STATE OF SALES ENABLEMENT
2017

INTRODUCTION

With increasing complexity in the B2B selling process, sales enablement is becoming a necessary strategic investment for companies to improve sales productivity and help sales teams close deals.

But sales enablement still means different things to different people.

According to Forrester, "Sales enablement is a strategic, ongoing 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 lifecycle to optimize the return on investment of the selling system". *('What Is "Sales Enablement" And How Did Forrester Go About Defining It?', http://blogs.forrester.com/)*
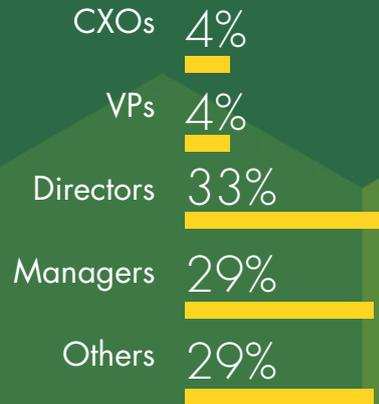
In simpler terms, sales enablement is a process that helps salespeople sell more effectively to customers, by providing them with relevant content and tools to compellingly address the individual needs of their customers at different stages in the buyer cycle.

Given the increasing acceptance of the importance of sales enablement, we decided to talk to senior managers in charge of sales enablement to understand the extent of deployment of sales enablement practices and how well it was working for them.
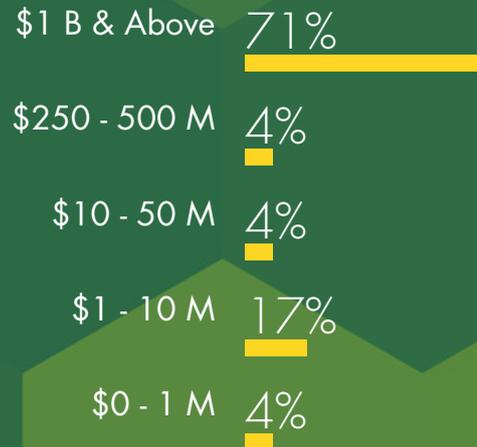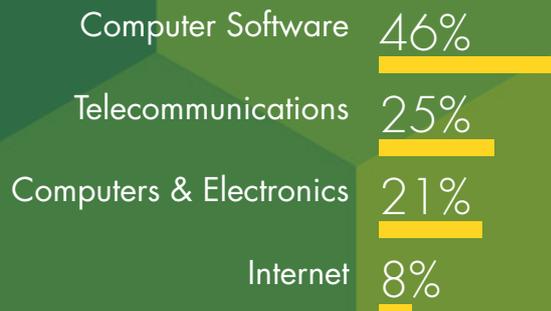
Here's what we found.

RESPONDENT PROFILES

CXOs	4%
VPs	4%
Directors	33%
Managers	29%
Others	29%

REVENUE BREAK-UP

$1 B & Above	71%
$250 - 500 M	4%
$10 - 50 M	4%
$1 - 10 M	17%
$0 - 1 M	4%

INDUSTRY BREAK-UP

Computer Software	46%
Telecommunications	25%
Computers & Electronics	21%
Internet	8%

Only a little over half the organizations we surveyed say they have a sales playbook

Out of all the respondents we spoke with, 55% said their organizations had a sales playbook as part of their sales enablement process, while the remaining 45% said they did not have one.

Given that playbooks play a vital role in the sales enablement process, we believe more organizations will be compelled to adopt them.

// Do you have a sales playbook for your organization?

Yes 55%

No 45%

Majority of respondents feel a playbook based on sales stages is more effective

74 percent of respondents felt *a sales playbook based on the different sales stages* would be more effective than *a generic playbook.*

Thanks to advancement in technology, developing such a playbook today is easily achievable. In fact, one of the key benefits of the sales enablement function is that it allows the sales process to be aligned with the buyer's journey.

// Would you say a playbook based on sales stages is more effective than a generic playbook?
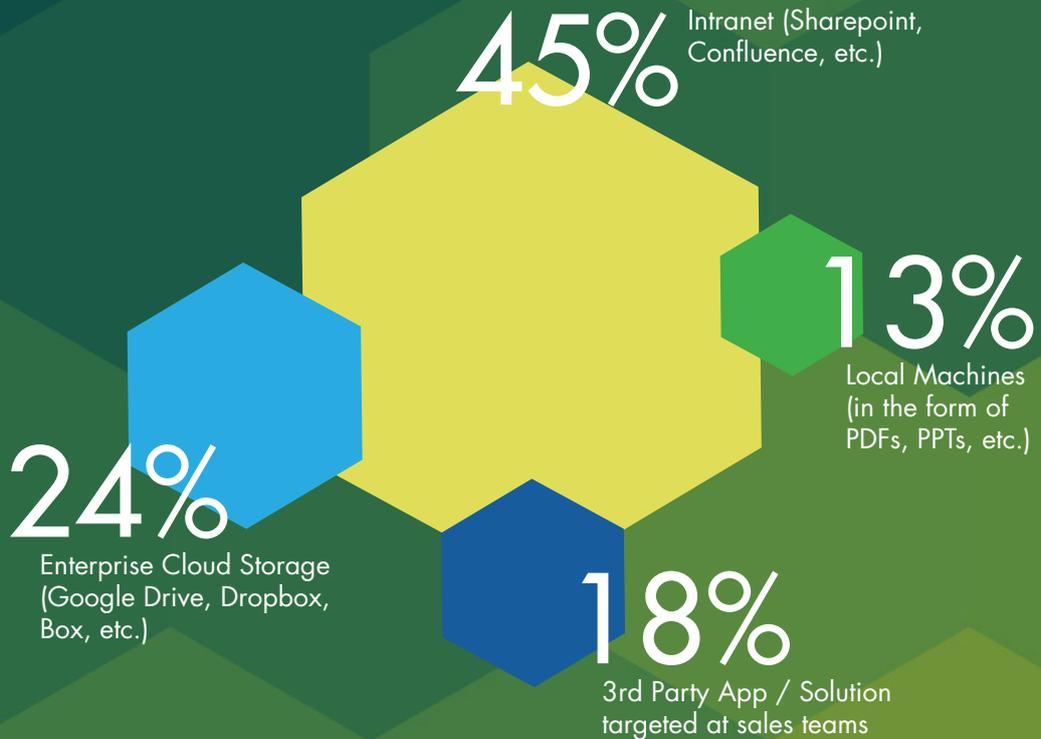
Yes
74%

No
26%

The intranet is the most popular storage point for sales collateral

45 percent of businesses surveyed maintained their sales collateral on the Intranet.

This was followed by *Enterprise Cloud Storage* (24%) and *Third Party Apps* (18%).

// Where are your sales collateral maintained?

45% Intranet (Sharepoint, Confluence, etc.)

13% Local Machines (in the form of PDFs, PPTs, etc.)

24% Enterprise Cloud Storage (Google Drive, Dropbox, Box, etc.)

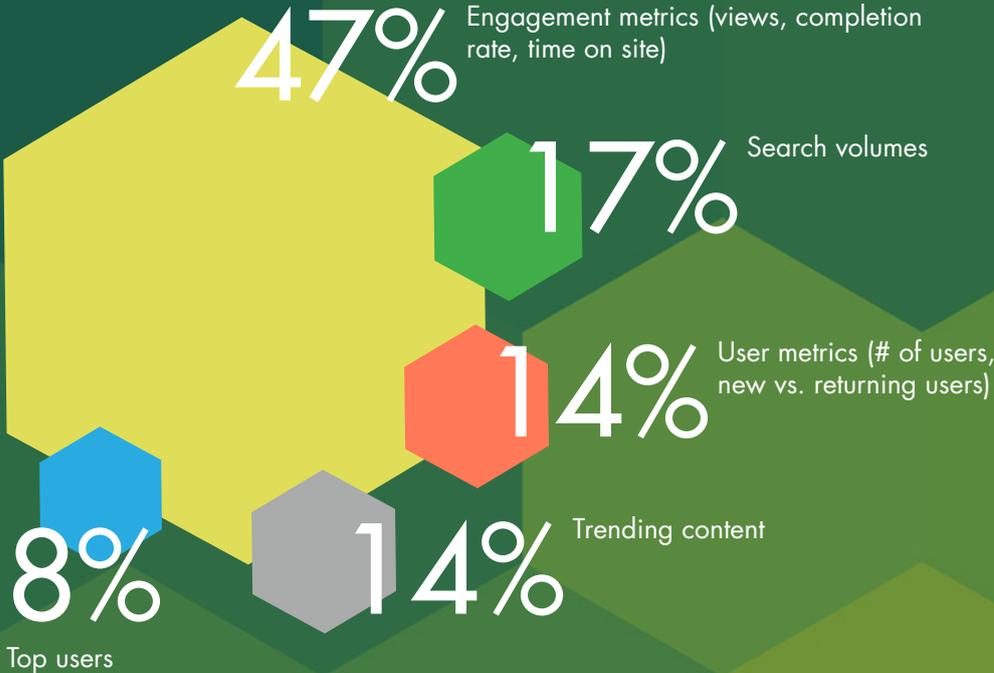**18%** 3rd Party App / Solution targeted at sales teams

Engagement metrics are used above all others for determining success of sales collateral

Engagement metrics (47%) topped the list of parameters used by marketers to gauge the success of their sales collateral; followed by *search volume* (17%).

// How do you rate the success of your sales enablement collateral?

47% Engagement metrics (views, completion rate, time on site)

17% Search volumes

14% User metrics (# of users, new vs. returning users)

14% Trending content

8% Top users

Providing quality content in a timely manner is the most sought-after goal in sales enablement

Asked what the top 3 goals were for their sales enablement function, 76% of respondents chose the option, *provide sales teams with fresh and quality content in a timely manner;* while the other two slots were taken up by *improve quality of sales interactions via intelligent recommendations* (66%) and *on-boarding new hires* (55%).

Integrate sales content into CRM (24%) was given the least preference, which is a pity, as integrating sales enablement with CRM can be a powerful customer engagement tool for businesses. This pattern perhaps reflects an early stage in the evolution of the sales enablement function.

// Which of these broad goals does your sales enablement function prioritize?

Provide sales teams with fresh and quality content in a timely manner
76%

Improve quality of sales interactions via intelligent recommendations
66%

On-boarding new hires
55%

Roll out sales enablement platform
41%

Measure impact of content on sales cycles
38%

Integrate sales content into CRM
24%

Inability to measure success a major roadblock to sales enablement, say marketers

55 percent of respondents mentioned *inability to measure success of a sales enablement initiative* as the key roadblock in their sales enablement journey; while 52% chose *lack of resources (content creators).*

Interestingly, real-time analytics is something a good sales enablement tool can provide as part of its offering and might be a good message to drive home with potential customers for wider adoption.

// In your opinion what are the key
roadblocks in a sales enablement journey?

Inability to measure success of a sales enablement initiative **55%**
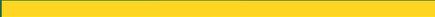
Lack of resources (content creators) **52%**

Content vision/content structure challenges **45%**

Lack of knowledge/expertise **38%**

Lack of budget **31%**

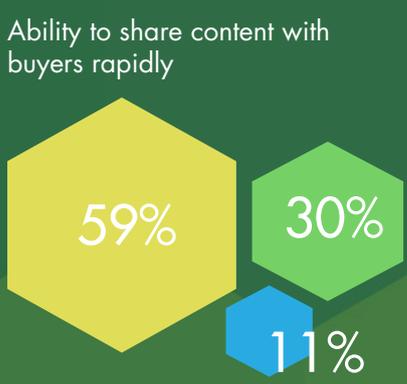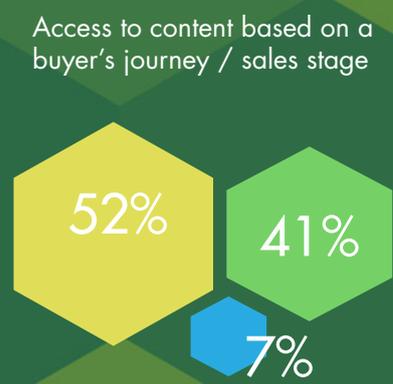# Rapid access to content emerges as most critical to a sales organization

73 percent of respondents felt *accessing content rapidly* was very critical to a sales organization. In comparison, only 48% chose *customizing sales pitches* as being very critical.

While the importance of accessing content rapidly cannot be disputed, sales content needs to become more audience-specific as the sales process becomes more complex and competitive. And the role played by sales enablement tools in content personalization will become more significant.

// How would you rate the following problems that are critical to a sales organization?

Access content rapidly

73%   23%   4%

Access to content based on a buyer's journey / sales stage

52%   41%   7%

Ability to share content with buyers rapidly

59%   30%   11%

Customizing sales pitches

46%   36%   18%
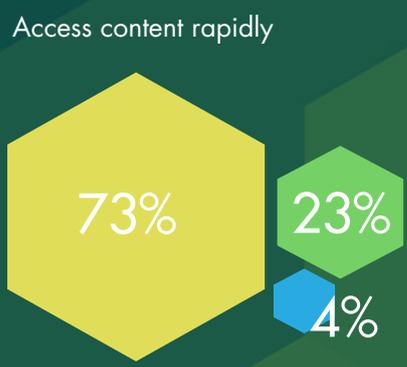
# Third party software forms the largest segment of sales enablement solutions

45 percent of organizations used sales enablement solutions that were *off the shelf/3rd party software*, while 35% used *home grown solutions.*

As high as 21% of organizations used none.

Perhaps some of the roadblocks mentioned earlier by our respondents are a reflection of the fact that over half the organizations we surveyed had deployed either homegrown solutions or none at all in their sales enablement function. Given the complexity of the task, some degree of external expertise might be required to get it right.

// What type of sales enablement solution do you use for your organization?

45%
Off the shelf/ 3rd party software

35%
Home grown solution

21%
None
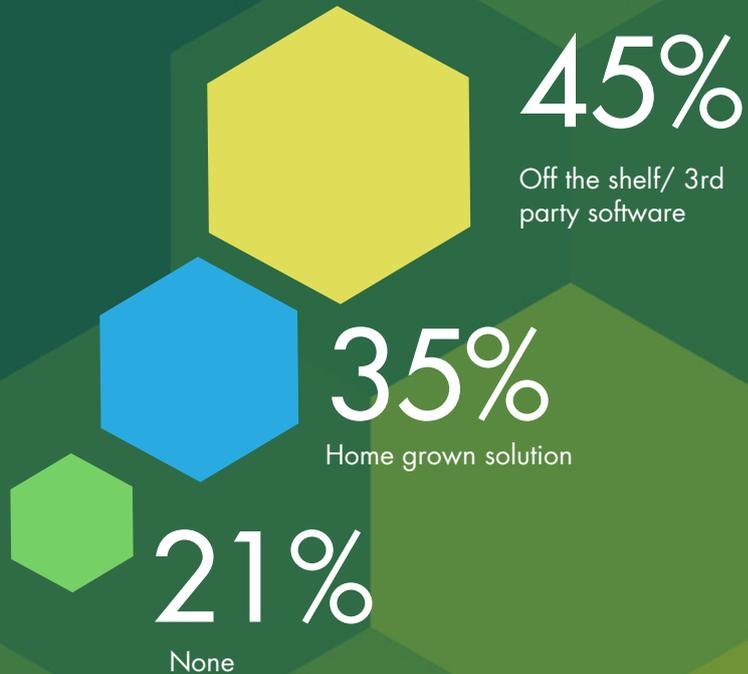
# Satisfaction levels with current sales enablement solutions need boosting

Only 17% of respondents said they were *very satisfied* with their current sales enablement solution.

Of the rest, 54% said they were *somewhat satisfied*, while a good 29% chose to say they were *not satisfied*.

// How satisfied are you with your current sales enablement solution?

54%
Somewhat satisfied

17%
Very satisfied

29%
Not satisfied
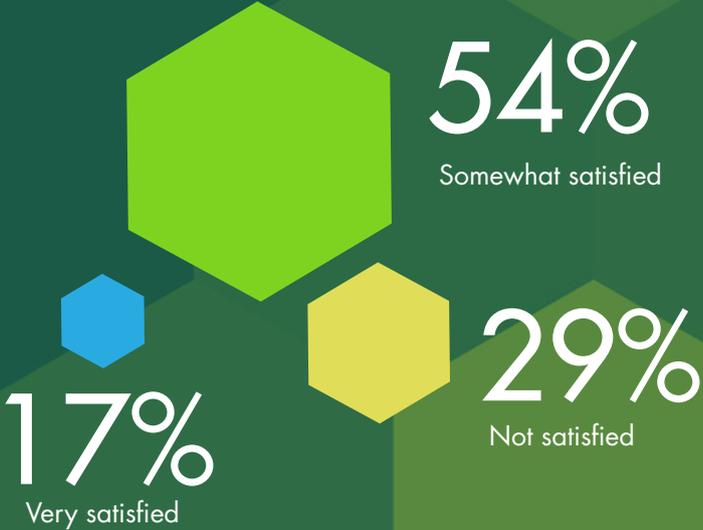
A quick searchable sales collateral repository is the feature most sought-after by marketers

When asked what important features they would want in a sales enablement solution, 76% of respondents settled for a *quick searchable sales collateral repository.*

Interestingly, while it is currently not a priority goal, the need for *integration with CRM* (64%) came in as the second most sought-after feature.

// What are some of the important features that you want in a sales enablement solution?

A quick navigable / searchable sales collateral repository ● **76%**

Integration with CRM ● **64%**

Ability to create / edit content in a rapid fashion ● **48%**

Ability to share content with prospects & track them ● **40%**

Automatically recommend content ● **40%**

Mobile enabled access ● **40%**

Offline access ● **32%**

Engagement metrics ● **32%**

Ready to use playbook templates ● **28%**

Retention aids such as Flashcards ● **16%**

Testing aids such as Quizzes ● **8%**

Secure access via SSO ● **4%**

44% of respondents surveyed say their organizations would invest in a sales enablement solution in the next 12 months

The remaining 56% of respondents didn't think their organizations would invest in a sales enablement solution in the next 12 months.

This is a far cry from what we would expect in an area that is gaining importance with every passing day. It would appear that organizations are still looking at how to first get the most out of their current investment in the sales enablement function before they commit to more.

// Do you see your organization investing in sales enablement solution in the next 12 months?

Yes
44%

No
56%

FINAL THOUGHTS

With buyers having access to a wealth of information to base their purchases on, and a great many options to choose from, the B2B buying process has changed significantly in recent years. Even the number of people involved in the buying process has gone up.

According to HBR, 'the number of people involved in B2B solutions purchases has climbed from an average of 5.4 two years ago to 6.8 today, and these stakeholders come from a lengthening roster of roles, functions, and geographies.' *('The new sales imperative', HBR, March-April, 2017)*

To make an effective sales pitch in such a scenario, the sales content delivered by the seller needs to be relevant and aligned with the buyer's journey and persona.

Fortunately, sales enablement tools allow marketers to achieve a level of granularity and personalization of content that has not been possible before.

Studies have shown the positive impact that sales enablement tools have on revenue growth and conversion rates.

One of the key requirements in rolling out a successful sales enablement program is to ensure that both the marketing and sales teams share the same perspective and work together in achieving their goal.

Playbooks are an important ingredient for success and more organizations need to rapidly adopt them.

Besides creating a searchable inventory of sales collateral, sales enablement tools need to integrate the process with CRM, offer detailed analytics and provide intelligence to marketers on content consumption.

We believe sales enablement is here to stay and organizations would benefit by willingly adopting it, sooner than later.

ABOUT ANALYSTS

Ravish Kamath
Senior Director, Products

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Ravish Kamath has over a decade of experience in bringing products and ideas to life. At Regalix, Ravish is responsible for driving the overall product strategy and its execution. He is passionate about prototyping, evangelizing new technologies, building and mentoring teams and of course launching new products.

Arunh Krishnan
Senior Analyst

Arunh started his career with consumer product marketing, moved to brand management, and been involved in new product launches. In his various roles, he has had deep involvement with consumer and product research. Arunh is currently involved in studying emerging trends and understanding consumer behavior in the digital space.

ABOUT SHAREDEMOS

ShareDemos is an enablement platform that provides solutions for sales and technical marketing teams. The platform has been built from scratch to solve issues around authoring, organization, privacy and analytics.

ShareDemos is a product developed and managed by Regalix Inc., a digital marketing agency with a focus on enablement content. After being in closed beta for over a year, the platform now powers various enablement initiatives within VMware, NetApp, SilverPeak and similar companies.

ABOUT REGALIX RESEARCH

Headquartered in Silicon Valley, we help the CMO organization leverage emerging digital practices for creating marketing leverage as they bring new products and innovation to market. Regalix Research helps marketers through research-based insights, consulting and peer-to-peer programs that guide marketing strategy development and execution. Our focus is helping Technology companies leverage innovation and best practices to create real differentiation. Our analysts are practitioners with a successful track record of delivering real marketing results for both leading Fortune 500 companies as well as venture backed firms.

For more information

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