



How To Become a Sales Engineer:

From Aspirations To Career Success

We all know the drill:

If you love storytelling, solving complex problems, and helping people succeed, sales engineering might just be the best career you’ve ever had. It’s a dynamic role that bridges the gap between cutting-edge technology and real-world business challenges, helping buyers understand how solutions can drive their success. Nothing beats the buzz of securing a new customer and delighting them with a killer demo. And I can tell you firsthand: I’ve spent my career at the intersection of sales and technology and consider myself a presales industry evangelist. As SVP of Global Partnerships & Ecosystem at Consensus, I work with teams around the world to revolutionize the buyer experience. Before that, I led presales and buyer enablement strategy at The Access Group, where I helped sales engineers scale their impact and optimize their role in the sales process.

My experiences have shown me just how essential sales engineers are—not only in driving technical sales but in shaping the entire buyer journey. Whether it’s helping a buyer navigate complex decision-making, aligning solutions to business goals, or becoming a trusted advisor to customers, sales engineers are at the heart of modern B2B sales. Here’s the exciting part: there’s never been a better time to get into sales engineering. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects **6% job growth** in the field between 2023 and 2033—outpacing the national average for most careers. Companies are increasingly recognizing the critical role of presales in winning deals and driving revenue, making skilled **sales engineers** more valuable than ever.

In this article, I’ll break down what makes a great sales engineer, why the profession is booming, and how you can build a successful career as a sales engineer. If you’re a team player who loves seeing others succeed—and if the world of presales sounds like the place you want to be—you’re in the right place.

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What Does a Sales Engineer Do?

Sales engineers, also known as solution engineers, connect technical solutions to customer needs. That's the technical way of looking at it. Non-technically? Sales engineers are like (very much non-licensed) therapists since their job is to truly understand the buyer's pain points. Sales engineers get to know buyers on a deeper level and then turn what they learned into actionable steps for the sales team. These sometimes-unsung heroes develop solutions to articulate the product's value and specifically how it helps their buyer, use cases, and pain points.

According to the **Consensus 2025 Sales Engineering Compensation & Workload Report**, sales engineers spend the majority of time on demos and discovery—and agree that mastering demos, discovery, and product knowledge improvement all positively impact their team. That's why sales engineers spend more time improving their product knowledge. It's our job to turn complicated product features into clear benefits that key stakeholders can understand.

Download our 2025 Sales Engineering Compensation & Workload report for a deeper dive into sales engineering careers.

Sales Engineer Responsibilities

Sales engineers spend their days making technical products make sense to buyers. They create and deliver **product demonstrations**, answer technical questions, provide informative presentations, and help customers envision how solutions will work in their environment.

But the job goes beyond presenting information. Sales engineers analyze customer requirements, provide customer feedback, and work with development teams to adapt products—insights that often emerge from **sales engineering research**. They also help calculate pricing, write proposals, and support customers through implementation.

However, the biggest goal and responsibility of a sales engineer also ties into the most important strengths they should have: communication and interpersonal skills. They must be great listeners and storytellers so they can learn about their buyers, understand the way they work—and then map the perfect solution.



The Difference Between a Sales Engineer and a Traditional Salesperson

The **average ratio of sales engineers to salespeople** is about one to five. Think of sales engineers as a communal resource instead of attempting to assign a sales engineer to every rep. Having sales engineers available when needed helps them to better support every sales rep and spread their expertise around the company.

Let’s see how the two roles compare in their responsibilities, skill sets, and impact on the sales process:

Ultimately, a sales engineer is a team player with huge empathy for the customer and their goals, objectives, and success. That’s not to say that salespeople can’t display the same empathy and collaborative mindset, but sales engineers have a greater degree of these traits as they’re vital for their role. Salespeople have to be highly motivated to hit personal sales targets. Sales engineers pride themselves on finding solutions to help salespeople reach those goals.

	Sales Engineers	Traditional Salespeople
Primary Focus	Showcasing technical solutions and ensuring product fit	Building relationships, generating leads, and closing deals
Skillset	Deep technical knowledge, communication, presentation, and research skills	Strong sales, negotiation, and persuasion skills
Role in Sales Cycle	Works alongside sales team to provide technical validation and customization	Drives deals from initial outreach to close
Customer Interaction	Works with technical buyers and stakeholders, often answering product questions	Engages decision-makers and focus on business impact
Product Knowledge	In-depth expertise, often working with development teams for custom solutions	Strong but less technical, focused on positioning and benefits
Collaboration	Works closely with product teams, sales, and customers Primarily works with prospects,	internal sales team, and marketing
Buyer Enablement	Bridges the gap between technical complexity and buyer understanding	Provides insights on business outcomes and ROI

Skills Needed To Be a Sales Engineer

Want to excel as a sales engineer? You'll have a few competencies to master. And while each skill builds on the others, they're all equally important for success.

Product Knowledge

You can only demo what you've discovered, which is why discovery is such a huge part of what sales engineers do. That's why SEs are spending the majority of our time on demos and discovery.

The core tasks SEs focus on include:

Product Knowledge Improvement



Discovery



Technical Demos



Our [2025 Sales Engineering Compensation & Workload Report](#) also found that sales engineers are performing product demos at more than 93% of companies.

But it's hard to demonstrate the value of a product if you have no idea what that product does. As a sales engineer, you need to be able to explain the product forward and backward. That in-depth knowledge helps form a foundation on which to build personalized product experiences for buyers, turning general product knowledge into specific information targeted toward their use cases.

Industry Knowledge

It's not enough to simply say that your product does what it sets out to do—you need to be able to say why that functionality matters. And industry knowledge is a huge help in that department. When you understand the industry you're working in, you can better explain why your product solves the industry's unique challenges.

Technical Skills

Technical knowledge forms your foundation. You must know how to use CRM platforms, analyze data, and understand system architecture. And remember that the tech world moves quickly—it's honestly a little insane. Sales engineers should be prepared to be lifelong learners, always willing to embrace the newest tech and adapt to expectations.

Written, Communication, and Presentation Skills

SEs write proposals, create documentation, and present to diverse groups—from buyers to IT teams to C-suite executives. Your ability to listen and not just answer the question right away is imperative to building the importance of solving the problem. Great storytelling abilities can showcase exactly how your product will relieve the pain associated with the problem.

On the internal side, engineers want specifications, but executives need ROI. Your ability to speak both languages will set you apart, you multi-lingual genius! The key to success here? Serious preparation. The best SEs don't just "wing it"—they refine their messaging, anticipate objections, and tailor demos to each audience. Over 85% of presales professionals are scripting at least part of their demo content before they start recording, with over 60% creating complete outlines and structured demo flows. This level of preparation ensures clarity, consistency, and a compelling narrative that resonates with every stakeholder.

Want to see how your demos stack up? **Take our free DemolQ assessment** to elevate your demos to deal-closing perfection.

Research and Analytics Skills

Numbers tell the story. Dig into industry trends, analyze customer challenges, and track buying signals. But the research goes beyond reading reports. Sales engineers should be able to use these insights to match solutions to specific customer needs. Fortunately, they can use data-driven analytics and buyer engagement tracking tools to help optimize their sales approach.

For example, the **Demolytics** feature in Consensus tracks how buyers engage with demos. It provides real-time intent data that helps SEs better qualify and interact with leads. They can view stakeholder insights—including demos sent, organic stakeholders discovered, discovery rate, views, view rate, features/sections selected, and docs downloaded—for any recipient of the initial link.



This analysis can help refine sales processes, boost **sales efficiencies**, and improve how teams demonstrate products to buyers.

Interpersonal Skills

To put it bluntly, the most important trait of a sales engineer is their likeability...but let’s break down what that means in this context. A sales engineer should be well-informed and highly communicative.

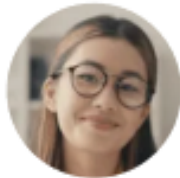
They also need to be able to reframe customers' expectations and views in a positive way. Believe it or not, that also means having the ability to say “no.” A sales engineer can’t just say “yes” to everything a customer asks. There’s a huge personal risk in buying the wrong software, and a buyer’s reputation can be damaged if they choose the wrong vendor.

Saying “no” can be a mark of honesty and integrity. If a buyer walks away from a conversation thanking the sales engineer for saying “no,” you’ve just witnessed a great sales engineer at work.

Download our 2025 Sales Engineering Compensation & Workload Report

Opportunity

Atlas Collaboration Inc.




Kim Nguyen

knguyen@atlas.com


Total View Time

37:45



Videos Watched

7



Tours Viewed

5

Feature 1

Product Introduction

00:00

00:15

00:30

00:45

01:00

How To Become a Sales Engineer

Where do great sales engineers come from? Anywhere! The path to sales engineering-hood doesn't have to be straight—it can take all sorts of exciting twists and turns.

1. Start With a Bachelor's Degree

A degree in engineering, computer science, or a related technical field can give you the foundation to explain complex products. Try to choose a program aligned with your target industry, like software engineering for tech companies or mechanical engineering for manufacturing firms. While the specific major matters less than the technical background, matching your degree to your desired industry could speed up career progression.

2. Gain Experience in Sales, Customer Success, and Implementation

What kind of experience, you ask? The answer can vary, although historically, sales engineers have had a background as implementation consultants. It's a common path for people to transition from the industry they're selling to and become a sales engineer serving the role they already know so well. But there isn't one way to gain experience as a sales engineer. We're seeing a lot of customer success folks move to presales and become sales engineers, utilizing the communication and interpersonal skills they've developed to become great discoverers of buyer needs. Sales engineers can also start as sales representatives, using their sales skills to become wonderful allies to their salespeople compatriots.



3. Obtain Relevant Sales Certifications

Certifications prove your expertise to employers and customers. The **Certified Sales Professional (CSP)** and other certifications and credentials show dedication to the field. But don't stop there—technology certifications in your industry keep your skills current. Each certification adds credibility to your demonstrations and presentations.

4. Build a Professional Network

Connections lead to opportunities. Attend industry events, join professional organizations, and connect with other sales engineers. Look for internships at technology companies where you can shadow experienced professionals. Remember: Every connection increases your chances of finding the right position.

5. Prepare For Your Sales Engineer Interview

Success in interviews comes from thorough preparation. Focus on showing technical depth, interpersonal skills, and sales ability. Showcase yourself as both a listener and storyteller, and demonstrate that you're adaptable and able to think on your feet. These steps can help you ace that interview.

Research the Company and Industry

Know the products, market position, and primary competitors before walking in. Study customer case studies and recent company announcements. Being well-informed helps you ask smart questions and provide relevant examples.

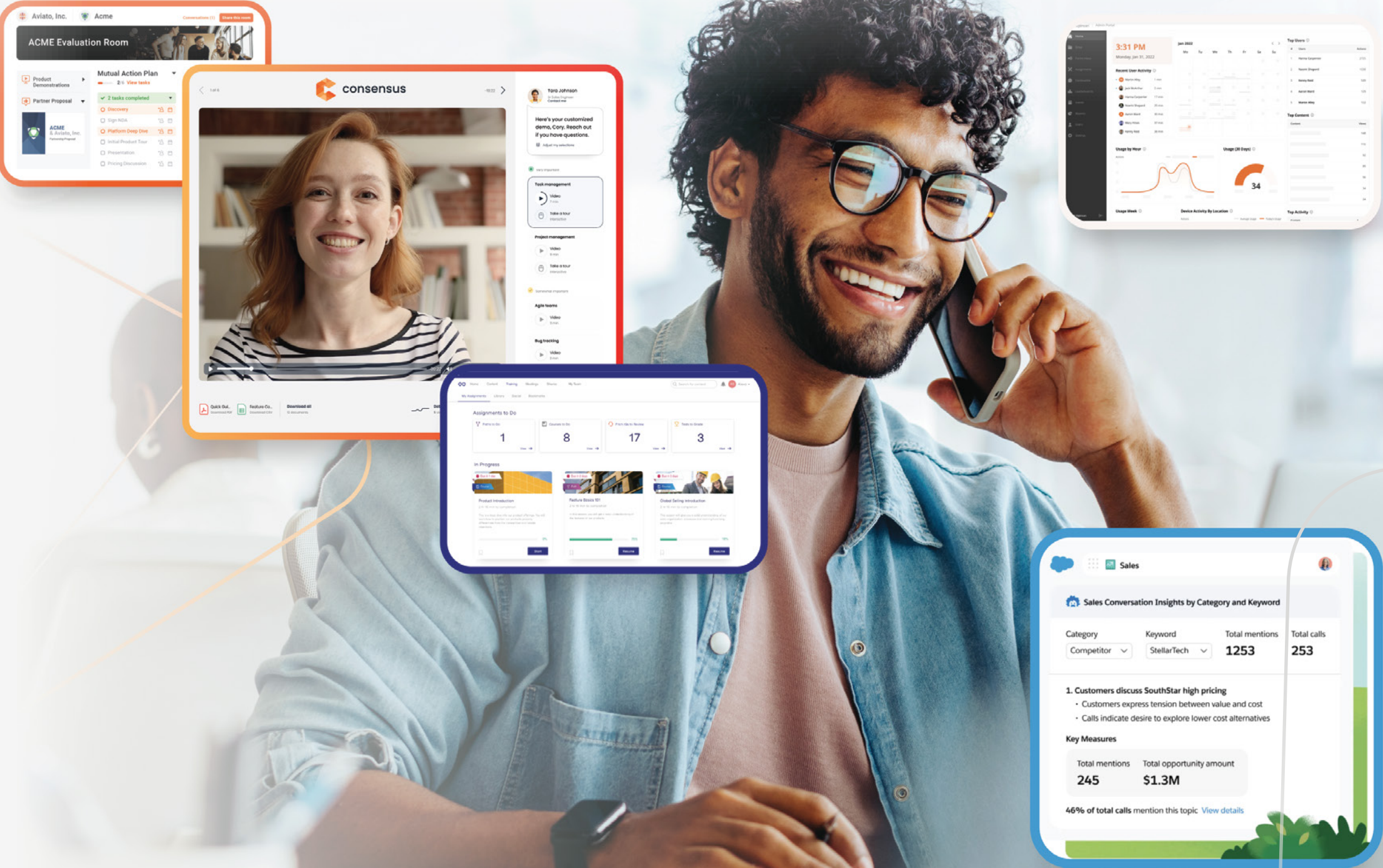
Study and Review Technical Terms

Master the language of your industry. But more importantly, practice explaining complex concepts simply. The ability to translate technical features into business benefits separates great sales engineers from

good ones. You should be knowledgeable about the technology in your industry, including what's coming down the pipeline, since today's sales tech is always evolving (think: **AI sales assistants**, **interactive demo software**, and many more).

Rehearse For Your Presentation

Most sales engineer interviews include a presentation or demo. Practice your delivery until speaking feels natural. Record yourself to identify areas for improvement. And always prepare backup plans for technical difficulties—they show problem-solving skills in action. Sales engineers spend the majority of their time on demos and discovery tasks, so presentation skills are vital. This is also the opportunity to let your interpersonal skills shine, so show confidence, clarity, and enthusiasm to make a lasting impression. and create a sense of progress.



6. Show your worth

One last tip—and this one will last throughout your career. Make sure you know how to articulate your value beyond your assigned KPIs. What's your demo ratio on deals? How long is your demo lead time, how many reps are you supporting, and how many products are you certified in? What's your customer feedback rating on your opps? What's your win rate?

Move away from traditional metrics to focus on **presale KPIs** that directly impact and measure success. Look for:

Technical Win Rate. Track how often you've successfully addressed technical objections and secured a technical "yes" from the buyer, even if the deal later falls through due to non-technical factors.

Gross Revenue Retention & Net Revenue Retention. This highlights how well you retain and expand revenue with existing customers. High retention rates often indicate strong presales engagement and effective solution alignment during the sales process.

Stakeholder Engagement Growth. Track how many new stakeholders enter the buying process after engaging with presales. The more internal champions you create, the stronger your deals.

Demo Views Per Deal. Pay attention to who is watching the automated demos you send out. Consensus has found that 12+ demo views mean a

72% deal close probability

—proving the link between growing buyer stakeholders and meeting their needs.

Time Spent on Key Activities. Conduct a monthly self-analysis to assess whether you’re spending more time on critical activities. Are key activities increasing and do you have more time to dedicate to them? If not, what automation tools or scaling strategies can you use to improve?

Pipeline Covered by Self-service Demo Automation. This KPI is the number of deals that move through the sales cycle by watching one or more demos on their own. Deals in pipelines that don’t have demo views are at risk. Knowing what percentage of deals are watching demos lets you know where to focus your attention.

Stakeholder Discovery Rate. Monitor how many additional stakeholders you’ve identified and engaged throughout the buying process. More stakeholders mean a stronger internal business case.

Know how you move the needle so you can confidently demonstrate your impact, advocate for career growth, and position yourself as an indispensable asset.



Task Management

Whether you prefer card, list, or gantt view, we help you label, tag, and organize your Tasks with ease.

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Start Your Journey To Become a Sales Engineer Today


Sales engineering is a perfect blend of technical expertise and sales—and the timing couldn't be better. This career is fast-growing and any work you put into this role is well worth it. The role has several challenges, but that's part of the beauty of it. It's a great fit for a lifelong learner—someone who's always taking time to grow, especially when it comes to new technology (especially if that technology makes me more productive like **demo automation software** does).

Want to discover more about sales engineering and see if it's the right path for you? **Download our free 2025 Sales Engineering Compensation & Workload Report.**

It's the only comprehensive SE report in the industry that gives you a 360-degree view of the latest trends in the Presales. We gathered and analyzed responses from over 1,000 presales professionals, including both leaders and individual contributors, who share their insights to help inform decisions and strategies for the SE community.

Jumpstart your sales engineering career with the actionable benchmarks and observations in this report to become a disruptive differentiator enabling today's buyers.

Download Consensus' 2025 Sales Engineering Compensation & Workload Report



Platform Overview

In this demo, I'm happy to walk you through the basic capabilities of our platform. Let's get started.

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Stakeholders Found

197

Demo Views