

SALES

The new collaborative sales team

Why it takes a village to close a deal



A new way of selling
(that works way better
than the old way).

Sales has always been hard. And it's always been critical to success.

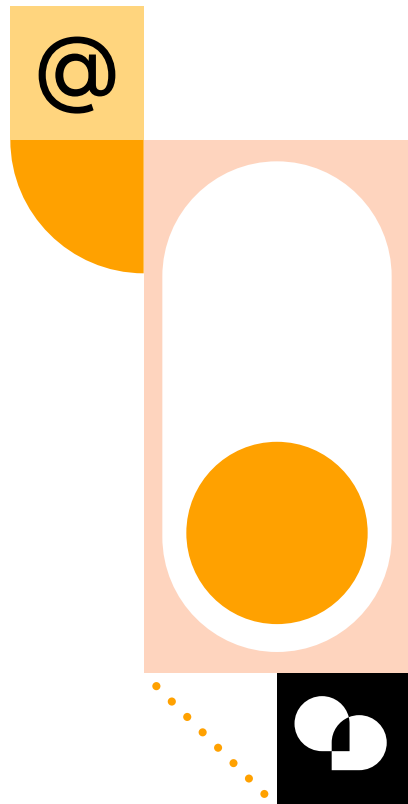
But today it can also make a case for being the *fastest-changing* discipline in business. Self-educating buyers. Bigger, more multidisciplinary buying teams. New expectations about the buying experience...

To rise to the challenges (and opportunities) created by change, a new kind of sales model has emerged. And it's running circles around the old-school, hard-sell, "lone wolf" model. The styles, structures and workflows of the old vs. the new might vary, but one thing is clear:

The winners in every market are the sales teams that collaborate in all directions to get to know buyers better, bring value to every conversation and close deals faster.

This new, collaborative sales team is built on three kinds of collaboration:

- **Collaboration with customers** to help mobilize large buying teams
- **Collaboration within the sales team** to lift performance, reward sales manager activity and improve customer conversations (which are especially challenging with distributed sales teams)
- **Collaboration with all other departments** to marshal the resources needed to make deals happen faster—and feed customer insights back to the business



This is new

This isn't just a new way of working; it's also a new way of *thinking*. A new way to marshal all your resources to serve buyers more effectively and run sales departments more efficiently.

Unfortunately, as we'll show, the ways sales teams communicate internally have not caught up with the new collaboration imperative.

Email, phone calls and meetings are fine for communicating with buyers. But for internal communications, they're fatally flawed.

This e-book is about a better way for sales teams to collaborate. It's not a theory: it's a new approach used all over the world by the highest-performing sales teams at the fastest-growing companies.

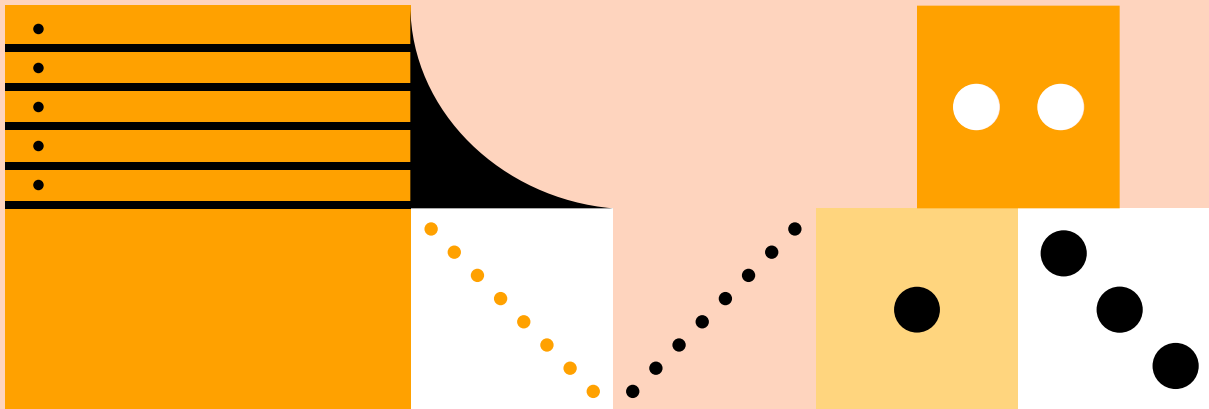
The new way replaces internal email with a channel-based collaboration platform (like Slack) that's integrated with your core sales software, starting with CRM (customer relationship management).

This simple change from email to a collaboration hub delivers dividends in hundreds of seemingly small places—to improve conversion, speed up deals and better serve buyers.

Let's dive in.

Slack is not the only game in town

In this guide, we'll talk about "channel-based collaboration." Slack is our own example of this, but it's not the only one on the market. Check us all out on places like Gartner, Gartner Peer Insights, IDC and Aragon Research—and if you'd like to know more about Slack, [do get in touch](#).



It takes a village to close a deal

Why collaboration has become so important for sales

New buyer expectations

They self-educate, know more, and expect more. *So every conversation must add value.*



Complexity

Bigger, multidisciplinary buying teams fire questions from all directions. *Sales teams must have fast answers drawn from all internal experts.*



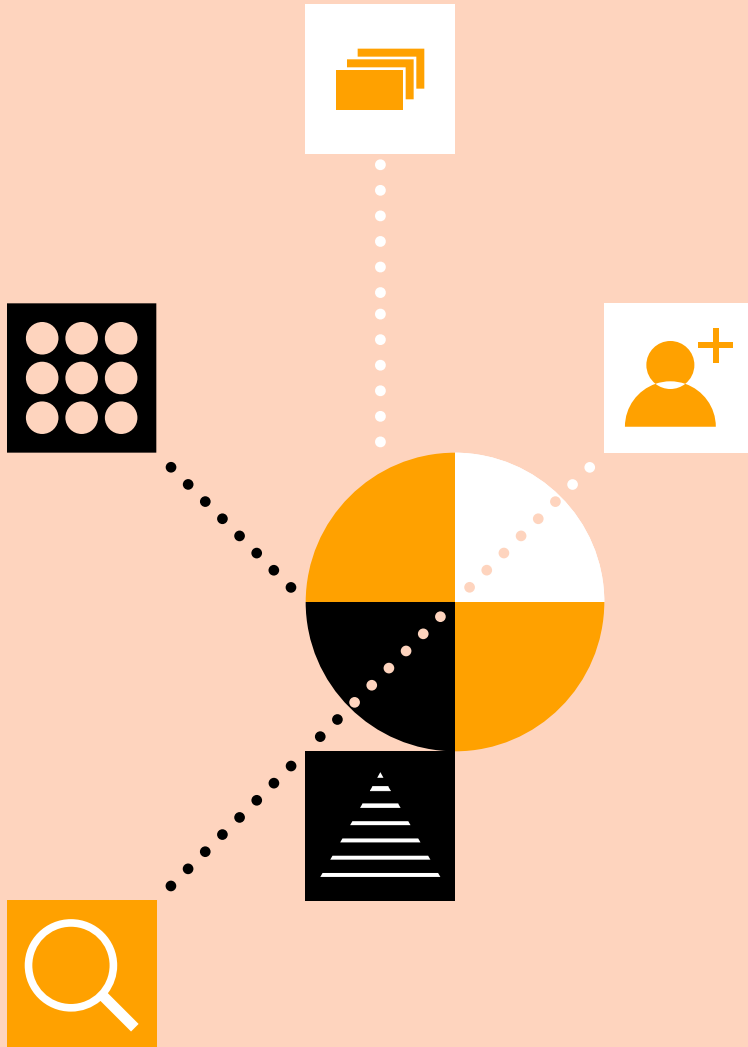
Speed

Pace is often buyer controlled, but when buying teams want to go fast, you must be ready. *Account execs can't get bogged down waiting for answers from internal teams.*



The upshot:

Effective internal collaboration is the only way to rise to these new challenges.



“Today, ‘behind-the-scenes’ resources are more customer-facing. The pre-sales engineer or subject matter expert might attend sales meetings. The head of service will meet with the customer to discuss ongoing support. Your clients’ CIO could have their questions answered directly by your own IT resources. In short, team selling is everywhere you look.”

Tiffani Bova, global customer growth and innovation evangelist, Salesforce

“The number of people involved in B2B solutions purchases has climbed from an average of 5.4 two years ago to 6.8 today.”

CEB

Old-school, meet new way

Collaborative sales cultures are different from siloed sales cultures in some important ways:

Sales silo culture	Collaborative sales culture
Comms are closed by default	Comms are open by default
Mostly one-to-one messaging	Mostly channel-based messaging
Isolated account teams	Informed sales teams, fully engaged with other departments
'Internal spam' is prevalent	Self-determined, "need-to-know" inclusion
Resources and expertise are dispersed	Resources are focused on each opportunity, as needed
Managers get informed via interrupting	Updates are given with minimal disruption; "ambient awareness"
Information hoarding	Knowledge sharing
Sales software is siloed	Sales software is integrated

The main collaboration zones

Effective salespeople are not just great at collaborating with their customer champion.

What separates good teams from great ones is how well they collaborate and marshal resources *internally* to progress and close complex deals. Let's look at where this collaboration happens:

“89% of buyers say consistent marketing and sales language about a product is important or very important.”

LinkedIn, “State of Sales, 2018”

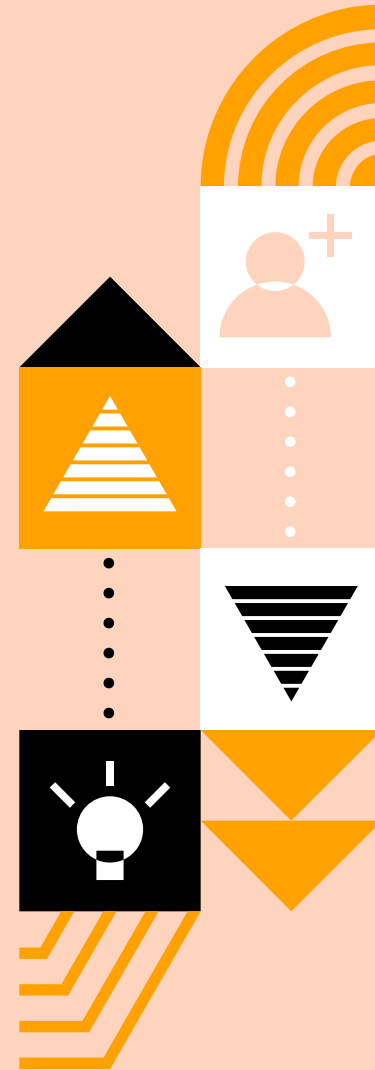
- **Within the sales team**
Up, down and sideways. *With channels dedicated to each account, team or program.*
- **With marketing**
To know what messages they're sending and let them know what buyers are saying. *With hot leads pumped straight in to the right channels from the marketing automation tool.*
- **With professional services**
Tap them for answers and alert them to issues. *Channels mean information never gets lost in the inbox.*
- **With product teams**
To know what's coming and let them know what buyers are asking for. *Loop in product experts for deal support and feeding back feature ideas in product channels.*
- **With legal**
To negotiate terms, and execute contracts faster. *Quick query forms to speed up replies.*
- **With support**
Get questions answered fast, highlight support issues and pick up new opportunities. *Open and act on support tickets from inside the channel.*
- **With finance**
For guidance, pricing, discounting and revenue recognition. *With approve/reject action buttons in the message itself.*
- **With post-sales teams**
Once the deal is done, the whole record of the relationship exists to build from. *Thanks to searchable conversations and files.*

A two-way street

Collaboration is not just about one-way deal support requests. It's also about making it easy for sales to feed back customer insight to improve the product, marketing and support. Win-win(-win-win-win...).

“94% of the highest-performing sales professionals consider collaboration tools “very important” or “important” to their success.”

LinkedIn, “State of Sales, 2018”



Internal email: where opportunity goes to die

Consider all the kinds of collaboration with the many different internal teams.

It's no surprise that email—a medium designed and optimized for one-to-one communication—would struggle to keep up. And that's exactly what happens:

- **Tangled threads**
Cluttered by reply-alls, excessive copying and blind copying
- **Knowledge is locked away**
Closed messages lock out many who would benefit from the conversation
- **Not widely searchable**
Users can only search their own message histories
- **No natural organization**
Just one big, dark pond of messages
- **Easily ignored**
The 'internal spam' problem deters engagement

Everyone recognizes these symptoms: Email is a frustrating, ineffective channel for internal collaboration.

Unfortunately, too many sales teams are stuck with it, slowing down everything from following complex configure/price/quote processes to responding to simple buyer queries.

The surprising power of channel-based collaboration

A collaboration hub built around channels may seem like a very simple, structural improvement over email and basic chat apps. But in practice, it changes everything.

Sales teams quickly learn to create channels to support whatever they're working on, inviting whoever makes sense to invite. Here are some of the channels we see (and use ourselves):

Channels naturally emerge to support specific projects, programs and initiatives. Team members can join and leave channels as and when they need to—unlike with lengthy email chains.

Sales management channels
Progress conversations about forecasts, territories and quotas.

Hiring channels
Accelerate discussions around candidates.

A Deal Desk channel
Where sales, finance and product leaders discuss complex, high value deals and help accelerate non-standard ones.

Entire sales org channels
For big announcements, executive AMAs and deal celebrations.

Account-specific channels
Focus the extended team on each opportunity, with all conversations, files and insights in one place. Ping approvers for quick responses. Onboard new account execs. Create a lasting record of the entire relationship.

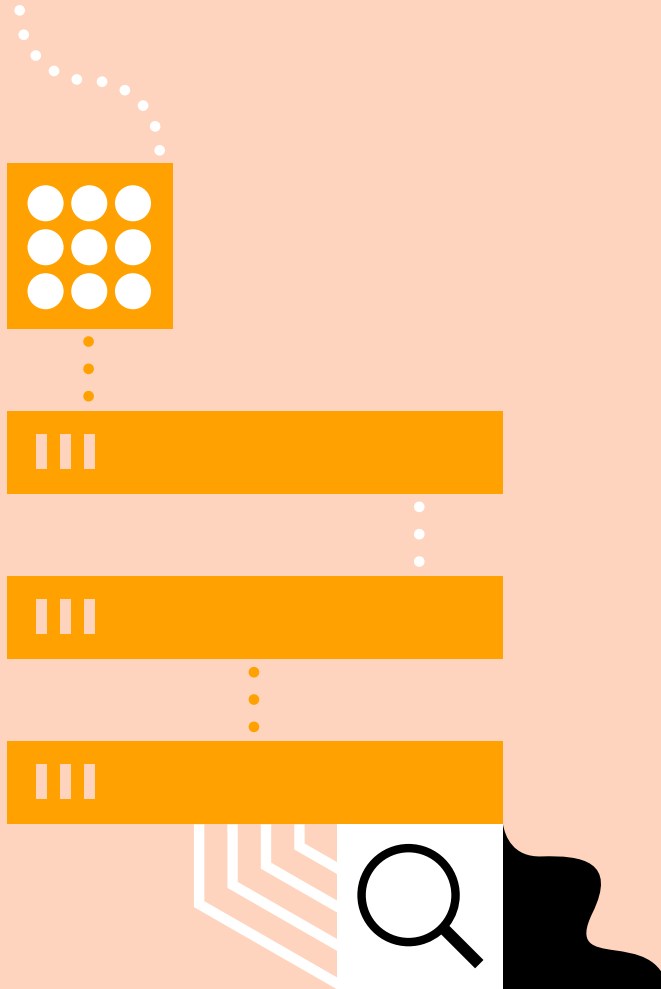
Team channels
Help align regional or industry-specific teams.

Sales Ops channels
Reach out to Ops to discuss territory, account ownership or process issues.

Triage channels
Support fast triage of any customer issues, to services, product, support or IT teams. Spin up trouble tickets without logging in to Jira.

Onboarding channels
Ramp up new reps and account execs to company processes and knowledge.

Deal Support Request channels
Dedicated deal support channels for big deals and centralized ones to surface and prioritize requests. With Salesforce integrations to keep the system of record up to date.



Openness is the default setting

Channels default to knowledge sharing instead of knowledge hoarding. So the right people make the right contributions at every stage of the sales cycle. Private messages are still available, but most activity usually happens in open channels, where information is easily discovered, searched and shared.

(We held some focus groups on knowledge sharing and reported on them [here](#).)

Better collaboration at every stage of the sales cycle

1.

Engage the customer
The account channel collects insights and loops in experts to provide fast answers.



Lisa Zhang 9:22 AM
Anyone ever work at Acme Anvils? I need some info.



2.

Build a business case
Pull in experts from across the organization and include articles, news, trends, company info ...



Liza Dawson 11:46 AM
[@Sheela](#) has a fantastic slide about our advantages in oil & gas markets.



3.

Negotiate the contract
Approve deals quickly in private channels with sales management, legal and finance teams.



Lee Hao 08:51 AM
[@Graham](#): See new discount proposal.



4.

Close the deal
Celebrate the win; share the learning; thank all contributors.



Rose Cahill 10:09 AM
[@Haley](#) killed it on this. Great job on the last-minute queries.



5.

Onboard the new customer
With rich context for post-sale implementation teams.



Harry Boone 11:17AM
[@Cust_Success](#): See the org chart pinned to the account channel. Everyone's on there.



What about noise and information overload?

People who are new to channel-based collaboration sometimes find that they're involved in more conversations than they'd like (something email is famous for).

More experienced users and teams discover all sorts of ways to configure their platform to suit their own work styles and minimize interruptions.

Let's face it, work life is pretty noisy. The key is to use collaboration hub features to actively manage the noise instead of being distracted by it:

- **Setting alerts selectively**
To focus on urgent requests
- **Starring important channels**
To prioritize life
- **Using "Do Not Disturb"**
After hours, and during the day to dig down into focused work
- **Using @**
To call out specific people
- **Using emojis and reaction**
For super-fast responses
- **Only surfacing live convos**
To only see channels with open messages
- **Leaving channels**
That are no longer relevant to you
- **Automating workflows**
To minimize bothering humans

Integrating collaboration with CRM and other software

Sales depends on lots of software. CRM is still the main platform, but it's now surrounded by dozens of sales technologies, including:

- **Prospecting**
- **Reporting**
- **Analytics**
- **Contract Lifecycle Management**
- **Forecasting**
- **Planning**
- **Sales Enablement**
- **Compensation Management**
- **Customer Insight**
- **CPQ**
- **Data Sync**
- **ABM**
- **Territory Management**
- **Management...**

Each one adds value in its own swim lane. But the fragmentation penalties can add up, forcing salespeople to waste time context-switching and logging in and out of different applications.

Integration unites

The new collaborative sales team unifies its tech stack where work happens: in the collaboration hub. In the hub, you integrate with other apps, bring data in, push it out, and initiate actions without leaving the workspace.

Let's look at CRM as our simplest example (but the principles apply to any and all sales apps).

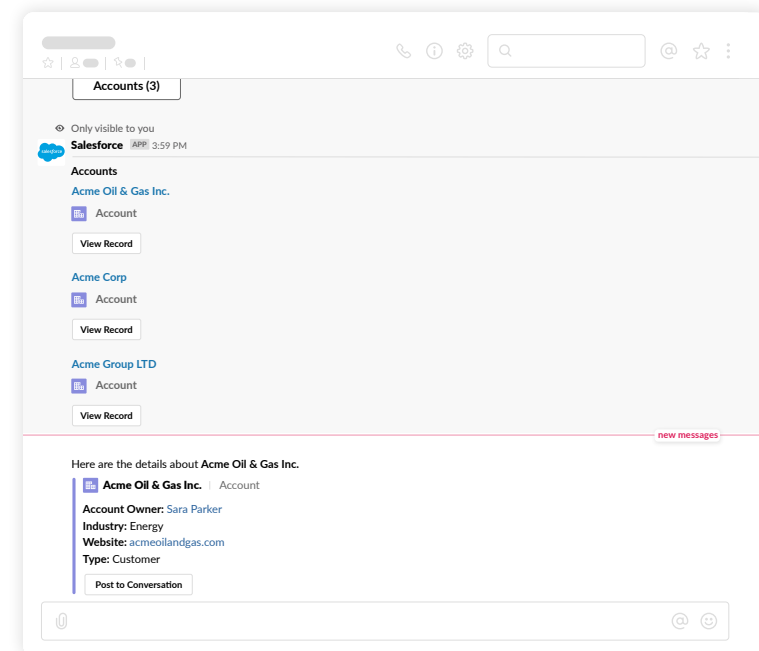
Playing nicely with your CRM

CRM is an excellent system of record for sales teams and sales leaders. It creates a single source of truth on the status of all opportunities, feeding powerful analytics, forecasting and reporting.

But CRM isn't optimized for collaboration and isn't designed to support the many different conversations that selling depends on. Because of this, it can be a struggle to get salespeople to update their records—and that means sales managers aren't getting the timely, accurate information they need.

By integrating with your CRM, a well-designed collaboration hub can maximize its value in a few ways:

- **Easier activity logging**
Pushing updates to the CRM without leaving the channel or workspace
- **Instant access to CRM data**
Pulling in relevant data to the conversation
- **Push CRM insights beyond licensed users**
So everyone in marketing, product and support can see opportunity status too



In short: a collaboration hub can help drive adoption of CRM and improve its data accuracy as well as extending its impact throughout the organization.

Slack and Salesforce

The Slack/Salesforce integration keeps teams aligned and gives them access to critical information in a snap—and it's getting better all the time.

Your team can receive customized notifications about Salesforce updates and query data like accounts, opportunities and cases—without leaving Slack.

Unifying Sales Ops

For more and more sales operations teams, Slack is where the whole sales tech stack comes together. Salesforce is the big one but it's only the start. There are over 1,500 other integrations, including things like Marketo, Zendesk, Drift, Troops, SalesLoft, Clearbit, Highspot and Demandbase. Check out the full list of integrations in the Slack App Directory.

3 Use cases

The new collaborative selling in action

Big, busy sales teams use channel-based collaboration hubs like Slack in literally hundreds of ways, from alerts about new leads to contract negotiation, and everything in between.

Let's look at three of the most common use cases.

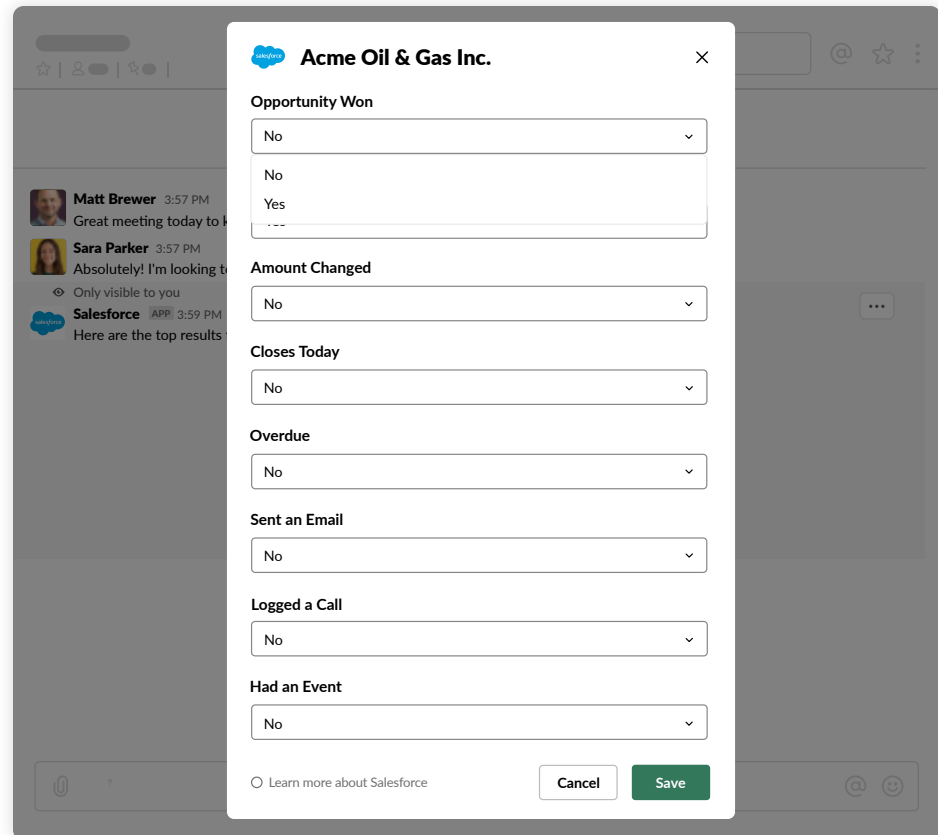


Use case 1

Focus the organization around the opportunity

The core use case and source of biggest value: collaborating in channels streamlines and accelerates the entire sales cycle. This occurs through:

- Fast and accurate deal support and quote approvals
- Instant access to product, marketing, service, legal and finance teams
- Faster ramping up of new reps and smoother account transitions
- Delivering a better, more informed and responsive buying experience



Use case 2

Improve visibility and leverage for sales management

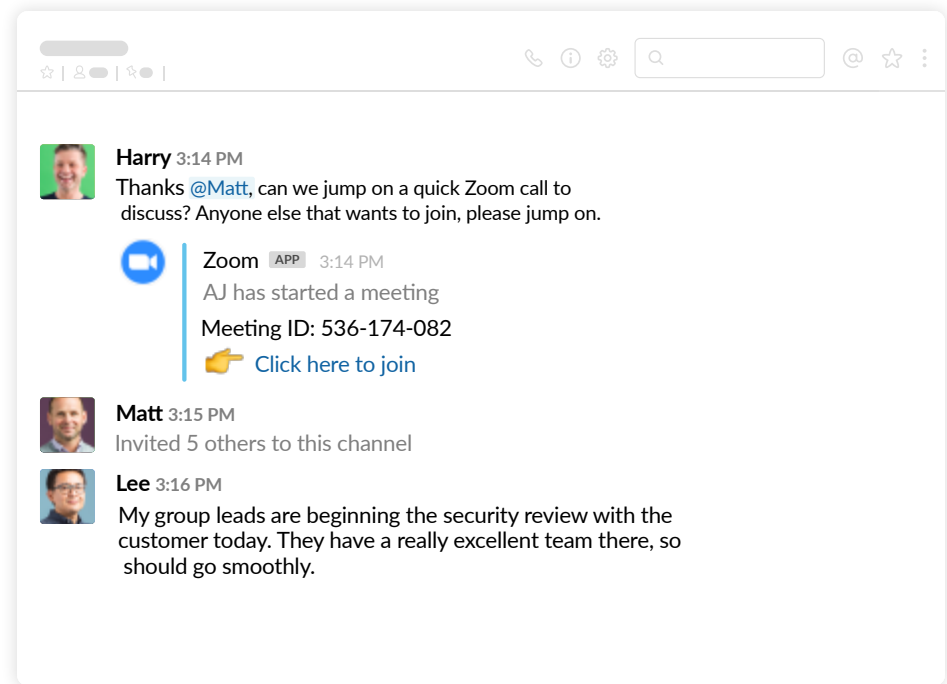
Salespeople love their channels, but sales managers get just as much benefit, thanks to:

- Real-time status of all opportunities and activities
- More opportunities to accelerate and improve conversations
- Flexibility to prioritize attention on the highest-value, time-sensitive deals

All without increasing the reporting burden on salespeople.

“On average, sales reps spend only a third of their time selling.”

Salesforce, “State of Sales, 3rd Edition”



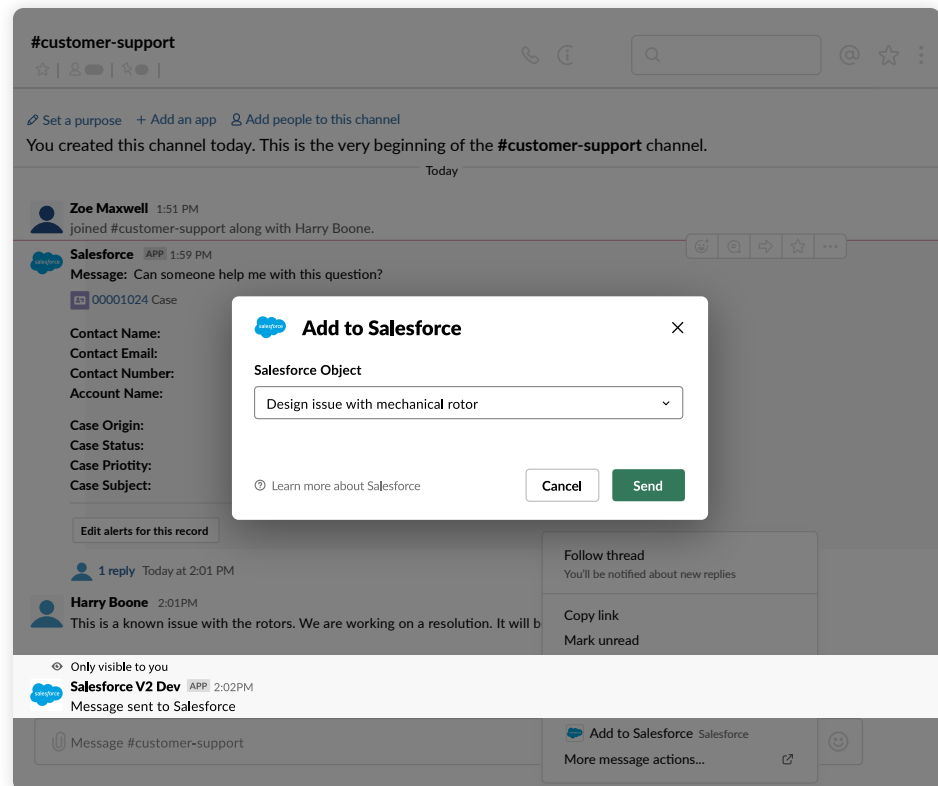
Use case 3

Release the full potential of Salesforce and your entire sales software stack

Software only adds value if it's used. A collaboration hub brings your sales apps together where the conversations are happening. The value is clear. A collaboration hub:

- Keeps CRM and all sales tools up to date
- Extends sales app information to colleagues in marketing, product and support
- Integrates your entire go-to-market stack
- Helps salespeople focus more time on selling

In short: a collaboration hub helps create a more agile sales team that responds to customers faster, delivers a consistent message and gets deals done.



The benefits of the new collaborative sales model

Better collaboration pays dividends across the whole sales organization and the entire sales lifecycle. A quick summary:

For the whole sales team	For sales managers	For sales operations
<p>Win more deals faster by better using all internal resources.</p> <p>Prioritize sales efforts to swarm around your biggest opportunities.</p> <p>Serve customers better with an improved buying experience.</p> <p>Preserve customer knowledge for use across all teams.</p> <p>Spend more time on high-value sales activities instead of admin.</p>	<p>Give managers better visibility of all opportunities, without chasing salespeople.</p> <p>Improve management leverage by adding value at key moments.</p> <p>Preserve margins with formal discount review workflows.</p> <p>Onboard new reps faster, ramping them up to full productivity sooner.</p>	<p>Unify the sales tech stack, where the work of sales happens.</p> <p>Improve the return on CRM by making it easier to update and query.</p> <p>Automate processes and streamline data flows.</p>

The top 5 things sales reps say they spend too much time on

1. Managing emails
2. Logging activities
3. Inputting sales data and notes
4. Finding the right person to contact
5. Creating follow-up tasks

Salesforce, "State of Sales, 3rd Edition"

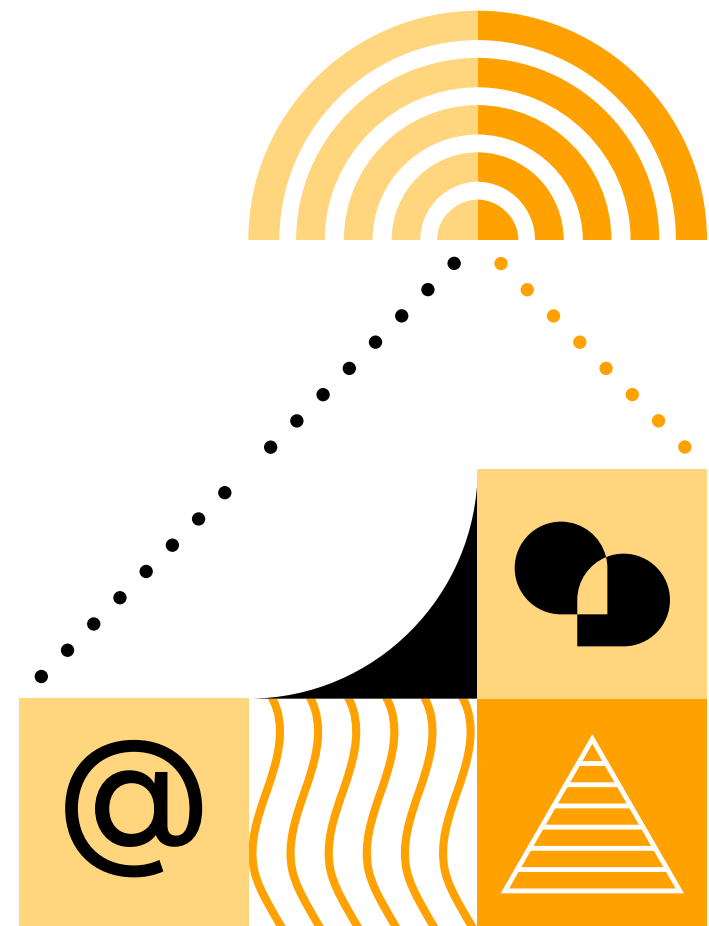
Where to start: Migrating to channel-based collaboration

The move from email to a channel-based collaboration platform like Slack is simple and easily managed. You don't turn off internal email, you just start using it less and less.

As the sales team starts working with channels, the platform evolves to mirror the way it wants to work. There's no rip-and-replace, just an organic migration that goes as fast or as slowly as you like.

“The better sales enablement formalizes its cross-functional collaboration efforts, the better the sales force’s productivity.”

Tamara Schenk, CSO Insights



Start with the sales team

The sales department itself is a great place to start. Start a pilot by spinning up channels for internal processes like hiring, onboarding or training. Add a few account-specific channels to experience what it's like to collaborate around deals.

But the real value from Slack comes when you start collaborating across departments and disciplines.

Extend to include marketing, support and product teams

The next logical step is to include the teams that sales works with most: marketing, support and product teams. Here, the benefits of collaboration accrue quickly, as people learn how and when to loop in their colleagues, and how to streamline their work together.

The next step makes even more sense.

Go enterprise-wide

More and more companies use Slack across the entire organization (IBM has 100,000 seats and Autodesk has 8,500).

Once a whole company shares the same collaboration hub, the benefits skyrocket. Collaboration improves everywhere. Complex processes can be streamlined and automated. The workforce finds it easier to align around the strategy.

Again, the transition is easy and largely managed by the user base (with guidelines and controls set by IT). Chances are, a lot of your teams are already using Slack every day.

Conclusion

Collaborative selling is an opportunity waiting to be seized

Sales is changing fast. The lone-ranger approach doesn't work anymore.

What works is a coordinated sales team supported by the right resources from across the organization—all focused on turning opportunity into revenue.

Clearly, collaboration has never been so important. Even more clearly, internal email can't rise to the challenge. It was never designed to do so.

But a channel-based collaboration platform that's integrated with your CRM and other sales applications can.

And if your colleagues in marketing, support, product, finance and legal are using it too? That changes everything.

That changes work.

We'd like to help you do that.

Slack and sales

Nice things our customers say

“Any time we get a lead, we actually send it as a notification to our reps in Slack. They’re getting real-time notifications, whether they’re at their desks or on their phone, and can respond proactively, as opposed to waiting for something to show up in their inbox.”

“And any time we win a new customer, we send a message to a Slack channel where we share details about who the customer is, why they bought and how we helped solve their pain points. Those learnings have been really important for all of our sales reps globally.”

Jeetu Mahtani, SVP of international operations, HubSpot

“Slack is business done right. When you have collaboration happening in one spot, leadership doesn’t need to be copied on an email. You can hop into a Slack channel, cruise along with the project and jump in where needed.”

Benjamin Sternsmith, area vice president of sales, Lyft Business

“No-ask updates keep the executive sponsors involved and aware of the current status of things. They don’t have time to read a lengthy email. A quick summary in a Slack note is very effective.”

“I’m not going to email the entire sales team. But I’m happy to post in the sales Slack channel. Those are two very different things.”

Samantha Lutz, senior field account manager, Lyft Business

Dig deeper

The sales-related integrations in the Slack App Directory.

Slack on Slack

How channels power our sales teams

The product summary

Our solution page for sales

Customer case

How Slack helped Hubspot scale

Customer case

Mission critical sales work at Lyft Business

Ready to talk? So are we.
Schedule time with our team.

LET'S GO

About Slack

Slack is where work happens. Slack is a new layer of the business technology stack that brings together people, applications and data—a hub for collaboration where people can effectively work together, access critical applications and services, and find important information to do their best work.

People around the world use Slack to connect their teams, unify their systems and drive their business forward.

