

DIGITAL ADVENTURES / SALES × AI × LEADERSHIP

From Salesperson to Orchestrator of Intelligent Agents

Mario Pufahl · Newsletter 31/2026 · 7 August 2026

Why the best sales teams of the future will be smarter, not larger

For a long time, sales followed a simple formula: more salespeople meant more customer contacts, more opportunities and more revenue. That logic is losing its validity.

Powerful AI agents are changing more than individual productivity. A new form of collaboration is emerging between people and intelligent digital agents. The salesperson of the future no longer works alone. They lead a digital team.

AI is no longer just a tool

The first generation of AI in sales was primarily an assistant. It drafted emails, summarised meetings and answered questions. That was helpful, but reactive.

The next generation works differently. AI agents analyse information independently, identify patterns, recommend actions and can perform defined tasks on their own. They develop from tools into active team members. That is the real shift.

A salesperson gains a digital team

Imagine a key account manager in 2028. Before an important customer meeting, they no longer spend hours reviewing presentations or researching information across systems. Specialised agents support them instead:

- A research agent analyses the customer's latest business developments, investments and strategic initiatives.
- A stakeholder agent identifies new decision-makers and shows which buying-group relationships are missing.
- An opportunity agent assesses deal risks and highlights critical factors.
- A proposal agent creates an initial proposal draft.
- A coaching agent simulates potential customer objections.
- A forecast agent assesses the likelihood of closing based on current developments.

The salesperson then decides which recommendations make sense and which strategy to pursue. They work with AI, not against it.

From task execution to decision-making

This fundamentally changes the role. Many salespeople currently spend much of their time on research, documentation, internal coordination and administration. These tasks can increasingly be automated.

Their main contribution shifts towards areas where people remain stronger:

- Building trust
- Facilitating complex decisions
- Explaining economic relationships
- Balancing different interests
- Supporting change
- Taking responsibility

The salesperson develops from an information provider into a strategic decision-maker.

New skills determine success

Many companies still invest mainly in product training. Other capabilities will increasingly make the difference:

- Business acumen
- Executive communication
- Negotiating complex deals
- Data literacy
- AI literacy
- Critical thinking
- Decision-making
- Change skills

The ability to direct AI usefully is equally important. People who ask good questions, assess outputs critically and interpret recommendations properly will work more effectively than those who simply consume AI output. Prompting alone is not enough. Strategic thinking is required.

Every salesperson becomes an agent manager

Managing several specialised agents at once will become a normal part of the job. The salesperson decides:

- Which information is needed
- Which agent takes on which task

- Which outputs are plausible
- Which recommendations to implement
- When to deliberately choose a different course

The salesperson becomes the manager of a digital team. AI does not make every decision, but few decisions are made without its support.

Leadership changes too

Sales leaders also gain a new role. Previously, they mainly led people. In future, they lead hybrid teams of employees and AI agents. They must define:

- Which tasks are automated
- Which responsibilities remain with people
- Which data may be used
- How quality is measured
- Which governance is required

Sales leadership develops from managing activity to managing the system.

The biggest mistakes

Many companies take one of two extreme positions. Some believe AI will replace salespeople entirely. Others treat it as just another productivity tool. Both views are too narrow.

AI does not replace a trusted customer relationship, but it increasingly replaces routine tasks. The winners will be companies that combine the two intelligently.

Competition is changing

The greatest competitive advantage will not come from the best language model or the largest technology provider. The difference lies in:

- How well companies organise their AI agents
- The quality of their data
- The clarity of their governance
- How professionally salespeople work with their digital colleagues

AI is becoming part of the standard toolkit. The ability to orchestrate it effectively becomes the differentiator.

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