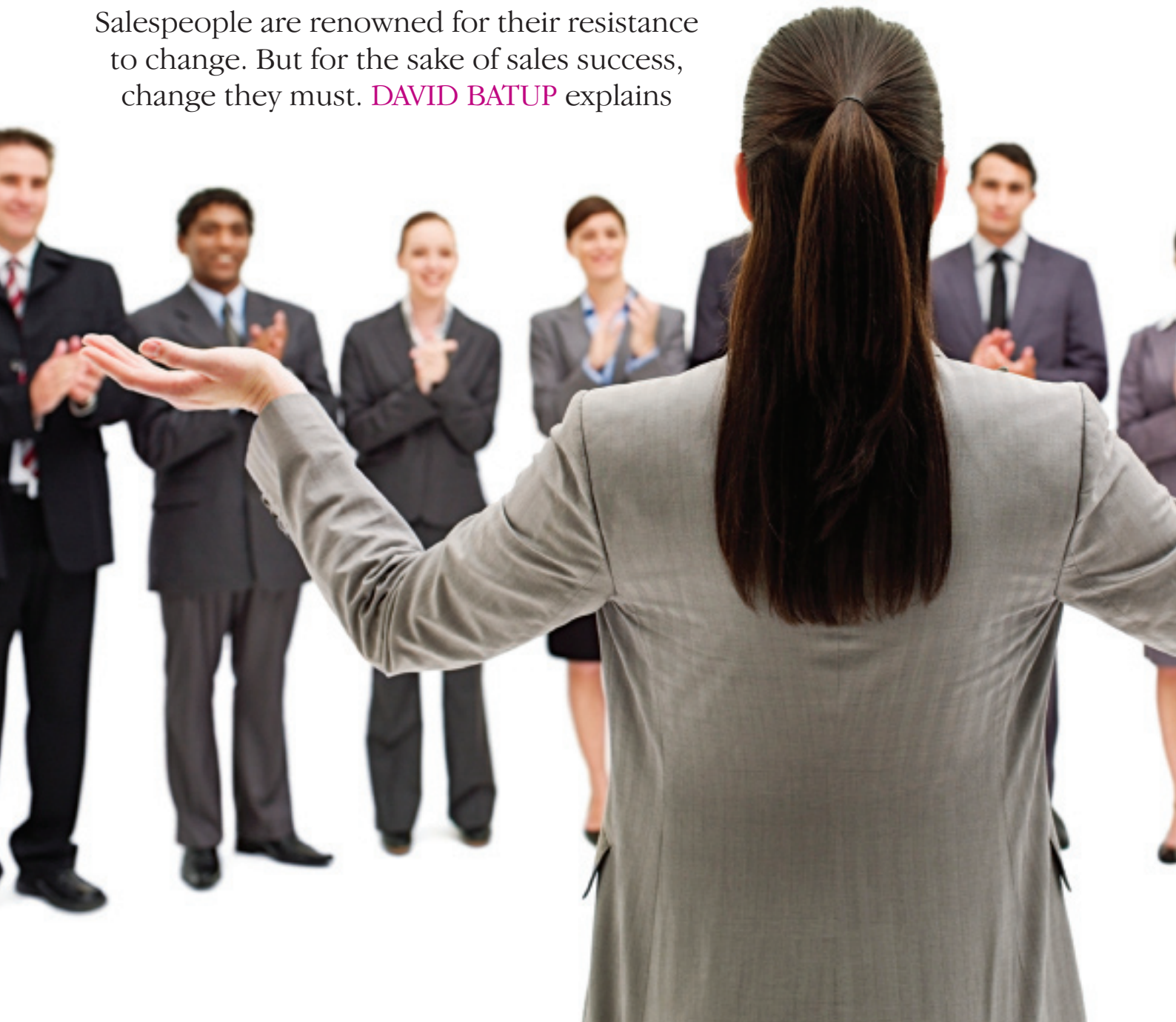# WINNING AND MINDS

Salespeople are renowned for their resistance to change. But for the sake of sales success, change they must. DAVID BATUP explains

HEARTS

*T*here are lots of definitions for 'sales enablement' (SE). The most succinct I have found is provided by Jeff Ernst,[1] who says: "Sales enablement is about ensuring your salespeople can have the valuable conversations that help buyers advance through their buying process." However you define it, all SE implementations have four elements to them — people, process, content and technology. In this article I explore how too much focus on the solution (process, content and technology) and not enough on the people who will use SE initiatives leads, at best, to not fully realising the expected benefits or, at worst, to a failed programme, wasting time, effort and money and causing unnecessary disruption to the sales effort. Of course all four go hand-in-hand, but you are seriously kidding yourself if you believe that salespeople will fall in line and use whatever you serve up to them in the form of an SE solution.

We all know of cases where well-intentioned efforts to increase sales productivity or effectiveness have floundered and eventually died. Often they are solution-based, typically driven by the CEO, marketing or sales VP, and the implementation has focused more on the technical aspects of the solution than the people who will use it. In these situations the senior managers understand the benefits and assume everyone else does, or that staff will fall in line because they say so. The classic example of this is CRM implementations, where fewer than half deliver the benefits that formed the original business case.

Fast forward to the real world and you will notice that change happens at an individual level and not at an organisational level. For example, I have a LinkedIn contact who was responsible for the implementation of an SE project and who was told by a sales exec that he would rather stick a fork in his eye than use the new sales portal. This gives a clue as to where the real focus should be. Another LinkedIn contact told me that even though they got most things right, "There is still an ongoing daily fight to achieve sales adoption."

I have always firmly believed that it is better not to undertake a project than to execute it poorly. This is certainly the case with SE. Not engaging, assessing or considering the behavioural change required of the sales team is a sure way of storing up trouble. Problems will surface at the point in the implementation when the sales team is expected to use the SE solution.

By then a lot of the budget will have been spent and senior managers will be looking forward to the benefits of promises made to them at the start. Often the resistance to change is subtle and manipulative in the sense that the implementation appears to go well, but then the excuses start. Situations are engineered so that using the solution appears difficult, the ultimate being: "What would you rather I do, sell or spend time on the SE application?" It's almost as though some people have an immunity to change, believing it doesn't apply to them. In this context I would include the senior managers who instigate the change for others but don't see the need for them to change their own working practices. It is often managers who resist change the most.

As Andris Zoltners[2] says: "Most people, particularly those in leadership positions in companies, frequently view change as something that is needed of others. However, change efforts require leaders to change ➤

> *There is still an ongoing daily fight to achieve sales adoption*

their behaviours so that others are inspired to follow."

This is particularly noticeable when it comes to changing how managers go about their day-to-day activities, such as one-on-one reviews or coaching. If the sales manager does not use the new tools themselves, then the salespeople won't either. There cannot be one rule for salespeople and another for sales managers. This is a sure-fire way of losing your top performers. So, it is essential to address this problem at the start.

Generally, people do not like change and salespeople seem to like it a lot less than most. Therefore, assuming you work in an organisation that values its people, and in particular its top performers, focusing at an individual level on making change effective is a sound investment.

The question of who to involve in the project should be finalised once the business needs and scope of the project are defined (see stage I2 in the bottom diagram below) but for the purposes of this article I have used a

modified version of the commonly used IDC model of SE (the top diagram) to show the scope for the change programme. I have added professional services to the teams involved, as so many solutions sold require some form of assistance in their deployment, but of course this could be different for your organisation.

SALES ENABLEMENT SCOPE

While an SE programme will affect the whole organisation at some stage, it is prudent to limit the scope of involvement to the individuals touched in the lifecycle of a sale.

Who should form the sales core of the project (management, development and implementation) team is a very different question and is a critical success factor in achieving the goals of the programme. Individuals should be selected on the basis of:
- Their sales success in the organisation, 'rainmakers'
- The strength of their internal network and ability to influence across departments
- Their openness and willingness to adopt and share new ideas and concepts, ie. become change agents and advocates of the SE solution.
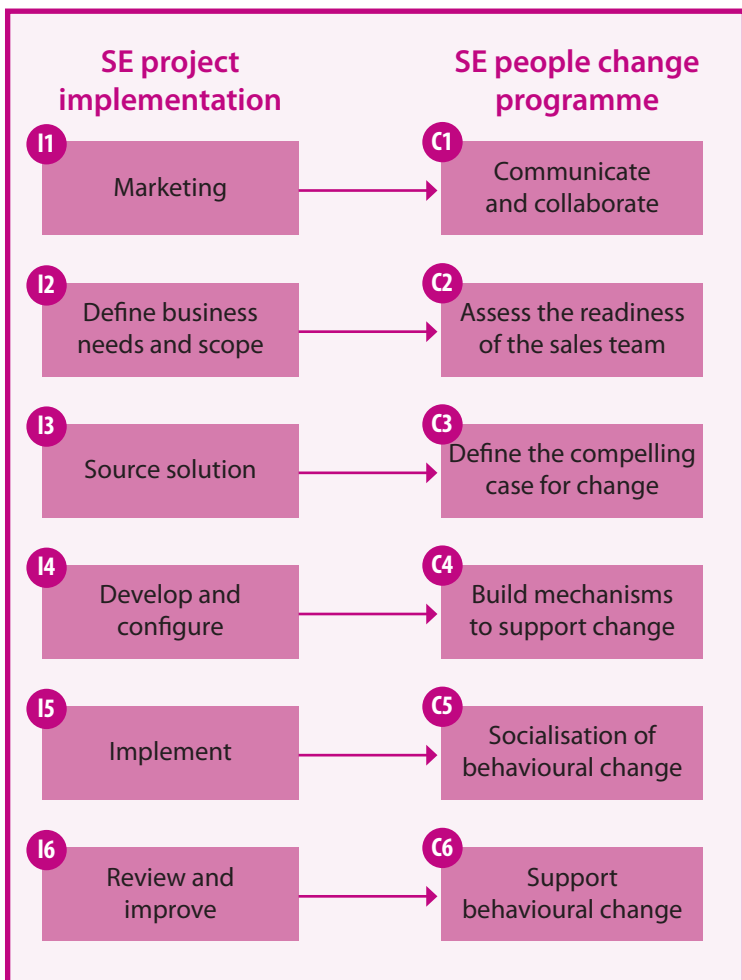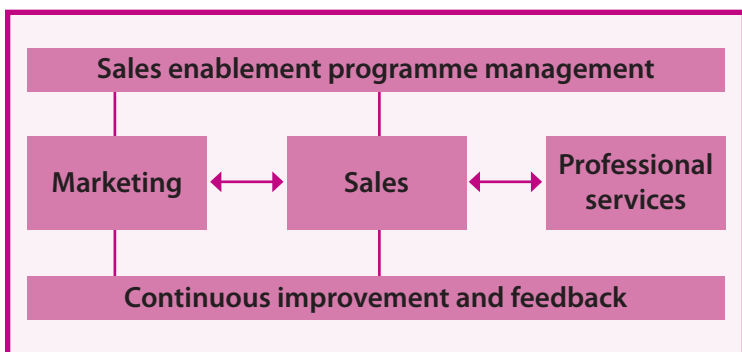
What you will find is that these people are rarely available, and it is often painful to free up enough of their time for them to be able to contribute effectively. My advice is to take the pain and manage the situation for the duration of the programme. I'd also add a warning that selecting implementation members only on the basis that they are available, or that the experience of working on the project will help those who are underperforming, will instantly send the wrong message to the rest of the sales team. From the start, it will threaten the successful outcome of the SE initiative. As a sponsor or sales manager leading the SE programme this is probably your first big test of how serious you are about making it work, and therefore how serious the company is. Don't fail at this first hurdle, and if you do, don't be surprised how difficult life will become in the latter phases of the project.

When discussing the challenges of changing sales behaviour, Michael J Webb[3] points out that: "It pays off in the end, but it takes vision, integrity, determination and a commitment to building long-term value for your customers and company."

To assist with the question "What should I be doing and when?" in order to address the people and behavioural aspects of the SE project, I have developed a model (shown left) that maps the six SE project implementation steps (I1 to I6) to the corresponding change management activity (C1 to C6). This is not an exact science and you may need to adapt the change management recommendations to your own situation.

The steps shown do not cover the full scope of an SE implementation such as mapping buying process to sales methodology, engagement model, organisational alignment or metrics. Instead, it focuses on the people change aspects. The change programme shown follows a combination of two well-known change management methodologies[4] and has been optimised for SE.

I have left out any explanation of the six project implementation steps, as they are fairly standard for any solution-based implementation. Your project manager for the SE implementation should be familiar with the steps and be able to provide clarification on them.

Sales enablement programme management

Marketing ⟷ **Sales** ⟷ **Professional services**

Continuous improvement and feedback

SE project implementation

SE people change programme

I1	Marketing	→	C1	Communicate and collaborate
I2	Define business needs and scope	→	C2	Assess the readiness of the sales team
I3	Source solution	→	C3	Define the compelling case for change
I4	Develop and configure	→	C4	Build mechanisms to support change
I5	Implement	→	C5	Socialisation of behavioural change
I6	Review and improve	→	C6	Support behavioural change

When working through the six SE people change steps described below, it is good practice to think through how the recommendations can be applied to the different learning styles and preferences that exist within the team. An example of this was demonstrated in a recent case study I read that found short, 5–10 minute videos were far more effective than 20–30 minute e-learning modules. There are a number of psychometric tests that can help with identifying learning preferences. Don't forget this is all about the individual, so make sure you keep this in mind when designing your approach.

C1 – COMMUNICATE AND COLLABORATE

Zoltners[5] suggests starting with 'guiding principles' so as to answer the question; "Why are we doing this?" These principles define the rules of the game and provide an objective way to resolve any dilemmas that arise during the change process. In terms of developing and communicating these principles I have slightly modified Zoltners' 'four Ps' of transition communication to make them rather more specific to an SE programme:

1. The purpose: why is the company doing this? The compelling reason
2. The picture: how will the function of sales operate; what will it look like and feel like when we reach our goal; how will sales behaviours need to change?
3. The plan: step-by-step, how will we get there? Both as a sales department and as individuals
4. The part: what can and must you do to help the plan move forward and what is in it for me?

C2 – ASSESS THE READINESS OF THE SALES TEAM

This is one of the most commonly missed activities of any sales initiative and particularly so with SE and CRM. I believe it is because those who are driving the change cannot see why the rest of the team would not be enthusiastic. There will be different levels of enthusiasm and hostility present within the wider sales team. It is smart to appreciate this, and to plan to address it. One way would be to map those who are:

a) Early adopters — who are ready to adopt, and positive in outlook
b) Supporting from the sidelines — who will adopt, but right now are not openly enthusiastic about it (ie. they appear neutral)
c) The opposition — who may or may not show it, but

There cannot be one rule for salespeople and another for sales managers

are hostile and possibly destructive to the programme.

It should be possible to develop a transitional route to develop the behaviours and practices required and at the same time have 'sub-routes' to coach and help the three different adoption types above. These routes should include a mixture of training, involvement, collaboration and communication. (The box below shows an example transitional route[6] for two behavioural changes.)

C3 – DEFINE A COMPELLING CASE FOR CHANGE

This builds on the guiding principles discussed in C1. Greater focus should now be directed at translating this into 'compelling case' style messages aimed at the different roles within the team. This is a great time to make it personal and to head off some of the objections that will come later. If the compelling case can be structured in a way that leverages the successful behaviour displayed in the closing of landmark deals then so much the better. So:
■ Build the need and the benefits of the new approach for each job role
■ Map out the journey and support that will be put in place for the individual
■ Manage expectations and counter resistance.

C4 – BUILD MECHANISMS TO SUPPORT CHANGE

These can be hard and soft factors that encourage the change in attitude and behaviour required. Use the rainmakers and advocates in the implementation team to adopt individuals or groups and provide a positive influence and a feedback conduit to build a more personal and supportive approach.

Consider the path of least resistance in terms of some of the compliance aspects (hard factors). These should be beneficial as well as in line with the behaviour change required. For example, if the only place that up-to-date collateral is guaranteed is on the SE system, it will drive people to use it. Take care here when deciding how far this goes; success requires a consistently strong commitment from all functional managers (marketing, sales and professional services). Ensure:
■ Resources are available to the bids that have reached a defined profile (eg. qualification status above 25%) and not to those that have not
■ The rainmakers and advocates are actively encouraged to take on coaching or mentoring roles for those who are finding the transition problematic
■ Collateral is farmed from the most successful bids and the SE solution is updated with the latest and best. This ensures an ongoing stepping-up of the quality and effectiveness of the collateral.

C5 – SOCIALISATION OF BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

The objective of this stage is to achieve a 'business as usual' status for the SE solution. Implementation success can be defined as the SE solution becoming just part of the everyday way things are done in the company. In this way, those who choose ➤

From what	...into what	Intervention	a	b	c
Ad hoc qualification	Consistent and accurate qualification	■ Involvement and collaboration in the build	✓	✓	
		■ Case study based training	✓	✓	✓
		■ Advocate coaching		✓	✓
Little evidence of meeting preparation	Collaborative meeting planning	■ Practical 'next meeting' coaching	✓	✓	✓
		■ Webinar based reviews	✓	✓	✓

not to use it are the exception and will stand out. So:

■ Encourage the language of the SE solution in meetings and general communication

■ Insist that managers 'walk the walk', not just talk about the SE implementation, and when the going gets tough (as it will) they stay true to their commitments

■ Celebrate sales successes and develop internal case studies showing how the SE solution assisted in wins. These are great for intervention examples, future training and new hire induction.

C6 – SUPPORT BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE

This reinforces the progress made and the need to keep the focus on the change process. This is particularly important as, until the new behaviours are embedded in everything salespeople do, there is a strong tendency to slip back into the old ways. Depending on the complexity of the change, the implantation will reach an inflection point or crossroads where either the new or old ways will start to dominate. Typically, this will come at around three to six months post-implementation or go-live of the system. The inflection point presents a threat to the success of the programme and it is therefore wise to build in some intervention to be delivered at this key moment to counteract any drifting from the progress made. So:

■ Address the inflection point danger and hold three and six-month activity or training events, eg. hold cross-functional workshops to identify the remaining challenges and what can be done to rectify them

■ Build the SE systems, tools and techniques into new hire programmes as a natural part of 'the way things are done around here'

■ Reward the new behaviours and provide guidance and coaching to those who are making progress. Consider the non-movers' future in their position or in the company as they will undermine the investment made

■ Hold quarterly workshops as part of an ongoing improvement programme to ensure that members of the sales team are equipped to meet every challenge thrown at them by the market, customers and partners.

So, I have deliberately focused on the change aspect of SE programmes that covers the people aspect of the four components of any successful SE implementation. The other three — process, content and technology — are also important, but without the behavioural change the SE programme will not meet its stated goals.

My advice is not to embark on the path of SE unless you have a good balance across all four components of an SE programme. I'd go further and suggest that the largest component (in terms of time and effort) of the budget should be allocated to the people element. Unfortunately, from the many sales-focused effectiveness programmes (SE, CRM, SKM [sales knowledge management], portals) I have seen, many have not achieved the benefits anticipated at the start and some have quietly faded away despite significant amounts of money, time and effort being spent on them. I suspect, and in some cases know, that the focus has been on the technology, then content, process and people in that order of priority. Turn this list around and I believe you will stand a much better chance of success.

The change management process I have described should be mapped to the different stages of the overall project plan. Once identified and agreed the change aspects should be woven into the day-to-day execution of the project. They should be scheduled as any other task, ensuring dependencies are identified and linked. In this way the change programme activities are integrated and managed appropriately to ensure success.

I point you also to a case study by Jeanne Hellman that has great insights into what it is like to undertake a large SE project. You'll find her report on her LinkedIn profile. Her conclusion: "Once sellers see the value, they will use it. The bottom line: it will be up to your organisation to determine how big and heavy a stick to wield to get your sellers on board. We opted for the carrot using the logic that once sellers see and feel the value of SE and SKM, they will use it because it helps them succeed."

> *Once sellers see the value of sales enablement, they will use it because it helps them succeed*

Contributor David Batup
SBR Consulting
dbatup@sbrconsulting.com
LinkedIn: davidbatup