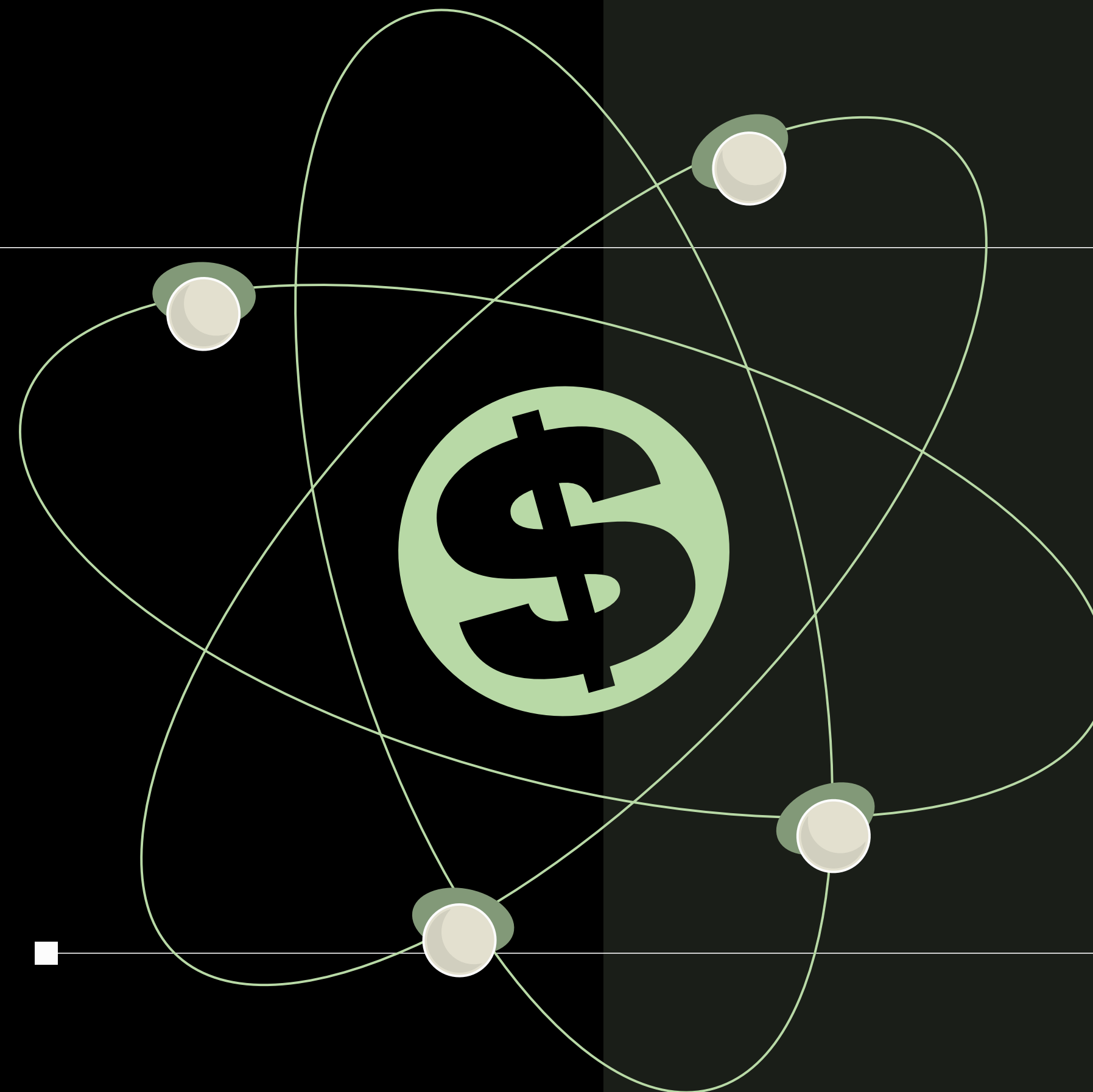


2025 SALES TRENDS

**AN INSIDE LOOK AT HOW 1,000
SALES PROS ARE ADAPTING,
GROWING, AND CONNECTING IN A
SHIFTING BUSINESS LANDSCAPE**



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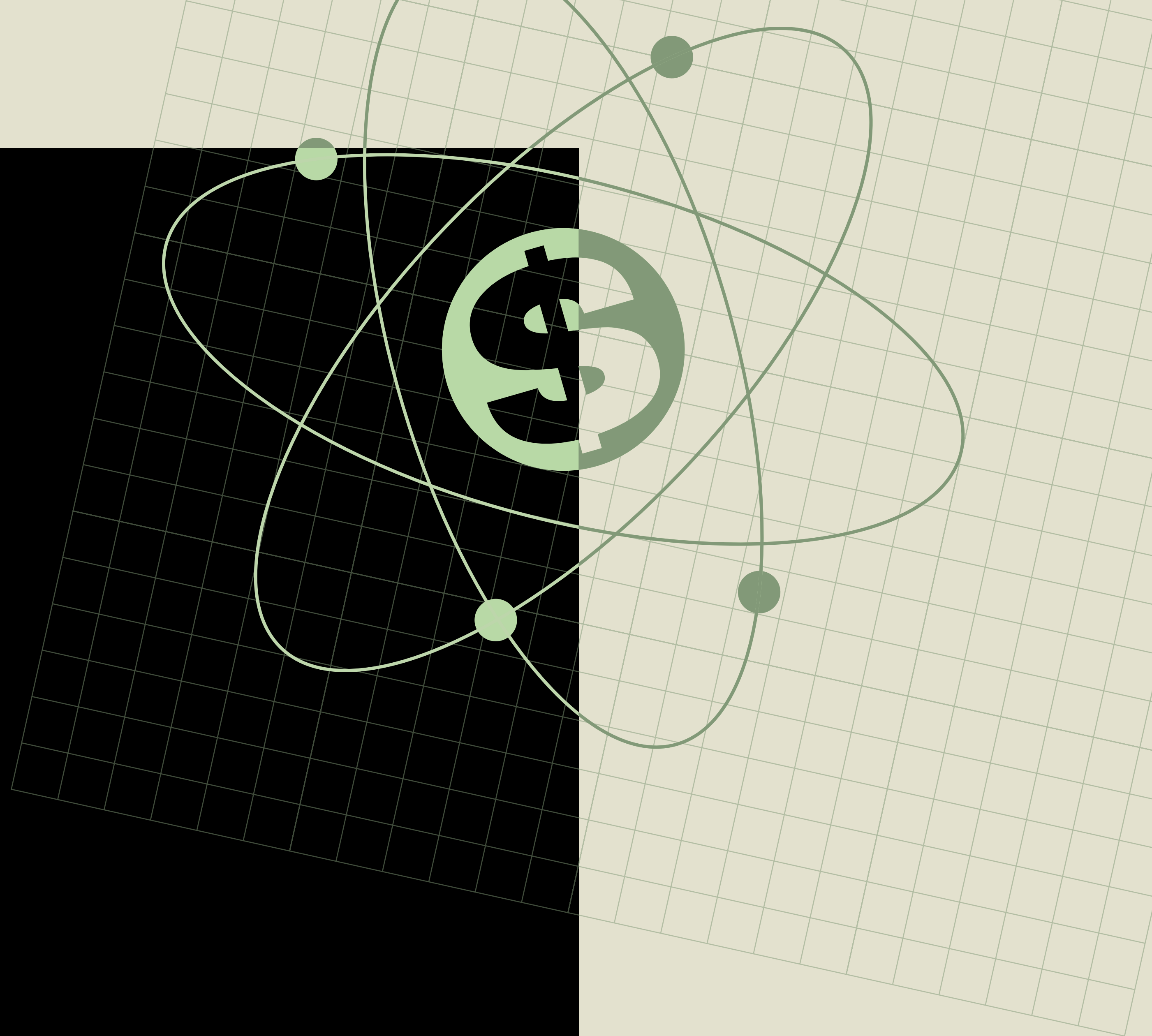
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FOREWORD

SELLING IN THE AGE OF AI



FOREWORD

THE SALES SCALES ARE TIPPING IN THE BUYER'S FAVOR

When I got my first sales job in October 2000, our “CRM” was a bunch of physical cards with customer information on them stored in a filing cabinet. To say things have changed would be an understatement.

The arc of technology bends toward convenience and efficiency, and both sellers and buyers have evolved. As the internet enabled widespread access to information, buyers started conducting research independent of conversations with salespeople. As businesses globalized, sales moved from outside to inside. And now, AI is a daily driver in most of our workdays.

When it comes to AI and sales, ChatGPT’s fall 2022 release was our iPhone moment. Since then, we’ve witnessed massive productivity gains in engineering—tools like Cursor and Claude have fundamentally changed how developers work. But sales? We’re still waiting for our breakthrough.

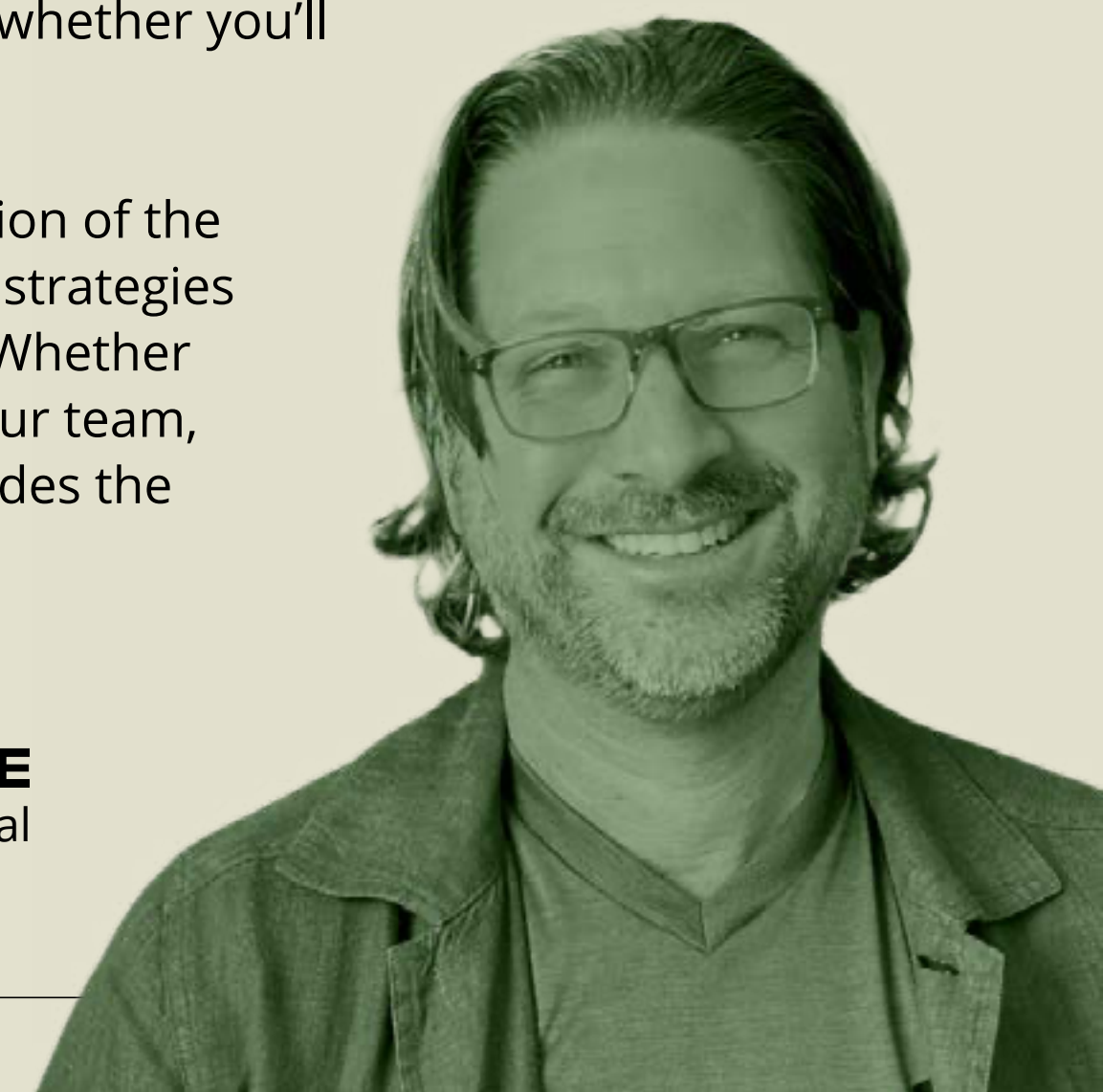
Here’s what I know: when it arrives, the transformation will be staggering. If today’s top inside sales rep produces \$1M in annual recurring revenue, tomorrow’s AI-enabled rep will produce \$4M. That’s not incremental improvement; that’s revolution.

This isn’t just about individual productivity. Organizations themselves will transform into sequences of specialized AI agents. In go-to-market alone, imagine agents that continuously refine your ideal customer profile, identify target accounts, select contacts, craft personalized sequences, and execute outreach—all working in concert.

The future of sales isn’t coming. It’s here. The only question is whether you’ll lead the change or chase it.

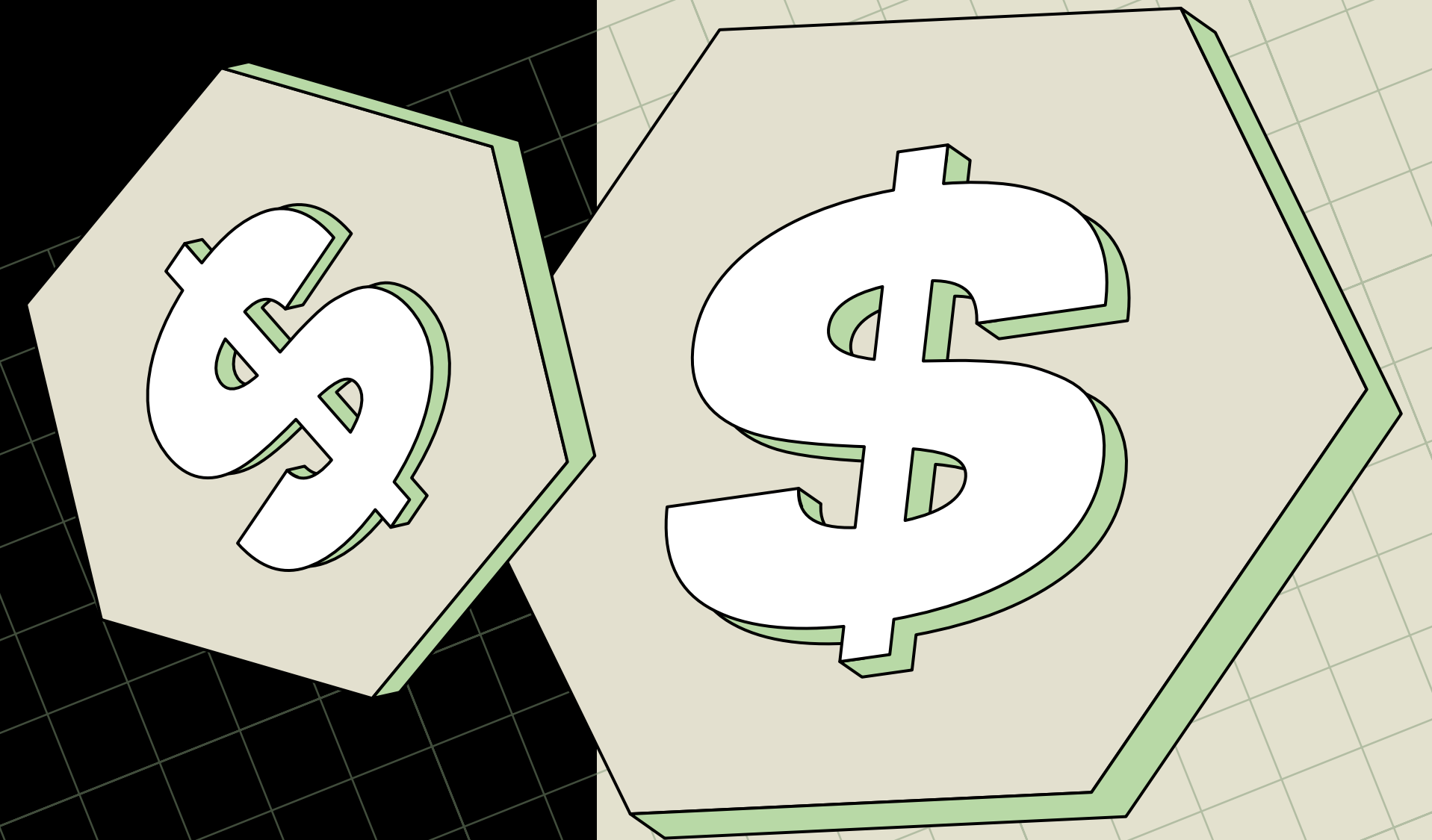
In the pages that follow, you’ll find a comprehensive examination of the sales landscape in 2025—the challenges teams are facing, the strategies that are working, and the specific actions you can take today. Whether you’re a sales leader charting strategy, a manager coaching your team, or a rep looking to multiply your productivity, this report provides the roadmap for success in our AI-first future.

MARK ROBERGE
Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital



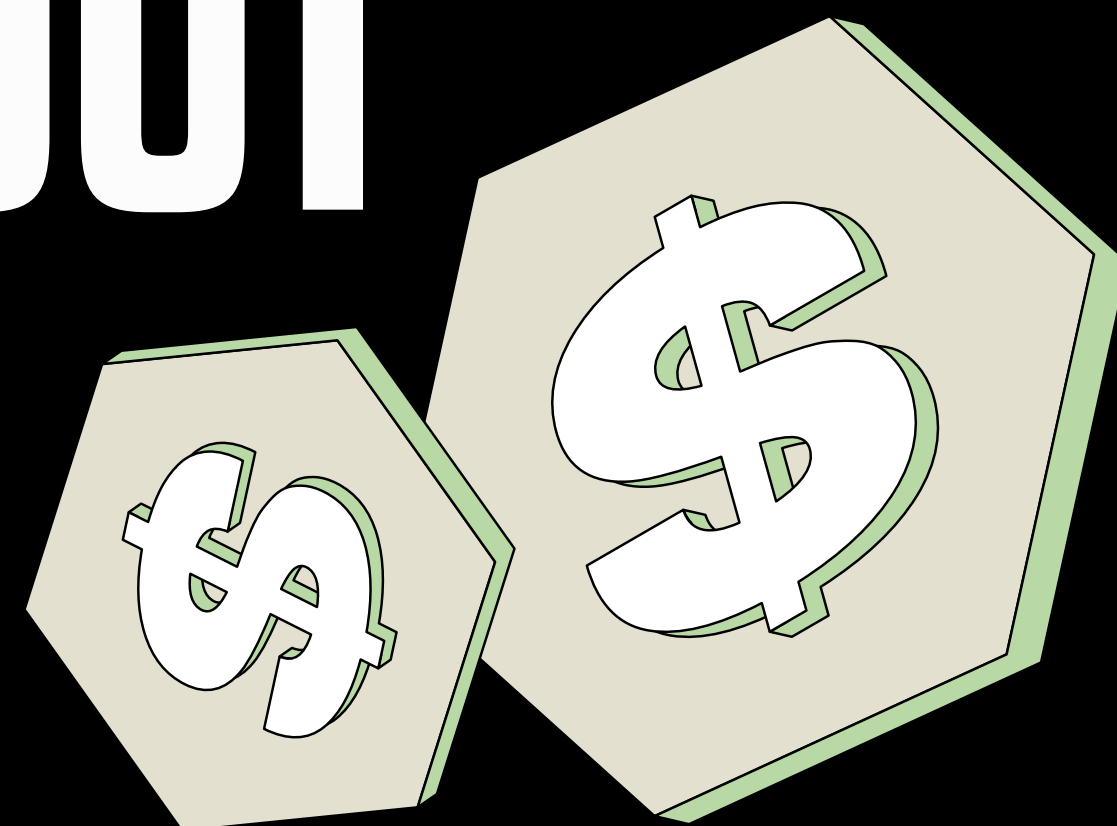
INTRODUCTION + KEY FINDINGS

VALUE AND TRUST CREATE
SALES SUCCESS



INTRODUCTION + KEY FINDINGS

SELLING TODAY IS ALL ABOUT VALUE



In a market where consumers have more options to choose from and do more of their own research than ever before, salespeople hoping to stand out from the crowd have to demonstrate precise, personalized value propositions to close the deal.

THE BIGGEST CHANGES IN SALES SINCE 2024, ACCORDING TO SELLERS

The rise of buyer reliance on self-service tools

40%

Solution selling > pitching products/services

35%

In-person selling is more important

31%

More touchpoints/interactions throughout the sales process

31%

Remote selling is more important

27%

We surveyed 1,000 top sales leaders and reps to gather insights on growth opportunities, challenges, and key strategies for 2025. We learned that the most successful teams practice value-first selling, that AI integration is now a table-stakes competency rather than a competitive advantage, that social channels are a bigger part of the sales process than ever, and that agility in the face of economic uncertainty is driving growth.

KEY FINDINGS

1	AI HAS BECOME OPERATIONAL, NOT EXPERIMENTAL	Only 8% of sales reps don't use AI at all
2	AI TOOLS RAISE THE BAR FOR SELLERS	74% of sellers say AI tools have made buyer research easier, putting more pressure on sellers to deliver value
3	RETENTION MATTERS	42% of teams prioritize annual recurring revenue (ARR) as their top success metric
4	LACK OF PRODUCT FIT KILLS DEALS	37% of deals don't close because buyers don't see product fit
5	OUTREACH IS CHANGING	42% say social media channels have the highest prospect response rate, vs. just 26% for email
6	SOCIAL MEDIA GENERATES REVENUE	45% rate social media as "very effective" at driving sales, more than any other channel
7	SALES TEAMS ARE NIMBLE	67% of teams rate themselves "very" or "extremely" adaptable to changing macro conditions
8	ECONOMIC UNCERTAINTY IS NOT A DEATH SENTENCE	91% report win rates increased or stayed flat despite market turbulence
9	SALES HIRING HASN'T SLOWED DOWN	Only 3% expect their team size to shrink this year
10	CULTURE IS KING	Salespeople say trust in leadership (30%) and healthy competition (30%) keeps them motivated



The Science of Scaling
@ScienceofScaling

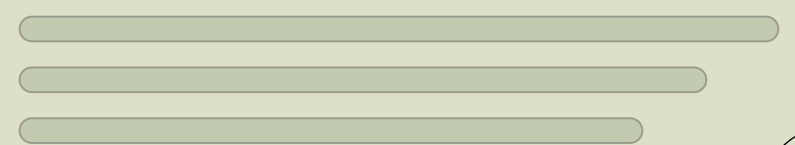
The messy, honest reality of scaling a business.
clickhubspot.com/bc8h and 1 more link

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**How to Cold Call
When 90% Hang Up**



Cold Call Review: He Turned 'Not Interested' into a Booked Meeting



Book 30% More Meetings NOW: The Cold Outreach Framework That Works



THE SCIENCE OF SCALING: A CHANNEL FOR THE REVENUE-OBSSESSED

“When should I scale” and “How fast?” These two questions are mission-critical for startups. But founders and entrepreneurs don’t always have a rigorous, repeatable framework to rely on.

On this YouTube series, Mark Roberge, Co-Founder of Stage 2 Capital and rotating hosts chat with tech’s top sales leaders to figure out what actually works. We break down frameworks and show you how to scale without the fluff.

← Check out some recent videos

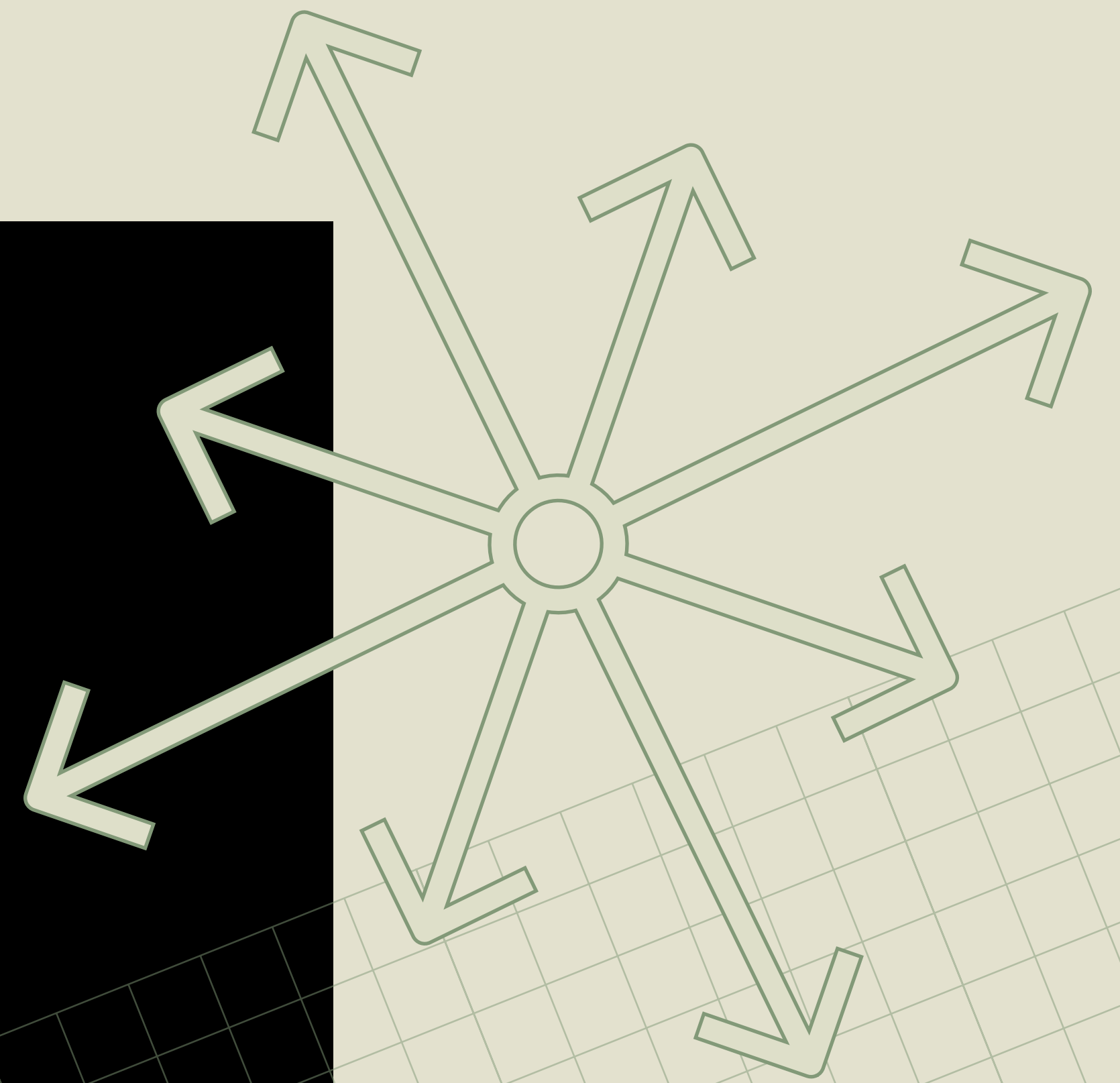
Learn what works from the people who have been there before.

SUBSCRIBE TO THE CHANNEL

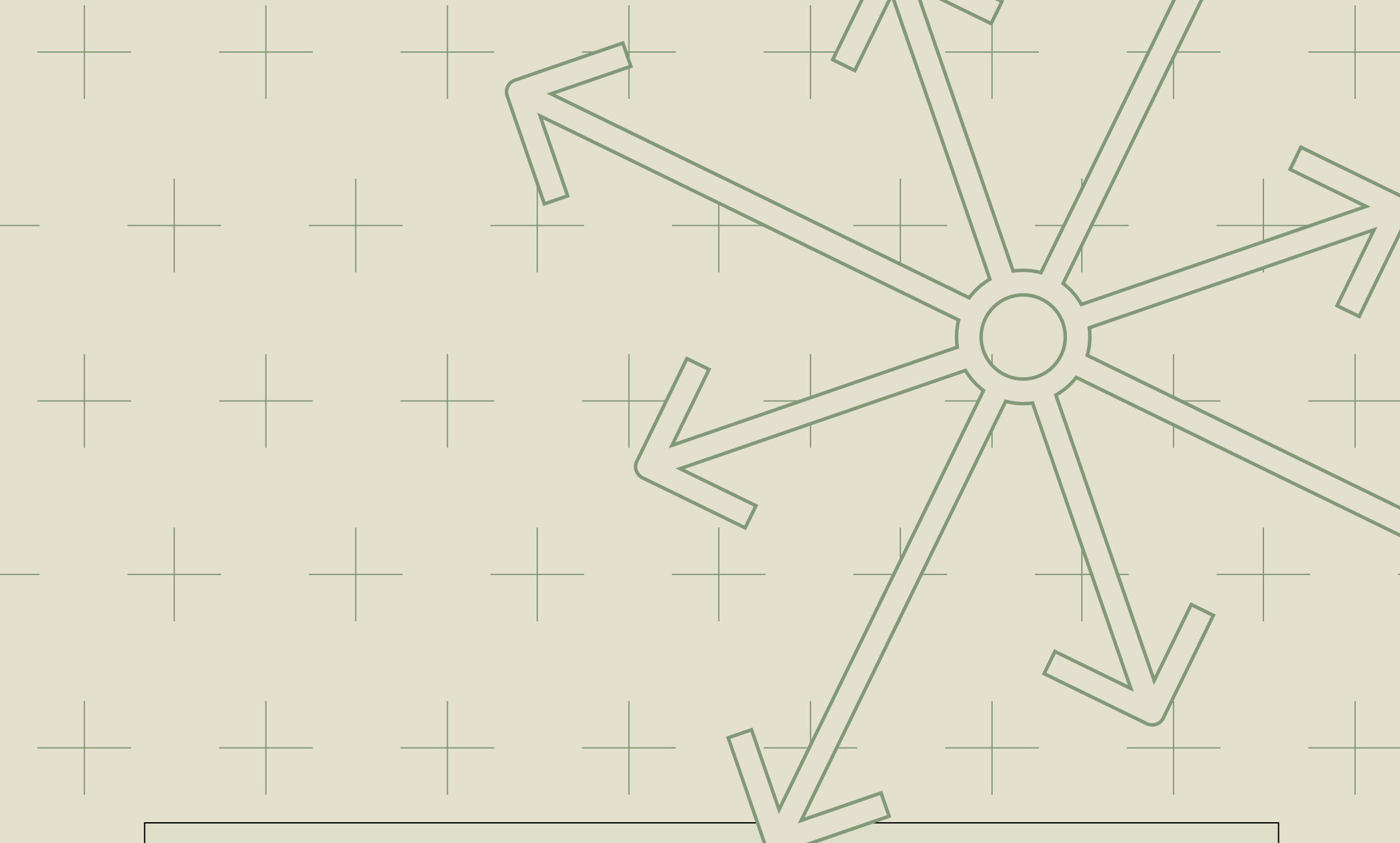


CHALLENGES + OPPORTUNITIES

NAVIGATING UNCERTAINTY
WITH ADAPTABILITY



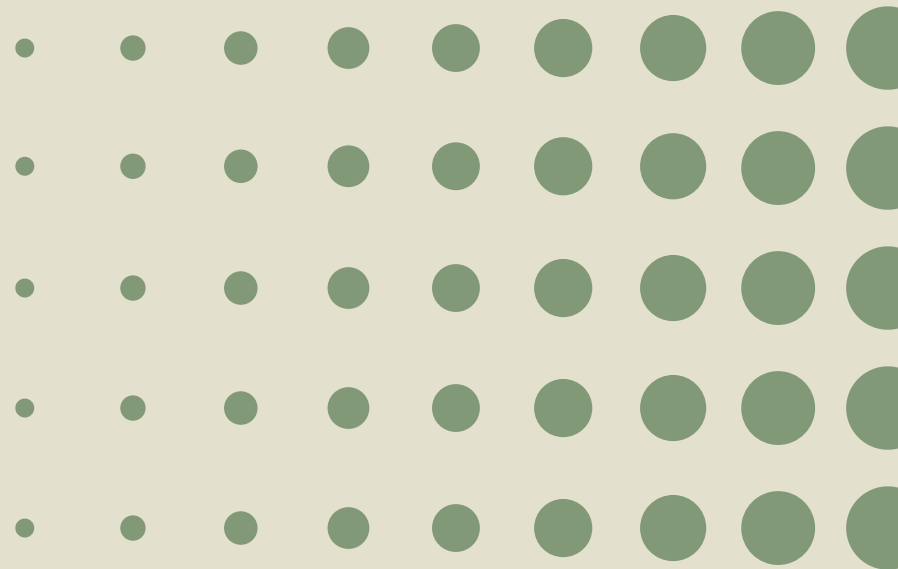
SUCCESSFUL SALES TEAMS ADAPT QUICKLY TO ECONOMIC AND BUYER SHIFTS



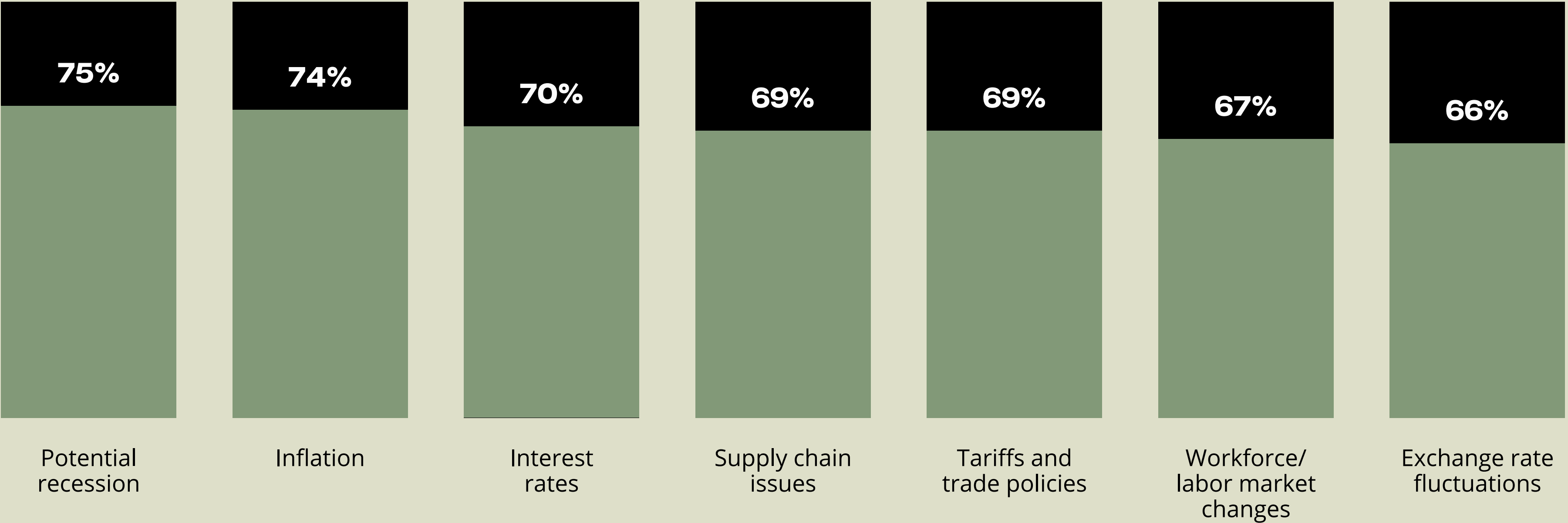
TALK OF RECESSION DOMINATES THE HEADLINES, BUT THE BEST SALES TEAMS ARE WRITING ANOTHER STORY. WHILE REPS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT RECESSION OR INFLATION, PERFORMANCE DATA REVEALS THAT ADAPTABLE TEAMS AREN'T JUST SURVIVING IN THESE UNCERTAIN TIMES, THEY'RE THRIVING.

MACROECONOMIC CONCERNS ARE TOP OF MIND FOR SALES LEADERS

In 2025, the only certainty seems to be uncertainty.



THE MACROECONOMIC FACTORS THAT SELLERS ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IN 2025



THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN THE SALES PROCESS

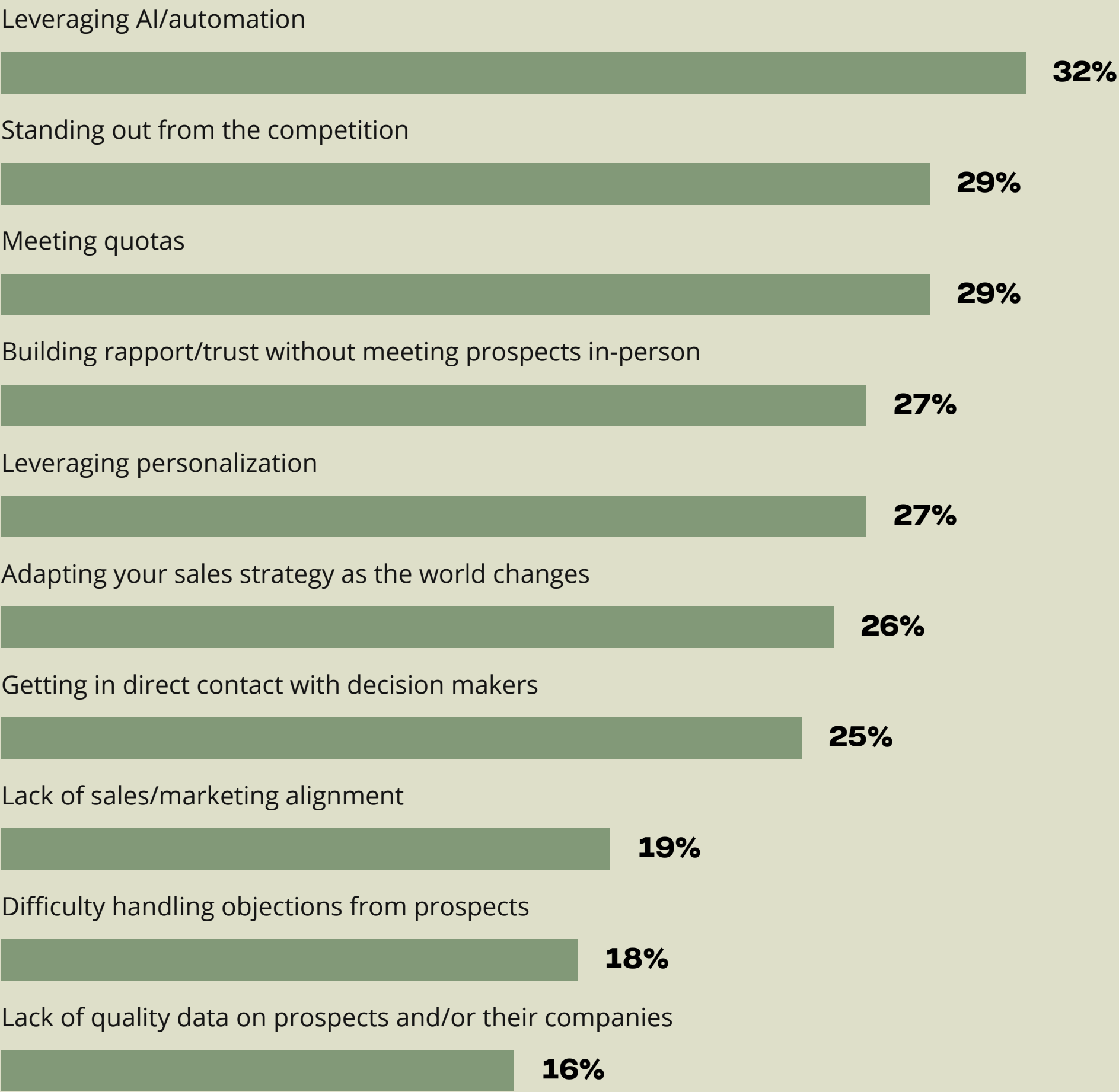
While AI may have been bleeding-edge just a few years ago, today it’s a core part of go-to-market (GTM) strategy — and teams face challenges taking full advantage. Think of this as an opportunity: Thoughtfully deployed AI can help with nearly all of the other challenges salespeople say they face.

HOW SALES TEAMS CAN USE AI

- Improve outreach and personalization with generative AI
- Deploy AI to streamline the sales process
- Learn how top sales teams use AI today
- Try Breeze, HubSpot’s powerful AI, for free

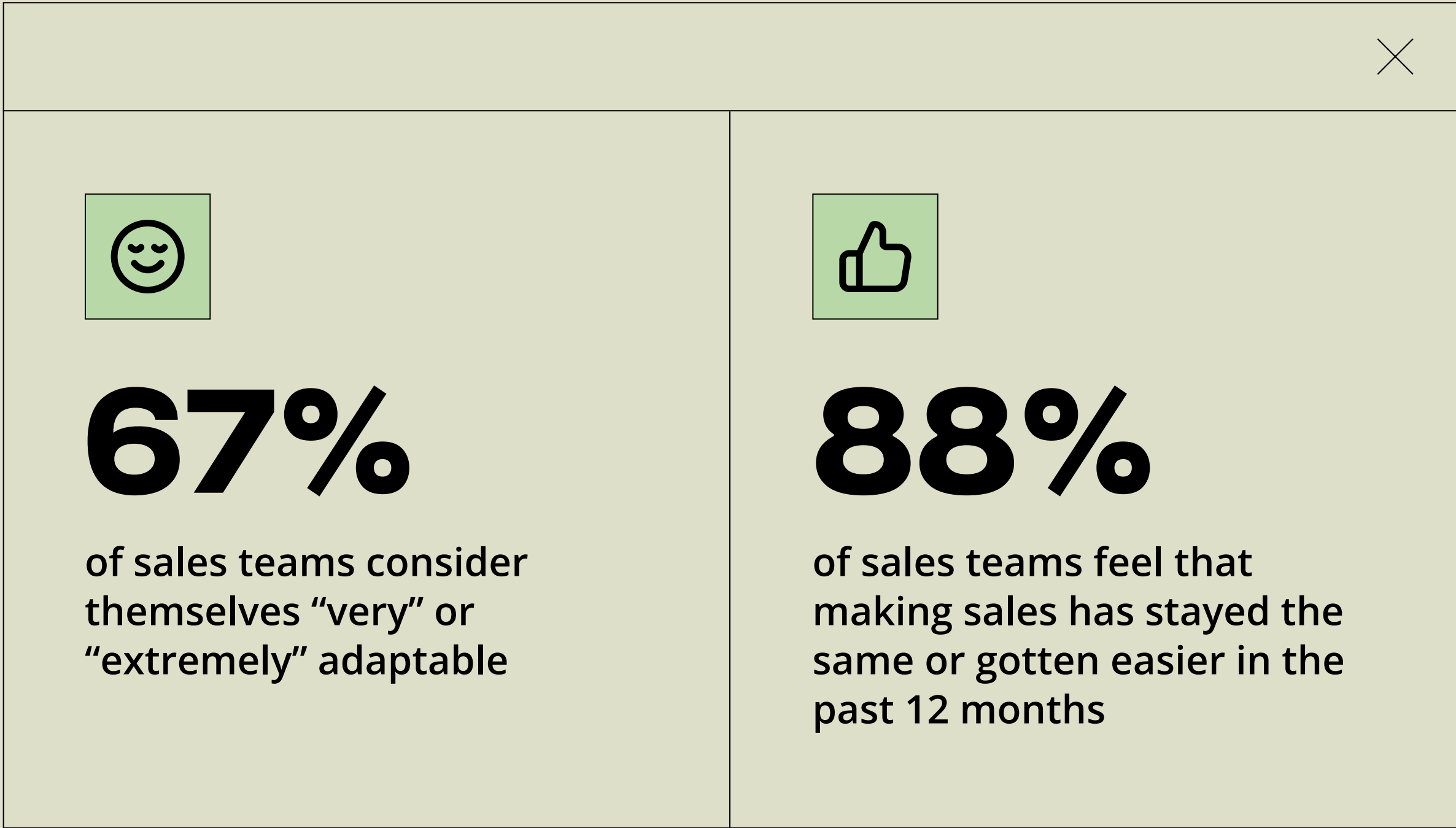


WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACE WITH THE SALES PROCESS?



HOW ADAPTABLE TEAMS THRIVE AMIDST UNCERTAINTY

The majority of teams are well-informed about what changes may come. 76% of sellers say they understand how macro trends affect their industry, while 79% say their organizations communicate effectively about how fluctuations impact their businesses.

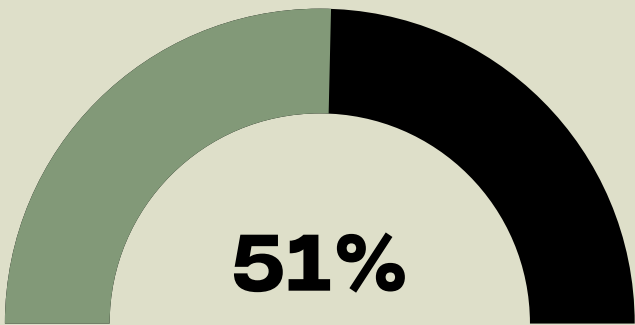


In unpredictable times, preparation is key. Adopting new technologies early keeps teams ahead on how to sell to prospects. A culture of experimentation and innovation creates a process for trying new things that makes it easier to adapt quickly. And strategic planning for multiple scenarios ensures that sales teams are never starting from scratch.

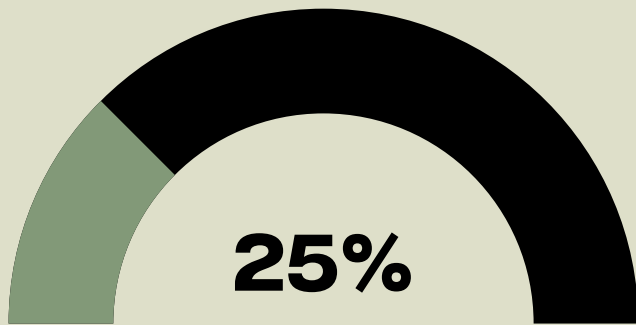
THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESILIENT SALES TEAMS

The vast majority of sellers say their win rates (91%) and close rates (91%) increased or stayed flat over the last 12 months. Nearly all (93%) of respondents' deal sizes stayed the same or increased since last year, and 68% say lead quality has gotten better.

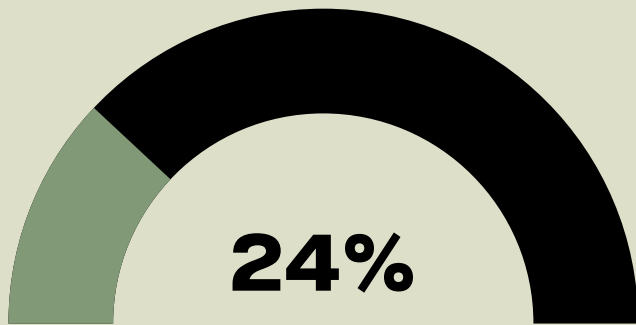
SELLERS ARE MORE OPTIMISTIC ABOUT QUOTA ATTAINMENT IN 2025



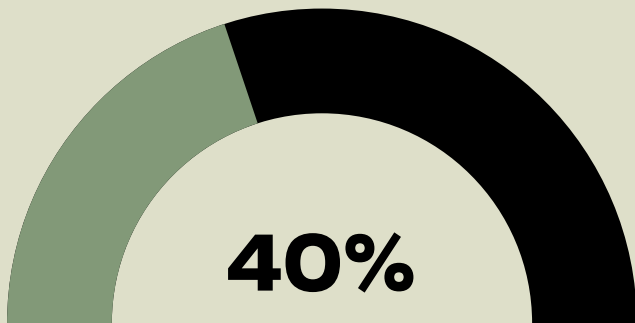
hit 75% or less of quota in 2024



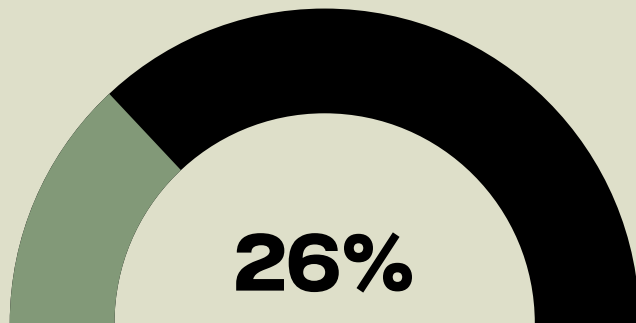
hit 76-99% of quota in 2024



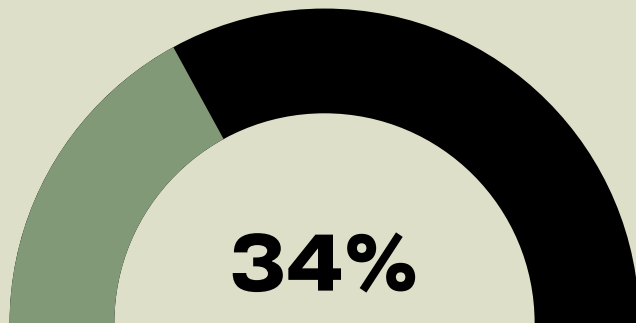
met or exceeded quota in 2024



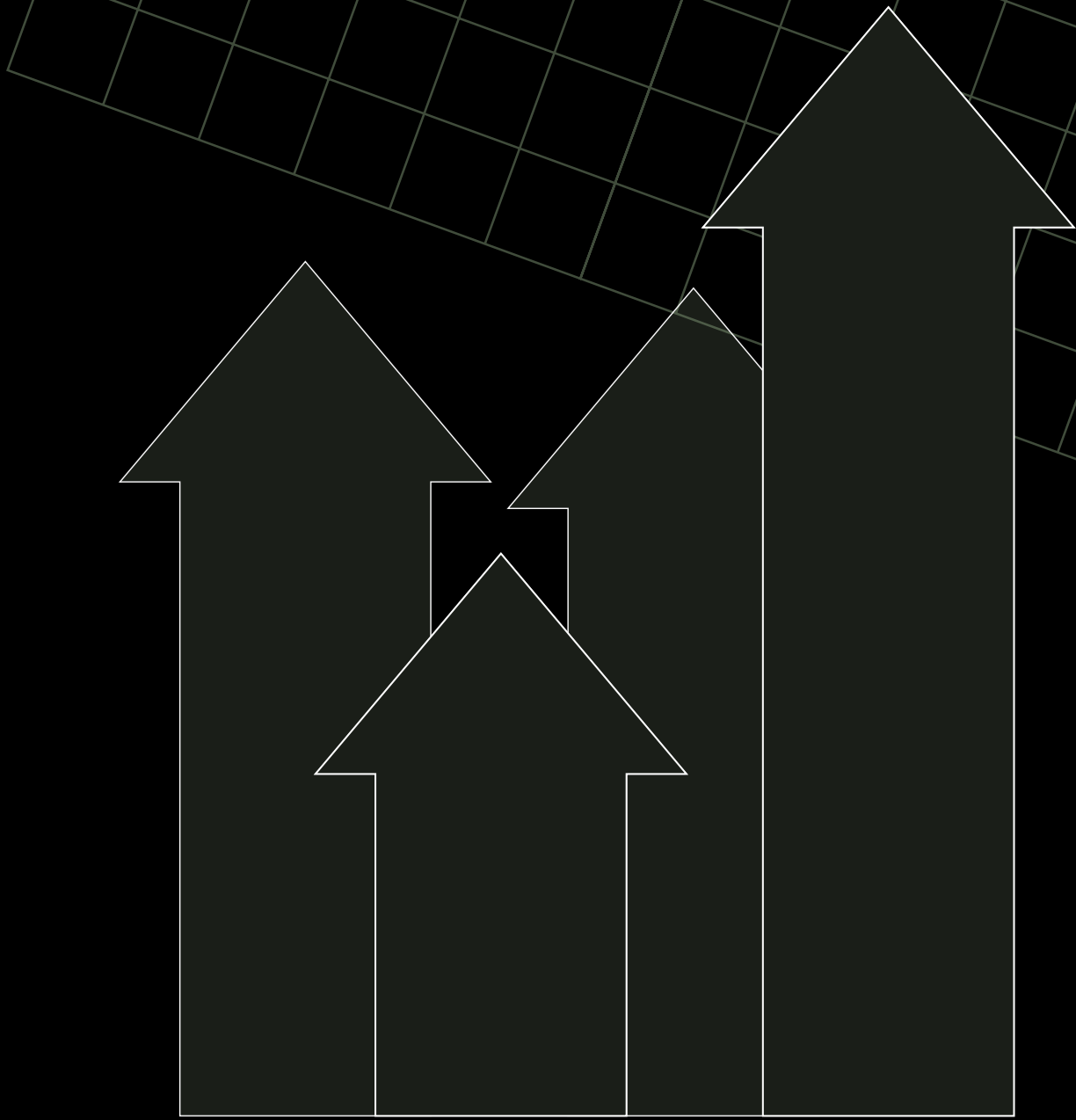
expect less than 75% quota attainment in 2025



expect 76-99% quota attainment in 2025



expect to meet or exceed quota in 2025



Job prospects for sellers have also stayed steady. Half (49%) of sales leaders say that getting the budget for the headcount they needed was neither easy nor difficult this year, while 42% said it was easy. Only 9% of teams had challenges getting the headcount they wanted.

SCIENCE OF SCALING SPOTLIGHT

“If everyone’s zigging, you’ve got to zag. There’s been three points in HubSpot’s history where we’ve gone completely against advice we’ve been getting.

The first is SMB. We were convinced that the internet disproportionately benefited small businesses relative to large and that we could build a platform that would help entrepreneurs turn their startups into scale ups. Everyone wanted us to move up to enterprise. Every round of venture capital was a dog fight. But we said, trust us.

The second one was when we made the shift from marketing app to CRM platform. A lot of people thought it was stupid. Investors thought it was stupid. Wall Street didn’t get it at all. But it worked.

The third one is, everyone says once you get to a certain size of CRM company, it’s very simple. You just start acquiring all these apps. You just plug them in and you build a kind of a Frankensystem. It’s just how you do it, right? No. Developers are really productive these days. They get a lot more done. Humans, increasingly, particularly end users, want an Apple-like feel to their product and user experience that really matter.

So we bet on ourselves. You have to be bold with the pivot.”

BRIAN HALLIGAN
Co-Founder and Former CEO, HubSpot

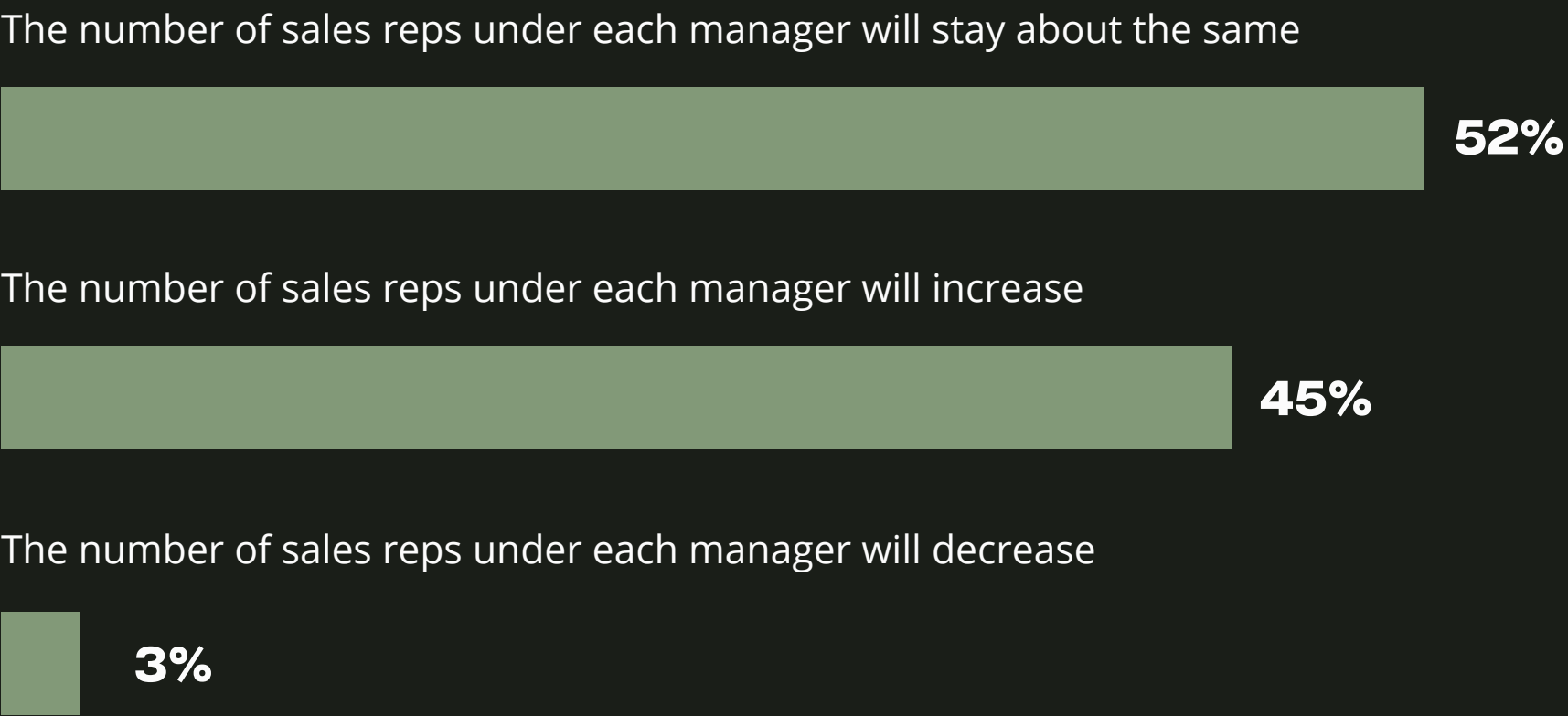
[LISTEN TO THE PODCAST](#)



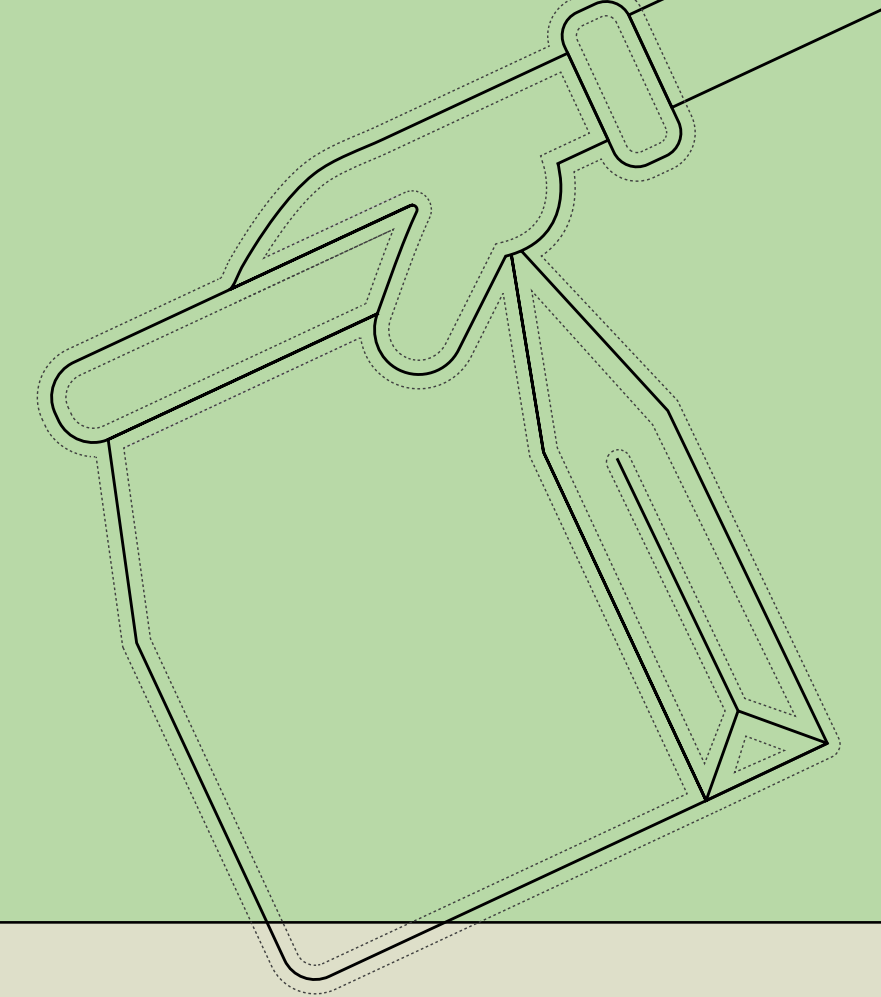
APPROACHING
STRATEGY WITH A
GROWTH MINDSET

Top sales teams aren’t laying off their reps, they’re holding steady or investing even more. Uncertain times are the perfect time to iterate and experiment instead of retreat, as buyer behavior and preferences are guaranteed to shift as well.

HOW WILL THE NUMBER OF SALES REPS
UNDER EACH MANAGER CHANGE IN THE
NEXT 12 MONTHS?



SALES TAKEAWAYS



1

ASSESS MARKET HEALTH EVERY QUARTER

The most effective sales leaders aren't just experts on their customers and products — they make it their business to understand their broader competitive landscape.

Institute a periodic trend assessment of your industry to ensure you're always in the know. Bring together leaders across departments to share what their functions see — for example, privacy regulations may impact lead volume, which will eventually impact deal flow. Devote regular time to reading trade publications and financial news. Consider bringing in external guests such as investors or your biggest customers who can share what they're seeing on the ground.

2

SHARE MARKET UPDATES WHEN THEY IMPACT YOUR TEAM

Your team doesn't need to know everything you do, but you should inform them of major market developments. There's a fine line between too much information, which can create unnecessary stress, and too little, which leads to further confusion. A shift in trade policy that is going to impact exports starting next month? Communicate it. A piece of relevant legislation that won't be voted on until next year? Watch and wait.

Make a [communication plan](#) that focuses on what actions leadership is taking, how those changes will affect sales processes, and what resources are available to help.

3

SET A BACKUP PLAN, BUT BET ON SUCCESS

Only 3% of sales teams expect to shrink this year, so a defensive stance puts you behind the competition. Create a best-case, base-case, and worst-case business plan for the year and a [hiring plan](#) that corresponds to each. Be ready to pivot in case something changes, but don't retreat before you have to.

4

BUILD A FLEXIBLE OPERATING SYSTEM

[Resilience](#) isn't just operational, it's cultural. Foster a [growth mindset](#) in your team and train reps to cope with ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty. Make sure your teams are set up to work from anywhere and are as comfortable with digital processes as they are analog and in-person ones.

5

FOCUS ON LEAD QUALITY OVER QUANTITY

With 68% of teams reporting that lead quality has gone up despite economic concerns, there's no better time to double down on quality over quantity. Work with marketing leadership to teach them what a [good-fit lead](#) looks like, and implement [lead scoring](#) and prioritization so that reps can see at-a-glance who they should reach out to first.



MARK'S TAKE

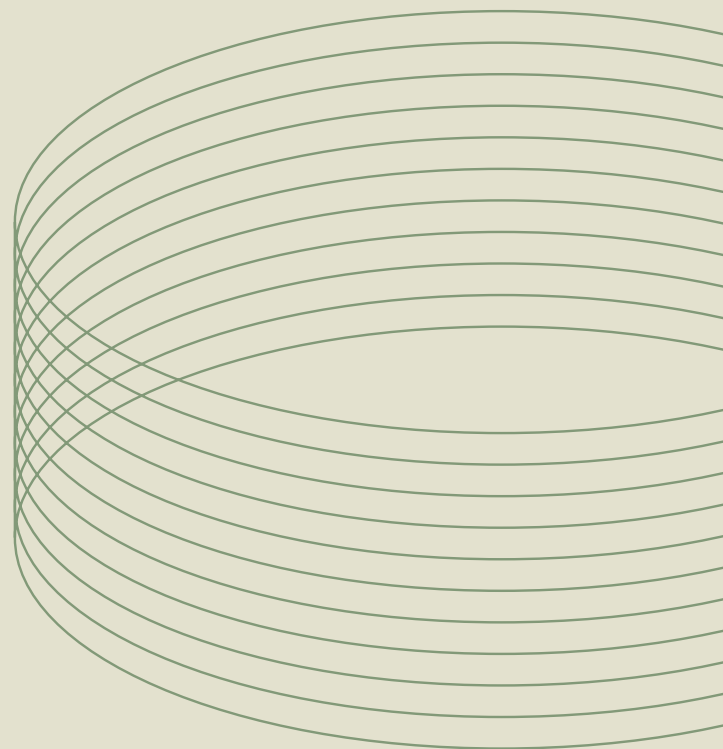
When the 2008 financial crisis hit, HubSpot was still a small startup working out of the Cambridge Innovation Center. All around us, companies were going out of business. Our churn rates were increasing, and we had to act fast. We built a list of high-value customers who were churn risks, and offered them additional training so they'd get as much value as possible.

The crisis wasn't all bad for us. We accelerated sales hiring, taking advantage of the spike in sales talent due to layoffs elsewhere. These new hires went on to play key roles in developing our playbook and hiring the next generation of salespeople. And the weak economy forced us to discover our "must-have" value proposition to ensure we were only focusing on our customers' mission-critical problems.

A market turn can be bad news for a business that's unprepared to pivot. But it could also be a blessing in disguise.

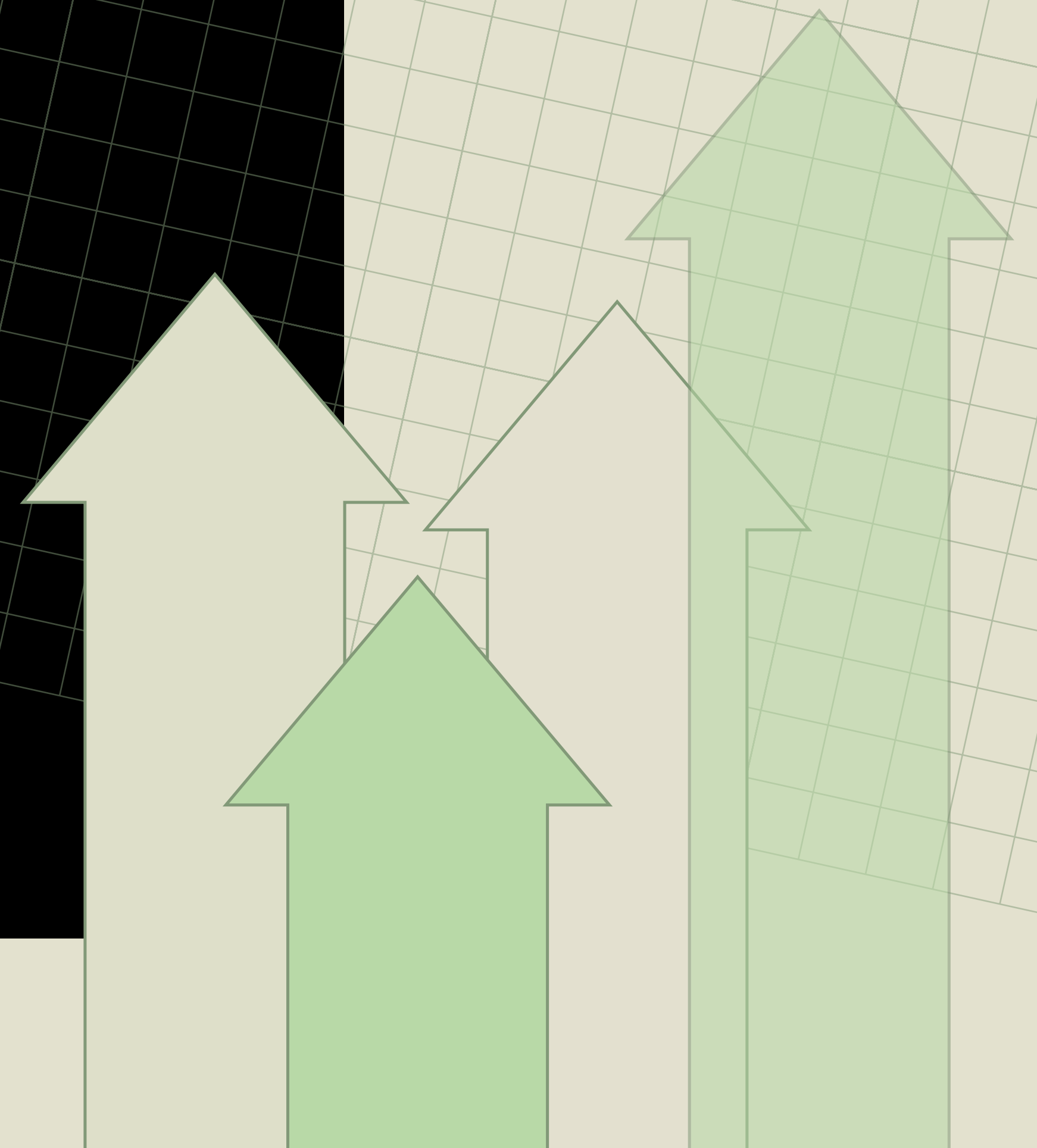
MARK ROBERGE

Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital, Founding CRO at HubSpot



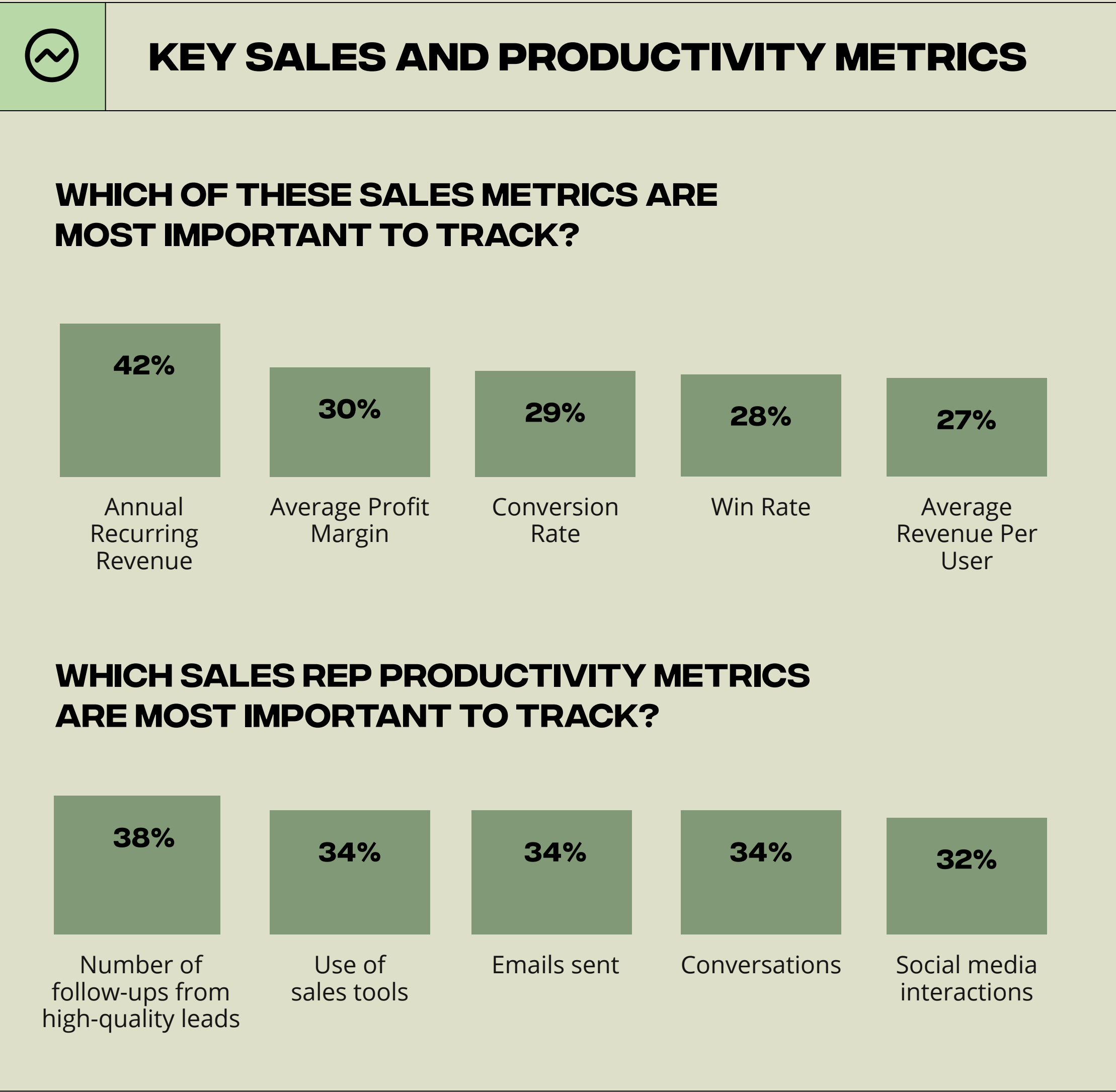
BENCHMARKS + PERFORMANCE

HOW YOUR SALES
TEAM STACKS UP

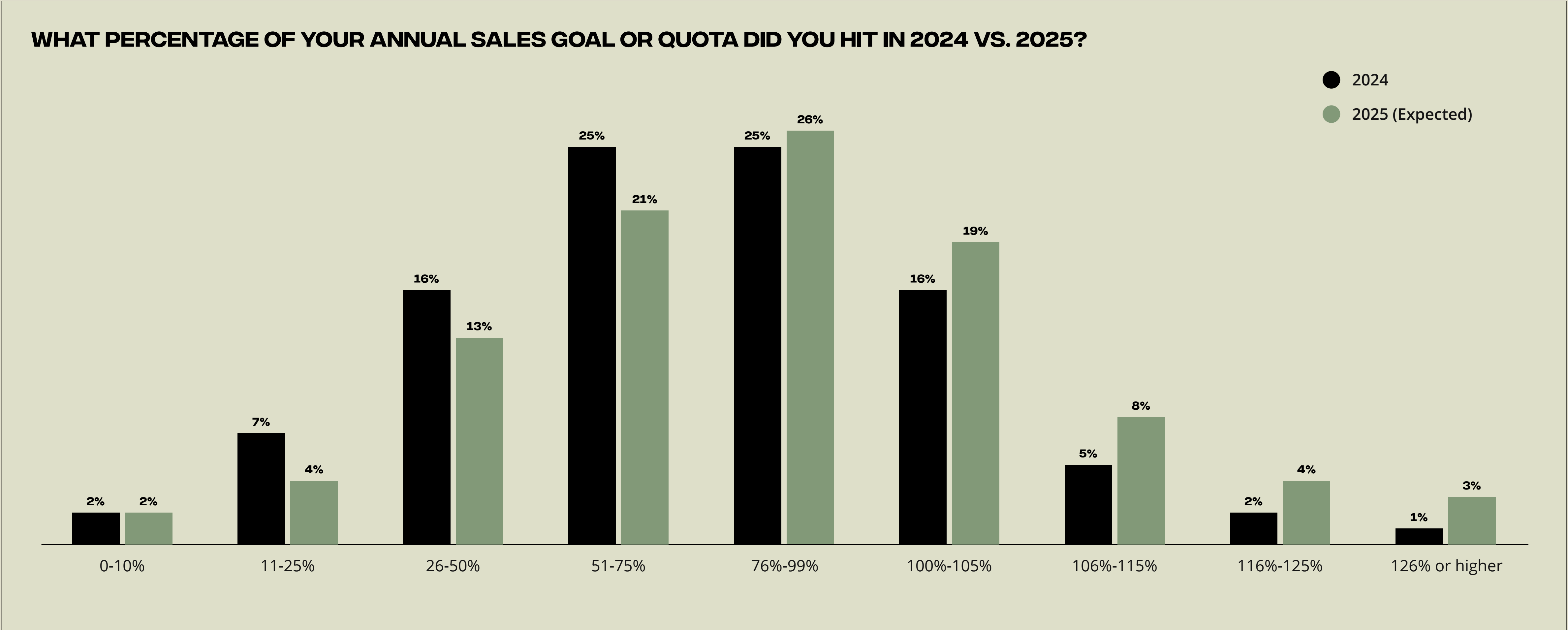


SALES TEAM PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS FOR 2025

Here’s how sales teams performed in 2024, measured success, tracked productivity, and more.



SALES TEAM QUOTAS AND COMPENSATION





WHICH OF THESE SALES COMPENSATION PLANS DOES YOUR COMPANY USE?

On-Target Earnings



Sales Quotas



Gross Margin Commission Plan



Sales Performance Incentive Fund or Sales Contests



Sales Decelerators



PARTNER INSIGHT

"It's clear that trust - both between sales reps and their leaders, and among reps themselves - is one of the best ways to keep salespeople motivated. While building a lucrative sales compensation plan may seem like an easy way to build that trust, you're better off building a plan that follows three criteria: simple, logical, and fair."

A simple plan allows your team to focus their efforts on what matters most to your business, a logical plan clearly lays out (and everyone understands) the 'why' behind the plan, and a fair plan is equitable to both the rep and the business, allowing both to achieve their goals.

92% of sales reps are using AI in their work, and Mark Roberge thinks an AI-enabled top performing rep will be able to 4X their sales. You need to be factoring that in as you're building your comp plans by asking yourself questions like:

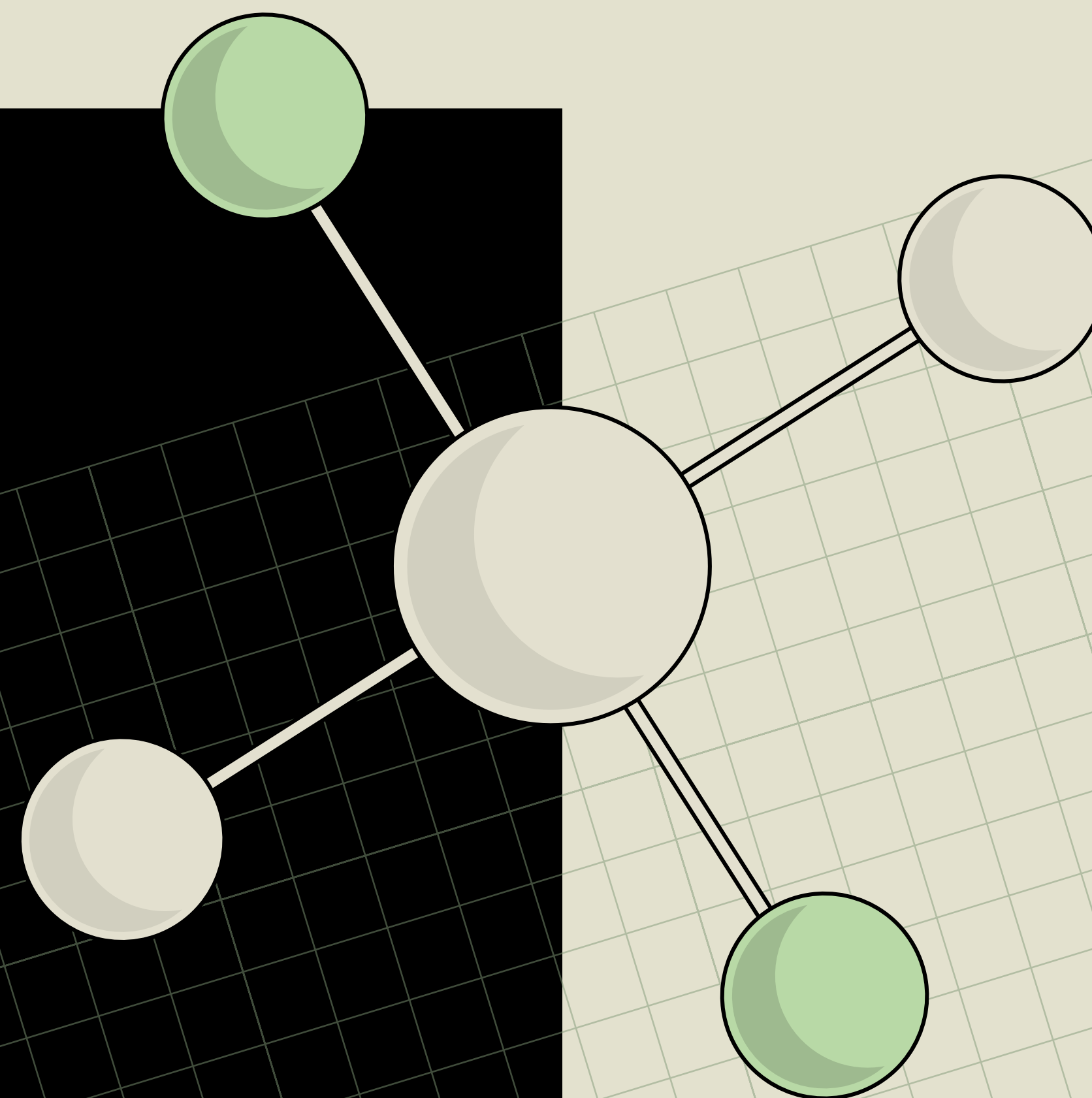
- *Can an AI-enabled sales rep achieve a quota we thought was impossible last year?*
- *Should I be adding in even more accelerators for my top performers?*
- *Do I need to include a decelerator for people who aren't hitting their targets?."*

GRAHAM COLLINS
Head of Partnerships, QuotaPath

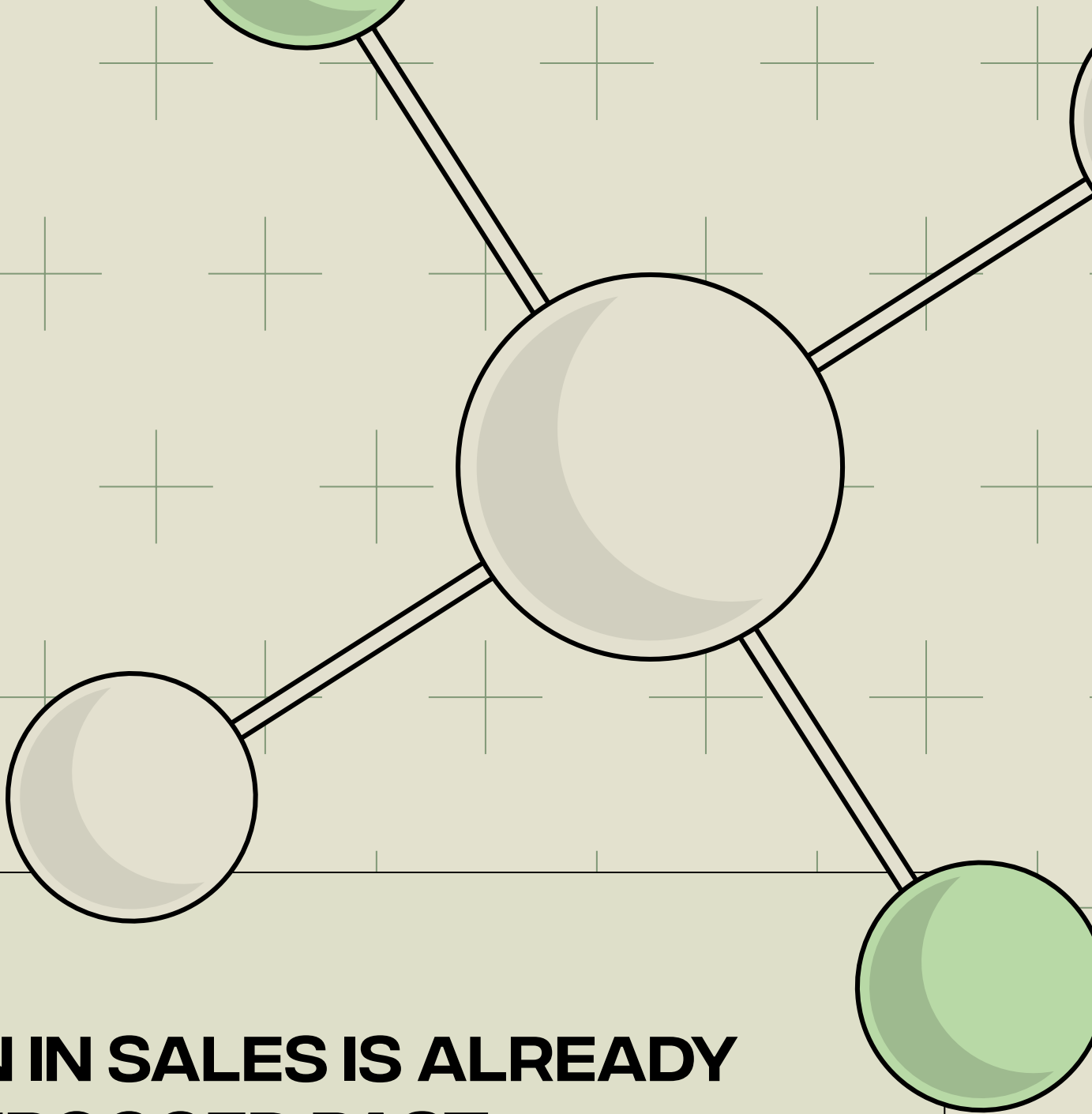


AI USE CASES + TOOLS

INSIDE THE AI-POWERED
SALES TEAM



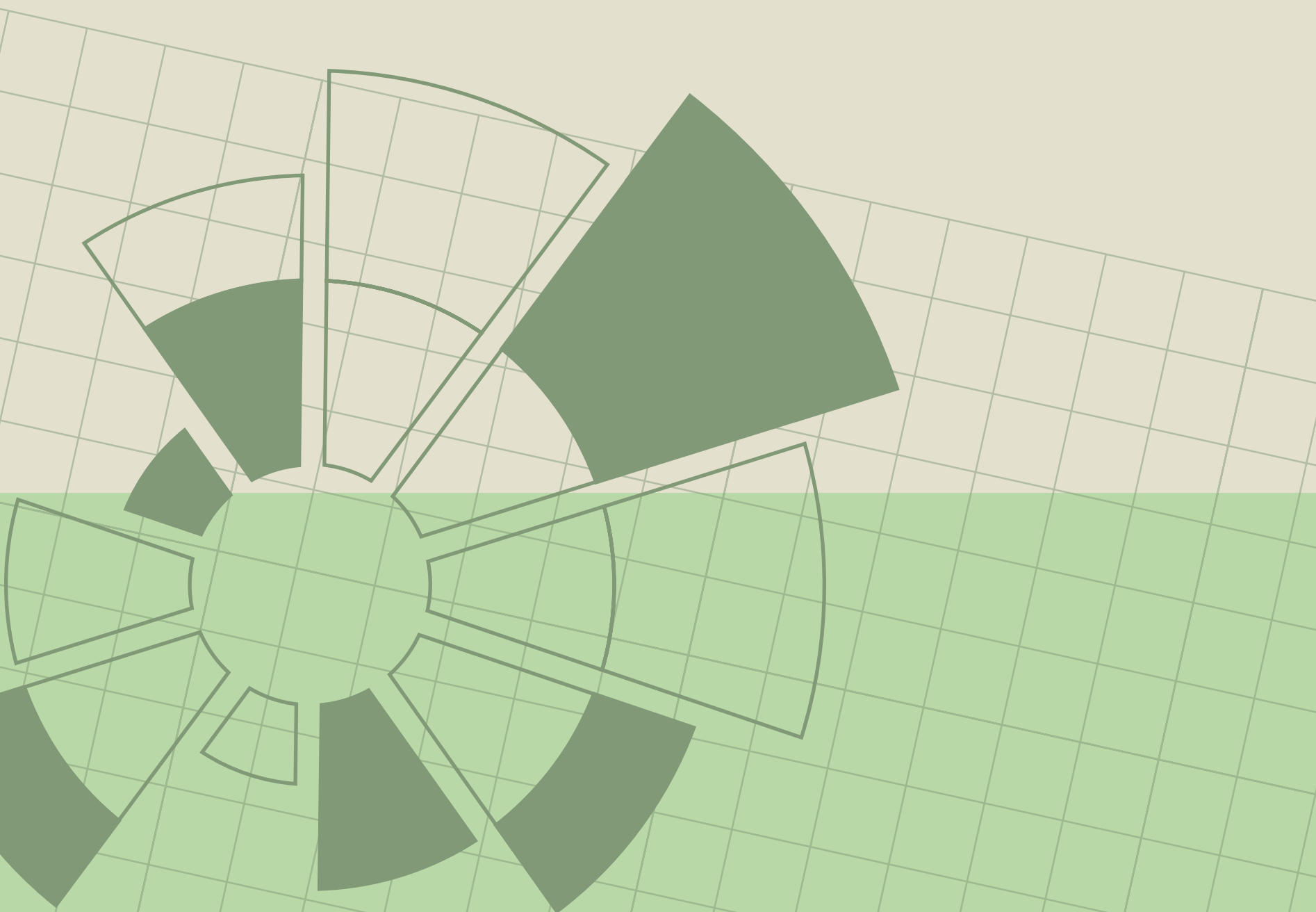
MOVING FROM AI TESTING TO OPERATIONS



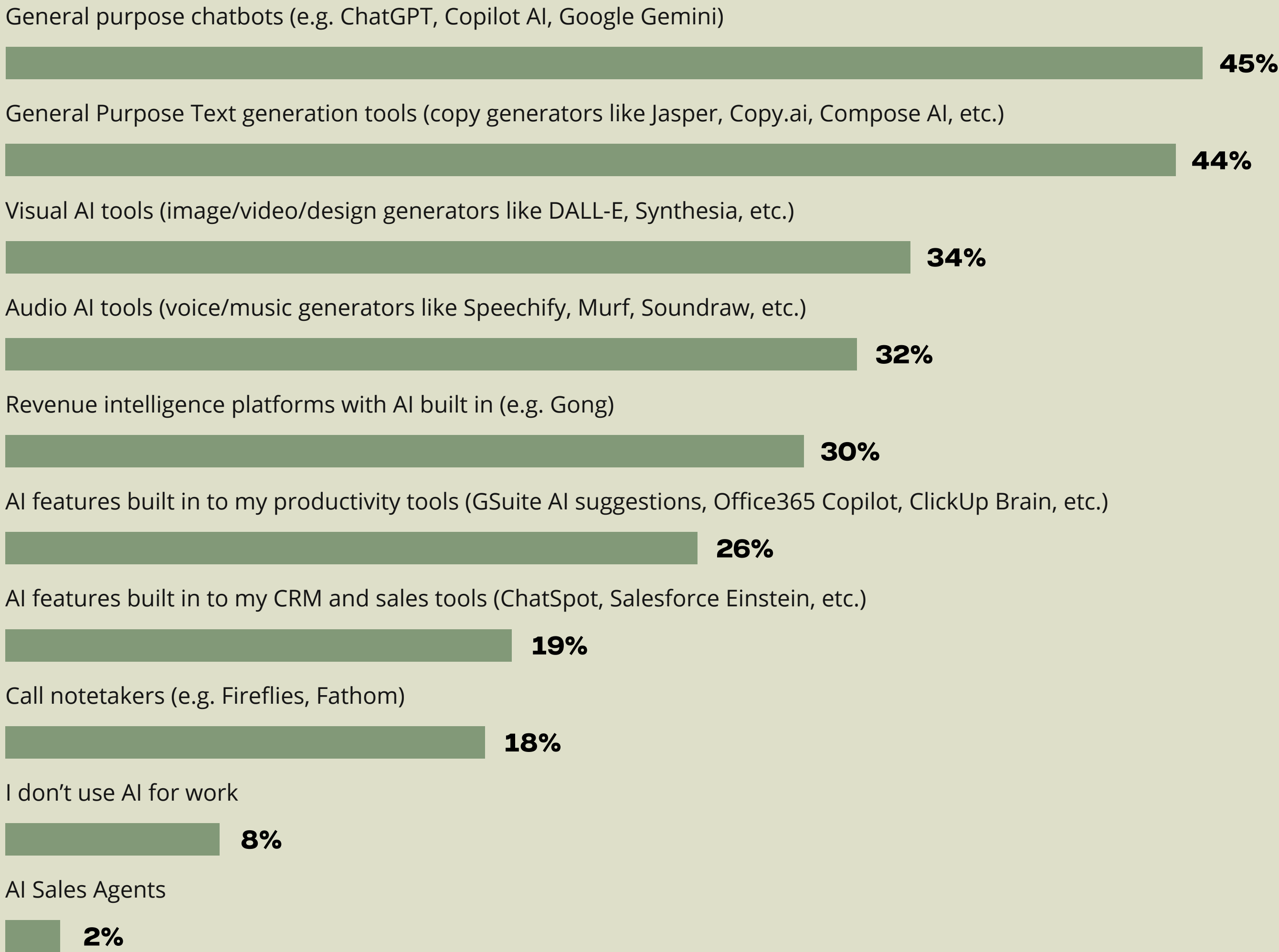
THE AI REVOLUTION IN SALES IS ALREADY HERE. WE'VE LEAPFROGGED PAST "SHOULD SALES TEAMS USE AI?" TO "WHERE SHOULD WE IMPLEMENT AI AND HOW?" THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TEAMS AREN'T JUST BOLTING AI ONTO THEIR EXISTING SALES PLAYBOOK, THEY'RE REBUILDING IT FROM THE GROUND UP. HERE'S WHAT THEY'RE DOING DIFFERENTLY.

AI HOLDOUTS ARE RARE (AND MISSING OUT)

Only 8% of sellers don't use any AI in their sales process. The ones who do report that AI and automation solutions provide the best ROI of any of their sales tools.

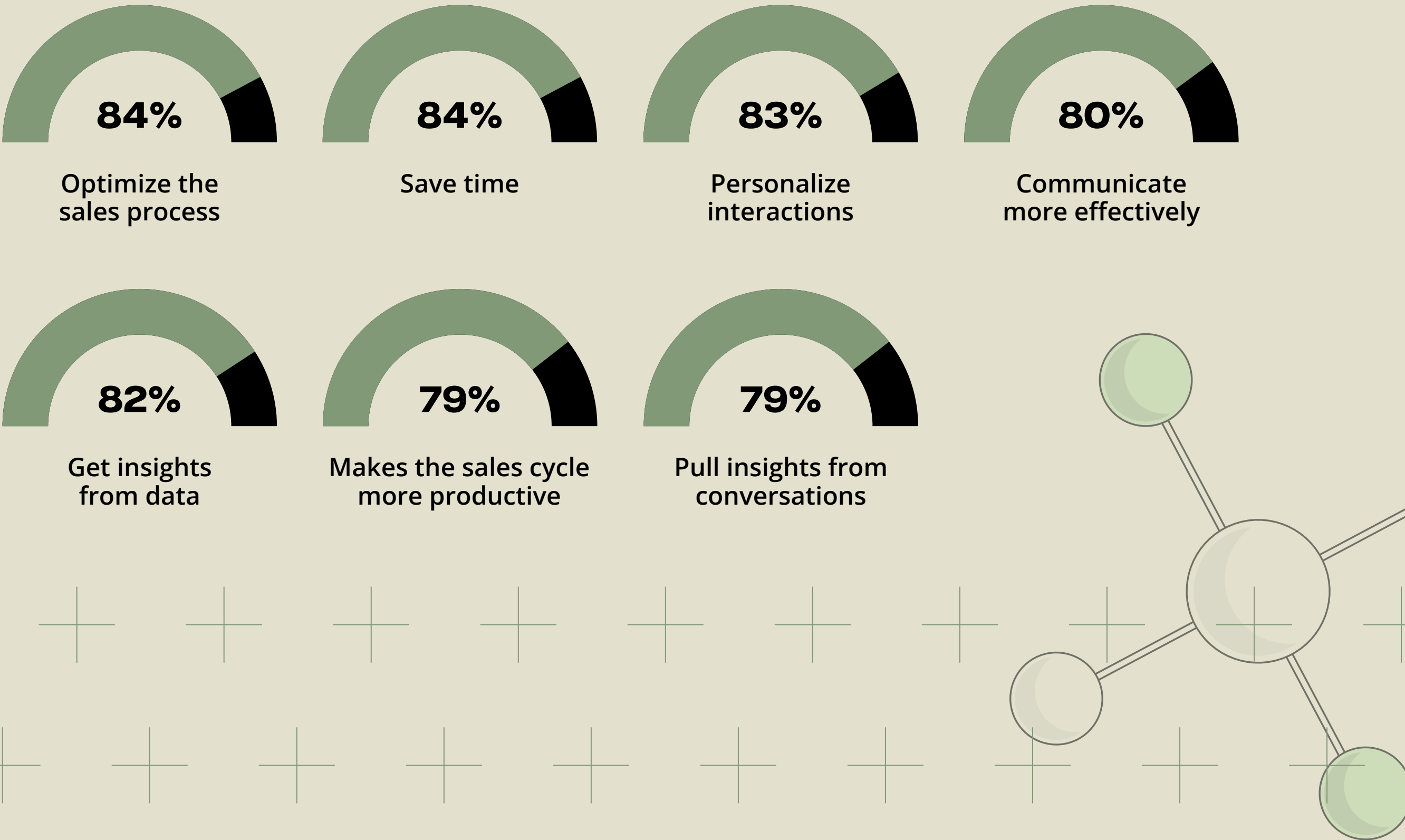


WHICH TYPES OF AI TOOLS DO YOU USE IN YOUR SALES ROLE, IF ANY?



THE PILLARS OF AI SALES SUCCESS

AI has quickly gone from a novelty to a standard part of any workflow. Here's how sellers use AI today.



SCIENCE OF SCALING SPOTLIGHT

“AI has the opportunity to reshape categories where content is an important input. Historically, a customer would have to come into ZoomInfo, find a set of accounts they were looking for, then go see if there were any signals that made those accounts good accounts to talk to. Is there intent? Did they visit my website? Do they have a new CIO? Are any of my former customers now with this company? You had a lot to grok, if you were a sales rep, to try to get at the right companies.

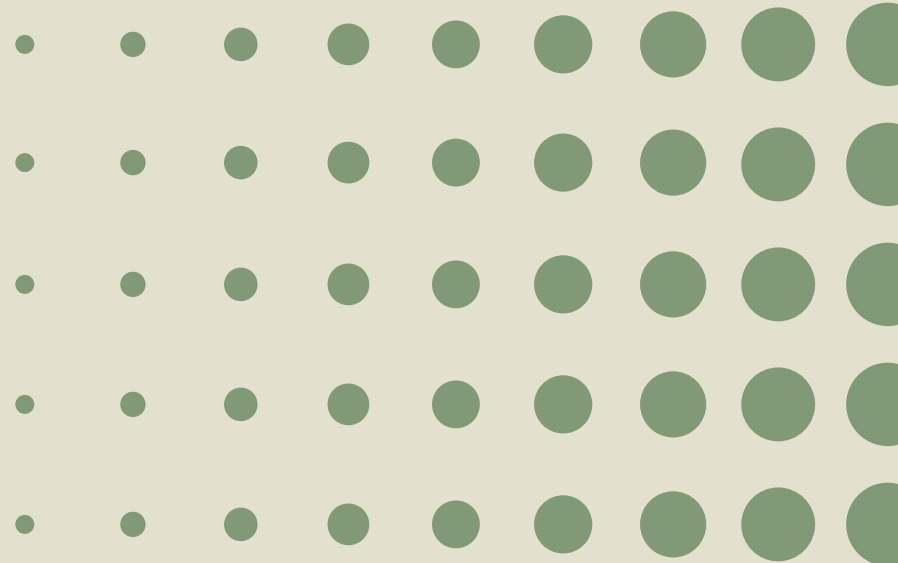
The first thing that AI does in our space is it takes away a lot of that cognitive load for a sales rep, and it understands your business. Trying to triangulate who to who to talk to today based on a bunch of disparate signals becomes handed over and delivered to you.

The second thing is AE to SDR pairings. How many conversations in your career have you had about AE to SDR pairings? One to one? One to two? What's the best number? The future account executive account manager is going to have an agentic SDR that rides along with them on everything. Every AE should have a one-to-one AI SDR pairing in the future.”

HENRY SCHUCK
Founder and CEO, ZoomInfo

LISTEN TO THE PODCAST

THE AGE OF THE SUPER-INFORMED BUYER



What happens when buyers know more than you do? This is quickly becoming the new reality for sellers. 74% believe that tools such as ChatGPT have made it easier for buyers to research products, which means the bar for sellers has been raised permanently.



WHERE SELLERS BELIEVE THEY CAN ADD VALUE IN THE AI AGE

36%

building buyer confidence in their purchase decisions

33%

helping buyers secure internal buy-in

27%

addressing buyers' emotions throughout the process

TODAY'S SALESPEOPLE ARE MORE THAN INFORMATION PROVIDERS — THEY'RE DECISION FACILITATORS.

WHY BUYERS STILL NEED YOU

WHAT AI CAN'T DO IS PROVIDE THE HUMAN ELEMENT THAT BUYERS NEED IN ANY CONSIDERED PURCHASE.



THEY TRUST RELATIONSHIPS OVER PLATFORMS

Relationships matter more than ever. With so many similar products in the marketplace, buyers are more likely to do a deal with someone they trust has their best interests at heart.



THEY NEED HELP CONNECTING THE DOTS

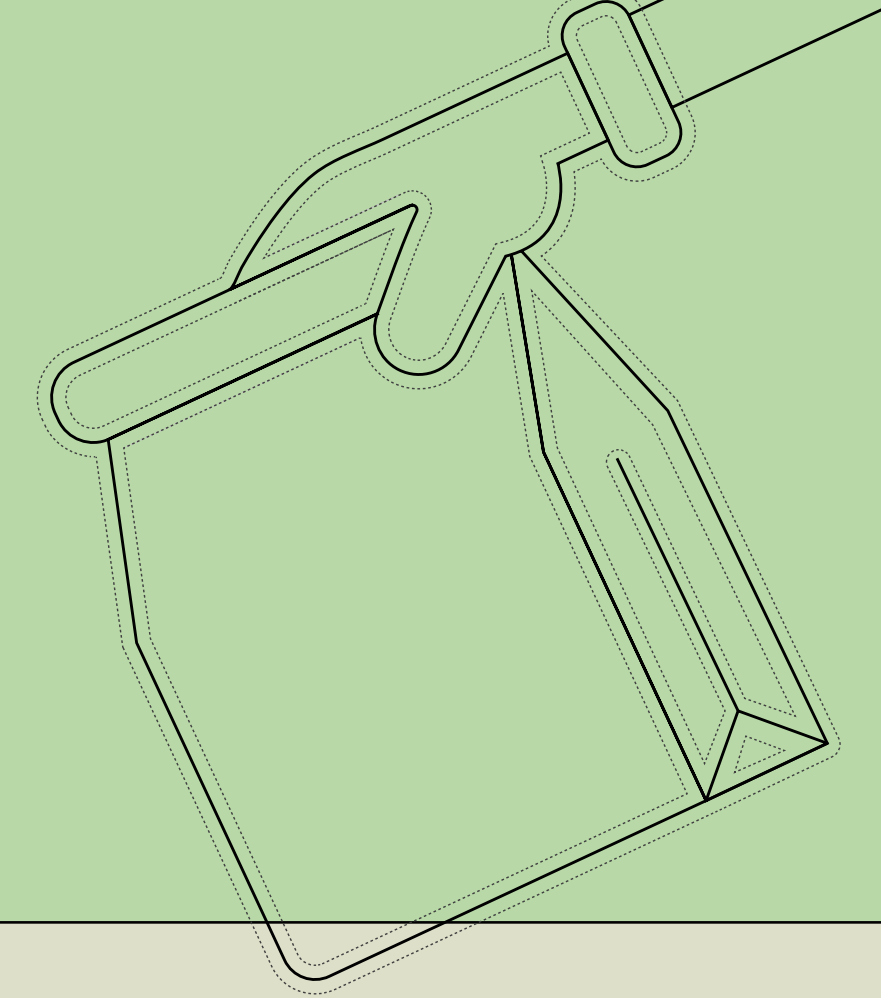
Buyers may have boatloads of information at their fingertips, but they still need someone to help make sense of it all. A seller who can assess a buyer's situation and design a solution that's tailored to their needs is worth their weight in gold.



THEY'RE EMOTIONALLY INVESTED IN DECISIONS

Facts and features are only part of what influences buyer decisions. Just as important is the emotion – have you made them feel confident in this solution? If they're not the decision maker, have you helped them navigate internal politics and priorities to secure buy-in? AI can't do any of that — only a human can.

SALES TAKEAWAYS



1

LISTEN TO WHAT YOUR CALLS ARE REALLY TELLING YOU

Conversation intelligence — generating insights from real conversations — is the highest-impact and easiest AI solution to implement. A tool that integrates with your CRM can extract key points from individual conversations, as well as aggregate insights across all calls. Not only will these insights make your reps more efficient, they're an invaluable resource to help managers see performance patterns at a glance and understand the “why” behind team performance.

Take our Academy course on how managers can leverage [conversation intelligence to coach sales teams](#).

2

TEACH YOUR TEAM TO DO WHAT AI CAN'T

With AI helping to take notes and outline action steps, reps no longer need to spend time on manual tasks. Instead, train them on confidence-building and securing buy-in. With an average of [five decision makers](#) involved in every sale, soft skills and emotional intelligence are more useful than ever. Teach them how to identify [emotional vs. rational buying motivations](#) and how to tailor their sales conversations in response.

3

MEASURE AI'S IMPACT

Optimization, time-saving, personalization, communication, insights, productivity, and conversational intelligence are the seven impact areas sellers say AI helps them with. Define [key success metrics](#) for each — response rate for personalization or time saved per rep for productivity, for example — and set up tracking before and after implementation so you can hone in on AI's impact.

4

IMPLEMENT GRADUALLY BUT DELIBERATELY

AI implementation is a marathon, not a sprint — especially when it involves customers. Rank potential investments by impact and effort. Prioritize the low-effort, high-impact initiatives while preparing for high-effort, high-impact initiatives — you can get to the rest when you have time.

Richard White, CEO and founder at [Fathom](#), an AI notetaker and meeting assistant, deploys customer-facing AI with caution.

“At first, we were cavalier about using customer-facing AI,” says White. “But there were some emails that we weren’t very happy with. There were some support responses that we weren’t very happy with. Now, we are very quick to deploy internal-facing use cases that uplevel our team. But we’re really cautious around bringing things to market that go directly to our customers.”

5

PREPARE FOR AI- INFORMED BUYERS

As prospects get smarter, sellers have to step up their game. Train your team on [consultative](#) and [solution selling](#). While buyers can access more information, more quickly than ever before, your reps are the experts. Train them on how to conduct discovery in the age of AI — questions like “What do you already know about us?” should be part of the qualification process if they aren’t already — and how to design personalized action plans that cater to prospects’ unique situations.

PARTNER INSIGHT

“Buyers already have the facts. What they need is confidence, clarity, and internal alignment. That’s where buyer enablement comes in. Trumpet data shows teams using personalization and engaging elements, such as mutual action plans, in our sales rooms, see win rates climb by more than 10%. In fact, sales rooms that include tailored video or content are revisited 40% more often, showing that the human touch is what keeps buyers engaged.”

When sellers shift from information providers to decision facilitators, they build trust, connect the dots, and support the emotional side of purchase decisions. Our trumpet engagement data proves it: Prospects are 2–3x more likely to share a sales room internally when it’s mapped to their specific buying group; directly accelerating alignment and deal momentum. In the age of the super-informed buyer, enablement isn’t optional, it’s the human element that turns knowledge into revenue.”

RORY SADLER
Co-Founder, Trumpet



MARK'S TAKE

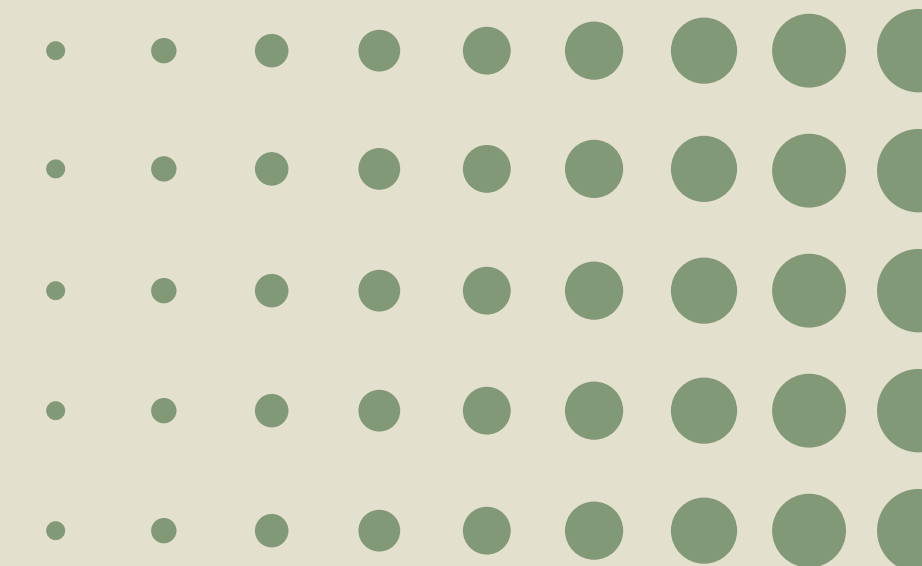
As part of a course I teach at Harvard Business School, I take 50 students on an annual field trip. Last quarter, we went to Silicon Valley to study AI. Our guest speakers described a future organizational structure consisting of a series of specialized AI agents, each responsible for specific tasks. For example, in a go-to-market prospecting sequence, agents might calculate the Ideal Customer Profile (ICP), identify the optimal unpenetrated accounts that fit the ICP, pinpoint five employees within the decision-making unit at each account, create a personalized outreach sequence for each contact, then execute each step of the sequence through the appropriate channel.

Just two years ago, successful AI implementations were rare. Most of the activity took place in innovation labs, and there were significant concerns about AI hallucinations. By 2024, comfort with the technology had increased, but implementing AI was hindered by legal and security issues, as these departments lacked established policies and were concerned about protecting intellectual property. Now, we're seeing greater success in integrating AI into core business operations.

As we move into the AI-driven future, nimble startups have an opportunity to rethink their entire internal operations. The winners will be those who not only embrace AI but do so in a way that aligns technology with business strategy.

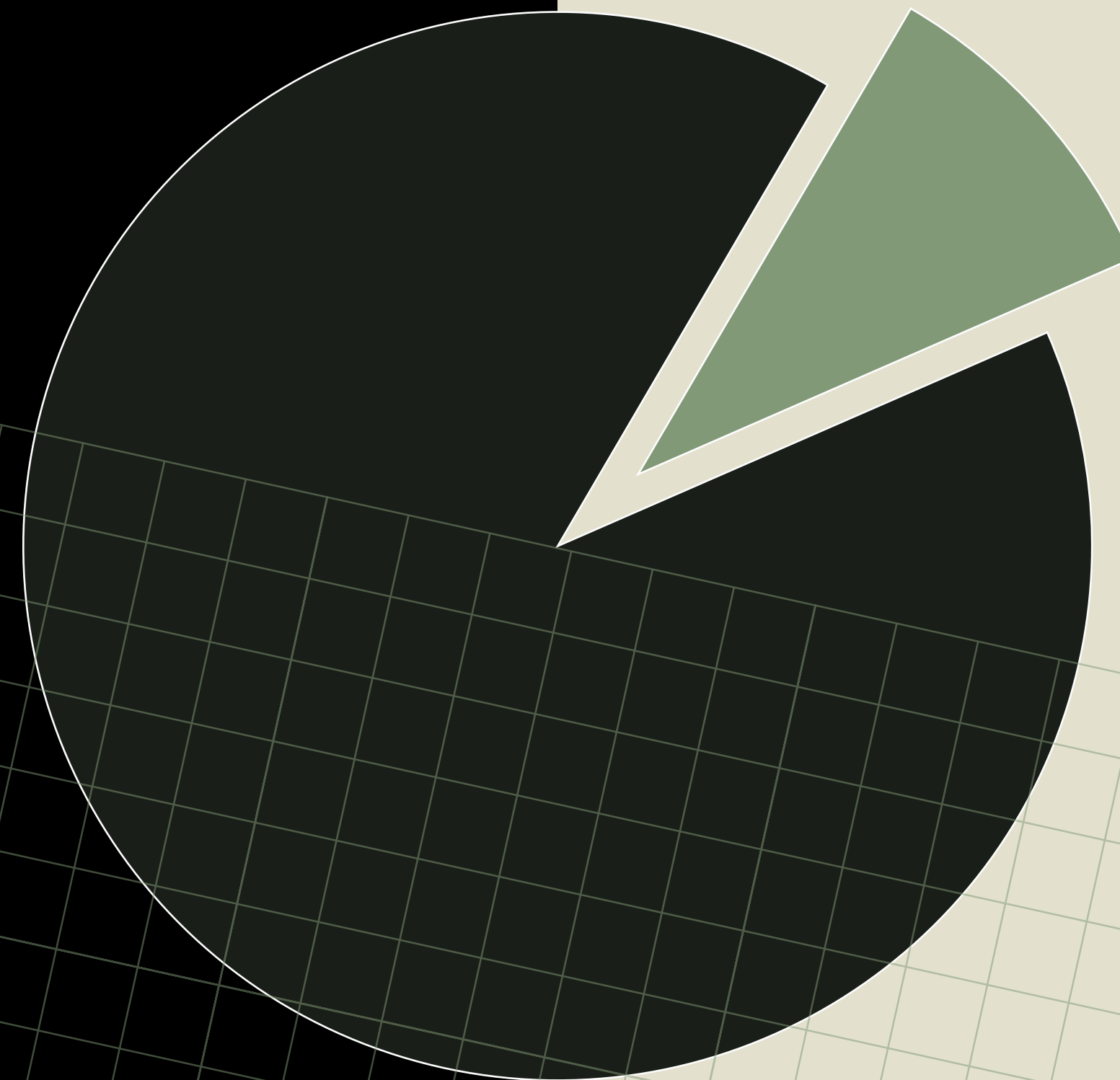
MARK ROBERGE

Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital, Founding CRO at HubSpot



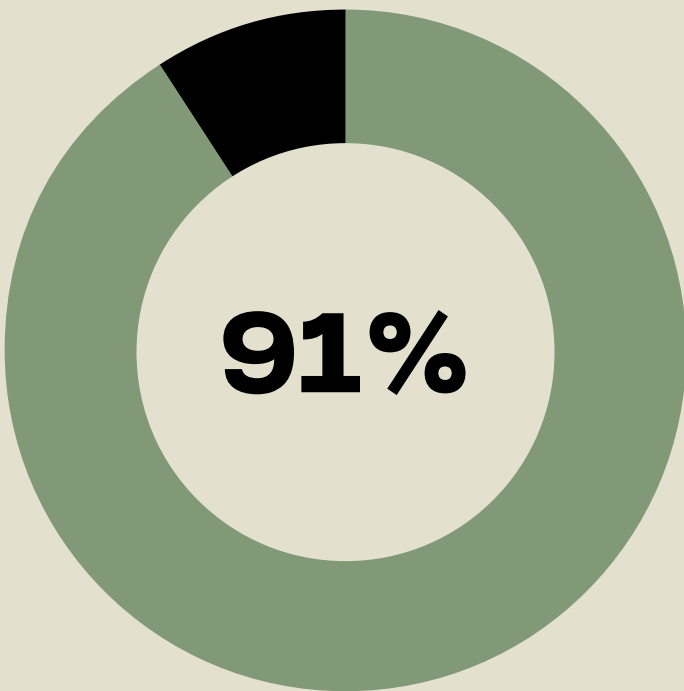
SALES + MARKETING

THE BEST REPS ARE PUTTING
ON THEIR MARKETING HATS

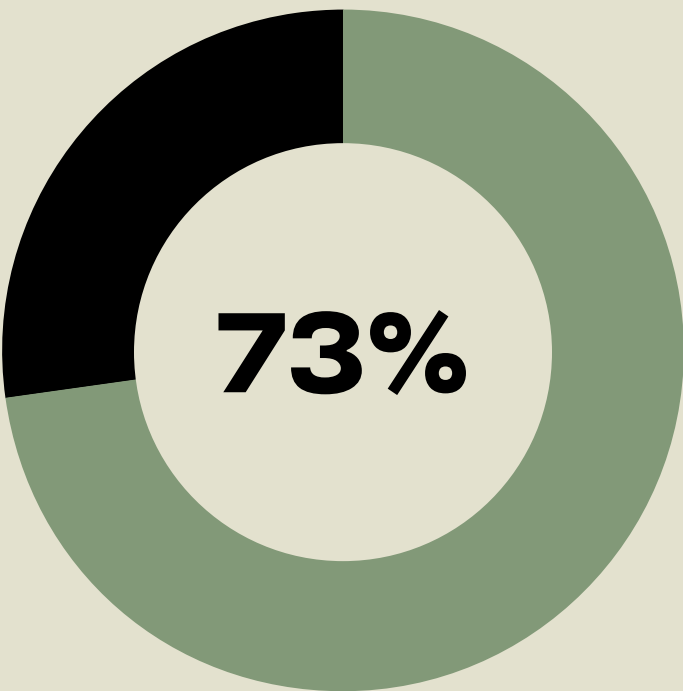


THE LINE BETWEEN SALES AND MARKETING HAS BLURRED

Today's top performers aren't just closers being fed leads. They're content creators, educators, social media experts, and brand builders. Marketing and sales organizations are more in tune with one another than ever.



say their sales and marketing teams are "somewhat" or "strongly" aligned



describe marketing leads as "high" or "very high" quality



"The biggest mistake people make with demand generation is the inappropriate cut and paste. This happens in many go-to-market system designs. They'll go to a conference and hear about someone who had amazing success with content marketing or cold outreach or events and they'll try to copy it. Demand generation selection has to be aligned with your context."

MARK ROBERGE

Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital, Founding CRO at HubSpot



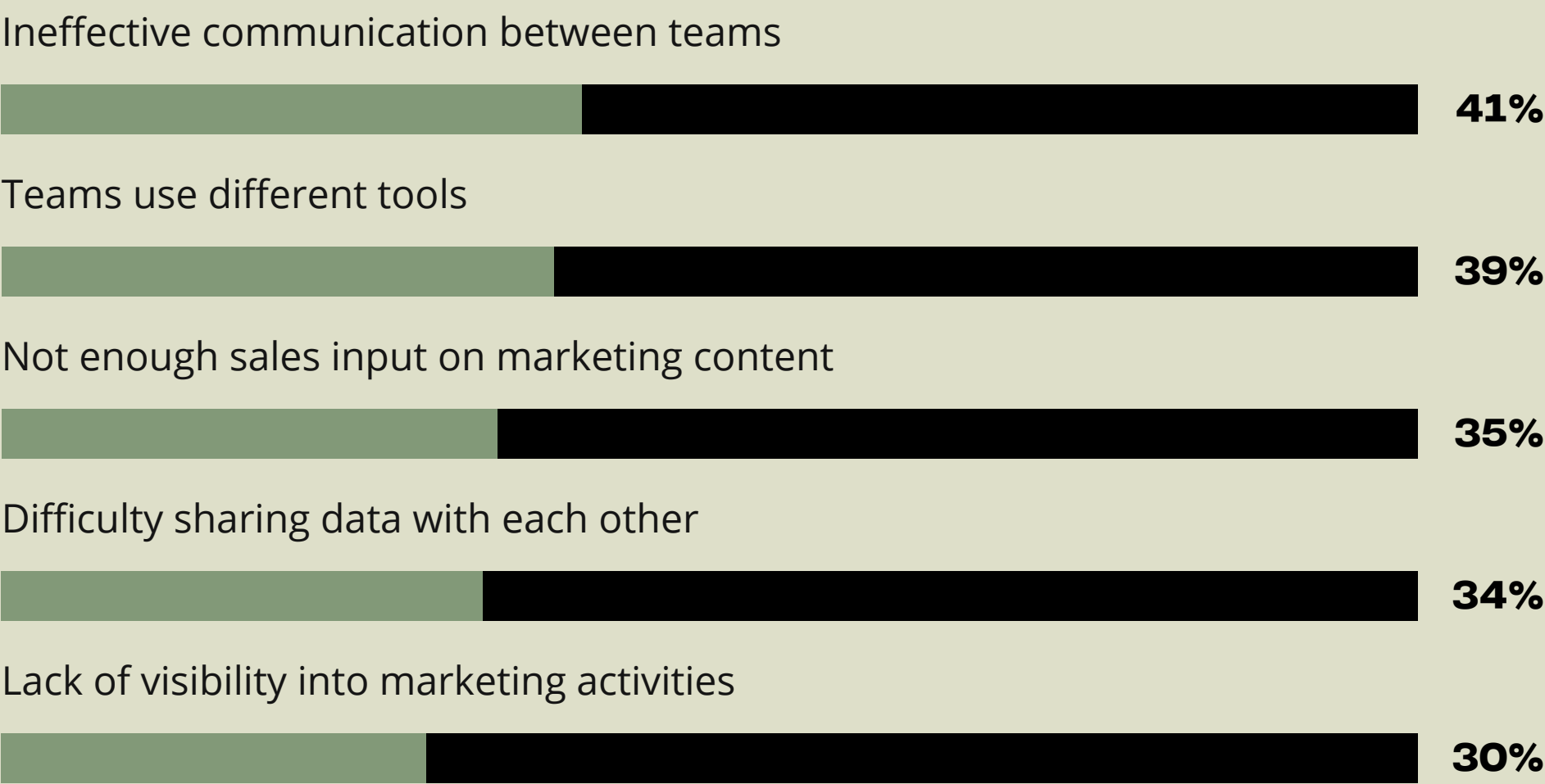
WATCH THE VIDEO ON LEAD GENERATION SECRETS FROM A HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PROFESSOR

WATCH HERE



WHERE SALES AND MARKETING ALIGNMENT FALLS SHORT

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES IN MAKING SURE SALES AND MARKETING TEAMS ARE ALIGNED?



The bad news is that these challenges pose significant obstacles to strong alignment. The good news is that they're operational or organizational challenges with concrete solutions. Build a shared operating system that defines how teams will communicate and give input on lead generation, and consolidate tools and data sources with your CRM to create a strong shared foundation for sales and marketing teams.

WHEN SALES AND MARKETING COLLABORATE, EVERYONE WINS

The benefits of aligning sales and marketing are clear: Your sellers will get better leads, leading to better business outcomes and happier customers.

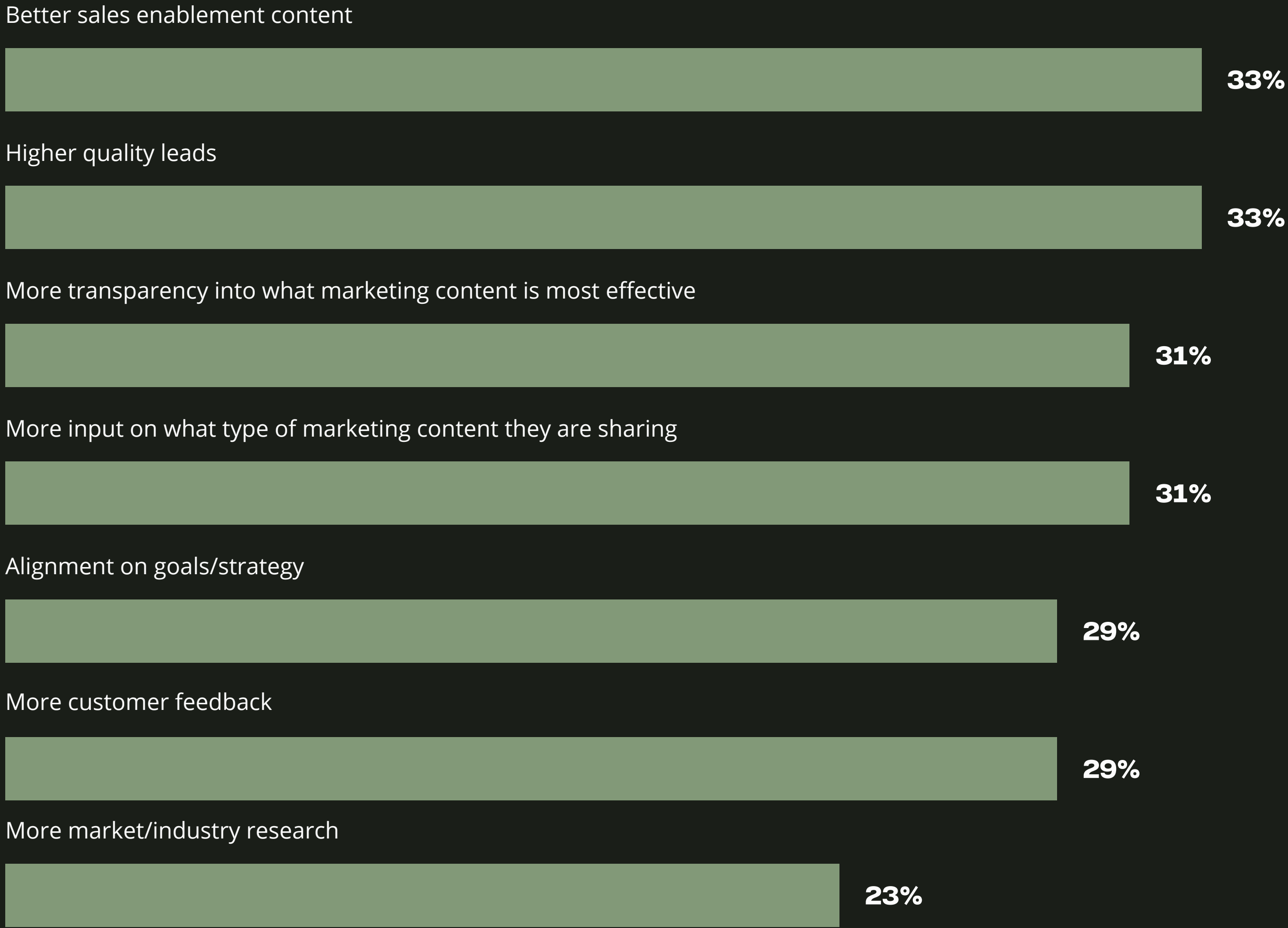
WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST BENEFITS OF SALES AND MARKETING TEAMS BEING ALIGNED?



WHAT SALES WANTS FROM MARKETING

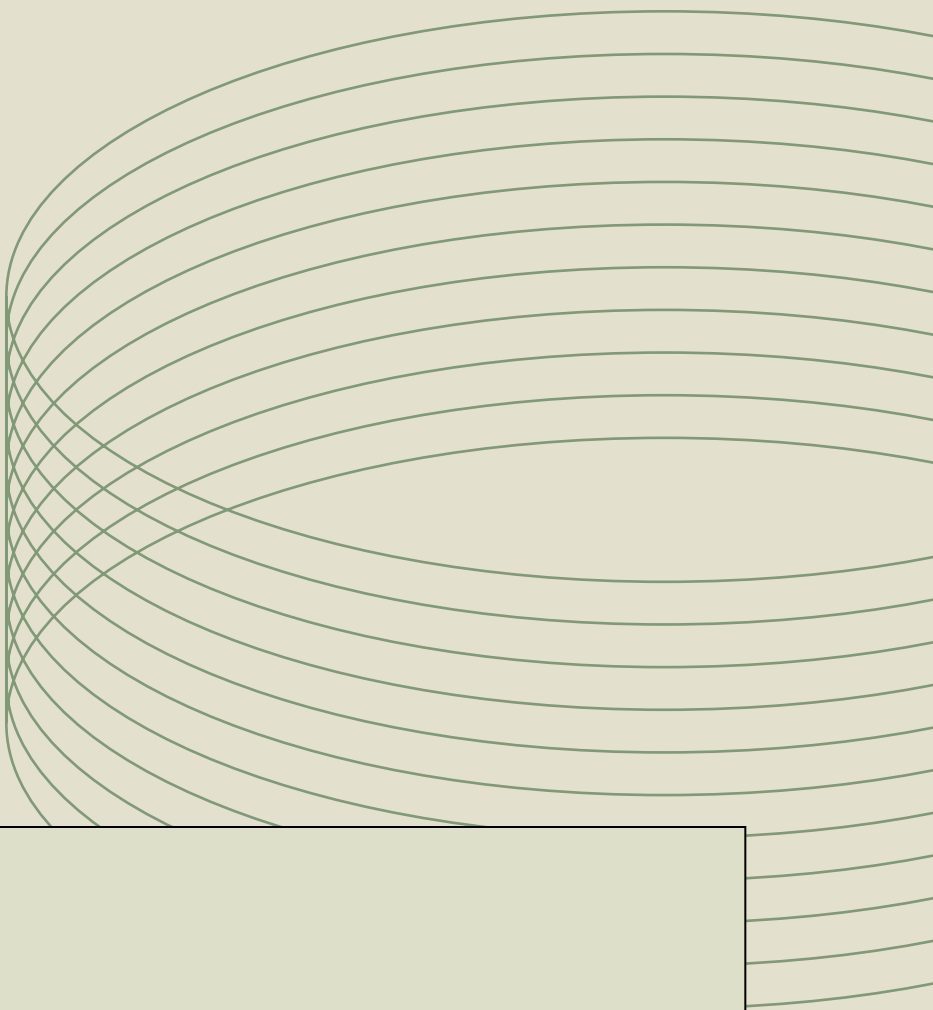
The first step to better alignment is setting shared expectations. Sellers prioritize better sales enablement content and higher-quality leads, but also say they want to function as strategic partners to marketers and help to define goals and strategy.

WHAT DO YOU NEED MOST FROM YOUR MARKETING TEAM?

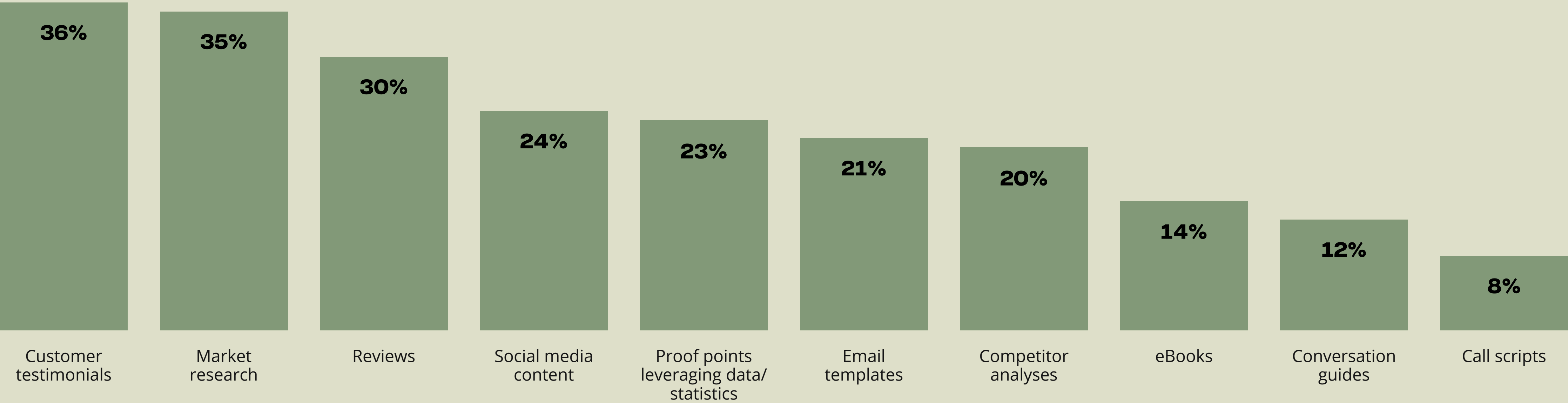


SALES ENABLEMENT THAT WINS DEALS

Effective enablement content helps sellers build real-world credibility. Traditional formats like ebooks and call scripts are less effective in a world where generic information is a simple internet search or LLM prompt away. Instead, endorsements from customers — like testimonials, reviews, and social proof — backed by clear data on outcomes and ROI — move the needle on deals.



WHICH TYPE OF SALES ENABLEMENT CONTENT IS MOST EFFECTIVE AT HELPING YOU WIN DEALS?



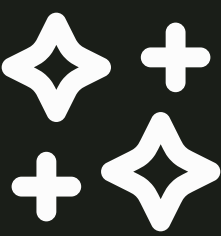
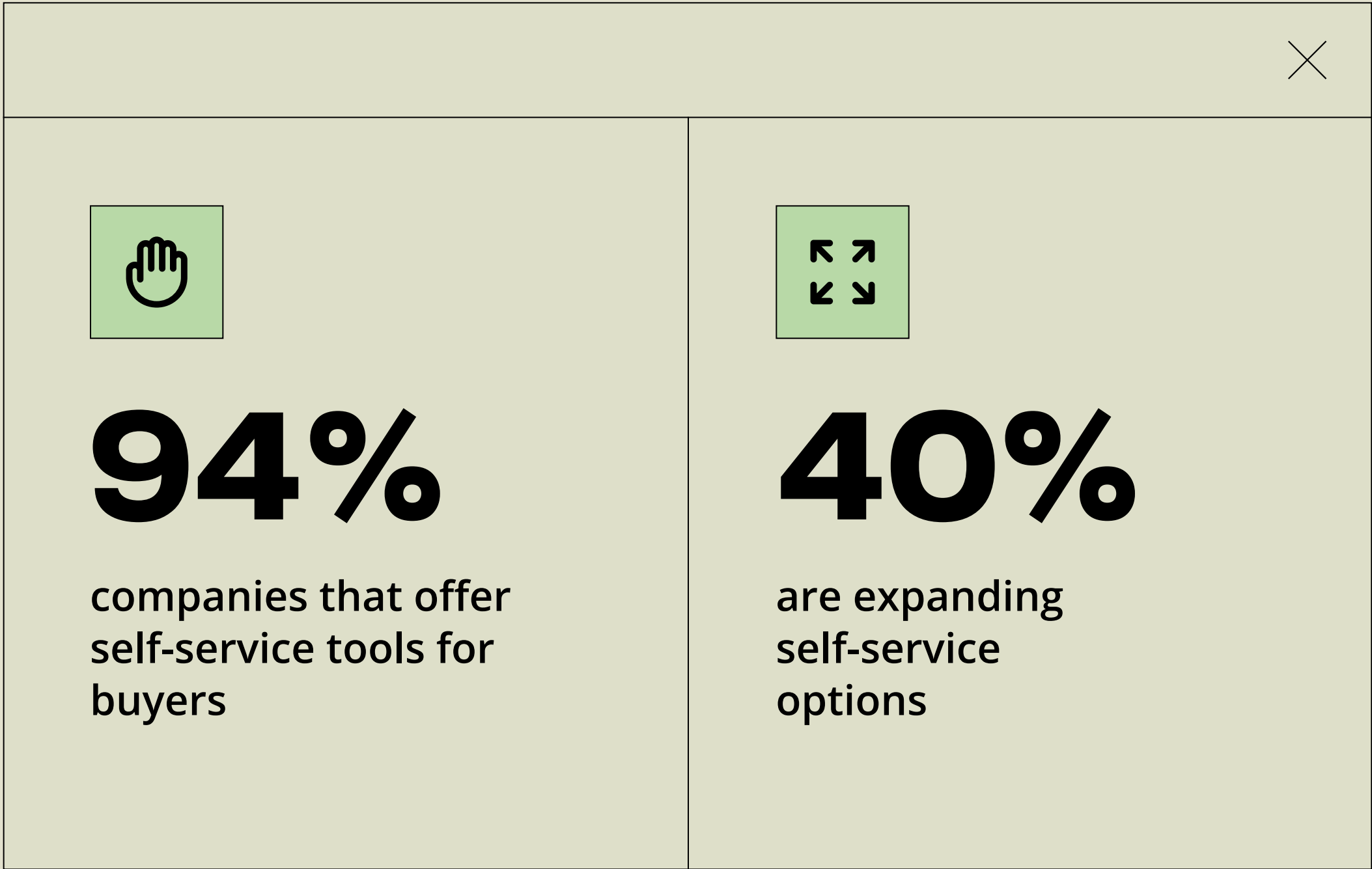
HOW TOP REPS DO MORE THAN SELL

Salespeople have always done more than “just sell,” but in 2025 there’s more to the sales role than ever before. Here’s where today’s best reps invest:

1	2	3	4	5
CONTENT CREATION	SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT	VALUE-FIRST EDUCATION	PERSONAL BRAND DEVELOPMENT	COMMUNITY-BUILDING
Personal branding and thought leadership are essential to build trust with prospects who need advisors to guide them through a sea of information.	Whether it’s social listening — monitoring mentions of your product on social media and chiming in with an expert opinion – or joining industry conversations, social media is a crucial outreach channel.	Prospects only care about the value you provide them. Highlighting customer success, sharing tips and tricks to get the most of your product, or sharing interesting use cases are all more relevant to prospects than acting as a personal billboard.	Prospects are more likely to respond to a message from a rep whose LinkedIn profile is filled with helpful insight than one who’s never posted. The sellers who invest in building their personal brands will reap the rewards.	A prospect’s peer will often have more relevant insight than a salesperson. Top sellers create communities to connect prospects with customers and experts they wouldn’t otherwise have access to.

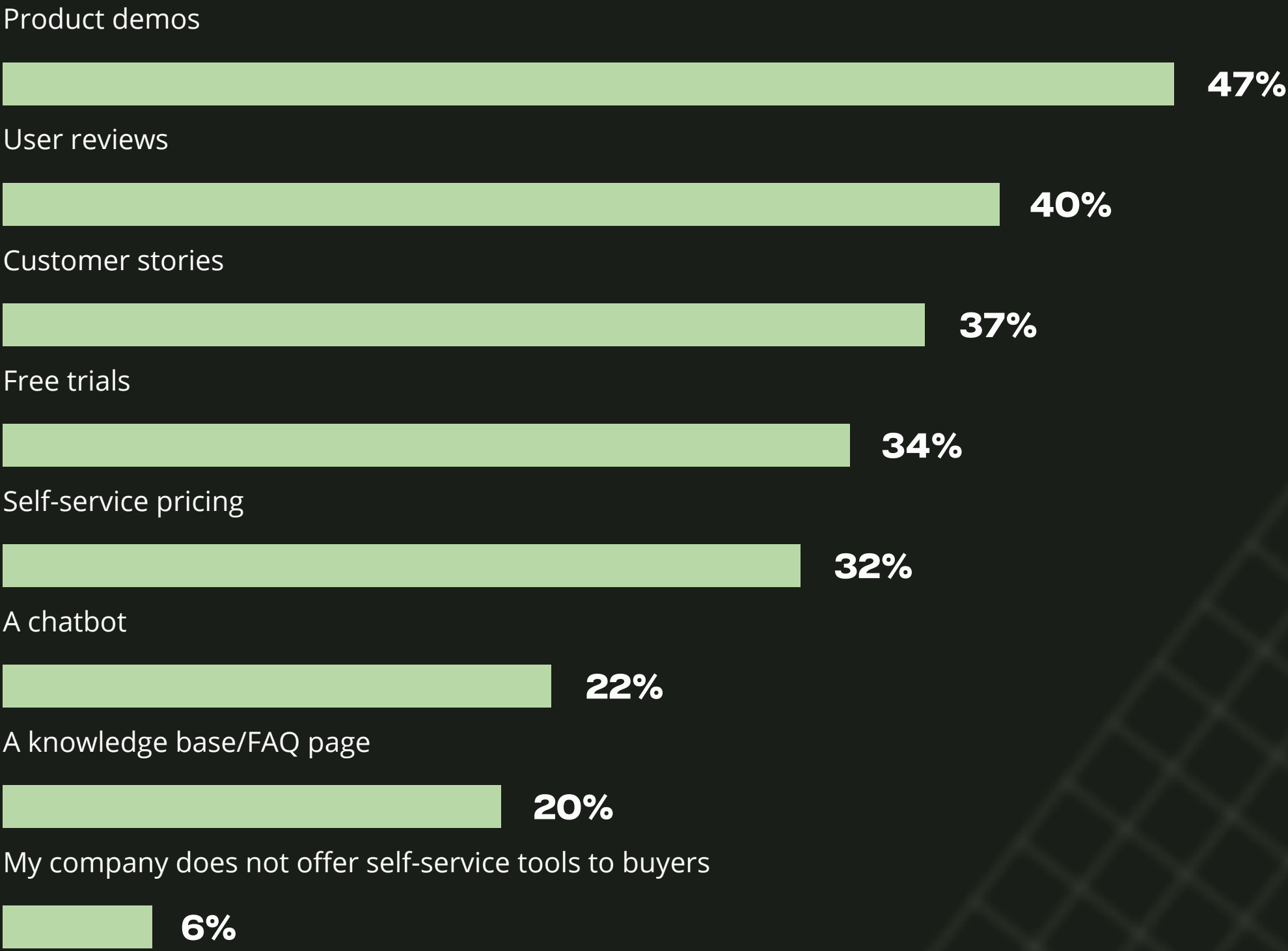
SELF-SERVICE IS RESHAPING THE SALES PROCESS

A few decades ago, a customer’s research process began with talking to a salesperson. Today, customers conduct the majority of research before ever taking a call. With the rise of self-service, buyers can learn more and do more on their own than ever before.

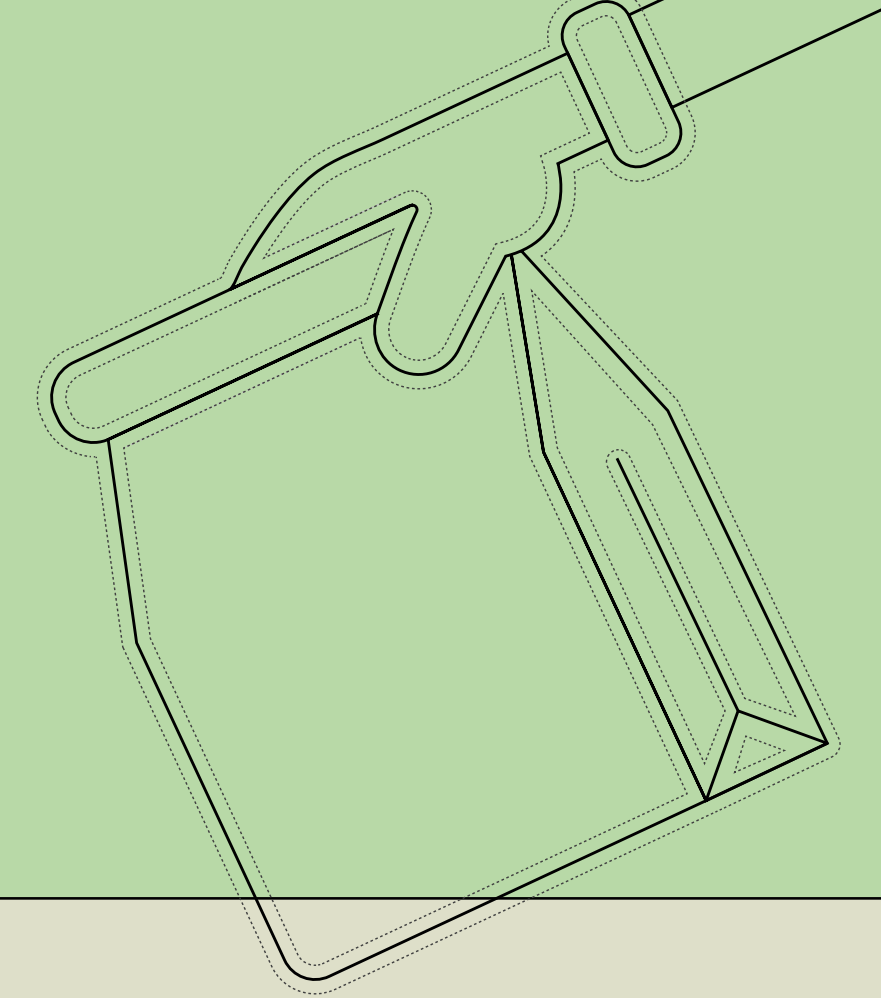


THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOLS DEMONSTRATE VALUE, SUCH AS USER REVIEWS, CUSTOMER STORIES, AND FREE TRIALS.

WHICH SELF-SERVICE TOOLS ARE MOST EFFECTIVE AT HELPING BUYERS MAKE PURCHASE DECISIONS?



SALES TAKEAWAYS



1

SELL TO BUYERS WHERE THEY ARE

35% of reps get their highest-quality leads and 42% get the highest response rates from social media, performance which demands formal investment from sales leaders. Conduct research to learn what platforms your customers use and educate your reps on how to leverage social media to build their own brands. Remember that every channel is different — [tactics for LinkedIn](#), for example, won't necessarily translate to Facebook.

Check out our [guide to social selling](#) and suggested [social selling training](#) to get started.

2

TRAIN REPS TO BECOME THE EXPERTS BUYERS TRUST

Authentic, informative thought leadership builds trust between prospects and salespeople. Not only should reps create original content, they should participate in broader industry conversations where they can share their expertise and — *only* if it's relevant — insights about your product. Our [guide to personal branding](#) and [free personal branding tools](#) will help your reps get started.

3

DEVELOP A SOCIAL-FIRST ENABLEMENT PLAYBOOK

Sales enablement has traditionally focused on meetings: battlecards, competitive intelligence, objection-handling resources, and more. But today, personal social media is just as important.

Develop a library of shareable content and prompts that's built for social media, but go beyond prewritten content (unless you want your sales reps to all sound the same). Prioritize [guidelines for each social platform](#), and tips that enable reps to create content with confidence. Whether it's [creating videos for social platforms](#) or prompts that reps can use as a starting point, show them how to share their own perspectives while staying on message.

4

IMPLEMENT SOCIAL LISTENING TOOLS

Salespeople shouldn't manually search for relevant posts or conversations. Invest in tools that can monitor prospects and industry conversations. We've put together a list of our favorite [social listening tools](#) to get you started.

5

BUILD SELF-SERVICE OPTIONS THAT HELP BUYERS HELP THEMSELVES

Whether it's a trial, pricing calculator, or customer stories, update your sales and marketing process to match the way people buy today. Don't feel like you have to do everything at once — for example, you may not be set up to create a free trial quickly. Prioritize the quick wins while laying the foundation for larger investments.

6

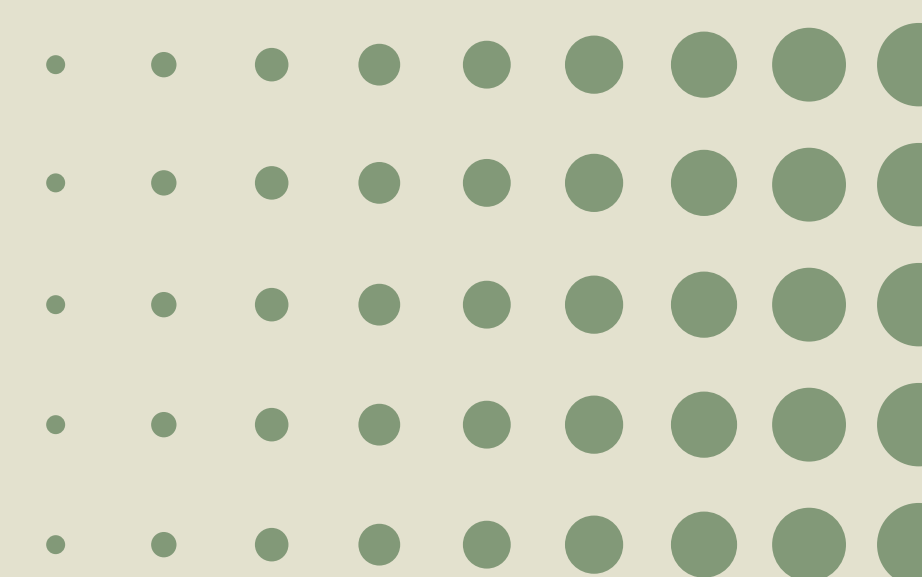
BRING SOCIAL INSIGHTS INTO YOUR CRM

It will come as no surprise that all the social selling and social listening won't be effective if it's not tracked and stored in a single source of truth. Integrate your various social listening tools with your CRM so their performance can be tracked alongside the rest of your sales metrics.

A green-tinted portrait of a man with shoulder-length hair, a beard, and glasses, smiling. He is wearing a denim shirt over a V-neck t-shirt. The background is split: the left side has a white grid pattern on a light green background, and the right side is a solid light green.

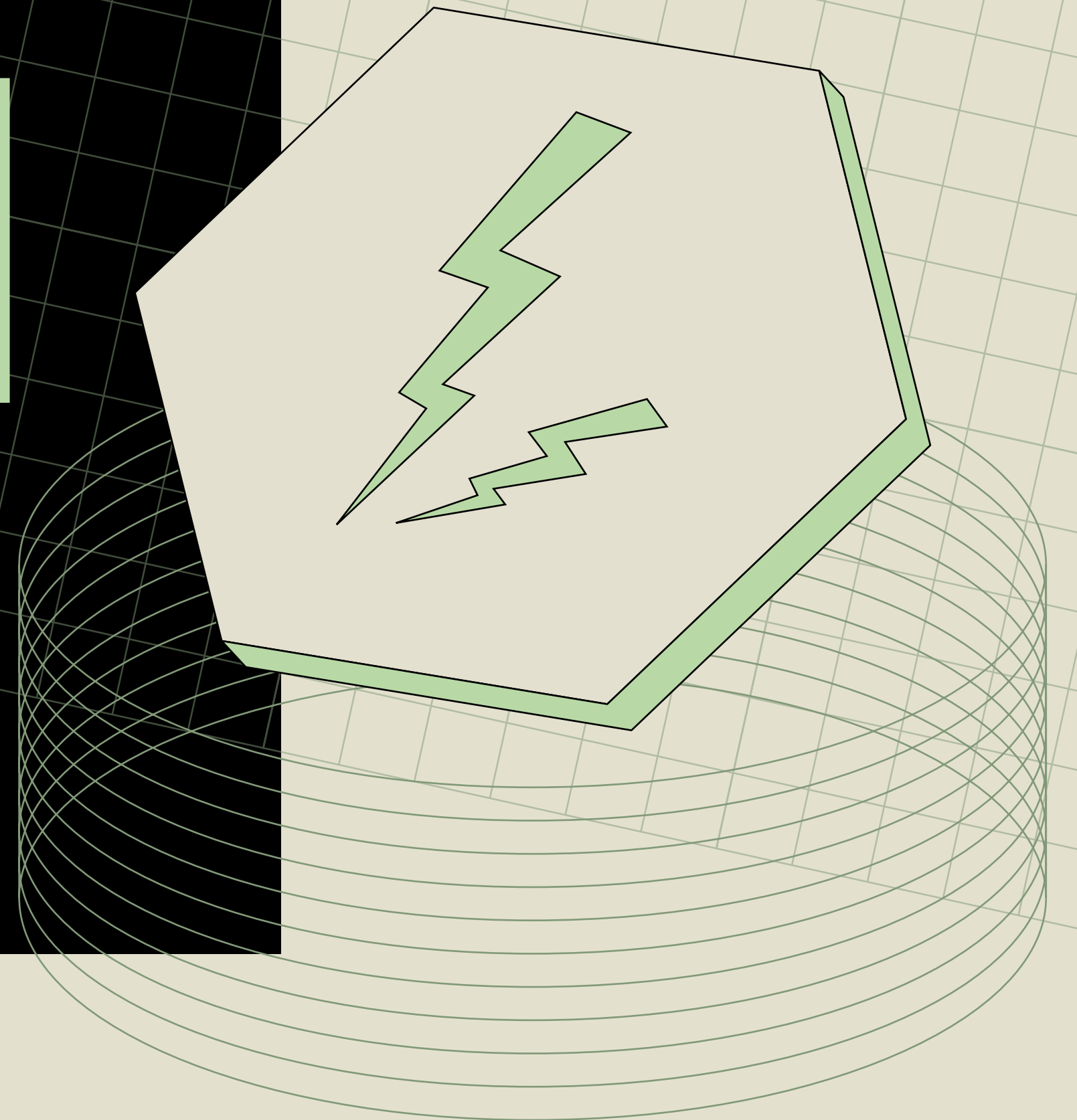
Today, alignment isn't enough. Marketers are creating more and more sales-like material and generating demand for self-service trials, and salespeople are creating more and more thought leadership content. The future of these professions is intertwined.

Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital, Founding CRO at HubSpot



COMMUNICATION

**THE MOST POPULAR CHANNELS AND
STRATEGIES FOR REACHING PROSPECTS**



COMMUNICATION

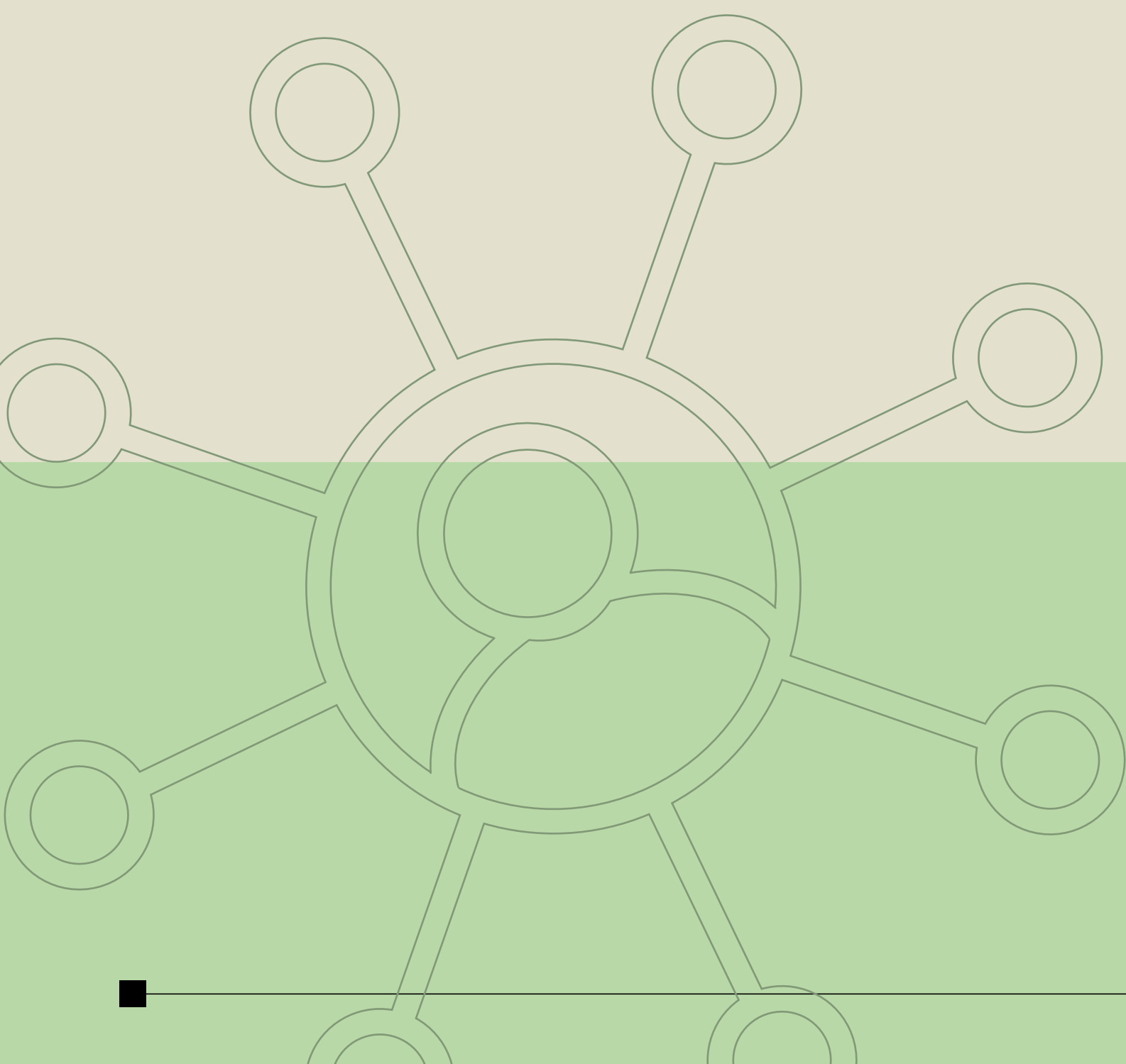
IT'S TIME FOR SALES TO GET SOCIAL



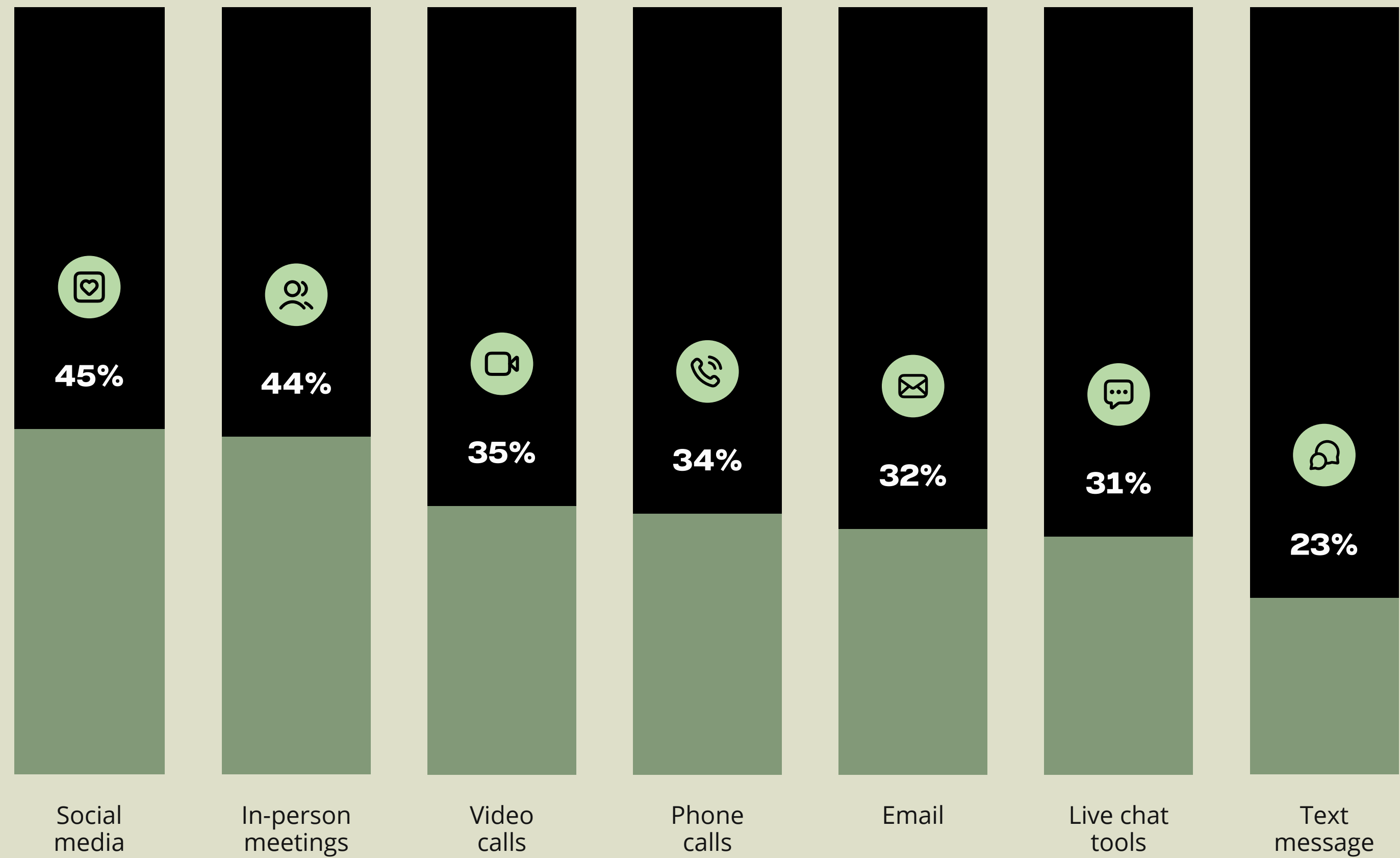
THE COMMUNICATION PLAYBOOK THAT WORKED 18 MONTHS AGO ALREADY NEEDS UPDATING. TOP SELLERS HAVE CRACKED THE CODE ON MODERN PROSPECT COMMUNICATION — AND IT'S NOT WHAT YOU'D EXPECT. HERE'S WHAT'S ACTUALLY WORKING.

THE BEST CHANNELS TO MAKE DEALS

Compared to 2024, 30% more sellers rate social media as “very effective” in 2025 and 21% more sellers rate video calls as “very effective.” In contrast, the effectiveness of in-person meetings dropped, with 5.5% fewer reps rating the channel as “very effective.”



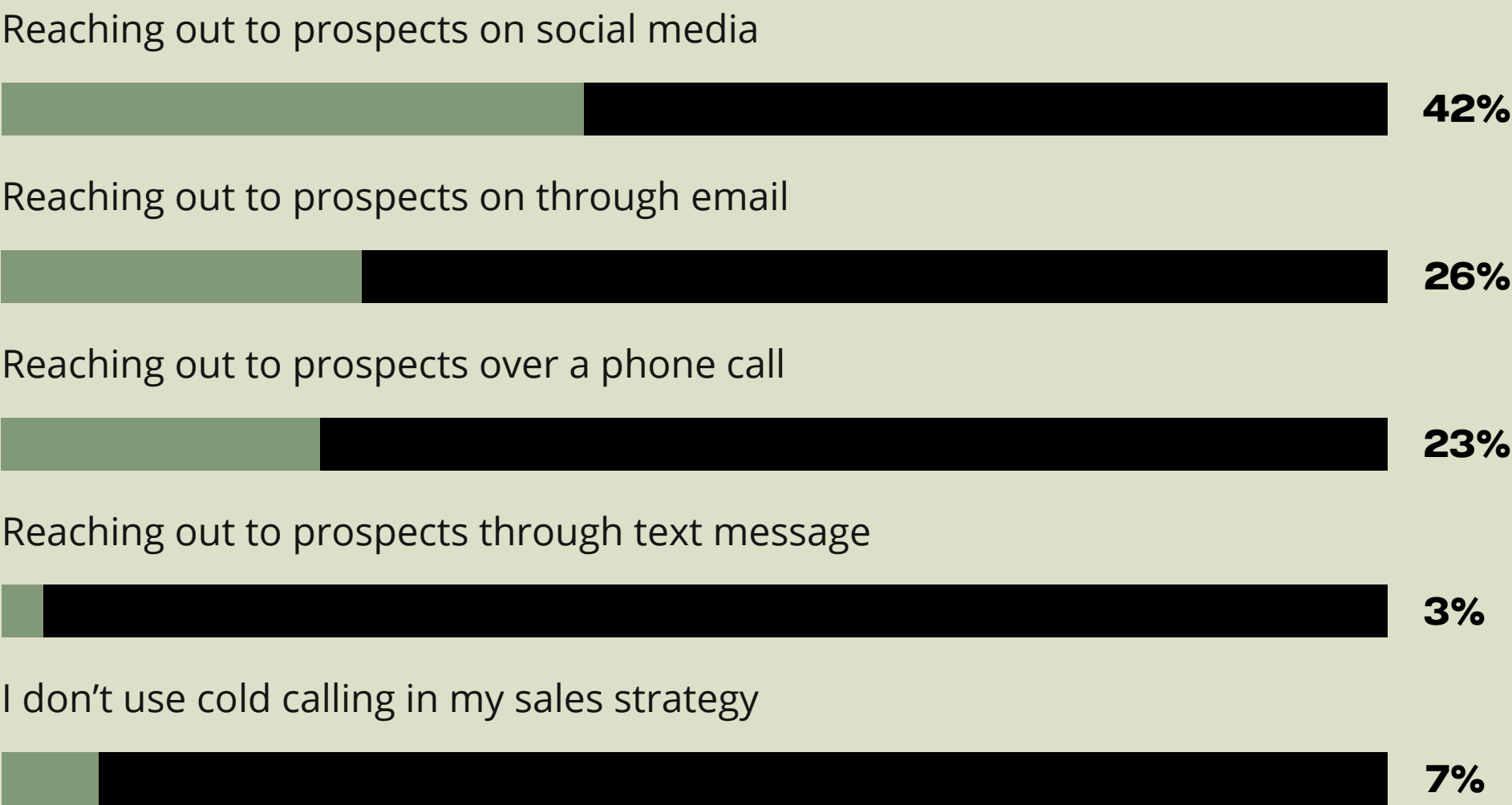
WE ASKED SALESPEOPLE TO RATE EACH OF THE FOLLOWING CHANNELS ON HOW WELL THEY DRIVE SALES. HERE’S HOW MANY SELLERS RATED EACH AS “VERY EFFECTIVE”:



SOCIAL MEDIA IS INFLUENCING EVERY PART OF THE SALES JOURNEY

When it comes to response rate and lead quality, social media is king.

WHICH CHANNEL HAS THE HIGHEST RESPONSE RATE WHEN IT COMES TO COLD OUTREACH?

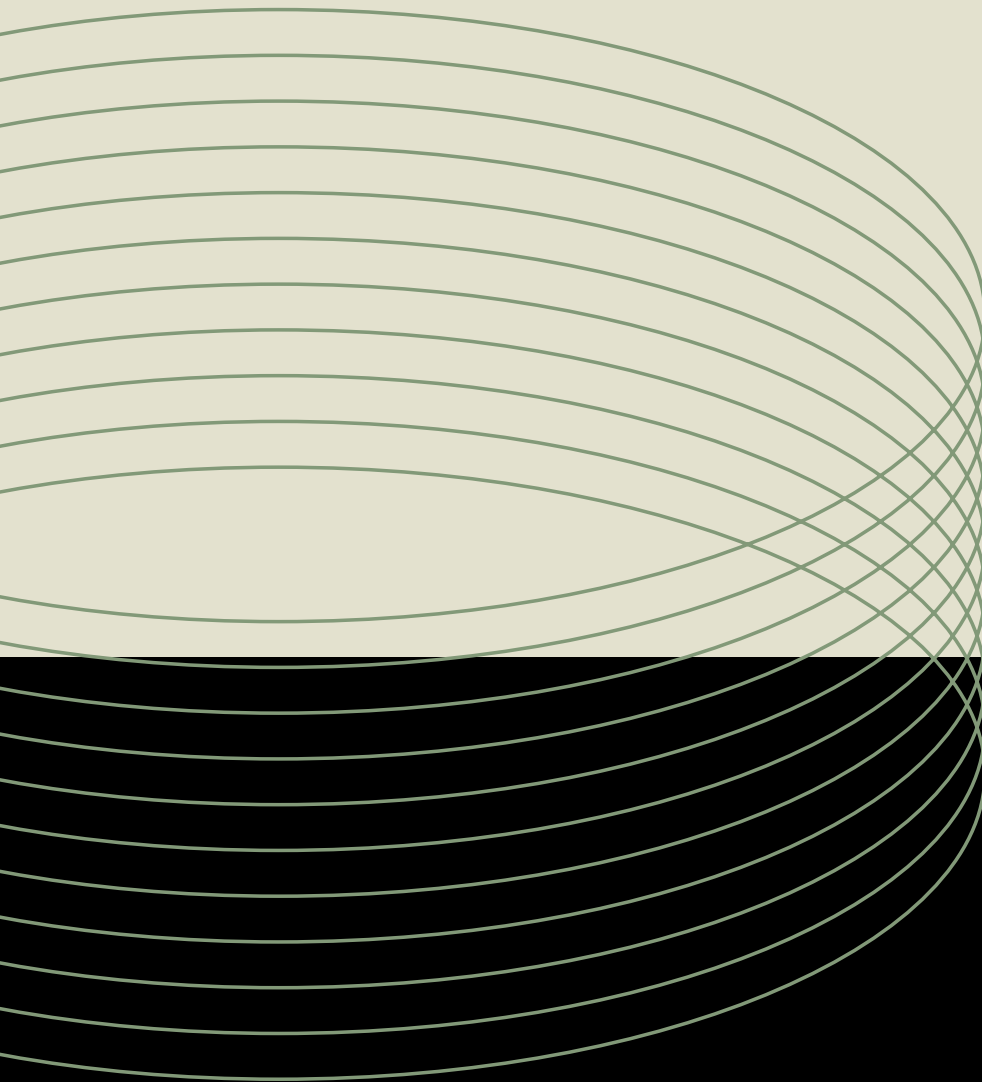


WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR HIGHEST QUALITY LEADS (OR PROSPECT CONTACTS) FROM?

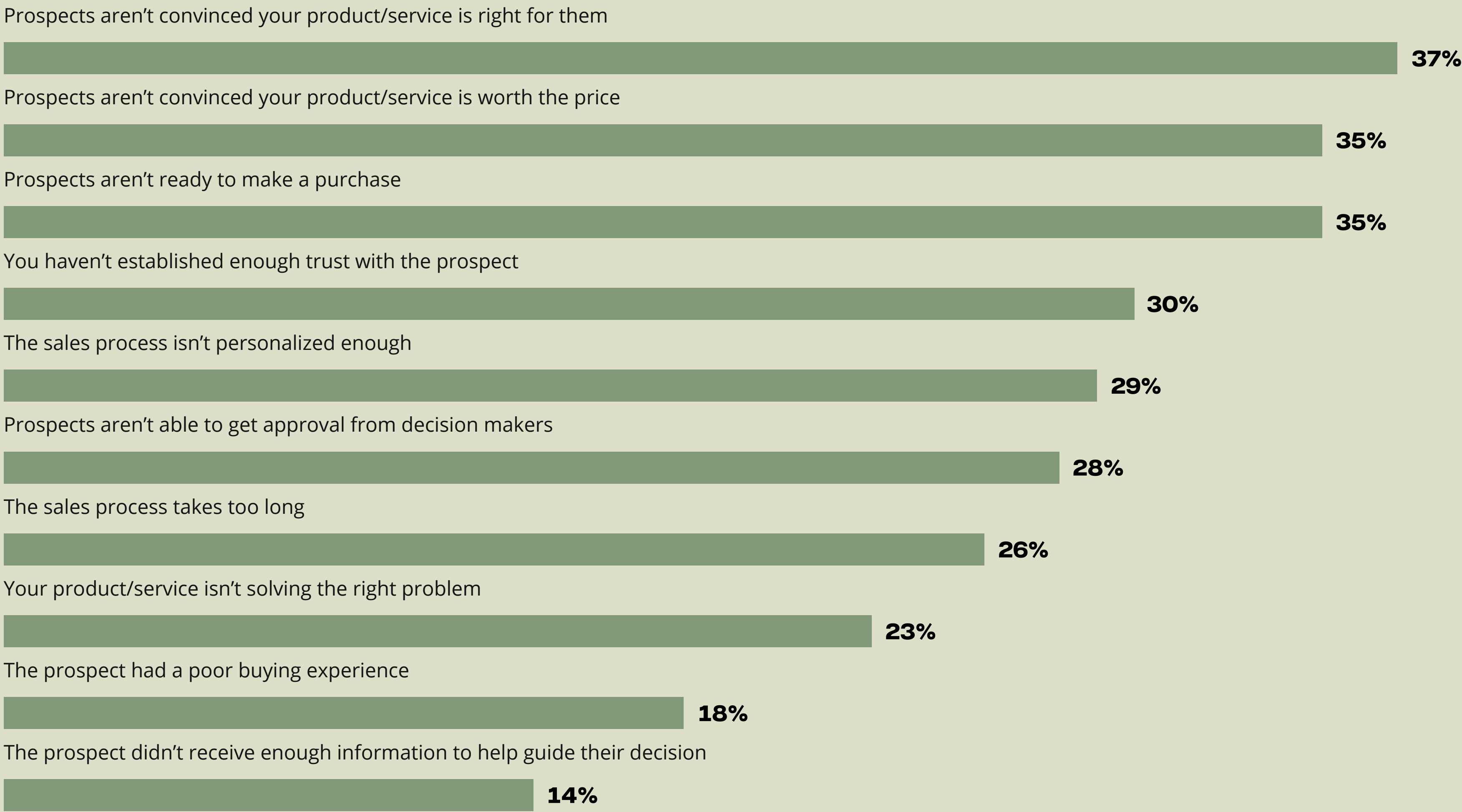


WHY DEALS DIE






When sellers lose out on deals, it's usually because prospects don't see value.



WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST REASONS PROSPECTS BACK OUT OF DEALS?



THE SALES COMMUNICATION TECH STACK

				
SOCIAL LISTENING PLATFORMS	VIDEO MESSAGING TOOLS	EMAIL AUTOMATION	ANALYTICS AND TRACKING	CRM
Monitor prospect sentiment at scale and enable reps to jump into relevant conversations with no manual work	Add a personal touch to all communication to build trust with prospects	Personalize sequences that don't feel automated but also don't require repetitive manual work	Measure what matters across channels and what works across teams, so you can continually innovate and iterate	All tools should integrate with a CRM that acts as a single source of truth for customer data and enables you to coordinate multi-channel outreach

BUILDING TRUST WITH PROSPECTS IN THE AGE OF AI

1

**OFFER A
HUMAN TOUCH
IN DIGITAL
CHANNELS**

2

**MAINTAIN
CONSISTENCY
ACROSS
TOUCHPOINTS
WITH A UNIFIED
MESSAGE AND
EXPERIENCE**

3

**LEAD WITH
INSIGHTS, NOT
SALES PITCHES**

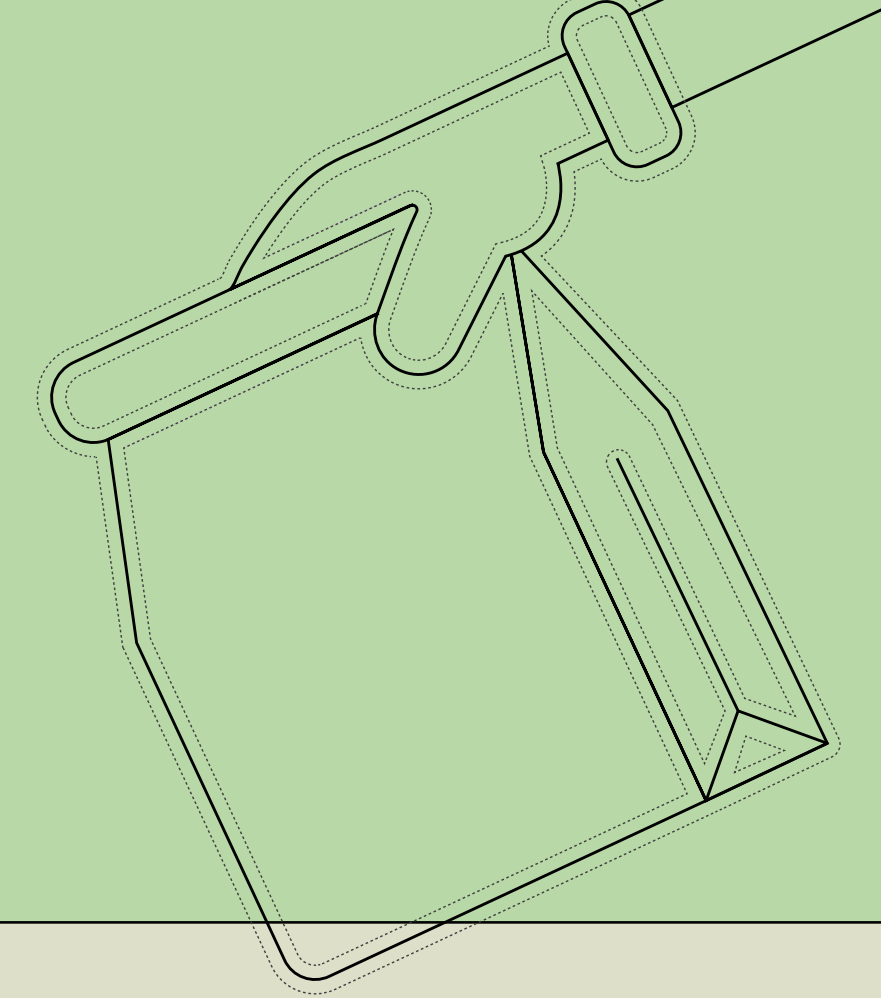
4

**PRIORITIZE
TWO-WAY
CONVERSATIONS
OVER ONE-WAY
BROADCASTS**

5

**BUILD
LONG-TERM
RELATIONSHIPS
BEYOND THE
IMMEDIATE SALE**

SALES TAKEAWAYS



1

CREATE MULTI-CHANNEL PROSPECT JOURNEYS

Build a [customer journey map](#) that documents how prospects first learn about your business all the way to closing a deal. Map touchpoints across social, email, meetings, and video so reps understand how the typical buyer behaves at every stage of the research process.

Channels should always work together, not separately. When building prospecting sequences and nurturing campaigns, make sure they're orchestrated to avoid repetition and annoying customers.

2

FLIP YOUR OUTREACH STRATEGY TO SOCIAL-FIRST

In 2025, [prospecting](#) should be social-first. High-quality leads come from everywhere, so start with research that reveals where your customers spend their time. If you sell to small businesses, Facebook will be crucial. If your sales process is more complex, a combination of LinkedIn and email prospecting with the goal of booking a video call may be more effective.

Use your customer journey map as a foundation to rebuild outreach sequences that can be deployed on social media, then build traditional channels around those sequences. Measure performance at every step of the way and tweak your strategies accordingly.

3

TEACH REPS TO SHOW PROSPECTS 'WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?'

72% of deals fail because buyers don't see value. Sometimes, a "no" is a "no." But when a prospect is a good fit, a "no" often means that your reps haven't proven value.

Your qualification and discovery process should weed out bad-fit prospects. Remember that [disqualifying a prospect](#) is just as valuable as qualifying one, as it saves your team from wasting time. Train your reps in [objection handling](#) to get to the bottom of a "no", especially one that's price or timing-based.

Train your reps to move from pitching to consulting. They should educate rather than promote, demonstrate ROI through tangible and measurable use cases, and leverage the perspective of other happy customers — through case studies and success narratives that are relevant to the prospect's use cases and industry — to show how your product works for others like them.

4

INVEST IN VIDEO COMMUNICATION CAPABILITIES

Five years ago, [using video in sales](#) might have helped you stand out from the crowd. Today, a personal touch to digital outreach builds trust in an impersonal world. Make sure you choose a tool that integrates with your CRM so all engagement and watch data is tracked and can inform future strategy.



MARK'S TAKE

In my Harvard Business School class on personal selling, we roleplay sales meetings. 80% of my students go straight to selling, then ask the “buyer” to purchase. You might recognize this as the “show up and throw up” strategy. Newsflash: It doesn’t work.

The key to closing sales is empathy. A salesperson’s job is to develop a buyer perspective — their needs, their challenges, the timing around the deal, and their buying authority. Selling is really about buying, and a salesperson is really just a vehicle for the buyer to solve a business problem. Communicating with prospects works the same way. Understand the perspective of the buyer and then tailor your sales process accordingly. Channels and buyer behavior will change, but empathy always works.



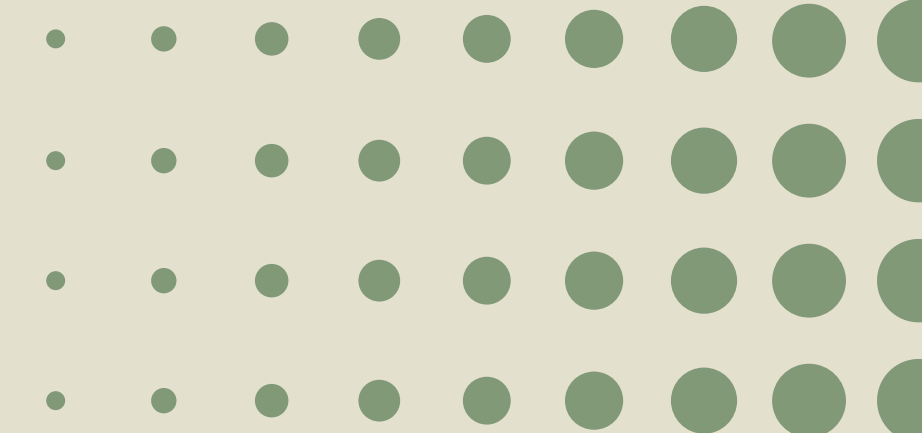
WATCH THE VIDEO ON HOW TO CLOSE YOUR FIRST HIGH TICKET DEAL

WATCH HERE



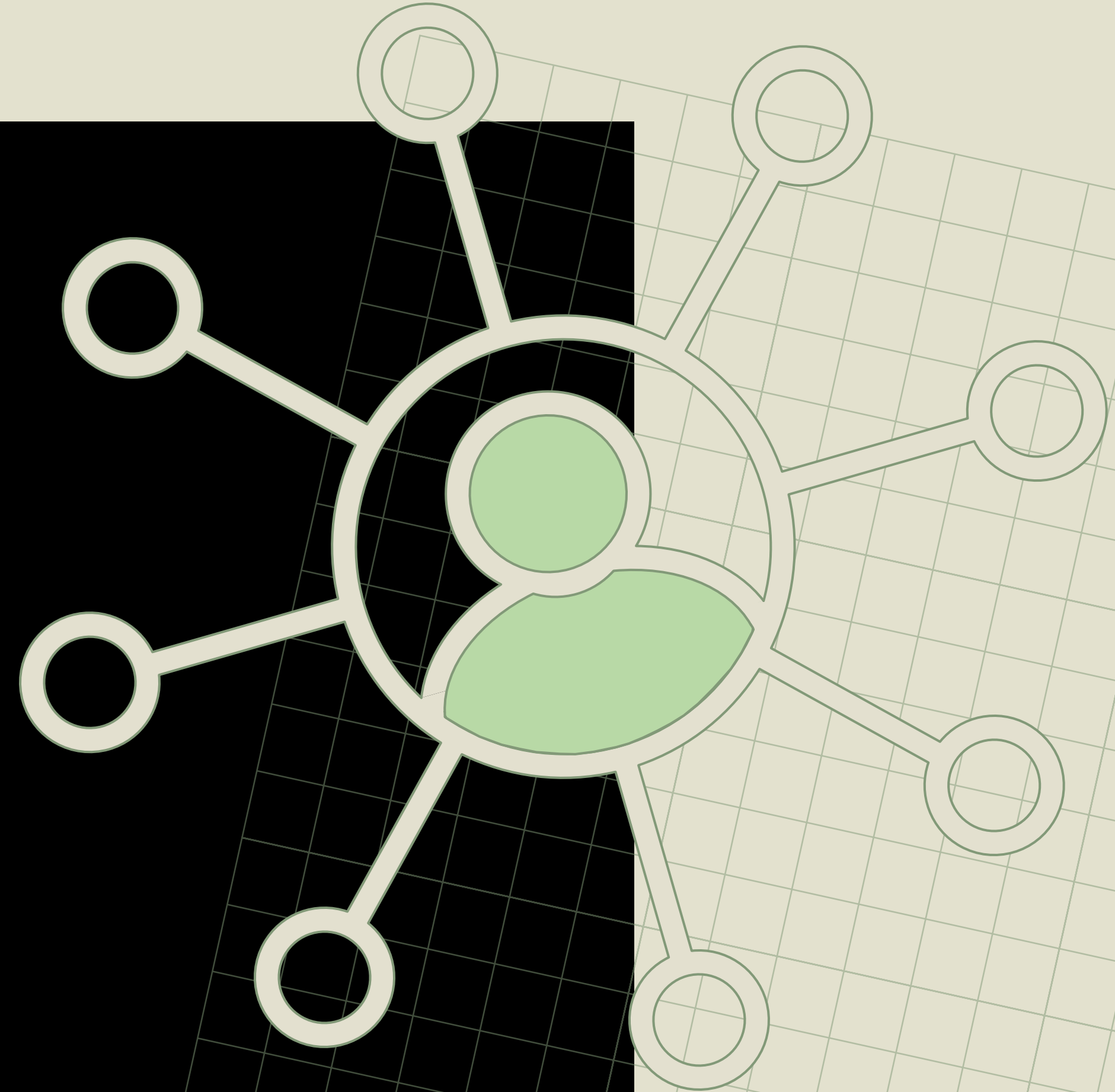
MARK ROBERGE

Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital, Founding CRO at HubSpot

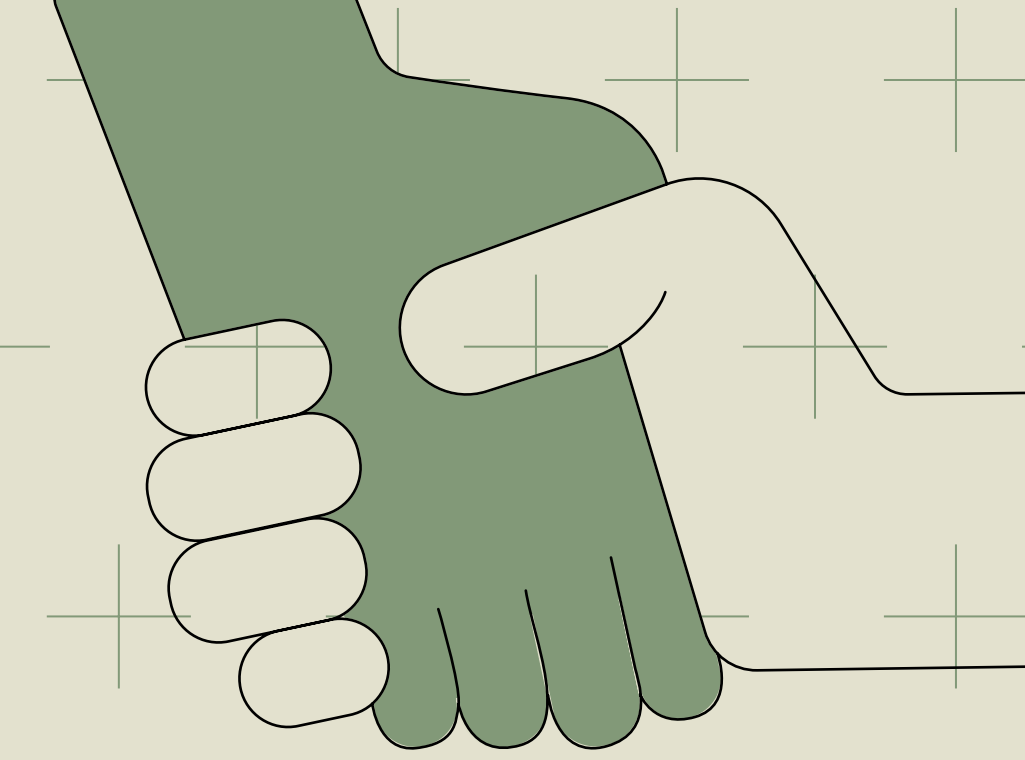


CULTURE

**THE BEST SALES TEAMS BALANCE
TRUST, COMPETITION, AND GROWTH**



CULTURE IS A STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE



HIGH-PERFORMING TEAMS AREN'T JUST BETTER AT SALES, THEY'VE CREATED AN ENVIRONMENT WHERE REPS CAN COLLABORATE AND THRIVE. NEARLY ALL (98%) OF SELLERS SAY TEAM CULTURE AFFECTS THEIR JOB SATISFACTION, AND JUST AS MANY SAY CULTURE HELPS THEM HIT SALES GOALS. HERE'S WHAT SEPARATES CHAMPION CULTURES FROM EVERYONE ELSE.

WHAT MOTIVATES SALES REPS

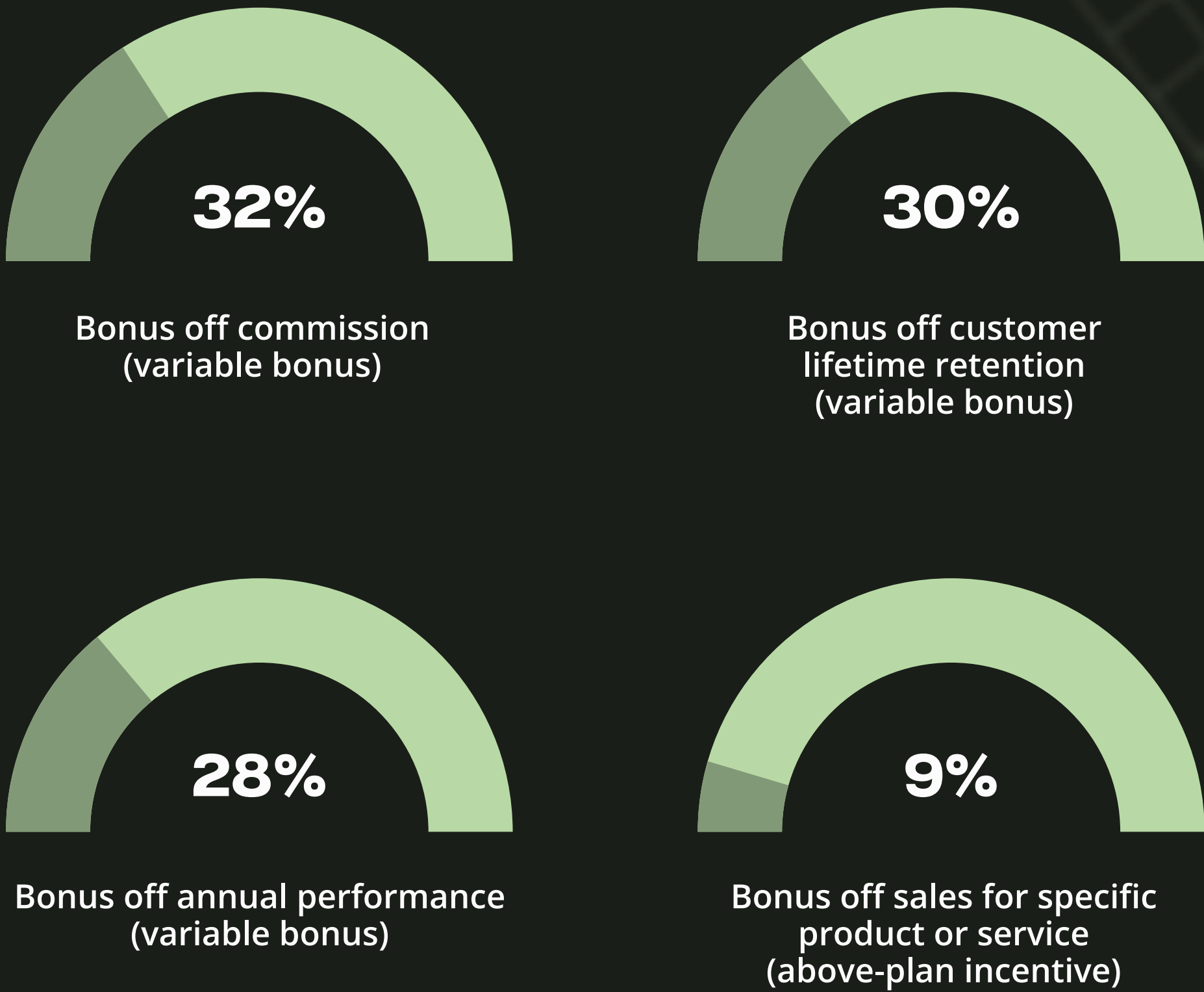
Trust is key, and a little (healthy) competition never hurt anybody.

WHICH ASPECTS OF INTERNAL SALES CULTURE ARE MOST IMPORTANT TO KEEPING YOU OR YOUR TEAM MOTIVATED?



Sellers are split when it comes to the variable compensation that they prefer.

WHAT BONUS STRUCTURE IS MOST EFFECTIVE AT MOTIVATING REPS TO SELL?



“The design of the sales compensation plan is a lever that is underutilized by the head of sales. It’s one of the most powerful tools to reinforce the strategy of the business.”

MARK ROBERGE

Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital, Founding CRO at HubSpot



**WATCH THE VIDEO ON
THE 3 STAGES OF SALES
COMPENSATION FOR
STARTUPS TO SCALE-UPS**

WATCH HERE



SALES TEAM SPOTLIGHT

There are very few people on our team who were previously quota-carrying reps. The titles that people have had before joining us have included founder, artist, biomedical engineer. They used to build bridges. It’s all over the place. The common denominator is that they are all very curious. They’re all commercially-minded. They are scrappy and resourceful. They’re very, very adept at Clay and other technical products, and they can bring these skills together.

The team is also not even paid on commission. There’s no variable compensation. Our team is well-compensated, of course. But our model leads to a very different culture and a very different team-first mentality.

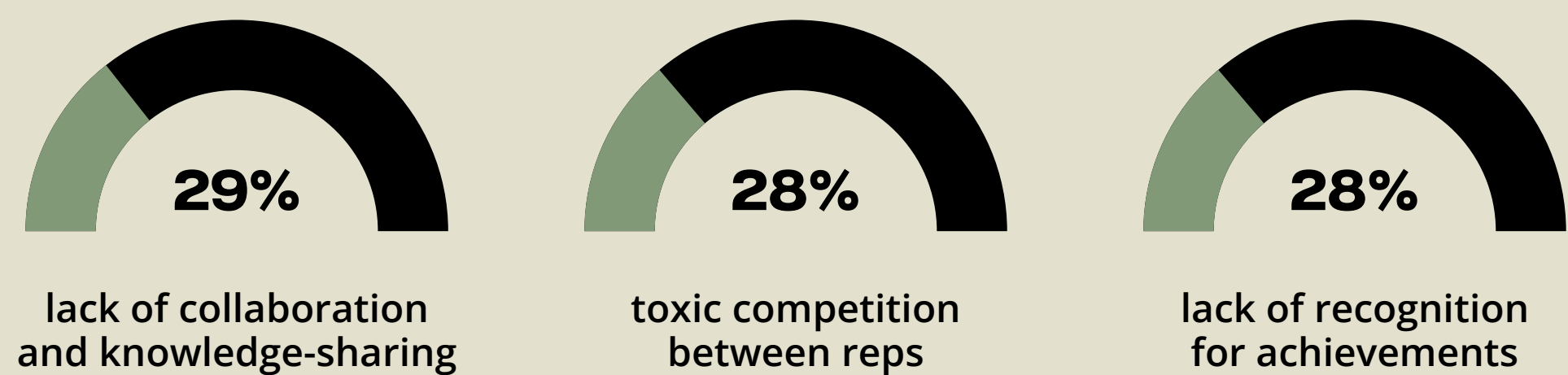
VARUN ANAND

Co-Founder and COO at Clay,
from the 2025 HubSpot for Startups AI Summit

WHAT KILLS HIGH SALES PERFORMANCE

While the popular conception of sellers may be that they're lone wolves, the truth is that they want to work together.

ASPECTS OF SALES CULTURE THAT NEGATIVELY IMPACT PERFORMANCE



Salespeople also cited a lack of trust between reps and managers (27%), lack of career growth (24%), and high turnover (23%) as net negatives.

“The top sellers in the industry speak less than half the time. The worst sellers speak over 75%. How are you training your reps if you’re spending all your time teaching them about the product?”

MARK ROBERGE
Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital, Founding CRO at HubSpot



WATCH THE VIDEO ON HOW THE RIGHT SALES TRAINING CAN LEAD TO \$100M IN REVENUE

WATCH HERE

SCIENCE OF SCALING SPOTLIGHT

From day one, Eric [Yuan, CEO and founder of Zoom] really loved this book Delivering Happiness [by Tony Hsieh]. He said, “This is what we’re going to do.” We’re going to be all about delivering happiness. The technology is going to deliver happiness, and we could see it was doing that, but we’re going to surround it. We’re going to treat people, people with respect. We’re going to listen, we’re going to care, we’re going to take care of our community, each other, our customers.

So when we were hiring people, we would take note of if someone was the best rep at that company but not the nicest person. If they just go grind out deals and you probably have to take a shower afterwards, that’s a failed rep.

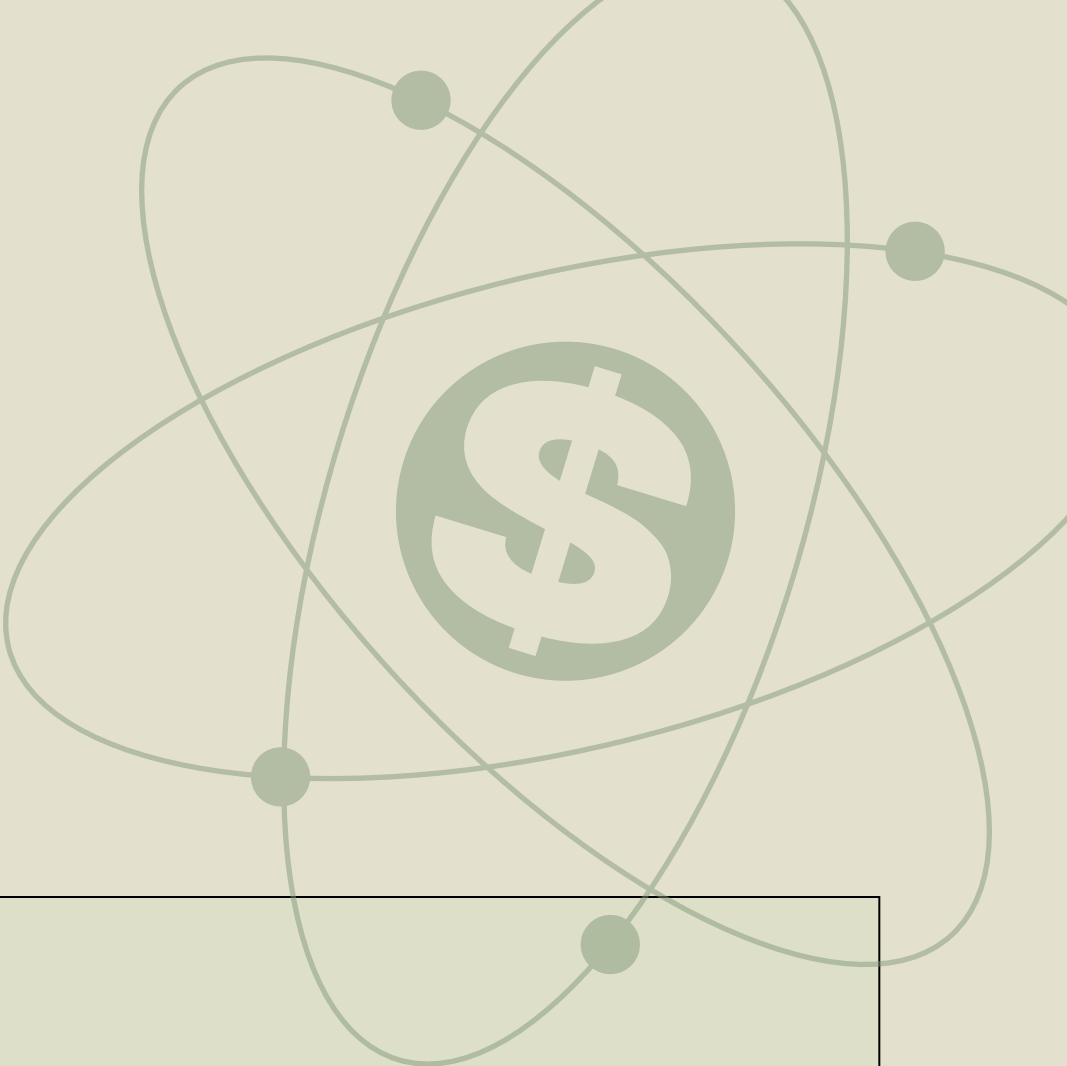
Hire the one that is a good person. That will listen. That will care. It’s not just about the deal. Those are harder to find because there’s a “nice guys don’t finish first” thing. So it’s a little more unique kind of a seller. We would ask, “Give me some examples where you’ve delivered happiness in your life, maybe in your just your outside life, and maybe at work. When’s the last time you delivered happiness? Give me an example.” This was taking our mantra and just forming it in a question that would, that would tell me a lot. It sounds super simple. But nobody was doing it.

GREG HOLMES
Former CRO, Zoom

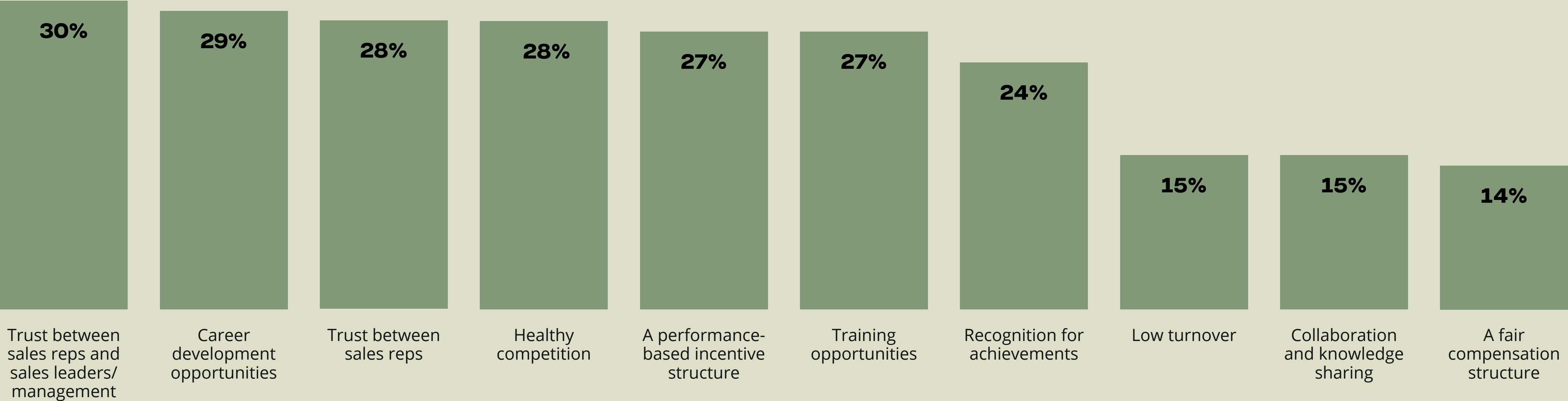
LISTEN TO THE PODCAST

LEADERSHIP PRIORITIES FOR SALES TEAMS

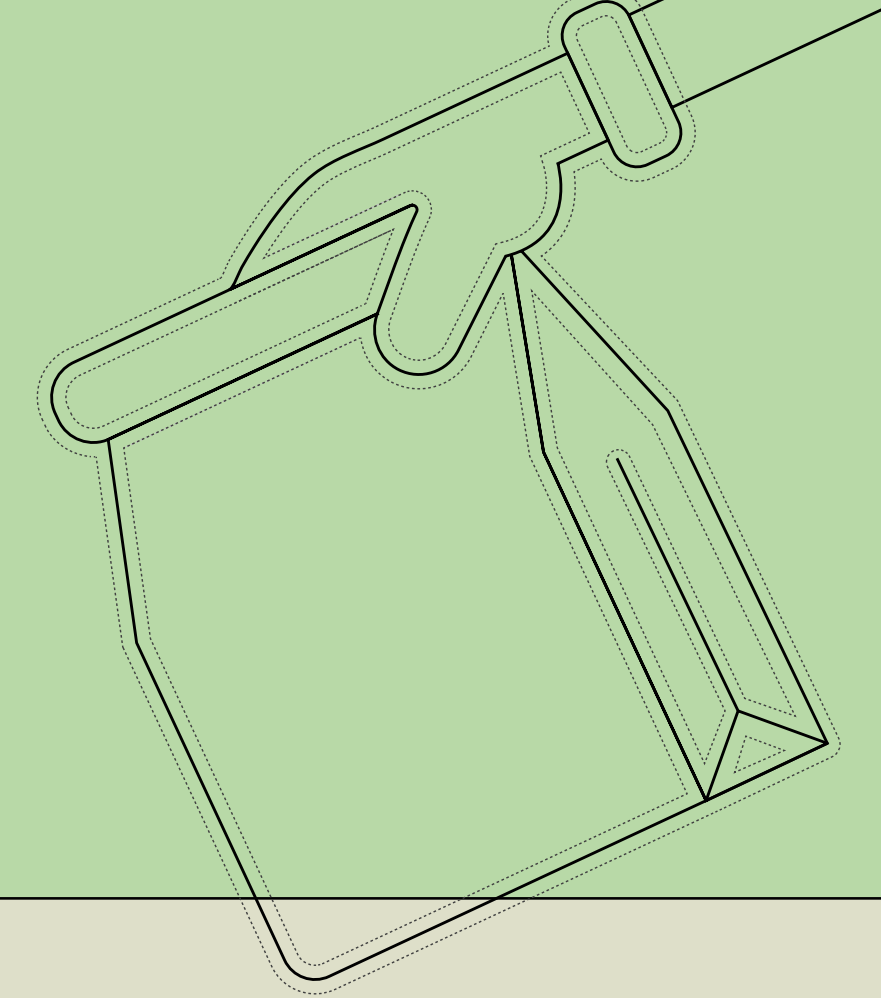
Managers and leaders named career development as the second-most important aspect of culture instead of healthy competition, but otherwise leadership priorities are very similar to the frontline’s.



WHICH ASPECTS OF INTERNAL SALES CULTURE ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR REPS TO SUCCEED?



SALES TAKEAWAYS



1

KEEP A PULSE ON TEAM MORALE

At HubSpot, we run a quarterly “eNPS” survey, which asks employees how likely they are to recommend HubSpot as a place to work. eNPS data isn’t useful in isolation — what you want is for the score to go up over time. Set up your own [eNPS surveys](#) and also measure employee retention and churn, which indicate whether reps want to build careers at your company. Give employees the option to write more detailed feedback and offer suggestions in addition to a quantitative rating.

2

DESIGN HEALTHY COMPETITION SYSTEMS

There’s a fine line between competitive and cutthroat. Run [sales contests](#) and [incentives](#) — for example, who can book the most meetings or who closes deals the fastest. Spur your team to outperform another team at the company, or unite your teams to outsell an industry competitor. Encouraging reps to beat their own previous records is another way to stoke their competitive spirit without getting toxic.

3

IMPLEMENT TRUST-BUILDING INITIATIVES

30% of reps say trust in leadership is important to their performance, so do your part to foster a healthy [sales culture](#). Encourage collaboration on deals that rewards both reps if a deal closes. Outside of the sales process, create time for informal and social connections through lunches and [team-building activities](#). If budget allows, consider bringing together hybrid or remote teams for in-person gatherings at least once a year.

Ask for reps’ feedback on your management, and incorporate it into how you operate moving forward to demonstrate that you’re open to change.

4

PREPARE REPS FOR THEIR NEXT CAREER MOVE

29% of sellers are motivated by career development opportunities. And it's easier to promote an internal employee who already understands your product, customers, and industry than to hire and train an external one. Invest in technical and soft skills training programs that salespeople can use to continue building their skills. For example, AI training is a great investment right now. Schedule training during work hours to demonstrate that learning is part of the job, and gather feedback on format and content to improve future sessions.

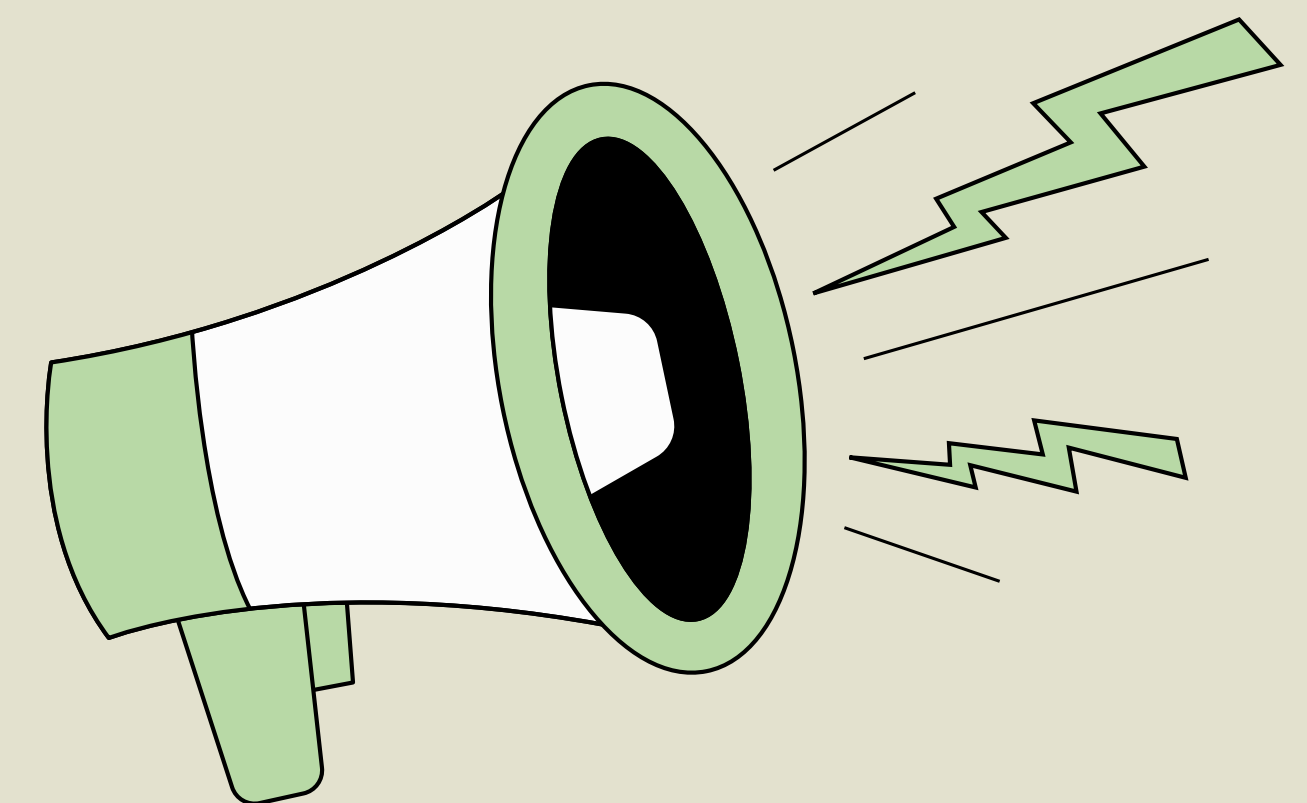
Provide management-curious reps with [development opportunities](#). Whether it's through mentorship programs for new hires, leading a short-term experiment, or creating a peer-to-peer training, formalize ways for reps to try their hand at leadership.

Offer cross-functional exposure, too. The best reps understand their place within the larger business. For example, marketers and sales can work together on campaigns; customer success can teach sales what makes a customer likely to retain and how to look for it in qualification, and sales has valuable insights for product on the features customers want.

5

CELEBRATE MORE THAN JUST PERFORMANCE

Give [sales awards](#) for performance, but reward soft skills too. Recognize reps who elevate the culture and collaborate, share knowledge with, and support their teammates.



MARK'S TAKE

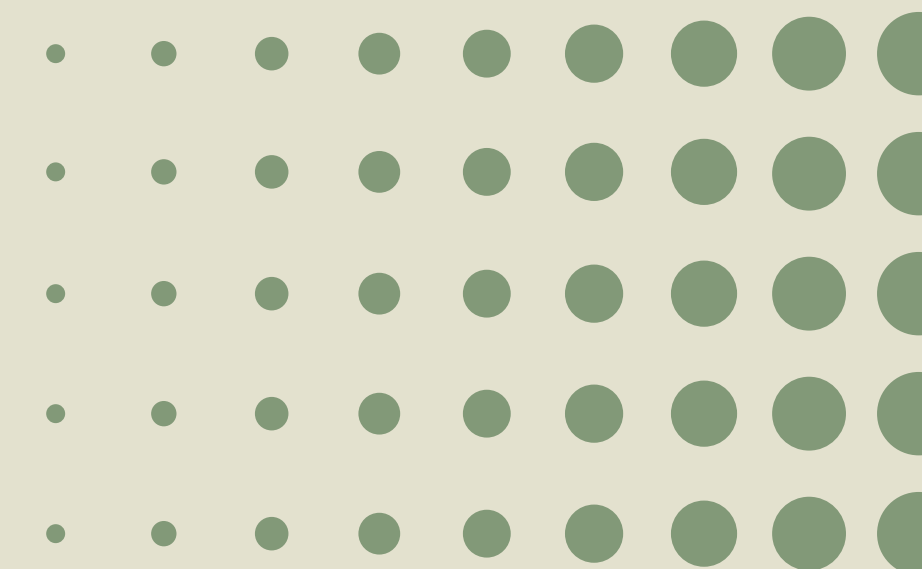
The industry average for salespeople churn is 30%, which is way too high. I aim for a churn rate of 10%-20% — lower than that, I'm probably being too soft, and north of that, I'm worried about culture issues.

While I was at HubSpot, I oversaw both Sales and Service, and worked closely with Marketing to teach all of our employees how a SaaS business works. That approach gave people a sense of ownership and encouraged them to learn about the business in the way it wanted to. It also created new leadership opportunities for them. On a monthly basis we had a full day meeting where each leadership team came in for an hour and presented to a "mini board," which was our CEO, CFO, head of Sales, and our CMO. We asked them questions like, "Hey, why is your churn down? Why is your revenue slower than it should be?" They'd be there presenting like it was a board meeting.

Building a strong sales culture requires getting people on board with a shared vision. I like to involve my team in the business. Instead of being super prescriptive and telling them exactly what boxes to check, I want to build a culture where people are curious about the larger strategy and vision. I try to hire people who want more autonomy and have the ability to lead from their seat.

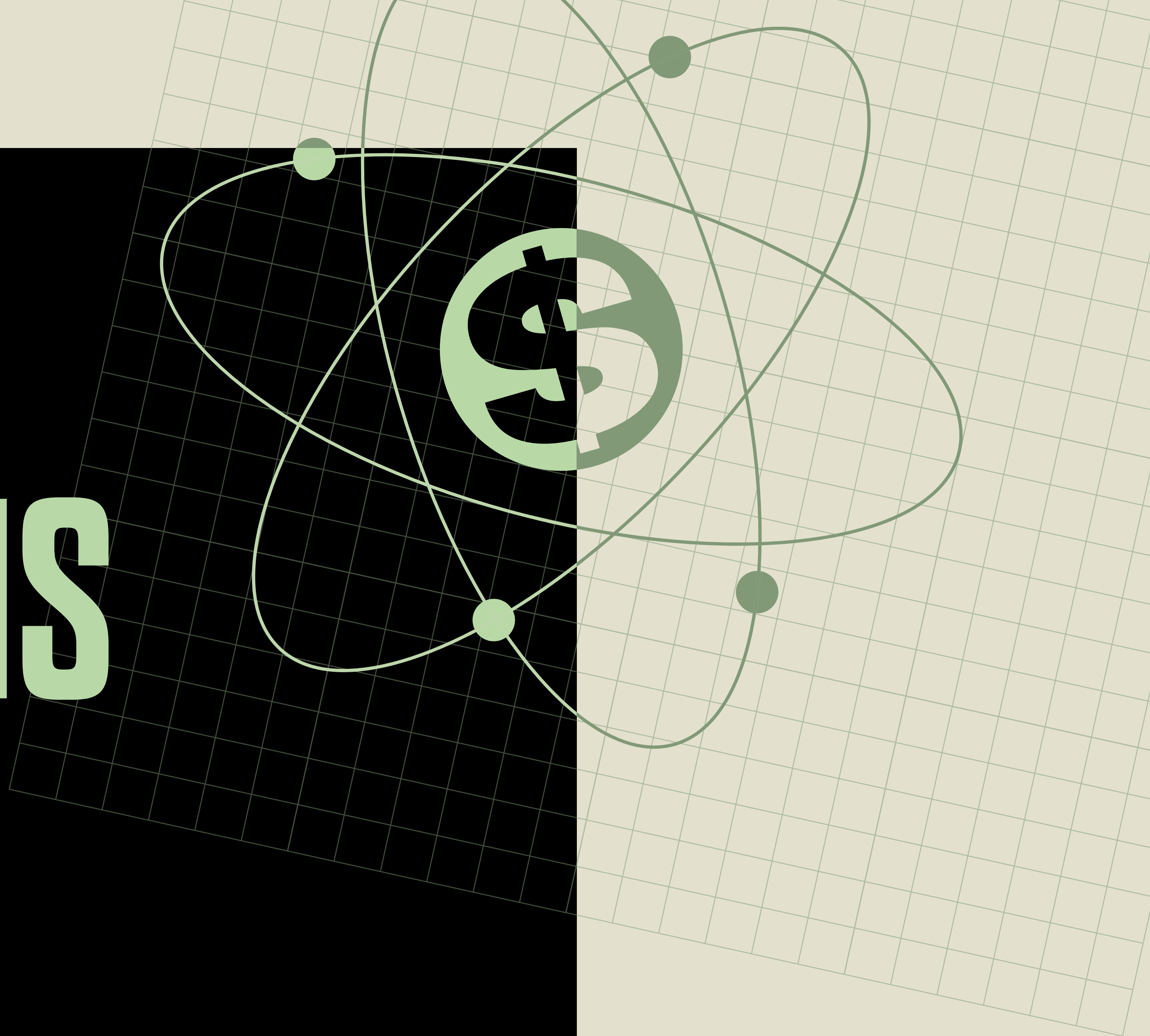
MARK ROBERGE

Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital, Founding CRO at HubSpot



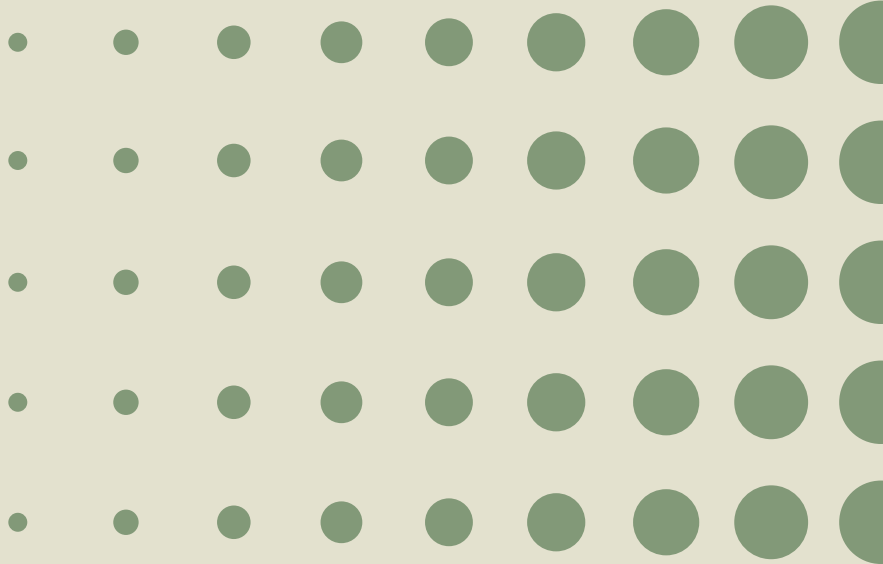
PREDICTIONS

EMERGING SALES TRENDS



TOP EMERGING TRENDS

IN SALES TO HAVE ON YOUR RADAR



1	AI will become a native part of the sales and buyer research process, and the best reps will use agents to help them sell better.	2	Technical and soft skills are essential in an AI-first world.	3	AI-powered signals to predict buyer intent and improve lead scoring will indicate purchasing readiness and help reps prioritize.	4	Social selling is now a strategic sales channel, and will only become more important.	5	Education-first selling complemented with self-serve options will become the norm, and buyers will come to sales reps further along in the research process than they ever have.
6	Adaptability will be a competitive advantage in uncertain economic times.	7	Multi-channel selling will become the default, and the orchestration tools required to pull it off must be part of every sales stack.	8	Revenue intelligence platforms will become more widely adopted in the next year.	9	Conversational commerce will become essential to growth, especially in SaaS.		



WHAT'S NEXT FOR THE FUTURE OF SELLING?

"When I started out in sales, I couldn't have imagined how different today's landscape would look. And I'd bet that in another 25 years, everything will have changed again."

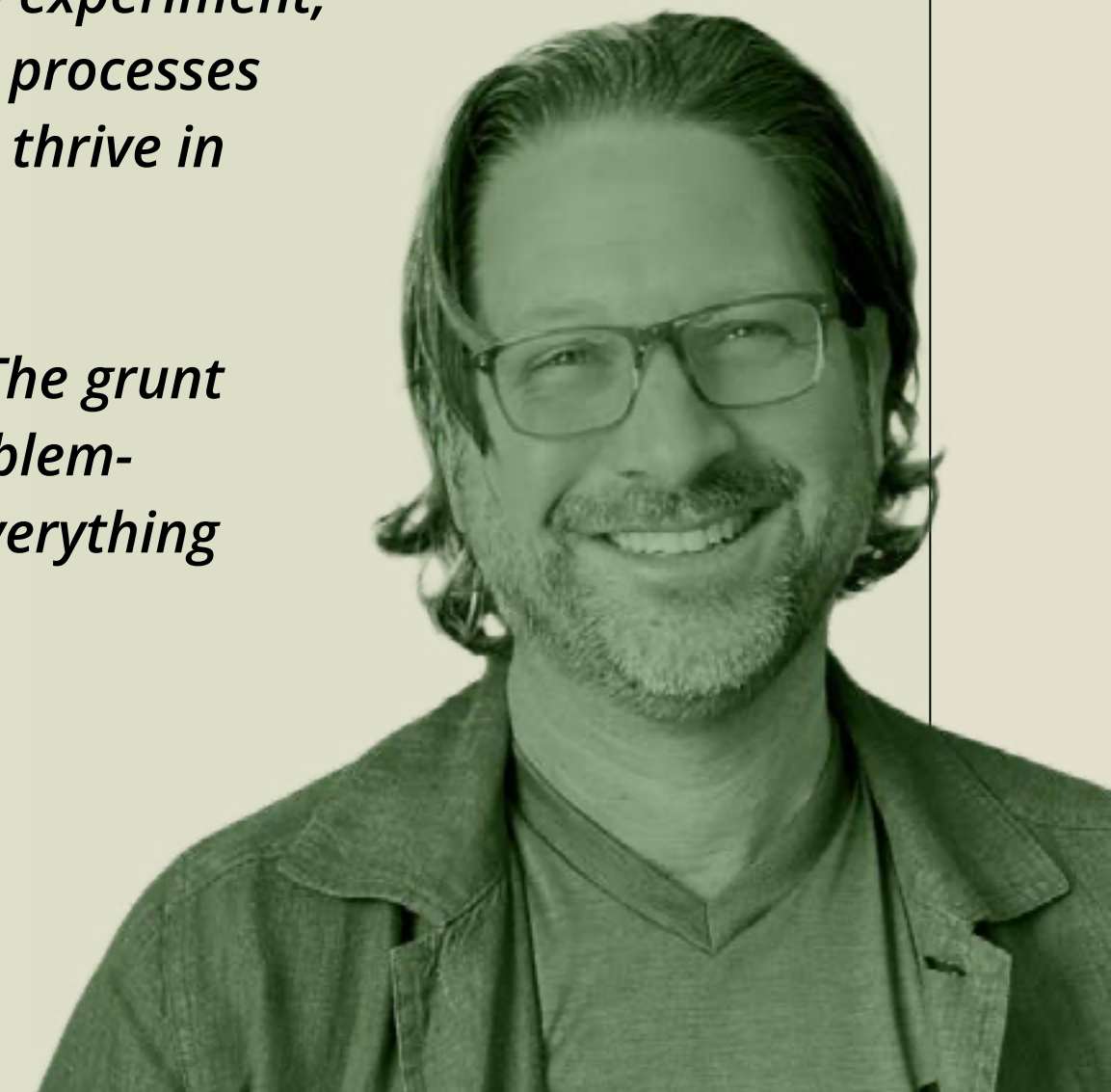
Sales tools may come and go, and frameworks may go out of fashion, and technology will continue to evolve past our wildest dreams, but one thing will stay the same: We're here to help people, to create clarity in the midst of confusion. Through uncertain times and the rise and fall of new tech, the sellers who win are the ones who keep their buyers' hopes, dreams, fears, and needs front and center. It doesn't matter how many bells and whistles you add on top — with that foundation, it's hard to go wrong.

Here's my advice: embracing AI isn't optional. Yes, your first attempts at AI-augmented selling might take longer than your current process. That presentation that takes 30 minutes today might take 90 minutes with AI—at first. But soon it will take 10 minutes. The leaders who reserve time now to experiment, who push through the initial friction, who reimagine their processes rather than just optimize them—they're the ones who will thrive in this new landscape.

We're not replacing salespeople. We're unleashing them. The grunt work disappears. The strategic, relationship-building, problem-solving work amplifies. And the results? They'll redefine everything we thought possible."

MARK ROBERGE

Co-Founder, Stage 2 Capital, Founding CRO at HubSpot



PLAYBOOK

YOUR SALES TEAM'S AI ACTION PLAN FOR 2025-2026

The data is clear: AI adoption separates winners from losers, social selling delivers the highest response rates, and value-focused teams thrive despite economic uncertainty. This playbook translates insights into action—your roadmap from current state to sales excellence.

✓ Check off the steps below as you complete them!

<div>PHASE 1</div> <div>AI ASSESSMENT AND QUICK WINS</div>	<div>PHASE 2</div> <div>SOCIAL SELLING BOOTCAMP</div>	<div>PHASE 3</div> <div>VALUE-BASED SELLING</div>
<div>Assess your team's current AI use</div> <div>Audit your AI tech stack</div> <div>Track the AI impact areas</div> <div>Begin implementing new use cases for AI on a monthly basis</div>	<div>Evaluate your team's current social selling strategies</div> <div>Optimize profiles across platforms like LinkedIn and Instagram</div> <div>Create a library of value-first posts, industry insights, and customer stories</div> <div>Track response rates across social channels</div>	<div>Conduct a value pitch training</div> <div>Create an ROI calculator or framework for sales teams</div> <div>Build a library of customer success stories by vertical, company size, and/or region</div> <div>Create materials for internal sales champions</div> <div>Run sales conversation trainings and role-playing sessions</div>

PHASE 4

TEAM CULTURE OVERHAUL

- Survey your team on current perceptions of culture
- Review recognition and incentive programs
- Create a plan for improved team collaboration and communication
- Start tracking and measuring overall team sentiment and culture

PHASE 5

MULTI-CHANNEL SELLING

- Elect the top performers across channels as resources for other sales reps
- Integrate sales tools across social, email, phone, and video selling
- Evaluate performance across channels, and for those using multiple channels
- Create channel-specific sales enablement content
- Build playbooks or sequences for outreach across multiple channels

PHASE 6

EVALUATING ONGOING SUCCESS

- | | | | |
|---------------------------|---|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| AI tool adoption rate | Lead quality by channel | Team sentiment and growth | Customer satisfaction and LTV |
| Response rates by channel | Deal velocity and close rate improvements | Revenue impact | Win rate improvements |

METHODOLOGY

HubSpot surveyed 995 sales professionals in June 2025 from B2B and B2C organizations in the U.S., UK, France, Germany, Japan, Australia, Mexico, Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Finland across industries to gain these data points.

SUPERCHARGE YOUR SALES TEAM

Find, track, and close deals all in one powerful, easy-to-use platform with HubSpot Sales Hub. Increase your team’s productivity, enable customer connection, and support growing your sales org.

PROSPECT SMARTER

Minimize distractions and keep your reps organized, efficient, and effective.

- Lead management and prospecting
- Email templates
- Sales automation

ACCELERATE REVENUE GROWTH

Turn more leads into closed deals with automated insights that maximize every minute of your sales team’s day.

- Meeting scheduler
- Document tracking
- Playbooks

POWER RELEVANT CONNECTIONS

Deepen customer interactions with sales software that gives your teams a complete picture of your buyer.

- Analytics & reporting
- Conversation intelligence
- Forecasting

GET A DEMO

