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**TRUST ME,
I'M A
SALES REP**



ACHIEVE COMPETITIVE AGILITY

With more than half of companies experiencing a material drop in trust over the past two and a half years,¹ trust from consumers, employees, and market analysts has become a hard-earned competitive advantage. For an average large-cap (US\$30B) company, that drop could cost them a potential US\$4B in future revenues.²

Jason Angelos

Managing Director – Accenture Strategy

Jason helps global organizations plan, architect and deploy innovative and highly agile sales solutions that drive more profitable growth.

Mark Gaylard

Managing Director – Accenture Strategy

Mark works closely with B2B and B2C leaders to implement growth strategies to improve customer loyalty, experiences and lifetime value.

Keith McInerney

Managing Director – Accenture Strategy

Keith advises global business leaders on designing and executing sales and customer strategies focused on driving profitable growth and engagement.

Gregory Solomon

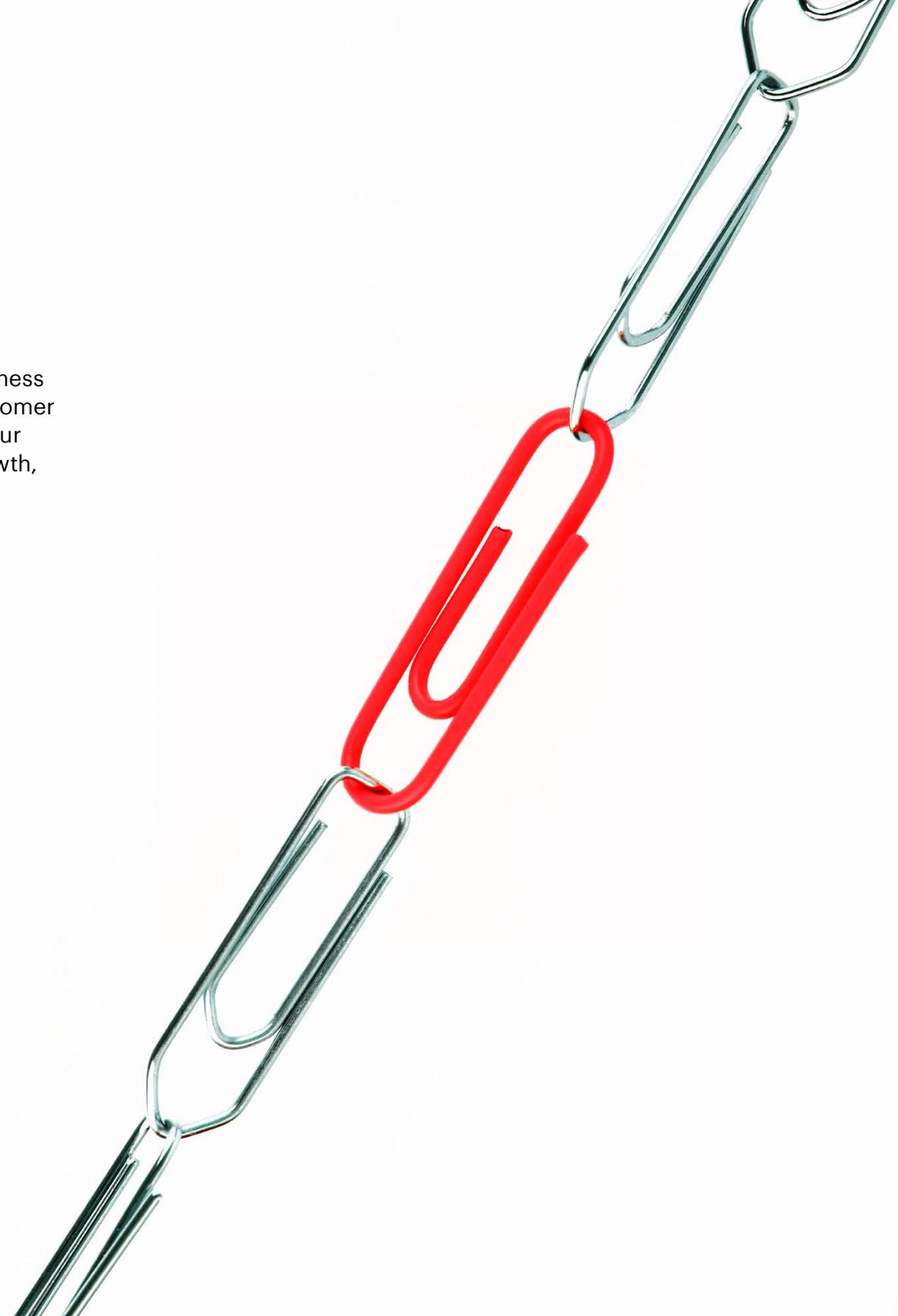
Senior Manager – Accenture Strategy

Gregory advises global organizations on driving profitable growth by optimizing sales spend, talent performance, and customer experience.

It's not surprising, then, that trust is increasingly recognized as a critical component of business growth in B2B and B2C sectors. Eight out of 10 executives cite trust as a major driver of customer business, and lack of trust as a reason why customers defect to a trusted competitor.³ Our experience shows that the absence of trust has significant negative impacts on sales and growth, causing reduced win rates, longer sales cycles, and lower referral and renewal rates.

If trust is so critical to sales, why aren't more companies making it the foundation of their sales process? Here's what every chief sales officer needs to know.

Salesforces perceived as “Trusted Partners” reached higher quota attainment by a factor of 25 percent.



Trust is more tangible than you think

While many CSOs may not see trust as a measurable competency, those who do beat competitors by making it a key ingredient of their sales process.

In sales, the numbers show trust beats pure product knowledge every time. Salesforces perceived as “Trusted Partners” reached higher quota attainment by a factor of 25 percent, versus those thought of as “Solutions Consultants” or “Preferred Suppliers”.⁴

But mastering trust takes a combination of art and science. CSOs, front-line sales managers, and sales enablement teams would be hard-pressed to simply “teach” their sales teams trust; it’s traditionally thought of as an intangible.

CSOs can, however, leverage advanced analytics and human-centered design to identify when and how high-performing salespeople exhibit trust behaviors—and what those behaviors are. Over time, we’ve seen a significant increase in trust-related competencies and activities.⁵

In short, trust—for those who get it right—is more rewarding than ever. And the good news is, lower performers can learn from their high-performing peers if companies take advantage of the behavioral insights analytics can provide.

Trust makes a difference in all sales environments

Accenture recently completed growth strategy work with a \$10B B2B client. We found that even in this inherently more transactional and less relationship-based environment (and despite leading sellers’ highly competitive personality profiles), high performers also exhibited differentiating, trust-associated competencies. High performers were materially more customer-focused than their lower-performing colleagues and were far better listeners. They also scored high on advanced self-accountability and credibility.

Baking in trust from the **start.**

Most CSOs only seek to understand their company's trust quotient after a negative event and by then, it's too late. Measuring trust proactively, at the frontline of sales, helps fuel growth by building trust into the process.⁶

CSOs who focus on trust across their front office can make great strides. While sales processes differ across industries and companies, two common activities that anchor at each end of the process merit attention: relationship mapping and win-loss reviews.

Account relationship mapping

Account relationship mapping helps sales teams achieve successful outcomes more often. Different sales teams may use different "flavors" of relationship mapping but all use it for one core purpose. It helps them understand—and be brutally honest about—sales relationships with individual stakeholders at an account.

Mapping sheds light on the level of trust between a client and sales team, where trust sits, and any fault lines that need to be addressed. Teams that create a relationship map, aligning it to buyer values and value propositions, position themselves for a successful outcome. We also see teams that map gain confidence in their sales approach, particularly for complex sales.

Our research shows most CSOs still have some work to do to perfect the art of relationship mapping. Only 16 percent of companies ranked themselves as satisfied with the results of relationship mapping, the lowest of 10 different sales enablement activities.⁷

Win/loss reviews

Our analysis shows companies that conduct win/loss reviews see an 18 percent jump in win rate, when done correctly.⁸ Yet, less than half (48 percent) of firms conduct them.⁹

Creating win-loss review discipline is part process and part culture. Leading sales organizations that make win-loss reviews a formal part of their sales process give themselves an advantage. They can feed critical

information from each review into their sales analytics platform. As that information grows and becomes insight, these sales teams continue to learn, improving their sales effectiveness as they go. That same information provides benefits that stretch across the front office, from marketing and product insights, to differentiated sales approaches, to lessons in customer service.

Leading sales organizations commit to fostering a culture of learning and development. They leverage win-loss reviews, not for blame or celebration, but to help them continuously improve.

Win/loss reviews can drive an 18 percent jump in win rate.



Trust: Delivering on digital promises

In a digital world, salespeople are not always the first contact a potential customer has with a company or brand. Recent research indicates that 70 percent of buyers wait until they have fully defined their needs before engaging with a salesperson, and almost 50 percent wait until they've identified a solution. With digital as a first stop for many customers, it's increasingly important for CSOs to ensure their sales teams exhibit trust in a way that aligns to their brand's digital messaging and promise.

Trust is **not** a solo sport

Sales teams miss an opportunity when they see themselves as only responsible for bringing in customers and landing deals, instead of also acting as guide for the customer's journey. Aligning the customer buying journey to the sales process is key to establishing trust and growing it. Almost half of companies we survey currently don't do that.¹⁰ That gets them into dangerous territory, particularly if trust is a key component of the brand.

CSOs who partner with their customer experience counterparts emphasize the end-to-end customer buying journey, ensuring the whole is greater than its parts. This holistic focus shifts away from siloed tasks and toward teams that work together for customer outcomes. It flips the mindset from "how do we sell" to "how do our customers buy." And it works. Accenture's B2B Customer Experience research shows high-performing companies get 40 percent more revenue return on every customer experience dollar invested.¹¹

Almost half of the companies we survey don't align the customer buying journey with their sales process. CSOs who partner with their customer experience counterparts ensure the whole is greater than its parts.

Our research on world-class sales practices shows that delivering a consistent customer experience that lives up to brand promise is the second most powerful driver of superior sales performance.¹² Only articulating a value proposition aligned to a customer's needs was more predictive of superior sales performance.¹³

What do high performers do differently?

They elevate the sales experience for customers. High performers recognize customer experience is critically linked to achieving their strategic priorities.

They team with customers. Leaders collaborate more effectively with end-user customers, resulting in more targeted innovation and the right outcomes.

They invest for results. CSOs in this group invest more heavily with new players and innovators to drive a better CX, realizing they can't go it alone as well.

Putting the trust in “trust me”

CSOs with trust-based team achieve more than their peers, confirming trust is not only the right thing to do by your clients, it’s also the profitable thing to do.

Here are a few things we see high-performing sales organizations focus on that can help your team optimally achieve their targets:



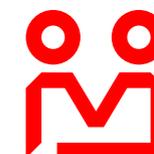
01

Know, don’t guess, by using talent analytics for insight on how and when your high-performing salespeople exhibit trust behaviors, as well as how they build those into a customer relationship. Then hire, train and replicate that high-performer model—turning insight into outcomes.



02

Monitor trust proactively across the end-to-end sales process to establish a trust quotient baseline. Then, identify opportunities for improvement and development. Next, prioritize and act on these opportunities.



03

Partner with your company’s customer experience leaders, linking customer journeys to the sales process. Leverage human-centered design and design thinking to develop trust offerings and unique trust-based customer treatments.

Trust has moved beyond being simply a qualitative component of sales; it has real quantitative impact. In today's somewhat jaded consumer environment, trust is linked to potential growth and revenues. Companies that treat it as a true business driver, incorporating it and protecting it throughout their sales organizations, put themselves ahead of competitors who don't. And we all know which end of that equation we'd prefer to be on.

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*Accenture's Consumer Insights & Growth Strategy practice sponsors the Chief Sales Officer (CSO) Insights Research annually. The research is based on survey data from sales leaders and managers; the survey is administered by CSO Insights, a division of Miller Heiman.

**For nearly a decade, Accenture has deployed its High Performance Sales Force Analytics tool and underlying methodology when working with clients to better understand the performance and profiles of their salesforces.

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About Accenture Strategy

Accenture Strategy combines deep industry expertise, advanced analytics capabilities and human-led design methodologies that enable clients to act with speed and confidence. By identifying clear, actionable paths to accelerate competitive agility, Accenture Strategy helps leaders in the C-suite envision and execute strategies that drive growth in the face of digital transformation. For more information, follow [@AccentureStrat](https://twitter.com/AccentureStrat) or visit www.accenture.com/strategy.

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