

Gartner for Sales

**Biweekly Update:
Sales Enablement's
Response to COVID-19
(22 June 2020)**

Sales Research Team

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Initiatives: Sales Effectiveness and Enablement **and 1 more**

Learn how a group of over 50 sales enablement leaders is responding to the COVID-19 crisis. Issues addressed include returning to field-based selling, continued investment in virtual selling capabilities and supporting frontline sales managers to efficiently navigate the crisis.

Quick Answer

What are the top priorities for sales enablement leaders as they support sellers through the COVID-19 crisis?

- **Rebuilding the sales pipeline:** Evaluating the impact of the pandemic and travel restrictions on the health of the sales pipeline and exploring revenue opportunities from newer geographies
- **Supporting sellers for long-term virtual selling:** Orchestrating virtual selling support strategies to enable sellers to maintain productivity during virtual meetings and build sustainable customer relationships over digital platforms

More Detail

Key Take-Aways on Rebuilding the Sales Pipeline for the “New Normal”

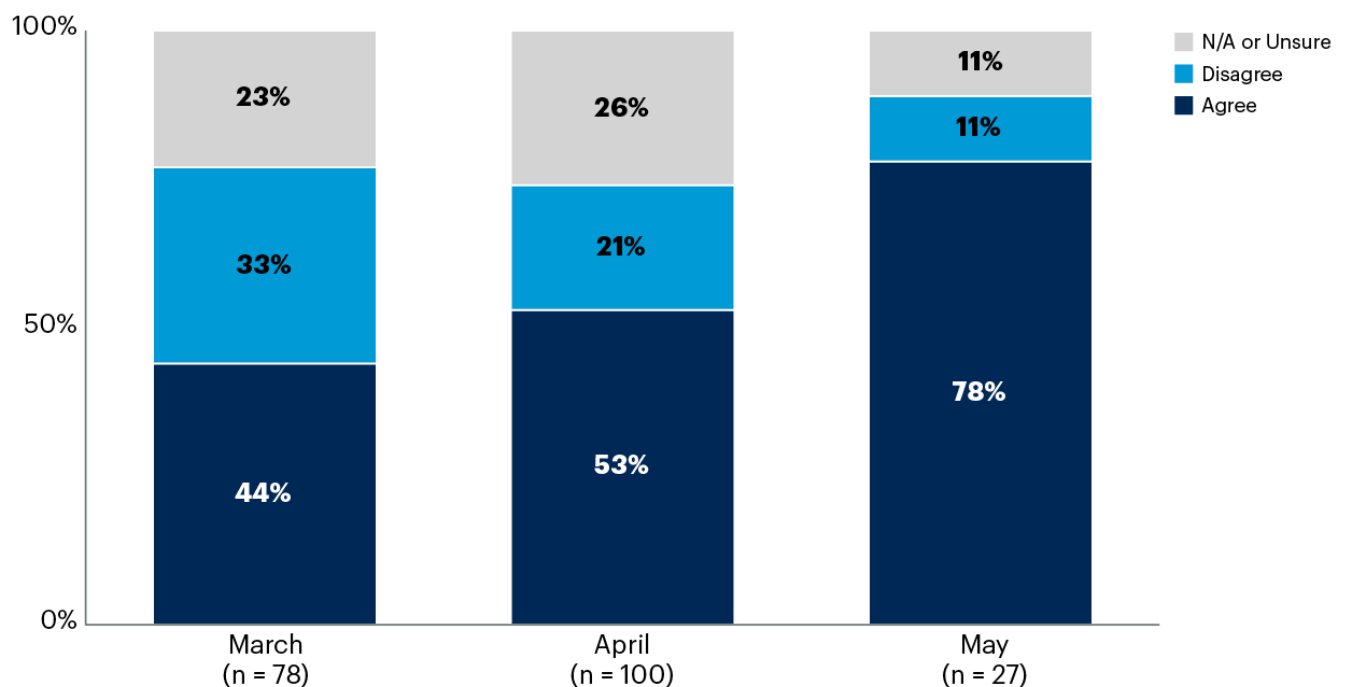
- **Evaluating pipeline rebuilding and restructuring needs** — Organizations are evaluating the degree to which their sales pipelines require rebuilding or restructuring for the new normal. Factors such as the rate at which travel restrictions are eased, customers' willingness to attend in-person meetings and sellers' readiness to travel for field-based selling influence this rebuilding process. To effectively modify their pipelines, sales leaders are increasingly leveraging artificial intelligence (AI) to understand the needs of their existing and prospective customers.
- **Investing in Virtual Selling Capabilities** — Organizations that invested early in building their virtual selling capabilities have fairly healthy sales pipelines. Selling remotely provided sellers with more opportunities to connect with customers virtually, which resulted in some organizations growing their opportunity or lead pipelines in certain geographies and market segments in the past few months.
- **Relentless focus on customer retention and renewal** — Organizations are working to identify at-risk revenue, map the industries and sectors that are most likely to be negatively impacted in the

long-term by the pandemic crisis, and strategize solutions to mitigate the impact on customer retention and renewals.

- **Managing lost or canceled sales opportunities** – As businesses begin to reopen, organizations are focusing on encouraging customers to place orders that previously got canceled because of the pandemic and associated travel restrictions. CSOs are increasingly focusing on issuing tactical guidance to sales teams for handling canceled customer orders (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Increase in CSOs Providing Guidance to Sellers on Handling Canceled Customer Orders

Increase in CSOs Providing Guidance to Sellers on Handling Canceled Customer Orders



Q: "Have you issued clear guidance to sales teams on how to handle canceled customer orders?"

Source: 2020 Gartner COVID-19 and Sales Leader Pulse Survey

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- **Reaching out to customers in newer geographies** – Segments that were traditionally out of scope due to the geographical coverage limitations of field-based selling are now being actively pursued. Market segment AI analytics tools are helping sales leaders curate the search for new customers in geographies where travel restrictions and lockdowns are beginning to relax and businesses are opening or are expected to open soon.

Key Take-Aways on Supporting Sellers for Long-term Virtual Selling

- **Reducing seller fatigue during virtual selling** – Sales leaders state that while virtual selling has enhanced seller productivity, sellers are overwhelmed by the number of customer meetings they need to attend on any given day. In their guidance to sellers, organizations are offering unwinding tips and underlining the need for regular "digital detox" breaks during work hours.

- **Equipping sellers with information that is timely, relevant and impactful** — As the buying process evolves, customers are relying more on digital sources to gather information about supplier organizations. Given this digital dependency, to effectively engage with customers, sellers need to be up to date with the publicly available information about their organizations.

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