



The State Of AI-Fueled Sales Enablement

An Inside Look At How Companies Are Applying The Latest Tools & Tactics To Drive Performance & Productivity

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— RODERICK JEFFERSON, RODERICK JEFFERSON & ASSOCIATES

Introduction

It is a prime time in the B2B ecosystem for digital transformation. This is especially true for B2B sellers who struggle with manual and tedious tasks and spend their working hours researching prospects and customers, customizing assets in advance of prospect meetings and training/learning about prospects, products and new releases.

But with innovations in sales enablement technology and the application of new data and intelligence, B2B businesses are positioned to align across organizations for better collaboration and productivity, and streamline processes around delivering customized experiences today’s modern B2B buyers expect.

While sales enablement adoption has been growing at a slower pace than some expected, it’s certainly maturing with the help of sales engagement technology and AI/machine learning, according to industry experts. **Research from CSO Insights** shows that in 2019, **61.3% of organizations reported having sales enablement**, up from 61.0% in 2018.

“Sales enablement is growing,” said Roderick Jefferson, CEO of **Roderick Jefferson & Associates**, a global sales enablement consultancy that works with companies such as Salesforce, Marketo, Oracle, PayPal and Uber. “It’s definitely starting to mature and becoming not just a nice-to-have but a must-have in every company from small startups all the way up to enterprise fortune 100 companies. What I’m seeing is more of the need for sales enablement to be viewed as a critical partner in the business to help decrease time to revenue and increase sales productivity.”



In 2019, 61.3% of organizations reported having sales enablement, up from 61.0% in 2018.

— CSO INSIGHTS

Furthermore, Jefferson explained that if B2B organizations are not utilizing AI in their sales enablement strategies, they're already behind the curve.

This special report will cover new trends, tools, tactics and strategies B2B companies are using to better enable sales reps to have relevant and contextual conversations with prospective customers. It will shed light on:

- How companies are formulating processes and workflows to better enable sales teams to sell;
- How tools are fueling reps with better insights to have meaningful conversations with prospects;
- Strategies to better personalize sales content to meet buyer needs and pain points; and
- How companies such as SAP are putting processes and technology in place to better enable their sales teams.

Sales Enablement By The Numbers

61.3%

IN 2019, 61.3% OF ORGANIZATIONS REPORTED HAVING SALES ENABLEMENT, UP ONLY SLIGHTLY FROM 2018'S 61.0%.

42.5%

ORGANIZATIONS WITHOUT SALES ENABLEMENT REPORTED WIN RATES OF 42.5%, WHILE THOSE WITH SALES ENABLEMENT REPORTED AN AVERAGE WIN RATE OF 49.0%.

74.6%

74.6% OF ORGANIZATIONS WITH SALES ENABLEMENT HAVE FORMAL OR EVEN DYNAMIC SALES PROCESSES.

Source: CSO Insights 5th Annual Sales Enablement Study

OUTREACH VIA SOCIAL MEDIA/MESSENGER APPS

69%

OUTREACH VIA TEXT

52%

IN-PERSON MEETING

47%

VIDEO CHAT

45%

OUTREACH VIA PHONE CALL

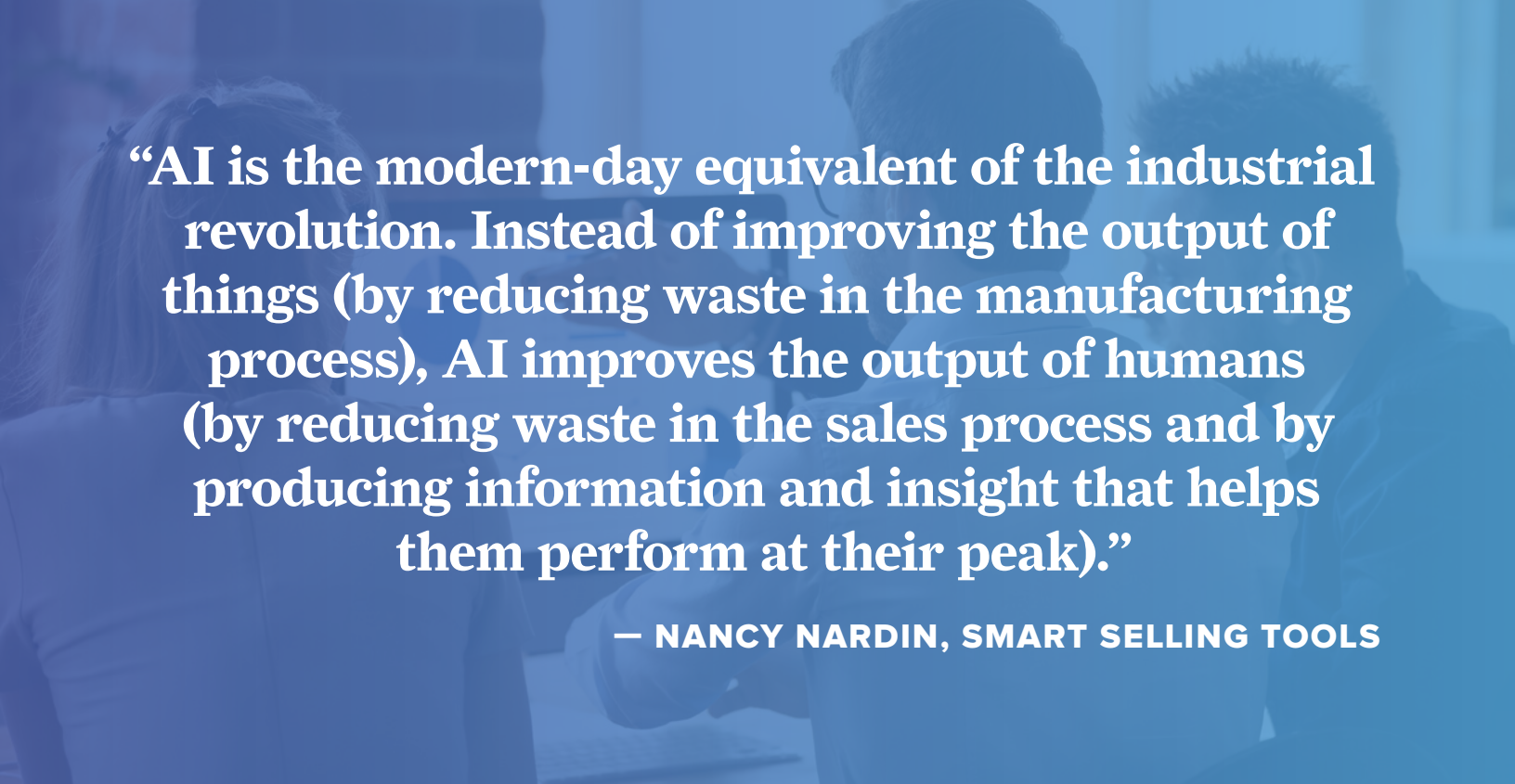
42%

Source: The B2B Millennial Buyer Survey Report from Demand Gen Report & The Mx Group

96%

OF B2B BUYERS STATED THAT VENDORS COULD IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF CONTENT BY CURBING THE SALES SPEAK.

Source: Demand Gen Report 2019 Content Preferences Study



“AI is the modern-day equivalent of the industrial revolution. Instead of improving the output of things (by reducing waste in the manufacturing process), AI improves the output of humans (by reducing waste in the sales process and by producing information and insight that helps them perform at their peak).”

— NANCY NARDIN, SMART SELLING TOOLS

The Sales Revolution: Upgrading From Manual Tasks To Streamlined Process At Scale

With so much content and digital resources available to today's B2B buyer, sales reps are required to be even more informed than their prospects so they can keep their companies top-of-mind and close deals. Beyond that, they must have personalized information for specific buyers and/or accounts to deliver customized experiences that cater to their pain points and challenges. This is where AI-powered tools can aid sales reps to present these experiences in real-time, before their competition.

“The whole game just gets elevated,” said Nancy Nardin, CEO of **Smart Selling Tools**, a sales software technology resource provider. “Businesses need to help their salespeople figure out how to hit ever-rising quotas. That's where AI tools come in. AI can do things salespeople can't do — think prioritizing a long list of prospects based on past wins and other probability factors — and they can do things salespeople don't have time to do, like finding the most relevant content for each buyer persona or stage.

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Progressive B2B organizations are taking advantage of the latest tools and technologies to automate tedious tasks and get them the information they need to simply sell better. According to Nardin, these tools include:

- **Chrome plugins** offered by sales enablement providers that allow salespeople to view marketing content while inside of LinkedIn, Sales Navigator or any website. “That allows the salesperson to more easily find relevant content without leaving their prospecting tool,” said Nardin.
- **Conversation analytics tools** that record and analyze sales calls so organizations can see exactly what’s working and what isn’t, as well as what resonates and doesn’t with different personas. “[These tools help] salespeople learn how to ask better, more relevant questions and management learns what customers care about.”
- **Account & opportunity management solution capabilities.** “Companies that want to better enable sellers to have relevant conversations with prospects are wise to consider solutions that allow salespeople to map out the buying team in terms of interests, concerns, biases and sentiment,” said Nardin. “That allows sellers to use content more effectively.”

Experts agree that while AI can absolutely help in various aspects of the sales process, it’s critical for B2B organizations to remember that, at the end of the day, it’s still about the human-to-human interaction. Sellers should use AI to their advantage, to let them cross manual tasks off their to-do lists and engage with buyers on a personal level.

“Flip the sales process around by making it less about your product and more about the buyer,” said Nardin. “Salespeople are so quick to jump into their presentation and talk benefits of their products, they can forget that the buyer doesn’t care until the seller shows them why they should care. Businesses can get better at training and coaching their salespeople on things like identifying motivators, quantifying ROI and understanding business objectives. AI helps free up time for salespeople to perform those types of higher value analysis. In the end, both seller and buyer are all the better for it.”

Jefferson agrees that enablement is about the people, not the product. “Most importantly, it all starts with people,” he said. “We’re not just about processes and programs and tools and best practices. It’s about making people more productive, more efficient and putting in scalable and repeatable processes that now take you for the long haul, not just where you are today.”



SAP Drives €2B In Sales Pipeline By Rethinking Sales Engagement

Situation

For almost 42 years, **SAP** led the on-premise enterprise application software market by transforming every business function for their customers. In 2014, they faced their biggest challenge in recent history — transforming the company to become the cloud-based SaaS platform for the next generation. At the forefront of this transformation was a new approach to sales and customer engagement. SAP needed to enable the 30,000 strong Global Customer Operations group to engage their customers and build relationships digitally and at a global scale, across 130 countries.

Action

SAP became an early adopter of Social Selling to transform the sales process with an unheard of 15,000-seat investment in LinkedIn Sales Navigator. The program showed early traction, but SAP quickly realized in scaling up that most salespeople could not find the content they needed to build an authentic personal brand and drive sales conversations forward. Ironically, SAP discovered **Grapevine6** through their social networks. After a successful pilot, SAP selected Grapevine6 for its superior content intelligence capabilities and simple user experience.

SAP chose Grapevine6 to power its global Social Selling program because of its:

- Personally relevant content for a global audience;
- Artificial intelligence that makes it easy for sellers to engage buyers; and
- Mobile-first approach that works whenever and wherever the sales team needs it.



To truly build trust, SAP established a radically different best practice: a 90/10 approach to content sharing, where 90% is curated non-SAP content and only 10% is SAP content.

Solution


SAP's goal was to expose their sales team to a wider business network. By enabling the sales team with personally relevant content from SAP and third parties, sales could position themselves as subject matter experts and trusted advisors. With Grapevine6, salespeople can quickly discover and share relevant, valuable and engaging content. With the ability to include SAP's own channels and feeds into the platform, the global sales team can share marketing-driven content along with third-party content and build a unique personal brand.

Management sold the benefits and impact of Grapevine6 to individuals in a pilot project, including increases in Social Selling Index (SSI) scores. Individual success stories drove interest and enthusiasm. SAP rolled out Grapevine6 to the entire global sales team by employing a unique "regional expert" program. In addition to the base training program, an expert user in each region benefited from additional training and resources to become a local champion for the program.

Sales & Marketing Unite!

The need for sales and marketing alignment at SAP is critical to enable reps to engage with consistent messaging as produced by the marketing team. Kirsten Boileau, SAP's Global Head of Regional Engagement, attributes collaboration between marketing and sales as the No. 1 reason for SAP's social selling success. Boileau and other SAP colleagues explain more in [this video](#).

Today's modern B2B buyer completes 70% of the buying journey before the first sales meeting occurs. SAP's sales reps embrace a strong social selling culture and proactively engage in social media channels. SAP social listening skills help gauge online behavior and engage in ways that build trust early in the buyer's journey. To truly build trust, SAP established a radically different best practice: a 90/10 approach to content sharing, where 90% is curated non-SAP content and only 10% is SAP content. This 90/10 strategy boosts the rep's credibility and keeps them top-of-mind to advance critical sales conversations.



“Sales and marketing teams must be aligned in order to provide the content that establishes the sales rep as a trusted advisor and expert in their field.”

— PHIL LURIE, SAP

According to Phil Lurie, VP of Sales Technology, SAP, a good personal brand depends on good content. “Sales and marketing teams must be aligned in order to provide the content that establishes the sales rep as a trusted advisor and expert in their field.” It’s worth noting that the program has since been rebranded to *digital selling*, since *social* is just one of the channels in which to engage buyers with content.

“When I come to work, I read about banking news globally and locally, and either upload an article I find to the Grapevine6 mobile app, or I’ll find an article on the app (in my suggested posts) and share it to LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook,” said Tolwyn N., Senior Account Executive at SAP. “I don’t spend much time on it — maybe five-minutes per day. It’s easy.”

Results

Used globally: Thousands of SAP salespeople around the globe use Grapevine6.

20% increase: Users have seen their average Social Selling index (SSI) on LinkedIn increase by 20%. Account Executives at SAP with high SSI scores have deal sizes 516% larger on average than their peers. They are also 3.4X more likely to hit quota, achieve a 55% boost in sales performance and achieve 3.6x more closed deals.

€2 billion: €2 billion of the current SAP pipeline can be attributed to the SAP Social Selling program (powered by Grapevine6). Closed business deals total more than €1 billion.

“Grapevine6 has been adopted widely across our sales and marketing teams because it is an enjoyable and easy-to-use tool to publish content and build your personal brand,” Lurie concluded. “We have seen significant improvements in our Social Selling metrics thanks to Grapevine6. These improvements have resulted in financial gains as well.”



Personalization brings 30% higher close rates for sellers.


— GARTNER

The Details Are In The Data: Helping Sales Personalize Messaging With An AI-Driven Approach

AI-powered sales tools, combined with first- and third-party data, can make all the difference in helping sales reps deliver the personalized experiences B2B buyers crave and close deals faster. In fact, **research from Gartner** shows that **personalization brings 30% higher close rates for sellers**.

However, **research from Forrester** shows that 61% of sellers believe they spend too much time on customizing sales assets, while **research from CSO Insights** shows that sales reps spend 24% of their time researching to prepare for calls with prospects. By leveraging AI tools and really homing in on the data that's available to them, B2B organizations are better positioned to help sales reps spend less time preparing and more time selling.

"We can start to think about and treat our data as a strategic asset," said Geoff Birnes, SVP of Customer Engagement at **Atrium**, a consulting services firm leading enterprises through a business transformation with AI. "We can treat our data almost as a currency. The data can have a voice in driving what we do. This can all be in real time. It's all about taking an AI-driven approach to our process across sales and marketing. AI allows the data to be prescriptive, giving us those insights so that when we're handing that lead to sales, it's about sharing why this lead is stored the way it is. Or here's all the insights that are applicable and here's what we recommend as a next best action."



“AI allows the data to be prescriptive, giving us those insights so that when we’re handing that lead to sales, it’s about sharing why this lead is stored the way it is.”

— GEOFF BIRNES, ATRIUM

Birnes added that B2B orgs that leverage all the data at their disposal and pair it with the insights they get from AI-powered tools can make a strong difference in their messaging, ultimately giving their company an upper hand over the competition.

“The companies that we’re seeing take advantage of this are creating really unfair advantages between them and their competition,” he said. “Simply because they’re getting insights to act on that their peers are not. And they’re just running better plays as a result.”

Jefferson added that role-specific content is critical. “Finding the right tool that can deploy that role-specific content at the right time, at the right level, to the right folks is going to be critical because we know what’s too technical for some may not be technical or deep enough for other parts of the organization.”



Everything has to start with your buyer's journey...It's really understanding your buyer's journey and where your company and your experience with them fit into that journey."

— RODERICK JEFFERSON, RODERICK JEFFERSON & ASSOCIATES

Conclusion

Sales enablement processes, while still in the early phases, are maturing with help from AI-powered tools and technologies. Companies such as SAP are gaining a competitive advantage by utilizing the power of AI to enable their sales team with personally relevant content, ultimately helping sales reps position themselves as subject matter experts and trusted advisors.

And although these tools are critical to success, experts agree that alignment between sales and marketing, as well as proper data collection and management, are still major aspects driving their businesses forward.

Sales enablement, much like most go-to-market strategies, really boils down to the buyer's journey, experts agreed.

"Everything has to start with your buyer's journey," said Jefferson. "It's not about your process, your stages, your tools, your methodology or even the deployment of AI across all of these aspects. It's really understanding your buyer's journey and where your company and your experience with them fit into that journey. That's when you reverse engineer and figure out how your sales stages and funnel and processes and tools all fit into the journey."

Additional Resources



Grapevine6, a mobile-first, enterprise content engagement platform for digital selling, uses AI to power global social selling programs at the largest technology and financial services companies in the world.

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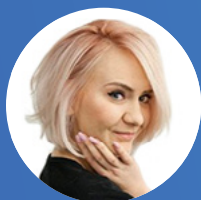
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Demand Gen Report is a targeted online publication that uncovers the strategies and solutions that help companies better align their sales and marketing organizations, and ultimately, drive growth. A key component of the publication's editorial coverage focuses on the sales and marketing automation tools that enable companies to better measure and manage their multi-channel demand generation efforts.

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