



Redefine the Communications Selling Experience with Data and AI

Discover how you can unlock efficiency, increase productivity, and supercharge sales.

Can you help me with a new plan?

Einstein Recommendation
Based on his device usage, the platinum plan meets Jimmy's needs.
[Draft with Einstein](#) [Not Helpful](#)

Device Usage
Data updated April 7, 2024 at 11:37 am.

Device	Usage Percentage
Smartphone	64%
Tablet	30%
Desktop	80%
Smart TV	58%

Contents

The communications industry is entering an era of change, innovation, and opportunity.....	03
Customer expectations continue to expand (and so do employees').....	04
Legacy systems are holding the communications industry back.....	05
Disjointed, manual experiences impede sales productivity.....	06
Telecom sales processes are increasingly complex.....	07
Solve industry challenges with data.....	08
Automate, simplify, and empower more productive, efficient sales teams.....	10
AI is the key to accelerating communications sales.....	11
Build toward a stronger AI future.....	13



The communications industry is entering an era of change, innovation, and opportunity.

The past decade has been an especially challenging one for telecoms. Intense competition and narrowing margins are making it difficult for communications service providers to differentiate themselves and increase profitability.

Not so long ago, the industry saw infrastructure investments like fiber and 5G as their next great driver of revenue, differentiation, and growth. These investments, while worthwhile, have not yet paid off. Communications companies need to increase their profitability. They want to improve margins, reduce customer churn, and increase revenue. Many are looking toward operational efficiencies and data-driven business models to achieve these goals.


The emergence and widespread adoption of AI has the potential to help telecoms cut costs, retain customers, and drive overall business success. [A telecom-specific sales platform](#), robust data strategy, and embedded AI capabilities have the potential to efficiently and effectively streamline telecommunications sales. These elements will enable communications service providers to supercharge core capabilities and ensure their teams are selling smarter, scaling processes more easily, and closing deals faster.



More than 8 in 10 sales professionals say sales operations play a critical role in growing the business.

[Salesforce State of Sales Fifth Edition](#)

AI tools and technology are only as powerful as the data they have to work with. This necessitates that communications service providers have their data house in order prior to attempting to unlock the advantages of AI. In many cases, this may mean transforming technological infrastructure. This is a worthwhile endeavor that will pay off now and far into the future. Connecting data and integrating systems will enable you to overcome current challenges, optimize operations, and seize the opportunities of an AI-driven future.



Customer expectations continue to expand (and so do employees’).

The proliferation of AI, specifically generative AI, over the past 12–18 months has further accelerated the increase in consumer and business expectations. The extreme personalization customers are experiencing across many other industries has set the bar higher for what they expect from their communications service providers. People (and businesses) want more than just tailored interactions. They want individualized product offerings, sales pitches, and intelligent, connected, and curated experiences across all channels. And, they want these things on demand, whenever and wherever it may suit them.

When technology advances:



81%
of customers expect faster service.

[State of the Connected Customer Sixth Edition](#)



73%
of customers expect better personalization.

[State of the Connected Customer Sixth Edition](#)

Employees also expect more. Many are looking for ways to increase productivity, reduce manual taskwork, and up the focus on valuable, more fulfilling work. They know and are excited about new AI-powered tools that might help them achieve these aims. A communications service provider’s ability to provide these tools is indicative of an innovative and efficient work environment that prioritizes employee experience and satisfaction.

Great customer and employee experiences can function as a differentiator, attracting more customers and better talent. This makes the ability to provide them critical to your position in the market.



Legacy systems are holding the communications industry back.

Old, outdated systems and inefficient processes are one of the industry's biggest barriers. Current systems are not set up to efficiently support customer service needs, sales needs, and even day-to-day operations. Even further, on average, only 17% of B2B companies have fully integrated customer data throughout the organization. This makes it tough to engage customers meaningfully and makes delivering a connected experience near impossible due to disjointed and incomplete back end operations.



On average, only 17% of B2B companies are fully integrated.

[Telecom NPS Benchmarks And CX Trends In 2023](#)

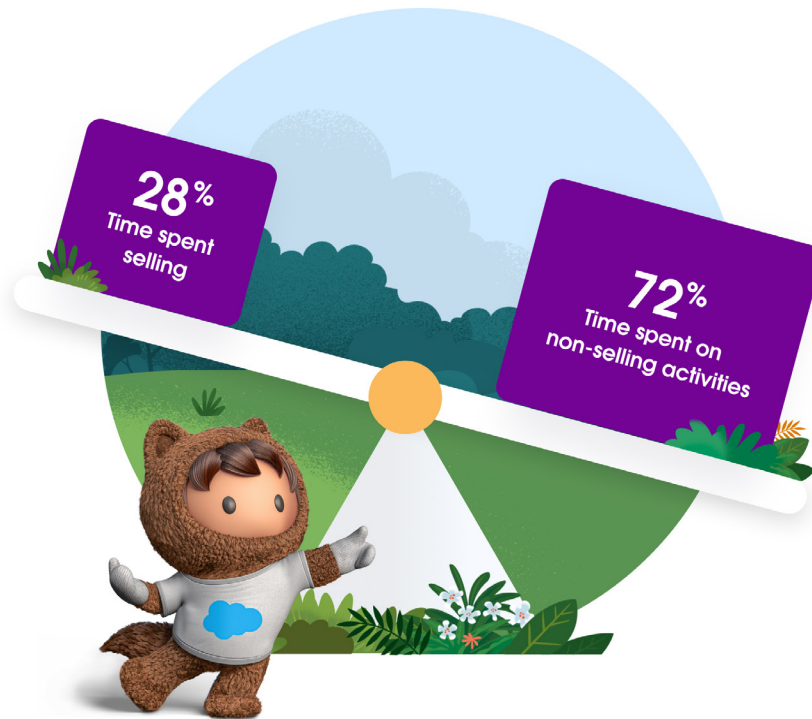
Many of the industry's greatest challenges can be traced back to these disconnected legacy systems and trapped data. When telecoms can't fully unlock their data, it hinders operations and makes it impossible to take full advantage of technological innovations like AI. Without a single source of truth, employees are left struggling with missing or incomplete information, effectively working with one hand tied behind their back.

This results in a high cost to serve, slow or incomplete service, poor customer satisfaction, and the inability to leverage customer data for cross-sell and upsell opportunities. It also leaves sales reps lacking the information they need to get good insights into their selling process, thereby greatly impacting sales teams' success.



Disjointed, manual experiences impede sales productivity.

Today's sales reps spend the vast majority of their time on non-selling activities. In fact, the average sales rep [spends just 28% of their time selling](#). Instead, reps are focused on things like manually updating opportunities, staying on top of opportunity milestones, and getting approvals throughout each stage of the sales process. This outsized focus on taskwork is antithetical to the ability to drive more sales. And, when it comes to trying to fix this (or strengthen quota attainment), most of the attempts at optimizations stem from guesswork, not data.



Telecom sales reps need more opportunities, more time actually selling, and smarter productivity and efficiency improvements throughout their process. Increasing sales productivity is a critical driver of success and growth in a business. At present, [89% of sales managers believe their sales reps are missing out on opportunities and almost 72% of sales reps expect to miss their quotas](#). Creating a better, more efficient sales operation can change this.

Telecom sales processes are increasingly complex.

Telecommunications sales processes are cumbersome, making it hard for sales reps to find success in an already competitive market. Not only do reps have less time to actually sell, the abundance of players offering similar products makes it hard for communications service providers to stand out and differentiate from one another. To find success, communications service providers need to innovate and differentiate their products as well as their processes.

A lack of differentiation often leaves customers defaulting to price (and incentives) as their primary decision maker. This puts pressure on communications service providers to continually lower prices, making it hard to drive growth and increase profitability. What's more, just because a customer signs on, whether or not they stay isn't always a given. High churn rates present a real challenge across the industry, with things like network problems, billing issues, or price increases causing customers to hop from one provider to another.

Product catalogs have also grown, increasing product management and quoting complexity. This is especially challenging when it comes to B2B sales, which are already more complicated as they often involve multi-site, multi-product quotes and orders as well as complex move/add/change/disconnect (MACD) management.

Ideally, better products and services would be a key element in attracting customers, but consumer-side telecommunications products and plans tend to be hard to distinguish from one another. A phone plan is a phone plan. Other than price, telecommunications companies have very few differentiation levers to pull. The B2B side has more opportunity for differentiation, but complicated offerings and complex pricing, discounting, and MACD management can be hard for sales teams to adequately explain—and this can be overwhelming for customers. This leaves many B2B decision makers unsure about what they want or need when it comes to specific solutions.

Further complicating telecommunications sales is the constant evolution of technology and regulatory issues, both of which add another layer of difficulty to the sales process. Ongoing technological innovation necessitates that telecoms continually update products and offerings, which is hard to communicate to customers and equally as hard to keep track of on the part of the employees. And, the need to ensure that every sale adheres to strict rules, sales practices, and consumer protection laws adds another step onto what can already be a lengthy sales journey.



Solve industry challenges with data.

Connected, harmonized data combats the vast majority of the industry's current challenges. Data harmonization standardizes data, reconciles differences, and removes inconsistencies to create a cohesive data set. Connected, harmonized data empowers telecoms to deliver personalized services, enhance customer experiences, reduce costs, innovate with new offerings, and create new revenue streams. It also paves the way for strong AI capabilities.

The strength of your AI is highly dependent on the accessibility and usability of your data. Connecting and integrating data across the entirety of your organization enables you to bring it onto a CRM platform and build solutions around it. This creates a single source of truth that gives everyone across your organization a 360-degree view. It not only makes data accessible, it makes it actionable and intelligent.

A communications-specific platform fueled by data and AI has the potential to revolutionize the industry and provide the differentiation service providers have been seeking for the better part of the past decade. From streamlining quote-to-order to increased personalization to shorter sales cycles and better experiences, this type of holistic solution is the key to building better, more profitable, more efficient experiences at scale.

“ I always coach a platform-mindset when thinking about data-unlock opportunities. Organizations win when they can foster compounding effects across multiple groups. Platforms do that, and the best platforms empower developers and business users alike.”

JONATHAN LAUDICINA
CUSTOMER DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION
OFFICER, AT SALESFORCE



A 360-degree view gives teams the information they need to accelerate sales.

One of the primary benefits of harmonizing data is creating a shared view across your organization. This creates a single source of truth and makes it possible to truly know each customer, subscriber, or partner. It allows teams to better understand what customers, subscribers, or partners might want/need, what’s currently going on with thier service, and what (if any) issues they may be having.

A centralized platform makes it possible for departments to collaborate, share information, and benefit from one another’s interactions. It allows sales teams to access data across the organization and use it to make smarter, faster decisions. It also enables them to quickly and easily understand important details about individual customers so they can interact more personally. When sales teams work with a holistic, 360-degree view, they can ensure engagement is happening successfully—at the right time, with the right message. Details around customer usage data, preferences, past issues, and current products combined with predictive insights can help further refine outreach and strengthen sales strategy. It also allows communications service providers to effectively segment audiences; build and deploy personalized, multi-play offers, and respond to customer requests quickly.



Automate, simplify, and empower more productive, efficient sales teams.

The more time sales reps spend on taskwork, the less time they have to actually sell. Automation and AI-powered solutions built into an integrated platform can help boost productivity and drive sales. In fact, high-performing reps are 1.9x more likely to use AI.

High-performing sales reps are 1.9x more likely to use AI.

[Salesforce State of Sales 2022](#)

Automated workflows powered by AI and unified data can streamline lead-to-cash and decrease order fallout using scalable processes, configurable workflows, and standards-based integration. These workflows automate complex sales processes and make them easier and more efficient for sellers to complete. The guided workflows, drag-and-drop simplicity, and automated data organization enables sellers to more easily manage and maintain territory assignments, optimize account coverage, and align with sales goals.

Flexible configuration tools allow communications service providers to design simpler onboarding processes, more intuitive user-interfaces, clear step-by-step guides, seamless order generation, and validation checks that decrease onboarding time, minimize errors, eliminate re-typing, and generate orders that flow seamlessly. Teams can automatically capture emails, events, and other types of engagement activities and easily manage activity data associated with relevant leads, contacts, accounts, and opportunities. And, they can accomplish all these things in one spot (continually building on that single source of truth).

This ability to make taskwork more efficient and gain visibility into selling activities at scale makes it easier for sales reps to focus on what matters most: selling. The end result? Sales close more quickly and revenue comes in faster.

AI is the key to accelerating communications sales.

An integrated, AI-powered platform primes the path for better, more intelligent sales and, ultimately, greater overall growth. It allows sales reps to deepen customer relationships, spend more time on high-value work, and truly personalize their sales approach. AI tools also make it possible to easily flag customers who may be dissatisfied so sales reps can reach out with proactive retention strategies.

AI capabilities make a genuine difference when it comes to driving revenue and increasing overall sales volume. They provide the insight, productivity boost, and tools needed for sales teams to work more efficiently and sell more confidently.

Intelligent insights based on real-time market conditions and customer insights can help teams:



Connect with customers and track deals across every channel.



Prioritize the best leads based on the customer profiles that drive the most revenue.



Access step-by-step guides that work to increase efficiency with actionable, prioritized to-do lists directly in the flow of work.



Move deals through the sales process faster.

Ramp up, close deals, and find key information faster.

Connecting with customers is only one part of sales success. To run an effective sales team, organizations need to ensure that sales reps are onboarded quickly and that key information is fast and easy to find. [An intelligent conversational interface](#) directly in the flow of work allows teams to access and seamlessly utilize valuable generative AI capabilities throughout their workday. For example, AI-enabled search allows reps to find answers faster so they can close deals more quickly, and AI summaries make it easier for reps to quickly get up to speed on both team activity and account history.

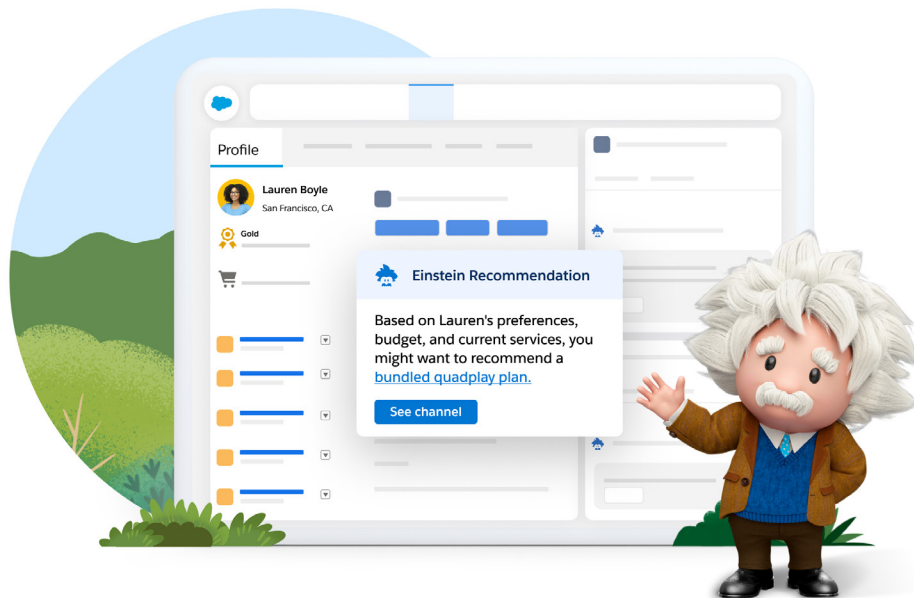


Personalize the process with AI.

In a competitive marketplace with so many options, a sales rep's ability to speak to a customer as an individual and offer personalized solutions and recommendations is invaluable. Both predictive and generative AI can help sales teams do this at scale. Predictive AI can help with lead scoring, next best actions, and predicting the likelihood of churn. It can take what it knows about a customer (or subscriber) as well as what it knows about products, offers, and the company catalog to provide tailored recommendations.

Generative AI is also being used by sales teams to boost productivity, streamline tasks, and uncover new insights. Teams can use generative AI to do things like generate emails, summarize calls, and draft copy for a variety of other content. This enables them to accomplish more in less time. Generative AI also has the ability to ingest unstructured data across a variety of sources, analyze it, and offer insights that might help teams understand the nature of competitors' offerings, general market trends, and how to refine pricing strategy. It can also help them build out complex multi-site quotes with ease.

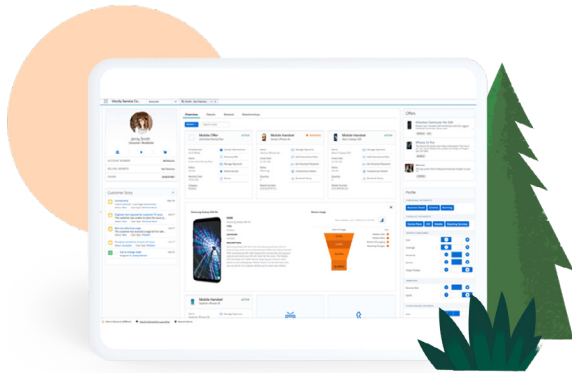
A communications service provider's ability to personalize solutions and outreach is a huge differentiator in the commercial market. Proactive, individualized engagement can go a long way toward attracting, keeping, and growing commercial business. AI capabilities allow communications service providers to more quickly and easily deliver complicated personalized solutions. Commercial sales teams can take an "always-on" approach by tasking the technology with the job of continually being on the lookout for pertinent information that may affect the health or success of a particular account. They can then use that information to help re-strategize for the best possible chance of success. This ensures that no opportunity is missed and important accounts don't churn due to lack of individualized attention.



Build toward a stronger AI future.

Seizing the AI opportunity and using it to fuel growth and revenue generation means being open to a new level of technological innovation and agility. It also means continuously learning and growing with the technology.

Bringing data, AI, and industry solutions together on one centralized platform enables communications service providers to boost productivity, unlock efficiency, and enhance engagement. It makes it possible for them to benefit from and take advantage of a full range of AI capabilities and sales solutions that help teams personalize outreach, strengthen customer relationships, and supercharge the overall sales process. This not only accelerates sales, it engenders long-term success, creates market differentiation, and builds a better overall sales experience for both the seller and the customer.



Discover how you can streamline operations, increase productivity, improve time to market, and fuel seamless experiences at scale.

[Watch the Demo](#)





The information provided in this report is strictly for the convenience of our customers and is for general informational purposes only. Publication by Salesforce, Inc., does not constitute an endorsement. Salesforce does not warrant the accuracy or completeness of any information, text, graphics, links, or other items contained within this guide. Salesforce does not guarantee you will achieve any specific results if you follow any advice in the report. It may be advisable for you to consult with a professional such as a lawyer, accountant, architect, business advisor, or professional engineer to get specific advice that applies to your specific situation.

© Copyright 2024, Salesforce, Inc. All rights reserved.