

Sales Leader Compass: The ROI of AI

From Potential To Performance,
How AI Transforms B2B Sales



LinkedIn

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Introduction

Two years after AI went mainstream, B2B sales teams face a pivotal moment. The landscape is more complex than ever—global economic outlook is mixed, competition is intense, [less than half](#) of B2B sellers fail to hit quota, and [40-60% of B2B deals](#) stall before a decision is made.

In today's challenging sales environment, success requires smart, strategic action. To stay competitive, sales teams must embrace technology—especially AI—to boost efficiency, uncover new opportunities, and drive sustainable growth. Sales teams of all sizes now rely on AI, with **56% of sales professionals using it daily**. According to LinkedIn Chief Economist Karin Kimbrough, companies integrating AI are gaining a competitive edge, while Microsoft's [Future of Work report](#) found that “customer service and sales professionals reported the highest productivity improvements.”

What's less clear is where and how to best deploy AI technology for maximum impact on your sales and revenue strategies—should it be in research, data integration, customer outreach, or elsewhere?

To answer this, we analyzed LinkedIn data alongside a global survey of 1,250 sales professionals conducted by [Ipsos](#). The findings reveal where AI delivers the greatest ROI—from freeing up time for meaningful client interactions to shortening sales cycles and improving outreach response rates. AI's impact is already evident—particularly in driving efficiency.

The enthusiasm for AI is undeniable. A full **74% of salespeople agree that AI represents the future of B2B sales, while 73% believe teams that don't embrace AI will fall behind**. In today's high-pressure market, leveraging AI isn't just a time saver—it's a business imperative. Read on to explore how AI is transforming sales and delivering real results in an unpredictable economy.

“In 2025, I expect these early adopters will be looking to demonstrate tangible gains from their AI investments. At the same time, those companies who haven't yet launched an integrated AI approach will get started targeting AI investments to enable growth and productivity as a way to remain competitive.”



[Karin Kimbrough](#)

Chief Economist,
LinkedIn

Key Findings



Integrating AI into sales research yields better quality leads, turning research into a competitive advantage. **38% of sellers using AI to research leads and companies reporting significant improvement, saving over 1.5 hours per week.**



AI-driven personalized outreach helps sales teams create more relevant and impactful messages. **Sellers who have improved response rates by using AI see an average lift of 28%.**



AI-powered CRM integrations streamline workflows, reduce administrative tasks, and simplify meeting scheduling. This leads to more efficient sales cycles, with **69% of sellers reporting an average reduction of one week in their sales cycle thanks to AI, and 68% saying AI helps them close more deals.**



Consistent AI usage helps drive better sales performance, as **sellers who exceed their quota are 2.5x more likely to use AI daily.**

The Sales Activities Enhanced by AI

The rise in AI usage is a reflection of sales organizations responding to the permanent shift in the way we do business, and **most sales professionals (73%) believe that they will be left behind if they do not adopt an AI strategy.** The research revealed that **88% of sales professionals have integrated AI into their weekly workflows, with 56% relying on it daily.** This widespread adoption demonstrates how essential AI is becoming for modern sales strategies.

As AI adoption grows, its applications now extend far beyond time-saving efficiencies, impacting key sales areas like lead generation, sales cycle management, account management, and reporting. AI has become central to modern sales strategy. Sales professionals are using AI to automate tasks and uncover insights, transforming operations and enabling teams to focus on building relationships and closing deals.



The Top Tasks Sellers Use AI For:

Among those using AI for sales tasks, each section represents the net percentage of sellers who use AI for any task in that category. Each individual data point shows the percentage of sellers who use AI for that specific task.



The ROI of AI

Improved Sales Activity Outcomes with AI

The overall impact of AI is clear, with **88% of sales executives reporting that AI has had a “significant or moderate impact”** on the ROI of their sales processes. And it is clear that time saving is the most common benefit experienced across all sales activities, with **84% of sellers saying AI saves them at least 30 mins doing routine sales tasks.**

While efficiency in sales is valuable, the ultimate goal is revenue growth, and **65% of sellers believe by using AI they are more likely to exceed their sales quotas.**

To understand where AI is having the greatest impact, we examined the 15 sales funnel activities being enhanced by AI, and found that the below three were delivering outsized benefits for sales organisations. Let’s dive into the B2B sales challenges AI is solving, the solutions it provides, and the outcomes it delivers.

1. Researching leads and companies

PROBLEM

More sales executives are feeling ‘future ready’ than ever according to our research, however 38% of sellers say that “addressing the changing dynamics of B2B buying teams” is a challenge, as they now involve more decision-makers and increasingly complex buying journeys.

Identifying the right companies to target—and the key stakeholders within them—remains one of the biggest challenges in sales. Without accurate, up-to-date insights, sellers risk wasting time on the wrong prospects and missing key opportunities.

Building pipeline and ultimately closing more deals begins with sales research, the more efficient and accurate, the better. This was one of the areas that AI had the greatest impact, but how was it achieved?

AI SOLUTION

AI-powered sales tools eliminate the inefficiencies of manual research by automating lead identification, analyzing vast data sources, and delivering real-time insights. As buying teams grow more complex, mapping decision-makers and understanding their roles is critical—**AI makes this faster (45%), more accurate (44%), and delivers more relevant insights (34%).**

By detecting new opportunities like job changes, and analyzing intent signals, AI ensures sellers can find the right leads and companies to target. This not only accelerates prospecting but also turns research into a competitive advantage, helping teams act on opportunities before competitors.

Ultimately, AI doesn’t just accelerate research—it transforms it into a strategic advantage, empowering sellers to engage the right buyers with confidence and efficiency.

ROI OF AI

By integrating AI into sales research, sellers can accelerate prospecting and improve pipeline quality. With **38% of sellers reporting significant improvement in researching leads and companies and saving 1.5 hours per week**, AI is proving to be a game-changer in sourcing higher-quality leads and driving more successful deals.

“It used to be that one or two people could make a decision and you could get an opportunity closed out fairly quickly. Now you’ve got committees who are the four to five individuals that I’m going to need to connect with in order to actually get a deal done. Where I find a lot of value in Sales Navigator is I can actually go in and figure out if I know this individual or do I know any other folks that can help me connect with this individual?”



Shane Evans
Chief Revenue Officer, Gong

2. Crafting personalized and targeted outreach

PROBLEM

In today's crowded market, buyers are bombarded with generic sales outreach that often lacks relevance or timeliness, and traditional cold outreach is ineffective.

Modern buyers will only respond to the most personalized, compelling messages that offer meaningful value. Crafting such messages at scale remains a significant challenge for sales teams.

AI SOLUTION

The solution lies in crafting truly personalized and relevant outreach communications, a process that takes time, accurate data, and creativity—things that the right AI technology can support.

The research showed that AI helps sales teams cut through the noise by enabling **faster (47%), more creative (46%), and highly accurate (36%) personalized messaging**. By analyzing vast amounts of data, **AI ensures that outreach is relevant, reduces human error (32%)**, and helps sellers tailor their communication to each prospect's unique needs.

Choosing the right AI technology and employing it in the right way enables your teams to maintain their credibility, and is critical to ensuring that automation enhances, rather than dilutes, customer engagement.

ROI OF AI

By integrating AI into personalized outreach, sales teams create more relevant and impactful messages. **Sellers who have improved response rates by using AI see an average lift of 28%.**

“With generative AI we have the ability to send compelling messages out when it comes to targeted prospecting. By improving our ability to communicate more effectively using this technology, we can reduce our sales cycle time. And by reducing the length of time spent on a sales cycle, we can have a competitive advantage”



Arben Morina

VP Global Revenue Operations, Cision





3. Enhancing Sales Cycle Efficiency & CRM Integration

PROBLEM

According to LinkedIn data, the average B2B sales cycle takes 3 months, requiring careful tracking of stakeholders, interactions, and deal progress. Yet, sellers spend [six hours every week](#) updating CRM systems—time that could be better spent engaging buyers. Inaccurate or outdated records lead to missed opportunities, inefficient workflows, and lost revenue.

AI SOLUTION

AI-driven CRM automation eliminates the need for manual data entry, **reducing human error (46%), improving accuracy (45%), and accelerating updates (46%)**. By seamlessly integrating with sales technologies, AI helps ensure sellers have real-time, reliable data to identify leads, track engagement, and personalize outreach—ultimately enhancing productivity and efficiency.

Beyond automation, AI-powered CRM tools help to actively enrich records by pulling in up-to-date data from multiple sources, flagging inconsistencies, and surfacing actionable insights. Sellers no longer need to waste time manually logging activities or searching for missing information. Instead, their CRM can provide a single source of truth, empowering them to prioritize the right accounts and drive meaningful buyer interactions.

ROI OF AI

AI-powered CRM integrations help sales teams streamline workflows, reduce administrative tasks, and simplify meeting scheduling. This leads to more efficient sales cycles, with **69% of sellers reporting an average reduction of one week in their sales cycle**.

“LinkedIn Sales Navigator offers the highest quality data I can get. It’s the perfect addition to my CRM system.”



Sven Mehnert

Team Manager Corporate Campaigns & Social Media, COSMO CONSULT

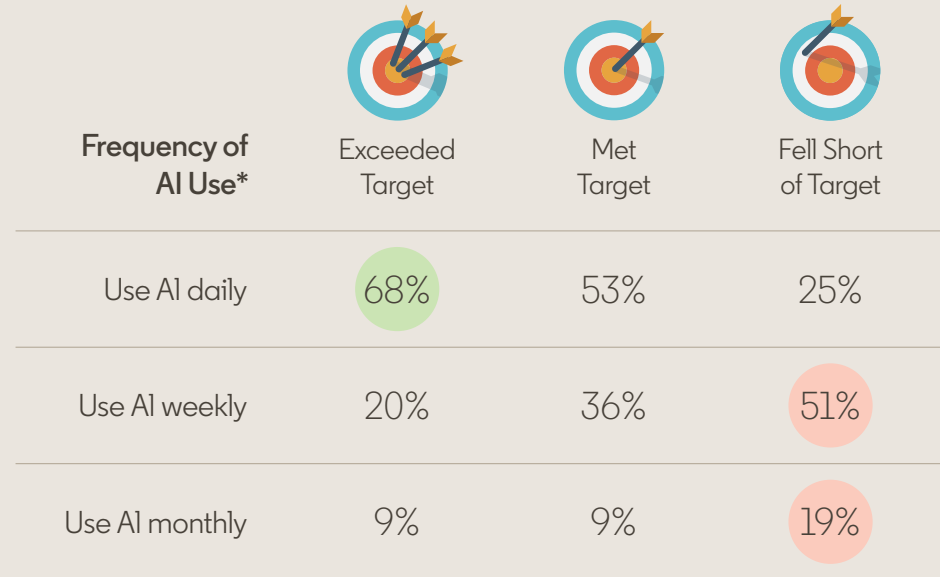
Top Performing Sellers Win with AI

One of the most striking findings from the research is the clear correlation between AI usage and achieving sales targets. The data showed that **sellers who exceed their sales target are 2.5x more likely to use AI daily than those falling short of their quota.**

However, when sellers use AI less frequently, they become more likely to fall short of their quota. This indicates that, to fully capitalize on AI's benefits, sales professionals must integrate it into their daily activities. Using AI only occasionally or limiting it to a single part of the sales process is unlikely to significantly improve quota performance—consistent application throughout the entire sales process is essential to drive maximum impact.

Overall, we clearly see that AI usage is directly contributing to increased revenue for sales organizations, with **68% of businesses investing in AI reporting it has helped them close more deals.** Consistent, daily use of AI in sales processes is proving to significantly boost performance, leading to higher sales and more efficient operations.

Sales professionals individual quota attainment



*Daily AI usage means once or several times per day, Weekly means at least once to several times per week, and means at least once a month or less frequently.



“Account IQ has revolutionised our marketing operations. What took 30 minutes now takes under two minutes, instantly revealing how a company makes money and identifying ideal outreach targets. It’s a powerful tool that boosts speed, productivity, and efficiency across sales and marketing.”



Vinod Kumar Nagarajan

Senior Director of Revenue Operations, Amagi Corporation

The Sales AI Investment Surge

With AI now being used in so many aspects of the sales process, it's easy to understand why business leaders in all role types are increasing their AI investments this year, and shortening their implementation roadmaps where possible. **98% of sales executives plan to invest in AI this year**, with top priorities including sales intelligence, sales enablement, and AI-powered CRM tools. These investments aim to streamline workflows, uncover new opportunities, and enhance customer engagement, providing sales teams with the competitive edge they need in an evolving market.

[LinkedIn Learning](#) data corroborates this trend. As interest in Generative AI surged globally in the last two years, so did time spent by sellers developing related skills. **The amount of time sales execs spent watching AI courses on LinkedIn have seen a twelve-fold increase.**

However, the path to successful AI adoption requires more than just interest and investment—it demands a clear strategy. Our research identified the top three facilitators and barriers to AI adoption:

Top 3 facilitators of AI implementation:

1	2	3
Having a well-defined strategy and roadmap	Access to high-quality data	Strong leadership support

Top 3 barriers to AI implementation:

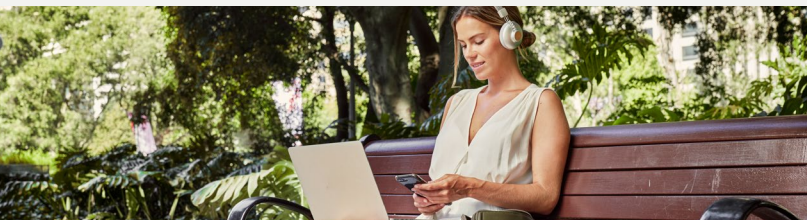
1	2	3
Data privacy and security concerns	Uncertainty around ROI	Resistance to change

“It’s too early to know what your AI strategy is. I think the question you ask yourself is “What is my AI win?.” What’s the one thing that I can do with my team right now that’s going to create value over the next six months? Because the world is changing so quickly, it’s one of these moments to start small, to go big over time.”



Dan Shapero
COO, LinkedIn

For forward-thinking organizations, the opportunity is clear: by addressing barriers and building robust AI strategies, sales leaders can unlock unprecedented ROI and position their teams for long-term success. With this increase in AI investments underway, it's unsurprising that **the percentage of sales executives saying they are highly confident in being 'future ready' has increased from 28% in October to 39% in January.**



Scaling B2B Success with LinkedIn Sales Navigator

In today's competitive B2B landscape, sales leaders are under pressure to boost productivity and drive revenue growth. While AI is revolutionizing sales, success ultimately depends on the quality of the data that powers it. LinkedIn Sales Navigator stands apart by combining cutting-edge AI with the world's largest professional network—offering sellers exclusive, first-party insights.

With access to a billion-member-strong network, Sales Navigator gives sellers unparalleled visibility into decision-makers, real-time professional updates, and relationship intelligence that transforms prospecting, engagement, and deal acceleration.

LinkedIn data shows that sellers who complete top AI courses on LinkedIn see a **+10% Increase** in connections within just three months



1. Finding the Right People

The average sales cycle now involves over 11 decision-makers, yet most sellers are connected to only 1-2 buyers. This gap results from inefficient prospecting and time constraints, preventing sellers from reaching key influencers like procurement or legal, who hold significant decision-making power. LinkedIn [Sales Navigator](#) leverages AI to help sellers identify the right prospects, enabling them to connect with multiple decision-makers, and increase conversions. **Sellers researching prospects using [Sales Navigator Account IQ](#) see a 17% higher connection rate.**



2. Engaging Effectively

Once the right prospects are identified, the next challenge is crafting personalized outreach. [Sales Navigator](#) provides insights available nowhere else that help sellers tailor their messaging for better engagement. **Sellers who use [Account IQ](#) to reach out to prospective customers see a 46% higher InMail acceptance rate.**



3. Elevating Customer Conversations

Top sellers invest time understanding their prospects, [Sales Navigator](#) quickly provides a deep understanding of leads and accounts to enable sellers to show up well in every conversation — shifting prep time from several hours to several seconds. As a result, [Sales Navigator](#) users close 31% more deals, and generate 45% more revenue*

*When a user takes 5 or more actions in Sales Navigator
**Statistics on this page derive from LinkedIn Insights Data, 2025

Discover how LinkedIn turns AI from potential into performance for sales.

LinkedIn [Sales Navigator](#) offers a comprehensive, data-driven solution to improve every stage of the sales process. By helping sellers find the right people, engage effectively, and elevate customer conversations. Equipped with AI-powered Sales Navigator, your team can have the right conversations with people who matter at scale.



#1

Discover Sales Navigator's AI-powered features

#2

Explore the ROI of LinkedIn Sales Navigator

#3

Follow the Sales Leader Compass for all the latest sales insights from LinkedIn

"If you think about the research that we used to do before a client conversation - what are the business challenges? How do they make their money? Who are the key stakeholders or buying influencers? All of that is now plugged into Account IQ, and integrated in Salesforce. So our salespeople don't need to leave the CRM that they live in to find that information."



Tim Wadsworth
Global Sales Effectiveness
Lead, London Stock
Exchange Group



Methodology

Primary quantitative research was conducted by Ipsos via a 20 minute online device agnostic survey in the United States, The United Kingdom, Germany, Australia, India, and Singapore. Ipsos recruited a sample of 1,250 sales professionals utilizing a mix of expert network and B2B panel samples. Survey development drew from Ipsos and LinkedIn expertise as well as findings from other Ipsos and LinkedIn data. The data is based on respondents from the survey and may or may not be representative of all sales professionals.

The sample was distributed across countries as follows:

 United States (n = 450)

 The United Kingdom (n = 200)

 Germany (n = 150)

 Australia (n = 150)

 India (n = 150)

 Singapore (n = 150)



Qualifying Criteria

- B2B revenue generating professionals who are customer facing
- Mid-Market (200-999 employees) or Enterprise (1000+ employees) organizations

Respondent Profile

- Role: Executives (n=791), Non-Executives (n=459) (Job titles for each group are listed in the 'Terminology Key')
- Industries: Tech (n=247), Finance (n=312), Manufacturing (n=237), Professional Services (n=170) and Other (n=284)
- Org Size: Mid-Market (n=582), Enterprise (n=668)

Terminology Key:

Executives: President or C-Suite Executive, Owner, Partner/General Manager, Senior Vice President (SVP), Vice President (VP), Senior Director, and Director

Non-Executives: Senior Manager, Manager and Analyst/Associate

Salespeople/sellers/sales professionals: All salespeople executives and non-executives