

THE
BUILDING BLOCKS
OF
SALES
ENABLEMENT



Mike Kunkle

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SALES
ENABLEMENT

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Foreword to Sales Leaders

By David Brock

About a year ago, Mike Kunkle told me that he was writing a book called *The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement* and asked me if I would write a foreword geared toward sales leaders. Glibly, I accepted. Fast forward to the present—I have a draft of the book in my email and a request from Mike to make good on my commitment.

Frankly, I'm amazed by how much he was able to cover in a relatively small number of pages. I suspect that if I'd attempted a similar effort, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* would have looked like the condensed version of my book.

However, as I reflected on what I'd read, I realized that this foreword couldn't be geared toward a single audience. Front-line sales managers should read it with certain objectives and perspectives in mind, while sales executives, CROs, and top sales leaders will read it with a slightly different perspective. And then there are the other leaders in the sales organization, particularly those tasked with leading the sales enablement organization. (Thankfully, my friend, Tamara Schenk, is taking care of that.)

So, this foreword addresses two types of sales leaders: the front-line manager and sales executives.

Front-Line Sales Managers

Sales enablement is, possibly, your most important partner in maximizing the performance of each person on the team. Sales enablement provides the

resources critical to your ability to execute with customers. Your role is to help each person on the team leverage these resources for maximum impact. You do this through coaching and development and by leveraging other resources in the company.

One of the more important things Mike does to help sales managers is to outline how each part fits together to create high-impact sales. We need to look at everything that influences sales performance from a systems point of view—how they interrelate and how we use the “system” to help address performance and drive success. Mike’s framework for looking at the complete set of tools, processes, and programs enables us to leverage those that produce the greatest impact on performance.

As a front-line sales manager, you also have a framework you can take back to the sales enablement team, as you need new things to help you and your people achieve your goals. Sales enablement also provides programs and tools to help you develop as a leader. Cultivate a tight relationship with your sales enablement team and leverage them to help you and your team hit your numbers!

Sales Executives

You are responsible for maximizing the performance of your organization by executing the company strategy in the face of the customer. The framework Mike provides in this book will help ensure you have all the bases covered for your organization.

Maximizing sales performance is about doing the “whole job.” Too many leaders and organizations fail because they don’t recognize this fact. Instead, they continue to blindly do what they’ve done in the past. Mike’s framework allows you to understand the interrelationships between each part of the selling system. It highlights the leverage points—those things that have the greatest impact on performance—and helps you identify things you should be doing but may have missed. This framework provides a holistic view of how the organization most effectively and efficiently achieves its goals and drives revenue.



When things are working, we often don’t pay much attention to their details. We just stick to the status quo. But the challenge is, what do we do when things aren’t working as well as they should? What do we do when the markets are disrupted?

Where do we start when looking at how we adjust, respond, and drive performance? This book provides the tools we need to start identifying and addressing these issues. It helps us figure out where to start, what we might be missing, what might have the most impact.

For sales leaders at any level, *The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement* lives up to its title. It provides a complete view of the systems, processes, tools, programs, and training critical for maximizing sales performance. It helps you understand how they interrelate and where you could focus to address performance issues. It's a book you should keep at close reach and refer to as you grow the capabilities of your organization and each person on your team.



Foreword to Sales Enablement Leaders

By Tamara Schenk

The world of enablement is small, but true expertise, passion, focus, and visions about a topic last forever. Mike and I met first online and then in person at a Forrester sales enablement conference in Phoenix back in 2012. At that conference, we bonded over our passion for sales enablement with our mutual friend Dave Brock, who wrote the other foreword for this book.

We connected immediately through Mike's holistic approach to sales enablement and his way of thinking in systems and providing ambitious frameworks. (I wouldn't have been surprised if this book had been called *Frameworks Matter*.)

We often joked that I got the diamonds and Mike got the building blocks (my sales enablement book leverages a diamond framework), but as I said the other day, these building blocks are actually worth diamonds. Regardless of the framework that enablement practitioners and leaders choose, what's most important is that they work with a comprehensive framework in the first place.

Frameworks matter. Frameworks provide a frame of reference for your work as an enablement leader. They model reality in an aggregated and simplified way without losing essential dimensions, and that's what makes all the difference. There are no shortcuts to enablement success. It needs to be set up in a strategic, formal, and holistic way that addresses all relevant dimensions, including sales readiness and sales engagement, buyers and their journeys, sales managers, sales processes, and methodologies.

A “three steps to success” model (no, that’s not a framework) that shows an overly simplified reality without representing all the relevant dimensions is not helpful. It will simply land you in irrelevance—you might implement some activities, but they probably won’t move the sales performance needle.

Why is this the case? Comprehensive and complete frameworks are mission critical because they allow you to apply their principles and concepts to your specific context and adjust them accordingly.

During my time as research director at CSO Insights, I learned a lot from five global enablement studies that we conducted. We found that if you implement enablement activities without meeting your senior executives’ expectations or connecting your enablement strategy to the sales strategy, you won’t be able to show how those efforts positively affected the business. We also found that more than 50 percent of enablement teams were investing in enablement *without* showing positive results.

In a good economy this isn’t as noticeable. However, fast-forward to a global pandemic and it’s not a good situation to be in. As the pandemic hit the economy hard, the truth came to the surface, and many enablement practitioners lost their jobs. It was the kind of situation when the CFO became the “CFNo.”

Now, as the economy begins to recover, it’s evident that enablement is more important than ever. In fact, if we set it up right, strategically and holistically, this could become the decade of enablement! Enablement could drive sales and customer success in this new buyer-driven, remote-first world.

The challenges in sales did not change just because we started working remotely most of the time. In fact, this only amplified the existing challenges surrounding our lack of foundational selling skills. If salespeople lack all the elements of personal meetings, they’ll have a much harder time engaging their prospects and customers remotely.

Now, making this the decade of enablement requires a well-thought-out approach. Luckily, *The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement* contains a comprehensive framework that covers everything you need to think about!

Implementing this framework in your context requires critical thinking, creative thinking, and system thinking. In a world that’s more and more driven by AI, it’s more important than ever to be able to think critically, question assumptions, and imagine in more than three dimensions. It’s fantastic that intelligent tools can enhance your effectiveness. However, to be truly successful leaders, we need to remain the masters and our tools the servants. Once this

capability is in place and encouraged, it will provide the proper foundation for creative thinking and system thinking to make all the difference in our fast-paced, complex world.

I encourage you to read this book and implement these building blocks in your organization for five important reasons:

1. **A holistic and strategic approach to sales enablement and its maturity levels** is the foundation of this excellent book and the prerequisite for your success. Enablement is cross-functional, so you'll need to effectively navigate across multiple functions (including marketing, product, L&D, various operations teams, customer success, and IT). You also need a shared vision of future success, which you inspire and uphold and implement in different phases and maturity levels. Mike's building blocks show you how to do that.
2. **It has a buyer-oriented perspective.** Those of you who know my work know that I am always focused on a customer-oriented approach, ensuring that enablement equips customer-facing professionals so they can be effective along every stage of the buyers' journey. Mike's building blocks begin there, with the buyers' acumen and buyer engagement content.
3. **Content is a lot more than marketing content.** Speaking of content, another aspect I love about Mike's work is that he believes there is no such thing as just "marketing content." Instead, he also discusses buyer engagement content (both are customer-facing), as well as sales readiness content and sales support content (which are internal content categories). I pointed that out in my book, and Mike has enhanced this distinction here. It's mission critical to understand and address each content category differently because they serve different purposes.
4. **Sales coaching and sales manager enablement are an integral part of the framework.** This is another area where Mike and I always inspire each other. The best enablement efforts always include sales coaching to drive adoption and reinforcement. In doing so, enablement leaders have to collaborate with sales leadership and sales managers from the very beginning, ideally providing specific tracks in sales manager onboarding and readiness services. If sales managers don't coach at all or are not in line with the enablement initiative, you put the whole

initiative at risk. So, even if you have to add yet another function to your orchestration efforts, it's absolutely worth doing so.

5. **It's grounded in processes and methodologies.** And, last but not least, Mike's framework formally implements sales processes and methodologies. Of course, the sales process is aligned to the customer journey, and the sales methodologies are appropriate, given the selling scenarios.

This may all sound simple or self-evident; however, from many years as an analyst and consultant, I can tell you that it is not. Formally or even adaptively implementing sales processes using the appropriate methodologies is a rare thing. However, you need this foundation because your enablement efforts cannot exist in a vacuum. So, a robust and perfectly designed buyer-seller journey framework is mandatory for any enablement and sales success. Mike's building blocks provide an excellent approach to get it right.



Introduction

How We Got Here, With This Thing Called “Sales Enablement”

In 2019, the sales enablement profession saw more than 10,000 people with “sales enablement” in their title. (We know this because of Paul Krajewski’s ongoing title searches on LinkedIn—his chart shows a hockey stick of explosive growth over the past few years.) So, sales enablement has finally become “a thing” (or at least it has in some vertical markets). It reminds me of the phenomenon where people work for years at their craft, but when their popularity hits a tipping point, they become an “overnight success.”

But what is sales enablement? In essence, it’s a function (or department), a title, and a growing body of knowledge about how to support sales forces effectively. Interestingly, without using the term *sales enablement*, I’ve been doing this work for years, and I know quite a few other early practitioners who cite the same path. As far as back as 1991, I was:

- Collaborating with marketing on messaging, collateral, campaigns, and promotions
- Working with HR and compensation leaders to ensure compensation programs and incentives fostered the sales behaviors and outcomes we wanted
- Designing and delivering training (often coordinating with corporate training leaders), including building sales onboarding programs that shortened ramp-up times and improved new-hire production
- Teaching both sales process and methodology
- Building job aids and sales tools
- Using the technology that existed at the time

- Conducting training and initiative evaluations to determine the effectiveness of our efforts and return on investment
- Training and engaging front-line sales managers to reinforce training and coach reps to mastery in support of this work

Sound familiar? It should. Although sales enablement frequently includes these activities, the profession still does not have a universal definition.

Multiple analysts not only cover sales enablement in their research, reports, and advisory services, they also define it—and each analyst has their own definition. Since I started writing this book and sourcing definitions, Forrester acquired SiriusDecisions, Korn Ferry acquired CSO Insights, and Gartner acquired TOPO, so there are fewer definitions today, but they still vary quite a bit. Here are several of today's definitions of sales enablement:

- **Gartner:** Sales enablement is the process of enabling sales teams to close more deals by providing them with the resources they need to be more effective. Resources may include tools, technology, training, content, or actionable strategies to sell your product or service to customers. High-performing sales enablement functions provide specific resourcing and supporting tools to simplify the selling process and reduce the burden on the salesperson. This leads to increased conversion rates.
- **Forrester:** The goal of sales enablement is to ensure sellers possess the skills, knowledge, assets, and process expertise to maximize every buyer interaction.
- **Sales Enablement Society:** Sales enablement ensures buyers are engaged at the right time and place with the right assets by well-trained, client-facing staff to provide a world-class experience along the customer's journey. While utilizing the right sales and performance management technologies in addition to synergizing cross-organizational collaboration, sales enablement optimizes the selling motion in order to increase pipeline, move opportunities forward, and win bigger deals more efficiently to drive profitable growth.
- **Association for Talent Development:** The goal of sales enablement is to increase the productivity of market-facing teams by providing ongoing and strategic resources throughout the buyer journey to drive business impact. It encompasses sales training, coaching, content creation, process improvement, talent development, and compensation, among other areas.

It's enough to make you dizzy, isn't it?

When you talk to practitioners, there is just as much variation. However, at a high level many seem to agree that the current state of sales enablement includes:

- Sales messaging
- Sales content to:
 - Attract, interest, and engage buyers
 - Answer buyer questions throughout their buying process
- Sales training and supporting materials and elements
- Sales technology and tools

So, let's look deeper. What is sales content? We have at least four types of content:

- **Marketing content:** This is what your marketing team designs to attract your targeted buyer personas to your company and website (through inbound marketing).
- **Buyer engagement content:** There are two types of buyer engagement content:
 - The first type is similar to marketing content, designed by marketing for use by sales reps when doing outbound prospecting to capture buyer interest and elicit a response.
 - The other type is collateral designed to meet the buying process exit criteria for your typical buyer personas. This collateral engages buyers by answering questions throughout the process and clarifying what buyers need to understand about your company, products, and services to make effective decisions.
- **Training content:** This is the content used to train your sales force, including new reps, incumbent reps, and front-line sales managers. Training content includes everything your reps and managers need to know and do to succeed, including product knowledge, buyer acumen, business acumen, sales process, and sales methodology.
- **Sales support content:** Included here are the playbooks, materials, job aids, cheat sheets, and tools that support your sales force in selling as your leadership team intends (using your sales process and sales methodology).

This describes sales enablement for most people in our profession, which means that this is also the starting point for thinking about how to evolve our sales enablement functions to truly support our sales organizations.

In addition to the varying analyst definitions and practitioner viewpoints, different organizations implement sales enablement differently. Many have

begun to note that there are maturity models of sales enablement. Similar to the analysts’ definitions, there are multiple models, but Table I-1 shows how I see them.

Table I-1. Sales Enablement Maturity Models

Maturity	Description
None	• “Leave them alone and let them sell” (Borrowed from David Bauders of SPARXiQ) • No effort; no impact on sales performance
Random	• Highly reactive, arbitrary acts of sales enablement • Fire fighting • Distracted by “bright shiny objects” • Unlikely to impact sales performance, other than luck
Informal	• Some structure, but not strategic, systemic, or scalable • Still somewhat reactive • Partly data-driven • Likely a limited impact on sales performance
Formal	• Sales enablement building blocks with a charter • Cross-functional collaboration • Supported by systems thinking • Strategic, structured, systemic, scalable, and measurable • Data-driven • Significant impact on sales performance
Adaptive	• A formal maturity level and performance consulting practices • A data-driven, diagnostic-based continuous focus on improving sales performance

How to Get the Most Out of This Book

I hope the need for this book is now clear. As a profession, we’re not aligned on the way we define sales enablement, we’re operating at a variety of maturity levels (some of which do not produce business results), and the fundamentals that many do align on are too basic to drive organizational performance improvement. To add to the confusion, even at the most simplified level, we use the term “content” to mean more than one thing.

I wrote *The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement* to help senior sales and sales enablement leaders effectively start or evolve a sales enablement function that delivers business results. But the process wasn’t easy, for several reasons.

I didn’t start in the field recently. I’ve been doing sales enablement since 1991, which means I have a lot of different experiences in varied organizations and have developed multiple frameworks, models, and systems that have helped

me get great results. Capturing and codifying almost 30 years of work in a way that someone else can absorb and use has been a challenge unto itself—a fun one, but a challenge nonetheless.

The sales function is an ecosystem that exists within a larger organizational environment that has performance levers at the organization, function, position, and task levels. This means there are opportunities to align and improve performance at the company, department, and role levels. Because of this, I developed a systems approach to support the performance levers for sales enablement and improving sales performance. The interesting dilemma with systems work is that it's a culmination of separate parts that unify into a larger whole (where, when done well, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts). My building blocks of sales enablement are supported by four sales systems, and, due to the nature of the building blocks and the systems, there is some overlap.

The challenge lies in explaining the interplay between the blocks and the systems. For example, do I detail how sales enablement technology supports selling in the chapter on the sales technology building block? Or should I do it when sharing the Sales Training System, where I typically show how sales technology can support the 5 Stages of Sales Mastery and Behavior Change? Do I detail buyer engagement content in the Sales Readiness System, or in the corresponding building blocks chapter?

Here's what I finally settled on: I share the details and most in-depth content, whenever possible, in the building block chapters. And I've aligned the four systems (sales hiring, sales readiness, sales training, and sales management) as closely as I could to the building blocks.

The framework, collaboration, and communication practices are all intertwined with the systems:

- The building blocks represent a framework. They are the elements that must be in place for a sales force to function at its highest-possible level.
- Cross-functional collaboration and communication practices support the building blocks.
- The systems also support the building blocks, and you implement the building blocks through the systems you create.

When discussing the systems, I:

- Refer you to the building block chapters for more details whenever possible.
- Detail the content in the systems sections if there isn't a direct correlation to a building block chapter.

I'm not sure whether this will make sense until you get there, but when I refer to other chapters for the details, multiple times, at least you'll know my reasoning. It made more sense than asking you to dig into the details in more than one place. Since there is even some overlap between building blocks (buying process and sales process, for example), I occasionally make references between those chapters as well.

Lastly, you'll notice that some chapters are far shorter than others, and some are far more detailed. There is a logical reason for this. While each building block is important, some are more complex than others and require more explanation. For example, while the act of designing great sales playbooks, developing useful job aids, or customizing workflow performance support software is detailed work and critical for the success of the sales support content building block, explaining the concepts is rather simple—this book is not intended to be a complete guide for each of those things. By contrast, specifying the steps of the Sales Training System—with the embedded five stages of sales mastery and behavior change and the principles behind each element—requires more detail.

Also, since the act of enabling a sales force spans multiple functions, highly effective sales enablement leaders frequently collaborate with other departments and functional leaders. I've tried to detail a bit more about the building blocks that are typically owned by sales enablement, versus those where the detailed tasks are performed elsewhere.

If You Are a Sales Leader

First, see the foreword from Dave Brock for some great insight on the book from a sales leader perspective. In addition, here are some ways you might use this book to your advantage.

Start with a problem you're trying to solve. (It should be relatively easy to review the table of contents to find a related chapter).

- Are you implementing a new sales methodology and struggling to get adoption?
- Are buyers not responding well to the content that your reps are sharing?
- Are your reps pitching products rather than using a buyer-centric, problem-based prospecting approach?

Are you looking to establish or evolve a sales enablement function at your company? For example, at SPARXiQ, we have various assessments that can help

you diagnose gaps in your sales force effectiveness. Then, using the results of the assessments, you can start implementing or refining the appropriate building blocks that best help you close the gaps identified. Similarly, if you'd prefer to do the work on your own, you can use the building blocks or the four systems in this book as a diagnostic, assessing your organization against the best practices to create an action plan.

Keep in mind that this book provides a detailed look at the moving pieces and parts of a sales enablement function that's operating at a formal maturity level. Be prepared for some detail. Real and significant organizational performance improvement doesn't result from the "harder, faster, longer, louder" method of sales leadership. It takes a disciplined execution of smart performance improvement initiatives, which is sorely lacking in many organizations.

As you work to develop and implement solutions—hopefully in partnership with a sales enablement leader—stay focused and allow your sales enablement leader to execute on your agreed-upon plans. Far too often, sales enablement does not produce the desired results because someone (usually a senior executive or senior sales leader) is easily distracted by "bright shiny objects" or flavor-of-the-month thinking, or they'll overreact to the last thing that went wrong. This behavior derails the good plans that are in place in favor of new, knee-jerk initiatives that address a one-off problem. It's OK to adjust and pivot strategies when things change or new information becomes available. But if this happens too frequently, your sales enablement efforts will not produce results for you.

Remember that most impactful sales enablement projects are change management initiatives in disguise. As the senior sales leader, you set the tone and influence the sales culture. If you don't foster a culture of accountability, coaching, and ongoing development, you may be part of the problem instead of the solution. In ATD's *2019 State of Sales Training* research report, 59 percent of survey respondents cited "Salespeople are not held accountable for applying skills learned in training" as the top barrier to training effectiveness.

If You Are a Sales Enablement Leader

First, see the foreword from Tamara Schenk for some great insight on the book from a sales enablement perspective. In addition, here are some ways that you might use this book to your advantage.

Use the building blocks as a diagnostic tool and a road map. Assess your function against the full building blocks framework to determine what you are currently doing very well, and where you can improve.

Use logic to prioritize initiatives based on the potential impact:

- If you don't have a charter in place, start there. Getting alignment about how you define sales enablement, which functions you will collaborate with, what you'll focus on, and how you will measure success will serve you very well.
- Are you implementing a sales methodology? First, ensure it's the right one for your business. No matter how well you implement the methodology, if it's the wrong one it's unlikely to make an impact.
- Are you launching a new product? Taking a scenario-based approach to product training, creating a certification, and ensuring buyer-centric, problem- versus product-focused messaging, will be more effective than revamping your sales management operating rhythm at that time.
- Prioritizing is key. Let's say you have a sales force of 100 with 5 percent turnover and only plan to hire replacements. In that case, revamping your new-hire sales onboarding program will not have as much impact as shifting the current sales team to a buyer-centric, value selling methodology that includes quarterly business reviews and top-notch strategic account management practices.

No one can implement all of the building blocks or systems at once. It's like the old joke about how you eat an elephant—one bite at a time. Using a diagnostic approach and the logic outlined here, work to get the building blocks and systems in place—one (or two) at a time—based on your resources, time, and budget and always with an eye toward impact and supporting strategic objectives.

Lastly, while this project and all the related frameworks, models, methods, practices, and systems may feel weirdly like part of my family after all these years, it helps to keep a sense of perspective. This is a peek into how my mind works, and the work I've done over the years that has truly produced great results for me. But I always remember something that I read in one of Tony Robbins's books years ago (although I'm not sure I fully understood it at the time). I later came to learn that the quote originated from mathematician Alfred Korzybski in the 1930s: "The map is not the territory."

The Farnam Street blog (fs.blog), which is an absolutely wonderful resource for critical thinking and decision making, offers a far more eloquent description than I can. In short, the building blocks framework is not reality—it is a representation of reality. It shows you where the streets and buildings are, but not the potholes and raised sidewalk blocks or missing grates. The work you do in bringing it to life inside your company and with your sales force is the reality and where the magic happens. I hope my map helps you get where you want to go. But the real work—the work that matters and produces results—well, that’s all you.



The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement

A Formal Approach With Systems Thinking

To help senior sales leaders and sales enablement leaders effectively start or evolve a sales enablement function that delivers business results, I focus on a formal maturity model, with the sales enablement building blocks, supported by systems thinking (Figure 1-1).

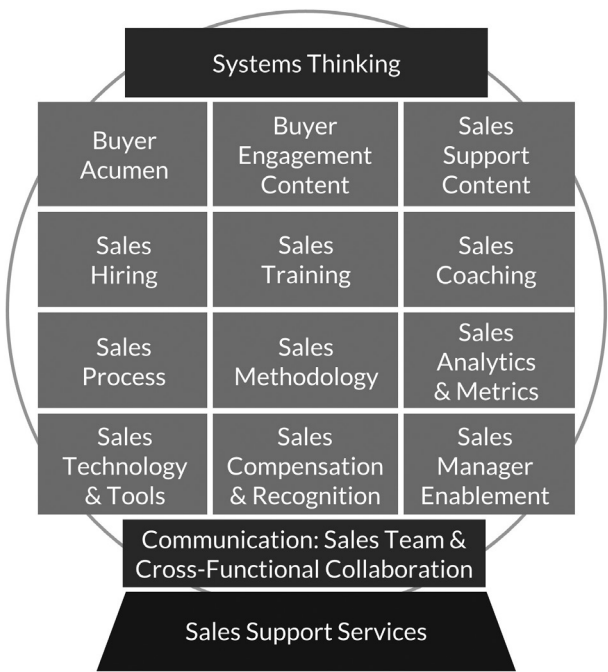
Here is a description of each block in the building blocks framework:

- **Buyer acumen:** In this building block you identify your buyer personas and their COIN-OP (challenges, opportunities, impacts, needs, objectives, and priorities), the problems they are trying to solve, what outcomes are they trying to achieve, and what metrics matter to each. This also covers their typical buying process, including objectives, tasks, and exit criteria per process stage.
- **Buyer engagement content:** There are two types of buyer engagement content:
 - The first is similar to the marketing content sales reps use when doing outbound prospecting to capture buyer interest and elicit a response.
 - The other type is designed to meet the exit criteria for your typical buyer personas as they progress through their buying process. This

collateral engages buyers by answering their questions and clarifying questions about your company, products, and services so they can make effective buying decisions.

- **Sales support content:** This includes the playbooks, materials, job aids, cheat sheets, and tools that support your sales force in selling as your leadership team intends (using your sales process and sales methodology).
- **Sales hiring:** In this building block, you collaborate to create a plan and process to source, recruit, hire, and promote sales reps and managers who succeed in their chosen role.
- **Sales training:** Here, you build a training and development plan to support your sales force. This includes sales onboarding and ongoing training that supports business objectives, teaching sales process and sales methodology, developing ongoing training to close sales competency gaps, and training and enabling sales managers. For best results, you will use a Sales Training System to train, sustain knowledge, practice and develop skills, transfer those skills, and coach to mastery.

Figure 1-1. Sales Enablement Building Blocks With Sales Support Services



- **Sales coaching:** This is a known performance enhancer. You select a sales coaching model and implement a competency development framework, remove obstacles, enable managers, and engage reps and managers in an ongoing process to identify and close sales competency gaps to increase organizational sales mastery and performance.
- **Sales process:** In this building block, you work with others to align your sales process to the buying process, and document the process objectives, tasks, and exit criteria for buyers and sellers in each stage.
- **Sales methodology:** In this building block, you collaborate to select appropriate sales methodologies for prospecting, opportunity management, and strategic account management. You work to develop sales competencies by role, from a top-producer analysis whenever possible or proven best practices.
- **Sales analytics and metrics:** Here you benchmark your sales metrics, such as conversion ratios, average sales price, cross-sell, ramp-up times for onboarding, sales velocity, sales productivity, quota attainment, content sharing, or key performance indicators (KPIs)—whatever is important for your business. You collaborate to track results pre- and post-training as well as following your sales onboarding and learning metrics, which will allow you to analyze everything. Using whatever tools are available, you can analyze customers, territories, purchase patterns, and more to understand your business and improve performance.
- **Sales technology and tools:** Here, you work with others to select and implement sales technology to support your sales force, create efficiency, increase time spent selling, and support sales effectiveness.
- **Sales compensation and recognition:** In this building block, you collaborate to ensure you have sales compensation, incentive, recognition, and reward plans that encourage the behaviors your senior leaders expect and the results they want.
- **Sales manager enablement:** This is deep enough to be a separate book, but it must be included in any sensible sales enablement plan. Here, you train managers to support their reps in achieving their quota, including how to analyze performance, select appropriate interventions, and coach effectively. You develop a coaching culture and implement a framework for sales competency development. You also determine your sales management operating system and the management disciplines

you want to instill, train managers on them, and hold them accountable for executing your cadence.

The building blocks are supported by communication (both being the point-of-contact for communication to the sales team and fostering cross-functional communication and collaboration) and systems thinking.

Lastly, as applicable and desired, you can choose to provide a variety of sales support services, which includes things like coaching services, RFP support, and research support, often using a services level agreement (SLA) with the sales force.

In the following chapters I detail each building block, giving you the information you need to implement them effectively to start or evolve your sales enablement function and achieve the business results you and your executive team want. But first, we need to address systems thinking.

What Is Systems Thinking?

Daniel H. Kim, author of numerous books on systems thinking and co-founder of Pegasus Communications and the MIT Center for Organizational Learning, offers the following definition for systems thinking: “A system is any group of interacting, interrelated, or interdependent parts that form a complex and unified whole that has a specific purpose.”

He continues: “The key thing to remember is that all of the parts are interrelated and interdependent in some way. Without such interdependencies, we have just a collection of parts, not a system.”

Let’s think about this in a different way. A car, for example, has many systems that work together so that it runs smoothly. These major systems include the engine, fuel system, exhaust system, cooling system, lubrication system, electrical system, transmission, and the chassis. Further, the chassis includes the wheels and tires, the brakes, the suspension system, and the body. If there’s a problem with the drive train, the electrical system (such as the starter, battery, or alternator), or if several of the cylinders aren’t firing (a fuel system problem), the car won’t run very well.

The human body has systems too. Each system—respiratory, cardiovascular, pulmonary, skeletal, endocrine, or digestive—plays its part in a healthy, well-functioning body.

It’s the same in an organization.

Some systems exist externally, like the political environment, socio-economic conditions, and micro- and macroeconomic factors. Others are internal to the organization. I like to focus on internal systems and figure out the moving parts to make sure they're not only healthy independently, but also working well together. Systems occur at the organizational, functional (department), position (role), and task levels. Of the many possible organizational systems, I've found that four produce the best results:

- The Sales Hiring System
- The Sales Readiness System
- The Sales Training System
- The Sales Management System

I haven't always called those systems by these names. Before "sales readiness" was a common term, I called that system "sales support." The Sales Training System is technically a subset of readiness, but it's important enough with enough moving parts to call it out separately; it also includes a subsystem, which is the 5 Stages of Sales Mastery and Behavior Change.

Every system has a purpose, and for systems to produce the best results, all parts must be present and functioning at optimal levels. We have an opportunity to use critical thinking to analyze the relationships between each part of our organizational system to understand them more fully and make better decisions about how to improve business outcomes.

Summary

In this chapter I introduced the 12 building blocks, describing each one and how they fit together as a whole. But it's also important to recognize at this stage that you can use the building blocks as your situation allows and dictates; that is, they are by no means suggested as sequential steps. This will become clearer in the following chapters, and you will be able to better see which blocks require your attention.

I also showed how I use systems thinking to create interdependencies, and how the four sales systems I use—hiring, readiness, training, and management—support the building blocks and create cross-functional collaboration.

We're now ready to discuss the first building block, buyer acumen.

Buy This Book



About the Author



Mike Kunkle is a respected sales transformation architect and an internationally recognized expert on sales training, sales effectiveness, and sales enablement. He is the founder of Transforming Sales Results and is vice president of sales effectiveness services for SPARXiQ, where he advises clients, publishes thought leadership, speaks at conferences, leads webinars, designs sales training courses, delivers workshops, and designs and implements

sales enablement systems that get results.

Mike has spent 36 years in the sales profession and 26 years as a corporate leader or consultant, helping companies drive dramatic revenue growth through best-in-class training strategies and proven-effective sales transformation methodologies and sales systems. At one company, as a result of six projects, he and his team enabled an accretive \$398 million in revenue, year-over-year. At another, new sales reps with 120 days on the job were outperforming incumbent reps with five years with the company.

Mike collaborated with Doug Wyatt to develop SPARXiQ's Modern Sales Foundations curriculum and also authored SPARXiQ's Sales Coaching Excellence course. *The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement* is his first book.

The Ultimate Sales Framework for Achieving Business Success

Sales enablement is no longer the new kid on the block. Having grown rapidly in recent years, it's now considered a best practice at many sales organizations. But there's little alignment across the sales profession on what sales enablement is or how to achieve it, nor is there a formalized strategy on what a sales enablement practice is or requires.

In *The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement*, sales enablement expert Mike Kunkle addresses these issues and presents a proven approach to support sales talent and achieve true business results. Kunkle lays out an easy-to-follow structure through the concept of building blocks, interconnected by systems thinking and supported by a consistent cadence of training, coaching, and content. Comprehensive and versatile, this book is for senior sales leaders and sales enablement leaders who are starting or evolving a sales enablement function as well as for struggling sales practitioners to use as a diagnostic tool and road map.

Impactful sales enablement projects are basically change management initiatives in disguise. Use the building blocks framework to navigate challenges, measure successes, and determine a path forward to improving business outcomes.

Praise for This Book

"The Building Blocks of Sales Enablement is rooted in a deep understanding of the messy reality that confronts today's sales enablement leaders: complex, interdependent systems that govern the modern commercial organization, and the chaos that is the customer buying experience. Mike Kunkle's intimate understanding of these dynamics delivers a clear and actionable framework that will propel growth for all revenue leaders."

—**Nick Toman**, Co-Author, *The Challenger Customer* and *The Effortless Experience*;
Managing Director, SBI



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