

Buyer's Guide:

# Best-of-Breed Sales Enablement

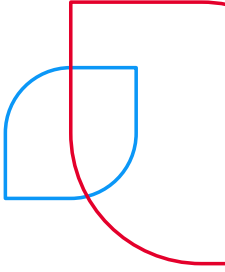


**BRAINSHARK**

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# Introduction

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These days, if you want your B2B sales team to be effective, you need a Sales Enablement solution. According to Aragon Research, Sales Enablement Platforms “represent the new tech stack in sales.” So it’s no longer a question of whether to implement a Sales Enablement solution, but a question of how.

As the Sales Enablement market has matured, it has become more complex. There are now several subcategories under the Sales Enablement umbrella and a plethora of suitable products to choose from in each. As the market segments, some vendors specialize while others try to address every subcategory within a single product. That leaves enterprises and growing mid-market companies looking to add Sales Enablement a choice between two approaches if they want a comprehensive solution:


1. Build a multi-vendor, best-of-breed ecosystem
2. Go all-in on a single-vendor suite

As a buyer, this can be overwhelming. Especially if you’re just dipping your toe in Sales Enablement. That’s where this guide comes in.

It will help you understand:

- The subcategories of Sales Enablement
- The best-of-breed and single-vendor approaches
- The advantages and challenges of each approach
- How to set up your best-of-breed sales enablement ecosystem should you decide that’s the best route for your business

Let’s jump right in!



**“Those with sales enablement reported an average win rate of 49%, 6.5 points higher than those without it.”**

-CSO Insights





# Sales Enablement Categories

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Sales enablement covers a wide range of activities and responsibilities that influence the entire sales process. The term can have different meanings to different companies, but Gartner defines **sales enablement applications as “tools that unite sales enablement functions with customer-facing sales execution.”**

Sales Enablement is made of up three major subcategories: **Sales Readiness**, **Conversation Intelligence**, and **Content Management**.

In their 2020 Sales Enablement Market Guide TOPO defined **“an effective sales enablement technology stack”** as a solution that provides **“a place to manage and recommend sales content, a hub for learning and coaching, and a place to listen and prescribe actions based on recorded sales conversations between sellers and buyers.”**

**Sales Readiness (SR)** involves onboarding and training salespeople and certifying whether they possess the skills and knowledge needed to have effective conversations throughout the buyer’s journey. Key sales readiness activities include assessment, certification, training, onboarding, coaching, scorecards, and native content creation such as video presentations. Sales Readiness systems are designed to reduce onboarding time and rep turnover, and help develop more productive, agile, and ready sellers—hence the name.

**Conversation Intelligence (CI)** gathers customer interactions across phone, web conferencing, and email and uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) to evaluate these interactions. The AI’s insights help sales teams notice patterns such as repeated keywords and prospect engagement so reps can change negative behaviors or try to repeat positive ones in future

conversations. Advanced or best-of-breed Conversational Intelligence can also be referred to as **Revenue Intelligence (RI)**.

**Content Management Systems (CMS)** store, organize, recommend, and analyze the use and effectiveness of internal and customer-facing sales assets. These systems help content creators (marketers and sales enablement professionals) know what content gets the best engagement and helps content consumers (sales reps) find what they need quickly.

You’ll eventually want your Sales Enablement solution to address all three categories for your sales and customer-facing teams to stay competitive. Building a best-of-breed ecosystem and finding a single vendor that meets those needs are the two different paths to get there.



# Best-of-Breed Ecosystem vs Single-Vendor Platform

## Best-of-Breed

**Best-of-breed products are mature, feature-complete products that specialize and lead the market in a particular niche** such as Content Management or Sales Readiness. Vendors offering best-of-breed products focus on building meticulous platforms by innovating ways to serve every need that may arise within a specific function.

A best-of-breed approach lets **businesses “handpick applications based on the features and functions that they require**—and feel confident they’re using the best tools across the organization” (Source).

**Combining multiple, specialized best-of-breed products into one cohesive Sales Enablement tech stack is referred to as an “ecosystem”** since multiple products are living and working together in one environment.

## Advantages

- Vendors are always innovating in their category
- Everyone in your team uses top of the line products to do their job
- You can mix and match products you prefer for a customized, targeted system
- You are not reliant on a single vendor to meet all your needs
- Strong core offerings in every category
- Start with 1 or 2 platforms and add on or switch out products as your organization’s needs change
- Long-term ROI

## Challenges

- Short-term cost
- IT resources
- Finding compatible products
- Users must learn multiple products





## Single-Vendor

Also referred to as “all-in-ones,” vendors in this category are competing in what TOPO has deemed **“a race to become a complete sales enablement platform”** by including **features in their applications that address all three major subcategories.**

Single-vendor products usually start in one category and add features over time as they work toward the goal of becoming a comprehensive solution or suite. For example, **an “all-in-one” or single-vendor Sales Enablement platform may have a strong Content Management foundation and offer a few Conversation Intelligence and Sales Readiness features.**

## Advantages

- Short-term cost
- One support team
- Deploy all at once
- Users must only learn one product

## Challenges

- Long-term cost if the product turns out insufficient, causing you to switch vendors
  - If the vendor stops innovating due to internal challenges like turnover
  - If new features become paid add-ons down the road
- Some features are minimally viable
- You must choose what “core offering” matters most to you and sacrifice on others





# All-in-One vs Best-of-Breed Feature Comparison

		All-in-One Vendor #1	All-in-One Vendor #2	Best-of-Breed Ecosystem
<b>Sales Readiness</b>	Training + Onboarding	◐	●	●
	Certifications	○	●	●
	Formal Courses	●	●	●
	Coaching with Machine Scoring	○	○	●
	Peer Coaching and Feedback	●	●	●
	Native Content Creation	◐	◐	●
	Voice Over Presentations	○	○	●
<b>Content Management</b>	Internal Content Engagement Tracking	●	●	●
	External Content Engagement Tracking	●	○	●
	Contextual Content Recommendations	●	◐	●
	Integrated Reporting and Analytics	◐	◐	●
	Content Workflow Tracking	○	○	●
<b>Revenue Intelligence</b>	Automated Video, Phone, Email, and Meeting Recording	◐	◐	●
	Conversation Topic and Keyword Analysis	◐	◐	●
	AI-identified Deal Risks	○	○	●
	Talk Ratio Tracking	○	○	●
	Market Trend Tracking	○	○	●





# Building your Best-of-Breed Sales Enablement Ecosystem

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More and more, enterprises are choosing to go with best-of-breed sales enablement solutions, but “a best-of-breed approach” also gives mid-market companies “the opportunity to start small and expand their technology stack alongside their growing business” ([Source](#)).

## But why are so many businesses choosing best-of-breed?

Three words: **longevity, compatibility, and guarantees**. Best-of-breed sales enablement products promise longevity through their completeness and stability, they are compatible with the rest of your tech stack as well as the workflow of your organization, and they guarantee results.

Some companies choose to go with all-in-one solutions to satisfy short-term budget goals without considering the long-term implications of insufficient functionality.

Too often, companies implement an all-in-one solution only to find a year down the road that they are missing a few crucial features their teams need to succeed. For example, they realize too late that they can't onboard reps effectively enough because the all-in-one does not have formal learning with required courses, workflow logic, and certification within its Readiness suite.

This is a huge problem because after sinking a lot of time and resources into implementing the all-in-one, they need to ditch their current solution and start over with a new one from scratch. Avoiding that pitfall is another advantage of building an ecosystem with separate pieces that can be changed out as needed without bringing operations to a halt.



**“Meeting stakeholders’ sales enablement expectations has a positive impact on revenue plan attainment, quota attainment, and win rates for forecast deals. Meeting just some expectations only led to average results and meeting no or few expectations led to well below average results.”**

-CSO Insights





# Sales Enablement Tech Landscape



The process of building a best-of-breed ecosystem also doesn't need to happen all at once. Depending on your organization's priorities, you can start with a best-of-breed CMS to get your Sales Enablement stack off the ground and add compatible Readiness and Conversation Intelligence when time, budget, and internal resources allow.

Whichever method you choose, the following practices and key considerations for evaluating best-of-breed products will ensure you enter the buying process confidently.

**“Build strategy first before implementing technology... There isn't necessarily a recommended order of buying one technology over another. However, invest in technology to support an overarching enablement strategy, objectives, programs, and talent.”**

-TOPO



# Identifying Best-of-Breed



Many vendors claim to offer best-of-breed products, so **how can you tell who really lives up to the title?** Look for the following factors when evaluating products for your best-of-breed ecosystem:

- The vendor is **recognized by industry analysts** as a market leader in their given niche
  - The product is **designed to thoroughly serve users with job functions in their niche** or is “feature-complete”
  - **Product features are robust** as opposed to minimally viable
  - Consistent **high ratings and rave reviews** from customers
  - Stellar **brand reputation**
  - Sells through **referrals and word of mouth**
- **Low churn rate**
  - Is **designed to integrate easily** with other essential or common technologies like Outlook or Salesforce





# Integrating Products

Perhaps the most important consideration when building a best-of-breed ecosystem is whether **the products work together seamlessly**. Here's how you can tell:

- Review the partners and/or integrations pages on each vendor's website to **be sure they mention one another**
- **Ask sales reps or download data sheets** and other resources from the vendors' websites that explain the integration
- **Schedule demos** with the vendors you are evaluating and ask them to show you how the integration works

Be sure to map out your sales teams' needs and workflow and make sure they align with how the ecosystem of proposed products would function.

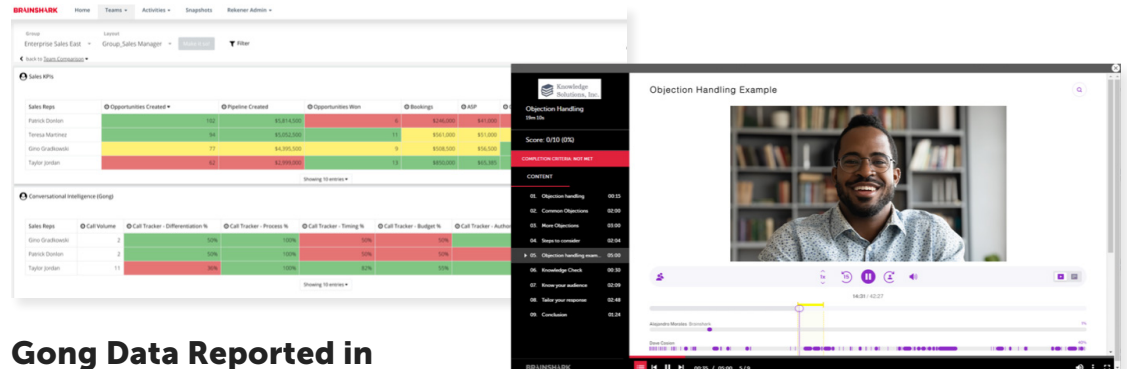




# Your Sales Enablement Ecosystem in Action

Now that you know what a best-of-breed sales enablement ecosystem is and how to go about building one, you're probably wondering **what it looks like in action**. Below is an example of an ecosystem constructed

with Brainshark's Sales Readiness solution, Gong's Revenue Intelligence, and Seismic's Content Management System.

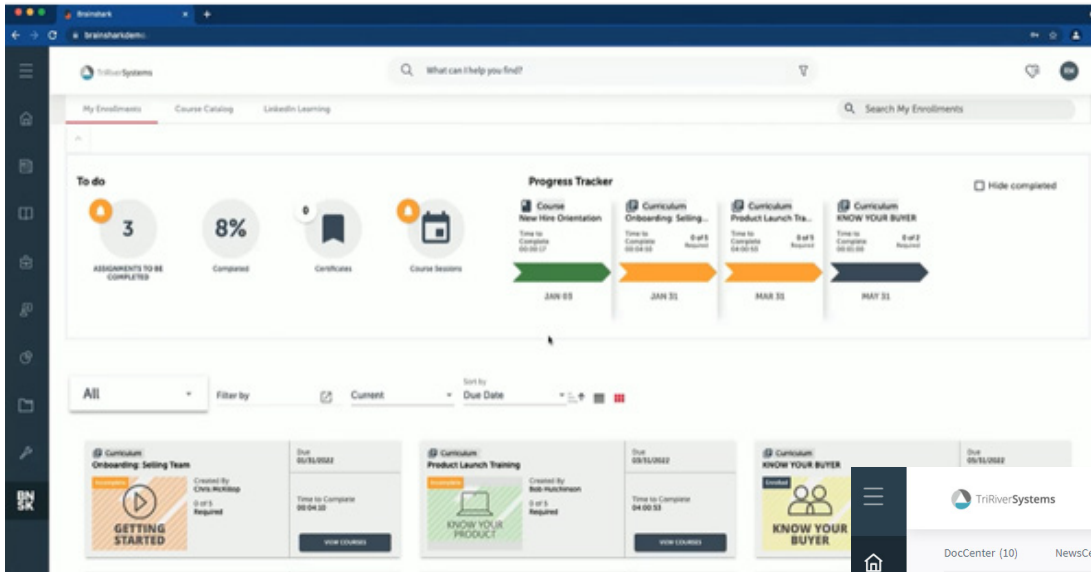


## Gong Data Reported in Brainshark Scorecards

Diagnose skills gaps more effectively with training and practice data alongside conversation intelligence data.

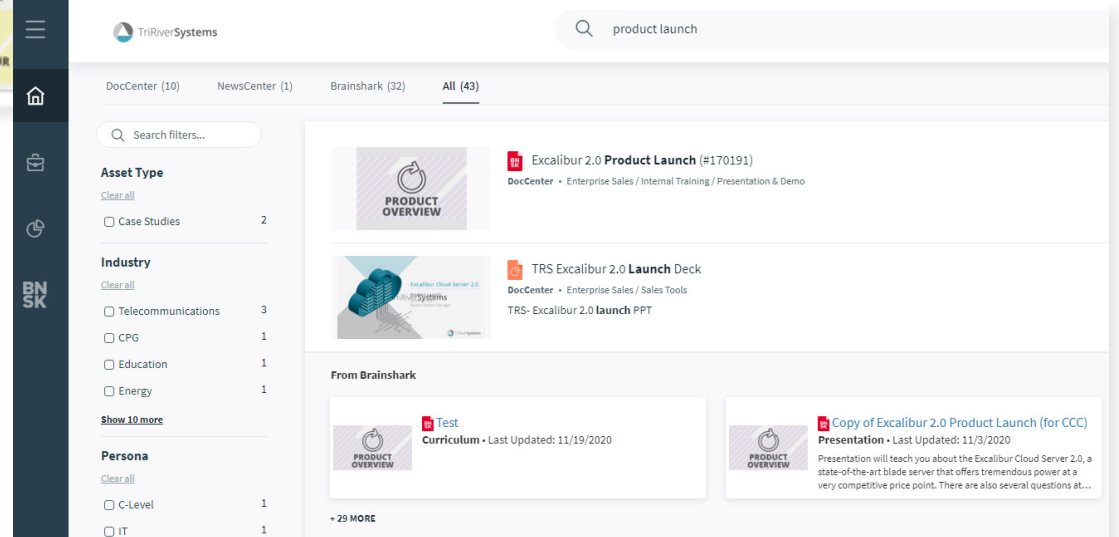
## Embedded Gong Calls in Brainshark Presentations

Foster peer learning and coaching by harnessing the best conversations in Gong and leveraging them in Brainshark courses.



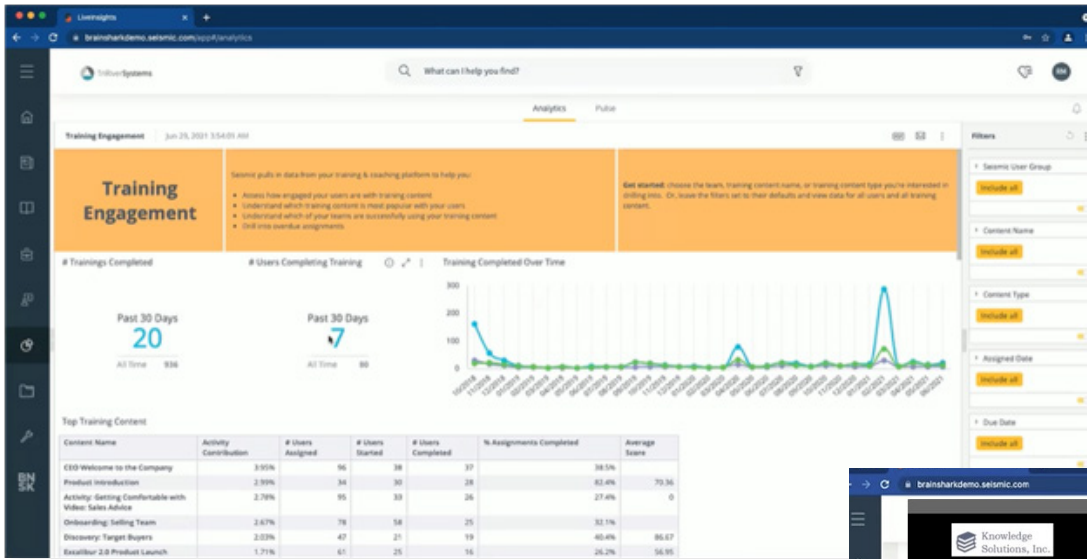
## Access Brainshark's User Interface from Seismic's top-level navigation

Provide a streamlined sales enablement experience that takes place on one screen and helps reps avoid distractions.



## Global Search in Seismic

Sellers can find content easily across both platforms from a single search without context switching.



## Sync Brainshark's Sales Readiness data with Seismic and CRM data

Achieve deeper insights on how content, training, and sales outcomes are affecting revenue.

**Objection Handling Example**

Score: 0/10 (0%)

COMPLETION CRITERIA: NOT MET

**CONTENT**

- 01. Objection handling 00:15
- 02. Common Objections 02:00
- 03. More Objections 03:00
- 04. Steps to consider 02:04
- 05. Objection handling exam... 05:00
- 06. Knowledge Check 00:30
- 07. Know your audience 02:09
- 08. Tailor your response 02:48
- 09. Conclusion 01:24

14:31 / 42:27

Allegro Morales Brainshark 1%

Dave Cassin 88% (18 / 21)

BRAINSHARK 00:35 / 05:00 5 / 9

## Create a centralized hub for all your enablement content and tools

Give your sellers a single source of truth with a fully integrated, best-of-breed ecosystem.





# Key Takeaways

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With all this in mind, it can be hard to figure out how to get started.

**Here are the steps to take to start building your sales enablement solution:**

1. Assess your organization's short and long-term revenue goals and how to best achieve them
2. Based on your findings, decide whether a best-of-breed ecosystem or all-in-one platform will deliver the results you need
3. If choosing best-of-breed, be sure to identify the vendors who actually fit that description
4. Talk to best-of-breed vendors' sales reps and demo their products to find out if they integrate seamlessly
5. Decide whether to implement multiple tools simultaneously or add them to your tech stack one at a time based on your priorities

Ultimately, you must determine what will work best for your business. But keep in mind that when weighing the single-vendor and best-of-breed approaches to sales enablement, **long-term ROI should always be the deciding factor.**





# Glossary

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**Best-of-breed**- refers to the leading applications, systems, or software in a niche or category. (Source)

**Conversation Intelligence**- technology that records, collects, and analyzes customer conversations and communications. (TOPO)

**Content Management System**-Not to be confused with website-building systems like WordPress, CMS in the Sales Enablement world refers to software applications that help businesses organize, manage, analyze, and track proprietary sales and marketing content.

**Ecosystem**- a technology ecosystem is the collection of tech solutions that a certain company uses to run its business, and how these solutions connect with each other. (Source)

**Revenue Intelligence**- typically includes examining various customer touch-points – web conferences,

phone calls, emails, texts, etc. – and provides an accurate, automated method of analyzing these interactions for insights and recommended next steps. (Source)

**Sales Enablement**- A strategic, cross-functional discipline designed to increase sales results and productivity by providing integrated content, training and coaching services for salespeople and front-line sales managers along the entire customer’s buying journey, powered by technology. (CSO Insights)

**Sales Readiness**-technology that prepares reps to sell through virtual onboarding, training, coaching, practice, assessment, certification, and performance analytics typically in the form of scorecards.

**Single-vendor**- A term used to describe an “all-in-one” software solution or suite of products that supplies a variety of capabilities in multiple categories





# About Brainshark

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Brainshark's data-driven readiness platform for sales enablement provides the tools to prepare teams with the knowledge and skills they need to perform at the highest level. With best-of-breed solutions for training and AI-powered coaching, as well as cutting-edge insights into sales performance, customers can ensure their sales reps are always ready to make the most of any selling situation.

Over 1000 amazing companies use Brainshark, including many in the Fortune 500. View our collection of testimonials to hear how we help our customers get better sales enablement results. Learn more at [brainshark.com](https://www.brainshark.com).

