APT*TUS*

7 Ways to Make Your Sales Team More Productive with Sales Enablement

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Strategies, Best Practices & More

Despite the ever-increasing connected world and the wealth of information at our finger-tips, the modern day sales cycle has become more difficult to implement. Companies are consistently challenged to condense sales cycles and increase sales productivity and deal velocity. Sales enablement is designed to address these challenges.

This paper will define and explain why sales enablement has become critical to supporting the sales team to improve productivity, velocity and drive revenue. In addition, this paper will provide 7 key tips that help create a path for companies to follow as they attempt to implement sales enablement strategies.

The Fundamentals: What is Sales Enablement?

The term "sales enablement" has been around for years, however its definition varies in scope. This term is best defined as a process carried out between sales, marketing, and other areas of a company to more effectively produce content, knowledge, and tools to be used throughout the sales cycle. With these resources teams are able to initiate more productive interactions with buyers and drive revenue growth.

But don't let the term *sales enablement* mislead you on who is involved and more importantly who within your company it impacts. Everyone from recruiting to marketing to ops needs to be aligned in order to build a successful sales enablement strategy.

There are many different aspects of Sales Enablement that come together to form the overall strategy. These include, but are not limited to:

- Creating a more efficient and continual method of training members of the sales team that aide in knowledge retention
- Getting the most relevant content to the sales team at the right time and in the easiest manner possible
- Enhancing communication between the marketing and sales teams
- Incorporating analytics to learn which content resonates with potential customers, then reincorporating that information into improved tools, content, and training.

The best defined sales enablement strategy is a closed loop system. Content is organized into a central portal that allows for easy access by marketing teams. The sales teams are then able to locate with relative ease the information they are searching for and pass that information on to the client. The analytics system put in place will tell which tools and content perform best. This information is recognized and reincorporated into the first phase of the cycle.

Figure 1, courtesy of Highspot

Why All the Trouble?

How important is developing a sales enablement strategy? Well let's first look at the numbers...

According to the Aberdeen Group, best in class companies are twice as likely to have undertaken a sales enablement solution. These companies reach their quota goals 50 percent more often.[i] Is this correlation or causation? We lean towards the latter. Sellers are better able to engage their customers as a result of a top down sales enablement strategy.

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It is widely recognized that a unified top down sales strategy saves resources. Shown by SeriousDecisions, Inc in their "Calculating the True Cost of Content" presentation: the amount of useful and effective content increases by 300 percent after companies optimize the content performance through sales enablement.[ii] Without the use of these strategies, much of the content that is created by marketing teams is left unused, and the investment – both in time and money – creating that content goes to waste. Highspot's "the Definitive Guide to Sales Enablement" states, that according to various studies, sales teams do not use 65 percent of marketing content, meaning nearly 2/3 of their assets are left to rot, unfound, unused and ineffective in a content wasteland, rather than informing prospects and supporting deals.[iii]

Sales enablement aims at relieving this problem. By corralling the information into an easy to find location, sales teams are able to effectively search for what they need. In addition, the analytics on the back end allow content creators to refine the process by understanding what content works best in every situation. As a result, pitches and presentations can become scalable and easily repeatable, further eliminating waste.

"The amount of effective content increases by 300% after companies optimizes it for performance through sales enablement."

Sales enablement allows sales teams to reach their quotas in a much more efficient and predictable way. The tools and content that the analysis shows to work are able to be used repeatedly in future sales cycles. The companies that implement these strategies are able to mass-produce efficient selling teams, rather then relying on a handful of high performing reps with natural ability. The best training methods are standardized and continuously used, skills and strategies refined, and success replicated. The right content is timely leveraged to inform and support potential costumer around their specific pain points. And, as a result of the application of analytics and best practice, the process is continually improved in an endlessly repeatable cycle of success.

7 Tips to Master Sales Enablement

Although these tips are not all encompassing, they will have an strong effect on increasing efficiency in companies that follow this practice:

1. **Take a Top Down Approach**

   Make sure you have upper management's buy in and leadership. A team needs to be created or a manager needs to be put in place. Sales enablement is not something that can just be whipped up out of thin air, it will take time to organize everything and get everyone on the same playing field. The objectives of the program need to be explicitly defined and the entire company needs to be included.

2. **Hire the Right People, Train Them Well**

   Hiring the right people and training them effectively is a large part of sales enablement. The Savo Group states that 35 percent of new hires' training is forgotten in one month. This percentage moves up to 90 percent after six months.[iv] To solve this problem, new information has to be taught in a manner that can be better understood. One example is online video, which appeals to people who either learn through sight or sound. Also, the more the audience is engaged and involved throughout the process, the more information they will retain.

3. **Continue to Refresh Knowledge**

   Training needs to be a continuous effort, one that is alive throughout the sales person's tenure at your business, not a one and done upon onboarding. Formal training should be mandatory on a monthly basis, with other refreshers (such as newsletters) sprinkled in to keep the sales teams engaged. Keep the sales teams up to date on new products, new competitors etc. To ensure that teams are able to keep up with new information while they are on the move, online mediums are great ways to avoid conflicting issues. People can't always make it to training so bring the training to them. This will keeps teams on their toes and allow for a better interaction with buyers.

4. **Open Lines of Communication**

   Encourage sales reps to speak openly and clearly about what is and is not working for them. In some companies, marketing and sales have a very limited interaction with each other. Increased communication between the sales and marketing teams is paramount. The marketing team needs to know directly from the sales team which content is performing best with leads. Communication needs to be encouraged, and the knowledge gathered acted on. These two divisions need to be the closest knit in order for sales enablement to have much of an effect.

5. **Use Feedback to Drive Content**

   With the knowledge gathered above from the increased communication, the marketing teams need to ensure that they are creating and passing on high quality content. This content needs to be able to be used in a controllable way that fits each circumstance individually. Once this has been established and it is easily located and applied, the salespeople will be able to rely heavily on it.

6. **Use it or Lose it**

   Make sure that the sales teams are actually using what is provided to them. This is a very common sense tip, but still very important. What is the point of investment in sales enablement if it is not being used? Management must enforce the use of the improved content, training, and tools. Make sure that the teams engage in the dialogue surrounding new content and tools, which will in turn lead to them adopting these practices.

7. **The Drive Towards Success Should Never End**

   Constantly make this a circular, never ending cycle. Use analytics to understand what works and what doesn't. For example, which pitch works best for each type of buyer, the tools that have to most success in the sales process, and what content is actually being used. Then with this information, direct it to the beginning of the process starting from hiring and training new reps. With each revolution, the necessary will carry on and the unnecessary will be cast off, eventually zeroing in on what is best for each situation. With this knowledge, the way in which sales teams approach and closed deals will be more standardized and easier to follow.

In Summary

Broadly speaking, sales enablement is a top down strategy to increase the efficiency of sales teams through the use of increasingly productive content, training techniques, and tools. Sales are the main body that implements these new strategies, however the interplay with marketing and the refinement of these practices is the backbone. This needs to be an organization wide initiative with all parties on-board. Everybody has a role to play, not just the sales teams.

About Apttus

Apttus, the category-defining Quote-to-Cash software company, drives the vital business process between the buyer's interest in a purchase and the realization of revenue. Apttus is delivered on the Salesforce App Cloud, the world's most trusted and comprehensive cloud delivery infrastructure. Applications include Configure Price Quote (CPQ), Renewals, Contract Management and Revenue Management. Additionally, Apttus' patent pending X-Author technology enables Microsoft Office to be a user-interface with full interaction and control between Salesforce and Microsoft Office. Apttus is based in San Mateo, California, with additional offices located across the globe. For more information visit: apttus.com*.*

Notes

[i] "Better Buyer Connections = Stronger Sales Enablement Results", March 2015, Aberdeen Group. | http://aberdeen.com/research/10223/10223-KB-sales-enablement-process.aspx/content.aspx

[ii] SiriusDecisions, Inc., "Calculating the True Cost of Content" presentation, SiriusDecisions Summit 20 https://www.siriusdecisions.com/Events/Webcasts/September-23-2015-Calculating-True-Cost-of-Co

[iii] "The Definitive Guide to Sales Enablement", Highspot, Inc, 2015 | http://www.slideshare.net/Highs

[iv] "Financial Services; Reinforcing Sales Process", Savo Group, 2012. | http://www.savogroup.com/bl

40% of the world's population is online

26 Billion connected devices are expected by 2020

82% of consumers research purchases online first

30% of complete half of their work purchases online