Seismic

E-BOOK

Riding the Next Wave of Enablement

The Ultimate Guide

The evolution of enablement

It's not much of a mystery anymore what sales enablement is. According Seismic's own 2021 Annual Sales Enablement Benchmark Report[1], 95% of survey respondents have a dedicated enablement team at their company, and 79% say enablement is a strategic part of their business. Why? In essence, to equip sellers with the right resources at the right time thereby shortening the sales cycle, increasing win rates, and securing bigger deals.

Enablement as a function emerged in response to the evolution of the buyer. With an abundance of information at their fingertips online, buyers are in more control of the buying process than ever before. In fact, they're easily more than halfway through their journey before they reach out to a seller.

That means sellers now need to reach out to buyers, intercepting their attention much earlier in their journey—a task typically associated with marketing. As a result, sellers now need to think more like marketers, and marketers need to think more about the day-to-day experiences of sellers.

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[1] https://learn.seismic.com/whitepaper-sales-enablement-maturity-index-report.html

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Buyer-facing content, which is often created by marketing, is a particular pain point for sellers. All too often, sellers spend hours looking for the content they require to address a buyer's needs—and all too often, they come up short, resorting to materials with sub-par relevance. To make things worse, there's little to no capability for sellers or marketers to measure the impact of their content.

Furthermore, seller onboarding and training are often delivered with canned messaging, lacking the latest and greatest insights from the field. There's also little capacity to meaningfully track an individual's performance and provide a unique learning plan based on that seller's specific strengths and areas for improvement.

Enablement arose to bridge all these gaps. Leveraging tools, procedures, materials, and coaching, enablement is meant to keep all go-to-market teams on track for success in the short and long term. It ensures marketing and sales are aligned on a cohesive story they can confidently present to the world, telling different parts of that story across the buyer's journey in ways that are memorable and measurable. It also ensures sellers, both new and experienced, receive data-based learning they can build on, always knowing what they need to know, showing what they need to show, and doing what they need to do when engaging with buyers.

Seismic has customers whose results include a **350%** increase in content usage, an **87%** increase in time savings, and a **32%** increase in leads for top sales reps after implementing our enablement solution[2].

But there's still a multitude of challenges.

[1] https://learn.seismic.com/whitepaper-sales-enablement-maturity-index-report.html

The challenges of getting enablement right

Selling has always been hard, and obviously the rise of the modern buyer has made it even harder. But how hard? Consider these stats:

17

meaningful interactions occur when B2B buyers are completing a purchase[3].

11

individual stakeholders are involved in a B2B purchase[4].

2 of 3

buyers prefer remote human interactions or digital self-service[5].

80%+

buyers expect sales teams to be informed about their business, industry, market, and role[6].

And the pandemic has only made things worse for today's seller. For those one in three buyers who still prefer face-to-face interactions, some simply can't or won't have them right now, making it even harder for sellers to build strong relationships without the rapport that comes more naturally with in-person meetings.

This only compounds the challenges sellers regularly have, including articulating their competitive differentiators, responding to increasingly faster competition, and dealing with an overload of content—both in terms of what they're receiving internally and in terms of what else is out there for the buyer to find.

Even though enablement now exists to make things easier, too many organizations still struggle to implement strategies and practices that can overcome these challenges. Essentially, it's not enough that enablement is there; it has to be done right or the consequences can be detrimental.

[3] https://go.forrester.com/blogs/why-are-buyer-insights-vital-for-product-marketing-sales/
[4] https://www.gartner.com/doc/reprints?id=1-25XFZ4S1&ct=210428&st=sb&ehash=a7189f0ef10 3af5944082e0f73a6b5606d42f6db49e8fdf794a2cb58d7adf014
[5] https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/ omnichannel-in-b2b-sales-the-new-normal-in-a-year-that-has-been-anything-but
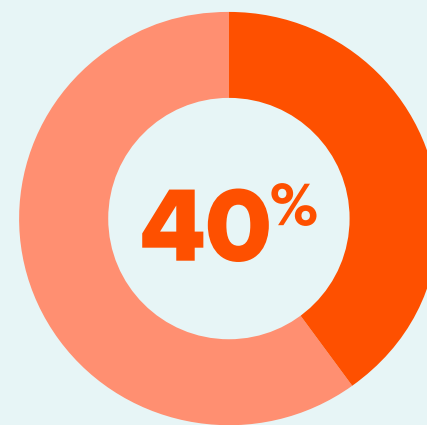[6] Forrester's 2021 B2B Buying Study

In fact, according to HubSpot, 40% of sales leaders didn't meet their 2020 revenue goals, citing remote selling, an inability to enable their sellers, and difficulty improving their sales processes as the major reasons. And for 2021, according to Gartner, only 6% of chief sales officers are extremely confident they'll hit their numbers.

Having coalesced from what was once a flurry of decentralized efforts to improve go-to-market effectiveness, enablement is now recognized as a strategic practice vital to a business's bottom line—and it's only getting more sophisticated.
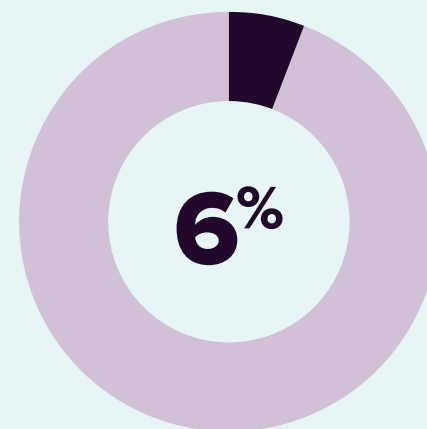
So the question is no longer 'What is enablement?' It's 'how do we get enablement right?' The next wave of enablement is coming in fast, and it's never been more important for organizations everywhere to get their bearings and either ride that wave to success or have it come crashing down over them.

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[7] https://www.hubspot.com/sales-enablement-report?utm_campaign=Sell-smarter-growbetter&utm_source=Directory
[8] https://learn.seismic.com/whitepaper-sales-enablement-maturity-index-report.html

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of sales leaders didn't meet their 2020 revenue goals[7]

6%

of chief sales officers are extremely confident they'll hit their numbers[8]

Requirement for enablement success

So how can organizations correct course and realize the benefits they always hoped to see from their enablement plans? By meeting these five requirements:

- ✅ **Ramp and upskill**
- ✅ **Embed guidance**
- ✅ **Offer differentiated experiences**
- ✅ **Provide data-driven coaching**
- ✅ **Find what's working**

1. Ramp and upskill

It's vital for new sellers to reach competency and productivity quickly, and for experienced sellers to keep up with the rapid pace of change in the new world of remote selling. While sellers often know their audience, their product, and their competition, they often lack the skills to apply this knowledge effectively so that they're maximizing every conversation they have with a buyer.

2. Embed guidance

It's important for sellers to come across as trustworthy experts who can help a buyer solve a problem rather than simply sell them a service. But that consultative approach can only be achieved if sellers get the consultation they need from their enablement team. Sellers need to know what to say, do, and show a buyer depending on their needs at a specific time. Effective enablement requires sellers to not only know all this, but also find the materials they need quickly and easily.

3. Offer differentiated experiences

Content needs to be delivered where buyers are and when they want to be engaged—and as we've seen, that's increasingly online. That means sellers not only need to provide subsequent pieces of relevant content to buyers, but they also have to actively find those buyers. What's more, these subsequent content pieces need to be different, not just in terms of the topics they cover, but in their very delivery. Today's buyer prefers highly visual, dynamic and interactive content, so it's important that such pieces be part of a seller's overall content mix.

4. Provide data-driven coaching

Coaching is vital to the development of any effective salesforce. But all too often it's done without empirical evidence to inform and back up what's being taught. Sales leaders need to leverage technology to provide training that's both dynamic and measurable. Only with an engaged salesforce, and the data they generate, can proper follow-up education and best practices be achieved.

5.

Find out what's working

Of course, the need to measure content isn't restricted to coaching. All content, whether it's aimed at sellers or buyers, or created by marketing or enablement, needs to be measured for its effectiveness.

You need to understand your enablement ROI. That means auditing content, identifying performing and underperforming pieces, and quickly adapting for better results—and you need to do it all at scale as your business grows.

So what can you expect when you get all of this right?

An enablement solution that works

Give your teams the skills, content, and context to win deals and loyal customers.

Ramp and upskill

Onboard and train sellers faster so they're more productive sooner.

Embed guidance

Align content and learning with customer interactions for better guidance on what to do and say.

Interact with buyers at the right time across every channel.

Offer differentiated experiences

Connect with buyers where and when they want to engage. Provide better digital experiences for greater competitiveness.

Leverage data to create better content, streamlined processes, and stronger sellers.

Provide data-driven coaching

Deliver more effective coaching based on performance and engagement results.

Know what's working

Gain insights from sellers, process owners, and content creators for greater overall outcomes.

Better Business Outcomes

About Seismic

Seismic is the global leader in enablement, helping organizations engage customers, enable teams, and ignite revenue growth. The Seismic Enablement CloudTM is the most powerful, unified enablement platform that equips customer-facing teams with the right skills, content, tools, and insights to grow and win. From the world's largest enterprises to startups and small businesses, more than 2,000 organizations around the globe trust Seismic for their enablement needs. Seismic is headquartered in San Diego with offices across North America, Europe, and Australia.

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