SALES READINESS TECHNOLOGY

BUYER'S GUIDE

BRAINSHARK®

Introduction

"How do you ensure that sales reps are prepared for each and every buyer interaction?"

This is the question that many companies turn to sales enablement to answer. But as organizations expand their sales teams, sales readiness becomes increasingly difficult – which is why 55% of top-performing companies are investing in sales readiness technology to improve productivity.

The sales enablement function is complex, and its success depends, in part, on choosing the right technology to support it. For many organizations, that means a sales readiness platform. These solutions are designed to elevate the onboarding, training and preparation that takes place before a sales conversation, so client-facing teams can make the most of every opportunity.

Sales readiness platforms are quickly becoming a 'need-to-have' for companies, with Forrester listing them as one of the core pieces of a modern sales enablement toolset.[1] These platforms are also rapidly evolving into **data-driven solutions** that contextualize readiness activities, allowing you to pinpoint performance issues and mitigate them with relevant training and coaching activities. Platforms like Brainshark can even pull in sales performance data from the CRM and other systems, enabling sales leaders to make real connections from improved readiness to increased revenue.

"55% of top-performing companies are investing in sales enablement technology to drive sales productivity"[2]

But the question is, with so many options out there, how do you ensure that you're selecting the solution that's the best fit for your team?

This buyer's guide outlines the key features and capabilities to consider when selecting a sales readiness platform to help your organization maximize productivity and prepare reps for every buyer interaction.

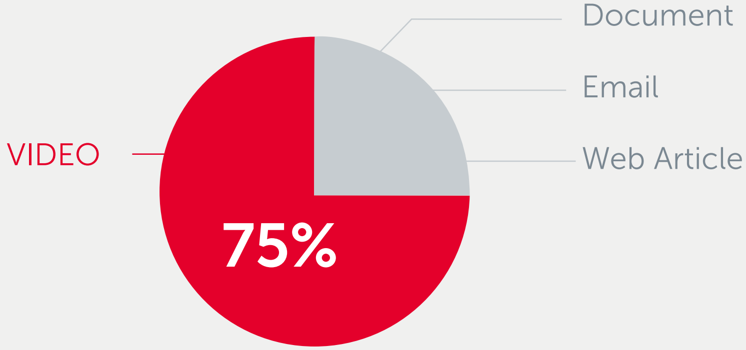
1. Content Authoring

First and foremost, sales teams need effective learning content to succeed. The challenge, of course, is that this type of content is typically proprietary and custom to your organization's needs. You can't simply buy it off the shelf from a third-party; **you have to build it yourself.**

Sales readiness technology can help simplify the authoring of this content in a way that's fast and easy. Short, video-based content assets have proven to be particularly impactful for learning and retention – especially when engaging with remote and mobile sales forces.

Simplicity is key. Whether you're a sales enablement leader developing a product training curriculum or a sales manager sharing a timely success story from a recent deal, your content authoring solution should be simple enough to use that anyone can do it, and do it quickly.

PREFERRED LEARNING FORMATS FOR SALESPEOPLE



DID YOU KNOW:

"75% of salespeople are more likely to check out video lessons than read a document, email or web article"[2]

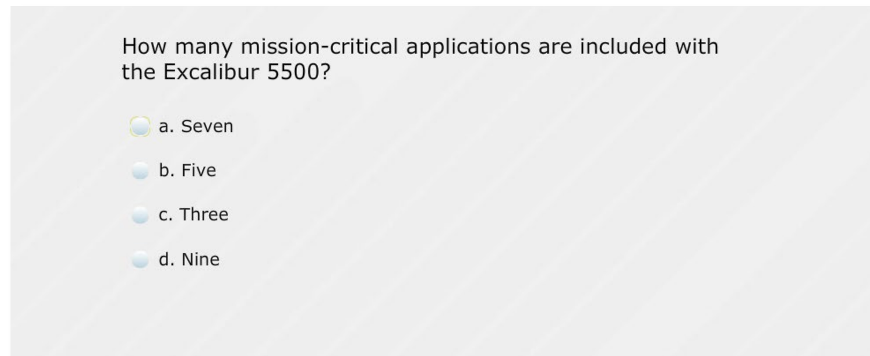
KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Dynamic Updating

Information is always changing, meaning content typically needs to be continuously updated to reflect the latest product offerings, competitor news and so on. An asset that was created last month may already be out of date. A solution that not only makes it easy to create new content, but also dynamically update existing resources so that salespeople always have the most recent versions? That's a must.

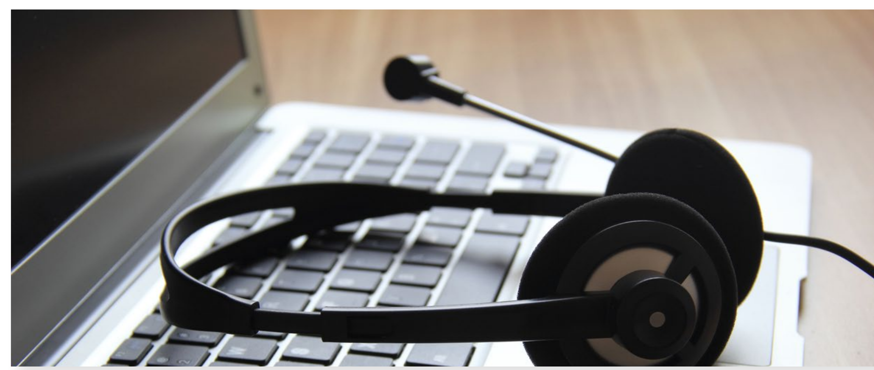
Interactivity

A sales training video is good. An interactive video is even better. Solutions that allow you to easily enrich your content with interactive elements like quizzes, polls, surveys, clickable hyperlinks, and attachments can be a major boon for increasing learning retention and ensuring better engagement with the material.



Guest Authoring

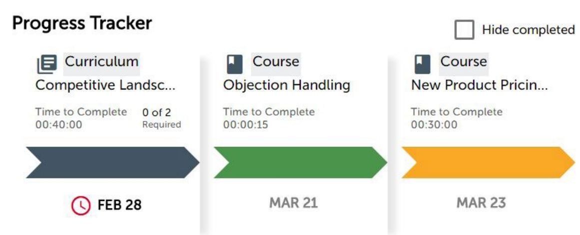
One of the biggest challenges for sales enablement leaders involves getting critical information out of the heads of subject matter experts, and into the heads of salespeople. One way to solve this is by making SMEs and others part of the content development process. Guest authoring capabilities can help "democratize" content creation so that anyone can contribute impactful learning content, which can then be refined by the sales enablement team and rolled out to the sales force.



2. Formal Training

Sales readiness solutions can also complement (or supplement) traditional classroom-style training by providing an online learning environment for mandatory courses and curricula that can be accessed on-demand. This allows sales reps to review critical learning material when it's most convenient for them, minimizing the need for in-person training sessions and allowing reps to keep up with training without sacrificing selling time.

This functionality tends to be **particularly valuable for sales onboarding,** providing a way to develop onboarding-specific tracks for new hires and monitor their progress until they're ready to have their first sales conversations. This ability to deliver and scale onboarding programs can help reduce ramp-up times – and time to first closed deal.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

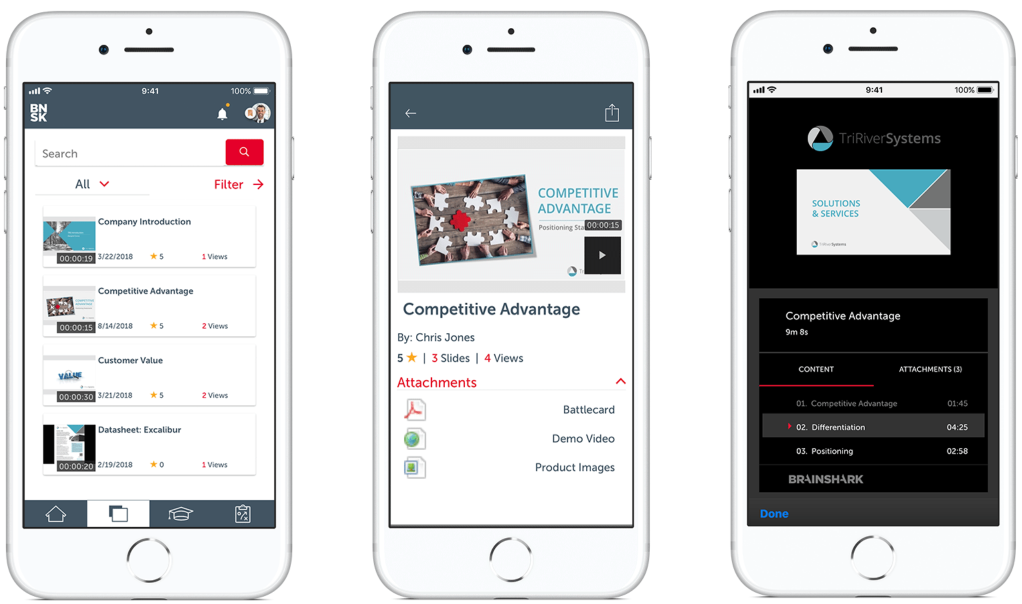
Structured Learning Courses and Curricula
Simply put, formal courses and curricula create a learning path for reps to complete. This not only organizes important training resources for salespeople, but also provides an easy way to monitor progress and ensure that every rep has completed required learning material. For example, by assigning new hires to a curriculum on core product features, you can monitor their progress along the way and verify when they've passed each course.

Certifications
For mandatory sales training, it's often important to certify that salespeople have achieved a certain level of comprehension. Some readiness tools will allow you to set certain course criteria for reps to meet (quiz scores, etc.) before moving on to the next one. You could also have digital completion certificates sent to learners automatically as proof that they are truly ready for primetime.

3. Content Access & Delivery

Of course, another key function of sales readiness technology is to provide **an easy way to organize, manage and access the right assets at the right time**, whenever they are needed. In fact, Forbes Insights reports that the time reps waste searching for content is among the top five challenges keeping sales organizations from reaching their full potential.

This typically will take the form of a central content hub or portal, where content is categorized, filtered, and searchable for quick access. Some tools may also provide reps with multiple entry points to view learning resources via integrations with other critical apps (CRM, etc.), while the assets themselves are managed from a single platform.



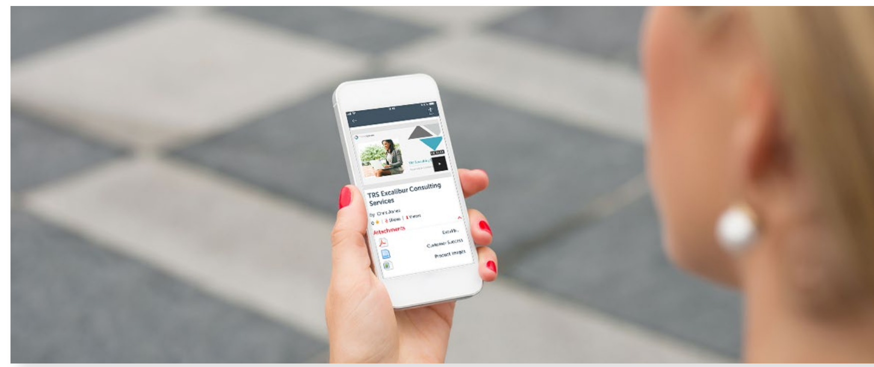
KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Just-in-Time Learning

In addition to formal training courses, reps also often need to access learning resources informally to address an immediate need, such as to prepare for an upcoming sales call or meeting. In addition to providing an easy way for reps to access this type of material as needed, some solutions will let you categorize “internal-facing” content to differentiate it from the external assets that can or should be shared with buyers.

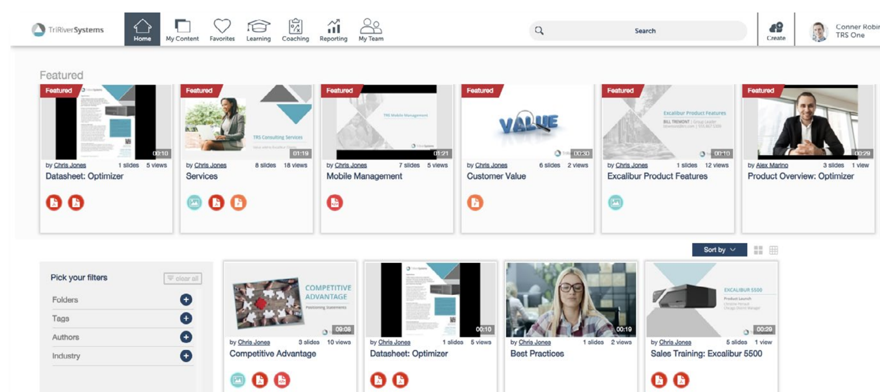
Mobility

Today’s sellers rely on their mobile devices to do their jobs, so a mobile-enabled readiness tool is a must. A quality mobile experience will increase adoption of the solution and enable reps whenever, wherever and however they work. Platforms that are optimized for iOS and Android devices will help ensure salespeople never miss a beat, no matter where they are.



Customizable Portals

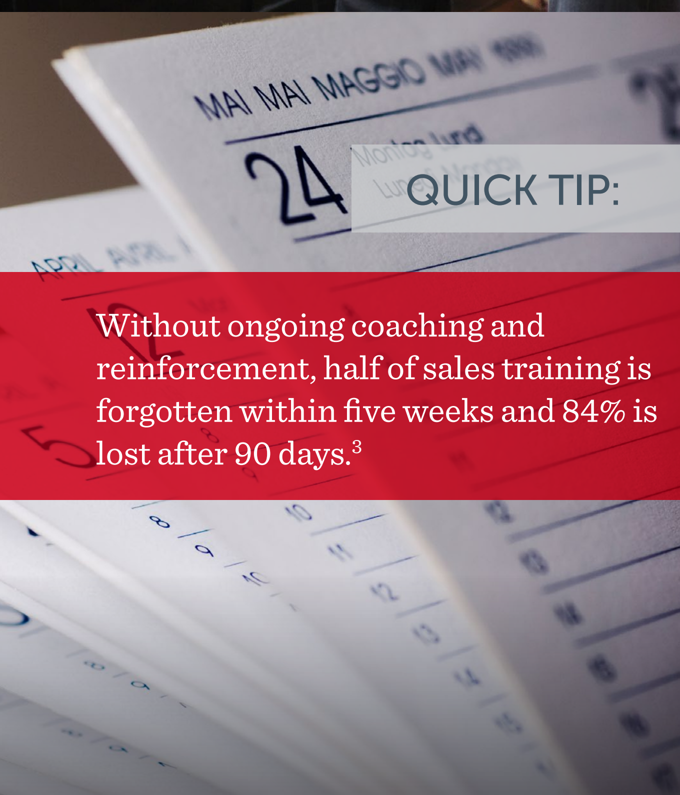
Just as your content needs to be custom-created to meet the needs of your company, so do the ways it’s housed and organized within your content and learning portal. The ability to customize your content portal with tags and filters should be table stakes for any sales readiness solution.



4. Coaching and Reinforcement

Sales leaders need to have confidence that their sales reps have not only completed their training, but have **truly mastered the material** required to be "field-ready." Coaching technology can help provide this assurance, along with a simple, scalable way to provide feedback to reps on where improvements are needed.

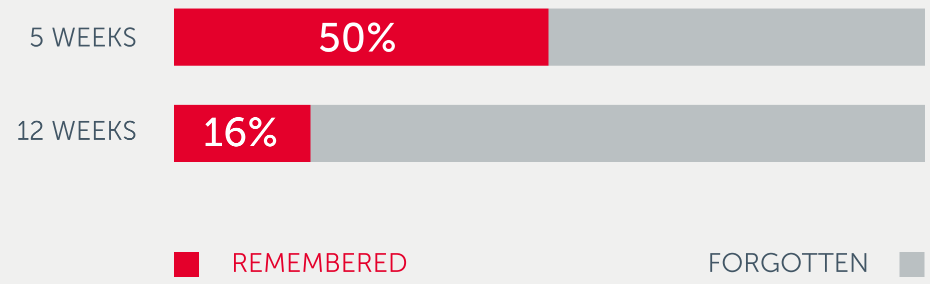
For example, following a training session or course, sales managers can send reps "assessments" that require them to demonstrate some aspect of what they learned (product pitches, objection handling, etc.). Reps can then record a video of themselves (or draft a written response), which managers can review, rate, and provide feedback on. It's also a plus to have customizable grading criteria for your coaching activities so you can change up the scoring categories, scales and feedback questions depending on the situation.



QUICK TIP:

Without ongoing coaching and reinforcement, half of sales training is forgotten within five weeks and 84% is lost after 90 days.[3]

SALES TRAINING RETENTION TIMELINE

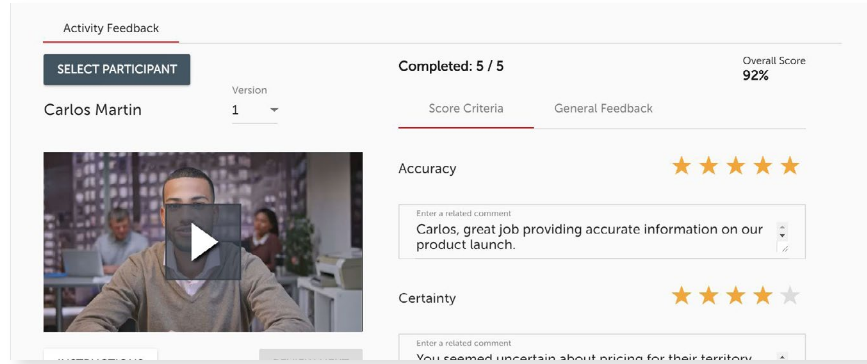


CSO Insights and Sales Performance International: The Future of Sales Training

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Integration with Formal Training

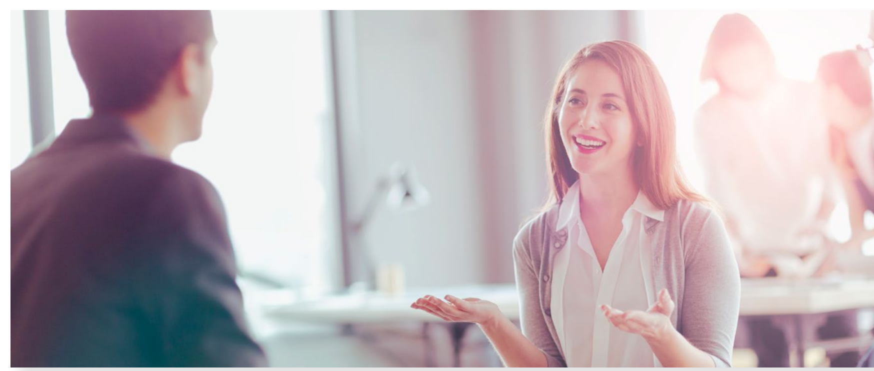
Video coaching can be conducted informally, but it's also valuable to make assessments part of a formal training course. For example, for an on-demand training course on a new product pitch, you could require reps to respond via video, demonstrating how they would deliver the message. Not only does this help ensure reps have mastered the material, but it encourages them to practice before getting in front of a buyer.



Screen Recording & Text-Based Coaching

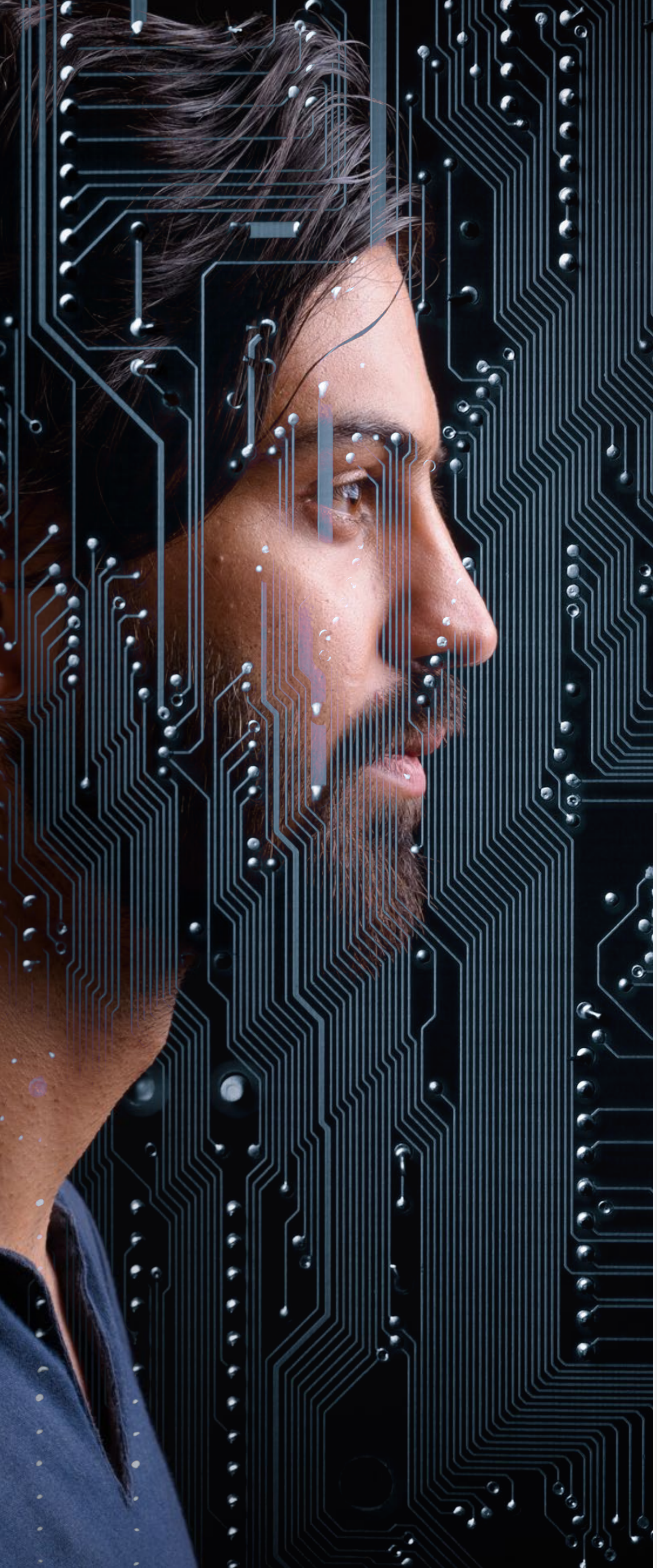
Enabling reps to record themselves speaking is a common use of coaching technology, but sometimes you also want to see what they are doing on their actual computer screens (for example, in the case of a slide presentation or product demo). The ability for reps to submit screen recordings allows you to further evaluate their presentation skills.

Other solutions will allow you to coach reps on their written communications as well. For example, you can ask sellers to draft a cold prospecting email to a company where a new CRO was just hired. Since this scenario is so specific, it requires reps to write a personalized message, as opposed to 'copying and pasting' an email template. Managers can review the copy for proper messaging, tone and consistency and share the best examples with the whole sales team.



Peer Learning

It can be helpful to share rep-generated videos with the entire sales team. For example, the best video submissions can be saved and shared as examples of best practices, success stories or what "good" looks like. It's especially useful to capture knowledge from veteran reps before they exit the workforce. For example, a 'spotlight session' on a challenging sales call can be used to demonstrate a winning strategy.

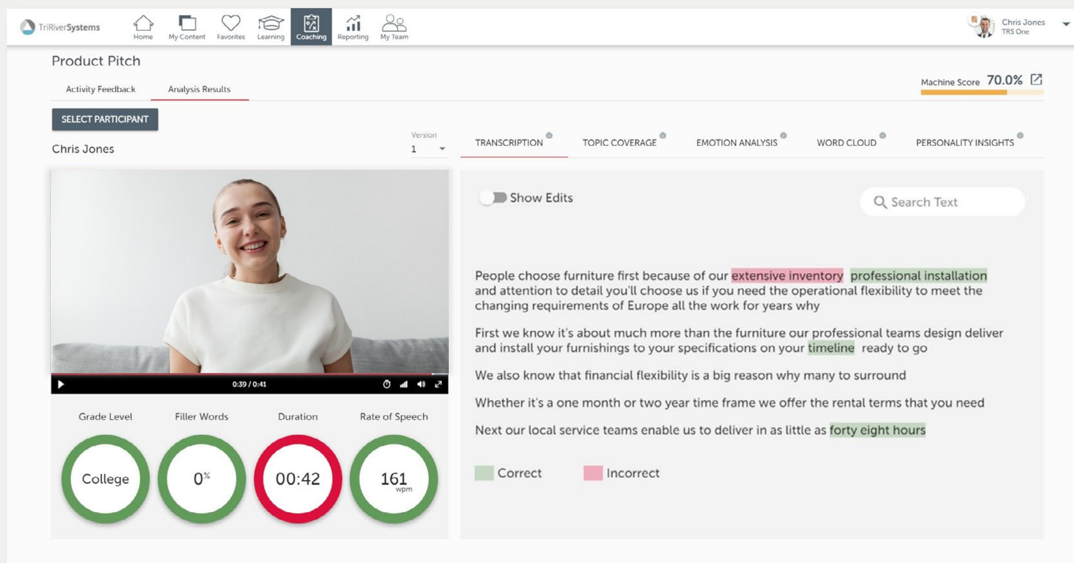


5. AI-Powered Insights

While video coaching is standard for many sales readiness offerings, some platforms offer more advanced capabilities than others.

For example, if you've assigned a video coaching activity to a large team of reps, depending on the nature of the challenge, it can take time for managers to score and rate each submission. Readiness tools with AI and machine scoring capabilities for video coaching can simplify and streamline this process significantly.

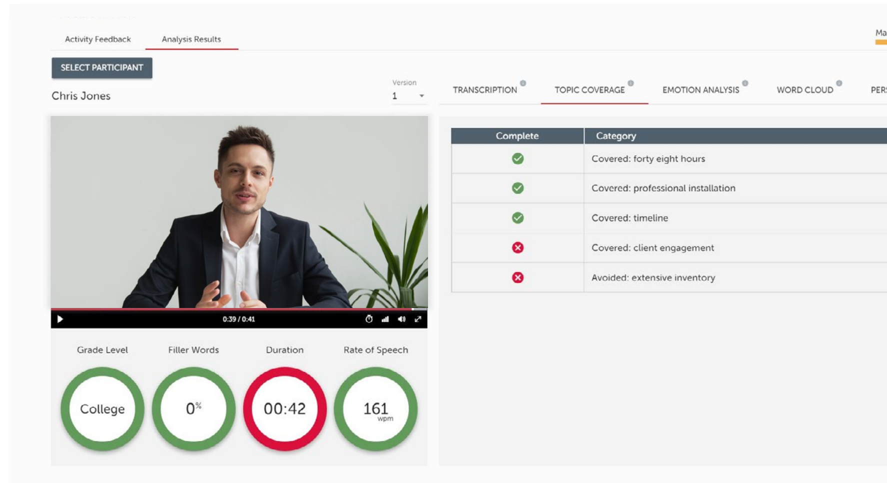
These tools can **automatically score and analyze rep videos** for how well key topics are covered, and even provide insight into how those messages are perceived (emotions exhibited) and delivered (speaking rate, duration of message). This can help managers prioritize coaching activities by quickly identifying reps that need the most help, while providing reps with an engaging practice tool to improve their performance.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

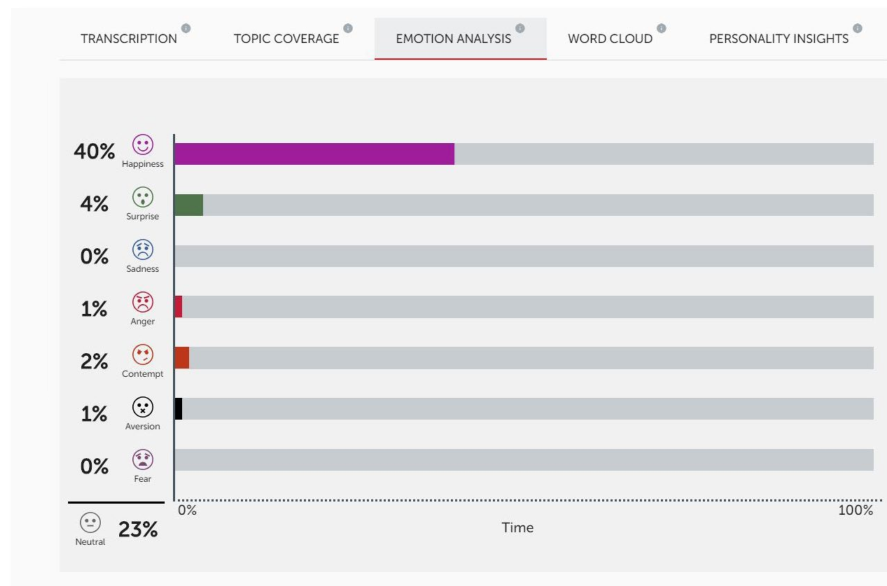
Topic Coverage & Scoring

With coaching assessments, the primary goal (naturally) is to ensure that sellers are saying the right things. Consider coaching tools that allow activity creators to input key topics that should be covered or avoided. An AI-powered engine can use these terms to autoscore each video, along with other parameters such as duration, speaking rate, and use of filler words (“um”, “uh”).



Emotion Analysis and Personality Insights

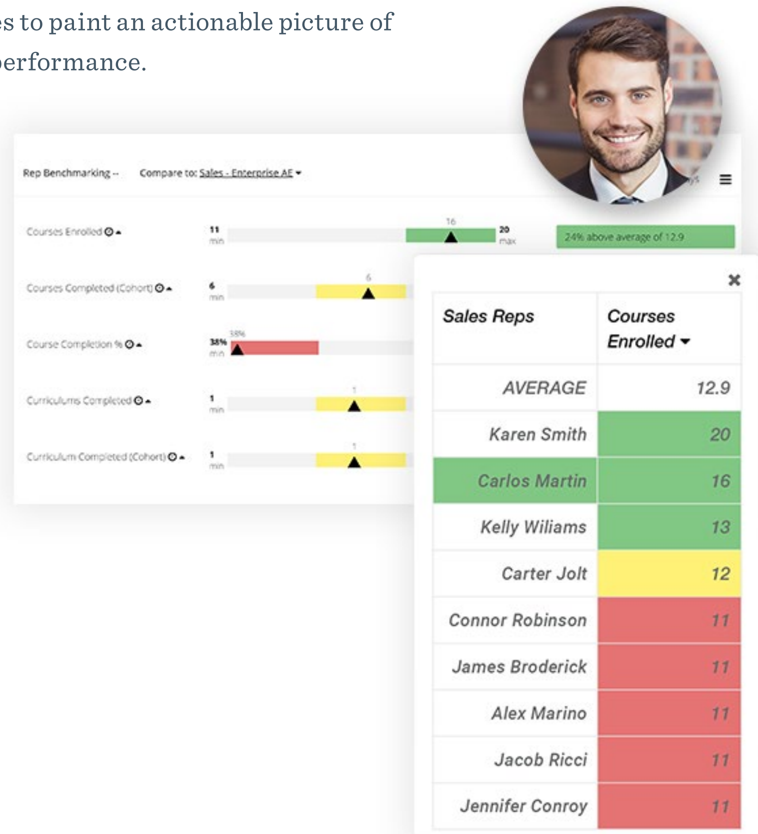
It’s not only *what* a rep says in a video that matters; sometimes *how* that message is delivered is just as important. Some coaching tools can auto-track emotions and personality traits exhibited based on facial expressions and word choices. This type of insight can provide additional color to the analysis, and help reps understand how their messages could be perceived by a buyer, so they can adjust their pitch if needed.



6. Readiness Scorecards

When it comes to tracking sales readiness activities and performance, pulling spreadsheets and comparing data across multiple sources won't cut it. In fact, in many cases, neither will a dashboard. Scorecards have the capabilities to go way beyond a dashboard – which typically only visualizes data – by putting readiness activities into 'coachable' context. Sales leaders are not only able to track readiness progress, but also gain greater insight into how rep learning behaviors measure up to their peers, goals, past performance and more.

Scorecards can also provide next-level visibility into sales team activities and productivity and can be spliced and diced with data from your CRM, marketing automation platform and other external sources to paint an actionable picture of sales performance.



KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Sales Performance Data Sources

Instead of comparing data from disparate sources and sifting through spreadsheets, scorecards can pull data from multiple sources – CRM (Salesforce, HubSpot, etc.), sales engagement platforms, and so on – to make meaningful connections from reps' readiness levels to revenue-generating activities.

For example, by integrating data from HubSpot with scorecards, you can compare pipeline and forecast data, target account tracking and lead conversion rates, with reps' progress in training and coaching activities, all in one simple view. Then you can filter that data across teammates and top performers, over time, and against goals. Doing this gives you an accurate, 360-degree view of rep performance so you can identify key trends across reps and teams, provide a high level of transparency to sales and company leadership and link readiness activities to revenue.

Sales Coaching and 1-1 Meetings

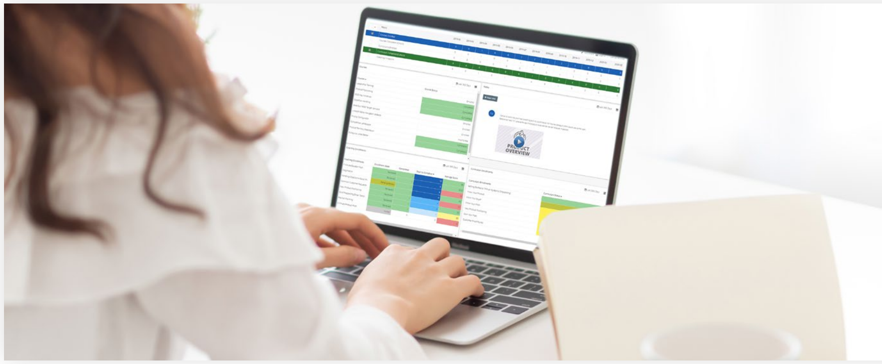
With the meaningful data that scorecards present, you can activate data-driven sales coaching and improve the quality of manager-to-rep 1-1s. Scorecards put data into 'coachable' context for managers and reps, making it simple to diagnose issues and address them head-on. Managers and reps can easily look at any slice of data, identify what the rep needs to work on (and how they measure up to their peers), motivate them to make improvements and come up with an action plan made up of relevant training and coaching activities.

Sales Onboarding

With scorecards, you can track more than training and coaching progress during the onboarding process. You can pair that data with key onboarding metrics such as time to first call, time to productivity, pipeline created, demos set and number of outbound calls. By doing this, you can gain insight into whether reps are ramping quickly enough, how they compare to the rest of their onboarding class and how they stack up against goals and benchmarks. From there, you can identify ways to accelerate your onboarding program and show sales leadership that new hires are on the fast track to productivity.

Key KPIs

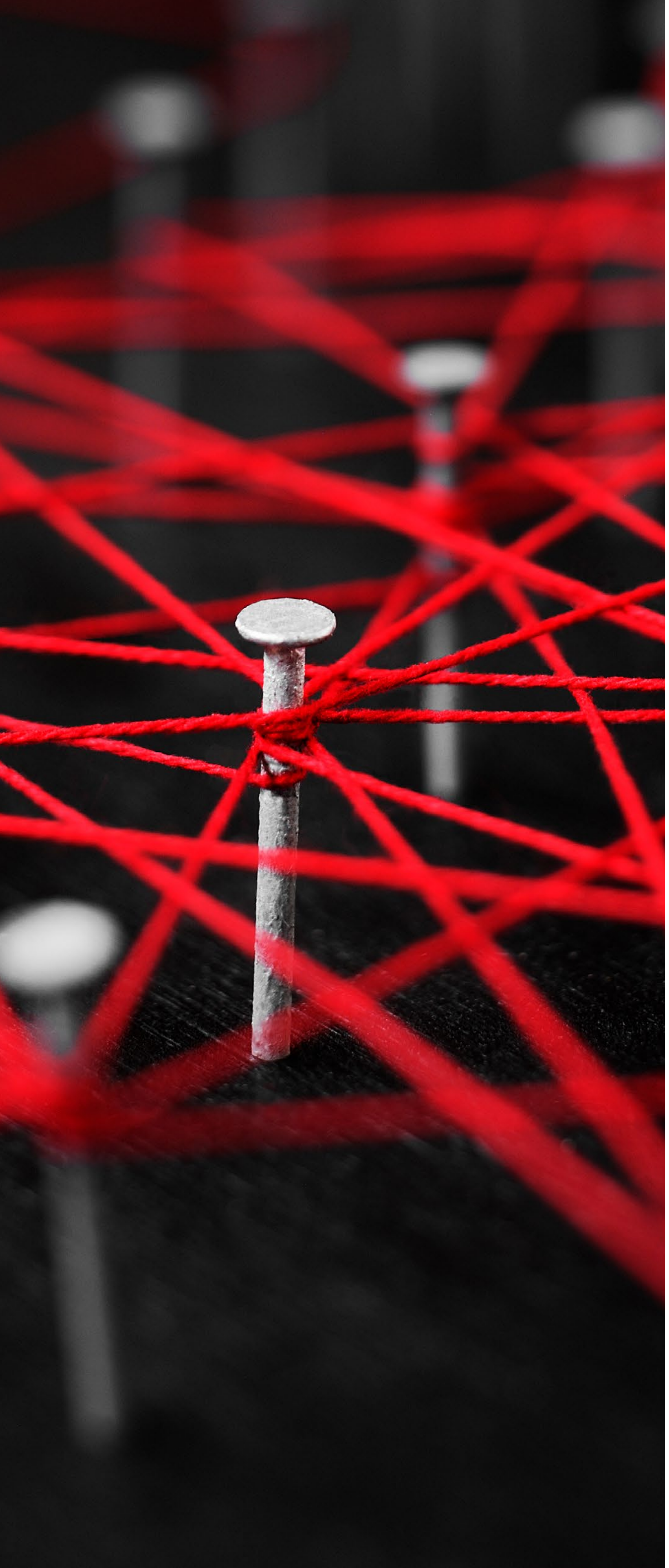
SF SalesReps	Calls - Outbound	Demos Set	Opportunities Created - New	Pipeline Created - New	Opportunities Won - New
TOTALS	32,161	416	257	$12,142,400	44
Bill Johnson	2,248	35	25	$1,267,000	5
Tom Blankenship	3,414	55	43	$1,928,500	8
Jim James	3,433	42	21	$859,500	5
Carl Broemel	3,230	55	35	$1,803,000	6
Bo Koster	3,366	36	23	$1,001,500	5
Phil Mahre	3,472	38	31	$1,522,900	6
Patrick Hallahan	3,385	49	27	$1,466,500	5



Days to Productivity

Last 365 Days | Totals Only

Metric	Bo Koster
Rep Start Date	10/01/2019
Role	Enterprise Sales East
Days to First Call	7
Days to First Demo	18
Days to First Opp Created	29
Days to First Opp Won	72



7. Integrations

It's important to ensure your sales readiness solution will integrate and work seamlessly with the existing applications that your sales reps use. The fewer disparate platforms reps have to juggle – and thus break their natural workflow – the better.

To increase rep adoption of your new technology, look for key integrations to make the transition easier on your sales team and **enable them where they work.**

KEY CONSIDERATIONS:

Learning Management System (LMS)
If you already have a corporate LMS in place, you may want to be able to integrate with your sales readiness solution. This type of integration can work in different ways, depending on your needs. Content and learning courses created from your sales readiness tool could be exported to your LMS, or (more likely), existing learning resources can be imported for access within your enablement platform.

Email
Sales readiness solutions that also integrate with applications like Microsoft Outlook make it easier for sales reps to find and share resources directly from their email client. This can include the ability to search for, preview, and attach content to email correspondence without ever leaving their inbox. Some solutions will also enable reps to monitor content clicks or downloads to easily measure engagement from a prospect, and prioritize follow-up.

CRM
For large sales teams, perhaps the most obvious mission critical application is the CRM. Integrating your sales readiness solution with platforms like Salesforce or Microsoft Dynamics 365 can create a central hub for reps to access the content and learning resources they need.

Advanced integrations can also offer the ability to serve up "content in context" to individual sales contacts and opportunities. For example, content from your sales enablement solution can be mapped directly to your CRM based on what's most appropriate for different personas, products, or even sales stages. This can help minimize the need for sales reps to go searching for the right content to prepare for sales meetings or share with prospects.

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's data-driven sales readiness platform gives you the tools to prepare all your 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, you can ensure 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 ensures reps master your message; 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.

Footnotes

1. **Forrester Research:** Building the Business Case for A Modern Sales Enablement Toolset
2. **Forbes Insights:** The Power of Enablement