

How Modern Enablement Teams Scale for Growth

Summary

Commercial leaders struggle to balance a wide spectrum of critical enablement* activities with the realities of resourcing trade-offs. While modern enablement teams can serve as many as ten critical functions across the go-to-market organization, they can also cost as much as a comparable group of sellers. To scale enablement teams without undermining profitability, business leaders must consider the wide variety of roles and responsibilities in enablement and strategically add headcount to critical job duties first. Once they resource critical functions, leaders can consider larger enablement teams that also scale across more sellers.

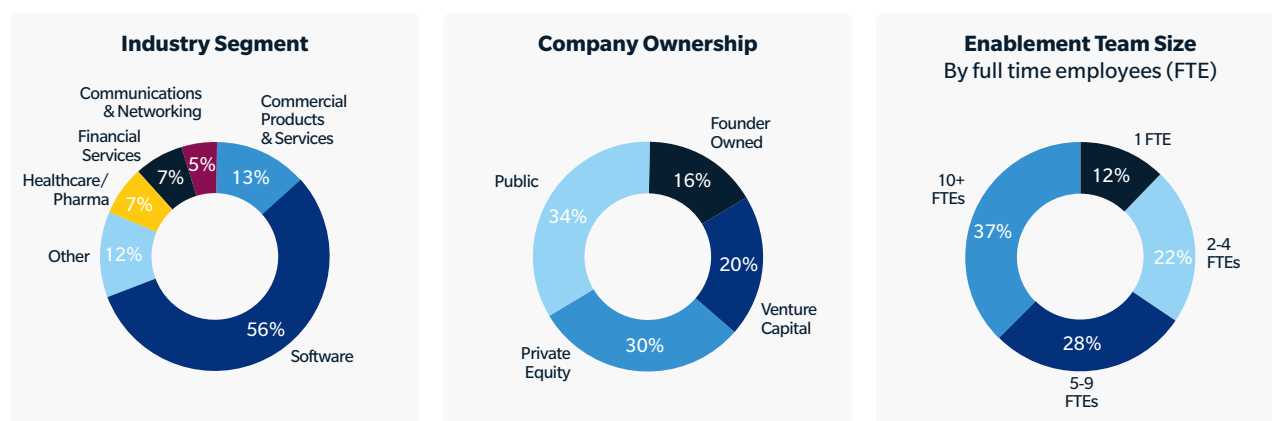
In addition to scaling the size of enablement teams, leaders can scale the impact of enablement programs by following three characteristics of the highest-performing enablement organizations:

1. Prioritizing quota-carrying experience when hiring enablement professionals
2. Measuring the right indicators to gauge the efficacy of their programs
3. Regularly training both sellers and sales managers on sales effectiveness

About this research

In partnership with the Revenue Enablement Society (RES), we surveyed 134 commercial leaders in public and private companies to understand the make-up and scope of their enablement teams. The figures below describe the organizations in our study.

Special thanks to RES for their support and contribution to this work.

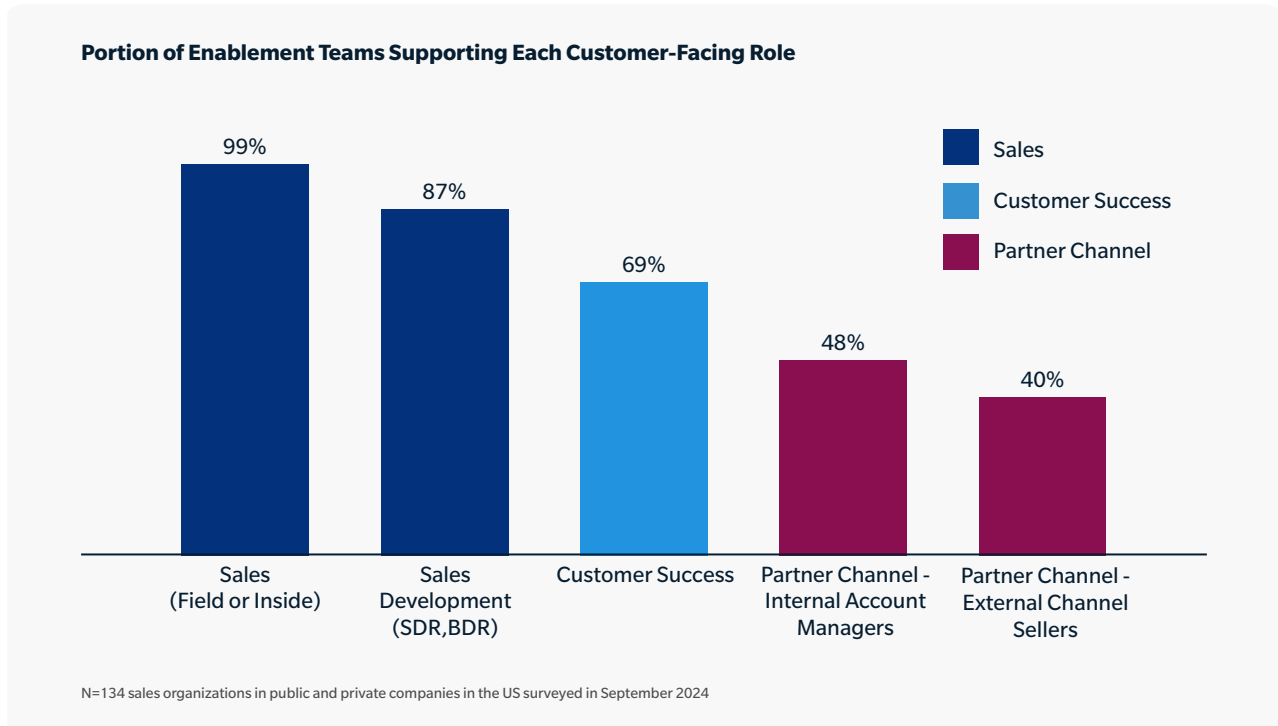


N=134 sales organizations in public and private companies in the US surveyed in September 2024

Note: *Though sales enablement is still a widely recognized term, in recent years commercial teams have begun referring to this team as revenue enablement to emphasize the expanded role of the enablement team in supporting the entire revenue-generating function. We simply use the term enablement in this report.

The enablement coverage – cost trade-off.

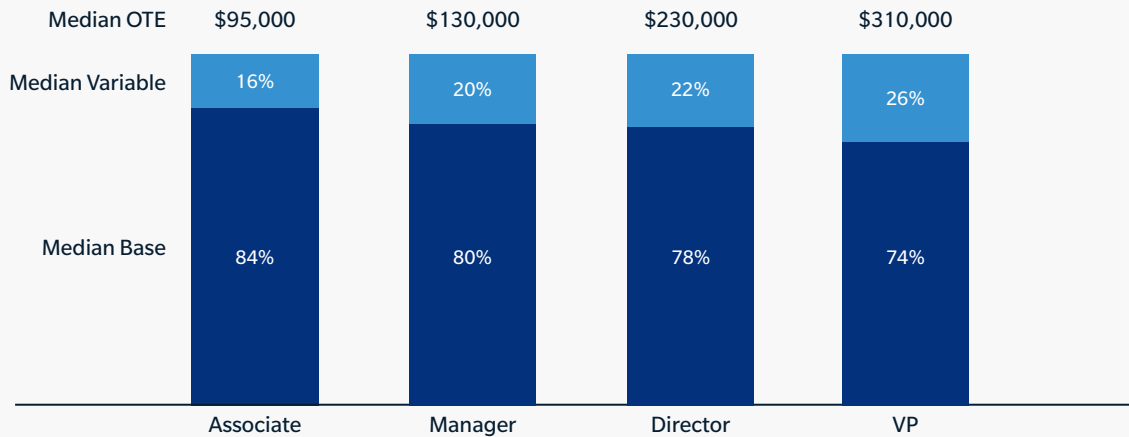
The mandate for enablement teams has evolved. Once considered a catch-all team performing various misfit duties for sales, modern enablement has grown to support essential functions for client-facing roles across the commercial organization. Today's enablement professionals may be expected to handle an array of responsibilities ranging from training sellers to leading cross-functional go-to-market (GTM) initiatives. Roughly half of enablement teams support not only sales but also customer success and partner channel teams.



Indeed, enablement programs have become essential for a variety of critical functions, with many organizations moving beyond the fundamentals like onboarding new sellers or creating sales content to managing revenue technology and developing sales processes.

But as the scope of enablement grows within an organization, so does the cost. The compensation cost of the enablement team alone is significant considering that a typical enablement director or VP can command as much as, if not more than, an enterprise seller in on-target earnings (OTE). For example, our research suggests a modest team of four with one director, two managers, and one associate has a median cost of \$585,000 per year. And that doesn't include any other program costs. This leaves commercial leaders with a common question: Do I expand our enablement team or add another 1-2 quota-carrying headcount?

Enablement Team Member OTE and Composition by Level



N=111 enablement team members at public and private companies in the US

As they scale commercial teams, business leaders know they must concurrently scale the size and scope of enablement to appropriately support growth – and they must do so without undermining profitability. Too little investment could lead to decreased productivity, while overinvestment can balloon GTM expenses.

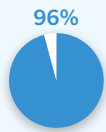
Commercial leaders often ask us how to strike the optimal balance between investment and the scope of enablement at their companies. To answer this question, SBI partnered with the Revenue Enablement Society (RES) to study commercial organizations of different sizes and the makeup and responsibilities of their enablement teams. **This report examines the scope of modern enablement programs, how organizations allocate headcount to enablement as they scale, and what top-performing enablement teams do differently to drive greater impact in their organizations.**

Modern enablement teams have widespread functional responsibilities.

To understand the myriad roles of enablement professionals, we asked commercial teams of varying sizes about the job duties they perform. Regardless of size, we found that 87% of enablement teams are expected to serve seven or more critical roles for the commercial team. Unsurprisingly, nearly every team in our study (96%) is responsible for sales training, onboarding and certification (93%), and sales content and curation (90%) (see chart on next page). What is surprising is the strong agreement that ensuring cross-GTM alignment, managing revenue technology, developing sales process, and ultimately measuring the impact of enablement on sales performance are also all squarely within the scope of the majority of enablement teams. Even in smaller teams that lack dedicated headcount to support each activity, the enablement team is expected to get the work done.

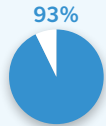
In addition to these seven core functional responsibilities, we found some enablement teams (particularly larger ones) may have as many as three other duties to perform. Just over half (53%) of the commercial leaders in our study reported that enablement is responsible for supporting external channel partner teams. Similarly, about half of enablement teams (49%) are tasked with developing and implementing GTM strategy (e.g. account segmentation and prioritization) and roughly a fifth of the teams (22%) reported expectations for customer enablement (equipping customers with post-sales resources to aid in adoption and customer satisfaction).

Enablement teams reporting functional responsibilities in-scope



Sales Training (aka Everboarding):

Conduct ongoing training and coaching programs to enhance sales skills and product knowledge.



Onboarding & Certification:

Develop and manage onboarding programs and certification processes to ensure new hires are prepared.



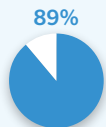
Content Creation & Curation:

Develop and provide pre-sales tools and content for sellers tailored to different stages of the sales process.



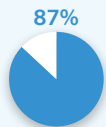
Measurement & Analytics:

Track and analyse sales performance and enablement metrics to drive data-informed decisions.



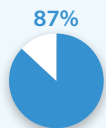
Sales Process Development:

Design and maintain optimized sales processes and playbooks aligned with the buyer's journey.



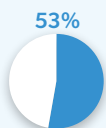
Cross-Go-to-Market Alignment:

Ensure alignment between sales, marketing, customer success, and others to optimize GTM strategies.



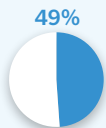
Rev Tech Management:

Implement and manage sales enablement technologies to enhance sales productivity and efficiency.



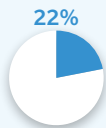
Partner Enablement:

Provide partners with the resources and support they need to effectively sell and support products and services.



Go-To-Market Strategy:

Develop and implement a comprehensive go-to-market strategy to effectively reach and engage target customers.



Customer Enablement:

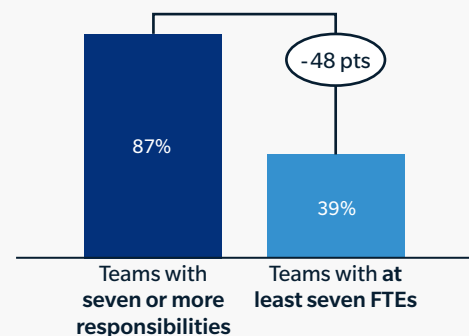
Equip customers post-sale with the necessary tools and knowledge to maximize their use of products and services.

N=134 Enablement organizations in private and public companies in the US.

Expectations for enablement are obviously varied on most commercial teams. Yet while a strong majority have at least seven responsibilities, only 39% reported enough full-time employees (FTE) to support dedicated headcount to each one. This suggests that some enablement professionals are expected to manage multiple roles, particularly on enablement teams with fewer FTEs. Moreover, we found that some teams allocate resources unevenly, opting to devote two or three FTEs to some enablement roles while others remain unowned by a single person.

Enablement Team Responsibilities vs. Staffing

48% of Enablement teams lack the headcount to dedicate an FTE to each in-scope responsibility.



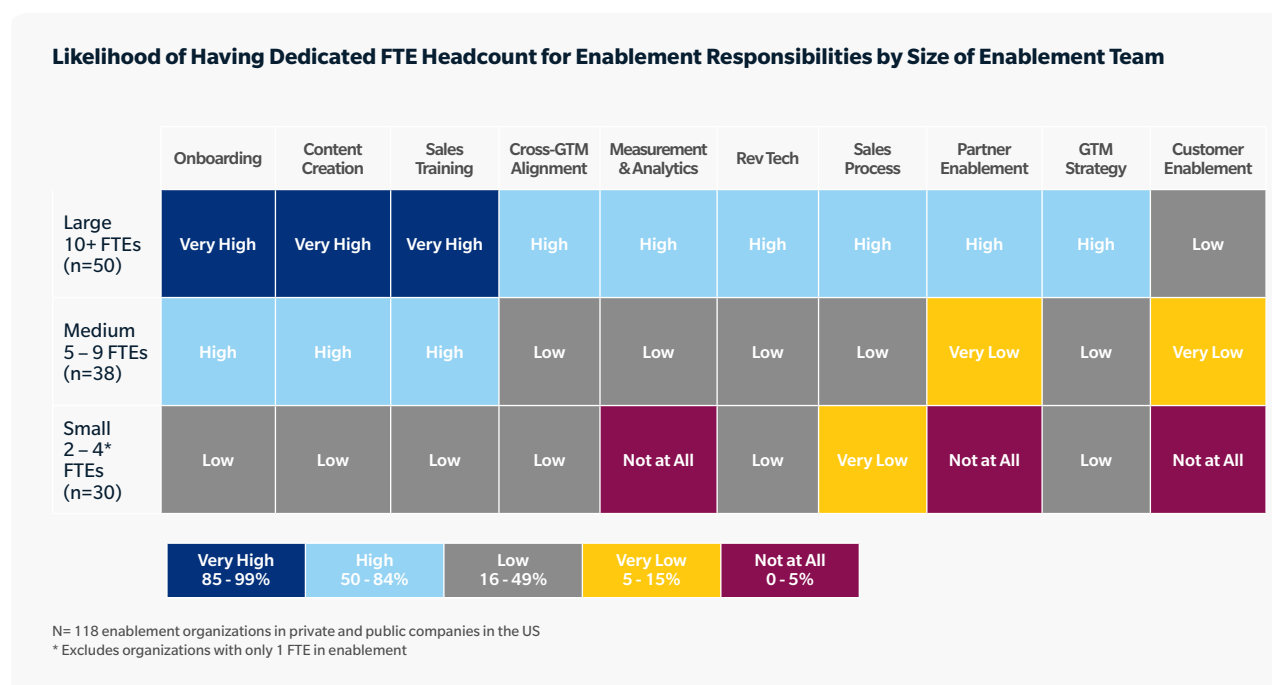
N=134 enablement organizations in private and public companies in the US

Given that headcount allocation is a critical consideration when scaling enablement programs, we looked at the makeup of similar sized teams to gain a sense of the likely order and intensity in which companies invest in each enablement activity.

Resource critical activities first, then scale.

Our study included commercial organizations ranging in size from a few sellers to large sales teams with hundreds of FTEs in client-facing roles. To better understand how teams allocate headcount and expand enablement activities as they scale, we grouped enablement teams of similar sizes and compared the volume of dedicated FTEs in each role. We looked at enablement in organizations with small teams of 2 – 4 FTEs, medium teams with 5 – 9 FTEs, and large enablement teams of more than 10 FTEs. About 12% of the enablement organizations in our study reported just one practitioner, and as suspected all of them reported multiple responsibilities (no fewer than four distinct job duties each). Because we are specifically interested in how teams invest in dedicated headcount, we excluded these from this functional assessment.

It was no surprise to find that large teams with more FTEs are highly likely to dedicate headcount across all enablement activities (with the exception of customer enablement, which is in scope for fewer than a quarter of enablement teams). With limited resources, small and medium enablement teams are unable to dedicate headcount to most enablement activities, so they typically first staff the fundamentals of enablement, e.g., content curation, onboarding, and sales training, and then fill in other roles as the commercial team expands and their needs become more varied.



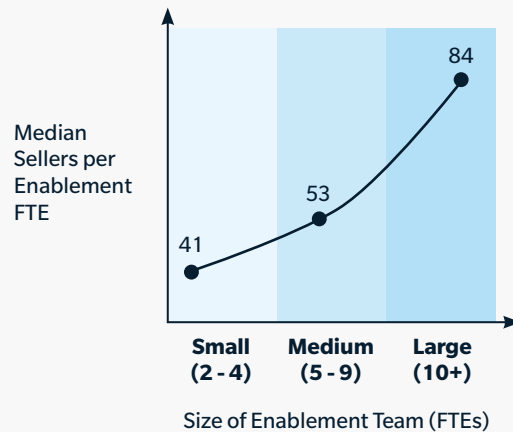
Interestingly, medium-sized enablement teams with enough FTEs to staff each distinct functional responsibility are still more likely to add multiple FTEs to content curation, onboarding, and sales training before making anyone solely responsible for any other enablement activity. Excluding partner enablement and customer enablement (which may be irrelevant to some commercial teams), we still see these core roles staffed more frequently and in greater volume than others. This is likely because these enablement tasks have more rigid capacity constraints than others, making them a bottleneck without additional resources. For example, a single enablement professional may only be able to feasibly onboard a portion of the required sellers within the desired onboarding period, making it necessary to add headcount to address hiring needs before dedicating headcount to other enablement roles.

Activities such as managing revenue technology or developing sales process, while important, may be seen as less timely and therefore better able to be managed by a single enablement leader. Because enablement activities scale differently, GTM leaders may gain efficiencies by right-sizing headcount in the most capacity-constrained roles (e.g., onboarding, sales training) and intelligently grouping other functional responsibilities into roles for the remainder of the enablement team.

When we looked at the ratio of sellers to enablement professionals by size of the enablement team, we found there must be efficiency gains by staffing certain roles with multiple FTEs before dedicating team members to others. While we determined the mean ratio of sellers to enablement professionals on small teams at about 41 to 1, we found that larger teams can accommodate as many as 84 sellers per enablement FTE. This suggests that it is not feasible to actually manage 84 sellers with just one person in enablement, but it is entirely feasible to manage 840 sellers with ten enablement professionals. As enablement teams grow, they can support an exponentially larger pool of sellers.

Because of the wide scope of enablement, optimally scaling headcount is less about finding a single ideal ratio of enablement FTEs to sales FTEs, and more about satisfying jobs-to-be-done.

Median Sellers per Enablement FTE by size of the enablement team



N= 118 enablement organizations in private and public companies in the US

Once critical responsibilities like onboarding and sales training are adequately resourced, medium to large enablement teams can scale in headcount and functional responsibility to accommodate more sales FTEs. Commercial leaders who want to build top-performing yet cost-effective enablement teams should abandon the concept of a magic ratio for enablement and instead focus on strategically staffing each distinct functional responsibility to maximize impact with the leanest team possible.

Steps to Scaling the Enablement Team

1. Satisfy critical jobs-to-be-done

Emphasis: Training and Content

Typical responsibilities: sales training, onboarding, sales content curation

Sellers to enablement FTEs: Expect higher ratios on smaller teams, ~40:1

Dedicate headcount to critical, capacity-constrained responsibilities first. These are roles that require the full attention of one or more FTEs.

2. Intelligently group responsibilities to cover more

Emphasis: Performance and Alignment

Added responsibilities: cross GTM alignment, managing rev tech, measurement and analytics, sales process development

Sellers to enablement FTEs: Some efficiency gains on medium teams, ~50:1

Group additional, less time-intensive, enablement activities under roles with multiple functional responsibilities to cover more with fewer headcount (e.g., managing revenue technology and measuring sales productivity).

3. Grow with the sales team

Emphasis: Strategy and External

Added responsibilities: customer enablement, GTM Strategy, partner enablement

Sellers to enablement FTEs: Lower ratios on large teams, ~80:1

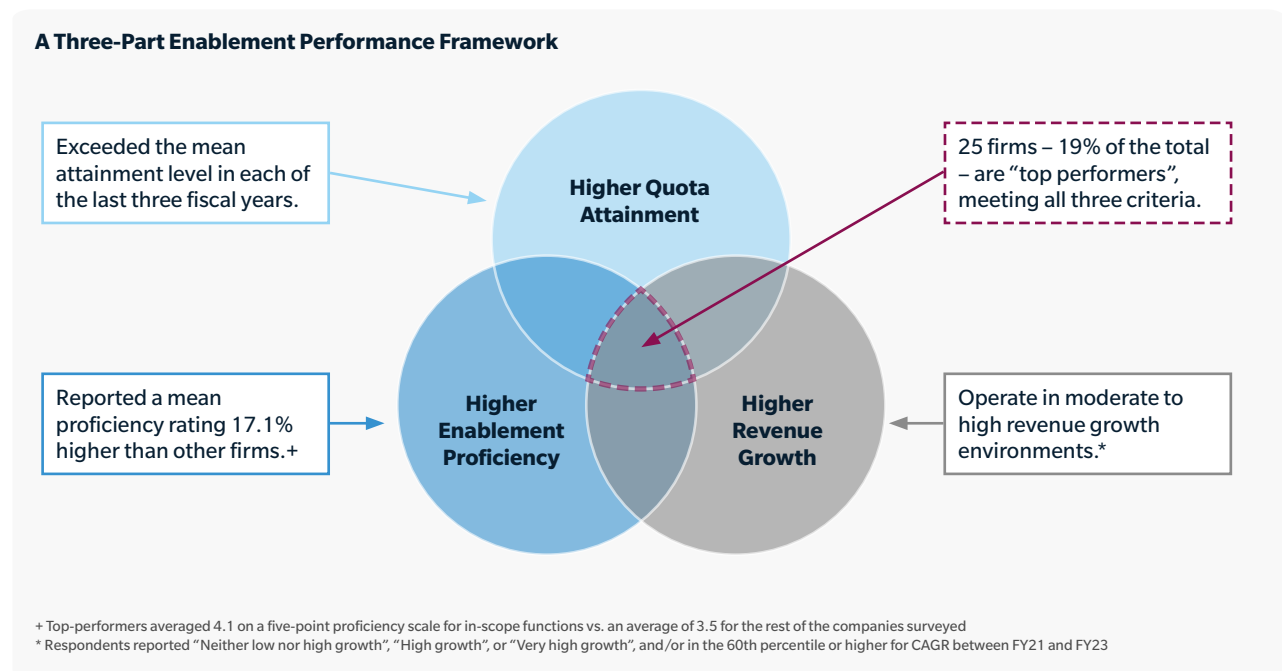
Add headcount to assume more functional responsibilities or as the sales team grows beyond the capacity of the current enablement team. Monitor FTEs dedicated to critical jobs-to-be-done to maintain adequate coverage.

Top-performing enablement teams scale their impact through different-in-kind execution.

In addition to examining how modern enablement programs scale in scope and size, we also sought to understand how the best enablement teams scale the impact of their work. What do leading enablement professionals do differently to deliver better outcomes from their programs? To find elite teams, we looked at three dimensions of enablement performance:

1. **Annual sales quota attainment.** Given that strong sales productivity is the primary goal of enablement, we used quota performance to identify commercial teams that outpaced their peers. We looked for teams that consistently exceeded the mean quota attainment level in each of the last three fiscal years.
2. **Year-over-year revenue growth.** Because the level of difficulty to achieve quota can vary by organization, we sought out teams that not only excelled at attainment, but did so in more challenging, moderate to high-growth environments.
3. **The functional proficiency of the enablement team.** To ensure enablement was a strong contributing factor to the sales team's success, we looked for commercial organizations that not only performed well, but also rated the enablement team as highly proficient.

Using these criteria, we identified about 19% of the teams in our study that out-performed their peers across all three dimensions. These teams reported higher proficiency in the fundamentals of enablement, excelled in moderate to high-growth environments, and consistently delivered higher quota attainment than most peers. These 19% are our top-performers.

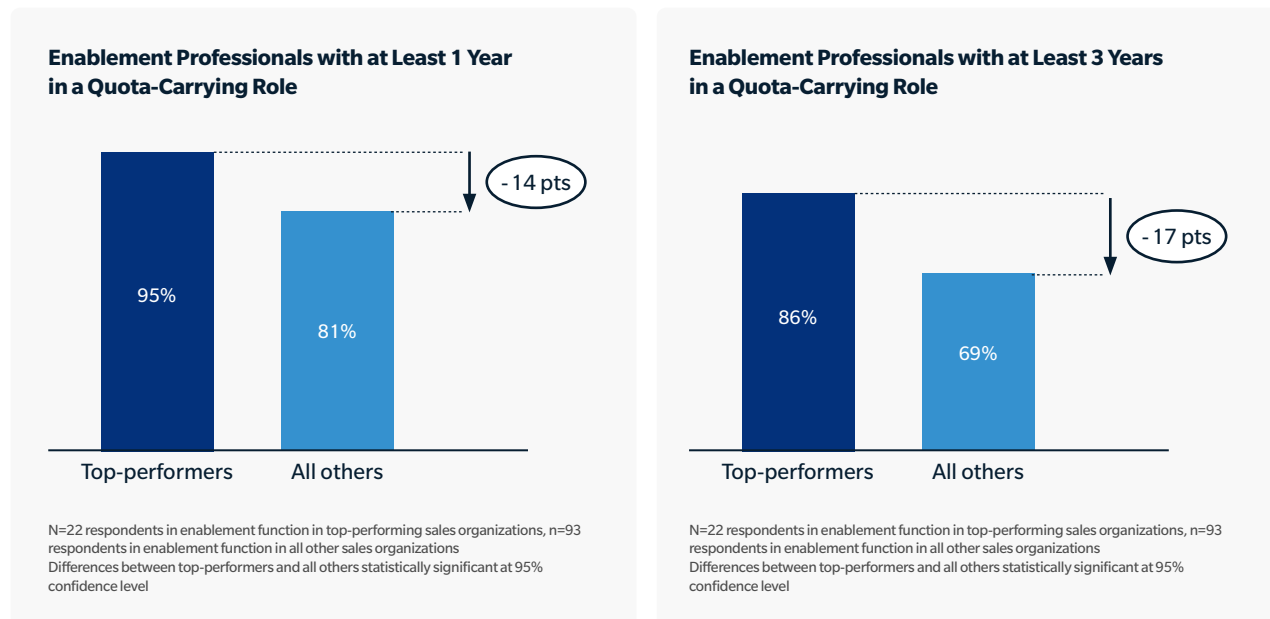


Top-performers have successfully scaled the impact of their teams, making the enablement program a competitive differentiator for their organization. When we compared top-performing teams to the rest of the enablement organizations in our set, we found **top-performers execute differently in three specific ways:**

1. They seek out quota-carrying experience for enablement roles.
2. They look at more, and different, metrics than their peers.
3. They excel at training sellers and sales managers.

Top-performing teams seek out quota-carrying experience for enablement roles.

When comparing the experience of top-performing teams to other enablement organizations, we found that the best teams prioritize quota-carrying experience when hiring enablement professionals. Of the professionals we surveyed from top-performing organizations, 95% had at least one year of quota-carrying experience in a prior sales role. Compare that to just 81% of professionals in all other sales organizations. Moreover, top-performing teams are more likely to hire team members with deep quota-carrying experience. Eighty-six percent of enablement FTEs in top-performing organizations had at least three years of quota-carrying experience compared to 69% in all other organizations.



Top-performing enablement teams may gravitate toward professionals with more practice in a quota-carrying role for a few reasons. Given their lived experience on the sales team, enablement leaders who have carried a quota may be better able to anticipate seller needs or discern what content, training, or technology resources are likely to be effective or ineffective. These teams may seek deeper experience (e.g., three or more years) to avoid candidates who have unsuccessfully “dabbled” in sales for a short time and likely can’t bring much depth of field-tested knowledge to the role. Alternatively, sellers in any organization may simply lack confidence in the advice of enablement professionals who have never held a quota-carrying role, which may drag on the effectiveness of enablement teams with less (or no) direct sales experience.

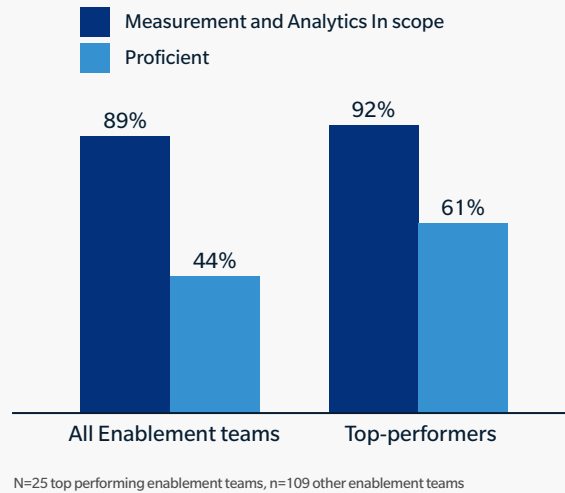
Key takeaway from top-performing teams: When hiring for enablement roles, prioritize candidates with more extensive quota-carrying experience (the more the better) to maximize the effectiveness of the enablement program. Enablement professionals who have been sellers can improve program outcomes by drawing on their proven knowledge, and have more authority when interacting with the sales team.

Top-performing enablement teams look at more, and different, metrics than their peers.

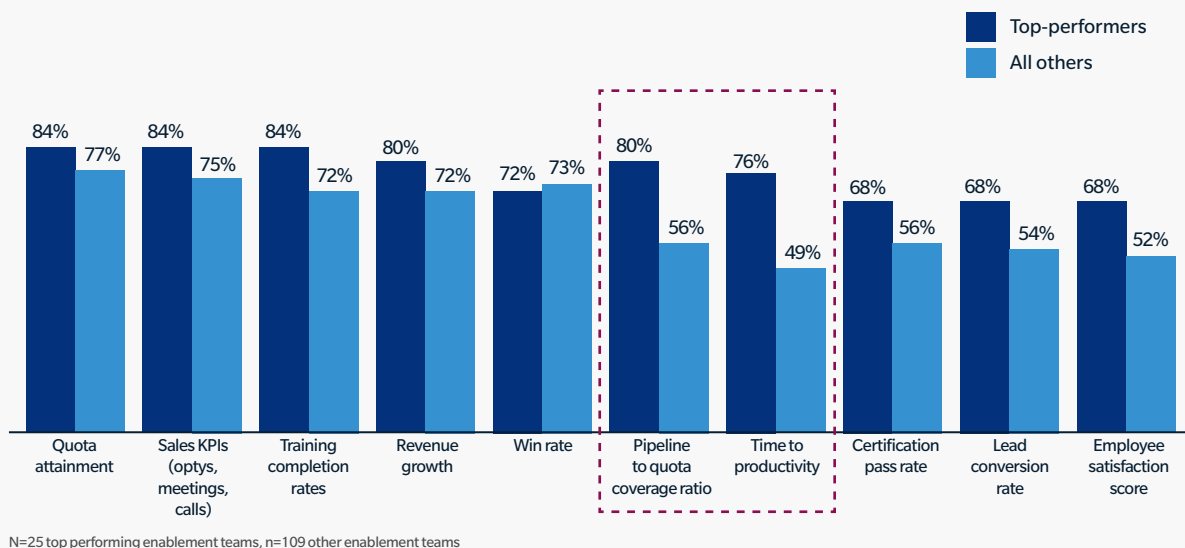
Most enablement leaders attempt to track and measure the sales performance indicators that are directly affected by enablement (e.g., opportunities created, training certification rates), yet the majority of teams in our study lacked confidence in their ability to do so. While 89% of enablement teams report responsibility for measurement and analytics, only 44% claimed proficiency with this task. Even among top-performing teams, just 61% report high or very high proficiency. The vast majority of enablement teams are expected to drive better outcomes through analytics, though most struggle to measure program output effectively.

Due to the extraordinary number of factors that can affect sales outcomes (and notoriously poor CRM hygiene in many sales organizations), it can be difficult to accurately measure sales KPIs, let alone draw a straight line between KPIs and revenue performance. Yet top-performers know it's critical to meaningfully gauge the efficacy of enablement programs so they can adjust tactics and strategy to emphasize what works in the field. We found that top-performing teams track more metrics than their peers, with 68% of teams actively measuring all ten of the most common metrics used to gauge the effectiveness of enablement, versus just 49% of teams in other firms. Despite the challenge, the best enablement teams measure more to be more efficient.

Enablement Teams with Measurement and Analytics In Scope vs. Teams Rating Their Proficiency as High or Very High



Top Ten Metrics Used to Gauge the Effectiveness of Enablement



Top-performers are also considerably more likely than their peers to track and measure two metrics: time to productivity and pipeline coverage. This suggests they place greater value on measuring the outcomes of their work, rather than only measuring inputs. While most teams track activity-based metrics, e.g., training completion rates or the volume of leads that sellers action, top-performers are more likely to measure the results of training and prospecting as evidenced in the speed with which sellers become proficient and the pipeline they produce.

Key takeaway from top-performing teams: Despite the inherent challenges, measuring changes in seller productivity that result from enablement programs is critical to improve team effectiveness. In addition to activity-based metrics, enablement leaders should also track the outcomes of their activities, e.g., pipeline to quota coverage ratio. They should have a point of view on a seller's expected time to productivity (e.g., 100% quota attainment in two consecutive quarters) and consistently measure seller outcomes to make data-driven decisions on enablement strategies and tactics.

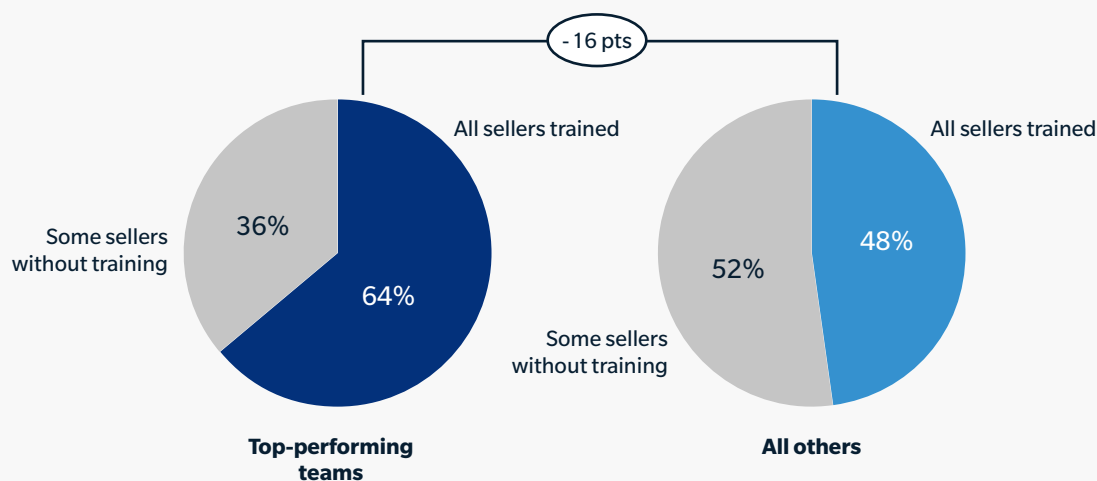
Top-performing teams excel at training both sellers and sales managers.

As mentioned previously, sales training is the most fundamental function for enablement. Nearly every team in our study (96%) is responsible for training sellers, but not all teams focus equally on sales managers. We found that top-performers excel at training both sellers and their frontline leaders, driving greater productivity from the sales team and more effective sales management.

To gauge the training proficiency of enablement teams, we compared the percentage of sellers in each organization that received some sales training in the trailing 12-month period leading up to our study. We found nearly two-thirds (64%) of top-performers had completed some training for all sellers on the sales team, while fewer than half (48%) of other enablement teams had trained all sellers in their organizations. The best enablement teams managed to train more (if not all) of their sellers, which naturally correlated with stronger sales performance.

Enablement Teams Reporting Seller Training in the Last 12 Months

By portion of sellers trained



N=25 top performing enablement teams, n=109 other enablement teams

Similarly, we found top-performers trained a higher percentage of their sales managers. About two in five (41%) top-performing enablement teams completed training for all sales managers in the last 12 months, compared with less than a third (32%) of all other teams.



While most commercial leaders appreciate the inherent ROI in training sellers, top-performing teams are seeing outsized returns in productivity and growth by placing greater emphasis on developing their frontline leaders. We found that top-performing enablement teams say their sales managers are more effective at managing sales performance than others. Nearly 70% of top-performing teams rated their managers as effective, versus a relatively paltry 41% in other organizations.



Key takeaway from top-performing teams: Enablement leaders should prioritize sales manager training as well as seller training to amplify sales productivity. Increased focus on the frontline will translate into more effective sales management and a more productive sales team.

Modern enablement teams have become indispensable strategic support for commercial organizations, with widespread roles and responsibilities across the revenue-generating function. To cost-efficiently grow enablement, business leaders should prioritize headcount to foundational (and often capacity-constrained) activities such as onboarding and sales training before broadening their scope to other less time-intensive responsibilities that can be grouped under enablement professionals with multiple functional roles. Once critical jobs-to-be-done are satisfied, the enablement team can support a greater proportion of sellers with fewer FTEs.

Top-performing enablement teams scale their impact through different-in-kind execution. They prioritize hiring professionals with deep quota-carrying experience, measure the outcomes of their programs with comprehensive metrics, and excel in supporting both sellers and frontline managers. Using field-tested, data-informed strategies, these teams elevate the function of enablement to a driver of sustained growth.

Next Steps for Enablement Leaders

1. **View available sales training resources** for enablement leaders. [🔗](#)
2. **Access additional SBI research** on building a worldclass enablement function. [🔗](#)
3. **Talk to an SBI subject-matter expert** about field-tested strategies to scale the impact of enablement in your organization. [🔗](#)

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