

How to Sell in 2024: Trends and Skills

November 25, 2023

Sales is an ever-changing and dynamic landscape. Every day, new products, services, and go-to-market strategies are emerging. Companies are faced with new customer preferences and trends, new ways of interacting with prospects, and new strategies for collecting leads.

To preserve revenue and customer loyalty, business leaders need to remain agile enough to adapt to this ever-evolving world. That's often why sales innovators are constantly assessing the market, to try and predict what processes and skills will be necessary in the years ahead.

While it's impossible to know for certain what the future might hold for salespeople, we can learn from the insights of thought leaders, and the patterns emerging in the modern world.

Here's what you need to know about selling in 2024.

How Will Sales Change in 2024?

Back in 2014, a leading sales expert, [Geoffrey James](#), shared his predictions on how sales would change over the next decade. Interestingly, many of his predictions do seem to resonate with the direction the sales space has been moving in.

For instance, James predicted that:

- **Companies will continue to hire more salespeople:** This certainly seems to be an accurate prediction. The growth of ecommerce and online business has led to a significant increase in the number of companies hiring sales people for various roles.
- **Sales processes will become more measurable:** Big data was already making its way into the sales sector back in 2014. Now, it's more important to companies than ever before. Data is now critical to personalizing and enhancing the sales process.
- **Sales people will become more specialized and professional:** Once again, this prediction appears to ring true, as sales people are beginning to specialize in specific areas, such as account-based selling, and industry-specific sales activities.

Of course, in the ten years that have passed since James' initial predictions, there have been various 'revolutions' that have given us a clearer view of what 2024 may look like. With that in mind, we're building on Geoffrey James' predictions, with our own list of key sales trends to watch in 2024.

Trend 1: The Rise of AI and Automation in Sales

Let's start with perhaps the most significant trend salespeople will need to embrace if they want to learn how to sell in 2024: AI and automation. Artificial intelligence has emerged as one of the most crucial tools in the salesperson's arsenal.

Offline and online business owners alike are using AI in virtually every part of the go-to-market strategy. AI tools help companies to analyze customer preferences and create marketing campaigns for specific segments. AI-driven systems assist with social media targeting, competitor analysis, and the monitoring and optimization of sales processes.

Automation is paving the way to more efficient and productive agents, allowing companies to streamline processes like cold calling prospects, and following up with leads. The use of AI and automation and AI in sales will only continue to grow in 2024.

In fact, research indicates that companies investing in AI are seeing a revenue increase of 3 to 15%, and an average [ROI uplift of 10 to 20%](#). AI doesn't just make teams more efficient, productive, and informed; it also revolutionizes how sellers use their time.

[Generative AI tools like ChatGPT](#) are already affecting how salespeople write outreach emails, respond to consumers, and conduct market research. Predictive intelligence is paving the way for rapid revenue growth and opportunity exploration. By 2024, there's a good chance AI and automation will be involved in virtually every aspect of the sales, marketing, and customer service journey.

Trend 2: The Impact of Social Media

The rise of the digital world, and the growing importance of social media has transformed how sales professionals conduct prospecting tasks and connect with consumers. In the last couple of years alone, countless reports have highlighted the benefits of social selling strategies.

[61% of organizations](#) engaging in social sales today say they've improved their revenue results. Additionally, sales professionals using social selling tactics close up to [40-50% more deals](#). Social media has changed the ways consumers search for products and solutions, placing an increased importance on influence and thought leadership.

Additionally, the introduction of ecommerce and sales tools into social media platforms has influenced how deals are closed on a comprehensive level. Companies can now use LinkedIn, YouTube, and various other channels to not only increase brand visibility and awareness, but also find and nurture prospects.

Most importantly, [social media](#) allows for the enhanced alignment of marketing and sales initiatives in the modern business world. Companies can create and optimize entire consumer journeys through social media. This is true for both B2C and B2B companies.

However, to optimize social selling efforts, companies and salespeople will need to leverage data and automation. Maintaining a comprehensive view of target and existing accounts throughout the sales, marketing, and customer service process will be crucial to increasing conversion rates, ROI, and customer

loyalty.

Trend 3: The Importance of Data and Analytics in Sales

In his 2014, report, Geoffrey James predicted that sales processes would become more measurable, thanks to the rise of big data. We believe in 2024, data and analytics will continue to play a crucial role in the development of sales processes.

The digital transformation of the world as we know it has unlocked the door to endless volumes of valuable data for business leaders and sales teams alike. We now have more tools than ever to help us understand the market, assess competitors, map customer journeys, and even determine buyer sentiment. With these tools, sales teams can create more powerful sales strategies.

However, data can also be the key to creating more productive sales teams, as business leaders can use technology to produce timely, accurate, and realistic forecasts. The key to unlocking the benefits of data and analytics in sales will lie within a company's ability to unify its insights.

A connected view of data across the customer journey is crucial to understanding how consumer buying decisions are driven. In fact, Salesforce says [81% of sales reps](#) believe a connected data view will be essential to their success in the years ahead.

This highlights a growing need for tools capable of integrating and analyzing information from various sources, for a more comprehensive view of customers. Sales analytics technology, customer intelligence systems, and CRM tools will likely become more advanced and unified going forward.

Developing Your 2024 Sales Strategy

So, based on these insights, predictions, and current sales trends, how can companies create a comprehensive sales strategy for 2024? After all, your sales strategy is crucial to guiding your teams and defining the critical metrics you're going to measure throughout the next year.

Here are some of the quick steps you can take to create an updated sales strategy plan.

1. Redefine Sales Objectives

If you want to sell in 2024, you need to rethink your sales objectives. Companies need to be more specific and 'Smart' with their goals going forward. It's not enough to say you want to capture more potential buyers. You need to determine what you want to achieve, and when.

For instance, do you want to increase your win rate by incentivizing sales objectives and teaching teams new sales skills? Are you hoping to reduce sales cycle times using automation and AI? Do you want to improve your lead qualification methods to reduce the time employees waste on the wrong prospects. Remember to set goals that are SMART:

- Specific

- Measurable
- Attainable
- Relevant
- Time-Bound

1. Learn More About your Target Market

Though automation and AI are growing more common in the sales landscape, that doesn't mean consumers are willing to accept an automated 'one-size-fits-all' experience. Personalization is becoming increasingly important in the modern world. Around [66% of companies](#) now expect companies to understand their unique needs and expectations.

Additionally, [76% of consumers](#) say they feel frustrated when experiences aren't personalized to their needs. Before moving into the next stage of your sales strategy in 2024, make sure you have a clear view of your ideal customer personas.

Rediscover their pain points, needs, preferences, demographics, psychographics and buying behaviors in the context of the modern world.

1. Re-examine the Competition

Competitor analysis has always been crucial to the development of an effective sales strategy. However, in 2024, it's going to be even more important to understand where you stand compared to other organizations in your space.

Remember, today's consumers have more opportunities to assess the offerings of competing companies than ever before. Now's the time to look at your competitors and what they can offer consumers in the years ahead. What are your strengths and weaknesses compared to these competitors? What are the risks and opportunities you need to be aware of?

1. Define Your Sales Tactics

Once you understand your objectives, target audience, and competition, you can start to explore potential sales tactics you might want to use in 2024. There are more ways to approach sales today than ever before. You might want to use account-based strategies to deliver highly personalized experiences to customers, or implement a new social selling technique.

Maybe you want to focus on aligning your marketing and sales teams, using valuable content to educate and inform potential customers. Knowing which sales tactics are likely to resonate with your customers going forward will help you to define what kind of new technologies and solutions you should be investing in, such as AI and automation.

1. Determine Essential Sales Skills for 2024

Finally, to ensure your sales strategy for 2024 is successful, you'll need to ensure you're providing employees with the [right skills](#), development opportunities and guidance. As virtual interactions become more common, you might need to invest more heavily in teaching your employees how to communicate

with prospects through tools like LinkedIn and direct messaging.

Other key skills you'll need to think about in 2024 include:

- **Emotional intelligence:** As AI takes over, consumers are increasingly looking for salespeople they can develop genuine human connections with. Helping your employees to develop better communication skills (such as active listening skills), and emotional intelligence will lead to the development of deeper relationships, and stronger brand loyalty.
- **Digital literacy:** No salesperson can escape the rise of innovative technology in today's landscape. Ensuring your employees know how to use the latest tools, from email automation, to ChatGPT for prospecting will be crucial. Invest in equipping your employees with the right hard skills to navigate the digital era.
- **Problem solving:** Sales cycles are becoming more complex, and an uncertain economy is driving more objections from consumers. This means salespeople need to be more effective at solving problems quickly and creatively.

Are Your Teams Ready to Sell in 2024?

While it's impossible to know for certain what the future of sales holds for today's companies, we can see some trends rising to the surface of the landscape. In 2024, sales cycles will be more data driven, companies will leverage more technology, and salespeople will need to become more empathetic, creative, and agile than ever before.

Need help preparing for the new era of sales? Join the [Hard Skill Exchange](#), to learn from industry experts and stay ahead of the latest trends.??

HSE Team