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# Sales Transformation Development Report

**Sales Manager**

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# 1. Introduction



Business to business (B2B) sales is a function undergoing a comprehensive and rapid transformation. Many sales functions report a struggle to navigate this transformative experience, with sales productivity and talent gaps being the two most reported challenges.

Working with our sales assessment customers, SHL have identified three common principles that sales organisations will need to address in the modern, digital sales segment:

## 1 The External Environment is radically different

Data and analytics are at the heart of the global sales transformation. Increasingly, the most successful sales organisations demonstrate effective use of analytics tools in their sales processes. In parallel, a majority of B2B sales functions have shifted their model from traditional to digital sales interactions, and 89% of sales leaders in those functions expect the digital transition to accelerate.

## 2 Customer Behaviour has changed

As a result of the marked increase in digital sales interactions, the role of the sales professional is changing. More than half of the sales process is completed before a sales-person gets involved for the first time, and over 70% of B2B buyers state a preference of digital self-service and remote interactions. This is countered by buyers needing sellers to collaborate with them in new ways – helping to personalise the offer, and simplify the decision-making process.

## 3 The Foundational Requirements for sales success have evolved

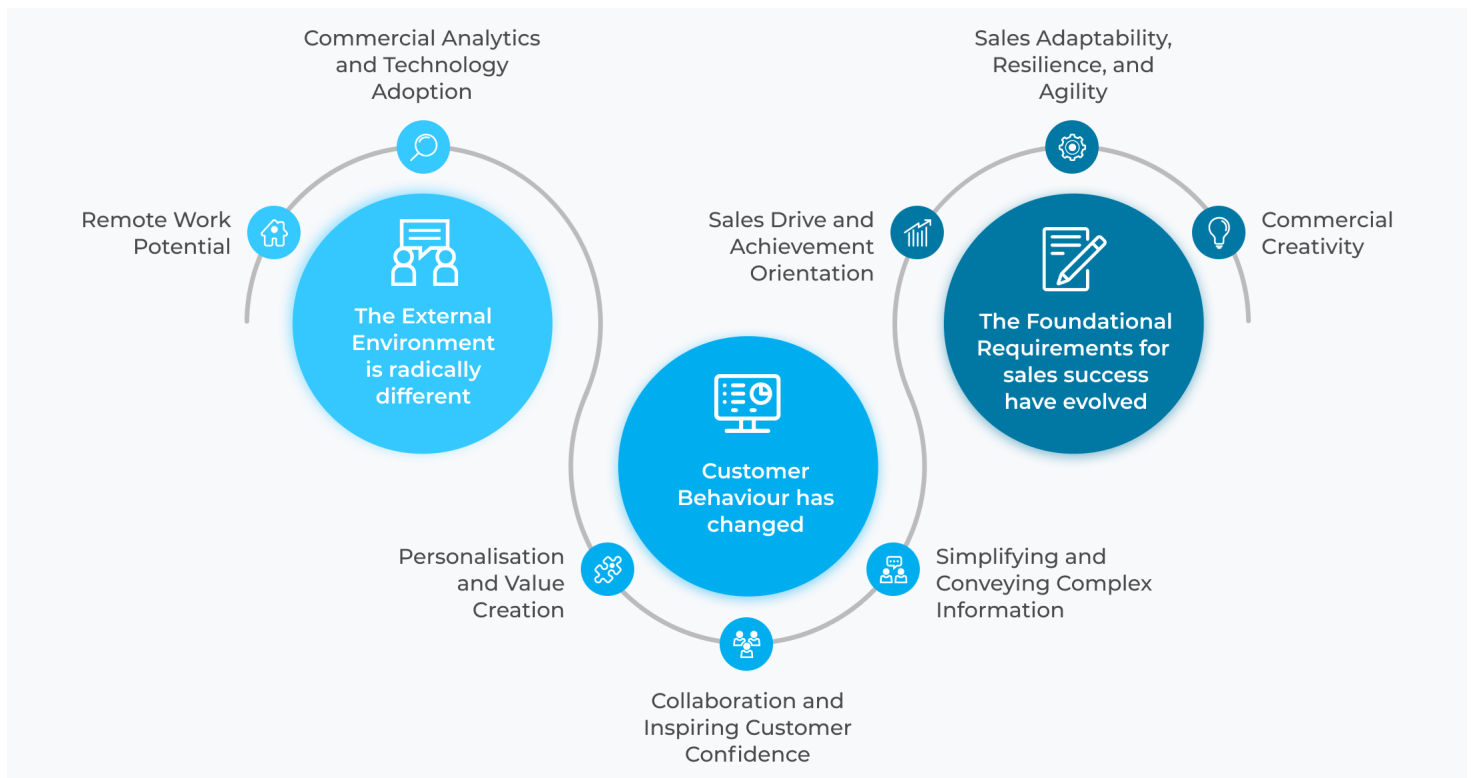
In this rapidly changing environment, it is unsurprising that the competency building blocks required to be a top sales performer are also changing. SHL assessed more than 11,000 B2B sales professionals, with two key findings:

- Some 'traditional' competencies remain critical – for example sales drive, sales focus and achievement orientation.
- A new set of emerging competencies differentiate high performers – for example adaptability and resilience.

## 2. SHL's Sales Transformation Model



Leveraging our insight and research, SHL have developed a tri-factor behavioural model that focuses on the key competency drivers for success against each of these three key segments.



- **Commercial Analytics and Technology Adoption** – developing, evaluating and leveraging technical tools and devices to enhance commercial execution; a commitment to technology systems and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software; and the use of data to identify patterns and trends to assist with setting prices, finding and securing new business, and establishing strategic, long term partnerships with customers.
- **Remote Work Potential** – the tendency to remain focused on key work habits; persisting to close leads; managing resources online; following organisational guidelines around work in a remote setting; maintaining enthusiasm; and effectively working autonomously.
- **Personalisation and Value Creation** – establishing and utilising effective socialisation; the ability to create rapport; proactively connecting customers to targeted information; and creating tailored messages and solutions that resonate with customer needs and challenges.
- **Simplifying and Conveying Complex Information** – the ability to simplify complex concepts and ideas while ensuring information is delivered to clients in a timely and quality manner. Sellers that are skilled in this area make themselves available to assist customers in synthesising information from multiple sources and help determine the key points of understanding required to enable buying decisions.
- **Collaboration and Inspiring Customer Confidence** – creating a feeling of partnership with the client; building consensus across multiple stakeholders; and helping clients build confidence in their ability to make smart buying decisions, which all foster a trusting relationship that establishes a positive environment for future sales opportunities.
- **Sales Adaptability, Resilience, and Agility** – quickly adapting to ambiguity; managing internal and external change; controlling negative emotions; remaining productive under pressure; and viewing future opportunities with a positive mindset.
- **Sales Drive and Achievement Orientation** – enthusiasm for identifying and securing new clients; seeking and completing demanding sales quotas; and striving to outperform colleagues' sales.
- **Commercial Creativity** – considering the competitive landscape, revenue, costs, and risks when choosing sales strategies; proactively identifying and acting on strategic opportunities; and being open to innovative methods to secure business.
- **Sales Leadership** – leading groups of enterprise sales professionals and delegating work based on skills and potential; motivating team members to reach stretch sales goals; setting clear expectations and standards for performance; monitoring work; and coaching others to develop their full potential.



### Commercial Analytics and Technology Adoption



This is a measure of the ability to adopt and utilise innovative technologies, coupled with the tendency to have a data-driven perspective to assist with sales. The measure is characterised by: developing, evaluating and leveraging technical tools and devices to enhance commercial execution; a commitment to technology systems and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software; and the use of data to identify patterns and trends to assist with setting prices, finding and securing new business, and establishing strategic, long term partnerships with customers.

You are likely to be somewhat uncomfortable with using technical tools to achieve commercial objectives. You are likely to delay or avoid learning new software systems (e.g. Customer Relationship Management) that can assist you in sales roles. You are likely to prefer traditional methods for completing work that are not reliant on digital advancements and changes in the sales workplace and you may feel awkward communicating through technological systems. You are likely to rely on instinct or feelings to help fulfil your sales goals rather than critically evaluating information with commercial data analytics, facts/figures, and research.

- Identify peers that have been successful in utilising data to reach their revenue goals. Work with them to understand what data analytics are useful to their clients and how to perform those operations yourself.
- Identify areas where you can improve your technological systems and data analytics skills and enrol in a free online course related to your largest need to further your education and upskill in those programmes.
- When working with a new client with whom you would typically utilise traditional methods, develop an alternative plan that is an unconventional and innovative approach in securing their business.
- Set up a meeting with your manager to discuss training opportunities with technological systems and the utilisation of data.

This is a measure of commercial aptitude in a virtual sales environment and the potential for sales success when working remotely over a long period of time. This is characterised by: the tendency to remain focused on key work habits; persisting to close leads; managing resources online; following organisational guidelines around work in a remote setting; maintaining enthusiasm; and effectively working autonomously.

You are likely to perform as well as others in a remote sales role. You are likely to remain energetic and focused on closing sales in a virtual setting. You are likely to comply with organisational policies surrounding remote work practices. At times, you may be slightly less organised or systematic than when you are working in an office. You are likely to be comfortable with the autonomy of a virtual setting and persist with difficult tasks regardless of the effort required.

- Create a plan of how you will spend your time for one week and monitor your time to see how you planned versus what you actually completed. Identify any discrepancies to assist in better planning for upcoming weeks.
- Develop a list of common distractions in your home office and attempt to limit attention to those items by only allowing focus on those non-work items during your established break times.
- Establish a routine that allows you to begin and end work at times that allow for optimum opportunities for correspondence between you and your clients.
- Begin each day of work by prioritising tasks that will have the largest impact on the attainment of your goals.

This is a measure of the ability to partner closely with clients and prospects by establishing trusted networks and relationships that drive value for the buyer. This measure is characterised by: establishing and utilising effective socialisation; the ability to create rapport; proactively connecting customers to targeted information; and creating tailored messages and solutions that resonate with customer needs and challenges.

You are as likely as others to seek the best value for clients through practical, cost effective, and/or bespoke solutions. You are likely to seek to build rapport and trust with your potential and existing clients to drive “win-win” partnerships for both organisations. At times, you are likely to control the sales opportunities and can direct the clients to the best solution for their needs. You may appear humble and sociable to drive a positive, professional relationship with your clients while demonstrating genuine concern for their needs.

- Be explicit and honest with your clients about what you and your organisation can and cannot do to meet their needs.
- Drive the clients proactively to those solutions that will create the best value for them and be sure to emphasise the value they will bring.
- For your next lead, create a detailed business case that clearly articulates the merits of your solution in the business language and context the client cares about. Share that business case with the client and agree on the success metrics that will underpin your partnership.
- Embrace creativity when preparing for the next client interaction. Plan to speak as little as possible while providing value only to what your client cares about most. Share the plan with high performing peers to get their feedback on your approach.



This is a measure of identifying, categorising, and communicating complex information in a manner that is easy to understand for enterprise clients. This is characterised by the ability to simplify complex concepts and ideas while ensuring information is delivered to clients in a timely and quality manner. Sellers that are skilled in this area make themselves available to assist customers in synthesising information from multiple sources and help determine the key points of understanding required to enable buying decisions.

You are likely to seek to understand the needs of clients and may expend moderate efforts to share sources of information that are relevant to their needs. You are likely to speak up when you feel a client is using inaccurate or misleading information but may at times not fully correct inaccurate information. You may provide the clients with requested documentation from one or two sources and would be likely to direct clients to the information that would have the most applicability to their needs. At times, you will evaluate and convert complex or lengthy material into easily understood and succinct concepts for the client.

- Practise speaking up in internal meetings when you feel that you have an idea or strategy that will add value to your organisation. Perfect this outspoken style to ensure you're communicating with clients on what they should and should not be considering when making their decisions.
- Attend training sessions on your organisation's products and services and try writing short summaries of the key points of information that can guide a client in purchasing the items that will best fit their needs.
- After a client has secured business with your organisation, seek feedback on the information that they felt was most helpful in guiding their decision to partner with you and your organisation.
- Find an opportunity to leverage "thought leadership" tools and strategies to help simplify and demonstrate to clients what they should be considering. Then guide the client to what you know to be best practice, given previous experience and demonstrated results.





This is a measure of the tendency to create a sense that the sales process has been collaborative, leaving the customer with a feeling of confidence. This is characterised by: creating a feeling of partnership with the client; building consensus across multiple stakeholders; and helping clients build confidence in their ability to make smart buying decisions, which all foster a trusting relationship that establishes a positive environment for future sales opportunities.

You are less likely than others to successfully work together with your clients. You are likely to have difficulty developing collaborative relationships with clients and may find it challenging to work cohesively with a client. You may fail to encourage and support the client with their decision-making processes and may lack the appropriate concern for the client's needs.

- Investigate a method to always promptly and accurately respond to any client requests. For example, you may establish that you will respond to all correspondence from clients within 24 hours to provide solutions or give an expectation of when the solutions will be ready for the clients.
- If a client needs support from other functions within your organisation, then make sure that you follow up in a timely fashion to ensure that their concerns were met by the other departments. If they haven't been met, then escalate the issue to make sure it is resolved in a timely manner.
- Research different customs and norms of the cultures for your clients that live in different regions than you and be aware of those social norms to ensure cultural sensitivity.
- Promote your organisation's solutions while avoiding attributions of those successes to yourself so you're not appearing overly confident or dishonest to your clients.
- Ask a trusted peer to review an upcoming proposal/correspondence and ask them to react from the customer perspective while checking for tone, language, etc. so you can understand the client's perspective better.

This is a measure of the likelihood of adapting to a rapidly changing industry and tolerating the pressure of a sales role. This measure is characterised by: quickly adapting to ambiguity; managing internal and external change; controlling negative emotions; remaining productive under pressure; and viewing future opportunities with a positive mindset.

You are likely to find it difficult to adapt to the constant changes in a business-to-business sales environment. You are likely to prefer traditional sales methods in your established daily routine. You are likely to be uncomfortable in ambiguous situations and unable to guide the buying process for your clients amidst uncertainty. You may experience more stress than others when innovative techniques are suggested or implemented for sourcing or closing new business opportunities. You may find the pressure to fulfil sales goals overwhelming at times and may express a negative viewpoint to your clients about any opportunities or changes.

- After a difficult sales situation in which you fail to close a sale, speak with a co-worker or mentor about what you did and what you could do differently in the future to obtain a more positive outcome.
- When faced with changes to a strategy or business process, start by asking questions about the objectives of the project to ensure that you get added clarity on this change.
- Create a plan to deal with difficult clients or changing processes, plans, and/or strategies. Throughout the plan, ensure that your emotions display a positive perspective in your correspondence with the client or internal stakeholder. Create contingency plans (e.g. self-talk/assurance, taking a break, etc.) to ensure your negative emotions are controlled.

This is a measure of the tendency to be motivated by and remain focused on achieving sales goals. This measure is characterised by: enthusiasm for identifying and securing new clients; seeking and completing demanding sales quotas; and striving to outperform colleagues' sales.

You are likely to display moderate enthusiasm for setting and pursuing challenging sales goals. You are likely to be comfortable in a sales culture that is high energy and fast paced but may, at times, set your own work pace at a more casual level. You are likely to be comfortable working independently to develop and attend to different opportunities when required. You may not display high energy levels all the time, but are likely to show determination when working on significant or high visibility tasks. You are likely to be willing to compete with your peers but may not be highly motivated in a competitive environment.

- Work with your manager to improve your performance of a key metric (e.g. leads-to-sales conversion ratio) over the course of a year to challenge yourself to be the best on your team.
- Create a list of items that impact your initiative and motivation at work. Look for methods that can enhance these items further so you can feel your desire to fulfil your goals is self-driven.
- To build momentum and motivation, start your day with tasks/goals that are considered "small" or "easy" wins. Leverage the momentum you build from completing those tasks to drive better results with higher impact goal attainment.
- Sketch out what a perfect quarter would look like from a commercial performance perspective. Then identify the actions and key performance indicators necessary in order to achieve this. Develop a complementary strategy to hold yourself accountable for this perfect quarter.

This is a measure of the tendency to consider all commercial factors in the decision-making process. This measure is characterised by: considering the competitive landscape, revenue, costs, and risks when choosing sales strategies; proactively identifying and acting on strategic opportunities; and being open to innovative methods to secure business.

You are as likely as most to identify and secure new business opportunities. You are likely to be motivated and energetic in closing your new opportunities and show an awareness of the external factors that can impact business-to-business partnerships. You are likely to be knowledgeable about your products and services and understand the factors that differentiate them from your organisation's competitors. You are likely to think ahead and consider adapting your sales strategy based on its effectiveness.

- Outline the products and services offered by your organisation's biggest competitor and present that information to your manager. Use the competitor analysis for strategising what your company could do to win business from them.
- Perform a cost-benefits analysis on your two favourite sales strategies and identify any methods for decreasing your costs, effort, and time while increasing the revenue from those strategies.
- Identify 2-3 competitors that you frequently encounter when securing business and list 2-3 key differentiators of your organisation's products and services over those suppliers' products and services.
- Participate in your industry's major conferences to learn the emerging trends that can impact your business and, if the opportunity arises, expand your network with potential clients and partners.



### Sales Leadership



This is a measure of traits that lead to success in a sales management or leadership role. These traits are often characterised by: leading groups of enterprise sales professionals and delegating work based on skills and potential; motivating team members to reach stretch sales goals; setting clear expectations and standards for performance; monitoring work; and coaching others to develop their full potential.

You are somewhat likely to be content with leading and supervising a team of sales professionals. You are likely to seek and understand the main sources of motivation for the professionals on your team. You are likely to be aware of your team's strengths and weaknesses and can generally delegate tasks successfully based on that information. You are likely to show an interest in your direct reports' performance, support their developmental opportunities as needed, and provide recognition and appreciation for substantial accomplishments on a case-by-case basis. You are likely to provide helpful feedback and resolve any poor performance issues as needed.

- Attend leadership meetings to network with other managers to discuss different methods to motivate employees and delegate responsibilities.
- Develop regular meetings with your sales professionals to make sure you're consistently and adequately monitoring their performance. Create a running list of performance metrics that you review at these regular intervals to see if there are any goals at risk of attainment and coach the individuals based on need.
- If you have the flexibility to do so, let your sales professionals choose the incentives that they believe impact their performance most and set up the incentive structure based on these preferences. Also employ flexible or non-financial perks (e.g. taking Friday afternoons off, allowing for virtual work after lengthy work trips) to help incentivise the team even further.