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GROW YOUR BUSINESS FASTER BY ALIGNING YOUR PEOPLE, PROCESSES, AND PRIORITIES

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Communications

How we create, curate, and consume content in the corporate world is changing. In the past we trained with books and workshops, but now we utilize vignettes and videos. With these practical changes, so too have our assumptions about content consumption shifted. The content we are creating is inspired by a new generation of workers who expect information and answers to be delivered right here, right now.

In the great TED talk "How a Handful of Tech Companies Control Billions of Minds Every Day," Tristan Harris shared his perspective on how people are connecting with technologies like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. He talked about the "race for attention" and the attention economy. Many of us use these social applications on a regular basis. As a society, we spend hours and hours a day watching videos, liking photos, wishing people virtual happy birthdays, and sharing pictures. Harris got me thinking about the implications of how information is being shared and consumed in the corporate workplace. If people can get addicted to social communications, why can they not get equally engaged with information that matters? What can we learn about information sharing from the consumer world that is relevant to enablement leaders? How can we apply lessons learned from the consumer world to better enable our teams?

The effects on companies, enablement leaders, and content creators are profound as we improve employee productivity and employee engagement.

In this chapter, we look at how modern trends like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, YouTube, and the proliferation of mobile apps are accelerating a corporate appetite for bite-sized, snackable content that can be consumed easily and quickly.

Make Content Attention Grabbing

There is a secret to getting your words heard, understood, and then reshared. Here are tips to help you make content attention grabbing, high impact, and action oriented. This advice applies to any kind of communication. These insights may provide a good lesson for employees wondering why their messages are not being understood or why they might not be getting the promotions they want.

Answer "What's in It for Me?"

Good communication starts with establishing a sense of value. Answer the question "What's in for me?" when creating content, which will help you discover the value of your content for your audience. For example, while it is important to set the tone in communications about expectations, explaining the "why" is a great way to motivate action.

Be Personable

Give your content a personality by broadcasting your face as you communicate. There is no reason to hide behind slides—your teams want to see your face. They want to know who the inventors are. Looking someone in the eye will make content more impactful.

Visual

Using images and color and fonts to make messages pop is a great way to capture attention. We learn a lot from the social worlds of Snapchat, Instagram, and Pinterest. People click on faces and images they like.

Share User Generated Content

Content created by users (employees, partners, and customers) creates authenticity and validation. User generated content will be consumed more and is proven to be more effective. Prioritizing this kind of content is important because it reduces the time to create it and test it and share it. It's proven, so once you have it, all you have to do is make it readily available.

In Context

It is important to distribute content and use it in context of a real workflow. Share short introductory videos and informational documents on the first few days after a new hire begins a job. With a salesperson, share tools and short and relevant sales aids right before a customer meeting.

Just-In-Time

Content and communications should be just-in-time. We should distribute information to our teams when they need it most. If I'm meeting a customer, send me a case study or customer story video that helps me better understand how to talk with the customer. If I'm working an early stage deal, as a salesperson should send me prospecting and pitch materials. We want to make sure our people are prepared and ready all the time.

Measurable

It is important to know how your content is doing in the employee attention economy. What content is being consumed? How many views and downloads does it have? What content is helping employees be more productive? You want the hard, quantitative metrics.

In sales, it is good to know which tools are being used and how effective they are in helping salespeople close business. Track views, downloads, and pipeline influence by asset. Share scorecards highlighting the return on all sales tools created.

Engaging

Make sure your content is engaging by getting feedback on the utility of the content. Have your employees, partners, and customers give feedback on the effectiveness of the content. Content can be scored, or feedback can be shared as comments or through other types of survey. Content effectiveness and engagement is automated today in a modern content-management system.

Mobile

Content should be optimized for mobile use, just as websites are. You want employee tools and resources to follow your people everywhere they go and on every professional device they use to get their jobs done.

The communication of ideas and content through playbooks is ready for innovation. In the marketing world, modern marketers have evolved their marketing strategies and tactics. We have websites. We use Instagram. We are on Facebook to build and connect with fans. We tell stories. We use videos. We use images to punctuate concepts and messages. We measure effectiveness. We create conversation with our audiences.

The same is now true for our employees. Employee engagement is important to get right. How we communicate is as important as what we communicate.

Team Huddles

Every week the team should come together to meet, share best practices, and align on priorities. We should be applying the same principles of content effectiveness reviewed in the previous section to our weekly team meetings. As enablement professionals, it's our job to lead and run weekly or monthly team calls. These are sometimes run in a radio show format with guest speakers. We can do a one-size-fits-all approach for our stakeholders, or we can create communication calls by role. They are important and the foundation of winning enablement strategies.

Team huddles are also executed by managers. Hopefully our managers have them weekly. We can help them do this. Managers in general do not make enough effort to communicate in an engaging way that answers the questions of "what's in it for me?" They often don't create a space for a conversation where communication is bidirectional. That's where we come in as enablement leaders.

As enablement professionals, it is our job to create content that is huddle ready for managers. This means that we want to create content that serves as a meeting in a box. We want to create a library of content that can be used by managers and consumed by their teams in their weekly meetings. It means creating videos and assets that are organized well and inspire conversation and curiosity. We do this by adding suggested discussion points and exercises like role plays.

After hosting a team call, be sure to include a follow-up recap email. The weekly or monthly recap email newsletters reinforce what's new and set the tone for focus and priority. Including a theme is a great way to drive additional alignment.

Besides regular calls and emails, you'll need to start thinking about your content library to help you scale and to help you deliver more value to your teams.

Sales Process Assets and Content

Taking a lesson from sales, let us look at a company's sales process and sales methodology as an example of how to shift our enablement thinking from the old way to a new way. The foundation of a sales methodology is the sales stages to follow and the sales process questions to answer at each stage of the sales process. Everything flows from the stages and process. A typical set of stages for a technology company selling business-to-business software is—

1. Qualification
2. Discovery

3. Demonstration
4. Mutual Plan
5. Proposal

The way most companies communicate and train on a sales process is to turn these steps into a slide deck that is large and dense with information. The materials are loaded into a library, and then teams are emailed a link.

The better way to do this is to break the sales process into small pieces of content in multiple digital formats rather than a process playbook. The content is created in multiple digital formats.

Step 1: Qualification Content

This piece covers the tools that are needed by sellers, including buyer profiles and qualification questions. You can also include a short company overview presentation and a sixty-second elevator pitch. The content should succinctly discuss how to gauge if a customer is ready to buy by asking them some qualification questions. The content should have a short list of questions and guide sellers to spend less time with prospects that aren't ready to buy or aren't in a position to buy.

Step 2: Discovery Content

The discovery content is foundational to executing a successful sales process. Information gathered in a discovery conversation is used to build a solution and proposal. It is also used to negotiate pricing. Short discovery tips and best practices could be top-performer stories or recordings of actual customer conversations. Why not have salespeople record the top questions they ask their buyers that are proven to help them learn more about their customer? It is great to create video vignettes of top-performing salespeople showing their peers how they conduct effective customer discovery conversations.

These tips and tools are important because they help improve sales productivity. New salespeople will ramp faster by closing deals faster. Struggling salespeople will get access to content they need by learning from their peers.

Step 3: Demonstration Content

In this piece of content, it is ideal to serve salespeople short demonstration scripts, solution overviews, and product demonstration flows to share with customers. We want to help our salespeople by giving them tools and assets they need without having to create it themselves. We want our salespeople to sell versus spending time building content. I also think it's a good idea to share video examples of demonstration flows completed by top performers. Learn from the best.

We want to have our salespeople use templates that are served up at the right time and then filled in based on information collected in the discovery. We want to help our sellers shorten sales cycles by focusing on the story versus figuring out the format to use.

Step 4: Mutual Plan

A big part of any customer buyer process is alignment with champions and economic buyers who are the buyers making decisions to spend money. We need to win over champions and economic buyers. We do this by selling value and helping champions and economic buyers see a path to success. That is the goal of a mutual plan. The best professionals document detailed mutual plans with clear action items and ownership for salespeople, champions, and economic buyers.

Since we're trying to help solve problems for our champions and economic buyers, we want to ensure we have co-ownership of mutual-plan actions. For this, sharing content templates and examples along with coaching videos is the way to make this part of the process more efficient. When we serve up mutual-plan templates with suggested actions and direction, we help our people spend more time selling and less time trying to figure out how to sell and close.

Step 5: Proposal

After a decision is made, it is time to get to a close with signed documents. Many steps and content types are useful at this stage. Negotiation tips and negotiation gives and gets are short, bite-sized content that are ideally served up just in time for a negotiation. Proposal templates and other closing materials should, ideally, also be served in small pieces of content.

What Should Be in the Sales Content Library?

We live in an era where people expect a dynamic library of content that is searchable and personalized with content recommendations. The old static file repository of materials is not how we should be thinking of a modern content library. Before we get into the best-practice list, we should follow some fundamental principles. The library must be well organized. It must be visual. It must be searchable. And as best as you can, make it be a one-stop shop so your people aren't going to too many places to find what they need to be successful.

Here are some of the "must have" content items to publish in your sales content library. You don't need all the items. Use what makes sense for your product and go-to-market. With the sales process in mind, here are some examples of how to create bite-sized content. You'll ideally want to partner with marketing to create all this content, so you don't have to create all this material on your own.

Buyer Personas: Document your buyer profiles, including their roles, attributes, the problems we can solve for them, compelling or trigger events, and how to communicate with them. We want to create content that will help our salespeople truly understand what's most important to our buyers.

Elevator Pitch: Create a short elevator pitch with coaching on value, customer proof points, engagement, and length. Make this content available in video and text. Include the talk track and script if necessary. Compose both short and longer versions. Including documentation on a one-liner tagline to voice mail, to a thirty-second elevator pitch, all the way up to a two-minute elevator pitch is super helpful to sales professionals.

Corporate Presentations: Create a first-call presentation with slides and speaking notes. Share slide examples created and used by top performers. Have video recorded versions, too.

Email Templates: Create a central place for your teams to find and share their best email templates by persona and by sales stage. These winning email communications are hugely beneficial, especially for new hires.

Sales Process: Document and share the sales process. Include all documentation that will help salespeople understand how to move through the process faster. This includes sales methodology documentation, qualification criteria, stages, forecasting, activities, value calculators, and success tips. Include supporting materials to help use the sales and customer relationship management systems like Salesforce.

Competitive Battle-Cards: Include videos and exercises on competitive overviews, strengths, weaknesses, handling competitive objections, and planting traps. Also include a competitive landscape and matrix of all the players compared against one another.

Deal-Win Stories: Keep your win stories in one central location for your teams to search by segment, industry, buyer, geography, and product.

Customer Stories and References: Centralize customer references and customer stories in one place to make it easy for everyone to find them and use them. Create a library of stories of your customers that are both written and videotaped. Like the deal-win stories, the customer stories should also be organized by segment, industry, buyer, geography, and product.

Frequently Asked Questions: Write down the most common questions your teams are being asked and provide the answers to them.

Industry Trends and Whitepapers: Make the files easily available and searchable. They are important to help salespeople understand the context of what's going on in the industry and what analysts think of their offerings and their competitive offerings.

Organize the content visually in folders so they are easy for your teams to find and consume. You want to make sure the content in the library is powered by a modern content-management system that will serve the right content at the right time and in context to your teams.

Playbooks

The next step with content is to turn the individual files into playbooks. There is a lot of debate about what is a playbook. For the purposes of understanding the Enablement Process Map, we'll refer to the playbook as a collection of files and actions that help drive key metrics that are tied back to the go-to-market priorities. We see playbooks being created for sales plays or campaign or specific competitors or industries or product pushes. The playbook is a collection of materials that include the basics, like industry trends, buyer profiles, elevator pitch, customer stories, sales process aides, FAQs, and competition, to name a few. The playbook is organized in a sequence that helps to keep teams aligned on what to do and when.

Executive Communications and Broadcasts

Leaders set the tone with their visionary and clear communication. When a top leader sends an email, it gets read. Top executives are busy, and sometimes the best way to get their involvement is to ghostwrite their communications for all strategic initiatives. Even if employees know the notes are ghostwritten, they know the notes are approved by the top leaders. Weekly or monthly employee broadcasts are a great way to drive momentum and rally teams to share updates. We did this at Salesforce for each of the sales and customer-facing roles. We branded the calls "Sharing Success." Many enablement leaders today host weekly or monthly team calls, executive broadcasts, podcasts, or radio shows as a big part of the communications strategy of a successful enablement program. One of the first things I would do when developing an enablement program is start hosting regular calls to create transparent and open communication.

Lessons from Leaders

Leaders can use the video communications to prepare and inspire their teams to get in the right mindset as they kick off the year. These videos are all about alignment and celebration.

For leaders, especially CEOs, before sending an email broadcast, consider sending a video message. Video is personal and emotive. Video-based communication builds relationships between leadership and employees at every level. People follow leaders who look them in the eye and speak from the heart. Video helps make this happen at scale.

The president of DocuSign, Neil Hudspith, kicks off every year with a personalized video message to his staff, initiated by John Hsieh, the vice president of sales enablement. Neil and John everyone to share their success from the previous year and ask goals for the new year. It's a motivational act by senior leaders.

The first time Neil did this video, product marketing brought a video team to his office, and they got Neil in his element, overlooking the San Francisco Bay. He was comfortable and excited. He graciously thanked everyone for their amazing contributions and then challenged them to imagine what they could do in the coming year. As a response to Neil's video message, employees recorded hundreds of videos, made thousands of comments, and viewed the videos tens of thousands of times. The communication started at the top and trickled down to the teams. The powerful questions and the answers created a rich library of stories and best practices.

The questions that stood out to me were "What is your proudest achievement from last year?" and "What are your aspirations for the coming year?" In his message, Neil shared his answers to the two questions, which centered around value and the customer. As a result, he was able to set the foundation for a company culture that emerged in the responding videos. The words "customer" and "value" showed up thousands of times in the employees' personal videos. That's how teams are aligned, knowledge is shared, and experiences are institutionalized at corporations like DocuSign.

The best videos are short and to the point. Have them be focused on a theme. CEO and leadership videos should have a clear purpose. They should be recorded from the leader's home or office or somewhere meaningful to them. Our leaders should not be reading from cue cards. Their messages should be purposeful and authentic.

With tens of thousands of videos recorded by sales teams over the past few months, I'm privileged to witness culture grow and evolve. Watching CEOs ask questions and inviting teams to respond in heartfelt, sincere sixty-second shorts is priceless. Corporate tone and values are set top-down; culture is nurtured bottom-up. Video bridges the two by creating community.

Tips for Asking a CEO to Record a Video

Getting a CEO to lead by example does not happen by accident. Once they see the value, they will be engaged and creative on their own. They are busy, and getting them to commit time and energy to this goal will require planning. Follow these steps:

1. Let them develop their own personalized message.
2. Write out notes and aids you know work for the leader.
3. Go to them to get the content.

Enablement Calendar

An enablement calendar is great to map out timing and schedule across an extended period of time. The calendar of enablement activities seems relatively easy to do, but given all the competing priorities, the reality is that it isn't easy. Getting alignment across teams around priorities and time commitments is hard. How much is the right amount of time to allocate to sales planning, learning, coaching, and deal/account reviews?

Here is a good benchmark you can use to create more buy-in to your calendar. The number is based on how many hours our teams should be spending on enablement. The number is communicated in a range of hours. Six hours per month is low and ten hours is a good number, but some will say it is high. Getting to this number should be based on the go-to-market priorities and be a direct extension of the learning and coaching goals. The number needs to be approved by the leadership team, then communicated with clear expectations to the individual team members and managers. With an approved and agreed-upon number, individuals and managers can plan their time and accelerate their success.

Crowdsourcing

Advanced communications include crowdsourcing and other feedback loops like advisory groups. Crowdsourcing best practices of content, stories, and playbook execution is something everyone talks about doing, but they never do right. Getting the actual assets and artifacts of a sales process is hard work. Folks are busy, and they never make it a priority to share.

Here is a list of a few content items to crowdsource from your top performers:

- Winning sales presentations
- Emails with high open rates
- Winning proposals

Advisory groups are a great way to create a structured forum for conversations and feedback from stakeholders and community members.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Creating compelling and relevant communications is not an easy task. There is a reason why enablement lives in marketing and why sometimes product marketers make great enablement professionals. Communications is a big part of the success of our enablement strategies. If we don't communicate clearly and with a voice that is motivational, we'll lose our people from day one. Here are some of the rules of communications:

- Make content attention grabbing and answer the question, What's in it for me?
- Build communication cadence with calls and emails that align the team with top go-to-market priorities.
- Bring your leaders to reinforce key messages and emphasize what's important to do right now, and remember that they'll need coaching too.
- Create a dynamic library that gives your teams everything they need to be successful.
- Always be crowdsourcing best practices and top assets created by your people and proven to win.

About the Author

Elay Cohen is the CEO and cofounder of SalesHood. He is the former senior vice president of sales productivity at Salesforce. Elay was recognized as the "2011 Top Executive" by Marc Benioff and credited for creating and executing all of Salesforce's sales training and coaching programs that accelerated its growth from a 500 million-dollar business to an enterprise worth more than 3 billion dollars. The innovative sales training and support delivered over these years by Elay's team to thousands of sales professionals resulted in unprecedented hypergrowth.

Elay authored the book *SalesHood: How Winning Sales Managers Inspire Sales Teams To Succeed*. Elay is a thought leader in the discipline of sales management and is sought after by the most successful CEOs. He is also recognized as a top innovative "Mover and Shaker" in sales leadership by *Entrepreneur* magazine and also recognized by LinkedIn as on of the world's top sales experts.

Elay is on a mission to improve and modernize how companies enable their people. Elay is working closely with the world's most innovative companies and most forward thinking educational institutions. Together, they are changing the future of work.