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Evolve Seller Skills to Connect With Today's Buyers



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The pandemic didn't change B2B buying and selling, it accelerated existing B2B buying and selling trends.

Today's Agenda

- Key trends in B2B buying
- How to evolve seller skills
- Where enablement leaders should start

Today's B2B Buyer: 5 Key Trends

RESTRICTED DISTRIBUTION

#1 Today's Buying Reality

6-10

Average
Buying Group
Size

4.5

Information
Sources per
Stakeholder

15%

Time Spent
De-conflicting
Information

77%

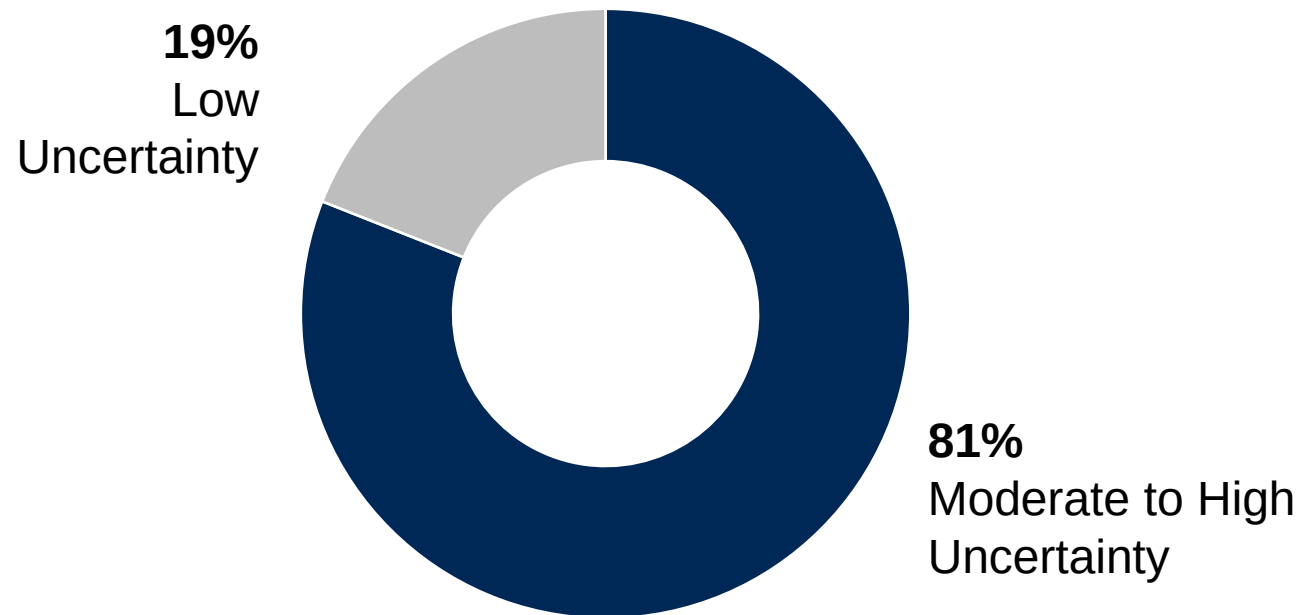
Buyers Reporting
High Purchase
Difficulty

n= 1,040 B2B buyers with completed purchases

Source: Gartner B2B Buying Survey

#2 Today's B2B Buyers Are Uncertain

Prevalence of B2B Buyers' Environmental Uncertainty^a



B2B buyers in uncertain conditions say:

- My organization is paralyzed by uncertainty
- It's not clear how organizational change will affect me/my team
- The amount of change in my organization is overwhelming

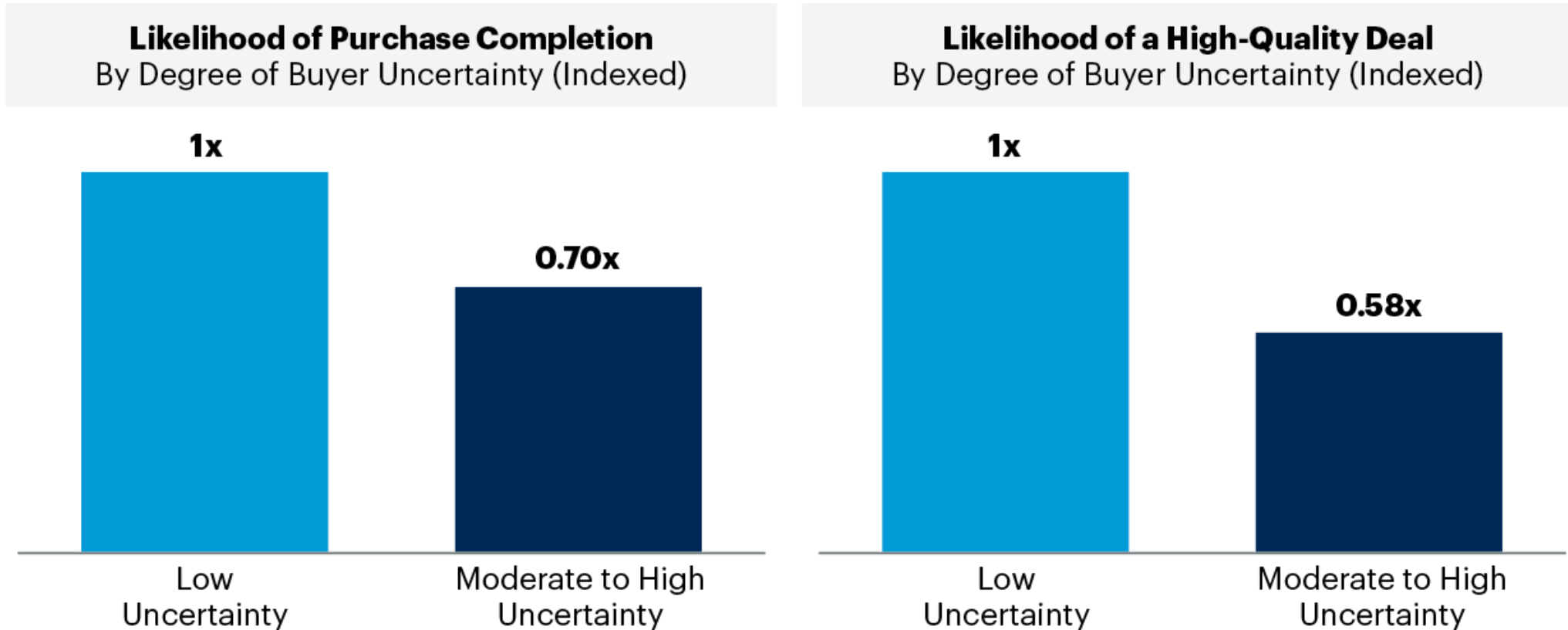
n = 1,049 B2B buyers

Source: 2019 Gartner B2B Buyer Survey

^a Buyers with low uncertainty averaged at most 2 ("Disagree") on the environmental uncertainty index.

#2 Customer Uncertainty Harms Commercial Outcomes

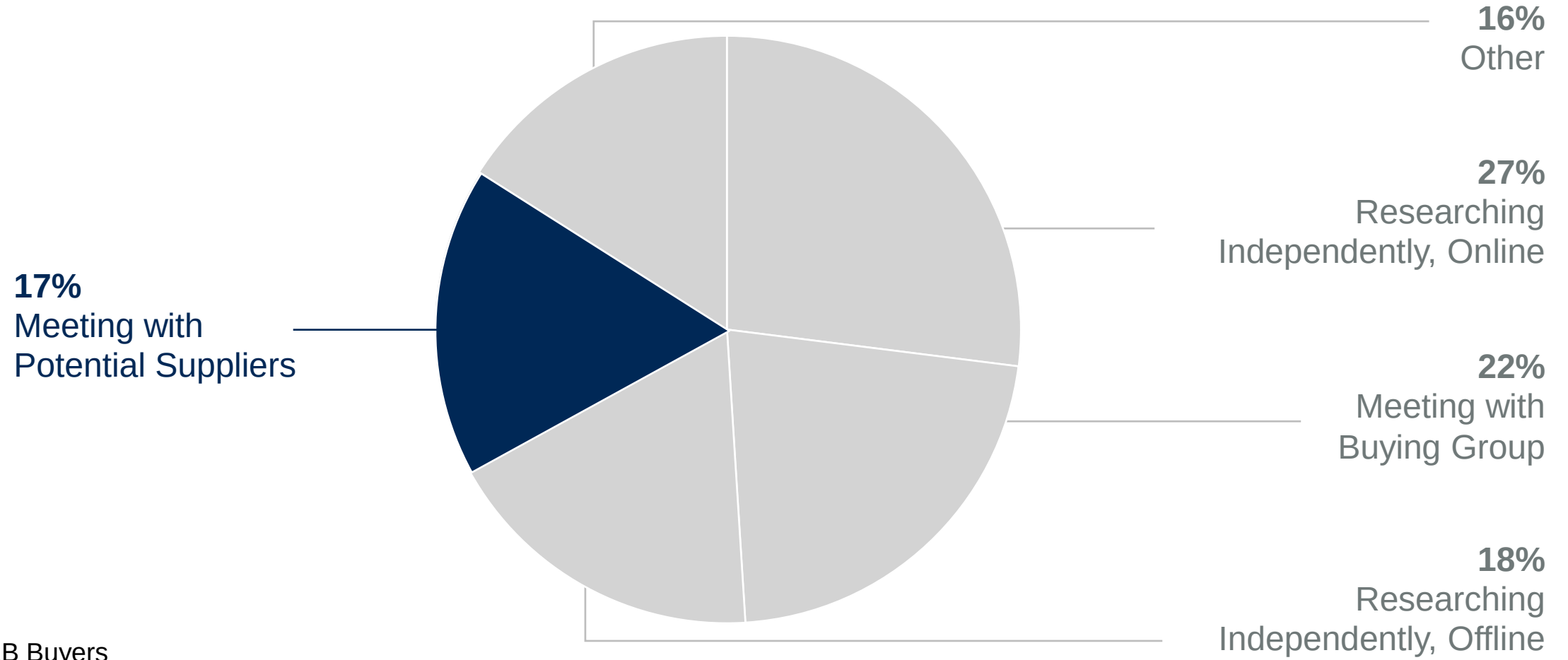
B2B Buyers' Environmental Uncertainty and Purchase Outcomes



n = 1,049 B2B buyers; 517 B2B buyers
Source: 2019 Gartner B2B Buyer Survey

#3 Sales has Limited Access to Customer

Proportion of Time Spent on Key Buying Activities

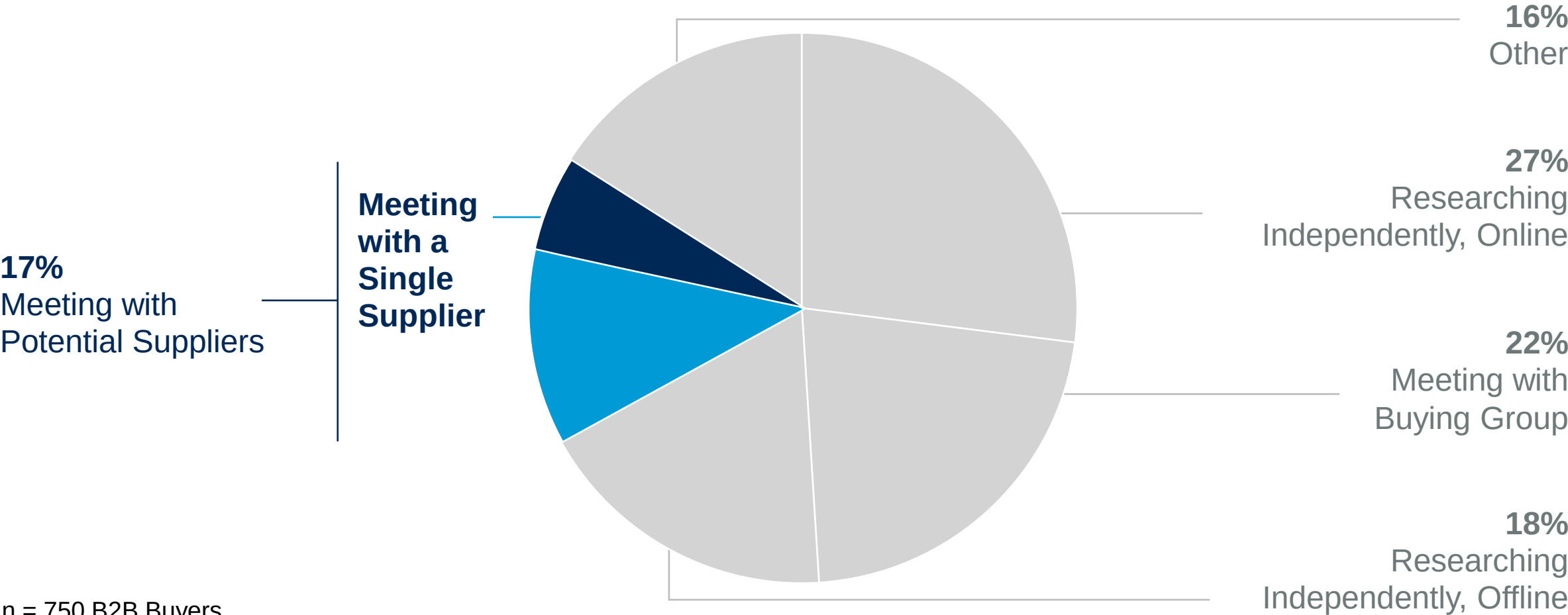


n = 750 B2B Buyers

Source: Gartner

#3 Sales has Limited Access to Customer

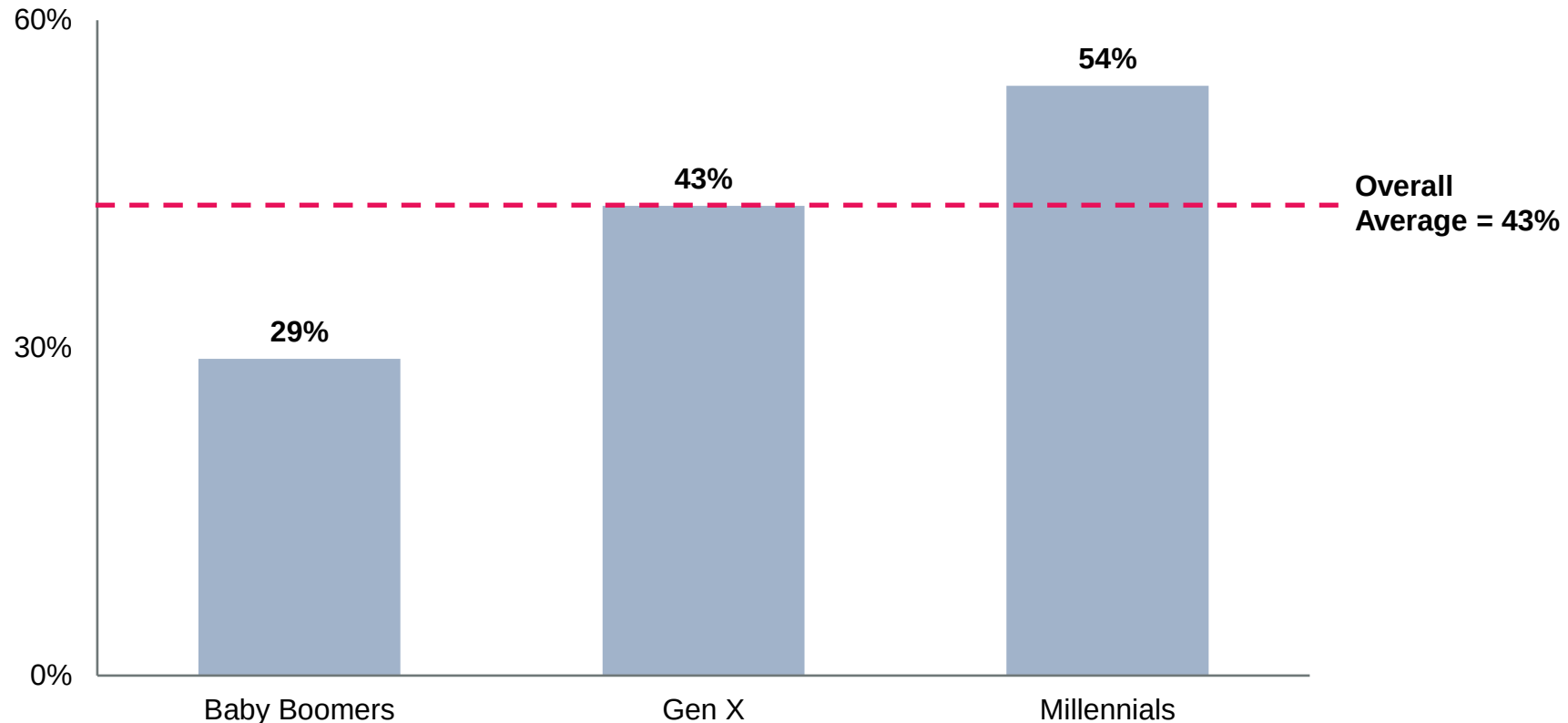
Proportion of Time Spent on Key Buying Activities



n = 750 B2B Buyers
Source: Gartner

#4 Customers Prefer a Rep-Free Experience

Percentage of B2B Buyers Preferring a Rep-Free Experience



n = 979 B2B customers

Source: 2021 Gartner Digital Buying Survey

Note: Percentages calculated based on number of B2B buyers who selected, "Somewhat Agree," "Agree," or "Strongly agree" in response to the statement "I prefer a rep-free sales experience."

#4 Customers Prefer a Rep-Free Experience

↑ 23%

increase in customer **regret** among those preferring a rep-free sales experience

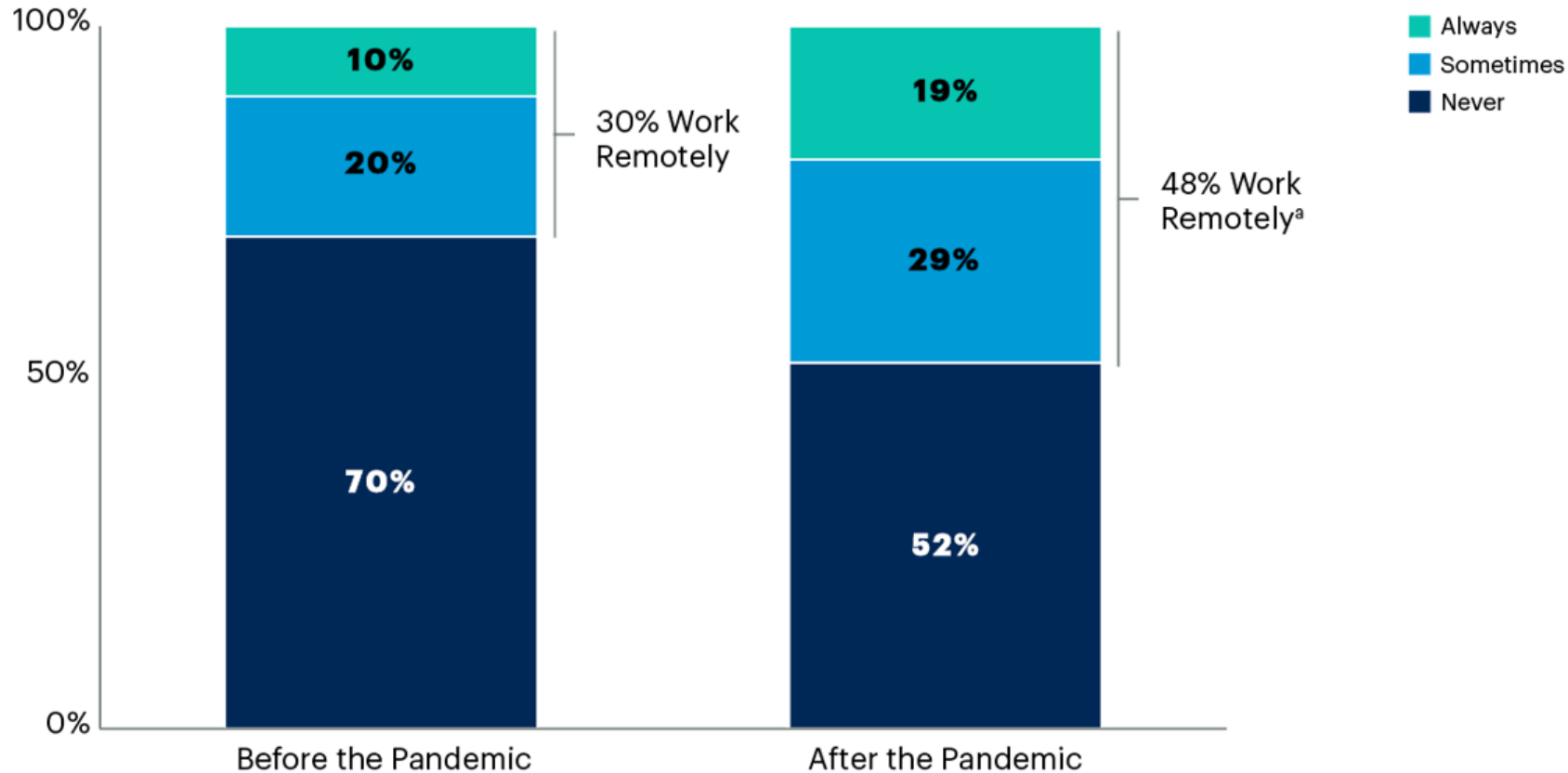
n = 982 B2B customers

Source: 2021 Gartner Digital Buying Survey

Note: Linear regression controlled for buying group size, product vs. service, purchase type, tech supplier, % of remote meetings, and purchase complexity. Regret defined by the extent of agreement/disagreement with the statement, "The offering we purchased is failing to meet our expectations."

#5 Many Buyers Will Remain Remote (aka Virtual)

Projected Percentage of Employees Working Remotely, Before and After the Pandemic



n = 421 HR leaders; 4,535 employees; 317 finance leaders

Source: Gartner COVID-19 Crisis Benchmarking Against Your Peers Webinar Poll (2 April 2020); 2020 Gartner Cost Cutting and Employee Experience Survey; COVID-19: How Finance Leaders Are Responding to the Emerging Situation Webinar Poll (26 March 2020)

^a Modeled based on responses to three Gartner surveys

725049_C

Polling Question 1 of 1

Which of these trends have impacted your sales organization the most?

- A. Buyer access challenge – unable to connect with buyers
- B. Buying complexities – leading to longer or incomplete sales cycles
- C. Buyers’ digital preferences – unable to keep buyers engaged

How to participate in our polling

If you are in full screen mode – click Esc

The poll question is on the “Vote” tab.

Please click the box to make your selection.

Upon voting you will see the results.

Thank you!

Ask a question

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Q. Polling Question

(please choose 1 answer)

A. Answer

☐

B. Answer

☐

C. Answer

☐

D. Answer

☐

E. Answer

☐

What do these Trends Mean for your Sellers

Today's Buyers....

1. Uncertain about their decisions
2. Unavailable and learning solo
3. Uninterested in engaging sellers
4. Buying Virtual
5. Lack confidence

Questions Enablement Leaders Should ask...

1. How do we help buyers feel confident?
2. How do we bring buying groups together virtually?
3. How do we meet customers where they are digitally?

How to Evolve Seller Skills to connect with Today's Buyers

Two Key to Unlock This Transformation

Organizational Capability

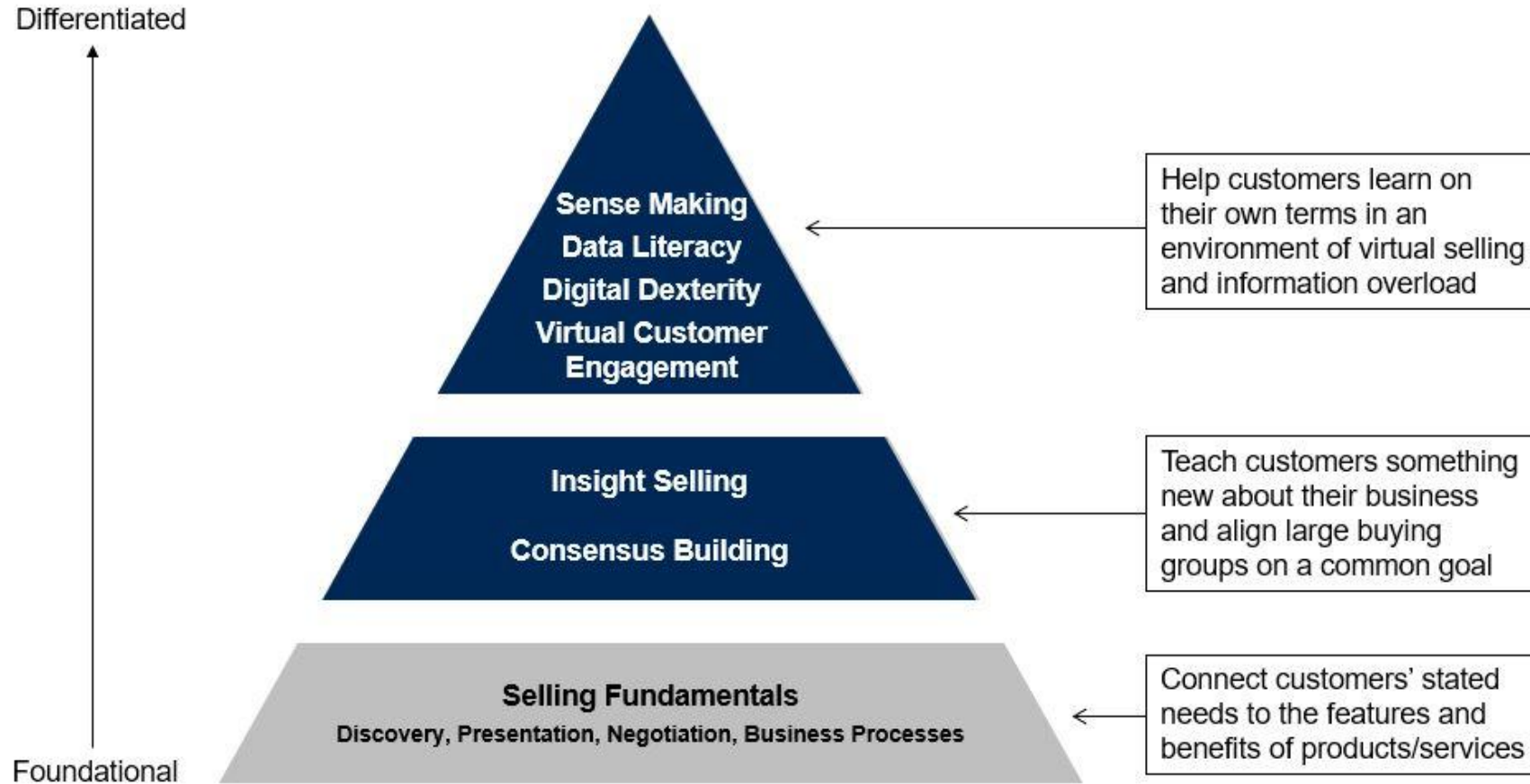
- Mapping the Customer Buying Journey
- Identify Consensus Challenges
- Tools to better Enable Buyers

Seller Competencies

- Revisit current competencies
- Align skills to today's buying realities
- Assess seller skills and gaps
- Equip managers to coach and reinforce these skills

Focused on Differentiated Competencies

Overview of Frontline Seller Competencies



Two Competencies to Stand-Out

VIRTUAL CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

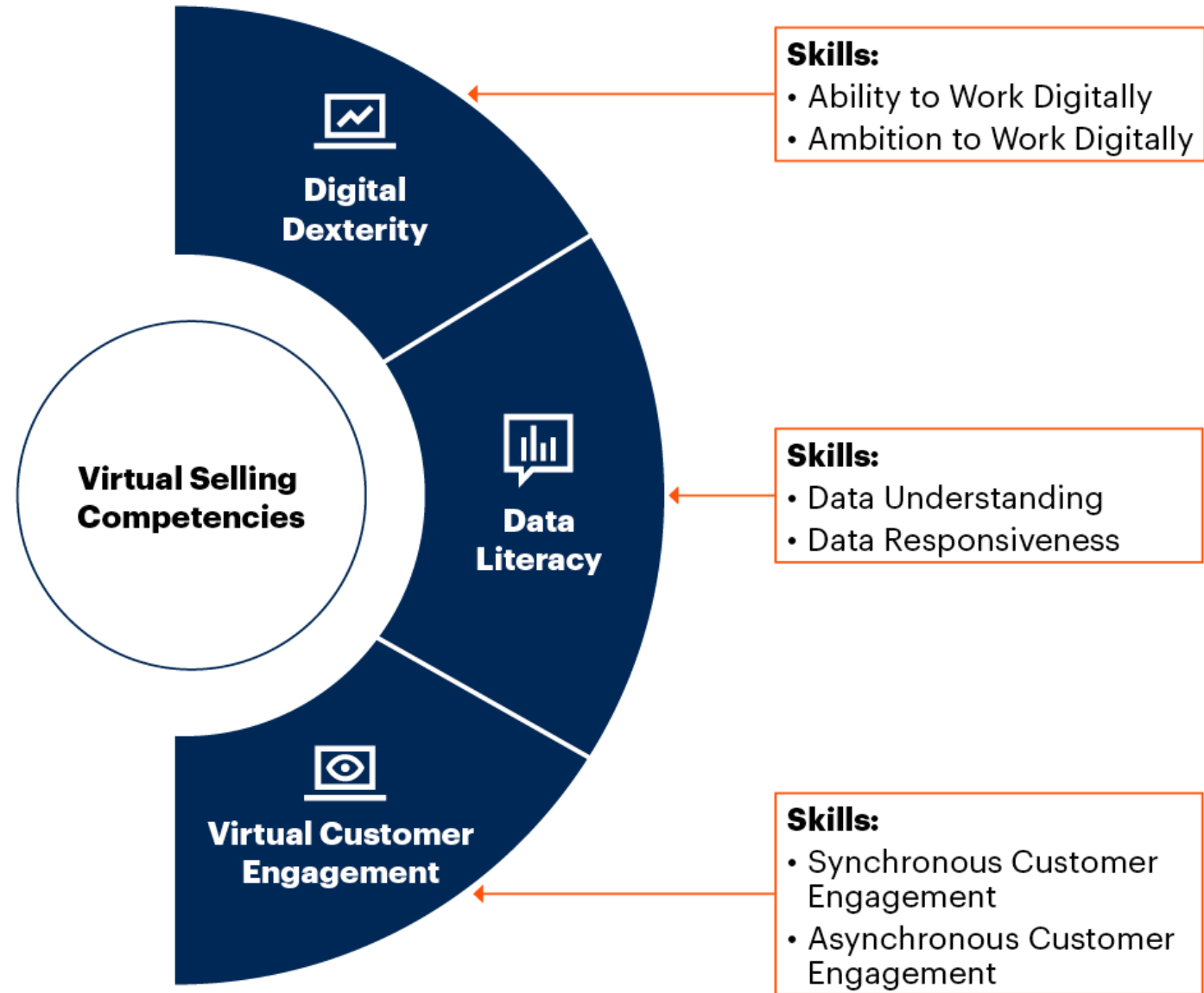
- Increase access to buyers by meeting them where they are digitally

SENSE MAKING

- Decrease buyer dysfunction by helping them gain decision confidence

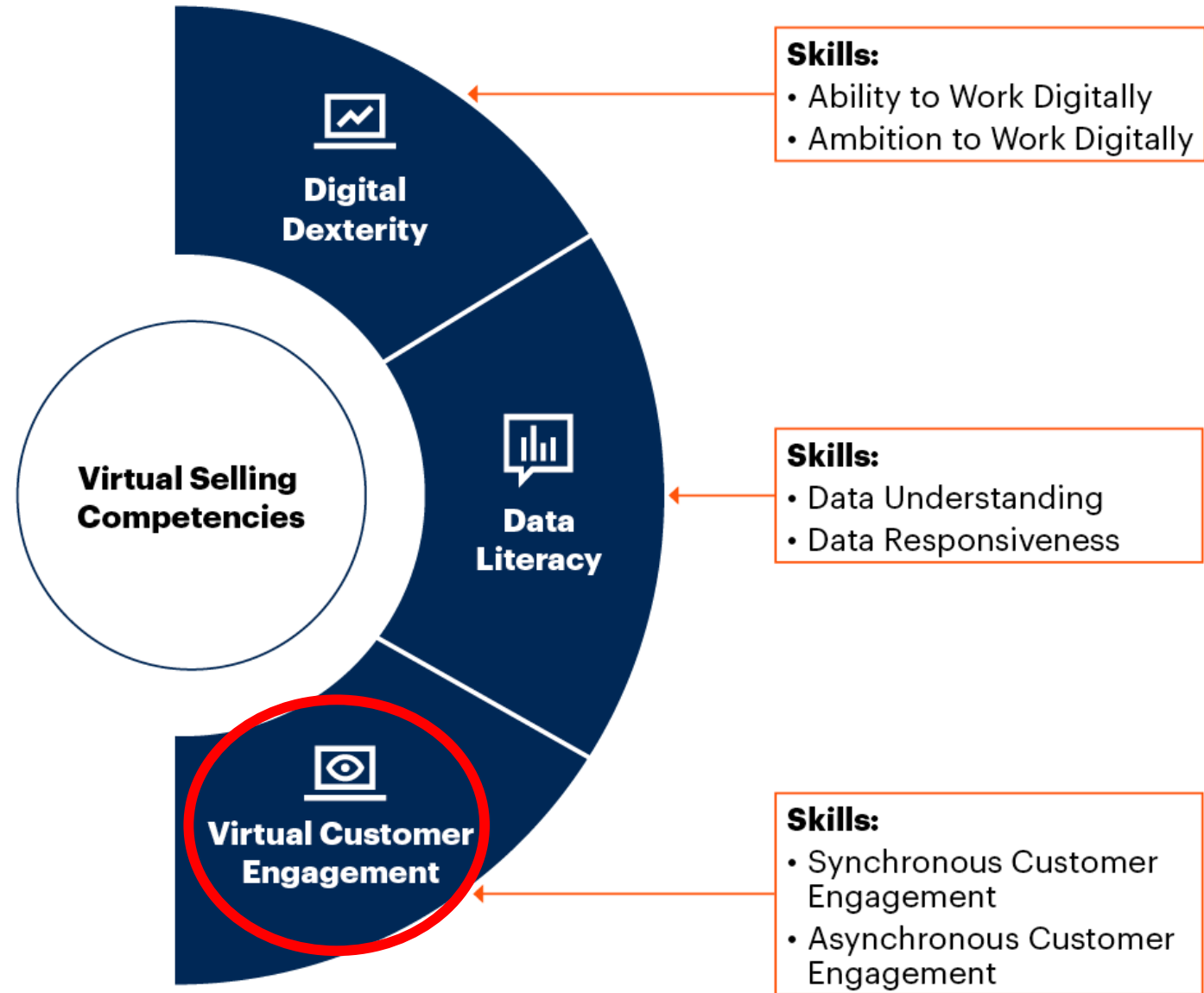
Virtual Customer Engagement

Tech Savvy Sellers



Source: Gartner
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Tech Savvy Sellers

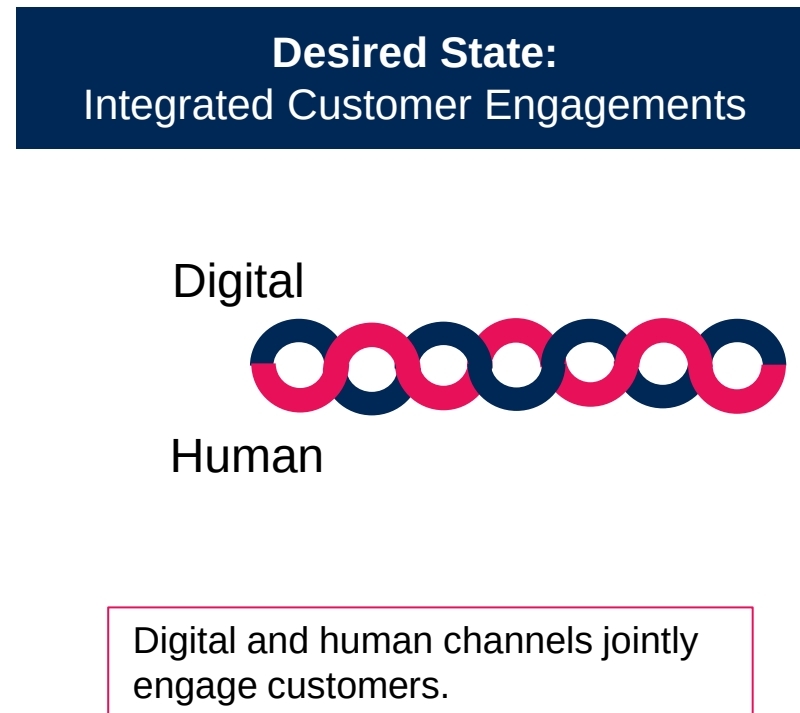
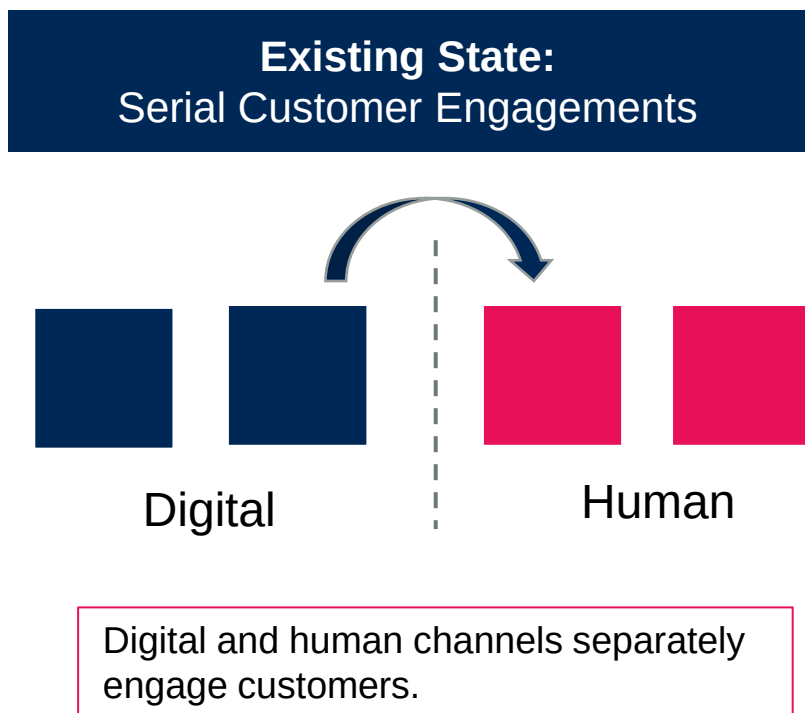


Source: Gartner
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CSOs Need to Shift to Human AND Digital

Evolution of the Customer Buying Experience

Illustrative



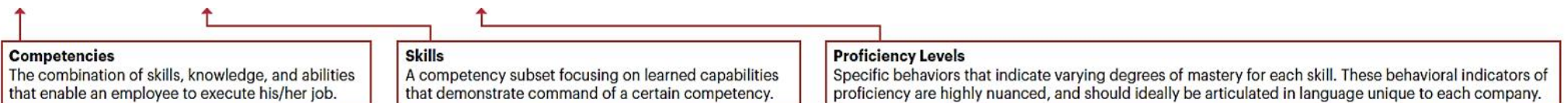
Source: Gartner

Enabling Digital and Human through Virtual Customer Engagement

Activity	Short-Term Actions	Long-Term Actions
MANAGING CONTENT	Share High Quality Enablement Tools • Ensure they align to key customer jobs to help customer stakeholders' social ideas and drive action when seller is not present	Reconcile Conflicting information • Create and continually update a repository of information resources customers are likely to review and help customers reconcile contradictory content.
SHARING CONTENT	Create Custom-Made Videos • Record and share with customers short videos of seller presentation voiceovers and customer testimonials.	Centralize Follow-Up Materials Online • Using a secure webpage or a cloud file storage solution, centralize follow-up materials to make them easy for customers to
ONGOING COLLABORATION	Create an Online Messaging Space • (e.g., Microsoft Teams or Slack channel) where customers and sellers can connect to share short and quick updates • Help address issues that do not require detailed emails or a virtual meeting.	Ensure Multichannel Alignment: • Regularly track customer interactions to ensure alignment between virtual and digital channels • Ask questions to determine customer perceptions of experience consistency as leading indicators of deal challenges.

Virtual Customer Engagement Competency Grid

	Competency Category	Skill Description	Demonstrates Familiarity	Demonstrates Proficiency	Demonstrates Mastery
Virtual Customer Engagement	Asynchronous Customer Engagement	Tailors Content Sharing to Virtual Environment Creates and curates content that is easy to follow, find and review for the customer.	Ensures the content is easy to follow and is tied to the previous or upcoming customer conversations.	Shares high-quality digital content aligned to key customer jobs during a purchase process (e.g., buyer enablement) for customers' asynchronous learning.	Creates and continually updates a repository of information resources that customers can easily find and review on their own.
	Synchronous Customer Engagement	Prepares for Virtual Meetings Adapts pre-call planning preparation to the virtual environment.	- Develops a pre-call plan (PAO) to establish expectations for the: Purpose; Agenda; Outcome. - Schedules a call planning session with other participants to coordinate their participation in the call.	- Limits the number of call participants and tightly defines their roles to avoid coordination challenges in a virtual setting. - Thoughtfully creates and shares shorter, bite-sized content in appropriate formats for 30-, 45- or 60-minute virtual meetings to ensure comprehension and respect time commitments.	- Prepares through role-plays with select interactions with other meeting participants to anticipate and strategize for likely roadblocks. - For virtual meetings, prioritizes information that is critical to provide buying help and requires stakeholder inputs and/or approval to move conversations forward.
		Ensures Virtual Stakeholder Engagement Identifies critical stakeholders to drive purposeful and planned involvement over virtual meetings.	- Highlights the intent/ purpose of the meeting with customers in advance of the call to target appropriate stakeholders. - Confirms participation by senior stakeholders who may delegate virtual calls to junior contacts.	- Prepares talking points and plan of action to invite inputs from stakeholders other than primary contact or decision makers. - Proactively seeks information about and introduction to additional stakeholders who should be involved. - Uses pauses and tone variations to gather feedback and ensure customer comprehension, to make the conversations engaging.	- Works with manager and peers to hypothesize potential conclusions and questions customers might bring to the meeting. - Prepares a conversation path to provide context for questions and help the meeting attendees arrive at a shared understanding. - Maps each stakeholder's role and level of influence in the buying group, to decide whether or not they need to be present.



Deconstructing Virtual Customer Engagement Competency Grid

Skill	Definition	Demonstrates Familiarity	Demonstrates Proficiency	Demonstrates Mastery	Ineffective Behavior
Tailors Content Sharing to Virtual Environment	Creates and curates' content that is easy to follow, find and review for the customer.	Ensures the content is easy to follow and is tied to the previous or upcoming customer conversations.	Shares high-quality digital content aligned to key customer jobs during a purchase process for customers' asynchronous learning.	Creates and continually updates a repository of information resources that customers can easily find and review on their own.	Shares the entire content together, without tying it to the customer buying stage.

Skills

A competency subset focusing on learned capabilities that demonstrate command of a certain competency.

Proficiency levels

Specific behaviors that indicate vary degrees of mastery for each skill.

Tool for Enabling Virtual Customer Engagement

Skill to Coach	Coaching Questions
Planning and Preparing	• What is your agenda and what outcome are you driving towards? • What content have you prepared and how are you ensuring that it is consumable?
Tools to Better Enable Buyers	• What do we know about this customer's mindset and behaviors thus far in the buying journey? • How will the buyer be able to interact with the tool? • How will the tool help the buyer validate their understanding of the business problem? • How will the tool help buyer build consensus within the buying group?

Sense Making

Sense Makers Inspire Confidence

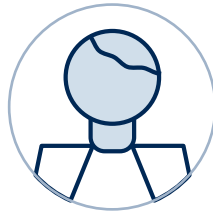
I can get you a lot more information on that.



Giver

- Believes comprehensive information is generally better
- Promptly responds to customer requests for information

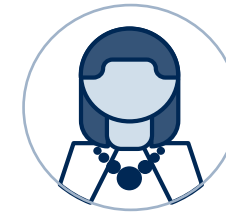
Let me tell you what you need to know.



Teller

- Shares his/her own perspective with buyers
- Bases information on extensive personal experience and knowledge

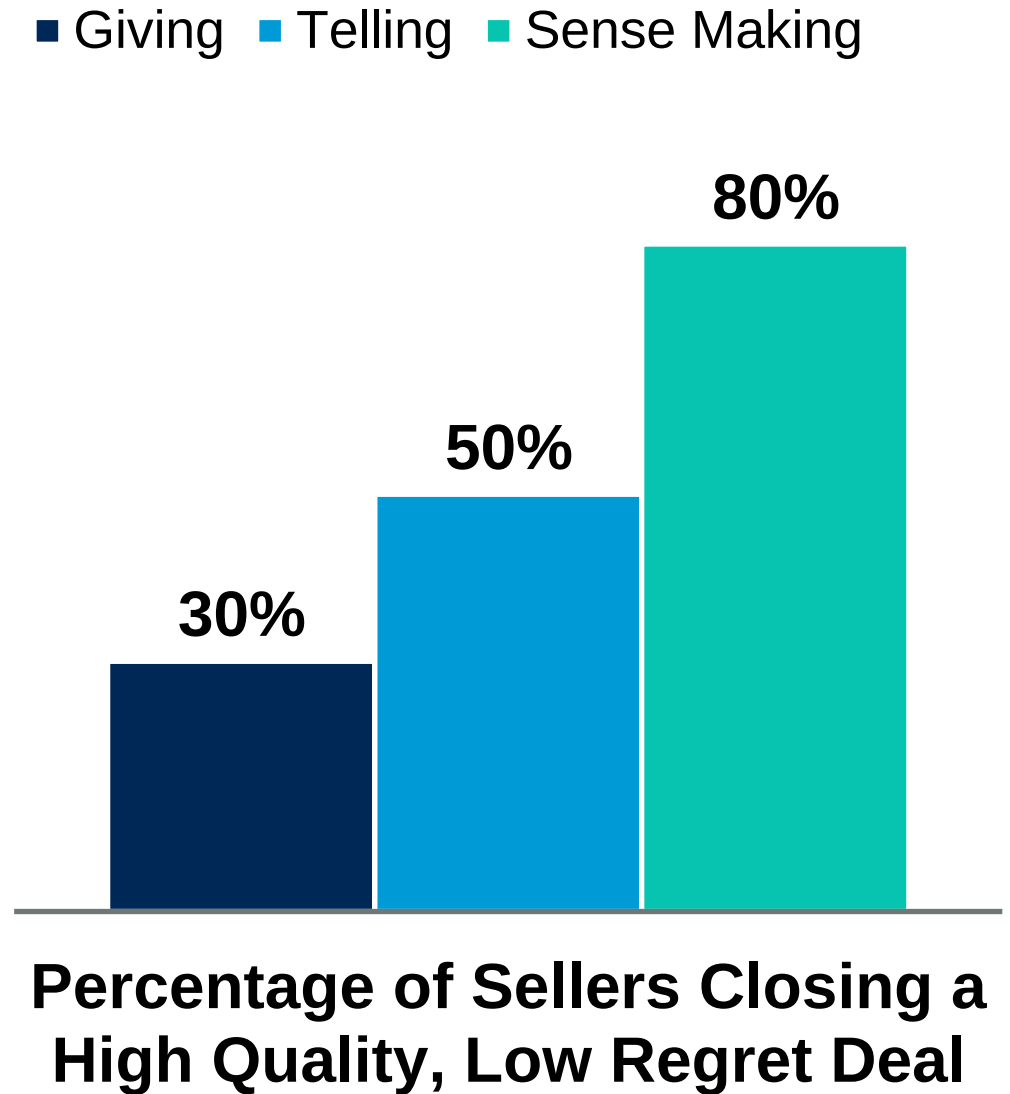
There is a lot of information — let me help you make sense of it.



Sense Maker

- Guides customer to evidence
- Prioritizes simplicity over comprehensive detail

80% of customers who identified Sense Making behaviors made a high quality, low regret deal.



n = 1,174 B2B Buyers

Source: 2019 Gartner Buyer Survey

a High Quality Sale is defined as the customer 1) did not settle for less ambitious solution, or 2) purchased a premium offering relative to the base offering.

b Regret is defined as: "The offering we ultimately purchased is failing (or failed) to meet our expectations."

Sense Making Competency 1



Diagnose

- Diagnose customers' information needs
- Provide relevant tools and sources of information



Connect

- Curates information
- Provide information critical to buying job completion



Collaborate

- Help customers evaluate information quality
- Enable customers to reach their own decision



Clarify

- Reduce complexity of information environment
- Filter information for customers

n = 913 B2B Sellers; 1,174 B2B Buyers

Source: Gartner Deal Performance Diagnostic; 2019 Gartner Buyer Survey

Sense Making Competency 2



Diagnose

- Diagnose customers' information needs
- Provide relevant tools and sources of information



Connect

- Curates information
- Provide information critical to buying job completion



Collaborate

- Help customers evaluate information quality
- Enable customers to reach their own decision



Clarify

- Reduce complexity of information environment
- Filter information for customers

n = 913 B2B Sellers; 1,174 B2B Buyers

Source: Gartner Deal Performance Diagnostic; 2019 Gartner Buyer Survey

Sense Making Competency 3



Diagnose

- Diagnose customers' information needs
- Provide relevant tools and sources of information



Connect

- Curates information
- Provide information critical to buying job completion



Collaborate

- Help customers evaluate information quality
- Enable customers to reach their own decision



Clarify

- Reduce complexity of information environment
- Filter information for customers

n = 913 B2B Sellers; 1,174 B2B Buyers

Source: Gartner Deal Performance Diagnostic; 2019 Gartner Buyer Survey

Sense Making Competency 4



Diagnose

- Diagnose customers' information needs
- Provide relevant tools and sources of information



Connect

- Curates information
- Provide information critical to buying job completion



Collaborate

- Help customers evaluate information quality
- Enable customers to reach their own decision



Clarify

- Reduce complexity of information environment
- Filter information for customers

n = 913 B2B Sellers; 1,174 B2B Buyers

Source: Gartner Deal Performance Diagnostic; 2019 Gartner Buyer Survey

Sense Making Competency 1



Diagnose

- Diagnose customers' information needs
- Provide relevant tools and sources of information



Connect

- Curates information
- Provide information critical to buying job completion



Collaborate

- Help customers evaluate information quality
- Enable customers to reach their own decision



Clarify

- Reduce complexity of information environment
- Filter information for customers

n = 913 B2B Sellers; 1,174 B2B Buyers

Source: Gartner Deal Performance Diagnostic; 2019 Gartner Buyer Survey

Sense Making Competency Grid

		Skill	Demonstrates Familiarity	Demonstrates Proficiency	Demonstrates Mastery	Sample Ineffective Behaviors
Competency Categories	Diagnose	Determines Customer Buying Job Identifies which buying job the customer is working on and whether help is needed to complete the job.	- Asks questions to determine status of buying journey - Teaches customer about buying jobs where necessary - Accepts customer evaluation of job completion	- Pressure tests customer evaluation of job completion - Evaluates customer's digital footprint to build understanding of customer buying journey	- Develops hypotheses about customer job completion prior to engaging customer; asks questions to quickly confirm or disprove hypotheses - Periodically re-verifies job completion - Prioritizes his/her actions with buying group based on what builds customer confidence of job completion	- Prioritizes actions with customers that satisfy sales process requirements over those that build confidence - Advances through sales process steps without verifying job completion
		Identifies Information Needs Anticipates customer's information-related challenges and determines which intervention would best address that need.	Steers conversation to information-challenges through use of diagnosis questions	- Recognizes "tells" that indicate an underlying information challenge - Pressure tests customer's evaluation of their information challenges	- Anticipates and proactively brings up customer information challenges - Identifies opportunities for teaching about information the customer may have missed or overlooked	- Steers conversation towards product or solution-oriented discussion, leaving information challenges undiagnosed - Raises information challenges that the seller cannot solve
	Connect	Curates Information Judiciously selects and provides information critical to buying job completion to the customer without overwhelming him/her.	- Gives the customer information when prompted - Shares information from a range of supplier and third-party sources - Shares competitor information where appropriate - Asks customer about the value of information the seller is providing	- Develops a plan for which information to share with the customer - Ensures that information and messages shared with the customer are consistent with those shared elsewhere by the supplier - Works with SMEs to proactively identify and develop answers to likely customer questions - Prioritizes the sharing of information that customers often struggle to find	- Curates information to strategically teach the customer back to supplier's unique differentiators - Prescriptively guides the customer to the key points within each information source - Offers guidance and rationale to the customer on how to evaluate information he/she encounters - Infers customer information consumption preferences from social media behavior	- Provides more information than is necessary to satisfy customer needs - Treats every customer question as an opportunity to provide more information
		Clarifies Information Helps customer reconcile competing claims made by different sources of information.	- Leverages SME or technical expert to explain assumptions and evidence behind claims - Cites additional evidence to support one claim over the other	- Helps the customer understand how their unique context influences how he/she should view competing or conflicting claims - Helps customer evaluate the relative trustworthiness of various sources - Analyzes reasons why customer is confused by certain information	- Uses questions to guide the customer to his/her own judgement as to the truth of competing claims - Helps customer understand the root cause of the perceived divergence between two claims	- Offers opinion to resolve conflicts between sources - Treats all information sources as equally valuable - Disputes competitor claims without verifiable evidence - Does not acknowledge or accept verifiable evidence of a competitor's product/solution advantage
	Clarify	Synthesizes Information Helps customer identify patterns and draw conclusions from a large set of information sources.	- Offers purely explanatory synthesis of several sources in response to customer requests - Provides examples to support explanations	- Proactively synthesizes information around topics where the customer frequently struggles - Highlights surprising or non-obvious connections between various pieces of information to create new understanding for the customer	- Helps customer understand how various pieces of information relate to each other - Provides a customer with framework or tools for understanding a body of information	Substitutes opinions based on experience and personal knowledge for actual synthesis
		Supports Verification and Evaluation Helps customer evaluate and verify the accuracy and relevance of information.	- Identifies and cites information sources and evidence for claims - Encourages customer to independently verify information - Admits not knowing the answer to a customer question	- Can explain methodologies and assumptions for benchmarks and data-heavy information sets - Asks the customer how he/she evaluates information and helps the customer verify it	- Offers guidance on how the customer should verify and validate information - Flags untrusted supplier information for internal review - Identifies customer's preferred social media influencers and references them where possible to support verification	- Offers opinions and judgement based on unverifiable experience or knowledge - Uses too many personal anecdotes in place of verifiable evidence - Encourages customer to trust seller's expertise and experience
	Collaborate					

Competencies
The combination of skills, knowledge, and abilities that enable an employee to execute his/her job.

Skills
A competency subset focusing on learned capabilities that demonstrate command of a certain competency.

Proficiency Levels
Specific behaviors that indicate varying degrees of mastery for each skill. These behavioral indicators of proficiency are highly nuanced, and should ideally be articulated in language unique to each company.

Deconstructing Sense Making Competency Grid

Key Skills for Sense Making “Diagnosis”

	Skill	Definition	Demonstrates Familiarity	Demonstrates Proficiency	Demonstrates Mastery	Ineffective Behavior
Diagnose	Identifies Customer Information Needs	Anticipates customer’s info challenges and determines best support	Ensures the content is easy to follow and is tied to the previous or upcoming customer conversations.	Shares high-quality digital content aligned to key customer jobs during a purchase process for customers’ asynchronous learning.	Creates and continually updates a repository of information resources that customers can easily find and review on their own.	Shares the entire content together, without tying it to the customer buying stage.
	Determines Customer Buying Job	Identifies customer’s buying job help needed to complete	• Steers conversation to information-challenges through use of diagnosis questions.	• Recognizes “tells” that indicate an underlying information challenge. • Pressure tests customer’s evaluation of their information challenges.	• Anticipates and proactively brings up customer information challenges. • Identifies opportunities for teaching about information the customer may have missed or overlooked.	• Steers conversation towards product or solution- oriented discussion, leaving information challenges undiagnosed. • Raises information challenges that the seller cannot solve.

Tools to Enable Sense Making

Manager Pressure Tests Seller's Understanding

Verify Buying Job Completion		
Buying Job	Verification Question to Ask Seller	Evidence — How Do You Know?
Problem Identification	Is your customer confident that he/she has identified the right problem or opportunity to address for his/her business?	
Solution Exploration	Is your customer confident that he/she has explored all the options in the market?	
Requirements Building	Is your customer confident that he/she has identified all the requirements the solution must satisfy to solve his/her problem?	
Supplier Selection	Is your customer confident that he/she can asses and select the right supplier to satisfy his/her requirements?	

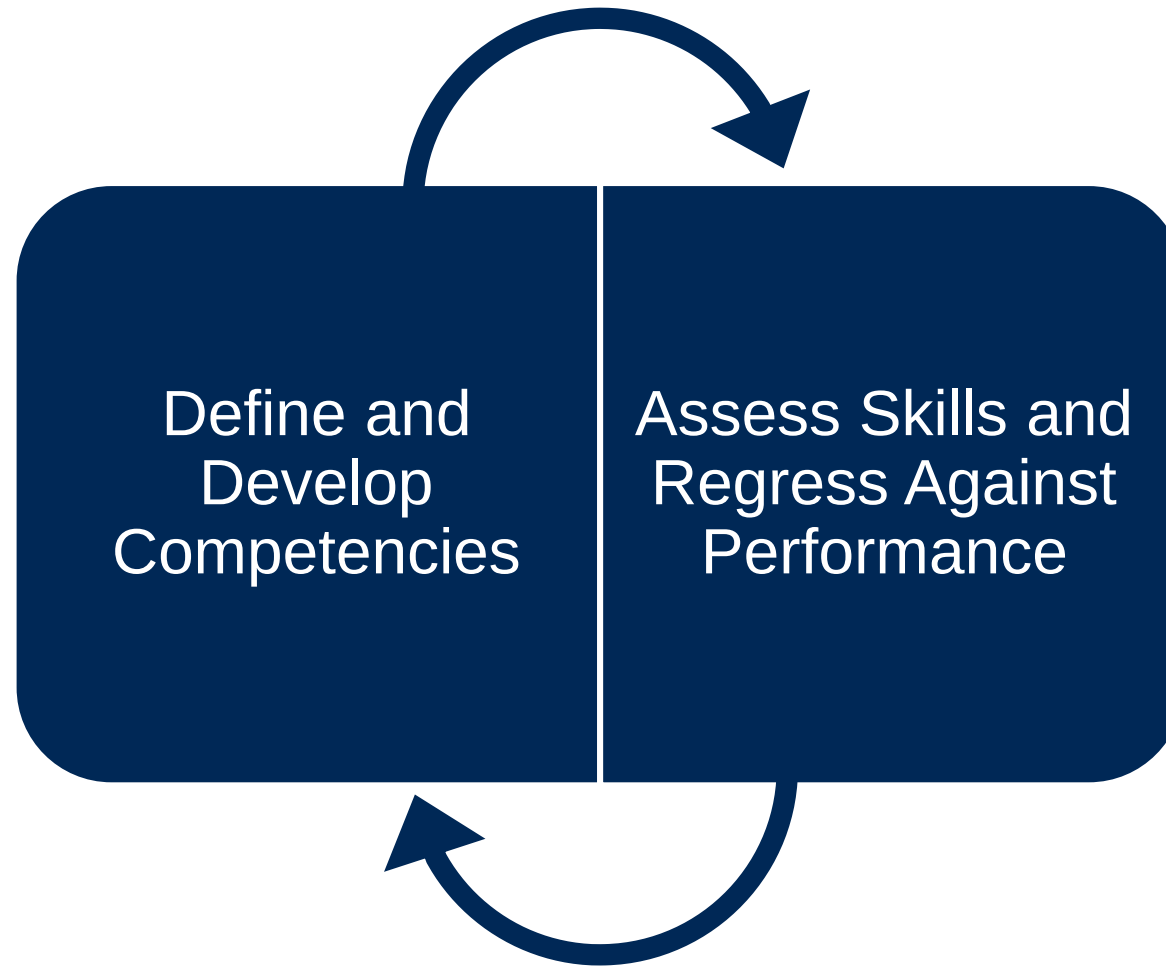


Deal Review Worksheet

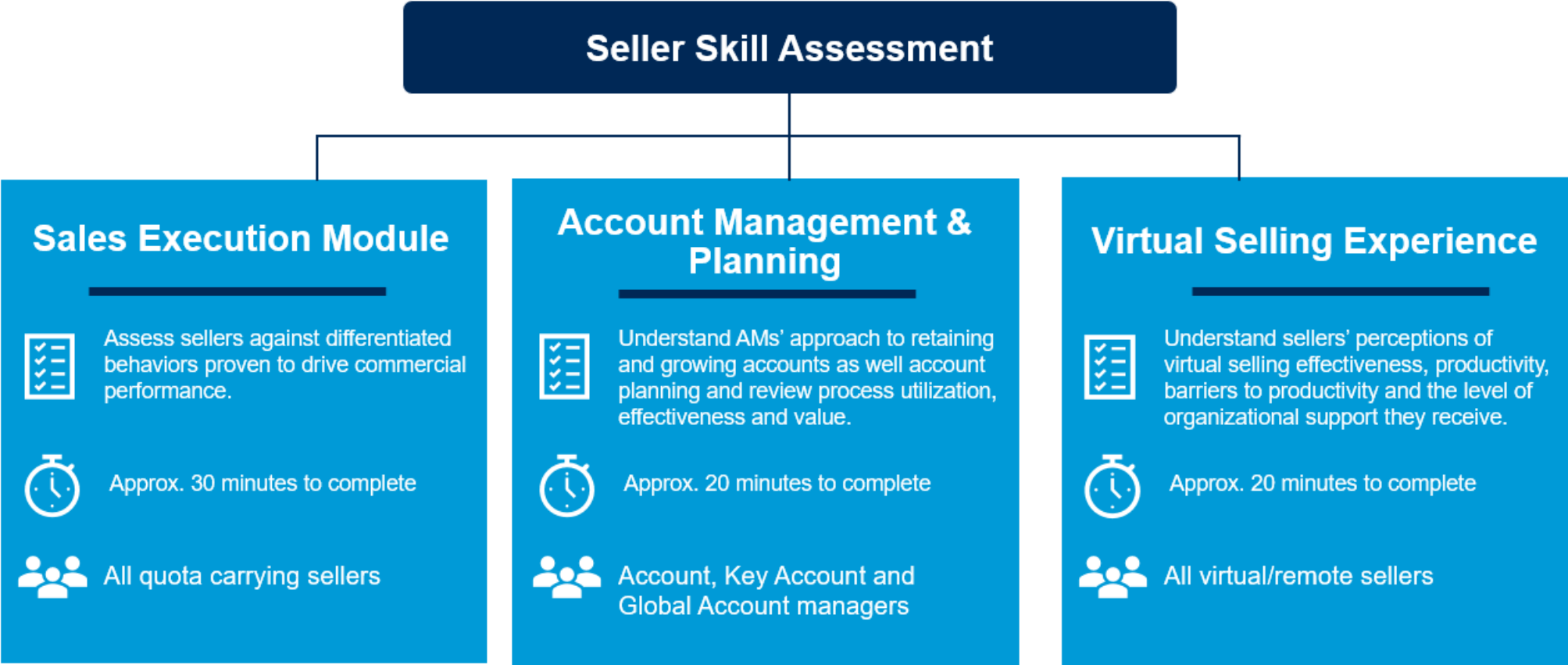
Customer's Buying Stage:	Evidence:
Likely Information Dysfunction:	Evidence:
Seller Action:	

Where Enablement Leaders Should Start

Create a Feedback Loop



Diagnose and Assess Seller Skills



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Key Takeaways

- **Evolve seller skills to meet today's buyer.**
The “Un” Customer is uncertain, unavailable and uninterested.
- **Invest in competencies that will differentiate your sales team.**
Using digital and human jointly to engage customers.
- **Revisit competencies, define skills and proficiency levels.**
Align training, coaching and certification frameworks.
- **Assess seller skills against core competencies.**
Use Gartner party diagnostics and build scorecards.

Ask your questions

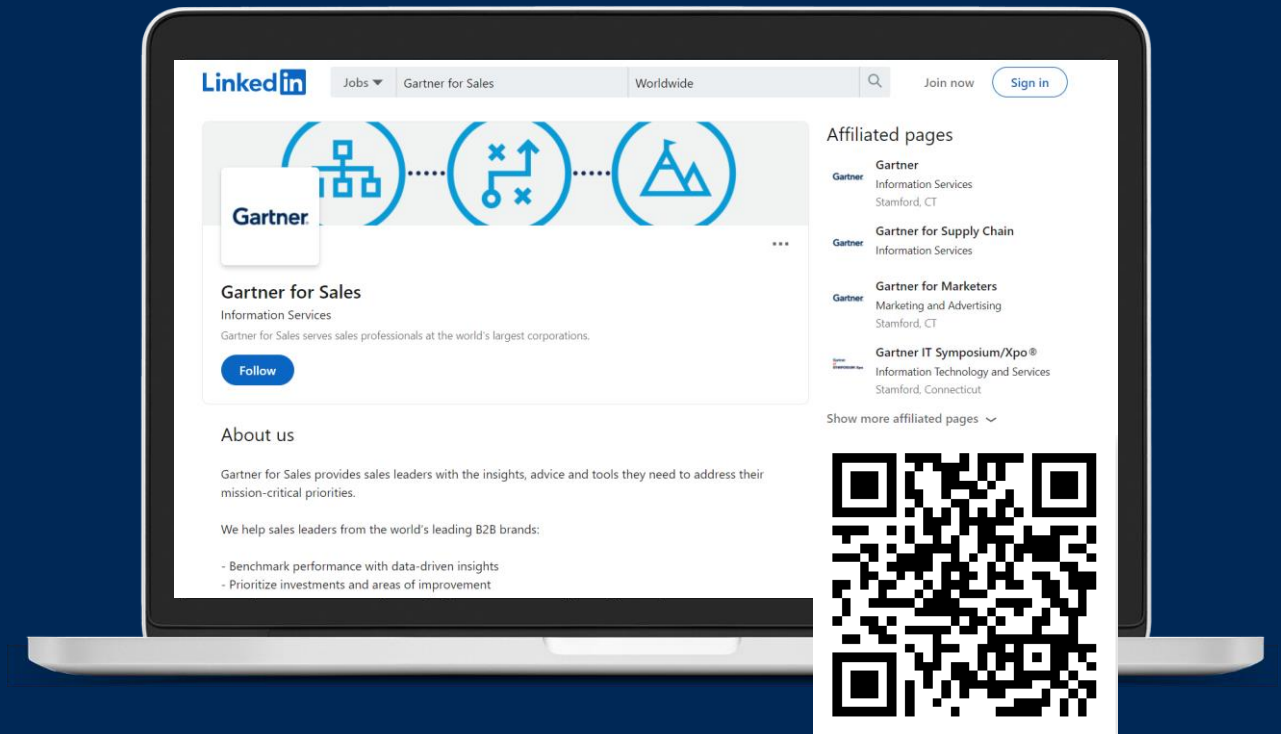


The screenshot shows a web interface for asking questions. At the top, there are four tabs: 'Ask a question', 'Attachments', 'Rate this', and 'Details'. The 'Ask a question' tab is highlighted with an orange border and an orange arrow points to it from the left. Below the tabs, the text 'Ask a question' is displayed. Underneath is a large text input area with the placeholder text 'Type your question here...'. At the bottom right of the form, there is a 'Send Question' button, which is also highlighted with an orange border and an orange arrow points to it from the left.

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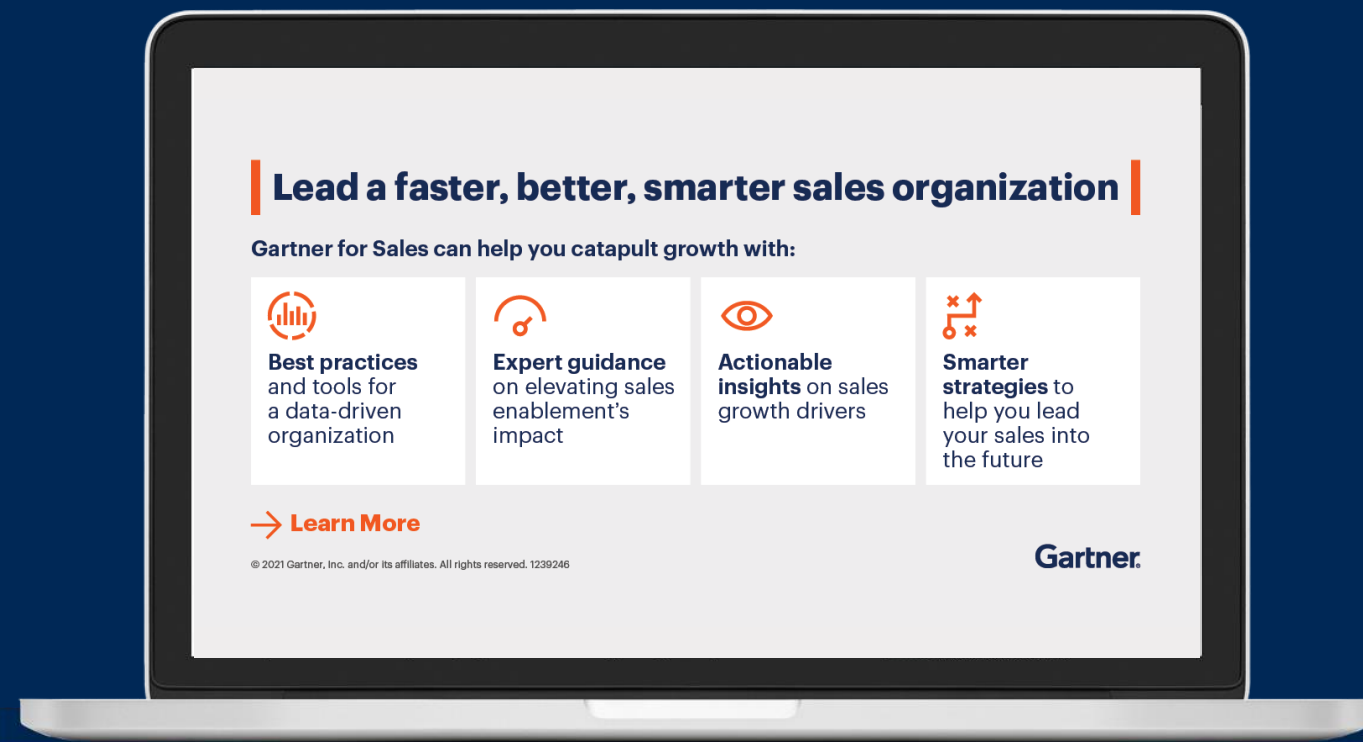
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