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Introduction

The world of work has undergone a seismic shift over the past few years. In 2019, when we last reported on the State of Work, the biggest challenge sales teams faced was misalignment. Fast forward to today, and the picture is vastly different—a global pandemic disrupted the way we work and an economic downturn is forcing everyone to improve performance with fewer resources.

Marketing teams, in particular, are feeling the squeeze. With tighter budgets available for campaigns, adopting a data-driven strategy is a must. But to do that, marketers need the right tools and technology to make the biggest impact with fewer resources.

In our latest State of Work report, we set out to examine how marketing teams can drive productivity in today’s turbulent environment. Our findings revealed that most marketing teams are missing out on crucial opportunities to embrace more progressive, efficient ways of working. They’re not leveraging the potential of automation and AI to transform their work, and it’s time for that to change.

Actions taken in the past 6 months due to economic downturn

- Budget reductions: 41%
- Pivoting business strategy: 37%
- Hiring freezes: 31%
- Productivity audits: 25%
- Reduced technology spend: 25%
- Layoffs: 10%

BASE: MARKETING EXECUTIVES, MARCH 2023
Methodology

Slack, a Salesforce company, conducted this global survey in partnership with the research firm Qualtrics between February 24 and March 21, 2023. The total sample size of sales professionals was 2,216 desk workers and executives across a range of industries in the following countries: United States, Australia, France, Germany, United Kingdom, India, Singapore, Japan and South Korea. The groups surveyed included office-based workers, remote workers, and those working in a hybrid model. We did not target Slack employees or customers for this survey.

In this report, we refer to the following respondent groups:

**Executives and leaders:** Presidents, partners, C-suite

**Managers:** People managers, ranging from team leads to VP-level leads

**Desk workers:** Independent contributors

The survey questions were designed to capture a wide range of data, including the challenges sales teams face, their productivity metrics, their use of automation and AI, and their views on employee experiences and wellness.
Marketing leaders need to rethink productivity metrics

Measuring the impact of work is a near universal challenge for marketing teams. Unfortunately, this can lead to a misguided emphasis on the wrong metrics.

According to the survey, 25% of marketing executives primarily rely on visibility metrics such as hours spent in office or online, the number of emails sent and lines of code written to measure productivity. However, the majority of marketing workers (29%) express a desire to be measured based on the achievement of team KPIs and goals.

This discrepancy in measurement preferences has led to an increase in performative work, a phenomenon where marketing workers spend an average of 32% of their time appearing productive without necessarily contributing to their team or company goals. The result? More burnout and less actual productivity.

Pressure to appear constantly available also adds to this issue. A staggering 57% of marketing workers feel pressure to respond to messages quickly, even if they’re sent after standard working hours. Similarly, 49% of marketing workers feel the need to regularly demonstrate their productivity to colleagues and managers.

Determining the right mix of inputs and outputs is one of the biggest obstacles many organizations face when it comes to properly measuring the productivity that’s so essential to navigating choppy economic waters.
Anyone can game a single metric, so you must consider a blend of leading and lagging indicators. The lagging indicator is what happened. It’s ‘reading the news,’ and if you look at it in isolation, it’s not very helpful—whereas leading indicators give you a proactive look at the speed and progress the company is making.

Marketing leaders need to rethink their approach to productivity metrics. A more balanced and holistic view of productivity, one that takes into account both inputs (like hours worked) and outputs (like goals achieved), could be the key to fostering a more productive and less stressful work environment.
Marketing orgs stand to benefit greatly from automation and AI

In the modern marketing landscape, many daily tasks are repetitive and transactional. These tasks, while necessary, can consume a significant portion of a marketer’s time that could be better spent on strategic initiatives. This is where automation and AI come into play.

Only 47% of marketing workers are currently utilizing automated processes. However, for those who have embraced automation, the benefits are clear: 84% of these workers report that automation has had a positive impact on their productivity. On average, marketing workers who leverage automated processes save an impressive 3.7 hours per week. That’s nearly a half-day’s work that can be repurposed towards more strategic tasks, or as we like to put it, enough time saved to start your weekend early on Friday!

Make better decisions with unified marketing insights

Providing a consistent and personalized experience across every channel is vital for a successful marketing campaign, but time spent pulling and analyzing customer data from different sources remains a problem. In fact, more than one third of marketers from Salesforce’s State of Marketing Report say unifying customer data is a key challenge for their organization.

With CRM Analytics for Slack, you can automatically pull critical customer data and insights into Slack, where teams collaborate to execute campaigns.
The benefits of automation extend beyond just time savings. A majority (63%) of sales workers say the greatest advantage of automation is its ability to help them achieve more with less time and resources. This increased efficiency is crucial when many organizations are facing budget constraints and pressure to perform.

Meanwhile, only 30% of marketing workers are currently utilizing AI in their work. AI has the potential to further transform the marketing industry, offering advantages such as predictive analysis, richer customer insights and personalized, targeted messaging. By integrating AI into their workflows, marketing teams not only improve their efficiency, they also enhance the customer experience.
### Most common sales processes that get automated

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>File sharing and storage</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT help desk customer service (e.g. answers to frequently asked questions)</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unique automations to make core tasks easier (e.g. automating simple tasks that are tedious or repetitive specific to my job)</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending messages to colleagues</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tickets and requests</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alerts (e.g. from third-party integrations to your main workspace)</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Onboarding (e.g. automating access to certain tools and documents to new hires)</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Requests for time off</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expense approvals</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Base: Marketing desk workers*
Drive marketing productivity by improving employee experiences

Our survey also found that productivity and wellness are not mutually exclusive. Job satisfaction, engagement, and mental wellness are top factors that contribute to productivity. Employees must be well to deliver results.

According to our survey, a striking 87% of employees say that feeling happy and engaged with their organization would enhance their productivity. What’s more, 34% of marketing workers say spending too much time in meetings and on emails is their primary challenge. Other notable barriers include trouble staying motivated (33%), struggling to stay focused (31%) and difficulty coordinating or communicating with colleagues at work (28%).
### Biggest barriers to productivity amongst marketing workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spending too much time in meetings and email</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trouble staying motivated</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty staying focused</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty coordinating or communicating with colleagues at work</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finding the information or context I need to move work forward</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive cost-cutting measures</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of clarity over my priorities</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Switching between multiple apps or tools to get the job done (e.g. G-Suite, Microsoft, Zoom, etc.)</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*BASE: MARKETING DESK WORKERS*
Boosting wellness and job satisfaction in the workplace is not about piling on more perks, but rather about providing employees with more flexibility in when they work. A significant number of desk workers, 43%, report feeling more productive when they’re able to work during the hours they choose. More than half say that the most effective way employers can improve their productivity is by allowing flexible work schedules.

Implementing flexible work schedules requires thoughtful planning, though. For instance, 48% of employees say they feel more productive brainstorming in the office versus remotely. Similarly, 42% feel more productive making group decisions in the office compared to when they’re working remotely. Moreover, 48% of employees feel a stronger sense of community in the office, and 40% find short conversations easier to have in the office compared to remote settings.

That being said, certain tasks such as deep focus work (42%), meetings (30%), and shallow work (22%) can be more productive in remote settings. Interestingly, 80% of employees report that they’re more productive when their immediate team is in the office at the same time. To enhance the employee experience, companies should consider experimenting with concepts like anchor days, hybrid work models, designated meeting-free days and asynchronous work processes.

Another aspect to consider is improving meeting hygiene and encouraging asynchronous work when possible. A substantial 34% of marketing workers say that spending too much time in meetings and on email hinders their productivity. Furthermore, 42% believe that their meetings could be eliminated without causing any adverse problems. This suggests that there are opportunities to streamline communication and collaboration processes to enhance productivity and job satisfaction.
Top ways marketing leaders can support productivity

- Flexible work schedules: 51%
- Flexible location: 38%
- Providing unique workplace benefits (e.g. lunch, snacks, games, etc.): 33%
- Making improvements to the workplace (e.g. more meeting rooms, quiet areas, etc.): 33%
- Encouraging people to bring their whole selves to work: 29%
- No-meeting days: 19%
- Tracking activity metrics (e.g. time spent at work, emails sent, etc.): 19%
- Empowering us to automate work processes with low- or no-code tools: 18%
- Requiring employees to be in the office every day or most days when possible: 13%
- Employee resource groups (e.g. women’s employee resource group): 9%

Base: Marketing Desk Workers
The takeaway

It’s clear that the traditional approach to sales productivity isn’t working as well as it could. By rethinking productivity metrics, embracing automation and AI, and focusing on improving employee experiences, marketing organizations can unlock new levels of performance.

The future of marketing productivity lies in three key areas:

• First, marketing leaders need to shift their focus to a blend of inputs and outputs. This means paying attention to the resources and efforts that go into each campaign in addition to the final results. It’s about viewing the process holistically and recognizing the value each step brings to the overall outcome.

• Second, keeping up with technology isn’t optional. Marketing leaders should adopt automated workflows and start exploring ways to utilize generational AI now. Automation can streamline processes, reduce errors, and free up valuable time for marketing teams to focus on more strategic tasks. Meanwhile, artificial intelligence offers exciting possibilities for predictive analytics, personalized customer interactions, and more.

• Finally, creativity is key when it comes to balancing flexible work schedules with in-person work. In the modern workplace, employees value flexibility highly. Certain tasks are more productive in an office setting, while others are best done remotely. Ultimately, the key to driving sales productivity lies in being open to change and willing to adapt. The potential benefits in terms of increased productivity, job satisfaction, and overall business performance are too significant to ignore.
Slack can help

As a marketing leader, you don’t have to navigate the future alone. *Slack for Marketing* is a powerful productivity platform that can help you unlock the full potential of your marketing teams in three key ways:

- Make smarter decisions as a team. Prioritize and optimize marketing programs seamlessly as a team with Marketing Cloud insights sent directly into your conversations.
- Launch campaigns and products faster. Break down silos and unify go-to-market teams by pulling all stakeholders, conversations, tools and Marketing Cloud insights into one place.
- Overdeliver with your external partnerships. Collaborate more effectively with external partners in Slack Connect channels and drive stronger outcomes with real-time feedback.

Learn more about *Slack for Marketing* or contact our Sales team for more information.
About Slack

Slack is on a mission to make people’s working lives simpler, more pleasant and more productive. It is the productivity platform for customer companies that improves performance by empowering everyone with no-code automation, making search and knowledge sharing seamless, and keeping teams connected and engaged as they move work forward together. As part of Salesforce, Slack is deeply integrated into the Salesforce Customer 360, supercharging productivity across sales, service and marketing teams. To learn more and get started with Slack for free, visit slack.com or connect with us @SlackHQ.

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