freshworks

SALES LEADERS' BUSINESS PREPAREDNESS SURVEY

How 400+ sales leaders worldwide are responding with positive action

Introduction

The global spread of COVID-19 has been swift and devastating. A COVID-19 response study fielded last month by Freshworks finds strong negative impacts for sales leaders and their organizations around the globe, but also an emerging — much more positive —story of:

Flexibility and rapid adaptation

Strengthening customer relationships

Optimising CRM/analytics and other technology usage

Training & development to augment sales capabilities

Information, process and strategy improvement

Enhanced digitalisation and automation of sales workflows

Complete study results are presented here. We hope you find the report both informative and helpful in fine tuning and evolving your own COVID-19 responses.

Sincerely,
The Freshworks Team

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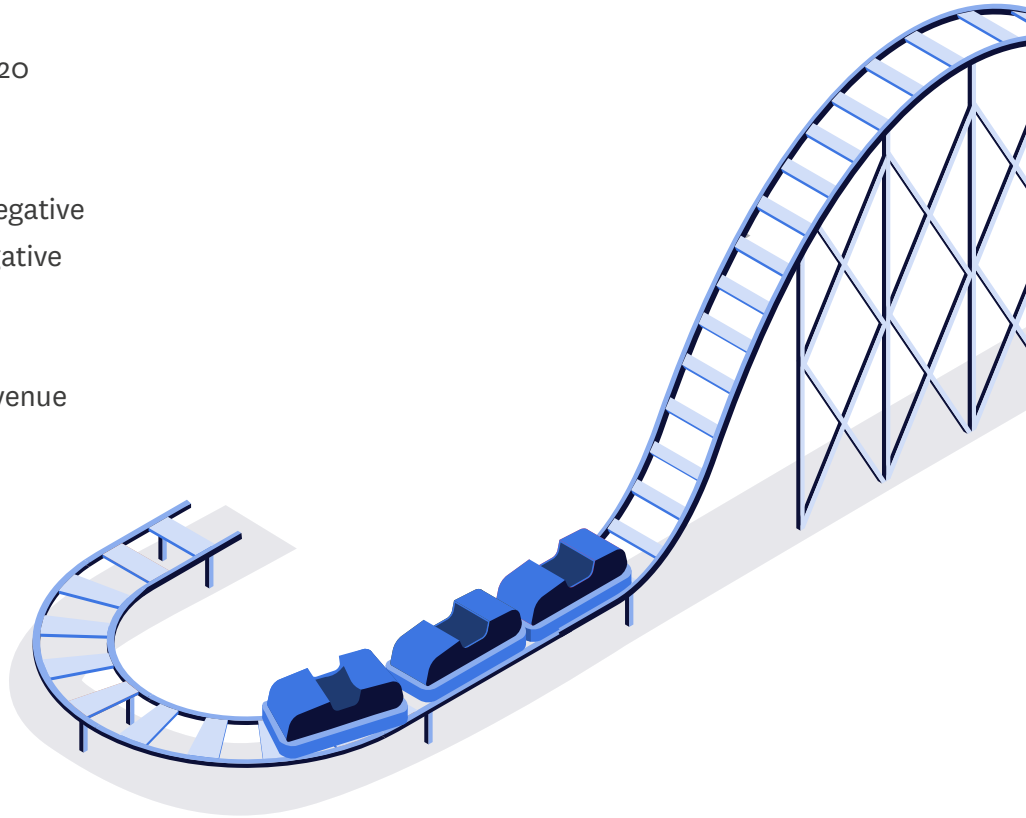
RE-DEFINE BUYER-SELLER INTERACTIONS

Revenue forecasts plummet 01

Nearly 7 in 10 (67%) of sales leaders worldwide expect COVID-19 to negatively affect 2020 enterprise revenues.

In Australia, 73% expect a decline in revenue in 2020. Within this group, 52% rate the negative impact from COVID-19 as either medium or high, while the remaining see only a low-negative impact.

The situation in the US appears more dire with 82% of sales leaders now anticipating revenue declines all told.



73% of Australia-based sales leaders believe COVID-19 will have a negative impact on 2020 revenues

69% within that group believe the negative revenue impact from COVID-19 will be “medium” or “high”

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Consumer demand shuts down 02

Nearly half (45%) of sales leaders in IT companies expect revenues to improve due to COVID-19 as business entities across the globe scramble to setup and support remote work arrangements and many companies use forced downtime to pursue process improvements that involve investments in automation, AI, and other technologies.

Hardest hit industry verticals are ones that rely heavily on consumer demand for goods and services, according to the study. Industries include:

Manufacturing
(74%)

Transportation & logistics
(72%)

Construction & real estate
(69%)

Travel & Tourism
(68%)

Industry verticals feeling somewhat less impact (at least, so far) include:

BFSI
(58%)

Healthcare
(46%)

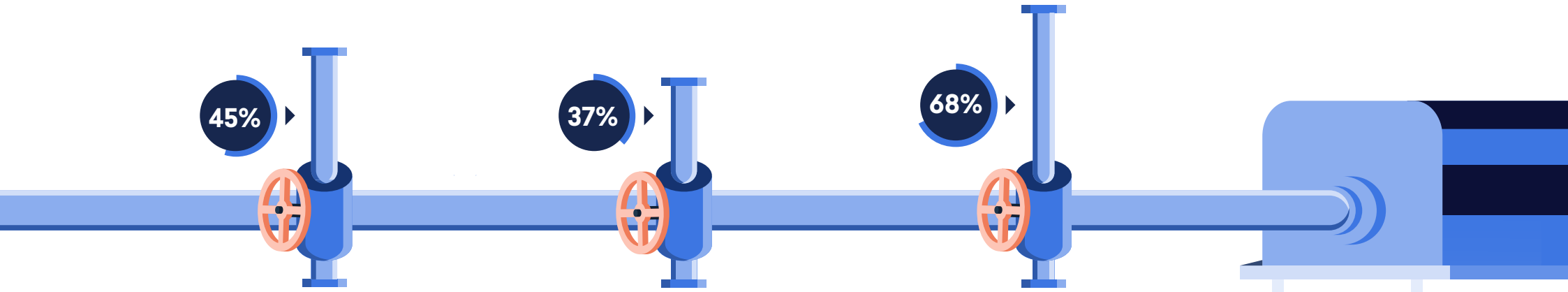
Information technology
(48%)

03 Nearly half of pipeline deals are now considered ‘at risk’

Sales leaders worldwide estimate that some 43% of pipeline deals predicted to close in Q2 2020 may now be at risk. Looking out to the end of 2020, the global sentiment is that 35% of deals in progress could be at risk of turning cold.

Looking regionally, Australia, UK and US-based sales leaders are more pessimistic for the shorter term (Q2), while Australia and UK are more pessimistic on the full-year look as well.

As a consequence, 68% of Australia-based sales leaders have reduced selling targets for their teams. In the US only 45% have done so. Interestingly, few sales leaders seem to be strongly emphasizing a sales pipeline focus and Australia leads the way as 24% of sales leaders rank focus on blocked/stuck opportunities in the pipeline as their top priority. In the US, meantime, only 6% rank this as top guidance they are providing to sales teams.



of pipeline sales deals are now at-riskfor Q2 2020 in Australia

of deals now at-risk for full-year 2020 in Australia

of Australia-based sales leaders reducing selling targets

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04

Hiring freezes, leaders expect negative budget impact

Unemployment rate has shot up to 6.2% in Australia, highest since September 2015, as per Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). The data showed employment in April decreased 594,300, the largest fall on record.

So, sales leaders have become more concerned when it comes to hiring decisions. More than half (55%) of Australia-based sales leaders say they have postponed new hiring decisions until the economic fallout from COVID-19 becomes clearer. That compares to 75% in the US

Also, nearly two-thirds (63%) of sales leaders worldwide expect negative budget impacts from the COVID-19 crisis. In Australia, that figure rises to 71%, making it difficult to imagine that job totals will not eventually be affected.

05 Decision makers become less accessible

Some 68% of sales leaders worldwide say the COVID-19 pandemic has made it more difficult to access key decision-makers for selling and closing deals. The figure is lower in Australia at 65% and is 64% in the US

This might be, at least in part, a function of growing pains as corporate enterprises have been forced to shift suddenly from office to work-from-home (WFH) setups and lockdowns/shelter-in-place orders are preventing field sales reps from meeting in-person with clients.

65% of Australia-based sales leaders say COVID-19 has made it more difficult to access key spend decision-makers

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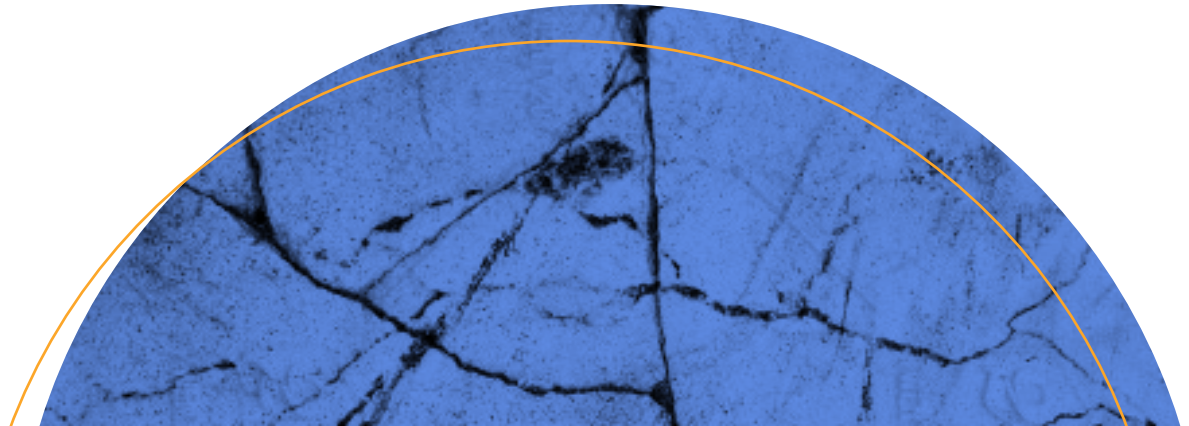
Now, for the

good news!



Strengthen customer relationships 06

82% of Australia-based sales leaders guiding their teams to focus on building deeper relationships with existing customers

An overwhelming 87% sales leaders are currently guiding their sales teams to focus on building deeper relationships with existing customers. That number is 82% in Australia 92% in the US.

45% of Australia-based sales leaders also say they are asking reps to engage more with current customers; that is almost on par with the US average of 47%. Asked how they are guiding sales teams to maximise ROI at this time, the number-one ranked response among sales leaders worldwide is to focus on service implementation and achieving key milestones for existing customers.

Yet another signifier that sales teams are ramping up focus on customer experience is that 35% of sales leaders worldwide report designing and deploying new contextual offers to match buyers' needs. The corresponding figure is 32% in Australia.

Recommended actions:

- Utilise CRM analytics to identify preferred/highest-value customers
- Prioritise preferred and high-value customers for well-being / check-in types of calls (with zero selling)
- Ask preferred customers to describe emerging and evolving pain points related to COVID-19 and related economic fallout (see more on page 13)
- Collaborate with marketing to create supportive content (COVID-19 related or otherwise) for use with both automated drip campaigns and personal outreach

07 Clean up CRM + and dive deep into analytics

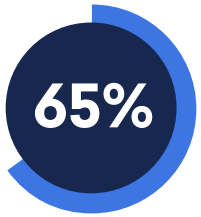
Cleaning up CRM and gleaning insights with analytics are two other ways many sales leaders are wisely choosing to use the downtime caused by COVID-19. On a global scale, roughly 7 in 10 (73%) are encouraging their reps to dig deeper into CRM analytics and to clean up records and files at this time. Corresponding numbers stand at 65% in Australia, and 62% in the US.

Recommended actions:

Add contacts to various digital/ content drip marketing campaigns
(and/or revise which campaigns people are associated with)

Reach out via email or SMS with personal 'check-in' notes, especially in cases where CRM notes suggest clients may be socially isolated at present

Mine external databases or use personal outreach to fill in missing data fields
(such as Linkedin)



of Australia-based sales leaders are using COVID-19-forced downtime to clean up their CRM records and to optimise their use of CRM analytics

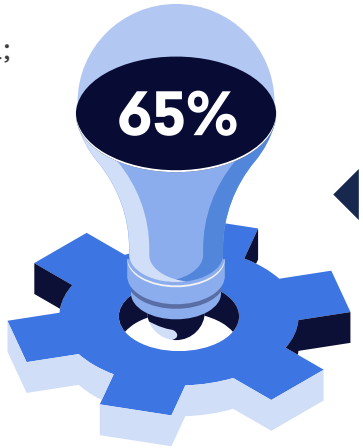
Ramp up training & development 08

Some 67% of sales leaders worldwide say that one key strategy for keeping sales forces productive and engaged at this time has been to increase their focus on sales enablement & training. In Australia, the figure is slightly lower at 65%, while it is 59% in the US

A potential roadblock for some in this area may be a lack of prior digitalization in terms of how training is delivered. Half of sales leaders worldwide say they are currently engaged with shifting in-person training over to virtual/digital formats.

Recommended actions:

- Setup direct mentoring relationships between more and less experienced sales personnel; ask mentors to emphasise high-level, consultative sales techniques
- Create incentives for product/service subject matter experts/reps to either create or curate and share helpful content with less knowledgeable reps
- Identify and recruit CRM power users to demonstrate both best practices and how to best utilise advanced CRM functionality



of Australia-based sales leaders are using COVID-19 downtime to shore up sales training and development

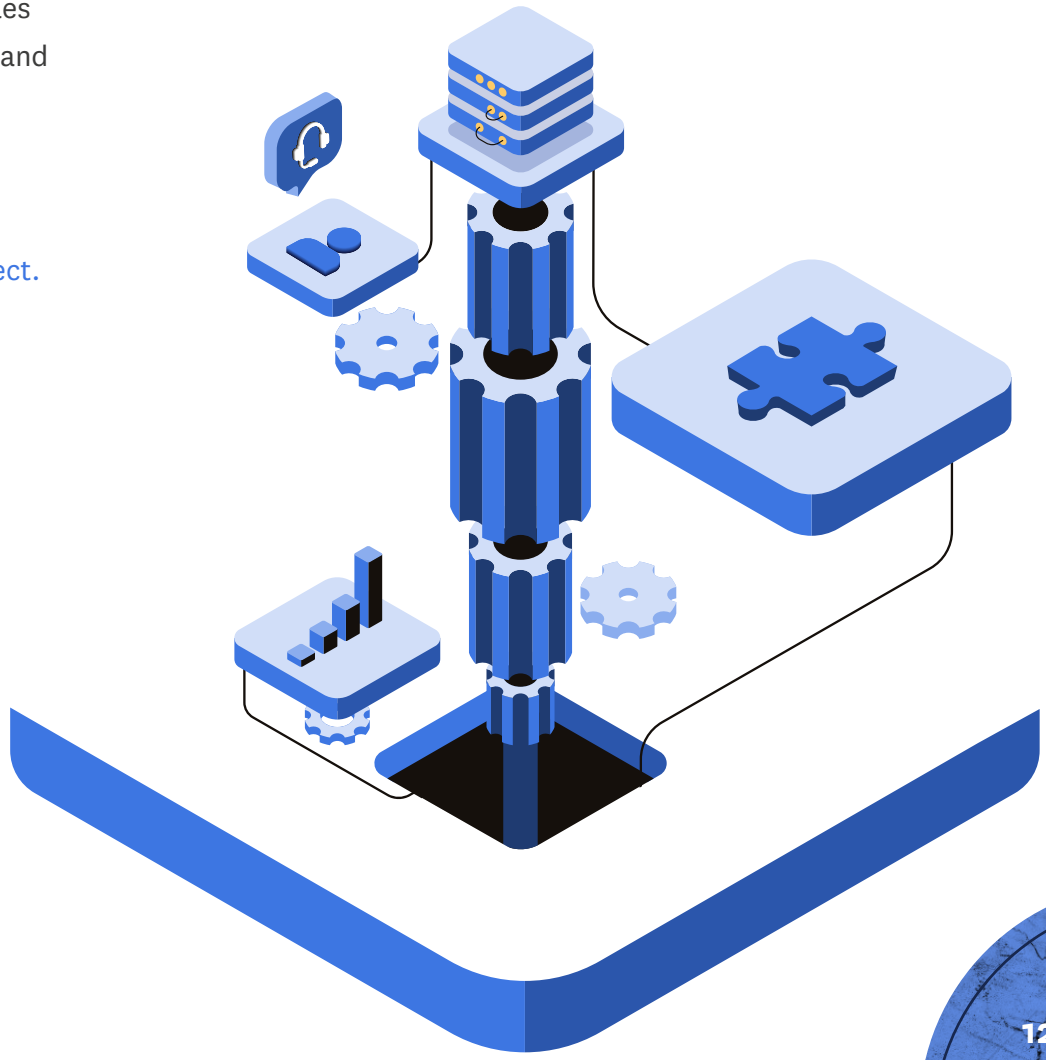
09 Re-engineer/improve sales processes

Comprehensive review and re-engineering of standard sales processes is one key area of long-term focus among sales leaders at present in Australia; 53% sales leaders say it is their top priority. The corresponding figure is 47% in the UK and 29% in the US

Recommended actions:

Click here for Freshworks' recently released step-by-step guide on this subject.

53% of Australia-based sales leaders are using COVID-19 downtime to re-engineer/improve sales processes



Improve go-to-market strategy 10

About 4 in 10 (43%) global sales leaders say they are using forced downtime from COVID-19 to revisit go-to-market strategies — that is, re-identifying customer pain points and adjusting standard sales and marketing messaging accordingly. The regional breakout:

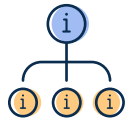
PERCENT OF SALES LEADERS WHO ARE:	GLOBAL	AUSTRALIA	U.S.	UK
Revisiting go-to-market strategies	43%	44%	26%	34%

Relatedly, 32% of global sales leaders say they are changing account plans, 32% are making changes to product discounting policies, and 29% are shifting product scope.

Recommended actions:

Set up direct client research into new and evolving pain points that can be promoted via CMS-based email or SMS campaigns
(using Survey Monkey or similar tools)

Add specific pain-point questions to customer check-in call scripts



Ensure that information gleaned from the above activities is properly aggregated, analyzed, packaged, and communicated to both marketing and newproduct/service development personnel

44% of Australia-based sales leaders are using COVID-19 downtime to revisit go-to-market strategies

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Re-define buyer-seller interactions

It may be too soon to draw firm conclusions on this, but the Freshworks COVID-19 impact study finds evidence that the present move to more digital/virtual interactions between sellers and buyers could be long-lasting (even permanent).

PERCENT OF SALES LEADERS WHO:	GLOBAL	AUSTRALIA	U.S.	UK
Say their sales personnel are ready for a switch to remote selling	70%	61%	73%	60%
Are encouraging sales personnel to meet virtually with clients versus in-person	68%	69%	71%	65%
Are canceling or postponing major in-person customer meetings	65%	56%	77%	68%
Believe their customers are ready for a switch to remote seller-buyer interactions	64%	56%	65%	50%
Are reallocating marketing spend to emphasise more digital types of communications with customers	37%	32%	24%	33%

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Recommended actions:

- Consider replacing in-person customer events with webinars/virtual conferences

- Add training around best practices, professionalism, and etiquette for small, medium, and large group virtual meetings as well as digital presentation skills

- Budget for, equip, and assist sales personnel with enhancing professionalism of home workspaces (for example, increasing WIFI bandwidth, green screens/professional meeting backgrounds, high-quality microphones and lighting for video conferencing, access to applications for handling large file transfers to and from clients, and so forth)

69%

of Australia-based sales leaders are asking sales personnel to meet virtually with clients versus in person

Conserve cash with more digital/remote and automated sales workflows

Even before COVID-19, there was a move afoot among global corporations to conserve cash by allowing — even encouraging — more remote work setups and by investing in process automation solutions. Supporting work from home (WFH) not only liberates substantial cash from office real estate, maintenance, and utilities, it is often preferred by younger generations and can improve employee morale, retention, and productivity by eliminating long/traffic-heavy commutes and adding flexibility for people coping with child/eldercare and other heavy personal obligations. A few relevant data points from the Freshworks COVID-19 impact study:

PERCENT OF SALES LEADERS WHO ARE:	GLOBAL	AUSTRALIA	U.S.	UK
Asking sales teams to work from home	75%	71%	77%	78%
Using regular virtual meetings to keep their sales forces engaged and productive	88%	89%	83%	87%
Cancelling or postponing major in-person company conferences, training events	67%	61%	71%	67%

Recommended actions:

- Create incentives that target full adoption and consistent/advanced use of CRM and other systems, which enable consistent interactions with and monitoring of remote workforces

- Add training on how to make optimal use of automation capabilities built into CRM, digital marketing, and other tools already available to sales teams

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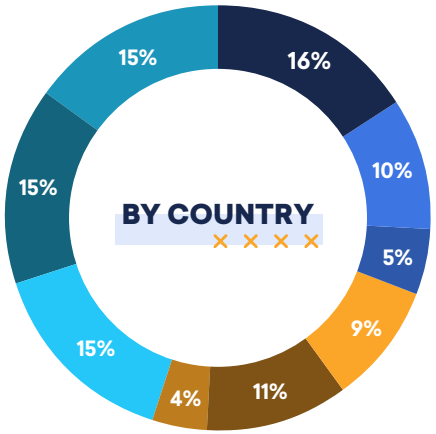
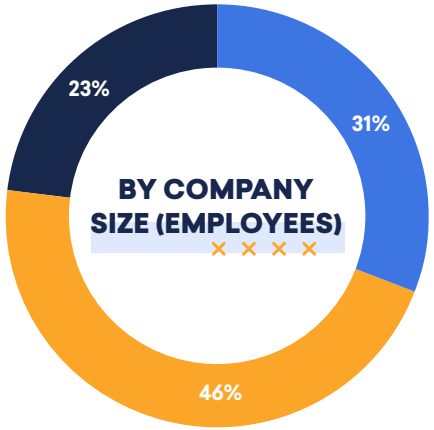
Who participated: study demographics

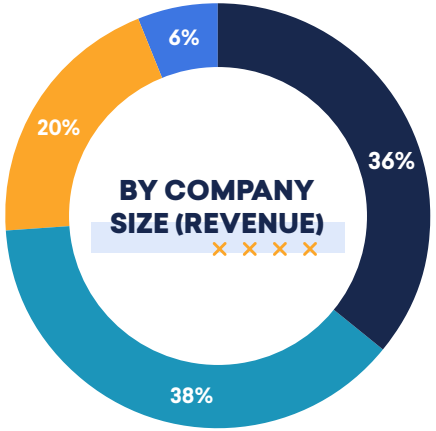


- U.S.
- Canada
- Belgium
- Netherlands
- Australia
- New Zealand
- India
- UK
- Gemany

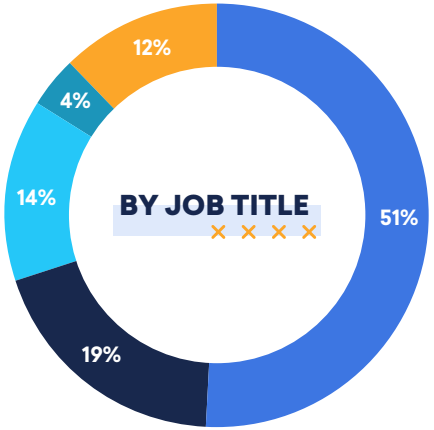


- 250-499
- 500-999
- 1000+

- 1 to 5
- 6 to 10
- 11 to 20
- 21+



- USD 1-100 million
- USD 100-500 million
- USD 500 million -1 billion
- USD 1+ billion



- Sales Manager/ Team Leader/ Senior Mananger
- Director/ Senior Director
- VP/SVP/EVP
- President
- C-Suite

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About Freshworks

Freshworks is a leading cloud-based customer engagement company, offering a suite of products that is transforming the way world-class organizations collaborate. Our products are used by over 175,000 organizations across the world including NHS, Honda, Rightmove, Hugo Boss, Citizens Advice, Toshiba, and Cisco. Freshworks has offices in US, India, UK, Australia, and Germany.

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