



# Five tips on building a winning programme

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What's working, what needs to change, and where this emerging function is heading

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# Introduction

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Even the best sales teams in the world are only as good as the information and insight they're given. Today, more organisations than ever have woken up to the fact that if they want to sell more products, they need to do everything they can to enable and empower their sales teams.

From basic education on new product features, to the adoption of entirely new sales methodologies, Sales Enablement is all about arming the people who sell your products with whatever they need to make sales happen.

It's a hugely exciting field to be involved in - not just because it's a hot topic that everyone has an opinion on, but because as it stands currently, there's no clear best way to handle it.

If Sales Enablement is on your agenda, there are a lot of decisions to make - and very few of them will be simple. We've created this paper to help you understand the current state of play in Sales Enablement, the challenges you're up against, and the approaches that others just like you have used to find success.

# One size does not fit all

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If you've come here looking for a quick overview of the best approach to Sales Enablement, we've got some unfortunate news - that doesn't exist. Or at least, it hasn't been found yet.

Currently, organisations are employing and experimenting with a wide range of Sales Enablement methodologies - both proven approaches such as challenger selling, and their own approaches developed specifically for their company.

With both delivering strong results for some businesses and weaker outputs for others, the message to those just starting out on their Sales Enablement journey is clear: Experiment and find the best approach and actions for your business.

The best training programmes and experiences for your organisation will ultimately be shaped and guided by:

## **YOUR CULTURE**

If your company has a particularly nurturing and collaborative culture, your Sales Enablement practices should fall in line with that. Sales teams will expect a training experience that's in line with what they've come to expect from your business, and that's in line with the culture that makes them want to work for you.

## **YOUR COMPANY-LEVEL OBJECTIVES**

While Sales Enablement is obviously about empowering salespeople and the teams around them, its primary goal is to deliver better results for your business. It's important to keep the big picture in mind when choosing or developing your approach to Sales Enablement, and consider how effective it may be at supporting your specific business goals - both in the short and long term.

## **THE PEOPLE AND TEAMS YOU'RE ENABLING**

Like any form of education, you need to consider how well a potential Sales Enablement approach may land and 'sink in' with the people you're enabling. Approaches will need to differ depending on the job role and seniority of the individuals they're aimed at. For example, sales leaders likely won't respond well to the same approaches and materials as the teams below them, as their responsibilities are very different.

## **OUR ADVICE:**

### **TEST THE WATERS BEFORE YOU JUMP IN DEEPER**

The best way to find what works for your teams is to do some experimenting. Testing can help you identify what does and doesn't work for your team, and spot potential problem areas with certain approaches that need improving or tailoring to your organisation's needs.

And experimentation shouldn't end once you've built your first Sales Enablement programme. Tweaking and improving your programmes is the key to long-term success, and keeping your Sales Enablement activities relevant and effective in a shifting sales environment.

# What makes a programme work?

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While effective Sales Enablement requires you to find your own path and craft your own best practice, there are a handful of things that every business will need to consider and get in place to get their programme off the ground.

Whoever you are, and whatever you want to help your sales team achieve, there are five things you need for a successful Sales Enablement programme:

## #1) BUY-IN FROM THE SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM

Executive buy-in is essential to securing the budget you need to build and conduct Sales Enablement programmes, but it's also important for ensuring your efforts are a success in the long-term. If you can communicate the value of Sales Enablement to leaders early on and secure their support, they'll continue to support your efforts as your programmes evolve and change shape.

## #2) A TEAM THAT'S READY AND WILLING TO ADAPT TO A NEW WAY OF WORKING

You can't train those who don't want to learn, so it's important that your team understands the value of Sales Enablement, and that it exists to help make their lives easier, and make them more successful in their role. The SkillWill matrix is a good measure to help you identify how ready for change your team is.

## #3) AN ACTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM

Sales Enablement is a hands-on process. For it to be successful, you need a management team that can frequently intervene in activities to tweak and improve them. If a programme isn't immediately successful, an active management team will play a pivotal role in getting it back on track and turning it into a success.

## #4) A WIDE VARIETY OF CONTENT TYPES

People learn in different ways, so it's important to consider individual learning preferences when you're creating Sales Enablement programmes and content. A wide variety of content types will ensure you have something for everyone, so nobody gets left behind simply because the enablement content is served in a way that doesn't resonate with them.

## #5) TESTS AND PRACTICAL EXERCISES

Tests are important for ensuring that the training has sunk in with the team. In addition to showing you who has been truly enabled by the training, it's also extremely valuable for helping you understand where your current training activities are falling short of expectations. If things consistently aren't sinking in, it might be time to change how you're delivering that information.

# Face-to-face vs. virtual training

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One of the most important decisions a company has to make when designing new Sales Enablement processes is exactly how it wants to deliver essential training. Should it stick with traditional face-to-face training, or go with digitally-delivered training sessions – either through live webinars, or self-guided materials available on demand?

Again, there is no right or wrong answer here – and many successful organisations that found that a balance between the two is very effective.

To help you understand the benefits and drawbacks of each, and decide where they might best be applied in your future programmes, we've put them head-to-head across three key areas:

## EASE OF DELIVERY

The obvious drawback of face-to-face training is that it requires you to bring people and experts together in the same physical location, at the same time. For companies based in one location, or with teams that frequently meet physically, that's a great option. But for those with more dispersed sales resources, it could present challenges.

Digital delivery on the other hand enables everyone to access the same training resources, regardless of their location – making it popular with larger organisations that operate across geographies.

## ENGAGEMENT

One of the biggest misconceptions around digital training is that it's easy to monitor engagement levels. Many training tools will enable the people managing them to see which users have accessed and viewed training resources – but in reality, accessing a resource doesn't necessarily mean it has truly been engaged with.

It's all too easy to click off a tab while a training video plays, or just zone out entirely. That's where face-to-face training really shines. Disengagement can be spotted immediately, and the person delivering the training can make attempts to engage the disengaged, ensuring the session and its takeaways land with them.

## GAUGING FEEDBACK

With digitally delivered training, there is no impetus for salespeople to give you timely or valuable feedback. While many training tools have functions built in to support trainee feedback and help you gather an understanding of what's working, it's very easy for trainees to skip this process.

With face-to-face training, however, feedback can be gathered immediately, as training is happening. It supports open discussion as part of training sessions, that can help you understand if the session has been valuable for your teams and gain a deeper understanding of what they really want to know to do their jobs more effectively.

## **MEASURING SUCCESS**

Measuring your results is a critical part of any new project. It helps you identify issues, report on your successes, and prove the value of your ideas and operations to the people in control of your budgets.

Unfortunately, measuring the success of Sales Enablement practices has proven difficult in the past. Because so many different factors can potentially impact the volume of sales your team closes, it's difficult to clearly attribute a fluctuation in sales to a single factor such as the launch of a new training programme.

Teams are seeking new ways of tracking and measuring Sales Enablement ROI, and new technology is helping to provide new ways of doing it. Today, some of the most common methods of value measurement include:

### **AVERAGE TIME TO CLOSE A DEAL**

By looking at the average time it takes to close deals, and comparing figures quarterly, you can see whether better product and sales knowledge is helping teams sell faster – and by extension, more efficiently.

### **CERTIFICATION SCORING**

Much like testing teams internally, measuring scores for industry or field certifications is another way to check how effectively your Sales Enablement efforts are helping salespeople learn more about the field they operate in, and the products and services they're selling.

### **WIN RATE**

While inexact, a rise in overall win rates is one of the clearest indicators of Sales Enablement success. However, if you choose to report on this and use it as an indicator of ROI, it's worth checking the figures against other major events such as product improvements or new launches that also could have impacted win rate.

### **TEAM FEEDBACK**

Ultimately, the best way to find out how effective your Sales Enablement programmes are is to simply ask the people you're trying to enable. Qualitative feedback from sales teams may be difficult to plot on a chart, but there is no clearer indicator of programme success than individual salespeople telling you that it has made their lives easier, and that they're seeing results from the methods they've been taught.

## Solutions are evolving, but information is limited

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As excitement around Sales Enablement has grown and more and more companies have jumped on board with it, a huge number of new technology solutions have appeared to help support them.

Today, there are more than 1,200 tools available to assist with Sales Enablement, making it almost impossible to tell which could work best for you. The market is flooded with solutions, but functionality is lacking in many, and a lot of the available products need more work to be truly fit for purpose.

At the moment, the best approach is a cautious one. While many of these tools hold promise, investing now while most platforms remain unproven is risky, and could tie your business to a vendor or a solution that doesn't deliver what your team really needs.

However, it's worth noting that those who do their own research and sift through the solutions available to find one perfectly suited to them stand to gain a huge amount. They'll be among the first movers, gaining new technical capabilities that many of their competitors don't have access to yet.

### **TURNKEY SOLUTIONS AREN'T THE ANSWER**

In many areas of business today, we've drifted into a culture where a new solution can solve every new challenge and underpin any new project. In Sales Enablement, however, this isn't the case.

Decision-makers need to be cautious when exploring new training tools, because no technology solution will ever be able to solve all your Sales Enablement challenges.

At its heart, Sales Enablement is about people. It's about finding the best ways to help people learn, and supporting them in ways that work for them personally. While a technology solution may be able to assist with things such as programme administration and tracking, there is no substitute for face-to-face contact and personal discussions around training needs.

# Conclusion

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More businesses are exploring and experimenting with Sales Enablement than ever before, but that doesn't necessarily mean they're going about it in the right way. There is no "best" way of managing and conducting Sales Enablement programmes, and finding the ideal strategy for your business may require some failure and course correction.

If you're planning your own programme, there are five clear actions you should take now to help make it a success:

## #1) SPEAK TO THE PEOPLE YOU'RE ENABLING

Open a dialogue at the earliest opportunity to understand what your salespeople really want to learn, and what they're struggling with. Encouraging open discussion isn't just valuable when designing your programme, it will also make it easier to gather feedback and improve it over time.

## #2) CONSIDER HOW YOU WANT TO MEASURE SUCCESS UPFRONT

Measuring the true value of Sales Enablement is tough. But, if you decide what your metrics for success are right at the beginning of your project, you can build your programme around them, and give yourself the best possible chance at gathering measurable results that prove its value.

## #3) BALANCE DIGITAL AND FACE-TO-FACE EXPERIENCES

There is clear merit to both digital and face-to-face learning experiences. Use both alongside each other to encourage on-demand learning, while also bringing people together for sessions on core topics that demand high engagement.

## #4) ALIGN TRAINING AND EVENTS WITH YOUR COMPANY CULTURE

All teams can be resistant to change. However you decide to conduct them, your Sales Enablement events must be aligned with your company culture, and not simply feel like a newly added responsibility that teams need to uphold just to tick some boxes.

## #5) PUT PEOPLE FIRST

This is about helping people be more effective in their roles, and any decisions you make need to be driven by those people. Putting technology or processes first will lead to results that don't work for your people - and if things don't work for your people, your attempt to enable salespeople has failed.

## About Outsourced Events

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At **Outsourced Events** [↗](#), we can help you create successful Sales Enablement events, which can incorporate as many techniques for delivery as needed – from roleplays and role-defined sessions, to whole team workshops. We've been creating and hosting successful events for many years, and can help you understand what your events need to ensure the highest levels of participation and audience engagement.

If you're building your own Sales Enablement programme and want some help conducting face-to-face events that get results, contact us today.

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