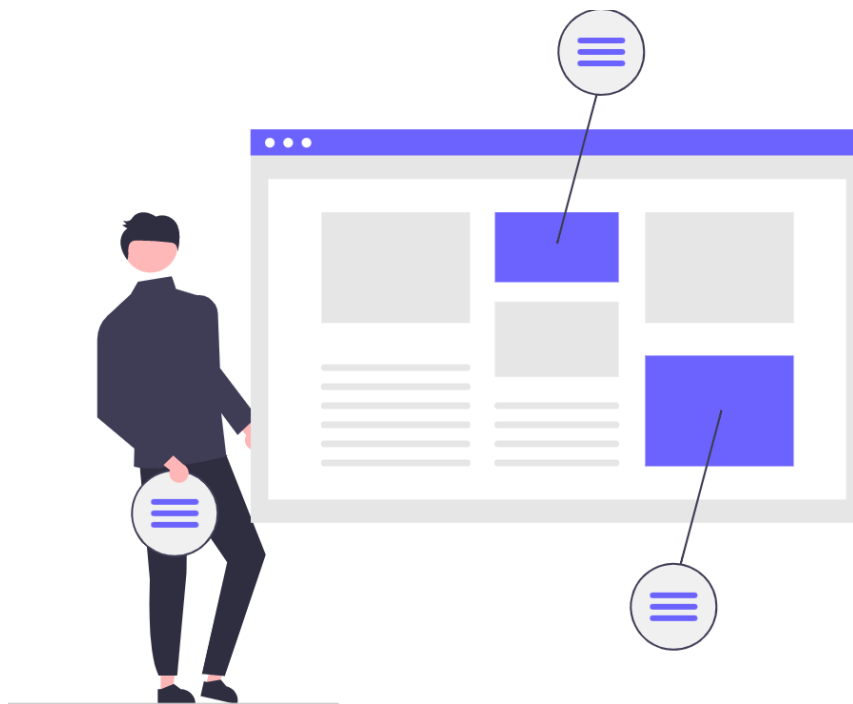

What is the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement?

Master Thesis



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Abstract

This paper explores the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement through a literature review and a quantitative survey. The literature review reveals that the role of the Sales Manager is not explicitly addressed in sales enablement literature. The survey gathers practitioners' perspectives on sales enablement and the Sales Manager, uncovering strengths and weaknesses in their understanding. The study presents the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement, along with practical tools to support their success.

To develop the survey questions, relevant literature on sales enablement and sales management is consulted. A total of 29 questions are derived, covering areas such as sales strategy, processes, content and training, and technology tools. The questions also focus on the Sales Manager's role and their level of responsibility. The survey is completed by 88 respondents, with an additional 32 partially completing it.

The analysis begins with a descriptive presentation of the survey results. The data, rated on a scale from 1 to 5, is compared to the literature to identify gaps in academic and practitioners' views on the Sales Manager and sales enablement. The findings reveal a theoretical conflict between the suggested areas of responsibility for Sales Managers in sales enablement literature and the actual views of respondents. While the literature suggests a strategic role for Sales Managers, most respondents' Sales Managers are involved in operational and tactical activities. This hinders the development of the sales organization and prevents the Sales Manager from becoming an organizational ambassador for sales, impeding revenue generation and cross-functional collaboration.

The paper proposes a new role for the Sales Manager in sales enablement. This role focuses on leading other functions within the organization to streamline revenue-generating activities and increase sales. To support Sales Managers in this new role, the author introduces the "Sales Managers Collaborate Model," a conceptual framework that emphasizes cross-functional collaboration through collaboration, analysis, design, and engagement. The model empowers the Sales Manager to act as the organizational ambassador for sales, leading key functions and areas within the organization to enhance the value proposition in a value infrastructure.

Keywords: *Sales enablement, Sales, Sales Management, Sales Manager, Sales processes, Sales strategy, Technology tools, Content & Training.*

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Problem identification

In today's highly competitive business environment, sales enablement has become increasingly important for organizations aiming to maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of their sales teams. As buyers become more informed and sophisticated (Paesbrugghe et al., 2018), sales teams need to be equipped with the right tools, content, and training to meet their expectations and navigate the complex sales landscape. This has led to the growing popularity of sales enablement as a critical function and discipline for driving revenue growth (Peterson & Dover, 2021).

This master's thesis will explore the role of the sales manager in sales enablement and how it can provide the organization with the necessary resources to succeed. The thesis will examine four key areas of sales enablement: sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, and technology tools. By analyzing these areas, the author aims to provide insights into practitioners' views on sales enablement and examine the sales manager's areas and level of responsibility.

Sales strategy plays a critical role in developing and implementing sales enablement strategies. This involves aligning sales goals with overall business objectives, developing effective and efficient sales processes, and measuring and analyzing sales performance to identify areas for improvement (Peterson et al., 2021).

Sales processes are critical as they aim to optimize sales performance by guiding and leading the organization, individual salespeople, and sales managers (F. Lauzi, 2023).

Content and training are crucial components of sales enablement. This includes providing sales teams with product and market knowledge, as well as training on sales techniques and best practices to meet customers' increasing expectations (Peterson & Dover, 2021).

Technology is another important aspect of sales enablement. Management can provide sales teams with the right technology tools to streamline their sales processes and improve overall efficiency. This can include tools for tracking leads, managing customer relationships, and analyzing sales data (Olanrewaju et al., 2022).

Sales enablement is a critical function and discipline for organizations looking to drive revenue growth and stay ahead of the competition. By focusing on sales strategy, sales processes, content &

training, and technology tools, the salesforce and organization can be equipped with the necessary resources to succeed in today's complex and competitive sales landscape.

Through an examination of the literature, there appears to be a gap in understanding how sales management, especially the sales manager, should navigate modern sales organizations. Furthermore, there is little to no literature that explicitly describes the individual role of the sales manager in sales enablement. For an organization to succeed with sales enablement, there needs to be a clear placement of responsibility.

This paper will examine, explore, and discuss the role of the sales manager in sales enablement. The research objectives of this paper are:

1.2 Research question

“What is the role of a Sales Manager in sales enablement?”

1.3 Research aim and structure

This project aims to explore the existing literature on sales enablement and uncover its areas of organizational influence within a sales organization. The role of the sales manager will be examined both at an individual level and in relation to sales enablement. The combination of sales enablement and sales manager literature will lay the foundation for a quantitative survey, targeting primarily sales managers or sales representatives.

The survey aims to identify strengths and weaknesses in respondents' organizations regarding sales enablement and examine the areas of responsibility for sales managers. The collected quantitative data will provide a basis for integrating the literature on sales enablement and sales managers, leading to a proposed practical approach for sales managers to navigate sales enablement.

2.0 Sales enablement theory

This chapter will examine existing literature on sales enablement and Sales Manager's role in B2B marketing.

2.1 Sales Enablement literature review

The purpose of the literature review is to search for relevant academic literature on Sales Enablement, critically reflect on its contribution to Sales Enablement, and determine how it can help address the research question of this paper.

The first part of the literature review will focus on Sales Enablement as an academic field and identify literature that aids in understanding what Sales Enablement entails. Only academic and peer-reviewed articles from sources such as Google Scholar and Aalborg University library were used to establish a theoretical foundation for exploring sales enablement.

The second part of the literature review will concentrate on the Sales Manager. The author will explore relevant literature to address the research question. This section will examine recent literature to identify similarities and gaps in the existing articles.

The final part of the literature review will summarize the findings and identify the areas where the Sales Manager is relevant in Sales Enablement, both at the organizational and individual levels.

2.1.1 Sales Enablement - why is it relevant?

Sales Enablement is an emerging concept and function within the business world, particularly prevalent in technology industries (Rangarajan et al., 2020). However, it has recently gained popularity in academic circles due to its comprehensive view of sales as an organizational discipline (Peterson et al., 2021). Firms that have a dedicated sales enablement function achieve higher quotas and win rates, with over a 10% advantage compared to firms without such a function (Miller & Heiman, 2018). This indicates that implementing sales enablement programs positively impacts an organization's revenue in both the short and long term, making it relevant for many B2B sales organizations.

Sales Enablement has garnered increased interest and relevance among professional B2B Sales Representatives and Sales Managers, as it recognizes the growing demand and complexity from the

buyer's perspective (Paesbrugghe et al., 2018). The buyer perspective and customer journey have become more intricate, lengthy, and uncertain (Paesbrugghe et al., 2018), which has led to a greater need for the involvement of experts at various levels (Miller & Heiman, 2018). Sales Enablement adopts a holistic approach, wherein all areas of an organization can contribute to or be influenced by sales enablement efforts (Peterson et al., 2021). Consequently, as the customer journey becomes more advanced and digitalized (Miller & Heiman, 2018), sales processes and organizations must also adapt. This sets Sales Enablement apart from other sales methodologies, as it views itself as a cross-functional integration of content, processes, technology, and people, aimed at enhancing the customer journey, decision-making, and ultimately driving sales (Peterson & Dover, 2021).

The objective of sales enablement is to either completely realign the revenue-generating mechanisms within an organization or, at the very least, improve the sales team's interactions with clients (Rapp & Beeler, 2021). It is a discipline focused on eliminating redundancies and inefficiencies that hinder revenue growth, such as uncoordinated marketing content, learning and development, operations, coaching, onboarding, and technology tools (Rapp & Beeler, 2021; Jordan, 2014; Olanrewaju et al., 2022). In doing so, Sales Enablement emphasizes four key areas within an organization's sales function: digital tools to equip the sales force (Rangarajan et al., 2020), aligning operations and sales processes (F. Lauzi et al., 2023), content and training to educate and coach the sales force in customer interactions (Rapp & Beeler, 2021), and strategy to holistically channelize sales enablement throughout the entire organization (Peterson et al., 2021).

2.1.2 Sales Enablement as sales performance optimization through processes

Some literature on sales enablement suggests taking an organizational approach, arguing that it plays a crucial role in increasing sales by streamlining various aspects of the sales process (F. Lauzi et al., 2023). Sales enablement optimizes sales outcomes and enhances overall performance by adopting appropriate design in terms of organizational, technological, and people platforms (Peterson & Dover, 2021).

An important area where sales enablement has a significant impact is in the implementation of sales development processes (F. Lauzi et al., 2023). These processes encompass various lead management contexts such as outbound prospect-focused, outbound account-based, inbound prospect-focused, and inbound account-based, each requiring specific lead research, engagement, and handover procedures (Terho et al., 2015).

Within the realm of sales enablement, a taxonomy of sales situations emerges, reflecting the evolving complexity of the sales function. Sales management is responsible for making resource allocation decisions to capture appropriate value from business-to-business (B2B) relationships (F. Lauzi et al., 2023). This taxonomy helps the sales force understand the intricate sales process and the challenges they face in effectively capturing and appropriating value.

Organizations measure the effectiveness of sales enablement through process-based evaluations, focusing on assessing how the enablement infrastructure improves sales support processes and delivers intended value (F. Lauzi et al., 2023).

The success of sales enablement lies in the development of firm capabilities, which encompass coordinated skills and knowledge sources across the entire organization. Organizations with dynamic capabilities strategically combine and leverage dispersed resources to effectively solve emergent problems and seize sales opportunities (Peterson & Dover, 2021).

According to F. Lauzi et al. (2023), Peterson & Dover (2021), Rangarajan et al. (2022), and Terho et al. (2023), sales enablement is viewed as an organizational approach that aims to increase sales by streamlining sales processes, adopting appropriate platforms, and aligning resource allocation decisions. Through process-based evaluations, enablement calibration, and the development of firm capabilities, organizations can continuously improve their sales enablement efforts.

2.1.3 Sales Enablement as a strategic approach to increase sales

Sales enablement can be seen as a strategic approach aimed at increasing sales by integrating various elements within an organization (Peterson et al., 2021). It recognizes the complexity of the sales function and the challenges faced by sales managers in capturing value from B2B relationships. Rather than being seen as an operational tool for individual roles, sales enablement is viewed as a holistic approach involving people in both frontline and back-office roles, working together in coordinated processes to improve the overall performance of the sales organization (Westbrook & Peterson, 2020).

Sales enablement encompasses organizational learning (Peterson et al., 2021), change management (Peterson et al., 2021), technology adoption (Rangarajan et al., 2020), and customer relationship management. Its purpose is to streamline revenue-generating activities within the organization,

ultimately leading to increased sales. It also emphasizes the connection between sales and marketing, fostering joint activities and refining customer-centric processes (Wiersema, 2013).

Strategic attention is centered on the marketing/sales interface, with sales enablement and customer management emerging as essential for dealing with strategic accounts and key intermediaries (Wiersema, 2013). Just as adopting a strategic approach is important for managing key accounts, sales enablement is a strategic approach that assimilates marketing/sales interface strategies to remove organizational obstructions and increase sales (Wiersema, 2013).

Overall, sales enablement is not just a singular initiative but an overarching business strategy that aligns various functions and processes to optimize sales performance and drive growth.

Rangarajan et al. (2020), Peterson et al. (2021), Westbrook & Peterson (2020), and Wiersema (2013) view sales enablement as a strategic approach to enhance customer relationships, increase sales, customer acquisition, business development, and customer satisfaction. They see sales enablement as a strategic approach that assimilates customer interface areas such as sales and marketing, product development, and sales. The overall strategic goal of sales enablement is to increase sales.

2.1.4 Sales Enablement as a transformational approach through Content & Training

Salespeople are facing growing challenges due to the increasing complexity of their roles. Consequently, it is crucial to develop new skills and competencies and seek solutions that can enhance the readiness of an efficient sales force. In the present day, customers possess more influence than ever before, mainly because of the abundance of information and greater market transparency (Paesbrughe et al., 2018). This situation underscores the importance of well-prepared salespeople who possess a deep understanding of customer requirements. Accurately comprehending customer desires becomes imperative in generating value for buyers (Peterson & Dover, 2021). To meet the increasing demands of customers, the complexity of sales cycles, and the rise in competition (Paesbrughe et al., 2018), organizations must aim to improve their sales performance and efficiency (Peterson & Dover, 2021). Jordan (2014) sees sales enablement as a tool with four categories that affect the salesforce within an organization: 1) recruiting & hiring, 2) training & coaching, 3) equipping, and 4) assessing. Brudner (2016) also recognizes the need to better prepare the salesforce to engage buyers in complex sales situations and therefore sees sales enablement as a tool to equip the salesforce through Sales Content Optimization. This can include material and content designed to

educate and prepare the salesforce in market analysis, competitor analysis, and marketing material (Brudner, 2016).

Despite the focus on sales coaching, training, or content, the objective of sales enablement remains essentially the same: to better prepare the selling organization to serve the buyer's needs with more efficient and effective coordination of various enablement services, such as training services, customer-facing and internal enablement content services, sales coaching services, and sales tools (Peterson & Dover, 2021).

Rapp & Beeler (2021) see sales enablement as consisting of both a macro and micro level in relation to a sales organization. On a macro level, the organization consists of 1) Sales Strategy, 2) Sales Technology, and 3) Salespeople. On the micro level, sales enablement is presented in the organization as the behavior of humans. The two levels are interrelated (Rapp & Beeler, 2021).

Peterson & Dover (2021), Rapp & Beeler (2021), Brudner (2016), and Jordan (2014) view sales enablement as a transformational approach to increase sales by equipping, coaching, and enhancing the salesforce to meet the increasing demand and complexity from customers. They see sales enablement as a human-oriented approach and discipline to educate and train the salesforce to meet buyers' demands and thereby increase sales.

2.1.5 Sales Enablement as a technological approach to increase sales

As organizations become more digitized and automated, challenges arise when the salesforce meets with prospects and existing customers without being equipped with the right technology or tools to enable buying (Olanrewaju et al., 2022). Sales enablement originally emerged in technology companies (Rangarajan et al., 2020), but in recent years, it has expanded to more sales organizations and is already making an impact on both revenue and customer retention (CSO Insight, 2021). Technology tools include sales-related software, applications, or platforms that help salespeople be more efficient (Olanrewaju et al., 2022).

With advancements in technology, sales enablement programs now have the capability to automate knowledge transfer processes specifically designed for supply chain partners (Plangger et al., 2020). This means that instead of relying solely on salespeople, organizations can utilize technology tools to disseminate information and empower their partners. These tools act as automated platforms that facilitate the exchange of knowledge, providing partners with the necessary resources and insights to

effectively drive sales (Plangger et al., 2020). By leveraging technology in this manner, businesses can streamline and optimize their sales enablement efforts, leading to improved efficiency, increased collaboration, and ultimately a boost in sales performance.

To keep up with customers' changing demands (Paesbrugghe et al., 2018), salespeople nowadays rely on a range of tools to enhance their performance. According to a study called "The State of Sales 2017" (LinkedIn, 2018), a significant 64% of salespeople use customer relationship management (CRM) tools to stay organized and on top of their game. Collaboration tools like Google Drive and Dropbox are also popular, with 62% of salespeople using them to work together seamlessly. Social networking platforms are utilized by 59% of salespeople to connect with potential customers and expand their network. Additionally, 40% of salespeople make use of enterprise communication platforms to stay connected within their organization. These figures have been on the rise, indicating that salespeople are embracing technology to improve their performance and adapt to the evolving sales landscape (Dilg Beachum, 2021). To meet the demands of today's B2B buyers, companies are adopting various sales tools to empower their sales teams (Olanrewaju et al., 2022). It's like having a toolbox filled with different tools that salespeople can use to match the right tool with the right customer at the right time. This combination of resources, tools, content, and knowledge provided by companies to their sales teams to help them close more deals is known as sales enablement (Hubspot, 2020). Sales enablement can be seen as a technological approach taken at the organizational level, aiming to provide consistent information and tools that can enhance salespeople's performance (Dilg Beachum, 2021).

The preferences of buyers are shifting towards remote work and increased reliance on software and technology tools. A significant 70% of buyers express their desire to work remotely for at least half of their time in the future. Notably, 50% of buyers even state that remote work has made the purchasing process easier (LinkedIn, 2021). This indicates that virtual selling skills have become crucial and will continue to be so in the foreseeable future. This emphasizes the ongoing need for salespeople to adapt to remote selling and leverage software and technology tools to effectively engage with buyers.

Olanrewaju et al. (2022), Plangger et al. (2020), and Dilg Beachum (2021) view sales enablement as a technological approach to enable sales organizations and salespeople to increase sales.

2.1.6 Summary of Literature

Despite having different approaches to sales enablement - Organizational, Strategic, Transformational, and Technological - the authors find agreement that sales enablement is a strategic discipline that seeks to assimilate cross-functional activities and streamline revenue generating activities to enable increase in sales through processes, strategy, content & training, and technology tools.

For graphical illustration the following table has been made:

Category	Description	Authors	Approach
Sales Performance Optimization (Processes)	<i>Activities focused on improving the effectiveness and efficiency of the sales process. This can include analyzing sales data, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing changes to increase sales performance through organizational focus.</i>	(F. Lauzi et al., 2023) (Peterson & Dover, 2020) (Rangarajan et al., 2022) (Terho et al., 2015)	Organizational
Sales Strategy	<i>An overarching plan or approach for achieving sales goals and objectives. This can include developing a go-to-market strategy, identifying target markets, and determining pricing and positioning strategies.</i>	(Rangarajan et al., 2020) (Peterson et al., 2021) (Wiersema, 2013). (Westbrook & Peterson, 2020)	Strategic
Content & Training	<i>Marketing materials and resources that help salespeople engage buyers, overcome objections, and close deals, and educational programs and resources designed to help salespeople improve their skills, knowledge, and performance. Examples include sales training sessions, coaching programs, and online courses.</i>	(Peterson & Dover, 2021) (Jordan, 2014) (Brudner, 2016) (Rapp & Beeler, 2021)	Transformational

Technology Tools	<i>Sales-related software, applications, or platforms that help salespeople be more productive, efficient, and effective. Examples include customer relationship management (CRM) systems, sales automation tools, and prospecting software.</i>	(Olanrewaju et al., 2022) (Plangger et al., 2020) (Dilg Beachum, 2021)	Technological
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Table 1: Summary of definitions (own illustration)

2.2 Sales Manager's role in sales enablement

This chapter will uncover, how the role of the Sales Manager has developed, and how the Sales Manager could - according to existing sales enablement literature - translate strategy into results through the sales force. The chapter will examine existing literature both inside and outside sales enablement to clarify the Sales Managers responsibilities and duties, and how the role is relevant when implementing sales enablement.

2.2.1 Current state of Sales manager and sales management

It is not uncommon to come across reviews of research within the sales function in general. In a bibliometric analysis conducted by Schrock et al. (2016), they examined the contributions of the Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management (JPSSM) and identified the key intellectual themes that emerged from 35 years of publishing. Their analysis revealed that sales managers and sales management have not received significant attention in much of the research, as evident from their discussion of historical themes and trends in sales literature (Plank et al., 2018).

Reid et al. (2017) points out that it is surprising how little attention sales managers have received in research, considering their acknowledged importance in the success of salespeople and sales organizations. The 2017 Sales Manager Enablement Report by Schenk and Dickie (2017) from CSO Insights captured the challenges faced by sales managers and sales management. Their report bluntly titles the situation as "Sales Managers: Overwhelmed and Underdeveloped."

This is why the author finds it intriguing to investigate the role of the sales manager in relation to sales enablement. As sales enablement becomes an increasingly important discipline for strategic sales organizations to master, the sales manager must be equipped to succeed with the implementation of sales enablement.

2.3 Evolution of the Sales Manager

The sales manager's role has traditionally been focused on generating growth, leading the sales team, and serving as the key interface between the company, sales team, and customers (Piercy, 2010). Traditionally, sales managers have primarily operated on an operational and tactical basis, with strategic matters being handled by either the marketing department or top management (Piercy, 2010).

Based on the examined literature, the author has categorized areas of responsibility into two orientation categories: "Operational and Tactical" and "Strategic." The operational and tactical level focuses on day-to-day operations within the sales organization, including overseeing sales (which can have operational, tactical, and strategic aspects), coaching and training the salesforce, and setting sales targets, forecasting, and goals (which can also have operational, tactical, and strategic dimensions depending on the evaluation level, such as weekly, monthly, quarterly, yearly, functional, regional, product, or business). The strategic level of a sales manager relates to overarching business and organizational responsibilities, including overseeing sales, setting sales targets, forecasting, and goals, organizational streamlining, cross-functional collaboration, and marketing strategy and sales/marketing collaboration.

As sales processes become more complex, competition intensifies, and buying companies expect more from selling companies (Paesbrugghe et al., 2018), the need for sales managers to assume a strategic role has often been overlooked (Lane & Piercy, 2009). From the perspective of sales enablement, sales managers must establish connections that overcome obstacles across various organizational areas, such as learning, change management, and technology adoption/CRM processes, with the goal of providing continuous sales support and increasing sales (Peterson et al., 2021). Additionally, when viewed from a resource-based perspective, sales enablement can be seen as a dynamic capability that demonstrates how companies integrate multiple capabilities (e.g., specialized marketing, cross-functional, architectural, CRM, selling) to align their resources and leverage them for sustainable competitive advantages (Peterson et al., 2021).

Sales managers need to transition into more strategic roles, focusing on organizational development and streamlining revenue generation (Dickie, 2017). In today's dynamic business landscape, sales managers are no longer confined to traditional sales activities but instead play a crucial role in driving overall organizational growth and success through cross-functional collaboration aimed at implementing sales enablement (Albro, 2018) to continuously support the sales force and empower buyers (Dickie, 2017).

One key aspect of the modern sales manager's strategic role is organizational development (Peterson et al., 2021). Sales managers are now responsible for aligning sales strategies with broader organizational goals and objectives (Schenk & Dickie, 2017) (Albro, 2018). They should work closely with senior leadership to develop and implement sales plans that align with the company's vision and long-term strategic direction. This includes identifying market opportunities (Stone & Good, 1994), setting sales targets (Evans & Schlacter, 1985), devising strategies to penetrate new markets or segments, and allocating resources (Badrinarayanan, 2019).

Organizational collaboration by sales managers has emerged as a prominent theme and the second most prevalent leader behavior (JOPSASM, 2019). This behavior involves organizing, facilitating, and leading group activities where salespeople are encouraged to interact and learn from one another while collectively addressing challenges across multiple organizational functions. When sales leaders adopt a collaborative approach, they empower their sales team members to offer and seek assistance not only from fellow salespeople but also from internal colleagues in different departments of the organization (JOPSASM, 2019).

The role of sales managers has evolved from being solely focused on traditional sales activities to becoming more strategic, with a strong emphasis on organizational development and streamlining revenue generation. Today's sales managers play a vital role in aligning sales strategies with overall organizational goals, streamlining revenue generation processes, and driving innovation to achieve sustainable sales growth and competitive advantage (Peterson et al., 2021).

To summarize the modern sale management's role and particularly the Sales Manager and compare areas of responsibility to the Old Sales Manager Table 2 has been made for graphical illustration. Table 2 can be seen below:

	Old Sales Management's role	New Sales Management's role	Authors
(1) Overseeing sales	X	X	(Piercy, Cravens, & Lane, 2012) (Piercy, 2010) (Ahearne et al. 2013) (Kraus et al. 2015) (Peterson et al., 2021) (Bowen et al., 2022)
(2) Coaching & training sales force	X	X	(Boehnke et al. 2003) (Shannahan 2013) (Pelham, 2006)
(3) Setting sales targets, forecasting and goals	X	X	(Stone and Good, 1994) (Evans and Schlacter, 1985) (Dickie, 2017). (Albro, 2018) (Piercy, 2010) (Bowen et al., 2022)
Operational or tactical orientated	X		(Piercy, Cravens, & Lane, 2012) (Boehnke et al. 2003) (Shannahan 2013) (Pelham, 2006)
Strategic orientated		X	(Peterson et al., 2021) (Dickie, 2017). (Albro, 2018) (Piercy, 2010) (Bowen et al., 2022)
(4) Organizational streamlining		X	(Dickie, 2017). (Albro, 2018) (Badrinarayanan, 2018) (Peterson & Dover, 2021) (Plank, 2018) (Rapp et al., 2020)
(5) Cross-functional collaboration		X	(Dickie, 2017). (Albro, 2018) (Badrinarayanan, 2018) (Peterson et al., 2021) (Peterson & Dover, 2021) (Lauzi et al., 2022)

			(F. Lauzi, 2023)
(6) Marketing strategy and sales/marketing collaboration		X	(Peterson & Dover, 2021) (Wiersema, 2013).

Table 2: Sales Manager's role (own illustration)

2.4 Literature gap regarding the Sales Manager in sales enablement

Sales enablement literature, although providing comprehensive insights into various aspects of sales and marketing, falls short in explicitly defining or describing the role of the sales manager. While sales enablement literature typically focuses on sales techniques, strategies, and best practices, it doesn't seem to describe and define the responsibilities and characteristics of a sales manager but rather focuses on the organizational level rather than the personal level (Peterson et al., 2021).

Sales managers play a pivotal role in leading and managing sales teams within an organization. They are responsible for setting sales goals, developing sales strategies, coaching, and training sales representatives, monitoring sales performance, and driving revenue growth (Table 1). However, in many sales enablement articles, the role of the sales manager may be briefly mentioned or not explicitly elaborated upon at an individual level.

One possible reason for the lack of explicit focus on the sales manager in sales enablement literature could be the assumption that their role is well understood and commonly accepted across different organizations. However, this assumption may not always hold true as the responsibilities and expectations of sales managers can vary significantly depending on the industry, organization size, and sales structure.

It could be the emphasis on individual sales representative skills and techniques in sales enablement literature, with less attention given to the leadership and management aspects of sales. While sales representatives are indeed important, the role of the sales manager is crucial in creating a high-performing sales team, aligning sales strategies with overall business objectives, and driving long-term success.

The dynamic and evolving nature of sales management may also contribute to the lack of explicit definition or description in sales enablement literature. Sales management roles can change rapidly with shifts in the market, technology, and customer expectations, making it challenging to provide a standardized definition or description that applies universally.

Despite the gaps in sales enablement literature, recognizing and addressing the role of the sales manager is crucial for organizations to achieve sales success. Sales managers are instrumental in building a motivated and skilled sales team, developing, and implementing effective sales strategies, fostering collaboration between sales and other departments, and driving revenue growth. Their leadership and management skills are essential in navigating the complexities of the sales process and achieving sustainable sales results (F. Lauzi et al., 2023).

While sales enablement literature offers valuable insights into sales techniques and strategies, it may not explicitly define or describe the critical role of the sales manager. Organizations should recognize the significance of the sales manager's responsibilities and characteristics and provide them with the necessary support and resources to effectively lead and manage their sales teams.

2.5 Summary of theory

The purpose of Chapter 2.0, "Sales Enablement Theory," was to explain, explore, and define sales enablement.

Chapter 2.1 explains why sales enablement is becoming increasingly relevant for B2B sales organizations and how it relates to the complexity of the buying processes. Chapter 2.2 explores existing literature on sales enablement and defines its different areas. From there, the most suitable definition was chosen for the project and to address the research question. The chosen definition of sales enablement is: *"Cross-functional streamlining of activities with the purpose of increasing sales through the areas of strategy, processes, content & training, and technology tools."*

Chapter 2.3 examines how the role of sales management, particularly the Sales Manager, has evolved from primarily focusing on the operational and tactical level to operating on a strategic level to eliminate cross-functional boundaries in the organization. Chapter 2.4 examines sales enablement's definition of the Sales Manager and finds that the role isn't explicitly described in the context of sales enablement.

This paper will suggest the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement.

3.0 Methodology

In the following chapter, the author will explain the methodological considerations, research design, and strategy to address the research question: "What is the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement?"

The structure of this chapter follows Creswell (2014), who refers to research design as a plan for conducting and structuring the research. It includes three overlapping components: philosophy, investigation, and methodology. According to Creswell (2014), researchers should consider, research, and present the findings and conclusions based on the philosophical approach and put it into practice.

Based on this, the project's philosophy of science, which serves as a framework for the methods to answer the research question, will be described.

3.1 Philosophy of science

3.1.1 Choice of paradigm

This project is based on critical realism. Critical realism has been chosen because it combines the measurement and perception of the objective while recognizing the existence of a subjective truth that cannot be measured or quantified (Nesgaard Nielsen, 2018).

The overall research question of this project is subjective as it involves the study of "What" a role is, which is understood and examined based on subjective criteria. However, there are elements of objectivity in the results of the analysis. The interpretation of the analysis results is also influenced by the author's ontology, which refers to their understanding of knowledge. This understanding is shaped by the choice of analysis models based on the author's thought process (Nesgaard Nielsen, 2018).

The rationale for not choosing social constructivism and positivism stems from the recognition that this project and research encompass both objective and subjective elements. Positivism leans towards the objective, while social constructivism is more subjective in nature (Nesgaard Nielsen, 2018). In this project, survey answers are being analyzed with the understanding of sales enablement as a cross-functional discipline that aims to increase sales through strategies, processes, content & training, and technology tools.

The author acknowledges that the combination of objective (measurable, quantitative analysis) and subjective (non-measurable, understanding, and reflection) aspects is a strength of the project and research question (Nesgaard Nielsen, 2018). Based on this acknowledgement, critical realism has been chosen as the philosophy of science for this study.

3.1.2 Ontology

"Ontology is the theory of being, of what exists in the world and how" (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2014, pg. 12).

The ontology of critical realism acknowledges that there exists a reality that is independent of our knowledge and views. This means that not everything can be measured and does not necessarily affect the reality being studied. Here, critical realism differs from positivism since it recognizes that the world is more than the observed, and it can be influenced by something that isn't measurable (Nielsen, 2018). Critical realism also recognizes the interplay of structures and actors in social ontology. This means that the interaction between these is dynamic and can affect each other. This could for example be an organization that is influenced by its management, customers, market, and cultural environment. Here, the structure of a given organization plays a significant role in the attitude of its actors and understanding of a Sales Manager's role and responsibilities (Nielsen, 2018).

3.1.3 Epistemology

"Epistemology is the theory of knowledge and is about what we can know about the world and how" (Buch-Hansen & Nielsen, 2014, p. 12).

The non-observable domain can provide findings to new knowledge in which structures and actors that are non-observable can be investigated. These factors are underlying and influence events that take place in the empirical and actual domains. As a critical realist one has a rational way of thinking and is aware that there is a reality without knowing it (Nielsen, 2018).

This project's epistemology consists of sales enablement literature. The literature is chosen based on its ability to answer the overall research question. The epistemology can help answer what structures that take place, for Sales Managers to successfully implement a new and improved approach to sales enablement.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

To help answer the research question, a survey of 29 questions were conducted. The questions related to both organizational and individual level regarding sales enablement and the Sales Manager. The respondents were kindly asked to rate their organizations' and Sales Manager's ability to increase sales through the areas strategy, sales processes, content & training, technology tools, and the Sales Manager, and grade them either "Excellent", "Good", "Fair", "Rather Poor", and "Poor". To see the whole survey please look in the Appendix.

The primary objective of the quantitative survey was to explore the perspectives and experiences of B2B Sales Managers and Sales Representatives regarding organizational responsibilities, with a focus on sales strategy, sales processes, content and training, technology tools, and the role of the Sales Manager. To reflect the chosen theory of sales enablement, the survey was prepared in a way that streamlined activities to increase sales in these areas.

The survey was designed to gather quantitative data in a structured manner, using closed-ended questions that allowed for easy analysis and comparison of responses. Before formulating the questions, the author considered the existing literature on sales enablement and identified the key areas that needed to be covered in the survey. The survey questions were formulated to reflect the chosen theory of sales enablement, which defines it as a "*Cross-functional streamlining of activities with the purpose to increase sales through the areas of strategy, processes, content & training, and technology tools*".

To reflect the cross-functional nature of sales enablement, the survey questions were designed to cover a range of areas within the organization that are impacted by sales enablement and the role of the Sales Manager. The questions were also designed to elicit responses from Sales Managers and Sales Reps who had experienced either success or failure in executing different areas of responsibility within the organization. This was done to ensure that the responses were grounded in practical experience and could provide insights into the effectiveness of sales enablement initiatives.

The survey was distributed through the professional social media platform LinkedIn, primarily to Sales Managers and Sales Reps operating in B2B sales organizations. The ideal respondent was a Sales Manager or Sales Rep with experience in different areas of responsibility, including sales strategy, sales processes, content and training, technology tools, and sales management.

To ensure that the survey accurately reflected the chosen theory of sales enablement, the author included a definition of the term in the survey introduction. This definition provided a framework for respondents to understand the scope of the survey and the areas that they were being asked to provide feedback on.

3.2.1 Survey preparation

The preparation of the survey was conducted in two stages. In the initial stage, the first section of the survey was developed, which focused on sales enablement. The questions relating to sales enablement were formulated from an organizational perspective, in accordance with the chosen theory, to explore the various responsibilities and tasks associated with this area.

In the subsequent stage, the second part of the survey was developed, which focused on the Sales Manager. To investigate the experiences of the respondents regarding the role of the Sales Manager in their organizations, the author drew upon literature from chapter 2.3. The objective was to compare the respondents' experiences with the expected role of the Sales Manager as suggested by the literature and how it has evolved over time.

The individual sections of the survey were designed to trigger specific information from the respondents and will be described in detail in the subsequent sections.

3.2.1.1 *Questions regarding sales enablement and organizational responsibility*

The questions related to sales enablement were designed to have an organizational focus. As identified in chapter 2.4, existing literature on the topic tends to lack a clear focus on the individual Sales Manager. Therefore, the questions in the first part of the survey were directed towards the organization rather than the individual Sales Manager.

The questions were categorized into four areas: sales strategy, sales processes, content and training, and technology tools. These categories were derived from existing literature on sales enablement and were drawn from Table 1: "Summary of definitions," based on the works of Peterson & Dover (2021), Rangarajan et al. (2020), Peterson et al. (2021), and Matthew J. Waller et al. (2020).

The questions examined the responsibility or sponsorship of the four areas within sales enablement. Initially, the respondents were asked whether their organization had intentionally allocated

responsibility for these areas and how effective the sales strategy, sales processes, content and training, and technology tools provided by the organization were enabling sales growth.

The purpose of this section was to evaluate the level of intentionality regarding sales enablement within the respondents' organizations, as well as to determine the degree to which each area of responsibility contributed to increase sales.

3.2.1.2 Questions regarding the Sales Manager

The questions regarding the Sales Manager were formulated with an individual focus. As discussed in chapter 2.3, the role of the Sales Manager has undergone a significant transformation in recent years, from an operational and tactical function to a strategic one that serves as an ambassador of sales across the entire organization. Consequently, modern Sales Managers are expected to shoulder new responsibilities, including organizational streamlining, cross-functional collaboration, and marketing strategy.

The questions were derived from Table 2: Sales Manager's new role. In addition, the respondents were asked to share their own views on the evolution of the Sales Manager's role and rate the extent to which they believe their organization's Sales Manager is equipped to boost sales.

This question is of great interest in the analysis because it directly confronts individual respondents with their own Sales Manager or cause them to reflect on their own situation and abilities. Both Sales Managers and Sales Representatives were asked this question.

3.2.2 Data analysis

The following section will describe the approach to which the analysis will be done, and what considerations will be made.

The first component will consist of a descriptive analysis, which will involve the examination of the survey data to identify and describe any trends or patterns that may emerge.

The second component of the analysis will be a theoretical and comparative analysis, which aims to identify gaps and similarities between the survey data and the existing literature. To facilitate this analysis, Table 2 will be used as a framework from a theoretical perspective.

3.3 Summary of methodology

The survey aimed to explore B2B Sales Managers and Sales Representatives' perspectives on organizational responsibilities, focusing on sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, technology tools, and the role of Sales Managers. Questions were formulated based on the organization's viewpoint and theory chosen.

For graphical illustration see the figure 2 below:

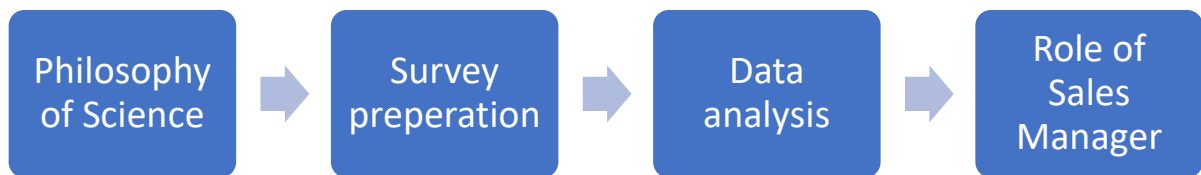


Figure 2: Approach to methodology (own illustration)

4.0 Analysis of quantitative survey

The following chapter will consist of two parts. The first part will comprise a descriptive analysis of the quantitative data extracted from the survey. This part will provide an overview of the data, highlight trends in respondents' answers, analyze variations in their responses, and identify points of agreement and disagreement.

The second part will be a theoretical and comparative analysis where the respondents' answers will be analyzed in relation to the theory presented in chapter 2.3. This analysis will serve as the foundation for proposing a way for Sales Managers to navigate in sales enablement.

The author has chosen the following rating scale: 1 = Poor; representing the lowest level that does not create value or competitive advantages. 2 = Below Average; indicating a slightly higher level that creates value in some minor areas but still falls short of creating competitive advantages. 3 = Fair; denoting a level that meets respondents' expectations and creates value in some areas but does not generate a competitive advantage. 4 = Good; representing the second-highest rating, indicating value creation in multiple areas and competitive advantages. 5 = Excellent; the highest rating, exceeding customer expectations and creating a competitive advantage.

It should be noted that "Fair" will not be perceived as positive, as merely meeting expectations does not create a competitive advantage according to the author.

4.1 Descriptive analysis

The following chapters will provide the reader with an overview of the data, describe tendencies and the overall data.

4.1.1 Establishing an overview

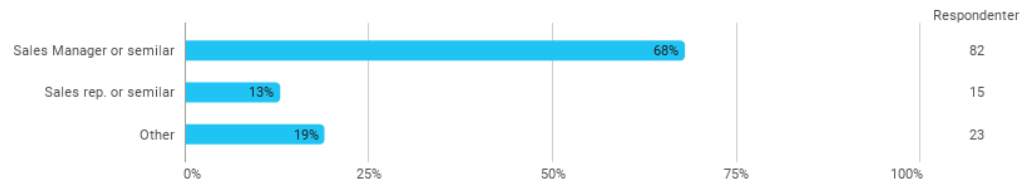
The initial part of the survey included general questions to assess the respondents' position, industry, and organization size.

Position:

A total of 120 participants took part in the survey. However, 32 respondents only partially completed the survey, resulting in 88 respondents who completed the entire survey. Out of the 120 respondents, 82 held positions as Sales Managers or similar, 15 held positions as Sales Representatives or similar, and 23 respondents held positions in the "other" category. After the survey was concluded, the author realized that there was a misspelling in the question regarding position. The question appeared as

"What is current position" instead of "What is your current position." Despite the misspelling, it does not appear to have affected the respondents' willingness to answer or their understanding of the question. All respondents answered this question, and no one contacted the author for clarification.

What is current position?



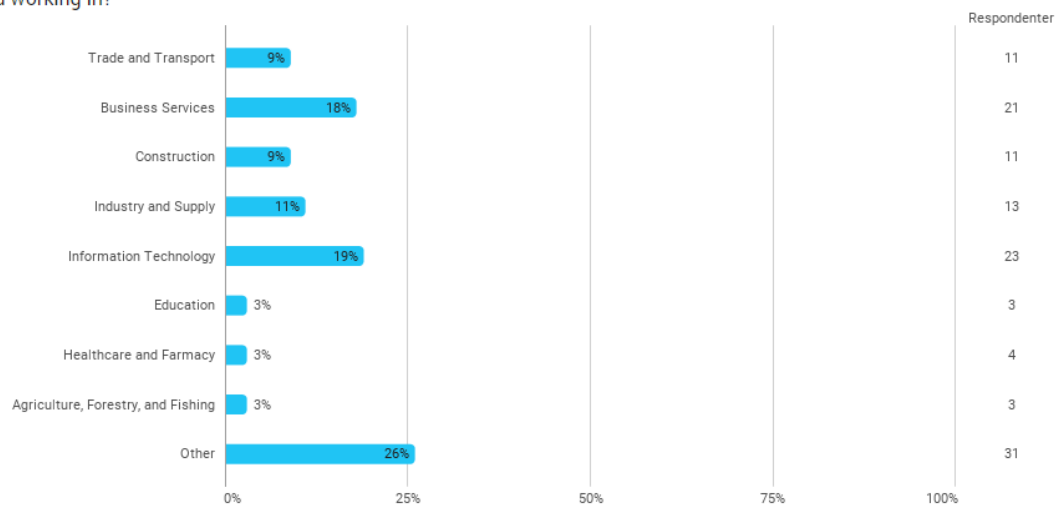
The author is pleased to note that 82 of the respondents hold positions as Sales Managers or similar, as the project aims to examine Sales Managers and their roles and responsibilities in relation to sales enablement. However, the representation of Sales Representatives is also important since they are involved in the processes and operations typically structured and overseen by Sales Managers.

Industry:

The subsequent question pertained to the respondents' industries. There appears to be an overrepresentation in the "Information Technology" industry with 23 respondents and the "Business Service" industry with 21 respondents. However, the category with the highest representation is "Other". The overrepresentation of the "Other" category could be due to respondents anticipating their specific industry, which is why the author chose to include that option in the survey. The most underrepresented industries are "Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing," "Education," and "Healthcare & Pharmacy."

The selection of industries was based on their representation in the Danish market according to the Statistics Bank of Denmark (Danmarks Statistik, 2020). Since the survey was exclusively distributed to Sales Managers and Sales Representatives in Denmark, the author did not consider the representation of industries in other countries.

What industry are you working in?

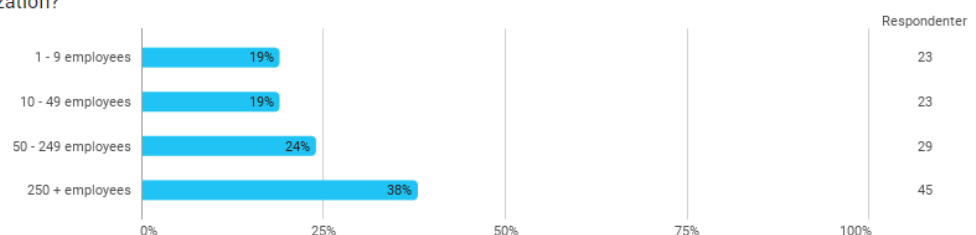


Size of organization:

The last generic question was related to the size of the respondents' size of their organizations. The categories of choice were "1-9 employees", "10-49 employees", "50-249 employees", and "250+ employees". 45 chose "250+ employees", 29 chose "50-249 employees", 23 chose "10-49 employees", and lastly, 23 of the respondents chose "1-9 employees". The numbers shows that 74 of the respondents work in organizations that have minimum 50+ employees.

The size categories were chosen based on their representation in the Danish market according to the Statistics Bank of Denmark (Danmarks Statistik, 2020). As the survey was distributed to Sales Managers and Sales Reps in a great variation of organizations, it was important for the author to include all major size industry categories. Since the survey wasn't intended to be distributed in other countries than Denmark, the author didn't look at other countries representation of industries.

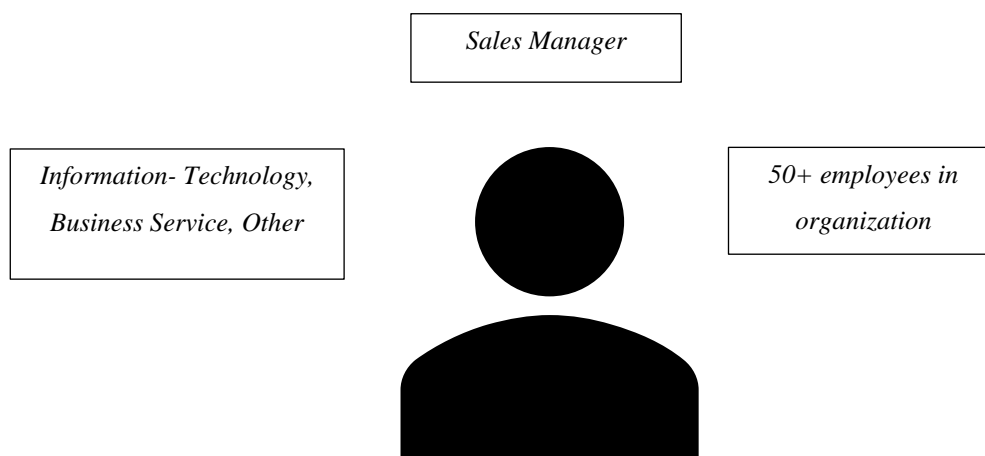
What is the size is your organization?



Summary of overview:

Category	Respondents
Position	
<i>Sales Manager</i>	82
<i>Sales Rep</i>	15
<i>Other</i>	23
Industry	
<i>Trade & Transport</i>	11
<i>Business Service</i>	21
<i>Construction</i>	11
<i>Industry & Supply</i>	13
<i>Information Technology</i>	23
<i>Education</i>	3
<i>Healthcare & Pharmacy</i>	4
<i>Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing</i>	3
<i>Other</i>	31
Size of organization	
<i>250+ employees</i>	45
<i>50-250 employees</i>	29
<i>10-49 employees</i>	23
<i>1-9 employees</i>	23

Persona of respondents:



4.1.2 Organizational sales enablement

This chapter will analyze the organizational responsibilities regarding sales enablement. In this chapter, the respondents' answers will be analyzed to examine the organizational areas sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, and technology tools.

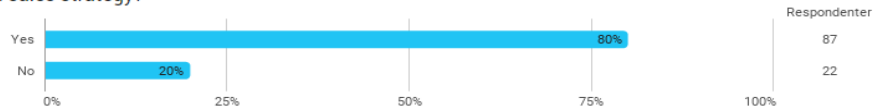
4.1.2.1 Sales Strategy

The initial phase of the sales enablement analysis at the organizational level focuses on sales strategy. The definition of sales strategy derived from the survey, based on the literature presented in Table 1, is as follows: "Sales strategy is understood in this survey as a long-term plan with clear sales goals and targets that can be continuously measured and monitored" (Appendix 1). The sales strategy serves as an overarching measurable plan for achieving sales targets (Table 1).

The first aspect of the sales strategy examination is to determine if the respondents' organizations have a clear and well-defined sales strategy. Sales strategy refers to how a company achieves its marketing objectives by allocating sales resources at the customer-facing level. It is considered important because having a sales strategy is positively perceived by the salesforce and sales management in terms of performance (Panagopoulos & Avlonitis, 2010).

Out of the respondents, 87 indicated that their organizations have a formulated sales strategy, while 22 stated that their organizations do not have a formulated sales strategy.

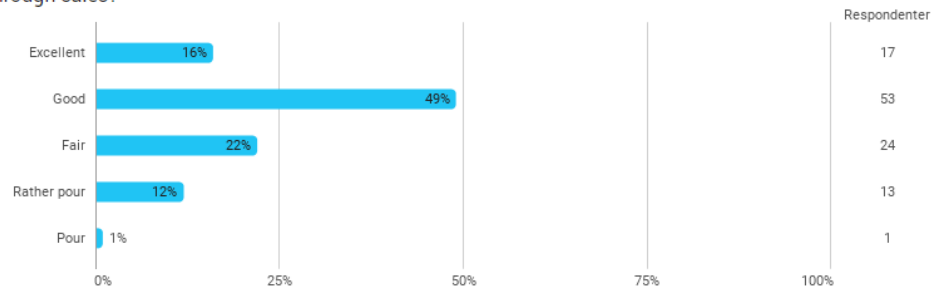
Does your organization have a formulated sales strategy?



Since sales enablement aims to align revenue generation activities and increase sales through both people and tools, having a well-formulated and measurable sales strategy is beneficial for management and sales representatives. It enhances engagement (Panagopoulos & Avlonitis, 2010) and enables optimization of performance through strategic clarity. The data suggests that the respondents' organizations strive to improve performance and provide guidance to their salesforce through strategic clarity.

The survey also inquired about the execution of the sales strategy in their respective organizations. Out of the respondents, 17 rated the execution as "Excellent," while 53 rated it as "Good." This indicates that 64% of the respondents perceive the execution as positive. However, 36% of the respondents perceive the execution to be "Fair" or lower.

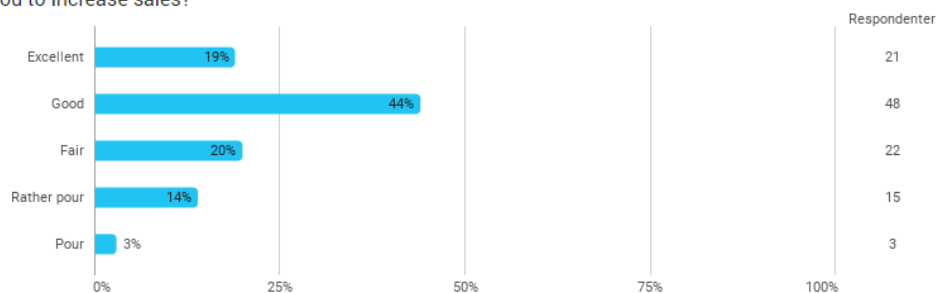
How well is the strategy executed through sales?



The final question inquired about the effectiveness of the sales strategy in enabling the respondents' organizations to increase sales. Given the understanding and definition of sales enablement in this paper, which emphasizes the goal of increasing sales, this question aimed to assess the strategy's ability to achieve that objective.

Out of the respondents, 69 expressed a positive view regarding the strategy's effectiveness in enabling sales growth. However, 40 respondents perceived the strategy to be either "Fair" or lower in terms of its impact on sales increase.

How well does the strategy enable you to increase sales?



Summary of strategy:

Overall, most respondents hold a positive perception of the sales strategy in their organizations. This is reflected in the fact that 87 respondents work in organizations with a clear and formulated sales strategy, and 70 and 69 respondents have a positive view on the execution and enablement of the sales strategy, respectively.

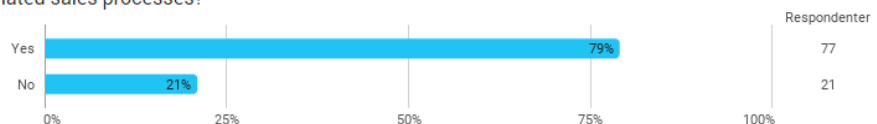
However, there is still room for improvement as 22 respondents work in organizations without a clear and formulated sales strategy, and 38 and 40 respondents have a perception of the execution and enablement of the sales strategy as either "Fair" or lower. These findings suggest that there are opportunities for enhancing the sales strategy and its implementation to further optimize sales performance.

4.1.2.2 Sales Processes:

The second part of the sales enablement examination on an organizational level focuses on sales processes. The definition derived from the survey, as illustrated in Table 1, describes sales processes as activities that encompass prospecting, positioning, lead generation, negotiation, closing, onboarding, and after-sales. These processes are designed to increase sales by providing actionable and well-defined tasks and procedures throughout the sales journey.

The initial part of the examination aimed to determine whether respondents' organizations have clear and formulated sales processes. Out of the total respondents, 77 indicated that their organizations have formulated sales processes, while 21 respondents reported that their organizations do not have such processes in place.

Does your company have clear and formulated sales processes?

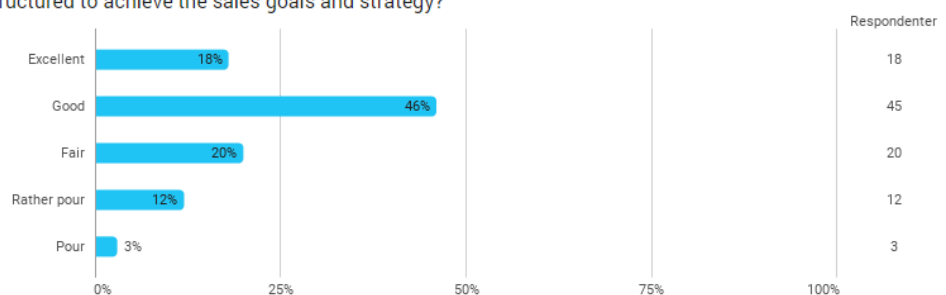


Sales enablement, being a strategic and organizational initiative aimed at aligning revenue generation activities to increase sales, greatly benefits from formulated and clear sales processes. Such processes

help engage both the management and sales representatives, optimizing their performance through organizational clarity.

The subsequent question in the survey explored how well the sales processes were structured to achieve the sales goals and strategy. Out of the respondents, 63 held a positive view on the contribution of sales processes to achieving the sales goals and strategy. This positive perception was reflected in the ratings, with 18 respondents rating it as "Excellent" and 45 respondents rating it as "Good." However, it is worth noting that 35 respondents perceived the contribution of sales processes to be either "Fair" or lower, indicating that there is room for improvement in this area.

How well are the sales processes structured to achieve the sales goals and strategy?

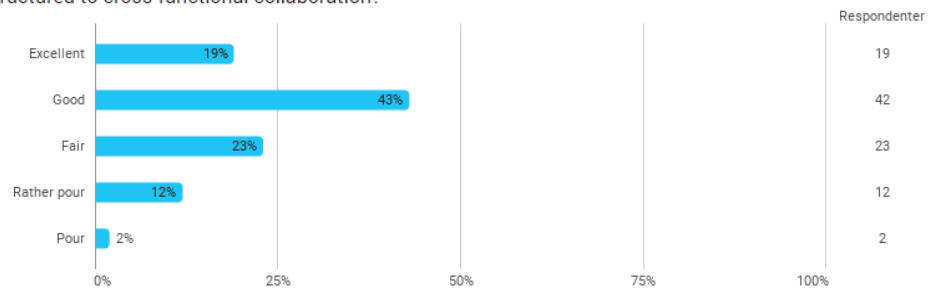


The subsequent examination focuses on how well the sales processes are structured to enable cross-functional collaboration. Since sales enablement aims to optimize revenue generation activities throughout the organization, it is crucial for multiple functions and areas outside of sales to contribute to or be influenced by sales enablement in order to achieve success in cross-functional collaboration.

Out of the respondents, 61 perceive the sales processes within their organizations to be structured to facilitate cross-functional collaboration. It's important to note that the level of cross-functional collaboration can vary significantly across different industries and markets. However, for organizations to succeed in cross-functional collaboration, it is essential to position the sales organization at the center of the business and marketing strategy. This entails aligning sales operations with the strategic direction of the organization to maximize sales and foster cross-functional collaboration. While the concept of cross-functional collaboration is not new and has been utilized in B2B marketing and sales for many years (Wengler et al., 2005; Lane & Piercy, 2009), its significance and popularity have increased in recent years due to the emergence of sales enablement and digitalization (Peterson et al., 2021).

Despite 61 respondents rating the sales processes as suitable for cross-functional collaboration, 37 respondents rated it as either "Fair" or lower, suggesting that there is still room for improvement in this area.

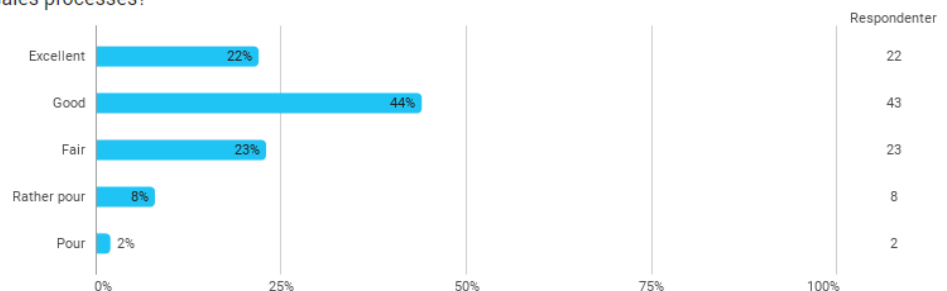
How well are the sales processes structured to cross-functional collaboration?



The final aspect examined in relation to the respondents' sales processes is their effectiveness and efficiency. Sales processes are designed to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the sales process. This involves activities such as analyzing sales data, identifying areas for improvement, and implementing changes to enhance sales performance.

Out of the respondents, 65 perceive their sales processes to be positive, indicating that they find them effective and efficient. However, 33 respondents rate their sales processes as either "Fair" or lower, suggesting that there is still room for improvement in terms of effectiveness and efficiency.

How effective and efficient are the sales processes?



Summary of sales processes:

Overall, most respondents have a positive perception of sales processes in their organizations. The presence of clear and formulated sales processes is reported by 77 respondents, indicating a strong foundation for effective sales operations. Additionally, a significant number of respondents (63, 61,

and 65) perceive the sales processes as contributing to the achievement of goals and strategy, facilitating cross-functional collaboration, and being effective and efficient.

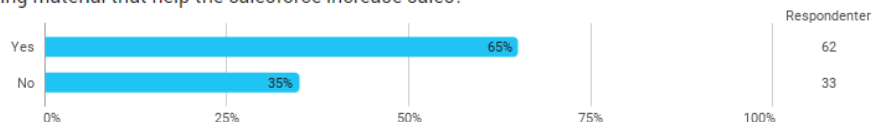
However, it is worth noting that there is still room for improvement. Approximately 11% of respondents work in organizations without clear and formulated sales processes, suggesting a need for more structured and defined approaches. Furthermore, a notable percentage (36%, 38%, and 34%) of respondents have a perception of sales processes that falls within the "Fair" or lower range, indicating areas where enhancements can be made to optimize effectiveness and efficiency.

4.1.2.3 Content & Training

The third examination on an organizational level focuses on content and training. Up to this point, there has not been a significant divergence in the respondents' answers regarding sales strategy and sales processes. However, disagreements arise in the following examination.

The first question in this examination assesses whether respondents' organizations provide the salesforce with clear marketing material to enable increased sales. Out of the respondents, 62 answered "Yes," indicating that their organizations do provide clear marketing material. Conversely, 33 respondents answered "No," suggesting that their organizations do not provide such resources. Marketing material plays a crucial role in helping salespeople engage buyers, address objections, and close deals. Examples of marketing material include case studies, product brochures, and competitive analyses, all aimed at enabling increased sales.

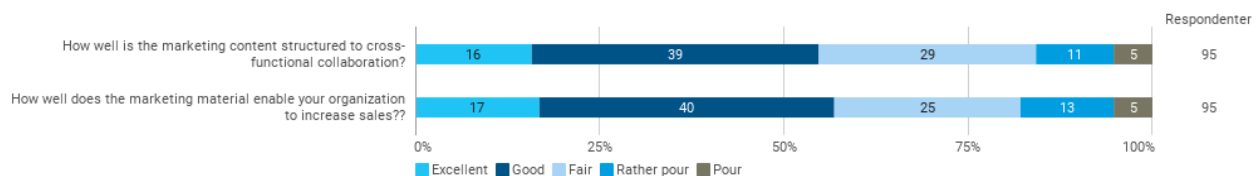
Does your organization have clear marketing material that help the salesforce increase sales?



The second question related to Content & Training examines the degree to which the marketing materials provided to the salesforce are structured to facilitate cross-functional collaboration. This question is formulated in alignment with the holistic view of sales enablement, which emphasizes organizational streamlining and cross-functional collaboration. The marketing materials are intended to be shared and utilized across various departments within the organization, contributing to sales enablement and ultimately increasing sales throughout the organization.

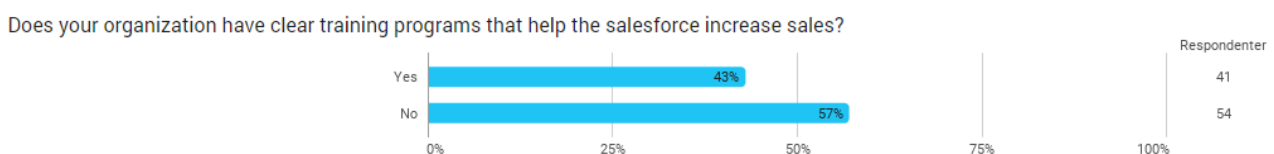
Out of the respondents, 55 perceive the marketing material as enabling cross-functional collaboration, while 45 do not. Similarly, 57 respondents perceive the marketing material as enabling increased

sales, while 43 do not. It is worth noting that in this aspect, there appears to be a larger divergence in the respondents' answers compared to both sales strategy and sales processes, indicating differing perceptions and experiences regarding the effectiveness of the marketing materials in promoting cross-functional collaboration and driving sales.



The other part of the examination focuses on the training of the salesforce. Training refers to educational programs and resources aimed at improving the skills, knowledge, and performance of salespeople. Examples of training methods include sales training sessions, coaching programs, and online courses.

According to the survey, 54 respondents indicated that their organizations do not have clear training programs that help the salesforce increase sales. It is worth noting that there was a potential ambiguity in the question, as it could be interpreted in two ways. It could either mean that organizations provide training programs that are ineffective in improving sales performance, or that organizations do not provide training programs at all. To ensure a comprehensive analysis, the author has decided to consider both interpretations in understanding and analyzing the responses.



The next question inquired about the effectiveness of the training programs in enabling the salesforce to increase sales. It is noteworthy that, for the first time in the survey, most of the respondents rated this aspect lower than "Good." Specifically, 49 of the respondents indicated that they perceive the training program's ability to enable an increase in sales as either "Fair" or "Poor." This suggests that there is room for improvement in the training programs provided by the organizations to enhance the salesforce's sales performance.

How well does the training programs enable the salesforce to increase sales?



Summary of Content & Training:

The survey results indicate that the areas of Content & Training within organizational sales enablement have the most divergence in respondents' answers. While 62 respondents stated that their organizations provide marketing content and materials to the salesforce, only 55 perceive these materials as enabling cross-functional collaboration, and 57 perceive them as enabling an increase in sales. On the other hand, 54 respondents reported that their organizations lack clear training programs, and 59 respondents stated that their organizations do not provide sales training that enables the salesforce to increase sales.

Based on these findings, it is evident that Content & Training are the most neglected areas of organizational sales enablement. This suggests a need for organizations to focus on improving and aligning their content and training programs to better support the salesforce in achieving sales goals and collaborating effectively across functions.

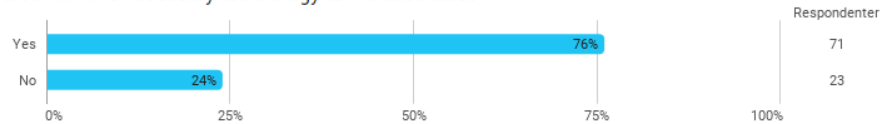
4.1.2.4 Technology Tools

In the final part of the examination of organizational sales enablement, the focus was on Technology Tools to enable an increase in sales. Out of the respondents, 71 indicated that their organizations provide them with the necessary technology tools for this purpose. These tools are sales-related software, applications, or platforms that assist salespeople in being more productive, efficient, and effective. Examples of such tools include customer relationship management (CRM) systems, sales automation tools, and prospecting software.

However, it is worth noting that 23 respondents reported that their organizations do not provide the necessary Technology Tools for sales enablement. This suggests a potential area for improvement in

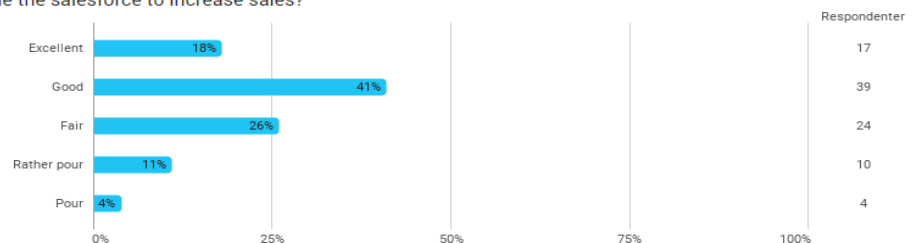
these organizations, as technology plays a crucial role in supporting sales activities and maximizing sales performance.

Does your organization provide the salesforce with the necessary technology to increase sales?



Despite most respondents agreed that they are provided the necessary Technology Tools, only 56 agreed that the Technology Tools enable them to increase sales. 38 rated the Technology Tools as being “Fair” or lower to enable increase in sales.

How well does the technology enable the salesforce to increase sales?



Summary of Technology Tools:

Technology Tools seems to be an organizational sales enablement area where most respondents are provided with the necessary tools. They do however rate the enabling to be rather moderate with 38 of the respondents rating the enabling of the tools to increase sales and being “Fair” or lower.

4.1.3 Summary of sales enablement on organizational level

Based on the data, there is a clear trend among the respondents regarding their perception of different organizational areas in terms of sales enablement. The areas of Sales Strategy, Sales Processes, and Technology Tools received relatively positive ratings, with an average of 71 of the respondents rating them as "Good" or higher in terms of clarity and formulation.

However, when it comes to the effectiveness of these organizational areas in enabling an increase in sales, the ratings are generally lower. On average, only 59 of the respondents rated the organizational areas as "Good" or higher in terms of their ability to drive sales growth. The area of Content & Training received the lowest rating, with only 51 of the respondents considering it as "Good" or higher in enabling sales growth.

These findings suggest that while the organizational areas are generally well-defined, there is room for improvement in terms of their actual impact on driving sales and enabling salespeople to perform at their best. The area of Content & Training requires attention and further development to better support the salesforce and contribute to sales growth.

Organizational Sales Enablement	Respondents
Sales Strategy	
<i>Clear and formulated</i>	87
<i>Enabling increase in sales</i>	69
Sales Processes	
<i>Clear and formulated</i>	77
<i>Enabling increase in sales</i>	63
Content & Training	
<i>Clear and formulated</i>	51
<i>Enabling increase in sales</i>	51
Technology Tools	
<i>Clear and formulated</i>	71
<i>Enabling increase in sales</i>	56
Average	
<i>Clear and formulated</i>	71
<i>Enabling increase in sales</i>	59

Table 3: Formulation and execution

4.2 Responsibility analyzed

The second part of the analysis will analyze the respondents' answers regarding responsibility allocation within the areas sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, and technology tools.

This chapter will examine if the areas within Sales Enablement is the responsibility of the sales management, or if it lays elsewhere.

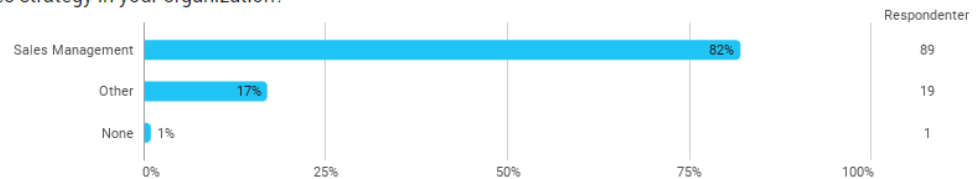
4.2.1 Who is responsible for Sales Enablement?

The responsibility for the Sales Strategy seems to be widely agreed upon by the respondents. According to the survey results, 82% of the respondents identified the Sales Management as the responsible party for the Sales Strategy. This finding aligns with the understanding that Sales Management plays a crucial role in developing and executing the business strategy through sales.

The responsibility for the Sales Strategy entails various tasks and decisions, including creating a comprehensive plan to achieve sales goals, defining a go-to-market strategy, identifying target markets, and determining pricing and positioning strategies. It is the Sales Management's responsibility to oversee and guide these strategic aspects of sales.

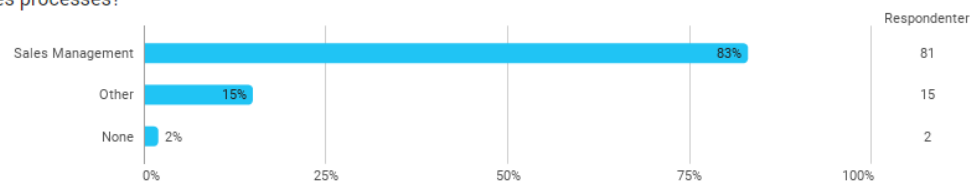
The high agreement among the respondents, with 89% stating that the Sales Management is responsible for the sales strategy, further emphasizes the importance placed on the role of Sales Management in driving the strategic direction of the sales organization.

Who is responsible for the sales strategy in your organization?



The next question related to responsibility examined Sales Processes. 81 of the respondents answered that the sales management is responsible for the Sales Processes.

Who is responsible for the sales processes?



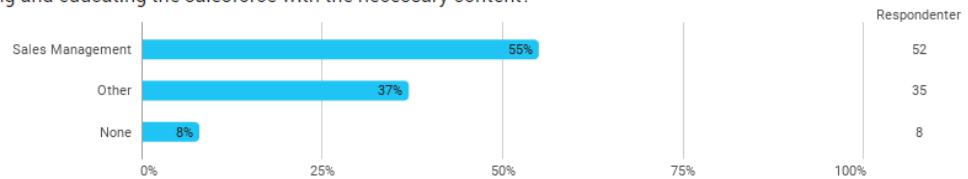
The responsibility for Content & Training within sales enablement appears to be a less established or neglected area in the organizations surveyed. According to the data, only 51% of the respondents reported having clear and formulated Content & Training for their salesforce, and a similar percentage of respondents (51%) perceived that the provided Content & Training enabled an increase in sales. This suggests that there may be room for improvement in this aspect of sales enablement.

In relation to responsibility for Content & Training, the findings show that only 55% of the respondents attributed this responsibility to the Sales Management. It is worth noting that 30% of the respondents indicated that the responsibility lies elsewhere or that no one currently holds that responsibility within their organizations.

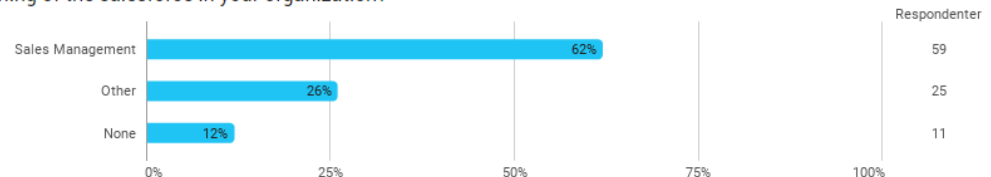
The data suggests that Content & Training may be an overlooked or neglected area of sales enablement within the surveyed organizations. This finding is consistent with the literature, as indicated in Table 2, which highlights that both the traditional Sales Manager role and the newer Sales Manager role should hold responsibility for this aspect of sales enablement.

Overall, the examination of Content & Training highlights a potential gap in sales enablement efforts, emphasizing the need for organizations to pay closer attention to this area and ensure the formulation, structuring, and optimization of Content & Training to effectively enable sales growth.

Who is responsible for providing and educating the salesforce with the necessary content?

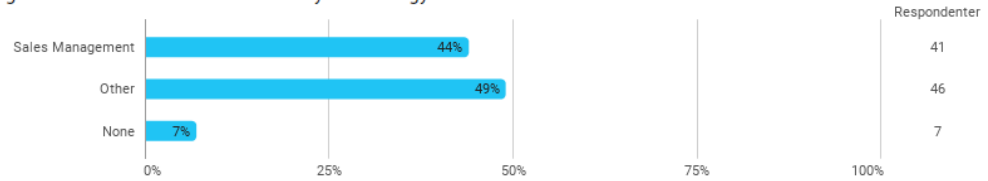


Who is responsible for the training of the salesforce in your organization?



The last examination of the responsibility related to Technology Tools. A minority of 41 answered that sales management is responsible for providing the salesforce with the necessary technology, 46 answered “Other”, while 7 answered, that no one in their organization is responsible for providing the salesforce with Technology Tools.

Who is responsible for providing the salesforce with the necessary technology?



Technology Tools is Sales-related software, applications, or platforms that help salespeople be more productive, efficient, and effective. Examples include customer relationship management (CRM) systems, sales automation tools, and prospecting software (Table 1). Despite being an area within Sales Enablement, Technology Tools seems to be a technical and specialized area within an organization to be responsible for. However, Sales Enablement is about stream-lining revenue generating activities to enable increase in sales. Therefore, Technology Tools could be understood as the New Sales Manager’s role “Organizational streamlining” from Table 2.

4.2.2 Sales Manager’s level of responsibility

The data from the survey indicates that a significant portion of the respondents perceive their Sales Managers to operate at an operational or tactical level. This finding suggests a potential misalignment between the expectations set by the literature on the role of a Sales Manager and the actual practices within organizations.

According to the literature discussed in Chapter 2.3, a strategic-oriented Sales Manager is responsible for various activities beyond daily sales oversight and coaching. These activities include setting long-term sales targets and goals on an organizational level, working on organizational streamlining, facilitating cross-functional collaboration, and collaborating with marketing on strategy and sales/marketing alignment.

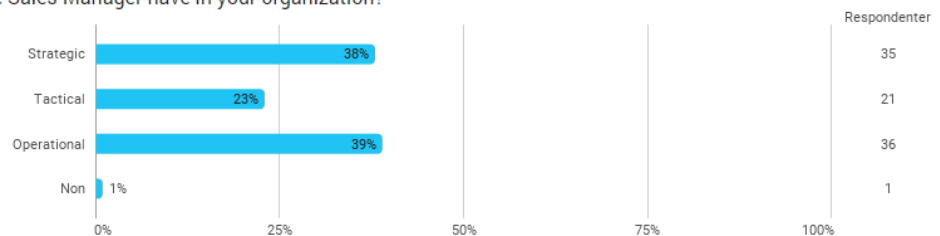
However, based on the survey responses, it appears that many Sales Managers are primarily focused on daily, weekly, or monthly sales oversight, coaching, and setting short-term sales targets and goals for individuals or sales teams. This operational or tactical approach suggests that the strategic aspects of the Sales Manager role may be overlooked or not fully embraced within the organizations surveyed.

This misalignment between the expected role of a Sales Manager and the actual practices observed can have implications for the effectiveness of sales enablement initiatives. To fully leverage sales

enablement and achieve its intended benefits, organizations may need to reconsider the responsibilities and expectations assigned to Sales Managers, encouraging a more strategic approach that encompasses activities such as organizational streamlining, cross-functional collaboration, and long-term sales goal setting.

Addressing this potential conflict between literature and practice can help organizations optimize their sales management practices and better align them with the principles of sales enablement, ultimately leading to improved sales performance and effectiveness.

What level of responsibility does the Sales Manager have in your organization?



Based on the survey results and the analysis provided, it appears that there is a misalignment between the strategic nature of sales enablement and the operational and tactical focus of Sales Managers in many organizations. The majority of respondents indicated that their Sales Managers primarily operate on an operational or tactical level, which may hinder the successful implementation of sales enablement strategies.

Sales enablement is a strategic discipline that aims to align cross-functional activities, streamline revenue generation processes, and leverage technology tools to drive sales growth. However, if Sales Managers are predominantly focused on day-to-day operations and short-term goals, they may not have the bandwidth or strategic mindset required to effectively implement and drive sales enablement initiatives.

This discrepancy raises concerns about the potential effectiveness of sales enablement strategies within these organizations. Without strong leadership and strategic direction from Sales Managers, it may be challenging to fully leverage the benefits of sales enablement and achieve the desired increase in sales.

It is worth noting that the responsibility for providing necessary technology tools to the salesforce does not appear to fall under the purview of Sales Managers in the organizations surveyed. This

further highlights the potential disconnect between sales management and technology-driven sales enablement initiatives.

To overcome these challenges, organizations may need to revisit the role of Sales Managers and provide them with the necessary support, training, and resources to embrace a more strategic approach to sales management. This could involve aligning sales management practices with the principles of sales enablement, emphasizing the importance of cross-functional collaboration, long-term goal setting, and leveraging technology tools to drive sales performance.

Summary of sales management:

The tendencies and points of agreement among the respondents indicate that the sales management within their respective organizations is responsible for the formulation of sales strategy, management of sales processes, and training of the salesforce. However, there is consensus among the respondents that the responsibility for providing the essential technology tools to the salesforce does not fall under the supervision of the sales management, despite the recognized importance of technology in driving sales growth. Additionally, the respondents agree that their Sales Managers primarily operate on an operational and tactical level, which may be an obstacle for the effective implementation and success of sales enablement initiatives within their organizations.

4.3 Theoretical analysis

This chapter will provide the reader with an in-depth analysis of the survey answers of the Sales Managers responsibility in relation to sales enablement literature.

As established in chapter 2.2 the Sales Managers role traditionally includes duties on operational and tactical level (Table 2). As sales organizations adopt sales enablement as a strategic discipline, the Sales Managers must develop into a strategic ambassador leading in the specter between C-suite management and the salesforce (Table 2).

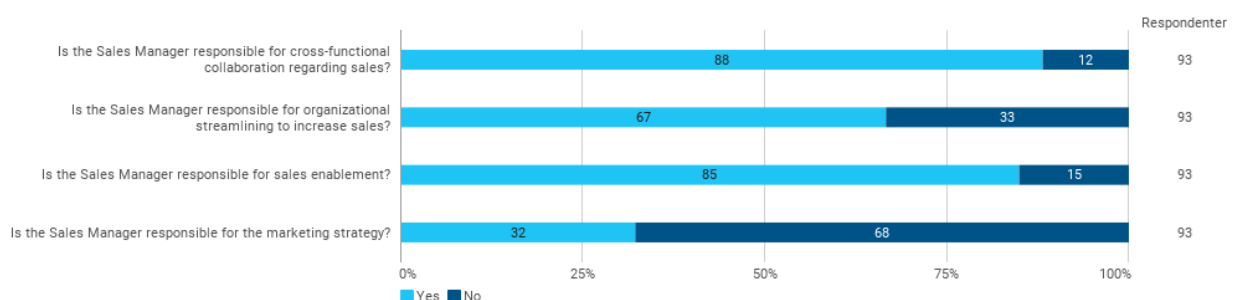
The last two sections in the survey examined the Sales Managers role involved in responsibilities of sales enablement.

4.3.1 Sales Managers involvement in sales enablement

The first section of questions examined if the Sales Manager is responsible for (5) Cross-functional collaboration, (4) Organizational streamlining, Sales enablement, and (6) Marketing strategy.

Cross-functional collaboration is the foundation of sales enablement (Peterson & Dover, 2021). It relates to sales enablement as a strategic approach to enable increase in sales through different functions within an organization (F. Lauzi, 2023). Why is this a relevant question? Its relevant according to the author because it allocates a responsibility for the very basic element of sales enablement. Since Sales Managers are responsible for overseeing sales (Bowen et al., 2022) and setting sales targets and goals (Dickie, 2017), activating other functions in the organization and invite and engage them in the mission to increase sales through different skills and areas of specialization touches the very foundation of sales enablement and examines if the Sales Managers in the respondents' organizations carries the minimum of responsibility to implement sales enablement. 88 out of 91 respondents answered that the Sales Manager is responsible for cross-functional collaboration regarding sales.

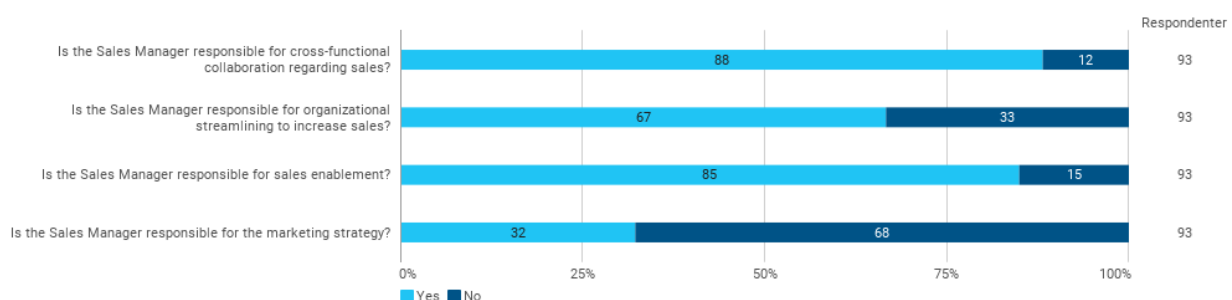
As sales cycles become more complex and requires involvement of more people in different functions (Paesbrughe et al. 2018), being able to master cross-functional collaboration will become more important as the buyers have higher demands in leading sales cycles and engaging sophisticated buyers. The buyers are experiencing what Dixon & McKenna (2022) identifies as "Customer indecision" due to information overload. In a world leading sales study Dixon & McKenna (2022) analyzed 2,5 million sales calls. They identified that one of the leading causes for salespeople to lose a sale was due to customers fear of making the wrong decision based on information. Sales Managers in B2B sales must accept the premise that sales cycles become more complex, and buyers are loaded with information from various sides. Therefore, leading and engaging different experts and functions within their own organization in a sales cycle to provide the buyers with the right decision and lead them to closing the sale will become vital for winning more sales in the future.



The next question examined if the Sales Manager is responsible for Organizational streamlining to increase sales. Organizational streamlining differs from cross-functional collaboration since it relates to processes and resources rather than individuals and functions (Rangarajan et al., 2022).

Organizational streamlining includes technology, sales processes, and organizational processes (Rangarajan et al., 2022). As sales cycles become more complex (Paesbrughe et al. 2018) the need for streamlining organizational elements become more and more important. The very definition of sales enablement is to streamline revenue generating activities through the whole organization to increase sales (Peterson & Dover, 2021). This includes production, marketing, IT, Research and development, Service, and other relevant areas within organizations (Badrinarayanan, 2018). These areas differ from industry to industry, but the method and goal with Organizational streamlining remains the same.

For Sales Managers, the need and relevance to lead Organizational streamlining to increase sales, becomes more important and vital as organizations' and buyers' needs become more complex and sophisticated (Rangarajan et al., 2022). Through Organizational streamlining, the Sales Manager enables synergy between the customer facing parts of the organization and back-end areas such as production, R&D, IT, etc. The synergy will create a better understanding from the organization of the customer's needs and enable the organization to meet the customers specific needs in the sales cycle and enable increase in sales. Sales Managers in B2B sales must accept the premise that sales cycles become more complex, and buyers expect more customized services and products hence Organizational streamlining and activation of different areas of an organization can enable information exchange and better understanding between buyer and seller. 67 of the respondents answered that their Sales Manager is responsible for organizational streamlining to increase sales. Despite most of the Sales Managers working with organizational streamlining, there still exist a large proportion of the Sales Managers that don't. This could lead to loss in value, innovation, information exchange, and organizational development.



Despite the next question being “Is the Sales Manager responsible for sales enablement” the author has decided to analyze question 4 first “Is the Sales Manager responsible for the marketing strategy” because question 3 can summarize all four questions.

The collaboration with different functions and areas in an organization to increase sales is a foundation of sales enablement (Peterson and Dover, 2021). The whole notion of sales enablement is to increase sales by influencing all parts of an organization through collaboration and streamlining (Peterson et al., 2021). As the customer journey becomes more digitalized and up to 80% of the customer journey in B2B context is being made by the customer itself (Gartner, 2018), marketing/sales collaboration and synergy becomes more important.

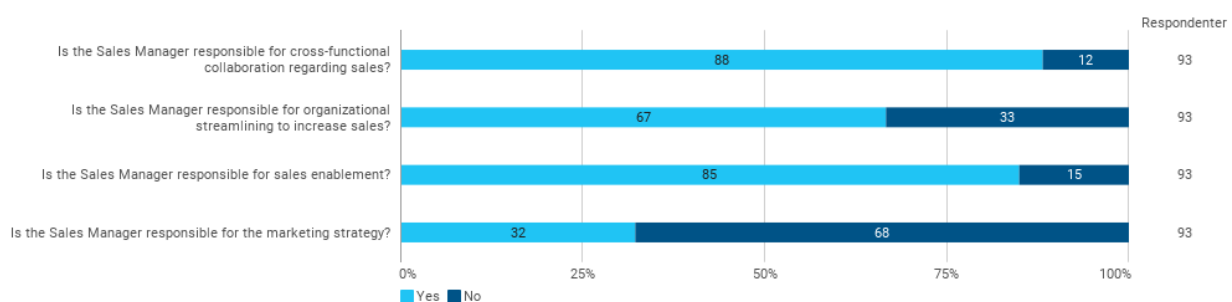
A cross-functional assimilation between sales and marketing enhances the readiness for a firm to assist the customer's journey more productively (Peterson & Dover, 2021). Sales enablement should be perceived as an organizational dynamic capability and not as a department/function capability. The collaboration between sales and marketing aims to be a mutual beneficial collaboration. Marketing aims to generate relevant prospects, leads, customer insights, market analytics, and competitive reports to better equip the salesforce when meeting the potential customer (Claro & Ramos, 2018). On the other hand, the salesforce can provide marketing with essential information regarding the customer and if the information is relevant for the customer.

To succeed in sales/marketing collaboration, the Sales Manager needs to actively involve the marketing department or CMO to outline the customer journey and determine the specific areas the salesforce should focus on (Claro & Ramos, 2018). Collaborating between salespeople, marketing, and customer service teams, which are closely connected to customers, has been proven to bring about valuable benefits such as creating superior customer value and improving sales performance (Hughes, Le Bon, and Malshe, 2012).

Effectively acquiring, sharing, and utilizing market information to anticipate customer needs and establish and maintain strong customer relationships requires seamless interaction and alignment between sales, marketing, and customer service (Claro & Ramos, 2018). When a salesperson is well-informed about the customers' requirements and the company's offerings, they are in a better position to leverage company resources and overcome obstacles to serve customers effectively.

Research underscores the importance of establishing and managing cross-functional support networks, referred to as "valuable infrastructures" within the organization (Evans et al., 2012). Sales, marketing, and customer service serve as the most direct channels connecting the company with its customers (Claro & Ramos, 2018).

Despite sales/marketing collaboration being a relatively old discipline both academic and practical, practitioners only 32 out of 93 of the respondents answered that the Sales Manager in their organization is responsible for the marketing strategy. The author recognized after the survey was taken down, that this question should have been formulated more specific in relation to sales/marketing collaboration. This misunderstanding can lead to a weaker answer to the research question since it doesn't investigate the sales/marketing collaboration but rather focuses on marketing strategy. However, as only one third of the Sales Managers are responsible for the marketing strategy, this could indicate that organizations still lack proper collaboration between sales and marketing which can damage the increase in sales performance (Claro & Ramos, 2018).



The last question that will be analyzed is “Is the Sales Manager responsible for sales enablement”. This question was asked to examine the respondents understanding of sales enablement and allocate the responsibility of implementing sales enablement in their organizations. All question in the survey relates to sales enablement both on an organizational and individual level. 85 of the respondents answered, that the Sales Manager in their organization is responsible for sales enablement. There seems to be a clear picture of the respondents lacking understanding of sales enablement, since 85 answered that the Sales Manager is responsible for sales enablement, but on average only 62 of the respondents answered that their Sales Manager is responsible for fundamental parts of sales enablement such as Organizational streamlining and Marketing strategy. The lack of understanding of sales enablement can damage Sales Managers work with implementing it and reaching the strategic level of responsibility hence they don't understand it and can't seek the right guidance without the right understanding.

On organizational level, most of the respondents' organizations have formulated sales strategies, sales processes, and technology tools to increase sales. They tend however to lack in content & training and especially in training their salesforce to increase sales. It also seems there is a weakness in the

organizations' collaboration between sales and marketing, and the Sales Manager's engagement and responsibility towards marketing strategy.

Despite having well formulated sales strategies, sales process, being provided with the necessary tools, and a medium engagement in content & training, there seems to be a gap between formulated strategies and processes and execution to increase sales (Table 3). In general, the respondents agree that the responsibility for sales enablement lays on the sales management and Sales Managers. When the execution to increase sales lacks, it might be due to the Sales Managers ability or understanding of HOW to implement sales enablement in an organization and involvement on a strategic level.

4.4 Summary of analysis

The purpose of the analysis was to analyze the survey data from a descriptive and theoretical approach to examine the status of sales enablement in B2B organizations.

The author acknowledge that the size of the sample is not representative for B2B organizations in general or the Danish market in relation to sales enablement. However, it serves as a temperature measurement for B2B organizations in relation to key areas of both sales management and sales enablement such as sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, and technology. In total 88 respondents completed the survey, with 32 partially completing it. The author decided to keep the answers from partly completed surveys, since the survey data is relatively small, and the data still provides a narrowed picture of sales enablement in B2B organizations.

The first part of the analysis showed that the respondents perceived both sales strategy, sales processes, and technology tools as being formulated clearly and relevant for their organization. Content & Training seems to be the most neglected area of sales enablement. In relation to the enablement to increase sales, sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, and technology tools have significant lower effect on the enablement to increase sales.

The survey showed that 87 answered that the sales management is responsible for the sales strategy. 81 answered that the sales management is responsible for the sales processes. 59 answered that the sales management is responsible for training the salesforce, while 52 answered that the sales management is responsible for providing the salesforce with marketing content. 89 answered that the Sales Manager is responsible for cross-functional collaboration. 67 answered that the Sales Manager is responsible for organizational streamlining. 85 answered that the Sales Manager is responsible for

sales enablement. And lastly 32 answered that the Sales Manager is responsible for the marketing strategy.

Despite the Sales Managers working in the areas of sales enablement still only 34 of the respondents answered that the Sales Manager in their organization works on a strategic level.

If the Sales Manager should succeed with sales enablement and enter the strategic level in B2B sales organizations and become the strategic and organizational ambassador for sales leading both up and down, the Sales Managers needs applicable and practical tools that helps them navigate in sales enablement.

The theoretical analysis will serve as a bridge to create an applicable and practical model for Sales Managers to navigate and succeed in sales enablement.

The next chapter will also present some of the quotes that the respondents gave when reflecting on the future of the Sales Manager.

5.0 Approach for Sales Managers to navigate in sales enablement

This chapter will serve as a bridge from theory into a practical and applicable model, that Sales Managers can use as organizational ambassadors for sales when implementing and to succeed in sales enablement.

The chapter will reflect the on the conflict between the survey data and the theory, while presenting some quotes from the respondents' reflections on the future of Sales Managers.

5.1 Theoretical conflict

“They (Sales Managers, red.) will become more and more a trusted partner with a collaborative approach towards customers. Knowledge-sharing, sparring.”

The conflict between the literature and practicality lays in the actual execution and understanding of a Sales Manager and sales enablement. As analyzed throughout the literature, academics have since 2005 (Wengler et al., 2005) and 2010 (Piercy & Garry, 2010) argued that the role of a Sales Manager must become strategic and work with sales in a holistic and organizational way. Sales enablement literature, despite mainly articulating sales management on an organizational level rather than individual, argues that enabling sales through the whole organization is a strategic discipline focusing on organizational streamlining and cross-functional collaboration which responsibility lays on the sales management (Peterson et al., 2021).

Questions arise when academics for two decades have argued that the role of Sales Managers should develop into strategic, serving as an ambassador between sales and the organization to the C-suite management (Lane & Piercy, 2009) and the survey data showing that only approximately one third of the Sales Managers work on a strategic level. Questions arise too, when the respondents answered that the Sales Manager in their organization is responsible for sales enablement and only approximately one third of the Sales Managers work on a strategic level despite sales enablement being a strategic discipline. The conflict lays in how a Sales Manager can become “... a strategic business partner - on a c-level” (Appendix), when Sales Managers primarily operate on operational

and tactical level. And how can Sales Managers ever succeed with implementing sales enablement since it forces the Sales Manager to work holistically and strategic?

Can the lower level of responsibility be due to Sales Managers not being equipped or educated properly? Might it be because Sales Reps. got promoted into sales management positions due to high-performance and not due to strategic or managerial skills? Or might it be because sales is perceived by corporate management and the C-suite as an operational and practical function rather than a strategic, collaborative, and consulting function?






Regardless of the reason for the theoretical and practical conflict, customers demand more from sales organizations (Paesbrugghe et al. 2018) as sales cycles become more sophisticated and complex. More functions are being incorporated into the decision-making. Still, Sales Managers are those who leads sales. So how can they meet the increasing demands and still lead and develop the sales team and organization?

Overburden Sales Manager:

As analyzed throughout the literature and illustrated in Table 2: “Sales Manager’s role” and analyzed throughout the survey data, the Sales Manager have duties and responsibilities on both operational and tactical level. The Sales Manager (1) Oversees sales, (2) Coaches & train the salesforce, (3) Sets sales targets and goals. The Sales Manager is also responsible for strategic and organizational areas such as sales strategy and sales processes. Despite the formulated areas of responsibility, the implementation and success of sales strategy, sales processes, coaching & training, and technology-providing, the respondents agree less that the implementation increases sales (Table 3).

It seems like the Sales Manager is too overburden with duties on operational and tactical level, that they don’t succeed in. Additionally, the literature (Peterson & Dover, 2021) and customers (Paesbrugghe et al. 2018) expect a Sales Manager to “*Become (red.) more strategic*” and “*and have (red.) closer cooperation with marketing and product development*” to meet the increasing expectation both internal and external.

The overburden and undereducated Sales Manager is illustrated below:

	Sales Strategy
	Salesforce
	Technology
	Content
	Sales Processes

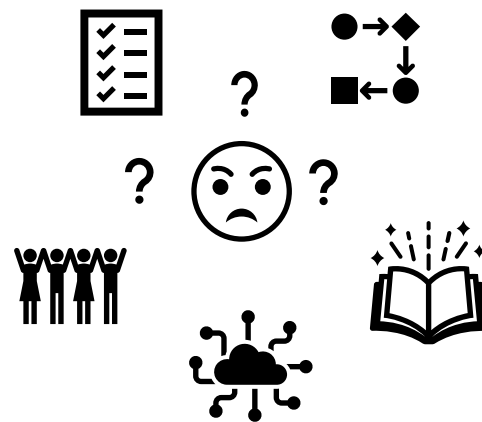


Figure 3: Overburden sales manager (own illustration)

If the Sales Manager can't succeed with her current areas of responsibility, how can we expect her to rise to a strategic level? What tools can help her?

Since the examined sales enablement literature don't articulate the Sales Manager on individual level, there don't seem to be practical and applicable tools to equip the Sales Manager to navigate in sales enablement.

Drawing from sales enablement literature, business design thinking literature, and cross-functional motivation, the author will give a suggestion to how Sales Managers can navigate in sales enablement in their role as organizational ambassadors for sales.

5.2 Sales Manager's Collaborative Model

The purpose of this chapter is to provide practitioners with a practical and applicable model for Sales Managers to use in B2B organizations when implementing sales enablement.

The model will focus on collaborating with key areas in the organization with the purpose to increase sales, streamline revenue generating activities, and accelerate knowledge-sharing. Key areas varies from organizations and markets but can be production, marketing, IT, service, logistics, research & development, etc.. Practically every key area in an organization that effect the value proposition.

“The Sales Manager must be able to meet people on all levels in the organization. To develop new contact and products you need to know the products, and to push sales you need the personality to meet people and build up relationships.”

Collaborate:

Sales organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of cross-functional collaboration (Peterson & Dover, 2021) in driving sales performance and creating a value infrastructure (Claro & Ramos, 2018). By leveraging collaboration between sales, marketing, and other vital areas, organizations can achieve sales performance and nurture long-term relationships with profitable customers. However, they seem to miss the proper tools.

Research has shown that cross-functional collaboration has a significant and positive effect on the innovation climate within organizations (Damanpour, 1996). This collaboration not only fosters innovation but also enhances the overall sales performance (Carlos & Ramos, 2018). The relationship between cross-functional collaboration and innovation performance is complementarily mediated by the innovation climate, indicating that a collaborative environment promotes sales success (Damanpour, 1996).

To effectively harness the benefits of cross-functional collaboration, companies should implement demanding and effective incentive systems that motivate and reward employees. By striking a balance between "soft" factors, such as collaboration, and "hard" factors, like stretch goals, organizations can create a productive innovation climate that fuels sales performance (Damanpour, 1996).

Involving expert employees and middle managers from different departments in cross-functional collaboration on a systematic basis is crucial. This collaboration allows salespeople to tap into the expertise of colleagues from various functions within the firm, align customer requirements with the organization's resources, and optimize sales strategies (Moncrief and Marshall, 2005). By integrating knowledge and skills from different departments, organizations can provide comprehensive customer solutions and deliver value to customers.

Salespeople heavily rely on internal information, often stored in Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems, to effectively perform their boundary-spanning role (Plouffe et al., 2016). Access to internal networks and knowledge enables salespeople to develop appropriate customer solutions, resulting in improved sales performance. The ability of salespeople to convert competitive

intelligence quality into performance is contingent upon the relationships sales managers have within their teams and with their peer managers (Ahearne et al., 2013). Strong relationships and effective communication among sales teams and managers facilitate the utilization of internal information and enhance sales effectiveness.

Cross-functional collaboration plays a crucial role in increasing sales performance and creating a value infrastructure within organizations. By fostering a collaborative environment, organizations can tap into the expertise of different departments, align customer requirements with resources, and provide comprehensive customer solutions. The implementation of effective incentive systems and the recognition of the importance of sales-marketing and sales-customer service collaboration further drive sales success.

The three steps in the Collaborate step in the Sales Manager's Collaborate Model is (1) Examine the organizational culture and management, (2) Examine revenue generating activities that effect the value proposition, (3) Approach area management and invite on a mission to increase sales and streamline activities.

When the relevant area is invited into the sales enablement mission, the next step is to analyze the parts where there is room for improvement regarding organization streamlining, cross-functional collaboration, and knowledge-sharing with salesforce and the rest of the organization. Knowledge-sharing is a key factor to increase sales (Ahearne et al., 2013), hence the team should focus on bridging the gap of information.

“Increased responsibility for the sales processes (red.) and customer journey, rather than the overall responsibility for the sales team”

Analyze:

When it comes to enhancing the value proposition and exchanging information to benefit production, IT, or services and increase sales performance (Claro & Ramos, 2018), the sales manager should collaborate closely with other departments in the company and design processes based on Business Design Thinking (Taran et al., 2016) and Supply Chain Management principles (Klassen, 1998).

To gain a deeper understanding of the organization's value infrastructure, one effective method is to analyze revenue-generating activities as a customer journey, using the concept of up-stream and down-stream activities. In the context of the supply chain, "upstream" refers to processes like sourcing raw materials, manufacturing, and procurement, while "downstream" activities typically involve distribution, warehousing, and customer delivery (Klassen, 1998).

These terms have become widely used and understood in supply chain literature, education, and industry practices, providing a shared language for describing the flow and coordination of activities within a supply chain (Olhager & Feldmann, 2017). However, it is important to recognize that the concepts of up-stream and down-stream activities can also apply to B2B marketing and sales, as sales enablement aims to streamline organizational processes (F. Lauzi et al., 2023).

By adopting a value infrastructure perspective that aligns with the principles of up-stream and down-stream activities from supply chain management, the sales manager can gain a comprehensive understanding of the fundamental elements of the value proposition. This knowledge can inform the design of tailored products or services and facilitate effective information exchange, enabling the salesforce to enhance their performance and increase sales.

In the analyze phase, the Sales Manager plays a crucial role as the organizational ambassador of sales by closely examining and understanding the value infrastructure of the company. Here are some key aspects the Sales Manager should consider:

(1) Collaborating with Different Functions: The Sales Manager should actively engage with various departments within the organization, such as marketing, product development, operations, and customer service. By collaborating and exchanging information with these functions, the Sales Manager can gain valuable insights into the organization's capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses. This collaborative approach promotes a holistic understanding of the value proposition and helps identify areas for improvement. (2) Conducting Customer Journey Analysis: To analyze the value infrastructure, the Sales Manager can utilize tools like customer journey mapping. This involves visualizing and evaluating the entire customer experience, from initial contact to post-sales support. By mapping out the customer journey, the Sales Manager can identify pain points, bottlenecks, and opportunities for enhancing the value proposition at each touchpoint. This analysis provides valuable insights into areas where processes, IT systems, or service offerings can be tailored to better align with customer needs and expectations. (3) Examining Up-stream and Down-stream Activities: Drawing from the principles of supply chain management, the Sales Manager should evaluate both

up-stream and down-stream activities. This includes understanding the processes involved in sourcing raw materials, manufacturing, and procurement (up-stream), as well as distribution, warehousing, and customer delivery (down-stream). By comprehending these activities, the Sales Manager can identify how they impact the value proposition and where improvements can be made to streamline operations, enhance efficiency, and deliver greater value to customers. (4) Identifying Information Needs: As the organizational ambassador for sales, the Sales Manager should actively seek and gather information from different parts of the company. This includes understanding customer feedback, market trends, competitor analysis, and internal data related to sales performance. By accessing and analyzing this information, the Sales Manager can gain valuable insights that inform decision-making processes, such as product or service enhancements, pricing strategies, or market positioning. (5) Facilitating Information Exchange: The Sales Manager should act as a catalyst for information exchange between different functions within the organization. This involves sharing insights gained from customer interactions, market research, and sales data with relevant stakeholders. By fostering a culture of open communication and collaboration, the Sales Manager can facilitate cross-functional dialogue, enabling departments to align their strategies, coordinate efforts, and collectively enhance the value proposition.

During the analyze phase, the Sales Manager takes on the role of the organizational ambassador for sales by collaborating with different functions, conducting customer journey analysis, examining up-stream and down-stream activities, identifying information needs, and facilitating information exchange. These actions contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the value infrastructure and pave the way for designing processes that enhance the value proposition and drive sales performance.

Design:

The aim of implementing a design thinking process is to generate and test potential business model options, ultimately selecting the most optimal one (Oesterwalder & Pigneur, 2010). In this context, the Sales Manager can contribute by transforming the information and ideas gathered from earlier phases into value infrastructure prototypes, allowing for exploration and testing. Through a thorough inquiry into various business model possibilities, the Sales Manager in collaboration with management of other areas of the organization, they can ultimately identify and choose the most satisfactory design (Oesterwalder & Pigneur, 2010).

Through the Collaboration phase, the Sales Manager have activated the necessary areas of revenue and value within the organization. In the Analyze phase, the Sales Manager has with the team analyzed pitfalls of information and value exchange. To leverage the value infrastructure and design the best infrastructure for common value and enable increase in sales, the design team with the Sales Manager as the orchestrator and ambassador must follow certain steps:

(1) Defining shared goals and objectives: To foster collaboration, the Sales Manager facilitates discussions to define shared goals and objectives across functions. By aligning everyone's efforts towards a common purpose, such as increasing sales, the Sales Manager can create a sense of shared responsibility and collective ownership (Oesterwalder & Pigneur, 2010).

(2) Mapping customer journeys and touchpoints: The Sales Manager collaborates with the marketing and customer service functions to map customer journeys and identify key touchpoints. This collaborative effort helps identify opportunities to optimize the customer experience and align sales processes, accordingly, ultimately increasing sales effectiveness (Peterson & Dover, 2021).

(3) Implementing feedback loops: The Sales Manager, in collaboration with the customer service and data analytics functions, establishes feedback loops to gather customer insights and sales performance data. By regularly sharing this information across functions, the Sales Manager can foster a culture of continuous improvement and data-driven decision-making, leading to enhanced sales processes and outcomes.

(4) Facilitating communication and knowledge sharing: The Sales Manager actively promotes communication and knowledge sharing among cross-functional teams. By leveraging collaborative tools and platforms, organizing regular meetings, and encouraging open dialogue, the Sales Manager enables teams to exchange ideas, share best practices, and leverage each other's expertise, ultimately driving sales growth.

(5) Monitoring and evaluating outcomes: The Sales Manager collaborates with the operations and data analytics functions to monitor and evaluate the outcomes of the collaborative cross-functional processes. By analyzing sales performance metrics, customer feedback, and process efficiency, the Sales Manager can identify areas for improvement and make data-backed adjustments to further increase sales (Claro & Ramos, 2018).

By incorporating these principles of designing collaborative cross-functional processes, the Sales Manager can foster a culture of collaboration, align efforts towards shared goals, optimize customer

experiences, provide effective sales enablement resources, and drive continuous improvement. This collaborative approach ultimately leads to increased sales and revenue growth for the organization.

“More strategic and closer cooperation with marketing and product development”

Engage:

When collaboration has been made, strength and weaknesses in relation to organizational streamlining of revenue generating activities, and processes have been analyzed and designed to improve and manage the value infrastructure, the next step is to engage and motivate both customer-facing professionals like sales and service, and back-end professionals like marketing, production, IT etc., to use the processes and enable cross-functional collaboration and organizational streamlining to increase sales.

By fostering a culture of teamwork, effective communication, and shared goals, the Sales Manager can empower the team to leverage their collective potential, leading to increased sales performance.

Mohsen & Eng (2016) examined through quantitative data comparative analysis the key factors that led the organization to succeed with motivation in cross-functional collaboration and engagement to increase sales. They interviewed 274 managers and found that (1) Resource dependency, (2) Joint reward system, (3) Top management support, (4) Multifunctional training, and (5) Cross-functional team use (Mohsen & Eng, 2016) to be the top factors for succeeding with implementing cross-functional collaboration and create Marketing Adaptiveness.

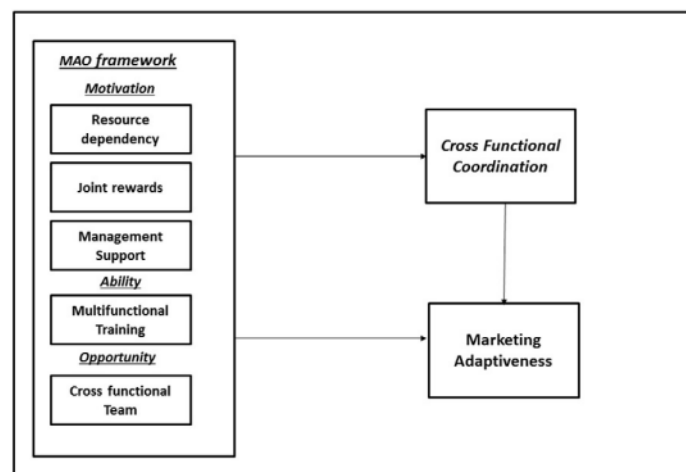


Figure 4: The research conceptual model (Mohsen & Eng, 2016)

S. Strese et al. (2016) found through survey data from 392 departments, that the organizations cross-functional cooperative ability was dependent on (1) Identify new and useful market knowledge transferred from other departments, (2) Understand new and useful market knowledge transferred from other departments, (3) Value new and useful market knowledge transferred from other departments, (4) Assimilate new and useful market knowledge transferred from other departments, (5) Apply new and useful market knowledge transferred from other departments, and (6) Exploit new and useful market knowledge transferred from other departments (S. Strese et al., 2016).

Both articles focus on information exchange, establishing common goals, managerial support, and exploiting information from other departments of the organization.

To foster cross-functional collaboration and ensure that all departments work towards shared objectives, the organization must implement several key practices. First, they must implement a joint reward system in place, where the marketing department and other functional units share equally in the rewards from a well-implemented market strategy. This encourages collaboration and discourages departmental silos by promoting a collective mindset and shared accountability for outcomes (Mohsen & Eng, 2016).

Senior management also plays a crucial role in supporting cross-functional collaboration. They prioritize firm loyalty over departmental loyalty, emphasizing the importance of working together towards organizational goals (Mohsen & Eng, 2016). Managers' evaluations should be based on joint performance with other managers, reinforcing the need for collaboration and interdependence between departments.

In addition to these structural elements, the organizations should recognize the importance of providing opportunities for functional units to socialize together (Mohsen & Eng, 2016) (S. Strese et al., 2016). Cross-functional projects create a conducive environment for employees from different departments, to interact, build relationships, and foster a sense of camaraderie. This socialization helps break down barriers, promote understanding, and enhance collaboration when working on joint initiatives and exchange information (S. Strese et al., 2016).

To further strengthen cross-functional collaboration, the organizations must emphasize multifunctional training for managers (Mohsen & Eng, 2016). Managers participate in training

programs that acquaint them with areas outside their specific functions. This exposure to different functional areas helps broaden their perspectives, enhances their understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by other departments, and encourages empathy and collaboration (S. Strese et al., 2016). Additionally, managers should receive training in effective communication strategies, specifically focusing on how to engage and collaborate with individuals from other functional areas. This training equips managers with the necessary skills to foster open dialogue, facilitate cooperation, and bridge any gaps that may arise between departments.

Engaging people in cross-functional collaboration is essential for the Sales Manager to succeed in implementing sales enablement. The marketing department and other functional units heavily depend on each other's services, resources, and support to accomplish their goals and responsibilities effectively and create a value infrastructure that enables increase in sales (Peterson & Dover, 2021). Through a joint reward system, top management support, opportunities for socialization, and multifunctional training focusing on information exchange and alignment of revenue generating activities, the organizations can actively promote and facilitate cross-functional coordination. By fostering a collaborative environment, the sales manager can aim to leverage the collective expertise and resources of all departments to drive innovation, meet customer needs, and implement sales enablement (Mohsen & Eng, 2016) (S. Strese et al., 2016).

“They (Sales Managers, red.) have to become more consultative and experts on the value of our solution, rather than just having a commercial focus.”

The following graphical conceptual model has been made based on theoretical analysis and reflections combining both sales enablement, business design thinking, and supply chain management.

The model should serve as a practical tool for Sales Managers to navigate in sales enablement as organizational ambassadors for sales and help them to succeed with cross-functional collaboration.

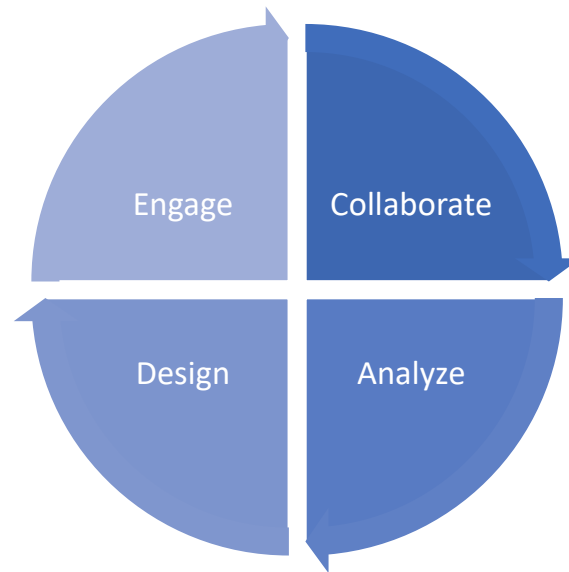


Figure 5: Sales Manager's Collaborate Model (own illustration)

5.3 Summary and practical approach

Sales Manager's Collaborate Model: Sales Managers' tool in sales enablement

As established in former chapters, the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement is to be the organizational ambassador for sales, engaging key areas of the organization, remove organizational obstacles, and create a value infrastructure.

As the Sales Managers role becomes more strategic, organizational, and more sophisticated, maintaining and developing the traditional sales duties such as Overseeing sales, coaching and training salesforce can conflict with strategic duties. That is why the Sales Manager should focus on leading through other functions and areas of the organization.

The Sales Manager, typically being educated and trained in sales, has in general no chance to streamline production standards to improve the value proposition, or suggest new improvements to a new IT system. That is why, the Sales Manager's Collaborate Model suggest organizational transformation leading through areas of expertise by collaborating, analyzing, designing, and engaging expert of different functions to enable increase in sales through the areas sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, technology tools (Peterson & Dover, 2021).

The Sales Manager can enable increase in sales through strategy, by collaborating with C-suite level management, analyze market for strategic clarity, business strategy's strength and weaknesses, design

strategic processes and formulation that enable increase in sales, engage necessary areas of function to help implement and execute the strategy.

The Sales Manager can enable increase in sales through sales processes and organizational processes, by collaborating with areas within the organization that influence the value proposition. The purpose of this is to create or strengthen the value infrastructure, by knowledge-sharing, goal alignment, and managerial support. The organizational areas can differ but can be production, marketing, IT, service, logistics, etc. It basically includes all areas of the organization, that through up-stream and down-stream principles influences the customer journey and decision-making processes.

The Sales Manager can enable increase in sales through content & training, by collaborating with HR and marketing. The training of the salesforce should be done in collaboration with HR, since they have expertise in human resources, education, and prevention in stress and burnouts. Providing the correct marketing material should be done in collaboration with marketing since they have the deepest market insights, case studies, competition analysis and can provide the salesforce with content that can help them create value and increase sales.

The Sales Manager can enable increase in sales through technology tools, by collaborating with the IT department. The technology should be implemented, so it reflects the sales goals and strategies. Here, the Sales Manager plays a significant role in ensuring that the technology provided to the salesforce are tailored to the actual needs.

No matter what areas needs to be included in the value infrastructure, the principles stay the same. The Sales Manager must collaborate, analyze, design, and engage to enable increase in sales through cross-functional collaboration and organizational streamlining. By doing so, the Sales Manager can fulfill the role as a Sales Manager in sales enablement and become the organizational ambassador for sales.

6.0 Discussion of findings

This project aimed to investigate the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement.

For this purpose, a literature review was made examining both literature on sales enablement and sales management. Through the literature review the author discovered, that the role of the Sales Manager wasn't explicitly mentioned or explained in relation to sales enablement. The role and areas of responsibility was mentioned on an organizational level as the sales management, rather than individual. Therefore, the author conducted a theoretical analysis to discover how the role of the Sales Manager has evolved, and what the literature has suggested. The analysis found that the literature has suggested for almost two decades, that the role of the Sales Manager should become more strategic and organizational. Based on this, the author conducted a quantitative survey consisting of 29 questions in relation to sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, and technology tools, the role of the Sales Manager and future reflections distributed to mainly Sales Managers and Sales Reps. in B2B organization through the professional social media platform LinkedIn. The purpose of the survey was to examine the organizational responsibilities in relation to sales enablement, how the respondents perceive their organization's ability to increase sales, and what level of responsibility the Sales Manager of in their organization works on.

In this chapter, the author will answer the research question and discuss managerial implications, and limitations in relation to answering the research question.

6.1 Answering the research question

The research question of this paper was:

“What is the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement”

The investigation of the role of the Sales Manager showed that academics for two decades has argued that the Sales Manager must become a strategic manager with organizational skills to align revenue generating activities to increase sales. Through the survey data, it was clear, that there exists a theoretical conflict in relation to the level of responsibility suggested by the literature, and how practitioners perceive the role of the Sales Manager.

The Sales Managers of the respondents' organizations works primarily on operational and tactical level, preventing them from strategic development of the sales and organizational streamlining of

activities. By examining the sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, technology tools, and the role of the Sales Manager it was clear that the Sales Managers lack an understanding of their own role in enabling increase in sales and lack proper tools to align organizations structures to increase sales.

In total 88 respondents finished the survey while 32 aborted the survey when questions examined the level of responsibility of the Sales Manager. This could also indicate that Sales Reps. and Sales Managers lack a language and understanding of the role of the Sales Manager in relation to sales enablement.

Based on the literature, the survey, and analysis, the author suggests that the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement is to take a position as the organizational ambassador for sales, enabling increase in sales through cross-functional collaboration and organizational streamlining. The Sales Manager should lead through key areas of the organization that effects the value proposition by collaborating, analyzing, designing, and engaging people and processes in a value infrastructure to increase sales. Through knowledge exchange and common goals, the Sales Manager can become the organizational ambassador for sales, activating key areas of the organization, and strategically enable increase in sales.

In short, the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement is to be the ambassador for sales and collaborate, analyze, design, and engage key areas of the organization that effect the value proposition.

6.2 Managerial implications

The most obvious managerial implication lays in practitioners' acceptance and implementation of a strategic Sales Manager.

When a company introduces a new strategic role for a Sales Manager, it implies that there are changes in the way sales operations are conducted and managed. This new role may involve implementing new sales strategies, adopting innovative technologies, or focusing on different market segments. However, there can be several challenges associated with this transition, especially if the organization and the Sales Managers themselves are not prepared.

One of the key challenges is organizational readiness. If the organization is not prepared to support the new strategic role of a Sales Manager, it may lack the necessary structures, processes, or resources required for the successful implementation of the new sales strategies. For example, the organization may not have updated sales systems or tools in place, or there might be a lack of alignment between the sales department and other functional areas within the company. This lack of readiness can hinder the Sales Manager's ability to effectively execute their new role.

Another challenge lies in the education and training of Sales Managers. If Sales Managers are not properly educated or trained to take on the new strategic responsibilities, they may struggle to understand and implement the required changes effectively. Sales management is a complex field that requires a deep understanding of sales techniques, market dynamics, customer behavior, and strategic planning. Without proper education or training, Sales Managers may find it challenging to analyze market trends, develop effective sales strategies, coach their sales teams, and streamline organizational activities. This knowledge gap can hinder the success of the new strategic role and hinder the overall performance of the sales department.

To address these challenges, organizations can take proactive steps to ensure a smooth transition and support Sales Managers in their new strategic role. This may include investing in training programs and educational resources to enhance the skills and knowledge of Sales Managers. Additionally, the organization can provide the necessary resources and infrastructure to enable Sales Managers to implement the new strategies effectively. This might involve updating sales systems, providing access to market research and data analytics tools, and fostering collaboration between sales and other departments.

In summary, when a new strategic role is introduced for a Sales Manager, the managerial implications can be significant. The challenges may arise from the organization's lack of readiness to support the role or from the Sales Managers' insufficient education and training. However, by addressing these challenges through proper organizational preparation and investing in the development of Sales Managers, companies and educational institutions can enhance the chances of success in implementing the new strategic role and driving improved sales performance.

6.3 Limitations

This paper had some limitations that were premediated before the process of the paper. Other limitations arose during the process.

Before the project, the hand-in date was determined. This limits the project and the author in exploring and analyzing further what the role of the Sales Manager could be in sales enablement past the due date. The author was also limited in the number of pages that the project could maximum be. This limits the author in including more data that could be analyzed. It also limits the author to be conscious about the number of words, expressions and literature included that could provide a stronger answer to the research question.

During the process of the paper, the author discovered, that a theoretical limitation is that there don't seem to be literature in sales enablement that explicitly talks about the Sales Manager on an individual level. Therefore, the author had to combine and reflect on former literature to suggest how the role of the Sales Manager could be.

In relation to distribution of the survey, LinkedIn have limitations in how many users one can connect with over a period. This limitation hindered further distribution of the survey, which could affect the answer to the research question.

7.0 Conclusion

This paper aimed to investigate the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement. For this purpose, a literature review was made to examine literature in relation to sales management and sales enablement. The author found that the role of the Sales Manager wasn't explicitly mentioned and described in sales enablement literature. To examine practitioners' view on sales enablement and the Sales Manager, a quantitative survey was made with questions derived from sales enablement and sales management literature. Strengths and weaknesses in the respondents' understanding of sales enablement and the Sales Manager were found through a descriptive and theoretical quantitative analysis. Finally, the role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement was presented together with practical and applicable tools to help the role succeed.

In selecting potentially suitable survey questions, the existing sales enablement and sales management literature was consulted and reviewed for relevance to the context of Sales Managers in sales enablement and the research question. In total, the author derived 29 questions and room for reflection for the respondents. The questions examined areas such as sales strategy, sales processes, content & training, and technology tools to increase sales. The questions also examined the role of the Sales Manager and level of responsibility. In total, 120 respondents participated in the survey. 88 completed the survey while 32 partly completed it.

In the first step of the analysis, the results were presented and analyzed descriptively. The scale of rating in the survey went from 1 to 5 with the categories; 1 = "Poor", 2 = "Rather Poor", 3 = "Fair", 4 = "Good", and 5 = "Excellent". The data were then analyzed in relation to the literature, to find gaps in academics and practitioners view on the Sales Manager and sales enablement. The data showed that there exist a theoretical conflict especially regarding the sales managements areas of responsibility in sales enablement literature and the respondents view on their sales management and especially the Sales Manager. The literature has for two decades argued that the Sales Manager should work on a strategic level, however, most of the respondents' Sales Managers work on an operational and tactical level. This hinders the development of the sales organization and prevents the Sales Manager to take the role as the organizational ambassador for sales streamlining organizational revenue generating activities and enabling cross-functional collaboration to increase sales.

Finally, the author developed a proposal to a new role of the Sales Manager in sales enablement. The role focusses on leading through other functions of the organization to streamline revenue generating activities and increase sales. To succeed in the new role, the author developed a conceptual model for

Sales Managers working with sales enablement to lean on. The model is called “Sales Manager’s Collaborate Model” and focusses on cross-functional collaboration by collaborating, analyzing, designing, and engaging both people and processes in all areas of an organization that effect the value proposition in a value infrastructure. The model seeks to balance and develop areas of value in a value infrastructure where the Sales Manager takes the role as the organizational ambassador for sales, leading through key functions and areas within the organization.

8.0 Future research

This chapter will suggest future research on sales enablement.

As the business landscape continues to evolve, the role of sales managers has also undergone significant changes. Sales managers will increasingly expect to possess strategic leadership skills to drive organizational growth and competitiveness. To better prepare sales managers for entering the strategic level, future academic research can focus on several key areas.

Firstly, a comprehensive exploration of the competencies required for sales managers transitioning into strategic leadership positions is crucial. Researchers can delve into existing literature on sales management, strategic leadership, and related fields to identify the specific knowledge, skills, and abilities needed for success. This research can lead to the development of a competency framework tailored specifically for sales managers entering strategic roles.

Investigating effective training and development methods for enhancing the strategic leadership capabilities of sales managers is essential. This could involve studying the effectiveness of various approaches such as executive education, mentorship, coaching, action learning, and simulations. By evaluating the impact of these training methods, researchers can identify the most effective approaches for bridging the gap between tactical and strategic roles.

Future research can explore the influence of organizational factors, such as culture, resources, incentives, and performance evaluation systems, on the development of strategic leadership skills. Understanding how organizations can create an environment that supports the growth and development of sales managers can provide valuable insights for both academia and practitioners.

Ultimately, the research on preparing sales managers to enter the strategic level should provide practical implications for organizations. By offering recommendations for designing and implementing effective development initiatives, researchers can support organizations in optimizing their sales management development programs. Emphasizing the potential benefits of investing in the strategic development of sales managers and its impact on sales performance and overall business results can encourage organizations to prioritize these efforts.

Future research on sales managers entering a strategic level should focus on exploring competencies, training methods, organizational support, evaluation, and practical implications. By addressing these areas, academics can contribute to the understanding of how sales managers can be effectively

prepared for strategic leadership roles, and organizations can benefit from evidence-based insights and best practices in developing their sales management talent.

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APPENDIX



Steffen Vestergaard • Dig

Master student in Sales & Marketing | Business Development Rep. | Sal...
1md. • 🌐



-- KALDER ALLE I SALG --

Hvad er en moderne Sales Managers rolle i B2B virksomheder?

(English below)

Kunder stiller større og større krav. Købsprocesser bliver mere uoverskuelige, komplekse og involverer flere og flere aktører. Samtidigt med alt dette, stilles der større krav til en Sales Manager til intern strømlining af forskellige grene af organisationen med henblik på at udvikle salget!

Jeg er nysgerrig på, hvad en Sales Managers rolle er i dag, og hvorvidt den kan udvikle sig til at varetage større og mere strategiske opgaver.

Nedenstående spørgeskema indgår som en del af min analyse i mit speciale, hvor jeg undersøger områder indenfor Sales Enablement som strategi, content og træning, salgsprocesser, og til sidst Sales Managers rolle.

Det vil hjælpe mig rigtig meget, hvis du vil bruge 2-3 minutter - afhængig af din grundighed - på at udfylde spørgeskemaet. Spørgeskemaet er anonymt og på engelsk.

Link: <https://lnkd.in/eazRknTy> ✓

Hvis du er interesseret i at få det samlede resultat fra undersøgelsen og specialet, er du velkommen til at connecte med mig her på LinkedIn eller kommentere på opslaget.

Del meget gerne!

På forhånd mange tak 😊

....

Message on LinkedIn to reach Sales Managers and Sales reps.

....

-- CALLING EVERYONE IN SALES --

What is the role of a modern Sales Manager in B2B companies?

Customers are making greater and greater demands. Purchasing processes are becoming more unmanageable, complex and involve more and more actors. At the same time as all this, greater demands are placed on a Sales Manager in navigating the internal streamlining of several parts of the organization in order to develop sales!

I am curious about what the Sales Manager's role is like today, and whether he is prepared to take on larger and more strategic tasks.

The questionnaire below forms part of my analysis in my thesis, where I examine areas within Sales Enablement such as strategy, content and training, sales processes, and finally the role of the Sales Manager.

It would help me a lot if you would spend 2-3 minutes - depending on your thoroughness - on filling in the questionnaire. The questionnaire is anonymous and in English.

Link: <https://lnkd.in/eazRknTy> ✓

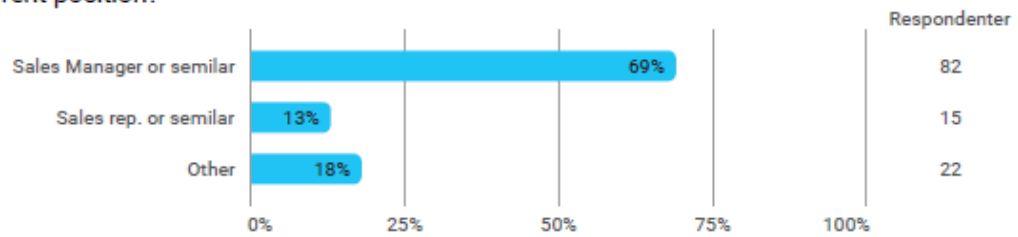
If you are interested in getting the overall result from the study and the thesis, you are welcome to connect with me here on LinkedIn or comment on the post.

Feel free to share!

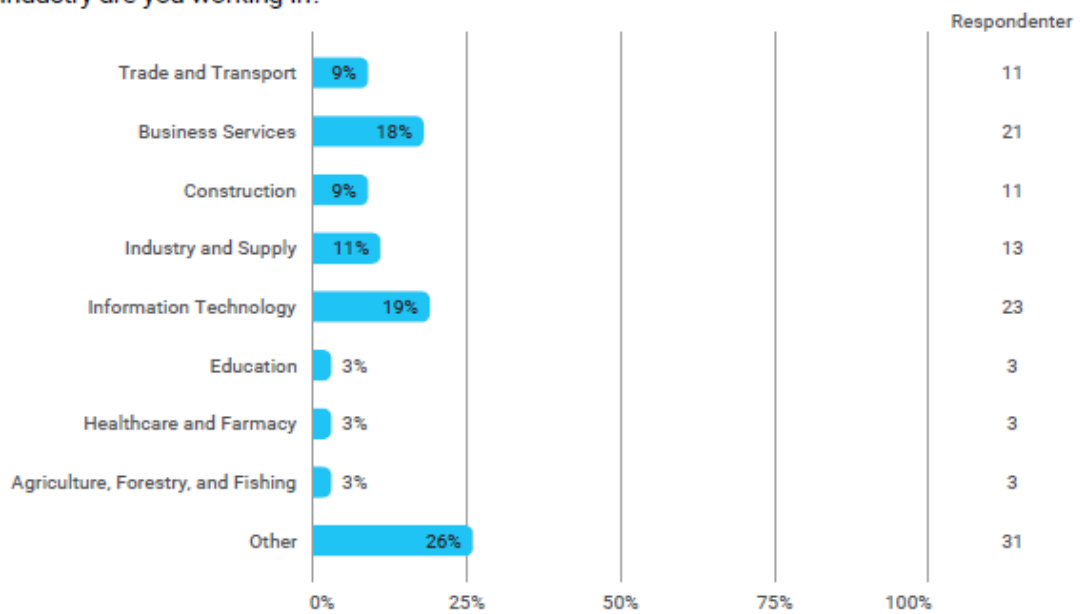
Many thanks in advance 😊

Survey Data:

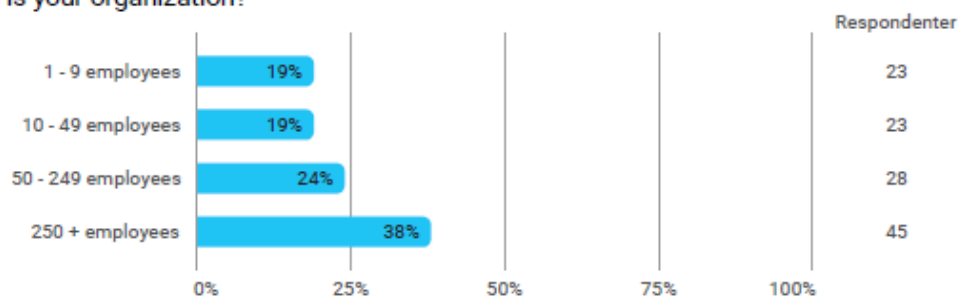
What is current position?



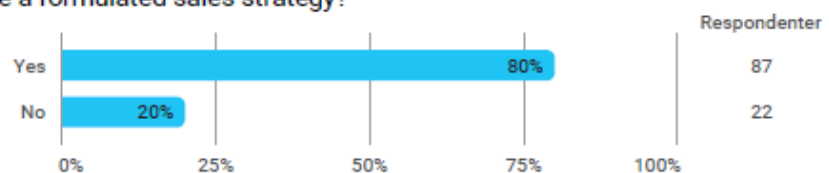
What industry are you working in?



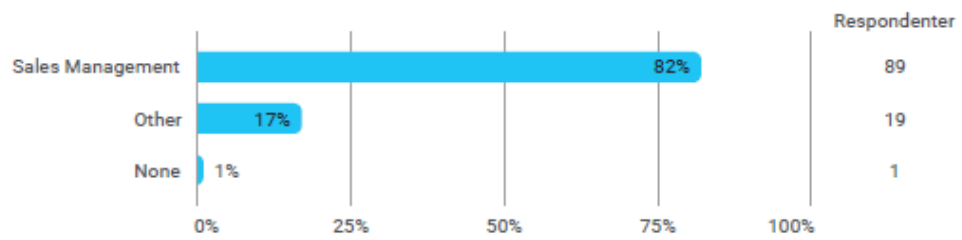
What is the size is your organization?



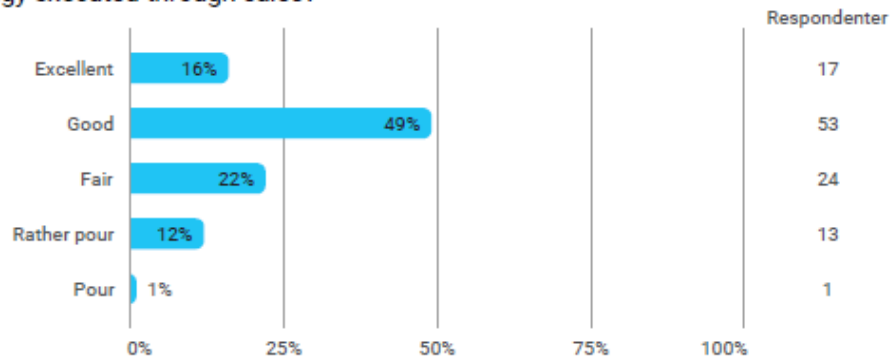
Does your organization have a formulated sales strategy?



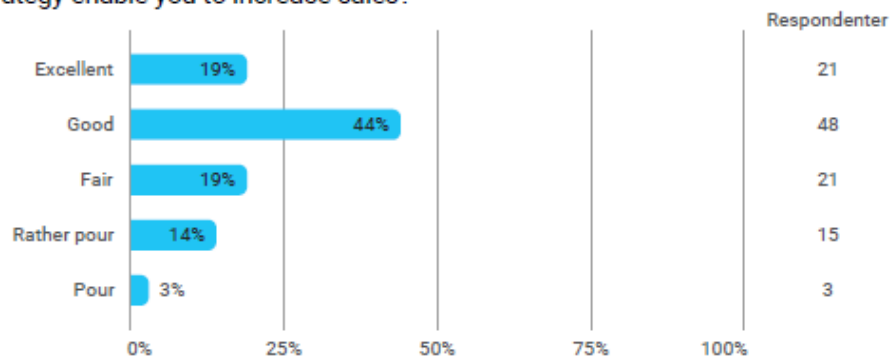
Who is responsible for the sales strategy in your organization?



How well is the strategy executed through sales?



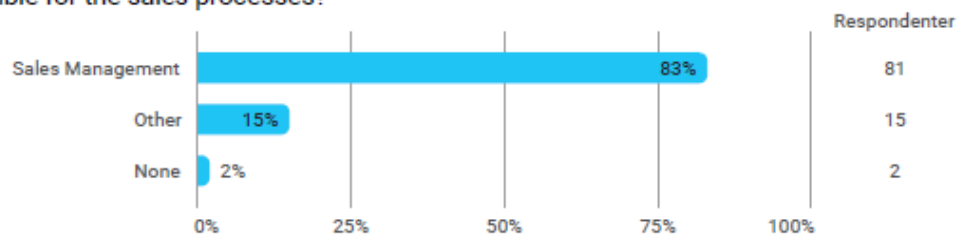
How well does the strategy enable you to increase sales?



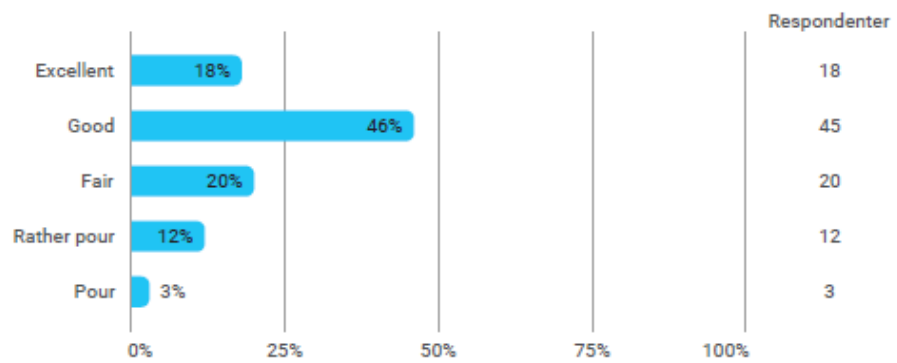
Does your company have clear and formulated sales processes?



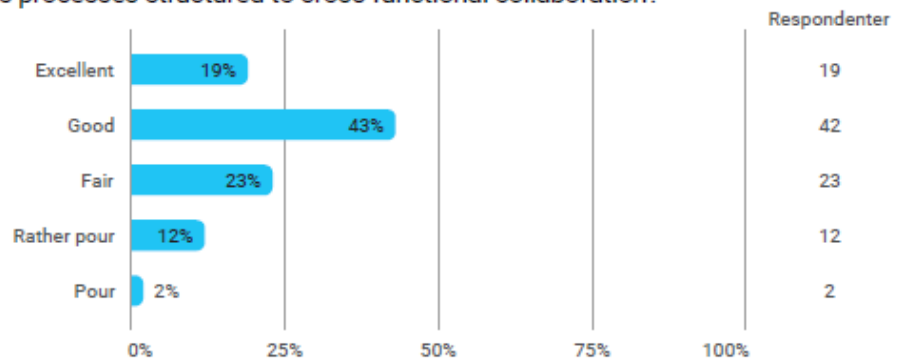
Who is responsible for the sales processes?



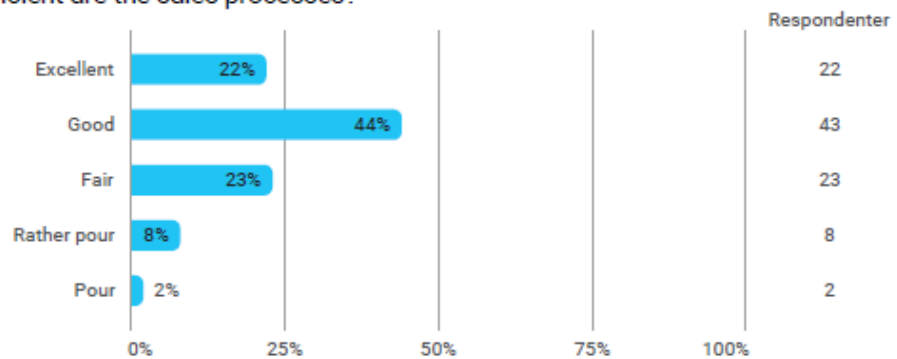
How well are the sales processes structured to achieve the sales goals and strategy?



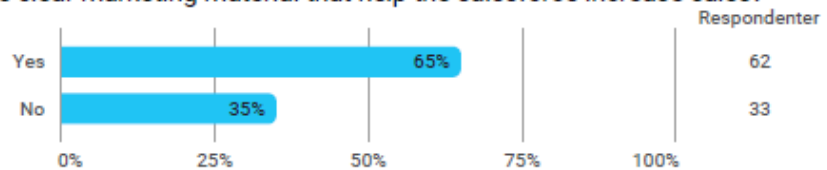
How well are the sales processes structured to cross-functional collaboration?



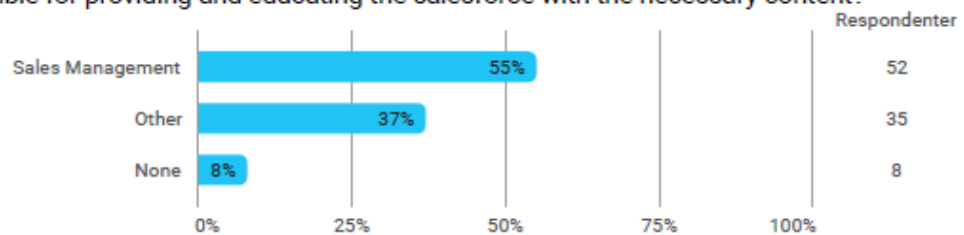
How effective and efficient are the sales processes?

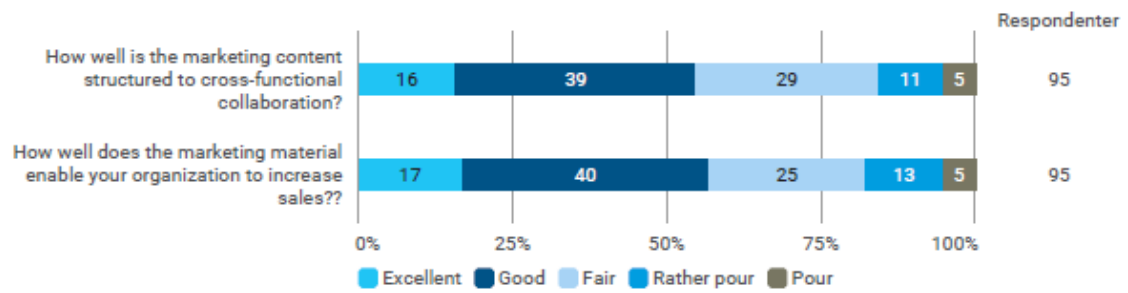


Does your organization have clear marketing material that help the salesforce increase sales?

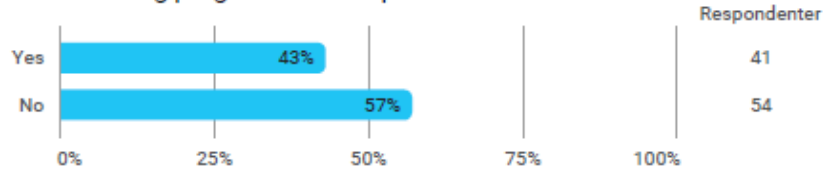


Who is responsible for providing and educating the salesforce with the necessary content?

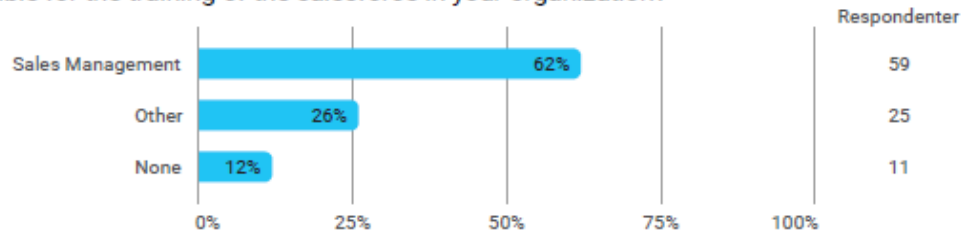




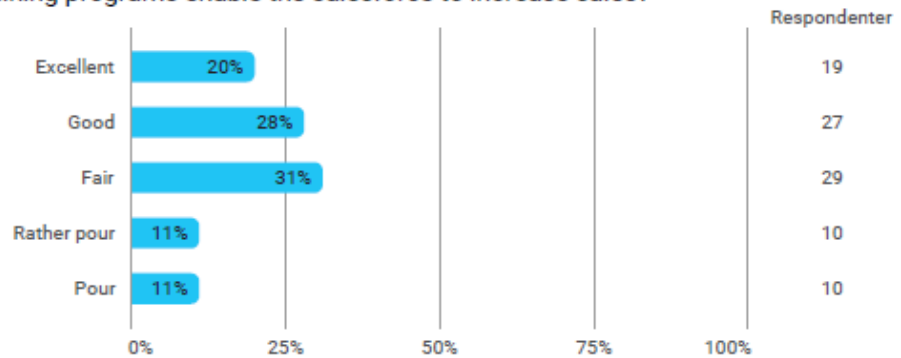
Does your organization have clear training programs that help the salesforce increase sales?



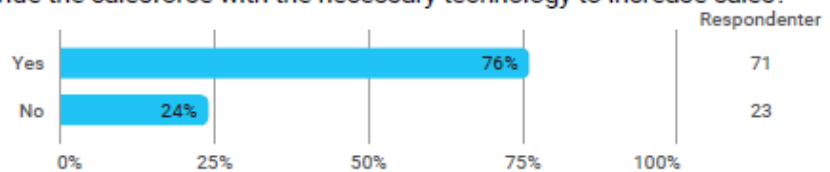
Who is responsible for the training of the salesforce in your organization?



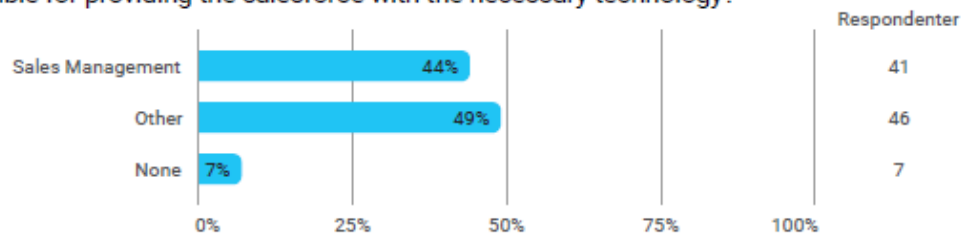
How well does the training programs enable the salesforce to increase sales?



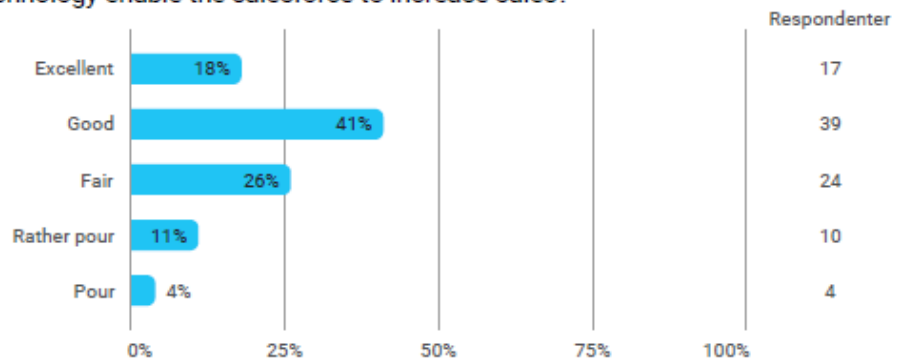
Does your organization provide the salesforce with the necessary technology to increase sales?



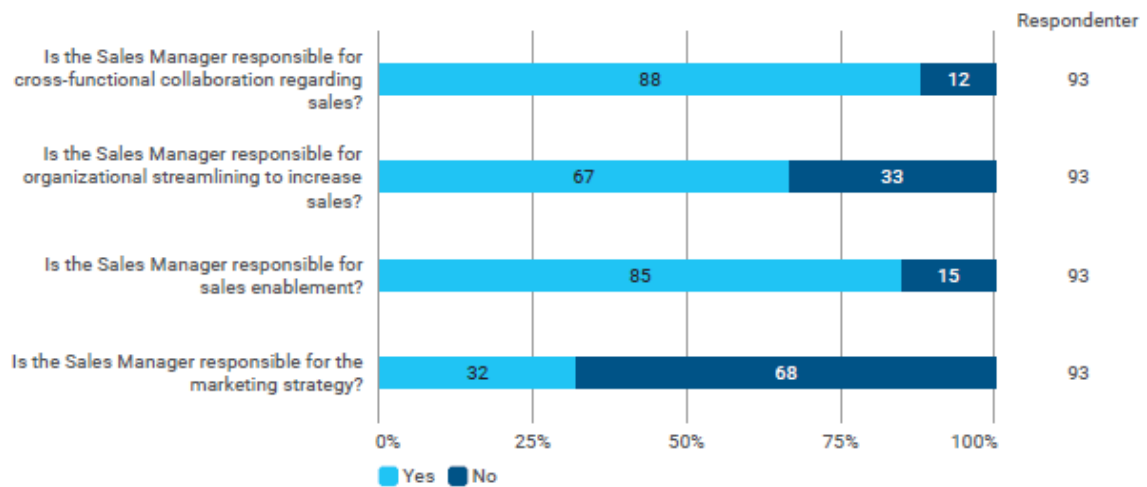
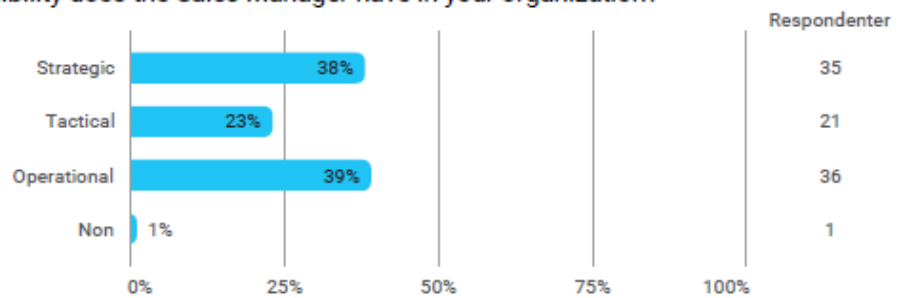
Who is responsible for providing the salesforce with the necessary technology?



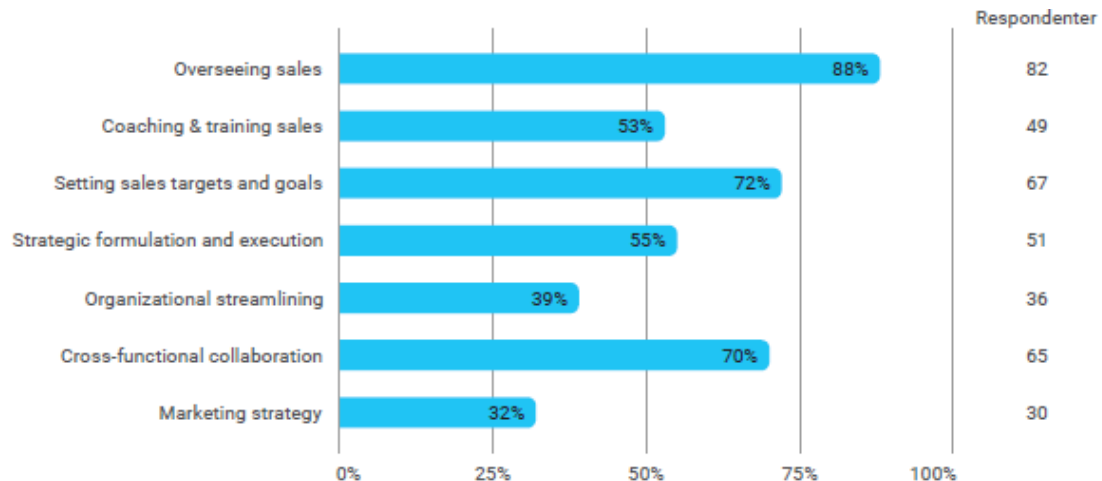
How well does the technology enable the salesforce to increase sales?



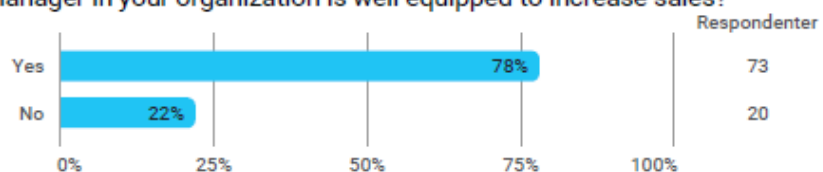
What level of responsibility does the Sales Manager have in your organization?



What duties does the Sales Manager have in your organization?



Do you feel that the Sales Manager in your organization is well equipped to increase sales?



How do you think the role of the Sales Manager evolves?

- Becomming more organizational
- The right way. Takes responsibility
- .
- As a strategic business partner - on a c-level
- More digital and more in collaboration with AI
- The problem is that is not evolving at all as it's mainly used in an operational way. So only putting pressure on achieving budgets with not focus on creation and strategic planning.
- Sales managers in my company has moved from
- Increasing
- The become more and more a trusted partner with a collaborative approach towards customers. Knowledge-sharing, sparring.
- To be more Strategic
- AI has automated a lot of sales processes
- They have to become more consultative and experts on the value of our solution, rather than just having a commercial focus.
- From sales only to include business development to make the company more agile
- Currently it does not evolve due to the strategy of the top management
- Strategic
- .
- Management
- In a good development, missing some sales persons
- Towards more focus on sales inviroment
- ???
- Don't understand this question
- I think there will be more focus on people management. You can fairly quickly make people understand sales processes and tactics but it will be crucial to keep people happy and motivated.
- It is becoming even more a people managing role - KPI and calculating efforts and actions are not the way to go. You need to provide you team with adequate and relevant information for them to act and fill their function. Surveillance and "5 visits a day" is not a performing environment. But we need to better understand the clinch between customers and own organization - this is where sales is pinned in.
- .
- Like it is, sales is relationship management, you cannot automate that
- ?

- We Will become more operational and more strategic
- Proper CRM system is highly needed.
- people get more and more self-led
- -
- Depends on the person and persons leader. If the leader is able to evolve sales in a strategic direction it will happen
- I think that Sales Managers are more implicated in the Marketing process
-
- More responsibility - less dependent of management
- I believe it is moving towards a direction of removing "noise" from sales work, so that sales managers is no longer responsible for being entire point of contact for all inquiries such as claims etc. this is what you see in SaaS companies with customer success people etc. So its all about limiting noise so sales have more time to do sales, and then instead having cross functional meetings to make sure things are aligned
- Becoming more strategic
- We don't have the exact role as a sales manager, as we as management consultants all are responsible for our sales
- For us it is from Purchase to Sale. From when we pay the money for our service till we get the money on our account for the sales.
- In our organisation it evolves with the amount of new sales tech that is implemented. By giving us salespeople new technologies that makes the "core selling" part a more fluent and streamlined it is much more strategic than it is hands on sales. For us it means that our general sales management is more focused on strategic tasks and actually "outsource" the hands on responsibility to a employee that is then a teamleader for the sales people.
- Generally in my organization the sales manager is only responsible for executing sales and executing the part of the marketing strategy that involves them, hand over projects to order management when a project is sold. This have evolved from only talking care of sales and taking care of the customer relation.
- Good
- More sales
- Increased responsibility for the sales process and customer journey, rather than the overall responsibility for the sales team
- The role evolves accordingly to the company's overall strategy and expansion
- ?
- Exciting role with a lot of communication with other people.
- The question is relatively open which makes it difficult to answer. If we talk about as the next stepping stone for a sales manager it would be to become a key account manager or regional manager etc. If we talk about personal development then it should be better communication skills, negotiation skills and understanding the market better and the demands.
- There will be sales specialists
- -
- In our organization it will increase to more roles than just the sales team, so sales is a part of all the roles in the business.
- More aligned with digital tools, marketing and social selling efforts.
- Nothing to add
- Increased focus on collaboration with customer success / post sales.
- Don't know
- Operational tactics, good communication and makes profitable results
- -
- No idea
- More focus on coaching and driving sales through others
- More focus on the marketing/sales collaboration
- Over time
- I don't now
- More strategic and closer cooperation with marketing and product development
- 0
- -
- The more value you can add to your sale, besides the actual product, the better you will come out in the end.
- It evolves as the city evolves - we are finding ourselves in a very competitive market. It is important to have the correct tools and resources for a Sales Manager to function ideally in a organization. If not, all sales tactics will fall to the ground.
- x
- More operational if your team shall develop and reach the goal. The salesmanager must go in front
- Don't know
- From setting targets to more focus on coaching

- Pas
- Good
- Depends on how many colleagues you have in your team. But in a small business, the sales manager is close to have every role. But what is fun in the automotive industri is that we in Denmark have much more permission to take our own decision for the cause of sales. Where f.ex. in Germany there is a really sharp line of the titels you have in front of your name. Prices can in many companies only be discussed with the sales manager.
- The role evolves into a higher focus on coaching and educating the sales staff as well as optimizing the customer/product portfolio and tools. The change is highly that the education happens in the battlefield. During a customer meeting, less structured and more learning by doing. The hard decisions concerning the choise of the most valuable orders of the company is a major focus.
- n
- In a time of increased digital transformation, the Sales Manager needs to integrate this into a respectful people strategy, to maintain and build relationships towards customers
- Be the activ part with very strong relations to all customers
- It has become more and more complex. The sales manager is responsible for more and more in relation to the sales process.
- The Sales manager must be able to meet people on all levels in the organization. To develop new contact and products you need to know the products, and to push sales you need the personality to meet people and build up relationships.
- Jeg tror rollen bliver mere og mere automatiseret i fremtiden. Mange af de ting vi sidder med, vil AI kunne spotte og lave en plan for på ingen tid
- More focus on behavior
- positive
- .
- ?
- The role is supposed to develop into full sales responsibility for the whole organisation
- N/A
- Greater and greater influence and importance in achieving the company's growth goals
- n/a

E-mail

Samlet status

