

# The State of Sales 2019



India Edition

**LinkedIn**

# Want to know what really makes the difference?

We surveyed the most successful B2B sales professionals in India to find out what technologies and trends are helping the top **10%** smash their quotas.

I've been leading sales and marketing professionals across the Asia Pacific region for over 10 years and selling has never been more challenging. Highly personalised services like Netflix and Amazon are driving customers to expect more from the brands they interact with, including those with B2B sales teams. Millennials, who have especially high expectations for personalisation, are gaining influence in the workforce and will make up 46% of professionals by 2020.

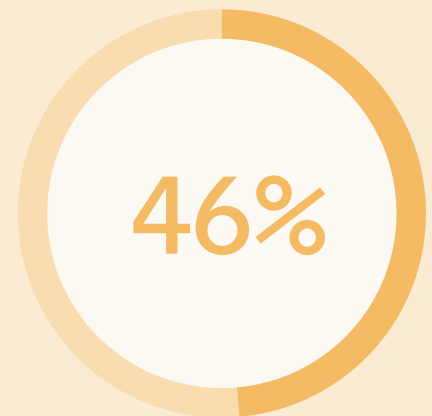
India is historically a relationship-based sales environment where referral selling is key. We know one of the best ways to win new deals is when a top customer moves to a new company. But with an increase of decision makers changing jobs, the challenge to track them down when it happens is now harder.

Through modern selling tactics, you can now get notified when your top customer and decision maker moves to a prospect account. Sales Navigator enables you to continue engaging with them at the right time. For India— where relationships are a cornerstone— that means building and maintaining credibility. I've personally seen deals in India close in record time with the use of sales technology.

Not only do we know how the best sales people are hitting their numbers here in India, but this research was part of a global survey of over 2,500 responses. This means we're able to see how some of the macro trends can be harnessed in this part of the world.

**Read on for key findings.** I'm keen to see how you'll use these insights to boost your sales performance.

“ Millennials, who have especially high expectations for *personalisation*, are gaining influence in the workforce and will make up



of professionals by 2020.”

# Executive Summary: 5 key findings in India

1

## **Technology gives sales professionals a competitive edge.**

Almost all sales professionals (94%) use sales technology to close more deals.

2

## **Decision makers expect understanding and human connection.**

Virtually all decision makers (98%) say they're more likely to consider a brand's products or services if sales professionals have a clear understanding of their business needs.

3

## **Marketing and sales orchestration helps close deals, but data silos remain.**

Almost all sales professionals (99%) indicated they work closely with the marketing department in prospecting efforts. We discovered that top sales professionals work more closely with marketing compared to regular sales professionals (78% vs 51%).

4

## **Millennial sales professionals tap into marketing insights at higher rates.**

Millennials (ages 21-38) are quicker to implement new strategies like marketing and sales orchestration.

5

## **Without trust, fewer deals close.**

Sales professionals ranked trust as the No. 1 factor in closing deals— with 55% of decision makers ranking it as the top quality they desire in a salesperson.





## CHAPTER 1

Sales technology  
is the x factor  
for closing deals

# Sales technology is the x factor for closing deals

**Businesses are increasingly investing in sales technology.** In particular, sales teams are turning to cloud-based software to accelerate productivity, gather contextual details about customers, and automate tedious tasks.

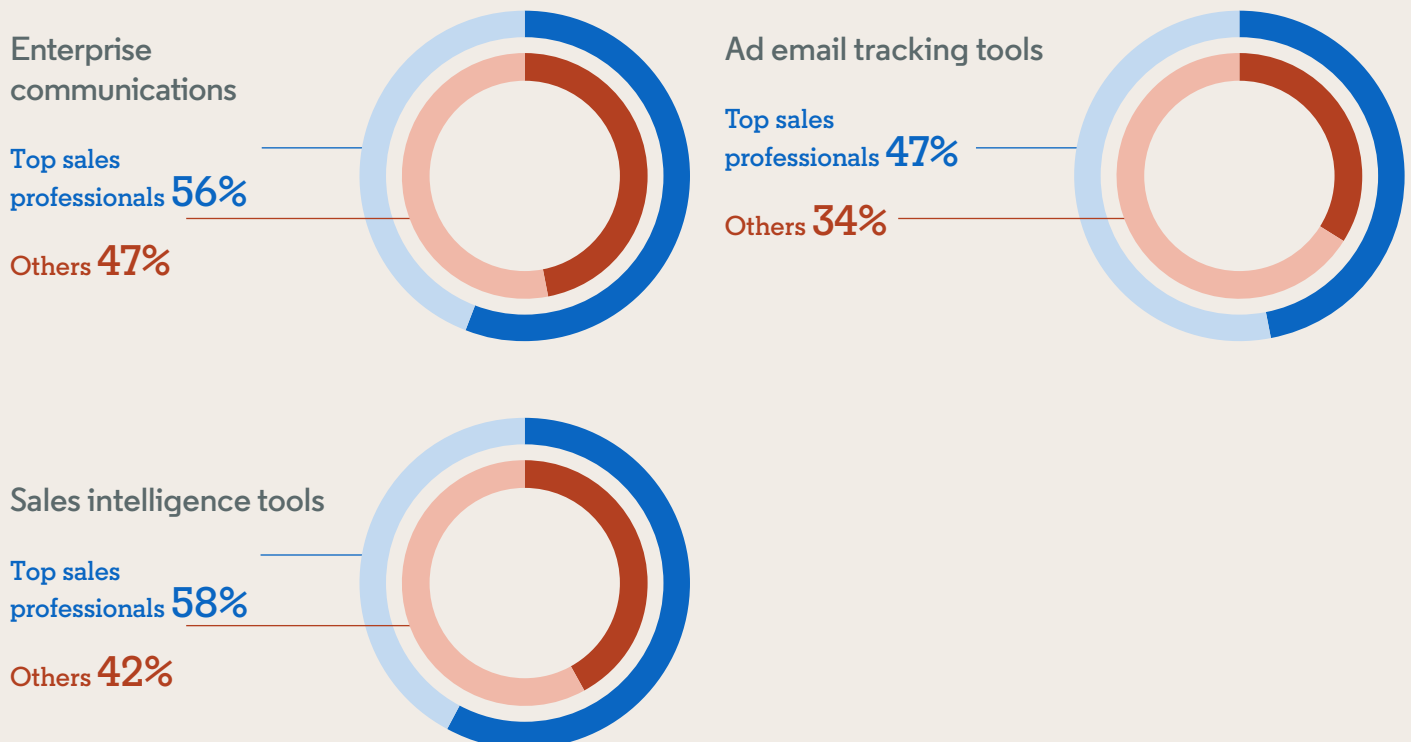
Almost all sales professionals (**94%**) use technology to close more deals in India. Of this group, **99%** consider sales technology important. The majority of sales professionals (**70%**) say they're spending more time using technology this year. CRM adoption alone has grown, with **77%** of sales professionals describing CRM applications as critical.

The top sales professionals used sales technology more often with **72%** indicating they use it "a few times a week or more" as compared to only **54%** of their peers.

With sales technology on the rise, it's no surprise that companies are pouring more resources into equipping their sales teams with these tools. Close to three-quarters (**71%**) of sales professionals expect their companies to invest more money on sales technologies next year.

## How important are these sales technology platforms in closing deals?

Sales professionals who rely on sales technology outperform their peers. Here's how top sales professionals differ from their peers when rating the technology platforms they consider "very important" or "important" to closing deals.



Social platforms are table stakes for the modern seller

93%

of sales professionals say they're active on LinkedIn for business purposes. This is compared to other social media platforms like YouTube (88%), Twitter (80%), and Instagram (79%).

## Technology usage is up across multiple platforms

74%

Almost three-fourths of sales professionals (74%) use CRM tools like Salesforce and Microsoft Dynamics.

58%

58% use collaboration tools like Box, Google Docs, Microsoft Office and Dropbox.

59%

59% use networking platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook.

58%

58% use enterprise communication platforms like Salesforce Chatter and Twitter.



## CHAPTER 2

Sales technology  
is ineffective without  
a human touch

# Sales technology is ineffective without a human touch

**Personal connection matters.** As beloved B2C brands have conditioned everyone to expect highly personalised recommendations, decision makers have embraced similar expectations of the B2B path to purchase. Conventional sales approaches don't stack up—buyers now find them cold, impersonal and obviously automated.

As a result, decision makers are more likely to consider a brand's products or services when the experience is personalised. For instance, if a sales professional has a clear understanding of their business needs (97%) or their role (98%); if they share content relevant to their role (97%); provide personalised communication (95%); or target the appropriate people at their company for initial discussions (97%).

Decision makers are more likely to engage with sales when introduced through a mutual connection, particularly if the sales professional represents a strong brand. **The influence of a strong brand (56%) ranked as the No. 1 factor** cited by decision makers when choosing to engage with sales.

## Which factors most influence decision makers in an initial engagement?

56%

Representing a well-known company with a strong professional brand

50%

Providing specific information relevant to their current job

55%

Mentioning the sales professional's company and product solutions

41%

Referencing a colleague they both know

34%

Having good charisma





# 39%

of decision makers say **websites** are a company's top asset to influence a purchasing decision.

Decision makers are least likely to engage with sales professionals based on how they present themselves in online profile pictures (78%), whose products or services are irrelevant to their company (69%), and who lack knowledge about their company (68%).

**Online first impressions matter.**

*Thirty-nine percent of decision makers say a company's website is the top marketing asset influencing their purchasing decisions.*

## Which top marketing assets most influence purchasing decisions?

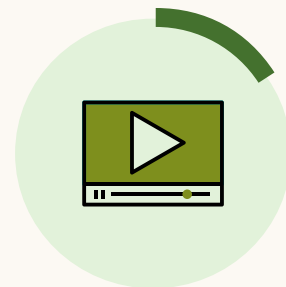
39% websites



24% events



16% videos



7% eBooks



9% blogs



5% webinars





## CHAPTER 3

# The sales and marketing divide diminishes

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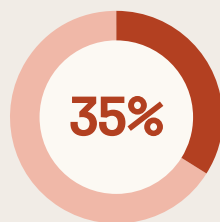
**Sales and marketing are starting to work more closely together**, benefiting both sales professionals and decision makers alike. Thirty-six percent of sales executives say they work more closely with marketing than in past years.

Top sales professionals have a stronger relationship with their marketing counterparts. They are **27%** more likely to say they work “very closely” or “closely” with marketing in prospecting efforts than their peers.

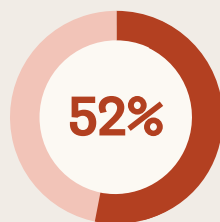
On a scale of 1 (a very small role) to 10 (a very big role), **90%** of the top sales professionals rate marketing’s importance in closing deals at an 8 or above. Of that, **52%** gave them a rating of 10.

**Still, the data divide remains.** While many sales and marketing teams are keen to partner more closely, data is often siloed in the technology platforms used by each function. Only **35%** of sales professionals say they see significant overlap in the data used by marketing and sales to target prospects.

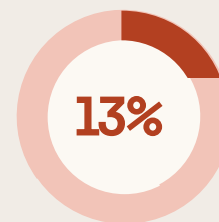
## To what degree does marketing and sales data overlap to target leads?



Lots of overlap



Some overlap



Little or no overlap

This misalignment doesn’t impact the quality of leads sales professionals say they receive from marketing. About **96%** say leads from marketing are excellent or good. This view was shared between top sales professionals and their counterparts at **48%** each.

**Marketing and sales misalignment impacts brand perception.** Ninety-seven percent of decision makers

say consistent marketing and sales language about a product is important.

However, three-quarters (**82%**) say they often or ‘most of the time’ experience different messaging from sales and marketing when learning about a solution.



## CHAPTER 4

Millennials are  
eager to orchestrate  
marketing and  
sales efforts

# Millennials are eager to orchestrate marketing and sales efforts

## Millennials are quicker than other age groups to use new strategies and technologies.

These younger sales executives mirror the technology usage of the most successful sales professionals at the highest rates. Seventy-three percent of millennials say they anticipate spending more time this year using sales technology. On the other hand, 61% of non-millennials say they anticipate investing more time this year compared to last year.

**A tight-knit relationship with marketing is paying off for millennials**, who tend to outperform non-millennial sales professionals. Millennials are **59%** more likely to say they work “very closely” with marketing.

This partnership has strengthened over the past year. As for millennial top sales professionals, **11%** more

likely than non-millennials to spend more time working with marketing.

In turn, millennials say they see excellent leads from marketing at **17%** higher rates than non-millennials.

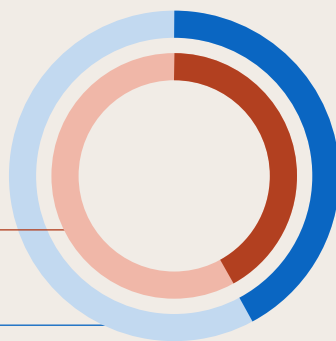
## How did 2017 sales performance compare by generation?

While millennials are eager to adopt sales technologies, non-millennials remain neck-and-neck with millennials in exceeding projected revenue by over 50%.

Exceeded their 2017 projected revenue by over 50%

**Non-millennials 42%**  
*(Baby Boomer and Gen X)*

**Millennials 42%**



Millennials credit a larger portion of their success to sales technology. **Forty-three percent** of millennials think CRM applications are “extremely critical” to their success, compared to **39%** of non-millennials.

However, both millennials and non-millennials agree that sales intelligence solutions are critical (**43%** and **42%** respectively).



## CHAPTER 5

Trust is the top  
indicator for  
sales success

# Trust is the top indicator for sales success

***In India, earning and maintaining trust remains important as consumer skepticism of big brands peak.***

We found that sales professionals say trust is very important to winning new business. About **32%** rank trust as the most important contributor to closing a deal—even above ROI of the product or service (25%) and price (12%).

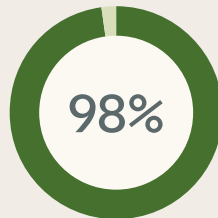
**Fifty-five percent** of decision makers rank trust as the **No. 1 factor** they desire in a salesperson, followed by responsiveness (44%), expertise in the field (38%), problem solving (38%) and transparency (36%).

## Sales professionals earn high marks from buyers

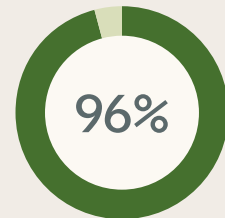
We asked how decision makers perceive sales professionals. The answers were positive:



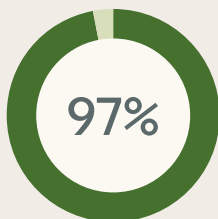
***A professional business contact***



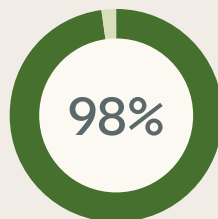
***Well-informed about the industry***



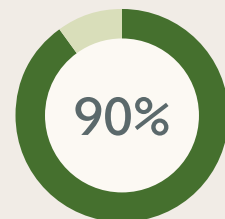
***Consultative***



***Well-informed about specific companies***



***A trusted advisor***



***Focused on building relationships***

# 86%

A great percentage of decision makers (86%) feel that the sales professionals they work with are essential partners all or most of the time.

# Conclusion

Today's selling landscape comes with heightened consumer expectations and skepticism—without a personalised purchasing experience, you'll quickly lose buyers' interest.

That's why it's important to implement a modern selling strategy: tap into technology at scale, lean into marketing to align insights, but not forgetting that real human connections are irreplaceable. Top sales professionals are closing more deals on a foundation of trust. Relationships are still at the heart of selling.

This approach will enable you to better target prospects, personalise experiences and meet buyers' expectations in 2019.

# Methodology

Market Cube, a research panel company, conducted two online surveys from October 23 – November 13, 2018.

For 2018, two sample groups were surveyed representing both sales professionals and decision makers. The first was a sample of 500 professionals from India who primarily work in B2B sales. The second was a sample of 502 business decision makers from India who have influence over purchasing decisions at B2B companies. Both samples include respondents over 21-years-old who are employed at companies of different sizes and functions.

The report also references a group of "top sales professionals" who are defined as sales professionals who exceed their sales target by at least **25%**.

[Try the Sales Navigator Demo](#)

