

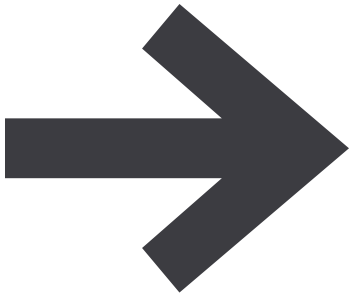
Report



The power of relationship selling

How leveraging technology and personal relationships means sales success for top organisations





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How are today's most successful organisations training and equipping their sales teams to deliver predictable, scalable results?

What separates today's most successful sales leaders from those with inconsistent results?

"We utilise Big Data in order to leverage insights and better understand what the customer needs and wants. This, in turn, allows us to direct our focus to areas of the relationship that need attention."

– CRO/COO



The power of relationship selling

Today we live in a time of relentless business transformation. And, according to new research from Microsoft Dynamics 365 and Heinz Marketing, it's clear successful organisations realise the key to successfully navigating this competitive landscape is to combine several critical approaches.

Specifically, sales teams need to:

- Engage with prospects at scale across multiple accounts
- Build relationships with the right people
- Leverage data-driven findings and recommendations to inform next steps

Simply put, combining insights and account intelligence correlates to increased sales productivity and the likelihood of achieving predictable results. The research clearly indicates that what separates today's winners and losers is the ability to combine the art of relationship-building with effective, data-driven engagement tactics.



Respondent breakdown

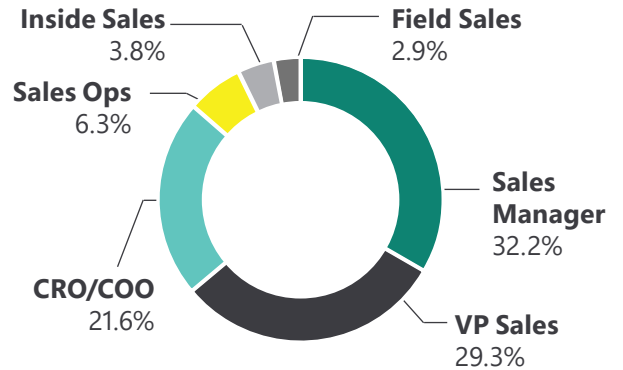
In order to find answers, Heinz Marketing conducted a survey of 208 sales leaders from predominantly US-based organisations that range from medium- to large-enterprise level companies over a two-week period in November 2018. Our goal was to understand how top B2B sales leaders develop their strategies and achieve their sales goals.

In order to pre-qualify for the survey, respondents had to indicate that their organisation was primarily involved in B2B sales, the company employed more than 100 people and their role was associated with 'sales management/leadership'.

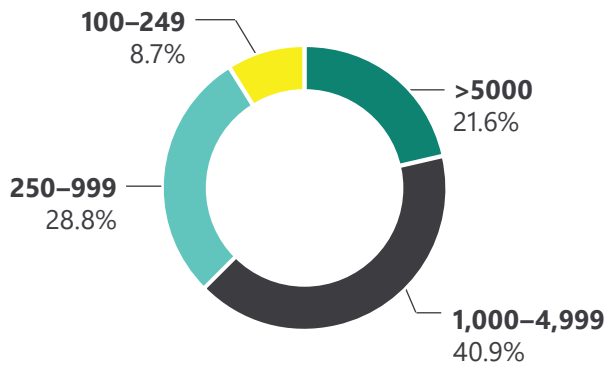
We also asked about the ability to achieve sales goals and carefully examined the differences among those that achieved a high-level of success, compared to those with lower levels of success. In the end, certain elements stood out as being more integral in driving sales results than others.



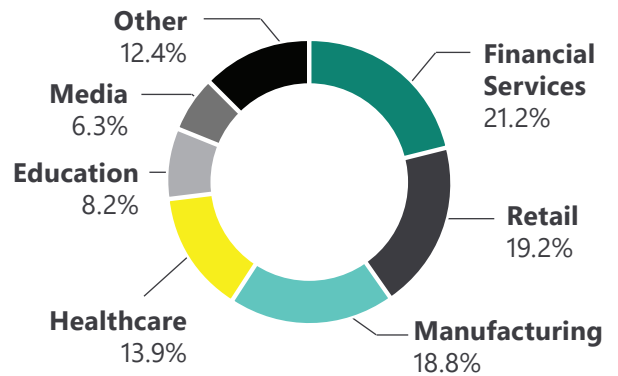
Current role



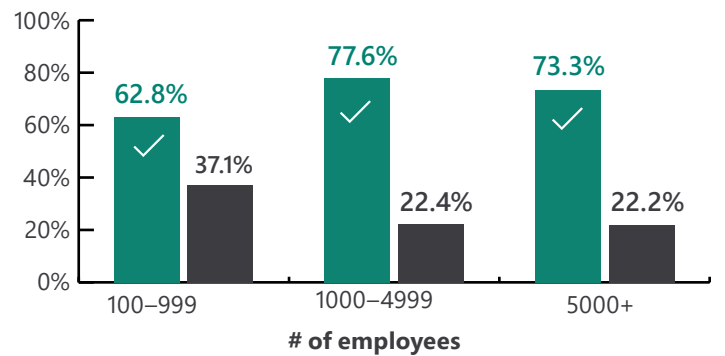
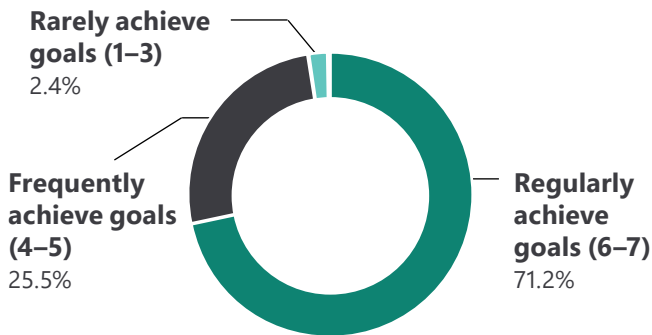
Number of employees



Industry



Currently, how successful is your organisation in achieving its revenue goals on a scale of 1-7, where 7 means very successful and 1 means not successful at all?



✓ Successful (6-7)
 ■ Not as successful (1-5)

Key themes for sales success

A careful examination of the data reveals four key findings that serve as a roadmap for organisations looking to achieve sales success:

1. Engage with the whole buying committee

Building strong buying committee relationships is crucial when it comes to achieving sales goals. In fact, more than 80% of respondents who report being effective at building these relationships also report being effective at achieving desired sales goals.

3. Cross-platform is key

Having access to sales tools that synchronise across multiple platforms is critical. Nearly 80% of successful organisations say their current set of sales tool capabilities are key in enabling their sales team to achieve their revenue targets.

2. It's all about scale

Being able to build strong relationships at scale is what matters to the most successful organisations. Over 70% of respondents said being effective at implementing this scaling process translates into met revenue goals.

4. It's a team sport

Achieving tight alignment between sales and marketing is fundamentally important. More than 75% of those who achieve their revenue goals also say their organisation has a strong alignment between sales and marketing. Having a mechanism to provide constructive criticism and feedback between marketing and sales is the leading factor that contributes to a healthy relationship, followed by sharing reports and insights and having a coordinated sales process. Bottom line here: the fundamentals still matter.

“Sales always have room to generate more and effective sales by building on current relationships as well as establishing new ones.”

– Sales manager



Cut-and-paste no longer cuts it

Gone are the days of cold calling and cut-and-pasting of boilerplate email copy. Today, success is about quality over quantity. **It means nurturing genuine relationships one-to-one, rather than firing off mass correspondence to huge audiences.**

Effective sales programs rely on tools and techniques that empower sales teams to focus on the right targets within an account, offer insights about buyers and track their progress through the funnel – all while giving teams the flexibility to customise each tactic while allowing for scalability across multiple accounts.

Three key themes – each part of a successful process

Our survey included 27 different questions that yielded results around three key themes. Then, to better understand what makes organisations successful, we looked for insights around each of those themes.

Key themes:

01

Build and strengthen relationships with key prospects

02

Provide prospect insights and recommendations to inform next steps

03

Engage at scale



01 Build and strengthen relationships with key prospects

Building effective, strong relationships with buying committee members is fundamental to those who regularly achieve their revenue goals. In fact, **81.8% say they are extremely effective at achieving this.**

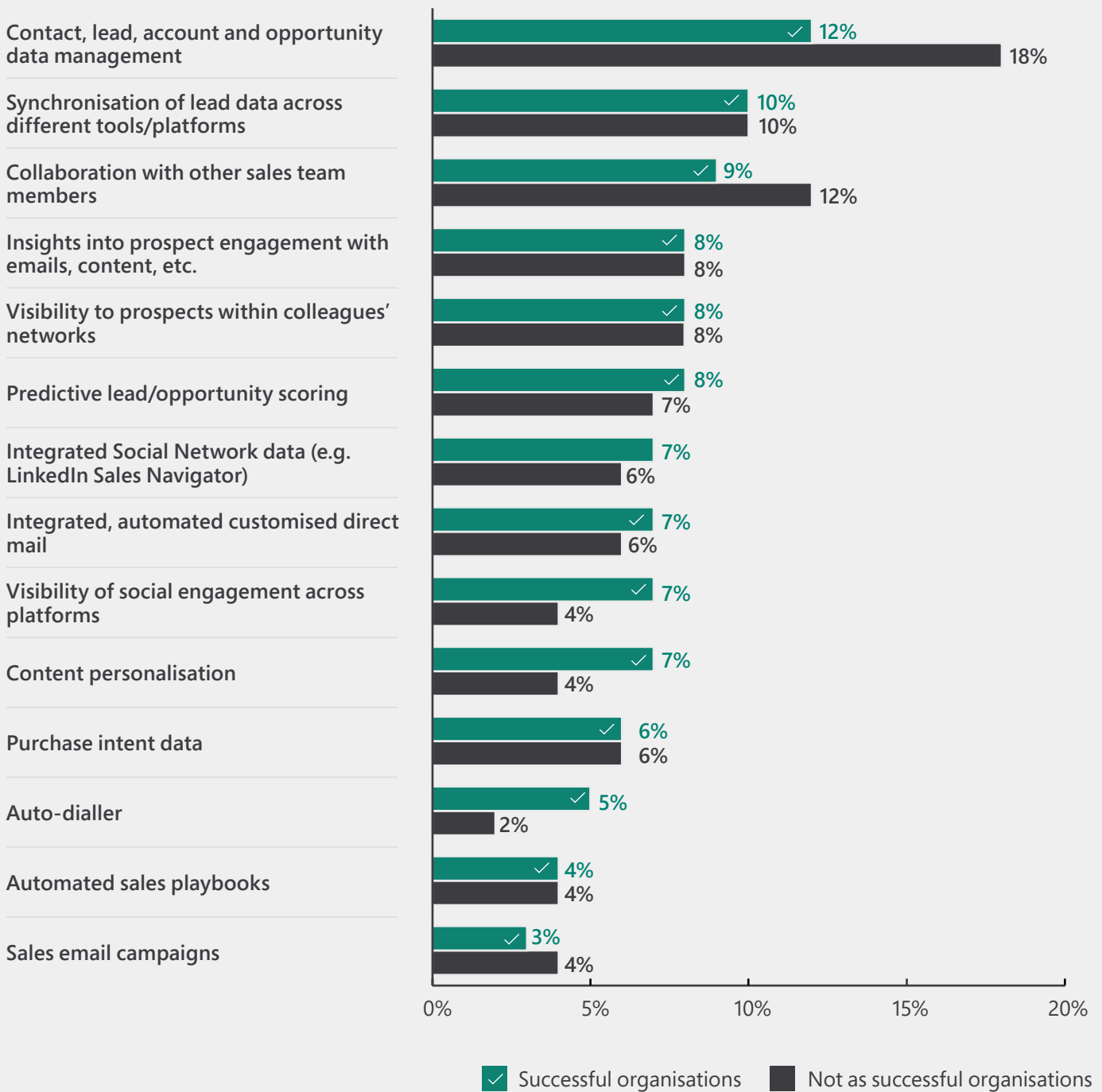
Herein lies a key insight for those who still have work to do: determining how to ‘crack the code’ and connect with all members of the buying committee will yield strong results. However, interestingly, these same respondents indicate that email campaigns and contact, lead, account and opportunity management were all among their most effective capabilities **which indicates that in today’s business climate, these tools are really just table stakes.**

How effective is your team in building strong, effective relationships with buying committee members on a scale of 1–7, where 7 means very effective and 1 means not effective at all?



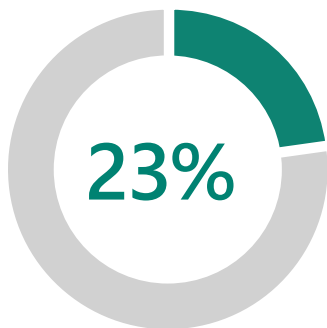
When it comes to empowering a sales team to build and organise relationships with target accounts, findings show data management of contacts, leads, accounts and opportunities ranks as most effective. Following closely behind is the ability to synchronise lead data across different tools and platforms to collaborate with other sales team members.

Thinking about your current set of sales tools, which of the following capabilities are most effective in enabling your sales team to successfully build and organise relationships within their target accounts? Please select the three capabilities that are most important.

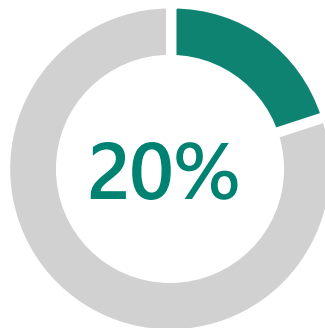




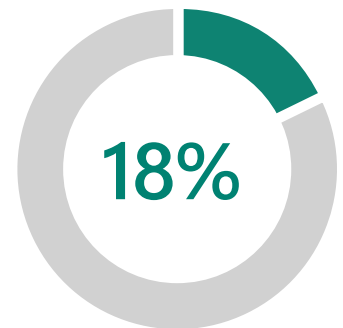
For all organisations' sales teams (regardless of their levels of success in achieving revenue goals), the top three most challenging elements when it comes to building relationships are:



Building multiple sales relationships within an account



Understanding how to best connect with buying committee members

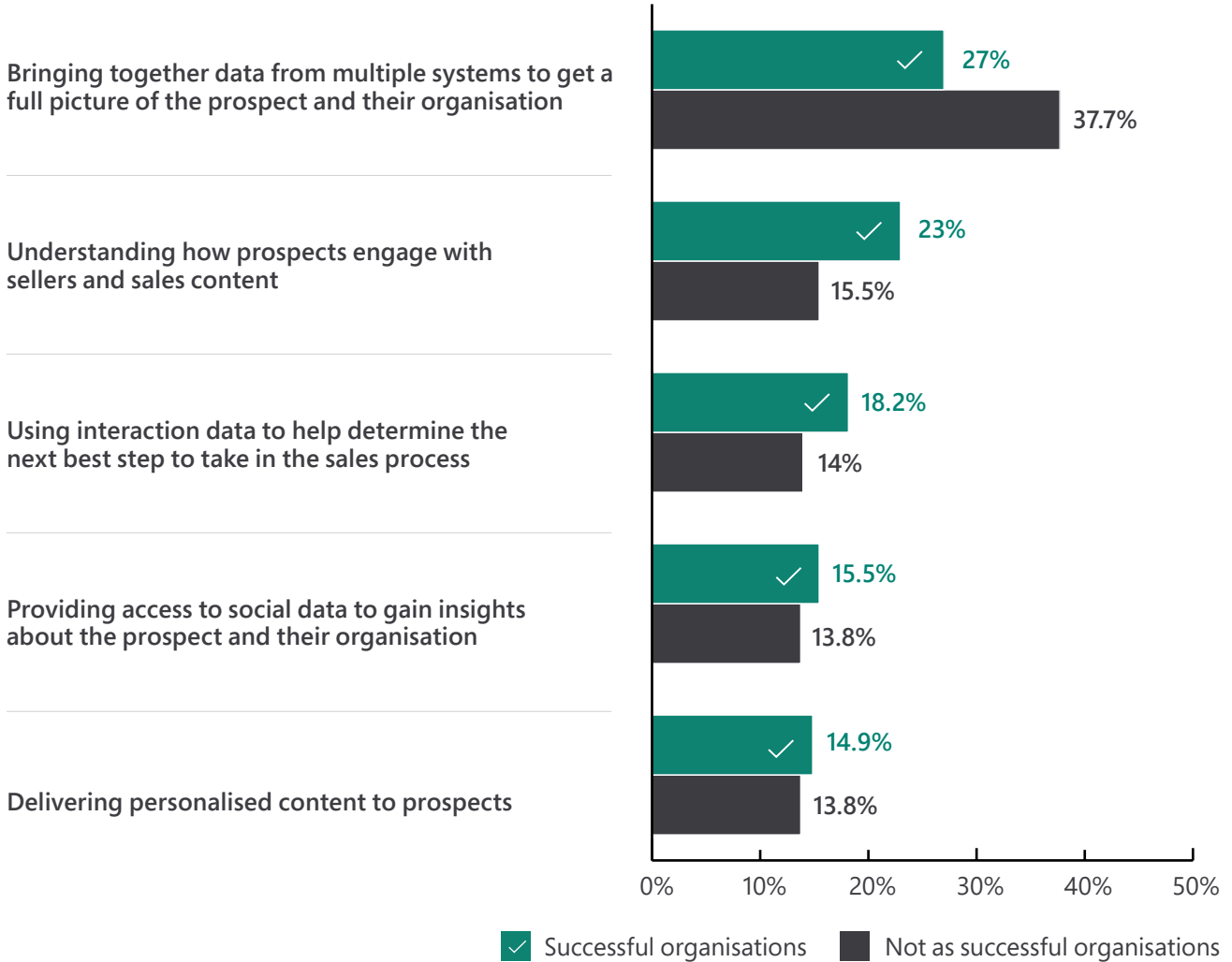


Understanding individual roles

02 Providing prospect insights and recommendations to inform next steps

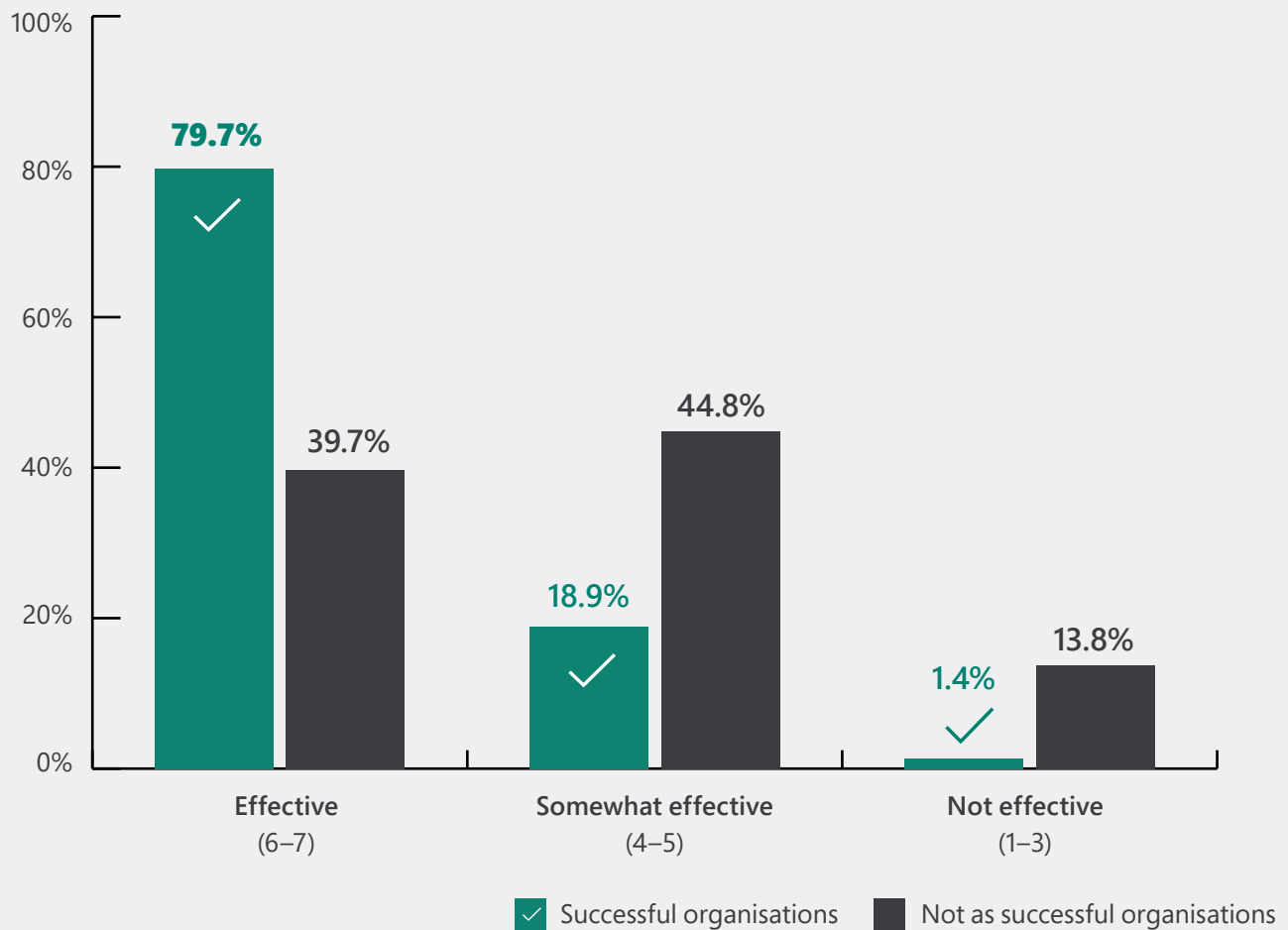
The ability to compile an accurate 'big picture' speaks volumes when it comes to developing an action plan and adjusting strategies. And research shows that, regardless of the level of success achieved, the top contributor here is the ability to orchestrate data from multiple sources.

From the list below please identify the three elements that are most important in providing prospect insights and recommendations to your team.



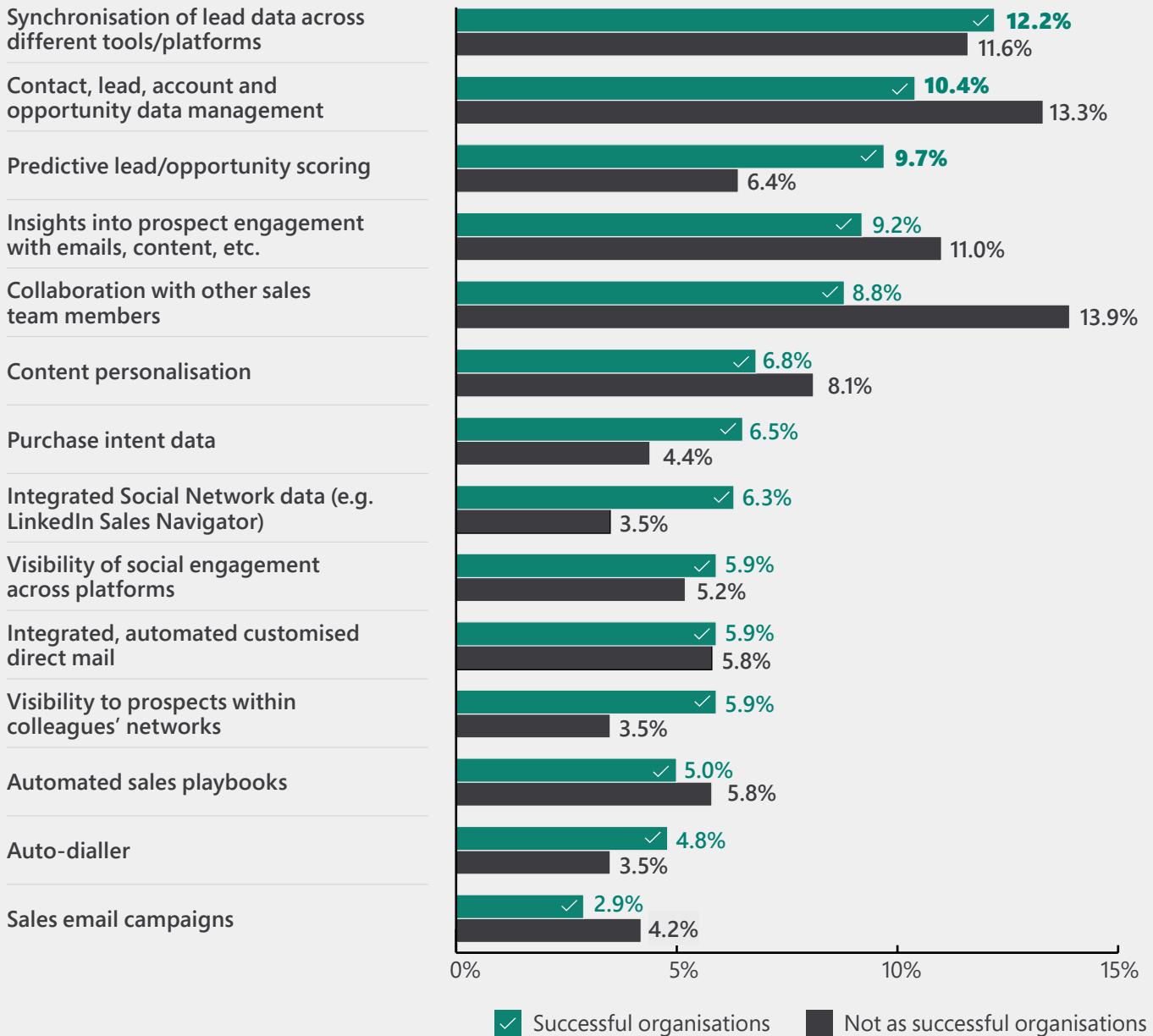
Effectively leveraging the data is also key. For example, **79.7% of respondents who are successful in achieving their organisations' goals indicate their use of data and consumer insights used to move deals forward is effective.**

Currently, how effectively is your team in using data and customer insights to move deals forward on a scale of 1–7, where 7 means very effectively and 1 means not effective at all?



When it comes to moving things forward, **synchronisation of lead data across different tools/platforms was listed as the most effective capability successful organisations utilise (12.2%), followed by contact, lead, account and opportunity data management (10.4%) and predictive lead/opportunity scoring rounding out the top three (9.7%).** In contrast, organisations that are not as successful prioritise collaboration with other sales team members, suggesting that lead data is manually communicated amongst sales team members.

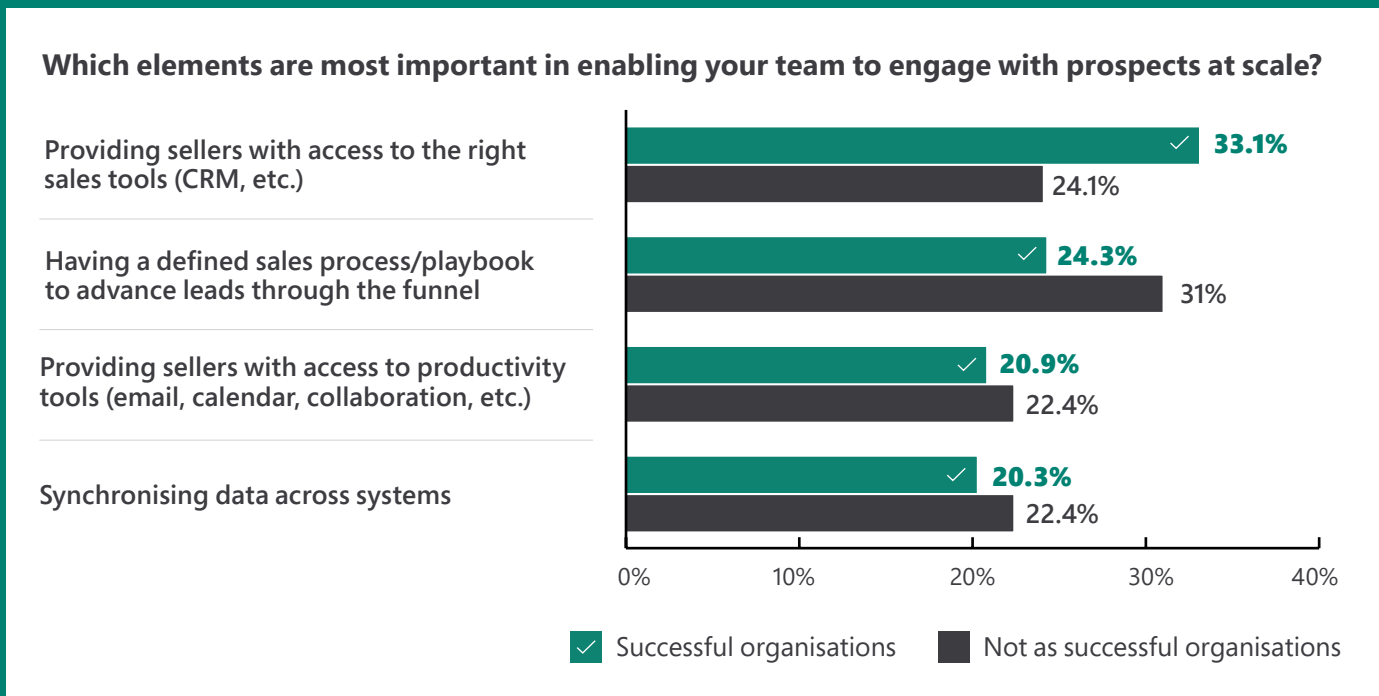
Thinking about your current set of sales tools, which of the following capabilities are most effective in enabling your sales team to successfully build and organise relationships within their target accounts? Please select the three capabilities that are most important.



“Insight moves the deal because we can get granular on a personal level with the lead.”
 – CRO/COO

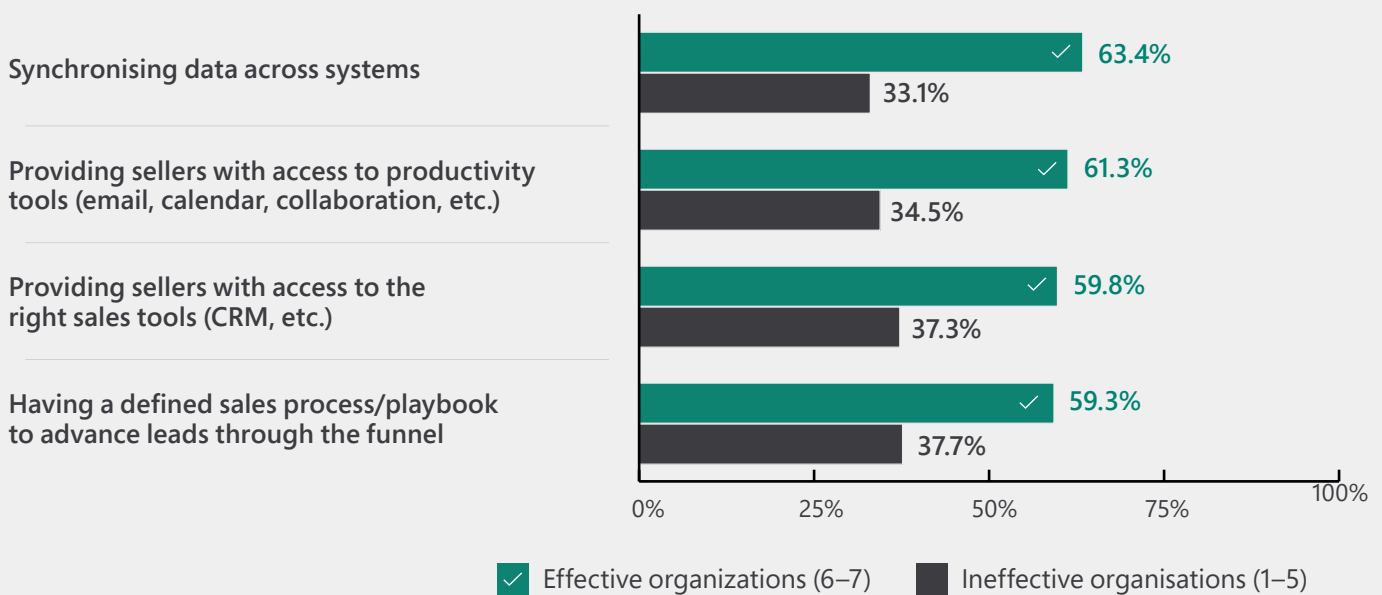
03 Engage at scale

When asked which elements are most important in order to enable teams to engage with prospects at scale, **33.1% of respondents at organisations that achieve their goals say the key to success is providing sellers with access to the right tools (CRM, etc.), followed by having a defined sales process/playbook to advance leads through the funnel (24.3%), providing sellers with access to productivity tools (20.9%) and synchronising data across systems (20.3%).** Those organisations who are not successful in their goal achievement prioritise having a defined sales process/playbook to advance leads through funnel, suggesting they are still working on building a consistent pipeline management strategy.



In addition, respondents who indicated they are effective in scaling sales efforts across multiple prospect relationships identify synchronising data across systems as a top challenge. **However, those who aren't successful in this area say having a defined sales process/playbook to advance leads through the funnel is a top challenge** – the least ranked challenge of those that are effective, indicating those that are effective have the foundational pieces already in place.

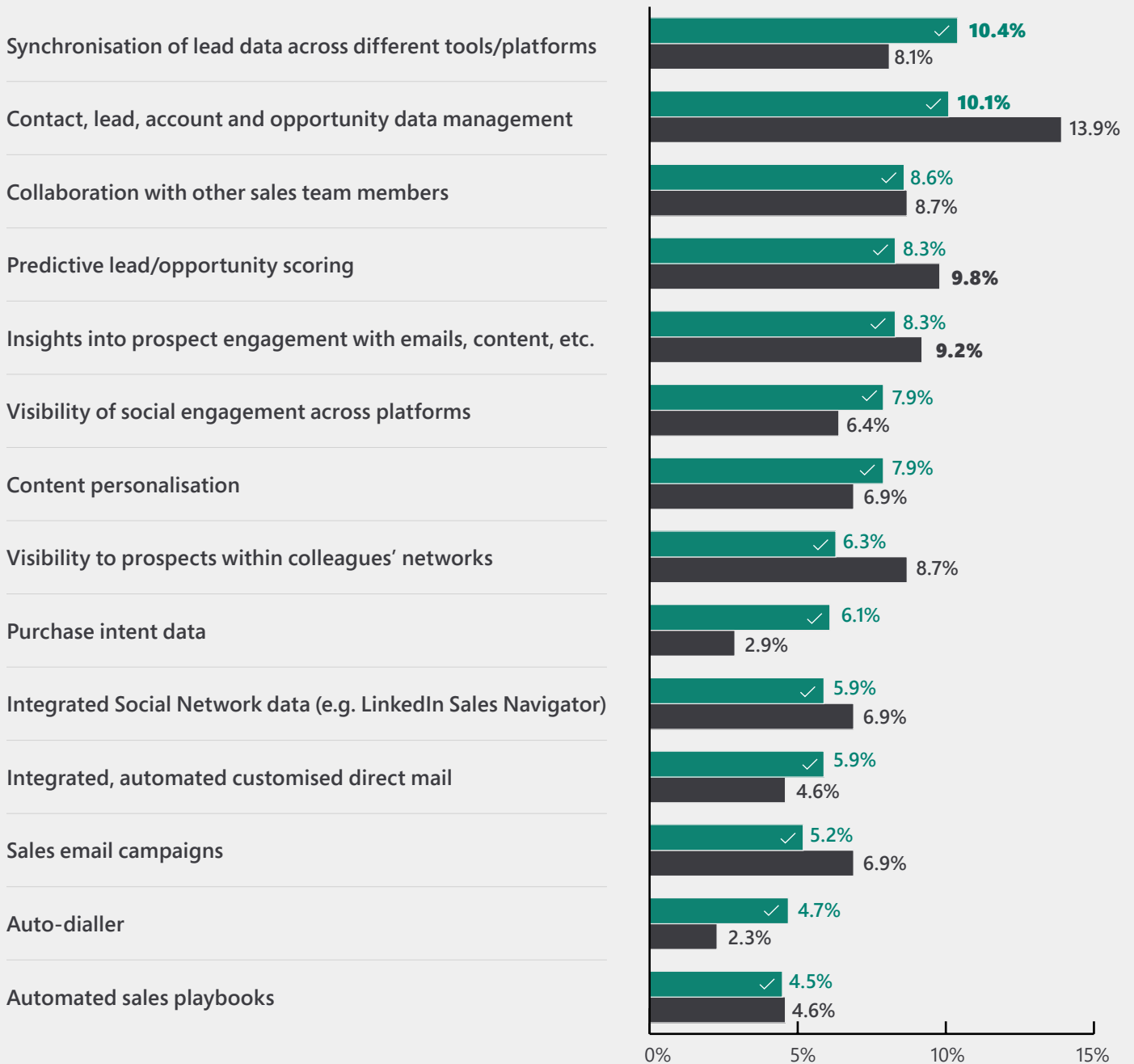
From the list below, please identify the three elements that are most challenging for your sales team in engaging with prospects at scale?



Building on a strong foundation

For most organisations, data is at the foundation of their sales process. Successful organisations rank the **synchronisation of lead data across different tools/platforms (10.4%) and contact, lead, account and opportunity data management (10.1%) as the two most important elements that empower teams to engage at scale with their key accounts. However, for teams that struggle to achieve revenue goals, predictive lead/opportunity scoring and insights into prospect engagement with emails, content, etc.** were identified as more effective.

In thinking about your current set of sales tools, which elements are most effective in enabling your sales team to engage at scale within their target prospect accounts? Please select the three most effective elements.



✓ Successful organisations
 Not as successful organisations

Two sides of the same coin

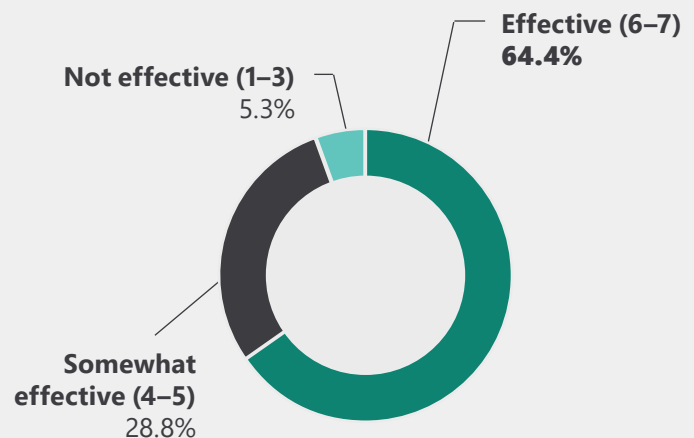
Research shows that in order to achieve business success, the sales team needs backing from the entire organisation. But, digging deeper, it's clear no other group's support is as crucial as the marketing department. Traditionally, the two often lack synergy and cooperation, but findings reveal success means these organisations should function in lockstep. Which shouldn't really come as a surprise. After all, they are both working towards the same goal.

Overall, 64.4% of respondents say their sales and marketing teams are closely aligned. However, for those who are successful in achieving their revenue goals, 76.4% report having the two departments in sync as critical. This is consistent with industry research conducted by SiriusDecisions that found **B2B organisations with tightly aligned sales and marketing operations grew their revenues 24% faster in a three-year period compared to those whose teams work separately.**¹

¹[2017 State of ABM Study Findings](#)



How would you describe the alignment of sales and marketing in your organisation on a scale of 1–7, where 7 means very well aligned and 1 means not aligned at all?



How would you describe the alignment of sales and marketing in your organisation on a scale of 1–7, where 7 means very well aligned and 1 means not aligned at all?



As far as how to best achieve that alignment, the data shows **having a mechanism to provide constructive criticism and feedback between marketing and sales as the leading factor that contributes to a healthy relationship (15.3%), followed by sharing reports and insights (14.1%) and having a coordinated sales process (13.8%).**

From the list below please select three elements that are most critical for strong alignment of sales and marketing?	Total
Ability for constructive criticism/feedback between teams	15.3%
Shared reporting and insights	14.1%
Coordinated sales process	13.8%
Goal sharing	12.7%
Defined lead flow process	11.9%
Provide appropriate sales tools	10.9%
Consistent definition of 'qualified lead'	10.9%
Provide appropriate sales enablement content	10.3%

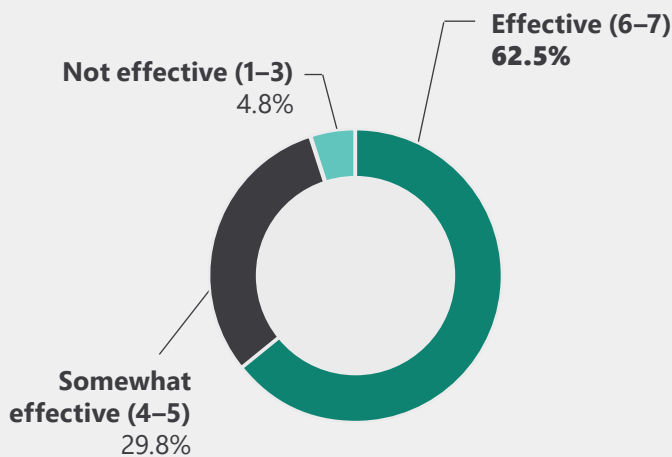
Making sure everyone's hard work is working

It's easy for team members to spend weeks or months with their heads down, working hard towards achieving the organisation's revenue goals. But it's important to periodically step back, evaluate effectiveness and, if necessary, make needed course corrections. And when it comes to measuring success, today's top B2B sales managers emphasise the importance of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Specifically, **62.5% say they're confident in the metrics and KPIs that guide their sales performance and 72.3% of organisations that meet their numbers feel their current KPIs are an effective way of measuring progress.**

On the other hand, it's not surprising that many among those not achieving their sales goals also do not express confidence in their company's KPIs.

How effective is your current set of sales KPIs in reflecting the effectiveness of your sales organisation's efforts on a scale of 1-7?



How effective is your current set of sales KPIs in reflecting the effectiveness of your sales organisation's efforts on a scale of 1-7?



Customer retention is key – so is building the database

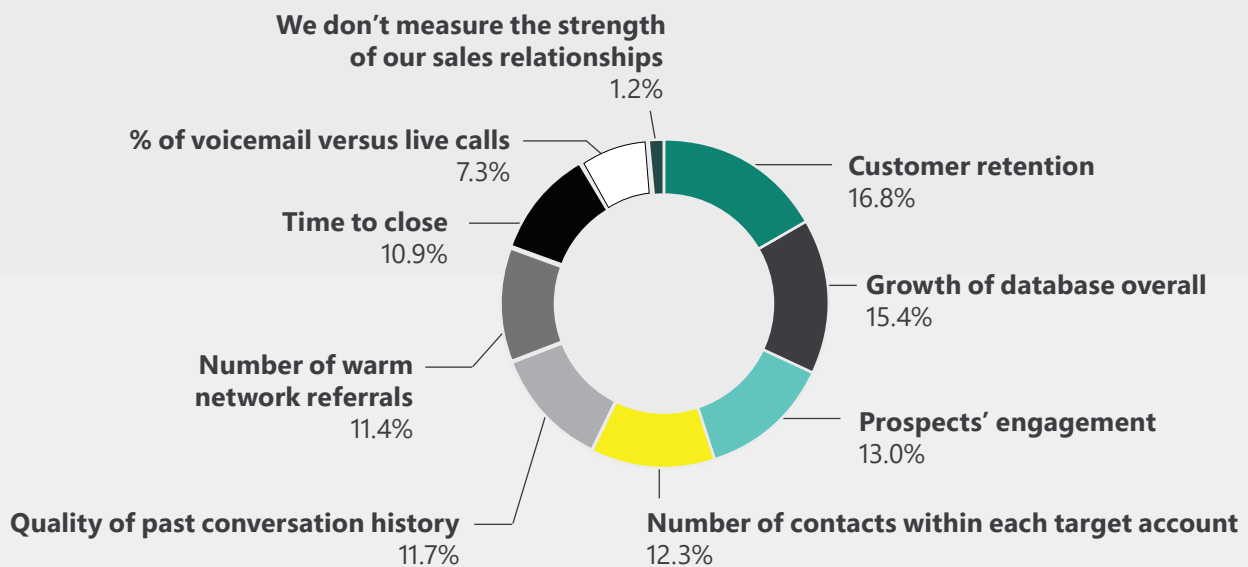
Not surprisingly, findings indicate the leading measure of success is customer retention. But successful organisations also underscore the importance of continuing to nurture relationships in order to build their database of contacts and create long-term customers.

It's a marathon, not a sprint

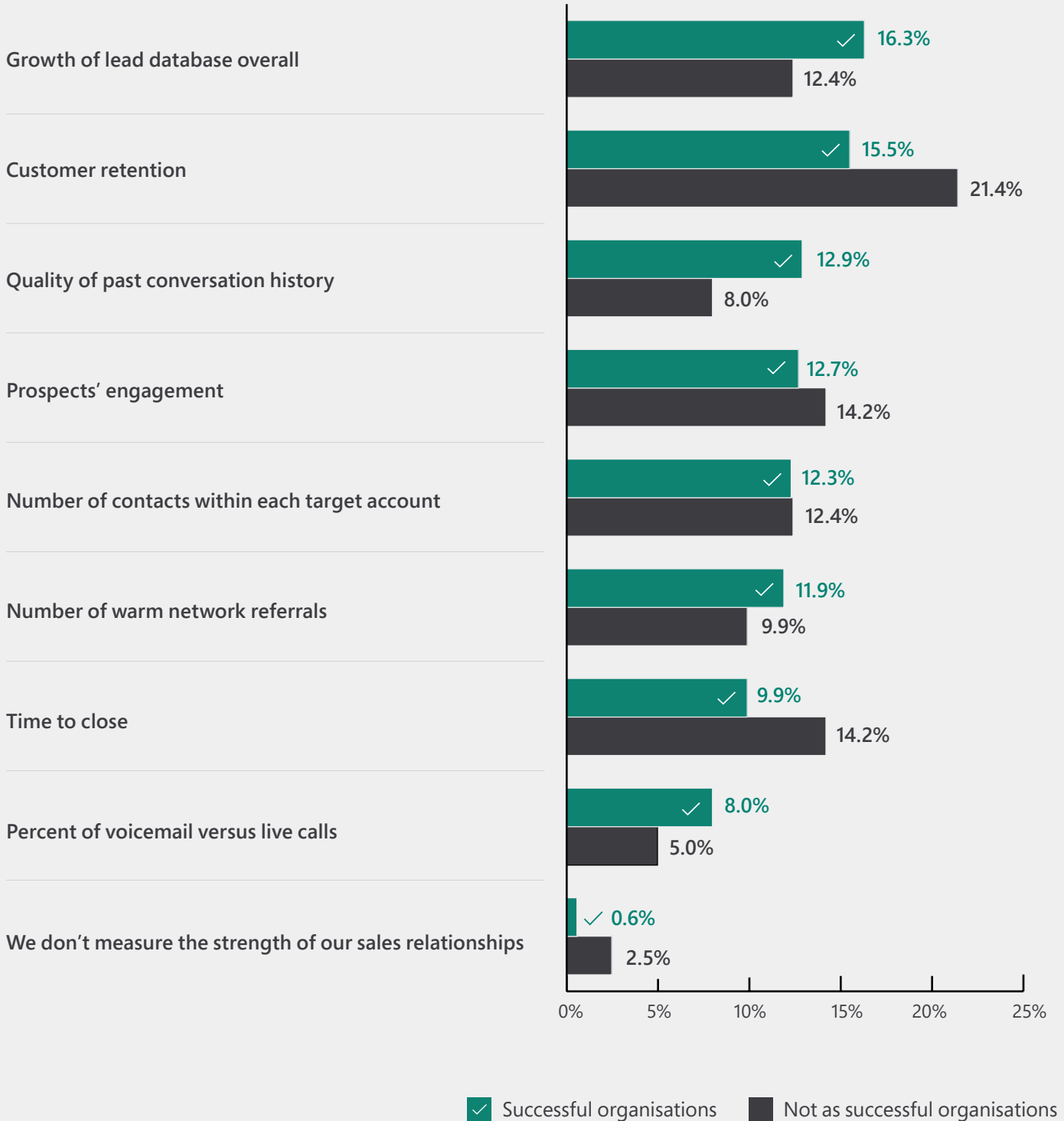
Conversely, unsuccessful organisations place a high priority on the importance of time to close which likely indicates an unhealthy desire to focus on making a quick sale now instead of investing the time it takes to build ongoing, healthy and, ultimately, more profitable relationships.



What measurements, if any, does your sales team use to gauge the strength of their sales relationships? Please select all that are being used.



What measurements, if any, does your sales team use to gauge the strength of their sales relationships? Please select all that are being used.



How to get there from here

A three-pronged approach

Sales relationships are all about quality, but sales success has often been measured by the number and volume of activities. Consequently, the real challenge lies in understanding how to prioritise and scale activities via data and buyer insights in an intelligent way so the right people on the buying committee can be identified and relationships can be nurtured – a relationship-based approach to selling. When it comes to determining the way forward, the findings are clear – three things play a key role:

1. Focus on building strong relationships with the right people on the buying committee.
2. Learn how to leverage data and consumer insights in order to move deals forward.
3. Establish a way to scale sales efforts across multiple prospect relationships.

Do whatever it takes to reach the buying committee

There's a reason the buying committee has that name – they're in charge of making key purchasing decisions. So developing those relationships is worth a substantial investment of time. The data reveals that in order to do so, successful teams have effective contact, lead and account data management systems in place. They also regularly collaborate with other sales team members.

“[Success means] finding the appropriate decision maker quickly and understanding their buying process, needs and establishing a solid relationship.”

– VP of Sales



Bring customer data together to maximise effectiveness

Like workers in other roles, sales professionals need powerful tools to thrive. And in the case of successful organisations, that means putting the data to work for them. It also requires the synchronisation of leads across different tools and platforms, development of a system for predictive lead scoring, integration of social network data (like LinkedIn Sales Navigator), increased visibility of social engagement on various platforms and automation of sales playbooks.

Scale up for success

One of the oldest sayings when it comes to investing is to not put all of one's eggs in one basket. And the same is true when it comes to nurturing prospect relationships. Research shows that scaling sales efforts across multiple prospects is crucial. In fact, successful organisations rank it as one of the most important things a company can do. They also emphasise how vital it is to understand how prospects engage with sales content and to use that interaction data to help determine the next best step(s) to take.

Other key findings include providing access to social data in order to gain additional insights about prospects and delivering personalised content to those prospects once you identify them.

Keep an eye on the KPIs

Even if it feels like things are heading in a healthy trajectory, it's important to make sure they actually are by evaluating progress against predetermined KPIs. And when it comes to achieving revenue goals, research shows there are a number of metrics that carry more weight for successful organisations. These include:

- Overall growth of the lead database
- Prospects' engagement
- Number of contacts within each target account
- Quality of the past conversation history
- Total number of warm network referrals

About the authors



Elisabeth Michaud, Senior Product Marketing Manager at Microsoft, is focused on Dynamics 365 for Sales.

With Dynamics 365 for Sales, your sales team can go beyond sales force automation to better understand customer needs, engage more effectively and win more deals. Your sellers can sell smarter with embedded insights, build relationships with authentic and personal engagement, boost productivity with seamless tools, accelerate sales performance with insight-driven decision-making and innovate with solutions built to evolve. Learn more at dynamics.microsoft.com/sales or follow us on Twitter @MSFTdynamics365.

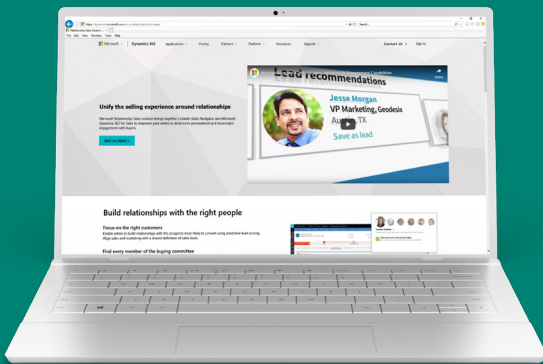


Matt Heinz is President of Heinz Marketing, a B2B marketing and sales acceleration firm that delivers measurable revenue results.

At Heinz Marketing, we believe every strategy, tactic and action has a specific, measured purpose. Instead of focusing on the activities, we focus on the outcomes. What really matters is sales pipeline, closing business and accelerating revenue. Learn more at heinzmarketing.com and follow us on Twitter @HeinzMarketing.



Foster relationships with buyers through authentic and personalised engagement



Empower your sales team to take a relationship-based selling approach: Microsoft Relationship Sales solution brings together LinkedIn Sales Navigator and Microsoft Dynamics 365 for Sales to help sellers drive more personalised and meaningful engagement with buyers. The solution brings together disparate data across CRM, social networks and productivity systems, such as Office 365. With unified relationship data, sellers can get a holistic view of relationships and deliver the authentic and personalised engagement today's buyers demand.



To learn more about how Microsoft Relationship Sales solution can help your company succeed, visit <https://dynamics.microsoft.com/sales/relationship-sales/>

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