



# TIME MANAGEMENT FOR SALES

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## Sales Reps Spend Only **35.2%** of Time Selling

Sales reps require many different skills to be successful, but the most basic and potentially the most important of them all is time management. XANT recently completed a study with **721** salespeople to determine how reps divide their time between sales tasks and sales systems.

## SALES TASKS

### Time Spent

The analysis showed there are thirteen tasks sales reps do during a typical week. Surprisingly, reps spend only **35.2%** of their time on revenue generating activities and **64.8%** of time on non-revenue generating activities. Administrative tasks such as dealing with internal policies and approvals (**14.8%**) and customer meetings (**14.0%**) were the activities with the highest amount of time spent while training was the lowest (**3.9%**).

Although, all sales roles report a relatively small amount of time spent actually selling, sales development reps are the least effective, spending only **33.2%** of time selling (**10.5%** less time than field reps on selling activities). The short amount of time spent selling can be partially attributed to time management skills. Over seventy-five percent (**77.1%**) of reps do not follow a time management philosophy. The **22.9%** of reps who do, report spending **19.0%** more time selling than reps who do not have a time management philosophy.

With such significant portions of time spent on non-selling activities, companies are paying their most expensive employees to perform tasks that systems or less expensive employees should be accomplishing. The average field sales rep is paid **\$105,482** a year. If **64.8%** of time is spent on non-revenue generating activities, then the typical company spends **\$68,352** per rep per year paying for tasks they were not hired to do.

### Effectiveness

Not surprisingly, sales reps reported that their most effective time spent was following up on sales calls (**79.0%** effectiveness score) and meeting with customers (**78.4%** effectiveness score). Administrative tasks (**-14.8%** effectiveness score) and downtime such as checking Facebook and catching up with colleagues (**-17.8%** effectiveness score) were the least valuable - the only two tasks with a net negative effectiveness score.

### Time vs. Effectiveness

When looking at both time spent on sales tasks and the effectiveness of those tasks, account and contact research (**11.6%** of time, **71.9%** effective) as well as administrative tasks (**14.8%** of time, **-14.8%** effective) were identified as the biggest time wasters - tasks taking the most time and producing the least amount of results. Account planning (**5.3%** of time, **77.9%** effective), general sales follow up (**11.1%** of time, **79.0%** effective) as well as pipeline management and forecasting (**4.5%** of time, **55.4%** effective) were the three biggest areas of opportunity - tasks that reps spent the least amount of time on but were the most effective.

# SALES SYSTEMS

## Time Spent

The study revealed **17** systems that had over **10%** usage among those surveyed. Surprisingly, sales reps spend an incredible **17.9%** of their time in CRM, the foundational administrative system for sales teams. To put this in perspective salespeople report spending nearly **30% (27.9%)** more time managing their CRM than in customer meetings. The majority of sales reps' time is spent in sales technology (**62.8%**) with email for sales related purposes taking the most time (**32.5%**) and tools to gather sales intelligence taking the least (**0.5%**).

## Effectiveness

Because of the inefficiency of CRM, sales reps report that **9.1%** of their time (over half the amount of time spent in their CRM system) is spent in spreadsheets trying to more effectively manage CRM-related tasks. This means sales reps spend **27%** of their time each week on CRM related tasks (**17.9%** for CRM and **9.1%** for spreadsheets).

When respondents were asked about the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of each system, CRM was rated more ineffective than spreadsheets by a small margin (**.5%**). In terms of systems rated as valuable, CRM was rated lowest and was explicitly called out as the most frustrating or not directly valuable to a sales reps' objectives. Sales tools such as email (**82.1%**), phone (**76.5%**), and web conferencing (**74.7%**) were rated as most effective and most valuable.

## Time and Effectiveness

Systems such as pipeline management (**3.5%** of time, **56.1%** effective) and content enablement (**1.8%** of time, **43.4%** effective) were the biggest time wasters salespeople identified - least effective and highest amount of time spent. The systems that provided large areas of opportunity, most effective but least amount of time spent, were phone (**5.5%** of time, **76.5%** effective) and social (**7.2%** of time, **67.8%** effective).

# CONCLUSION

Sales is a complicated profession and with many competing tasks that distract from revenue generating activities, it is no surprise that according to industry research from CSO Insights, quota attainment numbers have decreased significantly across the entire sales industry over the past decade. CSO Insights reports that the current average quota attainment is at **53.0%** which means reps are achieving this number by only spending **35.2%** of their time selling.

Opportunities exist to increase the amount of time reps spend selling by addressing the **14.8%** of time spent on administrative tasks as well as the **17.9%** of time spent on mundane CRM tasks. Through the introduction of strong time management methodologies as well as increasing the use of sales technologies, such as phone and social media tools that eliminate wasteful time in CRM, companies could see an increase in overall selling time.

If these time wasters were reduced and time spent selling improved to **50%** of a typical work week rather than **35.2%**, how much would quota attainment--and therefore revenue--increase? Rather than just asking, "how easy are we to work with" from a customer's perspective, organizations should also ask, "how easy are we to work with" from a sales rep perspective.

While CRM, for example, is a necessary record-keeping tool, it isn't a system that reps view as valuable to increase sales. The future of sales acceleration and revenue growth, lies in social applications as well AI-based sales tools that reps want to spend their time in.

<sup>2</sup><https://www.csoinsights.com/sales-managers-overwhelmed-underdeveloped/>