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	The best sales leaders drive growth for their companies. They use data and insights to anticipate market momentum and pinpoint where untapped potential lies. They steal the march on competitors and lock in new customers first.	
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	Insights from economic, technological, and behavioral megatrends translate into opportunities at the front line. The best sales leaders invest ahead of emerging demand and cultivate demand for products that won't be available for many months. Peering into the future and harnessing tomorrow's trends is a job for sales leaders, not just visionary CEOs.	
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Big data opens up amazing sales opportunities. There are already B2C and B2B companies translating data into operating margin improvements of up to 25 percent. Players in all sectors can follow suit if they build insights from a wide array of internal and external data sources and create tailored selling propositions based on personalization. But to maximize the benefits of big data, it needs to be at the very heart of the sales culture.

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Sophisticated customers are not interested in traditional sales models. They demand faster, more seamless, and even enjoyable sales experiences; they want more information and more value, and they want it across all channels. Delivering all this is hard enough—doing so profitably in both mature and emerging markets is a major challenge. Leading sales organizations are finding ways to improve digital, direct, and indirect channel performance, and are cracking the code of how to integrate them.

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No company can compete today using only a single sales channel. But with so many channels to manage, how can you ensure consistency, maintain close contact with customers, and raise profitability? The best sales leaders blend remote and field sales, integrate online and offline channels, orchestrate direct and indirect sales teams, and even use service as a sales channel.

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Sales operations not only represent a huge opportunity for cost improvement—reducing back-office costs by 20 to 30 percent is not unusual—they are also an important contributor to customer experience, and sales force and channel effectiveness. An effective back office can boost revenues by 10 to 25 percent by giving frontline sales teams 50 percent more time to sell. Customers, meanwhile, love the smoother fulfillment and faster turnaround time.

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Sales leaders can have all the market analysis, all the multi-channel processes, and all the technological wizardry available, but without investing substantially in the right talent, they will achieve little.

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Sales leaders know they themselves must be at the vanguard of change. Without strong leadership, any growth program will founder. Best-practice leaders challenge the status quo, they galvanize their team, they model change, and they demand results above and beyond everything else.

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The preceding chapters are rich with ideas, examples, case studies, and interviews with leading sales practitioners. Now it's over to you. For sales leaders determined to drive change and seek the sales growth on offer, we have a self-assessment guide and some benchmarks to get you started. Stakeholder alignment is essential, as is a clear vision of how to prioritize the transformation effort. Only 30 percent of change programs succeed—ensure yours is one of those that make the grade.

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It is brave (or foolish) to predict the future. Nevertheless, we offer our views on the trajectory of sales management. The rise of automation brings enormous opportunities for value creation and sales growth, but is not without its challenges. Companies should already be preparing for a major overhaul of how they sell—no industry is immune. The greatest benefit may come from not selling at all and outsourcing the function to a third-party specialist; less the “death of the salesman” and more the death of the internal sales function?

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