



# Transforming industrial sales

In the last few years, industrial sales have seen many changes and much uncertainty about the future. Logistics challenges have resulted in a huge increase in contacts from customers asking when their delivery is arriving. Remote work and the reduction in in-person customer meetings have changed how we interact with customers. Global and local component shortages have changed delivery schedules, quarantines prevent employees coming to work and so on – the list is almost endless. All this means a seamless information flow in industrial sales is now very critical, salespeople and customers need to be notified about changes and updates instantly, and the correct information always needs to be available online.

In addition to unexpected changes, there is also a change in customer expectations: customers want their enquiries to be responded to faster and faster. If it used to be ok to respond to a customer query in a few days, the expectation today may only be a few hours or even minutes. How interaction happens may also be changing: traditional phone calls or emails may be considered too slow or time-consuming these days.

## Can your salespeople work efficiently?

Sales has some special features compared with other functions in the company. One is that the sales team interacts more with other functions inside the company and communicates with customers. Another is that sales often require more flexibility than other functions. Navigating the sales process for one case from lead to order, delivery to cash, and aftersales on top of all this may not always be so exact, depending on your business. The nature of sales may sometimes mean that applications and tools to manage certain stage of the process look very different from the other stages. This means these stages do not always seem connected, apart from with a very traditional copy-paste functionality. Manual copy-pasting is usually hidden in the day-to-day work, and this may hugely slow processes down. It may also cause a lot of errors and it is often the case that information needs to be sought from many separate places.

The speed with which you can complete a task is important, but it is also important to know if the task should even exist, or if it should be automated. Every time a customer contacts your business to enquire about information that already exists somewhere, it is important to ask if they could acquire this information through an automated channel more quickly and even more accurately. The ability to deliver

**//** *Sales require more flexibility than other functions in the company*

the information the customer is seeking can sometimes be tricky because it may be related to functions other than sales. Is the information sufficiently reliable to be exposed to the customer without a risk of misunderstanding? Can the information reveal anything from internal processes that creates an awkward situation for the company?

## Transparency is the key

When you are increasing integration between systems and processes, it can have the side effect of increasing the transparency of various functions and processes. Sometimes these may not be considered positive because there are concerns too much may be revealed, or that some things cannot withstand daylight. Such cases usually only improve the company's processes. You are faced with the situation that something will be visible – perhaps even directly to the customer – and you may need to reconsider how you are doing things.

If your business relies heavily on a channel to do the actual sales for you, it is crucial that the channel partner has transparency. Channel partners cannot work efficiently and in a customer-friendly manner if they are in the dark all the time or lack adequate ways to access the data that interests the end customer.

It also creates confidence if the customer sees their case is moving forward. Every time the customer contacts your company, they want to see that their query is being handled and is progressing, and maybe even to get an estimate of when it will be completed. All this helps the customer plan their own activities. If you manage to win the customer's confidence in these everyday activities, it is more likely that the orders will keep flowing in.

## Benefits of integration

The main benefits to the company itself from sales process integration are a decrease in the organisation's manual work and a reduction in the associated errors. It can also make your sales reporting less fragmented, and data from different stages can be connected more easily.

To get the maximum benefit from sales process integration, it is very important to align your integration and go-to-market strategies. Depending on your business type, it may not always be beneficial to integrate everything – perhaps only some stages require it. It is also important to assess the level of integration that should be achieved.

## Beware of information overflow

Information overflow can easily happen when you're increasing the information available to both customers and internal parties. This can mean the correct information is difficult to find. Your search always returns hundreds of hits, and users cannot get a handle of the logic your data is organised by. It isn't enough to just publish all the information that can be published – it's crucial to control how and when that information or data can be accessed.

**// Decrease manual work and reduce errors caused by manual work**

Depending on the user's situation, they may have little patience for looking for the correct information. If the correct data isn't found quickly, the user is forced to go about it more slowly – or worse still, to ask for it from a competitor company. To avoid such situations, it is vital to always understand the flow to the target from the user's perspective and offer correct information at different stages of the journey.

## Enabling the digital transformation

Depending on the starting point, the change to an integrated sales process may entail a big transformation for the company. It may change daily sales work, organisation and the definition of responsibilities. Changes outside the sales domain may also be needed to ensure good information flow to sales. It remains important to keep in mind that it may be impossible for the customer to change, or that change might take quite a long time. It is usually impossible to force the customer to change how they work: you need to offer them the right incentives to adapt to the change.

With new digital solutions, you can increase the scalability of your sales to manage more customers and projects with the same resources and still adapt to the annual fluctuation that is usually quite big. It also makes it possible to adapt to change more quickly: instead of always comparing your results to the budgeted target defined in the previous year, you can flexibly change your focus areas during the year, depending on the requirements and circumstances.

Midagon is a truly independent transformation partner focused on tangible business benefits realization. We combine extensive program and project management experience, business domain and technology expertise with 100 % objectivity to help our clients succeed in their most complex transformations.

Midagon's offering for the industrial sales is based on experience gained on delivering services across various industries. Midagon's key service areas ensure a successful digital transformation program from planning to execution. [www.midagon.com](http://www.midagon.com)

