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**Biweekly Update:
Sales Enablement's
Response to COVID-19
(11 May 2020)**

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Learn how a group of over 50 sales enablement leaders is responding to the COVID-19 crisis and its economic impact. Issues addressed include preparation for the postcrisis economic rebound and coaching sales reps for tough customer conversations.

Quick Answer

What are sales enablement leaders' top priorities as they support sellers through the COVID-19 crisis?

- **Preparing for an economic rebound:** Adapt to the new selling environment by driving an efficient and seamless customer experience virtually and leveraging the high client interaction rate during this period to build sales pipelines for a postcrisis rebound.
- **Coaching sales reps for tough conversations:** Promote empathetic customer conversations by providing sellers guidance on the content, tone and style of effective customer messaging and engagement.

More Detail

Key Take-Aways on Adapting to the New Normal and Preparing for an Economic Rebound

- Sales enablement leaders anticipate customers and prospects will avoid face-to-face meetings with suppliers in the future, increasing the need for driving an efficient and seamless experience virtually. And as more buyers embrace virtual channels, sales organizations will see impacts on organization structure, costs, IT systems and marketing content alignment. Delivering effective customer experience in the postpandemic world would require tighter alignment between marketing and sales across the different stages of the new customer buying journey. To this end, process maps detailing how different functions interact with one another will be crucial to deliver the "right" content at the "right" time to customers. As collaboration increases, sales organizations are expected to witness fewer hand-offs between different teams, thereby reducing execution and delivery time.
- As customers are confined to their homes and can dedicate more time to supplier interactions, the client interaction rate with sellers has drastically increased. These virtual interactions also

allow for more informal conversations between sellers and customers. Sales enablement leaders are unsure if this accessibility will continue in the postpandemic world and therefore feel this presents a unique window of opportunity for sellers to take advantage of. Sellers should leverage the high contact rates and enhance their customer engagement efforts to build their pipelines for a postcrisis rebound.

- Sales organizations preparing for the postpandemic world are also considering restructuring the sales force to better adapt to the new selling methods. While this presents new opportunities to innovate, some growing concerns are the impact of virtual selling on seller compensations, frontline talent headcounts and procedural changes within the organizations.
- Understanding the pandemic's implications on the buying jobs will be critical to redefining sales strategies in the new virtual environment. This includes understanding what source of information buyers are looking at in the new environment, how internal consensus generation has changed and the impact of constrained business realities on the six buying jobs. Some organizations are identifying their key high-value customers and reevaluating their customer journey map to understand how they have modified their buying behavior.

Key Take-Aways on Coaching Sales Reps for Tough Conversations During and After the Crisis

- While the increased interaction rate can be helpful for sellers, sales enablement leaders need to ensure sellers are empathetic in their communication with customers. They need to be especially careful with less experienced sellers who may not be able to project this empathy clearly or may be unaware of what to share with customers and what not to.
- The buying community is inundated with questions like “How can I help?” from sellers, which is probably becoming the worst question to ask customers at this time for two reasons. First, given the uncertainty of the current crisis, most customers are not aware of what they need from sales. Second, in light of this confusion, the conversation usually results in the customer asking for price drops, leading sellers to the trap of commoditization. This messaging needs to be modified to “Here’s how we can help,” followed by clear activities that sellers can support prospects with. Sales enablement needs to make sure sellers can show the value of their proposal without having the price-focused conversations.
- Some organizations are adapting the strategy of crowdsourcing smart answers to the most difficult questions they are getting from their prospects and client base. This includes collating these challenging questions at a central desk and sharing them across titles and functions within sales, including enablement, operations, retention and business development. This collaborative, cross-functional mechanism arms its sellers to engage in tough conversations with clients and respond in a manner that builds credibility and bolsters sales prospects.

- Organizations are enabling their sellers to position their product or service in a way that clearly articulates the unique value of their solution and the specific manner in which it improves customer performance in their current economic/business context.
- Sales enablement leaders are adjusting their sales training content to provide frontline sellers with frameworks that enable them to operate in the virtual ecosystem, as well as delivering education programs on coaching sessions to their first-line sales managers.
 - Sellers are being trained on establishing a clear opening, target and walkaway terms prior to engaging with customers.
 - As different sections of sellers are adapting differently to the new way of selling, generational selling training is becoming an emerging priority.
 - These enablement strategies need to be balanced against the excessive usage of redundant sessions that end up burdening the sales force and reducing its productivity instead.
- Some sales leaders are concerned about the lack of clarity among sellers over what information to share and what to withhold with clients in the virtual ecosystem. They are working to empower sellers to manage information skillfully by providing guidance on what to ask and what to share.

Recommended by the Authors

[“Benchmarks on Sales Enablements’ Response to COVID-19: Update for Week of 20 April”](#)

Use this document to learn how a group of over 50 sales enablement leaders is responding to the COVID-19 crisis and its economic impact in the week of 20 April.

[“Next Steps for Sales Leaders After the Initial COVID-19 Disruption”](#)

Use this document to help establish strategies for responding to rapidly shifting market dynamics and drive greater confidence among both customers and sellers to own the market narrative with preplanned responses.

[“Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Resource Center”](#)

Visit our resource center for a growing number of resources to guide executives in sales and all corporate functions in responding to the outbreak.

Recommended For You

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