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Getting commercial enablement programs right

Embrace the six dimensions of successful sales enablement

In today's economic environment, marked by cost constraints and intense competition, stakeholders continue to expect higher returns—with less resources to get them there—than ever before. As the connective tissue between an enterprise's sales team and its revenue operations—including marketing, product, human resources (HR), and more—commercial enablement, also known as sales enablement, is increasingly vital. Successful sales enablement means that an organization's sellers feel empowered and supported to make the right connections and effectively close deals thanks to the content and tools provided to them.

Despite this, it isn't always clear who owns enablement and where it should be positioned in an organization. It usually lives with the Chief Revenue Officer (CRO) or with sales operations, but bringing other enablement functions such as customer success, support, and professional services into the mix offers strategic value, as does tighter integration with partner and customer education and enterprise learning.

Chief Revenue Officers are feeling pressure to meet stakeholder demands, and are increasingly investing in commercial enablement programs with the goal of enhancing seller productivity as a result. Their investments are usually directed at top-of-the-line enablement technology that fosters seller success, increases revenue, and delivers a positive, lasting customer experience. But program effectiveness varies—some organizations get a return on their investment while others struggle to achieve impactful results. And there is also pressure to better measure the impact of these efforts and link them to seller performance.

All of this can lead to pitfalls in today's sales organizations. Some common obstacles that can derail programs are explored below:

- **Sellers don't see the value.**
  If enablement initiatives are viewed as a chore or compliance deals and opportunities for personal development—they may fall short of their potential.

- **Lack of focus in enablement content.**
  Rather than focusing on individual seller needs, enablement efforts are often random or fail to align with a seller's revenue-generating growth goals. Often, enablement content might be misaligned with the needs of different personas, causing it to lose value.

- **Decentralized operating model**.
  If enablement efforts are spread across the organization, lack centralized coordination, or are missing key roles and skillsets, they may likely result in uneven execution.

- **Sales leadership is sidelined.**
  When enablement is reactive to the needs of functions such marketing, HR, or operations without aligning to sales leadership goals, it creates a disconnect.

- **Unactionable insights.**
  Providing sellers with ambiguous or unactionable client insights can hinder targeted territory development and personalized sales conversations.

- **Hard-to-digest sales collateral.**
  Enablement content that isn't tailored to the learner's situation or skillset or that is difficult to digest and act upon can compromise the credibility of future enablement initiatives.

- **Ineffective sales technology.**
  Many organizations have ambitions to streamline their sales technology, but they may not be allocating enough of their sales enablement budget to technology to achieve this goal. This means that sellers can get lost in a maze of disconnected sales platforms and tech stacks that aren't designed with the sales experience in mind. Successful enablement requires workflow, data, and analytics unification.

- **Tracking the wrong outcomes.**
  Measuring success based on the volume of collateral and trainings that are completed without linking enablement efforts to seller performance or to revenue goals can mislead and derail efforts.

Getting it right

Investment is one answer. In our recent survey about the future of B2B sales sent to 23 large software companies, we found that companies who are setting themselves apart invest 1.25x more than other B2B companies in onboarding, learning, and sales enablement. They also deploy 7x more sales enablement personnel to support their selling roles.[1] And 72% of B2B CROs interviewed said they are prioritizing investments in learning and enablement for the upcoming fiscal year.[2]

With these investments, leading companies can better strengthen the capabilities and productivity of their existing sales operations. They can also foster a culture of learning and growth, which can attract and retain top talent and lead to a more effective and resilient sales organization. In a talent market where 75% of employers are unable to find skilled talent,[3] sales teams are not immune to the same shortage.

WHERE ARE COMPANIES INVESTING?

Investment Stance (Adding or Investing)

CHANNEL STRATEGY	83%
LEARNING AND ENABLEMENT	72%
DATA MANAGEMENT	61%
PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT	44%
SALES PLANNING	42%
SALES SUPPORT	39%
FORECAST & ANALYTICS	39%
DIGITAL CHANNEL	39%
STRATEGY	39%
MARKET PLANNING	38%
OUTREACH & LEAD MANAGEMENT	37%

It also matters how you invest. According to our 2024 high-impact learning organization study,[4] commercial enablement functions should strive to be like these high-impact learning organizations, focusing enablement efforts on what matters most, on exceeding business and talent goals, and on getting better at prioritizing where and how they invest in learning.

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1. Deloitte Digital, Future of Sales Study, 2024
2. Deloitte Digital, Future of Sales Study, 2024
3. https://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/insights/industry/public-sector/strategic-workforce-development-ecosystem.html#endnote-sup-2
4. Learning and the path to maturity

The six dimensions of successful sales enablement

Activating a successful go-to-market enablement program that gets results involves embracing six clear strategic dimensions.

01. SET A CLEAR GO-TO-MARKET ENABLEMENT STRATEGY

Create a vision for your organization that reflects the roles and responsibilities within it and aligns enablement needs and capabilities with clear objectives. This strategy should manage resources effectively, making sure business conditions line up with the desire to grow where it makes sense. It should support the sales team and be able to foresee and adapt to their changing needs—so much so that enablement becomes indispensable.

02. VALIDATE YOUR OPERATING MODEL

Develop an operating model that has the right roles, responsibilities, skillsets, and ongoing governance processes to support your strategy at scale. This includes defined responsibilities and methods of engaging with other enablement functions within your business, such as those owned by talent or compliance.

03. PERSONALIZE CONTENT AND MODALITIES

Put the learner at the center of your enablement strategy. Create content that is role-specific and offers a mix of learning modalities (e.g., on-the-job, self-guided, in-person). Keep learning balanced too—consider content categories, training hour allotment, and learner proficiency.

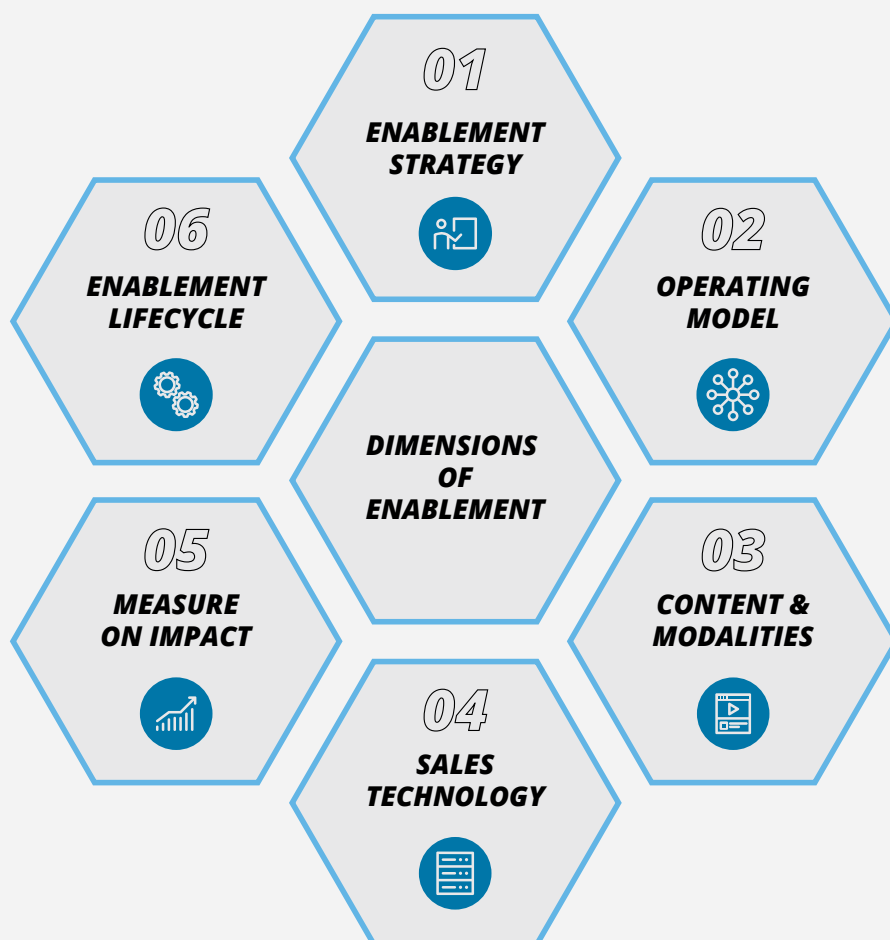### 04. ALIGN YOUR SALES TECHNOLOGY TO THE SALES EXPERIENCE

You can use disruptive tech such as artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning (ML), for example, to help sellers suggest next-best actions or recommend useful content to potential clients right when they need it. Evaluate your existing enablement technology to ensure it creates an optimal and streamlined learning experience for the entire workforce.

05. MEASURE BASED ON IMPACT

Measure the content that is used against perceived and actual value, as well as against seller performance and business impact. This can include revenue goals such as growth, conversion rate, average contract value (ACV), and customer lifetime value (CLV).

06. ACTIVATE A GO-TO-MARKET ENABLEMENT LIFECYCLE

Create a plan for the entire sales process that utilizes enablement resources and ensures teams alignments across customer-facing operations.

01 ENABLEMENT STRATEGY

06 ENABLEMENT LIFECYCLE

02 OPERATING MODEL

DIMENSIONS OF ENABLEMENT

05 MEASURE ON IMPACT

03 CONTENT & MODALITIES

04 SALES TECHNOLOGY

The commercial enablement lifecycle

Following the lessons explored above, it is important to now bring everything together. The commercial enablement lifecycle explores how today's organizations can enhance team collaboration and effectively govern enablement from start to finish. It is not a one-and-done process—it is dynamic and continuously changing.

GO-T0-MARKET ENABLEMENT LIFECYCLE

INTAKE · CREATE · DELIVER · ADOPT · MEASURE · ANALYZE
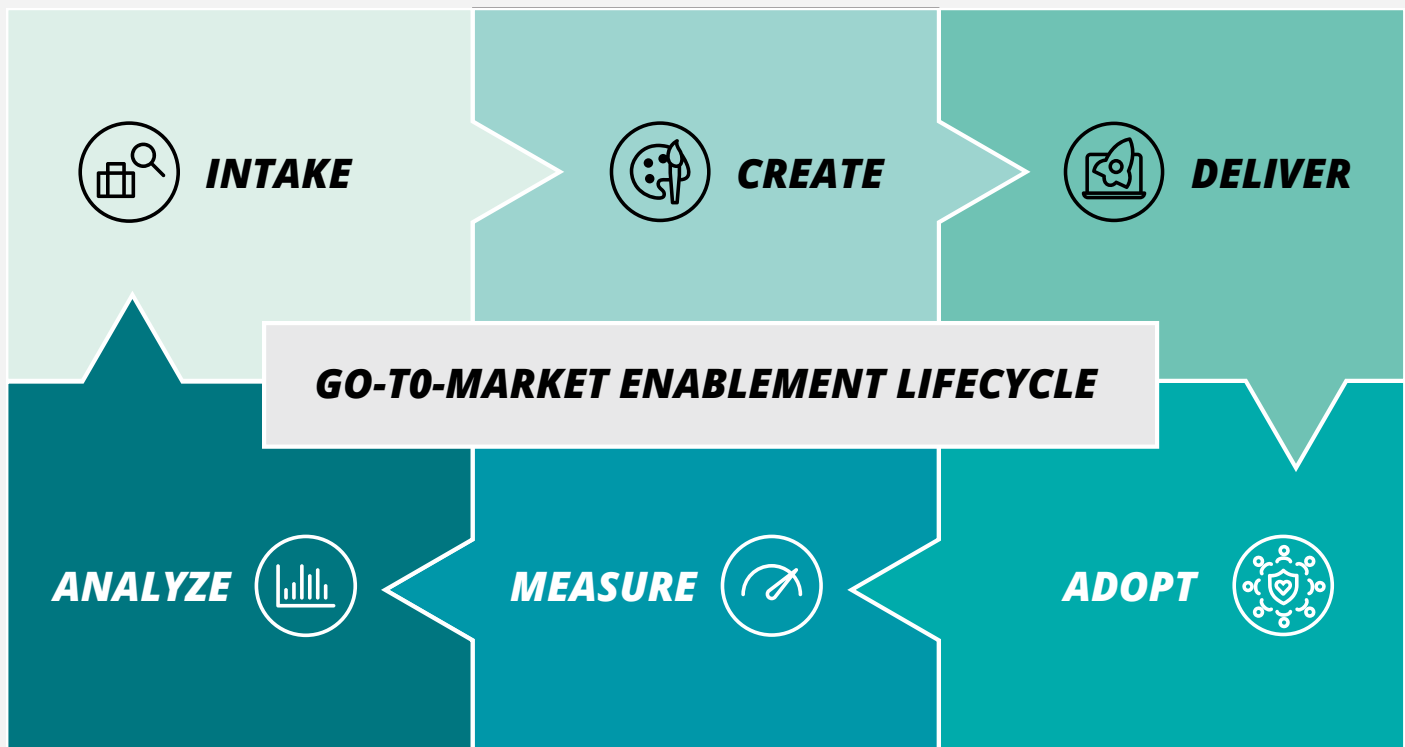
INTAKE / PRIORITIZATION
Create enablement content that aligns with corporate strategy. Set the content mix to deliver relevant content to users at the right time, in the right volume, and via the right channel.

CREATE
Design and develop curriculum, content, and programs. Align on enablement logistics such as duration, expected outcomes, key performance indicators (KPIs), training, and communications.

DELIVER
Plan and execute the delivery and deployment of enablement programs, and drive go-to-market enablement awareness across organization. Leaders in different geographies and focus areas should customize enablement to align content to their team's needs and values.

ADOPT
Execute the enablement plan across the organization. Act as champions of go-to-market enablement—encourage training, capture, and reporting feedback.

MEASURE
Align on KPIs and the measurement tools used to determine enablement success. Capture the data needed to calculate KPIs and create closed-loop measurement framework.

ANALYZE / ITERATE
Enhance and iterate the future enablement experience based on insights from prior enablement activities against intended outcomes and observed KPI performance.

Looking ahead

Pressures on sales organizations are high, and a well-planned and executed commercial enablement program can be a game-changer to bottom lines if carried out strategically. By avoiding pitfalls and embracing successful strategies, you can get closer to driving revenue growth, improving sales motivation and productivity, and meeting shareholder expectations.

If you're interested in continuing the conversation and learning more about how our teams can help elevate your commercial enablement program, don't hesitate to get in touch with our leaders.

Get in touch

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