



The future of Sales

Building for the next era





Times are changing... for good

The world of sales is undergoing a profound transformation. Customers are more connected, informed and demanding than ever before. Digital channels, automation and artificial intelligence are reshaping how organisations engage with customers. The traditional sales playbook, which was built on product pushes and transactional relationships, is no longer enough. Today's sales teams must adapt to a landscape where success depends on agility, collaboration and the ability to deliver real value at every touchpoint along the customer's journey.

This is not just an evolution, it is a permanent transformation of strategies, processes, people and technology. We have moved from analogue sales, centred on in-person relationships and manual processes, to increasingly autonomous models, where AI and automation orchestrate workflows end to end. Sales is shifting from manual, periodic activity to proactive, AI-assisted workflows, which unlocks a more fluid rhythm where sales teams focus on timing, human judgement and the moments of magic that build trust.

The future belongs to those who can blend digital enablement with the irreplaceable human touch, creating a sales function that is hyper-automated, data-driven and always growing with the business. Our customer experience study¹ shows that 74% of non-US consumers want more human interaction in the future, not less. Yet today, 59% of customers feel companies have lost touch with the human element of customer experience.

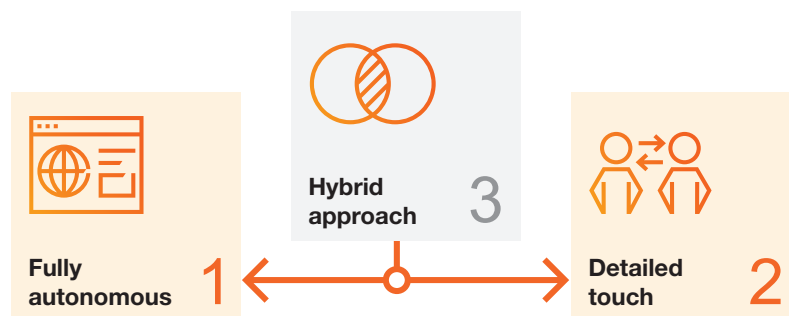
It's time to find the right balance.

¹ PwC Consumer Intelligence Series – Customer Experience

<https://www.pwc.com/us/en/advisory-services/publications/consumer-intelligence-series/pwc-consumer-intelligence-series-customer-experience.pdf>

How sales roles are changing

As sales evolves, it is vital to recognise that different customer segments in the B2B sector require different approaches.



1 Some segments can be served through **no-touch, fully autonomous models**, where customers prefer digital self-service and quick, low-friction transactions. Here is where you can leverage digitisation and AI the most. These models not only meet customer expectations but also significantly reduce internal cost-to-serve by automating processes and minimising human intervention, driving efficiency at scale.

3 Between these two ends sits a spectrum of **hybrid approaches**, where the best outcomes come from combining AI - and digital enablers at scale with human judgement at critical moments that build trust and help move decisions forward. This balance optimises efficiency by reserving high-cost human engagement for the moments of magic that truly matter, while automation handles routine interactions.

2 Other segments demand a **detailed touch**, where outcomes depend on deep relationships, peer-to-peer alignment and meticulous orchestration across stakeholders. This is where you map your relationship tree, understand the peer-to-peer powerplay, decide who your CEO needs to have top-to-top meetings with and ensure these are customers you personally know through and through to make it work. While resource-intensive, focusing these efforts on the right accounts ensures that investments in time and talent deliver maximum strategic value. Some segments can be served through **no-touch, fully autonomous models**, where customers prefer digital self-service and quick, low-friction transactions. Here is where you can leverage digitisation and AI the most. These models not only meet customer expectations but also significantly reduce internal cost-to-serve by automating processes and minimising human intervention, driving efficiency at scale.

Not every customer wants or needs the same approach. **The future of sales is about tailoring engagement models to fit the customer's complexity and expectations.** A differentiated approach not only improves customer experience but also aligns internal resources to where they create the most impact: reducing cost-to-serve, improving productivity, and ensuring sustainable growth.

The impact of AI on sales

45%

of CEOs express concerns about their company's viability over the next decade.

Looking at the findings from PwC's 27th Annual Global CEO Survey², we see that **45% of CEOs expressed concerns about their company's viability over the next decade, up from 36% the previous year**. In addition, 70% of CEO's say generative AI will impact their business model by 2027, a number that increases to 89% among those at organisations who've already put the technology to work.

This does not come as a surprise if you see that industries most exposed to AI already saw a three times higher growth in revenue per employee (27%) compared to those least exposed³.

There is a real opportunity to elevate sales' roles into true business partners that bring value to their customers. The modern sales representative is no longer the person who solely closes the deal, they have evolved into a trusted advisor who:

- Builds long-term **relationships**, engaging with customers throughout the (project) delivery.
- Develops deep **business acumen**, understanding customer priorities, pain points and strategic goals.
- Collaborates to design the best **solutions**, not just sell products.
- Shifts **mentality** from old-school behaviours to outcome orientation, positioning the entire portfolio, developing compelling proposals and defining KPIs for success.

As organisations digitise and automate, **the responsibilities of sales are evolving**. Pure selling is often crowded out by additional tasks, including managing complex offerings, solving administration, navigating new channels and supporting customers post-sale in getting the right answers. In fact, many sales do not end up playing the roles they were initially hired for. They increasingly self-direct to the responsibilities they are most comfortable with, but the need for new skills and adaptability has never been greater.

² **PwC 27th Annual Global CEO Survey**
<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/ceo-survey/2024/download/27th-ceo-survey.pdf>

³ **PwC Global AI Jobs Barometer**
<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/news-room/press-releases/2025/ai-linked-to-a-fourfold-increase-in-productivity-growth.html>

Complexity has multiplied

At the same time, **the complexity of go-to-market has multiplied**. With so many different (digital) channels, services, brands and social media spaces to manage, orchestrating the right engagement at the right time has become significantly harder.

Additionally, companies are implementing more digital and AI capabilities to try and keep up with the changing times. **These AI capabilities only create value if they free up time and enhance the quality of human interaction**, allowing sales to focus on the high-touch relationships and pivotal conversations that drive outcomes.

All these growing expectations and complexities means that **the life of someone in a sales function, whether it being a manager, director, or a CCO, will look drastically different tomorrow**. To illustrate this transformation, let's follow Sarah, a senior sales representative, as she addresses the growing complexity of her customers' questions and needs, both today and in the future.



A week in the life of a sales representative

Today (present)

Tomorrow (future)

Monday



Sarah starts the week sorting emails, updating the calendar and planning visits.

She researches customers and lines up meetings based on proximity.

She wakes to an **AI-generated briefing** that summarises priorities, highlights relationship context and proposes an optimised route to visit her customers. Marketing provides personalised content. **The CRM updates automatically** as calls are made. Human judgement remains central: Sarah is still deciding when to make a call or schedule a meeting in person.

Next to the preparation of her ongoing customers, she **spars with her agentic AI assistant** to identify new high-quality leads and the right counterpart she needs to contact.

Her **virtual marketing assistant** then helps her set up the right content and tone of voice that she can use to call the leads and plan in an introduction.

Tuesday



Sarah manually sorts through a list of marketing-qualified leads. She ends up highlighting two interesting leads that she will prepare for later, when she has some more time.

On a quarterly basis, she receives a report from her market intelligence colleagues about the market trends and evolution.

She reviews her CRM and receives a notification from her **CRM agent alerting her that certain customers are at risk of partially churning** and may be dissatisfied. The agent provides her with next best actions to undertake to proactively reignite the relationship.

In the afternoon, she organised a **deep dive session with her pricing colleague**. Based on all the historical information on the customers, as well as current and future market conditions, they assess the system's recommendation for the pricing of upcoming contract negotiations. They critically reflect together on the best game plan to achieve the proposed prices.

It's clear that **automation handles the necessary data collation while people make the decisions**.

Wednesday



After lunch, Sarah prepares for a video call with a long-time customer, focusing her presentation on relevant product benefits and addressing questions.

She negotiates the price with the customer by understanding their needs and then using last year's price as a reference with a small percentage added on top.

She updates the CRM manually after meetings and starts building the quote.

As she prepares for customer negotiations, Sarah rehearses with her **AI negotiation practice agent** that analyses customer preferences and suggests optimal strategies while providing real-time feedback. As she is actively working on being more assertive, this virtual sparring helps her a lot.

After the meeting with the customer, her **virtual sales assistant** gives her a call while she's driving home. She gets the debrief of the sales meeting and the AI assistant inserts the conclusions automatically into the CRM. Sarah still needs to ask approval to send over certain documentation, for which the virtual assistant immediately makes a task and tags her team lead. It's a relief to check those items off her list before even arriving home!

A week in the life of a sales representative

Today (present)

Tomorrow (future)

Thursday



Sarah's day starts with an angry call from one of her customers. Their shipment did not get delivered this morning and they don't know when they would get their products. She jumps on this urgent customer issue by contacting customer care and the supply chain. Fortunately, she has some connections there.

Luckily, her day ends better as she goes to dinner with an important customer to discuss future collaboration and they connect over similar travel plans.

Sarah meets with the **AI orchestration business partner**, a bi-weekly session dedicated to reviewing how her virtual colleagues are supporting her sales efforts.

Together, they assess which digital assistants are adding the most value, identify areas for improvement and set priorities for the next sprint. This collaborative check-in ensures that Sarah's AI-powered support network continues to evolve with her needs, freeing up more time for strategic customer work and innovation.

Friday



Friday is typically an admin day, where Sarah goes through her agenda, logs the meetings in her CRM system and adds different notes. She also makes the quotes that she promised throughout the week.

Sarah blocks the afternoon for a 'joint war room session' with colleagues from marketing and innovation **to optimise search results in AI models** and get even more visible online.

Next, the **cross-functional team**, including supply chain, pricing and customer care, brainstorm how to stimulate growth at one of their key priority customers as part of their **account planning & strategy**. With the aggregated data at their fingertips, they can dive deep into the issues and possible solutions. **Automation creates time for creativity and collaboration.**



How organisations will need to shift

Shift your mindset

The way sales teams work is changing and it's changing fast. In PwC's Annual Global Workforce Survey⁴, employees who use AI daily report striking benefits: productivity jumps to 92% compared to 58% for non-users, job security feels stronger (58% vs 36%) and salaries increase (52% vs 32%). The employees also indicate they are more optimistic about the future.

But these gains don't happen automatically. Many organisations still need to help their people build new skills and adapt to a tougher economic climate. **Leaders should rethink how they plan, govern and coach their workforce. The focus must be on capability building, responsible adoption and clear outcomes:** this way technology enhances, rather than replaces, the human element that customers value the most.

Rethink your operating model

Tomorrow's sales organisation won't look like today's. **It will be digitally enabled, hyper-automated and designed to scale with growth.** That means breaking down silos and creating cross-functional hubs where sales, marketing, digital and operations work side by side.

On top that, customers are now 'everywhere' – they expect seamless digital and self-service experiences. Sales teams must shift from product-oriented channels to customer-oriented ones, helping buying groups feel confident in their decisions. **Rising costs make it impossible to patch inefficiencies by increasing headcount, so optimising channels and operating models is critical.**

Engagement strategies should reflect this new reality:

- Fully autonomous segments without human-touch journeys.
- Hybrid approaches where AI drives scale and humans step in at decisive moments.
- High-touch journeys that formalise relationship mapping, stakeholder care and executive sponsorship.

⁴ PwC's Global Workforce Survey

<https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/news-room/press-releases/2025/pwc-2025-global-workforce-survey.html>



Partner with virtual colleagues

Digital assistants are here to stay – but getting value from them requires structure. **Organisations need to define how humans and virtual colleagues work together**, where automation leads and where human judgement prevails. Managers must be equipped to coach and govern these new teammates confidently.

One practical step? **Establish an AI orchestration business partner who meets regularly with sales teams.** These sessions review which assistants deliver the most value, identify improvements and set priorities for the next sprint. This creates a continuous improvement loop, ensuring virtual colleagues evolve with the business.

Finally, **rethink and restructure sales roles to match the complexity of modern offerings and the need for consultative, outcome-driven engagement.** Set front-line sales teams free and let them focus on timing, judgement and decisive moments that build trust for buyers – the things technology can't replicate.

Conclusion

The future is yours to shape

Sales is no longer about pushing products. It is about creating confidence, building trust and delivering outcomes that matter. The tools are changing, expectations are increasing and the pace is accelerating. Yet at the heart of this transformation is something timeless: the human connection.

Technology will take care of repetitive tasks. AI will surface insights and orchestrate complexity. But the decisive moments – the conversations that build relationships, the creativity that sparks solutions and the judgement that earns trust – those remain yours.

This is your opportunity to lead the change. To embrace new skills, new ways of working and new partnerships with both human and virtual colleagues. To move beyond transactions and become a true business partner, an advisor and a strategist for your clients.

The future of sales is not something happening to you. It is something you can shape. Organisations that act now, that invest in capability, collaboration and responsible technology adoption, will not just keep up. They will set the pace.

So, ask yourself: what will your next conversation look like? Will it be reactive or will it be proactive, informed and inspiring? The choice and the future are in your hands.





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