

Sales Enablement Optimization Study

2015 Key Trends Analysis

Compliments of:  **showpad**



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Next, we would like to thank the following thought leadership companies for their partnership and insights into how sales enablement can help companies sell with a sustainable competitive advantage. We acknowledge [CallidusCloud](#), [Showpad](#), and [The SAVO Group](#) for their forward thinking ideas.

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Introduction

*“The fact we need to reinvent how we sell is clear to almost all sales executives.
How to do it is not!”*

--Dr. Michael Lodato

Dr. Michael Lodato has been a longtime friend of CSO Insights, and may well be the grandfather of sales enablement. Twenty years ago, as a Professor at California Lutheran University, Michael taught the only graduate school course on sales process in the United States. We felt it was appropriate to start CSO Insights’ inaugural Sales Enablement Optimization Study with one of Michael’s maxims. Much is being written today about how buying is changing. Because of that, the strategies and tactics sales organizations have relied on for years don’t meet the needs of the marketplace. Everyone is clamoring for new ways of selling, but many firms are struggling with trying to understand what “better” sales enablement might look like. Many firms, but not all!

While sales enablement is a phrase that pops up more and more often today, as part of CSO Insights benchmarking efforts we have had the amazing privilege of documenting the experiences of companies like ADP, Experian, Aon Insurance, Zions Bank, Iron Mountain, SunGard, VMware, and T-Systems, who have been innovating how they sell for over a decade now. As far back in 2000, innovative early adopters were launching projects focused on sales effectiveness integrated initiatives (the combination of people, process, technology and knowledge).

Our research over the past three years has shown that implementing a sales enablement function is becoming more mainstream. In 2013, 19.3% of the firms we surveyed had personnel dedicated to increasing the effectiveness of the sales organization. That number rose to 22.6% in 2013 and increased to 25.5% in 2014, with another 6.7% of firms reporting that they planned to do this in the next year. We segmented the latest study data based on whether a company had a sales enablement function or not, and we found the following when we looked at the overall revenue plan attainment averages for the following groups:

Overall Plan Attainment as Related to Sales Enablement Function	Sales Enablement Function in Place	No Sales Enablement Function in Place
% of Overall Revenue Plan Attainment	88.5%	80.3%



Here we see an 8.2 point difference between these two groups, which means that the average revenue performance of firms with a sales enablement function was 10.2% higher than the firms without this function. Drilling deeper into the data, we found that the average overall revenue plan attainment for the 6.7% of firms that we surveyed who were planning to implement a sales enablement function this year was 74% (clearly they know they are underperforming and are looking to do something about that). Assume for the moment that you are one of those low-performing firms, and you are currently at \$100 million in revenue. If after implementing a sales enablement function your company could meet the average 88.5% performance level of your new peer group, ***you would experience a \$19.5 million increase in revenue.***

Seeing that difference in performance, and reflecting back to the case studies we had done on companies that were early adopters to the sales enablement concept, we decided that it was time for us to start doing primary research on sales enablement. For the 75% of firms who don't have this function in place yet, we wanted to provide a model for what sales enablement could/should look like. For the 25% of organizations that are already on this path, we wanted to investigate how they could optimize their efforts even further. As a basis for that, realizing that long term sales enablement must evolve into [sales force enablement](#), we created the following definition:

Sales Force Enablement: A strategic, cross-functional discipline designed to increase sales results and productivity by providing integrated content, training and coaching services for salespeople and frontline sales managers along the entire customer's journey, powered by technology.

We have broken down this definition into a line-by-line analysis of each of the digestible components. To review this in more detail, click here to access the CSO Insights Research Note [Sales Force Enablement Definition](#) (requires membership).

With the definition in hand, we then laid out the initial Sales Enablement Optimization survey. The focus of our inaugural research effort was to qualify the impact that sales enablement has on global sales organizations today. We wanted to understand how effective sales enablement is helping organizations identify prospects and move them effectively through the sales process to close. To do that, we formulated questions to identify the challenges sales organizations are facing today, why those problems exist, and the best practices that companies are implementing to optimize areas such as sales training, content development, sales team coaching, and more effectively leveraging technology.

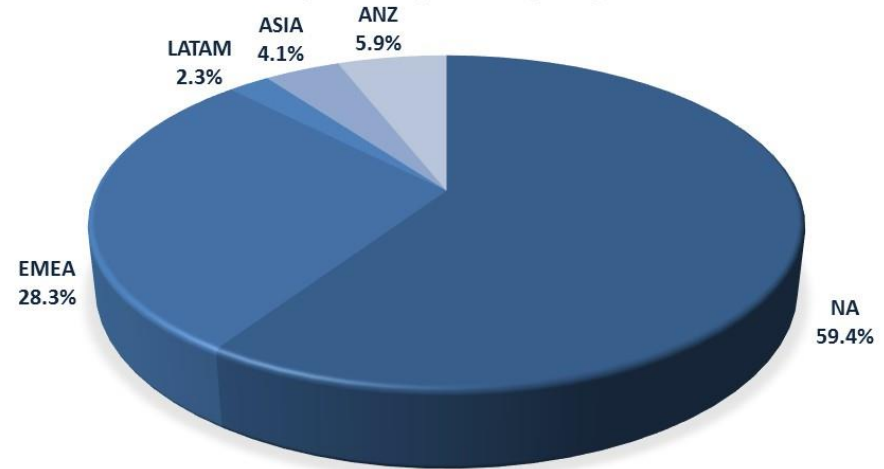


The data used for this analysis was gathered from the first 300+ companies that initially agreed to take part in the 2015 Sales Enablement Optimization Study. This group was asked to provide 85 metrics related to their sales performance. We have left the survey open to gather additional data so that we can create benchmark reports across selected vertical industries, geographies, company size, etc. If you would like to take part in that research effort, click on the [2015 Sales Enablement Optimization Study survey link](#) to access the survey.

The figure to the right shows a breakdown of participation by geographic region.

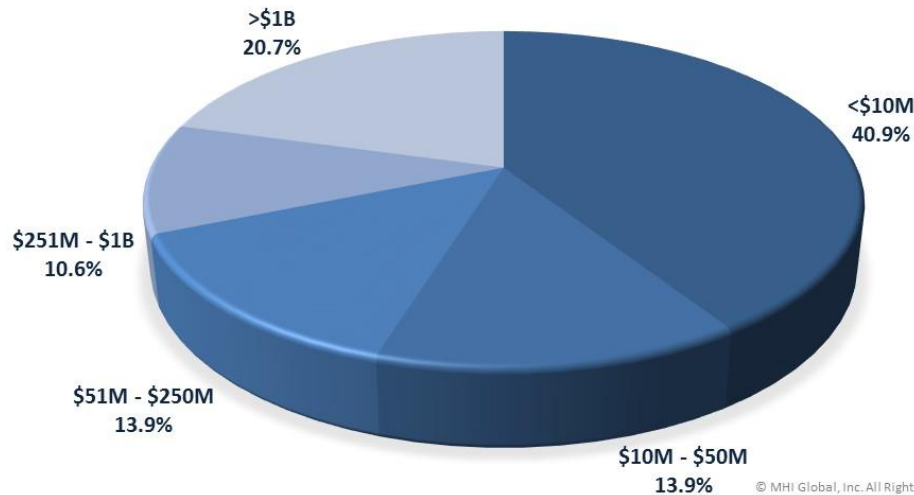
In terms of the size of the companies, we segmented the participants based on five different ranges of total company revenues. We ranked firms under \$10 million in sales as small firms, those in the \$10 million to \$250 million range as medium-sized businesses, and firms with >\$250 million were rated as larger enterprises, as you can see below.

Study Participants by Region



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Study Participants by Revenue



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The following Key Trends Analysis is designed to provide an overview of how sales enablement functions are being set up within companies today. We initially focus on understanding what user communities they support, which functional areas they collaborate with across the enterprise, what goals are being used to measure their impact on sales performance, and what specific services they provide.

We then dive deeper into exploring the role that the customer’s journey plays in sales process development, what training services are being provided to sales to help them execute that process, what content and tools (both customer-facing and internal use only) are being provided to sales teams, what type of coaching sales professionals are getting from sales management, and what role technology is playing in supporting sales enablement.

A chart set with all the answers we received to all the key survey questions has also been created for those looking for more data beyond the scope of this analysis.

As you read this analysis, we encourage you to make notes regarding the areas where your company is underperforming. Advisory Services clients have direct access to their [CSO Insights Analyst](#) at any time, and we encourage you to use this service. Contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this report, or if you want to know about companies that excel in a specific area or how best to invest your sales enablement budgets.

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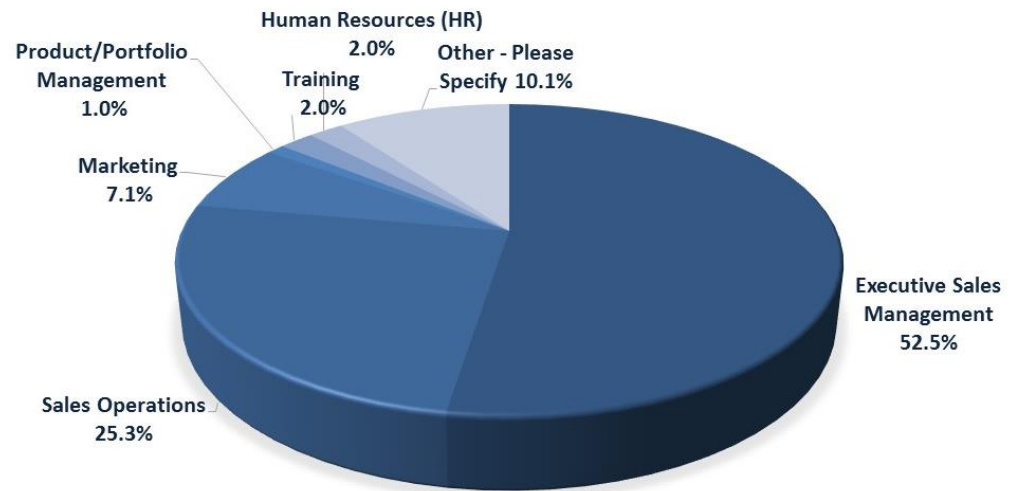
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Key Findings

- Sales enablement most often reports up to the head of sales or is an extension of sales operations.
- Full time resources are being dedicated to this task.
- Sales needs to understand the ROI of adding more salespeople versus increasing the effectiveness of the people it has.

Sales Enablement Directly Reports to These Functions



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Summary of Findings

One of the initial things we wanted to know from companies that do have a sales enablement function was who that function reports to. In the majority of cases, enablement is linked to the sales organization. As noted above, in more than half of the cases the head of sales is personally involved. We see this type of structure as a plus, as it increases the odds that the goals and objectives that sales enablement takes on are directly aligned with those of the full sales organization. It is also valuable to have sales enablement report to the CSO, as oftentimes sales enablement initiatives may need the help of marketing, customer support, finance, IT, etc., to implement. Knowing that sales enablement has the backing of a key corporate executive can help them get the collaboration support from the rest of the enterprise.

In one-quarter of the companies that participated in the study, sales enablement is linked to sales operations. Traditional sales operations support functions include quota setting, territory assignments, pipeline and forecast management support, compensation plan design, talent management, sales process design, sales training implementation, etc. If you have sales enablement reporting to sales operations, you need to



ensure that it does not just become an extension of the things sales operations are already doing, but rather takes on net-new responsibilities for understanding the challenges impacting sales performance, why those problems exist, and then coming up with strategies and tactics to overcome those issues.

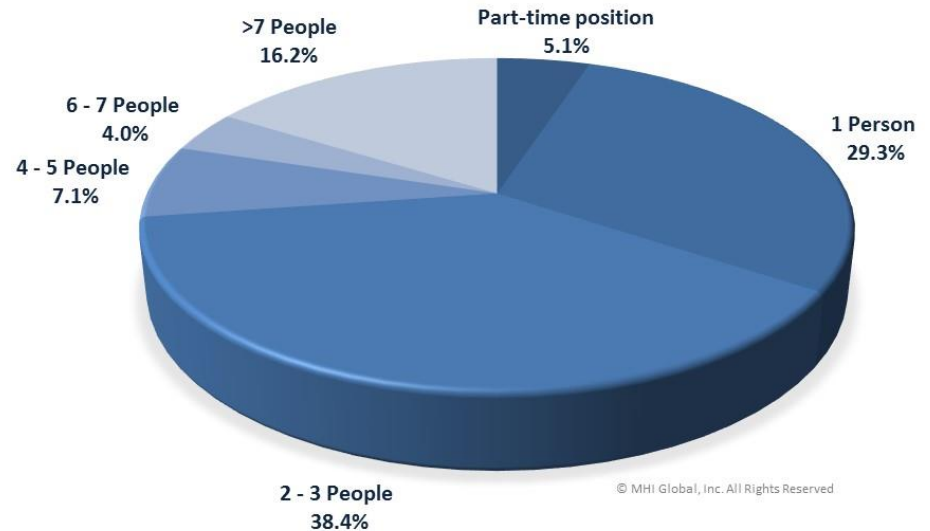
As a follow up question, we asked the study participants to provide feedback regarding how they were staffing this function. The chart to the right summarizes our findings. In just over one-third of the firms, sales enablement is a one-person band, sometimes only being able to dedicate part of their time to the task. Drilling into the data, we found that these were often small companies, as 50% of the sales organizations with only one person assigned to sales enablement worked for companies with <\$10 million in revenues.

In more cases we found that there was a team assigned to this function. We found the titles of the people leading the teams interesting. We are increasingly seeing sales enablement leaders with titles like Director, Vice President, and even in a few cases Senior Vice President, pointing to the importance this role is taking on in companies.

The level to which sales organizations embrace and support sales enablement going forward may require a new way of looking at things. One of the early adopters of sales enablement was Iron Mountain. We had a chance to interview Ian Levine, a Senior Vice President who headed up sales enablement for Iron Mountain. Ian shared with us Iron Mountain’s thoughts on staffing the sales enablement function:

“Our view of sales is that there are two types of employees: those that are carrying quota, and those who help increase sales capacity. Every time you look to hire anybody in a sales support role you need to run an ROI in your mind. You need to ask the question, ‘If I invested the same dollars in hiring more reps, how much more revenue would I see?’ Then you need to compare that to the increase in sales you expect from increasing the capacity of the reps you already have.”

Number of People Dedicated to Sales Enablement

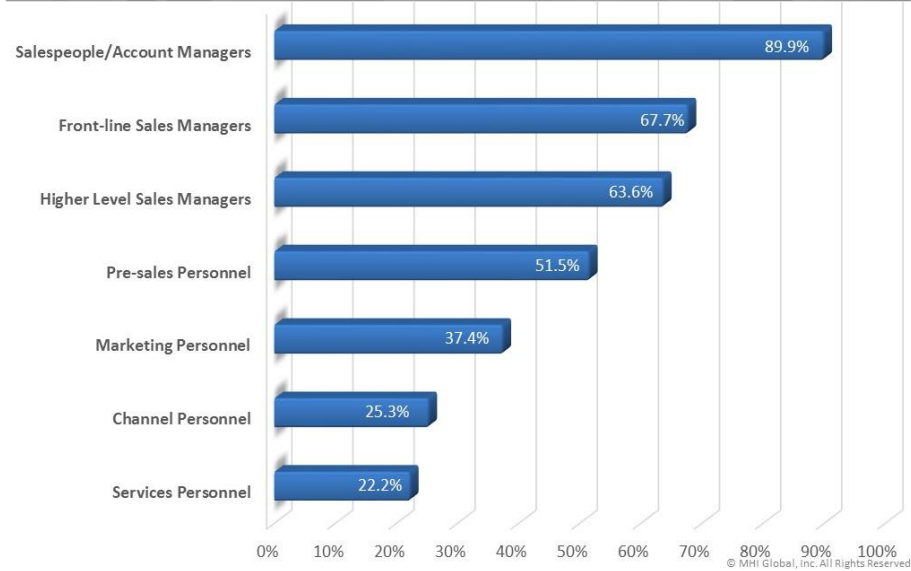




Key Findings

- Sales enablement has a wide variety of constituencies they have to support.
- Helping to optimize sales management is also a focus of sales enablement teams.
- Sales enablement will need to cross function lines in some companies.

User Communities Serviced by Sales Enablement



Summary of Findings

We next wanted to begin to understand the scope of the sales enablement function. This starts with exploring who it is focused on serving. The above chart points to a number of user communities that sales enablement is currently being asked to support. The obvious first priority is looking to increase the performance of salespeople. To begin to understand what sales teams, or any of the other communities on this chart need, you have to start with a dialogue. One of the best ways we have seen this handled was an exercise Dick Knudsen did when he was asked to champion a sales transformation initiative at Hewlett-Packard. Dick assembled a team of salespeople to start to explore what the sales force needed to be more productive. None of the salespeople were too keen on being there, as doubt was high that any good would come out of the meeting. So Dick took that issue head-on and told the group the session was done as soon as they answered one question: “Why shouldn’t HP double their individual quotas?”

The room was then silent, until one salesperson asked Dick what he meant. He replied, “Look, if your quota is X, why can’t I raise it to 2X?” The response was, “If that happened you would see reps quit in mass.” Dick then asked, “Why would you quit?” The reply was, “Because we couldn’t



come close to hitting those targets!” Dick asked, “Why not?” From there the salespeople opened up and shared all the challenges they were encountering that impacted sales performance. The output of that session set the direction for the transformation efforts going forward, and led to buy-in from the sales teams to be a major part of that solution.

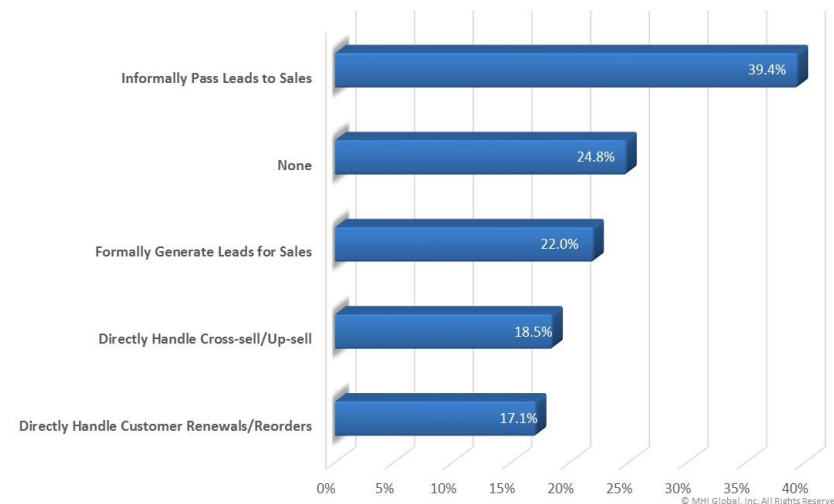
Seeing sales management come in at numbers two and three reminded us of the forward thinking of ADP. For years this has been a core user group that they focus on working with. When we did a case study on their sales management support plans, Ken Powell, the then-Vice President of Sales Effectiveness at ADP, shared the following (to download the full interview with Ken click here: [ADP Case Study](#) (membership required)):

“As a general observation, I believe that sales organizations, on the whole, grossly under-invest in and under-develop their sales leaders. The dollars that are spent on these individuals, versus sales rep development, is alarmingly disproportionate. I often see the Pareto principle applied where 80% of the dollars are spent on sales associates versus 20% on leaders. Personally, I feel the allocation should be weighted more heavily toward the leaders. The reason is simple. If I can significantly impact the ability of one leader—who in turn is managing a team of seven sales associates—then I can potentially improve the performance of eight people.”

We see on the previous chart that sales enablement teams are also serving marketing, channel partners, and services. As part of the 2015 Sales Performance Optimization study, we drilled into the role that customer support is playing in regard to supporting sales. The chart to the right shows that in three out of four companies surveyed, customer support is taking on direct responsibility for tasks to help generate sales. These range from generating leads for sales to actually closing business.

We expect customer support to take on more, rather than fewer, sales support tasks going forward. Because of that, sales enablement teams will need to expand the support they offer this user community to ensure they have the right training and tools, and that the systems they are using are integrated with those used by sales to facilitate the sharing of information and collaboration between sales and customer support.

Roles of Customer Support in Generating Sales

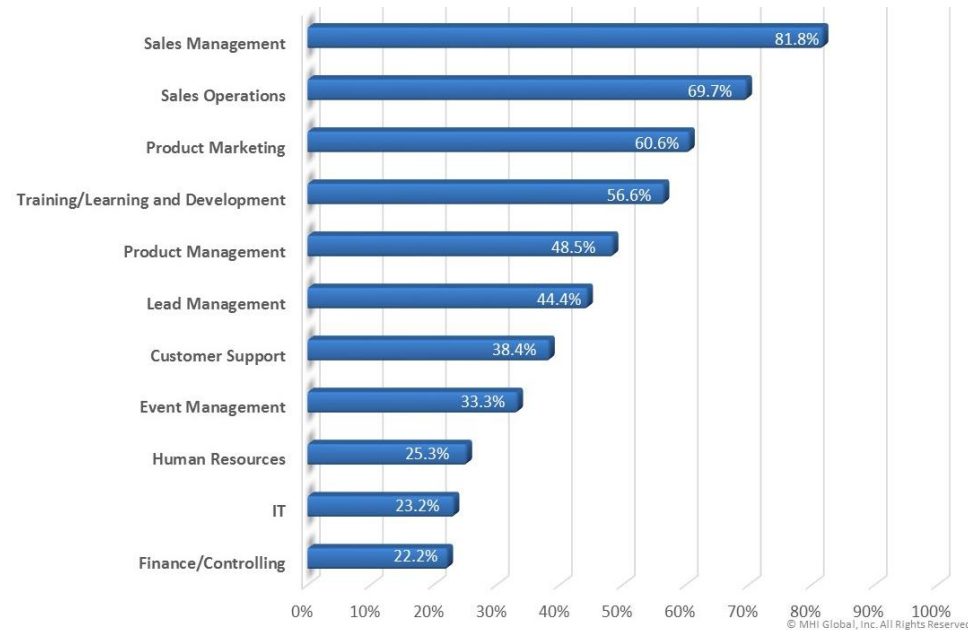




Key Findings

- Sales enablement teams need a little help from their friends to be successful.
- Sales process mapping starts to raise awareness that sales enablement is a company issue.
- Enlisting senior sales managers' support can help improve collaboration.

Functional Areas That Collaborate with Sales Enablement



Summary of Findings

The John Lennon and Paul McCartney song *A Little Help from My Friends* may well become the theme song for sales enablement personnel. They are being given a huge charter: implement initiatives that drive revenues, improve margins, increase productivity, minimize customer churn, etc. Reflecting back on the size of the sales enablement function, only 27.3% of the firms surveyed had a team of four or more people. That means that for the majority of organizations, in order to achieve their objectives, sales enablement is going to have to orchestrate the support of other functional areas in the company.

Above we see the span of collaboration that sales enablement is already working to establish. The most frequently mentioned partners for sales enablement are, of course, sales management and sales operations. But there are also roles that marketing, customer support, training, human resources, etc., need to play to support sales enablement efforts. Where are the collaboration points, and what roles will each functional area have to take on to make this all work? The answer will be unique to each organization; however, there are some common best practices that we all can use to get to our individual answers. One of those we profiled in-depth in the [CSO's Guide to Transforming Sales](#).



In The Guide we discuss the value of doing sales process mapping. The first step is to create a grid that lists all the steps in your company’s sales process, as well as your customer’s buying process. You then list all the functional areas in your firm that play any role in those processes. The form to the right is a sample that a manufacturing firm shared with us.

We recommend that the sales enablement leaders meet with the lead stakeholders in each functional area and interview them about what role(s) their people play in each step today, what roles they might playing going forward, and what information they need/could share based on the work that they do. As you will see in the completed example in The Guide, this exercise is a positive

Buying Steps	Selling Steps	Product Marketing	Telesales/ Marketing	Field Sales	Channels	Customer Support	F&A	Operations	Executive Mgmt.
Waits to be enlightened	Go to market planning								
Envisions problem	Interest development								
Defines problem	Needs analysis								
Envisions solution	Education								
Defines solution	Demonstration								
Determines the ROI	Justification								
Selects vendor	Proposal								
Negotiates purchase	Close								
Implements solution	Installation								
Expands on solution	Account management								

first step to get the enterprise to see how various functional areas are currently, or should be, collaborating to best meet the needs of the customer and can help sales enablement teams demonstrate the need for even better collaboration going forward.

After you identify all the possible collaboration points, the next step becomes getting agreement on who is going to do what to support the sales enablement efforts. A best practice that Fairchild Semiconductor used was directly linking executive sales management compensation to sales enablement success. Then-CSO Allan Lam told us how he accomplished this:

“What I was asking my team to do was be ambassadors for our transformation efforts. Inside of the sales organization they needed to help train, reinforce the concepts, enforce compliance, review their people, share success stories, etc. They also needed to interact with the other functional units in the company to explain and promote what we were doing. I didn’t want them watching it happen, I wanted them to be part of making it happen. In this regard, I asked each individual to actually draw up their own adoption plan, and agreed to be measured by that. Part of the senior sales management’s compensation package is a variable pay component tied directly to specific MBOs. So for a period of time I included the adoption plan as part of the management objectives. This meant that a significant portion of their variable pay was linked to this initiative.”



Key Findings

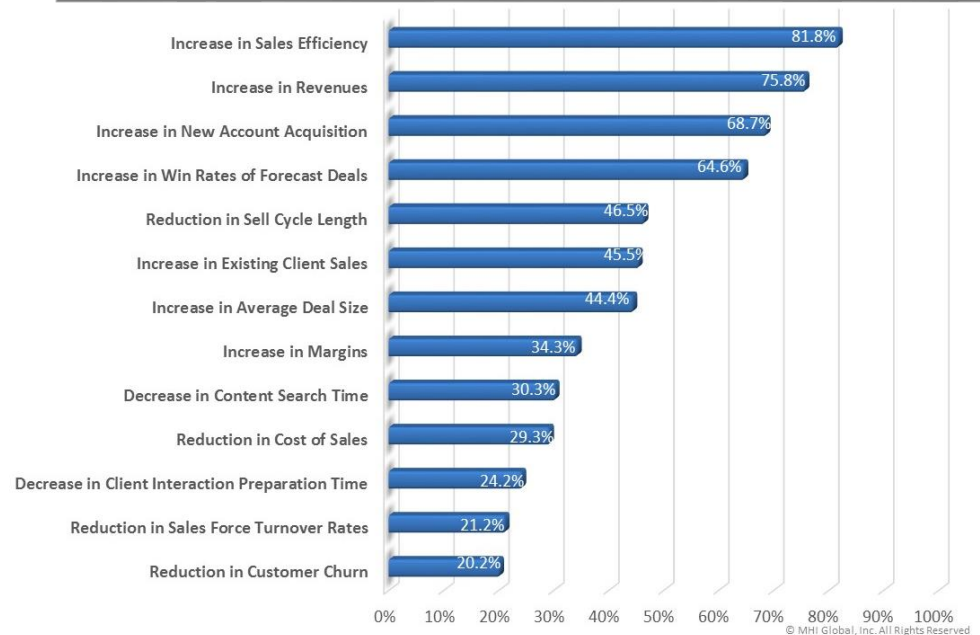
- Sales enablement has no shortage of goals they want to achieve, nor approaches to how to do so.
- Seeing three different approaches to setting priorities for sales enablement.
- Having a strategic vision that can be implemented in phases is generating the best results.

Summary of Findings

Focusing in on companies we surveyed that currently have a sales enablement function, we wanted to understand how they were measuring success. So we next asked those study participants to share with us what their major goals were going forward. The chart above summarizes their responses. What strikes you immediately is that there are many things that companies want sales enablement to address. This begs the question, how many of these goals can sales enablement go after at the same time?

Once you know what you want to accomplish, you then need to figure out “how” you are going to do it. Take for example the goal of new account acquisition. This is almost a universal goal for any growth-oriented company, but how to do it may be widely different for those firms. For company A, the issue standing in the way to new acquisition success may be related to compensation. The salespeople see that the commission rates on sales to new accounts are the same as to existing customers (even though new accounts take more time and effort to close), so they focus on calling on clients they are already working with. For company B, the issue may be messaging. In order to close new accounts, salespeople may have to call into new vertical segments of the market, and they haven’t received the right training or tools needed to effectively sell to this

Goals of Sales Enablement Programs





new class of decision makers. This suggests that sales enablement needs to invest time in not only setting goals, but also in determining the right strategies and tactics needed to achieve those goals.

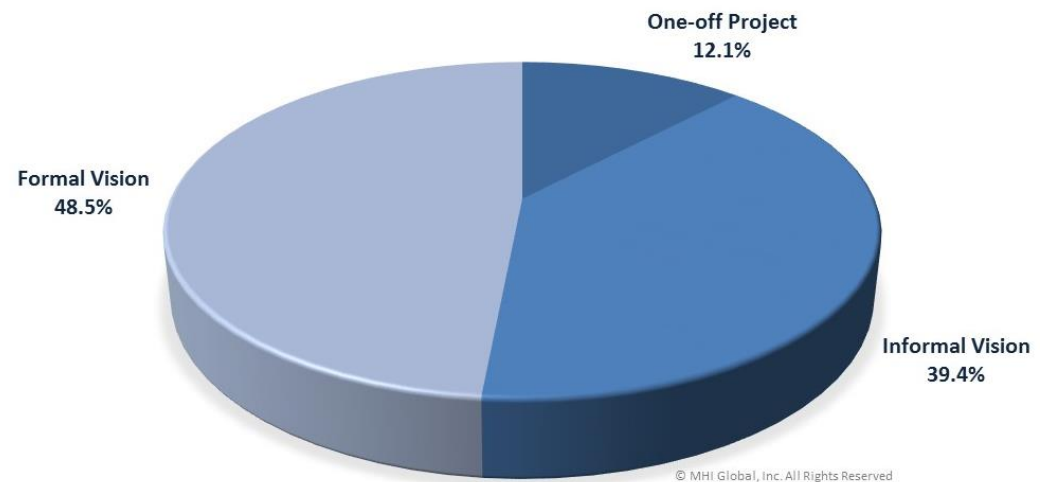
We asked a follow-up question regarding the process used by sales enablement to establish priorities. The chart to the right shows the three main approaches being used. Treating sales enablement as a series of one-off projects is how things are done at 12.1% of the firms surveyed. This can solve problems today, but can set the organization up for unexpected problems down the road, because you end up with a series of solutions that are not integrated.

For 39.4% of the firms, we see that they have adopted an informal vision of where they want to go. While this will normally mean they run into fewer self-inflicted problems over time than the one-off group, they will still likely run into more issues than the 48.5% of the sales enablement teams that are investing the time to develop a strategy vision from the start, and then using that to ensure that each initiative they take on supports instead of hinders the things they plan to do in the future.

Having a strategic vision can often be a frightening experience when you start to consider all the moving parts that need to come together to achieve that vision. The best advice we have on that issue is that no one is telling you that you need to do everything all at once. Looking at the list of goals again, the wisdom of Michael Hammer, author of *Reengineering the Corporation*, comes to mind. One of Michael’s mantras was that “reengineering was never meant to be doing everything a couple of percent better, but rather doing one or two things an order of magnitude better.”

A good example of a company that uses that as a guiding principle in prioritizing their sales transformation efforts is SAS; click here to view the [SAS case study](#).

How Sales Enablement Priorities are Set





Key Findings

- Top two services that sales enablement is focused on are related to “what to do.”
- “How to do it” then becomes the next area of focus.
- Holistic view of what needs to be done to support sales teams can help firms more effectively leverage budgets.

Summary of Findings

After understanding the goals sales enablement is looking to achieve, we next wanted to get a better understanding of what types of support they were planning to provide to their user communities in order to optimize sales performance. The chart above shows that sales enablement is involved in a number of different services related to sales efficiency and effectiveness.

Topping the list are two sets of services related to ensuring that the salespeople are proficient at what they need to do. For the study participants, this starts with optimizing sales training and process. As you will see later there are a lot of different aspects, including defining what activities need to occur during the sales cycle and which stakeholders need to engage for each of those activities, what the expected outcome should be in order to move an opportunity from one stage in the process to the next, what buyer-verifiable behaviors will tell salespeople and their managers that the prospect is actively engaged in their own buying process, etc. For more details on how to define/optimize a sales process, click here to download [CSO Insights Sales Process Primer](#) (membership required).

Sales Enablement's Primary Services





Once the process is clearly defined, then sales enablement needs to be involved in making sure that the sales training services that salespeople receive provide them with the skills needed to execute on the process. As you will see later in this report, sales training involves a number of different components, many of which companies are struggling to effectively deliver.

Looking back to the primary services chart, you see a number of items that are related to ensuring that salespeople have the right tools, content, technology, coaching, etc., to effectively engage and collaborate with prospects and customers to move the deal all the way through the sales process. To be effective at this aspect of their charter, sales enablement should be looking to analytics to find details on how salespeople are actually doing as they go through the sell cycle. A good example of a firm that has integrated their sales process into their CRM system to allow them to track KPIs all the way down to the individual salesperson level is CT Corp, a Wolters Kluwer Company. Click here to see the details on [CT Corp's case study](#).

One key advantage of having sales enablement involved in a wide variety of sales effectiveness-related initiatives is that they start to develop a holistic view of what the organization as a whole is doing to support the sales force. Here is why that is important. In many cases what we see is that sales performance optimization is broken up into silo functions; you have unique owners for areas such as sales training, content creation CRM, compensation plan development, new sales rep hiring and onboarding, coaching, etc. Based on that structure, the head of each of these functions can develop the myopic view that what they are doing is the most important thing that the salespeople need. They are then less likely to suggest that their budget be reduced so that funds could be allocated to another aspect of sales optimization that could generate a better return on investment.

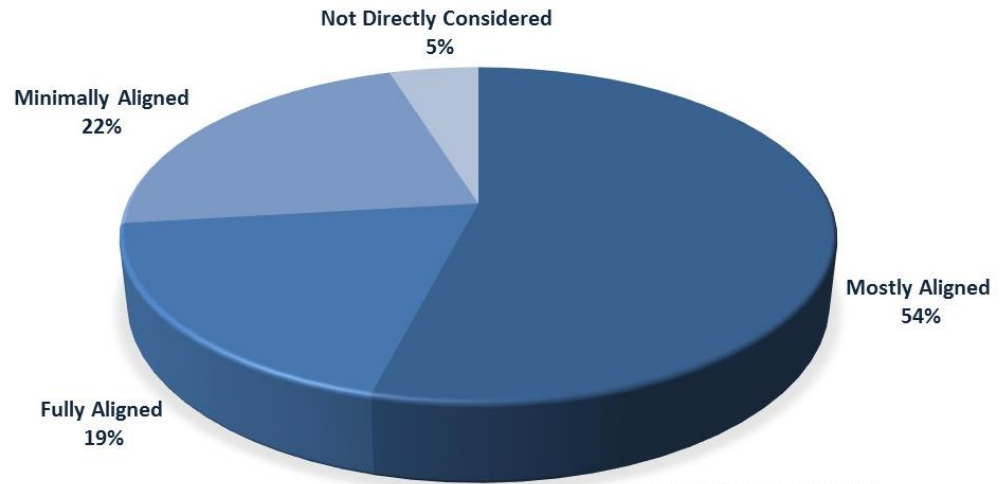
With sales enablement having broad insights into the problems that are currently impacting sales performance, and having an understanding of all of the separate budgets for people, technology, training, consulting, etc., they are in a unique position to make recommendations to reallocate funds into the areas that will have the biggest impact on sales performance. For example, if there is an immediate need to train the sales force on how to effectively leverage social selling, sales enablement could request that the number of new salespeople being hired over the next year be reduced from 25 people to 20 people, and that those funds be transferred to training in order to make the sales team as a whole more productive.



Key Findings

- Customer’s journey alignment becomes the essential foundation to execute customer-core strategies.
- The more aligned, the better lead/opportunity conversion is.
- The more aligned, the better the quota attainment is.

Sales Process Aligned With Customer's Journey



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Summary of Findings

Discussions around the right sales enablement approach have become commonplace in sales. Despite this, many sales organizations narrow the scope of sales enablement to sales and marketing alignment alone. The term “sales enablement” puts the focus squarely on the sales force, and too many organizations leave it there. But the most important number any sales organization is measured on is revenue. And revenue depends on a decision that is not directly controlled by sales: it’s the customer’s buying decision.

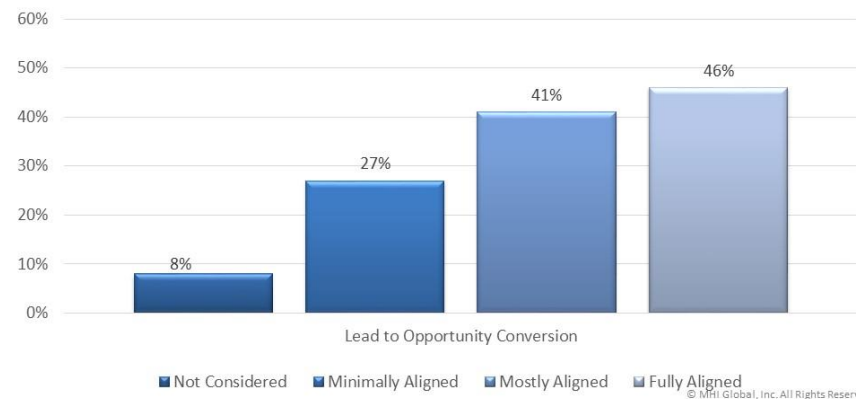
The rise of the information age has given the advantage and the power to customers. Customer behaviors have fundamentally changed and are still changing, and their expectations are rising. Our [2015 MHI Sales Best Practices Study](#) reports that today’s buyers decide how they want to connect, how they want to collaborate with salespeople and how they calculate value. Selling is no longer about products, it’s about the specific value customers can achieve through a provider’s products and services. Value is always specific to the customer, dependent upon their situational context and the buying teams’ approaches on how to tackle the challenge. Professional selling has become a servant role to creating value at each stage of the customer’s journey.



To equip sales forces to adapt to today’s ever-changing buyers’ world, sales organizations must learn to think and work from the outside to the inside. That is, from the organization’s market and customers (outside) back to the organization’s products, solutions, services (inside). Executing such a “customer-core” strategy requires sales organizations to break with long-standing product-centered traditions. Executing a customer-core strategy successfully requires sales organizations to deeply understand their customer’s journey to be able to map it to the internal sales, marketing and service processes. This mapping and customer’s journey alignment are the key prerequisites to building a customer-core sales system. According to the data, the majority of sales organizations have already worked hard on this challenge: 73% have their sales process mostly (54%) or fully aligned (19%) to the customer’s journey. Interestingly, 5% didn’t consider the issue, and 22% reported a minimal alignment.

It stands to reason that organizations that execute such a customer-core strategy experience a measurable impact regarding their conversion rates from leads to opportunities. Indeed, they do. The difference in conversion rates between unaligned sales processes and fully aligned sales processes is significant: 38%. Sales performance begins with lead creation and continues with successful conversion to opportunities. No isolated lead management strategy can ever compensate for the advantages of a sales process that’s mostly or fully aligned to the customer’s journey. Those customer-core approaches deliver conversion rates of 41% and 46%, whereas minimally or unaligned sales processes deliver conversion rates between 8% and 27%. There is also a significant impact on quota attainment. The difference in quota attainment between being unaligned and being mostly or fully aligned is 13%.

Lead to Opportunity Conversion Depending on Customer’s Journey Alignment



Aligning the customer’s journey to the internal process landscape requires sales enablement to collaborate with marketing, sales operations, and service or delivery. All stages along the customer’s journey must be clearly tied to an (ideally) integrated sales, marketing and service process to create simplicity, clarity and continuity for the sales force. Necessary adjustments have to be made to the internal processes, as the customer’s journey is outside the sales force’s control. See also [Missing Something in Your Enablement Approach?](#), [The Customer’s Journey Matters or How To Avoid Seller and Buyer Misalignment](#) and [Manage Mechanics, Navigate Dynamics](#).



The purpose of alignment is to trigger the right internal activities at each stage of the customer’s journey in a flexible way in order to allow buying iterations to happen. The more complex the buying environment, the more buying iterations can happen (e.g., new stakeholders, changed situation, new goals, merger or acquisitions). Creating a one-page visual map helps to assess current and design new enablement services based on one design point: the customer’s journey. Customer journey mapping performed correctly is the foundation for simplicity, clarity, effectiveness, as well as the steppingstone to world-class sales performance.



Key Findings

- Training services designed with customers at the core are less effective than others.
- Social selling training shows highest need for major redesign.
- The better the customer’s journey alignment, the more effective are the related training services.

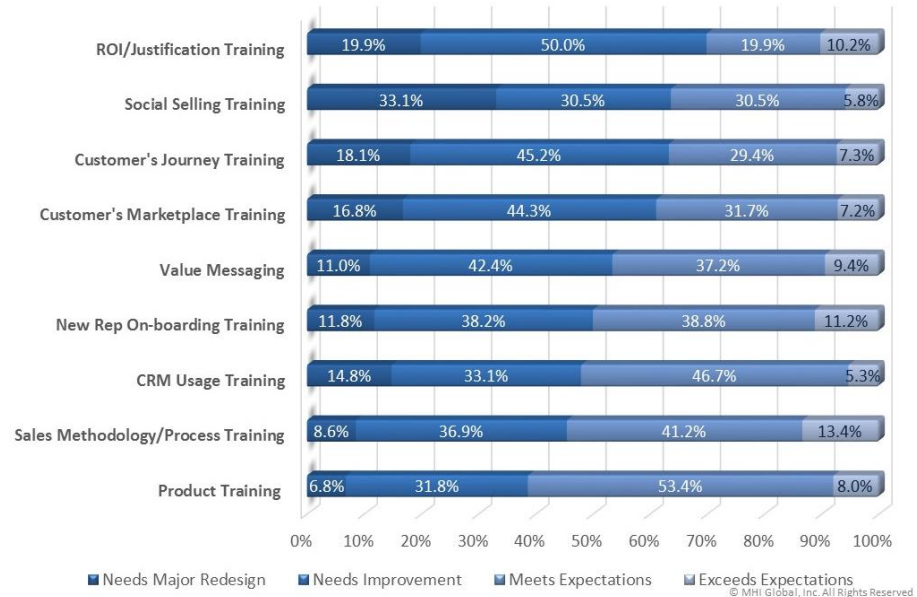
Summary of Findings

“There are four dimensions of true learning. A person learns in a whole and balanced manner when the mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional dimensions are involved in the process.”

-- One of the twelve principles of Native American philosophy

The term “sales training” is still the most common term in the industry, even if the purpose of training is learning. Sales training covers a broad range of services: product training, skill and competency training, methodology and process training, tool and CRM training, and onboarding services. In this study, we have listed a few training services specifically because these services play an increasingly critical role when it comes to adapting to evolving customer behaviors. Examples are, for instance, value messaging, social selling or customer’s journey, and ROI/justification training.

Effectiveness of Training as Rated by the Salesperson





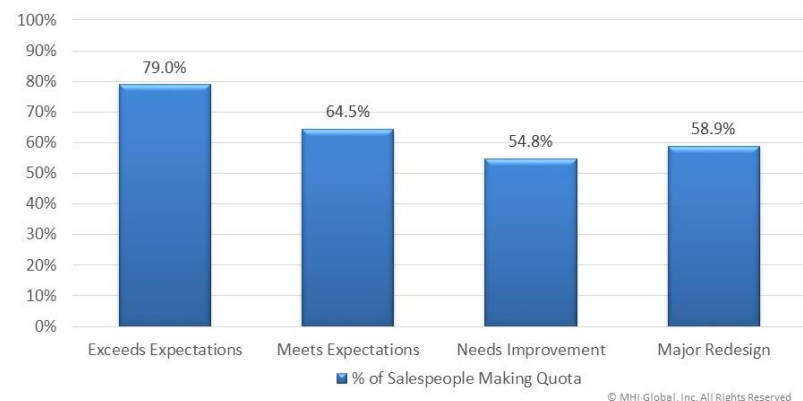
Customer-core training services, such as customer’s ROI/value justification training, customer’s journey training, and customer’s marketplace training show the biggest need for redesign and improvement. The data show that ROI/value justification training, at 69.9%, has the biggest need for redesign and improvement; followed by customer’s journey (63.3%); customer’s marketplace training (61.1%); and value messaging training (53.4%).

Social selling training shows the single biggest need for major redesign at a remarkable 33.1%. Social selling training services have evolved from LinkedIn tool training to a broader approach that is integrated into sales enablement services. The technology aspect is of course the core foundation and trigger for social selling, but it covers only one aspect of what we define as “social engagement.” Social engagement covers individual social marketing skills, the integration of social profiles in CRM systems, customer collaboration, developing the social customer community, and building social sales communities. Furthermore, our research shows that world-class sales performers see a significant impact using social media, especially when it comes to creating new opportunities (see [2015 MHI Sales Best Practices Study](#)).

All training services that are derived from internal design points, such as products and processes, seem to be much more effective in salespeople’s perception than the training services that have to be designed from the customer’s perspective. The challenge of making those customer-core training services more effective is not an issue that can be solved by sales enablement alone. It requires a consequent rethinking of how future sales organizations should be designed in a customer-driven world. Executing a customer-core strategy is the headline of a necessary transformation to create value at each stage of the customer’s journey, which is the path to sustainable future sales performance.

Early signals of the customer-core impact on sales effectiveness and performance send a clear message: those participants who have their sales process mostly or fully aligned with the customer’s journey provide much more effective customer’s journey training services (60% “exceeds expectations” and 20% “meets expectations”). In contrast, those participants with a minimally aligned sales process have significantly less effective, not to say ineffective, customer’s journey training services. The data, 0% in the category “exceeds expectations” and 13% in “meets expectations,” shows the huge effectiveness problem caused by a lack of customer-core strategy and execution.

Effectiveness of Customer’s Journey Training and Quota Attainment





For many years, the industry assumed that a lack of customer-core strategy would lead to performance and effectiveness gaps. Now the data points (as shown in the chart on the previous page) prove the assumption: the higher the ranking of the effectiveness of the customer's journey, the higher the quota attainment. The quota attainment difference between customer's journey training services that need major redesign and those that exceed expectations is 20%. Let's do some math. In a 100 million dollar or euro organization, a 20% better quota attainment means 20 million more in revenue.

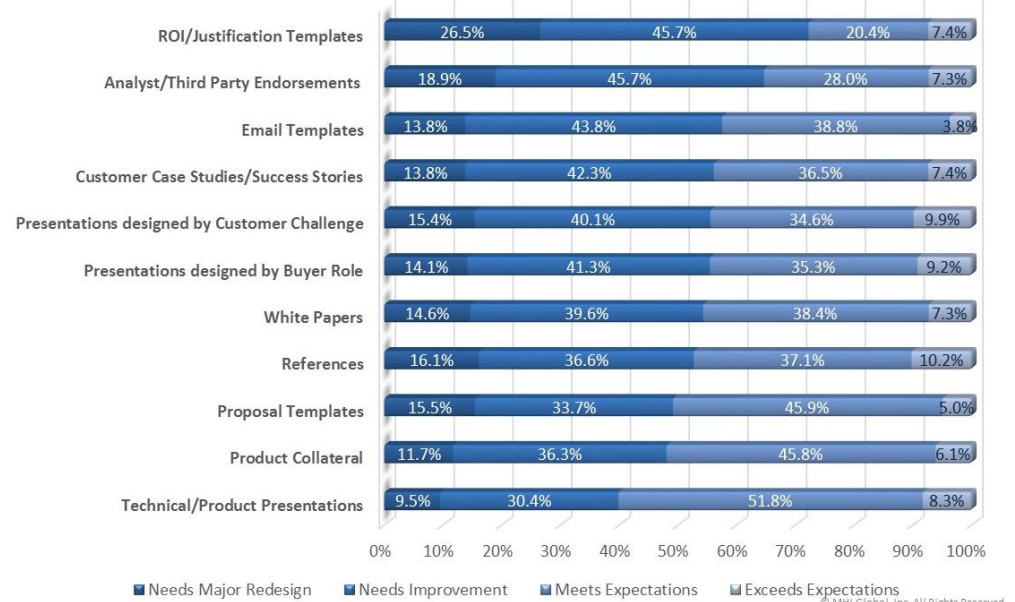
Compelling data proves that no sales leader can afford *not* to invest in the design and the consequent execution of a strategic and holistic customer-core approach. For further trends regarding sales training services, please see also [Adaptive Competencies - Key Differentiator of World-Class Sales Performers](#) and [Adapting to rising buyer expectations requires principles, not rules](#).



Key Findings

- Developing content with customers at the core is a challenge for many companies.
- Customer-facing content has the power to impact the customer relationship significantly.
- References and customer-focused presentations lead the “exceed expectations” category.

Effectiveness of Customer-facing Content and Tools for the Sales Team



Summary of Findings

Content services cover a broad range of customer-facing and internal content types. The first part of our content effectiveness assessment is focused on customer-facing content and tools, and their effectiveness from salespeople’s perspective.

The same pattern we experienced with training services exists with customer-facing content services. Those content services that have to be designed backwards from the customer’s journey and the buyer roles show the biggest need for redesign and improvement. The data says that ROI/business value/justification templates (71.2%), third party endorsements (64.6%), email templates (58.9%), customer case studies (56.1%), and even customer-focused presentations (55%) and white papers (54.3%) show a considerable lack of effectiveness.

Content types with the highest level of satisfaction are product-focused content, such as technical presentations (60.1%), and product collateral (51.9%). Salespeople also rank proposal templates and references as fairly effective. References are the only content type with a two-digit “exceeds expectations” result (10.2%). These four content types are the only ones that show a level of effectiveness above 50%.



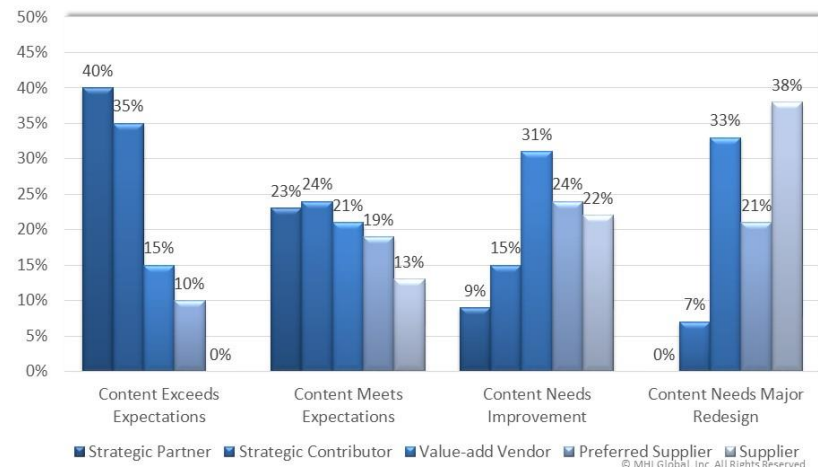
Creating content around products is what organizations were used to doing for decades. Organizations are often still designing around products. This situation leads not only to product-focused content (and training), but also to a situation in which product management and marketing teams compete against each other to get the sales force’s attention, not to mention the customers’ attention. Often, sales enablement leaders find themselves between a rock and a hard place, trying to fix what can be fixed on the last mile toward a customer-core approach, and navigating across functional silos to provide content salespeople will use. In these inside-out, product-oriented environments, it’s very challenging for sales enablement leaders to change content creation (as well as training services) to a customer-core approach, derived from the customer’s journey, buyer roles and customer business challenges.

To create successful customer-facing content services, a customer-core approach has to cover the entire customer’s journey. The first prerequisite to get there is to have an internal process landscape that is mostly or fully aligned to the customer’s journey. The second prerequisite is to develop a customer-core enablement framework that helps to design and produce those content services along the customer’s journey, and that requires more functions to be involved in the content creation process than marketing. Such a customer-core approach requires, as a third prerequisite, a formalized cross-functional production and collaboration approach to ensure scalability and sales effectiveness.

What’s the impact of effective customer-facing content on the relationship providers have with their customers? We mapped the participant’s data to show how they are perceived by their customers and how they ranked the effectiveness of their customer-facing content assets.

Overall, the more effective the customer-facing content, the more likely providers can develop a high level relationship with their customers. Content that is ranked “exceeds expectations” is more likely to lead to a strategic partnership (40%) than content that “meets expectations” (23%). Content that is ranked “needs improvements” can only lead to level three, a value-added vendor, whereas content that “needs major redesign” is more likely to lead to the lowest relationship level of a supplier (38%), not even a preferred supplier (21%).

Customer-facing Content Mapped to Relationship Levels





The messages conveyed by these data points are remarkable and compelling, and not only for sales enablement. Their core message is simple: content must become a sales force's strategic imperative and a number one priority on every sales leader's agenda. Customer-facing content is the key element that can impact the relationship with prospects and customers significantly. Highly effective customer-facing content that covers the entire customer's journey is a must-have ingredient to remain successful in an ever-changing, buyer-driven world. To provide highly effective content, a customer-core strategy is mandatory. Executing a customer-core strategy requires work with the customer's journey as a main design point (as discussed above) and implementation of the above-mentioned prerequisites. For details on content coverage along the customer's journey, see [Three Gaps That Lead to Insufficient Content Coverage and How to Fix Them](#).



Key Findings

- Content types designed with customers at the core are less effective than others.
- The term “playbook” needs definition and standards.
- Guided selling scripts have positive impact on win rates.

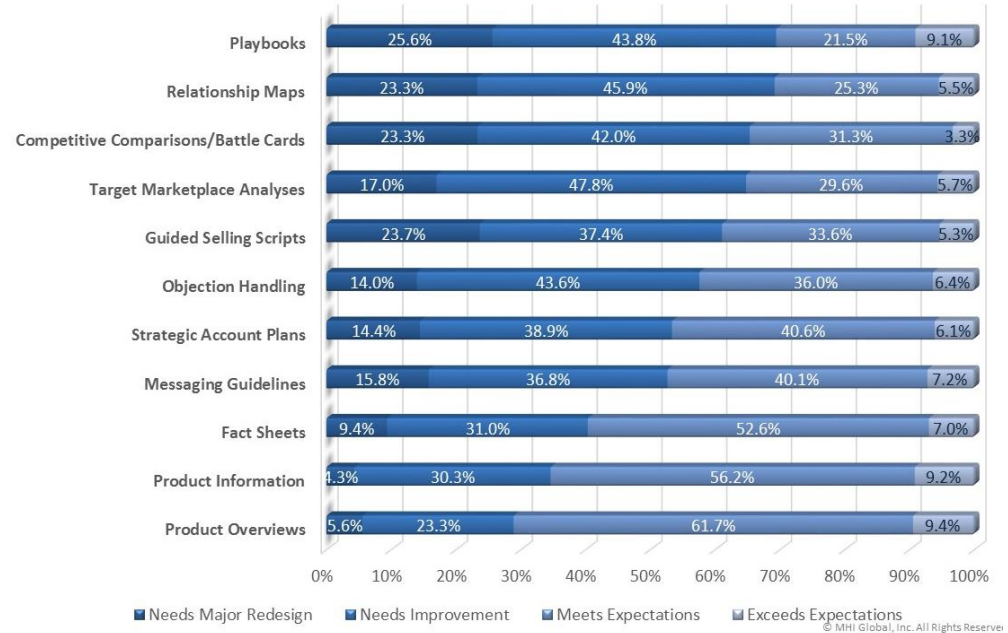
Summary of Findings

Our effectiveness assessment of content services continues. Now we look at internal content services to equip salespeople with everything they need to create value for prospects and customers along their customer’s journey. Internal content covers a broad range of content types from simple check lists, briefings, battle cards, guided selling scripts, do’s and don’ts up to complex playbooks.

Overall, the internal content assets are perceived as slightly more effective than the customer-facing assets. The most effective internal content assets here are also product-centered: product overviews (71.1%), product information (65.4%), and fact sheets (59.6%) are considered as the most effective content assets (“meets expectations” and “exceeds expectations”) combined.

The trend continues: there is a specific pattern around enablement services that has to be designed with the customers at the core. This pattern can be called the “customer-core gap.” Those customer-core focused content types also show the biggest challenges. Many internal content

Effectiveness of Internal-facing Content and Tools for the Sales Team





services, such as playbooks, relationship maps, guided selling scripts, and messaging guidelines, are perceived as not very effective. The perceived need for major redesign and improvement ranges from 69.4% (playbooks) to 52.6% (messaging guidelines).

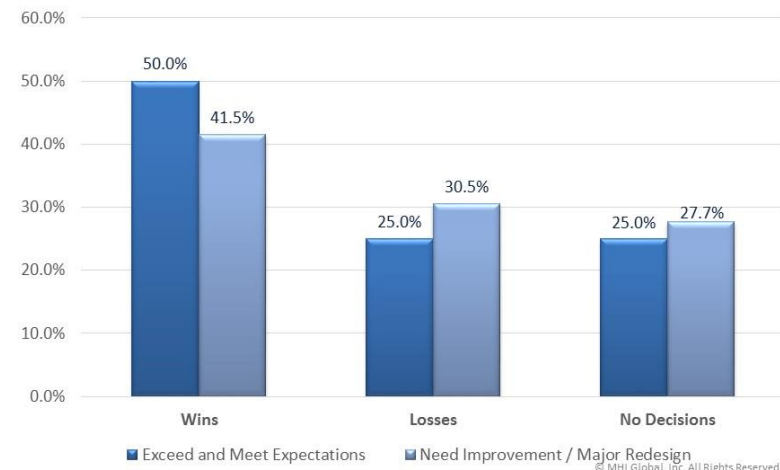
Playbooks, often considered to be the single best solution to equip salespeople with all they need in terms of interactive content along the customer’s journey, show the biggest need for major redesign and improvement. We tried to dig deeper into data segmentations to identify some patterns around playbooks regarding collaboration, performance and conversion indicators, but the data doesn’t allow us to identify any trends. What the data clearly says is that the confusion around the term “playbook” is even bigger than the confusion around the term “sales enablement.” The term “playbook” is used in various ways, for instance, as a technical solution, as a messaging tool, as an interactive enablement asset up to dynamic content packages, with the definitions often depending on the related technology solutions.

Relationship maps can also be problematic when the perspective is that of the seller rather than the customer. Battle cards bring a different notion to the assessment, as this content type is competitive in nature. Experience, research and client work all confirm that battle cards are absolutely necessary, but they rarely achieve the necessary level of detail and focus on the customer’s business challenges. Instead, they are often too product- and service-model-centric and require deal-specific adjustments.

An analysis of the effectiveness of internal content services suggests a correlation between win rates and how this correlation manifests. Interestingly, the data doesn’t show much significance for various content types, except guided selling scripts. This content type shows a high correlation to win rates and a much smaller correlation to losses and no decisions. While the impact on win rates is significant compared to losses and no decisions, the difference between those that were ranked as “meet or exceed expectations” and those that were ranked as “need improvement and major redesign” is not very big. The data suggests that even less effective guided selling scripts create much more value for salespeople and their performance than not having them at all.

Creating guided selling scripts or playbooks is never a cheap investment. Their success depends on the quality of the value messages that are provided

Impact of Guided Selling Scripts’ Effectiveness on Win Rates





for all phases of the customer’s journey and for all relevant buyer roles. For details on value messaging, please check out [Dynamic Value Messaging: Part 1, Defining Messaging Criteria](#), [Dynamic Value Messaging: Part 2, Different Buying Scenarios Matter](#), and [Dynamic Value Messaging: Part 3, Value Messaging Types Along the Customer's Journey](#).

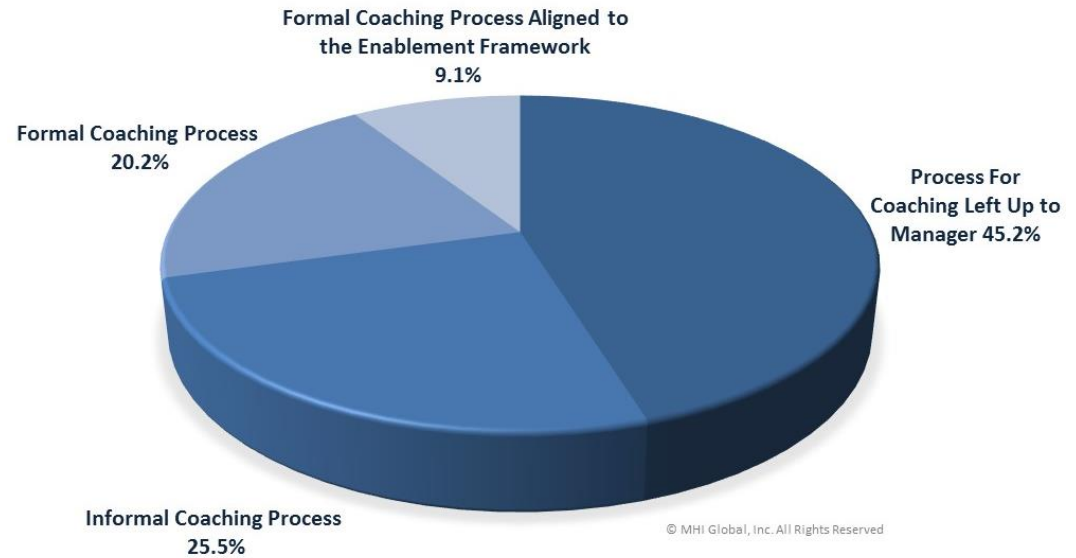
When analyzing the data, sales enablement leaders are well advised to assess those assets’ usability, design, structure, technology and effectiveness carefully from both perspectives – the salespeople’s perceived effectiveness, and the measurable conversion and win rates. Analyzing these details will equip sales enablement leaders with all necessary information to redesign or improve those internal content assets and follow a customer-core strategy.



Key Findings

- More than 70% of participants have an informal or no coaching process.
- The more formalized coaching processes are, the better the impact on win rates.
- Formal coaching process aligned to enablement framework is considered “world-class.”

Processes Used for Managers to Coach Their Sales Teams



Summary of Findings

With increasing enablement maturity, the need to consider frontline sales managers (FSMs) as a target group becomes essential. FSMs have the biggest leverage effect in any sales organization, whether their span of control is six or sixteen salespeople. Additionally, FSMs have to execute the sales strategy regarding what and how salespeople sell, and when and to whom they sell. That makes FSM the most important role in salespeople’s daily routine.

Enablement approaches can be well thought-through with aligned and integrated training and content services for salespeople. But if coaching services for FSMs are not included and FSMs are not considered as a target group, the initial enablement investments for salespeople are put at risk, by design. If adoption and reinforcement are not integrated in the enablement strategy, the FSMs will not be equipped to do their jobs.

The solution for successful reinforcement and adoption is not additional programs and initiatives that are often perceived as a time-consuming add-on. Instead, the mechanisms for successful reinforcement and adoption have to be embedded in the regular working routine, in the

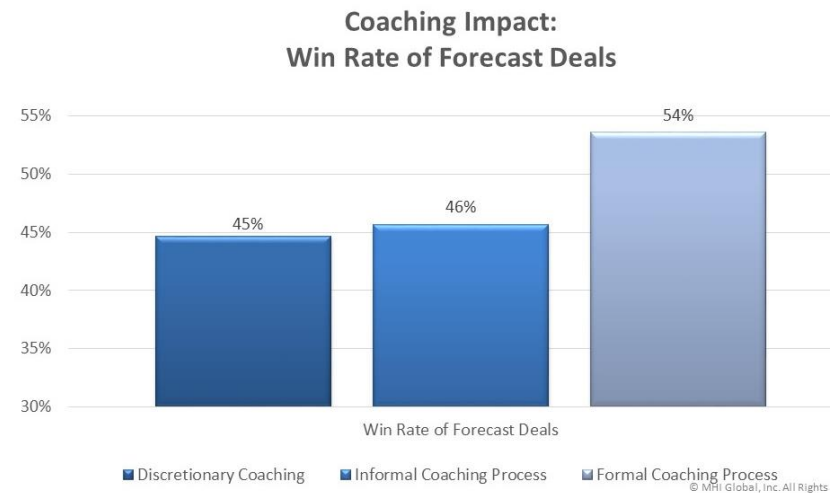


collaboration between FSMs and their salespeople. Therefore, coaching approaches and coaching guidelines should be well aligned to the enablement services, based on a customer-core strategy. Ideally, coaching services are a mirror of the implemented enablement services, designed to drive adoption and reinforcement.

Coaching is a leadership skill that aims to develop each individual salesperson's full potential. The FSM's priority as a coach is to use their domain expertise in sales along with social and communication skills to facilitate conversations with salespeople and discover areas for improvement. A sales professional's priority as a mentee is to be accountable for applying the coach's guidance in their day-to-day selling activities. In order to have a positive impact on the business and help sales professionals turn advice into action, coaches must use the common language of the sales organization, one that is based on the stages along the customer's journey and mapped to the internal processes. Coaching for success should also incorporate the implemented sales methodologies, processes, tools and the enablement services provided through content and training. This requires coaching to be an integral part of a holistic customer-core enablement framework. For details, see also [How World-Class Frontline Sales Managers Coach Differently to Drive Performance](#) and [How can we connect the dots between sales enablement and coaching.](#)

The data sends a clear message: there is a lot to do regarding the formalization and integration of coaching (see chart on the previous page). Two-thirds of the study participants have either an informal coaching approach (25.5%) or coaching is completely left up to the managers (45.2%). One-third follow a more strategic and integrated approach: 20.2% reported having a formal coaching process, and 9.1% have a formal coaching process aligned to the enablement framework.

In the CSO Insights Research Note [Four Reasons to Invest in Frontline Sales Managers](#) (membership required), four reasons are identified and backed up with hard sales performance data from our latest research. One reason for this is to establish a formal coaching process that is aligned to the customer-journey-aligned sales process. The formalization of coaching processes is vitally important because the impact on the win rate is so significant, as shown in the above chart. Our CSO Insights Sales Management Optimization Study shows a strong correlation between the formalization of coaching processes and win rates. Formal coaching processes led to a 9% better win rate compared to a discretionary coaching approach.





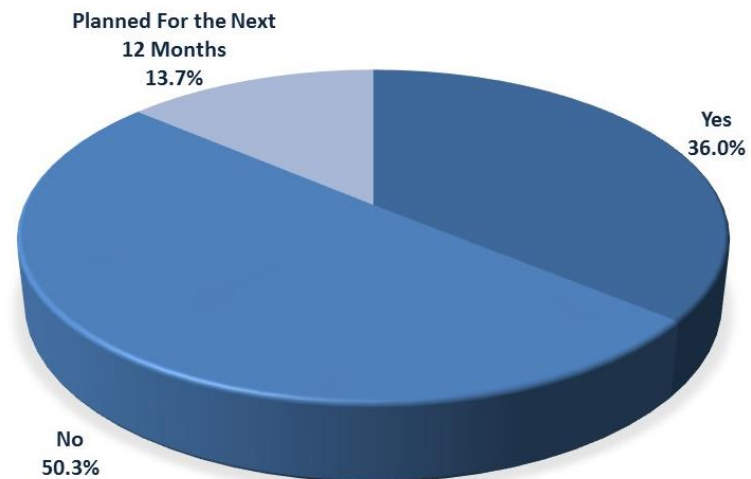
“We have no time for coaching” is what we hear very often; however, a day has 24 hours for all of us. That requires the reprioritization of time for activities and behaviors that move the performance needle. Our CSO Insights Sales Management Optimization Study shows that the average time sales managers spend with salespeople per week is between 30-60 minutes. Which sales leader can afford not to invest in the formalization of coaching processes and the FSM coaching capabilities, if a 9% better win rate can be achieved with a 30-60 minute coaching effort per salesperson per week?



Key Findings

- Enablement content technology is on the rise to leverage sales effectiveness potential.
- Learning technology conquers training space; mobile learning is growing.
- Technology should provide access to content and drive the knowledge shareconomy as well as cross- and up-selling.

Sales Teams Have Access to Sales Enablement Content Technology



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Summary of Findings

Enablement technology enables sales enablement. The data is interesting and probably differs from people’s expectations. On the content side, 36% of the participants reported using enablement content technology, compared to 50% who indicated not doing so. Another 13.7% plan to invest in enablement content technology within the next 12 months. So, enablement content technology is currently a focus area for only 50% of the study participants. That’s a fact that probably has something to do with organizations’ differing enablement maturity levels. What we learned from our research and from our work with clients is that enablement can have different origins, content or training. Contrary to mainstream opinions, training services are the top enablement service, not content services, as analyzed earlier (see page 13).

Training services are provided in different forms, with the increasing impact of technology. Classroom training services are still the leading service (74%), followed by one-to-one training services with sales managers (71%), webinar-based training services (58.2%), and eLearning-based services (51%). While web-based services have become mainstream, we are seeing two new services emerge, with 17.3% of the participants reporting



their firms are now using mobile learning and 9% using simulation-based training services. Investing in and implementing technology is connected to certain expectations regarding sales performance and productivity.

The top three measurable improvements participants see as a result of working with enablement technology are: improving salespeople’s access to sales content/tools (34.8%), sharing best practices across the sales force (31.9%), and improving cross-selling and up-selling (30.4%). All other improvements are ranked below 30% and can be considered as a result of the top three as, for instance, improving sales and marketing alignment (26.1%), reducing search time for content and collateral (24.6%), or reducing salespeople’s ramp-up time (24.6%).

Looking at these expected improvements powered by technology, the results on the “make or buy” question are surprising. In the training space, 57.9% of the participants reported using a self-developed training and learning platform. In the content space, 33.3% reported using a self-developed content enablement solution instead of one of the various standard solutions.

Top Three Improvements in Sales Performance Resulting from Sales Enablement Content Solution



When new technology is available, the early adopters use it first, while others continue to use what they already have. Late adopters may not fully understand the advantages of technological advances that provide enablement and learning value on every device and even within their CRM. Enablement content management solutions are not an equivalent to existing content management systems (CMSs) that are often used company-wide. The newer solutions provide a sales-specific, taxonomy-driven business layer that allows the organization to structure, manage, present, filter, provide, and analyze internal and customer-facing content in exactly the way salespeople and customers need it, ideally within the CRM. Knowledge stocks in various shared drives, or knowledge stocks in numerous, often non-transparent intranet pages, don’t drive the expected improvements. Knowledge has to flow to be valuable (see also the concept of the [Knowledge Shareconomy](#) and [how to drive this shareconomy approach](#)). The same is true for learning content and learning management systems. It’s not about providing a link to a web-based training; it’s



about covering the entire process from developing the learning content to managing and providing the services for different sales roles in tailored programs, including certification processes.

To make solid “make or buy” decisions, it’s important that all internal costs are captured (e.g., costs for development, maintenance, internal IT costs). “Make or buy” decisions often represent conflicts between business and IT on resources, budgets, importance, and dependence versus independence.

Furthermore, enablement analytics are a challenge for most study participants. Analytics that track internal behaviors (views, clicks, downloads, ranking) are a challenging area (55.9% need improvements). But analytics to track the behaviors of prospects and customers are perceived as even more challenging (65.8%). The advantages for standardized solutions are obvious here, as they already come with rich sets of analytics that only have to be customized, instead of self-designed and developed.



Going Forward Analysis

“We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.”

--Albert Einstein

No doubt, the focus on sales enablement is increasing. But the discipline is evolving in a different way than it began many years ago, with a strong focus on either content and technology or training. As the discipline becomes more and more mature, content and training services get better aligned, frontline sales managers become a target group, and coaching services become step-by-step an essential enablement service. Technology powers all these services on all devices; CRM integration becomes the new normal, and an increasing amount of very valuable analytics will create future value for enablement leaders. And last but not least, more and more enablement leaders focus on designing their enablement services with the customer's journey at the core. Successfully executing customer-core strategies is the most challenging part of this evolution, as it requires changing people's hearts and minds, from the sales leaders down to sales professionals. For good reasons, [customer-core](#) is our key trend and core challenge in this chapter.

We will now shed light on the key trend “customer-core” and “collaborate to integrate” before we provide strategic guidance on how to evolve your enablement practice to the next level based on the CSO Insights enablement maturity assessment model and the CSO Insights sales force enablement master framework.

Top Trend: Customer-Core

The central theme of this trends report is without any doubt customer-core. Our analysis highlighted the challenges organizations have with those enablement services that have to be designed with the customers at the core. Those services (training, enablement and client-facing content) showed the highest need of major redesign and improvement as well as the lowest effectiveness rankings compared to product-centered enablement services.

This challenge becomes even more relevant due to the strong correlation between customer-core and sales performance: “the more customer-core, the better.” Those organizations that have their sales processes mostly or fully aligned to the customer's journey provide more effective customer-centric enablement services that lead to better sales performance metrics, such as conversion rates, quota attainment, and win rates.



Today's markets are customer-dominated markets. In a world of rising buyer expectations and constantly evolving buyer behaviors, buyers decide when they want to connect with salespeople, how they want to collaborate with them, and how they want to calculate their business value. For details, see the [2015 MHI Sales Best Practices Study](#).

Today's Reality: Enablement Leaders are Caught Between a Rock and a Hard Place

It seems to be a no-brainer that all approaches around “how to sell” should be designed in a way that is aligned with how customers approach their challenges, how they make their buying decisions, and how they perceive value. “How to sell” approaches should follow a customer-core strategy. But reality often looks different, as stated by Michael Fox, Senior Director, Field and Partner Enablement, EMEA at VMware:

“What constantly amazes me is the amount of effort, and associated financial investment, poured in to attracting new customers and acquiring new business. In my many years in sales or marketing in the high-tech industry, I have seen some pretty questionable programs: tickets to the US Open Golf Tournament, VIP seats at the Monaco Grand Prix, meet and greets with a variety of corporate-sponsored celebrities, and endless white papers and free webinars. A company can save an absolute fortune on all these activities by introducing, and sustaining, one simple selling concept: put the customer's needs first.”

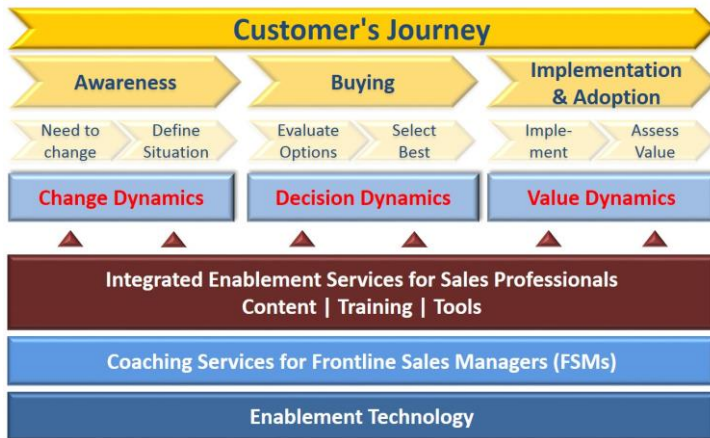
In product-centered organizations, customer-core approaches rarely exist in a holistic way – designed with the customer's journey as the main design point. Many approaches are still designed around internal design points such as products and services, which are mapped to the customer's journey, but only on the last mile. This “on the last mile” effort is often what puts sales enablement leaders between a rock and a hard place, between the current product-oriented, inside-out structure, and their strategic ambition to work in a customer-core way. Furthermore, the pressure to deliver top sales results quarter by quarter makes it even more difficult for sales enablement leaders to execute a long-term customer-core strategy that requires change, transformation and time to deliver the expected results.

Customer-Core: The Enablement Approach

The purpose of a customer-core sales enablement approach is to equip salespeople and their managers with skills, knowledge, strategies and expertise to facilitate the entire customer's journey to help prospects and clients make their best decision to achieve their desired results and wins. Taking a customer-core strategy seriously requires redefining professional B2B selling. It's no longer a product-pushing activity; professional B2B selling becomes a value-creating process at each stage of the customer's journey. So, sales professionals have to work based on the



customer’s context and challenges, the buying team’s different approaches to how to tackle the issue, and their desired results and wins, before a provider’s products and services become valuable ingredients of the customer’s future vision of success.



Selling as a value-creating process requires sales professionals to navigate the customer’s different dynamics along the customer’s journey successfully. In the early stages, it’s all about making a decision to change the current state to allow for a better future state. If this decision is not made, a buying phase will never happen. Stalled opportunities are exactly those opportunities that lack a clear customer decision to change the current state. Decision dynamics determine the actual buying phase.

Value dynamics in the implementation and adoption phases are often overlooked, but nevertheless are of highest relevance when it comes to creating up-selling and cross-selling potential (which organization does not have a challenge with growing in existing accounts?) and how various stakeholders perceive the delivered value differently. Value confirmation messaging is the keyword here, tailored per buyer role.

Customer-Core Requires Sales Leadership

Customer-core must become a sales strategy that drives the enablement strategy. As our performance data clearly demonstrates, no sales leader can afford *not* to focus on a strategy that can achieve significantly better performance metrics and a much higher quality customer relationships. Leadership and commitment are essential to driving such a transformation successfully based on a strategic, dynamic customer-core framework. Most importantly, customer-core, as any other fundamental change, requires people to change their hearts and minds. It’s about walking away from “I have to sell a product” and embracing “I love to solve my customers’ problems.” Change always requires that we have to shift our own hearts and minds first before we can lead others to do so. That means customer-core cannot simply be on top of any sales leader’s agenda; ideally, sales leaders walk the talk and simply live the new principle on a daily basis.



How do Sales Enablement Leaders get Buy-in from Their Sales Leaders?

We see in our customer base and our network that early enablement adopters and highly experienced and successful enablement executives drive customer-core strategies from their role across the sales leadership team. With their strong belief, future vision of success backed up with research, relentless focus and tons of energy, they work hard to bring the customer-core idea to their sales leaders' agendas, connecting their enablement approach to the sales leaders' goals and strategies. As soon as corporate offices have put customer-core on their agenda, those early pioneers have succeeded. In almost all cases the process looks as described by Mahatma Gandhi many years ago:

*"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."
--Mahatma Gandhi*

Developing Adaptive Competencies to Change Salespeople's Behavior from "I have to sell a product" to "I love to solve my customer's problems."

"Customer-core" requires an engagement principle that works in a dynamic way along the customer's journey, addressing the change, decision and value dynamics. As an example, for customer-core engagement, there is no longer a single value proposition; instead, [value messages](#) have to be dynamic. They evolve from value hypothesis to generic value propositions to specific value propositions to value confirmations after the buying decision has been made. Not only does value messaging have to be designed this way – all enablement assets, and the entire engagement approach, have to be designed this way, [adapting the dynamics along the customer's journey](#).

[Providing customer-core value messages](#) and other customer-core content is an essential foundation. But developing salespeople's skills to execute a customer-core strategy is often even more challenging and time-consuming, especially in product-centered organizations where salespeople have been talking about features and functions for decades. As we have seen above, customer-core conversations are not designed around a provider's products and services, but around the customer's context and business challenges. Because every customer makes every decision differently, every time, enablement leaders have to develop salespeople's [adaptive competencies](#). That means salespeople must learn how to adapt their messages, activities, behaviors and strategies quickly and effectively for new, changed and complex customer situations. Key elements of adaptive competencies are, for instance, [situational awareness](#), [creativity](#), [principles instead of rules](#), and [critical and strategic thinking](#).



An excellent, forward-thinking example of how to drive customer-core enablement approaches is VMware. Their customer-core initiative is led and inspired by Michael Fox, Senior Director, Field and Partner Enablement, EMEA at VMware. Based on his more than 20 years of global sales and marketing experience in the technology industry, he developed a comprehensive and compelling program to build salespeople's adaptive competencies following a customer-core enablement strategy.

“Although I am meeting with some resistance, I am actively promoting the idea that our sales teams should meet with customers with no pre-determined product to sell. The rep is not there to sell from his portfolio. Instead, he schedules a meeting to learn about the customer's current status, business goals, associated challenges, and vision of an ideal future state. Such a conversation yields massive opportunity discovery that can span far more than a pre-determined product sale. In fact data is now showing that adequate alignment of the customer's needs with a vendor's product and services can grow deal sizes 10x or more, while securing greater customer loyalty.”

As mentioned above, executing a customer-core strategy cannot be done by the sales enablement leader alone. Instead, it requires leadership and commitment across (at least) the sales force. Getting this buy-in from sales leaders and managers is often the hardest part for sales enablement leaders, as Michael Fox also demonstrates:

“These efforts require more than a savvy sales rep willing to look beyond the pressure of in-quarter deal closures. Air cover is essential. These efforts require support from marketing teams, sales ops teams, and company leadership, to ensure that, wherever possible, the vendor is clearly relevant and aligned to the customer's needs in business terms. Such air-cover will yield far more valuable and longer term results than the cost of VIP tickets to a prestigious sporting event.”

In addition to the necessary overall leadership commitment, the buy-in from the frontline sales managers (FSMs) should not be underestimated. The FSM is the role with the highest leverage effect in any sales organization, regardless of whether they lead six or sixteen salespeople. For salespeople, their FSMs are the most important role; the FSM primarily impacts what they sell, to whom, where and how. The relevance of the FSM's role to any sales enablement initiative leads to the need to make them a target group and to provide coaching frameworks and guidelines to them that are a mirror of the initial enablement services. Designed this way, coaching drives reinforcement and adoption of the enablement initiative.



Trend 2: Collaborate to Integrate

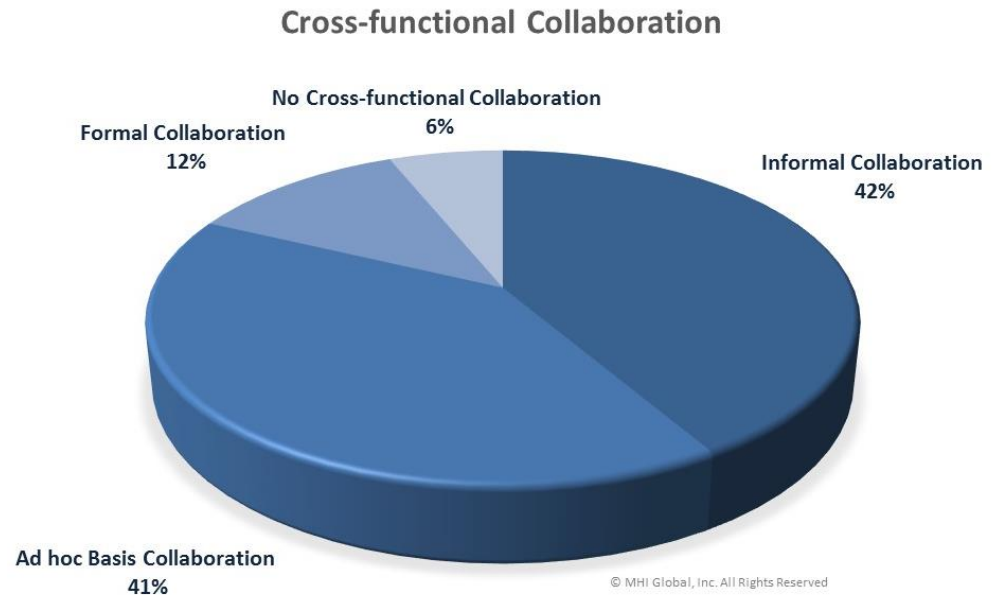
Enablement is a collaborative and cross-functional discipline. Collaboration is becoming more important with increasing maturity levels because content and training services have to be aligned. Then, to be integrated, coaching services are added, and frontline sales managers become a target group. Additionally, technology integration requires even more collaboration, also with additional functions and third parties.

While participants see a big need to collaborate cross-functionally, their actual maturity to do so in a structured, formalized and scalable way shows a big difference between aspiration and reality. More than 80% of our participants reported collaborating on an informal or even ad hoc basis.

Another aspect of collaboration is very interesting. It’s the fact that the most important function for enablement to collaborate with is not marketing. According to the data, the most important function to collaborate with is sales management (81.8%), followed by sales operations (69.7%) and product marketing (60%).

The core of enablement—designing, creating and providing enablement services—requires not only a structured [cross-functional production process](#), but also a cross-functional collaboration model that clearly defines per [content and training type](#) who the responsible and accountable role actually is.

It’s not enough to say “collaboration is working together.” Collaboration is about *working together to achieve better results faster*. To achieve this future state, collaboration requires a clear vision of success, shared goals, and principles based on a common language to enable people from different functions (not only marketing) to work together to achieve better results faster. Ideally, collaboration is powered by adequate





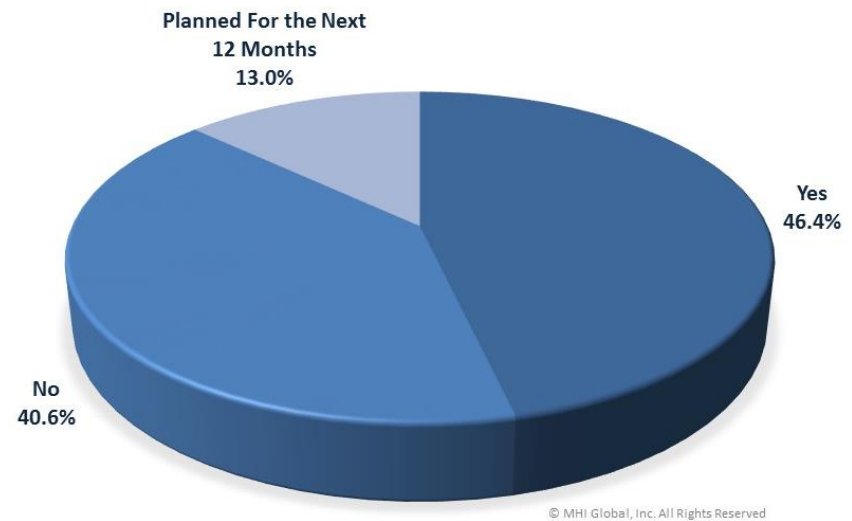
technology. But also of note here is that technology can only create the expected value if the collaboration framework is in place and if collaboration barriers have been removed by the sales leaders beforehand.

Collaboration is also a prerequisite for achieving a higher degree of integration of sales enablement services, one of the characteristics in the recommended maturity level of sales force enablement. [Integrating content and training services](#) is a challenge, as is integrating frontline sales managers as a target group. Furthermore, developing coaching services for FSMs requires a collaborative and integrated approach to making sure that the [coaching services are designed as a mirror of the enablement services](#) to drive adoption and reinforcement.

Additionally, [collaboration](#) is a prerequisite for the increasing trend to integrate enablement and learning technology within CRM systems. To make those approaches successful, execution and leadership are key ingredients, and enablement homework has to be done. As salespeople should receive content and even training suggestions based on the opportunities they are working on, the content has to be designed, developed and managed according to the taxonomy of the selling scenarios within the CRM system, along the customer’s journey.

Content types have to be assessed; their effectiveness has to be analyzed from different roles, customers and salespeople. Then, content has to be adjusted—to be removed if no longer relevant, or to be made available in various iterations, or to be reworked. Only after that can the remaining content be structured according to buying and selling scenarios, which is a prerequisite to being suggested to salespeople when they need it and where they need it. **“Be Inspired!”** is this delivery mechanism, as opposed to a less comfortable and less efficient mechanism that forces salespeople to go somewhere else (the enablement system) to search for content.

Integration of Sales Enablement Content System with CRM

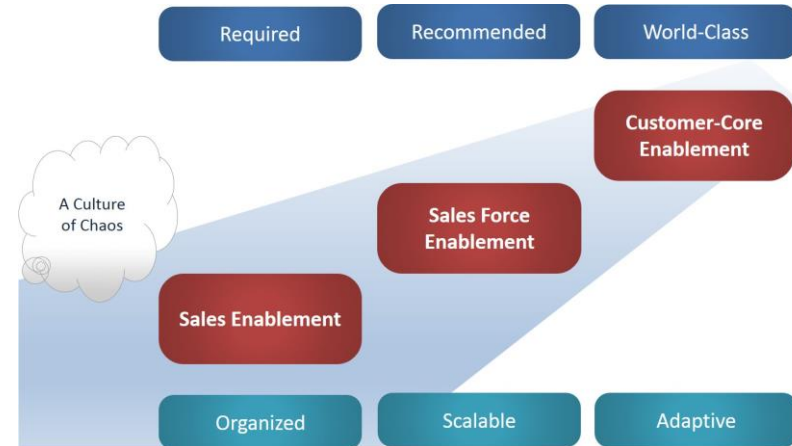




How to Evolve Enablement to the Next Level

Understanding the current state is the best way to develop a vision of future enablement success and a strategy for how to get there. Our Enablement Maturity Model is defined in the CSO Insights Research Note [All Things Enablement: Maturity Model Overview](#). It helps sales enablement leaders assess their current maturity stage and to make decisions on the right next steps to evolve their maturity level in a holistic way. We distinguish between three different levels: sales enablement as the required level, sales force enablement as the recommended level, and customer-core enablement as the future vision of success. Details and strategic guidance for how to use the maturity model on specific levels are outlined in [Enablement Maturity: Reaching the Required Level](#) and [Enablement Maturity: Reaching the Recommended Level](#) (membership required).

- **Required Level/Sales Enablement:** The focus is mostly on sales efficiency; organizations begin to manage different domains, such as sales training or the content domain. These domains get “organized,” but are not yet ready to be scaled.
- **Recommended Level/Sales Force Enablement:** At this level, sales effectiveness results have to be achieved, and customer-core becomes a challenge to be mastered. Content and training services have to be aligned, and frontline sales managers become a target group. Coaching services have to be designed. Technology integration becomes an essential foundation for the variety of enablement services that have to be aligned and integrated.
- **World-Class Level/Customer-Core Enablement:** A world-class enablement discipline is completely designed with the customers at the core. “World-class” describes an adaptive, sharing and learning organization that can adjust quickly and effectively to constantly changing customer behaviors and rising buyer expectations to drive sustainable business results. For future trends, see also the [knowledge shareconomy](#) and [how to drive the knowledge shareconomy](#), why [adaptive competencies](#) are a key differentiator of world-class performers, and its elements [situational awareness](#), [creativity](#), [principles](#) instead of strict rules, and [critical and strategic thinking](#).





Once the current state is assessed, decisions have to be made on how to get to the next level of maturity. For most organizations, it is to design the way to get from a required level to a recommended level. Achieving the recommended level is all about evolving the discipline to a customer-core approach and integrating enablement services, following a customer-core strategy. The maturity model provides the freedom to design the way forward coming from a training or a content perspective.

Our CSO Insights [Sales Force Enablement Master Framework](#) provides sales enablement leaders with strategic guidance on how to work with the customer’s journey as a main design point and how to balance the four main areas of sales force enablement: vision and strategy, enablement services, enablement operations, and change and adoption. It’s designed to work from the customer’s journey to the internal process landscape. It’s built on cross-functional collaboration, and it helps to create a balance between leadership and technology in each area.

Furthermore, the framework provides strategic guidance within these four areas and describes how to apply them successfully. Most important for enablement leaders is there is no need to tackle all areas at the same time. It depends on the organization’s current state and the main challenges that have to be mastered to achieve the desired sales objectives, and on which area to focus next. We recommend to address the vision and strategy charter first, as it will provide guidance in all other areas. The framework helps to take the right next steps in the main areas, for instance:



- Why an internal enablement charter is an essential prerequisite for any enablement leader’s internal selling efforts. It begins with mapping the sales strategy to sales execution to identify strengths, weaknesses and gaps. These determine the enablement scope and give direction to the other three areas.
- How to design [customer-core enablement content and training services](#) tailored to the customer’s journey, including [dynamic value messaging](#).
- How to set-up a [cross-functional production process](#) for all enablement services, powered by a cross-functional collaboration model, including how to measure and track efficiency and effectiveness.
- Why [adoption and reinforcement must include the frontline sales managers](#) as a target group and why their [coaching approach](#) has to be a mirror of the enablement framework.



As you think about your organization, which areas come to mind for focusing your efforts in 2016? If you have a clear direction, we wish you the very best of luck. However, if you would like help determining what to target, how to proceed, and how to be successful, Advisory Services clients should set up a study briefing call to discuss the findings of the study as they relate to your firm, how to prioritize next steps to take, and to explore best practices and case studies of how your peers are achieving the goals you have now set for your organization.

If you have any questions or comments on the information presented in this report, feel free to contact us.

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About CSO Insights

[CSO Insights](#) is dedicated to improving the performance and productivity of complex B2B sales organizations. We measure and analyze the behaviors, metrics and strategies behind world-class sales performance, providing our members with the research, data and expertise required to build strategies for sales performance improvement.

With over 20 years of sales research experience, the CSO Insights team is comprised of respected analysts with decades of success as sales practitioners and sales executives. This unique perspective, along with our wealth of sales performance metrics and benchmarks, gives us the exceptional ability to collaborate directly with sales leaders around the world to explore the best practices, strategic trends and next generation capabilities driving sales performance.

Our research, data and expertise help sales leaders create and execute strategies to find more, win more and keep and grow more business. CSO Insights' annual sales and marketing effectiveness studies have become industry standards for sales leaders seeking operational metrics, data and analysis, most notably: the *Sales Best Practices Study*, *Sales Performance Optimization Study*, and *Lead Management and Social Engagement Study*.