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Essential Strategies for Digital Sales Teams

Ignite Guide

Solve today's most complex selling challenges

Today's customers are more digitally savvy than ever, and the role of sales has changed to better serve and support them.

Sales teams are taking a leadership role in shaping the evolution of their discipline by understanding the need for new tools, technologies, processes, and tactics to empower them in the digital future.[1] And although a sales team's core responsibilities remain the same, they need a modern set of tools to get the job done right.

Your sales organization is likely made up of sales professionals with different needs and requirements, varying levels of experience and product knowledge, and diverse familiarity with sales processes and techniques. The challenge is how to incorporate technology that enables the digital sales process and empowers sellers to perform better—as quickly as possible.

While the shift from analog, manual processes, and outdated or disconnected technologies may not be easy, it will be worth it. Businesses that invest in a connected, modern sales strategy will realize tremendous benefits. Sales teams will be more effective and efficient, customers will receive a

tailored and cohesive experience, and your business will see stronger sales outcomes.

With the world of traditional selling slowly fading, digital selling is here to stay. And businesses that take advantage of the opportunities that AI, machine learning (ML), and the Internet of Things (IoT) present will thrive. These capabilities collect and interpret tremendous amounts of data, which can then offer insights to help sales teams spend less time on administrative tasks and more time selling.

This guide covers key items to consider when developing a digital sales team strategy, to help ensure an enhanced **customer experience** and a more product-ive sales team.
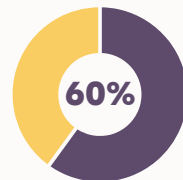
60% of B2B sales organizations will transition from experience- and intuition-based selling to data-driven selling.[2]

60%

What's inside?

Digital sales teams, defined

The role of sales has evolved, which in turn impacts how sales teams engage in the sales process. The pace of change is causing some companies to fall behind, while others rise to the occasion.

Success depends on how effectively leaders modernize and reorganize sales teams with new technologies that help them be productive while meeting expectations for today's more-informed, less-patient customers. To fast-track sales transformation, a digital sales team strategy should include the following:

- **Technology that will enable your sales team to be successful.** This includes tools that better serve customers; training tools, such as guided selling, to help salespeople quickly get up to speed; and capabilities that allow sales teams to better forecast and manage their pipelines. Most importantly, the technology must be delivered via a modern, easy-to-use interface.

- **Systems connecting front- and back-office applications.** When your customer relationship management (CRM) system is connected with operational systems, sales teams have a comprehensive view into leads and opportunities, timelines, invoices, and inventory. This in turn allows sales to provide more accurate information to customers.

- **AI and ML.** Data is the foundation of the sales process. AI and ML help make sense of that data, allowing you to understand what's working, what isn't, how leads and opportunities are progressing, and more. AI and ML are making immediate contributions to revenue by improving deal price guidance, deal intelligence, and dynamic pricing while improving rebate and incentive management.[4]

- **Simplified processes,** such as pricing, quoting, and approvals. When you automate rules and simplify processes, you help boost productivity by allowing your sales team to focus on selling. Time spent on cumbersome, manual tasks can now be spent building stronger customer relationships—which is especially important in high-volume selling environments.

- **Connected customer journeys.** Whatever digital tools you choose, make sure they're available to your sales team via the devices of their choice—including laptop, desktop, and mobile. The more connected they are, the better they can plan and execute.

30%

Over 30% of sales-related tasks can be automated, but only one in four companies has automate at least one sales process.[5]

Build your foundational strategy

When it comes to digital transformation, many sales organizations share the same challenges. Some are a mix of legacy, manual processes, and highly customized disconnected systems—none of which works seamlessly with the other.

Many struggle to access reliable marketing, financial, and supply chain information to gain a holistic view of the account. And seasoned salespeople with deep expertise are sometimes reluctant to change.

According to Gartner's State of Sales Operations, "Sales operations cannot expect to rely on sales data alone and must work with marketing, finance, customer service, and product to synthesize information from all functions and paint an accurate picture that leaders can use to make high-stakes decisions."[1]

When creating your digital sales team strategy, there are several key factors to consider that may alleviate these challenges.

1. Changing customer and salesperson expectations

No two customer engagements are the same, and customers and sales reps all have unique expectations of the process. Take a closer look at your customers and find ways to engage with them on their terms. Next, evaluate how your sales team prefers to operate and work their methods into your process. And ask yourself, Is your company easy to work with? How do your customers and the market in general view your company? How easy is it for your sales team to execute on its daily action plans?

2. Sales and marketing alignment

Aligning sales and marketing requires both teams to work together toward a common set of goals and objectives, typically involving activities that generate interest and, ultimately, revenue. Alignment improves collaboration and helps clearly define what each team is working on.

3. Financial opportunities

Giving everyone in the sales organization access to all aspects of a customer account helps maximize revenue and allows anyone to answer customer requests. But consider potential disrupters as well as new market opportunities and the possible impact on your business. Do your teams have the tools at hand to understand new opportunities, build plans, and act on them accordingly?

4. Innovation and R&D

Executing a digital sales team strategy will certainly help your customers today. But it also needs to anticipate and meet future customer and employee needs. From a sales perspective, there are five points to consider when it comes to innovation and research and development (R&D).

Build your foundational strategy

- **AI and ML:** These help improve performance across a variety of sales functions. AI and ML work in tandem and provide employees access to information via chatbots; stream-line sales; and allow sales teams to accurately interpret customer, pipeline, and other operational data.

AI and automation will enable more than 60% of B2B sellers in 2021.[7]

- **Best-in-class engagement processes:** Build processes that allow sales and inside sales teams to be as product-ive as possible by supporting the tools they need to do their jobs effectively. Engagement processes could also include management review or guided selling options.

- **Simplified pricing, quoting, and contract processes:** Complexities around pricing and contracts could be the reason a customer chooses the competition over you. Consider your competit-ion,potential disrupters, and customer expectations to help you understand how to elevate digital selling to maximize revenue and minimize costs.

60%
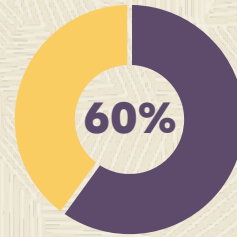
More than 60% of buyers now say providers that are knowledgeable and address their needs have the most positive impact on their buying decisions.[8]

- **Improved ROI through better integration:** When existing systems across the organization are more integrated, sales and marketing can create a better customer experience and help sales understand open issues, renewal deadlines, and product information. Tighter system integration also demonstrates to customers that you understand their business needs and are working to address them.

- **IoT:** IoT takes the data captured by thousands of connected devices and makes it available to a service provider or organization, which can then use that data to automatically replenish low inventory or trigger a purchase. From a sales perspective, this data can be used to gather intelligence for better account planning.

5. Employees

Like every industry or business, sales teams face challenges when it comes to onboarding new employees. When building your digital sales strategy, new hires are not the only consideration. Think about how you will not only attract the best talent but retain that talent. You must also provide employee development opportunities. Consider what needs to happen to provide your employ-ees with relevant, intelligent customer insights that can assist with all sales efforts. When you do decide to implement modern sales technology, how will you get your employees up and running on said technology?

6. Executive sponsorship and vision

Clearly define your digital sales team vision and get executive buy-in from the start. Executive sponsorship will ensure cooperation across all lines of business that are integral to the success of your strategy. It also establishes metrics so you—and everyone across the business—can measure success.

Five steps to get started with digital sales teams

01 Get to know the competition and market disruptors

Understand your competition before they find new revenue opportunities that weren't on your radar. Also, take note of disrupters trying to erode your market share. How? Do your research—read industry trend reports, sales professional news, or analyst reports. If possible, interview current or former customers.

02 Engage with sales and marketing leaders

Hearing from both lines of business is critical to helping you understand what the market is saying about your company versus competitors. Are you considered an industry leader? Is the competition expanding their services in new and innovative ways? How do your offerings stack up in comparison?

03 Analyze how comprehensive your sales processes are

Ask yourself the following: Are you ready to deliver on ever-changing customer expectations? Do you have a solid understanding of new and emerging market opportunities? Are you leveraging AI and ML to make territory management, forecasting, and lead scoring more effective? Implementing a digital sales team strategy is a must to protect your business.

Five steps to get started
with digital sales teams

04 **Meet with IT**

It's important to understand your company's overall technology roadmap and discuss how and where your digital sales team vision fits. Consider asking about plans for upgrading the technology infrastructure or the ability to implement emerging technologies. Don't forget to discuss costs—what's the cost to update current systems to a minimum requirement versus updating to deliver all the new capabilities to bring your vision to life?

05 **Select project champions from across the business**

Successful initiatives have strong support from key players across an organization. Start by considering the lines of business that will be impacted by your digital sales team strategy. Make these connections early and often.

The power of a digital sales team

Some consider sales the lifeblood of a company. Sales teams find ways to do so much with what they're given. Imagine their potential with digital tools that help them sell more effective-ly and efficiently while building relationships with customers. When it's time for you to move forward with your digital sales team strategy, remember these key takeaways.

1. Modern sales tools

can empower your sales teams to sell more effectively and spend more time providing customer value, which translates to stronger sales results.

2. Alignment between your sales and marketing teams

eliminates confusion about who does what, improving collaboration and helping to deliver a connected customer experience.

3. Sales engagement processes

should help your sellers be as productive as possible, connecting with customers in their chosen channels, at the right time.

4. Revenue results and customer satisfaction

go hand in hand. When you simplify complex purchasing, integrate disparate systems, and automate routine process-es, costs go down, revenue goes up, and customers recognize that you under-stand their business needs and can help support them.
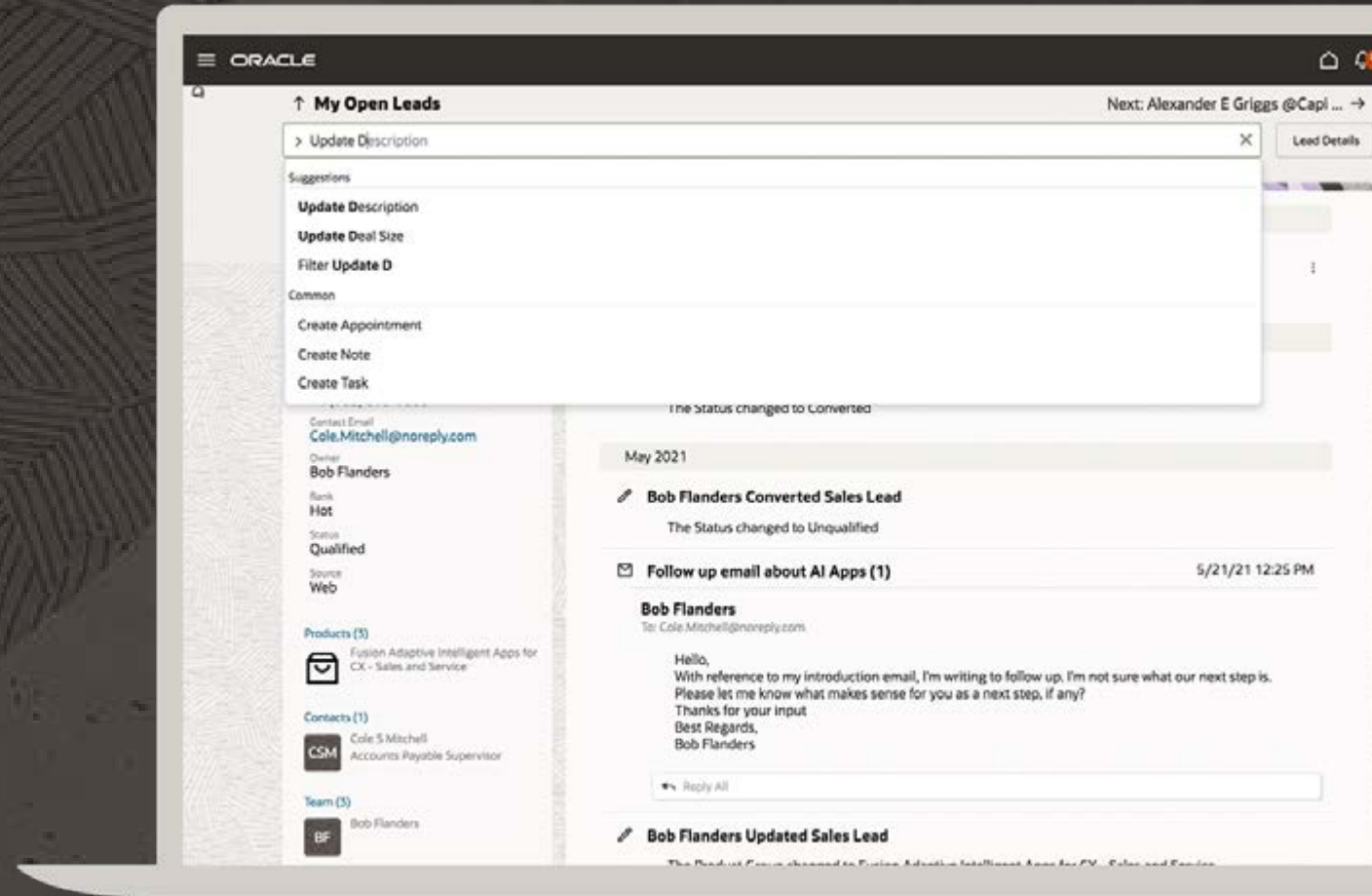
5. AI and ML

represent timely opportunities to automate sales and pricing processes, deliver accurate forecasts and quotes, uncover untapped market opportunities, and better understand customer needs.

Empower digital sales teams with Oracle

Automate processes, manage sales performance, and maximize your team's potential with Oracle Sales.

Want to know more?

To the experience-maker who's always moving forward

As modern customers seem to shape-shift from one moment to the next, it's critical to maintain pace with their expectations. To help, we created the Ignite series to fuel your continuous pursuit of customer experiences that always hit the mark.

Guides like such as this one on Digital Sales Teams aim to advance your expertise and help you craft foundational strategies in less time—so you can get back out there to captivate customers and drive revenue.

What will you discover next?

- Essential strategies for B2B commerce

- Essential strategies for configure, price, quote

- Essential strategies for account management and renewals

About Oracle Advertising and CX

Make every customer interaction matter by connecting all your business data across advertising, marketing, sales, commerce, and service. Oracle Advertising and Customer Experience (CX) is a connected suite of applications that goes beyond traditional CRM to help you create and nurture lasting customer relationships. Build a complete view of every interaction and every customer, no matter how and when they engage. Empower your entire business to deliver exceptional customer experiences—from acquisition to retention—and everything in between.

Sources

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