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How to Optimize Your Sales Coaching Process

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Sales enablement isn't necessarily a new concept. In fact, it has experienced a 343% increase in adoption over the last five years[1]. However, prehistoric approaches to sales training continue to hold companies back, leaving sales reps frustrated and enablement teams hopeless.

If this feels familiar, it might be time to take a step back and examine your sales coaching process. These best practices will optimize your sales coaching process, increase digital adoption and ensure your sales enablement program makes the biggest impact.

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1 Sales Tips and Techniques

SALES METHODOLOGIES

Sales methodologies are practically a dime a dozen and all have their pluses and minuses. Whether you swear by the Challenger Method, the Sandler Selling System or something in between, make sure your reps fully understand the ins and outs of your preferred method and know the steps to convert a lead into a customer.

Regardless of your company's sales model, every rep should be familiar with the four mental stages a prospect passes through before making a purchase: Attention, Interest, Desire, Action. Known as AIDA, these four phases are also attributed to the marketing funnel and should serve as the framework for all of the sales enablement content that your team produces.

When account executives encounter an objection or need to move a prospect from one phase to another, they need to know where the lead falls within the AIDA model. If a rep pushes bottom-of-the-funnel content too early, their mis-timing will feel too pushy at such an early stage.

Pro tip

DOWNLOAD "JBARROWS FILLING THE FUNNEL" COURSE TIPS FOR FREE!

PROSPECTING

When reps are prospecting, it's easy to want to put the cart before the horse or show your hand too early. Sales reps get excited to talk with leads so it's not uncommon to try and sell the entire solution on the first call. Instead, encourage reps in this stage to sell the idea by gaining the prospect's attention and creating interest. After all, this is the top of the AIDA model and is only meant to open the door to future conversations.

Reps should quantify the time they need (such as a 15-minute call) for the next conversation so the lead knows what to expect. Conversely, if they do advance to the next stage, reps need to stick to the proposed length of time to set an expectation of trust for future calls.

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TARGET AUDIENCE

It's easy to assume you know your target audience and ideal customer(s), but as markets change, technology evolves and buyer behaviors shift, it's never a bad idea to periodically reexamine your customer profiles. Be forewarned, persona work requires heavy lifting from sales, product, and marketing teams. But once this exercise is complete, it becomes easier to create detailed sales enablement content that solves specific pain points as leads move through the AIDA funnel.

After your reps know the intended audience to go after, sales managers will need to create parameters for lead scoring and buckets or tiers for the leads to live. With this in mind, it's helpful to research as many characteristics as possible before categorizing a lead. Specifically, these qualifiers should be considered:

- **Industry size**
- **Annual revenue**
- **Number of employees**
- **Competitors**
- **Technologies used**

Once you've performed this exercise, it's much easier to identify a Tier One lead who meets your ideal customer profile versus a lead who's not part of your target market.

WHO ARE THE DECISION-MAKERS?

Sales reps are often hungry for leads and want to talk to anyone who will listen. While this excitement is contagious and admirable, it can also lead to time wasted. Knowing the target market is only half the battle. It's crucial for sales managers to spend time identifying who in an organization will be the solution champion, who owns the budget, and who has the final say.

Rather than spinning wheels talking to someone who ultimately has no purchasing power, this research can be done from the Top-down or Bottom-up to crack into a new account. Overall, the Top-down approach provides more opportunities for entry because executives are easy to find on social networking sites and will typically be inclined to offer referrals for internal champions.

2 Creating the Right Content

Once the sales team is familiar with your sales methodologies, target audiences and have started prospecting, the next focus should be on sales enablement content. Collaboration between marketing and the learning/development managers is crucial to develop sales enablement resources that will have the most impact.

When creating a sales enablement content library, here are some of the best resources to develop for sales reps to lead prospects through the funnel:

- **PLAYBOOKS:** While these can be a bit ambiguous from one org to another, at a minimum, playbooks should provide your sales strategies, best practices, and KPIs but also your persona work, call scripts, battle cards, pricing, and product specifications. Your playbook should be the total guide for any sales rep to follow.
- **PERSONAS:** As mentioned earlier, this will identify your target buyer in your industry and steer reps toward the best solutions for each prospect.
- **PRODUCT BRIEFS:** No one likes being unprepared for a technical question, so giving reps a brief that highlights each product or solution with specifications and detailed information simplifies conversations when hard questions arise.
- **CALL SCRIPTS:** Knowing how to move past objections can make or break the deal, and call scripts provide a great visual aid to guide reps through common hurdles they may face.
- **CASE STUDIES:** Case studies provide an excellent leave behind for a rep to send to a prospect to further solidify the reason your product or service is the right choice. These stories can be very focused and helpful when selling to a specific vertical, industry, company size, or solution.
- **FRAMEWORK FOR SUCCESS:** A matrix or framework allows reps to know what they'll be evaluated on and how success is defined within the company. It gives them the parameters to work toward and know up front rather than guessing.

Your sales enablement library will need to be constantly updated as the market and your offerings evolve. Because time equals money for sales reps, it's critical for sales reps to have immediate access to the right content at the right time to effectively engage with prospects.

Pro tip

SALES ENABLEMENT CONTENT SHOULD BE UP-TO-DATE AND LIVE IN A CENTRAL LIBRARY THAT CAN BE ACCESSED FROM ANY APPLICATION SO REPS DON'T WASTE TIME SEARCHING FOR OUTDATED INFORMATION.

3 Measuring Sales Enablement Success

It's the sales enablement team's responsibility to ensure their company's training programs are effective, scalable and successful. To do this, sales training needs a multi-touch approach that includes ongoing, reinforced learning throughout the employee's tenure. Expecting a rep to memorize every change is nearly impossible, as research shows that within one hour, people will have forgotten an average of 50 percent of the information presented to them.[4] Instead, learning should be treated as an investment in your employees' continuing education that will create more opportunities for long-term success.

Here are some tips to measure the effectiveness of your program:

- Identify the various stages your reps could be in at any given time (new hires vs seasoned employees who need reinforcement).
- Decide who trains sales reps within each stage i.e., seasoned reps can train new SDRs.
- Design your training materials around each level.
- Don't forget that managers need training too. Just because they're in a leadership position doesn't mean they automatically know how to be effective trainers.

When training is complete, don't assume every employee walked away with the same level of understanding, as everyone learns differently. In a recent Sales Training Survey we conducted with JB Sales of 100 account executives, 67% said the lack of reinforcement after a training session impacted their ability to put their training into practice. Meanwhile, 18% said having too much information at once was the hurdle. This data only further highlights the need for microsized learning and ongoing assessments to ensure teams are comprehending your sales enablement training.

To fully assess the effectiveness of your sales enablement program, test your employees' knowledge through quizzes, certifications and stand and deliver presentations. These don't have to be scary or challenging, however. Enablement teams can incentivize the process with awards, round robin practice sessions, and encourage peer feedback to give newer reps the confidence they need to close deals.

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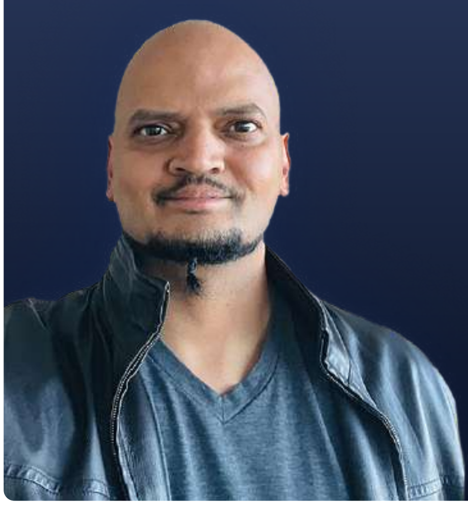
COACHING TOOLS CAN REDUCE FRICTION

It's natural for sales reps to experience frustration during training and after, especially if not given adequate feedback. In addition to robust content, sales reps will benefit from coaching tools that quantify and track the effectiveness of their conversations. Sales engagement platforms and conversation software provide instant feedback for trainers to evaluate how the rep is performing. With this knowledge, enablement teams can increase ramp time, generate productivity, cultivate a library of successful calls, and ultimately prove ROI of the enablement program through scorecards and skill gap assessments.

EXPERIENCE DIGITAL ADOPTION AND SALES ENABLEMENT SUCCESS

When sales reps are properly trained, receive ongoing feedback and given opportunities for two-way communication, it's easy to create an environment for success. Spekit's digital enablement platform provides a truly innovative approach to learning by reinforcing training through bite-sized, contextual resources that can be accessed across any tool. Content surfaces directly within a rep's preferred application the exact moment a question arises. As a result, trainers can achieve total digital tool adoption, onboard reps faster, scale and measure the success of their enablement program, and equip reps to be more self-sufficient.



Outreach

At Outreach, **our mission is to help sales reps** build pipeline and close that pipeline faster and more efficiently. **Spekit aligns with this mission** by allowing our reps to be self-sufficient in mastering their tools, processes and the continuous changes to our business in a contextual and intuitive way.

Harish Mohan
SVP OF REVENUE EXCELLENCE AND OPERATIONS, OUTREACH.IO

SOURCES: **1.** G2 Sales Enablement Statistics | **2.** Spekit/J. Barrows Survey | **3.** Spotio | **4.** Learning Solutions Magazine

To learn more about how Spekit helps sales enablement teams accelerate training and productivity:

Sign up for a demo

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