SALES&MARKETING MANAGEMENT

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How's your sales enablement strategy working?

Enablement platforms have been adopted by 9 out of 10 companies, but the people companies have in place are still the most important factor for success

FEATURE STORY

How’s Your Sales Enablement Strategy Working?

Implementation of enablement platforms has increased over 300% in the past 5 years, but it’s people who still have the power to boost performance.

BY PAUL NOLAN

Sales enablement has been declared “the foundation of success in today’s ever-changing sales landscape.”

A report from sales enablement platform provider Highspot states these tools, when properly deployed, can achieve and surpass even the most ambitious sales targets.

Providers and users of sales enablement tools say they are essential for success in a B2B sales environment in which buyers hold the upper hand, are more selective than ever, and are inclined to stick with the status quo unless they are presented with convincing, highly customized evidence that making a purchase will produce true ROI.

That’s well and good. But what, exactly, are we talking about when we talk about sales enablement? At first blush, it appears to encapsulate the full scope of activities that have been part of B2B sales strategies for decades — from onboarding and ongoing training, to lead generation, lead scoring, understanding unique customer needs, thorough customer relationship management, post-sale customer interactions and more.

Is sales enablement merely the relatively recent development of automated tools that tackle a lot of these tasks in a fraction of the time? The answer seems to be yes and no.

Keeping the Focus on People

In many respects, sales enablement is about technology that helps companies onboard sales reps more quickly, provide them content that helps them tailor conversations to each unique buyer, and generally bring more organization to the sales process in attempt to increase close rates and accelerate the sales cycle. However, experts say one common myth about an effective sales enablement strategy is that it’s all about the technology.

“While tools are critical, success depends equally on alignment, training and strategy,” said Steve Marshall in an email exchange with SMM. Marshall is chief product officer at Aidentified, a relationship mapping and prospecting platform for the financial industry.

The true power of sales enablement is in the people who can interpret the data that today’s tech tools produce and use it to drive actions, added Emily Hartzel, vice president and senior director of LeadG2, via email. Her company partners with sales enablement behemoth Hubspot to help companies maximize their investment in that platform.

Indeed, one of the most common and critical mistakes companies make when implementing a sales enablement strategy, is entering into the process with an improper understanding of sales enablement itself, according to Travis Keith, vice president of strategic client content at J.P. Morgan. His comments were shared in an article for B2B content creator Column Five.

"The problem we often see is that organizations view sales enablement as a specific tactic (or, really, just a few presentation decks). This is a myopic and shortsighted view of what you're really trying to achieve, and it's why you might struggle to make the larger organizational shifts needed to make it work," Keith states.

It's Not Just for Sales Teams

Many of those we reached out to for this report emphasize that effective sales enablement begins with ensuring that marketing and sales are aligned. In fact, a sales enablement platform can serve as a bridge between marketing and sales, making sure both teams are working from the same playbook.

"Sales enablement ensures that marketing is creating content that aligns with buyer personas and resonates with target audiences," Hartzel said. "By understanding the needs of the sales team, marketers can develop targeted resources like case studies, email templates and battle cards tailored to specific stages of the sales cycle."

Deniz Olcay (pronounced Ol-Jie), vice president of marketing for sales enablement platform provider Allego, goes further. He states that many B2B professionals are ditching "sales enablement" and adopting the term "revenue enablement" because these platforms are ideally used by multiple departments that play a role in a company's go-to-market strategy. In addition to sales and marketing, customer support is a critical component of revenue enablement, Olcay argues.

"Enablement is one of those unique functions that brings different teams together to use the tool. We hear a lot about sales and marketing alignment because, traditionally, we think of them like oil and vinegar. But sales, marketing, and service and support have to think of themselves as one team with one ultimate goal. I think of enablement as the orchestration of these three teams to drive success," he said.

The Problem of Patchwork Systems

The promise of incorporating technology in B2B go-to-market strategies — especially AI-driven technology — is that it will increase efficiency by tackling mundane tasks and returning time to reps to interact with buyers. The jury is still out as to whether that is occurring.

According to a 2023 Gartner report on technology's impact on seller productivity, 49% of sellers say they are overwhelmed by the number of technologies necessary to do their job. Allego reports that 76% of companies say poor adoption of sales tools is a top reason teams miss their quotas.

Olcay contends a big part of the problem is that companies have bolted on one tech tool after another to handle the different aspects of sales enablement (onboarding, product training, call analysis, content marketing, etc.). When you factor in the cost of multiple SaaS subscriptions and the investment of sellers' time training on each system, it can quickly become clear that scrapping a patchwork system and adopting an all-in-one tool is well worth the investment, he said.

"With a unified approach that brings enablement all under one umbrella, you drive better adoption, save overhead costs and have a better unified view of the system's impact in terms of cost and ROI," he said.

Highspot reports that organizations are 80% more likely to increase their win rate when using a unified sales enablement platform, partly because they spend less time "swivel-chairing between disjointed solutions."

Validating Your Sales Enablement Investment

Like any expense, these platforms must have a discernable ROI

In an article on incorporating AI into business processes written last year for *Harvard Business Review,* authors Thomas Davenport and Thomas Redman state that one hurdle to implementing new technologies is disappointment from previous investments.

"Robert Solow's 1987 comment that 'you can see the computer age everywhere but in the productivity statistics' is sadly still relevant," the authors write. "Organizations have invested trillions of dollars in data and the technology to analyze and enhance productivity but have little to show for it."

Emily Hartzel, vice president and senior director at Hubspot partner LeadG2, offers these six steps for implementing an effective sales enablement strategy:

1. **Assess Needs** – Identify gaps in your current sales process and understand what tools, content or training sales teams need.
2. **Set Goals** – Define measurable objectives for your sales enablement efforts, such as shortening the sales cycle or increasing win rates.
3. **Choose the Right Tools** – Implement a platform like HubSpot that integrates CRM, content management, and analytics.
4. **Create Relevant Content** – Develop resources that support each stage of the buyer's journey.
5. **Train Your Team** – Equip sales and marketing teams with the knowledge and skills to use tools and resources effectively.
6. **Measure and Refine** – Regularly analyze the effectiveness of your sales enablement efforts and adjust your strategy as needed.

SALES ENABLEMENT IS

3x **more effective at achieving sales goals**

Sellers equipped with AI are more likely to achieve positive outcomes and drive strategic initiatives.

2x **more likely to increase customer retention**

Organizations invested in post-sales enablement see greater retention rates than those that are not.

36% **more likely to decrease seller ramp time**

Teams that use analytics to measure training effectiveness prepare new sellers to succeed faster.

...according to nearly 400 sales, marketing, enablement and revenue operations professionals globally, in a 2024 survey conducted by Highspot.

The Post-Sales Through-Line

As the adage states, the easiest dollar to make is the one you already have. Smart organizations understand the post-sales experience is critical to earning customer loyalty, which is why sales enablement doesn't end when an initial contract is signed.

"To maximize revenue outcomes from existing customers, you need to minimize the time it takes them to see value from your solution. Yet, many organizations are unprepared to deliver the exceptional customer experiences that do so," state's Highspot's report on the state of sales enablement.

Whether or not you have a formal customer success team to handle post-sales support, your sales enablement system should include processes that help ensure positive post-sale customer experiences. Digital sales rooms (on page 5) can be a depository for essential customer information that gets handed off from sales reps to customer success personnel, as well as a main means of post-sale customer communication.

The same customization that sales enablement systems make possible to address unique buying preferences is possible — and necessary — for post-sale customer success. Ensuring full adoption of whatever product or service you provide is a proven path to customer loyalty. And tailoring your customer support materials to accommodate different learning styles during customer "onboarding" can significantly enhance customer engagement and retention.

Too Much Technology Can Drag Down Performance

Allego surveyed 330 sales leaders about their use of multiple sales enablement tools and discovered that incorporating too many tech tools into the sales process can feel like a second job in itself for both sales leaders and reps. It causes confusion, wastes time and undermines the whole purpose of using those tools.

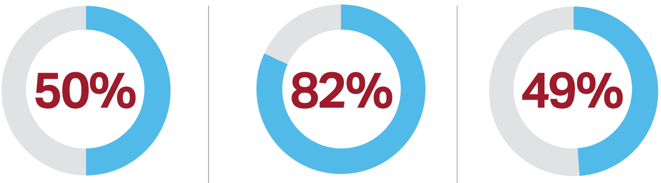
Consolidation is vital. The more complex a process is, the less likely sellers are to embrace it. Consolidation of your tech stack not only makes sense from a financial perspective, it increases user adoption, reduces workload and provides a clearer picture of what rep activity and what content directly relates to sales success.

How do you audit your current tech stack to determine what stays and what can go? For starters, look for overlaps. Many companies use multiple platforms for training and CRM. Find any duplication and retain only what works best. Or better still, swap everything out for an all-in-one sales enablement platform.

This type of audit tackles one of the most common sales enablement strategy mistake — not measuring the efficacy of the sales enablement platform itself. If you haven't defined specific objectives for your sales enablement strategy and measured its effectiveness, it's difficult to gauge its value. To truly understand the impact of your sales enablement strategy, you need quantitative data.

Sales teams are unhappy with the number of tools they use.

Both sales leaders and reps report dissatisfaction with the number of tools and the amount of effort involved in using multiple tools.



of sales reps think they're required to learn too many tools

of sales leaders say that trying to get reps to use the provided sales tools feels like a second job

of sales leaders aren't sure that reps are fully using the tools they have

SOURCE: THE SALES ENABLEMENT TECHNOLOGY REPORT, ALLEGO.COM

In sales, as in all aspects of life, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Clearly, technological tools such as sales enablement platforms are essential. It's reported that there has been a 343% increase in businesses adopting sales enablement in the last five years. In 2023, "sales enablement specialist" was the sixth-fastest growing job title on LinkedIn.

Yet complex B2B sales will always rely on the development of trusting relationships. High-performing organizations that consistently hit and exceed revenue targets will be the product of effective leadership and companywide collaboration more so than any single tech tool.

"True sales enablement comes from members who help other team members with their unique knowledge and skills. All boats rise in that situation," Baruch Labunski, founder of Rank Secure, a web design and digital marketing agency, told SMM in an email exchange.

"The technology is only an enabler, it's not a substitute for a strong strategy and the right team," added Allego's Olcay. "As organizations are looking to make an investment in enablement technology, it's important to make sure the right team is in place and there is a strategy around how enablement fits into the organization. Only then does it make sense for organizations to look at how to scale that by finding the technology that fits their process." SMM

Enablement's Newest Trend: Digital Sales Rooms

A key component of sales enablement platforms gaining traction is the digital sales room. Think of it as a customized content portal for each individual customer or prospect in which sellers can interact with all members of a buying team.

Gartner predicts that 80% of B2B sales interactions between suppliers and buyers will occur in digital channels by the end of this year. A digital sales room is a secure, online, centralized hub where sellers can provide customized presentations in any format, including video. Buyers can explore on their own time, evaluate information and share it with colleagues.

Allego VP of Marketing Deniz Olcay lists these additional key features of digital sales rooms:

- **Multimedia integration** – It's a Dropbox of sorts for your customer communications. You're able to upload PDFs, videos, 3D product models, interactive documents and presentations.
- **Data-driven insights** – Sales teams can monitor customer behavior with content to help make informed, data-driven decisions about next steps.
- **Collaboration tools** – Digital sales rooms may include tools for real-time collaboration, such as chat, video conferencing or document sharing.
- **Accessibility** – For sellers' and buyers' convenience, digital sales rooms are accessible on any device that can connect to the internet.
- **Real-time updates** – Sellers can instantly add whatever content a buyer requests and declutter by removing content that is no longer needed.

Olcay said digital sales rooms increase buyer trust and engagement, often help to accelerate the sales cycle, increase close rates, and enhance the customer experience.

Digital sales rooms also provide a streamlined means of providing customer support after a deal is signed, which is a critical component of sales enablement for those companies that are smart enough to take the long-term view.

Editor's Note: Download Allego's eBrief, "The ABCs of Digital Sales Rooms" for more insights on how to maximize use of this emerging tool.

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3 Seismic Shifts Impacting – and Improving – Sales Training

Sales enablement must start on Day 1 or it may be too late to course correct

BY CHRISTINA BRADY

The purpose of sales enablement is to equip sales teams with tailored resources, training and support, enabling them to sell better and faster. Yet, high turnover in sales is often rooted in poor training and onboarding. With 70% of salespeople lacking formal training, sales enablement isn't a "nice to have" — it's a necessity.

Imagine investing months onboarding a sales rep only to lose them because they didn't have adequate training. Or equipping your team with the latest tools, only to then see performance lag. Sound familiar? That's because these challenges are all too common for sales leaders.

What's the problem? Traditional and reactive enablement models no longer work in today's constantly changing sales landscape. The good news, however, is that today's advancements, including the emergence of AI and predictive sales enablement solutions, are shifting how we fundamentally approach sales enablement and opening new doors for sales success.

As we enter 2025, let's explore three major trends that are leading this transformation.

Individualized and Prescriptive Onboarding

For decades, companies have focused on onboarding all their employees in the same way. If you're lucky, there may be supplemental training for specific roles like an account executive, business development rep or customer success management track. However, this is often not the case. Even when it is, it's rare for the training to be tailored to each hire's specific learning style, proficiencies or skill gaps.

Consider this: 84% of sales training is forgotten in the first three months. The reality is that even the best tools won't make a difference if sales leaders don't first start by understanding how their teams learn and operate at an individual level.

This is a real problem and the only way to overcome it is if sales leaders throw out the one-size-fits-all playbook and embrace individualized and prescriptive onboarding. Instead of broken reactive models, sales leaders are beginning to prioritize what is called "proficiency mapping," or identifying skill gaps and proficiencies to understand where a seller might struggle or make mistakes that could impact revenue.

By shifting away from outdated models, sales leaders can develop tailored onboarding strategies that align with each hire's unique strengths and areas for growth, ultimately accelerating ramp time, improving performance and ensuring training sticks.

Kinesthetic Learning Replaces Classroom Learning

Traditional classroom training is quickly becoming obsolete. While it has its place in the sales enablement world, companies are shifting away from passive methods and seeing far better results from kinesthetic learning, or "learning by doing."

Through active methods like workshops, role-playing and live exercises, leaders can engage their teams more effectively and help them apply skills in real-world scenarios. I've seen firsthand how the kinesthetic approach can decrease ramp times by up to 50% and increase annual contract value by over 40%.

AI for Sales Practice and Coaching

With 43% of sales professionals already using AI in their workflows, one of the biggest shifts we're going to see in 2025 is the increased adoption of generative AI to scale personalized training and coaching for sales teams.

With game-changing capabilities like diagnosing skill gaps, identifying learning styles, simulating realistic customer interactions and delivering real-time feedback, AI takes the guesswork out of enablement. This technology can help improve performance in an individualized and scalable way without compromising revenue opportunities.

> Even the best tools won't make a difference if sales leaders don't first start by understanding how their teams learn and operate at an individual level.

AI can also be a great tool to help underperforming go-to-market teams gain visibility into revenue-impacting mistakes before they occur. Even the most tenured employees benefit from continuous practice and coaching. With the ability to meet each individual where they are on their career stage and level of mastery, AI offers a dynamic and scalable solution for continuous learning and development.

To stay competitive, leaders must embrace these trends to stay ahead of the ever-changing sales enablement landscape. By prioritizing individualized onboarding, active kinesthetic learning and AI-driven coaching, teams will be well equipped and ready to succeed in 2025 and beyond.

Christina Brady is the CEO and co-founder of Luster, an innovative AI sales practice and upskilling platform that is revolutionizing how go-to-market teams learn and practice.

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