

Choosing AI for Sales

A decision aid — not a scorecard.

From *How Will Sales AI Deliver Maximum Value?* — Bob Sanders, Axiom Sales Kinetics · AI Sales Summit, September 3, 2026

You are going to get value out of AI this year. Everyone will.

That is the problem. The first tranche of value is available to anyone who buys the same tools, which means it distinguishes nobody. The question worth asking isn't whether AI will help. It's whether you'll still be gaining ground in two years — or whether you collected everything it was going to give you in the first six months and didn't notice.

What decides that is grounding.

Training is what a model already learned: everything ever written about selling. Massive, genuinely useful, and your competitor can buy the same one tomorrow.

Grounding is everything the AI can reach — and actually use — at the moment it acts. Two things you have to give it:

- **Your methodology** — what good looks like for the things your sellers *and managers* actually do
- **Your environment** — what that looks like in your business, with your buyers and your competitors

And one thing nobody can sell you: **what your AI knows about your people** — what each seller can and can't do. That only exists if something measures it, over and over, and shares what it learns.

There is no score at the bottom of this page. Different answers are right for different organizations.

Part A · Before You Evaluate Anyone

What are we solving for?

- Are we solving one named problem, or changing how this team sells?
- If we named a problem — objection handling, discovery, pipeline quality — how do we know that's the problem and not a symptom of one?
- Would we recognize success? What would be different, in what timeframe, that we could actually see?
- Is the honest answer “we need to be able to say we're using AI”? That's a real business requirement. Meet it deliberately and cheaply — and most of what follows won't apply to you.

What do we already have to stand on?

- Is there a named set of skills — the things a seller has to be able to *do* — separate from the stages of our sales process?
- For each skill, is there a defined model of execution: what a seller actually does and says?
- **Hand that definition to two people who weren't in the room when it was built. Do they write down the same list of what a seller has to do?**
- Are there worked examples in *our* selling environment — our buyers, our offerings, the objections our people actually hear?
- Does any of it exist in a form a machine can read? Or is it slide decks, PDFs on a shared drive, an LMS, and the heads of our best managers?

Material the AI can't read is material the AI won't use — it will answer from training instead, blend in whatever scraps it can reach, and hand you something that sounds like your company without being reliable.

What are we actually able to build and sustain?

- **What have we built internally and still maintained three years later?** Not what we believe about building — what we have evidence of.
 - Who would own this? Is it anyone's actual job, or an addition to five people's?
 - Can we carry integration work as a permanent condition rather than a project that ends?
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The Four Paths

Your answers in Part A put you on one of these.

0 · Wait and see. This is the one we'd argue against. Not because the technology is urgent — because the thing that takes time isn't the software, it's defining what good looks like and accumulating what the system learns about your people. Waiting doesn't pause that clock. It just starts it later than everyone else's.

1 · Point solution(s). Solve the problem you have today. Fast, focused, and often exactly right — especially if you're solving for efficiency. The only mistake is choosing this by accident and then wondering in a year why proficiency never moved.

2 · Build a grounded system yourself. Entirely bespoke, entirely yours. In our experience this runs **two to four years**, and the spread isn't about software: if your methodology is already defined at the behavioral level you're at the short end, and if it isn't, you're building *that* first. Your second predictor is the "what have we built and still maintain" question — not your appetite for building.

3 · Adopt a grounded system from a vendor. Fastest route to grounded value, because the grounding and the interlock already exist. The real cost: you're inheriting someone else's methodology. It had better be one you'd want your team running — evaluate that before you evaluate any software.

Timeframes are our estimates from doing this work, not published research. They vary — which is why what moves you within the range matters more than the range itself.

Reading Your Answers

Still no score — but the answers do point somewhere.

Start here: are you solving one named problem, or changing how the team sells?

One problem points to **path 1**, and you can stop there. That isn't a lesser answer, it's a smaller question — and point solutions are good at smaller questions. If you're changing how the team sells, keep going.

Then, whichever of those you answered: could two people who weren't in the room apply your definition and reach the same place?

If no, that work comes first whichever path you take. The only question left is whether you do it yourself or adopt someone else's. It is not optional, and no vendor can skip it for you.

Then, only if you're changing how the team sells: do you have evidence you build and sustain internal systems — a named owner, and tolerance for integration as a permanent condition?

Yes makes **path 2** realistic. No points to **path 3**.

And path 0? Waiting isn't a path you choose. It's what happens when nobody answers the three questions above.

Part B · Questions for Whoever You're Talking To

Useful on any path. On path 2, lean hardest on **The System**. On path 3, on **The Grounding**.

The grounding — what is it standing on?

- Is it scoring **communication**, or scoring **selling**? Both are real. A general communications model measures tone, pace, listening ratio, filler — those matter. They're also identical for every company that buys the same tool.
- If the answer is "we customize it to your model" — **what do you need from us to do that, and what happens if we can't give it to you?**
- When it scores a seller, what exactly is it comparing them against? Point at the artifact.
- **If we disagree with a score, what do we appeal to?**
- Can you show us an exchange where it declines to answer because it doesn't know?

The localization — does it know us?

- Does it know what we sell, the language we use, the buyers we meet, the competitors we face?
- Does it know this individual seller's history, or does every session start from zero?

The system — do the pieces know about each other?

- Where do the outputs live? Who sees a score — the seller, the manager, us? How does each of them act on it? And how do *you* use it?
- How does this learn what our other tools already know about this seller?
- If we add a second tool next year, what has to be rebuilt?

The durability — will this still be true in three years?

- What happens when the next generation of models arrives? How tightly is this bound to one provider or one model?
- When it gets something wrong, how do we fix it, and does the fix persist?
- If we stop working with you, what do we keep and what stops working?

Where We Fit

We build a comprehensive, grounded system — path 3. That makes us the wrong answer for some of the people reading this.

If you're solving for efficiency, or for a single skills event, or for being able to report that AI is deployed, we are not your best choice. Not because those aren't real needs, but because they aren't what we're built to do — and you'd be buying a great deal of capability you have no intention of using.

If you're trying to change how your team sells, and to know, skill by skill and seller by seller, whether it's working — that's the problem we built for.

Either way, the questions above are the same questions. **Ask them of us too.**