These are the questions I used to get my first VP-level Sales Enablement leadership job.

At the heart of them is one purpose: to gauge the maturity of a business and the level of reason within the business line leaders (CRO, CSO, CPO, Head of Sales, etc.) you'd be accountable to.

More than anything else, business maturity and depth of reason will decide if any Enablement role you're interviewing for is likely to make you miserable or happy.

Use these questions as you seek your next role, because you deserve to be happy.

-Phil

"In your opinion, what is the purpose of an Enablement team?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

The variety of answers a business line leader (CRO, CSO, CPO, Head of Sales, etc.) could give to this question knows no bounds, and you also can't assume they've thought it through to a very deep level. However, this is the most foundational thing you need to align on with them if you're going to have any chance of a successful Enablement practice, so you've gotta ask and you've gotta like the answer before you go further in the interview.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* Whether they say something along the lines of "to grow my sales team's skills and help us win more deals."

* The level of detail in their answer

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

If they understand the true purpose of Enablement or if they are conflating it with other functions

How much they care about Enablement, and by extension, you.

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* "What do you think is the best Enablement team structure for your business?"
* "What are your previous experiences with Enablement as a business function?"

"What outcomes do you expect Enablement to generate, and why?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Enablement does not directly generate revenue. We impact it via skills growth. While most business line leaders understand this conceptually, you want to get a sense of how deep and detailed their point of view goes, because that will help you know how they're likely to react when the numbers are down and they're looking for reasons why.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* Whether they answer with revenue KPIs or skills & behavior change KPIs

* The level of detail in their answers

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

If they view Enablement as a revenue-*generating* or revenue-*impacting* function

How mature and deliberate the thinking behind their expectations may be

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* "What's the business reasoning for expecting those outcomes?"
* "How are you currently generating those outcomes?"

"What is the Enablement budget and who owns it?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Whether there is a dedicated Enablement budget and if it is controlled by the Enablement leader will dictate how much effort will be spent getting the resources and influence needed to make your practice successful. Don't fool yourself: if they don't give it a dedicated budget, it's not a high priority, regardless of what they say.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* What amount the Enablement leader is allowed to spend without others approval

* If other Revenue support functions (ex. RevOps/SalesOps) have a dedicated budget

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

The **ACTUAL** level of ownership Enablement has over its budget. The lower the amount = the less power you have.

How business essential they think Enablement is in comparison with other functions

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* If there is no Enablement budget: "What's the business reasons for that?"
* If there IS an Enablement budget: "What's the **FULL** process for spending from it?"

"Do you give quota relief to new hires during onboarding or not, and why?"

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WHY THIS MATTERS:

You need to find out if they view learning time and selling time in opposition to each other, and how much reason they apply to their point of view about it. This will indicate how much effort you might have to spend justifying your asks for people's time on Enablement experiences.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* The reasoning they give for their answer

* Indications of their view of the value of time spent growing versus time spent selling

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

If they view time spent on skills growth as a channel to productivity or a barrier to it

If they have reasonable expectations of their workforce, particularly their front line managers

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* If they **DON'T** give quota relief: "Would you consider it? Under what circumstances?"
* If they **DO** give quota relief: "Do you see it paying off?"

"How many of your team managers were promoted internally, and why?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Many companies promote their top-performing team members to be team managers because it's faster and less expensive than hiring externally, and often without confirming that these people fit a manager skills profile. This creates massive skill gaps and workforce instability, and you'll want to know what you're walking into beforehand.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* Whether the reasoning is driven more by efficiency or skills & readiness

* If the amount is more than 50%

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

The likelihood that their team managers have weak people & org leadership skills

How pervasive hiring-based skills gaps may be across their team manager population

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* "What dedicated people & org leadership skills training have they received?"
* "How often are your Reps pulling their manager in to help close deals and resolve customer issues?"

"Describe the current skill level of your average Rep and your average team manager"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

You have to know where you're starting from so you can discern if it's the right fit for your skills and passions. Also, hearing a business line leader assess their own current state can tell you a lot about the clarity of their perspective, and what they fixate on will indicate their priorities.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

✳ The balance of positive and negative in their response

✳ How offended or defensive they are when discussing their team's problem areas

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

The level of clarity or denial they have about their people's skills

The size of their ego

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UP:

- "Which skill level is the largest portion of your global team: top, middle or low performers?"

"Where do you want your teams' skill levels to be 4 quarters from now?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Every business leader knows that their people need to learn, grow and change to continually deliver success. However, you can't assume they understand the patience and prioritization required to generate meaningful, lasting change in humans. This question is all about seeing how they respond when you tell them "You can have all of that, but it's gonna take 7 quarters and here's why."

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* The number of skills, traits and changes they list

* If it's realistic to go from their current state to their desired future state in 4 quarters

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

How "easy" they expect skills growth and behavioral change to be

How realistic or unrealistic their expectations on you may be

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* "Pick your top 3 priorities from the list you just gave me."
* "Do you need everyone to grow in all these ways, or would we need to grow some skills among certain groups?"

"May I see the skill profiles for each of your roles?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Skills growth is Enablement's responsibility, but you can't hit a target until you know what it looks like. If they don't have skills profiles already, you need to find out why, and if they think they are necessary. It's also an indicator that you should dig into their overall hiring & performance management process, and the quality of cross-functional partnership with their Hiring/Talent & HR business lines.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* If they have skills profiles at all

* If the criteria are in terms of skills and maturity level, or are just experience indicators (5+ years in a similar role, BA in Business, etc.)

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

If their skills profiles don't exist, expect skills gaps, performance issues, manager credibility issues and immature hiring thinking and processes

Whether they are actually qualifying proper skills/skill levels during the hiring process

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* "When did each of these profiles begin being used in the hiring process?"
* "How do you currently handle performance management?"

"Which tools are in your revenue tech stack and what use cases are you using each one for?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Tools enablement often falls within Enablement's mandate, so how many tools and how they're being used will indicate what this part of your workload may be like. Also, how specifically their use cases are fit to their specific business needs will indicate how mature their operational thinking and execution levels are.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* The number of tools, which ones are required vs optional use, and how they are integrated

* Anything beyond industry standard (CRM for opp mgmt & forecasting, Prospecting tool for spray & pray outreach, LI Sales Navigator, etc.)

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

The labor level required and the quality of the data being produced

How intimately they understand their business and their workforce, and how confident they are in going beyond trends and peer pressure to optimize their operations

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* "Which tools are you considering not renewing, and why?"
* "How much time each month would you like your team spending on tools enablement?"

"Which tools are in your Enablement tech stack and what use cases are you using each one for?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

You need to find out what they think a sufficient Enablement tool is, and how strong their appetite to invest more in skills tech is. If they say "We use a SharePoint site that's good enough for me," you'll be looking at some major challenges with impact measurement and scaled active learning.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* How satisfied they seem with their Enablement tool stack

* If their level of investment and use cases align with the skills growth impact they're expecting this role to make

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

The level of difficulty you might encounter when you try to get more tools.

Whether you'll be begging for the basics it takes to run a successful Enablement practice or not.

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* "What's the approval process for tech tool purchases?"
* "When was the last time a new Enablement tech tool was brought on, and what was the total contract value of that purchase?"

"Which qualification framework (MEDDICC, NEAT, BANT, etc.) do you use, and why?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

This is really about how well the framework matches the sales skill and execution level of their team. For example, MEDDICC is lots of letters and their order does not reflect standard sales stage order, so it's a bad fit for teams struggling with operational rigor and data hygiene. Bad fit between framework and skill level indicates poor assessment capabilities and blind spots/denial among leadership.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* The reasons why they have chosen that framework, and how specific those reasons are

* If the framework is built into their opportunity records and reports

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

If they've thought critically about their needs or if they're following a current business fad

Their level of commitment to using the framework, and how well adopted it may be in the field

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* "Is your framework built into your Salesforce/CRM opportunity template?"
* "How are you spot-checking adoption of the method?"

"What types of data do you find valid and satisfying, and why?"

WHY THIS MATTERS:

It's easy to assume that quantitative data (numbers) are the only data type desired. When you dig into it a little, though, you find that most businesses accept a mixture of quantitate, qualitative and assumptive data. And whatever the mix, all data must be viewed within a context to have any meaning, so you need to find out how they compose that context and arrive at decisions within it.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* The data types they value, and how much weight they give each type

* The processes by which data is converted into decision and action within their org

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

If they think critically about how they use data (many organizations don't)

How siloed their data generation and usage thinking & processes may be

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UP:

* "Could you walk me through your thought process from a recent data-driven decision that you've made?"

"What role do you expect Enablement to have in performance management and compliance?"

13.

WHY THIS MATTERS:

Enablement is almost never in the management chain of the people we enable, which means we don't have authority over their day-to-day work behavior. Still, many business line leaders expect Enablement to participate in enforcement and discipline. This erodes trust between Enablement and our audiences, and limits the impact we can have, and should be avoided at all costs.

WHAT TO FOCUS ON:

* Any expectation of Enablement acting beyond their scope of authority

* Any lack of concern over how it damages the ability to fulfill Enablement's true purpose

WHAT IT CAN TELL YOU:

They have an incorrect view of Enablement, or team managers, or both

They view Enablement as a way of changing processes rather than a way of changing humans

SUGGESTED FOLLOW UPS:

* "What distinctions are drawn between Team Manager and Enablement duties when it comes to discipline?"
* "Why do you expect Enablement to use authority that we don't have?"

Want to dig deeper together into how to find and win the best next Enablement role for you?

I'd love to.

Click [here](#) to book a free call and we'll make it happen together.

-Phil

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