

Your Roadmap to Sales and Marketing Alignment

An insider's guide to
aligning your sales and
marketing organizations to
transform the way you sell





01. Introduction
The importance of sales-marketing alignment in meeting buyer expectations.

02. Fives Stages of Sales-Marketing Alignment
Assessing your organization's current maturity and understanding where you can go next.

03. Sales-Marketing Alignment Action Plan
Six practical actions to take to mature your organization's sales-marketing alignment.

04. About
Learn more about Showpad, the leading sales enablement platform for the modern seller.

Introduction

[Check out a full overview of the Sales Transformation Maturity Model.](#)

Today's B2B buyers expect personalized, seamless experiences throughout the purchase journey — both while researching on their own and after engaging with a salesperson. In fact, [a study from SiriusDecisions](#) found that 81% of buyers today make purchase decisions based on buying experience, rather than product or price.

In order to meet the changing expectations of buyers and continue to grow, organizations must transform the way they sell. This is easier said than done, as sales transformation goes beyond the performance of an organization's sales team.

The first step is to assess your organization's maturity today. Based on the experience of veteran sales, marketing, and sales enablement executives across multiple industries, we developed the [Showpad Sales Transformation Maturity Model](#) to help you understand how you are meeting buyer expectations today — and where your organization can go in the future. While the model is visionary, it's also pragmatic, providing approachable steps you can take to help you progress toward the ultimate goal — collaborative selling.

Though there are many elements that impact your sales maturity, the Showpad Sales Transformation Maturity Model focuses on six organizational aspects that most directly impact sales transformation. In this eBook, however, we'll narrow in even further to focus on just one of those organizational aspects: sales and marketing alignment.

Six Key Organizational Aspects Driving Sales Transformation

1. Operational systems
2. Customer-facing experiences
3. Marketing organization
4. Sales organization
- 5. Sales-marketing alignment**
6. Sales enablement



Why focus on sales and marketing alignment?

Research tells us the experience a buyer has with your company can make or break a sale, and that experience is primarily driven by your marketing and sales organizations. Your sales and marketing teams must align to ensure they are focusing on the same customers with the right messaging and content, investing resources where they will have the most impact, and delivering a seamless buying experience that will differentiate your organization from the competition. In fact, collaboration between sales and marketing is the only way to get to collaborative selling.

The following eBook explores the five stages of sales-marketing alignment to help you assess your organization's sales and marketing collaboration today and understand how it can mature in the future, with support from your sales enablement team. It also provides six practical, impactful actions you can take to evolve your organization's sales and marketing alignment — and transform your sales maturity.



Stages of Sales-Marketing Alignment

Sales and marketing alignment has a large impact on your organization's sales maturity. But before you develop a plan to improve your organization's sales and marketing alignment, you must first understand your maturity today. Below is a summary of the five stages of sales-marketing alignment, drawn from the Showpad Sales Transformation Maturity Model, to help you assess your current maturity and understand where you can go in the future.

1. Start-up Selling

Your organization is just starting out, and your salespeople often do their own marketing. If there is a marketing function, it's likely focused on a website and collateral. During this stage of transformation, very few metrics are tracked.

2. Success Selling

During this stage, your marketing and sales teams are often at odds. Marketing is focused on driving leads and building the brand. Sales wants more leads and doesn't have confidence in the data marketing provides.

3. Scalable Selling

Once an organization has reached this stage, marketing and sales have begun to partner, sharing ownership of pipeline and revenue. The teams jointly develop and agree on plans for different customer segments. Some demand generation programs are jointly owned and managed. Marketing delivers content that sales and buyers find valuable.

4. Guided Selling

Your marketing and sales organizations continue to deepen and strengthen their partnership, working together to execute account-based marketing and a more sophisticated channel strategy. The two teams work together to provide interactive and personalized buyer experiences. The lines between marketing and sales are becoming blurred. For customers, these lines are invisible.

5. Collaborative Selling

Your buyers have come to expect a seamless purchase journey, with consumer-like experiences throughout. Your marketing and sales organizations act as one team, engaging C-level buyers with personalized content and dynamic systems.

Sales-Marketing Alignment Action Plan

After reviewing the five stages of sales-marketing alignment in the Sales Transformation Maturity Model, you likely have a good idea of where your organization falls today — and where you can go in the future. But the path to collaborative selling can seem overwhelming, especially when you don't know where best to focus your attention.

Based on our experience partnering with 1,000 leading businesses in 50 countries, we developed six recommendations to help you mature your sales-marketing alignment — a key element in delivering a better buyer experience.

1. Align on Metrics and KPIs

The starting point for better sales and marketing alignment is to agree on metrics and KPIs. Aligning on metrics and KPIs ensures both teams are working toward the same goals. In addition, having shared goals builds trust. Marketing and sales teams should work together to determine what metrics are most important to track and how often they should be measured.



A weekly shared forecast call is a great time to review results.

While revenue should be your top metric, you'll also need to track other key metrics such as:

- Pipeline
- Marketing Qualified Leads (MQLs)
- Sales Qualified Leads (SQLs)
- Sales Accepted Leads (SALs)
- Sales Qualified Opportunities

Sales and marketing must also agree on the definitions of each of the key metrics being tracked. It's also crucial to ensure alignment on pipeline and revenue contribution by marketing and sales by volume (percentage) and value. Often, conversations about attribution turn into debates about credit — or blame. Approach these metrics as a tool to improve effectiveness across teams rather than ammunition for an "us vs. them" discussion.

Finally, ensure everyone is using a single view of the funnel that marketing and sales co-own, and that everyone is measuring results with the same data and reports.



2. Map Content to Each Stage of the Purchase Journey

In order to win buyers, it's key to provide content that is relevant and valuable, wherever they are in the purchase journey. The first step is to map out the journey of your buyers, then develop content in a variety of formats that are relevant to each stage of the journey, keeping in mind that different buyers prefer different content formats.

While these activities are typically owned by the marketing team, sales feedback is critical, especially when it comes to the bottom of the funnel. After all, salespeople are the ones meeting with customers day in and day out.

Qualitative feedback given by sales during conversations with marketing is important and valuable. However, it's not scalable. That's why marketing teams must also rely on content analytics to understand what content is driving business forward. By understanding which content is used by sales and which is tied to closed revenue, marketing can spend more time creating content that works.

When mapping content to the purchase journey, remember that in most cases, B2B buyers are doing a significant amount of research prior to contacting a salesperson. In fact, a [recent Showpad study](#) found that on average, B2B buyers spend up to 20 hours researching before contacting a salesperson. However, the more expensive the purchase, the more time buyers spend doing research.

Yet when B2B buyers are conducting research, 32% can't find the information they need. And 37% can't find enough information applicable to their purchase. That's why it's crucial for sales and marketing teams to make it as easy as possible for buyers to find what they're looking for.

Focus on search engine optimization (SEO) so buyers can easily find your company and your content. And build and maintain a website that provides a great user experience, as well as content in a variety of different formats. Finally, be sure to increase the value and specificity of content as your buyer progresses through the journey. Taking these actions will position your company as a trusted resource and encourage buyers to take the next step by contacting a salesperson.


On average, B2B buyers spend up to 20 hours researching before contacting a salesperson.

32% of B2B buyers can't find the information they need when conducting research prior to contacting a salesperson.

3. Focus on a Better Buyer Experience

Today's consumers have higher expectations than ever before. And, not surprisingly, our experiences as consumers are shaping our expectations as B2B buyers. Today's B2B buyers expect engaging, personalized, and seamless experiences while doing their own research and when working with a salesperson. In fact, as mentioned earlier, 81% of B2B buyers make purchase decisions based on buying experiences, rather than product or price. After all, B2B buyers are also consumers.

Despite changing buyer expectations, most sellers haven't adapted their approach to selling. They're using generic, static, and irrelevant presentations and leading ineffective meetings that are boring their buyers.



81% of B2B buyers make purchase decisions based on buying experience over product or price.

In fact, according to Forrester, 85% of buyers don't think their meetings with sales are valuable. And IDG found that 66% of buyers want more relevant content.

In order to scale success, marketing and sales must unite to focus on delivering a better experience for their buyers. For starters, marketing must collaborate with sales — and rely on content analytics — to provide content that is valuable and relevant. That way, with the support of sales enablement, salespeople can become guided sellers when they're talking with prospects.

After a buyer has engaged with sales, marketing and sales must provide branded microsites that allow buyers to access relevant content anytime, anywhere, and share that content to other internal stakeholders. This is key, as nearly 30% of B2B buyers cite difficulty sharing information internally as a factor that slows down purchase decisions.

When focusing on buyer experiences, remember that sales enablement is your partner. Your sales enablement team will help map different buyer experiences to sales stages according to your sales methodology. In addition, sales enablement will help ensure sales has the right training, coaching, content, and tools to deliver experiences buyers love.



30% of B2B buyers cite difficulty sharing information internally as a factor that slows down purchase decisions.

4. Plan and Execute as a Team

When an organization is in the early stages of sales transformation, marketing is focused almost exclusively on generating leads while sales is focused on closing deals. As investments in both teams grow, it becomes increasingly important to plan and execute together.

This starts by agreeing on who you're selling to. Start by working together to define ideal customer profiles (ICPs) and focus all marketing and sales efforts on these profiles. Share buyer personas that inform sales enablement, sales strategy, and messaging, and deliver consistent content based on this.

Engage sales and sales leadership in marketing planning. Find out what's important to them and listen to their ideas. After all, salespeople are the ones spending time with customers and prospects all day. If the data supports an idea, try it. Measure your results to determine whether you should do it again.

In addition, develop and deliver joint campaigns. Empower Sales Development Representatives (SDRs) with marketing-developed campaign assets including email templates, scripts, and content.

Finally, remember to keep your salespeople informed, but avoid overwhelming them. Sales and marketing should partner with sales enablement to determine the right level of communications and enablement for marketing activities.

Sales enablement should act as the filter on communications to sales to ensure they get what's important. Consider tiering your enablement activities.

5. Measure, Iterate, and Improve

Your sales and marketing organizations are now executing as one team. But the work isn't over. Instead, to continue your transformation, you must commit to ongoing improvement.

Schedule recurring meetings to review results, optimize performance, brainstorm, and plan. For starters, schedule weekly pipeline reviews. In addition, schedule regular (monthly or biweekly) update meetings between regional marketing and sales leaders to review results and trends, and to discuss how to evolve current plans to optimize. Finally, during Quarterly Business Reviews (QBRs), spend one-third of the time looking back and two-thirds looking forward.

For example:

Acme Company Enablement Tiers

**Tier 1:
Formal Training and
Certification**

Your most important initiatives, such as new product launches

**Tier 2:
Informal Training Without
Certification**

Key initiatives, such as product updates

**Tier 3:
Inform Only**

Press releases, analyst reports, global campaigns



In addition to measuring agreed-upon metrics, be sure you're leveraging content analytics to optimize investments. As mentioned earlier, it's critical to understand which content is used by sales and which is tied to closed revenue. These insights allow you to invest more in the content that impacts revenue.

6. Make it Personal

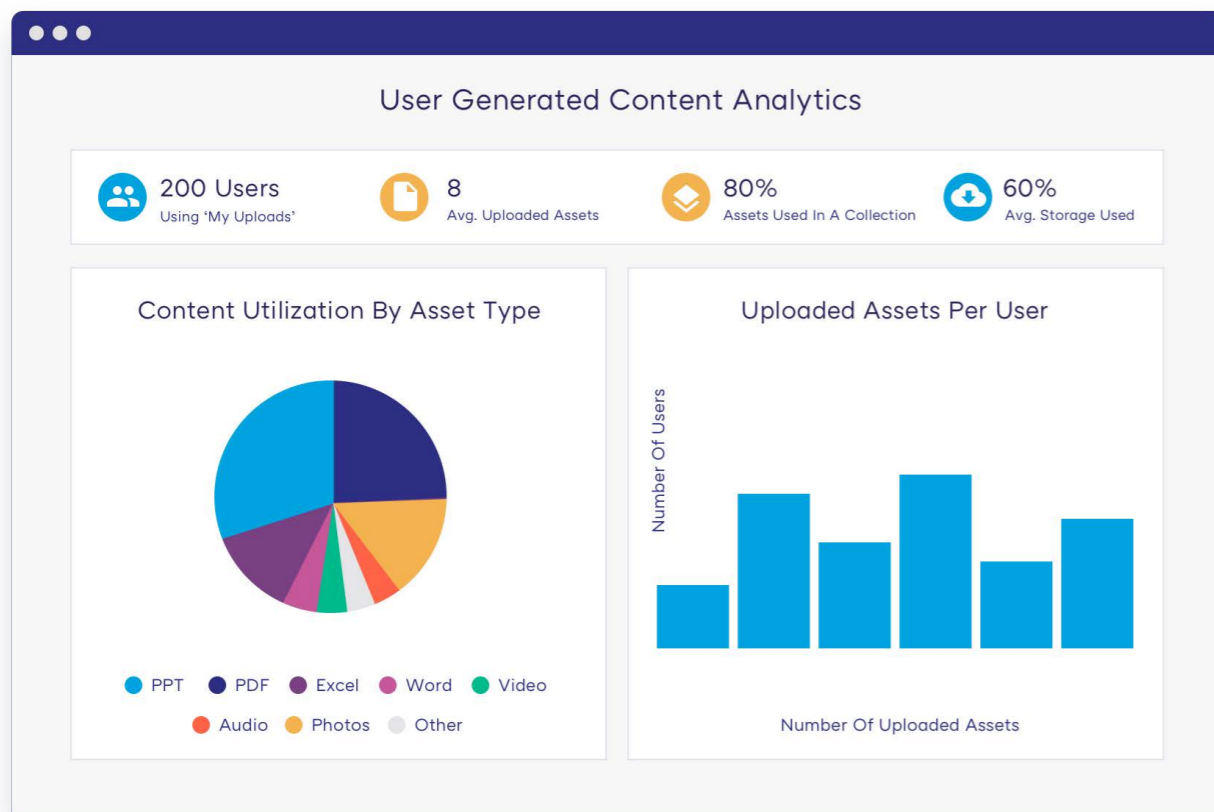
When you're working on improving the alignment between sales and marketing, it's key to focus on things like revenue, analytics, and your buyers. But it's also important to build relationships between your sales and marketing teams and to have fun along the way.

Example Meeting Cadence

Weekly: Pipeline review

Monthly: Regional marketing and sales leaders review results and trends and discuss plan optimization

Quarterly: Quarterly business reviews, with $\frac{1}{3}$ of the time looking back and $\frac{2}{3}$ looking forward





Agree to give feedback that's direct, but kind. Lean on each other. Catch up over coffee, go out for lunch, or share war stories over a drink. In other words, be one team. And finally, remember that alignment starts at the top. The way your sales and marketing leaders interact and work together sets the tone for how your sales and marketing teams will collaborate.

Stay in the Know

Showpad is releasing a series of eBooks focusing on different stages and dimensions of the Sales Transformation Maturity Model, providing practical, actionable insights to help you evolve your organization's sales success.

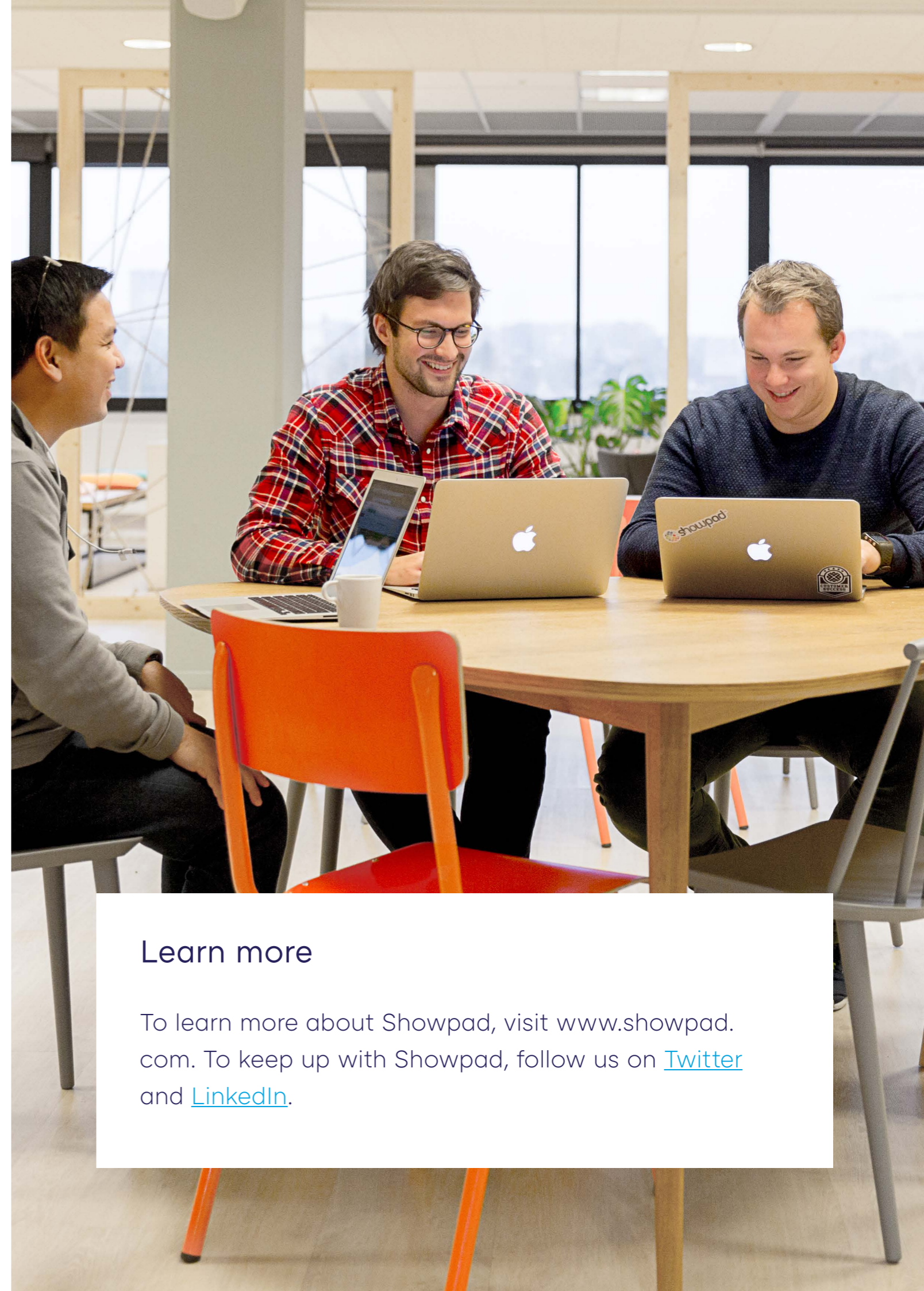
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About Showpad

Showpad is the leading sales enablement platform for the modern seller. Showpad's all-in-one platform empowers sales and marketing teams to engage buyers through industry-leading training and coaching software and innovative content and engagement solutions. Using the most comprehensive data on successful sales interactions, Showpad fuels Artificial Intelligence to discover, replicate, and automate what works for top performers.

Showpad serves more than 1,200 customers across the globe, including Johnson & Johnson, GE Healthcare, Fujifilm, Bridgestone, Prudential, Honeywell, and Merck. Founded in 2011, the company has headquarters in Ghent and Chicago with offices in Brussels, London, Munich, Wroclaw, San Francisco, and Portland.

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