



How to Build a Sales Enablement Process in Your Business

This guide provides insight for sales and marketing executives to define sales enablement's role in their organization, align sales and marketing to maximize profit, and measure the effectiveness of sales enablement.





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INTRODUCTION

What is sales enablement?

If your company doesn't have a sales enablement process in place, each employee will likely give you a completely different answer.

→ "It's something I do on the side," says the VP of Marketing. "It's how I support sales."

→ "It's how I make sure sales development reps are communicating effectively with clients," says the Director of Customer Success.

→ "It's something I think we need to work on more," says the VP of Sales.

Each of these answers illuminates the myriad of impressions employees have of the term "sales enablement." Within an organization, however, all must agree on the definition, role, and effectiveness of sales enablement.

This guide gives sales and marketing executives the insight to define sales enablement's role in their business, align sales and marketing to increase communication and maximize profit, and measure the overall effectiveness of sales enablement. While creating a blanket statement to define all sales enablement processes is impossible, this guide offers an in-depth look into the many facets of sales enablement and a surplus of ideas for businesses looking to develop or boost sales enablement strategies.



Defining Sales Enablement

A study by DemandMetric found that 74% of respondents who rated their sales enablement as underperforming also said the function was “poorly or very poorly understood” by the organization. That statistic is staggering. Unfortunately, many companies can’t leverage sales enablement because they don’t actually know what it is.

Many companies, including DemandMetric, Forrester Research and SiriusDecisions, have shared definitions for the term “sales enablement.” We will highlight details of each company’s definition that we believe are influential, and then offer our own definition of the term, without delving into specifics which could vary from company to company.

Forrester Research

*Sales enablement is a strategic, ongoing **process** that equips **all client-facing employees** with the ability to consistently and systematically have a valuable conversation with the right set of customer stakeholders at each stage of the customer's problem-solving life cycle to optimize the return of investment of the selling system.*

Forrester’s definition emphasizes that sales enablement is an ongoing process. This definition is inclusive: sales enablement helps “all client-facing employees,” not just sales development reps. Employees such as client success managers, marketers, and even IT professionals can benefit from sales enablement, as increased sales means increased return on investment overall. We especially like this definition because of its focus on optimized ROI. Sales enablement is inherently revenue-driven, as it equips all employees who interact with potential customers with the tools and technologies they need to succeed.



SiriusDecisions

*It is a front-and-center **function** that plays a critical role in readying sales to succeed in an ever changing and increasingly challenging marketplace. While the goal of the sales enablement function is simple – to ensure that every seller has the required knowledge, skills, processes and behaviors to **optimize every interaction with buyers** – the execution of that goal is anything but.*

SiriusDecisions' definition on their Sales Enablement Strategies page defines sales enablement as a function, not a process. Already there are differing opinions. A function, as Forrester describes sales enablement, is an individual building block within a company that works within to accomplish goals. A process, as SiriusDecisions describes sales enablement, is a series of activities that uses individual building blocks to achieve an end. Usually "process" is understood as a progression, while "function" is understood as an operation. However, we believe it's hard to pinhole sales enablement into one of these categories. Sales enablement should be understood as a separate function from sales development, but should also be understood as a process that uses marketing, sales knowledge, information technology, and more to achieve a higher ROI for company endeavors.

SiriusDecisions, like Forrester, also emphasizes the role of sales enablement as necessary for *every* step of the buyer cycle, optimizing *all* interactions with potential buyers. Still, this definition lacks specificity: how does sales enablement do this? In a blog post, Jim Ninivaggi states that sales enablement provides sales assets to reps and ensures that they are competent in using those assets. This definition encompasses equipping sales reps with the right tools and training them to use them correctly.

Sales enablement is a sales function
– except when it isn't.

- Jim Ninivaggi



Demand Metric

*Sales enablement is the processes, practices, technologies and tools that improve the performance and productivity of the sales organization. Sales Enablement **enhances the ability of the sales team to increase company revenue through sales. Bottom Line - Sales Enablement drives revenue by directly impacting the sales teams' ability to close more deals.***

Demand Metric's definition is most direct. Sales enablement "enhances the ability of the sales team to increase company revenue" by "impacting the sales teams' ability to close more deals." This definition does not immediately define sales enablement as a function or a process, allowing more room for interpretation, although it does say that sales enablement should use processes to improve the sales organization. QF agrees: Sales enablement is ultimately a method to increase revenue by ensuring sales reps will close more sales, whether through training, collateral, or technologies.

Our Definition

Sales enablement is multi-faceted, which is why it's hard to find a comprehensive definition. In a Demand Metric survey, 380 sales professionals voted on nine different phrases to describe sales enablement, with "develops strategy" and "creates materials and assets" at the forefront. No single definition can encompass what sales enablement will represent for every company, but one definition can help make its role in the sales process clear. After much thought, here is our definition of sales enablement:

*Sales enablement is an **aligned cross-function** of sales and marketing that drives company revenue by improving sales performance with processes, tools, technologies, and training. Ultimately, sales enablement **enhances every buyer interaction** by focusing on optimal communication, imparting best practices for engaging with target audiences, and advancing prospects through the sales funnel.*



Sales Enablement's Role in Your Business

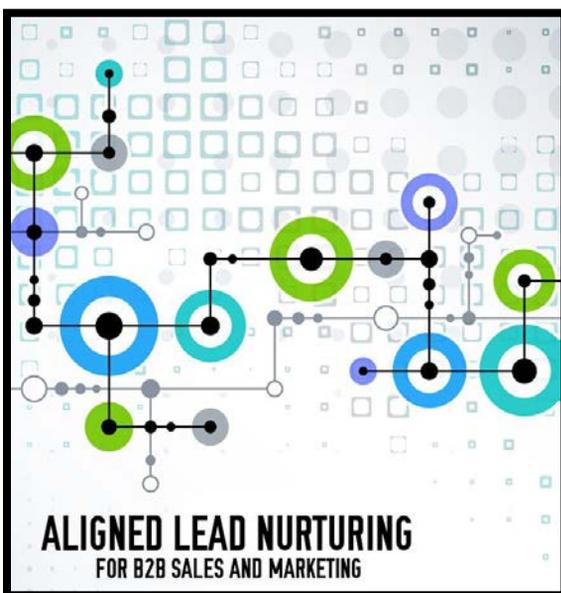
Depending on your company's existing processes and structures, sales enablement duties and/or positions will differ from company to company. In order to determine how sales enablement will function in your company, QuotaFactory developed a worksheet of questions that aligned sales and marketing teams can ask about sales enablement's role in their organization.

- 1. Why do we need sales enablement?**
- 2. How will sales enablement impact our sales?**
- 3. How will sales translate this support into effective prospecting?**
- 4. How will we be affected internally by an efficient sales enablement process?**
- 5. Where does sales enablement fit into our organizational structure? Will it be a separate department or will the responsibilities be split within the organization?**
- 6. How will sales and sales enablement communicate? Will there be a feedback process for optimal communication?**
- 7. What are our current training processes for new sales hires, and where do they need improvement?**
- 8. What does sales data indicate about the effectiveness of our sales reps? How can sales enablement increase their KPIs?**
- 9. When should sales enablement expect results? How should they measure those results?**
- 10. What are our goals for sales enablement's impact on the entire company?**

Aligning Sales and Marketing

Sales enablement is a function that combines responsibilities of both sales and marketing departments. Therefore, it's impossible to have an effective sales enablement process in place without aligned sales and marketing departments.

After having completed the worksheet above, everyone in the company should have a mutual understanding of sales enablement's role. Next, it's important to create processes that facilitate communication regarding sales enablement between departments that are directly impacted. Here are three activities sales and marketing can accomplish to open communication regarding sales enablement:



Aligned Lead Nurturing Guide:

For more tips on sales and marketing alignment, read our Aligned Lead Nurturing Guide for B2B Sales and Marketing Executives.



- 1. Work together on buyer personas.** It's important that both sales and marketing have a thorough understanding of their buyer. To gain better alignment across the two departments, the buyer persona should be developed and agreed upon by both sales and marketing. After a comprehensive buyer persona is created, including a summary of duties, in-depth responsibilities, pain points and challenges, and messaging to the persona, sales enablement can tailor their work to engage these buyers.
- 2. Organize sales and marketing meet-ups.** Steer clear of the meeting room; instead, combine sales and marketing socially. Whether after work at a local restaurant for appetizers, or at work for a sales and marketing luncheon, create a space where both sales and marketing can catch up on what's going on in the company and have meaningful conversations outside of daunting conference rooms. These events will foster camaraderie between both teams, who will learn about sales and marketing needs in a different setting.
- 3. Create an ideas board.** The ideas board is a safe space for marketing, sales, and sales enablement. Each department can nominate ideas for improving the sales process, and then they can vote on which ones the team should implement. They can also rate which tools are most helpful to them. HubSpot recommends creating a Wiki, that allows for comments and editing. Therefore, there is a continuous information flow from the entire company. Plus, executing this idea online will most likely increase engagement, as it's easier and more accessible, with younger reps. Closed-loop feedback between sales, marketing, and sales enablement is important, and the Wiki can help facilitate this communication.

Overall, it's important to always communicate in order to maintain a healthy alignment and shared company goals. Your answers to the questions in the worksheet might change over the years as the company expands and changes. Always meet to ensure that everyone is on the same page and knowledge is shared across the board in order to foster an environment where discussion and recapitulation are the norm.

Measuring Sales Enablement Success

How do you know you're studying the right metrics for sales enablement success? This is where most people falter; how do you measure sales enablement, when it covers so many things? Well, first, instead of measuring "consumption" or "usage" of tools, measure impact. Develop a clear charter for sales enablement that balances strategic with operationally oriented functions. Here are some KPIs we suggest tracking:



- **Measure the effectiveness of content and training.** Look at how sales enablement is affecting sales development themselves, before looking at how it's affecting the entire ROI of your company. Some qualitative metrics you might want to track are:

- downloads of content, training docs, workshops, webinars, etc.
- sales feedback for applicability
- increase in net new opportunities with use of sales enablement collateral
- increased conversion rates within the applicable sales funnel phase
- comparative consumption data with performance data tracked in CRM

Make sure to measure the effectiveness of the tools and technologies you're providing.



- **Treat sales enablement collateral as a product launch.** Create a timeline for when you put out a piece of content, and delineate expectations for the impact it will make. For example, did the inside sales reps who attended the workshop on channel sales apply their newly acquired education to their day-to-day duties? Why not? How do they compare to those who didn't attend the workshop?
- **Measure the effectiveness of the new hire process.** This is specifically geared toward the sales training material sales enablement provides. Follow new hires and closely monitor their activities. Are they using what they learned from onboarding training? What did they find most helpful throughout the process? In addition to traditional training completion or certification metrics, measuring access and effectiveness of tools will demonstrate whether new hires have the competency to leverage the technology provided.
 - The critical metric here will be *new hire time to productivity*, determined as the time it takes a new hire to close a first order or meet requirements for revenue run rates over a month or quarter. (CPSA)
- **Measure revenue.** As all of the definitions at the beginning of this guide mentioned, sales enablement is all about driving revenue. Look at the ROI of the tools sales enablement offer to influence the velocity and efficiency of the lead to revenue process, and determine their effectiveness through usage, helpfulness, and speed it helped the buyer move through the funnel.



CONCLUSION

Sales enablement is both a function and a process that equips sales reps with the tools, technologies, materials, and training to improve sales performance and integrate or align with the organization.

With a proper understanding of sales enablement's role in your organization, your inside sales reps, marketers, and IT professionals will be better positioned to drive revenue for your company. With the elusive sales enablement conundrum solved, your business will be able to focus on aligning its efforts 100% towards the customer.

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