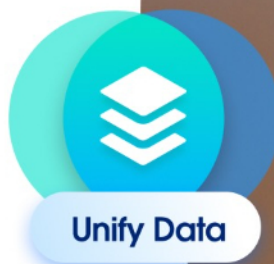




Seventh Edition

State of Sales

Insights from 4,050 sales pros on driving growth with AI and agents.



Foreword



The big reveal in this year's "State of Sales?" Sales teams use agents to transform every stage of the sales cycle, from prospecting to closing. And 94% of sales leaders with agents say they're essential to growth.

It's certainly been true for me. To give just one example: At Salesforce, we use agents to work all our untouched leads. We used to let these leads fall to the floor like sawdust. Now, agents sweep them up and sift for gold. In four months, agents contacted 130,000 leads and created 3,200 opportunities. Next year we believe these numbers will be 10x higher.

Ask almost any sales leader for their favorite agent story, and you'll hear something different, and just as amazing. At a time when sales teams are feeling the squeeze from rising customer expectations and capacity limitations, sellers are driving growth with the power of humans and AI together.

Keep reading to discover how the best teams plan to stay on top in 2026.

Adam Alfano

Executive Vice President, Sales
Salesforce

What You'll Find in This Report


For the seventh edition of the “State of Sales” report, Salesforce surveyed 4,050 sales professionals to learn more about:

- AI agent adoption, use cases, and benefits
- Data considerations to improve agent outcomes
- Key revenue models for driving growth
- Tactics to improve the sales rep experience

Data in this report is from an anonymous survey conducted from August through September, 2025. All respondents are third-party panelists. Due to rounding, not all percentage totals in this report sum to 100%. The comparison calculations are made from total numbers (not rounded numbers). For further survey demographics, see [page 36](#).




Salesforce Research provides data-driven insights to help businesses transform how they drive customer success. Browse all reports at salesforce.com/research.

 Australia

 Brazil

 Canada

 Denmark[†]

 Finland[†]

 France

 Germany

 India


 Ireland


 Italy


 Japan

 Mexico


 Netherlands

 New Zealand

 Norway[†]

 Portugal

 Singapore

 South Korea

 Spain

 Sweden[†]

 United Kingdom

 United States

4,050 sales professionals
surveyed in **22** countries

Flag icons: Getty images

[†] Single Sample Group

Who We Surveyed

- 1 Sales Leaders**
Sales and revenue leaders and managers
- 2 Sales Reps**
Front-line, quota-carrying sales representatives
- 3 Partner Reps**
Sales reps external to the company who sell through revenue-sharing agreements
- 4 Sales and Business Development Representatives (SDRs and BDRs)**
Specialists who prospect and qualify leads to fill the sales pipeline
- 5 Sales Operations**
Includes sales operations, sales enablement, revenue ops, and deal desk professionals

Sales Performance Levels

Throughout this report, we classify survey respondents across the following sales performance tiers.

16%

Underperformers
maintained or decreased
YoY revenue.

32%

High performers
substantially increased
YoY revenue.




52%

Moderate performers
somewhat increased
YoY revenue.

Contents

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Chapter 3: Sales Teams Pull on Three Key Levers for Growth	19
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Executive Summary

Before, sales teams had to choose between two options: Move fast and scale – or focus on the human connection.

Today, they're using AI and agents to do both at the same time.

But sales agents will fall flat without great data. So sales teams are putting in the groundwork to improve agent outcomes with unified data and simplified tech stacks.

They're also looking beyond AI to pave more paths to growth, focusing on usage pricing, sales planning, and rep support.

The result is a sales cycle reinvented – with humans and agents working side by side.

01 Sellers Welcome AI Agents to the Team

Caught between high customer expectations and limited capacity to deliver on them, nine in 10 sales teams look to agents. They report benefits to sales planning, customer retention, and prospecting. **94% of sales leaders with agents say they're critical for meeting business demands.**

02 AI Agent Adoption Requires Better Data and Fewer Tools

Sales teams are unifying data and simplifying tech to improve AI and agent outcomes. Sales pros have data concerns such as manual errors and duplicate data. Others say bloated tech stacks delay their AI initiatives. **84% of teams without an all-in-one platform plan to consolidate tech.**

03 Sales Teams Pull on Three Key Levers for Growth

Sellers are looking beyond AI to find three key tactics for growth: emphasizing sales planning, investing in partners, and delivering usage pricing. **76% of sales leaders say usage pricing is more important to customers now than last year.**

04 Beyond Pay, Here's What Reps Really Want

Sales reps want more personalized coaching and greater transparency in pay. Leaders are bringing in agents and automation that can help. Many reps also say community is the key to their success. **High performers are 2.5x more likely to regularly participate in a sales community outside their company.**

1

Sellers Welcome AI Agents to the Team



01 Sellers Face High Expectations and Low Capacity

Sales reps are being stretched thin by two opposing forces: growing customer demands on one end and limited time to deliver on them on the other.

Sellers say customers increasingly want ROI, personalized experiences, and extensive education before buying. Meanwhile, the sales cycle is growing longer as customers take longer to decide.

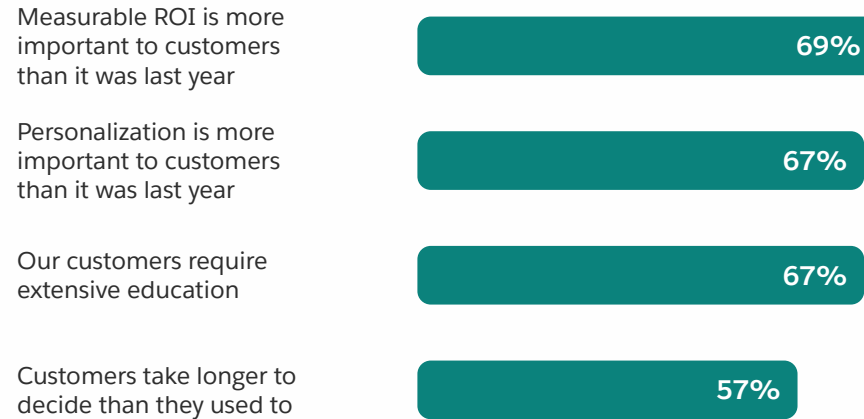
The challenge for reps is not a lack of desire or skill, but capacity. They spend more than half of their time on nonselling work like data entry and prospecting.

With only so many hours in the day, and only so many reps to go around, the question for sales teams becomes how to do more with less.

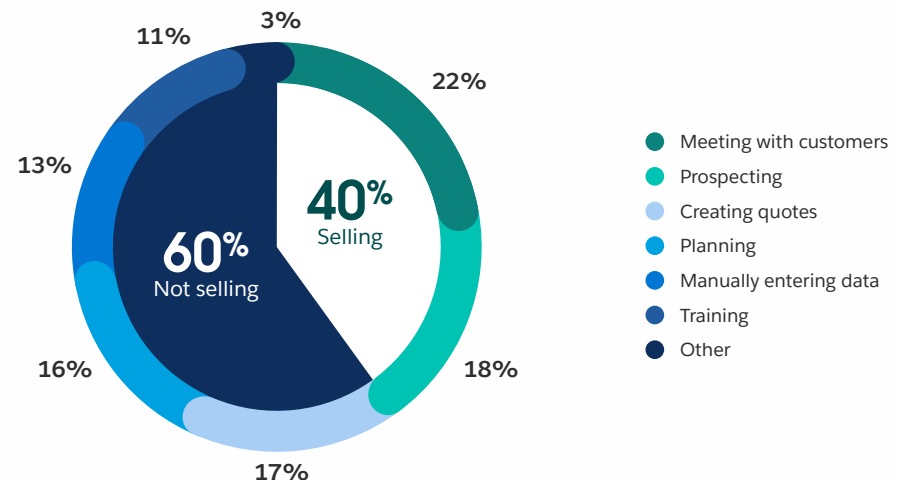
Changing customer demands is the #1 challenge in sales.

Reps Are Caught Between Customer Demands and Limited Time

Sales Professionals Who Say the Following



How Reps Spend Their Time During an Average Workweek



01 Sales Pros Say AI Agents Are Critical to Success

Feeling the squeeze, sales teams are calling in agents, which can support humans by working on their behalf 24/7. Sales pros say agents elevate the human experience and help grow pipeline, deals, and revenue.

Sales pros report wide-ranging benefits that include: improving data accuracy, making sales planning more efficient, driving customer retention, and engaging prospects who were previously left on the sidelines.

Reps add that agents help them understand customers better, increase their odds of hitting sales targets, and make them more productive.

94% of sales leaders with agents say they're critical for meeting business demands.

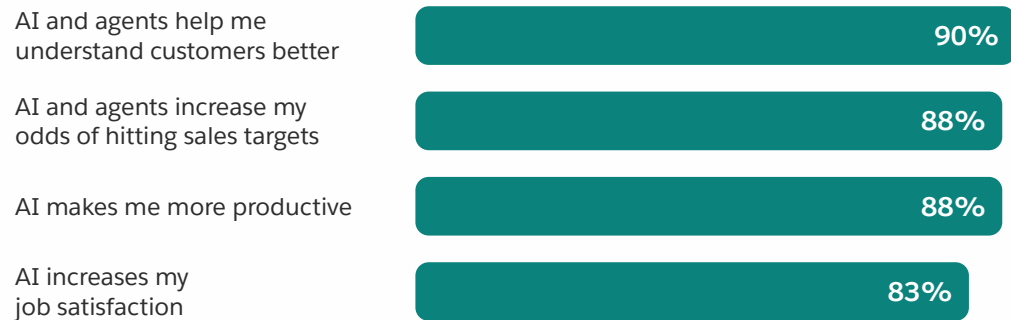
Humans and Agents Find a Formula for Success

Top Areas Where AI and Agents Provide Benefits

- 1 Data accuracy
- 2 Sales planning
- 3 Customer retention
- 4 Customer & prospect engagement
- 5 Cost savings

Base: Sales pros with AI agents.

Sales Pros with Agents Who Say the Following



01 Sales Teams Use AI Agents Across the Sales Cycle

As AI agents make their benefits known, agent adoption in sales is surging: Nine in 10 sales teams use agents today or expect to within two years.

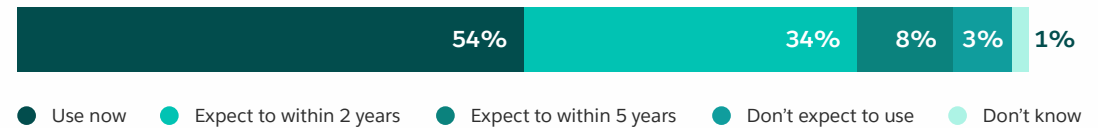
They're deploying agents from one end of the sales process to the other, helping reps overcome capacity limitations and move faster – while still providing the deep, personalized experiences customers expect.

Key use cases include: fulfilling orders to improve customer experience, tracking product usage to deliver usage pricing, and creating quotes to speed up the closing process.

Financial companies are especially keen on using the technology, making up three of the top five industries with sales agents. For example, wealth managers can use agents as assistants to book meetings and create financial reports, helping them spend more time connecting with clients.

The Rise of Agents Isn't Coming. It's Here.

Sales Teams' Use of AI Agents



Top AI Agent Use Case in Sales

- 1 Fulfilling orders
- 2 Tracking product usage
- 3 Creating quotes
- 4 Managing commissions
- 5 Prospecting

Top Industries Using AI Agents for Sales

- 1 Wealth management
- 2 Banking
- 3 Technology
- 4 Insurance
- 5 Media & entertainment

Base: Sales pros with AI agents.

01 High Performers Have a Secret: AI Prospecting Agents

Prospecting pains have dogged sales professionals since Day 1. Sales reps spend almost one full day of their workweek on prospecting, and nearly half say it's one of the worst parts of working in sales. And even with all that time spent on outreach, nearly half of sales pros still feel it's not enough.

So it's no surprise that sales teams with agents are depending on the technology to help. A third of sales pros with agents use them for prospecting, and nearly all of them benefit from agent use.

High performers are 1.7x more likely than underperformers to use prospecting agents.

Agents Take on Prospecting

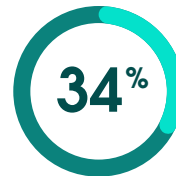
Sales Reps Who Say the Following

Cold outreach is one of the worst parts of a sales job

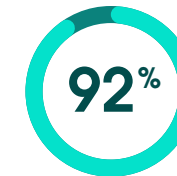
47%

My team lacks the bandwidth to do cold outreach

47%



of sales teams with AI agents use them for prospecting.



of sales pros with AI agents say AI benefits prospecting.



Pro Tip: Ask agents to handle both outbound and inbound leads.

Struggling with prospecting? Agents can help 24/7 by welcoming website visitors and warming up prospects, then handing them off to reps. [Learn how.](#)

Spotlight: AI, Agents, and Career Growth for Reps

Sales agents boost professional development in addition to productivity. Most reps with agents say AI frees them to focus on higher-value work. They also report more opportunities to mentor colleagues, pursue roles in leadership, and work across departments.

Providing these opportunities can lead to high retention, as a lack of career advancement is the top reason reps want to change jobs.

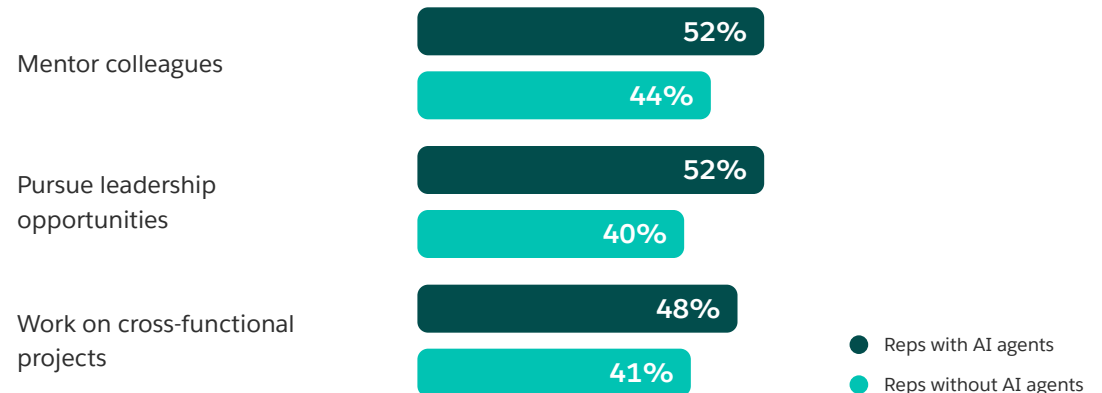
82% of sales reps with agents say that knowing how to use AI provides better career prospects.

AI and Agents Provide Professional Development

Sales Reps with Agents Who Say the Following



Sales Reps with Extensive Opportunities to Do the Following



Sales reps say that lack of advancement opportunities is their #1 reason for wanting to change jobs.



The real magic is in the partnership between our human and digital reps. They let us act like a company 10x our size.

Brandon Metcalf
CEO, Asymbi

Recruiting software company Asymbi uses AI agents to keep pace with an otherwise overwhelming volume of inbound and outbound leads. Agents contact and nurture leads around the clock, freeing reps to focus on higher-value work, such as strategic prospecting and program development.

Learn how Asymbi and other top companies use AI agents to drive growth.

[Get the guide](#)



2

AI Agent Adoption Requires Better Data and Fewer Tools



02

AI Agents are Only as Strong as Their Data

Agents need comprehensive data to understand customers and the business. But that's not enough: They also need data to be unified in order to create accurate, personalized results.

84% of data and analytics leaders say their data strategies need an overhaul to reach their AI goals.*

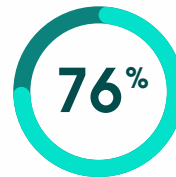
These data demands expose tough data realities, including manual data errors and duplicate data. Security concerns are also an issue: Most sales pros say customers approach them with in-the-weeds questions about data privacy and security.

More than half of sales pros also say security concerns delay AI initiative – highlighting the need for sales technology that can mine customer data for insights while protecting it at the same time.

* Salesforce, State of Data and Analytics, 2025.

Data Concerns Hold Sales Teams Back

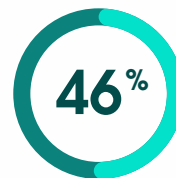
Top Data Issues Among Teams with Agents



76% of sales pros with agents say customers ask detailed questions about data security.



51% of sales pros say security concerns delayed AI initiatives.



46% of sales pros with agents say data quality issues hurt their sales.

02 Data Concerns Trace Back to Tech Sprawl

Only a third of sales teams use an all-in-one platform. The rest use a mix of standalone tools – an average of eight per team – risking tech bloat. Nearly half of reps say they're overwhelmed by the volume.

Equally as troubling are the data implications. Standalone tools mean data remains siloed or hard to leverage, even if it's high-quality. Data and analytics leaders estimate that 19% of their data is inaccessible.* And [most believe](#) their most valuable business insights reside inside this inaccessible 19%.*

This trapped data limits visibility across sales, while also limiting agent outcomes and AI insights.

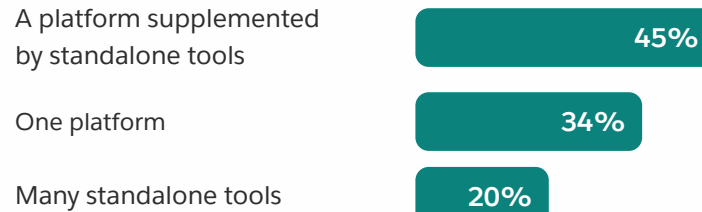
51% of sales leaders with AI say tech silos delay or limit those initiatives.

* Survey Reveals Data and Analytics Trends for 2026.

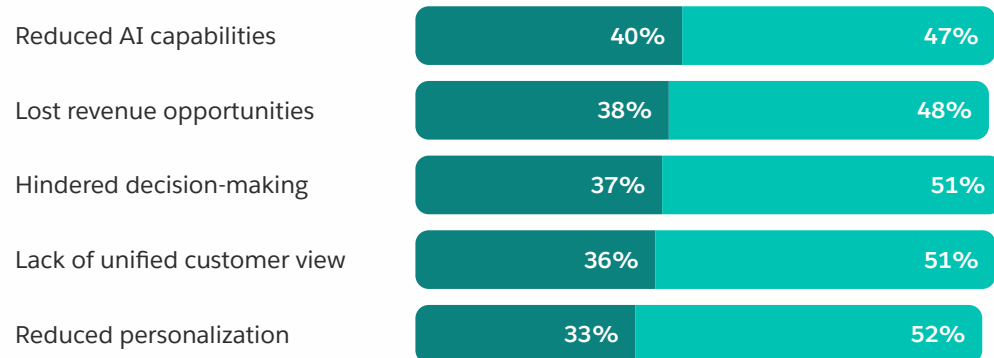
** Salesforce, State of Data and Analytics, 2025.

Bloated Tech Stacks Overwhelm Reps and Undermine AI

Sales Team Tech Stack Structure



Impacts of Data Silos and Trapped Data**



● Severe impact ● Some impact

42% of sales reps are overwhelmed by too many tools.

02 Top Teams Focus on Tech and Data Cleanup

Eager to take full advantage of AI and agents, sales teams are returning to the fundamentals: streamlined tech and high-quality data.

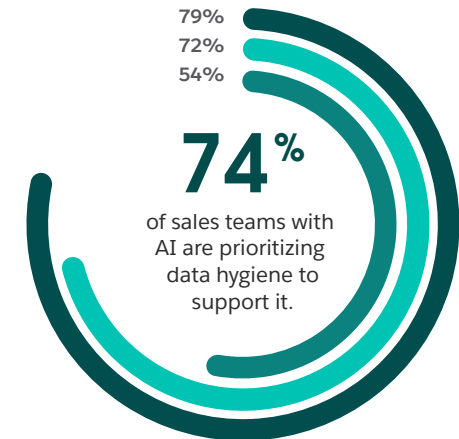
Most sales teams are working to simplify their tech stacks if they haven't already: over four in five of teams without a single platform plan to consolidate their tools.

High performers are especially focused on this foundational work. They are 1.3x more likely to move to a platform and 1.5x more likely to prioritize data hygiene to improve AI outcomes.

High Performers Prioritize Tech Consolidation and Data Hygiene



- High performers
- Moderate performers
- Underperformers



- High performers
- Moderate performers
- Underperformers



Pro Tip: Streamline your tech to improve your agents.

Simpler tech stacks lead to more sophisticated agents by making it easier to set them up with high-quality data and work with them side by side. [Learn more.](#)



Reps and AI agents need company and customer context to win. Unifying data is square one.

Paul Bullis

Distinguished Engineer & CTO, Salesforce Platform, IBM

Paul Bullis, Chief Technology Officer of Salesforce Platform at IBM, is working to make data usable for sales teams and agents alike. How? By unifying it. He brings together company, customer, and third-party data, enabling AI and agents to guide reps as they sell. For example, reps get alerts for the next best steps to take, and gain access to product usage insights that help them create compelling cases for renewals.

Catch the full interview on shoring up data to make full use of agents.

[Watch now](#)



3

Sales Teams Pull on Three Key Levers for Growth



03 Usage Pricing Is the Leading Revenue Model

Usage pricing is the #1 revenue model contributing to growth. Sales pros with usage pricing options say it's easier to show ROI, retain customers, and close deals.

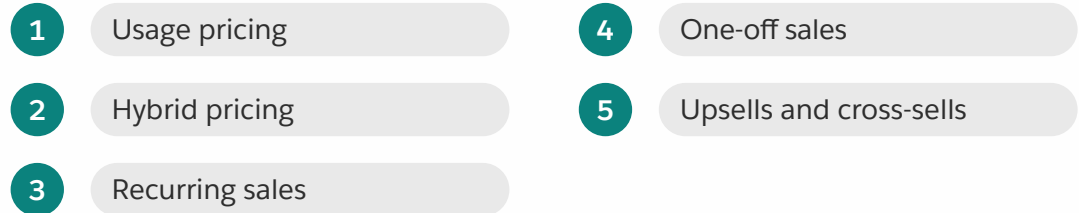
But building usage pricing is no guarantee a business will take full advantage of it. Sales pros struggle to track current usage and predict future usage, making it harder to forecast revenue.

These challenges have downstream effects on customer experience. For example, a lack of visibility into usage makes it harder to create quotes, delaying the renewal process. It also becomes harder to keep the customer informed on the status of their usage plan.

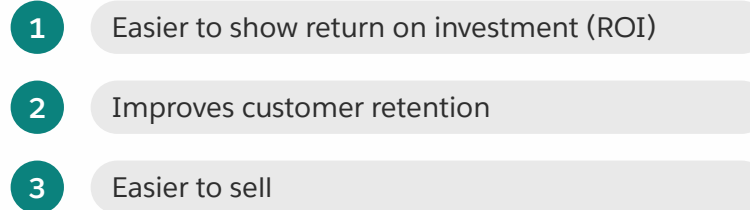
76% of sales leaders say usage pricing is more important to customers now than last year.

Usage Pricing Benefits Sales But Is Tough to Execute

Revenue Models Ranked by Contribution to Revenue

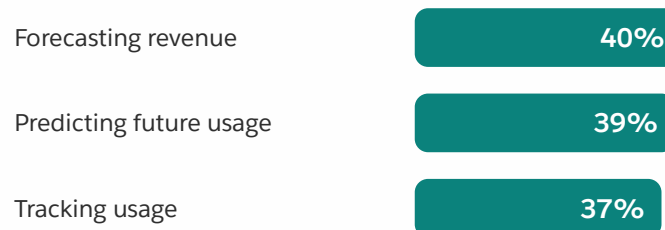


Top Benefits of Usage Pricing



Base: Sales professionals with usage pricing

Sales Pros with Usage Pricing Who Say the Following Are Challenges



03 Sales Planning Is the Quiet Force Behind Growth

Sales planning is the #2 growth tactic across industries (after investing in AI), as sales pros emphasize the need for prework to meet growing expectations with limited resources.

Everyone on the team has a role to play: Sales leaders and managers set blueprints to hit revenue targets; reps create account plans to close deals; and ops brings rigor to help the company adapt as company and market conditions change.

It's a time-consuming process that takes up almost a fifth of the sales pro's average week. But most sales pros say AI helps. For example, AI helps sales teams test what-if scenarios that predict how changes to variables like territory design or customer segments will impact revenue growth.

91% of sales pros say AI benefits sales planning.

With Less Room for Error, Sales Teams Bet on Planning

On average, sales professionals spend 16% of their time on preparation and planning.

Top Growth Tactics Across the Following Industries



Consumer Goods

- 1 Investing in AI
- 2 Improving use of tools
- 3 Improving sales planning



Healthcare

- 1 Improving sales planning
- 2 Investing in AI
- 3 Simplifying process



Technology

- 1 Investing in AI
- 2 Improving sales planning
- 3 Improving use of tools



Professional Services

- 1 Investing in AI
- 2 Improving sales enablement
- 3 Improving sales planning



Manufacturing

- 1 Improving sales planning
- 2 Investing in AI
- 3 Improving sales enablement



Media & Entertainment

- 1 Simplifying the sales process
- 2 Improving sales planning
- 3 Providing omni-channel offerings

03

Sales Teams Ramp Up Investments in Partners

Partner selling is reaching a saturation point in sales. Nearly every sales team uses partners in some form, and most use dedicated tools to engage them and manage their partner ecosystems.

Sales teams are also providing partners with access to their in-house tools – a nod to the growing strategic importance of partners and an effort to treat partners like extensions of their own sales team.

89% of sales professionals say partner selling is increasingly important to hit revenue targets.

Sellers Bring Partners Closer into the Fold

Sales Pros Who Say Their Company Uses Partner Selling



Access That Partners Have to Company's AI Tools



of sales professionals with partners use dedicated tools to support them.



Pro Tip: Elevate your partners with AI and agents.

Think about all you do to support your internal team with agents and AI. Provide that extra level of support to your partners – with agents that get them up to speed on new deals and guide them as they sell.

[Learn how.](#)



Using AI agents has been transformational for us as partners. We spend less time searching for information and more time connecting with customers.

Natasa Marinkovic

VP, Marketing & Alliances, Atrium

Salesforce gives partner sellers access to agents that provide quick answers to questions and personalized insights as they sell. The result is that they can close more deals and stop wasting time logging tickets and searching for information. It's all part of our customer zero approach: using our products to prove value before taking them to market.

Motivate your partners to sell and manage it all from one place.

[Learn how](#)



4

Beyond Pay, Here's What Reps Really Want



04 Reps Ask for Coaching; Teams Pull in Agents.

Over half of reps say traditional enablement materials – like courses and guides – don't give them the skills they need. What do reps want instead? Personalized coaching. Unfortunately, that's lacking. Many say they don't get enough feedback on sales calls or opportunities to practice important conversations ahead of time.

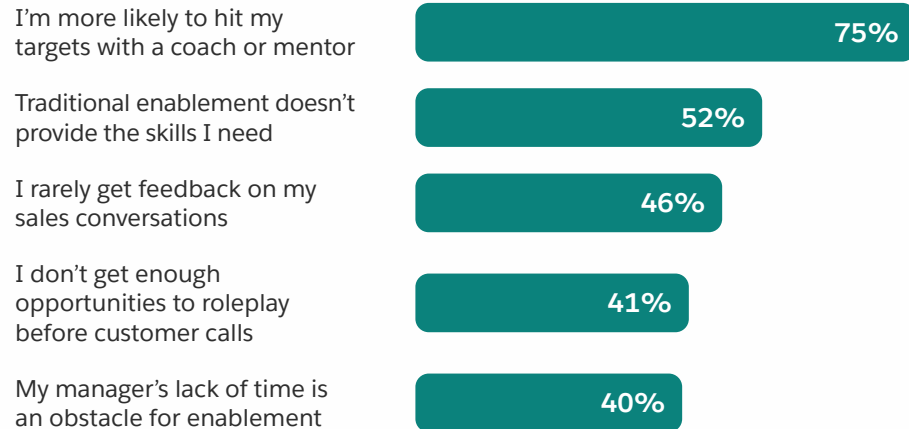
It's not that sales managers don't want to coach their reps. It's that they lack the time. Nearly half of reps say this lack of time is an obstacle.

Unable to scale and coach reps on every single deal, sales pros are turning to the next best thing: agents. About a third of sales teams with agents use them for coaching – for example, by helping reps roleplay sales calls and providing personalized tips on how to improve.

High performers are 1.4x more likely than underperformers to use agents for coaching.

Coaching Agents Help Reps Growth Their Skills

Sales Reps Who Say the Following



● High performers ● Moderate performers ● Underperformers

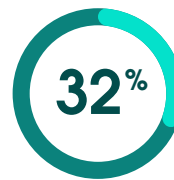
04 Reps Want More Transparency in Pay

While most reps are aware of the compensation amount of the deals they work and are aware of opportunities to increase their pay, many still wish for greater transparency.

But providing this transparency can be easier said than done. About a third of sales pros say their tech stacks lack compensation management capabilities – a gap that can open the door to confusion and inaccuracies around compensation design and calculations.

Reps Ask to Be Let in on Compensation Calculations

Sales Reps Who Say the Following



of sales leaders say their tech stacks lack compensation management capabilities.



Pro Tip: Motivate reps with greater pay visibility.

Fill in the blanks on how commissions are calculated by giving reps real-time visibility into their commission earnings as they close deals throughout the pay period. Automation makes this easy. [See how.](#)

Spotlight: Community Gives Reps an Edge

The heat is on for sellers, and community gives them relief. Four in five reps say that participating in a sales community helps their performance, and most wish for even more access to best practices from their peers.

Sales leaders are hearing the calls for community and working to unlock and open doors. Most say their company should be better about leaning on external sales communities for insights and training.

High-performing sales professionals are 3.2x more likely than underperformers to regularly participate in a sales community outside their company.

Community Brings Success

81%

of sales reps say participating in a sales community improves their performance.

79%

of sales reps wish for more access to best practices from other sales pros.

83%

of sales leaders say their company should be better at using sales communities for insights and training.

48%

33%

15%

44%

of sales reps regularly participate in sales communities outside their company.

● High performers ● Moderate performers ● Underperformers



The Salesblazer Community helps me build confidence and gain new insights. I love to connect with sales pros, build my skills, and stay ahead of the latest trends.

Meghan Perez

Senior Sales Manager, Grubhub

Meghan is a member of the Salesblazer Community, where thousands of sales pros come together to learn, connect, and grow their careers. She says being a Salesblazer gave her the chance to flex her public-speaking skills by participating on a panel at the Salesforce World Tour. She also participates in monthly sessions with small groups to discuss the most pressing topics in sales. The biggest benefit of joining? Learning how other sales pros operate – and bringing those insights back to Grubhub to help her team drive growth.

[Join Salesblazer](#)

GRUBHUB



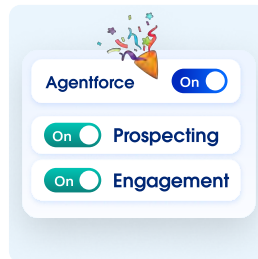
4 Steps to Driving Growth with Agents



1 Scale your sales with agents

Discover 6 real-world tips to end manual selling with agents handling the grind, from prospecting to quoting.

[Get the blueprint](#)



2 Discover the right sales agents to hit your goals.

Choose how agents transform every stage of the sales cycle, from lead engagement to partner success.

[Watch demos](#)



3 Learn how to build and activate a sales agent fast.

Get all the know-how you need to deploy your own personalized sales agent – in less than 30 minutes.

[Get the guide](#)



4 Join a sales community to grow your career.

Come and get the latest in sales content, training, and events – all part of the world's leading sales community.

[Join Salesblazer](#)

Appendix

Changes to Revenue over Past 12 Months, by Industry

● Substantially increased
 ● Increased
 ● No change
 ● Somewhat decreased
 ● Substantially decreased

Overall



Consumer Goods



Healthcare



Manufacturing



Media and Entertainment



Professional Services



Technology



Top 3 Agent Use Cases, by Industry

Consumer Goods

- 1 Order fulfillment
- 2 Quoting
- 3 Tracking product usage

Media and Entertainment

- 1 Order fulfillment
- 2 Tracking product usage
- 3 Coaching

Healthcare

- 1 Tracking product usage
- 2 Order fulfillment
- 3 Commissions

Professional Services

- 1 Pipeline management
- 2 Order fulfillment
- 3 Quoting

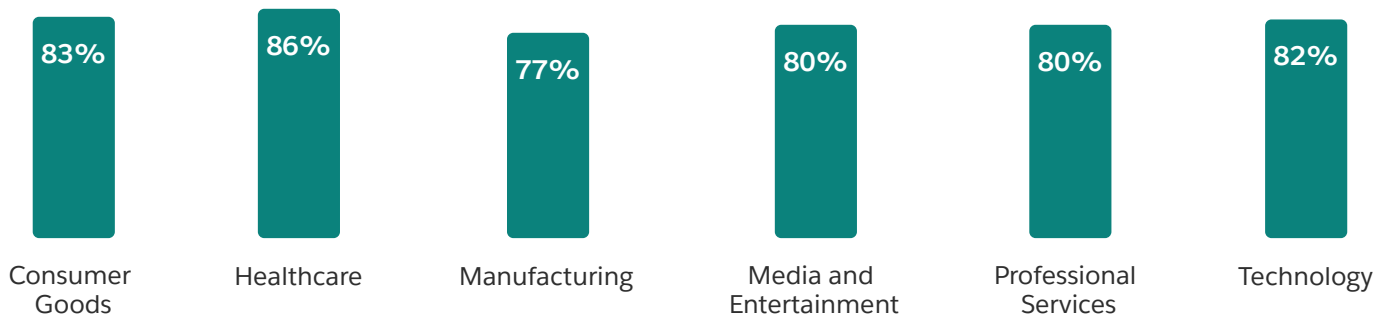
Manufacturing

- 1 Tracking product usage
- 2 Forecasting
- 3 Commissions

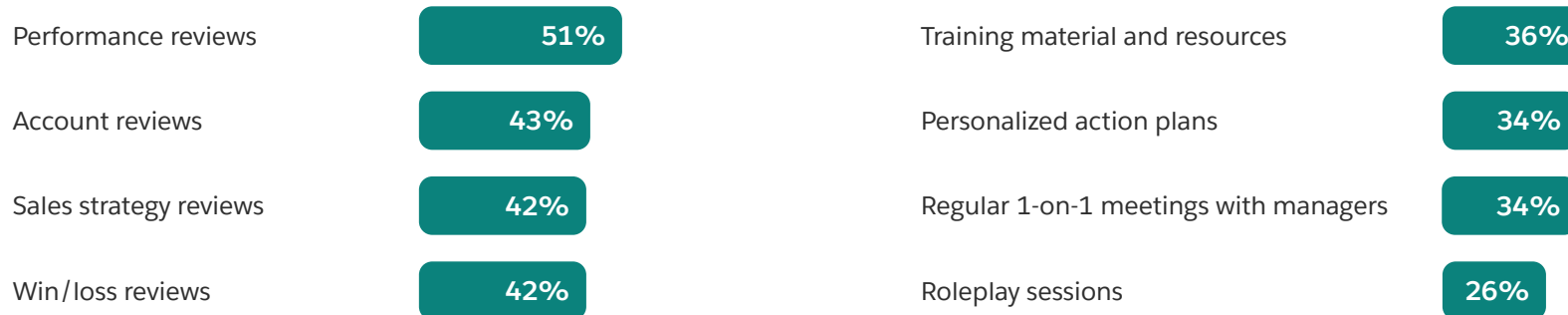
Technology

- 1 Tracking product usage
- 2 Order fulfillment
- 3 Quoting

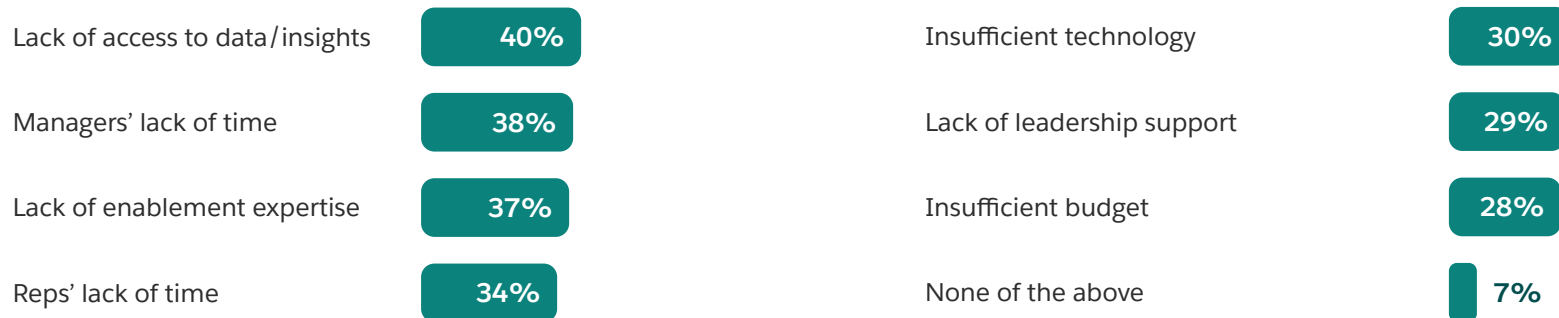
Percentage of Sales Teams That Plan to Use Partner Selling Next Year, by Industry



Types of Enablement Offered Among Sales Teams



Obstacles Sales Teams Face When Enabling Reps



Percentage of Quota Reps Expect to Meet This Year

● 2025 ● 2024



Top Reasons Sales Pros Want to Change Jobs

Gen Z

- 1 Lack of advancement opportunities
- 2 Overly complex sales cycles
- 3 Low pay

Millennials

- 1 Lack of advancement opportunities
- 2 Not enough flexibility and autonomy
- 3 Low pay

Gen X

- 1 Low pay
- 2 Lack of advancement opportunities
- 3 Lack of direction from leadership

Baby Boomers

- 1 Lack of advancement opportunities
- 2 Low pay
- 3 Lack of direction from leadership

Sample Details

Survey Details

Country

Australia	N=250, 6%
Brazil	N=250, 6%
Canada	N=250, 6%
France	N=250, 6%
Germany	N=250, 6%
India	N=250, 6%
Ireland	N=100, 2%
Italy	N=250, 6%
Japan	N=250, 6%
Mexico	N=200, 5%
Netherlands	N=150, 4%
New Zealand	N=100, 2%
Nordics (Denmark, Finland, Norway, Sweden)	N=150, 4%
Portugal	N=100, 2%
Singapore	N=100, 2%
South Korea	N=250, 6%
Spain	N=150, 4%
United Kingdom	N=250, 6%
United States	N=500, 12%

Industry

Agriculture	N=110, 3%
Automotive	N=319, 8%
Communications	N=176, 4%
Consumer goods	N=280, 7%
Energy & utilities	N=173, 4%
Engineering, construction & real estate	N=120, 3%
Financial services	N=468, 12%
Healthcare	N=410, 10%
Life sciences & biotech	N=201, 5%
Manufacturing	N=304, 8%
Media & entertainment	N=105, 3%
Professional & business services	N=177, 4%
Retail	N=555, 14%
Supply chain & logistics	N=174, 4%
Technology	N=328, 8%
Travel & hospitality	N=145, 4%
Other	N=14, 0.3%

Company Size

21–200 employees	N=1,215, 30%
201–3500, employees	N=2,025, 50%
3501+, employees	N=810, 20%

Role

Sales leaders	N=1,417, 35%
Sales reps	N=1,032, 25%
Sales ops	N=1,022, 25%
Sales support	N=579, 14%



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