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# How Digitization Can Help Address Today's Top Sales Challenges

Today's sales professionals have it tough. Charged with hitting ever-increasing sales quotas and client growth targets, they face a growing list of challenges that make it harder to interact with clients while dealing with administrative burdens that threaten to limit the time available to focus on direct sales activities.

But sales leaders are known for being problem solvers. Perhaps that's why they've set ambitious goals and priorities for the coming year. The chart below shows the top priorities for Chief Sales Officers (CSOs) according to a recent Gartner study.

Improving pipeline creation

72%

Investments in the sales development

70%

Improving account management

62.3%

Improving sales manager effectiveness

60.9%

Source: https://www.gartner.com/en/sales/insights/sales-leaders-top-priorities

In addition, Gartner found that "by 2025, 60 percent of B2B sales organizations will **transition from experience and intuition-based selling to data-driven selling,** merging their sales process, sales applications, sales data and sales analytics into a single operational practice."

But a positive mindset and can-do attitude will only get you so far. In the wake of the pandemic, CSOs face several daunting headwinds that will put these lofty goals to the test. Macroeconomic trends like rapidly rising inflation, ballooning interest rates, lingering supply chain issues and economic instability are driving CSOs to do more with less, threatening the ability of sales professionals to hit their quotas and targets. This paper explores the top six challenges that sales leaders face as they navigate this terrain.

# 1    An evolving work environment

One of the brightest outcomes of the pandemic has been the proven feasibility of hybrid and remote work. Thanks to Zoom, DocuSign and other game-changing technologies, most tasks can now be performed remotely, whether from home, at a satellite or shared office space, or on the road.

Sales professionals, many of whom embraced the mantle of "road warriors" before it was fashionable, have been early adopters of remote technology and the flexible workforce craze. Following the pandemic's onset, 96 percent of B2B sales consulting teams switched to remote selling, either entirely or partially. Moreover, 65 percent of business-to-business leaders found remote work to be as effective as the traditional, pre-pandemic work environment.

But to successfully incorporate remote and hybrid work into the sales process, organizations must have the right tools. They must allow sales professionals to communicate seamlessly within the organization and directly with their customers and prospects.

# 2 Sales teams are stretched thin

Today's sales professionals are burdened with too many responsibilities, which divert them from their core sales activities.

After millions of workers quit or changed jobs during the so-called "Great Resignation," companies are now facing an economic downturn, limiting their ability to address sales staff shortages. So current sales reps are often overburdened with more territory to cover, multiple sales enablement tools to manage, and less administrative help and support. A recent report shows that 39 percent of companies use more than five sales tools, and 86 percent of users get confused about which tool to use for which task, leading to a massive waste of time and misdirected effort.

But even before these recent challenges, 34 percent of sales development representatives (SDRs) cited "too many non-sales activities" as a top challenge in hitting quotas, according to the Sales Sentiment Index Report. Manually sourcing and updating prospect data in multiple databases remains a significant source of frustration for SDRs.

# 3    Limited sales enablement and marketing support

Sales professionals require access to a robust library of content, tools, knowledge and information to effectively source and close deals. These resources fall within the broad category known as "sales enablement."

The uncomfortable truth is that sales professionals often don't receive the benefit of a regular stream of fresh, relevant content marketing to help generate a steady, active lead pipeline and support them at every stage of the sales cycle.

One measure of this challenge is that 41 percent of sales leaders cited "messaging" as their top challenge, according to the 2020 Sales Development Representative Benchmark Survey, indicating insufficient support from marketing and enablement teams. The result is that many sales professionals are left to create their own messaging and marketing communications, which results in a preponderance of non-qualified leads and poor conversion rates.

# 4 Poor data access and quality control and marketing support

We live in a world of data, and the most effective sales teams know how to leverage and analyze information to their advantage. Yet poor data access and governance can lead to sales contracting errors, resulting in a poor customer experience and delayed sales closings, effectively leaving money on the table.

Human error is at the heart of contracting problems, with more than 90 percent of respondents to a 2020 DocuSign survey of over 1,300 contracting professionals saying that human error impacts their current contracting process, with almost half saying it happens often. Specifically, 32 percent of respondents reported having shared a contract with the wrong party, while 43 percent couldn't locate a stored contract. Furthermore, finding and analyzing contract data was identified as a top contract management challenge by 30 percent of respondents.

Because of the needless complications, delays and inefficiencies introduced by manual work, less than half of contracting professionals consider their existing system reliable or efficient.

Organizations are already using contract management solutions to solve several problems, but the most common benefits are contract generation, accuracy and analysis. These gains are frequently realized by a human-machine partnership that automates repetitive tasks and enhances human decision-making during the contracting process.

# 5　Inadequate onboarding, training and coaching

The benefits of rigorous, well-implemented onboarding, training and coaching programs are well-documented. According to one study, 78 percent of sales teams with an effective sales training program hit 100 percent of their sales quotas. In addition, nearly 90 percent of teams with well-defined key performance indicators (KPIs) for their sales training programs hit at least 75 percent of their quotas.

Of course, one of the challenges with implementing robust and effective training programs is the relatively short average tenure of sales professionals, which one benchmark survey found to be less than 16 months. A poor onboarding experience for sales staff significantly contributes to shorter tenure and higher turnover rates. This is a big issue for sales organizations challenged to find and retain productive professionals. According to CareerBuilder, 36 percent of companies do not have a structured onboarding process, choosing to focus on initial orientation instead of long-term employee development and success.

When factoring in a standard ramp-up time of three months, the typical sales professional provides less than a year of optimum productivity before leaving the organization. This places enormous pressure on sales leaders to implement an effective, ongoing training and coaching program to ensure they maximize productivity on the front lines and achieve an adequate return on investment (ROI) for each employee.

# 6 Arcane, manual processes

Too many sales organizations have been hampered by slow digital transformation. Outdated processes and legacy technology create bottlenecks in the sales process, resulting in frustration for sales teams, costly errors, delayed deal closings, and, ultimately, missed sales quotas.

Despite the availability of modern sales-tracking and deal-routing methods like marketing automation platforms and native assignment rules in CRM software, the leading method for routing leads is still overwhelmingly manual across most industries. Recent research has shown that 1 in 3 B2B organizations still use manual processes to move sales and marketing data across tools.

A related challenge is the lack of effective collaboration across functions and departments that serve critical roles in the sales cycle—such as legal, compliance and finance.

The most effective organizations don't function within a silo. To empower sales and generate above-average results, organizations must take a whole-enterprise approach to empowerment and cross-functional collaboration.

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# How sales leaders can optimize their teams

Sales is a dynamically changing function. Of course, there's no single solution to help overcome the many challenges that sales leaders face today. But technology has dramatically evolved in recent years, giving CSOs multiple options for streamlining sales processes and reducing or eliminating time-consuming, redundant manual steps.

Through robust integrations and application programming interfaces (APIs), sales teams can now access every critical document, application and support collateral within the platform they're already familiar with and working in daily.

One area ripe for transformation is document and contract management, which remains a significant part of every sales professional's job. In fact, 80 percent of enterprise sales teams execute over 500 contracts each month, and for many, this process is still filled with complex, manual steps that can result in critical errors and delays in closings.

Through DocuSign, sales teams can fully automate the agreement process from custom contract generation and signature to business workflows and document analysis. Sales professionals can now close deals with just a click inside the customer relationship management (CRM) system they already use, creating a seamless, frictionless process for customers and the sales team.

For example, Refinitiv, one of the world's largest financial data providers, uses DocuSign to close sales 95 percent faster. And at Salesforce, 90 percent of contracts are now signed in under an hour using DocuSign.

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" **85 percent of our sales agreements are now 'no-touch,' which means they get done far faster, at less cost, with fewer errors.** "

**Heather Atkinson**
VP of Revenue Operations
Products and Pricing at Salesforce

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CSOs should also begin transitioning to a fully virtual sales enablement environment, which goes beyond simply allowing current marketing content to be accessible online. True virtual enablement involves reimagining your current program to offer compelling and relevant materials and content in an engaging, interactive learning environment. The benefits of a well-considered and -implemented virtual sales enablement program include unlimited scalability, unprecedented flexibility and the promotion of enhanced diversity among sales teams.

Along with delivering a state-of-the-art sales enablement program, organizations must move toward providing outstanding, consistent, ongoing training and coaching programs. Again, technology can be an effective lever here, allowing learning to be done in an interactive, self-directed environment where new hires can proceed at their own pace. Research into game theory has shown that rewards and incentives are a critical component of ensuring teams participate and engage with training, so leaders should ensure that training incentives are aligned with the organization's larger goals.

However, the human element remains essential, especially with the exponential growth of remote and hybrid work. Regular coaching support and mentorship during the early days of a sales professional's tenure are critical, but make sure not to neglect more mature and tenured staff as they progress through their careers.

Lastly, to meet their sales quotas and maintain high levels of job satisfaction, talented sales professionals need to focus on what they do best: sales. As a CSO, you can best support your team by removing as many barriers as possible, such as manual paperwork and requiring access to multiple, disconnected platforms.

# Go from leads to cash faster with DocuSign

DocuSign—the market leader for e-signature and contract lifecycle management solutions—helps digitally transform how sales teams operate, from onboarding staff to automating manual processes and interacting with prospects and customers.

With more than a dozen products and over 400 integrations, DocuSign solutions address the entire agreement process, helping sales teams focus on accelerating their quote-to-cash journey and closing deals.

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