

Zone of Genius:

How revenue teams can thrive in a world of distraction



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Sales teams are under pressure to achieve exceptional results in a competitive environment. But they're bogged down by administrative tasks and other distractions.

So much so that it's getting in the way of what they do best - engaging with customers. According to Salesforce, sellers spend only 28% of their time actually selling. It seems that one of the biggest levers we can pull, is creating more selling time for reps. More time in their "Zone of Genius".

The concept of the Zone of Genius was first defined by psychologist, Dr. Gay Hendricks. It's the activities and mindset where someone is operating at their highest potential. They're utilizing their innate talents and creativity.

For sales teams, their Zone of Genius is customer interactions. Building relationships and creating value. Yet, salespeople spend a minority of their time actually selling. Various administrative tasks, data entry, troubleshooting etc. take them away from this zone.

We need to identify barriers that prevent salespeople from spending time in the zone. Solutions like automation, AI and better enablement can help minimize peripheral activities. Sales teams can then maximize time spent with customers.

If sellers spend more time doing what they love and are good at - engaging with customers - they will be more motivated, productive and able to drive results.



The Four Zones

The model identifies four distinct zones that influence how we operate at work. Incompetence, Competence, Excellence, and Genius.

According to Dr. Hendricks, each of us has a unique Zone of Genius. A state of work where we are operating at our highest level of contribution and creativity.

Yet, most people get stuck spending the majority of their time in the other three zones. They never realize their potential. The model gives a roadmap to shift into our genius zone so we can thrive.

Incompetence Zone

The Incompetence Zone represents areas where we lack skills and deliver low value. A sales executive who is bad with spreadsheets would be in the Incompetence Zone when trying to analyze data and create forecasts. The Incompetence Zone drags us down and is an inefficient use of time and energy.

Excellence Zone

When we have mastered a skill to an expert level and perform it with acclaim, we are in the Excellence Zone. Sales reps may be excellent at putting together decks, or filling out RFPs. But the Excellence Zone harbors a hidden danger - the more excellent you become at something, the more people expect it of you. This can lead to burnout.

Competence Zone

This zone contains activities we have become proficient at through training and practice. Sales reps are competent at CRM updates. But while necessary, being competent at a task does little to spark creativity or job satisfaction.

Genius Zone

This is the pinnacle zone where our unique talents and passions converge. Activities here feel effortless and produce disproportionate value. For example sales reps who are in their element talking to and solving problems for buyers. Discovering your Genius Zone unlocks new levels of innovation and fulfillment.



Getting in the Zone

Top Revenue & Sales Enablement leaders share their practical advice for getting your reps “in the zone”.



Robby Halford

Head of GTM Enablement @ Teamwork.com

Robby Halford is an accomplished revenue enablement leader with over 10 years of experience driving productivity at high-growth tech companies. He is currently Head of GTM Enablement at Teamwork. Previously, he led Revenue Enablement at Sparrow, building scalable onboarding programs and coaching sales teams. He has also held senior enablement roles at Heap, Malwarebytes, and Xactly.

Once sellers are in the Zone, systems and resources need to work to keep them there.

"I think building repeatable and scalable processes that allow people to access the right materials at the right time allows people to stay in the Zone of Genius without breaking it to go find an essential piece of knowledge (whether that's content, people, or process). They can self-serve the knowledge they need and carry on."

Enablement needs to protect sellers and direct the flow of information.

"Some of the biggest challenges to having more selling time is a lack of cohesion on who can tap the seller's shoulder. Product wants time to show off a new feature. Marketing wants them to know about a new campaign. Finance wants them to follow proper process for billing and account receivable. When everyone believes that their item/topic is the most important. Unless Enablement steps in to help direct traffic to manage the flow of information, sellers are constantly being lost in emails and chats which leads to less time selling."



Enablement needs to help sellers cut through the noise

"Enablement should look at their role as being the snowplough to keep the road clear for their sellers to do what they do best— which is to sell. We have the charter, support, and tenacity to protect our sellers from being inundated with constant noise. Enablement must take the noise, organize it, and make it a beautiful symphony that sellers will want to hear and enjoy."

Key takeaways

- Enablement teams can help manage the flow of information to sellers and minimize disruptions. This frees up more selling time.
- Building repeatable processes and enabling self-service access to knowledge helps sellers stay focused in their genius zone.
- AI can be used to automate lower value tasks like research so sellers can focus on high value human interactions.
- Enablement teams should focus on clearing away distractions and noise for sellers. They should curate and organize relevant information.
- Sellers need to prepare and leverage tools to maximize the value of customer interactions. This avoids wasted time pre and post call.





Chad Trabucco

Senior Director, Sales Enablement @ Go1

Chad is a revenue enablement leader with a wealth of experience in driving revenue growth for software companies. As Senior Director of Sales Enablement at Go1, Chad currently leads strategy and execution of sales readiness initiatives across all global regions. He previously held sales enablement roles at high-growth companies like Guru, Dixa, LinkedIn, and Glint. At Glint, Chad helped the company scale from \$1.5M to \$60M in revenue prior to their acquisition by LinkedIn.

Noise and distraction doesn't just erode focus, but also confidence.

"I want my reps to be confident in what they're doing. And I think all of that noise makes them less confident. Because they second guess what they're using. They don't know if it's valid. They second guess the methodology or the resources. Remember that we've hired them to be salespeople. Give them the confidence to be the salespeople that they are. It's not that the other things aren't important. You've still got to have your deals up to date. But we need to acknowledge and define what are the areas that you're gonna drive value for yourself, for the company, for customers."

Small distractions add up.

"Think of all the internal meetings that sellers have to be put in, or the trainings. All of that noise takes them right out of their zone. Small things like trying to find documents. And I'd say half a day every day is taken away from them. It adds up."

Remove friction in accessing assets and answers.

"Where is this document? How do I respond to this customer question? There needs to be immediacy in how they can solve that and access the stuff that they use all of the time. And I think that word *immediacy* is really really important. A solution like Workbounce is one way to provide that."



Key takeaways

- Reduce noise and distractions that undermine reps' confidence in their abilities
- Enable immediate access to the knowledge, tools, and information reps need to sell effectively
- Minimize time wasted on administrative tasks and meetings unrelated to selling
- Highlight each rep's unique sales genius and strengths, then provide support to maximize those
- Foster open communication and regular check-ins so reps feel valued and plugged into company objectives





David Taub

Director of Revenue Operations @ HydroCorp

David Taub is a sales and operations leader with over 15 years of experience driving revenue growth through sales strategy, enablement, and operational excellence. As Director of Revenue Operations at HydroCorp, Taub currently leads revenue process optimization to increase revenue efficiency. Previously at eSUB Construction Software, he led sales enablement initiatives to improve sales processes, resulting in increased implementation and go-live rates. Taub also has a strong track record of quota-achievement in sales roles earlier in his career at companies like Cachet Financial Services and Wells Fargo.

Enable and give people permission to do their job.

“Sales managers need to fully support and protect dedicated selling time for reps. Sales managers have to buy in. Leave me alone, let me do the job. Don't ask me about updating this field or pull me into a marketing meeting. Let me do what I'm here to do, which is bring deals in so I can get paid. It's giving them permission to block the time they need to be focused on the activities that build pipeline and advance deals. Not sending emails or doing administrative work.”

Get your incentives in line.

“Incentives must align with goals. When you build comp plans, salespeople will go after the types of things that make them money. If you tell them their entire comp plan is based on net new logos, give them the tools to go sell net new logos. If the goal is new revenue, commissions and SPIFFs need to reward new business generation. Everything in the sales process should point reps towards pipeline velocity - technology, training, enablement and especially comp.”

Less is more.

“More tools and tech don't necessarily improve productivity. You can enable all day long, it doesn't mean reps will utilize it. I think reps get so tool overloaded because companies buy a tool but don't teach anyone to use it or operationalize it. Then they realize no one's using it so they buy another tool. Stop buying all these tools! Companies think they need all these tools and layers to enable sales teams. But reps get overwhelmed and it becomes noise. Start with a simple stack - CRM, dialer, zoom. Don't overload them. Nail the fundamentals first.”



Key takeaways

- Sales managers need to fully support and protect dedicated selling time for reps. They should minimize administrative burdens and peripheral requests.
- Incentives and comp plans must directly align with revenue goals. SPIFFs and commissions should reward new business generation.
- More tools and technology don't necessarily improve productivity. Avoid overloading reps with new solutions. Start simple.
- Having clear, shared goals is crucial - enablement should point towards what matters most, like pipeline velocity.
- Sales fundamentals like call training combined with streamlined tech and coaching are key - not fancy tools or complex processes.



Things to Remember

Focusing solely on the zone of genius could lead to complacency and limited versatility in sellers. While we want to optimize genius zone time, enablement plays an important role in developing well-rounded reps across all zones.

The zone of incompetence helps identify areas for improvement. Paying attention to skills we lack informs learning. The competence zone contains necessary activities like data hygiene. Excellence zones build critical competencies even if not innate strengths.

This model advocates spending more time doing activities we excel at and enjoy. But it doesn't advise abandoning other zones. Enablement can structure tools and training to unlock more genius zone time. While also developing other skills crucial for sales success.

Having clear goals matters. Enablement should focus on pipeline velocity and new business generation if those align with company objectives. More tools don't necessarily improve productivity. Starting simple then expanding capabilities prevents overload.

The zone of genius offers a pathway to winning without burnout. But balance across zones remains critical. With the right leadership support and incentives, enablement can help reps thrive in their genius zone while continuing to grow.

Learn how Workbounce can help your team stay in the Zone →