



# HOW IT AND SALES LEADERS CAN COLLABORATE **TO DRIVE GROWTH AND INNOVATION**

**STRATEGIES FOR TEAMING WITH SALES TO GROW  
PROFITS AND CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS**

**argyle.**

salesforce

IN THE WAKE OF SIGNIFICANT BUSINESS DISRUPTION, IT leaders have an opportunity to position their companies for the future. IT is no longer just about keeping systems up and running. Today's IT leaders must be far more strategic in driving business growth.

One of the most impactful actions that IT leaders can take to realize this growth is better partnering and collaborating with other business units. When thinking about other teams they need to collaborate with, IT leaders sometimes overlook sales. Yet sales leaders play a valuable role in the digital transformation journey. While sales' objectives may appear vastly different from IT's at first glance, working together can drive innovation, a better customer experience, and, ultimately, revenue - which benefits the whole company.

Sales teams are prime candidates for cutting-edge tools, including artificial intelligence, and their appetite for technology transformation is greater than ever. Research bears this out:

- IT leaders say their CEO's #1 priority for IT remains the same now as it was prior to COVID-19: lead digital business/digital transformation initiatives, per [IDG](#).
- According to [Gartner](#), nearly 67% of sales teams are completing, undergoing, or planning a sales transformation to further evolve the function.
- [Forrester](#) notes that nearly half (46%) of companies say that marketing and sales are the areas where they are most investing in AI adoption systems.

Collectively, these trends present an opportunity for IT and sales to be at the forefront of innovation that can affect how the entire organization leverages technology.

If digital transformation is going to be a reality, IT and sales leaders need to agree on a unified goal for digital transformation across their business - and the next steps to get there. This guide will cover:

- **Why teams need a shared definition of digital transformation**
- **Why it's critical for IT and sales to collaborate**
- **How to foster a better IT and sales partnership**

The potential for sales technology is vast, so IT must be in the driver's seat for any new innovations. Working with sales leaders, IT can make the shift from a technology-led, business-enablement mindset to a broader role in driving transformation, growth, and revenue. This guide will help you do that.

## HOW TO DEVELOP A SHARED UNDERSTANDING OF **DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION**

Before we get into your digital transformation agenda as an IT leader, let's define it first.

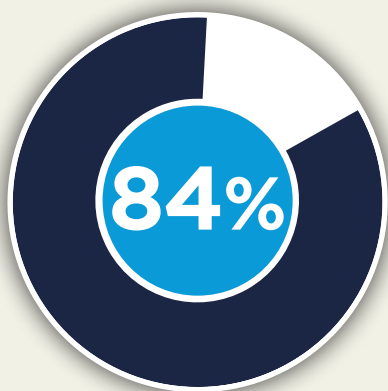
Digital transformation is the practice of using new technologies and services to evolve business models, sales strategies, marketing practices, product offerings, and organizations as a whole. You've probably attended enough business conferences and read enough industry articles to realize that digital transformation is on the minds of many CIOs. New [research](#) from International Data Corp. indicates that worldwide spending on digital transformation is forecasted to reach \$2.3 trillion in 2023.

"In the current competitive business world, digital transformation is the top strategic

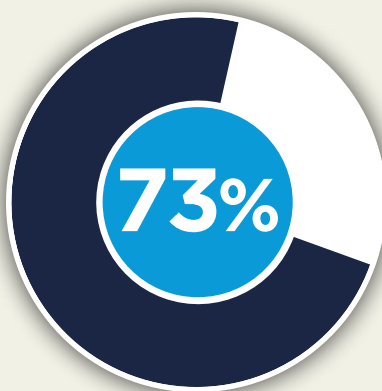
priority for every organization. Nevertheless, the concept is confusing and intricate. Digital transformation involves managing the existing business and building for the future at the same time, something like changing the engine of the plane while in flight," wrote Ashutosh Bisht, senior research manager for IDC's Customer Insights & Analysis Group, in the report.

Customers want transformation, too. A Salesforce study of 8,000 global consumers and business buyers found that 54% percent of customers say companies need to transform how they engage with them, and 89% of business buyers say the experience a company provides is as important as its products and services.

### THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STAKES HAVE NEVER BEEN HIGHER



**84%** of customers say the experience a company provides is as important as its products and services



**73%** of customers say one extraordinary experience raises their expectations of other companies



**66%** of customers are willing to pay more for a great experience

 BUSINESS BUYERS

1. Salesforce, State of the Connected Customer, June 2019.

However, Deloitte's most recent Global CIO [survey](#) suggests there are some gaps in the transformation process. Just over half (55%) of CIOs are currently serving as trusted operators of their businesses. This means that they're still struggling to ensure that the sales team and other business functions have the systems they need to operate.

CIOs must evolve into change instigators and co-creators, the report noted. In this case, that means working closely with sales leaders on strategic technology investments.

Robotic process automation (RPA), machine learning, cloud, and data analytics are imperative to success. They save time, reduce the cost of sales, condense the sales lifecycle, and boost the win ratio.

These technologies benefit IT in several ways:

- Your infrastructure is more agile so you can better respond to the needs of the business.
- You can put more power in the hands of your stakeholders.
- Your team isn't constantly reconfiguring data, running customized reports, and other routine functions.

A successful digital transformation is a win for every department, as well as for the customer. Next, let's look at how working more closely with your sales colleagues is good for you, your team, and the business.



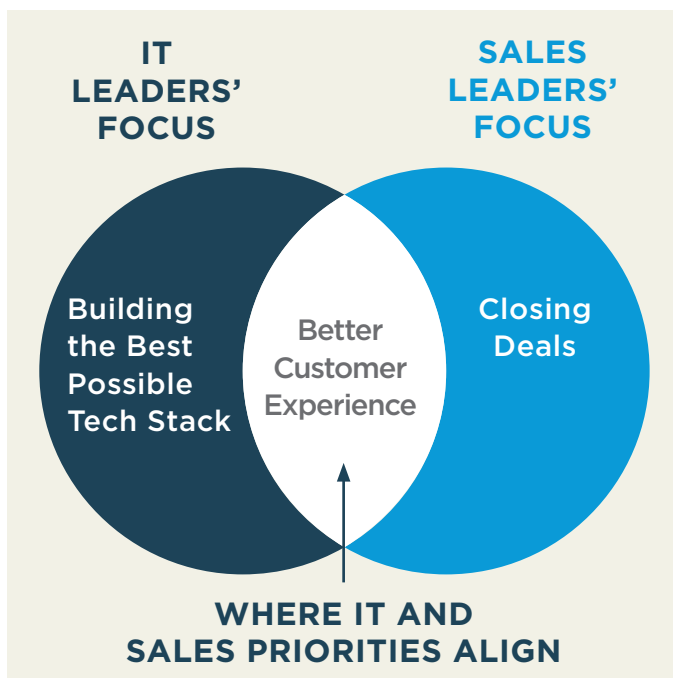
## WHY COLLABORATING WITH SALES IS CRITICAL

You may work in IT, but the fate of your organization is tied to the productivity and success of the sales department.

Digital transformation requires a team effort in understanding where the business is and where it is headed. Companies must make it easy for the modern buyer to purchase, use, and get value from their products.

As an IT leader, you and your team are focused on building the best technology stack possible. Your colleagues in sales want to close deals. Great technology and closing deals have one thing in common: a better customer experience. By breaking out of the IT silo and collaborating with sales, you can build a great customer experience together.

Transforming your sales function will have a ripple effect across the entire company.



**“TRANSFORMATION HAPPENS WHEN LEADERS STOP FOCUSING INTERNALLY ON TECHNOLOGY, PRODUCTS, DEPARTMENTS, OR SYSTEMS — AND RECENTER AROUND THEIR CUSTOMERS.”**

**— BRET TAYLOR,  
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF PRODUCT OFFICER,  
SALESFORCE**

For most companies, a sales transformation will include “changing the routes to market they use to reach prospects and support customers, the organizational structure that supports the sales organization, the talent they hire, the demand generation and sales execution processes they implement, and the productivity initiatives they prioritize to attack complexity,” writes [Phil Harrell](#), VP, Group Director, Sales Executive Services, SiriusDecisions.

The sales team interacts with customers all day. By working more closely with sales, you’ll naturally move closer to putting the customer in the center of everything you do. “Transformation happens when leaders stop focusing internally on technology, products, departments, or systems — and recenter around their customers,” explains [Bret Taylor](#), President and Chief Product Officer, Salesforce.

Wondering how to get started? In the next section, we’ll share some tips on aligning with sales for success.



## HOW TO BUILD A BETTER PARTNERSHIP WITH SALES

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Let's be realistic. According to research from [McKinsey](#), digital transformation isn't always a success. Consider:

- Fewer than 30% of digital transformation initiatives succeed.
- Only 16% of respondents say their businesses' digital transformations have successfully improved performance and equipped them to sustain changes in the long term.
- An additional 7% say that performance improved but that those improvements were not sustained.

So how do you ensure that your digital transformation initiative doesn't fall into the "failed to deliver" category, and that you're truly revolutionizing the selling motion at your company? You make sure to work with your sales colleagues every step of the way.

As an IT leader, you should also use this time to get familiar with the sales process. Understand where the team is hitting roadblocks. Pinpoint where customer frustration impedes a sale. That's where a digital transformation will provide the most value.

Here are some items that should be on the IT and sales collaboration checklist:

**1. Assess current processes.** What sales tasks are being done manually that could be automated? What's taking up the sales team's valuable time in activities other than selling? Have a discussion not only with the sales leadership, but also with their reps, to understand how a digital transformation could impact selling.

**2. Speak the same language.** Each team has their own shorthand. Cut down on the tech talk and explain solutions in simple terms. If a sales leader uses a word or references a customer experience you don't understand, ask follow-up questions. Curiosity is a sign of a great leader.

**3. Tackle data.** Data drives sales. How can IT provide easier access to real-time information for sales? Where are the roadblocks? How can data silos be broken down? Technology will generate the reach and scale your IT team needs to make customer centricity part of your company's DNA, so prioritize the democratization of data to enable better experiences for employees and customers.

**4. Establish a meeting schedule.** How long and often will the teams meet? Who should be included? Digital transformation will be an ongoing initiative, not a short-term project, so ensure the right leaders are in the room and committed to building cross-functional collaboration muscles.

**5. Absorb and implement feedback.** If the sales team is telling you that a solution won't work, listen. Be ready to suggest alternatives. Likewise, explain why you are suggesting a solution and outline the features that will help them. Communicate clearly.

**6. Agree on what success looks like.** Teams behave how they're measured, so align on integrated success benchmarks between your team and sales. Establish shared metrics, goals, and KPIs and how often they should be tracked. Outline a process for adjusting when needed and revisiting the project as needed.

The sheer volume of digital transformation projects you could consider is vast, but partnering with sales will have an immediate impact on your selling processes and customer experience.



## CONCLUSION

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Digital transformation will empower you to be a business visionary, not just a technology fixer. Partnering with your sales colleagues will ensure that the digital transformation you embark on will have measurable, meaningful results.

Successful companies recognize that a strong IT-sales partnership is critical. Invite your sales colleagues to have a seat at the table, as they hold the key to customer relationships. It's your job to show them the best way forward, as you set your sights on big-picture innovation and company growth.

Ready to learn more?

Unite your departments around your customer with the [Salesforce Customer 360 Playbook](#).

Or, visit our [Salesforce Resource Center](#) to get what you need to drive a customer-first digital transformation.

### ABOUT THE SPONSOR

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