

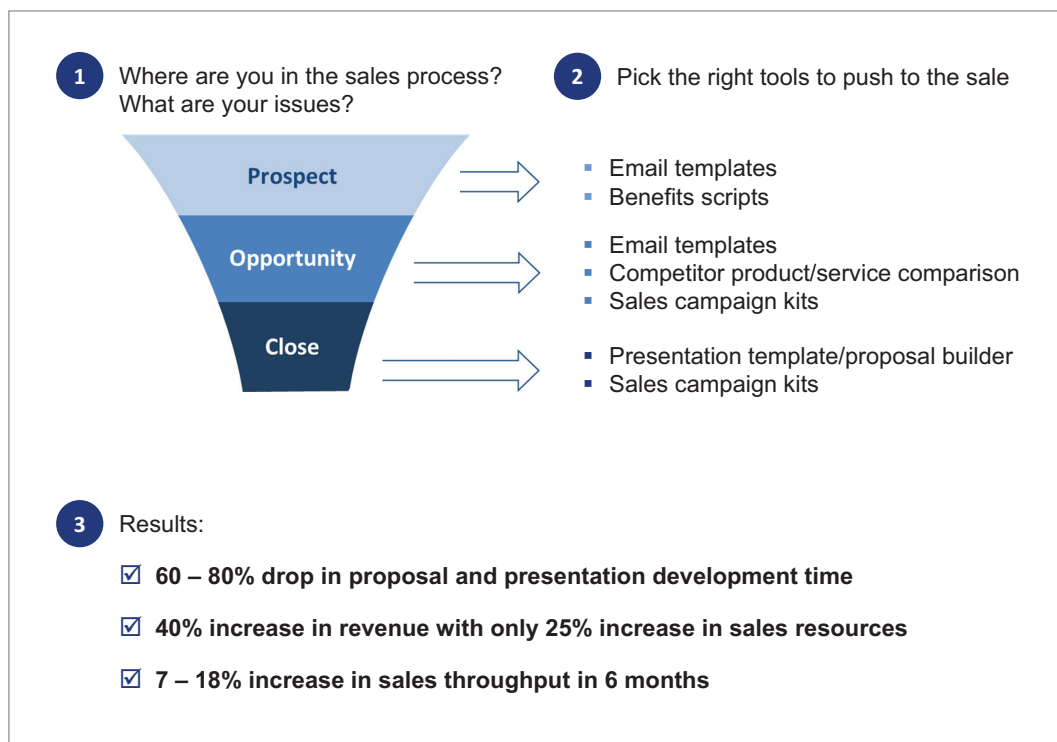
Sales Enablement: Develop the Tools that Deliver Results

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.

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. Each tool has a “sweet spot” in the sales cycle – the situation in which it can have the greatest impact.

Use the right tool for the right job...

The following diagram and the description of the tools that follow should guide you through getting the most out of your sales enablement investment.



Tools

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.

Strategic sales tools can magnify the ROI on both marketing dollars and sales hours.

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.

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.

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

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.

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.

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.

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 is the goal, 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.

Conclusion

For many companies, sales enablement tools like those described in this paper 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 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

For more than 20 years, EMI has been working with technology, telecom and financial services leaders to drive revenue and profit through our clients' sales and service channels. Our blending of industry expertise, strategic insights, and results-oriented programs has helped companies achieve greater growth and increased customer loyalty.

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