Microsoft
Dynamics 365

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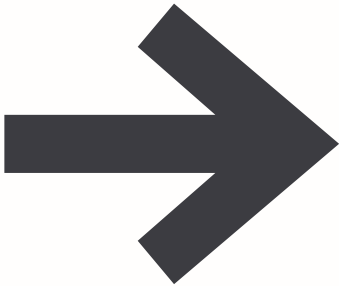
The power of relationship selling

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

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How are today's most successful organizations 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 utilize 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 organizations realize 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.

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Respondent breakdown

In order to find answers, Heinz Marketing conducted a survey of 208 sales leaders from predominantly US-based organizations 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 prequalify for the survey, respondents had to indicate that their organization 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.
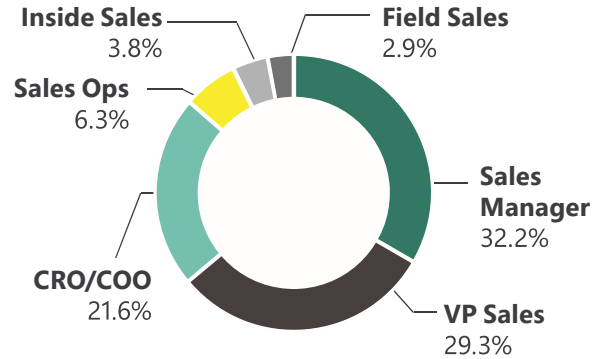
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Current role

Inside Sales
3.8%

Field Sales
2.9%

Sales Ops
6.3%

Sales Manager
32.2%

CRO/COO
21.6%

VP Sales
29.3%

Number of employees

100 - 249
8.7%

>5000
21.6%

250 - 999
28.8%

1,000 - 4,999
40.9%

Industry

Other
12.4%

Financial Services
21.2%

Media
6.3%

Education
8.2%

Retail
19.2%

Healthcare
13.9%

Manufacturing
18.8%
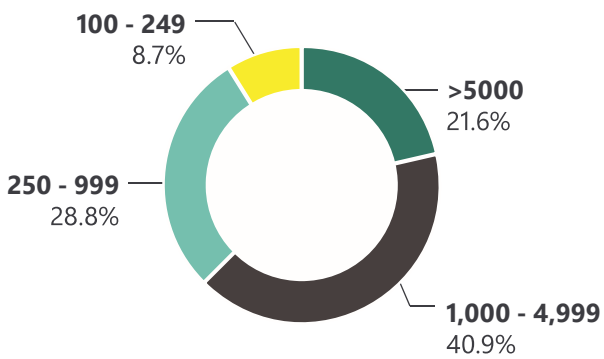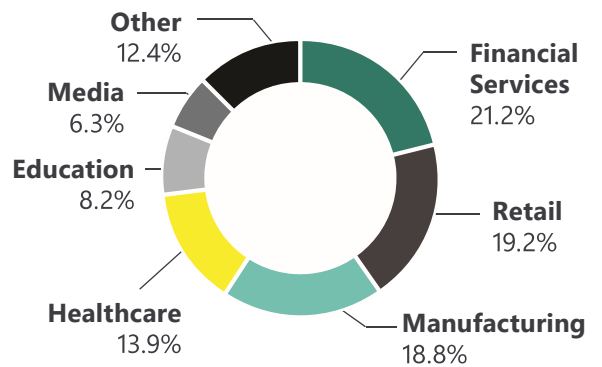
Currently, how successful is your organization in achieving its revenue goals on a scale of 1-7, where 7 means very successful and 1 means not successful at all?

Rarely achieve goals (1-3)
2.4%

Frequently achieve goals (4-5)
25.5%

Regularly achieve goals (6-7)
71.2%

62.8%   37.1%   77.6%   22.4%   73.3%   22.2%

100%
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%

100 - 999   1000 - 4999   5000+

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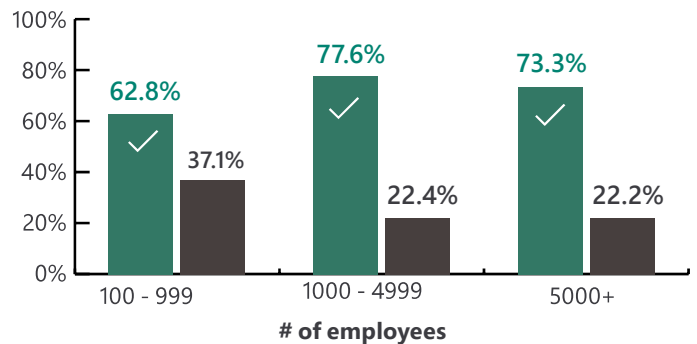
✓ Successful (6-7)   ■ Not as successful (1-5)

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Key themes for sales success

A careful examination of the data reveals four key findings that serve as a roadmap for organizations 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.

2. It's all about scale

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

3. Cross-platform is key

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

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 organization has a strong alignment between sales and marketing. Having a mechanism to provide constructive criticism and feedback between marketing and sales as 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 and building on current relationships as well as establishing new ones."

– Sales manager

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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-on-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 customize 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 organizations successful, we looked for insights around each of those themes.

Key themes:

01	02	03
Build and strengthen relationships with key prospects	Provide prospect insights and recommendations to inform next steps	Engage at scale

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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 organize 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 synchronize lead data across different tools and platforms to collaborate with other sales team members.

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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 organize relationships within their target accounts? Please select the three capabilities that are most important.

Capability	Successful organizations	Not as successful organizations
Contact, lead, account, and opportunity data management	12%	18%
Synchronization of lead data across different tools/platforms	10%	10%
Collaboration with other sales team members	9%	12%
Insights into prospect engagement with emails, content, etc.	8%	8%
Visibility to prospects within colleagues' networks	8%	8%
Predictive lead/opportunity scoring	8%	7%
Integrated Social Network data (e.g. LinkedIn Sales Navigator)	7%	6%
Integrated, automated customized direct mail	7%	6%
Visibility of social engagement across platforms	7%	4%
Content personalization	7%	4%
Purchase intent data	6%	6%
Auto-dialer	5%	2%
Automated sales playbooks	4%	4%
Sales email campaigns	3%	4%

✓ Successful organizations   ■ Not as successful organizations

For all organizations' 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:

23%
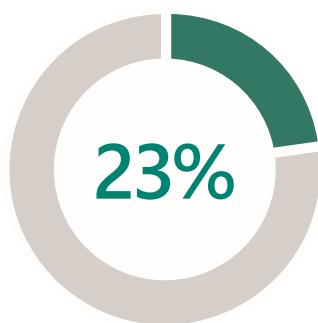
Building multiple sales relationships within an account

20%

Understanding how to best connect with buying committee members

18%
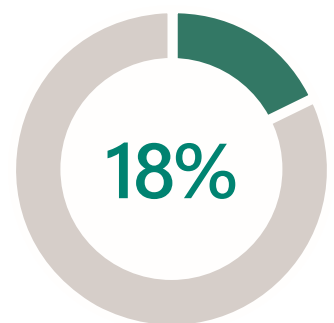
Understanding individual roles

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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?

Bringing together data from multiple systems to get a full picture of the prospect and their organization
- 27%
- 37.7%

Understanding how prospects engage with sellers and sales content
- 23%
- 15.5%

Using interaction data to help determine next best step to take in the sales process
- 18.2%
- 14%

Providing access to social data to gain insights about the prospect and their organization
- 15.5%
- 13.8%

Delivering personalized content to prospects
- 14.9%
- 13.8%

0%   10%   20%   30%   40%   50%

✓ Successful organizations   Not as successful organizations

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Effectively leveraging the data is also key. For example, **79.7% of respondents who are successful in achieving their organizations' 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?
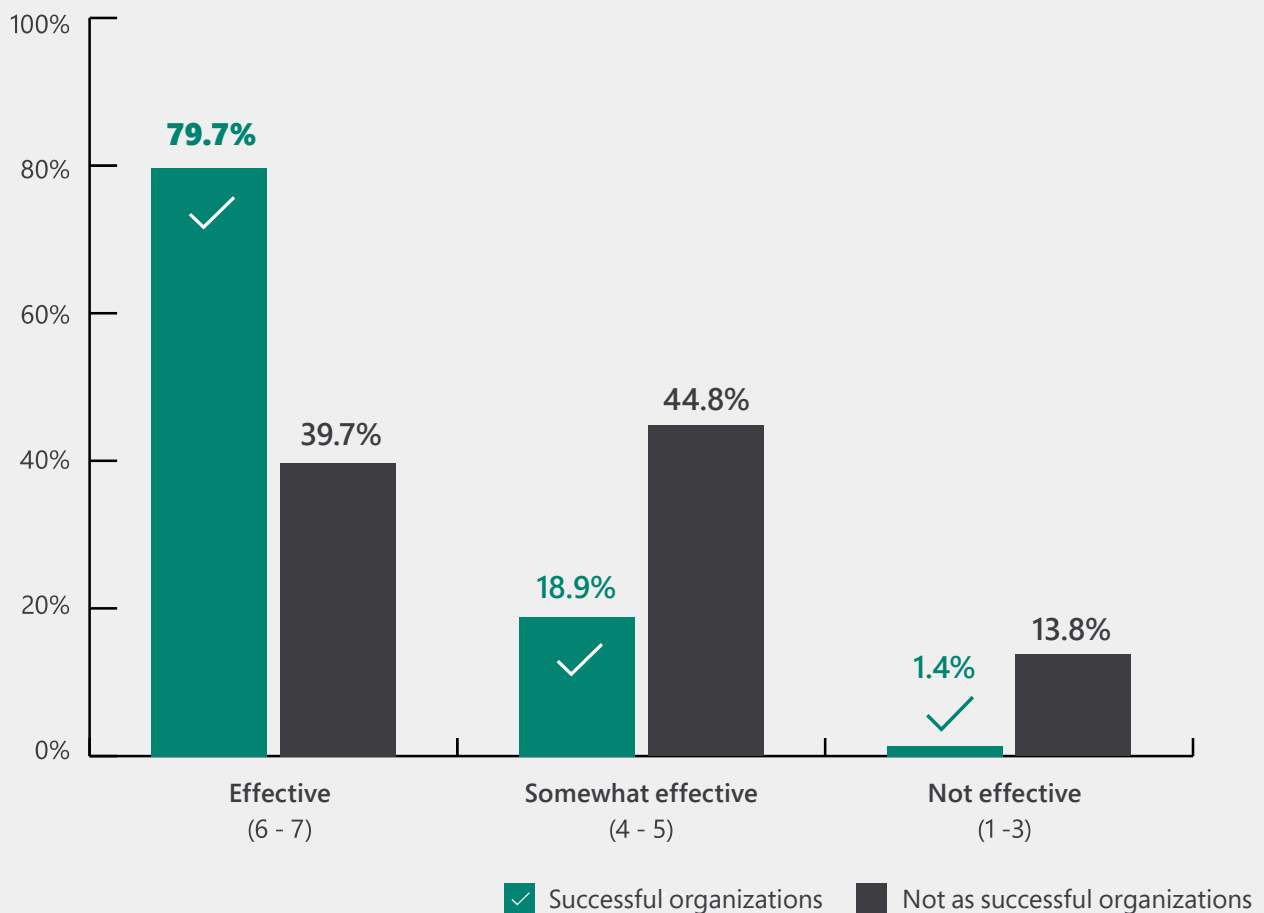

When it comes to moving things forward, **synchronization of lead data across different tools/ platforms was listed as the most effective capability successful organizations utilize (12.2%); followed by contact, lead, account, and opportunity data management (10.4%) and predictive lead/opportunity scoring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

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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 organize relationships within their target accounts? Please select the three capabilities that are most important.

Capability	Successful organizations	Not as successful organizations
Synchronization of lead data across different tools/platforms	12.2%	11.6%
Contact, lead, account, and opportunity data management	10.4%	13.3%
Predictive lead/opportunity scoring	9.7%	6.4%
Insights into prospect engagement with emails, content, etc.	9.2%	11.0%
Collaboration with other sales team members	8.8%	13.9%
Content personalization	6.8%	8.1%
Purchase intent data	6.5%	4.4%
Integrated Social Network data (e.g. LinkedIn Sales Navigator)	6.3%	3.5%
Visibility of social engagement across platforms	5.9%	5.2%
Integrated, automated customized direct mail	5.9%	5.8%
Visibility to prospects within colleagues' networks	5.9%	3.5%
Automated sales playbooks	5.0%	5.8%
Auto-dialer	4.8%	3.5%
Sales email campaigns	2.9%	4.2%

✓ Successful organizations   ⬛ Not as successful organizations

"Insight moves the deal because we can get granular on a personal level with the lead."

– CRO/COO

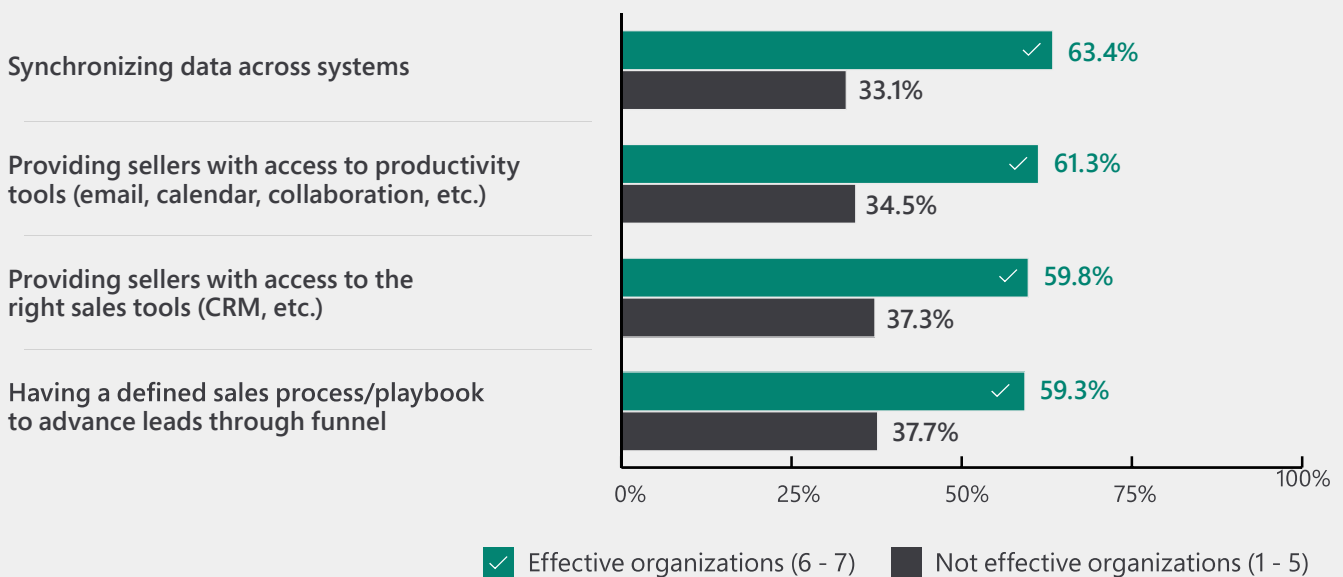systemate

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 organizations 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 synchronizing data across systems (20.3%).** Those organizations who are not successful in their goal achievement prioritize having a defined sales process/playbook to advance leads through funnel, suggesting they are still working on building a consistent pipeline management strategy.

Which elements are most important in enabling your team to engage with prospects at scale?

Element	Successful organizations	Not as successful organizations
Providing sellers with access to the right sales tools (CRM, etc.)	33.1%	24.1%
Having a defined sales process/playbook to advance leads through funnel	24.3%	31%
Providing sellers with access to productivity tools (email, calendar, collaboration, etc.)	20.9%	22.4%
Synchronizing data across systems	20.3%	22.4%

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In addition, respondents who indicated they are effective in scaling sales efforts across multiple prospect relationships identify synchronizing 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.
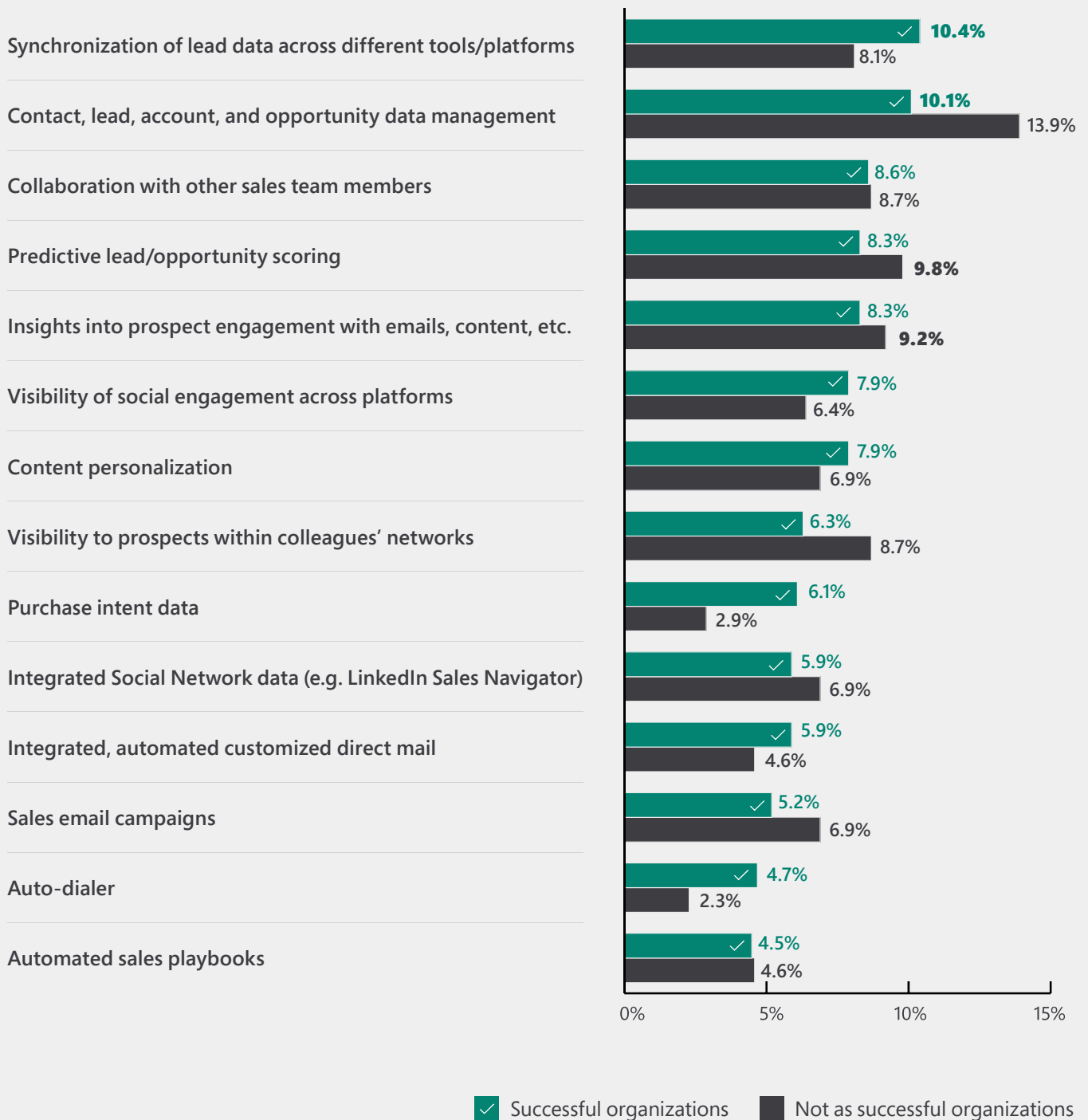
From the list below, please identify the three elements that are most challenging for your sales team in engaging with prospects at scale?

	Effective organizations (6 - 7)	Not effective organizations (1 - 5)
Synchronizing data across systems	63.4%	33.1%
Providing sellers with access to productivity tools (email, calendar, collaboration, etc.)	61.3%	34.5%
Providing sellers with access to the right sales tools (CRM, etc.)	59.8%	37.3%
Having a defined sales process/playbook to advance leads through funnel	59.3%	37.7%

Building on a strong foundation

For most organizations, data is at the foundation of their sales process. Successful organizations rank the **synchronization 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.

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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.

Synchronization of lead data across different tools/platforms
- 10.4%
- 8.1%

Contact, lead, account, and opportunity data management
- 10.1%
- 13.9%

Collaboration with other sales team members
- 8.6%
- 8.7%

Predictive lead/opportunity scoring
- 8.3%
- 9.8%

Insights into prospect engagement with emails, content, etc.
- 8.3%
- 9.2%

Visibility of social engagement across platforms
- 7.9%
- 6.4%

Content personalization
- 7.9%
- 6.9%

Visibility to prospects within colleagues' networks
- 6.3%
- 8.7%

Purchase intent data
- 6.1%
- 2.9%

Integrated Social Network data (e.g. LinkedIn Sales Navigator)
- 5.9%
- 6.9%

Integrated, automated customized direct mail
- 5.9%
- 4.6%

Sales email campaigns
- 5.2%
- 6.9%

Auto-dialer
- 4.7%
- 2.3%

Automated sales playbooks
- 4.5%
- 4.6%

0%   5%   10%   15%

☑ Successful organizations   ■ Not as successful organizations

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Two sides of the same coin

Research shows that in order to achieve business success, the sales team needs backing from the entire organization. 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 organizations 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 synch as critical. This is consistent with industry research conducted by SiriusDecisions that found **B2B organizations 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 organization on a scale of 1-7, where 7 means very well aligned and 1 means not aligned at all?

Effective (6 - 7)
64.4%

Not effective (1 - 3)
5.3%

Somewhat
effective (4 - 5)
28.8%

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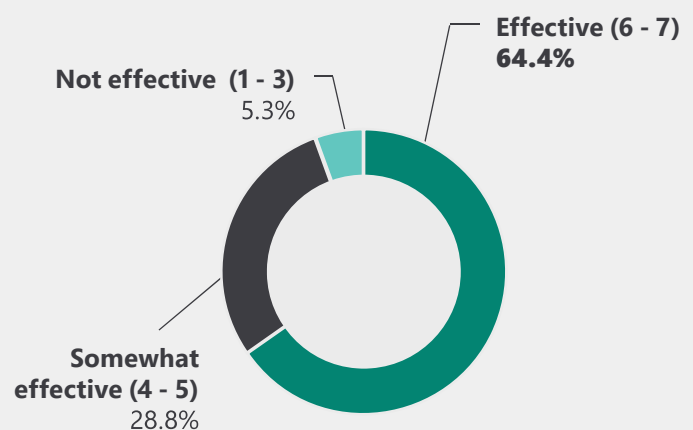
How would you describe the alignment of sales and marketing in your organization on a scale of 1-7, where 7 means very well aligned and 1 means not aligned at all?

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%).**

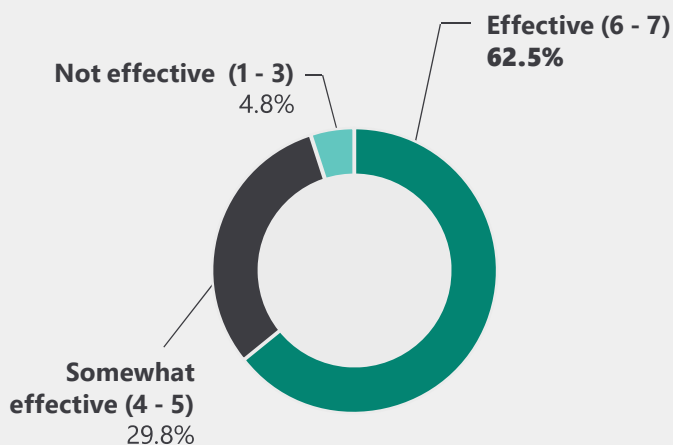| From the list below please select three elements that are most critical for strong alignment of sales and marketing?	Total
Ability for constructive criticism/feedback between teams	**15.3%**
Shared reporting and insights	**14.1%**
Coordinated sales process	**13.8%**
Goal sharing	12.7%
Defined lead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

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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 organization'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 emphasize 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 organizations that meet their numbers feel their current KPIs are an effective way of measuring progress.**

On the other hand, it's not surprising that 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 organization's efforts on a scale of 1-7?

Not effective (1 - 3)
4.8%

Effective (6 - 7)
62.5%

Somewhat
effective (4 - 5)
29.8%

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

	Effective (6 - 7)	Somewhat effective (4 - 5)	Not effective (1 -3)
Successful organizations	72.3%	24.3%	2.7%
Not as successful organizations	39.7%	44.8%	10.3%

✓ Successful organizations ⬛ Not as successful organizations
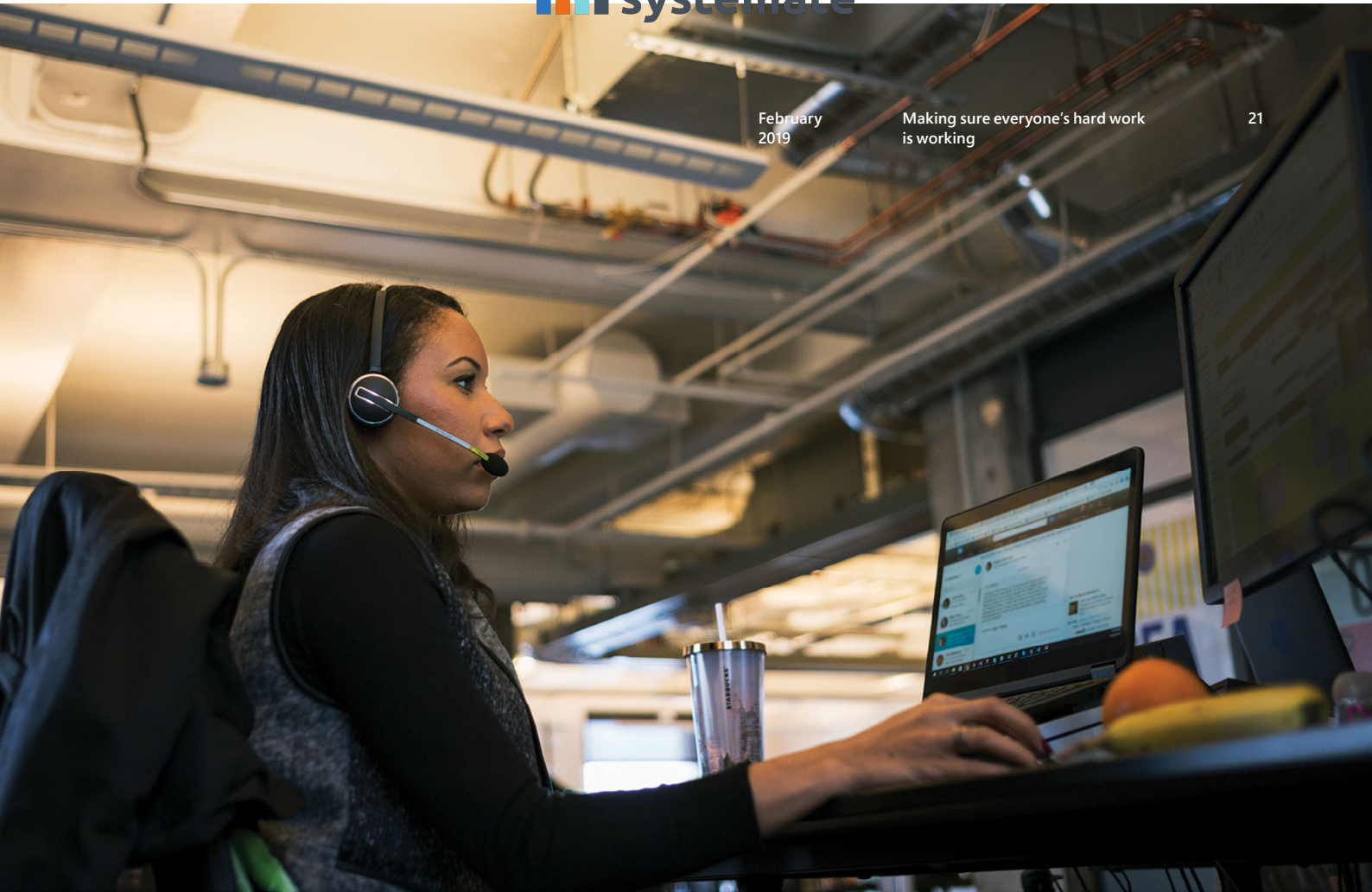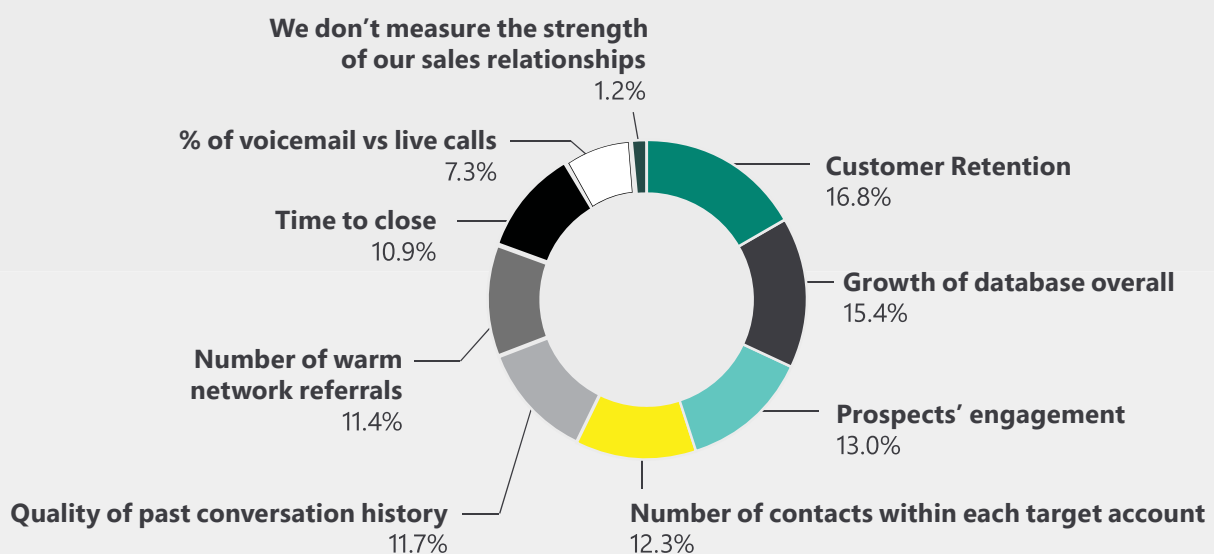
Customer retention is key—so is building the database

Not surprisingly, findings indicate the leading measure of success is customer retention. But successful organizations also underscore the importance of continuing to nurture relationships in order to build their database of contacts and create long-term customers.
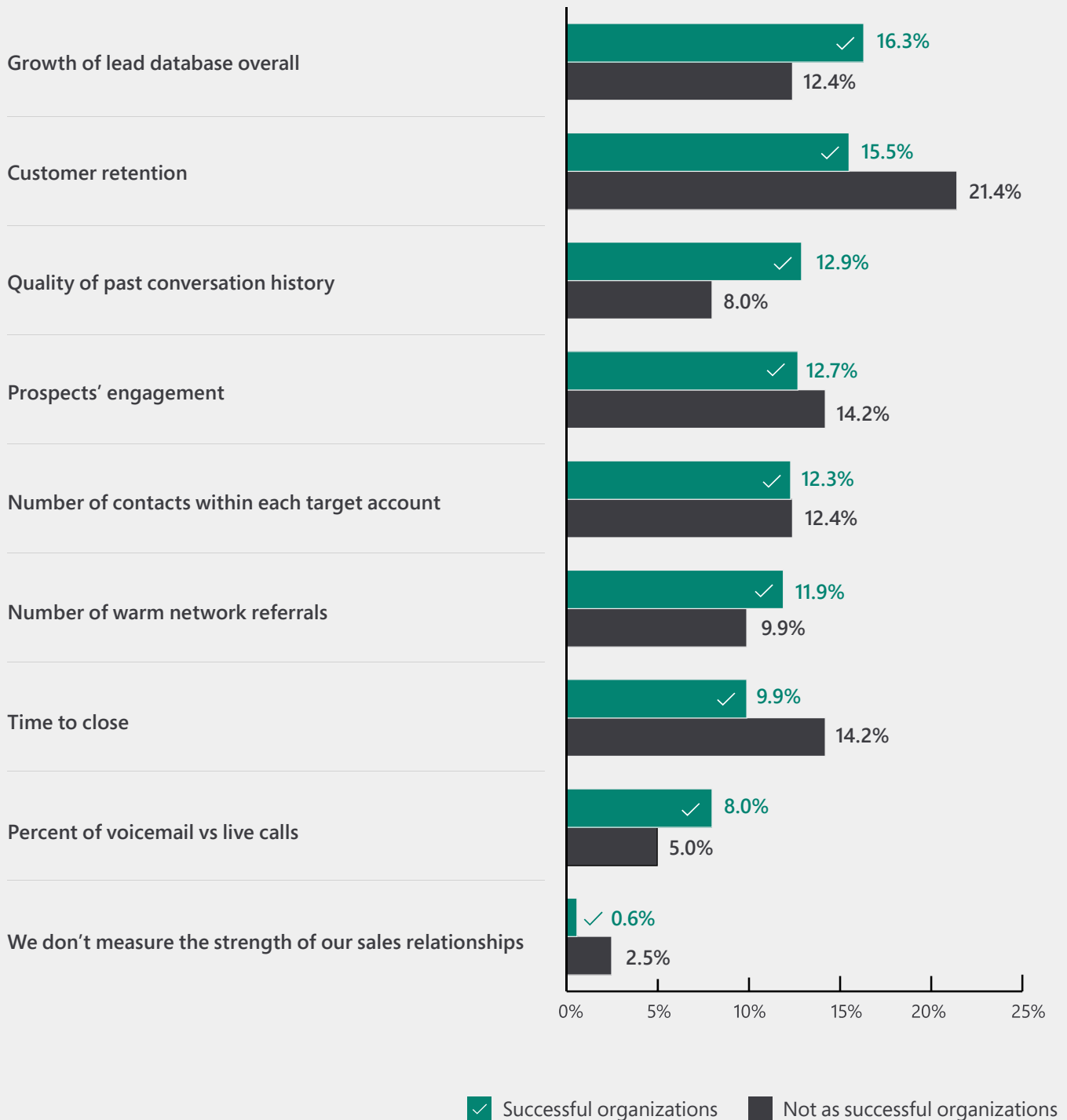
It's a marathon, not a sprint

Conversely, unsuccessful organizations 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 on-going, healthy and, ultimately, more profitable relationships.

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

We don't measure the strength of our sales relationships
1.2%

% of voicemail vs live calls
7.3%

Time to close
10.9%

Number of warm network referrals
11.4%

Quality of past conversation history
11.7%

Number of contacts within each target account
12.3%

Prospects' engagement
13.0%

Growth of database overall
15.4%

Customer Retention
16.8%

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

Measurement	Successful organizations	Not as successful organizations
Growth of lead database overall	16.3%	12.4%
Customer retention	15.5%	21.4%
Quality of past conversation history	12.9%	8.0%
Prospects' engagement	12.7%	14.2%
Number of contacts within each target account	12.3%	12.4%
Number of warm network referrals	11.9%	9.9%
Time to close	9.9%	14.2%
Percent of voicemail vs live calls	8.0%	5.0%
We don't measure the strength of our sales relationships	0.6%	2.5%

✓ Successful organizations   ■ Not as successful organizations

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 prioritize 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.

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"[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 maximize effectiveness

Like workers in other roles, sales professionals need powerful tools to thrive. And in the case of successful organizations, that means putting the data to work for them. It also requires the synchronization 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 organizations rank it as one of the most important things a company can do. They also emphasize 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 personalized 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 organizations. 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

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