

# How to distribute sales materials so they actually get used

## Not another email from marketing!

Salespeople are inundated with messages from prospects, customers, management, marketing and partners. Few have time to respond to all their emails let alone look at corporate intranet sites or sales portals. So what's the best way of getting sales enabling materials to the salespeople, and ensuring they use them to increase sales? In this article we suggest a number of alternative approaches and identify the ones that work best.

### Introduction

Sales Guides and other sales materials represent a considerable investment. Their value is only realised when salespeople access the information and use it to help sell a solution, so it's important that there's a process to ensure salespeople don't just have passive access to them, but actively use them. The Sales Guide is usually designed to be used by both direct and partner salespeople, so an added challenge is to ensure it's distributed through the partners' organisation.

Through hundreds of engagements at Solutions for Sales we have developed an insight into the best (and worst!) methods of getting materials to the salesforce. We've summarised the options below and given our recommendations on the most effective solution. Obviously, there is a trade-off between the effectiveness of the method and the cost, but the most effective methods are not necessarily the most expensive.

### Are you distributing the right materials?

Of course, the first step is to ensure that what you are distributing is of real value. The Sales Guide and other Solutions for Sales deliverables have proven themselves to be excellent sales enabling materials, valued by salespeople.



### Distribution methods

The Sales Guide (and other sales enablement materials) can be distributed by:

1. Providing printed copies at a sales event or a Sales Development Workshop
2. Posting a printed copy to the salesperson
3. Emailing the Sales Guide PDF directly to the salesperson
4. Emailing a link to the Sales Guide PDF hosted on the intranet or extranet site
5. Emailing a link to the Sales Guide PDF on a distribution site that tracks access
6. Providing a copy of the PDF on the sales information intranet or extranet site

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When choosing a distribution method the main issues to consider are:

- Will it attract the attention of the salespeople and encourage them to access the materials immediately, or will they leave it until later and probably forget?
- Does it provide the material in a tangible format (printed paper) that the salesperson can easily use?
- Does it provide an electronic copy that can be easily distributed and accessed?
- Can partner salespeople get access to the materials?
- Can you trace the users to evaluate usage and provide updates?

The choice between paper or electronic is likely to be based on each individual user's working habits. Possession of an electronic version means the user can print it locally, but the result of local printing is rarely as effective for use as a properly printed and bound version. Concerns over the environment and waste may favour electronic copies, but this will be undermined if the document is printed locally and then discarded.

The table below outlines the main pros and cons of each method.

## Recommendations

In our experience the most effective methods are:

- Handing out printed copies at a sales meeting, training or partner event. A professionally printed and bound copy of an impressive Sales Guide ensures a good level of attention, and is a highly tangible and powerful sales tool. The main disadvantage of handing out printed copies is that there is no automatic traceability for updates and follow-up.
- Distributing a PDF via an email with a link to a distribution site. A well written email will grab the salesperson's attention, and the use of a distribution site means that you can trace who has accessed the sales materials, giving you an immediate indication of which salespeople are proactive. It also provides a measure of the interest in the topic covered by the sales materials, and an automatic mailing list for updates when they become available.

A combination of these methods, together with announcements in newsletters and other internal and channel communications, is likely to be very effective. The preference should be for the materials to come through the sales management route, which adds an endorsement and differentiates them from end-customer materials.

Distribution method	Attracts attention	Tangible	Electronic	Traceable	Partner access
1 Printed copies at sales event	● ● ●	● ● ●	●	●	● ●
2 Posting	● ●	● ● ●	●	● ●	●
3 Email PDF of Sales Guide	● ●	●	● ● ●	● ●	● ●
4 Email link	● ●	●	● ●	● ●	●
5 Email link to distribution site	● ●	●	● ● ●	● ● ●	● ● ●
6 Provide PDF on sales information intranet or extranet	●	●	● ● ●	●	●

Key: ● ● ● = Good ● ● = Mediocre ● = Poor

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### Follow up

Just getting the materials to their target audience does not maximise effectiveness. You should draw salespeople's attention to the materials, and promote their use.

SfS includes two key follow up steps in the standard delivery of every Sales Guide:

- **User survey:** about two weeks after the Sales Guide is launched we conduct a web survey asking salespeople, and other users, for their views. This provides valuable feedback on the use and effectiveness of the materials, and encourages the salespeople to take another look.
- **Update:** our surveys show that salespeople will assume something is out of date if it has not been updated for 6 months. We include an update of the Sales Guide during the first 12 months. This provides another opportunity to attract salespeople's attention and encourage them to revisit and use the information.

Beyond these basic steps we have undertaken promotional activities for clients, including sales campaigns, interactive training sessions, online quizzes to test solution knowledge, and monthly newsletters reporting sales successes and disseminating sales tips.



### Conclusions

Having effective sales enabling materials is a key step to sales success. Distributing them effectively is the next most important consideration. Simply placing the materials on an intranet site is unlikely to maximise their use and your return on the investment. By having a simple plan and tailoring the distribution to your sales environment, you can maximise the impact and sales results.

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This article was written by Alistair Fox of Solutions for Sales. For information about Solutions for Sales and further useful resources visit [www.solutionsforsales.com](http://www.solutionsforsales.com) or call +44 (0)1702 586742.