

AI AND SALES

Trends for 2023 and Beyond

97% of sales leaders and sales operations pros already believe that AI gives reps more time to sell.¹ However, giving reps more time back through automation is just the beginning. AI also provides a means of augmenting human intelligence, so salespeople can finally exceed the expectations of today's most demanding buyers.

This report provides a window into how the right AI-powered sales solutions will empower companies to, at last, fix a broken B2B sales process.

Included in the report:



The key challenges AI is solving for Sales teams.



Top opportunities for adoption by function.



Predictions based on customer interactions and leading industry research for how AI will revolutionize the sales process and profession within the next five years.

Key Challenges



Sales reps spend only 28% of their week selling.¹



50% of reps feel like they're required to learn too many tools, averaging 8 solutions in addition to CRM.²



CSOs and CROs are under pressure to increase revenue with limited head-count increases and are expecting a 20% increase in technology spend to fill the gap. The average account executive ramp time is 4.5 months, while over 40% of reps take over 5 months to ramp.³



93.6% of B2B organizations report missing their quarterly forecast by 10% and 80% organizations by 25% or more.⁴

Key Opportunities



Using AI to guide sellers through meeting preparation, demos and real-time rep assistance in customer meetings improves rep productivity and buyer engagement.



97% of sales leaders and sales operations pros say AI gives reps more time to sell with automation and next-best-action recommendations.¹



AI offers more accurate and less fallible revenue forecasting, empowering teams to make smarter predictions about which deals to prioritize and what actions to take.



To reign in costs and achieve better data hygiene and improved seller focus, 94% of sales organizations plan to consolidate their tech stack within the next 12 months.¹

Key Opportunities by Sales Function

While operations teams have been leaning on productivity enhancing tools for many years, AI is quickly becoming a must-have for sales teams to compete. Here are some of the top opportunities for Sales teams by function.



Opportunities by Function

Account Executives

- Conversations analyzed by AI help reps prepare for more successful meetings
- Real-time rep assistance in live customer conversations creates better buyer engagement and sales results
- AI-driven guided selling helps AEs prioritize which accounts and opportunities they focus on
- AI-driven next best actions remove guesswork from daily processes and give reps more selling time
- Deal-level recommendations shorten sales cycles
- AI-curated conversations help team members efficiently disseminate post-conversation deal information
- Live feedback on voice tone and conversational skills make demos and meetings more effective

Opportunities by Function

Sales Management

- Real-time behavior reinforcement that helps managers ensure reps can support all conversations with the right contextual insights for customers
- AI is used to drive more accurate forecasting
- Automated AI Forecasting prioritizes next best actions for reps
- Managers use AI to identify deal risks
- Predictive modeling helps managers identify more viable target accounts
- AI-powered coaching that scales sales managers' support of sellers

Operations/Enablement

- Training is reinforced automatically across live calls and meetings
- Reps are automatically provided with competitive intelligence, objection handling and answers to difficult technical questions
- CRM automation and data capture increases the accuracy of reporting and insights for RevOps

Predictions

- 1 60% of sales teams will be using AI to augment human intelligence during discovery meetings and demos by 2026.
- 2 By 2025, 61% of opportunity activities will be informed by AI, not experience.
- 3 By 2025, AEs will increase use of AI-assisted engagement capabilities even as vendors per team shrink by 37%.
- 4 83% of high-performing enterprise sales teams will use AI-driven next-best action forecasting by 2025.

Prediction 1

60% of sales teams will be using AI to augment human intelligence during discovery meetings and demos by 2026.

AI can transform sales processes in two primary ways: automation and augmentation. Automation involves having AI perform low-level tasks with minimal rep involvement. Automation is a must for ensuring that salespeople have enough time to spend selling to prospects. However, augmentation is where AI becomes a true game-changer.

Gartner revealed that 50% of buyers cite demos as one of the most valuable parts of the buying cycle.⁵ The trouble is, salespeople often fail to provide enough value during demos and discovery meetings. Buyers have seized more control over their own journey; they are typically better informed about solutions, competitors and pain points than sellers. However, AI can tip the scales back in sellers' favor.

AI can now guide sellers through every step of their sales motion, including during live demos and discovery meetings. Here are just some of the ways that AI-powered guidance can improve demos:

- Provide answers to tough technical questions in real time
- Serve up competitive intelligence the moment that prospects mention a specific competitor
- Alert sellers when their voice energy is low, they're interrupting prospects or otherwise engaging in bad conversation etiquette
- Help sellers adhere to compliance requirements

While this technology is already being used by top-performing enterprise sales teams, we expect it to quickly proliferate through B2B sales organizations over the next few years.

Prediction 2

By 2025, 61% of opportunity activities will be informed by AI-driven next best actions, not experience.

Sales has historically been an intuitive profession. Account executives have tended to prioritize either the deals that they have a hunch about or the deals with the biggest upside. AI offers the ability to analyze an aggregate of data points at the opportunity level, including buyer sentiment during conversations.

By comparing existing open opportunities to past closed won opportunities with similar accounts, AI can remove guesswork from the selling motion. At last, sellers will not be dependent on their own intuition. Instead, they can take the next best actions most likely to result in winning deals.

Value that AI can add to opportunities includes:

- Recommending which opportunities to prioritize
- Suggesting potential members of the buying committee to add to your CRM
- Alerting reps when opportunities are in danger of going cold due to under communication
- Suggesting content, actions or messaging by opportunity stage, sentiment or a range of other factors

By 2025, 61% of opportunity activities will be informed by AI-driven next best actions, not experience.

It is difficult to predict exactly how AI will impact Sales in the next three years, as the development and adoption of AI technology is constantly evolving. However, it is likely that AI will continue to be used to automate various tasks in the sales process, such as lead generation, customer segmentation and personalized marketing. This could lead to increased efficiency and productivity for sales teams, and help them better target and engage customers.

Believe it or not, the previous paragraph was written by an AI using a platform called Chat GPT. We simply posed the question “how will AI impact sales in the next three years?” and almost instantaneously received a coherent response. This illustrates just how far AI has come in terms of language processing and comprehension, and the benefits for Sales teams cannot be overstated. AI has already become a game changer for information workers, automating and redefining core processes within companies.

This is especially relevant to—and needed by—Sales teams. Sales teams are the most expensive department within most companies. Each year, businesses spend millions of dollars on operating costs. But much of that spend is routinely wasted on clunky, inefficient processes. As a result, salespeople now only spend 28% of their week selling, down from 34% in 2018.¹

Prediction 3

By 2025, AEs will use 37% fewer technology vendors, giving rise to multi-function AI-powered engagement platforms.

Recent data reveals that a staggering 94% of sales organizations plan to consolidate their technology stack by the end of 2023.¹ There are multiple reasons for this, but one reason is because reps themselves are feeling overwhelmed by technology. Two thirds of reps feel as though they are “drowning in tools.”

If reps have been “drowned” in tools it has been with the best of intentions. Put simply, selling is getting harder and reps need help. First of all, buyers are harder to connect with. Our own data shows a nearly 12% drop in conversations in 2022 compared to 2021. Even when SDRs or AEs do gain buyers’ attention, they are typically not equipped to meet the expectations of highly educated buyers. Couple these factors with challenging macroeconomics and the result is a much higher cost of acquisition. In our recent Sales Engagement Trends Report,

we predict a 12% yearly increase in the cost of qualified conversations alone through 2026—which will have dramatic implications on the overall cost of revenue.⁶

Reps are typically asked to glean insights and manage customer data across a hodgepodge of solutions including CRM, sequence engines, conversation intelligence platforms, customer data platforms, ABX platforms and more. While each of these solutions may add value, we are predicting a major shift toward adoption of platforms that guide reps to discover and act on the insights they need, all from one single location. Single point solutions are certain to be shed as a result.

Prediction 4

83% of high-performing enterprise sales teams will use AI-driven next-best action forecasting by 2025.

One of the biggest opportunities that AI offers sales managers is the ability to improve forecasting with next best actions. Forrester's B2B Benchmark Metrics Data shows that 93.6% of B2B organizations report missing their first-day quarterly forecast by 10% or more.⁴

In 2021, Gartner predicted that 90% of B2B enterprise sales organizations will continue to rely on intuition instead of AI-driven analysis for forecasting. However, advances in technology and changes in the economic climate are driving an increased desire for smarter forecasting.

The results of Forrester sales activity studies carried out across more than 10,000 sales reps each year showed that “voice-based interaction in the form of calls and web conferencing make up between 40% and 56% of seller interactions with buyers.”

Companies are increasingly capturing these interactions thanks to AI-powered Conversation Intelligence solutions. Adoption of Conversation Intelligence is steadily on the rise. From 2021 to 2022, companies investing in Revenue Operations & Intelligence platforms, many of which include AI-powered forecasting, doubled. Simultaneously, Conversation Intelligence, which already experienced robust adoption, went from 38% adoption in B2B companies to a planned 51%.⁶

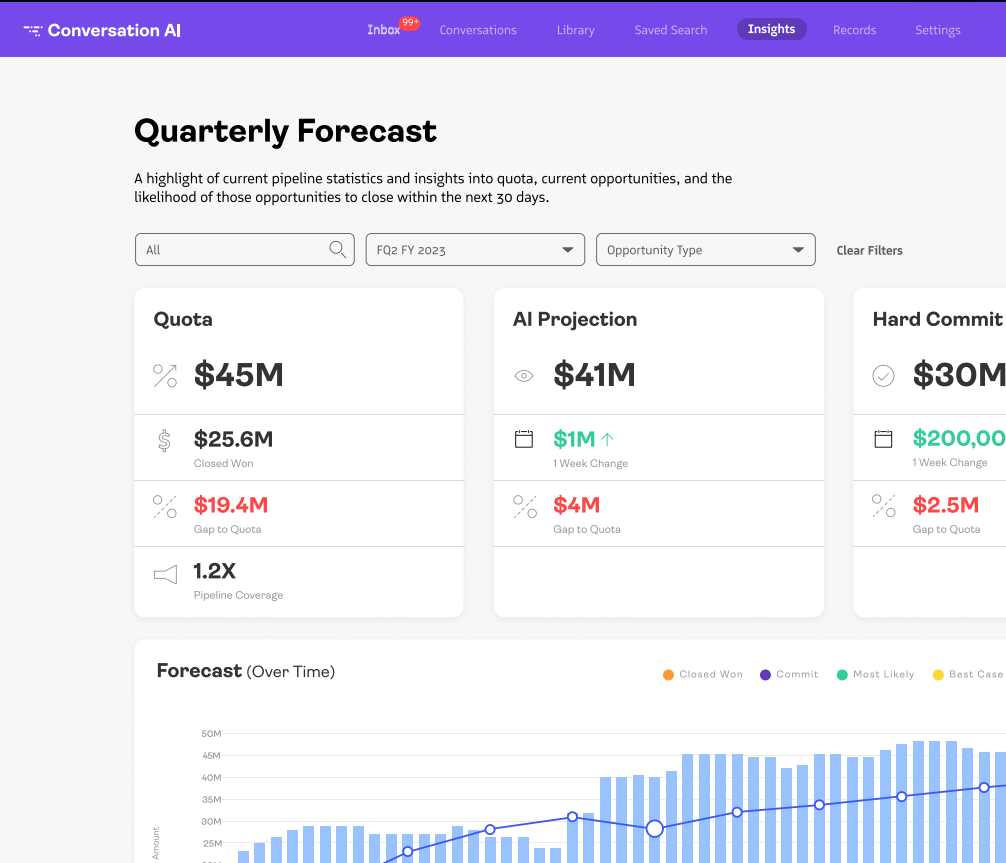
90% of B2B enterprise sales organizations will continue to rely on intuition instead of AI-driven analysis for forecasting.

83% of high-performing enterprise sales teams will use AI-driven next-best action forecasting by 2025.

With many conversation transcription services included in Conversation Intelligence solutions now exceeding 90% accuracy and pushing higher quickly, AI-powered forecasting solutions that incorporate conversation data as a critical element make forecasting far more effective.

AI-enhanced forecasting functionality is arriving at a time when it has never been more necessary.

As deals are growing harder to close, there is an increased desire for insights into where reps should focus, as well as growing pressure on managers to make accurate forecasts. As a result, we’re seeing sales managers growing more skeptical of reps’ intuition-based forecasting. Over the next few years, we therefore expect high-performing sales teams to adopt solutions that increase forecasting accuracy with increasing fervor.



**SOURCES**

1. Salesforce 2023 State of Sales Report
2. Allego Sales Enablement Technology Report
3. The Bridge Group SaaS AE Report
4. Forrester's B2B Benchmark Metrics Data Report
5. Gartner Technology Buying Dynamics B2B Technology Buyers Survey
6. Revenue.io Sales Engagement Predictions Report for 2023 and Beyond

About Revenue.io

Sell more and spend less on sales with a complete RevOps platform for conversation guidance, sales engagement, and live call insights and analytics—all in real-time.

120%

Quota
Attainment

60%

Reduction in
Rep Ramp Time

23%

Improvement
in Win Rates

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