

# 18 *in* 2018

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## What's Trending? 18 Trends for 2018

### The Big Trend: Women Reclaim Their Voice in Sales

Oh, what an erratic year this has been!

Whew! We made it through one of the most challenging years in history. We experienced natural disasters, political unrest, and media shakeups that made history. It looks like the rumblings that started in 2017 will continue in full swing into 2018. Yet we are coming out stronger and women, especially, have found their voice and a new footing in this brave new world.

Sales has traditionally been a male-dominated field and the majority of inside sales organizations still have more men than women. But attracting the next generation of inside salesperson means including women – and that means creating a workplace culture that welcomes women. The “bro behavior” and sales shaming needs to stop. It is time for us to welcome more woman into this growing field and give them a place on the team. They can be your brightest and hardest working stars.

What else is trending? Check out the following six categories: (1) Workplace (2) Workforce (3) Sales Enablement (4) Sales Stack (5) Leadership (6) Buyers.

### Workplace Trends

1. **CGOs Replace CMOs:** Chief Growth Officers will bring discipline, accountability, and oversight to the marketing and sales functions, with a particular emphasis on top line results. As sales and marketing continue to work together, this sales enablement role will be important in driving revenues.



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2. **The Café Society:** Company culture is on the rise, and tech giants are emphasizing innovative facilities designed to promote cross-collaborative work relationships across departments and teams. This shoulder-to-shoulder and face-to-face idea sharing is proven to spark creativity and build solid relationships – and stronger companies. Sales organizations can no longer exist in silos. They must proactively connect with different departments, channels, and partners.

3. **#MyJobShouldNotIncludeAbuse:** The #Metoo movement has sent ripples through every type of industry and is gaining momentum in all sorts of fields. In sales, as elsewhere, more and more women and men will step forward to tell their stories of discrimination and sexual harassment. Stop the sales-shaming. “See something, say something” applies here!

### Workforce Trends

4. **Generational Inclusion:** Five generations (Gen Z, Gen Y, Gen X, Boomers, and Traditionalists) are currently working together in the workplace, with the working Boomer population expected to double – from 41 million to 86 million. As 10,000 boomers turn 65 each day, and only half of them expect to retire, it is time to invest in these wise modern elders in the form of mentoring and leadership positions.

5. **Too Few Women in Tech Sales:** The California goal of 20% of females holding C-Suite positions by 2020 doesn't look like a reality. Women in tech sales are still lagging behind with only 25% of them in inside sales positions and half of that in management roles. Set up recruitment KPIs to interview at least the same amount of women for positions as men.

6. **Flexible Freelancers:** Companies may need to think about “renting” their sales talent instead of “buying” it: 51% of salespeople said they would change jobs for one that allowed them to work more flexible hours. The contract and freelance population is booming.

### Sales Enablement Trends

7. **Upskilling:** Change is happening faster than ever before, and the life of a learned skill is merely five years. We have a growing skills gap, with far more open recs than available talent to fill those positions. The current base lacks new skills, and the ones they have are becoming less relevant over time. Not surprisingly, companies are investing billions to help upskill their employees to



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improve sales outcomes. Organizations will make continuous learning part of reps' jobs and responsibilities.

8. **Email Sequencing Backfires:** Seven-touch email sequencing is killing prospecting and burning out good salespeople. It is time to redefine outreach efforts that engage instead of distance prospects. Bring back the phone to complement the outreach efforts.

9. **Negotiating the Workplace:** Millennial and GenZ workers insist on choosing when they want to start and finish their workdays, and whether they will work in the office, home, or some other location. This generation naturally gravitates toward flexible – they were raised in a predictable framework with the stability of being cared for and the ability to negotiate their schedules. To attract these young salespeople, sales teams will go virtual – managers will allow work-from-home offices, more flex hours, and sales meetings via Skype.

### Sales Stack Trends

10. **Keep Sales Tools Simple:** I used to say “The rep with the most tools wins,” but now I have to admit there are just too many tools. Time to get back to basics and keeping it simple -- even hand-written letters and direct mail have made a comeback! Sales reps only need five or six good tools from this list: CRM, social prospecting data/list, email automation, phone/call recordings software, data quality, workflow organization, list building, social media.

11. **Texting is Growing Up:** As more and more outgoing voice mail greetings request “Please do not leave a voice mail but send a text instead,” this outreach method is going to become more important in 2018. Talented reps know exactly how to mix things up when it comes to their prospecting efforts and texting is an integral part of their strategy.

12. **AI Is Here to Stay:** High-performing teams are 3.4 times more likely than underperforming teams to use artificial intelligence. Intelligent apps and analytics will transform the structure of the workplace by delivering advanced analytics, intelligent processes, and new user experiences.



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## Leadership Trends

13. **SDR Managers Change Tactics to Prevent SDR Burnout:** The average SDR averages 18 months in their role with a 4 -month average ramp-up time – burnout happens quickly when managers keep changing the rules. Managers will increasingly keep reps on track with a specific role – sales sniper, richer, social and digital nomad, content nurturer – rather than expecting them to manage multiple roles.
14. **Gender-Neutral Comp Structures:** Don't be surprised if equal pay finally steps up to the forefront in 2018. Websites that publish wage and salary information are on the rise, as are reports about high executive pay. Adequate and fair compensation is one of the major factors that cause employees to stay in a company or look for a new job.
15. **Genuinely Useful Perks:** The Starbucks gift cards are going into the bottom drawer as organizations offer employees perks they can really use – student loan assistance, prestigious gym memberships, parental leave, and unlimited time off. The benefits that employees truly care about, and which make them loyal, are those that offer them greater flexibility, autonomy, and the ability to lead a better life.

## Buyer Trends

16. **Customizing for Customers:** The buyers' journey and the customer experience is the top KPI for 2018 – and we have a long road ahead. Prospects rate two-thirds of salespeople average or poor on their sales performance – and that's pretty bleak. Be warned: Salespeople who approach their buyers on their own sales agenda will continue to get shut down. Buyers expect to work with trusted advisors, and they expect the same level of personalization as the google search they have right at their fingertips.
17. **Closing Consensus Continues to Be Tough to Reach:** A new study by Bain & Co predicts that global cloud IT market revenue will increase from \$180 billion to \$390 billion in 2020. The money is there to spend, but the decision-makers are nowhere to be found. Reaching consensus and closing deals has become an increasingly confusing and protracted process for customers and suppliers alike. Expect your decision-making committee to include at least five people with a variety of jobs, functions, geos, and departments . . . and there will inevitably be



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one dominant personality who always gets their way. Remember: The instinctual decision-maker has a higher tendency to select the better known, top-of-the-line vendor, while the logical buyer is far more open to selecting the lesser-known option. Listen to their silence. Just because they are silent, that doesn't mean they agree.

18.

**Customers Want More Authenticity:** Consumers prefer unfiltered moments over perfectly designed content. They look for honest insights about how brands operate, and they want to connect on a personal level to the brands they follow. Brands that share unfiltered photos and videos that haven't undergone heavy editing (particularly through options like Instagram Stories and Snapchat) can expect to receive more likes, shares, and clicks on their content.

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