

April, 2012

## Moving the Needle on Sales Productivity: Success Goes Mobile

Contemporary sales professionals are faced with an ever-growing list of customer expectations, as well as a confusing menu of technology tools purporting to help them reach quota more effectively by establishing and maintaining these customer relationships. In many industry sectors such as pharmaceuticals, financial services and technology, the traditional “traveling salesman” has necessarily morphed into a digitally savvy Business-to-Business (B2B) subject matter expert expected to have an enhanced, real-time awareness of their customers’ needs – all while often doing “more with less” due to budget constraints from above. This Research Brief will explore how the most successful companies are enabling their remote staff with device- and location-agnostic technologies that support a holistic communications platform enabling a more rapid and frequent “sealing of the deal.”

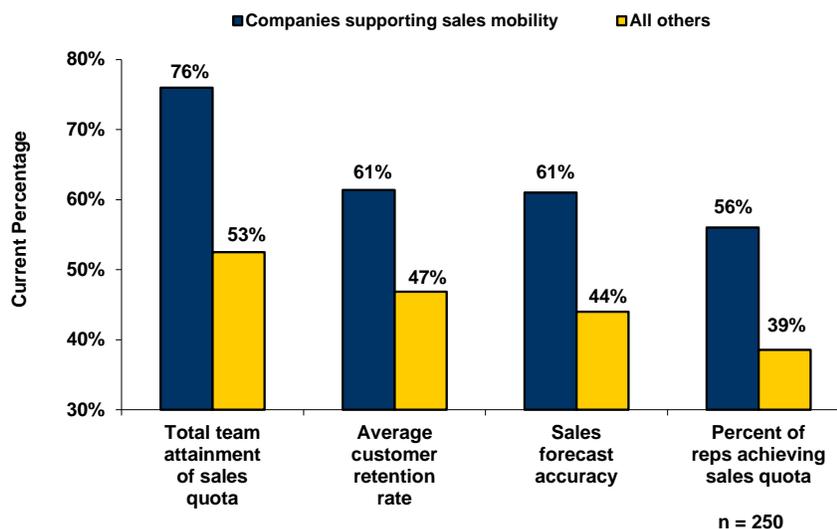
### Research Brief

Aberdeen’s Research Briefs provide a detailed exploration of a key finding from a primary research study, including key performance indicators, Best-in-Class insight, and vendor insight.

### Research Foundations for Sales Mobility

In January and February 2012, Aberdeen surveyed 250 end-user organizations about their sales effectiveness practices and accomplishments, specifically to understand how mobile tools are most effectively deployed toward improving overall sales and revenue productivity. Results published in *“Sales Mobility: How Best-in-Class Remote Sellers Are Replacing ‘See’ with ‘Do’”* (April, 2012) help us understand how companies are taking stock of the need to support their remote sales and account management staff.

**Figure 1: Tangible Business Results of Mobilizing the Sales Team**



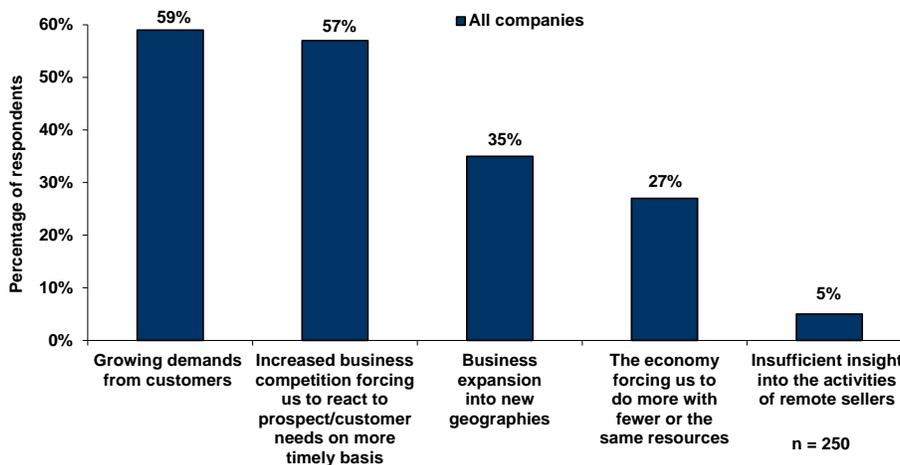
Source: Aberdeen Group, February 2012

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In Figure 1 above, we look at a number of current performance metrics that were self-reported by survey respondents, and then aggregated into end-users supporting sales mobility technologies and policies, and those indicating no such support. In all of the crucial sales metrics displayed, mobility-enabled sales teams yielded significantly better results around quota attainment, customer loyalty and more accurate sales forecasting – all Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that are frequently nominated in Aberdeen's Sales Effectiveness research as crucial to sustained business success. Clearly, the value of mobilizing the sales team provides us with a strong foundation to dig deeper into how the best performers adopt processes and technologies around mobile selling

In asking survey respondents to identify the top two business pressures behind their sales mobility initiatives, the leading answer from the majority of companies focused on a customer-first rationale, as seen in Figure 2 below, with more demands for service and support. Nearly as many companies cited competitive threats as a top pressure, further mandating the need for faster, 24/7 attention to the customer. Beyond these most common inducers of stress are the expansion of business into new geographies – a welcome concept amidst post-recessionary investment strategies – while the “do more with less” mantra has receded to roughly one-quarter of end-users considering it to be a main business driver. These two pressures seem contradictory to one another, but actually illustrate even more clearly the need for field-based personnel to have the information, training and tools necessary to conduct an increasingly well-managed personal book of business.

**Figure 2: Business Pressures Creating the Need for More Agile Selling**



Source: Aberdeen Group, February 2012

Survey respondents informing Aberdeen regarding their sales mobility goals echo this efficiency-oriented message, with a significant majority indicating a “work smarter” or productivity-centric aspiration as their top goal (Table 1). The subsequent choices help deliver the same customer-centric approach

**Sales Mobility: Best-in-Class Defined**

Aberdeen research to be published in *Sales Mobility: How Best-in-Class Remote Sellers Are Replacing “See” with “Do”* (April 2012) features a Best-in-Class group of survey respondents, defined as the top 20% of performers:

- √ 109% of overall sales quota achieved by the sales organization during the last completed calendar or fiscal year, compared with 73% among Industry Average firms and 41% within Laggards
- √ 8.1% year-over-year increase in lead conversion rate (sales-accepted lead to close); vs. a 2.1% increase for Industry Average firms and 6.1% decrease among Laggards
- √ 4.6% average year-over-year improvement in customer renewal rate, vs. a 0.3% improvement for the Industry Average and a 2.5% decline among Laggard respondents

Best-in-Class: Top 20% of aggregate performance scorers

Industry Average: Middle 50% of aggregate performance scorers

Laggard: Lower 30% of aggregate performance

seen above, with maximizing customer satisfaction – and spend – as priorities to be addressed.

**Sector Definition: Sales Mobility**

For the purposes of this survey, “sales mobility” refers to organizational support of sales and/or account management professionals whose work includes any component of out-of-office activity, including home, travel, at customer sites, etc. “Devices” can include feature cell phones, smartphones, or tablet/netbook/laptop personal computers. Finally, “sales staff” or “sales reps” refer to both direct outside/field sellers as well as account management personnel responsible for maintaining quotas.

**Table 1: Top Goals Inspiring Sales Mobility**

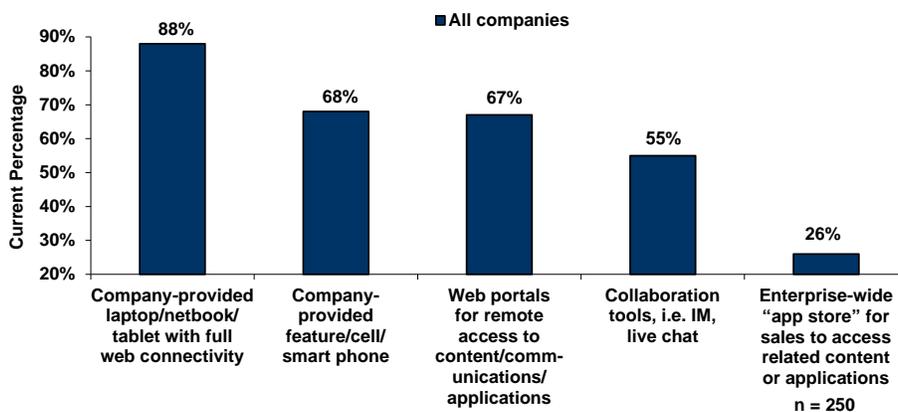
Sales Effectiveness Goal	Percent of Respondents, n=250
We would like to improve the overall productivity of our sales force	63%
We would like to increase the average “wallet share” we currently recognize from our current customers	29%
We would like to respond more timely and accurately to customer or prospect requests	28%
We would like to manage more sales territories, accounts or industries without an equivalent increase in sales headcount	26%
We would like to reduce the response time to selling “trigger events” such as prospect email/voicemail communications	12%

Source: Aberdeen Group, February 2012

The takeaway from these first data points is rooted in the reality that customers requiring “care and feeding” are still, in this day and age, visited in person by their sales rep or account manager in order to add personal attention, problem resolution or even “schmoozing” to the buy-sell relationship. These live interactions have clearly become more technology-enabled in the last two decades with hardware and content solutions constantly coming to market to enable more effective conversations, communications and order management.

“These pressures illustrate even more clearly the need for field-based personnel to have the information, training and tools necessary to conduct an increasingly well-managed personal book of business.”

**Figure 3: Most Popular Sales Mobility Modalities**



Source: Aberdeen Group, February 2012

With the case for sales mobility established, then, let's examine in more detail how companies support their remote sellers and account managers. We see in Figure 3 above that full-function personal computing is alive and well, with web-connected devices including the newer category of tablets, dominating the mobile landscape. Twenty-nine percent (29%) fewer companies, however, add communications devices or online portals to the mix. While this may initially seem odd – after all, mobile phones have been around longer than mobile computers and cost far less – it is worth noting that in a customer-centric world, having information at a sales rep's fingertips when visiting a client can easily be seen as more valuable than the ability to make phone calls. Indeed, many traditional phone-based tasks – calling 411 for addresses or phone numbers, dialing your next appointment for street directions – have been replaced by web-based activities that source the same data, but in an on-demand, self-serve modality. On the other hand, with the average sales rep among all survey respondents carrying 2.61 devices, the opportunity to utilize both PC- and voice-oriented technologies creates even more ways for these professionals to use the technologies they most prefer. Finally, with more than half of respondents also utilizing web portals and collaboration tools, and noting the 26% level of popularity of the new "application store" option, we start to understand how a versatile mobile technology tool belt can positively impact sales effectiveness through enhanced digital connectivity for the sales organization.

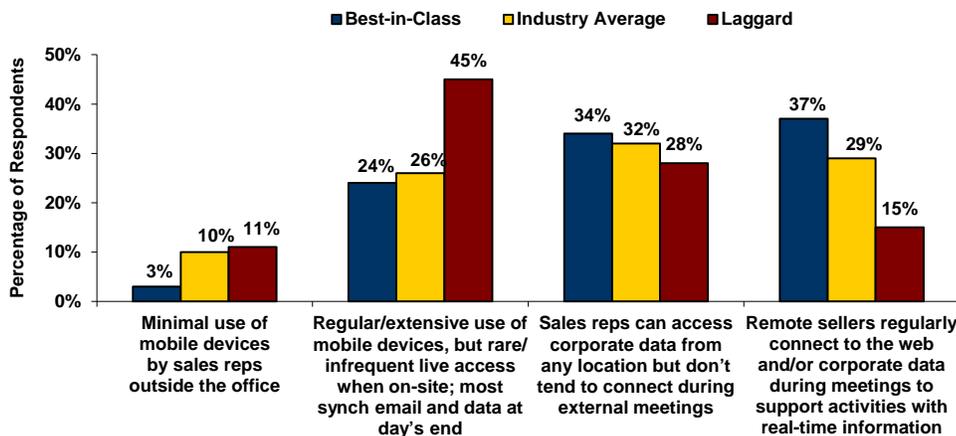
**Fast Facts**

- √ Best-in-Class companies support 89% of their non-inside sales reps with sales mobility, compared to 75% among Industry Average companies and 56% within Laggard firms.
- √ The Best-in-Class financially support an average of 2.44 devices per sales team member; this number drops to 2.29 and 2.04 among Industry Average and Laggard companies respectively.
- √ Forty-four percent (44%) of the Best-in-Class indicate that their sales mobility strategy includes supporting channel partners or other external sellers with mobile devices, support or access to information. Other firms report a 31% rate.

**Best-in-Class Mobile Selling**

With an understanding of why companies are motivated to empower their "reps of the future" with these tools, it is worth asking ourselves, "how far down this new road do we need to travel?" Within the current research into [Sales Mobility](#), the top 20% of performers identified as the aggregated Best-in-Class companies (see sidebar, page 2 above) demonstrate in Figure 4 a clear commitment to jumping into full-scale sales mobility head-first.

**Figure 4: Depth of Sales Mobility Utilization, by Best-in-Class**



n = 250  
Source: Aberdeen Group, February 2012

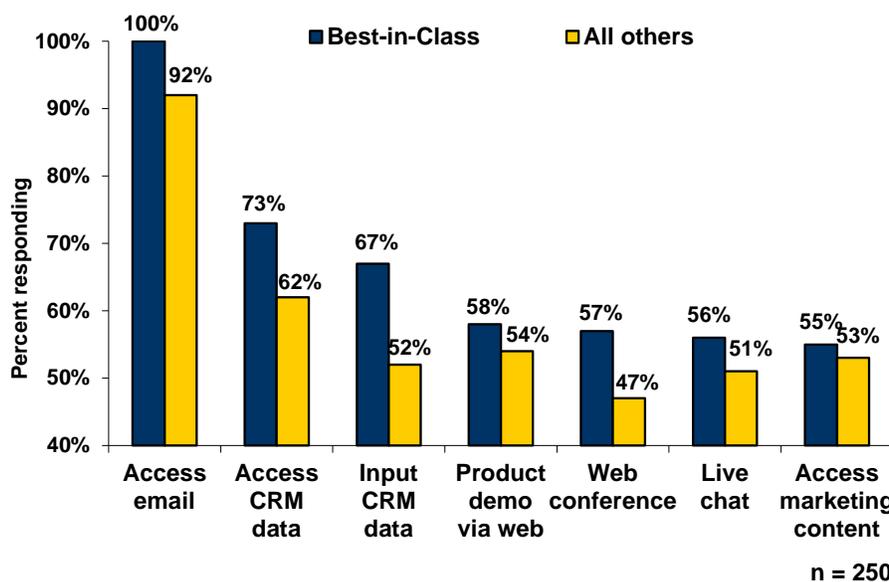
When end-users were asked to indicate how deep the use of sales mobility had extended throughout their sales organization, these top performers significantly out-paced Industry Average and Laggard firms at the high end of the utilization spectrum, while notably trailing under-performers at the low end. Hence, while companies are highly varied in their depth of sales mobility deployments, those with the best performance – around quota attainment, lead conversion effectiveness and customer loyalty – are leading the way with “anywhere, anytime” sales enablement, through enhanced overall productivity.

How exactly are these companies deploying sales mobility? In Figure 5, we see that across the board, the Best-in-Class more aggressively implement a wide variety of contemporary sales enablement practices outside the traditional home office environment; after all, no single application is simply a cure-all or magic bullet for success in mobile selling. The clear leader in use cases is, not surprisingly, the crucial email client which is the lifeline of professional sellers needing to communicate with colleagues, customers and partners. Every single Best-in-Class firm provides remote email support to their field staff, while 8% of other firms take this essential application away. These under-performers are also less likely than the Best-in-Class to provide access or data entry into the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) instance, again depriving their staff of the vital data about accounts, orders and customers they need to successfully do their job. The use cases in Figure 5 also show more than half of the top performers enabling field personnel with product, communications and content information, truly enabling an “anytime, anywhere” work/lifestyle for their team members. Item by item, these tools of the trade are hallmarks of companies at the top of the quota, lead conversion and customer satisfaction food chain.

**Fast Facts**

- √ Best-in-Class firms report that 79% of their sales reps are currently achieving annual sales quota, compared to 55% among the Industry Average and 32% within Laggards.
- √ The average lead conversion rate – a lead accepted by “closers,” from inside sales or internal/external lead generation provider, yielding a closed deal or account win – is 38% among the Best-in-Class, and 18% among all other firms.
- √ Annual revenue grew 16.7% on a year-over-year basis among the Best-in-Class; Industry Average firms saw a 4.6% increase while Laggards averaged a revenue decline of 6.2%

**Figure 5: Use Cases of Sales Mobility Use Cases by Best-in-Class**



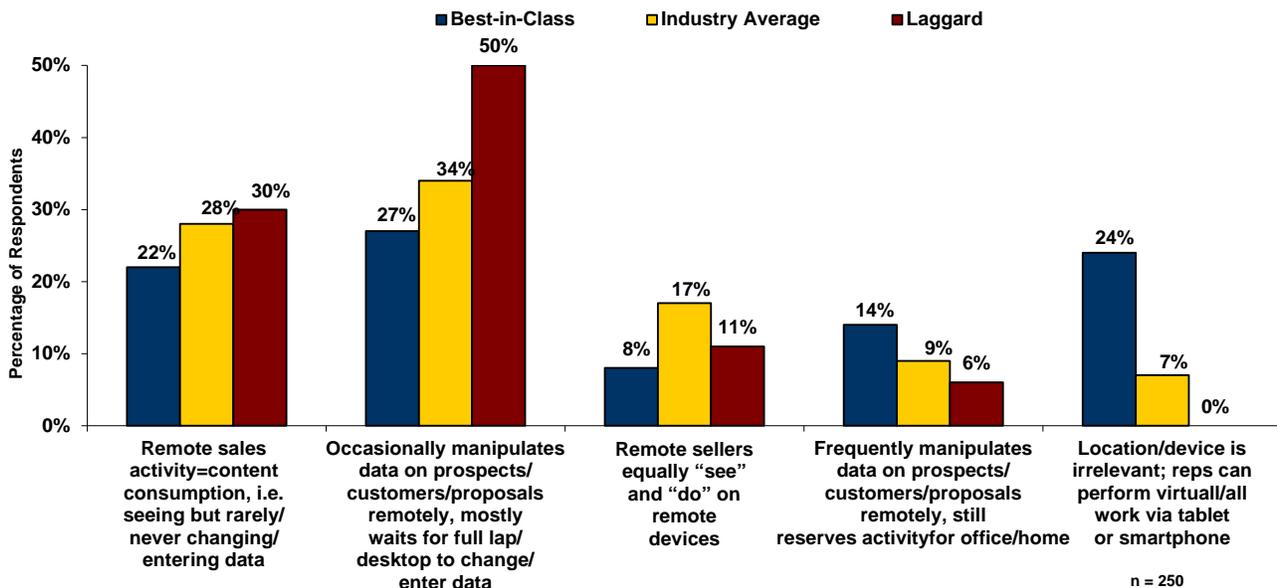
“No single application is simply a cure-all or magic bullet for success in mobile selling.”

Source: Aberdeen Group, February 2012

## Best-in-Class Migration from Passive to Active Content Management

In Figure 6, we note another fascinating distinction between the Best-in-Class and other firms, regarding how each maturity class favors different degrees of “content consumption” as opposed to “content creation.” This refers to the context of how free their remote sellers are to perform more, or less, their full-scale computing tasks when out of the office. Initially these data show that most companies’ reps are “doing” rather than “seeing” via mobile activity, and yet the areas in which the stronger performers out-pace other companies – and vice versa – is a notable finding showing clear Best-in-Class support for more independent, untethered mobile computing and content creation by the best-performing sales organizations and their personnel.

**Figure 6: Consume vs. Create: How the Best-in-Class Replace “See” with “Do”**



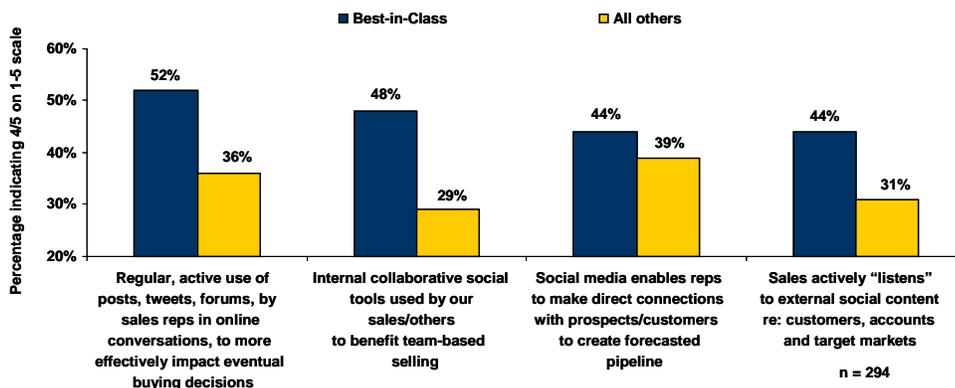
Source: Aberdeen Group, February 2012

Speaking of content creation, what about social media? Is there a place for user-generated content in professional sales? Preliminary data gathered by Aberdeen in advance of publishing “*Social Selling: Unleashing the Power of Social Media on B2B Sales Enablement*” (Q2 2012) would indicate a strong “yes.” If we think about the meteoric rise of social media content creation by younger “millennials” now more rapidly populating our field-based sales and account management teams, and the fact that remote staff inevitably have multiple pockets of “down time” during their day, the likelihood of communicating and participating in the social sphere is practically a foregone conclusion. And with the explosion of enterprise-grade social media tools and deployments, using these technology enablers for professional advancement is a natural extension of these same habits. Indeed, in Figure 7 we look at the self-reported social media trends among the Best-in-Class companies within Aberdeen’s March,

“With the explosion of mobile-enabled, enterprise-grade social media tools and deployments, using these technology enablers during field staffers’ inevitable ‘down-time’ is practically a foregone conclusion.”

2012 study on *B2B Social Media Marketing: Are We There Yet?* (those with the highest growth in revenue and marketing-contributed sales pipeline). From a variety of perspectives – internal collaboration with team-selling colleagues, engaging in informal conversations with their customers, understanding more about prospects and clients through user-generated content, actively participating in the digital discussion – the Best-in-Class are adopting social selling as an enabler that helps them succeed.

**Figure 7: The Best-in-Class More Highly Value Social Selling**



Source: Aberdeen Group, January 2012

**Fast Facts: Compliance**

While it is natural for sales leaders to be concerned about data security and compliance, particularly in industries such as the life sciences, health care and finance, companies with the "ability to track audit trails of customer-related data, i.e. for compliance/regulatory purposes" out-perform non-adopters:

- ✓ 35% higher lead conversion rate (28% vs. 21%)
- ✓ 22% stronger customer renewal rate (66% vs. 55%)
- ✓ 13% more accurate sales forecast (64% vs. 57%)
- ✓ 9% higher team attainment of sales quota (73% vs. 67%)

**Case Study**

Consider the case of a leading biopharmaceutical company, with a field sales force of over 1000 individuals, selling into and managing accounts in a highly regulated market required to carefully manage customer and patient data. According to the firm's Vice President and Marketing leader, the company "needed a better way to extend the prized face-to-face connectivity with our customers," and lacked a single solution through which the field team could offer "flexibility, personalization, customization and reporting" that would yield better overall sales effectiveness and customer satisfaction.

The company chose a digital communications platform designed specifically for life sciences use, which the VP indicates was implemented "not to build new relationships or replace a human touch with technology, but to extend and embellish them." Working with physicians and their staff in medical offices, the company's field sales force is constantly challenged with time constraints, considering the busy schedules of the practitioners, as well as the ever-changing landscape of products, research and regulations with which they need to be familiar. Using the new platform to build efficient, electronic communications with their customers, the company's reps "have the confidence they are using approved materials, having the right conversations, provide email links to digital assets to provide short- and long-form content that meet the needs of the customer," explains the VP. The solution also "allows us to digitally manage all our events, providing a seamless overall customer experience" that raises the all-important trust and comfort levels on the part of the medical customers.

The initiative has benefited the company extensively, with measurable efficiencies in communications with customers, sales collateral ordering speed, and more overall streamlined interface between the firm’s marketing, sales and operations personnel. “It really does provide meaningful benefit in our engagement with customers, connectivity to them, and qualitative benefits as well,” concludes the VP.

### Summary: Where Do I Start?

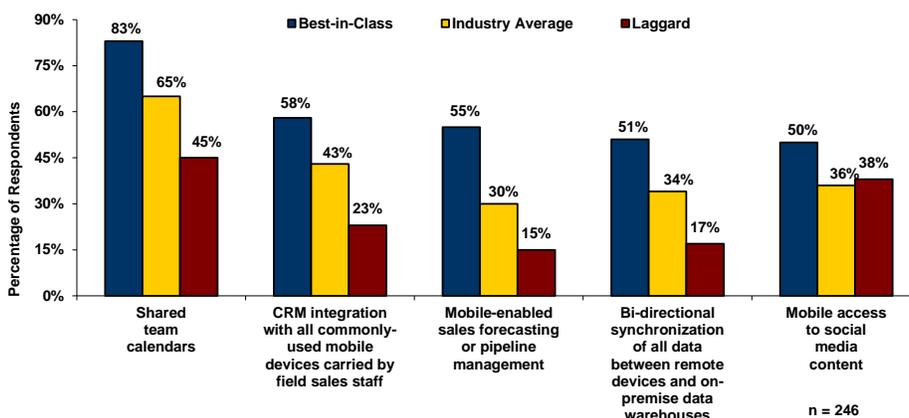
For companies seeking to untether their field sellers and relationship managers, the plethora of technologies and best practices within the sales mobility niche offer almost a “drinking from the fire hose” menu of options. Remembering that the best mobile strategies are driven by business objectives and process, we nevertheless in Figure 8 narrow the most popular technology enablers down to those more aggressively adopted by the Best-in-Class from Aberdeen’s *Sales Mobility* research. Here we see support for a number of best practices discussed in this Research Brief: more effective time utilization through shared team calendars, forecast view/data entry from the field, social selling enablement...and the kind of crucial anywhere/anytime access to customer data supported by Aberdeen’s findings in *Leveraging the 360 Degree Customer View to Maximize Up-Sell and Cross-Sell Potential* (September 2011).

It should be noted that no single technology enabler by itself will instantly turn a remote sales force into a high-performing team; rather, this research showcases how integrating a number of customer management technologies – and then enabling them in the field – is the strongest approach.

#### Fast Facts

- √ Best-in-Class firms expect more from their sales reps, with a \$932k average annual sales quota, versus \$669k and \$621k for Industry Average and Laggard companies respectively.
- √ Sales compensation is higher among the Best-in-Class, with a fully-loaded average of \$131k annually; Industry Average and Laggard companies provide \$95k and \$90k respectively.
- √ Forty-eight percent (48%) of the Best-in-Class anticipate additional sales mobility investments within the next 12 months; other companies show a 34% rate.

**Figure 8: Technology Enablers Supporting Sales Mobility by Best-in-Class**



Source: Aberdeen Group, February 2012

By modernizing the conversations held with an increasing savvy and time-constrained customer – think of the precious seconds a pharmaceutical rep has with a physician – mobile sellers are well advised to follow the examples

set here by their peers and competitors among the Best-in-Class performers. This includes careful attention to aligning mobility strategies with well-defined business goals and objectives, as well as carefully integrating the right technology enablers into the daily work-life of their front-line team.

For more information on this or other research topics, please visit [www.aberdeen.com](http://www.aberdeen.com).

Related Research	
<p><a href="#"><i>Sales Mobility: How Best-in-Class Remote Sellers Are Replacing “See” with “Do”</i></a> (April 2012)</p> <p><a href="#"><i>Partner Relationship Management: Channeling Better Sales Results</i></a> (March 2012)</p> <p><a href="#"><i>Lead-To-Win 2012: Managing People, Process and Technology to Optimize the Last Mile of the Sales Cycle</i></a> (March 2012)</p> <p><a href="#"><i>Social Collaboration Powers Top-Notch Customer Engagement Programs</i></a> (February 2012)</p> <p><a href="#"><i>Sales Performance Management 2012: How the Best-in-Class Optimize the Front Line to Grow the Bottom Line</i></a> (December 2011)</p>	<p><a href="#"><i>Sales Training 2011: Uncovering How the Best-in-Class Sustain, Reinforce and Leverage Best Selling Practices</i></a> (October 2011)</p> <p><a href="#"><i>Leveraging the 360 Degree Customer View to Maximize Up-Sell and Cross-Sell Potential</i></a> (September 2011)</p> <p><a href="#"><i>"Chance Favors the Prepared Mind" - Understanding the Science of Sales Intelligence</i></a> (July 2011)</p> <p><a href="#"><i>Sales Forecasting: How Top Performers Leverage the Past, Visualize the Present, and Improve Their Future Revenue</i></a> (July 2011)</p>
<p><b>Author: Peter Ostrow, Vice President and Research Group Director; Customer Management, Sales Effectiveness</b> (<a href="mailto:peter.ostrow@aberdeen.com">peter.ostrow@aberdeen.com</a>) <a href="#">LinkedIn</a> <a href="#">Twitter</a></p>	

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