

Artificial Intelligence in Sales: Bridging Theory and Practice – A Book Review

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Abstract

This review provides a critical examination of Livia Rainsberger's 2022 book titled „AI – The New Intelligence in Sales,” which offers a practically relevant but theoretically grounded approach to the integration of artificial intelligence into modern sales organizations. The book is explicitly targeted at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and provides a functionally focused analysis of AI tools, their applications, and the strategic implications for both sales performance and labor force development. By focusing on Artificial Narrow Intelligence (ANI) and eschewing futurist notions of AGI and ASI, Rainsberger makes an urgent case for action now. This review situates the book's applicability in current scholarly discourse, highlights contributions, establishes limitations, and offers avenues for further research in AI-driven sales transformation.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Sales, Management

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1. Introduction and Key Findings of the Publication

In her 2022 book, *AI – The New Intelligence in Sales*, Livia Rainsberger examines a watershed moment in the history of business, where sales organizations are coming under increasing pressure to digitalize, customize, and scale their operations in the midst of an unstable environment of abundant data. The book aims to demystify the complexities of artificial intelligence (AI) and provide a straightforward, application-oriented playbook for salespeople who want to take advantage of these emerging technologies without succumbing to the dangers of technology hype or vendor obfuscation. This is accomplished by distilling artificial intelligence to its bare bones—demonstrating that it is not some distant dream limited to technology elites but a present-day enabler that can be leveraged by businesses of all sizes, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The central argument of the book is clear: artificial intelligence is already pervasive, and its influence on sales is real, quantifiable, and expanding.

Rainsberger tackles the common misconception about Artificial Intelligence being the domain of corporations or futuristic ideas, such as Artificial General Intelligence or Artificial Super Intelligence, to effectively bring the attention of her audience to Artificial Narrow Intelligence, the type of Artificial Intelligence on which the practical applications used by most businesses today are based, from chatbots to sales forecasting software. With the clarity of mind and the conversational tone typical of her other responses, Rainsberger delivers the convincing argument that any salesman overlooking Artificial Narrow Intelligence is making his company fall even further behind its competitors who are already leveraging the capabilities of Artificial Narrow Intelligence to automate mundane tasks, analyze behavioral data, or deliver hyper-personalized experiences. Over its six chapters, the book takes a sensible flow from conceptual foundations to strategic action. The book starts by discussing the history of AI and placing its ascendance into context through exponential improvement in computing capability, data volume, and algorithmic sophistication. Without getting caught up in technical detail, Rainsberger provides a human story about AI told through analogies with human learning and use in day-to-day life. The first chapters are meant to set the scene for the reader, while subsequent chapters introduce more than twenty types of artificial intelligence tools—ranging from sentiment analysis in contact centers to dynamic pricing engines—and illustrate the use of each tool in the sales funnel.

2. Practical and Scientific Relevance for Research

Though Rainsberger's book is aimed at practitioners and eschews formal theory for the most part, it nonetheless has tremendous scientific importance as a dense empirical basis for scholarly research. Its finest scholarly contribution is its thorough explanation of AI's functional purpose across the sales funnel and its impact on sales performance dimensions such as productivity, accuracy, and customer engagement. These considerations align with traditional motifs of business scholarship and reveal a number of avenues for empirical investigation, model development, and theory creation. Categorizing the AI contribution within the triad of efficiency, effectiveness, and competence allows for more methodical

investigation. Efficiency, according to Rainsberger's definition, involves more than the simple reduction of time or cost; it involves a systemic reduction in task execution—work process automation that once demanded enormous human attention. Effectiveness is defined as the ability of artificial intelligence to enable enhanced decision-making capabilities, such as lead scoring, customer segmentation, and opportunity prioritization. Competence, however, defines how artificial intelligence instills best practices and facilitates knowledge transfer between various teams. Combined, these dimensions fit within the theoretical frameworks of absorptive capacity and organizational learning in a way that performance gains arise from an organization's ability to sense, absorb, and apply new knowledge (Zahra & George, 2002). Empirical grounding-wise, the book is full of case studies detailing AI's actual influence in the field. For instance, one mid-size B2B enterprise compresses sales cycle variation by nearly one-third with the help of an AI-powered forecasting solution based on historical data, while another enterprise brings its configure-price-quote (CPQ) process fully onto the automated track, cutting the time cycle from two days to thirty minutes, coupled with an elevated closure rate. Such cases lack data-driven constructiveness, but form an ideal starting point for longitudinal, hypothesis-driven testing on the causal role of AI on particular performance variables with more theoretical rigor, positivity, and academic maturity, with follow-through inquiries on time-to-close, conversion rate, or quality of deals, before and after the infusion of AI. Rather, the book appears superficial on its relevance to the massive body of work surrounding the ethics of artificial intelligence, the supposed biases of these algorithms, and their accountability. Their importance is duly acknowledged by the author, particularly regarding the political and legal compliance ensuing from the enactment of the General Data Protection Regulations. However, Rainsberger gives their treatment only superficial relevance, with brevity that lacks analysis of tangible acuity, subtlety, or scholarly insight. There is a shortage of debate about the possible impact of black-box algorithms on customer fairness and whether the use of explainability (XAI) techniques should be mandatory in specific high-risk decision-making situations. This shortage of debate limits the book's relevance for scholars interested in AI governance and partially reduces the ethical dimension of what is otherwise an exhaustive managerial case. Furthermore, the lack of incorporation of existing technology adoption models, including the Technology Acceptance Model (Tanis & Epema, 1989), the Diffusion of Innovations Model (Rogers, 2003), or the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology Theory (Venkatesh et al., 2003) to name but a few, is the lack of integration with existing practices in the explanation of technology adoption. The book, although implicitly pointing to aspects like perceived usefulness or organizational readiness, requires better integration with existing technology to enable its universality in context. Still, Rainsberger's work opens up new avenues for scholarly investigation. Her conception of AI as a sales enablement infrastructure implies the need for revised process models that account for the hybrid workflows of human-AI collaboration. Her applied taxonomies of AI tools provide a framework that could guide controlled experiments, comparative studies across industries, or even multi-level models of team versus organization-level effects.

3. Practical Relevance and Implications for Leadership

From a managerial perspective, „AI – The New Intelligence in Sales” is extremely topical and germane. In a world where there is too much information, hyper-personalization of the customer, and sales cycles that are constantly shrinking, the demands on sales leaders to „do more with less” are inexorable. Rainsberger provides both the map of the terrain in which one must navigate, and the challenges that must be met, and the practical advice on how to navigate these challenges effectively. The book's most valuable managerial observation is its insistent focus on the human/AI combined or hybrid system. Rather than viewing AI technology as the destroyer of sales jobs, Rainsberger urges the need for role reinvention. The future salesperson, according to her, is neither replaced by technology, nor repurposed, but reinvented with the infusion of insights garnered from AI, freed from mundane tasks, and then refocused on the creation of relationships, needs identification, and value addition, among other tasks. Of course, achieving the successful integration of these tasks in the manner proposed will require much more than just the technology itself, or how the technology is designed, developed or employed, but also its adaptation by the organizational or enterprise-wide culture. The value of Rainsberger's blueprint on the integration of AI technology into the organization cannot be overemphasized, especially in view of the challenges involved. The available literature to-date indicates that one of the biggest challenges facing the successful embedding of AI technology is employee resistance to change, along with the lack of preparedness or readiness on the part of employees to adapt to the changes that the technology will bring about in the organization or enterprise. Hence the importance of the book's focus on employee readiness, alignment, cooperation, and involvement, amongst other considerations. The book is also profound in its treatment of real-world implementation pitfalls. Rainsberger cautions against viewing AI as a plug-and-play solution or allowing vendors to drive strategy. She argues instead for internal capacity-building and alignment between technology and business outcomes. Nevertheless, the work does have limitations. Though the categorization of tools is remarkable, the absence of vendor or tool efficacy comparisons lessens its practical value to decision-makers looking to select from a variety of platforms. Likewise, while the book properly emphasizes the necessity of ethical compliance, it falls short of providing practical frameworks for AI governance or bias mitigation—key issues for managers working in regulated contexts. Yet the book's strength lies in its practical emphasis and level of depth. Where most business-oriented AI books remain at an

abstract level, Rainsberger goes deep into the sales function, tackling tangible issues such as forecasting uncertainty, lengthy sales cycles, and onboarding inefficiencies. Her work not only serves to demystify AI concepts but also brings them to life.

4. Conclusion

Livia Rainsberger's *AI – The New Intelligence in Sales* is successful in demystifying the concept of artificial intelligence, putting the benefits of AI into the context of an executable plan for sales executives. The problem-focused, empirical, and needs-driven approach taken by the book is highly original even in the academic context. The book's practical applications are clear, but there are many questions raised by the book from an academic viewpoint that need to be explored in the future. Longitudinal studies are particularly needed to assess how AI adoption affects sales performance over time—not just in terms of efficiency gains, but also in terms of role transformation, employee satisfaction, and organizational learning. In addition, the book's ethical themes merit deeper exploration, particularly regarding fairness, transparency, and the explainability of automated decision systems. Scholars interested in algorithmic accountability, regulatory compliance, and human-centered AI design will find ample starting points in Rainsberger's work, even if they will need to build the theoretical scaffolding themselves. In sum, the book distinguishes itself not just by answering the “what” of AI in sales, but also by offering a nuanced roadmap for the “how.” It is a must-read for any executive looking to future-proof their sales organization, and a valuable resource for academics aiming to understand the increasingly automated world of modern sales.

Conflict of interest:

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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