Turn Your Learning Platform Into a Sales Enablement Machine

Everyone knows that generating revenue is an organization's ultimate goal. After all, revenue is what keeps the lights on and people employed. On the front lines are an enterprises' sales staff, those tasked with taking the strategically sourced leads from marketing to close as many valuable deals as possible to stimulate growth and take the company to the next level.

But doing so can be a challenge if sales staff aren't motivated to push the envelope or equipped with the tools they need to drive performance.

Indeed, members of any sales team likely have many balls in the air at any given time. Yet, many organizations aren't giving their sales teams the training they need in an age where learning is continuous and technology's influence on the way we work is stronger than ever before.

Learning, and more specifically the way people learn, has changed. On top of that, sales teams are faced with more distractions and are busier than ever before. Most sales training activities remain rooted in formal and event-based training, resulting in sales teams that are served unstimulating and poorly-organized content that may not even be relevant to issues they're dealing with on a day-to-day basis, without any post-training reinforcement. Participants get used to spending an intensive week during which they're fed buzzwords, industry trends and actions items they should take home to be successful, but that's met with little retention.

It's estimated that U.S. companies invest more than $70 billion annually on sales training, with more than 75% of them using classroom training as their primary way to train their salespeople. Yet, today's tech-savvy, Millennial-dominated workforce doesn't respond well to these training modalities. No matter how talented a sales person may be, and no matter how many deals they close, at the end of the day, that person is a human being and human beings can only retain so much knowledge. That's why we only retain about 25% of what we see or hear – and forget about 80% of the information we learn if it's not directly applied within two weeks of learning it.

> **THE AVERAGE COMPANY SPENDS $10,000 TO $15,000 HIRING AN INDIVIDUAL AND ONLY $2,000 A YEAR IN SALES TRAINING.**
>
> **Source:** *Effective Onboarding: The Foundation of Success*

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Research shows salespeople tend to forget most of what they've learned within a month, so they need time to apply their new knowledge and skills, and later, the means to reinforce what they learned. The ongoing application and practice of these insights makes a new skill a habit. In addition, sales teams are motivated to learn and often seek out new sources for information, but they don't appreciate having their time wasted with drawn-out training sessions or jumping around between applications. By placing dynamic, self-paced digital content into the context of their workflow, a company can foster a more dynamic training environment.

Once learning becomes part of the workplace culture, it's easier to address learning at the point of need, and gives users a way to access necessary information when and where they need it.

How is this accomplished? Enter sales enablement.

What is Sales Enablement?

Sales enablement brings together a set of tools designed to equip sales people with the knowledge, skills and content they need to maximize the value of each and every buyer interaction, whether it be in or outbound, real-time or virtual. Sales enablement can have a direct impact on how your sales teams sell because it involves a systematic approach to increasing sales productivity by supporting sales reps with the content, training and they need to close more deals.

ENABLEMENT FOCUS

PERFORMANCE

PROCESS
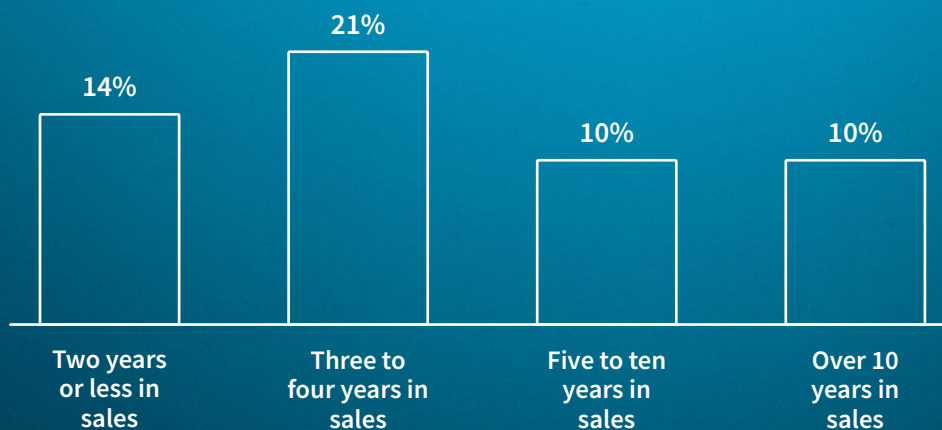
POLICIES

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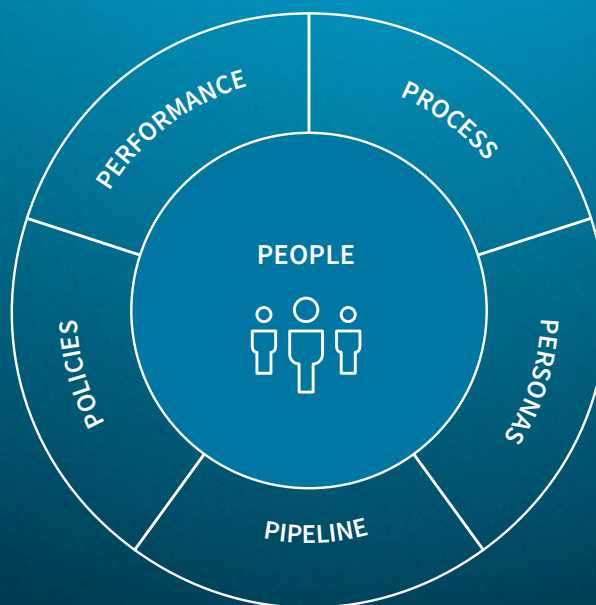
Despite the fast pace at which change occurs in the wild world of sales, the goal will always remain the same: sell more, better, faster.

That's why sales enablement is so important.

Maximizing your underline investment in sales training requires companies to consider a fully integrated approach to reinforcement, including sales coaching by frontline managers, on-demand e-learning and tools and job aids. and tools and job aids.

SALESPEOPLE WITH THREE TO FOUR YEARS OF TENURE SPENT THE MOST TIME ON TRAINING

What percentage of your time at work is spent on training?

14%	21%	10%	10%
Two years or less in sales	Three to four years in sales	Five to ten years in sales	Over 10 years in sales

Sales professionals with three to four years of selling experience spend 50% more time on training than those with two years or less and 110% as those with five years or more. This is likely because rookies aren't sure if they're going to stay in sales and veterans don't believe they need to develop further.

Source: HubSpot

But tools and skills change frequently. There's an endless flow of new products and services, customer demands, meaning that there is always a learning gap to fill, creating new opportunities to enable your sales team.

The way these opportunities are delivered is changing. Reality is, the demands of today's workforce requires less dependence on formal training activities (workshops, conferences) that take your sales teams away from their jobs. Effective sales enablement demands that learning plays a key role in workplace culture. Doing so makes it easier to deliver learning at the point of need, giving users access to valuable information when and where they need it.

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Fortunately, we live in an age in which we're surrounded by a world rich with technology and content designed to make business (and learning) more convenient. And your learning platform can be the king of all sales enablement tools – if it's used properly.

> *"FOR EVERY ADDITIONAL YEAR A CLOSER WORKS FOR THE SAME SALES ORGANIZATION, DEAL SIZE INCREASES BY 30%."*
>
> *– Dave Elkington, Profiling for Profit*

WHY YOUR EXISTING SALES TRAINING STRATEGY ISN'T WORKING

Your Learning Content is Dull And Overly Complex. The desired outcome of any organization's sales training initiatives is almost always going to be…increased sales (nothing new!) Yet professional development isn't ever achieved overnight. To illustrate this point, consider author Malcolm Gladwell's Rule of 10,000. Described in his 2008 book, Outliers, Gladwell suggests that mastering any skills requires 10,000 hours of practice, using Bill Gates' dedication to the countless hours he spent learning how to code and eventually build Microsoft into one of the world's biggest companies. Or think about driver's ed: driving classes don't automatically make you a better driver – you actually need to get out on the road and behind the wheel to apply that knowledge learned in the classroom.

The goal of any sales training initiative is fairly obvious: to increase sales. But we must remember that change is never automatic. Encouraging sales staff to adjust the behaviours they know well will never be an easy job, but is possible when done so with the right tools alongside engaging and valuable learning content.

Sales staff struggle to retain valuable knowledge. There's far too much reliance on formal and event-based training without much effort on reinforcement afterward. Meanwhile, your people are too busy to get excited about learning, instead constantly thinking about their next deal (not a bad thing, per se).

How do you really know if the content served in these formal and event-based settings is actually connecting with sales people in a way that they can take it and apply that information in the field to close more sales?

To maximize ROI on your sales training initiatives, consider using a blended approach using a variety of learning modalities (formal, social, experiential) that consist of facilitated reinforcement, sales coaching by frontline managers, and on-demand reinforcement enabled by your learning platform.

HOW DO SALES PEOPLE GATHER KNOWLEDGE TO IMPROVE THEIR PERFORMANCE?

50% Their peers

44% Their managers

35% Team training resources

24% The media
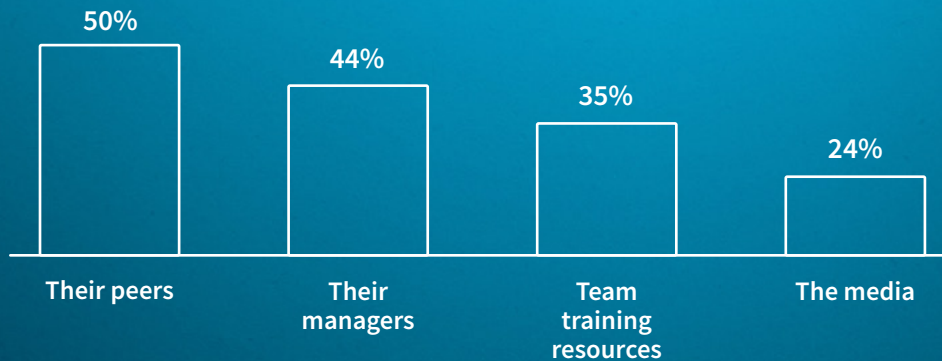
WHY YOUR LEARNING PLATFORM IS THE TOOL YOU NEED TO BOOST SALES ENABLEMENT

The modern enterprise needs training opportunities that empower their sales teams to ensure they meet their goals as they evolve. A modern learning management system (LMS) can help you bring these learning strategies to life, giving your sales teams the tools, the skills and the knowledge they need to achieve (and exceed) not only their business goals, but also to grow as individuals (and a team). Learning content should focus not only on developing job-related skills, but also those needed to grow as people – interpersonal skills that may help them establish deep-rooted relationships with lucrative, new clients, or establish certain individuals as go-to resources for other members of the team when they need support.

Indeed, your learning platform helps you reach your entire sales teams, providing critical information on-the-go, whenever they may need it most, while making learning fun. Tap into the well-known competitive nature of successful sales teams with learning content that leverages gamification, bite-sized video, inputs from internal subject-matter experts, within a learning environment based on models such as the 70:20:10 framework.

Tap into their competitive side. Gamify your sales training activities with leaderboards, points, badges and rewards to inspire some healthy competition within, motivating staff to learn more, retain more valuable information, and deploy that information faster. When your learning content is designed effectively and is relevant to their needs, you're equipping sales teams with the skills and knowledge they need to drive sales performance for the organization.

Whether its leaderboards, points or badges, levels, or even rewards, e-learning is an incredibly effective way to create a healthy sense of competition that's fun for the entire sales team. Not to say it's a silver bullet, but it does motivate staff to learn more and learn faster to ensure they perform better in assessments, as each learning achievement opens the door to a new challenge, along with a new incentive.

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Indeed, when e-learning courses are relevant to their needs and designed in a way that satisfies their learning expectations, this performance produces a more skilled and knowledgeable sales team – and more revenue for the organization.

A key to learning retention is follow-up, which is why gamifying elements of the learning experience that encourage repetition are so effective. Transforming cognitive knowledge into practical knowledge doubles the learners' retention rate by designing game elements that replicate specific situations and problems sales teams may encounter in the field.

Why gamify your sales training experience?

BENEFITS	RESULTS
Reduce stress and anxiety	Improve employee morale
Improve performance	Facilitate behavioural changes
Create healthy competition	Accelerate performance levels

"Gamification has proven to be very successful in engaging and motivating employees to change their behavior, develop skills or solve problems. Employees are more willing to change their behavior and adopt more sustainable habits by challenging themselves and their colleagues."

- Brian Burke, Gartner Inc.

Establish brand message consistency. Sales teams are the face of an organization, brand ambassadors on the front lines, meeting with prospects and existing customers. Their personalities reflect that of the organization and its purpose, ultimately having a powerful influence on the way people perceive your business.

This means that every sales representative must have a consistent understanding of the business, its culture, its products – and how they should be interacting with customers. There may, however, be issues getting that information into the hands of all of those within the sales organization, as they may be located in different cities, or even countries. Getting them all together in a single location isn't the easiest feat, nevermind an expensive one.

Fortunately, your learning platform allows salespeople to access the same up-to-date content, no matter where they are in the world. Your learning platform is their portal to live product demonstrations and virtual ILT sessions with company higher-ups, which can be absorbed from their own desk, couch or the car.

Serve up-to-date product knowledge training when they need it most. Consider this: sales reps spend up to 43 hours every single month searching for information. That's more than a month's worth of work focused on finding information they can use to close a deal – and 43 hours they're not actively selling. Indeed, sales reps need the right information to address individual prospect and existing customer needs, but if the information they need exists, they shouldn't have to spend so much time looking for it. Sales enablement plays a crucial role in ensuring that the content they need is front and centre to engage with and share with prospects.

Healthy organizations are those that evolve with its product to emerge as leaders within their industry. But a product is only as good the sales person's ability to sell it. That means you must be able to provide product updates to sales people in the field on the fly, outlining new features, benefits and applications. Ongoing product knowledge training is absolutely critical to any sales role, but they need a tool that enables it at the point of need. Your learning platform is the most effective way to do so easily and effectively, while saving sales teams' time and improving their product knowledge.

> *AROUND THREE IN FOUR HIGH-PERFORMING SALES ORGANIZATIONS ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO PROVIDE ONGOING TRAINING AS COMPARED TO LOW-PERFORMING ONES.*
>
> *Source: HubSpot*

Enable learning on-the-go (and in the flow of work). The role of L&D has expanded to encompass not only formal employee training, but also the different modalities of informal social learning and knowledge exchange.

> *CONTINUOUS SALES TRAINING = 50% HIGHER NET SALES PER EMPLOYEE*

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Today's L&D professionals wear two hats, as both curator and creator, supporting the programs and systems that make in the flow learning moments possible, such as creating flexible, on-demand formal training content, but also ensuring knowledge from experts across the organizations is achieved and retained.

To support learning in the flow of work, L&D professionals must focus not only on the learning aspect, but also in the flow of work aspect.

Top organizations today are already doing so, developing the digital ecosystems that enable learning in the flow of work. The applications that make up these ecosystems not only integrate with each other but also support the discovery of knowledge and quick learning from anywhere.

While the strategy and execution will likely differ from company to company, the goal will always remain the same: embed flexible learning content into your platform in which people work the most to maximize the training they get as they are working. Doing so ensure that no matter the problem, the learning platform will solve it for any employees, while also building an infrastructure that supports on-demand, easily searchable, mobile-friendly learning content in a variety of formats that can be accessed on the devices individual employees use the most.

LEARNING IN THE FLOW OF WORK: A SALES-FOCUSED EXAMPLE

Say your sales team uses a CRM and you want to build a system that enables learning on demand for those sales teams. You want to make training topics easily discoverable by integrating your CRM with your learning platform.

So, as the L&D lead, you record a series of soft skill training modules designed to coach sales reps on customer interactions. Maybe you've involved them in the videos themselves, or encouraged them to use your learning platform to record quick knowledge dumps on their smartphones into your content repository. These videos could be helpful to them to close deals, while you curate the best of those videos with the most useful knowledge to share with new sales reps as they join your growing team.

So here's the test: a sales team member is working an account that should be a quick win, but a competitor is also pitching them and your rep is having trouble closing the sale. If you have a video in your knowledge base that covers "overcoming objections" that video would be easily discoverable and that person watches it. Then, the sales person searches the CRM for information on that competitor, returning a point by point teardown of your product compared to your competitor, which was uploaded by marketing to the learning platform's content repository.

This kind of eLearning is an effective method for presenting on-demand skills training for busy professionals. It's important to reinforce formal training with sufficient post-training field exercises and on-going skills practice, such as sales coaching from frontline sales managers.

Without ever leaving the CRM, you're giving your sales reps a place to learn at the points they need it most, in this case, ways to teardown a competitor by watching videos from other reps and preparing themselves for their next client meeting, ready to move forward with the deal.

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Your Learning Platform, Your Sales Enablement Machine

To maximize ROI on your sales training initiatives, consider using a blended approach with a variety of learning modalities (formal, social, experiential) that consist of facilitated reinforcement, sales coaching by frontline managers, and on-demand reinforcement enabled by your learning platform.

The better your organization's sales team performs, the more people will know about your organization and what it does – an awareness that's guaranteed to generate more business. It is therefore imperative that your sales staff is trained effectively to ensure they're communicating your product effectively to prospects in the field.

Fortunately, the solution to these ongoing issues is actually quite simple, and involves equipping your sales teams with the tools they need to succeed and enable further growth.

When the right learning technology is paired with the right content, you can turn your L&D activities into a sales enablement machine. Docebo is the learning platform designed with the end-user in mind, giving learning administrators easy ways to configure personalized learning experiences that drive engagement and performance.

Docebo is the learning solution you need to bring your sales enablement activities to life, and gives your sales people the tools they need to develop the knowledge they need to drive performance and boost revenues.

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Docebo is a learning platform that is laser-focused on changing the way people learn through a cloud-based, user-friendly technology that is built for the modern user. Established in 2005, Docebo offers a learning ecosystem for companies and their employees, partners and customers that is designed to increase performance and learning engagement. Docebo is a learner-centric technology, embraced for its elegance and ability to blend social and formal learning. Docebo provides a scalable pricing model and a robust set of integrations and APIs, paired with reliable support available 24/7.

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