

THE STATE OF SALES ENGAGEMENT

A REPORT



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INTRODUCTION

In March of 2023, Gong set out to uncover critical information about sales engagement platforms. Here's what we looked into:

- ✓ Current platforms' strengths and challenges
- ✓ The gaps where platforms could boost performance and efficiency
- ✓ Sales leadership's top strategic priorities in today's uncertain economy
- ✓ Buyer preferences and perceptions re: seller communications

We collected the data in this report using an anonymous online survey of 608 sales professionals, leaders, and B2B decision makers. The appendix section at the end of this report breaks down the respondents' demographics.

“Sales engagement is overwhelmingly named by sales leaders as their top priority. These interactions between sales reps and buyers/customers are focused on the quality and volume of activity as they look to drive higher conversion rates and larger average deal sizes.”

-Gartner

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For years, revenue leaders have empowered their teams with sales engagement platforms. These tools promised to automate sales outreach, manage leads and sales cadences, and track and report on performance for sales and business development teams.

Yet, as we all know, teams still struggle to meet their goals. In today's competitive and turbulent environment, that struggle is only getting worse. Reps now face even more challenges when they reach out to buyers and try to close deals.

As budgets tighten and the lists of reps' needs continue to grow, choosing the right solution is paramount. This report reveals key considerations if you want to optimize your sales processes, improve efficiency and productivity, and ultimately drive more revenue. Here are the key takeaways:



What's the top priority for revenue leaders?

Pipeline performance continues to be the main concern for revenue leaders.



Why do teams crave better solutions?

Today's reps are unhappy with the technologies they use and the results they get, especially in terms of response rates.



Does personalization alone drive performance?

Buyers and reps both identify better personalization as the number one way to increase response rates.



Why are leaders turning to next-gen AI?

Doing more with less is mission-critical, and the appetite to leverage AI in revenue workflows is growing.



What does every revenue team need in a sales engagement platform?

The best sales engagement platforms provide value well beyond the top of the sales funnel.



PIPELINE IS A TOP PRIORITY

We asked leaders to identify their top priorities in 2023. Their number one answer? Pipeline. A whopping 79% indicated that creating pipeline that quickly converts to revenue is a major point of focus for their business. Perhaps not surprisingly, Gartner research shows that most organizations name pipeline management as one of the areas with which they continue to struggle.

Sales engagement solutions should help reps generate and convert quality pipeline. They should also give leadership the ability to view, manage, and optimize pipeline performance. Unfortunately, only 12% of leaders report being happy with their organization's current platform. Clearly there's a disconnect between the expected and realized ROI for this tech.

That's why today's leaders should audit their sales engagement investments with strict scrutiny.

Top priorities for revenue teams this year

- 1 Improve pipeline performance
- 2 Increase seller productivity
- 3 Enhance sales insights and analytics
- 4 Improve the buyer experience

84%

of leaders are focused on improving **pipeline performance** as a top priority



TEAMS ARE CRAVING BETTER SOLUTIONS

Only 12% of leaders are happy with their current sales engagement solution, and their teams' satisfaction rates aren't much better. Only 16% of end users say they're happy with their organization's current tool.

Here's the crux of their dissatisfaction: They're unhappy with their cold email response rates. Only 3% of all reps we surveyed are satisfied with their current response rate. That's an abysmal rating.

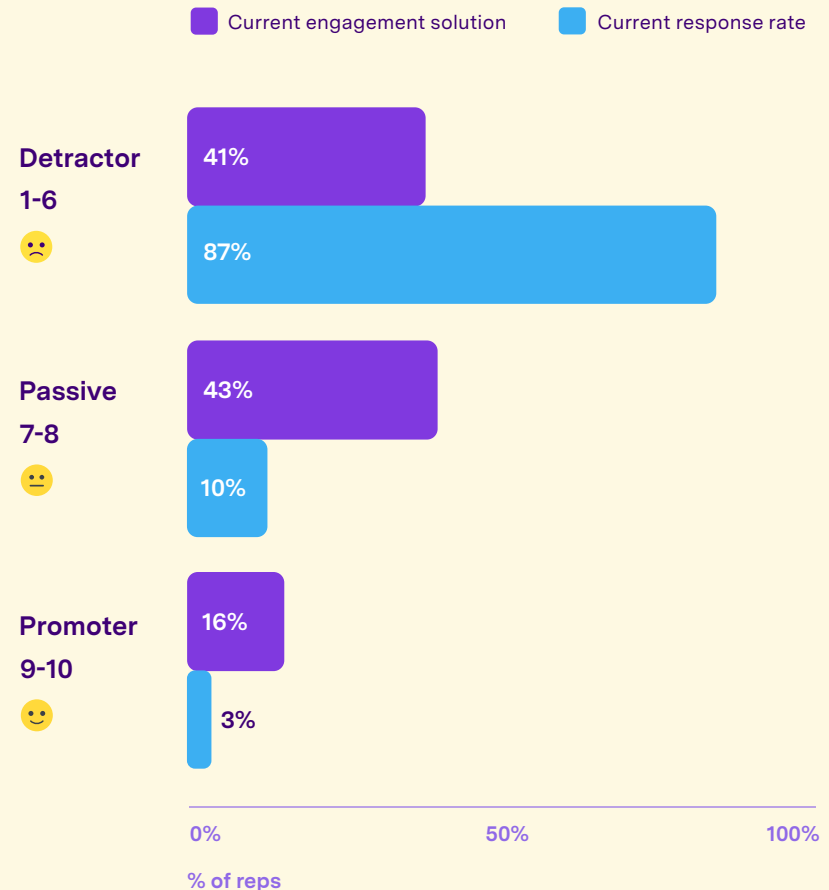
We wanted to further diagnose where current platforms miss the mark, so we asked respondents to identify their top sales engagement challenges. A majority of sellers said their biggest pain point was switching between multiple tools to complete their selling activities.

Modern sellers need one platform for all their selling activities.

16%
of reps are happy with their current **engagement solution**

3%
of reps are happy with their current **response rate**

Reps are unhappy with current solutions





PERSONALIZATION DRIVES PERFORMANCE

Buyer expectations are higher than ever before. The proliferation of digital-first go-to-market (GTM) models mean organizations have more information about leads than ever — long before they interact with a seller.

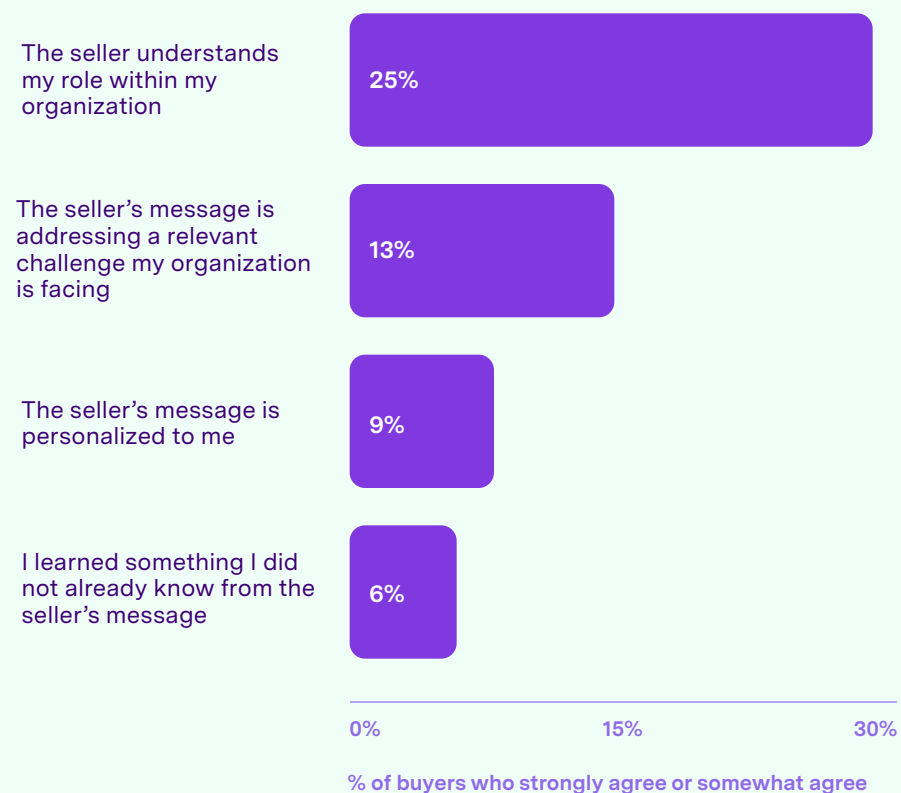
As a result, customers and prospects crave a personalized approach. They want your customer-facing teams to exhibit an intimate understanding of their business, their role, and the challenges they face. In fact, research from McKinsey found that organizations that excel at personalization generate 40% more revenue than average players¹.

Most sales engagement platforms provide scale by automating and sending large quantities of outreach to customers and prospects. This “spray and pray” approach falls flat and fails to deliver the quality consumers expect.

Generic templates in today’s sales engagement platforms miss the mark when it comes to personalization. Our study found that 91% of buyers perceive the sales content they receive from sellers as not personalized.

¹McKinsey: Next In Personalization Report, 2021

Personalization attempts are missing the mark



The alarming part is that this statistic isn't the result of sellers' lack of trying.

Reps told us they customize 58% of all outgoing content, and spend up to 12 hours each week personalizing these messages by customizing pre-defined templates or manually creating outreach from scratch. They know how critical personalization is to deal success.

So where's the disconnect?

A lack of scalability is partly responsible, but it's more than that. The gap results from reps wasting time on ineffective personalization and not understanding which timing and personalized outreach is historically proven to win deals.

Sellers spend:

5.9 HRS

personalizing pre-written content

6.2 HRS

creating from scratch



78%

of reps would like AI to **personalize** their sales engagement



GROW REVENUE WITH NEXT-GEN AI

Revenue teams need more scalable, efficient, and effective ways to personalize their outreach. That's how the next generation of revenue tech will substantially impact GTM teams and their workflows. Sellers are anxious to reap the benefits of these technologies, with 78% indicating they would like tools to personalize outreach for each prospect and organization using generative AI.

A quarter (26%) of revenue leaders have already started implementing AI in their GTM process, with another 26% planning to use it in the next 12 months. The biggest value driver for implementing new AI was increasing sales productivity.

AI-backed technologies can not only decrease the time sellers spend creating content, they also help prioritize workflows and effective activities. AI can determine the warmest leads and next-best-actions for sellers across their entire deal cycle.

A best-in-class solution will understand, automate, and deliver personalized outreach that saves your team time and increases revenue.

AI will transform GTM productivity

Are you currently using AI in your GTM process?

49%

No

26%

Yes

26%

No, but we plan to in the next 12 months

0%

25%

50%

81%

of leaders say AI increases their productivity



A PLATFORM FOR EVERY REVENUE TEAM

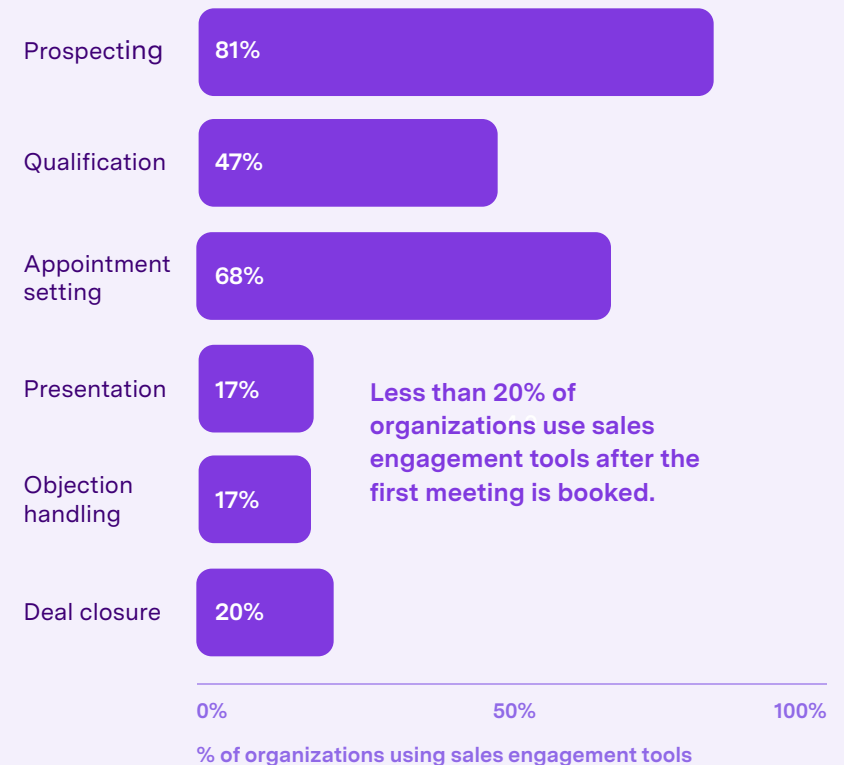
Today, organizations leverage sales engagement technology in a very limited way. A majority of end users fall within the sales or business development functions and are solely using engagement tools for prospecting and setting appointments. In fact, less than 20% of respondents use sales engagement tools after the first meeting is booked!

Given what's available today, every revenue team should be taking advantage of the personalization and process automation on offer in sales engagement tools.

Wondering how to ensure that your provider's offering is built for your entire organization? It should be able to support your revenue team from lead to close in one platform, guiding team members at every stage of the process using AI-backed insights. That means optimizing sales follow-up and providing visibility into every customer touch point to drive better alignment across sales development reps, account executives, customer success managers, and delivery specialists.

Engagement for every revenue team at every stage

Where organizations currently use sales engagement tools:

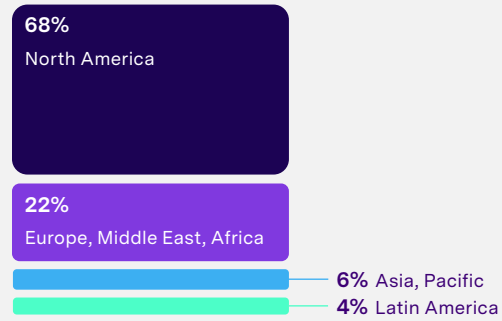


A NEW ERA OF SALES ENGAGEMENT

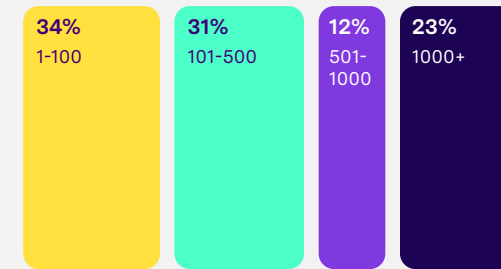
If you want to learn how Gong's Revenue Intelligence platform can help you create and accelerate pipeline, [request a demo](#) today.

Respondent Demographics

Region



Number of Employees



Level

