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Address New 2024 Revenue Risks From Salespeople Quietly Quitting

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Alarming, 89% of B2B sellers say they're burned out, and 54% say they're actively job searching or "quiet quitting." Given their dependence on sellers to deliver revenue, product leaders must reduce the risk of a downward swing in quota achievement due to quiet quitting.

Overview

Key Findings

- The 2022 Gartner B2B Seller Motivation Survey research reveals alarming levels of B2B seller burnout (89%), demotivation (83%) and active job searching (54%), also known as "quiet quitting."
- Compared with other employees, burnout is unusually high in sales — over two times higher. Burnout significantly decreases business performance, well-being and intent to stay.
- Gartner research further shows seller demotivation (or "drag") results in lower sales quota achievement.

Recommendations

- Minimize internal requests for nonselling activities and refocus your efforts on controlling and reducing the volume of internal communications to sellers.
- Expand engagement with other commercial functions such as customer success.
- Deliver digital accelerators to help buyers help themselves without depending on sales.

Introduction

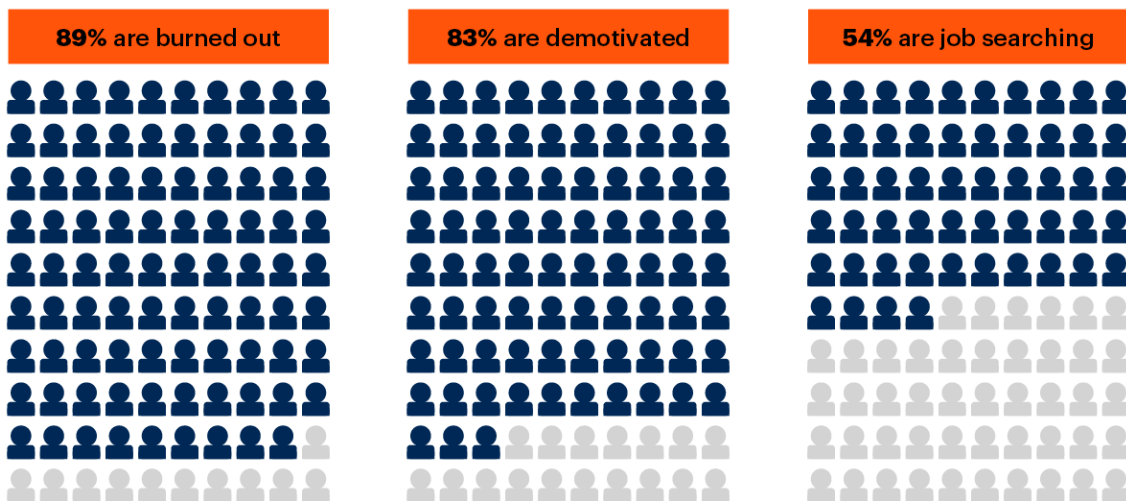
Gartner research shows alarmingly high levels of burnout and demotivation in B2B sales (see Figure 1). A recent Gartner survey shows that these are also pressing issues for IT sellers ¹:

- Nearly nine out of 10 IT sellers (86%) report feeling burned out from work, while 93% report seeing their colleagues feeling burned out.
- A similar number of IT sellers (81%) report feeling demotivated.
- Almost half of IT sellers (46%) say they are actively seeking new jobs.

Figure 1: Prevalence of Quiet Quitting Among B2B Sellers Across All Industries

Prevalence of Quiet Quitting Among B2B Sellers

Illustrative



n = 885 B2B sellers, 908 B2B sellers, 906 B2B sellers

Source: 2022 Gartner B2B Seller Motivation Survey

Note: Burnout, demotivation and active job searching are all indicators of quiet quitting.

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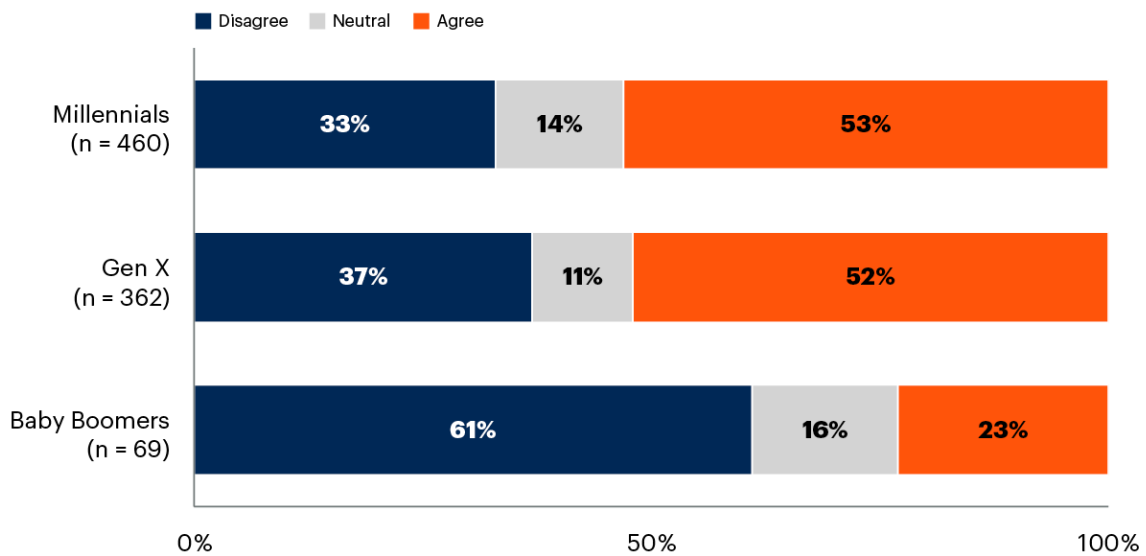
Gartner research shows overall B2B seller-reported burnout (93%) in 2021 ¹ is over twice as high as that found in employees at all levels in the organization including senior executives in 2021 (40%).²

The level of burnout differs between generational cohorts. It is over twice as high in millennial sellers (56%) and Generation X sellers (57%) versus baby boomer sellers (21%).¹ But given that many baby boomers are approaching retirement, the majority of the seller population in technology companies are Gen X (43 to 58 years old) and millennials (27 to 42 years old).³

Willingness to quit also shows differences between generational cohorts, indicating that job satisfaction in sales is not always about money. More than half of millennial and Gen X sellers would be willing to quit their current employer for a lower-paying sales job with better work-life balance (see Figure 2).¹

Figure 2: Seller Willingness to Quit for Less Pay and Better Work-Life Balance

Seller Willingness to Leave Current Employer for Better Work-Life Balance
Percentage of Sellers by Generation



n = 891 B2B Sellers

Q. I would leave my current employer for a sales job that paid less if it provided a better work-life balance.

Source: 2022 Gartner B2B Seller Motivation Survey

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This data is clear evidence of “quiet quitting” – the dynamic in which employees are distracted and quietly looking for another job. Rather than advancing with their selling priorities, they procrastinate and “go through the motions.”

Quiet quitting can put overall revenue results at risk over the next 18 to 24 months, combined with:

- **Lower quota attainment.** Medium to high levels of demotivation (or “drag”) correlates to lower quota attainment. ¹
- **Higher seller attrition.** Fifty-four percent of the B2B chief sales officers (CSOs) we surveyed are experiencing higher-than-target seller attrition. ⁴
- **Longer coverage gaps.** Over three-quarters of CSOs (78%) face some difficulty attracting high-quality sales job candidates. ⁴

Given that so many product leaders depend on sellers to deliver revenue, this issue extends beyond the CSO as it affects commercial results and product leader goals due to the risk of a dramatic downward swing in quota achievement.

Gartner research data shows that these issues are widespread. Within your organization, the risks and size of quiet quitting’s impact are best discussed with a sales operations expert who can provide details on your company’s rep quota attainment, seller attrition and average time to hire sellers.

Quiet quitting today will affect revenue results in the next 18 to 24 months, combined with higher seller attrition, longer coverage gaps and lower pipeline conversion. Leadership teams must make short- and long-term changes now to address 2023 shortfalls and prepare for a highly productive 2024.

Product leaders are usually not in a position to influence or manage sales culture, and undoubtedly, chief sales officers and tech CEOs are doing their best to improve the situation. However, these efforts remain a work in progress as 44% of IT sellers think management doesn’t know how to motivate them. ¹

What can product leaders do about productivity issues in a team that doesn’t report to them, and yet they are highly dependent on to reach their revenue goals? The answer is definitely not “more training.”

Analysis

Action 1: Minimize Requests for Nonselling Activities

One of the factors negatively affecting quota achievement and intent to leave is internal administrative burden, in which product leaders often play a role. Sometimes simple actions add up. In an effort to “help” sellers, many product leaders create more content and training that is shared en masse via email, which is actually creating nonselling activity (reading, finding and processing).

To minimize your effect on nonselling sales activities, refocus your efforts on the following best practices for your internal communications with sellers.

- **Control and reduce the volume of notifications** – In many organizations, product leaders can send out emails and other notifications internally to sellers whenever they want, which creates complexity and noise particularly in organizations with a diverse portfolio. Instead of a “free for all,” reduce administrative burden and cognitive load by selecting an individual to collate and coordinate product communications to sales teams. Develop a centralized communication channel with a planned cadence that delivers new information no more than weekly to prevent information overload. Curate and prioritize communication requests based on expected revenue impact, relevance and timing.
- **Prioritize information aligned to sales priorities (not product priorities)** – Do you want sellers to build the pipeline or work on closing the mid-funnel pipeline? Don’t provide an avalanche of product information. Select only the most important messages and actions relevant to completing that task. For more, see Quick Answer: How Do We Move Leads That Are Stalled Midfunnel?
- **Respond quickly to sales requests** – The majority of IT sellers (61%) say that internal approvals take an excessive amount of time.¹ Are you a participant in that approval workflow? Or involved before or after sellers request approvals for product configurations, solution design or pricing to meet customer budgets? If so, do your best to minimize time and effort for sellers.

Action 2: Expand Engagement With Other Commercial Functions

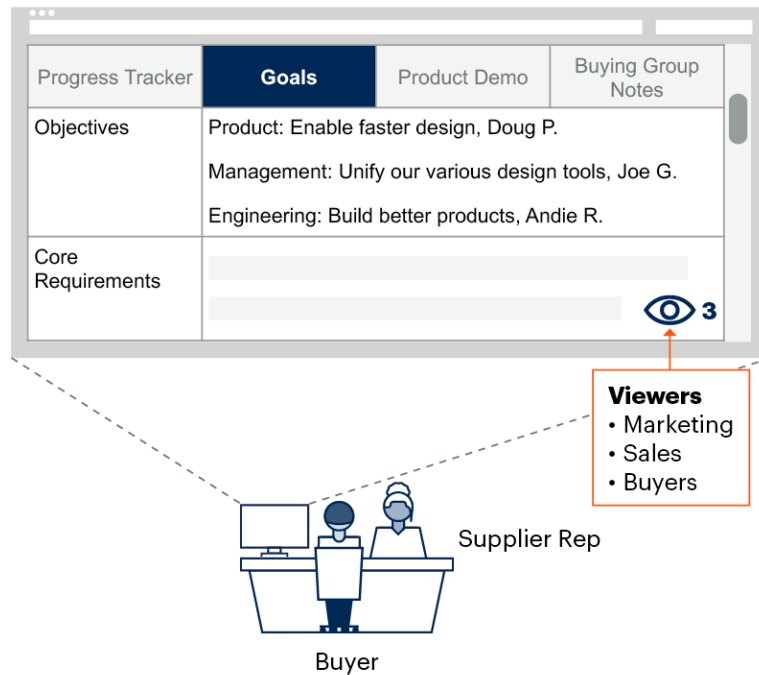
Product leaders always have the opportunity to activate experts in other commercial areas – such as presales, consulting and customer success – to support steps in the buying journey. In the context of quiet quitting, these functional teams can relieve and reduce the dependence on sales to perform tasks such as sharing content with customers or calling contacts about their event registration. Naturally, sellers can still take the lead, but other commercial functions can also identify and progress opportunities for your offering when sales is unable to do so.

Product managers can expand buyer engagement in other functions via the following tactics:

- **High-value offers** — Seventy percent of B2B sellers report that gaining access to prospects and customer stakeholders digitally is a challenge for them.⁵ High-value offers are the most effective way to supplement seller activity to engage prospects and book meetings with technical experts or consultants that lead to new revenue opportunities. For more, see [Develop Irresistible High-Value Offers to Drive High-Value Meetings With Top Prospects](#).
- **Cross-functional buyer engagement** — Buyer teams are large and diverse, and product leaders need to embrace this opportunity to connect buyers with all commercial functions, not just sales (such as marketing, customer success and technical support). Consider the example of software vendor Altium, which created a useful, user-friendly, transparent tool that maps out the entire buying process for buyers and all parties within Altium's commercial organization, including marketers and sellers. Editable by all, Altium's tool helps buying groups to define, update and track their buying journey progress (see Figure 3). Buyers are willing to use the tool because it helps them understand where they are in the complex purchase process, what has already been agreed on by the buying group, and what the next steps are. Much like a digital sales room, the tool also includes other collateral materials, such as a virtual showroom for buyers to visualize how the product will fit their organization. For more, see [Market Guide for Revenue Enablement Platforms and Innovation Insight for Digital Sales Rooms to Support Virtual Selling and Customer Experience](#).

Figure 3: Altium’s Shared Commercial Tool

Altium’s Shared Commercial Tool



Source: Adapted From Altium
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Altium

Gartner

- **Automated parts of commercial workflows** — Buoyed by technology, the revenue operations (RevOps) operating model addresses the challenges of siloed go-to-market (GTM) execution by integrating people, process and technology across all GTM teams. Its primary design principles center on shared data, transparency and workflow across different aspects of GTM functions like marketing, sales, customer success and support. For more, see Real-World Examples of the Journey to RevOps.

Action 3: Deliver Digital Accelerators to Help Buyers Help Themselves

Are salespeople required to personally facilitate every step in a buyer journey for every offering in your portfolio, or is that just an old-fashioned corporate tradition? Gartner research shows that your customers — large or small — are already accustomed to, and often prefer, digital interactions. Seventy-five percent of B2B buyers said that if they could, they would prefer to make a complex purchase without a salesperson involved at all.⁶ In fact, 68% of B2B buyers have made a significant purchase recently via digital commerce.⁶ Product leaders have multiple options to enable buyers to successfully navigate and advance their purchase digitally, even if they complete the final purchase through a sales rep.

Digital accelerators (such as digital channels, content and interactions) help buyers progress a purchase themselves and augment seller interactions.

Altium's digital tool shown in Figure 3 is also an example of a digital accelerator. The tool helped increase its close rate from roughly 20% to 80% (as measured from SQL to completion) and shorten its sales cycle. For more, see [Case Study: Help B2B Buyers Transparently Track Complex Buying Journeys](#).

Tactics that progress buying and ease without requiring seller involvement include:

- **Buyer enablement** — Buyers value content, online tools, chatbots and other types of digital assistance that they can access directly and use to complete their “jobs to be done.” Digital assets also enable sellers to optimize their face-to-face engagements with customers. Product leaders who offer buyers the choice of sales with human interactions and self-service digital interactions increase the scalability and reliability of their revenue operations. For more, see [Create a Buyer's Guide to Accelerate Sales](#).
- **Tech touch** — A tech-touch approach offers personal human interaction at scale via digital resources, automated interactions, online chat and email. For example, SAP offers “SAP for Me,” which provides customers an overview of their SAP products, licenses, incidents and training information. It also offers two-way engagement on key events such as go-live dates, onboarding and renewals. For more, see [Quick Answer: What Is Human-Augmented Digital Engagement?](#)
- **Automated sales tasks (product-led growth)** — Well-known technology providers such as Atlassian, Slack and Twilio have achieved tremendous success with generating interest, leads and, in some cases, purchases directly online without involving sellers (at least early in buying processes), also known as product-led growth (PLG). PLG providers with at least 25% of their sales fully automated outperformed those providers with less or no fully automated purchases.⁷ For more, see [PLG Actions and Attributes That Set Apart Providers Outperforming the Competition](#).

In summary, product leaders who depend upon sellers to deliver revenue need to do what they can to protect sales productivity and quota achievement. As a stakeholder, product leaders' best actions involve awareness of their own sales demands and dependency, and then minimizing them by:

- Reducing product leader requests to sales.

- Load balancing product leader needs with other internal functions.
- Augmenting seller activity with digital strategies.

The effect of these actions can be visible in consistent and positive pipeline progression and conversion in the face of seller burnout, higher seller attrition and longer sales coverage gaps.

To understand the best options forward for your role and organization, please schedule an inquiry with Gartner to discuss further.

Evidence

When Quiet Quitting Is Worse Than the Real Thing, Harvard Business Review.

¹ **2022 Gartner B2B Seller Motivation Survey.** This survey was conducted online from December 2021 through January 2022 to assess the organizational practices driving seller performance and attrition. The online survey sampled 908 sellers across North America, Europe and Asia/Pacific. Qualifying respondents had to be B2B sellers at organizations with at least \$25 million in annual revenue, headcount of 50 quota-carrying sales reps and from any industry segment except education, government and retail.

Disclaimer: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

² **2021 Gartner Inclusion Initiatives Employee Survey.** This survey was conducted in 2021 to assess the different diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) initiatives introduced by the organizations for their employees. The research was conducted online from 15 February to 18 March 2021 and contains responses from 3,007 employees with representation from multiple regions, industries and functions.

³ **2023 Gartner Technology's Impact on Seller Productivity Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand sellers' sentiment and emotional reaction toward technology and its impact across key levers of seller productivity. The research was conducted online in March and April 2023 among 501 respondents from the U.S. (n = 259), Canada (n = 86), the U.K. (n = 80) and Asia/Pacific (n = 76). Industry segments included banking/financial services, healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, business services and telecommunications. Respondents were screened for B2B seller roles with the following minimum requirements: at least one year in the role at an organization with at least 50 sellers and annual revenue in 2022 of at least \$25 million or equivalent.

Disclaimer: Results of this study do not represent global findings or the market as a whole but reflect the sentiment of the respondents and companies surveyed.

⁴ **2022 Gartner CSO Priorities Survey.** This survey of 43 organizations was conducted online from February through June 2022 to understand the current business challenges and top priorities of chief sales officers or equivalent leaders. The survey sampled CSOs, chief revenue officers, executive vice presidents and senior vice presidents in sales, and heads of sales from a variety of industries including financial services, information technology, manufacturing, professional services, software, telecommunications and wholesale.

Disclaimer: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

⁵ **Gartner Seller Skill Assessment.** The Gartner Seller Skill Assessment is deployed directly to the sales force to evaluate seller skills across a range of dimensions shown by Gartner research to drive success for both in-person and remote selling. The survey is conducted globally on an ongoing basis with a benchmark that is refreshed twice each year. Current sample size for the survey varies by question and represents data collected between January 2021 and December 2022. Respondents were required to be quota-carrying sellers from B2B sales organizations.

⁶ **2022 Gartner B2B Buyer Survey.** This survey was administered in November and December 2022 and includes data from 771 B2B buyers from the U.S., Canada, the U.K. and Australia. Respondents who qualified for this survey had to be employed full-time at an organization with total revenue of at least \$250 million or the equivalent and had participated in a significant B2B purchase decision. A “significant B2B purchase decision” is defined here as a decision that required deliberation with at least one other person and the evaluation of more than one potential supplier or vendor. Respondents were instructed to answer questions based on their experience with this recent purchase and with the supplier that was used to complete the purchase. Respondents evaluated the quality of the purchase decision and provided insights into various stages of their recent purchase decision.

Disclaimer: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

⁷ 2022 Gartner Provider Product-Led Growth Survey. This survey sought to gather the different strategies being applied, as well as key drivers and roadblocks, in the success of product-led growth initiatives. The survey also sought to understand the business impact associated with different approaches and the degree of process and technology used by providers. The research was conducted online from July through December 2022 among 245 respondents in North America (93; the U.S. and Canada), Asia/Pacific (77; Australia, India and Singapore), and EMEA (75; the U.K., Germany, France and Israel). Revenue bands covered organizations with revenue of more than \$5 billion (34), from \$1 billion to less than \$5 billion (61), from \$250 million to less than \$1 billion (66), from \$50 million to \$250 million (18), from \$10 million to \$50 million (20), and less than \$10 million (46). The survey targeted respondents who either led or contributed to the execution/ development of a free trial and/or freemium strategy.

Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

Acronym Key and Glossary Terms

Term	Definition
Burnout	Burnout refers to persistent mental and emotional exhaustion employees experience as a result of their job.

Recommended by the Author

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[Reorganize Resources to Raise Your Company's Ability to Execute](#)

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