THE CONTENT MARKETER'S GUIDE TO

Sales Enablement

Presented by:

Influence&CO.

The Content Marketer's Guide to Sales Enablement

When was the last time you made a purchase without doing a Google search beforehand? Without asking your friends or colleagues for their recommendations? When was the last time you called a sales representative and let him walk you through the process from start to finish without doing any research on your own?

Don't worry that you can't really remember. You're not alone. With all the information available at your fingertips, almost no purchase decision is made without a little online research first. In fact, according to Forrester, 74 percent of B2B buyers do more than half their research online before talking to a sales rep.[1]

B2B buyers are often making decisions for entire teams and departments within their organization. They're under pressure to sift through tons of available information, compare vendors and partners, and make the right choice. Add to that the fact that an average of 6.8 people are involved in B2B purchase decisions, and the sales process becomes even more complex.[2]

Content marketing can be your sales team's best tool for meeting the diverse needs of your B2B buyers and creating a positive experience for everyone involved. **Unfortunately, an estimated 80 percent of content created by marketing goes unused by sales.**[3]

Creating content and hoping your sales reps know exactly where to find it and how and when to use it isn't the solution. To improve the buying experience and fuel your company's growth, you need to bring your marketing and sales teams together to collaborate on content.

For your content to work at its best during the sales process, marketing and sales teams must collaborate to create content that truly enables sales. In this guide, you'll learn more about how to create powerful sales enablement content and ways your sales team members can effectively put that content to work.

According to buyers themselves, however, sales reps can make the sales experience a more positive and productive one by: [4]

- **Listening to their needs (69 percent)**
- **Providing relevant information (61 percent)**
- **Not being pushy (61 percent)**
- **Responding in a timely manner** [3] **(51 percent)**

1 salesforlife.com/blog/how-content-transforms-salespeople-and-influences-buyers-with-visuals 2 hbr.org/2017/03/the-new-sales-imperative 3 smallbiztrends.com/2018/08/aligning-marketing-and-sales-content.html 4 research.hubspot.com/buyers-speak-out-how-sales-needs-to-evolve

The State of Marketing and Sales Alignment

When your marketing and sales teams are aligned, they can more effectively collaborate on content, to the benefit of your entire organization. In fact, sales and marketing alignment can generate over 200 percent more marketing revenue, close 38 percent more deals, and earn 36 percent higher customer retention rates.

With the right content, your sales team can send relevant, high-quality resources that do much of the work of phone calls, email correspondence, and other touchpoints in much less time.

Plus, by providing content like blog posts, guest-contributed articles, and e-books, you give your prospective customers tangible resources they can share with others involved in the decision-making process to get the internal buy-in they need to move forward with your company.

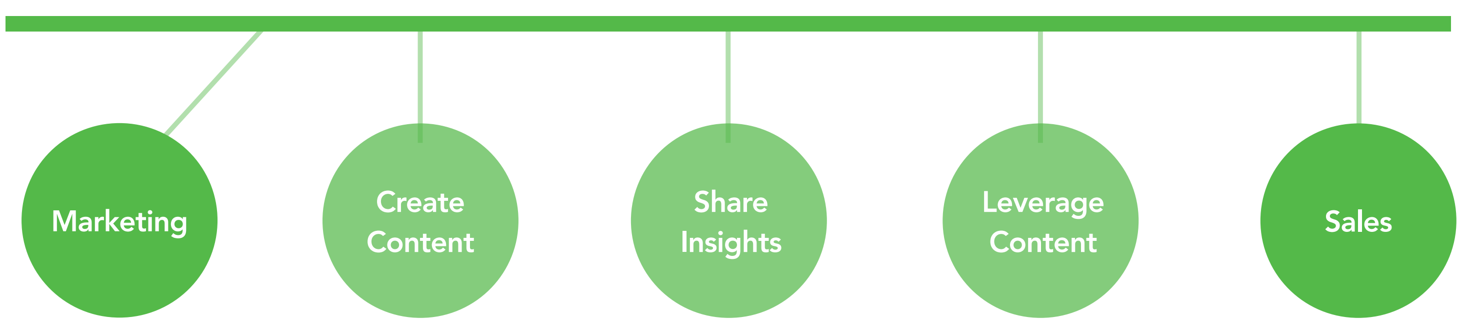
And when your marketing department can show exactly how the content you've created has contributed to your goals — not just to leads generated, but also sales won — you can paint a crystal-clear picture of content's value to your organization and increase your content marketing budget.

The benefits of bringing these teams together are clear, but actually doing so can be challenging. According to research from LinkedIn and Content Marketing Institute, fewer than half of B2B organizations report high marketing and sales alignment. [6]

The biggest difference between teams that are aligned and those that aren't? Highly aligned teams know how and when to use content.

By working together, your marketing team can create better, more targeted content for sales conversations. Sales reps will have a better idea of what resources exist for them to use, as well as a deeper understanding of your content strategy — including when content can be utilized.

How This Looks In Action



Marketing and sales alignment is an ongoing process that continuously transfers valuable insights back and forth between each team. Your marketing team uses its audience insights to create content and passes it to sales. Sales leverages that content to enable its conversations with prospects and passes the insights from those interactions back to marketing to use to create even better sales enablement content.

5 visualistan.com/2015/03/how-to-align-sales-and-marketing-infographic.html

6 contentmarketinginstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Final_CMI_LinkedIn_Research-March-2018.pdf

The State of Marketing and Sales Alignment

When you arm the members of your sales team with content specifically created to educate their prospects, quickly and thoroughly answer questions, and break down trust barriers, you enable them to supplement their conversations, improve efficiency, and spend more time selling — and that's a win for your entire company. Here are five simple ways to create effective sales enablement content.

1. Hold regular meetings and brainstorms.

Seventy-three percent of highly aligned teams meet daily or weekly.[7] The more marketing and sales teams communicate and learn from one another, the more focused they'll become on their shared goals. So make it a priority to get your teams into the same room and onto the same page.

Schedule regular meetings between your content marketing team and your sales reps. If both teams prepare ahead of time, everyone can show up with specific questions to make the most of their time together.

Use this list as a jumping-off point to guide your conversations:

- What questions do you get that take a lot of time to answer?
- What's the most common reason leads give for not moving forward?
- What's a piece of content you wish you could send that you don't already have?
- What's the most popular piece of content you send?
- What are some ways you've described the company's services or products on a call that have gone over really well?

Not all of these opportunities are content-specific, but each can help your sales team talk through experiences, problems, and wins in a way that uncovers valuable sales enablement content ideas.

2. Create channels on Slack or other chat platforms.

If your company uses Slack or another chat platform, create specific channels for marketing and sales, and invite relevant team members to each department's channel.

That way, a member of your sales team can hop over to the marketing channel to ask you about content for a specific topic. This can help you quickly understand what need a sales rep is trying to meet. If you have a resource that helps, send it; if you don't, add that idea to your topic list for future content.

And over on the sales channel, encourage your sales team members to talk through tricky questions from prospects or interesting conversations they're having. Regularly checking in on this back-and-forth between sales reps gives you the chance to chime in with helpful content resources or file ideas away for future topics.

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3. Conduct a survey.

"We should really write an article on ... " is a phrase content marketing teams hear all the time. To give everyone a chance to document their ideas and keep those ideas organized, use Typeform to power a simple form that allows team members to submit content ideas whenever they feel inspired.

Use your form to request an article summary and ask questions like "Would you like to be the author of this piece?" and "Why is this a valuable topic for us to cover?" This can help you prioritize content ideas and collect all the information you need to create a great piece of content that's effective for both marketing and sales.

Inspiration for content can strike at any time, and you won't always be in the same place at the same time when it does. That's why you need to have a process in place to record ideas for content whenever they arise. Thankfully, a simple Typeform is all you need.

4. Shadow sales calls.

One incredibly effective way to learn more about what's going on in the sales team is to shadow sales calls. Encourage your fellow content marketers to listen in on sales calls whenever possible. You can even go as far as requiring monthly shadow sessions or making sales shadowing a regular part of your training process as you grow your team.

Keep an ear out for common questions or trends, and listen carefully to how your sales team members have these conversations. How do they explain the benefits of your offering? How do they address the needs of specific points of contact?

Sitting in on calls is a great way to immerse yourself in the sales process and learn firsthand what your audience members and sales reps need — and it requires very little extra time or effort from your sales team.

5. Perform knowledge sharing.

Your sales team members are the ones having these conversations every day, and they can provide lots of helpful, specific expertise and feedback on content. You can't sit in on every sales call, but you can collect that expertise using a knowledge-sharing process.

Knowledge sharing makes it easy to create content by helping you gather the most important, relevant information from your sales team as quickly as possible. Ask your sales reps a series of questions about a topic, and use their individual answers and nuggets of expertise to create content that specifically addresses their needs.

Pro tip:
You can store and manage all these answers in a knowledge bank to streamline future content creation, too. This allows you to preserve all the valuable insights and stories you can't use in a particular piece of content for future projects — and save time.

How to Help Your Sales Team Use Content Effectively

All the content in the world means next to nothing if your sales team doesn't know where to access it or how to use it effectively. So now that you have a better understanding of how to create high-quality content that enables the sales process, it's time to actually arm your sales team with that content. **Here are five ways to help your sales team use content:**

1. Document your strategy.
It's not a coincidence that 75 percent of highly aligned marketing and sales teams have a documented content marketing strategy.[8] A central, accessible plan that details your approach to content marketing is critical for getting your teams onto the same page.

Develop your strategy with insights from sales to inform your audience personas, the details of your buyer journey, your content goals and tactics, and more. This way, your plan can be its most effective, and both your marketing and sales teams will understand how content is being created and used to reach your shared goals.

2. Involve sales in the content creation process.
When you involve sales reps in the creation process, they'll have a much better idea of what resources are available and when they can use them. The more involved they are from start to finish, the better they'll know the ins and outs of all the content that's available to them.

And if you have the capacity, consider helping your key sales team members write their own content. Interview your sales team, leverage your knowledge bank, and help them publish guest content of their own. Not only does this guarantee the content addresses exactly what your sales reps need it to, but it also helps them build their credibility and thought leadership in their field — which can make their conversations much easier and more productive.

3. Send email updates with newly published content.
As a marketer, you already know that just creating content doesn't do much good if no one sees it. The same applies to your sales team members. Once your team has finished creating awesome content for your sales reps, it's important to make it as easy as possible for them to access it.

To do that, consider sending weekly or monthly emails to your sales team members with links to all your newly published content. Include a quick descriptor that tells what the content is about as well as what your sales reps can use it for.

Is that new video a great resource for explaining how your service works? Spell it out. Would this article in a credibility-boosting outside publication make a good touchpoint for leads who have gone cold? Say so. By taking this approach, you're not only giving updates on new content, but you're also helping your team members understand when and how to put that content to use.

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How to Help Your Sales Team Use Content Effectively

4. Create a resource library.
Over time, you may create dozens or hundreds of pieces of content, and that's a lot of information to sift through — particularly for someone who doesn't spend their days creating, publishing, and distributing it. No wonder sales reps don't always know exactly where to go to get their hands on the right content.

It's also no wonder that 79 percent of highly aligned teams reported having a central location where sales reps can access content created by the content marketing team.[9]

To make it as easy as possible for your sales team to access and use your best sales enablement content, create a sales resource library. Consider organizing your sales content based on common sales situations, including stage in the buyer journey, product or service, persona, or any other elements that matter for segmenting your message.

Your library can be as simple or as comprehensive as your team needs it to be. Provided it includes a variety of high-quality assets that are designed to address the particular questions, objections, or other barriers of particular audience members, it should do the trick.

5. Share successes and feedback.
The only way to make sure your content is truly effective is to analyze it, so figure out what's working and consistently refine your resources. Dig through your website's analytics to identify pieces of content that are contributing to your goals, and ask sales reps to provide feedback so you can better understand how that content works in action.

Encourage your sales team to share their success stories and challenges as they use your content. This enables your sales reps to give feedback to one another and find new ways to use your content. Plus, it helps your team learn what works well in these sales-specific conversations and what needs to be changed to improve sales calls and better nurture your prospects to a sale.

Sales reps are motivated by closing deals, making money, and solving problems for their customers. Seeing their colleagues drive that process through content will inspire them to draw on those materials more often in their own sales conversations.

As noted above, nearly 80 percent of highly aligned teams report having a central location where the content produced by marketing can be accessed and used by the sales team. Now, your company blog is an incredibly valuable resource — but it's probably not built for members of your sales team to quickly and easily navigate multiple pages of content for specific pieces of information to fuel their sales conversations.

That's what a sales and marketing resource library is for.

Check out this template to start building a custom resource library and put your content to work enabling your sales process.

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About Influence & Co.

Influence & Co. is a content marketing agency that combines a team of content marketing experts with custom technology and relationships with top online publications to provide our clients a turnkey solution to content marketing.

We understand that content can be a valuable tool for every department throughout an organization — especially marketing and sales teams. We work with our clients to create content for their specific goals, including lead generation and sales enablement. Influence & Co. uses your company's unique expertise to create content that speaks to your audience of prospective leads, and then we help you use that content to nurture them throughout your sales process.

Contact us today to learn more about how we can help you integrate content throughout your marketing and sales teams.