



Quantified

The Sales Tech Trap: Why AI Isn't Closing Deals

A report from Quantified

Introduction: The Quota Paradox

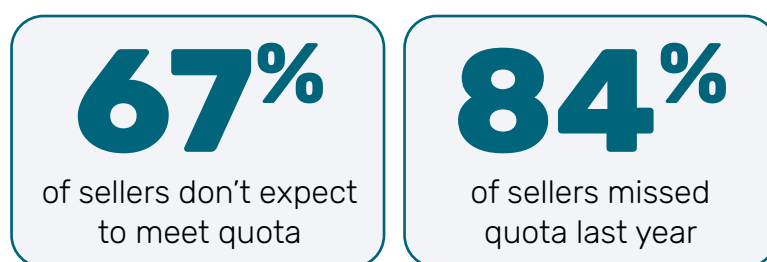
Despite all the technology and insights at our fingertips, quota attainment is plummeting faster than ever.

With powerful AI tools at our disposal, why are sales teams still missing their quotas? Despite more insights and tech-driven solutions, sellers are struggling to close deals. That includes better insight into our customers' buying behavior, more technology, and - in companies that have deployed call recording software - insight into virtually every sales interaction.

And the biggest potential game-changer is powerful AI solutions across almost every element of the sales cycle.

If you ask many sales leaders about hitting quota, you'll get a grim picture: ballooning sales cycles, ghosted deals, and desperate scrambles as the quarter fails.

The numbers back them up: according to Salesforce's State of Sales report, **67% of sellers don't expect to meet quota, and a staggering 84% missed quota last year.**¹



We can't just blame this on economic headwinds and changing buyer behaviors aren't the root cause. Yes, there's financial uncertainty and tightened purse strings on the part of every CFO in pursuit of profitable growth. Yes, buyers navigate more of the journey independently, leaving sellers blind to the deal's progress. Plenty of headwinds, to be sure.

84% of sellers missing quota isn't a blip—it's a catastrophe. What's driving this industry-wide collapse?

So we talked with sales leaders, sales trainers/sales enablement, and sales reps about it. And what we kept hearing was this:

AI promised to revolutionize sales, but it's failing in the most critical area: helping reps close deals.

The AI revolution for sales technology has addressed several pain points. Some AI tools help SDRs and lead-gen reps find more prospects and personalize outreach at scale. Others tailor communications throughout the sales cycle, manage pipelines, forecast sales results, and handle everything from proposal management to data hygiene. We don't lack tools. We have [tech overwhelm](#).

Despite these advancements, the core of sales—turning conversations into closed deals—remains a challenge. This is where technology alone isn't enough.

Yes, there's software for recording and analyzing calls, often called "conversation intelligence." It's flexible, powerful, popular, and can do many things, even providing coaching summaries. You probably use it, and you should probably continue to do so.

But it's also a rear-view mirror, looking at sales calls after they've already occurred.

And if you want to build a habit in sales conversations by having your sales reps practice something repeatedly, it's not likely to help unless you have a plentiful supply of "practice prospects" to work with. These days, the pipeline is simply too precious to be wasted like that.

Sales is failing because everyone is using technology to help sales reps with everything except the most important thing: becoming highly skilled, through deliberate practice, at having effective sales conversations.

To learn what's going wrong, we surveyed three groups: salespeople, sales leaders, and sales training/enablement.

The Survey and the Data

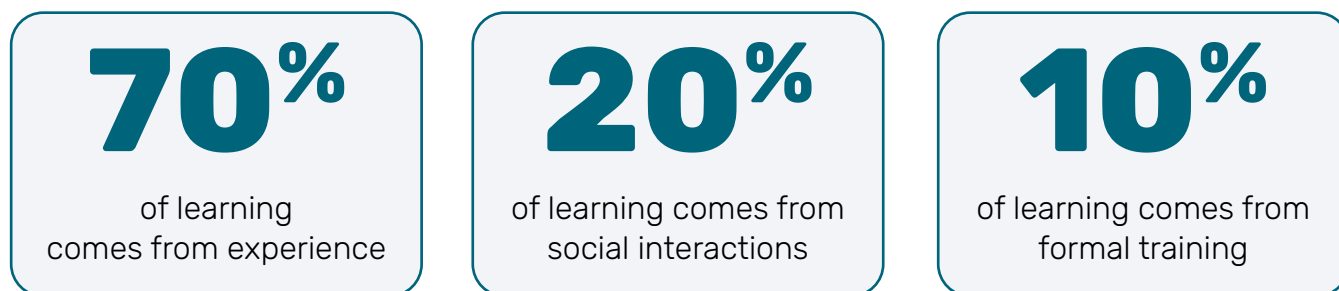
If you watch people learn, you'll quickly come to a simple conclusion: practice matters.

Maybe you, like many people, once taught a child how to ride a bicycle. Did you explain it carefully, as a step-by-step process? Did you show the child some videos?

Probably not - they'd be more likely to fall over. Why? The missing element is practice.

Football players practice. Olympic athletes and musicians do, too. To become excellent, they practiced a LOT, using an approach that's often called deliberate practice.

Trainers, educators, and neuroscientists know this. The 70-20-10 learning model asserts that 70% of learning comes from experience, 20% from social interactions (such as peer-to-peer learning), and 10% from formal training.² Practice is essential.



Other models of learning emphasize practice and experience as well. "Experience" is the first E in the 3E learning model (Exposure and Education are the other two). In the Five Moments of Need model, the middle step - Apply - is crucial. The LIFOW model (Learning in the Flow of Work) emphasizes hands-on learning through practice and repetition.

You get the point. People learn by doing. People need practice.

In sales, practice is where we're falling short. The numbers prove it: as we mentioned, 84% of sellers missed quota last year. No amount of software or call recording is going to fix that.

We wanted to understand how often sales teams practice and whether sales leaders, enablement teams, and reps viewed it similarly. We also explored their perceptions of training ROI, especially in comparison to other sales training and enablement initiatives.

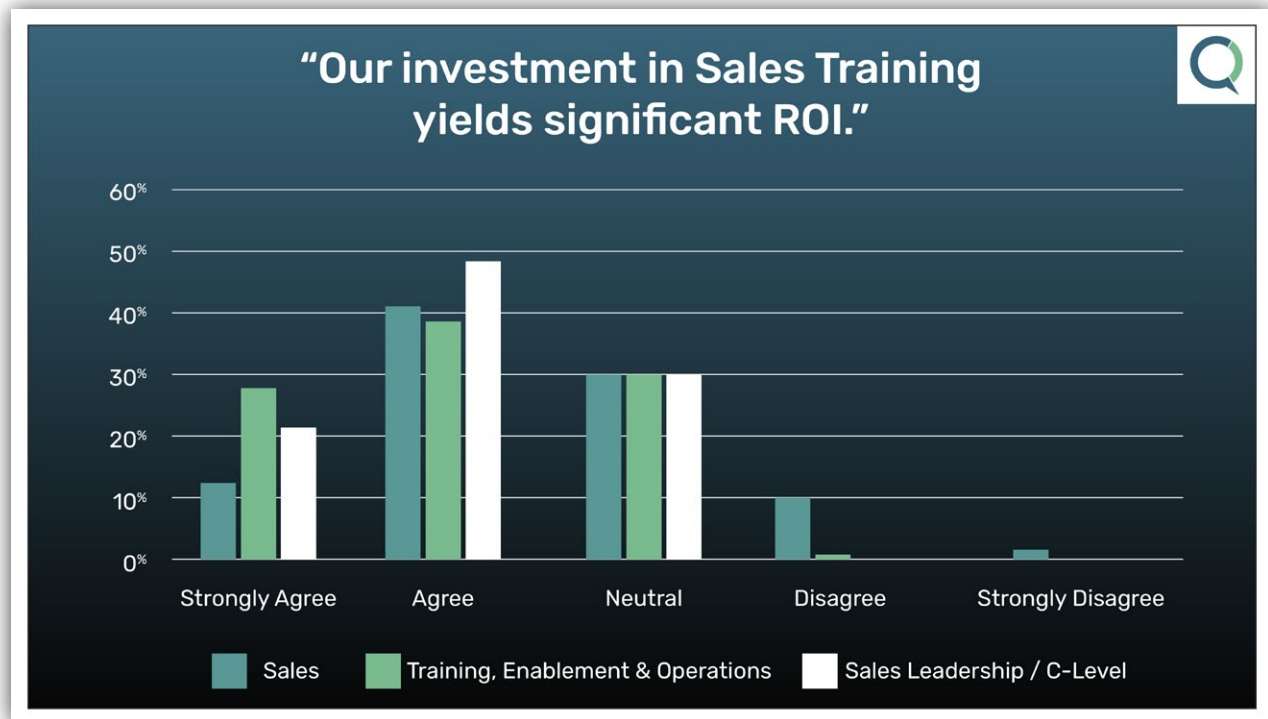
So we ran this survey to get some answers. The learnings from that follow.

Learning 1.

Sales Training ROI: Is Anyone Convinced?

Sales leaders, sales reps, and training teams measure ROI in different ways.

A sales leader views closed won deals as ROI, and is skeptical of any other metrics. Sales reps may view it differently, although they see it in terms of individual rather than team attainment. Trainers often measure “butts in seats” attendance or use post-training surveys, although what they really intend to measure is often behavior change.



While 63.3% of respondents agree or strongly agree their sales training delivers ROI, 30% are neutral, and 12.8% actively disagree. The fact that nearly half of respondents aren’t convinced shows a serious problem: if sales reps don’t see value in training, the training can’t possibly be working.

THE SALES TECH TRAP: WHY AI ISN’T CLOSING DEALS

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From my experience, sales training is falling short when it is created to check a box/hit a KPI vs. drive an outcome. This can be due to culture, power dynamics or, misalignment, but it's also our biggest opportunity. Understanding the business goals and impact we're trying to make and tying our training/enablement to that, and how that fits into the team's process/day-to-day now, is the key to true adoption and success. If you can focus on the most important things to move the needle AND make it easy to execute then you're cooking with gas! With AI/better training tech you can execute on that vision faster (for you and your reps!), with better metrics/proof, and more time spent on sharing best practices, wins, and coaching and less on just getting the message, training, and/or certification complete.

— Katie Pariseau,
Head of Revenue Enablement,
TrustRadius



Learning 2.

Role Play: The Best Tool We Rarely Use

If role play is effective, why aren't teams using it consistently?

Having asked about ROI, we asked specifically about role play, asking respondents how much they agreed or disagreed with the statement "Role Play is important in helping sales reps gain the skills needed to perform."



Across sales reps, leadership, and sales training/sales enablement teams, there was strong agreement on the value of role play in helping reps build the skills needed to succeed.

70% of respondents across all group agree that role play is crucial for skill building. This broad support for role play reflects a rare point of alignment between all three groups.

Not everyone agrees, of course. Roughly 7.7% of sales reps and 8.7% of leaders disagree, with the majority of detractors coming from the younger (18-29) or older (60+) age brackets. Still, these numbers are small, and the overwhelming message is one of agreement: role play works.

Despite the broad recognition of role play's value, only 10.3% of sales reps strongly agree that their teams practice role play often enough to consistently hit targets. Despite clear evidence of role play's effectiveness, many sales teams neglect it, undermining their chances of success. This gap between recognition and practice reveals a deeper issue in how sales teams prioritize training.

Leadership's stance on this issue is telling. 43.5% of leaders remain neutral on whether role play is happening frequently enough, indicating a lack of urgency at the top to push for more consistent practice. This neutrality may be contributing to the disconnect between the value everyone places on role play and the insufficient time spent on it in real-world training.



"Our sales team practices role play enough to hit their targets consistently."



"Though the concept of role play has evolved from the days of memorizing scripts, the activity remains one of the most valuable training tools we have. Practice and certification can be aided by today's technology, but there remains nothing better to assess verbal competency than to put a rep into a realistic situation with a trained coach."

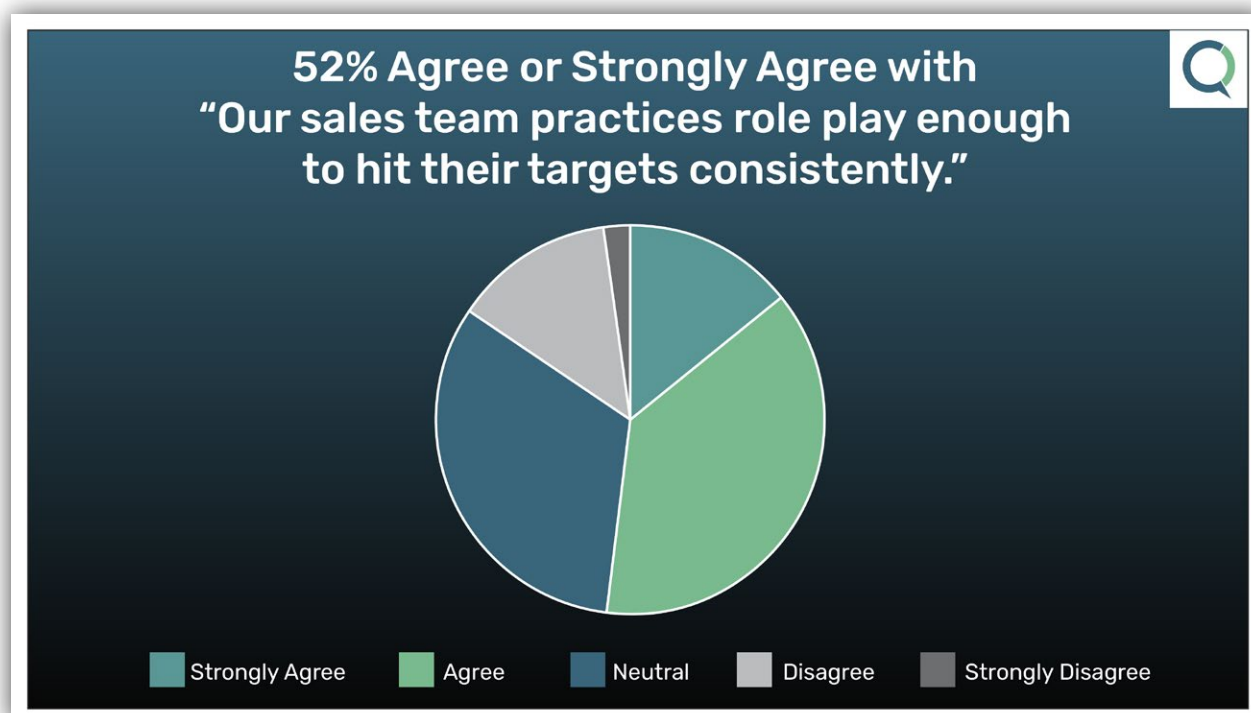
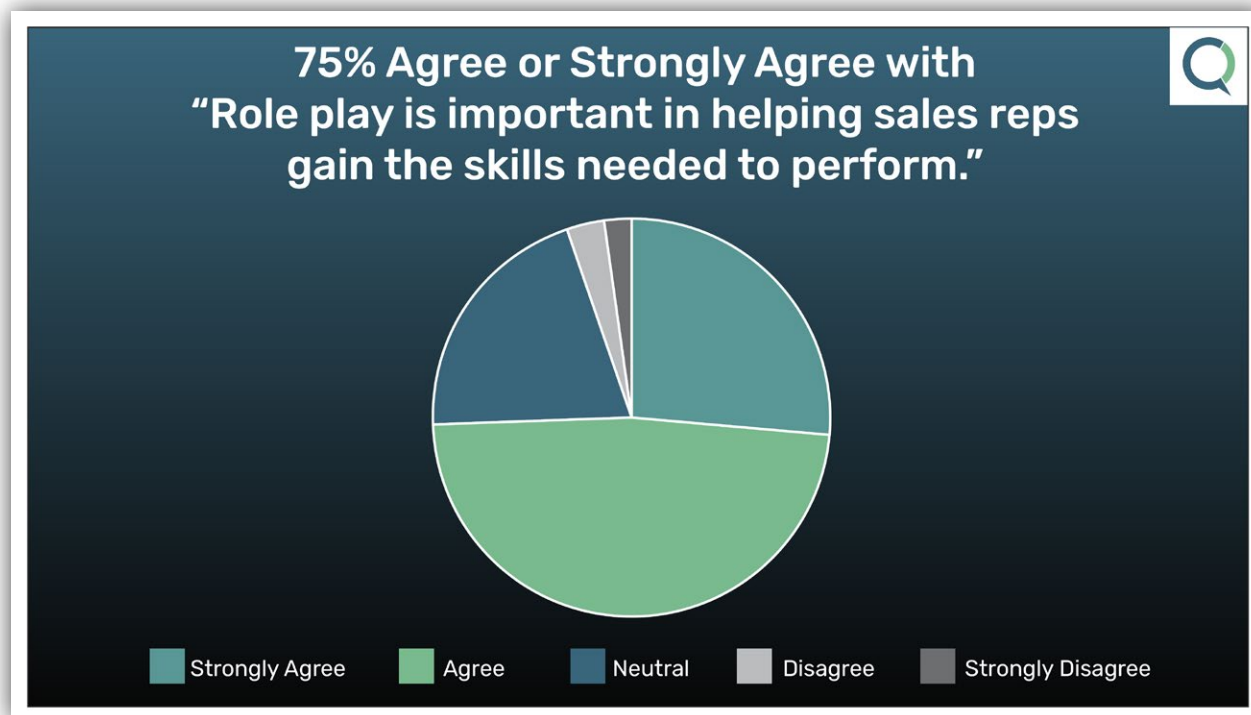
— Mani Chidambaram,
Global Head, Commercial Training, Sanofi

Learning 3.

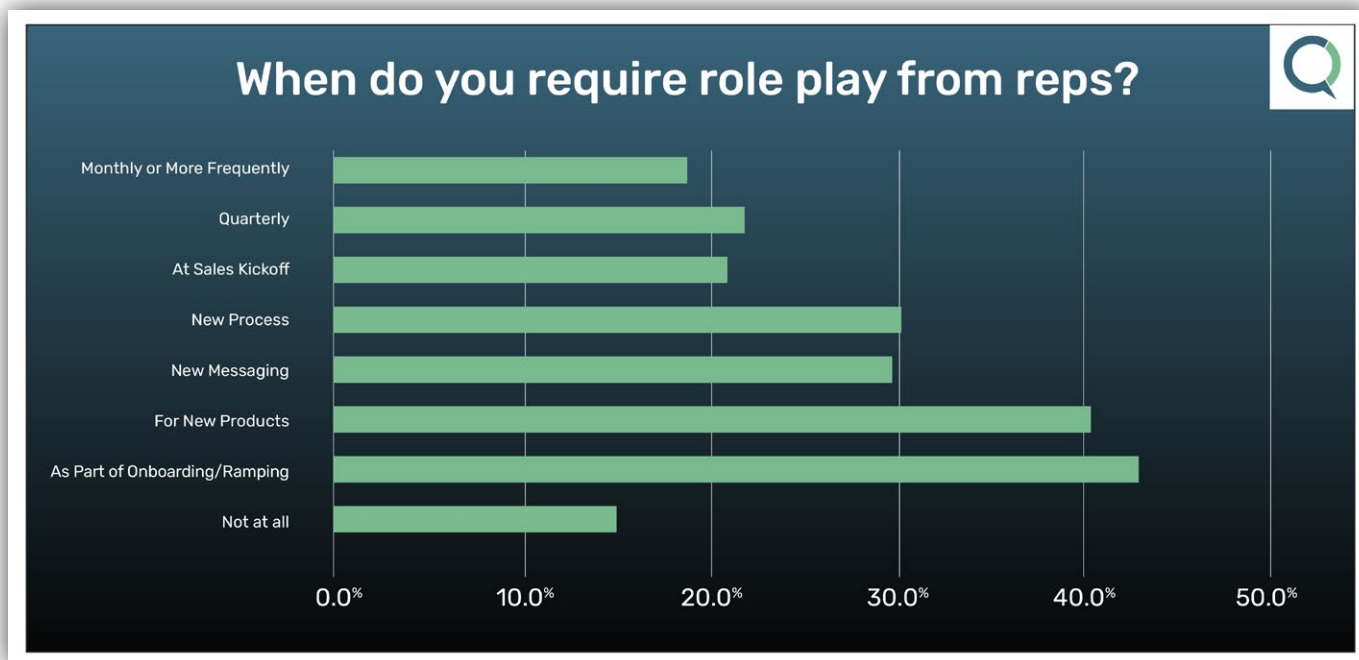
The Root of the Problem: Inconsistent Practice

If you want to master performance, you'll need to master habits first.

The habit of hitting the gym regularly will drive weight loss, increased muscle mass, and improved health. The habit of doing homework regularly after school drives grade improvements. The habit of starting every workday with a plan will drive more productivity.



Despite acknowledging the importance of practice, few teams integrate it consistently enough to create a habit.. 75% of teams Agree or Strongly Agree on the importance of role play, while only 52% believe that they're getting enough practice. This lack of practice is crippling sales performance and costing companies millions.



“Almost all sales training is aimed at changing behavior: Reps are doing one thing and you want them to do something different. If your efforts to change that behavior are limited to a one-off training, your chances of changing behavior are about as likely as when a piano teacher holds a first lesson with a student, and then expects the student to be able to play Chopin.”

– Jerry Pharr,
Head of Global Commercial Operations & Excellence, Varicent

It's easy to see the root of that problem. Only 18% of teams get practice via roleplay monthly, and only a few more - 22% - get regular quarterly practice.

43% of teams require role play as part of onboarding and ramping. While that's a great time for practice, there are two issues. First, that's less than 50% of the teams in the survey. And second, we know that skills atrophy and details are forgotten without regular practice.

Once reps are out of their ramping period, practice is episodic. Role play is driven most often by occasional events such as new product launches (40%), new messaging or process (about 30% in each case), or sales kickoff (21%). If there's no new product, process, message, or SKO? There is no practice.

The reluctance to push for the practice team's need is due to three uncomfortable facts about sales role play:

1.

It's hard to make time for.

Engaging in role play requires pulling a manager or a peer off the floor and into a practice conversation.

2.

Feedback is inconsistent.

If you role play with a peer, the quality of feedback you get from them will vary depending on who the peer is. The same is true with sales managers. As much as they may be trained on a rubric for evaluation, subjectivity creeps in.

3.

And most of all, role play

is awkward. If you've done it, you know - it just is. Sales is a discipline that thrives on pressure in most situations, but the awkwardness of human-to-human role play can shut down a conversation and learning.



THE SALES TECH TRAP:
WHY AI ISN'T CLOSING DEALS

There's a significant disconnect between what buyers and sellers believe is essential for effective sales training. Sellers often feel they need more training in objection handling, closing, and negotiation. However, many businesses primarily focus their training efforts on product knowledge, new pricing and packaging strategies, and proper CRM entry techniques, potentially missing the mark on the skills that truly impact sales success. Buyers, on the other hand, emphasize the importance of industry knowledge, business acumen, and active listening and consulting skills for sellers.

— Aaron Evans,
Co-Founder, Flow State Sales



A Path Forward: Practice Makes Progress

We started this report with a simple question: if we have better sales tools and tech than ever before, why are we doing worse than ever in terms of quota attainment?

The harsh truth?

Without deliberate practice, your sales team is set up to fail. And if you're not addressing this now, rest assured—your competitors already are.

Role play during new hire ramping is critical, yet only 43% of teams make it a regular practice. That leaves a significant opportunity for the 57% of teams not bringing this rigor to onboarding. Beyond onboarding, role play is essential for mastering new product conversations, refining messaging, and adapting to new processes—but 60–70% of teams still aren't leveraging this to its full potential.

Ready to close more deals and transform your team's performance with AI-driven role play? Our AI-driven role play solution has already helped companies like Novartis, Quartz Benefits, Sanofi, Open Lending, Otsuka, and more—and it can do the same for you.

Tired of inconsistent training and missed quotas? Our solution tackles these issues head-on, helping teams practice more effectively and improve quota attainment. It scales across large teams, eliminating the time constraints, subjectivity, and awkwardness of traditional role play. That's why sales teams use Quantified to practice 6x more than other teams.

Methodology

This report is based on a survey conducted with 107 Sales and Enablement leaders from various industries. The survey was administered online over two weeks in October 2024, using a structured questionnaire. Respondents were selected based on their roles in sales enablement, sales leadership, or related functions, ensuring a diverse representation across company sizes and sectors. The data collected includes both quantitative and qualitative responses, analyzed to identify key trends and insights. All the responses were anonymized to ensure confidentiality, and no personally identifiable information was collected.

Get Started

Take control of your sales outcomes now.

- Is your team missing quota?
- Struggling with inconsistent messaging?
- Unlock your reps' full potential before wasting months on underperformance.

We have the solution. Our advanced AI Role Play tool delivers faster, more predictable wins. Don't wait—[Book a Demo Today](#) to see our AI-powered simulators in action."

¹Salesforce State of Sales, Sixth Edition

²Morgan McCall, Michael M. Lombardo, and Robert A. Eichinger