Grande Guide to
Sales Enablement

What Is a Grande Guide?

You know what the typical day is like for marketers. Between brainstorming and strategy sessions, last-minute requests and impromptu meetings, and trips to meet customers, you can barely find time to breathe —never mind keep up with the latest marketing trends. That's why Oracle Eloqua developed the Grande Guide series. The Grande Guides were developed to give you the opportunity to become proficient in a key marketing topic—in this case, sales enablement—with a minimal investment in time.

This overview focuses on the value of sales enablement in generating integrated profiles of each customer— allowing the sales force to identify prime opportunities and develop an effective approach for each customer.

What Is Sales Enablement?

Sales enablement—also referred to as sales readiness —is about helping today's salesperson deliver the right content to the right person at the right time to facilitate this (mostly independent) buying process. It's up to you to get your sales team ready by making it easy to access and use the following:

- A prioritized list of whom to contact next based on lead quality and purchase intent

- Behavioral data summarizing prospect interests and intent

- Tools for tracking and alerting best prospects to key activities as they advance through the buying process

- A library of content aligned to specific stages of the buying process that helps build trust and rapport with the buyer—ultimately encouraging that prospect to reach a favorable purchase decision

The average sales cycle is 22% longer than five years ago.
Sirius Decisions, "Buying in to Longer Sales Cycles"

Why Sales Enablement Matters Today

Let's face it: No one wants to be sold to, especially by a salesperson. When was the last time you even answered an unidentified call at work, much less listened patiently as an overeager sales rep fumbled through a script? The same is true for your prospects. That's why they avoid your salespeople until the last possible minute, instead educating themselves by accessing publicly available information and connecting with peers online until they've narrowed their options. In fact, Research Firm SiriusDecisions estimates that the buyer's journey is 70 percent complete by the time a salesperson is contacted.

This shift places buyers in control of the sales cycle. And that forces corresponding changes in how your organization sells. The winning sales rep is not the person who can hunt down leads, arm prospects with content, and close the deal, but the one who consults with prospects to simplify their decision-making process based on a keen understanding of buyer interest and behavior. When a prospect finally reaches out, your sales rep had better understand everything there is to know about the buyer and be prepared to deliver immediate value. That's where sales enablement comes in.

> *"The measurement of demand creation and the sales pipeline begins the process of co-ownership of the funnel by both marketing and sales. It also clearly identifies the role that both play in the health of an organization's new business pursuits, and systematizes the fact that quality activity at the funnel top will result in a healthier funnel bottom."*
> **SiriusDecisions**

Why Do I Need to Understand Sales Enablement?

Your success as a marketer depends on your ability to help the sales team sell. Although a number of factors play into this success, disseminating knowledge and content is key. After all, many salespeople spend inordinate amounts of time researching prospects and then creating content to facilitate the buying process for those prospects who are not yet ready to move forward.

What if you could tell your sales reps what each prospect is interested in, so that they could communicate more intelligently about topics that resonate? And what if you armed your reps with the tools and content to easily engage and keep in touch with hot prospects? Your salespeople could then focus on building strong relationships with prospects and guiding them to a buying decision—in the process enhancing your own perceived value as a marketer.

Why Does My Organization Need to Understand Sales Enablement?

So why should your company care about sales enablement? If your organization is like most, it spends a lot of money on sales. And because it's making such a big investment, it wants to generate the most productivity and best results from the sales team. Sales enablement lets your company do just that.

Sales Enablement Basics

Effective sales enablement helps your marketing team pass higher-quality leads to sales, allowing your sales reps to focus on higher-priority activities. This effort in turn drives a steadier, more predictable pipeline.

Also, when your sales reps are reaching—and even surpassing—their quotas faster than ever before, they'll be eager to stay onboard. Just as important, your organization will better understand how marketing demand translates to pipeline and how conversion rates impact revenue—ultimately enabling the holy grail of sales and marketing: better alignment.

It's easy to get overwhelmed by terminology and techniques when it comes to sales enablement. But here's all you really need to know: Sales enablement covers the sales side of the revenue cycle, including:

- Identifying prospects whose behaviors and company activities make them promising buyers.

- Providing sales with topics they should raise to engage each individual prospect in a high-value, relevant dialogue.

- Educating sales on available tools and techniques for tracking customer prospects throughout the buying cycle.

- Delivering information that sales can quickly access, customize, and send to prospects to help them navigate the buying process.

The Key to Success:
Understanding Digital Body Language

Your marketing organization is in a unique position to help sales thrive when it comes to sales enablement. But your success depends on understanding how and when buyers are interacting with your website, content, and campaigns.

It's not enough to generate high-quality leads. You also need to deliver the information sales needs to close business. And that means being able to understand prospect interest and intent based on what they are doing on your site.

In fact, understanding prospect behavior is more powerful than knowing demographic information.

For example, on your registration form, a prospect might indicate interest in one of your solutions. But a greater need might become apparent when you see what content the prospect downloads and the time he or she spends viewing your online demos and webinars. With this information, your sales rep can engage in a more targeted, relevant conversation with the prospect—which helps accelerate the close.

- eBook Chapter3
- Analyst Webinar
- Vertical Webinar
- User Conference
- eBook Chapter4
- Partner White Paper
- Partner Conference
- Analyst Conference
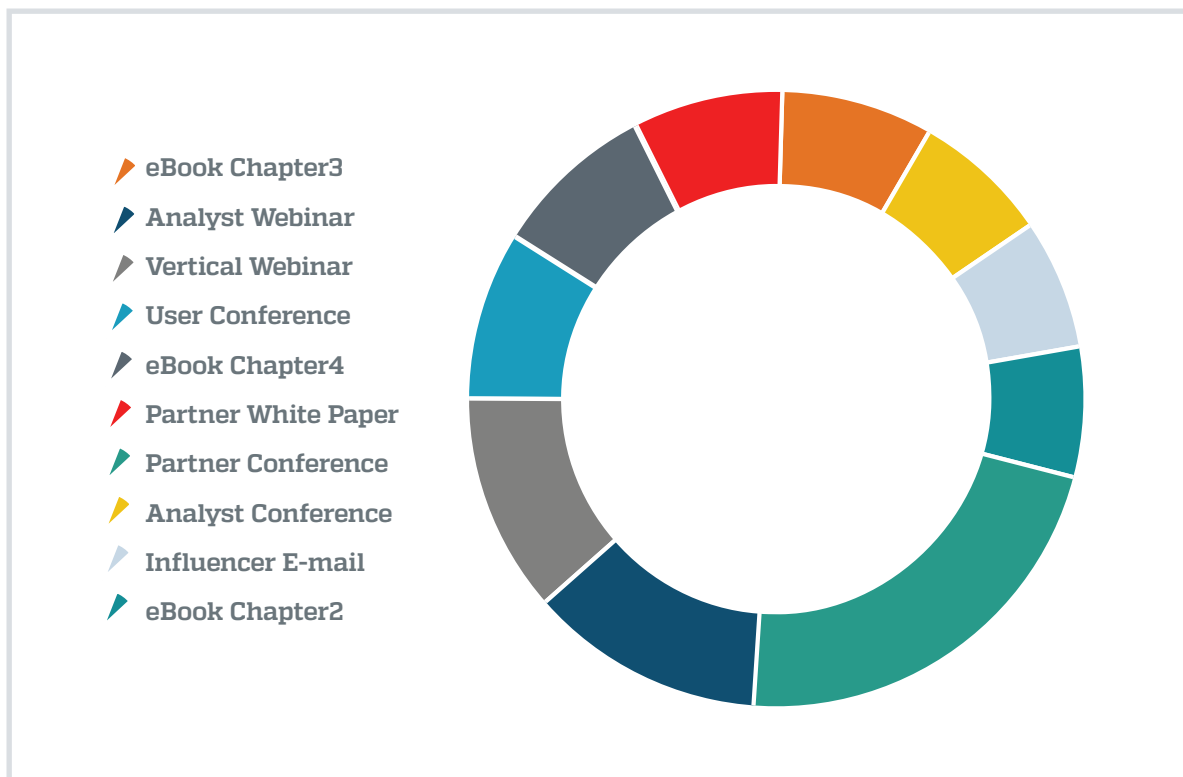- Influencer E-mail
- eBook Chapter2

FIGURE 1. INTEGRATED SALES AND MARKETING PLATFORMS ENABLE MARKETERS TO QUICKLY UNDERSTAND WHICH CAMPAIGNS ARE DRIVING THE MOST RESPONSES AND HAVING THE BIGGEST IMPACT ON REVENUE

Sales Enablement Tools and Technologies

You and your sales reps can and should tap into tools and technologies to get your sales enablement efforts humming. Here are several you cannot afford to overlook:

CRM OR SALES FORCE AUTOMATION (SFA)

Use these systems to manage sales activities, including daily tasks, activity record-keeping, lead routing and disposition, and opportunity and forecast modeling.

MARKETING AUTOMATION

Bridge your marketing and sales databases, and connect marketing activities to sales leads/opportunities in CRM and other favored tools.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

Sales reps need systems that can help them quickly identify opportunities, communicate with prospects, and close deals. These can include functionality such as:

1. Sending real-time e-mail alerts directly to sales when hot prospects visit your website (including visitor details like pages visited, length of visit, and search terms used).

2. Deciphering a prospect's online activities and behavior so that your salespeople can focus conversations on topics that resonate with buyers.

3. Enabling sales to access and customize prebuilt templates and track recipient response directly through their e-mail program.

4. Automatically e-mailing a report to your sales reps on prospect activities so they can track important contacts, companies, and hot leads.

Sales Enablement Best Practices

When it comes to excelling at sales enablement, there's no need to reinvent the wheel. Instead, follow these proven best practices:

SHARE RELEVANT INFORMATION

When you send leads to sales, do you provide any insights into the prospect's recent activity? You'd be amazed at the amount of information marketers collect on websites and through campaigns, but don't share with the sales team.

INCORPORATE A PROVEN SALES TECHNIQUE

Focus on your top reps: What communication techniques do they use to engage prospects? How can you pass these on to all your sales reps?

ARM SALES TO ENGAGE

Start with "foundational" e-mail templates on the following topics; they are easy to draft and will get used frequently:

- **Fast facts about the company.** Link to a fact sheet or About Us page on the website.

- **"I understand your pain."** Send customized messages that match the subsets of your prospect database.

- **"Check out this online demo."** Use action-oriented messages that inspire prospects to further explore products or services.

- **"I recently switched jobs and joined an exciting new company."** This is a big hit with newbies.

TEST YOUR SALES ENABLEMENT TOOLS

Get feedback from a small group of reps before rolling tools out to the entire sales organization. This helps develop sales champions for your initiative and builds credibility for your efforts.

MAKE IT EASY

Make prospect information and tools available in the environments that are familiar to your sales team, such as CRM, Microsoft Outlook, and mobile devices.

DON'T FORCE ADOPTION

Collaborate with salespeople to demonstrate the benefits of your tools—then publicize successes to the rest of the team.

> *Businesses that invest in sales tools to provide more insight about prospects see:*
>
> **32% more accurate sales forecasts to determine which prospects will become paying customers**
> **49% of all sales reps achieving quota**
>
> *Aberdeen Group, "Yesterday and Today: How Contemporary Intelligence Users Earn Best in Class Results" December 2012*

Sales Enablement in Action

**Not convinced of the impact sales enablement can have on your organization?
Check out these examples of success:**

1 PLUM BENEFITS

Contracts with companies to offer employee perks—namely discount entertainment tickets. By tagging pages on its site to track online behavior and pushing that data into its CRM system, Plum Benefits enables its sales team to generate higher revenues when talking to prospects. For example, a prospect might indicate on a form that she is interested in ballet, but her onsite behavior shows she was viewing sports and concert tickets. With this insight, the sales rep can make a cross-sell.

2 MERIDIUM

Provides software that helps companies track and manage the performance of their production assets. The firm's inside sales team spent hours qualifying prospects by looking up information. By tracking what's happening on its site and combining the information with data collected via form submissions, Meridium can proactively arm the sales team with additional insights. This sales enablement process allows the inside sales team to focus on higher-value activities, such as sending relevant content to prospects. Thanks to targeted delivery of relevant content, Meridium's sales cycle has been reduced by three to six months. Plus, by integrating Oracle Eloqua with its CRM system—and delivering marketing campaigns through Oracle Eloqua—Meridium has realized a 30 percent increase in sales opportunities.

What's Next in Sales Enablement?

While it's important to be up to speed on the here and now, it's also smart to think ahead. Here's what's on the horizon for sales enablement:

GOING MORE MOBILE

Whether sales reps are on the road or grabbing lunch, they want to respond as quickly as possible to prospects. Your sales team will need mobile-device access to information about opportunities and prospects' online behavior so that they can do just that.

INTEGRATING CRM WITH SOCIAL

As more and more prospects turn to their social networks for input on buying decisions, your sales force needs a way to tap into their activities. Thus, you can expect to see greater integration between sales tools like CRM and social media channels.

GETTING PREDICTABLE

Sales reps are always looking for a way to shorten the sales cycle. Soon, they'll want you to predict the next best course of action with hot leads based on your analysis of how similar buyers responded to your content and website while still in research mode.

> *The ultimate goal of enablement is to help sales close more deals faster. And they can do that when they access their prospects' digital body language —in other words, the digital clues that prospects leave behind when they engage with marketing assets.*
>
> *Ardath Albee (author, eMarketing Strategies for the Complex Sale)*

Sales Conversations as Extensions of Marketing Dialogues

Considering that much of the buying process is completed prior to sales engagement, it's imperative that your salespeople have the insights they need to step into the conversation seamlessly. If marketing has created buyer personas and is mapping content across all states of the buying process to address relevant problem-to-solution scenarios, sales enablement becomes an extension of an already familiar dialogue for the prospect.

Prospects are looking to solve problems, not buy products. According to Forrester Research, only 15 percent of executives say that their meetings with salespeople meet expectations. As a result, only 7 percent of them report scheduling follow-up meetings. Improving the information shared during hand-offs with the intention to extend marketing dialogues will help salespeople improve those odds.

This approach provides many benefits, including the following:

- Less time spent on research

- Reduced need for sales to customize content

- Improved ability to meet prospect's expectations

- Increased pipeline momentum

Effective hand-offs should include the following information:

- Overview of problem-to-solution scenario presented to the prospect

- Activity history detailing the scenario content viewed by the prospect

- Links to the remaining collateral in the scenario series with brief descriptions to expedite orientation (ensuring that your salesperson knows what to use next)

- Customer stories related to the problem, industry, and company size of the prospect, with key points highlighted

- Topics for conversation based on the prospect's expressed interests and industry

- Slides addressing the problem from the prospect's perspective, based on helping them meet their business objectives

This may sound exhaustive, but if marketing has focused its content strategy on the prospect's perspectives—as well as the entirety of the buying process—this information should already be available. Everything but the prospect's activity history can be prebundled and ready to go. Your marketing automation system should male including the activity history an efficient process, with all the information you need readily available.

Make sure to get feedback from salespeople about what works and what doesn't so that you can continue to refine the hand-off materials over time as patterns are discovered and the sales activity that produces wins is evaluated.

Conclusion

Now that you know what sales enablement is and why it matters, it's time to implement a sales enablement program of your own. By adhering to the guidelines and best practices outlined here, you can ensure that your marketing and sales teams are in perfect synch—improving the information shared during hand-offs so that salespeople have the insights they need to continue the conversation seamlessly and convert leads to sales.

Appendix: Sales Enablement Resources

ELOQUA SALES ENABLEMENT WEB PAGES

eloqua.com/platform/lead_management/
sales_enablement/

ARTICLES ON MARKETING AND SALES ALIGNMENT

visionedgemarketing.com/articles-on
-marketing-and-sales-alignment.html

BLOGS

It's All About Revenue

Marketing Interactions

Enable Your Sales

The Sales Enabler

Sales Enablement in a Sales 2.0 World

SiriusDecisions

The Top Line

E-BOOKS

Beyond Lead Flow—Enabling Sales Through Marketing Automation

WHITE PAPERS

Reading Your Buyer's Digital Body Language

ORGANIZATIONS/EVENTS

Sales Leadership Roundtable

Forrester's Technology Sales Enablement Forum

RESEARCH

InsideSales.com/MIT Lead Response Management Study

Don't Understand Sales Enablement? You're Not Alone! IDC Sale Advisory Practice