



# What Top-Performing Salespeople Do Differently

A LinkedIn State of Sales Guide



## The Benefits of Analyzing Top-Performing Salespeople

Sales leaders have always looked for ways to discover what the top cohort of salespeople do differently to achieve their success.

LinkedIn's global State of Sales survey—which surveyed **10,000 buyers and sellers** across the globe—provides some insight into a handful of things that successful salespeople\* do differently from their counterparts.

Here are some of the key behaviors that top performers do differently than their cohorts:

- Top Performers Put the Buyer First.
- They Embrace Sales Technology.
- They Put More Faith in CRM Tools.
- They Participate in More Training.
- They Put More Effort in Building Trusted Relationships with Buyers.
- They Value the Work of the Marketing Team.

\*We define top salespeople as those who reported they reached 125% or more of their quota.



# Top Performers Put the Buyer First

LinkedIn State of Sales data shows that top-performing salespeople put buyers first more than their average-performing counterparts.

When asked, “How often do you put the buyer first?” more than four out of five **(81%)** of the top group selected “always,” while just **60%** of their counterparts made the same selection. When asked a slightly different question, “How often do you put the buyer’s needs above yours?”—a question that is more about action than philosophy—the top-performing salespeople say they put the buyer’s needs above theirs “always” at a rate **18 percentage points** higher than their counterparts. The implication is that actually putting the buyers’ needs first—and not just saying you do—has a long-term positive effect on sales.

Top-performing salespeople say they always put the buyer first



Other salespeople who feel the same



## Top Performers Use Sales Technology Differently

Top-performing salespeople are more likely than other salespeople to use three sales technologies in particular:

- Sales intelligence tools (**41%** vs. **35%**)
- Email tracking tools (**40%** vs. **31%**)
- Productivity apps (**42%** vs. **34%**)

In fact, top reps use sales intelligence across the board at higher rates, and more of them feel sales intelligence is extremely critical to closing deals (**52%** vs. **24%**).



Additionally, more top performers were “very active” on LinkedIn (**55%** vs. **36%**), and more top sales reps use LinkedIn Sales Navigator (**45%** vs. **36%**). High performers also found more value than other salespeople in sales tech across the board for strongly agreeing that the tools:

- Enable them to build a stronger professional brand (**60%** vs. **45%**).
- Connect with the right prospects (**58%** vs. **44%**).
- Provide insight into key moments for connecting with customers and prospects (**60%** vs. **42%**).
- Understand local market context (**58%** vs. **39%**).
- Build stronger relationships with customers and prospects (**59%** vs. **44%**).
- Close more deals (**59%** vs. **43%**).

In addition, **51%** of high performers use sales technology at least one time per day compared to **39%** of other sales reps. Doing so helps them gain a more precise view of the opportunity as they prepare for outreach and engagement—and convert more prospects to customers. And that is a good reason why high performers plan to spend more time using sales technology going forward than their counterparts: **65%** vs. **46%**.

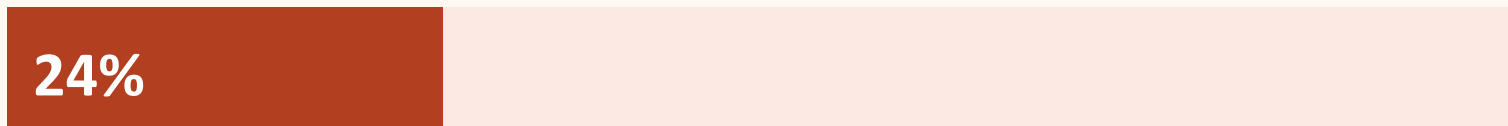
# Top Performers Rely on CRM Data

LinkedIn’s State of Sales research reveals a 26-point difference between top sellers and others in considering CRM extremely critical to closing deals (50% vs. 24%). Top-performing salespeople possess a higher confidence level in CRM data than their counterparts (52% vs. 28%). These figures may imply that the top-performing group puts in the time to keep their CRM data up to date because they believe it’s crucial to helping them close more deals and exceed quota.

## Top sellers consider CRM extremely critical to closing deals



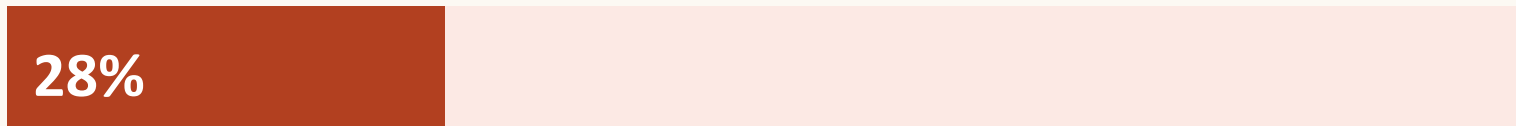
## Other sellers



## Top sellers possess a higher confidence level in CRM data



## Other sellers



## Top Performers Are More Likely to Spend Time in Training

All salespeople spend time with their managers.

How they spend their time together differs. Top-performing salespeople were more likely to spend time with their managers in training (**38%** vs. **29%**). This finding aligns with how high-performing sales managers prioritize time with their teams.

Top performers most likely to spend time in training with managers

38%

Other salespeople most likely to spend time in training with managers

29%

While lower-performing managers spend more time in 1:1 review sessions, higher performers spend more time on training and coaching. The embrace of training makes sense in an effort to keep pace in a fast-changing world.



# Top Performers Establish Trusted Relationship with Buyers

Strong relationships have a big impact on top sellers at far higher rates.

Nearly three-quarters (**74%**) of high-performing reps say forming strong relationships with buyers has a big impact on their ability to achieve quota (vs. **60%** of other sales reps). Hand in hand with this finding, **75%** of top sales reps feel it's very important to quickly build trust with buyers for winning new business.

## High-performing reps say strong relationships impact quota



## Compared to other sales reps



## Top sales reps feel quickly building trust wins new business



## Top-Performing Salespeople Interact Differently with Marketing

Top-performing salespeople believe they receive better leads from marketing.

53%

More than half (**53%**) of top performers described marketing's leads as "excellent" compared to just **23%** of their counterparts.

89%

Similarly, **89%** of the top-performing group called marketing leads either "excellent" or "good" compared to **82%** of their counterparts.

The discrepancy raises a chicken or egg question: Is the top group's performance stronger because it is getting better leads from marketing? Or is the top group simply better at turning leads into sales?



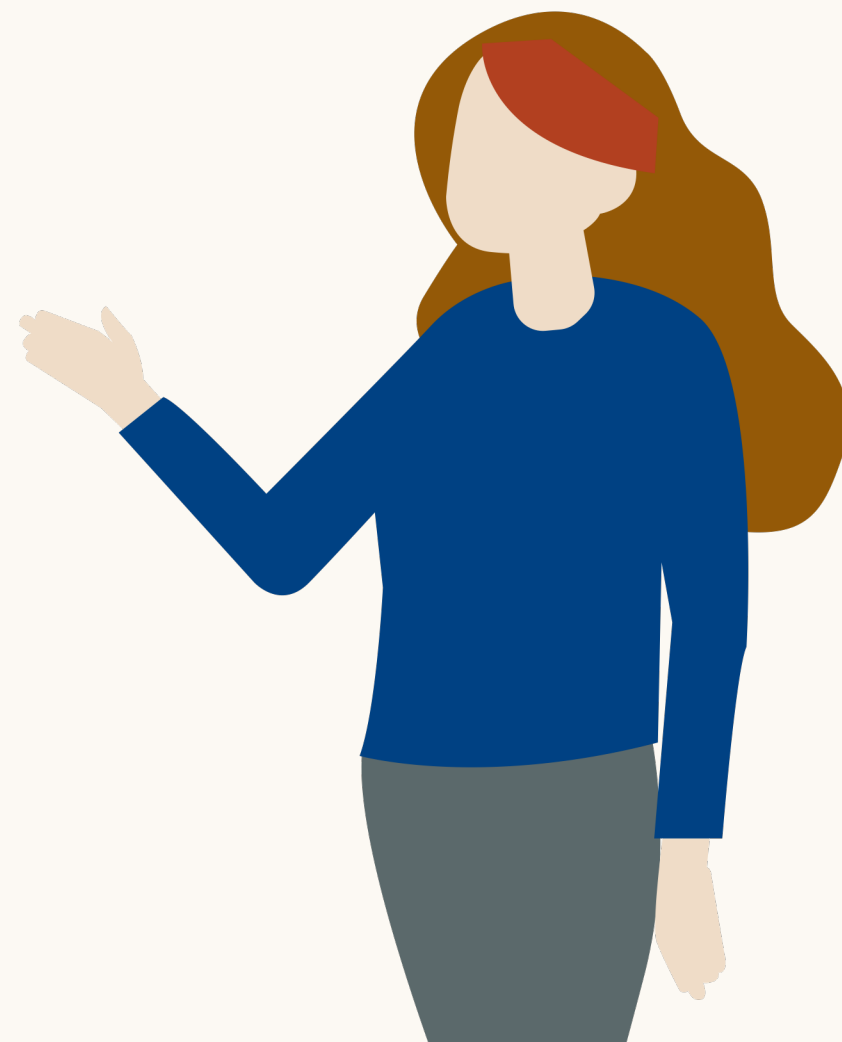


## Top Performers Provide the Template to Build High-Performing Sales Organizations

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Top performers are not beating quota by chance. Rather, they demonstrate behaviors that lead to different actions and better outcomes—behaviors that can be taught.

Sales organizations should apply these best practices by having managers coach reps on these behaviors, and holding managers and reps accountable to them.



“World-class sales organizations study their top performers to gain insights on performance improvement opportunities. They understand what defines ‘good’ within their salesforce—or more specifically their top 20% of performers. These sales organizations look at the sales process; where a rep spends his or her time; and the unique skills, traits, drivers and abilities that are being demonstrated on a consistent basis. Then they hope to replicate these attributes through building a success profile to assess and motivate the midlevel performers. We refer to this as ‘moving the middle’ or getting the middle of the road reps, typically the largest percentage of a sales population, to shift their actions and activities to look more like the ‘A’ players.”

—Joseph DiMisa, Sales Effectiveness and Rewards Leader, Korn Ferry



**Learn more about the world of sales.  
Download the LinkedIn's State of  
Sales Report: Global Edition here.**



LinkedIn Sales Navigator makes it simple to establish and grow relationships with prospects and customers by helping you tap into the power of LinkedIn, the world's largest professional network of more than 706 million members. Designed for sales professionals, LinkedIn Sales Navigator combines LinkedIn's network data, relevant news sources, and your accounts, leads, and preferences to produce customized recommendations and insights. With LinkedIn Sales Navigator, you can focus on the right people and companies, stay up-to-date on what's happening with your accounts, and build trust with your prospects and customers.