



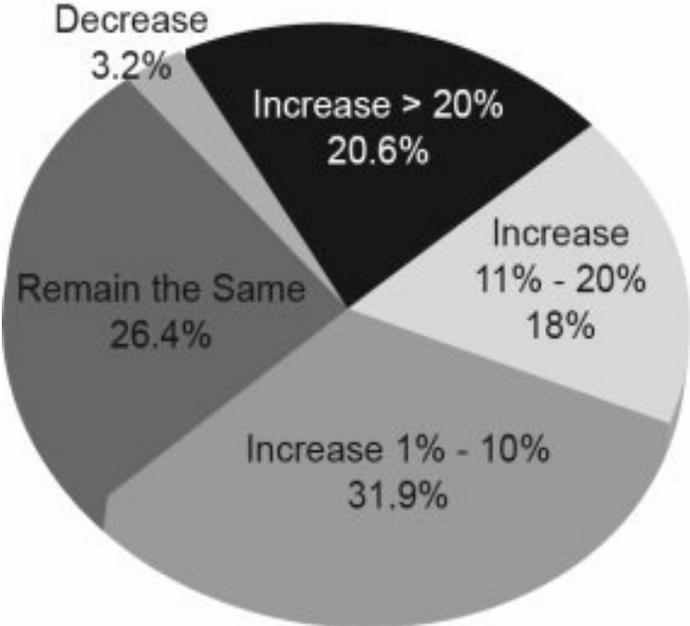
B2B Sales Forces Are Hiring

"The report of my death was an exaggeration!" - Mark Twain

I have been intrigued by predictions popping up that the number of B2B salespeople will be decimated over the next few years, replaced by an “ecommerce will rule the world” mentality. Clearly “buying” is changing, but does that really mark the end of B2B selling? On June 2, 1897, American writer Mark Twain, published the above statement in the New York Journal in reaction to newspaper accounts that he had died. Fast-forward to today, and those same words might well be applied to the forecasts regarding the death of

B2B salespeople. Here is why.

Planned Sales Force Size Change Over Next 12 Months



Results from CSO Insights 2015 Sales Performance Optimization (SPO) survey of 1,000+ firms (94% of which were B2B firms) present a different picture. When we asked sales management to tell us what their hiring plans were for the next 12 months, over 70.4% of US-based companies said they were planning on adding net-new reps versus 3.2% of firms reporting that they were decreasing the size of their sales force.



Do the doomsayers know something that sales management doesn't know, or does sales management have something in mind that is being ignored here? Looking at the trending data from the SPO study, the later may well be the case.

You see the fact that buying has changed is not lost on sales management, they get that. They realize that customer transactions: rapid, repetitive, routine, can be handled other ways; so, they are working to have sales professionals focus on customer interactions: protracted, complex, creative.

To support this transformation in selling, sales management is making a lot of changes. They are implementing new competency hiring models, increasing investments in big data/sales analytics technology, reengineering sales processes, investing in business acumen/business case building training, optimizing account planning, etc. They are also investing people to manage the sales transformation efforts, as the 2015 SPO study found that 25.5% of the firms surveyed now have a dedicated sales effectiveness/sales enablement team to support the sales organization.

Change is clearly coming to sales. Is success guaranteed, no. In CSO Insights 2015 Sales Management Optimization (SMO) survey of 600+ firms, only 37.9% of firms stated that their recent sales effectiveness initiatives met or exceeded the majority of their expectations. While this figure is up from 30.4% a year earlier, it still shows many firms are encountering challenges.