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# Industrial Marketing Management

## Understanding Sales Enablement in Complex B2B Companies - Uncovering Similarities and Differences in a Cross-Functional and Multi-Level Case Study

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<b>Abstract:</b>	As the sales function continuous to evolve, organizations are increasingly investing in sales enablement, which entails aligning resources across different organizational functions and hierarchical levels to support salespeople in their jobs. Extant literature on sales enablement has been either conceptual or based on general empirical assessments. For a more nuanced understanding, we examine how sales enablement is defined and deployed in a single firm. We report the findings from a single company case study that involved 25 in-depth interviews with cross-functional respondents from sales enablement, marketing, sales operations, sales professionals, and sales managers. Our study shows that the impact of sales enablement on the organization's success is perceived as crucial; however, all stakeholders have different understandings about sales enablement. Findings indicate that different organizational hierarchy levels and functions exhibit substantially different perspectives on and understandings of sales enablement. This ambiguity may have an impact on the effective deployment of sales enablement initiatives within a firm and could result in suboptimal outcomes. We conclude with ideas for future research and provide managerial implications.
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## **Understanding Sales Enablement in Complex B2B Companies - Uncovering Similarities and Differences in a Cross-Functional and Multi-Level Case Study**

### **Abstract**

As the sales function continues to evolve, organizations are increasingly investing in sales enablement, which entails aligning resources across different organizational functions and hierarchical levels to support salespeople in their jobs. Extant literature on sales enablement has been either conceptual or based on general empirical assessments. For a more nuanced understanding, we examine how sales enablement is defined and deployed in a single firm. We report the findings from a single company case study that involved 25 in-depth interviews with cross-functional respondents from sales enablement, marketing, sales operations, sales professionals, and sales managers. Our study shows that the impact of sales enablement on the organization's success is perceived as crucial; however, all stakeholders have different understandings about sales enablement. Findings indicate that different organizational hierarchy levels and functions exhibit substantially different perspectives on and understandings of sales enablement. This ambiguity may have an impact on the effective deployment of sales enablement initiatives within a firm and could result in suboptimal outcomes. We conclude with ideas for future research and provide managerial implications.

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**Understanding Sales Enablement in Complex B2B Companies - Uncovering  
Similarities and Differences in a Cross-Functional and Multi-Level Case Study**

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## **Understanding Sales Enablement in Complex B2B Companies: Uncovering Similarities and Differences in a Cross-Functional and Multi-Level Case Study**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Business-to-business (B2B) sales organizations face a myriad of challenges today, including dealing with increasingly demanding customers, rolling out digital transformation projects, managing supply chain issues – and all of this while dealing with the repercussions of a global pandemic (Guenzi & Habel, 2020; Hartmann & Lussier, 2020; Rangarajan et al., 2021; Sharma et al., 2020). Against this backdrop, sales organizations have also been facing an increasing complexity in managing their most valuable assets – their salespeople. Recent statistics do not paint a rosy picture for sales organizations. According to Xactly (2021), in a sample of over 2,000 sales leaders, 58% of companies saw voluntary turnover of their salespeople and close to 44% of salespeople planned to leave their jobs in the next two years (Prater, 2021). Furthermore, according to a study by CSO Insights, only 53% of salespeople reached their quota in 2019 (CSO Insights, 2019), indicating issues that sales organizations have in supporting their salespeople to become more effective in their jobs (Efti, 2020). A combination of all the factors above indicates that sales organizations need to manage their salespeople better and help them be productive in their jobs, which would also affect their bottom lines.

The COVID pandemic has exacerbated the challenges that sales organizations face. In addition to struggling to equip salespeople with the right tools and content to be effective in their job, companies also needed to adapt onboarding and training new sales hires while providing them with adequate coaching to deal with difficult situations (Wiseman et al., 2022). In this general setting, increasing attention has been given to sales enablement as an internal service

provided to customer-facing employees and their managers (Rapp & Beeler, 2021). According to a recent industry study (Highspot, 2020), there has been a substantial increase of interest among companies in a sales enablement function (i.e., a 343% increase between 2015 and 2020) and increased resources dedicated to sales enablement. In a similar vein, the sales enablement platform market (i.e., technologies to help aid sales enablement) is estimated to grow from 1.7 billion USD in 2020 to 7.8 billion USD in 2028, hinting at the importance of sales enablement to sales organizations (Watson, 2021). However, based on the increased complexity of the sales process (Rangarajan et al., 2021) and the report that salespeople frequently do not meet their quotas (CSO Insights, 2019), there is growing interest among sales practitioners to understand how to effectively implement sales enablement within an organization.

While sales enablement is a term prevalent among sales and marketing practitioners, there has been a burgeoning stream of academic literature on this topic among academics (Peterson & Dover, 2020, 2021; Plangger et al., 2020; Plank et al., 2018; Rangarajan et al., 2020, 2021; Rapp & Beeler, 2021; Singh et al., 2019). Interestingly enough, previous research in marketing already stressed the need for better marketing and sales alignment in companies to drive performance (Biemans et al., 2022; Cespedes, 1993; Guenzi & Troilo, 2006; Homburg et al., 2008; Rouziès et al. 2013; Rouziès & Hulland, 2014). Sales enablement today involves even broader cross-functional efforts in organizations, going beyond just marketing and sales (Peterson et al. 2021; Rangarajan et al. 2020). According to Peterson and Dover (2020), sales enablement intends to align multiple resources of a company to optimize sales efforts and to increase sales effectiveness. In the academic space, one of the core aspects of sales enablement is that it is not merely focused on frontline salespeople, but has a broad focus that considers multiple stakeholders. This includes the teams responsible for content creation, recruitment,

onboarding, training, coaching, technology implementation, and maintenance, as well as strategic tasks (Rapp & Beeler, 2021). In keeping with this, Peterson et al. (2020) map out a cross-functional approach to sales enablement and use insights from various industries into how the function of sales enablement has evolved. Rangarajan et al. (2020) provide a conceptual framework for sales enablement and describe various topics of interest to sales academics. Furthermore, Peterson and Dover (2021) highlight the current state of sales enablement across the globe and identify challenges faced by organization when dealing with the effectiveness of their sales enablement initiatives, which mirrors the challenges suggested by practitioners. Basing ourselves on extant research (Peterson & Dover, 2020; Rangarajan et al., 2020; Rapp & Beeler, 2021), in this study, we define sales enablement as a set of cross-functional initiatives within an organization aimed at improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the sales force.

While existing academic work in this domain has either been conceptual in nature (Rangarajan et al., 2020) or focused on sales enablement as generally perceived across many industries (Peterson et al., 2021), there is a need to understand in more detail how sales enablement is defined and deployed in an organization. In fact, companies are spending more and more for technology per salesperson and developing modern sales technology stacks beyond customer relationship management (CRM), which increases the amount of actionable data across sales operations to analyze sales performance (Salesforce, 2020). However, if sales enablement should be more than the sum of the individual contributing parts, such as organizational learning, change management, content creation, or CRM (Peterson et al., 2021), it is necessary to talk to all stakeholders within one company for a better understanding of the concept and its realization (Mullins & Agnihotri, 2022). To this end, an in-depth study within an organization which has implemented sales enablement initiatives, is required to obtain findings that can highlight the

challenges sales organizations face, when deploying the same. Such a study would allow for a nuanced examination of different viewpoints on sales enablement across company functions and hierarchy levels. Furthermore, understanding challenges associated with deploying sales enablement is critical before further studies can focus on measuring the success of these initiatives.

One key area in the research mentioned above is to understand how sales enablement is actually embedded into the strategic and operational activities of a firm, as well as how it is deployed, and which challenges are encountered during its deployment. However, prior research has been either conceptual in nature or examined sales enablement on a very general level, without considering the strategic and operational nuances involved in how a sales organization deploys sales enablement. We argue that more research is needed on how an organization goes about enabling its internal stakeholders who interact with customers – what we understand as customer-facing teams. Thus, the purpose of this article is to use a single-company case study to examine how sales enablement is defined and deployed as well as which challenges the organization faces in the process. We explore the collective understanding of sales enablement itself and sales enablement strategies as the basis of sales enablement management. If there are differences between functions and hierarchy levels, we investigate possible consequences. Doing so helps add an empirical lens that expands the conceptual work by Rangarajan et al. (2020) and sheds light on the actual process of sales enablement in organizations, thereby extending the perspective provided by Peterson et al. (2020). Overall, our study contributes to the evolving stream of research on sales enablement and to the literature on the increasing role of marketing and sales operations to help inside sales roles, while also adding to the literature on sales training based on new technologies (Chaker et al., 2022).



## **2. CURRENT LITERATURE ON SALES TECHNOLOGIES AND SALES ENABLEMENT**

As part of technological development within the selling process, point solutions such as CRM have become part of broader technology platforms (Gottlieb et al., 2020; Mullins & Agnihotri, 2022). Within these platforms, data from several resources are collected centrally to be used across several applications, such as marketing automation or sales engagement platforms (Singh et al., 2019). The execution happens via diverse channels, such as webinars, chats, social media platforms, etc. (Dwivedi et al., 2021).

Peterson and Dover (2020) consider CRM as one element of sales enablement in their "dynamic capability approach". In it, they criticize the often-non-value-adding use of CRM, if CRM is brought into use as just one sales enablement element detached from other components. However, the authors conclude that the ability to use CRM and thus create value in the context of a sales enablement program can be achieved by integrating all enablement elements. If this dynamic capability is missing, then even the best CRM will fail (Maklan et al., 2011; Maklan & Knox, 2009). Research across different contexts and cases has provided justification for this claim, as CRM is often not implemented and integrated into daily work processes in a value-creating way (Salesforce, 2022). Almost two decades ago, one of the most important CRM risk factors was described to be a lack in cross-functional coordination (Bligh & Turk, 2004).

In an environment where alignment and coordination take place, a dispersion of influence or distribution of power among functions would take place (Krohmer et al., 2002). A recent

study focuses on such a cross-functional coordination: the role of marketing in sales contexts, specifically, the impact of marketing-sales alignment (Peterson et al., 2015). The findings suggest a potentially high return-on-investment for companies that devote time and resources to improving the relationship between the sales and marketing functions.

Another reason for challenges arising during deployment of CRM is the lack of understanding among executives about a CRM strategy (Bohling et al., 2006; Payne & Frow, 2005). If such a strategic understanding - which is supposed to provide a foundation and framework - does not exist, it is not surprising that employees do not develop a strategic understanding of the potential benefits. Ultimately, what should be a strategic initiative is therefore too often degenerated to a simple tool. Peterson et al. (2021) see this danger for sales enablement as well and therefore describe change management as another central element for preventing myopic sales enablement activities. Already for the implementation of CRM, Payne and Frow (2005, 2006) postulate an accompanying change management in order to give an answer to the inherent complexity and to generate value (Bohling et al., 2006).

Per definition, sales enablement is considered to be overarching, integrating multiple organizational perspectives (Peterson & Dover, 2020; Rangarajan et al., 2020; Rapp & Beeler, 2021). Therefore, sales enablement programs should take a multi-functional, multi-hierarchical approach that considers different management levels with different task contents and perspectives. The multifunctional perspective can also be justified, among other things, based on the CRM element from the work of Peterson et al. (2021). CRM affects multiple functions, such as sales, marketing, services, etc. This raises the question of how to learn from the mistakes of implementing CRM and what could be the success driver for value-added sales enablement.

One of the first definitions of sales enablement can be traced back to a global market research company that described it as a role and a function within an organization to support sales activities (Santucci, 2010). This definition is based on the challenges of setting up a dedicated sales enablement team that works across traditional boundaries and reporting levels, since coaches, marketers, and salespeople have different responsibilities, goals, and objectives (Santucci, 2010). It is obvious that the internal alignment between the responsible departments for sales, marketing, operations, training, etc. is therefore difficult to achieve (Massey & Dawes, 2007; Peterson et al., 2015). The following table provides an overview of existing academic articles on sales enablement.

**---Insert Table 1 around here---**

The current academic perspective on sales enablement can be divided into three main areas: sales strategy, sales technology, and salespeople as human resources (Rapp & Beeler, 2021). One of the key findings is that sales enablement is mainly viewed as a sales technology or sales strategy. To the best of our knowledge, only one study has focused on the right deployment of sales enablement and its impact on sales performance – in combination with the technology acceptance model (Dilg Beachum, 2021).

In general, sales enablement research is mainly based on findings across several companies or as a conceptual construct. Whether the academic literature considers sales enablement primarily as a strategy, a sales technology, or from a human resources perspective (Rapp & Beeler, 2021), it is always essential that different roles and functions within one organization are aligned to empower customer-facing teams. To the best of our knowledge, no academic article provides an in-depth analysis of how different stakeholders within an organization view the sales enablement concept, realize it in their daily routines, and how this

contributes to the strategic objectives of a company. We believe that different understandings of sales enablement by divergent functions and at different hierarchical levels could lead to inefficiencies in the deployment, adoption, and the consequent effectiveness of these sales enablement initiatives.

### **3. METHOD**

#### ***3.1 Choice of method***

Due to the still limited research on sales enablement, especially with regards to intra-organizational perspectives across functions and levels, we conducted an inductive case study (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018). A case study offers the opportunity to study a new phenomenon directly in real-life situations and “natural” contexts (Bonoma, 1985; Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2018). We deem this approach particularly suitable, as “inductive case studies can be used to answer “how” and “why” questions in unexplored research areas” (Mills et al., 2010, p. 459). Moreover, a case study “allows studying phenomena in a flexible perspective, leaving room for the identification of missing factors” (Ivens et al., 2016, p. 107). To gain a better understanding of relationships and interactions within dynamic environments, such as organizational perspectives on sales enablement, it is crucial to get different perspectives from different stakeholders (Beverland & Lindgreen, 2010). Within sales research, case studies have already been conducted to explore how critical events shape the development of sales organizations (Beeler et al., 2017), how sales organizations can become more customer-centric (Guenzi & Storbacka, 2015), and how relationships between sales and marketing work (Mero & Taiminen, 2016).

We employed a single case study because it was more relevant for our research to understand different perspectives within the same organizational context rather than comparing

sales enablement initiatives across multiple companies firms that likely differ (e.g., in size, financial performance, or market position). This decision is also supported by existing literature, according to which successful sales enablement efforts require close intra-organizational collaboration across functions and levels (Rangarajan et al., 2020). Moreover, a recent study among 225 salespeople from 69 sales organizations highlighted that with a multi-company, survey-based research approach, it is not possible to examine variations across different functions and levels within a single organization (Mullins & Agnihotri, 2022). To better understand intrafirm dynamics, a case study within a single organization is needed.

For our research topic, a case study is also appropriate, because we investigate the complex set-up of customer-facing teams, including sales enablement, marketing, sales operations,<sup>1</sup> and sales, while considering the interdependencies between these functions and levels. In order to gain in-depth knowledge and insights, we incorporate multiple units of analysis (e.g., salespeople, marketeers) into a single unit of analysis (i.e., the company) (Yin, 2018).

We therefore aimed for obtaining deep and rich insights into one case company by conducting in-depth interviews with various stakeholders across the organization. This qualitative method avoids imposing presumptions on interviewees in order to obtain a nuanced understanding of different perspectives. The interviews were complemented with secondary data, such as internal strategy documents, sales enablement job postings, statements and articles by managers, and content on company websites. Similar to extant research (e.g., Raja et al., 2022; Vuori & Huy, 2016), data analysis followed an iterative process. When analyzing all of the

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<sup>1</sup> Sales operations or “sales ops” is a newly, specialized sales support function that aims at reducing frictions across sales processes (Frost, 2021). This includes administrative as well as organizational work, such as lead management, territory structuring, compensation plans, and data analytics.

compiled material, we used inductive abstraction to reach a generalized perspective on how sales enablement is implemented within the organization and how stakeholders in different functions and at different levels view it.

### ***3.2 Case selection***

For the case study, we selected a fast growing global company with focus on software-as-a-service (SaaS). SaaS is an internet, cloud-based subscription model for licensing and distribution of software that accounts for a large, growing share of global software sales (Buxmann et al., 2008; Dempsey & Kelliher, 2018). Our case company is publicly listed in the US, has annual revenues of around 1 billion US dollars, and has continuously been growing at rates between 50% and 85% every quarter. The company was founded around 2010 and currently has around 3,000 employees worldwide. This growth requires constant new hiring, onboarding, and empowerment of new sales employees across all global regions. The sales enablement function was specifically created to help in the onboarding of new salespeople and also for reskilling more experienced salespeople. The sales enablement function was established in 2017 and came under the supervision of the Chief Growth Officer. The sales organization consists of sales managers in different regions who are divided into teams of inside sales representatives and more traditional account executives. All new hires in the different sales roles must undergo mandatory onboarding programs, which are part of the sales enablement initiative. Content is primarily created by marketing employees. During the time of our research in mid-2021, a new sales operations team with a dedicated leadership position was being put in place to support the sales managers in their sales activities and performance reports. An overview of the organizational setup is provided in Figure 1.

**---Insert Figure 1 around here---**

The salespeople in the company sell a complex, abstract software for various use-cases and different buyer-personas across customer hierarchies. Depending on the customer's industry as well as corresponding buyer persona, the value proposition differs. The company uses several sales technologies, such as a CRM platform, an e-learning portal, and a centralized storage of sales- and product-related content.

### ***3.3 Case Data Collection***

Drawing from Peterson et al. (2020), we formulated a structured guide that we used for our interviews. In total, we conducted 25 interviews across functions and levels – including sales enablement managers, marketeers, sales operations analysts, sales managers, salespeople, and inside sales representatives. The suggestions and guidelines for qualitative research methods by Corbin and Strauss (2015) were followed. Profiles of interview participants are shown in Table 2. The levels/hierarchies are based on an adapted differentiation by Schneeweiß (1995). Thirteen participants were based in EMEA regions, while twelve were based in in the USA.

**---Insert Table 2 around here---**

The interviews and the questions within the structured topic guide were aimed at understanding how sales enablement is defined and deployed within the organization across different hierarchy levels and functions. The complete topic guide that we used is provided in Appendix 1. Among others, it includes the following questions:

1. How do you define sales enablement?
2. How do you define a sales enablement strategy?
3. How is sales enablement deployed within your organization?
4. How is the effectiveness of sales enablement measured?

Questions 2 and 4 were only used in the interviews with participants from sales enablement, marketing, and sales operations, as well as with sales managers. This was because salespeople and inside sales representatives have no influence on the sales enablement strategy due to their role. In addition, their targets are clearly defined with specific revenue figures to be met (salespeople) or the number of meetings to be booked (inside sales). Thus, there is no direct reference to the effectiveness of sales enablement for these stakeholders.

All participants were informed about the main questions one week before the interview. Each in-depth, semi-structured interview took around 30 minutes and was conducted virtually via the online conference tool Zoom. All interviews were transcribed. The first round of analysis to search for themes across all functions and levels was conducted by the interviewer. Following this, three academic experts, who did not participate the interviews, validated the themes, and worked on the analysis to identify diverging and converging understandings.

We complemented the interviews with various internal and public company information related to sales enablement. For example, we examined job postings by the case company for different sales enablement positions and compiled relevant content that was published on company websites.

## **4. FINDINGS**

### ***4.1 Structure of findings***

To stay within the multi-level und multi-functional approach, the discussion of the findings in this chapter is divided into main similarities and differences across organizational levels and functions. This allows us to be in line with Peterson and Dover's (2020) cross-functional definition of sales enablement. Each of the following section includes the feedback to



the questions mentioned in the previous chapter as well as quotes of the participants. The key themes are provided in Figure 2.

**---Insert Figure 2 around here---**

## ***4.2 Findings by functions***

### ***4.2.1 Sales enablement concept***

One key target of our research is to examine the general understanding of sales enablement from the different perspectives within one company. Across all functions, the sales enablement concept is seen as a serving, proactive role that provides a service to the sales teams. The findings across functions are provided in Table 3.

**---Insert Table 3 around here---**

Within the function of sales enablement, the VP of Growth Strategy had a pragmatic, yet abstract definition of sales enablement, describing it as the realization of the go-to-market strategy. The challenge of empowering all employees globally to run on the same system can be solved if all sales managers are enabled by the sales enablement teams. The sales enablement strategy is described as “*the North Star*” for all growth systems, by breaking the strategy into pieces and different objectives per departments, teams, and individuals. It is up to the sales enablement team to ask how to implement and realize this process. Across all functions and levels, participants have the common understanding of sales enablement as a serving, proactive role, which is also evident in strategy and recruiting material. There is an active part, mainly the sales enablement team that is offering the services, while sales teams are viewed as having a passive part of consuming it. In published company statements, sales enablement is described as equipping salespeople with the right messages to have value-based conversations with customers.

The company intends sales enablement to work across all go-to-market functions. In various material, sales enablement is characterized as collaborative and interdisciplinary, partnering with different internal stakeholders. Accordingly, participants from sales operations and marketing understand cross-functional collaboration as the key to a successful sales enablement. No other group of participants mentioned this topic so forcefully within the context of sales enablement.

*“Marketing should be part of sales enablement, while marketing should be hand in hand with sales teams and working towards aligned KPIs.” (Field Marketing Manager, France)*

The members of these two functions reported a clear demand for closer collaboration with sales to support them better with more personalized, dedicated content (e.g., tailored to regional contexts).

*“If you do not work with salespeople, you do not understand how busy they are and how much pressure they have.” (Senior Field Marketing Manager, Ireland)*  
*“Being able to share the right quantity of information, so salespeople can retain the information, requires a close collaboration.” (Product Marketing Manager, USA)*

While sales operations focus mainly on CRM data, marketing is talking more about a mix of diverse types of resources to serve sales.

*“Making sure the sales teams have the required resources and access to information to be as successful as possible.” (Product Marketing Manager, USA)*

Sales has a strong focus on continuity across the complete sales cycle, because of quickly developing markets and competitors. At the same time, interviewees from sales indicate respect for individual backgrounds, characteristics, knowledge, and experience, which is required to empower every team member in the best way possible. The assumption is that there must be tools or technology in place to ensure that valid data are accessible to have an actual overview of best practices.

*“It is a cookbook along the entire sales funnel, as a collection of the best practices to enable a scalable sales organization.” (RVP, Germany)*

For sales teams and sales, sales enablement management is reduced to a combination of onboarding courses and ongoing sessions, where best practices are shared. Interestingly, the delivery of content to salespeople was not seen as essential to sales enablement, despite this aspect being very prevalent in various sales enablement job descriptions. This is also in contradiction to the current academic understanding of sales enablement (Peterson et al. 2021; Rangarajan et al. 2020).

*“Sales enablement was born out of super complex sales motions; therefore, content is not the center of sales enablement.” (Director of Sales Enablement Operations, USA)*

According to the leader of sales enablement operations, within dynamic software sales cycles where customer-facing teams need to be empowered to conquer new markets, the focus of sales enablement strategies is more on the sales methodology than just the content. Since salespeople cannot learn everything in advance, one sales enablement manager recommends just-in-time enablement such as quick, snack-sized trainings right before customer meetings. However, this has not been deployed, yet. All sales enablement managers confirm that sales enablement is crucial for sales success, but what is currently lacking are real-life examples of sales cycles as well as best practices of won and lost deals.

#### ***4.2.2 Sales enablement strategy***

Internally and in its job postings, the company describes sales enablement as a “critical component” of its growth strategy. In line with these claims, all functions understand the role of sales enablement as crucial for the success in business.

*“Giving the sales teams the tools to be successful in their job.” (RVP, UK)*

Moreover, the Vice President EMEA Sales added that sales enablement is not only about the development of a salesperson, but also about attracting and retaining new talents. Therefore, sales enablement is crucial for the success of a rapidly growing company.

The salespeople we interviewed understood sales enablement as empowering them to be successful. Sales operations and marketing echo this by confirming the fundamental importance of sales enablement.

*“It is the empowerment of sellers to understand their jobs and have less frictions.” (Sales Operations Analyst, USA)*

*“Enabling sales to be more productive, get to quota faster and resources to move opportunities faster.” (Enterprise Account Executive, USA)*

*“Getting necessary tools and information to do proper pipeline generation and outreaches.” (Enterprise Business Development, Ireland)*

#### **4.2.3 Sales enablement deployment**

For the interviewed sales managers, sales enablement is primarily deployed as e-learning, formal trainings, self-service, and knowledge sharing within and across teams. None of the managers mentioned specific content, which is in contrast to the academic understanding, where content plays a primary role (Peterson & Dover, 2020).

*“Trainings are about who we are and what must be done, so it is not deal, but business related.” (Director Enterprise Sales, Germany)*

Even when sales enablement is the foundation for success of their team members, managers reflect that the success of their teams mainly depends on the managers themselves.

*“Most important is leading by example.” (RVP, Germany)*

For salespeople, the core of sales enablement are the onboarding trainings, which are based on e-learning and classroom trainings. In addition, they have ongoing sales and enablement sessions to share knowledge within teams and across regions. Generic content is offered by central teams and accessible via central hubs.

*“We learn the Command-of-the-Message methodology and have a lot of Mindtickle trainings, but I have the tendency to forget them. In addition, we are sharing a lot of experiences across the teams.” (Enterprise Account Executive, Germany)*

The inside sales members echo the core of e-learning. However, for this group, the learning of sales basics and personal development plays an essential role. This group also echoed the availability and use of content that is offered by central teams.

*“You learn how to execute sales itself, which is applicable for any product.” (Enterprise Business Development, Netherlands)*

*“They take you by the hands, show you your territory, you have the freedom of tool choice, you get a framework to always rely on and creative freedom to find your own way of doing things.” (Enterprise Business Development, Switzerland)*

However, interviewees from marketing and sales operations focus on completely different sales enablement components. The content plays a crucial role for marketeers. Besides product and sales trainings, these participants highlight that the content is an elementary component of sales enablement. Sales operations, in contrast, focus completely on CRM and learning management systems (LMS).

#### **4.2.4 Sales enablement effectiveness**

Another similarity across all functions (and levels) is the consistent understanding about the challenge of measuring sales enablement effectiveness. Interviewees point out that this is almost impossible because of too many variables and missing data within the organization. At the same time, however, developing the capability of measuring sales enablement effectiveness is seen as highly relevant across all functions and levels. Asked how the effectiveness of sales enablement could be measured, the sales enablement managers argued that it can currently only be measured to a limited extent.

*“In a perfect world, the turnover itself could reflect the sales enablement effectiveness.” (Director of Sales Enablement Operations, USA)*

Although this figure is dependent on many different variables, sales enablement practitioners appear to focus on return on expectations. Based on expected outcomes they try to do reverse engineering, such as revenue implications caused by changed behaviors based on trainings and coaching.

Besides the sales enablement managers, the sales managers replied with a mix of subjective expectations as well as concrete numbers. The vague expectations are that sales enablement should empower the team members to self-reflect, understand their status (e.g., regarding quota attainment), and what they need to meet their quota. There are soft measurements, such as becoming “audible-ready”<sup>2</sup> and confident in challenging selling situations. It describes the agility demonstrated by salespeople to understand customer pain points and adjust the conversation accordingly to focus on solving customer’ problems instead of just pushing products. In addition, the management focus on tangible KPIs, such as pipeline generation, converting discovery calls to new business meetings to end up with qualitative pipelines. These are all figures which depend on the accurate usage of CRM by every salesperson (Williams et al., 2017; Zoltners et al., 2021).

The participants from marketing and sales operations highlight that their limited goals are not synchronized with the goals of the other functions. While sales operations confirms that the CRM platform is the source of truth to search for patterns of how sales enablement affected successful or unsuccessful salespeople – by looking at actual performance metrics – they admit that the informational value is limited. This shows how dependent sales operations are on salespeople because the data accuracy within the CRM depends on how each salesperson uses the platform. Specific benchmarks for the number of meetings, generated pipelines, etc. are

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<sup>2</sup> The term “audible-ready” is a buzzword that is well understood by salespeople in the software-as-a-service industry.

enriched by data from training systems. Based on these insights, sales managers are contacted if salespeople are not meeting the requested standards from a quantitative perspective.

*“Our gap today is, that sales operations should work closer with the sales enablement department, currently we do not have hard targets.” (Sales Revenue Analyst, USA)*

The participants from marketing departments report that it is impossible for them to track the content usage from sales teams and accordingly from customers, if the content is not shared directly from marketeers with customers via websites or direct mailings. Currently, the primary measure of success is the generation of leads, but quantitative feedback is missing.

*“We would love to do follow-up surveys, e.g., how does a salesperson feel after a product presentation, what was the performance for and after a training course, we cannot measure something like that via CRM.” (Product Marketing Manager, USA)*

### **4.3 Findings by levels**

#### **4.3.1 Sales enablement concept**

Sales managers have a more strategic understanding of sales enablement, while it appears that there is no collective understanding of what a sales enablement strategy is. The findings across levels are provided in Table 4.

**---Insert Table 4 around here---**

For sales managers, sales enablement is still an overly broad term, which leads to minimal expectations as to what it can achieve.

*“It could mean everything, but at least: every account executive gets an understanding about the product, our approach and go-to-market.” (Director Enterprise Sales, Germany)*

The statement is interesting, because the relevance of sales enablement for sales success was highlighted in company documents and previously confirmed by all levels and functions. However, the lack of clear targets for the sales enablement concept and the difficulties around

measuring the effectiveness of sales enablement, as discussed above, appear to lead to low expectations.

Operational staff such as salespeople have a more hands-on understanding and more concrete expectations. At the same time, they care less about the overall strategy.

*“It is about content, training and material to enable sellers to achieve goals.”*

*(Enterprise Account Executive, Germany)*

*“Sales enablement is about giving you the tools to do proper pipeline generation.”*

*(Enterprise Account Executive, Germany)*

*“Sales enablement is more than just the tools: it is about empowering product marketing teams to set up whitepapers, events, etc., all under the umbrella of sales enablement. You could understand sales enablement as force multipliers to allow individuals contribute to develop pipeline.” (Enterprise Account Executive, USA)*

In addition to salespeople, inside sales representatives request even more support on personal development. The inside sales teams understand sales enablement as an empowerment for sales tasks and personal development, too. In their understanding, it should also cover personal needs, which seems reasonable because this role is often their first job. Therefore, they are open to learn and see sales enablement as a continuous learning experience.

*“Sales enablement is anything that helps you to execute the sales job.” (Enterprise Business Development, Netherlands)*

*“It is the continuous process of coaching and training to be audible ready.” (Enterprise Business Development, USA)*

*“Sales enablement is about ongoing support and development, kind of not just the initial training, it is more about support regarding sales career.” (Enterprise Business Development, USA)*

#### **4.3.2 Sales enablement strategy**

Regarding the definition of sales enablement strategy, the sales managers see it as a concretization of an abstract phenomenon to something more tangible to support their team members on a micro-level. They echo that it is about concrete tasks and tools to empower their team-members (Rangarajan et al., 2020).



*“The strategy, which is set up by the company, to align the go-to-market teams with company goals and objectives.” (RVP, UK)*

*“It is about breaking it down to each individual and understand where the gaps are in the processes to identify what would help.” (RVP, USA)*

*“It is just the approach to put it in to the reps’ heads.” (RVP, USA)*

Furthermore, sales managers mention short- and long-term sales enablement efforts as well as micro-enablement to quickly empower team members before specific selling situations based on individual needs.

*“It is about understanding the needs of each market and teams to optimize them, e.g., to specify content based upon data.” (Field Marketing Manager, UK)*

*“We need to partner with sellers to cover everything in a training sense, e.g., when you start, there is an ongoing training plan, etc.” (Sales Operations Analyst, USA)*

Among interviewees, sales managers think of sales enablement as the foundation for their team members to be successful. While sales success can be conceptualized in very different ways (Ohiomah et al., 2020), managers view sales enablement as an internal vehicle for providing their teams with concrete tools to achieve an impact at their daily jobs.

*“Sales enablement is the translation from our go-to-market strategy to sales activities” (RVP, Germany)*

## **5. DISCUSSION**

### ***5.1 Similarities across levels and functions***

All participants had in common that the sales enablement team is viewed as having a serving, proactive role that provides support which sales teams are “consuming”. This is also aligned with how the company communicates about its sales enablement efforts. Sales enablement is regarded as crucial for the success in business and for personal development of inside sales reps. Sales understands sales enablement as assisting across the customer journey (Peterson & Dover, 2020). Furthermore, sales enablement is viewed as a combination of onboarding courses and ongoing sessions, where selling best practices are shared.

## ***5.2 Key differences across levels and functions***

In line with their role, managers view sales enablement more strategically than salespeople, but there appears to be no mutual understanding of what sales enablement strategy is. Hence, what appears to be missing is some kind of guideline, which might make it challenging for operating levels to understand sales enablement as more than just a “*knowledge building program*”. From the perspectives of salesperson and inside sales, there is a more hands-on understanding of sales enablement and the expectation of concrete support. This difference in perception could lead to implementation and measurement issues associated with sales enablement (Baldauf et al., 2001).

In contrast to the academic understanding of sales enablement (Peterson et al., 2021; Peterson & Dover, 2020; Rangarajan et al., 2020; Rapp & Beeler, 2021), content is not viewed as a relevant element of sales enablement by sales enablement managers and sales managers. In contrast, marketeers, salespeople, and inside sales representatives specifically mention content and appear to rely on it. This could lead to implementation and measurement issues as well.

What is worth to mentioning is that US managers describe sales enablement strategies with a strong focus on empowering everybody in a hands-on way, while EMEA managers stayed more on a macro perspective which comes close to findings from the global survey reported by Peterson and Dover (2021). In combination with the statement of the VP Growth who considers it as his challenge to empower all employees globally to run on the same system, this underlines the importance of being aware of different local perceptions when setting up sales enablement.

Salespeople and inside sales representatives are more specific about what they need and expect from sales enablement. Especially the finding that the inside sales roles expect from sales

enablement more than just sales skills and focus more on personal development is interesting and should be emphasized.

### ***5.3 Comparison of empirical findings and academic understanding***

When comparing the academic understanding of sales enablement with that obtained from our interviews, the following differences stand out: From a sales technology perspective (Rapp & Beeler, 2021), even though the case company is a worldwide leading SaaS provider, the main technologies for sales enablement initiatives are CRM, LMS, and a central hub for content management. This is surprising, as one might have expected that such an innovative organization would work with a mix of the latest customer engagement, customer experience, and sales enablement tools (Chaker et al., 2022; Zoltners et al., 2021).

From a sales strategy perspective (Rapp & Beeler, 2021), sales enablement is reduced in practice to “knowledge building” based on different training and qualification measures due to certain situations (e.g., onboarding, sales calls preparation) provided by IT tools. This understanding could reduce the potential power of sales enablement.

### ***5.4 Theoretical Implications***

In this paper, we set out to understand how sales enablement is deployed within a specific organization. While previous research has focused on defining and understanding the concept of sales enablement (Peterson et al. 2021), on providing conceptual frameworks for understanding the effectiveness of sales enablement (Rangarajan et al. 2020), and on identifying the state of sales enablement practices in organizations across the world (Peterson and Dover 2021), there is still a gap in understanding how sales enablement is deployed within an organization. We believe that closing this gap is key, since every sales organization faces its own set of challenges, has its own legacy sales processes and systems, and its own set of constraints, which will play a vital

role in understanding factors driving sales enablement success. An in-depth case study thus provides an opportunity to understand what factors affect sales enablement initiatives in organizations. This is in keeping with one of the conclusions by Mullins and Agnihotri (2022). Combining the insights from our study with the more multi-industry focus of Peterson et al. (2021) will provide insights into possible boundary conditions that might affect the efficacy of sales enablement initiatives and can help drive future research, thereby contributing to research in this domain.

One of the primary findings from our research is the discrepancy between, on the one hand, the consensus about the importance of sales enablement and, on the other hand, starkly different perceptions of what exactly sales enablement is, and how it should best be deployed. Furthermore, our findings suggest that there is a misalignment between how the leadership in the organization views sales enablement compared to the other organizational functions. These findings suggest that sales enablement and its building blocks need to be clearly defined by top management in consultation with the middle management (managers) who are tasked with deploying these changes. Failure to do so could result in middle management either not buying-in to the vision of sales enablement or misunderstanding what sales enablement is, leading to inefficiencies in its deployment. The concept of middle management buy-in has not been the focus of prior research in the sales management and information systems literature, all of which have focused more on adoption of new initiatives if the individuals buy-in to the recent changes. Thus, middle management buy-in and the role of top management in influencing the same could be an avenue for future research and could further contribute to the literature on sales enablement.

Previous research on sales enablement indicates that marketing and sales need to be aligned (Peterson et al. 2021). However, our study indicates that both sales and marketing within the same organization are an increasingly homogenous function with new roles such as sales operations and marketing operations being created specifically with the intention of helping to drive sales enablement. Understanding the clear roles and responsibilities of each of these functions along with the more traditional product marketing and strategic marketing roles will be vital to understand how these divergent functions coordinate and co-operate not just with each other but also with the sales function will be key to understand the success of sales enablement initiatives.

In keeping with the findings from both previous research as well as our study, it is obvious that a silo mentality in organizations will not help the deployment of sales enablement initiatives. A possible solution for busting silos is proposed by Gulati (2007; 2010), who argues that organizations should work on increasing coordination and cooperation across different departments. In his work, Gulati (2010) suggests that organizations should focus on a more customer-centric approach by trying to better align the goals, activities, and KPIs of different departments. We propose that sales organizations can use the suggestions by Gulati (2010) to work on aligning the activities and KPIs of the different departments and levels involved in sales enablement to ensure successful deployment.

Our findings also suggest that there is no consensus among the different stakeholders on how to measure the effectiveness of sales enablement strategies. A lack of clear effectiveness criteria could lead to misalignment of sales enablement activities, which would create more confusion and impede structured processes across the different sales enablement support functions (e.g., sales operations, marketing operations), which in turn could lead to frustration

among the frontline sales teams about the benefits of sales enablement initiatives. Thus, setting clear targets and measuring performance across the distinct functions could also increase the effectiveness of sales enablement initiatives. Future research could thus examine how sales enablement effectiveness could best be measured and managed.

## **6. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

The results of our research are limited by the fact that the interviews were conducted with participants from only one company. It is notable, however, that the findings we obtained from one company are consistent with the still young stream of research on sales enablement (Rapp and Beeler 2021). Nevertheless, our study should be regarded as just one step towards a better understanding of sales enablement, warranting further research.

Furthermore, it is worth questioning why content does not play a significant role within sales enablement according to our interviewees. It seems reasonable that the role of content to sell abstract IT solutions is not as important as for more static products, such as consumer goods or industrial machinery. Future research should attempt to obtain more generalizable findings for this aspect. More broadly, future studies on sales enablement could develop a framework and definition of sales enablement strategy based on general models as well as on empirical findings to provide a foundation for further operative sales enablement management.

Given the limited research on sales enablement frameworks in place, it is interesting that only one of the sales managers mentioned the recruitment process as an essential role of sales enablement (Rangarajan et al., 2020). Obviously, a lot of importance is attached to the selection of employees to ensure that the company continues to grow, but it seems that for management, this is not part of sales enablement. While many sales enablement definitions strongly focus on

processes to have the right internal cross-functional alignment (Peterson & Dover, 2020), this was not in the focus of the case company.

Based on our study, it seems reasonable to assume that sales enablement is seen differently from multiple intra-company perspectives. Inside sales plays a key role for obtaining relevant and qualified first contacts with prospects. However, as there is only limited academic research (Conde et al., 2021), future research should examine inside sales in more detail, focusing on issues such as what these functions need to be successful or how sales enablement concepts could be adapted to ensure a common understanding between the different internal stakeholders. Taking this further, it is reasonable to assume that varying perceptions of sales enablement efforts within customer facing teams may be reinforced by subjective perceptions of selling situations. Inversely, the desired impact of the sales enablement strategy may depend on how comprehensive the sales enablement efforts are to match the variety of sales situations that salespeople are likely to find themselves in.

Additionally, our work mainly focused on individual perspectives on sales enablement strategy and deployment, which might constitute a more individual-centric viewpoint provided by the individual respondent. However, given the organization-wide deployment of such initiatives, a more holistic perspective on how sales enablement can be deployed could help future research. While work by Gulati (2007, 2010) provides insights into how organizations can work on influencing the individual perspective by trying to bust siloes, more research in the context of sales enablement deployment is vital for organizations interested in increasing their sales force effectiveness.

The literature lacks an examination of role of top management involvement and leadership in establishing the success of sales enablement initiatives. Following Rapp and Beeler

(2021), we were also able to show in our study that there is still a need for further research in this area. Our results suggest that differences between managers and their employees lead to demotivation. It would therefore be interesting to examine whether the possible discrepancy between employee expectations and the sales enablement program, which is usually initiated by management, has a negative impact on job performance and how this could be avoided by a suitable management model. This could be based on the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory, which was already used in a study by Westbrook and Peterson (2020) and is currently being applied in connection with the digital transformation with regard to the reduction of technostress (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007; Guenzi & Nijssen, 2021; Pullins et al., 2020). And finally, while our research identified challenges organizations face in deploying their sales enablement initiatives, future research should focus on empirically validating potential impacts of sales enablement initiatives on sales force effectiveness and sales force optimization efforts.



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## TABLES

**Table 1. Extant research findings about sales enablement**

<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Sales enablement findings</b>	<b>Main Sales enablement field</b>	<b>Article type</b>
(Wiersema, 2013)	Sales enablement with a more operational focus of shared responsibilities between sales and marketing, and smoothly functioning marketing-sales interface to develop successful customers and/or launch new products better.	Sales strategy	Empirical (interviews with 72 executives)
(Peterson & Dover, 2020)	Sales enablement to assimilate cross-functional departments such as marketing, training, management, automation, etc. to obtain necessary content, processes, and technologies to be more productive across the customer journey.	Sales strategy	Empirical (Conclusion out of 12 different definitions)
(Plangger et al., 2020)	Latest technology allows sales enablement programs to become automated knowledge transfer tools (dedicated for supply chain partners) instead of using salespeople.	Sales technology	Conceptual
(Rangarajan et al., 2020)	Framework for sales enablement as a firm-wide strategic initiative based upon people, process, and performance (3 Ps).	Sales technology	Empirical (interviews with 8 sales professionals)
(Westbrook & Peterson, 2020)	Sales enablement as the connection to integrate efforts of sales and marketing on joint activities to refine customer-centric processes. Especially sales enablement in regards of the impact on hindrance stressors, burnout, and turnover intentions.	Sales strategy	Empirical (Perceptions of 302 sales professionals)
(Peterson et al., 2021)	Sales enablement as a multi-faceted phenomenon to coordinate knowledge across silos to an integrative strategy for sales incl. change management, technology adoption, customer	Sales strategy	Empirical (interviews with 41 sales enablement professionals)

	relationship management and organizational learning.		
(Rapp & Beeler, 2021)	Sales enablement as process to provide content, data, and tools to empower salespeople to sell more effectively on a macro level as the company's strategic decision that the sum of independent sales enablement components will be bigger than the individual parts.	Sales technology / strategy	Conceptual
(Dilg Beachum, 2021)	Sales enablement as technology tools to differentiate companies, sustain sales growth and gain competitive advantages with focus on how salespeople use these tools (supervisor support is crucial for adoption, outcome variables are salesperson self-efficacy and sales performance).	Sales technology	Empirical (150 questionnaires from salespeople)
(Peterson & Dover, 2021)	Primary focus of sales enablement initiatives are salespeople and account managers but offered services by sales enablement teams vary worldwide, e.g., KPIs/goals are heterogeneous within sales enablement initiatives.	Salespeople as human resources	Empirical (561 questionnaires from salespeople and account manager)
(Chaker et al., 2022)	Sales enablement to empower inside sales to optimize their sales performance, incl. managerial implications to align marketing with inside sales functions to provide dedicated digital resources and empowerment for inside sales (e.g., regarding social media)	Salespeople as human resources	Empirical (interviews 33 inside sales and sales leaders)



**Table 2. Profiles of interview participants**

<i>No.</i>	<i>Function</i>	<i>Level</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Experience in years</i>	<i>Country</i>
1	Sales enablement	Top management	Vice President Growth Strategy	7	USA
2	Sales enablement	Top management	Director Sales Enablement Operations	14	USA
3	Sales enablement	Operational staff	Team Lead Go to Market Enablement	9	USA
4	Marketing	Middle Management	Senior Field Marketing Manager	16	Ireland
5	Marketing	Operational staff	Field Marketing Manager	11	France
6	Marketing	Operational staff	Product Marketing Manager	12	USA
7	Sales Operations	Operational staff	Sales Revenue Analyst	3	USA
8	Sales Operations	Operational staff	Sales Operations Analyst	6	USA
9	Sales	Top management	Vice President Sales	33	Sweden
10	Sales	Top management	Director Enterprise Customer Success	9	Ireland
11	Sales	Middle Management	Regional Vice President	22	UK
12	Sales	Middle Management	Director Enterprise Sales	13	Germany
13	Sales	Middle Management	Regional Vice President	13	Germany
14	Sales	Middle Management	Regional Director	17	USA
15	Sales	Middle Management	Regional Vice President	29	USA
16	Sales	Operational staff	Enterprise Account Executive	24	Switzerland
17	Sales	Operational staff	Strategic Enterprise Account Executive	11	Germany
18	Sales	Operational staff	Enterprise Account Executive	8	UK

19	Sales	Operational staff	Enterprise Account Executive	9	USA
20	Sales	Operational staff	Enterprise Account Executive	15	USA
21	Sales	Operational staff	Enterprise Business Development	6	Ireland
22	Sales	Operational staff	Enterprise Business Development	5	Netherlands
23	Sales	Operational staff	Enterprise Business Development	2	Switzerland
24	Sales	Operational staff	Enterprise Business Development	6	USA
25	Sales	Operational staff	Enterprise Business Development	2	USA

**Table 3. Findings by functions**

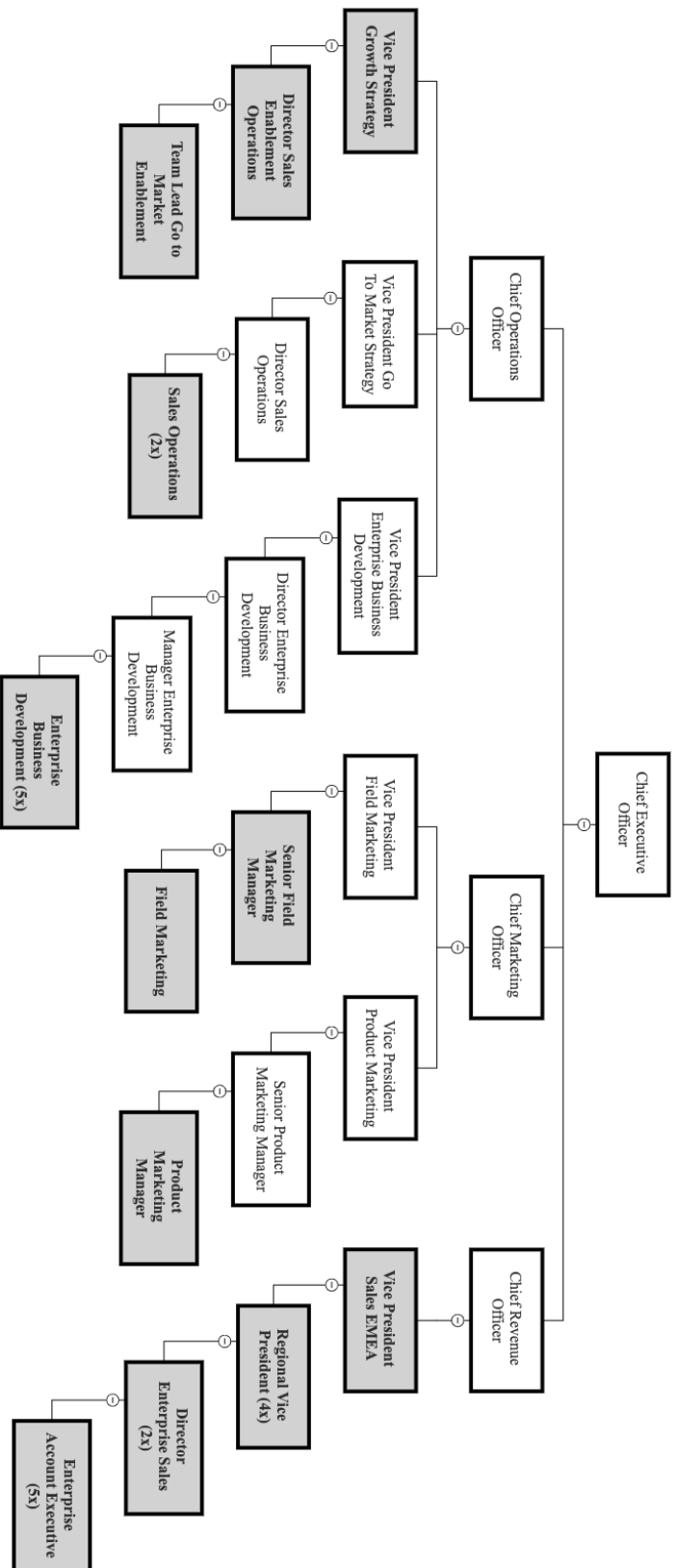
		Functions			
		SE	Marketing	Sales Ops (Controlling)	Sales
<b>Sales enablement concept</b>	<p><i>All participants consistently view the sales enablement team as having a serving, proactive role that provides support for sales teams, which are “consuming” the sales enablement outputs.</i></p>	- Realization of go-to-market-strategy	- Cross-functional collaboration	- Cross-functional collaboration	- Everything that empowers sales to be more successful across complete sales cycle
		- Content is not one of the main pillars	- A mix of several types of resources to serve sales	- CRM data and content are key	
<b>Sales enablement strategy</b>	<p><i>Sales enablement is consistently regarded as crucial for success.</i></p>	- “The North Star” for all growth systems	- Concrete work based upon content sharing	- Concrete work based upon CRM data	- Concrete empowerment of everyone in sales
<b>Sales enablement deployment</b>	<p><i>All functions focus on other areas / topics. From CRM to content, trainings, pipeline generation and personal development.</i></p> <p><i>Personal syncs across functions and levels.</i></p>	- Multiple roles like field enablement, sales enablement operations, etc.	- Mainly onboarding and trainings	- Mainly onboarding and trainings	- Mainly on onboarding, LMS and personal coaching
<b>Sales enablement effectiveness</b>	<p><i>Measurement of sales enablement effectiveness is almost impossible because of too many variables and missing data but would be highly appreciated from all levels. Not possible to obtain reliable figures for sales enablement performance, yet.</i></p> <p><i>Every function has their own targets / KPIs.</i></p>	- Focus on onboarding and trainings	- Focus on CRM, LMS and content management	- Focus on CRM, LMS and content management	- Focus on individual efforts
		- Overall, try to be intensively metric driven	- Quantitative data from lead generation	- Quantitative data from CRM	- Wish for very personalized results to improve performances

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct measurement of sales enablement on turnover not possible due to too many variables</li> <li>- Working with assumptions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No insights in content usage from sales</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>person by person, but data source is open</li> <li>- Soft factors such as being “audible-ready”</li> </ul>
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**Table 4. Findings by levels**

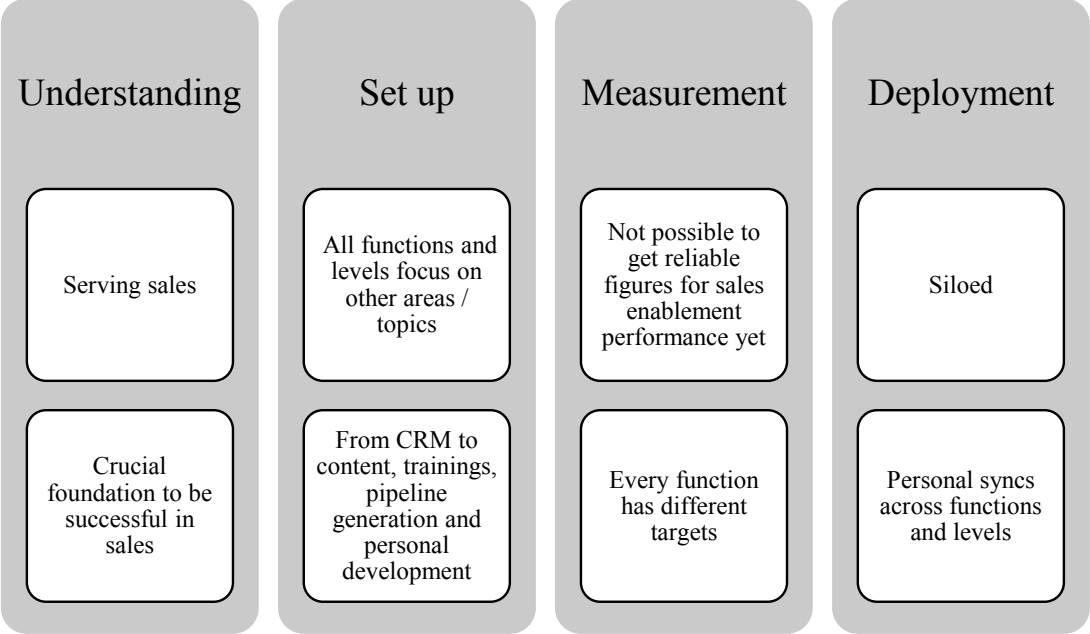
	<b>Levels</b>		
	<b>Top management</b>	<b>Middle Management</b>	<b>Operational Staff</b>
<b>Sales enablement concept</b>	- Content ≠ sales enablement --> In contradiction to current academic understanding / content is not viewed as one of the main pillars	- Sales managers have a more strategic understanding - Content is not viewed as one of the main pillars	- Salespeople and inside sales have a more hands-on understanding concrete expectations - Concrete initiatives to become successful and more productive - Support to do better pipeline generation and develop personally
<b>Sales enablement strategy</b>	<i>No collective understanding of what a sales enablement strategy is.</i>		
<b>Sales enablement deployment</b>	<i>All levels focus on other areas / topics.</i>		
	- Sales enablement is reduced to a combination of onboarding courses and ongoing sessions, where selling best practices are shared	- Sales enablement is reduced to a combination of onboarding courses and ongoing sessions, where selling best practices are shared	- Inside sales requests even more support on personal development

**Figure 1. Organizational set up (simplified)**



*Explanation: "grey fields" = Interviewed / "Number" = Persons interviewed, if more than one*

**Figure 2. Key sales enablement themes across functions and levels**



## APPENDIX

### *A Interview Guide*

<b>Staging</b>	Explaining the set-up of the interview
<b>Introduction</b>	Role and position, region, years of experience
<b>About sales enablement</b>	How do you define sales enablement?
<b>About sales enablement strategy (only asked to managers, sales operations, and marketers)</b>	How do you define sales enablement strategy?
	What elements does a sales enablement strategy consist of for you?
	How would you categorize these individual elements?
	How is the effectiveness of sales enablement measured?
<b>Sales enablement deployment</b>	How could an optimal sales enablement strategy be structured / look like?
<b>Sales enablement deployment</b>	How is sales enablement deployed within your organization?
<b>Sales / marketing content:</b>	How is the content created (on the job)? How has the content to be changed based on different scenarios?



## B Overview – Key topics mentioned by each participant

No.	Function	Level	Question	How do you define sales enablement?	How do you define sales enablement strategy?	How is the effectiveness of sales enablement measured?	How is sales enablement deployed within your organization?
1	Sales Enablement	Manager	Realization of GTM strategy -> expectation vs. realization -> how to realize goals in field -> training is one level of it -> incl. change management -> go to market call? / Difference between SE vs. SS: at company x complex pricing model -> challenge everybody globally needs to run the same system -> but how to realize it? need to enable management -> empower them to empower sales reps / SE getting more important for CS too / company x: Land and expand -> needs to be included in SE strategy because this is the place where money comes from -> what are the data points that show what people should do to be successfully? / Call it GTM and not SE	Growth systems = north star -> broken down into pieces -> different objectives per org/team/etc. -> certain realities! / SE team should ask themselves: how to bring this target to live	SE instrumentation: 1) overall performance of sales reps 2) ... 3) quality of the content plus system itself / variety of metrics like % of attendance, completion, ... who is finishing training vs. who is successful? Ramp time, attainment, production, / Specifically for CS: ramping metrics in place -> separate talk for CS empowerment?! / Ultimately: at company x -> revenue! / Solution engineer: not yet part of SE concept but will come in future / separate technical team because content needs to completely different	SE operations (SE should be 1) field empowerment with high level of empathy, teach, listen, etc 2) back-office more systematic, how to create content, not in a live context) -> Director of SE is about 2) / Reporting lines: based on strong c-level buy in easy to align and get needed resources -> all under 1 head // SE staff: spear 2 is about what/when sales reps are learning -> coop between 1 and 2 is crucial / Content library (G-Suite) available -> Netflix approach: want to avoid reps spending their time on not wanted/wasting stuff // using confluence, tableau, sf, Mindickle, recording call tool will come	
2	Sales Enablement	Manager	At company x it is different than before at other jobs: at company x reporting to Growth division, no COO. Overarching goal: to create systems that grow and scale! At company x more aligned with Growth team, but they function more than a revenue operations team (more focus on math - what to achieve?). Tara needs to say/show how / Personal perspective: SE was born out of super complex sales motion therefore content was not the center!		In a perfect world: turnover -> but impossible in reality! Since there are SOOO many things happen in parallel, impossible! Therefore, focus on return on expectation -> what is the outcome you expect? -> Reverse engineering -> revenue implication based on changed behaviors -> looking at metrics that they could specifically attach to them. Example: PG drop in Q4: coming together as a team, outcome: inconsistency of managers -> empowered managers -> checking improvements. Currently training is only measured by consumption, want to change it completely, zero correlation between correlation between success and training. / Analyze all closed deals + average size + try to analyze certain patterns -> to find out economic buyers to influence sales -> do not have it right now. / LMS Mindickle.		

					content: google drive, slack, mail, zoom, tableau (especially for managers). Enablement gives marketing a platform and tells sales where to find it. Marketing + tech uses mainly confluence. Productivity affected by the organization of content itself.	
3	Sales Enablement	Manager	Primary focus: sales, but also cover CS, SDR, channel partners -> full go-to-market-chain, revenue-operations, sales-operations, process optimization, further tools, etc. belong to its initiative too. No chief-growth-officer in place (currently).	Philosophical shift: this quarter enablement must present priorities, then internal discussion about what counts and what not within the growth team / Priorities from a business standpoint: SE as multiplier of productive capacities, how to hire, onboard and empower sales asap! More quarterly reviews ... Currently America-centric.	Depending on each program: From sales perspective only a handful of metrics like meetings, pipeline, average sales prices, etc. But trainers look more at course attainments. Survey-data: Motivation for enablement, onboarding, etc. is very high. Correlations: do people sell more after they did specific trainings -> but limited results. Training program is accessed once. Metrics in line with roles? Not in line, want to change it regarding persona alignment -> but limited by SE resources. Specific content for management: setting up content to empower new managers a month after they started, like manager x how many sessions finished, etc. / Very program specific, e.g., at management workshop is improving pipeline-metrics (meetings, opportunities, PG-value). For AEs same/close to the ones from management workshop. But right now, no direct influence. It is measured, but difficult/limited results. CS like product-growth, number of products used. BDR/SDR no, not yet, because of missing resources. Partner managers: partner penetration, value of partner deals, influence-rate, etc.	Multiple roles in place. SE as distinct department. 1) Field Enablement = traditional trainers / 2) Sales Enablement Ops / Field Ops = Focus on structure, content, process
4	Sales Operations	Team member	Empowering salespeople to be the best they can be, providing them with all the resources and instructions to make them successful as possible / How to? Having different types of resources available is the best mix because everybody learns differently / Continuous check-ups!	Having the different resources available, getting in front of new joiners, to avoid that they are feeling alone, having a way to be reachable, responding within 24 hours	Her role: how to deal with the strategies? -> different analysis of data, like lower expectations for performance of newbies -> incl. ideas for management. CRM SE is the source of truth: all people have targets, lower for newer reps, e.g., focus on first 6 months, on the right path? Resources for sales managers at Tableau available, but limited -> leaders mainly use SE // Best tools	

				available? // Our gap today is, that sales operations should work closer with the sales enablement department, currently we do not have hard targets. Maybe checking how fast they respond but would not really work. / There could be a correlation between broken/lack processes and sales performance.		
5	Sales Operations	Team member	It is the empowerment of sellers to understand their jobs and have less frictions.	We need to partnership with sellers to cover everything in a training sense, e.g., when you start there is an ongoing training plan, etc. Sales ops and sales need to work closely together, cadence to check content is still relevant incl. product marketing, marketers / Most important: ongoing trainings! Ensuring people are getting constant reminders, etc.	Mindtickler: tracking solved trainings / Did not formalize as much as possible: have ad hoc leading indicators, e.g., lead follow-up activities up to penetration rate -> direct line to managers / salespeople / // KPI management -> around GTM strategy -> ensuring that SF is properly maintained, internal analytics, tableau	Done via training strategy, LMS, constant understanding about to reach out when something does not work. Empowerment of leaders -> frontline ->
6	Marketing	Team member	SF = everything related to sales -> not onboarding, but everything regarding gaps / needs of sales / bringing in new tools, end2end services to enable sales to sell better / to always keep growing	E.g., working with AEs on SF: USA assumes that everybody has the same understanding / Need to have a strategy to empower all AEs to have the same knowledge of SF -> closing the gaps again /	It is impossible to track external content usage -> websites, etc. / So directly from marketing to customer, not possible if sales are involved.	Not happy with current content set-up. Would love to work with Bamboo / it ensures the correct messaging / Even marketing has struggle to find content. / In parallel working on confluence -> but just linked to G-Drive // At last employer: more connected with SE, company was more mature. Field marketing must do more enablement than SE is actually doing. E.g., she spoke with AEs about missing leads -> AE didn't know what to do with the leads -> maybe he was not given the training -> now she has to work on leads to empower SE team to empower AEs // Cooperation: SE will contact marketing for help, setting up events, but not a real partnership. / Current departments work in parallel. // Until now: working primarily with EAE, first session with commercial/mid-market tomorrow. Never had trainings about how to work with marketing / content
7	Marketing	Team member	All the materials, channels, support infrastructure that sales get to penetrate markets. Ideally: MA = part of SE. MA should be hand in hand with sales, KPIs should be aligned.	It is about understanding the needs of each market and teams to optimize them, e.g., to specify content based upon data, -> syncs with sales teams: yes / data: hard to get, higher management	In some ways collecting KPIs like "new leads" and "new logos", not "upsells", however tracking is not the best. Not possible to reflect all results properly. MA's main role = more project manager between sales and PM because not having the bandwidth to work on all projects. In an ideal	Content is crucial, regionalized content is key. Content creation: hinds coming from sales side, only field marketing team gets feedback, content is created by product marketing -> GADs at company X: every team has its own strategy. // Not happy with internal syncs/knowledge sharing -> maybe because of extreme

							world: need more internal syncs because e.g., campaigns are very similar globally, but just not aware of it.	growth processes did not develop as they should have done
8	Marketing	Team member	Making sure the sales team has the resources, access to information	Being able to share the right quantity of information so people can retain the information / best way: right quantity and quality vs. just wasting an hour -> figuring right amount by speaking with sales directly (involving sales with enough experience) + looking at aggregated data like LMS data about 600 sales doing RUM training but no progress regards turnover	PM does not have real goals like revenue, all focused on lead-generation. We would love to do follow-up surveys, e.g., how does a salesperson feel after a product presentation, what was the performance for and after a training course, we cannot measure something like that via CRM.	Sometimes SE and training around the product is mixed. -> maybe more effective to separate technical/product trainings vs. sales trainings themselves // Did a pilot deck and asked sales for feedback, from there modified deck, region by region, then sales do trial & error with customers, feedback loops -> incl. dedicated slack channel. / Tools: Mindtickle, G-Drive, Slack, Zoom.		
9	Sales	Manager	Attracting, Retaining and Developing top Sales talent is in our phase as company key pillar for accelerated growth. SE has huge impact not only on "developing" but also attracting and retaining talent. It is a monitored program that runs over several months both self-paced and instructor led modules, online and in person or live distance conferencing formats, with numerous managers built in check points.	Healthy focus on adapting and taking the enablement journey to next level. Big hopes it will deliver	Intensively metric driven in tracking all aspects: Learning progress (courses completed) Sales / PG Activity, Sales PG Success (\$), Market/Account penetration Metrics			
10	Sales	Manager	Getting the tools to be successful / CSM: more about sales motion -> focus on how to keep customers happy all the time / At the moment very "front-loaded" -> a lot of upfront, but later less trainings, depending on how much time you want to spend -> by yourself / directors		Intensively metric driven in tracking all aspects: Learning progress (courses completed) Sales / PG Activity, Sales PG Success (\$), Market/Account penetration Metrics	in general company x gives the tools to be successful, but a lot depends on people themselves -> very technical product		
11	Sales	Manager	Giving the sales teams the tools to be successful in their job	Strategy set up by the company to align the go to market teams with company goals and objectives	Audible ready and all about being confident -> put plan in place and execute -> what is my territory, create it and execute it. Generally, you do not get everybody empowered, but if 75% got it, it's good. With any SE: target should be: if more people are getting it, that better! Down to management and leadership, managers have to be extremely close.	A lot of e-learning + class-based sessions across the 3 areas		
12	Sales	Manager	Could mean everything, but at least: every AE gets an understanding about product, approach and GTM	Slice it in different pieces.	Output from SE guys: how can we improve our sales cadence, KPIs, etc. / Knowledge increasing / But also to	Online-trainings, onboarding stuff, some kind of coaching, where we are, what has to be done, not deal, but business related.		

				be aware of where I am good at, where I need to improve. Captured via regularly feedback loops, people need to get an understanding where they are, metrics wise, soft skill wise, so many KPIs, but need to focus on overall goal -> in line with corporate goal (more revenue) but also about company brand	Managers: weekly syncs. Would like to change: more time on checking in with his peers to check how good are they, progress, tools like Mindtickle are there, but how is it in reality. More onsite workshops incl. deal-reviews, account-reviews, etc. to have all the brainstorming from multiple perspective	
13	Sales	Manager	SE is translation from GTM to sales activities	Implementation of GT to sales activities	Output from person started to fill capacity (hitting quota). In a more mature sales organization focus could be different. Depending on where the gap is -> PG, individual issues (nr. of opportunities, converting, ...) + more qualitative	Deployed in so many ways, formal trainings, self-service, company enforced training ongoing, most important leading by example -> leaders! Joined company X 3 weeks ago, so far, a lot of content (Mindtickle)
14	Sales	Manager	Sort of a programmatic approach to provide sellers with resources they need to be successful in the field	Breaking it down to the individual + understanding where the gaps are in the process, experience + identify about what to help	just the approach to realize / put it in to the reps' heads	
15	Sales	Manager	Broad term, something that starts when you start at a new company, get a basic understanding about values / competitive understanding / tools you get for the job / intrinsic nature of sales methodology and GTM			
16	Sales	Team member (AE)	Giving you the tools to do proper PG...			Deployment: CoM as methodology, a lot of Mindtickle trainings, expression to forget it. Sharing experiences across the teams.
17	Sales	Team member (AE)	Content, training, material to enable sellers to achieve goals			Mindtickle = core of enablement, region by region, but other enablement sessions too, like ask anything sessions, meetings on Wednesdays to talk about processes, legal, etc., global sales calls incl. learning from other colleagues, + all the material at g-drive
18	Sales	Team member (AE)	Developing + setting someone up to succeed			Mindtickle, body-scheme, really good whitepapers, lots of documentation, product announcements, use-case training
19	Sales	Team member (AE)	Enabling sales to be more productive, get to quota faster and resources to move opportunities faster			company X seems to be more plugged in to onboarding, weekly cadence (global sales call), annual sales kick-off where SE team is very involved with, onboarding program is about several weeks, new reps sit in classroom style session with other new ones, SE trainers, to understand our process, deal structure, pricing.

20	Sales	Team member (AE)	SE means that I am being provided with the tools to GTM and being successful - combination of Sales tools like intercom, sales navigator, etc. that allow me to be as productive and successful as I can. / More than just the tools: empowering PM teams to set up whitepapers, events... all under umbrella of SE = "FORCE MULTIFIERS" to allow individual to contribute to develop pipeline			Overall, pretty good at company X, obviously do a lot of great webinars, campaigns, events with cloud alliance partners. Time to build out a lot of good curriculums in Mindtickle is very good / SE is deployed quite well / The top compared with another Saas
21	Sales	Team member (IS)	Getting necessary tools and information to do proper PG and outreach			Start: fully packed with product training and CoM, multiple enablement sessions about product + communication / Sharing a lot of information within the team
22	Sales	Team member (IS)	Anything that helps her to execute the sales job			2 sections: product + sales part. You learn how to execute sales itself, which is applicable for any product. Support via live Zoom sessions, also with each other, Mindtickle to learn the product better, a company x's sessions with experts, by herself attending meetings from colleagues. Ongoing: team specific sessions across teams or within teams, e.g., to focus on pains / tech knowledge. Really focus on what is needed.
23	Sales	Team member (IS)	To provide all the tools, guidance, resources to really push towards being a good salesperson -> to prepare you in the best possible way			First week of onboarding, they take you by the hands, show you your territory, freedom of tool choice, framework to always rely on, creative freedom to find you own way of doing things
24	Sales	Team member (IS)	Continuous process of coaching and training to be audible ready + having the most knowledge of sales and markets available			Pretty rigors 2 weeks with trainings incl. talking with peers, afterwards more sales trainings (audible ready) and afterwards more continuous training incl. CoM
25	Sales	Team member (IS)	Ongoing support and development, kind of not just the initial training, more support regarding sales career			Salesforce (SFI), at the beginning much more intensive with 2 weeks of trainings + Mindtickle courses, CoM training and after that kind of SE QA (ongoing enablement)