

# AI in sales: Embrace the future without losing the human

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## Exploring the advantages & downsides of AI and machine learning in high-performing sales organisations

AI and machine learning have been near the top of CTOs' digital transformation agenda for some time already. However, the meteoric rise of ChatGPT and Google Bard has catapulted the topic to the limelight. As AI writes Amazon best-selling books, crafts viral tweets for influencers, and passes exams at top universities, the question we're hearing from many of our clients is: **what's it going to do for sales?**

At SBR Consulting, we're increasingly asked about the optimal use of these tools in a high-performing sales organisation. While there's no one right answer, we've compiled a few thoughts from our experience so far to serve as inspiration.

### Focus on selling

Let's start with the most widely anticipated advantage: saving time. Data suggests that, even if they think it's significantly more, the average salesperson spends only 10% of their time actively selling. The ability to automate certain repetitive, process-driven tasks, then, is a great way to delegate administrative obligations to increase the time spent on revenue-generating activity. Point 1 to AI.

As we consider other projected benefits offered by using these technologies, we must also weigh them against potential downsides. Let's look at some pros and cons:

### Advantages

#### Preparation

One of the biggest advantages of AI and Chat GPT is the ability to automate time-intensive admin such as call prep, research and call follow-up. This is where companies can look to tools that analyse CRM data, meeting notes and transcripts, summarise them, and pull out the key points and next steps.

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## Personalisation

With just a couple of well-phrased prompts, salespeople can now tailor outreach e-mails to approach a much larger number of individual prospects per day. If connected to CRM data, AI can even take into consideration previous contact to ensure the message is personalised. Salespeople can also use these tech tools to craft narratives to appeal to specific buyer personas that they want to target. Along with the language and type of messaging that is most likely to resonate with that demographic, AI can even consider which platforms they're likely to engage with and adjust the content to conform with channel-best practice.

## Tool Integration:

Integrations between automation platforms, such as the Zapier ChatGPT plugin, can help sales teams and sales operations go one step further with their efficiency. You can ask ChatGPT to complete tasks in another app without having to switch platforms. Take a look at Zapier's [site](#) if you're interested in learning more about this.

And it's not just ChatGPT: tools such as [Sybill.ai](#) summarise sales calls while [some1.ai](#) and [MagicForm.ai](#) offer chatbots to answer client queries and even upsell them based on your website content and some optimisation. Meanwhile, our partners at [Glyphic.ai](#) use AI to analyse huge volumes of data from your own recorded sales interactions and produce insights into your deal qualification, create effective follow-ups and prioritised action item lists, pull out critical milestones, and more.

There are numerous other use cases we could speak about here. Account-based marketing addresses the critical question of how to align marketing and sales outreach. Portfolio analysis searches for upsell opportunities. From sales coaching to customer service workflow improvement, the possibilities offered by AI integration seem endless.

**However, organisations should be cognisant of the potential downsides of integrating AI into their sales processes.**

## Risks

### Over-reliance:

The ability to conduct mass outreach in a pseudo-personalised way in a very short space of time is currently a controversial topic. One concern is that if sales teams lean too heavily into tech to automate their roles, they can lose focus on the human relationship, which may be detrimental to long-term success. If we're busy sending an enormous number of seemingly tailored e-mails at the expense of picking up the phone and creating a connection, then we'll still be less successful than those who prioritise the methods proven to be more effective. Face-to-face communication is still ideal in the sales world, and video calls and phone calls are the next-best alternative.

### Authenticity:

AI platforms are also unlikely to be able to replicate the nuanced approach that experienced salespeople bring to the table. While they can certainly help with lead generation and data analysis, there is still a need for human intuition and creativity when crafting a sales pitch. Using AI to conduct initial research and offer an informative starting point may well save time and be extremely helpful. However, as ChatGPT and similar tools process existing data to provide the most probable answer, failing to add human input can leave content extremely dry and suspiciously unoriginal.

## Quality:

Schools are currently grappling with systems to identify whether an assignment is written by AI. Interestingly, [Turnitin](#), who offer plagiarism and AI detection software, say of their own tools that “there is no substitute for knowing a student.” Similarly, B2B buyers and decision-makers will start to pick up on generic, automated outreach and quickly disregard any communications they think may be mass- or auto-generated.

In a similar vein, the risk with tools that scrape the internet in real time for their responses, such as Google Bard, is that fake news or inaccurate information permeates our research. With AI, the rule is generally “rubbish in, rubbish out.” To ensure that you’re getting high-quality content that both sounds original and is factually correct, it’s worth learning how to write prompts effectively and then putting time into bringing critical oversight and adding your own voice to the outputs.

## Time to embrace a new era

Artificial Intelligence isn’t “coming;” it’s here. As with other technological advancements in the past, the technology itself isn’t likely to become the problem. Rather, it’s how we choose to use it that will determine how successful we are at leveraging its potential. Sales organisations need to use it as A tool, not THE tool.

That being said, the AI train has left the station, and we strongly recommend embracing it. If they don’t, businesses run the risk of sounding like Ken Olsen from Digital Equipment Corporation, who famously said in 1977, “there is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home”, or Robert Metcalfe, founder of 3Com, predicting in 1995 that user demand for the Internet would “catastrophically collapse” in 1996.

Research AI, seek training, and think critically about how you could use it to streamline your current processes, increase efficiency in daily activities, and enhance the human elements of sales.

To discover more about integrating AI into your sales organisation, [let’s talk growth](#).