How to build a sales enablement strategy: first steps

The framework and the metrics you need to succeed

Showpad

Introduction

Sales enablement is critical for companies looking to foster happy, quota- meeting sales forces. Unfortunately, what sales enablement is, exactly, isn't always clear. A quick online search brings up more than one million results, filled with articles, reports, and blog posts examining the topic from every possible angle. So how do you know **which sales enablement strategy will really help you** create a more effective sales organization?

> ## Personal interactions are still the most influential drivers of B2B sales.

Hint: it's not just about finding the right tool, or about making your sales team more productive. Sales enablement is about thinking bigger. While websites and digital channels are vital in the modern sales ecosystem, personal interactions are still the most influential drivers of B2B sales.

Organizations that struggle to **achieve meaningful results from sales enablement** usually do so because they're still focusing on traditional productivity activities—such as the number of leads generated, the number of customer meetings, and quota attainment. But the number of customer meetings doesn't matter much if they aren't turning into closed deals. Productivity is only a small part of the picture, because it focuses on metrics without surfacing exactly why the results are occurring.

That doesn't mean these metrics aren't important. They are. It's just that productivity—and a whole host of other benefits—follow naturally when your salespeople are well supported. To get there, you need to improve sales activities later in the customer lifecycle through better sales training, **better sales content management, and better use of customer behavioral data**.

Focus on sales effectiveness

...the Bottom Line
is Under Threat

We need to start moving beyond so-called productivity hacks to true team effectiveness.

Traditional productivity approaches don't create the information sales and marketing teams need to continually improve content, messaging and methods for boosting sales.

Sales enablement is about **improving the quality of sales interactions** how well sales people are engaging with clients, how successfully are they converting leads into sales, how efficiently are they moving sales through the pipeline. To get there, you've got to have a clear strategy around sales content, training, and data.

In this ebook, we're going to talk about improving prospect interactions later in the lifecycle—when potential clients are seriously considering a purchase. Improvements closer to conversion have a multiplier effect on sales, especially for B2B companies that have complex and lengthy sales cycles.

Improvements closer to conversion have a multiplier effect on sales

mproving on prospect interactions later in the sales lifecycle—at the time a buyer is seriously considering a purchase—improves sales effectiveness.

Like we said earlier, **incremental changes later on in the sales cycle have a greater impact on quota attainment** than similar tweaks earlier in the customer journey, especially for B2B companies.

B2B sales and marketing teams often deal in complex, technical products sold to diverse teams of well-informed stakeholders. These deals can also involve expensive products or services, so each conversion improvement down the funnel can be a major gain for a sales team.

For example, if each sale averages $1 million and sales teams average 10 sales a quarter, a 5 percent improvement in closing deals will bring in $500,000 of additional revenue per quarter, and $2 million more per year.

What a focus on enablement versus productivity delivers

If one sale = $1 million ...

10 sales per quarter

+ a 5% improvement in closing deals

_____

= **$2 MILLION** more each year

And because this work down the funnel requires more expensive resources (trained sales people versus lead-generation ads), efficiency improvement brings disproportionate savings and boosts an organization's ability to cost-effectively scale sales efforts.

Tracking customers' content usage when they're close to buying can also reveal patterns. When your analytics show not only what your salespeople are saying to customers, but which content they're sharing, you can directly tie collateral used to closed deals. That means you know which content works best and what you should create more of. And you can replicate best practices among sales reps. Say one customer story is used more than any other in deals that end up closing; maybe it's worth getting more reps to use it.

That means your **sales and marketing organizations will share a common view of content effectiveness and how it should be shared with customers**—because they can see the patterns and proof around what works and what doesn't.

Embrace new performance metrics

Start With The Right Standards

70%
content unused

Here are a few of the basic data points tied to late-stage sales meetings that most companies could do a better job of tracking.

- How much are salespeople using your **marketing content** to close deals?

- Which pieces do reps **share with prospects** most, and at which stage of the funnel?

- How are prospects **interacting with the content** they receive? Are they spending a lot of time reading it? Are they sharing it with colleagues?

- Which pieces are present—or not—in sales meetings that **lead to closed deals**?

- Are reps using the most appropriate content available at the right time?

- Are reps **using old or off-brand content**, and can you stop them from doing that?

Knowing these things will inform the content you create next. **Up to 70% of marketing content is never touched by sales**, according to Content Marketing Institute, an unfortunate fact, considering Gleanster Research found that marketers across the US spend more than $5 billion creating content each year.

Analyzing **how content affects sales conversations** will help reverse this trend, allowing those who are creating content for sales teams to produce more useful material and ultimately improve customer meetings. Here are a few additional advantages we saw internally:

- We could create more accurate internal sales forecasts, because we could better detect which prospects were most engaged.

- We could help our sales teams nurture them in a more personalized way.

- We shortened some sales cycles because we were able to have the right conversation at the right time.

- We could more accurately attribute ROI to specific content assets and set strategy based on what we learned.

With the right tools, teams can track how and how much customers use and share content. Like on the web, sales and marketing can understand how many people viewed documents, time they spent with content, how they shared it, etc.

Sales enablement also requires ongoing **qualitative feedback** from customers and colleagues about content preferences.

This information can provide a basis for A/B testing content to gain more visibility into what negatively and positively affects sales conversation. Seeing more clearly what kind of content is being used, how it is being shared, and how much time customers spend with it can be very valuable information.

The result: Visibility by both sales and marketing into what kind of content, messaging, and methods are working best at the bottom of the funnel.

We could more accurately attribute ROI to specific content assets

Conclusion

Sales enablement is the path to sales effectiveness. By focusing on content usage in the lower part of the funnel, sales and marketing teams can continually improve the content, messaging and methods businesses need to convert and closes B2B sales deals.

Regardless of the tools or technologies you use, sales enablement offers a new, data-driven, digitized view of how content is used down the funnel to cultivate customers and close deals. Such insight is now providing better ways to drive your organization's sales enablement program.

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