

# HIGH-VALUE MARKETING: CONNECTING CUSTOMERS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY, ANALYTICS, AND COLLABORATION

# **SPONSOR PERSPECTIVE**



SHANNON DUFFY
VICE PRESIDENT OF
MARKETING,
SALESFORCE PARDOT

Once upon a time, marketers just marketed. It was a unidirectional outpouring of offers and promotions to clients and prospects alike. While the essentials of marketing haven't changed, modern marketing has become a conversation. Buyers investigate products, and marketers respond with engaging experiences in the form of content and contact. Customer experience has become a key differentiator.

This shift in customer engagement has led to the creation of new tools to help marketers to keep up with this wealth of information and interaction. Marketers track prospects' behavior on websites, their downloading habits and streaming activities, and their engagement on social media, then analyze the data—all to determine which segments are primed for sales, and which need more cultivation.

The shift is not just a matter of technology, but a matter of strategy as well. Issues arise for some when they don't have the necessary skills within their teams to collect and analyze this new influx of data. Others find that they while they have invested in tools and technology, they lack the shared vision across departmental lines that's needed to create a truly seamless customer experience. Here at Salesforce, we wanted to better understand the everyday challenges of B2B marketers, and what can be done to empower them.

We worked with Harvard Business Review Analytic Services to find out how organizations deal with these changing demands, and what can be learned about overcoming them. The results show that closer alignment between sales and marketing teams makes managing the constant flow of buyer data much easier. Ensuring that marketers have access to the tools they need to support their sales teams with prospects' data quickly and efficiently is a critical factor for success.

There's much more that goes into marketing than there used to be, and our charter continues to change with the advent of new technologies and platforms. The growth of digital marketing makes marketing automation and analytics tools even more important for correctly identifying leads and creating a strategy for pulling them into the sales funnel. While traditional marketing will most likely always exist, marketers can't do it alone. Marketing and sales teams need to work together to maximize the effects of both technology and changing buyer demands.



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#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Marketing has transformed from a largely one-way activity of sending information about products and services to an ongoing exchange of information and insight among buyers, sellers, prospects, and partners. Today, it is less about promotion and more about engagement. Successful marketers know a lot about their customers. On the consumer side, that might mean an airline being able to present a compelling vacation package to a potential traveler based on knowing they enjoy outdoor activities but doesn't like flights of more than three hours, for example. In the B2B world, "knowing" customers includes demonstrating the value proposition of the relationship in some pretty sophisticated ways—for example, when a medical device company trains former nurses to help bridge the gap between existing medical challenges and the company's solutions.

As varied as these scenarios are, they have one thing in common, according to new research from Harvard Business Review Analytic Services. They are powered by data (lots of data), analytics, and automation.

But business leaders are experiencing a range of challenges as they seek to turn data into engaging experiences and sales, according to the 556 executives to the survey.

Technology tools are not sufficiently user-friendly, and are often hard to integrate into existing marketing and sales systems and processes. As a result, marketers lack access to the very capabilities they most need to engage customers and help their sales colleagues be successful.

Even when marketers have access to the tools, many organizations have yet to develop the analytic skills their marketing teams require—namely, the ability to interpret data once they have access to it. Respondents overwhelmingly named developing analytic skills on the marketing team as the number one critical success factor over the next two years, yet only around two-fifths say their marketing staff have the training they need to be effective.

Automation is becoming essential as marketing data and activities become more complex. More than half of respondents say they can't manage their marketing programs without it. But automation has yet to penetrate the barrier between marketing and sales. The vast majority of respondents have little or no automation when it comes to qualifying leads or passing leads to sales.

The gap between marketing and sales isn't just about technology; integration of the marketing and sales teams was the second most frequently cited critical success factor. Yet the existence of silos between marketing and sales is getting in the way.

HIGH-VALUE MARKETING

# Advanced Marketers set goals that go beyond immediate sales to foster long-term customer relationships.

To transform marketing for the digital economy, organizations need to:

- Address the skills gap among marketers
- Better integrate marketing and sales processes and data, and develop a culture of collaboration between marketing and sales
- Reflect the strategic importance of customer relationship development through shared performance goals across marketing and sales
- Concentrate the power of serving customers through multiple channels by developing a single customer view across them
- Adopt and ensure organization-wide use of advanced, user-friendly marketing technologies, including analytics and automation
- Ensure marketing efforts can be comprehensively tracked and reported, and that that information is used to constantly adjust marketing activities and investments

Not many organizations have achieved these goals. Just 15 percent of respondents have widespread use of advanced tools, analytics, and practices to better leverage data in their marketing and sales efforts. figure 1 These Advanced Marketers set goals that go beyond immediate sales to foster long-term customer relationships. Their approach appears to be paying off; they are much more likely than others to claim a market position that is considerably ahead of their rivals. Still, even these leaders have room for improvement.

### FIGURE 1

# **ADVANCED TOOL USAGE**

Thinking broadly, how would you describe your organization's use of information technology, analytics, and automation for its marketing and sales efforts?



# 15% Advanced Marketers

Advanced tools, data, and practices are well integrated and widely used

# 35% Developing Marketers

Advanced tools/practices, but not used by all areas

# **36% Limited Marketers**

Some advanced tools/practices, but underutilized/disconnected

### 13% Manual Marketers

Basic tools/practices, limited use

1% Don't Know

Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Survey, April 2016

# WHAT'S DRIVING CHANGE

The center of gravity in commerce has shifted from sellers to buyers. Customers have access not only to a world of offerings but also to a wealth of information that empowers them to make better decisions on their own. They do this through the web, via mobile devices, and across a variety of channels. At the same time, it's relatively easy for new entrants to get into the game and take market share away from incumbents. For example, a global online employment business is beginning to see its industry fragment with the rise of many niche providers. "Their promise [to employers] is they can go deeper with candidates," said the managing director of a European office for the company. "Customers looking to improve the quality of their hires are becoming sensitive to that." It's never been more important to stay on top of what customers are thinking and to convey that insight into closing deals.

For their part, whether B2B or B2C, customers expect the companies they do business with to know who they are and what they want (without being creepy about it). Marketers are responding by making better use of data from a variety of sources. They are applying more sophisticated analytics to provide the right offer in the moment, with no friction in the process. This customer-centric approach often means going beyond what the company has traditionally sold to provide a total, broader experience. For instance, it's no longer enough for an Asian airline with a business model of providing reliable service at a low cost to just sell a seat on a flight. To avoid being commoditized and marginalized with customers, they must offer an array of travel services, from expedited boarding to a hotel and car service on the other end, according to the company's chief IT advisor. "To build a relationship directly with the customer, we have to sell not just the core product but all things having to do with travel as well," he said. "If we're just a product supplier and give it to the online sites to sell, then we become commoditized."

To operationalize this new business model requires adopting a "complete digital tool set," he added. They are using big data analytics to understand customer behavior and targeting algorithms and content management solutions to present the right offers at the right price. The complexity of serving up such customized offers in real time requires a lot of automation. In fact, half of respondents said they cannot manage their marketing programs without automation, and companies with an equal mix of B2B and B2C business models were even more likely to say that, at 62 percent.

The need for technology extends beyond online commerce to all phases of the customer journey, regardless of industry or business model, with more than half of all respondents (56 percent) saying that technology is extremely important at every phase (rating it 8–10 on a 10-point scale). Yet today, less than a quarter (23 percent) say they use technology extensively to manage customer relationships, and only 38 percent say their marketing tools are integrated into their CRM (around the same percentage—39 percent—say their sales data is fully integrated with their CRM and marketing automation systems). However, asked to name the most important attributes of new marketing systems, 70 percent of respondents said the ability to integrate them with other systems is extremely important. Such integration ensures that every employee who touches a potential customer during the buying process is able to deliver a consistent, seamless experience. Integrating sales and marketing data makes it possible to do analytics on that data to better understand what works and what doesn't. While Advanced Marketers are six to eight times as likely as Manual Marketers (those with limited use of only the most basic marketing technology and practices) to integrate marketing data into their CRM and to use technology extensively to manage customer relationships, even they have room for improvement.

A video communications company uses technology throughout the engagement process, according to a product marketing leader. "Anything a prospect does that's more engaged (opening an email, scrolling through a web page) raises their score," he said. They conduct A/B tests to create prospect profiles and determine to which messages they would be likely to better respond. And they use marketing automation analytics tools to determine how best to engage any given prospect. "We're not selling a commodity," he said. "We treat each sales opportunity as a consultative sell."

The vast majority of respondents have little or no automation when it comes to qualifying leads (80 percent) or passing leads to sales (75 percent). This is hurting companies' effectiveness; almost half (47 percent) of those who have not automated the lead qualification process simply pass all leads to sales, unqualified. figure 2 This wastes salespeople's valuable time—time that should be spent strengthening relationships with customers and qualified leads. By contrast, the large medical device company that builds relationships with customers is also using analytics to understand why reps are spending more time in particular hospitals over others (not always where the best opportunities lie) and to make sure they're focusing on the right accounts.

Automating more of the marketing process can free up marketers to take on responsibilities that would otherwise fall to sales, such as turning marketing qualified leads (who may not be ready to buy but are open to being nurtured) into sales qualified leads, who are further along in their buyer journey. The video communications company has created a new role of marketing development rep to manage this process. "It's a much higher bar, producing a smaller number of leads," said the product marketing leader. This ensures that salespeople's time is spent closing deals. Leads that don't meet that criteria enter the nurture funnel. They're sent additional material and are invited to events, and they stay cool or get warmer based on their actions—all of which is captured and analyzed.

In contrast, Manual Marketers' salespeople waste time on unqualified leads, and worse, they lose track of leads that qualify but don't close. figure 3 Close to half of them (46 percent) forget such leads compared with only 7 percent of Advanced Marketers. Without the technology tools and integration to cycle these valuable prospects back into the nurture funnel, Manual Marketers are at a disadvantage. Indeed, Manual Marketers name their lack of the right marketing technology as their number one barrier to marketing effectiveness—cited by an overwhelming 63 percent.

FIGURE 2
WITHOUT AUTOMATION, MOST JUST PASS UNQUALIFIED LEADS TO SALES
How do you qualify leads?



Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Survey, April 2016

# MANUAL MARKETERS LOSE LEADS THAT DON'T CLOSE

What happens to leads that qualify but don't close?



Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Survey, April 2016

# ADVANCED MARKETERS MORE STRATEGIC, INTEGRATE DATA AND ORGANIZATIONS

In the digital economy, companies that employ advanced marketing tools and practices and have the ability to exploit a variety of data across their business are more likely to enjoy a favorable market position. figure 4 Over the next two years, Developing Users (those with inconsistent use of advanced tech-enabled marketing practices) will try to catch up by increasing their use of marketing technologies—93 percent expect to see such an increase. Even Manual Marketers expect to increase their use of technology (though a quarter still have no plans to do so) as their markets become more digitized. For example, a large South American insurance company has seen its market transform over the past five years, after it became legal to sell insurance over the internet. This has given rise to new sectors of the market, such as micro insurance, and has meant big changes in how insurance companies engage customers, marketing through apps and online. As a result, this company is investing heavily in developing its digital marketing infrastructure and capabilities.

While business leaders are more likely than not to say that their companies take a strategic approach to marketing (a full three-quarters of respondents make this claim), close to half say that their marketing goals are more about immediate sales than long-term relationships. figure 5 Advanced Marketers are the exception—only 25 percent say they prioritize immediate sales. This is a critical distinction as companies fight the commoditization of their products through closer customer ties.

Advanced Marketers look to technology to support their relationship-building efforts, not replace them. B2B companies in particular—especially those selling to a limited pool of potential customers or whose products are complicated—are building long-term relationships on a foundation of expertise, thought leadership, and trust. "We've repositioned people as relationship managers," said a senior sales leader at a large asset management company, "with full authority and accountability for maintaining the relationships with these very important, very sophisticated corporate clients." He describes this as more of a farming activity than hunting. These "farmers" are equipped with engagement tools that help them cross-sell a variety of products to "turn single-mandate clients into multi-mandate," he said.

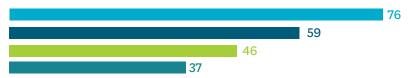
At the medical device company, this new, more consultative approach means that marketing and sales people must have strong clinical acumen, said the head of U.S. sales. A month of intensive clinical training is reinforced with daily questions delivered through an app on their mobile devices. Their scores are recorded and displayed on a leaderboard where reps compete to be on top.

# FIGURE 4

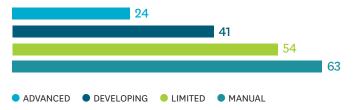
# **ADVANCED MARKETERS ARE MARKET LEADERS**

What is your company's market position relative to competitors?

We are ahead relative to our competitors.



We are about the same or behind relative to our competitors.



Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Survey, April 2016

# FIGURE 5

# STRATEGIC APPROACH TO MARKETING NOT FULLY REFLECTED IN GOALS

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

We take a strategic approach to marketing.



Our marketing goals are weighted more toward immediate sales than long-term relationships.



Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Survey, April 2016

Advanced Marketers stand out in a number of other ways. They are much more likely to:

- Be effective in their use of important technology-enabled marketing practices, such as mobile
  or location-based marketing, lead scoring, content marketing, and segmented email marketing
- Use technology extensively for managing customer relationships
- · Integrate both marketing and sales data with the CRM system
- Use clear, easily understood marketing metrics more consistently across the organization figure 6
- Have a stronger culture of collaboration between marketing and sales (including shared goals
  and alignment throughout the marketing/sales process) as well as with IT
- View marketing leaders as digital strategists

Along with the increased reliance on data and analytics comes the ability to really track performance. Respondents identified a number of key metrics that help them determine the effectiveness of their overall marketing efforts—top among them being marketing spend ROI, lead-to-opportunity conversion rate, and customer lifetime value. figure 7 "We've become very data-driven," said the chief merchant of an online fashion business. "The beauty of being online is that it allows us to determine by channel, by customer, by transaction where we're generating revenue."

Despite recognizing the need to track these important metrics, many fail to do so. Manual marketers are in a particularly tough spot, with only 16 percent saying they track customer lifetime value, for instance, while three times that many say they should. More than half (57 percent) say their inability to track results is a major barrier to the effectiveness of their marketing efforts.

# **NEW SKILLS, COLLABORATION, AND ALIGNMENT**

Technology is increasingly built into every aspect of how marketing gets done, and therefore into every marketing professional's job. So it's not surprising that respondents name ease of use as the most important attribute to getting value from new marketing solutions—71 percent say it is extremely important, rating it an 8–10 on a 10-point scale—more than any other attribute. figure 8 But only 42 percent say their marketing technology is easy to use. Advanced Marketers are twice as likely as Manual Marketers to claim ease of use, at 55 percent, but that still leaves a gap. It is interesting that while Manual Marketers are using only basic marketing tools, they still do not find them easy to use. This may reflect trends in the technology marketplace; recognizing the importance of widespread use of these tools, vendors are making them more user-friendly.

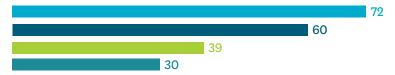
The online fashion company has created self-serve business intelligence tools that are available to everyone in the company: "Anyone can use them to get the information they need to understand that week's business," said the chief merchant. Such accessibility is the exception rather than the norm for marketers. Only 34 percent of respondents say they are able to access the analytics they need from within their marketing solution. figure 9

But having access to tools that are easy to use doesn't address the biggest challenge: the need for (and lack of) analytic skills in marketing. Respondents to the survey universally know that today's marketers must be adept at data analytics, but not all have the training they need in order to be effective in the new data-driven environment. figure 10 This is not to say that marketing professionals need to be data scientists or engineers. Rather, they "need to be able to interpret data—to envision possible scenarios and ask the right question," said the airline company advisor.

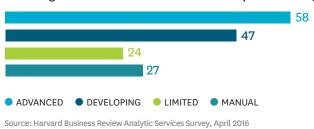
# **CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY OF METRICS**

Percentage of respondents agreeing with the following statements.

Marketing metrics are easily understood by users.



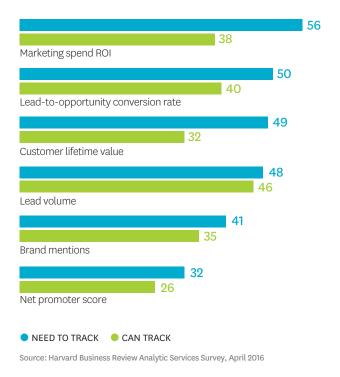
Marketing metrics are consistent across various parts of the organization.



### FIGURE 7

# MANY FAIL TO TRACK KEY MARKETING METRICS

What are the key metrics you need to track to determine the effectiveness of your organization's overall marketing performance? Which of these metrics are you able to track today?



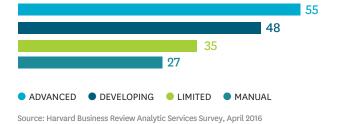
The managing director at the online employment business says he needs both creative and analytics people in marketing, although "the number crunchers are supported by BI [business intelligence], which sits in the sales readiness organization," he said. The process begins and ends with the numbers, but it needs the creative element to "put together fantastic campaigns." Once those campaigns are launched, it's back to the analytics to gauge results. This is where things can get tricky. Until analytics becomes more deeply embedded into how organizations operate, marketing teams need interpreters—people who can communicate data results in a way that everyone can understand.

Sometimes the "interpreter" is part of the analytics team—for instance, at the online employment business, "we have this odd analytical guy who is also a good communicator," said the managing director. "When he comes into the room, everybody just shuts up because he has a way to turn all these funny charts and numbers into plain English that we all understand." In other cases, this interpreter might be someone who is part of the product organization or the marketing team itself.

The online fashion business has high analytics skills across the company. For the chief merchant there, the skills challenge has more to do with balancing System One and System Two thinking (simply put, intuitive and analytic thinking) among decision makers, she said. "We have to switch back and forth all the time. Trading on a week-by-week basis, we use System One to get our big-picture hypothesis, then System Two to slow down and decide if we really can say with a high degree of confidence if we think something makes sense. That means doing everything from reading the trends that are out there, then doing simulation and regression analysis to get

FIGURE 8 **EASE OF USE DRIVES TOOL VALUE** 

Our marketing technology is easy to use.



# 71% SAY EASE OF USE IS ESSENTIAL TO GETTING VALUE FROM NEW MARKETING SOLUTIONS rated 8–10 on a 10-point scale

### FIGURE 9

# **ONLY A THIRD ABLE TO ACCESS ANALYTICS**

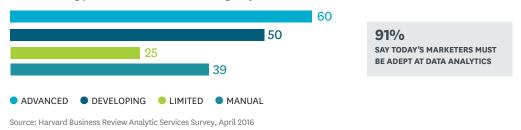
Are you able to access the analytics you need from within your marketing department?



### THE TECHNOLOGY SKILLS GAP AMONG MARKETERS

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

Our marketing professionals have the training they need in order to be effective in the new environment.



to where we think we need to forecast and come to some kind of understanding between those two. It's more about having both kinds of intellect inside each executive."

In addition to new skills, marketing in the customer-centric digital age creates the need for more connection points and higher levels of collaboration between marketing and sales. In fact, integration between marketing and sales teams was named the second most critical success factor for effective marketing over the next two years among survey respondents. figure 11

Advanced Marketers were more than twice as likely as Manual Marketers to say their marketing and sales organizations are fully aligned (72 percent versus 30 percent). And they were significantly more likely to describe the relationship between marketing and sales as an equal partnership with high collaboration and shared goals (49 percent versus 30 percent) rather than one in which one department exists to serve the needs of the other (client/service provider), or even an alliance of independent parties from distinct domains.

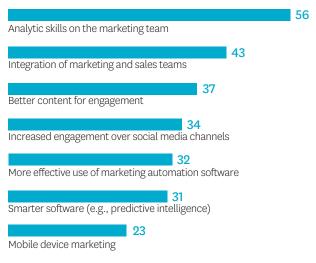
Last year, the medical device company created a commercial excellence team to build a bridge between marketing and sales at each of its four lines of business. These former sales reps work with marketing to adapt the information provided to sales to ensure it is as relevant as possible. This has created better shared understanding and a much closer relationship.

All respondents, including Manual Marketers, recognize the importance of collaboration at all stages of the customer journey, from discovery to purchase all the way to maintenance and advocacy. But Manual Marketers in particular face an alarming gap between the importance they give this collaboration at every stage and their organization's performance.

There's no reason that can't change. "Three years ago, marketing and sales did not talk to each other, and they wanted it that way," said the managing director at the online employment business. "Now they have very creative, positive conversations." This has been driven in part through more closely linked key performance indicators and goals (KPIs and KPGs). Advanced Marketers' sales and marketing leaders are much more likely to share KPGs than are their Manual Marketer counterparts. figure 12 But this isn't always easy. "Marketing relies on a lot of data and lives in the macro world," explained the managing director. "Sales is so close to the customer, they live in the micro world.... What is relevant for different stakeholders is not the same."

# **SKILLS AND TEAM INTEGRATION DRIVE MARKETING SUCCESS**

Which do you view as the critical success factors for effective marketing over the next two years?



Source: Harvard Business Review Analytic Services Survey, April 2016

The chief merchant at the online fashion business describes a "natural tension" between the KPIs of marketing, sales, and merchandising. Nevertheless, they are "highly collaborative," with a lot of give and take, she said. "The bottom-line goal is always the same. If I'm responsible for the percentage of gross margin we achieve, and marketing is responsible for cost per order, it's easy to see we might not achieve sales if they didn't sometimes elevate their cost per order or if I didn't sometimes reduce my gross margin so we could do a promotional offering." By sharing ownership of cash gross margin, they are able to get "the right amount of profit from every monthly sales figure. That means collaborating to the point where it makes sense, testing promotions and channels every week to figure out the cash gross margin."

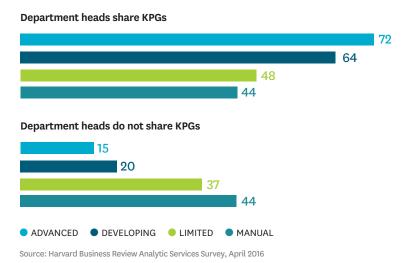
Revenue is by far the most widely shared KPG, shared by sales and marketing at 82 percent of all respondents' companies, but it isn't the only one. Advanced Marketers in particular are likely to say their marketing and sales leaders share goals for both pipeline and lead-to-opportunity conversion (both 75 percent versus 31 percent of Manual Marketers), number of leads (54 percent versus 13 percent), and deal win rate (54 percent versus 19 percent). KPGs that reveal performance in key parts of the sales and marketing process (e.g., deal win rate and cost of sale) are much less widely shared.

# CONCLUSION

Marketing in the digital age means more than just pushing out emails. Advanced Marketers are using technology and data, analytics and automation to gain deep insight into their customers' and prospects' needs and to act quickly on those insights. This takes some adjustment, said the product marketing leader at the video communications company. "We're just getting used to the idea that we have to dream up what might be a relevant measure and see if the data can give us

### ADVANCED MARKETERS MORE LIKELY TO SHARE KPGs

Do your marketing and sales leaders share any key performance goals (e.g., revenue targets, pipeline, etc.)?



an outcome for that...rather than look at a mountain of data to see what it can tell us." To compete on insight, companies must invest not only in technology but also in training to help all of their marketing professionals and executives learn to think and operate in this new way.

Digital marketing in particular creates a new way of working. Rather than spending large amounts of money, time, and energy on a single ad campaign that will reach a broad range of people, "digital marketing is a \$1 ad and 10,000 campaigns" as companies target down to the single individual, said the chief advisor at the Asian airline. It demands real-time insight and automation to create the right offer and close it on the fly. "That takes a different mindset."

In some ways, online-only businesses have it easier. Companies that operate in both the digital and analog worlds—particularly those that mix B2B and B2C business models—face a more complex challenge. "There will always be a place for traditional marketing," said the airline executive. "But where is the line between traditional marketing and digital? Where is the line between digital marketing and sales?" Advanced Marketers are figuring this out and creating new organizational models that put the customer at the center and bring to bear the power of diverse skills, functions, and capabilities in ways that simply wouldn't have been possible without today's technology.

But Advanced Marketers account for only 15 percent of respondents to this survey. Companies that want to accelerate their own transition are taking a variety of approaches. Some have the expertise to do this in-house, creating coalitions between marketing and IT. Others hire an expert to create a new unit to lead the charge. Still others contract with a digital marketing agency to develop their capability, working closely with the company's own marketers and commercial business.

There is a sense of urgency to this. Today's customers have a lot more choice and a lot more power. Companies that are able to stay on top of their wants and needs and make the most compelling offer will be well positioned to take market share from their competitors.

# **METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPANT PROFILE**

A total of 556 respondents completed the survey, including 264 who are members of the Harvard Business Review Advisory Council and 292 members of the broader HBR audience.

# SENIORITY

Twenty-three percent were executive management or board members, 32 percent were senior management, 29 percent came from middle management, and 16 percent came from other levels.

# **KEY INDUSTRY SECTORS**

Technology, financial services, and manufacturing topped the list, at 15 percent, 13 percent, and 13 percent, respectively.

Consulting services provided 8 percent of respondents, with the remaining industries contributing 7 percent or less.

# **JOB FUNCTION**

Sixteen percent of respondents worked in sales or business development, with another 16 percent in marketing/communications. Both operations/product management and general management were represented by 10 percent. Other functions were represented by 8 percent or less of the respondent base.

#### REGIONS

Thirty-three percent of respondents were from North America, 32 percent were from Europe/MEA, 27 percent from Asia/Pacific, and 8 percent were from South/Central America.

