SAP® Sales Cloud

E-Book

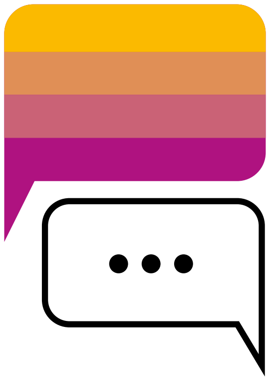
Change the sales rep experience, improve the customer experience.

THE BEST RUN SAP

There's no question: We live in an age when everything is at our fingertips through mobile devices, Amazon-style ease-of-use and lightning-fast technology. In 2018, **seamless convenience** is a consumer expectation.

That same expectation has seeped into the arena of business-to-business buying experiences.

So ask yourself, has your organisation evolved at pace? When your customers engage with your salespeople, are their expectations met? Are you providing value to every exchange? Are your reps set up for success, and set up to sell quickly after they onboard or change territories? Do you provide your reps with the tools they need to be efficient and effective? If you answered "no" to any of these questions, read on.



Fixing the Sales Experience

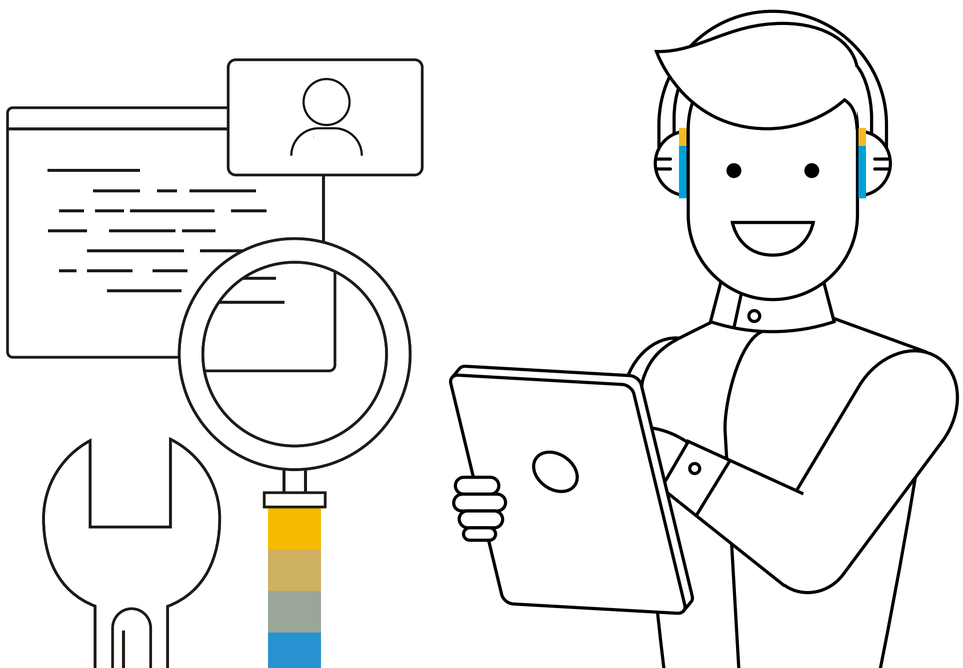
Revamping a process as critical as the sales cycle requires a concerted and collaborative effort from several departments—and a load of advance planning—to hit the ground running.

Currently, individual elements of the sales process are often managed by different departments, which employ cumbersome, slow and often manual methods. At the centre of the sales process is the CRM, but the traditional CRM hasn't kept pace with the changing climate of the buying process.

Let's consider the primary goal: to help sales close deals as effectively and quickly as possible. In practice, this means setting strategic priorities, and using intelligent technologies and tools to gather accurate, timely data in order to provide real-time, next-best actions for sales reps. Only by generating the right insights will outcomes be effective.

In every organisation, five main processes are usually occurring simultaneously, but often disjointedly: **customer management, pipeline and forecast management, sales enablement and training, quote And proposal management, and compensation and incentives structuring.**

This e-book will cover each of the five areas and the ways they need to **evolve and streamline**.



Customer Management

The first CRM launch truly changed the way sales were managed. We went from tracking customers on spreadsheets (and even in rolodexes) to tracking them and their attendant opportunities with software. It wasn't long before reps started to feel the purpose of a CRM was more about preserving their contacts for their replacement than it was about making their lives easier. After all, back then it wasn't much easier than updating a rolodex!

But the CRM is not just about managing contacts so the next rep can take over. It should be the core of the sales rep experience.

CURRENT

Traditional CRM applications are passive. They rely heavily on reps manually entering information. How many of your reps are disciplined about updating your CRM with activity, notes and opportunity statuses? Maybe 10%? The problem here is that even if reps are disciplined enough to enter information, there's little to no value being returned to the overall sales organisation.

While the CRM has evolved to support and integrate with other sales process tools in an attempt to deliver value to the sales rep, the experience is lacking. Disconnected sales tools attempt to create a complete customer view, but lack the intelligence to analyse the collective data. That leaves reps scrolling through account, contact and opportunity records to piece together the puzzle of the customer.

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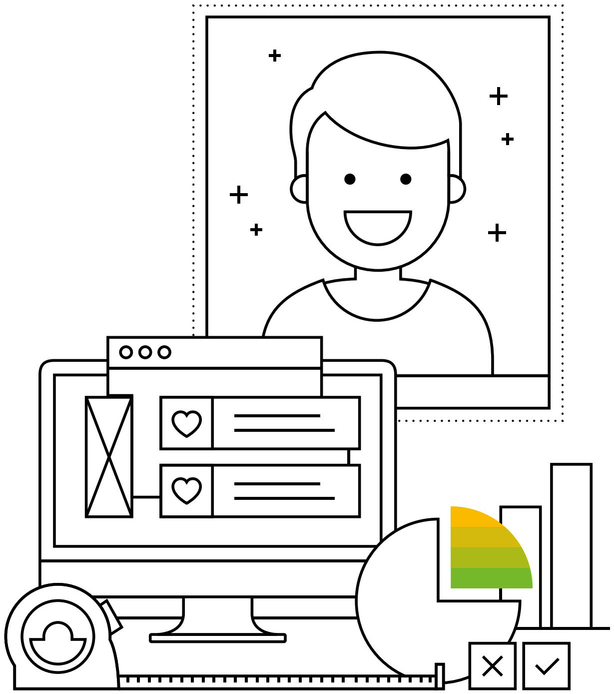
The CRM should be the central nervous system of the sales rep's day-to-day work experience, sending and receiving signals from the various applications the rep and other functions within the organisation use daily. This intelligent, automatic transmission of signals creates a complete view of every customer and every opportunity.

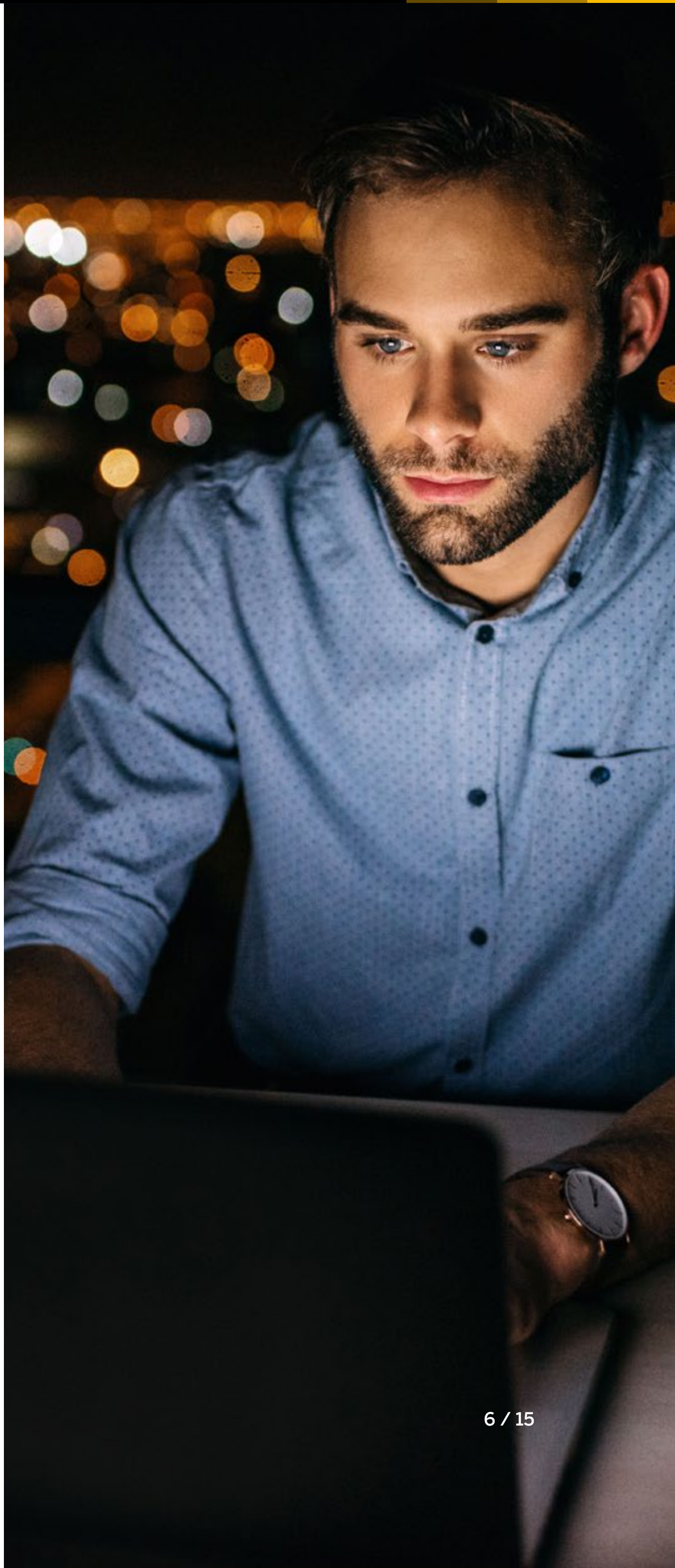
Imagine your reps opening their CRM and immediately seeing everything they need in a single view: Their hottest leads, along with the points they visited on your website, what solutions they currently use, what other solutions they've tried and what engagements they've had with your organisation. AI makes recommendations to your sales reps to augment their art of selling. All of this helps your reps become trusted advisors to your customers.



Pipeline and Forecast Management

Forecasting is critical to the sales process and its effects are visible to sales leadership, company leadership and even investors. Failure to accurately forecast can reverberate throughout the entire organisation. But most leaders don't have confidence in the accuracy of their forecasts.

At the heart of accurate forecasting is pipeline management. The pipeline gives visibility to the deals on the short- and long-term horizon. It's what sales uses to determine its forecast, to "call it".
Companies that forecast better are much more likely to hit their targets and drive the behaviour they want from their reps.



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Technology often isn't giving sales managers the visibility they need into their pipeline, sales activities and results. Where does the information come from? Again, it comes from sales reps entering the information into the CRM. We already know that many reps fail to enter that data. But the forecast process must happen. So how does that usually work? The sales manager and the sales rep meet to review the deals in the pipeline and negotiate which of those are forecastable based on the sales rep's gut instinct. The sales manager then has to decide if he or she trusts the rep's gut instinct, based on his or her own gut instinct. And then the whole process repeats when the sales manager meets with sales leadership.

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Imagine the forecast and pipeline review meetings between sales rep and manager as less of an interrogation session, and more of a coaching session to help the rep improve. Envision a CRM that provides powerful insights into sales forecasts with a prediction of the likelihood of success in a sales cycle based on signals received from the rep's e-mail, customer engagement, sales quote status and historical performance.

Imagine a CRM that offers rich visualisations to show what's changing in the forecast, in real-time—enabling your managers to coach their teams on the best next steps in their deals to increase close rates and speed up cycles. All without manual entry. Yet your sales reps and managers can still apply their knowledge of a deal to override the prediction. Imagine a CRM that combines human insight with machine intelligence.

Sales Enablement

Once a lead's been handed off, what's your reps' modus operandi? Are they left to their own devices, or is there a defined roadmap they're expected to follow? Are they trained on specific knowledge, products and positioning? Do they have easy access to the right materials and messaging?

Sales enablement is defined as all of the tools provided to sales to support their **selling efforts**. Best-in-class organisations often adopt sales processes that are repeatable, measurable, predictable and scalable. Then they train their reps to follow those processes.

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Most companies don't adequately train their reps on a formal sales process. Without one, reps lack the guidance to steer prospects through the different stages of the selling process. This can result in mishandling the customer and missing opportunities to convey crucial information, value points and collateral. It can also result in reps missing training on key knowledge, hampering their ability to truly understand the product they're selling.

While training sessions can instil the semblance of a process, these teachings are not enforced, and the sessions themselves don't occur often enough to drive the process home. In the end, reps may improvise with impromptu tactics, which are hit or miss, chance-based and totally inefficient.

Coaching, another aspect of sales enablement, is often ineffective as well. It's the job of managers to identify their reps' weaknesses and guide them towards successful selling practices. But coaching usually veers towards being only reactive. The only time most reps are given feedback is during their review, when it's already too late to make changes. This leads to dissatisfaction with the coaching process because reps feel their managers don't have the facts to back up the coaching.

And due to the lack of information, most coaching sessions focus only on reductionist, backwards-looking metrics such as quota, as opposed to real-time key performance indicators, thus distorting the original intent of coaching.

Finally, day-to-day, many reps struggle to locate pertinent collateral because it's scattered throughout various systems. This wastes time—your reps' time, and ultimately, your customers' time.

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Technology has produced new and novel ways to address these sales enablement pain points. A significant shift should occur in the way key information is made available. A relatively simple fix is to set up sales enablement portals. By combining all the documentation and content needed to guide the rep through the sales process in one dedicated area, much of the improvisation and disjointedness is fixed.

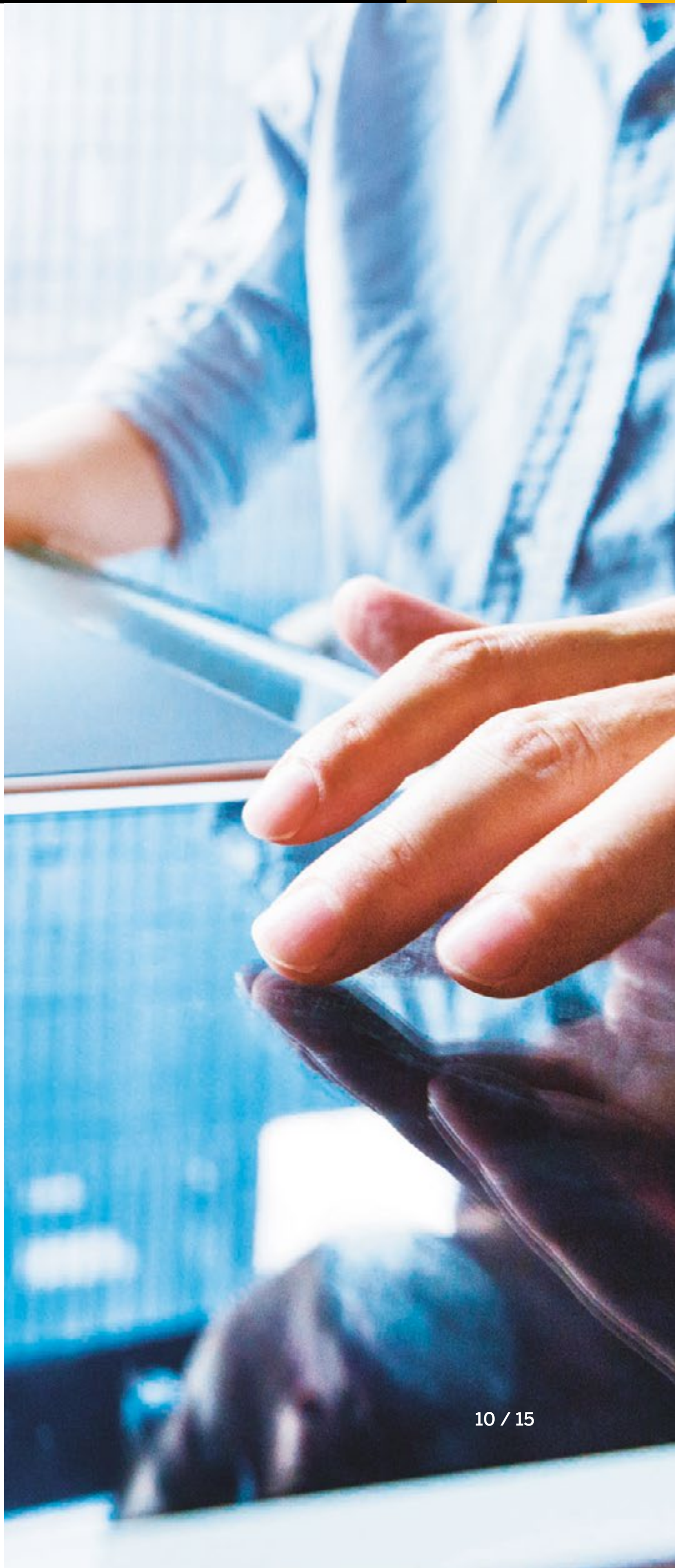
Despite its traditional inefficiencies, training can be an effective way to teach reps about products, positioning, technique and more. But the process needs to shift from the physical classroom-like training to a digital model. By receiving regular, online training sessions, reps can get up-to-date knowledge easily, even when they're on the road. This seamless and flexible learning environment leads to a naturally higher retention of information, as well as increased user satisfaction and productivity.

On an individual basis, managers armed with real-time data about their reps' progress, can conduct periodic coaching sessions that are focused on actual improvement. Constructive coaching uses real data to shed light on the current state of a rep's progress, and focuses ahead to help foster an atmosphere of proactive improvement.

Proposals and Pricing

The request for a proposal means the end of the sales cycle is near. The rep has worked the lead and been successful due to solid enablement. But reps aren't quite off the hook yet. Quotes can be extremely convoluted, and building them is a struggle in time and resource management.

Complicated product configurations shouldn't slow down the process. Nor should the "human element"— manager or finance approval.



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Proposals and pricing are other areas where haphazard is often the operating method. The reasons abound. When pricing sheets are manually updated, they're prone to error, often out-of-date and inconsistent. Furthermore, as product and service configurations become increasingly complicated, so many deliverables or line items show up on the proposal that the rep may need the help of multiple departments to fill it out, followed by the approval of each. Then, when deals are near closing, reps may throw in unplanned discounting. These erratic deductions eat into margins. Finally, most reps have a difficult time drawing the line on when to take a sales loss, even when the deal becomes unprofitable for the company.

All of these issues impede the final stages of the sales process. It can take days, or weeks, to get a proposal together because it becomes mired in pricing limbo.

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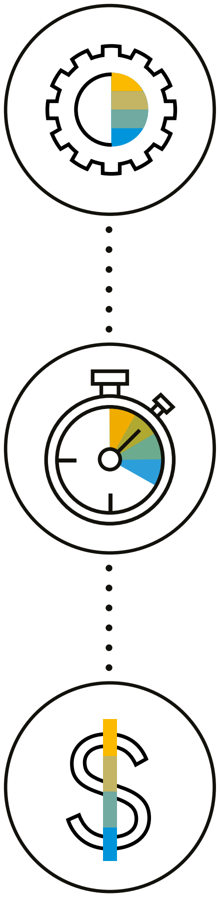
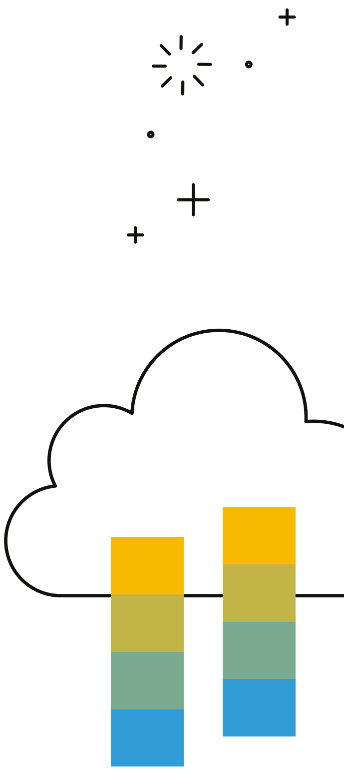
The proposal process, like the entire sales process, should just be another set of methodologies handled by intelligent technology. The result is a system that's seamless, automated and easy to update, and guides your reps through the configuration and pricing process. And it's much faster; you'll see a sharp decrease in the time it takes to develop a proposal, therefore quickening the entire sales cycle.

An intelligent CPQ (Configure Price Quote technology) will safeguard margins by establishing discounting "guardrails". This might translate to pre-approved discount guidelines and limits. Reps are kept informed of special pricing and compensation promotions. Finally, your reps' quoting process is made easier with pricing recommendations or even up-sell and cross-sell recommendations based on historical performance and other parameters. Your reps will leave less money on the table.





Incentives and Compensation

Once the sale closes, the rep expects to be rewarded for his or her work. After all, monetary incentives are the main reason salespeople work as hard as they do. This competitive drive is a powerful tool if aligned with company goals and should be handled with due consideration. But all too often, the sales compensation arena is complex, reflecting the many kinds of reps—inside, outside, presale, overlay, partners, etc.—that companies hire. This makes calculating and tracking payments very difficult. Many companies have little to no confidence in these manual calculations.

This lack of confidence suggests that calculation errors are expected and even assumed—but no company should have to settle for them.

CURRENT

Salespeople work hard to meet their quotas and expect their incentive payments to fairly reflect this effort. Unfortunately, commissions are not usually so straightforward. Increasingly complicated compensation methods lead to demotivated and disgruntled sales reps. That dissatisfaction spills into the culture of the sales team and eventually can reflect in your reps' interactions with customers.

In this scenario, reps raise more disputes and engage in shadow accounting, privately calculating their incentive payments to ensure that it matches what they were actually paid. Obviously, this is not a productive use of time.

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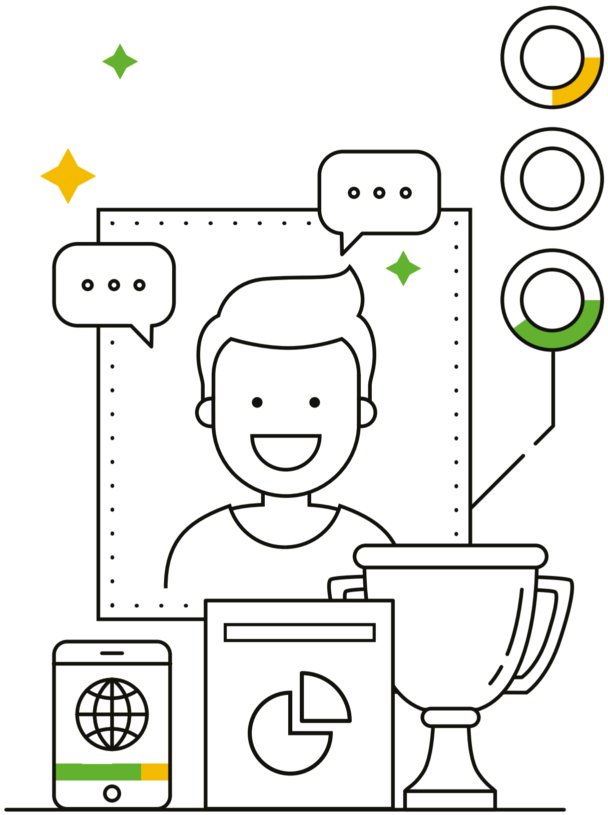
It's important that your sales reps get the assurance that their compensation is protected. Happy reps are more efficient and sell more. How does this translate into a working model? First, by revamping the compensation system so that it's transparent and streamlined. Reps should be able to explain how their compensation is calculated, regardless of the complexity of the commission plan. This could mean simplifying the incentives structure and removing layers and clauses that cause confusion.

It also means making use of technology to centralise the payment process. The system should track all the different streams of data, calculate and sign-on compensation – and then automate payments to ensure timely delivery. Accuracy, speed and agility will all see an uptick. These improvements also make modelling plan changes much easier, therefore allowing management to optimise its incentives structures to align with changing company goals.



Conclusion

The synergy of the sales, marketing and finance teams is what streamlines the overall sales process. Helping sales to win more deals, for more money, faster. The technology to tighten that synergy is here.

But let's not forget that each area we mentioned in this e-book reflects an entire process. That's five whole methodologies that need to be updated and streamlined. Clearly, the undertaking is not for the faint of heart. **But let's also not forget the main goal is to improve your sales rep's day-to-day experience, which will lead to happier customer experiences.**

SAP® Sales Cloud

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