

CRESTA

Good Salesperson, Bad Salesperson

Closing the Sales Performance Gap

**The science behind
the art of selling**

We looked at over **340,000** sales conversations to identify what set top performing salespeople apart from their peers.



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Introduction

Ever wonder why the same salespeople always end up outperforming the rest? Managers have been trying to answer this question for as long as sales quotas have existed. What drives exceptional sales performance? Past employment? Domain expertise? How you brew your coffee in the morning? Or is it just the art of selling?

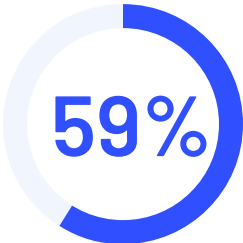
While there is merit to the art of selling, there is also the science of selling. And when you run an organization that makes 50,000 sales calls a month, the science of selling really starts to matter! To understand the science of selling, we used Cresta to analyze hundreds of thousands of conversations and identify exactly what makes top sales professionals stand out from their peers.



What is the Sales Performance Gap?

The Sales Performance Gap is the productivity gap between top performers and their peers. How do you define productivity? Productivity can be measured as conversion rate, average order value, or revenue per salesperson.

According to research published by the CEB in “The Challenger Sale”, **they found that in a transactional selling environment, the performance gap between average and star performers was 59 percent.** This gap grew to 200 percent in more complex sales environments.



What does the Sales Performance Gap mean for your business? Quite simply, by letting the Sales Performance Gap go unchecked, organizations are hurting their top-line revenue. Not to mention the cultural challenges that come with teams not meeting their targets. In some cases, Cresta has found organizations leave as much as 48% of potential revenue on the table. For this reason, at Cresta, we believe the Sales Performance Gap is one of the most valuable opportunities an organization can tackle.

So why does this evasive performance discrepancy exist? Businesses invest millions of dollars into training, coaching, and sales methodologies like Solution Selling and Customer-Centric Selling, and yet sales teams still suffer from performance discrepancies and inconsistent results.

To answer this question, we set out to:

Identify the key behaviors which set top salespeople apart from their peers.

Quantify the ROI of addressing the Sales Performance Gap.

Our Process

We analyzed more than 340,000 inbound sales conversations.

These conversations spanned industries from retail to telecom. We ranked salespeople according to their revenue per chat and conversion rate performance, then broke them into two groups: top performers and bottom performers.

Behaviors not Words. Semantics not Syntax.

We wanted to understand the behaviors of top salespeople. This meant analyzing the meaning of conversations (semantics) not the specific words (syntax) of conversations. No easy task, but thankfully, Cresta's Real-time Expertise AI is able to monitor sales behaviors during conversations.

Top Sellers' Playbook for Success

So what did we find? We identified four foundational sales behaviors which top sellers consistently followed more than their peers. There's clearly a recipe for success, and the top sellers stick to it.

The Magic 4

Setting Expectations

Letting the customer know
what to expect

Discovery

Understanding the
customer's needs and pains

Objection Handling

Alleviate customer concerns
and continue to move the
deal forward

Assuming the Sale

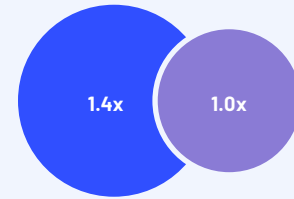
Using confidence and
assumptive language to
guide the customer to the
desired outcome



Setting Expectations

Setting expectations lets customers know what to expect during the conversation. Setting expectations can sometimes feel awkward or overly communicative, and as a result, is often skipped. However, setting expectations with the customer is key to getting aligned at the beginning of a conversation.

More Likely to Set Expectations



● Top Performers ● Bottom Performers

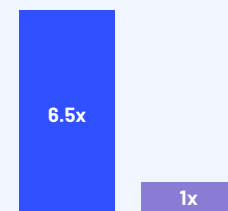
"In order to select the best products for you and to get the best price possible, I'm going to ask you a few questions to better understand your needs."



Discovery

Using discovery questions helps sellers understand a buyer's pains and goals, allowing the seller to craft a game plan going forward. Asking questions and finding out about your customers also gets them talking about themselves, which increases their feelings of self-value, worth and motivation. These feelings correlate to how much your audience likes and trusts you. As we all know, people buy things from people they like and trust. For some discovery questions, top performers asked the question 6.5x more than bottom performers.

Number of Discovery Questions



● Top Performers ● Bottom Performers

"What challenges have you been experiencing with your wi-fi? How many devices do you & your household need to connect to the Internet?"



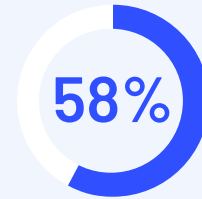
Objection Handling

The crux of a sales conversation! When a customer presents a concern about the product or service, a salesperson responds in a way that alleviates the customer’s concern and allows the sale to move forward. Common objections revolve around price, product fit, and competitors.

People are price sensitive!

Price was the most common type of objection we came across. Of the objections we observed, 58% of them were related to price.

Observed Objections Related to Price



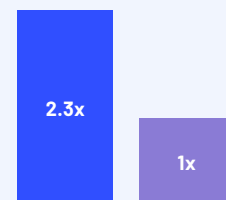
“I would recommend submitting your order today to lock in this pricing. With our 100 day satisfaction guarantee, you can ask for a price adjustment if the price drops or return the item if you’re not completely satisfied!”



Assuming the Sale

ABC - always be closing! Last but not least, instead of making the purchase seem like an option to the customer, the salesperson should assume the customer has already agreed to buy. By using phrasing that implies the customer is ready to move forward, the salesperson can direct the customer to start the buying process. But be careful! Being too assumptive could upset the customer and backfire!

More Than 100% More Likely to Assume the Sale



● Top Performers ● Bottom Performers

“Let’s get you started, do you prefer monthly or annual billing?”

What's it Worth? The ROI of Bridging the Gap

So, what's the ROI of bridging the Sales Performance Gap? From this exercise alone, getting every salesperson to perform like a top performer would generate an **additional \$28 million** in revenue!

Revenue per Chat	Top Performers	Bottom Performers	Top vs. Bottom
Revenue per Chat	\$137.63	\$55.13	2.50x
Conversion Rate	10.93%	5.84%	1.87x
AOV	\$1,770.2	\$1,682.95	1.05x
Total Revenue	\$46.8m	\$18.6m	2.5x

Source: Cresta data

Top performers produced **2.5x** more revenue per chat than their peers and converted **1.87x** more conversations than their peers.



Closing the Sales Performance Gap with Real-time Coaching and Assistance

The good news is you can close the Sales Performance Gap. Even better, the solutions don't require redesigning go-to-market strategies, entering new geographies, or launching new products. Leveraging AI, organizations can start to uncover insights like those revealed in this report.

AI serves as a live coach, guiding a salesperson on the right thing to say and the right behavior to exhibit during the conversation



Traditional AI

The landscape for sales-focused AI solutions is rapidly evolving. Until now, most solutions use AI to analyze a deal, a customer's sentiment, or a salesperson's performance after a conversation has taken place. But how do you actually bridge the gap and influence performance during a sales conversation? That's where Real-time Coaching and Assistance comes into play.



Real-time Coaching and Assistance

With modern advances in AI, organizations can use AI to coach and guide salespeople in real-time, as a conversation is taking place. In this capacity, AI serves as a live coach, guiding a salesperson on the right thing to say and the right behavior to exhibit during the conversation. In this way, real-time coaching and assistance can ensure every salesperson adheres to The Magic 4 (and more) during every conversation.

Cresta: Real-time Expertise AI for Sales Teams

Cresta offers Real-time Expertise AI that uncovers expert behaviors from top performers and amplifies these behaviors through real-time coaching and assistance, helping every seller perform like a top performer.

Real-time Coaching and Assistance

Assists sellers with behavioral coaching, recommended responses, and task automations during conversations. Drive adherence to The Magic 4 and help sellers identify renewal and cross-sell opportunities.

AI-Director

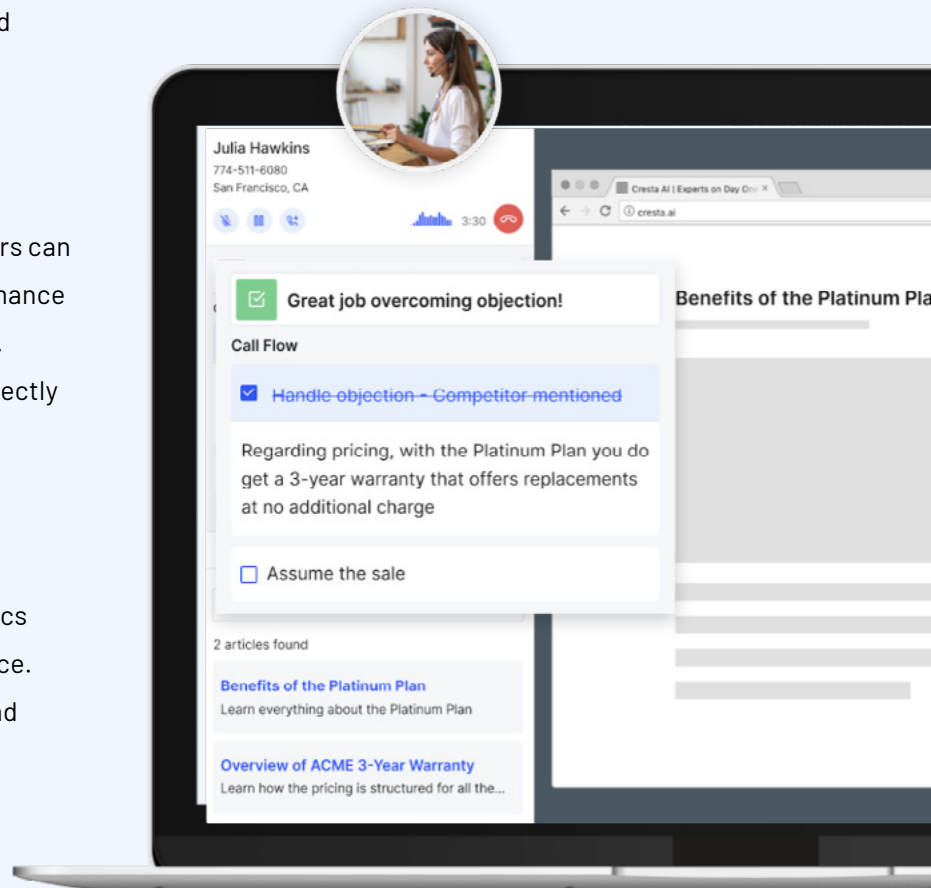
Analyzes 100% of conversations so managers can quickly monitor individual and team performance against key behaviors (such as The Magic 4). Managers can review and send feedback directly to sellers.

Business Insights

Cresta ties team behavior to business metrics such as revenue and conversion performance. Understand the economics of adherence and where to focus efforts.

Chatbots

Cresta's Real-time Expertise AI powers chatbots, saving your teams from having to deal with simple and routine customer inquiries and issues.



“Thanks to Cresta, during Q1 and Q2 of this year, even during the lockdown, we’ve continued to increase our conversion rates despite the reps being dispersed.”

– Director of Digital Sales

How Cresta Helped One Leading Retailer Improve Revenue Per Chat by 64%

As part of its Digital Transformation and AI initiatives, a leading mattress retailer looked to Cresta to help transform their sales team’s performance. Despite recent training initiatives, the retailer sales team was missing key sales behaviors from their sales methodology. As a result, conversion rate was suffering and revenue was being left on the table.

By deploying Cresta’s Real-time Expertise AI, the retailer was able to remind sellers to adhere to best-practices and key sales behaviors (including The Magic 4). With Cresta, the retailer was able to identify sellers needing additional coaching and deliver that coaching remotely. This was particularly helpful with the retailer’s newly adopted remote sales force (a result of 2020).

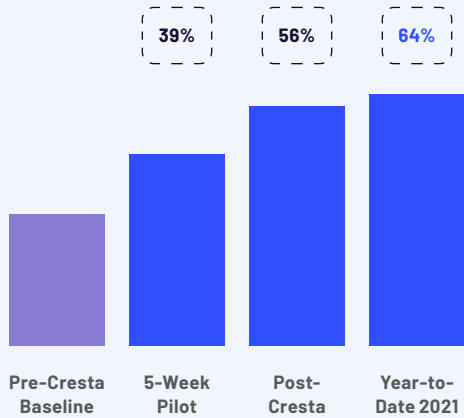
Results

Since implementing Cresta, the retailer has seen significant improvements in both Revenue per Conversation and Conversion Rate quarter-over-quarter. Cresta continues to play a role in the retailer’s broader commerce strategy.

[SEE THE RESULTS](#) 

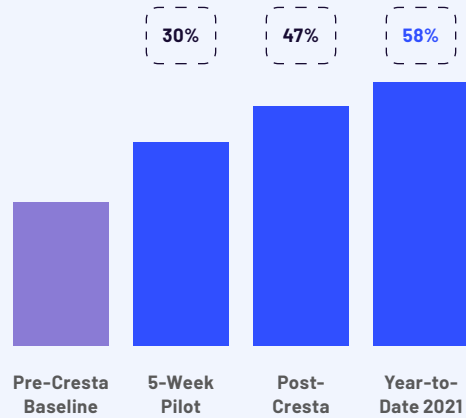
Revenue Per Conversation

64% increase



Conversion Rate

58% improvement



Percent Improvement from Pre-Cresta Baseline

"We've seen a significant increase in team member satisfaction & sales output. Our teams using Cresta feel way more prepared for calls & more confident recommending additional products!"

- Director of Digital Sales

How To Start Bridging The Sales Performance Gap Today

Addressing the Sales Performance Gap clearly offers significant ROI. But what are some steps teams can take to bridge this gap? Here are a few common themes we've found helpful.



Coaching and training

Consistent with our findings, the [Huffington Post](#) found companies who invest in training can see **24% higher profit margins**. Training is the most direct way to improve salesperson performance. With more employees placing a premium on skills development, this also leads to a happier and more engaged workforce.



Adherence and consistency

Salespeople that adhere to sales methodologies see improved performance. With one group, we found salespeople who stick to the script generate **26% more revenue per conversation** and have a **21% better conversion rate than their peers**. Ensure methodology adherence becomes a core part of your performance and quality assurance (QA) evaluations.



Learning takes time and repetition

Remember, we're human. We're forgetful. It's easy to forget training and coaching during customer conversations. Repeat training and allow ample time for new skills to be absorbed. Hermann Ebbinghaus's [forgetting curve](#) suggests **we forget 50% of new information within an hour of learning it**, and 70% within 24 hours.



Invest in real-time coaching and assistance

Invest in software and tools that help you identify your Sales Performance Gap and actively close it. It's one thing to know who your top performers are and how they're performing, but going beyond insight and taking action is the only way to close the gap once and for all.

We hope this ebook highlights how valuable improving team performance can be for your business. In future blog posts, we'll dig into what to look for when evaluating tools to help you bridge the Performance Gap.

If you'd like to chat, learn more, or quantify what the Performance Gap means for your business, please reach out to us at pro@cresta.ai.



CRESTA

Expertise AI

Invest in software and tools

Wherever you talk to customers - by phone, chat, or digital channels - Cresta helps you deliver business outcomes and a radically better customer experience.

Cresta uses AI to unlock a team's full potential. Our outcome-based AI observes every customer interaction to learn what experts do differently and amplifies these behaviors using real-time assistance and coaching.

Cresta's Real-time Expertise AI puts insights into action, allowing us to produce measurable ROI in weeks. Today, Cresta helps teams at companies like Intuit, Porsche, Earthlink transform Sales and Customer Service teams and close the Performance Gap once and for all.

Case studies:

14.7%

improvement in
conversion

F500 SOFTWARE CO.

24%

more revenue
per conversation

LEADING RETAILER

5x

reduction in new
agent ramp time

F500 SAAS PROVIDER