

Mobile Sales Enablement: Fulfilling the Promise of Untethered Selling

The dramatic technological advances of the last decade have created an entirely new set of expectations regarding the ability of various business-oriented job roles to perform one's duties in an "anywhere, any time, any device" world. There may be no function that has received more attention around "going mobile" than that of professional, business-to-business (B2B) sales executives and account managers. After all, didn't conventional wisdom clearly dictate that with the 2010 introduction of the iPad, and subsequent release of competitive tablet computers, salespeople would lead the charge in tossing away their laptops and other tethered devices? Wasn't the field-based account manager the ideal job role for completely cutting the cord?

In reality, some of the promise of these early thoughts around sales mobility has come to fruition. Aberdeen research published in *Sales Mobility: How Best-in-Class Remote Sellers Are Replacing "See" with "Do"* (March 2012) revealed that a wide variety of best practices supporting mobile selling are, indeed, more frequently adopted by the strongest-performing sales organizations. Still, the number of company-financed and technologically supported devices-per-rep remains high, at an average of 2.61. Furthermore, the research has not revealed dramatic increases in productivity beyond providing always-on connections to e-mail, calendars, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platforms...and the distractions of social media.

New research conducted by Aberdeen regarding sales enablement, however, brings to light a number of ways in which optimizing the experience of the remote sales person can, indeed, be linked to continued sales performance improvements. This Research Brief will focus on how enterprise Marketing and Sales organizations can collaborate effectively, specifically around the content, messaging, and assets that both teams utilize to develop and close customer relationships, and how best to fully mobilize these interactions and activities for optimal prospect / customer engagement.

Marketing and Selling to the Modern Buyer

Aberdeen recently surveyed 88 enterprises to learn about their sales enablement efforts, and has reported initial results in *Sales Enablement: Fulfilling the Last Frontier of Marketing-Sales Alignment* (September 2013). Following Aberdeen's PACE research methodology (sidebar, page 2), let's examine the mobile sales enablement space by first looking at the top three business pressures indicated by survey respondents as the most significant barriers to overall customer acquisition and management effectiveness (Table 1). We see that the visibility into, and velocity of, B2B sales deals are prime sources of frustration for marketing and sales leaders — stresses that directly correlate

Research Brief

Aberdeen's Research Briefs provide a detailed exploration of key findings from a primary research study, including key performance indicators, Best-in-Class insight, and vendor insight.

Sector Definition: Sales Enablement

For the purposes of this research survey, "Sales Enablement" refers to the development and deployment of **selling tools** — marketing collateral, content, assets, messaging, and events — as well as coaching, process, and customer feedback.

to the proposition of the research: that better alignment of the two functions can yield the promise of more efficient deal identification, lead management results, and customer satisfaction. For example, the leading pressure focuses on uncomfortably long sales cycles and stalled deals. Given the contemporary environment of buyer empowerment — see [Bringing Customer Service into Marketing: Empowered Customers Make Service Excellence an Imperative](#) (July 2013) — it is truer now more than ever that no two customers are alike. Hence, all deals and their related content / messaging should be situation-specific, often driven by the content they’ve consumed through the top and middle of the sales funnel. Those annoying “stuck deals” are less likely to occur if selling companies have more tools and processes to understand how their individual prospects engage with the messaging, assets, and conversations utilized to attract, engage, and sell to them. In other words, sellers must align their conversation and content to the buyer’s journey and vision, and convert what used to be a sales pitch into a must-have need on the part of their buyer.

Table 1: Pressures Motivating Sales Enablement Initiatives

Sales Enablement Business Pressures	All Respondents
Lengthening sales cycle and / or deals getting “stuck” and not progressing through the sales process	42%
We have difficulty measuring ROI on marketing spend, or justifying marketing budget, because of a lack of understanding about which campaigns / content are most effective in generating sales results	40%
We don’t have enough insight into how prospects / customers react to marketing-generated content	33%
We aren’t connected closely enough with the changing needs and expectations of our prospects / customers	31%
The “hidden sales cycle” — buyers are hyper-enabled with tools to research our solutions before we can sell to them — makes it difficult to directly deliver compelling content to our identified sales prospects	27%
Our sales forecasting precision suffers from arbitrary, emotional, or agenda-driven input, rather than analytical or empirical data based on actual prospect or buyer behavior	26%

Source: Aberdeen Group, September 2013

Another top business pressure that motivates end users to pursue sales enablement initiatives stems from the age-old problem of marketers: “I know that half of my working budget is working, but not which half.” All too often, well-intentioned and well-designed marketing content actually achieves success — defined by motivating consumers of the messaging to take action and move themselves into the visible sales cycle — without proper attribution once the sales conversations have begun. Identifying the source of customer interest and engagement becomes fuzzy in these scenarios, but if both marketing and sales personnel are provided with an opportunity to track the

Aberdeen’s PACE Methodology

Aberdeen applies a methodology to benchmark research that evaluates the business Pressures, Actions, Capabilities, and Enablers (PACE) that indicate corporate behavior in specific business processes:

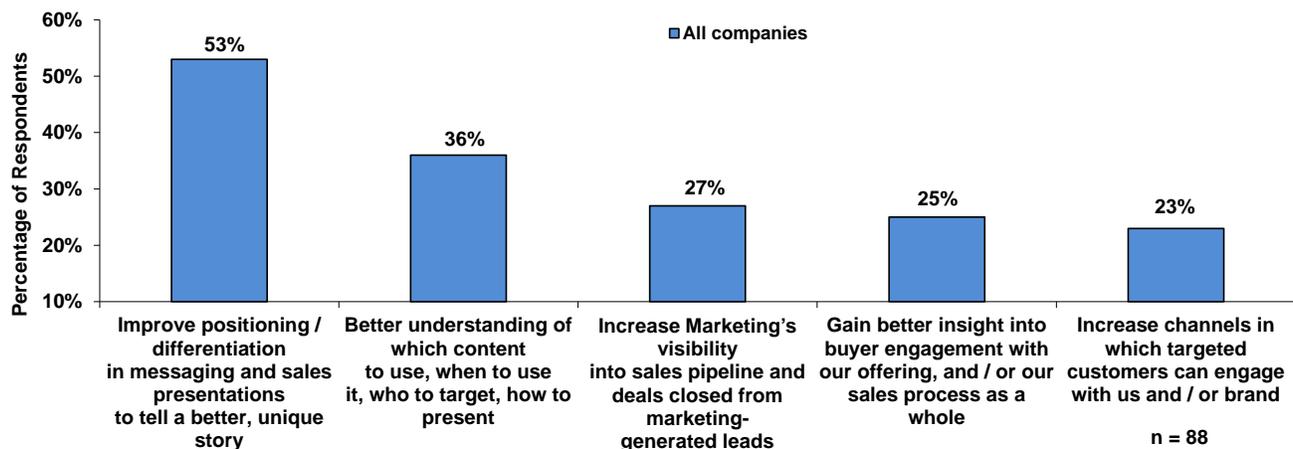
- √ Pressures – external forces that impact an organization’s market position, competitiveness, or business operations.
- √ Actions – the strategic approaches that an organization takes in response to industry pressures.
- √ Capabilities – the business process competencies (process, organization, performance, and knowledge management) required to execute corporate strategy.
- √ Enablers – the key functionality of technology solutions required to support the organization’s enabling business practices.

consumption of the kind of account-specific messaging described above, throughout the customer engagement lifecycle, the path toward understanding return on investment (ROI) of marketing initiatives, and even specific content assets, grows far more direct. Finally, an additional benefit accrues to those companies that actively promote a sense of marketing / sales alignment: it becomes much harder to criticize the other party, and more beneficial to support them, when mutual results are gained from a more collaborative environment in which content, messaging, assets, and campaigns are more universally created, executed, and measured.

Taking Action: Sales Enablement Business Strategies Focus on Reducing Friction

Prior to analyzing how the strongest performing companies deploy specific best practices and technologies to achieve this kind of corporate relationship, let's take a look at the overall survey respondent pool, in the context of strategic actions most commonly taken to alleviate the business pressures described above. In Figure I, we note the five most commonly nominated business strategies (four top choices could be selected by each respondent) addressed by companies seeking to maximize their overall customer engagement effectiveness. As before, we see a compelling argument for enterprises to de-emphasize the traditional one-way messaging of old, and to embrace a more customer-centric, data-driven approach to storytelling.

Figure I: Strategic Actions — How Marketing and Sales Lay Groundwork for Collaborative Success



Source: Aberdeen Group, September 2013

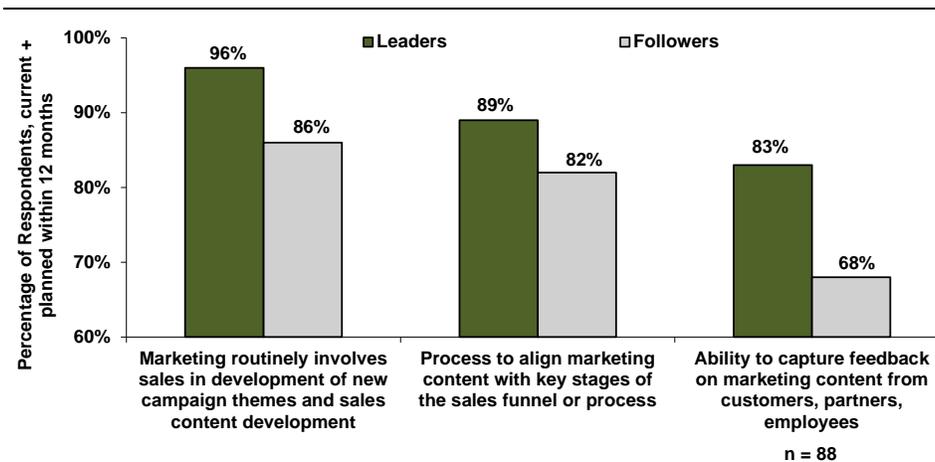
The many sales enablement processes and technology enablers described below reduce friction in the path for deploying the strategies in Figure I. Going to market successfully will always require a great product or service, but equally as important, marketers and sellers are striving to create more impactful connections in the communications and content presented in both mass-market and one-to-one customer interactions. This implies that identifying the ROI of discrete marketing campaigns in assets will be made far easier when the marketing

and selling teams collaborate in a manner that more effectively allows for post-marketing activity tracking of buyer engagement; the ongoing refinement of marketing messaging will not only make that department more effective, but inevitably better satisfy the sales team when the ultimate desired outcome — more engaged, qualified leads — are presented to them for nurturing and closure.

Capabilities: Learning from the Leaders

Now, let's begin to explore the core business competencies that are more frequently adopted by the strongest performing enterprises, and then move on to how companies can most effectively set these in motion in a mobile setting. In Figure 2, we analyze a set of business Process Capabilities that are popular among the majority of all companies, but particularly more for Leaders over Followers (sidebar). As a research note, Figure 2 summarizes the percentage of each maturity class cohort, indicating either a current deployment of the indicated process, or specific plans to implement it within one year. This is due to the modest number of currently-deployed scenarios, compared with sizable percentages of plan-to-deploy responses.

Figure 2: Processes that Support Better Customer Engagement



Source: Aberdeen Group, September 2013

While the processes highlighted in Figure 2 may seem like obvious no-brainers that any contemporary business would naturally and easily adopt, the data shows only an average current adoption rate of 39% among all three capabilities. And yet, an average of 42% of survey respondents plan to follow these paths within the next year, per the research note above, implying that while companies have not flocked to these approaches in the past, they “get it” and plan to do so soon. Virtually every Leader company currently or in the near-term **routinely collects input from the sales organization** when developing the campaigns and materials that those same sellers will eventually use in the field. In days gone by, the distinctions between marketing and selling responsibilities were quite severe: marketers handled the creative development of content, and pretty much handed over the brochures and other assets to the sales team for distribution. No thought was given to this

The Sales Enablement Leaders and Followers Defined

In August and September 2013, Aberdeen surveyed 88 end-user organizations to understand their sales enablement best practices. The performance metrics used to define the Leaders (top 35%) and Followers (bottom 65%) among these companies are:

- ✓ 104% average total team attainment of quota among Leaders, compared with 70% among Followers
- ✓ 19.4% average year-over-year increase in total annual revenue, vs. 1.6% for Followers
- ✓ 11.0% average year-over-year increase in team attainment of sales quota, vs. a 1.6% decline among Follower respondents

first core competency; today's most effective enterprises alternatively recognize that marketers are being held increasingly accountable for sales results, and that salespeople frequently conduct their own micro-marketing activities anyway...so it is a natural fit to create a bilateral feedback loop.

Deploying a **process to align marketing content with keys sales stages** helps organizations tailor-make what the prospect or customer sees for a "right message at the right time" experience. Much as Leader companies more strongly indicate (48% to 32%) that "the more specific "guided selling" or stage-specific scripting / content we design for, and require from, our sales reps, the better our sales results," they also recognize that these various levels of sales engagements represent very different customer touch-points that require situation-specific content. This should be of little surprise to marketers who are used to creating vertically-oriented for industry-specific assets; it simply layers a chronological variable on top of those traditional business lines of communication. For further details on the alignment of messaging to customer engagement stages, see Aberdeen's [Alchemy of Intent: Content Marketing in the Lead-to-Revenue Cycle](#) (July 2013).

Finally, Leaders are 22% more advanced than Followers (83% vs. 68%) with current or planned processes to **capture multi-voice feedback on marketing content**. Customers, selling partners, and internal employees all have visceral reactions to the messages used either on their behalf or in search of their budget dollars. Why not ask a newly-won customer what they thought of the content used to successfully bring them on board as an account? In fact, even a lost deal can represent a small win, if the selling organization is transparent enough to ask the same question. This spirit of self-improvement will certainly help leave a positive impression in the minds of the targeted account team members, regarding the gracious and introspective behavior of their original sellers.

The second type of business capability we analyze in this Research Brief focuses on Knowledge Management, or the competencies by which enterprises collect, store, and make accessible the "tribal knowledge" gained by their team members over time. In Figure 3, we see that current adoption rates (without the 12-month planning windows included in Figure 2) for three key knowledge management core competencies are higher among the stronger-performing Leader survey respondents.

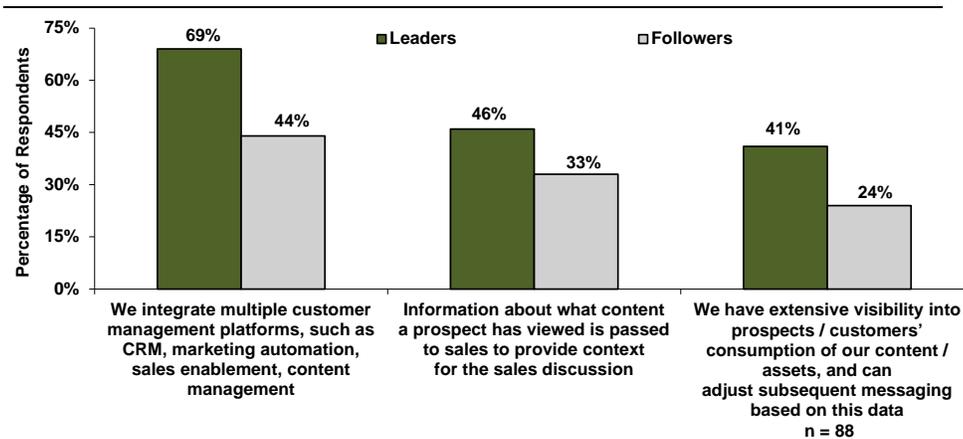
Aberdeen research published in [Leveraging the 360 Degree Customer View to Maximize Up-Sell and Cross-Sell Potential](#) (September 2011) ratifies the first capability highlighted in Figure 3, **integrating all customer-facing data and content platforms**. Consider the chaos that would ensue when a large, current customer receives a marketing offer of a lower-priced product or service, which is intended for net-new accounts, that represents savings over what they are currently paying for their solutions. This can easily happen if the marketing automation system, and the content associated with the campaigns it is meant to manage, is not integrated with the CRM, contact center, or service desk platforms. Leaders are 57% more likely than Followers (69% vs. 44%) to recognize the value of this approach.

Leader vs. Follower Performance: Current Metrics

In addition to the KPIs used to determine Leaders and Followers (page 4), the following current performance metrics differentials are also associated with the two maturity classes:

- √ Customer retention rate: 83% vs. 77%
- √ Percent of sales reps achieving quota: 72% vs. 51%
- √ Lead acceptance rate: 41% vs. 36%
- √ Lead conversion rate: 14.4% vs. 13.0%

Figure 3: Knowledge Management — Leveraging Tribal Knowledge



Source: Aberdeen Group, September 2013

Similarly, the strongest performers share one of the most valuable aspects of marketing automation — **visibility into how targeted individuals and accounts engage with their digital content** — with the sales team, more often than the rate among Followers. The final two knowledge management capabilities in Figure 3 speak to the war room mentality that contemporary marketers have learned to adopt: Leaders are measurably more adept at tracking, interpreting, and especially reacting to the digital behavior of their target audience. Aberdeen's research published in [Building the New Database of Intentions with Real-time Marketing Analytics](#) (May 2013) provides additional insight into this concept.

Going Mobile: Taking Excellence on the Road

With the strategies and core competencies now understood in the context of content-driven marketing / sales alignment, let's examine the mobilization of best practices in sales enablement. Table 2 summarizes a number of relatively new corporate capabilities that are not frequently deployed by the majority of survey respondents, but represent pointed ways in which Leaders out-adopt Followers as early adopters of these specific best practices.

Much of the discussion around sales mobility has historically taken place in the pre-cloud era. Even after the generations-old paradigm of disconnected, remote sellers gave way to intranet-supported field personnel, the number of enterprises whose field sellers have true, immediate access to all processes, content, and knowledge housed by their company is relatively low, even today. Nevertheless, the elements in Table 2 represent opportunities for marketing / sales engagement that not long ago would have been inconceivable methods of supporting the traditional traveling salesman. The remarkable developments around increased conductivity, bandwidth, and enterprise storage have allowed what once was considered science fiction — **real-time video** in the palms of your hands — to become a daily reality among nearly half of all survey respondents, particularly among Leaders. Additional content regarding video will be presented in the pages below.

Another standard operating procedure of 20th century selling held that Marketing created content, and Sales took it on the road. Today, while adoption is still young, Leaders report a 35% greater provision of **mobile access to marketing assets** than Followers (27% vs. 20%). These top performers are no doubt early adopters in recognizing the value of investing in infrastructure, data management, and, of course, security protocols required to give their front-line sellers a choice when it comes to determining which content is most appropriate for their unique customer discussion. This best practice speaks to the concepts introduced above around giving all customer-facing practitioners a voice in determining when and what kind of communications to use in pursuit of revenue. It also promises to expand in overall popularity as barriers to near-universal connectivity, computing power, and storage continue to fall.

Table 2: Mobility Best Practices

Mobile Sales Enablement Attribute	Leaders	Followers
Video content is accessible / viewable on mobile devices (smartphones, tablets)	48%	40%
Mobile access to all Marketing-provided collateral, content and assets used by Sales	27%	20%
Mobile-available (offline and online) “push” notification of when new / updated content is available	26%	21%
Mobile apps are very or extremely effective during the “active” sales cycle	19%	17%

Source: Aberdeen Group, September 2013 Additional mobility-oriented practices also include **asynchronous content updates**, or the automated process that allows sellers who are temporarily disconnected to be notified upon re-connection that there are new or updated marketing content assets available to them. Much as most of us, as consumers, have become very comfortable with the automatic synchronization of our calendars and tasks among our many personal computing devices, Leader enterprises are more likely than under-performing firms to support their field personnel in a similar fashion, and as a result are also less likely to force their reps to wait until day’s end to update the CRM — and we all know how ineffective that approach tends to be. Finally, the **effective use of mobile business apps** is a very new category of business capability, but Leaders have a slight edge over Followers in taking advantage of using marketing content, product demonstrations, inventory checks, and similar application-supported vehicles to help make their case in front of their potential buyer. In the pharmaceutical industry, for example, the remarkably tight window of time that a sales rep enjoys with a medical practitioner demands the salesperson have “all their ducks in a row” to plead their case during the few moments of buyer attention they have at their disposal. Reps who are adept at finding and showing absolutely any relevant piece of data or content, on-demand, are more likely to sustain a selling conversation and, ultimately, seal their deal. If they can take any action — read, view, send, connect, measure — regardless

**Leader vs. Follower
Performance: Year-over-Year
Metrics**

In addition to the KPIs used to determine Leaders and Followers (page 4), the following year-over-year performance metrics differentials are also associated with the two maturity classes:

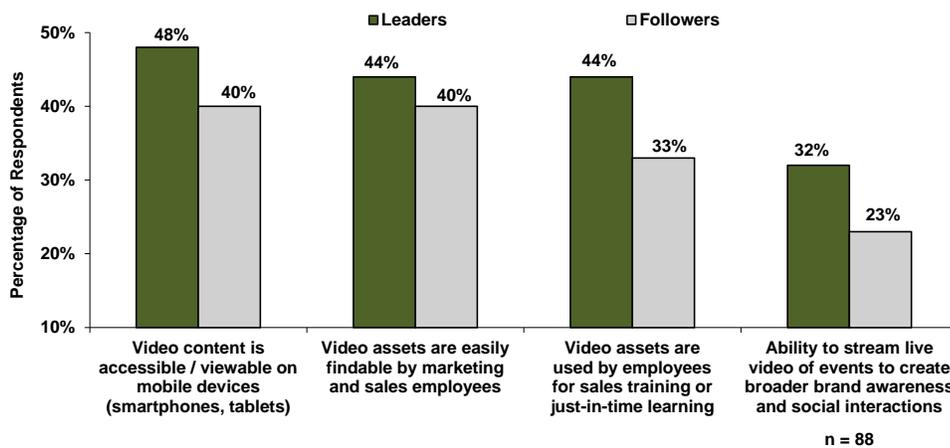
- √ Average deal size: +13.1%, vs. -2.6%
- √ Brand awareness: +11.3%, vs. +4.0%
- √ Percent of sales reps achieving quota: +7.1%, vs. -0.8%
- √ Percent of Sales-forecasted pipeline contributed by Marketing: +6.7%, vs. +2.7%
- √ Customer satisfaction: +4.7%, vs. +0.7%
- √ Sales acceptance of marketing-generated leads: +3.4%, vs. +0.7%

of their location or time of day, their effectiveness and top-line revenue results will inevitably improve.

Video Killed the Brochure

The fact that mobility-oriented best practices in Table 2 begin with video capabilities is a sure sign that these two modern technology trends are rapidly coming together to represent a new paradigm in sales enablement, as the dynamic nature of interactive video and untethered nature of remote job functions combine to create a powerful set of tools for contemporary sellers and account managers. In Figure 4, we see a summary of video-oriented best practices that Leaders deploy more frequently than Followers.

Figure 4: Utilizing Video to its Full Potential



Source: Aberdeen Group, September 2013

We know from [Sales Mobility: How Best-in-Class Remote Sellers Are Replacing “See” with “Do”](#) (March 2012) that contemporary professional B2B salespeople carry an average of 2.61 devices that are financially supported by their employers, so it follows that video content — in the form of product demos, training content, and real-time event participation — needs to be **accessible and easily viewed** by front-line sellers on their mobile devices. As with all technologies in the post-Steve Jobs era, the **ability to find, open, and independently consume video** content must also be self-explanatory, lest corporate managers waste their time creating assets that are not leveraged by impatient employees. These assets include the all-important sales and product **training content** that are crucial, reinforced follow-ups to the more formal sales training described in Aberdeen’s [Train, Coach, Reinforce: Best Practices in Maximizing Sales Productivity](#) (October 2012). Finally, with 45% of survey respondents indicating that they plan to increase virtual online events as part of their marketing mix, the **streaming of live video** becomes more of a must-have technology enabler for remote sellers.

Conclusion and Recommendations: Putting Sales / Marketing Kumbaya to the Test

The alignment of sales and marketing functions is a crucial element in building and sustaining long-term corporate success. The current research strongly suggests that the best common ground upon which to build this cooperative foundation focuses on content: the lifeblood of marketing communications and sales enablement. The business capabilities and technology enablers described above, particularly those that are favored more often by Leaders than Followers, can help both executives and operational managers in sales and marketing departments collaborate more effectively around the physical and digital media used to entice, nurture, and close a sustainable volume of sales revenue. In Table 3, we look at the four leading areas in which survey respondents indicate that their organizational competency around sales / marketing alignment is strong. By focusing on tactical elements such as knowledge management capabilities — where are our assets, how can we quickly access the right ones, at the right times, for the right customers — and real-time availability via any mobile device, the strongest performing companies are the most equipped to efficiently deliver the messaging necessary to identify, select, engage, and win business at better rates than under-performing firms.

Table 3: Proving a Case for Sales Enablement

Ability to Execute on Sales / Marketing Alignment	Percent indicating high effectiveness
Availability of, and access to, relevant content (e.g., videos, presentations, PDFs, etc.) for reps to use with prospects	84%
Selection of the right marketing programs and content to use with particular leads, opportunities, or accounts	82%
Sales-led lead nurturing (e.g., communications direct from Sales to the qualified lead)	76%
Using predictive analytics (e.g., “big data”) to understand how buyer content consumption impacts the likelihood of sales deals to be won or lost	49%

Source: Aberdeen Group, September 2013

These abilities also speak to trends that Aberdeen will continue to research in the coming months, specifically around current trends such as big data, which will soon be covered in the publication specific to its impact on sales and marketing effectiveness.

For more information on this or other research topics, please visit www.aberdeen.com.

Related Research

<p><u><i>Beyond the Quota: Best-in-Class Deployments of Sales Performance Management</i></u>; January 2014 <u><i>Enterprise Social Collaboration: High-Power Teamwork for Better Sales Results</i></u>; November 2013 <u><i>Sales Enablement: Fulfilling the Last Frontier of Marketing-Sales Alignment</i></u>; September 2013 <u><i>Eliminating the Noise: Best Practices for the Five W's of Sales Intelligence</i></u>; August, 2013 <u><i>Making the Most of Your CRM: How Best-in-Class Sales Teams Maximize Revenue and Customer Experience</i></u>; June 2013</p>	<p><u><i>Learn, Collaborate, Connect, Close: Best-in-Class Mobile Sales Enablement</i></u>; June 2013 <u><i>Sales Content Management: How the Best-in-Class Deploy Portals...and More Room to Seal the Deal</i></u>; May 2013 <u><i>CRM 2013: Generating Business Value throughout the Enterprise</i></u>; April 2013 <u><i>Breaking the Laws of Physics: Shortening the Last Sales Mile Through Workflow Automation</i></u>; April 2013 <u><i>Collaborate, Listen, Contribute: How Best-in-Class Sales Teams Leverage Social Selling</i></u>; November 2012 <u><i>Train, Coach, Reinforce: Best Practices in Maximizing Sales Productivity</i></u>; October 2012</p>
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