Gartner

Gartner for Sales

Outpace Fast-Changing Buyer Dynamics

How to orchestrate your customer engagement strategy

Taking bold action to engage B2B customers

Standardized customer engagement processes are ill-equipped to deliver for today's commercial organizations. Why? Because they don't fit the reality of the B2B buying process.

Today's buyer teams can include as many as 20 stakeholders, each of whom relies on different sources of conflicting information along an increasingly self-service buying journey. This creates massive variation in how any given buyer organization arrives at a deal, and renders standard engagement practices ineffective.

Commercial leaders instead need to reconfigure their go-to-market approach from today's common seller-centric models, or even the less common customer-centric model, to an orchestrated model designed to flex to the unique dynamics of a given buying group.

Orchestrated customer engagement depends on three key strategies that equip commercial leaders to respond to a specific buyer — resulting in superior revenue results:
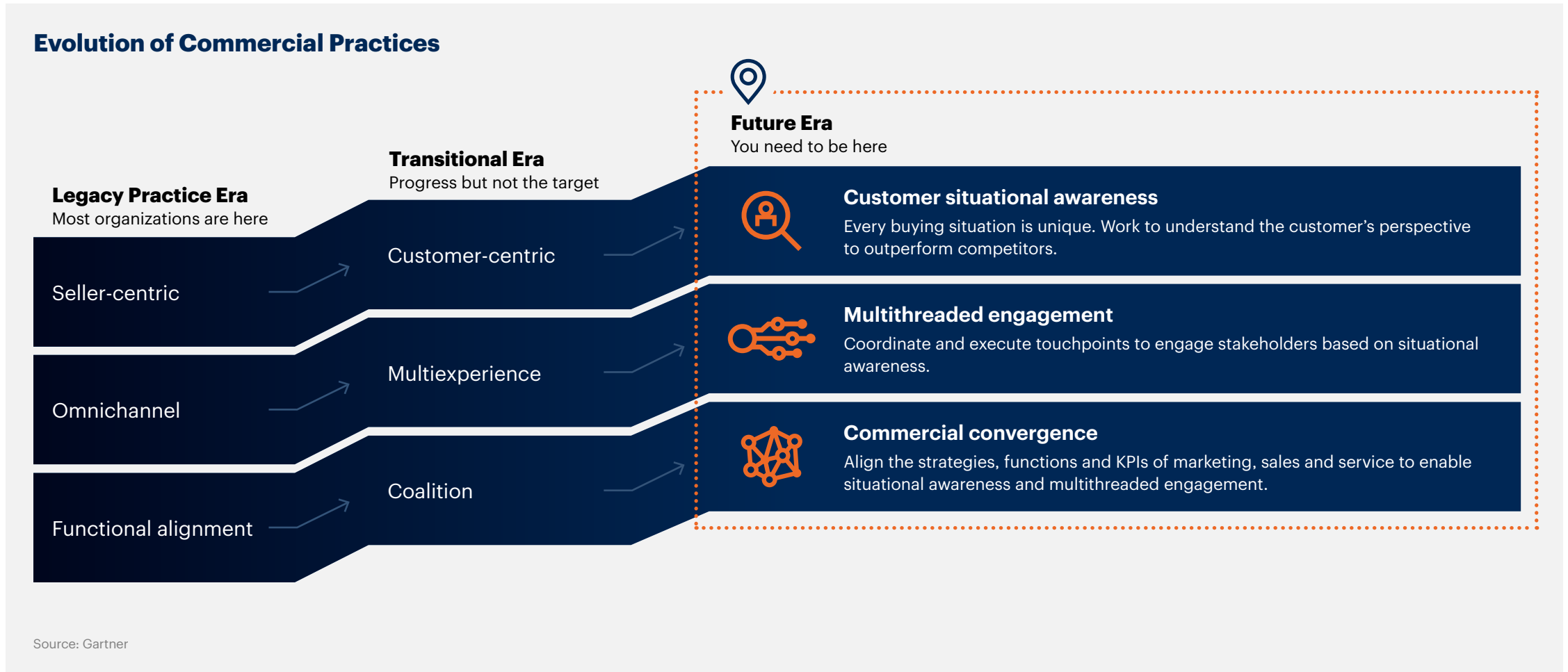
Customer situational awareness that caters the commercial approach to the unique customer perspective

Multithreaded commercial engagement that gears interactions with buyers to how, when and where each stakeholder chooses

Convergence in the commercial organization between marketing, sales and service to deliver what the customer needs as they need it, to expand customer engagement

Gartner expects that by 2026 …

50%

B2B organizations that unify commercial strategies and leverage multithreaded commercial engagements will realize revenue growth that outperforms their competition by 50%.

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The three key strategies of orchestrated customer engagement

Evolution of Commercial Practices

Future Era
You need to be here

Transitional Era
Progress but not the target

Legacy Practice Era
Most organizations are here

Seller-centric

Customer-centric

Customer situational awareness
Every buying situation is unique. Work to understand the customer's perspective to outperform competitors.

Omnichannel

Multiexperience

Multithreaded engagement
Coordinate and execute touchpoints to engage stakeholders based on situational awareness.

Functional alignment

Coalition

Commercial convergence
Align the strategies, functions and KPIs of marketing, sales and service to enable situational awareness and multithreaded engagement.

Source: Gartner

Customer situational awareness

# Understand the customer's unique situation

The common seller-centric approach delivered through a standardized engagement process may be efficient, but it ignores reality — namely, that modern buyers don't make buying decisions according to a prescribed and consistent set of steps. Yet today's commercial organizations rarely tailor their approaches to the unique situation and needs of a buying team.

To bridge the disconnect between what commercial organizations do and what the buyer needs requires situational understanding. When you understand the relationships, readiness and rules dictating the terms of a particular deal for the buyer, you can respond empathetically with relevant interactions and information that optimize buyer engagement.

Three Perspectives to Understand Customer Situations

What existing relationships and interactions impact this particular purchase?

How important is this purchase relative to other business priorities, and where is the buying team in its journey?

Relationship

Readiness

Rules
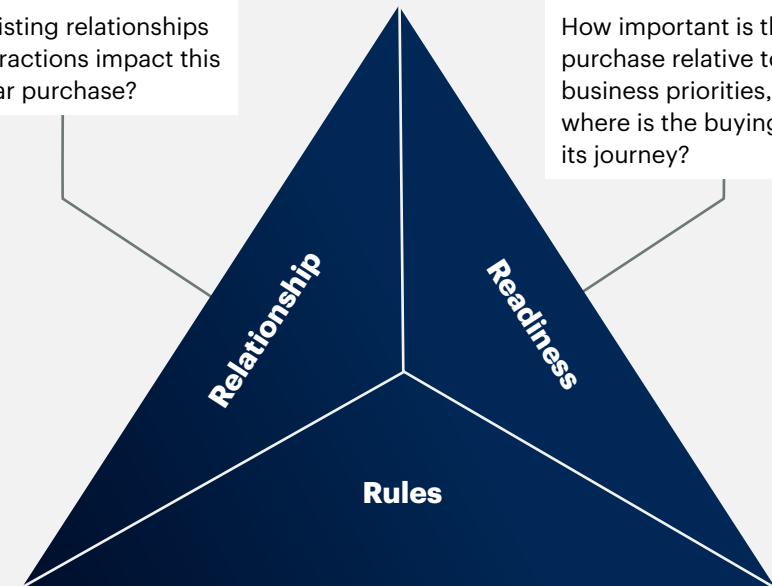
What are the specifics of the customer's procurement approach, including regulations and approvals?

Source: Gartner

Customer situational awareness

Help customers make sense of information

B2B customers who feel confident about their buying decision are 1.5x more likely to complete large, high-priced deals without second-guessing the decision.

Commercial organizations can influence that sense of confidence with high-quality information that delivers not only proprietary insight, but also Sense Making tools to help buyers understand the conflicting sources of information they encounter along the buying journey.

Sense Making builds trust that can reduce the skepticism buyers feel about the information they receive. Thus empowered, customers are better able to take bold and decisive action on a deal.

For more on the Sense Making approach ↗

How Information Helps and Hurts Deals
Impact on closing a high-quality, low-regret deal when clients agreed with the statement

26%

The information we encountered as part of this purchase decision was generally of high quality.

-54%

Making informed trade-offs between vendors and their capabilities was difficult.

-66%

Information from suppliers appeared trustworthy, but was contradictory.

-33%

The amount of trustworthy information was overwhelming.

n = 1,174 B2B buyers
Source: Gartner
"High-Quality Sale" is defined as the customer: 1. Did not settle for less ambitious solution, or 2. Purchased a premium offering relative to the base offering. "Regret" is defined as: "The offering we ultimately purchased is failing (or failed) to meet our expectations."
Note: Customer data controlled for trust in supplier, supplier brand, expected ROI, prior relationship with supplier, prior purchase experience and price-to-value ratio.
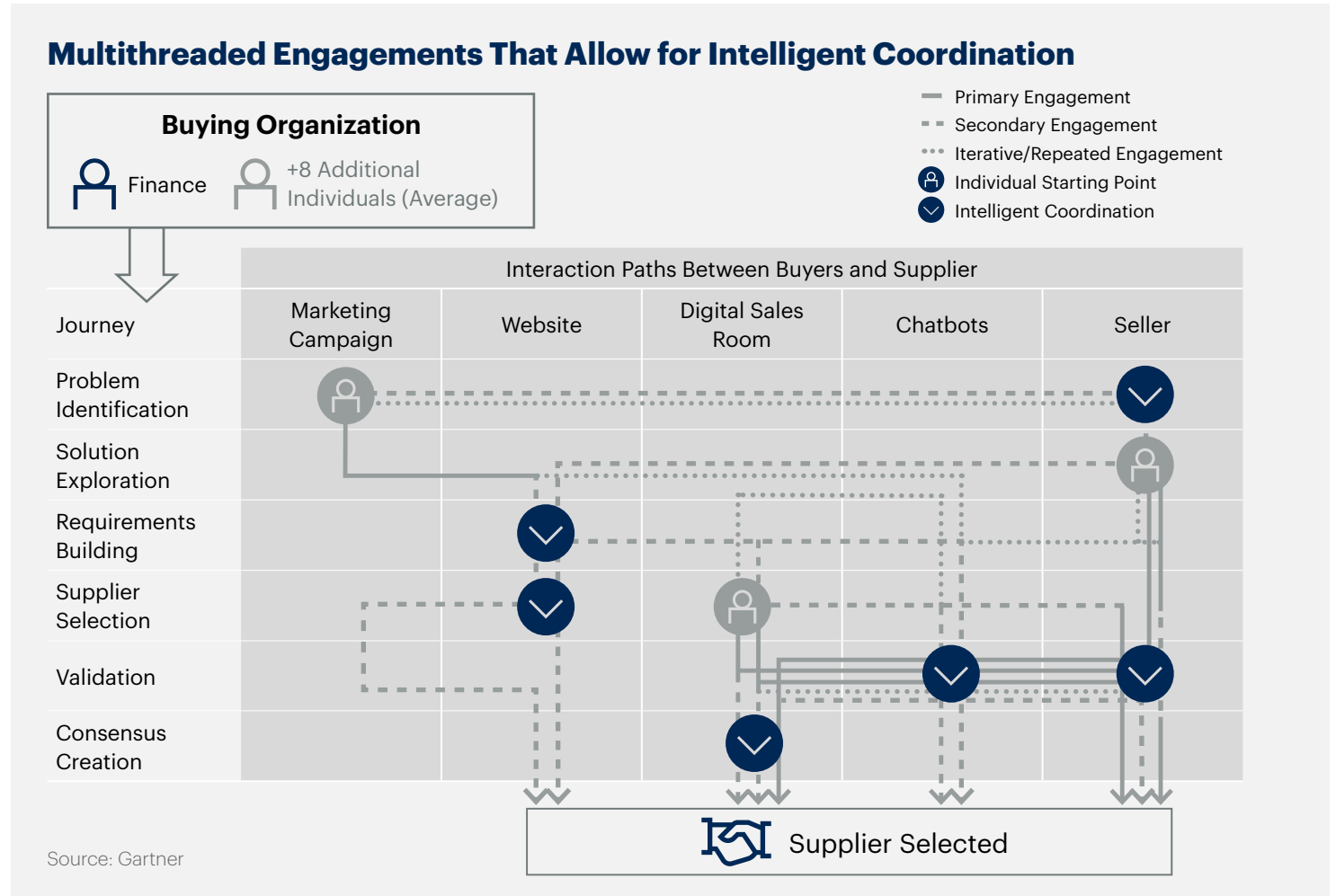
Multithreaded engagement

Succeed in a multistakeholder buying environment

Multithreaded engagement addresses the needs of each of the multiple stakeholders on a buying team with resources and interactions to help them understand the deal and come to consensus about it.

Done well, the approach enables commercial organizations to intelligently coordinate and support multiple individuals in the buying group — each following a different path — with a flexible mix of human and digital resources.
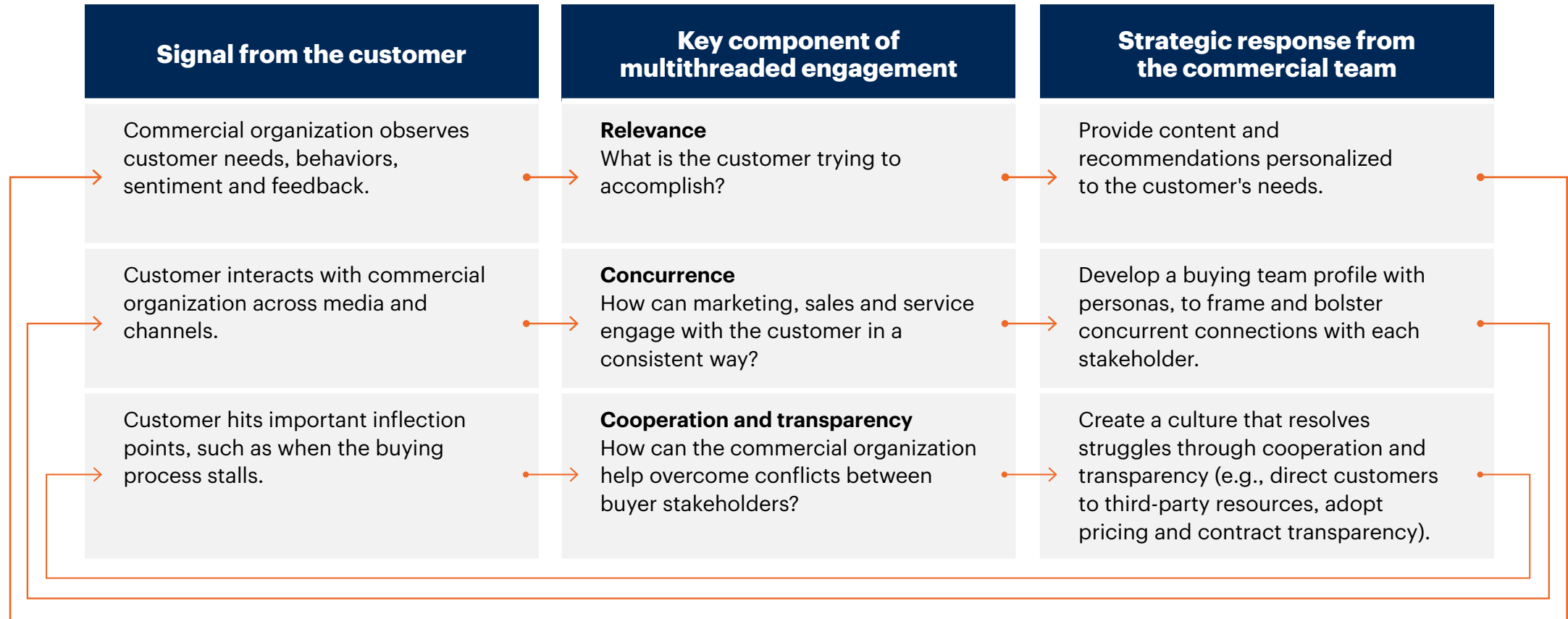
For more on multithreaded engagement ↗

Multithreaded Engagements That Allow for Intelligent Coordination

Source: Gartner

Multithreaded engagement

Optimize key components of multithreaded engagement

Effective multithreaded engagement includes three components that define
the commercial organization's strategic response to a customer signal.

Signal from the customer	Key component of multithreaded engagement	Strategic response from the commercial team
Commercial organization observes customer needs, behaviors, sentiment and feedback.	**Relevance** What is the customer trying to accomplish?	Provide content and recommendations personalized to the customer's needs.
Customer interacts with commercial organization across media and channels.	**Concurrence** How can marketing, sales and service engage with the customer in a consistent way?	Develop a buying team profile with personas, to frame and bolster concurrent connections with each stakeholder.
Customer hits important inflection points, such as when the buying process stalls.	**Cooperation and transparency** How can the commercial organization help overcome conflicts between buyer stakeholders?	Create a culture that resolves struggles through cooperation and transparency (e.g., direct customers to third-party resources, adopt pricing and contract transparency).

Commercial convergence

Create a frictionless customer experience

Buyers don't want to be exposed to the inner workings of your organization when making a purchase. They expect a frictionless experience.

To deliver it, commercial leaders across the marketing, sales and service functions must work together to align their strategies, streamline execution and drive collaboration through commercial convergence.

For more on commercial convergence ↗

Benefits of Commercial Coordination on Account Expansion

Marketing Activities	Selling Activities	Service Activities
▲**86%**	▲**48%**	▲**84%**
Improvement in win rates when account-based marketing strategies align with sales activities	Increase in likelihood to grow an account when sellers focus on improving the customer's business	Greater probability to increase wallet share when customers experience value enhancement

n = 745 B2B customers (2016); 611 B2B customers (2020)
Source: 2019 TOPO Account-Based Benchmark; 2016 Gartner Sales Customer Panel; 2020 Gartner Loyalty Through Customer Service and Support Survey

Commercial convergence

Take three steps to foster organizational alignment

Commercial convergence challenges deep-seated beliefs about the roles and responsibilities thought to be the domain of specific departments or personnel, and instead encourages cross-functional teams to situationally support the buyer.

Reaching practical commercial convergence requires:

3

A culture of customer empathy. Promote situational awareness for all buyer interactions — whether human or technologically mediated. Focus on transparency, data sharing and innovation across commercial teams.

2

Continuous and seamless engagement. Design workflows for continuous, event-based, integrated engagement, and include capabilities to extract actionable, timely insights about new revenue opportunities throughout the life cycle.

1

Interdepartmental collaboration. Form a cross-functional working group to understand buyer processes and streamline supplier execution. Encourage a collaborative, growth mindset and leverage cross-team key performance indicators and incentives.

Conclusion

Orchestrated engagement designed to meet and exceed customer expectations requires bold action, as well as time to develop and execute on the strategy, and investment in cross-functional capabilities and technologies.

Commercial leaders can start with the following steps:

- Discontinue seller-centric strategies and embrace customer situational awareness.

- Initiate multithreaded engagements that individually serve all of the stakeholders on the buying team.

- Reenvision the functional silos of marketing, sales and service as a single go-to-market stakeholder group aligned around a common set of priorities and data.

How Gartner helps sales leaders adapt and stay ahead

Sales is changing rapidly, and revenue leaders face a variety of new challenges. From maximizing growth during disruption, to improving sales motion and productivity, chief sales officers are rewriting the book on sales strategy and execution. This can feel daunting, but you don't need to do it alone.

Diagnostics and benchmarks

Guides and toolkits

Expert inquiry

Expert research

Live events

Peer connections

Case studies and best practices

Webinars and online learning events

Document reviews

How Gartner supports you as a client

Diagnose current state

Assess your functional maturity with **diagnostic tools** that identify strengths and weaknesses and guide strategic priorities.

Review your existing GTM strategy with a **Gartner expert** to identify areas of optimization and improvement.

Develop your plan

Develop a GTM strategy to succeed in the coming decade with **The Future of Sales 2025: A Gartner Trend Insight Report.**

Leverage the **Gartner one-page strategic planning template** to define program objectives that will lead to success.

Execute and drive change

Evaluate your current sales technologies to address gaps and accelerate your journey toward the ultimate revenue-driving sales tech stack with the **Gartner Sales Tech Auditing Tool.**

Align your sales and GTM strategy with today's buying realities with the guidance in the **Strategic Roadmap for Accelerating Revenue Growth.**

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