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Comprehensive Sales Support Guide

Go from sales support to full-scale sales empowerment!

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ABOUT TRIPTYCH

Fueled by The Marek Group, the Triptych platform was created to empower large, distributed sales forces, including highly regulated industries, with a sales-first focus. The goal isn't just to modernize, it's to transform the way your sales and marketing teams operate.

Our expertise in through-channel marketing and field sales support enables small marketing teams to support distributed sales forces at scale.We know that there's a need for readily available content in the format that sales reps and their prospects want. Our sales-first focus and omnichannel content delivery help your reps achieve optimum quota attainment.

We optimize time and resources to achieve your goals as a department, a division, and a company.

COMPANY PRINCIPLES

Maximize Value

We deliver the right content at the right time and in the right medium to maximize the value of every conversation and drive the sale to close.

Scalability

We use technology to do repetitive tasks and heavy lifting, in an elegant platform for the best possible user experience that requires little to no training to use.

Vendor-Agnostic

No vendor should force you to use their portal. A vendor-agnostic approach gives your sales team a central hub that's fueled by integrated business intelligence and decision-making insights.

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SALES SUPPORT GUIDE

Table of Contents

01 What is Sales Support

02 Identifying an ineffective processes

03 A process that drives growth

04 Sales-Marketing Alignment

05 Sales support & Consultative Selling

06 A prospective look at sales support

Summary:

From a collection of earlier blogs materializes a comprehensive guide for building a progressive sales support process. Containing symptoms of incompetent processes, steps for identifying root causes, as well as a foundational model for building a successful system, Triptych brings you a thorough exploration of sales support with updated statistics and industry standards.

01 WHAT IS SALES SUPPORT

Building a transformative sales support team begins with understanding the fundamentals— what sales support means, what added value it brings to your organization, how it empowers sales, as well as what has caused it to be a historically neglected component of sales.

Sales Support Defined

Sales support is a professional team that feed sales representatives the information and tools necessary to quickly and effectively close deals. Performing their role involves cultivating connections through content creation, lead nurturing, and training implementation.

Ultimately, the sales support team is involved in every step of the sales cycle.

The support team plants the seed with pertinent materials that coax the prospect to consider how their organization could benefit. Once that seed of consideration takes root, the prospect becomes a lead that the support team then hands off to sales who will present their tailored sales pitch with the relevant content that their support professional has gathered. Once a deal is closed, the support team continues to nurture the relationship by fielding customer questions as well as providing the materials necessary to begin the on-boarding process.

The services that are provided by the sales support team are essential for the relationship between the sales representative and the prospect to grow and fully bloom.

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WHAT IS SALES SUPPORT?

Recognize the value of support in sales

Sales support provides value to your organization in a myriad of ways, beginning by reducing the amount of time that a sales representative must dedicate to non-selling tasks on a weekly basis.

THE AVERAGE SALESPERSON SPENDS

66%

OF THEIR WORK WEEK ON NON-SELLING RELATED TASKS

At nearly twice the amount of time spent selling, non-selling tasks are the most time consuming activities of their week. Imagine how many more sales your reps could produce if given back even a fraction of that time.

That's what sales support aims to do. They're the Jack/Jane of all trades and their daily responsibilities may include:

Answering Customer Inquiries— freeing up sales reps from busywork and straightforward requests.

Generating Leads— using digital channels and research to gather, sort, and organize for sales reps.

Preparing Communications— creating advertising, campaigns, promotions, and public relations content that grows into prospects, buyers, and return customers for sales reps.

Providing Training— providing pre-purchase confidence to prospects through extra product information: schematics, instructions.

Sales support continues to be beneficial with an average annual cost of $32,594 per sales support specialist. That is just over half the cost of the average sales representative ($61,317 annually).

Finally, some sales support tasks can even be automated. In fact, sales tech adoption is on the rise with more than half of those surveyed reporting that they use at least 6 tools in 2019, up from 2 in 2017.

Companies with the best sales support are meeting quotas while growing revenue and cutting cost concurrently.

WHAT IS SALES SUPPORT?

Technology and Sales support

As briefly mentioned above, many top performing sales companies have recognized the benefits of automating their enablement (sales support). Usage of enablement solutions increased by 567% in just two years. Using technology is essential to scaling your support team, but it must be used correctly and in balance with your analog support (discussed more in a later chapter).

When using sales tech, it's essential to focus your technology on assisting your sales team first, just as a sales support representative would. The technology should be intuitive enough to direct your rep to the precise content that fits their current selling situation.

Further more, your sales tech should centralize and spread knowledge throughout your company while reducing costs— eliminating costly compliance violations, repeated print requests, and content waste.

With a digital enablement approach, where once salespeople were armed with folders and brochures, they now have all-in-one digital platforms that use searchable content and customizable templates.

A tech sales support puts more time back into customer-facing roles and revenue generating activities.

Why has sales support been historically overlooked?

Unfortunately, sales support is often forgotten. It's generally considered a 'want' rather than a 'need' and is often cut during a period of financial strain. For example, consider the following story:

A major company in a revenue slump wanted to reduce its sales force costs. They decided to cut back-office workers and protect frontline staff. After all, executives said, salespeople make sales. Although costs fell, frontline sales took over support tasks. Sellers were now busy answering customer inquiries, sifting leads, and generating content. Their additional duties cut into the time they needed to attend to customers. When managers saw sales numbers dropping, they panicked and added more sales reps. In the end, they had a more expensive workforce, which produced less than when they started.

At the end of the day, great sales support isn't easily accomplished, and may seem only a layer of unnecessary complexity or expense.

WHAT IS SALES SUPPORT?

How do you avoid putting yourself in a situation like the one in our example? Here are a few tips:

Be a lean and smart manager. Remove as much admin as possible. Through digital platforms, you can streamline many processes, such as training and development, collaboration, and communication.

Create small teams. People work better in smaller groups. Many studies confirm that this effect exists in groups of all ages — from kindergartens to classrooms to the workplace. If your management or support staff is struggling to cover 30 people, they aren't going to give your sales reps as much attention.

Examine the data. With smaller teams and digital tools, much of the manager's work in analyzing the workforce can be cut, streamlined, or automated.This leads to time and cost savings. Find out what works and what doesn't, and then share it across your networks.

Speed up the feedback loop from marketing to sales. With knowledge shared transparently across your enterprise, the improvement cycle can speed up. Through iteration, you can push your business to be agile in responding to marketplace changes.

Through these steps, you can increase the chances that your sales support will be a successful boost to your business.

Conclusion

Only through support comes growth

The first step to creating a thriving new client is not actually a great sales team, but rather a great sales *support* team. A great sales support team establishes roots for sustainable future growth, that a sales team can then continue to nurture until the deal is closed.

Sales support helps your sales reps realize financial goals by giving them the freedom to forget busywork and admin tasks. It's a cost-effective solution, and it's getting cheaper by the day thanks to digital tools enabling automation and streamlining.

02 IDENTIFYING AN INEFFECTIVE PROCESS

As we have been discussing, sales support is an important, yet often undervalued, component within a sales organization. Companies place heavy emphasis on the sales division, but support teams frequently lack the resources to keep up. Inadequate or unevenly distributed sales support is the issue that arises from such practices. Subsequently, businesses with such practices are watching great amounts of money go straight down the drain.

Whether you have an existing support staff, but your numbers just aren't reflecting the benefits they should be, or you are new to the sales support arena, it's important to understand what causes a process to be ineffective. Identifying problems and causes is the only way to a permanent fix.

IDENTIFYING AN INEFFECTIVE PROCESS

Why is this balance so difficult to maintain?

The issue starts with your marketing team's size. Most organizations have a large sales force supported by a comparatively small marketing team that can't handle a high volume of one-off requests and retain a strategic mindset. Sometimes resulting in, "If we can't personalize sales materials for all, then we won't personalize for anyone," a detrimental mistake.

When sales reps can't personalize the content they send to support the different stages of the buyer's journey, they can't give their best pitch. As a result, they could lose out to competitors with a more adaptive sales process.

An unmanageable ratio of sales reps to support professionals will swiftly move the weight of the balance significantly toward one side.

What are the signs of an ineffective process?

Having an inefficient sales support process creates several issues for distributed sales organizations. Knowing the signs of an ineffectual process is the best way to prevent them from occurring in the first place.

1 Siloed sales & marketing departments

Effective marketers know what sales needs, but most organizations don't have effective informative channels in place. Without them, both teams are flying blind in the creation and use of sales materials. With effective communication between marketing and sales, companies see a 38% higher win rate.

IDENTIFYING AN INEFFECTIVE PROCESS

2 Marketing loses it's strategic mindset

Several on-demand marketing requests will force your team to regurgitate the same sales materials in a hundred different ways for a hundred different reps. This will cause the department to lose sight of its true goal: creating the most effective, brand-compliant content possible. This leads to a gradual erosion of the material effectiveness.

3 Rogue reps damage your brand integrity

When sales reps don't receive adequate support, they may be forced to personalize their own sales materials. The problem is, when staying on brand and adhering to design and compliance standards is critical, reps may miss the mark if they do it themselves. This results in ineffective content that could open you up to millions of dollars of fines for marketing non-compliance (if you're in a highly regulated industry).

4 Top sales reps receive all the support

Most organizations are only able to provide adequate sales support to a small percentage of reps (typically, your top performers). When that happens, top performers continuously become more effective at selling while other reps are prevented from improving their skills and advancing their number of closed sales. The disparity can hurt morale within the organization and hinder your bottom line.

Just identifying the problem isn't a sure fire way to fix or prevent it. To find a permanent solution or prevent the issue in the first place you will need a clear understanding of where the issues are stemming from.

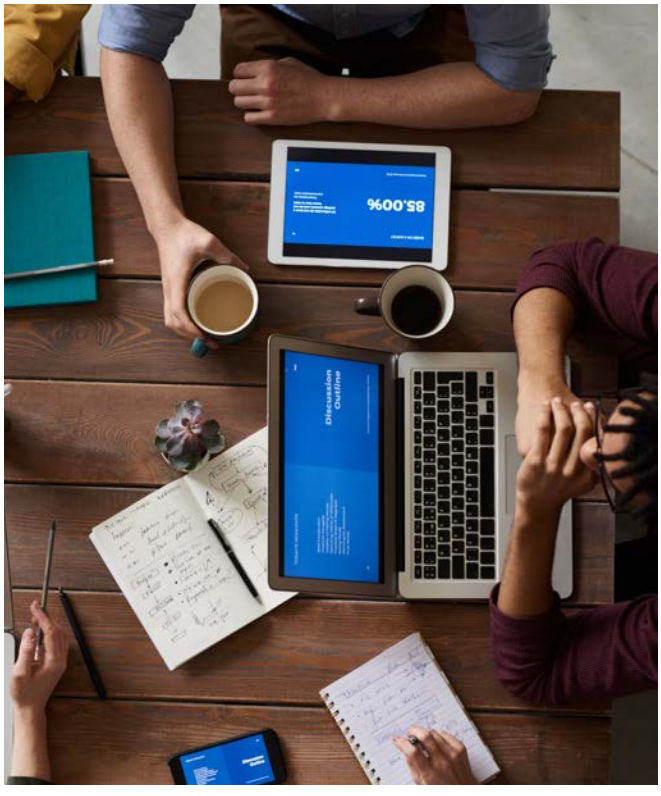
IDENTIFYING AN INEFFECTIVE PROCESS

How can you identify the root of your issues?

The symptoms of poor sales support are easy to spot, but pinpointing the root cause can be challenging. It requires bringing the right players together to have an open, honest discussion about sales support in your organization. Examine the current state of sales support, as well as any associated challenges.

If you're not sure where to start or who to bring in, try taking the following steps:

Bring together sales and marketing leaders: Get answer to questions like, how is sales support being handled? How are reps preparing for sales calls and incorporating material? What are current issues each department is facing? Answers from both groups will reveal solutions at a quicker pace.



Gather and review all analytical data: Data can reveal which content is most effective and which isn't effective at all.Tracking the effectiveness of your current materials can guide improvements to the content library. You'll see where to drill deeper and where to make cuts.

Look at your CRM to find lag in your sales process. If sales reps aren't responding to prospects quickly, they may not have adequate materials available.This would be a clear indication that there's an inadequate amount of sales support.

Gathering this information will give you a clear view of where you're issues are stemming from. Rather than wasting your time and money on the wrong solutions, you'll be able to solve the problem the first time around, or even prevent them all together.

Conclusion

Poor sales support is a two-edged sword. It increases waste and can drag down your bottom line. When a problem arises it can be tempting to simply throw money at it and hope it will disappear. In the long run, it's more effective to know the signs, identify the causes and solve the inefficiencies before scaling. Better yet, build your process with these issues in mind, and boost your annual revenue and customer retention with the right sales support from the start.

03 A PROCESS THAT DRIVES GROWTH

Time and time again, our discussion on how to maintain proper sales support brings us back to a quote from McKinsey & Company which perfectly establishes why so many organizations choose a path more traveled in lieu of sales support.

"Call it the Goldilocks quandary: too little support and your salespeople can't do their jobs well; too much, and you're wasting money. But get it just right, and your sales efforts can drive productivity and growth."

As discussed in the previous chapter, balance is critical to both a successful sales support process and ultimately, a winning sales team. A sales support process that drives growth is built with both balance and signs of inefficiency in mind, which is reflected in the four pillars that comprise its blueprint.

A PROCESS THAT DRIVES GROWTH

The pillars of a growth driving process

Whether you're building a support process from the start or addressing issues within your current process, there are four basic pillars that will bring balance.

1. Buyer's Journey Comprehension
2. Sales Representative Training
3. Sales and Marketing Alignment
4. Routine Process Assessment

The initial pillar of an effective process is influential to the success of each of the pillars that follow. In fact, being the basic pillars, each one is essential to the success of the process. Failure at any stage will result in a stunted growth.

Pillar one: Focused and relevant content for your sales reps is predominately dependent upon the defining of the buyer personas and the buyer's journey specific to your organization.

Failure to clearly define both the personas and their journey, can result in either ineffective content delivered at the proper stage or the proper content delivered at the incorrect stage. Both are highly likely to result in an unsuccessful pitch.

A clear map of buyer personas and the buyer's journey will inform both the content, resources, and technology that the support team will curate as well as the program from which the second pillar will be founded and regularly adapted.

Pillar Two: Profitable utilization of a sales support team requires that the sales reps are fully educated on the best practices for applying the content, resources, and technology given to them. Continuous training programs will keep your sales reps up-to-date on the where, when, why, and how of effectively presenting the supplied materials.

A PROCESS THAT DRIVES GROWTH

As a point of emphasis within many organization in the industry, it would seem wrong if department alignment was excluded from the foundation of a successful process.

Pillar Three: 75% of business buyers say that connected processes are very important to winning their business. Open communication between departments allows sales to share feedback on marketing content and resources with ease. Feedback should be used to inform a consistent analysis of current content and content gaps. Usage and customization should be tracked to identify content that may be updated, reconstructed, or even entirely removed from your library. These processes generate a cycle of improvements that will result in significant growth in number of sales wins across the board as well as a decrease in money wasted on ineffective content.

The final pillar of an effective process is a means for ensuring that your process remains on track and fully intact.

Pillar Four: Keeping the growth of your sales aimed toward the sky requires quick adaptation. In order to adapt to changing environments quickly and effectively, you must perform regular assessment of your process. Identify where things must be altered to address new standards, and implement changes to bring things back to equilibrium. Identify content that is outdated or no longer relevant to your audiences and replace them to ensure there are no gaps. Bring sales and marketing back together in order to identify if there are any barriers that they need to address and find a resolution to remove them.

Building a support structure upon these four pillars will produce a process that progressively adapts and becomes more effective— expanding sales, diminishing waste, and growing revenue. Mending a current process by assessing the present state of these pillars will reveal the cracks in the foundation of your structure where issues have taken root.

A PROCESS THAT DRIVES GROWTH

The four pillars and sales technology

Within these pillars, it is necessary to utilize the technology that has revolutionized the sales industry to scale and expedite. Sales platforms such as CRMs offer tremendous insights into customer relationships and conversion pathways. These platforms are also innovating the process for the personalization of content and the tailoring of each pitch.

As with all things though, technology has its strengths and weakness. It is essential to remember that consultative selling still requires the human touch of a sales representative and their support team.

Conclusion

All successful teams are built on strong fundamentals. The fundamentals necessary for a strong support team are the four vital pillars discussed in this segment— buyer's journey comprehension, sales rep training, sales-marketing alignment, and regular evaluations. All of which should be executed with the proper technology created to fortify them.

A healthy sales support process will enhance consultative selling and allow your business to reap the benefits that should come from employing a sales support staff.

04 SALES-MARKETING ALIGNMENT

"Sales and marketing alignment is potentially the largest opportunity for improving business performance today. When marketing and sales teams unite around a single revenue cycle, they dramatically improve marketing return on investment (ROI), sales productivity, and, most importantly, top-line growth."

—
Marketo

1 of 4 companies report that their sales and marketing departments suffer from misalignment.

The significance of sales and marketing alignment is obvious. What is also obvious, is that misalignment between the two departments is a widely known issue for organizations everywhere. What is not clear, is how you identify and resolve misalignment, or better yet, how you prevent it from happening in the first place. As a mainstay in the success of a sales support process, taking a moment to understand misalignment— what the signs are, how you diagnose them, and ultimately how you fix them— is the best way to prepare and prevent.

SALES-MARKETING ALIGNMENT

Recognize symptoms of misalignment

Recognizing how a problem manifests is an important first step toward finding a solution. Failure to establish or restore a symbiotic relationship between the two departments makes for an inefficient sales support process.

Lack of communication: When sales and marketing aren't speaking to each other, small miscommunications quickly morph into major issues. Lack of communication turns into tension and low employee morale.

Slow distribution: Sluggish responses from sales reps cause close rates to plummet. With 35-50% of all sales going to the fastest-responding sales rep, your business can't afford to be slow. The more time it takes for marketing materials to get into sales' hands, the more opportunities will be missed.

Ineffective materials: Marketing materials that miss the mark on client needs are a waste of resources. Using sales pitches with custom data and insights will please 77% of prospects. However, reps often have to rely on their top-performing pitch instead of taking a more personal approach. Custom materials take longer to receive and are more difficult to create, which complicates the process.

As with the issues with your support process, simply treating a symptom will not always ensure that the issue will clear up. Identifying and addressing the root of your problems is the only way to ensure that it will be fully resolved.

Diagnose the underlying illness

Identify your sales process: Companies with a formal sales process see 18% more revenue growth than those that don't. To map your current sales process, start at the end. This will help you understand what current goals your team has been working towards. From there, bring your sales and marketing teams together to discuss current goals, new goals, and any issues with current processes. Finally, map the steps taken by your sales reps and compare them to the map of your buyer's journey. Once you have a clear image of your current process, you should have a clear line of sight to any gaps or obstructions in your process that may lead to the symptoms of misaligned departments.

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SALES-MARKETING ALIGNMENT

Compare averages: Analyze your sales metrics to determine the average length of time for each status change. The purpose of this is to find your benchmark and compare this with your ideal times.

Investigate problems: Do you notice any status changes consistently taking longer than you'd like? Are your reps getting more "maybes" than solid "yes" or "no" answers for a particular type of sale? Finally, which groups of sales reps see the largest problems with status changes? Consider if these reps have full access to sales support, or if they're lacking the resources to improve. Investigating these problems helps determine gaps in sales support, so you can take out the guesswork and start tackling issues at the source.

Talk to your teams: Once you've pinpointed the disconnects in your sales process, start a conversation with the sales and marketing departments. You should conduct a survey and in-person interviews to find out why those issues are happening. Set up meetings to talk with your marketing team, sales managers, reps, and channel partners.

The following are a few questions to consider during these interviews. Use them as the groundwork for more specific questions that you may have from the other information you have gathered.

Sample questions:

How do you prepare for a sales call?

How long does it take to prepare yourself?

Do you feel like you have the right information?

Are your sales materials up to date and properly customized?

How would you rate communication between departments?

Simple "yes" or "no" answers won't be much help here. Request that employees share opinions on how to improve. The important thing here is to listen and look for patterns. For example, if multiple team members suggest having more frequent meetings, you should listen. The causes of poor sales and marketing alignment are often
hiding in plain sight. Fostering open conversations with both departments is the best step toward improvement.

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SALES-MARKETING ALIGNMENT

How to align sales and marketing.

You've found the issues and root causes of misalignment. Now it's time to take action. These three key steps will help your organization approach sales and marketing more effectively:

Bring in a strong leader: Overhauling your sales and marketing approach will be next to impossible without an ambitious leader at the forefront. Bringing in a champion to the cause will help speed up adoption and keep employee morale high during big change. This person can also lead training programs and offer incentives to keep the new solution on track.

Identify the right marketing materials: A Content Marketing Institute study shows that 60-70% of B2B sales content is never used. To increase efficiency, you need to create transparency and find out what your reps in the field need.

Try using these steps to establish a process for identification:

1. Use your CRM or portal to audit your marketing materials. See what's available and used most frequently.

2. Identify top-performing sales materials by talking with sales managers and top reps to learn what receives the best response. Gathering feedback from marketing can also help you understand specifically what features of these materials are helping reps close sales.

3. Trim the fat by eliminating materials that are ineffective, and instead list the top-performing materials to keep sales in the know.

4. Regularly survey sales to see how satisfied they are with the marketing department's work. Additionally, use real-time business intelligence from the field to find out what sales is using and how they're using it.

SALES-MARKETING ALIGNMENT

Define your departments' true customers: Marketing's main customer is actually the sales department. Sales needs to see the value in the content, test it, and provide feedback on its effectiveness. On the flip side, sales should request what they actually need from marketing, and collaborate on topics for future sales materials. That's where you see true alignment take place.

Track your progress: All this work is for nothing if you don't document and track improvements. Try tracking these important metrics:

1. Time to close
2. Total number of touch points
3. Selling time
4. Quota attainment

Conclusion

Although misalignment is only one of the indicators of an ineffective sales support process, it can be a contributing factor to each of the other indicators as well.

By tracking these metrics alongside your efforts, you can connect your hard work to significant improvements in your sales support process. When you prioritize sales and marketing alignment, your business will experience better departmental communication, eliminate ineffective marketing materials, and ultimately reap the ROI rewards.

05 SALES SUPPORT & CONSULTATIVE SELLING

Today's sales teams craft custom solutions tailored to individual clients. Yet, the end product isn't the only piece of the sales process that gets customized. Winning sales reps change their content and pitch to suit the unique needs of each prospect. These reps that listen, give advice, and adapt to their clients' needs have a competitive edge over those who use a single genaric pitch.

> *"B2B buyers are 5x more likely to engage with a sales professional who provides new insights about their business."*
>
> — Alex Hisaka

Many sales support systems still hold back from encouraging consultative selling, though. This reluctance costs sales reps time and hurts the bottom line. To maximize sales, sales support needs to make consultative selling a top priority.

SALES SUPPORT & CONSULTATIVE SELLING

What is consultative selling?

The best sales reps don't just simply sell to their prospects— they advise them. In essence, consultative selling means focusing on the client rather than the product. To achieve this, reps must gather a thorough understanding of the client's real needs and challenges. Asking the right questions and listening with care is crucial to this process.
As consultants, sales reps need to adapt to each prospect and offer unique insight. They should be prescriptive, not reactionary, advisors. Clear recommendations backed by sound reasoning ease the buying process and lead to increased sales.

"79% of business buyers say it's absolutely critical or very important to interact with a salesperson who is a trusted advisor." — Salesforce.

The case for a custom sales approach

Customized pitches always resonate better than "cookie-cutter" deliveries. Why? An effective pitch incorporates the prospect's specific needs, concerns, and goals. It shows the buyer that the rep has listened and generates confidence that the solution will match their challenges. The same is true for marketing collateral. Reps that tailor their sales content to suit the prospect are in a better position to succeed.

Moreover, personalization is no longer a luxary, your prospects expect it. Both consumer and B2B markets are full of features and messages aimed at the individual. Shopping experiences, digital ads, and user interfaces respond to individual behavior and preferences.

On the other hand, in B2B account-based marketing has become one of the most focused, customized ways to reach out to prospects. These trends are enabled by technology, making easy customization more important than
ever.

Pitfalls of traditional sales support

Sales have moved forward on from static products to custom solutions and strategies, yet sales support hasn't kept up. Consultative selling requires reps to adapt their pitches and content. A traditional support system doesn't allow for these changes— leaving resps feeling bogged down in administrative tasks.

Surprising as it may be, many companies don't recognize this problem. New technology can create a blind spot in sales support. The use of advanced CRMs and analytics fosters a sense of overconfidence. It promotes the belief that sales systems are better than ever. As we discussed in a previous chapter, while CRMs are beneficial, they can't completely replace your human sales reps, and they don't solve all your problems

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SALES SUPPORT & CONSULTATIVE SELLING

Do your CRM and sales support systems empower reps to customize pitches and content quickly? If not, how much time do they waste searching for the right sales content? How many hours do they spend personalizing their materials? If your processes don't prioritize consultative selling, your sales reps can lose valuable time.

Efficient, high-impact sales support

Your business has much to gain from aligning sales support with consultative selling. However, change can upset the balance in large organizations. If you need to overhaul sales support, you can complete the transformation in stages. An evolutionary change, as opposed to a revolutionary change, can ease adoption.

There are four proponents necessary to support the foundation for consultative selling, which are:

Buyer personas. You can't craft targeted messaging if you don't know your audience. Establishing buyer personas defines and segments your target market. Knowing your customer keeps your messaging focused and relevant.

Customer journeys. The sales cycle is a process with many stages. You need to have a firm grasp on what they are, as well as the questions associated with each stage. Understanding customer journeys lets reps deliver the right message at the right time.

Sales training. Defining buyer personas and customer journeys isn't enough. Reps need to be well versed in how to apply these concepts in the field. Sales training gets reps up to speed and empowers them to be more effective.

Sales-marketing alignment. Marketing's content should always be "in tune" with the sales team's approach. The key to their alignment is communication. Hold regular meetings so the two departments can discuss how to act together as a cohesive unit.

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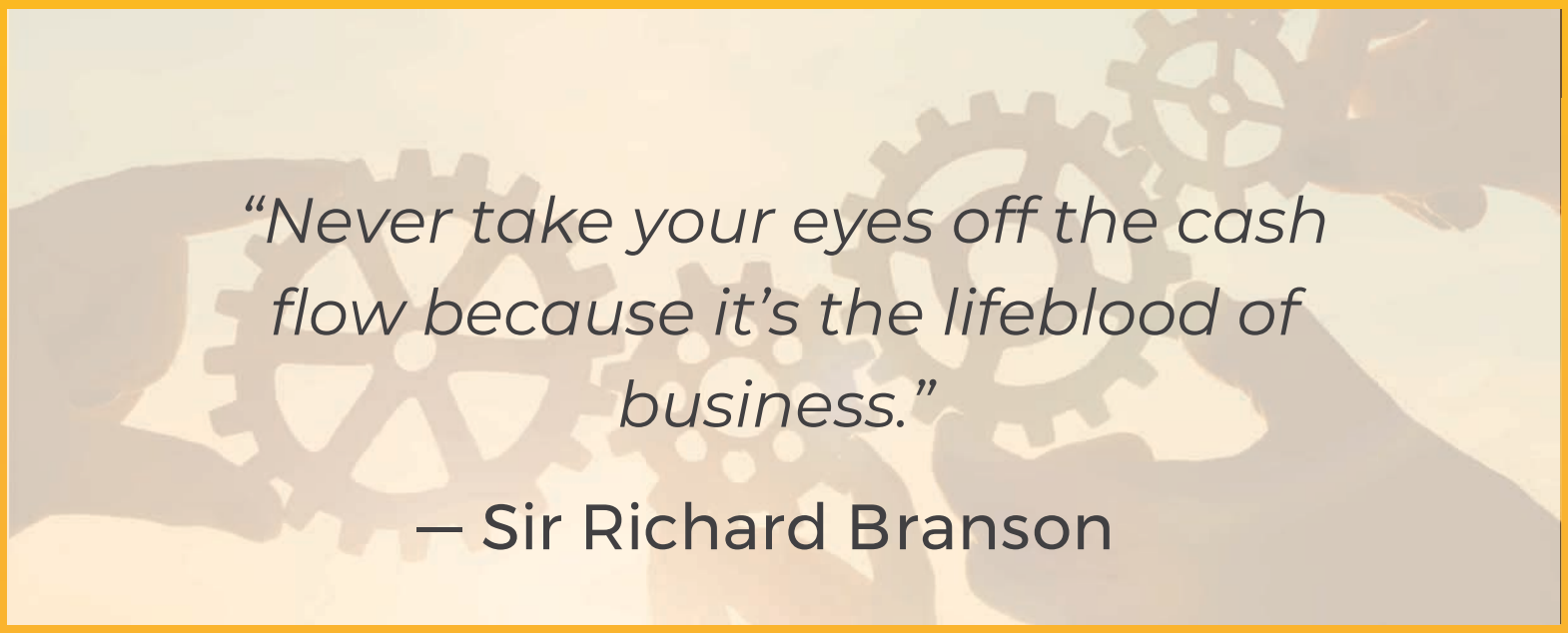
SALES SUPPORT & CONSULTATIVE SELLING

An investment worth making

Today's reps need to be able to adapt their messaging and content. However, traditional sales support often misses the mark, leaving reps to fend for themselves. Does your sales support process help reps adapt in a timely way? Don't get left behind—consultative selling is gaining momentum. Organizations that embrace customized sales strategies are bringing their sales support to n. They're entering a new era of modern selling with technology and innovation. Most importantly, organizations that invest in sales support gain a team that has the resources it needs to drive revenue and demonstrate that you have a best-in-breed solution. Transforming your sales support system might not be easy, but it will pay big in the long run. It all boils down to helping sales reps do their job better. Consultative selling lets them do just that. When sales reps are more productive, your bottom line grows.

06 A PROSPECTIVE LOOK AT SALES SUPPORT



"Never take your eyes off the cash flow because it's the lifeblood of business."

— Sir Richard Branson

Cash flow matters. In fact, it's one of the main reasons that new businesses fail. And it's an essential metric that reflects the health of enterprise-level organizations. You probably know that. But, you may not know that cash flow is closely linked to sales support. To maximize your cash flow without adding overhead, you need to empower your reps to make more sales. If sales isn't driving cash flow, your organization will begin to hurt across the board, and outdated sales support maybe the root cause.

As other sectors of the sales industry have continuously progressed, sales support has remained consistently in the same state. Throughout time, the effectiveness of sales support has deteriorated at a rapid rate. Each year budgets are tightened, commissions are restructured, and sales receives less support.

Furthermore, as we discussed in the previous chapter, sales has moved from selling a small range of set products, to taking a consultative approach with custom solutions. We know that in order to be effective today, reps need to incorporate the buyer's concerns, goals, and needs into their pitch. Historical models of sales support simply cannot be used at scale in today's marketing.

A PROSPECTIVE LOOK AT SALES SUPPORT

Missing the mark in sales support

Even though traditional sales support has been generally stagnant, organizations still tend to think that things are getting better. They're lulled into complacency from a false sense of control. This comes from their CRM and the analytics they use. An organization with these solutions in place certainly has a greater knowledge of how sales reps are cultivating their leads and performing than one that doesn't. But, CRMs won't tell you how many hours of selling time reps are wasting searching for or personalizing their own materials or tell you which marketing messages are most effective at closing sales.

Essentially companies are automating the old approach to sales support while ignoring one big question.

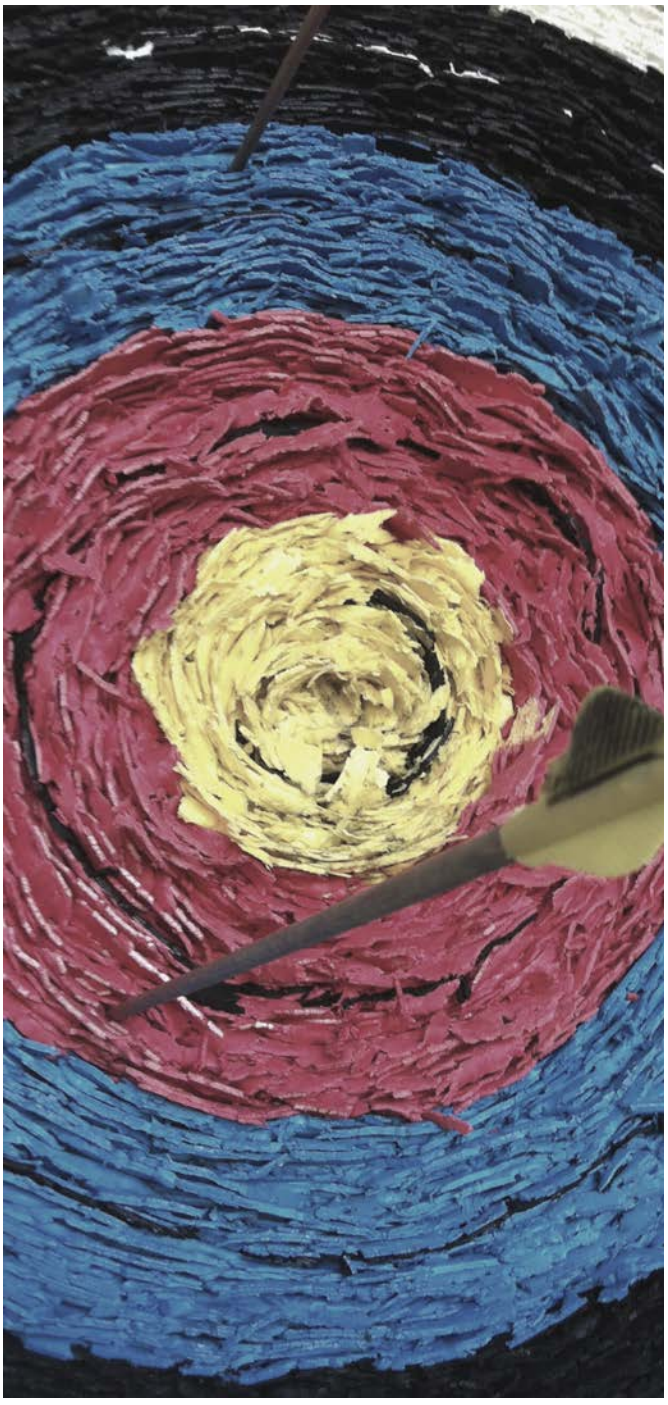
How is sales support assisting our reps in demonstrating to prospects that they have listened and incorporated their needs?

Sales reps with good ears, that is, those who exhibit good listening skills, and adapt their pitch and marketing materials to reflect what they've heard, repeatedly win out over traditional sales models.

Traditional sales support simply isn't up to the challenge of consultative selling, even when partnered with a central CRM.

Segmented contacts and all the automation in the world, will still miss the mark because it cannot adapt the pitch to your prospect.

On top of that, it will miss the mark because your reps are still spending an exorbitant amount of time supporting themselves.



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A PROSPECTIVE LOOK AT SALES SUPPORT

What is the future of sales support?

Sales support must grow and adapt as its counterparts have and will continue to as the buyers and products change. Transformation will come in two major forms: expansion of sales support core goals, and shifting support software focus from process to outcome.

- **The addition of a third core goal**

The core goals of sales support will remain the same, but there is now a third goal that organizations need to put into focus for their sales support team. The optimization of the sales pitch to convey the right message, at the right time, and in the right medium.

A shift in how the market prefers to buy brought about this change. At the end of 2019,

54 m U.S. HOUSEHOLDS HAD TRANSITIONED TO TRUE OMNICHANNEL SHOPPERS

In other words, 54 million house holds were leveraging technology for fuller shopping experiences. A number which is expected to rise to 74.7 in the next five years.

Fuller shopping experiences means, fuller shopper expectations with most shoppers expecting a customized experience at the very minimum.

- **Shifting the focus, process to outcome**

When there's transparency in an organization, you can align sales and marketing with prospect challenges.

The issue that traditional analytical solutions run into is that more attention is given to the process than to the outcome.
You can see this clearly in CRMs.

The average CRM focuses on the steps that a contact goes through to become a customer. It empowers you to track the process, or path, that this conversion takes, but **it doesn't help you to be adaptive or consultative.** It does not help you improve outcomes.

In time, all sales software will need to move from being process-focused to being outcome-focused. This will empower users to be consultative, to adapt based on prospect needs, and reach the point where they can prove to prospects that they are making a wise investment.

As these outcome-focused solutions become more and more common, they will build a base of analytical and attribution data that will help reps to make better decisions going forward.

With the implementation of these two changes, your sales support should be equipped to assist your representatives with the consultative selling that you need to compete in this era of selling.

A PROSPECTIVE LOOK AT SALES SUPPORT

How to start the transformation

Implementing a scalable sales support platform is one of the best ways to transform the way your organization approaches sales support. But, for it to be effective, you need a strong base of research in place.

Prior to implementing a solution at scale, be sure to have the following in place. Note, they should sound very familiar,

Buyer personas: If you don't know who you're selling to, then there's no way to adapt your message and offer to address their needs. Performing in-depth buyer persona research will help your team to stay focused during the consultation process. It will also show you what messages each buyer type will respond the best to.

Customer journey: Your customer journey will map prospect questions, needs, and goals to different stages in your sales process. With a customer journey in place, your reps will be able to match up prospects to a specific stage in the customer journey and to their buyer persona type. These two factors will allow your reps to use the right message, at the right time, and in the right medium. This can have an extremely positive effect on your close rate and overall success.

Sales training program: Just because buyer personas and a customer journey are available to your reps, doesn't mean that they'll use them effectively. Providing reps with ongoing training will be essential to helping them continuously improve their use of technology and help them to learn how to be adaptable in their process.

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Alignment between sales and marketing: When sales and marketing stop talking to each other it creates misalignment, wasted effort, and ineffective processes. Holding regular meetings between the two departments is a good way to start fostering alignment, but it needs to go even deeper than that. Marketing needs to understand that its true customer is sales, and therefore should focus on empowering sales with the materials its requesting, instead of creating a smattering of content in the hopes that something will stick.

Sounds familiar, right? You have to have a support process for consultative selling before you can scale it.

Evolutionary change, not revolutionary change

> **"There are really only three scenarios in which first to market revolutionary innovation can guarantee a sustainable advantage: (1) if you can secure ironclad patent protection (2) if you can set a proprietary industry standard, or (3) if you can use your lead to establish such a beachhead that even if better options become available, your customers will find it too much of a hassle to switch. In nearly all other cases, best beats first."**
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> **-**
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> **Jim Collins, "Good to Great"**

Revolutionary changes, as the name suggests, are disruptive— making adoption hard to enforce.

In contrast, evolutionary changes slowly build on existing technology and processes— making adoption easier and more likely. For an omnichannel organization that spans the country making a sweeping change may be too big a task. This is where your approach to changing sales support matters.

In a decentralized organization, taking the path of least resistance is often the preferred path. To do this in a cost and time efficient manner, you should:

- **Leverage technology** when training reps. Using technology wisely will streamline communication and make it more convenient for reps to participate.
- **Remember your audience.** Your approach should be customized to your reps for better adoption rates.
- **Make changes feel incremental.** Even big changes can be broken up into phases. You should also make the process as easy as possible. When it's easy, your reps will want to use it.

Don't start a sales support revolution; instead, help your company evolve. In your quest to improve sales support, there is one more tool that can help you.

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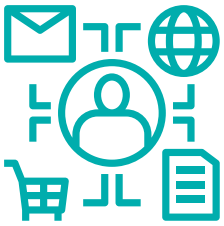
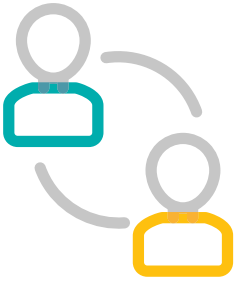
To provide sales support at scale you need technology that doesn't play favorites and allows both your sales and marketing teams to work at their best. Triptych empowers your entire sales force with four essential elements,



True omnichannel delivery: With Triptych's through channel marketing automation, you're able to give reps exactly what they need when they need it. This means no more losing clients to slow content creation or giving them materials that aren't personalized.

Enterprise-wide adoption: Triptych doesn't just give you the software and leave you to fend for yourself. We work with your team to guarantee adoption and ensure an implementation that aligns with the overall business KPIs.

Real-time business intelligence: When you use Triptych, you enable your entire sales team to give feedback with performance metrics and a transparent feedback loop. This means no more guessing at what works, only materials that work.



Alignment across the entire organization: Align sales, marketing, finance, and compliance all from one tool. Don't create resistance by making using many tools that just end up confusing your staff.

Triptych can help you unify your teams and empower your sales with **sales support that gets it just right.**

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