

ORACLE

# Making Sense of Guided Selling



**Spark Series**



A TEN-MINUTE READ



# What is guided selling?

Guide and personalize the entire sales experience from lead to sale.

Guided selling uses technology to automate the sales process, allowing your sales teams to focus on the right customers and helping your customers easily find and configure the right products and services.

This empowers more efficient sales by dynamically responding to every customer, opportunity, or salesperson's unique needs. By presenting the most relevant products, services, or solutions, there's a greater chance of converting prospects into customers. This helps build trust by creating a personalized customer experience that lasts well beyond the moment of purchase.

Sales representatives typically spend time juggling administrative tasks, manually sorting through long lead and account lists, and sifting through incorrect customer information. Guided selling quickly identifies customer needs, ensuring sales pursues and prioritizes opportunities that align with company strategies and objectives.



For sales management, guided selling doesn't just create efficient sales processes; it helps to create efficient sales teams. Better insight into customers' needs ensures that sales can focus on nurturing the right accounts and accurately forecast performance. Plus, from a job-seeker's perspective, guided selling is an advanced tool that makes a firm more enticing—helping attract and retain top sales talent.

**According to CFO Dive, 63% of CFOs report that worker turnover has increased in the past three years and that lost productivity (29%), new hire training (26%), and recruiting (25%) are the costliest aspects of employee churn.<sup>1</sup>**

Let's dig into the details of guided selling—and how it can make a difference in your business.



# Why it matters today

Guided selling is no longer a nice-to-have.

Guided selling is considered a must for businesses today because it simplifies the process for sales teams while delivering the exceptional experience your customers deserve and expect. With guided selling in place, your sales team can engage with customers as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Guided selling enhances and personalizes the buying process for customers by

- **Providing** a dynamic, easy-to-navigate user experience
- **Highlighting** the most relevant products and services
- **Giving** customers more control over their purchasing decisions

It also eliminates frustration by allowing customers to access real-time, accurate quotes or pricing information through a self-service option or via a sales representative.



For sellers, guided selling offers the greatest opportunity for success by

- **Reducing administrative duties**, which allows representatives to focus on selling
- **Ensuring sales teams prioritize** strategic accounts and opportunities
- **Providing personalized feedback** and coaching to help advance opportunities

Guided selling also identifies qualification criteria and allows for dynamic fine-tuning of lead and opportunity scores.

Sales managers apply guided selling to increase sales team efficiency, including

- **Planning and setting quotas** around key accounts that align with business objectives
- **Prioritizing work lists** based on criteria management determined for each opportunity
- **Maintaining quality control** over sales processes by defining actions for sellers at each stage in the sale
- **Leveraging intelligence** from machine learning to automatically adjust deal recommendations
- **Deploying digital assistants** to provide suggestions and next steps as teams work through lead lists

# The basics

Guided selling is just one piece of automating key aspects of your sales processes.

You can also include these coordinated and integrated capabilities and methodologies to help further optimize sales performance and streamline other key sales activities and processes.

## Automated playbooks

When sales teams know their roles and responsibilities and apply methods and tactics consistently, they're better positioned for success. Automated playbooks ensure sales teams have access to best practices and on-brand messaging to help them complete opportunity-specific action items. Playbooks should capture

- **Steps to take** at different stages in the sales process
- **How to answer** customer questions and inquiries
- **Messaging that aligns** marketing and sales strategy
- **Action items** for each stage of the opportunity

## Sales enablement and onboarding

When the playbook is in place, new sales representatives have a guide to help them engage with customers almost immediately. Automated assistance within a sales application—informed by data from a CRM system or human resources—helps identify and offer guidance to new sellers based on their expertise. It also

- **Defines skills and resources** for sellers to be successful
- **Delivers streamlined, in-context learning** and sales tools
- **Provides dynamic learning** to help train sales representatives while performing their daily routines

## Automated complex pricing and guided quoting

Just like a playbook can help quickly get sales teams up to speed, automated complex pricing and guided quoting can be used the same way. They reduce training requirements by providing practical steps to help sales teams identify customer needs and recommend appropriate options while allowing new hires to sell confidently and quickly. They also

- **Provide insight** into optimal pricing through machine learning (ML)

- **Improve effectiveness** and accelerate sales through connected customer information

## AI

Customer needs and markets are continually evolving—but AI can help your business adapt. When uncertainty arises during the sales process, sellers can leverage AI for guidance about how to proceed. It can also generate win-probability notifications or alerts about at-risk accounts. Also, for digital sales representatives who may oversee thousands of accounts, AI can help

- **Score and prioritize** leads and opportunities
- **Tap into historical data** to determine revenue potential

**According to Forbes, AI and ML are making immediate contributions to driving more revenue by improving deal price guidance, deal intelligence, dynamic pricing, and incentive management.<sup>2</sup>**



## Customer relationship management and self-service

Guided selling via a CRM solution streamlines selling and quoting processes and customer self-service options. Implementing reusable rules that sellers, customers, or business partners can easily navigate will save time that can then be spent building stronger customer relationships. Using a CRM system can also

- **Improve collaboration** across the entire business
- **Assist sales** and service teams with providing better customer support
- **Improve products** and services by using the data captured in the system

**Like consumers, B2B buyers show a strong preference for frictionless, self-service experiences, from initial research through purchase to post-sale support. Self-service B2B ecommerce sales increased from 14% in 2015 to 18% in 2019, while purchases through sales reps declined from 46% to 42% over the same period.<sup>3</sup>**

# What's next?

Automation, personalization, and AI will drive successful guided selling in the future.

There's no doubt that CRMs; sales force automation tools; and configure, price, quote (CPQ) solutions have helped sales teams dramatically improve customer engagement. AI is taking it to the next level, and it's certainly not going any-where. In fact, according to a recent Gartner report, 60% of B2B sales organizations will transition from experience- and intuition-based selling to data-driven selling by 2025.<sup>4</sup> That same report predicts that in five years, there will be no separation between sales process, applications, data, and analytics. All four will merge into a single concept—AI for sales.<sup>4</sup>

Combining AI and sales data is giving sales teams a powerful tool for understanding the customer journey, providing intelligence that can predict customer needs and help close deals faster.

# A view toward practical solutions

Once you've implemented guided selling, some practical steps can help ensure continued success.



**Measure and monitor** automated business processes beginning with your sales teams' performance to ensure feedback is collected and continuous improvements can be made.



**Consider integrated tools and technologies** such as CPQ and SFA/CRM—that can improve and personalize your sales and customer experience through ML and AI.



**Enable guided selling** across your overall CRM strategy. There may be growing pains on that journey, but along the way, guided selling can help identify what isn't working so improvements can be made quickly.





## To the experience-maker who's always moving forward

At Oracle, we know great experiences come from great inspiration, and we're providing the spark for your next idea. Packed with powerful info, the Spark Series will get you up to speed on core CX concepts—such as Guided Selling—quickly.

Think of it as a way to hone your understanding before turning your eyes toward a new strategy. Because if anyone's going to create CX gold, it's you.

### **What will you discover next?**

- [Essential Strategies for B2B Commerce](#)
- [Essential Strategies for Configure, Price, Quote](#)
- [Essential Strategies for Account Management and Renewals](#)



## About Oracle Advertising and CX

Make every customer interaction matter by connecting all your business data across advertising, marketing, sales, commerce, and service. Oracle Advertising and Customer Experience. (CX) is a connected suite of applications that goes beyond traditional [CRM](#) to help you create and nurture lasting customer relationships. Build a complete view of every interaction and every customer, no matter how and when they engage. Empower your entire business to deliver exceptional customer experiences—from acquisition to retention—and everything in between.

## Sources

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