Sales Enablement in Business-to-Business (B2B) Context: An Exploratory Case Study on Implementation and Key Areas

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Abstract

In recent years, sales organizations have faced a complex array of operational challenges, ranging from a shift towards remote work to fluctuating customer expectations and increasing market competition. To overcome these issues, many business-to-business (B2B) firms have adopted sales enablement strategies, a field gaining both practitioner and academic attention, but lacking a standardized definition. Employing a two-step analytical approach, this study aimed to elucidate the concept of sales enablement. It accomplishes this by conducting a comprehensive analysis of existing definitions within the practitioner landscape and exploring its practical application through a single case study. Our findings significantly advance the existing body of knowledge by identifying three key elements that are essential for effective sales enablement implementation: alignment, integration, and processes. In contrast to the prevalent focus on technology as the cornerstone of sales enablement,

our study reveals a more nuanced perspective. It posits that, while technology is an important facilitator, the key themes of effective sales enablement are alignment among people, integration of organizational resources, and streamlined processes. These insights provide valuable contributions to both the academic literature and the practical application of sales enablement, offering a multifaceted understanding that extends beyond mere technological focus to encompass human and process-oriented dynamics.

Keywords

Sales enablement, sales operation, business-to-business, sales strategy

1. Introduction

In recent years, sales organizations have confronted a multitude of significant operational challenges, including the transition to remote work frameworks, fluctuating customer expectations, intensifying competitive pressures, and looming economic uncertainties. Numerous business-to-business entities have turned to sales enablement strategies to overcome these challenges and sustain high levels of performance, numerous Business-to-Business (B2B) entities have turned to sales enablement strategies. A 2022 empirical study conducted by Highspot, who surveyed 215 companies, indicated a 9% enhancement in win rates and a 12% reduction in sales personnel turnover rates attributable to the implementation of sales enablement initiatives.

In recent decades, practitioners have widely used this topic (Peterson et al., 2021). This has also emerged in sales management studies. The concept of sales enablement, which is recognized as having been formalized in 2010 by Forrester, finds its reason for existing in the series of changes that have taken place in recent years B2B context (Peterson & Dover, 2021). On the other hand, Rangarajan et al. (2020) reported that one of the first sales enablements dates to 2008 when an academic biologist outlined potential career opportunities for biology Ph.D. students in professional sales (Rangajaran et al., 2020), defining sales enablement as something in which practitioners provide field representatives with the necessary tools to succeed (Alter, 2008). Despite this interest, it is difficult to recognize a well-established definition that can embrace all perspectives involving the sales enablement process and activity.

This study aimed to elucidate the implementation of the sales ablement process by conducting a thorough analysis of key definitions in the practitioner community and employing a single case study. By collecting and scrutinizing these definitions, this research endeavors to shed light on the specific strategies and practices adopted by a company in the realm of Sales Enablement, connecting them with the emerging key concepts in the literature. In addition, a case study is presented to explore the challenges in implementing a sales enablement strategy.

2 . Theoretical Background

An enlightening description of the broad scope of sales enablement and its impact on internal and external stakeholders emerges from the seminal work of Rangarajan et al. (2020), i.e., "it is the coordination of these disparate elements into an overarching business strategy for optimizing sales performance that makes sales enablement an emerging force in the sales landscape, and not a mere repackaging of often-studied concepts." In addition, the authors offer a comprehensive overview under the umbrella of the sales organization – the so-called "People, Process, and Performance Framework" – as a lens through which sales professionals and interested scholars can better understand the full scope of sales enablement. Firstly, the term "People" encompasses the topics of recruiting and onboarding as well as training and coaching salespeople. The significant elements associated with the first block were best practices and peer coaching, learning VS application, sourcing sales talent, mental flexibility

and learning orientation, and systematic training and coaching. Second, the term "Process" involves intra-company coordination and "ownership" of sales enablement. Key components combined with the second block are presented below: coordination of activities and learning across functional areas, alignment with the market and customers, receptivity to feedback, and inside and field sales forces. Thirdly and lastly, the term "Performance" covers leveraging technology for performance and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). Outstanding features related to the latter block are detailed below: plurality of performance metrics, pay structure challenges, alignment of performance metrics with the stages of the selling process, and short-term VS long-term expectations.

According to Jordan (2014), sales enablement activities fall into four categories: (a) recruiting and hiring, (b) training and coaching, (c) equipping, and (d) evaluating. Ninivaggi (2013) also noted four recurring topics related to sales enablement functions, although these were somewhat different in nature. First, 78% of respondents considered sales enablement as a function. Second, 73% believed that sharing best practices was a function of sales enablement, whereas 71% observed that building sales resources was the primary function. Finally, 68% felt that sales enablements incorporated the development of product training. Brudner (2016) threw a broader network by detecting nine different functions comprised in sales enablement: 1) strategy development, 2) creation of materials and resources, 3) systems and support, 4) sales training, 5) execution of analysis, 6) integration of new channels, 7) searching for cross-selling opportunities, 8) coaching, and 9) onboarding.

As Peterson and Dover (2021) point out, sales enablement is sometimes considered a role and other times a function. In any case, it must be embedded in corporate culture. As with most other structural changes, such as mindset and teamwork, sales enablement must be sustained by senior management and truly accepted by frontline staff. In essence, "either you are in sales, or you are in sales support" is a feature of the sales enablement approach. Every employee is engaged in enhancing sales performance because the customer will ultimately determine how many people will be recruited and what wages they can earn. People within the sales organization will ultimately define their own fate in terms of revenue.

As a result of the literature review on the subject conducted by Peterson et al. (2021), four related constructs were identified as follows: (1) Organizational Learning (OL), conceived as the development of new knowledge or insights with the potential to impact stakeholders' behaviors (Huber, 1991; Hurley & Hult, 1998; Le Meunier-FitzHugh & Piercy, 2007); (2) Technology Adoption (TA), as the acceptance and intention to use technology jointly driven by perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use (Davis et al., 1989; Cascio et al., 2010); (3) Change Management (CM), as a set of behavioral theories, techniques and strategies geared towards the intended change of the organizational work environment to empower individual development and enhance organizational performance (Weick & Quinn, 1999); (4) Customer Relationship Management (CRM), woven into the corporate strategy entailing customer orientation and supporting technologies that are critical to customer relationship management, effective resource allocation and overall company success (Landry et al., 2005).

To provide the reader with a comprehensive overview of the phenomenon under analysis, we identified and classified several distinct streams of academic literature (see Table 1). The main purpose is to illustrate the relevance of existing theoretical frameworks that are directly or indirectly related to our emerging understanding of the sales enablement phenomenon. In summary, our flexible research design and multi-sourced data enabled us to concurrently compare several perspectives on sales enablement, thus enhancing the reliability of our theoretical understanding of the topic under investigation (Arnould & Wallendorf, 1994; Kennedy et al., 2003).

Sales Enablement has garnered increasing attention in both academic circles and industry practitioners. Despite its growing prominence, a consensus definition that encompasses all the activities and processes typically subsumed under this broad category remains elusive. Various authors have focused on different facets of the concept, each

Table 1: Streams of academic literature

Proposed construct / concept	Author(s)
Technology adoption in terms of acceptance and intention to use	2002; Schillewaert et al. 2005; Ahearne et al. 2008; Cascio et al. 2010; Homburg et al. 2010 Jones et al. 2002; Speier and Venkatesh
Technological applications (e.g. CRM)	Hong-kit Yim et al. 2004; Tanner et al. 2005; Landry et al. 2005; Arnett and Badrinarayanan, 2005; Raman et al. 2006; Maklan and Knox 2009; Saini et al. 2010; Ahearne et al. 2012
Capabilities and resources	Barney 1991; Mahoney and Pandian 1992; Teece et al. 1997; Winter 2000; Helfat & Raubitschek 2000; Clulow et al. 2007; Morgan, 2012; Hughes et al. 2012; Bolander et al. 2015; Plouffe et al. 2016; Peterson et al. 2021
Broad scope of sales enablement	Rangarajan et al. 2020
Organizational perspective	Levitt and March 1988; Huber 1991; Sinkula 1994; Cravens, 1998; Hurley and Hult 1998; Hurley, 1998; Bell et al. 2002; Real et al. 2006; Le Meunier-FitzHugh and Piercy, 2007; Bell et al. 2010; Argote and Miron-Spektor 2011; Malshe and Al-Khatib 2017
Behavioral Perspective	Lewin, 1951; Hurley, 1998; Weick and Quinn, 1999; Armenakis and Bedeian, 1999; Ye et al. 2007

Source: Own elaboration on Peterson et al. (2021)

emphasizing one aspect over the others. Although much has been written about the definitional contours of Sales Enablement, there is a noticeable gap in the literature concerning its real-world application within companies. This gap suggests the need for qualitative empirical analysis to complement existing theoretical frameworks.

RQ1: What are the core elements and topics to be considered in the Sales Enablement process?

RQ2: How can these elements be implemented in successful sales enablement strategies in a corporate setting?

3 . Methodology

Because of the inclusive and exploratory purpose of this study, and because the SE concept was established earlier on the business side than on the scholar's side, we decided to include practitioners' definitions from consultants,

First, to gain a better understanding of the sales enablement concept and its key elements, we collected definitions and descriptions from practitioners and academics. Specifically, we gathered definitions from the web using the keywords "sales enablement definition" and "sales enablement concept" as sources on google.com(general search engine–first three pages) used to include the practitioner definition and Google Scholar. com. Because of the inclusive and exploratory purpose of this study, and because the SE concept was established earlier on the business side than on the scholar's side, we decided to include practitioners' definitions from consultants, software companies, experts, and other categories. We also decided not to include terms related to sales enablement to avoid overlapping, such as sales operations and sales support.

Nineteen definitions or descriptions of SE were found in this research, and all the texts we found were classified in a table preparing the coding activities. Because of limited text, we decided to proceed with manual coding.

The data analysis was conducted as follows: one researcher in the team performed open coding, definition by definition, and all themes were coded with descriptive codes (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Another researcher in the team screened the codes and developed an initial coding plan together with the first researcher. In the axial coding step, the properties and dimensions of the initially identified concepts were further investigated, and their relationships were traced. The use of multiple researchers in the coding process, high level of agreement in the coding, and data saturation in the analysis phase, even when using data from a diverse set of respondents, supported the validity of the findings.

If the concept of sales enablement was mentioned for the first time in 2008 (Alter, 2008), we can state that our definitions, from 2009 to the present day (2022), roughly cover the entire period in which the concept of sales enablement is developed.

Instead, to understand the application of the sales enablement process, a second study using a qualitative approach was chosen, which is particularly useful when there is no solid theoretical framework of reference, as is the case here. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Specifically, a single case study was used because it allows the generation of sufficient data to test theories in cases where the company has characteristics and attributes aligned with the characteristics of the study (Siggelknow, 2007).

To develop the case, an in-depth interview was conducted with the Sales & Marketing Director of the analyzed company, as this allowed us to outline the interviewee's experience regarding the phenomenon of interest and understand the meaning they attributed to this experience(Granot et al., 2012). The research method is the case study method (Yin, 2009). A single case design was chosen to provide "richness" of empirical illustrations and findings (Weick, 2004). According to Siggelkow (2007), conducting a single case study of organizations can be a valuable research approach in three distinct situations, namely for purposes of motivating, inspiring, and illustrating theoretical development. Ours is an "illustration of the theoretical development' use of a single case. We chose the qualitative research method because, in line with the approach to the case study (Yin, 2009), in-depth interviews can provide a wider focus on the topic, hoping to further enrich this area of research (Eisenhardt, 1989). To develop the interview framework, we utilized key concepts derived from an initial study of definition analysis. This approach provided us with the opportunity to conduct an empirical exploration of various domains and to gain insights into the practical implementation of these concepts in a real-world context.

4 . Findings

4.1 Findings Study 1

The results provide 19 definitions (see Table 2 in the appendix) from both the academic and business worlds.

As mentioned in the introduction, the concept of sales enablement was first developed by practitioners. Of our definitions, only five came from academic researchers. Most definitions have been provided over the years by companies that provide consultancy and software to create inbound marketing strategies (e.g., Cloudnova and Hubspot) and companies that offer technological solutions for sales enablement (e.g., Brainshark, Accent technologies, Highspot). Again, from the perspective of practitioners, it is possible to read the definitions of entrepreneurs and thought leaders (Albro, 2023). We also included two thesis dissertations that tested the concept of sales enablement in the field (Durante 2015; Kurikka 2015).

and companies that offer technological solutions for sales enablement (e.g., Brainshark, Accent technologies, Highspot). Again, from the perspective of practitioners, it is possible to read the definitions of entrepreneurs and thought leaders (Albro, 2023). We also included two thesis dissertations that tested the concept of sales enablement in the field (Durante 2015; Kurikka 2015).

Reading the definitions, we then chose four major topics (technology, performance, alignment, and integration) on which sales enablement can impact, verifying this for each definition of sales enablement. The subsequent sections provide an in-depth analysis of each topic and their respective characteristics, incorporating quotations from the gathered definitions for illustrative purposes.

4.1.1 Performance

Twelve out of the 19 definitions indicate sales enablement as a process capable of significantly impacting company performance.

These definitions consistently emphasize the pivotal role of performance optimization in sales enablement initiatives. The use of language like "efficiency and effectiveness" and "consistently effective engagements" illuminate a central tenet: Sales Enablement is not merely an adjunct to the sales operation but a foundational element used to enhance key performance indicators.

Effectiveness is understood as an improvement in customer relationship building, an improvement in sales, and a decrease in the length of negotiations.

"Sales Enablement is the set of a strategy, a process, a technology and the contents that give greater power to your sales department to sell more effectively by decreasing the length of the negotiations." (Cloudnova, 2022).
"The term sales enablement identifies the activity of providing the sales force with information, data and procedures that help create more effective relationships with prospects and support commercial development." (Caglioni, 2021)
On the other hand, efficiency is associated with the theme of productivity and time saving in the seller's work thanks to a greater speed of sale.
"Sales enablement is the technology, processes, and content that empower sales teams to sell efficiently at a higher velocity." (Jepson, 2017).
"Thanks to sales enablement, a system, a method and a program product are provided to increase the productivity of the sales force, creating a connection between market and corporate social networks." (Hu, et al., 2012).

4.1.2 Alignment

Moreover, alignment emerged as a theme in 14 definitions. It is possible to distinguish between the two alignment classifications. One is internal to the company between various departments and one is external between the

sellers and the buyer. The alignment between the seller and consumer is understood as the seller's ability to provide answers and customized solutions based on customer needs.

"I define sales enablement as a set of processes enabled by computer hardware, software and well aligned personnel that assures that sellers have the right messages, information and tools to advance the sales process." (Krauss, 2011)

"Thanks to sales enablement, sellers are striving to be more responsive than ever— taking the customer's lead and providing whatever support is requested. They ensure that customers have all the data, cases, and testimonials.

they might need to guide their decision making, and they lay out a suite of options, continually adjusting the offering as customer demand evolves." (Toman et al. 2017)

Corporate alignment has been described by various authors as an improved ability to collaborate between different departments and roles within a company.

"The roots of sales enablement therefore lie in integrating marketing and sales together with other departments to improve the sales effectiveness of an organization." (Cassarin, 2018).
"Connect and unify the different departments in a company." (Durante,2015)

4.1.3 Technology

Technology is a recurring theme (12 out of 19) as it appears to be one of the enabling elements of sales enablement. Using technological tools, both hardware and software, it is possible to successfully implement sales enablement by creating a unified system that supports personnel dedicated to sales.
From a technological standpoint, there is no specific mention of a particular category of tools, but rather an emphasis on a comprehensive IT ecosystem comprising both hardware and software components.
"[...] a well-designed IT infrastructure is essential to create a tightly integrated value chain and provide a high-quality service." (Tsai, et al., 2013).
"I define sales enablement as a set of processes enabled by computer hardware, software and well aligned personnel that assures that sellers have the right messages, information and tools to advance the sales process." (Krauss, 2011). This technology-reliant viewpoint is congruent with the "Technology Adoption" (TA) construct discussed in the literature, affirming that the adoption and effective integration of technology underlies the success of Sales Enablement endeavors.

4.1.4 Integration

The last and most frequent issue (14 out of 19) that emerges from the analysis of the different definitions is integration, understood as the ability to bring people, processes, resources, and technology into a system. As the sales enablement discipline is composed of different elements, they need to be integrated.
"Sales enablement is the act of implementing strategies, tools and processes that continually increase the efficiency and effectiveness of your sales ecosystem." (Richards, 2020).
"Define sales enablement as a set of processes enabled by computer hardware, software and well aligned personnel that assures that sellers have the right messages, information and tools to advance the sales process." (Krauss, 2011). From the various definitions, there is a clear emphasis on the necessity of establishing a coherent and integrated system and approach, both internally in terms of processes, systems, and personnel, and externally in relation to customers.
"The activities, systems, processes and information that support and promote knowledge-based sales interactions with client and prospects" (Gartner, 2020).

4.1.5 Conclusion of findings from first study

Sales enablement constitutes a strategic discipline characterized by the systematic alignment and integration of processes that synergize human capital and technology.

resources to augment organizational performance. From the data analysis emerges the ability of companies to create a system and a work method consistent and aligned with the consumer's purchasing process thanks to the

use of processes. Technology is the enabler of sales and related processes. Through the integration of sales alignment and non-sales technologies such as CMS, CRM, and ERP, it is possible to create an integrated value chain that delivers high-quality services and streamlines the entire process. The use of technology and the study of the data generated are linked to the possibility of having more in-depth knowledge of consumer and company performance. From the collected data, it emerges that improving company performance is the ultimate goal of the sales enablement process. Performance is understood to be a consequence of the company's ability to deliver greater value to the customer and do so with greater efficiency and effectiveness. Efficiency emerges from an operational point of view, with the knowledge of business professionals to save time and increase productivity. Instead, effectiveness is cited in terms of a better ability to interface with the market, be more responsive, better serve the consumer, and move the business forward. In conclusion, despite the heterogeneity of the definitions, four domain areas of sales enablement emerged. These areas serve as the foundation for subsequent empirical investigations.

Table 2: Sales Enablement Definition

	Definition and description of SE	Technology	Performance	Alignment	Integration	SOURCE
1	*"Thanks to sales enablement, a system, a method and a program product are provided to increase the productivity of the sales force, creating a connection between market and corporate social networks."*	yes	yes	yes	yes	Hu et al., 2012
2	*"Sales enablement can be best understood as a firm-wide strategic initiative that incorporates the 3 Ps of People, Process, and Performance to deliver value to seller firms and customers alike."*	no	yes	yes	yes	Rangarajan et al., 2020

3	"I define sales enablement as a set of processes enabled by computer hardware, software and well aligned personnel that assures that sellers have the right messages, information and tools to advance the sales process."	yes	no	yes	yes	Krauss, 2011
4	"In addition to future research opportunities, we identify three core implications for the practice of strategic sales enablement; enhancing return on investment, managing learner motivation and activating learning engagement of channel partners."	no	yes	yes	yes	Keeling et al., 2020
5	"Forrester define Sales Enablement as: "a strategic, on-going process that equips all client-facing employees with the ability to consistently and systematically have a valuable conversation with the right set of customer stakeholders at each stage of the customer's problem-solving life cycle to optimize the return of	yes	yes	yes	yes	Durante, 2015

	investment of the selling system. Connect and unify the different departments in a company."					
6	*"The purpose of sales enablement, according to the application - Showpad, is to study whether added value is added to the working methods of the sales and marketing team."*	no	no	yes	yes	Kurikka, 2015
7	*"As for sales enablement in the e retail sector, a well-designed IT infrastructure is essential to create a tightly integrated value chain and provide a high quality service. In addition, IT and technology systems (IST) procurement decisions are becoming increasingly important both operationally and strategically. "*	yes	no	yes	yes	Tsai et al., 2013

| 8 | *"In Sales Enablement, we would need to rely heavily on our Account Executives' (AEs) ability to negotiate, as well as their facility to uncover needs and bring value to our customers (at a low cost to our organisation). Participants gain insights on how to clearly define an efficient negotiation process, become proficient in highly effective negotiation tools, and achieve new confidence when negotiating with customers."* | no | yes | yes | no | Collins., K. "NeGOtiate & WIN". International Journal of Sales Transformation, 2019 |
| 9 | *"Thanks to sales enablement, sellers are striving to be more responsive than ever— taking the customer's lead and providing whatever support is requested. They ensure that customers have all the data, cases, and testimonials they might need to guide their* | yes | no | yes | yes | Nicholas Toman, Brent Adamson, Cristina Gomez – "The new sales imperative". Harvard business review, 2017 |

	decision making, and they lay out a suite of options, continually adjusting the offering as customer demand evolves."				
10	*"In the field of sales enablement, the - Software-as-a-service is of growing importance. It is a distribution model of emerging software applications and it is crucial to integrate them with local business applications, since there is a fundamental need for communication methods and infrastructures. "*	yes	no	no	yes	Feng Liu, Li Li, Wu Chou, 2009
11	*"The activities, systems, processes and information that support and promote knowledge-based sales interactions with client and prospects"*	no	no	yes	yes	Gartner
12	*"Sales enablement is the act of implementing strategies, tools and processes that continually increase the efficiency and effectiveness of your sales ecosystem."*	yes	yes	no	no	Accent – Technologies

13	*"Sales enablement is the technology, processes, and content that empower sales teams to sell efficiently at a higher velocity."*	yes	yes	no	yes	*HubSpot*
14	*"Sales enablement is "a strategic, cross-functional discipline designed to increase sales results and productivity by providing integrated content, training and coaching services for salespeople and front-line sales managers along the entire customer's buying journey, powered by technology."*	yes	yes	yes	yes	*Brainshark*

15	*"Sales enablement is a strategic, ongoing process that equips sales teams to have consistently effective engagements with prospects and customers throughout the buyer's journey."*	yes	no	yes	no	HighSpot

16	"Sales enablement is the process of providing the sales organization with the information, content, and tools that help sales people sell more effectively. The foundation of sales enablement is to provide sales people with what they need to successfully engage the buyer throughout the buying process."	no	yes	yes	no	Albro, S. 2022
17	"The roots of sales enablement therefore lie in integrating marketing and sales together with other departments to improve the sales effectiveness of an organization."	no	yes	no	yes	Casarin, D. 2022
18	"Sales enablement is a strategy, a process, a technology and content that give more power to your sales department to sell more effectively."	yes	yes	no	yes	CloudNova, 2022

19	"Sales enablement is an overarching dynamic capability that aligns varied firm resources to benefit the customer journey and selling productivity. This capability is reflected in three components: insight triangulation, enablement infrastructure, and sales support envelopment."	yes	yes	yes	yes	Peterson et. al, 2021

4.2 Findings of case study 2

4.2.1 Case overview

The Company considered in this study offers a large array of advanced technologies for key diagnostic applications. The Company, with three European R&D and production sites, is currently active at around 94. As an example, sales enablement implementation was set up and implemented within Western Europe in 2018, and is still ongoing at the time of writing. They considered the sales enablement concept as the ability of a company's sales professionals to "win" at each stage of the customer's purchase process, with a strong focus on customer retention and selling value. The improvement of sales effectiveness is not just a sales function issue, but a company issue, as it requires deep collaboration between sales and marketing to understand what is working and not working, and continuous improvement of the knowledge, messages, skills, and strategies that sales people apply as they work sales opportunities, the whole company was involved and trained together (Sales, Application Specialists, Technical Service, Marketing Communication and Back-office).

4.2.2 Findings Case study

Based on the interviews, four main concepts can be identified that highlight the key areas and activities that the company focused on during the implementation of the sales enablement process. These concepts include (a) buyer-seller alignment, (b) internal alignment, (c) performance, and (d) the sales-tech ecosystem. The company placed significant emphasis on these aspects to ensure the successful execution of its sales enablement initiatives.

(a) Buyer seller alignment

In initiating the sales enablement project, the company explicitly recognized the need to synchronize its sales process with the customer's buying journey, a strategic focal point that came to light through interviews. To operationalize this alignment, the interviewees emphasized the development and dissemination of a comprehensive

playbook that serves as a comprehensive guide for navigating the complex sales cycle specific to the Diagnostic Imaging Capital Equipment sector.

The construction of the playbook involved an initial mapping of the consumer purchasing process and the entire sales process. Subsequently, the company employed a multi-phased methodology to ensure that each phase of the sales process was carefully designed to align with and address the specific needs of the buyer during that particular stage of their journey.

This approach accounts for the intricate web of stakeholders involved in purchasing decisions, including clinicians, procurement specialists, and clinical engineers, ensuring that the seller's actions at each juncture are not only reactive but also proactively aligned with the buyer's requirements and expectations. The interviewee then declared that the playbook serves as both a strategic and tactical instrument, facilitating optimal buyer seller alignment throughout the sales cycle, including post-contract after-sales follow-up.

(b) Internal alignment

An important aspect in the sales enablement implementation process that emerges from this case is the alignment of salespeople. This includes the alignment between different areas within the company and within the sales team. To achieve the goal of aligning salespeople with company activities, the interviewee mentioned a "knowledge dissemination" activity. This activity was systematically organized across two core dimensions: strategy and tactics. The interviewee stated that strategy alignment ensured organizational coherence by sharing the corporate vision, long-term goals, and market trends with all employees. Several communication strategies such as quarterly local meetings and frequent one-to-one interactions have been employed to maintain alignment.

For tactical alignment, both budget and action plans were discussed in detail to clarify expected outcomes and tactical approaches. With this budget, the company aimed to provide a clear vision of the expected numbers. The action plan includes graphical representations that map the primary applications, customer types, and channels targeted by the company.Regarding the internal alignment of salespeople, the company has implemented three key directives: update on execution, follow-up activities, and team engagement build-up.

In the sphere of execution, daily activities were driven by a constantly updated Action Plan, which served as a practical guide for team members. To facilitate information sharing, regular meetings and conference calls were conducted, focusing on a predetermined set of topics to prepare the participants in advance. These discussions have generated actionable insights and are documented as future references. For Follow-Up activities, a robust feedback mechanism was established through open discussions and anonymous surveys. These forums allowed the sharing of best practices and constructive criticism. Practical training and coaching were integrated naturally into everyday activities, both in-person and remotely, to enable ongoing skill development and knowledge transfer among colleagues.

Third, the interviewee highlighted team engagement builds up: the project adopts a multidisciplinary approach, initially encompassing only Sales and Application Experts but later expanding to involve entire subsidiary units. The team-building activities implemented by the analyzed company range from role-playing exercises to gamification techniques using platforms such as Kahoot. These activities are designed not only to facilitate the understanding of key concepts but also to bolster team cohesion. Another tool highlighted by the interviewee is the special meetings that are organized to collect anonymous feedback, ideas, and satisfaction levels, further contributing to employee engagement. Both formal and informal discussion sessions offer an additional avenue for staff to express previously unarticulated needs and desires.

(c) Performance

The third main point made by the interviewees focuses on performance, which encompasses both revenue growth and the effectiveness of the sales team. The company identified revenue increase as the primary goal of the project. To measure this, an analysis comparing the actual full-year revenues to the budget was conducted, covering both the entire Western European region and individual countries.

A variety of KPIs were used to assess the project's effectiveness in a more objective way, a variety of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were used. These KPIs are particularly important for understanding the conversion rates in Business Development activities, especially in interactions with external partners. Although the main aim of the project was to rebuild and expand a professional network, these KPIs were valuable for understanding the additional financial gains that were achieved. This was true in various situations ranging from ongoing efforts to fully completed activities. Specific KPIs were introduced to evaluate the success of Special Projects and to provide a broader view of Business Development activities. These metrics provide a detailed understanding of a project's success and areas for potential improvement.

(d) Sales-Tech Ecosystem

The final critical dimension was illuminated by the interviewees' centers on the sales-tech ecosystem. This case study corroborates the notion that technology serves as a linchpin in facilitating sales enablement and ancillary processes.

An integrated value chain is formed through the integration of diverse technologiesranging from Sales Alignment Tools to Content Management Systems (CMS), Customer Relationship Management (CRM), and Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) software. This chain not only elevates service quality but also streamlines the entire operational workflow. The strategic utilization of technology, coupled with data analytics, enables a nuanced understanding of both consumer behavior and overall company performance.

In terms of specific software and IT tools, the company employed a CRM system supplemented by robust back-office support for demo logistics, pricing strategies, and customization. However, the use of CRM among sales representatives was inconsistent and not directly correlated with sales performance metrics. For example, the top two performers were not regular users of the CRM system, whereas the third-highest performer was an avid daily user who significantly contributed to optimizing the platform, particularly in terms of marketing automation.

Moreover, the interviewee emphasized that tripartite role technology, especially CRM, has played in advancing the sales enablement agenda. It has synergized with the sales process, fostered information exchange, and catalyzed the generation of collective knowledge, thereby amplifying the effectiveness of sales enablement strategies.

5 . Discussion, limitation and future research

This study aimed to understand the implementation aspect of sales enablement by highlighting the strategies and main areas of intervention. To do so, we started with the definitions present mainly in practitioner literature, along with the most recurring concepts, and integrated the study with qualitative empirical research. Previous studies have attempted to conceptualize sales enablement using the theory of dynamic capabilities (Peterson et al., 2021), while others have provided a conceptual framework to understand the purpose of sales enablement or its related activities

(Jordan, 2014; Rangarajan et al., 2020). However, there is still a gap in understanding the objectives and areas of intervention for effectively implementing a sales enablement project. Although each company has its own history-and distinctive characteristics, we are convinced that filling this gap can help businesses and academia focus on the most critical areas for successful sales enablement projects.

From the limited literature on sales enablement, it is evident that the most distinctive elements are technology, performance, change management, and content (Peterson et al., 2021; Rangarajan et al., 2020). However, in our two studies, in addition to those already mentioned, three fundamental concepts emerged: alignment, integration, and processes.

Sales enablement primarily arises from the need to align salespeople on three fundamental levels: with the customer, with the company, and with each other. To do this, it is necessary to systematize and understand both sales and purchasing processes. Traditionally, the aim is to map and make the sales process predictable (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005); however, it is rarely integrated with the customer journey (Peterson et al., 2021). This case study highlights the importance of prioritizing buyer-seller alignment as a key area of focus during the implementation of a sales enablement project.

The second prominent theme was integration. Sales enablement is a strategic discipline comprising a series of processes that connect individuals and technology to enhance customer value and, ultimately, business performance. This case study highlights the necessity for companies to establish an integrated system encompassing people, processes, and technologies to maximize value creation. In this context, sales enablements have emerged to establish such a system. Sales enablement plays a crucial role in facilitating the creation of an integrated system, in which people, processes, and technologies work harmoniously to enhance value generation. This necessitates a comprehensive approach that considers the interplay between various organizational components. The case study emphasizes the importance of managing these elements in an integrated manner to optimize outcomes and achieve strategic objectives. This requires the involvement and collaboration of multiple functions and levels, starting from the overall strategy and top management.

The technological dimension warrants further scrutiny. In both the preliminary literature review and our examination of extant definitions, the role of technology is highlighted as a crucial and enabling factor in the sales enablement process. However, this significance was not evident in the case study under consideration. While technology does maintain a noteworthy role; it functions not as an essential enabler, but rather as a mere facilitator of the overarching process. Insights gained from the interviews underscore the alignment and integration of processes and human resources that are pivotal for the successful implementation of sales enablement.

The findings of this study are limited to individual case studies but serve as a foundation for multiple avenues of future research, given the existing gaps in the literature concerning the effective implementation of sales enablement projects. While this study contributes to a nuanced understanding of sales enablement by focusing on key themes, such as alignment, integration, and processes, further investigation is warranted to generalize these insights across diverse industries and corporate landscapes.

First, additional empirical research is required to validate and expand on the elements of alignment, integration, and processes in sales enablement. Comparative studies that examine the effectiveness of sales enablement initiatives in various sectors could offer invaluable insights into the adaptability and versatility of the strategies outlined in this study. Second, the role of technology, particularly emergent technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, in the sales enablement process warrants further exploration. Given the rapid advancements in these areas, future research could investigate how these technologies might further facilitate alignment and

integration processes, making them more dynamic and adaptive to market conditions. Finally, building on the conceptual frameworks suggested by Rangarajan et al. (2023), future research endeavors should aim to develop a comprehensive framework for sales enablement. This would serve not only as an academic reference point, but also as a practical guide for organizations aiming to implement sales enablement programs effectively.

Through multi-disciplinary, cross-sectoral research, academia and industry alike can further fine-tune and adapt sales enablement strategies for broader applicability and effectiveness. This would not only enrich the academic discourse surrounding sales enablement but also offer actionable insights for practitioners in the field.

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