

Gartner for Sales

Critical Components of the Virtual Selling Tech Stack

Improve buyer engagement, data-driven seller
actions and simplify seller workflows

Sales Research Team



Gartner®

As virtual selling continues to grow, CSOs must identify the most valuable technologies for driving business outcomes. Use this resource to build a strong business case for investing in virtual selling technologies.

Sales Research Team



Overview

Key Findings

- Sales leaders say many commonly deployed virtual selling technologies offer good ROI and will be of top importance to their organization in the next two years.
- Carefully evaluating technologies is key, as the typical virtual selling technology stack involves 13 virtual selling technologies.
- Investing in emerging technologies presents calculated risks, as these technologies offer a spectrum of current value and varying levels of future importance.

Recommendations

CSOs who want to improve their revenue technology strategy for driving business outcomes should:

- Build a virtual selling technology stack based on evaluations of technologies that improve buyer engagement, data-driven seller actions or simplified seller workflows.
- Take calculated risks by also investing in best-fitting emerging technologies that align with the speed and complexity of transactions that their sellers most often support.

Strategic Planning Assumption

By 2026, 65% of B2B sales organizations will transition from intuition-based to datadriven decision making, using technology that unites workflow, data and analytics.



Data Insights

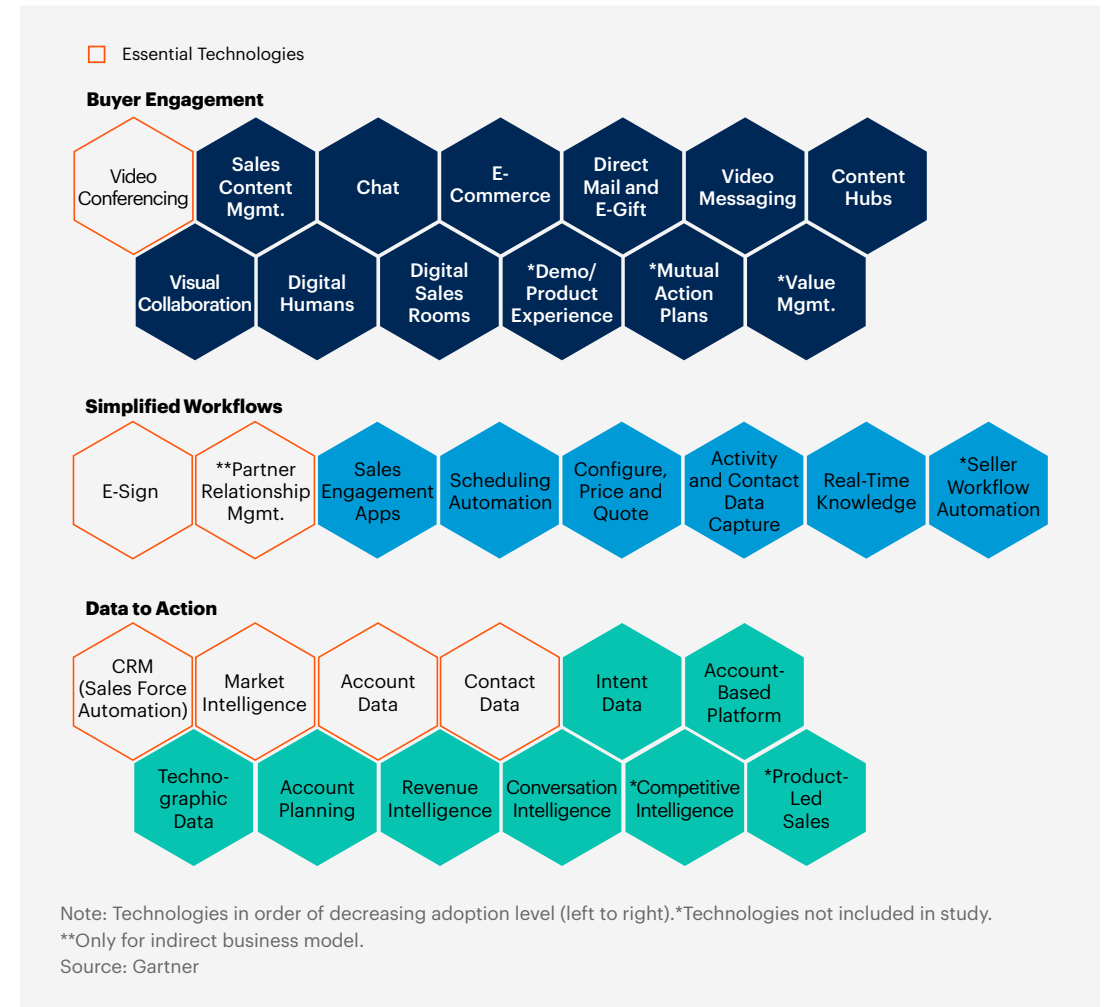
As selling becomes increasingly virtual, companies are investing more in sales technologies. A recent Gartner poll found CSOs expect their sales technology budget and virtual sales headcount to increase by 20% in 2022. The market is growing rapidly and has accelerated exponentially with the rush to virtual selling due to the pandemic. CSOs need a decision framework to properly evaluate solutions for specific technology use cases.

We surveyed sales leaders on adoption levels and business outcomes of 27 virtual selling technologies. Sales leaders can gain a competitive advantage by adopting solutions from different technology categories, but they often do not properly track and categorize the most critical technology use cases for their organization. Failing to do so can be costly; the average virtual selling technology stack consists of 13 virtual selling technologies. By investing in technologies closely aligned with the speed and complexity of typical transactions, CSOs will improve the satisfaction, adoption and benefits of virtual selling technology.

The Ideal Virtual Selling Tech Stack Improves Key Selling Competencies

CSOs must focus on designing a purpose-built virtual selling technology stack that helps sellers execute fundamental virtual selling competencies (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Virtual Selling Tech Stack



Build a virtual selling stack that helps sellers improve buyer engagement, adapt tactics based on data and simplify seller workflows:

- **Improve buyer engagement.** Virtual selling technologies help sellers improve customer engagement with innovative methods for facilitating meetings (for example, videoconferencing, visual collaboration) and asynchronous interactions with customers in a virtual selling environment (for example, video messaging, digital sales rooms). Innovative technologies can accelerate seller development of virtual customer engagement skills.
- **Adapt tactics based on data.** Virtual selling technologies equip sellers with stakeholder and company data that generates situationally aware insights to influence messaging, workflows and tactics (for example, conversation intelligence, account-based platform). Since sellers tend to have the lowest data proficiency in the enterprise, innovative technologies must help sellers understand and activate data points.
- **Simplify seller workflows.** Virtual selling technologies simplify day-to-day seller workflows by automating time-consuming tasks (for example, e-sign, sales engagement applications) and streamlining the seller's user experience (UX) of technology. Lack of seller digital dexterity easily undermines the successful adoption of technology. Innovative technology vendors understand that making sellers fall in love with their products requires embedding technologies into sellers' highly detailed daily workflows.

Essential Virtual Selling Technologies Bring High Value to Multiple Transaction Types

Technologies adopted at many organizations with high current value and significant future importance are deemed “essential,” as they support basic fundamentals of selling virtually, regardless of transaction speed and complexity. Except for email, dialer and calendar, other essential virtual selling technologies are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Examples of Essential Virtual Selling Technologies

Essential Virtual Selling Technology	Description
Customer relationship management technology (aka sales force automation)	Critical infrastructure in sales organizations that automates sales activities, processes and administrative responsibilities
Revenue data solutions (composed of market intelligence, account and contact data)	Enables prioritization of prospect and customer account and contact data using insights and propensity signals, integrated into daily seller workflows
Video conferencing	Creates secure, sensory-rich virtual meetings that are easy for buyers to join and sellers to host
Partner relationship management	Essential tool where indirect partners comprise a significant percentage of revenue, equipping resell partners to help end customers through buying and ownership cycle
E-sign	Provides high value through cost savings of faster processing time and lower administrative and storage fees

Emerging Virtual Selling Technologies Must Align With Transaction Speed and Complexity

Emerging technologies offer a spectrum of current value and varying levels of expected future importance. CSOs must take calculated risks to experiment with emerging technologies that help them gain a competitive edge and improve virtual selling results. The rest of this research focuses on emerging virtual selling technologies.

To optimize the impact of technology investments, focus on evaluating virtual selling technologies that fit an organization's typical transaction type and enable sellers to support common buying tasks. B2B transactions are often defined by the length of the sales cycle, deal size, buying-committee size and product complexity.

CSOs should evaluate emerging technologies that support two kinds of B2B transactions:

- Volume and velocity — Typically executed over shorter sales cycles (less than three months), for small deal sizes (less than \$25,000), with a small buying committee (less than six stakeholders), often for products with lower complexity
- Enterprise — Typically executed over longer sales cycles (six months or more), for larger deal sizes (greater than \$125,000), with a large buying committee (eight to 11 stakeholders), often for complex products

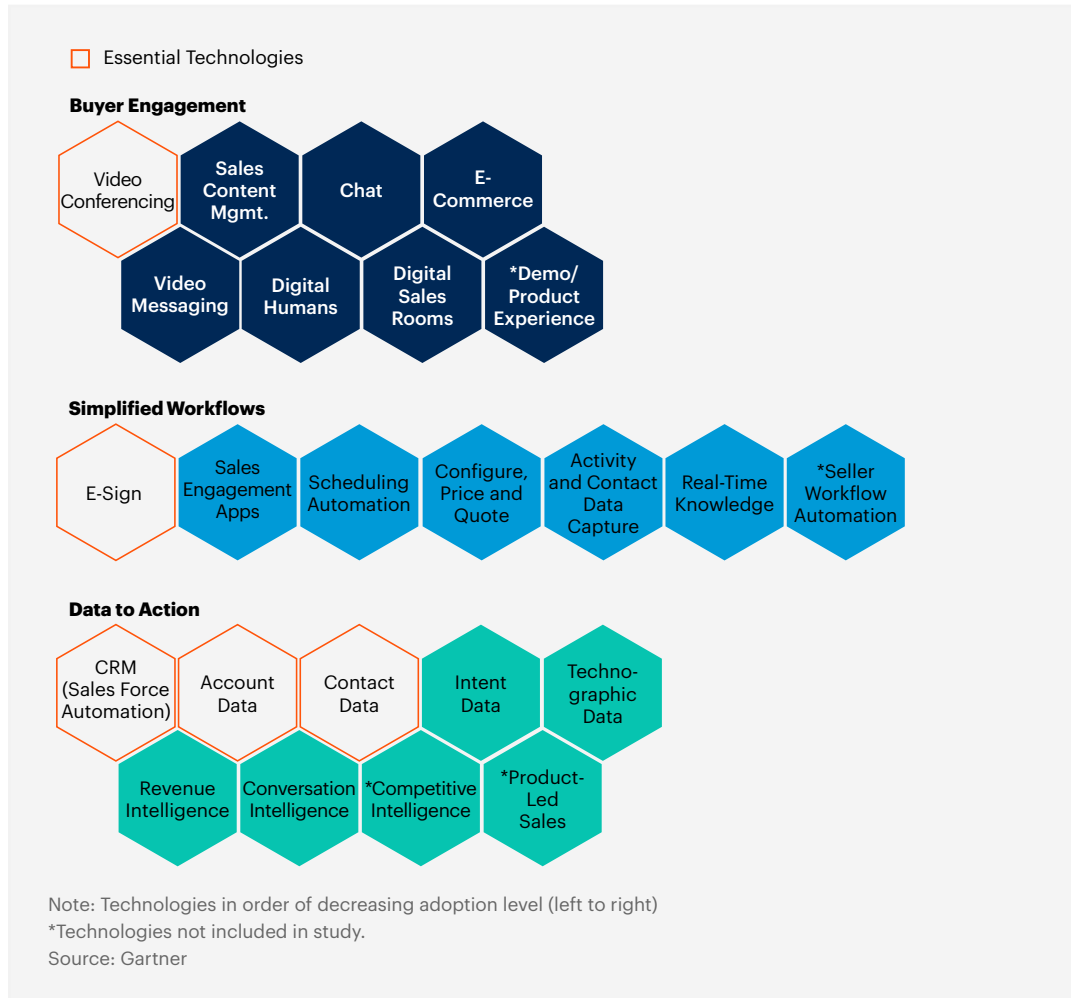
Sales teams with midmarket transactions, while not directly covered in this research, can still follow the guidance for both transaction types to prioritize technologies for investment. This transaction type is typically executed over sales cycles of three to five months, for medium deal sizes (approximately \$25,000 to \$125,000), with a mediumsized buying committee (six or seven stakeholders), often for varying degrees of product complexity.

Data-Driven Insights Add Value to High-Volume, High-Velocity Sales

To drive high-volume, high-velocity sales, sales leaders need to equip their sellers with emerging technologies that efficiently and productively engage buyers with repeatable, optimizable data-driven tactics (see Figure 2).



Figure 2: Virtual Selling Technologies for Volume and Velocity Transactions



The following are a few key emerging technologies we believe are valuable for volume and velocity transactions:

- Sales content management** helps sellers engage customers with relevant content assets and information more efficiently by providing a centralized access point for sales content. This technology is a key component of sales enablement platforms that equips sellers to collaborate with buyers on deal-specific sales content throughout the sales cycle. Sales leaders deem this technology as having high current value and top future importance, mainly because of the intuitive UX for sellers to search and distribute content to buyers, then analyze engagement analytics on the distributed content.
- Chat** provides a digital customer engagement channel throughout the customer buying experience, and it is particularly useful for prospecting and early buying scenarios. Customers can directly contact sales teams via the supplier website, and sales teams use chat to provide guidance on customer buying tasks. Sales leaders indicate this technology offers medium value and future importance. We recommend this technology for removing buyer friction. For optimal results, collaborate with demand generation and marketing on the technology design and rollout.
- E-commerce solutions** help buyers fulfill complex procurement and ordering flows digitally. This technology reflects an ongoing business model innovation in which the seller role shifts to facilitating digital commerce support. This technology generally provides moderate value and is expected to be highly important in the next two years, especially as more companies complete digital transformation initiatives.

- **Digital human technologies** (for example, chatbots, virtual personal assistants) are most commonly used for pipeline generation — specifically, engaging high volumes of marketing-generated leads. Chat and email bots will interact digitally with prospects and facilitate scheduling an appointment, simultaneously augmenting seller capacity and engaging leads with speed. Digital humans help organizations engage interested buyers at any time, anywhere and in multiple places simultaneously, regardless of a buyer’s physical location. For optimal results, collaborate with demand generation and marketing on technology design and rollout.
- **Sales engagement applications** help sellers execute more efficient prospecting and improve overall productivity by simplifying seller workflows. Sellers can efficiently execute multichannel, multitouch buyer engagement from a single application and optimize those engagements with analytics. This technology improves CRM adoption by helping sellers access and update CRM records from sellers’ preferred applications (for example, email inbox). Sales leaders indicate the technology provides high current value and medium future importance.
- **Scheduling automation** lets sellers and buyers automate the manually run workflow of scheduling conversations. Technology vendors help sellers improve overall conversion rates and productivity through three primary use cases: handoff scheduling from the website to sellers, trigger-based calendar invitations and automated back-and-forth scheduling between sellers and buyers. This technology provides medium value to sales organizations today and is expected to be moderately important in the next two years. For optimal results, collaborate with demand generation and marketing teams on technology design and rollout.
- **Conversation intelligence** simplifies how sellers and managers use AI-powered insights gleaned from seller conversations. AI-powered messaging guidance during customer conversations and objective reviews of post-call analytics help sellers improve call and deal outcomes. Managers can use these technologies to rapidly accelerate onboarding for new sellers, which preserves capacity for high-impact coaching behaviors such as deal-level coaching. This technology provides medium value to sales organizations today and is expected to be moderately important in the next two years. We expect this technology to become an essential component of every virtual seller’s tech stack given its ease of use and strategic value to the sales organization.

See Table 2 for a summary of how sales leaders perceive the current value and future importance of these technologies to their organizations.

Table 2: Perceptions of Current Value and Future Importance of Virtual Selling Technologies for Volume and Velocity Transactions

Technology	Perceived Current Value for Organization	Perceived Future Importance for Organization
Sales content management	High	High
E-commerce solutions	Moderate	High
Chat	Moderate	Moderate
Digital human technologies	Low	Low
Sales engagement applications	High	Moderate
Scheduling automation	Moderate	Moderate
Conversation intelligence	Moderate	Moderate

Note: Ratings of current value and future importance are relative to technologies in the same category of the revenue technology stack.

Source: Gartner

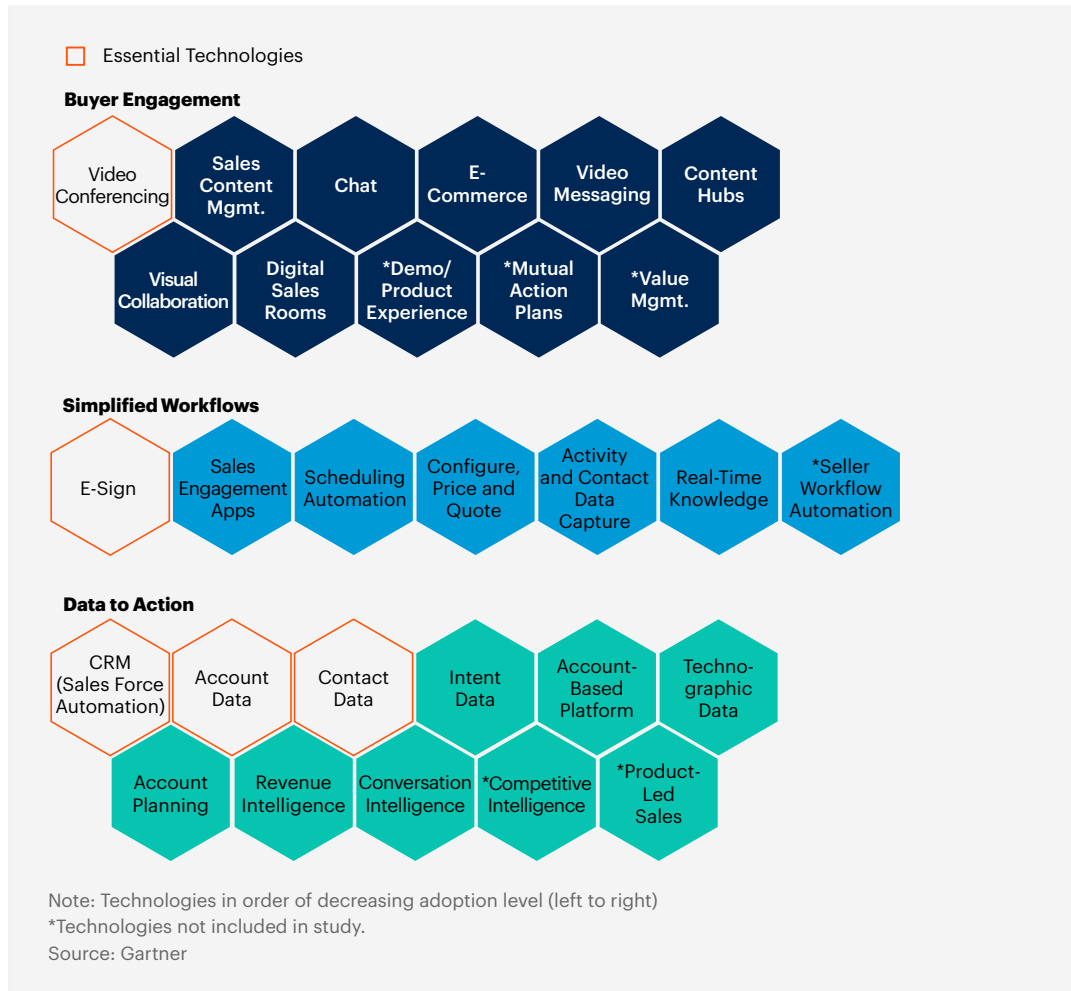
Collaboration and Orchestration Capabilities Are Critical for Enterprise Transactions

The virtual selling technology stack for enterprise selling requires more comprehensive tools for buyer engagement and adapting tactics with data, while optimizing seller workflow (see Figure 3).

The following emerging technologies are key to supporting enterprise selling:

- **Video messaging** offers a compelling and versatile way of building relationships and sharing content with customers through short, personalized or longer messages. These messages can be used to demonstrate how the product or service solves customer problems, or how the contract proposal adds value for the customer. This technology provides moderate value but sales leaders see it as having top future importance. When used as a situational engagement tool, savvy enterprise sellers can accelerate sales cycles by communicating asynchronously with stakeholders at key moments throughout a sales cycle.
- **Visual collaboration applications** are part of the “new work hub,” an assembly of team productivity applications for internal collaboration in the digital workplace. Additionally, these applications are particularly useful for facilitating synchronous co-creation with customers (for example, live ideation sprints, interactive presentations), visualizing an understanding of customer context and building consensus virtually with interactive exercises. Sales leaders regard these technologies as moderate in both current value and future importance, but we believe adopting this technology in key selling scenarios can create an instant competitive advantage for enterprise sellers.

Figure 3: Virtual Selling Technologies for Enterprise Transactions



- **Digital sales rooms (DSRs)** form a centralized and persistent microsite that coordinates bidirectional content sharing, provides a range of seller-assisted to seller-free experiences and enhances collaboration throughout the life of the customer relationship with the supplier. Vendors are still working on integrating different technologies needed to fully realize the benefits of DSRs, such as video messaging, content management, mutual action plans and visual collaboration. Thus, this technology currently provides low value. But it has moderate future importance, and we expect DSRs to become an essential component of an enterprise transaction.
- **Configure, price and quote application suites** enable sales organizations to automate and optimize quote and order creation. Their core capabilities streamline seller workflows around generating proposals. By automatically generating pricing of selected products and services integrated with CRM and fulfillment applications, sellers require fewer applications and less time to provide an accurate and well-designed quote. These technologies currently offer high value and have moderate future importance.
- **Account-based platforms** help sales teams prioritize and select accounts to engage, uncover data-driven account insights to tailor targeted messaging and orchestrate multichannel engagement of the buying team. While sales leaders rate these platforms as having low future importance, we expect account-based platforms to become essential for enterprise selling. Account-based platforms are one of the top technologies used by top-performing organizations in the high-tech vertical, and vendors throughout the market are tightly integrated (or competitive) with revenue data solutions, an essential category in the virtual selling stack. For optimal results, partner with marketing leaders for technology evaluation and rollout.

- **Revenue intelligence technologies** facilitate the capture of sales activities and enable sellers to manage their opportunities, pipeline and forecast with the help of AI and machine learning. This technology incorporates data signals from sales, marketing and customer service activities, including digital and nondigital interactions. Visualizing engagement and stakeholder data patterns for a deal, including data points from other parts of the business, helps sellers tune their tactics and decide their next best action. Although sales leaders see both the current value and future importance of revenue intelligence technologies as moderate, we believe this technology can accelerate data-driven decision making for sellers at a deal level.

Table 3 summarizes sales leaders’ perceptions of the current value and future importance of these technologies to their organizations.

Table 3: Perceptions of Current Value and Future Importance of Virtual Selling Technologies for Enterprise Transactions


Technology	Perceived Current Value for Organization	Perceived Future Importance for Organization
Video messaging	Moderate	High
Visual collaboration applications	Moderate	Moderate
Digital sales rooms (DSRs)	Low	Moderate
Configure, price and quote	High	Moderate
Revenue intelligence technologies	Moderate	Moderate
Account-based platforms	Low	Low

Note: Ratings of current value and future importance are relative to technologies in the same category of the revenue technology stack


Source: Gartner

Actionable, objective insight


Explore these additional complimentary sales technology resources and tools:

 **Webinar**
Sales Tech Mayhem: The 6 Core Elements of the Ultimate Stack
Gartner experts break down the sales tech landscape and provide actionable advice.

[Watch Now](#)

 **Infographic**
Gartner's Tech Stack for Pipeline Growth
Uncover the technologies required for hypereffective pipeline generation.

[Download Infographic](#)

 **Infographic**
Gartner's Account-Based Tech Stack
Get the list of proven technologies used by world-class account-based programs.

[Download Infographic](#)

Already a client?
Get access to even more resources in your client portal. [Log In](#)

Connect With Us

Get actionable, objective insight to deliver on your mission-critical priorities. Our expert guidance and tools enable faster, smarter decisions and stronger performance. Contact us to become a client:

U.S.: 1 855 811 7593

International: +44 (0) 3330 607 044

[Become a Client](#)

Learn more about Gartner for Sales Leaders

gartner.com/en/sales

Stay connected to the latest insights



© 2022 Gartner, Inc. and/or its affiliates. All rights reserved. Gartner is a registered trademark of Gartner, Inc. and its affiliates. This publication may not be reproduced or distributed in any form without Gartner's prior written permission. It consists of the opinions of Gartner's research organization, which should not be construed as statements of fact. While the information contained in this publication has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable, Gartner disclaims all warranties as to the accuracy, completeness or adequacy of such information. Although Gartner research may address legal and financial issues, Gartner does not provide legal or investment advice and its research should not be construed or used as such. Your access and use of this publication are governed by [Gartner's Usage Policy](#). Gartner prides itself on its reputation for independence and objectivity. Its research is produced independently by its research organization without input or influence from any third party. For further information, see "Guiding Principles on Independence and Objectivity." CM_GBS_1860384

Gartner[®]