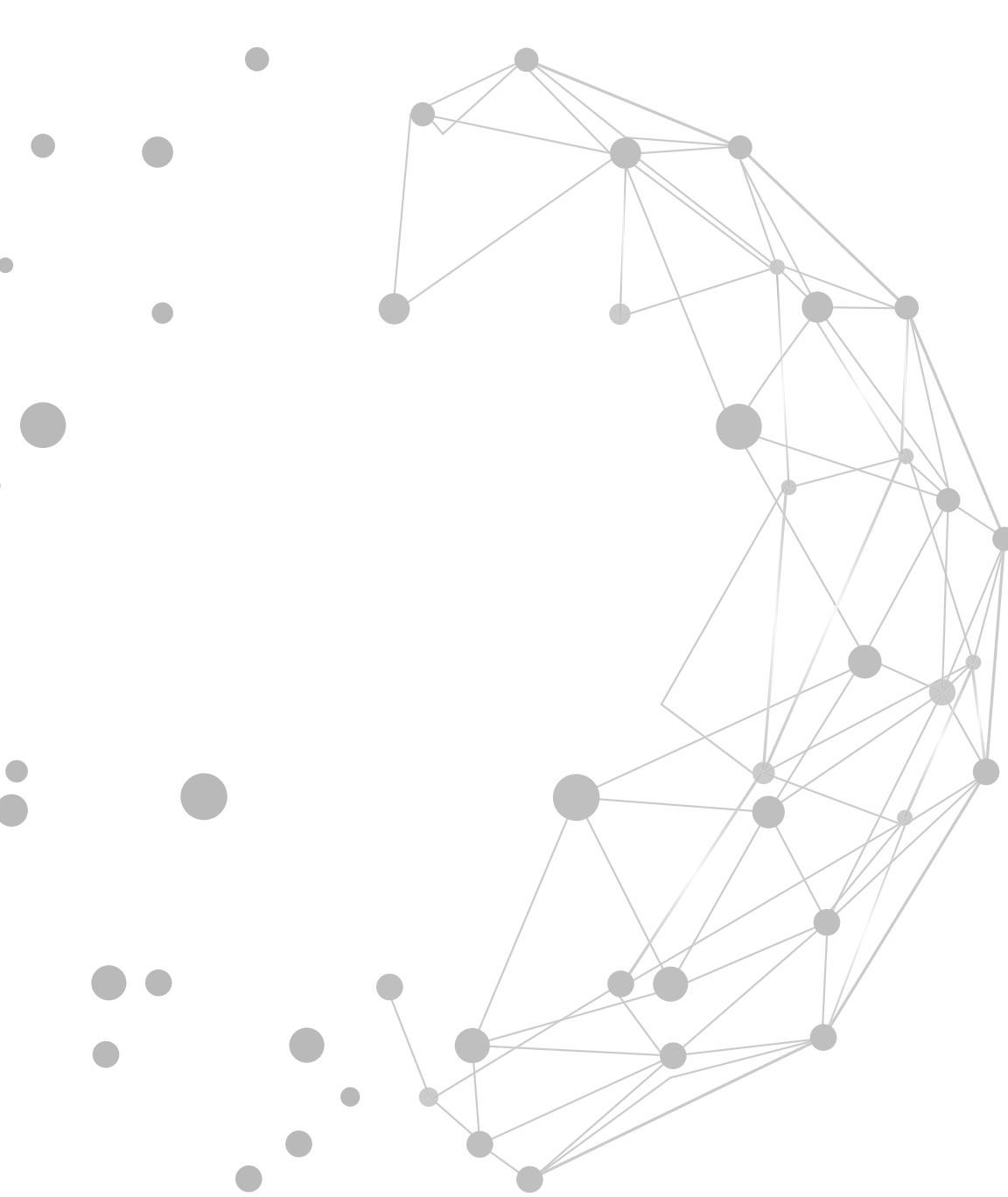




The State of B2B Lead Management 2022

Data and trends from 1,700+ sales,
marketing and ops professionals



Introduction

B2B companies spend an enormous amount of time, energy and resources generating the leads that power their revenue engines. But once they've accumulated these leads, how effectively are they orchestrating their journey into the right hands for follow-up?

That question was at the heart of LeanData's 2017 State of Lead Management study, which sought to capture how businesses were managing their leads for success...and their biggest challenges.

Five years later, what's changed?

LeanData partnered with Sales Hacker, Heinz Marketing and Outreach to find the answers. After analyzing the responses of 1,700+ sales, marketing and operations professionals, we are pleased to present the findings.

We hope you find these insights helpful on your journey to growth in 2022!



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Executive Summary

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic brought an abrupt end to the longest stretch of economic growth and prosperity in U.S. history. For nearly ten years, this record boom economy fueled innovation and opened up new market opportunities for businesses across all sectors.

For many B2B revenue teams, this was a time of plenty: budgets were overflowing, pipeline was abundant and leads were plentiful.

That all changed, of course, when COVID-19 transformed global markets nearly overnight. As companies retrenched and spending dried up, pipeline was no longer abundant—and every lead became precious. Meanwhile in other sectors (e.g., online meeting platforms), companies saw demand surge to record levels and exponential growth in lead volumes in a matter of days.

In either case, how businesses managed leads during this time either became their competitive advantage—or their Achilles heel.

Where are we today?

With signs of improving economic conditions, many sales and marketing leaders are scaling to accelerate growth in 2022. What role will leads play in this effort, and are our current systems and processes up to the task?

At this juncture in B2B's road to recovery, we wanted to find out how businesses were thinking about the role of leads in their revenue engines. Namely:

Do you believe your current systems and processes for managing leads will help—or hurt—your team's ability to accelerate revenue growth in 2022?

Key Insights

We polled 1,732 sales, marketing and operations professionals in December of 2021. The study's findings are presented in more detail throughout this report, but we've highlighted five key takeaways from the survey data (and more than 1,000 comments from survey respondents!).

Pipeline is the top priority for 2022.

Our survey revealed pipeline growth continues to be the #1 go-to-market priority (and challenge) for revenue leaders. While this isn't surprising, we also noticed a noticeable shift in the conversation around the role of leads to pipeline contribution away from greater lead volume toward improving our ability to increase lead effectiveness.

Few are confident their current lead management systems and processes support growth.

Fewer than 1 in 3 believe their lead management improves their effectiveness in achieving conversion goals. And only 18% are confident their current lead management system (routing, account matching, data integrity) will help their organization meet revenue goals in 2022.

Digital transformation of sales and marketing has accelerated, but lead management remains heavily manual.

Second only to insufficient pipeline, lack of automation / too many manual processes was ranked the #2 go-to-market challenge in 2021. Our survey uncovered, for example, the #1 method for routing leads is manually by sales or operations. Given 67% of our survey participants said leads are being assigned to the wrong owner, it's not difficult to draw a line between manual lead processes and suboptimal business outcomes.

Traditional walls between departments are starting to crumble.

Whether you call it RevOps, or simply "sales and marketing alignment," our survey showed a narrowing of the gap between the viewpoints of sales and marketing. In fact, 60 percent in our survey agreed their sales and marketing teams were aligned to deliver growth in 2022—up from 52% in 2017.*

Revenue leaders are optimistic in their outlook for 2022.

While they named significant challenges, the majority of our survey participants see opportunity to start rebuilding growth and forward momentum in their businesses. Asked to share one word describing their outlook for 2022, the #1 response was "optimistic." Check out the word cloud in the final question for more detail!

*The State of Lead Management 2017

Questions We Asked

- 1** Was revenue growth a challenge in 2021?
[For key findings, go to page 9](#)
- 2** What were your top go-to-market challenges in 2021?
[For key findings, go to page 10](#)
- 3** Are sales and marketing aligned to deliver growth in 2022?
[For key findings, go to page 11](#)
- 4** What are your top go-to-market priorities for 2022?
[For key findings, go to page 12](#)
- 5** Does your lead management support an ideal customer experience?
[For key findings, go to page 14](#)
- 6** How effective is your lead management in supporting conversion goals?
[For key findings, go to page 15](#)
- 7** How often are leads assigned to the wrong owner?
[For key findings, go to page 16](#)
- 8** Rate your organization's speed in lead response.
[For key findings, go to page 17](#)
- 9** Do you believe your current systems and processes for lead management will support revenue goals in 2022?
[For key findings, go to page 18](#)
- 10** Can you match a lead to an account?
[For key findings, go to page 20](#)
- 11** How do you route leads?
[For key findings, go to page 21](#)
- 12** What lead management capabilities would you like to have?
[For key findings, go to page 22](#)
- 13** What's one word to describe your team's outlook for growth in 2022?
[For key findings, go to page 25](#)

Section I.

What's the State of Go-to-Market in B2B?

“

Over the past two years, many companies have understandably been more in reactive mode—but now is the time to be proactive.

We're putting our growth engines back into gear. What's under your hood? For far too many, their lead-management capabilities won't get them out of the driveway.

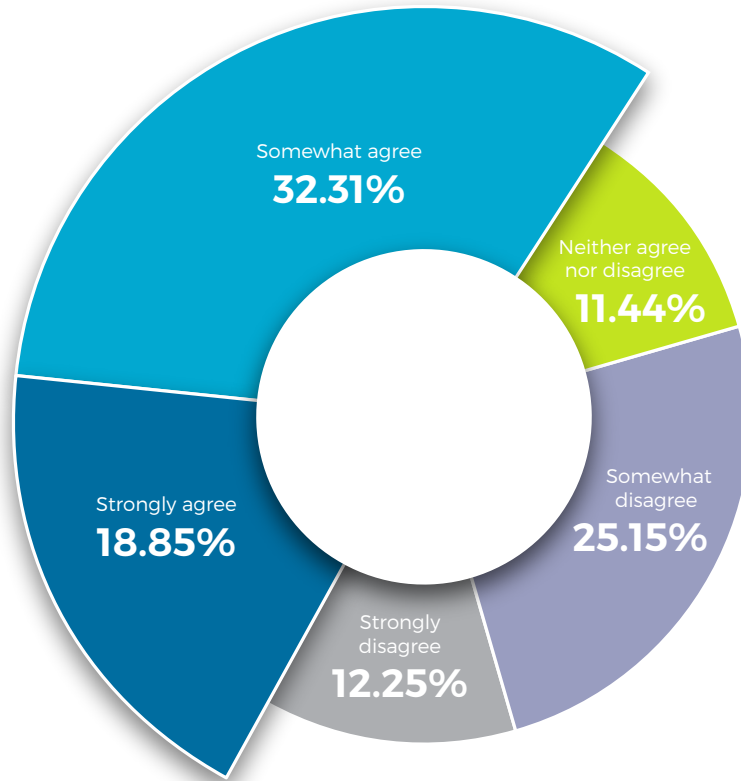
Our survey revealed the hard truth: core lead management capabilities for many are still manual, error-prone, arbitrary and ineffective.

”

Matt Heinz
President of Heinz Marketing

KEY FINDING

More than half (51%) agreed revenue growth was a challenge for their organization in 2021.



QUESTION 1:

Revenue growth was a challenge for my organization in 2021.

*The State of Revenue Operations 2019

...and yet 78% felt this way in 2019.*
What's changed?

Nearly half (46%) of our study's response came from the Software/Tech sector—and many companies in this sector *have* seen growth accelerate as digital transformation / tech adoption has gained momentum.

KEY FINDING

Pipeline was the #1 challenge for revenue leaders in 2021...

#1 Generating sufficient pipeline



#2 Lack of automation/too many manual processes



#3 Meeting revenue targets



#4 Pivoting go-to-market as conditions changed



#5 Virtual selling/performance of a remote team



QUESTION 2:

Rate the extent to which these items were challenging for your revenue organization in 2021.

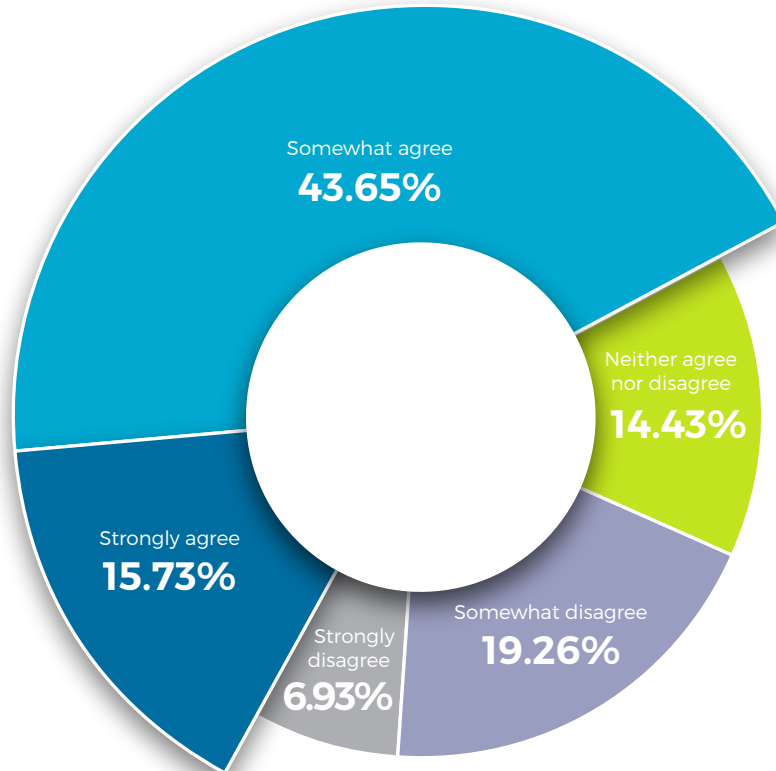
...but lack of automation wasn't far behind at #2.

“There seems to be a continued emphasis on quantity over quality. We hear people say they want to generate more pipeline rather than, for example, improving close rates. But if we were more effective, perhaps we'd have a greater sense of abundance? Lack of automation in the revenue engine may also be why we continue to see pipeline volume considered our #1 challenge.”

Mary Shea
Global Innovation Evangelist at Outreach

KEY FINDING

Nearly 60% believe their sales and marketing teams are aligned to deliver growth in 2022...



QUESTION 3:
Are sales and marketing aligned to deliver growth in 2022?

*The State of Lead Management 2017

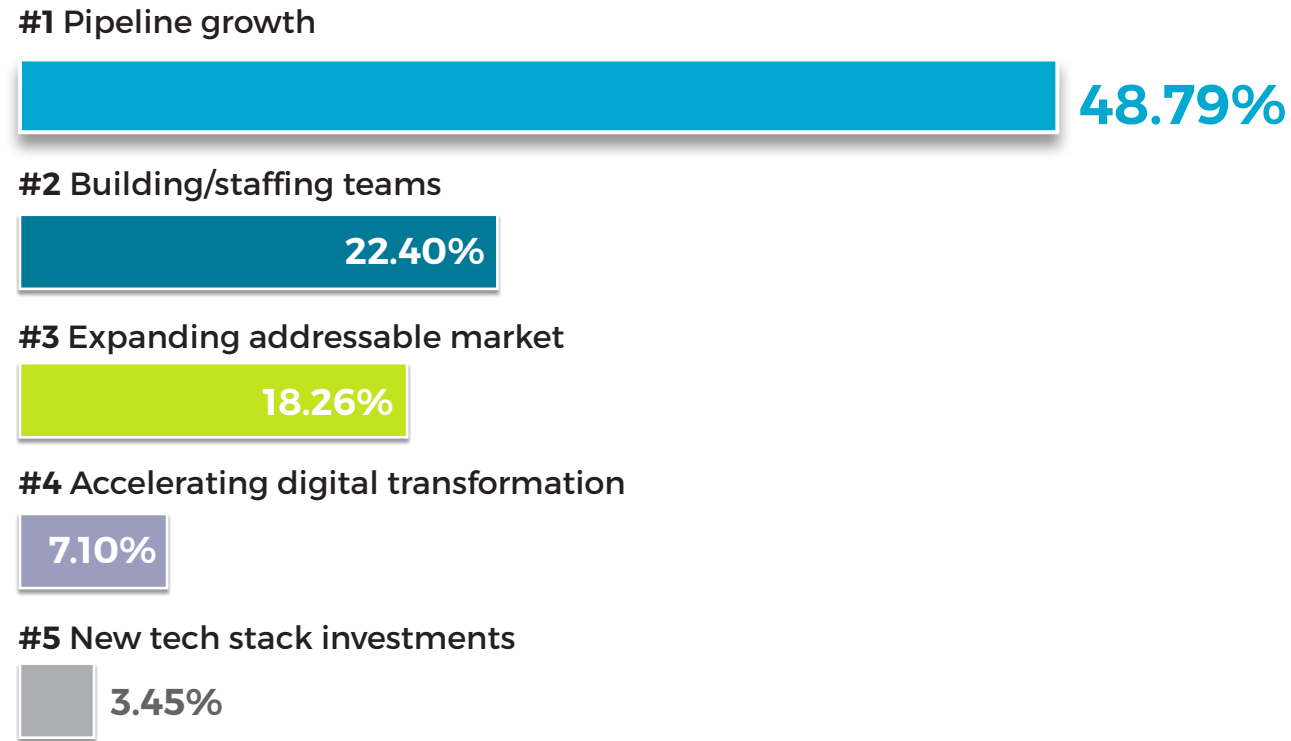
...up from 52% in 2017*

“As RevOps becomes more broadly adopted, the silos that have traditionally separated sales, marketing and customer success are crumbling. But we finally have the technologies needed to make sales and marketing alignment a reality where it counts most: at the data layer. The most courageous operations professionals are adopting them now.”

Dana Therrien, VP/CRO Practice at Anaplan
(Former head of Sales Ops Strategies practice at Forrester)

KEY FINDING

Pipeline growth is the #1 priority for B2B sales and marketing leaders heading into 2022.



QUESTION 4:
What are the top priorities
for your go-to-market
organization in 2022?

Section II.

How Is Lead Management Performing for Your Business?

“

B2B buying and selling has changed forever—there’s no going back. And after the past two years, sales leaders understand the imperative of digital transformation in their organizations.

The shocking truth our survey exposed is how little lead management has evolved to meet these new realities.

If your team is spending more time triaging leads than engaging with them, you need to take a hard look at this less-than-transformed area of your revenue engine now.

”

Max Altschuler

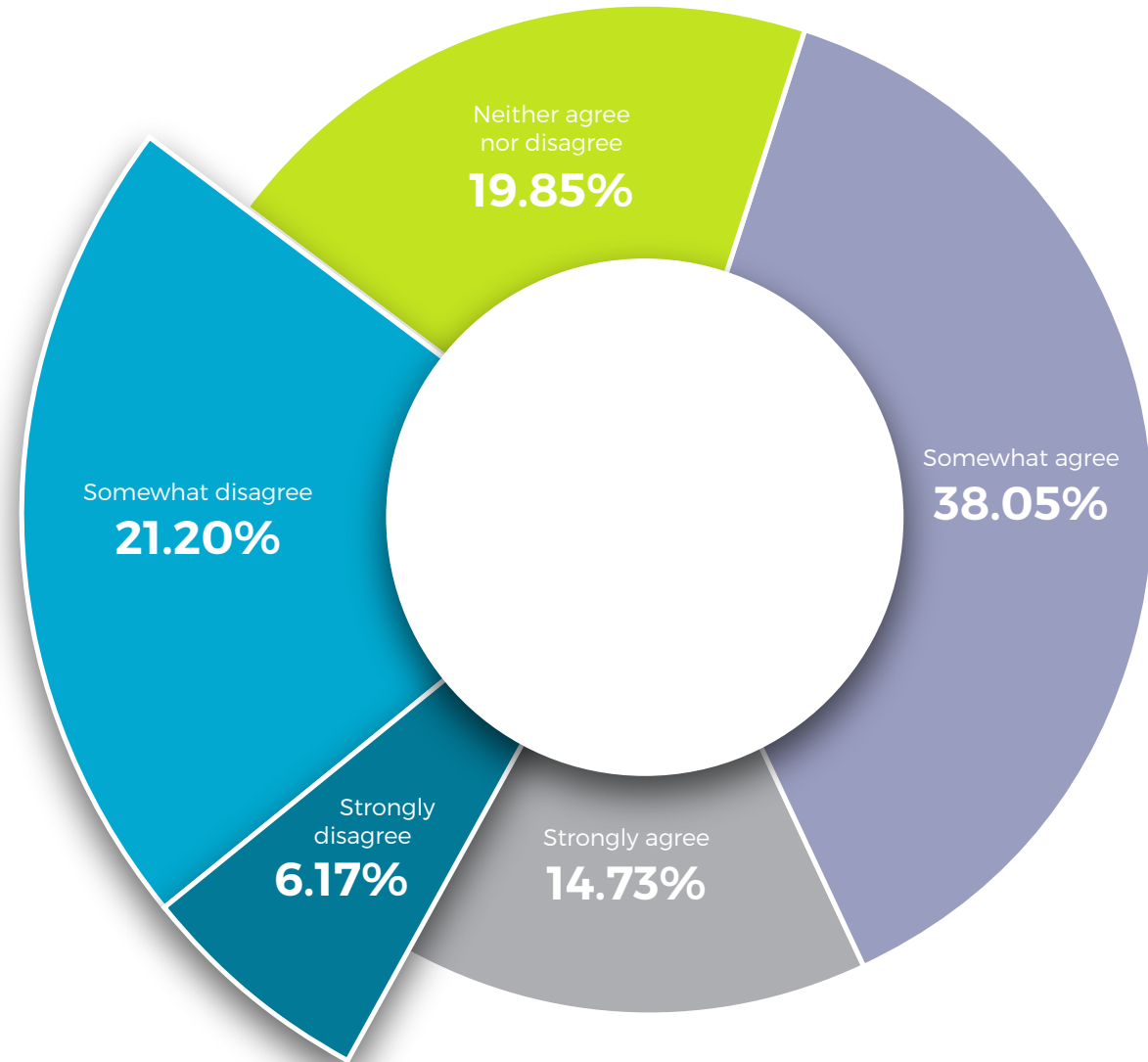
VP of Sales Engagement at Outreach
(Founder and former CEO of Sales Hacker)

KEY FINDING

**More than 1 in 4 (27%)
don't believe their lead
management systems and
processes help deliver an
ideal customer experience.**

QUESTION 5:

I believe my organization's lead
management systems and processes help
us deliver an ideal customer experience.

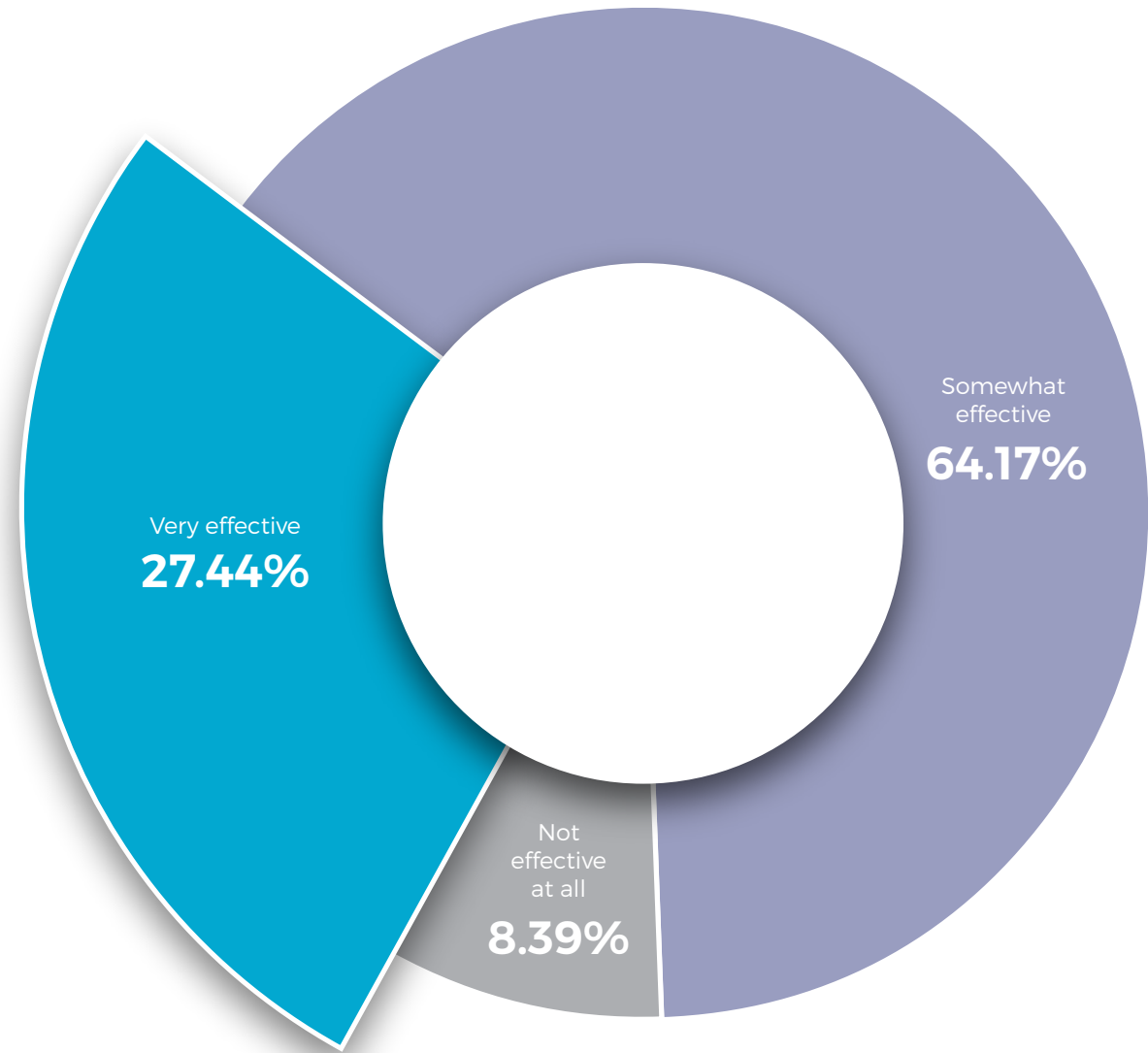


KEY FINDING

Fewer than 1 in 3 (27%) are confident their current lead management strategy helps their team to achieve conversion goals.

QUESTION 6:

How effective is your team in achieving conversion goals with your current lead management strategy?

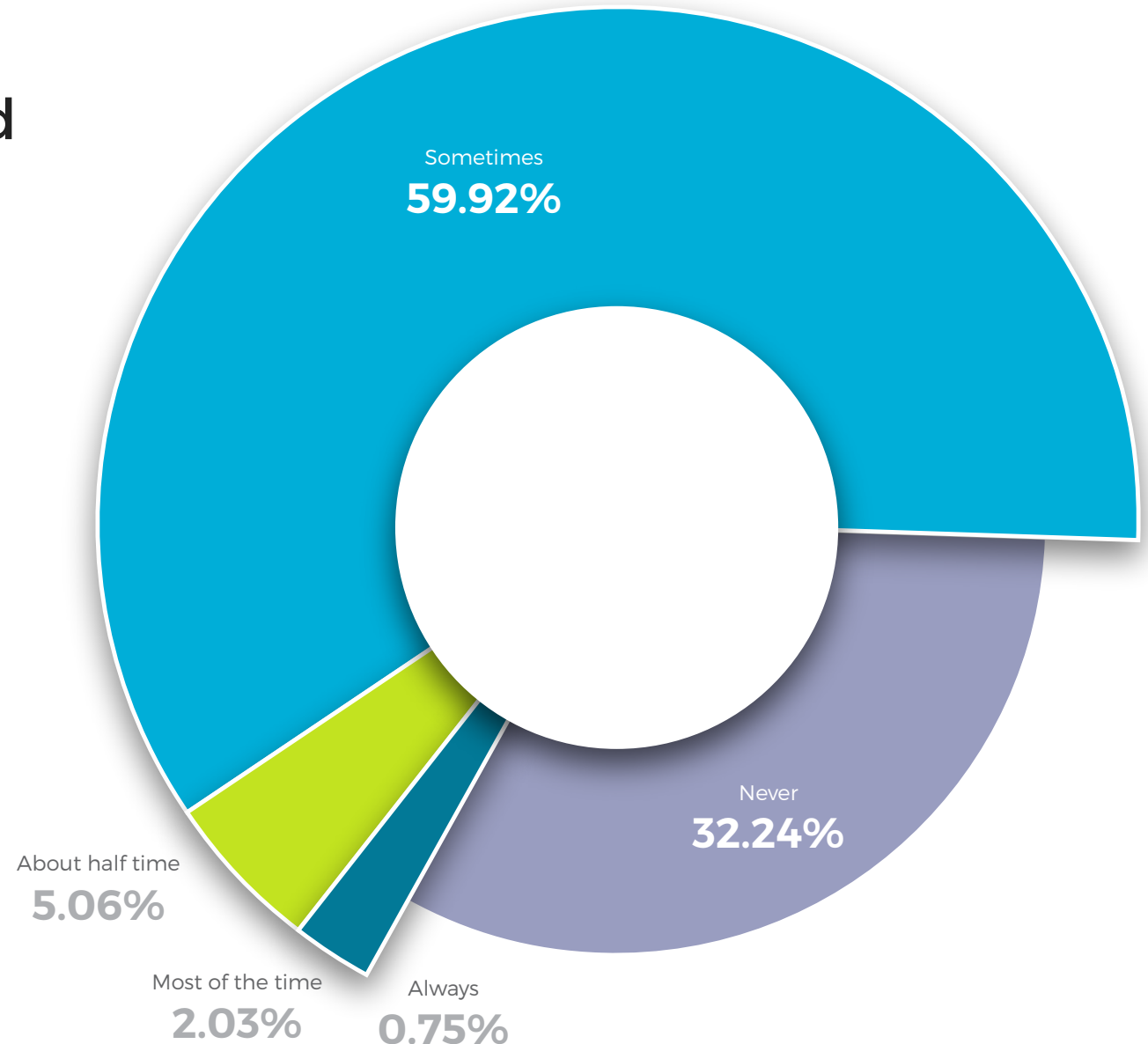


KEY FINDING

More than 2 in 3 (67%) reported leads are being sent to the wrong person for follow-up.

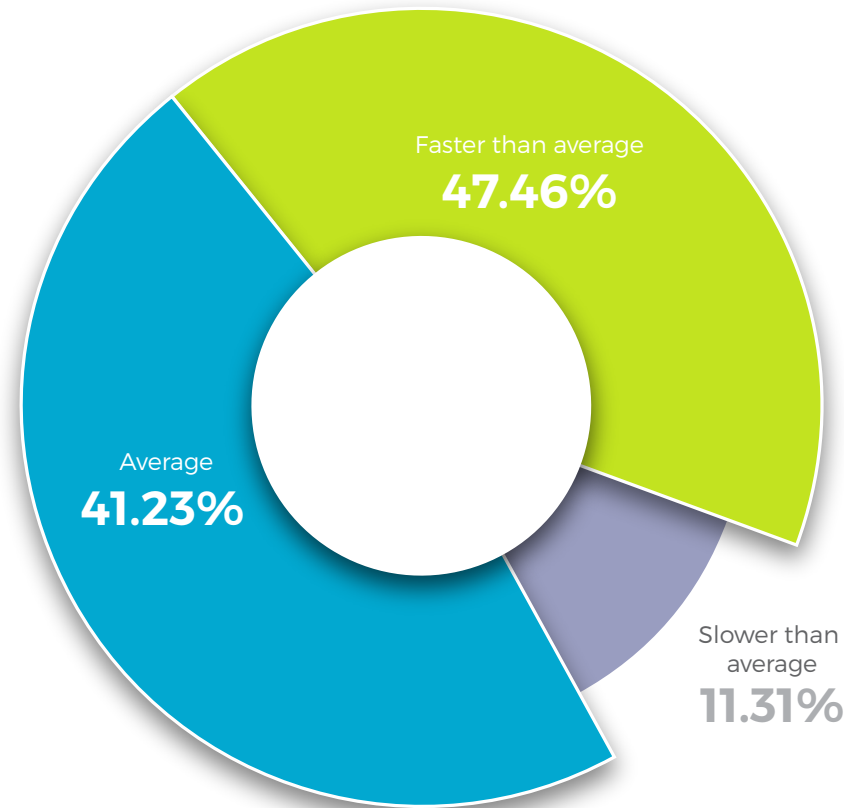
QUESTION 7:

How often are leads assigned to the wrong owner?



KEY FINDING

The vast majority (89%) are satisfied with their organization's speed in responding to new leads...and nearly half (47%) believe they are even *faster* than average...



QUESTION 8:
Overall, how would you rate your organization's time to respond to new leads?

...yet 67% also said leads go to the wrong person.

“As an SDR leader, I always want our sellers to follow up on inbound leads immediately. But speed isn't everything! You must have accuracy, so leads are finding the right owner for follow-up, and context to understand a customer's needs to personalize the message.”

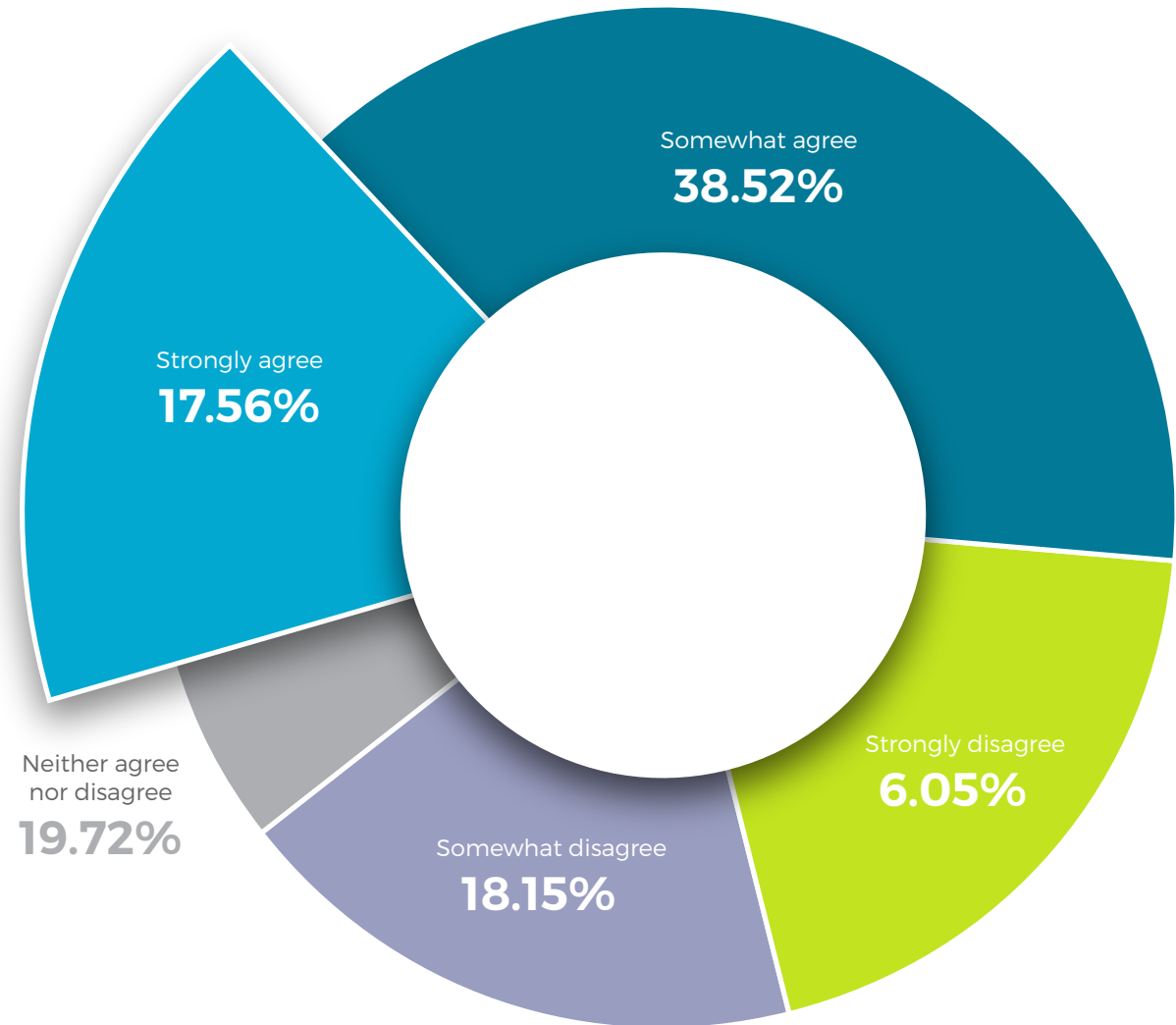
Rob Simmons
Vice President of Sales Development, LeanData

KEY FINDING

Fewer than 1 in 5 (18%) are confident their current lead management system will support revenue goals in 2022.

QUESTION 9:

I believe my current lead management system (routing, account matching, data integrity) will support my organization's revenue goals in 2022.



Section III.

How Are You Managing Your Leads?

“

Manual processes have no place in the modern revenue engine. Our study revealed the extent to which they persist as the dominant method for managing leads.

Our team is privileged to work with some of the highest-performing companies in the world. And we've seen firsthand the difference it makes when they bring intelligent automation to what's traditionally been a manual-intensive, time-consuming and error-prone process.

For modern B2B revenue organizations, digital transformation of lead management is a strategic imperative for achieving growth in 2022.

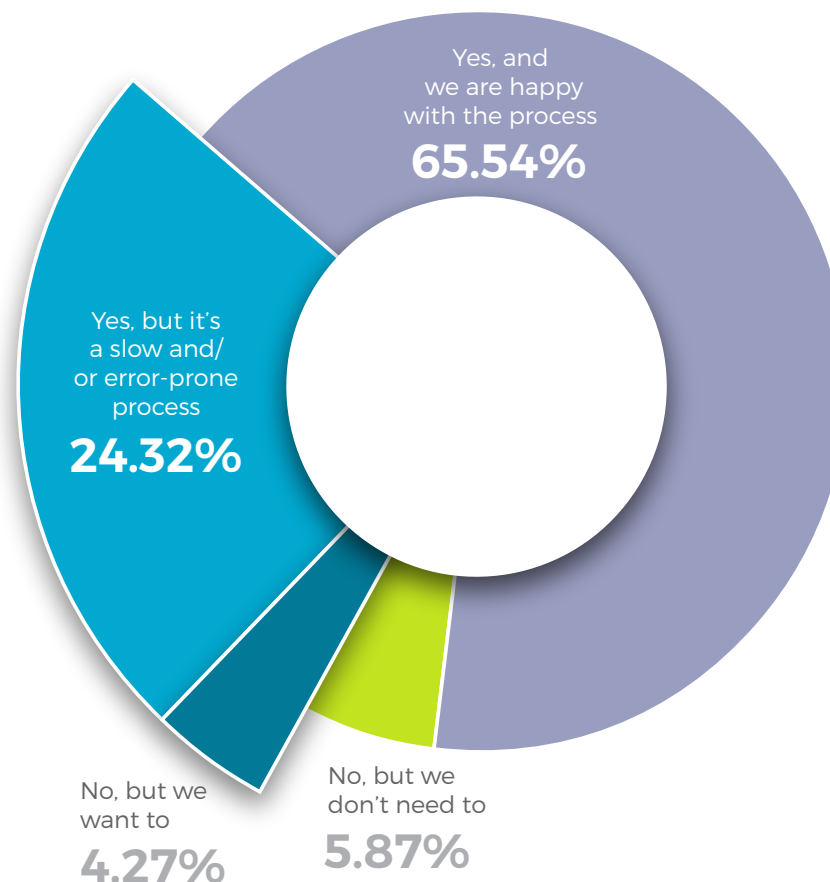
”

Evan Liang
Co-founder and CEO, LeanData

KEY FINDING

Nearly 1 in 3 say matching leads to accounts is a slow, error-prone process—or it's impossible.

QUESTION 10:
Can you match a lead
to an account?

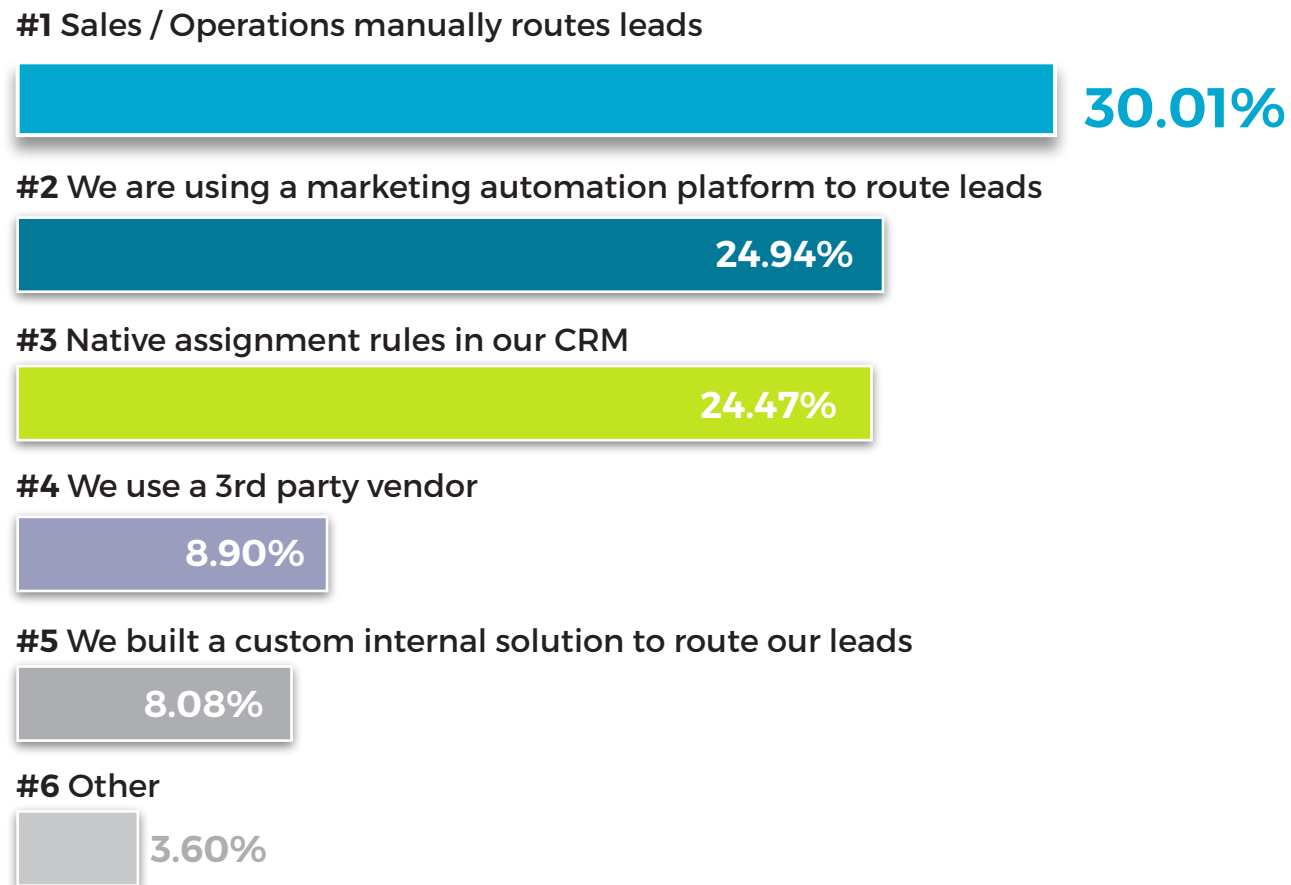


“You’d think we’d be better at this by now, especially with so much focus on account-based strategies. But based on our experience and research over the past couple years, what should be table-stakes is still eluding far too many B2B organizations.”

Matt Heinz
President of Heinz Marketing

KEY FINDING

The #1 method used for routing leads today is manual.



QUESTION 11:
How does your business
route leads?

KEY FINDING

The #1 lead-management capability revenue teams would like to have?
More automation, fewer manual processes.

#1 More automation / fewer manual processes



32.09%

#2 Ability to track and enforce SLAs



22.23%

#3 Matching a lead to an existing opportunity



18.04%

#4 Greater agility to change routing rules more quickly



12.98%

#5 Nothing



12.57%

#6 Other



2%

QUESTION 12:

What lead management capabilities would you like to have, but currently do not? (Check all that apply.)

Section IV.

Looking to the Future



KEY FINDING

Fast emerging as a key capability for revenue teams: mapping leads to opportunities.

#1 More automation / fewer manual processes



#2 Ability to track and enforce SLAs



#3 Matching a lead to an existing opportunity



#4 Greater agility to change routing rules more quickly



#5 Nothing



#6 Other



QUESTION 12:
What lead management capabilities would you like to have, but currently do not? (Check all that apply.)

“The most important thing B2B organizations can do to accelerate growth is identify when multiple individuals from a prospect organization are actively researching their solutions. The standard tech stack, centered around marketing and sales automation, does not provide this critical capability. The ability to match leads to one another, or leads to opportunities, will be vital to the evolution already underway in B2B from a leads-centric to opportunity-centric revenue model.”

Kerry Cunningham
VP Research at 6sense
(Former VP/Principal Analyst, Marketing Operations at Forrester)

KEY FINDING

Revenue leaders are optimistic in their outlook for 2022!



QUESTION 13:

What's one word to describe how you're feeling about your revenue team's outlook for 2022?

Final Thoughts

After two years of reinventing go-to-market strategies to align with new market realities, many B2B leaders are optimistic about their prospects for growth in 2022. Even amidst continued market uncertainties they named (e.g., new COVID variants, supply chain disruption) and internal challenges (e.g., hiring/staffing), our survey participants overall shared a common belief that 2022 offers a turning point in pivoting to growth.

Given their substantial contribution to pipeline – ranked the #1 go-to-market priority in our survey—leads will play a pivotal role in B2B growth in 2022. So how effective are our current systems and processes for maximizing the value of leads once generated? According to the 1700+ B2B growth leaders we surveyed, fewer than 18% have confidence in their ability to support 2022 revenue goals.

When we looked under the hood, we found manual processes still govern how new leads—ie, potential customers—are treated once they enter an organization. Not surprisingly, more than a quarter of our respondents don't believe their current lead management processes help deliver an ideal customer experience.

Digital transformation of sales and marketing has become a strategic priority for businesses to effectively compete, but lead management for many companies operates much like it has for the past 10-20 years. This may be changing, however, as our survey's highest level of response (26%) came from VP and C-level titles.

Perhaps lead management is evolving into an executive-level discussion in 2022?

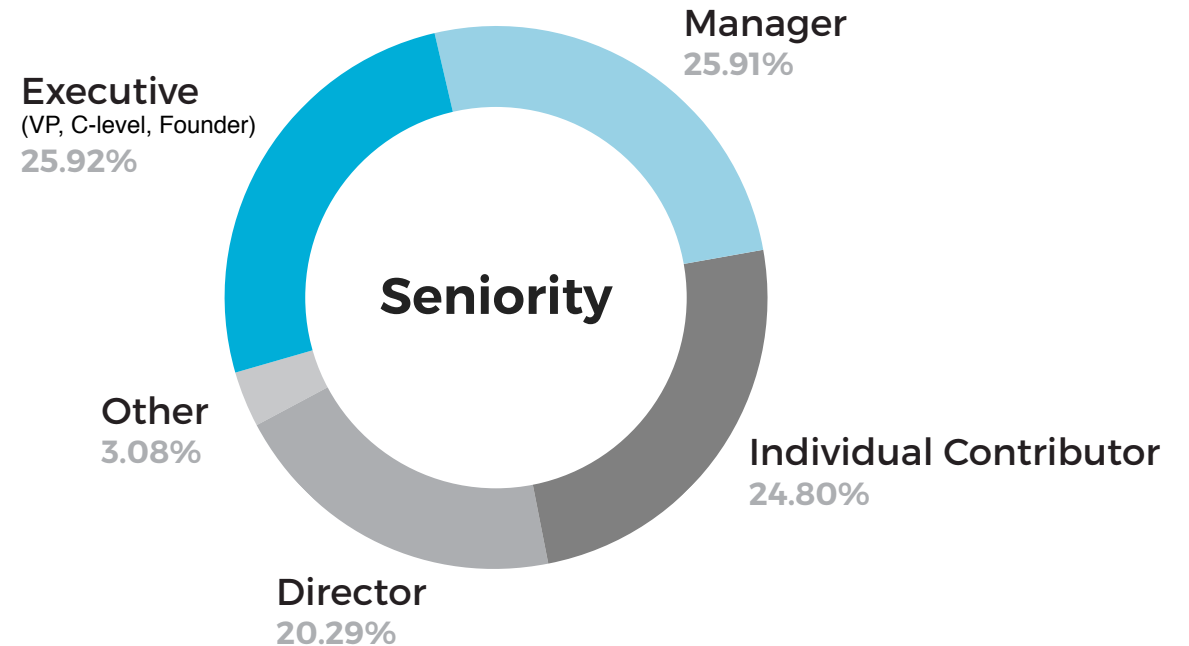
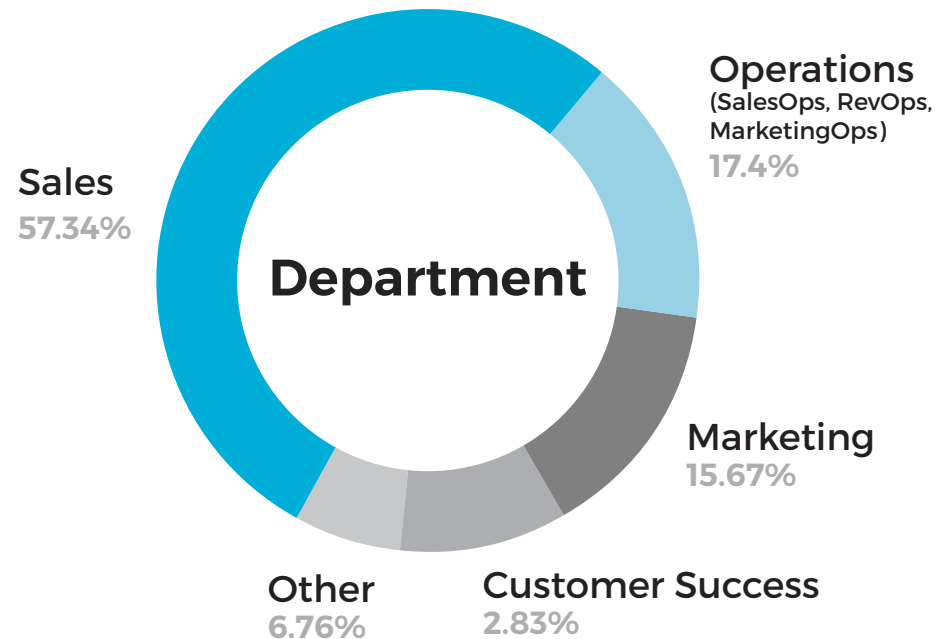


About the Study

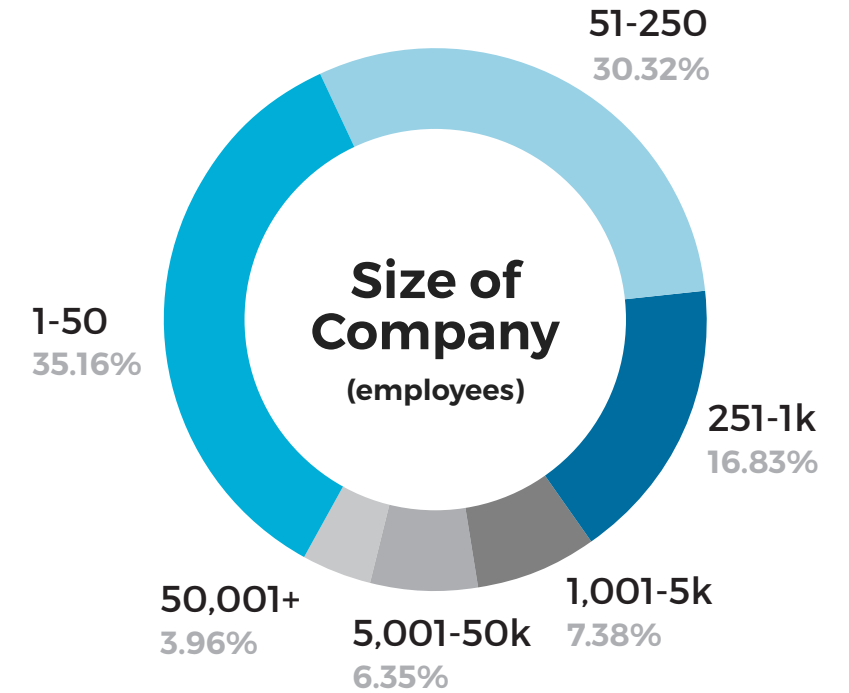
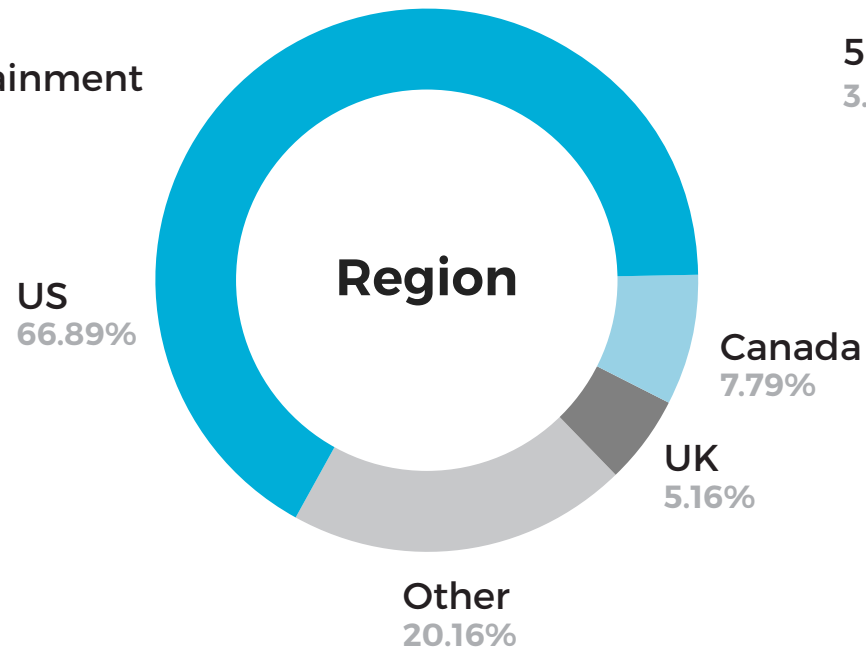
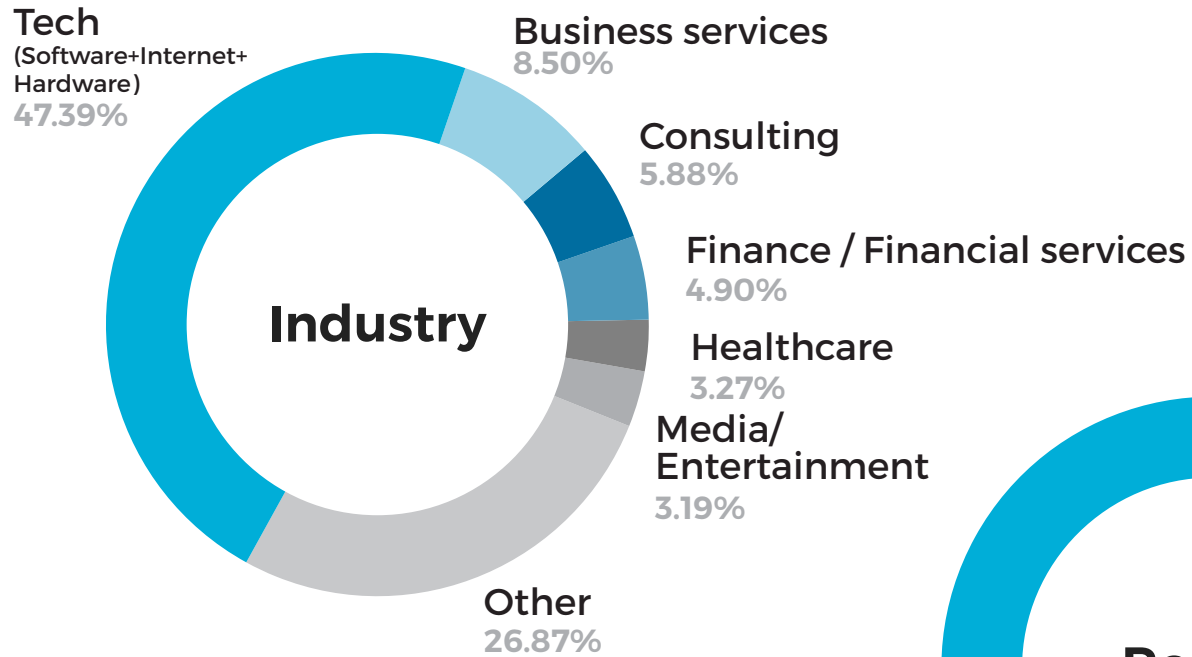
The background features a teal-to-blue gradient. On the left, there are several white circles of varying sizes scattered across the space. On the right, a network diagram is visible, consisting of white dots (nodes) connected by thin white lines (edges). The nodes are arranged in a way that suggests a complex, interconnected system, with some nodes having multiple connections and others being isolated.

Participant Profile

LeanData, Sales Hacker, Heinz Marketing and Outreach conducted an online survey targeting B2B sales and marketing professionals in December 2021. The survey generated responses from 1,732 individuals. A more detailed profile of our respondents is below.



Participant Profile



Research Partners



Today's growth leaders are powering their B2B selling with LeanData, the gold standard in modern revenue orchestration and an essential element of the modern RevTech stack. The LeanData Revenue Orchestration Platform, powered by No-Code Automation, simplifies and accelerates coordination of all the plays, people and processes needed to transform buying signals into buying decisions. LeanData is inspiring a global movement among its 800+ customers and community of 5000+ OpsStars worldwide, empowering them with revenue operations excellence that translates into compelling buyer experiences and competitive advantage. To learn more, visit www.leandata.com.



Sales Hacker is the largest and smartest sales community that helps B2B sales professionals connect, learn, and define new best practices in modern sales. Sales Hacker's more than 40,000 members from companies such as Microsoft, Adobe, Splunk, DocuSign, and SAP depend on Sales Hacker to make progress in their sales careers and improve their revenue outcomes. To learn more, please visit www.saleshacker.com.



Focused on helping clients drive predictable growth via a revenue responsible focus, Heinz Marketing helps B2B marketing teams elevate their impact and contribution to business outcomes that matter. Their proven Predictable Pipeline methodology has been successfully customized and implemented at countless organizations, changing the trajectory of marketing work, careers and lives. The Heinz Marketing team is made up of full-funnel experts who speak the language of sales, empowering clients with strategy and tools for success. To learn more, visit www.heinzmarketing.com



Outreach is the largest and fastest-growing sales execution platform provider that helps companies dramatically increase productivity and drive smarter, more insightful engagement with their customers. Outreach is the only solution provider to integrate sales engagement, conversation intelligence, and revenue intelligence into one platform. See www.outreach.io.

Appendix: Participant Comments



Selling in the New Normal

“Sales is changing. We can’t keep doing the same thing and expect different results. Leaders need to understand that emails, calls and LinkedIn messages do not work like they used to. Buyers want something else. There has to be a different way.”

“What is the best way in 2022 to get new clients? Because cold calling is not effective anymore!!”

“The biggest hurdle will be breaking through the noise as email becomes more and more saturated!”

“Shift in sales between virtual and face to face. There will be a clear mix of this in 2022, and one will need to be prepared to sell into both these environments.”

“I see challenges when to get back to ‘face-to-face’ client meetings versus virtual meetings.”

“Selling professional services is hard to scale since it’s so relationship driven.”

“A lot of our more junior staff have really struggled with accountability while working completely remotely.”

“Our clients receive so much demand on their mindshare, and efforts to connect with them are so consuming, the value gets lost in all the noise.”

“Continuing to look for creative ways to virtually engage with prospects during the limited opportunities for onsite visits.”

“It has been very tough to get my team to do personalized outreach, while doing it at the required volume to hit the quota.”

Marketing in the New Normal

“The new ‘world’ has made traditional marketing tactics somewhat inefficient. Need to revamp current lead generation activities to address the changing landscape.”

“Messaging seems to be the biggest challenge. The clients’ needs changed and we didn’t always seem to be in sync with their needs.”

“Finding the right balance and mix for an effective lead generation campaign.”

“Doing nothing with marketing contacts or what we call mid-bound leads. Curious about our content but still haven’t raised their hand to talk to us.”

“We are currently implementing content mapping based on the buyer journey to see where gaps are.”

“Building a more resilient marketing mix and marketing team!”

“Building pipeline and generating leads from remote locations is perhaps our biggest challenge.”

“Challenges are around top of funnel.”

“Looking for a new way to get above and beyond the additional lead generation chatter of sending emails and phone.”

“How to best convince executives that marketing is critical to growth?”

“Lead generation continues to be a challenge - lack of resources devoted to do this effectively.”

“The biggest struggle will be navigating a mix of trade show cancellations and being able to pivot during last minute cancellations.”

Growth Challenges

“Growing like crazy, with big numbers to hit...”

“Need to grow 4X this year, so we have huge goals. Scaling will be a challenge and an opportunity for us.”

“Our targets are more than 50% higher in 2022!”

“One of our main initiatives is doubling or tripling the sales team in 2022. Processes, automation, and hiring will all be key in doing this.”

“Very competitive market and tough buyers so of course meeting ambitious revenue goals will be a significant challenge.”

“The pandemic keeps changing, and it keeps moving the goalposts for business making forecasting accurately near impossible. Which means we ourselves are continually having to keep changing, which in turn takes up more of our time.”

“Predicting market conditions and pivoting while growing exponentially is our biggest challenge.”

“Finding segments that are investing is a major challenge and being able to pivot, identify and go after is even more challenging.”

Hiring/Staffing

“Recruitment is a consistent challenge in today’s environment of close to full employment.”

“Need to ensure work/life balance and wellbeing of our teams, while also pushing hard on growth targets.”

“We would have far exceeded our sales target for 2021 had we had the staff to take the work.”

“HR churn and recruitment has been a real challenge for us. This is compounded by increasing demands from clients who are under increased pressure due to covid.”

“Sales rep turnover - too much knowledge leaving, internal promotions taking away from other teams, then a long process to try and backfill that position.”

“Mass resignation and replacing staff with good talent. Filling roles is challenging due to higher salary demands by mediocre talent.”

“Massive problem finding well qualified sales professionals who will actually do some prospecting and not just sit around waiting for inbound leads.”

Tech Stack

“There is so much innovation happening in the tech stack, but some of it seems to be ‘solution looking for a problem’, and there is SO much overlap.”

“There’s a lot of MarTech out there, but selling new solutions internally, implementing new tech and realizing its true potential is the real challenge.”

“We need more / smarter tools to meet our goals for 2022 - sharper knives :)”

“We have too many sales tools that don’t talk to each other, so we need to decide which tools serve us best and standardize our processes around those functionalities.”

“Too many disparate systems and slow clunky processes for routine tasks!”

“Our tech stack is already massive. Adding more would just insert more steps and confusion...we need to get additional functionality from existing vendors.”

“Anyone who is awaiting the ‘Great Consolidation,’ it needs to happen now :)”

“De-comm of old sales tech with the new tech we have, merging systems from acquisitions, data clean up in CRM.”

Performance of Current Lead Management

“We are WAY behind where we need to be, or should be. The business talks of wanting leads, but has zero of the processes or capability to convert leads into opportunities and then revenue.”

“The integration between the martech and selltech is still woefully bad. This needs a lot more automation and better integration.”

“Lead scoring and de-duping are the biggest shortcomings.”

“It is too manual and labor intensive so a lot of activities get lost due to the distraction of other activities.”

“We’re a small org, so we can still get by on manual responses to inbound, and highly personalized manual outreach. But that will have to change as we expand our team and addressable market.”

“Too much spray and pray. Not surgical enough.”

“We rely too much on humans to be able to respond to inquiries in a timely manner. Puts too much risk for opp creation.”

“Too many different systems that sales and marketing work from.”

“I think our process is fine for now, but could become sticky when the lead volume increases.”

“Too many manual processes and confusion around the process overall. Misalignment between sales, marketing and sales/rev ops.”

“Would love to get to best practices here!”

“Data is stale once it gets to the rep.”

“Moving away from the lead object and working in Accounts, Contacts and Opportunities has allowed us to see a truly unified funnel. We can actually track everything we need in salesforce now from marketing to BDR to sales.”

“The quality of inbound leads for our organization has been so low that our sales team doesn’t have confidence in following up on the leads.”

“Need less manual process and more automation that is accurate, trackable and delivers with consistent data across the organization.”

“Conflicting opinions internally about how leads should flow - how they should be assigned, followed up, escalated and managed.”

Lead Management Capability Wish List

“Inbound leads matched to existing leads in the system.”

“Auto-converting leads/contacts into opportunities.”

“Direct calendar booking, Account Hierarchy rules, Better Lead to Contact to Account Assignment configuration.”

“Match new contacts to existing accounts.”

“Matching a lead to an existing contact.”

“Cleaner data, the landscape of companies change so quickly that a lead can be relevant one day and not the next.”

“Automated lead enrichment.”

“I would love a tool that can automatically identify the new lead and their company revenue, size and age immediately.”

“Better salesforce data integrity.”

“Lead scoring using 3rd party data and signals data.”

“More real-time distribution. Currently very slow.”

Looking to 2022

“Companies that adapt and change given the impact of covid will succeed; those that try and revert to old ways will fall behind.”

“Businesses have to either adapt to the operational changes accelerated by the pandemic, or die.”

“We’ve got to be more efficient, prepared, and resilient to hit and exceed our revenue goals in 2022’s marketplace.”

“Capacity and staffing issues will continue to be a challenge in the first half of 2022.”

“2022 is going to be a touch & go year for us, there are no clear indicators that the COVID 19 won’t be a problem in the new year.”

“Hot market in 2021, but it’s going to be a challenge to keep that pace in 2022. Need to see growth in different capabilities to continue the growth we saw in 2021.”

“New logos, expandable market share and the “personal” connection was more challenging in 2021. We believe 2022 will have a better outcome with new markets opening and technology becoming ever more important.”

“2021 was challenging and had some success and feel that 2022 will also have similar challenges but we have learned from the past how to manage these challenges more effectively.”

