



# Augmenting Sales with Intelligent Virtual Assistants

## The 451 Take

Sales teams are only as productive as their own capacity allows. As sales cycles become more complicated, more sales-people are needed to engage leads and prospects at various stages of the funnel. Stakeholders are seeking ways to help sales reps become more productive – more diligent in following up with prospects in a timely manner and better able to offer personalized service that truly engages prospects in a way that leads to demonstrable results.

Sophisticated automation technology can help accomplish this in an efficient and scalable way by automating the human-to-human interactions that drive customer engagement. Many businesses are turning to intelligent automation tools to augment their sales teams. Automation technology can help salespeople relate to customers without sidelining the human high-touch aspect of sales that’s critical to building relationships and ultimately driving top-line growth.

Intelligent virtual assistants (IVAs) help individuals on the frontlines be persistent, prompt and effective in sales interactions by autonomously following up on leads and communicating with prospects in two-way, human-like conversations. These communications managed by the IVA move prospects forward in the sales cycle.

## Business Leaders View Intelligent Virtual Assistants as High-Impact Tools

Source: 451 Research’s Voice of the Enterprise: Customer Experience and Commerce Q2 2019

44%

of businesses anticipate that AI digital assistants for prescriptive sales enablement will have the highest investment over the next 12 months



43%

of businesses cite automated chatbots and virtual assistants as having high impact on operations over the next two years



42-44%

of businesses are looking at sales analytics and intelligence tools and AI digital assistants as game-changers over the next 12 months



## Business Impact

For sales teams, the key elements to consider are those that retain core customers, help salespeople reengage with dormant leads, effectively determine interest from active leads and accelerate open opportunities. IVAs reduce friction in the sales process by persistently working leads in a polite and personalized manner to determine sales-readiness and take appropriate action. The responses and actions that are taken on ‘hot’ leads differ from those who express interest in checking back later, for example. The more skilled the virtual assistant is, the more use cases it can handle autonomously. Similarly, IVAs can be used to ramp up or down sales capacity on demand to meet organizational needs more cost-effectively than people power alone.

451 Research is a leading information technology research and advisory company focusing on technology innovation and market disruption. More than 100 analysts and consultants provide essential insight to more than 1,000 client organizations globally through a combination of syndicated research and data, advisory and go-to-market services, and live events. Founded in 2000, 451 Research is a part of S&P Global Market Intelligence.



Research®  
Now a Part of

Business  
Impact Brief

S&P Global Market Intelligence

## Business Impact (continued)

In the face of the COVID-19 epidemic, a 451 Research flash survey indicated that 43% of businesses are planning to increase their spending on employee communications technologies – the largest increase found. It is likely that IVAs and similar automation tools will feature into those decisions. One-third have delayed hiring staff, opening the door to new forms of automation to compensate for the gap. Companies are moving quickly to reevaluate how they will direct their technology spending to take into account a drastically different environment – for sales teams and every other part of their businesses.

**EXPANDED SALES CAPACITY.** Overextended salespeople result in a reduced number of touches to potential leads, cascading into a series of missed opportunities. IVAs automate many of the repetitive tasks that stretch sales teams, allowing people to focus on establishing relationships and closing deals.

**BETTER PIPELINE QUALITY.** IVAs allow salespeople to bypass the time-consuming aspects of the qualification process. By directly asking leads whether they are interested in speaking with a salesperson, IVAs provide a scalable way to improve pipeline performance no matter where a lead may fall in the funnel.

**IMPROVED VISIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY.** Where there is lack of visibility, there are inevitably dropped leads and lost opportunities. IVAs overcome this deficit by recording all activities in a CRM, and by alerting sales managers and sales reps of change in lead status, updating relevant lead information during conversations, and providing reports and dashboards to track progress. Automation provides a mechanism for tracking and reviewing all activity that goes into the sales process. Survey data from 451 Research found that many business decision-makers (42-44%) are considering intelligent automation technologies for their sales teams.

## Looking Ahead

Building positive relationships with consumers is a core part of winning the customer experience. An increasing number of companies understand the value of relationship building. Nurturing the relationship and connection to customers along the entire customer journey is a core aspect of digital transformation initiatives, helping to build customer loyalty and retention. Going forward, businesses will find that software with embedded intelligent automation and analytics can help align sales with marketing around branding and messaging. At present, the technology has reached the stage where entire tranches of low-level leads can be nurtured and engaged through virtual personas.

Today's IVAs, when applied to sales, will likely be a boon that lets salespeople concentrate on having better-qualified opportunities, not just more of them. Recovering from the economic downturn and thriving during periods of economic volatility will require businesses to embrace a new kind of sales workforce that can quickly refill sales pipelines and optimize the sales cycle. The need for speed and efficiency will push people to look for automated solutions that can be brought to bear across the sales cycle from engagement and qualification to follow-up. IVAs may become a competitive differentiator for sales teams.



conversica

Generating \$20 billion dollars in revenue for thousands of companies, Conversica's Intelligent Virtual Assistants help organizations attract, acquire and grow customers at scale. The company's award-winning Intelligent Virtual Assistants serve as virtual team members, working alongside employees in an Augmented Workforce to boost productivity and top-line growth. By autonomously engaging contacts, prospects, customers or partners in human-like, two-way interactions at scale, Intelligent Virtual Assistants drive towards the next best action. To learn more visit [www.conversica.com](http://www.conversica.com).