



# Global Revenue Risk & Performance Index

September 2019

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

1.	Introduction .....	1
2.	Executive Summary .....	2
3.	Revenue Risks & Aspirations .....	3
4.	Pipeline Conversion .....	4
5.	Pipeline Velocity .....	6
6.	Target Achievement .....	6
7.	Forecast Achievement .....	7
8.	BDM / Rep Performance .....	7
9.	Referral Rates & Conversion .....	8
10.	Account Planning & Management .....	9
11.	Customer Relationship Management (“CRM”) .....	10
12.	Management Confidence .....	11
13.	Talent & Recruiting .....	12
14.	Marketing .....	13
15.	Lead Generation .....	14





# REVENUE RISKS & ASPIRATIONS

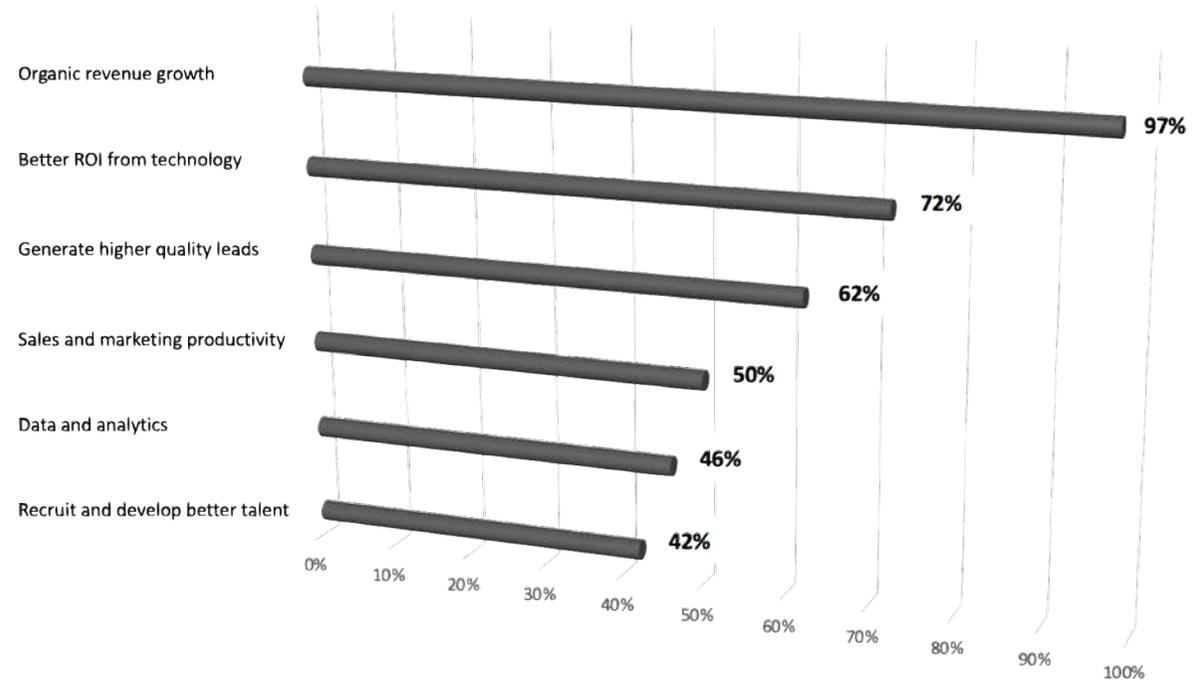
Looking to 2020 and beyond, there is no question that CEO's, Boards and Sales and Marketing leaders continue to view organic revenue growth as a strategic risk priority. Almost across the board, revenue lines need to show consistently, sustainable and profitable growth.

Conversations with many sales and marketing leaders, however, revealed far less consensus on the best approaches to adopt to deliver on that objective. Particularly given the revelations concerning the lack of return to date from heavy and continuing investments in technology and people, and against a backdrop of unrelenting market place and customer volatility.

There were also in quite a few instances a creeping realization that the accepted strategies for delivering sales growth were already destined to fail – and in some cases were already failing.

More organic revenue was again the number one objective for many of our respondents [refer Figure 1]. Interestingly, four of the next five key objectives all featured prominently in the previous two Indices. Getting more from investments in CRM and other technologies reflects the rising sense of frustration many senior executives and directors feel about the anaemic returns seen to date from substantial organisational investments in CRM, social media and other sales and marketing improvement technologies.

Fig 1. CEO Revenue Aspirations 2020



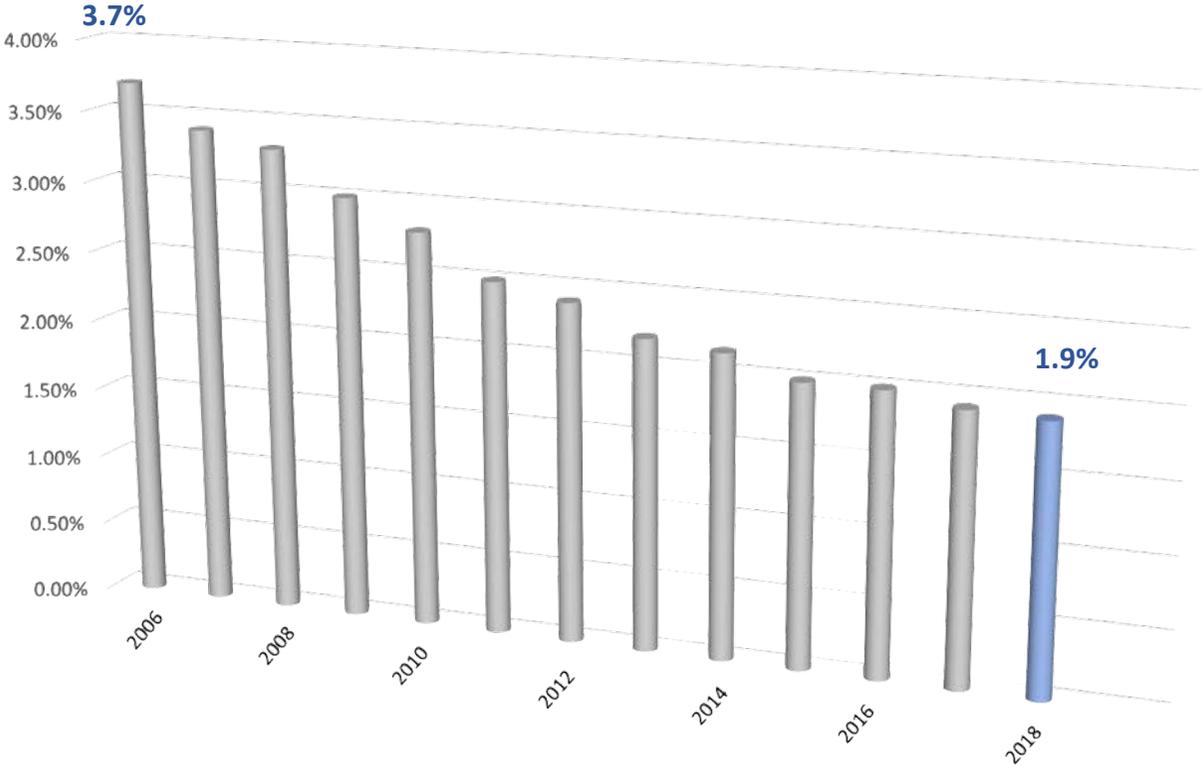
# PIPELINE CONVERSION

In 2017, the average end-to-end pipeline conversion rate dipped under 2% for the first time since the Index began in 2006. This year, in spite of enormous global investments in technology, people, analytics and consulting, it remained unchanged.

The figure of 1.9% is down by 5.5% on 2014/15 and a staggering 48% from 2005/06 [1.92% vs 3.7%] remembering that in that same period the global CRM market has grown by 462%.



Fig 2. End-to-End Pipeline Conversion

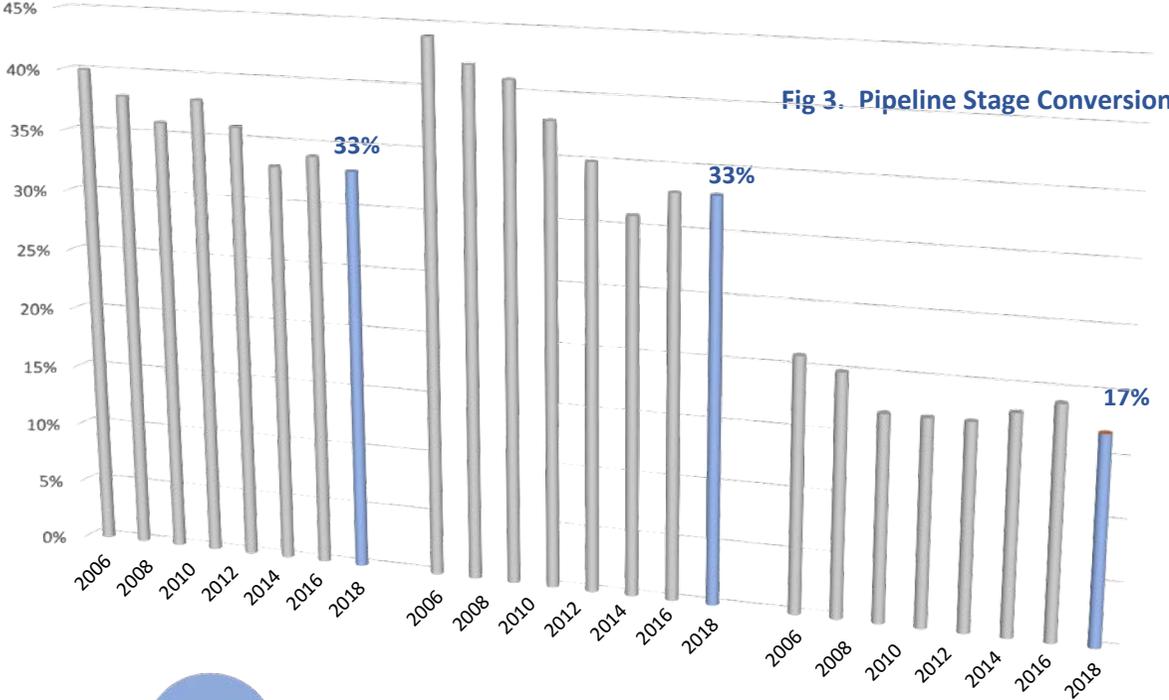


*“Since 2006, marketing and sales conversion through the pipeline has declined by 48%.”*

# PIPELINE CONVERSION (CONT.)

Figure 3 illustrates the trend in conversion performance at each major stage of the pipeline since 2005/06. Save for a few temporary upward corrections, the overall trend in all three core metrics has been downward.

*“For the amount of money we’ve spent in the last two years, we should be seeing improvement. But we’re not.”*



-18%

Decline in lead conversion

-25%

Decline in opportunity conversion

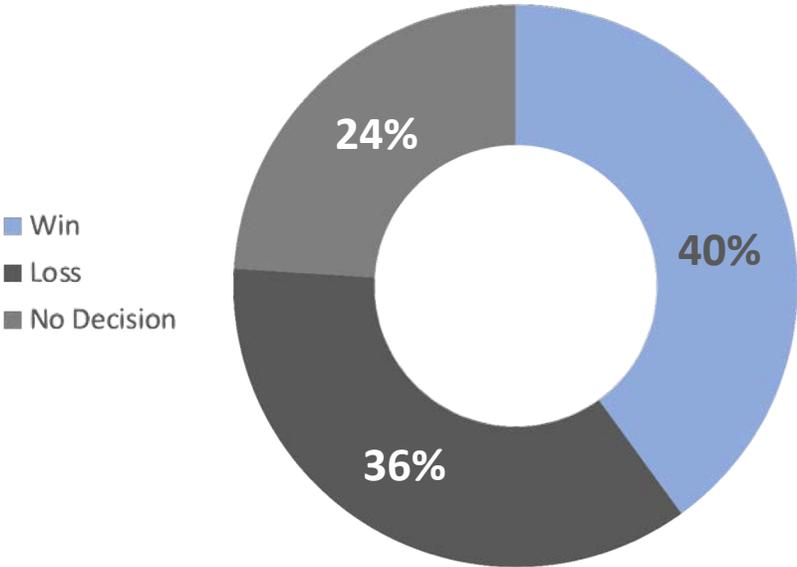
-19%

Decline in close rate



# FORECAST ACHIEVEMENT

Fig 6. Forecast Under / Over Achievement



While CEO’s and Board Directors expressed the most surprise and angst about the anemic 1.9% conversion rate, no other single metric frustrates and angers CSO’s and Sales Directors more than the outcome of forecast opportunities. Nothing burns a CSO, CFO or CEO quite like a deal that’s been called out as a “W” only to have it lost – or worse, go to a No Decision.

The forecast Win vs Loss/ND rate has declined by 16% since we last formally tracked in the 2015/16 Index.

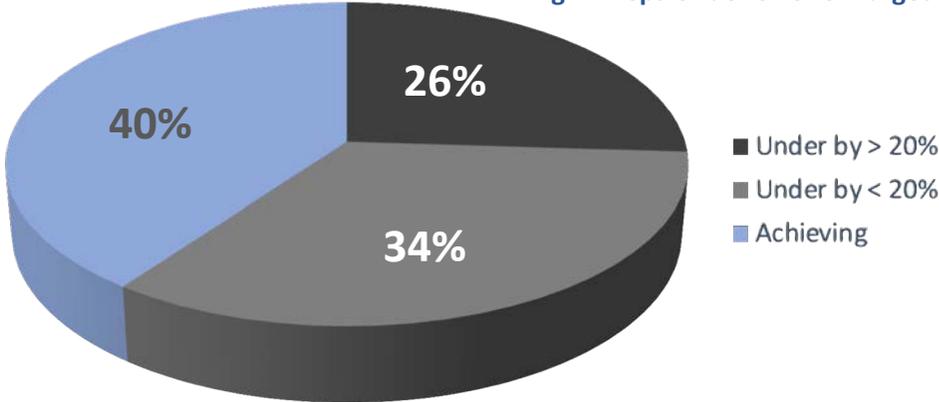
Little wonder more than one CEO we interviewed described sales forecasting as an oxymoron.

Sixty percent of BDM’s and sales reps either missed or were missing their 2018/19 quotas. This statistic is unchanged from two years ago. What has changed however, is the proportion that missed or are expected to miss their targets by more than 20%; that figure is now 26%.

While these figures may have changed little in the last two years, when compared against the 2011/12 the proportion achieving target has declined by 20%. Over the same period, 20% more per annum (and approx. \$US225 billion in total) has been invested in CRM to try and help them achieve those targets.

# REPS UNDER / OVER TARGET

Fig 7. Reps Under or Over Target



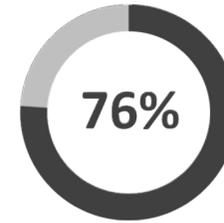
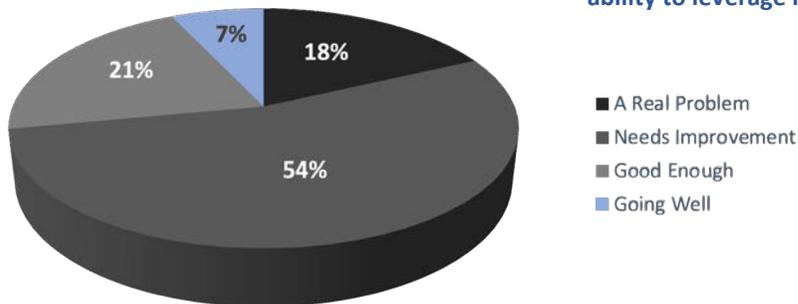
# REFERRAL RATES & CONVERSION

It's somewhat ironic that while BDM's and rep's are usually quite comfortable asking an existing customer or client for more business, but will rarely if ever ask those same customers and clients to introduce or refer them to others. More than one BDM we interviewed felt that asking customers to introduce their friends and acquaintances was a bit too close to pyramid selling and network-based marketing.

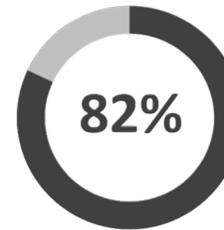
Whatever the reasons or the justifications for avoiding it, there is absolutely no doubt that opportunities introduced from trusted referrers closed more often, more quickly and for higher values. Initiating a sale process by getting an existing customer or client to introduce and recommend you to someone else they know, significantly tilts the opportunity risk in your favour.

With so much evidence of the overwhelming power of referrals to significantly improve just about every risk and performance metric related to a sale, it is nothing short of amazing not only how few companies do this well, but how few even try to do it better. In our Index data, 62% of organisations responding felt their ability to leverage referrals either needed improvement or represented a real problem.

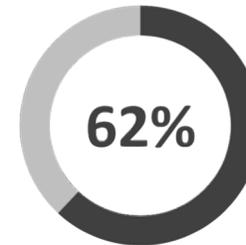
**Fig 8. How do organisations rate their ability to leverage referrals?**



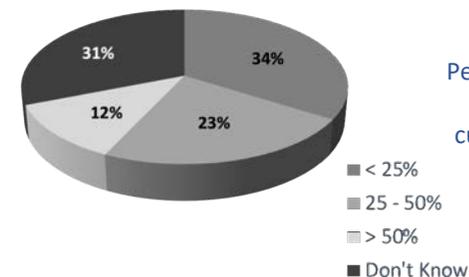
Percentage of companies who report having some kind of formal customer referral program.



Percentage of companies with referral metric as part of BDM / rep KPI's and remuneration plans.



Percentage of companies formally measuring and tracking new business from referrals.



Percentage of new business sourced from existing customer or client referral

# ACCOUNT PLANNING & MANAGEMENT

Across all the businesses, industry segments and geographies represented in the Index, 73% of all revenue generated came from existing customers and clients. That figure is 2% higher than two years ago and has increased by nearly 10% since our first Index in 2006. Such a degree of reliance on farming existing relationships is understandable when organizations struggle so much with the risks around generating new leads and converting them.

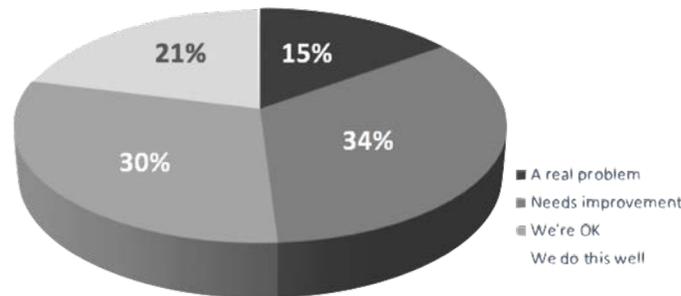
Yet in spite of the obvious and considerable importance attaching to existing account management and growth, few companies report doing it well. A disturbingly high number concede to being very ordinary at it. When asked about their perceptions of and approaches to managing existing accounts – even their key accounts, many admitted to large and consistent gaps. As with so many other risks and capabilities tracked in this Index down through the years, by far the majority still report that more improvement is needed now than previously; effectively admitting that things are not getting better.

This year's Index data revealed a correlation coefficient of 0.88 between organization's reported capabilities in account planning and management and revenue growth from key accounts. Efforts aimed at improving this key risk indicator are rarely wasted.

# 0.88

Statistical correlation between Account Planning & Management Capability and revenue growth.

Fig 9. How do organisations rate the effectiveness of their Account Planning & Management?



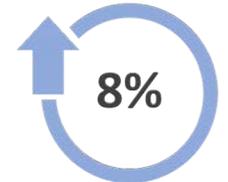
Average improvement in Opportunity to Offer conversion



Average improvement in Offer to Close conversion ("Win Rate")



Average improvement in Pipeline Velocity



Average growth in account revenue following deployment



Average improvement in customer / client satisfaction (per NPS or similar)



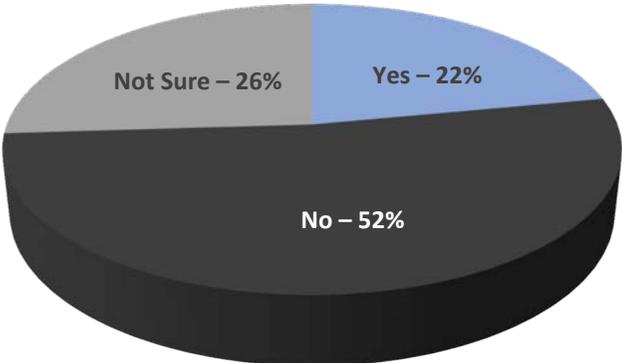
# CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

In the race to cause CEO's and senior executives the most angst and frustration, it's a neck and neck race between missing forecasts and customer relationship management ("CRM") systems for the winner's ribbon. It is surely one of the greatest unexplained mysteries of the universe, that a technology which organisations around the world can't seem to throw enough money at, causes so much frustration and fails to deliver so often.

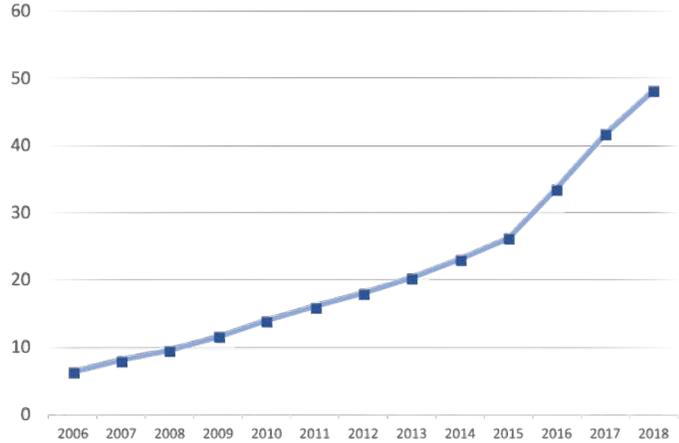
Numerous studies over recent years have documented the failure rates of CRM projects. In 2017, CIO Magazine reported that one third of all projects had failed. However that figure of one third was actually an average of more than a dozen other analyst reports with numbers ranging from 18% to 68% and depending on various sampling variables such as size of organization, industry, scale of project, choice of vendors etc.

In November 2018, the Future University of Egypt completed possibly the most comprehensive study ever of CRM failure and the reasons for it. The study covered 6.75 million different academic papers, research studies and project reports spanning more than 20 years. Their final report concluded that **65% of all CRM projects result in failure**. That project failure rate is certainly troubling enough. At least as concerning though, might be that only **22%** of the executives included in the 2019 Index believed that their investment in CRM had **actually helped their organisations to grow their revenue**.

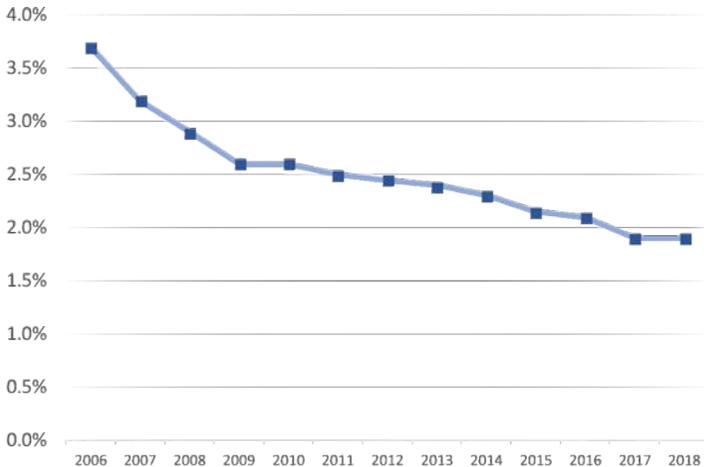
Fig 10. Has CRM helped your organisation grow?



Global Investment in CRM Software 2006 – 2018 in \$US Billions



Global Pipeline Conversion 2006 – 2018



# MANAGEMENT CONFIDENCE IN REVENUE TARGETS

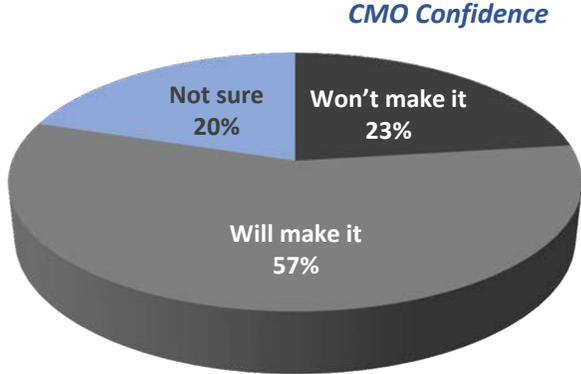
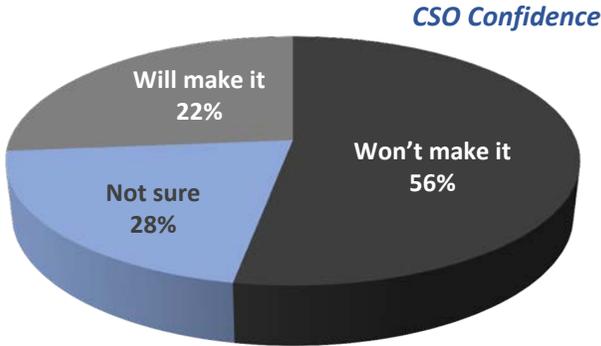
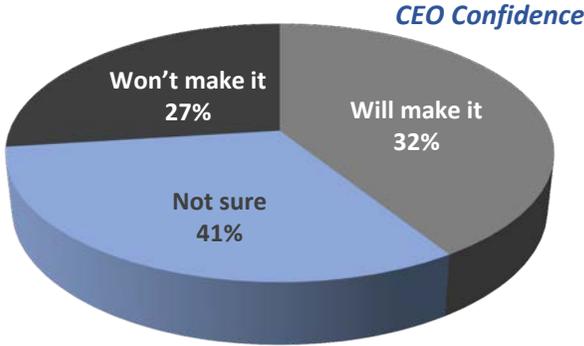
It comes as no surprise given the data on the preceding pages that two-thirds of responding CEO's reported being hopeful at best about the likelihood of their organization hitting next year's revenue numbers.

These numbers are almost identical with the 2017 Index.

This year's Index again highlighted an interesting divergence between the confidence levels of the three top revenue executives – CEO's, CSO's and CMO's. The difference in perspectives between sales and marketing leaders would seem to indicate they might even be looking at different realities.

**Reality distortion field ("RDF")** is a term coined at Apple in 1981 to describe Steve Jobs' charisma and apparent ability to bend reality and the perceptions of reality of those around him, to his will. Originally of course, the term came from Star Trek, where a breed of aliens created their own new world through mental force.

While in Steve Jobs' presence, reality may have been malleable. Sales figures in the real world unfortunately are not. Organizations either make their sales numbers or they don't. It's worrying that CEO's and their front line sales leaders are so far apart in terms of expectations of success.



*“Is there a reality distortion field that improves sales funnel performance?”*





# MARKETING FRUSTRATION

Since the CFC, marketing functions have come in for scathing treatment in the Index, particularly from CEO's. In 2016, 78% of CEO's questioned the relevance and value of marketing. That figure improved this year, but not significantly.

Many of the CEO's and CFO's who have responded to previous Indices said they believed marketing lacked credibility, wasn't outcome-focused and made little to no effective contribution to generating revenue.

While this year's numbers aren't as savage on marketing's contribution, it's clear that marketing departments generally continue to suffer from a significant credibility gap when it comes to their CEO's and Boards:

- 58% of CEO's had little or no confidence in their marketing departments contribution to winning new customers;
- Only 15% reported being very confident that marketing made a contribution, with 27% having at least some degree of confidence.

We asked some CEO's to explain why they felt the way they did about marketing. In nearly every case the issue could be summarised as "line of sight" between marketing investment and revenue delivery – what one CEO described as,

*"...the lack of demonstrable causation between the millions we spend on advertising, digital strategy and social media and customers buying something".*

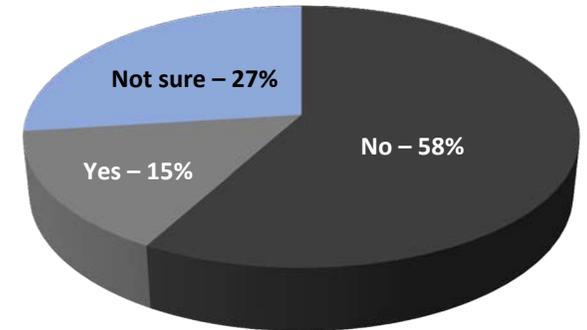
Asked to comment on Marketing's contribution to revenue creation and delivery, Sales Directors typically varied between skeptical and scathing, with quite a few "preferring not to comment."

Leaving aside the actual degree of truth in statements such as these, it is evident that a fair amount of work remains left to do before most organisations can claim that their marketing and sales teams and efforts are aligned.

***"Eighty percent of CEO's don't trust or are unimpressed with their CMO's"***

Harvard Business Review  
August 2017

**Fig 11. CEO Confident in Marketing?**



*"My guys refer to our marketing people as revenue prevention. There's always another excuse for why this or that cannot be done to generate leads. I can't remember a lead in our business that we didn't develop ourselves."*

GM Sales  
Global IT company

*"I'm sure Marketing is making a contribution. Just not to sales."*

Sales Director  
Insurance Company

# LEAD GENERATION & CONVERSION

Lead generation and conversion were again hot risk topics in this years' Index, with 62% of organisations seeking to generate more higher value leads. The rate of conversion from leads to sales contacts improved fractionally in the last two years, which was good news for CMO's and CSO's. Unfortunately since the Index began in 2006, that metric has declined by 18% and by nearly 7% since 2012.

Also troubling was the continuing decline in the velocity at which leads turn into sales contacts. Much of the hype around digital and social technologies is based on the promise of increasing the speed at which marketers can respond to changing buyer demands, and then at which those buyers respond to the offers presented to them. Neither assertion is currently supported by the performance data.

The global Marketing Automation market grew by more than 70% between 2014 and 2019. Valued by analysts at \$US6B in 2019, the industry globally is expected to be worth \$US14B by 2024 – an expected year on year growth of 19%.

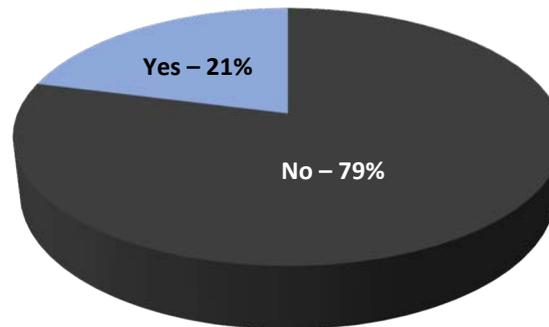
Only 18% of the CEO's responding to this years' Index reported having invested in Marketing Automation (solutions that coordinate and measure the execution of marketing programs and campaigns), with 6% reporting they have never even heard of it.

Few CEO's hold their marketing areas accountable for either the number or quality of leads they pass to sales, and less than a quarter of marketing functions are measured on ultimate revenue conversion.

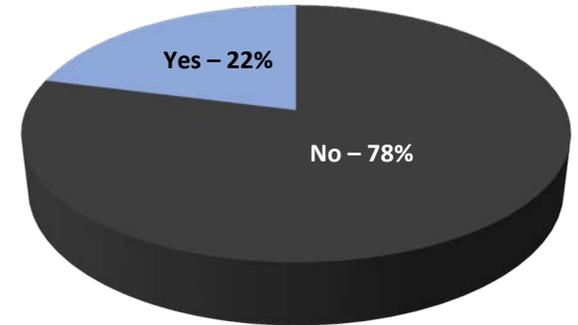
Despite continuing statistical evidence that using sales people for lead generation is expensive, largely ineffective and unsustainable, prospecting based on cold calling remains a significant component of most current sales job descriptions.

The practice carries a substantial hidden risk and cost. The average sales person in 2019 still spends approximately 38% of their time prospecting i.e. generating leads. At a typical fully loaded base remuneration of \$54,000 pa that equates to \$21,000 per sales person of (a) marketing cost carried by sales; and (b) lost selling time.

**Fig 12. Using Marketing Automation**

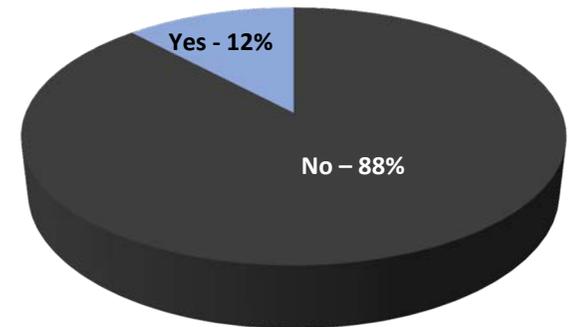


**Fig 13. Marketing KPI'd on Leads Generated**



When the average sales person's achievement against quota (40%) is recalibrated for the fact that they spend only 31% of their time actually selling (the remaining 31% spent on administration and other non-selling tasks), their performance doesn't look anywhere near as bad.

**Fig 14. Is Marketing KPI'd on Revenue?**



# OUTLIERS AND MARGINAL GAINS

David Brailsford's is now one of the highest profile success stories in professional sport. In 2010 however, when he took on the job as GM and Performance Director for Team Sky, Britain's new professional cycling team, success seemed a very long way away.

Up until then, Britain was a perennial under-achiever on the world cycling stage. Brailsford was tasked with changing that. His approach was staggeringly simple.

Brailsford championed a philosophy of what he called "marginal gains - the 1 percent margin for improvement in everything you do." He believed that if he could improve every area related to cycling by just 1 percent, then those small gains would add up to a remarkable overall improvement.

David and his team began with the obvious things: training programs, bike designs and weights, rider nutrition and the like. Then they moved onto the less obvious elements – those hidden beneath the surface. They started looking for 1 percent improvements in seemingly insignificant areas overlooked by other teams: improvements to the geometry of bike frames, tire inflation and resistance on the road surface, rider hygiene - even to the level of the pillows they slept on and how they washed their hands. No potential for improvement was considered too insignificant.

Brailsford was convinced that if he could harness these aggregated 1 percents, Team Sky could win a Tour de France in five years. They took only three!

In 2012, Bradley Wiggins became the first British cyclist to ever win Le Tour. In that same year, Great Britain won eight gold cycling medals, 12 total cycling medals and set three world records at the London Olympics. Britain's coach? David Brailsford.

So phenomenally successful has the last decade been for British cycling it has been referred to by many as its golden age. So – what relevance does David Brailsford and Team Sky have for the woeful current state of revenue performance?

## Aggregation of Marginal Revenue Gains

Business leaders frequently overestimate the importance of one defining moment and underestimate the value of making better decisions on a daily basis. Almost every habit that we have - good or bad, is the result of many small decisions over time.

How easily we forget this when we want to make changes. So often we convince ourselves that we can and should be like Steve Jobs – that change is only meaningful if there is some large, immediately visible outcome associated with it. Whether it is losing weight, building a business, or making a sale, we often put pressure on ourselves and our people to make some earth-shattering improvement that will change our world for the better as if in a single instant.

Meanwhile, improving by just 1 percent isn't notable - it isn't even *noticeable*. In fact it's frequently plain boring - and therefore it's more than often completely overlooked. But it can be just as meaningful and powerful. It also comes with way less risk – and cost.

Unfortunately, the same pattern also works in reverse. When we find ourselves stuck with bad habits or poor results, it's usually not because something happened overnight. It's the sum of many small poor choices that we made — a 1 percent decline here and there — made over time, that eventually appears as a major problem. Like 2% revenue conversion.

For any decision, there is basically no discernible difference in outcome between making a choice that is 1% better versus one that is 1% worse. Either way, we won't notice much today. Or tomorrow.

But as time goes on, these small improvements or deteriorations compound until one day we realise we have a very big gap between where we are and where we thought we would be or where we would like to be. In fact there's a huge difference over time between slightly better or worse decisions. Small choices don't make much of a difference at the time, but add up over the long-term.

When things start slipping, even by only small amounts, they frequently go unnoticed because the immediate impacts are often so small they're invisible. But it's the compound effect of keeping on going with those poor decisions, of never realising and taking action to get back on track that causes the biggest problems.

None of us will probably find ourselves in the Tour de France anytime soon, but the concept of aggregating marginal gains are just as enormously powerful in the world of marketing and selling. Most people love to talk about their successes as individual events. We talk about running a great campaign, closing a big sale or building a successful business or winning the Tour de France as if they are events. But the truth is that the truly significant things in revenue creation aren't stand-alone events at all, but rather the sum of all the often unspectacular, seemingly insignificant things we can choose to do 1 percent better or 1 percent worse. Aggregating these marginal gains makes a massive difference. There is immense power and massive revenue gains on offer by harnessing those small wins and slow gains.

# OUTLIERS AND MARGINAL GAINS (CONT.)

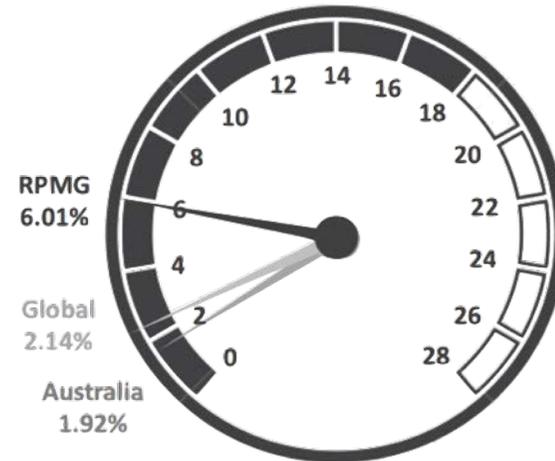
## Aggregating Revenue Performance Gains

In 2005 RPMG began exploring the effects aggregated marginal gains could have on corporate revenue generation. In the decade since, 150 organisations from 14 different industries and 4 different continents have proven that it works – to the tune of 24% compounding year-on-year improvements; literally billions of dollars of additional revenue unlocked mostly by small wins and subtle, unspectacular changes.

In 2005 the average corporate revenue pipeline converted 3.7% of sales opportunities into closed sales. By 2017 that figure has declined by 48% to less than 2%. The other way to interpret that statistic is to say that 98% of corporate sales opportunities now fail to turn into sales.

According to this year's Revenue Performance Index, 66% of sales leads fail to turn into appointments or calls, 67% of appointments or calls fail to progress to an offer being made to a customer and a staggering 83% of the offers that are made fail to result in a customer making a purchase. These dismal performance statistics rightly horrify CEO's and Boards. But it is because they are so bad that they offer so much hope – through the power of aggregated marginal gains to deliver exceptional improvements, rapidly.

Fig 15. Conversion Differentials for RPMG Clients vs All Respondents

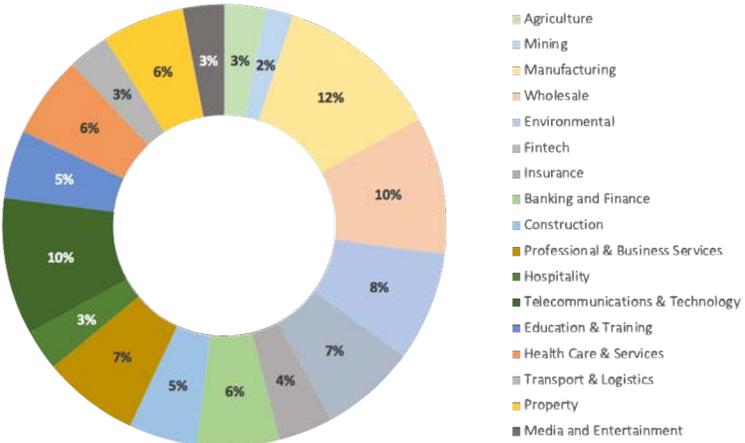
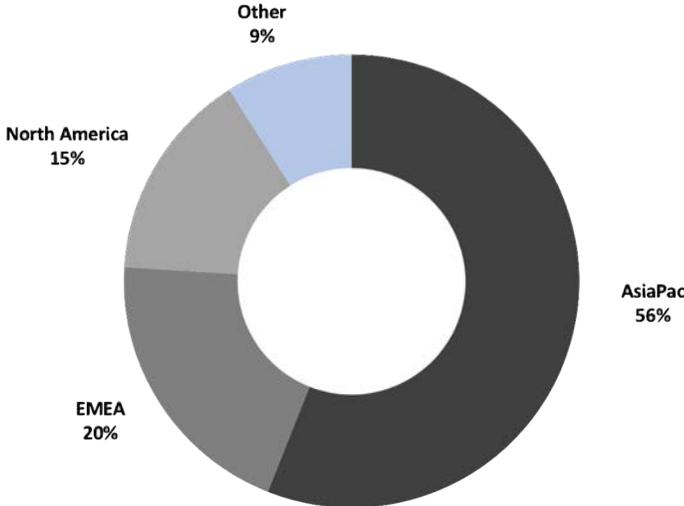
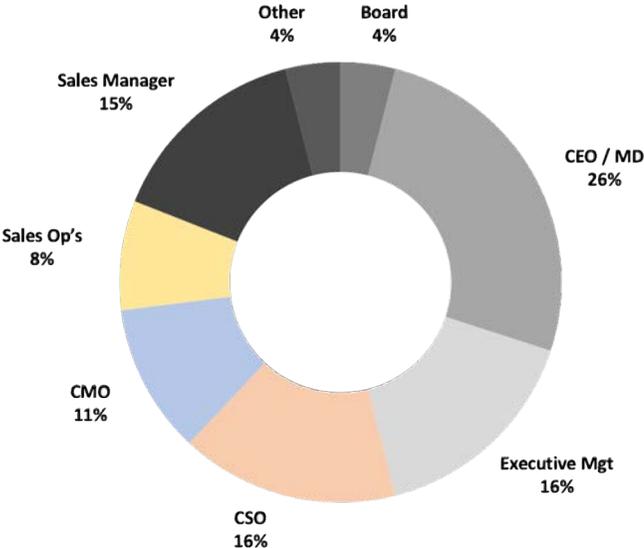


## The Bottom Line

In this year's Index, 487 organizations responded, reporting an average end to end revenue conversion of 1.92% (see Fig 2 on page 4). The corresponding rate for RPMG clients across the same period was 213% better - or 6.01%. Respondents head-quartered outside Australia averaged 2.14% conversion.

What do those numbers mean? RPMG clients managed their revenue risks better and outperformed their industry peers in pure revenue delivery terms by a factor of 24% year-on-year. A company operating at the average Australian pipeline conversion metric of 1.9% delivering \$100M in revenue, would convert at 2.38% and create and deliver an additional \$24M in revenue and \$3-4M in profit.

# DEMOGRAPHICS & REPRESENTATION



# ABOUT RPMG

The Revenue Performance Management Group (RPMG) has been helping organisations manage their revenue risks and to find and aggregate those small percentage revenue performance gains into sustainable double-digit year-on-year sales productivity and revenue system yield improvements since 2005.

To learn more about how our Revenue Risk & Performance framework can do the same for your organisation, visit our website at [www.rpmgi.com](http://www.rpmgi.com) or email us at [info@rpmgi.com](mailto:info@rpmgi.com).

