



Evolving Customer Needs Drive Sales Technology Investment in 2020

Investment in sales technology will increase this year as organizations adjust their sales approaches to help attract business from customers across all generations.

Despite a prospective customer base of people who largely consider themselves Baby Boomers, sales organizations say they continue to adjust their sales approach to reflect differences among customers across a wide range of generations. In 2020, sales leaders say they will invest in technology that will help them better attract and engage with new customers.

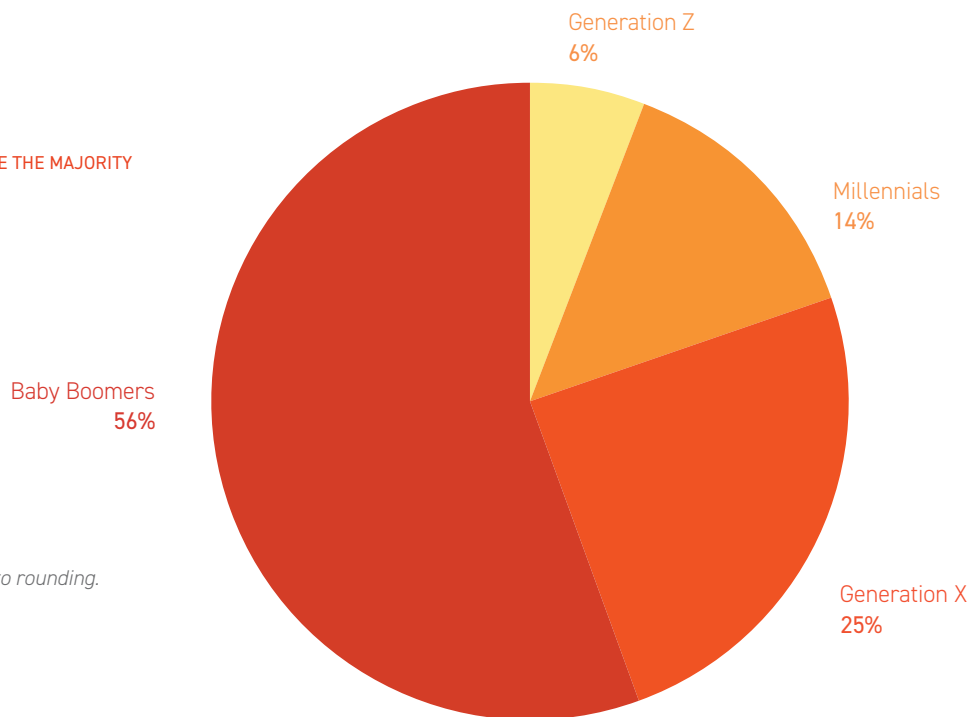
Technology changes in recent years and the ways in which customers communicate will cause sales professionals to drop traditional sales approaches that are less personal such as making unsolicited phone calls. Instead, they'll turn to conferences, live demonstrations, and other face-to-face interactions to drive customer buying decisions.

SoftwareTrends surveyed 1,000 sales directors, managers, VPs, and C-level executives across several industries to see how they attract new customers in a world of innovative technologies, as well as to find out what tech investments they plan to make in the next year to stay competitive.

Status of the Sales Industry

More than half (56%) of the sales professionals surveyed by SoftwareTrends said that a majority of their prospective customers identify as Baby Boomers, while another 25% said they belonged to Generation X. Millennials constituted another 14% of the prospective customers, and Generation Z made up 6% of the crowd. (See Figure 1.)

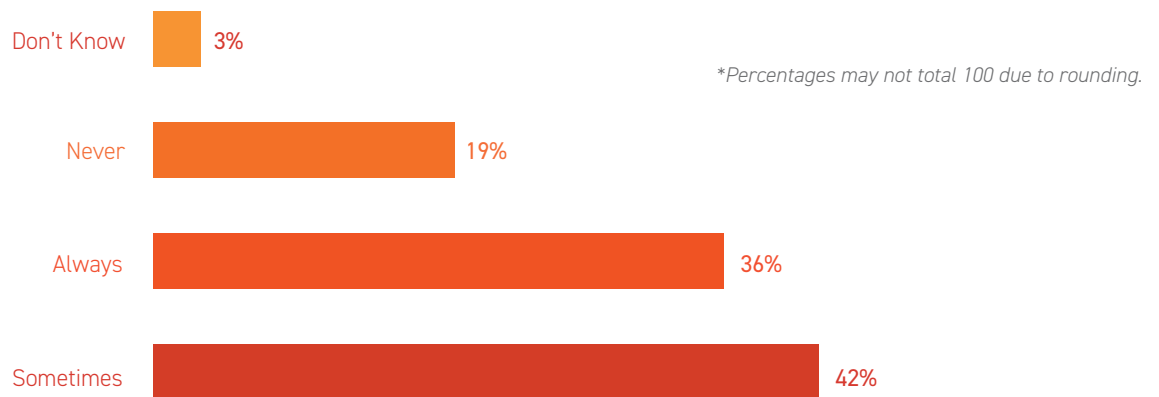
FIGURE 1: FROM WHICH GENERATION ARE THE MAJORITY OF YOUR PROSPECTIVE CUSTOMERS?



*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

The age of their targets seems to drive the techniques and tools that sales professionals use to attract their business. Many respondents said their sales organization adjusts its sales approach to address the differences among buyers from different generations. Some 42% said they sometimes adjust their approach to address these differences, while 36% say they always do. About 19% say they never do. (See Figure 2.)

FIGURE 2: DO YOU ADJUST YOUR SALES ORGANIZATION'S APPROACH TO ADDRESS THE DIFFERENCES AMONG BUYERS FROM DIFFERENT GENERATIONS?



“**42%** of respondents said they sometimes change their sales approaches to address differences in buyers from different generations.*”

*based on 1,000 respondents.

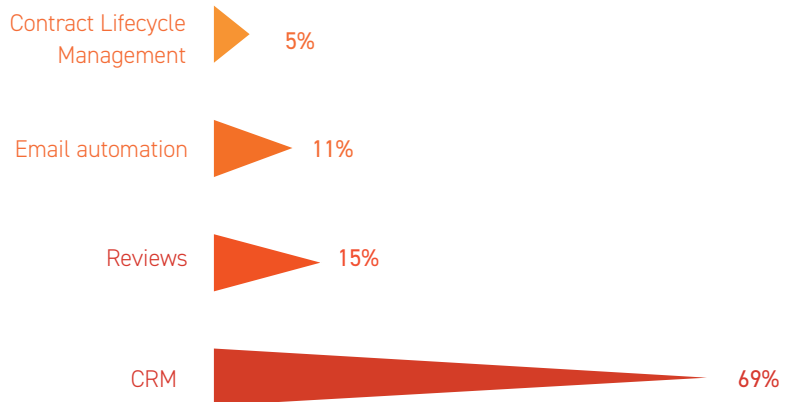
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The Tools of the Sales Trade in 2020

There are many tools that organizations rely on to keep track of and maintain positive customer relationships. More than two-thirds (69%) of respondents said they rely on customer relationship management (CRM) systems the most, as the technology can help manage a company's relationships and interactions with customers and potential customers from the start of interactions until deals close and beyond. CRM systems have become very popular with sales organizations, as the technology can help companies stay connected to customers, streamline processes, and boost profitability by improving contact management, sales management, and productivity.

A further 15% stated that they rely mostly on reviews as a way to maintain positive customer relationships; after all, what better way to gauge customer happiness than to hear straight from them? About 11% of respondents to the SoftwareTrends survey reported that they rely on email automation to avoid wasting time with messages not personalized to their targets. Another 5% said they use contract lifecycle management technology. (See Figure 3.)

FIGURE 3: WHAT TOOL DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION RELY UPON MOST TO MAINTAIN POSITIVE CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIPS?



*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

“ More than **2/3** of respondents say they use Customer Relationship Management Systems (CRM) to maintain positive customer relationships.* ”

*based on 1,000 respondents.

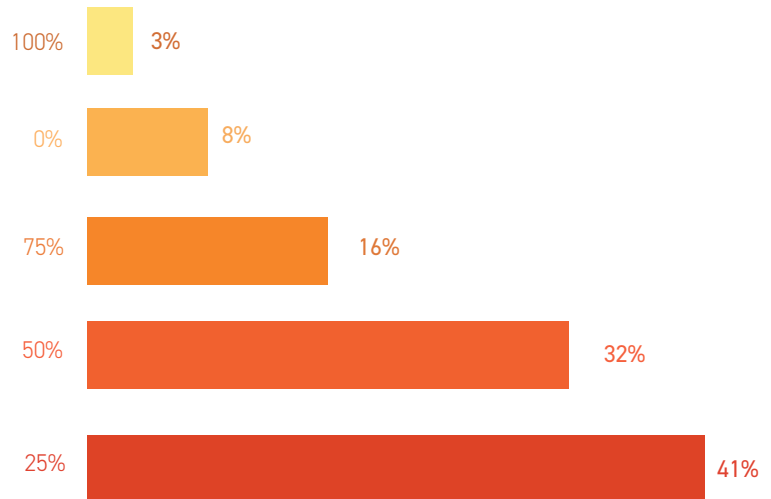
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Respondents to the survey indicated that they use marketing materials at least part of the time to contribute to sales efforts while working with customers. They are right to do so and would do well collaborating with marketing teams in their organization to gain information to help drive their sales efforts.

A separate [SoftwareTrends survey](#) of 1,000 marketing professionals revealed that 42% believed that their marketing materials contribute to 50% of sales efforts. Another 23% said they believed their marketing materials contribute to 75% of sales efforts.

It’s no surprise, then, that sales professionals are using (or should be using) their marketing efforts to boost their own sales efforts. About 41% of respondents in the SoftwareTrends sales survey say they use marketing materials about 25% of the time, while 32% say they use marketing materials half of the time. Some 16% say they use marketing materials three-quarters of the time. Only 3% say they use materials 100% of the time. (See Figure 4.)

FIGURE 4:
WHAT PERCENTAGE DO MARKETING MATERIALS CONTRIBUTE TO SALES EFFORTS WHILE WORKING WITH CUSTOMERS?



*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

“**41%**
of respondents

said they use marketing materials in their sales efforts at least 25% of the time while working with their customers.*

*based on 1,000 respondents.



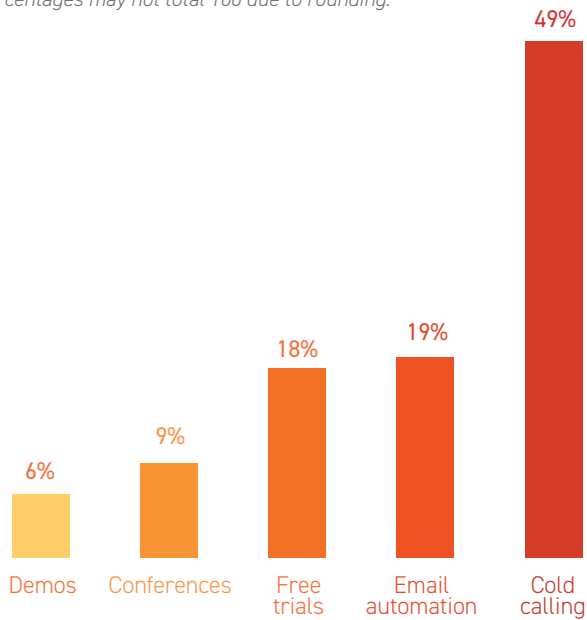
Technology Changes Drive Sales Approach

Respondents to the SoftwareTrends survey indicated that they felt that traditional ways of making sales and gaining customers will change in 2020. (See Figure 5.)

Perhaps most interesting was the opinion that the tradition of cold calling customers will be losing its touch. A high percentage of respondents said their sales targets were Baby Boomers, an older demographic that might like (or be accustomed to) traditional sales approaches like cold calling. That’s not necessarily an accurate assumption to make, however, as almost half (49%) of the SoftwareTrends sales survey respondents said they don’t expect cold calling to be useful as a sales approach in 2020.

FIGURE 5: WHICH SALES APPROACH DO YOU FEEL WILL NOT BE AS USEFUL IN 2020?

*Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.



In this modern age of social media and electronic communications, it's much easier to establish a relationship with potential buyers. As HubSpot says in a [2018 report](#), cold calling isn't necessarily dead, but has given way to more effective "warm calling," which involves connecting with a prospect before making a sales pitch to them, perhaps over LinkedIn or another trusted professional social media channel. Not surprisingly, only 19% of respondents to the SoftwareTrends sales survey say automation will not be as useful in 2020, perhaps because it's a way of tailoring friendly invitations to do business through inbox messages tailored to the prospect.

In that sense, customers still like freebies, an open handshake, and the chance to try before they buy, and that's likely to continue to be the way to woo them. Only about 18% of respondents felt that free trials won't be as useful as a sales tool in 2020. Conferences will remain a useful way to gain sales (only 9% disagreed), and only 6% said demos won't be useful anymore in 2020.

With competition stronger than ever to gain the attention of eyes and ears in a noisier digital environment, it's more important than ever for companies to get a read on their prospective customers' habits, desires, and appetites for new products and services. Many respondents to the SoftwareTrends sales survey said they use technologies and tools to attract and market to new customers.

Among those tools, 63% said they use sales engagement tools, and 55% reported that they use sales and market intelligence technology to create a broad picture of their target markets, customers, problems, competition, and growth potential for new products and services.

Just less than half (49%) reported that they use sales enablement tools, and 48% said they use predictive analytics technology, which uses data, statistical algorithms, and machine learning techniques to identify the likelihood of future outcomes based on historical data. Predictive analytics can be used to determine customer responses or purchases, and create models to help businesses attract, retain, and grow their most profitable customers. Some 43% of respondents said they use sales coaching, and 43% stated that they use data enrichment tools. (See Figure 6.)

FIGURE 6: WHICH TECHNOLOGIES AND TOOLS DOES YOUR ORGANIZATION EMPLOY TO ATTRACT NEW CUSTOMERS?

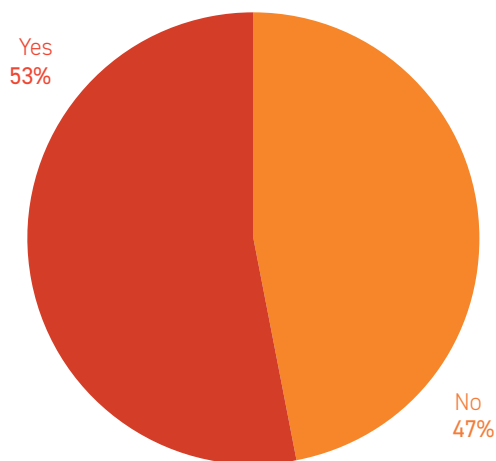


“ About **63%** say they use sales engagement technologies to attract new customers.*
of respondents *based on 1,000 respondents. [Tweet](#) ”

The Future of Sales

Just more than half (53%) of respondents say their organization intends to increase its sales technology budget in 2020, while 47% said they will not. (See Figure 7.)

FIGURE 7: DOES YOUR SALES ORGANIZATION INTEND TO INCREASE ITS SALES TECHNOLOGY BUDGET IN 2020?



“ More than **53%** of sales organizations said they plan to increase their sales technology budget in 2020.*
*based on 1,000 respondents. [Tweet](#) ”

Of new technologies that sales organizations will invest in for 2020, about 59% said they will add sales engagement technology to help streamline sales processes. These types of tools will also enable sales organizations to combine their sales and marketing efforts to create personalized and automated sales tools, including emails, social posts, and text messages.

About half indicated that they will invest in sales enablement technology to equip sales teams with strategic resources they need to excel, from tools to technology to content. About 46% said they will invest in account-based marketing technology and 41% said they plan to invest in data enrichment technology. Just about 41% said they will invest in video technology. (Figure 8.)

FIGURE 8: WHICH NEW TECHNOLOGIES WILL YOUR SALES ORGANIZATION INVEST IN 2020?



“ More than **59%** said they plan to invest in sales engagement in 2020.* ”

of sales organizations

*based on 1,000 respondents.

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Sales professionals will always be looking for the perfect way to attract new customers, while maintaining relationships with current contacts with the hope of retaining long-term commitments. Doing so in a landscape of changing demographics and constant competition will require a substantial investment in new technology and a willingness to depart with traditional sales approaches in favor of those more familiar to younger and tech-savvy customers. It’s a compromise that promises to reward companies with new and longer-term sales—and in the end, higher revenue.

Survey Methodology

This [SoftwareTrends survey](#) of 1,000 sales leaders was conducted by PureB2B between October and December 2019, using the PureB2B intent-based survey engine, which is a customized survey program designed to connect directly with optimal decision makers to help clients uncover valuable insights and drive better business decisions.

