



# 2022 STATE OF SALES TECHNOLOGY

B2B Organizations Leverage Integrated Tools, Take Holistic Approach To Engage Buyers In Hybrid Settings



# INTRODUCTION

While sales technology has been an essential component of the modern sales team for decades, the past two years have seen a notable evolution in the role of technology in the selling process. According to [data](#) from *Demand Gen Report*, just over half (51%) of companies implemented new sales technologies to keep up with buyer demands.

The rising dependence on sales technology became particularly evident as sales teams transitioned from in-person sales to completely remote to hybrid work over the course of the pandemic. Sales leaders had to equip their staff with tools that could perform in any environment, with all the functionality and security they would get working from the office.

The reliance on sales tools to drive revenue is only expected to grow, according to experts interviewed for this report.

It isn't just sales technology that leaders need to consider. The sales tools must integrate with marketing, CRM and other systems that provide the foundation for outreach to prospects and current clients.

“Sales technology is part of a greater go-to-market engine,” said MJ Patent, CEO and Co-Founder of [Alveo](#). “There has been an upsurge in revenue operations and revenue technologies, and the interdependence of all these different technologies working together to give a holistic view of your buyer and customer.”

The numbers bear out the growing dissatisfaction with sales technology and the need to improve its effectiveness. Less than 2% of chief sales officers are very satisfied with their current [sales technology stacks](#), according to data from research firm Gartner. The good news: Seven out of 10 chief sales officers plan to increase spending on technology this year to provide more sales tools to sellers.

Sales engagement will remain a critical part of sales as teams adapt to a changing business landscape, and organizations must learn how to maximize the use of tools currently in place. To help companies understand how to make better use of marketers’ time and improve underleveraged solutions, this special report will uncover strategies to improve adoption and maximize the impact of the sales stack while containing costs.

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**MJ PATENT, ALVEO**



# CONNECTING WITH BUYERS IN A HYBRID WORLD

While the sales team is increasingly taking a hybrid approach to work, the people on the other end of the sales exchange are also likely to be working remotely, at least part of the time. Michael Phalen, Founder and Principal of [Go-to-Market Pros](#), said it is harder to engage buyers in a remote environment. “They have a lot of competing interests — they’re blending home, work and other lifestyle choices and responsibilities.”

Video conferencing and Conversational AI technologies have made it easier to forge personal connections, as in-person meetings weren’t possible during the pandemic. Specifically with Conversational AI, organizations are better equipped with unique first-party data on prospects and buyers for more hyper-personalized messaging.

“Artificial intelligence is transforming the lead qualification process using first-party intent data to nurture site visitors in real-time,” said Andrew Arocha, CRO of [Drift](#). “This allows reps to focus on closing high-intent leads instead of wasting time qualifying low-quality leads.”

“Conversational AI has grown because sales leaders recognize that it can help them gain a competitive advantage. The shift to digital has caused an explosion in data, more data than any human could ever analyze (or act on) in a single sitting. Conversational AI is a game-changer because it can quickly mine tech stack data for salient insights that lead to strategic business decisions.”

To have meaningful interactions with prospects and customers, sales technology must be aligned with the buyers’ journey to provide a complete picture of the customer. To highlight the need for a more holistic approach, a recent Korn Ferry study of [top-performing sales teams](#) found that 96% of them were aligned with marketing and customer service on client wants and needs.

Fruitful conversations matter, regardless of where the potential customer or seller is located. However, it becomes even more essential that those exchanges be supported by sales technology when operating in a hybrid environment, Patent noted. “I have found success with clients that bring together sales, product marketing and those in customer-facing roles.”

According to Patent, sales technology should incorporate all touchpoints, so the sales team is aware of all the ways the customer has been engaged with the company. “How is marketing getting in front of these prospects? How is sales getting in front of them?”

It is critical to understand customer engagement across all different channels, which can be challenging as customers are using various internet connections. “It’s not just email. It’s not just web advertising,” she said. “How do all these things tie in together to nurture that buyer through the funnel to a closed customer? And then even beyond that, how do you expand that customer with upsells and cross sells?”



# HOW TECHNOLOGY HELPED SALES SHIFT FROM AN ART TO A SCIENCE

With Andrew Arocha, CRO of Drift

Organizations have more data than they know what to do with. With such large quantities at their disposal, it's often difficult for sales reps to sift through, organize and even collect every piece of information a buyer shares. But with the help of sales technology — specifically AI — sales teams can collect every piece of buyer information and organize it in an actionable way.

To learn more about the current state of sales technology and the role of automation, the *Demand Gen Report* team sat down with Andrew Arocha, CRO of **Drift**, a conversational marketing and sales technology company, to learn more about the modern sales landscape.

***Demand Gen Report: What are some of the biggest sales technology challenges plaguing organizations? How can they combat those issues?***

**Andrew Arocha:** For sellers, the new mandate is clear: Digitize everything or get left behind. But in response to digital-first, the market has over-corrected and today's sellers are actually using too many disparate tools. It's become a huge pain point that takes time away from selling.

In fact, B2B sellers work a 52-hour week but spend **less than 25%** of their time in direct-engagement selling activities. Not only are they wasting time navigating between tools, but the information they need to do their jobs is scattered far and wide. The additional noise also distracts reps and negatively impacts pipeline.

Right now, we're seeing a big push towards consolidation. Sales leaders are deliberately trying to eliminate unnecessary tools, reduce spend, and are only purchasing new tech if it helps with the all-in-one platform mission.

***DGR: Why do you think the use of conversational AI and automation has grown? What are some of the factors that influenced that growth?***

**Arocha:** No matter what stage of the customer journey they're in, today's buyers and customers want convenience, speed and knowledgeable help. If buyers don't receive a response to their question within 10 seconds, they'll move on to a competitor. And they're **2X more likely to buy** from companies that deliver this outstanding digital experience.





Businesses have tried to create the kind of hyper-personalized digital experience and real-time responsiveness customers crave. But to put it plainly, keeping up is a huge challenge for sales, marketing and customer service teams. Humans can't know the answer to every question a buyer might ask or what each visitor's intent is. And people can't work 24/7... but AI can.

***DGR: How does conversational AI and automation factor into companies' overall personalization and targeting efforts?***

**Arocha:** Sales reps can quickly be overwhelmed with unstructured or unfiltered data, while managers struggle to sort through spreadsheets, reports and dashboards to find actionable insights. There's a stat I love from Dr. Richard Huseman — the average person listens at about 25% efficiency. If you think about all the distractions reps face daily, and how they spend more than 75% of their time outside of direct-engagement-selling activities, it's no wonder productivity is such a concern.

But this is where AI has proved invaluable. Natural language processing (NLP) algorithms "listen" at 100% efficiency to help inform next steps. NLP can analyze conversations and surface relevant insights, many of which the seller would have missed or forgotten. That's why so many sales executives are adopting an insights-driven sales system to enable their sales teams to consistently learn, retain and grow the trust and the business of B2B buyers.

***DGR: How does conversational AI and automation fit in with the rest of the sales technology stack?***

**Arocha:** There are plenty of tools that collect and deliver raw data, but it takes time to analyze and surface it in a helpful way. This is inefficient, time-consuming and not useful for sellers or their leaders. What reps need are bite-sized, tangible insights about what they care about: Their book of business (territory, accounts, contacts, pipeline and open opportunities) — and how to win them.

My take? AI should not be treated as this separate, standalone thing; it should be built in to every tool in your tech stack.

***DGR: How do you see sales technology continuing to grow and benefit organizations?***

**Arocha:** It all comes down to productivity. More than **79%** of sales executives say improving the productivity of existing sales reps is key to hitting new targets. But here's the rub: **65%** of B2B organizations rank sales productivity as a top *challenge*.

If you scroll through a platform like LinkedIn, you'll see countless posts touching on the "art of selling." This is all well and good, but new market pressures have propelled us past the "art of selling" head-first to the "science of selling."

You see, while the "art of selling" focuses on building relationships, the "science of selling" examines the number, efficiency and effectiveness of sales touchpoints. By 2026, **65%** of B2B sales organizations will transition from intuition-based to data-driven decision-making, using technology that unites workflow, data and analytics.

Sales teams need both approaches to be successful. But the role of the seller has changed in recent years, and it's never been clearer that the future of sales is insight-driven.





# FINDING THE RIGHT TOOLS FOR YOUR TEAM

While sales tech tools are intended to help sales teams cut down on manual tasks, they often end up being even more work to manage. Technology helps sellers forge relationships with buyers, but it must provide a complete view of all digital interactions so sales teams can embrace and act-on the data at the right time.

"With the push toward consolidation, all-in-one, omnichannel platforms have won an even stronger foothold on the market," said Drift's Arocha. "Reps need a 360-degree, real-time view of ALL digital interactions a prospect or account has had or is having so they can act the moment intent is highest.

"And it goes without saying that the best sales tools play well with others. If a particular platform doesn't have robust integrations to help reps work the way they like to work (not the other way around), it's a nonstarter."

It is a function of leadership to encourage a tool's use and gather feedback. "Feedback from top performers and respected members of the team is essential to making sure that the right tools are chosen and ultimately adopted," said Randy Seidl, Founder and CEO of [Sales Community](#). "It takes a combination of availability of technology and adoption to provide better visibility into customer activity."

Phalen stresses the importance of ensuring that you aren't investing in technology where the cost to service outweighs the benefits. He refers to it as "technology debt":

- Is it worth the time and effort to train reps?
- Is it going to drive sales?
- How much time are the reps spending on the platform?
- Are the reps getting value, or is the platform running them?

How can you improve adoption of new sales technology and maximize the value of existing tools? Alveo's Patent recommends taking a measured approach to introducing tech. "A lot of failure is due to not rolling out the tools properly and a lack of training. You need a roadmap that takes incremental steps and shows value to the sales team."

The tools need to be easy to use, Phalen noted, so that the sales team doesn't feel overwhelmed by administrative tasks. A tight integration between sales tools, marketing and CRM solutions can help ease the data entry burden. "Ultimately, the sales team is energized by good conversations with buyers. The systems they use should enhance those interactions whenever possible."

One way to ensure that your sales tech stack is providing an ROI is to take advantage of all the features and functions. "This requires strong sales leadership to ensure high adoption rates and that everyone is using the technology to the fullest," said Seidl.

The sales team is more open to using systems when the benefits are clearly demonstrated. "Many times, we ask sellers to do things that add burdens to their day without explaining the why behind the ask," Patent acknowledged. That can lead to a waste of resources — people and technology.

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**MICHAEL PHELAN, GO-TO-MARKET PROS**





## CONCLUSION

Sellers and buyers evolved their perspectives during the pandemic, with many settling into a hybrid approach to work. As the sales team and their targets go remote, sales technology needs to keep pace.

“As a salesperson, at the end of the day when you leave your job, if you’ve had a couple of really good customer prospect meetings, you feel good,” said Phalen. Sales tools are playing an increasingly significant role in the depth of those engagements and the ultimate outcomes.

Sales technology should support — not hinder — customer engagement. That means tools must be integrated and provide a complete picture of the customer’s interactions through all channels.



Drift is the Revenue Acceleration platform that combines chat, email, video, and automation to remove the friction from business buying. With Drift, you can start conversations with future customers now, on their terms – not days later. There are over 50,000 businesses that use Drift today to generate more revenue, shrink sales cycles, and make buying easy.

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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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