



Building a Team of Top Performers: A C-Level Look at Sales Enablement and Training





Introduction

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Sales enablement and training are an often overlooked, but extremely critical element to high-performing sales organizations. It is our job as business owners and executives to provide the tools and ongoing development that supports our sales professionals in performing to their maximum potential.

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— Jennifer Hunt,
Managing Partner,
SFE Partners

Sales enablement and training is more than a corporate catchphrase; it's a vital element to drive predictable and replicable sales growth and to ensure your revenue engine is running at full potential. Over the last decade, more and more companies are seeing the importance of equipping sales personnel with the right tools; not only are they able to demonstrate greater value in meetings with buyers¹, the effects on the rest of the organization are extensive.

¹ Jim Ninivaggi, “Is Sales Enablement on Your Radar?” Forbes, Feb 1, 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinessdevelopmentcouncil/2018/02/01/is-sales-enablement-on-your-radar/#3093e04a2057>

Introduction

When you give a bunch of smart, driven people the tools that they need to make them even stronger and more effective, the difference is evident. Your customers see it in how quickly their questions are answered, their phone calls returned and their trust earned. Your sales managers see it in more successful hires and lower turnover rates. New hires see it in how quickly they become part of the team, performing as well as peers who have been in the position for years. Your sales organization spends more time selling and less on administrative tasks. Individuals see the investment you've made in them and feel valued by the company.

You see it too. In all of the above as well as in the accelerated sales cycle, better conversion rates and in revenue growth.

In this paper, we examine the far-reaching impact of effective sales enablement and training. We look at possible gaps that may be preventing your team from closing deals as well or as quickly as is possible. And we reveal your role in making changes that empower your sales organization to out-perform your competition.

How well equipped is your sales team?

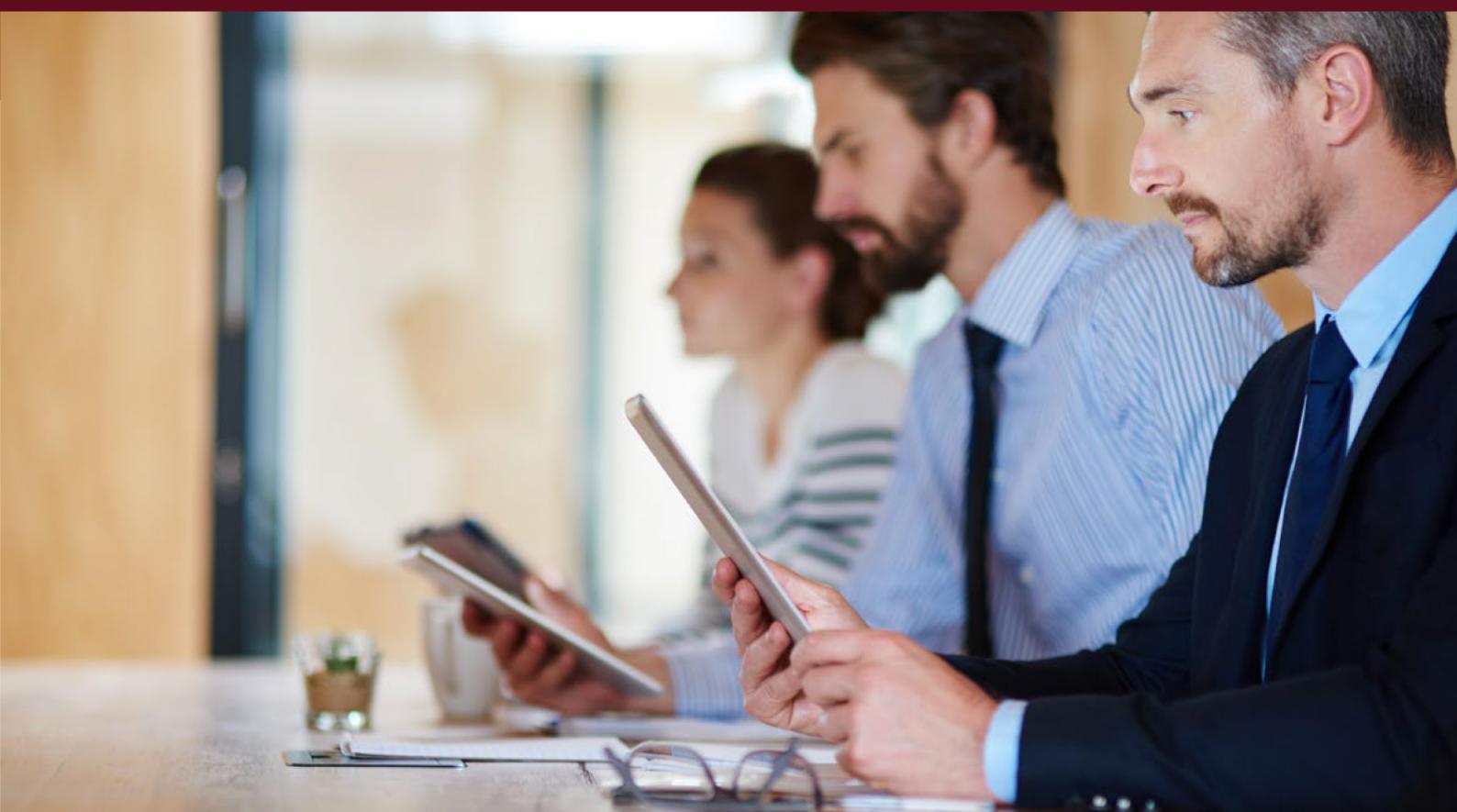
A study conducted by research firm Aberdeen found that sales enablement tools improved conversion rates by 23% and increased team quota attainment by 32%.² Is your team equipped with all the technology, resources, skills and knowledge they need to achieve your goals? Ask yourself:

- 1 Do you know what sales enablement tools are out there and which ones fit your team's requirements?
- 2 Can your sales team access all the information they need by logging in to a single system?
- 3 Are your sales and marketing organizations aligned in their messaging, lead identification and support?
- 4 Is your team making full and effective use of all their enablement tools?
- 5 Is your onboarding process designed to turn new hires into confident, knowledgeable contributors to your sales team?
- 6 Do you provide refresher courses that support their professional development?
- 7 Do you ensure that your team is up to date on their product and sales technology?
- 8 Do you provide training and development for your sales leaders?

If you answered no, or even hesitated before answering any of the questions, read on.

² JGeorge Deeb, "Sales Enablement Tools Are the Keys to Making More Money," Entrepreneur, July 7, 2018. <https://www.entrepreneur.com/article/315039>

Sales Enablement: A High-Performer's Toolbox



A sales enablement tool is anything that helps your salespeople do their job efficiently and effectively. This includes physical devices such as cell phones, tablets and laptops, but also the programs that are loaded into the devices, such as productivity, communication, and data management apps.

Shared systems such as customer relationship management systems (CRMs) save time, improve accuracy and facilitate reporting throughout the sales process. It's worth noting that tried-and-true, "traditional" tools can create more problems than they solve. For example, sales organizations that rely on shared spreadsheets to keep track of leads aren't automatically notified when a prospect has been overlooked, an error has been introduced or information has been accidentally deleted.

Sales Enablement: A High-Performer's Toolbox

To recognize the long-term value of sales enablement tools, let's start by examining what effective implementation looks like. Some of the aspects that benefit from a good sales enablement program are:

Consistent Representation of Your Value Proposition

Sales enablement tools encompass support your sales team receives from other units in your company. Marketing is the most obvious example, generating leads and providing channels to assist in reaching prospects. The company website, blogs, whitepapers, etc. are all among the many sales tools provided by marketing.

But in order for marketing tools to be effective, messaging has to be consistent with and relevant to your sales team's requirements. Say a prospect downloads a paper that convinces her you might have a solution to one of her problems. Every touchpoint that follows, from her visit to your website to the resulting sales calls, should advance this belief.

Sales and marketing should also share an understanding on the companies – and people within the prospect companies – being targeted. For example, a product brochure written for sales engineers when the intended target are security architects is irrelevant to your team's sales process.

It's also critical for the two functions to agree on lead management, starting with what sales recognizes as a sales qualified lead. It's great if your marketing department can provide 100 leads a month—as long as they are leads sales can use.

Collaborative Technologies

Just as sales and marketing are only as effective as their collaboration, different sales enablement technologies also have to work well together. Can your sales team access multiple systems with a single login to get the information they need? Can they look up and add data easily on any of their devices? System integration is essential to improving workflows, and to driving the efficiency that saves time and boosts productivity.

To maximize ROI of these enablement tools, you need to ensure these tools are being used correctly. Say you have a powerful lead management software that is costing you over \$1,000 per user per month. Now say that you've discovered that your sales people are only using 10% of this system's features. That is a lot of wasted potential—and also a very common complaint. And while 90% of \$1,000 times X number of users easily translates into a number, misuse or underutilization of tools – whether it's technology, hardware, methodology, interdepartmental support, or anything else – goes beyond the cost of investment; it also cuts into opportunities for revenue.

This brings us to the value of sales training.

Sales Enablement: A High-Performer's Toolbox

Getting the right sales enablement tools

The market is flooded with sales, team and individual productivity tools. How do you know which are the right ones for your team? In top-performing companies, the task of getting your team the support and tools they need falls onto your sales operations function. Your sales ops people possess an in-depth understanding of your existing systems and of your sales team's requirements, enabling them to find tools with the highest ROI. To gain a better understanding of the value that a sales ops unit adds to your company, download Sales Operations: [The Key to Breakthrough Revenue Growth](#)



Accelerate Growth via Training



It may be common practice to separate sales enablement and training functions, but they should be planned and implemented in tandem as skills and knowledge also fall under enablement tools. To do their jobs, your sales people have to be intimately familiar with your product, your company, your target market, industry pain points, best sales practices, your sales methodology, and the systems that they use. They also need to understand how to apply this knowledge effectively to find prospects turn them into customers. Gaining and applying knowledge is a process which can be greatly accelerated with training.

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When I asked the sales team in a newly acquired company ‘what would be the one thing your new company could do to make you better, stronger sales people,’ not one of them said more money or an iPad or a company car. They said ‘We need better tools so we can work in the field as effectively as we work sitting in the office. And we need training. We want training.’

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Accelerate Growth via Training

Among the ways sales training delivers value to your organization are:

Effective onboarding programs

Poor onboarding has been found to be a major contributor to high numbers of employees jumping ship within their first six months. On the other hand, organizations that provided a structured onboarding process found that their new hires were 58% more likely to still be with them after three years.³

So, what does a good onboarding process look like? Effective onboarding provides a welldefined, comprehensive course designed to make your new hires feel confident and competent in their new positions. It makes new sales people familiar with – even passionate

about – your product lines and sales methodologies. It helps them understand how tools are used in your company (customization of advanced tools means that the look and feel of your CRM is unrecognizable to someone who has years of experience using the same system in their previous organization). It involves interaction with representatives from different functions, from HR to sales to marketing to IT, to explain their role in supporting sales. In other words, planned and conducted correctly, effective onboarding enables your new hires to hit the ground running.

³ Arlene S Hirsch, "Don't Underestimate the Importance of Good Onboarding." Society for Human Resource Management, August 10, 2017. <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/dont-underestimate-the-importance-of-effective-onboarding.aspx>



Accelerate Growth via Training

Refresh the Skills of Even your Most Tenured Sellers

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When sales people are scrambling to meet their numbers what I'll hear is that no one has time for training. But guess what? If your team has been struggling to meet their numbers for the past couple of quarters, then you definitely need a refresher because somewhere, something is missing. ”

Conventional wisdom suggests that there's such a thing as a 'natural' sales person. Whether you believe that or not, there is hard evidence supporting two lesser quoted truths. 1. Even the best sales reps have potential to do even better and 2. It's nurture, not nature that makes a great sales team.⁴

Resistance to training comes when the needs of the target audience go unaddressed. There is no one-size-fits all training; topics and delivery need to be custom fit. Can your team benefit from online courses to master a new system, or from 30-minute 'lunch and learn' sales technique refresher courses over pizza? There is no single right way to deliver training, as long as it fully involves participants.

Most of all, training needs to be relevant:

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When you have good sales training, it doesn't matter if that sales person has one or 20 years of experience. They walk out of that door with a spring in their step, excited about what they learned today that they can apply to their jobs tomorrow. ”

⁴ Andris A. Zoltners, PK Sinha, and Sally E. Lorimer, "Great Salespeople are Born, but Great Sales Forces are Made." Harvard Business Review, May 20, 2016. <https://hbr.org/2016/05/great-salespeople-are-born-but-great-sales-forces-are-made>



Accelerate Growth via Training

Up-to-date Knowledge

Your sales people operate in a dynamic environment where the way they use and sell product can change with updates in technology or policy or regulations.

An extreme example of adapting to change came with the implementation of GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), which forced sales teams to learn new practices and changes in cloud-based SaaS programs, among other things.

While not all changes are motivated by fines amounting to 4% of your annual turnover⁵, training can ensure that your team stays on the top of their game with current information on product and technology developments.



Leadership Development

One aspect of training that is nearly always neglected is leadership training. Sometimes the gaps are serious. Often sales managers are promoted to their current positions because they were ace sales people, even though the roles require completely different skill sets. Dealing with customers in no way prepares someone to understand the finer points of financial analysis, forecasting, pipeline reviews and recruitment. There is an even wider gap when it comes to soft skills. In one survey, over half of the 27,000 respondents gave a poor rating to their leaders' ability to provide constructive feedback.⁶

Management is where errors get even costlier. Take recruitment, for example. Bad hires can cost your company hundreds of thousands of dollars in salaries, benefits, investments and lost sales. However, someone untrained in interviewing and training may never ask questions that dig deeper. For instance, were an impressively high number of leads the result of inbound or outbound calls? Of cold calls or of reminders to existing customers that it was time to renew their contract? With the right tips and techniques, your manager is more likely to hire someone who can replicate their results in your company.

Even the most seasoned VP of sales can find room for improvement, and those who are self-aware seek out opportunities to manage and motivate their team better.

⁵ Ryan van Biljon, "Four Ways GDPR Impacts Your Sales Team." Forbes, May 31, 2018. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinessdevelopmentcouncil/2018/05/31/four-ways-gdpr-impacts-your-sales-team/#3e0111a530e6>

⁶ Mark Murphy, "Why Leaders Need More Training on How to Deliver Constructive Feedback". Forbes, August 20, 2017. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/markmurphy/2017/08/20/this-chart-shows-why-leaders-need-more-training-on-how-to-deliver-constructive-feedback/#61408be26581>

Sales Enablement and Training for Your Company



Effective sales enablement and training is vital to your team's – and ultimately to your company's – success. The quickest route to getting it right is to get advice from an experienced advisory firm. The best ones will conduct an assessment involving different departments, as well as a couple of your highest and lowest performers. They will use their findings, as well as experience using best practices, to develop specialized training programs that are just right for your company.



Ensure the Success of Your Sales Team

Whether you're updating your sales enablement and training program or implementing a new one, our expert advisors are here to help. Contact our team to find out how you can achieve more manageable, more repeatable, and exponentially more profitable sales as you grow.

Call SFE Partners at
(781) 460-2100 or visit us at
www.sfepartners.com

About SFE Sales Partners

Headquartered in Boston, MA, SFE Sales Partners is the leading advisory firm for business leaders. From structuring the sales organization to defining core processes, selecting the right tools, and setting measurable and achievable goals, our approach is designed to install and motivate a growth-minded sales team. We offer a full range of sales services for go-to-market, scaling, M&A, and new product launches. More than 250 companies from around the world have chosen us for their sales consulting and outsourcing needs.



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