# > THE EMERGENCE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN SALES

PRESENTED BY: THE CPSA AND SHANE GIBSON
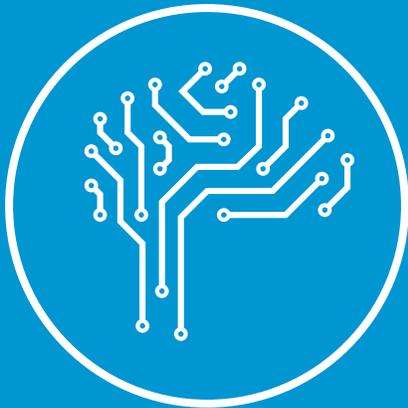
INTRODUCTION: HOW AI AND MACHINE LEARNING HAS ALREADY CHANGED SALES

Artificial Intelligence (AI) can, with the right sales tools and strategies, help sales professionals sell more, at a faster rate and in a more informed way.

Sure, AI and machine learning won't close your deals, make effective prospecting calls for you, nor build rapport with prospects in the non-virtual world. But make no mistake, AI permeates almost all areas of sales today and it will continue to grow as a resource to help sales and marketing teams cut the clutter from the sales funnel.

AI uses historical data to make predictions about what is going to happen in the future. Approaches to the **depth and breadth of use of AI in selling processes varies.**[1] Some companies develop sales and marketing models focused at defining the warmth of leads while others use acceleration models to better understand lead prioritization.

This e-book from the **Canadian Professional Sales Association** and one of Forbes's Top 30 Social Sales People in the World, Shane Gibson, will consider the relationship between AI and the salesperson. We'll consider the fears and opportunities associated with AI as a sales process and discuss fundamental skillsets you need to thrive in today's age of machine learning and AI-assisted sales.

We will investigate the apprehensions, misunderstandings, ironies, technologies and opportunities associated with the unstoppable AI machine and offer ways you can better incorporate AI into your sales and sales-focused activities.

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[1] How AI is Changing the Day-to-Day Work of Sales Teams -
https://www.salesforce.com/blog/2016/12/how-ai-is-changing-sales.html

THE FEARS

There is a fear among today's salespeople that marketing and augmented reality - driven by super-intelligent computer programs - will largely **replace the need**[2] for real sales professionals. This fear is not without some justification. The use of chatbots, for example, is quickly becoming the norm across multiple sectors. As platforms like LinkedIn become more integrated with, for example, Microsoft's CRM - being able to cross-reference large data sets of prospect website behavior, purchases, and browser history - will mean that initial conversations on LinkedIn or through a chat window could be done by AI.

Chatbots will be able to pull from on the best answers from 1000s of sales conversations as they answer 100s of inquiries simultaneously.

Let's consider, for example, the possible near-future of sales in automotive dealerships. It is not inconceivable to imagine a time within the next few years when a buyer can put on their augmented reality glasses, step into a car dealership, and be instantly presented with a three-dimensional virtual sales assistant which is programmed to ask the right questions of the buyer at the right times and have accurate and compelling information at their disposal to answer 1000s of the most frequently asked questions. Even the test drive could, conceivably, become an automated experience as we quickly move into a time of hybrid manual-self driving cars.

[2] Actors, teachers, therapists – think your job is safe from artificial intelligence? Think again -
 https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2017/feb/09/robots-taking-white-collar-jobs

AN IRONIC RESISTANCE TO AI IN SALES

Many of us – particularly Millennials - welcomed AI into our personal lives many years ago.

We allow AI to recommend the restaurants we visit, which Netflix shows best match our interests, and we are even happy to get into the back of unmarked cars, driven by complete strangers, because the **AI of companies like Uber and Lyft tell us that it's okay to do so.**[3]

And yet, for some reason, bringing AI into the office is still alien to large swathes of sales professionals and so, there remains resistance to change.

As **Millennials continue to grow as a percentage of the workforce,**[4] adoption of AI in the office will quickly become a logical next step in the progression of the sales profession. When done correctly, there are already some staggering tales of what can be achieved with inventive uses of algorithms and AI tools. Take, for example, the tale of the **programmer who outsourced and automated almost all of his duties.**[5] "From around six years ago until now", said the programmer, "I've done nothing at work. I'm not joking. For 40 hours each week, I go to work, play League of Legends in my office, browse Reddit, and do whatever I feel like. And in the past six years, I've maybe done 50 hours of real work."

His robots and his automated processes were able to do the work his employers thought he was doing manually. The reality was that he was making $95,000 a year for essentially pushing a few buttons each day and enjoying a great lifestyle.
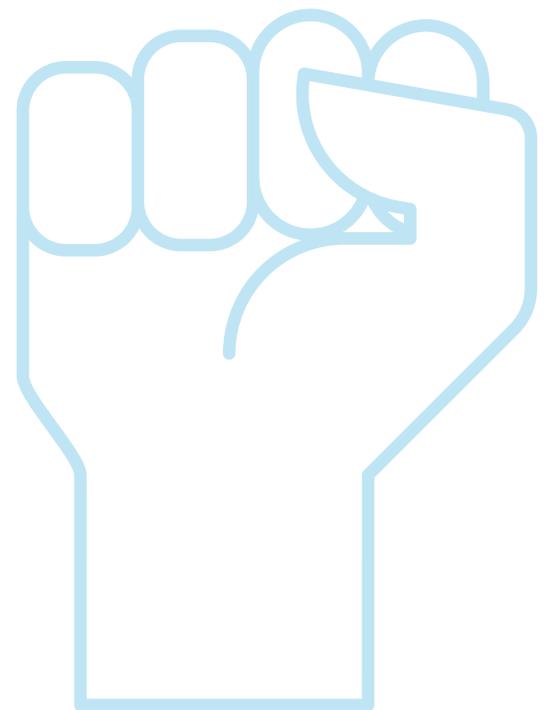
"for some reason, bringing AI into the office is still alien to large swathes of sales professionals"

[3] A Day In The Life Of A Millennial Sales Rep: Why A.I. Is Causing A Sales Revolution - **https://www.insidesales.com/ insider/artificial-intelligence/day-life-millennial-sales-rep-causing-sales-revolution/**

[4] Millennials Now Make Up Largest Workforce Generation in US - **https://www.accountingweb.com/practice/ growth/millennials-now-make-up-largest-workforce-generation-in-us**

[5] PROGRAMMER, FIRED AFTER 6 YEARS, REALIZES HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO CODE - **https://www.payscale.com/ career-news/2016/05/programmer-fired-after-6-years-realizes-he-doesnt-know-how-to-code**

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THE OPPORTUNITIES

"AI", suggests Jamie Shanks, CEO at leading Social Selling management consulting and training company, **Sales for Life,** *"is a means of contextualizing the sales conversation. AI empowers me to be able to have better, stronger, and more informed conversations."*

While too many sales departments continue to bumble along without making the most of the tech available to them, those who are integrating AI and machine learning into sales processes are, and will continue to, outperform the competition.

For example, many companies use Salesforce yet don't take advantage of the multitude of plugins and integrations, developed by third parties to help automate and make their CRMs-led sales efforts smarter. InsideSales.com as well for example, , has AI modules built into their CRM. They have used data from millions of customer interactions to determine what behaviors or interactions work best to convert certain types of clients into customers. Intelligent algorithmic tools - which have data based upon millions of interactions - can save hours of sorting and filtering a lead database each week – freeing up more time to prospect and sell. Use of predictive analytics and smarter CRM features enables salespeople to receive auto-filtered, qualified leads faster and with much more chance of conversion.

Marc Benioff, Salesforce CEO explains *"We're in an AI spring. I think for every company, the revolution in data science will fundamentally change how we run our business because we're going to have computers aiding us in how we're interacting with our customers."*[6]

Instead of the 'old school' approach of manually researching prospects, for example, technology is doing it for sales teams, at a fraction of the time. AI can now determine who salespeople should call, when to call them and the probable buyer behaviors.

In a recent CPSA podcast interview focused on AI and predictive sales forecasting, Michael Lock, CEO at **Aviso Inc.** explained: *"One of the most important things that big data (and) machine learning can do is … help you figure out what the quality is like in your pipeline; what is most likely to close, and if you have enough of those deals in the pipeline (to) actually to make quota."*

Gabe Larsen, V.P. Marketing Strategy and host of the #Playmaker Podcast at **InsideSales.com,** elaborates on this in another CPSA podcast as he discusses the role of leadership in ensuring successful use of AI within the sales process: *"My recommendation is look at it as a path, and that path should basically have four steps… Number one, go for productivity. You're not going to get AI unless you actually start capturing data. So instruct your sellers so that you actually start to capture data. Number two, figure out who you should be going after. Go figure out your optimal buyers … the demographics and the information and then prioritize them and use data to do it. Number three… go after your sellers. Who are you're top people? What DNA does great look like? How can you match greatness with optimal contacts or prospects to… hit your numbers more effectively? And… step four is you start looking at post sales activities. Cross sell, up seller, some other custom AI questions where AI can really come in and affect you."*

SALES BY 2020: WHAT WILL AI AND MACHINE LEARNING MEAN FOR LOWER-SKILLED SALES JOBS?
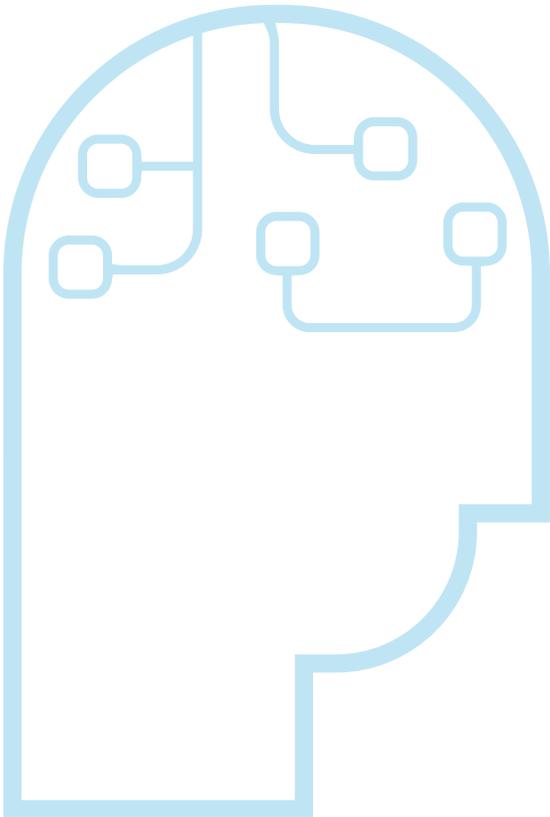
The age of robots replacing vast numbers of traditional lower-skilled blue-collar jobs has, actually, been in place for a number of years. Robots now build our cars, our hardware and the clothes we wear. Why? Because it's relatively easy to mechanize repetitive tasks.

This is now happening in white collar jobs – including sales roles with a high level of repetition. By 2020, sales-related tasks which are repetitive or don't require intuition will be automated. For instance, SDRs who book appointments for key account managers and personal assistants who book appointments for sales professionals may become a thing of the past unless more right-brained or creative activities exist in their sales process.

Indeed, some studies, such as a January 2017 report from the **McKinsey Global Institute,** estimates that roughly half of today's work activities - including large numbers of white-collar roles - could be automated by 2055!

"By 2020, sales-related tasks which are repetitive or don't require intuition will be automated."

THE RESUME OF SALES CANDIDATES IN 2020: WHAT SKILLS AND QUALIFICATIONS WILL BE NEEDED?

Rather than sounding the death knell for all sales jobs, these changes will, in fact, open up more time and opportunities for those salespeople who can master the right-sided brain skills to become the driver and main touch point of sales activities further down the funnel. While AI will be able to communicate basic, factual features, advantages and benefits of your company, tomorrow's salesforce will be the key drivers of adding value.

Make yourself - as Seth Godin calls it - a "**linchpin**".[7] Master the sales technology stack and understand how it can work for you.

The first major component of the resume of tomorrow will the right-brained, creative communication skills. These include the ability to build rapport, social intelligence, emotional intelligence and networking at conferences. It's these personal touches which will remain the main drivers in securing the all-important meeting or presentation in the prospect's boardroom.

The second component is the sales technology stack. The sales leader of the future won't just be a great people person. They're going to be required to have in-depth understanding of the sales technology stack and how it connects with the role of human relationships.

Gabe Larsen uses the analogy of the comic book hero Iron Man: *"In Iron Man, you've got a gentleman who puts on a suit and becomes a super hero. What we want to do with sales is exactly that. We want to take the subjective sales person who is guessing about what they should do (and) how they should do it and we want to… encapsulate that with a machine so they become a super sales person".*
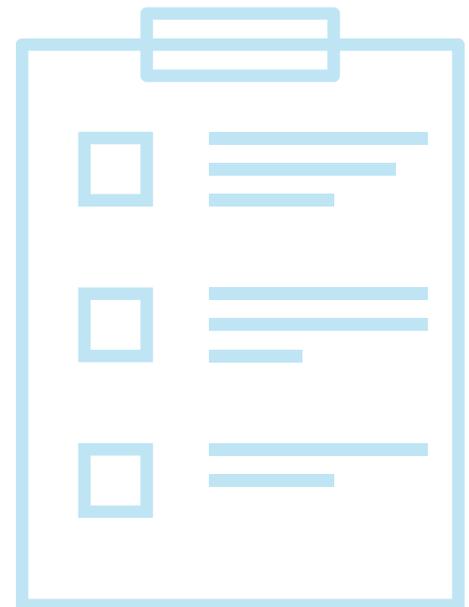
[7] Linchpin: Are You Indispensable? - https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/7155145-linchpin

THE FUTURE OF INBOUND SALES

Inbound sales will continue to grow in importance because marketing is getting more sophisticated every day. Sales and Marketing pros are increasingly strong at understanding how to segment, find, engage, and interact with the marketplace. Coupled with these skills are new ways to circumvent gatekeepers and blocks to prospecting.
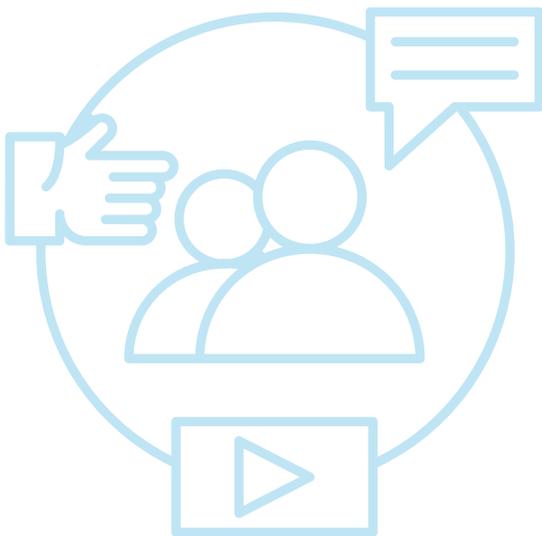
In 2009, Shane Gibson and Stephen Jagger began a discussion around the idea of the 'reverse drip': where today's consumer doesn't want to be dripped on using drip marketing and lead nurturing. Rather, they want to choose how they consume content. Maybe that's through your Facebook page, maybe it is your newsletter, maybe it's your website. Maybe, in the future, it will be talking to a chatbot. In fact, at his technology company Red Cape, Stephen Jagger and his team have launched a free AI driven chatbot for Realtors. This AI tool helps Realtors engage prospective buyers through SMS text and Facebook messenger conversations.

How we trigger prospects to reach out to us is often by proactively creating content online; getting better at inbound marketing. Inbound will grow in importance because it must; because the consumer does not want to be interrupted. And everything they engage with needs to be timely and relevant.

As Jamie Shanks explains: *"The future of AI, specifically within the inside sales function, is the ability to highly contextualize buying intent from inbound leads."* He continues, *"What companies like Microsoft have been able to discern is that this is not, or no longer, a volume game… (instead) great AI will provide leads that are showing the highest propensity to buy. And this goes far beyond basic data from marketing automation. The future of AI is to be able to look at all sales and marketing interactions and be able to (provide) the seller with the customers that are showing the highest content consumption story, and interest, and propensity to buy … (this) allows the sellers to focus their motion, or sales cadence, directly on only those accounts."*

"Inbound will grow in importance because it must"

THE FUTURE OF OUTBOUND SALES

AI can, and will, automate many aspects of hunting. For example, people can already program bots to visit LinkedIn pages of all the candidates which meet certain criteria. AI already has the capability to help outbound and/or outside sales people in many ways. Some of these scenarios include:

Reducing the time that it takes to confirm or rebook appointments using AI tools like X.ai

Providing real-time data and insights into customer personality profiles, a tool like Crystal Knows can evaluate your customer or prospect email (or LinkedIn) writing style and give you tips on how to write more compelling messages that suit their personality.

Tools like **Gong.io** can literally listen to your outbound phone calls and determine based upon a 1 million + call data set what you need to do in your calls to be more effective. Gong listens for keywords, looks at when you talk about price and also how much you talk during a conversation.

There are even facial recognition tools in development that will evaluate video conference meetings and read micro expressions which could give you insight into customer sentiment in real-time.

But it's almost inconceivable that AI will become so effective that it will be able to replace the salesperson on that qualifying call, at the trade show in that live presentation. Why? Because these key stages in the sales process will always require the personal touch. There will always be need for real human interaction to build rapport and ongoing business relations. With that said, the outside/outbound sales person who chooses to have AI as a real-time sales coach and personal assistant will have the advantage. To give you an analogy, it's like comparing navigating by sight to navigating with GPS.
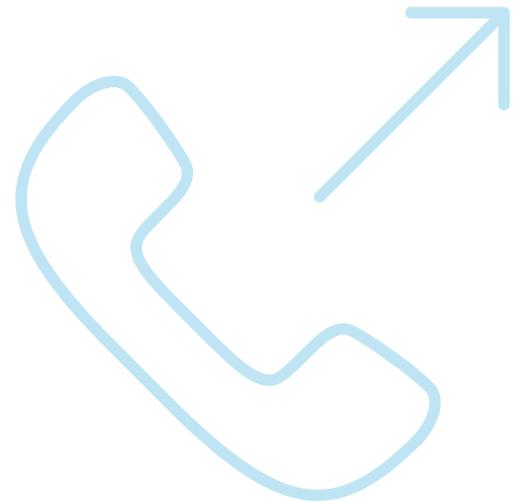
CONCLUSION: WHY GOOD SALESPEOPLE WILL REMAIN VITAL TO THE SALES PROCESS

"Sales is about creating an environment where an act of faith can take place." – Shane Gibson. Faith is about building trust, credibility, and strong relationships. This is not just about the art of being likable, but actually building trust and credibility. Zig Ziglar would often refer to sales as a transference of enthusiasm. Faith, trust and enthusiasm are fundamental by-products of positive human interaction.

Relationships do, and always will, matter.

Sales expert and speaker, Bill Gibson, would often ask his audience: "If two people like and respect each other, the details of the transaction will take care of themselves, right?" Often the audience would respond with "Well, I sort of agree." Then, he'd say, "How's this sound? If two people don't like and respect each other, the details won't matter, because there probably won't be a transaction. Who will agree with this?" And members of his audience would laugh and say, "Yeah, I agree, that if I don't like and respect someone, there isn't going to be a transaction." Bill Gibson would then explain: "A lot of people work the relationship to get the deal. But the reality is, the relationship is the deal."

We're wired as humans to trust other people. Why? Because, at the end of the day, most people want to look you in the eye, or at least talk to you on the phone, or connect with another human being, before they make a financial decision. In fact, the larger the perceived risk of the investment, the more trust, credibility, faith, and deeper relationship people need to have with the salesperson.

In an age of machine learning, you really shouldn't be afraid of AI replacing your job. Instead, look at the free time it gives you to get better at the creative, innovative, disruptive, people-oriented aspects of selling.

And remember, there are many sales activities which artificial intelligence simply cannot replace anytime soon. Our ability to gain rapport, to tell a joke, to build a relationship, to be authentic and share our feelings with someone and, vitally, to negotiate will remain vital. To break the rules when we need to. Or to identify the need for a new product or solution that no one's ever heard of, through a customer need, creatively.

These are the sales activities and skills which artificial intelligence will not replace anytime soon. So stop worrying and, instead, embrace changes brought by machine-assisted selling because, actually, the future is bright for the brightest, tech-savvy, salespeople!

This e-book was produced by the CPSA and Shane Gibson

ABOUT THE CPSA

<u>The Canadian Professional Sales Association (CPSA)</u> has been there to support and advance sales professionals with tools, training, and resources that accelerate their success for as long as sales has existed in Canada.

Over the years, the CPSA has helped to transform the sales industry, bringing in rigorous standards, ethical guidelines, and recognition programs that have professionalized sales and set the bar for excellence. Today, the CPSA continues to shape the future of sales with innovative, forward-thinking programs that advance the profession and support sales professionals at every stage in achieving their goals.

The CPSA'S 20,000+ members include senior executives, entrepreneurs, sales managers, sales representatives and sale agents. We support them, and the broader sales community, in many ways, including:

- Competency-based training programs that set the gold standard and take sales professionals to the next level.

- An industry-leading sales designation that recognizes sales professionals with the experience, knowledge, skill, and attitude to get top results.

- Actionable, on-demand resources that help members apply the latest ideas, innovations, and insights to accelerate their performance.

- Educational and networking events that connect our sales community coast-to-coast, live and online.

- Exclusive offers that saves members an average of $1500 a year.

The CPSA Foundation is a registered charity that raises awareness of sales as a positive career choice for post-secondary students and recognizes and rewards tomorrow's sales leaders. The Foundation's programs, including The Sales Excellence Award for students, are funded through events and generous sponsorships.

Contact us today at **MemberServices@cpsa.com** or **1-888-267-2772** to see how we can help you and your team reach new heights in sales success.

ABOUT SHANE GIBSON

Shane Gibson is an international conference speaker, sales trainer and author on social media marketing, social selling and sales performance who has addressed over 100,000 people on stages in Canada, USA, South Africa, India, Malaysia, Dubai, Colombia, Chile and Brazil. Shane Gibson is #5 on the Forbes.com list of the Top 30 Social Sales People in the World. Follow Shane on Twitter: **http://twitter.com/ShaneGibson**. Connect with Shane on LinkedIn: **http://linkedIn.com/in/ ShaneGibson**

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