



Sales Teams Need a Transformation, Microsoft is Ready to Deliver

When it comes to sales and sales tech stacks, 2022 could be considered the best of times – or the worst of times. For any company with a sales arm, the possibilities surrounding tech seem limitless. Technology is now able to track endless amounts of data and deliver customer insights driven by any touchpoint throughout the customer journey. Salespeople can automatically send marketing messages via any channel – and make those messages personalized to the specific needs of the customer receiving it. On the flip side, the opportunity promised by multitudes of new players in the sales tech stack game haven't always paid off, for a variety of reasons. In many cases, data remains in silos. In other instances, processes need rethinking, and in others, it's unusual for technology solutions currently in place to be viewed as cumbersome.

Adding to that the fact that sales teams rely on manual data entry in their customer relationship management (CRM) systems, which many fail to do consistently. This can result in faulty insights and poor revenue forecasting, and it turns out the dream of an automated tech-led sales explosion isn't as easy or reliable as it might seem.

Regardless of how complex the current sales tech industry is, that hasn't stopped businesses from investing in it – and investing heavily. In 2022, [the global market for CRMs](#) was projected to be at \$63.91 billion. It's expected to grow to \$145.79 billion by 2029. But despite anticipated growth, it's unclear how optimally those CRM investments are being used.

In many ways, customers themselves are changing the sales game. We know that customers, whether B2B or B2C, are well-informed, self-directed, picky, connected, and generally speaking short on patience. Customers have a myriad of choices available to them whenever they want. And those traditional buying cycles for businesses? They've gone out the window. Sales has never been more challenging – making real-time customer insights even more important. Combine that with changing business models due to a global pandemic and a demand for greater data transparency, and salespeople have far more to deal with than a growing and changing tech stack. They need a tech stack that can grow and change with the world around it.

Common CRM Challenges Plaguing Salespeople

Every business today is dealing with massive changes – changes in the how, where, and when people work, changes in how customers shop, changes from disruptive business models popping up in their industries, and even changes in the ways they're allowed to track or store customer data. Amidst all of these issues, businesses are trying hard to work with CRM systems that may not be providing the insights they need at the time they need them – meeting the needs of management more than meeting the needs of sellers. Our research shows that some of the most common challenges facing sales teams today include:

Systems of record and systems of productivity are siloed. Business today is usually completed in two places: systems of record and systems of productivity. And while most decision makers want to believe that business is getting done in systems of record, the reality is salespeople spend more time in their productivity tools. The issue? These two systems are often siloed and don't integrate easily or even at all with each other.

Ineffective collaboration within the organization. One of the main struggles of relying on manual data entry in a CRM, sales teams only see the information presented. Without a complete customer history,

salespeople lack the ability to see who knows the customer, who has interacted with the customer, or even when the last interaction was. Without this information, salespeople are often flying blind.

New and changing customer expectations and pressures. It's no secret that technology has led customers to expect more from the brands they buy from – and brands aren't necessarily ready. According to a recent survey we conducted with Microsoft, 91% of brands feel that customers today are more digital than they anticipated. These "reimagined" customers put a higher value on things like convenience, trust, even brand reputation. They also value quality over price. That means salespeople aren't just facing a world with new sales technology – they're facing a world with customers who behave differently than any customer they've ever known.

Manual time-consuming processes limit productivity. Despite their advancement, many CRM systems bog salespeople down with time-consuming menial tasks like data entry. And because systems of record and systems of productivity are not often connected, as noted above, salespeople often are duplicating efforts across various platforms.

Systems are one-size fits all. Many tech companies have developed CRMs with the idea that any business or salesperson can use them. The problem is that most businesses have industry-specific sales needs. Monolithic sales tools don't work for every salesperson in every company. The one-size fits all approach to sales no longer works and the one-size fits all approach to technology doesn't either.

Inaccurate or incomplete data in a CRM. Perhaps most frustrating about CRMs is the fact that the data housed there is often inaccurate, incomplete, outdated – or all those things. Since most of the tools rely on manual data entry from salespeople – many of whom would rather be making a sale than recording the details – it's easy to see why data isn't reliable. And that can greatly impact things like revenue forecasting, customer engagement, and more.

Lack of AI or automations for the next best action recommendation. Regardless of how accurate their data may or may not be, many CRMs still often lack the AI power to create automated decisions or direction for the sales teams using them. Without the ability to automatically prioritize customers, determine pricing, or connect on a personal level, salespeople can struggle to operate at the optimal level. Ultimately, that means less productive salespeople, fewer sales, and less revenue overall.

Luckily, technology is starting to catch up to the complex needs of sales teams in every industry.

Sales Teams Today Need a New Vision

Recognizing the increasing changes in the global sales environment, sales teams need to reimagine their processes to drive better outcomes. Sales needs to be more productive. And vital customer data needs to be put to work. The good news? Sales teams don't have to do this alone.

We've been talking with the team at Microsoft about their new vision for the sales environment and exploring how they are thinking about the challenges posed and using those challenges to help drive change. What we all know for sure is clear: today's best in class CRM is no longer just a source of information – it's a gateway to action. Microsoft is focused on developing solutions that can help salespeople become more productive and we're looking forward to seeing those be introduced in the coming months. The things we know we can expect Microsoft's vision to include address some of the following:

Automation of menial tasks. Today we see massive amounts of customer data being entered into Excel spreadsheets, Word documents or stored in emails. The right kind of CRM solution allows salespeople to automatically collect that data and add it to right customer record in the CRM. Manual data entry needs to be a thing of the past.

Driving productivity with real-time insights. With accurate, up-to-date information, salespeople can gain real-time insights into where customers are in their journey. By empowering salespeople with

this information, they can better guide customers through the journey. This vision is about working smarter, not harder and eliminating the frustrations that sales teams currently experience with existing CRMs.

Optimize outcomes with recommendations.

Speaking of working smarter, not harder, adding AI-driven recommendations to sales processes is quickly becoming table stakes today. CRM solutions that provide sales teams (and customer service teams) with the next best course of action will enable more sales at a higher volume.

In essence, from what we're seeing so far, Microsoft's new vision is designed to be the bridge between systems of record and systems of productivity that will allow sales teams to perform their tasks even more productively and ultimately, achieve better leads, have better conversations, and experience faster growth. It's a whole new way of imaging the sales business.

Sales is Ready for a Transformation, Microsoft is Ready to Deliver

You're not imagining the fact that it seems as though offerings in the sales tech stack seem almost limitless. There have never been so many companies churning out so many solutions to help salespeople track customer data. But tracking and collecting data is just one part of the sales puzzle. Sales teams need to be able to act on that data quickly and intelligently. That's where Microsoft's new vision for the sales tech stack comes into play – and integration is key. The ability to integrate all elements of a CRM and seamlessly sync systems of record and systems of productivity, generate AI-driven actions, tips, and conversations is the next step companies need so that their CRMs truly work for them and simply and streamline every part of the processes involved. It's the next logical step for peak sales productivity and more growth opportunities. Who can say no to that? We're looking forward to seeing what's on the horizon from Microsoft on this revisioning and reshaping of the sales environment and if you're in sales, chances are good you are as well. Stay tuned!