



Grow with Digital Sales

How to make digital sales a priority
and a part of your commercial engine
for growth acceleration

December 2024

Whitepaper





From strategy to implementation, we help companies **grow smarter**



We are a management consultancy focused on driving growth through designing, developing and accelerating the full commercial engine.

Through a combination of deep subject matter expertise and empowering people to get things done, we turn sales & marketing into a sustainable competitive advantage.

As a group of commercial specialists experienced within change and transformation on both individual and organisational levels, we develop solutions that work and stick.

- **Driving competitive advantage from one commercial engine**

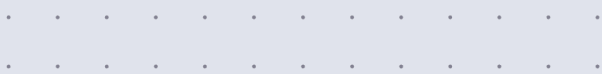
By understanding and developing a company's commercial functions as a single, cohesive engine, we design and build enduring assets capable of capturing revenue with a new generation of digital buyers.

- **Impact through deep and focused expertise**

We concentrate solely on crafting commercial growth. Leveraging our deep expertise, we work with commercial leaders to provide fresh perspectives and create the tools and solutions needed to inspire change and move teams.

- **Empowering people to get things done**

We believe that only by deeply understanding people's genuine needs can we craft solutions they will truly own. By empowering people to get things done, we drive meaningful and lasting change.





Preface

How to capture and execute on my digital sales opportunity effectively?

The shift from traditional, face-to-face interactions to digital platforms has transformed how we connect with customers and approach sales. Today, up to 80% of the buying journey is influenced by digital channels. As a result, mastering digital sales and e-commerce in B2B has become essential for growth in most companies.

Despite its importance on leadership agendas, many companies struggle to prioritise and act effectively in digital sales. A common challenge is the lack of a clear strategic direction for digital sales, including e-commerce. Companies often grapple with vague objectives, insufficiently operationalised strategies, limited traction, and internal misalignment. The risk is significant—B2B companies may miss out on growth opportunities as competitors strengthen their digital capabilities.

At Kvadrant Consulting, we have seen first-hand the successes and pitfalls companies encounter when optimising digital sales. Drawing from these insights, this whitepaper aims to inspire you to make informed decisions on where, when, how, and how much to invest in digital sales capabilities—leaving you with actionable insights as to how to capture and execute on your digital sales opportunity effectively.

In this paper, we'll explore the following topics:

- INTRO
 - THE WHY
 - THE WHAT
 - THE HOW
 - TAKEAWAYS
- 1. The digital sales revolution**
 - 2. The power of digital sales**
 - 3. Succeeding with the next wave of digital sales**
 - 4. How to start accelerating your digital sales**
 - 5. Time to become part of the revolution**

Enjoy the read!

Intro

The digital sales revolution

Seizing the potential of digital sales
in B2B



The digital sales revolution:

Seizing the potential of digital sales in B2B

Nearly half of the buying process is spent on independent research

As buyers increasingly embrace self-service and digital interactions, the role of digital sales in B2B is more prominent than ever. While face-to-face interactions still play an important part in most buying journeys, most customers now expect a seamless digital experience that guides them through the purchasing process. However, many B2B companies are stuck in old selling habits or believe that putting a purchase button and a shopping basket button on the website suffices. No more of that. It's time to seize the full potential of digital sales.

Whereas digital commerce used to represent white space, lacking a digital sales strategy today poses a fundamental risk to for sales and customer loyalty as legacy channels continue to lose share.

Welcome to a digital-first world

The opportunity for digital sales lies in meeting buyers where they are: online. Buyers spend significantly less time engaging directly with sales representatives and more time researching independently through digital channels. According to recent studies, nearly half of the buying process is spent on independent research, with only 17% of a buying group's time allocated to meeting with suppliers.¹ In other words, buyers educate themselves and do their own research. So, either we're part of that or someone else will do it.

At the same time, the complexity of B2B buying has not diminished. While buyers are better informed than ever before, they are also overwhelmed by the vast amount of information available and the complex implications of their purchase decisions. For companies, this means digital sales must not only deliver information but also simplify the decision-making process for their potential buyers.

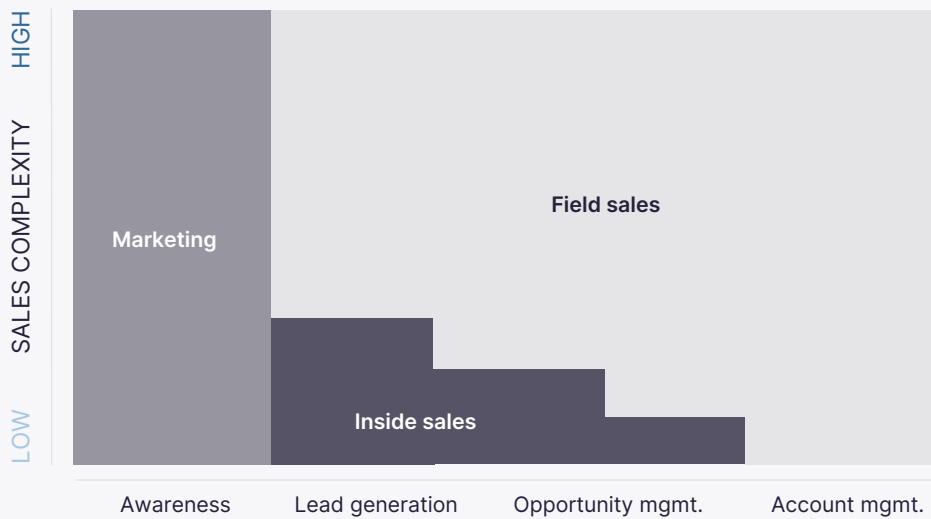
This shift presents an opportunity to handle more of the sales process through marketing and digital self-service.

Enter **digital sales**.

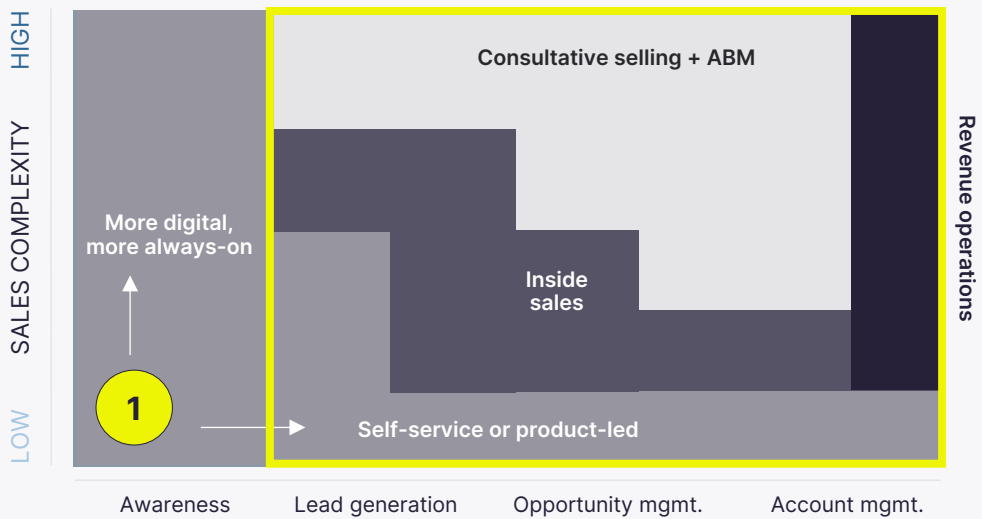
EXHIBIT 1

The traditional vs. the modern sales process

TRADITIONAL SALES PROCESS



MODERN SALES PROCESS



The digital sales imperative

- The majority of interactions between suppliers and buyers now take place in digital channels, often long before direct contact is made.²
- B2B buyers are increasingly channel-agnostic, engaging with digital touchpoints throughout the buying journey.³
- This shift hasn't simplified the buying process—on the contrary, buyers are better informed but more overwhelmed than ever.⁴
- Despite the complexity, buyers expect seamless self-service options in B2B, using digital channels as much as face-to-face interactions. Their ultimate goal is ease of engagement and effortless ordering.⁵
- Meeting these expectations requires a robust digital sales framework.

In essence, the role of digital sales and e-commerce is straightforward:

1. Offer a seamless buying experience for your **customers**
2. Drive streamlined selling operations for your **company**

² Gartner (2019), *Distribution of B2B buyer group's time*

³ Gartner (2019), *What information channel did you use to complete the activity?*

⁴ HBR (2022), *Sensemaking for sales*

⁵ McKinsey (2021), *Omnichannel in B2B sales*

The why

The power of digital sales





Reaping the benefits of
the virtuous cycle



The power of digital sales

Reaping the benefits of a virtuous cycle

Digital sales deliver tangible benefits that go beyond meeting customer expectations. For B2B companies, digital sales enable businesses to reach broader audiences, streamline processes, and strengthen customer relationships. These benefits span from top-line growth to bottom-line improvements, and from external outcomes to internal efficiencies:

-  **Revenue generation:** Digital sales channels grow revenue from existing customers and create new revenue streams by providing easier access to customers and enabling faster transactions.
-  **Operational efficiency:** By automating routine tasks and streamlining processes, digital sales free up resources, allowing teams to focus on more complex customer needs.
-  **Customer satisfaction:** Digital sales enhance customer experience by offering seamless, self-service options that meet buyers' growing demand for convenience.
-  **Workforce empowerment:** Digital sales tools give sales teams the ability to respond faster, better engage customers, and tailor solutions more effectively.



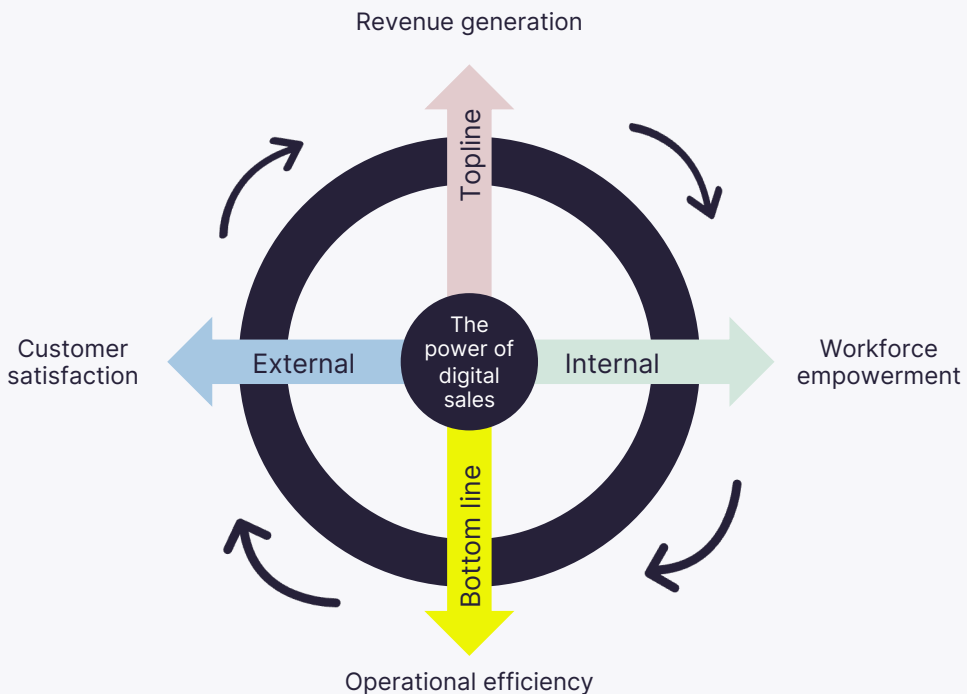


While most companies begin their digital sales journey with a focus on one key benefit—often operational efficiency to free up resources—fully embracing digital sales can lead to a virtuous cycle, where the benefits extend far beyond the initial objective.

To be clear though, digital sales must begin with the customer in mind, and only then harvest the associated internal benefits. Those who have embraced digital sales consistently share the same story: “Every time we made it easier or more convenient for the customer to buy from us, we saw significant leaps forward.” In this way, B2B companies mirror the patterns seen in the early days of B2C e-commerce.

EXHIBIT 2

The digital sales value cycle





Expanding on the **benefits** of digital sales

1

Revenue generation & expansion ↑

Digital sales channels drive growth by increasing revenue from existing customers and creating new streams from untapped segments. Easier access to your full product catalogue, faster transactions, and an overall improved ease of doing business can boost average order value and share of wallet. Additionally, digital channels open opportunities to reach new customers in markets or applications previously overlooked.

Examples of areas and KPIs

- Revenue from digital channels (e.g., websites, apps)
- Revenue from digital cross-sell (ecosystems, brand extensions)
- New customer acquisition through digital channels
- Revenue from digital products/services
- Profitability of digital vs. non-digital business models

2

Workforce empowerment →

Digital tools enable sales teams to work faster, engage better, and tailor solutions more effectively. They streamline workflows, automate repetitive tasks, and offer tools for lead acquisition, document management, and guided buying. These capabilities free up time and improve job satisfaction, allowing teams to focus on higher-value activities.

Examples of areas and KPIs

- Sustainability improvements (e.g., resource savings, capacity optimisation)
- Faster execution (e.g., delivery times, market response speed)
- Reduced defects and errors



3

Customer satisfaction and engagement ←

Seamless self-service options empower customers to take control of their buying journey, meeting growing expectations for convenience and personalisation. Companies increasingly consolidate scattered digital touchpoints into unified, customer-centric portal solutions to deliver a cohesive experience. This fosters greater loyalty and trust.

Examples of areas and KPIs

- Usage of digital tools (e.g., time spent on apps, chatbots)
- Lead generation via digital channels
- Hours saved by customers
- Digital marketing KPIs (e.g., click-through rates, impressions)
- Customer satisfaction and retention tied to digital tool adoption
- Number of customers registered on digital platforms

4

Operational efficiency ↓

Digital sales streamline the sales process by automating tasks such as order processing, invoicing, and managing catalogues. This reduces manual errors, saves time, and lowers costs, allowing sales teams to transition from transactional order-takers to strategic advisors. Customers can serve themselves, freeing sales reps to focus on nurturing leads and pitching solutions.

Examples of areas and KPIs

- Employee adoption of digital tools (e.g., access, usage time)
- Employee satisfaction and retention due to digital tools
- Office vs. remote work operations
- Hours saved on operational tasks



Navigating the digital sales spectrum

Not all products and services are easily sold online. Many of them can't just be put in a cardboard box and sent with free shipping or signed up to like a Netflix subscription.

Generally speaking, the first wave of digital sales focused on the low-hanging fruits: books, music, consumer electronics, and travel bookings. These products are standardised and simple to sell through self-service e-commerce. Haven't we all gotten used to it?



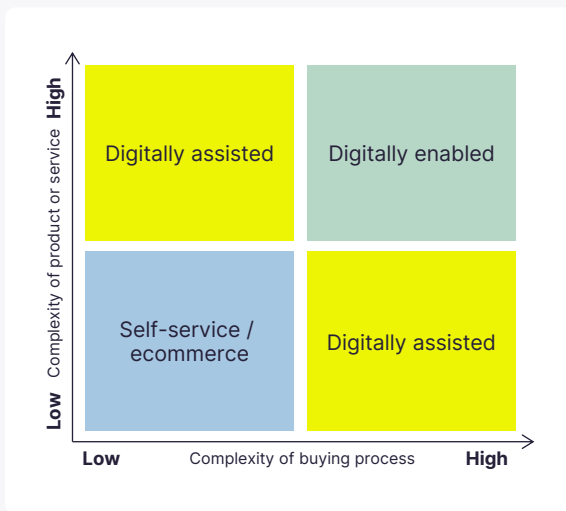
However, many products—especially in B2B—are far from standardised or simple. Most operate along a spectrum that ranges from straightforward sales to highly complex, customised offerings.



We are now moving beyond the first wave of digital sales. It's time for B2B to follow suit and move past the simple self-service models typical of everyday online shopping. While we've successfully sold low-complexity products and services digitally, it's now time to tackle the more complex offerings. But before we do, let's explore the different types of digital sales—because treating all digital sales the same way is a pitfall to be avoided. Broadly, digital sales can be grouped into three categories:

EXHIBIT 4

Types of digital sales models



- **Self-service digital sales**

Buyers handle the entire purchasing process on their own, typically for low-risk, highly standardised products or services. Transparency and ease of use are critical in this model.

- **Digitally assisted sales**

For more complex purchases involving multiple decision-makers, buyers may begin online but require digital assistance throughout the process. Companies need to provide tailored information and support to facilitate decision-making.

- **Digitally enabled sales**

This is necessary for buyers who may understand their business problem but are unaware of the solution space. Companies must offer consultative support, using digital tools to inform and guide buyers through the journey.

Supporting buyers in self-serving through an e-commerce model is an obvious win, and creating company-wide adoption plans for this approach is a key step. However, the bigger opportunity lies with the customers and orders that will never fit neatly into this model: Digitally assisted and enabled sales. Welcome to the next wave.

EXHIBIT 5

A simplified view on the different digital sales models



1

Self-service



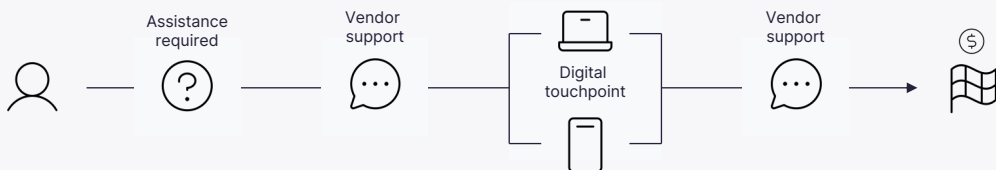
2

Digital assistance



3

Digitally enabled



The what

Succeeding with the next wave of digital sales

Establishing the foundation
and capabilities



Succeeding with the next wave of digital sales

Establishing the foundation and capabilities

Customers don't think in terms of channels; they see you as one unified entity

The modern buying journey is non-linear, involving numerous touchpoints. This complexity can be daunting, but our role is to make buying as simple as possible for our customers—regardless of the channel they use to interact with us. Customers don't think in terms of channels; they see you as one unified entity. Your digital sales approach should reflect this reality. Imagine a connected system of activities within your company, designed to continuously optimise and evolve over time.

The buying journey as the outset of it all

Understanding your customers' steps and aligning them with your sales cycle is fundamental to unlocking the potential of digital sales. While most B2B companies have a defined sales process, achieving digital sales excellence requires precise mapping of:

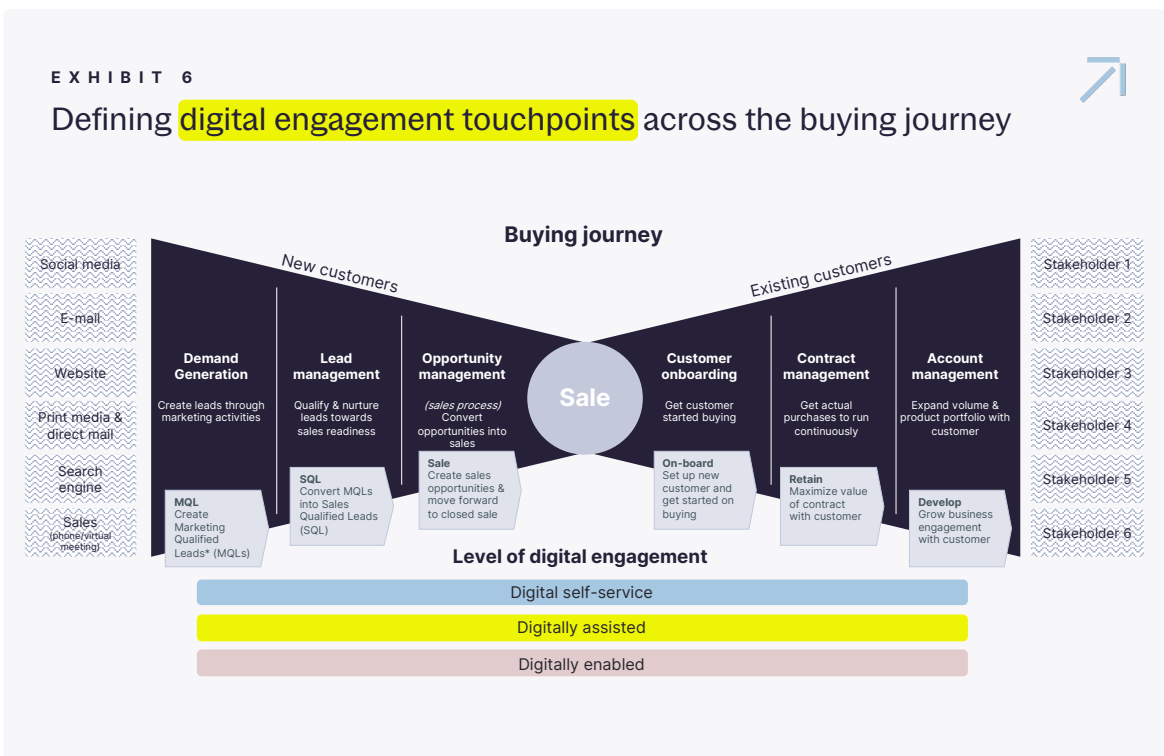
1. Objectives at each stage of the buying journey
2. Roles of your commercial team versus digital touchpoints
3. Key stakeholders involved
4. The ideal digital sales model—whether self-service, digitally assisted, or digitally enabled (see exhibit 4)



Assessing your digital sales maturity

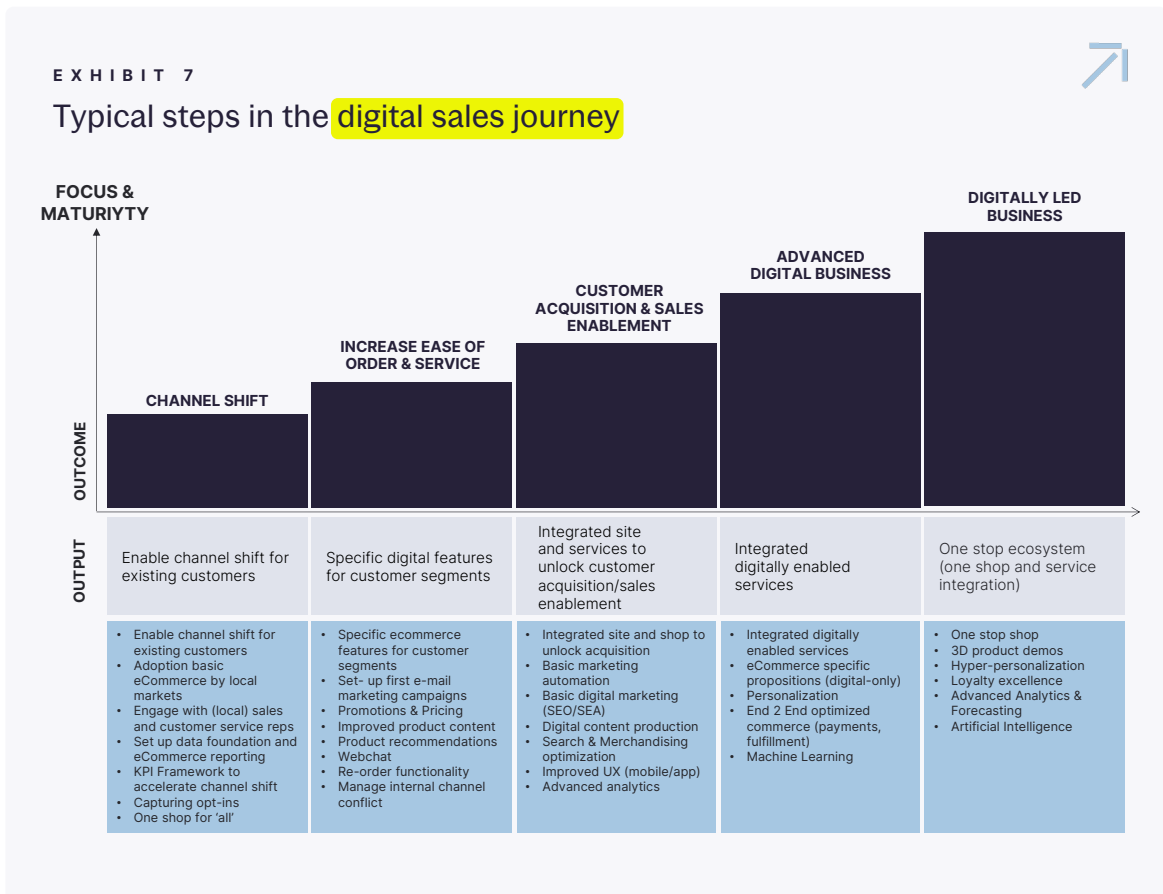
The digital sales journey typically progresses through five phases, each with specific opportunities and challenges. By evaluating these phases, you can identify your current stage and determine the next critical steps for your B2B commerce business.

The easiest way to drive commercial impact is to focus on migrating customers from higher-cost touchpoints to digital channels.



Leverage existing customer relationships to encourage this shift, then build on successes and insights to refine your strategy. Over time, you can expand to include targeted marketing activities for acquiring new customers.

Both scenarios can stall progress and prevent companies from fully realising the potential of digital sales. The key is to set clear priorities and align them with your strategic direction. By learning from the missteps of early adopters, you can avoid these pitfalls and accelerate your digital sales journey.



However, succeeding with digital sales is not a simple, one-off project. It's an evolving journey that requires establishing end-to-end processes and capabilities, which can have a transformational impact across the organisation.

Taking on this journey is not easy. Two challenges often hinder B2B businesses:

- Hitting glass ceilings:** Progressing too slowly between phases and becoming stuck in a "dead zone."
- Spreading efforts too thin:** Attempting to execute on priorities from all five phases simultaneously, resulting in inefficiency and underutilisation of potential.

10 digital capabilities required for success

Optimising digital sales is not a simple endeavour as it often touches every part of the business—legacy processes, data systems, and organisational structures. The ultimate goal is to design an approach that is aligned to and anchored in the commercial strategic priorities of your organisation while getting ten distinct digital sales capabilities in place:

EXHIBIT 8

10 capabilities required to succeed

Strategy	Digital & ecommerce strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop ecommerce strategy (footprint, ambition, etc.) • Select and source ecommerce platforms • Perform negotiations and manage relations with 3rd party parties (agencies, etc.)
	Ecommerce platform product & ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop & own digital development roadmap • Ideate and demand specify functionality concept requirements • Refine & optimize UX (guidelines, optimization of journey, etc.)
Build & optimise	Digital development & user experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop & own front back-end functionality from roadmap • Quality assure and test features/functionality • Implement & deploy features/functionality • Adapting functionalities (delivery options, etc.) • Localization of specific journey elements or similar
	Content production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define content standards, agency/development model & storage • Develop digital content for e e-store, app and .net
	Operating model & Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Move from "monolith supply chain" to fit and enable digital ambitions • Cross organisational setup & alignment (Commercial, Operations, Finance, etc.)
Execute & drive trade	Buyer / partner / channel management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Buyer management • External partner management (distributors, partners, wholesalers, etc.) • Securing channel shift • Managing internal and external channel conflicts
	Merchandising & trading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plan campaign/activities and set targets • Merchandising, assortment selection, search rules, recommendation structure • Pricing & promotions
	Assortment, logistics & customer care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assortment strategy & management • Logistics management (inbound & outbound) • Customer care • Order & quote management
	Digital marketing execution, CRM & loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow up and analyze marketing performance (lead generation practice, plan & execute campaigns, manage agencies) • Manage CRM infrastructure, playbook, KPI, tracing framework • Analyze data, onsite consumer behavior and identify segments & opportunities
	Analytics & reporting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish & run reporting tool • BI & big data operations • Compile and deliver strategic dashboards • Manage web analytics for all properties
Track		

The how

How to start accelerating your digital sales

Creating or reinvigorating momentum

4

How to start accelerating your digital sales:

Creating or reinvigorating momentum

While every B2B business is unique—whether in sales channels, industry dynamics, or product complexity—they also share common challenges and opportunities when scaling digital sales and e-commerce. Based on our experience working with numerous B2B organisations, some areas consistently stand out as key to successfully accelerating digital sales. These include:

- Defining the strategic purpose of digital sales and e-commerce operations
- Identifying the key levers to unlock growth
- Ensuring organisational alignment to support execution

These areas form the foundation for three key strategic accelerators: a clear strategy, focused execution, and strong organisational alignment.

EXHIBIT 9

Three key strategic accelerators



Clarify business and strategy objectives

Clear purpose & role of digital B2B in the overall commercial strategy

- How is my full sales & channel mix strategy?
- Are you looking to shift customers online, or capture new business?
- How do I better integrate online and offline buying for my customers?
- How can I extend my value proposition to the online environment?



Do the right things – at the right time

Knowing when to do what along the stages of the transformation journey

- Are you aware of, and address, the “glass ceilings” you are facing right now?
- Do you focus on doing the few things well that truly moves your business?
- Have you established a culture defined by continuous improvement and being data led?



Establish a strong, common vision

Aligning the full organization & incentives to drive progress

- Is the ecommerce revenue, profit and customer satisfaction targets top of mind and made accountable?
- Have you aligned strategic, tactical & operational level activities in a business plan?
- Have you established a strategic KPI framework to anchor company-wide execution and follow up on progress through data?



FOCUS

Expanding on the three key **strategic accelerators**

1

A clear strategy and plan

Success starts with a clear and detailed strategy for digital sales. This involves addressing fundamental questions about your e-commerce operations, such as:

- What are your business objectives for digital sales? Are you focused on shifting customers online, capturing new business, increasing efficiency, or driving revenue growth?
- How do these objectives align with your overall corporate strategy? Is top management aligned on priorities?
- What role does digital sales play in your broader sales channel mix?

Once the overarching strategy is established, the next step is developing a focused plan. This includes:

- Determining how to better integrate online and offline buying experiences.
- Extending your value proposition into the digital environment.

Without this clarity, organisations risk creating friction before they even begin, resulting in missed opportunities and a lower return on investment.





FOCUS



2

Focused efforts & activities

– doing the right thing at the right time

The challenge in digital sales lies in focusing efforts on the initiatives that truly move the needle. Without this focus, projects can become fragmented, and competing priorities can dilute results.

Key principles for effective execution:

- **Focus on the critical few:** Prioritise the actions that drive measurable progress toward your objectives. For instance, in the early phases, focus on triggers that encourage customers to order online.
- **Adopt a test-and-learn mindset:** Continuously validate your initiatives through customer feedback and iterate based on data. Avoid waiting for perfect solutions before acting.
- **Ensure cross-functional benefits:** Align digital efforts with broader company success, benefiting not just digital teams but the entire organisation.

Every phase of the digital sales journey has unique priorities and challenges. The key is maintaining alignment with your strategic objectives to avoid overextending or losing focus.



FOCUS

3

A common vision & alignment

B2B digital sales thrive on internal alignment across the entire organisation. Success requires collaboration across departments, including sales, marketing, and IT.

To achieve this:

- **Make digital sales a shared priority:** It cannot be a secondary focus; everyone must view it as integral to business success.
- **Align incentives and KPIs:** Set clear targets beyond revenue, including profitability and customer satisfaction, and ensure all teams work towards these shared goals.
- **Embed digital sales into the broader strategy:** Digital sales should complement offline efforts and leverage existing corporate infrastructure, particularly IT systems.

When alignment is achieved, organisations can unlock faster progress and greater results.





10 questions indicate a need for change

Our experience in the field reveals several reasons why companies should re-evaluate how digital sales contribute to their overall commercial engine. Leaders in sales and digital frequently raise recurring questions and dilemmas that signal the need for deeper analysis and targeted change. These reflections often serve as indicators for where adjustments may be necessary and include questions such as:

- Are we doing enough in digital?
- Why isn't digital integrated into our overall sales strategy?
- How can digital sales help us scale efficiency without adding more salespeople?
- Have we unlocked our true profit potential from sales automation?
- Which customers is digital sales meant to serve, and have we got this right?
- Why does implementing digital sales feel so complex to get started on?
- Is our digital sales approach customer-first or company-first?
- Why does digital sales lack a clear 'organisational home', often falling into a no-man's-land between IT, Sales and Marketing?
- After everything we've done so far, what should we focus on next?

One or multiple of these questions may sound familiar. Perhaps it's time to start looking into your digital sales approach a bit more deeply.



How to **get started** – or revisit current state

So, how do I jump on this next wave of digital sales in B2B? Here are eight key steps to guide you towards digital sales success:

- 1 Assess your digital sales maturity:** Evaluate your current stage in the digital sales journey to identify strengths, gaps and opportunities to assess the need for a deeper look into accelerating your digital sales approach.
- 2 Understand the buying journey:** Map out the key moments where digital touchpoints can add the most value, from initial research to post-purchase support.
- 3 Identify your digital sales focus:** Decide whether your strategy will prioritise self-service, digitally assisted, or digitally enabled sales based on your product offering and customer base.
- 4 Develop a clear strategy:** Determine your business needs, define your objectives, and align them with your broader corporate and / or commercial strategy
- 5 Define a focused roadmap:** Define your prioritised actions and activities that will drive measurable progress towards your objectives and capture them in a clear plan.
- 6 Establish a common vision:** Create a shared vision between functions that makes digital sales a shared priority and foster a mindset that prioritises making the customer's life easier through a seamless digital experience.
- 7 Embrace a data-driven mindset:** Use data and feedback loops to constantly improve your digital sales performance
- 8 Align around shared KPIs:** This is not just a sales department's game. It's a game of all function evolved, from marketing to IT. Let's get behind a common vision on KPIs.

Takeaways

Time to become part of the revolution

Riding the next wave of digital sales

5

Are you prioritizing building the smartest digital machine?

Digital sales are no longer a nice-to-have—they are essential for staying competitive in today's B2B market. With buyers spending more than 80% of their journey without interacting with suppliers, does your investment and focus reflect this shift?⁶ Put differently, are you prioritising the biggest opportunities and building a smarter “digital sales machine” that goes beyond the extremes of low-complexity digital sales? If not, you're likely missing out on an obvious growth opportunity.

Key takeaways

- **From simple sales to strategy:**
Make a very clear link to company strategy and how digital sales is a key lever.
- **Customer-centric clarity:**
Successful companies know: You will only be able to make it easier to sell, if you make it easier for your customers to buy.
- **Insist on keeping it simple:**
Yesterday's e-commerce was straightforward. Today, digital sales may seem more complex—but it doesn't have to be.
- **Reduce noise to ensure commercial focus:**
Technology trends and internal complexities create distractions—keep focused.
- **Focus on value moments:**
Success lies in adopting a full-channel approach, centred on key customers and critical sales moments.
- **Technology is no excuse:**
The main challenge isn't technology—it's a lack of focus to unlock effective digital sales value.
- **Do the right things at the right time:**
Don't get lost in the endless possibilities of activities, focus your efforts deliberately where they matter most.
- **Make digital sales everyone's business:**
Make sure everyone knows what success looks like.



Your role as a leader in digital sales and e-commerce

As a leader, your priorities should be clear and focused on these three key jobs (in prioritised order):

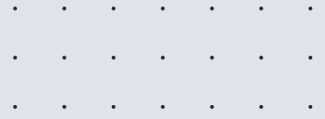
- 1. **Develop a long-term growth strategy:** Build a clear understanding of how to grow the business profitably by serving customers better than your competitors, in a way that aligns with overall company goals.
- 2. **Build the right team and processes:** Hire the right talent and establish processes that ensure you serve customers profitably and efficiently.
- 3. **Put the right technology in place:** Deploy the technology solutions that accelerate your ability to meet customer needs and grow profitably.

Whatever your standpoint may be, we hope you’ve grown smarter and made you reflect over the course of this publication—and hope for your team and company to do exactly the same.

Kvadrant Consulting

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About the authors



Carsten Pingel
Partner

✉ cap@kvadrant.dk

☎ +45 2630 3139

Carsten is an expert in commercial transformation and excellence. With more than 15 years of corporate and consulting leadership experience, his functional focus in Kvadrant lies on commercial strategy, e-commerce and digital sales for B2B & B2C companies and value realisation on behalf of private equity and strategic investors.



Martijn Kemmeren
Senior Manager

✉ mke@kvadrant.dk

☎ +45 4041 0709

Martijn is a Senior Manager and consultant with demonstrated experience in marketing transformation, go-to-market excellence, and commercial transaction services for companies and investment funds with portfolios operating in complex buying environments.





Grow smarter