

SALES TRANSFORMATIONS

A SALES ENABLEMENT SURVIVAL GUIDE



BRAINSHARK

Introduction

Coping with change is an unavoidable part of life for modern sales organizations. Reps come and go. Accounts open and close. New competitors surface while others fade into irrelevance. These are fluctuations that any sales force deals with on a regular basis.

But some changes are so essential to the continued existence or growth of the business that they require a **transformation** of how the sales team operates.

Transformations can have several different triggers, such as a major shift in market dynamics or a spate of inorganic growth, meaning each transformation will vary

from the next. However, they can be broadly grouped into the following categories:

- Mergers & Acquisitions
- New Buyers
- Product Innovation
- New Sales Methodology

No matter which circumstances have compelled your organization to overhaul its sales approach, **you need to guide your sales team through the coming changes.** This eBook will break down the different types of sales transformation, key challenges sales enablement leaders can expect to face and strategies they should consider when addressing them.

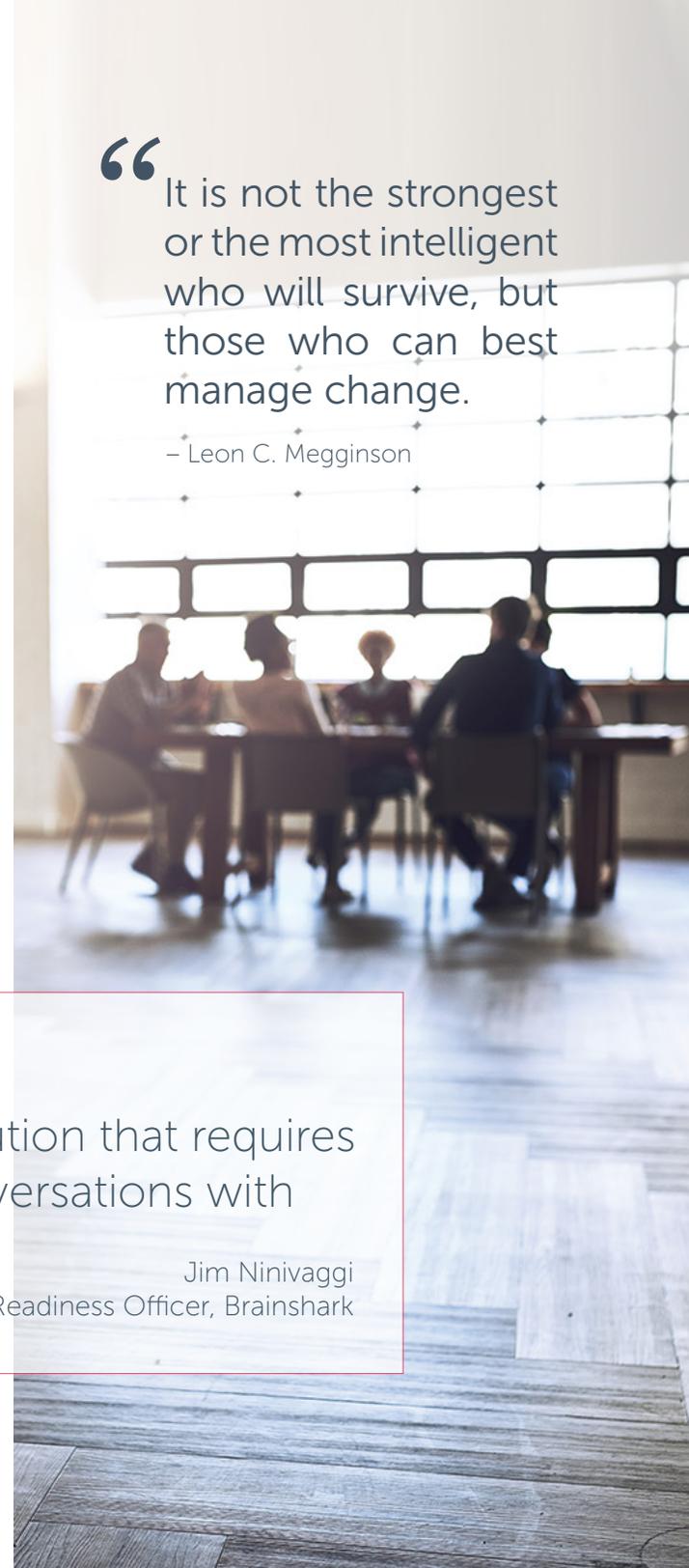
“It is not the strongest or the most intelligent who will survive, but those who can best manage change.

– Leon C. Megginson

Q: What Is Sales Transformation?

A: A wholesale change in go-to-market strategy and execution that requires salespeople to start having fundamentally different conversations with prospective buyers.

Jim Ninivaggi
Chief Readiness Officer, Brainshark



Key Challenges For Transformation

Transformation is often an intense process, which means you can expect to face a fair number of obstacles along the way. Sales enablement leaders should anticipate the following hurdles:

Getting Sales Managers On Board

Before you even begin to think about how sales reps will tackle a transformation, it's imperative to focus on enabling the first-line sales managers (FSMs).

Why? Transformation requires a "re-boarding" of the entire sales organization, and the FSMs will be responsible for executing whatever strategy the C-suite has outlined. If the FSMs haven't bought into the vision, or if they don't understand why changes are being made, they'll lack the confidence to lead your sales reps through the transformation.

On average, sales managers have 6.2 salespeople reporting to them, CSO Insights reports. Without proper guidance, those reps will eventually revert to old habits, leaving your sales transformation goals **dead in the water**.

Coaching Your Sales Coaches

Even if the FSMs have bought into the transformation, sales enablement leaders must still

help those managers effectively coach their reps to sell in a way that's consistent with the new company strategy. Say your salespeople have been exclusively selling to the financial services industry, but now they're being asked to target technology vendors. The sales managers won't know exactly what to look for when preparing reps for these new buyer conversations, and their sales coaching priorities may need to change pretty significantly.

"The first-line manager is the heart and soul of any transformation. If you don't get the managers bought into the transformation, it doesn't matter what you do with the reps."

– Jim Ninivaggi, Brainshark

What are a technology company's biggest pain points? Can reps speak the vernacular? Do they know the most important players in the space? **Your sales managers must be ready to ask and answer these questions**, because even A-players will need to be coached through a transformation.

Convincing Top Sales Reps to 'Walk the Walk'

Star players will already have their preferred way of doing business. They've mastered how to connect with a specific type of buyer, or how to sell a certain product. Now they may have to change their methods, which won't necessarily be well-received. Without clear communication, they may not even understand why the transformation is necessary, which will only hinder sales enablement's goals.

Transforming On the Go

Sales is a short-term world. Although a transformation may be taking place, you're still expected to hit quarterly numbers and maintain a healthy pipeline. Shutting down the business while the sales team learns a new market or methodology just isn't possible, which forces sales enablement professionals to balance their everyday responsibilities with transformation priorities.

89% of high-performing sales organizations emphasize FSM enablement (9% higher than low performers).

– SiriusDecisions

Mergers & Acquisitions

Companies announced more than 50,000 transactions totaling \$3.5 trillion in 2017, according to the Institute for Mergers, Acquisitions and Alliances.



SCENARIO

An increasingly frequent growth avenue these days, M&A often means the business must somehow unify two different sales teams. Both sides will have their own preferred methodology and sales tactics in place, on top of whatever differences and similarities exist around product portfolio, customer base and culture.

You'll also have to deal with competitors, who will quickly work to sow fear, uncertainty and doubt among customers and prospects once the deal is announced. While their sales reps try to argue why the merger or acquisition can only be negative, you need to stay ahead of the noise by getting your sales reps message-ready.

Although less common, divestitures and spin-offs will also require salespeople to address new buyer questions and concerns. Many of the same sales enablement tactics that apply to M&A should also prove effective in these cases.

Mergers & Acquisitions

“70% of mergers and acquisitions fail to meet business expectations.

Heather Cole
Service Director of Sales
Enablement Strategies
SiriusDecisions



Take Action

- Take inventory of both organizations to determine if and where customer, product and structural overlap exist
- Decide which sales methodology will most benefit the combined organization
- Redefine desirable behaviors, skills and knowledge, and then train to them
- Provide guided selling and playbooks that communicate enablement priorities and goals



Put Technology to Work

News travels fast, which means time is of the essence when M&A is involved. Reps must be ready to answer that critical question: “What does this deal mean for me, the customer?” Video coaching tools are an efficient way to improve the sales readiness of a newly-combined sales force. Sales enablement teams can organize a formal, teamwide video coaching activity and then assess the submissions, thereby ensuring sales reps can discuss the value of your merger or acquisition.

REMEMBER

The acquiring company doesn't always have the right answer. “You can always learn from the company you're acquiring,” says Ninivaggi.

New Buyers

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



SCENARIO

New market penetration is another popular route for chasing growth. A common concern for sales reps, however, is whether they're able to have meaningful conversations with those new clients and prospects. Do they truly understand the pain points and dynamics of that new market?

This can apply to a company chasing business in new verticals, new geographies or even a new set of buyers within their existing customer base. For example, as more technology budgets are put in the hands of line-of-business leaders, a high-tech vendor that had previously sold only to CIOs might ask its sales force to start calling on CMOs. Those new buyers will have their own set of challenges, drivers and questions, which in turn forces reps to have a completely different kind of conversation.

In addition, the buying process, competitive landscape and cultural tendencies may all change as a result of chasing new industries and geographies. For a sales rep, that means a lot of learning has to take place quickly.

New Buyers



Take Action

- Help salespeople better understand new market conditions, value drivers and what type of customers your new prospects are serving
- Ensure that reps are also prepared for new buying process hurdles, such as selling to procurement in the financial services space
- Arm salespeople with content and stories that enable them to sell against more established competitors and explain why your company is an upgrade over the status quo



Put Technology to Work

Sales reps must develop a deep understanding of the new market landscape and new buyer personas when this type of transformation takes place. Expect to be producing plenty of sales content as a result. Sales enablement platforms are key to making that content readily accessible, but also consider a video coaching tool that allows managers and sales coaches to **assess and certify** that reps are adequately prepared to engage with new buyers.

REMEMBER

Entering new regions involves the added challenge of navigating an unfamiliar culture – one that may not respond well to your current sales approach. For instance, a provocative approach in the Americas might not play well in EMEA. You may need to refine your sales methodology so that it better aligns to your new buyers' preferences and expectations.

Product Innovation

Only 38% of sales reps receive formal training for new product launches. – Corporate Visions



SCENARIO

New product launches, enhancements and sunsets are a continuous process for companies that rely on innovation to grow and thrive. To truly qualify as a **transformation**, product changes must create a “competence and confidence gap” for sellers when they engage with customers.

In other words, has the product overhaul **radically changed** the nature of your sales conversations? Has it created new competition? Are there new buyer roles now involved in the decision-making process?

A technology company that pivots from selling on-premise hardware to cloud-based software subscriptions, for instance, is indeed facing a sales transformation. Maybe procurement is no longer involved in the buying process as a result. Maybe the cloud solutions feature a compelling use case for new verticals or new types of buyers.

How should sales enablement leaders help managers and reps keep up with so much change? How do they make sure reps don't lose too much of their precious selling time? Sales reps spend only 37% of their time selling, according to research from InsideSales.com.

Perhaps most importantly, how does the enablement team get reps on board with the product transformation? Sales reps who have been successful selling certain products may not embrace the shift to new ones with open arms.

Product Innovation

“Buyers don’t buy the product itself; they buy the business value they can get from the new product, service or solution.

Tamara Schenk
Research Director
CSO Insights



Take Action

- As a final certification, conduct an on-site training program that requires reps to deliver product presentations to key company executives
- Use the on-site event as an opportunity to rally your sales team behind the new strategy
- Instead of focusing on new features, center product training around helping sales people translate those features into key value statements



Put Technology to Work

Sales readiness tools can also provide just-in-time learning to reps in the field, allowing them to spend less time preparing for buyer meetings and sifting through training content.

Use sales readiness tools to deliver the formal training program and provide targeted coaching activities to ensure mastery.

Have reps record their product pitches and submit video to managers for feedback and guidance.

REMEMBER

The same product feature might hold different value to different buyers, depending on their individual needs and circumstances. A car with asymmetrical all-wheel drive – a great benefit for snowy conditions – might help a diehard skier get to the slopes in tough conditions, or it might help a stay-at-home mom get to the grocery store more safely.

New Sales Methodology

"The key is to look at the methodology and the key activities reps are expected to perform. Deconstruct the required competencies so that the rep can be successful in that required activity." – Jim Ninivaggi, Brainshark



SCENARIO

When a new CSO takes over, an organization is often compelled to adopt his or her preferred selling philosophy. Most commonly, companies will shift to a solution-oriented approach, with the reps focusing on customer problem resolution rather than product promotion.

Methodology changes might force salespeople to develop skills they previously didn't need to prioritize. Sales enablement must ensure reps are equipped with the abilities and knowledge to apply that new doctrine in calls and meetings. If they're being asked to share business insights with prospects, can the sales reps effectively research your target industries and present those findings during a sales conversation?

Whichever methodology your CSO practices, it's important to ensure that the sales force can still execute the basics, including call and meeting preparation, product and market mastery, and actively listening to customers and prospects.

New Sales Methodology



Take Action

- Determine the competencies required by the new sales methodology and rebuild your sales training program around them
- Assess whether reps can successfully demonstrate the needed proficiency in those areas
- Achieve buy-in from the first-line sales managers, making sure they too understand why the change in methodology will create success



Put Technology to Work

Use a sales readiness platform to administer initial training, provide just-in-time reinforcement, share peer knowledge and highlight early success stories. Video coaching capabilities can help you assess whether reps possess the skills needed to execute the new sales methodology, as well.

REMEMBER

As with other types of transformation, your reps may have a healthy dose of skepticism when asked to adopt a new sales methodology – especially if the organization has cycled through a few different ones in recent years. Sales enablement leaders should recognize that reality and gauge whether managers will be able to cut through any cynicism that exists.

Trickle-Down Transformation: Your Survival Checklist

Although each transformation scenario will require a tailored approach, incorporating these fundamentals into your sales enablement and training strategy will benefit the entire sales organization, regardless of the circumstances.

We call the process “trickle-down transformation,” because buy-in should begin with the CSO and progress in a top-down fashion. The C-level outlines the strategy, and it’s on sales enablement to ensure each level of the sales organization is ultimately moving in the same direction.

Learn more about how to prepare your sales reps for any situation in our exclusive eBook, ['The 4 Pillars of Sales Readiness.'](#)



Trickle-Down Transformation: Your Survival Checklist

ONE

✓ Build a Sales Transformation "Tiger Team"

In a transformation, sales enablement leaders are responsible not only for onboarding and training new reps, but also “re-boarding” the rest of the organization around the business’ new strategic priorities. Trying to do both at once is a recipe for failure. To put your sales enablement team in better position for success, assemble a “tiger team” of in-house experts that is focused on ensuring that reps have mastered all of the new buying and selling scenarios they can expect to face.

Sales ops, sales management, sales reps and, if applicable, marketing and product marketing should be represented in this group to ensure all relevant parties have input.

TWO

✓ Empower the Sales Managers

Design a 7-to-8 week transformation training program for first-line sales managers, primarily built around virtual learning and culminating in an on-site event that ensures managers are capable, willing and ready to lead transformation efforts.

Using a sales readiness platform, you can regularly distribute training content and exercises that require sales managers to lead short “mastery sessions” with their teams. These sessions should be built around a narrow, easy-to-digest topic, such as opening a sales call, pre-call planning or objection handling. Using a leader’s guide, the sales managers debrief their reps on the video material and walk them through it.

In addition, sales readiness solutions allow you to actually test a sales manager’s coaching abilities via practice scenarios and assessments. When showing the manager video of a rep’s sales pitch, for example, you can prompt him or her to identify the major mistakes and also highlight what was done well.

“The best way to learn is to teach. It ensures managers understand the concepts of the transformation and learn how to coach [to] the changes.

Jim Ninivaggi
Brainshark

Trickle-Down Transformation: Your Survival Checklist

THREE

Use Technology to Highlight Early Successes

It's natural for sales reps to be skeptical of a transformation strategy, even if the underlying reasons have been well-communicated. Overcome the skepticism by capturing win stories and sharing them as quickly as possible. By showing proof that the transformation is working, you can galvanize the rest of the sales force and give them a model for success.

A sales readiness platform with content authoring capabilities, such as Brainshark, is a great tool for distributing those stories. Ask the rep what was most important to closing the deal, spotlight why the buyers agreed, and get that valuable information out to the rest of your team.

FOUR

On-Demand Learning is a Must

You want to provide sales managers and reps with anywhere, anytime sales training, with learning content accessible via mobile devices, CRM platforms and email as needed. Create quick reference guides to better support just-in-time learning. Also build formal learning assessments that require sales reps to show they can have meaningful conversations around your transformation strategy before they engage anyone in the field. Allowing unprepared salespeople to “practice” on buyers will only damage your company's transformation efforts.





Want to learn more about sales enablement & readiness technology?

Visit us: www.brainshark.com

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

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

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.

BRAINSHARK

www.brainshark.com | 781-370-8200