Learning Technology Use Case:
SALES AND PARTNER ENABLEMENT

2021

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Current State

Though it's been said many times before, it's no less true today: The speed and scale of business change has never been as dramatic as it is right now. For many organizations, that means new products roll out more frequently and existing ones are updated rapidly. At the same time, customer knowledge and expectations are at all-time highs.

According to Brandon Hall Group's *2021 HCM Outlook Study*,

improving sales performance is the *number-two* business priority heading into the next year and gaining market share is *number four*.

Combined with the fact that revenue generation is the number-two business priority, as companies seek to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, it becomes clear that sales performance is under great pressure.

TOP FIVE
Business Priorities

Source: Brandon Hall Group, 2021 HCM Outlook Study

82%	Improving customer experience
76%	Improving sales effectiveness
74%	Retaining top talent
70%	Gaining market share
66%	Diversity, equity and inclusion

How can large, distributed sales organizations keep up with these changing conditions? Enterprise sales teams able to adapt and respond quickly to changing needs and trends will be well-positioned to stay a step ahead of the competition. This involves agile sales enablement training with fresh, accessible and measurable content.

Complexities

Organizations with extensive partner and reseller networks face a host of challenges keeping these groups properly trained. Typically, sales professionals are tasked with selling multiple, often competing brands and product lines that keep getting new versions. This makes for some complex training needs. When you also take into account that these sales teams are widely dispersed and often aren't even employees, it only adds to the complexity.
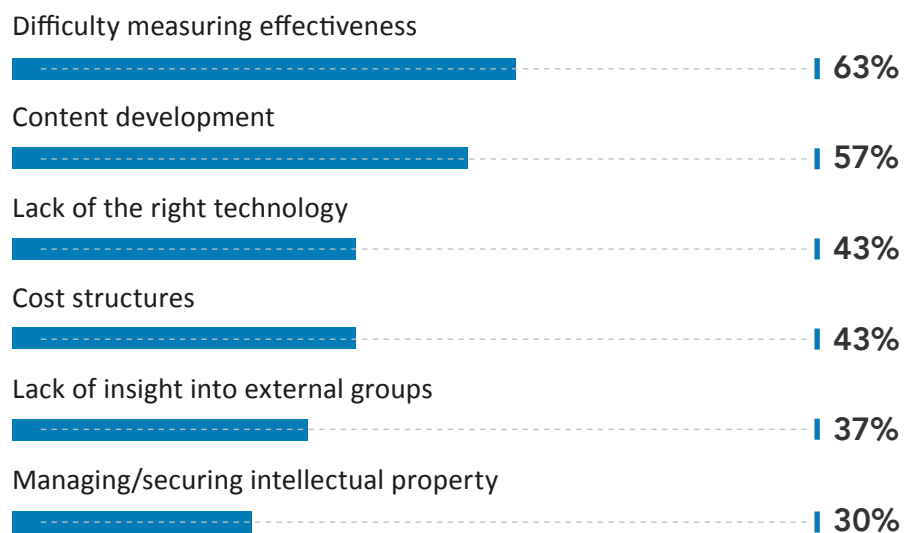
Traditional, event-based learning no longer fits well within the dynamic nature of the role of the modern sales professional. This means companies must find solutions that fit better into their workflows, providing more opportunities for collaboration and learning in the moment. This requires a new look at sales enablement content.

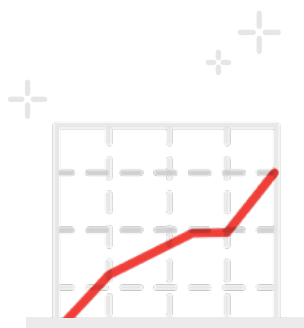More than three-quarters of organizations say they satisfied using sales and partner training developed in-house. Keeping up with the demands of the role can be difficult, time-consuming and costly. Sales enablement learning should be targeted, tailor-made, self-driven and engaging for sales reps, giving them the tools and information they need to confidently meet sales goals.

Sales and Partner Training Challenges

Difficulty measuring effectiveness
63%

Content development
57%

Lack of the right technology
43%

Cost structures
43%

Lack of insight into external groups
37%

Managing/securing intellectual property
30%

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group, Extended Enterprise Learning Study

Tracking sales-performance enablement training is often merely guesswork. Nearly two-thirds of companies cite their difficulty in measuring effectiveness as a challenge to their efforts.

Consequences

It is clearly in the organization's best interests that the people responsible for selling their products and services have the best, most up-to-date skills and knowledge available to be successful. This is especially true in a reseller/partner environment. Salespeople will sell products and services they feel they know more about and are comfortable and confident with. In a multibrand reseller environment, the right training can make the difference between what gets sold and what doesn't.

And these objectives are confirmed when we look at the benefits organizations say they achieved through their extended enterprise learning efforts. Many companies are increasing awareness of their products and improving customer relations, among other outcomes. Companies that deliver partner and reseller training are recognizing multiple benefits:

How Partner/Reseller Training Helps the Business

Improves customer relations	**74%**
Increases awareness of products/services	**67%**
Increases sales	**55%**
Reduces training travel time	**48%**
Reduces training costs	**48%**

Maximizes client retention	**42%**
Generates revenue	**39%**
Helps meet/exceed corporate objectives	**39%**
Reduces client support interactions	**35%**
Meets compliance requirements	**35%**

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group, Extended Enterprise Learning Study

Overall, about 63% of companies that deliver partner and reseller training say they are either satisfied or very satisfied with the effectiveness of their efforts.
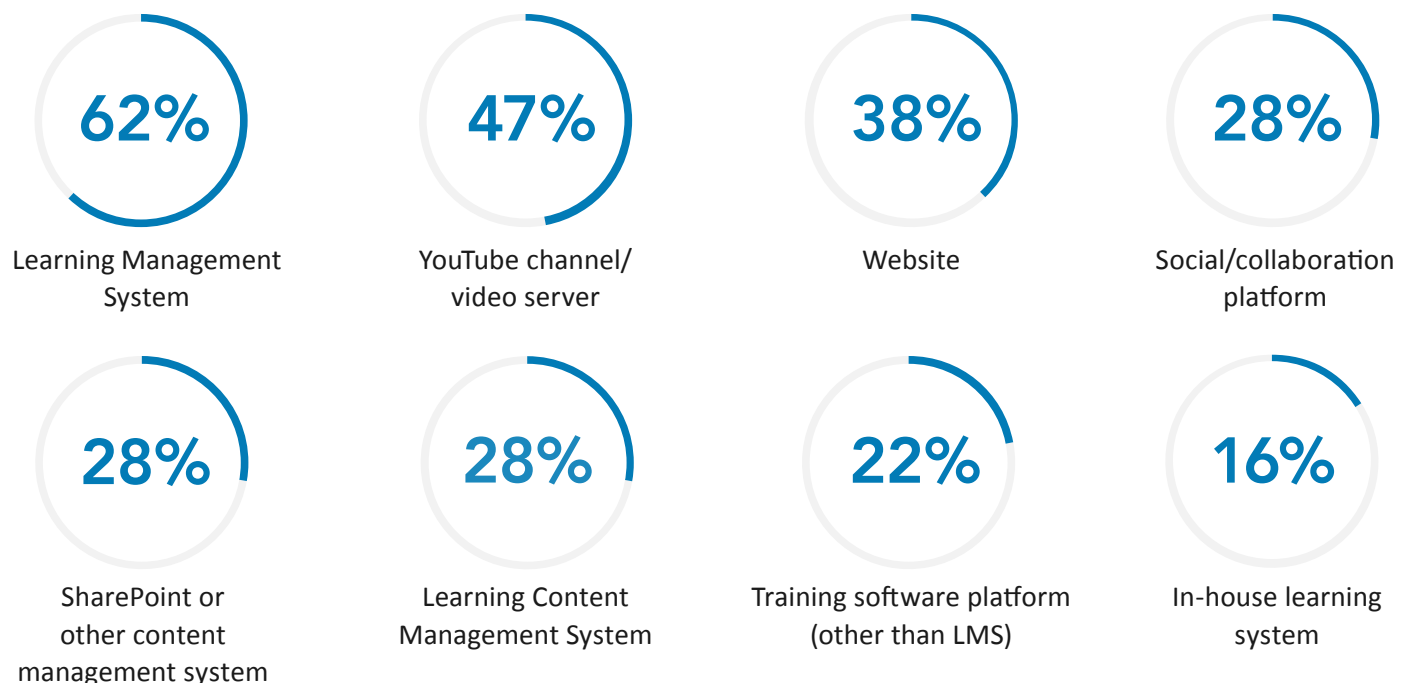
A big driver of effectiveness, though, is technology. Eighty-seven percent of companies say that technology is the main reason for the effectiveness of their customer training. Most companies use an LMS for Sales and Partner Training.

Taken in aggregate, it becomes clear that organizations need to focus acutely on the content and modalities they use to deliver training to their sales and partner networks.

Delivery Modes for Sales and Partner Training

62%
Learning Management System

47%
YouTube channel/ video server

38%
Website

28%
Social/collaboration platform

28%
SharePoint or other content management system

28%
Learning Content Management System

22%
Training software platform (other than LMS)

16%
In-house learning system

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group, Extended Enterprise Learning Study

Critical Questions

Organizations that seek to improve the customer experience must address these key issues:

❯ How is sales enablement content created and updated?

❯ How is sales enablement content distributed?

❯ How is sales enablement content consumed by sales reps always on the move?

❯ How do I ensure that content is fresh and addresses current market/customer requirements?

❯ How do I track content consumption?

❯ How does sales enablement impact sales performance?

Brandon Hall Group POV
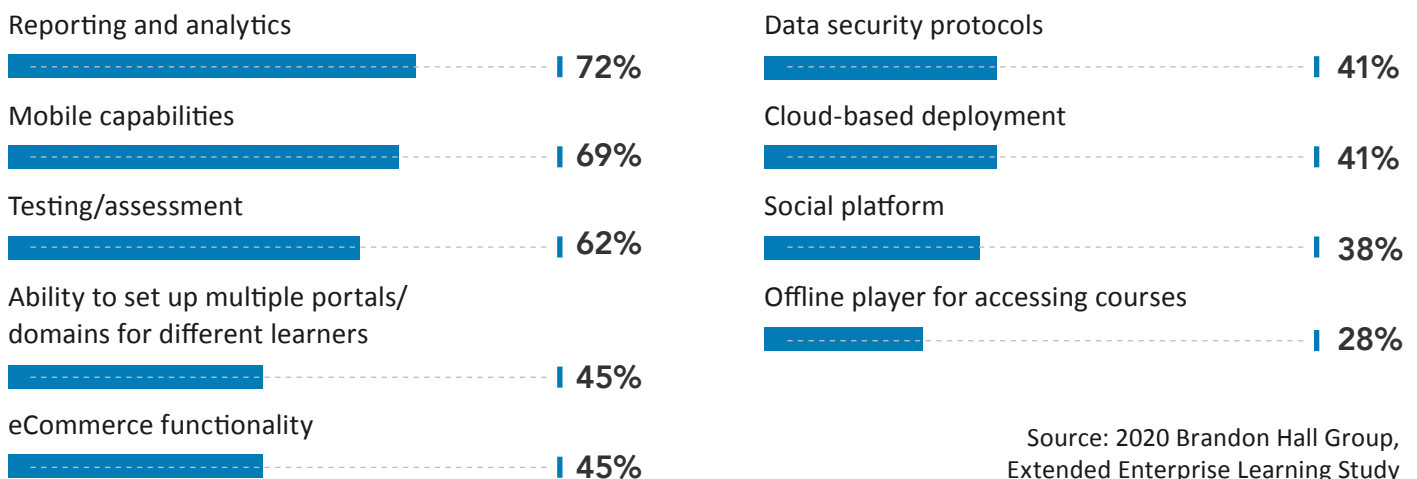
Leveraging the Right Technology

Most employee groups are equally pressed for time when it comes to their busy workload, but for sales professionals, it is a somewhat different environment. Time spent on training is time they are not generating revenue for the business nor income for themselves. This puts a huge burden on how and when we expect this segment of the workforce to engage in learning. Learning should be targeted, personalized and engaging; able to consume as little time as possible, while delivering specific outcomes that are immediately relevant and recognizable to the learners. Sales professionals tend to spend their work lives in a sales portal or platform like Salesforce, so it is important that their training can be accessed quickly and easily from within this environment.

As we saw earlier, measurement of this kind of training is a huge challenge for organizations. As such, one of the key requirements for a technology solution is robust reporting and analytics. Sales reporting and analytics is a function that lives and dies by its numbers. Sales performance data can be correlated with learning data to measure true effectiveness of learning programs. Learning must consider this and leverage the vast amounts of data generated by sales to measure the effectiveness of its programs. Metrics such as revenue attainment, customer retention, cross-selling and upselling should be factored into the development of programs so they can be measured later.

Most Important Technology Characteristics in an LMS for Sales and Partner Training

Reporting and analytics
72%

Mobile capabilities
69%

Testing/assessment
62%

Ability to set up multiple portals/ domains for different learners
45%

eCommerce functionality
45%

Data security protocols
41%

Cloud-based deployment
41%

Social platform
38%

Offline player for accessing courses
28%

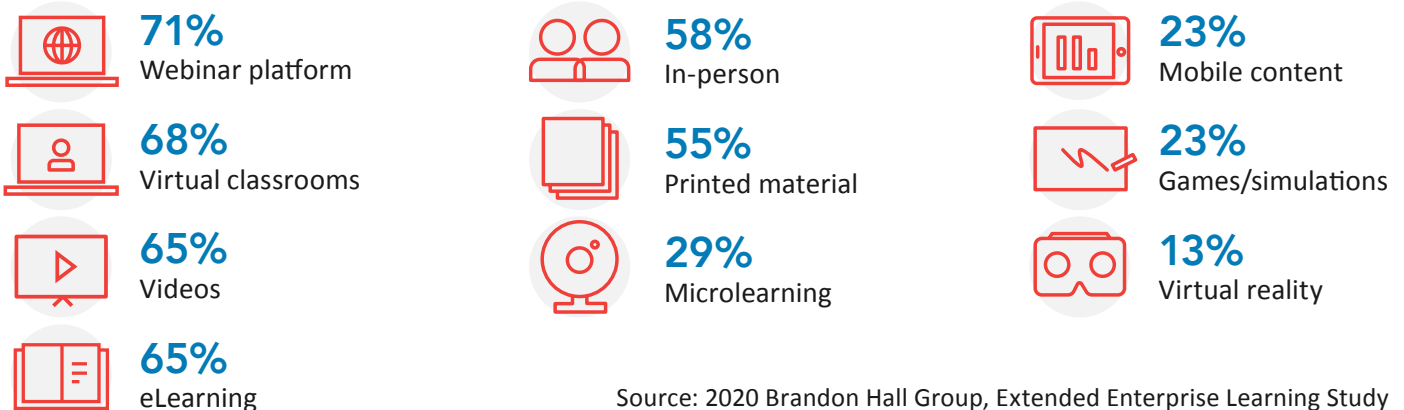Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group, Extended Enterprise Learning Study

The Right Learning Experience

Technology must provide a learning experience tailored-made for the needs of the organization's sales teams and partner networks. Because the motivations and work habits of these professionals are somewhat different from other groups, it becomes important to consider these things:

❯ Sales professionals tend to be self-driven, so their learning should reflect that. Allow them to explore and experience learning elements.

❯ Personalized learning journeys that include AI-driven recommendations give the learning the built-in "what's in it for me" that salespeople need.

❯ The nature of sales requires rapid course development to meet the dynamics of new and changing products and markets.

❯ Salespeople like to learn from one another, so technology should enable learning consumption and skills sharing through social learning.

❯ As an inherently competitive group, learning engagement and adoption can be fostered through gamification and badges.

❯ Enable an agile sales force that can learn new skills quickly and adapt to changing market conditions.

Companies that say their sales/partner training is effective use a wide variety of modalities. The core takeaway is that it is not a single approach that will work every time; rather, it is about having options to meet the specific needs of the learners and the business at any given opportunity.

Modes of Learning Delivery Used for Sales and Partner Training

71%
Webinar platform

68%
Virtual classrooms

65%
Videos

65%
eLearning

58%
In-person

55%
Printed material

29%
Microlearning

23%
Mobile content
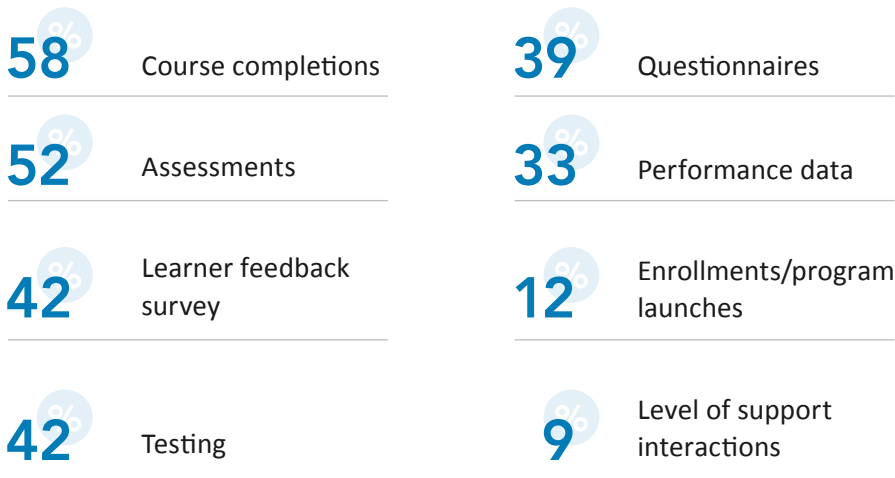
23%
Games/simulations

13%
Virtual reality

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group, Extended Enterprise Learning Study

Always Be Measuring

Sales leadership loves data. It fuels almost every aspect of the job. But it can be a double-edged sword when leaders are overwhelmed by the sheer volume of data produced. It can be difficult to glean actionable information that informs business decisions when presented with a sea of numbers without context. Unfortunately, many organizations are stuck with basic learning measurement that doesn't provide much insight.

Methods Employed to Measure Sales and Partner Training

58 Course completions

52 Assessments

42 Learner feedback survey

42 Testing

39 Questionnaires

33 Performance data

12 Enrollments/program launches

9 Level of support interactions

Source: 2020 Brandon Hall Group, Extended Enterprise Learning Study

Only one-third of companies say they use performance data to measure sales and partner training, and none reported using predetermined KPIs. The key is to map sales enablement and partner training directly to sales performance. By basing sales training programs on specific KPIs, the programs can then be measured on their impact. The good news is that sales will always have plenty of data to work with.

Sales and partner training measurement should be:

Actionable

See how enablement training impacts sales performance.
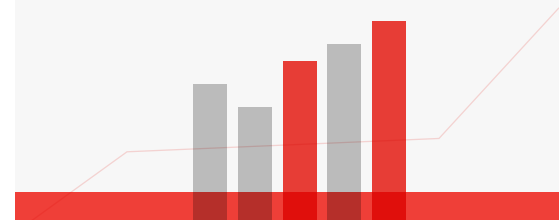
1

Insightful

Export performance data to visualization tools like Power BI.

2

Informative

Determine what works, what doesn't and how to optimize training.

3

Goal-Oriented

Map sales enablement data to sales goals and other KPIs.

4

Key Takeaways

Organizations that want to supercharge their sales, and partner training must recognize the unique nature of these audiences and their job requirements. A strategy designed to meet their needs and the technology to make it happen are essential.

These are the key points to remember:

> Sales teams require agile, accessible training.

> Limit the amount of time learning takes away from the job.

> Sales teams learn best from one another, so connect them.

> Sales professionals respond well to incentives.

> Sales performance is one of the easiest things to measure; base everything on KPIs.

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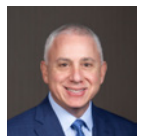
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