

STATE OF SALES TECHNOLOGY

TOP BRANDS ADOPTING NEW APPLICATIONS & APPROACHES TO
INCREASE REPS' PRODUCTIVITY AND EFFICIENCY



Introduction

The bottom line in this digital-first climate is it's a buyer's world and sales reps are just living in it. Between the desire for self-service buying journeys and increased expectations for relevance and personalization, there are various contradictory demands emerging concurrently, driving new opportunities and needs for sales technology.

"Sales is one of those professions that had a way of working, models and playbooks, and while there were unique tweaks people proposed, the machine was working and people were pretty happy with it," said Scott Brinker, VP Platform Ecosystem at **HubSpot** and Editor at **chiefmartec.com**. "In 2020, the machine broke and forced people to step outside of their pattern and start experimenting with new ways of engagement — such as digital selling."

Though sales tech has always been an essential component of the sales team, the past two years have seen notable evolution as **51% of companies** implemented new technologies to keep up with buyer demands. It's not just about keeping up with demands, though, as organizations are also working to equip their sales teams with the tools needed to succeed in the digital selling environment.

The sales tech tides have shifted, and companies must work to streamline their sales reps' time and keep them up to speed on the latest initiatives. Throughout this report, we'll discuss the various aspects of sales technology, with specific topics of discussion including:

- Identifying the differences between essential pieces of sales technologies and "nice to haves;"
- How funding rounds and merger-and-acquisition activity impacts the rate of change in sales tech;
- The role technology plays in engaging remote buyers in the virtual world;
- The best methods and strategies to coach and train sales reps remotely, especially as new technologies are onboarded; and
- The importance of alignment on key initiatives to curate a comprehensive, streamlined sales tech stack.



Identifying The 'Must-Have' Technologies In Sales Tech Stacks

It's clear that companies are starting to invest and expand their sales technology capabilities. Businesses specializing in various sales enablement practices are reaching **billion-dollar valuations** and acquisitions seem to happen daily. Nancy Nardin, Founder of **Smart Selling Tools**, explained that the flurry of M&A activity and funding rounds are resulting in overlapping solutions and tools.

"All the activity is morphing certain categories of technologies into functions within larger platforms," she explained. "That adds to the complexity of buying decisions, because while a rep might only need one function from a software, they have to pay for a larger platform to access it — and they might already have a similar solution in place."

To combat this, Nardin suggested companies perform an annual audit of their sales tech stacks to ensure the technologies are used to their fullest potential. When it comes to the specific components of sales tech stacks, the experts all pointed to CRMs as the foundational and most important element.

"Outside of the CRM, 'nice-to-have' tools really depend on sales objectives and goals," explained **Pam Didner**, a B2B marketing consultant and author. "Some people immediately want to train their salespeople to know more about their products, but then other people want to examine how the sales rep sells and understand their style to optimize communications to help them become a better salesperson."



That's where the issue emerges: As more solutions claim to be must-have platforms and enchant sales teams — something experts refer to as “shiny new toy syndrome” — they must work together and align on initiatives to identify the best fit for the company and ensure there's no technological overlap. With CRM in mind as the No. 1 piece of sales technology, Nardin continued that other key components of sales tech stacks include:

- A lead database;
- Video conferencing technology;
- E-signature applications;
- Revenue intelligence; and
- Sales enablement platforms, specifically for coaching and training.

“Outside of the CRM, ‘nice-to-have’ tools really depend on sales objectives and goals.”

PAM DIDNER, B2B MARKETING CONSULTANT

Q&A WITH ADAM PERRY, DEMANDBASE:

How To Leverage Insights & Analytics Generated From Sales Technology



In the digital selling environment, there are more tasks than ever on the plates of sales reps that pull their attention away from actual sales and over to lead and data management. As more companies realize that sifting through insights and analytics isn't a productive use of sales rep time, they are implementing sales technologies to automate the more time-consuming tasks.

Given the influx of enhanced sales technologies and their subsequent complexities, businesses must ensure they're utilizing the piece of sales tech that's the best fit for the company. Given the crowded market, we sat down with Adam Perry, Demandbase's VP of Customer Experience, to discuss the key features of sales technology to help B2B sellers work to their fullest (and most efficient) potential.

Demand Gen Report: How can B2B sellers find and prioritize the right leads and accounts with tech?

Adam Perry: The No. 1 thing I hear is that there isn't enough time to sell. Simply put, administrative overhead reduces sales capacity instead of spending time keeping client information up to date or manually searching for "interesting moments" with their accounts. Sales should be receiving support from the marketing and operations teams to free up their time to do what they are supposed to do: Sell. Sales should not be responsible for data management, managing people, contacts and lead information — those activities are not enabling sales teams to fulfill their potential. They need to make that cold call, craft that personalized email, set and lead meetings and do good discovery.



On top of that, we all know that it's all about speed to lead in the B2B space. There are several buying signals, on and off your website, that you need to have a process for handling. Every one of those processes should lend itself to allowing your SDR and AE teams to engage with any potential opportunity as quickly as possible. The key is making sure everyone on the team understands what patterns, behaviors and demographics all of your top customers have in common so ideal prospects can be quickly identified.

If you have not analyzed your best clients — the ones that have stayed the longest and grown with you in the past 18 months — it is imperative that you do an ICP analysis. In developing your ICP, your sales leadership must have input into the discussion — and sales leadership needs to have a seat at the table.

DGR: What are some best practices for effective and successful sales enablement? How can AI and tech play their part?

Perry: For sales enablement, the most significant thing right now is content coverage. Sales teams must know what persona they are selling to, what competitors they're up against and the common use cases. It's also knowing the right ratio of enablement. **Harvard Business Review** tells us that that number is way higher than what is normally expected, with half (yes, 50%!) of the sales team in supporting functions.

AI is a part of the same solution. Instead of only giving account scores that rate companies and buyers to predict who might be active, AI should prescribe the next-best action sales should take based on the moves each buyer is making — regardless of where they are in the buyer's journey. The buyer journey doesn't go from consideration straight to purchase, so our sellers want to know, "OK, what do I do next?" and technology should make it easy for them to take that next best step.

DGR: What are some key tactics for managing, leveraging and acting on buyer insights for more impactful sales plays?

Perry: Considering that customers feel like sales is unprepared for the sale 82% of the time, I'd say we start there. How well does your sales team know the industries they are selling to? Do they know the local language? The business lingo? What do they know about the specific buyer in front of them? Do they understand the structure and dynamics of the buying committee? Do they know what is happening on the company's social media? Ensuring that your team can answer each of these questions appropriately will provide an opportunity to inspire confidence within the buyer by letting them know that they are understood and that their problems will be solved.



Another way to leverage buyer insights is with content. Does your sales team know what content is available and what has already been consumed? If sales knows what the buyer knows, conversations can be engaging and at the perfect speed instead of being a drag by explaining something the buyer may have already heard or skipping steps and assuming the buyer understands more than they do.

DGR: How can B2B sales teams better decide which solutions are a fit for their tech stacks? What are some ways sales teams can get more bang for their buck when integrating tech?

Perry: If you agree that marketing and operations need to have an active role in helping sales be successful by giving them more time to focus on selling, then you better consider how well your existing tech vendors connect with each other. The ideal situation would be to leverage the same vendor with tools for marketing, sales and the teams supporting them. With the right technology partner, it becomes much easier to align all your data in one place for the most effective go-to-market (GTM) motions. Integrating GTM tools under one umbrella will maintain alignment across teams and ensure your technology stack plays nicely together.

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ADAM PERRY, DEMANDBASE



Enabling Sales Coaching & Training To Adapt To The New World

Revenue intelligence and sales coaching and training are growing in importance, as **51% of sales professionals** are measuring sales processes and outcomes in a different way. The two enablement components go hand-in-hand, as both have spent the past year rising in popularity and utilize similar machine-learning and AI capabilities to analyze conversations, compare them against company goals and provide a detailed report.

“For sales reps, revenue intelligence analyzes what’s in their phone calls and compares it to the forecast,” explained Nardin. “Does it support the forecast? Are there warning signs or red flags? It gives sales organizations access to something they haven’t had before, which are leading indicators, as opposed to wondering if they hit a number or not.”

The shift to remote work was abrupt and, consequently, **67% of sales managers** said that overseeing a remote sales team is more challenging than they anticipated, while **65% of salespeople** said that working remotely is more challenging than they anticipated. To that end, sales coaching and training technologies that monitor reps’ performance and help managers identify areas where salespeople might need improvement and provide guidance for other team members are surging in popularity.

While sales enablement initiatives aren’t new, the technological capabilities and insight analytics are. In fact, **58% of sales reps** reported they have dedicated coaching sessions with sales managers on effective virtual selling. Think of it like Tom Brady joining the Buccaneers: One aspect of the organization changed and suddenly it won the Super Bowl. Back in marketing terms, it’s proven that effective coaching from sales managers can unlock an **8% improvement in sales performance per rep**.



“The individual rep is where you see more coaching applied, but the aggregate analysis of sale reps’ conversations — how they’re doing, the patterns and topics that come up and competitors mentioned — never really existed before,” explained HubSpot’s Brinker. “It was largely very incomplete reporting where salespeople might add into a CRM, but now you have the underlying raw data for all these human interactions. And it’s perfect for machine-learning applications to really start to identify the patterns.”

However, the main premise of modern sales technology is to automate time-consuming aspects of sales reps’ jobs to free up their time and focus on selling. How does sitting teams down to analyze their performance — or even taking the time to train them on the new technologies — further that mission?

“You have to dissect that online training and chunk it out into snackable, digestible content modules,” said Didner. “An online course is one strategy, but you can also try chunking information into smaller pieces or starting a training podcast. You can even send a daily text that provides a helpful tip.”

With all that sharing in mind, there’s still an opportunity for interdepartmental coaching. Adam Perry, VP of Customer Experience for **Demandbase**, explained that he finds value in analyzing the outreach he’s received from other sales reps and sharing it with his team for inspiration.

“For sales reps, revenue intelligence analyzes what’s in their phone calls and compares it to the forecast, which is something they haven’t had before.”

NANCY NARDIN, SMART SELLING TOOLS



How A Top SDR Doubled Her Meeting-To-Opportunity Conversion Rate

Dynamic Signal is a mobile-first company communications platform that helps enterprise organizations increase productivity and empower advocacy by informing and engaging employees with timely, relevant content across channels and devices.

As a former top-performing SDR at Dynamic Signal, Lauren Wadsworth knew it was harder than ever to get the attention of key prospects and that she needed a new way to stand out and build more connections. Her secret weapon? **Vidyard's Chrome extension**. The personal video messaging solution helped Lauren multiply her monthly meetings booked by 5X with a positive response rate to cold outbound messages of 12.75% and an increase in meeting-to-opportunity conversion of 200% in a matter of months. Now those are numbers you can take to the bank.

The Challenge: Humanizing Cold Calls

It's every salesperson's dilemma — how do you manage to “be personal” when you're cold calling and emailing upwards of 80 prospects every day? How do you balance quality with quantity?

In her early days at Dynamic Signal, Lauren Wadsworth was a newbie SDR struggling to meet her quota. Even though she threw herself into her work and booked an incredible 26 meetings in her third month (nearly double her team's average), her conversions lagged — not to mention that more than 50% of prospects cancelled or missed their discovery call. In response, Lauren tried to add more volume to her funnel to keep up.

The Solution: Less Is More & Personal Is Powerful

As it turns out, the solution to her sales woes was less volume, more personalization

After seeing the impression left on her boss when she received her first **prospecting email** with a personalized video message, Lauren decided to give video a shot. After all, emailing and cold calling simply weren't cutting it anymore — what could it hurt?

The results of her experimentation? Mind-blowing.



The Result: Be Un-ignorable

Lauren sent out 55 personalized videos to her prospects — each with their name handwritten on a whiteboard — and waited to hear back. Nothing could have prepared her for what happened next.

“I had a 37.5% response rate, and a 12.75% positive response rate (meetings booked),” she wrote. “To give some context, the average call-to-meeting conversion was 1% and email-to-meeting conversion was 2% across the team.” Over the next two quarters, she became her team’s top-performing SDR, using video to work smarter, not harder — no 12-hour workdays required!

The level of engagement from the prospects that received her videos was off the charts. With responses like the following, not only had Lauren discovered a better way to connect, but she was also leaving an incredible first impression that helped reduce her meeting cancellation rate from more than 50% to less than 10%.

Cold Prospecting Email Response: “By far, the best intro email from a ‘vendor’ in a very long time. I love the quick intro video (and name on the whiteboard). Happy to speak.”

Cold Prospecting Email Response: “You. Are. AWESOME! I have half a nostril above the water line right now, and you totally burst through all that with your creative message and positive attitude... AND. I. SIMPLY. CANNOT. IGNORE. YOU. You made me smile. And for that, I will be happy to talk with you.”

In fact, her success was so astonishing that it inspired her whole team to adopt personal video messaging, using Vidyard as their solution. In their first month after making the switch, they booked more meetings with VPs and CXOs than they had in the past year combined. How’s that for quality?

To learn more about how a former SDR at Dynamic Signal Lauren Wadsworth multiplied her monthly meetings booked and increased conversions with video, [read the original full story here](#).



Leveraging Technologies To Meet Digital Selling Needs

A key aspect of the new state of sales technologies are the features that enable sales reps to explore new ways of engaging customers. Video content is quickly growing in popularity — **46% of buyers** prefer video outreach, especially in the absence of face-to-face meetings. In addition to a personalized touch, video can actually analyze viewer interactions to inform next-best actions.

“Certain technologies enable you to create video content that’s integrated back into the CRM,” explained Brinker. “As prospects and clients are engaging with it, you’re actually getting that data back and creating triggers for sales sequences or for marketing campaigns, depending on where they are in the funnel.”

When conducting these highly personalized forms of outreach, sales reps must keep in mind their target audience. They might be pitching two executives in wildly different industries, so they must ensure they’re speaking appropriately to each prospect or customer.

“In the sales world, one size doesn’t fit all,” explained Perry. “You have to make sure your sales teams know to speak the language of the customer in your pitch. If you’re pitching to someone in big pharma, it should sound a lot different than a pitch to someone in finance because their whole lingo is different.”

In addition to video content, another key aspect of engagement is capturing prospect and client attention by utilizing out-of-the-box initiatives, such as E-gifting. Nardin explained that simply sending an email with a lunch credit or coffee voucher attached lets the prospect or client know that their time is valued.



That, of course, costs money, which tees up the next sales tech trend — E-commerce. While E-commerce is typically associated with online shopping over on the B2C side, it's gaining steam in B2B as technology providers and sales reps alike explore the E-commerce possibilities.

“Everyone’s triangulating that E-commerce isn’t just a B2C thing,” explained Brinker. “A lot of SaaS companies have started to prove out the model of touchless B2B sales. That extends to a lot more scenarios than I think people began to imagine, so you talk about all the innovation in B2C E-commerce, and it feels like it’s on fire now in B2B E-commerce.”

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SCOTT BRINKER, HUBSPOT



Conclusion

With more sales technologies entering the market than ever before, Brinker explained that sales reps currently feel like “kids in the candy shop.” However, the case for alignment has never been stronger, as sales reps must agree on key initiatives and understand what they want to achieve when selecting sales technology or refining their stacks. It’s easy to get caught up in the glitz and glam of new technologies, so teams must view sales technologies through a practical lens to ensure it’s actually the right fit for their company.

“The important thing is to have clarity around your sales ops capabilities,” said Brinker. “The technology you research and see advertised is just the demos. To actually implement it, it isn’t an attack implementation; it’s a full a program implementation and you have to make sure people are able to adopt it. It’s also an enablement mission to make sure that they understand how to use it well. In the case of sales, this is still a relatively new bounty — it’s like Christmas in sales tech.”

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SCOTT BRINKER, HUBSPOT

DEMANDBASE

Demandbase is the leader in Account-Based Marketing (ABM). The company offers the only AI-enabled, comprehensive ABM platform that spans Advertising, Marketing, Sales and Analytics. Enterprise leaders and highgrowth companies such as Accenture, Adobe, DocuSign, GE, Grainger, Salesforce and others use Demandbase to drive their ABM strategy and maximize their marketing performance. The company was named a Gartner Cool Vendor for Tech GoTo Market in 2016.

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Vidyard is the video platform that helps businesses drive revenue through the strategic use of online video. Going beyond video hosting and management, we help businesses connect with more viewers through interactive and personalized video experiences, learn powerful insights on their viewing audience, turn insights into action with enterprise integrations, and prove the impact of their video programs.

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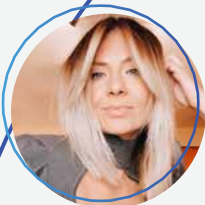




Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

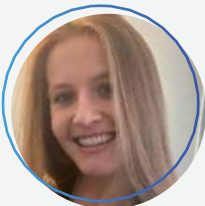
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