# Sales Enablement has Ignited over the Summer

## By Peter O'Neill, Research Director Research In Action.

The Sales Engagement/Enablement (SE) topic keeps ticking along. After my Vendor Selection Matrix™ report on Sales Engagement Management was published in May, I also completed another research project on sales enablement in June. This was a trends survey across 177 marketers (42% US, 48% Europe) and the findings and insights are published by the B2B Marketing community as what they call a premium report. And I presented the highlights of that report, within a specialized SE stream, at their IGNITE conference which was attended by over 3,000 people. My report and presentation title was:

*"The Sales Enablement Moment is Now".*

The report concludes that now is a golden opportunity for B2B marketers to share their knowhow and expertise and help sellers look good in front of buyers. The perennial goal of marketing/sales alignment depends heavily on mutual trust and respect, and that would be easy to obtain with a successful SE program. The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted this need to both individual sellers and their executives. An SE program with a full supply chain of services and process addressing the competencies now required in a digital business world; providing content and training on a dynamic and responsive platform; and helping sellers to configure the right solutions for their customers quickly.

My experience shows that the typical sequence of an SE project goes through these stages of maturity:

1. **Improve sales training**

2. **Provide sales with digital content – passive**

3. **Promote content to sales proactively**

4. **Add customer insights**

5. **Integrate to other sales systems**.

Some companies will be able to improve marketing/sales alignment by just extending the current marketing automation processes and/or better-integrating Marketing Automation with the CRM or SFA systems. Others will want to invest in a new SE platform that does quite a bit more. An action plan is shown below, but here are some important points to consider:

1. **Address sales adoption from day one.** The most successful SE projects focus on providing the optimal selling experience. Consider sales to be your customer for

content, training and insights; research their needs first; and provide the information in the format and technologies that they prefer.

2. **Compare various SE platforms.** Please do not sign-up to the first SE vendor that calls. For the SE vendors, it is gold rush time currently and the SE software demos are all impressive – flowing PowerPoint presentations and running on tablet devices. Ensure there are standard interfaces to the systems that matter in your company; look for an empathetic user interface and adaptability in the software; and, perhaps most importantly, ensure it supports those devices that your sellers use. Sellers are already collecting a massive number of apps onto their devices through their own efforts. The SE system of choice needs to be visible, and recognized as important by the sellers, among that forest. It has to earn its adoption, based on ease of use, accessibility, comfort and applicability to the sellers' daily tasks.

3. **Assign an SE program manager high up in the organization.** Unless you set up a team of 5–10 people, the SE goals listed above cannot be achieved by your SE program manager alone. Much of the work will be done by colleagues in other departments with encouragement and assistance from the SE program: creating content, cranking data, providing training modules. So executive support across the organizations is, therefore, critical.

During the last weeks, I have been extremely busy presenting several webinars on SE. For example, I did this one with the vendor who led our Vendor Selection Matrix, Seismic. But I also presented with other vendors such as Mediafly and Highspot and I have also delivered workshops on the same topic to both buyer organizations and other SE vendors.

Always keeping you informed!

Peter O'Neill