



# The Importance of Digital Capabilities



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Forrester Research suggests that among B2B buyers, those born in 1981 or later “now hold the keys to decision making for the majority of purchases.” ([digitalcommerce360.com/2024](https://digitalcommerce360.com/2024)). This indicates that the level of your team’s digital capabilities is critical to sales success.

### Digital capabilities

How is your company supporting you in implementing and using digital practices? Here are four important applications areas to focus on.

1. ERP - Enterprise selling requires a centralized software system, known as an Enterprise Resource Program (ERP). These programs support your customers by streamlining your company’s essential processes. Inventory control, asset and rental management, customer sales records, accounting, business intelligence, are all tasks supported by ERP. When ERP data is integrated with your Customer Relationship Management (CRM), your internal processes are unified. Your

customers are able to make purchases, review orders, search inventory, check delivery status, and review accounts payable online. This frees the field salesperson to focus on relationship building and value-added selling versus the traditional quoting, pricing, and chasing of backorders and deliveries.

2. E-commerce - E-commerce software offers consumers the ability to order 24/7. It integrates your ERP with your website and mobile apps. Ongoing innovations in multichannel marketplaces allow your customers the convenience of purchasing from third parties through your website.

E-commerce also offers the opportunity to develop deeper relationships with customers as it tracks their purchasing behavior over time. That data leads you to a better understanding of your customers’ needs and requirements and helps project future demand.



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To provide an exceptional E-commerce experience, you must provide superior product content. Buyers today are looking for more (and better quality) images, videos, 360-degree spins, and countless types of documents (spec sheets, installation guides, application, and warranty info, etc.). They are interested in finding and evaluating your products in a fast and easy to use format.

3. AI - Artificial Intelligence is rapidly infiltrating the sales cycle and offers exciting possibilities for transforming how business is done. Its applications are complex and there is a lot to consider when choosing which AI tools to implement.

Distributors collect a myriad of valuable internal, customer, and vendor information in the process of doing business. AI can generate outputs based on that data. Remember, AI outputs are only as good as the data you input. It must be properly managed. In a recent Forbes article on this topic, ([forbes.com/garbage-in-garbage-out](https://www.forbes.com/garbage-in-garbage-out)) Simon Jelley points out that only 23% of your collected data will probably be “good” data. According to Jelley, there is a lot of data to clean to get to the good stuff. Make sure your team does this.

Sales reps bring knowledge and experience to the deal. With the right AI applications, your best salespeople become even better. AI is most effective in sales when it’s treated like an aid, as opposed to a replacement, for key human practices.

4. Pricing strategies - Are your pricing policies clear? Do your customers get different pricing from outside sales reps, inside sales reps, E-commerce orders, customer service reps, and/or counter store reps? Inconsistency in pricing breeds customer complaints and less scrupulous customers can play one employee’s quote against the other, costing you money.

Technology has changed the dynamics of pricing strategy. With digitalization, software applications for pricing are readily available. These can be added to a functional ERP and they can measure customer pricing performance. Sales should be supported with data-driven processes. Pricing software removes concern in making critical pricing decisions and eliminates divisive customer profitability sessions between sales reps and management.

## 5 KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The level of your team’s digital capabilities is critical to sales success.
2. ERP programs streamline your company’s essential processes.
3. To provide an exceptional E-commerce experience, create superior product content.
4. AI is most effective in sales when it’s treated like an aid for key human practices.
5. Sales should be supported with data-driven processes like pricing software.