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The Future of Sales

SPECIAL REPORT

How top sellers separate themselves from the pack

Unparalleled intelligence.
Unequaled results.

Sales leaders unleash selling superpowers with the robust capabilities of LinkedIn.

LinkedIn Sales Navigator

The Wall Street Journal news organization was not involved in the creation of this content

Convert connections for commercial success.



The Future of B2B Sales Is Here



Gail Moody-Byrd, Vice President, Marketing, LinkedIn Sales Solutions, examines the transformation of B2B sales over the past two years

The state of B2B sales has changed drastically over the past two years, and that has left too many sales organizations struggling to find their footing in this changed landscape. How does a leader assemble the right mix of technology, talent and skills to maximize organizational value?

“LinkedIn Sales Navigator is uniquely positioned to help CROs, CSOs, and CCOs arm their teams with unparalleled intelligence to power the world’s best commercial organizations.”

LinkedIn’s 2022 State of Sales report, based on a survey of 14,000 sales professionals, captures the current sentiment in the industry, identifies the winning ways of top performers, and recommends the principles that build high-performing sales teams.

The key takeaway from the report? Sellers who leverage dynamic intelligence about their buyers’ needs and timing are more likely to close deals.

Our survey finds that the seller-buyer dynamic has changed permanently, and confirms that a

more insightful, intelligent, selective approach is required to build successful sales teams.

Buyers today, many continuing to work remotely after the pandemic, have more information than ever – and, so, more power. They research products, read reviews, connect on sites such as LinkedIn, and get far into a buying decision on their own.

Buyers want to be understood, and hear from sellers who get their problems. They want a partner who can help solve those problems, without wasting their time.

Buyers hate spam and privacy intrusions more than ever. Anything that smells of cold-calling gets rejected. Yet nearly half of all sellers are still making cold calls and spamming prospects – and using technology that amasses emails and scrapes contact information to do even more of what buyers don’t want. That’s a recipe for frustration, and falling revenue for companies.

The most successful sales professionals know that selling today means understanding prospects’ challenges, their environment, and their timeline for purchasing new products.

They use data to gain accurate, timely, non-invasive intelligence on buyers’ wants and needs, build credibility and nurture customer relationships, to win permission to consult and help when buyers and buying committees want them to.



LinkedIn Sales Navigator is uniquely positioned to help CROs, CSOs, and CCOs arm their teams with unparalleled intelligence to power the world’s best commercial organizations.

LinkedIn is the only company with trusted first-party identity and intent data derived from the activity of our 830 million members, and the only company that can deliver valuable insights for sellers from our Economic Graph – our unique digital representation of the global economy.

It’s clear from our 2022 State of Sales Report that organizations that embrace account, relationship and buyer intelligence hit revenue targets with smarter, more efficient data-supported sales motions. Such sellers convert leads more efficiently, exceed quota, and grow revenue.

Sales Navigator is essential technology for sellers and sales leaders who want to sell the way buyers want to buy in 2022 and beyond. May our 2022 State of Sales Report propel you towards sales nirvana and send everyone to President’s Club in 2023!

LinkedIn Sales Navigator

Sell smarter and prosper.

The collective power of our data gives sellers the most comprehensive view of account intelligence, enabling outreach when it’s most welcomed.

How Sellers Are Winning in Today's Challenging New World

Sales have been remade – and top sellers thrive by using sales technology intelligently



Throughout history, technology has transformed the sales process.

At the dawn of the 20th century, new technologies such as the automobile and the telephone allowed sellers to knock on exponentially more doors and speak with more potential customers. As the century drew to a close, the advent of the internet and email enabled sellers to reach buyers at scale from their laptops and mobile phones.

These technological advances, however, also brought downsides for buyers. The rise of telemarketers made the do-not-call list a necessity. The proliferation of spam forced the creation of the CAN-SPAM Act.

The pandemic and the rise of remote work accelerated the proliferation of sales technology, such as CRM systems and sales intelligence tools. 91 per cent of sellers at large companies use sales tech once a week, according to LinkedIn's new 2022 State of Sales report.

Yet, in too many cases, the rise of sales technology has been frustrating for buyers. Sales tech often leads to sellers simply becoming more efficient at spamming potential buyers with messaging for products they don't need or aren't in the market for at that time.

This reality has created a buyer-seller divide. Many sellers are engaging in ill-advised outreach

simply because they can. For instance, early in the pandemic, HubSpot data found that sales teams boosted their email to prospects by 50 per cent. At the same time, response rates from buyers dropped to an all-time low.

So, the state of sales in 2022 is a paradox: The adoption of sales technology is at an all-time high, accelerated by the pandemic, while the success rate of much of that technology is at an all-time low.

Meanwhile, the most successful sellers use technology not to reach more prospects, but to make themselves more human and connected to potential and existing customers. Top performers bridge the divide between buyers and sellers.

The best sales leaders adopt technology to sell more intelligently and drive organizational value.



"Digital buying is here to stay, and sales organizations have to adapt to stay relevant and meet their customers where they are," says Steve Goldberg, CRO, SalesLoft.

Data gathered for LinkedIn's 2022 State of Sales report shows that the actions of top performing sellers show a better pathway to selling the way buyers want to buy. Here are three key ways that top performers bridge the gap:

1. Better targeting. The most successful sellers are effectively using technology such as sales intelligence tools. They don't use it to simply knock on more doors. Instead, they use it to knock on the right doors and deliver the right message at the right time.

2. Better organizational data. In a typical week, the most effective sellers spend 18 per cent more time than average sellers updating their CRM systems to ensure they fully understand the buying committee and the complexities of the organizations they are selling to.

3. Better time management. Top performers say they spend less time selling than average performers. Effective sellers spend more time using technology and data to research their buyers and to prepare for sales calls. In effect, they spend

less time on unproductive and potentially damaging blind outreach to buyers and instead leverage the tech stack to zero in on the prospects most likely to buy. Ultimately, the most effective sellers put their effort into the deals that data shows are the most likely to close.

In the end, top performers may spend less time knocking on doors, but they spend more time closing deals.

This vision of how B2B selling can improve is at the heart of LinkedIn's 2022 State of Sales report. It documents how the past two years accelerated the rise of virtual selling and the growth of the sales tech stack. Our data also shows that the sellers who use data to target accounts, build relationships, and understand buyer intent — are the ones who are thriving.

Here are the top three findings from the 2022 State of Sales report:

The pandemic disrupted the sales process — permanently and positively

For sellers (and the buyers they target), remote work has gone from rarity to commonplace in the past two years. Sellers have adjusted to a new reality of limited travel, fewer live conferences, and rare face-to-face meetings. In response, they've improved their outreach skills, with our data showing that sellers, by a margin of 88 per cent to 46 per cent, are far more likely to do warm calling than cold calling. Buyers love it. More than half of buyers (55 per cent) say that working remotely has made buying easier.

The continued rise of sales technology and data-driven selling

Sales technology permeates the modern sales organization. For the most successful sellers,

CRM systems and sales intelligence tools lead the way, while they avoid intrusive outreach that is often applied ineffectively. Successful sellers are far more likely than others to use sales tech weekly, embracing data in all its forms to make sure they're reaching out to buyers at the right

“Sales tech often leads to sellers simply becoming more efficient at spamming potential buyers”

time. With 86 per cent of sellers saying they have seen a deal lost or delayed in the past year by a decision maker changing roles, using sales intelligence tools and CRM systems to keep track of buyers has never been more crucial.

Top performers are thriving thanks to their intelligent use of technology

Top performers, those reaching 150 per cent of quota or more, are far more likely — by a margin of 82 to 47 per cent — than other sellers to do research “all the time” before reaching out to prospects. They're far more likely to use sales tech, to put buyers' needs ahead of theirs, and to leverage LinkedIn.

And they report that solutions such as Sales Navigator are crucial. The top-performing cohort is 37 per cent more likely than other sellers to say they plan to use sales intelligence tools, such as LinkedIn Sales Navigator, “significantly more” this year.

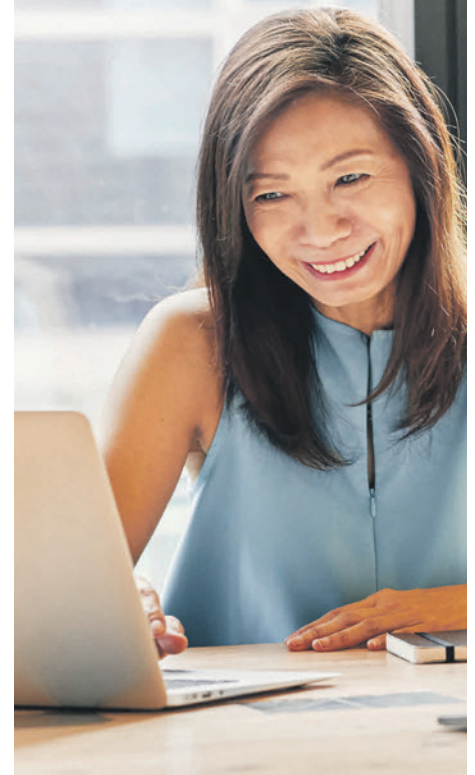
The bottom line? Top performers rely on data and technology in a way that uses available intelligence to craft relevant, timely and welcomed outreach to buyers. This approach helps high-performing sellers exceed quota, sales teams achieve revenue targets, and sales organizations thrive in the new reality of virtual selling.



With CRM systems and sales intelligence tools leading the way, technology is at the center of the virtual selling process

Informed outreach drives

more revenue.



Leverage the unique power of LinkedIn Sales Navigator to craft relevant, timely, and welcomed outreach.

LinkedIn Sales Navigator

Why Successful Salespeople Are Made, Not Born

Five key behaviors that separate top sellers from average performers



Top performing sellers are not born. They are made. Or rather, they make themselves by adopting key behaviors that guarantee sales success and power the world's best commercial organizations.

According to LinkedIn's 2022 State of Sales report, there are five distinct behaviors that the most successful sales professionals (those who reached 150 per cent of quota or more) adopt — that are actionable, repeatable, and scalable.

- Researching prospects
- Putting the buyer's needs first
- Multi-threading into their target accounts
- Working closely with marketing teams
- Using reliable sales technology to humanize buyer touchpoints

Any sales professional with the right discipline can achieve this, meaning any sales organization can elevate the performance of all its sellers.

Researching prospects

Salespeople who smash their target invest time in researching their prospects before contacting them. The LinkedIn 2022 State of Sales research shows that 82 per cent of top-performing sellers always research their prospects before reaching out. For sellers who simply meet their target, less than 50 per cent always do research first.

Better research brings sales success. A seller who understands what motivates a prospect will have a far better idea of what will trigger a positive response.

Putting the buyer's needs first

Top salespeople look for what their buyers want to achieve. They spend time understanding their buyers' goals and they make sure that their advice meets their buyers' needs.

Putting the buyer first boosts sales success. More than 70 per cent of top sales people always put their buyer's needs first, compared with just 39 per cent of other sellers.

Sometimes this means challenging the buyer's assumptions, because sellers have more influence on buyers than they think. Almost nine in 10 (89 per cent) of buyers say that they are more likely to purchase a product if the salesperson changes the buyer's way of thinking.

Multi-threading into your target accounts

The best sales professionals use social selling. Success in sales depends on who you know as well as what you know. Top salespeople connect with a range of people in their target organizations. When salespeople are multi-threaded and have four or more connections at an account, they are 16 per cent more likely to close a deal.

Since LinkedIn is the world's largest professional network, with more than 830 million professionals, it's no surprise that top-performing sellers spend twice as much time each week expanding their LinkedIn network than other sellers do.

Sales teams work closely with their marketing teams, with top sellers almost twice as likely as their peers to rate their marketing leads as "excellent." There are plenty of ways to align sales and marketing. For example, sellers can meet regularly with the marketing department. Sellers can share what questions prospects are asking, so the marketing team can create content that directly addresses key objections.

"Better research brings sales success. A seller who understands what motivates a prospect will have a far better idea of what will trigger a positive response."

Using reliable sales technology

The overwhelming majority (80 per cent) of top-performing salespeople use sales technology at least once a week, compared with only 58 per cent of their less successful colleagues.

Sales technology streamlines the sales process and aids top performers in better tracking the activity of their prospects. Top sellers manage their prospect and customer data diligently. For instance, by about 30 percentage points, they are significantly more confident in their CRM data than other sellers are.

Train your way to a high-performing salesforce

Today's top-performing sales professionals research their prospects and plan outreach based on account intelligence, relationship intelligence and buyer intent signals. They also make the most of insightful, data-driven sales technology, which builds efficiencies and helps them bridge the divide between buyers and sellers.

None of these behaviors are necessarily innate. Top sellers can be made and, with the right training, sales organizations can teach average sellers to perform like the top performers.

Sellers Are Warming up the Cold Call

Sales prospecting has pivoted from cold calling as sellers use research to warm up their outreach

Attitudes towards sales have changed. Buyers are wary of contacts from people they don't know, who may be scammers — or spammers.

Buyers are tired of unsolicited outreach from brands they are not interested in. Cold calls are far down the list of the outreach preferred by buyers, according to the LinkedIn 2022 State of Sales report.

That may explain why 88 per cent of sellers say they conduct warm calls — a call where the seller has done research before outreach.

Because buyers don't like cold calls, sales prospecting has been forced to evolve beyond traditional cold calling in order to bridge the gap between buyers and sellers. Large-scale, impersonal “spray and pray” sales tactics no longer work, with 90 per cent of B2B C-Suite executives reporting that they won't respond to impersonal outreach. To be successful today, sales professionals are relying on warm calls fueled by deep knowledge about the prospect account's decision-makers, top challenges, and existing technology stack.

The problems of cold calling

Many salespeople cut their teeth on cold calling. It's a crash course in handling rejection. But it can be very stressful: over half of sellers (63 per cent) say that cold calling is the worst part of their job.

More importantly, cold calling is inefficient. On average, cold callers dial 18 times before they reach a technology prospect. And when they do get through, they don't know how qualified the prospect is. Cold calling is just a numbers game: if you are lucky, perhaps one or two calls out of thousands will result in a first meeting.

Knowledge is power

Sellers can find a better pathway to success by taking time to understand their customers. To do this, you need a trusted source.

The more intelligence sellers have about a prospect account, the better they will be able to understand authority, need, timing and perhaps even budget. Information helps a salesperson prioritize accounts with the highest potential, avoiding wasted time and increasing conversions.

According to LinkedIn's 2022 State of Sales report, more than 82 per cent of sales professionals who crush their targets, reaching 150 per cent of quota, “always” use account, relationship and buyer intelligence prior to outreach. Only about half of sales professionals who merely meet their target “always” research their prospects first.

Understanding prospects leads to greater success. LinkedIn research shows that the top factor prompting a buyer to buy is whether the person selling is “informed about the buyer's company and business needs.”



The bottom line is that research, which is the foundation of warm calls, can empower your sales organization to create new business opportunities. Finding reliable sources of information is critical, and LinkedIn is the only effective source of information about sales prospects. As the world's biggest professional network, connecting over 830 million professionals, LinkedIn is the go-to source of truth for account mapping and personalized outreach.

How LinkedIn Sales Navigator Powers a New Way to Sell

Sales reps have only 5 per cent of a customer's total purchase time. With so little time, how can sellers capitalize on finding the right buyer, to engage in the right way at the right time?

Thankfully, the top-performing reps at every sales organization have figured this out. They don't blindly push every account through the same cadence of cold calls that don't resonate. Instead, they practice insight-driven selling. Here's how Sales Navigator can help entire sales organizations embrace this new approach:

Focusing on the right buyers

Top-performing sellers know their sweet spot, and they find buyers who fit into it.

Sales Navigator is the salesperson's gateway to more than 830 million professionals and over 58 million companies. It gives sellers access to the largest source of potential buyers in the world. And with over 40 search filters, ranging from company headcount growth to job titles to who's changed jobs in the past 90 days, sellers can pinpoint the exact set of buyers to target.

Identifying opportunities to reach out

Top sellers reach out at the right place at the right time. Lead Alerts, powered by real-time data from the LinkedIn network, notify sellers of when buyers have changed roles or companies, when they've engaged with content on LinkedIn,

and when they're in the news. Additionally, with LinkedIn-powered buyer intent signals, sellers can pounce on opportunities.

Finding warm paths in

They find creative ways to position themselves as trusted advisors. With shared connections and TeamLink, Sales Navigator empowers salespeople to unlock the value of their entire professional and company networks to help engage buyers through warm introductions.

Personalized outreach

The most effective sellers uncover what resonates with buyers. Sales Navigator delivers personalized icebreakers to sellers, and can highlight

shared education, work experience, and groups to build trust. Sellers get one shot at getting messages right — and they know that LinkedIn has the most accurate data on leads and companies.

Multithreading

They develop multiple relationships across an account, because they know multithreading prevents deals from going dark. AI-powered lead recommendations uncover additional potential members of buying committees, and collaborative account maps help salespeople stay organized across all their deals.

Learn more by visiting
[linkedin.com/futureofsales](https://www.linkedin.com/futureofsales)

Build deeper sales relationships.



Let LinkedIn's one-of-a-kind economic graph, with 830 million members and 58 million companies, provide your sales organization with unique capabilities to drive organizational value.

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