

# 17 in 2017

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## What's on Trend for 2017?

The inside sales field continues to grow at warp-speed, and today's sales organizations are rebooting their current models and pushing stronger with inside sales. These 21st-century digital game-changers are the future of sales. Is your sales organization ready for the future?

For the past 10 years, we've been trend-spotting and predicting workforce and workplace sales trends. Each year, we publish a trend report and dedicate it to a specific theme. Look at our [last 10 years of trend spotting](#).

Our trend reports are loaded with advice on tactics, tools, and talent — and they're 100% accurate. These trends are based on our training observations, researching, and confirming, as well as on a series of national and global online surveys and secondary research from hundreds of sources. We carefully assemble our top predictions for the upcoming year with the goal to educate you and gently escort you into the future.

**Digital Disruption** takes center stage in 2017. We highlight trends that will keep you on the digital cutting edge in major categories including the workforce, the job market, sales enablement, customer engagement, leadership, productivity and technology. Anything else? Oh yeah, Trust — it's the new business currency.

### Workplace Trends

1. **Digital Inside Sales Embraces the Blur.** How and where we work matters to salespeople in the digital realm. Today's workspaces are in a state of flux and undergoing a major shift. Office environments have never been more



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relaxed, open, and compassionate, yet the digital nomads prefer to work from home. This continually challenges traditional perceptions that inside sales means they must work inside the company. Adopting a remote mindset is the solution. Companies are realizing that building a digital workplace must mean “embracing the blur” in which work and life merge.

2. **More OM Chanting, Please.** Inside salespeople tend to be a bit too stressed and sedentary, and more and more organizations are realizing that it is time to chant a collective “OM.” As workplace and mental health take center stage, more companies are investing in wellness and well-being programs and creating a more relaxing and healthier environment for workers. Stand-up desks are more and more common; and in-house yoga, shower rooms, and napping pods are calming stressed-out salespeople.

### Workforce Trends

3. **The New Face of the American Workforce.** The American workforce has changed as more Hispanic and Muslim Americans are entering the workforce, and many are attracted to sales positions and not just service positions. More diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, language, nationality, religion, and sexual orientation will strengthen a company's profitability. In how many languages can you say “Job well done!”?

4. **Hungry GenZ Wants In-Person Communications.** A significant change in the age demographic of salespeople is taking place. Millennials will continue to dominate technology sales teams and reshape the workplace, and GenZ will officially settle in the workplace this year. The Millennials' focus on work-life balance has already forced companies to rethink the traditional workweek, and GenZ will take the changes to the next level. What to watch for: More than 23 million of them prefer to communicate face-to-face, and they value structure and predictability in life and work with an emphasis on effectiveness over convenience.

5. **Digital Salespeople Building their Escape Hatch.** The flexible workforce continues to be on the rise. According to a new study by Deloitte, 42% of U.S. executives expect to use more contingent workers in the next three to five years. The Gig Economy continues to grow, so don't be surprised when your entrepreneurial digital salesperson leaves the office for the day and drives for Uber or DJ's by night while renting their out-of-town roommates' room on airbnb. **Leadership**



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## Trends

6. **Millennial Managers: Be Careful What You Wish For.** As ambitious Millennials continue to climb the corporate ladder at a rapid pace, they are finding themselves in management roles. Many find themselves un-prepared for the role because they are poorly equipped with the soft skill requirements and they don't hold the classic management values that would make them truly effective. Digital leadership requires sales leaders to embrace a blend of entrepreneurship, social selling, and higher-level financial discipline as they navigate corporate politics, leadership, and team-building.
7. **Modern Mentoring Bridges the Gap.** Mentoring bridges the learning and generational gap, increases sharing and collaboration, and is the key to retaining restless salespeople. We're seeing the emergence of different types of mentoring: co-mentoring or reverse mentoring, micro-mentoring, and group mentoring go beyond traditional face-to-face mentoring. These modalities provide opportunities for multigenerational and multicultural cohorts to collaborate and gain insight on who they are, what they value, and how to communicate.
8. **Sales Enablement Is the New Hire.** One of the top sales challenges leaders continue to face is around Training and Development — mostly because their salespeople are not sales- or learning-ready; in fact, they've checked out when it comes to learning. Enter Sales Enablement, a strategic position that will evolve in 2017. This role will focus on merging talent development, technology, sales processes, messaging, and sales methodology to better train, coach, and guide sellers as they support buyers through the buying journey and customer lifecycle. This role is still in the infancy stage and hasn't yet matured in sales organizations, but ultimately it will prepare digital sales teams for the 4th Industrial Revolution.
9. **Sales Training Pops Up Just in Time.** The Sales Academy of the future is not linear and not comprehensive. Instead, it features ramping-up, on-boarding, and "re-boarding" through micro-learning: offering bite-sized chunks of information sharing and educational opportunities that are easily digestible and easily retained. Training includes pop-ups at the desktop and mobile phone level using small videos, easily scanned copy, or even mini quizzes or tests. This type of micro learning easily installs the information into a receptive brain.



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## Technology Trends

10. **Emojis to Rule Workplace Communications.** The Oxford Dictionary named the emoji its Word of the Year back in 2015, and in 2017 emojis will be unstoppable. They have hit mainstream for communications, and sales and marketing organizations are adopting this trend to strengthen their brand. This digital trend will only keep growing in popularity as faster, less verbal, and less nuanced communication will be the norm. Corporate emails with emojis are experiencing higher open rates as customers want to relate on an emotional and intellectual level.

11. **Big Brother Is on the Rise.** Every breath you take, every move you make...as sales reps become more and more virtual, remote, and isolated from the company it becomes critical to find ways to measure their productivity — and the latest monitoring and measuring technology will do just that. Workplace spying is on the rise as more companies are using technology to monitor their employee's emails, phone calls, and keystrokes.

12. **Social Media Makes Us Sad.** Research suggests that for more than half of us, social media is a chronic source of unhappiness. According to the Pew Research Center, social media obsession is correlated with higher levels of unhappiness as posting the perfect photo prevents them fully enjoying life experiences. As everyone chases the “likes” from an invisible audience, there is a false sense of social well-being that can be infectious.

## Customer Engagement Trends

13. **CEO Alice Doesn't Work Here Anymore.** There is a 1 out of 5 likelihood that a decision-maker will leave their position — in fact, almost 30% of decision makers have started new positions in the past year. And we're talking about major positions such as CIO (average of 34 months) or VP of Sales (average 32 months) or CTO and CMO (average 29 months). Sales teams are in the same boat: 76% of Millennials have sought new positions within the last 24 months and burnout is an ever-present issue. So when you combine the job movement of sales reps and decision-makers, 46% of deals are at risk of creating uncertainty.



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14. **Digital Buyers Like to Chat.** Today 67% of buyers who land on your site want to talk to someone through chat or video; 75% of these B2B buyers used social media to make purchasing decisions; and 95% of them expect new or different insights from sales professionals. These buyers are forcing a shift in the sales model. Reps are no longer bound by territory. Instead, they are defined by their ability to engage on a certain subject or topic. It's crucial to adapt to buyers who want to engage digitally and easily with sales organizations.
  15. **Customers Are Emotionally Raw.** For a few years now we've been chasing customers who are adventurous, experimental, and downright fickle. But now we are faced with emotions like anger and disgust that are especially hard to track and deal with. Customers can reward or punish companies based on a single experience. Our President-elect has started an emotional tidal wave, and his emotional "hyperdemocracy" will encourage more emotional floodgates to open.
  16. **Corporate Sales Hook-ups Abound.** Our modern digital salesperson is idiosyncratic and independent. They will arrive with a deep technical knowledge and offer selling skills, digital mastery, and social influence that make them in high demand because they are poised to make the biggest contribution in the digital workplace. But they are here today and gone tomorrow. When more than 60% of Millennials make up the least engaged workforce in history, don't be surprised to find that everyone is looking for greener pastures.
  17. **Trust Is the New Business Currency.** As we move into a new year, the wreckage of the 2016 Presidential elections has left us feeling shocked and scared, and perhaps the biggest issue is lack of trust. If our institutions can undergo seismic shifts, what does that say for organizations? In 2017 it will be more important than ever to make sure we build trust with customers, helping them feel secure in the solutions we are selling.

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