How to boost productivity and grow your customer base through sales enablement

Introduction

It's a cliche because it's true — it's a competitive world. And it's only getting more competitive every day. For every Uber, there's a Lyft, and for every Lyft there's a Sidecar (R.I.P.). But there's a silver lining when you're competing for customers' business — the fact that you can win.

To increase customer acquisition amongst a crowded (or even not so crowded) playing field, it's more important than ever to create as much competitive edge as possible. "No, duh," right? That's like telling a basketball team they need to score more points to win. But it's all about how companies create that competitive edge. In today's market, one of the most important strategies organizations need to implement is Sales Enablement.

This eBook will discuss what sales enablement is and how an effective sales enablement strategy can increase productivity across sales teams and customer acquisition.

What is sales enablement?

The definition of sales enablement seems like it should be straight forward: it's about enabling sales to sell. But, that doesn't help does it? So, we asked some seriously talented sales leaders what sales enablement means to them:

When I think of sales enablement, I think of giving sales reps the content, training, and software they need to be more productive and hit their number.

David Weinhaus

Partner Sales Enablement at HubSpot

What I love about sales enablement is that you don't have to be a sales guru to help your sales team be more productive. Most salespeople are really good at activity and closing deals. But they are not very good at creating content or making sure best practices get spread consistently across an organization. There are a lot of high yield sales enablement opportunities out there just waiting to be taken advantage of.
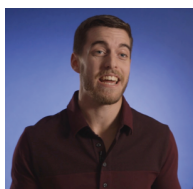
This is what sales enablement means to me: Give your sales team the knowledge, tools and content to deliver a more valuable buyer experience.

Max Traylor

Inbound Marketing Strategy Leader and Consultant

At PandaDoc, we define sales enablement as giving the right tools, technologies, training, and content to sales reps to decrease non-selling activities and help them close more deals.

As the above quotes illustrate, there's similar consensus that sales enablement empowers sales to increase their pipeline, Increase their productivity, increase close rate & customer acquisition and reduce the time spent on non-selling activities. Each organization will have to set their own goals, both as a company and for their sales team, to decide how sales enablement will align with their sales and marketing teams.

Why sales enablement

According to a recent survey by Serious Decisions, 71% of sales people say they lack the necessary knowledge to close the deal. Knowledge — whether it's about your product or service — shouldn't elude the people that are selling it. That's why it's essential to develop a process to enable your sales team with the knowledge and tools to drive growth. We've established what sales enablement is, and touched on why it's important, but let's go a bit deeper.

1. It creates a feedback loop

All too often, there's a major gap between the marketing and sales teams. Maybe each has different ideas about the ideal buying persona, or their messaging varies. Either way, if marketing's work isn't generating MQLs (Marketing Qualified Leads) that are turning into SQLs (Sales Qualified Leads), which the sales team are closing, that's a problem. A solid sales enablement strategy creates a two-way road between marketing and sales, ensuring that there's clear dialogue between them. Whatever work marketing is doing at the top of the funnel needs to support sales, and vice versa for sales at the bottom of the funnel.

2. Sales spends more time selling

To salespeople, any time not spent interacting with potential customers is time wasted. So, when they need to put together materials — proposals, contracts, or quotes — they want to minimize the time spent on non-selling activities to increase their time selling. More time spent selling will lead to increased close rates, but that's only true if they're selling better. That's why it's imperative to give sales the necessary tools, technologies, and content to clearly articulate your product's or service's benefits.

3. It provides a competitive edge

Today's buyers are savvy. 94% of buyers have already researched their purchasing decision. And you can bet it's not just about your product or service, but also on how you stand up against your competitors. If the rep can't answer their questions and articulate why you're the better solution for them, it's game over. Marketing should provide content to both sales — such as competitor analyses — and prospects — via materials such as battle cards. This gives sales the competitive edge they need and creates trust by showing prospects that they know their stuff.

4. It just works

More than 50% of companies using sales enablement have reported increased conversion rates above 10%. Moreover, 23% of companies report more than a 20% increase in their conversion rates. Managers need to see growth and ROI in anything they implement, be it a new tool or a new sales philosophy. And that's the ultimate outcome of a great sales enablement strategy. Additionally, in the process of working towards growth and customer acquisition, your employees will be happier due to increased productivity which will foster collaboration and consistency across the entire organization.

How to implement sales enablement

79% of organizations with 10 or more sales reps report some of kind of sales enablement initiative and 53% have a dedicated sales enablement team, it's clear that now is the time to implement sales enablement. Since sales enablement is more of a concept than a tangible tool, it can be daunting to execute across an entire organization. Here's how to get started:

1. Develop a plan

As we've already covered, there isn't one-size-fits-all sales enablement plan. It's important that you set the goals that are important to you and take stock of what you're currently doing. A good rule of thumb is if your close rate is less than 50%, there is a huge opportunity to increase it through sales enablement. You'll want to do a full audit of your sales and marketing funnels to identify the following:

Check your current marketing content assets as they relate to sales:

Check what content is sales using, not using and what content does sales need?

Check your current MQL and SQL process:

Create benchmarks based on your current flow: what percentage of MQLs convert to SQLs, what percentage of SQLs convert to Opportunities, what percentage of Opportunities convert to Closed Deals? Identify any major gaps, lost leads, or concerns. Use this information to develop your goals for each team and as an organization. Once you've investigated, identified weaknesses, and set goals, you'll have a clear understanding of where to begin.

2. Align sales and marketing

Once you've developed a plan, you'll have a better understanding of how aligning sales and marketing will work towards achieving the goals you've set. However, there are some essential steps you can take to create alignment:

Schedule regular syncs between both teams

Sales needs to communicate what they're hearing from the front lines (prospects and customers) and how they're qualifying leads. Marketing needs to deliver what campaigns they're working on, how they're qualifying leads, any competitive research they're doing, etc. Regular communication will lead to a more focused funnel and a unified brand approach. This can be monthly, bi-monthly, or even bi-weekly.

Create a Service Level Agreement (SLA) between both teams.

The agreement should state that if marketing delivers X number of leads, sales will close Y% of them. Holding each team accountable to the same goal means that they will work together towards achieving it — plus, no more finger pointing. Aligning both teams will only work if you nurture the relationship, just like you would any lead. You'll likely identify other ways to unify both teams, but by creating a regular forum for communication, and holding each team accountable to one another, you'll be starting in the right direction.

3. Develop Content

Recently, IDC estimated that nearly 80% of all content marketing creates specifically for sales enablement purposes goes unused by sales. That's simply unacceptable. Marketing still needs to create effective content that will help sales throughout the buying process. Develop top of funnel content that sales can repurpose at the bottom of the funnel.

Think of your content as your ammo. Some types will work in certain situations, while some will work in others. That's why it's important to have a sales enablement arsenal full of the following:

– Reusable templates for proposals, quotes, and contracts

– Battle cards

– Case studies

– Competitor analyses

– Pricing options

– Infographics, images, and videos

– Ebooks

– Blog posts

You may view these pieces as strictly top the funnel content, but if it's relevant to your audience and gives them actionable insights and information, your sales team should be utilizing it.

4. Put the right tools in place

To make sure your sales enablement is effective, you need to have the right tools in place. Here's the type of tools to consider for each team:

Marketing

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– An inbound marketing tool to track, score, and convert MQLs to sales.

– A social management tool, to manage all social media channels.

– A content management system (CMS) to post content, like blogs.

– An email marketing tool, to automate email nurture campaigns.

Sales

– A customer relationship management (CRM) tool to track all leads from inbound (MQLs) and outbound efforts throughout the funnel.

– A video conferencing tool to demo prospects.

– A document automation tool, like PandaDoc. By creating templates in advance, syncing with your CRM to auto-populate data, including marketing content in proposals, and gleaning insights from detailed analytics it allows sales to send out better documents quicker.

– A sales development tool to help automate the prospecting stage.

– A high quality lead sourcing tool.

Both Teams

– A central communication tool. This will foster ongoing communication outside of regular sales and marketing syncs.

– A meeting tool, for scheduling meetings automatically.

– A project management tool, to easily track and troubleshoot daily work.

There are many, many more tools out there to help your organization throughout all stages of the funnel. That's why it's important to identify where you have needs and to select the best solution for your team. Many tools will also include many of the functions outlined above, so see where you can consolidate.

Conclusion

Every company understands how important it is to invest in their people, but it's equally important to invest in structure and processes. The sales team's ability to turn qualified leads into new business needs to be a top priority.

Most organizations find that their current process is leaking productivity. Without a properly defined process, great content, or the right tools to execute, sales will struggle to increase conversions.

By clearly defining all of these, along with regular communication with marketing, you'll see increased productivity from your sales team. And an increase in productivity will lead to an increase in customer acquisition.