


STOP REVENUE MALPRACTICE:

# The Path from Reactive to Predictive Sales Enablement






Imagine this scenario: You visit your doctor because you aren't feeling well, but you aren't sure why. Your doctor takes one look at you and prescribes a range of treatments without first properly diagnosing the problem. This scenario clearly constitutes blatant medical malpractice, but it's not dissimilar to how sales team leaders tend to address poor rep performance. Sales managers often attempt to address the symptoms of poor performance (missed quotas, stalled deals) by providing more coaching or training, but they fail to identify the underlying skill gaps that are causing these issues. And, the need for new training only becomes apparent after the mistakes are made. Introducing new training or coaching without first diagnosing the problematic skill gaps is a common yet overlooked kind of malpractice called **Revenue Malpractice**, and it's often the silent killer of GTM success.

Your revenue challenges are a symptom of deeper skill gaps that no one has spotted or fixed. These gaps build up across your sales and enablement teams and often go unnoticed until they start costing you deals, slowing down pipeline, or hurting customer relationships, which is sadly when 90% of teams intervene - after revenue has been impacted.

Most teams focus on metrics like call volume and close rates, but that's not where the real risk lies. The real problem is reps making the same avoidable mistakes, not because they aren't trying, but because they weren't truly prepared. These everyday errors add up, and by the time you notice them in your forecast or win rates, the damage is already done.

We interviewed five revenue leaders to learn how top SaaS companies are getting ahead of these issues by changing how they enable their teams. Instead of *reacting* after problems appear, they're using data to *proactively predict* where reps are likely to struggle and stepping in with the right training, coaching, or support *before* it impacts revenue.



## PART 1:

# How Traditional Sales Enablement Contributes to Revenue Malpractice

Traditional sales enablement can no longer keep pace with the fast-moving buyers and competitive markets of today.

Lagging indicators like quota attainment and deals closed only help to reveal shortcomings after it's too late and your pipeline has suffered.

Managers give subjective

feedback that leaves reps wondering how exactly they can improve, while they remain unsure of how to recognize pivotal moments in subsequent deal cycles. Traditional sales enablement is a purely reactive process, where teams hope that they learn from mistakes of the past to improve for the future.

The culmination of the issues with traditional sales enablement leads to *revenue malpractice*, where skill gaps remain undetected across teams, leading to patterns of mistakes that result in poor performance and reduced revenue predictability. Through our conversations, we identified the top six issues with traditional sales enablement that create revenue malpractice.



## Issue #1

# Lack of predictive coaching

A reactive sales coach attempts to treat the symptoms of poor rep performance, but is unable to identify the underlying skill gaps. During a stalled deal, the reactive coach attempts to analyze the lead-up to the stall and use their past experience to give the rep guidance on how to overcome the obstacle. After a lost deal, the reactive coach does a post-mortem to create a teachable moment for the rep, in the hope they have more success going forward. While these approaches are helpful, they require something to go wrong to enact. Both stalled deals and lost deals represent missed revenue opportunities.

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**D'Andre Crump**  
VP Revenue Enablement at  
[RevLogic](#)

A reactive coach is no more than a sales manager: someone who manages problems after they arise. A predictive coach can steer the rep in the right direction before the deal stalls or is lost. But to do so, the coach needs to have the foresight to recognize an impending obstacle for the rep. Even for the best sales coaches, this can be challenging to do at scale across an entire team with a traditional approach. “We’ve got a lot of managers in the world. There are not a lot of great sales coaches in the world,” says D'Andre Crump, VP Revenue Enablement at [RevLogic](#).

## Issue #2

# Limitations on traditional role-playing

Role playing is one of the most powerful training tools for sales reps. It gives them a low-risk environment to practice key conversations, build confidence, and recognize pivotal moments before facing real prospects. But traditional role-playing isn't scalable, and it relies on managers to subjectively identify the skill gaps that need to be practiced.



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**Shawn Pillow**  
Director of Revenue  
Enablement at [Chainalysis](#)

Practice with one buyer persona may not translate to another persona with different pain points. The manager is left with the impossible task of creating an all-encompassing variety of role-playing scenarios that account for a range of personas. These scenarios are usually constructed in response to rep errors or deals that have gone sideways and do not account for current market dynamics or buyer trends. Further, roleplay performance is measured by the manager, who can be prone to bias and out of touch with how a buyer might actually respond.

Because of these shortcomings, reps are often left practicing new skills on prospects, with their roleplays being less applicable than they hoped. Learning experiences in these moments are valuable, but they come at the expense of potential revenue, representing a direct cost of a traditional role-playing approach.

### Issue #3

## Reliance on siloed metrics

If a manager only examines metrics like number of meetings booked or demos held, they are missing the big picture. A rep might be booking a ton of meetings, way over quota expectations, but none of their deals are closing because they are booking meetings with prospects that have no buying power. On paper, that rep is hitting their meeting goal, but in reality, they are missing a chance to adjust and make a stronger contribution to revenue. “Building a groundswell of support is great, but if it doesn't ultimately result in something that a C-level exec cares about, then that's a problem,” says Shawn Pillow, Director of Revenue Enablement at [Chainalysis](#).

The consequence of this approach is that reps build a skillset that does not maximize their utility. A whole team of reps might be incredible at booking meetings, but they aren't developing skills that actually help them learn how they can communicate value to customers. Kari Roberts, VP of Revenue Operations & Strategy at [BetterUp](#), says,





## Issue #4

“The biggest challenge we have among reps is inadequate customer understanding and qualification, and difficulty connecting solutions to customer initiatives that deliver ROI.” Crump agrees: “We’ve got reps spending a ton of time on deals they shouldn’t be in and not enough time qualifying deals. Reps are chasing activity and just being busy and not really focused on highly qualified opportunities.”

## Subjective feedback and bias from managers

Overreliance on subjectivity causes enablement to become disjointed throughout the organization. Without objective and quantifiable data, it becomes difficult to get buy-in throughout all levels of the organization around the best strategies for rep training. “You need to take what you think is going to be very important to driving your teams forward and being successful, and ensure that you have buy-in and enablement around not only SVPs and manager level, but at the rep level too,” says Roberts.

Lynne Santangelo, Senior Manager of Sales Enablement at [InvoiceCloud](#), says that she previously used competency questionnaires to identify skill gaps, where rep self-ratings were compared with manager ratings. This approach does afford the opportunity for Santangelo’s team to be proactive, but it is still based on the subjectivity of both the rep and the manager.

Subjectivity will likely make it seem that a sales team is performing better than reality. Roberts says sales managers should be concerned that reps are inputting unqualified pipeline data for the purpose of self-preservation. When this positive subjectivity becomes systemic, pipeline gaps can be masked for too long. Santangelo adds that she sees poor Salesforce hygiene and incomplete data entry constantly affecting leadership’s ability to coach effectively.

If anyone feels that there is too much subjectivity present, whether it be in data analysis or rep enablement strategy, organization-wide buy-in becomes extremely challenging.

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## Issue #5

## Arbitrary ramp-up training

Most sales organizations have a structured onboarding process for new reps, but these ramp-up training periods are often arbitrary and not grounded in data. Reps are put on some sort of timeline to get accustomed to their new role, after which they are expected to start contributing to revenue. Many sales organizations deploy a one-size-fits-all approach for this process.

What if a rep is ready to hit the ground running before the ramp-up period is over? If managers have no way to measure this, they are missing a revenue opportunity. On the other hand, what if a rep is past the ramp-up period but still not contributing effectively? Without data, it's challenging for managers to figure out what went wrong and what additional training the rep needs.

## Issue #6

## Inability to measure training effectiveness

A traditional approach to sales coaching means that managers often take shots in the dark, hoping to target the skills that reps are deficient in. This issue is a culmination of the issues

above. The manager looks at siloed metrics and sees their team is struggling to handle objections, so they deploy template-based lessons on how to overcome specific objections that a buyer might have. This approach does not account for individual-level skill gaps, nor does it consider the specific objections that a rep might face in the future.

Managers have no way of knowing that they are actually targeting the right skills with their training. Maybe conversion rates are falling in the objections phase due to a misstep in the qualification phase, but this isn't revealed until later on in the deal cycle. Even if

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**If you don't have a tool that demonstrates where reps are strong and where they are weak and have an opportunity to improve, then that's a problem.**



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the manager gets lucky and happens to target the right skills, they have no way of quantifying how their training is contributing to performance. Maybe market conditions have shifted in such a way that buyers are less concerned about a previous objection, and the training has actually done nothing at all.

The ramifications of revenue malpractice are far greater than lower conversion rates. Sales cycles get longer too, and even if a deal is closed, poor execution in the discovery phase can result in poor customer experience and a damaged reputation for your business. The revenue leaders we interviewed know there's a better way:

"Slipped deals and 'close to no decision' deals provide valuable insights into skill gaps and why things go wrong, but ideally, there is a system to flag risks early." - Shawn Pillow, Director, Revenue Enablement at [Chainalysis](#).





## PART 2:

# From Traditional Enablement to Predictive Enablement™. How Are Top Teams Shifting from Reactive to Proactive?

## Proactive teams are leveraging AI-driven data insights

AI is creating a streamlined opportunity for a paradigm shift in sales enablement from a reactive mode (traditional) to a proactive one (predictive). With AI, siloes between rep performance metrics, market conditions, and buyer trends are broken down with unprecedented efficiency.



Human sales leaders could replicate many AI capabilities, but the time it would take to do so would be unrealistically astronomical. Sales managers don't have the capacity to collect all the data necessary to gain a full picture of rep skill gaps, let alone the time to do the analysis. Finding these data-driven insights for each individual rep is exponentially more difficult.

And this all assumes that reps are

entering data into CRMs correctly and diligently. AI makes these data-driven insights available nearly instantaneously for every rep across a team. Not only that, AI can put rep performance in the context of macro market conditions and buyer behavior trends, further optimizing the utility of these insights.

The time-saving capabilities of AI are limitless. In fact, Crump points out that there are ways to execute “strategic AI implementation to automate smaller deals and increase rep capacity for strategic opportunities, vastly increasing the productive capacity per rep to exceed revenue targets.”

The power of AI is the foundation upon which proactive teams build the following behaviors. Without AI, a well-executed Predictive Enablement™ approach is extremely difficult, if not downright impossible.

## Proactive teams are using predictive tools to flag risks early

Sales leaders are using predictive technology and real-time data to create early warning systems that can alert them to rep performance issues before they impact pipeline and revenue. They aren’t just using AI to analyze current and historic data. Rather, they are using it to make predictions to gain foresight into the various directions a deal might take. This allows them to prepare and be proactive to potential obstacles and stalls, rather than reactive.

Many of the sales leaders we interviewed indicated they are using AI to examine call quality, handling of objectives, and buyer engagement signals to build predictive models that identify where reps might succeed and fail. At [Cockroach Labs](#), Senior Manager of Revenue Enablement Operations Nav Nicholson is building a deal health dashboard using machine learning to flag at-risk opportunities.

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**Nav Nicholson**  
Senior Manager of Revenue  
Enablement Operations at  
[Cockroach Labs](#)

## Proactive teams create realistic but low-stakes practice environments for their reps

The provision of a low-stakes environment in which reps can master skills and build confidence is integral to a Predictive Enablement™ approach. “When you make the stakes lower, you can engage and create more learning moments because your reps will be more confident,” says Pillow.

AI provides an opportunity for reps to roleplay with personas that are similar to those they are likely to encounter in real-world situations. The realism of roleplays skyrockets because AI can use current and predicted market trends to inform the practice environments, something that would be impossible with a traditional approach.

AI can give reps objective, data-driven feedback that isn't prone to human bias and aligned with your team's methodology, process, and definition of what 'success' looks like. This

feedback is based on actual buyer behavior data, and not the opinion of a sales manager. AI can also quickly provide a wide range of buyer personas to reps, covering a much wider variety than any sales manager could.

## Proactive teams identify skill gaps in real-time

A traditional approach includes structured meeting times for reps to meet with their managers and discuss skill gaps. Sales managers can't be everywhere at once, observing every rep on an individual level and flagging skill gaps as soon as they arise — but AI can. AI programs can analyze call transcripts, CRM data, and win/loss patterns to identify specific pressure

points for reps. Nicholson says her team is using AI to do exactly this at [Cockroach](#): "We are extracting transcripts from our call recording platform and having AI do the scoring on behalf of the manager and then giving the manager a heads up on different areas." This allows sales managers to swiftly hone in on specific skills causing poor rep performance and get them back on track, whether it's in a practice environment or in an actual deal cycle.

"If you don't bring up issues with reps when you have the time with them...then you're having the conversations weeks down the road and you wish you addressed it sooner." - Lynne Santangelo, Senior Manager, Sales Enablement, [InvoiceCloud](#)

The predictive ability of AI can use data from practice environments to flag a potential struggle before it actually occurs in a deal cycle. AI programs can continue to use data to identify the training that will be most effective to avoid the deal being impacted. Improvements are no longer made through 'lessons learned.'

For example, if a rep is consistently struggling to discuss pricing, AI can detect patterns within

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this rep's conversations to flag that skill gap immediately. The manager no longer has to guess why a particular rep's deal is falling apart, because AI connects the dots between the specific skill gap and the outcome.

AI also breaks down silos between rep performance metric and market conditions. Say deals are stalling late in later stages. AI can correlate this trend with current market conditions and buyer behavior data to conclude that certain industries might be shifting their priorities in another direction. Sales teams can quickly react and adjust how they address later stages, before they are avalanched by lost deals.

## Proactive teams onboard new reps with data-driven ramp-up periods

Adding an element of real-time data allows ramp-up periods to shift from one-size-fits-all to highly individualized. "If you typically have a nine-month ramp-up period, but you have a way to measure that a rep is ready after six months, then you get three months of house money," says Crump. Without a way to measure, that rep will toil away in training for those three months and your team will miss a revenue opportunity.

AI provides an opportunity for an unbiased measure of whether a rep is ready to graduate from the onboarding process. It can identify reps that are crushing their training roleplays while highlighting strengths and weaknesses that will affect real-world performance. Again, AI represents a time-saving opportunity, because these high achievers can be identified without in-depth observation from managers.

AI also has the capacity to shorten ramp-up periods regardless of rep aptitude. Many of the logistical learnings involved with sales are no longer necessary. "We're just going to implement best practices on the rep's behalf, with the goal of having salespeople focus exclusively on face-to-face conversations while AI handles everything else," says Nicholson. Reps can skip all the onboarding work related to data entry, CRM maintenance, etc., and get right to sales strategy.

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## PART 3:

# Luster's Predictive Enablement™: The Platform Transforming Sales Performance with AI

How can sales leaders take the concept of 'using AI to execute proactively' and put it into practice? Luster is harnessing the power of AI and making it usable, allowing sales teams to effectively transition from reactive to proactive.

Luster is the first **Predictive Enablement™** platform built to help go-to-market teams prevent revenue-impacting mistakes by diagnosing reps' skill gaps, predicting where they'll surface in sales conversations, and prescribing personalized enablement before it's too late. Powered by AI-driven practice, real-time call insights and prescriptive coaching plans, Luster delivers the precision today's sales teams need to outperform.

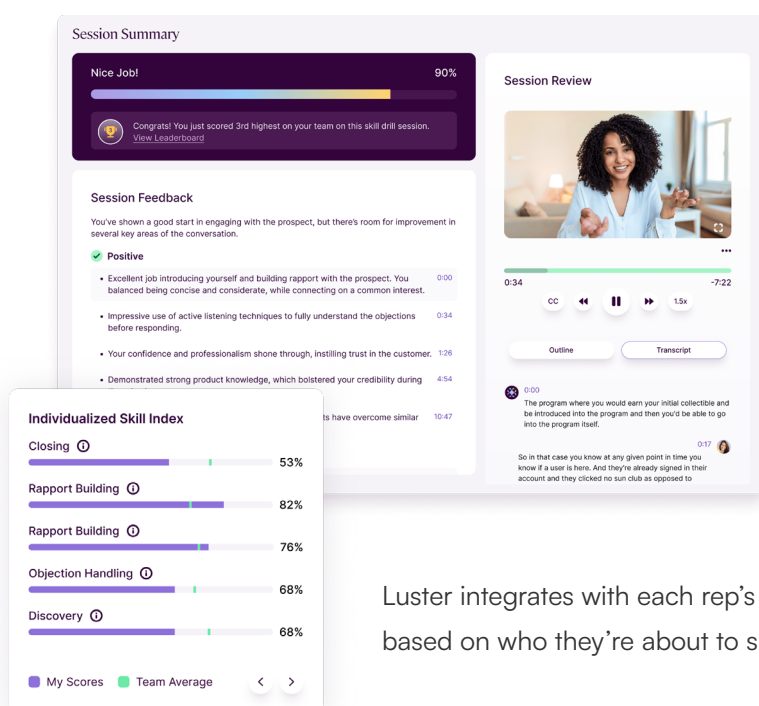


From onboarding and hiring to skill mapping, performance management, continuous learning, and certifications, Luster unites these critical functions in one platform. The result: higher rep confidence, faster ramp times, stronger conversion rates, and fewer costly mistakes. It's everything that proactive sales teams are aspiring to do, all in one platform.

As one example, reps can practice in low-stakes, hyper-realistic environments featuring simulations based on specific buyer personas that reflect real-world conversations,

continuously updating them to reflect changing market trends to help reps stay aligned with customer needs. Every session delivers personalized feedback, pinpointing exactly which skills they need to improve. This is just one way Luster ensures reps are always ready and confident before engaging with prospects or customers.

“Right now is the time for our sellers to go really deep on understanding their customers because their problems may be changing,” says Pillow. Luster makes this vastly easier. Plus, reps can practice for an upcoming call as many times as needed without taking additional time away from their manager or coach. By the time the rep talks to an actual prospect, they’ve nailed down exactly what they want to say and are prepared for a variety of reactions.



For leaders, real-time team dashboards and AI-driven coaching prompts make it easy to identify their team’s strengths and weaknesses and create personalized development plans, enabling them to focus on strategic guidance and make the most of every 1:1.

On top of that, reps are no longer left wondering which trainings they should do to improve performance. Training isn’t just available, it’s scheduled.

Luster integrates with each rep’s calendar and surfaces relevant practice based on who they’re about to speak with.

With all this talk of Luster’s AI capabilities, it might be expected that

Luster is another AI platform led by product developers or engineers. But

Luster’s leadership team consists of highly skilled sales executives who have been end users themselves, ensuring that the product truly meets the needs of sales organizations.

With Luster, teams can more easily move from reactive to proactive and implement Predictive Enablement™ to address skill gaps before revenue is impacted.



## Conclusion

Traditional sales enablement leads to revenue malpractice, where skill gaps go undiagnosed and rep errors compound, costing companies revenue. AI and data-driven insights represent an exciting opportunity for organizations to transition from a reactive to a proactive approach and address rep skill gaps before they impact revenue.

Predictive Enablement™, powered by Luster's AI, offers a truly transformative path towards proactiveness. By shifting away from lagging indicators and subjective feedback, sales leaders can ensure their teams are prepared to tackle obstacles before they arise in actual prospect interactions.

Luster's Predictive Enablement™ platform is a first-of-its-kind tool that helps make it easy for sales leaders to shift their approach. With realistic, low-stakes practice environments, actionable analytics, and personalized skill-building drills and coaching plans, Luster helps reps close skill gaps before they hinder performance and equips sales leaders with the tools to coach more effectively.

Don't wait for your reps to learn from stalled deals or missed quotas. Move from reactive to proactive with Luster.

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