SALES ENABLEMENT

MAGAZINE

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3 WAYS TO **PLAN FOR A NEW PRODUCT LAUNCH**

IS YOUR SALES TRAINING PLAN **IRRELEVANT?**

MERGING SALES TEAMS?

4 FACTORS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

BRAINSHARK

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Sales Enablement Technology – What's in a Name?

At this point, what sales enablement is has become pretty well-established. CSO Insights reports that the number of companies with a dedicated enablement role has more than tripled since 2013. And while there are many ways to define it, most people agree on the primary goals and responsibilities of the function.

What's less clear, however, is how to define the *technology* available to support it. In other words, 'What does a sales enablement solution do?'

The confusion is somewhat understandable. There are a lot of terms out there, and different industry analysts and experts use a variety of categories to describe what are (essentially) the same things.

Sales enablement automation. Sales asset management. Sales engagement platforms.

These are all terms that different analyst firms have used to refer to the same types of solutions – and these examples only refer to one side of the enablement market.

It's no wonder that buyers might get confused, so I'd like to try to provide some clarity. At Brainshark, our take is that there are two distinct sides to the sales enablement technology space:

1) Solutions to help reps prepare: These are the tools used for onboarding, training, coaching, skills development and general preparation of sales reps and client-facing teams. While Forrester uses the Sales Readiness moniker, these solutions may also be described as Sales Coaching & Learning tools (Aragon Research) or broken up into smaller categories like Video Practice & Role Play (Smart Selling Tools).

2) Solutions to help reps engage: From an enablement perspective, these are the tools that help companies organize, find and share the right sales assets, and track the prospect/customer engagement with that content. (These may be described using Sales Enablement Automation – a la Forrester – or any of the other initial examples listed above.)

Of course, the product offerings themselves are not always this distinct. Some vendors are focused on only one side of the market, while others provide varying functionality for both. What's important is that each category is an equally vital piece of the sales enablement technology puzzle.

The alphabet soup around enablement tech is unlikely to go away completely, especially as the space continues to shift and evolve. But just like any good sales conversation, the more clarity we can provide for buyers, the more prepared they'll be to make the best sales enablement investments.

Greg Flynn

CEO, Brainshark

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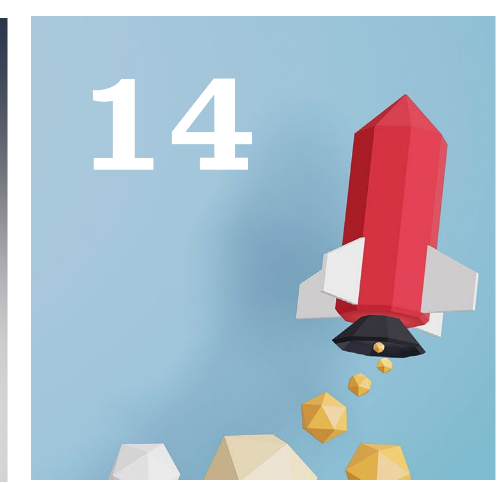

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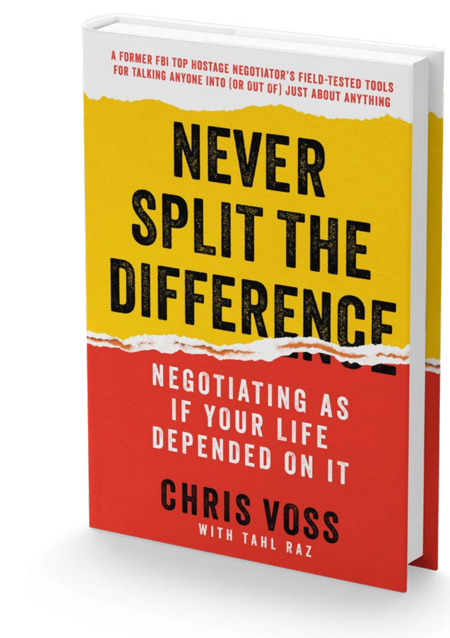


Never Split The Difference:
Negotiating As If Your Life Depended On It

By Chris Voss

Former hostage negotiator Chris Voss is no stranger to high-stakes situations, developing skills that helped save lives during a long and successful career with the FBI. In *Never Split The Difference*, he outlines nine principles of effective negotiation that can help readers of all backgrounds become more persuasive and improve their emotional intelligence in any discussion.

3 Ways Video Coaching Technology Improves Sales Manager Productivity

1. Scalability

Experiencing time or logistical challenges when it comes to sales coaching? No problem. Managers can use video coaching tools to provide personalized feedback wherever reps are – company HQ, in the field, or anywhere else in the world.

2. Reinforce Best Practices

Institutional knowledge shouldn't only exist in the heads of your experienced sellers. Video coaching tools allow sales managers to continuously document and share best practices across their teams.

3. Improve Manager Coaching Skills

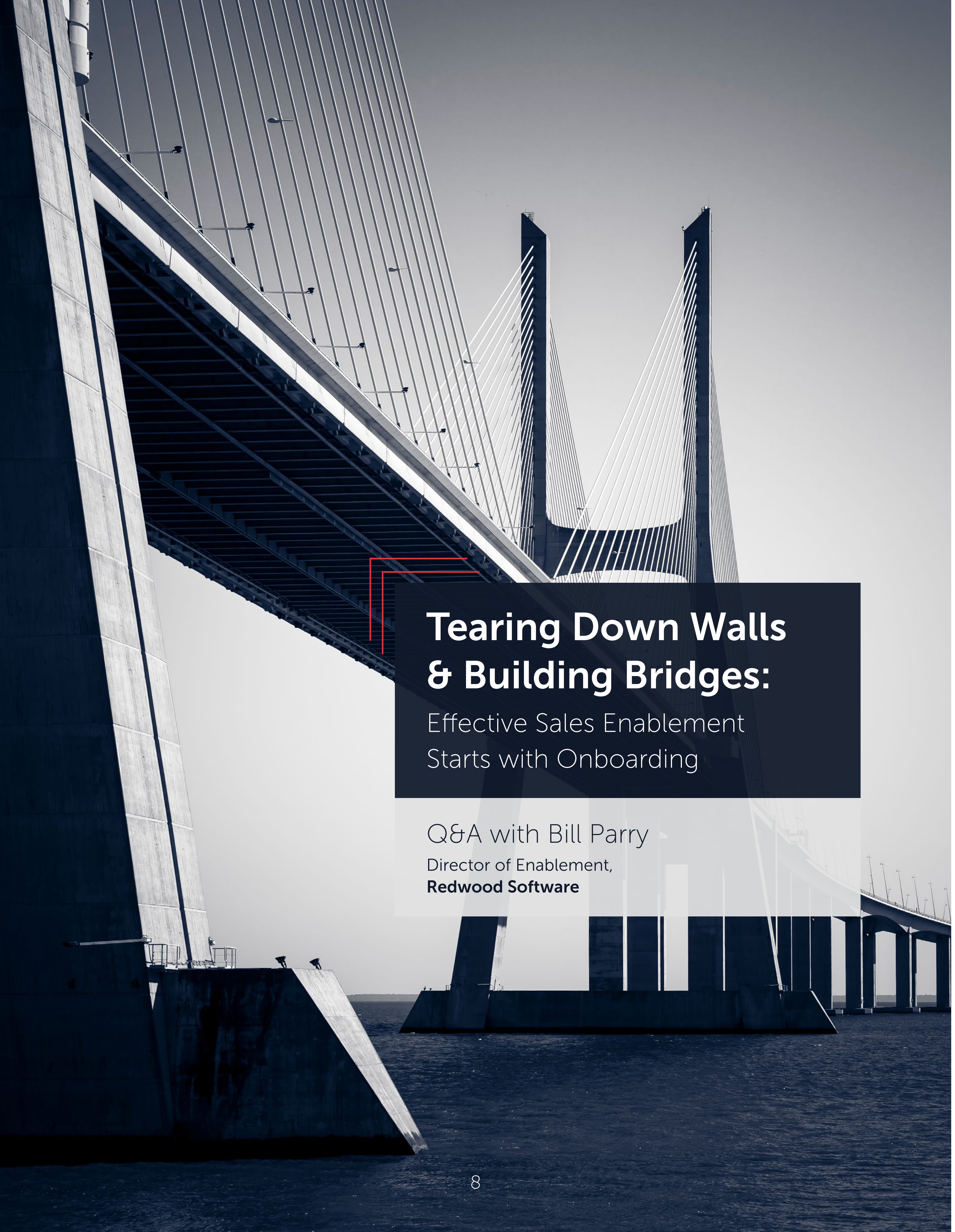
Video coaching activities can help sales managers self-evaluate their coaching abilities in specific situations. They also allow sales enablement teams to easily provide constructive feedback!

INSIDER'S PERSPECTIVE

HOW DO YOU MEASURE SALES ENABLEMENT SUCCESS?

"Agree upon goals and metrics with your executive team so you have a dashboard you can report from on an ongoing basis. That helps you get the requisite investments you need from a people and dollars perspective, so that you can align on expectations and priorities. There's always more to be done than there are resources."

Kara Underwood
Head of Global Learning & Enablement, Wrike



Tearing Down Walls & Building Bridges:

Effective Sales Enablement Starts with Onboarding

Q&A with Bill Parry

Director of Enablement,
Redwood Software

What is your philosophy around sales enablement?

BP: People always ask, "What is sales enablement?" There are all kinds of great definitions of what it is. But at the end of the day, it's about tearing down walls and building bridges so sellers have the right information at the right time, marketing is creating the right content that serves the needs of our sellers and clients, and they're all working together and having that synergy.

The challenge is, we're spending so much time working in our own little silos; we need to bring people together so they're communicating, and we can have more prepared and educated sellers. So when sellers engage with customers, they're not vendors, they're actually trusted advisors that are providing quality information to customers and our customers want to have a conversation with them.

What are the biggest sales onboarding challenges for both sales and enablement leaders today?

BP: One of the biggest challenges is that I tell sales leaders, you have to go slow, so you can go fast later. Reps are not going to learn everything in the first three days, it's just not going to happen. But if they know where the bathroom is, where to get coffee and how to get their computer working, that's probably going to be a win.

A lot of sales leaders want their new hires to know everything right away. So I start by asking them a simple question: what does your new hire need to know by the end of Week One? After the first week, you can show them the roadmap of what they'll learn during Week Two, Three, Four and so on. If some reps can complete onboarding sooner, awesome, but if it's going to take others a little bit longer, that's ok, we can work with that. But with most sellers, if you tell them where to go and what they're going to do, they can take it from there.

For example, if your 16-year-old gets their driver's license, are you going to let them drive on their own across the country? No, because they don't know how to really drive. When somebody is onboarded, do they really know how to sell [for you]? Or do you want to stick with them for a little bit, watch them merge onto the highway and make sure they know how to turn left? And that's the same thing with onboarding.

How can onboarding become a more collaborative process?

BP: We all know those sellers that are top performers and they leave a wake behind them. We also know that you have mediocre sellers that don't know what questions to ask and don't know where to go. But if you create an onboarding system that allows the seller to touch, engage with and have communication with people that do the installation, people that do the order, people that do customer service, it allows the ecosystem around the seller to develop a level of comfort so they can be part of the seller's learning process.

As a sales enablement leader, how do you know if your enablement efforts are effective?

BP: At the end of the day, it's all about getting the information to the seller so they can have an informed conversation with the customer at the right time. So many sellers struggle because there's too much information, it's just noise. How can we cut through that noise so sellers can understand the pain the customer is feeling and the solution they can bring to them?

A seller can't get there unless they know where to look or what to read. Too many sellers get frustrated and rely on past techniques as opposed to getting really good at asking quality questions. The only way you can do the latter is if you understand what the customer's pain is and what you can do to solve it. ■

Onboarding, ‘Ride Alongs’ and Video Coaching:

Launching a Sales Enablement Program in 90 Days at Tactile Medical

By Lauren Boutwell
Photography By Kirsten Solberg

Tactile MEDICAL™

When Lisa Mauri Thomas joined Tactile Medical in 2017, her role as national sales trainer was brand new for the company. The position was created to address several areas of improvement as the sales team was growing rapidly, including greater consistency of training and development and quicker ramp-up times for new sales reps.

“We needed to make sure there was a true defined path to get people where we needed them to be,” she says.

However, as a team of one supporting 230 remote reps and counting, Lisa needed to develop a plan for her first 90 days on the job, with the goal of figuring out how to scale her sales enablement initiatives long term.

“We wanted to cut the ramp up time of new hires in half, so we wanted a technology that would be robust; nothing flat or 1 dimensional, but more of a high-performance sports car,” she says.

Cloning the Solo Sales Enablement Leader

Before Lisa started at Tactile Medical, she already had a sales enablement strategy in mind and even started researching technology solutions to support her plan.

She said she kept coming back to Brainshark, in large part because of its video coaching capabilities. During her job interviews, she even pitched Brainshark’s video coaching tool to one of Tactile Medical’s executives, showing them how reps could demonstrate knowledge, improve their skills and share best practices.

After that interview, the executive was completely sold on Brainshark. Lisa then set a goal of launching 30+ courses in Brainshark at Tactile Medical’s national sales meeting by her 90th day on the job.

But leading up to Day 90, Lisa not only had to familiarize herself with her new role, she also had to learn the ins and outs of the company, where the sales organization was heading, the company’s vision and strengths and how to navigate different departments. In other words, there was a lot to do, and as one person, she needed to scale her enablement programs while forming a connection with reps no matter where they were working.

"Brainshark allows me to be a real, tangible presence to everyone in the field, [reps] hear my voice and have my help and guidance from wherever they are, regardless of where I am," she says. "It's the closest I've come to being out in the field with every one of them, every day. I'm literally the 'voice of Brainshark.' I couldn't do my job with a less robust system; Brainshark is the closest I've come to actually being able to clone myself."

Onboarding, 'Ride Alongs,' and Video Coaching

The sales team at Tactile Medical now uses Brainshark from their first days on the job through every stage of their tenures. Before new sales hires even start, they receive basic onboarding materials, including a quick overview of what to expect and company information, which Lisa says helps to get them moving so they don't lose momentum early on.

Once reps start on Day One, Lisa says they immediately jump into Brainshark and begin several courses to understand the basics of their role, the product, the disease states the products treat and more. She also assigns video coaching activities that test new reps on areas such as basic medical terminology, which she says is more effective than quiz questions.

"It's one thing for them to check a box or an A, B, C, D answer. It's another for them to actually articulate something like 'phlebolymphedema' with a degree of confidence."

As onboarding continues, reps partner up with more experienced reps in the field for what Tactile Medical refers to as 'ride alongs;' while driving to sales meetings, the new rep will review courses, discuss the material and ask questions.

> "I COULDN'T DO MY JOB WITH A LESS ROBUST SYSTEM; **BRAINSHARK IS THE CLOSEST I'VE COME TO ACTUALLY BEING ABLE TO CLONE MYSELF."**

"Ride alongs are great because new reps don't have to train by themselves on new topics," Lisa says. "It streamlines the trainer role for those more experienced reps. Not everyone is naturally great at training others and the veteran reps recognize this as a career development opportunity. It helps them become sales managers."

Once new reps are fully onboarded, they receive Brainshark curriculums for new product launches or entries into new markets. When preparing for sales meetings, reps can access 'grab and go' content via Brainshark for whatever they might be working on, such as developing new accounts, best practices, product-related podcasts and more.

"Reps are assigned curriculums throughout their career, for every job in sales all the way through [the management level]," she says.

Can They Do It? vs. *Did* They Do It?

For all the learning Lisa creates and sends out to reps, she measured completion and pass rates, but wanted a way to dive deeper into reps' readiness.

"So much of sales training metrics are, 'did they do it?'... check the box, did they answer this question correctly," she says. "Who cares! At the end of the day, 'can they do it'? Brainshark really helps us to capture that information and to understand to what extent, can they do it."

With Brainshark's video coaching tool, Lisa says she's able to see whether reps can stand and deliver the material they learned in training, instead of only checking for completion.

"The video coaching activities are big assessment sessions," she says. "To be able to have people come fully prepared and show what they know, it really connects the dots for them."

COVER STORY

Still, for video coaching to be truly impactful, Lisa had to make sure the sales managers – the reviewers of the videos – were well equipped to provide feedback and coaching to actually help reps improve.

So she rolled out a curriculum for sales managers and team leads to learn about the best practices of using video coaching, as well as how to assign and assess the submissions. She also created assessment rubrics for them to ensure consistency of reviews.

"Practice is only as good as the coaching and feedback that comes back," she says. "To be great at coaching and feedback, you have to have solid assessment skills to hone in on what they should keep doing, what they should stop doing, and what they need to improve on. It's all about growth and Brainshark helps us develop people at every level."

To provide an additional layer of assessment, the team at Tactile Medical also uses Brainshark's AI-powered machine analysis engine, which provides automated transcriptions, scores and feedback on the videos reps submit.

"It's great for machine learning to give a score and a manager to give a score because the manager gets to see 'what was the gap.' I have not found anything else other than Brainshark that does this so well."

Shorter Ramp-Ups and Upskilled Reps

With the help of Brainshark, new reps are receiving courses, video coaching activities and ride along training, which has allowed the

company to cut ramp up times of new sales hires in half.

"The Brainshark content is a real presence during the in-field training ride alongs. It's like I am in the car, via Brainshark, during those ride alongs and helping the seasoned rep train the new rep," Lisa says.

In addition, she says that although the ride alongs are targeting new hire skill development, the program has raised the skill sets of all reps, especially the training and assessment abilities of veteran reps.

For Lisa as the solo sales enablement practitioner, Brainshark has helped her kick the sales enablement program into high gear, with the creation of over 120 courses and numerous video coaching activities. And the success of Brainshark has spread across Tactile Medical to other departments as well.

"The sales enablement success in 2019 has been powerful and visible. Now, all of Tactile Medical, well beyond the sales team, has embraced Brainshark and its robust training tools to enhance performance levels of all staff across all departments," she says.

"It was really reaffirming when various managers of internal departments kept coming to me asking about 'this Brainshark thing' everyone was buzzing about. They all wanted in. At the end of the day, it benefits sales and Tactile Medical overall."

3 Ways Sales Teams Can Plan for a New Product Launch

By Lauren Boutwell

Whether your company releases a new product or feature every week, month or year, there's no doubt that a new product launch is a pivotal event for the entire organization.

However, the reality is that product launches are also a true test of the readiness of your sales team.

Even if your new product or feature is a game-changer, each and every one of your sales reps needs to be ready to speak to key selling points and grab buyers' attention. If your reps aren't ready to sell it, your entire launch could fall flat, resulting in missed opportunities in the market.

Ensure your sales reps have a plan for your next product launch:

1 Collaborate with subject matter & product experts

It might seem obvious, but for a new product launch or feature release, you'll want to team up with subject matter experts (SMEs) and product experts. Not only can they provide technical expertise and explain the ins and outs of the product or feature, but they can also help you identify the information that will be most relevant to your sales team.

When creating training content for your launch, sales readiness technology can make it easy for SMEs to contribute their voice and knowledge directly into a presentation or video (to be vetted by your enablement team, of course), so that reps get the most up-to-date, accurate information before they go out into the field.

2 Use multiple levels of assessment

When a new product or feature comes out, the last thing you want is for a rep to communicate key details incorrectly during a sales call. For your next release, make sure training includes multiple levels of assessment.

One type of assessment is a knowledge-check, which can be a quiz or test that's embedded in a training course or curriculum. For example, you can create a training video explaining the new feature and add quiz questions that prompt reps to recall what they learned in order to pass the course.

Another type of assessment is a simulation, which can be in the form of a video coaching activity. In this case, reps can stand and deliver the new product information via video and submit it to managers for feedback before meeting with buyers. Some video coaching tools include AI-powered analysis that can evaluate reps' submissions for coverage of key topics, speaking rate and more, which helps managers quickly identify how well their teams are delivering the new product messaging.

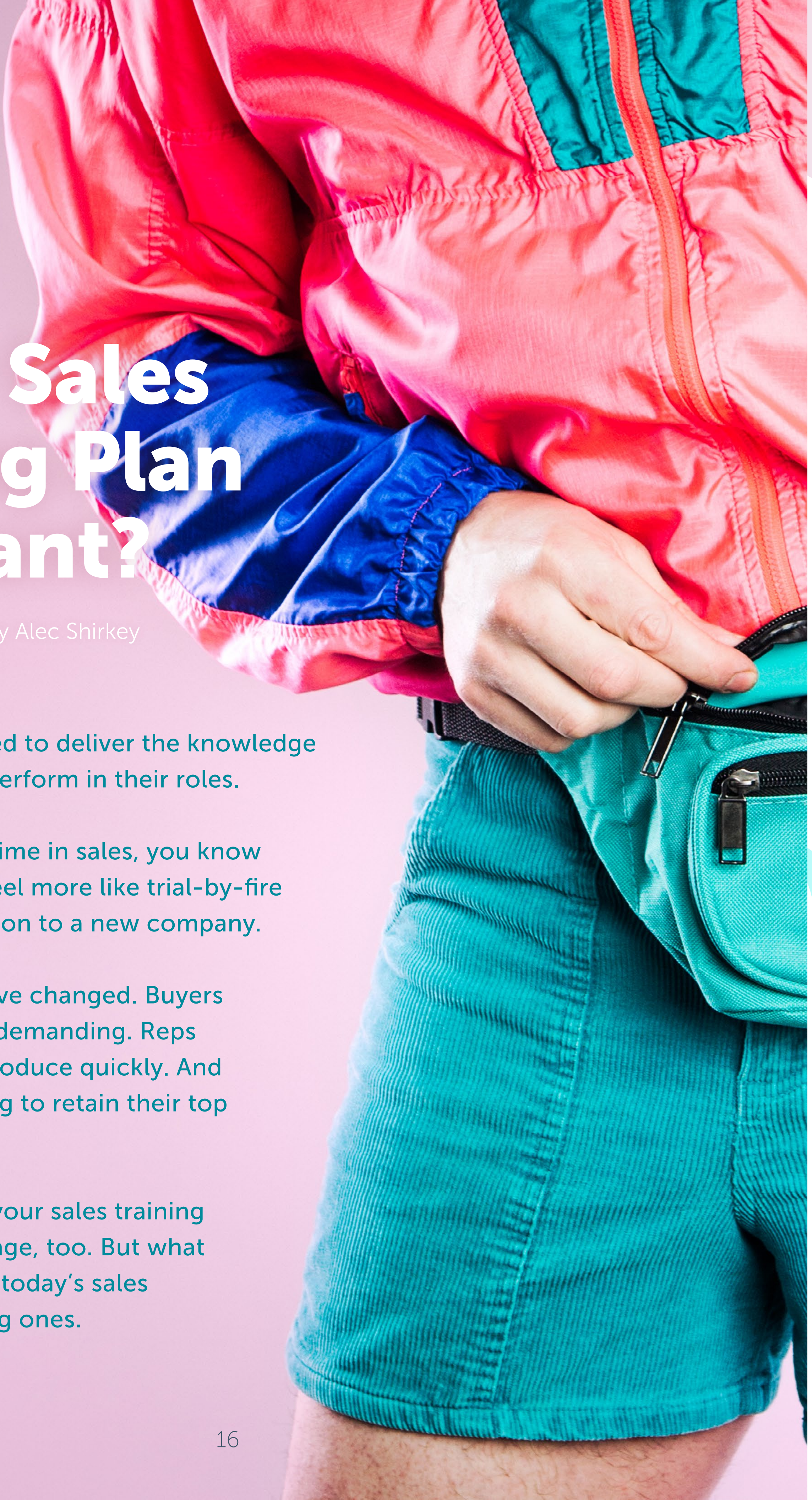
3 Empower reps to practice their new product pitch

When new product or feature messaging is released, reps need a safe, comfortable environment to practice the material before they reach out to buyers. This can be done in several ways, including role plays with peers or managers, or via a video coaching tool where reps can practice on their own before requesting feedback.

With a video coaching tool, reps can record as many takes as they'd like when practicing their new product pitch. For example, if a new feature is targeted at a new persona, it will require reps to give a new product pitch. To practice, reps could record several takes and, once they feel confident in their pitch, submit it to peers or managers for feedback.

Is Your Sales Training Plan Irrelevant?

By Alec Shirkey



Sales training is supposed to deliver the knowledge and skills reps need to perform in their roles.

But if you've spent any time in sales, you know that sales training can feel more like trial-by-fire than a helpful introduction to a new company.

That's because times have changed. Buyers are more informed and demanding. Reps are under pressure to produce quickly. And companies are struggling to retain their top sales talent.

This new reality means your sales training plan might need to change, too. But what factors really matter for today's sales teams? Let's look at 3 big ones.

1. Is Sales Training Designed for Modern Reps?

Today's salespeople want easy-to-consume information, instant access to the information they need, and the flexibility to work whenever and wherever they want. That's why sales training content needs to be readily available to reps on-demand, via the devices they use every day.

"Our sales force has become more mobile. [Reps] are looking for more just-in-time delivery, and we really need to think about what they need in the context of the everyday job they do," said Liz Pulice, VP of Sales Enablement at Brainshark.

Because busy reps also have a lot on their plates – from the pressure of hitting quota to the demands of their buyers – they may only have a short window to consume and retain what they're learning. Training content needs to immediately capture their attention and easily convey the need-to-know details.

Sales enablement technology can make it easier to create engaging, bite-sized learning content for home office and geographically-dispersed reps – catering not only to younger generations of sellers, but also to the demands of the job.

2. Measuring Key Sales Activities

To ensure sellers are prepared to thrive in the field, your sales training program should focus on the right measurements. But let's start with two measurements that don't tell the full story behind rep performance: course completion and quota attainment.

Course completion only answers one question: did reps consume the required training? It doesn't indicate whether a new sales hire can actually apply key skills and knowledge in practice.

Quota attainment only determines whether or not reps produced the required result. It does not tell companies why the rep fell short. Hitting or missing "the number" is a lagging indicator that can only tell you what already happened – forcing sales organizations to be reactive, instead of proactive, when it's time to course-correct.

Instead of focusing on these lagging indicators, start reviewing your sales and buying processes and mapping them to the sales activities reps must perform during each deal cycle. This helps determine where your reps should really spend their time, in order to drive revenue.

Using your CRM system (in partnership with sales ops if needed), you can track whether reps are completing the right activities.

3. Assessing (Not Guessing) Sales Readiness

Once you've begun tracking key sales activities, determine which behaviors reps need to exhibit to execute those activities.

When it comes to prospecting, for instance, do reps have the cold-calling skills needed to set meetings with potential buyers? Do they understand buyer personas well enough to perform discovery and unearth pain points?

To answer questions like these, companies need to be assessing sales readiness. Traditionally, this type of assessment has taken place during high-intensity boot camps. But today, video coaching platforms can determine whether the rep is truly ready to deliver a compelling, consistent message to the customer.

This involves video coaching assessments, where a rep is asked to "stand and deliver" what they've learned from required training courses, and then receives feedback from a sales manager or coach on specific areas of improvement.

However, it also involves self-directed practice that allows reps to perfect a sales behavior – i.e., delivering an elevator pitch or handling a common objection– in a simulated environment. This encourages sales reps to prepare for the unexpected and build improvisation skills – which are critical when calls take unexpected turns.

"Our goal is practice," Pulice said. "That's the reason we're doing role plays. Everyone is practicing together so we don't do that in front of the customer, and we have the opportunity to correct."

MERGING SALES TEAMS?

4 FACTORS THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE

By Alec Shirkey

The stakes are high for sales teams when M&A takes place. Here are 4 tips for getting reps up to speed on any post-merger sales strategy – and ensuring they stay productive during the transition.

1.

CONSIDER CULTURAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE DEAL

Integrating teams with different sales cultures can make it tough to change rep behavior. Ensure that both sides have input when defining the skills and behaviors reps need to execute the new strategy and incorporate best practices from both sides into your training and coaching efforts.

2.

SHOW YOUR NEW TEAMMATES WHAT WORKS

Tapping into the "tribal knowledge" of each organization is a great way to foster trust on both sides. Sales readiness technology can make this kind of peer learning easy by enabling sellers to share their best practices with other reps via short video content; sales enablement pros can then turn the best recordings into formal training content.

3.

EARN BUY-IN FROM THE SALES MANAGERS

Sales managers need to buy into the vision behind the merger, otherwise they'll have a hard time leading their reps through the integration process. Get a head-start by establishing a merger training program specifically for sales managers that ensures they are capable, willing, and ready to lead the transformation.

4.

MAKE MICRO-ASSESSMENTS A PRIORITY

When a merger takes place, reps need to become message-ready as quickly as possible. Micro-assessments can ensure reps are prepared to position the value of your recent merger to buyers because they – just like microlearning courses – focus on one specific learning objective.

About Brainshark

Brainshark's sales readiness platform equips businesses with the training, coaching and content needed to prepare salespeople when, where and how they work.

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 customers – 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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