



The LinkedIn State of Sales Report 2020

Global Edition



A Note on the Methodology for this Report

This global edition of the State of Sales report includes 10 countries: Australia, Brazil, Canada, France, Germany, India, Mexico, Singapore, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

For each country, we surveyed 500 buyers and 500 salespeople and sales managers. For the entire State of Sales project, we surveyed more than 10,000 people globally.

For the Global 2020 survey, Market Cube, a research panel company, conducted two online surveys from in November and December 2019. Two sample groups were surveyed in each of the 10 countries: sales professionals and decisionmakers. The first was a sample of 5,000 salespeople and managers who primarily work in B2B sales. The second was a sample of 5,000 business decision makers who have influence over purchasing decisions at B2B companies. Both samples include respondents over 21 years old who are employed at companies in different industries and of varying sizes. The report also references a group of “top sales professionals” who are defined as sales professionals who report that they exceeded their sales target by at least **25%**.

Additionally, LinkedIn conducted two other surveys of salespeople in March-April 2020.

One survey was fielded among LinkedIn’s VisionCritical Advisor Community of sales professionals who were LinkedIn members from April 2–9, 2020. It surveyed 511 North American sales professionals about the impact coronavirus was having on their business.

Another survey was fielded among LinkedIn’s VisionCritical Advisor Community of sales professionals and business leaders who were LinkedIn members from March 11–17, 2020. It surveyed 660 sales professionals and business leaders, querying them about how coronavirus has affected their sales outlook.



Australia



Brazil



Canada



France



Germany



India



Mexico



Singapore



United Kingdom



United States

INTRODUCTION

The State of Sales Has Clearly Changed

2020 has brought change—and the need to grapple with it—to the forefront around the globe. COVID-19 has made sure of that.

LinkedIn's extensive research has identified **emerging trends** and also **enduring trends** that are impacting sales organizations. First, let's examine some of the emerging trends driven by coronavirus' immediate impact.

Key Emerging Trends*

77%

Virtual selling goes mainstream: 77% of respondents are holding more virtual meetings.

44%

Less responsive buyers: 44% of respondents anticipated a decrease in responsiveness to outreach.

44%

Longer sales cycles: 44% of respondents said customers' sales cycle increased.

*Based on VisionCritical research conducted in the United States.

It's true that COVID-19 is driving some changes in the short term. At the same time, many trends that were already in motion before this year are gaining strength in the current environment.

Key Enduring Trends

Long-term metrics are stepping to the forefront.

Understanding data and analytics is an increasingly important tool for survival, and sales organizations are embracing long-term metrics of sales success, such as customer satisfaction.

The data-driven sales org is on the rise.

Sales organizations are putting data to work before the sale. Around the globe, data is increasingly crucial for sales orgs, and sales leaders must take greater control of how their sales organizations use it.

Sales technology is transforming the sales org.

When face-to-face meetings are limited, sales technology has increasingly moved to the forefront of how sales professionals strengthen existing relationships and begin to build new ones.

Trust gets deals done.

Across the world, our survey data indicates that buyers want trust in the sales process but find it in short supply. For sales professionals, achieving trust with buyers is often the first step to getting deals done.

Building a sales team with the right skills is challenging.

Across the globe, we largely see agreement between buyers and sales managers in terms of important traits and skills for salespeople—but finding salespeople with the requisite skills can be a challenge.

Top-performing salespeople do things differently.

We'll show you some key ways that top performers differ from their peers and what these insights mean for your sales team.

LinkedIn plays an expanded role for both buyers and sellers.

The survey results show that both buyers and sellers are increasingly relying on LinkedIn in their day-to-day jobs.

INTRODUCTION

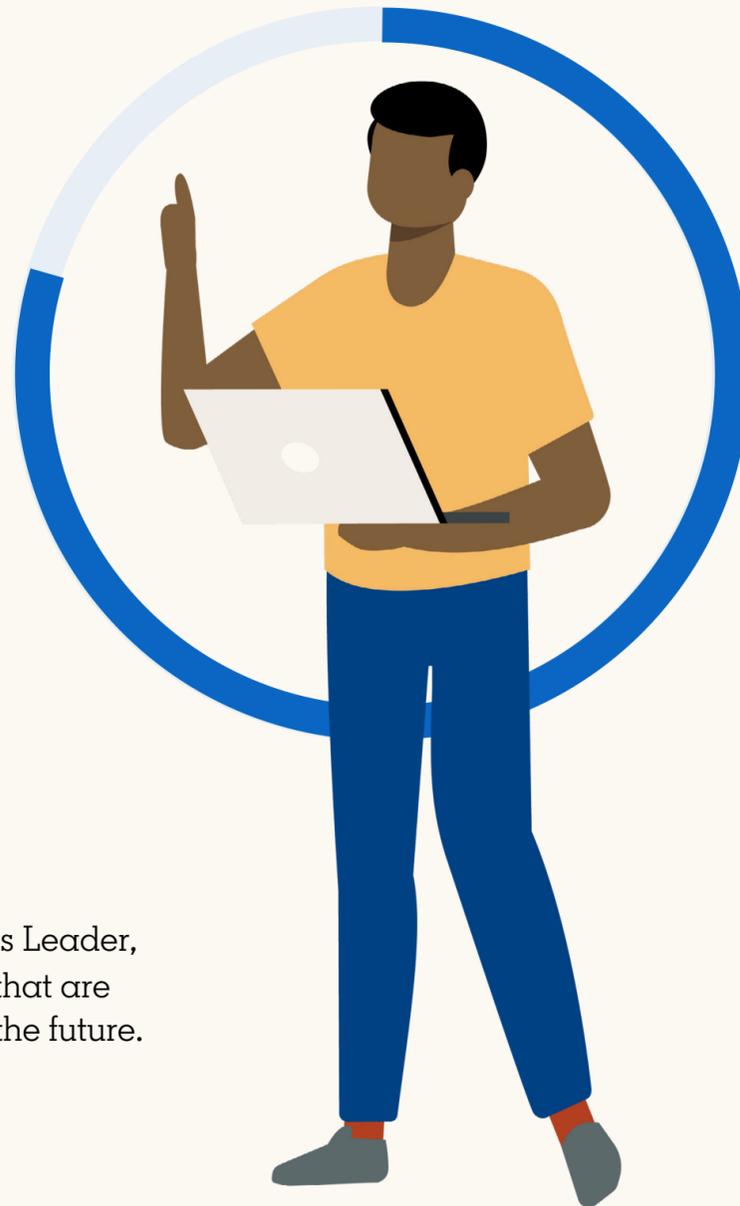
The State of Sales Has Clearly Changed

Even before the current economic challenges appeared, sales managers understood that leading through change had become a required skill for their role.

76%

In responding to LinkedIn's fourth annual State of Sales survey, **76%** of sales managers across the globe agreed that their capacity to navigate change is more important than it was five years ago. Managers in three countries rated this at even higher percentages: India (87%), Mexico (87%) and Brazil (86%). When comparing top-performing managers with their lower-performing counterparts, 51% of top managers vs. 34% of the remainder feel their ability to adapt to change has become much more important. More than ever, transformation is an inescapable reality in the sales organization and the pace of change is only accelerating.

Read on as LinkedIn and Joseph DiMisa, Korn Ferry's Sales Effectiveness and Rewards Leader, dive into the emerging and enduring trends that are transforming the state of sales now and into the future.



“Top sales organizations were already making a shift toward emphasizing trust, adopting sales technology, and prioritizing existing customers, but this crisis has accelerated the need tenfold. Trust is quickly moving from face-to-face meetings to a sales organization’s ability to understand a client’s pain points and quickly identify a solution. In today’s evolving world, customers are also changing by becoming more skilled at researching a solution, finding the ballpark pricing, and quickly identifying most of the pros and cons of a product. A sales organization needs to differentiate themselves by creating better thought leadership and data-driven insights to help build trust and loyalty.”

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

EMERGING TRENDS

The Immediate Impact of Coronavirus on the State of Sales

Many sales leaders around the world quickly became curious about the potential impact of the coronavirus. Between February and March, sales executives increased their engagement with the coronavirus-oriented content on LinkedIn by almost **12X**.

The search for answers is apparent in how sales professionals were using LinkedIn Learning to explore new skills. Time spent on LinkedIn Learning courses about “social selling” and “inside sales” more than doubled between February and March 2020 globally. Time spent on LinkedIn Learning courses about ‘Sales Navigator’ also increased by **40%** in the same period as sales professionals worked to position themselves for this new world.

This new reality poses challenges for sales professionals. A LinkedIn survey* of more than 500 sales professionals found that:

51% of respondents said their customers were experiencing budget cuts.

45% of respondents said specific industries were at a standstill.

44% of respondents said their customers’ sales cycles had increased.

42% of respondents said there was turnover or layoffs at their customers’ companies.

*Based on VisionCritical research conducted in the United States.

Even in the earliest stages of COVID-19’s presence, sales professionals anticipated its effects on their outlook.

Salespeople Anticipate Changes*

55%

of respondents anticipated a decrease in pipeline (with **14%** expecting a significant decrease).

44%

of respondents anticipated a decrease in responsiveness to outreach (with **8%** expecting a significant decrease).

60%

of respondents anticipated a decrease in hitting quota/closing deals (with **18%** expecting a significant decrease).

“We are seeing a few trends among sales organizations adjusting to the current climate. First, everything has shifted to virtual selling, using video conferencing, sending emails, creating webinars and info sessions. It is a big adjustment for many direct sellers. The most successful reps will adjust more quickly and learn to build relationships through different digital channels. Second, there’s a realization that quota attainment and incentive payments are going to be affected, thus causing organizational enhancements to continue to drive productivity. Most organizations are making adjustments to motivate and reward reps to keep focused on the customer and their needs. Finally, we’re seeing a rise in the use of data-driven selling. We are finding that sales organizations are placing more emphasis on using data to help a client make informed business decisions based upon quantifiable information and numbers.”

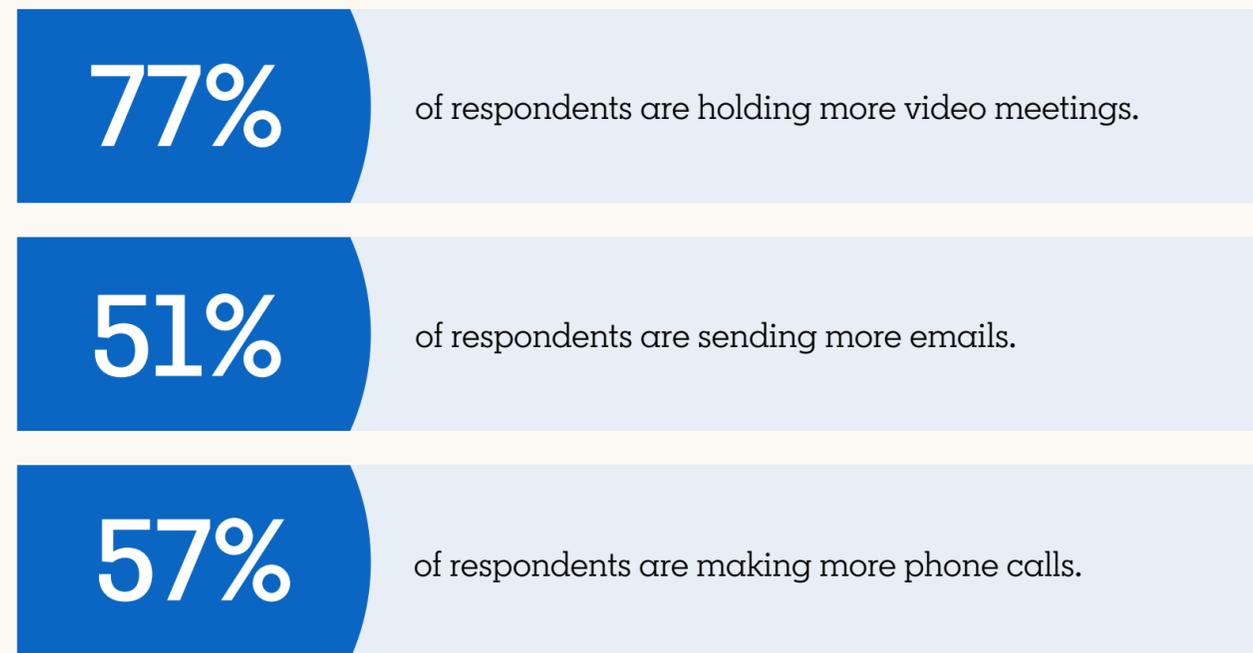
—**Joseph DiMisa**, Sales Effectiveness and Rewards Leader, Korn Ferry

EMERGING TRENDS

The Immediate Impact of Coronavirus on the State of Sales

Sales professionals are rising to meet the challenge of this new reality in a range of ways. For one thing, a majority of sales professionals surveyed are focusing on strengthening existing relationships. Seventy percent of respondents said they are making customer retention a higher priority. Additionally, 74% said they are making increasing agility a higher priority.

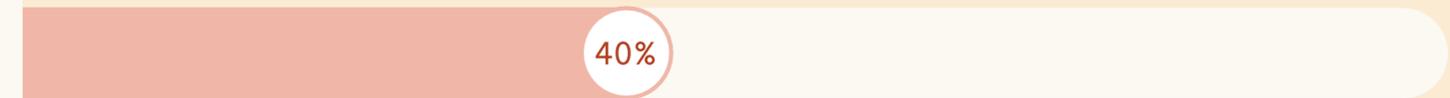
And with travel restricted, conferences canceled and face-to-face meetings limited, sales professionals are embracing digital selling:*



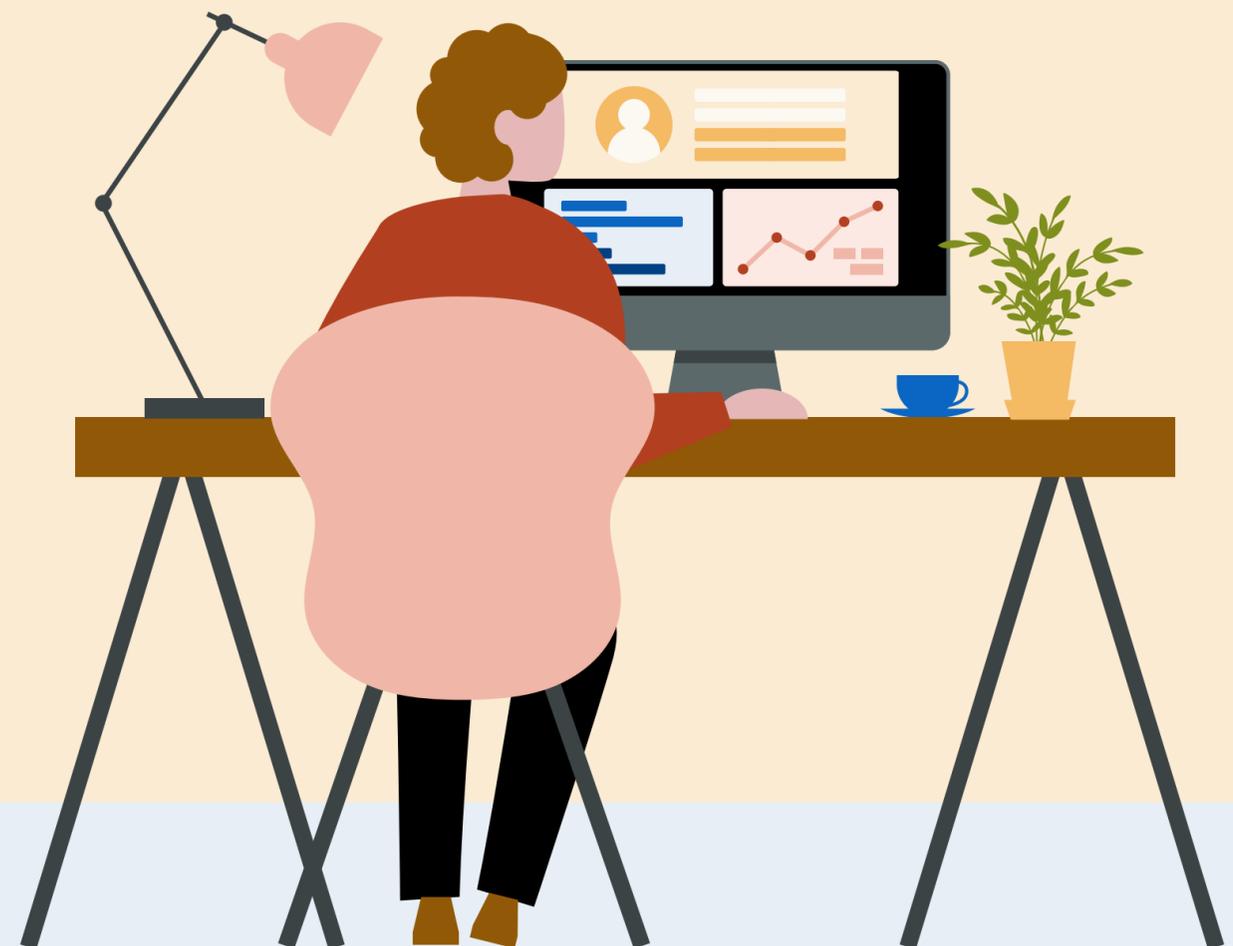
*Based on VisionCritical research conducted in the United States.

LinkedIn research shows that sales professionals are also opting for warm outreach over cold outreach in the current environment.

Sales professionals leveraging more warm outreach:



Sales professionals leveraging more cold outreach:



ENDURING TRENDS

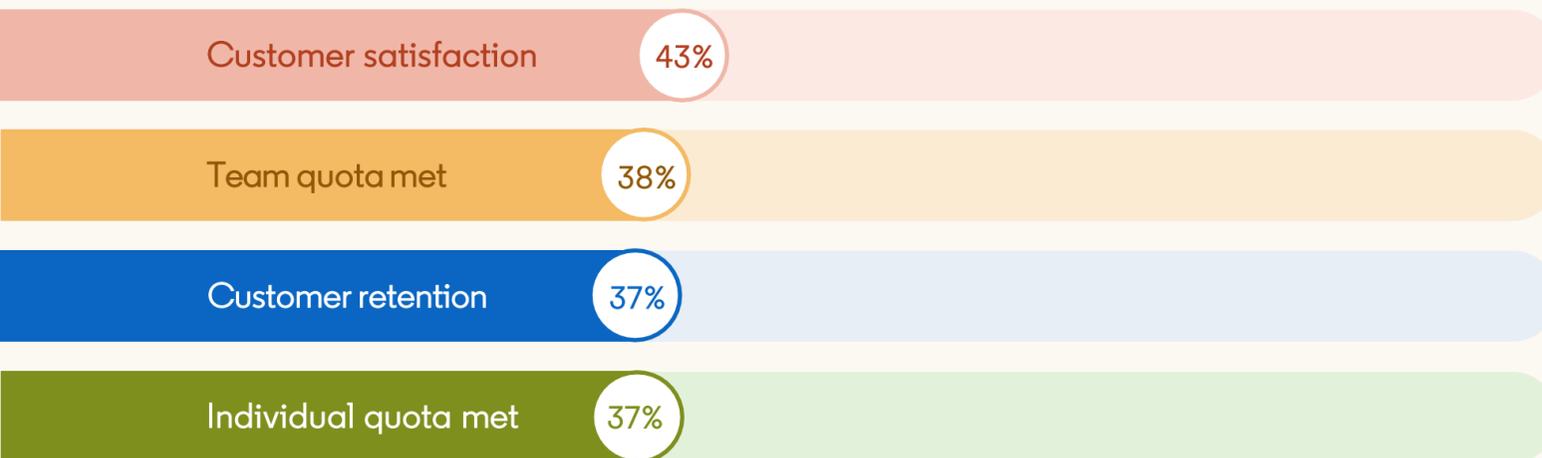
The Primacy of Customer Retention Metrics

The Survey Said:

Our survey data indicates that measurements of long-term value are moving to the forefront over traditional short-term metrics, such as quarterly quota. When asked to identify how sales reps should be measured, four metrics were selected by more than a third of respondents. The top metric looked past the quarterly horizon.

Forty-three percent selected customer satisfaction, the most popular metric, according to the survey. Another **37%** selected customer retention/attrition, placing this measurement in the top three. Rounding out the top four metrics are team quota met (**38%**) and individual quota met (**37%**).

Top Metrics for Measuring Sales Performance



The Takeaway:

Even before COVID-19, sales organizations had shifted their emphasis in evaluating performance from quarterly quota to customer satisfaction and customer retention. Coronavirus has only accelerated this trend. Sales leaders are prioritizing customer retention more than ever and quickly reorganizing their organizations so that their salespeople are in position to help current customers.



ENDURING TRENDS

The Rise of the Data-Driven Sales Org

The Survey Said:

Like virtually every other sector of business, sales organizations are embracing data. This increased use of data affects everything from how territories are assigned to how salespeople prospect for clients to how sales organizations measure success. In this period of uncertainty, sales organizations are charting a clear path forward by using data to identify and target the strongest industries, geographies and accounts.

Sales organizations are using data to analyze and improve performance.

Almost half of respondents (49%) say their companies are using data to assess the performance of salespeople. For instance, 47% of respondents say they are evaluating patterns from closed-lost business to apply these learnings to future deals.

Using Data to Assess Sales Performance

49%

Using Data to Evaluate Patterns in Closed-Lost Business

47%

Sales organizations are putting data to work before the sale.

Large percentages of salespeople say they are using data to prospect: 49% say they are using data to select accounts to target, and 47% are using data to select industries to target.

Using Data to Prospect

49%

Using Data to Select Industries to Target

47%

Additionally, salespeople see LinkedIn, in particular, as delivering unique data to help inform sales strategy. Fifty-three percent of sales professionals said LinkedIn provided unique data. The countries feeling this the most strongly were the United States (63%) and India (61%), while only 45% in Mexico and 41% in Germany capitalized on LinkedIn in this way.

Sales Professionals who feel LinkedIn provides unique data



ENDURING TRENDS

The Rise of the Data-Driven Sales Org

The Takeaway:

“Data is becoming more and more important for the sales organization. The key to this data will be how it is used during the selling process and the customer journey. The most effective organizations will be able to aggregate, govern and leverage this data to give insights to both past sales efforts and to future forecasts. They will be able to match their process and organizational strengths to that of the customer buying process and specific needs. Having access to timely and relevant data will be key to success. Sales organizations with a clear data strategy for their go-to-market efforts reported that **11%** more of their sellers made goal and they won forecasted deals **8%** more of the time.”

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

Gone are the days of relying only on intuition to guide decisions. Data is increasingly crucial for sales organizations, and leaders who take control of how they use this information are going to thrive. Sales reps should also increase their data literacy to improve their productivity.

Beyond the Global State of Sales survey, our analysis of LinkedIn’s profile data provides a glimpse into how evolving sales skills map to the growing importance of data. The skills that salespeople are including on their LinkedIn profile are constantly changing. Many of the skills increasing with greater frequency on salespeople’s LinkedIn profiles relate to data. Between 2015 and 2019, for instance, the presence of the skills “data analysis,” “research,” and “analytics” in the LinkedIn profiles of salespeople each increased by more than 60%—with “data analysis” leaping almost threefold.

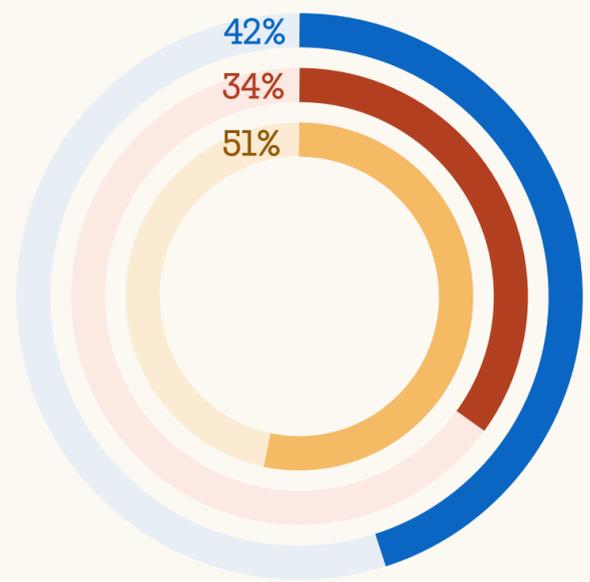
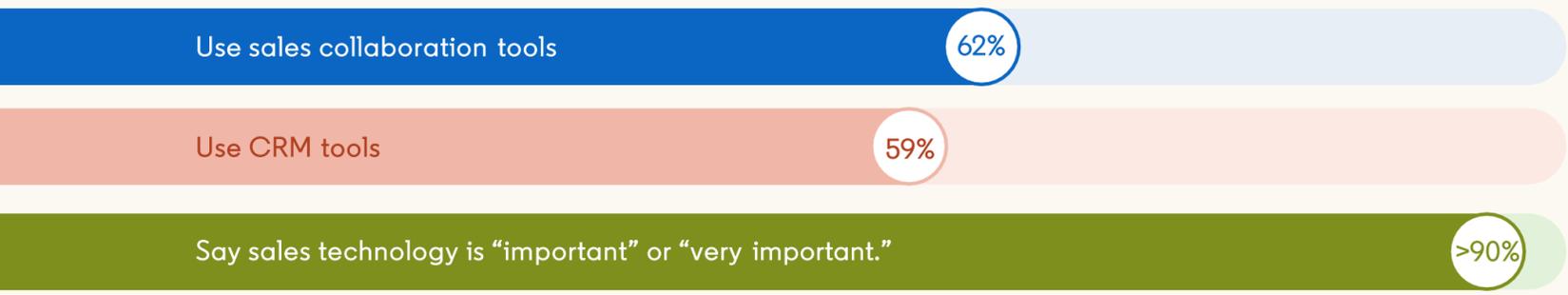


ENDURING TRENDS

Sales Technology Is Transforming the Sales Org

The Survey Said:

With face-to-face meetings limited, sales technology will only become more central to the sales process. Even before the appearance of COVID-19, sales technology was clearly a key force reshaping the sales profession, as this cross-section of stats from our survey of sales professionals confirms:



Sales technology is an essential part of the workflow for most salespeople.

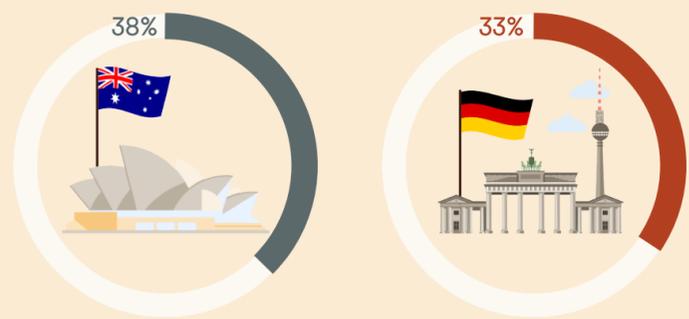
Almost half (42%) indicate they use sales tech once a day, while an additional 34% say they use it once a week or more. More than half of respondents (51%) say they plan to spend more time using sales technology going forward while 43% plan to spend about the same amount of time.

Of those who plan to spend more time with sales technology, Brazil (72%), Mexico (65%) and India (64%) were the highest, while Germany (33%) and Australia (38%) were the lowest.

Most likely to spend more time with sales technology



Least likely to spend more time with sales technology



It comes as no surprise that younger generations use these tools at higher rates than older generations and will likely increase that usage. Gen Z/Millennials use productivity apps at higher rates than Gen X/Boomers (40% vs. 29%). The same holds true for their use of sales intelligence tools (38% vs. 33%) and email tracking tools (35% vs. 30%).

ENDURING TRENDS

Sales Technology Is Transforming the Sales Org

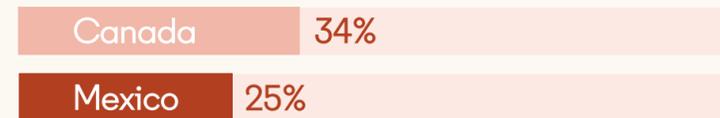
Here's the breakdown of highest and lowest usage by country across sales intelligence tools, productivity apps, and email tracking tools.

For sales intelligence, the highest usage was in India (44%) and the United States (43%), while the lowest usage was in Canada (34%) and Mexico (25%).

Highest Usage

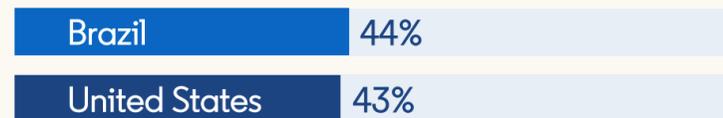


Lowest Usage

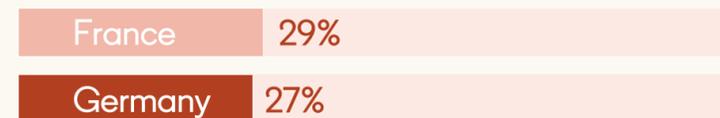


Productivity apps found their highest usage in Brazil (44%) and the United States (43%), while the lowest usage was in France (29%) and Germany (27%).

Highest Usage

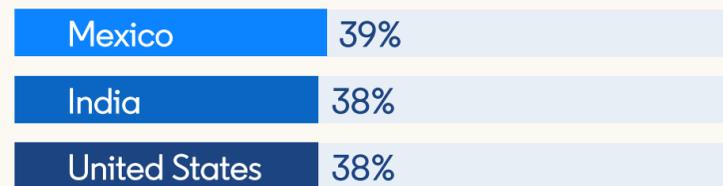


Lowest Usage

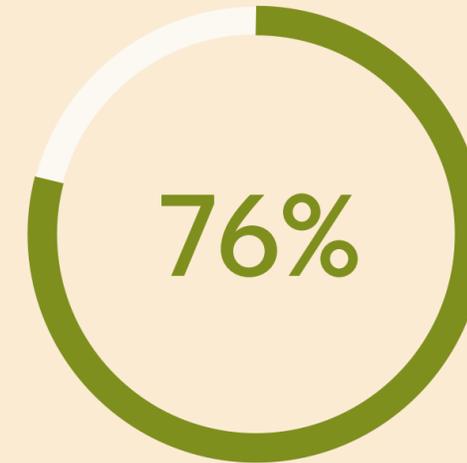
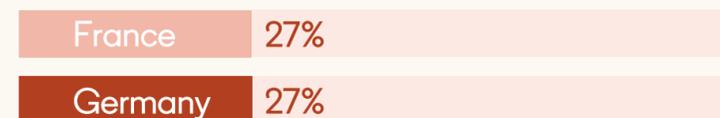


When it comes to email tracking tools, three countries use it at the highest rates: Mexico (39%), India (38%), and the United States (38%). Those countries showing the lowest levels of usage were Germany and France (both at 27%).

Highest Usage

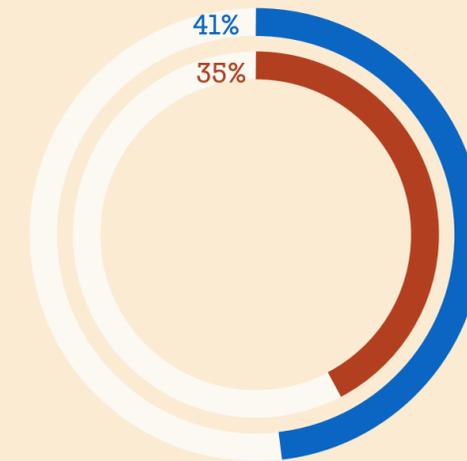


Lowest Usage



Sales intelligence tools specifically are viewed as invaluable.

Among global sales intelligence users, 76% described the tool as extremely critical or critical in closing deals.



The survey revealed a gap in usage of sales intelligence tools when comparing top-performing salespeople (41%) versus the remainder of respondents (35%). Among respondents using sales intelligence tools, LinkedIn products topped the list, with 65% using either LinkedIn.com, LinkedIn Premium, or LinkedIn Sales Navigator.

ENDURING TRENDS

Sales Technology Is Transforming the Sales Org

But even with its growing presence, sales technology is not yet fully transforming sales organizations, because it requires workflow integration and change management to truly achieve the benefits.

“Getting the most out of sales technology tools is more about effective utilization. Recent Korn Ferry studies have found that on average organizations were using 10 tools with an additional four planned over the next 12 months. The key will be to integrate all technologies together and to embed it within the sellers’ workflow, something less than **30%** of sales organizations felt like they had mastered.”

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

Sales teams, particularly at large enterprises, are evolving their organizational structures to help better integrate sales technology into their workflows. Many are building expanded Sales Operations teams in part to master sales technology and reap its benefits. The number of people in Sales Operations roles has more than doubled in the last two years, and increased **2.8X as fast** as the sales function overall.

The Takeaway:

Sales technology is an arms race, but it’s not just about purchasing technology: It’s about integrating the tools effectively into the selling process. Companies want these solutions to boost the efficiency of their teams and enable their salespeople to spend more time selling—currently only at **36%**—and less time on repetitive and administrative tasks. In fact, the competition for salespeople’s time is so high that they are turning to time management courses on LinkedIn Learning, ranking these courses among the most watched by salespeople.



ENDURING TRENDS

Trust Gets Deals Done

The Survey Said:

Edelman's Trust Barometer shows a clear lack of trust in institutions with the majority of respondents seeing corporations, the media, and government as unethical. Only NGOs (charitable organizations, such as the Red Cross, Greenpeace, and Oxfam) were the exception. In times of uncertainty, trust only becomes more important.

Not surprisingly, as organizational trust erodes, buyers seem to crave it even more. When asked what qualities they value in a salesperson, buyers across the 10 countries surveyed ranked "trustworthy" (43%) at the top, followed by "expert in the field" (36%) and "responsive" (34%).

Trustworthy

43%

Expert in the field

36%

Responsive

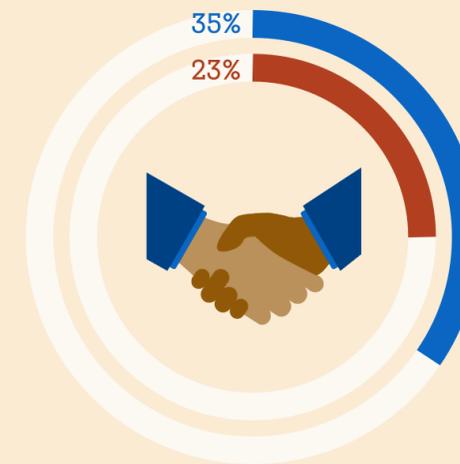
34%

In the survey, we asked buyers how sellers could put buyers first. Many cited "honesty" as a key component of this kind of approach:

- "Should be trustworthy and knowledgeable about my industry, and ready to listen to my problems and coach my team"
- "Knowledge of requirements, problem solving, confident, trustworthy"
- "Better service for customers and more absolute honesty"
- "Be honest with your work and give respect to your customer"
- "The salesperson is sincere in doing long-term business with my organization"

Buyers, however, often find the trust they seek in short supply.

Only 32% of buyers describe the sales profession in general as "trustworthy." Overall, buyers in five of the 10 countries surveyed ranked "trustworthy" their top word for describing the sales profession: United Kingdom, Germany, India, Australia, Singapore, and Brazil.



For their part, salespeople agree with their buyer counterparts about the crucial importance of trust. More than one-third of sales professionals (35%) ranked trust as the critical factor in closing deals and an additional 23% ranked it second. They ranked it higher than factors such as price, ROI, and strategic counsel in getting deals done.



With salespeople and buyers agreeing about the value of trust, it's comforting that our survey indicates that successful salespeople do win the trust of buyers—88% agree that the salespeople they ultimately buy from are "trusted advisors."

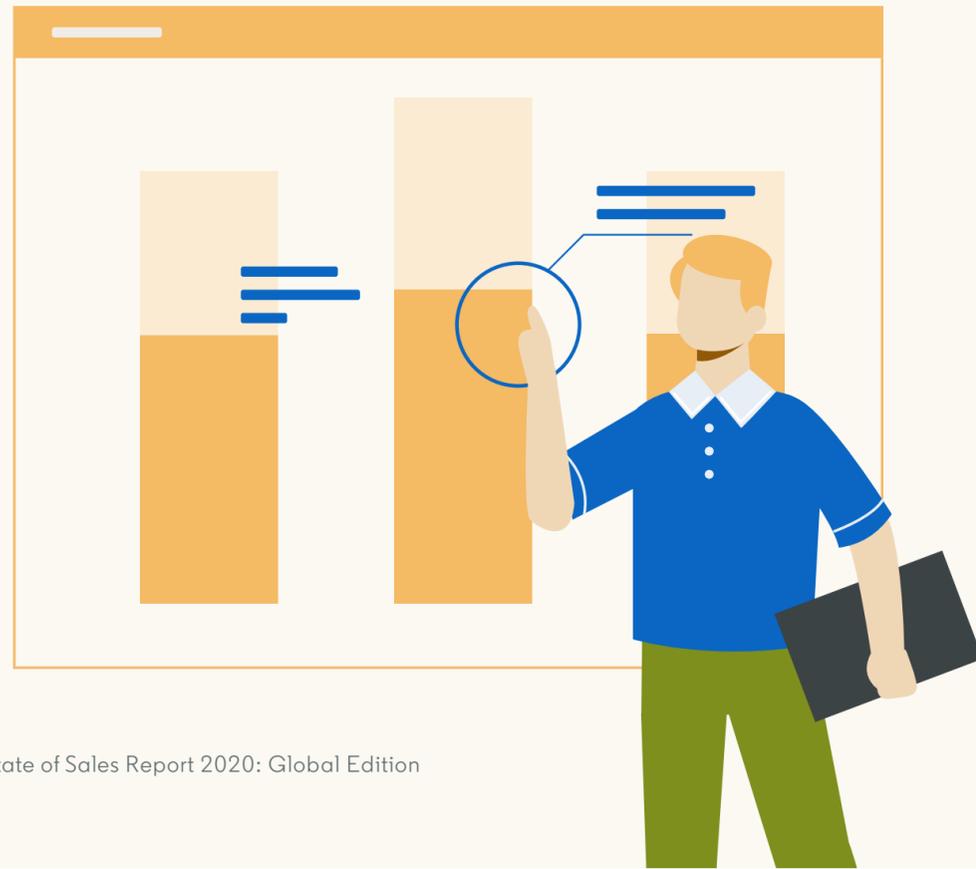
ENDURING TRENDS

Trust Gets Deals Done

The Takeaway:

“In these times, customer trust of their business partner is becoming more critical. Unfortunately, sales organizations will have limits in terms of historical trust building activities due to the lack of access. To be successful, sales reps will need to develop new selling motions to build trust using both information and data. Then, reps will need to understand how to share these outputs during customer interactions. The result is a need to rethink what sellers do and the competencies they require to succeed in this new world.”

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



Our survey offers some hints about how sellers can meet these increased expectations and start to build deeper relationships over time that ultimately lead to trust. Buyers “strongly agree” or “agree” that they’re more likely to consider a brand when a sales rep:

“Demonstrates a clear understanding of our business needs and has a clear understanding of my role in the decision-making process”

97%

“Provides personalized communication”

93%

“Shares content applicable to my role in the decision-making process”

92%

“Targets appropriate people at my company for initial discussions”

92%

The bottom line:

Building trust begins even before a salesperson makes the first outreach to a buyer. By being prepared about who the buyers are, what they need, and what roles they play in the buying process, sellers can start developing trust from the first interaction.

ENDURING TRENDS

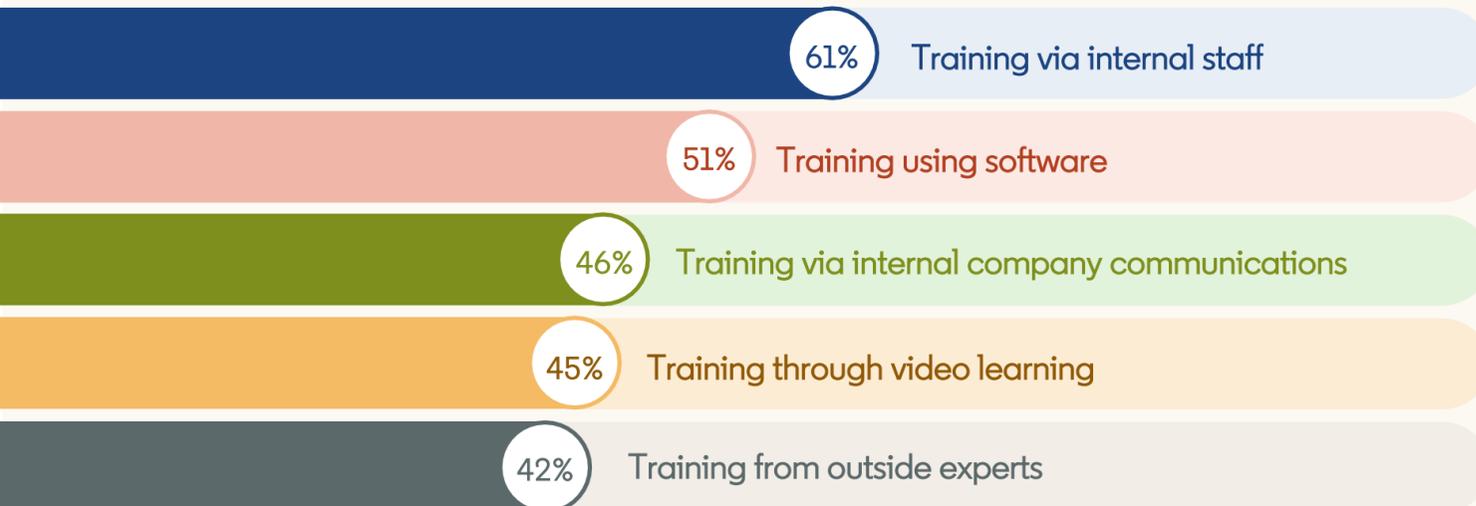
The Challenge of Building a Sales Team with the Right Skills

The Survey Said:

The increasing usage of virtual selling is demanding new skills among salespeople. The demand for upskilling can be seen from the **2.8x** higher proportion of salespeople who spent time on LinkedIn Learning compared to other global working professionals in 2019. That said, are sales managers hiring for the traits that buyers want?

The answer is Yes. And No.

Many managers are adapting to change by empowering their teams through coaching and training. The main way managers educate or train their teams is via internal staff (**61%**). More than half of managers (**51%**) also call upon software training. Rounding out the top five were internal company communications (**46%**), video learning (**45%**), and training from outside experts (**42%**).



Not all sales reps are aligned with their managers.

Across countries, we see a wide range when it comes to sales rep interest in training and coaching. Reps in India (**44%**) and Mexico (**43%**) showed the highest levels of interest in training, while those in France (**23%**) and Germany (**18%**) showed the lowest. With regards to coaching, sales reps in France showed the most interest (**45%**) and those in the United Kingdom the lowest (**24%**).



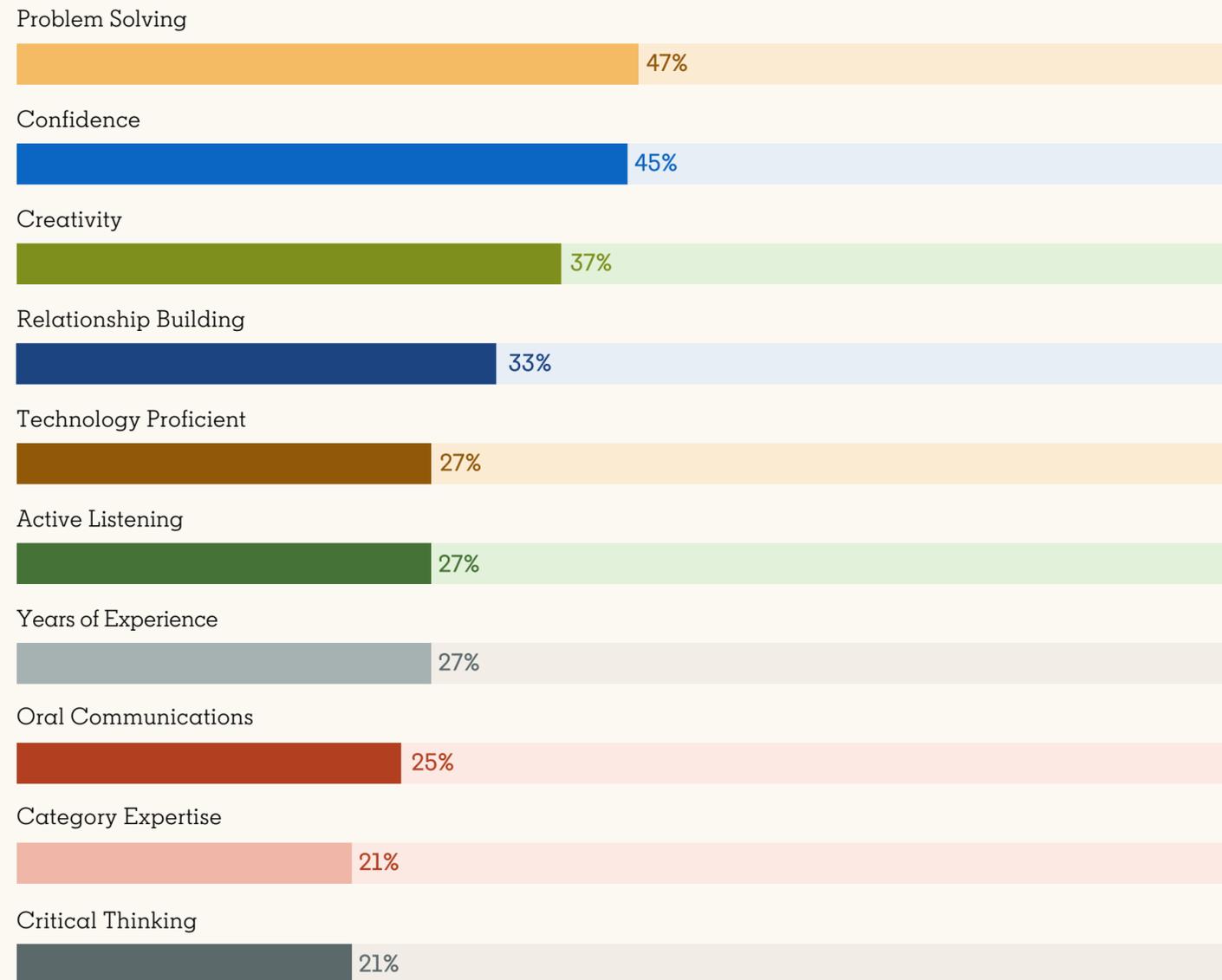
The top sales group across all countries spends more time in training with their managers (**38% vs. 29%** of their counterparts) and in coaching sessions (**34% vs. 29%**). Moreover, **41%** of top sales reps say they would choose training as where to spend the most time with their managers (**vs. 33% of average performers**).

ENDURING TRENDS

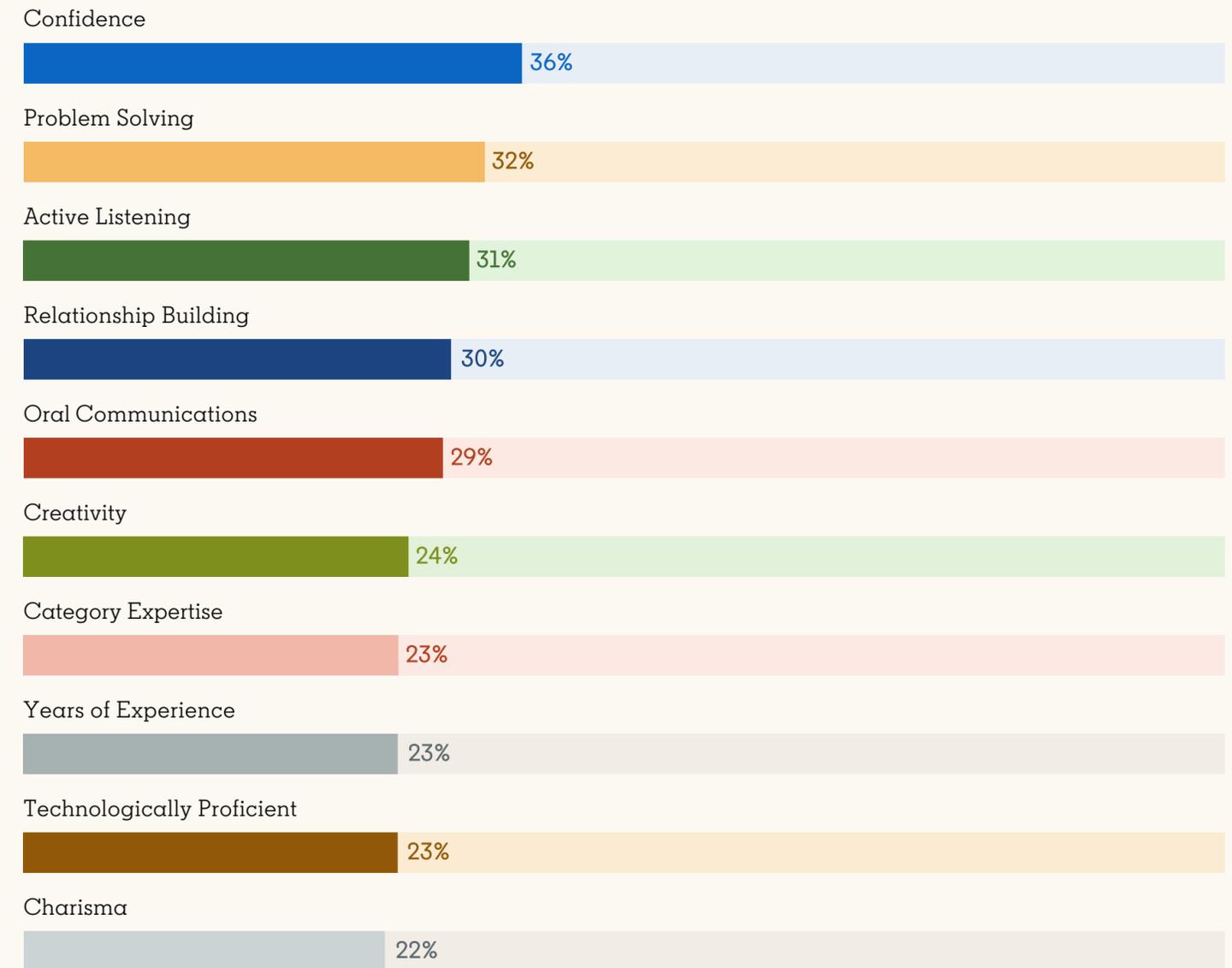
The Challenge of Building a Sales Team with the Right Skills

Let's compare the 10 characteristics buyers around the globe desire from salespeople with characteristics that sales managers look for in the sales reps they hire.

What Traits Buyers Value in Salespeople



What Traits Sales Managers Value in Salespeople



ENDURING TRENDS

The Challenge of Building a Sales Team with the Right Skills

The Takeaway:

Among the top six traits for both decision makers and sales managers around the world, there is agreement on three: problem solving, confidence, and relationship building. In fact, while the traits appear in a different order, both buyers and managers list the same traits in the top nine positions. That's strong evidence that sales managers are largely hiring for the skills buyers want.

Managers could further improve their alignment with buyers by prioritizing “technologically proficient” (at No. 5 for buyers and No. 9 for managers) and “critical thinking” (No. 10 for buyers but not on the list for managers) in their hiring.



ENDURING TRENDS

What Top-Performing Salespeople Do Differently

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

LinkedIn's survey provides some insight into a handful of things that successful salespeople—in this case reps who reported they reached **125%** of their quota or above—do differently from their counterparts. **Here's what we learned:**

1. Sales Technology

Top-performing salespeople were more likely than other salespeople to use three sales technologies in particular: sales intelligence tools (**41% vs. 35%**), email tracking tools (**40% vs. 31%**), and 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 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, the research revealed a 26-point difference between top sellers and others in considering CRM extremely critical to closing deals (**50% vs. 24%**). This may help explain why **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%**.

2. CRM Data

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.



ENDURING TRENDS

What Top-Performing Salespeople Do Differently

3. 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 aligns with how high-performing sales managers prioritize time with their teams. 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.

4. Establishing Trusted Relationships

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.

5. Leads from Marketing

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

A blue graphic with a white percentage '53%' inside a white-bordered shape.

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

A blue graphic with a white percentage '89%' inside a white-bordered shape.

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?

ENDURING TRENDS

What Top-Performing Salespeople Do Differently

The Takeaway:

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 mid-level 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



ENDURING TRENDS

The Expanding Role of LinkedIn

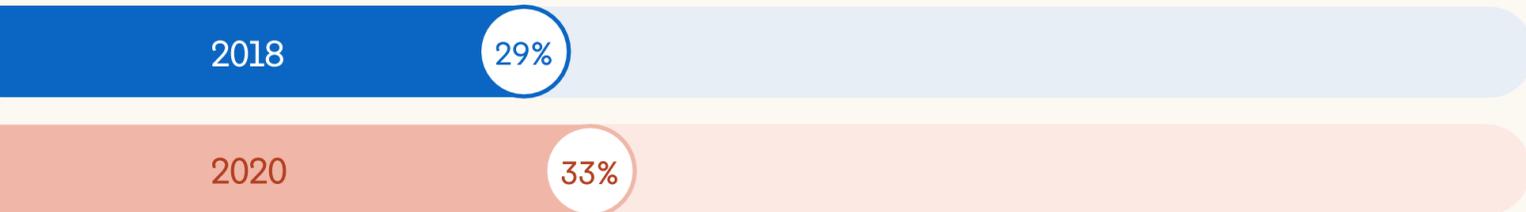
The Survey Said:

For both buyers and sellers, LinkedIn has become an intrinsic part of the buying and selling process. Our platform is likely to become even more central with conferences, travel and face-to-face meetings limited.

Seventy-eight percent of buyers say it's important for a salesperson to have an informative LinkedIn profile. This feeling was higher among buyers in five of the 10 countries surveyed: India (92%), Brazil (86%), Australia (84%), Mexico (83%) and France (80%). Even among the remaining five countries, buyers feel an informative LinkedIn profile is important at high percentages: United States (75%), United Kingdom (73%), Germany (73%), Singapore (72%), Canada (70%).

The percentage of buyers who “strongly agree” that an informative LinkedIn profile is important for salespeople has increased over the various editions of the State of Sales survey.

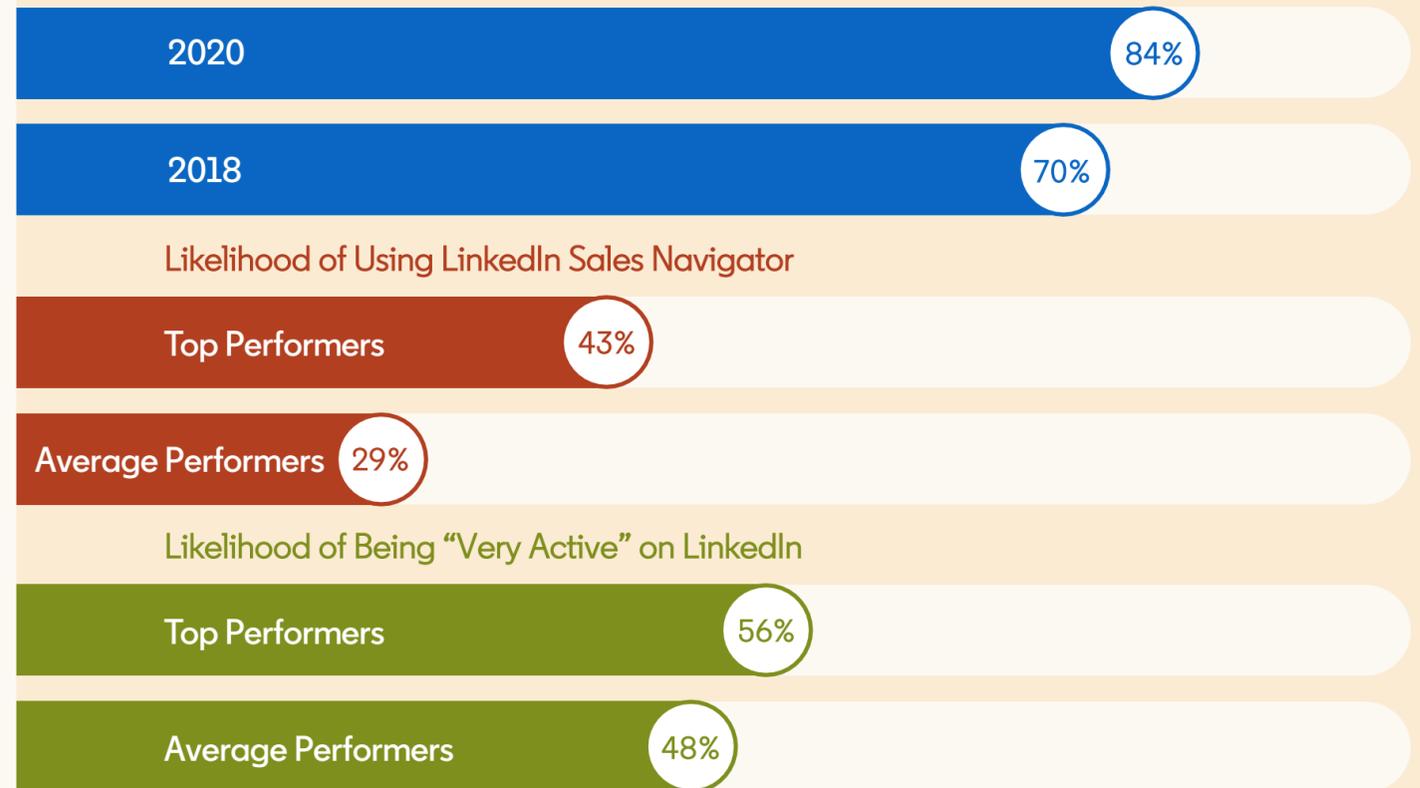
In 2018, 29% of buyers said they “strongly agree” with this need and 45% said they “agree”. This year, that figure jumped to 33% (again with 45% saying “agree”).



Like their buyer counterparts, salespeople are also perceiving that LinkedIn delivers significant advantages.

The survey found that LinkedIn is the platform where salespeople are most active with 84% being active on it. That's up from 70% just two years ago. Additionally, top performers are significantly more likely to use LinkedIn Sales Navigator (43% to 29%) and more likely to be “very active” on LinkedIn (56% to 48%).

Salespeople Active on LinkedIn

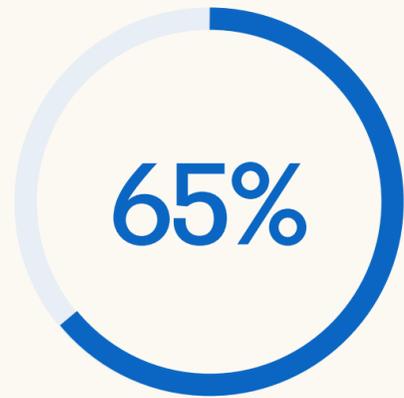


ENDURING TRENDS

The Expanding Role of LinkedIn

Salespeople see LinkedIn as delivering unique data to help inform sales strategy.

Fifty-three percent of sales professionals said LinkedIn provides unique data.



The survey also showed that, among respondents using sales intelligence tools, LinkedIn products topped the list, with **65%** using either LinkedIn.com, LinkedIn Premium, or LinkedIn Sales Navigator.

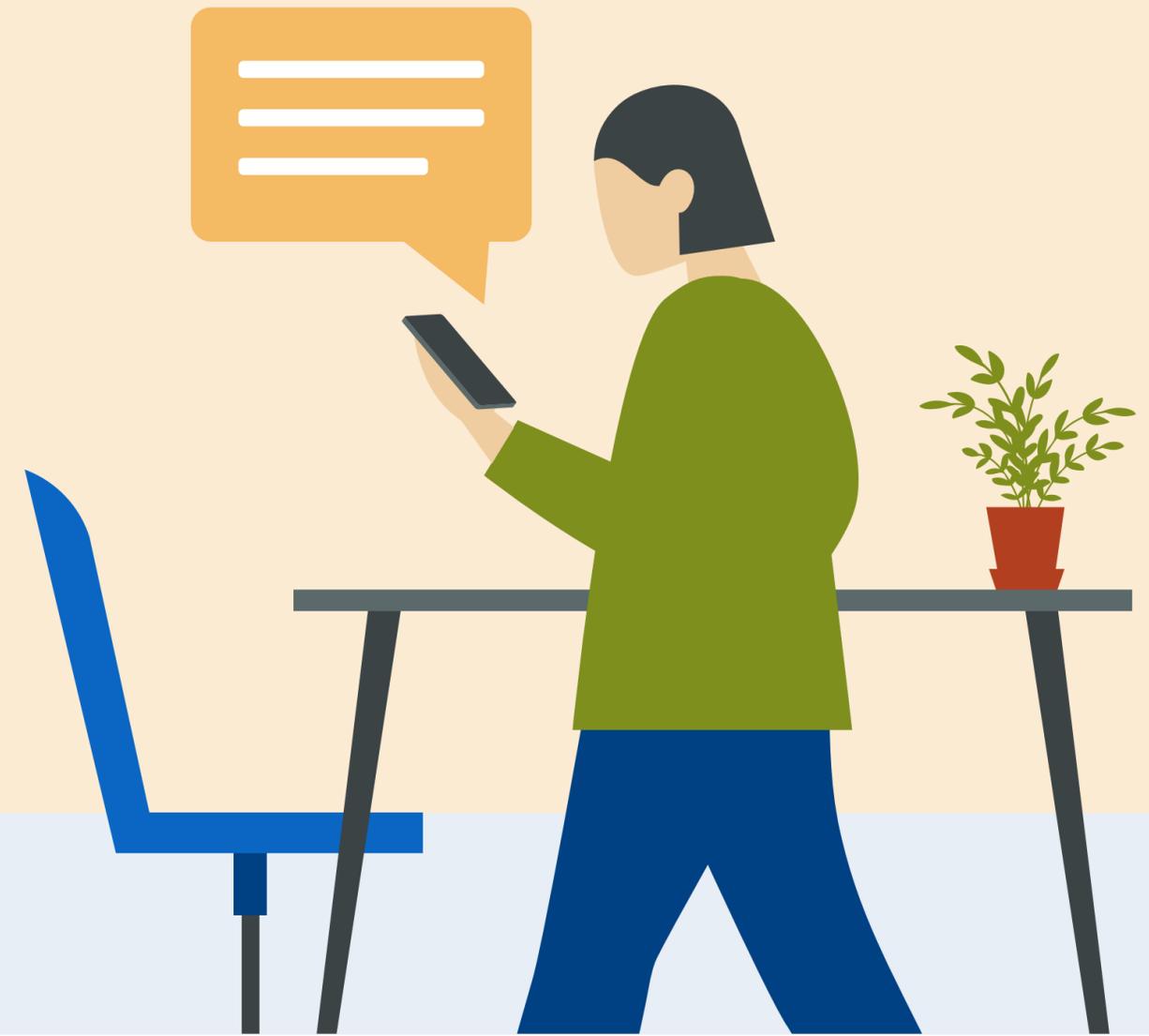
The Takeaway:

In the sales process, the use of LinkedIn goes both ways.

Buyers are visiting the LinkedIn profiles of sellers as one of the steps in the process of sizing up the salespeople calling on them.

For their part, sales professionals are using LinkedIn and LinkedIn Sales Navigator to gain a holistic understanding of their prospects, customers, and the complete buying committee.

For many buyers and sellers, LinkedIn is becoming an indispensable part of the buying process. Expect its importance to continue to grow in the coming years as the Gen Z and Millennial generations, who grew up with social media, take over the business world.



Conclusion

For sales organizations around the world, change is here to stay. The impact of the coronavirus has introduced new, emerging trends. It has also accelerated the rise of other, enduring trends.

In the world changed by coronavirus, sales managers understand that the organizations they lead are changing fast. To lead a sales org through this change and ensure it thrives in the future, sales managers and Sales Operations leaders must embrace and act on:

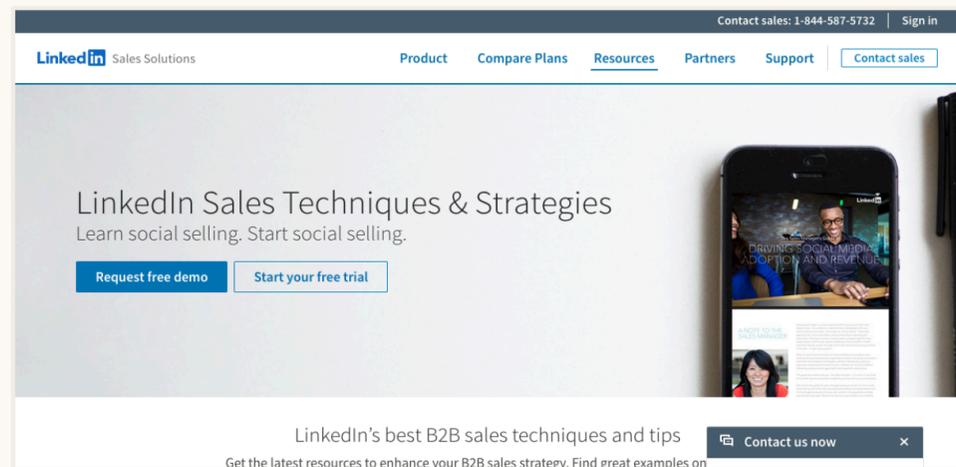
- Long-term metrics are stepping to the forefront.
- The data-driven sales org is on the rise.
- Sales technology is transforming the sales org.
- Trust gets deals done.
- Building a sales team with the right skills remains challenging.
- Top-performing salespeople do things differently.
- LinkedIn plays an expanded role for buyers and sellers.

Incorporating these changes into your sales organization will prepare you for the future that is approaching faster every day.

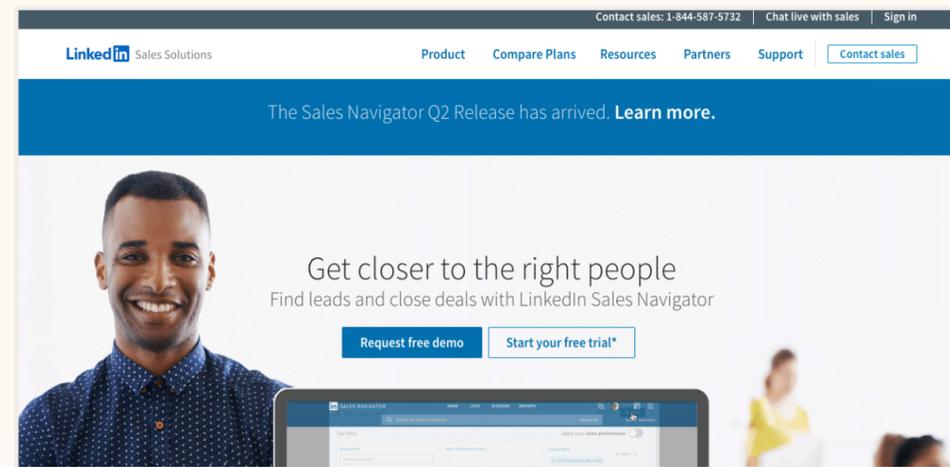


To learn more about the state of sales, LinkedIn recommends the following resources:

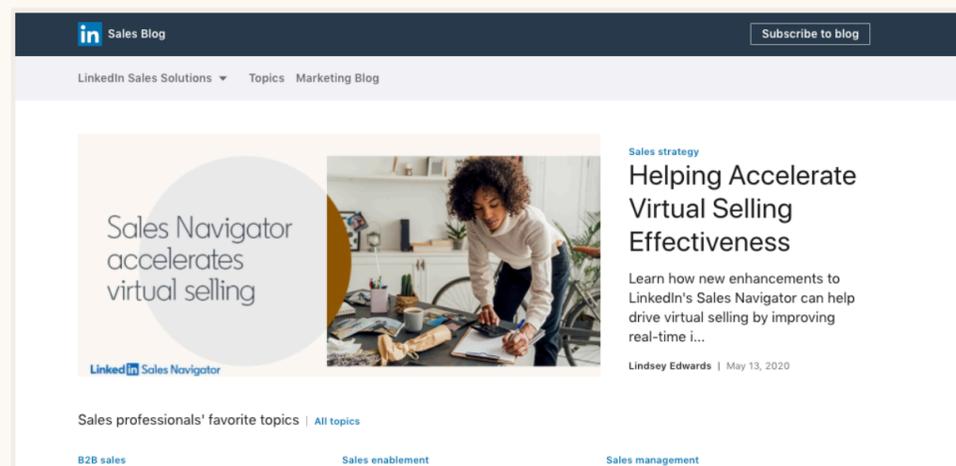
The Real Sales Resource Page



LinkedIn Sales Solutions Website



The LinkedIn Sales Blog



The LinkedIn Coronavirus Resource Hub

