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## A New Era of Sales: Benchmark Research

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For those on the outside looking in, sales is a seemingly straightforward profession with one simple goal in mind: selling. While that premise certainly carries some degree of truth, the full reality is that the industry has become increasingly more complex and competitive. The challenges salespeople face on a daily basis continue to mount – higher quotas, changing metrics and new sales channels. Each new challenge presents a new system or process to learn that takes valuable time away from actually selling.

To better understand this conundrum, BigMachines recently conducted a [benchmark survey](#), identifying the key factors that drive sales teams and the roadblocks they encounter. The results uncovered widespread, inefficient processes and the fact that few organizations actually take the steps necessary to ensure that their sales teams have the tools and information they need to address their challenges.

Here are some key findings:

- Two-thirds of those surveyed pointed to a disconnect between sales and marketing in their companies, when in fact, these two departments must work in tandem in order to be successful. If the lines of communication are broken, opportunities may be missed, errors can occur and deals can even be lost.
- Half of all respondents said that their ability to meet sales goals is the key factor in growing their businesses. These individuals recognize the significance of their own job, yet at the same time, they are acutely aware of the shortcomings of their tools and processes.
- Nearly 40% of respondents said they are leveraging B2B ecommerce within their organization, and many are taking advantage of leading ecommerce solution providers for the tools and implementation expertise.

We believe that there is a systematic shift happening in business. Organizations are becoming aware of the need to tap into new sales channels, but they often do so without adequate planning. Business-to-business (B2B) ecommerce is gaining increasing interest and adoption as a way to expand sales channels. Multichannel selling is a great path to increase revenue, but sales executives can't tackle every channel – online, offline, mobile, ecommerce, etc. – without the tools necessary to monitor, manage and follow up.

The bottom line is that most organizations neither sell efficiently nor effectively. Despite the fact that a high performing sales organization is key to growth, our survey showed a clear disconnect between sales and the rest of the enterprise, hampering the success of the sales team. In far too many organizations, the sales organization works in a deep silo rather than in an interconnected, transparent setting. Despite the growing challenges for sales teams, the survey revealed optimism. Deal sizes are expected to increase throughout 2011 and hopefully beyond, pointing to anticipated growth. How can you ensure that your company is among those that fulfill those optimistic forecasts?

While there is no one silver bullet, there are critical success factors and best practices that you should consider to help your sales teams sell more and sell faster:

- **Share the goals:** Sales are driving your company's growth and success, so make sure the entire organization is invested in the success of the sales team. From the CEO down, each employee needs to feel a sense of responsibility for meeting sales metrics and goals. In particular, marketing must be involved in the planning and execution of sales strategies so they are not only informed, but share responsibilities (and rewards) for the outcome.
- **Consider new channels:** Make sure that you know the best way to reach your top prospects. Think beyond your current sales channels and put yourself in your prospects' shoes. How do they want to connect and buy? Consider how they shop, evaluate and purchase and make sure you are putting your products and services there. Ecommerce is a driving force for change within businesses right now and it may be the right option for your company and your customers. In many ways, B2B business is being driven by consumer trends. Your customers expect that corporate purchases should be as easy as buying a new laptop on Dell.com or the latest best seller on Amazon.com. Identify the right channels for your prospects and customers and delegate resources behind each of these channels to ensure its success. And consider selling across multiple channels for maximum reach and effectiveness.
- **Social media is just one of the tools, not THE tool:** Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn – they're all great resources for connecting with customers and prospects and they each open new doors for monitoring and managing your brand online. But, don't let it be the ONLY way you are connecting with your prospects and customers. Face-to-face contact remains the most successful way to establish relationships and close deals for more than 75% of the respondents in our survey. Make sure you provide your sales team with the tools and applications that streamline their workload so they can spend more face time with their prospects and customers. By applying Sales 2.0 technology to help your reps generate faster quotes and proposals, and reduce the time they spend inputting data and updating reports, you enable them to spend more time selling and closing deals.

What is your company doing to drive a company-wide passion for achieving and exceeding sales goals? Have you looked at the ways your internal teams communicate and partner to achieve success? Are you evaluating the best channels to reach your prospects and expand your reach to new audiences? Are you implementing the tools and applications needed to ensure success and quick ROI? The performance of your sales team is key to success. Now is the time to explore new sales channels and processes that enable you to grow your sales and drive your success.

Challenges are mounting for sales teams – higher quotas, changing metrics and new channels in which to sell. The problem is that these changes can get in the way of sales people doing what they do best, which is selling. To better understand this conundrum, BigMachines recently conducted a [benchmark survey](#), identifying the key factors that drive sales teams and the roadblocks they encounter.

*Since its inception in 2000, Godard has led BigMachines on its mission to deliver innovative web software solutions to its customers and to build an enduring company with a great team. Godard earned an MBA from Stanford University and both a BS and MS in engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).*