



Case Study

What matters to Avanade is accelerating people-first sales productivity with Microsoft Copilot for Sales

Do what matters

Supporting dream team sellers with a dream “copilot”

When we talk about reimagining the future of business, we speak from a wealth of experience. Founded in 2000 as a joint venture between Accenture and Microsoft, we help our clients shrink time to value through the many services we offer. Our nearly quarter century of accelerating success for our 5,000-plus clients, many of them among the Fortune 500 and the Fortune Global 500, speaks to the trust our company earns. In addition to being awarded 2023 Microsoft Global Systems Integrator (GSI) Partner of the Year for the 18th time, we're also prized as a great place to work. That focus on caring for our employees and giving them the tools they need to succeed sparked our inspiration to make it easier for our sellers to succeed.

The high-touch world of professional services sales requires timely client communication, precisely directed messaging and, most importantly, the personal touch. Sellers found that updating their sales data in [Microsoft Dynamics 365](#), an intelligent customer relationship management (CRM) system, and tying together relevant threads from [Microsoft Outlook](#) and [Microsoft Teams](#) was beginning to infringe on valuable face time with clients.

“Our sellers spend a lot of time just trying to qualify lead data, understand the accounts, stay on top of what’s happening with their clients and stay informed on the client industry,” says Jennifer Ferrara, global business lead at Avanade. “They’re always on the move, so we need to minimize tedious updating and searching for data in multiple, disconnected places.” And in the intensely collaborative field of professional services selling, sifting through long email threads for vital nuggets of information and exchanging updates among a busy team was more time-consuming than it needed to be. Hopping between productivity apps to ensure a complete picture took time for sellers needing to be responsive in a competitive industry. Though important, that manual work was a distraction from the most important person in the equation: the client.

Leading the way with an AI-enabled tool

We knew the answer lay in [AI technology](#). After nearly a decade of partnering with Microsoft on AI, our recent [global AI readiness research](#) indicates 79 percent of employees anticipate that the use of generative AI tools will impact up to 20 hours of their work week. As part of our internal Early Access Program (EAP), we’re prioritizing ways to help our people become early adopters and achieve

Company Name: Avanade

Country: US – West

Company Size: 60,000+

Industry: Electronics and High Tech

Solutions: Microsoft Copilot for Sales, Generative AI, Microsoft Outlook, Microsoft Teams

the most with generative AI tools. We're using Microsoft Dynamics 365 Sales and [Microsoft Copilot for Sales](#), an AI sales assistant that helps sellers update Dynamics 365 records, summarize emails and meetings and prepare sales information for client outreach directly in our Microsoft 365 collaboration apps, like Microsoft Outlook and Microsoft Teams. Our private preview of Copilot for Sales addressed both the functionality of the tool and the broader context for its use. “We prioritize responsible AI here at Avanade,” explains Ferrara. “In this fast-moving space, it’s vital that we support our clients and help them to institute responsible AI governance.”

There was another dimension to our choice and deployment of the solution. “We are our own test client for all Microsoft technologies,” says Scott Riddle, IT sales transformation solution architect at Avanade. “It’s important that we show the value of emerging innovations for our clients as early as possible. And everyone in our pilot group was super excited to try Copilot for Sales.”

He’s referring to people like Sydney Gorst, business development executive in Avanade’s healthcare and public sector client group. She’s one of 250 sellers in the US who participated in our trial of Copilot for Sales.

“Every sales cycle journey with a client is unique,” she emphasizes. Honoring that journey called for a tool that could help sellers like Gorst succeed by minimizing the work of coordinating diverse communication threads.

That’s why we infused our EAP with organizational change management, like our “Disrupt Avanade” team, to explore our options for deploying AI-focused initiatives like Copilot for Sales. It’s all part of a people-centric change strategy that coordinates onboarding and curates experiences with educational resources like our “School for AI” for employees. “When our sellers can reduce the time spent on sifting through multiple channels to find what matters with Microsoft Copilot for Sales, we can be more focused so that we can deliver with clients and drive our business strategy faster,” asserts Ferrara.

Prospecting the “gold” from the inbox

Until our Copilot for Sales trial, sellers like Gorst had to work hard to establish a contact cadence with prospective clients. She’s impressed with the time saved on email alone.

“There may be multiple email threads about the same sale, but Copilot for Sales summarizes the key points and helps me craft an answer to my client. It saves clicks and keeps me from having to jump from one interface to the next.”

– Sydney Gorst
Business Development Executive in Avanade’s Healthcare and Public Sector client group

Andy Blevins, industry portfolio lead at Avanade, agrees. “The first time I read an email summary, I honestly didn’t think it could be so easy. But reading back through the lengthy thread showed that the app had correctly summarized everything,” he says.

“This one feature probably saves each person 30 to 60 minutes a week,” Gorst concurs. “With the time we’re saving, what we sellers can accomplish is truly incredible.”

Discovering new value in data

In his role of managing a team of sellers, Blevins finds wide-ranging productivity potential for using AI-powered tools. He recognizes the time savings sellers can achieve by writing optimal prompts to help prepare for client meetings, describing the context for that client, the solutions we provide, industry scenarios and even specifics like the client’s current competitors or projects.

This concept of prompt engineering is key to getting the best possible results. “I can tell the light bulb goes on for sellers when they see the power of a well-written prompt,” Blevins explains. In addition to time savings, Blevins notices the potential for Copilot for Sales to help his sellers develop deeper relationships with their clients. “It’s very challenging to be smart about how you manage 50 contacts that can be clients, colleagues and Microsoft counterparts,” he adds. “But staying on top of those key relationships will be much easier with Copilot for Sales’ AI capabilities.” And thanks to the accessibility features in Copilot for Sales, neurodiverse employees can excel just as anyone else would as part of teams like his.

“Since deploying Copilot for Sales, we’ve discovered that we have more valuable information about any given opportunity than we’d realized,” continues Blevins. “The increased intent information from clients that we now have was only a dream before.”

Ferrara looks forward to sharing that success with our clients. “This is an exciting area,” she concludes. “We can be our own test client and share rich insights with our clients that help them with their AI journeys.”

About Avanade

Avanade is the leading provider of innovative digital and cloud services, business solutions and design-led experiences on the Microsoft ecosystem. With 43,000 professionals in 25 countries, we are the power behind the Accenture Microsoft Business Group, helping companies to engage customers, empower employees, optimize operations and transform products, leveraging the Microsoft platform. Majority owned by Accenture, Avanade was founded in 2000 by Accenture LLP and Microsoft Corporation. Learn more at www.avanade.com.

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North America

Seattle
Phone +1 206 239 5600
America@avanade.com

South America

Sao Paulo
AvanadeBrasil@avanade.com

Asia-Pacific

Australia
Phone +61 2 9005 5900
AsiaPac@avanade.com

Europe

London
Phone +44 0 20 7025 1000
Europe@avanade.com

About Microsoft

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