

# Magic Quadrant for Sales Force Automation

Published 4 August 2021 - ID G00733926 - 51 min read

By Adnan Zijadic, Ilona Hansen, **and 2 more**

---

The sales force automation market grew 10.9% to an estimated \$8.15 billion in 2020. Vendors improved guided selling, activity management and overall platform capabilities. Our evaluation of 16 vendors will help application leaders choose the solution that best meets their sales execution needs.

## Market Definition/Description

Gartner defines sales force automation (SFA) as systems that support the automation of sales activities, processes and administrative responsibilities for organizations' sales professionals. Gartner considers SFA to be foundational technology, implemented to automate an organization's core sales processes.

The core capabilities of SFA systems include:

- Lead, account, contact and opportunity management
- Sales activity management
- Guided selling
- Sales pipeline and forecast management
- Mobile sales applications
- Reporting
- Partner relationship management (PRM)
- Platform capabilities

Optional capabilities include:

- Digital content management for sales
- Configure, price and quote (CPQ)

## Magic Quadrant

**Figure 1: Magic Quadrant for Sales Force Automation**

Source: Gartner (August 2021)



## Vendor Strengths and Cautions

### Creatio

Creatio returns as a Leader in this Magic Quadrant on the basis of product capabilities and innovation. Its SFA product, Sales Creatio, is best suited to midsize and large enterprises ranging from 200 employees to more than 2,500 employees. It also supports complex global deployments. Sales Creatio can support a wide range of sales processes due to its low-code/no-code platform abilities and business process management (BPM) engine. Most notably, Creatio's product releases include low-code AI models for next best action and out-of-the-box AI for contact and account recommendations. The vendor's roadmap includes a focus on digital selling experiences, such as providing omnichannel connectors and augmented reality/virtual reality (AR/VR) integration with mobile.

### Strengths

- **Artificial intelligence:** Creatio has released notable capabilities to support out-of-the-box AI functionality. These include the ability for users to use preconfigured machine learning (ML) models to score any object in the application for use in predictive analytics and AI conversational analytics.

- **Innovation:** Over the past year, Creatio has delivered meaningful product innovation to support multiexperience selling such as AR/VR integration, omnichannel connectors and sales cadences.
- **Market responsiveness:** Creatio has delivered a comparatively high number of product enhancements that have arisen from customer requests. These afford sales organizations the ability to influence continuous improvements to their sales capabilities and roadmaps.

#### Cautions

- **Sales strategy:** Compared with Leaders in this Magic Quadrant, Creatio does not target small businesses, and does not distinguish between its approach to selling to midsize clients and enterprise clients. This is important for sales organizations to understand, as it can have implications for the various needs of these different market segments.
- **Forecasting functionality:** Sales organizations requiring the ability to do complex sales forecasting may find Creatio's solution difficult to use. It demands a high degree of manual dexterity in order to work with calculations and manipulate forecasts inside the existing application.
- **Application ecosystem:** Creatio has very few sales-specific applications when compared with other Leaders. It has approximately 187 sales-compatible apps built by independent software vendors (ISVs), of which 70 are sales specific.

#### **CRMNEXT**

CRMNEXT returns as a Challenger. Its SFA product is aimed at all sizes of enterprises in financial services, insurance and life sciences, but has a particular forte for meeting very large enterprise needs. CRMNEXT is best suited for complex B2C relationships, but also supports B2B and indirect channel sales. Over the past year, the company has invested considerably to support digital selling environments such as AI models for smart work prioritization, real-time nudges and alerts, and an advanced playbook designer. CRMNEXT's roadmap includes advancing its AI priorities, such as releasing out-of-the-box, industry-specific prediction models.

#### Strengths

- **Pipeline management:** CRMNEXT's Catalyst Performance Modeler, which is part of its SFA offering, is an effective sales planning and forecasting tool. Its intelligent algorithms take past performance and current run rates into account to create strategies for meeting targets. CRMNEXT can support a high degree of sales process complexity, with AI and ML models with no code required.
- **Reporting:** CRMNEXT comes with "what if" analysis capabilities, which allow for moving opportunities between quarters to switch among different sales quota scenarios. Customers value this flexibility for pipeline management and forecasting.
- **Functionalities:** CRMNEXT provides drag-and-drop capabilities to create processes and workflows, and processing to core systems. Customers can leverage automation to reduce account opening time, deliver expedient product fulfillment and eliminate manual tasks. Guided next-best-action prompts and call scripts support efficiency.

#### Cautions

- **Lack of services:** Clients have reported to Gartner CRMNEXT's lack of continued assignment of professional services, and also delayed technical support for their projects. CRMNEXT experts were either not available or delayed significantly in delivering requested support to customers. In some cases, the vendor delivered support via nonexperts, which deferred customer projects significantly.
- **Limited ISVs:** CRMNEXT does not provide a marketplace for filling in, complementing or extending its own functionalities. Customers need to know that they cannot adopt complementary applications, add-ons or extensions through a marketplace.
- **Limited industries:** CRMNEXT is well-established in financial services, banking, insurances and life-science industries, but has limited visibility in other sectors. Customers outside of these industries need to carefully assess CRMNEXT's vision and strategy to test its adaptability for their purpose.

## **Freshworks**

Freshworks remains a Niche Player. Its product, Freshworks CRM (formerly Freshsales), is primarily aimed at organizations with 50 to 500+ employees. SFA capabilities include account and contact management, opportunity management, pipeline and forecast management, and reporting. Freshworks CRM has deployments worldwide. It is hosted on Amazon Web Services (AWS) infrastructure. Organizations will find the product suitable for basic to moderately complex sales processes. Notable improvements to Freshworks CRM include touchless creation of leads or contacts from email, chatbot support for customers and sellers, new forecast and quota management functionality, and voice data entry.

### **Strengths**

- **Product strategy:** Freshworks has broadened its range of native SFA functions in response to customer needs by adding contact health scoring, forecast management and voice data entry. It has also integrated Freshworks CRM with Freshservice and the Neo reporting platform to offer users a unified customer view. Furthermore, the acquisition of customer success management vendor Natero will help with postsale customer success and 360-degree visibility.
- **Sales execution:** In 2020, Freshworks had among the highest customer acquisition rates of all evaluated vendors. This is important for sales organizations to consider as the vendor increases its brand awareness and global reach.
- **Market responsiveness:** Freshworks has delivered quality enhancements in the last year, including a new reporting platform, a CPQ engine, a forecasting module and lead generation chatbots. It has also delivered frequent updates, averaging more than one release per month.

### **Cautions**

- **Forecasting:** Compared with other vendors in this Magic Quadrant, Freshworks' forecasting functionality is only included in the highest edition of the product package, not as a core feature of the SFA solution unanimously. Furthermore, it also lacks the scope and depth possessed by leading vendor solutions, such as the ability to create custom forecast categories and assigning quotas on a product basis.

- **Product functionality:** Freshworks' account, contact and opportunity management features are limited compared with other vendors, and best suited for less-complex sales processes. In particular, in terms of its ability to manage account hierarchies, integrate with third-party data services, and maintain contact relationships and relationship intelligence, Freshworks does not perform as well as other vendors in this Magic Quadrant.
- **Retention:** Freshworks encountered a relatively high level of customer churn in 2020, relative to other vendors in the Magic Quadrant. This is a consideration for sales organizations that want to prioritize a vendor with a longer tenure of customers.

## HubSpot

HubSpot is a new entrant to this Magic Quadrant and is a Niche Player. HubSpot provides CRM applications spanning marketing, sales and customer services. Its SFA product is called Sales Hub. HubSpot sells mainly to small and midsize organizations in the U.S., followed by EMEA, Asia/Pacific and LATAM. Sales Hub is delivered as a SaaS product and is hosted over AWS in the U.S. and Google Cloud Platform (GCP) in Europe. In the past 12 months, HubSpot has released account-based marketing (ABM) features for sales, improved its cadence tracking functionalities and has added a new forecasting tool. HubSpot's roadmap includes conversational intelligence, customization features and adding a sandbox testing environment.

### Strengths

- **Appealing user interface (UI):** Sales Hub comes with a straightforward, easy-to-learn UI. The interface is designed for intuitive navigation, allowing sales users to perform tasks efficiently, but is also able to review multiple data points easily.
- **Marketing in sales:** Sales Hub informs sales reps if a customer has opened emails, or has visited or submitted forms on HubSpot-hosted websites, and views or shares sales collateral uploaded via HubSpot. This functionality is normally only seen in marketing technologies, but highly appreciated by sales for managing better customer engagement.
- **Customer service:** HubSpot provides 24/7 customer support by live chat or email. Customers on HubSpot's Professional or Enterprise license also have access to help desks over the phone.

### Cautions

- **Data synchronization:** Accounts created by HubSpot based on domains and contacts are based on email only, and cannot be extended by other values. This makes it difficult for customers to identify duplicate accounts and contacts.
- **Lacking customization options:** Sales Hub comes with limited possibilities for customization. B2B customers with particular, lengthy and complex sales cycles need to assess HubSpot's customization options.
- **Market understanding:** HubSpot's value proposition hinges on a unified HubSpot experience. Customers operating in a mature sales technology environment might expect Sales Hub to be easy to integrate into their complex environment with non-HubSpot technologies, which is not pronounced by the vendor. HubSpot differentiators are based on delivering a native application ecosystem, progressive

pricing and a strong ecosystem. But customers expecting to hear about capabilities distinguishable from other SFA vendors might be disappointed.

## Insightly

Insightly remains a Niche Player. Insightly CRM includes capabilities for sales, lead management, project management and custom process design in a single SaaS offering. Insightly CRM is aimed at small and midsize B2B sales organizations, particularly those in the professional services sector. Insightly targets customers primarily in North America and Europe. In the past year, it has introduced AppConnect, allowing customers to integrate Insightly CRM with other enterprise applications. Automated quote generation has also been added. Notable planned improvements include AI-based lead scoring and campaign attribution analysis.

### Strengths

- **Product offering:** Insightly's lead management, reporting capabilities and integration features are well-aligned with the needs of small and midsize selling organizations. Full audit logging of data changes enables users to draw more insight from opportunity and activity records.
- **Sales execution:** Insightly's customer acquisition was among the highest of all vendors evaluated, achieving double-digit growth over the prior year. This is a positive indicator for sales organizations looking for an SFA vendor that has a relatively stable product presence among its target customer segments.
- **Customer loyalty:** Insightly has built a higher customer retention than other vendors in this Magic Quadrant, especially among customers who prioritize the ability to manage postsales delivery projects.

### Cautions

- **Market understanding:** Insightly's value proposition is based in large part on providing project management features, which does not resonate with customers in all industries, especially in sales organizations. Its vision for digital optimization is limited to data integration and reporting, which is not a core depiction of digital optimization requirements.
- **Implementation and onboarding:** The scope of implementation services offered by Insightly is comparatively low. It has few active implementation partners, a small professional services team, and basic account configuration and data migration services. Insightly's scope of client training, onboarding and customer success management is narrow compared with other vendors in this Magic Quadrant.
- **Innovation:** Insightly's roadmap is largely unchanged since last year, focused on AI-based lead scoring and campaign attribution analysis. Its roadmap currently does not include the addition of guided selling and forecasting features that many customers seek.

## Microsoft

**Microsoft returns as a Leader.** This is based on a strong product vision for digital selling and its recent product releases. Its product, **Dynamics 365 Sales**, is relevant for all industries and organizations of all sizes. Recent enhancements to the product portfolio include conversational intelligence for desktop, sales acceleration and advanced predictive forecasting functions. The vendor's roadmap includes support for seamless digital selling

experiences that enhance collaboration through Microsoft Teams and other web chat experiences. Microsoft plans to add a CPQ solution to support digital commerce and seller-based quote-to-cash execution, with a public preview in 2021.

## Strengths

- **Market understanding:** Microsoft has consistently improved its roadmap to support modern sales strategies, which include the increasing need for collaboration and remote selling, all the while not losing its focus on field-based sales. Examples include Dynamics 365-to-Teams integration for collaboration and plans to embed conversational intelligence into mobile, which will help with sales effectiveness. This plays well with sales organizations looking for a simpler user experience inside the SFA solution.
- **Sales strategy:** Microsoft has a strong sales strategy for supporting digital transformation efforts, which is often business-value led and not just focused on supporting sales outcomes. For example, it has introduced the ability to provide industry-specific assessments and benchmarks, and to use these to showcase how its Dynamics 365 Sales solution can help deliver results.
- **Product strategy:** Microsoft continues to release new AI-based products and features, namely with the release of conversational intelligence. This includes sentiment analysis and relationship analytics to measure contact health and engagement. It has also included most of the AI capabilities in a single product edition — Dynamics 365 Sales Premium — and at a reasonable list price of \$135 per user per month.

## Cautions

- **Industry strategy:** Microsoft currently relies on partners to deliver its industry strategy, and customers may encounter a number of overlapping partner solutions, especially within sales. This could falsely signal to customers and prospects that Microsoft underinvests in an existing native product offering or in its industry accelerators and solutions. Also, Microsoft's AppSource marketplace has a vast amount of accelerators and apps for industries, but these often overlap with partners like C3 AI and Adobe.
- **Sales execution:** Microsoft continues to heavily rely on partners and resellers, and has an underdeveloped direct sales organization. This can have a direct impact on its Ability to Execute effectively relative to other Leaders.
- **Market responsiveness:** Microsoft's product releases often play catch-up with those of other leading vendors in this space, and it rarely puts forth truly differentiating features. For example, Microsoft Teams integration with the SFA product was made available simultaneously to most of the remaining Leaders. Another example is the vendor's planned release of a CPQ solution, which is already present in leading vendor solutions for quote-to-cash processes.

## Neocrm

Neocrm (formerly Xiaoshouyi), a subsidiary of IngageApp Global, is a Niche Player. It has rebranded the product to prepare for internationalization, but its product, Neocrm Sales Cloud, continues to focus on China-based companies. It is best suited for B2B and B2C sales processes. Neocrm serves the manufacturing, high tech, professional services and consumer products industries. In the last year, it has added the ability to connect with end

users on the WeChat social platform, capture leads and convert to contacts, customers and opportunities, generate quotes and orders, and view built-in and custom visual workbooks. Neocrm plans to continue to build out its ML capabilities with NeoSuggest and NeoPredict.

### Strengths

- **Market understanding:** Neocrm has incorporated a “lead to cash” concept focused on automating manufacturing, channel partners and consumer transactions in its platform as a service.
- **Integration:** Low code/no code allows Neocrm to easily connect WeChat into the solution’s SFA capabilities and execute lead capture and pricing and quotes.
- **Product:** Neocrm has native mobile and social capabilities that connect internal and external sales users with customers, making work easier. This will be valuable in China.

### Cautions

- **Geographic strategy:** Neocrm’s customer base is almost completely in China, reducing its ability to serve customers in other locations.
- **Market strategy:** Over the last three years, Neocrm has made several name changes. The confusion over its identity dilutes its brand message, causing uncertainty for potential customers.
- **Native CRM capabilities:** Neocrm sells some core SFA functionality as add-ons, functions that leading vendors offer natively in their respective applications without additional cost, such as opportunity forecasting and guided selling functions.

## Oracle

Oracle returns as a Leader in this Magic Quadrant. Part of the Oracle Advertising and Customer Experience (CX) suite, Oracle Sales is broadly focused on the core components of SFA, but also on adjacent areas such as sales performance management (SPM), planning and data intelligence solutions for sales. Oracle’s operations are geographically diversified, and its clients tend to be midmarket to enterprise. It also sells prepackaged SFA industry applications, as seen among some Leaders. Oracle has incorporated its new Redwood design for a streamlined UX and UI, which is responsive and modern, making seller work easier. It has also added an Oracle Sales Assistant and Microsoft Teams integration to collaborate and take actions.

### Strengths

- **Market understanding:** Oracle offers a unified enterprise offering that includes ERP, CRM, platform and business intelligence capabilities. Its responsive design within Oracle Sales provides a unified experience for the seller that creates an environment for productivity and efficiency.
- **Product packaging:** Oracle has added AI features to the Enterprise and Premium subscriptions of Oracle Sales at no additional cost, and without the need for separate subscriptions. This simplifies the contracting process for buyers.
- **Innovation:** Oracle has added innovative capabilities that include Slack and Microsoft Teams integration for collaboration. It has improved its mobile capabilities with adaptive search and responsive design, and workspace-driven infolets, which

are configurable mini-workspaces to help get tasks done more efficiently. Oracle has also included a unified quoting experience integrating CPQ as a part of sales.

### Cautions

- **Marketing strategy:** Oracle has a relatively low number of mentions on shortlists of Gartner client inquiries for the SFA product compared with some other Leaders. The vendor has struggled to position its SFA product line in the market to increase penetration.
- **Integration:** Oracle provides seamless integration with other Oracle clouds and applications, either out of the box or through its Oracle Integration Cloud Services (OICS). However, integrations with non-Oracle products become more difficult for end users to implement.
- **Lead management:** Oracle lacks depth in some capabilities for lead management that some Leaders possess. For example, web-to-lead form capability in the lead management function is primarily executed through its B2B marketing platform or through a PaaS extension. Meanwhile, most SFA vendors have these capabilities as a standard functionality of their SFA solutions.

### Pega

Pega remains a Visionary in this Magic Quadrant. It delivers on a composable architecture with prepackaged business capabilities, delivering a unified CRM. Pega Sales Automation supports B2C, indirect sales and B2B sales teams. The solution's delivery mode is mostly SaaS-based (95% of its customers are via AWS), but also on-premises (5%). Pega offers geographically segmented data residency under its Pega Cloud Services offering. In the past year, it has focused on enhancing the client experience, customer success and attracting partners in new verticals. Pega's roadmap includes many new features to strengthen its vision of AI-powered intelligent sales automation for supporting sales' changing roles.

### Strengths

- **AI everywhere:** Pega is focusing on automating the sales process, supporting the sellers' tasks and providing insights to users and customers through its comprehensive AI-based embedded technologies. Customers seeking more automation for their sales processes should assess Pega's guided selling capabilities, its BPM and RPA functionalities, NLP and ML.
- **Integration ease:** Pega provides low-code architecture to make it easier to integrate with third-party applications. This is of particular interest to customers seeking to create a seamless sales technology environment by integrating many different sales tools.
- **New UI/UX:** Cosmos, Pega's new templated enterprise application design for process workflow and management, allows for reviewing sales activity workloads more efficiently. It allows for seeing all information in one place, with customizable categories, and it works on any device. Customers wanting to steer each opportunity to the full life cycle will find these capabilities helpful.

### Cautions

- **Complex platform:** Customers report that implementing Pega's platform can be complex. Understanding the platform architecture and shifting data can take time.

Prospective customers evaluating Pega should focus on understanding Pega's architecture.

- Pega resources: Finding Pega implementation partners is relatively difficult compared with other vendors in this Magic Quadrant, as commonly reported by Gartner customers. Customers wanting to deploy Pega should secure professional support and resources before they finalize an organizational deployment plan.
- Industry coverage: Pega is currently recognized as best suited for the insurance, financial services and healthcare industries, with less presence in other sectors. Customers outside of these three common Pega industries should test Pega against their primary organizational processes to ensure it fits their purpose.

## **Pipeliner**

Pipeliner remains a Niche Player. Pipeliner is most often used in North America. Its SFA product, Pipeliner CRM, is best suited to small and midsize B2B sales organizations and has also been implemented in large sales organizations. The product provides a well-developed mobile app and web browser UI. In the past year, Pipeliner has added several new capabilities for evaluating performance of pipelines, a workflow automation engine called Automatizer and customizing dashboards. In the coming year, Pipeliner plans to introduce customizable compact pipeline views and team evaluation benchmarking to enhance manager inspection and coaching. Account planning features are also on its upcoming roadmap.

### **Strengths**

- Sales strategy for small businesses: Pipeliner continues to demonstrate a strong strategy for selling to small businesses. It has a dedicated inbound sales team and uses independent full-time and part-time sellers, although it can support midsize and large enterprises. It maintains a sales thought leadership site, which is helpful for companies looking to quickly implement sales best practices using Pipeliner CRM.
- Market responsiveness: Pipeliner has delivered quality enhancements in the last year, including email personalization updates, customizable form views, import templates and improvements to the Automatizer workflow engine. It has delivered frequent updates, averaging almost one release per month over the course of the year.
- Platform: Pipeliner has improved its platform automation abilities with the release of Automatizer, a platform for in-app workflow execution. Creating workflow automation is done via drag and drop design inside the day-to-day UI, thus allowing sales users to automate their workflow without the involvement of an administrator or IT. This bodes well for sales organizations looking to provide autonomy to sales users and have sales reps self-impose efficiency improvements.

### **Cautions**

- Product offering: Pipeliner lacks the depth of core capabilities offered by Leaders in this Magic Quadrant, including advanced forecast management, PRM, application customization options, and a mobile software development kit (SDK). These are all considerations for companies seeking the full breadth of capabilities from their SFA provider.

- Support for complex implementations: Pipeliner has a limited number of professional service resources and a comparatively modest number of implementation partners. It also has a comparatively modest investment in customer success employees. These are considerations for companies seeking help with either sales transformation projects or with improving adoption.
- Product pricing: Pipeliner has increased list prices on the highest edition of its Pipeliner CRM product by 35% in the last year. This is a consideration for sales organizations looking for stability in pricing from their prospective vendor solution.

## Salesforce

Salesforce returns as a Leader in this Magic Quadrant, based on its increasing market responsiveness. Its SFA product, Salesforce Sales Cloud, is suitable for organizations of all sizes in locations worldwide, and can support deployments of 50 employees to well over 5,000 employees. The solution now includes digital selling and remote collaboration capabilities integrated with Microsoft Teams, and allows for deeper collaboration through Salesforce Anywhere. In the past year, the vendor has released Einstein Conversation Insights, a conversational intelligence platform that is coupled with Salesforce High Velocity Sales, an inside sales product, and Salesforce Meetings, a video meeting management system. Planned innovations include more flexible forecasting models, a High Velocity Sales integration with LinkedIn to support cadences, and a Slack for Sales integration.

### Strengths

- Sales execution and viability: Despite the pandemic and a difficult economic climate, Salesforce grew its client base and product portfolio, thus reporting companywide, double-digit growth year over year.
- Market understanding: Salesforce's value proposition and differentiators rest on the fact that it has a solid understanding of the future needs of selling organizations. Some notable examples include a tightly integrated Revenue Cloud product with multirevenue model support (from consumption pricing to subscription billing), over 10 prepackaged industry-specific sales applications, and best practices according to industry.
- Market responsiveness: Salesforce received high marks for the quality of its product enhancements when compared with other vendors in this Magic Quadrant. For example, it released Global AI Models for organizations looking to take advantage of AI but lacking quality data to start. This is important because poor data quality plagues sales organizations and inhibits AI adoption. Other examples include multicloud support for billing, and Sales Cloud-Microsoft Teams integration.

### Cautions

- Product features: As of July 2020, Salesforce discontinued the Einstein Voice Assistant service, which had previously been a key feature in its sales mobile application offering. Salesforce no longer has voice-to-text application execution, such as creating opportunities from a mobile device, which plays a significant role for field sales.
- Offering strategy: Due to recent acquisitions and an increasing focus on industry-based product offerings, Salesforce has a relatively confusing sales product strategy. For example, you can find the Sales Cloud offering in over 10 package

variations when considering editions, ranging from Sales Cloud stand-alone, a combined Sales+Service Cloud offering, and an industry-based Sales Cloud offering. This can get overwhelming for sales organizations trying to navigate product packaging needs.

- Innovation change: Compared with other Leaders in this Magic Quadrant, Salesforce has delivered a modest amount of net new innovation in its sales product suite this year. For example, most sales releases for this year were enhancements of a prior year's sales product.

## SAP

SAP returns as a Leader. SAP Sales Cloud is one of five core modules in the SaaS-based Experience Management product portfolio (the other modules being SAP Marketing Cloud, SAP Digital Commerce, SAP Service Cloud, and SAP Customer Data Cloud). SAP Sales Cloud includes CPQ functionalities and SPM features. The solution is deployed in over 31 industries and is commonly used by manufacturing, professional services and consumer packaged goods organizations. In the past 12 months, SAP has introduced new activity types for guided selling, ordering and filtering of products, inside sales enhancements, and custom attributes from SAP ECC or SAP S/4HANA in offline pricing. SAP's roadmap includes predictive forecasting, enhanced guided selling and dynamic visit planning.

### Strengths

- Functionalities: SAP comes with a well-structured UI, allowing for simplified management of the functionalities. Its data visibility aids account hierarchy functionalities in mapping complex organizational structures, with multiple levels of subsidiaries or distribution centers. SAP regularly updates these functionalities.
- Data compliance: SAP provides an EU Access service, which enables customers to have their data processed and accessed from within the European Union, European Economic Area and Switzerland, apart from other regional access services. Remote access outside the region is excluded. SAP Sales Cloud can also be hosted in data centers in China and Russia, compliant with local data residency requirements.
- Customer service: SAP Sales Cloud comes with 24/7 service and support independently of the contractual framework chosen. SAP ONE provides unified global access to all support inquiries in a mobile-enabled interface. It is connected to SAP's Enterprise Support Academy for improving user adoption by offering expert chats, access to support engineers and guided answers for self-service.

### Cautions

- Sales execution: SAP sells mostly to its existing ERP customers, which seek to complement their ERP applications with SAP's cloud-based CRM technologies. SAP is not particularly strong in communicating its roadmap, nor is it a standout in the market for winning new business.
- Differentiation: SAP's SFA capabilities are less differentiated in innovation and lag other Leaders in this evaluation. Prospective customers looking to differentiate their sales technology stack efforts will not find, for example, functionalities such as being able to augment standard reports with calculations.
- Product and sales strategy: SAP Sales Cloud does not come as a freemium offering, but customers can request a trial period. Customers wanting to test SAP Sales Cloud in their own environment will require system integration support for

setting up the environment. Customers frequently report that the installation is a big task.

## **SugarCRM**

SugarCRM remains a Visionary in this year's Magic Quadrant. Its SFA solution, Sugar Sell, is best suited to organizations with 50 to 500+ employees, but it can also support as many as 5,000 employees. In the last year, SugarCRM has acquired Node.io, in order to bring in additional predictive capabilities, as well as W-Systems, an implementation service provider, to help bolster its in-house professional services. The most notable releases of the past year are SugarPredict AI lead and opportunity scoring, and a purchase tracking module for postsale customer success. On its roadmap, SugarCRM plans to introduce SugarLive, an inbound and outbound telephony integration with AWS, sentiment analysis and an advanced CPQ solution.

### Strengths

- **Market strategy:** SugarCRM has an improved strategy for addressing the needs of its customer segment, and for customer retention. It currently has regionally tailored programs and a community to help with platform success. Furthermore, it has acquired W-Systems to increase professional resources and Node.io to address AI platform needs.
- **Product packaging and pricing:** SugarCRM has among the most attractive product packaging and pricing for its sales solution. For example, its SFA product, Sugar Sell, lists at \$80 per user per month and includes the SugarPredict AI offering for sales predictive analytics, as well as ample data storage needs and a full copy production sandbox. This bodes well for budget-conscious sales organizations and those seeking transparency.
- **Geographic strategy:** SugarCRM has a global list of implementation partners to support deployments in any region, and the ability to deploy cloud (public or private), on-premises or hybrid environments. Also, SugarCloud is deployed on AWS infrastructure as a service, which helps for regional considerations.

### Cautions

- **Product feature integration:** SugarCRM has made minimal improvements to extend its acquired products into the Sugar Sell application. For example, even basic lead management functionality and processes have to be created from the Sugar Market application separately and not as embedded functionality into the sales application. Also, it lacks a native sales playbook designer as it currently uses Customer Journey, a plug-in from Addoptify, which requires a paid download.
- **Market responsiveness:** Compared with other vendors in this Magic Quadrant, SugarCRM has among the fewest number of enhancement requests arising directly from customers.
- **Innovation:** SugarCRM has among the lowest percentage of company research and development expenses attributed to SFA innovation relative to most vendors in this Magic Quadrant.

## **Vtiger**

Vtiger is a Niche Player in this Magic Quadrant. Its product, also named Vtiger, is best suited to small and midsize businesses (SMBs) with between 20 and 250 employees, and

is relevant for B2B and B2C use cases. It is available globally with a strong base in North America. In the last year, Vtiger introduced Calculus AI, its ML algorithm, to provide sales insights. It also increased the depth of its WhatsApp features by allowing conversations and activities within the widget. For 2021, Vtiger has introduced a free pilot edition that allows SMB users to access sales enablement, marketing and project management features, to name a few. It plans to continue to enhance integrations to improve seller productivity, including into applications such as Zoom, ZoomInfo and Microsoft Teams.

### Strengths

- **Geographic strategy:** Vtiger has a broad distribution for its customer base, with approximately half in North America and the remainder spread globally. This gives the vendor a competitive advantage to expand within each region.
- **Product strategy:** Vtiger offers a one-product approach that includes sales, marketing, invoice and project capabilities, which are commonly requested by SMBs. The addition of the free pilot edition in 2021 has decreased the risk of deploying a new SFA tool.
- **Product development:** Vtiger has a monthly release schedule and each release has multiple feature enhancements, as well as new capabilities to improve the product. Some capabilities were generated from customers, such as built-in dialer capabilities, Facebook Ad integration, enrichment of contacts from LinkedIn, and stripe integration for subscriptions.

### Cautions

- **Retention:** Vtiger has a comparatively low customer retention rate relative to most of the vendors in this Magic Quadrant.
- **Market strategy:** Vtiger lacks vertical-specific products and an app marketplace, which Leaders offer in support of a broader range of industries. Vtiger offers no differentiation between its midmarket and enterprise sales strategies, and targets SMB customers.
- **Implementation strategy:** Vtiger expects clients to self-implement with the help of a four-hour onboarding session. For customers with over 100 users, it provides turnkey implementation services. These factors are considerations for companies with complex sales processes that need help understanding how to apply Vtiger's SFA product to their sales processes.

## **Zendesk**

Zendesk is a Niche Player in this Magic Quadrant. The Zendesk Sell product for SFA features capabilities that are suitable for small and midsize sales organizations. Zendesk has a presence in all geographic regions, but mostly concentrates on North America. Zendesk Sell integrates with the Zendesk Suite, a holistic platform that leverages features such as telephony integration, lead management and chat. It introduced features focused on improving seller efficiency, including Mapsly integration for meeting location routing, and a task player that allows sellers to build a queue of activities and execute them in immediate succession through a "play" feature. Zendesk's product roadmap includes enhancements to pipeline analytics and tighter integration with the Zendesk Sunshine platform.

### Strengths

- **Customer support:** Compared with other vendors in this Magic Quadrant, Zendesk excels at supporting customers with training and onboarding services. It offers free on-demand training for administrators, developers and users. Zendesk expert support is included with all product editions.
- **Product capabilities:** Zendesk has strengthened the integration of Zendesk Sell with the Zendesk Suite, adding improved account mapping, self-service data migration, and a community forum that spans sales and customer service functions. The product also offers email and task sequencing capabilities that are not common in other SFA applications for the midsize B2B market.
- **Viability:** As a company, Zendesk has demonstrated strong financial performance in the past year. This bodes well for sales organizations looking for a financially stable vendor outside of some of the big SFA players.

### Cautions

- **Market responsiveness:** Zendesk has made a fairly modest number of product enhancements to Zendesk Sell. Compared with the Leaders in this Magic Quadrant, it offers fewer native and add-on capabilities and is often dependent on third-party solutions. Zendesk Sell lacks a native PRM module, which is important for indirect sales use cases.
- **Innovation:** Zendesk's vision for future innovation includes integration with its Zendesk Explore analytics platform and continued integration development with the Zendesk Sales Suite. However, its roadmap currently lacks the introduction of other major SFA functions that prospective customers will expect from a B2B SFA solution.
- **Market strategy:** Zendesk lacks a robust community of app vendors offering third-party add-ons to the Zendesk Sell product. The number of apps available in its marketplace is relatively few compared with other vendors in this research.

### Zoho

Zoho returns as a Challenger in this year's Magic Quadrant. Zoho CRM is well-suited to support sales organizations of all sizes. It has a flexible platform for configuring applications via a low-code/no-code interface and a business application designer for nontechnical employees. In the past year, Zoho has released a notable set of capabilities. These include a new recommendation builder for next-best-action recommendations, and workflow suggestions powered by Zia, its AI assistant, to suggest which workflows can be automated based on repeated manual execution. Planned innovations from Zoho include a new UI redesign canvas to help with user experience, a Zia sales strategy planner for outcome-driven next-best-action recommendations, and a Zoho CPQ solution.

### Strengths

- **Innovation:** Zoho has released a good amount of new capabilities that are truly differentiating. Examples include Remote Sales Office, which allows for in-app meeting experiences, lead and opportunity intent models, and Zia Workflow Automation Suggestions, an RPA-like solution.
- **Product features:** Zoho maintains a high degree of native features that include core SFA and near-core SFA functionality, as well as those geared to support digital selling experiences and revenue models.

- Sales strategy: Zoho has one of the most flexible pricing models for customers, with no requirements for long-term commitments and a monthly payment plan. It has also increased its efforts to sell globally through a tailored ABM program.

#### Cautions

- Customer experience: Zoho received among the lowest overall experience ratings from its customer base on Gartner Peer Insights when compared with leading vendors evaluated. Customers cited customer support and application performance issues.
- Market responsiveness: Zoho has released comparatively few sets of capabilities arising directly from customer requests. Furthermore, it has increased list pricing by approximately 16% on its product packaging, which is due to apply in January 2022. This may not provide enough time for alternatives for existing Zoho customers that are cost sensitive, and may deter prospects.
- Sales execution: Zoho has to do more to compete globally with Leaders in this Magic Quadrant. It has comparatively few global or very large customers today. This may increase hesitation among sales organizations considering Zoho, as the perception suggests that the vendor cannot meet scalability requirements.

## Vendors Added and Dropped

We review and adjust our inclusion criteria for Magic Quadrants as markets change. As a result of these adjustments, the mix of vendors in any Magic Quadrant may change over time. A vendor's appearance in a Magic Quadrant one year and not the next does not necessarily indicate that we have changed our opinion of that vendor. It may be a reflection of a change in the market and, therefore, changed evaluation criteria, or of a change of focus by that vendor.

#### Added

- HubSpot — This vendor met the criteria for inclusion this year.

#### Dropped

None

## Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

For Gartner clients, Magic Quadrant research identifies and then analyzes the most relevant providers and their products in a market. Gartner uses by default an upper limit of 20 vendors to support the identification of the most relevant providers in a market. On specific occasions the upper limit may be extended by Methodologies, where the intended research value to our clients might otherwise be diminished. The inclusion criteria represent the specific attributes that analysts believe are necessary for inclusion in this research.

To qualify for inclusion in the 2021 Magic Quadrant for Sales Force Automation, vendors were required to meet seven of the following eight criteria:

- Serve as a system of record for account and contact management *and* sales activity management *and* opportunity management.

- Serve as a system of record for pipeline management.
- Serve as a system of record for forecast management.
- Serve as a system of record for lead management capabilities, which includes functions for lead nurturing, lead conversion tracking, and lead attribution analysis.
- Provide guided selling capabilities in the form of formal sales playbooks and workflow-based recommendations that align with sales playbooks, and/or AI-based prescriptive next best actions
- Provide a platform for extending sales processes with custom user interfaces, custom data objects, custom data fields and custom workflows.
- Provide open APIs that allow the solution to integrate with third-party applications.
- Provide application mobile capabilities, whereby sellers and their managers can manage their primary daily sales from either a natively provided mobile application or from a low-code mobile application development SDK.

If vendors met these initial criteria, they were then required to meet both of the following criteria to qualify:

- Have customers with live sales execution platform implementations in at least two of the three use cases for sales execution platform Critical Capabilities: B2B sales, B2C sales and indirect/relationship sales.
- Have made at least two major CRM SFA releases with significant functional improvements during the 12 months from 1 March 2020 through 28 February 2021; a new or acquired offering from an established vendor in this market is also considered, if Gartner established that offering was being sold to customers.

If vendors met both of these initial criteria, they were then required to meet at least four of the following five criteria:

- Have at least 50 customers with live sales execution platform implementations as of 1 February 2021, spanning at least four industries, in accordance with industry definitions established by Gartner.
- Have an average number of SFA paid users (not partner users, nor freemium users) per customer (not org/instance) of at least 25 users as of 1 February 2021.
- Have generated revenue from SFA software of at least \$13 million during the calendar year 2020.
- During the 12 months from 1 March 2020 through 28 February 2021, closed SFA contracts with at least 10 new logos (not new contracts sold to an existing client) on deals that exceed \$750,000 in total contract value, *or* closed SFA contracts with at least 50 new logos on deals between \$10,000 and \$750,000 in total contract value.
- Have deployments in at least three regions (North America, South America, Central America, EMEA, Asia/Pacific).

## Evaluation Criteria

### Ability to Execute

Different sales organizations require different levels of depth and complexity in terms of capabilities. Vendors that support a wide range of complexity have greater market potential, and are rated accordingly. As this is a cross-industry Magic Quadrant, evaluation of a provider's offering is focused on the ability to serve several broad industry sectors, not to provide industry-specific solutions.

**Product or Service:** This criterion looks at core goods and services that compete in and/or serve the defined market. Vendors are evaluated on the quality of their native SFA capabilities, including both the core capabilities and SFA extensions. Vendors are also evaluated on technical considerations such as ease of use and administrative functions. Gartner assesses information provided from the Gartner Peer Insights data, as well as other, publicly available sources, from the Critical Capabilities research and from observations collected from Gartner inquiries.

**Overall Viability:** This is an assessment of the organization's overall financial health, as well as the financial and practical success of the business unit. We consider the likelihood of the organization continuing to offer and invest in the product, as well as the product position in the current portfolio.

Vendors will be rated on additional factors such as customer retention rate, and ability to generate revenue specifically in the SFA market.

**Sales Execution/Pricing:** This includes an organization's capabilities in all presales activities and the structure that supports them. It considers deal management, pricing and negotiation, presales support and the overall effectiveness of the sales channel. The vendor must provide global sales and distribution coverage that aligns with its marketing messages. It must have specific experience and success selling SFA applications to sales buying centers (i.e., the VP of sales or sales operations) and to application leaders. Among the many factors in this category, Gartner evaluates the number of new customers acquired, growth in SFA revenue, average SFA deal size, average contract duration and customer retention. Gartner also evaluates clients' satisfaction with contacting and negotiation processes.

**Market Responsiveness and Track Record:** This criterion considers a vendor's ability to respond, change direction, be flexible and achieve competitive success as opportunities develop, competitors act, customer needs evolve and market dynamics change. We also consider the vendor's history of responsiveness to changing market demands. Gartner evaluates the quality and depth of the vendor's releases, and the ability to release functions requested by clients.

**Marketing Execution:** The clarity, quality, creativity and efficacy of programs designed to deliver the organization's message in order to influence the market, promote the brand, increase awareness of products and establish a positive identification in the minds of customers. This "mind share" can be driven by a combination of publicity, promotional, thought leadership, social media, referrals and sales activities.

Gartner will measure the frequency and quality of the vendor's marketing techniques, including but not limited to its use of publicity promotions, and thought leadership in social channels or print publications. Gartner will also evaluate the vendor's presence on the shortlists of Gartner's clients and the scope of available third-party solutions.

**Customer Experience:** This criterion considers products and services and/or programs that enable customers to achieve anticipated results with the products evaluated — specifically, quality supplier/buyer interactions, technical support or account support. This may also include ancillary tools, customer support programs, availability of user groups and SLAs. Feedback from active customers on generally available releases during the

past 12 to 18 months is an important consideration. Sources of feedback include vendor-supplied references, Gartner client inquiries and other customer-facing interactions, such as at Gartner conferences. Customer experiences are evaluated based on the vendor's ability to help customers achieve positive business value, as well as sustained user adoption, quality implementation and ongoing support.

Operations: The ability of the organization to meet goals and commitments.

**Table 1: Ability to Execute Evaluation Criteria**

Enlarge Table

Evaluation Criteria	Weighting
Product or Service	High
Overall Viability	Medium
Sales Execution/Pricing	Medium
Market Responsiveness/Record	High
Marketing Execution	Medium
Customer Experience	High
Operations	Medium

Source: Gartner (August 2021)

## Completeness of Vision

Gartner evaluates vendors on their ability to convincingly articulate logical statements. This includes current and future market direction, innovation, customer needs and competitive forces, as well as how well these statements map to Gartner's view of the market.

Market Understanding: This includes the ability to understand customer needs and translate them into products and services. Vendors that show a clear vision for their market listen, understand customer demands, and can shape or enhance market changes with this. Vendors must define how their SFA solutions improve clients' sales process execution and support sales effectiveness objectives. Vendors must also define their competitive differentiators, value proposition and the outcomes achieved by their clients.

Vendors are also evaluated on their articulated and demonstrated ability to align with clients' customer experience, digital business and sales execution optimization objectives.

**Marketing Strategy:** In this category we look for clear, differentiated messaging that is consistently communicated internally and externalized through social media, advertising, partner programs, system integrators, customer programs and positioning statements. Vendors are evaluated on their segmentation strategy and how their solution appeals to selling organizations in multiple verticals, as well as prospects with 50 or more sales sellers. If the vendor gets a significant percentage of revenue from recurring revenue-based products, it must also have a customer retention strategy.

**Sales Strategy:** In this category we primarily look for a sound strategy for selling that uses the appropriate direct and indirect sales strategy, as well as partners that extend the scope and depth of market reach, expertise, technologies, services and customer base. Vendors are evaluated on their ability to sell to both business and IT stakeholders, as well as to the segments defined in the marketing strategy.

**Offering (Product) Strategy:** This category includes the vendor's approach to product development and delivery that emphasizes market differentiation, functionality, methodology and features, as they map to current and future requirements. Gartner assesses the vendor's product and packaging offerings. The vendor should not only demonstrate a product vision that accounts for core SFA functionality (as defined by the market's core capabilities), but also one that offers new application functionality across the breadth and depth of product capabilities. The latter consideration is critical for meeting the needs of a maturing market.

Subcapabilities include, but are not limited to, the vendor's vision for:

- Sales enablement capabilities, such as content management, sales training and coaching
- B2B and B2C digital commerce
- Sales effectiveness capabilities, such as CPQ or order management
- Integration with third-party sales applications

**Business Model:** In this category we look for how the design, logic and execution of the organization's business proposition helps it achieve continued success. Vendors need to have clear business plans for how they will be successful in the SFA market. These business plans should include appropriate levels of investment to achieve profitability and healthy revenue growth during a three- to five-year period. Sales channels and partnership strategies are important components.

**Vertical/Industry Strategy:** In this category we look for how the vendor deploys products to meet the specific needs of individual market segments, including verticals. Vendors will be evaluated on the scope of native-built applications that automate industry-specific sales processes in verticals such as financial services and life sciences. Vendors will also be evaluated on the scope of third-party partnerships with ISVs that offer industry-specific capabilities.

**Innovation:** This concerns direct, related, complementary and synergistic layouts of resources, expertise or capital for investment, consolidation, defensive or preemptive purposes. Vendors are evaluated on the quality of their enhancements and product releases. Vendors must show continued investment in improving core SFA capabilities. They must also show growth in new areas such as improving sales execution, analytics,

social collaboration and SaaS; or new devices such as tablets and smartphones; or new technology directions such as digital business.

Geographic Strategy: We look at the vendor’s strategy to direct resources, skills and offerings to meet the specific needs of geographies outside the “home” or native geography, either directly or through partners, channels and subsidiaries, as appropriate for that geography and market. Vendors will be evaluated on the percentage of employees allocated to the regions, as well as the depth and scope of partners available in those regions.

**Table 2: Completeness of Vision Evaluation Criteria**

Enlarge Table

Evaluation Criteria	Weighting
Market Understanding	High
Marketing Strategy	Medium
Sales Strategy	Medium
Offering (Product) Strategy	High
Business Model	Low
Vertical/Industry Strategy	Low
Innovation	High
Geographic Strategy	Medium

Source: Gartner (August 2021)

## Quadrant Descriptions

### Leaders

Leaders have the Ability to Execute their vision through products, services and demonstrably solid business results, in the form of revenue and earnings. Leaders have

significant successful worldwide customer deployments in a wide variety of industries, and with multiple proof points for deployments above 500 users. They demonstrate consistently above-average customer experience levels, product execution scores and sales execution scores. They demonstrate product leadership, delivering new enhancements and innovations on a consistent schedule. They also provide thought leadership, showing customers and prospects how their SFA solutions improve sales execution and sales processes.

## Challengers

Challengers are often larger than most (but not all) Niche Players, and demonstrate a higher volume of new business for SFA. They have the size to compete worldwide, but in some cases may not be able to execute equally well in all geographies. They often return strong customer experience satisfaction scores. They understand the evolving needs of a sales organization, yet may not lead customers into new functional areas with a strong functional vision.

Challengers tend to have a good technology vision for architecture and other IT organizational considerations, but have not won over the top sales executives and/or application leaders in the IT organization.

## Visionaries

Visionaries are ahead of most potential competitors in delivering innovative products and/or delivery models. They anticipate emerging and changing sales needs and move the market into fresh areas with solutions that improve sales execution.

Visionaries have strong potential to influence the direction of the SFA market, but are limited in terms of execution and/or track record.

## Niche Players

Niche Players offer products for SFA functionality, but may lack some functional components. They may not show the ability to consistently handle deployments of more than 500 users across multiple geographies, or they may lack strong business execution in the SFA market. These vendors may offer complete portfolios for a specific industry, but face challenges in one or more areas necessary to support cross-industry requirements, such as complex forecasting and sales effectiveness. They may have an inconsistent implementation track record, or they may lack the ability to support the requirements of large enterprises.

Niche Players often offer the best solutions for the needs of particular sales organizations, considering the price/value ratio of their solutions.

## Context

Given that there are more than 75 SFA vendors worldwide, the vendors in this research are a small part of the overall SFA vendor market. There are hundreds more vendors that provide basic contact management software, which is a subset of SFA. And there are dozens of vendors that have built vertical-specific SFA solutions.

Because it is not possible to review every SFA provider, this Magic Quadrant evaluates SFA solutions that are broadly applicable to many differently sized sales organizations and verticals.

We place particular emphasis on vendors' core SFA capabilities, as described in the Market Definition/Description section of this Magic Quadrant. However, for the purpose of building as complete a picture as possible, we also evaluate their noncore SFA capabilities, such as content management.

SFA means different things to different types of sales organizations:

- Product-driven, transactional sales organizations, such as those with short-cycle B2B sales, value basic lead and opportunity management capabilities to reduce sales cycles and improve sales management visibility.
- Product and service organizations selling enterprisewide deals, such as long-cycle B2B sales organizations, will value account management and forecasting capabilities. These organizations often also value lead management, CPQ and sales content management systems. They often tie together proposals, bids, configurations and quotes with authorizations and order capture systems. Organizations operating in this space require granular forecasting and pipeline management features.
- Organizations engaged in relationship selling require SFA tools to manage their customer and prospect data, but they also require sales enablement tools for content distribution and sales activity capture.
- Organizations that sell via indirect sales channels require PRM capabilities.

## Sales Organization Sizing

In this Magic Quadrant, Gartner refers to sales organization customer sizes or vendor target segments. We define these segments as follows:

- Small business — fewer than 50 sales users
- MSE or midsize business — 50 to 500 sales users
- Large business — 501 to 1,000 sales users
- Enterprise-size — more than 1,000 sales users

## Market Overview

There are several notable drivers for sales force automation (SFA) solutions today, which have surfaced in most Gartner inquiries:

- Sales leaders, amid a pandemic, are reevaluating their sales technology stack investments to encompass more virtual selling or remote selling capabilities and self-service digital commerce. Gartner has fielded numerous inquiries that relate to virtual selling scenarios. For example, there is an increasing need to pivot to digital channels to help increase sales resiliency and overcome challenges when face-to-face interactions are not possible. Some SFA vendors have responded to these challenges by releasing video meeting solutions or further integrating with some known unified communication providers. Others are considering integrations with AR/VR solutions to help increase sales effectiveness. And many others are increasingly selling digital commerce capabilities to support B2B transactions. It is common for Gartner clients to inquire about best-of-breed forecasting vendors to supplement SFA purchases, as many hold the view that leading SFA forecasting

capabilities lack the ability to address complex forecasting needs. There is no shortage of options and considerations to be made. But one thing is clear: all future sales models point toward a multiexperience sales model.

- Multiexperience/total experience selling. Sales organizations are increasingly trying to understand customer journeys and require the need for SFA systems to interact with a variety of channels to glean insights and personalize communications. These types of interactions are pointing toward the need to enable the SFA system to be more tightly interwoven with other customer-facing systems and interaction channels. Other clients ask for ways in which vendors support an optimal user experience (UX), and sales experience, such as collaborating with peers and customers via productivity platforms often seen in Microsoft Teams or Slack. Collaboration a la Slack or Teams between customers and sellers today is nascent, but sales organizations are starting to reevaluate the sales workbench and tools used to ensure sales efficiency.
- Sales analytics and insights. Gartner fields increasing inquiries on vendors' ability to provide additional analytics and insights into the SFA platform in order to discover factors driving deal success, such that sales organizations are revisiting outdated sales forecasting processes and are more willing to supplement with AI and ML techniques to glean insights. Others are fixated on addressing data integrity and the ability to utilize advanced analytics technology.

## Functionality Trends

The top market trend is the expansion of AI and virtual selling capabilities in SFA, whereby remote selling using collaboration tools and unified communications is becoming an essential part of the sales technology stack. Furthermore, SFA tools are increasingly moving from systems of record toward systems of engagement and insights, respectively for fostering more seamless interactions and increasing effectiveness via analytics. To support more seamless experiences, SFA solutions will eventually extend their ability to act as a system of experience by decreasing friction in communication and collaboration with partners, customers and other sellers. For more information on the emerging modern sales technology stack, see [Modern Sales Technology Emerges to Support the New World of Buying and Selling](#).

Prescriptive next best actions — an aspect of B2B guided selling capabilities — is rapidly improving in maturity and on the horizon for many vendors. AI/ML predictive analytics exist in most SFA vendor solutions today to a degree, whether on opportunities or leads or both. Customers will need to evaluate specific predictive needs and ML model configurability to differentiate offerings such as those used for forecasting, lead or opportunity scoring.

Fewer than a handful of vendors have released conversational intelligence/sales coaching platform capabilities, some to a limited degree of functionality. These have been top of mind for many customers inquiring about the effectiveness and ability of such solutions in the best-of-breed market. Gartner expects this trend to increase among SFA vendor offerings.

Most vendors offer a unified CRM data model in which service, marketing and sales core objects or entities are consistent across the application stacks. This model has since reached market maturity and is no longer a differentiating value proposition.

Basic process automation capabilities — such as activity capture of email data and calendar events — are a relatively mature capability of most SFA solutions.

Fewer than a handful of vendors offer the ability to capture and automate specific customer-designated processes using robotic process mining and/or robotic process automation (RPA). This trend is expected to increase in order to reduce sales process friction in an effort to shift focus toward sales effectiveness measurements.

## Evaluation Criteria Definitions

### Ability to Execute

**Product/Service:** Core goods and services offered by the vendor for the defined market. This includes current product/service capabilities, quality, feature sets, skills and so on, whether offered natively or through OEM agreements/partnerships as defined in the market definition and detailed in the subcriteria.

**Overall Viability:** Viability includes an assessment of the overall organization's financial health, the financial and practical success of the business unit, and the likelihood that the individual business unit will continue investing in the product, will continue offering the product and will advance the state of the art within the organization's portfolio of products.

**Sales Execution/Pricing:** The vendor's capabilities in all presales activities and the structure that supports them. This includes deal management, pricing and negotiation, presales support, and the overall effectiveness of the sales channel.

**Market Responsiveness/Record:** Ability to respond, change direction, be flexible and achieve competitive success as opportunities develop, competitors act, customer needs evolve and market dynamics change. This criterion also considers the vendor's history of responsiveness.

**Marketing Execution:** The clarity, quality, creativity and efficacy of programs designed to deliver the organization's message to influence the market, promote the brand and business, increase awareness of the products, and establish a positive identification with the product/brand and organization in the minds of buyers. This "mind share" can be driven by a combination of publicity, promotional initiatives, thought leadership, word of mouth and sales activities.

**Customer Experience:** Relationships, products and services/programs that enable clients to be successful with the products evaluated. Specifically, this includes the ways customers receive technical support or account support. This can also include ancillary tools, customer support programs (and the quality thereof), availability of user groups, service-level agreements and so on.

**Operations:** The ability of the organization to meet its goals and commitments. Factors include the quality of the organizational structure, including skills, experiences, programs, systems and other vehicles that enable the organization to operate effectively and efficiently on an ongoing basis.

### Completeness of Vision

**Market Understanding:** Ability of the vendor to understand buyers' wants and needs and to translate those into products and services. Vendors that show the highest degree of vision listen to and understand buyers' wants and needs, and can shape or enhance those with their added vision.

**Marketing Strategy:** A clear, differentiated set of messages consistently communicated throughout the organization and externalized through the website, advertising, customer programs and positioning statements.

**Sales Strategy:** The strategy for selling products that uses the appropriate network of direct and indirect sales, marketing, service, and communication affiliates that extend the scope and depth of market reach, skills, expertise, technologies, services and the customer base.

**Offering (Product) Strategy:** The vendor's approach to product development and delivery that emphasizes differentiation, functionality, methodology and feature sets as they map to current and future requirements.

**Business Model:** The soundness and logic of the vendor's underlying business proposition.

**Vertical/Industry Strategy:** The vendor's strategy to direct resources, skills and offerings to meet the specific needs of individual market segments, including vertical markets.

**Innovation:** Direct, related, complementary and synergistic layouts of resources, expertise or capital for investment, consolidation, defensive or pre-emptive purposes.

**Geographic Strategy:** The vendor's strategy to direct resources, skills and offerings to meet the specific needs of geographies outside the "home" or native geography, either directly or through partners, channels and subsidiaries as appropriate for that geography and market.