E-signature

Impact on Closing Deals

There are more than 400 technology solutions, fitting into 45 sales tool categories. Certainly, there is no shortage of options. The most effective way for you to make the best technology choices is to start by thinking through your own unique challenges.

There are two questions to ask yourself in the process:

1. What are the barriers that keep you from closing more deals or closing them faster?
2. Which of those barriers can be tackled the fastest, with the least amount of cost—in both time and money—and with the quickest results?

Think of your challenges in terms of the hierarchy of revenue needs, which represents the skills and technologies that are essential to selling. Just like Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, these are listed in order of their importance, with the lowest level being the most essential to sales “survival.”

Satisfying the first three levels in the hierarchy is what enables you to obtain a healthy pipeline of opportunities. However, having a healthy pipeline of opportunities doesn’t matter if those opportunities don’t close. And they aren’t closed until that golden moment when the buyer signs on the proverbial dotted line, which can take an agonizingly long time.

A recent study by CSO Insights entitled, “Optimizing the quote to close process,” found that only 25.6% of deals closed within one week of delivering a quote. The bulk of respondents (45%) reported that quoted deals took one to four weeks to close, while a large chunk of respondents (29.5%) reported it took more than one month on average to close a deal from time of quotation.
Time kills deals

A lot can go wrong, causing deals to derail while salespeople wait for the signed paperwork, even after receiving a verbal agreement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons why deals are lost after a verbal agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Companies reorganize, which often means decision-makers get replaced with decision-reversers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Budgets get cut or put on hold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Decision-makers leave for jobs at other companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Priorities from the top are changed, and edicts are issued to focus budgets elsewhere.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To avoid any of these common scenarios from killing your deals, it's imperative to shorten the time from quote to close. Quite simply, if you can get the contract signed quickly, there isn't enough time for these events to occur. Adobe Sign can shorten the time from quote to close, reducing the risk of deals lost in the eleventh hour.

Perhaps this is the reason why our survey respondents ranked e-signature tools the highest out of 13 different technology types when asked about perceived benefits of the technologies they use.

Not only did e-signature tools rank highest in perceived benefits, more e-signature users were “very satisfied” (the highest level of satisfaction) than were users of any other sales tool. And e-signature tools ranked number two in over-all satisfaction (adding up those that were satisfied and very satisfied).

### Perceived Benefit and Actual Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales Technology</th>
<th>Ranking: Perceived benefit by those who use the tool</th>
<th>Ranking: Overall Satisfaction (Very Satisfied plus Satisfied)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-signature</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamification</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Contract Management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Performance &amp; Compensation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside Sales</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*E-signatures can shorten the time from quote to close often by weeks*
An important finding of our research is that organizations without e-signatures use about 5 sales tools; while those who have e-signatures average six to seven. That means that, while e-signature is the app that drives the most highly satisfied users and the highest perceived benefit, most companies have a sales stack that stops just short of realizing these benefits.

The benefits of e-signature tools are indeed underrated by non-users. When we compared the perceived benefit between users and non-users for each type of tool in the survey, e-signature tools made the largest jump in perceived benefit. That is, non-users of e-signature tools miss out because they rank e-signature at number thirteen in perceived benefits while actual users rank e-signature as having the highest perceived benefits.

Going back to the two questions posed at the start, Adobe Sign can eliminate a significant barrier: lengthy quote to close processes that keep you from closing more deals, or from closing them faster. Furthermore, the solution helps you tackle the barrier quickly, without much upfront implementation cost, leading to a fast impact on closed deals.

If you’re unsure of which sales technologies to choose, you wouldn’t likely go wrong by selecting e-signature with the highest perceived value and the second highest ranking for overall satisfaction.

Adobe Sign is the only application that lets sales organizations create secure, 100% digital document processes from initial quote through close to renewal. It’s simple to send digital documents out for signature with a single click, and recipients can e-sign agreements on any device.

Plus, Adobe Sign integrates with leading enterprise applications—such as Salesforce, Apttus, and Microsoft Dynamics—to put the power of e-signatures inside the solutions you already use. In fact, Adobe Sign has also been the top-rated e-signature solution in the Salesforce AppExchange since 2006.

To learn more, visit www.adobe.com.

“Non-users of e-signature tools miss out because they rank e-signature at number thirteen in perceived benefits, while actual users rank e-signature as having the highest perceived benefits.”
Introduction

The array of sales tools available to the modern B-to-B sales organization is vast. Our definition of sales tools is any solution intended for use by sales leaders, managers or sales people. The vendors of these tools have delivered impressive new capabilities in the form of specialized solutions that streamline the sales process, improve sales performance, or otherwise enhance a company’s ability to drive revenue. With so many cloud-based offerings, sales tools are no longer the exclusive domain of large enterprises, but are now penetrating medium and small enterprises. Likewise, they are no longer limited to CRM-like functionality.

Smart Selling Tools conducted research to understand how buyers identify, justify, evaluate and make decisions about acquiring sales tools. The results of that research is detailed in this report that will help both sales tools vendors and buyers better understand the journey from need awareness, through discovery, purchase consideration and decision. This research investigated:

- Who controls the budget
- Who conducts the assessment
- The conditions that trigger an acquisition
- The difficulty of completing the steps in acquiring and using sales tools
- How many sales tools were evaluated and acquired in the past year
- Which kinds of tools are providing the greatest benefit
- The impact sales tools are collectively having on revenue attainment
Executive Summary

All survey respondents were from B-to-B or mixed B-to-B/B-to-C organizations, and almost half of the companies participating in the survey were from the technology sector. Respondents came from organizations of all sizes, ranging from 10 or fewer full-time salespeople to companies employing more than 1,000 salespeople.

Here is a summary of some of the study's key findings:

• A commercial CRM solution is in use by 88 percent of respondents. A commercial Marketing Automation solution is in use by 69 percent.
• Other than CRM and Marketing Automation, the three categories of sales tools currently seeing the most use are: Prospect Communication & Engagement, Pipeline Management & Deal Flow, and Inside Sales.
• The sales tools currently generating the most interest are: Gamification, Sales Intelligence, Prospect Communication & Engagement, Sales Performance & Compensation and Value Selling & ROI.
• The average number of sales tools in use ranges between 5 and 6, and the maximum number in use ranges between 10 and 13.
• The sales organization is the primary sales tool budget holder (39 percent), followed by the C-suite (29 percent) and sales & marketing jointly (20 percent).
• The lead responsibility to assess which sales tools are needed is tied between the sales organization and a cross-functional committee (41 percent).
• Over half of organizations surveyed spend less than 10 percent of their time considering the need for new, or the effectiveness of current, sales tools.
• Obtaining budget and gaining user adoption were rated the most difficult phases of the sales tool acquisition cycle to complete.
• On average, organizations end up acquiring half of the sales tools they trial or pilot.
• 84 percent of organizations studied report that their sales tools have a slight or significantly positive impact on revenue attainment.

These findings are further detailed in the report. For information on the survey sample and methodology, please refer to the Appendix.
Sales Tools Currently in Use

- **E-signature**: obtaining signatures electronically.
- **Gamification**: running sales contests.
- **Inside Sales**: dialing, routing, call management, etc.
- **iPad or Tablet tools**: mobile catalog, visit reporting, etc.
- **Pipeline Management & Deal Flow**: sales process, predictive analytics and deal analytics.
- **Prospect Communication & Engagement**: information delivery tools that augment email.
- **Quoting & Pricing or Configuration**: quote templates and guided quotations.
- **Sales Contract Management**: routing, tracking and access to contracts.
- **Sales Enablement**: playbooks, portals and sales asset management.
- **Sales Intelligence**: prospecting lists and prospect research.
- **Sales Performance & Compensation**: designing and tracking compensation.
- **Territory & Account Planning**: territory and quota assignment.
- **Value Selling & ROI**: ROI and value quantification.

Figure 1 displays the usage status for each of these categories of tools.
Other than CRM solutions (covered in a later section of this report) and marketing automation, just three tools in this survey have crossed the 50 percent adoption threshold.

The “Other Tools” response category was chosen by just over one-fourth of survey respondents, and they were encouraged to write-in tools not listed in the survey questions. Some of their write-in responses include:

- Predictive analytics
- Phone scripting
- Outside sales route optimization
- Business intelligence data mining
- Sales coaching
- Video communications

For the sales tools listed in Figure 1 that were not in use, participants were asked to identify the current status for each tool, and this information is summarized in Figure 2.

**Status for Sales Tools Not in Current Use**

![Status for Sales Tools Not in Current Use](image)

Figure 2: Tools are sorted from top to bottom by highest percentage in implementation status.
Pipeline management and deal flow solutions are experiencing the highest implementation percentage, while prospect communication and engagement solutions are currently receiving the most consideration. Figure 2 shows that it is relatively rare that there is no budget for sales tools, or that they have been rejected post-evaluation.

When the “In use” and “Implementing” categories are combined, there are three tools with this hybrid in-use status by almost two-thirds of survey participants:

1. Pipeline Management & Deal Flow: 68 percent
2. Prospect Communication & Engagement: 65 percent
3. Sales Intelligence: 61 percent

Tool Interest

The top five sales tools in which survey participants are interested, where “interest” was determined by combining the responses in Figure 2 in “Evaluating” status with those who expressed interest but have no budget. These tools are:

1. Gamification
2. Sales Intelligence
3. Prospect Communication & Engagement
4. Sales Performance & Compensation
5. Value Selling & ROI
Sales Force Size & Tool Usage

Survey participants were divided into three groups for analysis of tool usage by the size of the sales force. Figure 3 summarizes the distribution of responses by sales force size.

Number of Full-Time Sales Representatives

There are some differences in the way these small, medium and larger sales forces depicted in Figure 3 use sales tools. Table 1 summarizes the key differences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Small (10 or fewer)</th>
<th>Medium (11 to 25)</th>
<th>Large (26 or more)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Average number of tools in use:</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum number of tools in use:</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% using just 1 sales tool:</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% using 5 or more tools:</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% using 10 or more tools:</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most used tool:</td>
<td>Prospect Communication &amp; Deal Flow</td>
<td>Prospect Communication &amp; Deal Flow</td>
<td>Quoting, Pricing or Configuration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Metrics by sales force size.
The difference in metrics presented in Table 1 isn’t dramatic. Regardless of size, sales forces are all highly likely to use five or more sales tools. What is interesting is that small and medium sales forces have a different favored tool than large sales forces. Table 2 provides a more detailed look at the top five most used tools by sales force size.

### Favored Tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority Ranking</th>
<th>Small (10 or fewer Salespeople)</th>
<th>Medium (11 to 25 Salespeople)</th>
<th>Large (26 or more Salespeople)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prospect Communication &amp; Engagement</td>
<td>Prospect Communication &amp; Engagement</td>
<td>Quoting, Pricing or Configuration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pipeline Management &amp; Deal Flow</td>
<td>(Tie) Inside Sales; Sales Intelligence</td>
<td>iPad or Tablet Tools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Inside Sales</td>
<td>Pipeline Management &amp; Deal Flow</td>
<td>Inside Sales</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>iPad or Tablet Tools</td>
<td>E-signature</td>
<td>(Tie) Pipeline Management &amp; Deal Flow; Sales Intelligence; Sales Performance &amp; Compensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>(Tie) Sales Intelligence; Value Selling &amp; ROI</td>
<td>Sales Enablement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Large sales forces have completely different sales tool priorities.

With one exception (Sales Intelligence), the lists of top three sales tools in use by small and medium-sized sales forces contain the same tools, just in a different order of use. Not so for large sale forces, which have an entirely different list altogether.

The analysis of the study’s data revealed some statistical relationships between tool usage and sales force size. Specifically, the size of the sales force predicts to some degree that certain sales tool will or will not see use. Figure 4 shows where this relationship exists.
The proper way to interpret Figure 4 is:

- Large sales teams are far more likely to use Sales Performance & Compensation tools.
- Small and medium sales teams are slightly more likely to use Prospect Communication & Engagement tools.
- Medium and large sales teams are more likely to use Gamification tools.

For the remaining tools (listed in Figure 1), the size of the sales team is not a predictor of whether a tool is in use or appropriate. In other words, very few tools are primarily seeing use only by large sales teams. The barriers to using sales tools have little to do with the size of the sales force and the implied resources that come with larger teams. The sales tool solutions landscape seems quite accommodating of sales teams of all sizes.
The study examined how sales tool decisions are made, starting with which part of the organization controls or owns the budget for acquiring new sales tools (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Sales has primary control over their budget for tools.

Almost 40 percent of the time, a member of the sales team is the budget holder for sales tools. The C-suite, however, holds the budget almost 30 percent of the time, and marketing or marketing and sales combined almost one-fourth of the time.

When the budget holder is in sales, over half the time that person is the sales executive or vice-president.
There are differences in which department holds the sales tool budget based on the size of the sales force (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department</th>
<th>25 or fewer sales reps</th>
<th>26 or more sales reps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales &amp; Marketing</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-suite/Market President/Owner</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: The Sales department is most likely to hold the sales tool budget for large sales forces.

For smaller sales forces, it is most likely that sales and marketing combined will control the tool budget, and the C-suite has significant involvement as well. The budget ownership picture changes for larger sales forces, with the sales department almost twice as likely to own this budget, and little involvement from the C-suite. In these larger sales teams, marketing is involved at the same level, but 14 percent of the time as sole budget holder. IT is not a significant sales tool budget holder for any size sales team.

How well does sales tool budget ownership match up with tool assessment responsibility? Figure 6 shows a breakdown of who has the lead responsibility to assess which sales tools are needed.

Figure 6: Sales has a major role is assessing needed sales tools, either solely or as part of a committee.
The responsibility to assess which tools are needed falls within the sales department for almost half the participants in this study. When that is the case, Figure 7 breaks out who in sales has that responsibility.

### Lead Responsibility within Sales to Assess Tool Needs

![Lead Responsibility within Sales to Assess Tool Needs](image)

- VP or top sales exec: 75%
- Individual sales rep(s): 10%
- Sales operations: 6%
- Sales enablement: 3%
- First-line manager: 3%
- Mid-level manager: 3%

Figure 7: The vice-president or top sales executive almost always has the tool assessment responsibility.

In addition to examining who holds the budget for sales tools and who has responsibility to assess which ones are needed, the study also looked at when organizations consider new tools. To determine this, the study survey presented five conditions to participants, having them select the one that best represents their trigger for considering new sales tools. Figure 8 summarizes the results.

### When Organizations Consider New Sales Tools

![When Organizations Consider New Sales Tools](image)

- **We are always looking** for new tools that can improve sales performance: 33%
- **When we become aware** of a new tool that can impact sales performance: 20%
- **When a specific problem/challenge is first predicted** to impact sales performance in the future: 9%
- **When a specific problem/challenge first begins impacting** sales performance: 19%
- **After a specific problem/challenge has already impacted** sales performance for a long time: 19%

Figure 8: One third of study participants are always looking for sales tools that can help.
Those conditions in Figure 8 that trigger consideration of new sales tools for the most part don’t correlate to which tools sales organizations use, with one notable exception: **Value Selling & ROI tools.**

The response options in Figure 8 are indicators of an organization’s strategic personality. Those who responded with “We are always looking for new tools that can improve sales performance” are characteristic of innovators and early adopters. Those choosing “After a specific problem/challenge has already impacted sales performance for a long time” are characteristic of laggards. These strategic personalities are at opposite ends of the spectrum, and for Value Selling & ROI tools, they show different usage rates:

- Innovators/early adopters: 49 percent
- Laggards: 32 percent

Sales organizations that are innovators or early adopters are more likely to use sales tools that help demonstrate ROI and provide value quantification. This higher usage of Value Selling & ROI tools fits the mold of these strategic personalities.

Figure 9 shows how much time survey respondents spend considering the need for new or the effectiveness of current sales tools.

![Percent of Time Spent Considering Sales Tool Needs or Effectiveness](chart)

**Figure 9:** Well over half of survey respondents spend 10 percent or less of their time in the consideration process.
For most individuals with the lead responsibility for assessing which sales tools are needed, it doesn't take up much of their time. This study found that there is no relationship between time spent assessing tools and how many new ones are trialed, but there is a relationship to how many tools are acquired (Table 4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Spent Considering Sales Tools (Fig. 9)</th>
<th>Average number of sales tools purchased in a year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10% or less</td>
<td>1.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 20%</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% or more</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: More time spent in consideration results in more sales tools purchased.

The differences in Table 4 may seem small, but the statistical relationship between time spent in consideration and the number of tools acquired is strong. Additional time allows tool evaluators to test longer, refine their requirements, gain a deeper tool understanding and develop more compelling justifications for their acquisitions. Tool vendors that have a precise understanding of what buyers do in each of these phases of their journey gain a competitive advantage.
The preferred outcome of a sales tool decision-making process is the implementation of the right tool that is accepted by users and delivers the promised benefits. This journey from selecting a sales tool to successful use is still a perilous one, with obtaining budget as the most difficult step. This study identified phases of the sales tool acquisition cycle, gathering data about the ease of completing each one. Table 5 presents these phases in order, with the reported difficulty of each.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step in Acquisition Cycle</th>
<th>Easy</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Difficult</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Determining the need</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Identifying potential solutions</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Evaluating solution options</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Establishing decision criteria</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Justifying tool acquisition</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Obtaining budget</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Implementing the tool</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. User training for the tool</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Gaining user adoption</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Getting the desired benefits of tool usage</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5: Relative difficulty associated with various steps in the tools acquisition cycle.

While the steps in Table 5 may not occur in the precise order listed, they generally must all complete to successfully implement and use a sales tool. The study shows that the most difficult steps to complete are:

1. Obtaining budget
   Gaining user adoption (tie)
2. Getting the desired benefits of tool usage
3. Evaluating solutions options
   Justifying tool acquisition (tie)
   Implementing the tool (tie)

Three of the final four steps in this acquisition process are on the list of most difficult to complete successfully. It is a very real possibility that a buyer can prepare a strong justification, obtain budget and still see the tool implementation fail. Buyers who expect implementation challenges should consider services from vendors or other outside experts to ensure sales tools are implemented, adopted and deliver the expected benefits. Vendors that don’t already offer such services should consider doing so to improve or accelerate the success rate of implementations.
Gaining user adoption is one of the most difficult steps in the sales tool buying process. The survey data analysis shows an interesting relationship between this phase and the consideration time for sales tools (Figure 9). This relationship is shown in Table 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Spent Considering Sales Tools (Fig. 9)</th>
<th>% Reporting Gaining User Adoption is Easy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10% or less</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 to 20%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% or more</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6: More consideration time makes gaining user adoption easier.

The adage “haste makes waste” seems to summarize the conclusion of Table 6. When organizations spend more time considering sales tool needs and effectiveness, gaining user adoption becomes easier. In fact, for survey respondents who report spending 21 percent or more of their time considering the need for new, or the effectiveness of existing sales tools are almost three times more likely to report that gaining user adoption is easy. This is clearly a case where the upfront investment of time in the consideration process yields benefits on a backend process phase that is critical to achieving success with a sales tool.

Where budget is concerned, the average, annual per user price point at which it becomes difficult to get approval for any one, new sales tool is $530. This figure varied little based on the size of the sale force (Table 7).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales force size</th>
<th>Annual per user price point approval difficulty threshold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small (10 or less)</td>
<td>$507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium (11 to 25)</td>
<td>$596</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large (26 or more)</td>
<td>$544</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7: Sales teams share similar budget approval levels regardless of sales team size.
The sales tool acquisition process often includes a free trial or pilot of the tool as part of purchase consideration. Figure 10 displays how many sales tools were tried in the 12 months prior to the survey via free trial or pilot and then how many of them were subsequently purchased.

Figure 10: Over half of survey respondents purchased none or one sales tool in the past 12 months.

Analyzing the data reveals that the approximate average number of new sales tools tried over the course of a year is four, and about half of those are ultimately purchased. The criteria that respondents report using for determining the success of new sales tool trials or implementations is ranked below:

1. Impact on sales performance
2. Ease of use
3. User adoption
4. Fast implementation

Other criteria were offered through the write-in comments section of the survey question that collected this data:

- “Not very tech savvy – must be easy to understand.”
- “Perceived positive business outcomes and value received from tool.”
- “Philosophy.”
- “Profitability.”
- “Proving potential ROI on spend.”
- “Solves the problem.”
The success of any solution is ultimately determined by the results that solution helps produce. The last step of the buying cycle is the evaluation where buyers assess the impact of their purchase. During this study, participants rated the collective impact that sales tools are having on revenue attainment, and the results are summarized in Figure 11.

Sales tools should, of course, have a favorable impact on revenue, but users don’t always get the benefits of solutions that vendors say they will get. This could, in large part, be due to the difficulty of attaining user adoption as pointed out in Table 5. Most respondents (55%) are seeing the use of tools result in a slight positive impact. While another 29% report a significant positive impact on revenue attainment.

Figure 11: Just 3 percent in this study report a negative impact on revenue from sales tools.
There is an implied relationship between sales tool impact-on-revenue and overall revenue growth. In other words, respondents that report a positive impact on revenue from the use of sales tools should also report stronger revenue growth. Indeed, the relationship between tool impact and revenue growth was statistically quite strong, as Figure 12 shows.

**Sales Tool Impact on Revenue & Revenue Growth**

![Graph showing the relationship between sales tool impact and revenue growth](image)

Figure 12: 88 percent of study participants reporting a positive impact on revenue from sales tools are also experiencing slight to significant overall revenue growth.
When users say that sales tools are impacting revenue positively, they’re not just making an assumptive statement to justify a tool expense. The tool impact/revenue relationship is very real, as Figure 12 shows. Of the study participants that said their sales tools positively impact revenue, 88 percent report slight to significant revenue growth as well. By contrast, of study participants that said their sales tools are providing no or a negative impact on revenue, 64 percent report slight to significant revenue growth – a difference of 24 percentage points. In other words when sales tools are working, they are not merely productivity aids for the sales team. They really do drive revenue growth.

The satisfaction with sales tools listed in Figure 1 was measured, and Figure 13 shows the ranking for tools with which users were “Satisfied” or “Very satisfied.”

![User Satisfaction (% Satisfied and Very Satisfied)](image)

**User Satisfaction (% Satisfied and Very Satisfied)**

Sales Performance & Compensation, Gamification and E-signature are in the top five for user satisfaction, but in the bottom five for usage (Figure 1). These satisfaction ratings are the result of tool usage.
In addition to gathering sales tool satisfaction data, participants also provided a ranking of tools listed based on perceived benefit. Table 8 compares the top 5 technologies based on perceived benefit ranking by users and compares those to perceived benefit ranking by non-users.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sales Technology</th>
<th>Rank: Perceived Benefit by Users</th>
<th>Rank: Perceived Benefit by non-users</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E-signature</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gamification</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Contract Management</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sales Performance &amp; Compensation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside Sales</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8: Perceived benefit by users often differs from perceived benefit by non-users.

When viewing Table 8, it’s important to remember that the perceived benefit of each technology by actual users differs from the perceived benefit of each technology by non-users. This indicates organizations could be missing out on valuable technologies because of a misperception of benefit.

The benefit perception ranking by all respondents does differ slightly based on sales force size, as Table 9 summarizes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool Rank</th>
<th>Small Sales Forces (10 or fewer sales reps)</th>
<th>Medium Sales Forces (11 to 25 sales reps)</th>
<th>Large Sales Forces (26 or more sales reps)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Prospect Communication &amp; Engagement</td>
<td>Pipeline Management &amp; Deal Flow</td>
<td>Sales Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Pipeline Management &amp; Deal Flow</td>
<td>Prospect Communication &amp; Engagement</td>
<td>Pipeline Management &amp; Deal Flow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Sales Intelligence</td>
<td>Sales Intelligence</td>
<td>Sales Enablement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Inside Sales</td>
<td>Sales Enablement</td>
<td>Prospect Communication &amp; Engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Value Selling &amp; ROI</td>
<td>Inside Sales</td>
<td>Quoting, Pricing or Configuration</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9: Top five perceived benefit ranking by all respondents broken out by sales force size.
Because CRM is the “system of record” for sales, this section of the report focuses on the CRM landscape as revealed through this study. Figure 14 shows the current installed status of CRM systems.

![CRM Solution Use](image)

Figure 14: The current CRM solution use landscape.

Only solutions with at least two installations were included as individual bars in Figure 14. Virtually everyone is using some sort of CRM solution (94 percent), and 88 percent are using a solution from a vendor.

A number of CRM solutions in Figure 14 were only in use by a single study participant. These solutions are accounted for in the “Other” bar in Figure 14, and listed below for reference:

- Base CRM
- BigContacts
- Buildtopia
- CampaignerCRM
- Divalto
- Focus
- Goldmine
- InfusionSoft
- Membrain
- NimbleCRM
- Sales Task Force
- SalesLogix
- SalesLook
- Streak
- Vtiger

CRM Solution Use
salesforce enjoys the largest market share, and that share differs based on the size of the sales team that uses it (Table 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salesforce</th>
<th>Small Sales Teams (10 or fewer sales reps)</th>
<th>Medium Sales Forces (11 to 25 sales reps)</th>
<th>Large Sales Forces (26 or more sales reps)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Share</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10: Salesforce CRM market share by sales team size.

The survey questions dealing with CRM generated some insightful write-in comments, shared here:

- “It would be nice to have a CRM system that brings in other systems such as Oracle and Business Intelligence. A one-stop shop to get a clear picture of past shipments, order history, and general market information."
- “New generation of CRM is required. One that addresses the entire organization beyond sales and marketing."
- “Most CRMs are the same – and they are used like static repositories of information. The CRM does nothing for people, people do everything for the CRM. Data/reporting should be intuitive and automatic – while data is being input.”
Summary

It isn't just wishful thinking that sales tools are making a positive impact on revenue attainment: 84 percent of organizations in this study agree on this impact (Figure 11). Furthermore, those that report a positive revenue impact from sales tools aren't just talking: 88 percent of them are also experiencing revenue growth (Figure 12). This beneficial relationship is good news for buyers and vendors, but that doesn't mean a sales tool has smooth sailing to effective use.

The sales tool acquisition process challenges buyers in several areas, with the two greatest being: obtaining budget and gaining user adoption. In fact, it's very possible to navigate the budget approval shoals only to wreck upon the user adoption rocks. The study does offer advice about one way to mitigate these hazards: spend enough time evaluating tools. Those who rush the sales tool evaluation process are more likely to have difficulty gaining user adoption of those tools (Table 6). Those who do spend adequate time evaluating tools make better choices and have more realistic expectations about tool performance.

Vendors can help buyers connect with the right tools more effectively by:

Understanding the customer journey

Most vendors claim intimate knowledge of the buyer’s journey and the customer experience, but few regularly measure, study and work to improve it. Too many vendors fling random content online hoping to connect with buyers on their journey. This is a hit and miss proposition at best. Vendors who study what their customers go through know exactly where the “speed bumps” in the journey are, and they do their best to smooth them out.

Two of the speed bumps the study identifies are obtaining budget and gaining user adoption. Vendors can help on the budget issue by providing case studies and tools that help quantify benefits and simplify creating the business justification for purchasing. Regarding gaining user adoption, improved support, training, self-help resources and optional services may provide the answer to the adoption barrier.

Know and respect the audience

This study shows that who holds the budget for sales tools and who has lead assessment responsibility often don’t have “Sales” in their job title. When addressing the budget holder in companies with small or medium-sized sales forces, quite often that person is in the C-suite. It’s just as likely that tool assessment is the responsibility of a cross-functional committee as it is a member of the sales team. Vendors should make sure that they know the audience for their communications, and build those communications specifically to address the needs of the audience that is perhaps more diverse than once thought. This may mean developing multiple sets of messages and marketing assets to support selling to a non-sales audience.

Vendors that are relentless in the pursuit of a better customer understanding, and who use that understanding to provide a better customer experience will gain a competitive advantage without making so much as a single feature addition to their sales tool solutions. Furthermore, those vendors will have more precise insights about which new features and services will resonate most with their buyers.
About Smart Selling Tools

Nancy Nardin is a nationally recognized thought leader and presenter on sales and marketing productivity tools. She is the Founder and CEO of Smart Selling Tools, Inc., an analyst and consulting firm specializing in sales productivity and sales performance improvement through the use of smart sales tools.

More than 30,000 sales and marketing professionals rely on Smart Selling Tools’ weekly newsletter to stay current about software that can help drive revenue. You can also attend any one or more of Smart Selling Tools’ online Demo Day events. Every Thursday at 11:00 a.m. pacific, Smart Selling Tools introduces a new tool vendor to conduct a 30 minute demo. It’s the easiest, hassle-free way to learn about tools.
Appendix: Survey Background

This Sales Tools Study survey was administered online beginning February 2, 2015 through March 21, 2015. During the survey period, 421 responses were collected, and from those, 370 contained enough data to be useful in the analysis. The survey data was analyzed to identify insights and interesting relationships between study variables, and to ensure the study findings were statistically valid. The results of this study are most representative for those organizations whose characteristics resemble the survey sample, which is summarized below.

Type of organization:
- Mostly or entirely B2B: 85 percent
- Blend of B2B/B2C: 15 percent

Primary role of respondent:
- C-suite: 24 percent
- Sales VP/Executive: 24 percent
- Sales Management: 20 percent
- Sales Representative: 11 percent
- Sales Operations: 2 percent
- Sales Enablement: 4 percent
- Marketing: 5 percent
- Other: 10 percent

Year-to-year revenue growth:
- Significant increase: 49 percent
- Slight increase: 35 percent
- Flat: 12 percent
- Slight decrease: 3 percent
- Significant decrease: 1 percent

Industry:
- Financial services: 5 percent
- Insurance: 3 percent
- Manufacturing: 4 percent
- Media/Publishing: 4 percent
- Professional Services: 13 percent
- Technology: 49 percent
- All others: 22 percent