

The Future of Sales: Trends to Watch

By Leyla Hussein • 11 May 2023



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I still remember the sound of the first sales office I ever worked in. Rows of desks, landline handsets, the low roar of thirty people all talking at once, and a whiteboard at the front with the month's numbers written up in squeaky marker. Walk into a good sales team today and half of that has gone quiet. The phones are still there, but so is a screen full of data telling you which of your prospects opened your last email twice. The job is the same job. The tools underneath it have changed almost beyond recognition.

Sales is in the middle of one of its larger shifts, [driven by technology](#), on one side and changing buyer behaviour on the other. None of it replaces the fundamentals, but ignoring it is a quiet way to fall behind. A few of the changes are worth watching closely.

Artificial intelligence, used well

AI has gone from novelty to daily tool faster than almost anything before it. Used properly it takes the routine weight off a salesperson: scoring leads, tidying data, drafting a first version of an email, spotting patterns in customer behaviour a human would take a week to find. The point of it is not to remove the salesperson. It is to hand back the hours they currently lose to admin, so they can spend them on the part that actually needs a person, which is the conversation, the judgement and the relationship.

Selling on social

The places buyers spend their attention have moved, and sales has had to follow. A thoughtful presence on LinkedIn and the platforms your market lives on is now a genuine channel, not a vanity exercise. It works when it is built on something useful: sharing a real insight, joining a conversation already happening, being visible and credible before anyone needs you, rather than turning up in someone's messages the moment you want something. Authentic beats polished, every time.

Selling through a screen

The pandemic pushed years of change into a few months, and virtual selling is now simply part of the job. A video call is not a worse version of a meeting, it is a different kind of meeting, and it rewards a different set of skills. Clear communication, a presentation built for a screen rather than a boardroom, the ability to build rapport without a handshake: the salespeople who have learned to hold a room they cannot physically stand in are the ones winning on it.

Personalisation, which buyers now expect

Tailoring your approach used to be a way to stand out. Now it is the minimum. Buyers expect you to understand their particular situation, and a generic pitch tells them you have not bothered. The tools to do this well already exist: a decent CRM will tell you what a prospect has looked at, asked about and cared about, and there is no excuse for treating them like a stranger. Real personalisation is not their first name at the top of an email. It is understanding their problem and speaking to it.

Letting the data guide you

Finally, the numbers. Sales has always run partly on instinct, and good instinct still matters, but there is now enough data to check it against. Tracking what actually happens through your funnel, where deals stall, which approaches convert and which quietly do not, turns a set of hunches into a strategy you can improve. The teams pulling ahead are the ones willing to look honestly at what the data tells them, even when it disagrees with them.

None of this is a threat to anyone willing to adapt. The sound of that old sales floor has gone, and something is lost with it, but the work underneath is unchanged: understand a person, earn their trust, help them buy. The tools are only ever there to let you do more of that, and the future belongs to the people who use them to get closer to their customers rather than further away.

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