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OPERATIONS | STRATEGY

How Organizations Can Improve Sales Enablement

Six initiatives can help leaders enhance their commercial enablement programs, from setting a clear go-to-market strategy to personalizing content and learning modalities

In today's economic environment, marked by cost constraints and intense competition, investors and other stakeholders expect organizations to deliver higher returns, often with fewer resources. As the connective tissue between an enterprise's sales team and its revenue operations—marketing, product development, HR, and other functions—sales enablement is becoming increasingly vital to help drive growth.

With [successful sales enablement](#), also known as commercial enablement, sellers feel supported and empowered to prospect and effectively close deals with the help of the right content and tools. However, it's often not clear who owns sales enablement and where it should reside in organizations.

In many companies, the chief revenue officer or head of sales operations owns the function. Some companies are bringing other enablement functions such as customer success, support, and professional services into the mix, as well as integrating with partner education, customer education, and enterprise learning.

Barriers to Success

To meet the demands of stakeholders, chief revenue officers and other leaders are increasingly investing in commercial enablement programs with the goal of empowering seller productivity. While some organizations are seeing a return on their investment, others struggle to achieve results. Leaders are also feeling pressure to better measure the impact of these efforts and link them to seller performance.

This can lead to challenges in today's sales organizations. Some common obstacles that can derail sales enablement programs include the following:

Decentralized operating model. If enablement efforts are spread across the organization, lack centralized coordination, or are missing key roles and skillsets, they may result in uneven execution.

Misaligned sales leadership. When enablement is reactive to the needs of functions such as marketing, HR, or operations without aligning to sales leadership goals, it can create a disconnect.

Tracking the wrong outcomes. When companies measure success based on the volume of collateral produced or the number of training sessions completed rather than linking enablement efforts to seller performance or revenue goals, they aren't considering the seller's experience.

Seventy-two percent of B2B chief revenue officers surveyed say they are prioritizing investments in enablement and learning for the upcoming fiscal year.

Unactionable insights. Enablement efforts that provide sellers with ambiguous or unactionable customer insights can hinder targeted territory development and personalized sales conversations.

Undervalued efforts. If sellers view enablement initiatives as a chore or merely compliance requirements, the efforts may fall short of their potential.

Lack of focus in sales enablement content. Rather than focusing on individual seller needs, enablement efforts are often deployed in broad campaigns or fail to align with a seller's revenue-generating growth goals. Often, sales enablement content is heavily product focused and may be misaligned with the needs of different buyer personas, causing it to lose value. Content also often misses the mark in addressing emerging skills needed by sellers to go beyond product knowledge into areas like industry application and solution orientation for a specific customer context.

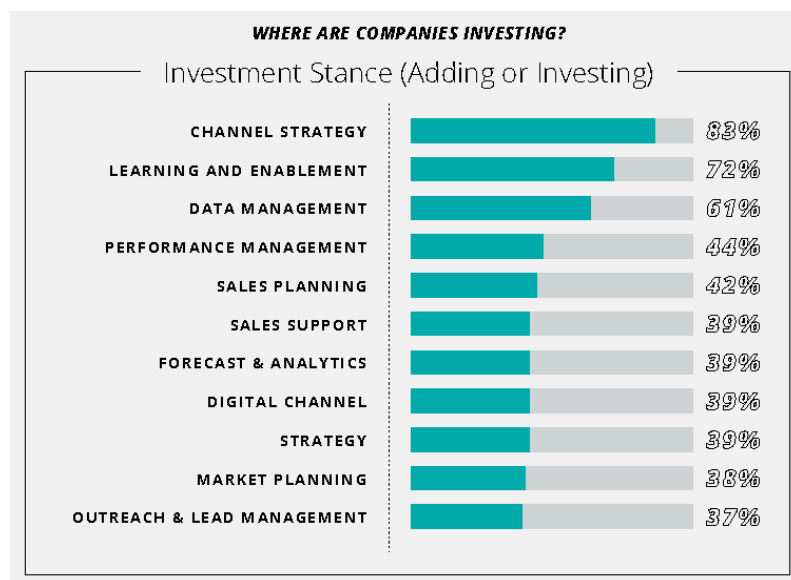
Hard-to-digest sales collateral. Sales enablement content that isn't tailored to the learner's situation or skillset, or that is difficult to digest and act upon, can compromise the credibility of future enablement initiatives.

Ineffective sales technology. Many organizations have ambitions to streamline their sales technology, but they may not be allocating enough of their sales enablement

budget to technology to achieve this goal. This can result in sellers getting lost in a maze of disconnected sales platforms, content libraries, and folders that aren't designed with the sales experience in mind. Successful enablement requires workflow, data, and analytics unification.

Investment Priorities

Investing in the right technology, talent, and training can help organizations address some of these challenges. According to Deloitte's "[2024 Future of Sales](#)" survey, the highest-performing B2B companies invest 1.25 times more than other B2B companies in onboarding, learning, and sales enablement. They also deploy seven times more sales enablement personnel to support their selling roles. Furthermore, 72% of B2B chief revenue officers surveyed say they are prioritizing investments in enablement and learning for the upcoming fiscal year.



Source: Deloitte's "2024 Future of Sales" survey, July 2024

With these types of investments, companies can better strengthen the capabilities and productivity of their existing sales operations. They can also foster a culture of learning and growth, which can likely attract and retain top talent and lead to a more effective and resilient sales organization.

Six Dimensions of Enablement

Chief revenue officers and other leaders can activate an effective sales enablement program that gets results by considering six strategies:

Set a clear go-to-market enablement strategy. Leaders can create a vision for their organization that reflects the roles within it and aligns enablement needs and capabilities with clear objectives. This strategy should support the sales team and be able to foresee and adapt to their changing needs.

Validate the operating model. Organizations can develop an operating model that has the right roles, skillsets, and ongoing governance processes to support their strategy at scale. This includes defined responsibilities and methods of engaging with other enablement functions within the business, such as those owned by talent or compliance.

Personalize content and modalities. Companies can put the learner at the center of their enablement strategy by creating content that is role-specific and skills-based, and that offers a mix of learning modalities (for example, on-the-job, self-guided, and in-person). When developing learning programs, leaders should consider content categories, training hour allotment, and learner proficiency.

Align technology to the sales experience. Organizations can use emerging technology such as AI and machine learning to help sellers suggest next-best actions or recommend useful content to potential clients at key moments in the buying journey. Additionally, AI content generation can shorten the time between the release of new products and offerings and the availability of relevant learning content. AI can also be deployed to make overall enablement operations and content management more efficient. Companies should evaluate existing enablement technology and plan to ensure an optimal and streamlined learning experience for the entire sales workforce.

Measure based on impact. Chief revenue officers and other leaders can measure the content that is used against perceived and actual value, as well as against seller performance and business impact. This can include revenue goals such as growth, conversion rate, average contract value, and customer lifetime value.

Activate a go-to-market enablement lifecycle. Leaders can create a repeatable process to design and execute enablement programs, informed by strategic priorities and feedback and results from the field. This ensures alignment of enablement resources across customer-facing operations.

Pressures on sales organizations are high, and a well-planned and executed commercial enablement program can be a game-changer to the bottom line if carried

out strategically. By avoiding pitfalls and embracing effective strategies, organizations can get closer to driving revenue growth, improving sales motivation and productivity, and meeting shareholder expectations.

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