



How Innovations in AI Simplify Selling

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Introduction

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been at the forefront of discussions about the future of work long enough that the practical ways it can impact businesses are becoming clearer.

But how can AI be used to drive innovation in simplifying selling?

In this definitive guide, we'll cover everything you need to know about using artificial intelligence in sales. We'll be answering the big questions like: How can sales organizations use AI to boost productivity? With the rise of AI, are relationships still important to sellers? Can sellers use AI to better understand their customers, and make better, long-lasting relationships?

Here's a breakdown of what this guide will cover:

1. **What AI is...and what it isn't.**
2. **Why AI won't replace sellers anytime soon**
3. **How AI can boost sales productivity**
4. **AI's role in identifying whitespace in accounts**
5. **AI's role in insights, and why insights are vital to sales success**
6. **The evolution of account-based selling and future beyond the advent of AI in sales**

01

What is artificial intelligence?

When ChatGPT became everyone's favorite chatbot, suddenly a niche topic became forcibly mainstream: AI. Just as suddenly, everyone became an expert on using generative AI for everything from coding to doing multiple jobs at once. The phenomenon was so far-reaching that it can be difficult at times to find a definitive single explanation for what generative AI is.

Here's how Yann LeCun, Turing Award winning French computer scientist, explains it:

"Generative AI is the ability of machines to create new content, such as images, text, or music. This is in contrast to discriminative AI, which is the ability of machines to classify or predict things. Generative AI is a rapidly growing area of AI research, with applications in a wide range of fields."

Sales is one of those fields ripe for innovation through AI

Generative AI for sales – a perfect match



As pointed out by the *Harvard Business Review*, sales has often lagged behind other areas of business in digital transformation. That will change thanks to generative AI. The data that sellers work with daily – phone calls, email threads, video interactions with customers – are exactly the kind of unstructured data generative AI can take, learn from, and work with.

Before AI, sifting through this immense data took hours and hours of sellers' time. The big advantage here is the possibility of removing those hours of manually sifting through data and giving that time back to the seller to do what sellers do best.

That being selling things. Building relationships. Becoming trusted advisors to their most strategic customers.

What can AI do that sellers can't?

Despite many mainstream worries about a dystopian, robot-ruled future, AI isn't meant to replace human intelligence. As Steven Pinker, Johnstone Family Professor in the Department of Psychology at

Harvard University, puts it, viewing human intelligence as something to be replaced is the wrong way of framing the impact of AI.

The right way of framing AI is to see it for what it's good at – a specific kind of intelligence hyper powerful at a particular kind of computation. For this reason, AI can certainly augment areas of intelligence, and perform those tasks better than even humans.

For example, we've long had computers much more capable of crunching complex mathematical equations, or at playing chess, than humans. Now, we have computers that can research and summarize from that research much, much faster, as well.

But some people get a little freaked out about AI and think it is doing more than it is. It is human-like, but not replacing fundamental aspects of what human sellers do.

AI can analyze vast amounts of data quicker than we can

Tools like ChatGPT have been trained on infinite amounts of data to be able to write about any topic as if it were a knowledgeable professor. However, it works in ways vastly different than the human mind. In the words of Steven Pinker:

“We’re dealing with an alien intelligence that’s capable of astonishing feats, but not in the manner of the human mind. We don’t need to be exposed to half a trillion words of text (which, at three words a second, eight hours a day, would take 15,000 years) to speak or solve problems. Nonetheless, it is impressive what you can get out of very, very, very high-order statistical patterns in mammoth data sets.” While human minds may differ

from artificial ones, that doesn’t mean there can’t be interplay between the two. We can use AI to sift through this data and rely on human minds to think strategically and creatively about how to use this information.

What can sellers do that AI can’t?

Well, quite a bit. Even before the release of super advanced chatbots – and despite the rapid digital transformation the world has seen– sellers were indispensable in the buying decision when complex, high stakes sales were on the table. When it comes to these types of sales, it’s relationships that win deals and drive revenue, time and time again. Understanding who the key players are within an account, and what uniquely motivates them, and building relationships to help them achieve their goals is where sellers far outshine AI.

Strategize to analyze customer pain points and motivations

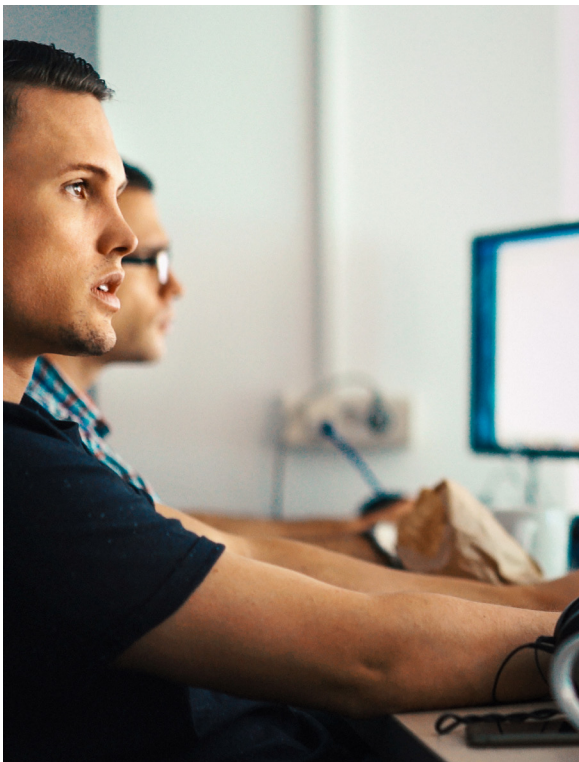
While generative AI is fantastic, it’s important for sales leaders to remember what its limitations are when implementing it for their sales teams to use. While many companies may be busily touting its effectiveness (and the benefits it can offer are immense), its shortcomings remain notable.

While chatbots like ChatGPT or Google Gemini may deliver customized, well-thought-out answers to complex queries, the models themselves processing this data don’t know or understand the information they are producing.



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Steven Pinker



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**Talent hits a target
no one else can hit;
Genius hits a target
no one else can see.**

Arthur Schopenhauer

Language models are analyzing data and patterns and coming up with a best guess as to what should be said next. It does this so well that it understands the subject and what it is discussing.

Human sellers, however, understand what is going on. They understand the context around the account, the people within it, the problems and the very interpersonal and human motivations therein.

They can gather all of this information in an [insight map](#) that charts goals, pressures, and initiatives and use AI to formulate these insights into actionable steps to lead them on a course to victory in the account.

Find novel solutions to problems buyers didn't even know they had

Seeing the big picture is exactly where AI falls short. As excited as we should be about AI's potential to boost productivity and remove mundane processes, we can't rely on AI to see the big picture inherently.

In our book, [Not Just Another Vendor](#), we highlight the story of Scott Jackson, Former Senior Director, Sales Enablement, Comcast Business, and how one of his sales reps sought out detailed information within an account. By talking to buyers, he could not only find the surface level challenges they were facing. He found novel, unique answers to hidden motivations that they weren't fully aware of.

Generative AI can only analyze what is there and extrapolate text or music or images from what it's trained on.

True genius, however, is not hitting the target that no one else can hit – it's hitting the target no one else can see. The same goes for greatness in sales. It's finding those hidden motivations and offering unique solutions.

02

Unleash your sales potential: how AI can boost productivity

One of the benefits of generative AI, having been broadly available for a substantial amount of time by now, is that we're starting to get a better idea of how exactly sellers can use AI to do their jobs better.

According to a recent and comprehensive study conducted by HubSpot, a staggering 70% of sales professionals agree that AI tools will make them more productive at work — enabling them to work smarter, faster, and

more efficiently than ever before. This seismic shift is worth taking note of – how can AI make your job easier and more fun?

However, sellers can leverage AI in a few key ways. When used effectively, AI in sales can help your sellers to free up valuable time, identify your ideal customer profile, personalize your approach, and even enhance your team's coaching.

How to use sales AI to boost productivity

Now that we are clear on a few important points like the fact that AI is important, it's here to stay, and it will help sellers and not replace them, let's get into a few practical ways savvy sellers can use AI to boost productivity and job satisfaction.

Free up valuable time

Time savings is a huge plus of implementing sales AI into your existing sales workflow. Sales representatives often get bogged down by repetitive administrative tasks like data entry and scheduling meetings. Sales AI can automate these tasks, freeing up valuable time for what truly matters – building relationships and closing deals.

Studies have shown that AI's potential to augment these tasks is huge. In fact, according to that study we mentioned earlier, 78% of sales professionals agree that AI can help them spend more time on the most critical aspects of their role, and 74% agree that AI can help them spend more time on the parts of the job they enjoy most.

Of course, sellers are often resistant to change. They are so busy in a hyper competitive world so it makes sense they would be critical of anything that appears like busywork in disguise.

However, an important part of [change management](#) focused on bringing AI successfully into the organization should address these issues before they cause trouble, and show sellers that AI will only help them be better sellers, and enjoy their jobs more.

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**AI will help sellers,
not replace them.**

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Artificial Intelligence can help you define your ideal customer profile

How well do you know your ideal customer profile? The reality is if you are a mature sales organization, you know it quite well. You've asked the right questions and understand your customers' firmographics, problems, and the positive impact you can have on them.

However, what key pieces of information are you missing – information that your entire revenue team could use to bolster their effectiveness in helping you win that big deal or renewal on the line?

AI can analyze vast amounts of data to identify patterns and pinpoint leads with the highest conversion potential. This allows you to focus your efforts on the most promising prospects, maximizing your return on investment.

AI can accelerate personalization

AI can analyze customer interactions and tailor your communication accordingly. This can involve personalizing emails, offering targeted recommendations, and adjusting your sales pitch to resonate with each prospect's unique needs.

But will the impact of AI on personalization be all that big? Sellers think so. In fact, 69% of sales professionals strongly or somewhat agree that AI can help them personalize the customer experience.

While that all sounds good, you might still be wondering – what exactly does that look like in practice?

Here are two use cases for how AI can enhance seller's ability to personalize:

- AI can help sellers come to an even deeper customer understanding thanks to AI's ability to analyze data and go far beyond personas. [Knowing your customer](#) is vital to successful sales, and so much of what's vital to a deal lies in countless details.
- Unlocking whitespace in accounts: whitespace is the opportunity for revenue growth in existing accounts, and it's vital to your business's success. Existing customers are more likely to expand into new areas and solutions from a seller they know, and AI can help identify these areas of growth and even make tailored product suggestions to help sellers succeed.

Gathering insights and data are where AI really shines for sellers, and sales professionals agree: 73% of sales professionals agree that AI can help them pull insights from data they otherwise wouldn't be able to find.

AI can enhance sales coaching

Finally, AI can analyze sales calls and provide valuable feedback to both new and experienced reps. This personalized coaching can help identify areas for improvement, refine sales techniques, and lead to improved performance.

It's clear that AI is here to stay, with most sales tools expected to include some sort of AI soon. But what's good to see after all the excitement is that sellers are also here to stay, and working together, seller and AI can uncover new insights into their customer's business challenges, forge connections, gain clarity, and collaborate internally and externally to provide meaningful value and become trusted advisors to their customers.

Pitfalls to avoid when implementing generative AI for sales



Again, it's easy to get excited about the potential of AI. But like with any innovation, it comes with its own fair share of challenges. For example:

Generative AI for sales is not foolproof

Generative AI tools are incredibly smart, but also capable of baffling fallacies. In the words of Steven Pinker, generative AI's ability to appear competent "makes its blunders all the more striking. It utters confident confabulations, such as that the U.S. has had four female presidents, including Luci Baines Johnson, 1973-77. And it makes elementary errors of common sense."

Deciding how to handle the jump to AI is something that [sales leaders can't afford to take lightly](#).

Already there are stories of times ChatGPT has been used undiscerningly, leading to dire consequences in crucial fields like law. Other than the real possibility of ChatGPT or Google Gemini delivering horrendously false or even offensive responses to queries, there is a security element to consider as well.

Generative AI for sales poses security risks

According to popular generative AI's terms of use, anything that the chatbot comes up with from your queries technically belongs to them. Additionally, what's put into the chatbot quickly becomes part of the chatbots training data, meaning businesses should be very concerned about confidential information being shared.

Guardrails will inevitably need to be set to ensure safety and compliance well before AI is regularly adopted by an organization.

CROs and sales leaders need to consider, however, that even if they haven't come up with a strategy yet for how AI is used in their organization, sellers could very well be using these tools already.

Generative AI for sales – tools and features to look for

Beyond the hyper popular AI chatbots, another very important AI powered sales tool has arrived – and that's Einstein GPT from Salesforce.

Einstein GPT is the tool to watch for generative AI in sales. Naturally, as many sellers do most of their daily activities in Salesforce, they'll look for a tool that can seamlessly leverage the data they are already working with natively.

Einstein GPT solves challenges out of reach for general models

Einstein GPT could potentially cover some of the areas ChatGPT is weaker in for corporate workers. It is designed specifically for corporate environments. Also, unlike ChatGPT which is trained on general information, Einstein GPT is trained on your unique customer data, making it so much more helpful at solving unique needs sellers come across in their day-to-day activities.

Additionally, Einstein GPT has access to real-time data, making it a more reliable source of information for current or recent events.

Einstein GPT's "Trust Layer" could help bridge confidence gap for sales leaders

Finally, there's one last area that Einstein GPT could excel where other more general models cannot. As previously stated, there is a privacy risk inherent to using generative AI tools in sales. However, Salesforce has added what they call a "Trust Layer" to help business leaders sleep better at night.

In Salesforce's own words, this trust layer "will enable companies to get started with trusted generative AI faster by optimizing the right model for the right task. It will also provide deployment capabilities for any relevant LLM while helping companies maintain their data privacy, security, residency, and compliance goals."

If this trust layer is strong enough to do what Salesforce intends it to do, we could see a rapid adoption of generative AI at every level of interactions between sellers and customers.

Salesforce native tools will benefit from Einstein GPT

This significance extends not only to the use of Einstein GPT for sellers – it also impacts tools and applications native to Salesforce. [The best sales tool](#) should be able to take advantage of Einstein GPT. For this reason, sales solutions that complement the data found within Salesforce natively are likely to win out against tools that aren't.

Ultimately, the highest use case for AI in sales is that which applies to insights. [Tools that help you gather insights](#) will be the most beneficial for sellers.

By sifting through this data, AI can do more than the simple drudge work that sellers don't want to do anyway – it can help sellers see that elusive bigger picture that is so invaluable.

03

AI and whitespace: how to use AI to find room for growth in existing accounts

When we speak about AI in sales and its potential impact, we would be remiss not to specifically focus on whitespace and AI. AI can be a powerful tool for targeting whitespace revenue – low hanging fruit to the seller.

What is whitespace in sales?

Surprisingly tricky to measure, sales whitespace is the existing opportunity within customer accounts to cross-sell and up-sell. Once your team has done the hard work of cultivating a relationship, instilling themselves as a trusted advisor, and landing and expanding a deal, without a strategy to target whitespace effectively, they are not reaping 100% of the fruit of their labor. Still, most companies undervalue this critical sales channel, often to the point where they haven't even set up key performance indicators (KPIs) around it.

Why do so many businesses fail to target whitespace?

Think of the metrics commonly tracked by businesses — from bookings, to billings, to their backlog, conversion rates, deal sizes, renewals, NPS, and more. What's often missing? Tracking pipeline potential from the existing customer base.

Given targeting your whitespace is one of the most proven ways to grow net new revenue, it seems like a startling error that so many businesses fail to do so successfully. But there are several reasons why this happens.

Relationships aren't a priority for sellers

Many sellers are still trapped in the age-old mindset that lone wolves are the strongest sellers. Predatory sales practices aren't effective at building strong relationships, and they certainly don't enable sellers to target whitespace down the line.

Instead of looking for easy wins, sellers who establish [strong relationships](#) with customers are in an advantageous position to grow revenue in their existing accounts.

Sellers focus on product over relationships

As you can see, poor relationships are at the heart of missed opportunities in targeting whitespace. A common issue sellers face occurs when they focus only on selling their product at the expense of understanding their buyers' real challenges.

Sellers show up with a list of features and matrices that show X is greater than Y, gather minimum information, take what information they do have and put it into a proposal, shoot that proposal to their prospect, then move onto their next target.

However, this is not the basis for a strong, mutually beneficial relationship. By asking questions, and seeking to understand deeper motivations, sellers can solve challenges their buyers weren't even aware they faced.

Sales teams focus only on key accounts

Even in a strategic, account based selling approach, sales teams often get blinded by their most strategic accounts, and neglect to target the whitespace in their accounts that don't make the top tier. In some ways, this is understandable. Key accounts are your biggest spenders and can be the bedrock for your sales organization.

However, they are often not where the biggest growth opportunities come from. Sellers that have a consistent, daily approach to targeting whitespace in their second-tier accounts and below will unlock hidden growth others will simply overlook.

Benefits of targeting whitespace – real world example

Targeting whitespace in accounts is not just a theory – it's a proven sales strategy that produces big results.

In our recent book, [*Not Just Another Vendor*](#), we highlight the story of one sales leader, Todd Adair, MHCL, Southeast Zone Commercial Manager, GE Healthcare, and how he embodied this mindset change to unlock unparalleled growth in his accounts.

"In the past, our sales approach could be boiled down to three steps: here's why you need my technology, here's how to justify it, and now I'll find a way to fit it into your problem," he says.

Today, that's been flipped on its head. "Now it's completely different. Now we say: 'What's wrong with what you're doing today? Why change? Why now? And over the course of the next six to 12 months, here's why you should partner with me to help solve that problem.'"

Since beginning this new approach to sales, Todd and his colleagues have carefully measured the data to track how the 70-

plus accounts managed under account planning principles that target whitespace fare against the rest of the accounts within the business that run with a more traditional approach. As it happens, those accounts reliably outperform, averaging 9% yearly growth, compared with 5–6% from the accounts managed more traditionally.

How AI can help you target whitespace and grow revenue

Now that we've discussed what whitespace is in depth and why it should matter to your organization, you are wondering – how does AI help?

When it comes to key account management and targeting whitespace, AI has a huge impact.

Here are a few key areas that AI can help:

Identify account intent

You've put in the work to identify which of your accounts have the most potential upside for revenue growth. But how do you know their intent? Are they ready to make the leap? When it comes to cross-selling and upselling, processing and understanding that intent ahead of your competition is critical. AI can process that data and address those signs before it's humanly possible to do so.

Being the first to address the needs of your key customers can give you a huge leg up on the competition.





Improving customer interactions

Limited amounts of time are spent face-to-face with the buyer. Sellers need to make use of this time wisely. By analyzing the information in your existing account and all your interactions with buyers within the buying group, AI can help sellers tailor solutions to the unique needs of their buyers, helping them to make the most out of each interaction.

Better revenue team alignment

The [revenue team](#) is made up of various customer facing roles from sales to marketing to customer success. AI can help the revenue team work better together, and better work with potential buyers to provide tailored solutions, address needs and bolster customer satisfaction.

AI does this by providing activity and behavioral information sales managers and leaders can use to find gaps and help steer their teams back on the right course before a minor slipup turns into a major deal slippage.

Taking whitespace analysis social

Many businesses realize how important social media is to sales. Social sellers outperform their peers, and many buyers are now using social media as their main information source. Luckily, AI can help streamline customer analysis from a social standpoint through complex algorithms and analytics.

There are many ways they can do this – through analyzing common hashtags around their audience, and even which words are used most. Processing this sort of information at scale would have been impossible for a seller before. Today, it's easy to do this in practice, and leads to unlocking extraordinary potential to connect with potential buyers.

Beyond analyzing potential buyers themselves, AI can use data from social media to help sellers stay on top of the trends and topics that matter most to their ICP, making it that much easier for them to position themselves as experts and thought leaders in their field.

The next frontier: AI and beyond



We're amid rapid (and major) innovation, thanks to the arrival of artificial intelligence, which will usher in a new era of insights and scale. Here's what's coming in the world of ABS:

Artificial intelligence will offer a new era of insights. True, generative "artificial intelligence" hasn't reached account-based selling platforms just yet, but sophisticated augmented intelligence has—and it's already having an impact on the ability of revenue teams to put account planning to work.

AI will offer sellers a far wider range of insights, giving them unprecedented levels of knowledge about their customers and how best to serve them. The better these insights get, the more people will hurry to adopt technology as an essential component of maximizing customer value.

Soon, AI will be accepted by sales leaders, working together with them so closely that sellers may not even be fully cognizant of it.

What will be clear, however, as insights become the chief currency of the AI-driven future – there will be no greater failure than for a seller or revenue team to miss forging meaningful, lasting connections. The ability of AI to hyper analyze customers, data and interactions will only raise the stakes for relationship sellers as buyers become accustomed to more.

Sellers able to understand their customers' businesses even better than they do themselves will be the very greatest, and shine far more even in the pre-AI world.

In the end, no matter what advances in technology are made, selling comes down to one thing and one thing above all others: strong relationships and the trust those relationships build.

We are Altify.

Altify is the Account Planning AI Cloud helping sales teams grow revenue by planning smarter.

Altify was founded on a core belief: **strategic B2B selling puts the customer at the center**. We know sales success isn't just about selling something—it's about **creating mutual value**, which demands a solid plan.

Our mission is to shape the next generation of sales leaders. We equip revenue teams with **proven methodology, best practices, and a structured sales process**, fostering a customer-first mindset to strengthen relationships and win more opportunities.

Altify is not just software, but rather full-service sales transformation, powered by software. Our expert team helps sales organizations build and scale successful, tailored methodology-backed programs, with wholistic support from **sales strategy and training to technical implementation**. We ensure long-term customer value, proudly helping the world's best sales teams deliver unparalleled results.

See how Altify can transform your revenue operations at altify.com