How to Prove The Return on Investment of Your Sales Enablement Program

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Introduction

Let's face it, the last few years have been a rollercoaster ride. First, there was a global pandemic and an abrupt shift to remote work that forced you to shift your enablement programs and implement new tools. Now we're facing a recession and economic uncertainty, and your sales enablement program is likely under the microscope again. Budgets are being cut; headcount is being frozen. Once again, you are faced with the challenge to do more with less.

One of the biggest challenges to the success of an enablement team is that enablement programs are often seen as a cost center to the business. It's difficult to directly prove the return on investment (ROI) or measure the success of these programs, so it's often one of the first areas in the sales organization to suffer funding cutbacks. Without clear success metrics and proven ROI, it's difficult for enablement leaders to advocate for the value of their program—and team—to obtain sufficient funding and additional resources.

To be a successful enablement leader, you *must* be a change agent. Your job is not just to enable your team, but to be a **revenue accelerator**. To do this successfully and to get a seat at the leadership table, you must shift your focus from actively supporting your sales team to doubling down on efficiencies that drive more productivity, and therefore, revenue for the business.

The cost of enablement

Like any element of business during times of economic instability, it's critical to weigh the return on investment and to be as lean as possible. Your enablement program is no different. It's easy for the CFO to cut non-quota-bearing employees and programs from a plan when you are looking at line items on a spreadsheet. So your job as an enablement leader is to view your program with a similar mindset.

Enablement programs are invaluable. They allow front-line and pre-sales employees to spend their time focused on selling and generating revenue, while also enabling them to be successful as quickly as possible.

Let's start with what your program costs your organization. There are a few cost levers to consider: people, processes, and technology. To protect your investment in your people, you must ensure that your processes and technology are working for you—and them.

How do people factor into the cost of your enablement program?

Let's start by looking at your people and the ideal ratio of an enablement team to sales reps. According to Forrester, 75% of B2B sales organizations have a dedicated sales enablement function in place. In their research, Forrester found that high-performing organizations have an average ratio of 1:36 sales enablement professionals to FTEs compared with a 1:48 ratio for low-performing orgs. But, the organizations classified as "high performing" raised the proportion of reps achieving quota by 11%, while low-performing organizations reported an average 13% *decrease*.

HOMEWORK

What would revenue growth look like in your organization if you were able to raise the proportion of reps who achieved quota by 11%?

While these ratios may be the ideal, many enablement "teams" are functioning as a team of one (or maybe two people). In addition, sales enablement professionals are getting more expensive. According to the Sales Enablement Collective, the average salary of a sales enablement professional (regardless of job title) is $119,228, up 10.9% from just last year[1].

The churn factor

There are few professions more transient than sales. Well before The Great Resignation happened, Glassdoor conducted a survey that showed that 68% of sales reps plan to look for a job in the next year, and nearly half (45%) plan to change jobs in the next three months. In fact, the average rep quits after just 18 months. Why? Sales quotas and revenue goals can feel next to impossible to reach due to:

- Aggressive ramp goals and the pressure to start selling quickly
- Difficulty hiring and retaining talent
- A plethora of enablement resources that are going unused and unadopted
- Lack of insight on if enablement programs are successful
- No way to evaluate how your reps are progressing with individual learning needs

Our own research backs this up. We surveyed 500+ sales professionals and found that 47% of sales reps have quit a job due to a poor onboarding and training process. SMA reports that, on average, new sales hires only become productive after 11.2 months.

THE VALUE OF RETENTION

If the average rep isn't productive until after 11 months and they are likely to quit after 18 months, your organization really will only have seven months of actual quota-bearing productivity from its reps.

[1] https://product-marketing.docsend.com/view/sz2bdzdd6ibfju6p

This churn factor forces your organization to continually replace, ramp, and upskill new sellers. This is an expensive cycle. DePaul University found that, on average, it costs a sales organization nearly $100K every time it replaces a sales rep. Between the continual churn and "everboarding" and with only seven months of actual sales productivity per rep, it becomes very difficult for your RevOps team to consistently predict your organization's ability to achieve quota.

How do processes factor into the cost of an enablement program?

The good news is that the enablement team has the ability to be the heroes in the fight against churn. One of the biggest ways enablement can move the needle is by helping sales teams become measurably more efficient and more productive.

The first lever that you can focus on improving is your "everboarding" program.

WHAT IS "EVERBOARDING"?

Where in the past, many enablement leaders have thought of onboarding and training as individual programs, "everboarding" is an approach to enablement that combines onboarding, coaching, training, and reinforcing knowledge and processes. It is the holistic approach that connects all of the elements that help to make your sellers more productive and successful.

While improving onboarding and increasing ramp time is critical to your team's success—in fact, top sales performers are 3x more likely to report that their onboarding experience was "good" or "excellent" compared to poor performers—a great enablement program must also focus on the processes that build habits out of best practices and reduce friction.

Did you know that the average sales rep spends a whopping 3–11 hours per week searching for the information they need to do their jobs? For the sake of easy math, let's say your average rep makes $100K per year—you'd be paying each rep $22,500 a year just to search for the information they need to do their jobs. If you have 50 sellers in your organization, that compounds to $1.1M!

To drive efficiency, your mission must be to build programs that decrease ramp time, increase productivity, remove barriers to information, and continually reinforce best practices.

How does technology factor into the cost of an enablement program?

Did you know the average business spends at least $150 per user/month on sales enablement tools?[2] Consider your enablement tech stack. As the world shifted to remote work, your tech stack undoubtedly grew to give your team more tools to enable their communication and productivity. Most sales teams use between 4 and 10 digital sales tools, including:

CRM
Salesforce, Hubspot, etc.

Prospecting and intent data
LinkedIn Sales Navigator, Zoominfo, DemandBase

Email Optimization
Outreach, Salesloft, Lavender, Vidyard, etc.

Learning management system
Lessonly, Docebo, etc.

Forecasting
Clari

Scheduling
Calendly, ChiliPiper

Conversation intelligence tools
Gong, Chorus

Conversational messaging
Drift, Intercom, etc.

Virtual meeting tools
Teams, Zoom, etc.

Internal communication tools
Slack, Teams, etc.

Contracting
Docusign, PandaDoc, Conga, etc.

Sending
Sendoso

[2] https://www.mediafly.com/evolved-selling-community-blog/influential/how-much-do-organizations-spend-on-sales-tools-for-sales-reps/

But many sales teams have struggled with learning and adopting all of these tools. If you've put in a request for budget for a tool, you may have heard, "The field isn't using the tools we already have." As an enablement leader, increasing the adoption of these tools and proving ROI is another lever you can pull to provide value to your organization.

When you have a strategy around tool adoption and effectiveness, these tools help make your team much more efficient, and may even eliminate the need for additional headcount, helping you to do more with less.

SPEKIT IS THE NON-DISRUPTIVE WAY YOUR REPS LEARN EFFECTIVELY AND QUICKLY

Most of your reps have already forgotten what they've learned during onboarding. Managing change needs to be a top priority.

Spekit is the only part of your tech stack that can deliver just-in-time learning without disrupting your reps' workflow. With Spekit, you can help them ramp quickly and efficiently reinforce information and best practices without distracting them from selling activities.

Sales efficiency + productivity = revenue acceleration

According to Forrester, high-performing organizations are increasing their sales enablement budget at a rate twice as fast as low-performing organizations. Why? Because effective enablement teams can help reduce the ramp time for new reps, scale the best practices of top reps to the whole team, keep top-performing reps engaged to reduce churn, and ultimately, drive a revenue-generation engine that consistently and predictably hits its goals.

Take a data-driven approach to shift the paradigm

Now that we've reviewed the three levers—people, process, and technology — that help you take the cost of enablement and turn it into revenue, let's discuss how you actually measure that change. As we mentioned earlier, proving the ROI of your enablement program requires a paradigm shift. Part of this is shifting your leadership team's view of enablement as a cost center to a revenue accelerator. But part of this requires a shift for you too—from being reactive to strategic. And from being strategic to *programmatic*.

For many enablement folks (especially those of you who are working as a mighty team of one or a few), keeping up with all of the requests, questions, and demands from your team can feel like a full-time job. And let's be honest, giving them what they need can be fulfilling and can help you build a strong relationship with your reps. However, to be successful as an enablement leader, you must shift your focus to aligning the goals of your program to the goals of your organization. You must show meaningful and measurable impact to your business.

Why do you need to do this? Because if you cannot prove the return on investment for your enablement program, it will be a struggle to gain the budgetary support from your executive team necessary for you to get the headcount and tools you need to be successful.

Must-measure metrics to demonstrate ROI for your enablement program

To demonstrate ROI, you must measure. There are a whole host of KPIs that can help you advocate for your program, both qualitatively and quantitatively. So, without boiling the ocean, how do you decide what to track?

The most important metrics will be the ones that align with your organization's high-level business objectives. These objectives and key results (OKRs) should be your starting point as you determine which metrics will be your guiding principles. Once you have selected the metrics that matter, be sure to incorporate them into your enablement program charter.

Here are some examples of great metrics to track for your enablement program.

Qualitative metrics

- Check-in surveys
- Proficiency in specific sales processes
- Demo proficiency
- Level of confidence
- Tool adoption
- Knowledge retention

Quantitative metrics

- Meetings set
- Opportunities created
- Time to first deal won
- Sales pipeline
- Quota attainment
- Lead-to-customer conversion rate
- Average win rate
- Average deal size
- Length of sales cycle
- Internal sales team NPS
- Employee churn rate

The value of micro-KPIs

One thing many people in enablement struggle with is how to tie in the work you do on a daily basis to improve overall sales success. Think of micro-key performance indicators (KPIs) as baby steps to showing impact. Micro-KPIs can become the bridge between enablement programs, initiatives, and activities that connect to overall productivity and quota attainment.

Micro-KPIs provide visibility for the tactics that fuel your overall program. For instance, your team's usage of content and messaging could be tied to the number of meetings set. If your sales team is adopting the messaging they have been trained on, ideally it will improve the meetings set KPI. Improving meetings set can lead to more opps, increased pipeline, and better win rates.

While not fully tied to your company's high-level OKRs, micro-KPIs may be helpful in showing correlation—especially because it's not always possible to show a direct connection from an enablement initiative to overall revenue growth or sales efficiency.

TAKE A DEEP DIVE INTO SALES ENABLEMENT METRICS

Align your enablement program's focus areas to business outcomes with these 11 must-measure sales enablement metrics.

Learn More About Enablement Metrics

Building the business case for your enablement program

As the person in charge of your enablement program, your success rides on your ability to demonstrate a meaningful and *measurable* impact to revenue growth in your organization. It's your job to communicate the value of your program at a regular cadence to your leaders and stakeholders. If you do this well, your leadership team will see you and your program as a growth accelerator rather than another line item in the budget.

First, you must understand the OKRs that your business is driving toward. Then build your strategy around how your enablement program can impact the success of those OKRs. Which of the metrics we covered earlier will help you measure your progress and alignment?

Be prepared to answer the following questions:

- What is our plan and our progress against it?
- How do we compare to our peers?
- Are there gaps from a capability, maturity, or cost standpoint? What are the consequences of these gaps?
- How is our enablement program aiding the business to increase revenue and/or reduce costs?

HOW TO GAIN BUY-IN AND BUDGET FOR YOUR SALES ENABLEMENT PROGRAM

It's not easy to gain support and resources for your enablement program, but don't worry, we've got you covered. Learn how to be an agent of change.

Read this blog post for 6 actionable tips to gain support for your program.

Remember, it's not just about what your enablement program will cost your business. It's important to focus on:

1. The return on investment of your program
2. The cost of *not* investing in enablement

The second factor is often overlooked. **What would it look like if your organization did not invest in enablement?** Often this comes at the cost of decreasing sales performance, resulting in lost revenue, declining win rates, incosistent quota attainment, and an increase in the amount of time your reps spend not selling.

Not investing in enablement can also mean that your organization loses its competitive advantage by allowing for a poor customer experience. Operationally, not having a strong enablement function can result in inconsistent processes, limited tool adoption and wasted spend, and poor data quality.

In fact, Forrester shares that when organizations enable sellers with data and insights to tell the buyer's story, they can experience a lift of up to 66% in revenue and as much as 82% more repeat business.[3]

These are all important factors to include when you report to your stakeholders. Remember, a successful enablement program is all about doubling down on efficiency to drive more revenue for your organization and keeping your sales team engaged. **Engagement + enablement = revenue**. It's as simple as that.

[3] https://www.mediafly.com/blog/the-cost-of-a-sales-enablement-solution-pales-in-comparison-to-the-cost-of-doing-nothing/

About Spekit

Spekit is a just-in-time learning solution that delivers the training and guidance needed to navigate new processes, technologies, and methodologies. You can increase productivity with embedded, contextual learning, access critical information with a single click, and communicate change with in-app notifications.

Learn how Spekit can help you optimize sales efficiency and productivity, reinforce sales knowledge, and maximize ROI for every piece of technology connected to sales productivity and data accuracy in your tech stack.

Schedule a demo today at Spekit.com. 🐙

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