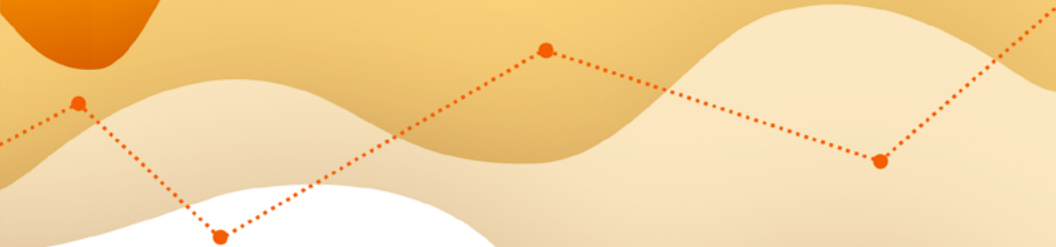


SALES LEADERSHIP TRENDS 2024

Navigate The New Normal





Antoine de Saint-Exupéry...

A French pilot, author, and poet once wrote, “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the people to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.” The point here, never forget that purpose and inspiration is at the heart of any great leader. Focusing on the vision and not the task is first and foremost. But after casting that vision, there is still work to do. We’ll go through the five key leadership trends for navigating the challenging sales landscape in 2024.

The sales landscape has gone through dramatic changes over the past few years. The pandemic pushed us into remote selling, inflation caused buyers to become more cautious, everyone started spending way more time online, and generative AI entered the mix, creating no end of debate about what role it should play in sales. Things are finally beginning to settle into a new normal, but it’s vital for sales leaders to understand how today’s sales environment will be different than before.

We’ve identified five key trends that sales leaders should expect to define 2024’s new normal—along with ways to handle them.

Value-based Selling Will Become The Norm

Although it's been around for decades, value selling has made a particular resurgence in recent years, with some major players [like ZenDesk](#) referring to it as “the sales methodology of the future.” And it's easy to see why. According [to a recent study by ValueSelling Associates](#), 87% of high-growth organizations are using a value-based sales strategy, contrasted with only 45% of negative-growth organizations.

Given the tumultuous economic environment of the past few years, companies are being extra cautious about where they spend their money. Before they make a purchase, they need to know in concrete terms that the value it provides will outweigh the cost. And they want to know that it will continue providing value for the long run, rather than being something they'll have to rip out and replace in a year—wasting resources and offsetting any temporary value it may have provided. Ideally, that means continual innovation to anticipate customers' needs before they experience them, providing a solution that is ready to go when the need arises.

For a sales organization to keep up in a competitive marketplace, they must find ways to provide value, not just a product or service. This means taking the time to deeply understand their customers. Organizations must conduct research to learn why customers are interested in an offering, what problems they need to solve, what goals they hope to achieve. From there, sales reps can address those customer needs head on by explaining how their product or service empowers the customer to overcome problems and accomplish their aims—and in ways competitors can't.

Of course each customer is different, and that means sales reps must take a personalized approach to value-based selling. It isn't enough to know the broad value their product or service provides. They must learn the specific needs of each customer to offer a fine-tuned value proposition that pinpoints the customer's issues and provides the solution. Are they looking for a way to save time on a certain process? To get around a roadblock they're facing? To increase their market share? A product may do all of these things and more, but knowing which element is top of mind for the customer will allow sales reps to tap into the value needed to close a sale.

Sales Tech Consolidation Will Have Organizations Deciding Between All-In-One And Best-In-Class Solutions

The shift to selling software solutions over the last couple of decades has meant that many of the tech solutions organizations pay for (or are considering paying for) offer additional functionality beyond a single core function. This often creates redundancy with other tools, causing businesses to pay multiple times for the same functionality from different vendors, while only using that functionality from one of them. Companies thus want to consolidate their tech stacks to reduce that redundancy. They want to find solutions that offer the most bang for the buck, and eliminate solutions with costs that exceed the value they provide.

Tech consolidation has been increasing in recent years, and it encompasses many different industries and tech solutions. For example, according to [Gartner](#), 75% of organizations were pursuing security vendor consolidation

in 2022, compared with only 29% in 2020. And according to Salesforce's most recent [State of Sales](#) report, 94% of sales organizations intend to consolidate their tech stack over the next year.

This puts organizations in the position of choosing between two different philosophies for SaaS offerings:

All-In-One Solutions

provide as many functions and capabilities as possible in a single product or service, offering solutions to multiple problems at once.

Best-In-Class Solutions

focus on a single core offering, ensuring that it's easy to use, saves time, exceeds (or sets) functionality norms, and performs well across industry specific criteria.

An all-in-one solution is appealing for a number of reasons. For one, 66% of salespeople feel like they're drowning in tools, as the average sales team relies on 10 different tools, according to that Salesforce State of Sales report. If a single tool can do the job of 10 others, it saves reps from the hassle of continually switching back and forth from one to the other, allowing them to remain within the same ecosystem while they focus on simply making sales. For another, all-in-one solutions often cost less than paying individually for a selection of disparate solutions. And even if it isn't a single tool, switching to a single vendor can feel like a tempting form of all-in-one consolidation: there are often native connections and shared UI norms in a vendor's product family, easing the burden on your users and consolidating billing.

However, some all-in-one solutions fall into the "multitool problem." A multitool is technically able to cut through wood, drive screws, fasten bolts, and more—but it isn't particularly good at performing any of these functions. And even if a multitool has a single best-in-class feature, the odds are slim that its other features are similarly effective. A multitool may be nice to have in a drawer for emergencies, but no carpenter, mechanic, or contractor would ever think of using one to replace their collection of specialized tools.

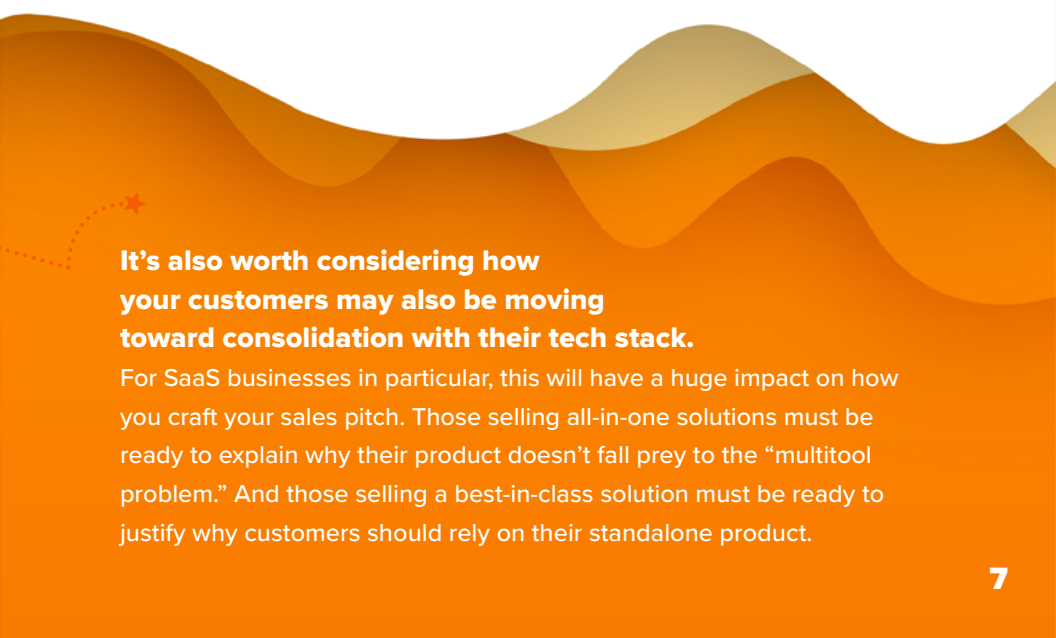
For all-in-one solutions to be viable, they can't merely "do it all"—they need

to actually perform each function well, providing equal or better value to the standalone solutions they seek to replace. If the extra features a product offers don't work well, then they don't add any value, and customers will quickly realize they'll have to look elsewhere for a solution they supposedly already purchased.

A best-in-class solution is like a Milwaukee power tool. It may only do one thing, but it performs that function exceptionally well. It requires far less time and effort to use, and it's reliable, no matter what you're working on. You'll never have to worry about when a project will push the solution beyond its limits, because it's simply the right tool for the job.

But of course the real world is rarely black and white, and many solutions these days fall somewhere between those extremes. Some solutions manage to perform exceptionally well in their core areas while also providing the benefit of additional functionality.

Sales leaders must consider these things as they carefully evaluate their existing tech stack and any new solutions they adopt in 2024. As the world of sales tech moves toward consolidation, with incentive compensation management, forecasting, call intelligence, enablement platforms, and more all blurring together, you must take care to ensure that the solutions you're using are the right tools for the job, whatever that might look like.



It's also worth considering how your customers may also be moving toward consolidation with their tech stack.

For SaaS businesses in particular, this will have a huge impact on how you craft your sales pitch. Those selling all-in-one solutions must be ready to explain why their product doesn't fall prey to the "multitool problem." And those selling a best-in-class solution must be ready to justify why customers should rely on their standalone product.

Generative AI Will Offer Promising Results— But Require Caution

Artificial intelligence has become impossible to ignore over the past year. According to some, it's a panacea—providing automated solutions to anything and everything, quicker and cheaper than ever before. Others are less enthusiastic, noting things like the high incidents of errors, often awkward or uncanny outputs, and various ethical concerns.

However you feel about recent advancements in AI, it isn't going away anytime soon, and it'll impact nearly every aspect of business moving forward, including sales. According to the [Boston Consulting Group](#), "To be an industry leader in five years, you need a clear and compelling generative AI strategy today." We can't stick our heads in the sand. AI is a force to be reckoned with. Whether we wholeheartedly embrace it, find limited appropriate applications for it, or take a stance against it, we need to address it.

So with that in mind, what does the landscape of 2024 look like for using AI within sales? And how should sales leaders approach AI adoption?

According to the Salesforce [State of Sales](#) report, 33% of sales organizations are using AI right now, and an additional 20% of them plan to start using AI over the next two years. This means three things:

One

Sales teams have the opportunity to become early adopters of AI right now with all the potential benefits and drawbacks that entails.

Two

Sales teams opposed to the use of AI have time to articulate the reasons they've abstained from following the trend. When the rest of the world “zigs” toward a new technological opportunity, there will always be companies who capitalize on the chance to “zag” on the counter-opportunity.

Three

That window won't last for long, with more than half of all sales organizations either already using AI or planning to do so in the near future. Those who don't adopt AI now may soon be playing catch-up in one way or another.

Of the teams surveyed who are already using AI, Salesforce found that 39% to 41% experienced major improvements in the areas of forecasting accuracy, use of sales reps' time, prioritization of leads, understanding of customer needs, visibility into sales rep activity, personalization for customers, and understanding of competition. And an additional 43% to 46% of them experienced moderate improvements in these areas. Only 14% to 17% of them reported minor or no improvements.

With results like these, does that mean all sales teams should be rushing toward AI adoption? Maybe. But we'd urge caution. Move toward embracing AI, but do so with eyes wide open. While AI has tremendous potential, it still is not without its pitfalls, and some forms of AI are more beneficial than others.

For the moment, AI is best suited for supplementing human input, not replacing

it. We aren't ready to hand the reins to AI to simply go make sales on its own. AI still experiences way too many "hallucinations" (making things up when it doesn't know the right answers) and is far too impersonal to trust to that extent.

Not only can sales reps rest easy that their jobs are safe for now—but they also have the opportunity to seed the idea that generic-sounding messaging from competitors is also generated by AI. AI can effectively take over much of the busywork salespeople perform behind the scenes, freeing them to spend more time interacting with customers—but it's a tool reps should use with the utmost responsibility.



A few of the things AI is really good at include generating ideas, outlines, and starters.

A few of the things AI is really good at include generating ideas, outlines, and starters. For example, when sales reps struggle to write cold or follow-up emails or LinkedIn messages, AI is great for giving them a first draft which they can then edit into their own voice. Just be sure to carefully check the AI output for accuracy before hitting send.

Remote Selling Is Here To Stay

During the pandemic, nearly everything went remote out of necessity, including sales. It may not have been everyone's preference, but we made it work, finding [ways to build and motivate remote sales teams](#) to get us through a difficult time.

But since then, something interesting has happened. Pandemic-related restrictions have mostly been lifted, and in-person meetings are now permitted, yet buyers are reluctant to go back to the way things used to be. According to a recent [global survey by Bain & Company with Dynata](#), 92% of B2B buyers actually prefer to conduct sales interactions virtually.

And beyond the matter of customer preference, [Bain & Company also found](#) that remote or virtual selling can often offer significant advantages over in-person sales, including a 45% improvement in win rate, a 43% improvement in revenue per sales rep, and cost savings due to reduced travel.

None of this means abandoning in-person sales entirely—there will always be cases where a more personal touch is required—but it does mean understanding that expectations have shifted. Remote selling has become a new standard part of sales, rather than a temporary adjustment out of necessity. And sales leaders need to consider how this shift will affect the

way they manage their teams.

For example, the role of **sales coaching** has become more important than ever. As sales reps adjust to new expectations, they will benefit from continued guidance to ensure they're able to make the most out of their virtual sales calls. This may mean frequent ride-alongs and check-ins until virtual sales performance aligns with expectations.

Additionally, it will be crucial to ensure that your sales reps are equipped with the best digital tools to keep them on track, including Customer Relationship Management (CRM), **Sales Performance Management (SPM)**, and **Incentive Compensation Management (ICM)** software.



Social Selling Will Play An Increasingly Important Role

According to [recent estimates](#), there are approximately 4.9 billion people around the world who use social media right now, and that number is expected to increase to 5.85 billion people by 2027. Social media is where people (and businesses) go for their information and for help making decisions, so it has become a crucial place for salespeople to find and nurture leads.

It's worth noting that while they both operate on social media and often go hand in hand, social selling is not the same as social media marketing. Where social media marketing is about building brand awareness and promoting products and services, social selling is about developing connections with users and nurturing relationships. In other words, social selling is just selling—but taking place on the platforms where people are already spending their time.

And social selling works. Really well. According to [Sales for Life](#), organizations that engage in social selling experience 40% to 50% more new business and 80% to 90% better retention rates than those that don't. And according to [LinkedIn](#), 78% of sales reps who use social selling outsell those who don't.

Additionally, social selling is effective for both B2B and B2C interactions, although different platforms are more effective for either. According to **HubSpot**, the most effective platforms overall for finding new prospects are Facebook (67%), LinkedIn (63%), and Instagram (62%). But Facebook jumps up to 70% effectiveness for B2C and down to 66% effectiveness for B2B. LinkedIn is the opposite, with only 55% effectiveness for B2C but 69% effectiveness for B2B. And Instagram has less of a divide, with 64% effectiveness for B2C next to 61% effectiveness for B2B.

Social selling has become a crucial aspect of sales, and its importance is only growing. Sales leaders who empower and equip their teams to harness the power of social media will have a distinct advantage over those who don't.

Empower Your Team In 2024 With Performio

As you navigate the challenges and opportunities of the new year, you want to empower your sales team for success. One of the best ways to do this is by equipping your reps with powerful tools, like Performio's [Incentive Compensation Management \(ICM\)](#) platform.

Sales reps need transparent access to their compensation and performance data to do their jobs well and stay focused on sales. Without the ability to track their progress, sales reps have to spend time performing homebrewed calculations to see how much they can expect to earn. This shadow accounting doesn't just harm morale and impact trust, but it can also cause major problems when a sales rep's calculations don't line up with what they've actually earned.

Performio's Incentive Compensation Management (ICM) software gives your reps real-time insights into their performance, how far along they are toward their goals, what they can expect, and much more.

**Want to see what Performio can do for your business?
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