



What an AI Sales Teammate Changes for

Sales Engineering Leaders



Contents

The Inflection Point	03
The Perfect Storm	04
What This Guide Is — and What It Is Not	05
The State of Sales	06
The Gartner View in 2023	08
The Gartner View in 2026	09
From Doer to Strategic Force Multiplier	10
Jennifer's Example	12
The New Charge for SE Leaders	13
What That Looks Like in Practice	14
Make the Case for Change	15
Your Next Move	16
Conclusion	17



The Inflection Point

Every five to seven years, sales gets rewritten.

Not nudged. Not iterated. **Rewritten.**

Inside sales reshaped the 1990s. SaaS rewired everything in the mid-2000s. Product-led growth changed buyer behavior in the 2010s.

AI is the next rewrite.

And this time, **Sales Engineers are at the center of it.**

This is the first tectonic shift where the SE function gets to choose its role: strategic driver of transformation, or reluctant passenger.

This guide assumes you want to drive.



The Perfect Storm

Three forces are colliding in ways that make the status quo genuinely unsustainable.

01

Products Are Getting Ridiculously Complex.

AI-native architectures.
Multi-tenant platforms.
Integration layers that require real technical fluency to explain.

02

Buyers Show Up More Informed.

Armed with research, peer reviews, and product tours before the first conversation begins. They don't need the overview. They want the truth, and they want it immediately.

03

SE capacity didn't scale with demand.

Coverage ratios stuck at 4:1 to 8:1. Deal complexity accelerating. And sellers waiting — on answers, on availability, on support.



What This Guide Is – and What It Is Not

This is not a guide about replacing Sales Engineers with AI.

What makes Sales Engineers effective is their technical credibility, contextual judgment, and their ability to architect solutions in real time.

AI doesn't replace those things - it should accelerate them.

What AI should replace tedious work that consumes capacity without delivering SE-level value.

This guide has one job: to equip you, the Sales Engineering leader, to drive the AI transformation their sales organizations need right now.

Your team sits at the intersection of product truth, buyer expectations, and sales execution. That position is not incidental. It is exactly the position from which this change should be led.

The State of Sales

We surveyed 201 B2B sellers across industries and sales motions. The findings are worth sharing with your business partners — particularly in Product and Engineering, who may not fully appreciate what the SE function carries.

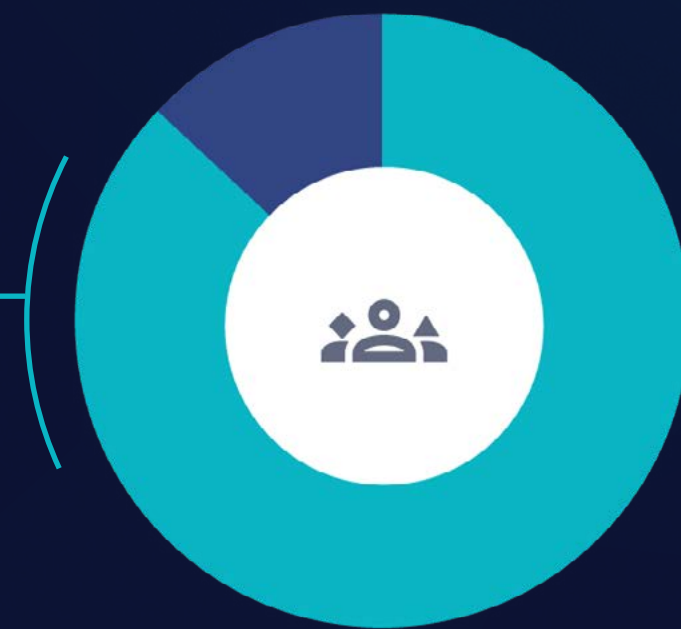
FINDING #1:

SE support is more valuable than ever.

87% of AEs say SEs are critical to closing deals.

76% rely on SEs more than they did a year ago.

Buyers confirm this independently. According to Gartner, meetings with technical architects, sales engineers, and specialists have the greatest influence on buyer trust and confidence in a provider. The SE function is not supplementary to the sales process — it is one of its most credible moments.



FINDING #2:

Demos are no longer the primary value SE delivers.

When sellers were asked to rank SE contributions, demos came in fifth. The highest-value work looks like this:

- **Technical discovery**
- **Solution architecture**
- **Risk reduction for the buyer**
- **Handling technical objections**
- **Product demonstration**

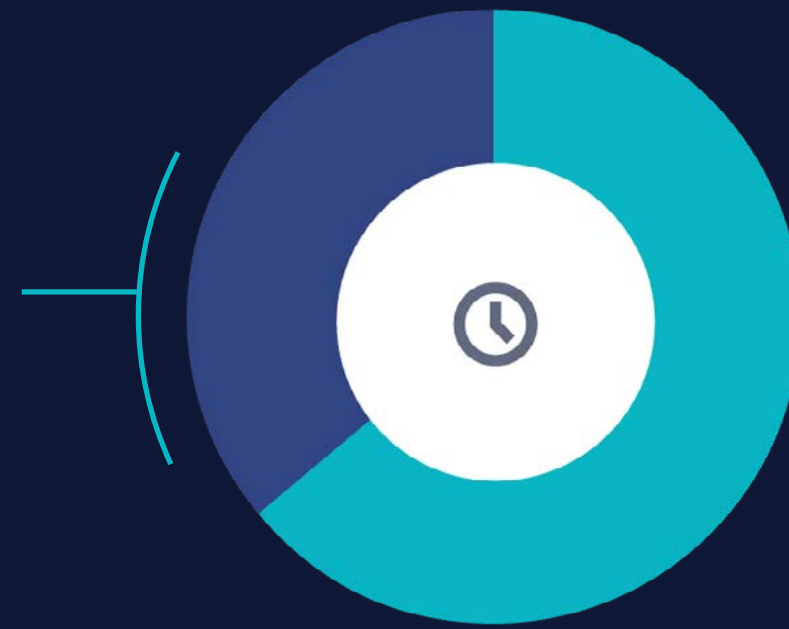
If your SE KPIs still center on demo volume, that is worth revisiting. The work that moves deals forward starts well before the demo begins.

FINDING #3:

Capacity is the constraint.

64% of AEs have lost or delayed deals waiting on SE support.

This is not a performance problem. It is a structural one. The job has grown faster than the model that supports it.



FINDING #4:

AEs want SEs working at a higher level.

When sellers describe what they need most, the list looks like this:

- **Competitive intelligence, surfaced at the right moment**
- **Strategic partnership on complex opportunities**
- **Solutions tailored to specific accounts and stakeholders**
- **Real-time support in critical conversations**

Not environment setup. Not generic walkthroughs. Not locating documents that should already be accessible. The sellers who rely on your team know what SE capacity is worth. They want more of the right kind.





The Gartner View in 2023

Back in 2023, Gartner made something very clear:

Sales Engineers are far more than demo resources—they are the most valuable human touchpoint in the buying journey. In fact, their research found that the #1 resource B2B buyers prefer to engage with when evaluating solutions is a technical expert such as a Sales Engineer or Solution Architect.

Sales Engineers sit at the intersection of product, business value, and customer context. They don't just show features—they validate business cases, architect solutions, handle objections, and act as trusted advisors throughout the deal.

In complex sales, they are the ones who translate possibility into reality.

The Gartner View in 2026

AI is now extending that role in two distinct but complementary ways.

First, Product Ride-Along Experts embed real-time product knowledge directly into the flow of a sales interaction—joining calls, listening for questions, and instantly surfacing accurate, in-context answers exactly when they are needed. Instead of waiting for follow-ups or pulling in a specialist, sellers operate with continuous access to expertise, reducing training time and eliminating the bottlenecks that slow deals.¹

Second, Agentic Sales Engineers take this a step further—acting as always-on, context-aware partners to the seller. They provide guidance across the entire sales cycle, from discovery to objection handling to next-best actions, enabling even new reps to operate with the depth and precision of experienced technical sellers.²

¹ Gartner, “AI Vendor Race: Deploy Product Expert AI Agents to Accelerate Sales Cycles and Cut Training Time,” Michele Buckley, February 6, 2026.

² Gartner, Innovation Insight: Agentic Sales Engineers Fast-Track Growth by 4 Months, Roland Johnson, March 2026.

Now, that same foundation is evolving at scale. Gartner’s predictions point to a world where this AI-augmented expertise becomes a structural advantage.

By 2027, companies using product expert AI agents will shrink sales cycles by 20% by delivering instant, in-context technical answers.

Sales cycles will shrink by

20%

By 2028, organizations leveraging agentic Sales Engineers will compress seller ramp time from eight months to just two.

Compressed seller ramp from

8 to 2
months

And by 2029, “ride-along” AI agents will reduce product training time by 40% by surfacing expertise exactly when it’s needed.

Reduced product training time by

40%

These aren’t distant projections—they reflect decisions being made right now. The role of the Sales Engineer isn’t diminishing—it’s becoming the blueprint for how technical expertise scales. The only question is whether organizations will lead this shift—or fall behind it.

From Doer to Strategic Force Multiplier

If SEs are more valuable than ever and more constrained than ever, the path forward is clear.

Change the model. Not the headcount.

What AI Should Absorb

There is another category of SE work — necessary, but not differentiated. This is the work that consumes capacity without requiring SE-level expertise:

- **Environment setup and configuration**
- **Repetitive product walkthroughs**
- **Research and knowledge retrieval**
- **Boilerplate follow-up documentation**

This work is not heroic. It is not strategic. And it is not a good use of the people your organization depends on to win complex deals.

What Stays in SE Hands

Some work is irreplaceable. This is where SEs earn their credibility and deliver their highest value:

- **Strategic discovery with complex technical stakeholders**
- **Custom solution architecture**
- **Trial and POC strategy**
- **Competitive positioning on high-stakes deals**

This is the work that requires judgment, trust, and technical authority that has been built over years. It should be protected.

AI is not a threat to SE value. It is the mechanism by which SE value gets protected.

The Modern SE: Four Mandates

When repetitive work is absorbed by AI, the SE role clarifies into something sharper:

- 1 Strategic Technical Advisor** on complex, high-stakes opportunities
- 2 AE Enablement Engine** — equipping sellers to have more credible conversations earlier in the cycle
- 3 Product and Competitive Intelligence Hub** — translating technical complexity into sales-ready insight
- 4 Strategic Relationship Builder** — extending SE influence from presales into post-sale outcomes

This is not a theoretical future state. It is available now, for teams that make the transition.



Jennifer's Example

Jennifer Jones, VP of Solution Experience at Dayforce, saw Hero® for what it actually is: **a bridge between scattered deal context and clarity, between manual preparation and consistent execution, between an overextended SE team and a sales organization that finally runs the way it should.**

While other teams were in committee cycles and tool evaluations, Jennifer moved. She piloted Hero with intention, trained it on real field expertise, and embedded it directly into the workflows that shape deal outcomes.

Reps walked into meetings more prepared. Advisors spent less time assembling context. SEs recovered the strategic space they had been missing.

She did not wait for perfect conditions.

She built the bridge, crossed it, and brought her organization with her.

[Read the full case study →](#)



The New Charge for SE Leaders

If you own the SE function, your role is changing more than anyone's on the sales leadership team. Not because AI replaces you. **Because AI finally gives you the capacity to lead the way you have always been capable of leading.**

This means that a reframe is in order.

SE leaders are sales leaders.

Not adjacent. Not auxiliary. Not “the technical team.”

The SE function exists to lift win rates, accelerate deal cycles, support expansion, and reduce churn. Every conversation that goes well because a seller was prepared, every objection that landed cleanly, every buyer who left the meeting more confident — that is SE output.

In 2026, the SE leader's job is not to build AI tools or evaluate vendors indefinitely. It is to train, govern, and scale the AI Sales Teammate that makes the rest of the sales organization more effective.

That means:

- **Defining the product truth Hero operates from**
- **Setting the guardrails and tone**
- **Correcting outputs and guiding behavior**
- **Deciding where Hero shows up in the sales process**

You define the expertise. Hero scales it.

You stop being the bottleneck. **You become the architect of leverage.**



What That Looks Like in Practice

Gartner's research on agentic sales engineers describes the model clearly: **recruit sellers for their core sales skills — relationship building, listening, discovery — and support them with an AI agent trained on specific product and competitive knowledge.** This combination produces sellers who can engage buyers effectively within weeks, not months.

The human element is not removed. It is elevated. Gartner recommends identifying specific, high-trust moments in the sales process — discovery sessions, ROI conversations, executive alignment — where human expertise is most valuable, and preserving those moments for people.

Everything else becomes a candidate for AI support.

Make the Case for Change

Here is what this looks like when it comes together:

Every SE recovers time for the work that requires their judgment — complex discovery, solution architecture, competitive strategy, executive conversations.

Every seller has an AI Sales Teammate that handles research, preparation, documentation, and knowledge retrieval in real time.

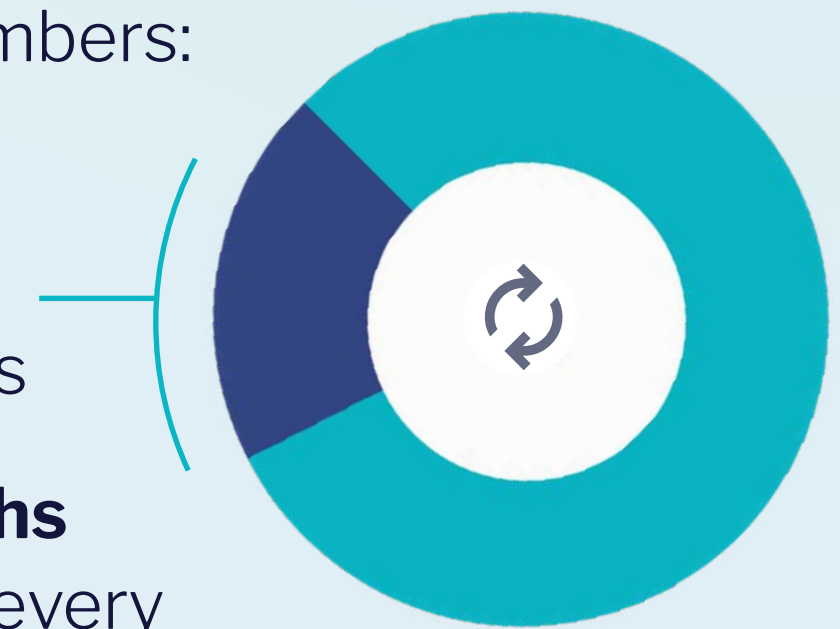
You own the bridge between today's fragmented tool landscape and a sales organization where AI is a dependable part of how deals get won.

That is not a small change. It is a structural one — and it is available now.

The Business Case, in Plain Terms

Gartner's research gives you the numbers:

- **20% shorter sales cycles** through faster, more confident answers during live conversations
- **Ramp time cut from eight months to two** — creating capacity from every new hire, months earlier than before
- **40% less time spent on product training** — because sellers learn in context, not in classrooms



For a sales organization adding headcount, compressing the ramp from eight months to two is not a marginal improvement. It is a structural advantage. The revenue lift compounds with every rep who reaches full productivity faster.

Your Next Move

01

See Hero in Action

If you have not seen Hero, start there. The five-minute demo is the fastest way to understand what changes and what becomes possible.

02

Run a Focused Trial

Connect with our team to structure a trial around real workflows, with real sellers, on real deals. The goal is not to evaluate a tool. It is to see what your team's capacity looks like when Hero absorbs the work that does not require an SE.

03

Build the Business Case

We have built tools to help you quantify the impact before anyone asks you to. Use them early. The ROI conversation is easier when you have already done the math.

04

Scale What Works

If the trial confirms what the data suggests, we will work with you to extend access and move quickly. The market is not waiting, and neither should your team.

Conclusion

The inflection point is real.

The research is clear. The buyer behavior has already shifted.
The sellers who rely on your team are ready for something better.

The SE leaders who move first will not just improve their team's output.
They will reshape how their entire sales organization performs.

You do not need to overhaul everything at once.

You just need to start.

Hero® is ready when you are.

[See Hero in Action →](#)



About Hero

Hero® is an AI Sales Teammate built to help sellers win the moments that decide deals.

Not a platform. Not an agent. A teammate. One that shows up prepared, stays sharp in the conversation, and helps you follow through before the momentum fades.

Hero was built by Vivun, the leader in AI for sales, on the belief that the best technology for a sales rep is the kind that makes you better — not the kind that makes you easier to manage. That belief is in everything Hero does: from preparing you for the call, surfacing the right answer mid-conversation, and helping you close the loop fast while the deal is still warm.

Hero works with the tools you already use. and requires no consultants, no configuration, and no IT project. Hero is ready when you are — which, if you're in sales, is right now.

Those aren't organizational averages sitting in a leadership deck. That is time back in your week and more deals in your column.

What It's Like to Sell With an AI Sales Teammate

The best way to understand Hero is to feel the difference she makes in a real conversation.

See it live → meethero.ai

Walk through a real sales scenario — before, during, and after a customer call — and see exactly what it looks and feels like to have Hero in your corner.

No demo request form. No SDR follow-up. Just Hero, doing what she does.

meethero.ai