Ai

FOR SALES TEAMS

7

WAYS TO ENHANCE YOUR PRODUCTIVITY WITH ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

YOU'VE SEEN THE SENSATIONALIST HEADLINES.

You've heard the rumors that AI is revolutionizing sales. But how much of it is hype, and how much of it is real? What can AI do for your sales team?
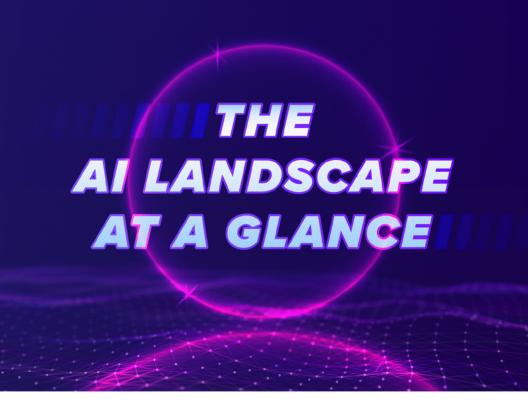
With so many (at times contradictory) claims vying for your attention, where do you get started with it all? Do you need to worry about falling behind if you're slow to adopt AI, or will indiscriminate AI adoption lead to negative consequences?

In this ebook, we'll help you cut through the noise to identify where AI truly shines for sales—and what pitfalls to avoid.

Because the bottom line is that yes, AI really does stand to be a game changer. **According to research by the McKinsey Global Institute** (MGI), nearly a third of all sales tasks can be automated, which would free up that time for sales reps to spend on more profitable activities.

But not all AI use cases are equally viable, and you have to know where to look for the right ones.

THE AI LANDSCAPE AT A GLANCE

Before we jump into the specific ways AI is being used in sales, let's take a moment to consider the big picture of AI: what it is, how we approach it, and why it's important to be intentional about its use.

WHAT WE MEAN BY AI

The concept of artificial intelligence has been a mainstay of science fiction for decades, but in the real world, most of what we call AI refers to large data models that have trained on enough human input to be able to recognize and mimic patterns. This gives it the ability to interact with humans in an intuitive manner and to provide a wide variety of tools and services across most industries, including sales.

The chatter around AI is, well, mostly chatter. Fans call it the most revolutionary thing to happen to the world of sales, while fearmongers warn that its dangerous imposition is taking jobs and destroying the industry. At Performio, we see it somewhere between these extremes. AI tools can be a valuable addition to a sales organization's toolset, but they aren't without their limitations.

GOOD AND BAD USES OF AI

Used appropriately, AI can remove much of the tedious work that eats up sales reps' time, freeing them to focus on more important things. It can enhance their abilities, making them more effective at closing sales. It can identify trends and outliers in sales data and produce accurate forecasts. It can assist with training and coaching. And much more.

But AI also has the potential to cause harm. Ideally, AI should augment human effort, not replace it entirely. But left to their own devices, people have been known to take the easy route. A recent **survey by Salesforce** found that an astonishing 64% of workers have passed off AI-generated content as their own work. Aside from the deception itself, this opens the door to all manner of problems related to the quality and accuracy of content, privacy concerns, and even the potential for copyright infringement.

BEING INTENTIONAL ABOUT AI

Some of your sales reps are almost certainly using AI tools already. Possibly even most of them. Hopefully they aren't being deceptive about it, but they may lack guidance as to exactly what is and isn't acceptable. As a sales leader, it's your responsibility to take an intentional and informed approach, establishing standards to ensure that your team is using the right AI tools in an approved manner. You want to take advantage of the best of AI while avoiding the risks of improper use.

Setting guidelines for AI use will not only head off potential disaster, but it will also give you a significant advantage over your competition. In a **recent report by Washington State University**, nearly half (49%) of the 1,200 professionals they surveyed across the US said their organizations hadn't taken any steps toward providing resources or information on how they should (or shouldn't) use AI at work.

To be clear, this doesn't mean you should immediately go out and adopt all the AI tools available. It does mean it's time to understand what's out there and chart a clearly defined path for how you and your team will interact with AI tools moving forward.

7 USES FOR AI IN SALES

At Performio, we work closely with hundreds of sales leaders and stay carefully tuned to the trends that are shaping the industry. And while the potential uses for AI in sales are practically infinite, these are the seven areas that are generating the most buzz or have the greatest potential to make an impact on sales team productivity.

1. CONTENT GENERATION

Ever since ChatGPT broke onto the scene with its ability to quickly generate text that almost sounds human, people have been using it for any and all applications where humans would otherwise have to write something. From **homework** to **misinformation-laden blog posts** to **whole books**, it seems there's no limit to the projects humans will hand off to AI to write for them.

So it's little surprise that sales reps have likewise taken to using ChatGPT and other generative AI tools to generate emails and other text-based content. According to **a recent report by Hubspot**, 31% of sales professionals are currently using AI to help write their sales content or outreach messages.

But is this a good thing?

On the positive side, there's no question that it's saving them a lot of time. The same report found that using AI in this manner allows the average sales rep to reclaim a little over two hours per day. And 79% of sales professionals believe that this automated content generation allows them to spend more time where they really want to be spending it—selling.

But generative AI has plenty of drawbacks as well. AI has a nasty habit of "hallucinating"—simply making stuff up when it doesn't know the correct response. It occasionally plagiarizes the texts it was trained on. And while generative AI text can almost sound human, it still lies in the uncanny valley, where it's off by just enough to leave many readers feeling uneasy.

To some, receiving an AI-generated email can actually feel insulting, especially when it's full of obvious errors a human could have fixed in seconds, or when the use of AI wasn't disclosed, making readers feel like they were intentionally deceived.

So is this a good use of AI or not? Ultimately, that's a decision each sales team will have to come to on their own, but the time savings are hard to ignore. Still, if you do use AI to generate sales content, we'd suggest the following guidelines to avoid introducing errors or insulting your customers:

1. Always edit AI-generated content by hand. This may change as the technology improves, but the risk of errors is currently too great for us to advise automating the whole process from start to finish. For now, you can use AI-generated content as an outline or a first draft, but you'll still need to look it over, make corrections and adjustments, and ideally add some personal touches before hitting send.

2. Always disclose AI-generated content. Making customers feel deceived is a surefire way to lose sales. If the content they're reading came from a bot, they're likely to figure it out anyway, so being upfront about it helps preserve your trustworthiness. The disclosure can also help to mitigate issues of liability related to plagiarism or errors that slip through.

2. LEAD GENERATION

Lead generation is a time consuming process that involves identifying, qualifying, and segmenting prospects. And more often than not, only a few leads actually become paying customers in the end. But using AI, you can streamline all aspects of lead generation while ending up with higher-quality prospects that are more likely to convert.

Spending less time to generate better leads is a win-win, making it easy to recommend this use case for AI in sales.

Historically, you would have to manually define everything about the leads you're trying to locate: the market(s) they're in, the type of company (if B2B), the details of your Ideal Customer Profile (ICP), etc. Then you'd have to search and compile a list of companies or people who match the criteria you set out. Then you have to look up the contact info for each one individually.

But AI can look at your existing customer base to automatically determine the criteria that make for a high-quality lead. You can still add any specific filters you want to include, but it saves a lot of time while also helping you find new avenues to pursue that you may have never thought of on your own.

Then the searching is all done automatically as well, pulling from the AIs' huge databases of companies and customers to find ones that are a great fit. Many can even factor for things that would be near-impossible to know by yourself, such as whether a given prospect has been actively searching for a solution similar to what you offer. And with saved searches, the AI will keep running your search in the background, ready to alert you the moment a new lead is found.

The AI can also score each of your leads based on how good of a fit they appear to be, allowing you to easily prioritize which ones to pursue in what order. And the scoring model will improve over time as it continues to learn more about your customers' needs and preferences. Finally, it pulls in all the contact info for you, allowing you to reach out effortlessly.

Individual AI-powered lead-generation tools will vary in the specifics of what they have to offer, but examples that provide similar kinds of functionality to what we've described include **Apollo.io**, **LeadFuze**, **Seamless.AI**, and **Zoominfo SalesOS**.

3. ANSWERING COMMON QUESTIONS

Sales reps spend a substantial amount of time answering the same questions over and over. Those questions may come via a formal request—such as a Request for Proposal (RFP), Request for Information (RFI), Request for Quote (RFQ), or Due Diligence Questionnaire (DDQ)—or simply as a list of questions in an email. Either way, it can easily take sales reps 10, 20, even 30 hours to read through all the questions, look up the appropriate answers, and draft a thorough response.

AI tools can dramatically shorten that time.

First, they can read through all of your existing content libraries and past responses to compile lists of the most commonly asked questions, along with appropriate responses to provide. Next, when any sort of information request comes in, the AI can read it, parse out the individual questions, search the compiled repository for the best answers to each question, and draft a response— all in a matter of seconds, rather than hours.

From there, a sales rep can simply read through the draft, check for accuracy, fill in gaps, and add a personalized touch, but this takes a fraction of the time it would have taken to complete the whole process from scratch.

As with all AI-generated content, it's essential to do that manual review. The AI will occasionally make mistakes, and you want to catch them before customers do. But many of these AI tools can help by offering multiple potential answers to a given question. So if the first answer it picked isn't quite right, a second or third answer may be much closer to what the prospect was looking for, and the rep still won't have had to source that answer on their own.

Sometimes the AI simply won't have a correct answer to provide. That's especially the case when a question hasn't been asked and answered before, or if the prospect asked the question with a unique nuance. However, you can train the AI, making it smarter the more you use it. Every time a rep modifies a suggested answer or drafts a new answer, that new response is added to the repository, giving the AI more to draw from in the future.

Additionally, the AI can learn which answers generate the best reactions from

prospects, allowing the tools to not only save sales reps' time, but also improve the effectiveness of the responses they send out.

This is another fantastic example of AI-powered tools supplementing the work of sales reps to improve productivity and efficiency. Examples of tools that operate in a similar manner to what we've described include **QorusDocs**, **Responsive**, and **SalesGRID**.

4. CONVERSATION INTELLIGENCE

Conversational intelligence tools like **Clari Copilot** (formerly Wingman), **Gong**, and **Outreach** use AI to transcribe sales calls in real time, analyze them for trends and insights, and even provide on-the-fly recommendations and responses to objections. And these tools only get better over time as they learn the specifics of your business and customers.

As they listen to calls, they learn what questions and objections customers tend to raise, which responses do and don't resonate well, and what tactics most successfully result in sales. And then they can offer up those insights to sales reps as the call is ongoing, ensuring that they're never left forgetting their line or wondering what would be best to say next.

Additionally, the resulting transcripts and insights allow sales coaches to easily learn where their reps are doing well and what they need to improve on, without necessarily needing to sit in live during their calls. They can view summaries of transcripts with key moments and potential risks highlighted for attention. And they'll get at-a-glance insights that would have been incredibly tedious to calculate otherwise, like a rep's talk-to-listen ratio.

5. TRAINING AND ROLE PLAYING

There's no substitute for practice when it comes to helping sales reps improve their skills. Traditionally, this has taken the form of a sales coach or another member of the sales team sitting down with a sales rep, playing the role of a customer, and acting out common objections to see how the rep responds.

But with AI tools learning customer objections, they can also play the role of a

mock prospect, giving reps a chance to practice and interact with the AI on these common objections before giving their responses to real customers. This saves a tremendous amount of time on the part of the coaches, who can simply review the mock calls to see how their reps are doing.

Additionally, person-to-person role playing can suffer from the fact that the mock prospect is already well informed about the product you're selling, so they may struggle to accurately convey the questions, confusions, and objections a less-informed customer would bring up. But an AI that has trained on real sales calls can be better equipped to authentically play the role of a prospect and prepare your reps for what they'll actually experience. Similarly, AI can generate scripts or prompts for human mock prospects to work from when role playing in person.

This isn't to suggest that AI will or should completely replace one-to-one training sessions. Those personal interactions will always be valuable and should be preserved. But employing AI tools in addition to direct coaching can both save time and help your reps train more effectively.

Some examples of AI tools that are dedicated to sales role playing include **SecondNature**, **PitchMonster**, and **Quantified**.

6. SALES DATA ANALYTICS

Sales organizations have long relied on **sales data analysis** to identify trends, forecast, set goals, plan compensation, and more. And data analytics has mostly been powered by machine learning—which is a kind of AI. In this sense, data analytics has been a clear use case for AI in sales long before ChatGPT pushed AI so prominently into the realm of public discourse.

However, recent advancements in generative AI have made data analytics more powerful, intuitive, and useful than ever before.

Here at Performio, we recently supercharged our own **Analytics Studio** with new AI-enhanced improvements. For example, AI is making our software even better at detecting outliers and anomalies that could have you paying more than you need to, giving you the chance to correct them and save money.

And for an improved user experience, we've incorporated AI-based natural language processing that allows you to crunch numbers, create visualizations, generate reports, and more, all by simply asking for what you want—as if you were speaking to a human. Rather than figuring out how to navigate various menus or learn specific syntax, you just tell our software what you're looking for in plain language, and near-instantly receive all the data insights you need.

7. ICM IMPLEMENTATION AND CONFIGURATION

One of the biggest hassles when **adopting a new Incentive Compensation Management (ICM) solution** is the initial process of implementation. You have to transfer everything over from your old solution, configure the new solution, set up data integrations with other systems, build out your sales comp plans, and get everyone up to speed with the new workflow.

It's a universally lengthy process that can take hundreds or even thousands of hours spanning multiple months to complete, no matter which vendor you're going with. Here at Performio, we pride ourselves on offering some of the quickest and most seamless implementations in the industry, but we still have to acknowledge that there's room for improvement—and AI may be the key.

AI-assisted ICM implementation could potentially turn hours into seconds and months into days by automating most of the manual drudgework that goes into the process.

This particular use case is currently theoretical and forward thinking, as we aren't aware of anyone who is already using AI in quite this manner. But it should be well within the realm of AI capabilities, and it's something we at Performio are looking into ourselves. Stay tuned, as we hope to be able to offer this functionality to our customers before long.

KEEP YOUR SALES TEAM ON TRACK WITH PERFORMIO

Regardless of what AI tools you may use to enhance your sales reps' productivity, you're going to need a way to track and manage their performance.

Performio's ICM software gives you everything you need to incentivize your sales reps and drive performance. You'll be given powerful tools for creating new sales comp plans, tracking performance of individuals and the team as a whole, calculating commissions, and seamlessly communicating with your team, along with AI-enhanced functionality for analyzing data and generating reports.

And your sales reps will be given access to their real-time performance, letting them see all the sales they've made, what they can expect to earn from each, how far along they are toward their quotas and goals, and what more they need to accomplish in order to meet them.

Ready to see what Performio can do for your business?

Request a demo today.

Schedule A Demo

Ai
IS ALL THE RAGE

Start the party on your sales teams now with key professional life hacks to drive performance, and it all starts with you incentive comp software.

Performio | Press