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Nobody Needs a Salesperson Anymore

(Unless They're This Good)

What the best salespeople do that buyers still pay for — and how to know whether yours do it. A companion paper to Pete Evans' talk, built on Objective Management Group's assessment data from 2.3 million salespeople.

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In 60 seconds

Buyers can research, compare and shortlist without ever speaking to a salesperson — so the average salesperson has become optional. The best have not. Objective Management Group (OMG) has assessed 2.3 million salespeople across 30,000 companies, and the data is precise about what separates the two groups: a handful of measurable skills, and underneath them, resilience. Both can be measured. Both can be coached. Most owners are guessing at both.

28%

of salespeople hit quota in 2023, down from 74% in 2012

2–2.5×

the top 10% outscore the bottom half on every skill that matters

2×

top-quartile resilience doubles the odds of being a top performer

1 in 5

salespeople are confident of hitting target in a downturn

Sources: Membrain, The State of B2B Sales / B2B Sales Trends 2026; Objective Management Group assessment data; OMG resilience study, 500+ sales professionals.

Five things this paper will tell you

- 1 Selling has got harder for everyone**
 More stakeholders, longer cycles, lower win rates — and record technology spend has not reversed it.
- 2 "This good" is specific, not vague**
 Reaching decision-makers, talking money, qualifying and selling consultatively — with gaps of 200%+ between the best and the rest.
- 3 Resilience sits underneath all of it**
 Three observable behaviours, 18 validated questions, and a 2× effect on top performance.
- 4 Most teams are not ready for the next round**
 One in four salespeople admit they lack the resilience to recover; half doubt their manager will support them.
- 5 Five interventions move the number — none involve buying software**
 Role fit, qualification, training, coaching and the manager relationship, each with a measured return.

Selling has got harder — for everyone

UK sales teams have spent a decade absorbing one disruption after another: Brexit, a pandemic, an energy shock, double-digit inflation and now renewed geopolitical and trade uncertainty. Underneath the headlines, the mechanics of a B2B sale have changed too. Every pursuit now costs more and returns less.

~13

stakeholders in the average B2B purchase today, up from 6.8 in 2017. Deals take longer.

17–21%

average B2B win rate, down 27% since 2021. You win fewer of them.

74% → 28%

of salespeople hitting quota, 2012 to 2023. Half the team is missing the number.

Source: Membrain, The State of B2B Sales; B2B Sales Trends 2026.

The paradox: record technology spend, falling effectiveness

Effectiveness has collapsed during the biggest technology investment in the history of sales. If tools were the answer, these numbers would be moving the other way.

78%

of companies now use AI in at least one business function

15,384

sales and marketing technology products in 2025 — 100× growth since 2011

up to 65%

of a salesperson's time still spent on non-selling activity

Source: Membrain, B2B Sales Trends: 2025 Review & 2026 Outlook.

The root causes are not technological. They are human — and human causes can be measured.

The other side of the table

Your buyers have changed as much as your market. They arrive with a shortlist, a benchmark price and a view of what "good" looks like, formed long before a salesperson is involved. For the average salesperson — the one who confirms a spec, quotes a price and chases — there is genuinely no role left. Nobody needs that salesperson anymore.

The exception is the salesperson who does what the buyer cannot do alone: reaches the person who actually owns the decision, qualifies hard enough to walk away, talks about money without flinching, and keeps doing all of that after the third lost deal in a month. Buyers still pay for that. The question for every owner in the room is simple: how many of yours are that good — and how do you know?

2 • WHAT "THIS GOOD" LOOKS LIKE

The best outscore the rest by 2–2.5× — on every skill that matters

"A good salesperson is a good salesperson" is the most expensive assumption in British business. OMG's assessment data says otherwise. The gap between the top 10% of salespeople and the bottom half is not a general quality; it lives in specific, named skills — and specific skills can be measured and coached.

SKILL	GAP IN ASSESSED SCORE	TOP 10% VS BOTTOM 50%
Reaching decision-makers	+247%	
Comfortable discussing money	+209%	
Qualifying	+208%	
CRM proficiency	+203%	
Consultative selling	+200%	

Source: Objective Management Group, 2026.

3 • UNDERNEATH ALL OF IT

Resilience is a set of behaviours, not a mood

What lets one salesperson keep reaching decision-makers, qualifying hard and talking money while the market is throwing punches — and stops another? OMG's data gives a consistent answer: resilience. Not "staying positive", but three observable behaviours.

1 Performance under pressure Delivering consistent results during downturns, disruption or uncertainty.	2 Client focus during adversity Staying centred on customer needs and sales goals while everything else is noisy.	3 Rapid recovery Rebounding from lost deals and setbacks without a lingering drag on activity.
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Across the assessment data, high performers consistently do four things under pressure: they stay in the moment in high-stress situations, persist more effectively after rejection, recover faster from setbacks, and maintain steady activity regardless of external pressure. Top-performing managers show the same pattern — leading through adversity, lifting morale and modelling resilience for their teams.

How it is measured. OMG uses 18 validated questions as indicators of resilience, assessing a salesperson's ability to recover emotionally from failure, adapt quickly to change, keep prospecting under stress, take ownership of outcomes, stay composed with frustrated clients and lead teams through disruption.

Salespeople in the top 25% on resilience-related factors are twice as likely to be top performers as those in the bottom 25% — regardless of what the market is doing.

Most teams are not ready for the next round

The uncomfortable mirror. In an OMG study of more than 500 sales professionals:

1 in 5

expressed confidence in achieving their targets during an economic downturn

1 in 4

admitted they lacked the resilience to recover from adversity

~1 in 2

reported low confidence in their manager's ability to support them under stress

Source: Objective Management Group resilience research, sample of 500+ sales professionals.

That last number is a leadership problem, not a salesperson problem — and it is fixable. Left unaddressed, these gaps stall performance every time pressure mounts, and there will always be a next round.

The Brexit conversation: real headwind, or standing excuse?

Nearly ten years after the referendum, we still meet UK businesses that cite Brexit when explaining underperformance. The honest answer sits between two extremes. The disruption was real and measurable: independent research puts Brexit-related uncertainty at a 9.2% annual reduction in UK services exports between 2016 and 2019 (roughly £109bn cumulatively), with SMEs hit hardest, and firm-level studies find manufacturing investment fell by around 7%.

But the current data tells a story of adaptation, not permanent damage. In the 2026 Lloyds Business Barometer, 84% of UK businesses say they are confident in their ability to withstand economic shocks, 59% have actively adjusted their strategy, and 57% still expect to grow this year. The gap between the businesses still citing Brexit and the businesses that have adapted and returned to growth comes down to resilience, not circumstances.

You cannot control interest rates, energy prices or trade policy. You can control how quickly your salespeople recover from a lost deal, whether your managers coach through setbacks, and whether your leadership models forward motion instead of resignation. Accepting the real headwind while refusing the permanent excuse is where a resilient sales culture starts.

"When a market leader sees sales decline after years of growth, the hardest question is why. OMG helped us answer it. The assessment revealed the true capabilities of our sales teams and which individuals had the resilience to compete against Chinese manufacturers offering similar products at much lower prices. That clarity has transformed how we develop our people worldwide, moving us towards a far more consultative approach and much tighter qualification of opportunities."

— GLOBAL SALES DIRECTOR, GLOBAL MANUFACTURING BUSINESS • VENTAS SALES CLIENT

Five interventions, measured

Not generic advice — five specific interventions with a measured return, and in each case a number showing how rarely they happen today.

INTERVENTION	MEASURED EFFECT	...AND THE REALITY IN MOST TEAMS
Role fit	+29%	performance lift from assessing for role fit — yet only 43% of salespeople are in a role that matches their skill set
Pipeline qualification	+20%	more closable opportunities from proper qualification — only 42% of pipeline is closable today
Structured sales training	+30 pts	increase in sales percentile from structured training
Regular coaching	+9–17%	sales performance — yet only 10% of salespeople receive frequent coaching
Manager relationship	+20%	goal attainment from a strong manager–salesperson relationship alone

Source: Objective Management Group, 2026.

None of this is about buying more software.

From resilience to a culture of sales excellence

Individual resilience is the foundation, not the whole building. OMG's research points to five interconnected pillars that together build a sales culture that keeps growing through hard times:

- **Effective hiring** — assess resilience and skill before the offer, not after the first bad quarter.
- **Engaged executive leadership** — owners who know the sales numbers as well as the finance numbers.
- **Team development** — structured training on the specific gaps the data shows.
- **Individual development** — coaching, not pipeline review, for every salesperson every month.
- **Role fit** — the right people in the roles where their strengths matter.

The reset: every salesperson in your team is one of three decisions

Upskill Right person, coachable gaps. Train and coach the specific skills the data shows — qualifying, money, decision-makers, recovery.	Restructure Right person, wrong role. 57% of salespeople are not in a role that fits. Move them to where their strengths matter.	Replace Wrong person for the job. Measure resilience and skill before you hire — not after the first bad quarter.
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Most owners guess — and guess kindly, which is how a bottom-half performer stays for three years. The point of measuring is that you stop guessing: you know who to invest in, who to move and who to let go, and you can do it fairly, because it is evidence rather than opinion.

Five questions to ask your sales leader on Monday

You do not need an assessment to start. Each question maps to a gap in the data above. Listen for precision: a leader who knows the answers runs a team that is "this good". A leader who has to go and find out — that is your first data point.

- 1 How many of our open opportunities have a decision-maker we have actually spoken to?**
Reaching decision-makers — the biggest gap in the data (+247%)
- 2 When did a salesperson last walk away from a deal because it didn't qualify?**
Qualifying — only 42% of pipeline is closable
- 3 Who had a real conversation about money with a customer this month — and who avoided one?**
Comfortable discussing money (+209%)
- 4 After our last big loss, how long before that salesperson's activity was back to normal?**
Resilience — rapid recovery
- 5 How much time did each salesperson get with you as a coach last month — coaching, not pipeline review?**
Only 10% of salespeople are coached frequently

If the answers are vague, that is the answer.

One thing to do this week: take the Sales Resilience Scorecard

Find out where your sales organisation really stands — in a few minutes, not a few weeks. A short executive diagnostic from Ventas Sales that benchmarks you against UK peers across four dimensions: market pressure, sales execution, sales talent readiness, and technology and process confidence. You get a free tailored report on your strengths, hidden risks and capability gaps — and a 20-minute call with Pete to go through it.



Sales Resilience
Scorecard

Scan the code or visit ventassales.com/scorecard • pete@ventassales.com • +44 7908 452930

Or: evaluate your whole team

An OMG sales force evaluation covers resilience and every other gap, person by person — so you know who to upskill, restructure or replace.

Go deeper: the Membrain report

Download *The State of B2B Sales 2026* — the full Membrain research behind the buyer and pipeline data in this paper.

membrain.com/whitepaper-the-state-of-b2b-sales



About Ventas Sales

Ventas Sales works with CEOs, MDs and sales leaders to transform their teams through coaching and structured sales process. As a UK Certified Partner of Objective Management Group since 2016, Ventas evaluates sales teams, removes the guesswork from hiring, and targets coaching and development to the specific needs of the business and the individual. [ventasales.com](https://www.ventasales.com)

About Objective Management Group

OMG is the pioneer and industry leader in sales force evaluations and sales candidate assessments. With data from over 2.3 million salespeople and sales leaders across more than 30,000 companies, OMG's tools help organisations make smarter hiring decisions, develop stronger sales teams and identify the root causes of performance gaps. [objectivemanagement.com](https://www.objectivemanagement.com)

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