# Sales Enablement

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A topic dominating recent discussions in the professional fields of sales and marketing is "sales enablement." According to most dictionaries, the term isn't really even a recognized word, but that hasn't stopped its growth as a widely-acknowledged notion of how to coordinate the work of marketing and sales to aggressively increase the number of leads that convert to closed sales.

Surprisingly, after reviewing the literature on the topic, it is clear that there is not even a widely accepted definition of the term. At its broadest, Sales Enablement is a concept proposing that formal processes should be in place to rally all the resources of a company to ensure that salespeople have the information to respond to every prospect with a

relevant message, no matter where that prospect is on the sales cycle. More succinctly, Sales Enablement is about finding ways to help sales people be more successful at their jobs.

This whitepaper will work to define the term and then discuss how technological developments, particularly the arrival of big data and automation, have made it possible to turn this broad concept into a set of definable, effective processes that can dramatically drive revenues.

Before defining the term or trying to better understand Sales Enablement, it will be helpful to discuss the *sales funnel*. The sales funnel is a metaphor that helps illustrate the process whereby a
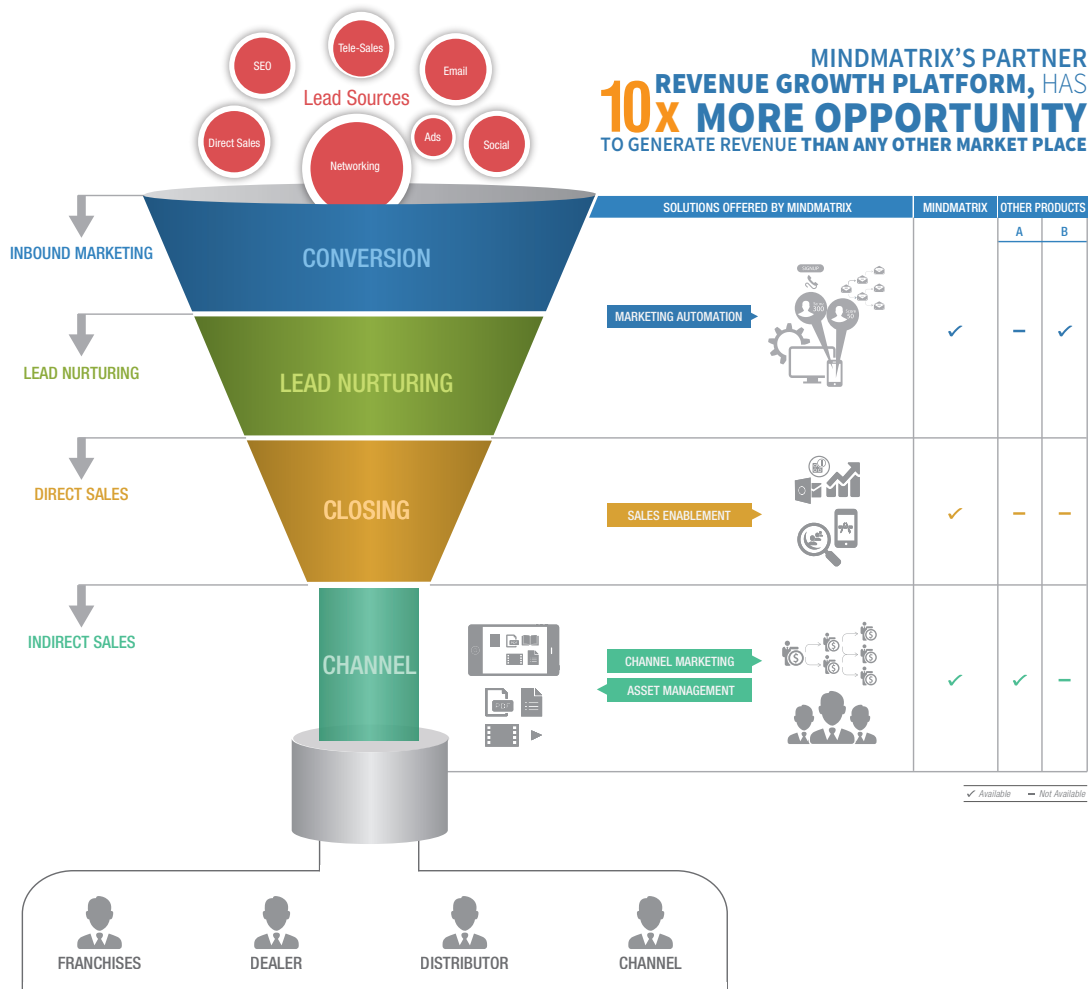
prospect proceeds from the very first awareness that a particular type of product or service exists to the point that he decides to buy a specific offering.

There are variations on the idea, but one of the earlier definitions argues that a prospect travels through 4 stages in the funnel. First is *awareness*, which is the initial recognition of overall product category or service. The next stage is *interest*. The prospect has a general interest in the offering and is learning about its value. Third, *desire*, is the recognition by the prospect that a specific version of the product or service is needed. In this stage, prospects are narrowing the choice down to a few specific vendors. Finally, *action* is the decision to buy.

Other versions of the funnel exist, but they all show raw leads entering the funnel at the top, and then moving along a sales cycle to the "buy" decision. (One odd note about the funnel metaphor—this funnel is leaky—lots of leads never make it to a buy decision, so they "leak" out.)

Why is the sales funnel relevant to Sales Enablement? It is because for a very long time, the attention of marketing and sales has been on the top of the funnel --getting leads. For years, there has been a very strong focus on gathering as many leads as possible. Anyone who has been in sales can tell you that one of the most frequent questions they get from management is "how many cold calls did you make today?"

The concern with this concentration on lead generation is that it tends to create the wrong focus for marketing and sales. It shifts the focus onto the early stages of the funnel. In truth, what really matters is how sales and marketing deal with those leads once they enter the funnel. Lead generation is not a goal. A closed sale is the goal. It is out of this re-focusing and attention on closing sales that the notion of Sales Enablement is derived. What sales and marketing (and perhaps the entire company) should be doing is using their resources help sales most effectively reach out to every lead. Everything should be focused on enabling sales to move prospects from a general awareness of a product/service category along to recognition that they actually need it, and finally that yours is the product or service that suits them best. Getting the largest number of leads from the top of the funnel to

the bottom is the true goal of sales. Sales Enablement says that all the resources of marketing should be rallied to do whatever it required to help sales succeed.

There is an even more precise definition of sales enablement. This definition suggests that true enablement ties the success of marketing to the number and volume of closed sales. Marketing is held accountable for closed leads. By doing this, marketing and sales become much more closely tied together, as their goals are now identical. (This is what we mean when we talk of aligning marketing and sales) In this linking of marketing to the responsibility of closing sales, we create the overall principle of sales enablement. Marketing must rally all the necessary corporate resources to ensure that sales is given all the available tools to do their their jobs better. And that means helping sales optimize its focus on the interests and needs of each individual prospect at any particular point in time. Helping sales sell better.

Now that a working definition of Sales Enablement has been created, the next step is to discuss what technology and Big Data are doing to create new opportunities to help salespeople do their job better. As everyone is becoming increasingly aware, technology has made it possible for vendors to learn a great deal about prospects and customers. Big Data provides a warehouse of potentially valuable information that can help sales do its job better. Ultimately, the more we know about a prospect, the more accurately and promptly we can respond to their interests and needs.

This data collection has led to the creation of automated tools that can dramatically help salespeople do their jobs better. There are 4 specific tools that sales and marketing automation software has created that can enable sales.

PERSONALIZED HIGH-IMPACT SALES CREATION

This is one of the most powerful tools for enabling sales. Let's begin with the most obvious point in sales: people pay attention to what matters to them. The more accurately you identify products or services that matter most to them, the more likely

they will pay attention to you. And that's what personalization is all about. Making sure your sales collateral is personalized and targets what matters to them. Previously, printed, static marketing collateral had to be generic—targeting all those within a specific target market. With technology, it is now possible to create individualized pieces of marketing collateral that focus on the specific interests of one prospect. For example, instead of large unwieldy catalogs showcasing every available product, modern automation allows salespeople to create branded catalogs that include only the product or service lines that are relevant. All communications can be personalized to strengthen your relationship—no matter what the media. That means there is much less chance the message will be lost. Personalization means creating a communication with one client that takes the company collateral and makes it distinctly and uniquely relevant to the receiver.

REAL-TIME 360 PROSPECT TRACKING

The second automation tool that assists sales in new ways is real-time prospect tracking. In sales, knowledge is key. The more information that sales is given, the better they can do their job. If a lead is in the early awareness stage of the sales funnel, any message highlighting very specific features of a particular product is probably not going to be useful or even understood. That lead may only be ready for more general, preliminary information that explains the overall value of a product or service category. Automation software can identify for salespeople where a particular leads stand in the sales funnel. Prospect tracking software collects the data constantly being captured about a prospect's interaction with your website, emails, social media pages, and other marketing collateral. It then analyzes it to determine the needs of each prospect. This means that salespeople do not blindly interact with a lead, only able to guess what communication would be relevant and readily received.

SALES PROSPECTING

One thing any good salesperson will tell you is that leads require attention. And one thing that can truly

enable sales is finding ways to increase their interaction with each lead without adding to their duties. Sales prospecting tools are intelligent programs that respond intelligently to a prospect's behavior. They allow a salesperson to create multi-step, multi-channel lead nurturing programs using various media, such as e-mails, e-books, print, and social media. These programs are dynamic---automatically adjusting to specific prospect behavior and attributes. For example, an e-mail thanking the prospect for their interest will automatically follow if they download a whitepaper. By automating these sorts of processes, leads get on-going attention that is relevant to them, but without taking more time from an account reps already full day. Their time can then be spent interacting personally with leads that are further along in the sales cycle and need direct contact.

SOCIAL MEDIA

One of the difficulties with the information age is that customers have so much control. They are out there developing an awareness of a product category, as well as individual products, long before a salesperson has any contact with them. One of the most popular learning platforms is social media. Social media can be a place where new leads learn about a company or its products. It is important, then, that social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter are maintained and recognized as important touchpoints for prospect interaction. Sales automation software can create valuable social media campaigns that ensure that fresh, relevant information is being fed to your sites, without putting additional responsibilities on the sales staff. When we talk of sales enablement, it means ensuring that all platforms for prospect interaction are being used and optimized. We aren't enabling sales when such a significant sales platform is underused or not maintained.

To summarize, sales enablement is all about helping salespeople do their jobs better. There has been a lot of discussion of what sales enablement means as a space in the corporate structure. For instance, it is a function or a role, and does it exist within sales or marketing, or does it exist outside of both? The answer to that seems to vary significantly by

organization. That, however, is probably a topic for an entirely different whitepaper. Our concern here is to understand the concept of sales enablement and the company-wide duty to help sales sell. What is now successfully driving better sales enablement is the power of new technology to support sales functions. It provides information that allows sales to respond more accurately to the specific needs and interests of an individual lead wherever they happen to be in the sales funnel. What we've seen is that technology is allowing us to respond far more effectively than ever before to the needs of individual leads as they go down the sales funnel. We can now enable sales to track precisely where they are, understand their learning needs, personalize all their communications, and interact via social media. It has been the arrival of this technology that has made the concept of sales enablement possible. It is now more than a broad concept. It has become a set definable, effective processes that can dramatically drive revenues.