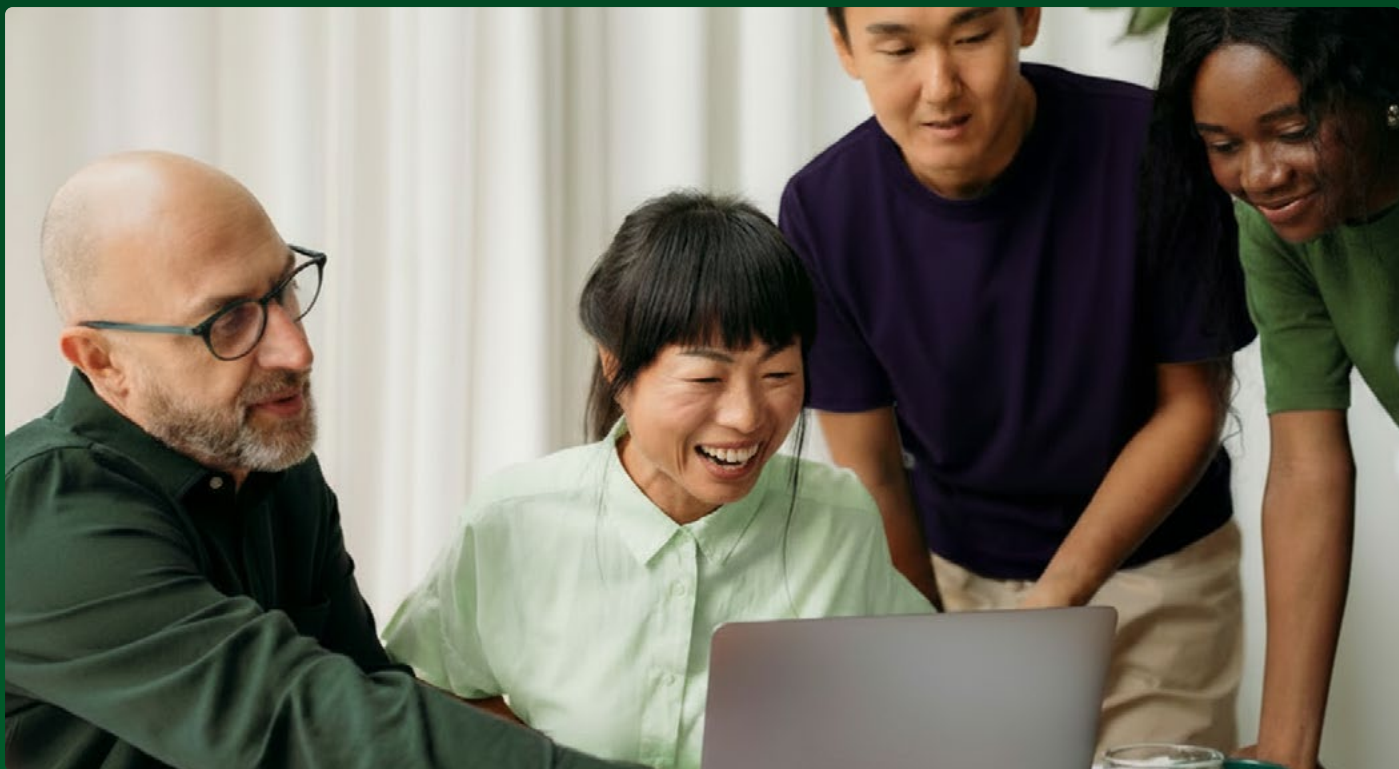




The hidden cost of selling:

How work around the work shapes sales performance

The modern sales process is supported by more tools, data, and technology than ever before. For many customer-facing professionals, success still depends on navigating a growing number of administrative tasks, systems, and follow-up activities that compete for their attention.

To better understand how professionals manage their daily workflows, Pipedrive surveyed 1,000 working professionals across industries and roles. The findings reveal a consistent challenge: administrative work consumes a significant share of the working week, uncertainty about priorities is common and many professionals struggle to keep up with follow-ups and customer information.

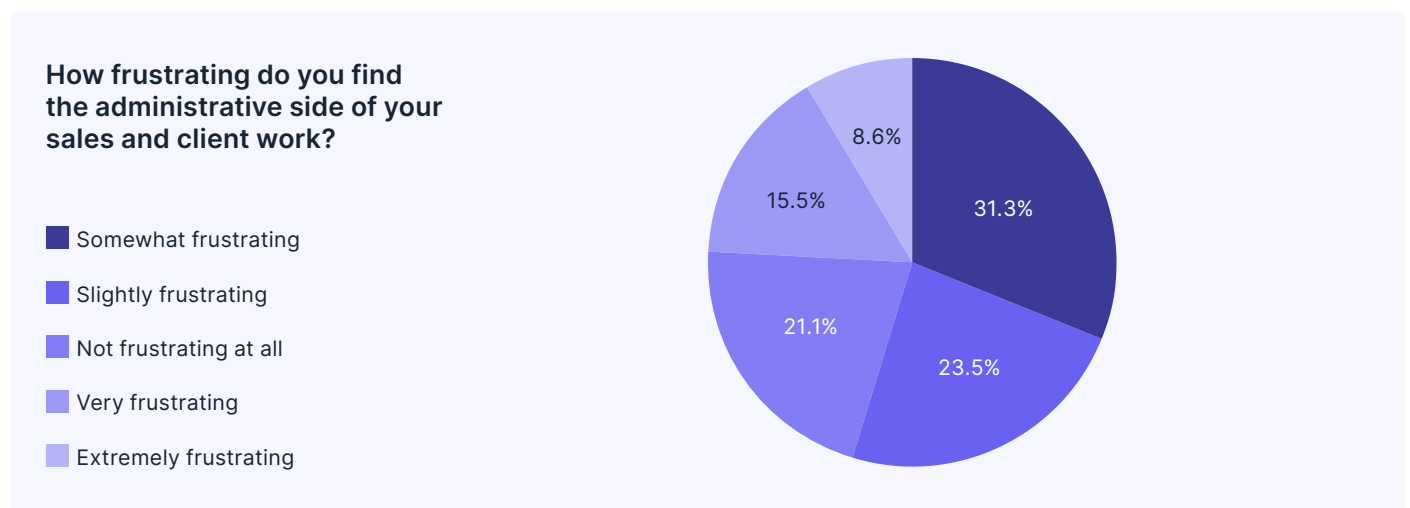
At the same time, the survey highlights growing openness toward AI-powered assistance. This is not seen as a replacement for human judgment, but rather as a tool to reduce repetitive work and surface relevant information quickly. It also helps professionals focus on the activities that create the most value: building relationships and serving customers.

The administrative burden is taking time away from customer work

Data reveals that administrative work has become a significant part of the customer-facing workweek. Nearly **58%** of respondents spend at least three hours per week on updating systems, writing summaries, logging notes, and completing other administrative tasks. This includes **28.2%** who spend 3-4 hours, **14.6%** who spend 5-6 hours, and **15%** who spend more than 6 hours every week on administrative work alone.

The burden is reflected in how professionals feel about these responsibilities. More than half (**55.4%**) describe the administrative side of their work as frustrating, including **8.6%** who find it extremely frustrating and **15.5%** who find it very frustrating. By comparison, only **21.1%** say administrative work is not frustrating at all.

Rather than serving customers, many professionals spend a meaningful portion of their week maintaining systems and managing process-related tasks. The findings suggest that productivity challenges are often rooted in the work required to support selling instead of the action of selling itself.



Uncertainty has become a daily part of the workflow

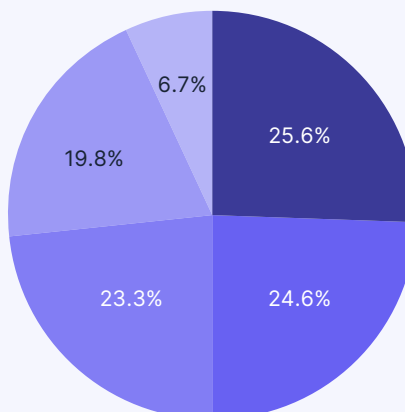
Knowing what deserves attention next has become a challenge for many professionals. Nearly **68%** of respondents experience uncertainty about priorities at least a few times per week, including **24.6%** who feel uncertain multiple times per day, **19.8%** who experience it about once per day, and **23.3%** who encounter it a few times per week. Only **6.7%** say they never experience uncertainty about what to prioritize next.

The survey also reveals a fragmented approach to managing follow-ups and next steps. While **26.8%** rely on calendar reminders and **26.7%** use a combination of methods, others depend on personal notes (**19.5%**), manual CRM updates (**10.4%**), automated

workflows (**10.1%**), or even memory alone (**6.5%**). This variety suggests there is no dominant workflow standard. Instead, professionals are piecing together systems that work for them individually, often creating inconsistency and uncertainty along the way.

On a typical workday, how often do you feel uncertain about what to prioritize next?

- Rarely
- Multiple times per day
- A few times per week
- About once a day
- Never



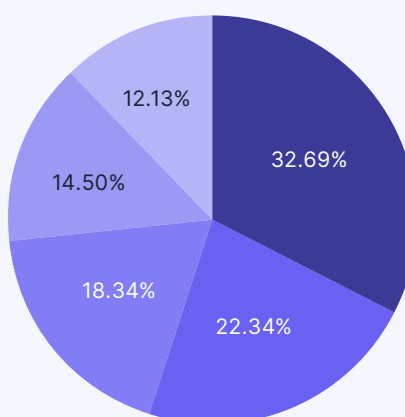
Preparation and follow-ups are consuming more time than expected

Much of the work involved in sales and account management happens outside customer conversations themselves. Before a call, only **16.3%** of respondents spend less than ten minutes preparing, while **42.9%** spend between 10-29 minutes, **28.3%** spend 30-59 minutes, and **8%** spend more than an hour reviewing emails, CRM history, and previous interactions. In total, more than **71%** spend at least ten minutes preparing for every customer conversation.

The workload continues after the conversation ends. Nearly **47.2%** say follow-ups or CRM updates take longer than 24 hours, either always, almost always, or often, including **14.5%** who say this happens almost every time and **32.7%** who say it happens often. These findings highlight a hidden productivity challenge: customer interactions may be measured in minutes, but the preparation and administrative work surrounding them can consume hours.

After a sales or client call, how often do follow-ups or CRM updates take longer than 24 hours to complete?

- Often
- About half the time
- Occasionally
- Always or almost always
- Rarely or never



AI adoption is growing, but full integration remains rare

While AI has become a mainstream topic, full adoption remains relatively limited. Only **25.2%** of respondents say AI tools are fully integrated into their daily workflow, while **29.9%** use them occasionally but not consistently. Another **13.8%** are open to trying AI but have not used it much, and **11.1%** remain skeptical of AI tools altogether.



The findings suggest that AI adoption is no longer a question of awareness but one of integration. Many professionals have experimented with AI, yet relatively few have incorporated it deeply enough to transform how they work.

The survey also reveals notable industry differences. In IT and technology, **33.6%** report regular, integrated AI usage, compared with only **11.4%** in wholesale and retail and **10%** in financial services.

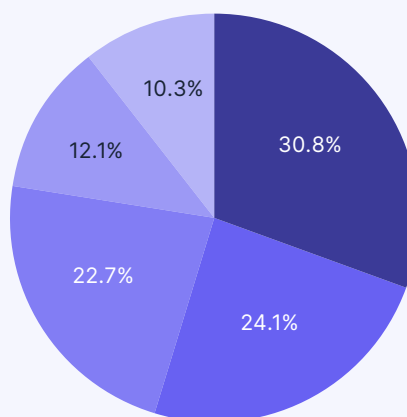
Employees want assistance, not autopilot

Respondents are generally open to AI support, but they show a clear preference for assistance rather than full autonomy. The most desired AI capability is having it draft emails, summaries, and notes for review (**43.3%**), followed by automatically handling repetitive administrative tasks (**37.3%**), flagging overdue follow-ups or missing information (**36.3%**), and recommending next steps for approval (**35.7%**).

At the same time, comfort with autonomous AI remains limited. While **22.7%** say they are very comfortable with AI automatically completing tasks without review, and **30.8%** are somewhat comfortable, a combined **22.4%** are somewhat or very uncomfortable with this level of automation. The findings suggest that people want AI to reduce workload, not remove human oversight.

How comfortable would you be with AI automatically completing tasks without your review?

- Somewhat comfortable
- Neutral
- Very comfortable
- Somewhat uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable



Trust remains the biggest barrier to AI adoption

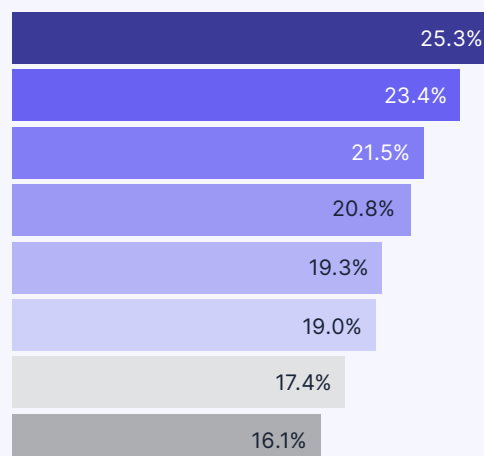
The biggest obstacles to broader AI adoption are human, not technical. The most common concern is trust, with **25.3%** saying it is difficult to know when AI-generated output can be trusted. Another **23.4%** say their organization has not provided clear guidance on how or when AI should be used, while **20.8%** feel AI outputs are too generic, and **19.3%** believe the results require too much editing to be useful.

Additional concerns include AI adding complexity rather than saving time (**17.4%**) and poor integration with existing systems (**16.1%**). Meanwhile, **21.5%** say they have not used AI enough to form an opinion, highlighting how many professionals are still in the early stages of adoption.

These findings suggest that improving trust and providing clearer organizational guidance may be just as important as improving the technology itself.

In your experience, what has limited the value of AI tools in your work?

- It's hard to know when to trust the output
- My organization hasn't given clear guidance on how or when to use them
- I haven't used AI tools enough to form an opinion
- Outputs are too generic and don't reflect my specific context
- Results require too much editing or oversight to be useful
- None of the above
- They add complexity instead of saving time
- The tools don't integrate well with my existing systems



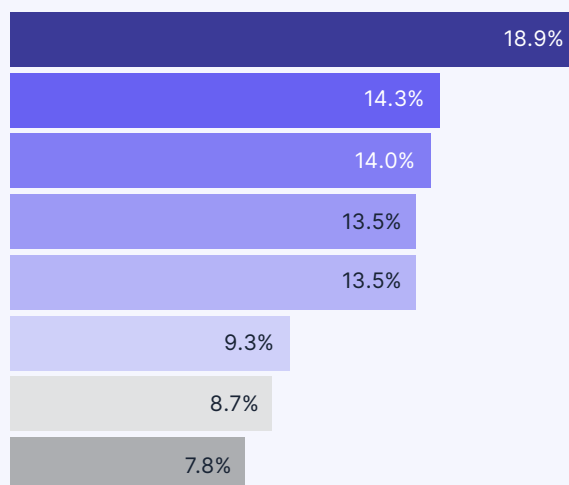
What professionals want most is clarity

When asked what would most improve their results, respondents consistently prioritized clarity and focus over additional features or automation. The most common answer was knowing exactly which deals and tasks to prioritize each day (**18.9%**). This was followed by spending less time on post-call administration (**14.3%**), reducing the number of tools they switch between (**14%**), having follow-up emails drafted and ready to review (**13.5%**), and having more time for live customer conversations (**13.5%**).

Interestingly, improvements focused on guidance and prioritization outranked many traditional productivity features. This suggests that today's challenge is not necessarily a lack of information, but knowing where to focus attention amid increasing complexity.

If you could improve one aspect of how you manage your sales and client work, which would have the biggest impact on your results?

- Knowing exactly which deals and tasks to prioritize each day
- Spending less time on post-call notes, updates and admin
- Reducing the number of tools I switch between
- Having follow-up emails drafted and ready to review
- Having more time for live customer conversations
- Seeing complete client context in one place before every call
- Identifying at-risk deals before they go cold
- Receiving real-time guidance during calls



In conclusion

The findings in this report suggest that the biggest challenge facing customer-facing professionals today is not a lack of effort, tools, or customer opportunities. Instead, it is the growing complexity of the work surrounding customer interactions. While there is no single solution, the survey highlights several opportunities for organizations looking to improve productivity and employee experience.

- First, reduce administrative work wherever possible to ensure employees spend less time documenting work and more time doing the work that creates value.
- Bring priorities into focus. When priorities are clear, teams can make faster decisions, reduce context switching, and maintain momentum throughout the day.
- Consolidate information and reduce tool switching to centralize information, improve system integrations, and create a more unified view of customers and ongoing activities.
- Treat AI as an assistant, not a replacement. Successful adoption is likely to come from practical, low-risk use cases that keep people in control while allowing technology to handle routine work in the background.
- Build trust through clear guidance by establishing clear policies, providing training, sharing successful use cases, and defining where AI can add value.

