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10 WAYS TO EMPOWER YOUR SALES ORGANIZATION

THE KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL SALES TRANSFORMATION

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When people hear the term sales organization, they often think of individuals with the title client advisor, business development, or account executive. Some may even include cross-functional business units, like marketing, but that is generally where the conventional norm stops.

Most powerful sales teams collectively see themselves as part of a holistic team that includes members from not only sales and marketing, but operations, customer service, field service, and beyond. That is because today's customer is being harnessed by the entire thread of a company. This is due to the criticality of needing to build and support an extraordinary digital user experience.
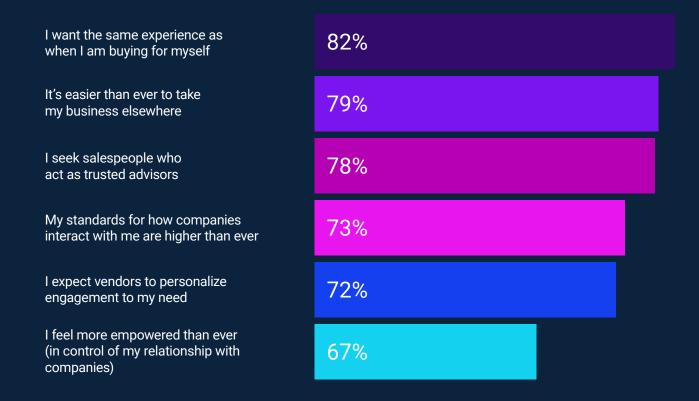
Therefore, frontline sales team members are no longer just selling products or services, they are seen as trusted advisors and advocates for their company and for their clients.

CUSTOMERS RAISE THE BAR FOR SALES STANDARDS

Technology-savvy customers have increasingly high standards, and explicitly seek trusted advisors over traditional salespeople.

In fact, a 2018 Salesforce study found that the percentage of business buyers agree with the following:

I want the same experience as when I am buying for myself
82%

It's easier than ever to take my business elsewhere
79%

I seek salespeople who act as trusted advisors
78%

My standards for how companies interact with me are higher than ever
73%

I expect vendors to personalize engagement to my need
72%

I feel more empowered than ever (in control of my relationship with companies)
67%

THE AVERAGE CUSTOMER TODAY IS TECHNOLOGY SAVVY

They expect personalized experiences that go beyond what they were ten years ago.

For example, customers no longer drive up to a bank teller window to deposit their checks or withdraw money. They use their smartphones to make their daily transactions, pay their monthly bills, and schedule automated payments. If one is in an automobile accident, they reach for their mobile device to snap a picture and upload it to the insurer's app to submit the claim. Those digital capabilities rely heavily on a well-orchestrated team to bring it to market and provide an incredible user experience.

While many companies' operations are streamlined, transparent, and fluid, most are still striving to realize the benefits of a digital transformation. One of the primary obstacles organizations face in achieving modernization is their scale and size. The larger the company, the more difficult it is to become strategically aligned and adapt. Communication breakdown happens and the ability to grow and sell more effectively becomes muddled.

"At organizations with fewer than 100 employees, respondents are 2.7 times more likely to report a successful digital transformation than are those from organizations with more than 50,000 employees"

McKinsey and Company

A TRUE DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION MUST CONSIDER ALL THE NUANCES OF A COMPANY'S CULTURE FOR IT TO SUCCEED

1

TOP DOWN, BOTTOM UP

Legacy companies possess more complex processes. Individuals within these organizations are more likely to be reluctant to change relative to their more flexible and agile startup organizations.

Empathy is paramount at this point, especially when trying to support a wide range of skilled employees. Gaining an authentic point of view and understanding of every team member is the key to a successful digital transformation. In the end, they must adopt the optimized process and technology for their company to reach its true north.

As the well-known adage says, "it starts at the top". In other words, the success of transforming asales organization must be initiated by senior level individuals. office, most of the time spent in the office with the option of working from home occasionally, or 100% remote.

Ensure Executive Sponsorship

Despite whether an organization is hierarchical or flat, there should always be members of the executive leadership team responsible for the direction, overall goals/KPIs, and success of a sales digital transformation project.

These individuals are the heart of the project. They are the catalyst for change across the organization. Without their passion and drive to support the successful rollout of the reimagined digital sales experience, there is a higher probability that the project will fail.

2

DEFINE YOUR ORGANIZATION'S TRUE NORTH

Organizational leaders are responsible for defining goals on behalf of their company to effectively guide employees towards reaching their true north, an orienting point to help teams stay on track.

The concept of collectively moving towards a true north aligns cross-functional teams and departments to cohesively reach their ultimate future state. While doing so, it's also important to empower teams with the right digital tools to succeed. These tools provide organizational processes for everyone to follow. This is often challenging as there may be conflicting perspectives that impair the group from defining their true north in a standardized and repeatable way.

Oftentimes, this is where a consulting partner is hired to lead a comprehensive and objective discovery process. They will be able to uncover how an organization is currently operating, define commonalities between cross-functional teams,and deliver a favorable platform to unify the eam's approach.

3

IDENTIFY ALL CRITICAL POSITIONS & PLAYERS

Today's sales organizations are multi-faceted.
They act as liaisons and trusted advisors between the customer and the marketing, operations, customer service, and even HR divisions.

Each sales professional plays a critical role in ensuring a customer's satisfaction. Therefore, all related departments who touch or influence a buyer's journey should be included in the end-to-end sales process. They should also be considered when identifying and rolling out a complete digital transformation platform.

In the end, the technology will aid in streamlining the customer's experience as well as ensure a front-facing sales advisor is equipped with as much information about the customer as possible.

"A transformation is 5.8 times more likely to be successful at organizations where CEOs communicate a compelling, high-level change story, and 6.3 times likelier when senior leaders share aligned messages about the change effort with the rest of the organization."

McKinsey and Company

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REIMAGINE THE SALES PROCESS

A traditional sales model typically consists of lead generation, nurturing, opportunity development and, ultimately, the closed sale.

Today's sales process goes much further. It requires the team to have visibility into predictive buying patterns, intelligent service recommendations, and meeting the customer's needs before they even realize they were unsatisfied.

A salesperson or sales team must rely on sophisticated technology to gain a competitive edge to service today's demanding customers. They need information at their fingertips, hyperconnected to their entire organization so they can effectively perform at their peak.

5

ENSURE ACCOUNTABILITY

Every team member must be held accountable for the transformation to be successful. Selling is a team sport.

The more accountable one is for adopting and following the reimagined sales process and tools the better the outcome. For example, if all sales team members are required to enter their opportunities into a customer relationship management system (CRM), keep them up-to-date and accurate, and report when the opportunity is either closed or won, then the customer service team can rely on that system for being a single source of truth.

Should a customer call the customer service team for information about an order, the representative can access that customer's history by accessing the shared system. The operational staff can also forecast what orders are in the pipeline and prepare for fulfillment. However, if one member of the value chain fails to remain accountable, the entire system is compromised.

6

GAIN CONSENSUS FROM THE TEAM

With a variety of individuals undergoing change, it's so important to maintain consistent communication around the changes being made, especially to those individuals on the front line, along with clear definitions of roles and responsibilities, and a strategic approach to talent management.

Communicating the need for transformation and the overall objectives is paramount and should be delivered by the executive sponsors.

If certain team members are reluctant to align, executive sponsors and other key members of the sales organization must determine whether a consensus can still be reached. If not, those individuals must come to terms with the evolutionary change of the company and whether they are still a good fit to help reach the company's goals.

"Human Resource Manager involvement will increase the digital transformation success as they help to align employees with the project objectives while realigning with the employee's initial roles and responsibilities."

Radhika Agarwal, Head of Human Resources, Saggezza
An Apexon Company

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QUALIFY THE ADOPTION SPECTRUM

Organizations will invariably have a variety of team members who are prepared and skilled to take on new technology challenges and others who are far behind.

This should not inhibit the team's performance but magnify where special accommodations need to be made to support those individuals who may need extra help.

By creating a task force made up of highly skilled performers who can mentor those struggling individuals, companies will have a higher adoption rate in a shorter period of time. If internal resources are lean, a consulting partner is an ideal way to gather feedback from all sides of the spectrum to ensure you are gaining the most ROI with a quicker turnaround.

CAREFULLY SELECT THE RIGHT PLATFORM & TOOLS

An exhaustive assessment of the current technology and tools being used to support the sales process must be performed to identify redundancies and eliminate inefficiencies.

This may be in the form of Excel spreadsheets, documents, tools, and processes. It is typical for sales organizations to uncover opportunities for growth as they begin to streamline effective sales mechanisms to unify the team's overall approach.

They also uncover redundancies that can be remedied by creating a digital environment. This will help to optimize performance, build trust, provide cross-department visibility into customer records, deliver predictable buying behaviors, intelligent insights, and ultimately create a single source of truth.

INSTITUTE UX DESIGN

Designing your selected technology solution for your team's specific needs is critical to the successful adoption of the platform.

User Experience experts lead teams through discovery workshops to identify the end-user needs when prioritizing new functionality. This ensures that the development process is guided by the entire user base, not by a senior person in the room. It also encourages all users to embrace the change and participate in its inception. By doing so, they will feel more connected to the future state and begin to detach from the legacy process.

ROLLOUT & ACTIVATE CHANGE MANAGEMENT PLAN

Once the players have been identified, roles and expectations have been accounted for, and the platform has been selected and designed, it's time to activate an organizational change management plan.

A phased approach is often the best way to ensure successful deployment and digital transformation. Start with the onboarding and training of core team members, who can qualify whether the digital platform is delivering on its promise. After the pilot rollout is complete, the remaining team members should be onboarded in phases.

Taking this approach will allow for immediate feedback and generate quick successes to ensure the digital transformation is successful and that true north is realized.

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APEXON IS A PURE-PLAY DIGITAL ENGINEERING SERVICES FIRM FOCUSED ON HELPING COMPANIES ACCELERATE THEIR DIGITAL INITIATIVES FROM STRATEGY AND PLANNING THROUGH EXECUTION.

We leverage deep technical expertise, Agile methodologies and data-driven intelligence to modernize systems of engagement and simplify human/tech interaction.

We deliver custom solutions that meet customers' technology needs wherever they are in their digital lifecycle. Backed by Goldman Sachs and Everstone Capital, Apexon works with both large enterprises and emerging innovators — putting digital to work to enable new products and business models, engage with customers in new ways, and create sustainable competitive differentiation.

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