

STATE OF SALES ENABLEMENT 2021

Welcome

The linchpin of sales enablement success in 2021 is resilience amid change. As organizations responded to the pressing challenges of the pandemic in the past year, sales enablement became key to helping revenue teams effectively navigate transformation. In looking ahead to the next year and beyond, sales enablement can continue to help revenue leaders confront the challenges that come with uncertainty head-on and ensure a smooth transition back to in-person or hybrid work environments.

For the seventh edition of the State of Sales Enablement Report, Sales Enablement PRO surveyed nearly 400 sales enablement leaders worldwide to learn how sales enablement can drive immediate productivity impact to support revenue teams in securing sustainable long-term growth.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH:

Quantitative data in the report was collected from a survey conducted from March 23 through April 9, 2021, generating 379 total responses from across 20 different countries. The top 5 countries were the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, and Australia. Qualitative research was further captured from the Sales Enablement Virtual Soirée on January 27, 2021.



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Executive Summary

Our research found that three key themes are becoming essential for sales enablement practitioners in order to optimize efforts and maximize business impact:

CONSISTENT REP PERFORMANCE

The ability to achieve quota quarter-after-quarter creates more predictable and scalable revenue, and sales enablement plays a crucial role in arming reps with the tools and behaviors they need to consistently perform.



+30

Having highly engaged employees correlates with a 30-percentage-point improvement in quota attainment.

COLLABORATION WITH REVENUE STAKEHOLDERS

When enablement is well-aligned to the strategic goals of revenue leaders, practitioners are better poised to collaborate with stakeholders across the business to influence revenue growth from pre-sales to post-sales.



+6

Reporting to a revenue leader is correlated with a 6-percentage-point improvement in customer retention compared to those that report to an HR leader.

ENABLEMENT INSIGHTS FOR IMPACT

Revenue leaders need actionable analytics on progress against key objectives to accurately forecast, plan, and execute growth strategies, and sales enablement is well-positioned to surface these data-backed insights.



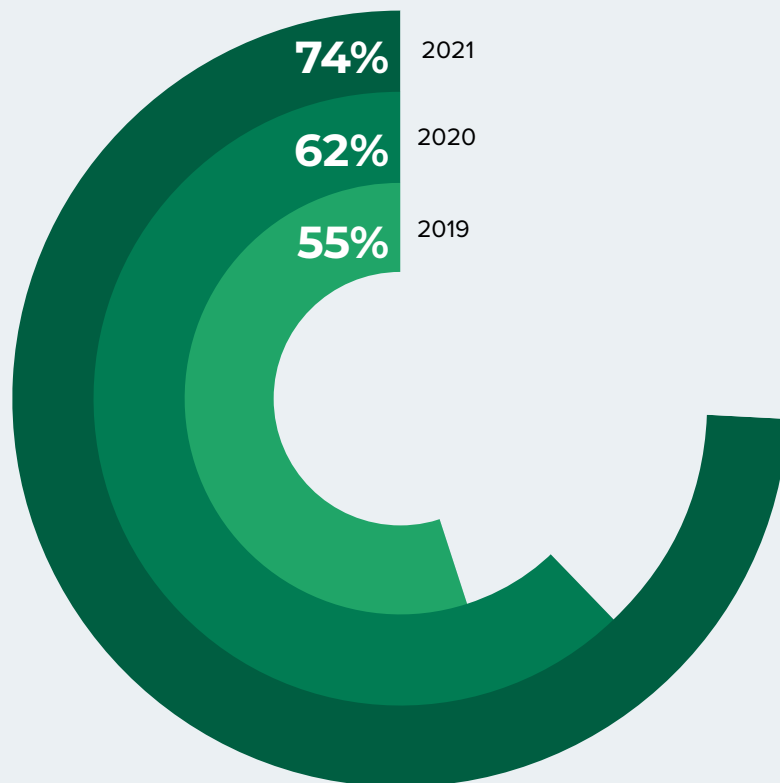
2.3X

Those that are above average in communicating sales enablement's value are 2.3 times as likely to exceed expectations in collaborating with executives.

Sales Enablement Adoption

Does your company have a dedicated sales enablement person, program, or function?

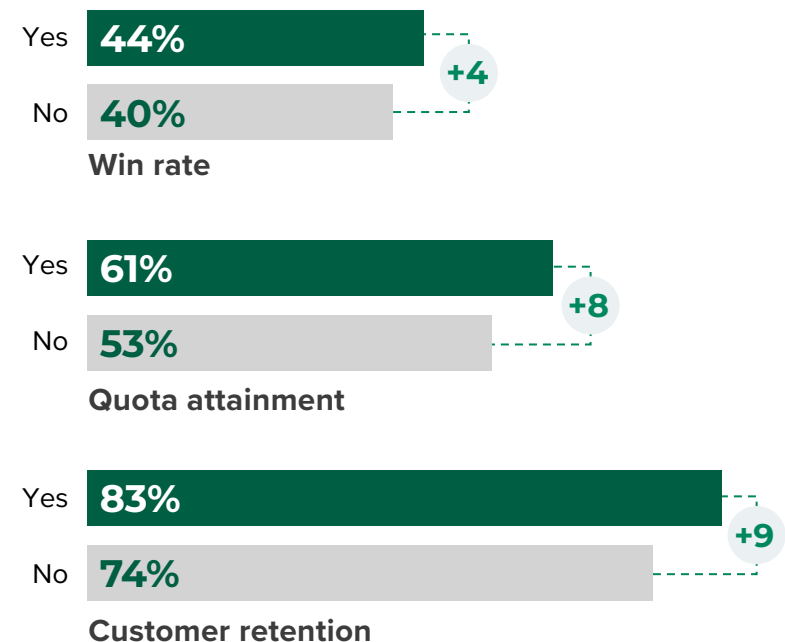
Yes answers, 2019-2021



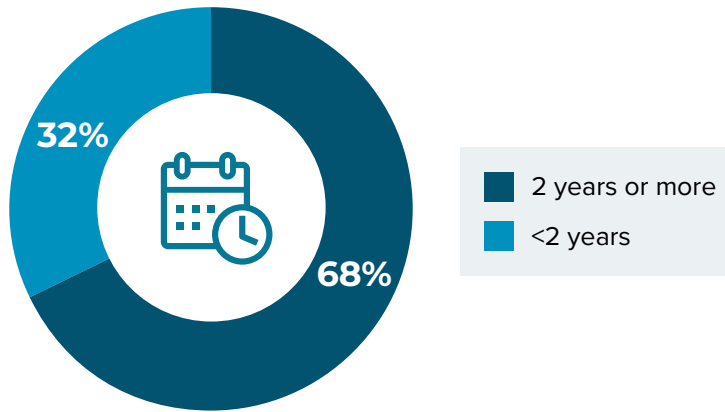
SALES ENABLEMENT GROWTH

More and more, organizations are realizing the strategic necessity of having a formalized sales enablement function. In fact, 74% of respondents now have a sales enablement function at their organization, representing 19% year-over-year growth. Most importantly, having a dedicated sales enablement function is correlated with significant business impact for organizations, including 4-percentage-point higher win rates, 8-percentage-point improvements in quota attainment, and 9-percentage-point greater customer retention compared to those without a dedicated sales enablement function.

Business impact of having a dedicated sales enablement person, program, or function:

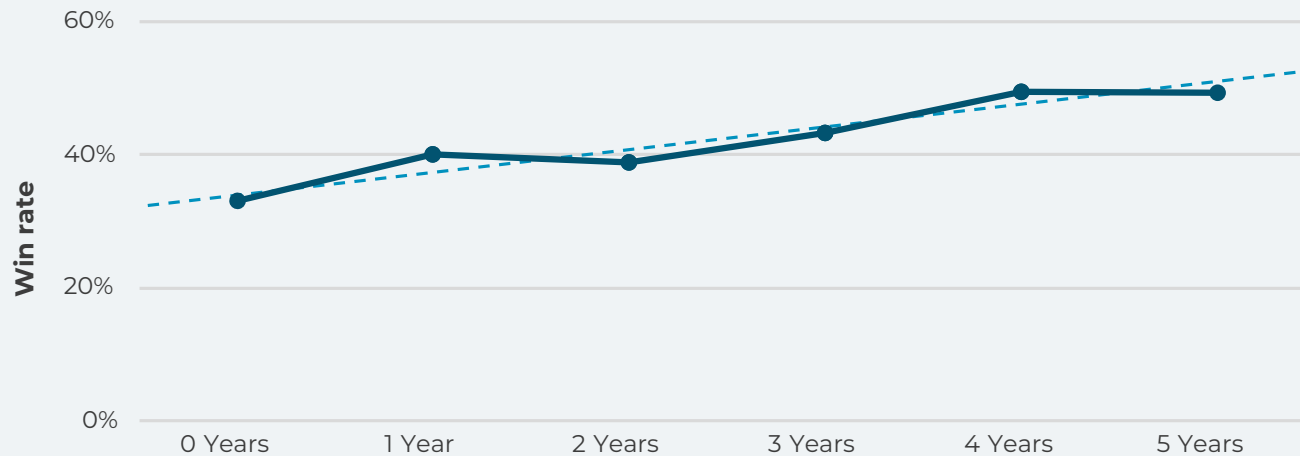


How long has your company had any type of sales enablement process and/or practices?



While sales enablement experienced massive adoption in the past year, it is also becoming more established at the organizations that have adopted formal efforts. Of those with sales enablement teams in place, 68% have had it for more than two years, representing 79% year-over-year growth from 2020.

Impact on win rate year-over-year when companies have any type of sales enablement process and/or practices



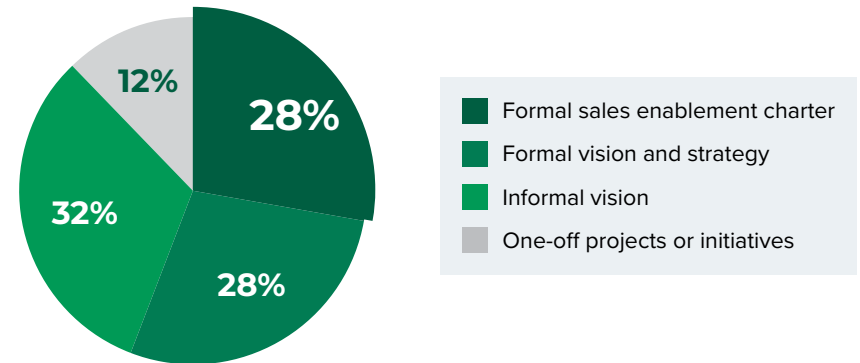
3 POINTS

is the increase in win rate that companies see for **each additional year** that sales enablement is in place.

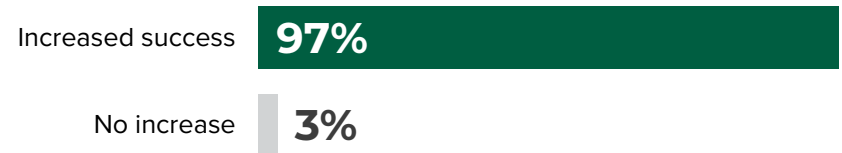
More organizations are also formalizing their approaches to sales enablement by putting a charter for enablement responsibilities in place, including defined vision and strategy of what sales enablement can accomplish. As 28% have a formal charter, this represents 65% year-over-year growth.

When organizations have a formal approach to sales enablement by way of a charter, it is also more likely to be viewed as having a positive impact on the business, as 97% of those with a formal charter said sales enablement has increased the overall success of their company's sales performance.

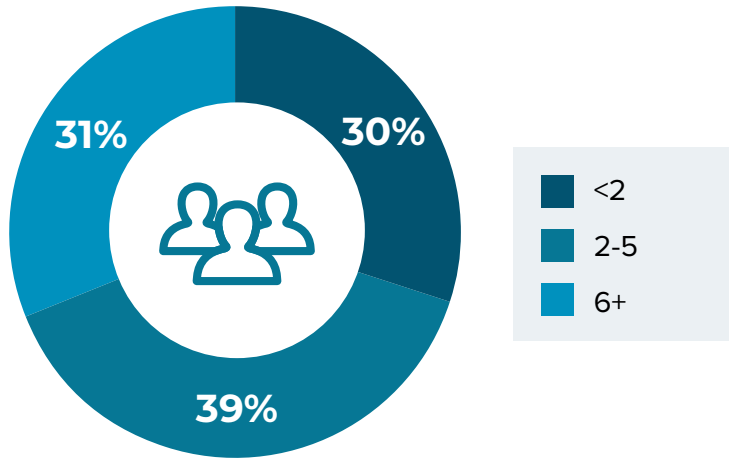
Which of the following best describes your company's approach to sales enablement?



Sales enablement team's impact on business success with a formal charter



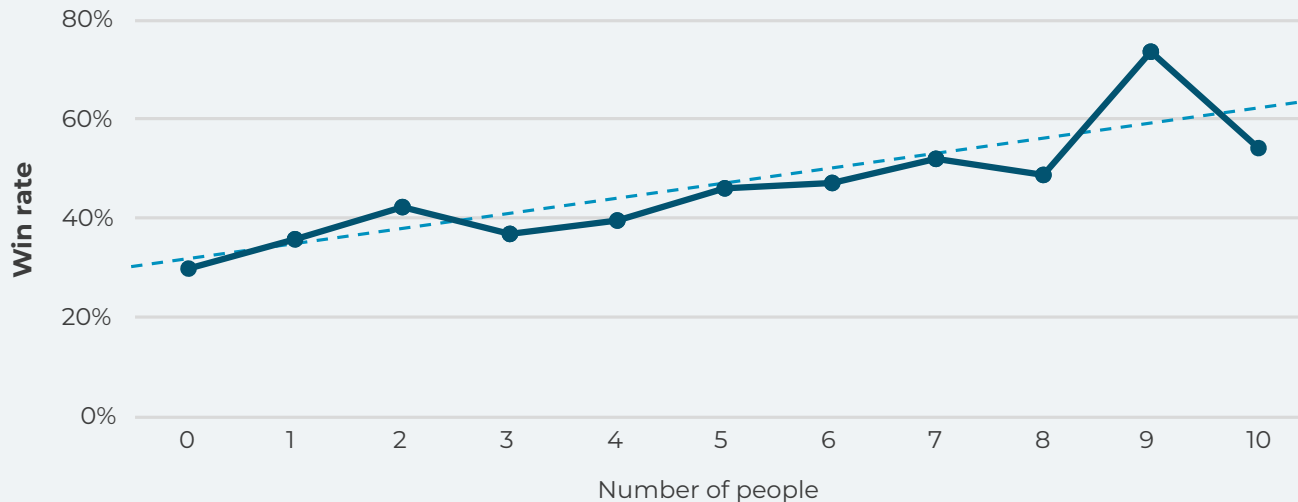
How many people are dedicated to sales enablement at your company?



SALES ENABLEMENT RESOURCING

In line with the trends seen in sales enablement adoption, organizations are also beginning to invest in more resources to maximize the potential of sales enablement’s impact on the business. Specifically, team sizes are rapidly growing, as 39% of teams have two to five members, and the amount of teams with six or more members has grown 107% year-over-year to 31%.

Impact on win rate year-over-year when companies add employees dedicated to sales enablement

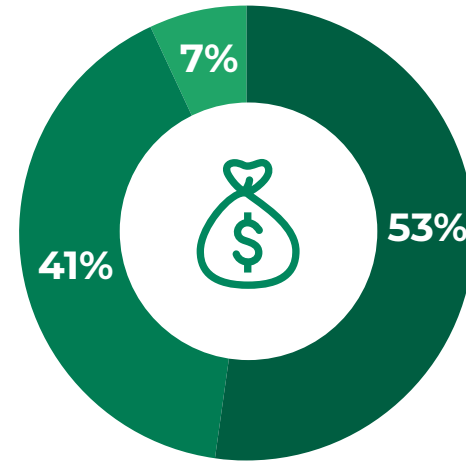


Each **team member** added is correlated with a win rate improvement of

3 POINTS

While many sales enablement teams operated with limited budgets in the past year due to the economic impact of the pandemic, 53% of respondents anticipate a significant increase in budget allocation in the year ahead, representing 77% year-over-year growth compared to those that increased budgets in 2020. Additionally, our research found that on average, the win rates respondents reported grow alongside incremental increases in budget.

Do you believe your sales enablement budget will increase, stay the same, or decrease in the next fiscal year?



- Increase
- Stay the same
- Decrease

Every additional **\$50,000 spent** on sales enablement is correlated with a win rate improvement of **1 POINT**



SALES ENABLEMENT PLATFORM ADOPTION

The utilization of sales enablement tools to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of enablement efforts also saw growth this past year, with 61% now using a dedicated sales enablement tool, a jump of 32% year-over-year.

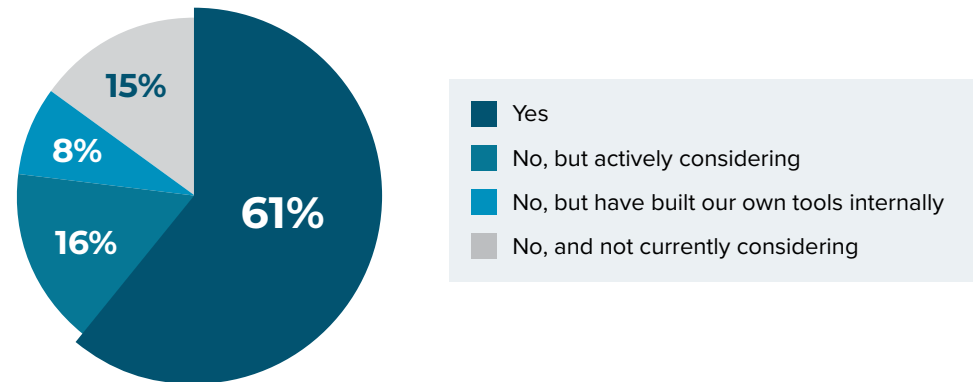
Leveraging sales enablement tools can not only impact business performance, but it also helps improve internal operations through enhanced collaboration between sales enablement and other functions across the business. For instance, tool utilization is correlated with a 9-percentage-point increase in win rate compared to those not considering a tool.

Those that utilize a sales enablement tool are

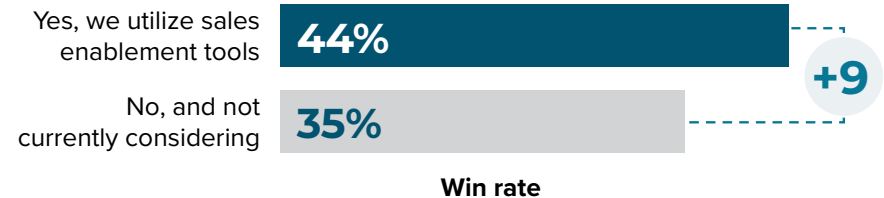
52% more likely

to engage in formal collaboration with cross-functional stakeholders compared to those not considering a tool.

Is your company or team currently utilizing purchased sales enablement tools?

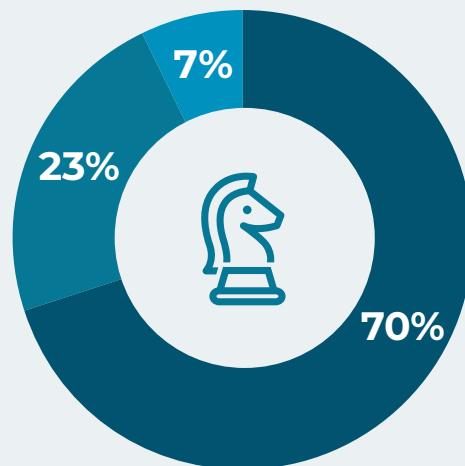


Business impact:



Sales Enablement Drivers

Has your company's sales process become more challenging over the last 12-18 months?



- Yes
- No
- Don't know/not sure



SALES CHALLENGES

As the world of work evolved in the past year, respondents also noted large-scale changes to their organization's sales process and buyer experience. Particularly, 70% of respondents reported that their company's sales process has become more challenging.

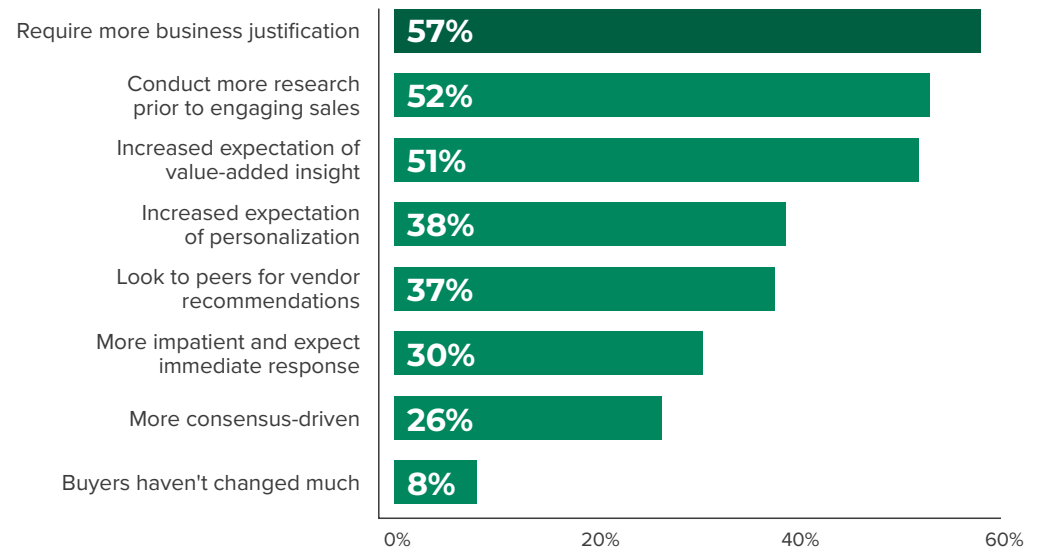
The most persistent challenges that respondents experienced include competitive pressure, time to deal, and customer experience and retention. As many write-in responses in this section highlighted, the pandemic accelerated the impact of many of these challenges, as revenue teams had to quickly adapt to circumstances such as virtual selling, decreased budgets, and separation from buyers.

What are your top three sales challenges?



Alongside changes to the sales process, respondents also noted intensified pressure in meeting buyer expectations, as 57% said that buyers now require more business justification. These changes highlight the importance of agility in proactively evolving practices to keep up with industry transformation and shifting buyer needs, which sales enablement can help spearhead for organizations.

How do you think your buyers have changed over the last 12 months?



GOALS

The core goals for a majority of sales enablement teams this year demonstrate how practitioners can address these changes by helping reps consistently win deals and grow the customer base while ensuring they are equipped with the skills to meet their goals each period. The top four sales enablement goals respondents have for the year ahead include:

1

**INCREASE SALES
DEAL WIN RATES**

2

**INCREASE NEW
CUSTOMER
ACQUISITION**

3

**IMPROVE SALES
COMPETENCIES**

4

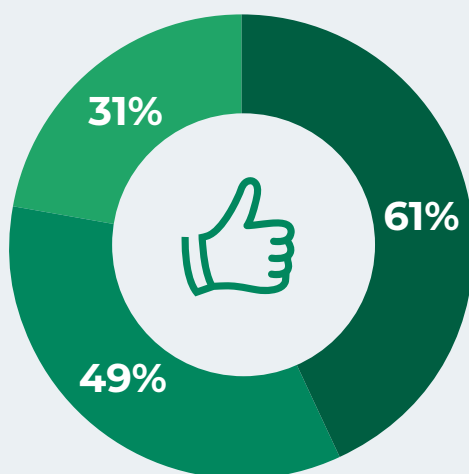
**INCREASE
CONSISTENT REP
PERFORMANCE**



Sales Enablement Prioritization

How engaged are employees at your organization?

Average quota attainment



- Most engaged
- Somewhat engaged
- Least engaged

CONSISTENT REP PERFORMANCE

When reps are able to consistently perform and meet the goals set for them, revenue generation becomes more predictable and repeatable. Sales enablement can boost the amount of reps who continuously achieve quota by motivating rep engagement, landing sales plays that guide reps through how to effectively engage customers, and driving the right behaviors that lead to sales success.

REP ENGAGEMENT

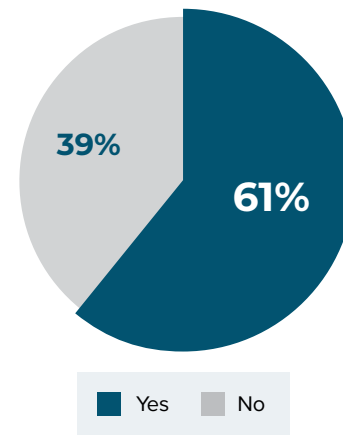
To encourage the dedication to job performance necessary to motivate consistent quota attainment among reps, among the most important areas to prioritize high employee engagement. In fact, having highly engaged reps correlates with a 30-percentage-point improvement in quota attainment compared to organizations where employees are the least engaged.

As virtual environments can cause some reps to feel isolated or disconnected, it is all the more critical for sales enablement to foster connectivity among reps to improve engagement. This can be done both formally through methods such as mentorship programs or sales advisory councils, or informally with things such as peer-to-peer communication channels or after-work meet-ups. As some organizations also begin to transition back to in-person or hybrid models, it will be important for sales enablement to continue to build upon these programs to maintain engagement through continuous change to encourage consistency.

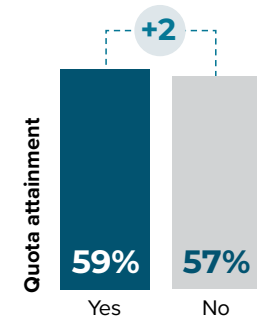
SALES PLAYS

Sales plays can also be a beneficial vehicle to improve rep consistency by enhancing their ability to land strategic initiatives with prospects and customers through guidance on what to know, say, show, and do throughout the sales process. In fact, the 61% of sales enablement teams heavily involved in the creation and delivery of sales plays have 2-percentage-point greater average quota attainment than those that are not.

Is sales enablement heavily involved in creating and delivery sales plays?

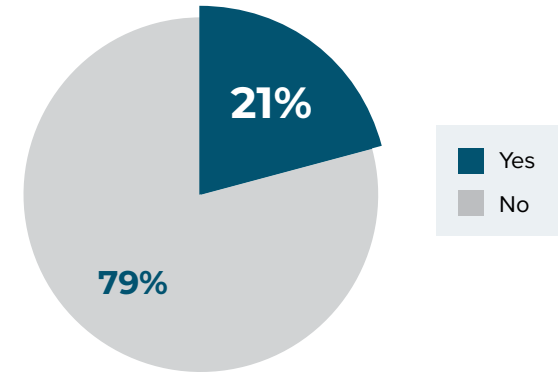


Business impact:

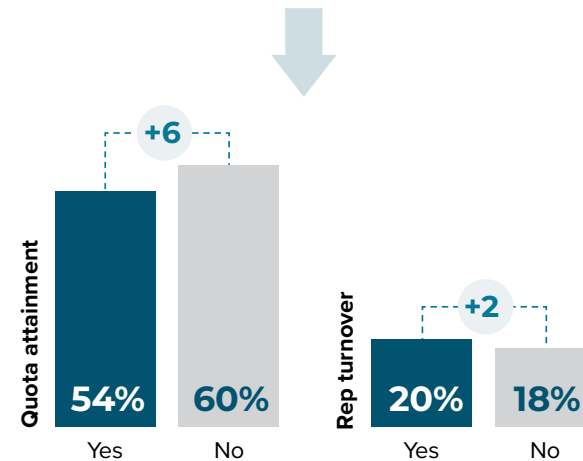


However, simply having plays is not the only indicator of success, as the effectiveness with which they are deployed can greatly influence business performance. For example, 21% of organizations struggle with ineffective sales plays. These organizations also struggle with a 6-percentage-point dip in average quota attainment and 2-percentage-point jump in average rep turnover compared to organizations that do not struggle with ineffective sales plays. With dedicated focus from enablement to create sales plays that motivate the desired rep behaviors, practitioners can help ensure they are effective in influencing progress against sales targets.

Is having ineffective sales plays one of your top three sales challenges?



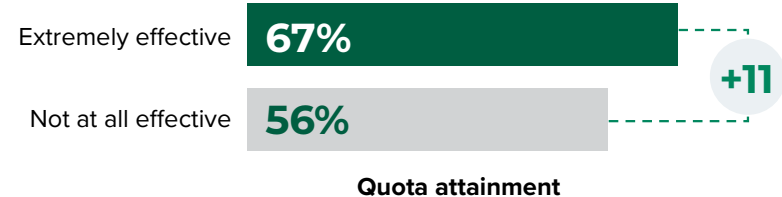
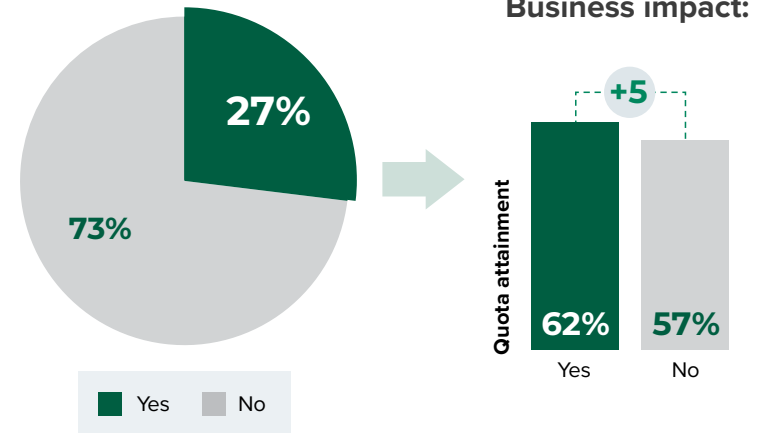
Business impact:



One way that practitioners can track and monitor the effectiveness of sales plays is through the use of a dedicated tool, which 27% of respondents use. In fact, those that use tools to execute sales plays experience 5-percentage-point higher average quota attainment compared to those that do not.

Further, the more effectively the tools are used, the higher the correlation to improved quota attainment, as those that are extremely effective in using sales play tools see 11-percentage-point improvements compared to those that are not effective.

Does your sales enablement team use a sales play tool?



Sales playbooks have helped us create a unified sales enablement approach to mobilize reps into action on our core GTM initiatives. Having a tool to craft and deliver sales playbooks has only amplified their impact, which has been critical to gaining leadership buy-in.



—Ian Westbrook, Sr. Director of Field Effectiveness, DocuSign

IMPACT OF CONSISTENCY

Organizations that prioritize consistent rep performance tend to also have positive relationships between the sales enablement team and executive stakeholders.

When sales enablement teams focus on rep performance as a top five goal for the function, they increase the likelihood that they will exceed executive expectations by

63%

Additionally, these teams that have it as a top five goal are 11-percentage-points more likely to be perceived as having a positive impact on sales performance. Since the benefits of consistent performance cascade through the key objectives of executive leaders, prioritizing this in all of sales enablement's efforts can help elevate the perception among core stakeholders of sales enablement and the strategic value it brings to organizations.

Respondents who agree that sales enablement has a positive impact on sales performance



GOING FORWARD

If practitioners can increase the number of reps that can consistently hit their quotas, it will have a massive impact on revenue, not to mention buy-in across the revenue organization for enablement initiatives. Boosting rep engagement through intentional programming aimed at motivating productivity, ensuring effective use of sales plays by leveraging tools, and elevating rep consistency as a core sales enablement goal can help ensure reps are prepared to regularly achieve quota.



For me, [the enablement] brand is about being expected, repeatable, and consistent.



–Hannah Ensler-Rivel, Director of Revenue Enablement, Red Canary

COLLABORATION WITH REVENUE STAKEHOLDERS

Sales enablement can be the connective tissue between revenue leaders and the field, putting the strategic goals of revenue leaders into action across revenue-facing teams. Where enablement sits within an organization can help streamline enablement's ability to align its efforts with strategic priorities, and intentional collaboration with revenue stakeholders can enhance enablement's influence on revenue.

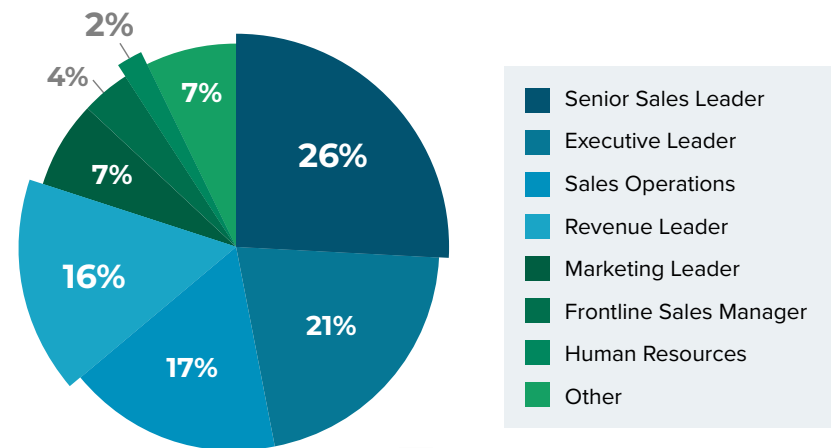


ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

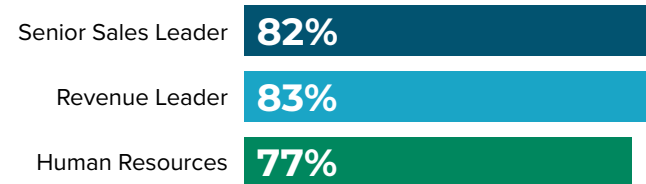
While sales enablement continues to report to a wide range of leaders across the business, from HR to sales ops, more teams are beginning to align under revenue leadership, including sales and revenue leaders.

This shift not only demonstrates increased desire to align enablement efforts with revenue strategy, but it also is correlated with significant business impact. For the 26% of respondents reporting to a senior sales leader, average customer retention rates are 5-percentage-points higher than those reporting to an HR leader. Similarly, the 16% of organizations reporting to a revenue leader see average customer retention rates that are 6-percentage-points greater than those reporting to an HR leader.

Where does sales enablement directly report into?



Business impact:



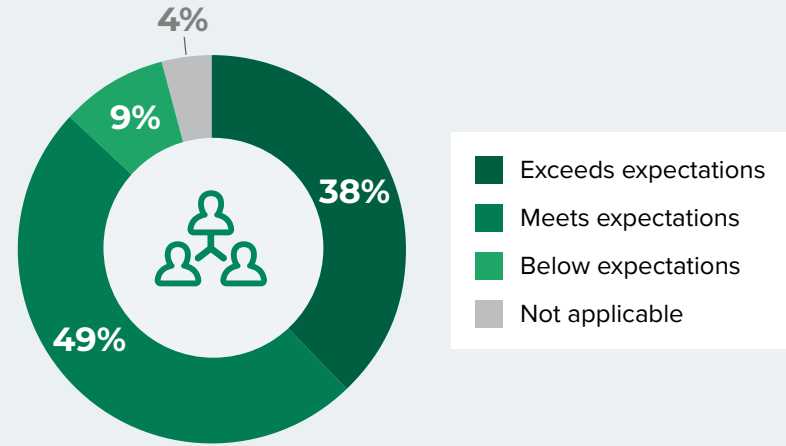
Customer retention

COLLABORATION

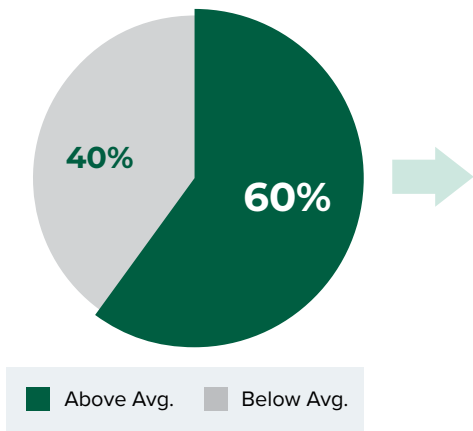
While reporting structure can help keep enablement strategy deeply entwined with the vision of revenue leaders, it is also important for enablement to proactively and intentionally collaborate with sales and revenue leaders to execute against their goals regardless of where it sits in an organization. In addition, collaborating with marketing leaders is important to ensure full alignment of go-to-market efforts across the entire customer journey.

Our research found that many sales enablement teams are successful in this endeavor, as 38% of respondents said sales enablement exceeds expectations in collaborating with sales leadership, and an additional 49% said sales enablement meets expectations.

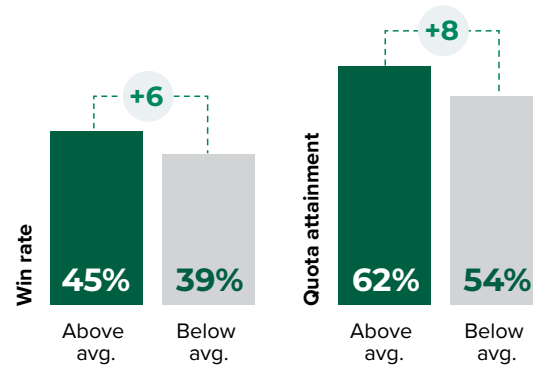
How would you rate the effectiveness of your sales enablement collaboration with sales leadership?



How effective is sales enablement at correlating sales enablement initiatives to sales goals?



Business impact:



When enablement effectively collaborates with revenue leaders, practitioners are better positioned to design programs that move the needle on sales goals and provide value in the areas that executive leaders care about most. For example, the 60% of organizations where sales enablement is above average in its ability to correlate enablement efforts to sales goals also have average win rates that are 6 percentage points greater and average quota attainment that is 8 percentage points higher than those that are below average.

GOING FORWARD

Sales enablement can be a revenue leader's secret weapon to catalyze improved performance against their core objectives across revenue-facing teams. Intentional alignment and proactive collaboration with revenue leaders is necessary to do this effectively. Reporting into a leader within the revenue organization can help streamline alignment and collaboration, but regardless of where enablement reports, practitioners can elevate their ability to influence revenue performance by partnering with leaders to correlate their efforts to sales goals.



[Sales enablement] can be that change agent and really get [revenue leaders] to start thinking about going beyond their silos.



–**Jeff Davis, Author of Create Togetherness**

ENABLEMENT INSIGHTS FOR IMPACT

Without reliable analysis into the underlying factors that drive progress on revenue goals, it can be challenging to effectively design solutions to support strategic initiatives. Sales enablement can help leaders make the necessary strategic decisions to achieve and exceed revenue targets by providing this data-backed insight, and leveraging the right solutions to do so.

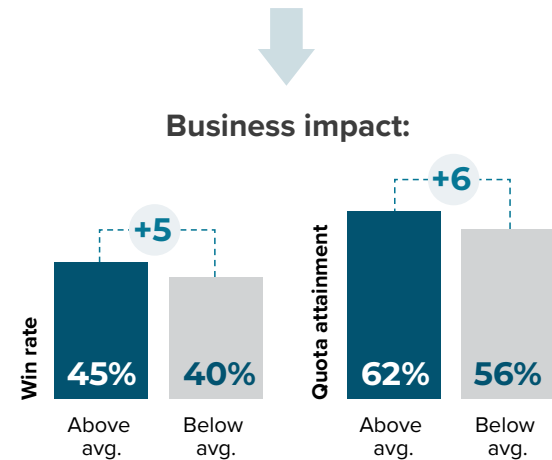
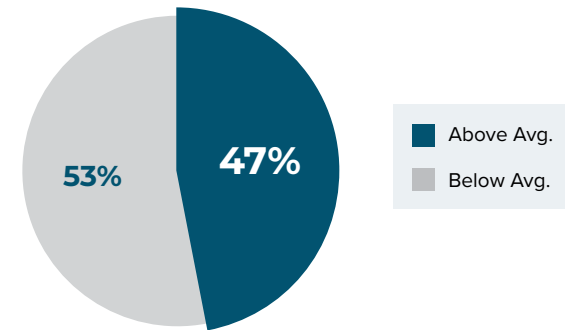


DATA ANALYTICS

It is essential for enablement to be able to evaluate progress against the revenue organization's key goals and initiatives. In doing so, use of data-backed insights as well as an ability to communicate the impact of its efforts on business goals can help scale success of enablement programs.

In fact, the 47% of respondents at organizations where sales enablement is above average in its ability to use data to analyze the impact of enablement efforts also see a 5-percentage-point increase in average win rate and 6-percentage-point increase in quota attainment.

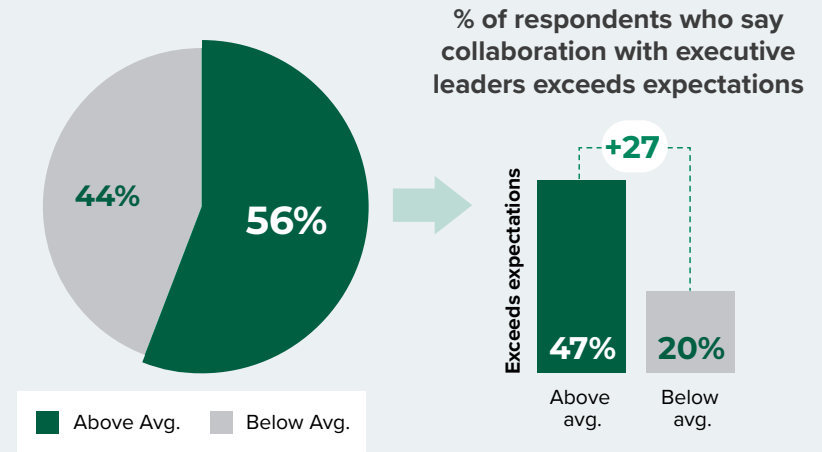
How effective is sales enablement at using data to analyze business impact of sales enablement efforts?



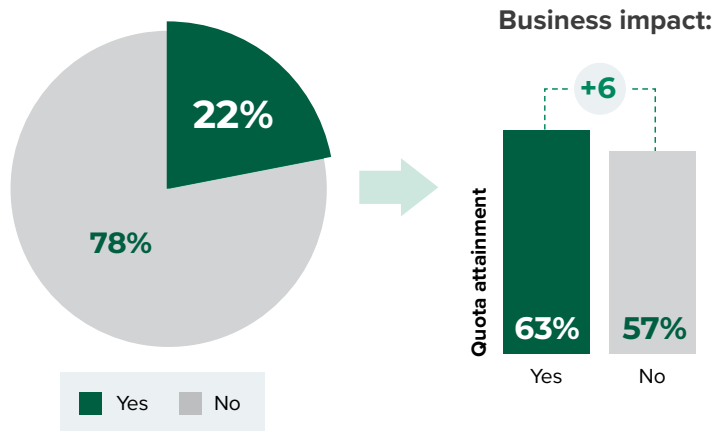
When sales enablement is above average in its ability to communicate the business impact of its efforts, it is also more effective in its collaboration efforts with executive leaders. The 56% of respondents that are above average in this area are 2.3 times as likely to exceed expectations in collaborating with executive leaders than those that are below average.

Being able to both effectively use data and then bring those insights to stakeholders helps not only improve visibility and buy-in for enablement programs, but it also can help ensure leaders have the intel necessary to confidently capitalize on opportunities.

How effective is sales enablement at communicating sales enablement's value to the business?



Does your company use a revenue intelligence tool to support its sales efforts?



REVENUE INTELLIGENCE

In addition to providing valuable insight to help leaders make strategic decisions, the ability to have insight into what is moving the needle on revenue goals can also help enablement effectively plan initiatives and iterate to refine efforts. Revenue intelligence tools, which 22% of respondents use, can help increase effectiveness on this front, as they can provide crucial analysis into how reps are applying the knowledge, skills, and tools that enablement arms them with in interactions with prospects and customers.

While having such tools in the sales enablement tech stack is correlated with a 6-percentage-point improvement in quota attainment compared to those without these tools, optimizing use of the tool can scale this impact even further. When leveraged extremely effectively, revenue intelligence tools are correlated with a 9-percentage-point improvement in quota attainment.

GOING FORWARD

Sales enablement can play a pivotal role in uncovering weaknesses in performance, identifying opportunities for improvement, and coordinating the efforts of revenue-facing teams to drive revenue growth. This requires practitioners to effectively leverage tools to gather and decipher the necessary data-backed insights that leaders need to make strategic decisions, as well as clearly communicate how enablement can make a difference.



By quantitatively proving the value sales enablement provides, practitioners can secure their well-deserved seat at the table



–Jason Salfen, Director of Enterprise Sales Programs, Salesforce

Conclusion

Sales enablement can accelerate the strategic change needed for organizations to maintain high performance in a rapidly evolving business landscape. As organizations continue to recognize and invest in its ability to propel progress against revenue targets, it is imperative for practitioners to prioritize the areas of sales enablement that can provide the greatest opportunities for impact. This year's report showcases three themes that practitioners can use as a guide for their efforts in the year ahead:



ENGAGEMENT MOTIVATES CONSISTENT REP PERFORMANCE

When reps are unengaged, they often feel less compelled to contribute their full effort to their role or go above and beyond to exceed expectations. By focusing on engaging reps internally, sales enablement can not only build a healthy sales culture, but also motivate reps into action and inspire them to maximize their potential.



ALIGNMENT WITH REVENUE GOALS IMPROVES COLLABORATION

Proving how sales enablement efforts enhance revenue performance in terms of executive priorities can go a long way in building the trust necessary for effective collaboration. By correlating all enablement programs to specific sales goals, practitioners can demonstrate the value of enablement to revenue leaders and work in lockstep with them to execute on strategic initiatives.



ENABLEMENT INSIGHTS ON IMPACT DRIVES EXECUTIVE CONFIDENCE

By providing clear, data-backed insight into what works and what could be further refined in the revenue strategy, sales enablement can ensure that executive leaders have the resources they need to confidently make decisions. At the same time, enablement can elevate its own perception as a business function that is pivotal to organizational success.

ABOUT HIGHSPOT

Highspot is the sales enablement platform that reps love. It empowers companies to elevate customer conversations that drive strategic growth. The intuitive platform combines intelligent content management, training, contextual guidance, customer engagement, and actionable analytics. Revenue teams use Highspot to deliver a unified buying experience that increases revenue, customer satisfaction, and retention. For more information, please visit highspot.com

ABOUT SALES ENABLEMENT PRO

Sales Enablement PRO brings together leading sales enablement professionals—across practitioners, thought leaders, consultants, and solution providers—to provide sales enablement expertise from experts. For more information, please visit salesenablement.pro

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