KEEPING UP WITH THE CUSTOMER: DATA-DRIVEN SALES TRANSFORMATION

The disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has forced businesses to rethink how they buy information technology products and services. As customers migrate from in-person to digital channels, sales teams need to rethink their strategies. Experience- and intuition-based selling will shift to data-driven sales, where processes, applications, data, and analytics merge into a single operational practice.

Buyers today expect a satisfying digital experience in their personal lives and assume they will have it during the workday. When shopping for new business products or services, they spend a growing amount of time researching marketing literature, white papers, customer testimonials, and videos or even download trial software. It is essential to quickly connect all these channels to create a consistent customer experience and to arm sales teams with the information they need in order to be successful.

With all this complexity, sellers have a narrow window of opportunity to convince a potential customer to buy. When business-to-business (B2B) buyers are considering a purchase, they spend 17% of their time meeting with potential suppliers, according to Gartner research. The time spent with any one sales representative may only be 5% or 6% of that total.

Suppliers must give buyers a choice of interactions, whether it's through in-person, digital, or blended channels (including bots). This interactivity is expected to render the traditional, mechanistic sales models less effective. Organizations need to look to hyperautomation, digital selling, and artificial intelligence to interact with their customers in new ways.

This paper looks at how to engage the "everywhere customer," support insights-driven sales management, and increase the sellers' digital skills. Infosys followed this path to reimagine its sales force's effectiveness. The results of our live enterprise initiative can provide guidance for any large enterprise in B2B sales.

Shifting sales strategies

Large incumbent enterprises often struggle to recognize game-changing market stimuli as they focus on running a complex business. The most resilient respond to market disruptions effectively while still meeting escalating business performance expectations.

To compete effectively, it is imperative to close the historical gap between marketing and sales through integration of data and insights. Companies need common language, actions, and insights delivered through a single integrated platform. Many customer relationship management (CRM) systems attempt to provide this connection but end up being more of a system of records. Sellers often struggle with the technology due to poor user experience, disparate data sharing among teams, or complicated business processes that lead to disengagement and a lack of productivity.

> Resilient large incumbent enterprises are adept at meeting mounting business performance expectations while effectively responding to market disruptions

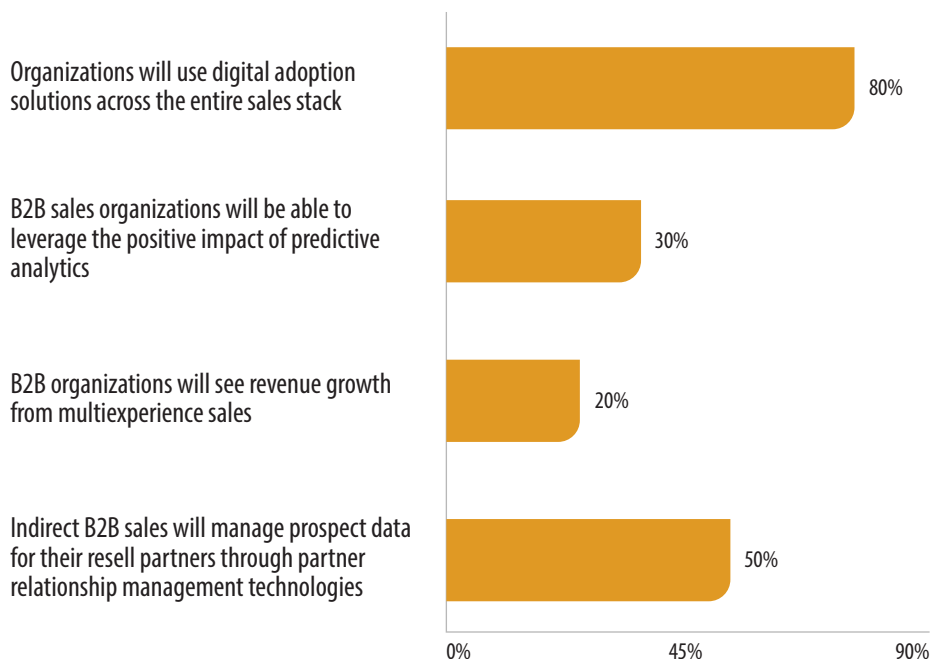Organizations have suddenly recognized the importance of digital B2B sales channels and accepted that old strategies no longer work. The decision to reinvent the sales team, however, is not as simple as flipping a switch. Businesses must continuously reinvent their operating models with as much enthusiasm as reimagining their customer journeys and experiences.

This approach gave Infosys a head start on changes that were forced upon almost every business last year. The enterprise needed to sense and respond in real time to changes in customer requirements, talent supply chains, and virtual working.

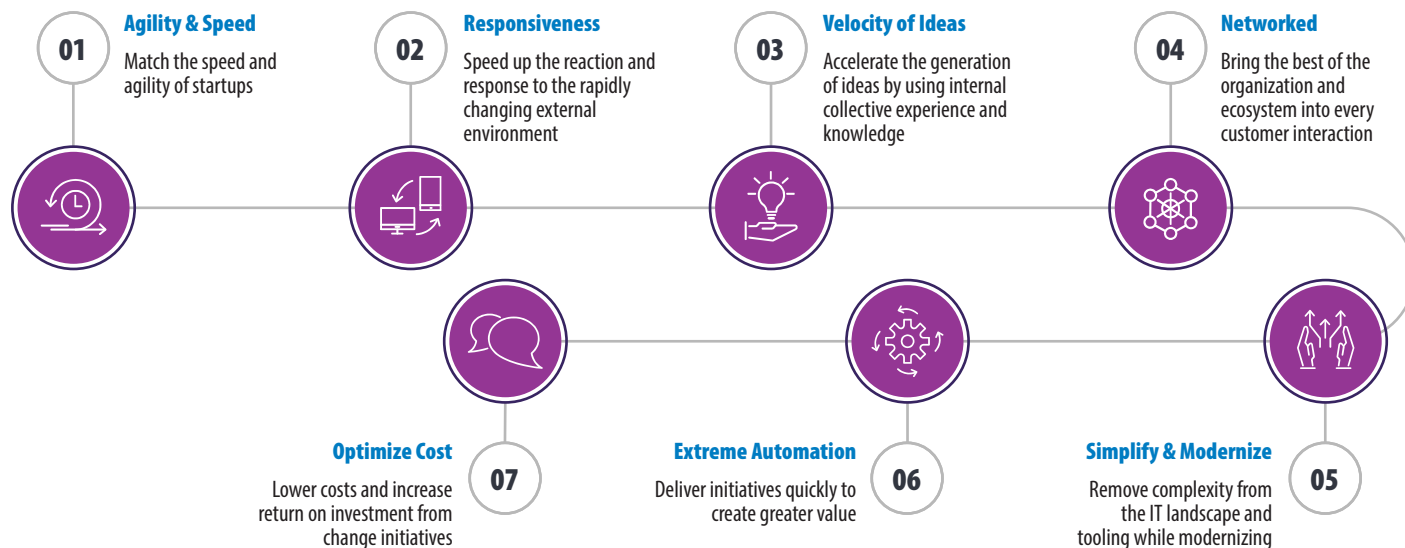## How Infosys succeeded in sales transformation

As the pandemic accelerated, Infosys' response had to be quick and confident. We needed to develop targeted, relevant propositions. We had to equip sales teams with a COVID-19-related point of view to take to clients. To do these effectively, Infosys also needed a better user

Figure 1. Sales technology predictions for 2025

Source: Gartner

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Figure 2. Mapping sales aspirations to live enterprise objectives

01 **Agility & Speed**
Match the speed and agility of startups

02 **Responsiveness**
Speed up the reaction and response to the rapidly changing external environment

03 **Velocity of Ideas**
Accelerate the generation of ideas by using internal collective experience and knowledge

04 **Networked**
Bring the best of the organization and ecosystem into every customer interaction

Optimize Cost **07**
Lower costs and increase return on investment from change initiatives

Extreme Automation **06**
Deliver initiatives quickly to create greater value

Simplify & Modernize **05**
Remove complexity from the IT landscape and tooling while modernizing

Source: Infosys

experience and faster collaboration between the sales and solutions teams. The knowledge-sharing mechanisms also needed a redesign to enable quick tagging of market relevant offerings.

We identified the most critical challenges faced by the sales force and then developed seven points that could act as guardrails when making any process changes.

> Infosys' new sales transformation approach was built on people, process, and technology

We imagined a new digital pathway to accelerate our business, account, and pursuit sales strategies. Adopting the same Agile blueprint as other departments, we used sprints that delivered incremental change and eventually created a new structure. The new approach to sales transformation was built on three key pillars: people, process, and technology. This was overlaid with an organizational management philosophy that encourages long-lasting change through one micro change at a time.

People

The sales force needed greater knowledge of the company offerings, access to market intelligence, and the ability to communicate more effectively in the virtual world. The most important steps were to:

- Enable people to focus on the most important metrics (size of the pipeline, conversion rate, incentives). An automated reporting system with personalized dashboards was created to highlight new opportunities and follow-ups.

- Generate insights that prioritize the most important capabilities — ones that drive large account growth and identify the traits of top performers. Based on those insights, a training program was introduced to the rest of the sales force.

- Identify early adopters in each segment. They served as role models for their colleagues and enhanced the message of change.

- Develop a virtual selling podcast series that shares the experiences of company leaders with the more

than 1,700 members of the global sales force.

- Create a unified collection of sales enablement programs. We worked with the Education, Training and Assessment unit to launch a self-paced learning platform. Sales Excellence through Accelerated Learnings (SEALS) offers a blend of key sales, business, and technology skills as well as the latest insights on various domains, industries, and technology trends.

- Set up a series of training platforms to focus on different teams and different needs. One platform helps the sales force to familiarize themselves with newly created solutions and to sell off-the-shelf products. In six months, this helped increase the pipeline of existing accounts by more than $70 million. Another effort educated the client services team about new offerings. The platform used expertise from sales leaders who have successfully sold that offering. And another sales training program seeks to insert storytelling and repeatability into successful deal pitches.

Process

The live enterprise change management team ran surveys and focus group discussions and provided analytics to better understand virtual selling. We examined how to make systems easier and less intrusive, effectively engage with social selling, and quickly obtain better insights. Some key changes included:

- Helping the customer service group target prospects through a Find a Connect feature. This provides information about stakeholders, challenges, industry trends, competitors, organizational charts, and prospective customers' key stakeholders. The initiative led to more than $7 million in pipeline creation in the first half of Infosys' 2020-21 fiscal year.

- Partnering with Gartner to map how the pandemic and remote working changed buyer journeys and to understand the new era of virtual selling. At the start of the crisis, we gathered analysis and recommendations from sales and account teams, external analysts, and Infosys research.

- Developing a new social selling program that uses networking platforms, such as LinkedIn Sales Navigator. After an initial success, the program was expanded to our larger sales force. We found that the return on investment of social selling is 1,000x, which has led to $370 million in the Infosys sales pipeline.

- Working with external experts and facilitating more than 100 engagements with representatives of different products, regions, practice areas, and council members.

- Splitting the price and prove stages in our CRM system to provide better granularity and forecasting. Also, our opportunity life cycle stages now automatically change based on data, which make the movements more accurate and closer to industry benchmarks. Ultimately, our CRM insights improved decision-making about planning, revenue forecasting, large deal proposals, and sales management.

- Building a sales insights knowledge management portal to provide industry analysis, best practices, references, frameworks, and playbooks. The portal has more than 1,500 unique documents and 80,000-plus views.
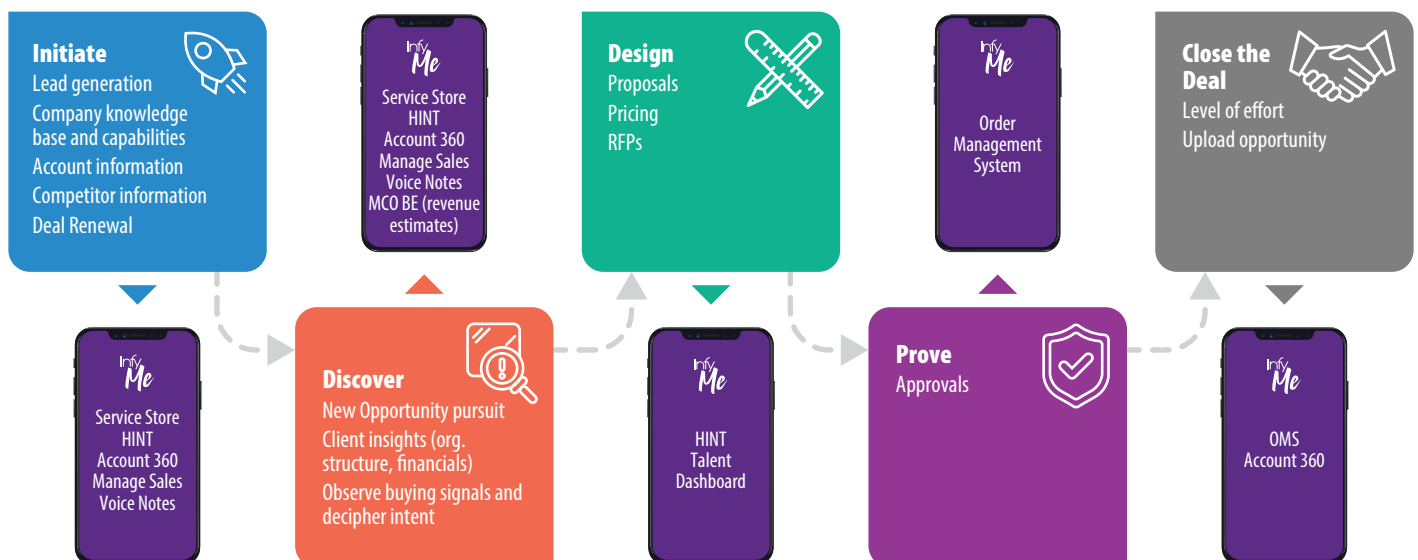
- Creating HINT, a growing internal knowledge search engine than can access more than 65,000 assets. The scalable engine collects information from multiple internal portals, sales systems, and past deals to provide input for new proposals.

Technology

Infosys switched to a digital-first, mobile-first approach that increased speed and flexibility. To make this happen, the quasi-systemized approach was switched to a deep learning search engine. Many daily sales processes were collected in the internal InfyMe app.

A cross-functional team — featuring business, sales effectiveness, and information systems experts — collaborated from design to release on sales apps. The user journey was envisioned and mapped to empower the sales staff to make decisions and revisit priorities based on feedback for every development sprint. These

Figure 3. The sales journey enabled through InfyMe apps

Source: Infosys

priorities were expressed as user stories that captured the spirit and benefits of an idea without defining every detail. That left room to incorporate what has been learned during implementation. At the end of each sprint, the full team reviewed the improved journey with the sales teams and received critical feedback from major stakeholders.

The technology changes also included:

- Reorganizing sales data to make it universally accessible rather than having it stored in silos. This improves decision-making on deals and reduces the turnaround time on critical processes. Managers are able to get snapshots of market intelligence to help match offerings to client buying intent and signals.

- The addition of real-time telemetry to provide better usage analytics. This allows leaders to measure the success of this technology

transformation. The change hints at a future dominated by autonomous sales analysis and virtual selling apps.

- A knowledge repository that offers a 360-degree view of accounts and also connectors that provide market, social, account, and people insights. Level of effort creation and approvals, which used to take weeks, can now be done in days. These apps save a salesperson 15% of work time each day on average.

- The creation of an Infosys digital identity that helps clients, partners, academics, and the open source community access our systems (cloud assets, learning, and other platforms) and co-create intellectual property. Account teams can use this to provide solutions to clients. Trial access is in the planning stages.
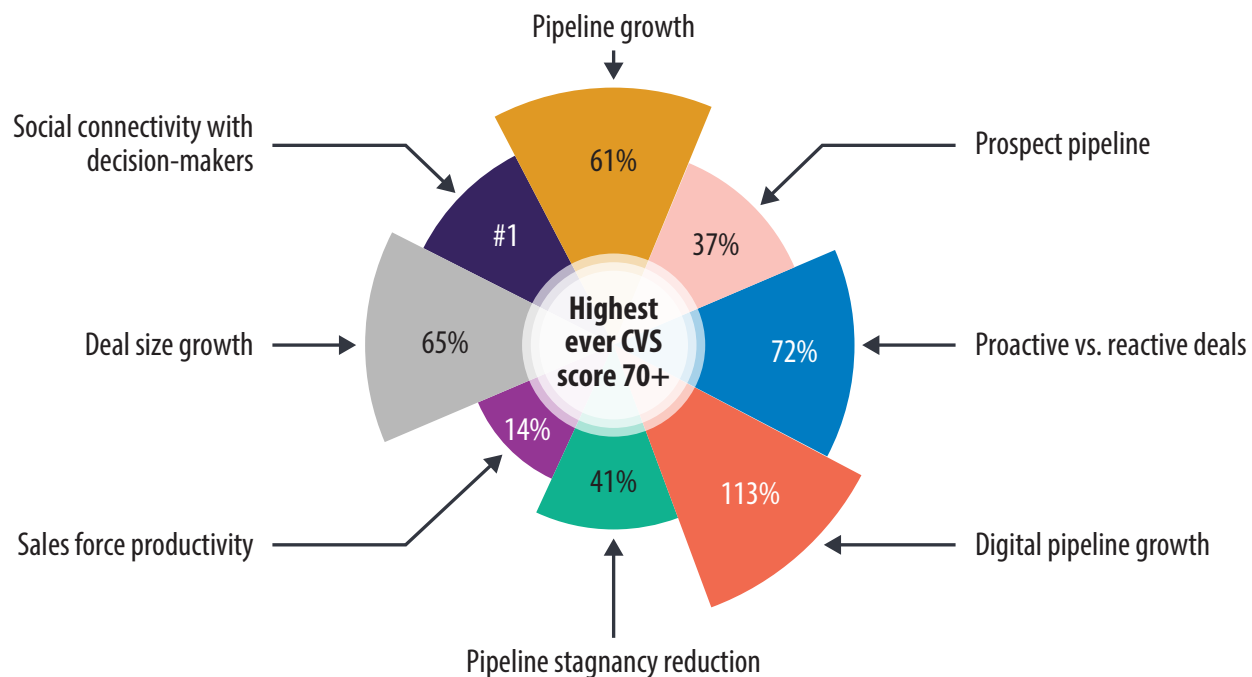
Impact

In this transformation, we answered long-standing questions that plagued sales teams. How do you get system-driven insights? How do you improve the sales of new services? How do you access knowledge across the organization? The answers led to a record number of new accounts and contacts and opportunities won.

Soccer-themed gamification increased CRM adoption by 23% and raised the social selling index. Pipeline stagnation decreased by 41%. The Sales effectiveness team also worked with outside partners to bring in additional expertise, which led to an increase of 65% in deal size.

Overall, the sales effectiveness initiatives contributed to a total pipeline increase of 61% in the 2021 fiscal year. In response to a companywide focus, the digital sales

Figure 4. Key metrics showing outcome of Infosys sales transformation process

Source: Infosys

pipeline increased by 113%. And the proactive deals pipeline — which has higher rates — increased by 72%. And about 40 intellectual property assets in Infosys' internal digital marketplace contributed more than $18 million in the most recent four quarters.

These new cross-functional capabilities also played a role in Infosys' successful pursuit of the blockbuster strategic partnership with asset manager Vanguard (involving the transfer of 1,300 employees). The sales team mapped client stakeholders, including Vanguard's key decision-makers, through tools such as our Sales Navigator.

Meanwhile, the Vanguard sales team wanted to learn more about the Infosys large-deal process and to cross-sell the new Vanguard platform to Infosys' existing clients. A richer collection of information has allowed Infosys leaders to better deploy their talent, track metrics, and optimize performance, engagement, and productivity.

Key lessons that can be applied to other sales transformations:

- Map sales transformation goals to the company strategy and enterprise change management journey.

- Emphasize communication by ensuring that sales teams have playback channels and opportunities to provide feedback.

- Create regular micro changes that can build into systemwide changes.

- Ensure the uplift of physical and digital infrastructure as much as of people and process changes.

- Amplify clients' experiences by focusing on our sales team and their understanding of expectations and the changing environment.

Infosys has been in the business of selling for 40 years, but what that means today is vastly different from what it did in previous decades. We have fundamentally changed how we build new systems and workflows through artificial intelligence, training, and mobile functionality. These allow a person to discover sales intent, understand buying signals, develop sales plays, design deal or account strategies, and navigate company innovations. Combined, they can generate fresh ideas and identify new buying centers.

Infosys has adapted and transformed its sales with a better understanding of the ever-evolving nature of business. This resulted in the company's signing some of the biggest orders in its history. Customer expectations, experiences, and relationships are changing in almost every industry. Companies today must seamlessly integrate digital and human channels, and capabilities should continuously strengthen customer relationships to meet rising demands.

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