

THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO

# Accelerating Enterprise Sales Cycles

Practical advice for using demos  
to increase efficiency at different  
stages of the sales cycle

**Re/prise**



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# Introduction: PLG, Meet Sales

Enterprise sales dominance belongs to companies that understand the modern B2B buyer. Buying habits have shifted fast. More and more buyers want to self-evaluate or self-serve, demanding a hands-on experience with the product. According to Gartner, **33% of buyers** prefer a sales-free experience, and that number jumps to 44% for millennials.

Even with an increased emphasis on **product-led growth (PLG)**, the role of enterprise sales is still strategic and critical. Recent research from VC Tomasz Tunguz found that product-led companies in the current economy operate at about **5% to 10%** less profitability than sales-led companies. For many teams, a combination of PLG and sales-led growth (SLG) works best to accelerate revenue growth.

Now more than ever, sales teams need to add value in the form of consultative advice and industry knowledge beyond the product experience alone. With that said, demos can be leveraged to accelerate prospects along their path to purchase. Let's learn how.

We recently surveyed 240 sales account executives (AEs) at enterprise software companies to learn more about their typical sales cycles, confidence levels with demos, and what slows them down.

We'll dive into these findings, and give you practical tips on accelerating the modern sales cycle, including how to:

- Incorporate PLG motion to help prospects self-qualify
- Instill confidence in first-call demos for AEs
- Provide the right leave-behinds for committee-based buying and multi-threaded accounts

# 33%

of buyers prefer a sales-free experience

**For many teams, a combination of PLG and sales-led growth (SLG) works best to accelerate revenue growth.**

# The Data: 2023 State of Sales Demos

Similarly to the [solutions engineer \(SE\) survey](#) we conducted, deal sizes are trending larger. The average deal size for 42% of organizations surveyed was more than \$50,000, with 43% of companies operating in the \$20,000-\$50,000 range. Typical sales cycle time for more than half (53%) of respondents was 30-90 days, with 28% of companies' sales cycles ranging from 90-180+ days. The largest cohort of respondents (38%) had an average of 11-20 AEs on their team.

Today, these sales representatives spend far too much time creating demos. Each week, 39% spend 5-10+ hours, while 44% spend 2-5 hours on this task. Shared demo environments were another major pain point, impacting quality for 55% of respondents at least some of the time. Even with all of that sunken time, about half of representatives aren't fully confident in their ability to showcase product value without SE support (48% expressed that they're only "somewhat confident").

To add to the complexity, the majority of sales teams (86%) have lost a deal to a committee decision at least once in the last month.

## Number of deals lost per month to committee decision:



Despite the fact that most teams have lost a deal to a committee decision, only 28% use interactive demos to enable internal champions to showcase product value. This is a major missed opportunity, since typical one-pagers and sales leave-behinds often fail to convey the dynamic story of your product to your prospects.

Now that we know more about the current landscape, let's apply these stats to learn how teams can increase efficiency at every stage in the sales cycle (and close more deals in the process).

## So, what would help these sales teams win more deals?

Here's how the results broke down for our respondents.

**46%**

More qualified leads

**23%**

Shorter sales cycles

**16%**

Quicker/easier ways to show value to a prospect

**15%**

Enabling champions to multi-thread to decision makers

# How to Strategically Leverage Demos to Increase Sales Efficiency: A Playbook

## STAGE 1

### Gain more product-qualified leads

Remember how we said modern B2B buyers want a hands-on experience? Once they get immersed in your product experience — whether it's a free trial, product tour or interactive demo — they become a product qualified lead (PQL). PQLs differ from marketing-qualified leads (MQLs), since they're typically a step ahead of prospects in the initial awareness and research phases.

Why is this important for sales? PQLs tend to be well-educated prospects that are more prepared to buy before the first call. Embedding interactive demos into your website and marketing materials can help prospects experience the product first-hand, accelerating them along the journey from MQL to PQL. Interactive demos provide a controlled, guided environment for prospects to explore before speaking to a sales representative.

According to TrustRadius, product demos are the top resource that buyers use during the evaluation process, with 59% of buyers relying on them. This has been true for six consecutive years. The same report shows that nearly all buyers want the opportunity to self-qualify; 70% seek out product demos or free trials available on a company's website.

Interactive demos let customers immerse themselves in your product experience, step by step. That makes the job of the AE much more productive when it comes to the first call. Prospects arrive more informed, since they've already seen the value of the product on full display.

## Best Practices



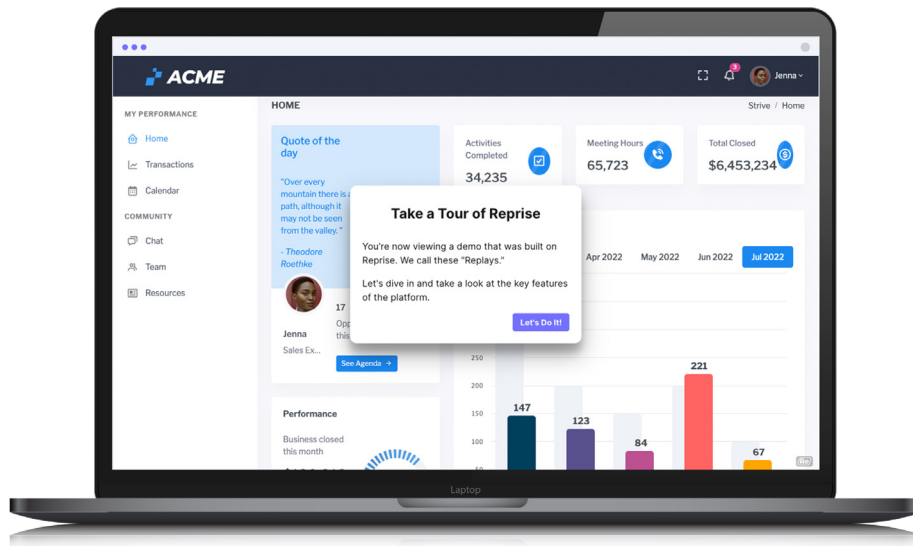
**Test different product messaging with your demos**, targeted to specific personas or verticals. A/B test messaging or create an interactive product tour for each pain point, embed them on the website, or share them in other channels like email marketing or social—and see which ones get the most leads and engagement.



**Optimize product tours accordingly** after reviewing the analytics from an interactive demo platform. See what's working, where prospects are exiting the tour, and where they're spending the most time. With the right demo software, editing your demos takes only a few clicks.



**Create interactive demos tailored to stakeholders** in the purchase decision. Some of the people involved could be end users, influencers, or champions who are driving the process, and final decision makers like an executive approver and budget controller. Develop bite-sized product demos customized for each persona and organize them into a demo library on the website.



## STAGE 2

### Drive more strategic prospect demo calls

PQLs become even more powerful when they're combined with a well-informed sales demo. The story you tell at this point in the sales cycle sets the stage for the prospect. It helps them understand exactly how your product fits their use case or solves their pain points. Creating a set of shared template demos you can easily customize makes this demo process turnkey.

With an interactive demo or product tour initially qualifying your lead, you can gather data based on viewer activity and behavior. Individual user activity such as which screens they viewed, how long they spent on each screen, and where they dropped off the demo can help inform exactly how to tell the most effective story to convey value for any given prospect.

This approach leads to a more consultative and fruitful first call, since there's less burden on the sales representative for discovery. From there, it's easy to craft a targeted demo based on the aspects of your product that piqued the prospect's interest.

### Best Practices



**Start with a “golden demo” or template** and refine it from there based on your PQL's interactions with your product tour. SEs can help AEs prep their first-call demo to instill confidence. Or, AEs can use guided demos as sales enablement, providing the click-by-click training and scripts they need to confidently learn to run demos solo.



**Create an interactive demo library.** A product demo library or demo center is a collection of interactive, self-guided demos that software companies use to showcase the various features, functions, and use cases of their product(s). This can serve as a sales enablement tool, allowing your reps to choose the most relevant demo for the prospect's use case.



**Customize your demos to your prospect's pain points or questions** using a demo creation platform. To get a head start, you can create and share multiple standard demos tailored to industry verticals, or certain prospect group pain points. Following the first call, you can bring SEs into future calls to further target these demos and drill in on technical details.

## STAGE 3

# Empower internal champions to multi-thread

Losing deals to committee decision-making was a common pain point for our survey respondents. Other stakeholders in the buying committee often don't have the same context as your primary champion. Typical sales leave-behinds, such as one-pagers, don't have the breadth of information to fully showcase the strengths of your product.

The best way to shorten time to the decision-maker's "aha" moment with a guided demo as a leave-behind. Powerful guided demos can tell your product's story when you aren't there to tell it yourself. These demos help you multi-thread accounts and uncover unknown evaluators by allowing champions to circulate leave-behinds internally.

## Best Practices



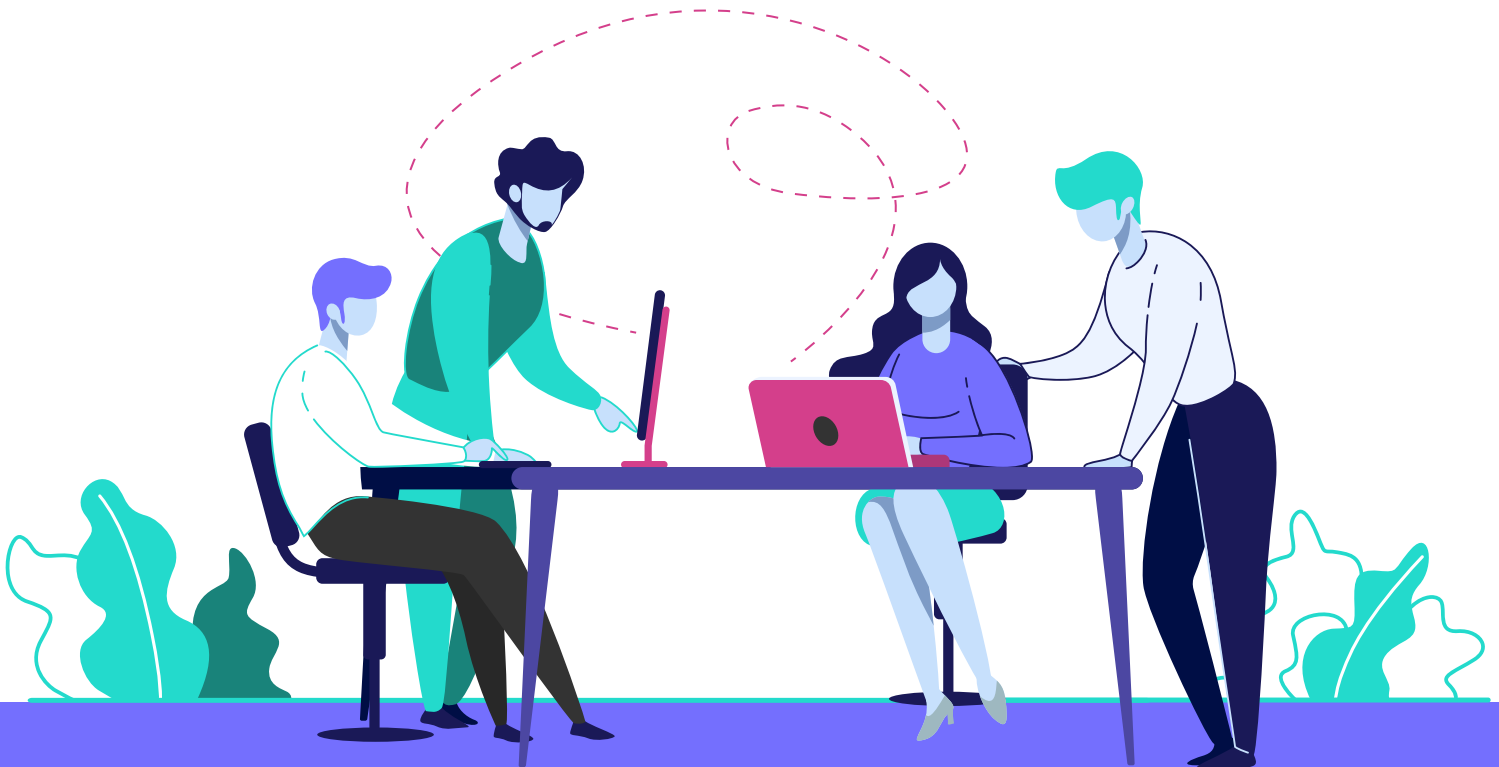
**Give your champion guided demos that act like a virtual AE** by incorporating elements like pulsating buttons and pop-up instructions within your guided demos. These elements can fill in the knowledge gaps for your champion while they're sharing your demo with other stakeholders.



**Leverage demo analytics and session information** to understand where committee decision-makers may need supplemental information. For example, if a decision-maker gets stuck on a part of the product tour or spends a lot of time on a certain feature, you can follow up accordingly.



**Use a demo leave-behind as a case study.** If your prospect's needs match the use-case of a current customer, show off how your customer achieved their goals with your product. A demo creation platform allows you to edit, customize links and screen shots, and view analytics to measure how well your leave-behind resonated.



# Blending PLG and SLG to Shorten Sales Cycles

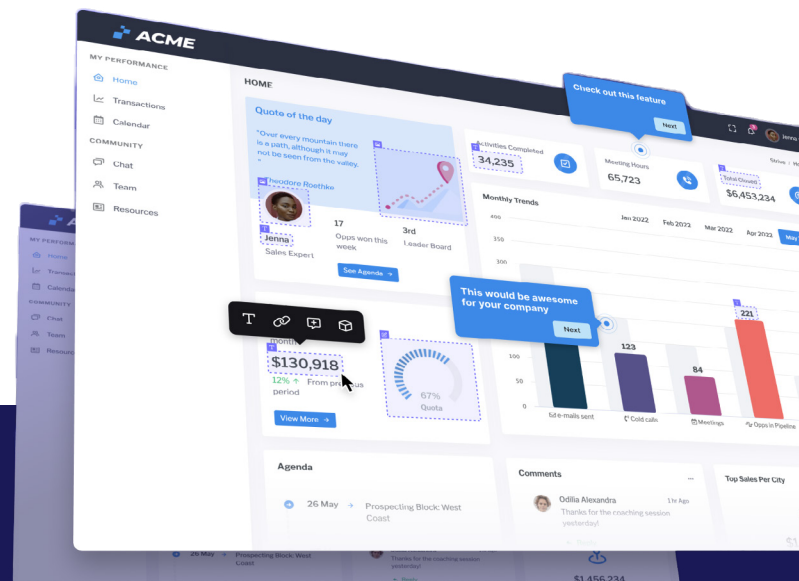
Modern software buyers want the opportunity to self-serve. But, the complex nature of B2B software still demands the expertise of a well-informed sales team. The good news is that it's possible to have both! In fact, blending PLG and SLG can accelerate your deal velocity, and create a frictionless path to quota. After all, most of the prospect's buying journey has already happened by the time they engage with a sales rep.

Today, it's never been easier to tell your product story at each stage of the sales cycle. Interactive demos can be a great PLG entry point, showcasing product value and pre-qualifying prospects for better, more consultative sales conversations. Demo analytics reveal where prospects find the most value from your product, driving more targeted and qualified first calls.

Rather than reinventing the wheel for every new prospect, sales teams can create and share templated demos and easily customize them in minutes, instead of hours. A demo library also serves as a sales enablement tool to empower AEs to drive their own first-call demos without the assistance of an SE.

For committee decisions, guided demos are great leave-behinds to help decision-makers discover aha moments with your product — fast. With the right demo creation platform, a successful sales process flows like a great story — vibrant, visual, and dynamic. Start accelerating your path to close today.

Unlock a frictionless path to quota.



Explore Reprise for Sales [➤](#)

