

# How to Dramatically Enhance Your Sales Technology ROI

A Complete Guide



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# Introduction

Sales technology solutions are evolving rapidly. Many new products and features enter the market every year. For most businesses, this means selecting the right sales technology is a daunting task. Done correctly, though, it can be an incredible asset to your organization. Sales technology solutions can revolutionize how you do business, increasing the productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness of your entire sales organization. Depending on the size of your company, an effective sales technology stack could even equate to *millions* in additional revenue every year.

**This only happens, though, when you select the right sales technology solutions for your organization. In this e-book, we'll explore this issue by answering these questions:**

- **What does it mean to have the “right” sales technology?**
- **How are organizations getting their sales technology selection wrong?**
- **Why is it increasingly difficult for sales organizations to get the right suite of sales tools?**
- **Why do most organizations have extremely low sales technology adoption rates?**
- **What are the consequences of choosing the wrong sales technology?**

Most importantly, we'll outline the step-by-step process for helping ensure your selection, adoption, and integration of sales technology yield the most dramatic return on your investment.

Read on to learn how the most lucrative and successful enterprise and midmarket companies approach sales technology selection, and discover how to apply those best practices to your own organization.



# Chapter 1

## 6 Key Problems with Sales Technology Selection Today

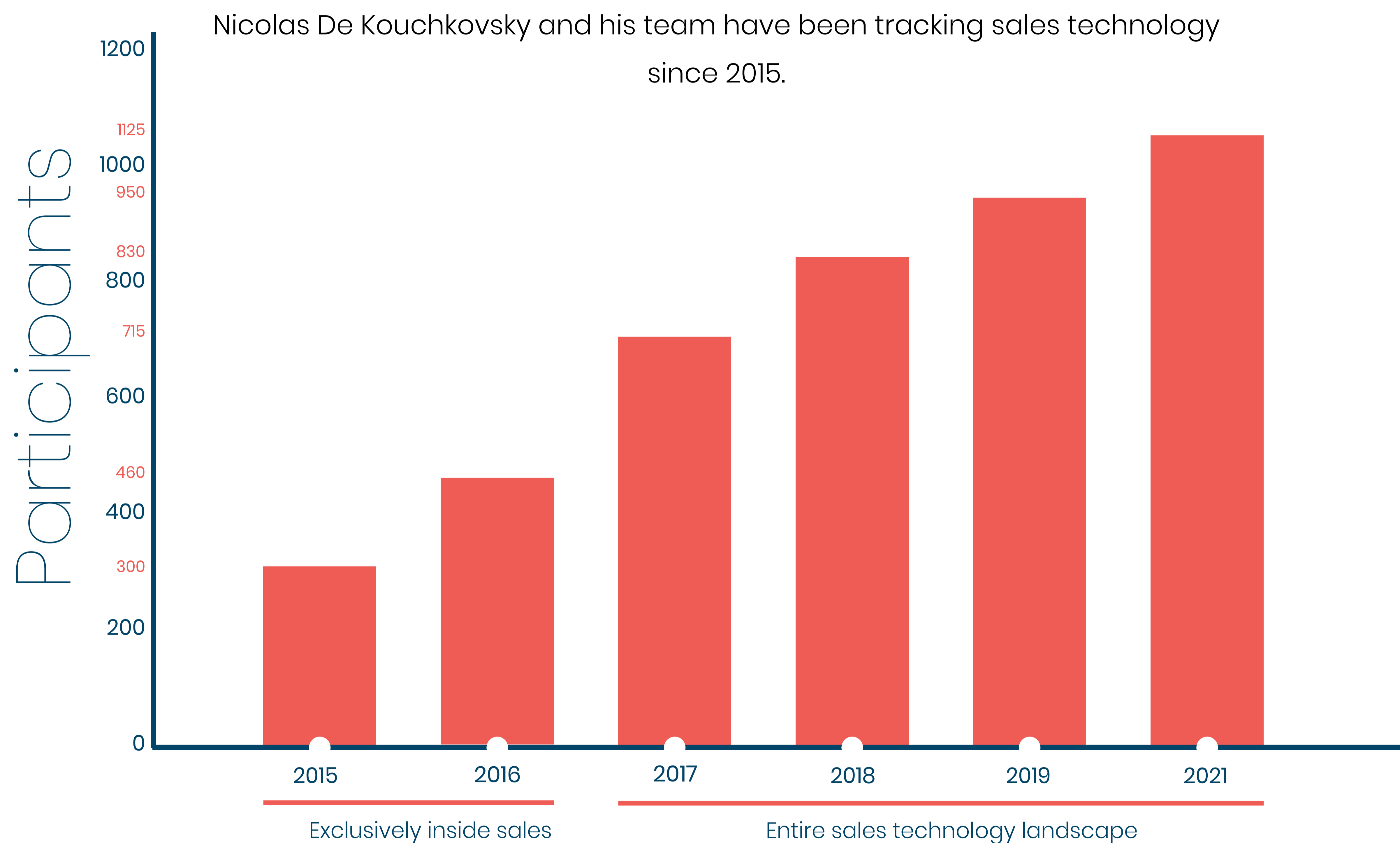
Selecting your organization's sales technology stack is difficult today for several significant reasons:

- Overly Complex and Crowded Landscape
- No Sales Technology, Wrong Sales Technology, or Complacency with Existing Sales Technology
- Too Much Money Spent on Sales Technology Systems
- Low Buy-In and Poor Adoption of Sales Tech
- Third-Party Resources for Sales Technology Selection
- No Sales Technology Selection Strategy



## 1 Overly Complex and Crowded Landscape

The first major hurdle for any company selecting sales technology today is how crowded and complex the landscape has become.



**Note:** The team did not release findings in 2020. See their 2021 sales tech<sup>1</sup> landscape for a more detailed look at the research results.

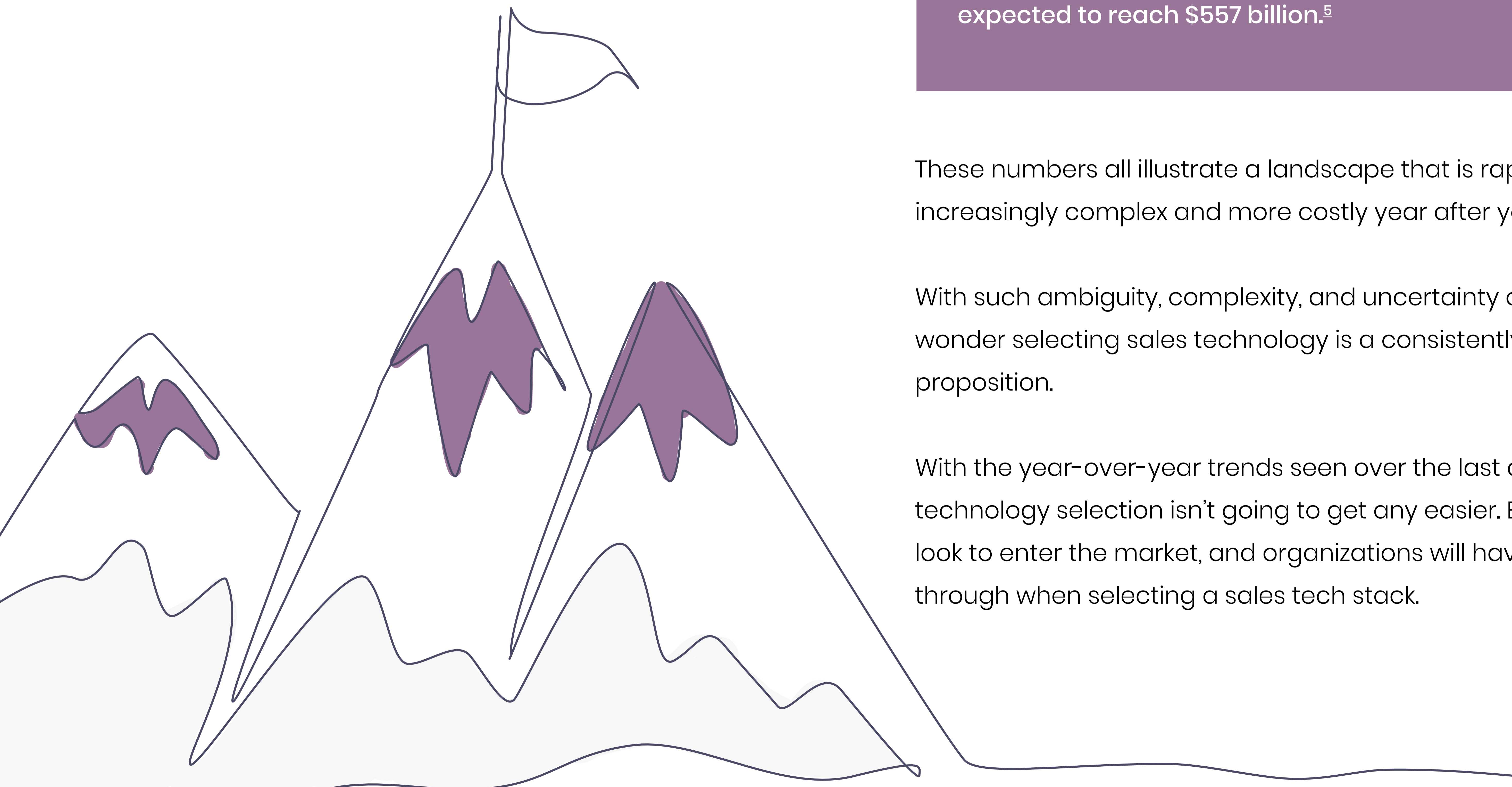
Trends indicate there is an explosion in sales tech spending as well.

- By 2025, CRM software alone is expected to reach over \$80 billion in revenue.<sup>2</sup>
- Global sales performance management software was around \$4.2 billion in 2020 and is expected to be more than \$8.7 billion by 2026.<sup>3</sup>
- In 2020, the sales enablement platform market was valued at \$1.7 billion. By 2028, it's projected to be \$7.3 billion.<sup>4</sup>
- Enterprise software spending is estimated at \$506 billion for 2021. By 2022, it's expected to reach \$557 billion.<sup>5</sup>

These numbers all illustrate a landscape that is rapidly expanding and becoming increasingly complex and more costly year after year.

With such ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty on the part of the buyer, it is little wonder selecting sales technology is a consistently overwhelming and difficult proposition.

With the year-over-year trends seen over the last decade, it's also clear sales technology selection isn't going to get any easier. Every year, more and more solutions look to enter the market, and organizations will have more and more choices to wade through when selecting a sales tech stack.



## 2 No Sales Technology, Wrong Sales Technology, or Complacency with Existing Sales Technology

In this complex, crowded landscape, many organizations end up making one of three mistakes. All can be financially costly.

### **No Sales Technology**

The first mistake is choosing no sales technology at all. Companies can't decide what's going to be a good fit for their organization, so they abstain from sales technology altogether. While this saves a company the initial expense of software licensing and fees, it hinders your sales team from being their most productive, efficient, and effective.

Without the right sales technology, companies struggle to keep up and to compete in this selling landscape. Sales reps are stuck doing manual work that could be automated, and there's no central repository of data (a "source of truth") that allows for smart, informed decision-making. This all affects the bottom line and contributes to the startling statistic that sales reps consistently only spend 37 percent of their time on revenue-generating activities.

This is to say nothing of the costs associated with employee turnover. Lacking support and the tools that enable a sales rep's success can contribute to higher employee churn, and that's a big financial blow.

According to this research<sup>(6,7)</sup>, here are some startling stats:

- In the 2021 Bureau of Labor Statistics report, the overall turnover rate is 57.3 percent.
- The average cost to replace an employee is up to two times that employee's salary.
- Replacing high-level employees (managers and those with specialized skills) can cost up to 400 percent of the annual salary.




## Wrong Technology

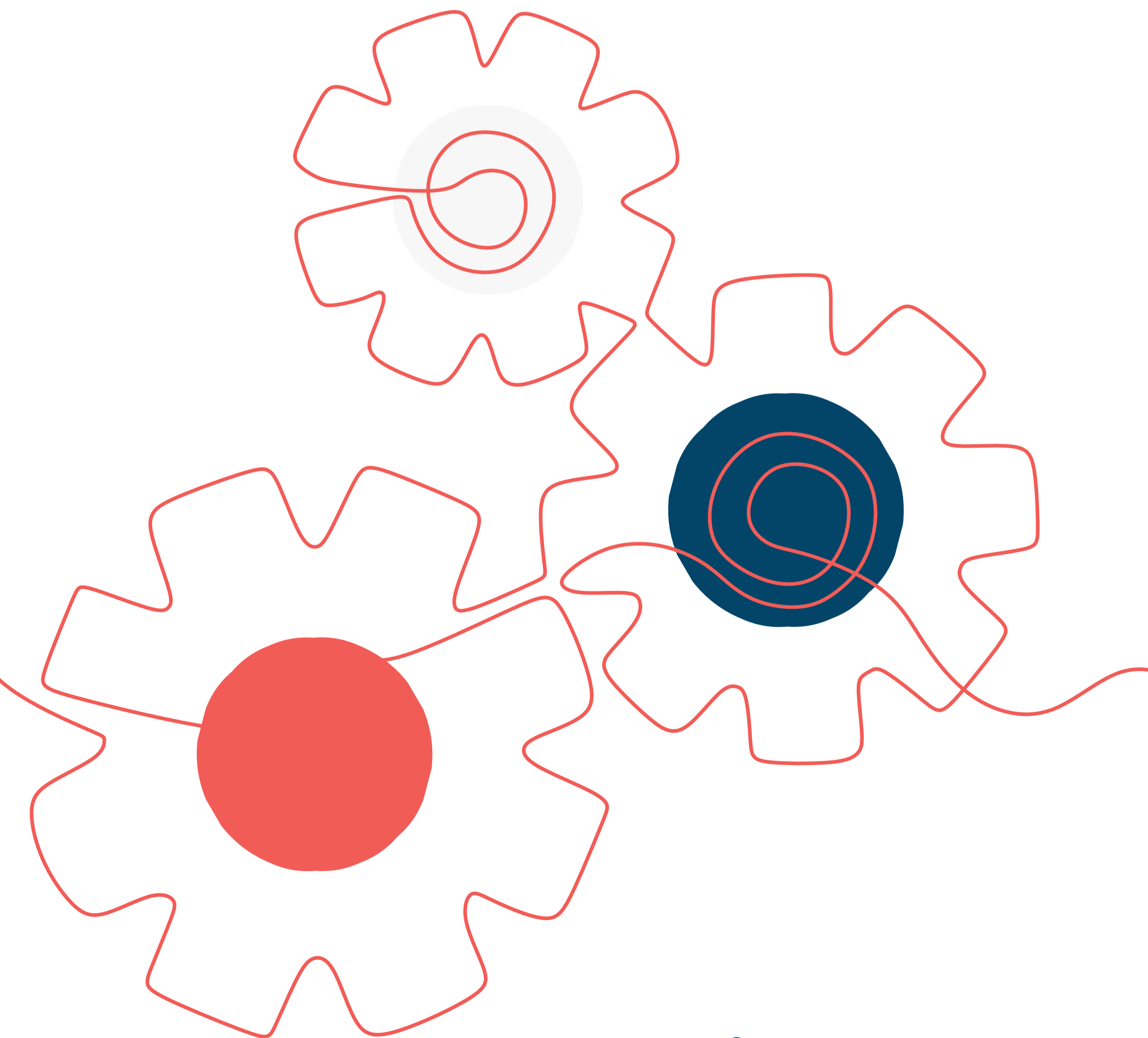
The second common mistake is selecting sales technology that isn't a good fit for your organization. (With so many options available, it's an understandable mistake!)

### What exactly does it mean for a technology to be “wrong,” though?

- The technology provides more functionality than you need, which often means overpaying.
- The technology leaves gaps in the needs of your sales reps.
- Your organization doesn't have the adequate capabilities to use the sales technology successfully.
- The sales technology can't scale with your organization as you grow.
- The sales technology is not a good fit or is not integrated well with your sales strategies, processes, and systems.
- The sales technology does not successfully integrate with your other solutions. This often results in wasted time manually moving data from one system to another. In some cases, it means the solution takes more time than it saves.
- The sales technology was selected based on peer review, which is prone to bias from the reviewers. Not only are women greatly underrepresented in the peer review process, but reviewers are much more likely to have a preference for work done by those of the same gender.
- The sales technology doesn't align with corporate stakeholders' goals and objectives.



**Note:** Deciding not to choose sales technology doesn't mean your sellers aren't choosing sales technologies on their own. (Think LinkedIn Sales Navigator, third-party data providers, and engagement tools to track prospect interactions.) Casting a light on this “shadow sales tech” reveals critical things your sellers need.





## Complacency with Existing Sales Technology

Many midmarket and enterprise organizations do have sales technology solutions, but there's a general complacency around innovation, change, and movement within that sales tech stack. Because they are unsure how best to tackle their problems and hesitant about what direction to move, they end up sticking with what they already have.

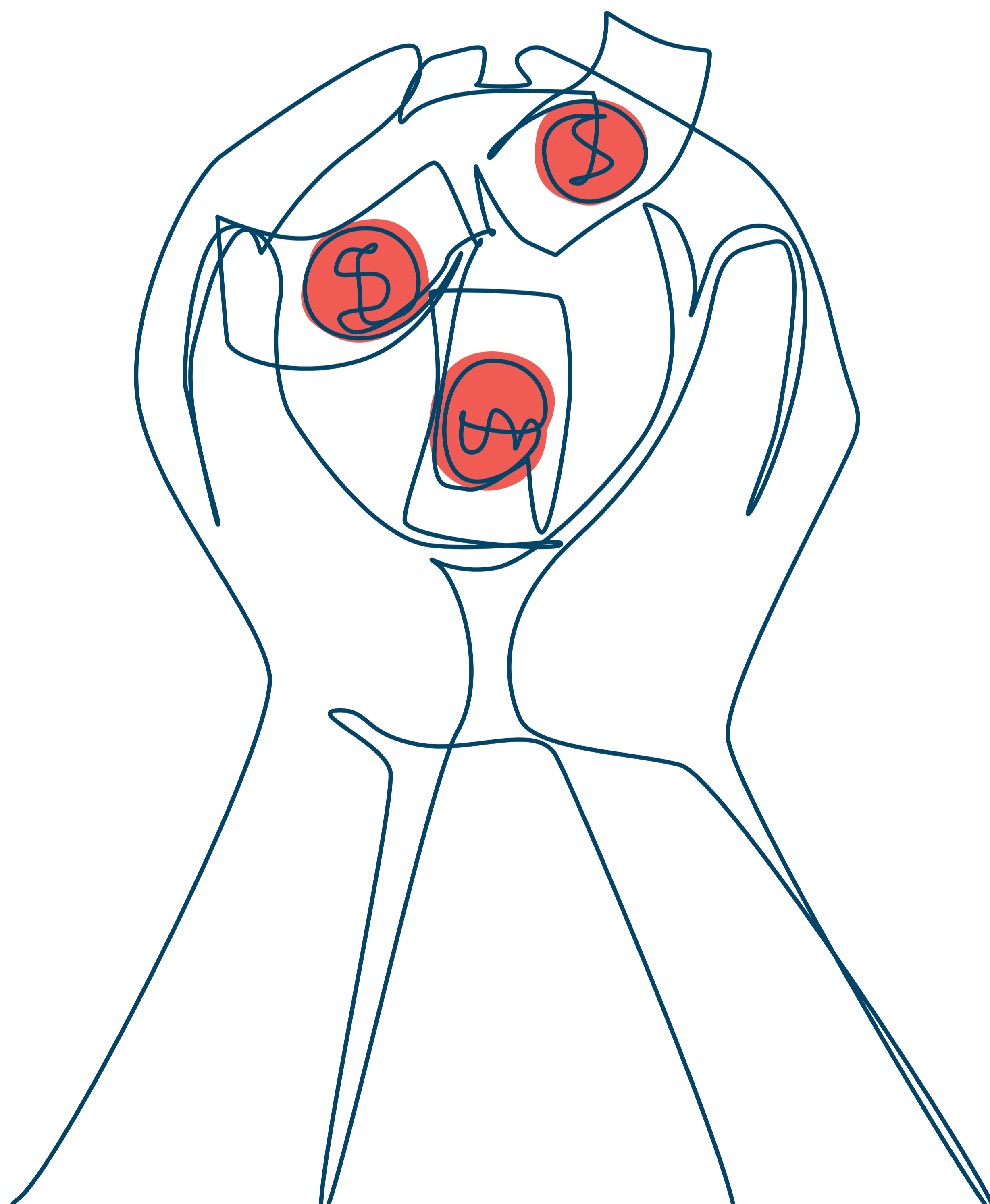
This mindset can lead to stagnation. A sales technology stack must be viewed as something that's always adjusting to changing situations. This is true whether those changes are happening internally within the organization or externally in the general buying landscape. As just one example, there's been a recent shift from focusing on product to providing a more customer-centric sales approach. Your sales technologies today need to help your sales reps offer the kind of value, guidance, and information customers want and need now.

Another facet of complacency is having sales technology available to your sellers, but it's not being used. This poor adoption can happen for a number of reasons. ([See problem number four for a more detailed breakdown.](#))

Organizations must always beware of the phrases "we've always done it this way" or "it's good enough."

### 3 Too Much Money Spent on Sales Technology Systems

Many organizations are spending more for their sales technology than necessary. This can happen for several reasons:



- ***The organization buys in at the wrong tier.***

An enterprise company, for example, might opt for the gold standard of a given sales tech solution. This is not because they've carefully vetted the solution and found its core functionality aligns with their sales processes, strategies, and systems. Instead, they assume at their level of financial success or organizational complexity that they'll need it. This kind of mindset can lead to a lot of financial waste.

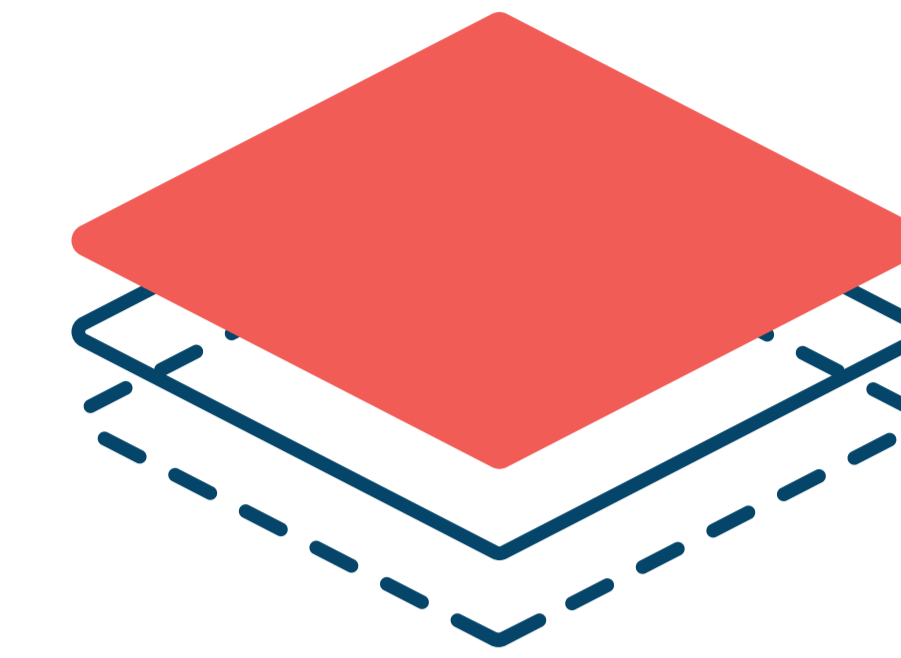
Instead of assuming your organization needs the most robust version of a sales tech solution, examine the actual capabilities of that tool. Ensure its core functionality fits within your overall sales strategy, meets your requirements, and helps you work toward your revenue-generating goals and objectives.

- ***There's overlap in functionality across the sales tech stack.***

Unless it's a highly specialized tool, most sales technology solutions do multiple things. This can be a great way to keep your sales tech stack expenses down, but it can also quickly lead to overlap. You might not even realize it, but you could have several sales tech tools that do the same thing. To be more financially efficient, be cognizant of the full functionality of every sales tech tool you're using and how each one aligns and integrates into your overall strategy. If there's overlap, there could be ways to reduce the pricing tier or even to eliminate a tool altogether. This would minimize your overall sales tech budget or free up some additional budget without losing any functionality.

- ***There are gaps in the sales tech stack.***

Underpaying for sales tech can be just as harmful as overpaying. When you have a gap, or a need, it's costing you in ways that are both overt and ancillary. Maybe your sales reps are manually sending emails one at a time. If that's the case, they are dedicating a tremendous amount of time to an activity that could be made more efficient and profitable with any number of sales tech solutions. In these kinds of instances, a sales tech solution can yield more profit than it costs—sometimes many, many times over.



Don't forget to also consider costs that are more difficult to quantify. Sales rep dissatisfaction or frustration associated with unmet needs could lead to poor sales tech adoption or even highly costly personnel churn.

It's also important to note gaps don't just happen in the functionality of the sales technology solutions. It's equally vital to identify gaps within your processes, strategies, and systems. To alleviate specific gaps in your sales tech stack, you must have alignment between your sales technology solutions and an effective integration program that aligns to your overall sales strategy.

## 4 Low Buy-In and Poor Adoption of Sales Tech

One of the biggest reasons people see less-than-optimal results with their sales technology is because the people who are meant to utilize the solution are misusing it, underusing it, or not using it at all.

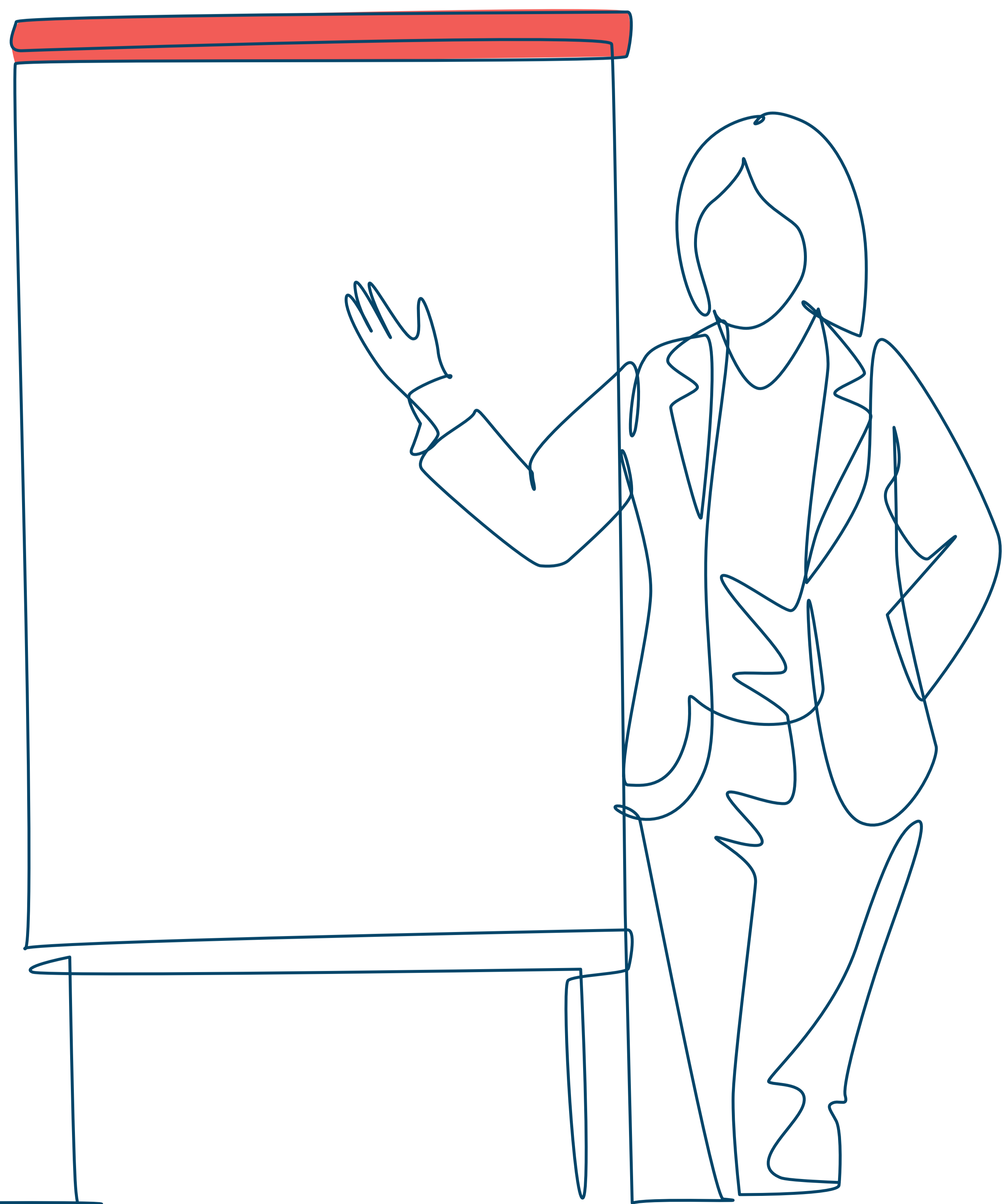
What accounts for this low buy-in and poor adoption of sales technology?

At the highest level, it's the fact that organizations don't have a strategy and process in place for sales tech selection, adoption, and integration. The result? They can't effectively utilize that sales technology.

**Let's take a closer look at some of the individual components that contribute to that lack of overall strategy:**

**•Lack of adequate onboarding, ongoing training, and coaching.**

One significant reason organizations have sales technology that just sits on the shelf is because they don't adequately invest in sales technology training and coaching. They hand the solution down, tell the sales reps they'll all be using this new tool, and then don't provide a sound onboarding and ongoing training program.



Yes, many sales technology platforms are designed to be user friendly, but training is still a crucial (and often overlooked) component of successful sales technology adoption. Be cognizant of the entire spectrum of sales reps within your organization. Some might be more technologically savvy than others. If you want to see a positive return on your investment, effective, adequate training and coaching should be made readily available to anyone who needs it.

The sales training should include a knowledge-based approach that focuses on a “learning by doing” process. It should provide sales professionals with a road map that allows them to take action when using the technology. This will make them more productive and effective, and it will allow them to spend more time selling.

**•Failing to identify, involve, and align your sales reps and stakeholders.**

Another big reason sales technology selection falters is because the relevant stakeholders and sales reps are not identified, consulted, or aligned. (This means the people who are actually being asked to incorporate and to use the solution every day.) In many companies, managers and higher-ups make these kinds of financial decisions and then tell the sales reps the results of those discussions. When your stakeholders and reps aren't consulted or aligned, three negative things happen.

One, you don't have an accurate sense of what your sales reps actually need and want. You don't know what's going to move the financial needle the most because you haven't asked the people who have the most insight into that.

Two, your stakeholders feel less personally invested in the entire sales process. Their voices aren't being heard, which means they are less likely to adopt that solution with any consistency or longevity.

Three, your sales strategies, processes, and systems are not effectively aligned to the sales technologies or the stakeholders' desired outcomes. This leaves a working environment that's very siloed. Stakeholders are negatively impacted by this approach, and it can dramatically affect your revenue-generating opportunities.



Including your stakeholders and sales representatives in the decision-making process and communicating with them throughout (before, during, and after selecting a sales tech solution) is an easy way to help ensure you're actually choosing solutions that will make a significant and positive impact on your organization.

- ***Your sales tech stack is not adaptable.***

If doing business during the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that companies that wish to thrive must be agile and adaptable. If you think of your sales tech stack as something static, you're in for wasted resources and poor adoption. Once a tool no longer does what it's meant to do, you can expect adoption to drop. For continued, sustainable, effective sales technology adoption, you must constantly be assessing your goals, communicating with your stakeholders, and strategically adjusting your sales technology solutions as necessary in order to match the needs of your team.

- ***The organization doesn't effectively communicate the value of the solution.***

Effectively communicating the value of the sales technology to your stakeholders and your reps is essential to driving buy-in and adoption. Sales reps aren't usually overly enamored by new sales tech, so you need well-crafted value messaging that resonates and they can align with.

For example, convey that incorporating a specific sales technology is not about creating more activities for the rep but making substantially more money. Then provide the details that back that claim up.



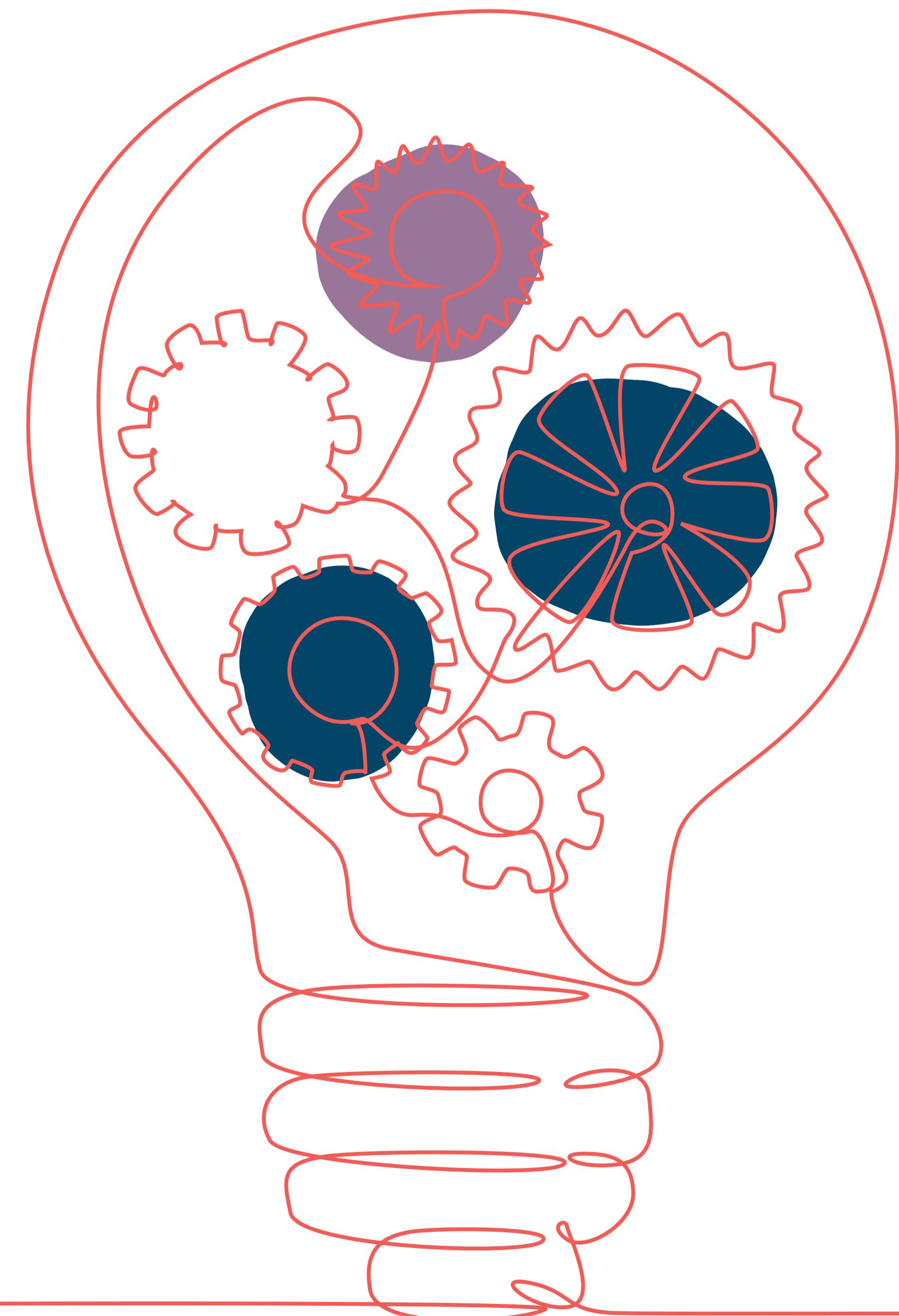
## 5 Third-Party Resources for Sales Technology Selection

Rather than creating a comprehensive and personalized sales technology strategy (see below), many organizations rely on third-party resources like Gartner, Forrester, or G2. They use these resources to learn about and to compare sales technology solutions. That poses a few issues, though.

First and foremost, especially when you're reading reviews, remember that every organization is different. Just because a solution didn't work for one company doesn't mean it won't prove financially beneficial for you. The reverse is true as well. A solution that had a big financial impact in one company could have no impact (or even a negative impact) on your company. Everyone has different problems, pain points, challenges, and needs. There is no one perfect sales technology stack that will work across all organizations.

Second, when it comes to selecting your sales technology, you need an entirely personalized perspective. High-level information about a sales technology solution can be helpful, and it has its place. When it comes to selecting a final choice, though, you need to be relying on those who have an in-depth understanding of the nuance and intricacies of your organization.

If you're unclear about where to start with this process or you're unsure if you are prepared to make these significant process-level decisions with the greatest level of positive financial impact, third-party resources should be limited to consultants, advisors, or analysts who are offering the kind of personalized insight and advice that's going to prove most helpful and drive the most economic value.

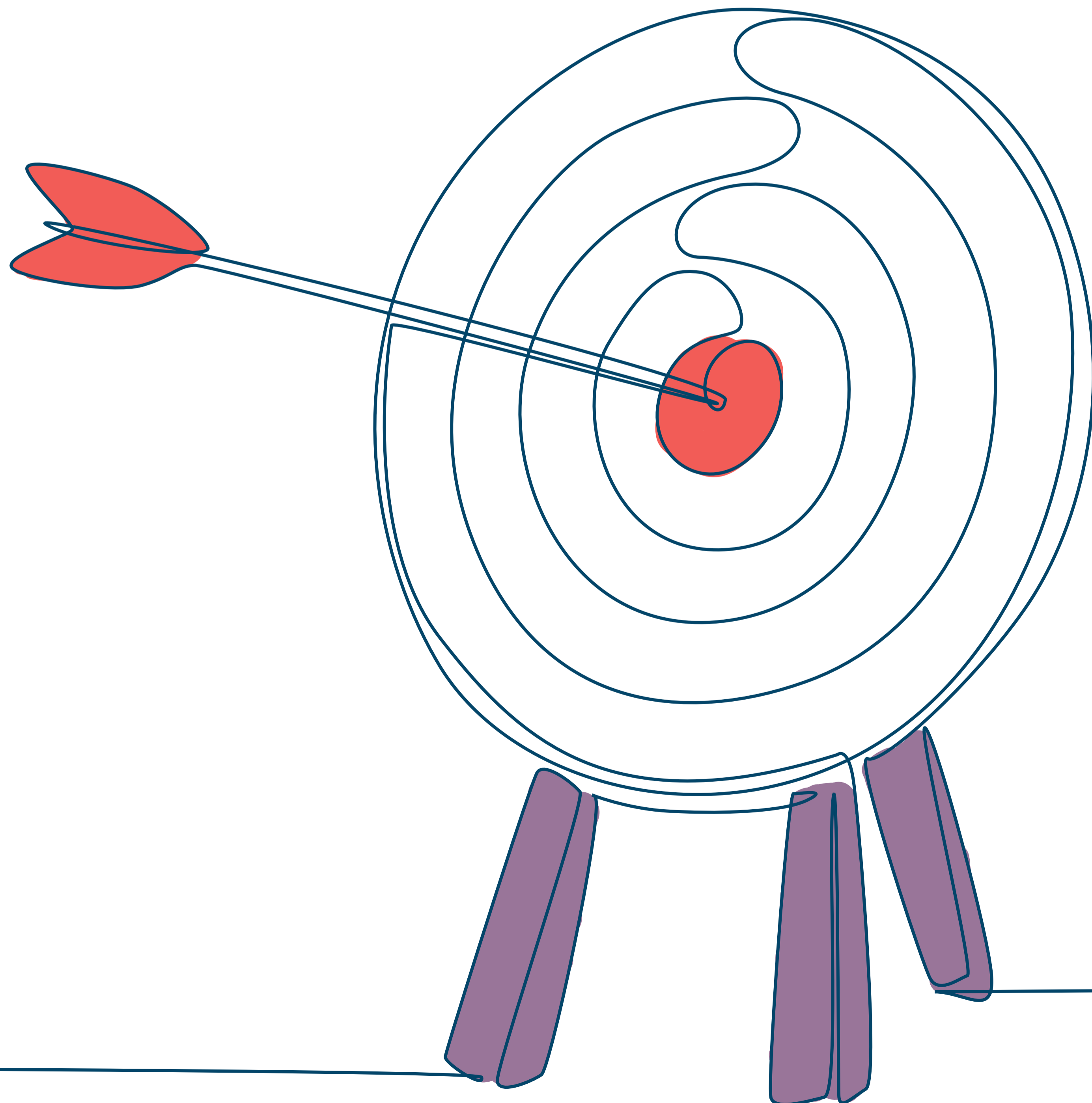


## 6 No Sales Technology Selection Strategy

This is the single most important problem within sales technology selection today. Organizations don't have processes, systems, and strategies in place **before** they start evaluating sales technology.

### Here's the **WRONG** way to select sales technology;

- You identify a problem within your organization.
- You pick a sales technology that addresses that problem.
- You don't align stakeholders across departments.
- You tell your sales organization this is the new tool they'll be using.
- You experience little to no buy-in or adoption and a negative return on investment.
- You abandon the solution.
- Repeat with a new solution.



This is a reactive way to approach your sales technology stack. It ends up only treating symptoms rather than the underlying cause of the issue. With sales technology, you have to ask yourself: How much money are we spending on Band-Aids without actually fixing the foundational organizational problems?

Sales technology on its own can't solve any problem within a company. It's just a tool. For sales technology to be effective, it needs to be used as part of an overarching sales strategy. Remember, no technology will make a bad process better. It might just make it a little faster.

This reactionary, nonstrategic approach leads to tremendous financial waste. This happens through churn and uncertainty within your sales tech stack, but it can even affect the morale, performance, and longevity of your sales reps. (Churn in your employees can be a particularly big financial issue. Check out this breakdown<sup>8</sup> that shows how the overall cost of hiring a \$100,000 salesperson actually sits at \$232,211.)

While it's tempting to jump at various sales tech solutions, the actual selection of the tool should be the last step in your process. Not the first. Take an honest, holistic look at your processes, strategies, and people, and fix the underlying problems within your sales organization. Create a sound sales strategy. Develop a sales technology strategy that integrates and aligns with that overall sales strategy. Then begin engaging with vendors that offer tools to address your most pressing priorities first.

## Consequences of Poor Sales Technology Selection

Taken together, these problems in the market today create an environment where it's incredibly easy to see a poor return on your sales

According to this multiyear report<sup>9</sup>, the numbers are staggering:

- Every single computer in every single US and UK office has an average of \$259 worth of unnecessary software.
- For all US and UK companies, that totals \$34 billion of wasted money.
- Of all software solutions purchased, 30 percent are entirely unused. Another 8 percent are only rarely used.

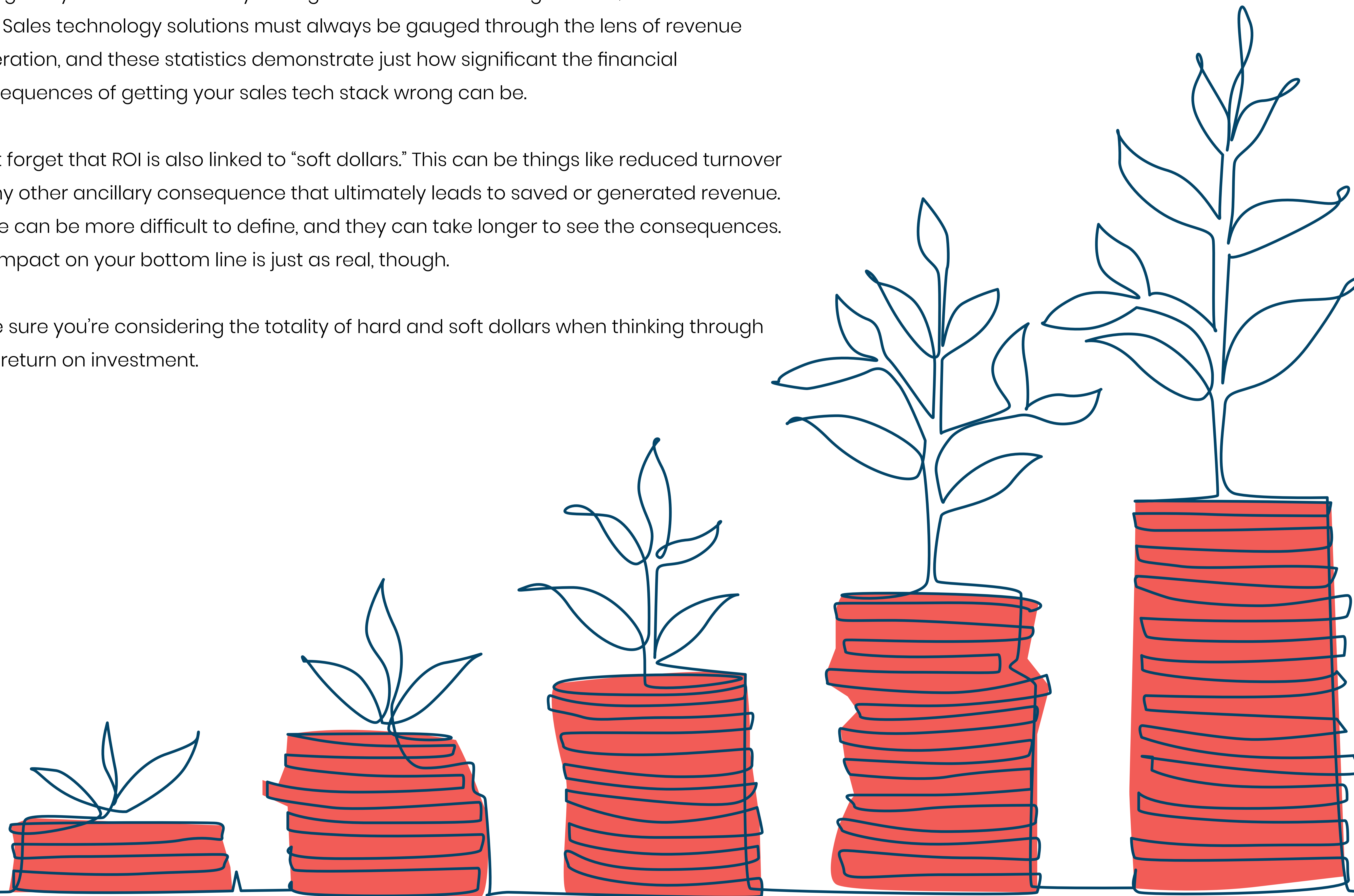




Think about your current sales technology solutions and the kind of adoption you're seeing. Ask yourself how much your organization is contributing to that \$34 billion hole. Sales technology solutions must always be gauged through the lens of revenue generation, and these statistics demonstrate just how significant the financial consequences of getting your sales tech stack wrong can be.

Don't forget that ROI is also linked to "soft dollars." This can be things like reduced turnover or any other ancillary consequence that ultimately leads to saved or generated revenue. These can be more difficult to define, and they can take longer to see the consequences. The impact on your bottom line is just as real, though.

Make sure you're considering the totality of hard and soft dollars when thinking through your return on investment.



# Chapter 2

## How People Select Sales Technology Today and Why It's Costing Them

Every year, navigating the business landscape becomes more complex. This includes determining the best way to engage with your buyers in a meaningful, effective way. (As the pandemic made particularly clear, [best practices for buyer interactions](#) are always in flux.)

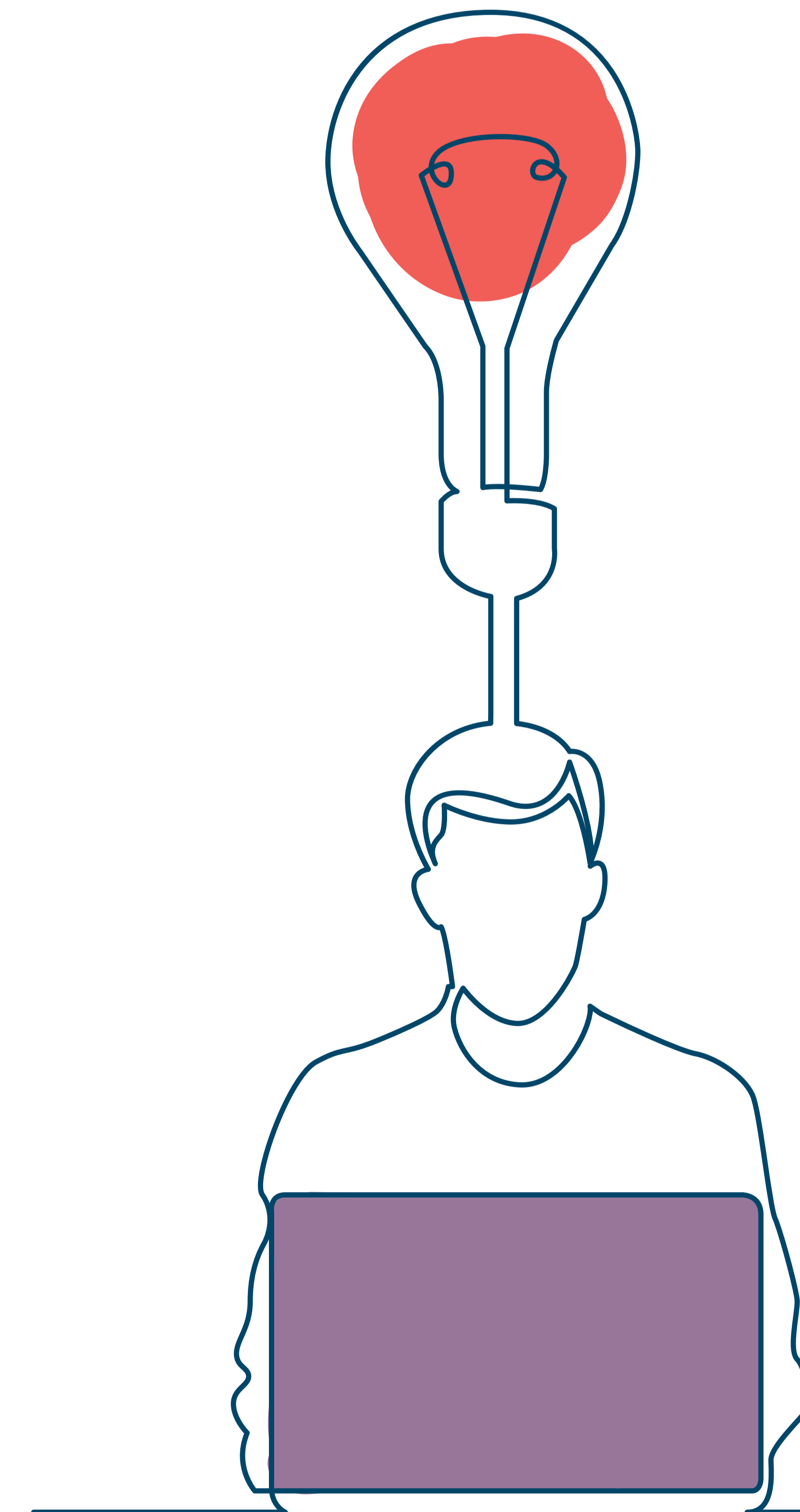
This increasing complexity is one essential reason a business can't afford to go without the help of sales technology. If you're manually doing every task and not gathering any actionable data throughout your sales cycle, there's simply no way you can make informed decisions moving forward. There's also no way to keep up with competition that is benefiting from automation or solid data tracking.

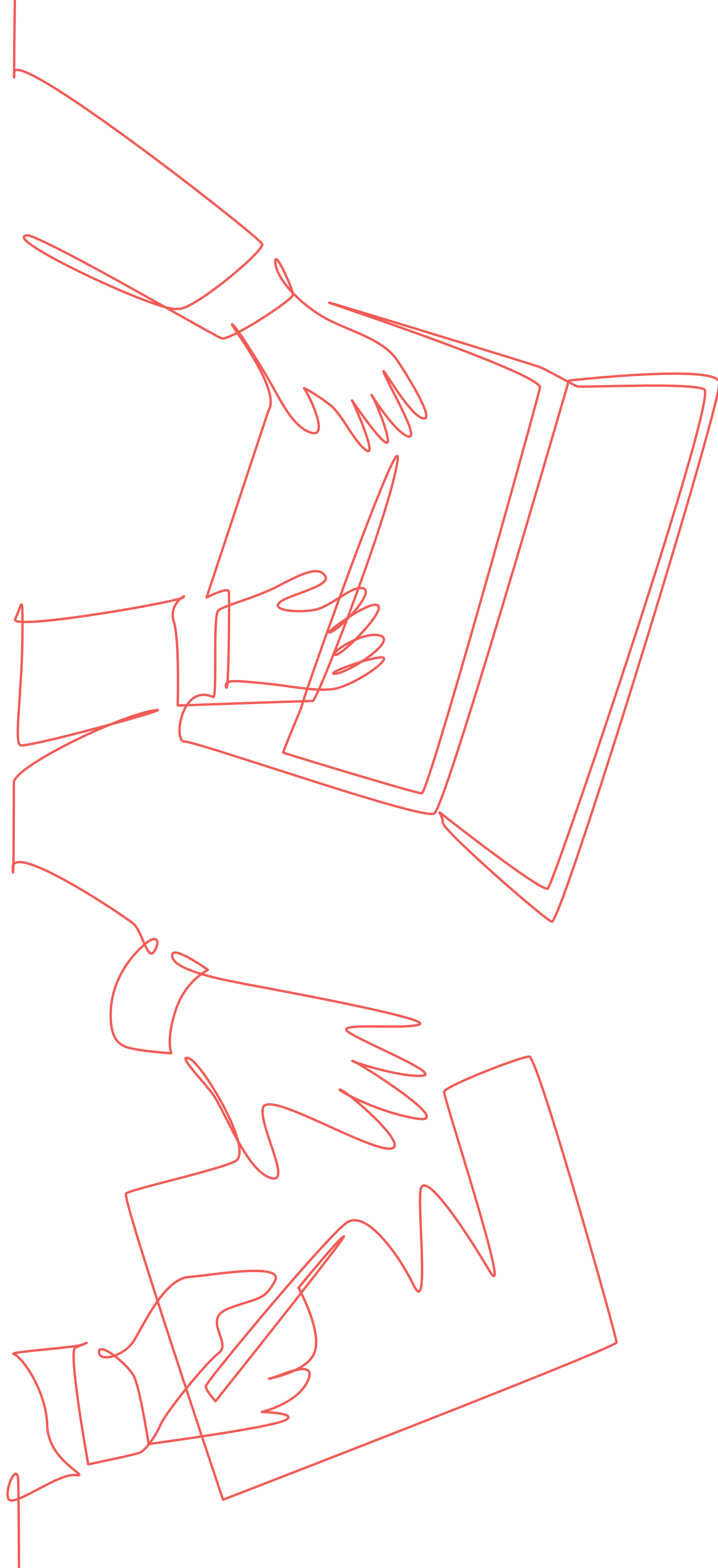
When it comes to sales technology selection, though, so many companies are either losing money or not making nearly as much as they could with any given sales tech stack. So, what are businesses doing today, and why isn't it working?

### Reacting, Not Strategizing

A lack of sales technology selection strategy was listed as one of the fundamental problems surrounding today's sales technology landscape. It's such a pervasive problem, though, it's worth looking more closely at this issue.

When an organization recognizes it has a problem, the most common reaction is to adopt a solution that will fix the problem. It seems logical. There's a problem, and this solution offers an answer.





What ends up happening, though, is that the organization never takes a good, hard look at the actual problem. They only see the surface-level issue that results from the more complex, underlying organizational problem. It's like a doctor exclusively treating symptoms and never fixing the illness that's causing all those problems. In that case, the patient (that is to say, the organization) would never get better.

The only way to heal is to stop reacting to symptoms and to start treating the illness.

As one example, take a lack of conversion surrounding your cold calling. You could address that problem and "fix" it by bringing on software that allows your reps to call more people every single day. You could skyrocket the number of calls every sales rep completes...and still see the exact same level of conversion. In that scenario, you're still not generating revenue from the activity, but now you're also actively spending money on a sales tech solution that's just amplifying the negative attributes surrounding your cold calling.

In these instances, you have to be ruthlessly honest. You have to ask yourself hard, uncomfortable questions where you might not like the answers.

- When was the last time you assessed your messaging? Is it working? Does it resonate with your prospects?
- How mature is your market?
- Is your product or service working? Does it have defects, flaws, or issues that are torpedoing deals within the sales cycle?

If you know your organization needs sales technology solutions, the inclination is to start with the technology. A successful sales tech stack, however, puts sales technology selection as the absolute **last** step in the process.

Before you even think about selecting a sales tech tool, you need to put in the work to devise a strategy. This ensures you've created an environment that's conducive to the success of these sales tech tools once implemented.

So, this is the process that **doesn't** work. Let's start to unpack what does work.

# Chapter 3

## 5 Stages You Must Go Through for Successful, Profitable Sales Technology Selection

Every organization is different. Their problems, issues, challenges, hurdles, size, markets, verticals, and buyers all create a unique situation within each business. This means there is no one sales technology solution that's going to work for every company.

There is, however, a step-by-step process for successfully selecting sales technology and adopting it within your organization. Any company can take this framework, tailor every step to their needs, and have a profitable sales technology stack.

### The 5 E's of Sales Technology Selection

Here are the five steps, each of which will be discussed in its own chapter:

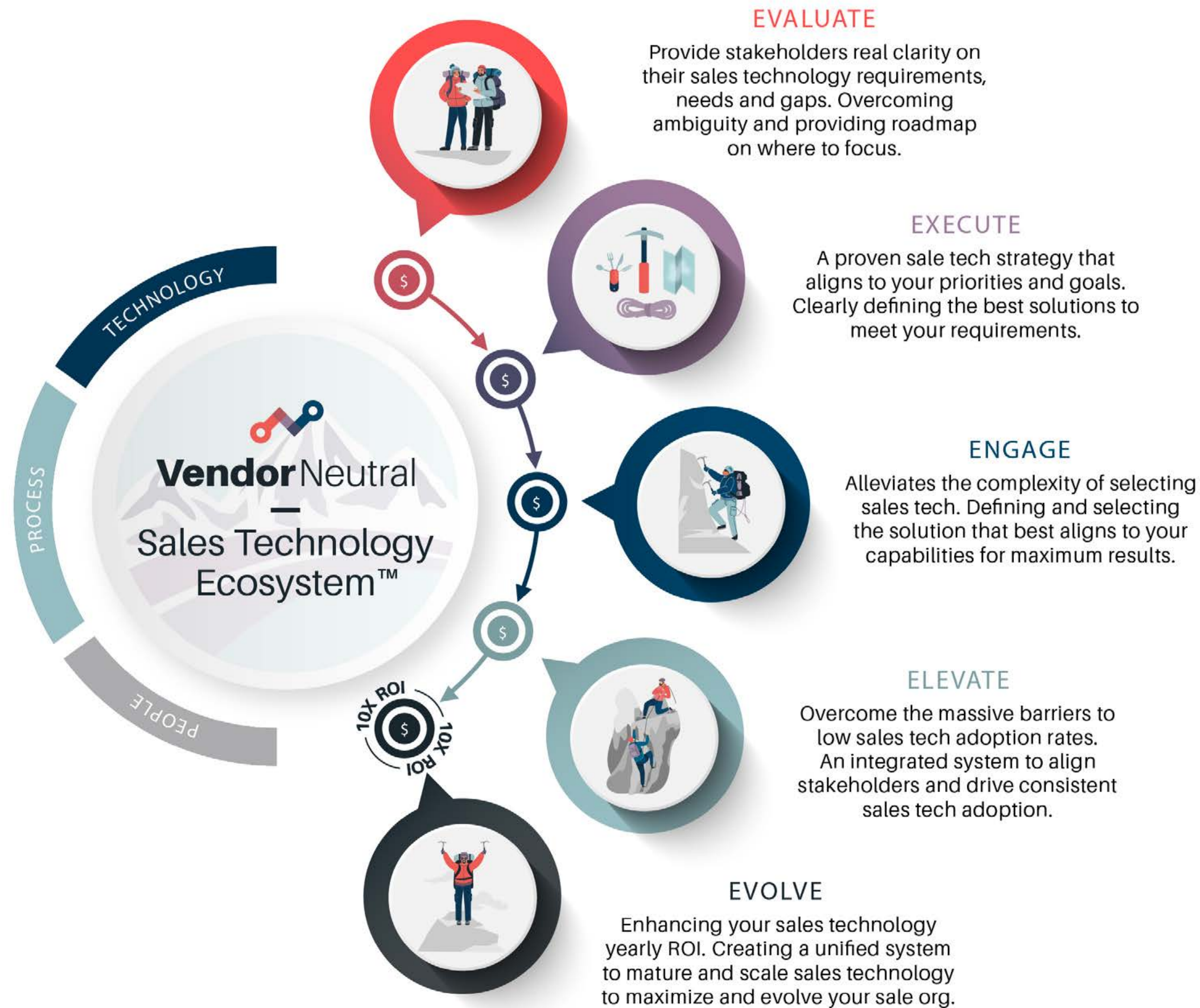
- **Evaluate** (the auditing stage)
- **Execute** (the strategy creation stage)
- **Engage** (the vendor engagement stage)
- **Elevate** (the adoption stage)
- **Evolve** (the increasing return on investment and scaling stage)



At Vendor Neutral, we've spent years working with clients and gaining firsthand knowledge about the massive challenges and complexities associated with sales technology.

Using the expertise we've developed over that time, we created a proven, repeatable, and scalable ecosystem for the successful selection, adoption, and integration of sales technology.

This ecosystem approach is comprised of these 5 Es:



# Chapter 4

## Evaluate (The Auditing Stage)

The first stage in creating an environment that's conducive to successful sales technology selection is the **evaluation stage**.

During this phase, you complete a number of thorough audits. This includes auditing the following:

### • **Your stakeholders**

One of the most essential audits you'll complete is your stakeholder analysis. The first step is to identify all your relevant stakeholders. Once that's done, you'll need to open a dialogue with them. Determine their pains, challenges, needs, gaps, and barriers to success.

#### Stakeholders are any of the following:

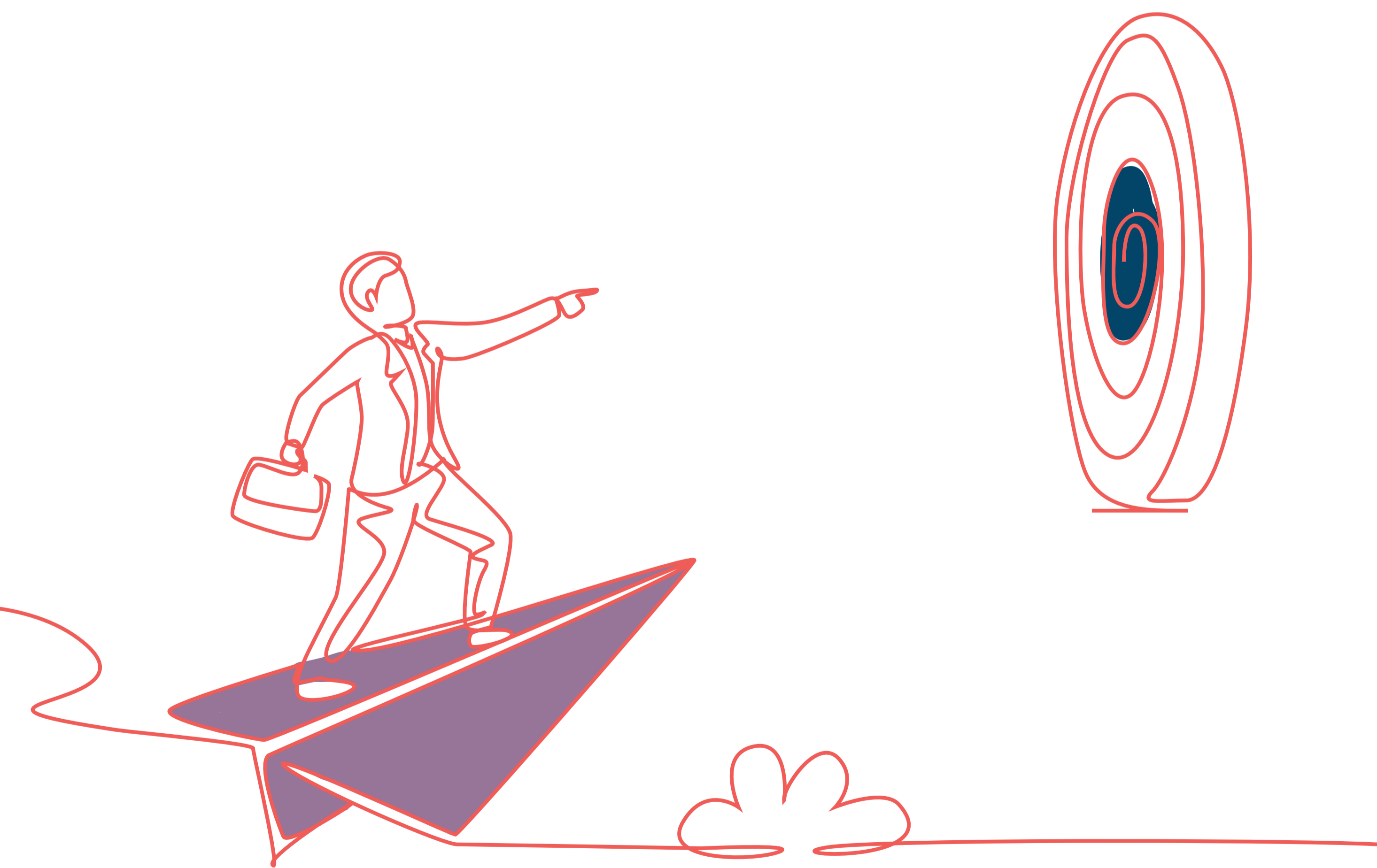
- The people responsible for a process or tool, including the data that goes into it, the actions taken to use that data, and the measurement and reporting on the results.
- The users of the process or tool.
- Those who fund the acquisition of technology.
- Internal resources who manage the technology.

An accurate audit of your stakeholders makes you better equipped to evaluate what sales technology is necessary, what will move the revenue needle, and what will actually get used.



It's also a key to buy-in and adoption. If the stakeholders are an active part of the conversation, they feel heard, and they feel invested in the process. (Nothing stops adoption faster than having a solution forced on a group of stakeholders from upper management!) Poor adoption accounts for a huge amount of the wasted resources associated with sales technology solutions, and collaboration, alignment, and communication can often help to avoid that problem.

Within your audit, you must also ensure your stakeholders are aligned cross-functionally throughout your organization with the correct strategies, processes, and systems. A well-implemented audit process will identify where there are potential silos in your sales, marketing, customer success, and sales enablement departments.




### • **Your needs and goals**

If you don't know what you're trying to accomplish, you'll never be able to assess whether any given sales technology solution is doing what you need it to do. Before you even think about specific sales technology solutions, make sure you know exactly what goals you're trying to accomplish.

Make sure this is a component of your stakeholder analysis. For organizational success, everyone needs to be aligned and working toward shared, known goals.

Once you know what you're trying to accomplish, you'll have a much better sense of what tools will help you reach that goal.



Note: This entire process should not be a one-off. You want to establish ongoing feedback loops. This will allow you to constantly assess what's working and what needs to change.



### •Your gaps in existing strategies, processes, and technology

Again, this information will largely come from your relevant stakeholders. This will help you determine what gaps you encounter in your current sales strategies, processes, and systems and what needs don't currently have a sales technology solution to effectively address them.

### •Your overlap in existing technologies

One of the biggest contributors to sales technology waste is overlap in functionality. So many sales tech solutions are robust tools, and it's incredibly easy to end up paying for multiple solutions that do the same thing.

Make sure you know what's in your existing sales tech stack, but also make sure you know everything those solutions do and where they are integrated. You might not even realize you have two paid solutions that accomplish the same task.

A thorough audit of overlap can sometimes reveal solutions that can be entirely cut, reducing your overall sales tech budget without losing any functionality.

### •Your capabilities

The last important audit to conduct is of your organizational capabilities. There might be a solution that's perfect for your goals, stakeholders, and needs, but if you don't have the resources, people, or infrastructure to use that tool effectively, it's not a good fit for your business in its current state.

## It's Not Just about What You Have

One important note and a common misconception about the auditing process: this is not just about defining and identifying what you have within your organization. It's equally important to determine what you **don't** have. Make sure you're thinking about this for all aspects of your audits—from stakeholders to existing technology to capabilities.



*“Make sure you know what’s in your existing sales tech stack, but also make sure you know everything those solutions do and where they are integrated. You might not even realize you have two paid solutions that accomplish the same task.”*

# Chapter 5

## Execute (The Strategy Creation Stage)

The next stage for successful sales technology selection is arguably the most important...and the one people most often skip: the **execution stage**.

### Alignment between Sales Strategy and Sales Technology Strategy

The first step to successful sales technology selection is understanding that you need a well-thought-out, strategic approach. Creation of a sales technology strategy is essential to initial and ongoing success, but this is exactly where many organizations fall down. Rather than creating strategic processes and systems around the selection of sales technology, they just select tools in a reactionary way as problems arise.

Many sales technology selection processes are also siloed or created independent of group collaboration. To ensure you get the most out of any given tool, a sales technology selection process should align with your overall sales strategy.



### Failing to do this leads to many problems:

- Poor adoption rates.
- Misused, underused, or not used sales tech solutions.
- Sales technology solutions that take more time or money than they save.
- A lack of proper or sufficient training (initial and ongoing).
- A lack of reporting or data tracking, leading to little or no visibility into the efficacy of the solutions.
- Poor or negative return on investment.
- A waste of resources and sales professionals' time.
- Lost revenue from two sources: one, potential sales associated with the increased efficiency and effectiveness of your sales team and, two, wasted resources associated with unused, misused, or underused sales technology.



## Cure the Disease; Don't Treat the Symptoms

When an organization has a problem, it has to figure out if that issue is what actually needs the attention or if it's just a by-product of a bigger underlying problem. In this way, companies should always strive to cure the disease rather than just treat symptoms.

Sales technology solutions today have amazing functionality, and they absolutely have the power to revolutionize a company and its revenue-generating potential. They are, however, just tools. They cannot fix underlying, foundational problems. (You could have the highest quality golf club. If your swing is wrong, though, it'll just help you slice into the woods faster!)

Address your holistic organizational issues and lack of interconnectivity before investing in sales tech, or you're setting yourself up for a lot of wasted time, money, and resources.

# 7 Tips for a Successful Sales Technology Selection Strategy

## 1 Think about Sales Rep Enablement

What would happen if you spent as much time, energy, and resources thinking about your sellers' experience as your customers' experience? Enabling your sales reps is a critical component to successful selling. You need to gain a full understanding of their selling environment, as well as the road map that allows them to spend more time selling.

Again, gather information about what your sales reps need in your stakeholder audit. Nobody knows what your sellers need better than your sellers.

## 2 Learn from Your Competitors

So many organizations look at their competition through the lens of how their products or services are better or worse. A competitor that's outpacing you in the market, however, could be doing so not because of its product but because of its sales strategy. Don't look at what your competitors sell; look at how they sell it. Assess where you're better and worse, and see what you can learn from the sales strategies of your direct competition.

Sources for this can include any of the following:

- Sales reps who came from competitors.
- Win/loss analysis based on discussions with companies that chose another solution.
- Various rating sites where comments can include information about competitors' sales processes.
- Case studies. (Even before engaging with vendors, these can be quite revealing.)



### 3 Think Strategically about Where You're Putting Effort

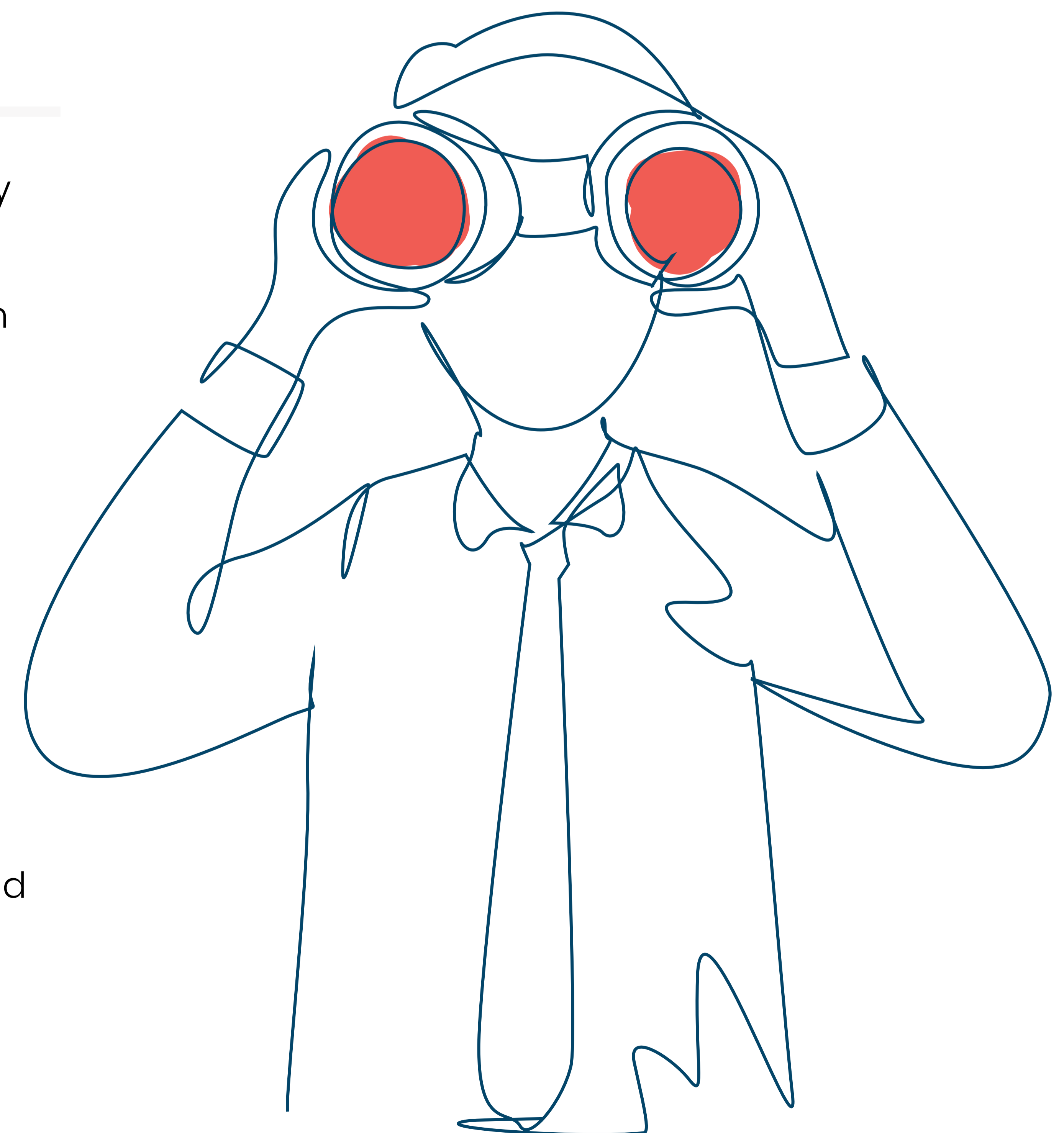
Historically, all channels used to communicate with a prospect degrade over time...if you don't develop a genuine relationship with that prospect. This is true of everything from phone to email to social media. Don't continue to put your time and effort into a means of communication that isn't resulting in tangible results. Change the strategy, approach, and sales messaging, if necessary, to keep a channel relevant. Once you're seeing results, then it makes sense to amplify those efforts with the help of sales technology. If you opt for the technology too soon, you're just putting out ineffective messaging faster and to more people.

### 4 Focus on Results, Not Activities

So many organizations are overly concerned with the "activities" of their sales reps. (Call so many people each day. Send so many cold emails every week. Book this number of meetings every month.) When it comes to sales reps, companies too often equate more and more activities with productivity.

While it's true sales is often a numbers game, you should be shifting your focus to tangible, measurable results. Maybe you only book ten meetings all quarter, but one of those meetings results in a multimillion-dollar deal. That's infinitely more productive than lots of meetings that result in no sales.

Always keep results as your North Star key performance indicator (KPI). With that mindset shift, you'll know what your most pressing priorities are and where you should be looking to amplify and to assist with sales technology solutions.



## 5 Track Results

One of the most useful aspects of sales technology tools is data generation and reporting. With data, you don't have to guess; you can make informed organizational decisions. Track both the data generated by the sales technology solution and any metrics that indicate the efficacy of the solution itself. This way, you'll get invaluable information about your day-to-day operations, but you'll also be able to quantify (in revenue, time saved, or other key metrics) how successful any given sales technology solution has been.

When it comes to data tracking and analysis, don't forget to invest in frontline manager training. If your team of managers don't know what the data means, you can't hope to make successful, effective data-driven decisions from it. This training aspect at the managerial level is often overlooked, but it's a crucial step to enabling your entire sales team.

Work backward by identifying the KPIs and data points you want in order to effectively measure through technology.

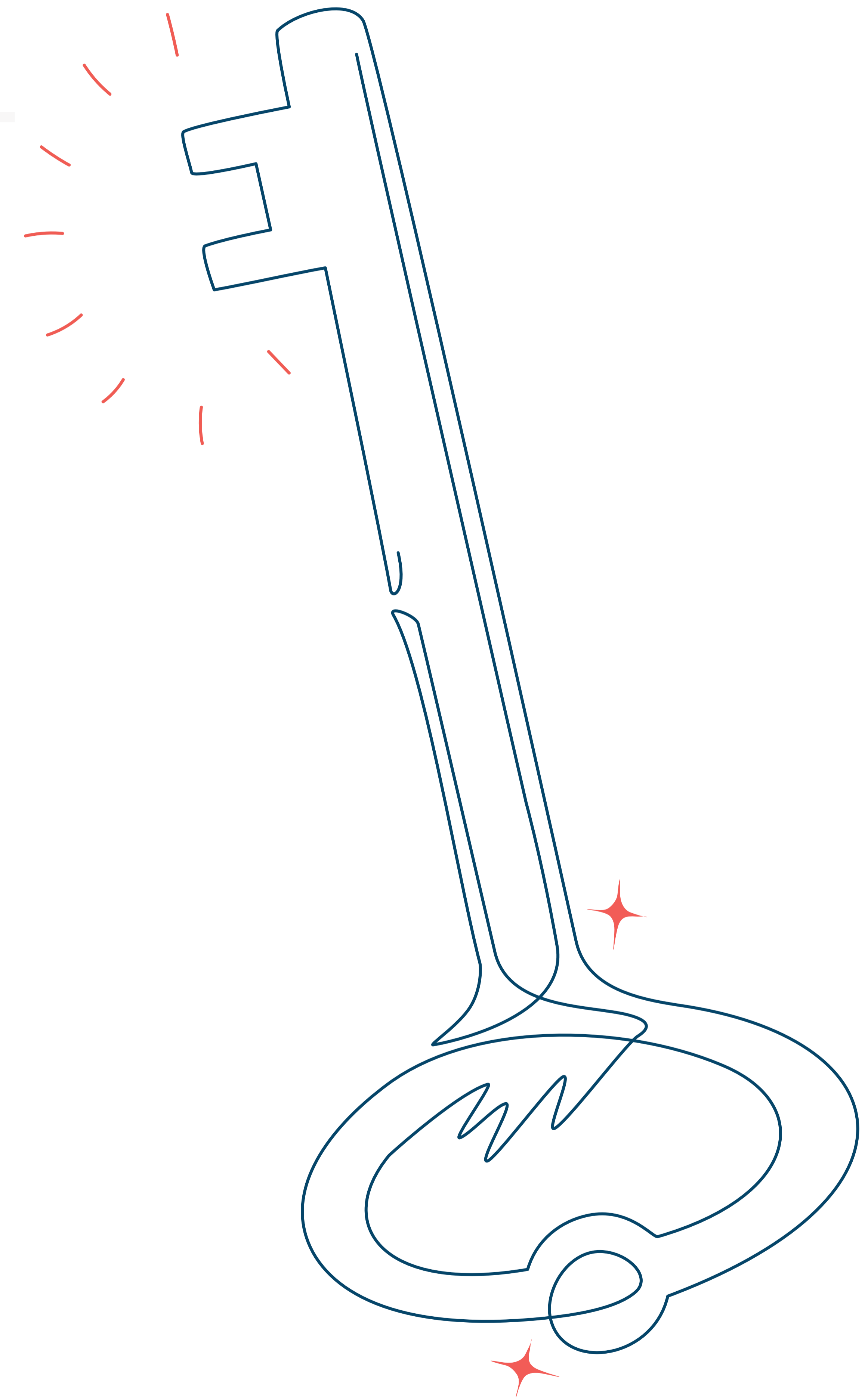


## 6 Avoid “Shiny Object Syndrome”

With sales technology, it’s important to remember that just because it’s cool doesn’t mean it’s correct for your organization. It’s easy to get lured in by all the incredible features and tools these solutions offer today. Always ask yourself, though, where the real value is. With something like conversation intelligence or artificial intelligence, do you have the data, infrastructure, and other capabilities to make those solutions yield a return on investment? Are you willing and able to wait several years before you’ve gathered enough data to make them viable solutions?

Also, when devising a sales technology selection strategy, remember that most people only use a small fraction of the full functionality of a solution. Whether it’s computers or sales technology, people tend to get more robust solutions than they actually need. Don’t be pulled in by the allure of features that are interesting but will cost you more just to sit unused.

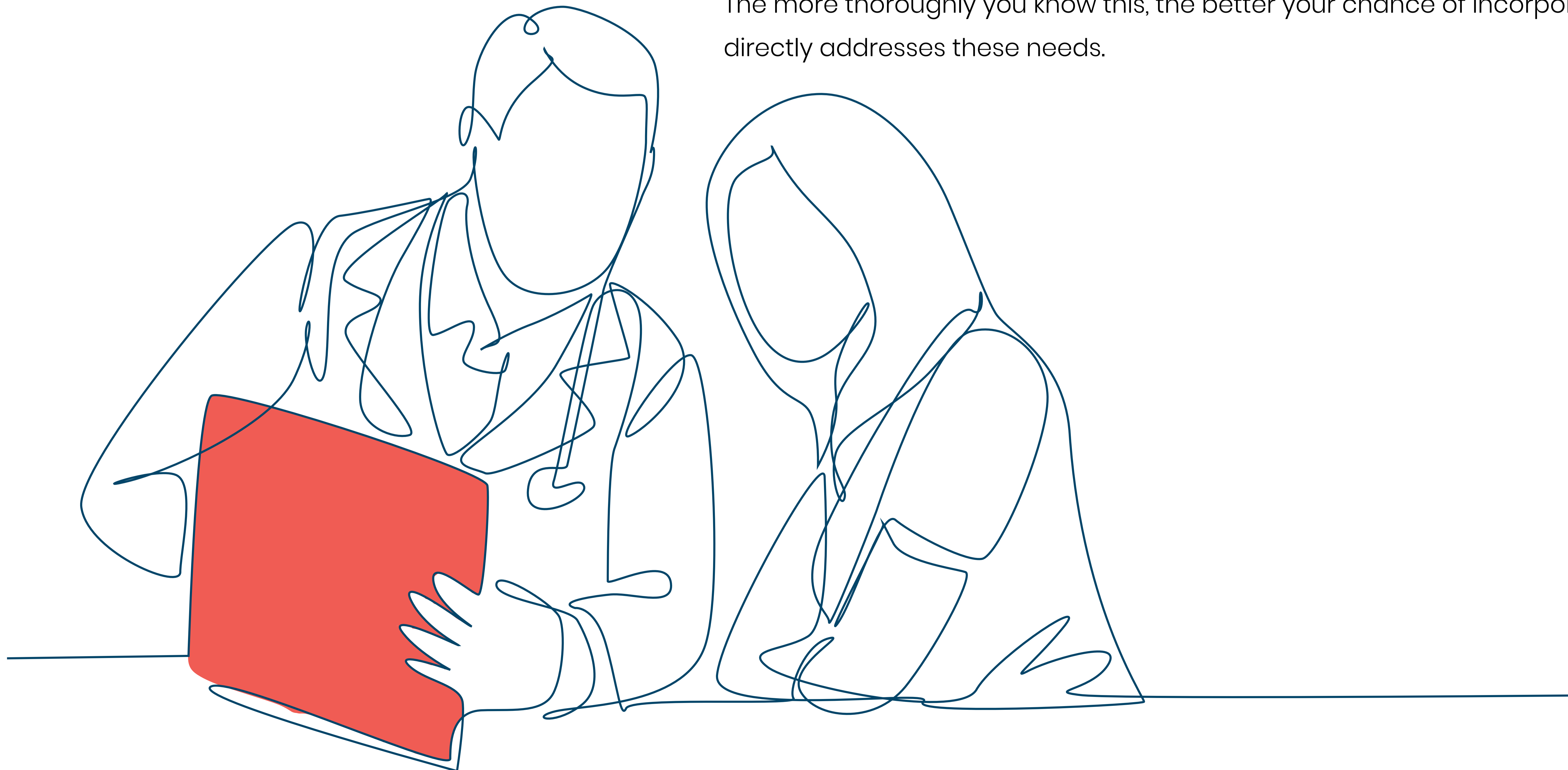
Again, take a cold, hard look at your organization and its maturity. Maybe you’re only using spreadsheets to track data, but maybe that’s all you need. This is a particular pitfall for larger companies and those that generate more revenue. They assume they need the best of breed across any given sales solution when a lower, more economical tier would have a more positive impact on the bottom line.



## 7 Understand Your Customers Thoroughly

If you want to effectively create and execute valuable conversations, new capabilities, and solutions that deliver the most impactful results, you must have a strong understanding of your customers' business environment today. Without a customer-centered sales strategy and processes that are effectively integrated with the right sales technology, the customer's experience with your organization could be very limiting.

Strive to know as much as you can about your customers' worlds, their unique situations, their daily complexities, and the individual roles you will need to engage with throughout the sales process. The more thoroughly you know this, the better your chance of incorporating sales tech that directly addresses these needs.





# Chapter 6

## Engage (The Vendor Engagement Stage)

Once you've thoroughly audited your relevant stakeholders and created a thoughtful sales technology selection strategy (that also aligns to your overall sales processes and system), it's time to think about the **engagement stage**.

### Use a Sales Technology Road Map

The terminology can vary, but a "road map" is essentially any guide to help you engage with sales technology vendors in a thoughtful, strategic way. **It typically consists of four steps:**

#### **1** Identify Stakeholders, Goals, and Priorities

The first step, as discussed in chapter four, is identifying all your relevant stakeholders. Depending on the size, scope, and organizational structure of your organization.

This could include people in any of the following:

- Sales ops
- Marketing ops
- Sales enablement
- Sales leadership
- Demand generation
- Risk and security
- Inside sales
- Field sales
- Marketing leaders
- Customer success leaders
- Financial leaders
- Senior leadership (CXO)



Talk directly to these people. Make them an ongoing part of the sales technology selection decision-making process. This will help you accurately and effectively identify your biggest and most pressing priorities. These are the problems that, if solved, would move your revenue needle the most. Pinpointing your most significant priorities means you have the opportunity to make the biggest positive financial impact on your organization.

When you've worked collaboratively to identify these priorities, you can then create effective, impactful, and realistic goals around those priorities.

## 2 Conduct Your Audits

Using the insight, guidance, and knowledge of your stakeholders, the next step is conducting audits of your existing organization. (Again, for a more detailed breakdown of this auditing process, see chapter four.)

This includes identifying the following:

- Technology gaps. (Where do you have problems that aren't currently addressed by sales technology solutions?)
- Technology overlap. (Where do you have multiple sales technology solutions accomplishing the same goals?)
- Organizational capabilities. (In its current state, what can your organization logistically implement?)



### 3 Select Potential Vendors

Using all the reliable, relevant information you've gathered about your organization, you can now start to narrow down your search for potential sales technology solutions.

Even armed with all the information you've gathered, are you still feeling overwhelmed and unsure where to start? Check out this [sales technology selector tool](#). It's a brief survey-style questionnaire that helps you identify your biggest priorities. It then sorts through hundreds of potential sales technology applications to match your identified priorities with a short list of vendors.

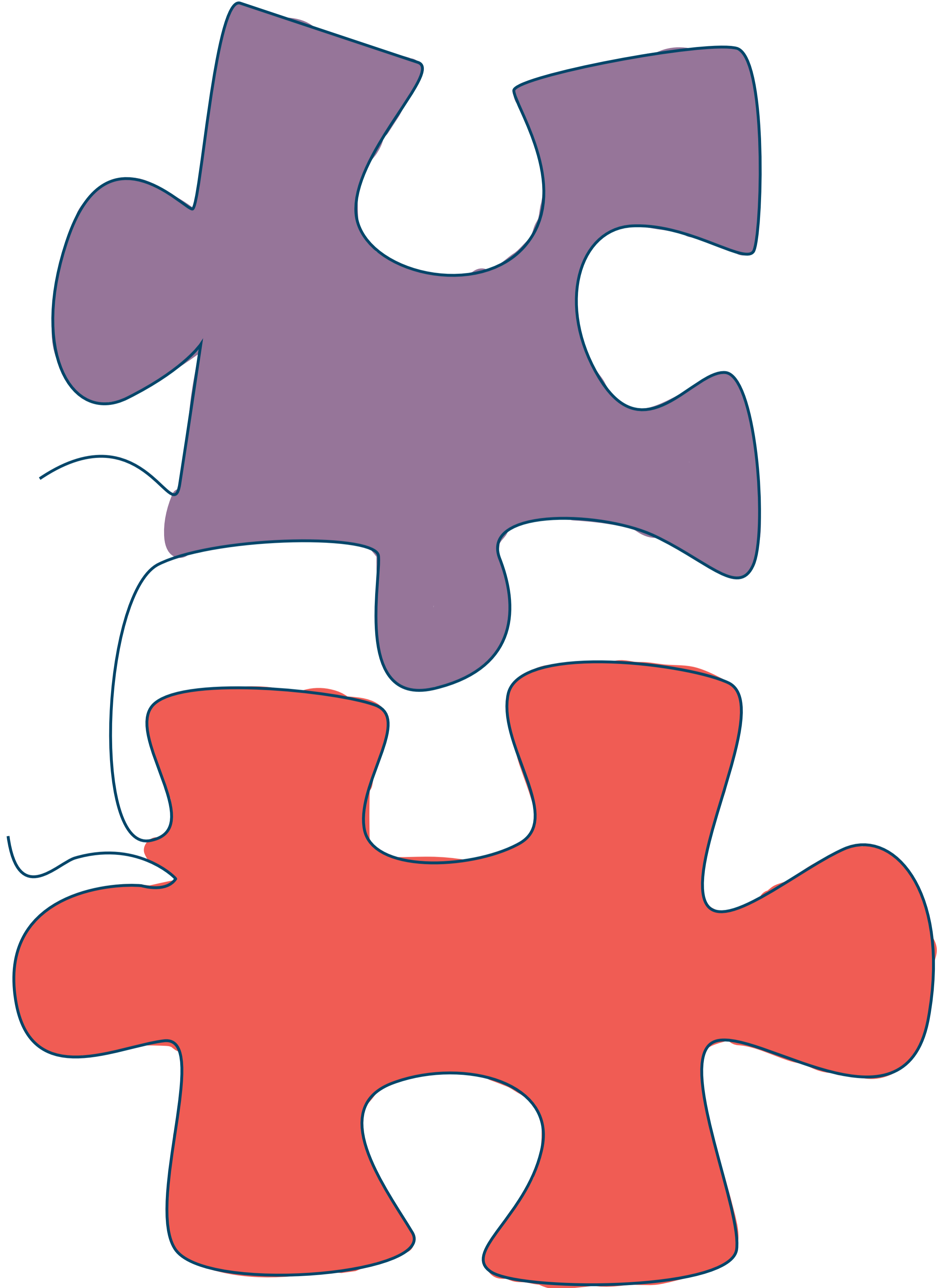
### 4 Analyze Potential Vendors

From your short list, you can start to think about specific solutions through the lens of your overall sales strategy.

Ask yourself several questions:

- What sales technology solutions will align with and further your existing processes, people, systems, approaches, information, and strategy?
- What business objectives will the sales technology solution accomplish?
- What will initial and ongoing training look like and require?
- How soon can you expect to see a return on investment?

Don't forget to address underlying organizational issues first. If you don't solve those foundational problems, a sales technology solution will just help you make the same mistakes faster!



## Navigate an Increasingly Complex Sales Technology Landscape

Getting your sales technology selection right can be transformational for your organization. If you're not confident you can navigate the sales technology landscape to the greatest effect, consider the benefits of working with a third party:

### •Save Time

Working with a third party experienced in sales technology can save you countless hours of research. By partnering with someone who knows the sales technology landscape well, you can easily and efficiently get insight about which technologies align with your priorities and can help you reach impactful goals and objectives.

Every minute you don't have to spend wading through an increasingly overcrowded sales technology landscape is time you can engage with your stakeholders, work on underlying issues within your business, and address a myriad of other tasks that will help ensure your sales technology is maximally effective once implemented.

A word of caution: If you decide to use third-party consulting resources to help you in your sales technology selection process, make sure they focus on a broad spectrum of solutions. Most consultants focus on a very narrow set of solutions, and they don't have the necessary expertise or ability to provide you with an objective view that suits your unique needs. Vet any potential third-party resource heavily.

### •Save Money

With such a crowded, complex sales technology landscape, there's always an inherent risk of going it alone. You could spend all those resources (time and money) on vendor research and engagement and still end up with solutions that don't effectively move the revenue needle.



Partnering with the right third-party business could yield a tremendous return on your investment. If that company can help you minimize your costs, free up budgets associated with sales technology licenses, and maximize the efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of your sales team, the fee for that service could be negligible next to the overall revenue gained from the efforts.

Depending on your organization's size and capabilities, it could save you a **significant** amount in technology spend and free up that budget for other resources and technology.

### •Gain an Experienced, Collaborative Partner

Choose a third party that approaches every business relationship with the right mindset. They should seek to be a collaborative partner, bringing their experience and expertise but tailoring every decision to your input and your organization's unique situation, needs, and goals.

They should also be committed to offering guidance at whatever stages make sense for your organization.

That could include any or all of the following:

- Developing a sales technology selection road map and strategy.
- Identifying your biggest priorities, goals, and objectives.
- Effectively aligning your stakeholders.
- Offering potential solutions that fit well within your organization.
- Assisting with the successful integration and adoption of sales technologies.
- Developing a training, onboarding, and coaching strategy that supports the development of a knowledge base for an effective adoption program.
- Helping you scale your sales technology stack once the initial selections are profitable.



# Chapter 7

## Elevate (The Adoption Stage)

After thoughtfully selecting your sales technology solutions, it's time to ensure the successful adoption of those tools. After all, poor adoption is one of the most prevalent and financially disastrous aspects within the sales technology landscape. Even if you choose the perfect solutions for your organization, if you don't have full and effective buy-in and adoption among your stakeholders and staff members, you're going to see diminished (or even negative) return on your investment.

Here are seven keys to getting the **adoption stage** right:

### 1 Keep the Right Metrics in Mind

Every sales technology solution needs to be selected with the aim of making your sales team more efficient, effective, and productive. The solutions need to allow them to spend less time dealing with administrative tasks and more time selling. Reports and studies differ, but sales reps, on average, only spend somewhere between 23 percent<sup>10</sup> and 37 percent<sup>11</sup> of their time actively selling. Whatever the specific number in your organization, it's easy to see there's room for improvement here.

Any process, strategy, and tool that can free up time can directly result in more hours spent selling. (Remember, selling is what sales reps are good at, and it's the thing that directly leads to more revenue for the organization.)

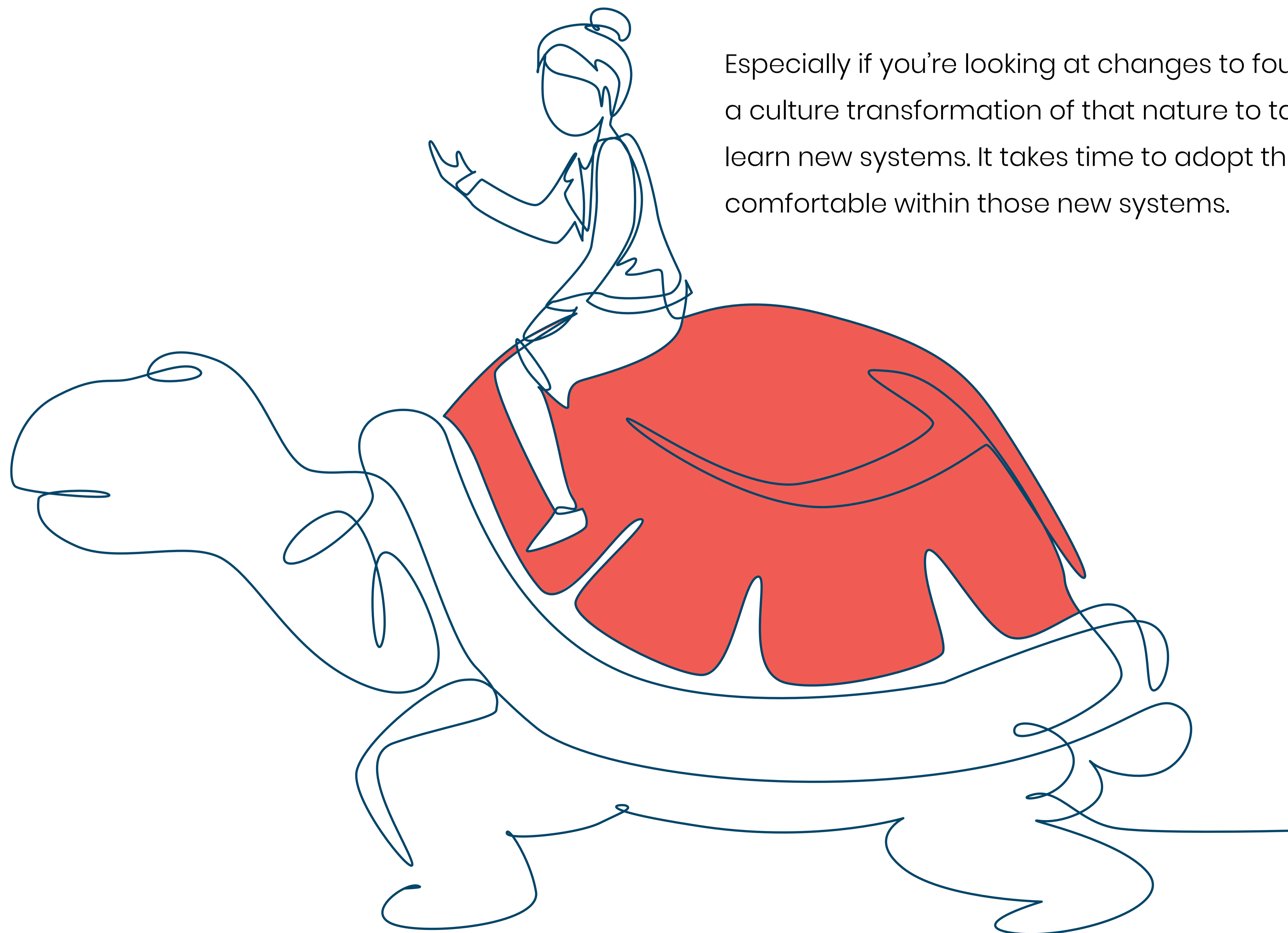
When assessing productivity, just make sure you're focusing on **results**, not **activity**. A hundred emails sent doesn't mean anything if there aren't any tangible, concrete financial benefits associated with that activity.



## 2 Have Patience

Wholesale changes don't happen overnight. This is especially true for enterprise or large companies. When it comes to overhauling your sales technology approach and stack, you need to trust in the power of iterative change. Small changes can add up over time to big results. You just need to have the patience to let time do that. If you've carefully created your sales technology selection strategy, give solutions the time they need to yield results. Continue to always consider the people, processes, and technology holistically.

Especially if you're looking at changes to foundational issues within the organization, expect a culture transformation of that nature to take up to three years. It takes time for people to learn new systems. It takes time to adopt them, and it takes even more time for people to feel comfortable within those new systems.



### 3 Set Realistic Expectations

Poor adoption accounts for a huge amount of the waste associated with sales technology.

#### This poor adoption can stem from many sources:

- An inadequate or nonexistent knowledge base associated with onboarding and ongoing training around the sales technology.
- Training and coaching that don't effectively align to your strategy and processes.
- Lack of ownership in the sales technology selection decision-making process.
- Inadequate infrastructure to support the new tools.
- Organizational culture and resistance to change (logistical, procedural, or otherwise).
- Misaligned stakeholders.
- A lack of senior management awareness.

While addressing these issues is vitally important, it's also crucial to keep realistic expectations in mind. Even with the ideal rollout, no organization is ever going to achieve 100 percent of people using every tool to 100 percent of its capabilities. The goal is to maximize the efficiency and productivity of your sales team—not to get every single last person fully bought in.



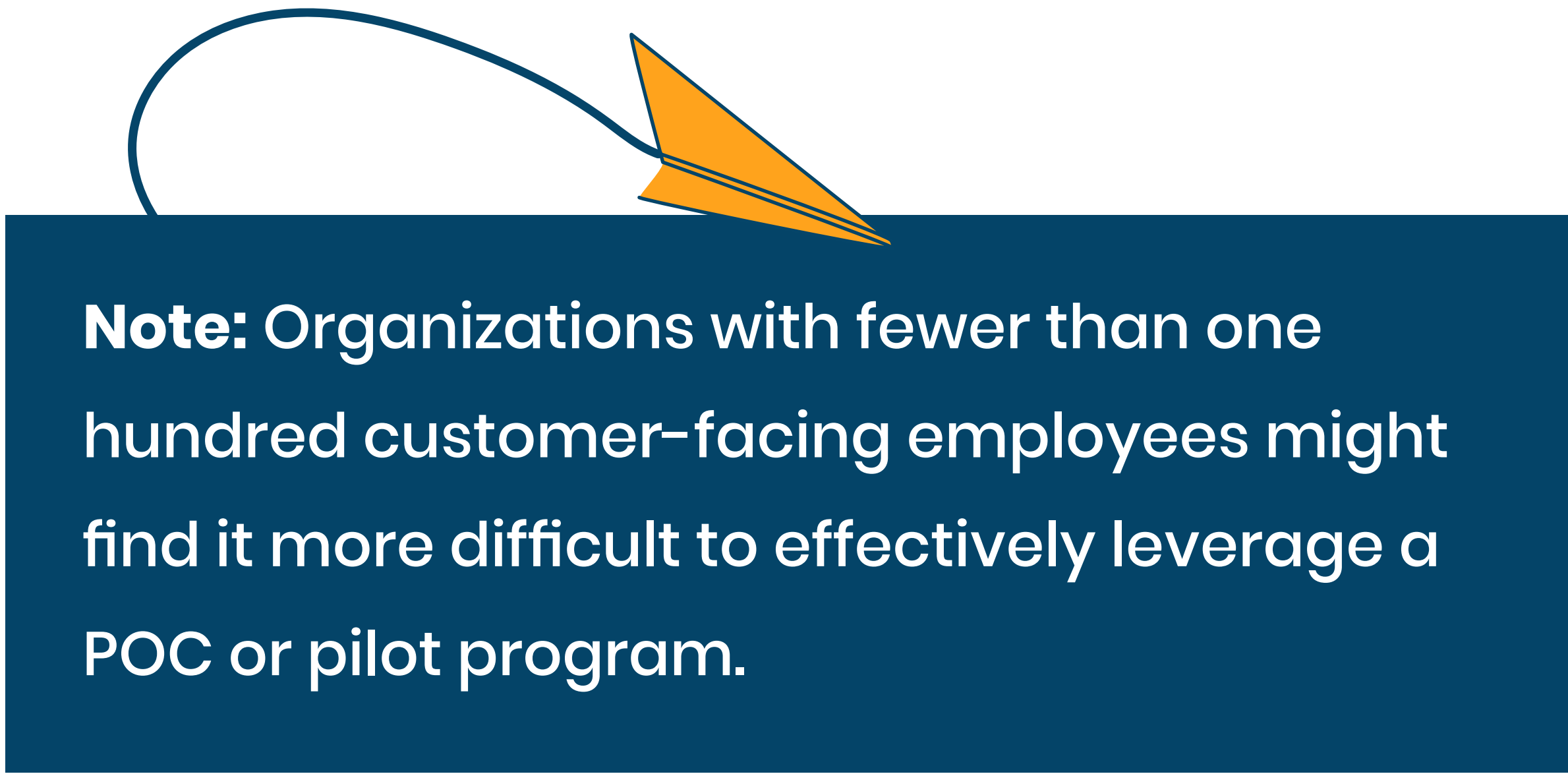


## 4 Utilize Pilot Groups

The larger your organization, the more important it is to roll out new sales technology solutions through pilot groups, or a proof of concept (POC). Delineate these groups in whatever way makes sense for your organization. (Maybe that's by business unit, geography, or some other metric.)

These pilot groups mean you're able to see if a solution works as expected within specific defined scenarios while minimizing the financial requirements. (Rather than committing to licenses for every employee, you limit your initial expense to a few select members of the pilot group.)

A successful POC or pilot group can also be invaluable in the larger rollout because you then have a group of trusted users and stakeholders who have firsthand knowledge of the solution's success. This means you have enthusiastic proponents who can help amplify and convince other users and stakeholders that the solution is worth investing the time to learn and to use.



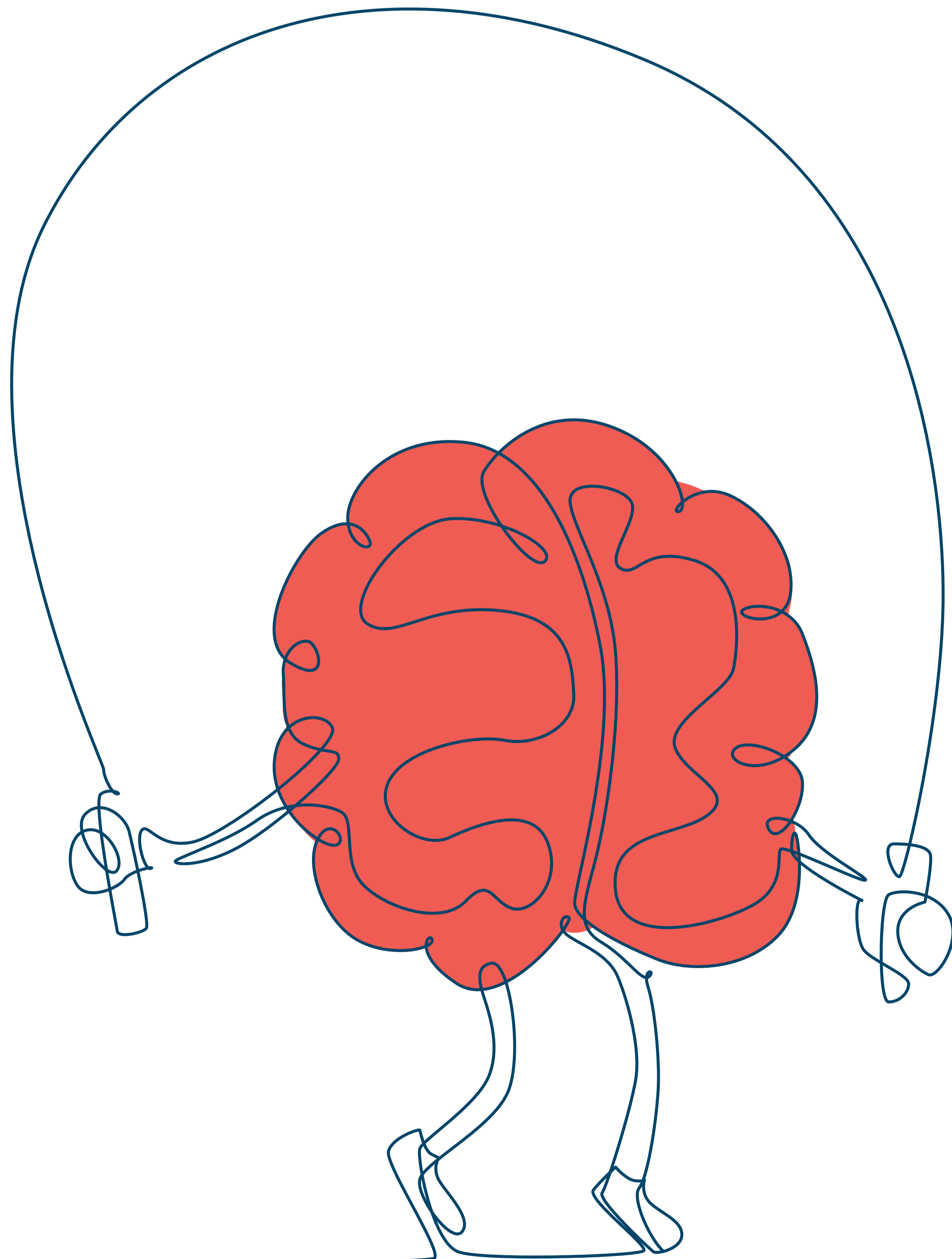
**Note:** Organizations with fewer than one hundred customer-facing employees might find it more difficult to effectively leverage a POC or pilot program.



## 5 Dedicate Sufficient Resources to Training

Training is key for the successful implementation of new sales technologies. Make sure the training is structured effectively, though. For the best retention and results, ensure the onboarding and training material is available on demand and incorporates a learn-by-doing component. (Sales reps should be able to access training whenever they need it, and they should be able to interact with that training material at their own pace.) The goal should be to provide sales reps with action-oriented material that's conducive to quickly retaining what they learn. Training should also illustrate **why** and **how** sales reps will improve their efficiency and effectiveness and, ultimately, make more money.

The content should be succinct and easily digestible, and it should be stored in a knowledge base that's easy and quick to navigate. Remember, any barrier to just-in-time training material can directly result in diminished or ineffective use of the sales technology solution. This leads to lower-than-expected ROI.



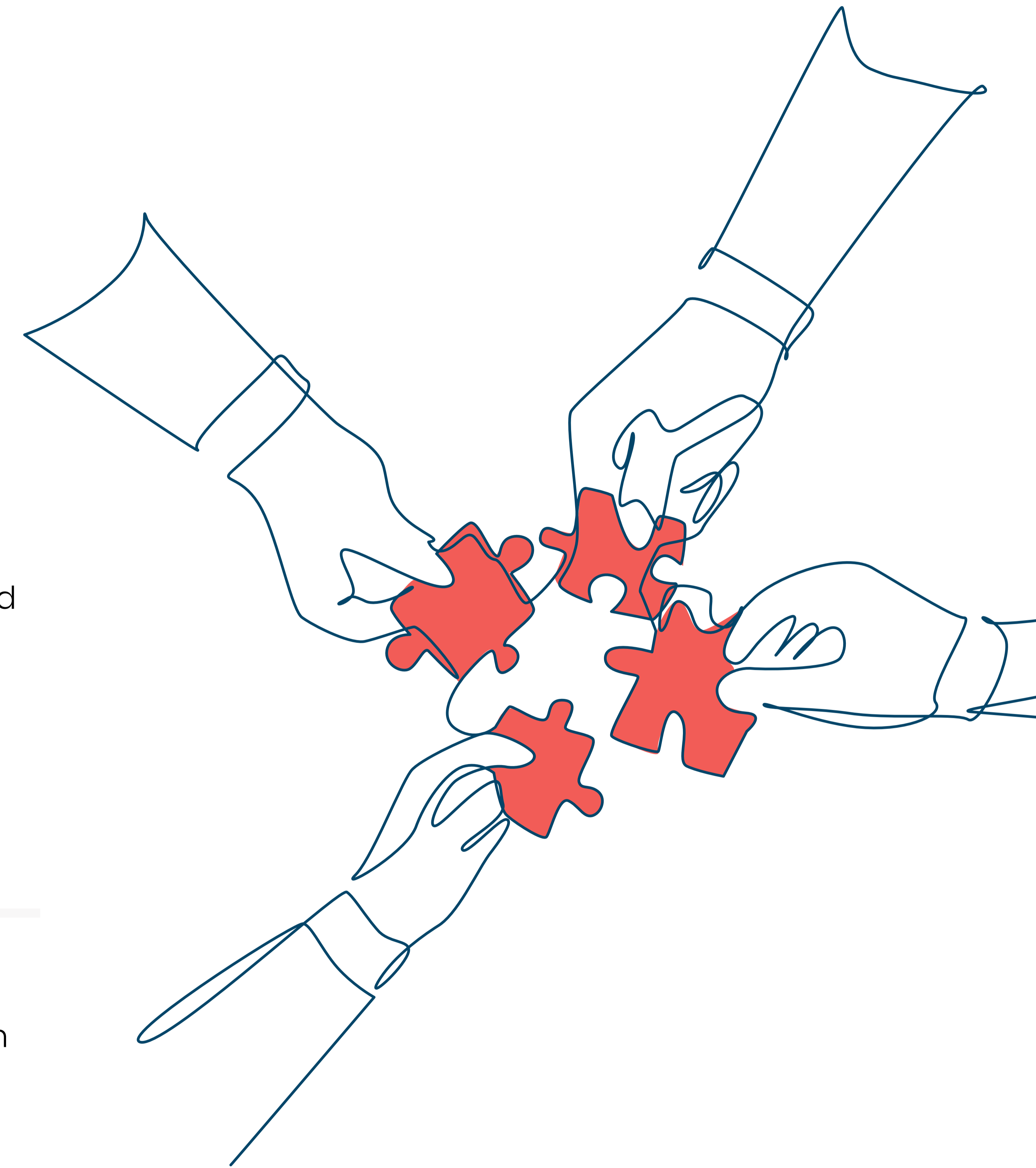
## 6 Align and Involve Your Stakeholders

Involving your stakeholders in the selection of sales technology is essential. It gives you firsthand insight into the organization's challenges, barriers to success, and needs, but it also gives those stakeholders a sense of ownership in the process. This can increase motivation and make stakeholders and their staff more likely to leverage the sales technology solutions, both on an initial and ongoing basis.

Involving your stakeholders, however, is only half the strategy. Those stakeholders must also be cross-functionally aligned. Relevant stakeholders across departments must all be in active communication and working toward shared objectives and goals. This helps ensure you're using the full power of your workforce to reach those objectives and goals. When everyone is ideologically and logistically in alignment, you're also in a favorable position to continuously gather feedback, including valuable data and insight. This, in turn, can help you make the best and most informed decisions moving forward.

## 7 Lay the Groundwork

If you've created the right sales technology selection strategy, it means you've already implemented the infrastructure and effective onboarding process you need to have success with your sales technology selections. Before you think about engaging with or selecting tools from specific vendors, make sure you've laid the essential groundwork that supports a strategy around your people, processes, and technology. It will help ensure a seamless integration that yields increased efficacy, efficiency, and productivity of your sales team.



# Chapter 8

## Evolve (The Increasing Return on Investment and Scaling Stage)

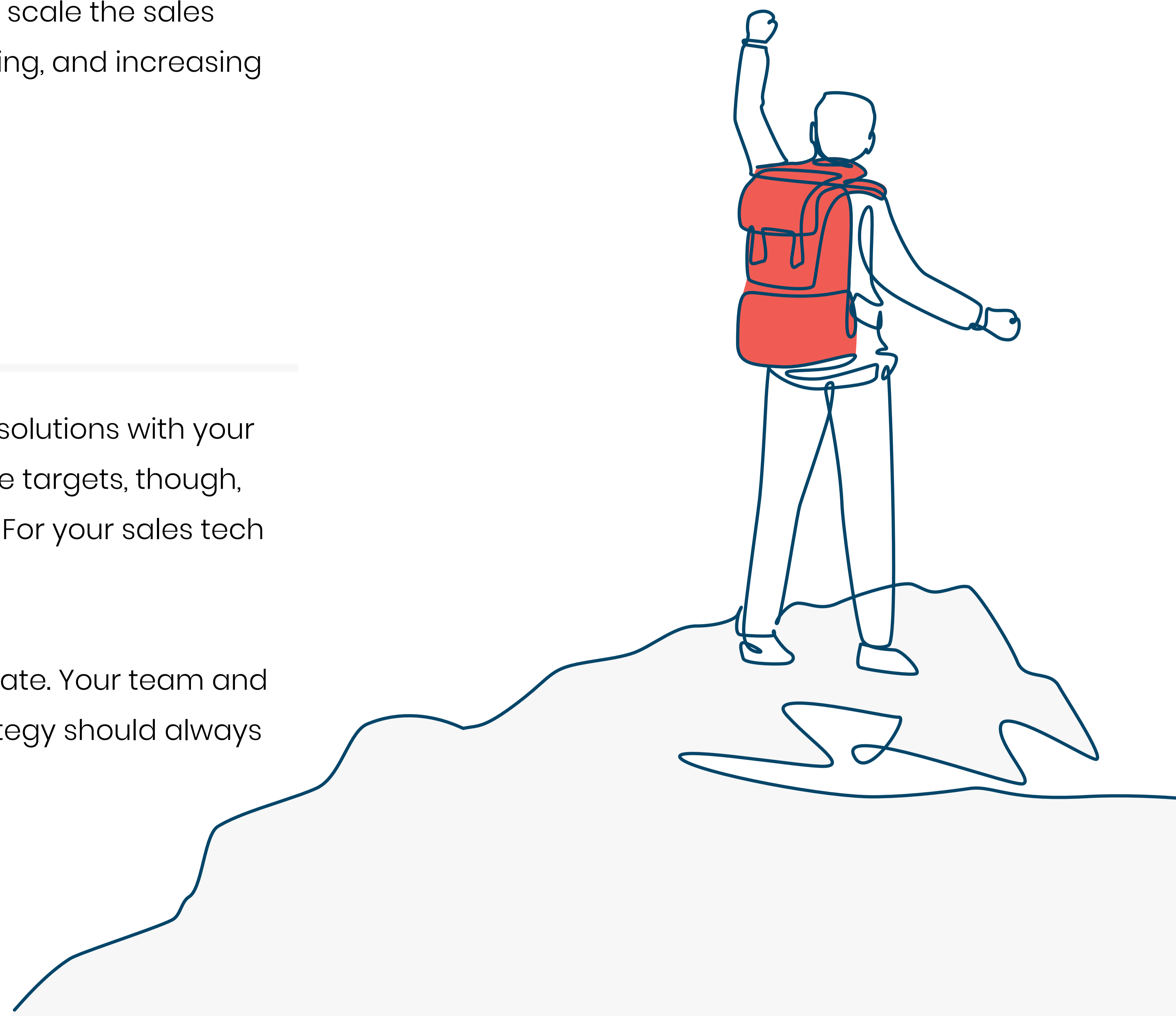
Many businesses make the mistake of assuming the sales technology selection process is linear. The more accurate way to view it is cyclic. Once an initial round of sales technology solutions is successfully selected, implemented, and adopted, it's then time to evolve or to scale the sales tech stack. In this way, a successful organization is constantly refining, fine-tuning, and increasing the ROI of its sales tech solutions.

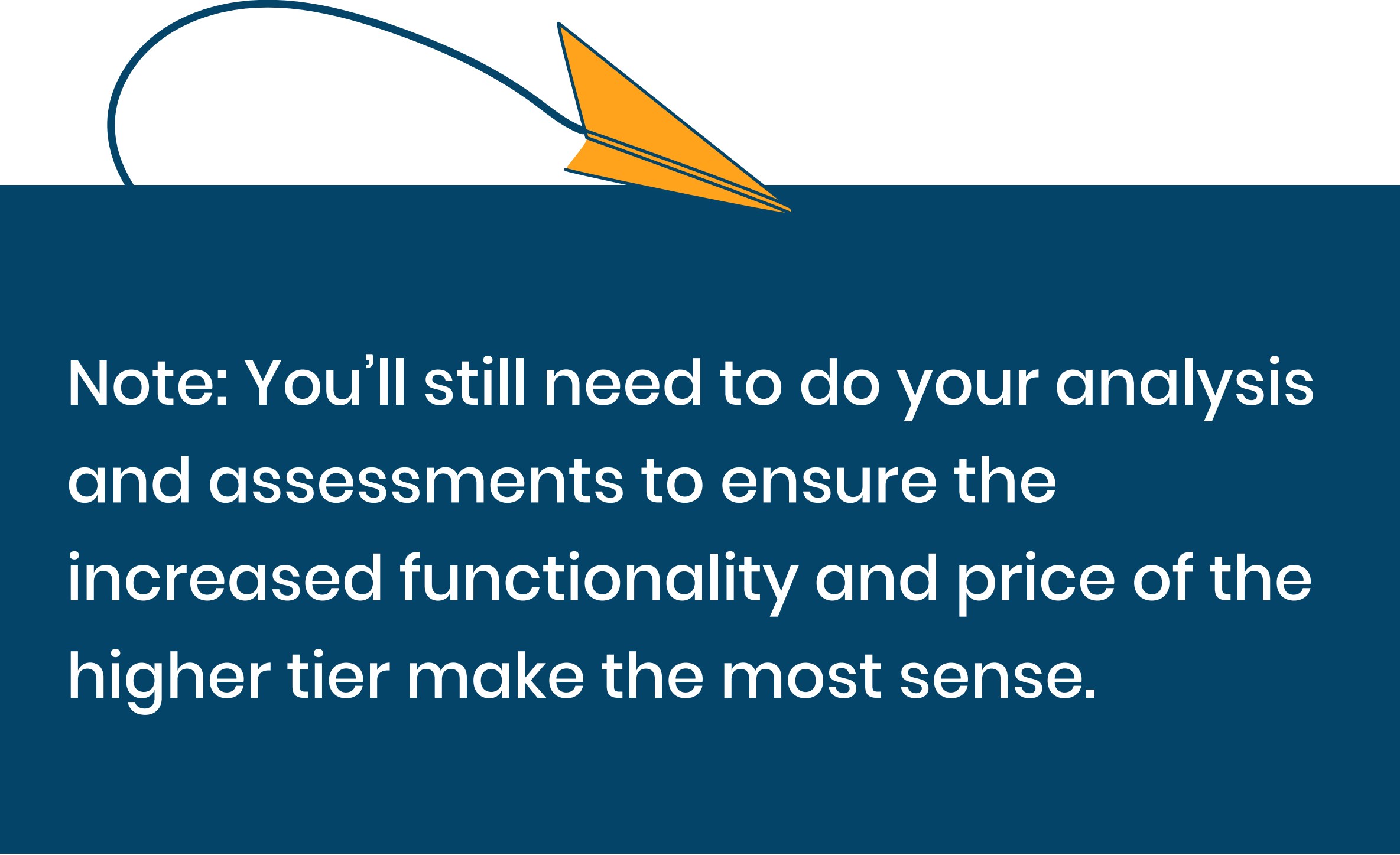
For the most effective **evolution stage**, keep these three factors in mind:

### 1 Sales Technology Selection Is Never “Done”

Having the right sales technology is about perfectly aligning sales technology solutions with your processes, people, resources, systems, priorities, challenges, and goals. All those targets, though, are constantly in flux. As your business evolves, those factors are going to shift. For your sales tech stack to stay relevant and effective, it must adapt to reflect those changes.

Once you think you're done with your sales technology selection, you will stagnate. Your team and organizational goals are always evolving, and that means your sales tech strategy should always be evolving as well.





**Note:** You'll still need to do your analysis and assessments to ensure the increased functionality and price of the higher tier make the most sense.

## 2 Think Long-Term with Scalability

When selecting your sales technology solutions, prioritize scalability, if possible. It's a much less time-intensive and resource-heavy decision to simply increase the tier of an existing sales technology solution than to pick a new solution from scratch.

## 3 Expand with Year-over-Year Growth

As you continue to refine your sales technology strategy, you should see increased sales and increased overall revenue year over year. Continually decreasing the time, tasks, and resources spent by you and your sales team while simultaneously enhancing processes, systems, and results puts you in a position to scale successfully and effectively.

Once you're looking to expand your programs, to scale your sales organization, and to bring on new technologies, it's time to go back to the evaluate stage. It should be even easier this time because you're already in constant communication with your stakeholders regarding their goals and the use and adoption of resources. The infrastructure and processes are already in place for you to touch base with them and to gather the necessary information you need to move forward with program expansion.

This process might include the integration of new technology with existing technology, or it might mean expanding what you already have.



# Chapter 9

## Important Conclusions

From small to midmarket to enterprise organizations, the selection of sales technology is something most businesses know they need to do. However, very few companies approach this process with the level of thought, care, and strategy they need to see the most benefit and the biggest return on investment. **Here are some of the most important high-level takeaways when it comes to choosing a successful sales technology stack:**

### •Financial Impact

Ignoring your sales technology or getting your sales technology selection, implementation, and adoption wrong can have a devastating financial impact. It can mean hundreds to thousands of dollars wasted per sales rep on unused, misused, or underused sales technology solutions.

One 2016 study<sup>12</sup> found this equated to \$259 of unnecessary software on every single office computer in the United States and the United Kingdom. That amounted to \$34 billion in money needlessly spent on various sales technologies. ([See this article](#) for a more in-depth discussion.)

More recent data confirms the problem is only accelerating. According to this 2020 SAAS trends report<sup>13</sup>, companies, on average, waste over \$135,000 every year on unused, underused, or duplicated sales technology solutions. Another report<sup>14</sup> found duplicate app subscriptions are on the rise, with companies, on average, having three-point six. So-called “orphaned” apps (a subscription for whom no one is accountable) also rose 100 percent across all companies from 2018 to 2019.

And this is to say nothing of the potential revenue you could garner by a sales technology stack that actually increased the efficiency, efficacy, and productivity of your sales team.

For midmarket or enterprise companies, it's not implausible for the right sales technology to equate to millions in additional yearly revenue.



### •Complex, Crowded Sales Technology Landscape

Every year it's getting harder to navigate the sales technology landscape. More and more solutions come to market, making it increasingly overcrowded, complex, and overwhelming. If the data over the last decade (and especially the past two years) is any indication, this problem isn't slowing down any time soon.

### •Most Organizations' Sales Technology Strategies Are Backward

It seems counterintuitive, but when you're selecting sales technology, the solution itself needs to be the absolute last step in the process. Your sales technology strategy should never be reactionary. It creates a cycle where you're just throwing money at symptoms rather than treating the underlying issues. You're setting yourself up for poor adoption; little to no return on investment; and often costly secondary problems, such as sales rep dissatisfaction and churn.

Fix your underlying organizational issues, and then create a sound sales technology selection strategy. (This should also align to your overall sales strategy.) Only after you've taken these steps should you think about engaging vendors and selecting sales technology solutions.

### •A Sales Technology Tool Is Just a Tool

Sales technology solutions can do incredible things. They can dramatically increase the efficiency, efficacy, and productivity of your sales team...but they are still just tools. Alone, they can't fix any underlying organizational problems. On their own and without the right strategy, they have little value.

If your messaging is off base, a sales technology solution will only help you amplify ineffective content. You'll still make the same mistakes; you'll just make them faster.

Have realistic expectations about what your sales technology stack is meant to be doing. Create an environment that's conducive to success before introducing new solutions.



## •Develop and Follow a Road Map

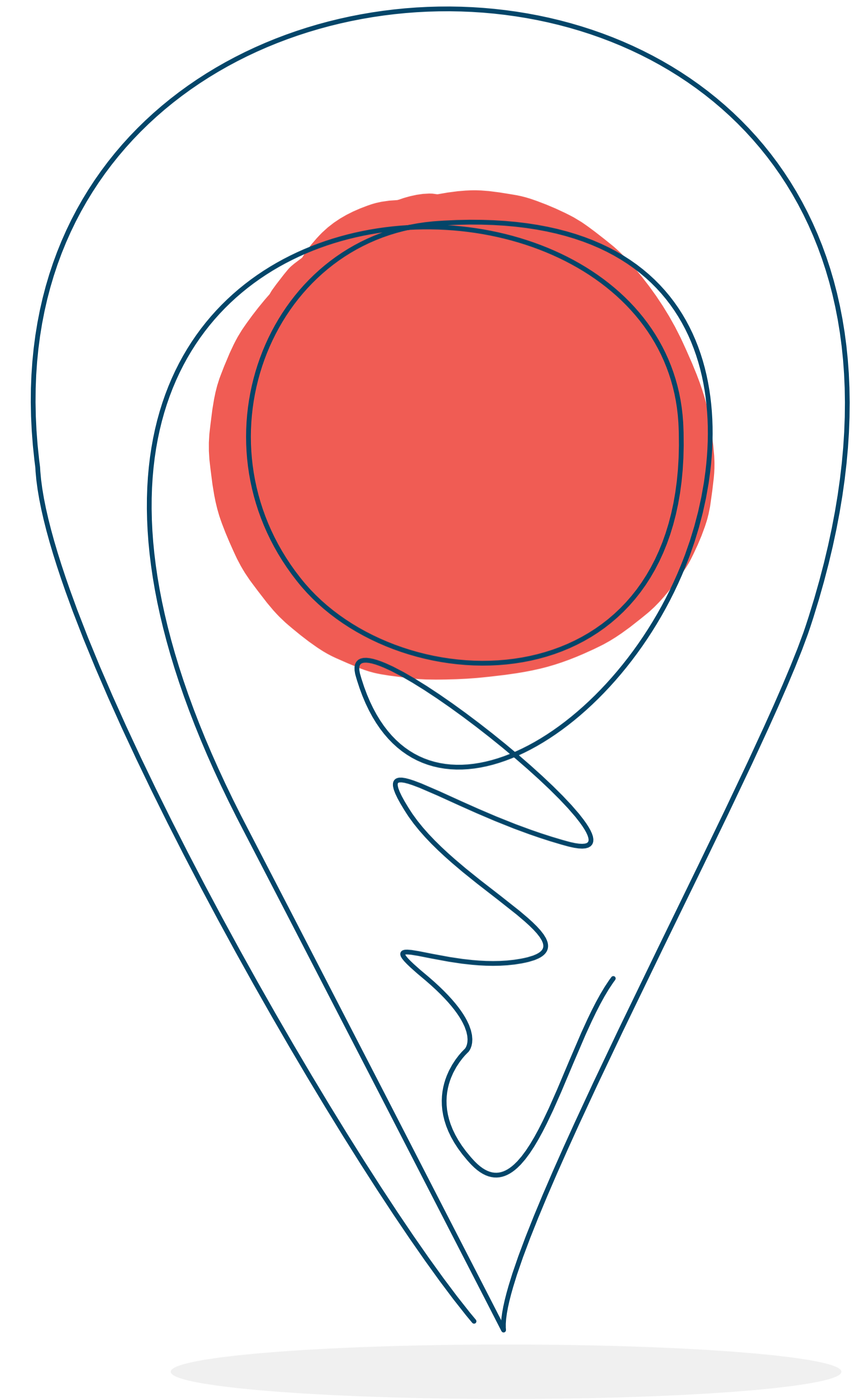
Every organization is different. No two companies have the same challenges, barriers to success, markets, verticals, and more. That means the specifics of each sales technology stack is going to be different as well. There is no one cover-all answer for all companies.

### The framework for success, however, is universal:

- Engage your stakeholders, identify goals and objectives, and run thorough audits of your existing situation (sales technology gaps, overlap, and organizational capacity).
- Create a thorough sales technology selection strategy that aligns to your overall sales processes and strategy.
- Engage your potential vendors based on your core needs, priorities, capabilities, and existing infrastructure to support.
- Integrate the sales technology solutions into an environment that's conducive to strong adoption. (Stakeholders should be aligned cross-functionally, and you should have the infrastructure, strategy, and onboarding processes in place already.)
- Continue to refine your strategy, and then scale your technology stack and sales organization when financially feasible.

## •Know When You Need Help

Proper sales technology identification, selection, integration, and adoption can transform your business. With the myriad complications and challenges around the sales technology landscape today, though, it's becoming increasingly difficult to have success when selecting a sales technology stack.



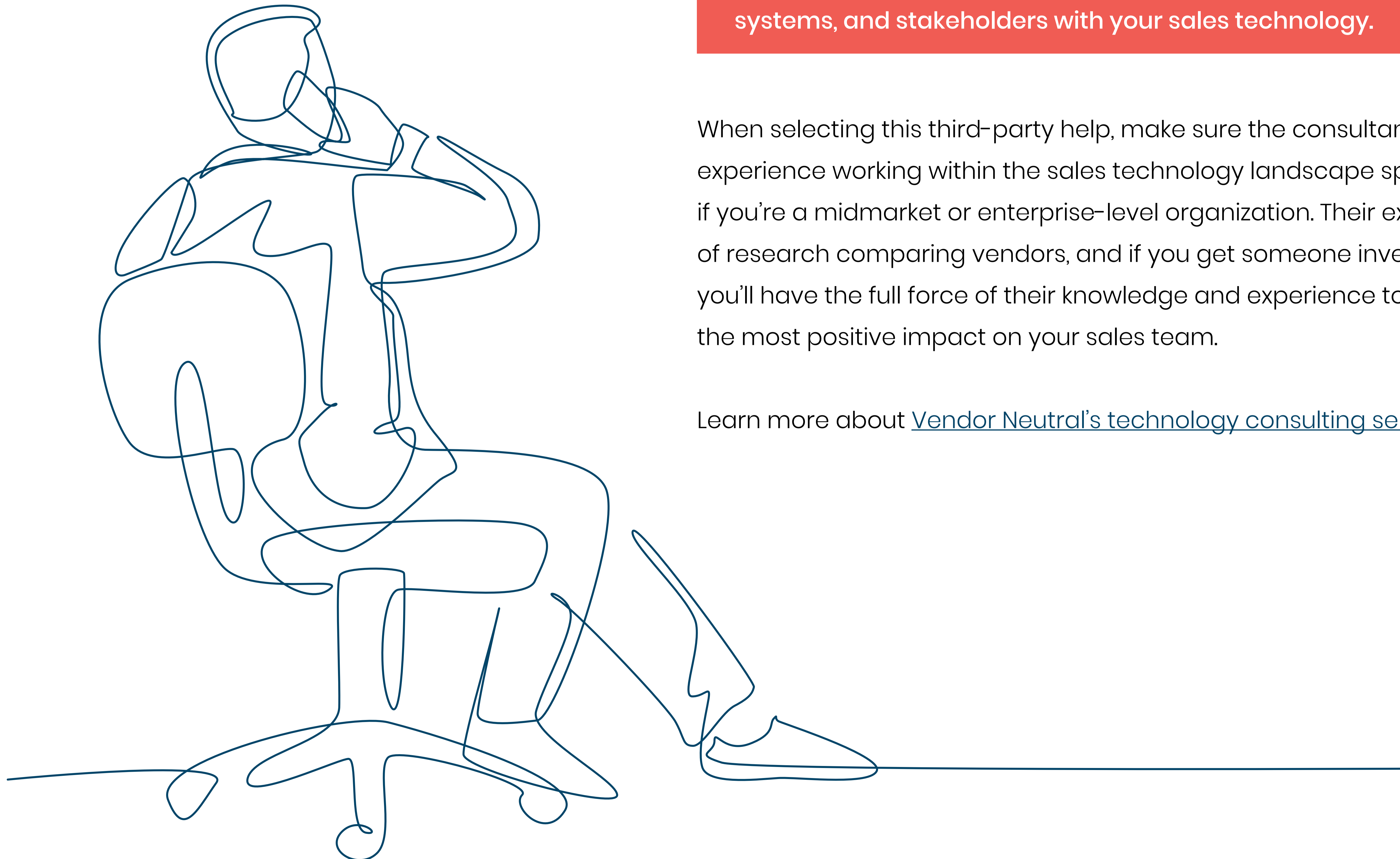


### Consider reaching out to a third party if:

- You're feeling overwhelmed.
- You don't know where to start.
- You've had problems in the past with poor adoption of sales technology solutions.
- You're looking to outpace your competition or to increase your overall revenue.
- You don't have a holistic approach that effectively aligns your strategy, processes, systems, and stakeholders with your sales technology.

When selecting this third-party help, make sure the consultant has direct and extensive experience working within the sales technology landscape specifically. This is especially important if you're a midmarket or enterprise-level organization. Their expertise can save you countless hours of research comparing vendors, and if you get someone invested in being your strategic partner, you'll have the full force of their knowledge and experience to get you the sales tech stack that has the most positive impact on your sales team.

Learn more about [Vendor Neutral's technology consulting services](#) here.



## Additional Resources for Successful Sales Technology Selection

Selecting the right sales technology can feel complicated and overwhelming. Success, however, largely comes down to knowing the processes and strategic road map to follow.

To help you navigate every step, here are several repositories of information and knowledge from industry analysts, thought leaders, and experts in the sales technology arena.

Check these out to broaden your overall understanding of sales technology, including the available solutions, the selection process, adoption approaches, and today's best business practices:

- [The Neutral Zone Sales Blog](#)
- [Vendor Neutral Webinars](#) (live and on demand)
- [The Quantum Leap and Neutral Zone Podcasts](#)

Ready to start your sales technology selection process? Use these helpful resources to guide and to direct you:

### • [Sales Technology Selection Tool](#)

Easy to use, quick questionnaire that identifies your organization's biggest priorities. Save yourself hours of research. Answer a few questions, and then get a personalized report with a short list of suggested vendors that align to your most pressing needs.



## •[10 Questions to Ask Yourself before Investing in Sales Technology](#)

Picking the actual sales technology should be the last step in your process. Before you even think about vendor engagement, make sure you know the answers to these ten questions.

## •[Vendor Neutral's Certified Vendor Sales Technology Landscape](#)

Take a shortcut with your sales technology research. Start with the Vendor Neutral Certified 100 Sales Technology Landscape. Every certified vendor has been selected and evaluated by our analysts. Check out each concise certified profile. Get the stats and intelligence you need to assess which technologies will integrate well into your stack.

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