

A Data-Driven Approach To Modernize Your Sales Organization In 2025



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The ability to modernize your sales organization with a data-driven approach is the new market imperative. Use this guide to transform your sales organization and create sustainable competitive advantage.

Today, more than ever, **the path to best-in-class sales performance is paved with proven, measurable, data-driven strategies.** This is a key trend that high-performing sales leaders will need to understand and act on in 2025.

The Five Key Action Items of Market Leaders

Action Item 1

Develop a Data-Driven Readiness Map to Truly Understand Your Team

- **Intaking large amounts of real-world performance data** from two key sources: talent/ competency assessments and sales performance metrics.
- **Leveraging the data** to create a unique sales team readiness map that provides close, up- to-date evaluation of the team's talents, competencies, skills, and potential for success
- **Creating an objective evaluation** of team readiness: specifically, whether the current team is positioned to succeed, or whether new hires and/or reassignments make strategic sense

Action Item 2

Leverage a Data-Driven Readiness Map to Help Shape Your Team for Success

- **Developing clear hiring criteria** based on analytics, detailing the minimum talent and competency criteria for new hires to ensure alignment with organizational goals.
- **Using the readiness data** to guide any necessary reassignments within the organization, ensuring that employees are placed in roles that match their talents.
- **Identifying key target audiences** within the team who will benefit most from training and development.
- **Prioritizing development of employees** who are approaching high-performance potential; identifying targeted investments in their development.



Action Item 3

Build Data-Driven Onboarding and Development Plans Unique to Each Individual Player on Your Team

- **Utilizing data and analytics** to define the specific competencies and skills that differentiate high performance within your team.
- **Creating an organizational development plan** comprising learning paths tailored to the high-potential and high-performing employee segments, avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach.
- **Implementing personalized reinforcement plans** that utilize individual performance data to provide customized feedback and development, ensuring that both reinforcement and one-on-one coaching are tailored to the unique needs and strengths of each team member.
- **Emphasizing multi-modal training approaches** to meet learners where they are, including in- person, on-demand, and other methods.



Action Item 4

Commit to a Technology-Enabled Development and Reinforcement Strategy

- **Identifying and integrating AI tools**, such as role-play bots and conversational intelligence resources, to provide scaled real-time coaching and feedback.
- **Embedding processes and methodology within CRM systems** to ensure development happens seamlessly within the flow of work.
- **Leveraging the data, analytics and AI functionality** within these technology platforms to drive meaningful coaching and deal intervention by sales leadership.

Action Item 5

Use Data/Analytics to Drive Continuous Optimization

- **Continuously collecting and analyzing performance data** to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities for improvement.
- **Regularly reassessing both team and individual goals**, ensuring full alignment with organizational objectives and evolving market demands via one-on-one coaching sessions.
- **Using analytics to refine training and development programs** based on real-time feedback and refined organizational goals.
- **Providing tailored insights and actionable feedback** to team members to address specific weaknesses and enhance strengths.
- **Implementing an ongoing cycle** of testing, learning, and refining processes to maximize team efficiency and effectiveness over time.



Develop A Data-Driven Performance Potential Map to Truly Understand Your Team

When evaluating your team from a readiness-to-succeed perspective, it is important to understand the differences between competency and skills vs. innate talents. This distinction is particularly important when evaluating the ultimate potential of a sales organization.

Why So Many Salespeople Underperform

“We had such high hopes for (insert salesperson’s name here.)”

A major cause of sales team underperformance — perhaps the main cause — is the common organizational syndrome of making hiring decisions based on instinct, rather than on Action Item One Detail: Develop A Data-Driven Performance Potential Map to Truly Understand Your Team When evaluating your team from a readiness-to-succeed perspective, it is important to understand the differences between competency and skills vs. innate talents. This distinction is particularly important when evaluating the ultimate potential of a sales organization. Why So Many Salespeople Underperform “We had such high hopes for (insert salesperson’s name here.)” A major cause of sales team underperformance — perhaps the main cause — is the common organizational syndrome of making hiring decisions based on instinct, rather than on quantifiable, data-driven insights.

This is the result of a predictable confirmation-bias challenge. A given candidate’s preparation, situational charisma, and ability to say what an organization wants to hear can draw attention toward all the applicant’s apparent positives, but away from one or more critical talent deficits in areas that are non-negotiable for the position in question.

Those talent deficits are quantifiable, and they’re fundamentally different from skill gaps. A skill (also known as a competency) is something that can be taught. A skill gap is something that can be improved through training, coaching and experience. A talent gap, on the other hand, requires a different strategy.

A talent is an intrinsic, spontaneous pattern of thought, feeling or behavior that predisposes someone to achieve near-perfect performance in an area of strength. We are born with dominant talents that explain our behavior, and while we develop and mature over time, the peaks and valleys on our talent profile remain constant. People achieve their greatest growth in their areas of strongest talent. To reach our optimal personal potential, we must each leverage our leading talents and manage our lives so our gap talents don’t get in the way of our success.

When a seller’s talent profile is a mismatch to a role, the return on training and coaching investments, in terms of progressing the seller to higher levels of performance, will be low. The most effective sales leaders understand both the leading and lagging talents of each team member, and have data to support a seller who, from the starting gun, has enough talent

aligned to a role within which they are well suited to succeed. Make no mistake, it is leadership's responsibility to spot the mismatches, no one else's—and the sooner the better.

All of this raises a critical question. How can we accurately measure both talents and competencies to understand the true potential of both individuals and the team? quantifiable, data-driven insights.

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From Instinct to Insight

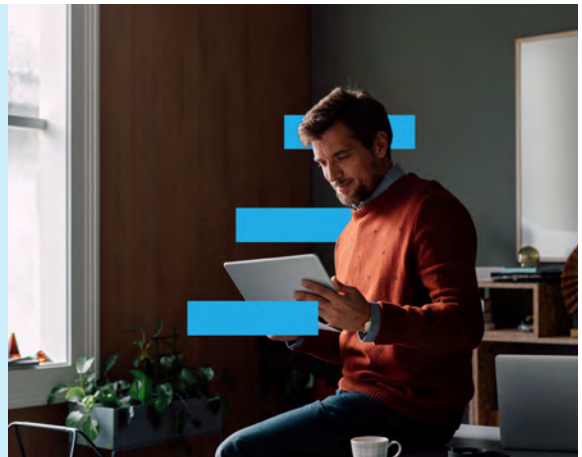
Today's powerful analytics-driven assessments offer unprecedented insights into individual aptitude, role suitability, and the likely trajectory of sales professionals within specific roles.

This data translates to actionable insights leaders can use to make sales processes and revenue performance more predictable, measurable, and manageable.

Mature sales organizations leverage proven, performance-based assessments to improve their hiring and onboarding to uncover a candidate's match to a given role, based on what matters to success within that role. Unlike traditional, one-off assessments, the best modern assessment suites leverage decades of data and embedded AI resources that directly drive commercial outcomes including win rates, quota attainment, margin attainment, and velocity to close.

Salespeople and their coaches can thus easily see where their skill metrics stand relative to top performers, and they can re-assess to track progress over time. This continuous feedback loop not only reinforces positive habits, but also identifies potential areas of improvement—before they become critical performance issues.

Today's top-performing sales teams are treating scheduled assessment results and ongoing performance data as what these data streams now are: KPIs. These are mission-critical data points that can be used to hire more people with a statistical likelihood of predictably generating revenue at scale.

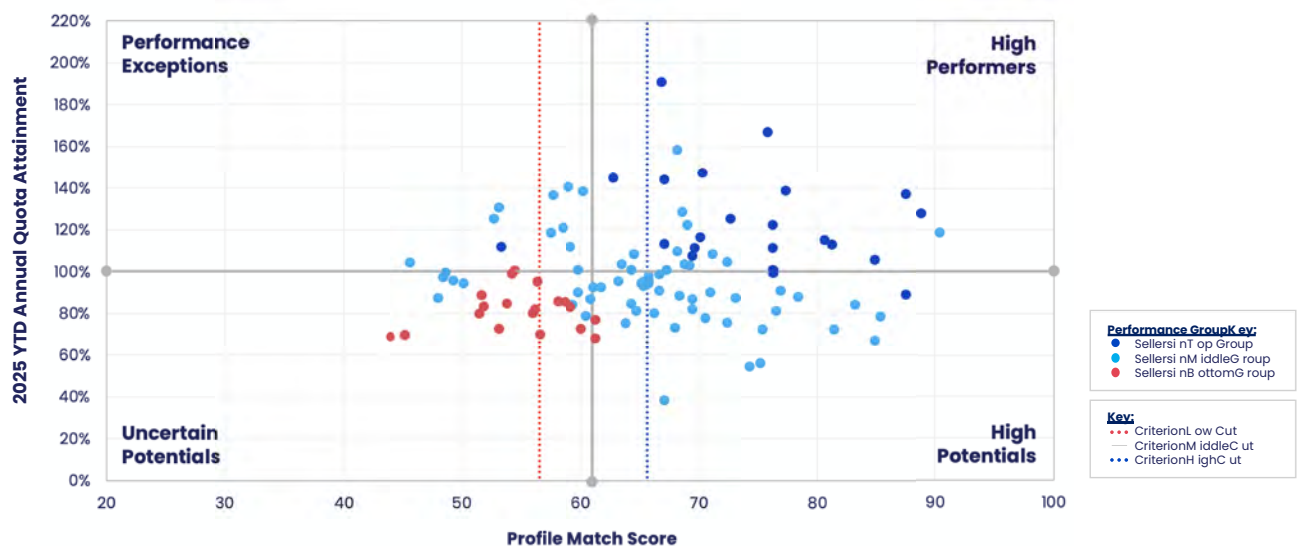




02

Leverage a Data-Driven Readiness Map to Help Shape Your Team for Success

Sales Talent Readiness Map



[Figure 8: 'Sample Talent Readiness map'. Source: Sandler & AuctusIQ, 2025.]

When you combine a comprehensive view of your team with actual performance data, a clear map of organizational readiness is formed. Through this data-driven process, sales leaders receive an objective perspective on their team's readiness to succeed now and their potential to improve over time ... with the right development investment. Targeted investment will drive performance improvement on the right-hand side of this readiness map. Likewise, significant team concentration on the left-hand side of the readiness map indicates potential misalignment of roles and wasted development investment. Paired with underlying historical data sets, your team's readiness map can accurately predict your potential return on development investment.

Let's take a closer look at how a data-driven readiness map can provide an objective view of any sales organization.

Upper Left = Performance Exceptions



Typically the smallest group, these are the salespeople who outperform despite a mismatch of talents and competencies required for success in their role. Their success may stem from luck, applying a few leading strengths, or external factors like inherited leads or misattributed deals. However, without development, they're vulnerable—especially during change when new demands expose their skill gaps. Developing their competencies is key to sustaining their performance.

Upper Right = High Performers



The superstars, or perhaps rising superstars. High performance. High correlation with the ideal talents and skills required for the job they've been hired to do. One might imagine that holding on to these folks and keeping them happy would be our strategic priority ... and while that's certainly important, there's another group where focus is needed is key to sustaining their performance.

Lower Left = Uncertain Potentials



These are salespeople who underperform—and whose talent/skill profile suggests that that's not really a big surprise. They are not necessarily ideal choices for the position into which they've been hired. To put the matter bluntly, these folks need to be given the opportunity to contribute to the organization in another role. They aren't the strategic development priority, either.

Lower Right = High Potentials



These are the people who should be developed. These are the ones organizations should provide with as much guidance, support, and personalized learning as possible. The people in this corner of the quadrant, and the people bordering it, represent the future contributors whose skills may currently need work ... but whose talent base suggests significant career growth potential.



Insights And Intelligence From Your Organization's Sales Performance Potential Map

For sales leadership, the potential benefits of accurately identifying the readiness of their organization to succeed are profound. They include:

Reduced cost of mis-hires/better talent acquisition and retention. Attracting and holding on to high-performing sales talent is more difficult than ever. Rising labor costs mean that hiring the wrong person is more expensive than it's ever been.

The true cost of a single bad hire far exceeds the average first year of salary. Organizations must consider things like: HR/benefits/administration costs, impact on current clients, negative impact to potential new clients, lowered team morale, and opportunity costs.

And clearly, a significant proportion of sales hires are bad hires: Salesforce has reported that **only around 24% of salespeople meet or exceed their annual quotas**, a figure that reflects a challenge playing out across many industries.

Maximize Performance by Getting The Right People On The Team and in the Right Role. Providing an objective perspective on personnel decisions previously made with gut instinct can have a profound positive impact on the performance of an organization.

When leveraged appropriately, today's data-driven assessments measuring the complete individual are remarkably predictive of performance. The following table offers one of many real-world examples.

Talent Profile Match to Performance

Sales Leaders

Assessment Profile Match Index	Sales Leader 155 total	% High Performers	% Low Performers
Strong Match	57	58%	0%
Moderate Match	84	19%	27%
Low Match	14	0%	71%

Sales Executives

Assessment Profile Match Index	Sales Executives 254 total	% High Performers	% Low Performers
Strong Match	50	151%	190%
Moderate Match	154	94%	97%
Low Match	50	67%	87%

[Figure 9: Sample Assessment Match Index. Source: Sandler & AuctusIQ, 2025.]

By applying the assessment match index during the hiring process over a three-year period, a leading global manufacturing company was able to increase the percentage of strong-match sellers from 13% to 61%, which resulted in an additional \$2.2 billion in revenue—while reducing head count from 550 sellers to 475. The revenue per seller increased from \$10.8 million to \$17.2 million, delivering a 57.8 % productivity increase.

From Instinct to Insight

Using modern data-driven tools, sales leaders can arm themselves with objective data on:

- The segments of team members where development investment is warranted.
- The competency and skill gaps that are holding them back, and
- An accurate forecast of the performance improvements (and related ROI) that can be achieved from targeted development investment.

From Instinct to Insight

High-performing and high-potential salespeople thrive in data-driven, process-focused environments where expectations are clear, performance is measurable, and feedback is constructive. These are the salespeople on the right side of the grid. They tend to feel empowered by a clear career development path, and that feeling of empowerment and agency leads to higher morale and retention rates.

03

Build Data-Driven Onboarding and Development Plans Unique to Your Team

When you combine a comprehensive view of your team with actual performance data, a clear map of organizational readiness is formed. Utilizing data to understand where to focus development investment within your organization is only half the battle.

To move the sales performance needle, organizations must also understand the specific competency and skill gap deficiencies to be addressed. Today's leading organizations are relying on data to help create development plans that are purpose-built to address the unique needs of their teams. What does a data-driven onboarding and development plan look like? There are two core components to solving this riddle.

First, we must understand the competencies and skills that differentiate exemplar performers within our organization. This analysis provides important insight into the specific skills and competencies that will move the performance needle the most if addressed. This step in the process highlights the reality that a "one-size-fits-all" approach to development investment is inevitably misguided.

Second, we must identify both the competency strengths and the competency gaps throughout the entire organization, down to the individual contributor. Armed with these two fundamental data components, highly efficient learning paths can be created—paths that maximize the ROI of development investments at both the individual and team level.

Team competency metrics

Order in Selling Cycle	Competency	Team Scores
3	Developing Relationships	77.5
7	Navigating the Deal	70.8
2	Understanding Client Needs	61.8
1	Generating Opportunities	59.2
4	Delivering Value Proposition	54.3
5	Overcoming Objections	50.2
8	Managing Procurement	44.3
6	Teaching and Advising	40.1
10	Growing the Client	38.7
9	Negotiating to Close	33.8



Team learning path

- The Success Triangle
- Discovering Buyer Motivations
- Better Understanding through Asking Questions
- Uncovering Truth Behind Stalls and Objections
- Negative Reverse Selling®
- Building Business Acumen and Financial Concepts
- Negotiating From the Inside Out
- Expanding Client Relationships

Individual competency metrics

Order in Selling Cycle	Competency	Individual Scores
4	Delivering Value Proposition	81.1
6	Teaching and Advising	75.5
10	Growing the Client	62.1
2	Understanding Client Needs	58.8
3	Developing Relationships	54.1
5	Overcoming Objections	50.1
8	Managing Procurement	46.1
7	Navigating the Deal	40.1
1	Generating Opportunities	37.5
9	Negotiating to Close	33.1



Individual learning path

- Initiating Buyer Focused Conversations
- Breaking Through Your Comfort Zone
- Identifying and Accessing Key Decision Makers
- Executive-Level Selling
- Guiding Your Buyer's Decision Process
- Empowering Buyers to Champion Your Solution

[Figure 10: A breakdown of data-driven team and individual learning path development Source: Sandler & AuctusIQ, 2025.]



04

Commit to a Technology- Enabled Development and Reinforcement Strategy

Reinforcement strategies are required to maximize the efficacy of any training and development investments. According to the Ebbinghaus Forgetting Curve, absent any active reinforcement, 84-87% of skill training is forgotten within 90 days. While this finding has long been established beyond any reasonable doubt, effective reinforcement at scale has remained extremely challenging for large organizations. AI is changing the game here, and today's leading sales organizations are leaning into the chance.

Instead of relying on monthly role-playing sessions with sales managers or expecting those managers to comb through hours of call recordings — both of which are time-intensive and limit scalability — effective sales leaders have realized that AI can now step in to address these challenges in a practical, sustainable way. Many organizations are now using generative AI to develop and support highly personalized, content- specific automated role-play sessions tailored to each individual salesperson's learning path, allowing team members to practice realistic, deeply customized scenarios with targeted feedback.

AI-driven conversational intelligence tools track performance in real time, scoring salespeople on competencies critical to an effective sales methodology—like setting upfront contracts, establishing rapport, and steering conversations toward value-based decision-making. This data, when summarized in a heartbeat into accessible, salesperson-specific reports, allows managers to offer tailored, concrete feedback based on real data, rather than guesswork or gut instinct. They can then coach salespeople toward personal goal achievement in one-on-one coaching sessions with far greater efficiency. Today's technology thus harnesses proven techniques from the world of behavioral science to fuse organizational revenue targets with unique personal goals.

Much research has been done on the efficacy of micro-learning applied daily within the natural flow of work. One area where leading brands are now leveraging this concept is within the CRM platforms that serve as the system of record for most sales organizations. Behavioral “nudges” toward specific best practices, applied while the salesperson is working within a CRM platform, provide strong and consistent development reinforcement.

Using Data/Analytics to Drive Continuous Optimization

Senior leadership at today's leading brands have realized that developing and maintaining high performing sales organizations is not a "check the box" activity. The talent on their teams and the markets where they compete are complex and always evolving. The most effective leaders now acknowledge that it's pointless and ultimately unproductive to view sales performance optimization as an episodic activity. Rather, both sales performance and talent assessment data must be updated regularly and visualized on management dashboards. This data provides an objective foundation to a continuous cycle of investment and improvement within modern sales organizations.

This evolution toward data and away from "gut instinct" decisions on hiring and development within sales organizations mirrors the transformation we have witnessed within marketing over the past two to three decades. Digital marketing channel data and sophisticated attribution models have created a data-driven, statistical approach to marketing investment for brands today. Sales organizations are now entering a similar period where sustained, scalable success will be enabled, not by improvisation, but by data and technology.

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**A 67.8%
Increase in
Pipeline Value**

There are already many examples of this data-driven approach driving statistically significant, revenue- correlative performance improvements. One leading global technology company, for instance, applied predictive assessment results to uncover critical salesforce competency gaps in two targeted development areas: Generating Opportunities and Growing the Client. By delivering personalized playbooks, coaching, and targeting training to these gap competencies across 254 sellers, the company increased mean competency scores in these two areas by 46% and 60% respectively.

The overall increase in the targeted competencies directly impacted pipeline value created during the 12-month period. **Overall average new pipeline value increased by 67.8 % adding more than half a billion dollars in total pipeline value across the sellers participating in the program.**

Such results are not only impressive but also sustainable when senior leadership commits to a continuous cycle of improvement.



The Transformation

The five-step process that many market leaders are now adopting provides a clear, analytics-first path out of the low-performance mindset where “gut instinct” drives decision making. Data is now key to the strategically vital goals of shaping growth organizations and planning development investments.

Advancements in AI and related technologies are providing personalized, scaled reinforcement, along with data-driven coaching insights rooted in a philosophy of consistent reassessment to track sustained progress. When executed consistently and with discipline, this approach allows for continuous improvement within today’s complex and dynamic markets. The five action items we have shared with you here open the door to a future of data-driven, technology-enabled sales performance improvement.



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