

AI FOR SALES PLANNING FORECASTS

WHY IS THIS TOPIC IMPORTANT?

SMEs can improve their sales planning by using AI tools that collect, evaluate, and analyze the data already available within the company. By analyzing historical sales data, market trends, and customer behavior, AI improves the accuracy of sales forecasts and helps SMEs manage inventories effectively and allocate resources more efficiently. AI-driven analytics tools make it possible to reduce overstocking and waste, thereby optimizing inventory management. The forecasts are integrated into the ordering process so that purchases can be made in close alignment with actual demand. This allows demand fluctuations to be anticipated and an optimal inventory level to be maintained. For example, the analysis of weather data by AI systems enables companies to predict how changes in weather affect customer purchasing behavior. As a result, SMEs can make proactive adjustments in their sales planning, such as increasing stocks of seasonal products or preparing for sudden fluctuations in demand.



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WHAT ARE THE POTENTIAL USE CASES?

Strategic sales planning is crucial for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to remain competitive in the long term. Companies need to analyze historical sales data, market trends, and customer behavior in order to make informed decisions and allocate resources efficiently. With the help of AI, SMEs can collect, evaluate, and analyze existing data, thereby improving the accuracy of sales forecasts and optimizing inventory management by reducing overstocking and avoiding waste. The forecasts are integrated into the ordering process so that purchases can be made in close alignment with actual demand, demand fluctuations can be anticipated, and an optimal inventory level can be maintained. For example, the analysis of weather data by AI makes it possible to predict how changes in weather affect customer purchasing behavior and to make timely adjustments in sales planning, such as increasing stocks of seasonal products or preparing for sudden demand fluctuations. Unlike an operational focus, this approach emphasizes strategic, long-term decisions that enable stable and predictable business management.

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AI IMPLEMENTATION: PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

A bakery chain with 29 branches and around 220 employees uses AI-powered software “foodforecast” to optimize its production planning and ordering processes. The system analyzes historical sales data, weather information, seasonal factors, and other variables to accurately forecast demand for each branch. The AI generates precise daily sales forecasts and provides concrete ordering suggestions for each location regarding the quantities of products to be produced. By automating daily ordering tasks, staff can focus more on sales and customer service, while improved demand forecasting significantly reduces food waste. In addition, the AI enables rapid responses to external factors and market changes, supports the maintenance of optimal inventory levels, and lowers storage costs. The managing director emphasized that implementing AI has made their operations more efficient and more responsive to customer needs. The introduction of the technology was carried out gradually, starting with a pilot branch before being rolled out across all locations. Employees were involved by allowing manual adjustments to the automated forecasts, which helped build trust in the new system.



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WHAT NEEDS TO BE CONSIDERED?

The process should begin systematically by first selecting a pilot branch to thoroughly evaluate the software and compare forecasts with actual orders. Involving employees in this process is crucial, as their feedback can help refine the system and build trust in the new technology. After a successful test, the technology can be gradually rolled out to additional branches, accompanied by continuous functionality checks. An important prerequisite for the effective use of AI is the availability of extensive, high-quality data. Without sufficient data, the reliability of the AI application cannot be ensured. Overall, careful planning, comprehensive testing, and gradual implementation are essential elements of this approach, supported by high-quality data and well-involved staff. In addition, it is important to consider potential implementation costs and dependency on the technology, while also exploring possible future areas of AI application. By taking these factors into account, SMEs can improve their operational efficiency and responsiveness to customer needs through AI integration.



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