

-- Speaker 0 00:00:00 <inaudible> Make It Right. The manufacturing podcast

Speaker 1 00:00:09 Manufacturing is defined as the making of goods by hand or by machine that upon completion, the business sells to a customer. As we have discussed many times on this podcast, the manufacturing process can be very challenging and the need to make more for less and better is constantly upon a company making it right is the first challenge, but selling the products can be equally challenging. Welcome to the Make It Right podcast. I'm Janet Eastman. And this week on the show, my guest is Ryan Bretsch. He's the VP sales enablement. That's all, that's more than one syllable there. It's. He is the VP of sales enablement at Spoke Marketing in St. Louis. And he's here to talk about how sales enablement, if done, right, can help you get on a fast path to cash. So welcome to the show, Ryan. And I'm giggling because you and I were just talking about how your last name is kind of different because it's seven letters, but only one syllable, which is kind of rare. And then I couldn't even say enablement. So they are welcome to the show.

Speaker 0 00:01:12 Well, thank you very much for having me, Janet, you know, one of the first challenges with sales enablement I guess, is going to get pronounced it correctly on both ends, right.

Speaker 1 00:01:23 I failed miserably right at the word, go away, I'm out the gate wrong. So it's really a pleasure to talk to you, Ryan. And I'd like to find out a little bit more about say sales enablement, but let's first talk about your career and your sales background and how you got on this path.

Speaker 0 00:01:42 Alright, well, you know, I actually first started my career. Believe it or not in operations, I was, um, you know, worked for Unisource, which is a distribution company spot by Georgia Pacific. And, um, you know, as an operations analyst was how I started my career and then somehow in a move to Portland, Maine, I migrated over to the sales. And so I've actually been playing tic TAC toe with the, with the United States. I think because, you know, from there I went to Portland, Maine, then I went to Tampa, Florida. Then I went to Seattle Washington. Um, in Florida, I managed a 50 person sales group for bright house networks, which is actually now part of charter communications, um, was an executive director for sales result, which is a sales operations company in Seattle. And that's really where I started to get interested, you know, deeply interested in that topic. Um, from there I went to st. Louis and, you know, actually founded my own company and, um, sold that earlier this year and, you know, vice president of sales enablement for spoke marketing now.

Speaker 1 00:02:51 Okay. So your role at spoke is VP sales enabled sales enablement. So explain what that role actually entails. Like what, for those of who are uninitiated, what is sales, sales enablement?

Speaker 0 00:03:02 Yeah, it's a great question. So sales enablement is, is, is actually about providing salespeople with everything that they need to succeed in the field. So that includes training sales, collateral tools, resources, just anything that makes it easier for sales professionals to conduct, uh, the important parts of their job, conducting discovery with clients or prospective clients, delivering sales, presentations, planning, sit in and conducting sales meetings, you know, so on, so forth. And it is, is actually a subset of the larger sales operations discipline.

Speaker 1 00:03:41 Okay. So when you, when did you actually see the sales enablement light? When did you kind of go well there's sales, but then there's all this other stuff. And, and you got into the sales enablement side of things.

Speaker 0 00:03:53 Well, you know, sales operations really deals with the administration and of, you know, of supporting the sales efforts. So that has anything like CRM, you know, managing and devote, you know, the, the CRM training of sales representatives on CRM, developing compensation plans. So that's the administrative side of the, of the sales operations discipline. You know, I've always been fascinated because, you know, I just love being around, especially top sales performers, right. I mean, they really inspire me and, you know, I've always just had a passion for just really from an even an academic standpoint, what are the things that can be --

-- done to, to make the, you know, sales professionals job, you know, easier when they're out there because it's already a pretty hard job, has your, has, you know, and has a lot of sales representatives for manufacturers now as well.

Speaker 1 00:04:48 So I think, you know, sales has changed probably you can correct me on this because I'm, I've never been in sales, but I'm probably over the last 20 years, sales has really changed or 25 years. Right.

Speaker 0 00:05:02 Well, it's, it's changed and is going to continue to change. I think probably one of the biggest changes right now is really how you map sales to how customers actually buy. So if you think about it for like, when you go used to go to, to buy a car, you know, you, you know, you basically plan for the big day where you're going to go down to the dealerships, look at, you know, numerous cars, whether it's one, five or 10 cars, but you really planning on making a day of it, you know, kind of like a less fun version of, of a, of a, of an outdoor picnic. Right. Um, but you know, there's all the pieces to, to that negotiation, you know, the, you know, looking at the cars, engaging with the sales person, engaging with the sales manager. So it was really one of those things that if you want an information about buying a car to a purchasing decision about a car, you know, you're, you're out there and again, having to make a day of it, you know, and, and that was the process for buying a car. If you think about how you buy a car today is, you know, you're doing most of the research on, on the car specs and everything else, you know, online. I mean, you can even do, I believe, you know, virtual test drives virtual walk around of the car. So the whole fundamental nature of buying a car has, has, has changed. Um, and so the sales have to, you know, the sales strategy and the sales engaging, it has to map to it, if it doesn't then, you know, then you're out of business.

Speaker 1 00:06:38 Yeah. I remember by my last car, I actually went online and I actually built the thing on my computer and went, okay. I liked that hard top. And I liked that color and I liked this and I liked that. And I knew exactly when I walked into the dealership, what I was buying and they probably had me by the nose because they went well, that's what you're buying, that's the price. Right. But yeah, it has changed quite a bit over the last little while. So let's, let's talk a little bit and have you share a story or an experience to illustrate sales operations in practice now, how it's all happening?

Speaker 0 00:07:10 All right. Well, I'll share a story on, on sales operations, um, just, you know, where this can impact. I actually will make it a sales operation story, not an enablement story, because I think it really just kind of illustrates, you know, the thought process of how sales has to relate to, to basically mapping to the whole of the business. So in this case, there was a company in New Hampshire, it did wood flooring, and it was a really cool process. When, you know, when I went out there, they actually, you know, old growth forest submerge logs that they would actually pull from rivers basically do their treatment of the wood. And it just led to an absolutely phenomenal product that popped in people's homes. But as you can probably imagine that process is, is expensive, right? It's not just a matter of going out, shopping down a few trees and then making wood flooring out of it.

Speaker 0 00:08:05 So, you know, when we interviewed the CEO of the company, one of the questions that's asked is, is that, you know, what's the most important thing for your business when it comes to your sales effort and the CEO, the reply was, you know, the ability to protect and preserve margins, which is really important for manufacturers and certainly important for manufacturers of high quality products that are labor intensive. You know, once you started looking at the actual internal sales process itself, and I'm always spending time with the sales representatives. One of the questions I asked at the frontline level is how much degree of control did the sales representatives have over pricing in the answer that I was given was a wide latitude of control. So if you really about piecing together what management strategy was versus the strategy on the, on the, on the sales, in the, in the sales field, as cuts as the sales professionals are dealing with the cust --

-- omers and actually wound up being, you know, just join it and not in cemetery, because what the salespeople were basically doing was just asking, you know, so what is it that you're paying?

Speaker 0 00:09:18 You know, what is it you're, you're getting quoted for the pine floor that, you know, you're thinking about putting in your home and they'd get the amount. And then, you know, the sales representative, essentially it would be, if we can max that amount, would you buy our product instead? And more often than not? The answer is absolutely yes, because you're getting a phenomenal upgrade for the same price as you would pay for, you know, for a normal wood floor. The problem is, is that while the sales were going, terrific, you know, it was generating a lot of revenue. It wasn't meeting, you know, management goals of profitability. So, you know, really examining the sales process, you know, on a very close academic detail level is really important for, you know, getting the, you know, the sales operations in sync with the business operations.

Speaker 1 00:10:09 So in, in that story, the salesman wasn't selling the uniqueness of the product, they were just finding whatever that number was that was going to make the sale.

Speaker 0 00:10:21 Exactly. So multiply that by, you know, eight sales representatives, all doing the same thing, because you know what management wasn't sent advising and, and compensating on, and basically, you know, motivating cause every sales person wants to be the top sales person, right? So is if you're trying to sell value, but you see the, the, you know, the person next to you is winning more sales on, on price. You know, you're going to start doing the same exact thing to keep up. And it's just a, you know, it's, you know, it's a cascade effect and you know, it, you know, it really affects, you know, the company's bottom line.

Speaker 1 00:10:59 So how do you turn that ship around?

Speaker 0 00:11:03 Well, you know, a lot of it is, you know, there's a number of things that you're, you're looking to do sales enablement, obviously being one on an operations. And you know, what you're compensating on is probably the key to addressing that, that situation. So in that case, we essentially redesigned the compensation plan because, you know, salespeople are going to sell to what makes them the most money, right. It's fundamental to, you know, to being a sales professional. So in that case, you're really working to address it through, through the compensation plan.

Speaker 1 00:11:39 Okay. So just explain to me then why sales sales enablement is so important. Is it really like a missing link between sales and marketing? Because marketing is presumably if we use this wood example, the marketing, uh, products would have said, this is a fantastic floor. It's old growth forest, they're beautiful floors. They're so unique. They're going to look like nothing you've ever seen in anybody else's home. Right. But then the sales guys over there just selling on price. So how do you connect the marketing and the sales to bring that together so that the sales person can actually sell that uniqueness?

Speaker 0 00:12:19 Well, that's actually a great two part question. And I'm going to endeavor to answer the first part first, and I'm going to throw a little bit of curve ball out is, you know, you had asked, you know, why is sales enablement so important? And I'm going to first offer to you that it's not important. It's not important to a players. You know, the, you know, so your top performing sales people, you know, they, they always, you know, enjoy the benefits of, you know, of what sales enablement, you know, brings to the equation. But, you know, they don't need sales enablement to be able to sell effectively in the, in the field. That's why they're a performers, right? They, they can do magic with very minimal resources. So, you know, sales enablement is actually much more important and just know, you know, that a players are actually rare.

Speaker 0 00:13:15 I mean, there's theories that, you know, you can make them commonplace. You really can't. I mean, how many Michael Jordans are there in basketball, right? And he may be had five Michael Jordans all playing together. How effective would, would they be playing together? Sales enablement is really designed for the B and C players that need the extra push to get up to the level of performance o --

-- f, of a players. And if we go back to, you know, to, um, you know, the second part of the question is, is I don't think that sales enablement is, is also the missing link between sales and marketing, but both sales and marketing need to be involved in it. They need to know what their roles are and they need to know how to properly support it. So sales enablement can be effective when they don't do those things. That's often why sales enablement is not effective, but sorry, go ahead. Oh, but overall sales enablement is, is important because it's the key to get the B and C plus they are players to run better, more productive sales meetings.

Speaker 1 00:14:24 Okay. So then how can marketing really contribute effectively to that modern sales process?

Speaker 0 00:14:30 So there has to really be, you know, it really maps to understanding how the customer buys, you know, the evolution of marketing is no longer just about brand brand awareness, promotion advertising and or lead generation. Um, you know, the nature of how the customer makes purchasing decisions is fundamentally, fundamentally. And so more so than ever. It's, you know, marketing has to be involved in supporting the entire sales process, but you have this historical rubs, you know, that takes place between marketing and sales and who should be in control of that. And it's really important too, to make sure that we, that, that both sides marketing and sales are really, you know, listening to the sales professionals perspective and really digging deep around understanding what it is that they need.

Speaker 1 00:15:25 Right. And ultimately, I guess, well, I suppose it all depends on, on what you manufacture and what your product is that you're trying to sell, but the salesperson should be out there trying to sell a solution to someone's problem, right?

Speaker 0 00:15:40 Yes. Yes. That's, that's exactly what they should be doing. I mean, in many cases, you know, manufacturing is specking products, our products to meet a certain solution for a prospective client. And, you know, as important as relationship building still is to the sales process, it's really the efficient conduct of the sales meetings. That's more important than, than ever, and, you know, and sales. He also has to understand that marketing now has, uh, an important role to play in that they don't necessarily a lot of sales organizations, don't much marketing in their business. They really need to consider that for the exact example that we talked about on, you know, regarding the, the car dealership, which is that more so than ever, you know, customers are basically engaging the marketing functions of the company to begin their sales process. They're researching the websites, they're going to social media, they're looking up product specifications on Google.

Speaker 0 00:16:40 So they're doing all of these things before they ever engage a sales person on it. So there really has to be close coordination between marketing and sales. And there has to be a lot of listening going on versus just rushing to say, you know, let's do this, let's do this. Let's do do that. Um, you know, sales enablement is all about helping manufacturers deliver Chris sales, engaged in it from discovery to the sales presentations, the delivery of the, of the proposal, all of that is designed to support, not how the manufacturer wants to sell, but rather how the manufacturing customers want to buy. And that's what marketing and sales both need to be focused on.

Speaker 1 00:17:27 Okay. How about some key takeaways that, uh, you can leave with the manufacturing leaders and their sales teams to help them, you know, move the ball forward on this?

Speaker 0 00:17:39 Oh, okay. Yeah, that's a, that's another good question. Um, you know, I think there's really just understanding that sales enablement provides a cohesive plan, an operational scope, you know, to, to conduct thoughtful opportunity qualification, to, to do more effective discovery. And discovery is basically questioning for the customer's needs requirements and success conditions, how to properly plan, you know, position against competitors is extremely important. Managing objections in the sales process. Notice, I didn't say handling objections, I've talked about managing the actions. Those two are two fundamentally different things. And just in general, how to conduct sales meetings. Um, the second thing is, is j --

-- ust what I reiterated earlier. Sales and marketing both have to be involved, but they have the understanding that the needs of the sales professional are the thing that's most paramount. If leadership isn't listening to the challenges of the salespeople in the resulting sales enablement effort will most likely fail.

Speaker 0 00:18:44 And it just, you know, I mean, I've seen it time and time and time again, you know, sales enablement is one of those deceptive things. It looked really easy in practice to, to, to put in the place, but it's actually quite difficult. Um, and, and just kind of goes to my final point, which is even if marketing sales are involved, sales enablement is a thoughtful and deep seated exercise. It's not something that can be slapped together. And it's all in an actually it's often best served if it's outsourced to a subject matter expert with specific training in and skill sets around the discipline. So those would probably be my three points.

Speaker 1 00:19:25 Yeah. And to that last point, when you say, you know, you want to outsource this, I can understand why that would be a good idea because that outside person can bridge that gap. That probably an internal person wouldn't be able to between the, the leadership in the sales and the marketing teams. And they can come in and, and sort of take all questions and sort of level the playing field, maybe, um, in a way that somebody internally couldn't do. Right.

Speaker 0 00:19:54 Yes. And it isn't, you know, I don't want to make, you know, if you do set the right standards and goals and objectives and walk through that exercise, and you're very disciplined about it, an organization can do that, you know, on, on their own. It is the one nice thing about having an outside person do it is that, you know, our, our, our company do it is, um, you know, is basically comes down to, to confirmation bias, right. It's, you know, when you're so close to something, you know, you basically see it through, you know, through, through a Rose colored lens, you know, sometimes, and basically having that outside perspective allows for an objective, you know, very clear lens to be looked at in all sorts of the organization, plus an outside organization isn't, you know, nearly his subject to, to, you know, political, you know, that, that often go in, you know, kind of the urinal internal politics of companies. And, you know, again, not all internal politics is bad politics, right? I mean, it's just, it's a necessary part of, of, of a business. But, um, you know, having that outside objective look at the entire sales process and how sales enablement is managed, basically, you know, provides a fresh perspective on how to, how to help sales professionals in the field. If they're, especially if they're underperforming and if they're already underperforming, then you know, the question is, is, you know, it kind of amplifies maybe the need to have an outside perspective looking in on it.

Speaker 1 00:21:33 How long can that process take when you bring somebody in and get this process going, I'm assuming it's different for depending on the size of your sales team and whatnot, but, you know, can you turn something around in six months?

Speaker 0 00:21:45 I think six months is very fair. You know, a lot of customers want things turned around in, in one month. And I, and I think there's organizations that will cater to that. And, you know, it just kind of goes to that, tried and true adage is what you put into it, you know, is what you're going to get out of it. So inputs equal outputs, and, you know, really the more the, you know, the more thoughtful effort that you're putting into to, you know, scoping, you know, sales enabled, scoping the sales operations, making sure that it, you know, that it meets the objectives of the business. We talked about that earlier. Um, you know, that's, you know, you're going to get a better end product.

Speaker 1 00:22:29 And I suppose, you know, we all know that changing people's habits do take time. You can't do it in, in 30 days probably. So yeah. Give it a bit of time, but yeah.

Speaker 0 00:22:39 Yeah. Magic workers, certainly. So,

Speaker 1 00:22:43 Yeah, Ryan, thank you so much. I really appreciate your time.

Speaker 0 00:22:46 Okay. Well, Janet, thank you very much for, for having me and thank you very much for, for asking, you know, very thoughtful, insightful quest --

-- ions. You know, I love thoughtful, insightful questions, so it was terrific.

Speaker 1 00:22:59 Thank you very much. Ryan Bretsch the VP sales enablement at spoke marketing. They're based in st. Louis. That's our show this week, you can find, make it right on Twitter and LinkedIn, and you can subscribe to the podcast through iTunes, Google play, Stitcher, Spotify, and YouTube. And remember the makeup right podcast is brought to you by Kevin Snook. He's a leadership advisor and author of the bestselling book, Make It Right - Five steps to align your manufacturing business from the front line to the bottom line. Until next time I'm Janet Eastman have a great week. Thanks for listening to Make It Right.

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