



# What's Working Now?

## Staffing Sales Survey

Data, Insights & Recommendations for **2024**

BROUGHT TO YOU BY:



# About This Study

The way we sell has changed dramatically in recent years. The very nature of the staffing business itself is changing. It's tougher than ever to reach decision-makers. And your competitors are getting smarter and faster all the time. If you're in the business of sales (and aren't we all?), it's no surprise that 2023 delivered new harsh realities.

- Indeed and Glassdoor [reported declines in revenue](#), paid job ads are down 50%.
- Staffing Industry Analysts forecasts a [10% decrease in market size](#) this year with a meager rebound of only 3% growth, and many market segments are expected to further shrink in 2024.

Conducted between **July and October of 2023**, this online survey of staffing industry professionals was designed to help you find the best tools and strategies to drive staffing sales.

The survey was completed by 146 individuals located throughout the U.S. representing a wide range of staffing specialties, including Accounting/Finance, Allied Healthcare, Nursing, Human Resources, and Information Technology. The most common specialties among staffing firms surveyed are Clerical and Industrial. Just over 63% of survey participants represent small to midsize staffing firms with between \$1.1 and \$25 million in annual revenue.

In summary, the data reveals a diverse landscape of sales outcomes in the staffing industry in the last two years, and trends in 2023 that emphasize the need for adaptability and strategic thinking in an uncertain marketplace.

***This information can inform your decision-making to drive future growth.***

# About Haley Marketing

Founded in 1996, Haley Marketing is the largest website development, social and content marketing firm serving the temporary staffing and executive recruiting industries.

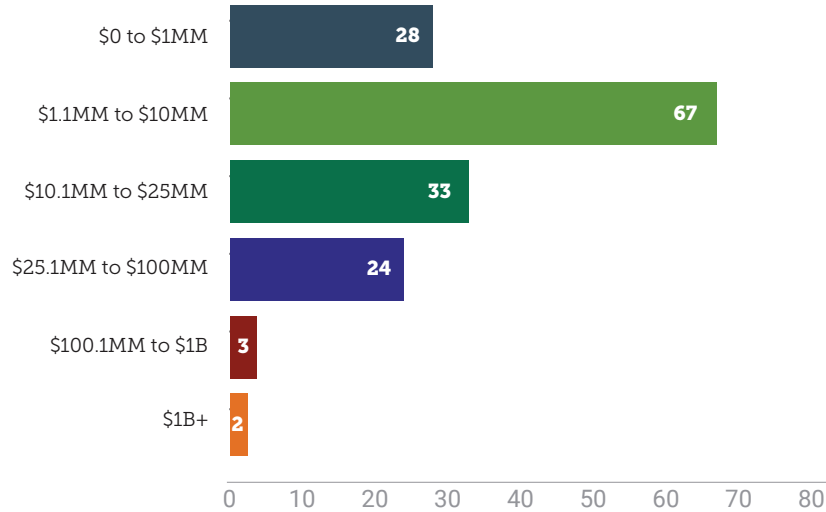
**Our mission is to make world-class marketing easy and affordable, ultimately helping clients:**

- Drive sales
- Build stronger brands
- Improve recruiting results

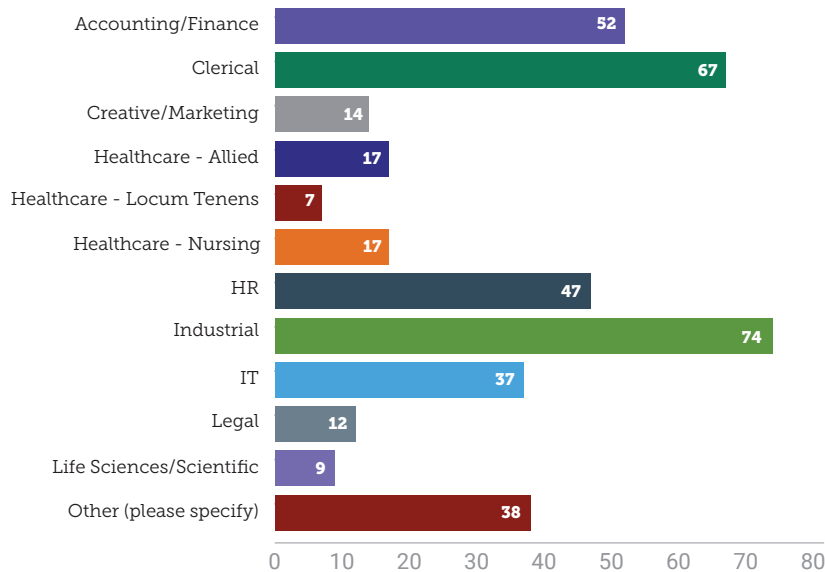
For over 25 years, we have served more than 1,400 staffing firms and recruiters – from sole proprietorships and one-person startups to billion-dollar international firms. For more information, visit [www.haleymarketing.com](http://www.haleymarketing.com).

# SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

## Q: WHAT IS YOUR COMPANY SIZE?



## Q: WHAT IS YOUR COMPANY'S SPECIALTY?



### Notes:

- > Due to skip patterns, skipped questions and survey drop-out, some questions were not answered by every respondent. For each question, we included the total number of responses (which is statistically valid for the sample size); percentages are based on the number of respondents who completed each question.
- > The distribution of staffing firms across different revenue categories indicates diversity in company size, providing insights into best practices and sales strategies of midsize firms.

Let's dive into the data – and **what it means for your business.**

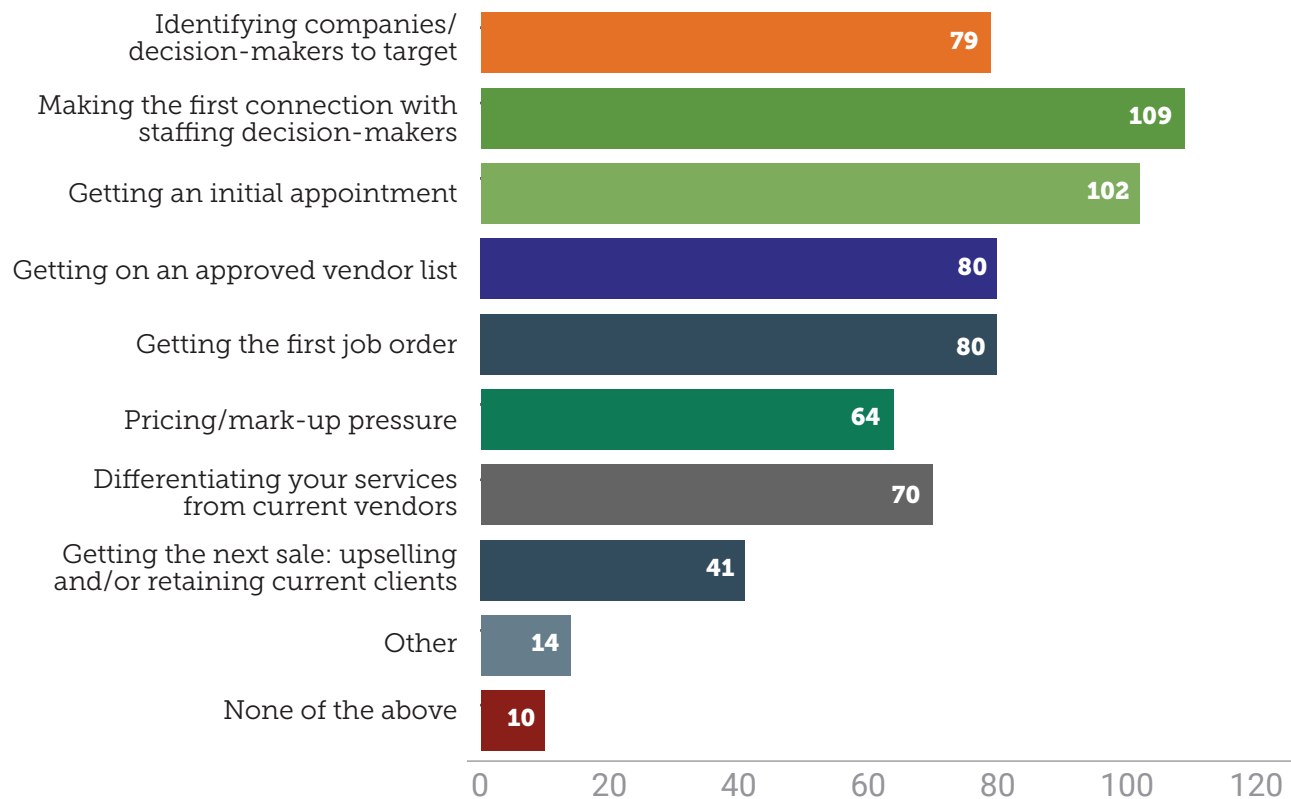
# SECTION 1:

## Challenges and Opportunities

### Connecting with Decision-Makers

Staffing firms face challenges at various stages of the sales funnel, but nearly 53% of survey respondents said making the first connection with decision-makers is the number one challenge.

#### Q: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SALES CHALLENGES IS YOUR ORGANIZATION CURRENTLY FACING?



The survey data illustrates patterns in key sales challenges in:

#### 1. PROSPECTING:

Making the first connection with staffing decision-makers is the top challenge, with nearly 53% of respondents expressing difficulties in this regard.

Getting an initial appointment is another major obstacle, as half of the respondents reported struggling with it.

Identifying companies and decision-makers to target is another significant challenge, with more than two-thirds of respondents citing this as an issue.

#### 2. CONVERSION:

Gaining approval as a preferred vendor partner is a challenge for nearly 40% of people surveyed, highlighting difficulties in moving prospects to the next stage.

Pricing/mark-up pressure is faced by 3 out of 10 of respondents, showing challenges in negotiating and closing deals.

Differentiating services from current vendors is a concern for one out of three respondents, suggesting heated competition and a need to better present a unique value proposition.

### 3. REPEAT BUSINESS:

Getting the next sale, including upselling and retaining current clients, is a challenge for 20% of respondents.



## TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2024

- ✓ **It's time to get creative.** Staffing buyers are harder to reach, and if you want to succeed in this environment, you need to change your sales strategies, processes, and tools. Focus more on the pain points prospects are experiencing in the current market and how your services can alleviate those pains. Use multi-touch, multi-channel marketing to capture attention, demonstrate your value, and foster more productive sales conversations.
- ✓ **Build a digital marketing system.** Old-school "smile and dial" sales don't have the same impact they did just a few years ago. In today's remote world, you need an integrated system of digital marketing (blogging, SEO, PPC, social media, and email) to reach and nurture relationships with staffing buyers.
- ✓ **Build personal brands.** Personal branding by salespeople and recruiters can boost your company's visibility, open doors with prospects, support client retention, and help upsell.

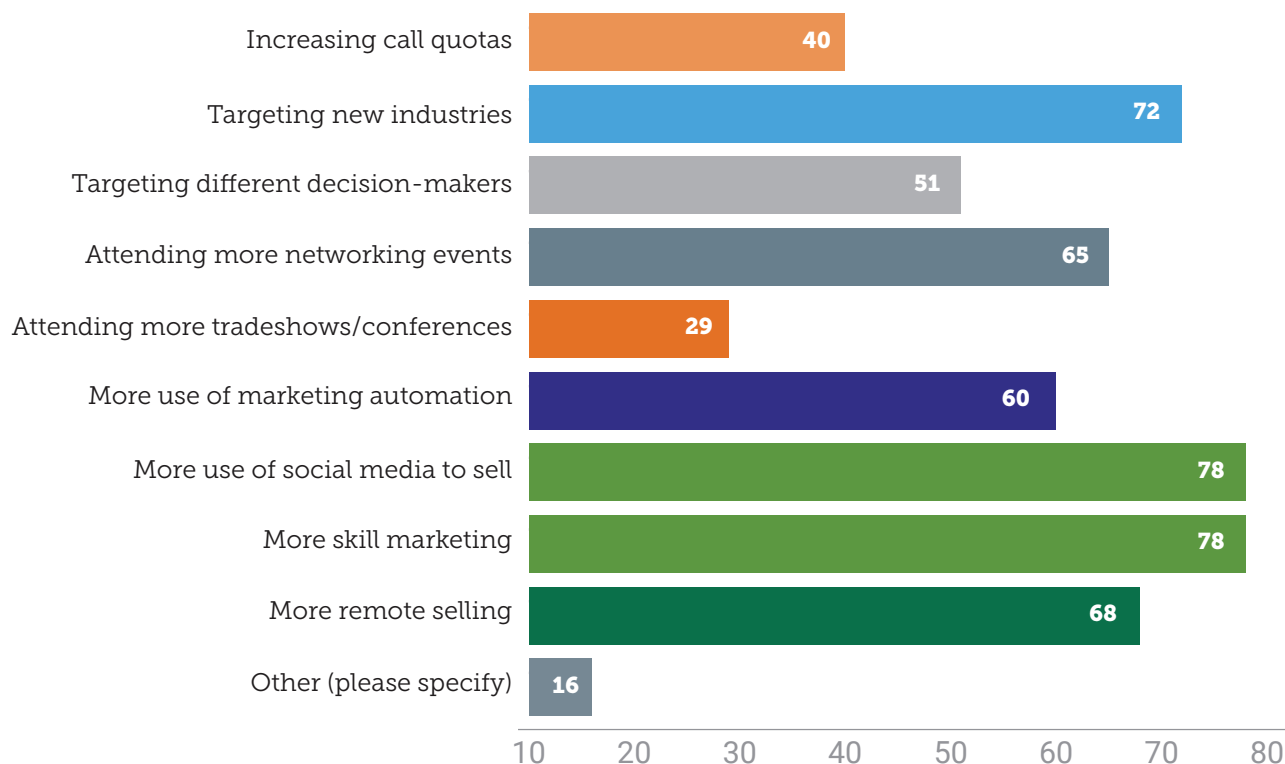
## LEARN SIMPLE STEPS YOU CAN TAKE TODAY TO POLISH UP YOUR PERSONAL BRAND:

**Ask Haley:** In Staffing, How Can I Build a Strong Personal Brand on LinkedIn?

<https://www.haleymarketing.com/2023/09/16/ask-haley-build-strong-personal-brand-linkedin/>

## Q: HOW HAS YOUR SALES PROCESS CHANGED POST-COVID?

Now let's take a look at how staffing firms are navigating a dynamic post-COVID world. Survey respondents indicated they are embracing digital tools, adapting to changing market demands, and redefining their sales processes to increase revenue in a highly competitive environment.



This data reveals a number of major changes in how staffing firms' sales processes have adapted to a post-pandemic business environment.

### 1. INCREASED USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA AND SKILL MARKETING:

The most significant change is the increased use of social media and skill marketing. Nearly half of all survey participants recognized the importance of leveraging digital platforms for sales, branding (we can't stress this enough), and proactively showcasing the most desirable skills of top candidates.

### 2. TARGETING NEW INDUSTRIES:

Four out of 10 staffing firms in the survey shifted their focus to target new industries and areas of specialization. This indicates a response to changing demands in the labor market during and post-COVID.

### 3. MORE REMOTE SELLING:

Over two-thirds of survey respondents embraced more remote selling methods. This is in line with the shift towards remote work and the need for virtual engagement with both existing and prospective clients.

### 4. ATTENDING MORE NETWORKING EVENTS:

Over two-thirds of staffing firms surveyed said they're attending more in-person networking events. Salespeople are getting out there to build and maintain professional relationships.

### 5. MORE USE OF MARKETING AUTOMATION:

35% of staffing firms are using marketing automation to streamline their processes and reach a wider audience more efficiently.

## 6. TARGETING DIFFERENT DECISION-MAKERS:

Nearly 30% of those surveyed said they are targeting different decision-makers within client organizations. This is likely due to organizational changes post-COVID, as well as the fact that the staffing decision-making process has become more complex. In addition to the hiring manager, multiple stakeholders throughout an organization (e.g., HR leaders, procurement specialists, risk managers, and even financial professionals) may be involved in making key staffing and hiring decisions.



### TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2024:

- ✓ **EMBRACE NEW SALES TOOLS.** While email remains the dominant tool for B2B selling, you need to embrace other digital tools to connect with staffing buyers. Texting, direct messaging, and communication tools like WhatsApp and Slack can have a higher impact and achieve far greater response. Tools like video email and asynchronous selling can also improve response.
- ✓ **INTEGRATE AI INTO YOUR OUTREACH.** At a minimum, AI can be used to improve the quality of writing in texts and emails. However, AI can also be used for audience segmentation, to increase response personalization, and to optimize timing for email, social, and SMS delivery.
- ✓ **MASTER SOCIAL SELLING.** While no one likes an overly aggressive salesperson on LinkedIn, top salespeople are mastering the use of LinkedIn and other social networks to connect with buyers, build personal and company brands, nurture relationships, and facilitate sales conversations.
- ✓ **GET MORE TARGETED WITH SKILL MARKETING.** While skill marketing remains a tried and true tactic in staffing, the best skill marketers present highly relevant talent to equally highly targeted audiences. If you make your skill marketing more relevant, you'll increase your open and response rates.
- ✓ **FIND THE RIGHT MIX OF REMOTE AND IN-PERSON ENGAGEMENT METHODS.** You'll need to use a combination of virtual and in-person outreach to connect with decision-makers. This is vital for a well-rounded sales strategy.

## CASE STUDY

Strategy, analysis and testing dial in the right marketing mix to grab attention and drive conversion.

### How Can You Increase Sales in a Highly Competitive Environment?

<https://www.haleymarketing.com/case-studies/how-can-you-increase-sales-in-a-highly-competitive-environment/>

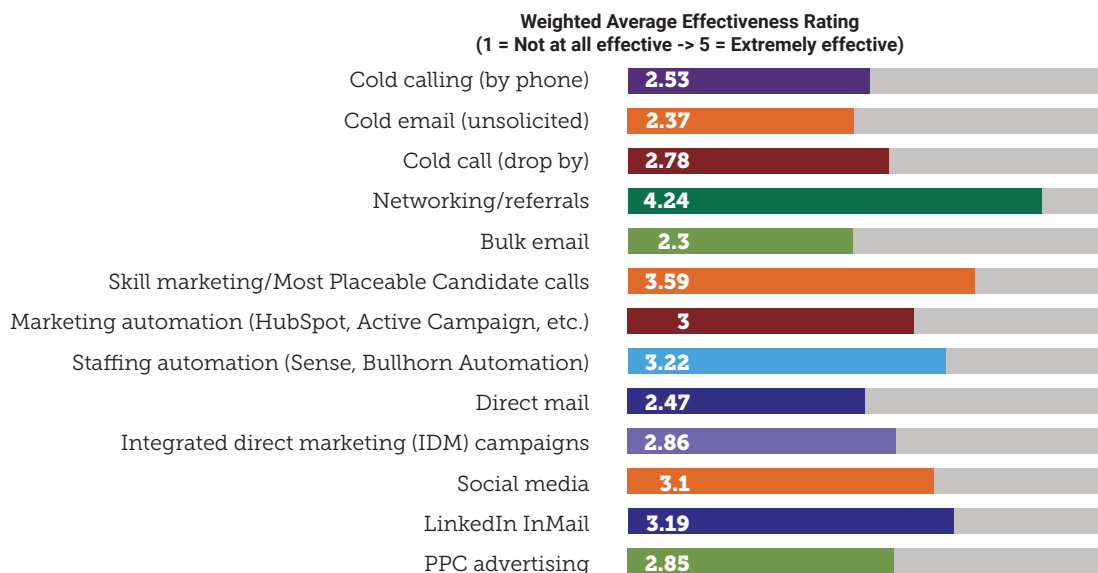
# SECTION 2:

## Sales Method Effectiveness

Understanding the effectiveness of current sales methods will help you define your own sales strategies and better differentiate your company from the competition.

The survey looked at the effectiveness ratings of various sales methods and explored trends in the use of artificial intelligence and lead-generation tools.

### Q: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FOLLOWING SALES METHODS?



#### MOST EFFECTIVE SALES METHODS:

- 1. Networking/referrals:** It's no surprise that this method received the highest average rating of 4.24, as building relationships and obtaining referrals from existing contacts have proven to be effective for sales success since the beginning of time.
- 2. Skill marketing/Most Placeable Candidate calls:** This method also ranks among the most effective, with an average rating of 3.59. Proactive marketing of candidates with highly desirable skill sets is a strong way to attract attention and engage with prospective customers, especially in niche industries and high-demand talent roles.
- 3. Staffing automation and LinkedIn InMail:** These sales tools were nearly tied for third place in effectiveness for connecting with new buyers.

#### LEAST EFFECTIVE SALES METHODS (BASED ON AVERAGE RATINGS):

- 1. Bulk email:** Bulk email received the lowest average rating (read: don't waste another minute even thinking about it).
- 2. Cold email:** Cold email (unsolicited) is also rated low, likely because of the widespread use of spam filters to reduce clutter.





## TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2024:

✓ **SOME BEST PRACTICES ARE STILL BEST PRACTICES.** Networking, referrals, and skill marketing were top ways to drive sales in 2023—and will most likely continue to be top ways to generate sales in 2024.

✓ **ADD VALUE BEFORE YOU SELL.** Whether through mass communication or one-to-one outreach, demonstrate that you understand the challenges prospects are facing...and that you have relevant solutions to offer before you start to sell staffing services.

✓ **PERSONALIZE YOUR SELLING.** With cold prospects, do your homework and proactively address likely pain points based on the client's industry or the type of people they hire. For warm leads, use automation and AI to make your messaging more relevant.

✓ **DIFFERENTIATE YOUR SALES PROCESS.** Look at what all your competitors are doing... then do something different! While most salespeople are solely focused on digital

marketing and calls, you can have a higher impact by integrating direct mail and even drop-offs into your prospecting plan to have a greater impact.

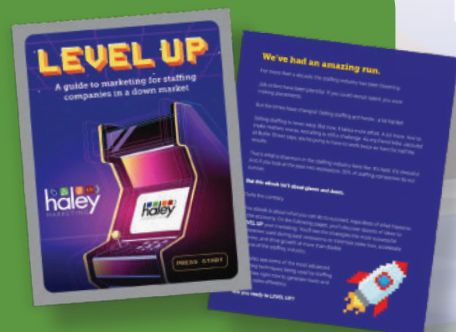
✓ **MIX DIGITAL AND TRADITIONAL SELLING.** Take advantage of the best of the old (calls, drop-bys, skill marketing, mail) with the best of the new (retargeting ads, social media, sales automation, video) to get your company found, generate interest in your solutions, and open doors for more meaningful sales calls.

✓ **USE CONTENT MARKETING TO OPEN DOORS AND STAY TOP-OF-MIND.** From blogging to eBooks to video and even branded magazines, content marketing can position your firm as more than a typical staffing vendor. It strengthens positioning, differentiates your brand, illustrates your value, and provides a constant stream of conversation starters.

## Looking for more ideas to improve sales?

Download our Level Up eBook with 12 strategies to increase sales impact.

<https://www.haleymarketing.com/level-up/>



13%

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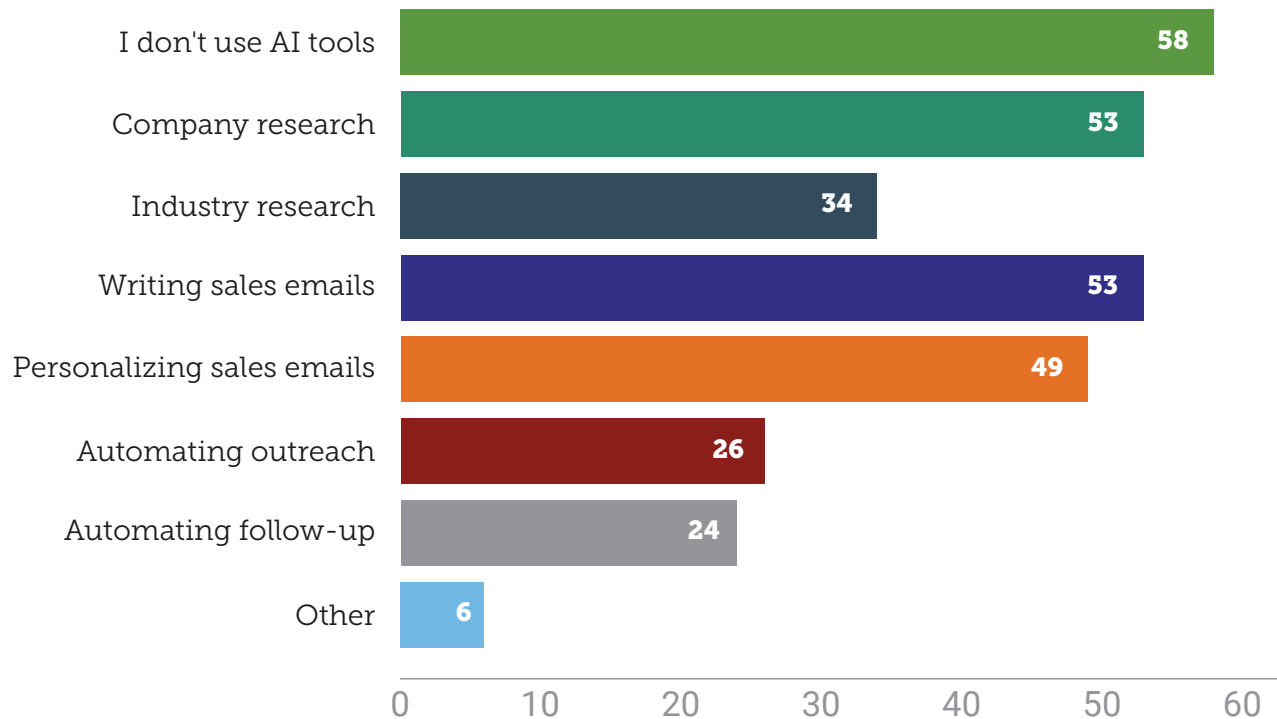
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## Q: HOW DO YOU USE AI TOOLS IN YOUR SALES PROCESS?

Although artificial intelligence (AI) exploded onto the scene in 2023, the survey revealed that approximately 37% of respondents do not use AI tools for business development or in the sales process.

The most common use of AI was for recruiting-related activities such as writing job postings and articles and fine-tuning resumes. Less common was the use of AI for marketing, including gathering market intelligence, targeting areas for business development, or list-building and outreach automation.

This is an untapped opportunity for you to leverage artificial intelligence to speed up the sales cycle and drive process improvement.



### AI USAGE PATTERNS:

- ▶ **Company Research:** A third of staffing firms surveyed are using AI for company research to identify potential clients and understand their needs.
- ▶ **Writing Sales Emails:** One-third of survey participants use AI for writing sales emails and sales automation to assist in creating initial communication with potential clients.
- ▶ **Personalizing Sales Emails:** AI is used for personalization of sales emails to enhance relevance of communications and better engage potential customers.
- ▶ **Industry Research:** Only one in five staffing firms are using AI for industry research or to gather insights into market trends and look for new opportunities.
- ▶ **Automating Outreach:** Just 16% reported using AI to automate outreach efforts, which could reach a targeted audience more quickly, consistently and effectively.
- ▶ **Automating Follow-Up:** AI is under-used in the automation of follow-up activities, such as leads nurturing.



## TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2024:

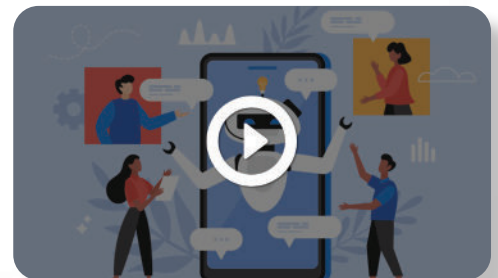
- ✓ **GET AHEAD OF THE CURVE ON AI ADOPTION.** AI can dramatically improve sales productivity, and more than half of the industry isn't using it...yet! Like most new tools, big advantages go to the early adopters.
- ✓ **USE AI TO ACCELERATE SALES.** Start with the easiest applications – using AI to write better sales emails and LinkedIn messages. Then expand to use it for market research, industry research, and even interactive sales training.
- ✓ **USE AI TO IMPROVE SALES LEADS.** Improve website copy. Create higher converting calls to action. Create more compelling visuals...that don't look like stock photos. Add an AI chatbot to maximize website conversion.

There are several promising opportunities for you to better leverage AI applications in sales. From market research to identify more qualified buyers and lead generation, to automation of repetitive and administrative tasks, as well as tools to improve personalization, Artificial Intelligence tools can help you stay competitive in a rapidly evolving industry.

## Want to learn more about using AI?

Watch our On-Demand webinar:  
AI and the Future of Staffing

<https://lunchwithhaley.com/2023/09/06/ai-and-the-future-of-the-staffing-industry/>

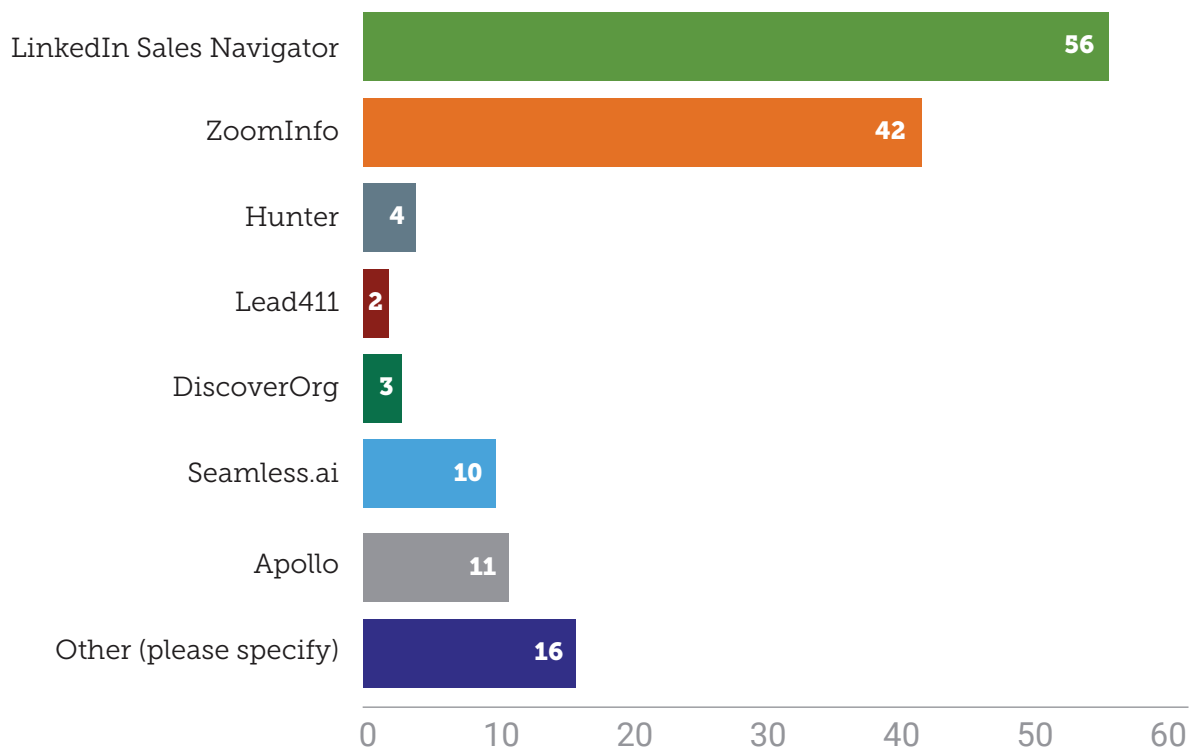


## Q: WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING SALES LEAD/LIST-BUILDING TOOLS DO YOU USE?

For filling the sales funnel, the survey asked which list-building tools are used for lead generation.

Surprisingly, about 43% of staffing firms reported they do not use any sales lead/list-building tools. While one of the biggest sales challenges is not knowing who to target, many staffing firms are not using lead/list-building tools to identify potential customers.

This points to yet another under-utilized method for improving lead generation, targeting desired market segments, and increasing sales efficiency.



### USAGE PATTERNS:

Many do not use these tools. Surprisingly, more than 4 in 10 still don't use any list-building tools.

- ▶ **LinkedIn Sales Navigator:** This tool is very popular among survey respondents for mining a wide range of potentially golden leads on the LinkedIn platform.
- ▶ **ZoomInfo:** This tool is used by a significant number of staffing firms to access business information and contact details for potential leads.
- ▶ **Apollo and Seamless.ai:** Only about 7% of respondents reported using these platforms for contact discovery, lead generation and engagement.
- ▶ **Experimentation:** One in ten survey respondents reported a variety of other tools are used in their tech stack, which includes custom or specialized solutions based on the specific company needs. This suggests testing of various tools as the technology continues to evolve.



## TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2024:

- ✓ **USE LEAD GEN TOOLS TO IMPROVE SALES SUCCESS.** Making the first contact is the #1 challenge staffing companies face. Lead gen tools allow you to more accurately target the right companies and decision-makers...with the right message.
- ✓ **INTEGRATE LEAD GEN WITH AUTOMATION.** By combining lead lists with a well-planned series of marketing touches, you will increase your probability of getting that first appointment (just be sure the touches are focused on the prospect's needs and not just your staffing services).

Adopting new and emerging AI tools for sales automation and lead/list-building can help you expand the pool of potential clients, as well as improve your sales processes, help develop new business opportunities, and increase revenue growth.



### DID YOU KNOW:

Workflow automation can be deployed to reach out to prospective, current, and inactive clients in order to keep your firm top-of-mind and deliver the right message at the right time (driving revenue and lowering client acquisition costs!).

#### **Automation for Sales: It's a Lead Gen Thing**

<https://www.haleymarketing.com/2022/04/14/use-automation-in-sales-process-staffing-firms/>

# SECTION 3:

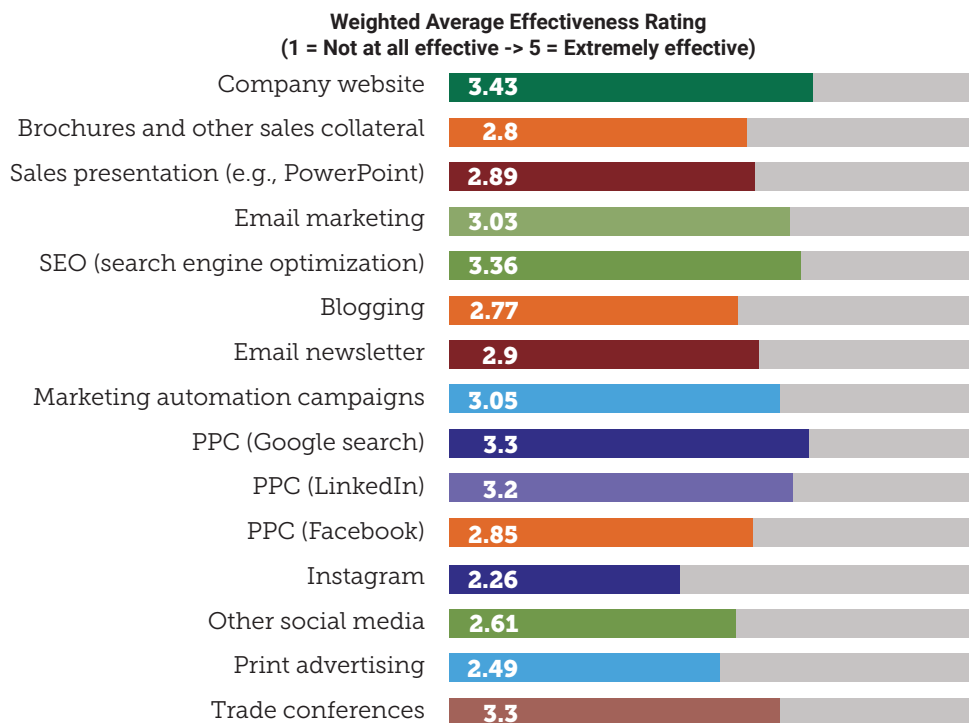
## Marketing Tools and Sales Strategies

The survey data revealed patterns in the effectiveness of the most popular marketing tools used by staffing firms.

- ▶ Company website and SEO are rated as highly effective, suggesting that a strong online presence and search engine optimization are key for successful attraction, engagement and conversion of prospects.
- ▶ While social media use is high, Instagram was rated as the least engaging platform for staffing firms.
- ▶ Staffing firms use a diverse range of marketing tools and are adopting a multi-channel marketing approach and multi-layered tech stack.

These insights will help you develop and optimize a comprehensive marketing strategy to better drive sales in 2024 and beyond.

### Q: HOW WOULD YOU RATE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FOLLOWING MARKETING TOOLS FOR YOUR BUSINESS?



#### Top 3 Most Effective Marketing Tools:

1. Company website (Average Rating: 3.43)
2. SEO (search engine optimization) (Average Rating: 3.36)
3. (Tie) Trade conferences, PPC (Google search) (Average rating 3.30)

The survey data also points to why differentiation is important for you to create a compelling brand, content-driven market presence, and unique selling proposition.



## TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2024:

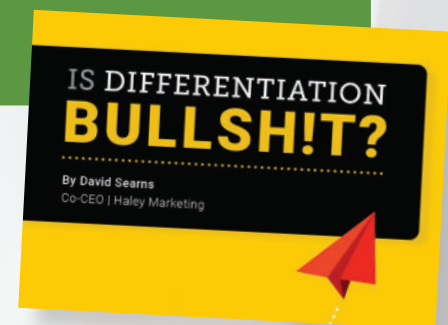
- ✓ **MAKE IT PERSONAL.** Personalized email marketing, marketing automation, and PPC Google search can play a beneficial part in lead generation and filling your sales funnel.
- ✓ **IMPLEMENT WEBSITE CRO.** CRO = conversion rate optimization. It's the process of getting more of your website visitors to take action via copy, calls to action, and the design of pages, buttons, and forms.
- ✓ **SEO REQUIRES A STRATEGY.** It's not just about keywords. It's about having a long-term plan to create relevant content and a game plan to get that content found and provide a great user experience that keeps people on your site.
- ✓ **SOCIAL MEDIA IS SHIFTING...CONSTANTLY.** But don't waste time on the hot new site. Instead, double down on content creation, personal branding, and relationship selling using the platforms that perform for your sales team.
- ✓ **TAKE A MULTI-CHANNEL APPROACH.** When prospecting, there's no way to know which tool will work best for a given prospect. The most effective marketing strategies integrate channels to maximize reach.

## Which brings us to one of our favorite FAQs about marketing...

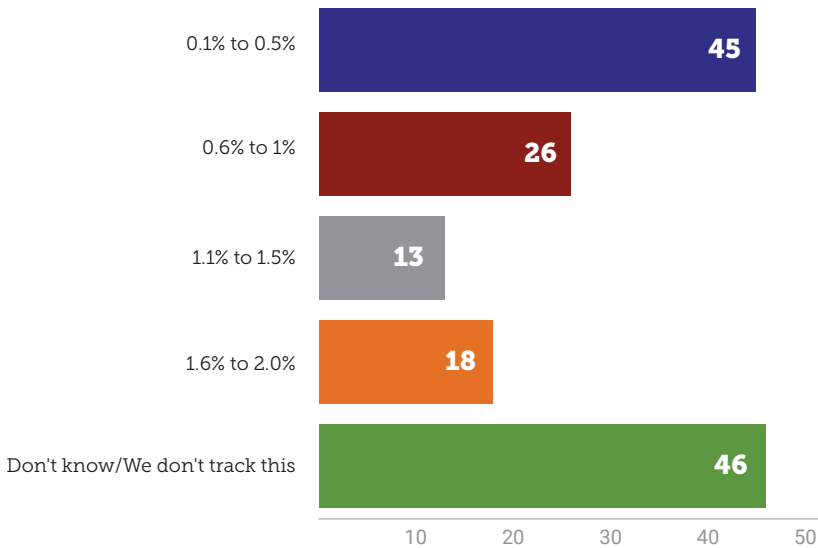
### Is Differentiation Bullsh!t?

(No, but this eBook will show you how to really stand out!)

<https://www.haleymarketing.com/haley-resources/is-differentiation-bullsht/>



## Q: APPROXIMATELY WHAT PERCENTAGE OF YOUR SALES REVENUE DO YOU SPEND ON MARKETING (EXCLUDING JOB ADVERTISING)?



This part of the survey asked what percentage of sales revenue people like you are spending on marketing.

### MARKETING EXPENDITURE:

- ▶ **Variation in Spending:** Most survey responses fell into the 0.1% to 0.5% range suggesting a conservative or cautious approach to marketing spending.
- ▶ **Moderate Spending:** A considerable number of firms spend between 0.6% and 2%, which represents moderate to aggressive marketing spending compared to a historical industry average of 0.4%.
- ▶ **Significant Don't Know/Don't Track:** An astonishing 30% of the survey respondents said they "Don't know/Don't track this," indicating a lack of effective measurement or awareness of marketing expenses and ROI.

## Looking for how to set your marketing budget?

Download our Marketing Best Practices Guide from our eBooks page:

<https://www.haleymarketing.com/haley-resources/ebooks/>

and check out this article (it's an oldie, but a goodie):

<https://www.haleymarketing.com/2014/01/22/marketing-limited-budget/>







## TAKEAWAYS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2024:

Change is a given in the staffing business, and its pace is only increasing. We've witnessed the impact of economic cycles, changing markets and technology advancements like AI. If you do only one thing to boost profitability in 2024, invest your time and money in marketing. Specifically:

- ✓ **BUDGET BASED ON GOALS.** Traditional percent of sales budgets do little to ensure an effective marketing investment. Instead, look at your growth goals and then budget based on either what it will take to succeed or the percentage of the growth you'd be willing to invest to achieve that goal.
- ✓ **MAXIMIZE YOUR MARKETING INVESTMENT.** Use data and analytics to monitor the performance of your activities. In 2024, ROI is king, so increase investment in things that are working and shift dollars away from those that are not.
- ✓ **EMBRACE TECHNOLOGY TO IMPROVE EFFICIENCY.** AI. Automation. Lead gen tools. Use tech to give your sales team more time to sell.
- ✓ **BE STRATEGIC.** The purchasing of staffing services has become more complex with multiple decision-makers. Match the right message to the right audience (at the right time). And ensure your sales team has the training to speak to the challenges and needs of each type of decision-maker.
- ✓ **INVEST FOR THE LONG TERM.** Whether the economy goes up or down in 2024, companies that invest in marketing will see less decline, faster recovery, and more rapid recovery than those that reduce marketing in lean times.
- ✓ **ALLOCATE SOME MONEY TO EXPERIMENT.** Marketing is both an art and a science. To achieve breakthrough results, you have to try new ideas. Have fun and take some risks.



# FINAL THOUGHTS:

If this survey taught us anything, it reinforced our understanding of how sales and marketing in the staffing industry are big, hairy and ever-changing challenges. Decision-makers are harder to reach. And the competitive “noise” is louder than ever.

While there is no one “right answer” for growing a staffing company in a market like this, you must continue to adapt your sales and marketing methods to connect with clients and prospects.

## Here are our seven “must-do” ideas for 2024:

- ✓ **Be strategic.**  
Define your goals and understand what it will take to achieve them. Develop your positioning, prospect targeting, lead gen, and sales outreach around those goals.
- ✓ **Match your messaging to the market.**  
Staffing changed in 2023. Success in 2024 will depend on showing how your services solve business problems for your clients.
- ✓ **Use marketing to improve (not replace) sales.**  
Implement tactics like integrated direct marketing, account-based marketing, and sales automation to make your sales team more productive.
- ✓ **Build a digital marketing system.**  
Integrate blogging, SEO, PPC, social media, and email into a system to build your brand, generate leads, and keep your company top-of-mind.
- ✓ **Optimize your marketing.**  
Constantly test ideas to improve your website, advertising, email campaigns, automations, and more to increase response.
- ✓ **Improve your sales tools.**  
Use tools like video email and AI to make your sales activities more impactful.
- ✓ **Train your staff.**  
Teach your team how to talk to different kinds of staffing buyers. Discuss the issues your clients are facing and how staffing can solve them. Give them the tools and training to build personal brands and master social selling.



## Have a Question for Haley Marketing?

We hope you have found a few ideas and great value in our 2023 Staffing Sales Survey. If you have questions about the data and any of its implications, please feel free to reach out to us at **1.888.696.2900** or **info@haleymarketing.com**.