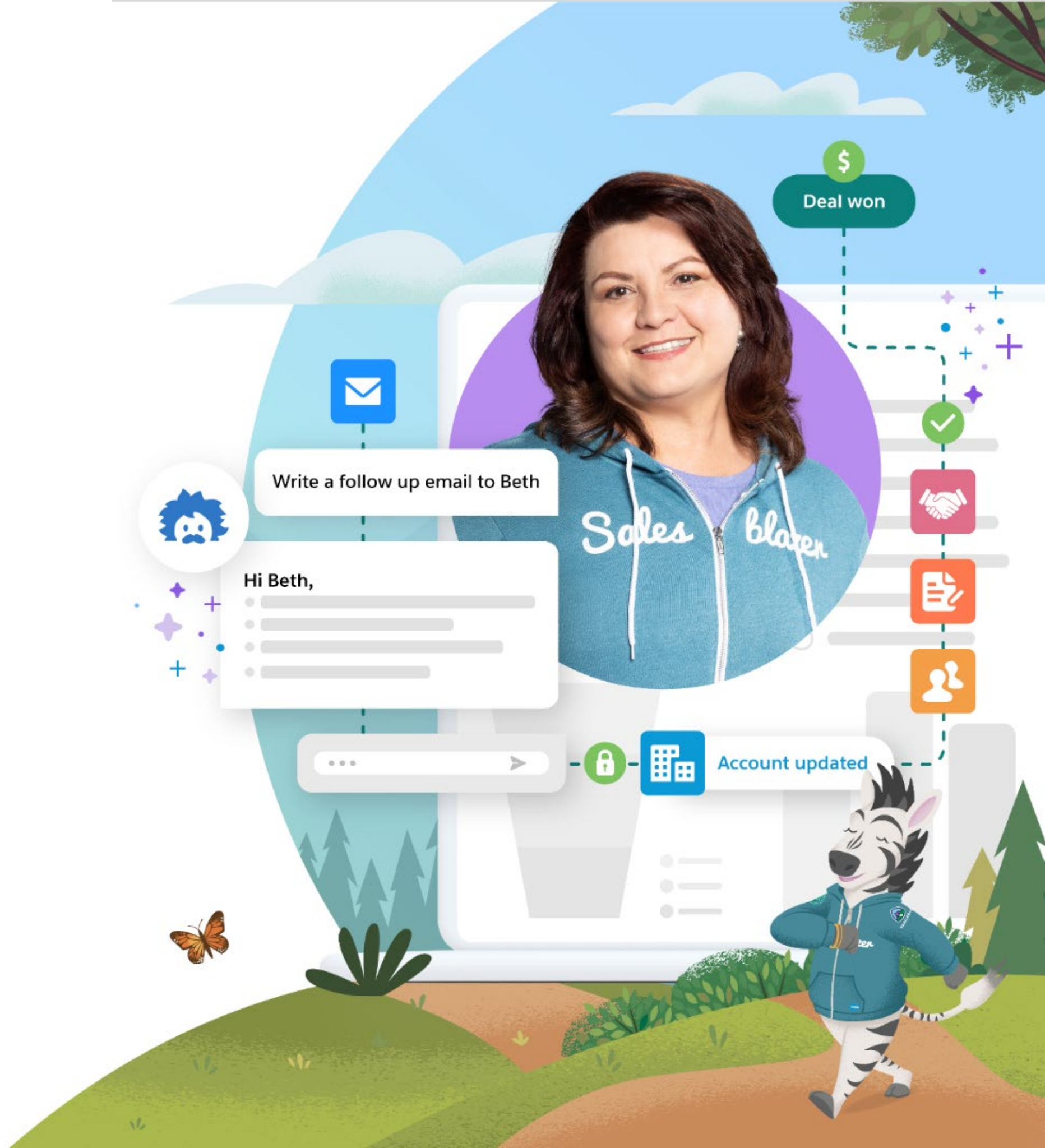




SIXTH EDITION

State of Sales

Insights from 5,500 sales professionals on driving growth and standing out in a crowd.



Foreword

Note to sellers



Growing customer expectations is the number one challenge in this year's "State of Sales." I'm seeing it every day. Customers don't just want to learn about products. They want to separate myth from reality, and really understand how they can succeed.

The question becomes: What's it going to take to tell a customer that you've got them? It's why sales teams are investing in making it easier for sellers to sell.

This report shares how sales teams are focused on training and enablement, which is the number one tactic for growth. They're using AI to boost productivity, consolidating tools to simplify their tech stacks, and investing in complete CRMs like Sales Cloud that drive growth – from pipeline to paycheck.

The results speak for themselves. Growth is up, turnover is down, and teams using AI are outperforming the rest. Keep reading to discover what's working for 5,500 sales professionals today.

Ketan Karkhanis

Ketan Karkhanis

General Manager, Sales Cloud

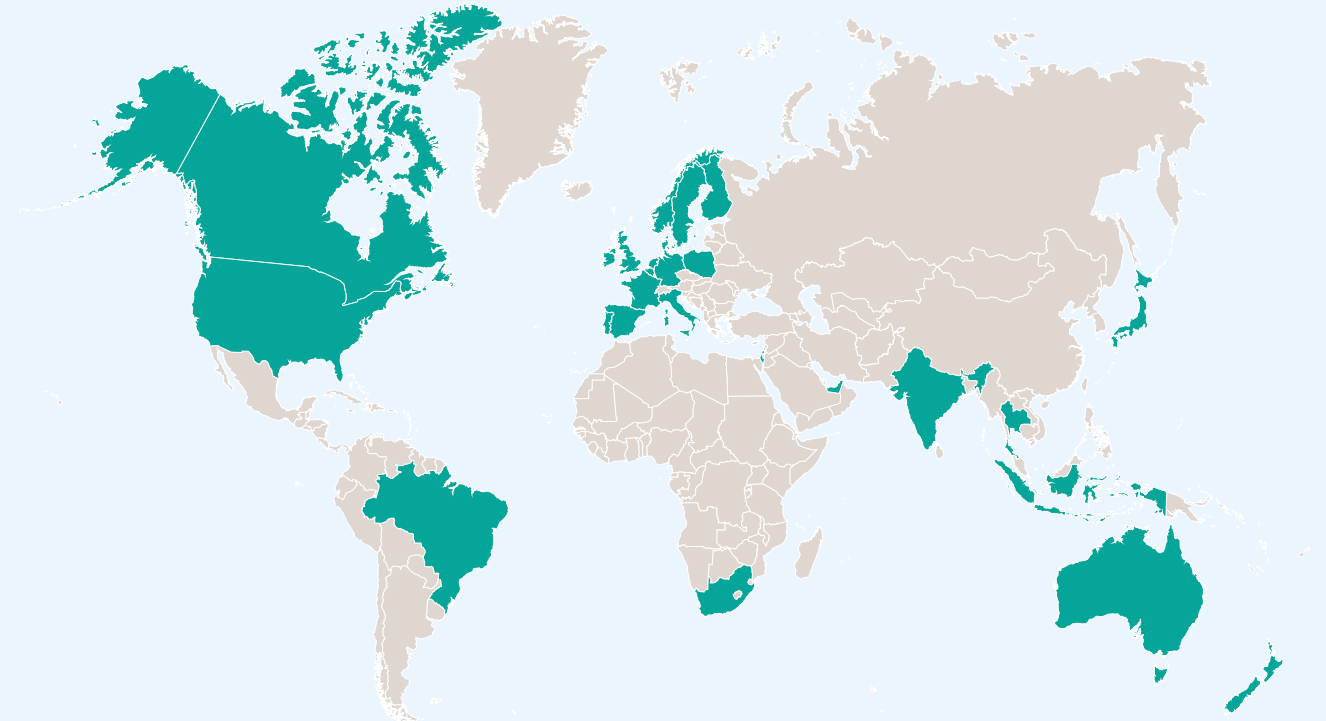
What You'll Find in This Report

For the sixth edition of the State of Sales report, Salesforce surveyed 5,500 sales professionals worldwide to discover how sales pros are:

- Growing revenue in the face of rising customer demands and competition
- Firming up sales enablement strategies to better prepare reps
- Addressing data and trust concerns in the age of artificial intelligence (AI)

Due to rounding, not all percentage totals in this report sum to 100%. All comparison calculations are made from total numbers (not rounded numbers).

Data in this report is from a double-anonymous survey conducted from March 8, 2024, through April 18, 2024. Respondents represent 27 countries across six continents. All respondents are third-party panelists. For further survey demographics, see page 38.



5,500 sales professionals surveyed worldwide



Salesforce Research provides data-driven insights to help businesses transform how they drive customer success. Browse all reports at salesforce.com/research.



Who We Surveyed

In this report, we refer to the following respondent groups:

Sales Reps

Front-line sales representatives, inclusive of the following:

- **Inside Sales Reps**
Quota-carrying individuals who primarily interact with customers virtually via phone or digital means
- **Outside Sales Reps**
Quota-carrying individuals who primarily interact with customers via in-person meetings
- **Partners and Channel Sales Reps**
Reps external to the company who sell through revenue sharing agreements

Sales Support

Specialists assisting with administration and support, along with sales and business development representatives (SDRs and BDRs)

Sales Operations

Includes sales operations, sales enablement, revenue ops, and deal desk professionals

Sales Leaders

Sales and revenue leaders and managers

Sales Professionals

All salespeople, inclusive of the groups above



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Executive Summary

Customer expectations are growing, productivity is lagging, and competition is on the rise. Yet four in five sellers say sales are up.

How are sales teams making it work? In part, by using training and technology to guide reps to success. They're consolidating tools and improving data security to realize the benefits of AI. They're also connecting the dots in their data to provide reps with a complete customer view.

The renewed focus on simplifying selling might explain the optimistic mood as sales pros look ahead. Most say they feel confident despite the challenges they face.

1

Sales Are Up, but So Are New Pressures

Marketplace pressures and low productivity are weighing on sellers. Still, sales teams continue to push through challenges to grow. **79% of sales teams increased revenue over the past 12 months.**

2

AI Adoption Surges, Calling for Trustworthy Data

Sales teams are using AI in a push for productivity and personalization, but many report concerns over budget, training, and data deficits. **81% of sales teams say they use AI today.**

3

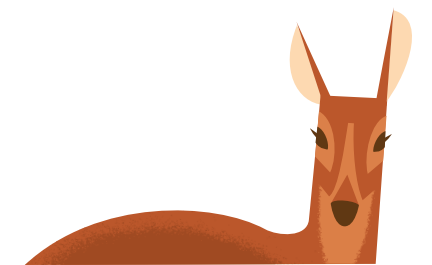
Sales Teams Turn to Enablement as a Top Tactic for Growth

Sales teams are improving their training programs for direct sellers and partners alike, a key strategy for delivering more value to customers. **Improving sales enablement is the #1 tactic for growth.**

4

Employee Retention Is Rising – but Vulnerable

Retention and satisfaction among sales pros is rising, but dependent on compensation. **64% of sales pros say they'd leave their company if offered a similar job with better pay.**



1

Sales Are Up, but So Are New Pressures



01

Sales Growth Is Back

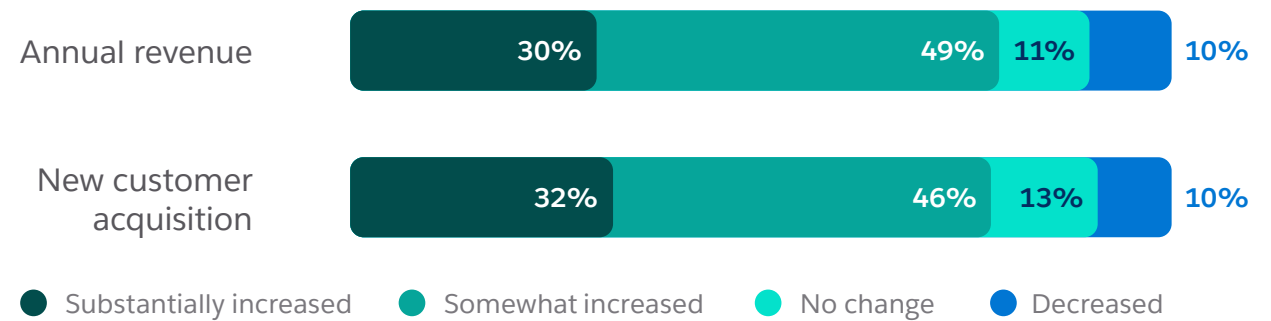
In the previous State of Sales report, released during the pandemic, 82% of sales professionals said they had to quickly adapt to new ways of selling in the face of economic headwinds. These teams worked to pave a path to growth amid inflation, supply chain issues, and global unrest.

Today, that hard work has paid off. Sales are growing, with nearly four in five teams reporting increases in both revenue and customer acquisition over the past 12 months. Most sellers feel good about the direction their company is heading in, with 82% confident about the 12-month growth strategy.

79% of sales leaders say revenue increased over the past year.

Revenue and New Customers Are on the Rise

Changes in Performance Over the Past 12 Months



Base: Sales leaders



01

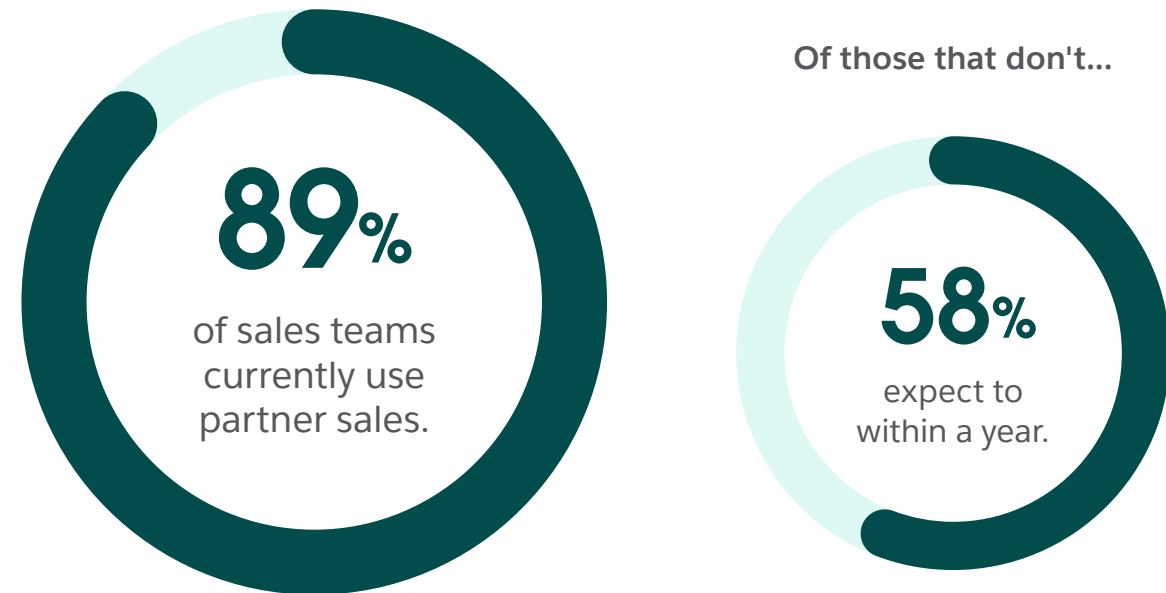
Partner Selling is Widespread, Contributing to Growth

In their pursuit of growth, many sales teams are turning to partner sales. Nearly nine in 10 sales teams use partners currently, and among those who don't, over half expect to in the next year.

Partner sales, also known as channel sales, brings in third-party resellers, brokers, and distributors to generate new sales indirectly without adding headcount. These indirect sales can help teams carry out strategies like expanding into new regions, targeting new markets, or simply scaling efficiently.

84% of sales pros say partner selling has a bigger impact on revenue than a year ago.

Within 12 Months, Nearly Every Company Expects to Use Partner Sales



Base: Sales leaders

01

One-off Sales Take a Back Seat to Recurring Revenue

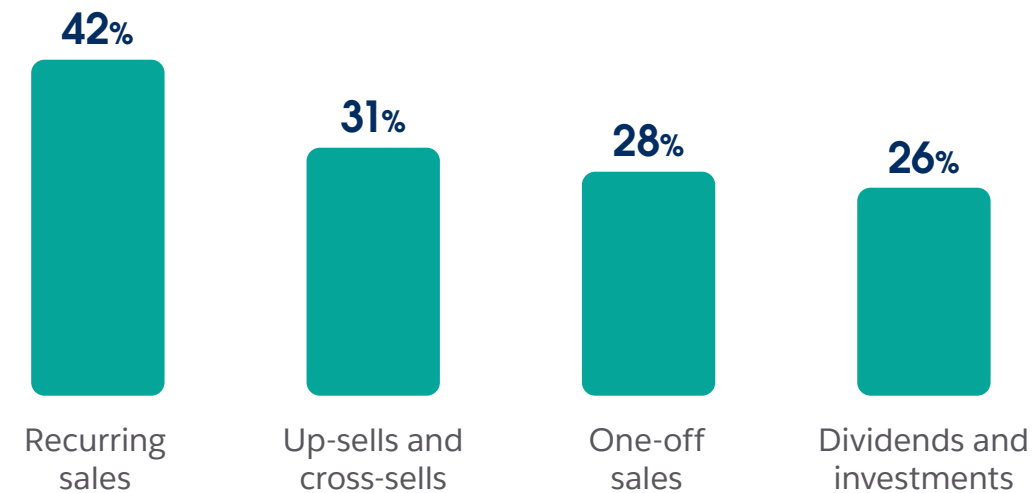
While partner selling adds significantly to revenue on the whole, revenue streams are diverse. Over 90% of sales teams use more than one revenue source.

When asked to name the top revenue source, sales leaders don't point to the traditional one-off sale. Rather, they point to recurring revenue, whether through subscriptions, usage-based pricing, or otherwise. Upsells and cross-sells are next, named collectively as a top revenue source by nearly a third of sales teams.

In short: Most businesses see greater revenue by selling to existing customers than to new ones.

Recurring Sales, Upsells, and Cross-sells Lead as Revenue Sources

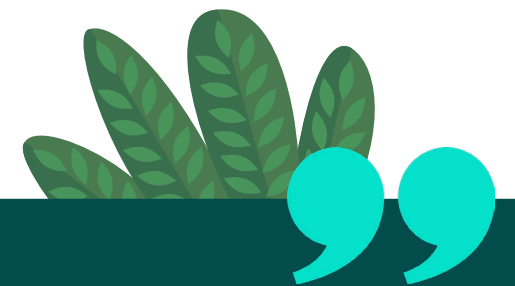
Sales Leaders Who Cite the Following as Their Top Revenue Source



Adolfo Carreno

SVP, Digital Technologies & Enterprise Architect, PTC

“We all know that keeping existing customers is easier than acquiring new ones. If we can become more customer-centric than ever, and woo the customers we already have, then recurring revenue can lead to exponential growth.”



01

Sellers Face Changing Customer Needs and Expectations

Although revenue is increasing, sales pros say they're facing multiple challenges – with changing customer needs and expectations at the top of the list. Think lower costs, deeper understanding, and greater value.

Increased scrutiny on deals may be contributing to the squeeze. Three in four business buyers say their company extracts maximum value from every single purchase,* and many sellers say sales cycles are getting longer.

Marketplace competition is also increasingly becoming a headache: 57% say competition has gotten trickier since last year, and only 13% say it's gotten easier.

With all of these making sales more difficult, most reps are struggling to hit quota. So while revenue is up, lower quota attainment may point to revenue increases that fall short of company goals.

67% of sales reps don't expect to meet their quota this year, and 84% missed it last year.

*Salesforce State of the Connected Customer, 2023

Changing Customer Expectations Is the Top Challenge in Sales

Top 5 Sales Challenges

- 1 Changing customer needs and expectations
- 2 Competition with other businesses
- 3 Supply chain issues
- 4 Macroeconomic conditions
- 5 Inadequate or ineffective tools / technology

Base: Sales leaders

Difficulty of the Following Compared to a Year Ago



● More of a challenge ● Less of a challenge

Base: Sales professionals

01

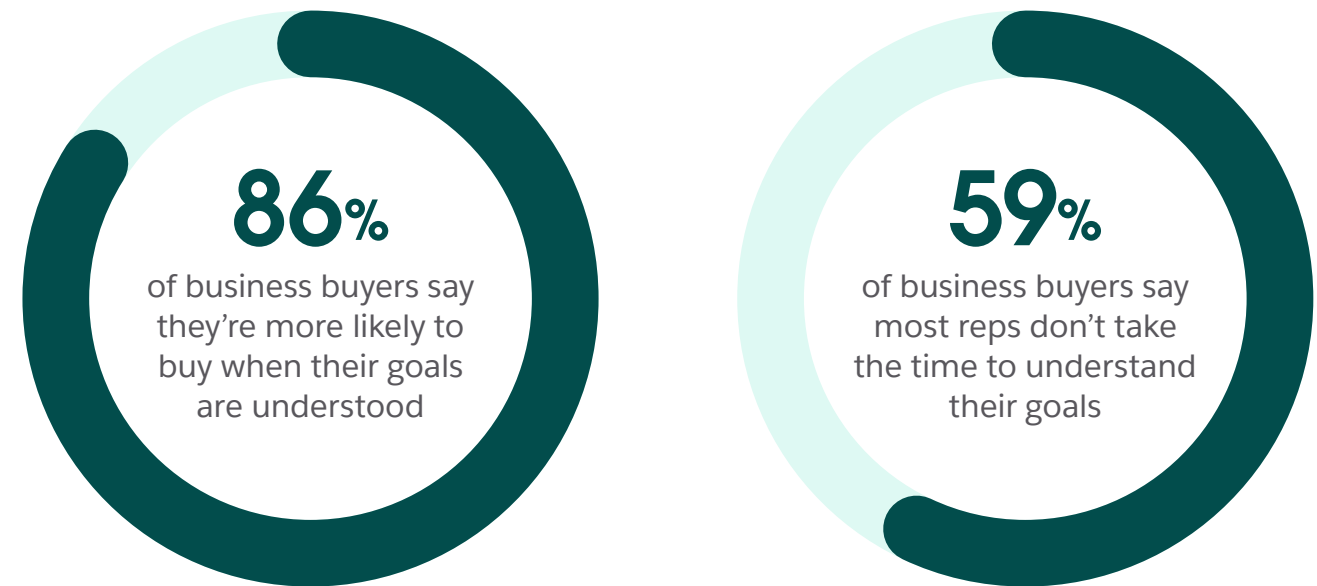
Reps Struggle to Deliver Personalization

Buyers provide a clue for how salespeople can meet expectations and stand out amid rising competition: create personalized engagement focused on their individual needs and preferences.

Strikingly, 59% of business buyers say reps fail to grasp the unique goals they aim to achieve. Whether accurate or not, this perception could indicate that reps aren't doing enough to personalize their communications and show they understand their prospects' unique perspectives.

In an increasingly competitive environment, this lack of personalization is a critical missed opportunity, as 86% of business buyers are more likely to buy when vendors understand their objectives.

Buyers Expect Trusted Advisors – and Reps Don't Show This



[Salesforce State of the Connected Customer, 2023](#)



Cherilynn Castleman

Managing Partner and Sales Coach, CGI

“How can we deliver personalized selling without spending all day doing it? Great reps listen closely and respond in kind, but also use technology to engage prospects with the right messages at the right times.”

01

Productivity Lags as Nonselling Tasks Dominate Time

Even as sellers are asked to deliver more value, they get trapped in busywork. This spells out a productivity problem.

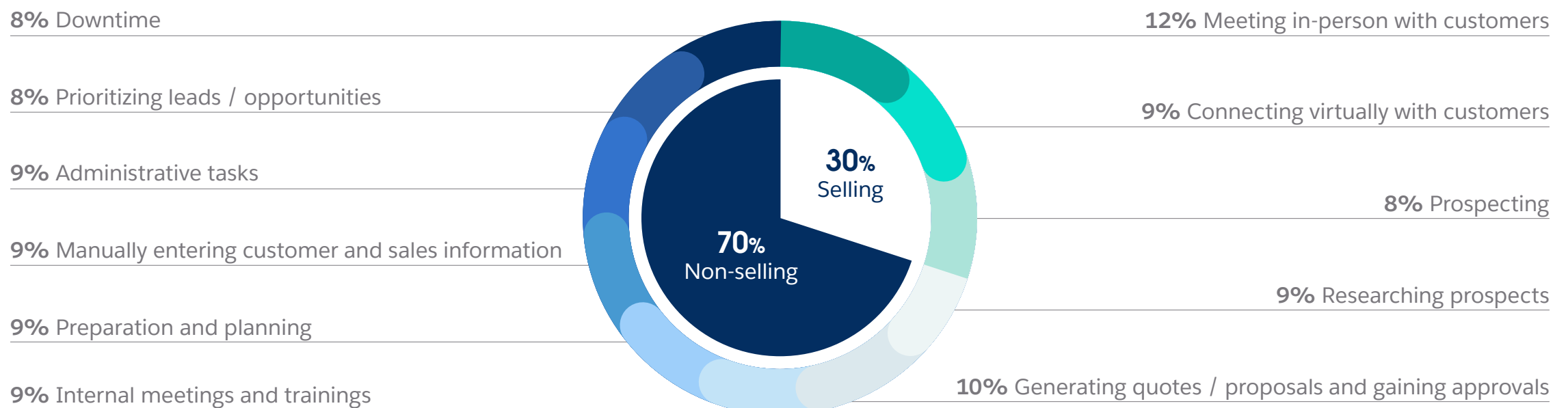
Reps only spend 30% of their time selling during an average week – a figure that is virtually unchanged from the 2022 State of Sales report, when reps spent 28% of their time selling.

Despite recent advances in technology, sellers continue to spend most of their time on tedious and manual tasks. Some of these tasks, such as prioritizing leads, entering data, and generating quotes, can potentially be automated.

For tasks that can't be fully automated today, like training and planning, the question becomes how to make them more impactful and less time-consuming, freeing up more of sellers' time to actually sell.

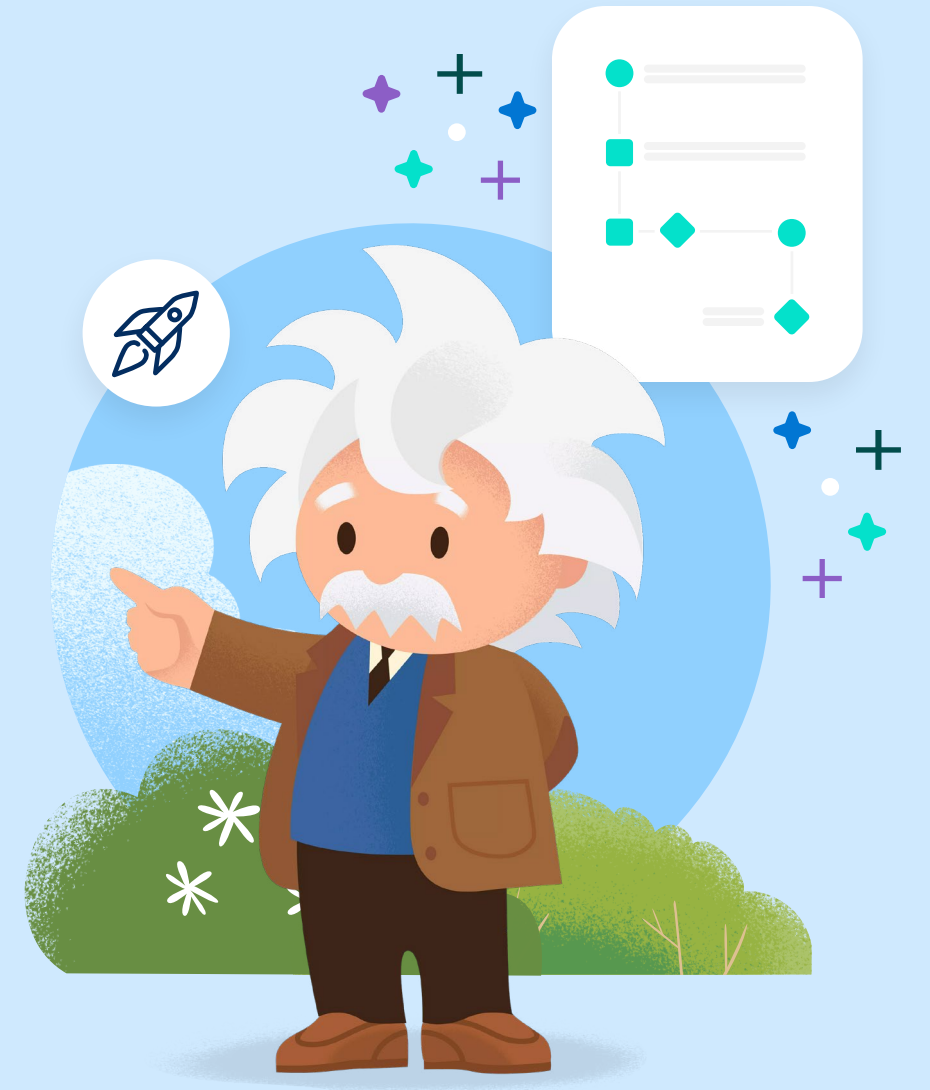
Reps spend 70% of their time on nonselling tasks.

How Reps Spend an Average Workweek



2

AI Adoption Surges, Calling for Trustworthy Data



02

Sales Teams that Use AI Come Out Ahead

Four in five sales teams are experimenting with or have fully implemented AI. As adoption becomes widespread, sales teams are taking stock of the gains.

The top improvement from AI is to sales data quality and accuracy – for example, by syncing customer interaction data across systems to ensure that it's always correct and up-to-date.

Sales teams are also addressing the top challenge of meeting customer demands by using AI to personalize their communications – for example, by generating emails grounded in customer data.

83% of sales teams with AI saw revenue growth in the past year — versus 66% of teams without AI.*

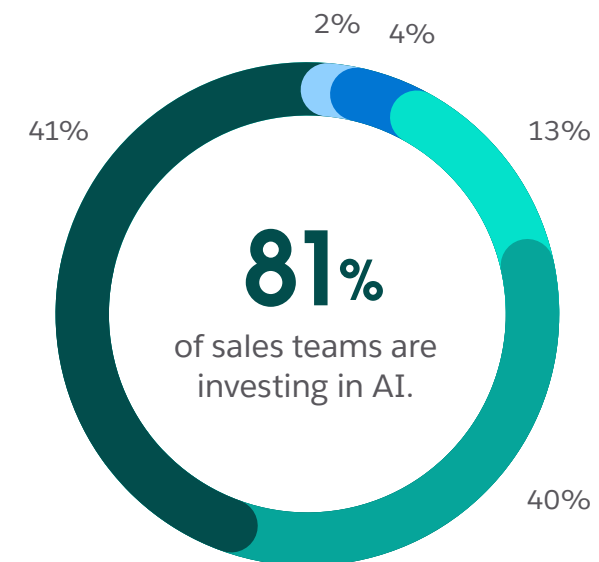
*Base: Sales leaders

AI Is Widespread in Sales

Sales Team Investment in AI

- Fully implemented AI
- Experimenting with AI
- Evaluating AI (not used yet)
- No plans to use AI
- Don't know

Base: Sales professionals



Top 5 Benefits from AI to Sales Organizations

- 1 Sales data quality and accuracy
- 2 Understanding of customer needs
- 3 Personalization for customers
- 4 Sales forecasting accuracy
- 5 Prospect / customer communication

Base: Sales professionals at companies using AI

02

Getting Started with AI Comes with Challenges

There are roadblocks on the journey to implementing AI, however. Many organizations have struggled with supplying the budget, headcount, and training to effectively implement it.

Nearly a third of sales ops professionals also have concerns about data security, completeness, and accuracy. The same amount expressed concerns about having sufficient human oversight of AI – for example, monitoring AI outputs to ensure they're correct.

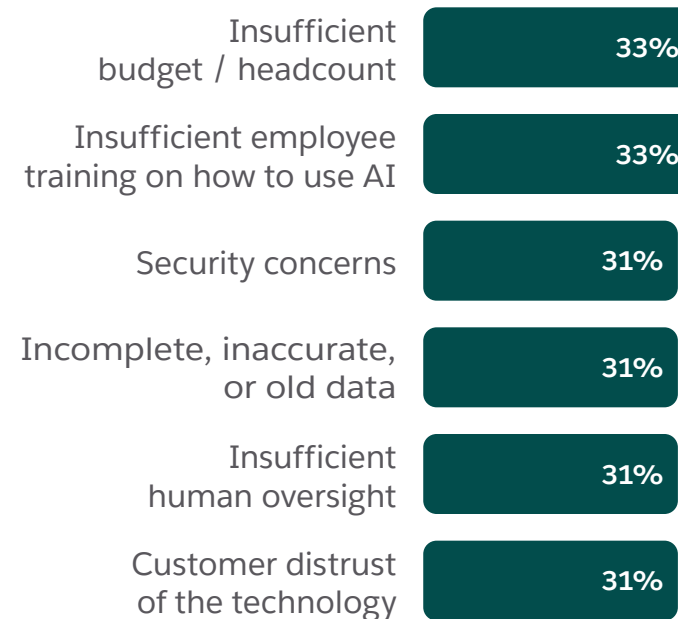
Sales ops professionals also point to customer distrust as a common obstacle they've faced while implementing AI.

Only 55% of business buyers trust AI to be as accurate as a human.*

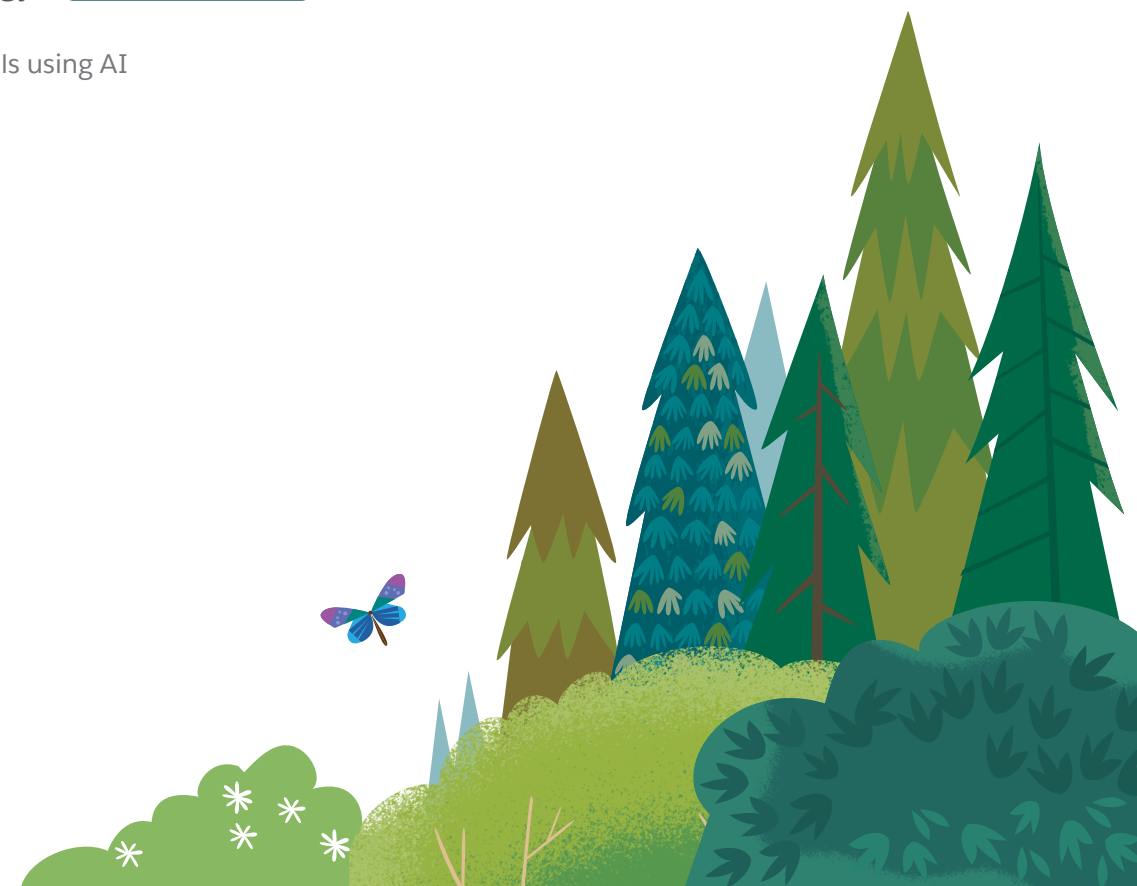
*Salesforce State of the Connected Customer, 2023

Budget, Training, and Trust Gaps Present AI Roadblocks

Sales Teams that Encountered the Following Obstacles While Implementing AI



Base: Sales ops professionals using AI



Spotlight: Data Concerns Loom Over AI

The rise of AI has elevated the need for trustworthy data that's accurate, up-to-date, secure, and compliant.

Leaders are eager to extract maximum value from their company's data and are concerned about missing out on generative AI for sales, which can create personalized content like emails, sales pitches, and recommendations for reps.

But generative AI relies on customer data for these outputs, exposing companies to data security and privacy risks. Sales pros urge caution. Seven in 10 are concerned generative AI surfaces new security risks, and many say they don't know how to use the technology safely.

Only 35% of sales professionals completely trust the accuracy of their organization's data.

*Salesforce, State of Data & Analytics survey data, 2023

**Salesforce, Trends in Generative AI for Sales, 2023

AI Exposes Data Shortcomings and Creates Security Risks

Sales Leaders Who Say the Following*

Trustworthy data is more important in times of change.

98%

Our organization should be getting more value from our data.

94%

I'm concerned our company is missing out on generative AI.

78%

Sales Professionals Who Say the Following**

Generative AI introduces new security risks.

73%

My employer doesn't provide generative AI training.

67%

Our company's data is not properly set up for generative AI.

63%

I'm not sure how to safely use generative AI at work.

49%



02

Sales Ops Leads the Charge to Prepare for AI

Before their teams adopt AI, sales ops professionals are taking steps to overcome challenges and maximize benefits. For instance, over half of teams with a full AI implementation updated their tools and tech stack.

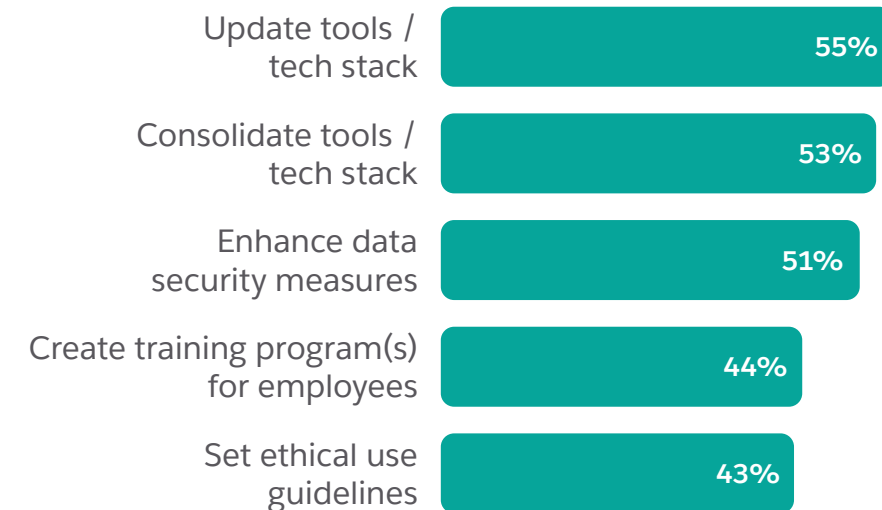
More than half are also enhancing data security measures to protect customer data.

Ensuring that sales professionals can properly and effectively use AI is also a priority, with many sales teams creating training programs for employees ahead of AI adoption.

However, fewer than half of sales teams are setting ethical use guidelines. These are possible oversights: Nearly half of sales pros say they don't know how to safely use generative AI at work, and most business buyers are concerned about the ethical use of AI.

Teams Focus on Tools, Data, and Training for AI Readiness

Steps Taken to Prepare for AI



Base: Sales ops professionals at companies where AI is fully implemented



*Salesforce Trends in Generative AI for Sales, 2023

**Salesforce State of the Connected Customer, 2023

3

Sales Teams Turn to Enablement as a Top Tactic for Growth



03

Enablement Helps Reps Meet Quota, but Isn't Perfect

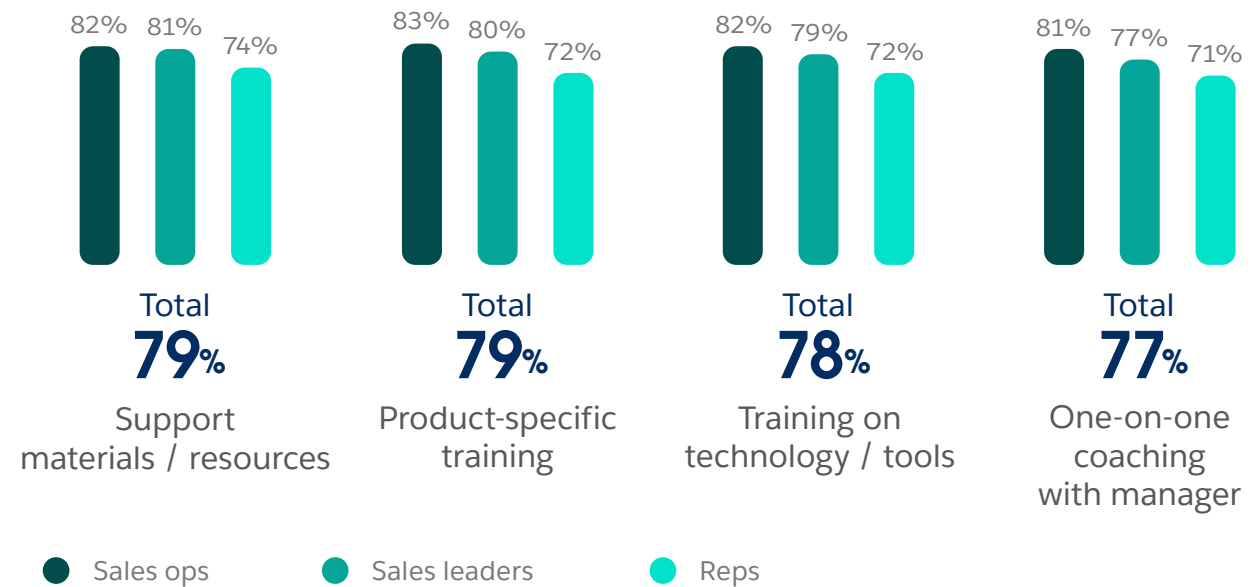
Sales teams signal a focus on training, together with technology, to address pressing challenges. In fact, three in four reps say their company's enablement programs prepare them to meet quota. Satisfaction is high when it comes to the availability of support materials, product-specific training, and one-on-one coaching.

In short: sellers are fans of enablement. When coupled with trends in rising growth, this satisfaction suggests that investments in sales enablement are paying off.

Most Reps Agree Enablement Is Effective



Employees Satisfied with the Following Enablement Areas



Scott Konkol
VP, Go-To-Market Enablement, Truioo

“The old way of training reps was about hoping for the best. With competitors rushing in, that mentality won't cut it anymore. We have to tie enablement to revenue goals, measure if it's working, and race to adapt if it's not.”



03

Enablement Emerges as the Top Tactic for Growth

Seeing the success of enablement and training programs, sales teams are doubling down. They're prioritizing programs that help reps speak the language of their customers, address the root causes of their pain points, and communicate value more clearly.

More than half of sales teams use sales strategy and performance reviews as part of their training. But other enablement activities, like one-on-ones and roleplay sessions, lag in adoption. Given the data and time-intensive nature of this personalized enablement, teams may find them harder to incorporate consistently or scale as headcount grows.

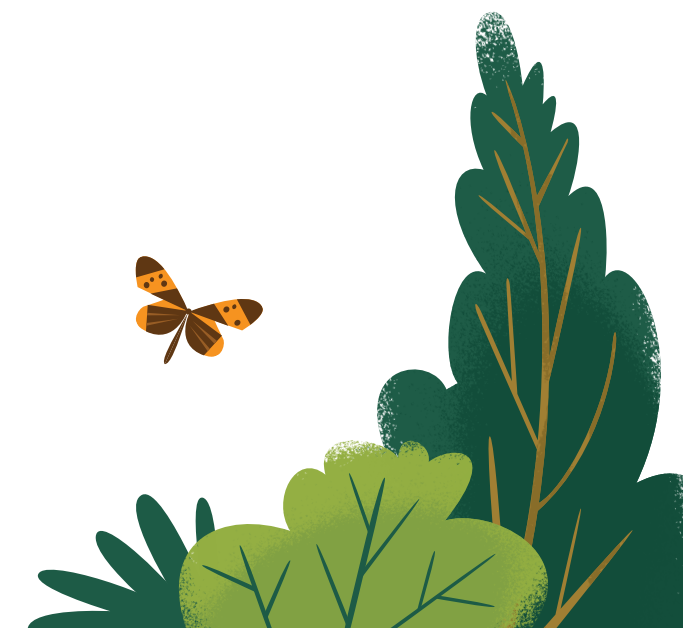
The #1 growth tactic for sales leaders is improving sales enablement and training.

Strategy and Performance Reviews Lead the Roster of Training Activities

Sales Enablement Resources Offered



Base: Sales professionals



Spotlight: Enablement Gets a Lift From AI

With reps already spending substantial time on nonselling work, sales teams are boosting enablement with AI to train reps more efficiently.

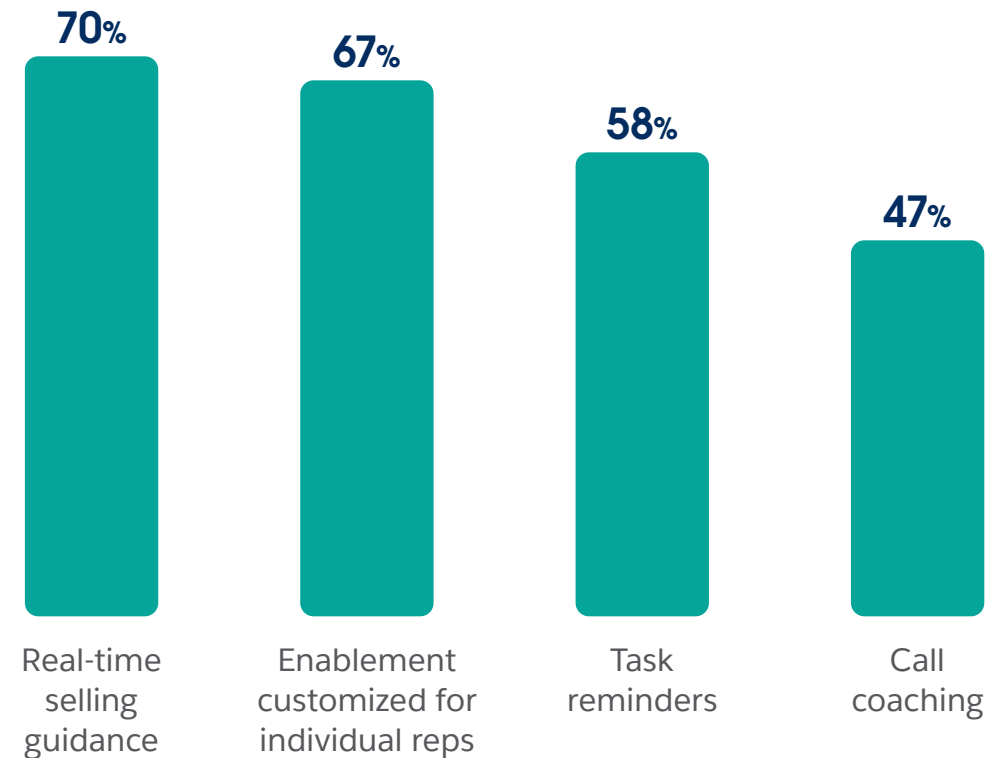
The most popular way sales teams use AI for enablement is to provide real-time selling guidance, where AI doles out personalized advice to reps directly in the flow of their work.

Another common use of AI is to customize enablement to meet specific seller or deal needs – for example, by training AI models on historical deal data to surface green and red flags and provide suggested coaching before it's too late.

Additionally, nearly half of sales teams using AI take advantage of conversational intelligence to support call coaching. Here, AI can point reps to coachable moments in their calls, like an objection that went unanswered.

Sales Teams Are Enhancing Their Training Programs With AI

Enablement Activities Where AI Is Used



Base: Sales ops professionals at companies using AI



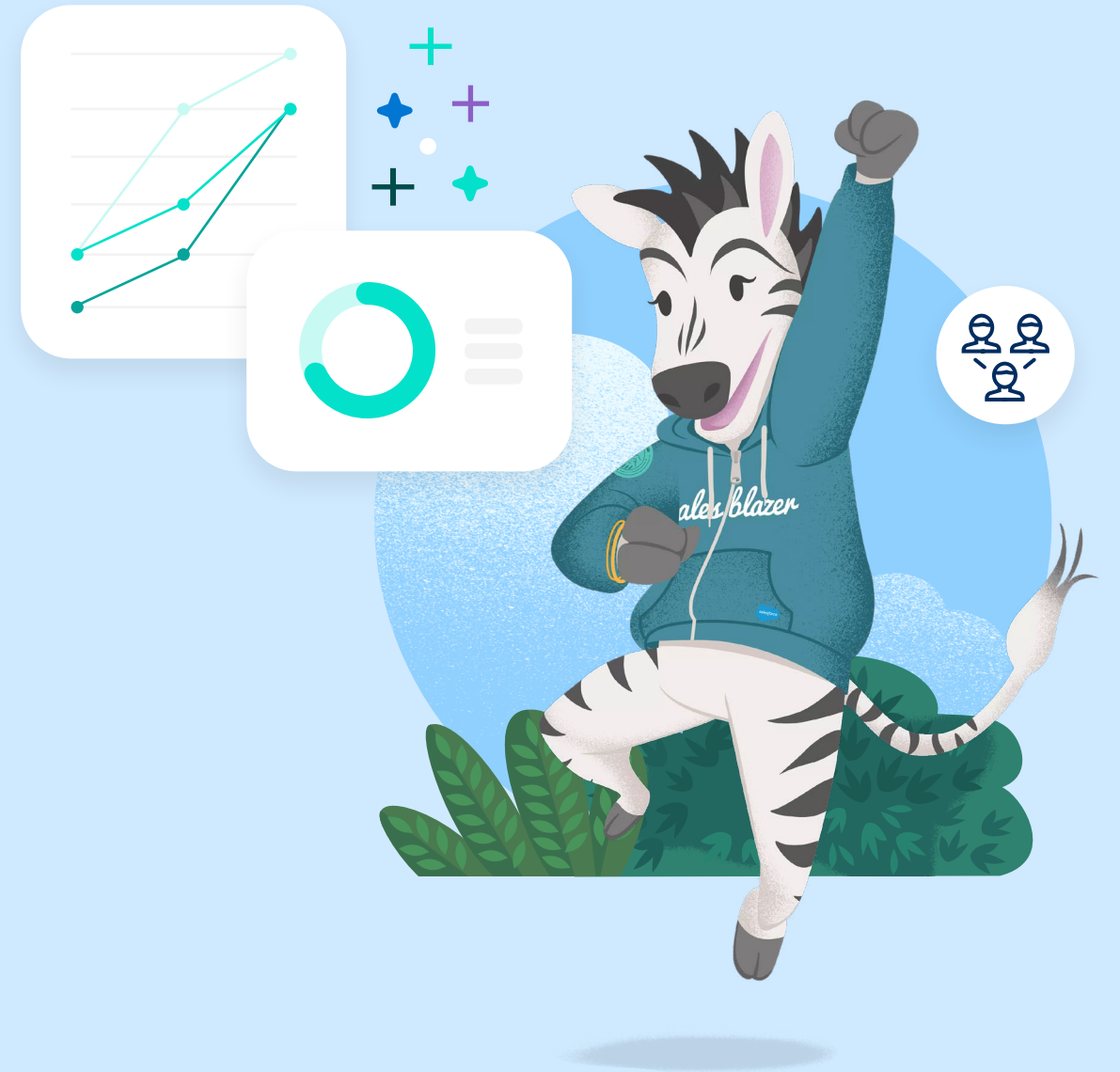
Cory Benz

Director of Revenue Operations, Crexi

“Deals are won by having a conversation, and that’s always going to happen between people. What we want to do is use AI to help people do it more effectively.”

4

Employee Retention Is Rising — but Vulnerable



04

Employee Retention Is Up

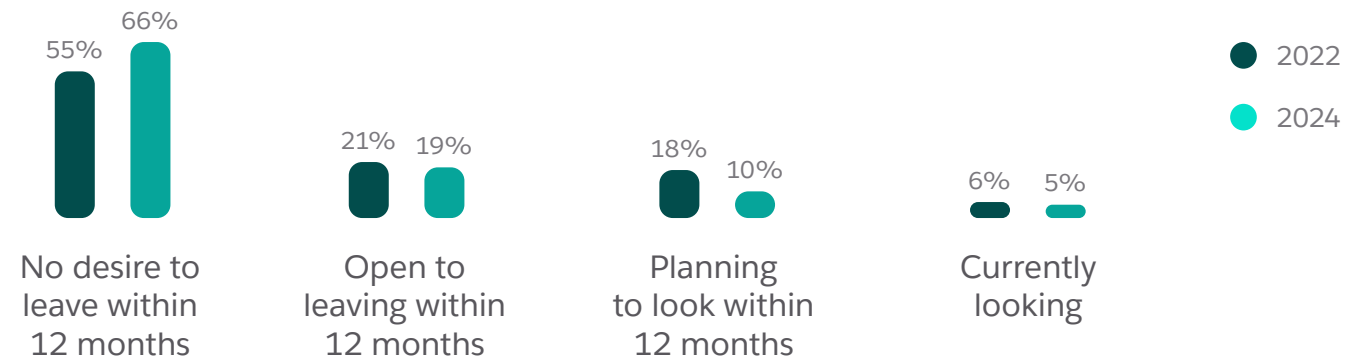
Employee retention is on the rise in sales, offering stability in the face of growing customer expectations and competition. Teams hold on to their institutional knowledge and skill base when they retain workers, and spend less time onboarding replacements who can take months to ramp up.

While there's room for improvement, on the whole, sales professionals are mostly satisfied when it comes to benefits, pay, culture, and more.

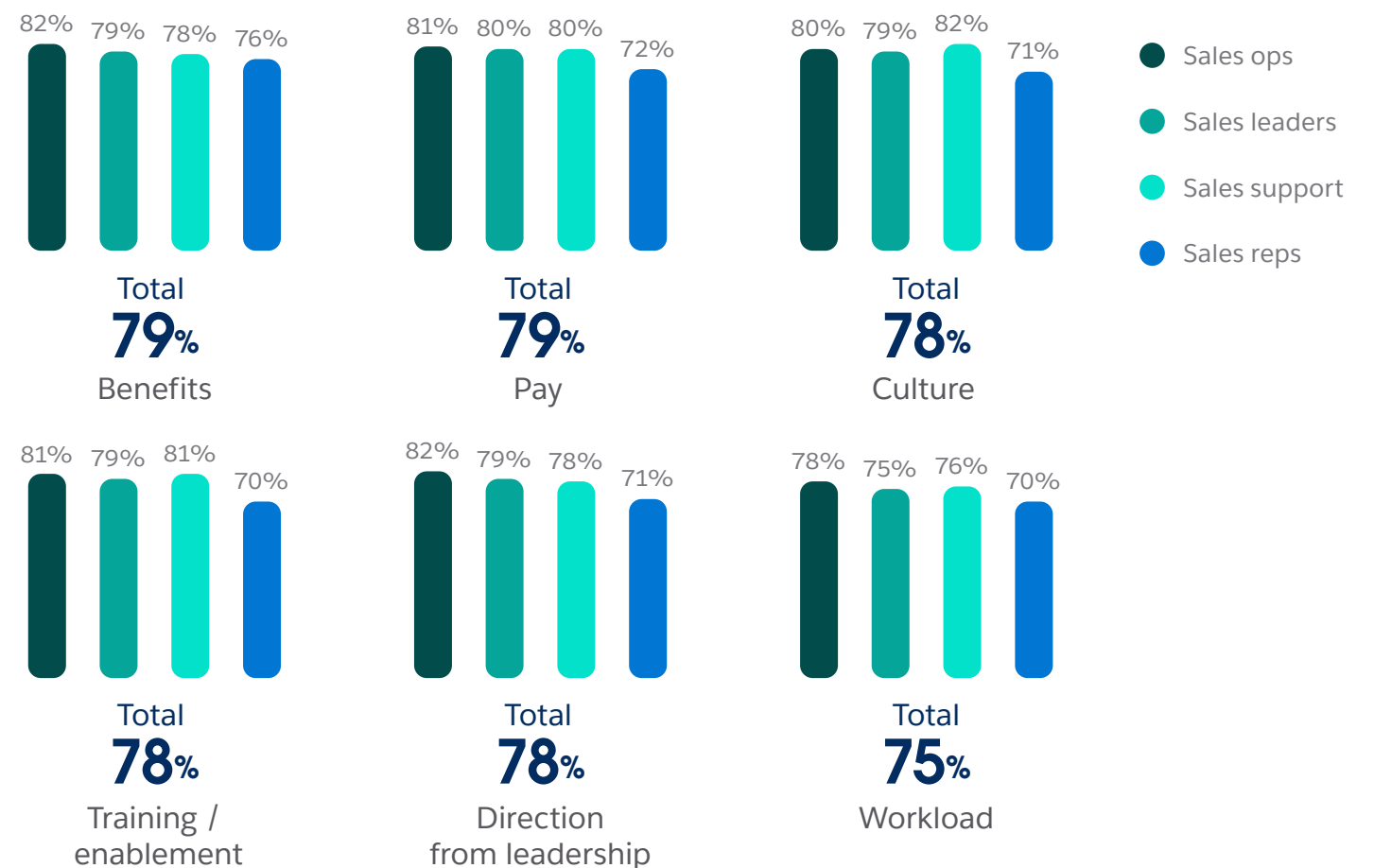
Sales teams report an 18% average staff turnover over the last 12 months — down from 25% in 2022.

Fewer Reps Plan to Look for Other Work

Sales Professionals' Plans for Changing Jobs



Sales Professionals Satisfied with the Following Aspects of Their Jobs



04

Compensation Is on the Rise

Mirroring the increase in employee retention, budgets and headcount are on the rise for most sales teams surveyed, as well as employee compensation.

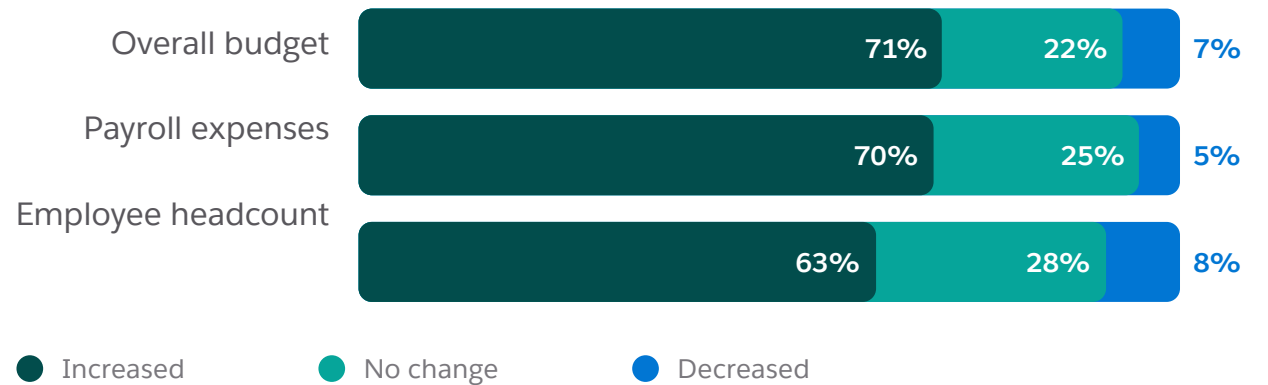
81% of sales professionals say their pay has increased over the past year.

Compensation strategy, which seeks to align pay with performance, is in a good spot as well, with 82% of sales reps saying they understand which metrics affect their pay.

However, fewer than one-third of sales reps are completely confident in closing in the current economy, which may affect variable pay like commissions.

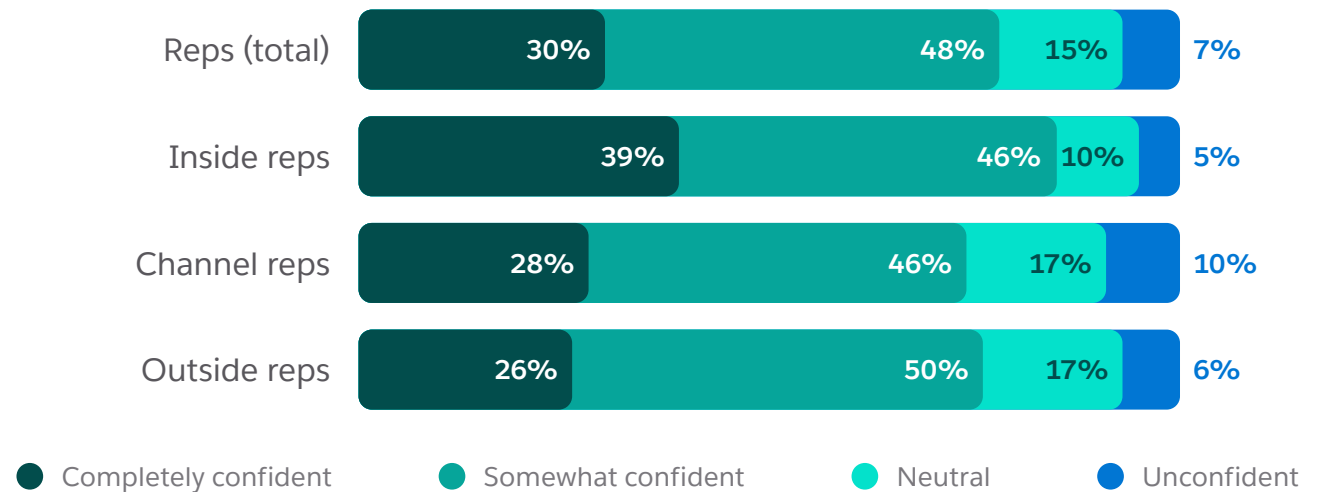
Budgets, Headcount, and Compensation Are Growing

Changes to Sales Org Over Past Year



Base: Sales leaders

Sales Reps' Confidence in Ability to Close in Current Economy



04

Retention Depends on Advancement Opportunities and Competitive Pay

While employee retention has grown overall, it remains fragile. Sales pros say the top reason they'd consider changing jobs is a lack of career advancement opportunities, and the second reason is uncompetitive pay or benefits.

64% of sales professionals say they would leave if offered a similar job elsewhere with better pay.

There are challenges to providing competitive pay, however. These include changing business needs, limited budgets, and ineffective planning. But the stability that comes with retention may motivate leaders to address these challenges head on.



Rana Kordahi

Founder, The Selling Academy

“Employees are the number one stakeholders. They deliver the results that drive growth, so let's prioritize our reps. The best way to do that isn't free pizza. It's building a compensation plan that motivates them.”

Advancement and Pay Are Deciding Factors for Retention

Top Reasons for Considering a Job Change

- 1 Lack of career advancement opportunities
- 2 Uncompetitive pay and / or benefits
- 3 Lack of clarity or direction from leaders
- 4 Unrealistic sales targets
- 5 Not enough flexibility or autonomy

Base: Sales professionals considering, planning, or looking for a new jobs

Top Challenges to Providing Competitive Sales Pay

- 1 Changes in compensation strategy
- 2 Limited budgets
- 3 Ineffective planning
- 4 Macroeconomic factors
- 5 New products or regions

Base: Sales leaders

Look Ahead: Sales Leaders Pave a Path to Future Growth

Moving forward, sales leaders will focus on growth tactics that directly address the most pressing challenges.

In addition to sales enablement, targeting new markets is top of mind as a way to maneuver in the increasingly crowded marketplace where new entrants and legacy companies vie for the same customers.

Another tactic for improving go-to-market strategy in a crowded space is to optimize how products are offered, whether through more effective pricing, bundling, or delivery models.

Finally, sales leaders are working to improve the use of tools and technologies – no surprise, considering the productivity gains that many sales teams are already achieving with AI.

In the face of customer scrutiny and with competitors closing in, there's much work to be done. But if the past is any guide, then sales pros are already rolling up their sleeves.

Leaders Emphasize Enablement, Expansion, and Technology

Sales Leaders' Top 5 Tactics for Growth

- 1 Improving sales enablement and training
- 2 Targeting new markets
- 3 Improving use of tools and technologies
- 4 Optimizing how products are offered
- 5 Modernizing tools and technologies



Learn how Sales Cloud drives growth from pipeline to paycheck.

Overcome the toughest challenges and grow revenue with trusted AI. It's all part of Sales Cloud, the complete CRM you won't outgrow:

[Sales AI](#) gives reps an AI assistant that guides sellers and drives productivity with predictive and generative AI.

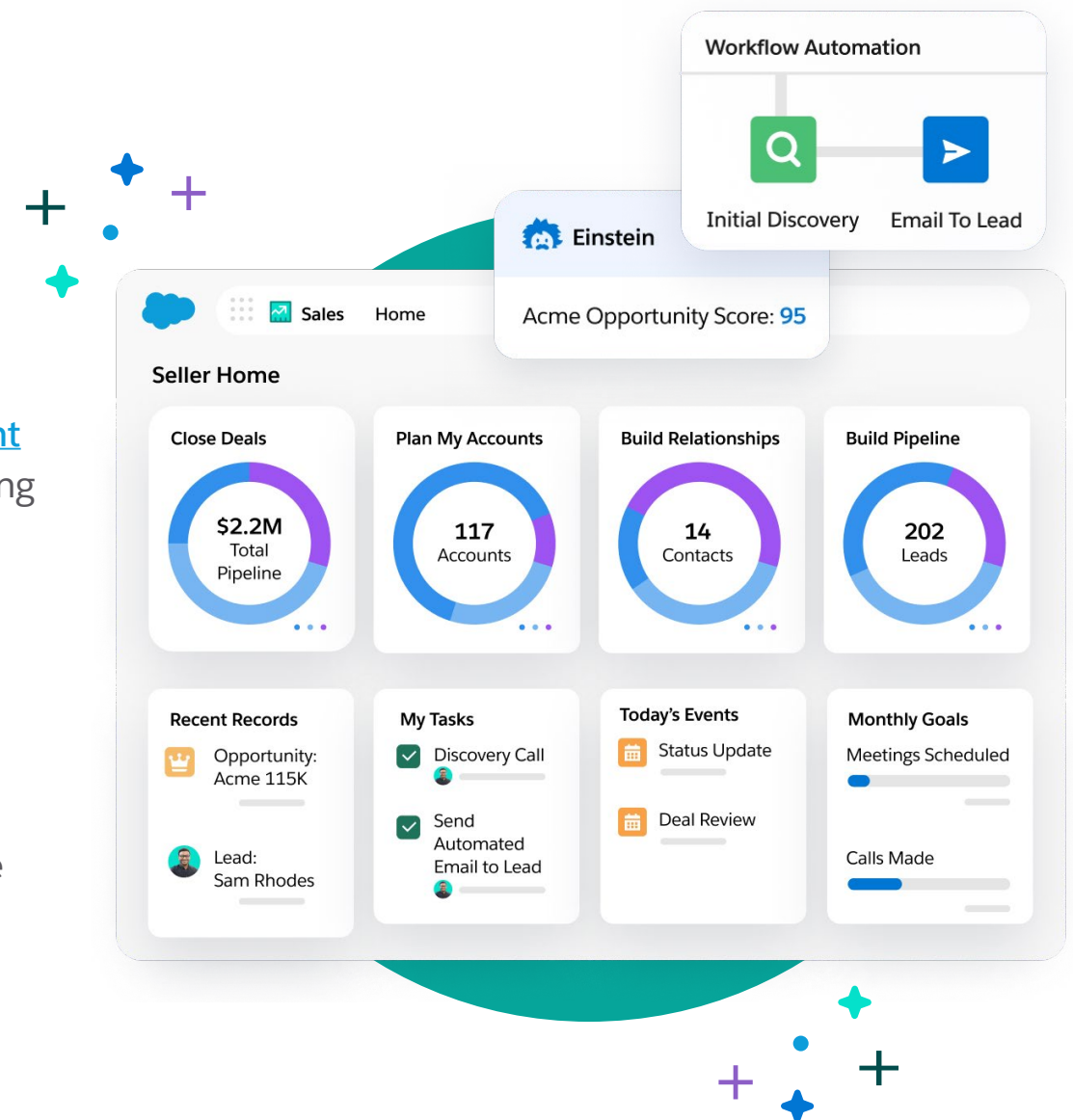
[Data Cloud](#) connects disparate data into one complete and trusted view of your business.

[Sales Programs](#) helps reps move deals forward with AI-powered coaching and resources.

[Partner Relationship Management](#) helps speed up partner selling using AI insights.

[Revenue Cloud](#) helps you max out recurring revenue streams by streamlining quote-to-cash.

[Incentive Compensation Management](#) helps you motivate reps with impactful incentives



Want tips on getting ahead?

Click below to join the Salesblazer Community in Slack, where you can share your own insights with other sales professionals, get advice and best practices, and map a path toward growth.

[Join the community](#)



Appendix

Top Challenges, By Industry

Automotive

- 1 Changing customer needs / expectations
- 2 Competition with other businesses
- 3 Supply chain issues

Consumer Goods

- 1 Changing customer needs / expectations
- 2 Supply chain issues
- 3 Macroeconomic conditions

Financial Services

- 1 Changing customer needs / expectations
- 2 Macroeconomic conditions
- 2 Inadequate or ineffective tools / technology (*tie*)

Healthcare and Life Sciences

- 1 Changing customer needs expectations
- 2 Macroeconomic conditions
- 3 Supply chain issues

Manufacturing

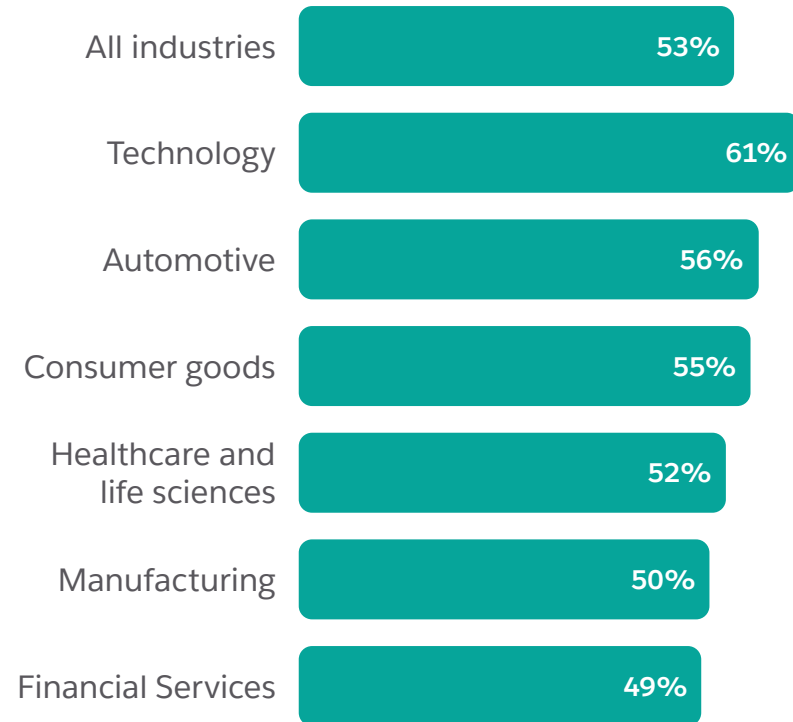
- 1 Changing customer needs / expectations
- 2 Competition with other businesses
- 3 Supply chain issues

Technology

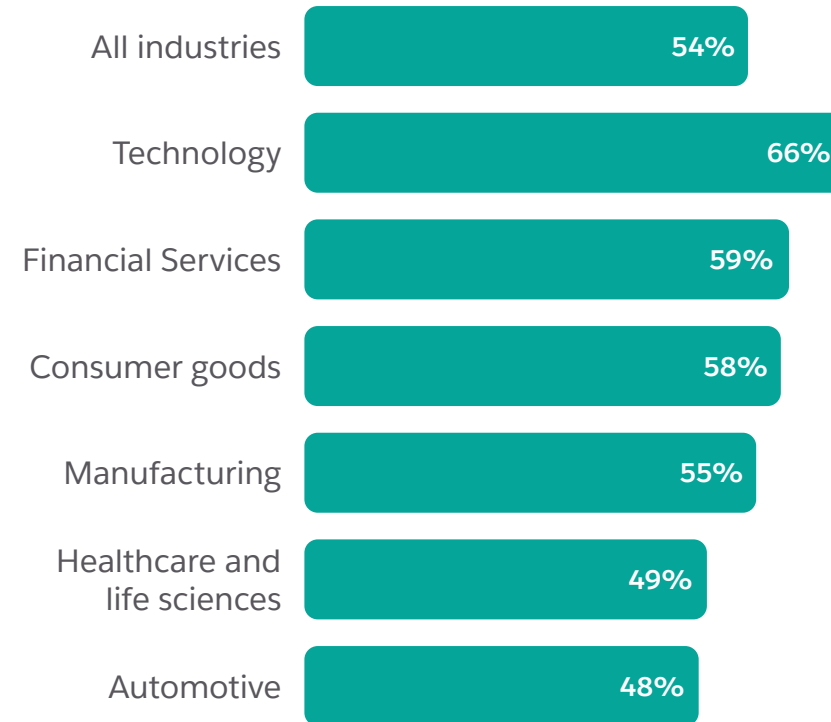
- 1 Changing customer needs / expectations
- 2 Competition with other businesses
- 3 Supply chain issues



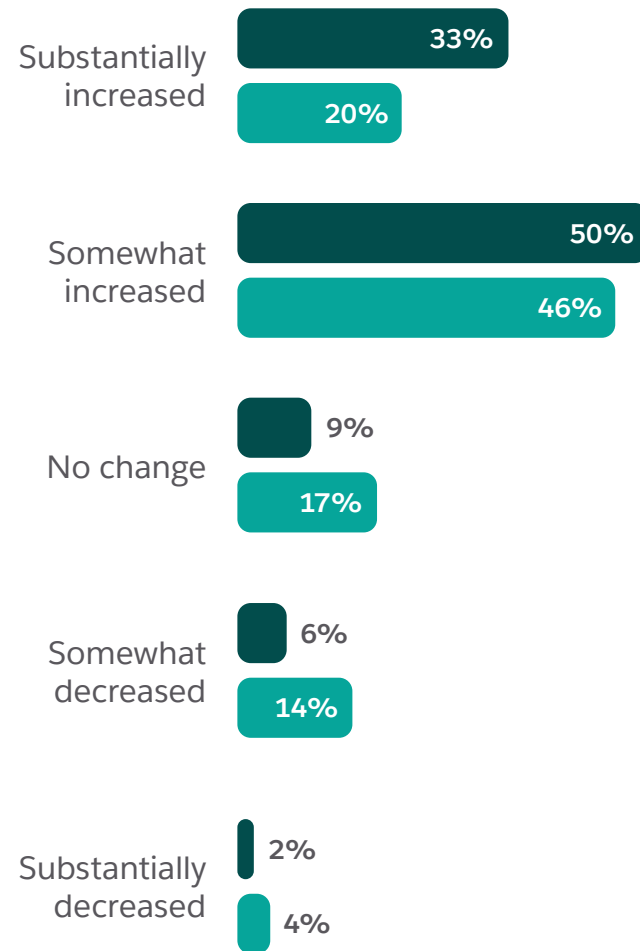
Sales Professionals Who Say It's Harder to Sell Than It Was a Year Ago



Sales Professionals Who Say High Customer Expectations Are More of a Challenge Than Last Year



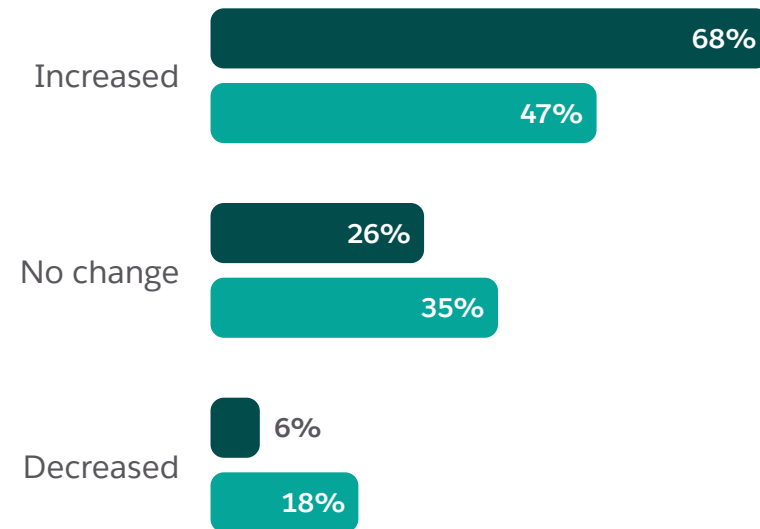
Changes to Revenue Over Past 12 Months



● Teams with AI* ● Teams without AI

Base: Sales leaders

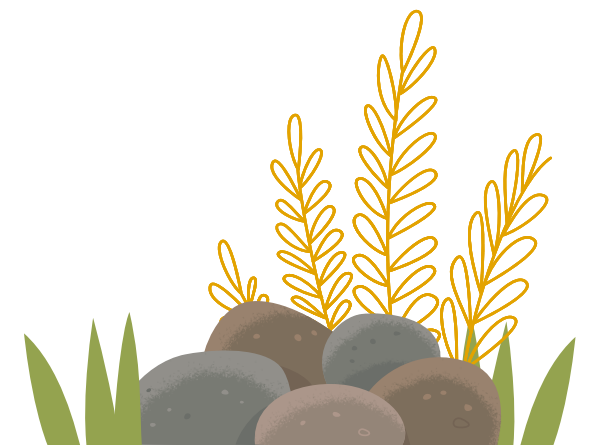
Changes to Headcount Over Past 12 Months



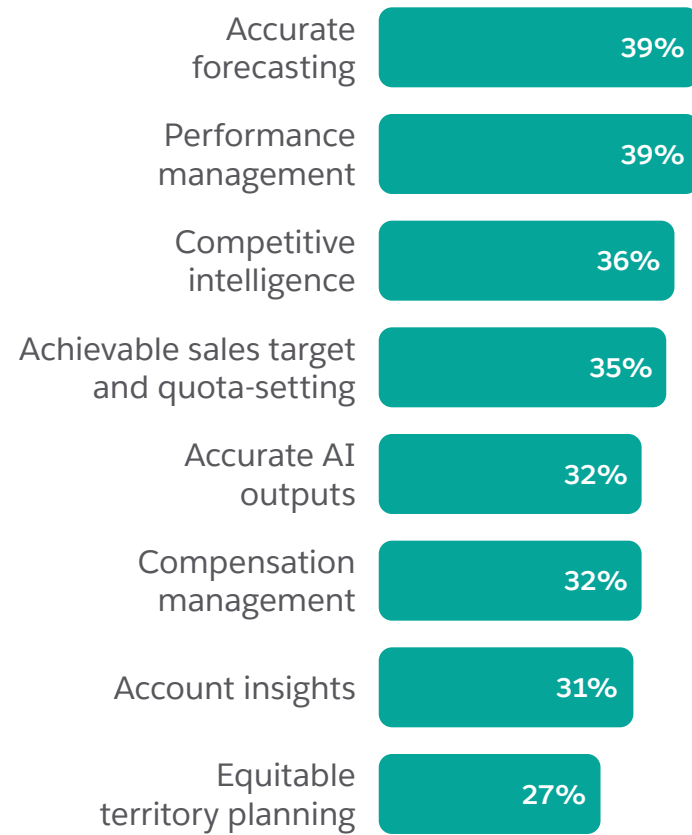
● Teams with AI* ● Teams without AI

Base: Sales leaders

* "Teams with AI" refers to teams that have fully implemented AI or that are experimenting with it in their operations.

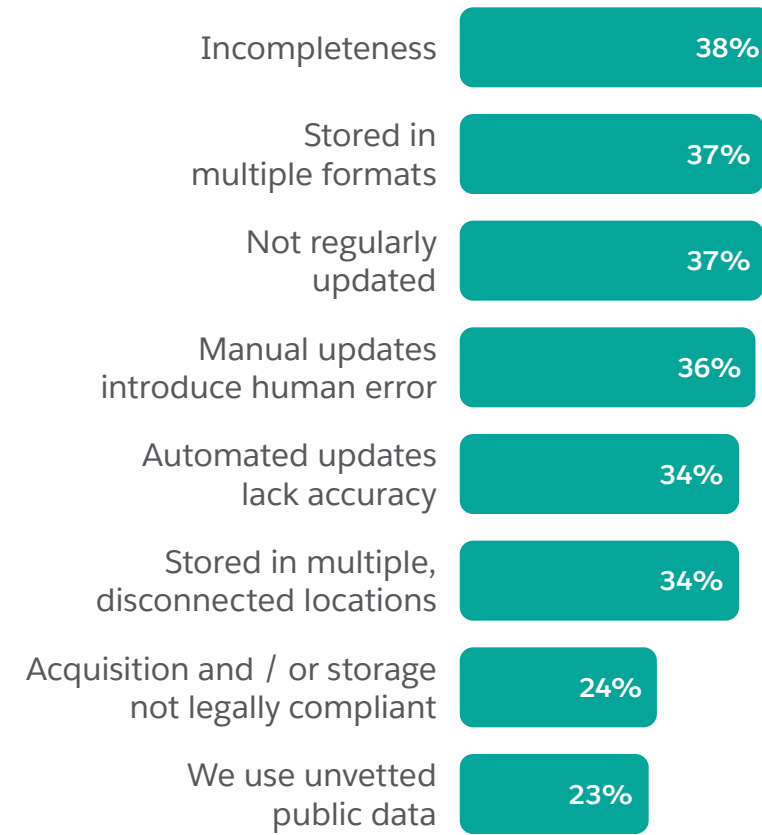


Processes Hindered By Poor Data Quality



Base: Sales professionals

Reasons for Not Trusting Sales Org Data



Base: Sales professionals who do not trust aspects of organization's data



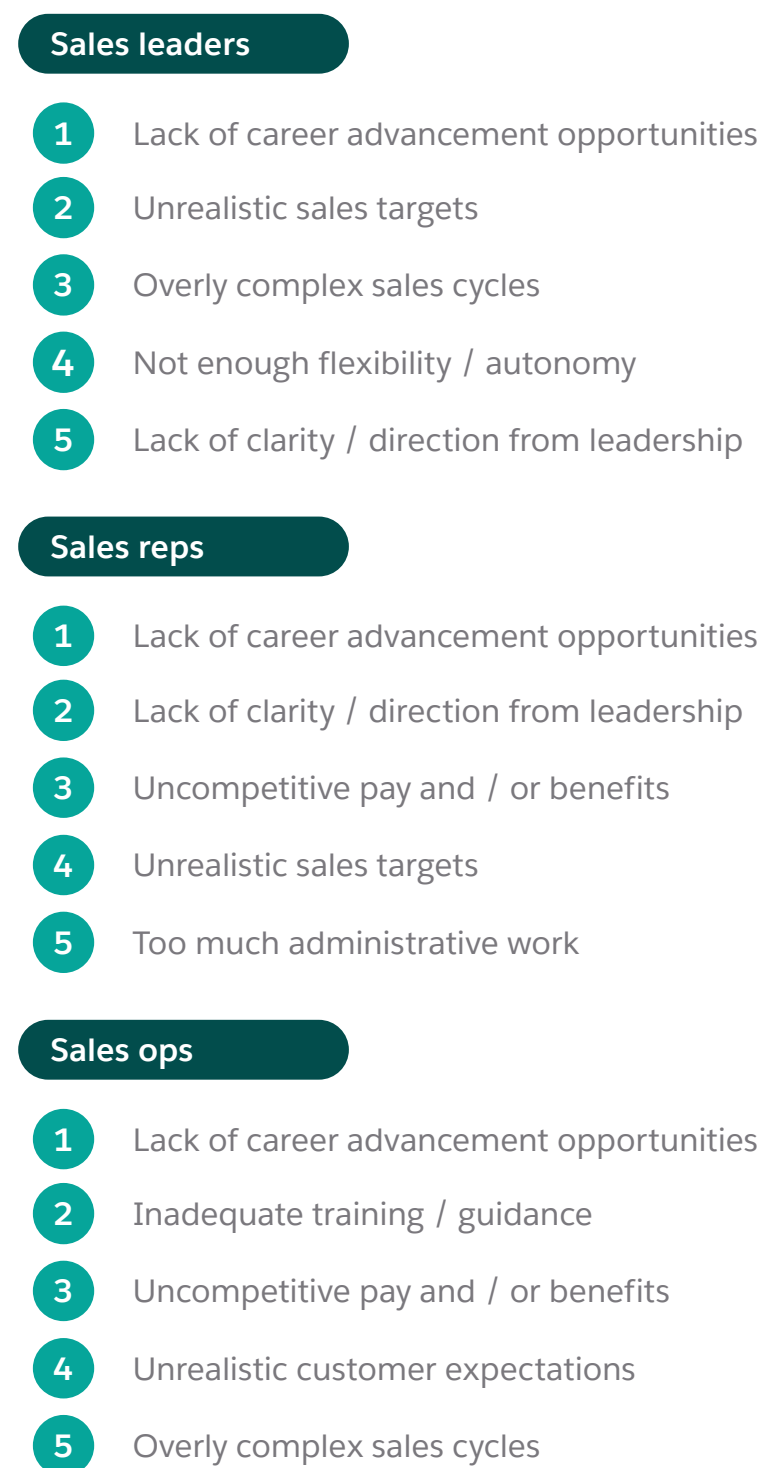
Reasons for Considering Leaving Current Job



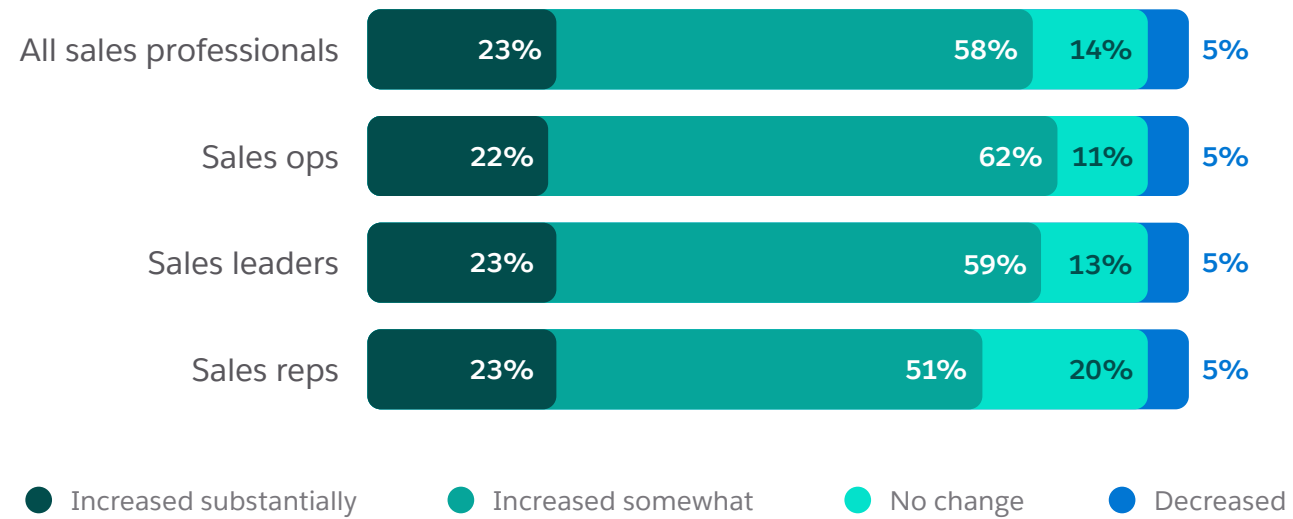
● 2022
● 2024

Base: Sales professionals considering, planning, or looking for a new job

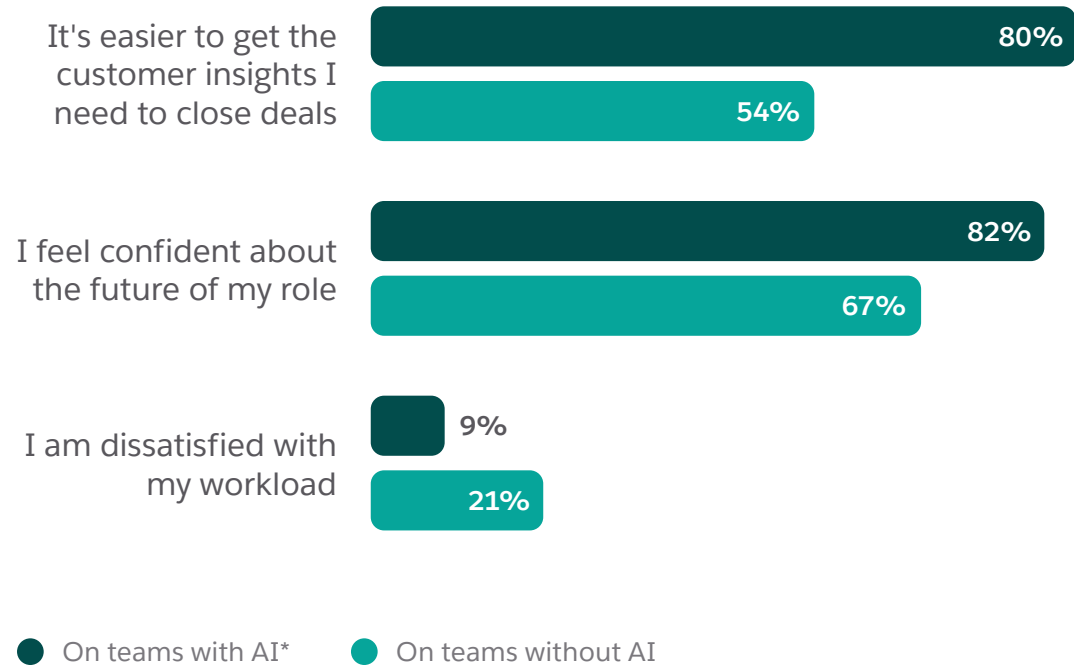
Top Reasons for Considering Leaving Current Job, By Role



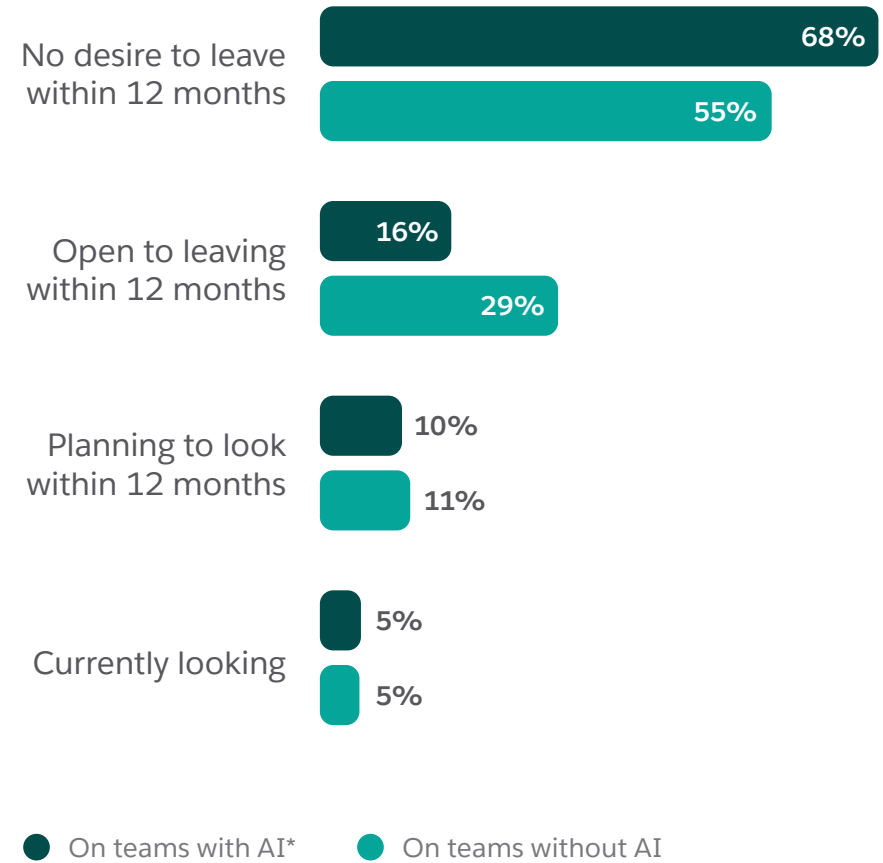
Extent Total Compensation Changed Over Past Year



Reps Who Say the Following



Sales Professionals' Plans for Changing Jobs



* "Teams with AI" refers to teams that have fully implemented AI or that are experimenting with it in their operations.



Top Growth Tactics, By Industry

Automotive

- 1 Improve sales enablement / training
- 2 Improve use of tools / technologies
- 2 Target new markets (*tie*)

Consumer Goods

- 1 Optimize how products are offered
- 2 Improve use of tools / technologies
- 3 Improve sales enablement / training

Financial Services

- 1 Optimize how products are offered
- 2 Improve use of tools / technologies
- 3 Target new markets

Healthcare and Life Sciences

- 1 Improve use of tools / technologies
- 2 Optimize how products are offered
- 3 Improve sales enablement / training

Manufacturing

- 1 Optimize how products are offered
- 2 Improve sales enablement / training
- 3 Target new markets

Technology

- 1 Target new markets
- 2 Improve sales enablement / training
- 2 Improve use of tools / technologies (*tie*)



Survey Demographics

Survey Demographics

Country

Australia	4%
Belgium	2%
Brazil	5%
Canada	5%
Denmark	1%
Finland	1%
France	5%
Germany.....	5%
India	5%
Indonesia	4%
Ireland	2%
Israel	2%
Italy	4%
Japan	5%
Netherlands	3%
New Zealand	2%
Norway	<1%
Poland	2%
Portugal	2%
Singapore	2%
South Africa	4%
Spain	4%
Sweden	1%
Thailand	4%
United Arab Emirates	2%
United Kingdom	5%
United States	18%

Role Within Sales

Sales operations	26%
Sales support	15%
Sales manager or director	25%
Sales leadership / Head of sales	10%
Inside sales rep	7%
Outside sales rep	12%
Partner / channel sales rep	5%

Industry

Agriculture	3%
Architecture, engineering, and construction	4%
Automotive	8%
Communications	3%
Consumer goods	11%
Energy and utilities	4%
Financial services	8%
Healthcare	5%
Life sciences and biotechnology	3%
Manufacturing	14%
Media and entertainment	3%
Professional and business services	5%
Retail	16%
Supply chain and logistics	5%
Technology	5%
Travel and hospitality	4%
Other	1%

Company Size

SMB (21-100 employees)	30%
MM (101-3,500 employees)	50%
ENT (over 3,500 employees)	20%





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