

THE MISSING METRIC

*Unlocking the Human
Advantage in the Age of AI*

AuctusIQ™

To Us, Sales is Personal.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Organizations are investing heavily in data, AI, and go-to-market technology, yet the most predictive driver of commercial outcomes remains the least measured: the human factor.

This white paper examines why talent is the missing variable in sales performance, how human capability explains a disproportionate share of commercial variance, and how leading organizations are quantifying the behaviors and skills that differentiate their top performers. It also outlines a rigorous, data-driven framework for identifying talent gaps, developing people toward their potential, and operationalizing coaching at scale through AI.

THE PARADOX OF THE MODERN COMMERCIAL ENGINE

Over the past decade, companies have transformed the outer layers of their commercial systems. They have invested in product readiness, customer intelligence, predictive analytics, and AI-enabled sales tools. These advancements give leaders unprecedented visibility into markets, buyers, and workflows.

Yet wide performance variance persists across sales teams. Despite sophisticated systems, leaders still find themselves asking why some sellers consistently excel while others, who have similar tools and training, struggle to produce. Technology has advanced rapidly, but human capability continues to determine outcomes.

Organizations have optimized what surrounds the seller, but they have not optimized the sellers themselves.

THE UNDER-MEASURED VARIABLE: HUMAN CAPABILITY

Revenue models traditionally emphasize territory potential, pipeline strength, activity volume, conversion rates, and product knowledge. These metrics matter, but they fail to capture the most predictive factor driving success: Who is executing the work.



Decades of criterion-based research demonstrate that **individual talent explains 40–60% of performance variance in sales roles**. Talent is not an abstract concept; it includes measurable traits such as learning agility, a growth mindset, persistence, relationship formation, problem solving and accountability. TalentIQ is a match index that measures the most predictive attributes explaining this variance for each sales or sales leadership role across global sales organizations.

Yet most organizations, who are missing TalentIQ, cannot answer foundational questions:

- Which human traits drive the success of their top performers?
- How do I accurately measure who has what they need to succeed?
- Which capability gaps are limiting the middle of the sales force?
- How much performance lift is possible with targeted development?
- Who is in the wrong role?
- How ready is the team to achieve next year's targets?

Without this insight, leaders are forced to rely on anecdote and intuition—operating without the most predictive variable in their system.

THREE TRANSFORMATIVE QUESTIONS FOR REVENUE LEADERS

As commercial roles become more complex, leaders must answer three questions that traditional data cannot address.

1. ***Why do your best performers win?*** Top performers consistently apply high-value human attributes such as persistence, relationship formation, cognitive flexibility, problem-solving ability, accountability, and rapid learning.
2. ***Can you quantify the human factors predictive of success?*** Most organizations know what their sellers do. Few know how to measure who those sellers are—how they think, how they approach challenges, and which innate traits contribute to outcomes.
3. ***Can you systematically close the talent gap?*** Once capability gaps are visible, leaders can target coaching with precision, accelerate development, reduce ramp time, strengthen role alignment, and mitigate performance risk.

WHAT THE DATA SHOWS: INSIGHTS FROM THOUSANDS OF SELLERS

Large-scale analysis reveals consistent patterns across industries and company sizes. High talent scores correlate strongly with higher performance tiers, and top performers share a predictable set of cognitive, behavioral, and motivational attributes. In practice, the people who score highest on the predictive index are the same people who consistently exceed quota attainment. Those who score well, perform well.

The data also shows that moderate-talent individuals can become strong performers when leaders know the exact gap to close. A seller may have high drive and strong relationship skills but struggle in complex problem solving; another may excel analytically but lack consistency and follow-through.

TalentIQ Assessment Match	Average Quota Attainment
High Predictive Index	\$14 Million Per Seller
Moderate Predictive Index	\$6 Million Per Seller
Low Predictive Index	\$4 Million Per Seller

N=303

Sellers with a higher Predictive Index score produced 3.6 times more on quota attainment.

A powerful diagnostic emerges when organizations map their sales force on two dimensions: capability (talent readiness) and attainment (performance). This view exposes high performers, hidden potential, development needs, and misalignment that drives underperformance.



LIFE-CHANGING DATA

While the data shows what drives performance variance, its real value becomes clear when you see what that insight unlocks for an individual. **Tyler Morrison** never thought of himself as a salesperson. In 2015 he was at a mid-market organization at the time, not in a formal sales role, not carrying a quota, and not labeled as “commercial talent.” But he was selling every day—ideas, recommendations, influence, value. He just didn’t have language for it.

Through TalentIQ, for the first time, Tyler was given a clear, data-backed understanding of how he naturally shows up, what situations he excels in, and which behaviors consistently drive impact for him. Not generic competencies. Not best-practice averages. But his specific strengths and patterns. That clarity had an immediate effect.

What changed was not a new tool or training program. It was *insight*. For the first time, Tyler had a clear, objective view of how he naturally operates—how he thinks, how he approaches problems, and which specific capabilities most influenced his results. The assessment also identified two areas where targeted development would have the greatest impact: delivering the value proposition and navigating the deal. That insight didn’t just improve his performance; it changed the direction of his career. Development stopped being generic. Coaching became focused. Instead of trying to adopt someone else’s style, he worked intentionally on those specific capabilities, with clear expectations and measurable progress.

With that clarity, Tyler stepped confidently into a sales role, where his strengths translated directly into performance results. As Tyler applied this insight, his results changed materially. His sales performance increased from \$900k to \$6.3M in Annual Bookings, creating a step-change in his earnings and career trajectory. And that change mattered beyond work.



Tyler and his family on a once in a lifetime vacation to Hawaii.

The performance lift created financial opportunities for his family that would not have existed otherwise—greater stability, more flexibility, and the ability to say yes to experiences and choices that had previously been out of reach. The data didn’t just explain his success; it helped create it. This is the human side of the data.

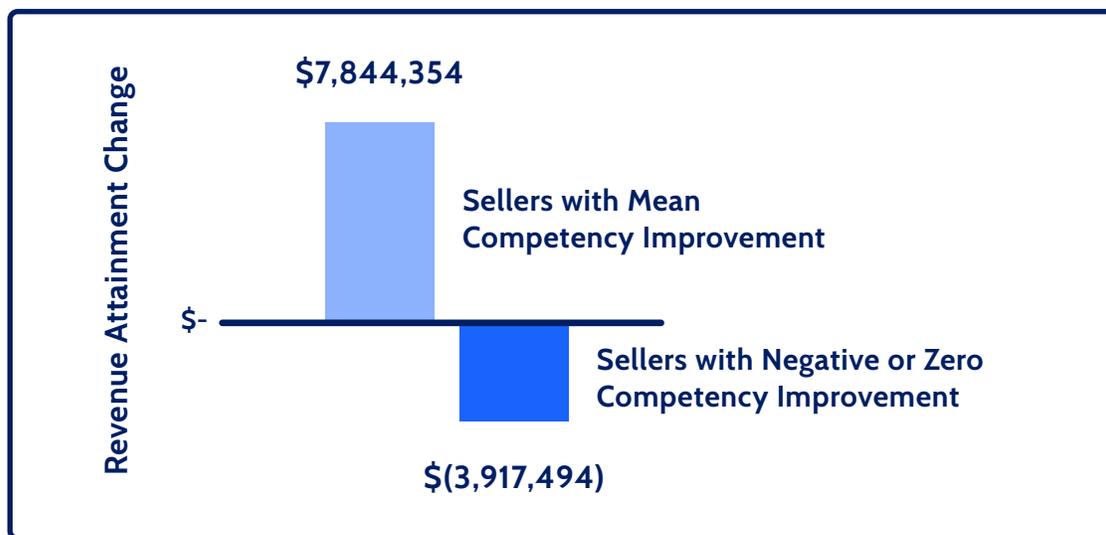
At scale, talent intelligence explains performance variance across teams. At the individual level, it changes careers—and, in many cases, lives. When people understand their capability and leaders know exactly what to develop, performance gains become real, repeatable, and meaningful.



CASE EXAMPLE: CLOSING THE TALENT GAP IN PRACTICE

In one commercial team, sellers were assessed at two points in time to measure the impact of targeted coaching. Middle performers moved into higher performance bands, and nearly two-thirds of low performers showed measurable improvement within two quarters. Those who could not improve, even with support, were redeployed or transitioned. The patterns were clear across the sample. In a study of 426 sellers, those who improved their mean competency scores on the TalentIQ assessment delivered \$3.4 Billion more in year-over-year annual revenue growth than their peers who did not improve their TalentIQ.

Competency Improvement Fuels Revenue Attainment Growth



*Managers who applied TalentIQ to increase seller competency delivered **\$3.4 billion more** in revenue growth than managers who didn't apply TalentIQ.*

One seller demonstrated moderate overall capability but a pronounced gap in complex problem solving. Once identified, this gap became the focus of his development plan. Within months, his capability and performance improved, and he ultimately advanced into a larger role.

WHY TALENT INTELLIGENCE IS A STRATEGIC IMPERATIVE

The demands placed on modern sellers are expanding. They navigate more stakeholders, channels, and information than ever before. Meanwhile, technology has reached saturation; most companies now operate with similar sales stacks. Differentiation no longer comes from the tools themselves but from the people using them.

AI accelerates strong performers but cannot create foundational capability. Organizations therefore need a system that consistently builds capability across the team, beyond intermittent workshops or manager-dependent coaching, but a structured method for developing talent aligned to modern selling demands.

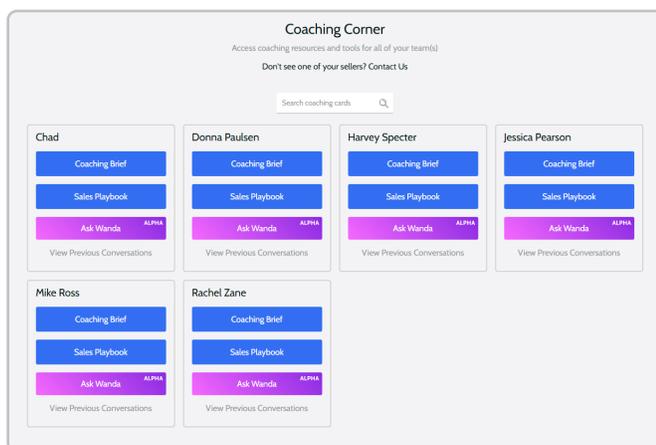
OPERATIONALIZING TALENT INTELLIGENCE THROUGH AI

Once the foundation of talent is measured, AI makes it operational. Modern performance systems can provide deal-specific and individual-specific coaching, surface high-impact development opportunities, reinforce behaviors used by top performers, guide managers on how to coach each person effectively, and embed learning directly into daily workflow.

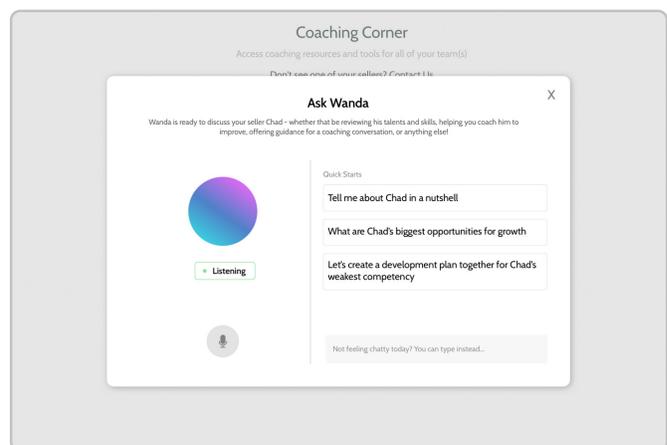
This integration turns talent intelligence into a continuous improvement engine to help sellers, managers, and teams perform at a higher level every day.

Organizations that outperform their peers are shifting their management approach. They are moving from activity inspection to capability building, from pipeline reviews to talent reviews, from one-size-fits-all coaching to individualized development, and from tech-stack expansion to human performance optimization.

In this new model, data and systems still matter, *but they are not the differentiator*. The differentiator is the organization's ability to understand, measure, and elevate human capability.



AskWanda Coaching Corner Team Dashboard



AskWanda Coaching Assistant for the Sales Manager

CONCLUSION

Companies have optimized their tools, systems, and data, but without understanding the human factors that drive performance, they are operating blind to the most critical variable. Talent is the missing metric in modern revenue systems.

When organizations measure human capability, map performance drivers, and coach with precision, they elevate performance, increase readiness, and unlock the full potential of their teams. The companies that win the next decade will be those that understand not just what their sellers do but why they succeed. With TalentIQ, coaching is personal, so each player on the team is improving their game to win more every day, week, month and quarter.



MEET THE AUTHOR: DR. COURTNEY MCCASHLAND

Dr. Courtney McCashland is a leading expert in the science of human performance and one of the foremost authorities on measuring the traits that drive commercial outcomes. As Founding Partner and Chief Science & Strategy Officer at AuctusIQ, she leads the research behind TalentIQ—the predictive talent intelligence system that helps organizations quantify and develop the human capabilities most correlated with sales success.

With executive leadership roles spanning financial, technology, research, and human capital organizations, Dr. McCashland has spent her career proving how talent explains a disproportionate share of performance variance. Previously, she served as President of Global Science and Strategy for IBM Smarter Workforce and President of Global Assessment for Kenexa, where she built predictive assessment systems used by Fortune 500 companies to hire, develop, and scale high-performing teams.

As a founding partner behind several fast-growing companies, Dr. McCashland has proven the business value of talent-based analytics and strengths-based development. Her assessment and performance frameworks have been featured in multiple best-selling books. Dr. McCashland holds degrees in marketing, journalism, and research from the University of Nebraska—Lincoln and earned her doctorate in organizational leadership from the University of Southern California, graduating summa cum laude.

Through decades of research, she continues to demonstrate that human capability—not tools or technology—is the most predictive driver of revenue outcomes, and she equips leaders with the insights needed to measure, develop, and operationalize talent at scale.

AuctusIQ™

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TO THE PEOPLE WHO DELIVER A NUMBER

Sales is a profession most people take for granted until they're the one carrying the number. Then it's not "just sales." It's pressure. It's the weight of outcomes.

The people who succeed aren't lucky. They're built for it. And that's why we celebrate them. This work demands resilience and heart.

So we built the most sophisticated solution to uncover what actually drives success in sales. Not theory. Not generic playbooks. Real, personal insight leaders can act on so performance improves without losing the human side that makes sales work.

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