The Cutting Edge of Sales:
Insights from the 2015 State of Sales Report
Introduction

There’s no doubt that we are living in an era of rapid change. While this disruption is making us more efficient and productive, sometimes the quick pace of this change can seem exhausting. It’s hard to keep up with the latest trends and even harder to look forward to what’s coming next.

So what is the state of sales in 2015? Salesforce Research set out to answer this with the 2015 State of Sales report, based on a survey of more than 2,300 global sales leaders to discover the trends and insights shaping the sales profession in the coming years. While you can download the full report for all the relevant data and findings, this e-book will focus on the four main trends identified in the report, and how the Salesforce Sales Cloud can help you prepare for each. These trends include:

- Analytics use soars among top teams
- High performers sell more with mobile
- Teams that sell together, win together
- High performers are high tech

Let’s take a look at each and how Sales Cloud can help put you on the cutting edge.
Chapter 1

Analytics Use Soars Among Top Teams

First among the report’s findings is an undeniable link between analytics use and high performance. High-performing sales teams are 3.5 times more likely to use sales analytics than underperforming teams. Top performing sales teams are also 4.6 times more likely than underperformers to rate their basic sales analytics capabilities as outstanding/very good.

While high performers are already reaping the benefits of analytics use, a shift toward analytics is happening among sales teams at all levels and is expected to continue. Among all sales organizations surveyed, there’s a 58 percent increase in planned sales analytics use from 2015 to 2016. Current use of technologies such as predictive analytics is comparatively low, but sales leaders across the board say they value adding it as a sales function; nearly twice as many are piloting or planning to use in the next 12 to 18 months (135 percent growth).

How Salesforce Gets You There

At the end of the day, it is the sales team that keeps any organization in business, and it is with the sales team that companies should rely on first to leverage data. However, many companies don’t know where to start when looking to incorporate data into their sales operations. With customer relationship management tools such as Salesforce tracking every account, analytics tools tracking each touchpoint and
interaction, and existing customer data streaming in, access to data is no longer the issue. Finding the meaningful insights through all this data noise is now the real success metric for today’s organizations.

Make Informed Decisions

According to Google CEO Eric Schmidt, every two days we create as much information as we did in the period spanning the dawn of civilization until 2003. That’s nearly five exabytes of data, he says. While this can seem overwhelming, a CRM solution such as Salesforce helps a sales team stay on top of just about everything. With Salesforce, you have records for each one of your leads. These records contain all relevant information about each prospect’s recent activity and your sales team’s interactions with that person. All of this data and all of these records add up to one complete view of your sales process with stunning detail.

For a sales professional who is enthusiastic about data, opportunities to engage with rich, new information are virtually infinite: deal status, pipeline performance, geographic performance, market segment breakdown, individual rep performance – the list goes on. You’ll have a deeper profile of your customers, allowing you to make better decisions on each deal and deliver the personalized service and sales that consumers expect.

Get Immediate Insight

The wealth of information Salesforce puts at your fingertips – ranging from real-time snapshots of your business to yearly summaries – is one of the reasons our customers are so successful. In fact, an independent survey of more than 4,000 customers found that customers were able to cut the time needed to prepare reports by an average of 52 percent. By always knowing where you stand, you can spot trends early and make the best decisions for your business. Dashboards are by far the best tool for providing these insights on the fly.

Salesforce makes building dashboards easy for anyone, regardless of technological skill. All the data you access every day in your CRM solution can be organized/integrated into dashboards. In short, if you can measure it, you can get it on a dashboard. A lucrative dashboard is one that your sales and marketing teams live off of. Great dashboards are open on screens all the time, and everyone references them. The most important meetings happen around them. The critical reports feed into them.

Salesforce also offers additional functionality to take your dashboards up a notch. For example, dashboards are powered by Salesforce reports, which means they are not just static images of your performance. Instead, you can click on just about anything and drill down to the underlying reports, data, and customer profiles. If you spot an anomaly or point of interest in your dashboard, it takes seconds for you to click through and discover the source. This functionality means that the dashboard data is not just helpful, but actionable.

With this built-in social functionality, Salesforce dashboards are also the center of collaboration for

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the entire sales and marketing team. Social turns your dashboards into collaboration engines. It’s like having your company’s own internal Facebook platform built into your dashboard. So people can follow a metric or an activity, share it with other team members, comment on it, or open a conversation around it. This may sound like a bell or a whistle, but in reality, it’s hugely powerful.

**Understand Performance**

As we mentioned before, dashboards may be the flashy, beautiful manifestation of your team’s most valuable data, but it is the power of Salesforce reports that supports them on the back-end. Think of reports as different lenses through which you can view your data. If you’re looking for a report of last month’s activities, you can filter by time, and exclude all activities but your own — and voila, all the information you need is at your fingertips. You can save this as a report and access it whenever you want. Your reports will automatically sync and update with the new data you generate every day.

While using a dataset, this used to require an IT team or special data analysts, however, Salesforce makes it possible for any sales rep to achieve in minutes with no outside help required. The reporting interface is intuitive, familiar, and functional. There is no longer an excuse to avoid using data in your sales operations. Your performance and sales cycle will no longer be vague approximations. All of this data and all of these records add up to one complete view of your sales process.
Chapter 2

High Performers Sell More With Mobile

The report also found that today’s top sales organizations are significantly more likely to use mobile sales apps, helping them close business from anywhere. In fact, nearly 60 percent of high-performing sales teams already use, or are planning to use a mobile sales app (2 times more than underperformers). Top performers are also nearly 5 times more likely to have outstanding/very good capabilities in mobile sales.

How Salesforce Gets You There

Why are mobile sales teams so much more successful? It starts with a simple stat: 68 percent of a sales rep’s time is spent not selling.

Companies struggle because they can’t give enough selling time back to their reps in the field. Too much time is spent behind a desk, bogged down in recording activities, responding to emails, and a million other tasks that, although essential, don’t end in sales. This is because many sales organizations don’t have the right sales tool in place. Salesforce’s can help reps get out from behind their desk and go where they can be most effective: In front of the customer.

Equipping your sales team with a mobile CRM not only offers a degree of flexibility and efficiency for individual sales reps, but is also a proven way to boost sales, improve productivity, and increase company revenue. This e-book will show you
exactly how Salesforce1 allows your sales team to spend more time selling and closing new business deals.

Stay Up To Speed
Sales is not an easy job. It takes a special personality to juggle dozens of accounts, manage countless meetings, and respond to many follow-up emails and tasks every day. You’d be hard-pressed to find a company employee with more on his plate than the average sales rep.

With so many appointments and responsibilities to handle, sales professionals deserve their own personal assistants. They need somebody to keep all of their accounts, tasks, and appointments organized so they can focus on what they were hired to do: sell. Unfortunately, a personal assistant for every sales rep just isn’t in the cards for most companies.

However, Salesforce has changed that. With a suite of productivity apps that helps you organize your days, automate repetitive tasks, and move at the speed of business, Salesforce allows you to focus on what matters most: the customer.

Take Action From Anywhere
The reason sales reps spend so little time actually selling these days is that they are tied to their desk for a majority of the activities they must conduct in the average day. Sales teams have a tremendous amount of tools at their disposal to close a deal. CRM systems track contacts, accounts, and opportunities. To-do lists and activities help organize the million tasks a sales rep must perform. Social tools enable collaboration between teammates and departments. Software and online tools are necessary to edit pitch decks, spreadsheets, and reports. All of these tools are invaluable components of the modern sales reps arsenal.

However, without the right tools, all this technology can become a hinderance.
Sales professionals are often required to be in front of a desktop or laptop in order to use any of the above programs. This means dedicating time away from customers and away from activities that can move deals forward. Many of these tools are also part of disparate, unconnected systems which means even more time is spent switching among them. In fact, according to recent IDC research, 61 percent of employees typically access four or more systems to get the information they need to do their jobs.

Salesforce1 takes care of these problems by putting all of your tools in one place. Salesforce1 also puts these tools in the palm of your hand so you can update accounts while in line for your morning coffee or on your way to your next meeting, not at the end of the day behind a desk. You can maximize every day, every moment, with activity that will close more business and make you more successful.

Make the App Your Own

When it comes to mobile tools, the tools need to make the daily functions of the sales team easier to perform, and with greater efficiency. Sales reps already have their phone in hand for hours each day. Putting your CRM at their fingertips, in a way that matches the way they want to work, eliminates much of the friction and monotony in utilizing the most important CRM features. Removing any barriers allows your sales team to fully tap into everything your CRM has to offer.

Salesforce1 is completely customizable, which means the app molds itself to the way you work, and not the other way around. Nearly everything about the app is customizable, from the look and feel, to the apps and actions you can take. This limits any learning curve. Your sales team can launch the mobile app and instantly feel comfortable -- and the the app will look familiar. The actions and verbiage will be consistent with the desktop versions of their CRM. Everything about Salesforce1 feels like a crucial missing piece to your sales process that you didn’t even know you needed.
Another key differentiator of top performing sales organizations is their collaborative approach to sales. High performers are nearly 3 times more likely than underperformers to view sales as 100 percent the responsibility of the entire organization. Top sales performers are also connecting with customers in more ways. The report found that winning sales teams have top-rated capabilities across a broad range of channels. High performers, for example, are 4.7 times more likely than underperformers to rate their capabilities in omnichannel sales interactions as outstanding/very good.

How Salesforce Gets You There

Recent research from CEB suggests that the changing business environment has made ignoring team selling in favor of individual performers bad for business.

The study found that over a period of 10 years, from 2002 to 2012, the impact an individual’s task performance has on profitability companywide decreased, from 78 percent to 51 percent. In that same period, the impact of how often people collaborate with their coworkers, and employees’ “network performance,” increased from 22 percent to 49 percent. Even in sales, where lone wolf-style employees are notoriously prevalent, network performance now accounts for about 44 percent of the impact.
Collaboration allows your reps to tap into their team and network for advice, information, and expertise on the fly. Modern sales teams are more collaborative, with a team atmosphere that allows them to leverage their collective knowledge to outperform salespeople that are less connected.

**Social and collaborative**

Salesforce gives sales reps the ability to collaborate and crowdsourced intelligence and resources from their team in ways that weren’t possible just a few years ago. With an internal social network such as Chatter, they can easily aggregate skills, insights, and expertise to close more deals and identify new opportunities. This type of collaboration can increase cross-selling, decrease sales cycle times, and bump up conversion rates.

This type of collaboration does not require any type of radical reorganization. Even in companies that have fully invested in a social sales force, their structure, processes, and metrics have remained mostly unchanged. The only difference is the engagement in a more social and collaborative method of selling, and the value of that social network increases dramatically the more sales people participate.

**Accessible to other departments**

In addition to transparency within the sales department, sales reps need to begin looking outside their borders for opportunities to share information and collaborate. With Salesforce, the sales department aligns more closely with the rest of the organization. Teams from across the office, or across the globe, can now work within shared tools, track progress with shared metrics, and collaborate in real time.
The sales process no longer starts and ends with a sales pitch. The content created by marketing is just as important as the sales pitch, and the service your new clients receive after the deal has closed creates brand advocates that can uncover even more opportunities. To view sales as an isolated department does a disservice not just to your sales team, but to your customers. Fortunately, Salesforce provides a 360-degree view of your prospects, from their first marketing touchpoint, to their most recent service inquiry.

**Finely Tuned**

Where the lone wolf salesperson had only their number to judge their performance, today there is far more insights into sales activity. With Salesforce, sales people can now analyze their number of activities, the number of demos, the length of sales cycle, and a hundred other metrics that were once opaque. In addition to individual performance, these metrics are also available at the team level.

Being able to see your team’s pipeline, create a friendly competitive dashboard, or flag accounts that need extra assistance create a collaborative environment and keep your entire sales team on the exact same page. This added insight and data allows sales departments to adjust, improve, and perfect their sales strategies and techniques.
Chapter 4
High Performers Are High-Tech

As you’ve read through this e-book, you’ve noticed a trend towards technology use for high performers, so the last major finding of the report should be no surprise: high-performing sales teams use technology to accelerate sales processes and free up time to sell, using nearly 3 times more functionality than underperforming teams. Top performers are nearly 8 times more likely than underperformers to be heavy tech adopters, showing winning teams’ proclivity to optimize every part of the process.

How Salesforce Gets You There
There’s no shortage of CRM options — and obviously we’re partial to which CRM you should use — but only one CRM continues to help more businesses succeed than any other. Salesforce customers, on average, report 27 percent growth and a 42 percent boost in customer satisfaction.
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Salesforce Decreases Your Costs

While the cloud is ubiquitous in today’s technological environment, Salesforce pioneered the concept way back in 1999. Cloud computing upended the traditional on-premise model, dramatically cutting costs and reducing risk.

In the 15 years since, Salesforce has perfected data center operations and helped the cloud computing industry grow to its current massive size and scale. With its cloud-based product, Salesforce is able to dramatically decrease costs by requiring no hardware, providing better support, making it far easier to scale, and getting customers up and running 70 percent faster than on-premise competitors.

Faster Support

When it comes to sales and technology, any downtime at all can mean major lost revenue. When something goes wrong with an on-premise solution, it can take hours to get a technician onsite, and even longer to get the problem resolved. The modern sales organization simply doesn’t have that kind of time.

With Salesforce, all of your maintenance happens automatically. If issues arise, a support technician investigates the problem in a matter of minutes, not days. This means less downtime, no expensive maintenance costs, and more time spent selling.

Less Hardware, Less Manpower

On-premise solutions are remarkably expensive to set up and continue to eat through your budget as you add additional IT headcount and incur maintenance costs. If you want to scale your operation in the future, the hardware costs will mount even higher.

By delivering a cloud-based solution, run entirely from a secure data center, Salesforce requires none of the upfront cost of its on-premise competitors. There is no hardware to be installed and no additional IT hires to be made. An entire company can be set up and pushed live with minimal cost and effort to the customer.

Easy to Scale

For an organization running an on-premise CRM solution, scaling the business up or down requires a substantial investment, and therefore substantial risk. Scaling up requires adding more hardware and staff and can take months to fully implement.

With Salesforce, additional users and more functionality can be added with a few mouse clicks. No extra hardware, no extra risk. If you need to scale back down or restructure your organization in the future, Salesforce painlessly changes with you.
The sales game is changing fast. To excel in this rapidly changing environment, sales teams need to embrace change head on and make the most of the tools available to them.

This is not a mere suggestion. This is proven and supported by data from more than 2,000 sales leaders. The 2015 State of Sales report provides a roadmap that any sales team can follow to success and the path is clear: sales teams that embrace new technology like mobile CRM and analytics will rapidly outpace the competition. Collaboration and technology are key differentiators between top performers and their average counterparts. Salesforce is the platform that can help you close that gap and put your sales team way out in front of the competition.

Conclusion
SALES SOLUTIONS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR BUSINESS MORE PRODUCTIVE

If you want to grow your sales and establish a transparent sales process, you need an easy-to-use Customer Relationship Management system. Salesforce allows you to store customer and prospect contact information, accounts, leads, and sales opportunities in one central location.

45% Increase in sales pipeline.
44% Increased sales productivity.
37% Increase in sales revenue.

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