# STATE OF **SALES ENABLEMENT 2020**

SALES ENABLEMENT PRO

# Welcome

For the sixth edition of the State of Sales Enablement Report, we surveyed sales enablement leaders worldwide to learn how sales enablement has evolved in the past year, including how businesses are adapting to the health and economic challenges of COVID-19.

Sales enablement is in a unique position, as they are not only adapting to change themselves, but also responsible for supporting sellers as they transition to new ways of working. With the insights from this report, professionals can effectively align sales enablement efforts to corporate goals and prioritize initiatives to deliver value to the business today, in the midst of crisis, and beyond.

**About the Research:**

Quantitative data in the report was collected from a survey conducted from March 20 through May 15, 2020, generating 387 total responses across 19 different countries. The top 5 countries were the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, and India. Qualitative research was further captured from the Sales Enablement Soiree, Virtual Event on April 22, 2020.

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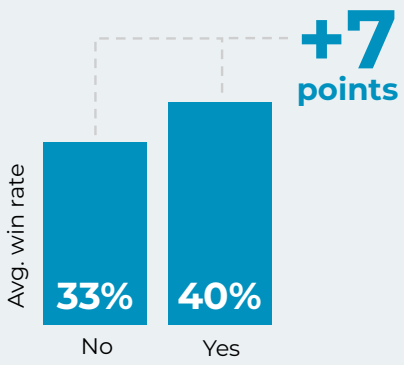
# Executive Summary

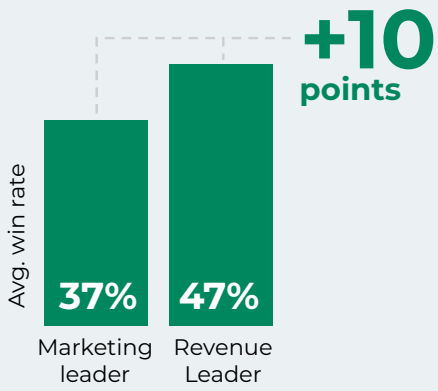
Our findings have made it clear that sales enablement is a vital lever to help organizations increase win rates, improve customer satisfaction, and accelerate revenue:

## VIRTUAL ENABLEMENT PLATFORMS



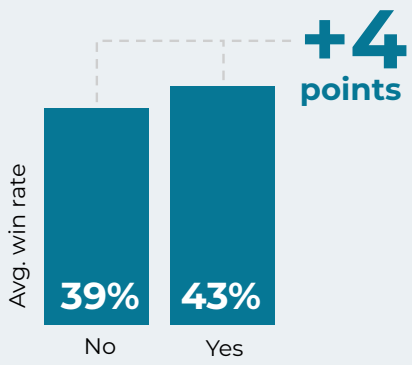

Sales enablement practitioners that leverage a sales enablement platform for their sales teams report win rates that are 7 percentage points higher than those that do not.

## ORGANIZATIONAL REVENUE ALIGNMENT




Enablement teams with a tenure of more than 2 years that report to a revenue leader experience win rates that are 10 percentage points higher than those that report to a marketing leader.

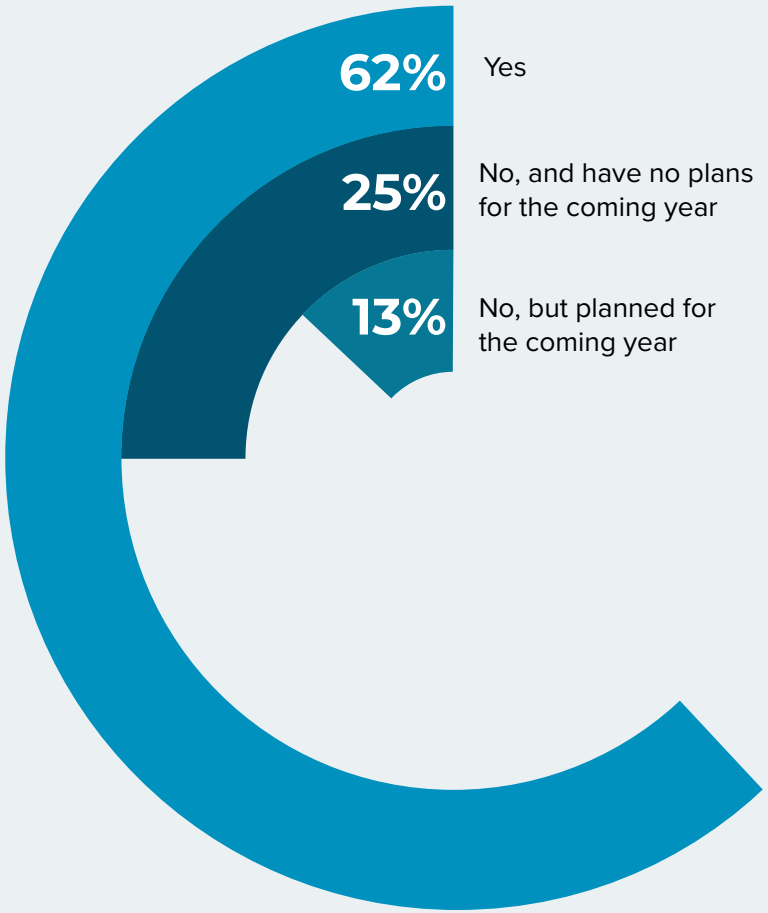
## CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE




Many enablement teams focus on enhancing the customer experience by enabling post-sales roles such as account management, and those that do experience win rate improvements of 4 percentage points.

# Sales Enablement Adoption

**Does your company have a dedicated sales enablement person, program, or function?**




## SALES ENABLEMENT TEAM

When the very first State of Sales Enablement report was published five years ago, only 14% of organizations had a defined sales enablement team in place. Since then, the growth and adoption of sales enablement has been staggering as companies realize that its business value should not—and especially in the current climate, cannot—be overlooked.

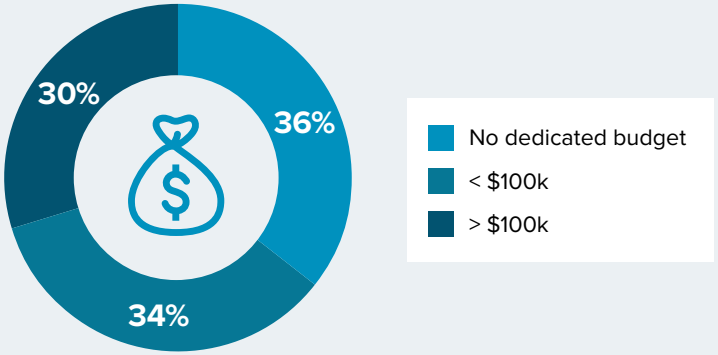
**In the past five years, the sales enablement function has experienced a 343% increase in adoption.** While 62% have a sales enablement person, program, or function in place, representing **year-over-year growth of 7 percentage points,** an additional 13% plan to dedicate a person, program, or function to sales enablement in the coming fiscal year.

Sales enablement continues to gain widespread attention and maintains a trajectory for growth as a business function in the next year and beyond.

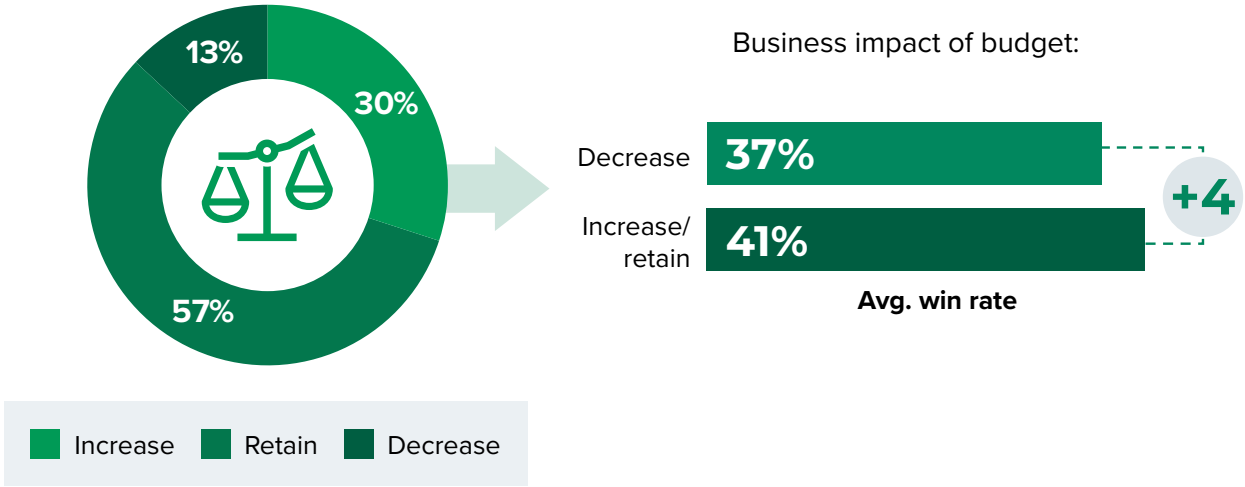
## SALES ENABLEMENT RESOURCING

Resourcing sales enablement through a dedicated budget is also becoming commonplace, as 66% have a budget of some degree and 30% of those budgets are greater than $100,000.

**What is the budget of your sales enablement team?**




**How will your sales enablement team budget change in the next 12 months?**

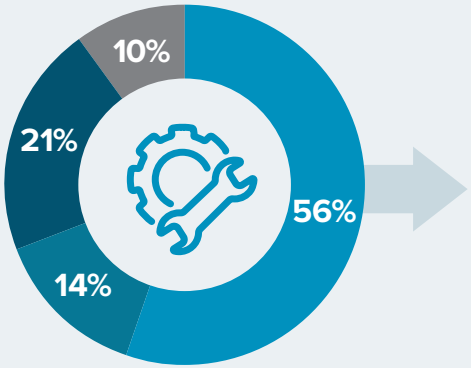






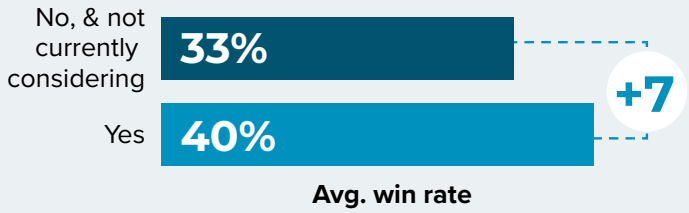
Across companies of all sizes, 87% anticipate retaining or increasing their sales enablement budgets from their current levels in the next 12 months. Further, those that plan to increase or retain their budgets experience win rates that are 4 percentage points higher than those that anticipate decreasing their budgets. In times of economic crises, this is particularly noteworthy, as it indicates that companies continue to recognize the importance of investment in sales enablement.

**Is your company or team currently utilizing sales enablement tools?**




- Yes
- No, but actively considering
- No, and not currently considering
- Don't know/not sure

Business impact of sales enablement tools:




Technology can also help sales enablement teams effectively deliver programs to the field, and those that do adopt sales enablement tools see a return on their investment. A majority (56%) of respondents utilize sales enablement technology to support their sales teams, and an additional 14% are actively considering bringing in a sales enablement tool in the coming fiscal year.

Sales enablement practitioners that leverage a sales enablement platform for their sales teams report win rates that are 7 percentage points higher than those that do not utilize a platform.

While sales enablement budgets and technology correlate with higher quota-attainment, these are not the only factors. The research showed that tenure is also a key trait of effective sales enablement teams. Those that have a sales enablement team that has been established for more than 2 years experience win rates that are 5 percentage points higher than those that do not.

**How long has your company had any type of sales enablement process and/or practices?**

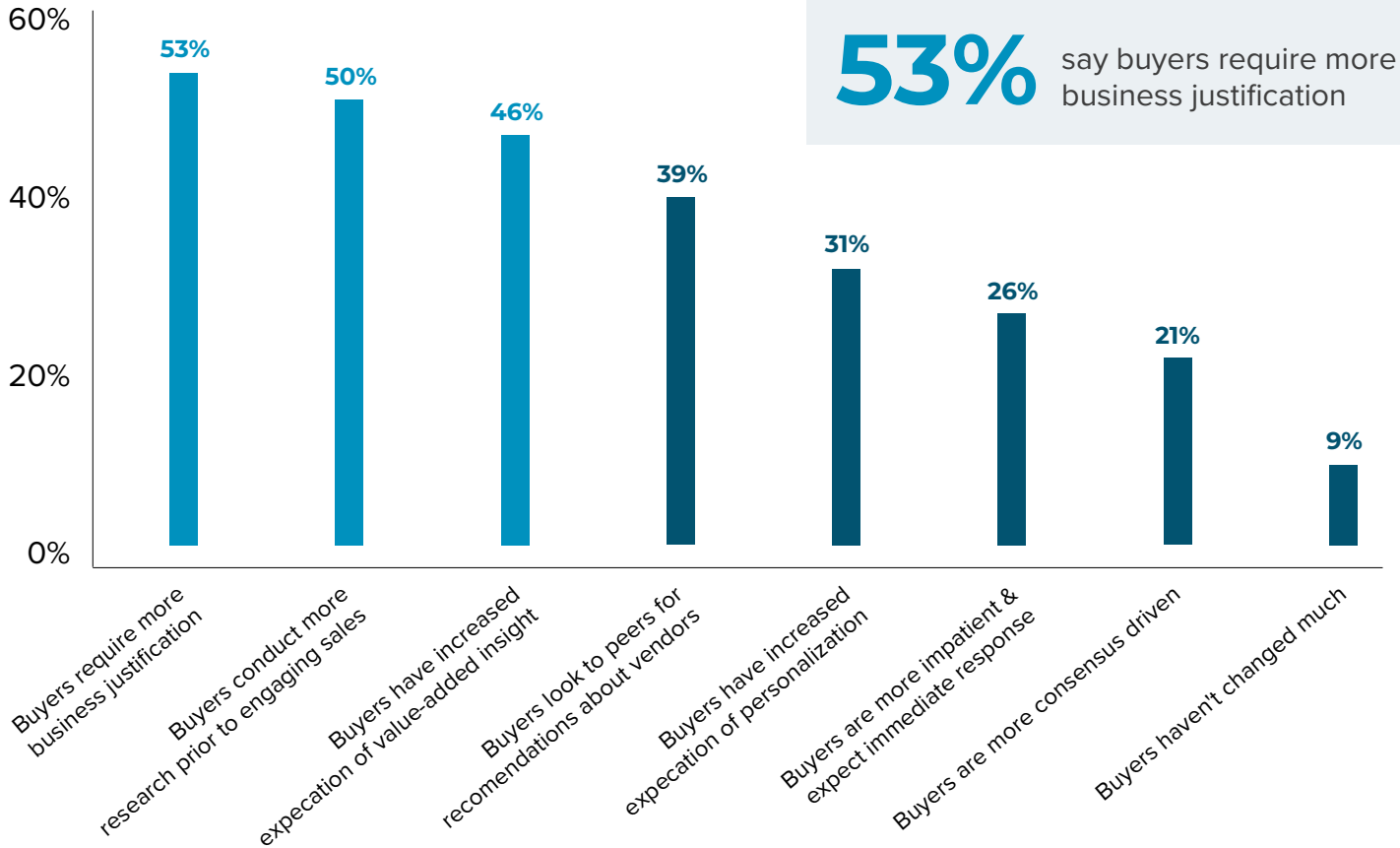
# Sales Enablement Drivers

## EXTERNAL DRIVERS: BUYER BEHAVIOR

As the entire modern business environment experiences rapid changes, the dynamic between buyers and sellers continues to evolve alongside it. In the past 12 to 18 months, **more than 9 out of 10 respondents agree that buyers have significantly changed.**

The most prominent ways in which respondents have observed their buyers changing are centered on an increase in how informed buyers are, and the information they require from sales as a result.

**How have buyers changed in the last 12-18 months?**




**53%** say buyers require more business justification

## INTERNAL DRIVERS: SALES CHALLENGES

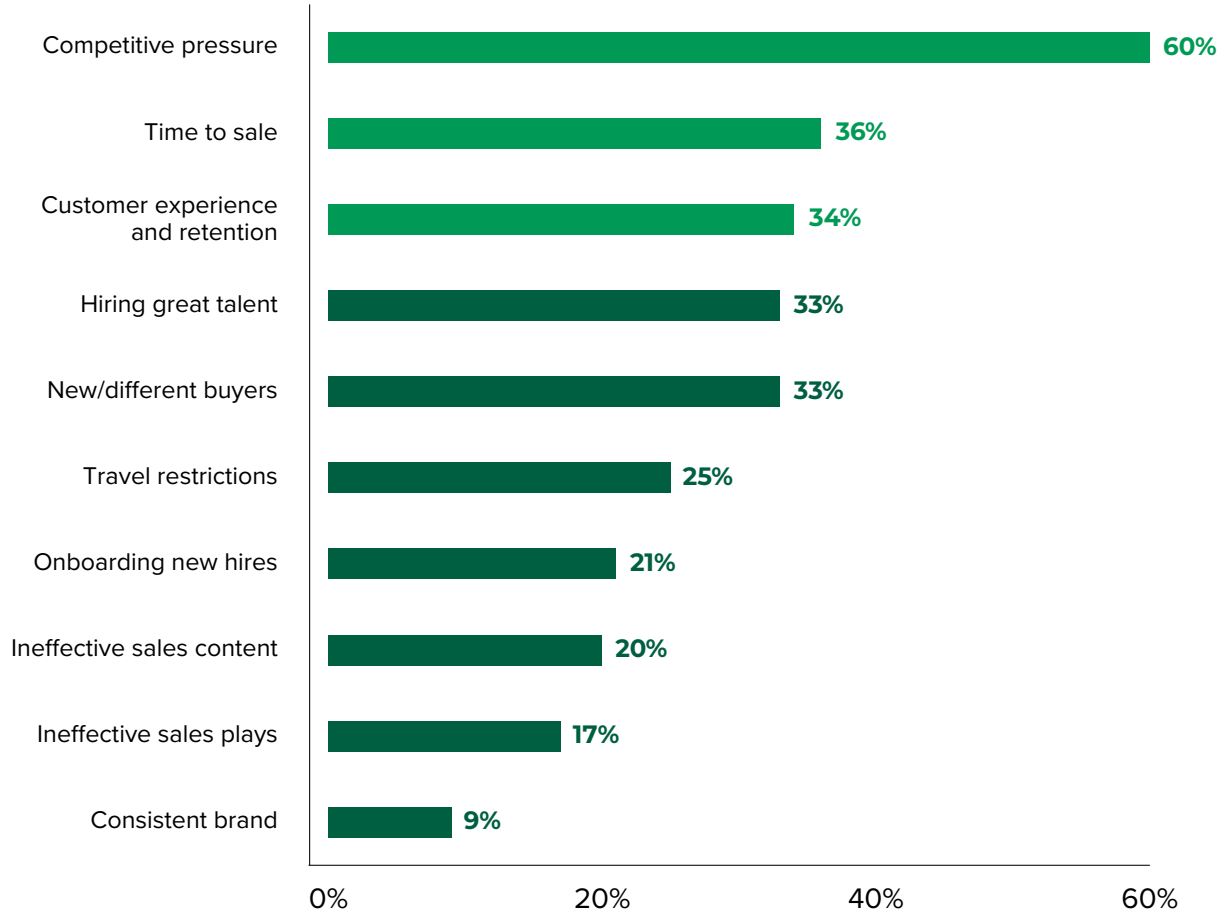
The combination of the evolving market conditions, buyer expectations, and sales process challenges compound to create points of friction that sales organizations are struggling to address.

This is likely exacerbated by the current economic conditions. The most common write-in responses we received for this question highlighted challenges stemming from COVID-19, as many buyers are facing internal budget constraints.

Additionally, the top sales challenges that respondents have experienced this past year are largely a reflection of the economic uncertainty many sales organizations are currently facing. These include: competitive pressure (60%), time to sale (36%), and customer experience and retention (34%).

**What are your top 3 sales challenges?**

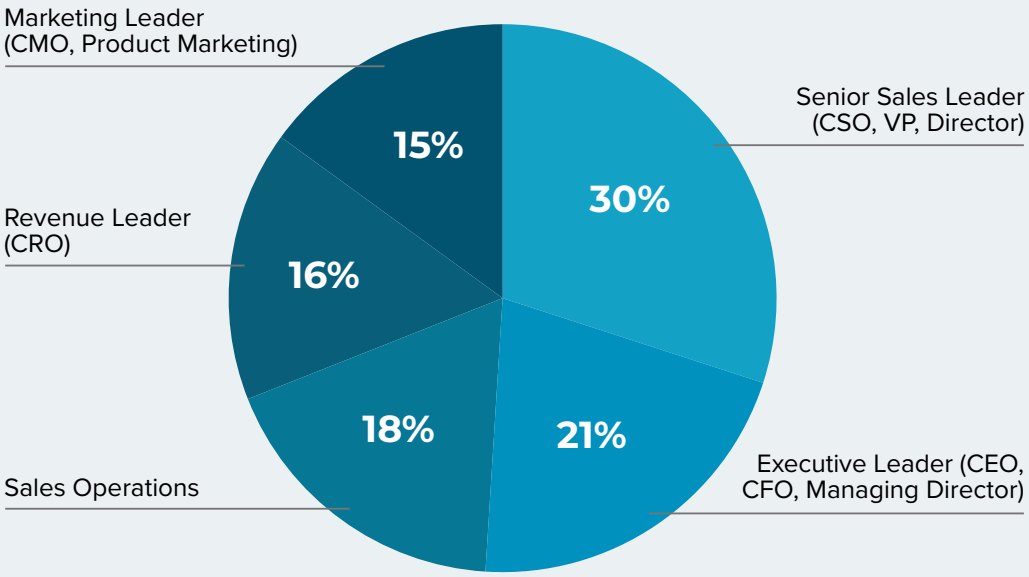
% of respondents who selected it as a top 3 challenge



# Sales Enablement Prioritization

## Revenue Alignment

**Where does sales enablement directly report into?**




### THE IMPACT OF THE ORG CHART

Sales enablement has historically reported to a wide range of leaders across the organization, from marketing to sales and even sales operations. Last year, however, the report began to see a growing trend toward reporting into executive leaders. This year's research found a similar trend, as it is the second most common reporting structure after senior sales leaders.

There has also been a substantial shift in the amount of organizations where sales enablement reports to a revenue leader. **Year over year, those that report to a revenue leader have increased by 7 percentage points.** This shift demonstrates an increased desire to align sales enablement efforts to overall revenue goals within organizations.

## STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT TO REVENUE

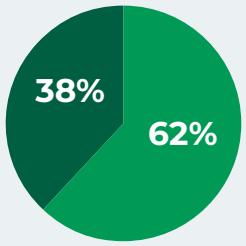
While reporting structure can make it easier to align sales enablement efforts to executive priorities and revenue goals, it is important for sales enablement to intentionally align to strategic initiatives regardless of where it sits in the organization. Many sales enablement functions are effectively creating this alignment, though there is some room for improvement in order to optimize these efforts.

When asked to rate the effectiveness of sales enablement in its ability to work cross-functionally to execute corporate initiatives, 62% indicate they are above average. Sales enablement is also strong in its ability to correlate sales enablement initiatives to sales goals, as 59% indicate they are above average in this area.

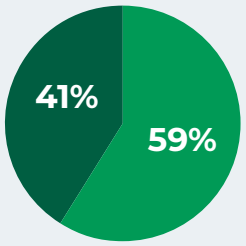
However, sales enablement is less effective in its ability to clearly demonstrate and articulate its impact on these corporate efforts. For instance, 50% of respondents said sales enablement is either average or below average in its ability to use data to analyze the business impact of sales enablement efforts. In terms of its ability to communicate sales enablement's value to the business, 48% are either average or below average. This demonstrates that while practitioners know their efforts are aligned to corporate initiatives, many struggle to anchor those efforts with metrics that prove value.

**How would you rate your sales enablement team's ability to do the following?**

Work cross-functionally to execute corporate initiatives

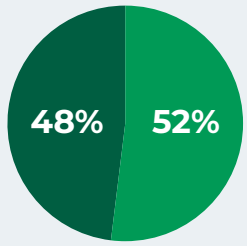



Correlate sales enablement intiatives to sales goals




Use data to analyze the business impact of sales enablement efforts

Communicate sales enablement's value to the business




Above average

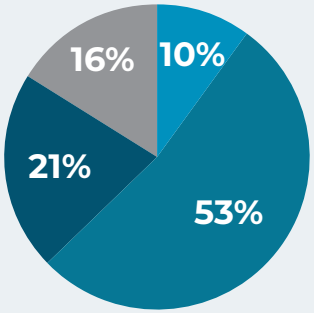
Average or below average

Especially as organizational goals and executive priorities evolve to respond to the changing times, it is critical for sales enablement to stay in close alignment with these goals in order to design effective solutions. But in order to truly prove its value to the business, sales enablement needs to focus on how it can use data to clearly demonstrate impact and communicate that to stakeholders.

> Align your strategic initiatives to business goals and take a holistic approach. If you can't map exactly what you're doing in terms of enablement directly back to a strategic initiative for the company, you're more likely getting into the tactical catch-all space.

**–Yarun Nahar, Head of Enablement and Learning Solutions, Global Partner Solutions, Facebook**

## How do execs feel sales enablement aligns to their goals?




- Exceeds expectations
- Meets expectations
- Below expectations
- Not applicable

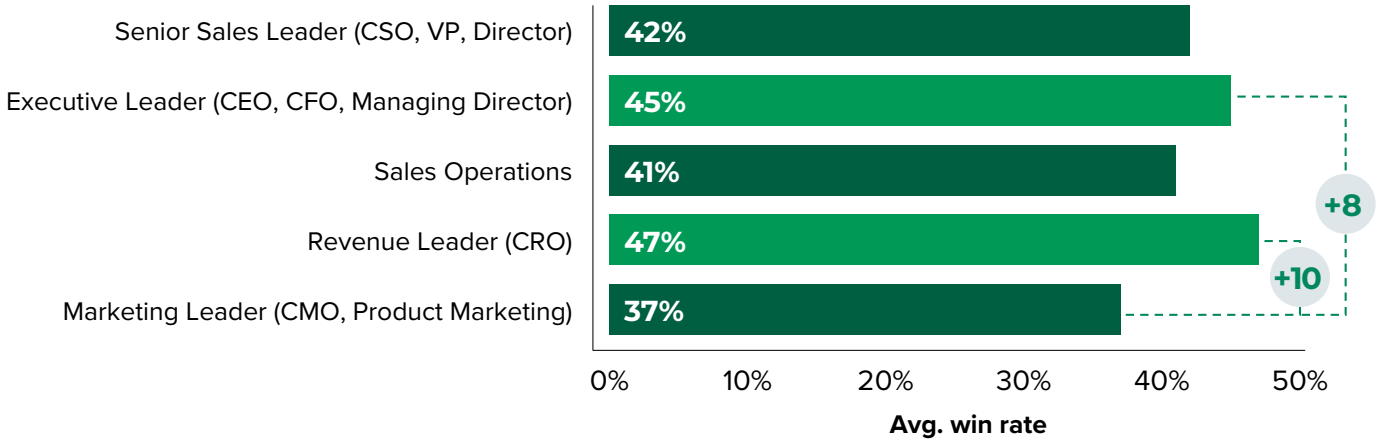
## BUSINESS IMPACT—NOW AND LONG-TERM

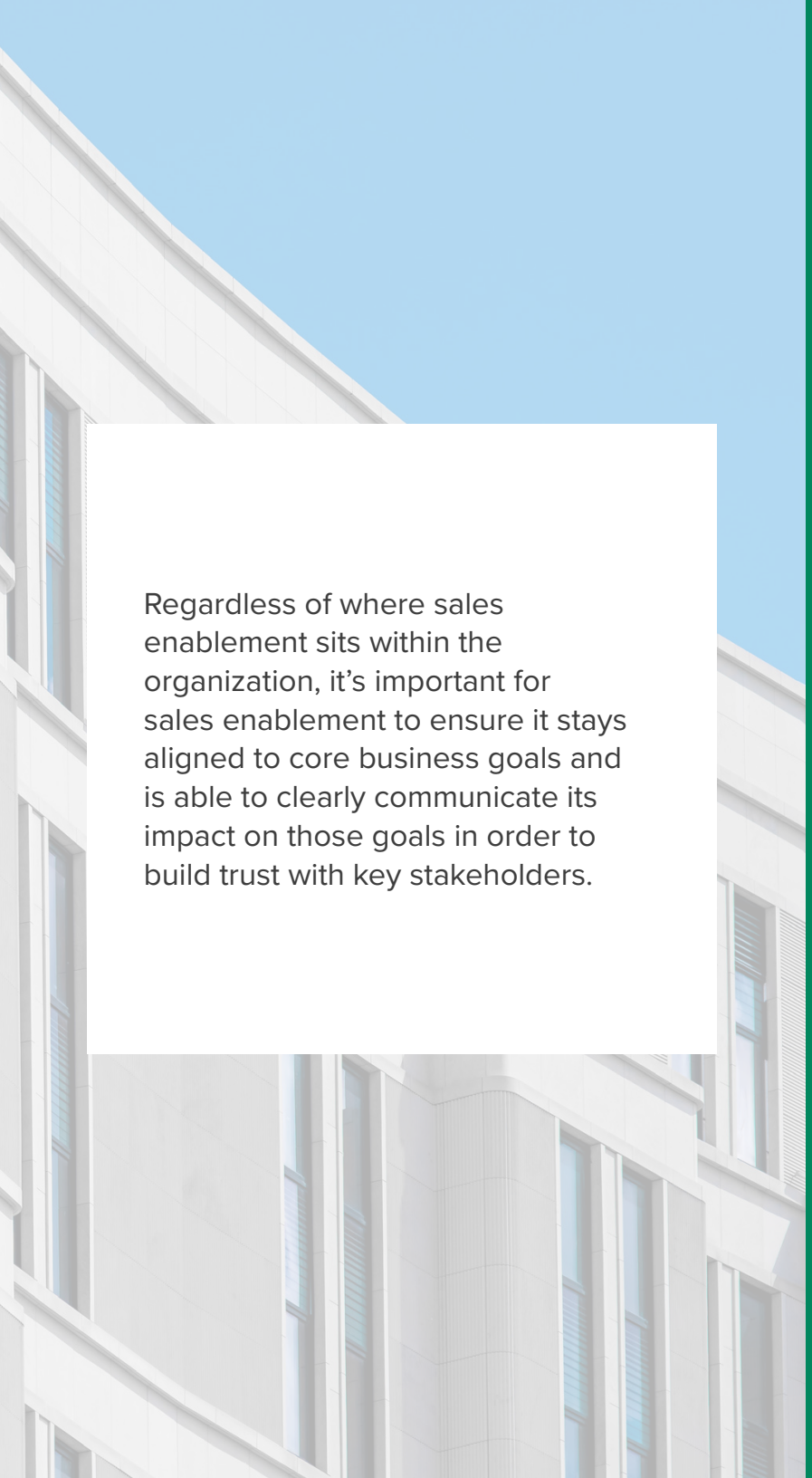
Holistically, sales enablement is viewed by stakeholders as having a positive impact on the organization. Of the survey respondents that are not sales enablement practitioners, 63% of those above the line say that sales enablement meets or exceeds executive expectations.

Increased alignment across the revenue engine can help sales enablement elevate its success and position its value on a broader scale.

In fact, **the more closely aligned sales enablement efforts are to the goals of revenue and executive leaders, the better positioned enablement is to generate impact on those business goals.** Teams with a tenure of more than two years that report to a revenue leader experience win rates that are 10 percentage points higher than those that report to a marketing leader. Similarly, those that report to an executive leader experience win rates that are 8 points higher than those that report to a marketing leader.

### Where does sales enablement directly report into?





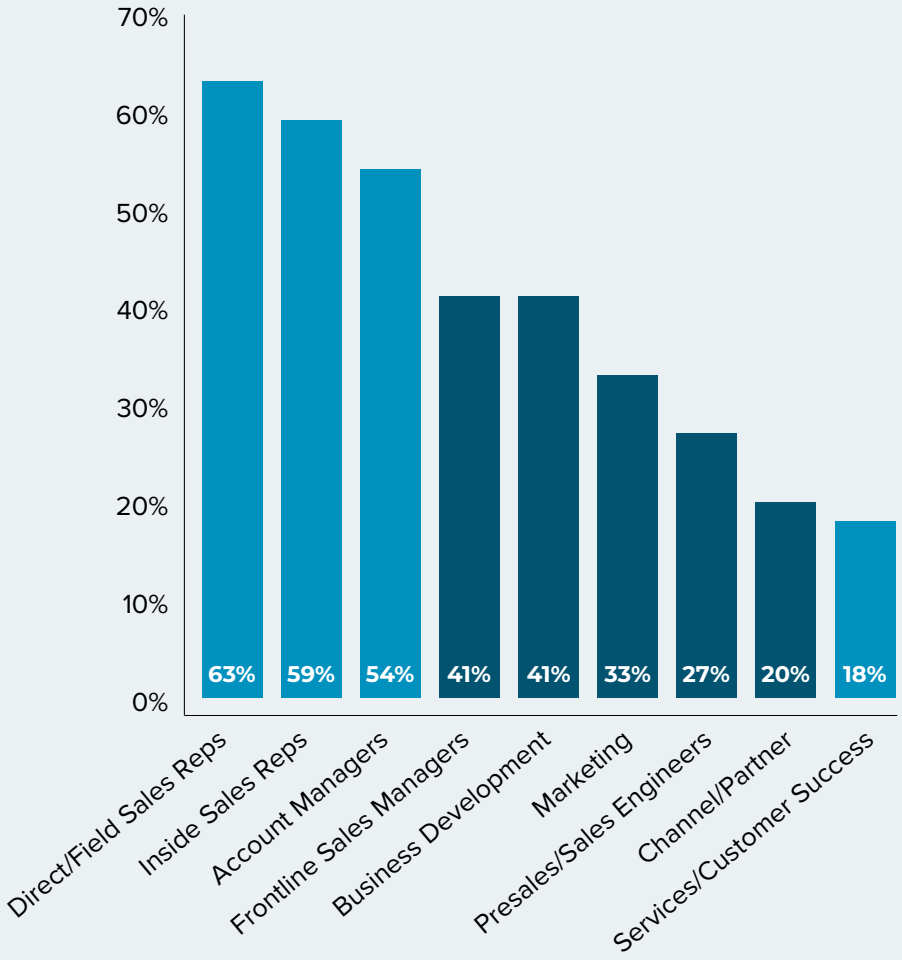
Regardless of where sales enablement sits within the organization, it's important for sales enablement to ensure it stays aligned to core business goals and is able to clearly communicate its impact on those goals in order to build trust with key stakeholders.

"I'm making sure that all the people that enable revenue to be successful, to make our goals and objectives, are working in concert. That's the combination of all of those great people across the business...In my mind, it's really the way to maximize cross-functional collaboration to support the revenue generation for the business."

**–Caroline Holt, Executive Vice President of Revenue Enablement, EVERFI**

# Customer Experience

**Which teams or functions does sales enablement support at your company?**




## EXPANDING THE SCOPE OF ENABLEMENT

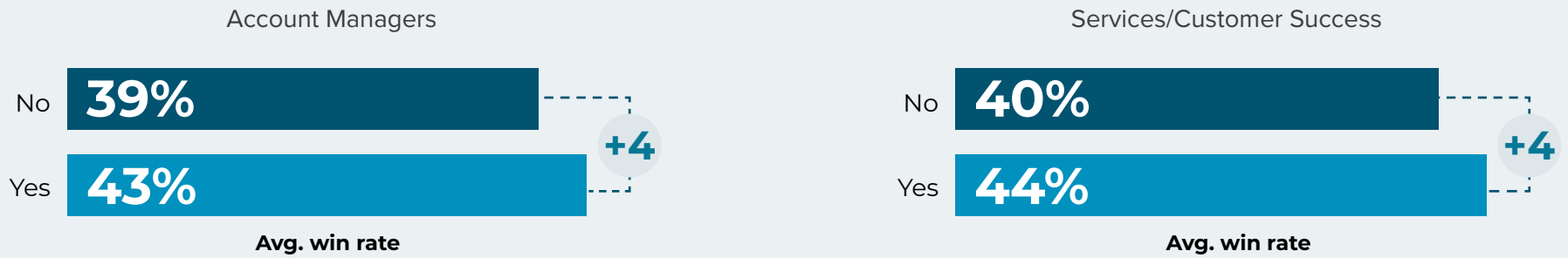
Sales enablement often serves a variety of internal customers across organizations. Our research found that traditional sales roles are still the primary audience for sales enablement, as 63% support direct/field sales reps and 59% support inside sales reps.

However, **sales enablement is also expanding to support more roles across the revenue engine, especially those focused on post-sales.** For example, 54% support account managers and 18% support services/customer success.

## BUSINESS IMPACT—NOW AND LONG-TERM

Focusing on enablement for post-sales roles and activities is a relatively new priority being explored by some organizations, yet it is one that can have significant business impact. Organizations that **support account management through sales enablement experience win rates that are 4 percentage points higher** than those that do not. Those that **support services through sales enablement also experience win rates that are 4 percentage points higher** than those that do not.

**Does sales enablement support the following teams at your company?**



**Sales enablement functions that focus on post-sales roles and activities are significantly more collaborative.**

Respondents were:

**25%** more likely to engage in formal collaboration if they focus on broadening existing customer penetration as a top goal for sales enablement.

"Due to enabling this 'secondary sales force', this is why sales enablement needs to focus not just on the pre-sales but also the post-sales organization," said Emily Garza, director of customer success at Fastly. "Because that's where a lot of the organic and follow-up growth is happening with these 'land and expand' type deals."

Retaining and expanding existing customers is a critical component of overall business health. As organizations seek out new ways to reinvigorate their customer base, support for post-sales roles is a key opportunity for sales enablement to bring value to the business.

# Virtual Enablement

## THE RISE OF VIRTUAL ENABLEMENT

The ability to conduct business virtually is a new, necessary reality, and one that is likely here to stay. In order to drive agility among the teams that sales enablement supports, practitioners must quickly innovate to deliver impactful virtual enablement programs. For example, respondents said that digitally onboarding new employees that are working from home is critical to sales success.

When implemented effectively, virtual enablement has the potential to promote scalability and flexibility among sales teams that can set organizations up for success both now and long-term. Key themes from the qualitative research include:

### CONNECTIVITY ON A GLOBAL SCALE

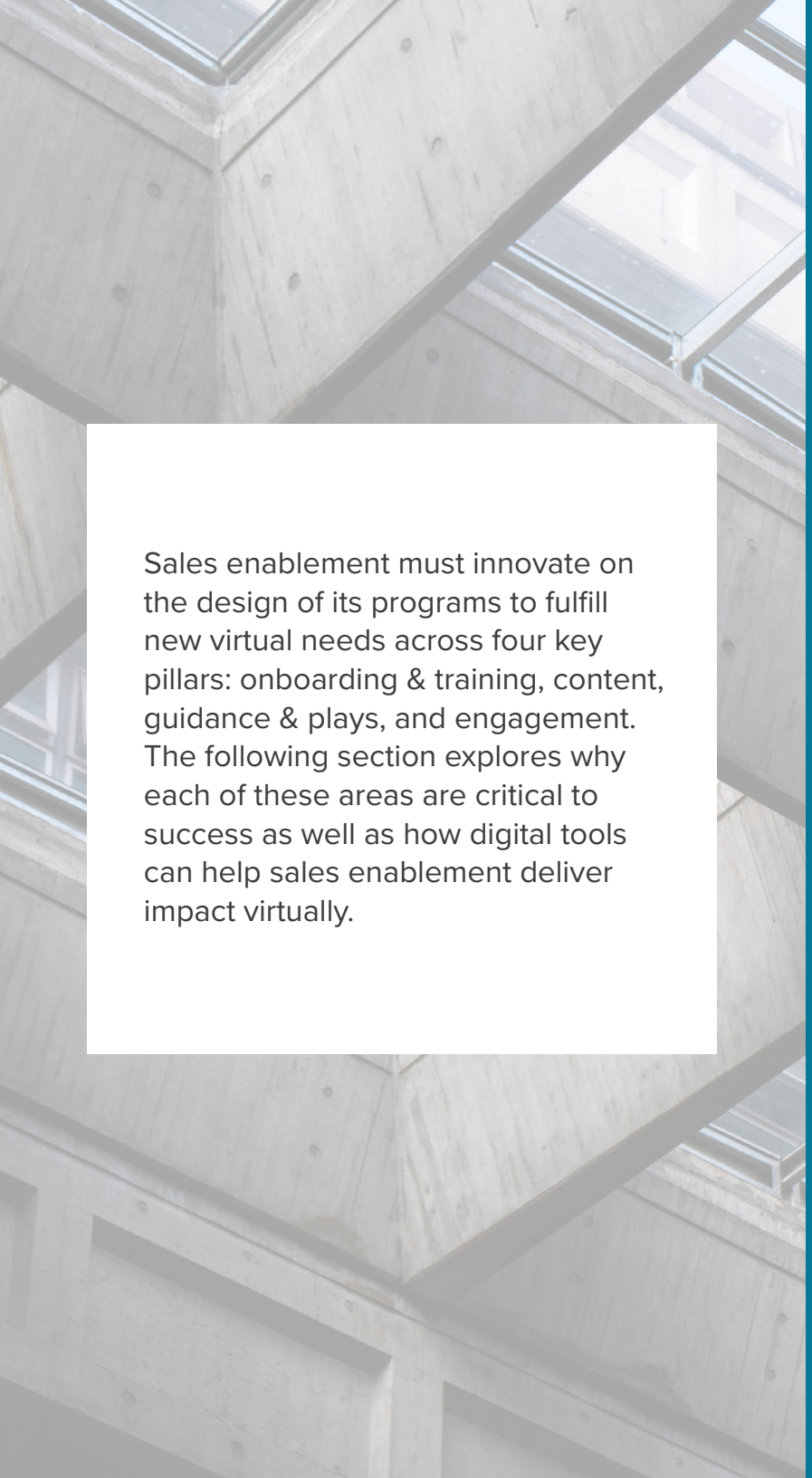
Virtual enablement provides a unique opportunity to promote interactivity between global teams that might not typically connect through in-person enablement programs, for example through digital meet-ups across geos. Laying the foundation for that global connectivity now when virtual methods are necessary will help teams maintain that alignment and collaboration in the future as conditions normalize, as well.

### SELLER ADVISORY BOARD

Sales enablement practitioners can work to ensure that virtual enablement programs are resonating and delivering impact by creating a seller advisory board. Through this, representatives across all levels and teams serve as advocates to provide feedback as conditions rapidly change in order to ensure messaging resonates, customer needs are being met, and the right competencies are being targeted.

### EMBRACE VIRTUAL TOOLS

Digital sales technology is critical for sellers to be able to connect with customers and prospects and continue to deliver excellent customer experiences virtually. This means enablement needs to prioritize seller competency around how to leverage these digital sales tools, as well as embrace tools that deliver enablement programs in virtual environments, such as onboarding.



Sales enablement must innovate on the design of its programs to fulfill new virtual needs across four key pillars: onboarding & training, content, guidance & plays, and engagement. The following section explores why each of these areas are critical to success as well as how digital tools can help sales enablement deliver impact virtually.

> One thing we're trying to do is to work with our sales advisory board as a means of trying to get more qualitative conversations around the impact of the training that we've delivered. By getting into those types of conversations, we really learn what the experience was like and we can also start then to move into understanding how it affected their fluency in the moment.

**–Rebecca Bell, Associate Director of Global Sales Enablement, IQVIA**

## ONBOARDING AND TRAINING

The current reality has resulted in a surge in new competencies that are now becoming essential for sales success, including things like empathy and leveraging digital selling tools. In many organizations, these are new skills that sellers need to develop quickly.

Through onboarding and training tailored to the virtual environment, sales enablement is well positioned to deliver impact by improving seller competency. In fact, those that do prioritize competency improvement experience win rates that are 3 percentage points higher than those that do not.

Technology also plays a key role in enablement's ability to deliver effective onboarding and training remotely. Those that effectively utilize tools for the purpose of onboarding experience win rates that are 7 percentage points higher than those that do not use a tool. Additionally, those that effectively leverage tools for sales training efforts experience win rates that are 5 percentage points higher than those that do not use a tool.

**Is one of your top 3 goals for sales enablement to improve sales competencies?**

**Does your sales enablement team have a sales onboarding tool and use it effectively?**

**Does your sales enablement team have a sales training tool and use it effectively?**

## CONTENT

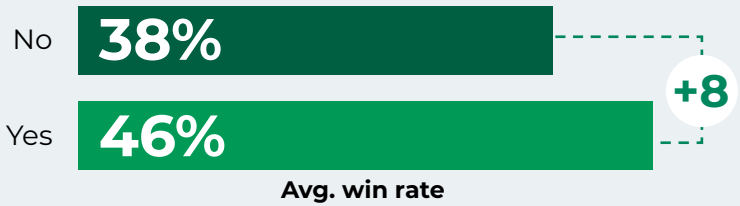
Content is at the core of every meaningful buyer and customer interaction. Given the heightened need to ensure all such interactions reflect deep empathy for buyer and customer needs at the moment, surfacing the right content that is proven to be effective is increasingly important.

Sales enablement is responsible for ensuring sales content is optimized to resonate with customer needs, and further that content is properly managed so that content is easy for sellers to find, access, and customize digitally.

Sales enablement teams that effectively utilize tools for sales content or sales asset management experience win rate improvements of 4 percentage points compared to those that do not utilize a sales enablement tool.

**Does your sales enablement team have a sales content/asset management tool and use it effectively?**

**Does your sales enablement team have a sales play tool and use it effectively?**




## GUIDANCE

In the midst of rapid market evolution, guidance on how to turn corporate initiatives into action in the field can help salespeople remain agile and quickly adapt to change. Sales plays are a key vehicle to deliver this guidance, making it a valuable area of focus for sales enablement.

For sales plays to be most effective in the modern environment, they not only must be delivered digitally, but also package up the knowledge, messaging, and assets reps need to engage with buyers—all in one place.

Tools are critical to both create and deliver these dynamic plays in a virtual environment. In fact, organizations that effectively utilize tools for sales plays experience win rates that are 8 percentage points higher than those that do not.

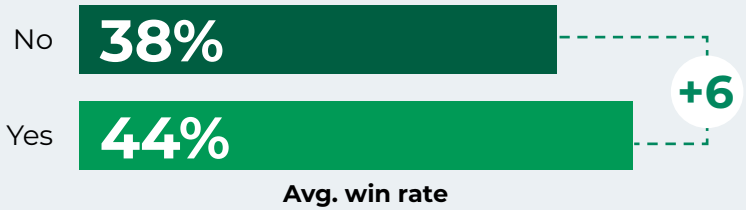
## ENGAGEMENT

Empathy is essential to ensure effective buyer interactions in the virtual selling environment. As such, sellers need insight into what is and is not landing in order to tailor outreach to buyer needs. Sales engagement technology can be helpful to enhance productivity as well as demonstrate to sellers what content is resonating with buyers.

Organizations that effectively utilize sales engagement tools experience win rates that are 3 percentage points higher than those that do not utilize tools for sales engagement.

**Does your sales enablement team have a sales engagement and workflow tool and use it effectively?**

**Is your sales enablement team involved in sales tools technology management?**




## BUSINESS IMPACT—NOW AND LONG-TERM

Sales enablement can play a critical role in the current climate by preparing salespeople to effectively utilize tools and resources in an environment that requires virtual engagement.

**Across onboarding, training, content, guidance, and engagement, sales enablement can deliver substantial business impact by leveraging tools.** In fact, sales enablement functions that focus on the management of sales technology achieve win rates that are 6 percentage points higher than those that do not.

> Enablement people need to become increasingly adept at using technology that they have at their fingertips. We need to be able to deliver things in a virtual fashion as we move to a virtual world. Be prepared that virtual is becoming the primary media.
>
> **–Rebecca Bell, Associate Director of Global Sales Enablement, IQVIA**

# Conclusion

As sales enablement has matured, formalized, and expanded as a business function in recent years, it has also proven its ability to generate improvements in sales performance, proficiency, and productivity.

As businesses need to find solutions for unprecedented challenges, sales enablement practitioners need to seize the opportunity to help organizations transform gracefully in the midst of crisis, as well as position the organization for success as it exits crisis mode. This year's report underscored this through three key themes:

## 1 DIGITAL SELLING REQUIRES VIRTUAL ENABLEMENT

Many organizations are selling differently at the moment than they might be traditionally used to. Enablement needs to adapt as a result, both by preparing sellers to engage customers in a virtual environment as well as delivering remote training, onboarding, coaching, and more to the field.

## 2 REVENUE ALIGNMENT IMPROVES CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES

In order to more closely correlate its efforts to revenue impact, sales enablement must be tightly aligned to the organization's revenue framework. Through a focus on efforts spanning pre-sales to post-sales, sales enablement can improve performance across the revenue engine. In doing so, sales enablement can better prepare all roles that interact with a customer to provide a cohesive experience that keeps them engaged.

## 3 VISIBILITY OF BUSINESS IMPACT IS CRUCIAL FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Sales enablement needs to be especially prudent in tracking metrics and measuring impact in this environment to ensure that enablement programs continue to yield positive results in the midst of change and strategize for the future. However, it is just as important to ensure that impact is effectively communicated to executive leaders as well as cross-functional partners.

Sales enablement continues to be a key ingredient for organizational success. Through close alignment to executive goals, prioritization of initiatives that support those goals, and a clear and compelling story of how sales enablement efforts generate business impact on those goals, sales enablement can continue to elevate itself as a critical function both today and for future success.

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