

MAKING THE CONNECTION: HOW TOP SELLERS LEVERAGE WEB CONFERENCING TO WIN

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Report Highlights

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Top salespeople find a way to spend more time selling, and less time searching or administering.

p4

Do stronger sales technologies help hit your number? Early adopters enjoy 9% better quota results.

p8

Using interactive whiteboard tools improves every quota attainment metric, plus customer retention.

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Video-enabled sellers are 8% more likely to achieve their individual quota number.

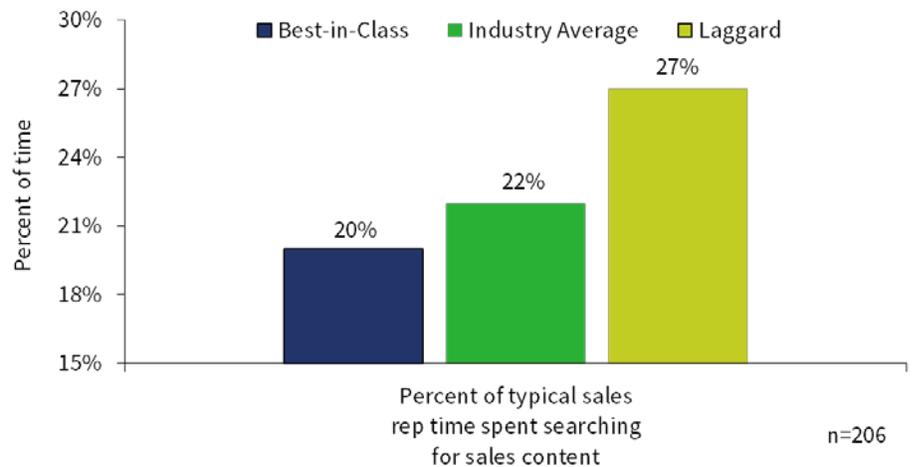
Time and technology — never enough of the former, and how to best deploy the latter — often shape the daily existence of modern B2B sales professionals. If you're looking for an additional edge in beating your quota next year, this research report will provide actionable guidance around how web conferencing solutions can help you make better, faster, and more effective connections with today's savvy buyers.

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Every minute you spend NOT nurturing and closing business drags out your sales cycle longer, and makes it harder to hit your quota.

If you're a professional seller, particularly in a business-to-business (B2B) environment, you're already well aware of the need to manage your time carefully, as well as the stressful clock-ticking associated with controlling and minimizing your typical sales cycle. If it's any consolation, Aberdeen Group's research proves that you are far from alone. As we see in Figure 1, the most successful sales organizations — the Best-in-Class are defined as the top 20% of performers from a significant set of survey respondents — somehow manage to create an environment in which fewer minutes and hours are lost each day around unproductive sales rep activities.

Figure 1: Nothing Matters More than Your Time



Source: Aberdeen Group, November 2015

Every minute that you spend searching for proposal templates, waiting for Legal to approve another master service agreement, stressing out on the edge of your seat for a signed deal to come through, persuading the CFO to allow for a pricing discount... is a minute not spent nurturing and closing business. It is the mission of Aberdeen's Sales Effectiveness research practice to help identify which technologies and best practices are most likely to help professional sellers take back their precious time. If

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the 26% advantage represented in Figure 1 (bottom-performing Laggards report 27% of sales rep time spent unproductively, vs. only 20% among the Best-in-Class) rings familiar for you, keep reading.

Better Sales Results? There's an App for That.

In an August 2014 Aberdeen research report, *Would You Buy from a 20th-Century Sales Rep?*, we learned that Best-in-Class companies are 29% more likely than under-performers (63% vs. 49%) to promote an “early adopter” sales technology approach that leans forward in the interest of arming their quota-carriers with newer, notable, leading-edge infrastructure to better help them control sales cycles and reach quotas. This may seem like a no-brainer assumption, but if you're a professional seller, it's highly unlikely you've received a no-questions-asked approval on every technology expense you've ever requested. The reality of modern, competitive sales marketplaces is that, unless you are selling for Google or Apple, the profit margins for your team are rarely healthy enough to open up the CFO's purse strings completely when it comes to acquiring new sales technology enablers.

The best way to justify a business expense, of course, is to demonstrate for the C-suite that a positive return-on-investment (ROI) can be clearly associated with doling out cash. When we segment out survey respondents from the above-mentioned research a bit differently, comparing the business results of early sales technology adopters compared with lagging firms, we see in Figure 2 a clear and strong argument that even the folks in finance should find compelling:

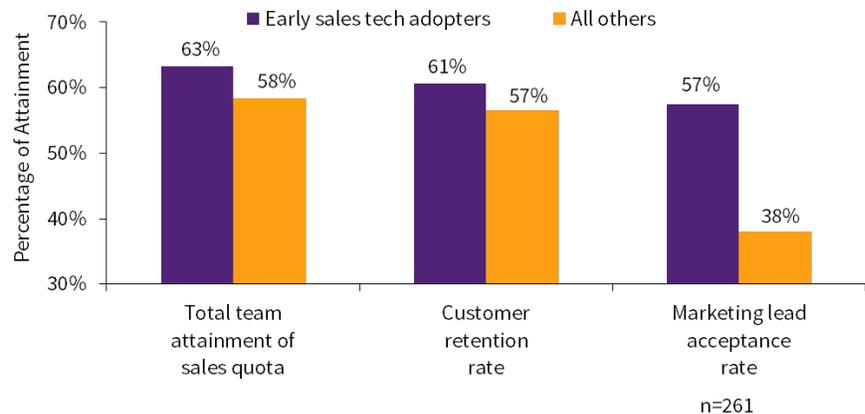
Unless you are selling for Google or Apple, the profit margins for your team are rarely healthy enough to open up the CFO's purse strings completely when it comes to acquiring new sales technology enablers.

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Unless you work in a 100% sell-and-flip environment, maintaining consistent customer spend is in your best interest.

→ Achieving a **higher total team attainment of sales quota** benefits the bean-counters in a measurable way, because we know from Aberdeen's Sales Performance Management research that it costs over \$29,000 and takes 7.2 months to fully replace a typical B2B sales rep. When more reps hit their number, and the overall team quota is closer at hand, the need to spend those stressful dollars diminishes. Wouldn't it be better to allocate those funds proactively, around technology platforms that actually help sales reps and channel partners seal their deals?

Figure 2: Stronger Sales Technology Footprint, Better Outcome for Today's Seller



Source: Aberdeen Group, November 2015

→ We don't need research to intuitively understand that it's easier and more economical to keep current customers happy, as opposed to chasing down new logos. **Better customer retention** is an obvious metric that company executives, when requested to fund technologies that will keep getting invoices paid, will no doubt appreciate. And unless you work in a 100% sell-and-flip environment,

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maintaining consistent customer spend is in your best interest, too.

- Why do early tech adopters enjoy a **50% stronger marketing lead acceptance rate**? Because they invest in the tools necessary to generate better-quality leads for the folks on the front line. Some of these technologies are utilized purely by the marketing team, such as marketing automation and content management platforms, to create top-of-funnel awareness of the general product line represented by the sales team, while others are better suited to the mid-and late-stage direct conversations with buyers that are held by individual sales contributors, which are discussed immediately below. Either way, the executives who hold budget in your organization will certainly appreciate any opportunity to streamline the lead-to-close processes to which both marketing and sales professionals contribute.

Web Conferencing Technologies: Across-the-Board ROI Wins for Every Stakeholder

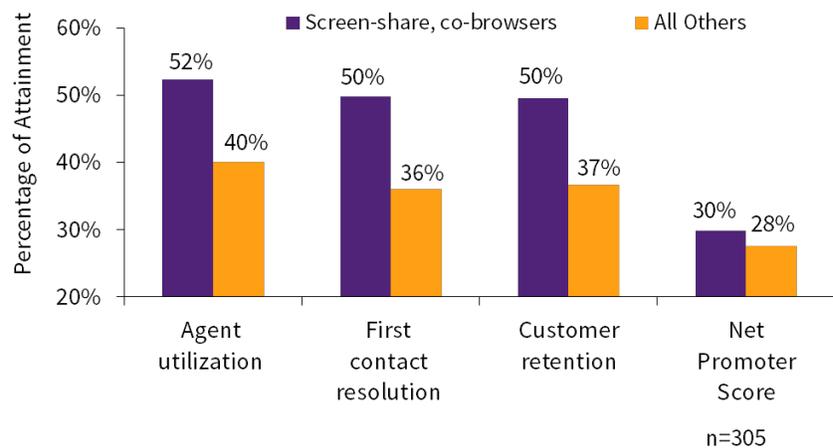
Aberdeen's Customer Experience Management and Contact Center research practice performs extensive studies around the benefits that both sales and service practitioners enjoy when using screen-sharing or co-browsing platforms to efficiently connect with their prospects and customers. This study points out that the highly virtual and digital nature of modern B2B communications is inherently flawed. Particularly, real-life, in-person buyer interactions can be severely limited when old-fashioned conversations — looking someone in the eye,

The executives who hold budget in your organization will certainly appreciate any opportunity to streamline the lead-to-close processes to which both marketing and sales professionals contribute.

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absorbing their body language —are replaced by impersonal, live chat boxes or drawn-out, boring, PowerPoint presentations. Regaining the personal touch that helps both sales and customer service professionals build bonds with their buyers requires technology enablers, typically baked into web conferencing tools, that help restore visual cues and energy into sales conversations that are not held in person. In *Co-Browsing: Guide Customers to Grow your Own Success* (May 2015), Aberdeen research showcases a number of corporate performance advantages that accrue to companies who have adopted screen-sharing or co-browsing technologies, compared with non-users (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Do You See What I See —Improved Sales Performance with Screen-Sharing Perhaps?



Source: Aberdeen Group, November 2015

Buyer interactions are severely limited when old-fashioned conversations — looking someone in the eye, absorbing their body language — are replaced by impersonal live chat boxes or drawn-out, boring, PowerPoint presentations.

Whether honing in on the efficiency of customer-facing interactions, or maintaining optimal levels of customer satisfaction, today's enterprises are keenly aware of the financial value of supporting stronger and more intimate relationships between sellers and buyers of all sorts of goods and services. There are many ways in which savvy market-facing professionals

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leverage screen-sharing tools to help them shorten their sales cycles and beat quotas:

- ➔ **Product demonstrations** are an obvious, ubiquitous use case for showing a buyer how much value the solution that we're selling can add to their business. If you buy into the concept that "facts tell, but stories sell," a strong and visually compelling demo is an unbeatable way to focus a prospect's attention on WIIFM ("what's in it for me"), when they can visualize themselves using and benefiting from the product as they see it in action.
- ➔ **Interactive web experiences** take one-directional product demos to a new level. It's one thing to show-and-tell a potential buyer all about your product features, advantages, and benefits; top-performing organizations leverage their web conferencing tools to let the prospect actually experience their product. For example, this can take the form of encouraging a buyer to select, click, enter data, and experience on their own terms any web-based software product, to give them an enhanced experience and whet their appetite around how the solution will eventually help them.
- ➔ Finally, **online assessment or ROI calculator** applications allow sellers to walk their counterparts through a seemingly random, but generally pre-planned, cadence that inevitably leads the buyer to understand that their life would be forever incomplete without investing in the product under discussion. The technology required to accomplish this effective type of sales conversation moves beyond screen-sharing, to co-browsing, wherein all parties on a web conference have the ability to drive the application.

If you buy into the concept that "facts tell, but stories sell," a strong and visually compelling demo is an unbeatable way to focus a prospect's attention on WIIFM, or "what's in it for me," when they can visualize themselves using and benefiting from the product as they see it in action.

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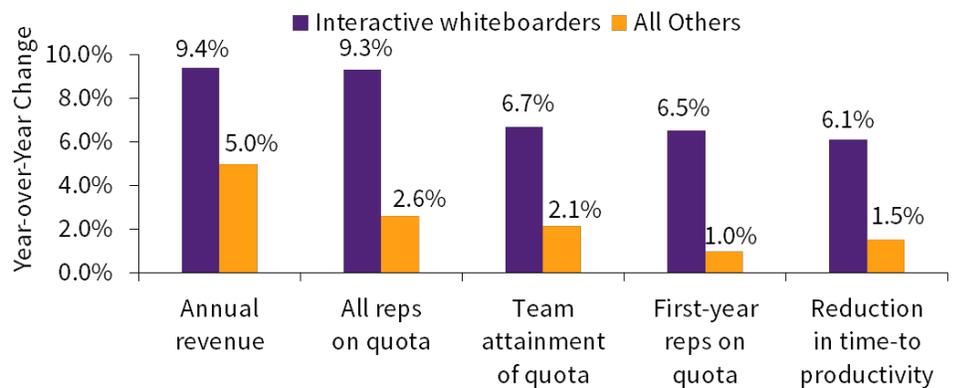
The Sales Effectiveness Best-in-Class Defined

In March through May 2015, Aberdeen surveyed 322 end-user organizations to understand their sales effectiveness best practices. The performance metrics used to define the Best-in-Class (top 20%), Industry Average (middle 50%), and Laggard (bottom 30%) among these sales teams are:

- 72% of sales reps achieving quota, vs. 48% among Industry Average and 37% for Laggard firms
- 7.4% average year-over-year increase in average deal size, vs. a 2.8% increase for the Industry Average and a 5.7% decline among Laggard respondents
- 6.7% average year-over-year improvement in (reduction of) the average sales cycle, vs. 0.4% and 15.8% worsening of (growth in) cycles, respectively, for Industry Average and Laggard respondents

Truly interactive selling, when you aren't in the same room as your buyer, can be further augmented by the utilization of the advanced "whiteboard" tools that are included in some of the stronger web conferencing solutions. These technologies allow sellers to literally paint a picture on the shared screen within a web conferencing environment. The focus is not so much on artistic skill, of course, but on creating a more engaging, compelling conversational experience that helps sellers stand out from the competition by highlighting or pointing to content, or jotting down their buyer's thoughts to illustrate their ability to consultatively sell. In Sales Effectiveness 2015: How in the World Are We Going to Hit Our Number? (June 2015), we learn that interactive whiteboarding is still in the early-adoption stage, but that Best-in-Class companies (sidebar) are almost twice as likely as under-performers (21% vs. 11%) to grab onto this leading-edge approach. When we segment out users of this technology enabler and compare their performance with non-adopters, we see in Figure 4 that all three quota-attainment sales metrics, and customer retention strengths, are bolstered by such deployments:

Figure 4: Drawing a Picture of Sales Success



Source: Aberdeen Group, November 2015

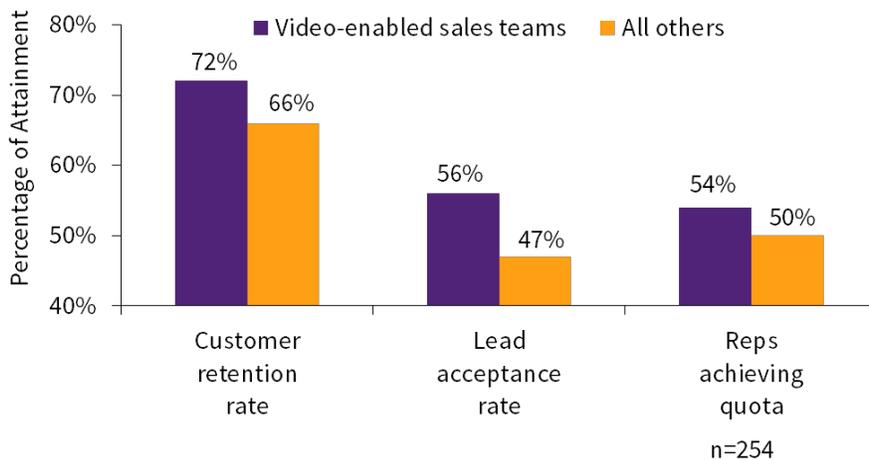
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When YouTube Meets Your Sales Forecast

Lastly, we explore the most advanced elements that web conferencing tools can provide: real-time video connections that truly bring buyer and seller together in what is as close as possible to a conversation that can be held without being in the same room together. Let's face it: most of us spend at least a little bit of time, when we are on a conference call, in a meeting, or even attending a web conference, unfocused on the topic at hand, checking our e-mail, or doing something other than giving the speaker our full attention. With modern technology advances and Internet bandwidth growth, the ability to look your prospect in the eye via webcam is more feasible and advisable than ever before. This capability will help both individual sales contributors and their managers alike (Figure 5).

Interactive whiteboarding allows sellers to literally paint a picture on the shared screen within a web conferencing environment.

Figure 5: Driving Deals with More Personalized Selling



Source: Aberdeen Group, November 2015

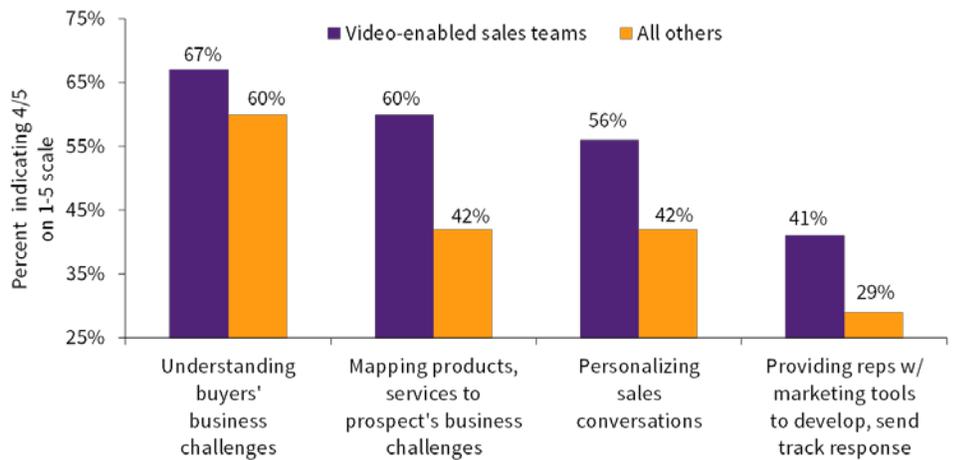
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The ability to look your prospect in the eye via webcam is more feasible and advisable than ever before.

Even before a video conference begins, you'll know that your buyer is serious about exploring your goods or services, when they accept an invitation to participate in this most intimate of digital sales interactions. Once the meeting begins, one of the biggest advantages that professional sellers bring to the table — their sparkling personality and skills of persuasion — has a far better chance of resulting in a positive outcome than if they are limited to voice-only, e-mail, or other less dynamic or personal methodologies of communicating with prospects and customers.

Another way of considering the value of video-enabled web conferencing is seen in Figure 6, which showcases the percentage of users versus non-adopters, in terms of their strong or extremely strong self-reported rankings around a series of crucial BB sales competencies:

Figure 6: Video Sales Enablement = Stronger Sales Competencies



n=254
Source: Aberdeen Group, November 2015

We don't need research findings to take to heart what Figure 6 teaches us: generating more personalized, customer-centric

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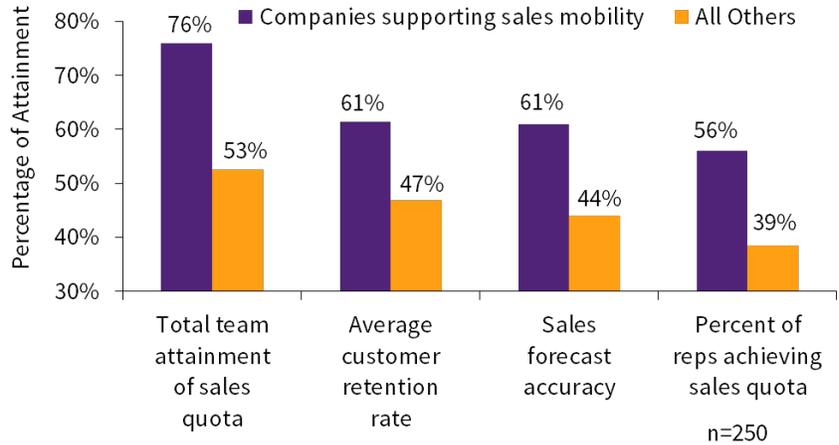
conversations with buyers is an obvious advantage in improving how sales professionals spend their time meeting quota and shortening their sales cycles. The final data element in this chart ratifies another reality of modern selling: in a content-driven world, savvy sellers understand that they need to act as “micro-marketers” if they hope to build solid and lasting connections with their buyers. In order to win, they not only have to customize what they say and send to their prospects, but also deploy tools allowing them to gauge the level of content consumption and messaging resonance after their web meeting.

More Than a Luxury: Sales Mobility is Here to Stay

In the end, no sales technology is going to be effective for today's rep or channel partner if it is not fully mobilized. Plenty of research supports the argument that empowering modern sellers with the ability to do their job on any screen, at any time, any physical location, is a must-have necessity. Even traditional inside sales reps, who may be tethered to their computing and telecommunications devices, can and do use their personal mobile devices simultaneously to improve their real-time flow of data and knowledge. In the context of web conferencing, we have to assume that one or more parties attending any given business meeting, on any day, are going to be remote, traveling, or otherwise unable to sit at a desk with a wired device. Allowing both the seller and buyer to enjoy a consistent web conference experience in any environment pays off for companies who understand the value of making such a technology investment on behalf of their sellers (Figure 7).

Generating more personalized, customer-centric conversations with buyers is an obvious advantage in improving how sales professionals spend their time meeting quota and shortening their sales cycles.

Figure 7: Anywhere, Any Time, Any Device Selling: No Longer a Nice-to-Have



Source: Aberdeen Group, November 2015

Conclusion and Recommendations

We began this discussion with a focus on time and technology. Time is the most important currency in which modern B2B sales professionals trade, because there are so many fewer 9-to-5 jobs and traditional opportunities to get hold of customers than there were for previous generations of sellers. Maximizing how we prepare for and use those precious moments when we are in a live, customer-facing environment, becomes a crucial element of executing on both individual and team wide sales plans. The web conferencing technology enablers recommended by this research report — interactive whiteboarding, video, screen-sharing, and co-browsing — are proven methodologies that support better, faster, and more buyer-centric sales results. In an era when the traditional sales cycle has been replaced by the “buyer’s journey,” informed by virtually unlimited opportunities for buyers to gain an edge over sellers, shouldn’t we take advantage of every potential leverage point that’s available to us?

Savvy sellers understand that they need to act as “micro-marketers” if they hope to build solid and lasting connections with their buyers.

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For more information on this or other research topics, please visit www.aberdeen.com.

Related Research

[*No Longer a Luxury: Why the Best-in-Class View Sales Enablement as a Must-Have*](#); November 2015

[*Analytics Meets Enablement: Data-Driven Content in Context*](#); October 2015

[*What's in YOUR Revenue? Why Quality Matters More than Quantity in B2B Sales*](#); September 2015

[*No Longer Sitting at the Kids' Table: Sales Management Finally Grows Up*](#); June 2015

[*Sales Effectiveness 2015: How in the World Are We Going to Hit Our Number?*](#); June 2015

[*Flash Forward: Remember When we Called it "Predictive" Analytics?*](#); April 2015

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About Aberdeen Group

Since 1988, Aberdeen Group has published research that helps businesses worldwide improve their performance. Our analysts derive fact-based, vendor-agnostic insights from a proprietary analytical framework, which identifies Best-in-Class organizations from primary research conducted with industry practitioners. The resulting research content is used by hundreds of thousands of business professionals to drive smarter decision-making and improve business strategy. Aberdeen Group is headquartered in Boston, MA.

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