

The Chief Sales Officer

Second Quarter 2021

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A Sales Leader's Embrace of an Omnichannel Sales Approach to Drive Growth

The Path to Effective Virtual Selling

Common Questions CSOs Are Asking About Talent, Hiring and Virtual Selling



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The Chief Sales Officer

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Letter From the Editor

The impact of the past year has left its mark on sales organizations, and it is critical for chief sales officers (CSOs) to strategically adapt their sales roles to operating in a more virtual environment. Consequently, many sales leaders are restructuring and designing sales roles in this new environment.

- 74% of CSOs have recently updated or are updating their seller skills profile to include virtual selling
- 41% of CSOs have created new hybrid field/virtual roles
- 37% of CSOs have permanently transitioned some or all field sales to virtual roles

This issue of *The Chief Sales Officer* showcases our best insights about sales talent to help CSOs transform and grow their teams. We look at the most critical seller competencies and skills and how to most effectively equip sellers with these skills for today's virtual sales environment. We also explore how these skills and competencies can inform the development of a virtual selling strategy that builds and sustains the sales force of the future. We also speak with Bill Spehr, president of sales at Express Scripts, a U.S.-based pharmacy benefit management organization, about specific strategies to create innovative seller-mediated digital experiences the company launched in response to changing customer buying habits. These sales talent trends are of consequential importance to CSOs, and based on these trends, CSOs must make critical talent decisions.

In this issue, we share the latest Gartner research to help CSOs navigate the changes in sales talent and the skills required in the future, including:

- Necessary actions for CSOs to prepare the sales function and sales roles for the future **(Page 4)**
- Guidance on defining sellers' needed competencies and skills for virtual selling **(Page 10)**
- A CSO's execution of an omnichannel strategy for the current sales environment **(Page 19)**
- Recommendations and risks for CSOs when developing a virtual selling strategy **(Page 23)**
- Common questions that CSOs are asking about sales talent and virtual selling **(Page 25)**

We hope this issue inspires and informs how you approach your talent priorities and chart your organization's path in an ever-changing environment.

Be well,

David Millstein, Delainey Kirkwood and Jeffrey L. Cohen



4 CSO Actions to Navigate the Pandemic in 2021

By Delaine Kirkwood

The majority of chief sales officers are not confident in their sellers' ability to achieve revenue targets this year.

This article explains the actions CSOs are taking in 2021 as they explore new growth opportunities and adapt to digital buying trends expedited by the pandemic.



The proliferation of digital buying — the customer's pursuit of a purchase online without the direct involvement of a sales rep — is one of the biggest shifts impacting B2B sales and one that has been accelerated by the pandemic. As B2B buyers increasingly use digital channels to learn and make purchases, sellers stand to lose the critical access to customers upon which they have historically depended to help drive deals forward.

CSOs must act quickly to address the commercial risks posed by the proliferation of digital buying, specifically decreasing seller access to customers and influence over the customer's purchase decision. Unfortunately, most CSOs are not confident in their ability to meet revenue expectations in the current buying environment.¹ CSOs must develop commercial strategies that reflect customer digital behaviors and fulfill the needs of “everywhere customers,” who want to use both digital and in-person capabilities to complete a purchase. To be positioned to execute these new strategies effectively, CSOs must shift from being leaders of sellers to becoming leaders of selling, with a focus on omnichannel routes to market.

CSOs who make this shift also must make important shifts in their priorities and budgets that will drive growth in 2021 and beyond.

While not everyone's path will look the same or start in the same place, here are four key initiatives leading CSOs are embarking on — and all CSOs should consider — as they go on the journey to becoming leaders of selling.

Quick Summary of CSO's Actions

Action 1: Improve the Digital Buying Experience

The pandemic has accelerated digital buying trends in B2B sales. CSOs must remap customers' digital and virtual buying journey and identify gaps for opportunities.

Prioritize this action if you have not recently mapped your customer's digital buying journey.

Action 2 : Create Personal Connections With Chief Marketing Officers (CMOs) and Functional Connections With Marketing

Sales and marketing alignment is especially critical now, as customers use in-person and digital channels throughout the entire buying journey.

Prioritize this action if you are embarking on a digital transformation of your customer buying experience since you'll need to work closer with your marketing colleagues to execute this effort successfully.

Action 3: Increase Digital Marketing and Technology Investments

A seamless omnichannel buying experience depends on a variety of integrated technology platforms. CSOs must drive competitive differentiation in a digital world by increasing their investment in digital marketing and sales technology capabilities.

Prioritize this action if you are able to secure an incremental budget or reallocate existing budget to digital marketing and technology investments.

Action 4: Adapt Sales Role Design for a Virtual Future

It is imperative to lower the cost of finding new customers and, more importantly, keep existing customers. As a result, leading CSOs are investing in key account managers, who are highly effective at growing existing business, and inside sales reps, who are highly efficient at attracting new business.

Prioritize this action if you need to optimize your sales roles to either lower the cost to acquire new customers digitally or expand your key accounts program to improve customer retention.

Action 1

Improve the Digital Buying Experience

Even when face-to-face sales interactions resume, fewer people will be present in person. Many customers will opt to join meetings and speaking engagements virtually instead.

Beyond that, the pandemic has also generally made people more comfortable with asynchronous virtual interaction. It's likely that these changes in how people work will extend to the buying experience as well.

Despite a need to continue engaging customers virtually for the long term, less than half of CSOs have either remapped their customers' digital buying journeys or identified gaps in their customers' digital buying experiences with their company. However, almost half are actively considering doing so this year (see Figure 1).

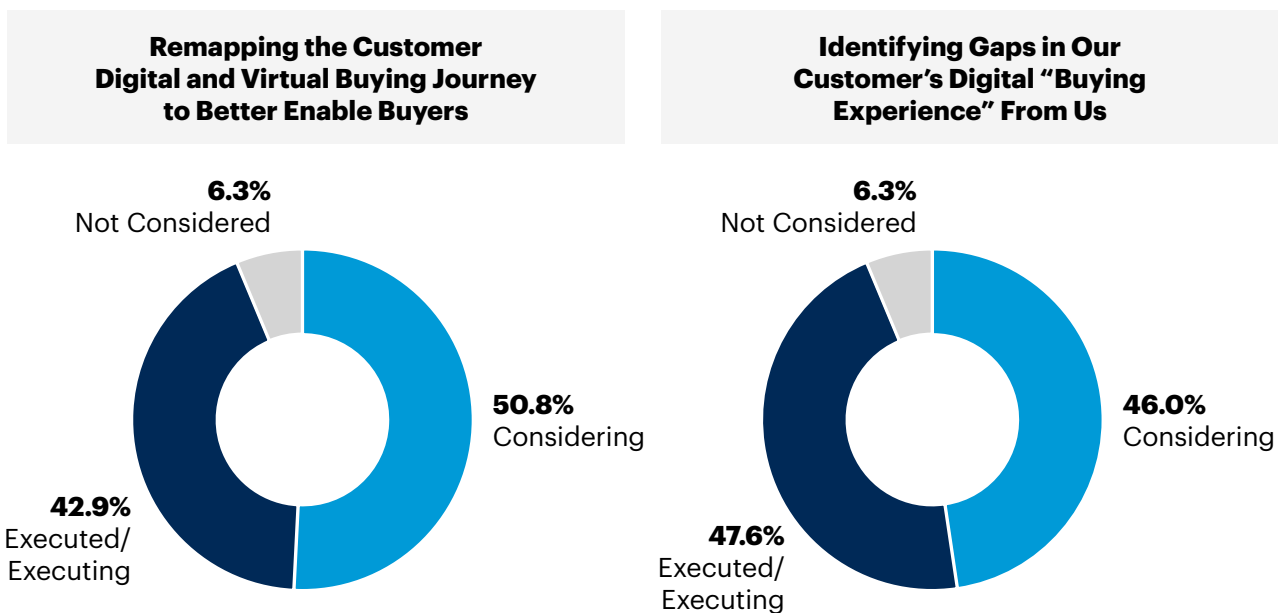
Less than half of CSOs have either remapped their customers' digital buying journeys or identified gaps in their customers' digital buying experiences with their company.

To remain competitive, CSOs must move quickly and remap the customer's digital buying journey and close gaps in the customer's digital buying experience. When doing so, CSOs should consider the following:

- How might we identify and incorporate digital touchpoints as we remap our customer buying journey?
- How might we solicit input, data and feedback to understand the voice of the customer?
- How might we gather insights into how and when a buyer interacts with our digital assets (e.g., track the customer's digital footprint)?

Figure 1. CSO Plans for Mapping the Customer Digital Buying Journey and Improving Customers' Digital Experience in 2021

Percentage of CSOs



n = 61 CSOs

Source: Gartner CSO Priorities Pulse Survey (January-February 2021)

Note: Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding.

Action 2

Develop Personal Connections With CMOs and Functional Connections With Marketing

Fifty-nine percent of CSOs report significant increases in collaboration with marketing in the past 12 months (see Figure 2).

Specifically, CSOs are partnering with CMOs to champion initiatives such as mapping the customer life cycle, developing digital buying capabilities and improving analytics capabilities.

Thirty percent of CSOs are even combining sales and marketing operations into revenue operations (RevOps) teams to create a 360-degree view of the customer. To avoid being passed by their peers, CSOs must partner with their CMO colleagues to better align the sales and marketing functions.

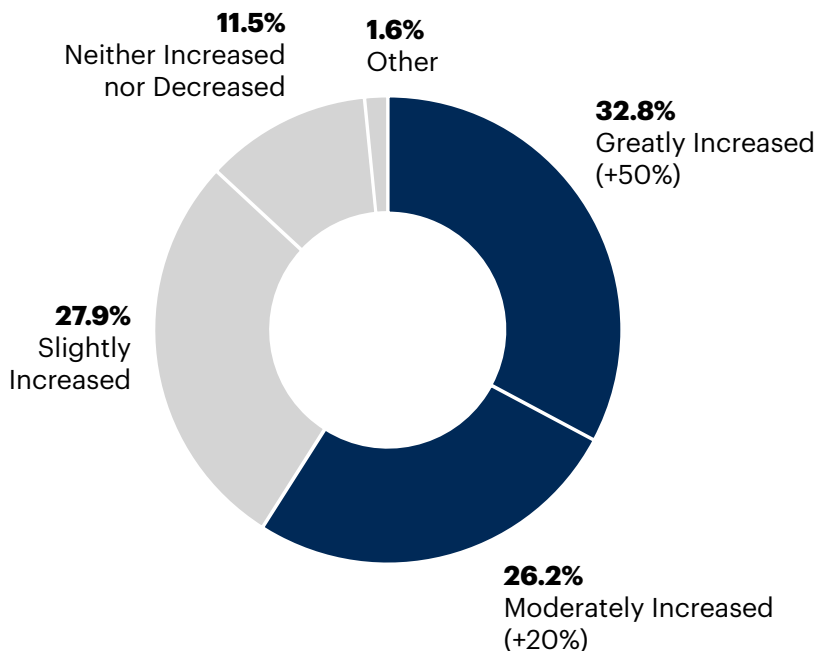
Thirty percent of CSOs are combining sales and marketing operations into RevOps teams to create a 360-degree view of the customer.

CSOs should consider the following questions when aligning sales with marketing:

- How can sales and marketing establish common goals, metrics or design roles to overcome challenges posed by a lack of sales and marketing alignment?
- How might we combine customer data from sales and marketing into a single database?
- How might we create end-to-end revenue management to design, manage and track nonproduct customer experiences throughout the customer life cycle?

Figure 2. CSOs Who Have Moderately (+20%) or Greatly (+50%) Increased Their Time Spent With Marketing Leaders in the Last 12 Months

Percentage of CSOs



The majority of CSOs are now spending at least 20% more time with chief marketing officers than before the pandemic.

n = 61 CSOs

Source: Gartner CSO Priorities Pulse Survey (January-February 2021)

Action 3

Increase Digital Marketing and Technology Investments

The changes outlined previously typically require increased investment in digital marketing and sales technology, as evidenced by the growth in sales' digital marketing and technology budgets year over year (see Figure 3).

Specifically, these investments enable sellers to better engage customers digitally and support the development of seller-free digital channels to engage customers through an entire customer purchase.

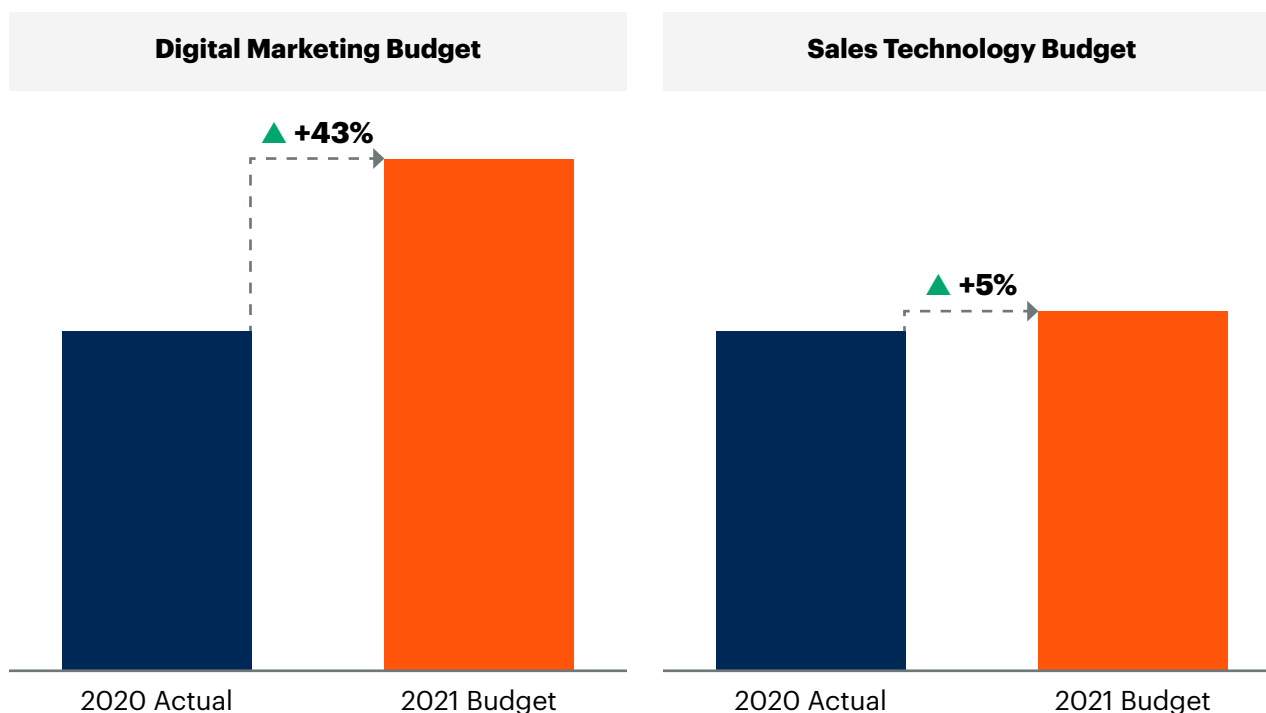
Organizations that invest in digital sales capabilities now will be well-positioned for growth in the future as digital buying trends accelerate.

When evaluating possible digital marketing and technology investments, CSOs should consider:

Investments in digital marketing and sales technology enable sellers to better engage customers digitally and support the development of seller-free digital channels to engage customers.

- How do I start creating digital commerce capabilities for my B2B sales organization?
- How can we ensure we make the most cost-effective technology investments and secure incremental funding from finance to make these investments?
- How might we future-proof our technology investments so they are suitable in both the current virtual-only and future hybrid sales environment?

Figure 3. Changes in Sales Function Budget Line Items
Percentage Change



n = 61 CSOs

Source: Gartner CSO Priorities Pulse Survey (January-February 2021)

Action 4

Adapt Sales Role Design for a More Virtual Future

Virtual selling requires an emphasis on certain seller skills and capabilities compared to the in-person environment. The permanent shift to virtual selling is changing the makeup of specific roles and the mix of roles on sales teams.

Sixty-seven percent of CSOs are either considering or have already shifted some or all field sellers to virtual roles. Additionally, 40% of CSOs have already created hybrid field and virtual sales roles (see Figure 4). Additionally, certain roles appear to be most effective virtually.

Sixty-seven percent of CSOs are either considering or have already shifted some or all field sellers to virtual roles.

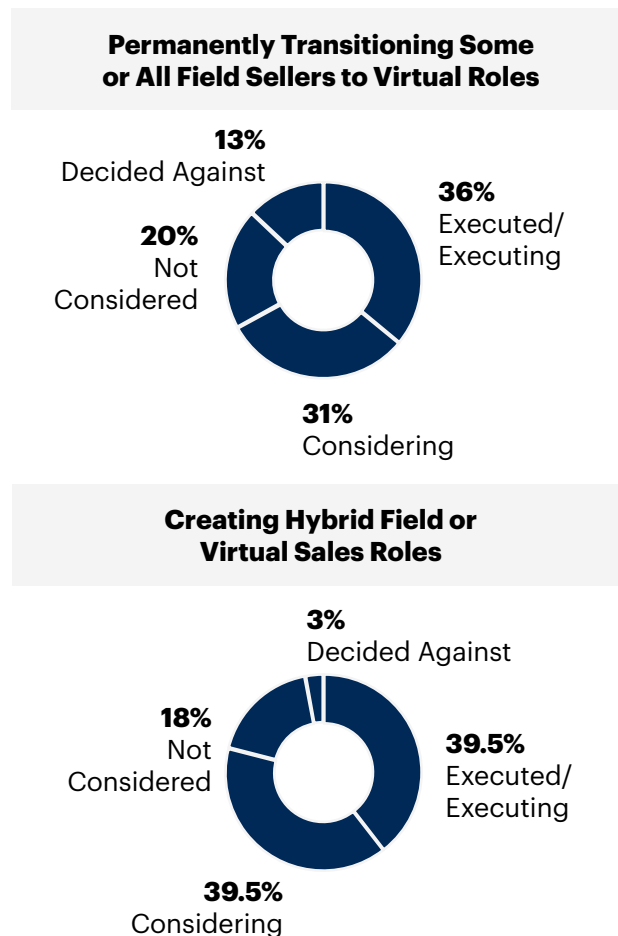
CSOs have found that they can get the highest return by investing in high-efficiency (e.g., inside sales) and high-effectiveness (e.g., key account manager) sales roles. This prioritization will help organizations achieve their short- and long-term goals despite the numerous challenges they face in a virtual environment.

CSOs must adapt sales roles for the future and increase investments into key sales roles (key account managers and inside sales reps).

When doing so, CSOs should consider the following:

- How should we update and evolve our job descriptions and onboarding plans to accommodate the virtual shift?
- How might we analyze current sales force performance to assess the new expectations for the evolving sales role?
- How might we reinforce sales role priorities with sales performance objectives and compensation?

Figure 4. Impact of Shift to Virtual Selling on Sales Team Role Composition
Percentage of CSOs Choosing Each



n = 61 CSOs

Source: Gartner CSO Priorities Pulse Survey (January-February 2021)

Conclusion

CSOs are on a journey to become leaders of selling and are taking key actions around the digital buying experience, cross-functional collaboration, resource allocation and role design to prepare their sales organization to support a virtual and omnichannel sales strategy.

These actions will help their sales teams both navigate the pandemic in 2021 and achieve long-term success as digital buying trends continue postpandemic.

¹ 2020 Gartner CSO Priorities Pulse Survey (n = 68 CSOs)

3 Skills Frontline Sellers Need for Successful Virtual Selling

By Antra Sharma

CSOs need to ensure their frontline sales talent has the skills required to succeed in a virtual selling environment.

Learn about critical virtual selling competencies and the seller behaviors that constitute each competency.



Adding Seller Competencies for Virtual Selling

Rapid changes in B2B buying, accelerated by disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, require CSOs to reassess the seller competencies needed for a virtual environment. In fact, 74% of CSOs report they have recently or are currently updating their seller competency profiles for virtual selling, and 61% of CSOs are already investing in new technology to enable virtual selling.

Almost three-fourths of CSOs report they have recently updated or are currently updating their seller competency profiles for virtual selling.

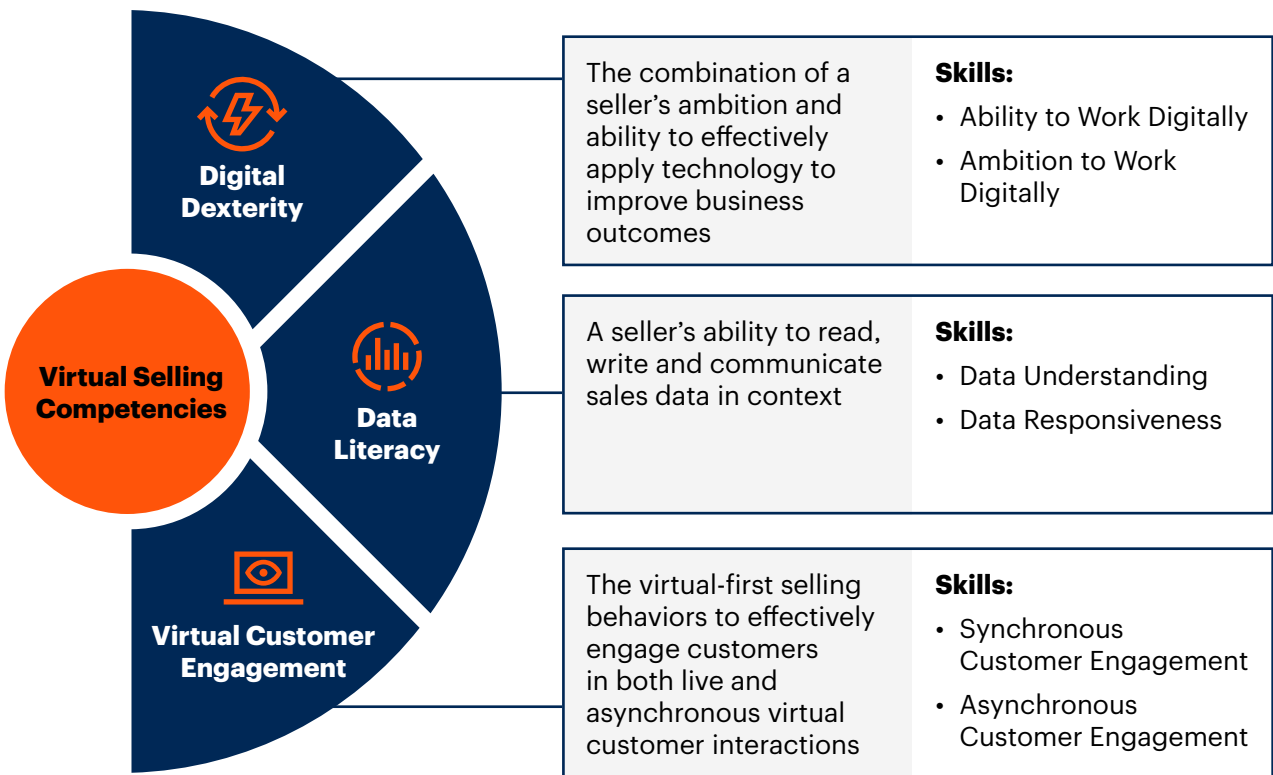
Gartner has identified three key seller competencies that CSOs should add in their updated seller competency profiles:

- 1. Digital Dexterity
- 2. Data Literacy
- 3. Virtual Customer Engagement

Sellers will need to master these competencies and associated skills to successfully use existing and new technologies that enable effective virtual selling (see Figure 1).

Before focusing on virtual selling competency mastery, CSOs must ensure alignment with sales enablement leaders. This alignment should be around defining virtual selling competencies and ensuring the updated seller competency profiles can support the company’s long-term strategic objectives in addition to short-term ones. This alignment also ensures that urgency for updating selling skills becomes a sales

Figure 1. Virtual Selling Competencies for Sellers



Source: Gartner

organizationwide priority and encourages the adoption of these skills by different sales teams. CSOs can use Table 1 to make the business case for virtual selling competencies and build a compelling narrative for why it is relevant for sellers to master these competencies.

1 Digital Dexterity

Digital dexterity is the combination of a seller’s ambition and ability to effectively apply technology to improve business outcomes.

A seller’s digital dexterity can take various forms. It includes basic activities, such as effectively collaborating with remote colleagues using digital tools. It also includes higher-order activities, such as leveraging an organization’s AI and predictive modeling capabilities to decide a seller’s next selling motion. Additionally, our research suggests that a leader’s emphasis on the need for digital dexterity increases the likelihood of their sales teams developing digital dexterity by 2.4 times.¹

The Markers of Effective Digital Dexterity

CSOs can share the table of effective and ineffective behaviors with their sales enablement teams and sales managers. This table will help them accurately determine whether the seller exhibits behaviors that demonstrate digital dexterity (see Table 2).

Assessment Criteria for Identifying Digital Dexterity Gaps

As a next step, CSOs must periodically review seller progress to evaluate digital dexterity levels. For this evaluation, CSOs should direct sales enablement leaders and sales managers to use the categories and questions below to build an assessment criteria that helps diagnose gaps in sellers’ digital dexterity levels. The answers to these questions can be subjective, such as a noted discomfort with a specific task, or more objective, such as not at all, rarely, sometimes, often or very often performing a specific task.

Table 1. The Business Need for Virtual Selling Competencies

 Pitfalls of a Standard Approach to Selling ...	 ... Are Overcome by a Virtual-Ready Sales Force
Technology-supported tasks viewed as supplementary to traditional means	Integration of technology into daily workflow to increase seller productivity in sales tasks
Delayed and/or misinformed decisions with overreliance on personal experience and intuition	Adoption of analytics for day-to-day selling activities and timely decision making
Preference for in-person collaborations and apprehension toward virtual interactions	Confident, timely and purposeful involvement of remote experts and customer stakeholders

Source: Gartner



Table 2. Effective Versus Ineffective Seller Behaviors for Digital Dexterity

		
	Effective Behaviors	Ineffective Behaviors
Ambition to Work Digitally Believing technology positively augments tasks and activities	• Willingly inquires about and attempts to use various digital tools in daily workflow • Anticipates the need for and invites experts from other geographies best suited to join virtual customer meetings regardless of their location	• Resists using new digital tools in daily workflow • Primarily builds customer engagement strategies independently, relying solely on personal or immediate team's knowledge
Ability to Work Digitally Working from anywhere with the right technology	• Uses collaboration tools to increase engagement during virtual meetings • Uses data to build a comprehensive view of the customer • Selects the most appropriate content and formats it according to the communication medium	• Uses collaboration tools to only passively present supplier information and solutions, without effectively engaging participants during virtual meetings • Relies on customer interactions to source relevant information • Determines the communication medium without considering customer preferences and the purpose of the communication

Source: Gartner

- **Use of Digital Tools to Develop a Comprehensive Customer Understanding** — How often does the seller use the customer's digital footprint through digital tools, such as microsites or social media platforms, to understand the customer's business priorities and challenges?
- **Selection of Best-Fit Communication Channel** — How often does the seller consider the communication channel that will match the customer's communication preferences?
- **Interaction in Virtual Conversations** — To what extent does the seller use technologies to make virtual conversations interactive with the customer?
- **Remote Collaboration** — How often does the seller successfully involve experts from remote geographies as needed?
- **Digitalization of Personal Tasks** — To what extent does the seller leverage existing networks to learn about technology that can improve efficiency and productivity of the seller's daily sales tasks?

2 Data Literacy

Data literacy is a seller's ability to read, write and communicate sales data in context.

Our research predicts by 2023, data literacy will become an explicit and necessary driver of business value, demonstrated by its formal inclusion in over 80% of data and analytics strategies and change management programs.

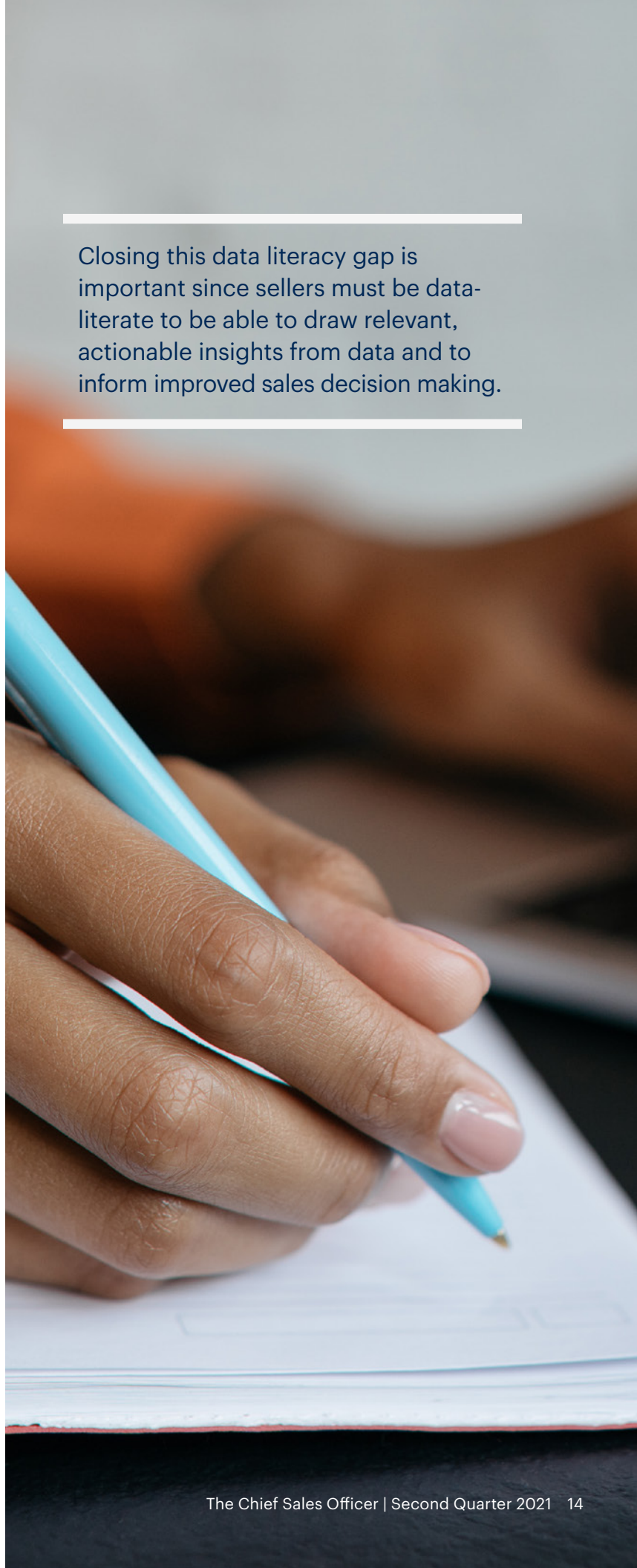
Unfortunately, only 43% of sales leaders consider their direct sellers as highly sales-data-proficient.²

Closing this data literacy gap is important since sellers must be data-literate to be able to draw relevant, actionable insights from data and to inform improved sales decision making, such as next steps in a sales interaction.

The Markers of Effective Data Literacy

CSOs can share the table of effective and ineffective behaviors on the next page with their

Closing this data literacy gap is important since sellers must be data-literate to be able to draw relevant, actionable insights from data and to inform improved sales decision making.



sales enablement teams and sales managers. This table will help them accurately determine whether the seller exhibits behaviors that constitute effective data literacy (see Table 3).

Assessment Criteria for Identifying Data Literacy Gaps

CSOs can direct sales enablement leaders and sales managers to track progress improving sellers’ data literacy. Sales enablement leaders and sales managers can use these categories and questions to measure which seller behaviors need to be prioritized to increase data literacy mastery:

- **Comprehension of Foundational Data Concepts** — To what extent does the seller understand basic data concepts and their relevance for various sales tasks?
- **Contextualization of Data Findings** — To what extent does the seller communicate and contextualize data findings based on the customer’s specific context and needs?

- **Deployment of Analytics/Related Tools** — How often does the seller use the analytics provided by sales operations for both personal activities as well as sales tasks?

3 Virtual Customer Engagement

Virtual customer engagement is the virtual-first selling behaviors to effectively engage customers in both live and asynchronous virtual customer interactions.

Customers expect sellers will not only engage them through live virtual meetings but also asynchronously, where sellers exchange information with customers outside of those live meetings.

Table 3. Effective Versus Ineffective Seller Behaviors for Data Literacy

	 Effective Behaviors	 Ineffective Behaviors
Data Understanding	Selects the right data and metrics to use depending on changing customer context and needs	Selects own metrics based on easily available data rather than organizational standards
Data Responsiveness	• Validates data findings through offered self-service tools to share new insights with customers • Prioritizes next best seller actions based on sales analytics and field-level observations of how customers buy	• Relies on customers to contextualize data-based conclusions for their own business • Avoids using simple analytical tools in daily activities

Source: Gartner

This combination allows customers to independently review information and engage with digital tools, while sellers ensure information consistency between channels.

The Markers of Effective Virtual Customer Engagement

CSOs can share the table of effective and ineffective behavior below with their sales enablement teams and sales managers. This table will help them accurately determine whether the seller exhibits behaviors needed for effective virtual customer engagement (see Table 4).

Assessment Criteria for Identifying Virtual Customer Engagement Gaps

CSOs can direct sales enablement leaders and sales managers to track seller progress to help improve their ability for successful virtual

customer engagement. Sales enablement leaders and sales managers can use these categories and questions to determine which seller behaviors need to be prioritized to improve seller ability for virtual customer engagement:

- **Tailored Content Sharing to Virtual Environment** — How often does the seller create and share easily understandable information that customers can easily review on their own?
- **Preparation for Virtual Meetings** — To what extent does the seller prioritize the content shared in live virtual meetings to ensure maximum comprehension?
- **Stakeholder Engagement** — How often does the seller correctly identify key customer stakeholders and involve them in a purposeful manner during the purchase?

Table 4. Effective Versus Ineffective Seller Behaviors for Virtual Customer Engagement

	 Effective Behaviors	 Ineffective Behaviors
Synchronous Virtual Customer Engagement	• Limits the number of call participants and tightly defines their roles to avoid coordination challenges in a virtual setting • Maps each stakeholder’s role and influence level to determine the need for their presence	• Applies live meeting tactics of expansive and often flexible agenda • Plans assuming that stakeholders who previously joined live interactions will be the same stakeholders present for virtual interactions
Asynchronous Virtual Customer Engagement	Shares high-quality digital content aligned to key customer jobs during a purchase process (e.g., buyer enablement) for customers’ asynchronous learning	Shares content that customers cannot use on their own

Source: Gartner

Conclusion

To successfully meet the needs of a virtual selling environment, CSOs must reconfigure their sales talent strategy.

CSOs need to align organizational investments and resources with a virtual selling approach, which will prepare sales teams to not only master relevant virtual selling competencies but also equip them with the appropriate tools for effective virtual customer engagement.

To sustain efforts updating seller competency profiles and supporting these virtual selling skills, CSOs must consider:

- What are our current business and related talent objectives? Does our current competency framework continue to support these objectives?
- What do our sellers need to know about how their customers' buying process has evolved, and how should this impact how our sellers engage with their customers?
- What can enablement and other organizational resources provide to help promote and develop these virtual selling competencies?

¹ 2018 Gartner Digital Dexterity Survey (n = 3,481 employees)

² 2020 Gartner State of Sales Operations and Analytics Survey (n = 299 sales leaders)

Upcoming Virtual Events



Gartner regularly hosts virtual events across a variety of sales topics. The following are a small selection of our upcoming webinars.

Please join us by registering online.

Rewriting B2B Selling for Digital Buying
23 June 2021, 08:00 a.m. EST

Unlocking Growth by Reducing Frontline Burden
8 July 2021, 10:00 a.m. EST

Building the Data-Driven Organization
22 July 2021, 1:00 p.m. EST

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Innovation Corner: **A Sales Leader's Embrace of an Omnichannel Sales Approach to Drive Growth**

By David Millstein

Bill Spehr, the chief sales officer at Express Scripts, now part of Evernorth, shares how he's executing an omnichannel sales strategy, which is changing the seller role and increasing sales-marketing collaboration through the usage of customized customer microsites.



Bill Spehr

Bill Spehr serves as senior vice president of Pharmacy Benefit Management sales and Health Plan Account Management at Express Scripts, now part of Evernorth. Bill joined Express Scripts in 2016, bringing with him 30 years of healthcare experience focused on developing high-performing sales and account management organizations. Before assuming his role at Express Scripts, Bill held leadership roles at Connecture, WebMD and CVS Caremark.



How has COVID-19 changed your sales strategy over the past year?

COVID has certainly been a disruptor, but far more importantly, it has accelerated trends that we were already seeing for years. Specifically, customer buying behavior had been changing given the amount of information customers have access to during the buying cycle and were spending much of their time reviewing this information independent of our sellers. It has become a business imperative for us to be where our customers were learning. For our sales leadership team at Express Scripts, that meant we needed to create an omnichannel sales approach.

What are you doing at Express Scripts to operationalize an omnichannel sales approach?

Our omnichannel sales approach requires us to align digital and in-person capabilities to progress the customer forward in their purchase decision. To execute on this vision, we needed to do three things:

1 Put data and analytics at the center of everything we do — Over the last few years, we made critical investments in technology infrastructure, predictive modeling, artificial intelligence and other business intelligence capabilities to enhance our knowledge about

our customers. Pharmacy Benefit Management is an extremely complex purchase with high risk, so we use our analytics to make the buying process as simple as possible. These capabilities help us be very prescriptive about the actions we take to engage our customers.

2 Stand up a cross-functional team to lead this new approach — Sales could not operationalize this effort alone. We needed to create a cross-functional team that shares ownership and accountability for results. Members of sales, sales operations and marketing are aligned around our established goals and work together to achieve those goals. So it's all hands on deck around our omnichannel sales approach, and we could not be successful without a cross-functional partnership.

3 Provide sellers guidance on using sales data to inform their decision making — After rolling out new digital capabilities, we needed to set up sellers to be able to use them effectively. So we

“Our omnichannel sales approach requires us to align digital and in-person capabilities to progress the customer forward in their purchase decision.”

created workbooks that sellers can use to quickly see what the predictive models are telling them about their opportunity book of business and how they should be taking action from that information. We knew this was going to introduce a level of complexity. But we have been successful by ensuring sellers understand what's in it for them and training sellers to develop their analytics skills needed to get more comfortable in this kind of environment.

“If we are building everything around our data and analytics capabilities, then we need sellers that have deep analytical skills.”

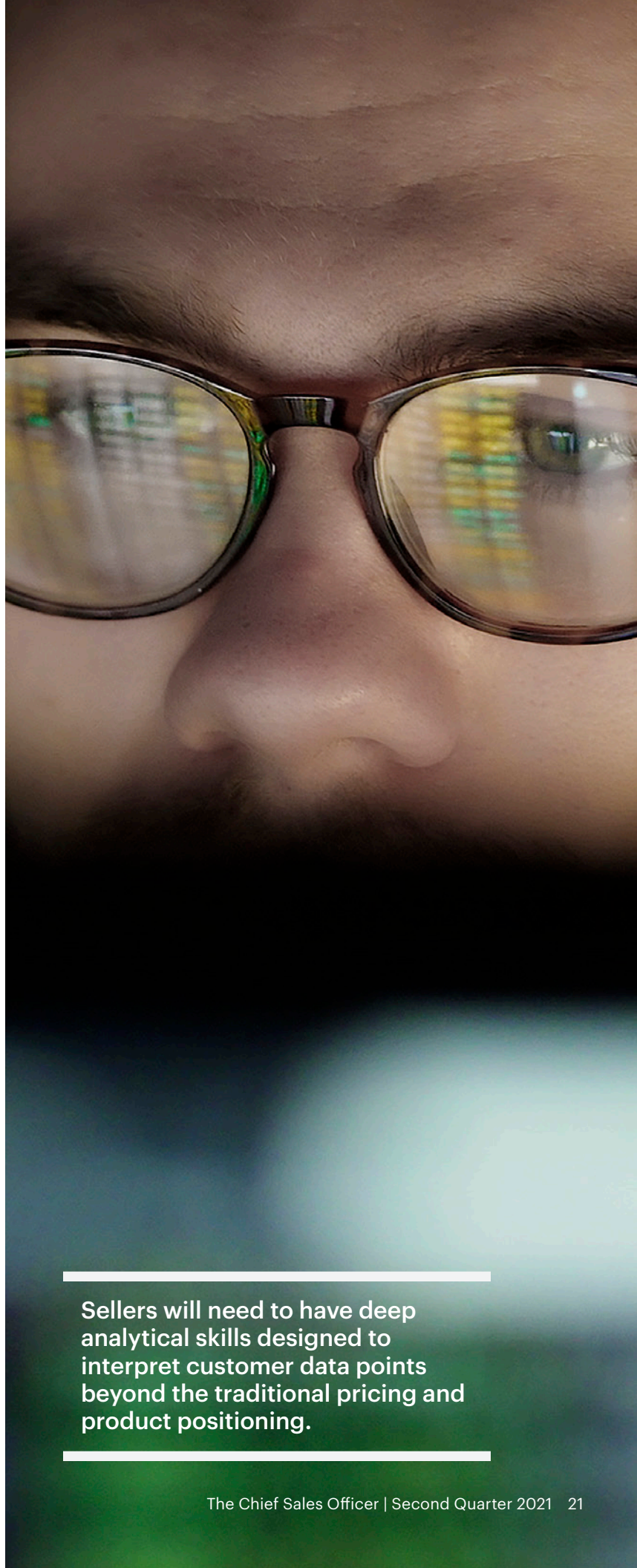
So what does this omnichannel approach look like in practice?

As a part of our omnichannel sales approach, we have deployed customer-specific microsites, which enable us to get in front of a customer well in advance of the customer putting their business out to bid, sending in a request for proposal or selecting a consultant to work with. The microsites allow us to share personalized videos, white papers and presentations that customers can view on their own at any time. Our sales and marketing teams regularly connect to identify the right information to create and maintain a microsite's relevance. Our sellers use these microsites to drive and manage customer engagement virtually. While we initially deployed them for some of our largest prospective client opportunities, now we have expanded them far beyond only our largest opportunities.

Can you go deeper on what this means for the skills that your sellers will need in the future?

Sellers will need to have deep analytical skills designed to interpret customer data points beyond the traditional pricing and product positioning. We expect to make a significant investment in training and technology to help

Sellers will need to have deep analytical skills designed to interpret customer data points beyond the traditional pricing and product positioning.



the sales team interpret the available customer data.

There also will need to be a much different hiring profile for the seller as the attributes of a high-performing seller must evolve significantly. There's a big difference in the seller skills required to leverage digital to acquire a customer as the seller will have limited personal interaction. In this environment, while the seller does not go away, the seller's ability to effectively use technology and data are now critical skills to be successful.

In fact, in some cases, instead of hiring expensive sellers, we will shift our investments into hiring sales enablement personnel to help us understand our customer opportunities deeper, better and faster. The seller is still important in this world, but if we are building everything around our data and analytics capabilities, then we need sellers that can become data-literate (see Figure 1).

What results have you seen?
What are your next steps?

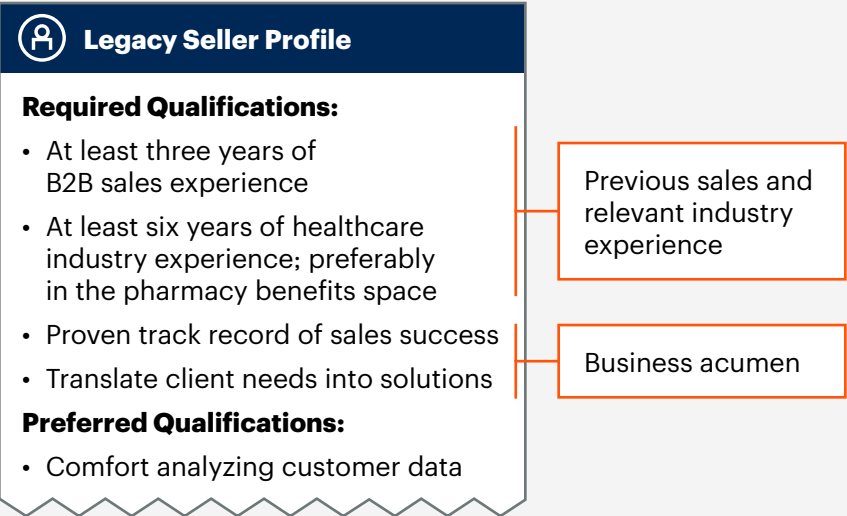
Since implementing this approach, we have seen a 4x increase in conversion rates for prospective accounts when they use their microsites.

In terms of our next steps, we will continue to expand our microsites to more opportunities, add new capabilities so that they can also be a virtual meeting place for sellers and customers and evolve our microsites over time as we learn more about what works best.

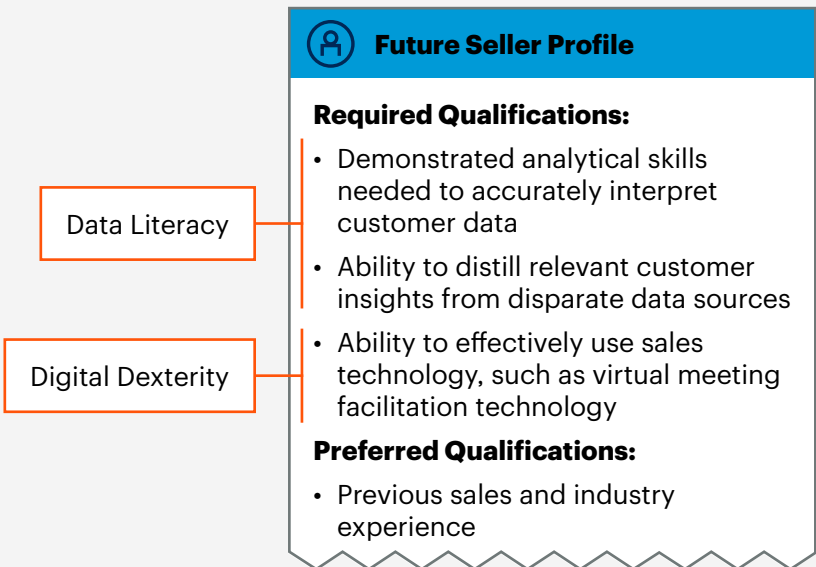
We will also need to bring our commercial functions even closer together, breaking down functional silos to build more advanced analytics capabilities and improve our ability to reach and engage customers regardless of the sales channel. Ultimately, this will require us to fundamentally shift how we are organized, and we expect that strong commercial results will continue to follow.

Figure 1. New Seller Profile for an Omnichannel Sales Approach
Illustrative

1 **Express Scripts realized its sellers needed the data literacy and digital dexterity skills** to analyze, interpret and effectively use a multitude of customer data points.



2 **Express Scripts' new seller profile prioritizes data literacy and digital dexterity skills** required to be effective in an omnichannel sales approach, while also maintaining foundational selling skills.



Source: Adapted From Express Scripts

The Path to Effective Virtual Selling

Here are four actions that CSOs cannot overlook when creating a virtual selling strategy that drives growth.

Action 1: Update Sales Role Competency Profiles for Virtual Selling

Focus on virtual-first sales skills:



Data Literacy



Virtual Customer Engagement



Digital Dexterity



Common Mistake

Prioritizing sales experience over virtual-first sales skills in hiring and promoting

Action 2: Define and Innovate on Effective Live Engagement

- ▶ **Set clear expectations** for live or synchronous engagement.
- ▶ **Support sellers** to manage energy.
- ▶ Improve meeting **“production value.”**



Common Mistake

Emphasizing quantity of seller virtual customer interactions over quality

Action 3: Engage Customers Beyond Live Meetings



Invest in technology to **increase asynchronous customer engagement**, such as digital sales rooms.



Common Mistake

Investing only in technology to improve the live virtual meeting experience

Action 4: Set Top-Down Strategy for Virtual-First Coaching

- ▶ Communicate a **clear coaching framework**.
- ▶ Provide coaching **support and technology**.
- ▶ **Hold managers accountable** for quality coaching.



Common Mistake

Overlooking manager training on how to coach in a virtual environment



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Common Questions CSOs Are Asking About Talent, Hiring and Virtual Selling

By Jeffrey L. Cohen

As chief sales officers adapt sales roles for virtual selling and recruit for the sales force of the future, they are entering uncharted territory with many questions. **Lots of questions.** Below are a selection of some common questions CSOs have recently asked us and we've helped them answer.



Talent and Hiring

- 1 How should we **redesign our sales roles** to reflect changing skills and job requirements?
- 2 What are the **seller competencies and skills** we should be looking for?
- 3 What is the value of **hiring sellers in-house versus outsourcing** or selling through channel partners?
- 4 What are best practices around **sales recruiting** and hiring efforts to attract top sales talent?
- 5 What are **recommended compensation plans** for sales development and business development representative roles?
- 6 How do we develop a **peer mentoring program** to quickly upskill our sales force on evolving sales skills?
- 7 How do we build and validate the impact of our **sales force training** as we scale globally?



Virtual Selling

- 1 What are **virtual selling best practices** at the most progressive sales organizations?
- 2 Where should we prioritize investments to **improve virtual selling and virtual customer engagement**?
- 3 How can the sales enablement team **prepare, enable and onboard reps** for virtual selling?
- 4 How do we **deliver sales coaching** in a virtual selling environment?
- 5 What **virtual selling skills** should sales managers be coaching?



Do you have questions similar to these or about other aspects of changing sales roles?
Contact your account executive to gain access to Gartner experts and get them answered.
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Set strategy, identify and measure goals and allocate resources effectively

Go-to-Market Strategy

Accelerate revenue growth by allocating resources to the direct and indirect routes to the market best position to meet buyers' needs

Sales Force Design & Deployment

Design a seller coverage model that focuses each sales role on a targeted customer segment in a well-designed territory

Leading Sales Operations

Lead sales operations function to serve as a strategic advantage for overall sales organization

Sales Analytics, Process & Systems

Equip sellers with insight-led processes, tools and reporting to effectively engage with customers

CRM Sales

Identify, deploy and improve value of technologies that drive sales execution, including SFA, SPM, sales analytics platforms, PRM, CPQ and lead management

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Invest in developing a digital commerce platform and application ecosystem as a way to scale digital commerce into digital business

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- Expert advice on elevating the impact of sales enablement
- Cutting-edge insights on sales growth drivers
- Actionable strategies to help you confidently lead your sales function into the future

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Leading Sales Enablement

Optimize sales enablement strategy and design to arm sales teams with the collateral, tools and technologies needed to sell more effectively and efficiently

Account Management & Account-Based Strategies

Establish well-defined strategies, processes, and tools that retain and grow the customer base

Pipeline Creation & Sales Development

Build pipeline and improve prospecting, opportunity qualification and conversion practices

Sales Motions & Methodology

Align organizational resources with sales motions to deliver and articulate value through messages, products and service to customers

Seller & Buyer Enablement

Arm both frontline sellers and buyers with tools and resources necessary to progress through a buying journey and make a purchase decision

Talent Development Programs

Develop frontline talent skills through effective training, coaching and onboarding programs

Sales Execution & Demand Generation

Sales Enablement

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