

The Chief Sales Officer Quarterly

Second Quarter 2025

Refining Strategy
and Execution

Gartner®

Letter From the Editors

Once upon a time, in a far off land, a wise leader crafted a sales strategy so meticulous and brilliant that it thrived unaltered for a splendid year.

Ah, fairy tales ...

Given the current pace of change, the ability to adjust your sales strategy and hone execution is not just beneficial — it's essential. In the shadow of quarterly targets, sales leaders are under unique pressure to stay on top of changes on the horizon. Have buyer priorities changed? Are competitors making a move? What's the next tactic? Do we have the right talent to execute on it? While those short-term adjustments are critical to quarterly results, CSOs are still tasked with investing in their sales organization's long-term success and growth.

In this issue, we tackle what it takes to keep a sales organization competitive — on the ever-winding road to success:

- The need for competitive intelligence is constant. In [Transform Competitive Intelligence Into a Strategic Asset](#), we unpack the critical role of competitive intelligence and how CSOs can use it to empower their teams to navigate complex buying environments.
- In an endless cycle of onboard, upskill and reskill, now is the time to look at your talent strategy. In [Boost Sales Hiring Success With Labor Market Insights](#), we explore how sales organizations can adapt to rapidly changing market dynamics to maintain a competitive edge in talent acquisition and retention.

- This quarter we talked with Black & Veatch's chief business evolution officer, Patrick Hogan, in [Sales Leader Spotlight: The Intersection of Innovation, Strategy and Commercial Success](#). Patrick discusses his career journey, the trends shaping his industry and how he leads his organization through strategic change.
- Finally, in [Establish a Growth Acceleration Role Dedicated to Long-Term Strategy](#), we examine how appointing a dedicated head of growth acceleration can empower CSOs to stay competitive by balancing immediate demands with strategic growth.

All the best and good selling,

Betsy Gregory-Hosler and Delainey Kirkwood

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Transform Competitive
Intelligence Into a

Strategic Asset

By Delainey Kirkwood, Dave Egloff, Robert Lesser

CSOs can transform competitive intelligence into a powerful asset for their sales teams. Learn how contextual, competitive intelligence enables sellers to guide buyers through complex purchasing decisions.

As buying grows even more complex and buying groups grow even bigger in size, CSOs must look for opportunities to simplify the process for decision makers. Today's buyers are overloaded with information from all the vendors attempting to sell to them. Buyers are forced to reconcile competing, yet seemingly credible, claims from different suppliers. The most effective sellers help customers make sense of the information and understand the alternatives — even the competitive alternatives.

Unfortunately, many sellers lack fluency in their solutions and value propositions, as well as knowledge of direct competitors, differentiating features and emerging market entrants. Competitive intelligence programs can help overcome these gaps.

In our conversations with clients, we see two common pitfalls in how organizations approach competitive intelligence:

1. Many competitive intelligence programs often focus on nonsales functions like product development, marketing and strategy, leaving the sales function largely overlooked. While sales may gain indirectly from these programs, CSOs need to fully leverage competitive intelligence to help sellers win deals and retain customers.
2. When sales does have a competitive intelligence program, sellers may receive educational materials like competitor information and internal battlecards, but applying this knowledge is still challenging. Sellers must identify whether a competitor is involved in an opportunity, find relevant content and adapt internal documents for customer use.

To simplify how sellers use competitive intelligence:

- Develop a cross-functional cohort to improve competitiveness
- Prioritize competitors by level of risk and disruption
- Tactically neutralize competitive threats

Develop a Cross-Functional Cohort to Improve Competitiveness

In today's dynamic marketplace, CSOs must evolve from a purely sales-focused mindset on competitive intelligence to build a holistic, comprehensive commercial coalition across the organization. This broader cohort is crucial for cultivating and sustaining competitive differentiation. Each cross-functional stakeholder contributes to an integrated approach to developing competitive strategies:

- Product development teams refine product roadmaps by analyzing competitor features and incorporating feedback from sales on buyer priorities.
- Marketing teams optimize market insights to position awareness and demand generation campaigns focused on the ideal customer profiles with the appropriate value positioning.
- Corporate strategy curates a list of competitive threats and acquisition targets.
- HR sharpens its talent acquisition and retention programs.

Cross-functional teams also possess greater capacity and reach for comprehensive information collection, drawing from a variety of internal and external sources that should be gathered, cross-referenced and validated with the other sources (see Figure 1).

CSOs have an opportunity to connect strategy and differentiation with seller tactics using **competitive frames of reference** across marketing and sales value messaging.

A competitive frame of reference is the relative positioning between similar offerings as viewed by the potential customer. Establishing a **competitive frame of reference** helps customers recognize the differences between the offerings based on objective criteria that they find valuable.

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» **Figure 1. Three Independent Sources for Data Triangulation**

For example:

- Partner summits
- Partner training
- Joint engagements
- Technical collaborators



- For example:
- Executive briefings
 - Customer advisory
 - Engagements

For example:

- Quarterly business reviews
- Win/loss reports
- Sales engagement

Source: Gartner

As a coalition, all commercial stakeholders should contribute to the comparative matrix and competitive frames of reference between their own company and common competitors. Table 1 provides an abbreviated example of how a technology company may comparatively assess itself.

In Table 1, the coalition identifies the first competitor's low-cost strategy. Leads should exclude cost-sensitive profiles, and instead focus on premium value messaging. Against the second competitor, leads and opportunities should include technographics to focus on customers who have specific compatibility needs.

With enhanced data, the coalition can create competitive content and insights, including customer-facing messaging, ROI comparisons and detailed analyses, along with seller resources like objection-handling guides and scripts.

CSOs should ensure competitive insights are readily available to support sellers, preventing them from having to create their own materials.

» **Table 1. Illustrative Competitive Matrix With Competitive Frames of Reference**

Buying criteria	Company	Competitor No. 1	Competitor No. 2
Scalability	Handles millions of concurrent users with automatic load balancing during peak usage	Concurrent users are limited during peak transactional periods	High concurrent user volume, but some back-end processes are halted during peak transactional loads
Reporting	AI-powered real-time analytics with customizable dashboards using visualized data	Real-time analytics, but dashboards are not completely customizable and data visualization requires an additional cost	Same as the company, but compatibility with other software packages is limited
Overall Value	Premium offering that reduces the long-term costs of upgrades and maintenance	Lowest cost offering requiring additional purchases with data visualization and storage	Same as the company, but compatibility with other software packages are limited

Source: Gartner

Prioritize Competitors by Level of Risk and Disruption

Most organizations have many competitors, making it difficult for sellers to help customers differentiate their options. CSOs expect sellers to know their products, company and market trends, as well as who they are competing with and how customers interpret value messaging and competitive frames of reference.

To ease the burden and improve customer interactions, CSOs must narrow competitor lists based on necessity by inventorying all competitors. Each sales team may have a different set of prioritized competitors. For example:

- Public sector sellers face unique competitors when dealing with government agencies.
- North America sellers, versus those in Asia/Pacific, may face different competitors based on regional selling strategies.

CSOs should leverage their internal stakeholders to build a comprehensive competitor list, refining it to a shortlist of priority competitors. This involves engaging sellers, channel partners, customers and product teams to assess competitor strengths and potential disruptions. Figure 2 provides an illustrative cyclical flow to inventory all competitors, focus sellers to a prioritized list and enable them to win.

» **Figure 2. Focus and Enable Sellers to Win Against Key Competitors**



Source: Gartner

CSOs must regularly monitor and validate competitor data to understand their value propositions and potential disruptions. This involves assessing competitors based on market presence, growth plans, success potential in meeting customer priorities, and their impact on business performance, including sales cycles and deal sizes.

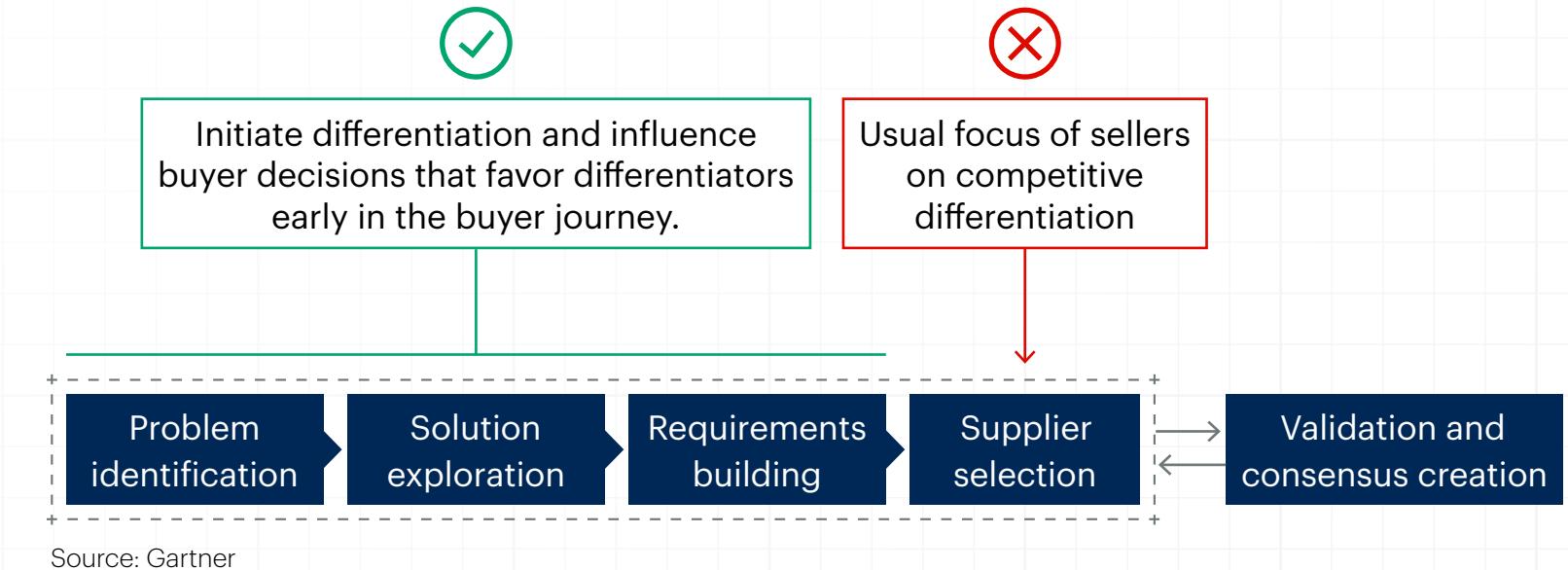
After identifying the most disruptive competitors, CSOs should equip sellers with tactical playbooks and customer-facing materials to highlight competitive differences. These competitive frames of reference can include aspects of product scalability, service delivery and organizational strengths like financial stability and brand reputation.

Tactically Neutralize Competitive Threats

CSOs should equip sellers with quality customer-facing resources to emphasize competitive positioning. For each key competitor, provide an objective comparison highlighting differentiating factors. This prevents sellers from creating personal inconsistent documents themselves, ultimately saving time and improving accuracy and outcomes.

Finally, CSOs must ensure that sellers use those resources to win competitive deals. Sellers must reevaluate their sales process, considering subtle steps along the buying journey that influence favorable deal outcomes. It's important that sellers do not wait until customers finalize their supplier selection. Instead, they should establish a competitive advantage from the moment the buyer's problem is identified, highlighting factors that position their offering as the best solution (see Figure 3).

» **Figure 3. Competitive Seller Tactics During the Buying Journey**



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Boost Sales Hiring Success With

Labor Market Insights

By Muskan Gujral, Jared Davis

Sales organizations must adapt to evolving market dynamics to maintain a competitive edge in talent acquisition and retention. CSOs can use this research on the U.S. B2B sales labor market to make better-informed decisions that improve hiring and retention strategies.

As market dynamics continue to shape and reshape the talent pool, CSOs and hiring managers face the perennial task of attracting top talent. Organizations must pivot quickly to capture top talent and effectively navigate the complexities of today's hiring environment. Leverage Gartner's analysis of U.S. labor market data in B2B sales to assess your strategies and excel in hiring and retention.

Adapt to a Flexible Work Model

Despite the return-to-office mandates, selling has become more reliant on virtual and hybrid modes. Gartner's analysis of the U.S. labor market data shows a 353% rise

in job advertisements referencing hybrid work from 2020 to 2024.¹ Nearly one-fifth (18%) of seller job postings list work location as remote, and another 8% specify a hybrid work arrangement.¹

Although some organizations have reverted to in-office work models, they have been unable to erode the appeal for virtual and hybrid settings. In fact, these settings are often highlighted as part of an organization's employee value proposition. The comfort and flexibility offered by these models undeniably expand the organization's recruiting ground. Pros of remote and hybrid work include potential cost savings on office space and utilities, a broadened talent pool for hiring and an enjoyable work-life balance for employees, leading to higher job satisfaction and greater retention. For most organizations, these pros far outweigh the cons, such as less in-person face time. Opting for remote working and hybrid models for your sales teams will help you attract a greater number of interested candidates.

Recommendations

Pursue the following solutions to move toward a more flexible work model:

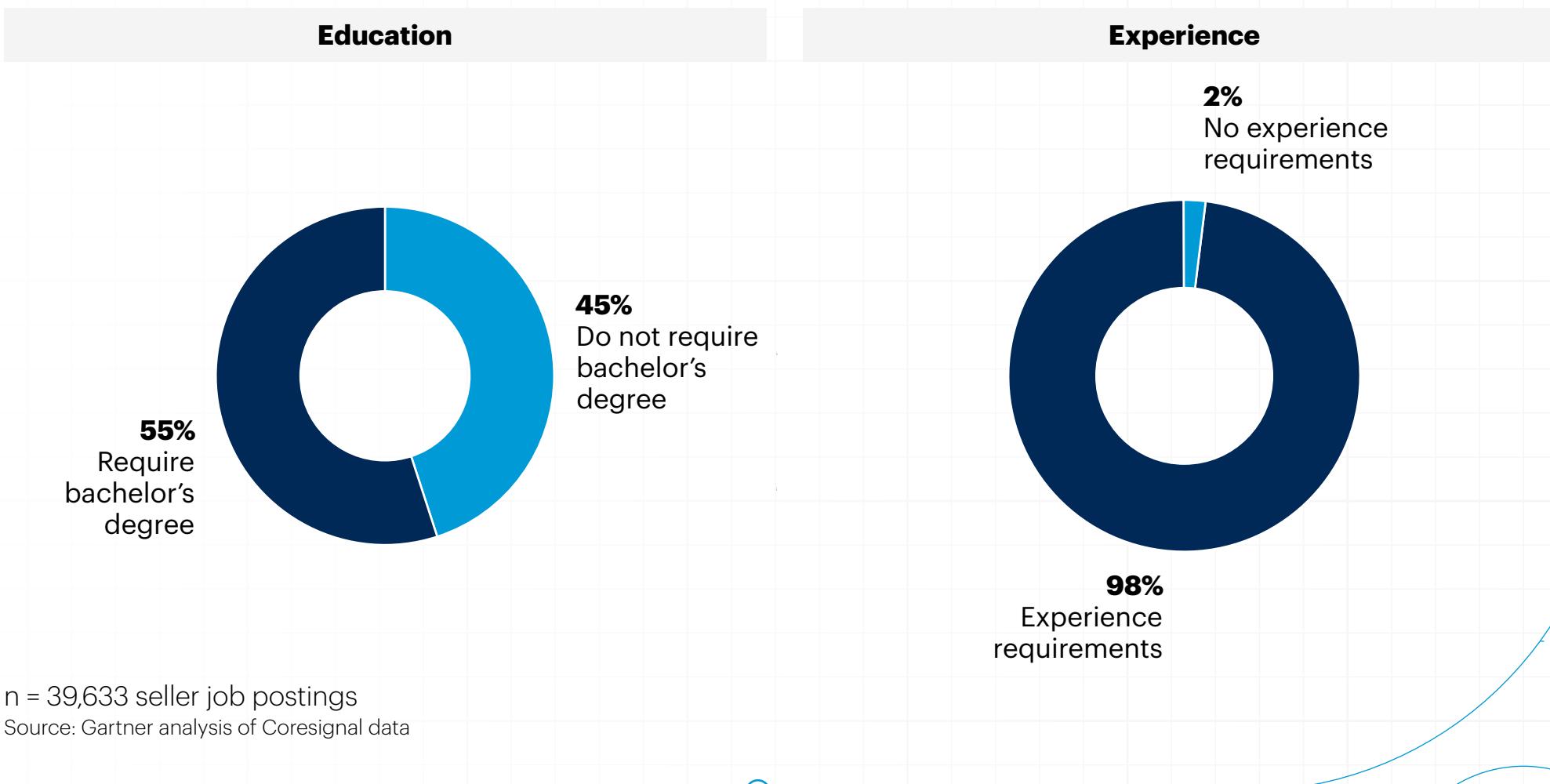
- Assess the requirements for different roles in your team and determine the necessity for face-to-face operations of each role.
- Expand your target candidate pool by eliminating geographic locations from your job postings. If required for certain strategic roles, introduce a hybrid work model.
- Spotlight and package your new virtual-first work mode as an incentive or added perk of your employment benefit package.

Seek Skills Over Education

Our research suggests that employers are prioritizing a candidate's experience over educational background. Out of the 39,633 sales job postings in the last four years, 45% did not list a bachelor's degree as a required criterion.¹ However, about 98% of the openings specified years of experience required or equivalent certifications to apply (see Figure 1).¹ Employers perceive on-the-job experience as building several foundational skills in a seller like effective communication, customer relationship management, negotiation skills, etc.

While years of experience is a better indicator than educational background, it is not the best substitute for skills. Seventy-two percent (72%) of sellers believe that their skills will become outdated in the next one to two years.² Sales leaders can cast a wider net by focusing on a future-oriented skill set, which is transferable and adaptable to sales. The future of sales lies in AI partnership and embracing technology as a teammate instead of the enemy. Despite this understanding, only 6% of job descriptions in the past four years list AI or related skills as requirements.¹

» Figure 1. Seller Job Posting Requirements, Education and Experience



Recommendations

Take the following actions to anchor your search for talent in skills, rather than educational backgrounds:

- Identify the critical seller skills for your organization and establish a competency model to aid your recruiting and hiring managers to assess the same. Gartner clients can access: [Tool: Frontline Seller Competency Model](#).
- Study the shifting market trends in your industry and pre-emptively align the seller skills with the requirements of the present and the future, instead of getting preoccupied with degrees and sales experience.
- Be open to hiring from nonsales and nontraditional talent pools such as return-to-work professionals, athletes, military and talent from adjacent industries.

Steer Toward Better Job Titles

Organizations recognize the need to increase the sellers' time spent on closing deals, improving relationships with buyers and pushing product adoption. One way this is done is by hiring for more specialized roles such as subject matter experts or go-to-market (GTM) support roles.

Table 1 lists the most in-demand job titles in B2B sales job postings (in order of level of demand):¹

» **Table 1. Title Groupings and Role Categories**

Title Grouping

Account executive/business development manager/sales executive

Sales development/business development representative

Account manager

Technical specialist/engineer/subject matter expert/presales

Sales director

Inside sales representative

Customer success manager

Key/global/strategic account manager

Frontline sales manager

Hybrid account manager (hybrid = roles covering account growth + new logos, not geographic)

Role Category

Sales

GTM

Sales

Presales

Sales

GTM

GTM

Sales

Sales

GTM

Source: Gartner analysis of Coresignal Data

Note: GTM = go-to-market

Technical specialist and GTM support roles represent an opportunity to focus the seller on activities where they can add unique value while reducing the skill and knowledge demands of the seller role. The GTM support roles also have the advantage of most often functioning remotely, thereby extending greater scalability and flexibility to the CSO when organizing the team.

Our research also suggests that while hiring for key sales associates, the listing of traditional sales support tasks, such as order processing and administrative support, has decreased since 2023. Sales organizations are gradually automating these tasks or shifting them to other functions altogether.

Recommendations

To steer hiring toward better-suited job titles:

- Encourage the use of specialized titles such as technical specialists, or GTM support roles.
- Recruit talent with sound technical understanding and strong product knowledge for these specialist roles.
- Show the labor market that seller roles are now simpler, therefore making them more attractive for the candidates.

¹ **Gartner analysis of Coresignal data** (n = 39,633 job posts from 1,392 U.S. companies, August 2020 to June 2024). CoreSignal is Gartner's data partner for employee and job postings data from LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and Indeed. Gartner uses a combination of machine learning modeling and keyword fuzzy-matching to analyze word embeddings and text in the title and contents of job descriptions. From these models, Gartner produces skills, qualifications, and responsibilities sought within job posts. For this analysis, skills, experiences and years-of-experience were extracted from the responsibilities and qualifications sections of the job postings. These samples may not be representative of general hiring trends and the data should only be used for directional insights

² **2024 Gartner Seller Skills Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand what seller skills are needed to excel in a changing B2B sales world, where buyers prefer digital; data and technology usage are expected; and the relationship with technology becomes more that of being teammates. The survey was held from January through March 2024. The online sample included 1,026 B2B sellers across North America (n = 696), Western Europe (n = 182) and Asia/Pacific (n = 148). Industry segments included banking and financial services, healthcare, information technology, manufacturing, business services, and telecommunications. Qualifying respondents had at least one year in the role at an organization with at least 50 sellers and enterprise-wide annual revenue in 2023 of at least \$25 million or equivalent. *Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.*



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Sales Leader Spotlight | Interview

The Intersection of Innovation, Strategy & Commercial Success

By Betsy Gregory-Hosler

Patrick Hogan is chief business evolution officer at Black & Veatch — an employee-owned, global engineering, procurement, construction and consulting firm. Patrick leads enterprise strategy and execution, with management responsibility for the company's merger and acquisition (M&A) activities and partnerships, enterprise innovation and sustainability, enterprise sales and client account management, and enterprise marketing, branding and communications.



Before he joined Black & Veatch, Patrick spent 20 years in both enterprise and business unit leadership positions for Honeywell, most notably with several chief commercial officer positions. He has broad experience in energy, environmental safety, IT consulting, and global sales and marketing operations. Patrick earned a Bachelor of Science degree from University of Bristol, and a Doctorate in Medicinal Chemistry from University of Cambridge in England.

Staying ahead in a rapidly evolving business landscape requires a blend of innovation, strategy and a keen understanding of client needs. Patrick Hogan, chief business evolution officer at Black & Veatch, shares insights into his career journey and the trends shaping the future of the industry.

Tell us about your career path.

My career path starts and ends with all things technology and innovation. I was fortunate to work on a PhD project involving advanced research chemistry and how to apply it with state-of-the-art MRI imaging technology. I learned that I really like science, but I really like it when it's applied to a quantifiable business outcome. Over time, that interest took me from being a researcher in an academic environment toward roles where I was solving large, complex customer problems.

I transitioned into the biotech and clinical technology sector. Our salespeople were struggling to sell the company's sophisticated research outcomes to clinicians.

So, I went with them into the field to understand why we weren't connecting with the client. That experience taught me the importance of understanding client needs firsthand, effectively communicating technical concepts and finding a commercial result that addressed those needs. It was the beginning of my exposure to sales. I progressively moved to sales leadership and got exposure to product marketing and development, eventually leading to a number of different roles leading marketing, strategy and commercial functions working for large, publicly traded global companies that were technology leaders in their vertical markets.

“
My career has always been at the center of a Venn diagram of innovation, strategy and a commercial outcome. If I can be working in all three, those are the kind of roles that have attracted me.

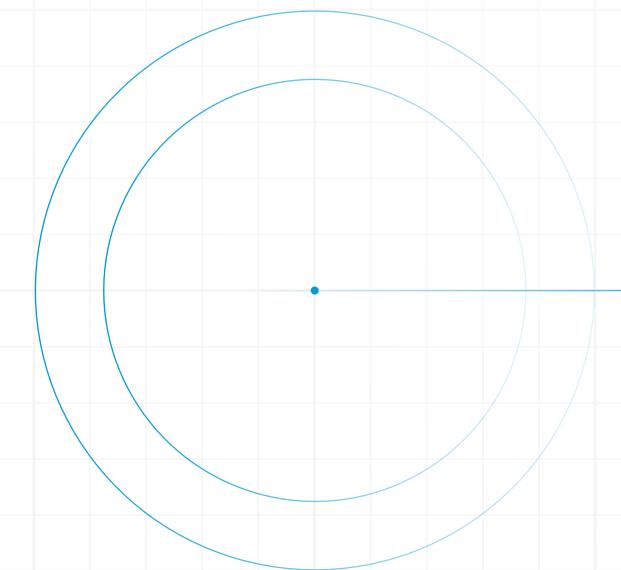
Which functions fall under your current role?

My current role at Black & Veatch brings together strategy, M&A, innovation, sustainability, sales and marketing. It begins with enterprise strategy, spanning all of the company's sectors, as well as wholly-owned subsidiaries, our regions and the functions that support all of these. We have a team that is focused on M&A and partnerships to ensure the company maintains a growth focus in key areas. We also run an incubator called the Black & Veatch IgniteX program, fostering startups in many areas, particularly decarbonization and green technologies, so we have a view into what is coming next that feeds our advanced product offerings and also our thought leadership practices that we share with clients.

Our sustainability team is integrated into our strategy, emphasizing transparency in emission reductions in our own operations and also leveraging these insights to create new services for clients. Additionally, I oversee our enterprise sales team, which manages more than 1,100 sellers globally, focusing on sales enablement, operations, and key account management. Our enterprise marketing team handles thought leadership, brand management and digital client experiences. Finally, we brought in innovation as well, to ultimately support new ideas for each of our business units based on their markets as a differentiated way to create new sources of collaboration and value for our clients.

Tell us about trends impacting your organization right now?

We're a global engineering, consulting and construction company. We design and help build the world's critical human infrastructure. We say human infrastructure because the work we do ensures communities around the world have reliable power, clean water and other critical resources that ensure a higher quality of life. Right now, our clients (power utilities, energy majors, municipal water providers, data centers) are rapidly transforming their business models. They're no longer staying in nice, neat verticals. They're moving horizontally and becoming a little bit of everything — think molecules, electrons, data bytes. We have to be ahead of that curve and help our sales teams navigate that environment while also being able to articulate in the language and different ROI value propositions of each of those changed business models.



What does this change look like for sellers?

Our sellers are amazing people who work very hard. They have to navigate within the complexity of these very large companies and understand everything that's going on within that client across multiple levels, locations and business units. They also have to navigate within Black & Veatch, which is complex and continually adapting itself to better meet the needs of those clients. Specifically, those sellers need to be able to marshall the internal resources needed to fulfill a large-scale engineering, procurement and construction project. We've recently gone from three business entities to five to get closer to specific client types and let sellers get focused on the specific buying behaviors, ROI vocabulary and needs in each of those segments.

We're asking our sellers to become more savvy as to the market dynamics of each client and their business objectives versus just being a technology expert. In the past they may have stayed in a particular vertical where they had experience. Now they need to follow the client beyond that and understand the full range of integrated services we offer to identify opportunities. They are now effectively client experts who pull in the relevant solution oriented subject matter experts as needed. This requires a shift toward listening more and asking more questions, rather than pushing their favorite solutions.

How do you identify necessary strategy adjustments throughout the year?

We are constantly reviewing forecasts about where our business is going. We conduct monthly reviews to assess our business trajectory, closely aligned with finance, operations and supply chain. Every quarter we hold strategy days to provide our teams with updates on our technologies, our customer needs and accounts. These strategy days involve all executive leaders, functional leaders and client or solution owners. We overlay that with regular strategic account planning as well. We're constantly understanding the market and what our clients need both today and into their long-range future. That's how we're adjusting and iterating to be predictable, profitable, and where the client needs us to be.

Can you share an example of a significant midyear adjustment you've made?

A recent example involves the energy infrastructure market, where we've seen immense demand for AI-enabled data centers. These require substantial new sources of resilient energy at a scale that has not been seen before. We've had to pivot our value proposition, redeploy engineering and construction skills, and adapt our pricing and resource utilization strategies in response to ensure clients can confidently plan ahead for their large capital investments to build power stations, data centers or new energy sources that might not come online until several years in the future. People don't necessarily realize that they will also need massive amounts of water

for cooling, as well as land for building these facilities — there's a power equation, there's a land equation, there's a water equation. We have decades of expertise in all of those so we're adapting to redeploy valuable, incredible talent for this once-in-a-career life cycle of amazing demand.

What tools and processes have you found effective in enhancing sales execution?

We've invested in putting robust business intelligence into the hands of our sellers and sales leaders. We are fortunate to have one ERP integrated with one CRM instance, and they refresh daily to give us near real-time assessments of activity against our goals. Because of what we do, the value we bring is our talent, which means our selling signals are also our recruiting signals. We need to know what engineering and construction expertise we need in what zip code to ensure we can execute confidently on project delivery.

We're also leveraging machine learning and predictive AI in our selling forecast process, so that we can send better downstream signals to our operations team. Finance, risk management, even marketing and reputation management, they're all relying on the data coming from our sellers. Sellers are very busy, so we facilitate the quality of that sales data using AI to streamline data transfer into CRM and provide independent pattern-generated analysis on sales opportunities.

We're also trying to encourage sellers to be aware of what the available client-facing data can do for them. It can help them improve their sales velocity, win rate and pipeline forecast accuracy, which helps them and the entire company. It also better positions us to be in the right place, with the right tools and the right people. To help, we have a dedicated market insights team that is cracking the code on everything in the public domain around our clients, their markets and regulations.

We're breaking down the insights for sellers so it becomes a story they can tell to challenge or inform clients.

We want to be the team who is educating and leading our clients directly as well as in the social channels where we spend significant time, including LinkedIn.

This whole process is a virtuous circle. We're reinvesting back into new areas, new people and new technologies that, in turn, will help the seller, because they've got something well-established and proven to take to their clients. That's a great place to be — leading from the front with the latest perspectives on where the markets are trending and how innovation will get you there.

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The Comparative Seller Performance Metrics Flywheel

```
graph TD; A[Compare sellers vs peers  
Compare top performers vs peers] --> B[Data-Based Decisions]; B --> C[Isolate relevant individual coaching metrics  
Set realistic role-based targets]; C --> D[Planning]; D --> E[Execution]; E --> F[Improve individual performance]; F --> A;
```

Source: Gartner 778469_C

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Establish a Growth Acceleration Role

Dedicated to
Long-Term Strategy

By Delainey Kirkwood, Dave Egloff

A CSO's focus on urgent issues can hinder long-term growth, especially when one leader manages both sales operations and strategy. Appointing a head of growth acceleration helps achieve predictable and scalable long-term growth.

Like their peers, CSOs must make big bets for the future. However, CSOs are the most accountable of any C-suite member for near-term performance.

The CSO's reality is that the long-term focus is often the opportunity cost of nearer-term priorities. Nearly all CSOs want to dedicate time, people and money to planning for the future, but their priorities often focus on near-term revenue activities, such as acquiring new logos or growing

existing accounts.¹ In fact, CSOs are among the three executives most expected to be involved in board meetings for growth-related discussions, but are rarely expected to participate in board meetings on strategic planning and execution.² These are all worthy investments, but have a nearer-term bias. Even if CSOs wanted to focus more of their attention on building for long-term growth, they are often distracted by external challenges across talent, supply chain or inflation.

CSOs often ask their head of sales operations to act as both a sales operations leader and a sales strategy leader to operationalize the commercial strategy, believing that it is the right path toward growth acceleration. Unfortunately, as soon as sales operations are commingled with strategy, the immediate needs of operations become the central focus.

CSOs should establish a dedicated head of growth acceleration role who can work with the sales operations leader to develop tactics across profit, revenue and market share growth.

The Role: Head of Growth Acceleration

The head of growth acceleration reports to the CSO and drives the unified commercial strategy by collaborating with cross-functional commercial stakeholders. This role leverages quantitative and qualitative assessments to shape sales strategy, inform product roadmaps and prioritize commercial investments. Ultimately, the head of growth acceleration is accountable for increasing the rate of growth.

The head of growth acceleration is not the same as a head of sales strategy. If there is a dedicated leader responsible for strategy, these functions look similar and have overlapping responsibilities. However, this relatively newer, more innovative title reflects an expanded mandate and broader commercial responsibility. Sales strategy, by definition, may appear too anchored to the sales function. "Growth acceleration" better describes this role's leadership within the unified commercial strategy.



If I miss my number twice in a row, I may never see the benefits of any of these growth projects.

CSO at a Software company

Long-term growth requires an investment that spans long-term initiatives. CSOs need a delegate who has the skills, capacity and freedom to focus on the success of the next year and next decade.

Appoint a Multidisciplinary Leader to Growth Acceleration Role

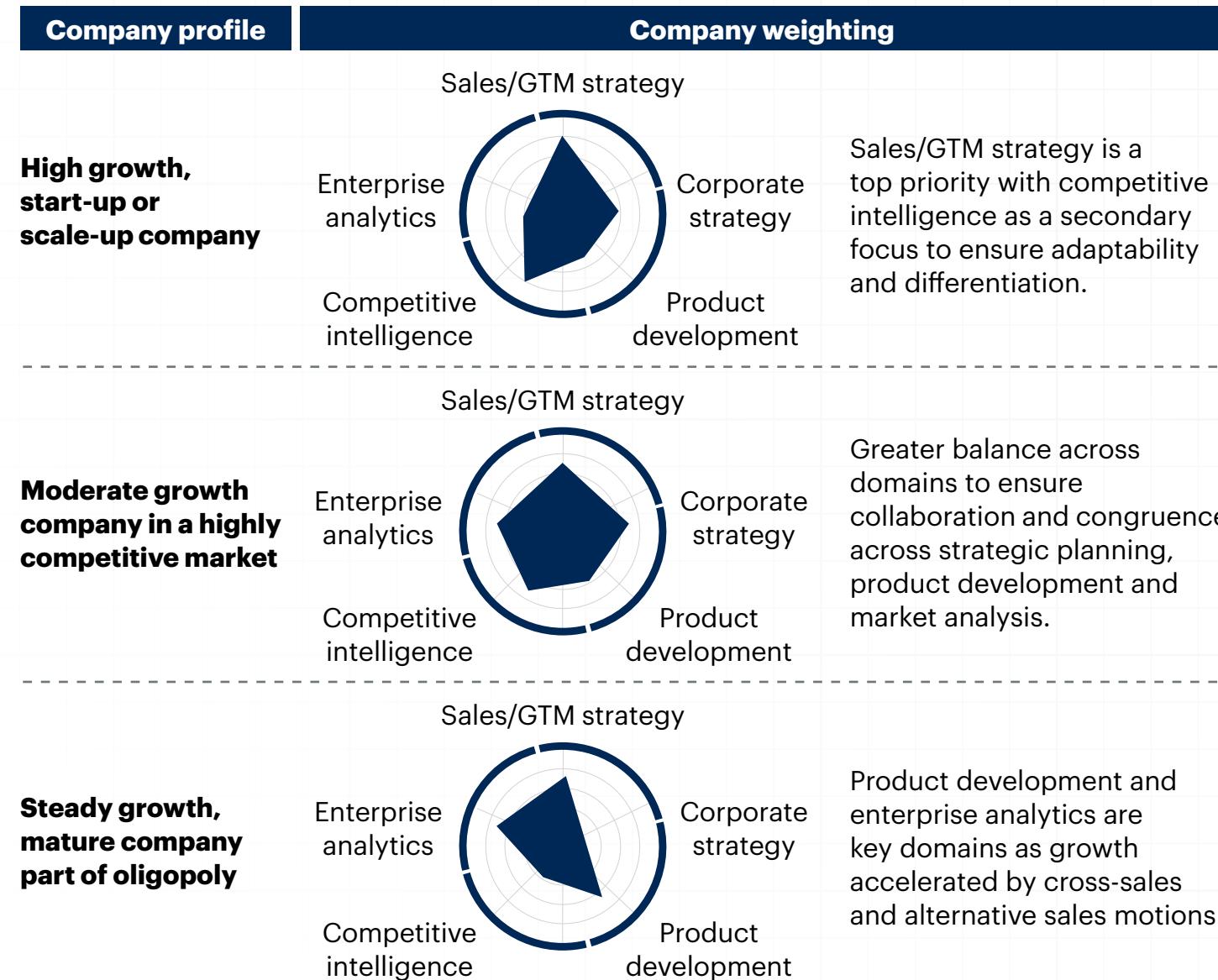
The head of growth acceleration must appreciate priorities across commercial strategy, corporate strategy, product development, competitive intelligence and enterprise analytics. While expertise in all areas is not necessary, a core competency across domains is crucial for influencing commercial stakeholders and activating the commercial strategy. Each organization will require a unique skill blend based on its go-to-market strategies

and organizational profile. Figure 1 provides an illustrative example of how these skills could be weighted differently across three sample organization profiles.

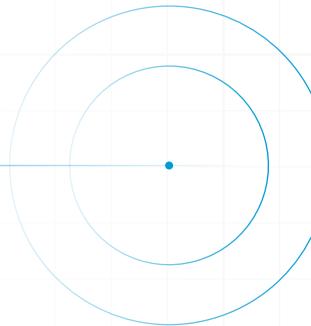
CSOs must develop and promote plans for the growth acceleration role, ensuring it has the competencies to meet the organization's needs. Visible support from the CSO and genuine backing from across the commercial team are essential. With only CSO support, the number of growth levers will be limited.

The head of growth acceleration maximizes ROI with unified commercial support and is ultimately accountable for enabling growth initiatives. Responsibilities include resolving cross-functional gridlock, aligning commercial stakeholders, harmonizing sales channels and the various routes to market, allocating or mobilizing resources and uncovering insights.

» **Figure 1. Illustrative Competency Weighting by Company Profile**



Source: Gartner



Role Responsibility: Enable Organic and Inorganic Growth

Organic growth requires commercial stakeholders from such areas as sales, marketing and product to align and operate as partners in the buying journey and selling process. Rather than assigning blame when growth targets are missed, the head of growth acceleration must objectively prioritize organizational growth over merely the needs of the sales force. This requires a ruthless prioritization to invest in only the organic strategies that have the best chance for success. With fewer organic growth initiatives, each function is freed to focus on the needs of those specific initiatives.

Inorganic growth arises from mergers, acquisitions or joint ventures. The head of growth acceleration can add significant value. By understanding go-to-market (GTM) strategies and competition using both qualitative and quantitative assessments, the head of growth acceleration has a unique perspective to:

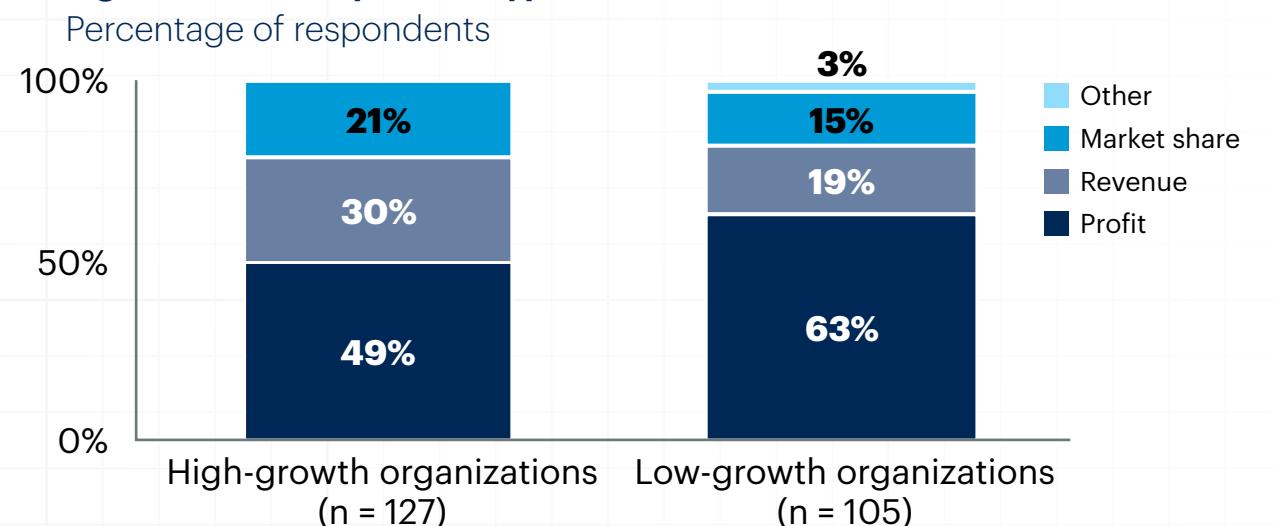
- **Detect the presence and disruptive nature of competitors.** Then, recommend smaller competitors for acquisition due diligence.
- **Spotlight adjacent markets that may be receptive to the current product offering.** Then, seek channel partners or joint venture candidates to improve new market penetration.

Ultimately, the head of growth acceleration must continually scour the marketplace for opportunities and inefficiencies. They must be empowered to influence strategic directions and be freed up from near-term goals to establish a multiyear growth acceleration plan.

Develop Tactics Across Three Key Forms of Growth

Slower and uncertain economic conditions underscore the importance of a dedicated head of growth acceleration working under the CSO. Top-line revenue growth isn't always feasible, especially during uncertain times. Although low-growth companies are more likely to focus on profit, a sizable percentage of high-growth companies also pursue profit (see Figure 2).³ Figure 2 illustrates three forms of growth (profit, revenue and market share). Each requires its own set of tactics to accelerate results.

» **Figure 2. Most Important Types of Growth**



n varies by segment; executive leaders involved in their company's growth initiatives

Q: Which of the following forms of growth is most important for your company at present?

Source: 2024 Gartner Growth Agenda Survey

Profit Growth

The CSO and the new head of growth acceleration have the most beneficial impact by focusing on commercial spend efficiency. They should aim to increase returns from existing investments and resources across all commercial stakeholders. Two tactics to explore:

- **Track profitability** across all routes to market. If profitability is too challenging to calculate by channel, use other leading and lagging measures of efficiency, including:
 - Win rate
 - Deal cycle time
 - Average deal size
 - Percentage of stalled deals
- **Rebalance resources** across all routes to market, including moving sellers between engagement models and redefining rules of engagement between direct and indirect channels. Rebalancing is essentially a prioritization exercise.

Revenue Growth

CSO must seek acceleration across all sales motions for revenue growth. Unfortunately, many CSOs focus their attention on the overall revenue number instead of analyzing each of the subcomponents listed below. Sustaining growth acceleration is improved when heads of growth acceleration examine their opportunity and success by revenue gained from:

- **New-sell** — Acquiring new logos
- **Cross-sell** — Selling new product lines to existing customers
- **Upsell** — Moving customers from an existing product to an up-leveled, higher-margin offering
- **Add-on sell** — Selling peripheral products to existing customers
- **Resell** — Refreshing or renewing products to existing customers

The head of growth acceleration monitors growth rates and addresses areas of deceleration.

Market Share Growth

Often overlooked because it is seen as a component of overall revenue growth, market share growth requires a keen eye on competitors and market conditions. Market share growth presents an opportunity and risk during economic uncertainty as customers seek to consolidate vendors to simplify operations and renegotiate for better pricing. Heads of growth acceleration must work collaboratively with their CSO and their organization's:

- **CFO:** To target new price points for competitive markets and customers
- **Product team:** To develop clear differentiation and “battle cards” to help sellers compete with their most common competitors
- **Customer success and services team:** To address customer retention issues and collect customer success stories.

¹ **2025 Gartner CSO Priorities Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand the top priorities, challenges and opportunities for chief sales officers in 2025. The survey was completed from October 2024 through December 2024 with an online sample of 246 heads of sales and senior sales leaders across North America (n = 165), Western Europe (n = 46) and Asia/Pacific (n = 35). Qualifying respondents belonged to a sales function of an organization with enterprise-wide annual revenue in 2024 of at least \$100 million or equivalent. Industry segments included manufacturing, information technology and high tech, banking and financial services, and pharmaceuticals. Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

² **2025 Gartner Board of Directors Survey.** This survey was conducted to understand how C-suite executives can work more effectively with the board of directors (the nonexecutive director board) and provide appropriate information to the board with confidence in their ability to deliver on the enterprise strategy in the near term and in the future. The survey also focused heavily on current issues of the day for boards that are either caused by technology or are mitigated by technology. The survey was conducted online from June through August 2024 among 328 respondents from North America (n = 169), Latin America (n = 12), Europe (n = 77) and Asia/Pacific (n = 70). Respondents came from organizations with \$50 million or more in annual revenue in industries except governments, nonprofits, charities and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Respondents were required to be nonexecutive members of corporate boards of directors. Disclaimer: The results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole, but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed.

³ **2024 Gartner Growth Agenda Survey.** This survey was conducted to better understand which tactics and approaches differentiate high-growth companies (those who achieved revenue growth of 10% or more) from others. The research was conducted online from 4 October through 27 November 2023 among 288 executive leaders from North America (n = 105), Latin America (n = 35), Europe (n = 104) and Asia/Pacific (n = 44), across all commercial industries, excluding information technology. Respondents were from companies with at least \$250 million or equivalent in annual revenue. Qualified respondents had personal knowledge of their company's financial performance and either led or participated in their company's growth initiatives. Disclaimers: Results of this survey do not represent global findings or the market as a whole but reflect the sentiments of the respondents and companies surveyed. There are no respondents from China in compliance with the Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL).

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