



CSO Insights™  
The Research Division of Miller Heiman Group

# Fifth Annual Sales Enablement Study



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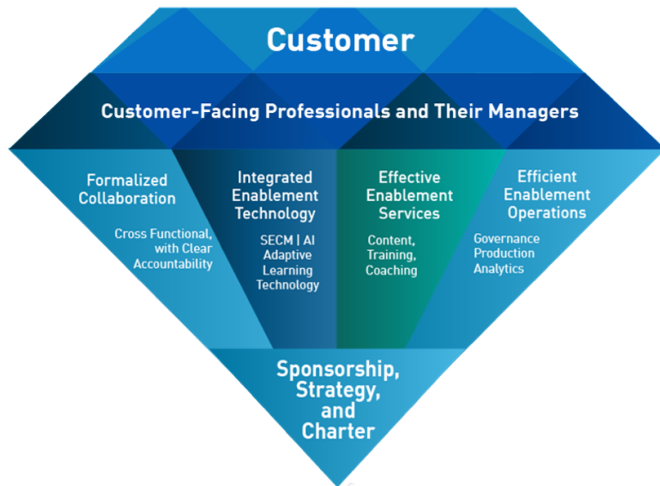
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In our Fifth Annual Sales Enablement Study, we find for the second year in a row a steady trend that sales enablement is slowly and steadily maturing rather than continuing to grow very fast. Overall, this results in some positive news. More organizations followed a formal and charter-based sales enablement approach with significantly better business impact. In other cases, however, it is apparent that the lack of a content strategy, or the lack of effective collaboration and missing processes hold sales enablement back from achieving greater successes. For sales enablement to drive business impact and become the sales force's key engine to drive sustainable sales results, more formality, more strategy, and more focus on a holistic approach is urgently required.



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Using the CSO Insights Sales Enablement Clarity Model, here are some of the key study findings:

**Customer:** While most organizations align selling processes to the customer's path, the alignment dropped compared to last year, and only one-third also aligned their enablement services accordingly.

**Sponsorship, Strategy, and Charter:** Formality and close alignment to the business strategy and specific challenges matters. More organizations followed a formal and charter-based approach and saw significantly better results compared to those with a random or informal approach that achieved results way below average performance.



**Customer-facing professionals and their managers:** We found that the majority of organizations reported an engaged sales force, heavily impacted by their sales managers' leadership style. Additionally, the better the seller engagement, the lower the turnover rates.

**Effective Enablement Services:** To meet buyers' expectations, an integrated approach is key to success. Implementing a content strategy, focusing on selling skills, sales methodology and process training services as well as a formally implemented coaching strategy drive results.

**Integrated Technology:** Organizations show different implementation levels for content, learning and coaching solutions. Overall, considering the CRM as anchor for all enablement technologies drives sales productivity.

**Formalized Collaboration and Efficient Enablement Operations:** The majority of organizations still collaborates in an ad hoc manner and works without a production model that defines the sequence of activities to produce enablement services. The more formal the sales enablement approach, the better implemented these inner workings are.

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## Chapter 1: The State of Sales Enablement 2019

Since sales enablement's big breakout in 2017, it has become a stable discipline in many sales organizations and created a tangible impact on business results. Overall, sales enablement continues to mature, but not all sales enablement teams are taking advantage of enablement's innate performance potential yet. In this report, we will examine what those organizations that are achieving their desired results are doing differently than those that are in the early phases or in the process of maturing their sales enablement practice.

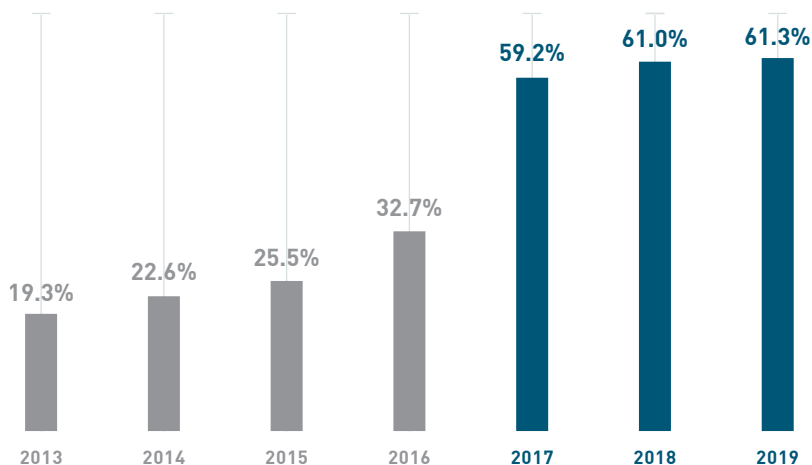
### Sales Enablement Continues to Impact Performance

In 2017, the percentage of organizations with a sales

enablement person, initiative, or function grew from 32.7% to 59.2%. In this, our Fifth Annual Sales Enablement Study, we gathered input from over 900 study participants worldwide (see the Appendix for demographics) and found that the growth curve has flattened. In 2019, 61.3% of organizations reported having sales enablement, up only slightly from 2018's 61.0%.

There is a difference between initial enthusiasm for a new concept and an ongoing commitment to excellence. The former is necessary, but only the latter, based on a thoughtful strategy and lots of staying power, will create the desired results.

Percentage of Organizations with Sales Enablement 2013-2019

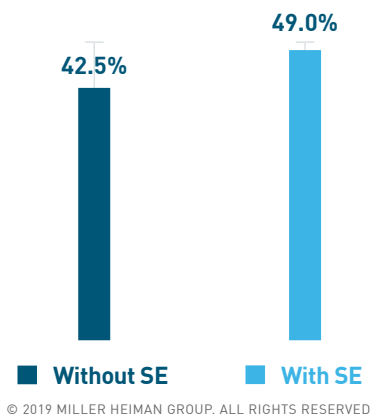


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In our 2019 study, enablement's greatest impact was seen on win rates for forecast deals. Organizations without sales enablement reported win rates of 42.5%, 3.9 points below the study's average of 46.4%. Those with sales enablement reported an average win rate of 49.0%, 2.6 points higher than the study's average and 6.5 points higher than those without enablement, which is an increase of 15.3%.

In addition to win rates, we'll also see a remarkable impact on revenue plan and quota attainment from different facets of enablement as we dig deeper into this chapter and the report.

### Win Rates for Forecast Deals

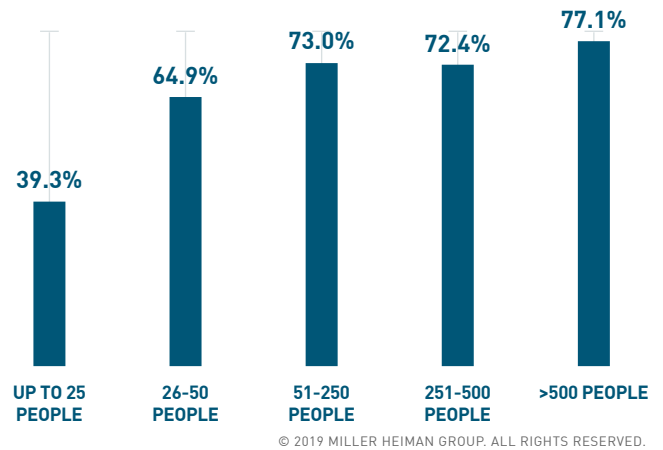


### Sales Enablement Remains More Relevant in Larger Organizations, Specific Industries

More than three-quarters of the organizations in our study with more than \$250M in annual revenues reported having a dedicated sales enablement person, function, or initiative. This makes sense. As an organization grows, the orchestrating role of sales enablement becomes increasingly important.

Organizations with a sales force comprised of more than 51 sellers were also more likely to invest in enablement. Again, this makes sense as sales enablement can ensure the consistency, effectiveness, and scalability of enablement services needed as a sales force grows. The tipping point appears to be at 26-50 sellers. This is the point at which the percentage of organizations with enablement (64.9%) surpasses the study's average (61.3%).

### Dedicated Sales Enablement by Sales Force Size



Sales enablement continues to be more relevant in certain industries as usual, this year especially in telecommunications and pharmaceuticals. On the other end of the spectrum, only one-third of organizations in the oil and gas industry reported having a sales enablement function.

### Enablement Addresses Customer Experience

Enablement's goals have remained consistent with prior years and are fully aligned with the goals sales leaders shared with us in the [2018-2019 Sales Performance Study](#). One potentially notable difference from last year, however, is that customer experience rose from sixth place to fourth place.

### Top 10 Sales Enablement Goals in Addition to Driving Revenues

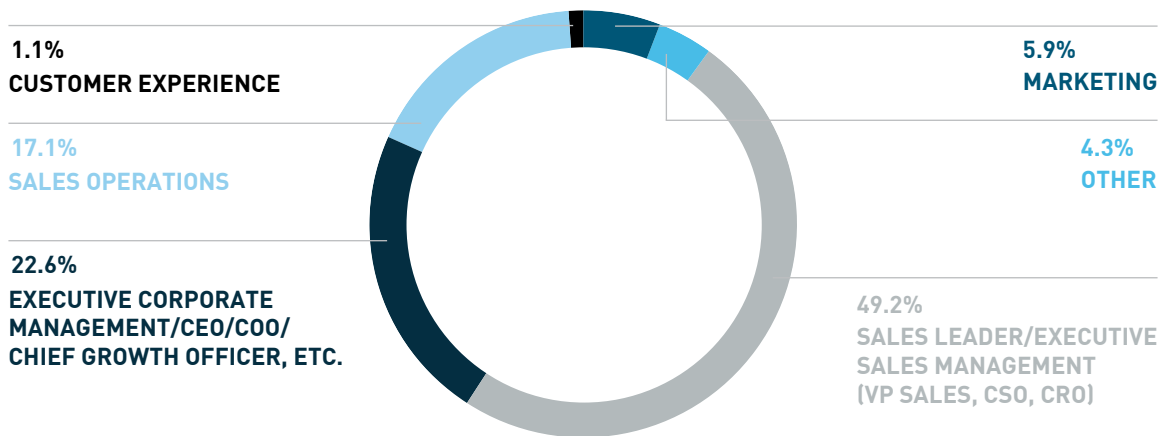
1. Increase win rates for forecast deals
2. Increase new account acquisition
3. Increase existing account penetration
4. Improve customer experience/reduce customer churn
5. Increase available selling time
6. Reduce sales cycle length
7. Decrease new person ramp-up time
8. Increase average deal size
9. Reduce sales force turnover
10. Reduce cost of sales

### Slight Changes to Reporting Structure

Respondents to this year’s study told us that less than half of their enablement teams report into sales leadership and a little more than one-fifth report into another C-level function. For the last several years, the percentage of enablement teams reporting into sales operations has continued to decline from 25.3% in 2015 to 17.1% this year: Many organizations are establishing enablement as a separate discipline from sales operations. The percentage of those that report into marketing has remained consistent.

In contrast to last year, this year’s data doesn’t show a significant relationship between reporting structure and sales performance. As we’ll discuss in Chapters 2 and 3, the far more important performance driver is the way sales enablement is set up.

### Enablement Reporting Lines



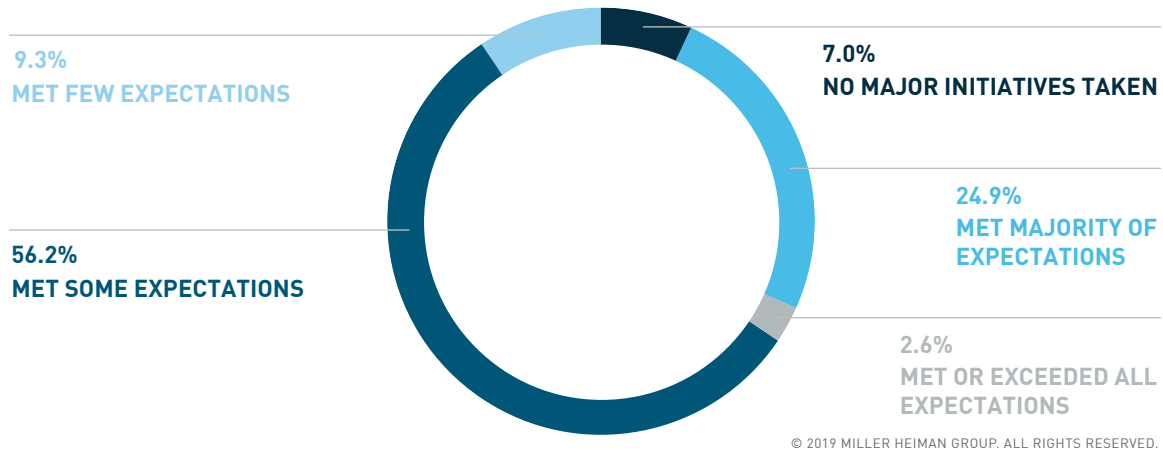
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### Meeting Stakeholder Expectations Matters

When we asked participants with sales enablement how well sales enablement met the expectations of their

stakeholders, the results offered both encouraging news and challenges.

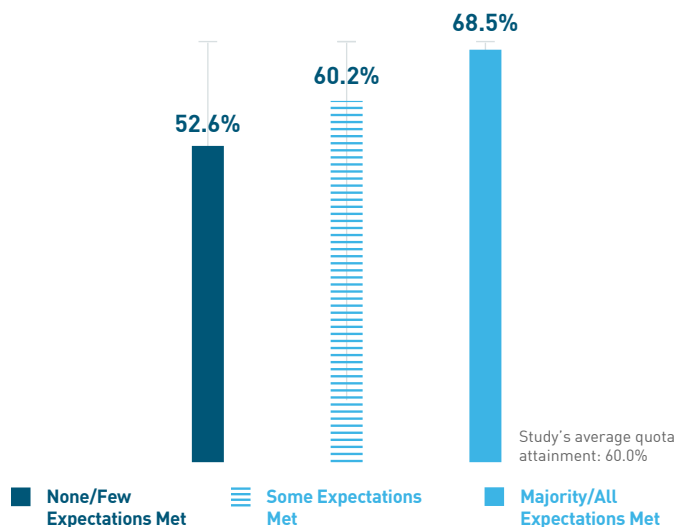
#### Outcomes of Enablement Initiatives Depend on Meeting Stakeholder Expectations



*Meeting the stakeholders' expectations is challenging: Only a bit more than one-quarter met the majority, all or even exceeded their expectations.*

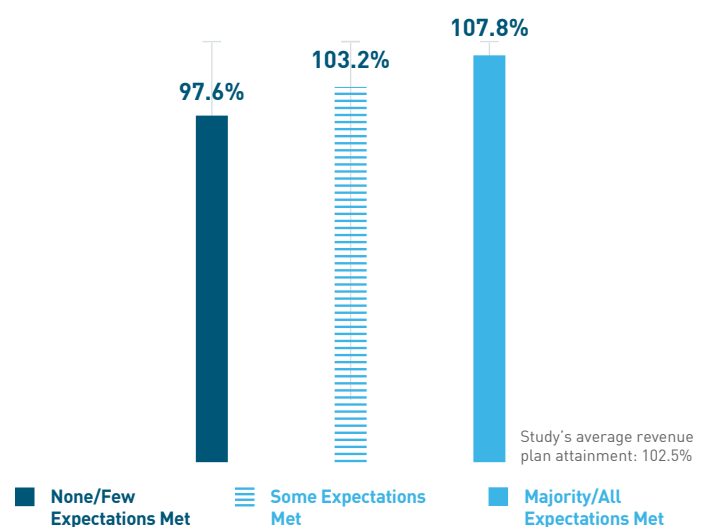
Meeting stakeholders' expectations has a positive impact on revenue plan attainment, quota attainment, and win rates for forecast deals. Meeting just *some* expectations only led to average results, and meeting *no* or *few* expectations led to well below average results.

#### Meeting Enablement Expectations vs. Quota Attainment



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#### Meeting Enablement Expectations vs. Revenue Plan Attainment



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These data points can be extremely useful when “selling” your enablement charter (business plan) to executive leadership. Meeting just some expectations leading to only average results is a strong justification for a more formal and strategic approach. In Chapter 3, we’ll discuss how establishing a sales enablement charter can ensure that enablement’s scope and strategy, as well as the stakeholders’ expectations, are aligned with the business strategy and the organization’s challenges.

The percentage of those organizations that met or exceeded the majority of all their stakeholders’ expectations dropped from one-third in 2018 (34.4%) to just above one-quarter (27.5%) this year. Also, the group of organizations that only met a few expectations is at 9.3%, more than four times as large as last year (1.7%).

One reason for these missed expectations might be the increasing responsibilities senior executive stakeholders assign to sales enablement without

always completely understanding the complex and interconnected nature of sales enablement as a cross-functional discipline.

Another possible cause can be found at the other end of the spectrum. A small minority of respondents (7.0%) said they had a sales enablement person, function, or discipline, but did not undertake any major enablement initiative. While this is a small group, it is more than twice the percentage of respondents as last year (2.7%).

That raises the question: How can an organization have sales enablement but not run any *major* initiatives? The reason is embedded in the question as we asked specifically for *major* initiatives. If an organization is just getting started with sales enablement or is transitioning from L&D only into a more strategic and holistic sales enablement discipline, they may not have had the time to roll out a major initiative yet.

	<b>WITH SALES ENABLEMENT</b>	<b>WITHOUT SALES ENABLEMENT</b>	<b>With SE, but not meeting expectations*</b>
Revenue plan attainment (average: 102.5%)	103.6%	101.0%	97.6%
Quota attainment (average: 60.0%)	61.2%	59.8%	52.6%
Win rate for forecast deals (average: 46.4%)	49.0%	42.5%	43.6%

\*This group includes organizations that only met few expectations and those that didn’t take on any major enablement initiatives.

### Sales Enablement Improves SRP Matrix Position

The CSO Insights Sales Relationship Process Matrix maps sales process maturity and customer relationship levels against key sales performance metrics. Year after year, our research has found that the more mature an organization’s sales processes and the higher their customer relationship levels, the better their performance. For greater detail, download our [2018-2019 Sales Performance Study](#).

This year’s sales enablement study identified a correlation between sales enablement and SRP Matrix position, providing additional evidence for the enablement business case.

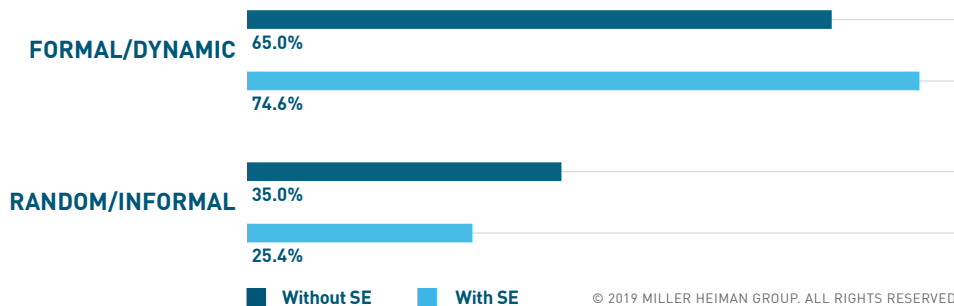
*Organizations with sales enablement are more likely to have formal or dynamic sales processes.*

As our research has repeatedly shown over the years, formally implemented sales processes provide a strong foundation for sales productivity and performance. Dynamic sales processes that can be easily adapted to changing buyer behaviors have an even greater positive impact.

In this study, we found that organizations with sales enablement have more mature sales processes. A bit more than half of organizations without sales enablement (54.8%) operate with informal or even random sales processes, compared to only one-quarter (25.4%) of those with sales enablement.

Three-quarters (74.6%) of organizations with sales enablement have formal or even dynamic sales processes, compared to 45.2% without sales enablement.

### Sales Process Maturity Levels



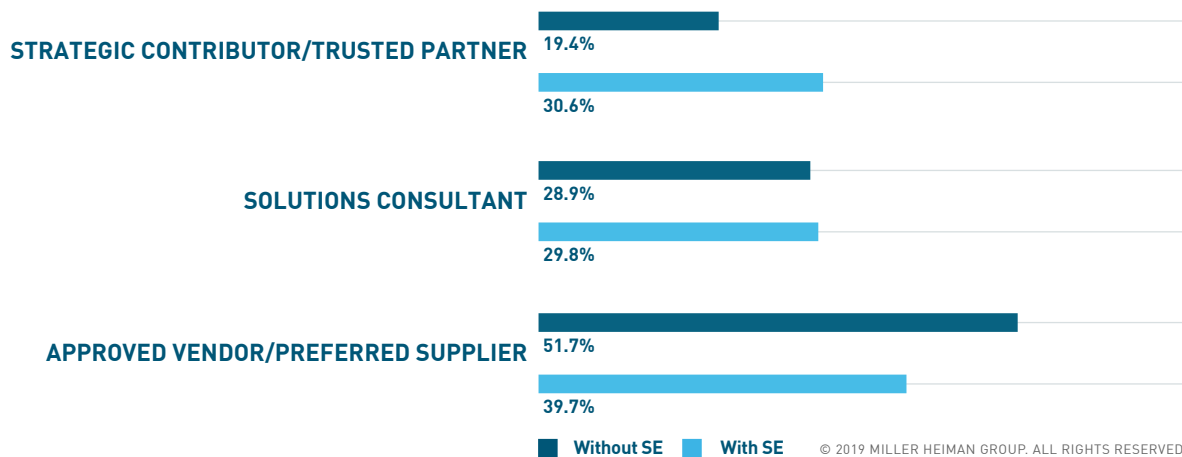
Our most recent [2018-2019 Sales Performance Study](#) found that customer relationship levels have an even greater positive impact on performance than sales processes. For example, average win rates

for those considered Trusted Partners were 59.9% versus a mere 39.5% for those who were considered Approved Vendors.

That's good news for enablement leaders, as our analysis shows that sales enablement has an even stronger impact on customer relationship levels than it does on sales processes.

As the chart shows, the biggest difference is at the top two and the bottom two levels.

### Organizations With Sales Enablement Are More Likely to Have Strategic Contributor or Trusted Partner Customer Relationships



### The Sales Enablement Clarity Model

In subsequent chapters of this report, we'll share additional details from our study using the Sales Enablement Clarity Model as a framework. We developed this framework in the form of a diamond

as a model for our clients to use to create a holistic, sustainable enablement discipline. The study findings make an excellent business case for using the diamond as you initiate or mature your enablement discipline.

## Sales Enablement Clarity Model

In sales, definitions are important because they help ensure everyone is on the same page regarding the concept and approach. You may recall our definition of sales enablement from previous reports:

*A strategic, collaborative discipline designed to increase predictable sales results by providing consistent, scalable enablement services that allow customer-facing professionals and their managers to add value in every customer interaction.*

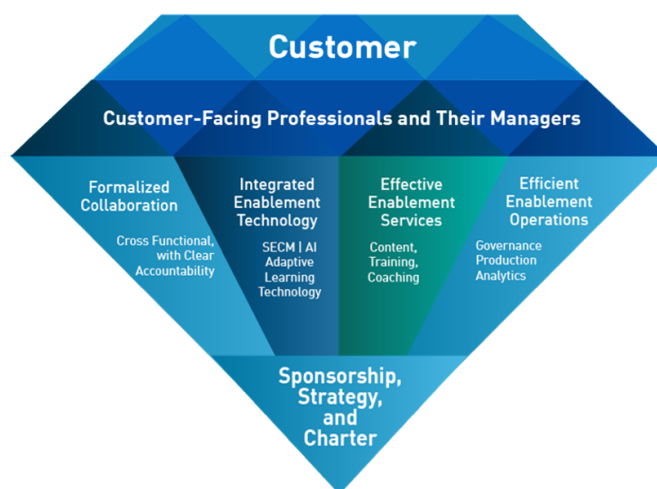
However, definitions only go so far. Successful sales enablement also requires a framework to guide enablement leaders throughout their journey. We created our framework in the shape of a diamond because it evokes the challenges that so many enablement leaders must encounter.

### A Diamond in the Rough

Even without a formal enablement discipline, you'll probably have many functions that want to help sales succeed: marketing, product management, L&D, sales operations, sales managers, IT, etc. These functions provide lots of different enablement components, such as content, tools, or training services. While their intentions are positive, the services provided by disparate functions are often disconnected, designed from a functional or product-oriented perspective, and randomly/inconsistently pushed to the sales force. As a consequence, sellers get frustrated because these services are confusing and of little help.

The enablement leader's task is to transform this rough diamond into a cut and polished sales enablement discipline, based on the customer and the customer's path. The effort will still involve

### The Sales Enablement Clarity Model



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contributions from many teams, but using the facets of our sales enablement diamond, enablement leaders can orchestrate their contributions to create consistent enablement services that add value to the sales team and the customer.

### Using the Diamond as Our Guide

To establish a solid foundation, we'll start with the top and bottom facets, looking first at developing a customer-driven foundation and then discussing the necessary internal foundational elements: sponsors, strategy, and charter.

Next, we'll discuss sales enablement's primary audiences and how to engage them before moving on to sales enablement services (content, training, and coaching) as well as enablement technologies and the inner workings of sales enablement (formalized cross-functional collaboration and enablement operations and metrics).

To help you keep track of where we are, each chapter has a facet icon next to the chapter title.



## CHAPTER 2: The Customer-Driven Foundation

In the age of the modern, educated buyer, enablement efforts must be designed through the lens of the customer. Only then can enablement create the foundation the sales force needs to diagnose and solve buyer problems and to achieve their desired results and create revenue.

### Alignment Drops, but the Majority Are Still on the Right Path

To design an enablement discipline through the customer's lens, we first need to align internal selling processes to the customer's path (or customer's journey if that works better for you). This entails integrating the many steps and gates buyers move through along the path to a decision into the organization's internal selling processes.

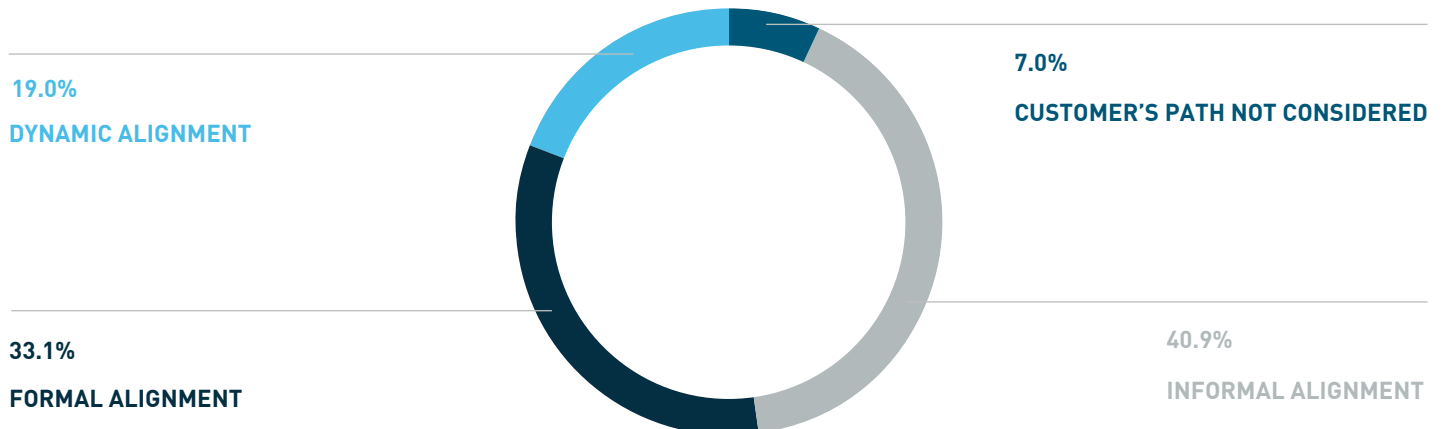
For example, at each stage of their buying process, customers need to commit to moving to the next stage. No matter what your salespeople do, if buyers aren't committed, the opportunity doesn't move

forward. Integrating this commitment into your selling processes helps salespeople avoid the kinds of misunderstandings (and missed forecasts) that are a result of buyer and seller misalignment.

In our research, we define four levels of alignment. *Random* alignment means that the reflection of the customer's path in internal selling processes is almost nonexistent. *Informal* alignment includes only some of the steps and the documentation and formal implementation are missing. *Formal* alignment is more purposeful and complete, and *dynamic* alignment is when the organization also implements mechanisms, such as sales analytics, to quickly adapt selling processes (and ideally, marketing, sales, and services processes as well) to changes in buyer behaviors.

A bare majority of organizations (52.1%) have either a formal or dynamic alignment. Another 40.9% are aligned informally, and 7.0% are random.

### Sales Process Related to Customer's Path



Last year, 60.5% of organizations followed a formal or dynamic approach to alignment, so this is something of a drop. However, the percentage for dynamic alignment is almost the same.

While many organizations are still finding it challenging to progress from informal to more formal levels of enablement, the data may also reflect a greater number of mid-size organizations in our sample. As noted earlier, larger organizations and those with a larger sales force are more likely to have a mature sales enablement discipline. Nevertheless, the sales enablement effort is worth it for organizations of all sizes.

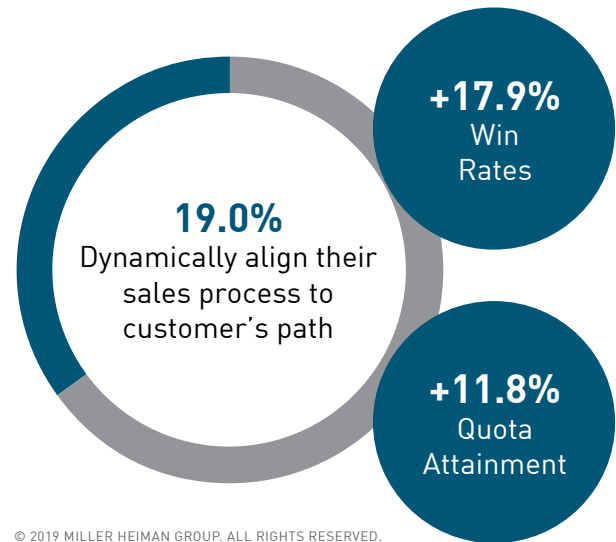
### Dynamic Alignment Drives Dramatic Improvements

As in previous years, organizations with informal and random alignment didn't achieve even average results. Win rates and quota attainment were below the study average. Additionally, as we move from random/informal alignment to dynamic alignment, we see a significant rise of win rates for quota attainment and win rates. These dramatic increases, 17.9% for win rates and 11.8% for quota attainment compared to the study's averages, show how great the potential impact of enablement on performance is. They also emphasize, once again, that doing nothing may be better than doing sales enablement poorly.

### Alignment of Enablement Services Has a Way to Go

To serve their intended purpose, enablement services must be aligned to the appropriate phase of the customer's path. For example, success stories, case studies, and business-problem-oriented presentations are often tailored to the awareness phase of the customer's path. To be effective, they must match the buyers' understanding of the

*Only 19.0% of organizations dynamically align their internal processes to the customer's path. But this one-fifth achieves significantly better results.*



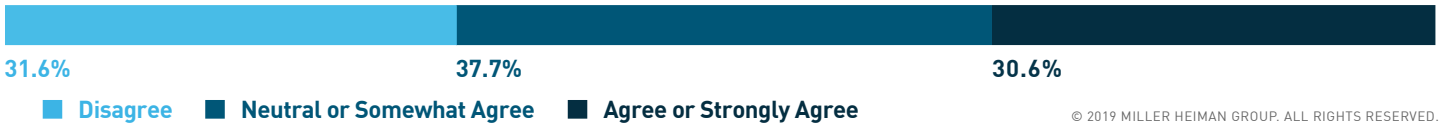
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problem and its business impact and help buyers learn more about potential approaches to achieving their objectives. The next phase, the buying phase, calls for services such as customer-facing presentations and training services that are more detailed and tailored to a specific buyer problem.

Enablement owns the responsibility for aligning services to the customer's path, but it requires close collaboration with other functions such as sales operations, marketing, and customer experience. Unfortunately, while the majority of organizations (52.1%) align sales processes to the customer's path, far fewer (30.6%) align enablement services to the customer's path.

*While 52.1% of organizations align sales processes to the customer's path, far fewer (30.6%) align enablement services to the customer's path.*

## We Effectively Align Our Enablement Services With All Phases of the Customer's Path



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*Organizations that aligned enablement services to the customer's path achieved significantly better win rates than those that did not.*

### Start Your Journey with the Right Foundation

The practices included in the customer facet of the enablement diamond set the tone for your overall enablement approach. This facet is the lens you use to look at *all* other enablement facets. If you're not getting alignment to the customer's path right, every other facet of your enablement discipline will be out of alignment as well because it won't be focused on the customer.

Here are three ways to get started:

#### 1. Create a customer-focused mindset.

Work with marketing, sales, and service, as well as senior executive sponsors to create a shared vision of success with the customer at its core. To do that, study the available research such as the [Buyer Preferences Study](#) as well as first-hand feedback from your customers given either during sales and service calls or more formal events such as voice-of-the-customer programs and surveys. The findings should then be shared and discussed during sales enablement advisory board meetings, ideally combined with a facilitated workshop on how to create a more customer-focused mindset. (See Chapter 9 for more on setting up an advisory board.)

#### 2. Collaborate to align your internal selling processes to the relevant customer paths.

Work with customer experience, customer success, marketing, and real customers to map internal selling processes to the customer's path. This is a step that takes some time, but to get the most out of it, work with a less is more mindset. Focus on the customer buying scenarios that create most of your revenue. Map those out as customer paths, and then ask customers to review the steps and decision gates they go through to ensure they are reflected accurately in your selling processes.

#### 3. AAA your enablement services: assess, adjust, and align.

Assess all enablement services (content, training, coaching, and tools) by mapping them to the different phases of the customer's path. If there is no immediate connection to a specific phase, mark them as "to be adjusted." Then, assign ownership of the tailoring of these services to the customer's path phase to which they should belong.

Your greatest workload is likely to be in the area of content services, while training services, such as professional selling skills and value messaging, are more likely to fit all phases. Just make sure this is a conscious decision and not simply a shortcut. Some methodologies can be clearly mapped to the earlier (prospecting) or the later phases (opportunity management) and require training services that are in alignment.



## CHAPTER 3: Internal Foundations: Sponsorship, Strategy, and Charter

With the customer’s path clearly in mind, we can now move to the bottom facet of the sales enablement diamond. In this chapter, we’ll focus on the importance of aligning sales enablement to the business strategy and how engaging senior executive sponsors and gaining organizational buy-in can help you overcome significant hurdles.

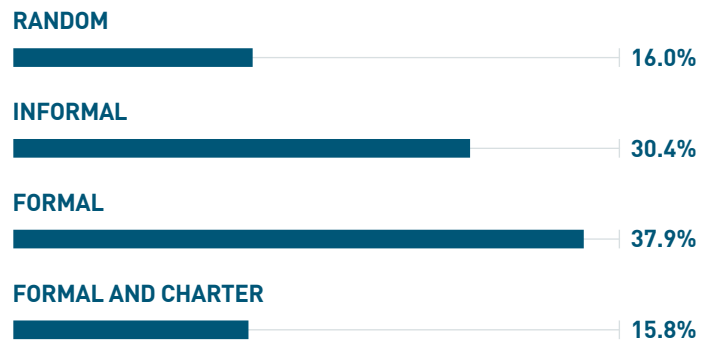
### Sales Enablement Approaches Still Vary

As with alignment to the customer’s path, we define four levels of sales enablement formality. A *random* approach means sales enablement is seen as a tactical, one-off project with no formal vision and strategy. An *informal* approach implies a certain understanding of what sales enablement should look like, but this vision is not well-defined or documented. A *formal* approach includes a well-documented vision and strategy, including a thorough analysis of the business strategy and the current state of the sales strategy implementation. A *formal + charter* approach builds on the formal approach to include a sales enablement charter or business plan where sales enablement’s vision, goals, strategies, and road maps are clearly defined. This charter also contains additional details, e.g., enablement services to be provided and for which audiences, necessary investments that need to be made, actions to be taken, and how success will be measured.

### Random or Informal Enablement Doesn’t Work

If you have ever managed a sales team, you know that a few percentage points difference in win rates, quota attainment, or revenue attainment can make

### Approach to Sales Enablement

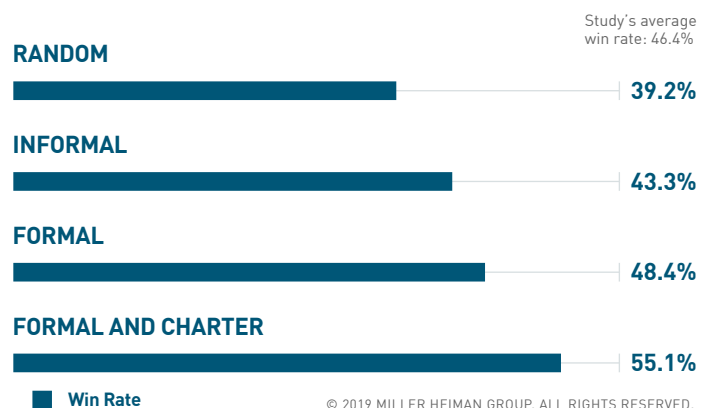


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or break a fiscal year. Year over year, we’ve seen more formal approaches to enablement leading to better results. This year, the impact is even stronger, with enablement formality dramatically impacting win rates, quota attainment, and revenue plan attainment.

As importantly, in our 2019 study, we found that the win rates for organizations with an informal approach to enablement were 3.1 points lower

### Approach to Sales Enablement and Win Rates



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than the average. Quota attainment in these organizations was also 3.6 points below the study's average of 60.0%.

Sales enablement initiatives run as tactical projects with a specific objective are often disconnected from the business, sales strategies, and strategic initiatives. And, as all these metrics further demonstrate, a random or informal approach to enablement fails to lead to even average results and may be worse than doing nothing.

### Reasons for a Random or Informal Approach

So, if random and informal approaches don't work, why do organizations continue to approach enablement this way? The top five reasons participants in the 2019 study gave us were:

- Not enough resources
- Just getting started
- Lack of senior executive buy-in
- Approach meets current needs
- Working on a more formal approach

Very likely, "lack of senior executive buy-in" serves as the root cause for other reasons such as the "lack of resources." If buy-in is lacking, resources frequently are too because senior leadership's attention is focused elsewhere as are the budgets they manage.

The second reason, "just getting started," is also understandable. Sales enablement often originates as an initiative to resolve a particularly pressing sales challenge. The data and analysis in this report should help provide motivation to move beyond crisis-driven enablement into something more strategic.

Finally, we have to wonder at the response "this approach meets our current needs" when those organizations that followed a random or informal approach couldn't even reach average results across the three main sales KPIs. The majority of these organizations haven't clearly linked their sales enablement goals to the goals of the business. For example, they may have vaguely defined their goal for enablement as "improve collaboration." If you haven't tied a goal such as that to quantifiable results, it's easy to define your efforts as "good enough."

Of course, as we've shown in this chapter, if "good enough" equals random or informal, you may inadvertently be dragging results down as opposed to contributing. For enablement professionals, this is a dangerous place to be. Even informal and random approaches need resources, e.g., budget and contributions from other teams. If you're not achieving demonstrably positive results, you might find yourself in an uncomfortable position in the next budget cycle.

### Climbing Out of a Hole

Based on the strong evidence we see in the data year after year, we want to encourage every enablement leader, including those who are just getting started, to work on a formal and strategic approach to sales enablement and to develop a charter.

It can be challenging to move from a random or informal approach to a more formal one, but there are several actions you can take to promote success:

### **1. Follow a proven process to create a charter.**

A charter is essentially your business plan, and as such, defines your structure as well as your goals and how you'll achieve them. These details will help you gain buy-in from all necessary stakeholders as you mature your enablement discipline from random/informal to formal/dynamic.

To create your charter, begin by conducting an assessment of the current state of sales strategy implementation to identify the real challenges your sales force is facing right now and then develop a sales enablement strategy to address those challenges. At the end of this report, we've included links to additional resources that can help you better understand what a charter is and how to create one.

### **2. Get executive buy-in and address their concerns.**

Our survey tool allowed respondents to comment on their specific enablement challenges. These responses showed that challenges often stem from a lack of organizational commitment. To break free from this challenge, senior executive buy-in is a must. But to get buy-in from the very top, you need to create a solid business case

and tailor your messaging to each executive's role. Selling to the executive level is no different than selling to a VIP customer buying team, so prepare well, practice your presentation, and get feedback on your messaging. It might be helpful to reiterate the orchestrating role of sales enablement as that takes away the concern that an entirely new discipline would confuse more than provide value. You can also strengthen your message by connecting sales enablement to existing strategic initiatives (such as customer experience, sales effectiveness, etc.) to ensure an integrated approach and easier internal communications.

### **3. Involve your sales managers early on.**

Executive buy-in is essential to getting the resources you need, but sales manager buy-in is essential to implementation. In our client interactions, we often see enablement teams forget to involve sales managers in strategy development. When that happens, even the most dynamic approach won't create the desired results. Get sales managers involved early and find ways to keep them engaged.



## CHAPTER 4: Enablement Audiences and the Role of Seller Engagement

Now that we've established a foundation, let's look at the sales enablement audiences, i.e., your enablement customers. The top five audiences you should be thinking about include:

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

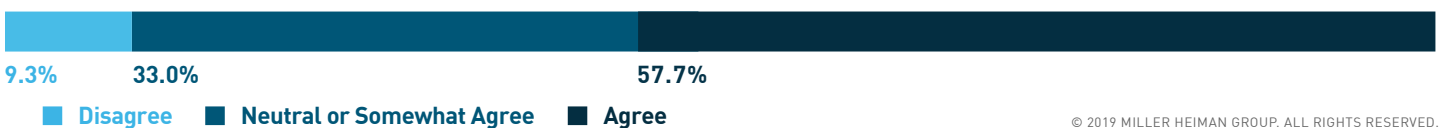
The first two are particularly essential. Of course, you need to enable quota-carrying salespeople, but unless you align enablement to the management strategies of frontline managers and enable them

with coaching services, your overall enablement efforts are likely to fall short. This year, we examined how the salesperson and frontline manager engagement impacted performance.

### Most Sellers At Least Somewhat Engaged

Seller engagement is essential to a successful enablement discipline, but it's challenging to define. The usual definition of employee engagement is an emotional commitment to an organization's vision and goals. Seller engagement is a bit more complex, as their engagement goes in two directions: solving buyer problems and achieving the organization's goals at the same time.

### Our Sales Force is Emotionally Committed to Both Solving Buyer Problems and Achieving Our Organization's Goals.



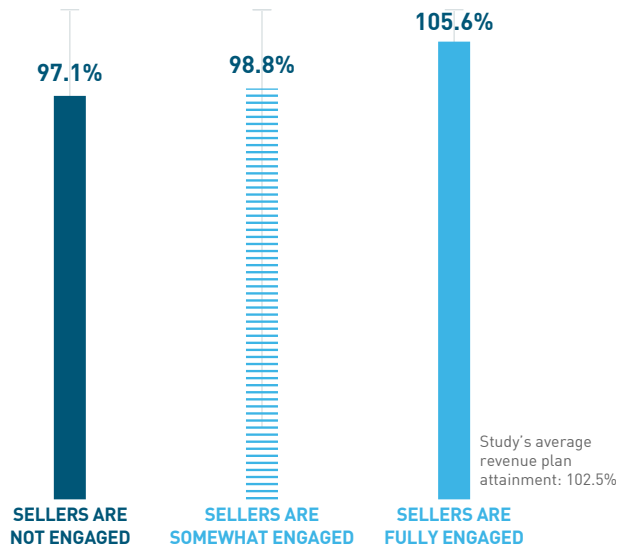
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The majority of all study participants reported that their sales force is either fully engaged (57.7%) or somewhat engaged (33.0%). Interestingly, the response was similar across different levels of sales leadership. As this is a new data point this year, we performed a holistic analysis to better understand whether or not seller engagement correlated to a measurable business impact and which practices drove seller engagement.

### Only Full Seller Engagement Impacts Performance

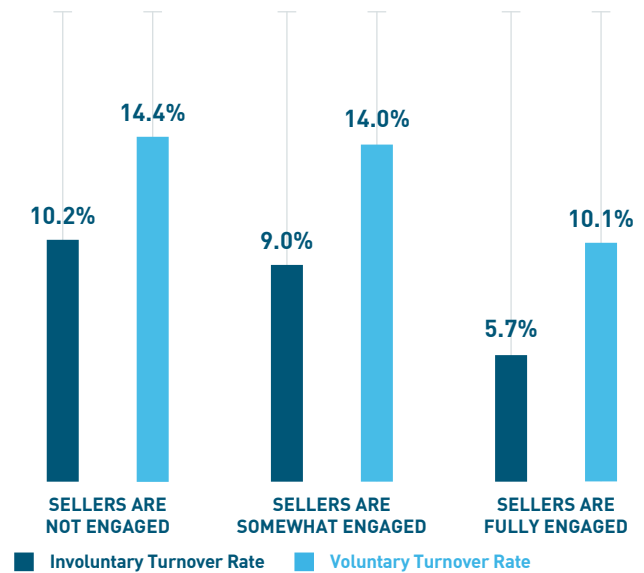
Our data shows that there is a strong relationship between seller engagement and sales performance, but only for the 57.7% of organizations that said their sales forces were fully engaged. Study participants that answered with "neutral" or "somewhat agree" achieved only average results across all three KPIs: quota attainment, revenue attainment, and win rates. These were nearly the same results as those that reported no engagement.

### Seller Engagement and Revenue Plan Attainment



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### Seller Engagement and Turnover Rates



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*Only fully engaged sales forces achieved better sales results—on average 8.5 points higher revenue attainment.*

#### Full Engagement Leads to Lower Turnover

Fully engaged sales forces also had lower turnover rates—a big benefit as lower turnover naturally leads to lower costs for recruiting, hiring, onboarding new salespeople. Our [Talent Study](#) shows that organizations need 3.7 months to fill an open position and 9.2 months to get the new hire to full productivity. Generally, a stable sales force is also more effective because existing sellers don't have to make up sales to compensate for new hire ramp-up time and there are fewer gaps in territory coverage. In other words, lower turnover rates positively impact the cost of sales, also one of the sales enablement goals.

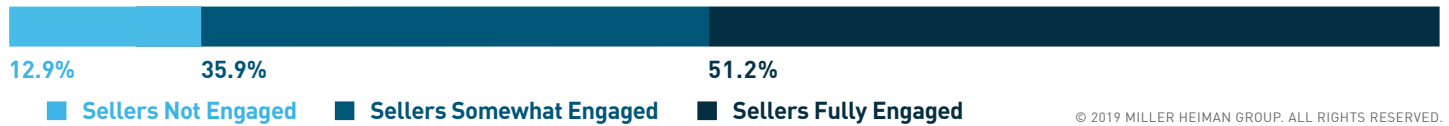
Once again, the patterns were similar with full-engagement required for a significant impact. Of course, there are many factors that determine turnover rates, but this pattern shows that seller engagement has a potentially positive impact on important metrics beyond the core sales KPIs.

*Engaged sales forces experienced far lower voluntary and involuntary turnover rates than unengaged sales forces.*

#### Engaging Managers Promote Seller Engagement

In previous years, we've talked quite a bit about the positive impact of enabling frontline sales managers to reinforce the enablement services provided to sales professionals. We found a similar phenomenon when studying seller engagement: engaging sales managers lead to engaged salespeople.

## Our Sales Managers Effectively Inspire, Motivate, and Engage Their Sales Teams to Leverage the Resources Provided to Them.



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The majority of organizations (51.2%) reported that their sales managers effectively inspire, motivate, and engage their sales teams to leverage the resources provided. A large majority (82.8%) of these respondents also said they had a fully engaged sales force. This data point is very much about the overall leadership style that is more than sales coaching.

### Inspiring, Engaging, and Motivating Sales Managers Drive Seller Engagement

#### NOT ENGAGING SALES MANAGERS



#### SOMEWHAT ENGAGING SALES MANAGERS



#### FULLY ENGAGING SALES MANAGERS



■ % of Seller Engagement

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*How your sales managers inspire, motivate, and engage your sales teams is the single most important practice to drive seller engagement.*

### Full Engagement Requires a Proper Foundation

This year’s study data also found a correlation between a highly engaged sales force and several other attributes of a solid sales system and a mature sales enablement discipline.

- **Formal sales enablement**—Organizations with an engaged sales force were more likely to follow a formal enablement approach: 62.3% compared to 53.7% of all respondents.
- **Better customer’s path alignment**—Organizations with a highly engaged sales force were more likely to have aligned their enablement services to the customer’s path: 46.6% compared to 30.6% of all respondents.
- **Higher adoption rates for sales process and methodology**—Organizations with a highly engaged sales force had much higher sales process adoption rates: 47.1% reported that more than three-fourths of their sales force used their defined sales processes daily, compared to 34.7% of all respondents. The pattern held for sales methodology adoption.
- **Better aligned coaching services**—Among those organizations with highly engaged sales forces, 44.2% reported aligned coaching services, compared to only 29.6% overall.

### Enablement as Change Agent

Seller engagement is very important, but it’s impacted by a lot more than sales enablement. As we saw, the leadership style of the sales managers plays a huge role. So, too, do many foundational elements: sales process and sales methodology adoption rates, process alignment, etc. None of these things can be driven by sales enablement alone; however, the collaborative nature of sales enablement puts enablement in the position to make things happen.

## Four ways enablement can spark change:

### 1. Involve and educate your sponsors.

Share these findings with your senior executive sponsors, ideally in a sales enablement advisory board meeting (see Chapter 9). Talk to the HR and sales management members of your advisory board about adding an assessment of seller engagement to your current employee engagement programs. Explain that these actions will help you tailor your sales enablement strategy to address the specific engagement issues in your organization.

### 2. Assess and adjust your enablement approach.

Even if you don't own seller engagement, you still own your approach to sales enablement. As we discussed in Chapter 3, your charter must be aligned with the goals of the business. This includes sales strategy and any challenges particular to your organization. After following the recommendations in step #1, be sure to go back and adjust your charter to include seller engagement.

### 3. Collaborate to improve engagement.

If you don't own the sales process and its implementation, reach out to the team that does. For most organizations, this is usually sales operations with some sales management involvement. If you've followed the previous two steps, you've probably already shared the findings from this report. If not, do so now. Then, invite them to collaborate to create an integrated approach to achieving the shared vision of a fully engaged sales force, including high adoption rates for sales processes and the sales methodology.

### 4. Involve sales managers in enablement.

If you haven't already, begin building strong relationships with highly effective sales managers. Share these findings with them and ask them what they would need from enablement to be more effective in their role. This includes both overall leadership style as well as coaching services. (More on coaching in Chapter 7.) Often, improving communication and involving sales managers early on in strategy development will help ensure consistent messaging across the sales force.

## Sales Enablement Services

Now, we turn to what many people think of when they think of enablement: the services enablement provides to the audiences it serves. You may have noticed that this facet is the only one that's green in the clarity model introduced on page 3. That's because this facet is the only one that is visible and tangible. Everything else that we've discussed so far has created the foundation for these services. Everything we will discuss after these chapters is designed to help you provide effective, scalable sales enablement services as efficiently as possible.

### Enablement Services Jockey for Position

When asked what types of enablement services they provide, respondents have placed sales training services, followed by sales tools at the top of the list for the last four years. Other enablement focus areas shuffled for position this year.

**Sales process improvements** are back in the top three. In Chapter 6, we will discuss sales enablement's role in sales process improvements and why adoption rates of sales processes are crucial for overall sales enablement success.

**CRM and sales enablement technology management** has moved up three positions to #4. No doubt, this is reflective of the increasing relevance of sales enablement technology. More on that topic is found in Chapter 8.

**Sales content** services dropped to #5 from #3 last year. We will analyze the impact of sales content on performance in Chapter 5.

**Onboarding services** held onto its #6 position. This relatively low position is interesting as in some

### Top Sales Enablement Services

■ Training Services	↔	
■ Sales Tools	↔	
■ Sales Process Improvements	↑	+2
■ CRM/Enablement Technology Mgmt	↑	+3
■ Content Services	↓	-2
■ Onboarding	↔	
■ Coaching (enablement doing it)	↓	-2

organizations, sales enablement is reduced to onboarding only. As the data shows year after year, onboarding is an important part of sales enablement and enablement should orchestrate training services for specific onboarding initiatives.

**Sales coaching services** were ranked #4 last year but only made it to #7 this year. As we will discuss in Chapter 7, sales coaching is still not a broadly accepted and well-implemented enablement service, despite being shown, year after year, to be one of the best ways to drive sustainable performance improvements.

In the next three chapters, we'll discuss each of the core types of enablement service in more depth:

- *Sales content*, including customer-facing and internal enablement content and its impact on performance
- *Sales training*, including various focus areas and formats and how to drive adoption rates for sales processes and methodologies
- *Sales coaching*, including the current state of sales coaching, its impact on performance, and how to get started



## CHAPTER 5: Sales Content

In sales enablement, content includes any piece of content sellers need to create business. Content also covers every phase of the customer's path, not just the early phases that are usually the domain of content marketing. When content services are mastered and then brought to life by related training services and powered by the right piece of technology, impressive sales results can be achieved.

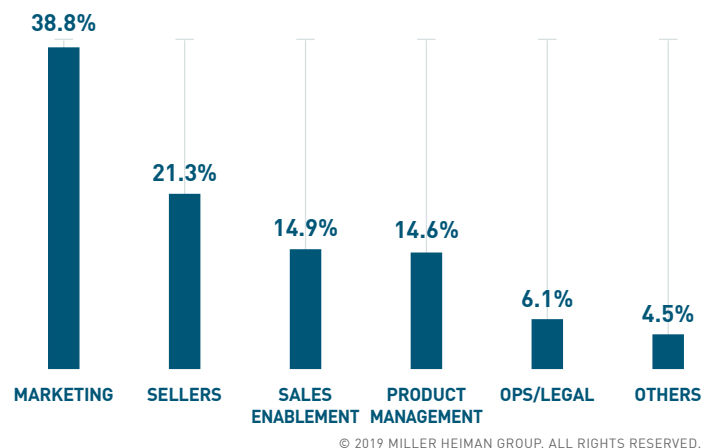
### Sales Content Comes in Many Forms

Content services include two distinct types of content. *Customer-facing content* is what sellers share with their buyers or use in direct buyer interactions. Examples include case studies, success stories, presentations, white papers, third-party content, proposal templates, contracts, etc. *Internal enablement content* is what sellers use to prepare for their buyer interactions. Content types in this category include objection handling scripts, value messaging guidelines, battle cards, playbooks, etc.

Additionally, specific *content types* (white papers, references, case studies, battle cards, playbooks, etc.) can be segmented into various *content formats* (pdf, pptx, mp3, mp4, xls, docx, etc.), which are created by or contributed to by many different functions (not just marketing).

This complexity requires sales enablement to take an orchestrating role to ensure content services are consistent and effective.

### Who Creates the Content Sellers Need?



### Where Does Content Come From?

The finding that enablement content comes from many different sources is not new to this year's study, and the changes in contributing sources are pretty slight this year. Marketing's role as a source increased by 5.0 points to 38.8%, while sales operations and legal decreased by 4.5 points to 6.1%.

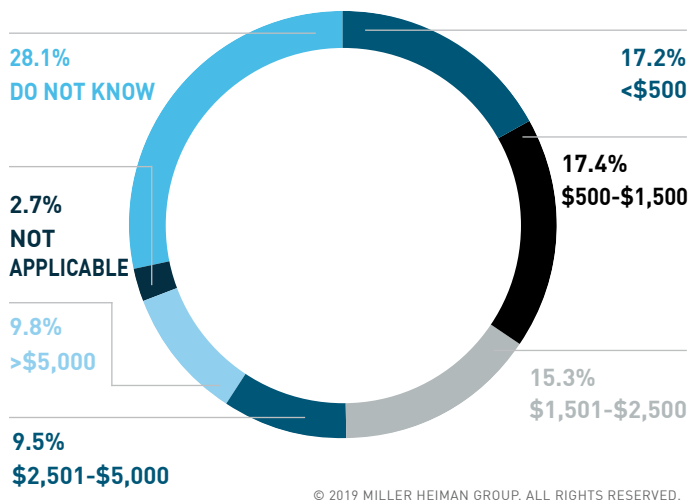
Sellers still create about one-fifth of the content they need on their own: 21.3% this year compared to 20.7% last year. We specifically asked about content *creation from scratch*, excluding the typical customizing and tailoring of existing content assets, as this is the most time-consuming aspect of content creation. According to our [2018-2019 Sales Performance Study](#), salespeople still only spend about 32.0% of their time actually selling, so providing them with easily customizable content assets can be a big boon to productivity.



### Getting a Handle on Content Investments

Content is a big investment, but with so many different functions contributing to the content pool, it's not easy to identify and calculate the total investment made in content types and formats all along the customer's path. In fact, 28.1% of respondents said they don't know how much they invest in content. That percentage doesn't change much when filtered by respondent role, organization size, or industry.

### Annual Spend on Content for Salespeople (per Salesperson)



*More than a quarter (28.1%) of organizations don't know how much they spend on content for their sellers.*

The most probable cause for this lack of transparency lies in the disparate sources of content already discussed. In addition, many organizations have no clear accountability when it comes to who is responsible for the various content types and formats, not to mention who is

responsible for managing the content throughout its lifecycle. Truly understanding the overall investment requires an assessment to determine the related line items in each functional budget plus the costs for third parties that are often involved in content creation or localization.

In a mature sales enablement discipline, enablement orchestrates the content process. While sales enablement may not own the entire content budget, this puts them in the best position to assess the current state of content services and to calculate the investment made by each contributing function, including third-party costs. Once content investments are better understood, enablement can better collaborate with all involved functions to create the most cost-effective content strategy and a formalized collaboration model (see Chapter 9).

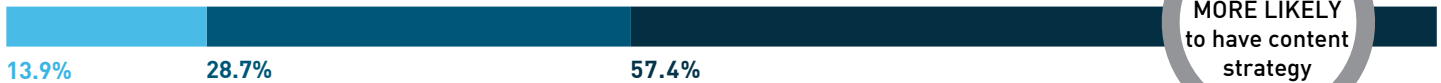
### Content Strategy Contributes to Sales Performance

An effective sales enablement content strategy defines the purpose of content, the goals content should help to achieve, and how content is to be designed, created, and managed in support of the business and selling strategies. A comprehensive content strategy contains this level of detail for all relevant content types and formats, across all contributing functions.

Similar to last year, only about one-third (31.8%) of respondents reported having a content strategy in place. Here again, a formal approach to sales enablement makes a difference. Respondents who followed a formal and charter-based sales enablement approach were five times more likely to have a content strategy than those who approached enablement in an informal or random manner.

## We Have Developed and Implemented a Content Strategy

### FORMAL APPROACH/CHARTER



**5x**  
MORE LIKELY  
to have content  
strategy

### RANDOM APPROACH



■ Disagree ■ Neutral or Somewhat Agree ■ Agree

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Given the complexity of content and the many contributing functions, it's not an easy task to develop a strategy for content. However, year after year, the data from our enablement study shows that it's worth the time and effort. Just look at the significant improvements that can be achieved with an effective content strategy.

Even more importantly, having only somewhat of a content strategy (a partial strategy or one that is not fully implemented) led to win rates below the study's average of 46.4%. An analysis of quota attainment showed similar results.

### Enablement Content Needs Improvement

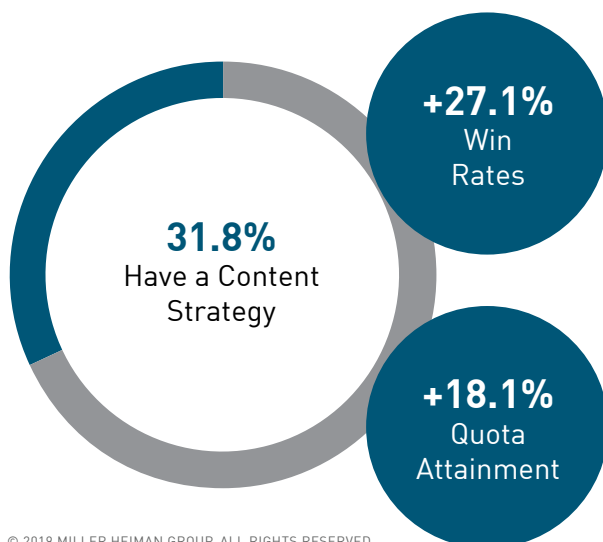
Once a content strategy is in place, the next step is to assess the effectiveness of content by type. This assessment can be done by surveying sellers and their managers, as well as customers for customer-facing content. If an organization already works with a sales enablement content management platform, useful analytics can also be gathered.

The greatest improvements in customer-facing content were needed in four areas:

- Customer-facing presentations
- Case studies/success stories
- Business value/ROI justification assets
- Collateral

For internal enablement content, the top four areas for improvement were:

- Value messaging guidelines
- Battle cards (competitive comparisons)
- Objection handling guides
- Playbooks



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*Value messaging guidelines, battle cards, client-focused presentations, and customer case studies need the greatest improvement.*

In both content areas, content that's product-oriented is considered to better meet seller needs. The same is true for planning tools, proposals, and references. Other than references, the one thing these content types have in common is that they are internally-focused versus customer-centered. It stands to reason that content types that are centered on topics that are more under the control of the business (such as the product portfolio) are easier to create than content for topics that the business can't control such as buyers and competitors.

### **Creating a Content Strategy**

Here are a few actions that can help you leverage the performance impact of a fully implemented content strategy:

#### **1. Determine where your content comes from.**

The first step is to determine who creates all the content your sellers need. For best results, be thorough in your search. We've mentioned a few different functions, e.g., legal, marketing, sales operations, etc., but you may have additional sources such as product, solution, and industry selling teams.

#### **2. Define content and assess what you have.**

First, define all content types and formats to gain clarity. Then, map all content types to the customer's path to see if there is a good fit. Build buckets such as "good to go," "needs adjustment," and "to be deleted." Gaps in content can go into a "to be created" bucket, and redundancies can go into a "to be deleted" bucket.

#### **3. Develop and implement your content strategy.**

Following the definitions you set in step #2, connect your content to the role of content you laid out in your charter (purpose and goals) and define how each content type in various formats will help you achieve these goals. To effectively implement a content strategy, two other components should be implemented as well: a formalized collaboration model and a production process. Both components are discussed in Chapter 9.

#### **4. Implement content lifecycle management.**

Now that all the prerequisites are in place, content lifecycle management will help ensure that all content assets are kept up to date by automatically reminding content owners to review, update, or retire assets regularly. When assigning ownership to assets in your sales enablement content management solution, be sure to assign it at the content type and format level.

## CHAPTER 6: Sales Training

Year after year, respondents to our enablement study tell us that sales training is their most important enablement service. Sales training covers areas such as skills, product, process methodologies, messaging, and customer insights. It also incorporates the various formats in which these services are delivered.

Analyzing the performance impact of sales training was not a focus of our study this year; however, we did gather some data that shows the impact is real. Here is a quick summary:

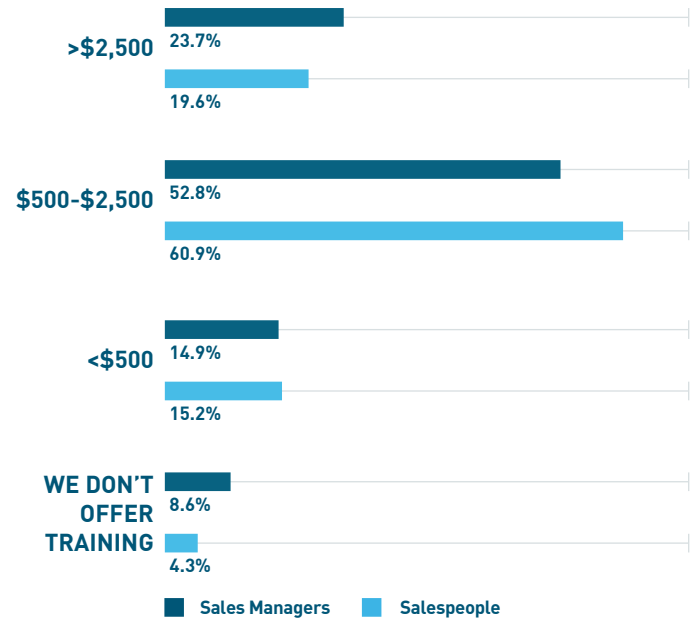
Training was usually seen as meeting or exceeding expectations when it addressed an urgent need and provided easy ways to apply the newly learned skills. And, the higher sales training services were ranked, the better performance results. As an example, organizations in which sales methodology and process training services met or exceeded expectations saw quota attainment 4.1 points above average. When these same services were ranked as needing improvement or redesign, quota attainment fell to 7.8 points below average, which equates to a 14.5% decline.

### Sales Training Investments for Sellers and Managers

Overall, organizations spent slightly more on their salespeople and sales managers than they did last year as visualized in the chart. The majority of organizations (60.9%) invested between \$500 and \$2,500 per salesperson per year, almost the same percentage as in 2018 (60.2%). However, almost one-fifth of organizations (19.6%) invested more

than \$2,500 per salesperson per year, slightly more than last year. At the other end of the spectrum, the percentage of organizations that only invested \$500 or less slightly decreased compared to last year.

### Annual Training Investments in Salespeople and in Sales Managers per Person per Year 2019



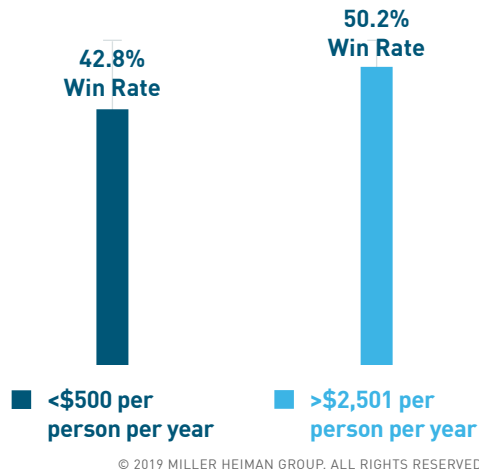
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We saw similar patterns for the investments in sales managers.

### Investment Is Needed to Impact Performance

It makes sense that investing in training services can impact performance, but how much is required to drive results?

## Investments in Salespeople Matter



This year we found that organizations that invested between \$500 and \$2,500 per salesperson per year achieved an average win rate of 46.5%, almost exactly the study's average win rate of 46.4%.

Investing more than \$2,500 per seller per year leads to remarkably higher win rates. At the other side of the spectrum, investments smaller than \$500 per person per year led to win rates way below the study's average. The data shows a similar impact on revenue plan attainment.

When we looked at the impact of investing in sales training for sales managers, we saw similar results, with higher levels of investment required to achieve above-average results. The trend continued when we examined training's impact on revenue plan attainment as well.

## Increased Investment in Skills and Methodologies

As discussed in our [Buyer Preferences Study](#), buyers expect excellent communication skills across all channels, sellers to be well prepared, to learn something new, and to be provided with insights and perspectives that help them solve their challenges in the best possible way. These expectations require sellers to evolve their selling skills and to better leverage defined selling methodologies and processes.

Suggesting that many recognize these buyer expectations, organizations ranked selling skills and sales methodology/process as the top two training investment areas. We always look at the customer's path as the linchpin for all enablement efforts, and sales methodologies do a great job helping sellers connect with their buyers along the customer's path in a purposeful, repeatable, and scalable way. They ensure everyone speaks the same language and that sellers clearly understand the steps that need to be completed and why.

At the bottom of the list, only 30.2% of organizations planned to invest more in social selling training. This leads us to conclude that many sales leaders don't yet fully understand the role of social selling when it comes to the digital transformation of their businesses. Another explanation could be that once an organization has invested in tools training, they assume they are done. In reality, social selling is only effective if the entire selling skill set has evolved and the required platforms and tools are integrated into the workflow.

## Planned Investment in Training Areas (Over Next 12 Months)

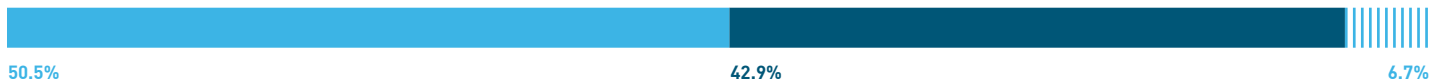
### SELLING SKILLS TRAINING



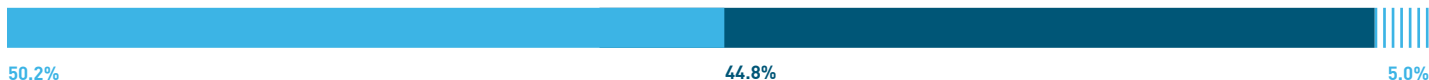
### SALES METHODOLOGY/PROCESS TRAINING



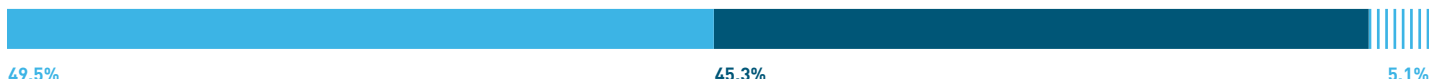
### PRODUCT TRAINING



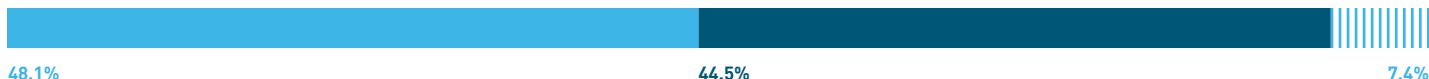
### VALUE MESSAGING TRAINING



### NEW SALESPERSON ONBOARDING TRAINING



### CRM AND OTHER SYSTEMS TRAINING



### ROI/BUSINESS VALUE JUSTIFICATION TRAINING



### CUSTOMER'S MARKETPLACE/CUSTOMER'S JOURNEY TRAINING



### SOCIAL SELLING TRAINING



Invest More Same Invest Less

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More organizations plan to increase investments in selling skills and sales methodology/process training than any other area.

### E-Learning Is the Focus of Increased Investments

This year, we also saw some changes to the training formats organizations plan to deploy. Not surprisingly, e-learning was singled out for increased investments by the greatest percentage of organizations (59.8%), followed by online simulations and online instructor-led training.

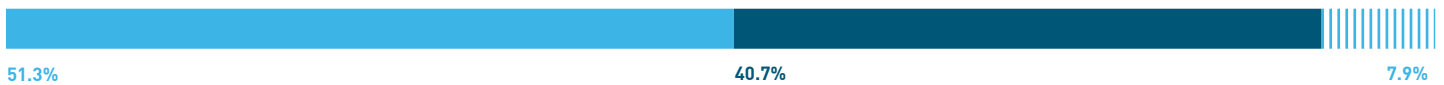
It's interesting that mobile learning is not positioned higher, but 43.1% of organizations still expect to invest more in this area. As to be expected, onsite classroom and instructor-led training is the area in which the greatest percentage of organizations (16.1%) plan to spend less.

### Planned Investment in Training Formats (Over Next 12 Months)

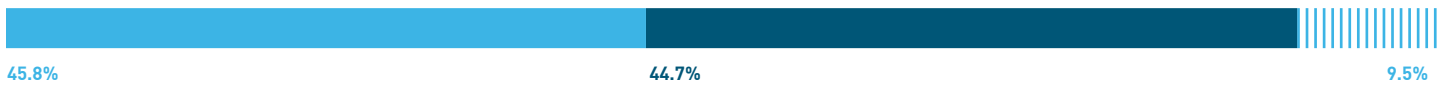
#### E-LEARNING



#### (ONLINE) SIMULATIONS



#### ONLINE INSTRUCTOR-LED TRAINING, SYNCHRONOUS WEB-BASED TRAINING



#### SHADOWING EXPERIENCED SALESPEOPLE



#### MOBILE LEARNING



#### ON-SITE CLASSROOM-BASED TRAINING, INSTRUCTOR-LED TRAINING



#### GAMIFICATION-BASED TRAINING



#### VIRTUAL REALITY (VR) BASED TRAINING



### Methodology and Process Training Drives Adoption

In Chapter 1, we saw that organizations with sales enablement are more likely to have more mature sales processes than those without sales enablement. These organizations consciously invest in sales methodology and sales process training to engage and equip salespeople to use their processes and methodologies daily.

These investments promote the adoption rates (the percentage of the sales force using the defined sales process or methodologies daily) that are crucial to delivering productivity and performance gains. As in other studies we've done, this year's

enablement study found that sales process and sales methodology adoption rates above 75% resulted in above-average gains for revenue plan attainment, quota attainment, and win rates, with a big boost at adoption rates bigger than 90%. This pattern holds true for sales process adoption, for sales methodology adoption, and for a combined approach (see table).

*Only sales process and sales methodology adoption rates above 75% resulted in above-average results for revenue plan attainment, quota attainment, and win rates.*

	Adoption Rates of Sales Process and Sales Methodology and Performance Impact		
	<25%	76%-90%	>90%
Revenue plan attainment (average: 102.5%)	97.6%	106.7%	112.5%
Quota attainment (average: 60.0%)	49.4%	64.0%	72.4%
Win rate for forecast deals (average: 46.4%)	40.4%	54.1%	57.8%

### Jump Start Sales Training Services

In this chapter, we looked deeply into the positive impact of higher levels of investment in sales training on win rates and revenue plan attainment. If your enablement discipline does not yet focus on sales training, here are a few recommendations to consider.

#### 1. Assess your overall sales training landscape.

As with sales content, there are also various teams that provide sales training services, such as learning and development (L&D), product management, or marketing, and the consistency between services suffers. Identify what's provided, by whom, for which target audiences, in what training areas, and in what formats. Map these services to the customer's path to identify gaps or redundancies. Group



your assessment findings into buckets such as “good to go,” “needs adjustment,” and “no longer relevant” and then use these buckets to create your action plan.

## **2. Pay special attention to selling skills, sales methodology, and process training.**

As this year’s study has shown, it is vital to get selling skills, sales methodology, and process training right. Do a deeper assessment in these two areas to make sure your training services are complete, compelling, and fit your business model. Also, look for ways you can strengthen these services. Offering small refresher training modules in a digital format that can be served up in your CRM system based on an opportunity or account is one example.

## **3. Provide related sales coaching services for sales managers.**

Prepare your sales managers to drive adoption and reinforcement by ensuring your sales training services have a corresponding coaching service. As an example, if you’re implementing a new value messaging approach, you’ll need new content and seller training. Make sure your sales managers are also equipped with training services so the coaching they provide their sales team is consistent and aligned. (More on this is provided in the next chapter.)



## CHAPTER 7: Sales Coaching

For the last five years, sales coaching has had the greatest impact on win rates and quota attainment. However, less than half of the study participants leverage sales coaching effectively. As we get this question frequently, let's first differentiate between sales training and sales coaching before going into the details.

### Sales Training and Sales Coaching Defined

*Sales training* covers a number of training areas such as selling skills and techniques, sales methodologies, sales processes, sales technology, and the whole range of product training services. Sales training can be delivered in various training formats such as e-Learning, instructor-led online and classroom sessions, hybrid formats, and many more.

The goal of sales training is often to kick off change, e.g., as an initial step to establish new skills and methodologies or to develop new behaviors. However, sales training alone cannot achieve sales enablement's goal to engage, equip, and empower sales professionals to be valuable, relevant, and differentiating in every buyer interaction. To make sales training effective, it requires ongoing sales coaching efforts.

*Sales coaching* is a process by which sales managers or dedicated sales coaches use a defined approach and specific communication skills combined with domain expertise to facilitate structured conversations with sales professionals to uncover improvement areas and opportunities

for new levels of sales success. Sales coaching builds on sales training efforts to drive sustainable performance improvements. Additionally, sales coaching should drive adoption and reinforcement of the already-implemented enablement services. Sales coaching covers different coaching areas such as lead and opportunity coaching, funnel coaching, skills and behavior coaching, and account and territory coaching.

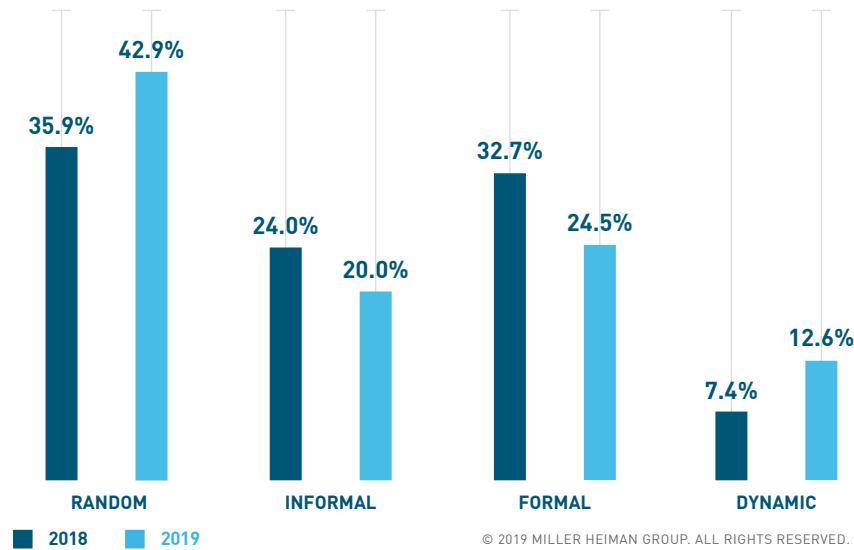
### Sales Coaching Still Too Random

As vital as sales coaching is, the majority of organizations (62.9%) said they follow a *random* (coaching is left up to managers) or *informal* (coaching guidelines may exist, but no formal implementation) approach. The percentage of organizations that followed a more *formal* (purposeful and fully implemented) or even *dynamic* (*formal* plus coaching services tailored and aligned to the enablement services for salespeople) approach to sales coaching was only 37.1%.

Overall, more organizations followed a dynamic coaching approach this year than last. However, more organizations are also in the random category than last year. It's likely that these are organizations that have only recently added sales coaching to their sales enablement discipline.

When we looked deeper, we found a very strong relationship between the coaching approach and the way sales enablement is set up as a discipline. When the organization took a formal approach to sales enablement (with or without a charter), 56.9% of

### Sales Coaching Approach 2018-2019

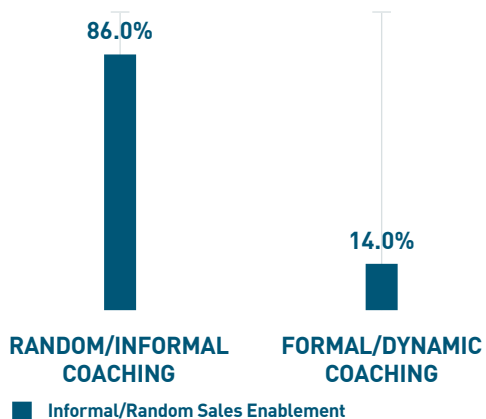


the time, they also took a formal approach to sales coaching. Conversely, only 14.0% of those with an informal approach to enablement approach sales coaching formally.

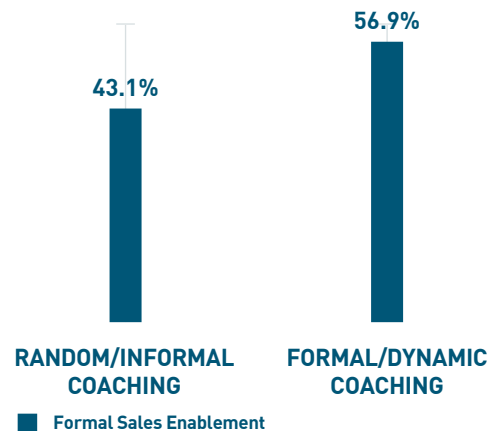
*The more formal sales enablement, the more mature the coaching approach.*

That said, we find it interesting to see that of those organizations with a formal sales enablement approach, 43.1%, still approach coaching informally. This may be an indication that, way too often, sales coaching is considered separate from sales enablement and or treated as an afterthought.

### Sales Coaching Approach if Sales Enablement Setup is Random/Informal



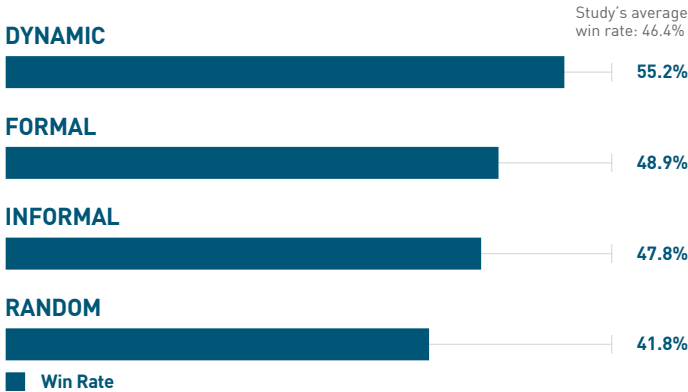
### Sales Coaching Approach if Sales Enablement Setup is Formal (with or without charter)



### Dynamic Coaching Drives Double-Digit Results

As in previous years, the data shows that sales coaching has an impact on performance. And, as might be expected, the more formal sales coaching is, the better the performance impact. If you still need to make a business case for sales coaching enablement in your organization, the data points from this year's study should be a tremendous help.

### Sales Coaching Approach vs. Win Rates



As in previous years, leaving sales coaching up to the managers resulted in win rates and quota attainment rates well below the study's average. While you sometimes need to walk before you run, an informal approach to sales coaching should only be considered an interim step, as only formal and dynamic sales coaching led to significantly better results.

Those with a dynamic approach achieved an average win rate of 55.2%, 13.4 points higher than those with a random approach and 8.8 points higher than the study's average win rate. In terms of actual improvements in percentages, that's an

improvement of 19.0% compared to the study's average, and 32.1% compared to the random approach. For quota attainment, the impact was even stronger this year.

*Dynamic sales coaching showed double-digit improvements in sales performance on both quota attainment (21.3%) and win rates (19.0%) over the study's average.*

*Dynamic coaching showed even stronger improvements over the random approach: a 27.9% improvement in quota attainment and 32.1% for win rates.*

### Overcoming the Inertia

Despite the business case that can be made for sales coaching, many organizations have followed an informal approach for years, and it can be challenging to inspire a sales organization to take a different approach to management. As noted in the previous section, our study shows that alignment to enablement services (the hallmark of dynamic coaching) can also serve to create quick wins that can help you win support.

Here are some additional ideas for moving from informal to dynamic sales coaching enablement:

#### 1. Involve and engage your sales managers.

As their primary focus is sellers, sales enablement leaders often have almost no relationships with sales managers, even in the 73.7% of respondents that said they include frontline sales managers in their enablement efforts.

Enablement only pays off when sales managers are engaged and everyone is working toward the same goals. The first step is to build relationships with them. Then, involve them early on in enablement strategy and whenever you are about to create new enablement services, especially for new initiatives. Listen to their feedback, integrate their suggestions, and ask them what they would need to make this initiative a success. Finally, using the findings from this study, explore the concept of sales coaching with them to better understand where they are and what enablement services they need the most.

## **2. Create a business case.**

Once you've established a relationship with your sales managers, you can use the results from this study combined with their feedback to create a business case. Remember to clearly differentiate between sales training and sales coaching to avoid confusion. Involve your sales managers in the process and, if appropriate, let them present the business case. It will be even stronger and more convincing if the request comes from sales management (as an execution function) instead of sales enablement as a support function.

This is often the hardest step as too many still think of sales coaching as a soft skill or one that is not necessary. This is especially true in very male-dominated organizational cultures and those whose sales leaders were never coached themselves. Make the case on the mental level and address the emotional level, too.

## **3. Run a successful pilot on sales process and methodology.**

To ensure maximum impact and an easy starting point, begin with a sales coaching pilot revolving around sales process and methodology enablement. If your organization is using a licensed sales methodology, your provider may already offer related sales coaching services that you can quickly leverage. If your environment is self-developed, or you and your sales managers see the need to tailor the coaching approach, run a pilot in one or two sales teams and measure the impact on adoption rates and performance as a proof of concept before rolling the services out to a broader audience.

## The Inner Workings: Enablement Tech and Collaboration

Our last three facets cover the inner workings of enablement. The first facet we'll cover is *Integrated Enablement Technology*, including the current state of investments, implementation progress, and the impact of technology on performance. We'll also look at the level of technology integration and the role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in enablement.

Next, we'll cover the *Formalized Collaboration* facet. By now, it should be crystal clear that while sales enablement plays an orchestrating role, enablement is a cross-functional, highly collaborative discipline. A formal cross-functional collaboration model provides clarity on roles and responsibilities for

each enablement service your team provides. In this chapter, we will discuss what the study results have to say about the current state of enablement collaboration as well as the key issues facing enablement organizations.

The third and final facet is *Efficient Enablement Operations*. This facet covers the enablement governance model (ideally supported by an advisory board) and the enablement production processes that ensure the quality, effectiveness, and scalability of your enablement services. Last but not least, it covers enablement metrics, i.e., how to measure sales enablement success.



## CHAPTER 8: Sales Enablement Technology

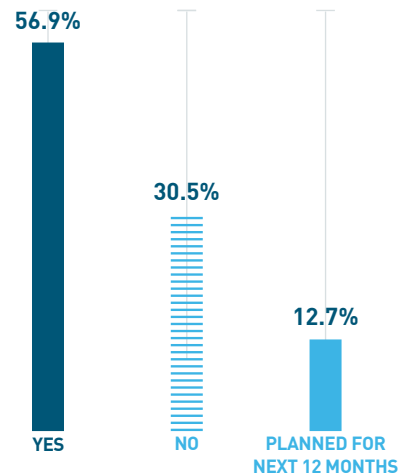
Sales technology's role in sales enablement increases every year. The better these technologies become, the more they enable the success and scalability of sales enablement. In this chapter, we look at the investments being made in sales enablement content management (SECM), training/learning, and coaching technologies as well as the impact these investments have on results.

### Majority of Enablement Functions Invest in Technology

First, we wanted to know which enablement technologies organizations are implementing. While there are dozens of different types of enablement technologies, we clustered our results into three high-level categories: sales enablement content management (SECM), sales training and learning, and sales coaching solutions. To make this data more meaningful, we also separated the responses of organizations that have sales enablement from those that do not.

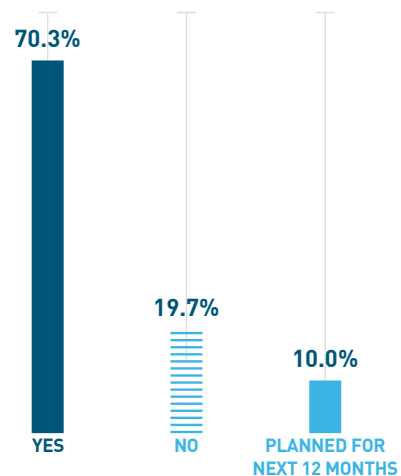
The majority of organizations with sales enablement already had technology implemented across all three categories, with sales training and learning technologies being the most common (70.3%). This comes as no surprise for two reasons. First, as we mentioned earlier, sales training has been the most common enablement service for the last five years. Second, existing L&D solutions and LMS platforms are often used for sales enablement, especially as organizations evolve from an L&D focus to more comprehensive sales enablement.

### Do You Have a Sales Enablement Content Management Solution in Place?



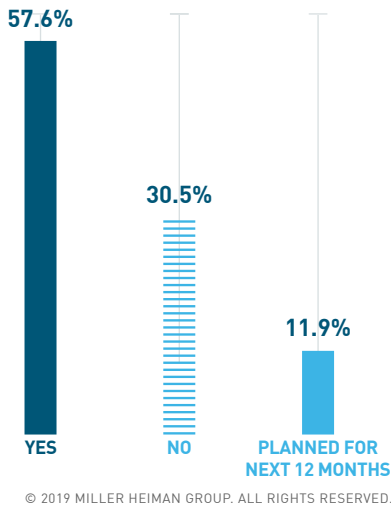
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### Do You Have a Training and Learning Technology Solution in Place?



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### Do You Have a Coaching Technology Solution for Your Sales Managers in Place?

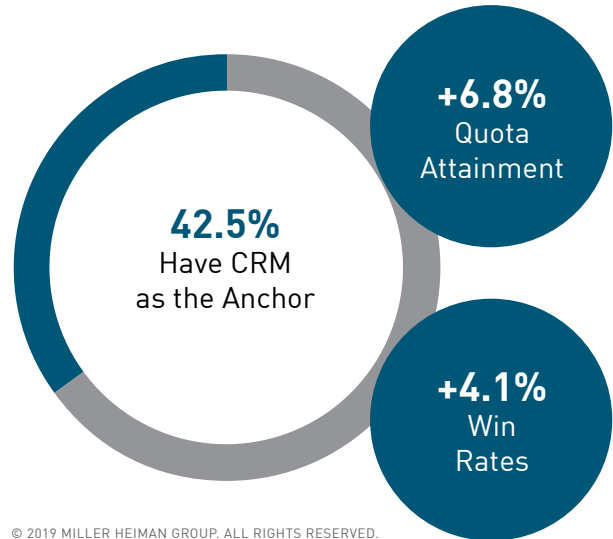


Unfortunately, almost half of the organizations (43.0%) still share content with their sales teams via email or store it in multiple repositories. This is almost the same percentage as last year (47.5%). Every function wants to help sales so they provide their services via shared drives, portals, or intranet pages they set up independently. However, multiple sources of content frustrate sellers and make it less likely that they'll use what is created. It also makes it almost impossible for content managers to implement a content strategy and effectively manage the content lifecycle.

### CRM Must Be the Anchor

Finally, we turn our attention to how these enablement technologies are used within the broader sales technology landscape. It's encouraging that 42.5% of organizations consider CRM as the anchor for all enablement technologies. However, almost one-third (29.2%) rely on point solutions, and another 28.3% try to connect existing point solutions into the sales workflow. These findings are consistent with last year's data.

*When enablement technologies were integrated into CRM, quota attainment rates were 6.8% higher than the average.*



Integration of sales enablement technologies is worth the effort. We saw similar results for revenue plan attainment and for win rates.

### AI Is Becoming More Important

As sales technologies get more sophisticated, we wanted to understand how sales organizations are leveraging AI. The majority (60.2%) reported that they weren't using any AI-based technology right now. Nearly one-quarter (24.5%) said they use AI-based technologies in some enablement areas, such as content, and a small minority (4.1%) said they used AI-based technologies in all enablement areas. Interestingly, 11.3% were not sure whether their technologies were based on AI or not. That's understandable as there is some confusion about concepts like AI and Machine Learning, and technology vendors don't always use the same language.



## **A Strategic Approach to Enablement Technologies**

Regardless of where you are in your sales enablement journey, you should always take a strategic approach to enablement technology. And, remember, no matter what is implemented, it will have a huge impact on the sales force's daily workflow. You will need to plan carefully to lead and guide this change effectively.

Here are a few recommendations to consider:

### **1. Assess your current sales technology.**

As with other types of enablement services, it's critical that you have a clear picture of what's being used along the entire customer's path. It's also vital to understand what's implemented and NOT being used. Collaborate with sales operations and your sales managers to complete this assessment, and remember to look beyond CRM to identify all the different systems and shared drives/portals your sellers use to access tools and services. Once you have a comprehensive inventory, identify redundancies, gaps, areas that need improvement (e.g., better functionality or integration), and technologies or shared drives/portals that are no longer relevant and should be eliminated.

### **2. Create a business case for investment.**

Make a business case for filling the gaps identified in your assessment based on the business problems you want to solve and the goals you want to achieve. Remember to make

sure that all decisions are connected to or derived from your sales enablement charter (see Chapter 3). To keep budget requests under control, check out commercially available solutions before recommending an internal development project. With an abundance of available options in all value/price ranges, internal development is rarely, if ever, called for these days.

### **3. Leverage change management best practices.**

As mentioned, no matter what technology you add or integrate into your existing infrastructure, it will change the way your salespeople perform their jobs. Ensuring a successful implementation and high levels of adoption requires an equal focus on change management. We don't have room to go into the details of change management in this report, but there are many good sources of information available. Just remember to always get executive buy-in, involve your sales managers early on, and equip them with coaching services in support of your enablement efforts, the sales strategy, and the business goals.



## CHAPTER 9: Cross-Functional Collaboration, Enablement Operations, and Metrics

While the collaboration and operations/metrics facets don't result in deliverables that are visible to your target enablement audiences, they are the inner workings of enablement that allow you to create these tangible enablement services. The purpose of these facets can be summed up in three very important words: governance, productivity, and scalability.

*Governance* is a term nobody wants to focus on, but when difficult decisions need to be made, a governance model pays off.

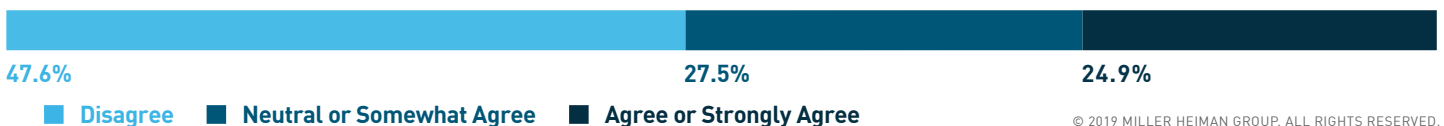
*Productivity*: When the inner workings of enablement are set up correctly, there are almost no surprises as everyone follows the same plan and knows well in advance what needs to be done and by when.

*Scalability*: In fast-growing organizations, there is a lot of pressure on sales enablement to reduce the ramp-up time for new hires or salespeople who come aboard through an acquisition or merger. This can only happen when the inner workings of enablement are running smoothly.

### One-Quarter Operates With an Advisory Board

Many enablement decisions are cross-functional in nature and involve a number of senior executives. An advisory board allows enablement leaders to get in front of these executives regularly to present progress and results, discuss challenges, and make strategic decisions. In this year's study, one-quarter of respondents agreed that they effectively use an advisory board to keep senior executives involved and engaged and to make strategic decisions.

### We Effectively Use a Sales Enablement Advisory Board to Keep Our Senior Executives Involved and Engaged and to Make Strategic Decisions.



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*Organizations that run sales enablement formally with or without charter are almost twice as likely to have an advisory board.*

### Enablement Approach Impacts Collaboration

Collaboration has been a common theme throughout this report, and many enablement leaders have told us that they end up needing to collaborate with many more functions than initially expected.

Some sales and marketing experts refer to enablement collaboration as a sales and marketing alignment issue, but it's much more than that. Sales and marketing are both contributors to enablement, but when enablement is done right, they do not own it. In a mature enablement discipline, enablement professionals orchestrate collaboration across many groups, including marketing, product management, sales operations, sales management, IT, L&D, and

more. Given the huge collaboration effort required, it's surprising that 76.5% of the respondents to this year's study said they collaborate in an *ad hoc* or *informal* manner only.

Before getting into the details, let's define our terms. *Ad hoc* collaboration means there is no explicit agreement to collaborate—and very little collaboration actually happens. *Informal* means that different functions know, at a high level, what they are expected to contribute, but there is no documented collaboration model. In a *formal* collaboration model, roles and responsibilities are assigned—and documented—for each enablement service.

Many organizations find the RACI model (Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed) particularly useful. This collaboration model defines the accountable, responsible roles, as well as the roles to be informed and to be consulted. At a minimum, these roles should be agreed upon by content type. As we'll discuss in a moment, a formal collaboration model that's also connected to the production model is still a rare phenomenon, but well worth the extra effort.

We filtered responses by the participants' sales enablement approach and found a clear link between sales enablement approach and collaboration. The majority of organizations that followed a random or informal approach to sales enablement also followed a random or informal approach to collaboration. On the flip side, those organizations that followed a formal and charter-based sales enablement approach almost always followed a formal collaboration model as well.

Next, we wanted to know why so many organizations collaborate in an *ad hoc* or informal manner. The majority of organizations (64.8%) told us that silo-thinking is the main hurdle, followed by conflicting goals, budget restrictions, lack of experience, lack of leadership support, and competitive company culture. Most of these issues cannot be solved by sales enablement. Instead, those issues require the involvement of the organization's leadership team in order to be solved.

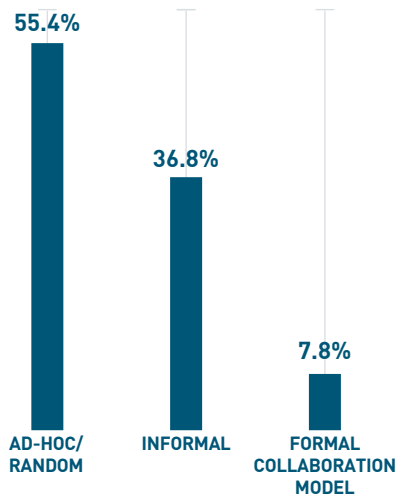
### Enablement Production: Collaboration in Action

Formalizing your collaboration model is only the first step. Next comes your production model, i.e., the sequence of activities followed to create and deliver enablement services. Overall, 23.0% of organizations reported having a production model in place, 34.8% were not sure or only somewhat agreed, and 42.2% disagreed.

As with the collaboration model, the sales enablement approach plays a role, as you can see here. When sales enablement is formal and charter-based, it's more than four times as likely that the enablement team has also implemented their production model.

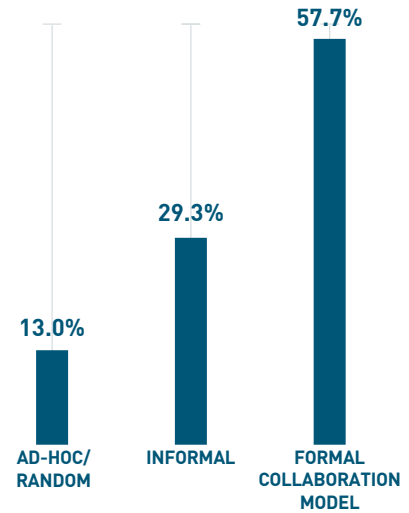
*When sales enablement is formal and charter-based, it's more than four times as likely that the enablement team has also implemented their production model.*

### Cross-Functional Collaboration With Random and Informal Sales Enablement Approach



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### Cross-Functional Collaboration With Formal Charter-Based Sales Enablement Approach



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### We Effectively Produce and Manage Our Enablement Services Based on a Production Model That Covers All Phases from Design to Delivery.

#### FORMAL APPROACH/CHARTER



#### RANDOM/INFORMAL APPROACH



■ Disagree ■ Neutral or Somewhat Agree ■ Agree

**4.5x**  
MORE LIKELY  
to have a  
production  
model

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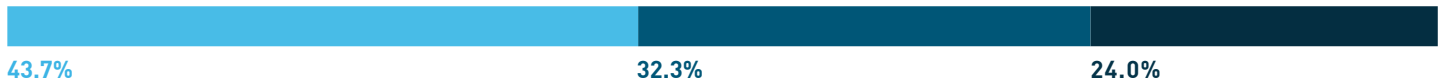
The next question is whether or not getting the inner workings right impacts productivity and performance. And yes, it matters. When both the collaboration model and the related production model are implemented correctly, enablement teams set themselves up for greater success. They are not only more efficient, but also more effective, as their energy can go directly into what they create rather than dealing with dysfunctional collaboration with all its resulting delays and missteps. Finally,

scalability is impossible when collaboration is ad hoc and defined production processes don't exist.

When both the collaboration and production models are formalized and implemented, quota attainment was 13.1 points higher. Win rates showed a similar impact. So, it makes sense to get the inner workings right.

## Measuring Enablement Metrics

WE CONSISTENTLY MEASURE THE IMPACT OF OUR ENABLEMENT INITIATIVES WITH A SET OF TAILORED METRICS THAT ALLOWS US TO DETERMINE THE ROI OF OUR ENABLEMENT INVESTMENTS.



WE CONSISTENTLY MEASURE THE IMPACT OF OUR ENABLEMENT INITIATIVES WITH MILESTONES AND PRODUCTIVITY METRICS.



WE CONSISTENTLY MEASURE THE IMPACT OF OUR ENABLEMENT INITIATIVES USING BOTH LEADING AND LAGGING INDICATORS.



■ Disagree ■ Neutral or Somewhat Agree ■ Agree

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## Measuring Sales Enablement Success

The metrics you use to measure sales enablement success is another important element of Efficient Enablement Operations. Your enablement charter should already list those metrics. If you don't yet have a formal charter, you may want to revisit Chapter 4. Our book [Sales Enablement: A Framework to Engage, Equip, and Empower A World-Class Sales Force](#) also includes a significant amount of guidance on how to create a charter, including an example in the appendix.

Overall, nearly one-quarter of organizations consistently measure the impact of their enablement efforts with either productivity metrics, milestones, or leading and lagging indicators. However, organizations that follow a formal or even charter-based approach to sales enablement are also more likely to implement a tailored approach to enablement metrics.

Almost one-third (29.0%) said they work with milestones and productivity metrics. These are

usually the easiest metrics to implement and can be especially useful when just launching your enablement discipline. One-quarter (25.7%) of organizations use both leading and lagging indicators, and 24.0% leverage a whole dashboard of tailored metrics to determine the ROI of their sales enablement investments.

## Formalizing Enablement's Inner Workings

If you're just launching your enablement discipline, you may be surprised at how much behind-the-scenes work needs to be done. Here are a few steps you can take to get started:

### 1. Formalize your collaboration model first.

You need to focus on your collaboration model first because it is a prerequisite for the production model. Begin by approaching all involved functions to explain the challenges of creating enablement services without a collaboration model, e.g., when there is a lack of role clarity and accountability, tasks get moved around until it becomes an emergency, and

everything needs to be done at the last minute. Then lay out the vision: designing consistent enablement services along the customer's path with various functions seamlessly and efficiently.

## **2. Assess enablement services and assign roles collaboratively.**

Follow the steps in Chapter 7 to assess your existing enablement services and create a content strategy. Once this is done, set up a few workshops for those functions you identified in your collaboration model to go through content or training type and define roles according to the RACI or another agreed-upon model.

## **3. Test the collaboration model in a pilot project.**

Now that the foundational work is done, it's time to bring your plan to life. Choose a pilot project such as a new playbook, value messaging approach, set of white papers, onboarding program, or sales process or sales methodology training program. Learn from experience and adjust your collaboration model as you discover ways to be even more effective. Establish regular collaboration meetings with all involved roles to discuss the model and learn as a team.

## **4. Define a production process connected to the collaboration model.**

A sales enablement production process doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, there are only four to five steps that need to be defined: define and design, create and localize, provide and publish, measure and track. Your defined steps may vary, but it's vital to ensure you include every step from design to delivery in your production process. Also, remember that your production

model must be in sync with your collaboration model.

As with the collaboration model, run a workshop to make sure that everyone involved has clarity on their role in the production process and the timing of each step. A pilot project can, once again, help you work through any challenges.

## **5. Choose your success metrics (and make sure they're in your charter as well).**

To measure your success effectively, you need to choose metrics based on where you are in your enablement journey. If you are in the early phases and about to implement an initiative with specific goals, define metrics just for that initiative. Very likely, these will be milestone and productivity metrics such as available selling time, search time for content and training, content customization time, etc.

If your enablement discipline is more mature, your initiatives will be more directly connected to your pipeline, e.g., a new prospecting approach, a new value messaging initiative, or a new sales methodology. In this case, in addition to lagging indicators, e.g., win rates, you may want to include leading indicators, e.g., conversion rate improvements, to provide feedback on whether you're having the desired impact early in the sales process.

Finally, these metrics should also be included in your enablement charter. If you have a charter already, make sure the metrics defined there match the metrics you are actually using. If you don't have a charter, refer to the resources included at the end of this report and start creating one.

## Concluding Thoughts

Following this Fifth Annual Sales Enablement Study, we saw that how sales enablement is approached plays a huge role that should not be underestimated. It begins with a customer-focused mindset that looks at sales enablement through the lens of the customer's path. And it continues with the internal approach to sales enablement. That formality matters is not new, and that the strategic alignment to the business strategy and the particular challenges of the sales force play a key role is also not entirely new.

However, what is new, is that these two foundational pillars impact almost all other areas of sales enablement in a significant way. These foundational pillars need to be a top priority for all sales enablement leaders who want to become the engine to drive sustainable sales enablement results. Our recommendation is to focus on the next steps we described in Chapters 2 and 3 first before focusing on a specific sales enablement service only. If you are interested in more details, in the specific "what to do next," please get in touch with your CSO Insights analyst. We are happy to help you evolve your sales enablement practice.

## Additional Resources

### Chapter 1:

[Sales Enablement Clarity Step 1: Establishing a Common Understanding](#)

[Sales Enablement Clarity Step 2: The Clarity Model](#)

### Chapter 2:

[Why Alignment to the Customer's Path is Key to Sales Performance](#)

[Why The Customer's Path Should Be At The Core Of Your Enablement Approach](#)

### Chapter 3:

[Why you need a sales enablement charter and how to get there: Part 1](#)

[Why you need a sales enablement charter and how to get there: Part 2](#)

### Chapter 4:

[Why Sales Force Enablement Requires a Two-Step Approach](#)

["Making sales enablement simple" – what "simple" actually means for the enablement team](#)

### Chapters 5 and 6:

[Why you need a sales enablement content strategy](#)

[Enablement builds it, but do salespeople use it?](#)

[Why consistency matters to achieve sales force enablement results](#)

### Chapter 7:

[Sales Coaching: Four Ideas To Improve Sales Coaching Effectiveness](#)

[Five Ways to Get Started With Sales Coaching](#)

### Chapters 8 and 9:

[How to Make Enablement Teams Productive and Scalable: Invest in Efficient Enablement Operations](#)

[Sales Enablement Governance: Why You Need an Advisory Board](#)

[Measuring Enablement Success Part 1: It's Not All About Revenue](#)

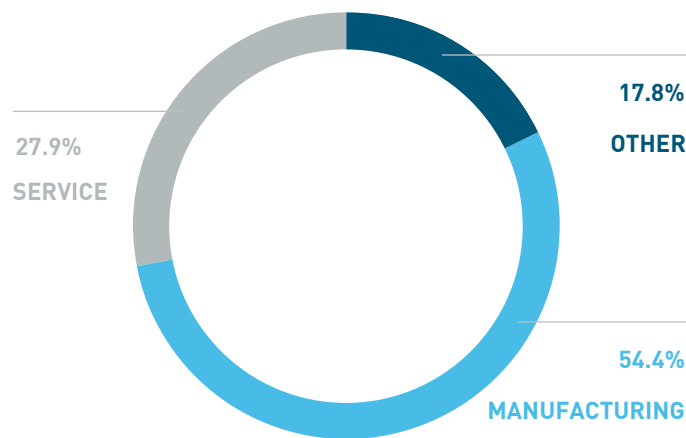
[Measuring Enablement Success Part 2: The Metrics You Need](#)



## APPENDIX A

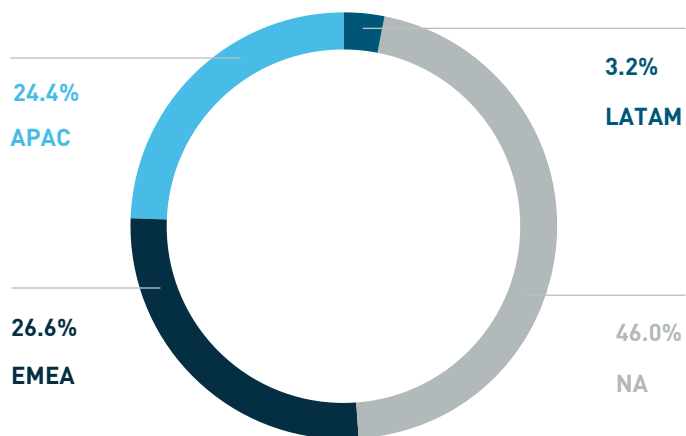
Data collection for the *2019 Sales Enablement Study* took place during May and June of 2019. Respondents included sales executives, sales enablement leaders, sales operations leaders, sales managers, and sales professionals from 918 study participants. The study also represents perspectives from many regions and industries and covers a wide range of roles and company sizes.

### Study Participants by Industry



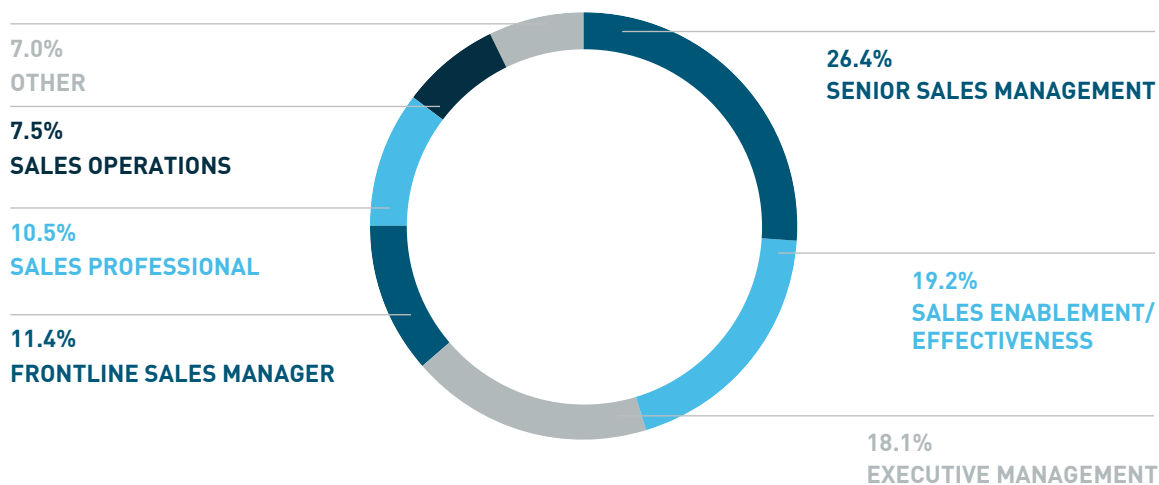
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### Study Participants by Region



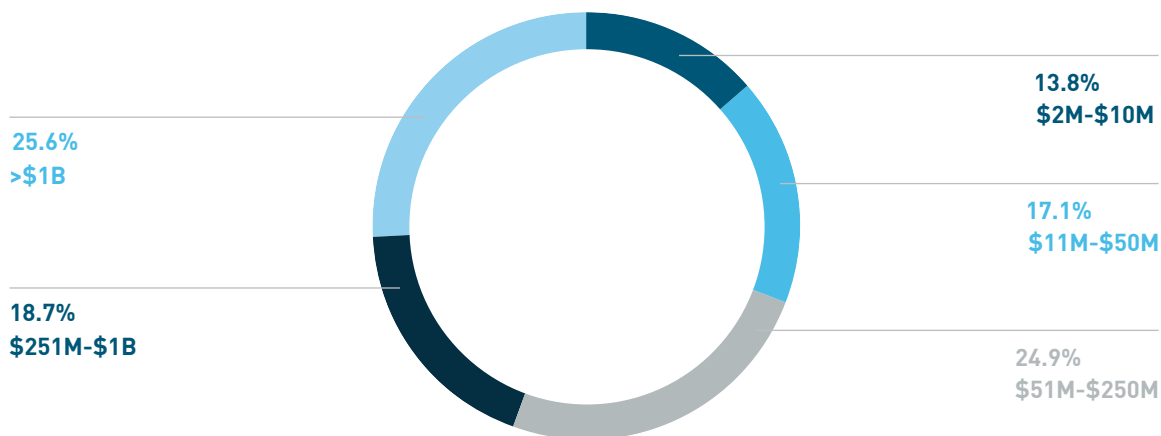
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### Study Participants by Role



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### Study Participants by Company Revenue



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The Research Division of Miller Heiman Group

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