Sales Leader of the Future
2021 Survey Summary

Background

WE ARE BOTTLENECKED

For years, our healthcare industry has been bottlenecked where sales teams intersect with supply chain functions. We have not yet systemically replaced tactical price haggling activities with collaborative efforts to jointly innovate, to eliminate waste, to improve clinical outcomes, and to improve the patient experience. What gives?

COVID-19 has compounded these symptoms while also surfacing new vulnerabilities. Your IDN customers are experiencing an unprecedented crisis on the frontlines of healthcare. They urgently need solutions to a growing list of financial, operational and clinical challenges. Your organization has many viable solutions, but somehow can't earn the limited attention credits of your customers. Why?

OLD WAYS WON'T OPEN NEW DOORS

We've known this day was coming for a long time. The legacy sales tactics have already been showing signs of decreasing effectiveness as IDNs continue to merge, as IDNs expand their definitions of success, and as the supply chain function becomes an increasingly important primary entry point. Marketing and Sales teamed up and embraced solution selling as a welcomed replacement to feature-benefit selling. Unfortunately, many sales teams didn't receive formal development to expand their skills to fundamentally change HOW they do WHAT they do.

COVID-19 surprised us by instantly and permanently altering the selling environment. Virtual selling immediately displaced face-to-face interactions, and IDN leaders now exercise unprecedented discretion with their limited time. In response, some of you quickly adapted to the new environment, reimagined your offerings, and modeled resourcefulness, problem solving and resilience. Some sales leaders capitalized on opportunities to deepen trust during the crisis and created new partnerships. Every successful sales team mastered virtual selling rather than secretly hoping for the return of normalcy.

The recipe for sales success clearly demands more sophisticated strategies and tactics. These new approaches require everyone in sales to "show up" differently, empowered by a broader and even deeper skill set. The sales leader of the future pays attention to the changing landscape, adjusts the strategies and tactics and then invests in the skills that will enable the team to succeed.

This inaugural survey summarizes the attributes, competencies and technical skills of the sales leader of the future, which represents a 360-degree perspective of industry participants.

Supply Chain Sherpas appreciates IDN Summit, Share Moving Media, and Hays Waldrop for their support.

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Survey Approach

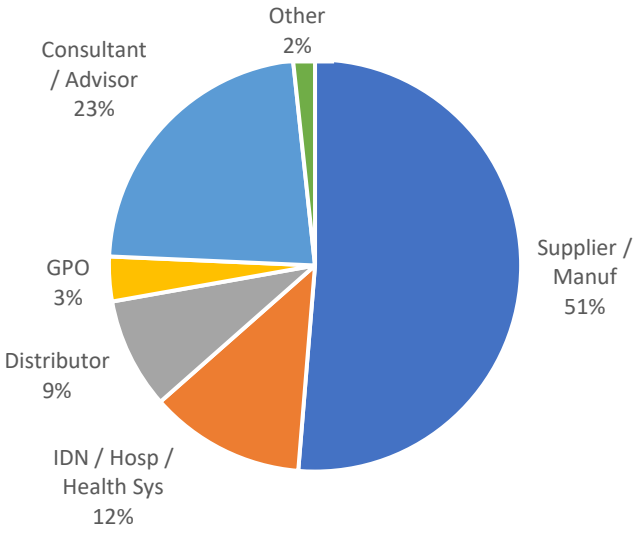
This is the first year of this survey administration, to help identify the skills necessary for the **Sales Leader of the Future**. Specifically, the objective is to help the industry **prioritize the training and development opportunities**. Our healthcare supply chain future depends on the collective preparedness of our Sales Leaders, including incumbent leaders, emerging leaders and next generation leaders.

Respondents were asked to assess healthcare sales leaders' attributes, competencies and technical skills. We also asked specific questions about how the development priorities were influenced by COVID-19.

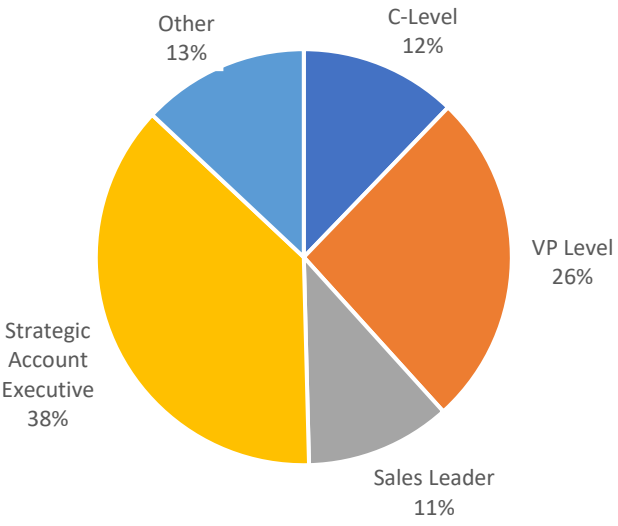
Competencies are specific skills, which can be learned and mastered over time. **Attributes** (or traits) are specific patterns of behavior we develop based on our personal and professional experiences. Technical Skills are what it takes to effectively sell to the healthcare supply chain.

Respondent Demographics
115 responses

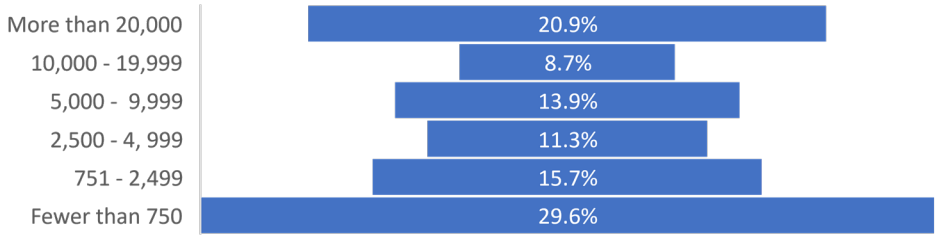
Organization Type



Position Level



Organization Size (in employees)



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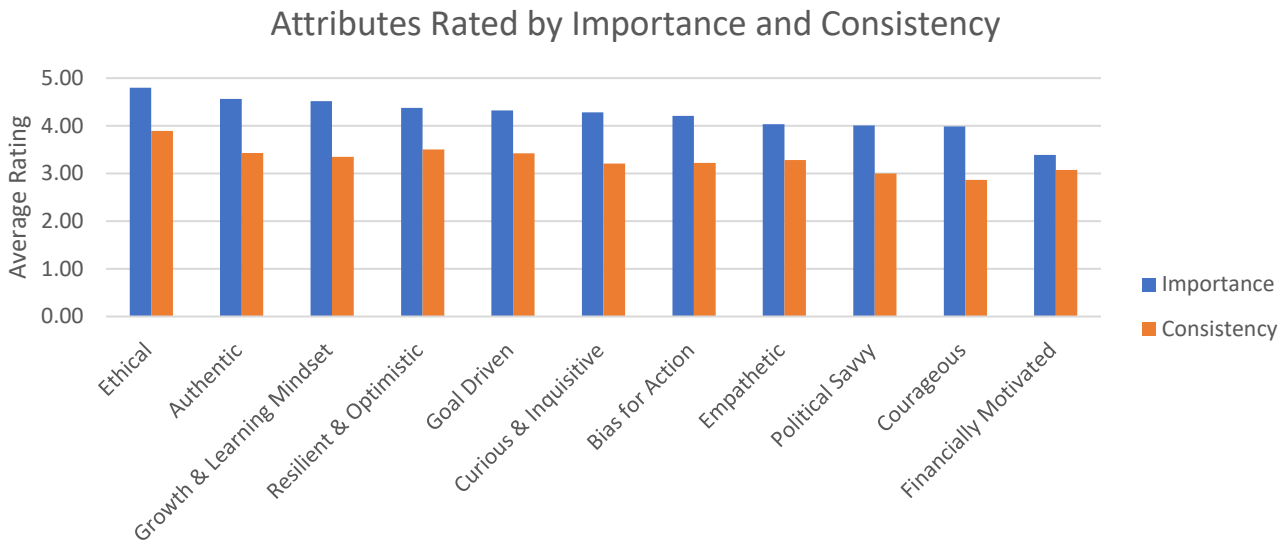
Leadership Attributes

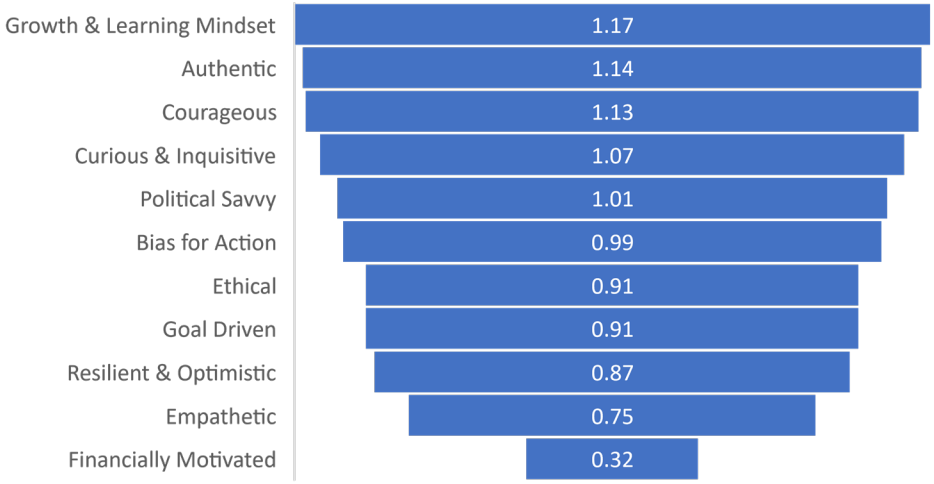
Ethics is the highest priority leadership attribute for Sales Leaders, with Authentic and Growth & Learning Mindset following close. It is interesting that Financially Motivated is lowest rated, providing insight to incentives alignment for sales leaders. Empathy was rated fourth from the bottom in importance but during COVID was rated second. Is this a critical attribute for the future, or merely a crisis management tool?



Relative Gap Between Importance and Consistency

Importance and consistently demonstrated were each assessed on a 1-5 scale by survey respondents.

The difference between the importance and current level of consistency is the gap reflected here.



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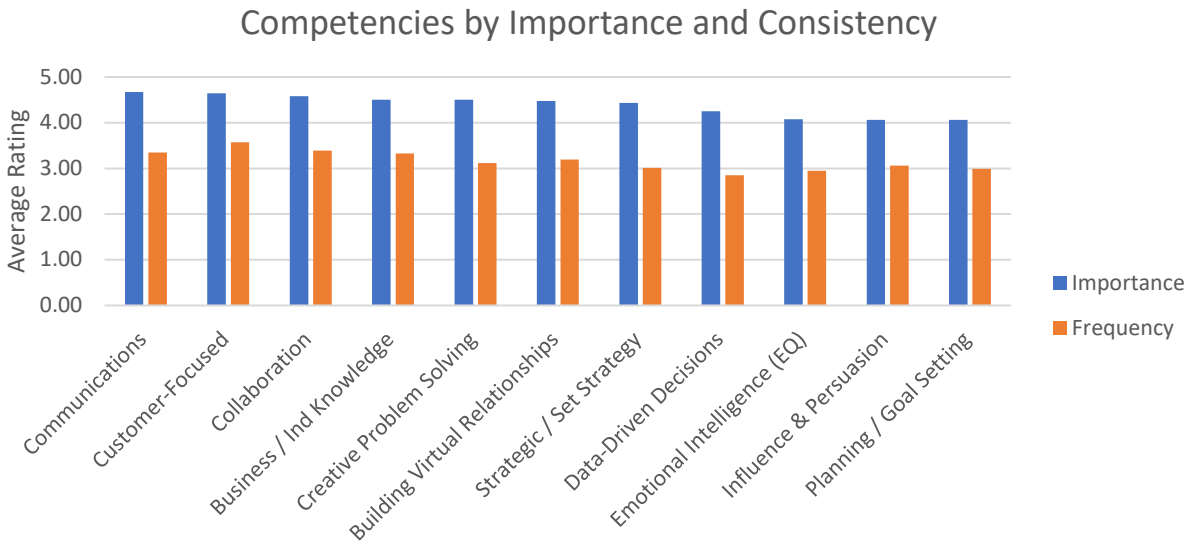
Leadership Competencies

Many listed competencies were rated as important with only a 0.61 difference between the top-rated Communications (4.67) and the lowest rated Planning/Goal Setting (4.06). Competencies can be learned and there is a clear need for development in these competency areas – especially when you notice the gap between their rated importance and how consistently the competencies are demonstrated by Sales Leaders.



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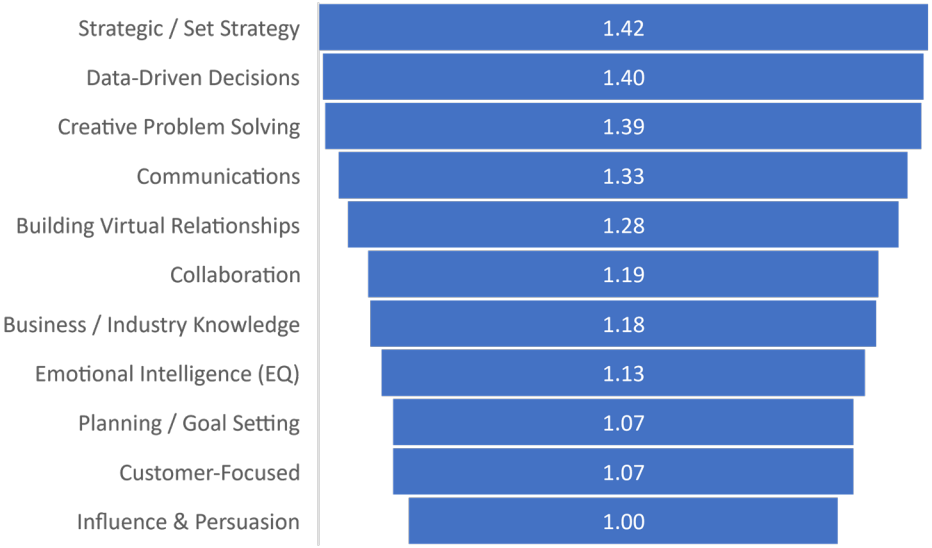

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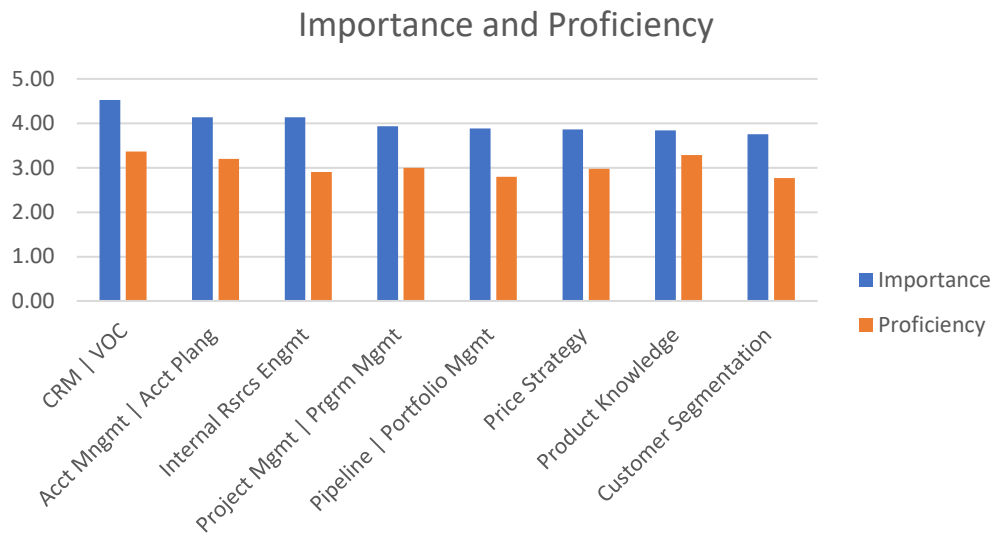
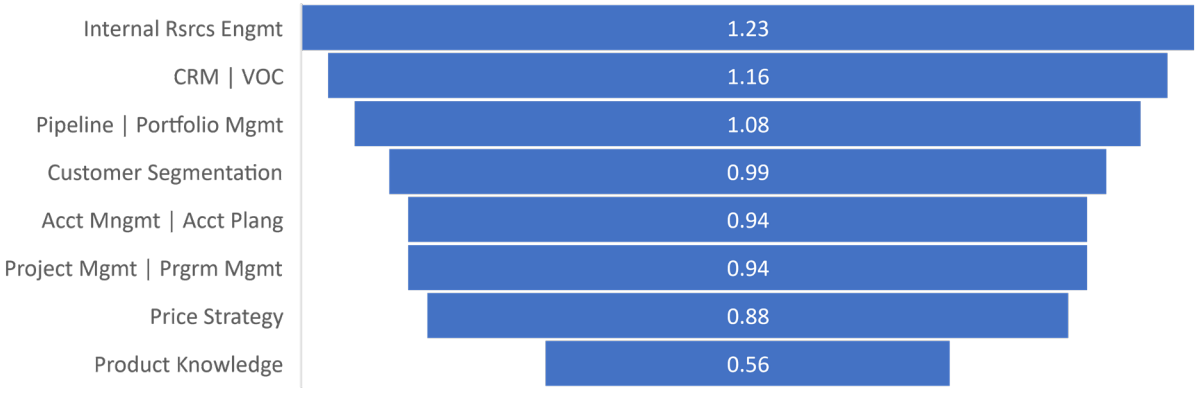
Technical Skills

Customer Relationship Management/VOC and Account Management/Account Planning skills ranked highest for importance. The great news is Customer Relationship Management also had the highest rated proficiency, with Product Knowledge a close second. Are we building relationships and selling features and benefits? How are we engaging internal resources to service our customers?



Relative Gap Between Importance and Proficiency



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What Competencies, Attributes and Technical Skills were most important during COVID?

This table shows the top five rated Competencies, Attributes, and Technical Skills that were important for Sales Leaders during COVID-19. The top Competencies and Technical Skills are 80% the same. The Attributes shifted the most, with Empathy and Bias for Action rising to the top 5.

Competencies	Attributes	Technical Skills
Communications (74%)	Resilient & Optimistic (84%)	Customer Relationship Management (82%)
Creative Problem Solving (70%)	Empathetic (66%)	Internal Resources Engagement (53%)
Customer-Focused (67%)	Ethical (60%)	Account Management (43%)
Building Virtual Relationships (66%)	Bias for Action (56%)	Project Mgmt | Program Mgmt (32%)
Collaboration (65%)	Authentic (54%)	Product Knowledge (30%)

Comments and Suggestions from Respondents

1. "Sales Leaders of the future have to be more strategic and stop selling."
2. "The role of "trusted advisor" is still the goal. What has changed are the skills and knowledge required to be able to maintain that status."
3. "In the future the basis for selling will advance however, understanding what customers need and why will not go away."
4. "In this changing environment and business model the VOC is going to be more important than ever in shaping new paradigms."
5. "Influence to better assist decision-making within the supply chain. Sometimes they know not what they do as they may not have the bigger global picture."
6. "Critical thinking and curiosity using the voice of the customer to identify win-win opportunities aligned to shared organizational principles."
7. "I believe Sales Leaders see themselves and what is important differently than others within their organizations; hence there is sometimes a disconnect that impedes ultimate success."
8. "Strategy and planning are very important because you need the other skills to create a value proposition for the product or service – and be able to express that in a way that is data-driven and important to the customer."
9. "Very difficult to bring value to customer when one cannot bring together various elements within the supplier organization in support of that customer."

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If You Could Wave a Magic Wand and Elevate ONE Area:

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