



THE 4 PILLARS OF SALES READINESS:

A GUIDE TO **'ALWAYS-ON'** ENABLEMENT

BRAINSHARK[®]

Introduction

Preparing your sales team – *really* preparing them – is not something that happens overnight. From product information and selling methodologies to objection handling and CRM usage, there's a lot salespeople need to know. And even if you train them once, the tides of business are always changing, meaning that same information is changing right alongside it.

This is why sales readiness is so important.

Sales readiness is a core component of sales enablement that involves all strategic activities designed to prepare sellers with skills and messages needed to make the most of every buyer interaction. Think of it as a 360 approach to preparing not only your sales reps, but all customer-facing team members, with a focus on 4 primary pillars: **foundational, continuous, transformational, and reactive.**

Each pillar represents a series of situations that happen in the lifecycle of a rep (or your business) that require strategic training and preparation – with sales enablement leading the way.

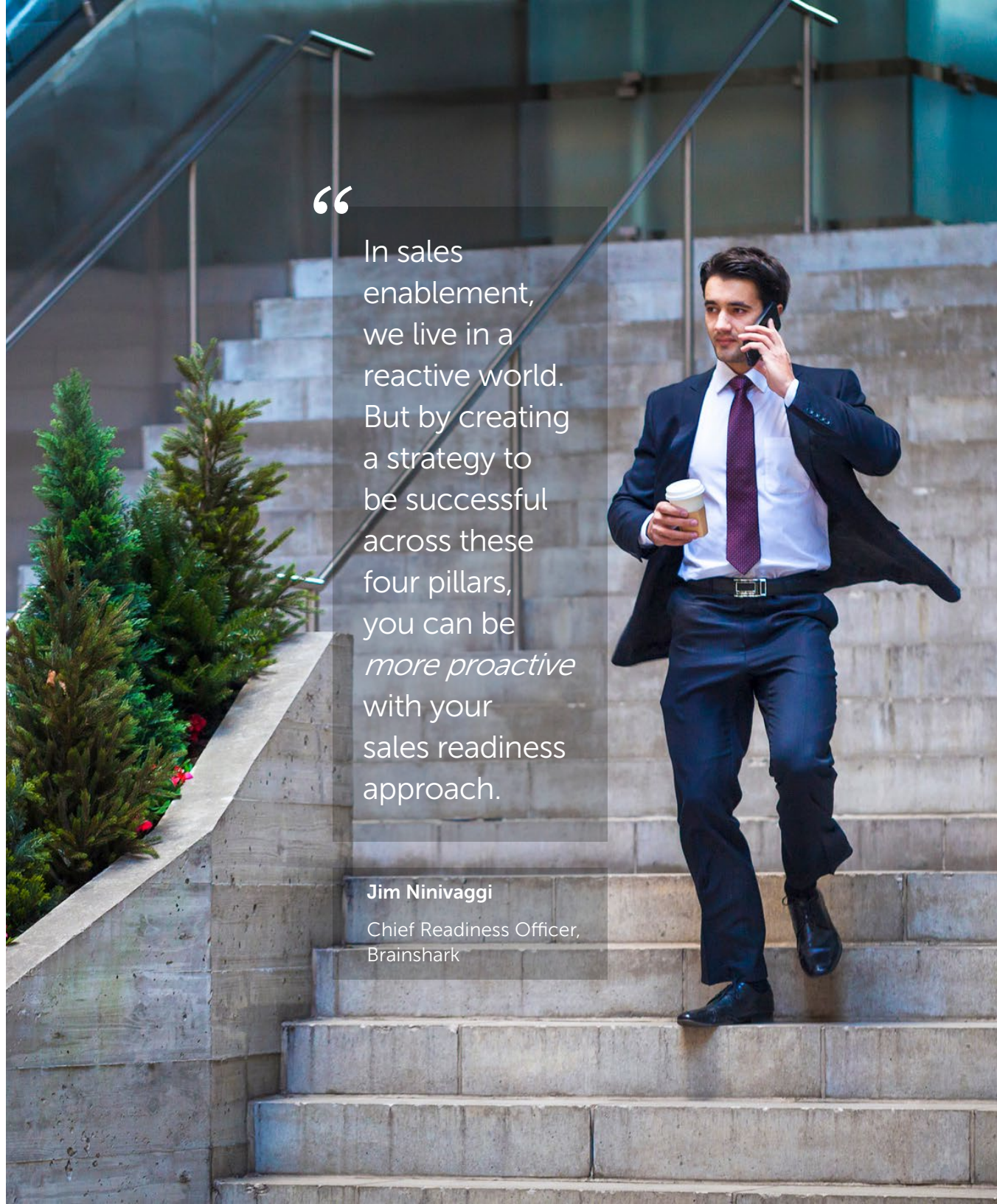
This eBook looks at the 4 pillars of sales readiness, the role each plays in preparing reps to sell, and how sales enablement technology can help.

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In sales enablement, we live in a reactive world. But by creating a strategy to be successful across these four pillars, you can be *more proactive* with your sales readiness approach.

Jim Ninivaggi

Chief Readiness Officer,
Brainshark





Foundational Readiness

DEFINITION: The efficient transfer of all knowledge that new hires need to be successful.

GOAL:

Accelerate time to full productivity and improve retention across every sales role in the field.

Foundational readiness is about creating a ready-to-execute onboarding program **for every role in your field force**, including field sales, inside sales reps, business development, sales managers and sales leaders. According to The Sales Management Association, 41% of firms don't specifically support sales manager development efforts. But when sales managers and leaders are new to their roles, they need onboarding just like everyone else.



For more than 60% of companies, sales onboarding success lags management expectations.

The Sales Management Association



Best Practice

Identify foundational competencies for all sales roles and develop readiness paths for each. For example, readiness paths for sales managers and leaders likely won't involve a full-time boot camp program (like it would for sales reps). Think of it more like getting a master's degree with night classes; if new sales managers and leaders need to ramp up in 90 days, make it so they can review on-demand learning courses on their own and attend workshops with colleagues.



Technology Advantage

Sales enablement software can make it easy to set up unique readiness paths for different roles as online courses that can be accessed via email, mobile and the CRM. Assessments or [video coaching](#) activities can be included with the courses to validate whether salespeople understood the material and can demonstrate comprehension through a quiz or digital role play. Issue certifications when salespeople have passed a significant milestone in their training.

Foundational Scenario

"We need our sellers to get ramped up and productive faster."

- Create structured learning paths for new hires to follow
- Track new hire progress for learning completion and mastery of concepts
- Enable video-based practice, coaching and reinforcement



Continuous Readiness

DEFINITION: Ensuring every sales force member is up-to-date and ready with the latest releases, competitive intelligence, market insights and ongoing performance improvement.

GOAL:

Ensuring all members of the field force are ever-ready to maximize every buyer interaction.

After foundational readiness, the learning isn't over; onboarding won't cover everything that salespeople will encounter as they start selling. Continuous readiness takes standard product and skills training and makes them more **proactive and assessment-centric**. Sales enablement leaders need to understand where a salesperson stands from a competency perspective and give them the opportunity to develop further.



Continuous investments in training & reinforcement result in:

Over
50%
higher net sales
per employee

Nearly
40%
higher gross profits
per employee

And a
20%
higher ratio in
market-to-book value.

ATD



Best Practice

Competencies can go beyond core skills. Create training for those that are interested in moving into other sales or customer-facing roles. These courses should lay out possible career paths for salespeople through certifications, so moving up or transitioning across the company is not a mystery – sellers can simply take courses with the goal of advancement. For example, for reps that may want to move into customer success (or account manager) roles, offer courses that outline the job responsibilities, how to apply their skills to the new role, and what it takes to transition.



Technology Advantage

Sales enablement software can provide a simple way to [continuously send out courses](#) and assessments to each role in sales. The key here is setting up courses in an automated fashion ahead of time so once reps complete a course, they are automatically met with the next course so there are no learning gaps. These courses might cover new products as they're released, as well as key skills trainings.

Ideally, salespeople should be allowed to “test out” (by passing a coaching activity or an assessment) at any time so they can move on to other courses. For example, if a rep's next course is presentation skills, but they feel confident in their skills, you may want to allow them to skip right to the assessment portion of the course without having to view the entire presentation. If the rep passes, they can quickly move on to the next course or curriculum.

Continuous Scenario

“This new product is a game changer. How do we get our reps ready to sell it?”

- Create video-based learning content available on any device
- Monitor and track readiness across the field force
- Incorporate informal and formal assessments to test knowledge



Transformational Readiness

DEFINITION: A holistic shift in strategy and go-to-market tactics that includes targeting new markets or buyers, mergers or acquisitions or new selling methodologies.

GOAL:

“Re-board” the entire field force while minimizing the impact on productivity and revenue.

Carrying out transformational readiness activities should start at the **sales manager level**. Oftentimes, sales managers are one of the key groups responsible for leading the transformation, whether it’s acquiring (or merging) a new company or product, adopting a new sales methodology or entering a new market.



50.5% of salespeople say their training around customer marketplaces needs improvement, and 20.4% say their training needs a complete overhaul.

CSO Insights



Best Practice

Sales enablement leaders need to **ensure that managers are ready to lead and have the tools to do so.** Make sure sales managers buy into the transformation by providing key information about the change so they thoroughly understand the business reasons and the path forward. Educate them on the new learning paths for the sales force and make them part of the continuous stream of communication for the change management efforts.



Technology Advantage

It's important to think about how reps' conversations with buyers will change as a result of the transformation. [Sales enablement software can help](#) to design and deliver training courses to address those changes. Both formal and informal assessments in the form of video coaching activities can be used to determine if reps are truly 'message-ready.'

For example, if reps were once selling to CIOs but are now selling to CMOs, that's a big change and will require re-boarding in several areas including persona training, pitch delivery, objection handling and responding to common questions regarding the transformation. Update existing material to reflect the changes and develop courses around new developments that reps may encounter as a result.

Transformational Scenario

"This isn't working – we need our reps to start selling to the C-suite."

- Create just-in-time learning paths for the sales team, available on any device
- Send out a continuous stream of communication about the change
- Practice and reinforce knowledge through coaching and assessments



Reactive Readiness

DEFINITION: Ready the field force to leverage or manage events with immediate impact on the business, such as good or bad news about your company, competitors, or geo-political events.

GOAL:

Get your entire field force ready in days or hours.

Ideally, sales enablement leaders should have an **“emergency kit”** for significant events when reactive readiness is needed. This kit should entail an execution plan for all communications and processes, as well as tools that will allow you to build and deliver content quickly.

The key here is the ability to pivot and react to the changes as quickly as possible; having a plan of attack in advance will allow you to spend more time preparing the sales force and less time scrambling to compile the information. These kinds of organizational or market changes have a short window of time, and reacting quickly is the only option if you expect your sales force to adapt and communicate appropriately with prospects and customers.



"You need a way to build content, deliver it in a mobile-first way and assess reps so they're message-ready – and you need be able to do that in a matter of hours."

Jim Ninivaggi

Chief Readiness Officer,
Brainshark



Best Practice

Get sales managers involved in the content creation process to help craft the responses and FAQs that reps will need. Design coaching activities where reps must respond to questions that buyers may ask so managers can evaluate and sign off on responses. In addition, the sales organization will want to hear from leadership. Facilitate this by helping to create and deliver a quick video where leaders talk about the news.



Technology Advantage

As an example, if two of your biggest competitors are merging, let reps know immediately, then begin to roll out your reactive readiness plan. (Even if the merger is just a rumor, if it's a big enough deal, it may warrant a condensed plan so reps know how to address questions.) Use sales enablement software to deliver content and assessments or coaching to reps, and have managers deliver feedback right away. Then get reps back to selling as soon as possible since the news is timely.

Reactive Scenario

"Two of our competitors just merged. What's our message to buyers?"

- Easily and quickly create video-based learning content and immediately deliver it to the sales team on all devices
- Capture and share leadership communications via video
- Use video practice, coaching and assessments to ensure reps are on-message and ready within hours

Conclusion

With the speed of business today, sales teams of all shapes and sizes need foundational, continuous, transformational and reactive readiness plans.

The goal for each of these plans is **to be proactive about preparing the salespeople** for whatever comes their way in the market, their organization and with buyers.

The more sales enablement leaders can anticipate the needs of the sales team, plan for changes in the business, and continuously provide training and assessments, the *better* prepared the entire sales organization will be to capitalize on opportunities.

Readiness is not a one-and-done process, it's a practice that should evolve for every scenario that sales will encounter.

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In the age of the customer, all customer-facing professionals require sales training.

Forrester Research





Want to learn more about sales enablement & readiness technology?

Visit us: www.brainshark.com

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About Brainshark

Brainshark sales readiness software equips businesses with the training, coaching and content authoring capabilities to achieve sales mastery and outsell the competition.

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

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

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