

# THE FUTURE OF SELLING

Sales leaders predict how AI  
will transform B2B buying

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It Will Continue to Be Human

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# ABOUT THIS BOOK

For over 300,000 years, humans have sold to each other.

From trading goods and services in exchange for food to the introduction of coins as currency, from the traveling salesman to now digital sales, selling is nothing if not an ancient art. Yet, even as new inventions — like the printing press, airplanes, and computers — have impacted this art, the foundation has remained the same:

**At the heart of every successful sales process is a conversation between humans.**

It's no secret that the 2020s have forced go-to-market teams across every industry to rethink their sales strategies. But, when we look to the future of selling in the new Intelligence Era, there's one thing we can bet on — humans will continue to play a big part.

Yet also like every era of selling prior, there will be winners and losers, and who wins and who loses will depend on how well companies adapt to the emerging technologies.

In a way, companies today are at an inflection point. While the estimated economic impact of artificial intelligence (AI) is valued in the trillions, [less than one-third of companies](#) are actually using AI in more than one function. This means that, if you want to come out on top, now is the time to seriously consider how you will integrate AI into your sales process.

In order to get a deeper understanding of the future of sales and what it will take to win, Drift sat down with three industry sales leaders to dive into how they are leading their teams through the next era of AI-driven sales.

This book explores how leaders at 6sense, Clari, and Drift look to cutting-edge technology to not only future-proof their teams, hit higher targets, and help them be more strategic with their time, but also keep the human at the center of the buying process.

Here's what the future of sales looks like for us, and what it can look like for you, too 🙌

# MEET YOUR SALES EXPERTS



## ***DEREK LEVINE***

Director of Enterprise Sales, 6sense

### **👁️ WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THEM**

Derek started selling in 2007 when there were no sales tools — just spreadsheets and maybe a barebones CRM.

### **🔥 THEIR TAKE ON THE FUTURE OF SALES**

“Data will be tidied up and organized so sales teams can better use it.”

### **🦸 SUPERHERO THEY WANT ON THEIR SALES TEAM**

Tony Stark (Iron Man)



## ***MAYA CONNET***

Global Head of Inside Sales, Clari

### **👁️ WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THEM**

Maya is passionate about consolidating sales tools to make selling more seamless.

### **🔥 THEIR TAKE ON THE FUTURE OF SALES**

“Sales teams should see AI as a friend, not a foe.”

### **🦸 SUPERHERO THEY WANT ON THEIR SALES TEAM**

Beyoncé



## ***LEE ZUCKER***

VP of Global Sales and Partnerships, Drift

### **👁️ WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT THEM**

Lee started his sales career as employee #12 at a start-up, where he sold door-to-door using paper contracts and slides.

### **🔥 THEIR TAKE ON THE FUTURE OF SALES**

“Sales will be a combination of using technology to help facilitate the sale and deliver personal touches.”

### **🦸 SUPERHERO THEY WANT ON THEIR SALES TEAM**

Michael Jordan

# WHAT IS THE STATE OF SALES TODAY?

Before we can start predicting the future of selling, we need to understand what selling is like today.

Earlier, we mentioned that the sales landscape is at an inflection point, and according to [Salesforce's State of Sales report](#), 69% of sellers say their job is harder now than before. At the same time, customers have become more vocal about the expectations they have for the sales experience. [74% of customers](#) say they are likely to buy based on experience alone.

Suffice to say, between business and buyer expectations, today's sellers are experiencing some growing pains. For our sales leaders, this comes down to three key characteristics:

## LOTS OF TEDIOUS, MANUAL WORK

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Sellers need to prioritize the tasks that will allow the business to run as it needs to, while helping them drive results.

**LEE ZUCKER**

VP of Global Sales and Partnerships, Drift

According to [Salesforce](#), the average seller spends only 28% of their time actually selling. The other 72% of their time is largely spent on tedious, low-value tasks.

Whether it's conducting administrative tasks, deciding how to prioritize their leads, or manually inputting sales data, the majority of the work that sellers do in their day-to-day isn't moving the needle for the business. Instead, these tasks are eating away at sellers' productivity, taking up space in their minds, and (most importantly) preventing them from connecting with the people that truly matter — their buyers.

## THE CHALLENGE OF DIFFERENTIATION

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Differentiate or die. If you don't differentiate, then you're not going to stay around forever.

**MAYA CONNET**

Global Head of Inside Sales, Clari

There has been an explosion of business tools made available in the past few years. In fact, over the past two years alone, the number of martech solutions has [grown by 24%](#).

Needless to say, competition is at an all-time high, and with buyers being spoiled by choice, it's crucial that companies find ways to make themselves stand out. Yet as more and more offerings emerge on the market, sales reps are only finding it more difficult to cut through the inbox noise.

## DATA PARALYSIS

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We're in this age of so much data getting shoved into our faces.

**DEREK LEVINE**

Director of Enterprise Sales, 6sense

Never before have we had so much data available at our fingertips. Between demographic data, technographic data, firmographic data, and more, if you're looking to leverage data in the sales process, the possibilities to do so are endless

But all of this data isn't without its drawbacks. [Salesforce](#) found that, when asking business leaders what barriers exist to unlocking the value of data at their companies, 41% said a lack of understanding of the data and 30% said too much data. Similarly, many sellers find it difficult to interpret and act on all of the data in front of them. Instead of using data to their advantage then, sellers spend hours each morning staring blankly at their computer screens, trying to make sense of it all.

# SO, WHAT DOES THE FUTURE OF SALES LOOK LIKE?

Although the current sales landscape has its challenges, the future is far from bleak. More companies are recognizing the problems at hand and innovating on their own technology to solve for them. The future of selling is one where sellers leverage technology to deliver better experiences, unlock sales productivity, and drive more revenue, faster.

How? To answer that question, let's see what predictions our sales leaders have on the state of sales going forward 🧠

## PREDICTION #1

In the age of digital selling, time is of the essence. So, why should we let tedious tasks get in the way of productive human conversations?

The answer is, we shouldn't. In the future that our sales leaders envision, sales reps will be able to lean on AI to take care of all the busywork so they can focus on having more conversations. As Maya put it:

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AI can help us get rid of boring, administrative tasks that most salespeople hate doing.

**MAYA CONNET**

Global Head of Inside Sales, Clari

Already, 33% of sales organizations are using AI to improve their sellers' productivity and grow revenue, according to [Salesforce](#). Sellers are leveraging AI tools to transcribe and summarize meetings, write up the first draft of an outreach email, and instantly identify which accounts to prioritize, as well as which to leave for later.

With the many tools available today, all it takes to enhance your selling with AI is to make sure you have the right tools for your team.

For example, Maya's team uses [Clari Copilot](#) to ensure that reps leave every sales call with all the key takeaways and action items from the conversation without being distracted by note taking. Copilot does this by recording sales calls and condensing the meeting into a summary that the rep can reference when crafting their follow-up to the buyer — allowing reps to have more focused conversations while also not having to spend hours after the call relistening to the conversation.

"It takes a ton of work off of the plate of the salesperson to not have to remember that [information] or take notes," Maya explained. "It just makes the sales process super smooth."

Besides taking care of the busywork, AI also empowers reps to have more effective and efficient conversations. Take live chat, for example: Drift's [AI Suggested Replies](#) help reps cut down the time it takes to respond to a site visitor in live chat by automatically generating a reply based on the context of the conversation. Not only does this save your reps the time and effort of researching and crafting that response, but it also results in an experience that better engages the visitor.

Whether it's creating call summaries or generating live chat responses, AI is already helping reps spend less time with low-value tasks, so they can get to conversations, faster. And our sales leaders believe that AI will continue to be a valuable support in the future.

As Lee summed up, "With prioritizing, it's really about focusing on what is actually the most critical for getting to your end goal. Anything that is not part of that equation, [sales reps] will need some air cover and support [AI] to help figure those things out."

## PREDICTION #2

When buyers spend only about [5% of the sales process](#) actually talking to sales, sellers need to get creative in order to grab their attention. The best way to do that? Personalization.

According to research from [McKinsey](#), companies that embrace a personalized future will be the ones to win their markets — in fact, companies that are already



excelling at personalization are generating 40% more revenue than those who are not.

But creating exemplary personalized experiences requires a lot of time, money, and effort. Plus, with the average B2B buying group consisting of [six to 10 decision makers](#), companies need to be able to personalize at scale in order to get the right messages in front of the right individuals.

For Derek, generative AI was the key to iterating on his personalization strategy, specifically with emails. Before, to provide effective one-to-one personalization, Derek needed to rely on hours of research or plain luck. For example, one of his most successful emails — where he compared a product to a character in Star Wars — only came about because he learned on a sales call that the C-level prospect was a big fan of the franchise.

While this level of personalization is extremely effective, it's also hard to replicate. That's why Derek now uses 6sense's [Conversational Email](#) to make his outreach feel more personal with less effort. By training the AI on his previously written blog posts, Derek can now instantly generate five or so email drafts that not only are tailored to his audience but are also in his tone of voice. And blog posts are just one example of how the Conversational Email tool can be trained to match a sales rep's tone of voice. It can also learn from previously drafted emails, one-pagers, and custom-prompts crafted by a sales or marketing team.

So, instead of staring at a blank draft wondering where to begin, reps can use generative AI as a jumping-off point to help them craft personalized messaging much more quickly. And Derek only sees this as the beginning:

"I think that's where things are headed," Derek said. "That [generated] content can be highly relevant. Then, the human comes in to be like, 'Let's change this to this, let's change that.' And so now you have email copy personalized in four minutes. It's wild."

Besides generative AI, our leaders see new technologies emerging that will empower buyers to manage their own journey and help personalize the sales process. "We know that the majority of the sales process actually happens without a salesperson in the room," Lee said. "So, you need technology to enable that potential buyer to get all the information they need to make the best decision possible."

That's where tools like our recently launched, [Site Concierge](#), come in. Using AI, Site Concierge tracks website visitor behavior and surfaces the content, calls to action, and playbook paths that are most relevant to that visitor and their

buying stage. Not only do these tools take the work off of your marketing team to personalize every single experience, but they also streamline the sales journey by giving the buyer what they need before they even know they need it.

As these tools show, the future of sales is one where AI will act as the engine for delivering personalized experiences at scale. And our leaders believe that reps will be able to build stronger relationships from them. As Lee put it:

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Personalization, in the future, should be knowing the customer or prospect better than they know themselves, and proving that you know them via your sales process.

**LEE ZUCKER**

VP of Global Sales and Partnerships, Drift

## PREDICTION #3

Whether it's sales reps personalizing the buying experience or prioritizing their time, the future of sales will be data-driven. Just take it from [Gartner](#): “By 2026, 65% of B2B sales organizations will transition from intuition-based to data-driven decision making, using technology that unites workflow, data, and analytics.”

This doesn't come as much of a surprise, though. After all, you have to know who your buyer is and what they're looking for in order to serve them. That's why intent data, which uncovers the signals that inform you about a person's readiness to buy, is quickly becoming a must-have for sales teams.

But just having that data isn't enough — sellers also need to be able to interpret it easily. That's why a data-driven future of sales should really be framed as an **AI-guided future of sales**.

So, what might that future look like?

For Derek, this future is one where sales reps can eliminate the guesswork from their sales efforts. “Sales teams will need tools that can identify the companies that are the best targets, then find the right personas and key contacts.” One example is 6sense's [AI-powered predictive analytics](#), which helps identify where accounts are in the sales process, who makes up the buying group, and even the next best action for the rep to take.

Similarly, sales reps can use tools like [Drift Prospector](#) to better understand

their buyers. By collecting buying signals from across your entire tech stack and calculating an AI-powered engagement score, Prospector peels back the curtain on what types of content accounts are engaging with so reps can personalize their outreach from there.

With these tools in hand, reps can more easily take action on their data rather than waste time staring at their computer screens, which is especially important in a digital world where every second matters. As Derek put it:

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These tools need to deliver data in an actionable form so that sellers can maximize every single minute to go after the right accounts.

**DEREK LEVINE**

Director of Enterprise Sales, 6sense

That said, the world of data-driven sales doesn't end after the ink has dried. "There's a couple of buckets that sales tools need to fill, and sales engagement at the very top of the funnel is super important," Maya said. "But the other piece is the long-tail of everything — customer success."

Given that increasing customer retention rates by 5% has proven to [increase profits by more than 25%](#), it's crucial that sellers use their data to actively help their customers succeed. To do this, reps can leverage tools like [Clari Inspect](#), which uses AI to calculate a health score that easily identifies who is at risk of churning and who is ready for an upgrade. This allows reps to re-engage accounts when it matters most.

Altogether, these AI-powered tools turn endless amounts of data into a cohesive story that reps can learn from and take action on. As a result, our leaders believe that future sales reps will be able to spend less time trying to piece together what their data is saying and more time holding productive conversations with buyers and customers alike.

# EVEN AS SALES EVOLVES, IT WILL CONTINUE TO BE HUMAN

While there's no denying the influence that technology has on the modern sales process, in all of these predictions, one thing is clear: Humans aren't going anywhere.

As we said at the beginning, human conversations have been — and will always be — at the core of any successful sales cycle. Why? **Because rapport, empathy, and connection will always reign supreme.**

Although the rise of AI has spread fears that humans will fade into the background, the reality is that the future of sales will probably be even more human. Because, when integrated effectively, AI will help sales reps build more rapport, show more empathy, and foster stronger connections — whether that's in-person, digitally, or even outside of human conversations.

That's why, when done right, the future of selling will only result in more conversations, more personalization at scale, and more effective reps who can get back to the jobs they were hired to do.

So, let's not shy away from AI. Let's instead embrace it and use it to pave the way towards a brighter sales future 🌞

## WANT TO COMBINE THE EFFICIENCY OF AI WITH A HUMAN TOUCH?

Drift helps companies harness the power of AI for better personalization. If you want to ensure that you're delivering the right experience at every touchpoint of the buyer's journey, we'd love to talk to you.

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