



An EMI Industry
Intelligence Report



Sales Enablement: Develop the Tools that Deliver Results

By: Anthony Nygren

In an average week, technology sales professionals spend 8 hours developing client presentations, 5 hours looking for marketing collateral, and 4 hours searching for customer information outside the organization. Over a full year, 17 hours each week translates to 100 full sales days lost.

With that much sales potential at stake, why does this inefficiency persist in many organizations? These critical tasks—developing presentations, building customer and industry profiles, crafting compelling emails to customer and prospects—are typically not systematically addressed by anyone except sales people. In addition to eroding valuable sales time, this approach is a poor match for the skill set of most sales professionals.



Among your company's best salespeople, how many are very good at...

- Synthesizing large volumes of competitive information to find key differentiators?
- Writing nuanced, concise, targeted emails?
- Composing sales presentations that are consistent with brand positioning and also compelling decision motivators?
- Articulating consistently the differentiating benefits of a product/service?

Despite the poor fit with their skill set—and the value of developing effective modular arsenals of these tools for reuse across the sales teams—these tasks are too often left to sales, because marketing does not recognize this work as important. The result? Inefficiency and lower conversion rates.

Optimizing selling time requires an investment in tools that enable rapid response to maintain sales momentum, and that bolster the personal touch of sales with customized, strategic, compelling messaging. This paper describes several vital tools that, when properly designed, executed, and deployed, increase active selling time, improve message consistency and effectiveness, and decrease new hire ramp-up time.

Filling the Tool Box

Tool: Email Templates

Personalized, customized emails are important vehicles for moving an opportunity deeper in the sales cycle. To be effective, however, they must be targeted at a specific moment in the sales.

- If a sales person has just gotten off the phone with a new prospect, the email needs to offer a next step, shaping the seller's action plan and overcoming prospect inertia.
- If a new product or service has just been introduced, an email should offer opportunities to learn more and a clear expectation for the next sales outreach.
- If a prospect is hesitant, the email needs to offer a compelling reason to act or overcome the potential objections.

Email templates address these needs, but also offer two important benefits over ad hoc emails. First, the templates ensure that prospects are receiving communications that are consistent and compelling, as well as free of typos, poor grammar, and unpolished language. Second, the templates save time: while it doesn't take a tremendous amount of time to write a single email, even a few minutes per email adds up when multiplied by 5, 10, or 20 emails per day. Moreover, sending emails immediately after first contact with a prospect actually leads to more closed sales than spending a week or two crafting a customized email; email templates facilitate this quick response.

Tool: Benefits Scripts

The first presentation of benefits is a key juncture in the sales cycle, determining the prospect's motivation to continue the conversation and shaping their interest and commitment. To avoid undermining the opportunity, the initial communication must be:

- Convincing
- Responsive to the prospect's needs
- Compelling

Sales people often recite features rather than presenting benefits. In many cases, even when benefits are presented, they are often monochromatic, rather than colored to match a prospect's needs. And, as new sales people ramp up, they typically learn by imitating their more experienced peers, which means they perpetuate that approach, for better or for worse.

While fully scripted sales discussions are a recipe for failure, benefits "talking points" and needs triggers can guide a sales person to better and faster results. Moreover, modular scripts can be developed to fit a range of sales scenarios—first meeting, objection handling, consideration versus competition—and to target different buyer types. Benefits scripts shorten the sales cycle and improve onboarding efficiency by enabling sales people of any experience level to present benefits that are consistent, on brand, strategically sound, and competitively positioned.



Benefits scripts offer the sales person a strong, reliable foundation for capturing the opportunity.

Tool: Competitive Silver Bullets

Unless a sales person is in the enviable position of being a sole-source solution, comparison to the competition (including internal resources or the status quo) is inevitable. Handled effectively, explicit competitive comparisons can winnow the field of competitors, demonstrate expertise and knowledge of customers' needs, and accelerate the close. Handled ineffectively, it can create confusion, focus attention on details that don't differentiate, and actually prolong the sales cycle by leading prospects to clarifying conversations with other vendors.

The first step in handling a competitive comparison effectively is to define the terms of the comparison in a way that is logical and plausible, resonates with the prospect's needs, and positions the sales person's offering favorably. Once these criteria have been applied to define the vectors, the comparison needs to be fair and accurate for it to have an impact. Developing the comparisons ahead of time, buttressing them with third-party references and objective assessments—and ideally, enabling access to the comparisons during prospect discussions—guarantee effectiveness. Investing in the development and continuous maintenance of the comparisons improves sales productivity and delivers accurate, current content. Arming sales people with these comparisons improves conversion rates not only by demonstrating competitive superiority, but also by building confidence in the sales person's industry expertise.

Tool: Presentation Templates and Automated Proposal Builders

The sales presentation is often the single most important interaction in the sales cycle; it is always the moment when the seller has an opportunity to formally summarize benefits, terms, and ROI for the prospect. It is vital to use this window of opportunity to offer the buyer a compelling and consistent reason to buy and to make a commitment immediately. Development of a compelling and effective presentation is time-consuming. Capturing and organizing customer information and benefits case; creating a logical, compelling flow; ensuring that the customer data and preferences are correct—all of these activities can consume significant sales time. And the less experienced the sales person, the more these issues are magnified.

Templates and proposal automation remove most of these challenges. They eliminate anxieties about grammar, spelling, and factual errors that can significantly disrupt a presentation and can undermine a prospect's confidence. Automating and standardizing all non-value added, non-individualized content reduces the time it takes the sales person to create the presentation, as well as the time between sales interactions. Finally, templates and proposal automation guarantee consistency of message, language, and appearance, in addition to ensuring that the presentation contains a well-crafted, strategic set of key selling points.



A database or worksheet of competitive comparisons that enables quick and easy reference equips sales people for success in competitive situations.

Tool: Sales Campaign Kits

Across industries, the trend is towards a more consultative selling, but sales campaigns remain a compelling approach to focusing sales activity and accelerating sales growth. Whether launching a new product or driving cross-sell are the goals, sales teams need to be trained and armed with materials that they need to close the deals. Incentives, while important, are not enough. Time-bound, focused sales sprints are effective when they combine consultative selling tools, lead generation marketing, and competition for incremental reward.

Sales campaign kits raise the performance of the sales team by delivering tools to simplify selling and motivate greater effort. Kits can contain everything from prospect diagnostics to quick reference guides to motivational messaging and award opportunities. These tools deliver results by reducing the variability of sales people's product knowledge, providing door-opening techniques and objection handling strategies, and driving top-of-mind awareness of the product(s) featured. In our experience, well-designed sales campaigns can deliver a 3 to 7% boost in the performance of the large population of sales people in the middle of the performance bell curve. For the higher-performing tiers, campaigns have delivered a up to a 50% increase in sales.

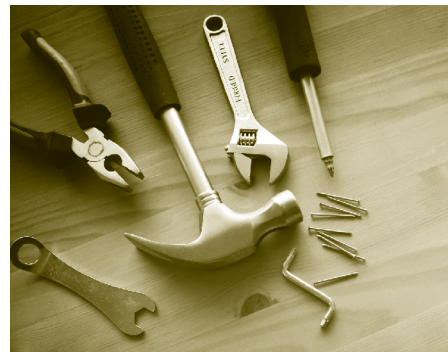
The Tool Box On-Site: Examples from the Field

The following case studies illustrate how companies used sales toolkit components to drive sales success.

Example: Market-leading software company pursuing fast growth

A leading provider of software to a segment of the SMB market was forecasting 30% annual growth but faced a dilemma: having optimized their marketing strategy and tactics to increase leads by over 100%, how could they convert those new leads to deliver on growth goals without a significant investment in additional sales resources? In addition, how could the company ensure that any new sales hires that were brought on would be fully ramped-up as quickly as possible?

Operationally, leads generated by marketing were distributed to sales people, who were then tasked with managing the opportunity, with a high degree of autonomy. While a few email templates had been created, they were long, not on-message, and not tailored to different stages in the lead management process. Moreover, new hires modeled their selling techniques on the existing examples; they adopted and adapted old presentations for their own sales opportunities, and copied and modified old emails to send to their clients.



The solution for the software company was to invest time and resources in developing a suite of sales tools to enable them to more efficiently move prospects along the sales cycle. The tools included:

- A standard sales presentation template for online demonstrations that contained slides highlighting the key differentiators for the company
- A set of emails targeted at specific industries and specific points in the buying cycle
- A collection of competitor comparison sheets both to be used by sales on calls and to be sent to prospects

The result of these efforts was a much more efficient sales force—one that was able to deliver a 40% increase in revenue with only a 25% increase in sales resources.

Example: Leading bank seeking to improve sales productivity

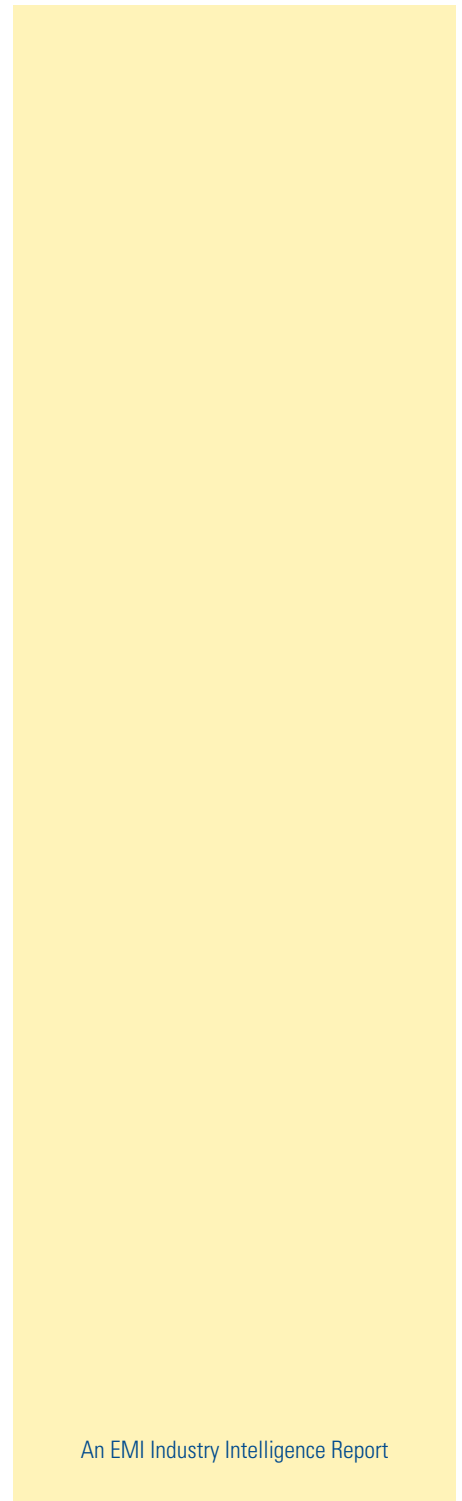
A leading U.S. bank had implemented a new salesforce automation (SFA) system, but found that its sales force was not entering their pipeline data into the new tool, thus eroding its value and compromising sales management effectiveness. In addition, teams were spending an average of 3 to 5 hours per week in proposal and presentation development. A survey of presentations and proposals developed demonstrated a lack of consistency, accuracy, and effectiveness.

To address this issue, EMI created a modular proposal and presentation tool, which included:

- A customizable document generator using Siebel and Microsoft Word
- A customer needs diagnosis tool linked to more than 30 products, enabling easy, effective and compliant industry and client customization

To support the deployment of the proposal tool, EMI created and implemented a field-driven training program.

Following the launch of the proposal tool, bank regions reported 20 to 50% increased proposal use, average proposal and presentation development time fell to under an hour, and the bank generated higher close rates.



A Blueprint for Tool Building

As evidenced by the discussion and examples above, each one of the tools has a “sweet spot” in the sales cycle—a point at which it’s likely to be used most often and most effectively—based on its intended use. Recognizing these tool “sweet spots” can be valuable when making decisions about investing resources. An audit of sales operations and performance data should reveal the points of greatest weakness in the status quo. A logical approach would be to target these points of weakness first with the appropriate tools, then work to fill out the portfolio.

Deployment “Sweet Spot”

Tool	Prospecting	Opportunity Dev.	Close
Email templates	●	●	●
Benefits scripts	●	●	
Competitor product/ service comparison		●	●
Presentation template/ proposal builder		●	●
Sales campaign kits	●	●	●

● Primary ● Secondary

Just building the tools will not, in and of itself, deliver results. If sales does not embrace and use the tools, any investment in their development will have been wasted. Sales must be involved throughout the development process to enable effective design and ensure executive endorsement, and a focused, disciplined training program must be applied to roll out a new suite of sales tools.

These tools complement, but do not replace, SFA or lead nurturing software solutions. By creating efficiencies to speed effective handling of sales opportunities, and enabling more effective messaging and marketing by each sales person at the front line, these tools both increase sales activity and improve close rates. By bringing the best of marketing into the most important active-selling moments, strategic sales tools can magnify the ROI on both marketing dollars and sales hours.



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Conclusion

For many companies, sales enablement tools like those described previously are considered afterthoughts by marketing and sales management—the ad hoc work addressed by overstretched resources whenever they have time. Unlike a sales force that’s too small or less capable, or a marketing effort that misses key potential customers, the lack of these tools often goes unnoticed; the ROI on the creation of the tools seems hard to quantify. But the reality, as our examples point out, is that ignoring or under-investing in these tools erodes sales results. Without a best-in-class suite of sales tools, selling time is lost, interactions with prospects are sub-optimal, and competitive advantages are left unstated. With them, sales cycles are shortened, sales productivity is magnified, new hire ramp-up is accelerated, and sales conversion rates are increased.

About the Author

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About EMI

EMI has been working with Fortune 500 companies and financial services leaders to drive results through our clients’ sales and service channels. For more than 20 years, our strategic programs, combined with our industry expertise, have helped companies achieve greater growth and increased customer loyalty.

To learn more about what EMI can do for your company, call 617-224-1101 or visit us on the web at emiboston.com.



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