# Audio file

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# Transcript

00:00:03 Greg Reffner

Everybody welcome to the Abstrakt podcast. We are very lucky today we have Roderick Jefferson, of Roderick Jefferson & Associates joining us, and we're going to be talking about. Today is aligning sales enablement to the new buyer's journey, the changing buyer’s journey? What is that next evolution of sales enablement? And Roderick is really the guy that's kind of leading the charge on that. With that being said, Roderick, I'll pass it to you, Sir, to introduce yourself before we kick this off.

00:00:32 Roderick Jefferson

But first of all, my absolute pleasure. Thanks for having me on. I really, really appreciate it because sales enablement is shifting. As with everything else in the world and it's shifting fast. I am Roderick Jefferson. I'm the CEO of Roderick Jefferson and Associates. We are a sales enablement and sales coaching firm, primarily focused in-kind of that SMB (Small and Medium Business) space. If you will, the 10 to 300 million. Little bit about myself. First and foremost, I'm a sales guy. I started out carrying a bag as a BDR years ago at AT&T, got promoted to AE, did well, but presidents club a couple times. Got promoted to sales leader and promptly turned it down. because I realized that I love the process of selling more than I did taking down big deals. So as any good salesperson does I talk myself into a new role of regional sales trainer. And I figured, you know, I can share all my tools and templates and all the things that have gotten me to presidents Club and it worked out nicely. Over the last 20 plus years I have either grass rooted or run enablement at Siebel Systems, Network appliance, eBay, HP, Oracle, Salesforce and Marketo, and in the last three years I had decided to start my own firm and really focus on, like I said that SMB, space and absolutely loving it. So enough about me. Let's give the people something they can listen to.

00:01:51 Greg Reffner

Yeah, love it absolutely well Marketo, Salesforce. Those are pretty well-known brands and president's club. I can't remember the last time I even thought about what president’s Club might be like. I feel like that's like maybe a dream. We might all kind of see coming to fruition one day.

00:02:07 Roderick Jefferson

One day we’ll get back together and people have stories that they can't tell when they get back to the office.

00:02:11 Greg Reffner

Love it absolutely. All right, well, let's lay some groundwork for today's conversation so it's very rare that we just talked to individuals who have coined specific terms that are so synonymous with beta be software sales, and you actually coined the term sales enablement, so I feel kind of honored to be talking to you and just to make sure we're on the same page, how do you define sales enablement Roderick?

00:02:40 Roderick Jefferson

I define sales enablement as getting the right people in the right conversations with the right tools at the right time. That ultimately leads to increased revenue. Accelerated speed revenue increased seller productivity and creating customers for life.

00:02:58 Greg Reffner

Love it and when we say right people were talking about internal stakeholders, product marketing, marketing sales, customer success, right? We're not talking about prospects.

00:03:08 Roderick Jefferson

No, we're talking about the full ball of wax and let's not leave out partners and alliances, also. OK, because what we do is kind of three things, enablement, we communicate, and collaborate, we orchestrate and let me explain what that means on the communication piece. It's about making sure that everyone is on the same page that things are clear in their concise, and they're consistent. You've got scalable, repeatable processes and tools, but enabled. It's not about tools, it's about people. That's where the collaboration comes in, and I was explaining enablement this way. In analogy, think about an orchestra. You've got brass, percussion, strings, woodwinds, all coming together. Now let's align those two lines of business inside of your company. Everyone's trying to do the right thing for the prospect or the customer, but the problem is sometimes they're playing notes on top of each other. Sometimes they're maligned, sometimes their shower. Until one person or in this case, individual sales enablement steps up tap the stand and all of that noise becomes a beautiful sheet of music.

00:04:08 Greg Reffner

I love that, I played saxophone for about an hour before I gave up. I was like I'm done with this. I'm never going to be able to carry a tune. That's interesting. There's some challenges presented today in the fact that we're no longer in the office. More and more companies are talking about fully remote forever. I think we've all come to grips that things need to change from a vendor perspective.

Really, what I want to talk to you about is. What's going on with the new buyer's journey? How is that changing? You know, we don't have a group of buyers now that can reach across the aisle. Talk to each other about their opinion on a product they're not in a conference room anymore. I'm just. I'm really curious if buyers' expectations have changed and you know, kind of what your thoughts are on the how. This looks six months a year, two years from now in terms of the buying landscape. Let's put aside kind of the selling landscape for a little bit.

00:05:08 Roderick Jefferson

And that is the loaded question of all loaded questions and a fantastic one. Absolutely it's changed along with everything else, because now that we are remote, we're all more dependent on being able to humanize the tools that are available. And let me explain what I mean. Now, there was a time when, like you said, the buyers could connect. Now buyers are far savvier than they've ever been because they've got access to more information, whether it be through G2 or tools like that or even their own internal or external networks. So they're having these conversations further along down the buying stream than they were before they bring in a sales professional and AE/SE, etc. So now they're prepared. They are not looking to be sold. And I always say to people now is the time where we have to start, especially enablement, to start enabling our sellers to start having conversations and stop giving presentations you can't lean on the demo anymore like you used to. And I also think that it's an opportunity now to really approach conversations differently.

First of all, you've got to build rapport in a different way with that buyer. Right, you're not sitting across the table. You can't look up and go. Oh, we went to the same school or oh, I see you like the fish and there's big pictures of your face now you really have to genuinely focus on asking questions to get answers to help find a solution, not just to ask the next question so that you can sell something right? And the next thing is about creating a virtual community, you have to stay in constant contact more with your buyer now than you ever have. The level of contact now would have been considered a nuisance in previous selling, but if you don't stay connected, guess what your competition is. So, you've got to find creative ways to reach out and I will quote my buddy John Barrows. Don't check in and don't just reach out to see how things are going. That's a useless thing. I'll give you a third thing. Also, to that, an add on to that. At one time, starting an email with how are you handling things in these turbulent difficult times? Stop it. Yeah, it feels disingenuous now harms that they know why you're reaching out, but you have to reach out with specific information that is of high importance to the buyer. The buyer's journey now has to be the foundation in which all selling sits upon and it should have been already, but it hasn't been because what we did previously was. We had these selling motions so stages, sales process, sales methodology right, and sales tools and we tried to shoehorn the buyer into those.

Now it's about going up a level, asking the buyer the right questions, making sure that you're opening, asking those open-ended questions, but more importantly that there has a true business outcome to this and no longer is it about bits, bytes and bots and features and benefits.

00:08:10 Greg Reffner

Yeah, I want to back up for two seconds and talk about things like G2 crowd because I've talked to a couple people. I get some people to ask me, you know how do you how you found success in sales? And I start talking about well are using Google Alerts. Are you using G2 crowd? How are using those tools and the blank stare I get is just kind of crazy to me because it just shows such a lack of training and enablement from the leadership at these companies. That they're not teaching their sellers, like how to pay attention to what companies are doing how to understand where buyers are going to look for information? If you don't know where your buyers are going to look for information, how do you know what they're seeing? How do you know what they're finding out about you?

00:08:55 Roderick Jefferson

Do you know what's important to them?

00:09:00 Roderick Jefferson

I'm surprised to hear you say that because in the consulting world, and in enablement, and I'll say, true enablement, those are staples now. I'll flip the coin and say why? I'm not surprised. Because training ain’t enablement, I believe that you train animals and you enable people. With that said let's stop for a moment and think about what training is a one-time spot event that doesn't have reinforcement. An ongoing behind it. Enablement is an ongoing occurrence where the act of training is simply the kickoff or a component of it is not the end of the deal. If they're not getting this from their enablement people, but they're getting its training. You should be able to find tools like this from true enablement practitioners, and if the folks out there are the practitioners, I'll say now Connect with sales enablement society, because what you're going to get is thought leadership from a variety of different verticals. You're also going to find out that there are some analysts in there that are going to give you. Where do these tools sit?

Right? There is the Forresters. There is the gartners, the serious decisions, those type folks. That's where I go, right? And I say, what? Tell me how does this compare to this? I can get it from G2 and I do, but then I go and say of the clients that you're working with their customers, you're working with, who's using what and why did they like it. Why do they not like it? Why is more important today sometimes than what? What is about the user experience and that's important, but why is? What's the outcome of this that you're driving to? And how do you get there? And how do you then wrap? And dare I say, revenue-focused metrics around all of these things.

No more, I feel like no more Smiley sheets and butts and seats as I call it. If enablement can't truly justify how they're either accelerating speed to revenue there increasing seller productivity, they're removing umm, by our obstacles and they're creating. Customers for life. I'm just going to say it and people are going to be mad but you're useless.

00:11:11 Greg Reffner

Hey, I love it. I could not agree more. We'll get back to the measurements. How we measure success in sales enablement. A little bit later, but ultimately our first couple bullet points. Really, buyers' journey has changed. And companies need to start understanding what that buyer's journey looks like, and then we don't just train our apps, we enable them on an ongoing basis so they understand. Why things are important to these prospects are now engaging with.

00:11:39 Roderick Jefferson

Absolutely and I've got a couple other things that I want to talk directly to my sales enablement practitioners out there and that is if you have not worked with marketing and product marketing to readdress and reset your ICP or ideal customer profile, go do it now. Because right now requires a stronger partnership between sales, marketing, sales enablement, etc. Than ever, you have to make sure you've got an airtight end to end process. I'm talking about messaging positioning. Go to market strategy-, short-, medium-, and long-term metrics. And of course, a different approach to enable it, yeah.

Why, because the C-Suite is far more accessible now than ever, and you've got to get your folks that may not have ever had this access and availability. The understanding of how to talk to them, what's top of mind and what language they speak. Next is you can expect the VP of sales or the CRO to be intimately involved in deals. Why? because they're at risk too right now?

And also, the buyer's journey has extended. As well as the number of people that are included in that, and here's some stats for you. This is from rainsalestraining.com and also from Chorus AI, average number of conversations. Close a deal. Has bumped up to about 8 now. The average number of decision makers per deal is somewhere between 5:00 and 7:00. There's a 45% increase in the number of sales leaders that are joining meetings compared to the base. Same baseline pre-covid and finally 36% increase of leaders on the buyer side are now participating in these conversations. Why? Because everyone has something at risk.

And that criteria have shifted, and if we don't make the shift as sellers as enablers. We're going to have a problem.

00:13:35 Greg Reffner

Brings me to a point around. Working cross-functionally within organizations. I want to talk about because it's definitely has changed and there's one thing that I got into sales Roderick because I like the idea of I measured on my performance, not on the number of hours I work and what's crazy to me is I had submitted a demo request couple days ago for a product I was evaluating, and I think I submitted 5 demo requests was like 6:37 o'clock at night. One company got back to me. Can you tell I'll give you one guess? How much which one of those companies am I seriously evaluating?

00:14:12 Roderick Jefferson

Somewhere between zero and two.

00:14:14 Greg Reffner

Yeah, it's the one company who got back to me like within 5 minutes 6:30 on a on a week, weekend, night and the other ones got waited till Monday and so I started asking some of my SDR leader friends. Kind of you know. What kind of hours does your teamwork? Do you guys allow some flexibility? And it seemed like there was still this expectation of an 8 to 5 work schedule, and to me I think that is a little bit crazy because. People, the lines of work in-home or are kind of blurred, and if you want to leave at 2:00 o'clock go, you know go take a walk in the park with your kids in the afternoon you can do that now come back online at 6:30 or 7 o'clock. I feel like companies should be encouraging behavior where SDR's feel like you know what I'm excited to pick up the phone even though it's 7:00 o'clock at night. So, do you ever see sales enablement leaders work with HR to try to maybe incentivize kind of weekend responses? Weekend prospecting off our responses off our prospecting and things like that.

00:15:22 Roderick Jefferson

I'm going to give you 2 schools of thought. The first is I would say that companies are now, especially because we're in a virtual environment, are now more flexible than they've ever had to be. And it comes from the old adage they've never confused activity with productivity. I've never, as a leader, been a Clock watcher. If you can get your job done in 40 out in 30 hours, do it. That means you're more efficient. It also means you got some best practices to share with others, so they're not putting in 70 hour weeks, right? Yeah, and so. Yeah, incentivizing. This is the flip side of it. I'm not a big fan of that.

I'm really not, ok, and the reason is that we have a flexible enough schedule and if you're doing things right and if you are enabling your people with it. I'm not. No one has an 8 to five job. Let me start there, that's out. There will be times where you have to work weekends. Yeah, there will be times where you have to work deep into the wee hours of the night, we've all been there. But that should not become the norm. That should be the exception for those times. I think that we have to, as enablement. People start finding especially right now, or why a way to find. It's never going to be fair, but a way to find mutually equitable hours for people to work. Right, and if you're doing 70 hours you need to ask yourself. First of all, what are you not doing right?

00:16:49 Roderick Jefferson

And secondly, how do you now go show in a justifiable and validating form, how this can be done differently and how this has been being done in other places successfully within smaller parameters of time?

00:17:04 Greg Reffner

Yeah, actually if you're working 70 hours a week, you're either a doctor or you're not very good at your job and you need to change.

00:17:10 Roderick Jefferson

And now to the sales leaders. There's never been a time where leading with humanity, compassion, empathy, and AQ has meant more than right now. If you've been a sales leader for a while, we used to do this and we just did it until the hours were done, it's not how it works lifeworks anymore. We also used to sit and watch 1/2 an hour, 30 minutes to an hour's worth of talking head. PowerPoint now will watch 65-minute podcasts.

But not an hour of just folks droning on now. I think it's time for the sales leaders to reset their expectations because what's important to your manager is imperative to you. So if you are modeling positive behavior and showing how to be more efficient effective model, more productive consistently guess what? So will the people on your team?

00:18:03 Greg Reffner

Yep. Yeah, I love it absolutely well, said, well, said well, let's talk about sales enablement. You mentioned KPI's. How are we measuring success of sales enablement? Sales leaders have quotas. Marketers need to hit down there MQL targets. Customer success looks at churn. Product has story point spreads. They have to hit. How do you? How are you or where? Where are you seeing success with companies aligning KPI’s to the changes in the buying landscape changes in the selling landscape and making sure that everybody is really on the same page when it comes to the motions, we're going to go through to bring in revenue?

00:18:44 Roderick Jefferson

Well, as with all of my other answers, I believe in the power of three, so that's at least three components is first and foremost number one. I believe there are two types of metrics. One that sales enablement owns and another set that sells enablement, impacts and influences. Right? So what we influence and impact are things like average deal size, collateral usage, frequency deal velocity, new pipeline created, number of closed deals, quota attainment, time to revenue win and loss rate.

Those have not changed. Ok, what we actually own are things like you know the needs analysis, the program, base stats, the usage stats for your learning management, your content management system, all the sales-related communications that are being sent out. All of your statistics and metrics around E-learning. As I said earlier, Smiley sheets and butts and seats won't get it done anymore.

And I think that's just for sales. And 2nd I think there's a whole different set for customer success and this seems to get left out a lot because everyone focuses on the BDR and the AE, the let's not leave out customer success because we're building a big house. If we leave out customer success. We built this beautiful house, short hallway, where people had tried out the back door and we wonder why.

00:20:02 Greg Reffner

Totally

00:20:04 Roderick Jefferson

So, Customer success adoption rates. APR annual recurring revenue customer churn rates customer life value C sets daily usage engagement rates escalation resolution Reddit accounts all those things. We can help influence by preparing folks on how to address those, and also how to hedge those.

Now the same stats go for customer success. As I said, for sales it's still about numbers, it's about metrics, it's about tools. It's about processes, programs, platforms. Ultimately it comes down to really removing those, selling obstacles, and getting folks to do what they do best. The third thing. Numbers are statistics until you can tie them to something that matters. And what I mean by that is we throw all these numbers and stats outright. Meet with your sales leaders and find out of that whole laundry list, sales leaders and customer success. Is that whole laundry list that I gave you which actually mattered to them. Because otherwise, enablement is giving sales. We think they need. No, and we're also setting ourselves up to be two things. One, the fixers of broken things which were not. It's got that worked out. I stay out very quickly. Right, and Secondly, sales, scribes and sales servants, which were not. We have to be seen as a true business partner with them.

That also comes down to where did the metrics fit in to the buyer's journey where they fit into the selling motions? What tools are required, and just because there's a million tools out there, you don't need a million of them. Yeah, right. What's the best thing for the maturation point in the maturation cycle of your company right now?

And at the end of the day.

How do I come back and show those three things? How do I show that we have accelerated speed the revenue. How can I show that we help to increase our productivity? How can I show that we are helping create customers for life? And finally, how can I show that we are removing selling obstacles we do that were of high value and more partners. We don't do that. We will forever be viewed as the fixers of broken things.

00:22:16 Greg Reffner

Yeah, absolutely. Do you find that sales enablement leaders are starting to get a dedicated budget for their own tools like LMS or CMS?

Type of solutions to help with that E-learning? Or is that still kind of a struggle?

00:22:29 Roderick Jefferson

Well, it depends on where you report right? I've reported to marketing to sales OPS to the COO, to the CRO. And I will say this when it comes to budget. The closer to the sun you are, the closer you are to budget and remember. Sales is the sun.

00:22:45 Greg Reffner

Yeah, that's fair.

00:22:47 Roderick Jefferson

You further you get the colder it gets for you.

00:22:51 Greg Reffner

Absolutely. It's funny that sales leader. It's always like that. There's no budget. Well, I need this. OK, you can have that because that's all the name of new revenue. So I've been on.

00:23:00 Roderick Jefferson

If it will. If it will create more revenue or it will help to maintain customers and also cut down on attrition of internal sellers. Yeah, well there's always budget that will show up.

00:23:11 Greg Reffner

It's funny how that works. Yeah, absolutely well last question and it's really the reason I wanted to ask you this is because for the longest time. I went through this period of my life Roderick where I was like. I want to help people out to be a sales enablement leader. And I got talked out of it by every person that I that I asked too. I was like hey, what advice do you have for sales enablement leaders like is it awesome getting into this job and they're like no, it sucks. You're always the person that will get blamed for when things go wrong and so I was like, OK, I guess I'm not getting sales enablement.

For the for our folks listening that want to get into sales enablement, they feel like they want to help people. They understand the change in the landscape of sellers and buyers. They want to work across departments. What advice would you give aspiring sales enablement leaders when it comes to finding a home where they are going to be embraced from other leaders in the company. They're not going to be an island, like. how do we find that home for those sales enablement leaders who do really want to make an impact?

00:24:18 Roderick Jefferson

First of all, it hurts my heart to hear that someone talked you out of.

00:24:21 Greg Reffner

Oh many people talked me out of it.

00:24:23 Roderick Jefferson

That I absolutely love and what I find out is when people are saying those things, it's because they are not viewed as that valued partner that we talked about earlier and viewed as again the fixtures of broken things or as purely training. When people come to me and say, hey, I'm thinking about moving over from product marketing or I've been successful in a sales role and I want to move over my first. Response is fantastic and here's why because you bring credibility, especially sales folks.

Everyone did I start with today first and foremost. I'm a sales guy that says I have walked in your shoes. I can talk to you about how comfortable or uncomfortable things are. I've taken down big whales, I've landed Bluebirds and I've lost it the 13th hour. So, I feel your pain so come on in join the party. Now what we can do is talk to other sales.

Leaders and sales professionals in their language, not in sales enablement, speak, kill the jargon and the bingo cards, please. Right, there's value in coming with that background, and there's also value in saying you look at things different. Sales enablement really has not shifted a whole lot in the last 20 years. Tools have innovative, but we're still doing a lot of things the same way. I will say this, the one humongous plus about Covid is that it made every sales enablement practitioner. Not theorists, not analysts, but practitioner learn how to be comfortable with being uncomfortable yet have to do things differently.

Right, so if they're coming in, I'm like you bring fresh ideas, new thoughts, a different set of lenses. And you also bring. The willingness to learn and grow. So come on in. Right, I want to learn from you as much as I'm sharing with you. Just because I have 20 years of, just because I'm the guy that quote-unquote coined this, I don't know at all. Not at all. As I was writing my book, I realized that I was writing stories and things like that that I have learned so much in just the last three years. Beyond the first 17 or so, when I thought that I was really learning sales enablement. And I was in bits and pieces.

But I also stopping I'd venture to ask you the question. Why do you want to go into sales enablement? And I've asked that people go well. You guys don't have a quota. Wrong in our quota is everybody in the company.

00:26:45 Greg Reffner

Topline, total number.

00:26:47 Roderick Jefferson

Unlike when you talk to and this is not disrespectful. This is just being honest when you're talking to marketing a product marketing and you're trying to explain why we don't do enablement. The last month of the quarter, why we're not going to do 4 webinars. To them, it's Wednesday. To sales it’s end of quarter, yeah. Right, you come in as a salesperson into enablement. You know that already, yeah, so as you're building programs, you're thinking about. If this were me, what would resonate with me when I was in a sales position? What do I wish I would have gotten? What do they teach me that didn't make sense that I can teach differently now and what did they do to come back and reinforce this later that either someone did incredibly well or they never did?

00:27:27 Greg Reffner

Love it, yeah. I feel like we're at kind of a chasm in the sales name world where? It's going to be elevated role for those sales enablement practitioners that can come in and deliver. You are going to have a seat at the table and it's really going to separate the cans from the camps in terms of those that are able to deliver. You know, I think the past six months have shown that I think the next six months are really going to show that so this is amazing stuff, Roderick. I really do appreciate it. I have some Nuggets that I have personally taken away in terms of the buying experience, something that has always been really important to me is making sure my team understands where buyers are going and not how it works. But why it's important to them? I love that little nugget that you kind of shared with us today.

Companies should definitely be helping their sellers or customer success. We're talking about G2 crowd like, how are your even your customers using the tools? Where are they going to find other users of your software? That was that was huge for me. The work hours making sure we're leading by example. Definitely, that's like that kind of goes without saying and then making sure that we're not just looking at influence, but I think the word you used was impact in terms of the KPI's that sales enablement leaders need to be looking at in terms of.

Being measured and ultimately tying that to new revenue. So did I miss anything that our buyer should walk away from our prospects, our listeners. I'm still in sales mode, Roderick our listeners should take away from today. Again, just because you're in sales doesn't mean you're always selling the best salespeople I've ever worked with. Ask more questions than they did talk. If you're talking more than 50% of a conversation, you're over talking because we need to get back to focusing on having conversations and stop giving presentations.

00:29:33 Greg Reffner

Love it, that is absolutely golden rule to live, but I think that works in all aspects of life, just not even, not even sales, right. More listen. The more you listen, less you talk, the better off you'll be. How do people get ahold of you? Find out about your new book coming out.

00:29:49 Roderick Jefferson

Thanks for the plug on that. First of all, the book is called Sales Enablement 3.0. The blueprint to sales enablement excellence. It's all about where we're going and the things we're talking about now and how we've had this shift and where I see us going even further. It sells label it practitioners that when should be out in early December. Nice to get connected and if you can't find us, then you're not really looking. Let me see we're Roderick underscore J underscore associates on Instagram. Roger Jefferson Associates on LinkedIn at the voice of Rod on Twitter as well as at the voice of Rod on Facebook. You can hit me email info@roderickjefferson.com. You can find us at roderickjefferson.com or you can find us on YouTube at Roderick Jefferson and Associates. If you can't find us you're not really trying.

00:30:39 Greg Reffner

I was going to say I think the only thing you didn't list there was Quora or Reddit.

00:30:44 Roderick Jefferson

Yes, well we are getting there.

00:30:47 Greg Reffner

Well, thank you for your time today Sir. It was a pleasure as always and hopefully, everyone took away some things that they can go to use and make an immediate impact.

00:30:57 Roderick Jefferson

My absolute pleasure, if you would like to know more, connect with me on LinkedIn. Come the questions my way. I will do what I can answer.

00:31:03 Greg Reffner

Perfect, enjoy the rest of your day, Sir.

00:31:05 Roderick Jefferson

Thanks likewise bye.