

DATA-DRIVEN SALES:

USING REPORTS AND DASHBOARDS
TO GIVE YOURSELF AN EDGE



sales cloud

Introduction

There's no doubt that we are living in the quantified era.

Terms like “big data” and “analytics” are being thrown around in every industry and for every job function. All this data holds a lot of promise for today’s business professionals. The promise of improved accuracy, the prospect of increased efficiency, and the dream of improved efficacy are all on the minds of today’s modern professionals as they rush to embrace this new data-driven era. At the forefront of this clamoring for more data is the sales organization. At the end of the day, it is the sales team that keeps any organization in business, and it is with the sales team that companies should look to leverage data first.

However, many companies don’t know where to start when looking to incorporate data into their sales operations. With customer relationship management tools like Salesforce tracking every account, analytics tools tracking every touchpoint and interaction, and existing customer data streaming in, access to data is no longer the issue. Finding the meaningful insights through all this data noise is now the real success metric for today’s organizations, and reports, dashboards, and forecasting are the way to achieve it.

This e-book will examine just how the right reports, dashboards, and sales forecasting can help dramatically improve your sales performance and help you to fully embrace the era of big data.

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Chapter 1

Better Visibility, Better Performance

According to Google CEO Eric Schmidt, every two days, we create as much information as we did in the period spanning the dawn of civilization until 2003. That's nearly five exabytes of data, he says.

Finding the signal through the noise

It's clear that the issue for sales teams is no longer having access to data, but having access to too much data. A CRM solution like Salesforce helps a sales team stay on top of just about everything. With a CRM solution, you have records for each one of your leads. These records contain all relevant information about each prospect's recent activity and your sales team's interactions with that person. All of this data and all of these records add up to one complete view of your sales process with stunning detail.

For a sales professional who is enthusiastic about data, opportunities to engage with rich, new information are virtually infinite. Deal status, pipeline performance, geographic performance, market segment breakdown, individual rep performance — the list goes on and on. However, all this data can decrease visibility into what matters most. Dashboards, reports, and sales forecasting allow sales teams to find the meaningful signals in all that data noise and make the decisions that matter most.



Measure progress, not results.

In addition to adding clarity, reports and dashboards can make a sales team ultra-responsive. Most sales organizations are results-driven. While this may seem like a good way to monitor success, results have one major flaw: They are not actionable. Once results are final, there is nothing you can do to impact or influence them. If you're trying to lose weight, weighing yourself once at the beginning of the month and once at the end of the month won't be very helpful. You'll have no idea if you're headed in the right direction — and hence no idea if you should be watching your diet more closely or exercising more frequently.

The real ability to effect change comes from monitoring progress, not just results. Sales teams must be able to understand at a glance, at any point in the sales cycle, how their teams are progressing toward their goals. A CRM solution like Salesforce gives teams the ability to create dashboards that provide immediate insights into how many deals are in the pipeline, where prospects are in the sales cycle, and exactly how long they've been there. These kinds of insights allow sales reps to identify problems before they arise and make corrections to a deal that may be stalling in the pipeline.

This insight into progress also makes your data actionable, which in turn makes your sales managers and their teams ultra-responsive. This means faster response times, a better selling experience for the buyer, and more revenue for your company.



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Customer Spotlight:

Advanceit

Advanceit is Canada's leading merchant cash advance provider. Advanceit decided to move forward with Sales Cloud during their CRM implementation. They have since seen a 35% year-to-year growth, propelling them into a new world of efficiency and customer service.

35%

year-to-year growth since implementing Salesforce

20%

increase in inside sales reps productivity using Sales Console

“We wouldn't be in business without Salesforce.”

-Peter Mazoff
President, Advanceit

Chapter 2

Reports and Dashboards

The wealth of information Salesforce puts at your fingertips — ranging from real-time snapshots of your business to yearly summaries — is one of the reasons our customers are so successful. In fact, an independent survey of more than 4,000 customers found that customers were able to cut the time needed to prepare reports by an average of 52%. By always knowing where you stand, you can spot trends early and make the best decisions for your business. Dashboards are by far the best tools for providing these insights on the fly.

Dashboards that drive revenue, not just track it.

Dashboards are an essential tool for making the data that really matters accessible to those that need it. They also allow your team to align around similar objectives, track success in the same ways, and focus on moving the same needles. Before we dive in, let's first start with a definition.

What's a dashboard? A dashboard is a single screen that tracks a number of key metrics in real time. They can take many forms and perform many functions, but their core purpose is to provide access to relevant data at a glance, in a way that is easy to understand. Pretty simple, right?



So why are dashboards so important? Dashboards align your entire sales and marketing organization around the metrics you most need to track. With a well-designed dashboard, you can see:

- Sales KPIs (win rate, revenue, activities, etc.)
- Whether you're attracting enough leads
- How they're progressing through the sales cycle
- How successfully you're converting them
- Where the revenue is coming from
- How your campaigns and salespeople are performing

If it sounds complicated, fear not. Salesforce makes building dashboards easy for anyone, regardless of technological skill. All the data you access every day in your CRM solution can be dashboarded. In short, if you can measure it, you can get it on a dashboard. A great dashboard is one that your sales and marketing people live inside. Great dashboards are open on screens all the time. Everyone refers to them. The most important meetings happen around them. The critical reports feed into them. A great dashboard helps streamline, automate, and accelerate the entire sales and marketing operation. Salesforce also offers additional functionality to take your dashboards up a notch. For example, dashboards are powered by Salesforce reports, which means they are not just static images on your performance. That means you

can click on just about anything and drill down to the underlying reports, data, and customer profiles. If you spot an anomaly or point of interest in your dashboard, it takes seconds for you to click through and discover its source. This functionality means that the dashboard data is not just helpful, but actionable.

With social functionality built right in, Salesforce dashboards are also the center of collaboration for the entire sales and marketing team. Social turns your dashboards into collaboration engines. It's like having your company's own internal Facebook platform built into your dashboard. So people can follow a metric or an activity, share it with other team members, comment on it, or open a conversation around it. This may sound like a bell or a whistle — but in reality, it's hugely powerful. Great dashboards are active collaboration platforms.

And finally, Salesforce dashboards can be accessed effortlessly on the Salesforce1 Mobile App. Dashboards are too important to lock to the desktop. You need to be able to access your dashboard wherever you are. If you've created the perfect dashboard on your desktop, it will appear automatically on your phone, formatted, and optimized to make viewing easy — so you can take action from wherever you are.



“With social functionality built right in, Salesforce dashboards are also the center of collaboration for the entire sales and marketing team.”

Reports that demystify performance

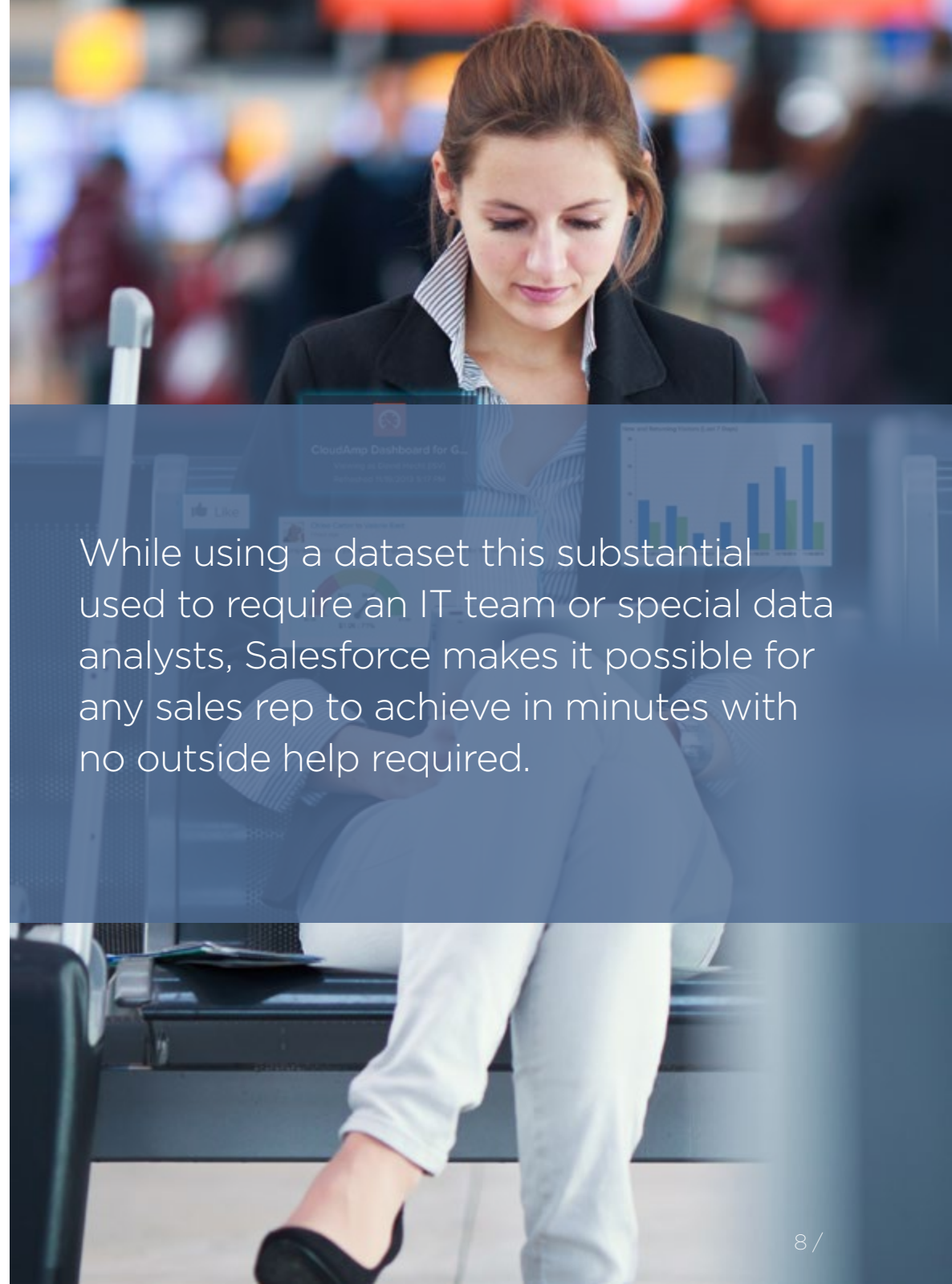
As we mentioned before, dashboards may be the flashy, beautiful manifestation of your team's most valuable data, but it is the power of Salesforce reports that supports them on the back end. Your CRM solution generates a tremendous amount of data every day. This means thousands upon thousands of rows of data. When you're looking for actionable information, all this data does you little good. Fortunately, Salesforce reports allow you to sort this data quickly and easily to find the information you care about most.

Think of reports as different lenses through which you can view your data. If you're looking for a report of last month's activities, you can filter by time, and exclude all activities but your own — and voila, all the information you need is at your fingertips. You can save this as a report and access it whenever you want. Your reports will automatically sync and update with the new data you generate every day.

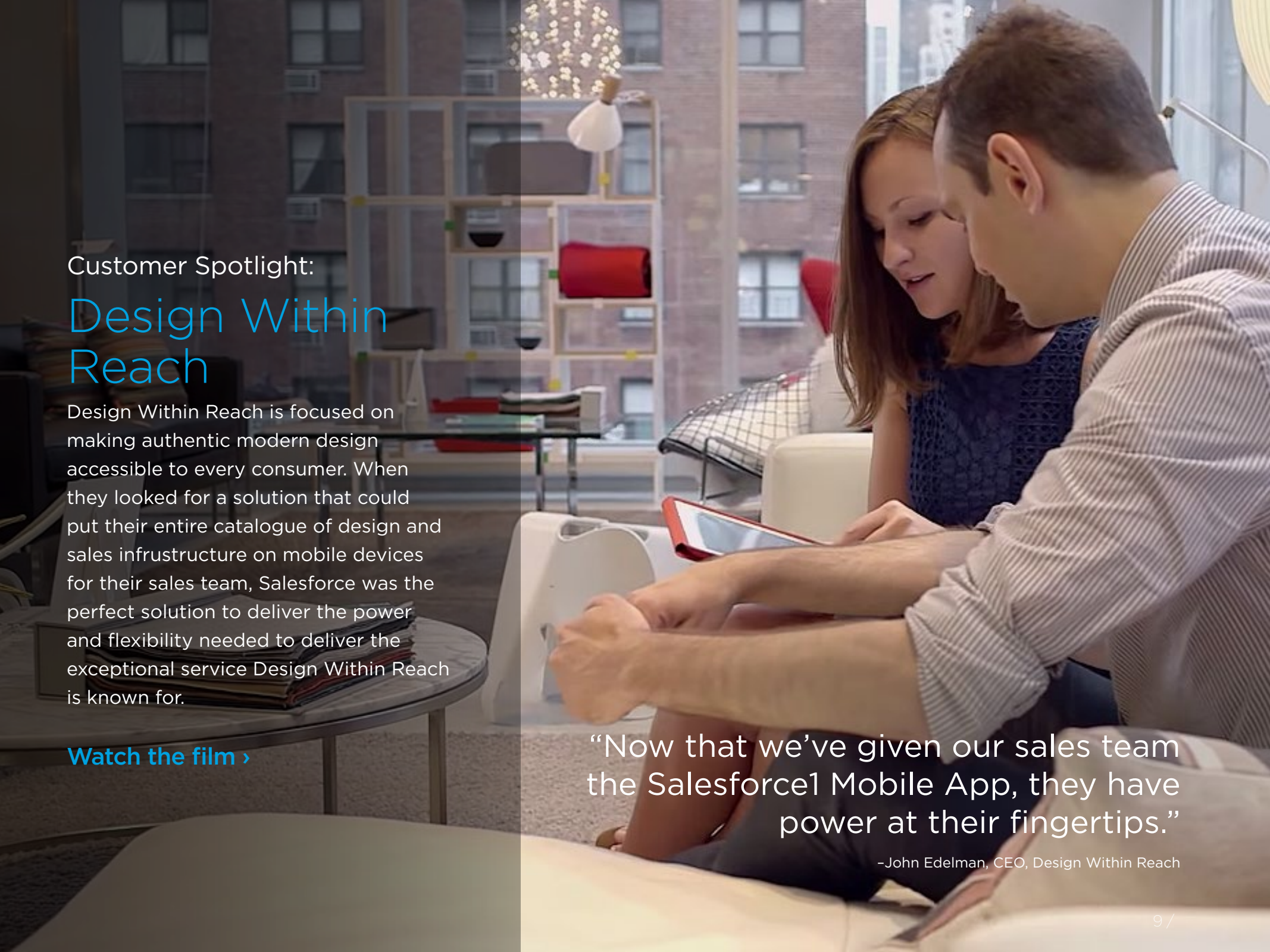
While using a dataset this substantial used to require an IT team or special data analysts, Salesforce makes it possible for any sales rep to achieve in minutes with no outside help required. The reporting interface is intuitive, familiar, and functional. There is no longer an excuse to avoid using data in your sales operations. Start putting that data to work and become a data-driven sales hero.

See even more resources for improving your sales: Visit the [Salesforce Resource Center](#).

[VISIT NOW](#)



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A man and a woman are sitting on a white sofa in a modern office or living space. The man, wearing a striped shirt, is pointing at a tablet held by the woman, who is wearing a blue top. They are both looking at the screen with interest. In the background, there is a white shelving unit with various items, a lamp, and large windows showing a cityscape.

Customer Spotlight:

Design Within Reach

Design Within Reach is focused on making authentic modern design accessible to every consumer. When they looked for a solution that could put their entire catalogue of design and sales infrastructure on mobile devices for their sales team, Salesforce was the perfect solution to deliver the power and flexibility needed to deliver the exceptional service Design Within Reach is known for.

[Watch the film >](#)

“Now that we’ve given our sales team the Salesforce1 Mobile App, they have power at their fingertips.”

-John Edelman, CEO, Design Within Reach

Chapter 3

Sales Forecasting

The usefulness of sales forecasts have always been iffy at best. Sales professionals would merely look at their list of prospects, and make their best guess of how many would move to close in the next quarter. This process is not very scientific and can make it incredibly difficult for sales managers to guide, advise, or direct their teams.

However, with added visibility to the sales process and more data comes added sophistication to sales forecasting. Once sales managers understand the stages of the sales process, the velocity at which leads move through the funnel, and the relative rate of close, forecasting becomes far more scientific. This sophistication makes it easier to make accurate, meaningful predictions of sales performance. It also makes it easier for your sales leaders to guide behavior such as prospecting to support their overall goals. This means forecasts hold more weight and the rest of the organization can lean on your predictions more heavily when planning for the year.

Easier and more powerful

Salesforce makes it easy for sales managers to develop forecasts for the whole team. Where it once used to take a week for managers to plan and implement forecasts, Salesforce can help develop forecasts in minutes. Forecasts can also include adjustments made by forecast managers

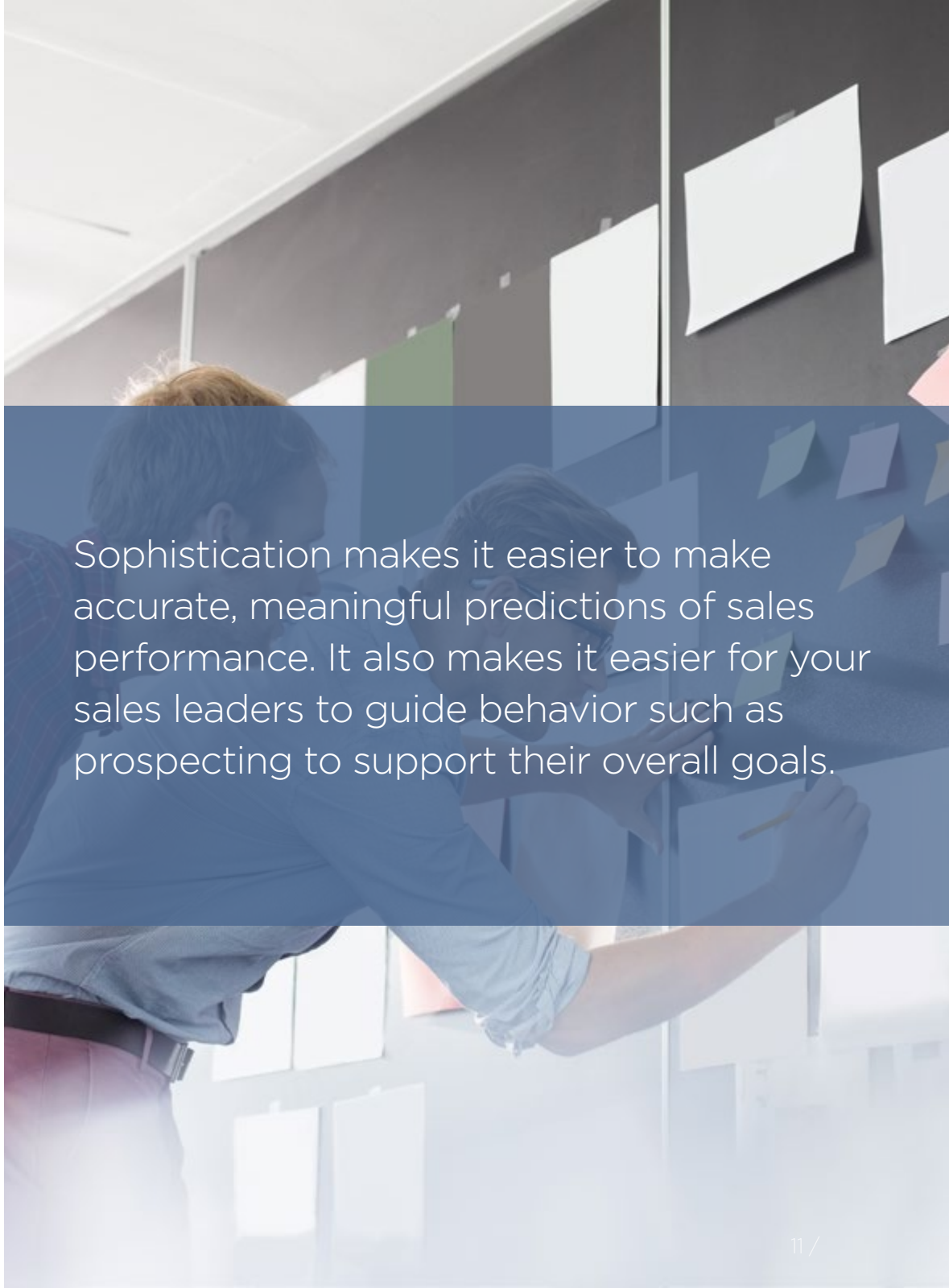


to their immediate subordinates' forecasts as well as adjustments made by forecast users to their own forecast amounts. This makes the process more fluid, collaborative, and ultimately more accurate.

A sales manager can also enable up to four different types of forecasts for your organization simultaneously, depending on your needs. For example, you might want to forecast on revenue from opportunities as well as quantities by product family. You can switch between forecast types by clicking the forecast name and choosing another forecast from the popup menu. Each type of forecast stores its own separate quota and adjustment data.

Users can also view forecasts and their related opportunities by forecast category for an individual or for everyone below them in the forecast hierarchy. For example, they can see the July "Best Case" forecast for all the sales managers who report to them, all the sales reps who report to any one of their managers, or just one individual. Users can also adjust their own forecasts and the forecasts of subordinates one level beneath them. The user interface makes it simple to conduct status calls with an opportunity team because users can move around it with ease.

The flexibility of Collaborative Forecasts and the ease of use turns sales forecasting from a dreaded activity to an indispensable, data-driven sales tool.



Sophistication makes it easier to make accurate, meaningful predictions of sales performance. It also makes it easier for your sales leaders to guide behavior such as prospecting to support their overall goals.



Conclusion

Sales has long been a “go-with-your-gut” type profession, but that is changing fast. The big data revolution and increase in competition have become driving forces for a new kind of sales. Today’s most successful reps are supported by solid reporting and powered by insightful dashboards. They rely on data-driven forecasts for planning and performance evaluation.

They are surrounded by data at every step. With the help of a CRM solution like Salesforce, sales teams are able to harness this data as a powerful weapon while the competition is still struggling to put all their information to use.

SALES SOLUTIONS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR BUSINESS MORE PRODUCTIVE

If you want to grow your sales and establish a transparent sales process, you need an easy-to-use customer relationship management system. Salesforce allows you to store customer and prospect contact information, accounts, leads, and sales opportunities in one central location.

[Learn more ›](#)

32% Improvement in win rate

40% Increased sales productivity

32% Increase in sales revenue



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