professionals with AI say it has improved use of reps' time at least moderately.

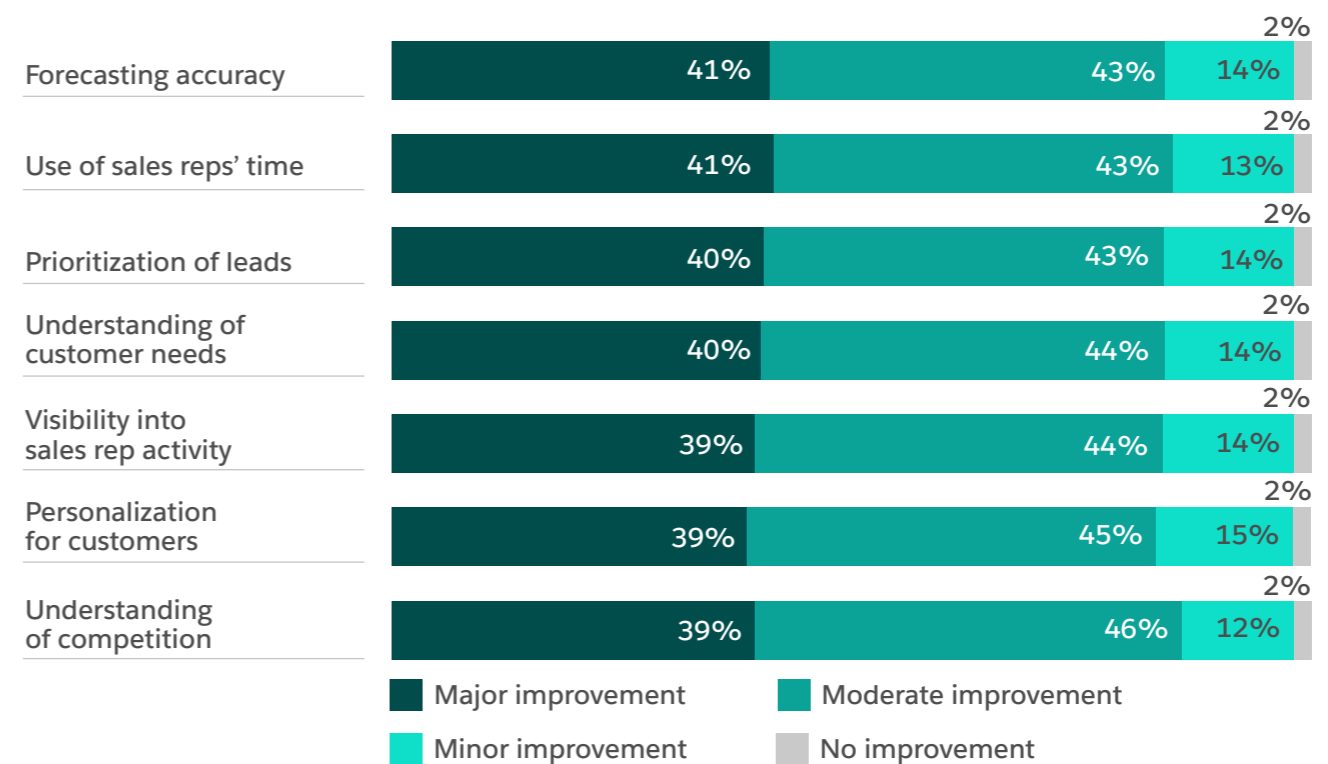
High performers are 1.9x more likely to use AI than underperformers.

* Base: Sales ops and sales leadership.

High-Performing Teams Boost Efficiency with AI



Extent of AI's Improvement on the Following:



Base: Sales ops and sales leadership at companies using AI.

04

The Seller Experience Gets a Second Look

Retention is still a concern for sales organizations. As of September 2022, nearly one in four reps was either looking or planning to look for a new job within 12 months. In total, nearly half of reps were at least open to leaving if something better came along.

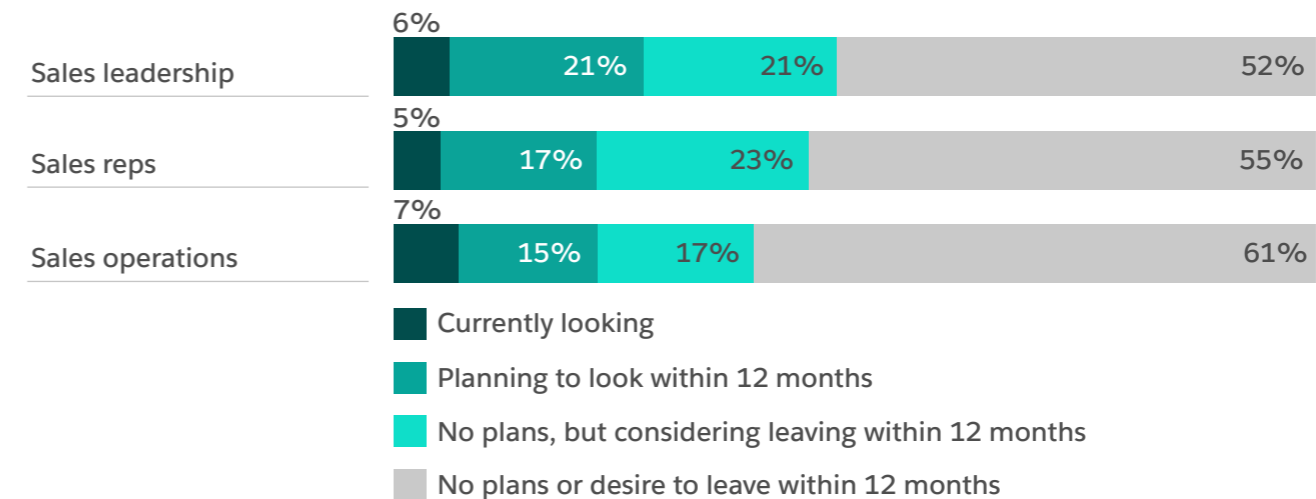
At the same time, 85% of sales leaders say they are struggling to get budget for needed headcount. That number could climb if economic shifts force leaders to cut down on operating expenses.

For now, companies are retaining talent by focusing on how to make sales professionals feel they are set up for success, even when resources are tight.

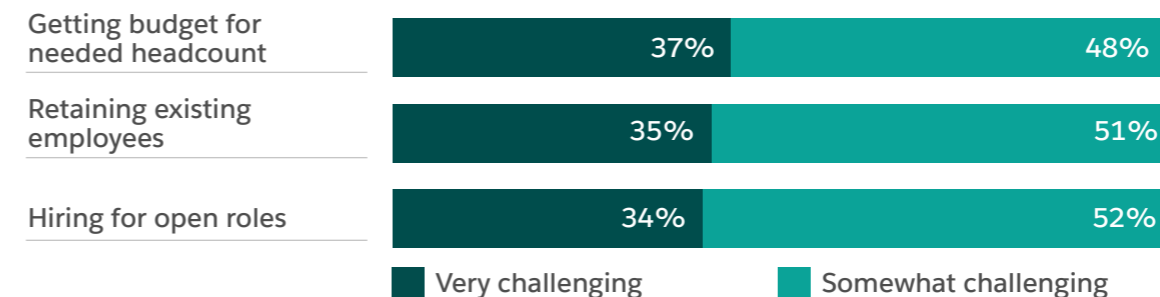
Sales organizations reported 25% average turnover over the last 12 months.

Employee Retention Remains a Sticking Point

Sales Professionals' Plans Regarding Seeking New Employment



Sales Leaders Who Say the Following Is Challenging:



* [Chief Economist Outlook](#), World Economic Forum, September 2022



04

The Seller Experience Gets a Second Look

Some issues are easier to fix than others – like unrealistic sales targets. Those can be adjusted. Other shortcomings are more complex. Companies say they are working on it, improving training programs and benefits.

In general, companies that prioritize the employee experience see a big gain in customer satisfaction, which leads to customer retention. B2B companies see a lift of 1.8x in customer KPIs when they focus on improving the employee experience.*

* [The Experience Advantage](#), Salesforce, 2022.

Top 5 Reasons Sales Professionals Want to Leave Their Job

Sales Leaders

- 1 Lack of advancement opportunities
- 2 Too much admin work
- 3 Unrealistic sales targets
- 4 Uncompetitive pay/benefits
- 5 Not enough flexibility/autonomy

Sales Reps

- Unrealistic sales targets
- Uncompetitive pay/benefits
- Want to leave sales entirely
- Uncompetitive product
- Bad company culture

Sales Ops

- Lack of advancement opportunities
- Inadequate technology/tools
- Unrealistic sales targets
- Uncompetitive product
- Uncompetitive pay/benefits

Top 5 Retention Strategies from Sales Leaders

- 1 Providing schedule/location flexibility
- 2 Increasing benefits
- 3 Improving sales training and enablement
- 4 Providing team-building opportunities
- 5 Streamlining sales processes



04

The Seller Experience Gets a Second Look

Coaching is one way organizations keep sales professionals engaged and productive. But what kind of coaching is effective?

Reps and leaders differ on this. Generational differences are noteworthy – baby boomers prefer training materials, while Gen Xers and millennials prefer sales strategy reviews. Gen Zers value performance reviews most highly.

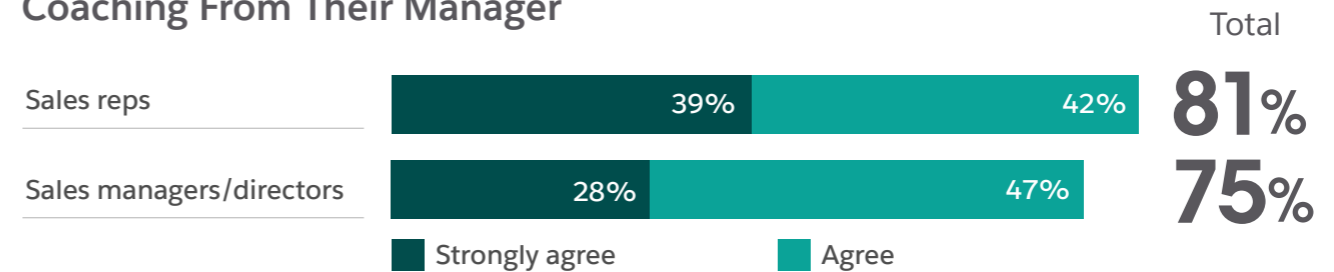
Sales professionals largely agree they get valuable coaching from their manager, but only 26% say it occurs weekly. So, when managers do sit down for a coaching session, they may have a long list of issues that are difficult to address in a single session.

Technology solutions can supplement one-on-one coaching and training, but only 53% of sales leaders say they use these tools. This may be an area sales orgs will want to review in trying to do more with less.

Only 53% of sales leaders use coaching solutions.

Coaching Is Valuable, but Supporting Technology Lags

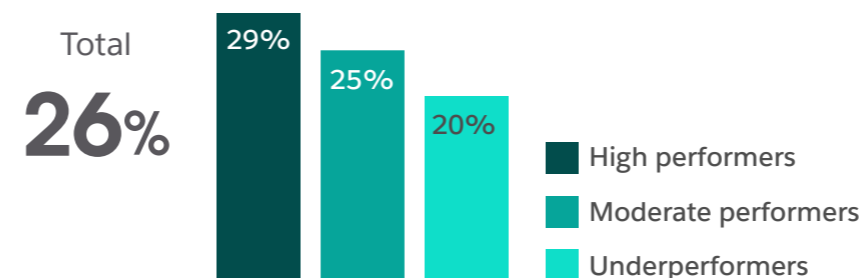
Sales Professionals Who Agree They Get Valuable Coaching From Their Manager



Most Valued Coaching Method, By Generation



Sales Professionals Who Receive 1:1 Coaching At Least Weekly



Look Ahead

With challenges mounting and economic conditions shifting, it's little wonder why most sales professionals do not expect to hit quota this year.

That's not the end of the story, however. Sales organizations continue to uplevel their training and enablement in support of their teams.

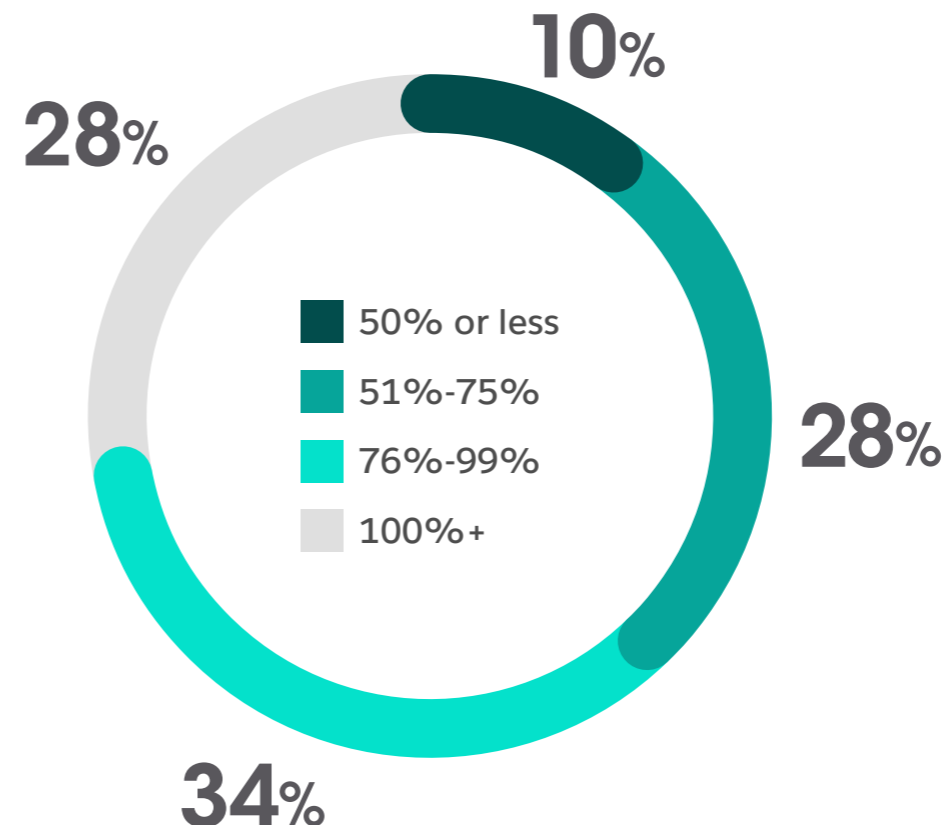
Sales professionals acknowledge that effort, appearing largely confident in their organizations' ability to retrain sellers for this new reality – and more confident than during the peak of the pandemic in 2020.

While sellers can't predict the future, they certainly can be prepared for whatever comes their way.

75% of sales professionals are confident in their sales organizations' ability to reskill reps — up from 63% in 2020.

Hitting Quota Remains a Challenge

Sales Professionals Who Expect Team to Make the Following Percentage of Annual Quota



Growth Factors by Industry

Sales organizations report the following as key to driving growth over the next 12 months:

Automotive

- 1 Improve training on tools/technology
- 2 Improve cross-functional alignment
- 3 Improve data accuracy/quantity

Consumer goods

- 1 Adapt to virtual/hybrid selling
- 2 Improve cross-functional alignment
- 3 Modernize tools/technology

Financial services

- 1 Improve training on tools/technology
- 2 Streamline processes
- 3 Improve cross-functional alignment

Healthcare

- 1 Streamline processes
- 2 Adapt to virtual/hybrid selling
- 3 Engage beyond initial sale

Manufacturing

- 1 Improve training on tools/technology
- 2 Target new markets
- 3 Modernize tools/technology

Retail

- 1 Adapt to virtual/hybrid selling
- 2 Adjust sales KPIs
- 3 Modernize tools/technology

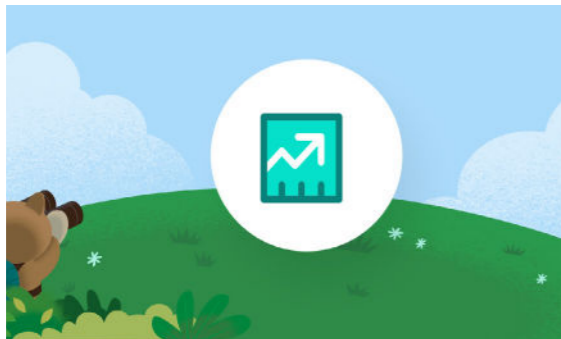


More productivity and efficiency resources



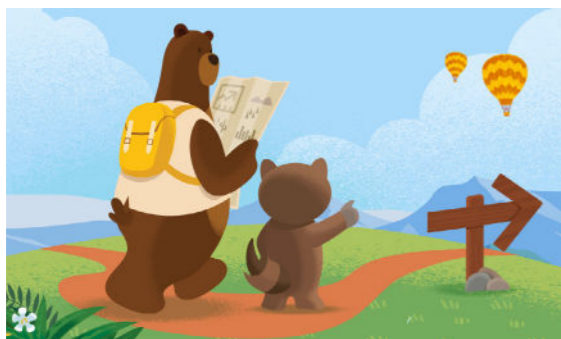
Save Now, Grow Efficiently with Sales Cloud Unlimited

See how you can simplify your tech stack to boost sales efficiency.

[Learn More](#)

Reduce Costs with Sales Cloud

Learn more about how our platform uses automation, data, and intelligence to save you money.

[Learn More](#)

Get the Sales Cloud Guided Tour

Take a spin around Sales Cloud's best and brightest features.

[Learn More](#)

Survey Demographics



Survey Demographics

Country

| | |
|--|----|
| Argentina..... | 1% |
| Australia | 4% |
| Belgium | 1% |
| Brazil | 4% |
| Canada | 4% |
| Chile..... | 1% |
| Colombia..... | 1% |
| France | 4% |
| Germany..... | 4% |
| Hong Kong | 1% |
| India..... | 4% |
| Indonesia | 4% |
| Ireland | 1% |
| Israel | 1% |
| Italy | 4% |
| Japan | 4% |
| Malaysia..... | 4% |
| Mexico | 4% |
| Netherlands | 2% |
| New Zealand..... | 1% |
| Nordics (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden)..... | 3% |
| Philippines..... | 4% |
| Poland | 3% |
| Portugal..... | 1% |
| Singapore | 2% |
| South Africa | 3% |

| | |
|---------------------------|-----|
| South Korea | 4% |
| Spain | 3% |
| Switzerland..... | 1% |
| Taiwan..... | 2% |
| Thailand..... | 4% |
| United Arab Emirates..... | 1% |
| United Kingdom | 4% |
| United States | 10% |
| Vietnam..... | 4% |

Company Size

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Small (21–100 employees) | 30% |
| Medium (101–3,500 employees) | 50% |
| Enterprise (3,501+ employees) | 20% |

Role within Sales

| | |
|--|-----|
| Sales operations | 27% |
| Sales support | 17% |
| Sales representative | 23% |
| Sales manager or director | 26% |
| Sales leadership / head of sales | 6% |

Industry

| | |
|---|-----|
| Agriculture..... | 2% |
| Architecture, engineering, and construction..... | 3% |
| Automotive | 7% |
| Communications | 4% |
| Consumer goods | 13% |
| Energy and utilities..... | 6% |
| Financial services..... | 11% |
| Healthcare..... | 3% |
| Life sciences and biotechnology..... | 3% |
| Manufacturing | 9% |
| Media and entertainment | 4% |
| Professional and business services..... | 4% |
| Retail | 13% |
| Supply chain and logistics | 6% |
| Technology..... | 7% |
| Travel and hospitality | 5% |
| Other | 0% |

Generation

| | |
|--------------------|-----|
| Baby boomers | 8% |
| Gen Xers | 46% |
| Millennials | 45% |
| Gen Zers | 1% |





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