Applying Generative AI and Experiential Learning to the B2B Sales Process

By Michael Rodriguez and Stefanie Boyer

This paper explores the integration of applied generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) into sales education. Grounded in Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), the research examines how GenAI can enhance each stage of the B2B sales process. This structured pedagogical approach augments traditional role-play exercises, increases student engagement, and equips learners with both practical skills and theoretical insights relevant to evolving sales roles. Specifically, the paper examines how incorporating GenAI tools into traditional sales role-plays and related activities enhances their realism, personalization, engagement, applicability, and adaptability, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice. The paper provides insights into student perceptions of the value in using GenAI in each stage of the B2B sales process. The manuscript concludes with a discussion of contributions and implications for both academic researchers and sales practitioners, offering guidance for future implementation and study.

INTRODUCTION

The potential of artificial intelligence (AI) has long captured the interest of both sales professionals and academics (McClure et al., 2024). As AI technology advances, its sales applications have become increasingly sophisticated. The evolution of AI in sales reflects a growing recognition of its capacity to transform traditional sales processes (Alavi and Habel, 2021). The promise of increased efficiency, improved customer engagement, and enhanced decision-making drives this interest. Sales-focused organizations have consistently invested in the latest technologies to transform their sales processes (IDC Report, 2022). These investments reflect a strategic effort to gain a competitive edge by leveraging technological advancements. By adopting new technologies, sales organizations aim to improve efficiency, enhance customer relationships, and drive revenue growth.

The rise of GenAI, characterized by its capability to generate personalized, human-like content, introduces new opportunities for enhancing experiential learning in sales education. Despite this potential, the integration of GenAI into experiential learning frameworks remains underexplored. This paper outlines the integration of GenAI into the sales process and classroom role-play activities. The goal is to enhance learning activities and better prepare students for modern B2B sales environments by leveraging technology in the form of GenAI. The innovation represents an advancement in the field of AI, possessing the ability to create new and original content. content. GenAI's capacity to generate content sets it apart from traditional AI technology. This unique ability has significant implications for the sales process by creating new opportunities for personalization, automation, customer engagement, and, most importantly, increased efficiency in the sales process.

The rapid evolution of AI has triggered shifts within B2B sales. While early AI implementations emphasized automation and predictive analytics, the emergence of generative AI (GenAI) introduces a paradigm shift, enabling the creation of adaptive, personalized content that can simulate human communication. This development holds implications for both the practice and pedagogy of sales.

Despite widespread adoption of AI technologies in industry, sales education has lagged in GenAI integration within its core instructional frameworks. Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), offers a foundation for understanding how GenAI can enhance student learning through concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active

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experimentation. Yet few, if any, pedagogical models systematically embed GenAI across the full ELT cycle in a sales education context.

This manuscript addresses this gap. Building on prior calls for research that link AI with experiential learning (McClure et al., 2024; Cummins et al., 2020), we present a pedagogical framework that aligns GenAI tools with the B2B sales process through Kolb's (2015) ELT model. Our goal is to provide sales educators, enablement leaders and sales trainers with a structured, empirically informed, and practically applicable roadmap for integrating GenAI into classroom instruction. In doing so, we extend both theory and practice by showing how GenAI can augment, rather than replace, the human-centered foundations of effective sales education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The intersection of sales education and AI represents a growing domain of inquiry, though pedagogical frameworks for applying GenAI remain underdeveloped. Existing literature has extensively examined the role of sales force automation (SFA) technologies in improving efficiency, customer management, and forecasting (Chang, 2022; Buttle and Maklan, 2019). CRM systems and digital engagement platforms have been central to these efforts (Rodriguez and Honeycutt, 2011; Marshall et al., 2012), with traditional AI emphasizing data-driven insights and predictive modeling (Avlonitis and Panagopoulos, 2005; Paschen et al., 2020).

However, GenAI introduces a qualitative leap in sales enablement by generating original, adaptive content such as prospecting messages, sales scripts, and customized presentations that aligns with the nuances of human communication (Zewe, 2023; Marr, 2023). This innovation supports higher-order cognitive processes like improvisation, empathy, and negotiation, expanding the scope of automation beyond efficiency toward simulation and personalization.

In parallel, pedagogical research has consistently emphasized the need for adaptive, technology-integrated learning approaches that reflect evolving sales environments. Cummins et al. (2020) and Magnotta (2018) advocate for instructional designs that mirror the complexity and uncertainty of real-world sales. These calls have converged with the broader reemergence of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) as a model for aligning sales education with immersive, skill-based learning experiences (Passarelli and Kolb, 2021).

While ELT has informed role-play exercises for decades, recent contributions (e.g., Loe et al., 2024) have begun to systematically map ELT's four phases to classroom activities. Still, few studies integrate ELT with GenAI in a way that offers instructors actionable strategies. The current manuscript addresses this gap by embedding GenAI applications across the ELT framework and aligning them with each phase of the B2B sales process, thereby advancing both theory and instructional design.

In addition to foundational studies on sales force automation and CRM technologies, recent work emphasizes the evolving role of experiential learning in sales education. Cummins et al. (2020) reviewed the literature on sales education and highlighted the need for adaptive, technology-integrated learning approaches that reflect current sales environment. The integration of GenAI aligns with the call for updated pedagogical frameworks that enhance student readiness for modern sales challenges. Similarly, Magnotta (2018) demonstrated the effectiveness of experiential learning modules in preparing inside salespeople, pointing to the value of immersive, role-play-based instruction. The findings suggest that AI-enhanced simulations can offer even greater realism and engagement. McClure et al. (2024) provide a comprehensive framework for understanding AI's foundational role in sales, advocating for research that explores GenAI's unique contribution beyond automation. This paper addresses their call by embedding GenAI across all stages of Kolb's ELT cycle, offering a theoretical and practical roadmap for sales educators, enablement leaders, and sales trainers.

Prior literature has extensively explored the impact of sales force automation (SFA) technology in B2B environments (Chang, 2022), examining tools such as customer relationship management (CRM) systems (Rodriguez and Honeycutt, 2011) and social media technology (Marshall et al., 2012). SFA encompasses the integration of technology to streamline and automate routine sales tasks such as

contact management, opportunity tracking, forecasting, and managing the sales process (Buttle and Maklan, 2019; Rapp et al., 2021). Traditionally, SFA has been closely tied to CRM platforms like Salesforce.com and Microsoft Dynamics, where automation primarily focuses on enhancing efficiency by minimizing manual administrative activities (Rodriguez and Trainor, 2016). These technologies have become critical for enabling sales professionals to effectively manage customer interactions, improve collaboration, maintain relationships, and organize essential client data (Avlonitis and Panagopoulos, 2005; Rodriguez and Boyer, 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2018). Integrating GenAI uniquely builds on this foundation by improving sales technologies by creating original, human-like content rather than relying solely on data-driven insights (Zewe, 2023). The advent of GenAI, however, significantly broadens the functionality and impact of SFA by introducing intelligent, adaptive capabilities that enhance decision-making, personalization, and predictive analytics (Paschen, Kietzmann, and Kietzmann, 2020).

One of GenAI's most significant contributions to SFA lies in its capacity to enhance lead qualification and scoring. GenAI models improve the prioritization of leads by intelligently analyzing customer interactions, intent data, and historical patterns. This improves the sales pipeline and increases conversation efficiency (Järvinen and Taiminen, 2016). Additionally, GenAI-driven personalized outreach transforms engagement by automating and customizing communications such as direct messaging in online platforms, emails and follow-up messaging to clients.

GenAI further enriches sales education and professional development by transforming sales coaching methods through real-time conversation analysis. Conversation analytics powered by AI find patterns, common objections, and effective strategies. They then give salespeople actionable, data-driven feedback to help them become more effective (Luo, Tong, Fang, and Qu, 2019). GenAI improves content generation by automatically creating sales presentations, proposals, and responses that are tailored to each customer's needs. This cuts down on the work needed to create content and ensure that it meets buyer expectations (Kietzmann et al., 2018).

GenAI enables sales students and professionals to make personalized interactions at all stages of the sales process, from prospecting to customer retention. This differs from traditional AI approaches that mostly focus on predictive analytics based on existing data (Marr, 2023; McCarthy, 2007). Recent research shows that using GenAI in sales improves the quality of interactions with prospects, speeds up nurturing activities, and makes it easier to have more personalized conversations (McClure et al., 2024; Igwe et al., 2020). GenAI helps salespeople and students bridge the gap between theoretical sales ideas and real-world applications by creating customized content. This improves both the effectiveness of education and sales activities.

Application of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) for GenAI and Sales Process.

Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), developed by Kolb (1984; 2015), has long served as a foundation for sales education, emphasizing the cyclical process through which learners construct knowledge through experience, reflection, abstraction, and experimentation. The model's four components (Kolb, 2015; Passarelli and Kolb, 2021): Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE), offer a flexible yet rigorous structure for aligning instructional design with real-world selling tasks. Each stage supports different cognitive processes, enabling learners to build, apply, and refine their understanding over time. These are explored in detail below, with an explanation of how they may be valuable to sales students adapted with GenAI.

Concrete Experience marks the entry point into the learning cycle, emphasizing learning by doing. In the sales context, this might include generating leads using GenAI tools such as ChatGPT or engaging in real-time simulations like RNMKRS. These immersive experiences allow students to actively engage with sales tasks, creating a personal and situationally relevant foundation for future analysis and learning. Engaging with AI early on fosters familiarity and confidence, anchoring learners in realistic tasks that replicate professional selling environments. According to Kolb (1984), this stage is essential for grounding learning in direct, tangible interactions that resonate with learners' existing schemas.

Reflective Observation follows the concrete experience, guiding learners to pause and analyze what they just experienced. In AI-driven sales training, this might include reviewing the quality of AI-generated prospect data, comparing it with manual research, or critiquing a simulated sales conversation. Structured reflection encourages learners to move beyond superficial execution and recognize gaps, patterns, and improvement areas in both their performance and the AI's output. This stage supports the development of metacognitive skills where students learn to think about their thinking, which enhances their capacity to adapt in future situations (Moon, 1999).

Abstract Conceptualization represents the stage where learners begin to integrate theory into their understanding, drawing generalizations from their reflections and constructing mental models. For sales students, this might mean aligning AI-assisted insights with established frameworks like BANT or MEDDIC, or synthesizing trust-building strategies into cold-call scripts. The goal is to transform experience and observation into transferable knowledge that informs future behavior. This conceptual integration is crucial for building strategic thinking and developing the judgment required for complex decision-making in sales (Illeris, 2007).

Active Experimentation is the phase where learners test out their evolving understanding in new scenarios. This could involve prompting ChatGPT to generate alternative rebuttals during objection handling or refining an upsell message after analyzing GenAI feedback. The iterative nature of GenAI tools allows for rapid trial and revision, mirroring the real-world demands of agile selling. Kolb (2015) emphasizes that this phase is essential for reinforcing learning through action, enabling learners to close the loop by re-entering the cycle with new insights. In this way, learners are developing adaptability, feedback-seeking behaviors, and resilience, which are all critical attributes for modern sales professionals.

By integrating AI tools into each phase of the ELT cycle, educators can create personalized, scalable, and high-fidelity learning environments that accelerate sales skill development while preparing learners for real-world selling enhanced by emerging technologies.

In university classrooms, GenAI introduces new affordances at each stage of this cycle. Unlike traditional role plays or textbook exercises, GenAI provides dynamic, responsive environments that adapt to student inputs in real time. For example, tools like ChatGPT or Claude can simulate buyer objections, generate nuanced customer scenarios, or provide sentiment-based feedback, thereby deepening both the authenticity and adaptability of experiential learning activities.

To better support educators in applying this framework, Table 1 serves as a pedagogical guide with actionable strategies. Each cell not only maps a specific ELT stage to a sales process phase but also includes sample GenAI prompts and instructional activities designed to reinforce core selling skills. For example, during the Discovery phase under "Active Experimentation," students might use GenAI to simulate client needs assessments and receive real-time feedback on question quality or emotional tone. Likewise, in the Presentation phase under "Abstract Conceptualization," students can prompt GenAI to co-create solution pitches based on case data, fostering message development and critical thinking. These concrete applications provide instructors with ready-to-implement learning tools that bring theoretical alignment into practice. This alignment is intended to make GenAI integration intuitive, scalable, and pedagogically consistent with Kolb's learning cycle.

In the sections that follow, we walk through each step of the sales process, illustrating how educators, enablement leaders, and sales trainers can deploy GenAI tools to scaffold experiential learning through the ELT framework.

GenAI can be used in Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) to improve sales education by incorporating it into each stage of the learning cycle: Concrete Experience (CE), Reflective Observation (RO), Abstract Conceptualization (AC), and Active Experimentation (AE) (Kolb, 2015; Passarelli and Kolb, 2021) (see figure 1).

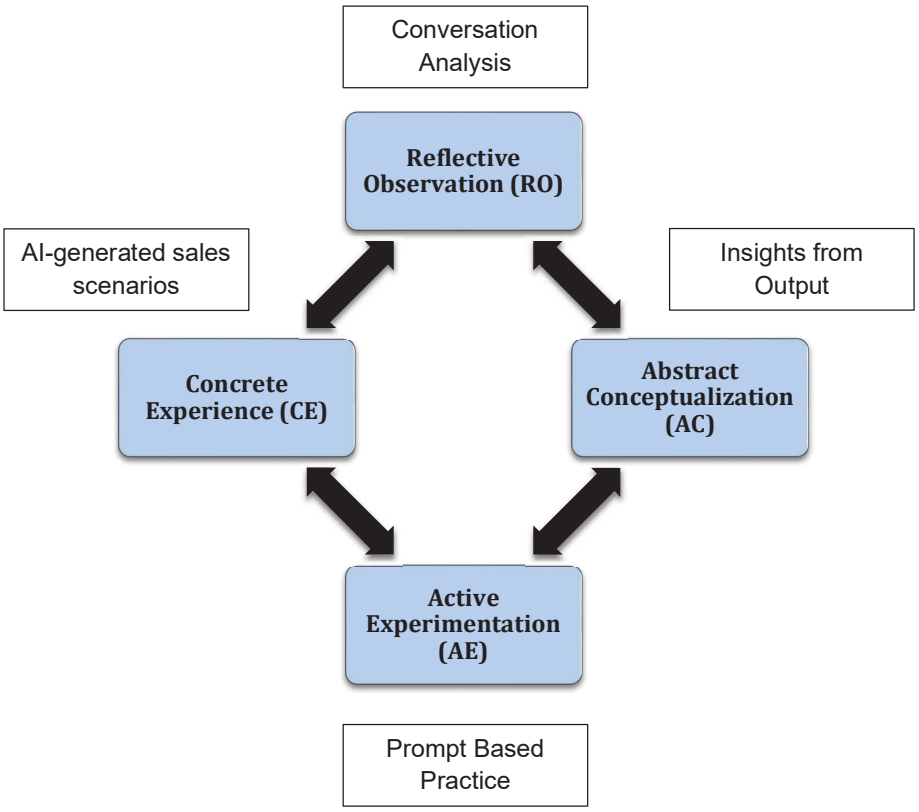
In sales education, GenAI can initiate concrete experiences (CE) by providing realistic sales scenarios, such as AI-generated buyer personas or simulated client interactions, enabling students to directly engage with

Table 1: Applied GenAI Activities in the Sales Process with Instructions for Learners and Instructors with ELT Components

Sales Stage	ELT Component	Exercise	Instructor Instructions	Learner Instructions
Prospecting	Concrete Experience	Generate a list of 5 prospective B2B leads in the [cybersecurity/software/healthcare] sector for a mid-size logistics tech company	Show students how to prompt ChatGPT to simulate lead sourcing based on target market and criteria.	Use ChatGPT to generate and justify 3 ideal customer leads by prompting with role, industry, and pain points.
	Reflective Observation	Evaluate GenAI lead suggestions vs. ICP expectations.	Ask students to compare AI leads to known customer profiles and facilitate discussion on mismatches.	Compare AI-generated leads to ideal customer profile. Reflect on fit and improvement areas.
	Abstract Conceptualization	Teach lead qualification using AI examples (e.g., BANT, CHAMP).	Use ChatGPT to define and simulate lead qualification questions using BANT or CHAMP criteria.	Apply AI-defined BANT/CHAMP frameworks to leads. Use ChatGPT to refine qualification questions.
	Active Experimentation	Use ChatGPT to test 3 different prospecting email subject lines for open rate appeal.	Guide students to iterate 3 subject line prompts and compare ChatGPT feedback on attention-grabbing effectiveness.	Prompt ChatGPT for feedback on 3 subject line variations. Choose the one with strongest hook based on GenAI critique.
Pre-approach	Concrete Experience	Use Perplexity or ChatGPT to research 1 lead based on communication styles (DISC)	Demonstrate how to construct research prompts that generate business insights.	Research company and decision-maker. Summarize insights in a profile brief using GenAI tools.
	Reflective Observation	Compare AI research output with manual search.	Guide students to document differences in depth, quality, and relevance.	Reflect on AI vs. manual research quality. Note insights AI missed or added.
	Abstract Conceptualization	Use messaging frameworks with AI to craft outreach.	Show how to align AI prompts with positioning frameworks like value messaging or SPICED.	Craft an outreach message using ChatGPT aligned to value-focused messaging models.
	Active Experimentation	Use ChatGPT to generate and A/B test two different value-driven opening statements.	Ask students to create two different approaches and analyze which aligns better with customer context using GenAI scoring.	Use GenAI to script two opening lines. Submit both to ChatGPT and ask which better fits your prospect profile and why.
Approach	Concrete Experience	Generate a one-slide pitch using ChatGPT and DALL-E or GAMMA and personalize based on communication styles (DISC)	Model how to use text and visual prompts to match buyer persona and industry needs.	Use GenAI to create a visual and verbal 1-slide pitch tailored to your buyer's interests.
	Reflective Observation	Conduct peer critique of AI-generated pitches.	Facilitate structured feedback sessions. Use a rubric.	Revise pitch based on feedback from peers and GenAI suggestions.
	Abstract Conceptualization	Apply trust and persuasion principles to AI-crafted messaging.	Introduce influence frameworks (e.g., Cialdini) and ask how they map to AI responses.	Use AI to revise pitch using a specific trust principle (like authority or reciprocity).
	Active Experimentation	Simulate a 2-minute cold call with objections using ChatGPT role-play or RNMKRS.	Assign objection prompts. Help students evaluate responses using AI critique.	Role-play a cold call. Ask ChatGPT: 'How persuasive and clear was my delivery? How could I improve?' or see RNMKRS feedback.
Discovery	Concrete Experience	Conduct live discovery with ChatGPT as the buyer.	Assign buyer persona prompts. Monitor students' questioning techniques.	Prompt ChatGPT to act as a buyer. Run a 5–10-minute discovery and uncover needs.
	Reflective Observation	Review recorded or transcribed AI conversations.	Provide reflection guides and rubrics to assess discovery effectiveness.	Analyze where questions landed, what was missed, and how to probe deeper next time.
	Abstract Conceptualization	Use GenAI to create better probing questions.	Show how to prompt AI: 'Generate 5 open-ended questions for [persona/problem]'.	Refine your discovery questions using AI-suggested language. Adjust based on prior gaps.
	Active Experimentation	Use ChatGPT to generate discovery question variants and test them in a branching GenAI dialogue.	Show how different question types change AI-generated buyer responses. Have students revise to improve info uncovered.	Prompt AI prospect with open vs. closed questions. Compare depth of responses. Adjust until you get full pain point revealed.
Presentation	Concrete Experience	Build a short presentation for specific buyer personas with ChatGPT and DALL-E, Copilot, Claude or GAMMA.	Teach students to prompt for 3-slide visual and verbal content tailored to prospect goals.	Use GenAI to create slide text and visuals that match the buyer's challenges and objectives.
	Reflective Observation	Use GenAI to summarize role play transcripts and identify missed opportunities	Facilitate feedback sessions on flow, clarity, and buyer alignment.	Revise your deck after peer and AI feedback. Improve visual hierarchy and messaging clarity.

	Abstract Conceptualization	Link pitch structure to storytelling strategy like STARR.	Introduce simple pitch frameworks (e.g., Problem Solution Benefit or STARR). Apply them to AI-generated decks.	Ask ChatGPT to revise slides using a storytelling prompt (e.g., 'Frame this like a problem/solution or STARR').
	Active Experimentation	Use your GenAI of choice to A/B test two visual pitches and analyze which aligns more with buyer's profile.	Support students in prompt tuning for visuals and messaging. Have them justify alignment with buyer persona using AI critique.	Create two GenAI slides. Ask ChatGPT or GenAI of choice to evaluate which matches buyer needs better and why. Submit best one.
Objections	Concrete Experience	Use ChatGPT or Claude to generate 3 objections and respond based on specific persona and buyer roles	Provide students with realistic objection scenarios to solve using GenAI.	Generate objection rebuttals with ChatGPT or Claude and revise tone/logic using its feedback.
	Reflective Observation	Debrief objection handling and critique responses.	Review each other's scripts. Highlight emotional intelligence and persuasion gaps.	Revise rebuttals using peer and AI feedback. Reflect on areas of growth.
	Abstract Conceptualization	Teach influence principles using AI-crafted scripts.	Align each AI response to a principle (e.g., social proof, scarcity).	Ask ChatGPT: 'Which influence principle is most persuasive for this objection?' Apply and revise.
	Active Experimentation	Use ChatGPT to simulate objection escalation and revise response to improve confidence and empathy scores.	Challenge students to respond to layered objections. Have them ask ChatGPT to score their responses on tone and empathy.	Handle an objection, then simulate escalation. Use ChatGPT to improve your response's tone and effectiveness.
Closing	Concrete Experience	Script several closing options using ChatGPT summarization prompt.	Prompt AI to summarize value, handle last concerns, and propose a next step.	Generate a closing statement using ChatGPT. Test it with another student or scenario.
	Reflective Observation	Use AI and peers to critique closing effectiveness.	Evaluate timing, tone, and buyer alignment.	Ask ChatGPT to rate your closing message on clarity, assertiveness, and customer focus.
	Abstract Conceptualization	Teach closing models via GenAI simulation (e.g., Challenger, MEDDIC).	Assign each model and prompt ChatGPT to demonstrate closing tactics.	Use GenAI to simulate different closes. Compare and reflect on approach impact.
	Active Experimentation	Use GenAI to test urgency phrases in a closing message and refine based on AI critique.	Assign students to write two versions of a close using different urgency signals. Use AI feedback to guide revisions.	Write two GenAI closing messages using urgency. Ask ChatGPT which is more persuasive and revise accordingly.
Follow-up	Concrete Experience	Write a follow-up email using AI prompt templates based on identified needs.	Provide prompt templates for thank-you, check-in, and feedback request emails.	Use GenAI to draft a personalized follow-up email. Edit for tone and CTA strength.
	Reflective Observation	Review and revise emails using GenAI tone analysis.	Use AI tools to flag too casual or unclear messages.	Revise follow-up for clarity and personalization based on AI feedback.
	Abstract Conceptualization	Teach post-sale strategy via AI scenario mapping.	Use AI to simulate 30/60/90-day check-ins and churn prevention.	Create a post-sale action plan with GenAI (e.g., 'Generate a retention sequence for this persona').
	Active Experimentation	Simulate upsell or renewal call with GenAI acting as buyer.	Prompt ChatGPT to role-play buyer and critique upsell.	Conduct call. Use AI feedback to revise pitch, tone, and offer framing.

Figure 1: GenAI and Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) Framework



authentic sales situations. Reflective observation (RO) is then enriched through GenAI-supported tools, such as analyzing recorded sales interactions to facilitate structured feedback and critical self-assessment. Abstract conceptualization (AC) is deepened as GenAI synthesizes data from these interactions to illustrate sales concepts and theories, enhancing students' understanding of best practices through tailored recommendations and strategic insights. Finally, active experimentation (AE) is fostered as students leverage GenAI to iteratively test and refine their sales strategies, practicing adaptive selling techniques in diverse, AI-generated scenarios. Integrating GenAI across all stages of ELT ensures a comprehensive, interactive, and impactful sales education experience. The following section details the impact of GenAI across each stage of the B2B sales process within the ELT framework.

Stage 1: Prospecting

Prospecting is the initial and foundational stage of the B2B sales process, in which sales professionals identify and qualify potential leads. Effective prospecting involves researching markets, analyzing organizational characteristics, and qualifying prospective clients based on predefined criteria (Gopalakrishna et al., 2022). Sales professionals face challenges such as data overload, identifying relevant decision-makers, and effectively qualifying prospects. Using Kolb's ELT (Kolb, 2015; Passarelli and Kolb, 2021), the prospecting stage can be enhanced significantly through experiential engagement facilitated by GenAI.

In the initial phase, Concrete Experience (CE), students engage directly with GenAI technology to generate initial lists of prospective leads within specific industries or markets. This direct interaction lets students experience firsthand how AI-driven tools perform automated market research, data aggregation, and preliminary lead qualification. Such engagement offers sales students practical exposure to GenAI's technological capabilities and constraints within realistic sales contexts (Rodriguez, 2024).

Following this practical engagement, students move to the Reflective Observation (RO) stage, where they critically

assess AI-generated prospects' quality, relevance, and accuracy. This reflective exercise encourages students to evaluate the reliability of GenAI's prioritization and scoring algorithms, examining factors such as predictive accuracy and data relevance. Reflection provides information about how well GenAI works when applied in sales, encouraging students to think critically about how well technological capabilities match up with real sales goals (Gartner, 2022).

Subsequently, during Abstract Conceptualization (AC), students synthesize their reflections into theoretical understanding by conceptualizing how GenAI can effectively support prospecting activities. In this stage, learners develop a deeper understanding of the theoretical frameworks underlying AI applications in prospecting, such as predictive analytics, lead qualification criteria, and personalized communication. The conceptual insights acquired help students recognize the strategic integration of technology into traditional sales methodologies, reinforcing their theoretical grounding through practical applications (Kolb, 2015; Passarelli and Kolb, 2021).

Finally, the cycle ends with Active Experimentation (AE), where students put their newly learned theoretical ideas into practice by trying out different GenAI prompts and watching what happens. Students iteratively adjust their inputs based on previously identified strengths and shortcomings, aiming to optimize the quality of prospect lists and maximize lead conversion potential. Active experimentation helps with iterative learning and improvement, which helps students improve prompting skills in a planned way, leading to more accurate and useful prospecting results. Faculty can facilitate peer debriefs where students explain the logic behind their prompt adjustments and reflect on the realism and relevance of the AI-generated leads. This iterative exercise helps students build fluency in prompt engineering, critical evaluation, and data-driven prospecting strategies, which are key competencies in modern B2B selling.

GenAI significantly optimizes the prospecting stage by automating lead generation and qualification tasks. GenAI tools streamline market research by quickly gathering and interpreting large data sets from social media, industry reports, and corporate announcements. AI algorithms rank leads by conversion likelihood, providing personalized lead prioritization and outreach strategies. This allows sales professionals and students to allocate resources efficiently and engage prospects with personalized, relevant content, improving response rates and reducing the sales cycle (Rodriguez, 2024; Gartner, 2023).

Stage 2: Pre-Approach

In the Concrete Experience (CE) stage, students utilize GenAI tools to perform detailed pre-approach activities, including comprehensive research on potential clients' organizational backgrounds, key decision-makers, industry trends, and competitive environments. Through hands-on interaction with AI-driven tools, students actively compile extensive prospect profiles, allowing them to experience firsthand how advanced technologies streamline the research-intensive tasks traditionally associated with this phase.

Subsequently, in the Reflective Observation (RO) stage, students critically assess the relevance and accuracy of AI-generated information gathered during the pre-approach. This reflection encourages learners to analyze the quality, relevance, accuracy, and timeliness of the data provided by GenAI systems, thus developing a deeper understanding of these advantages and potential limitations. At this point, reflection helps build critical evaluation skills, which lets students figure out how useful GenAI-supported research is and where more human judgment or validation might be needed.

In the Abstract Conceptualization (AC) phase, students utilize their reflective insights around using GenAI in sales pre-approach activities. Sales students conceptualize how integrating technology into preparatory stages impacts efficiency, accuracy, and personalization within the broader sales process. Drawing from these observations, students begin to connect practical experiences with broader principles, such as strategic targeting, personalization at scale, and data-driven decision-making within contemporary sales methodologies.

In the last step, Active Experimentation (AE), students change their GenAI prompts, data inputs, or the scope of their AI-driven research strategies based on what they learned about ideas in the earlier stages. This iterative

process enables students to experiment systematically with varied techniques to optimize their preparation for prospect interactions.

Stage 3 Approach:

Applying ELT to the "Approach" stage of the B2B sales process, which involves the initial direct interaction between salesperson and prospect, illustrates how GenAI enhances personalized customer engagement and strategic communication.

In the Concrete Experience (CE) phase, students actively engage with GenAI to craft personalized outreach messages tailored to initial customer interactions. Leveraging AI-driven tools, students create emails, LinkedIn connection requests, and talking points uniquely suited to the prospect's professional role, communication style, and organizational context. This concrete, hands-on experience allows students to practically explore the capabilities of GenAI in real-time personalization at scale, creating an authentic and meaningful first impression.

In the subsequent Reflective Observation (RO) stage, students reflect on the effectiveness of their AI-generated messages, analyzing aspects such as tone alignment, personalization accuracy, and relevance. Students identify strengths and areas for improvement in their GenAI-generated content, reflecting on how effectively AI facilitated rapport-building and set the stage for further interaction.

During the Abstract Conceptualization (AC) phase, students gain insights from their self-reflective observations. This helps them understand how to combine GenAI-driven communications with traditional interpersonal selling methods, bringing theory and practice together to get the most out of engagement.

Finally, in the Active Experimentation (AE) phase, students refine their prompting techniques to enhance outreach effectiveness further. Students test different approaches by repeatedly changing their AI-generated communication, like changing the level of personalization, tone of voice, or the length and structure of the content. GenAI's ongoing experiments feed the cycle of learning by doing, which leads to constant improvement in customer interactions.

Stage 4: Needs Identification

GenAI can also be used to improve sales education and practice by applying ELT during the Needs Identification or Discovery stage. This is an important step in B2B sales that focuses on understanding and clarifying customer needs during the discovery stage.

In the Concrete Experience (CE) phase, students actively engage in role-play exercises using GenAI-supported tools designed to simulate authentic customer interactions. Utilizing GenAI, students generate realistic customer scenarios, including dynamic buyer responses, needs, value and urgency driving questions, and communication styles (e.g., DISC profiles). This concrete engagement provides students with practical, realistic interactions, helping them practice questioning techniques and active listening skills vital for uncovering prospect goals and explicit and implicit customer needs.

The subsequent phase, Reflective Observation (RO), involves students analyzing the interactions recorded or transcribed by GenAI tools. GenAI helps with structured reflection by summarizing conversation patterns, pointing out places where important information was identified or overlooked, and analyzing customer responses based on sentiment and themes. Students assess their questioning strategies, the depth of insights gained, and the effectiveness of their listening approaches, providing a comprehensive evaluation of their performance during the discovery interaction.

During Abstract Conceptualization (AC), students connect theoretical concepts to their reflective observations. GenAI tools help with this by organizing data on interactions and aligning real-life sales conversations with theoretical sales frameworks, like SPIN selling or consultative selling. This allows students to better grasp theoretical constructs underlying effective questioning and needs analysis to understand how these insights guide effective sales practice.

Finally, in the Active Experimentation (AE) phase, students refine and adapt their discovery techniques by iteratively adjusting their GenAI-supported questioning strategies. Using insights gained from previous stages, students experiment by crafting more targeted and

nuanced prompts for GenAI, generating new sets of customer scenarios or probing questions. This iterative experimentation enables students to enhance their ability to uncover deeper, more strategically relevant customer needs, improving their overall effectiveness in real-world sales interactions.

Stage 5: Presentation/Solution Stage

Pelletier and Hopkins (2018) emphasized the value of uncertainty and realism in role-plays, which GenAI elevates by enabling tailored sales content and reactive buyer scenarios. GenAI can help students better match solutions to customers' problems by using AI-powered tools during the presentation or connecting solutions stage. This is done by making sales presentations more personalized and powerful.

In the Concrete Experience (CE) phase, students engage directly with Gen AI to develop tailored sales presentations. Leveraging AI tools, students create customized proposal decks, product demonstrations, or interactive presentations specifically designed to align their solutions to previously identified customer challenges and pain points. This hands-on experience allows students to actively practice translating customer needs into concrete solutions, appreciating the impact of personalized content creation facilitated by AI.

Following the direct experience, students enter the Reflective Observation (RO) phase, in which they assess the effectiveness of their AI-generated presentations. This reflective stage involves analyzing peer reactions and feedback from their professor. Students then pinpoint areas for improvement and recognize opportunities to deepen solution alignment.

In the Abstract Conceptualization (AC) phase, students connect their reflections with relevant sales frameworks, such as value proposition alignment, consultative selling, and persuasive communication models. Utilizing insights gained through GenAI-assisted reflection, students conceptualize how and why certain presentation strategies effectively address explicit and implicit customer needs, and where they fall short.

Lastly, the Active Experimentation (AE) phase gives students the chance to improve their method by giving Gen AI new inputs and strategies based on what they've learned from their past reflections. In this iterative process, students experiment with alternative presentation styles and personalized messaging. By refining their prompting techniques, students learn to optimize solution presentations, effectively tailoring each sales engagement.

Stages 6: Objection Handling and 7: Closing

For this research, stages 6 and 7 are combined, given the overlap between the two, to reduce redundancy, exploring ELT. Loe et al. (2024) demonstrate how experiential learning can elevate the quality of role-play outcomes when applied to objection handling. Integrating GenAI into this stage supports their findings, offering scalable and repeatable simulations that enhance students' negotiation skills and objection response strategies.

By leveraging GenAI, students can effectively refine their skills in addressing customer concerns and moving the sale to possible closure. In the Concrete Experience (CE) phase, students directly engage with GenAI to simulate objection-handling scenarios. Here, GenAI creates realistic objections based on varied customer profiles, enabling students to experience handling common challenges such as price resistance, competitive comparisons, or product/service concerns. Through these interactions, students actively practice addressing objections by using AI-driven response suggestions, enhancing their real-time negotiation and persuasion skills.

The Reflective Observation (RO) phase allows students to systematically analyze their AI-supported objection-handling exercises. GenAI records conversations and analyzes how people feel about them, which helps students think about how well they answered questions, such as how they showed empathy. Reflective analysis at this stage deepens student awareness of how effectively they managed objections, identifying specific communication techniques that facilitated customer understanding and acceptance.

During the Abstract Conceptualization (AC) phase, students explore frameworks such as consultative selling or objection reframing models. Through this conceptual integration, learners develop a deeper

theoretical understanding of how strategically addressing objections contributes significantly to successful deal closures.

Finally, in the Active Experimentation (AE) phase, students leverage their insights to refine their approaches. By adjusting their prompts and experimenting with GenAI, students generate alternative methods and language for addressing objections and gaining customer commitment. Iterative practice with refined AI prompts allows students to actively test improved negotiation strategies, develop more persuasive communication skills, and build confidence in their ability to close sales effectively.

Stage 7 and 8: Follow-Up and Nurture

The follow-up stage involves post-sale activities aimed at maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty and identifying cross-selling and upselling opportunities.

In the Concrete Experience (CE) phase, students directly engage with GenAI technologies to generate personalized follow-up communications, such as tailored email check-ins, satisfaction surveys, or targeted content designed to support customer retention and growth. Moving into the Reflective Observation (RO) phase, students analyze the effectiveness of their GenAI-generated follow-up interactions. Using feedback from peers and faculty, students reflect on what aspects of their follow-up messages would resonate best with the customer. Students can assess whether the AI-generated content can effectively address customer needs, identify successes, and identify potential areas for improvement.

In the Abstract Conceptualization (AC) stage, students connect their insights to existing best practices related to customer retention, upselling, and cross-selling. GenAI enriches conceptualization by summarizing interaction outcomes and highlighting patterns across customer segments. This enables students to understand how GenAI creates AI-driven communication that strengthens long-term client relationships and drives incremental revenue.

Finally, the Active Experimentation (AE) stage enables students to refine GenAI applications through iterative practice. Students experiment by adjusting prompts to enhance personalization and relevance. Active experimentation with GenAI allows students to optimize their retention and growth strategies, systematically improving their capability to nurture ongoing business relationships.

Integrating Kolb's ELT with GenAI in the follow-up stage enriches the learning experience, offering sales students practical insights to effectively leverage AI in maintaining and expanding long-term customer relationships.

As interest in GenAI tools continues to grow, it becomes increasingly important to understand how students interact with these technologies in real educational settings. To that end, we conducted an exploratory study to examine student perceptions of GenAI's value and their confidence in applying it within the sales process.

METHODOLOGY

This exploratory study investigates student perceptions of the importance of sales process stages, as well as the value of and skills using GenAI tools in each stage of the sales process.

Perceived Importance of Sales Stages, GenAI Value and Confidence

A quantitative survey was administered to 51 third- and fourth-year undergraduate sales students to assess their perceptions of the relative importance of eight sales process stages. We analyzed student survey responses on eight stages of the B2B sales process to understand the perceived value of Generative AI in each stage.

To examine whether perceptions of AI value differed significantly between stages of the sales process, paired-sample t-tests were conducted comparing each pair of stages in Table 2. This analysis allowed us to assess whether the same participants rated AI significantly differently across phases. The results revealed several meaningful distinctions. For instance, Prospecting was rated significantly higher than Discovery ($t = 2.98$, $p = .004$), Presentation ($t = 2.13$, $p = .038$), and Objections ($t = 3.13$, $p = .003$). These differences suggest that respondents view AI as more beneficial in the early, data-driven stages than in later or more interpersonal phases. However, no significant difference was found

Table 2. Paired T Test: Value of AI by Sales Stage

Stage Comparison	t-statistic	p-value	Significance
Prospecting vs Preapproach/Research	0.27	0.78	
Prospecting vs Approach/Opening	1.94	0.05	*
Prospecting vs Discovery	2.98	0.004	*
Prospecting vs Presentation	2.12	0.038	*
Prospecting vs Objections	3.12	0.002	*
Prospecting vs Close/ Moving the sale forward	3.47	0.001	*
Prospecting vs Follow up/ post sale	2.71	0.009	*
Preapproach/Research vs Approach/Opening	1.96	0.05	*
Preapproach/Research vs Discovery	2.97	0.00	*
Preapproach/Research vs Presentation	2.19	0.032	*
Preapproach/Research vs Objections	3.05	0.003	*
Preapproach/Research vs Close/ Moving the sale forward	3.22	0.002	*
Preapproach/Research vs Follow up/ post sale	2.58	0.012	*
Approach/Opening vs Discovery	1.05	0.29	
Approach/Opening vs Presentation	0	1	
Approach/Opening vs Objections	1.32	0.19	
Approach/Opening vs Close/ Moving the sale forward	2.04	0.04	*
Approach/Opening vs Follow up/ post sale	0.85	0.39	
Discovery vs Presentation	1.30	0.19	
Discovery vs Objections	0.35	0.72	
Discovery vs Close/ Moving the sale forward	0.82	0.41	
Discovery vs Follow up/ post sale	0.11	0.90	
Presentation vs Objections	1.56	0.12	
Presentation vs Close/ Moving the sale forward	2.04	0.04	*
Presentation vs Follow up/ post sale	0.94	0.35	
Objections vs Close/ Moving the sale forward	0.66	0.51	
Objections vs Follow up/ post sale	0.394	0.69	
Close/ Moving the sale forward vs Follow up/ post sale	-1	0.32	

between Prospecting and Preapproach/Research ($p = .78$), implying consistency in AI valuation during the initial phases. This pattern reflects a common perception: AI is most effective when tasks involve data analysis, automation, or scale, and less so when empathy, negotiation, or trust-building are paramount.

These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the differential applicability of AI across task types within the sales cycle. Specifically, AI has shown strong utility in early-stage tasks such as lead generation, information retrieval, and segmentation, where structured data and algorithmic decision-making can enhance efficiency and accuracy (Paschen et al., 2020; Syam and Sharma, 2018). Conversely, later-stage activities such as objection handling and closing often require emotional intelligence, adaptive communication, and trust-building—areas where AI tools currently lack the nuance and flexibility of human agents (Singh et al., 2019; Huang and Rust, 2021). The significant differences observed between Prospecting and stages like Discovery and Objections thus reflect an alignment with prior findings: AI is valued most where automation can reduce cognitive load and scale effort, but less so when social cues, empathy, and contextual judgment are central to performance.

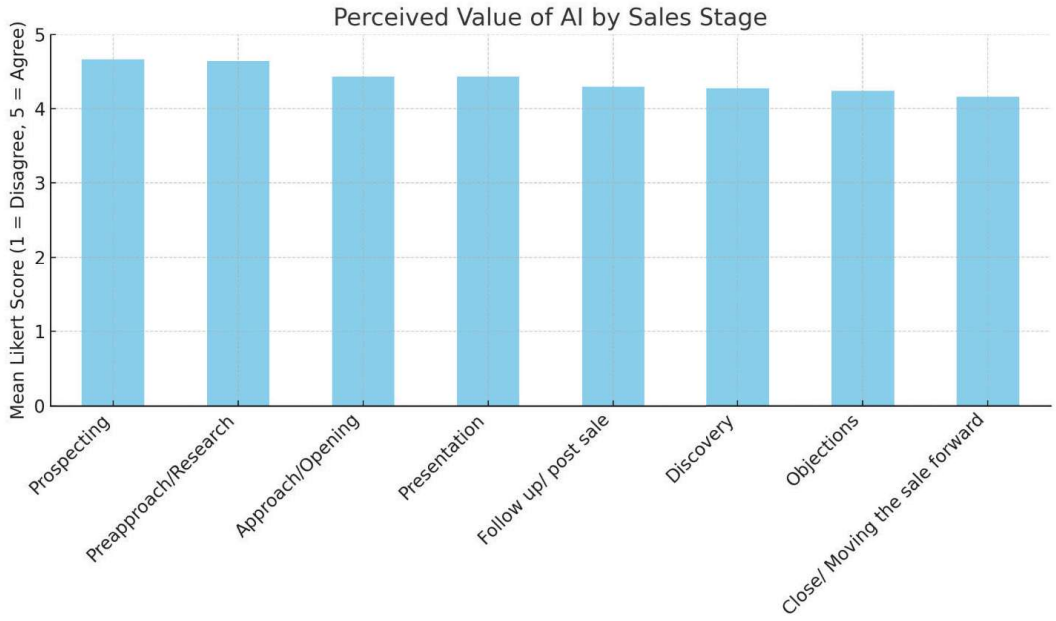
An analysis of the mean Likert scores, in Table 3, revealed clear trends in how respondents perceive the usefulness of AI across the sales process. The highest average scores were observed in the Prospecting ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 0.71$) and Preapproach/Research ($M = 4.65$, $SD = 0.72$) stages, indicating strong agreement that AI adds value during these early, research-intensive

Table 3. Mean Scores for Value of AI in Each Stage of the Sales Process

Sales Stage	Mean Likert Score	Standard Deviation
Prospecting	4.67	0.71
Preapproach/Research	4.65	0.72
Approach/Opening	4.43	0.94
Presentation	4.43	0.94
Follow up/ post sale	4.29	1.04
Discovery	4.27	1.06
Objections	4.24	1.11
Close/ Moving the sale forward	4.16	1.12

phases. These stages often involve lead identification, data collection, and initial outreach, which are areas where AI tools can automate tasks and deliver insights at scale. Moderate to high scores were also recorded for Approach/ Opening and Presentation (both M = 4.43), reflecting a belief that AI can support message crafting, personalization, and pitch optimization. In contrast, the lowest average score was found in the Follow-Up/Post-Sale stage (M = 4.29, SD = 1.04), suggesting a more cautious view of AI's role in maintaining relationships and providing post-sale service. Despite the variation, all stages received ratings above 4.0, signaling a generally positive but context-sensitive attitude toward AI adoption throughout the sales cycle, which is visually represented in Figure 2 to illustrate the high perceived value across all stages.

Figure 2. Graph of Perceived Value of AI by Sales Stage Means



Instructional Impact of GenAI-Integrated Activities

The instructional model pairs each sales stage with a corresponding GenAI-powered experiential activity. For example, students engage in simulated buyer conversations using RNMKRS or ChatGPT to role-play Discovery scenarios, where they practice active listening and problem identification. In the Presentation stage, students use GenAI to

create dynamic sales decks with tailored messaging and visuals, leveraging multimodal tools such as DALL·E and text-to-slide AI prompts.

Student reflections and debriefs support these findings. Many students note that AI simulations help them "rehearse difficult conversations without fear of failure" and "explore different selling styles quickly." These experiences align with the Active Experimentation and Reflective Observation components of ELT (Kolb, 1984), reinforcing the role of feedback-rich environments in skill development.

Advancing Theory and Practice in Sales Education

The convergence of high student valuation and GenAI-enhanced instruction offers important implications for sales education theory. First, students' consistent recognition of the importance of interactive stages (e.g., Discovery, Closing, Presentation) validates the need for curriculum emphasis on interpersonal selling behaviors. Second, GenAI tools provide a scalable mechanism for simulating real-world complexity, thus addressing one of the most enduring challenges in sales education: limited access to diverse roleplay opportunities (Deeter-Schmelz and Kennedy, 2002; Inks, 2004).

Finally, by embedding GenAI into the ELT cycle, this study extends theoretical understanding of how emerging technologies can support constructivist learning models in sales pedagogy. Specifically, AI-enabled simulations can enhance learner autonomy, facilitate continuous feedback, and personalize pathways for skill mastery.

Contributions

This study makes several important contributions to the field of sales education and technology-enhanced learning. First, it offers a novel integration of GenAI within the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) framework, providing a structured and pedagogically sound approach for sales educators, enablement leaders and sales trainers to effectively incorporate emerging technologies. We offer a structured, classroom-ready framework with example activities that aligns GenAI tools with each stage of the B2B sales process. Each section of the manuscript includes specific classroom activities and instructions for learners and teachers, enabling faculty to operationalize AI-based learning in practical, replicable ways.

This alignment bridges the gap between theory and practice, enabling more robust and adaptive instructional design. We extend Experiential Learning Theory by illustrating how GenAI tools can be systematically embedded across Kolb's four-phase learning cycle. By mapping GenAI capabilities to each phase: Concrete Experience, Reflective Observation, Abstract Conceptualization, and Active Experimentation; we provide a conceptual model that modernizes ELT for AI-mediated instruction.

Second, the manuscript explains how traditional AI and generative AI work together in the sales process. By enhancing both practical and theoretical understanding of AI's utility across the B2B sales cycle, the framework prepares students to navigate and lead within sales environments that are increasingly focused on technologyCollectively, these contributions address a critical need in sales education: to align technological fluency with applied selling competencies. This framework prepares students for the evolving demands of modern sales roles while providing educators, enablement leaders and sales trainers with a research-based, future-oriented teaching toolkit.

Third, this paper offers initial insights into student perceptions of integrating GenAI into the sales process, as well as their confidence in using these tools. These findings highlight the importance of creating educational opportunities that allow students to experiment with GenAI and build competence and confidence in its application. The results also provide a foundation for future research exploring the role of AI in sales education and its impact on learner development.

Managerial Implications

The findings emphasize the practical value of combining AI-driven tools with experiential learning to equip future sales professionals with both conceptual knowledge and applied competence. This integration enhances individual adaptability and aligns with industry expectations that align technology with the modern-day salesforce (Syam and Sharma, 2018; Paschen et al.,

2020). As sales organizations increasingly adopt AI tools for lead scoring, content generation, and pipeline management, the need for talent who can critically evaluate and apply these technologies becomes paramount (Singh et al., 2019; Huang and Rust, 2021).

From a managerial standpoint, these results encourage organizations to invest in training programs that mirror this blended pedagogical model—one that fosters digital acumen alongside human-centered skills like empathy, adaptability, and strategic thinking. Managers should prioritize professional development strategies that integrate AI simulations, role-plays, and coaching platforms to reflect real-world scenarios. For example, AI-driven coaching systems can provide scalable feedback while human managers reinforce context, judgment, and motivation (Luo et al., 2021).

Importantly, this teaching innovation underscores the principle that AI should augment, rather than define or replace, the sales process. A human-centered approach to AI adoption ensures that technology serves to empower sales professionals. As emphasized by Ransbotham et al. (2017), firms that adopt AI with a complementarity mindset achieve greater value by enhancing human capability rather than diminishing it. Managers who align technology integration with workforce empowerment will be best positioned to achieve competitive advantage in AI-enabled sales environments.

CONCLUSION

By responding to calls from scholars such as Cummins et al. (2020) and McClure et al. (2024), this paper contributes to an emerging pedagogical shift that prioritizes technological fluency alongside experiential rigor in the preparation of tomorrow's sales professionals.

Integrating generative AI into sales education through the lens of Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory offers a transformative approach to preparing students for the complexities of modern sales environments. Experiential learning frameworks have long proven effective in building applied skills through active experimentation and reflective observation (Kolb, 2015), and their relevance is amplified when paired with the capabilities of GenAI technologies. By embedding GenAI into experiential activities, educators, enablement leaders, and sales trainers can facilitate deeper learning, critical thinking, and real-world application. These insights reinforce the argument that experiential learning augmented with AI is not only pedagogically sound but also directly aligned with current sales enablement trends (Buehrer et al., 2022; Goel et al., 2024).

While this study explores the role of Generative AI across all stages of the B2B sales process, we recognize the breadth of this approach. However, examining the full sales cycle is essential for maintaining theoretical and instructional consistency, particularly within pedagogical frameworks that emphasize process-based selling. Addressing each stage ensures alignment with widely adopted sales curricula and supports educators in delivering comprehensive, sequential instruction. That said, we acknowledge that future research should adopt a more granular lens by investigating the role of GenAI within specific stages, such as objection handling, closing, or post-sale engagement, as adoption becomes more widespread and pedagogical use cases mature.

This pedagogical innovation enriches student outcomes and ensures that future sales professionals are equipped with the adaptive mindset necessary to thrive in a rapidly evolving, technology-driven marketplace. In doing so, it lays the groundwork for a new generation of sales professionals who are not only proficient in using AI tools but also capable of strategically navigating the human-machine interface that defines contemporary B2B selling.

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Appendix A. Respondent Questionnaire Display of AI Value in Each Stage of the Sales Process

How much do you agree with the following statements?

AI is valuable in this phase of the sales process:

	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither	Slightly Agree	Agree
Prospecting	○	○	○	○	○
Preapproach/Research	○	○	○	○	○
Approach/Opening	○	○	○	○	○
Discovery	○	○	○	○	○
Presentation	○	○	○	○	○
Objections	○	○	○	○	○
Close/ Moving the sale forward	○	○	○	○	○
Follow up/ post sale	○	○	○	○	○