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Buyer's Guide to Sales Readiness Platforms

How will this guide help you?

Sales organizations face more, bigger, and more frequent challenges these days: greater competition, increased market volatility, remote teams— you name it. More complex challenges require companies to take a comprehensive sales readiness approach to overcome them.

Unlike point solutions that address only some aspects of these challenges, a sales readiness platform empowers revenue teams to take a complete approach by combining industry-leading sales enablement, content management, conversation intelligence, and coaching tools – all in one place.

This buyer's guide will help you determine the capabilities you'll need from a sales readiness platform to ensure your sales teams are always ready to hit their numbers.

You'll find out about:

1 How to get the most out of your sales force

2 How sales readiness platforms work, and how they can help

3 What to consider before investing in a sales readiness platform

4 Vendor comparisons for sales readiness

Sales enablement vs. sales readiness

Sales enablement is an established practice at many organizations, but it's different from sales readiness. Here's the difference:

- **Sales enablement** is the training, reinforcement, and practice that enables salespeople to build knowledge and engage in successful interactions with prospects and customers.

- **Sales readiness,** on the other hand, is a continuous state of excellence to grow revenue by using a suite of tools and processes that increase knowledge, enhance performance, and adapt to change. Building knowledge through sales enablement is a key part of a comprehensive sales readiness approach.

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How to get the most out of your sales force

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Getting the most out of your sales force

Anyone who's been around sales for long enough has heard of the 80/20 rule: Count on the top 20% of your sales force to carry the load for the other 80% and meet quota. And for a long time, the implicit assumption was that sales managers could simply hire right, find that 20% they could count on, and make the number. But today's buyers are savvier, competition is more intense, and sales cycles are more complicated than ever. As a result, it's harder than ever to find that 20% of reps who can "just do it." The facts are:

9+ months

According to CSO Insights, it takes more than nine months for a rep to hit full productivity

20%

Meanwhile, Forrester Research reports that the average sales quota attainment has dropped from 63% to 43% by some estimates

20%

At the same time, the Bridge Group reports that the median annual seller turnover sits at 20% (and is expected to rise) with the 25th and 75th percentiles at 15% and 33%, respectively

So instead of counting on 20% of sellers to carry the load, you may be down to 5% or 10% who are consistent achievers, and have to hope for the best from the rest of your reps.

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Forward-thinking sales organizations take a more proactive, data-driven approach to increasing sales productivity. They don't accept the premise that sales is an art and the only way to fix flagging results is to hire better. Instead, they codify the skills it takes to succeed and then build programs to replicate winning behaviors. Critical steps in this process include:

Identifying your ideal rep profile (IRP)

Instead of accepting the idea that sales success is an unsolvable mystery — identify the combination of skills that correlate to revenue and success. Ideal company profiles (ICPs) are sales targets that are commonly developed through data analysis; do the same thing for your salespeople (you'll see how in a bit).

Building IRP-focused enablement programs

Instead of using anecdotal evidence or attempting random acts of enablement, build programs that focus on the skills you've identified in your IRP. Identify how each rep's skills map to the IRP and provide individualized enablement that focuses on skill gaps — helping you reduce ramp time and improve results.

Using knowledge checks, reinforcement, and practice to ensure knowledge is maintained and used

Telling your reps "how to fish" without seeing if they've learned and internalized key concepts threatens to derail your entire enablement investment. Ensure salespeople remember and use the skills you've taught them before money is on the line.

Analyzing real-world performance

Perhaps the biggest threat to improving sales performance is using lagging indicators, like revenue outcomes, to determine sales effectiveness. Instead of waiting for the deal to close and then trying to figure out what went right or wrong, measure how reps are performing against the skills you've trained them to use, identifying areas that need remediation.

Empowering frontline managers

Most managers coach to deals, mostly because it's the only data-driven option at their disposal. Instead, arm them with clear information about the skills that need remediation and help them provide individualized coaching.

Not taking shortcuts

Each step in this process contributes to your overall readiness strategy. It's critical to incorporate each of these focus-areas to achieve continued sales success.

Customer Persona **10%** — NEEDS WORK

Objection Handling **10%** — GREAT

Communication Skills **15%** — GREAT

Product Knowledge **15%** — GOOD

Value Articulation **15%** — NEEDS WORK

Competitor Knowledge **10%** — GREAT

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How sales readiness platforms work, and how they can help

How do sales readiness platforms work?

Successful sales organizations use a methodical approach to sales readiness. However, they don't expect miracle results using just a spreadsheet and a bare-bones onboarding tool. Instead, they achieve their desired results using a unified software platform that empowers them at every step of the process:

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Sales Readiness Framework

01 Define Excellence
02 Build Knowledge
03 Align Content
04 Analyze Performance
05 Optimize Behavior

1 Define excellence

The IRP that drives success

2 Build knowledge

Provide individualized skill training, practice, and reinforcement based on the IRP

3 Align content

Support readiness in the field with just-in-time training, tools, and content

4 Analyze performance

Score the effectiveness of sales interactions and highlight areas for improvemet

5 Optimize behavior

Deliver individualized coaching to bridge demonstrated skill gaps and improve outcomes

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Key attributes of a sales readiness platform

What platform functionality is needed to support a successful sales readiness approach? Here are the key capabilities to look for:

Industry-leading sales enablement

Incorporates sales-focused learning, reinforcement, and practice

What you need	What to expect from a readiness platform
Platform	
Intuitive and powerful administration	**Easily manage the needs of different groups and departments**
Effective content management	**Centralized governance and version control**
Templates to save you time	**Pre-built templates for the most common sales enablement needs**
Training	
Sales-focused training modalities	**Capabilities built to engage salespeople and hone sales-specific skills**
Automated, adaptive training based on demonstrated skill gaps	**Individualized learning paths that adjust automatically based on multiple variables**
Easy-to-create microlearning content	**Create engaging video content with just a few clicks**
On-demand and instructor-led training	**Incorporate blended learning to achieve the greatest impact**
Gamified sales activities	**Live and team challenges promote camaraderie and friendly competition**
Engaging quiz and assessment questions	**Interactive questions that create an immersive learning experience**

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Industry-leading sales enablement (cont'd)

Incorporates sales-focused learning, reinforcement, and practice

What you need	What to expect from a readiness platform
Reinforcement	
Scientifically proven spaced reinforcements	**Engaging questions pushed out anytime and anywhere to cement learning concepts into long-term memory**
AI-enhanced role-plays	**Practice pitches, demos, and written communications with AI-powered guidance**
Peer feedback and idea-sharing	**Share ideas in virtually any enablement modality to gather input and improve teamwork**
Field activities	
Frontline manager visibility into rep skill attainment	**Role-based dashboards provide detailed analytics about skill attainment, comparison, and trends**
Field coaching capabilities	**Guide frontline managers with templates for individualized, skill-focused coaching sessions**
Reporting and analytics	
Role-based reporting dashboards	**Provide role-specific views into enablement achievements on an individual and team basis**
Correlation of skills to business objectives and outcomes	**Identify winning behaviors that closed deals**
Drill-down reporting for enterprise, team, and individual details	**View enterprise enablement trends and drill down through teams to see how individuals stack up**
Tight CRM integration	**Deliver complete enablement training through the CRM, and provide individualized content via Salesforce opportunities**

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Sales content management

Provides reps with any time, anywhere access to just-in-time learning, sales tools, and marketing collateral

What you need	What to expect from a readiness platform
Content governance	
Cross-platform content in a centralized data layer	**Provide access to all readiness content and activities—not just marketing assets**
Content across workflows	**Keep and update a single version of content that may be incorporated into multiple workflows**
Version control and content expiry	**Ensure only current content is available and only the most up-to-date version is accessible**
Access to all approved content (marketing, training, conversation intelligence, etc.)	**Manage access to content for both content owners and users**
Core functionality	
Supports the devices reps use in the field	**Available for both mobile and desktop users**
Supports a wide scope of training, tools, and content	**Marketing assets, sales tools, microlearning, quizzes, practice, & real-world conversation snippets – all in one place**
Maps to your specific needs with a flexible structure	**Mimic your business workflow and taxonomy**
Guides reps to the right content with smart search	**Deliver contextualized search of both metadata and data within content**
Attaches helpful context to content	**Store helpful training and other assets along with sales tools and marketing content**
Shares content externally and tracks engagement	**Identify individual and total content engagement**
Provides analytics on content performance	**Understand the impact of content on sales workflows**
Provides analytics on reps' skills and behaviors	**Incorporate training results into individualized readiness analytics**

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Sales content management (cont'd)

Provides reps with any time, anywhere access to just-in-time learning, sales tools, and marketing collateral

What you need	What to expect from a readiness platform
Key integrations	
Makes content available within your CRM	Provide access to content in the flow of activity within the CRM
Syncs content use and engagement to sales records	Understand the impact of content on sales cycles
Provides a content library within your email client	Send and track marketing assets directly from popular email platforms
Distributes snippets and insights from conversation intelligence	Uses conversation snippets as examples of winning behaviors for contextual, ad hoc training
Governs content within other tools in your stack	Manage content for sales, training, and other purposes
Expanded functionality	
Enables just-in-time training and content delivery	Access training anytime and anywhere
Supports democratic content creation and distribution	Enable subject matter experts across the organization to create content within the solution

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Conversation intelligence

Helps reps and managers identify how to improve
both deal outcomes and individualized selling skills

What you need	What to expect from a readiness platform
Deal Coaching	
Sentiment analysis	**Understand the buyer's sentiment to gauge the impact of the conversation**
AI-powered call scoring	**Score calls against best practices**
Email analysis	**Evaluate the impact of email communications**
Next step and action item detection	**Identify and recommend follow-up activities**
Mobile app	**Provide comprehensive access and use via mobile devices**
External call sharing	**Share calls with others for information, feedback, and to advance sales**
Automatic, highly-accurate recording and transcription	**Ensure that conversations are recorded and transcribed accurately**
Call and web conference analysis	**Transcribe and analyze conversation using the leading communication platforms**
Call themes and trackers (out-of-the-box and custom-built)	**Measure real-world performance against included and custom themes**
Keyword search	**Isolate specific conversation segments**
Snippets and libraries	**Share and store conversation snippets for use as best practices and other purposes**
Individual and team reports	**Measure individual and team performance against key skill metrics**
Call stats and insights	**In-depth analytics that help sales and enablement leaders evaluate real-world sales performance**
GDPR compliance	**Compliant with GDPR privacy regulations**

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Individualized sales coaching and remediation

Frontline managers can provide personalized coaching to address the unique skill gaps of every rep

What you need	What to expect from a readiness platform
Coaching templates	Help frontline managers coach to skills, sales methodologies, new product introductions, and other initiatives
Scoring and trend analysis	Score key skills during coaching sessions, and use trend analysis to understand the impact of coaching efforts
Recommended content and training programs based on coaching sessions	Recommend content based on coaching-based evaluations
Remediation for skill gaps	Provide a wide scope of remediation based on skill gaps including role-plays, challenges, quizzes, and assessments
"Coach the coach" manager analytics	In-depth analytics to measure the impact of frontline-manager coaching

Finally, look for a vendor that provides a **unified data platform** that gives you a complete view of readiness efforts and results.

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What to consider before investing in a sales readiness platform

What to consider before investing in a sales readiness platform

Many vendors claim their software will improve sales results. While some can offer tangible benefits, they tend to offer siloed solutions that focus on the symptoms rather than the illness. The challenge is that improving sales productivity is much harder with a collection of siloed solutions vs. a single, unified platform. For example:

- Without correlating skills to outcomes, sales enablement leaders take their best guess at enablement priorities, threatening ramp time and reducing training effectiveness

- Siloed sales content management tools focus on sharing marketing content instead of highlighting winning conversations and real-world sales interactions through virtual role-play practice, reinforcement exercises and more — focusing on sharing marketing content instead of improving in-field performance

- Siloed conversation intelligence solutions focus on deal outcomes but miss the opportunity to help frontline managers identify and coach to skill gaps that can affect all the deals in a rep's pipeline — not just the one in front of them

That's why both comprehensive capabilities and a unified platform are required to produce the best results.

❚❚ With Mindtickle we've adopted an integrated and engaging approach that takes into account the specific needs of each seller to help them build the knowledge, skills, and behaviors on an ongoing basis for success in the field."

Bill Mills
Manager, Sales Enablement, Thomson Reuters

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Vendor comparisons for sales readiness

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Vendor evaluation guide
for sales readiness platforms

Which vendors offer the most comprehensive sales readiness platforms?
We've created the following chart to see how the Mindtickle Sales
Readiness Platform fares against other vendors in the space.

Vendor	mindtickle	Bigtincan BRAINSHARK	Lessonly by SEISMIC	allego	HIGHSPOT	GONG	CHORUS
Define excellence							
Capability							
Correlation of business outcomes to training	●	●	◐	○	◐		
Correlation of business outcomes to the skills that win deals	●						
Ideal rep profiles (IRPs): The combination of skills and behaviors that drive consistent success	●						
Skill-based drill-downs: Visibility into readiness from an organization-wide view down to individual contributors	●						
Role-based dashboards: Readiness analytics for improving sales performance for key Sales roles	●			○			

Legend

● Advanced functionality   ◐ Meets requirements   ○ Minimal functionality   **[blank]** No functionality

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Vendor	mindtickle	Bigtincan BRAINSHARK	Lessonly by SEISMIC	allego	HIGHSPOT	GONG	CHORUS
Build Knowledge							
Capability							
Video-based microlearning: Bite-sized video content for easy engagement	●	●	○	●	◑		
Conversation intelligence examples: Use of snippets from real-world sales interactions to demonstrate best practices	●			◑		●	●
Sales-focused engagement mechanics: Games, leaderboards, team-focused contests, and other activities that are purpose-built to engage salespeople	●	○	○	○	○	○	
On-demand training	●	●	◑	◑	○		
Live, instructor-led training	●	○					
Courses and curriculums	●	●	◑	●	◑		
Skill attainment metrics: Individualized analytics that show skill attainment vs. winning behaviors	●						
Individualized training: Automatically adjust training based on demonstrated skill gaps	●						
Spaced reinforcements: Engaging, scientifically proven spaced reinforcement quizzes to improve retention	●			●			
AI-based virtual role-plays: Practice pitches, demos, and more with AI-based analysis to identify areas for improvement before money is on the line	●	●					

● Advanced functionality   ◑ Meets requirements   ○ Minimal functionality   **[blank]** No functionality

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| Vendor	mindtickle	Bigtincan BRAINSHARK	Lessonly by seismic	allego	HIGHSPOT	GONG	CHORUS
Align content							
Capability							
Content filters and attributes: Find the right content using filters	●	●	●	●	●		
Sharing and tracking marketing assets	◐	●	●	○	●		
Just-in-time access to readiness assets: Real-world call recordings that demonstrate best practices, microlearning from SME's, training modules, virtual role-play practice, and more	●						
Universal version control and expiration: Ensure that only the most up-to-date, current content is available for access	●		●	○	○		
Measure performance							
Conversation intelligence: Analyze real-world sales interactions	●			○		●	●
Deal intelligence: Identify and remediate individual deals	●			○		●	●
Skill intelligence: Identify and remediate individualized rep skill gaps	●						
Call scores: Quantitative analytics that measure performance against winning behaviors	●						
Recommended remediations and coaching: Automated coaching recommendations and training content based on real-world sales interactions	Coming soon						
Optimize behavior							
Frontline manager field coaching tools: Enable frontline managers to provide individualized, skill-based coaching	●		○				

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Why Mindtickle?

Mindtickle helps world-class companies be ready to grow revenue by increasing knowledge, understanding ideal sales behaviors, and adapting to change.
To do this, The Mindtickle Sales Readiness Platform empowers revenue teams with industry-leading sales enablement, content management, conversation intelligence, and coaching tools — all in one unified platform.
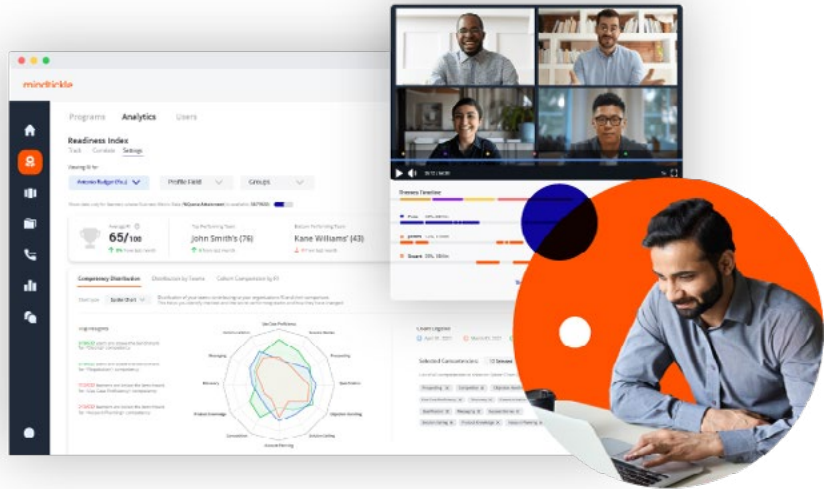
Mindtickle enables our customers to:

- **Define Excellence**.
  Establish a Readiness Index that sets a baseline for what knowledge, skills, and capabilities each sales rep in your organization should possess.

- **Build Knowledge**.
  Use the most configurable, comprehensive, and individualized platform purpose-built for sales training, practice, and reinforcement for onboarding and continuous training.

- **Align Content**.
  Align just-in-time training, tools, and marketing assets under a unified platform, giving salespeople access to virtually any training, conversation recording, practice session, reinforcement activity, and more.

- **Analyze Performance**.
  Use AI-powered conversation intelligence to provide insights on what's happening in real-world sales interactions, using call scores to identify areas for improvement.

- **Optimize Behavior**.
  Use extensive sales coaching capabilities to close the loop between real-world performance and the behaviors that win deals.

> With Mindtickle, we can consolidate and centralize content and assets in one place, have a view of the readiness of our reps that is tied to field performance, and have established a coaching culture for ongoing success."

Ken Blank
Sr. Sales Enablement Programs Lead, Infoblox

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