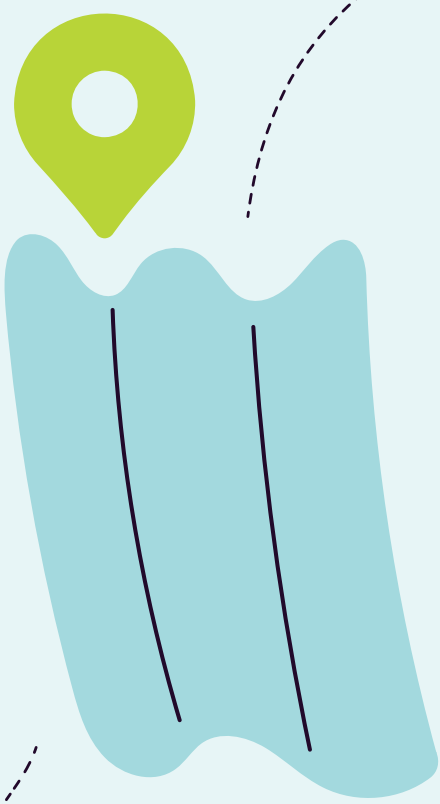
Seismic

GUIDE

Enabling Reps for the Challenges of B2B Selling

Table of contents



INTRODUCTION

Businesses don't just buy products from other businesses; they invest in relationships

Today's businesses require an expert partner who'll play a consultative role in the sales process, utilize convenient digital communication, and leverage a level of personalization that ensures the process feels tailored exclusively to them.

To fulfill these needs, business-to-business (B2B) sales reps have to wear more hats than ever before, from researcher and consultant to digital strategist and marketer. Unlike their business-to-consumer (B2C) counterparts, who may have more advanced support from specialized acquisition teams, B2B reps often juggle these various roles every day, pulling out the right tool at the right time to facilitate an efficient sales process, build relationships, and close deals.

Hiring, ramping, and retaining high-caliber B2B sales reps means assessing and enabling them for the idiosyncratic challenges of the B2B world.

Let's take a look at that world and what businesses can do to help their reps thrive in it.

CHALLENGE

The B2B buying cycle is long and complex

Before a business makes a purchasing decision, it can go through many cycles of research, strategic planning, and budget negotiations involving many decision-makers. And this makes sense: B2B purchases are usually costly, long-term contracts with the potential to dramatically impact the business. It's a different beast from the B2C sales cycle, where decisions are often made more quickly and emotionally with lower costs and less pressure to deliver business results. As such, B2B sales cycles are lengthy—and getting longer.

With longer sales cycles and more decision makers to consider, B2B reps often have a lot more to learn and keep track of than their B2C counterparts. As such, B2B reps run the risk of losing the buyer's perception of how knowledgeable they are and how much value they're truly adding to the decision-making process.

Proper training and coaching are crucial to mitigating this risk. But unfortunately, methodologies and technologies haven't kept pace with the evolution of B2B selling. Traditional training platforms have a reputation for being difficult to navigate, sometimes taking weeks or months to get a solid grasp of and that's if a business is even using a dedicated training platform.

In fact, many businesses continue to use a disjointed mix of HR cloud software, survey platforms, and email to build and deliver training. What's more, they have little in the way of empirical tracking, making it hard to improve anything because it's already hard to see what might be going wrong in the first place.

Decision makers say their average buying committee is composed of senior management, influencers, budget holders, and end users. And the average B2B buying cycle has gotten longer since 2020.[1]

[1]https://www.outreach.io/assets/resources/Outreach-TLP-_-Final.pdf

SOLUTION

Prioritize learning, and make it scalable yet individualized

The key to ensuring reps don't lose face in front of buyers at any point during a deal cycle is to leverage an integrated learning platform. Such a platform should make it easy to build and distribute engaging lessons that can be taken on any internet-enabled device. And while this level of efficiency and scalability is leagues ahead of traditional solutions, it's not all that matters.

Every learner is different, requiring their own idiosyncratic path to success—so, that needs to be scaled as well. The platform should uncover opportunities for personalized plans and tailored feedback—even for hundreds or thousands of employees at a time—by prioritizing learner feedback based on how long they've been waiting for it, aggregating quiz results so it's easy to identify general strengths and weaknesses, and reusing past feedback to eliminate hours of unnecessary typing.

Also, as with any other function in an organization, learning should be measured, demonstrating how it has impacted business objectives and revenue. And since collecting this data may require tracking employees through multiple systems, the platform should integrate with other software in your tech stack, like your CRM.

Finally, despite all your best efforts, it's important to recognize that reps will occasionally get caught off guard by a buyer's question, sometimes in the middle of a conversation. Therefore, it's important they have a resource that can provide them with immediate answers on demand. Based on the questions and answers typed into it, this resource, known as a "just-in-time enablement" solution, can capture the collective knowledge of any given topic across your organization, building a database of automatic, validated responses ready for any rep in the nick of time.

[2]https://www.saleshacker.com/coaching-for-sales-success/

48.2% of sales reps claim not to receive proper coaching, but 82.1% of their leaders claim to be providing it.[2]

CHALLENGE

B2B buyers expect digital savvy

Gone are the days when networking (usually at an event or over sales dinners) was the most critical touchpoint in a sales deal. Now, with the rise of remote work and a global customer base, businesses expect to engage with reps almost solely through digital channels.

What's more, buyers tend to conduct their own research online, only contacting a sales rep when they're already more than halfway down the purchase path. So, if they don't hear back at the right time in the right way, they may quickly choose a competitor with greater digital finesse.

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[3] emtemp.gcom.cloud/ngw/globalassets/en/sales-service/documents/trends/future_of_sales_ebook.pdf

By 2025, 80% of B2B sales interactions between suppliers and buyers will occur in digital channels.[3]

SOLUTION

Know what digital channels B2B buyers are using and leverage them effectively

B2B reps must understand where B2B buyers live online, whether that's on LinkedIn or within specialized forums or communities. Either way, these sites are bustling with buyers ready to have conversations—and it's up to reps to effectively engage with them there, turning those conversations into conversions.

Traditionally, sharing content over social media has been an inefficient and sometimes risky endeavor for B2B sales reps. Finding the right content to share is often a chore, and there's always a chance that content may be off-brand, inaccurate, misleading, or even in violation of a regulation. To streamline the discoverability of suitable content and to mitigate the risk of sharing unsuitable content, businesses need to have curated feeds from both Marketing and third-party sources, ensuring reps find and share only compliant, risk-free, and resonant assets, complete with limited customizable elements and Marketing-approved text and imagery.

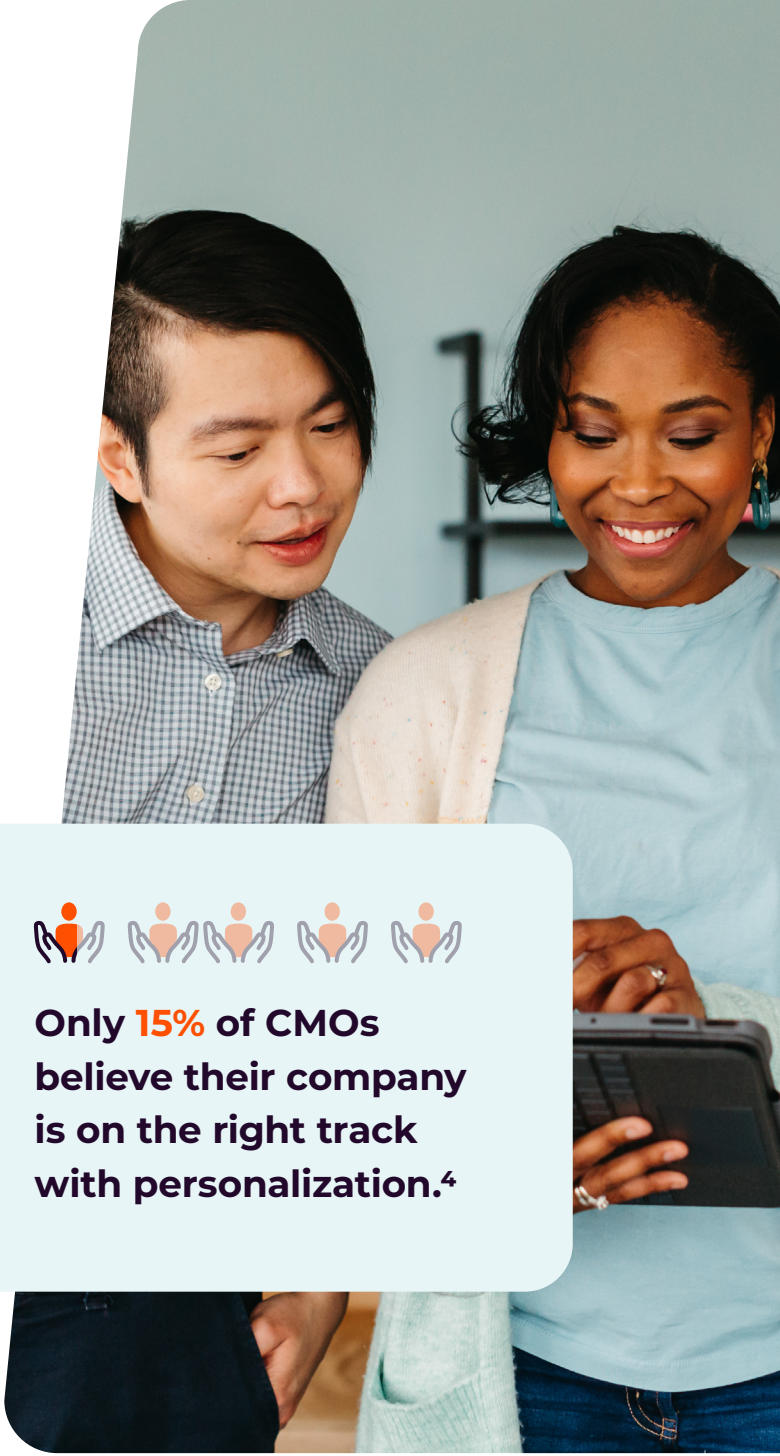
Finally, speaking of Marketing, it's important they provide reps with content assets that aren't just relevant and safe but that also stand out. This includes interactive content that buyers find inherently engaging. Marketing will need the technology to create such content—and create it easily.

CHALLENGE

Providing a personalized experience throughout the buyer's journey is crucial but difficult

It's no mystery that a well-timed ad or email with a customer's name on it can evoke a strong temptation to purchase a product. But for B2B reps, personalization is crucial throughout the sales cycle, gaining even more importance the closer they get to close. That's because, as discussed, the B2B world isn't just about products or services; it's about the relationships that undergird them.

As such, achieving effective personalization in the B2B world is about so much more than a mail merge. It's about sharing the right content with the right people at the right time—and accurately reflecting their needs at every step. The challenge? Time. It takes too long to personalize assets like presentations primarily because the actual editing it requires is laborious. And it's laborious because it's inefficient, taking reps away from their primary task: selling.



Only 15% of CMOs believe their company is on the right track with personalization.[4]

[4]https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-future-of-personalization-and-how-to-get-ready-for-it

SOLUTION

Enable and streamline personalization with the right technology

Reps need an economical way to generate buyer-facing documents that reflect their firsthand knowledge of a deal or customer. And that requires automation. Everything from pitch decks to proposals should be populatable without requiring reps to download or edit anything, or toggle between too many tools. Imagine combining slides, accessing templates, and inserting case studies into presentations without ever leaving PowerPoint. Imagine answering pre-built questions as you construct a deck so that the system automatically pulls in the appropriate slides from your content library for you.

Of course, the best way to personalize the selling experience for a buyer is to meet them in person. When that's not possible, going digital is your only chance. Video calls is the first option that probably comes to mind, but those still require scheduling and aren't likely to make the same impact. But what if you could facilitate continual digital communication? That's what digital sales rooms are for: having a secure virtual environment, easily created and branded by a rep, where hyper-relevant content can be shared and where one-on-one conversations can happen at any time. Furthermore, buyers can get notifications about the latest activities in the room as well as share, comment on, and tag information they're interested in. It's the ultimate personalized digital selling experience.

People spend the equivalent of five working weeks a year reorienting themselves after toggling to a new application.[5]

Businesses that excel at personalization drive 40% more revenue than those that use it less effectively.[6]

[5] https://hbr.org/2022/08/how-much-time-and-energy-do-we-waste-toggling-between-applications
[6] https://www.mckinsey.com/capabilities/growth-marketing-and-sales/our-insights/the-value-of-getting-personalization-right-or-wrong-is-multiplying

CONCLUSION

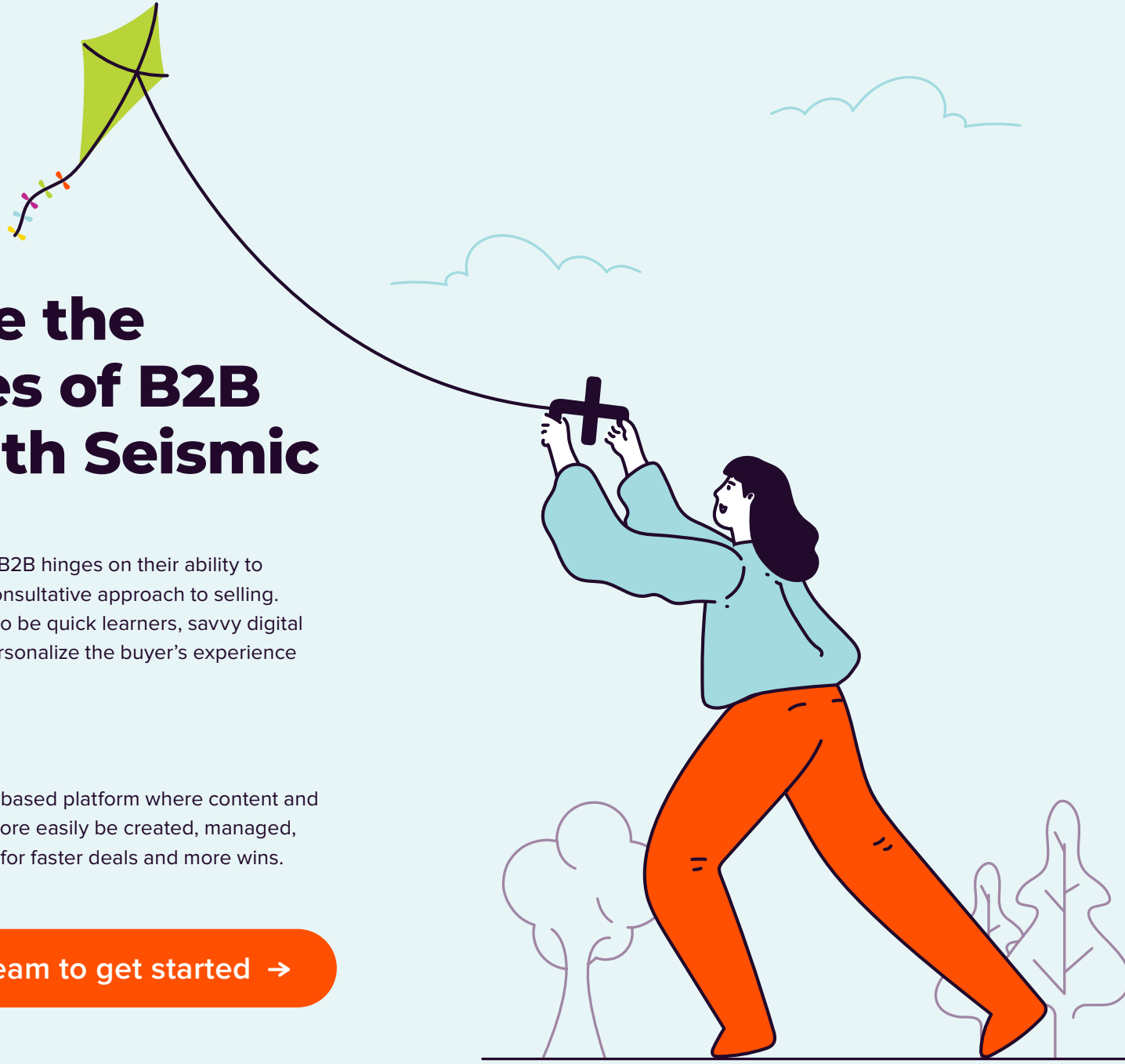
Overcome the challenges of B2B selling with Seismic

A rep's success in the world of B2B hinges on their ability to build relationships through a consultative approach to selling. To accomplish that, they need to be quick learners, savvy digital communicators, and able to personalize the buyer's experience from start to close.

But that takes technology.

Seismic is an integrated, cloud-based platform where content and training not only live, but can more easily be created, managed, measured, and improved upon for faster deals and more wins.

Speak with our team to get started →



About Seismic

Seismic is the global leader in enablement, helping organizations engage customers, enable teams, and ignite revenue growth. The Seismic Enablement Cloud™ 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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