HubSpot Academy

SALES ENABLEMENT CERTIFICATION LESSON TRANSCRIPT

THE POWER OF CONTENT IN SALES ENABLEMENT

Video 1: The Importance of Content in Sales Enablement

> Marcus Sheridan: Frankly, if you really look at the power of content, if we go beyond content, what is content? Content is great teaching, great communication. That's what it is. Everybody can buy into that. This impacts huge facets of the business.
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> Josh Harcus: Marketing, at its core, just needs to basically empower people with knowledge. I think that's the biggest thing.

Hey, it's Kyle from HubSpot Academy. Sales enablement is the processes, content, and technology that empower sales teams to sell efficiently at a higher velocity. The content piece of sales enablement in many cases acts as the glue between the marketing and sales team, holding them together and keeping them aligned. Here's Todd Hockenberry, Owner of Top Line Results:

> Todd Hockenberry: Content is where oftentimes we find the easiest place to bring sales and marketing together. Because if you're gonna create good content, then you have to understand the persona and the buyer journey. You don't want to create content in a vacuum, where the marketing department thinks this is great, but nobody ever reads it. You have to create content based on a person, based on a situation, where they're at. You don't do a features comparison or an options comparison at the awareness stage, because they don't even know they have the problem yet.

Bertrand Hazard, Vice President of Marketing at TrustRadius, has also found this to be true:

> Bertrand Hazard: Content is ultimately the fuel to the marketing and sales engine. And what's kind of sad for me is when I see marketing organizations working in silo, instead of looking at building content across the entire channels. You get marketers building data sheets and doing a few other documents, and they never ask input from sales. And I always blow my mind because, ultimately, sales and the salesperson is the critical component of the entire process. I'm not saying that sales should be driving what content marketing should be driving. That's not the point. The point is sales and marketing should have a say and work together, and content is a great way to force alignment, just because, at the end of the day, you want the content to be the one that, ultimately, the prospective buyers will find interesting — that's how they raise their interest — and you want the content that will help support the sales people.

But the sad fact is that many marketing teams aren't producing any sales-related content. Here's Steve Bookbinder, CEO and head trainer at DM Training:

> Steve Bookbinder: My last job I was working for a company that was based in California and I was running their New York office. I visited the California office and then one day I walk inside the head of marketing's office, closed the door, and I said to the head of marketing of my company, I said, "Are you working on anything that's going to help me close more sales?" And he looked at me, not as if I'd asked a stupid or sarcastic question, but like he was really gonna have to think, "Hm, am I actually ... Let me just ... Let me ..." And he has all these piles on his desk. He himself wasn't sure, but after looking through all the piles, he concluded, "No, no I'm not working on anything that'll actually help you make more sales." And I literally said to him, "Then could you do me favor? Stop working on that other stuff and only work on the stuff that's gonna help me make more sales." What possible benefit could anything that's not gonna help me make more sales ... What possible benefit could that be to the company?

He has a point. Ultimately, everything marketing produces should in some way be driving people toward buying. Here's Josh Harcus, founder of Huify and author of *A Closing Culture*:

> Josh Harcus: There's some things we have to come to grips with, especially us diehard marketers is at the end of the day, if you're not selling product or if you're not selling a service, what are you doing? There's really no reason to be doing what you're doing.

So if your marketing team hasn't been focusing on driving people toward purchasing your product, it's time for them to rethink their priorities and start focusing on producing content that will enable the sales team to sell efficiently at a higher velocity.

Video 2: Using Pre-Sale Content to Enable Sales

Content can help sales in two main ways: First by attracting people to your company, and then by helping them through the sales process.

Using content to attract people is the hallmark of an inbound strategy. Here's Doug Davidoff, Founder and CEO of Imagine Business Development:

> Doug Davidoff: Seth Godin says attention is the single most valuable commodity a business can have, the attention of the people that you want. If I can get your attention, my product is going to introduce itself. I don't need to tell you about it, I don't need to go out of my way, because I'm relevant and it's connected to what we talked about and, eventually, you're going to go, "How can you help me with this?"

Creating content that will help people solve problems that are related to the products you sell is a great use of marketing resources, and it's something that a company can do no matter what size it is. Here's Nicole Sahin describing how she started her company, Globalization Partners:

> Nicole Sahin: One of the immediate projects that we did was to add a ton of content to our website that would be easily accessible to our clients and useful for them, but also to drive more traffic to the website. For the first couple of years I'd say the majority of our business came through the website.

That company is now one of the fastest growing companies in the United States. And that isn't a unique story. If your content is good, it will lead people naturally toward talking to sales. So if your marketing team is creating educational that attracts people to your company, then they're already helping the sales team to a certain extent.

But for a lot of companies, the content they publish on their website and elsewhere doesn't actually drive results. Here's Marcus Sheridan of *The Sales Lion*:

> Marcus Sheridan: So many companies are producing content that doesn't get results. You know what you should start with? When you think about what content moves the needle, it's simple. You start with the bottom of the funnel. Most of the people start with the top or outside of the funnel, totally backwards and totally screwed up. The bottom of the funnel represents the people that are ready to buy. They know they want the thing. They know they have a problem, and so if you start there, and you say what are the 80% of questions we get on every first sales call, sales appointment, pitch, whatever you call it, whether it B to B, B to C, B to G, it doesn't matter. It's the same process. If you can get rid of those 80% and you can teach them your philosophy beforehand, you're that much further along in the sales process, and then if you integrate that into the sales process, then it's magic.

Some of the questions people ask on sales calls might be uncomfortable for your marketing team to answer, and that's okay. Don't shy away from the hard questions.

> Marcus Sheridan: If we really talk about what buyers want to know about, yet what businesses want to talk about, there's a huge opposition there. Most companies embrace what I call ostrich marketing. They think if they just bury their head in the sand the question, or the need or the concern, that'll just go away, but it doesn't go away. You see, people in this day and age, we're so impatient as we're searching online, as we're trying to find answers to our questions. To give an example of this, with River Pools, one of the first pieces of content we ever produced was how much does a fiberglass pool cost? To make a long story very short, because we produced that piece of content, that little article that took me 45 minutes to write at my kitchen table, because we have advanced tracking analytics I can tell you that that one single article, how much does a fiberglass pool cost, has generated over $4.5 million in sales that we otherwise never would have generated. Yet, if I ask the listeners that are out there why you don't

do it, why you don't talk about cost and price, they're going to give me three reasons. The first thing they're going to say is, "Well, every job is different and it depends," which is incredibly explainable. In other words, you could explain to anybody what drives it up, what drives it down, etc. etc. The second reason why they don't talk about it is because they say, "Well, it'll scare customers away, especially if we're more expensive," which again is fundamentally false because the thing that we all agree that scares us away as buyers is when they don't talk about cost and price. The third reason why we don't talk about cost and price is because of the competition. The competition. When I say cost and price, it's like so many other subjects, but cost and price is the most volatile. It's the most mercurial because so many people they realize they should be talking about this, but they say, "I don't want to give my competitors my secret sauce," which we all know is Thousand Island anyway, but we still believe we have a secret sauce. The majority of companies do not. In fact, if I went to most sales teams and if I said, "Do you as your sales organization, do you have a very good sense as to what your competitors charge?" They would say, "Yes. I've got a very good sense as to what our competitors charge." If you have a good sense of what they charge it also means therefore they have a great sense as to what you charge. In other words, it's the big secret non-secret. Everybody acts like nobody knows what everybody's charging when in reality everybody knows what everybody's charging. If you look at what influences the most when it comes to content and messaging and how we communicate with a thing it's almost like an upside-down triangle, with the biggest section being the top section. What we don't talk about, what influences us the most, is the competition. We allow them to hinder our ability to engender trust. Then if you go to the next section, which is the next part that influences us the most, are the bad fits. In other words, the ones that wouldn't have bought from us anyway. Again, we say things like, "I don't want to scare them away. I don't want to talk about the things that we are or are not."

So as you create content to attract people to your company, be sure to provide answers to the questions they'll be asking. The more education you can provide your prospects before they meet with sales, the more qualified they'll be when they get there. And having leads that are more qualified will make your sales team's job a whole lot easier.

Video 3: Using Content During the Sales Process

In addition to the content that your prospects will find and consume, your marketing team needs to create content that will help the sale team during the sales process, and that's where content is most relevant to sales enablement. Your sales team needs easy access to excellent content that's relevant while they're meeting with their leads. It could be that you already have a library of sales content, but are your sales teams really using it? Here's Jamie Shanks, CEO of Sales for Life, with a quick test you can use to find out:

> Jamie Shanks: One of the audits a marketer can do is grab a stopwatch, walk over to a sales professional's desk and get a role based scenario. Say, "You've been trying to talk to this particular chief marketing officer. Here's a pitfall or challenge they just told you over the phone. As you hung up the receiver, you thought to yourself, 'Hold on a second. I think I've seen an infographic that can debunk the myth of what that person just said on the phone. Let me go find it and share it with him.'" Start the stopwatch and if in under one minute that sales professional can't find your content library, and then ultimately find that particular asset to share, he'll never do it.

Organizing your content in such a way that your sales teams can find it within a minute is a high bar to clear, but if you don't clear it, your sales team might never use any of marketing's content. This is one area where technology can help a lot. One simple way marketing can help sales reps easily share relevant content with their leads is by providing them with email templates that either link to the content or include it in the email itself. While it might take several minutes for a sales rep to find the appropriate piece of content and write an email to share it, it only takes a few seconds for them to select and personalize an email template.

But this brings up an important point: even if your sales content is easily accessible, your sales teams won't use it if it isn't part of their process. And if that's the case, then your sales process is in serious need of updates. Here's Ryan Burke, SVP at InVisionApp:

> Ryan Burke: The sales motion is changing. One of the things that I sort of instill on the team is we don't really sell, right? We educate. We know that the buying process has shifted to the buyer, and you have to react to that. How do you do it? You don't sell people, you don't push into the market, you educate them. How should they be using the product? How are other innovative companies doing things? What are best practices? What is value you can add at every step of the process and cater to particular personas? And ultimately, they're going to make that buying decision.

If you've taken our Inbound Sales course, this is old news to you. But the reality is, most sales teams don't think of themselves primarily as educators. So start by working on changing your company's sales process so that content fits into that.

But providing your sales team with relevant content isn't just about modernizing your sales process. Content can also be useful when a sales conversation stalls. Here's Steve again:

> Steve Bookbinder: You send somebody a proposal, they go into radio silence. You call six weeks later and you don't say this, but you kind of say this "Hey, it's me. I don't know if you remember me. Remember me? Remember me? Three weeks ago you asked me to send a proposal, which I did. I guess the purpose of today's call is to see if you got the thing I sent you, read it, like it, decided to buy from me, but for some odd reason forgot

> to tell me. I guess that's why I'm calling today." Those kind of calls are useless. When you send an email or a call and you ask for an appointment, you ask for a decision, you ask do you have any questions, you're essentially asking, "Do you have any money? I'm calling you to get money." I ask salespeople, "What percentage of the times are they reaching out and asking for money?" And for most sales people, it's 100% of the time. If every single time, every single time they get an email from somebody, it's always asking me for money and I wasn't interested in talking to them the first time. I'm even less interested the thousandth time. But if more than half of the time, let's say 90% of the time, that note from you, that email from you is actually of value. It's not asking me for money, it's giving me some information that you thought would be helpful and you know what? Probably it would be helpful. It's the kind of information I'd go, "You know what? It is helpful, but you know who would care even more about this, my friend down the hall. Let me forward that to them." What a great way to get into a company. Now everybody that's met you, their first impression is, you bring value rather than you're asking for money all the time.

And that's the most important thing: Create content that will enable your sales team to add value throughout the sales process. How you do that depends a lot of the space you're in, the length of your sales cycle, and the people you're selling to. But your sales team has excellent insights into all of these things. So collaborate with them about places where the sales process tends to get stuck — bring it up in your next smarketing meeting — and then brainstorm content that will help those sales get unstuck. And then you'll truly be enabling sales.

Video 4: Content Strategy in Action

Let's take a look at how one company used content to completely revolutionize their sales process:

> Marcus Sheridan: I'm Marcus Sheridan. I am the CEO and president of the Sales Lion and also am a former pool guy, River Pools and Spas. The River Pool story is one that's been talked about a lot at this point in inbound and content marketing circles, but to make a long story short, we started the company in 2001. Things were going okay until the market crashed in 2008. I remember the day of the crash, we lost within the next 48 hours five deposits of people who said we're going to get a pool. They withdrew that deposit. So, we lost a quarter of million dollars in business in the first 48 hours. Over the coming week and months, it got worse and worse and by January of 2009 we're literally looking over the edge of bankruptcy and I think I'm going to lose everything. That's when in January of 2009 I start to read all these fancy phrases like inbound marketing, content marketing, social media, all this stuff. Really, in my mind, my simple pool guy mind, what I heard was okay, so what you're telling me in all this stuff that I'm reading is that if I just obsess over the questions my customers ask every single day, good bad, or

ugly, and I'm willing to address them on the website, through text and video, I might save my business. Okay, fine. So, that's what we did. We embraced the simple philosophy. At the time we called it, “They Ask, You Answer,” and we said we're going to be the best teachers in the world when it comes to, in our case, fiberglass pools. To make a long story really short, we did just that and we became the most trafficked swimming pool website in the world. Today we get about 600,000 visitors a month. Last year we were the largest installer of fiberglass pools in the country. Because we were getting so many leads outside of area, I had to make a choice, do I stay where I am, just installing pools in Virginia and Maryland, or do we do something with this huge brand that we built, this momentum that we've built digitally speaking. So, we started manufacturing pools as well. That's gone incredibly well in an incredibly fast period of time, and I would guess within the next 10 years, we're probably the largest manufacturer of fiberglass pools in the US. That's the quick story of River Pools. Let me tell you a quick story about how content had a major impact on our sales process with our organization. Since understanding this principle, we'll call it assignment selling, since understanding this principle, I've taught it to organizations around the world and every single one has a similar pattern. Let me describe. At the beginning of 2013, I was looking at my analytics from my website and some of my lead behavior, and I was comparing two groups of people. This group here had filled out a form and said I want to get a quote for a swimming pool, and they ended up not buying. This group here had filled out a form to get a quote for a pool, and they ended up buying. So, I said what is the difference? What is the difference between the non-buyers versus the buyers? I noticed the number 30 just kept jumping out underneath the group that had bought, and of course that number 30 represented the total pages they had viewed, and this is what we found specifically. This is very critical that if somebody read 30 more pieces of our content or consumed 30 or more pieces of our content before the initial sales appointment, they would buy 80% of the time. If they didn't hit that number, the closing rates were about 25%, which was industry average. So, we went from being incredibly average to being elite sales organizations. I said, my goodness, I've been selling the wrong way for years, because for years somebody would call me up and say, hey Marcus, I'm checking out your website or I heard about you from a friend, could you come out to my house and give me a quote for a pool? Like every other pool guy, I would go out to the house, and I would give them a quote, but I would get there and I would answer the same questions over and over and over again. In fact, this is what we found as we've worked with sales organizations, 80% of all of the questions that sales professionals get on a first sales appointment are the same questions almost every time, 80%. Yet, as organizations, we continue to send them out there to answer those same 80%. What would happen if before you met with that prospect, they not only knew the answer to those 80% of questions, but they had heard them from you. They had heard your voice explain it to them. They had seen you explain it to them. They knew the answers because you had taken the time to teach them through the digital mediums

that we have available to us today. Yes, you're right, sales cycles would go down. Sales appointments, in terms of time, would go down. Closing rates would go up, and the fact is, we would spend dramatically more time selling and less time teaching when we're in the face-to-face experience. Yet, we keep sending them out there to teach the same things over and over again when all that stuff should have happened beforehand, which is why the content we're producing should be extremely sales based. In other words, very buyer-centric questions, not fluff. That's what we started to do at River Pools, and that's what we've taught companies to do. So, in other words, you'd call me up and you'd say something like, Hey Marcus, I'm checking out your website, could you come out to my house and give me a quote for a pool. You see, knowing the power of 30 pages for us, this is how that response changed. I would say, sure, I'd love to come out to your house, but you're getting ready to spend a lot of money, and if you're going to spend a lot of money, I know you don't want to make any mistakes. So, as to make sure you don't make any mistakes, this is what we're going to do. As we're talking on the phone right now, I'm going to send you two things that you're really going to like. The first thing I'm going to send you is a link to video that's awesome. This video is going to show you the process of the pool showing up, going in the ground, patio going around it, all the cleanup. This way you're going to see the whole thing, and this way when I come out to your house on Friday, you're not going to say, so Marcus what is this process look like, you're already going to know. Sidebar, that just saved me 35 minutes on the sales appointment. The second thing I'm going to send you is this guide, if you will. This guide is great, because it's going to answer all those little questions you have right now about pools, like should I get a heater with my pool? What's the best type of heater? Should it be gas? Should it be electric? Should I get a cover? What's the best type of cover? Should it be mesh? Should it be solid? We're going to answer all those questions. It's a little bit long, this guide, it's about 30 pages, but I promise it will be well worth your time. Will you take the time to review those things before our appointment on Friday? Do you realize that 90% of the time the answer is exactly the same, sure. That's the answer. Then, if they do that homework, I know that 80% of the time they're going to buy. Just so this hits home, when life was great and the economy was booming in 2007 and everybody could get a loan for a pool and it was easy to buy a pool, that year we sold 75 pools. In order to sell 75 pools I had to go on 230 plus sales appointments myself. My whole life that year was getting up early, driving two to three hours to go to a sales appointment, sitting in a home for two to three hours, and then driving two to three hours home. I didn't get to see my wife. I didn't get to see my kids. I didn't get to work with more qualified buyers. Then, we understood the power of content. A sales tool. Then we integrated into our entire sales process. Then the magic happened. By this point I had moved on, and I wasn't just a pool guy. I was now doing the sales and marketing consulting, and we had brought in other sales people that supposedly weren't as skilled at sales as I was, and let me give you some real numbers. In 2013, we sold 110 pools. In order to sell those 110 pools, we went on about 150 sales

appointments. You can do the math, which sales team was happier, them in 2013 or me in 2007? That's because I was doing it wrong.

Wow, what a story! So make sure you're using content both before and during the sale, and you to will start seeing marked success.