A close-up photograph of a car's start/stop engine button. The button is black with a textured surface and features a glowing yellow rectangular light at the top. Below the light, the words "START", "STOP", and "ENGINE" are printed in white, stacked vertically. The background is a blurred blue and grey.

Sales Enablement Actions in Response to COVID-19

Updated March 27, 2020

Initial reactions and near-term priorities

Given the rapidly evolving nature of the COVID-19 crisis, sales enablement leaders are seeking immediate peer perspectives to ensure they are taking the proper actions on behalf of their customers, their teams, their shareholders and themselves.

Conversations with 90+ sales enablement leaders taking place on March 27, 2020, discussed a number of recommendations and actions in four key areas:



Virtual Customer Engagement



Training Sellers



Seller Productivity

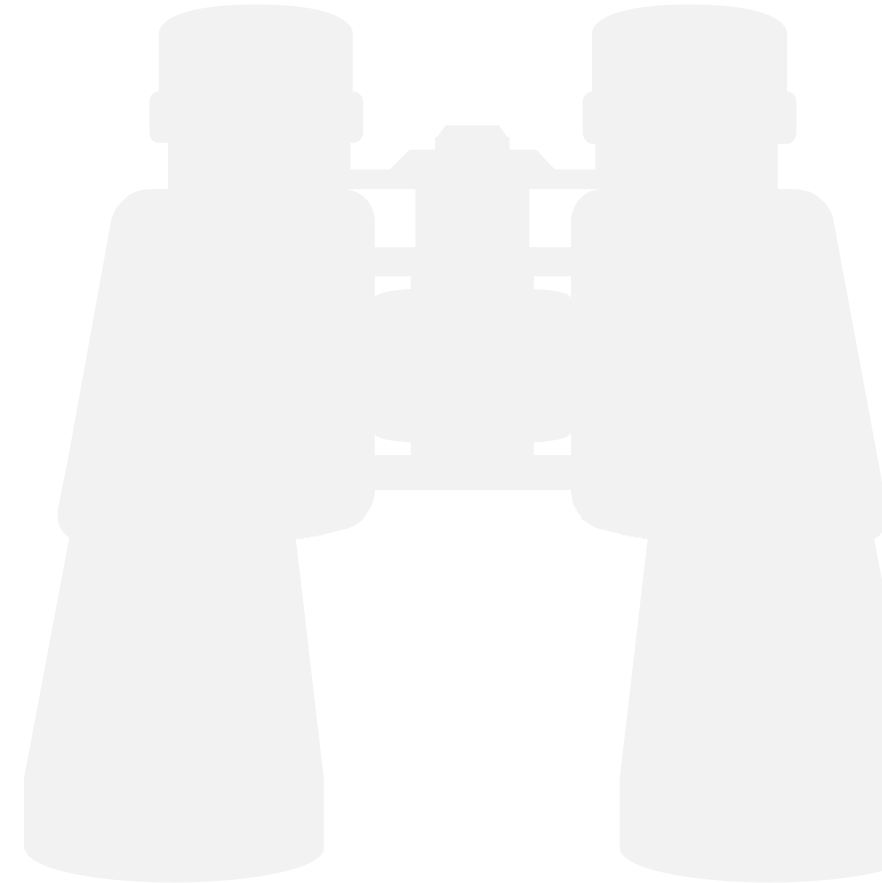


Work-From-Home Technology

Virtual Customer Engagement

Key take-aways on engaging customer virtually

- With customers' businesses and lives being disrupted and many customers working from home, sellers are experiencing easier access to customers, who are either receptive to help or reaching out for support. However, the humanitarian crisis caused by COVID-19 means the conversations sellers are having are very different from before and must be managed carefully.
- Sales enablement leaders emphasize the criticality of empathizing with customers in current sales conversations. Companies are stopping “hard” selling and are instead focusing on customer engagement and support. Sellers need to understand how customers are impacted by COVID-19 and identify meaningful ways to help. Companies aware of the business environment have placed many promotional activities and programs on hold.
- While the degree of change in customer messaging depends on how an industry is affected by COVID-19, sales enablement teams are actively collaborating with marketing to contextualize sales enablement content for customers. The consensus view is that the customer message must be empathetic and set realistic expectations of product/service delivery and support.



Seller Productivity

Key take-aways on managing seller productivity while working from home

- Sales organizations are finding many sellers adapt fairly quickly to working remotely. Sellers/sales teams previously resistant to virtual selling now see the benefits of adopting new technologies, both because of personal necessity and how buyers' lives are upended.
- To facilitate remote working, organizations focus on conducting training sessions that would help sellers leverage collaboration tools for internal engagement and virtual customer meetings.
- Many sales enablement leaders agreed on the need to be flexible while managing a remote workforce. When working from home, employees are faced with a range of challenges outside the norm, such as caring for young children during business hours. Recommended guidance: Quickly craft and conduct manager training on how to effectively manage employees remotely.



Key take-aways on managing seller productivity while working from home (continued)

- Attention needs to be paid to improving internal collaboration with highly disrupted corporate functions not used to working remotely, such as finance. The challenges these functions face may slow down sales teams in the near term.
- Sales enablement leaders reported that strategic initiatives are being put on hold as sales teams focus on service delivery. Sellers are being encouraged to proactively share relevant information with customers and understand their pain points/ways to help and share what they learn with the sales organization.
- While selling in this environment has been challenging, no significant changes have been made to the seller productivity metrics. Companies are taking a wait-and-see approach to metrics but are tracking current metrics more frequently for leading indicators of trouble (such as moving from monthly to weekly tracking).





Work-From- Home Technology



Key take-aways on the tools and technologies used to work from home

- Common collaboration and content-sharing platforms include Google Suite, Microsoft Teams, Seismic, Slack, Webex and Zoom, among others. These collaboration platforms are being used both for internal communication and customer engagement. With increasing adoption of these tools, sellers are starting to appreciate the wide variety of functionalities these tools offer. However, sales enablement leaders agree that sellers would need additional training to take full advantage of these platforms.
- To effectively engage with customers virtually, participating sales enablement leaders report they use video content management platforms, such as Videolicious or vidREACH, to share video messages and conduct virtual tours.
- Enablement leaders also report using technology platforms, such as Adobe Connect, Allego and Saba Classroom, to conduct interactive, virtual training sessions for sellers.





Training Sellers



Key take-aways on training sellers

The current economic environment is pushing sales enablement leaders to rethink their sales training strategy. In one instance, a company is thinking of permanently replacing its daylong classroom training with short-duration online courses.

To ensure collaboration tools are leveraged effectively, companies are conducting virtual-selling training sessions for sellers. This includes:

- Basic training sessions covering the essential features of the collaboration platform being used and hygiene factors governing virtual meetings (such as attire).
- Designating “power users” who can be contacted by others within the organization to help address queries they may have regarding the usage of a given platform.



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