

20 in 2020

SMART INSIDE SALES TRENDS

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20 Inside Sales Trends in 2020

It's a beautiful day in the sales neighborhood. We embark into a new decade which promises to revolutionize entire industries, redefine businesses and transform how we interact. Our 2020 inside sales trend report examines the major trends impacting our sales organizations.

We are in our [15th year](#) of our trend spotting and most of the time, we are right. We have divided these 20 trends into 5 essential categories:

1. Enhancing the Customer Experience
2. Sales Managers becoming Chief Employee Experience Officers
3. Building Competitive Teams
4. Strengthening Workplace Productivity and Motivation
5. Raising the Bar on Skills

Enhancing the Customer Experience

1. **Personalization Rules** — Having strong defense isn't enough, you need to be personalized on the offense. Customers want to feel acknowledged and understood and are even willing to pay more for personalized digital experiences.



2. **Customers Want Thoughtfulness** — The pendulum has swung back to placing greater value on relationships, experiences and decluttering our digital inboxes. Customers want to build relationships and emotional connections. They'll respond to brands that show interest in them and their feelings and then follow that up with a consistent, technology-driven experience. What is often ignored and most important today is thoughtfulness or the softer side of business.

3. **Customers want AI as a Service (AlaaS)** — AI will continue to expand and reach human-level intelligence. This means AI will become entrenched in everyday business operations, supporting creative tasks, generating new ideas, and tackling previously unattainable innovations. Enhancing the customer experience means incorporating more automated and functional technology to quickly respond to customer's needs.

4. **Customers Want Less** — Maybe it's Marie Kondo's anti-hoarding book, maybe it's generational attitudes, but research shows that people are buying less with a move toward experiences over things. Instead of companies creating more products to sell to customers, they must integrate sustainability into their brand. Customers want to buy products that are made well and can last longer without making a negative impact on the environment.

Sales Managers becoming Chief Employee Experience Officers

5. **Millennials Still Lack Loyalty** — According to the 2019 Deloitte Millennial Survey, 49% of Millennials will quit their job in the next two years. There is a significant gap between Millennial workforce needs and what the workplace offers. If managers want to harness their human capital, they need to start incorporating the tools and technologies that increase their productivity. Aside from offering state-of-the-art offices, competitive salaries, flexible hours, exponential growth opportunities, they want to feel like their work is making a difference in the world.



6. **Manager Versus BellaBot** — A recent AI at work study conducted by Oracle, found that 64% of employees trust a robot more than their own manager and half have turned to a robot instead of their manager for advice. Employees say their robots are better at providing unbiased information, maintaining work schedules, problem solving, and budget management. Managers must invest in their soft skills like understanding feelings, coaching and creating a work culture since these are skills that cannot be automated.

7. **Motivational Disconnect** — According to research out of George Mason University, managers were asked to rank the factors that motivate employees. Their lists emphasize external factors such as compensation, job security, and promotions. But when employees answer, they are motivated by inherent factors such as interesting work, being appreciated for making meaningful contributions, and a feeling of being involved in decisions.

8. **Gen Z'ers Want Heroes** — Gen Z'ers (born between 1997 and 2012) are more fiercely committed to changing the world than their older millennial brothers and sisters. New research shows that 90% are fed up with the negativity in the U.S. and expect companies to help, if not take the lead. Some 83% consider a company's purpose before deciding to work there, and 72% before making a purchase. They want to work for companies who take a stand on societal issues such as: Protecting the environment, racial and gender equality, LGBTQ rights and gun safety. Their heroes are peers like environmentalist Greta Thunberg and gun-safety advocate Emma Gonzales.

Building Competitive Teams

9. **Teams that Rally Together, Stick Together** — Employee activism is on the rise. Teams will rally and protest against their company if they don't agree with political and social values. In new research on trust, 67% expect employers will join them in taking action on societal issues. And 71% of employees believe it is critically important for their CEOs to respond to challenging times.



10. **Blurred Lines between Inside and Field Sales** — Remember how we predicted inside sales would be replacing field sales by the year 2020? It is happening in a blended, flexible, and mobile way. Today, there are 5.7 million professional salespeople in the U.S., approximately 47.2% are inside sales and 52.8% are outside sales. Outside sales spend almost half their time selling remotely (an increase of 88.4% since 2014) according to Hubspot. They all use the same digital tools which blurs the lines between inside and outside.

11. **Retirees Are Coming Back to Work** — The fastest growing demographic in the workplace are those age 65 or older with 10,000 of them turning retirement age each day. People are living longer, having encore careers and have experience that can be extremely valuable to companies with skills gaps. Employers are bringing people out of retirement who have in-demand skills out of necessity in a way they haven't in the past.

12. **Empower Your Teams** — Making sure employees are engaged and supported at work is important to the success of any company. Employees who trust their employer are far more likely to act in ways that help the company grow and prosper. But the world is watching, and 78% of people say that the single best measure of a company is how it treats its employees.

Strengthening Workplace Productivity and Motivation

13. **Reimburse for Therapy** — Mental health continues to be a growing concern, with half of Millennials and 75% of Gen Z's having left a job due to mental health concerns. Also, as we head into an election year that promises to be even more toxic than 2016, people need relief. We are already stressed-out by current events and worried about fake news being used as a weapon. Companies must provide coverage for employees who seek therapy during challenging times.

14. **Offer Compelling Experiences** — We still have the lowest unemployment rate in 50 years with over 7 million unfilled jobs, Companies must build their entire core structure and organizational ethos around offering compelling experience of their employees and customers. More than a third of the companies surveyed are actively developing ways to retrain and reskill their workforce, and 33% already have a roadmap for making sure their corporate culture and growth plans focus on people.



15. **Purpose and Meaning at Work** — Have you hired your Chief Purpose and Inclusion Officer yet? Employees are demanding that companies be a force for good that has a purpose. At Salesforce, they've donated nearly \$300 million to causes like public schools and to address the homeless problem in California.

16. **Time for Sensitivity Training** — More and more states are mandating sexual harassment prevention training in today's #MeToo era. Managers must not avoid ignore or avoid difficult or uncomfortable topics and conversations because they risk losing vital employees by playing it safe. Instead, they must invest in additional training on cultural sensitivities in order to grow a cohesive sales organization.

Raising the Bar on Skills

17. **Learning How to Learn** — We have relied so much on quick answers that we have forgotten how to learn. Speed reading, continuous learning, note-taking, analyzing information, and identifying patterns and trends are becoming important, yet the skills have been forgotten. Technology is changing how we learn and retain valuable information.

18. **AI Takes on Repetitive Tasks** — The death of the single skillset, companies are increasingly opting to apply workplace trends with new technologies that allow them to streamline repetitive tasks. Organizations are rolling out intelligent assistants, or chatbots, to handle employee recruitment, scheduling calls, meetings, and even doctors appointments.

19. **Uptick in Hiring Candidates with Liberal Arts Degrees** — Liberal arts majors will become more valuable to companies moving forward. A report by McKinsey analyzed the jobs that are most susceptible to automation and discovered that jobs harnessing a workers soft skills are the least likely to be automated. For instance, jobs that involve managing and development people have only a 9% automation potential. The biggest workplace gaps throughout technology evolution will rely on the soft skills that are cultivated by a liberal arts education instead of technical expertise.



20.

Visual Work Boosts Productivity — Video is playing a much more significant role in both what we do and what gets in our way. The growth of remote workers and expanding generational differences will cause offices to start thinking about work in new ways. An area you may want to focus on initially is how you make your work more visual and visible. So, video is a tool that your work audience is willing to engage with, and so it should be something you're leveraging. Your people are eager to create and share videos, use it to collaborate, and keep track of elements in workflows and to-do lists.

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