

Sales Enablement & Training: Key trends for

2021



Introduction

2020 was a lot of things. In fact, it was just a lot – period.

One thing the past year wasn't, of course, is typical. For many sales organizations – and sales enablement teams, specifically – 2020 looked like a continuous series of unplanned changes and on-the-fly pivots.

More than any other year, the events of 2020 will have a significant impact

on sales strategies and approaches in the year (and years) to come.

With that in mind, here are just a few key areas that are trending in the world of sales enablement and training as we turn the page on a most un-typical year.



1. Virtual, asynchronous training is the rule, not the exception



Let's start with the most obvious one. Naturally, virtual learning programs are nothing new. For years, companies have taken at least a blended approach to training, using learning management systems or [sales readiness platforms](#) to educate their teams at scale.

The difference in 2020, of course, was that the other side of the blended approach – in-person, instructor-led training (ILT) – was no longer an option at all. That meant most companies not only had to move to a fully remote training strategy – they also had to get a lot better at it.

“Virtual training has taken a prominent and more permanent role for sales enablement.”

– Shane Jackson, Gartner

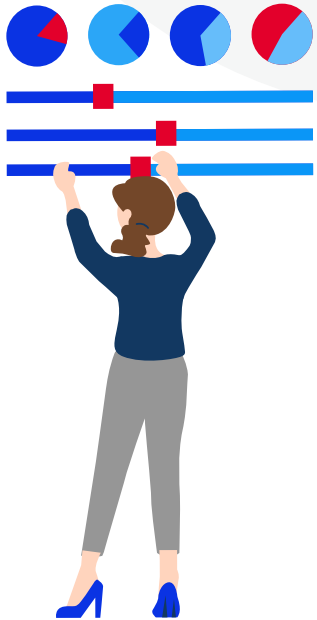
Of course, remote training (when done well) has plenty of benefits. [Mindray transitioned to a 100% virtual sales onboarding program](#) in 2020 and was able to reduce its new hire training time by 40% as a result.

This trend is unlikely to slow down in 2021. A Buffer survey found that **99% of remote workers would like to continue doing so in the future.**

Sales and enablement organizations will need to be prepared to deliver effective virtual learning options to keep the new world of remote sellers prepared. This includes investments in:

- Self-paced, asynchronous learning programs
- Microlearning and virtual reinforcement
- [Virtual coaching and practice tools](#)
- Comprehensive sales readiness technology solutions

2. Sales enablement (officially) becomes more data-centric



In late 2020, a representative from Forrester SiriusDecisions cited one of the firm's most popular assets: a brief simply titled, "Measuring Sales Enablement".

Clearly, sales enablement leaders are interested in better ways of using data to measure and improve their strategies. But nearly as many have still struggled to succeed in implementing a truly data-driven approach.

Sales Reps	Opportunities Created	Pipeline Created	Opportunities Won	Bookings	ASP	Close Rate	Sales Cycle (days)
Gino Gradkowski	77	\$4,395,500	9	\$98,500	\$56,500	69%	
Patrick Donlon	102	\$5,814,500	6	\$246,000	\$41,000	55%	
Taylor Jordan	62	\$2,999,000	13	\$850,000	\$65,385	76%	
Teresa Martinez	94	\$5,052,500	11	\$561,000	\$51,000	65%	

Showing 10 entries

2021 may be the year this truly changes. Technology has evolved to provide enablement leaders with greater insight into the effectiveness of their programs. For example, [Readiness Scorecards](#) provide new ways to:

- Visualize sales training progress for teams and individual reps
- Diagnose where reps are struggling or why training is falling short
- Demonstrate ROI by connecting sales enablement activities to real sales KPIs

Those are only some examples. Sales enablement analytics tools have continued to advance in a variety of ways, shedding new light on sales content impact, call intelligence, digital buyer engagement and more.

As a result, sales enablement leaders have never been in a better position to make data work for them.



3. Sales reps embrace and master the information landscape



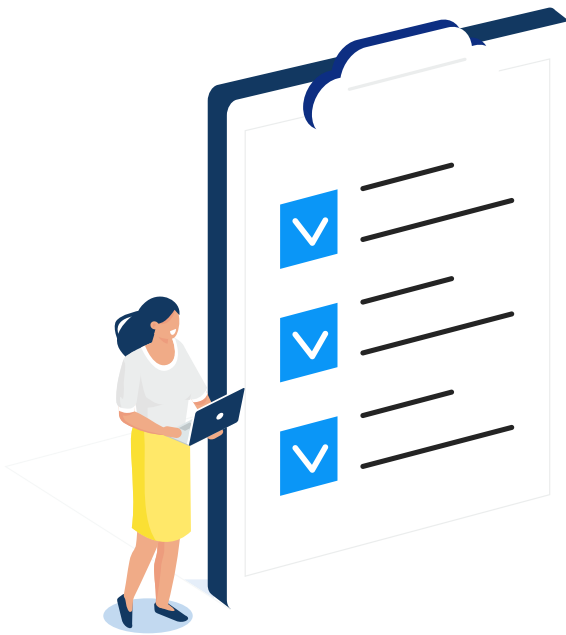
At the most recent Sales Enablement Society virtual conference, Gartner's Shayne Jackson stated that today's sellers require a mindset and skills that were likely not on their radar when 2020 started.

Notably, there's a **new emphasis on a rep's ability to make the digital buying process easier for customers**. To that end, Jackson explained that sellers need to become better educated on the "information landscape" that buyers are encountering, including areas like:

- Information published by and about the seller's company
- Information published by and about the competition
- Information about customer challenges, and what they're likely to come across when researching solutions (i.e. Google searches)

In other words, in a primarily digital buying world, the best sales reps will be prepared to make sense of all information that buyers will come across when researching new solutions. (Because let's be honest – there's a lot out there.)

For sales enablement, that may require evolving sales training and communications to ensure teams are continuously up to speed on more than just product, messaging and process.



4. Enablement expands beyond “sales”



“An increasing number of sales enablement functions are responsible for supporting not only quota-bearing sales reps, but also additional buyer-facing roles (e.g. customer success, channel sellers, sales engineers, marketing personnel). The common thread among these roles is that **they are all part of the organization’s revenue engine — the go-to-market functions responsible for revenue growth.**”

– Forrester SiriusDecisions

Enablement – it’s not just for sales reps anymore.

While this one has been trending for a few years now, it’s continued to pick up steam more recently. In 2019, [CSO Insights reported](#) that the top five audiences supported by sales enablement were:

- Quota-carrying salespeople
- Frontline sales managers
- Higher-level sales managers
- Channel partners
- **Service and customer success professionals**

The last bullet is where to expect more sales enablement functions to focus their efforts in 2021, expanding beyond core sellers to all client-facing roles.

It makes sense. [Customer success teams](#), for example, require similar levels of information mastery to succeed. And while they may not be closing deals, they do have an impact on revenue in the form of contract renewals, expansion and general client satisfaction.

This recognition is one of the reasons why a transition from sales enablement to **revenue enablement** has steadily gained industry traction the past couple years – and will likely continue to do so.

5. The enablement tech stack expands & evolves



For years, the sales enablement technology landscape was commonly viewed in two primary buckets: **sales readiness** (sometimes referred to as “sales coaching and learning”, [where Brainshark is a leader](#)) and **sales content management** (where vendors like Seismic and Highspot are among the most prominent).







Both categories remain the cornerstone of any enablement tech stack, but the overall toolsets are certainly expanding.

TOPO’s 2020 Sales Enablement Market Guide lists **conversation intelligence** as a primary sales enablement sub-category, naming it among “the most talked about segments in the sales enablement space.” These tools – from vendors like Gong and Chorus – record and provide insights into the conversations that reps have with buyers.

Another category is **sales engagement**. While leaders like Outreach and SalesLoft are by no means new to the market, these platforms are now more commonly grouped under the sales enablement umbrella as well.

Of course, all of these product segments come with some level of overlap – both in functionality and ownership within an organization. For example, sales operations will likely have a hand in the deployment of both conversation intelligence and sales engagement solutions.

As enablement teams continue to expand their toolsets in 2021, one of the keys that will hold everything together is *data*. Expect to see more data integrations across these platforms to help organizations unify their enablement efforts and make better decisions.

Readiness	BRAINSHARK
Content management	 
Conversation intelligence	 
Engagement	 

Want to learn more about sales coaching and readiness technology?

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About Brainshark

Brainshark's data-driven sales readiness platform provides the tools to prepare client-facing teams with the knowledge and skills they need to perform at the highest level. With best-of-breed solutions for training and 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.

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 ensure reps master key messages; empower teams with dynamic **content** that can be created quickly, updated easily and accessed anywhere; and use powerful **scorecards** to visualize sales performance trends and make real connections from improved readiness to increased revenue.

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