BRAINSHARK

20 Ways to Achieve Better Sales Enablement in 2020

What separates good sales enablement programs from great ones?

Great sales enablement requires a coordinated effort between several departments (sales, marketing, product, etc.) as well as a formal strategy and executive sponsorship, according to CSO Insights. The best programs are data-driven, highly engaged with sales reps and continuously evolve as businesses change.

On top of that, these great sales enablement programs achieve better results, such as 15% higher win rates.[1] However, only 26% of programs today meet the majority of their stakeholders' expectations,[2] which means for many organizations, there's more work to do.

Don't settle for average sales enablement. Check out this eBook for **20 ways to achieve better sales enablement in 2020.**

Quick Links

1. Jumpstart onboarding with pre-boarding

If your sales organization sends new sales hires to a multi-day boot camp to consume as much company and product information as possible, then it might be time for a change. One idea? Start onboarding before day one.

With pre-boarding, you can start new reps on their onboarding paths as soon as they sign on the dotted line. Send short training videos to the new hire to help them get familiar with basic company and product information, as well as what to expect on their first day (how to set up their computer, where to find the bathroom, etc.). This way, when the rep walks into the building for the first time, they're already on their way to full productivity.

Learn more: Pre-Boarding for Sales: 6 Ways to Prime New Reps for Onboarding

2. Crowdsource expertise with peer learning

It's standard practice for sales enablement to collaborate with subject matter experts on training content. But a resource that is sometimes overlooked is your sales reps themselves; they're in the trenches every day, talking with buyers and discovering better sales techniques. Over time, they build a wealth of expertise that can benefit the whole sales organization.

To capture and share these best practices, ask reps to record videos – a video coaching tool makes this easy – describing how a deal was won, how they handled an objection or even something as simple as an elevator pitch. Pick the best videos, share them across the team and convert them into training content for future use.

Learn more: Infographic: What is Peer Learning for Sales?

3. Be prepared with an emergency kit

When a game-changing situation arises for your company – such as breaking news about changes in the market (such as two competitors merging or new executive appointments) – your sales team is on the front lines. In other words, they need to be message-ready for anything that may come up in a buyer conversation.

To prepare for these situations, create an 'emergency kit' that includes content templates (outlines for email communications, training videos or coaching activities) and plans for all communications and processes (pre-canned responses and FAQs), which allow you to spend more time preparing the sales team, rather than scrambling to find information.

For example, assign video coaching activities asking reps respond to questions that buyers may ask so managers can evaluate and sign off on responses. You can also send out a quick video where leaders discuss the news, which is important because reps will want to hear their perspective.

Learn More: The 4 Pillars of Sales Readiness: A Guide to Always-On Enablement

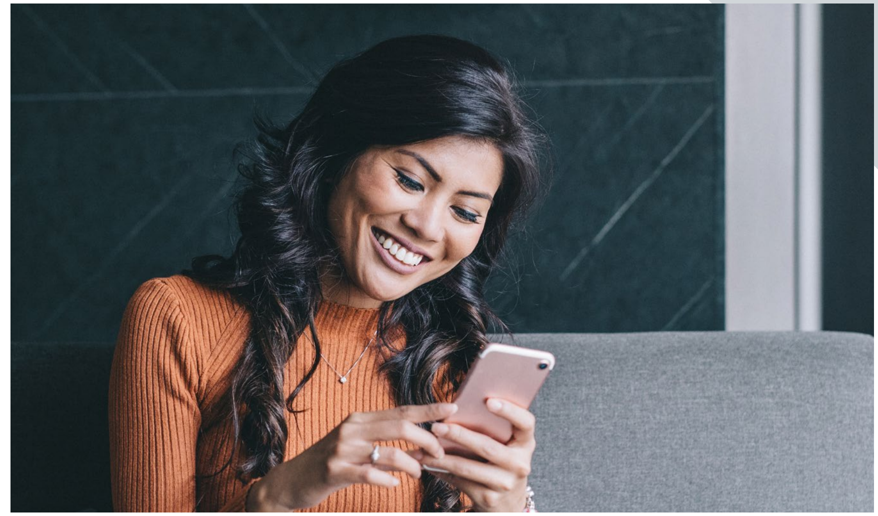
4. Survive (and thrive) through sales transformations

Sales transformations come in many forms, whether it's M&A, a new sales methodology or a major product launch. But one thing these scenarios have in common is the need to get your sales team up to speed quickly.

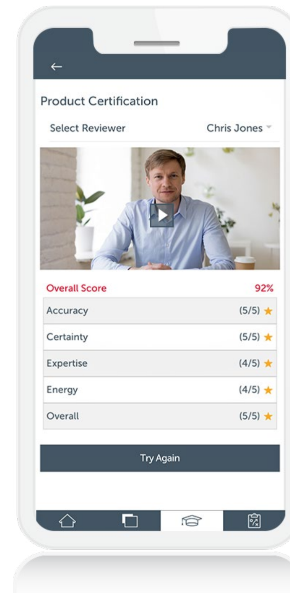
For example, if you're merging with a competitor, identify where possible customer, product or structure overlaps might exist. Then decide which sales methodology will work best for the newly combined sales team. After that, redefine the necessary behaviors, skills and knowledge, and design (or adjust) training accordingly.

Follow up with video coaching assessments where reps record a video response to a key question, such as 'what does this merger mean for X customer?' From there, sales managers can evaluate reps' skills before they're faced with questions from buyers.

Learn More: Sales Transformations: A Sales Enablement Survival Guide



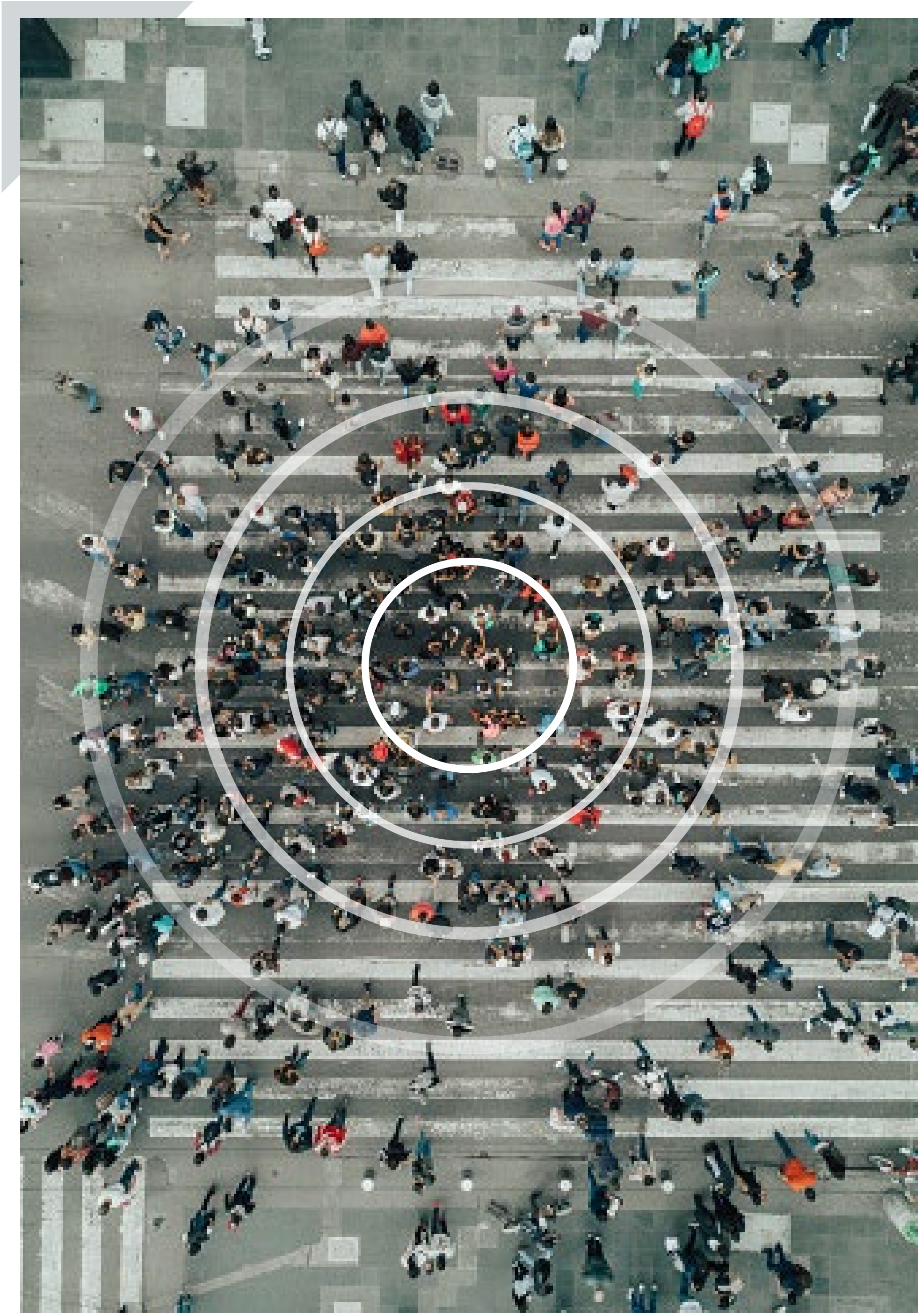
5. Coach the coaches



There are a few common reasons why sales managers don't coach well or enough, but whether it's a lack of time or skills, sales enablement can help by making a concerted effort to 'coach the coaches.'

Start with a sales manager onboarding path that outlines their role and daily routine. Provide a playbook with tactics for providing meaningful feedback to reps in coaching situations. For events like product releases, create manager training programs that allow them to master the material before coaching their reps.

Video coaching tools can also help managers coach more effectively because they make it possible to reach more reps in more locations and provide more consistent feedback. Sales enablement can educate managers on how to use the technology by assigning sample video coaching activities (before they use it with reps) and provide best practices.



6. Expand your sales enablement audience

Most enablement programs cover sales reps and managers, but there are other customer-facing employees that need be up to speed on the latest product and company information the same way your sellers do.

One group in particular is your customer success managers (CSMs), who interact with customers on a daily basis. CSO Insights ranks this as one of the top 5 groups that sales enablement should support.

To best position yourself take on this new group, first evaluate their unique needs. Work with managers on the CSM team to identify the areas where content, training and coaching would make the sense. For example, it's probably a given that CSMs need product training around each release. What they may not currently have is training around soft skills (active listening, presentation, relationship building, etc.), so discuss what types of programs would be best to help them improve upon those.

Once you've come up with a plan, start assigning CSMs training where they can work on these skills and prepare for customer conversations, as well as video coaching activities where they can practice answering customer questions or handling scenarios.

7. Nurture 2nd and 3rd year reps

With so much focus on getting your newest sellers up to speed, reps that move into years two and three of their tenures are sometimes forgotten.

One way to combat this is to provide continuous training that's proactive, instead of reactive. Depending on where reps are against required competencies, you can continuously push microlearning courses to them via the systems and devices they use every day. For example, offer best practices around advanced negotiation skills, so reps that are anticipating tough late-stage deals will be ready when the time comes (instead of offering training after the fact).

You can also create learning and assessment paths where reps can upskill for other sales positions or develop leadership and management skills. For example, a sales development rep eager to move up could take a learning path that prepares them to move into an account executive role.

Learn More: Special Report: How CSOs Can Win the War for Sales Talent

8. Develop a sales enablement business plan

Whether you're establishing a new sales enablement function or trying to improve your strategy, putting together a business plan can be beneficial. Get key stakeholders to contribute to your plan and have them sign off on it. That way, when you're trying to get buy-in for initiatives, requesting budget or allocating resources, you have a document to reference to ensure you're staying aligned with your strategy.

CSO Insights refers to this as a **charter**: "a blueprint that is aligned to the strategic initiatives and objectives of your executives."

To create a sales enablement plan or charter, follow these steps:

1. Talk to key stakeholders to understand how to align with your company's business strategy, mission and vision
2. Evaluate of the current state of affairs in the sales organization to uncover areas to prioritize
3. Define your objectives, goals, roadmap and roles and responsibilities of your team members and those you'll collaborate with
4. Outline your initiatives and how success will be measured

9. Prioritize sales process readiness

According to CSO Insights, 59% of sales organizations plan to invest more in sales process and methodology training in the coming year. If reps don't understand your sales process and how to follow it, then you can't accurately forecast your company's revenue.

The goal of sales process training is for reps to understand for each stage, 1) which activities they should be doing and 2) which activities the customer should be doing. Reps also need to learn about the exit criteria for each stage (the activities that help them move from one stage to the next), and the tools that will help them complete these activities (sales readiness, document automation, sales engagement technologies, etc.).

For example, a sales process learning path could include a course that defines the discovery stage, how to complete key activities (i.e., the discovery call), and assets, such as slides for the discovery call and follow-up content for the customer.

Take it a step further by training reps on how to move a stalled deal forward. Reps should be able to review all their touch points with customers, such as how they presented the proposal or how they handled objections, so they can pinpoint why the deal is stuck and tactics to move it forward.

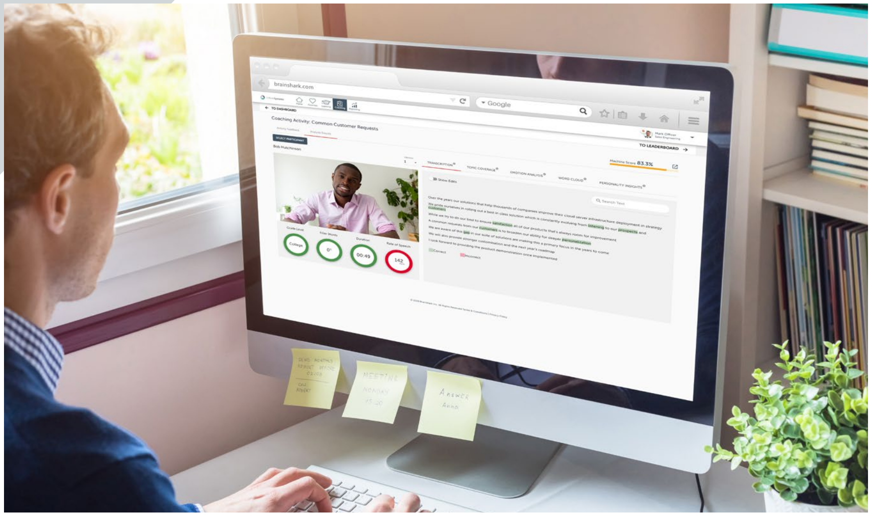
10. Engage your sales force to retain them

Engagement with your sales force is key to the effectiveness of your enablement initiatives, as well as rep retention and performance. When a sales team is engaged, they have “an emotional connection to the organizations capabilities and motivation to engage customers and actually help them solve their business problems,” according to CSO Insights, which found that with highly engaged sales teams, voluntary turnover drops 30%.

In other words, an engaged sales team feels supported, motivated and fulfilled by their jobs and clearly see the positive impact their work has on prospects, customers and their company.

Here are some ways to better engage your sales team:

- **Collaborate with sales managers:** Managers can communicate and reinforce your initiatives with their reps.
- **Encourage peer learning and mentoring:** Reps will feel more connected if they can share and utilize information from peers regularly – and they’ll feel valued if a fellow rep uses their suggestions! You can also tap tenured reps to mentor new hires, which helps to create lasting relationships.
- **Expand training opportunities:** Provide reps with growth opportunities, such as learning about other sales roles, job shadowing or participating in a leadership or management workshop.
- **Add friendly competition:** Sales readiness platforms often include leaderboards which can drum up friendly competition between reps, but you can also create your own mini contests or incentive-based programs to motivate reps to participate in various enablement programs.
- **Create team bonding opportunities:** Aside from events like President’s Club, offer team outings, town hall meetings and other social events that create an atmosphere where reps can share ideas with each other and you.



11. Embrace AI to improve sales

Artificial intelligence (AI) is an emerging technology that supplements the work of humans by automating processes. When it comes to sales, AI offers efficiencies to reps and managers via sales readiness and asset management technologies.

For example, Brainshark's AI-powered Machine Analysis helps sales managers by automating the scoring and feedback of video coaching activities. So, when a rep submits a video response to how they'd handle an objection, they can get instant feedback from Brainshark, which transcribes the video and produces an automated score based on areas such as rate of speech, use of filler words ('um' or 'ah'), emotions exhibited and more.

Sales asset management platforms use AI to make content recommendations. AI identifies content based on geographic location, product type, industry and more, through advanced tagging capabilities and serves it up during relevant stages of the buying cycle, helping reps quickly identify the best content to engage prospects.

12. Develop a plan for your first 100 days

Companies often hire enablement leaders because of poor sales results or a lack of support for sales reps – which means by their first day on the job, the leader will have a lot on their plate.

In your first 100 days, go through the current sales onboarding program as a rep would, but evaluate it for areas of improvement or expansion. Read up on key competitors, shadow sales calls and dive deep into sales and enablement processes. Meet with key people in the organization to discuss how you'll collaborate, such as marketing, product and other sales leaders.

Towards the end of your first 100 days, create a 6-12-month plan, determine KPIs and get buy-in from key stakeholders for your upcoming plans.

Learn More: The First 100 Days: Getting Started as a Sales Enablement Leader

13. Be a savvy solo enabler

CSO Insights found that 32% of sales enablement professionals are managing enablement in a part-time or single-person function. These small or one-person teams encounter unique challenges due to the lack of bandwidth and resources. But there are some strategies that can help you maximize what you do have.

Leverage peer learning to supplement sales training. This way, you don't have to create all training content on your own; you can use your own reps as the source. For example, have salespeople record a video describing the key tactics that helped them win a recent deal. Turn the best responses into learning content that can be incorporated into onboarding or training courses.

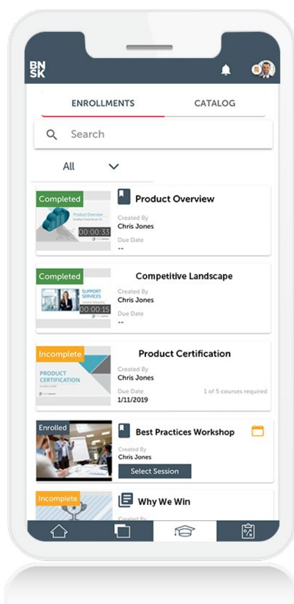
Another tactic is to create and nurture enablement champions. Seek sponsorship from the C-suite so you can get support for your initiatives. Lean on subject matter experts and counterparts in marketing and product for help with content creation and execution of training courses.

Learn More: 9 Tips for the Solo Sales Enablement Leader

14. Adapt learning to today's modern rep

Gone are the days of text-heavy PowerPoint presentations and binders of learning materials – or at least those days should be gone. Today's sales reps want (and expect) learning content that's quick and easy to consume. It's your job to adapt to the modern learning preferences of your sales reps to keep them engaged and ensure they absorb the material.

Create bite-sized, microlearning courses that are accessible anywhere, anytime, no matter where reps are working. Video formats often work best, where reps can stop and start whenever they'd like. The bite-sized format simplifies learning as it breaks down material into easily consumable chunks.



15. Give reps 'reps'

To master key messages, reps need 'reps;' meaning they need repetition and practice of key messages so they can refine their craft and get mistakes out of the way before they go into the field. But to see a real difference in performance, reps need to practice purposefully with the help of their manager and peers.

Reps can do this via in-person role plays with sales managers, where they can get in-the-moment feedback. Another way is through video. For example, if a rep is trying to perfect their elevator pitch, they can record themselves with as many 'takes' or attempts as they'd like. Once the rep has a 'take' they feel good about, they can request feedback from managers and peers to refine their pitch.

Learn More: 8 Ways to Use Video Coaching for Team Readiness

16. Be strategic about sales content

Content is key to many parts of the sales process – whether it's thought leadership, proof points and customer testimonials for buyers, or playbooks, messaging documents and battle cards for your reps.

But if you don't have a strategy, content can be inconsistent, hard to find and managing it can be unruly. Unfortunately, only 32% of organizations have a content strategy in place, reports CSO Insights.

Take the following steps to create a sales content strategy:

- **Establish who creates what:** Marketing may create customer testimonials, while sales enablement might create sales assets such as playbooks – ensure you have governance over who creates and maintains each type of content.
- **Do a content audit:** Determine which content needs to be updated, which content is missing and then map existing content to the buyer's journey so it's easy for reps to identify and utilize.
- **Connect content to desired results:** Define why you're creating each piece of content and how it will help reps navigate a competitive situation or tap into a new market, for example.

17. Make onboarding agile

There's a lot that new reps need to know when they come on board, such as product information, competitive differentiators, the sales methodology and more.

By adopting an agile approach to onboarding (based upon agile software development principles), you can break the often months-long ramp process into shorter periods of training and coaching, focused on building proficiency in key competencies through sales activities.

For example, give a new rep 2 weeks to prepare for their first demo call, where they'll complete training courses and pass a certification. Once that activity has been completed, they can use these skills immediately on their first call, while preparing for the next key activity in the sales cycle. This approach allows you to certify that reps have mastered each activity or identify who needs more training.

Learn More: The Brainshark Agile Sales Onboarding Methodology

18. Diversify your sales coaching

If you're only coaching reps using one approach, then you're likely not getting the full picture of rep readiness. For example, if coaching only takes place via in-person role plays, you may not be covering other interactions reps have with buyers throughout the sales cycle.

Video coaching technology can help expand your sales coaching program with a variety of options. Text-based coaching activities allow you to evaluate reps' email writing and outreach skills (i.e., proper messaging, tone and consistency) and provide feedback at scale. Call-recording tools can be used to record reps' prospecting calls (be sure to check state privacy laws) so you can go over what they did well and where they can improve. And screen recording capabilities let you see reps' presentation skills in real-time. By varying your coaching activities, you can get a clearer picture of how well reps are positioned to complete every activity in your sales cycle.

19. Measure ROI with 3 big questions

If you want to continue to get buy-in for sales enablement initiatives, determining ROI is critical.

But where do you start? By focusing on 3 key questions, you can more clearly articulate the value of your efforts to sales and company leadership.

1. **Are reps ready to sell?** Most training metrics only tell you whether reps have completed courses. Incorporate assessments, like video coaching activities, to determine whether they can apply their learning in the field.
2. **Are reps performing the right activities?** Establish benchmarks for activity levels, such as prospecting calls made, or outreach emails sent, based on your organization's sales cycle length and average deal size. Start with the ideal result (i.e. quarterly quota is $100,000 per rep.) Then calculate the number of opportunities each seller needs to hit that number, and how many activities they must complete to create those opportunities.
3. **Are reps producing the expected results?** Rely on metrics that give you a better understanding of rep productivity, such as run-rates, sales velocity, and conversion rates. Also understand which measurements sales enablement can directly influence (time reps spend selling) and indirectly influence (time to first deal).

Learn More: 3 Big Questions to Measure Sales Enablement Success

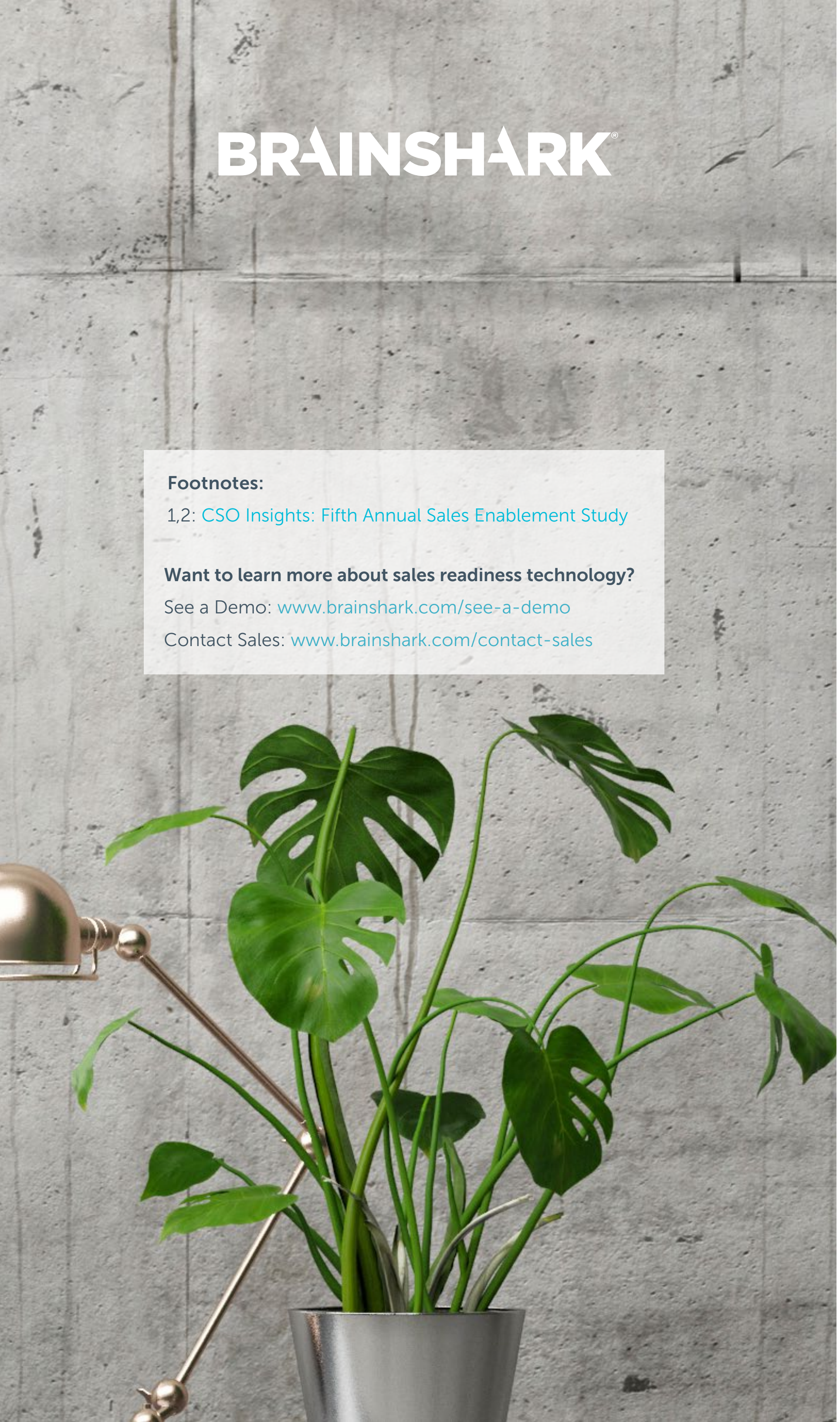
20. Develop SDRs to grow your future sales force

Your sales development reps (SDRs) are one of the most important groups in sales. Not only are they often the first line of interactions with future customers, but they are also (hopefully) the talent pool for your field sales team of the future.

Apply these coaching and development tactics to help your SDRs perform in their current and future roles:

- **Teach reps to fish:** Instead of hand-holding and telling reps the right way to do things, lead them into it by asking them questions, such as 'what could you have done differently?' or 'what's another question you could've asked that prospect?'
- **Tailor your approach:** Figure out what makes each rep tick and coach them according to their personality. Then guide them to their future role depending on their interests and strengths.
- **Designate an embedded sales coach:** Coaching is critical for getting SDRs to learn and grow, so some companies now hire a dedicated person to help them develop key selling skills.

Learn More: SDR Performance & Retention: How Sales Readiness Can Change the Game



Footnotes:

1,2: CSO Insights: Fifth Annual Sales Enablement Study

Want to learn more about sales readiness technology?

See a Demo: www.brainshark.com/see-a-demo

Contact Sales: www.brainshark.com/contact-sales

About Brainshark

Brainshark's sales readiness platform gives you the tools to prepare all your client-facing teams with the knowledge and skills they need to perform at the highest level. With best-of-breed solutions for training, coaching, content and more, you can ensure reps are always ready to make the most of any selling situation.

With Brainshark, companies can: enable sales teams with on-demand training that accelerates onboarding and keeps reps up-to-speed; validate readiness with sales coaching and practice that ensures reps master your message; and empower sales organizations with rich, dynamic content that can be created quickly, updated easily, and accessed anywhere.

Thousands of companies – including more than half of the Fortune 100 – rely on Brainshark to get better results from their sales enablement initiatives. Learn more at www.brainshark.com.