A Sales Enablement Guide

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Summary:

- Sales enablement programs are designed to help sellers deliver relevant, differentiated, and valuable customer engagement during the early steps of the sales process and thereby advance the buyer through the sales cycle and earn the sale.
- Sales enablement programs align the sellers' sales process with buyers purchase process and then aid salespeople with content, knowledge and automation designed for each sales cycle step.
- Sales enablement programs are measured by their ability to increase top line revenues, grow customer acquisitions, increase salesperson productivity, and reduce sales cycle duration.
- This document shares the 4 sales enablement programs and the 3 biggest business outcomes when correctly implemented.

Sales enablement programs have become mainstream for midsize and large companies and certain industries such as technology and professional services. While it's a relatively new concept, it's gaining increased adoption across all industries and company sizes. And for good reason, the payback is significant.

Even small gains in sales performance measures such as salesperson productivity and sales win rates deliver a linear payback when scaled across the salesforce. Research firm Aberdeen found that sales forces with successful Sales Enablement programs achieved **23 percent higher lead conversion rates** and **32 percent higher team sales quota attainment**. Those kind of results are worth replicating.

Sales enablement consultants and practitioners apply a combination of content, coaching and technology tools to achieve significant improvements to sales force productivity and revenue results. We know this because this is our profession.

We also know that taking the typical tools-focused approach generally falls short of expectations. So, in this document we're going to share our integrated approach of engineering the tools to achieve the most important sales outcomes.

But first some context. Before jumping into tools or outcomes, we need to describe this sales process improvement discipline in a way that it is defined and measurable. And while there is no consensus definition, the description below is a generally accepted among professional circles.

Sales enablement is the process of delivering information, content, guidance, and tools to salespeople, so they improve their performance and grow company revenue.

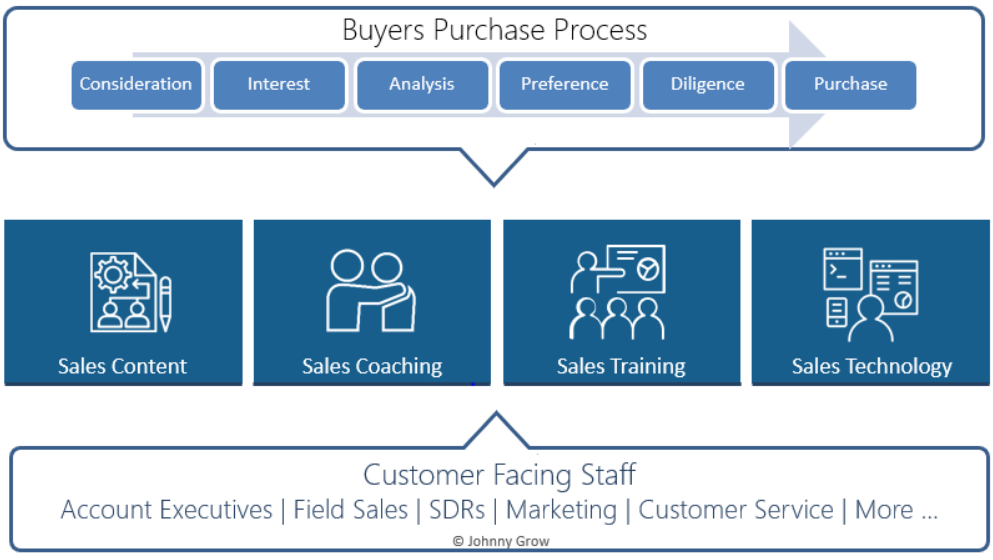
Successfully equipping the sales force with these assets facilitates customer engagement and is proven to improve sales productivity, sales conversion rates and revenue growth.

But success is elusive for many.

Taking the all-too-common tools-only approach delivers an IT solution to salespeople that don't really care much about IT. Salespeople care about sales results and making quota. So, a better approach is to directly align enablement capabilities with the most important sales outcomes.

The 4 Building Blocks

To start, understand that salesperson enablement equips salespeople with **content, coaching, training,** and **technology.**



1 Content

McKinsey advises that salespeople waste 10 to 20 hours per week searching for content and then curating or recreating content because they can't find what they are looking for.

The problem is exacerbated as SiriusDecisions reports that Marketing goes to great effort and expense to create content, but 60% to 70% of marketing's content goes unused because it's not found.

Sales enablement content management recovers this lost time and investment by pursuing three goals.

First, increase salesperson effectiveness by making content easily accessible. That happens by getting all sales content in a single repository with simple search capabilities. A content management system is generally the best tool for the job.

Second, increase customer engagement effectiveness by tailoring content for each buyer role and industry. Even better, align content with the steps in the buyer's buy cycle to efficiently advance the buyer through each sales cycle stage.

CRM systems can take content accessibility to the next level of contextual content delivery. Several CRM applications can be designed to proactively suggest scripts, collaterals, artifacts, insights, offers, or other assets based on a combination of customer type, persona, sales step, sales cycle stage and other factors. This push-based technology facilitates guided selling, eliminates search time, and better leverages the company's content.

CRM systems provide the automation to get the right sales support to the right person on the right channel at the right time.

According to Gartner, by 2026, employees will reduce the time spent looking for information by 50% as information finds them in the context of their current work activity.

And third, increase content effectiveness by ensuring it is consistent across channels, tracked for utilization and rated for value by the recipients. Ratings are often as simple as the thumb up or down buttons.

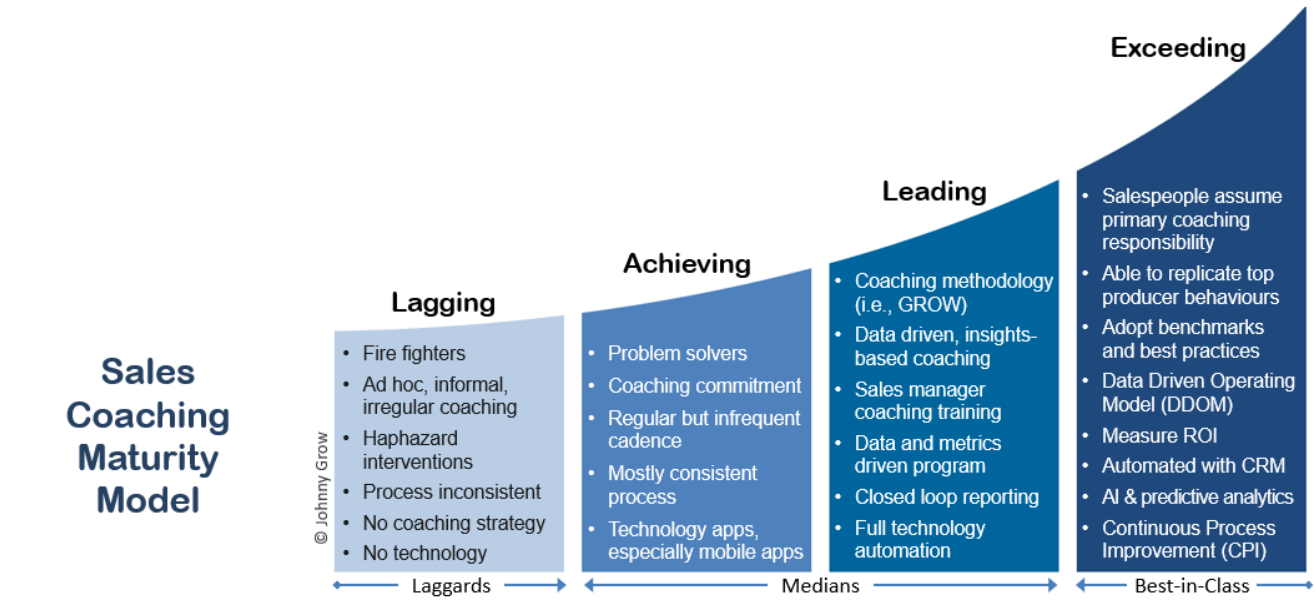
2 Coaching

Business to Business selling is a team sport. And the team needs a coach.

Good sales managers recognize their greatest impact is to grow the contributions of each of their direct reports and achieve a workforce multiplier effect. But a frequent coaching misstep is incorrectly allocating limited time among sales performers.

Most sales managers spend the most time coaching the highest and lowest performers. While all sales professionals need coaching, investing more time with the middle performers will deliver the greatest upside financial impact.

Sales coaching research shows that active sales coaching delivers significant and sustained performance improvements in the areas of sales conversions, quota attainment, year over year revenue growth and salesperson tenure. No other productivity investment delivers a bigger financial impact than effective sales coaching.



Sale Opportunity Win Rate	41%	52%	57%	61%
Salesforce Quota Attainment	49%	58%	62%	68%
Year over Year Revenue Growth	67%	76%	82%	96%
Voluntary Sales Turnover	21%	18%	15%	12%

Sales coaching maturity correlated to sales outcomes | Source: Sales Excellence Report

According to CSO Insights Fifth Annual Sales Enablement Study, "For the last five years, sales coaching has had the greatest impact on win rates and quota attainment."

3 Training

Sales training is area of frequent disappointment.

While training classes are informative, the problem is that about 94% of the information presented is forgotten within 36 hours.

There are two solutions for this problem.

First, instead of the traditional classroom style training, consider shorter, bite-sized and on-demand online training delivery. We often use a concept we call Just-enough-learning which makes shorter learning sessions available with each sales cycle step or based on sales cycle events. We also use something we call Just-for-me-learning which delivers specific role-based content to targeted audiences (which often aligns with a day in the life approach for each role.)

The most successful training programs are designed for the employee experience and change the objective from delivering training to measuring learning. We prefer the four-stage progressive training model of See it, Know it, Try it and Do it.

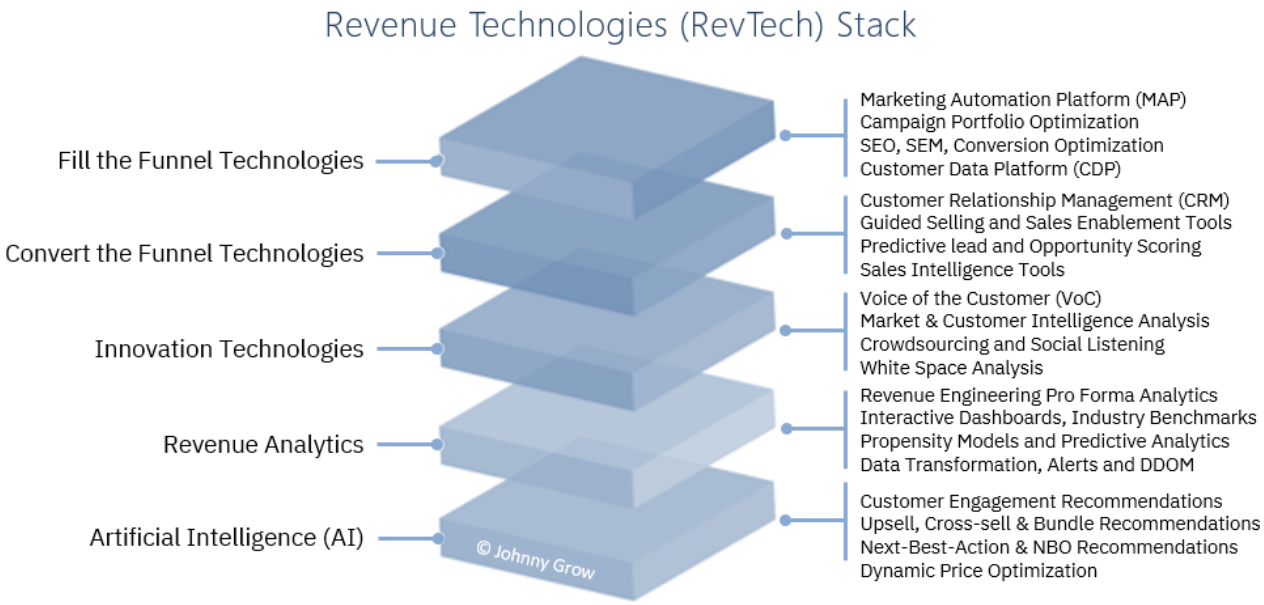
Second, make training experiential.

New information, instruction or content is applied when it's embedded into the company's sale methodology or sales process. Even better, when you insert new training topics into best practices or Sales Playbooks and leverage your CRM system to deliver them at the right step in the sales cycle, they become routine and effectively used.

4 Technology

Many companies make the mistake of acquiring sales technologies individually or as a response to the problem of the day. That ends up creating fragmented applications, data siloes and inconsistent user experiences. It also increases IT costs for system integration and maintenance.

A better approach is to plan a holistic sales technology stack in place of ad hoc and piecemeal systems.



Start with CRM as your underlying platform. Then leverage the platform's ecosystem (i.e., Salesforce AppExchange or Microsoft AppSource) for best of breed apps that are pre-integrated and share consistent user experiences and common tools such as workflow builders, predictive analytics, or artificial intelligence (AI).

Recognize **the most empowering sales force enablement technology is AI**. Most CRM platforms have built-in AI that can apply sales cycle data, customer data and historical data of comparable sale opportunities to determine which leads are qualified, which buyers will buy, and which customers are at risk of churn.

AI can maximize the three prior building blocks to proactively push content, coaching and training for each opportunity at the right points in the sales cycle. It can detect customer sentiment to improve customer engagement. It can surface in-the-moment buyer insights, suggest the best content, or make next best action recommendations.

AI brings it all together.

3 Sales Outcomes from the 4 Building Blocks

The three most impactful sales outcomes that can be accelerated and amplified as part of a sales enablement program are shared below.

A Improved Sales Force Productivity

There are three ways to improve sales productivity. You can redesign processes to be more streamlined and effective, apply technology to automate manual activities and develop analytics to work smarter.

Enablement programs typically pursue the first two. They often automate processes to inject content or insights when and where they can be applied.

One caution though, you need to streamline processes before you attempt to automate them. There's no sense in automating inefficient business processes.

Our sales enablement consultants typically use Agile Value Stream Mapping as the process design method because it quickly identifies idle periods which extend process durations, designates process steps by value or non-value, and is particularly well suited to eliminating non-value-added steps and activities.

Once processes are effective you can use a combination of your CRM application and selling enablement apps to integrate your sale methodology, automate your sales process and deliver content, coaching or training concepts as guided selling recommendations.

B Increased Sales Force Win Rates

Poor sales closure rates are often a consequence of earlier actions and not the real problem. For example, if marketing is acquiring leads that don't fit the company's Ideal Customer Profile (ICP) or otherwise passing unqualified leads to the salesforce, sales conversions will suffer.

The sales process must be looked at holistically to understand how improvements in any of the upstream actions will yield downstream improvements.

There's more than one way to improve your sales win rate. In fact, there are over a dozen evidence-based best practices for just this goal. They include Sales and Marketing Alignment, Sales Playbooks, Sales Win Plans. Strategic Account Management, sale methodologies and sales analytics to name a few.

Enablement programs often start with content that includes the 360-degree customer view as that data can be shared in a high number of scenarios.

Enablement apps can also play a big role. For example, Configure-Price-Quote (CPQ) apps can greatly reduce the time needed to create complex quotes, perform route planning to maximize sales visits and use digital contracts with e-signatures to accelerate sales closure.

Other enablement apps will likely be baked into your CRM platform and include things like AI-calculated lead scores, next-best-action recommendations, automated delivery of contextual content or artifacts based on position in the sales cycle, team help using enterprise social networks (i.e., Salesforce Slack or Microsoft Teams) and interactive dashboards.

Increasing sales close rates delivers significant and sustainable revenue growth. It is also more effective and less costly than just playing the numbers game of increasing the volume of sales pursuits.

C A High-performance Sales Team

The two most influential selling enablement programs to raise sales team performance are sales coaching and sale methodologies.

Sales coaching applies structured conversations to develop each salesperson's full potential and grow the cumulative revenue impact of the salesforce. These dialogues seldom tell sales staff what to do and instead focus on helping them develop the right skills and reinforce the behaviors that deliver results.

When part of an enablement program, coaching is more than just a sporadic activity. It’s initially delivered in the onboarding process, continuously delivered as part of a recurring program and with the help of sales automation technology, proactively delivered in a just-in-time format.

Sale methodologies integrated within CRM software accelerate sales cycles by providing road maps to get to the destination in the shortest time. Using CRM workflow to facilitate sales processes saves time, creates consistency among reps, provides measured visibility and enables predictability.

The Point is This

Selling enablement assets and tools are cool, but sales outcomes rule.

Avoid the temptation to start with tools and apps and then seek out problems they can solve.

Instead, engineer the tools and apps to deliver measurable and predictable sales results. Only then will you succeed in getting the sales team to actually use the enablement solutions.

How We Can Help

Helping clients accelerate revenue growth is our core competency and singular focus.

We have the sales enablement methods, best practices, technologies, and expertise to drive fast and sustained revenue growth.

Check out our flexible services, prescriptive methods, and predictable results at https://johnnygrow.com/sales/sales-enablement-consultant/

About Johnny Grow

Johnny Grow is a business growth consultancy that delivers professional services to increase company revenue growth, profit growth and market capitalization.

Growing our clients' business is our business. Our work goes beyond incremental improvements to deliver order of magnitude results.

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