Why AI Predictive Sales Analytics Will Close the B2B Sales Productivity Gap: Top 3 Lessons

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March 2019

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What's Inside

1. Introduction

In the Age of Distraction that we live in, B2B Sales Productivity has been rapidly declining over the past decade. In fact, this deep dive plummeting closely correlates to the invention of mobile, texting, the utilization of diverse omni channels of customer discourse, declining customer confidence and loyalty rankings of vendors. Summed up, there has never been a more difficult time to be a B2B Sales Professional. Productivity ratios have declined to less than 33% of focus time on customer relevant activities, such as demonstrating a product to a prospect, talking to a real customer prospect (even a simple phone call), or interacting with valid sales prospects (Accenture, CSO Insights Report). Email marketing is nearly dead. Yet, it takes an average 10-12 touchpoints to get anyone's attention to covert a lead in B2B sales, depending on which report you read.

How do Sales Leaders get ahead when their odds of success continue to erode?

I remember when I was a GM and Senior Director at Xerox in my early sales career, and the esteemed management author, Peter Drucker, advised every C Level leader that increasing the productivity of knowledge workers was the most important contribution management needs to make in the 21st century. How consistently accurate Peter has been!

One can say that Artificial Intelligence is the next big thing for Sales Productivity Acceleration. AI certainly is one of the major building blocks that Sales leaders must design, develop and execute successfully. However, less than 20% of enterprise and mid-market companies are advancing AI infrastructure, according to studies from leading management consulting firms, like: Accenture, Capgemini, Deloitte, EY, PWC, IBM.

At SalesChoice, we have learned a lot on what it takes to adopt AI for predictive sales. Before we get into the learnings, a quick word on what we do: SalesChoice is an AI Salesforce ISV Application that seamlessly integrates with Salesforce, extracts all relevant custom fields into a dynamic and ML Model. The software solves specific predictive sales use cases (leveraging AI Guided Selling methods) such as:

Predictive Sales Forecasting

Opportunity Scoring

Account Scoring

Predictive Pricing (Discounting Intelligence)

AI Driven Sales Coaching Insights

Data Quality and Completeness Intelligence

Source:
Sales Mastery

2. Top 3 Lessons

- **Lesson One:** Chief / Head of Sales Leadership Must Value Advanced Data Analytics

There is no point getting underway with AI in a corporate culture that does not value fact based analytics and data quality and completeness, and has a corporate culture that is not committed to Data Quality Excellence as a Strategic Asset. AI is only as good as the quality of the data and the completeness of the data set to create an accurate and informed AI model that can be used to solve the use cases identified above. To help drive this enablement we have done two rather smart things in building our AI Platform: We are the only vendor that have exposed the AI model with integrated data completeness and data accuracy intelligence to expose the realities of the current state in our AI platform. There are other tools that can do this but they are not integrated into the AI Modelling Validation Layer, something we felt was critical to ensure we guide our Sales Leaders to trust AI predictive sales driven analytics.

> *'We designed the software to require only 3 keystrokes for sales enablement: The Sales Target / Total Quota you have to hit, the time period, and your user role. Press "update" and that's it! We do the rest.'*

Every company has customized their CRM practices/processes so much that every workflow is very unique from customer to customer, increasing the risks for AI onboarding due to customized workflow logic. We designed our product from the ground up to simply accept the current market landscape. This makes us unique in taking all the unique custom field attributions from Salesforce, and extend to absorb other data sets, as required for enhanced AI signal detection.

- **Lesson Two:** AI is very good at automating work that sales professionals do NOT want/like to do

Be clear about the Sales AI use case in predictive sales analytics that you must solve and its importance and risk to your business if not solved. For example, consider if you cannot afford to position an inaccurate sales forecast - given diverse market conditions, fluctuating markets, competitive environment, maturity of sales

professionals, etc. - whatever your reason is. The fact remains that the majority of Sales Professionals using Salesforce have some crappy sales forecasts.

AI driven sales forecasting, opportunity and account scoring are examples of use cases that Lesson Two can play out with trump cards, provided Lesson One is in good shape. For example, we have learned that AI can easily correlate higher performing sales professionals vs. lower performing sales professionals and adjust commits based on the sales persona profile (Historical Win Rates). Together with many other win factors, it can adjust forecasting outcomes also based on the nuances of sales behavior(s).

> **'AI can easily look at Account Coverage History and identify the most significant coverage patterns that a company should pursue to achieve consistent growth goals.'**

Too often Sales Professionals advance into other industry verticals on sales coverage, only declining their odds of penetration success, vs. making the plan adjustments to make an industry swing turn. So it is key to prioritize all account history patterns into a comprehensive unique AI model relevant to each customer. AI should never be a one-trick-pony approach that predicts an outcome that is sub-optimal.

- **Lesson Three:** AI must be Explainable AI

The array of win factors and unique business realities have taught us that AI must be Explainable AI vs Black Box AI for Sales Professionals.

AI will lead you to places you may not have thought about but should go to. AI must line up with your business goals and objectives; otherwise what vendors are delivering you in the market are static advise to contact specific people and buyer profiles that may not even be relevant to your territory focus but happen to be in the marketing demand generation processes with a centralized contact database. This is a classic case of drawing observations from misaligned database against your business goals and objectives. That is a very dangerous position to be in with AI and the reason why our approach at SalesChoice is to prevent it at all times.

We find working with Sales Leaders that those who value advanced sales predictive analytics have a history of innovation and experimentation and a natural curiosity for learning. They are our best customers. Those that do not trust the AI model even when it is their (Customer) data set and is validated, are not the right customers for AI. Seeing the realities of their data parameters and underlying patterns of dynamics

can often be too much for a sales leader who is comfortable in current realities vs transformational initiatives which AI often brings. So we are at the early adoption life cycle of using AI in Sales, based on our experiences in recent years, in designing, building and deploying AI solutions for Sales Leaders across North America.

Looking Ahead: AI will be most valuable in Dynamic Customer Persona Profiling

AI can rapidly scan an entire customer database from CRM and customer orders and absorb all conversation intelligence patterns that can support lead and opportunity scoring tools. What is less mature is using advanced AI customer segmentation tools that automatically build out customer personas that include risk prediction and sales potential, further segmented into persona buyer profile attributions.

> **'Tracking Customer Lifetime Value in Account Scoring, year over year contributions and tracking predictive churn risks is a ripe area to drive increased insights.'**

What is imperative is to appreciate that customer interaction signals may not be in the CRM infrastructure, and may still be buried in email and increasing text interactions. So mining all communication channels correlated to activity intelligence - fact based - is really imperative to develop a robust customer predictive churn model.

We have just finished our first release on Account Intelligence and Activity Attributions and will augment these insights with diverse conversation interaction channels to get the full picture. We are also now developing persona insights based on a target buyer's interactions with the sales professional, to guide reps on their audience's personality and the tone, manner and content of communication that is most likely to elicit a positive response from a certain individual.

What I see in the market is too many AI solution providers doing niche plays i.e. customer chatbots, analyzing text patterns, analyzing email patterns, analyzing Salesforce history (or any CRM history for that matter) etc. but not putting the complete picture together.

A lot of the most insightful data customer interaction patterns remain in email, outside the CRM tool where activities are to be recorded, or interact only in the CRM platform. Sales Professionals, no matter what infrastructure they are given, always find ways to work the way they want to work, and more often than not enter minimal amount of data into their CRM tools. So, AI toolkits can be very effective at mining

their patterns and pushing these back into the CRM to update databases, such as scraping customer contact details from email messages, or updating account details (addresses, industry segmentation details) etc. All serve a valuable productivity foundation for operational excellence.

AI can be very valuable in automating tasks that are administrative in nature and data entry intense. AI running in the background can be one pathway to increase the productivity of knowledge workers. A sample customer persona illustration is given below.

Source:
Runkit + npm
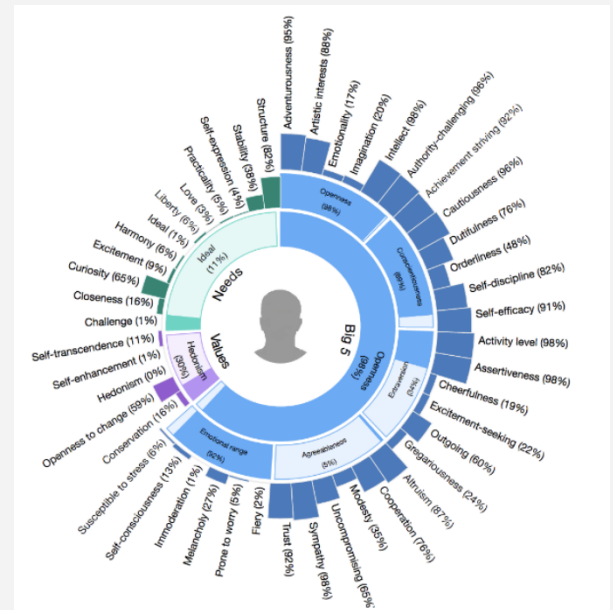
3. Summary

I was fortunate to talk to Peter Drucker over 20 years ago, and his passion for productivity excellence has always struck a chord in how we build our own products at SalesChoice. Keeping it Simple, and Easy to Use was always a design philosophy of Peter's. If you cannot understand it, and if it does now align with business gut checks, no one will use any tool. I think too many AI leaders have not adopted simplicity and ease of use in their product innovations. Reducing complexity in using AI toolkits is critical for Sales leadership adoption as they won't have the budget to recruit a Data Scientist engineering or advanced AI team in Sales, at least not any

time soon, so these toolkits must make business sense and work through the eyes of a sales leader.

What is clearer now is that early experimentation is needed to start the journey for AI utilization and adoption.

The journey won't come from one vendor alone, rather it will come from being very clear on the customer use cases you must solve, and having a vendor that is explainable and ethically AI driven, and can handle custom objects. Sales Leaders must start learning about AI enablement as a new leadership skill set to avoid being left behind. **The role of the Advanced Data Analytics accountability has moved to being one of the most important top three skills of CFO's, according to a recent PWC Report.** This begs some new organization design consideration realities.

Is it possible that CFO's will have Sales and Marketing Operations report into them, as auditing data sources will increasingly come under regulatory scrutiny? This is likely a bit of a stretch, but it is conceivable they will control the integrity of all the data sources. CIO's have not been active in data compliance and audit of Sales CRM toolkits, as most of the budget for Sales CRM is controlled by CRO's. So, we are expecting some major organizational shifts as the new regulatory AI frameworks for Explainable AI vs Black Box AI start to hit the market.

Fortunately, we predicted Explainable AI would be an audit requirement that increasingly legal and finance and IT professionals will get involved in to help guide sales leaders. After nearly three decades of CRM Toolkit Utilization, and still many companies having data accuracy challenges in their CRM infrastructures, AI is one bridge that I am now confident will help close the sales productivity knowledge worker gaps that are persistent issues today in many leading organizations - enterprise, midmarket or small. Every C level must become analytically smarter in managing data as a strategic asset. The companies that get this right as the data tsunami waves accelerate, will survive, while others could simply perish for not recognizing that Data is the new Oxygen fueling everything we do and know – not only in business but also in our personal lives.

4. Helping You Get Started

- **Offer One: AI Data Readiness Assessment Interview (FREE)**

SalesChoice will conduct an AI Data Readiness assessment interview at no cost to help you advance to AI Excellence, based on 15 best practice questions. One hour of your time is all you need to give us. We don't do the survey link assessment as our unique context is key to quality ethnographic research, plus your voice gives more relevance as we are striving to be Customer First, connected in everything we do at SalesChoice.

- **Offer Two: SalesChoice Training Workshops (FEE REQUIRED)**

SalesChoice offers a ½ day or 1 data AI Data Readiness Workshop for Sales Professionals to get underway in AI Data Readiness to help evolve and transform their Sales operations in a guided discovery experience with proven Sales and AI experts, based on best practices. Contact us to learn more and we will send you more information on the content you will learn.

- **Offer Three: AI DATA MODEL – MASKED READINESS CHECK (Free)**

If you would like to send us a masked CSV Data File of your salesforce data, masking client and account names, we can do a rapid AI Data Readiness scan of your unique data set and give you a pulse check on your unique Sales AI Data Readiness to advance predictive AI Selling investments.

- **Offer Four: AI Predictive Sales Demonstration (FREE)**

Spend 30 min or an hour with our firm and we guarantee you will leave with increased knowledge, access to 15 questions for AI Data Readiness insights, and a greater understanding of the value SalesChoice's AI Predictive Sales Insight Engine can bring to your business.

About SalesChoice

SalesChoice Insight Engine™ is an Artificial Intelligence (AI) driven sales forecasting platform that predicts sales outcomes reliably at up to 95% accuracy.

Benefits

✓ In an age where 40%-60% of sales professionals are wrong in predicting accurate sales forecasts, driving huge negative impacts on a company's financial performance, our software reduces your forecasts risks by predicting sales much more accurately.

✓ Insight Engine™, SalesChoice's Artificial Intelligence (AI) forecasting solution for your CRM, tells sales leaders whether they are at risk of not meeting the numbers in any chosen time period while allowing them to run a What-If analysis to explore how the prediction changes with change in target quota.

✓ The software forecasts which opportunities are most likely to be won or lost with up to 95% accuracy, while guiding account executives on accurate close date estimates and on controllable and uncontrollable factors determining sales outcomes, to help them take corrective action and ensure more efficient forecasting.

Targeted Users

The solution is geared towards sales leaders and account executives in both mid-market B2B organizations and large B2B enterprises using Salesforce or NetSuite. SalesChoice has an open API and can work on other CRMs too.

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salesforce
ISV **PARTNER** *Einstein Analytics Certified*

RelationEdge
SI **PARTNER**

NETSUITE
CRM Analytics **PARTNER**