2024 National Conference in Sales Management

Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark
St. Louis, Missouri
April 10th—April 12th, 2024

PROCEEDINGS

Research Papers & Abstracts (By first author's last name)

Teaching Session Abstracts (By first author's last name)

National Conference on Sales Management Mission Statement

The mission of the National Conference on Sales Management (NCSM) is to create and disseminate knowledge on professional selling and sales management. This mission has three legs: Research, PSE, and Business Involvement.

Research – The conference should be a focal point for the development and transfer of knowledge on sales and sales management. We should provide a forum for the development of quality research in the sales and sales management area.

PSE – A related leg is to encourage growth that strengthens PSE and its educational component. The NCSM should be designed whenever reasonable to support the PSE faculty advisors. Our activities should be structured in a fashion that recognizes their important role in the dissemination of sales and sales management knowledge as advisors to students.

Business Community Involvement – The final leg consists of our role in recognizing the opinions and contributions of the people who are working in the field of sales and sales management. Businesspeople can make an important contribution in evaluating the research we are doing and in sharing ideas on trends in sales management and selling. NCSM seeks to enhance the practice of professional selling and sales management by fostering the dialogue between academicians and practitioners.

Through adherence to the mission, the National Conference on Sales Management (NCSM) exists to create the premier national conference for disseminating knowledge in the areas of sales management and professional selling.

FOREWORD

This thirty-eighth volume of the Proceedings from the National Conference in Sales Management contains articles and abstracts of presentations scheduled at the 2024 Conference held April 10th—April 12th at the Hilton St. Louis at the Ballpark in St. Louis, Missouri. Each article was selected after a blind competitive review process and will be presented at the conference by at least one author. In addition, the three-day Conference has five research presentation sessions, four teaching presentation sessions, and a number of special sessions devoted to research and practice. As always, the 2024 Conference continues to provide the outstanding socializing and networking opportunities that are hallmarks of the NCSM.

As interest in sales research and education has significantly expanded over the years, Conference attendance by both academics and practitioners continues to be strong.

Special recognition for this 2024 Conference goes to:

- Joan Rogala, Executive Director of Pi Sigma Epsilon for her expert support and guidance throughout the conference planning process, and all the staff of Pi Sigma Epsilon for all they do behind the scenes.
- The NCSM Executive Board – Stacey Schetzsle of University of Tampa for her leadership and guidance as the Executive Director of the NCSM; Aaron Arndt of Old Dominion University for serving as Program Chair; Bruno Lussier from HEC Montréal for serving as Competitive Sessions Chair; Bryan Hochstein of The University of Alabama for chairing the Doctoral Student Sales Research Program; Nicole Flink from Weber State University for serving as Sales Education Track Coordinator; April Kemp from Southeastern Louisiana University for serving as Special Sessions Coordinator; David Locander from University of Tennessee at Chattanooga for serving as Proceeding Editor; and Emily Tanner from West Virginia University and Rhett Epler from Old Dominion University for serving as member at large and assisting with program development.
- All the paper reviewers (see list in separate document) for their constructive feedback to help authors advance their research.
- And all of the contributors and supporters of the Conference who put their valuable time into making this Conference a success.

The goal of the National Conference in Sales Management is to serve as a forum for professionalizing selling and sales management by bringing together a broad spectrum of academics and practitioners. Thanks to the support and effort of everyone associated with this thirty-eighth event, this goal continues to be met.

Aaron Arndt   David Locander
Program Chair   *Proceedings Editor*
Old Dominion University   *University of Tennessee at Chattanooga*

HERITAGE OF LEADERSHIP FOR NCSM

Year	Program Chair	Proceedings Editor
1986	E. James Randall *Georgia Southern University*	E. James Randall *Georgia Southern University*
1987	E. James Randall *Georgia Southern University*	E. James Randall *Georgia Southern University*
1988	E. James Randall *Georgia Southern University*	David J. Good *Central Missouri State University*
1989	David J. Good *Central Missouri State University*	David J. Good *Central Missouri State University*
1990	David J. Good *Central Missouri State University*	James B. Deconinck *Central Missouri State University*
1991	E. James Randall *Georgia Southern University*	Roberta J. Good *Central Missouri State University*
1992	Ramon A. Avila *Ball State University*	Dan C. Weilbaker *Northern Illinois State University*
1993	Ramon A. Avila *Ball State University*	Dan C. Weilbaker *Northern Illinois State University*
1994	Dan C. Weilbaker *Northern Illinois State University*	Rick E. Ridnour *Northern Illinois University*
1995	Dan C. Weilbaker *Northern Illinois State University*	Timothy A. Longfellow *Illinois State University*
1996	Timothy A. Longfellow *Illinois State University*	Michael R. Williams *Illinois State University*
1997	Timothy A. Longfellow *Illinois State University*	Michael R. Williams *Illinois State University*
1998	Michael R. Williams *Illinois State University*	Michael A. Humphreys *Illinois State University*
1999	Michael R. Williams *Illinois State University*	Michael A. Humphreys *Illinois State University*
2000	Michael A. Humphreys *Illinois State University*	Jon M. Hawes *The University of Akron*
2001	Michael A. Humphreys *Illinois State University*	Jon M. Hawes *The University of Akron*

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		Scott A. Inks *Middle Tennessee State University*
2003	David A. Reid *The University of Toledo*	Scott A. Inks *Middle Tennessee State University*
2004	Scott A. Inks *Ball State University*	C. David Shepherd *Kennesaw State University*
2005	Scott A. Inks *Ball State University*	C. David Shepherd *Kennesaw State University*
2006	C. David Shepherd *Kennesaw State University*	Mark C. Johlke *Bradley University*
2007	Mark C. Johlke *Bradley University*	C. David Shepherd *Georgia Southern University*
2008	Mark C. Johlke *Bradley University*	Ellen Bolman Pullins *The University of Toledo*
2009	Mark C. Johlke *Bradley University*	Ellen Bolman Pullins *The University of Toledo*
2010	Ellen Bolman Pullins *The University of Toledo*	Concha R. Neeley *Central Michigan University*
2011	Ellen Bolman Pullins *The University of Toledo*	Concha R. Neeley *Central Michigan University*
2012	Concha Allen *Central Michigan University*	Michael L. Mallin *The University of Toledo*
2013	Concha Allen *Central Michigan University*	Michael L. Mallin *The University of Toledo*
2014	Michael L. Mallin *The University of Toledo*	Scott M. Widmier *Kennesaw State University*
2015	Michael L. Mallin *The University of Toledo*	Scott M. Widmier *Kennesaw State University*
2016	Scott M. Widmier *Kennesaw State University*	Lisa R. Simon *California Polytechnic State University,* *San Luis Obispo*
2017	Scott M. Widmier *Kennesaw State University*	Lisa R. Simon *California Polytechnic State University,* *San Luis Obispo*
2018	Lisa R. Simon *California Polytechnic State* *University, San Luis Obispo*	David E. Fleming *Indiana State University*

2019	Lisa R. Simon *California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo*	David E. Fleming *Indiana State University*
2020	David E. Fleming *Indiana State University*	Stacey Schetzsle *University of Tampa*
2021	David E. Fleming *Indiana State University*	Stacey Schetzsle *University of Tampa*
2022	David E. Fleming *Indiana State University*	Stacey Schetzsle *University of Tampa*
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Laurianne Schmitt	*IÉSEG*
Stephan Volpers	*HEC Montréal*

Wednesday, April 10th

Start	Presentation Title	Author
1:00	**Welcome**	
1:05	**Research: Session 1 (15-20 minutes each)**	
1	From Words to Sales – Storytelling Rhetoric in Buyer-Seller Interactions	Melanie Bowen, Christine Lai-Bennejean
2	Preparation Effort for Complex Sales Negotiations	Aaron D Arndt, Christine Lai-Bennejean
3	B2B Salespeople Crafting the Customer Experience of their Key Accounts	Michael Klein, Laurianne Schmitt, Bruno Lussier
2:05	**Teaching Moment: Session 1 (8-10 minutes each)**	
1	Scavenger Hunts in Sales Classes: How, Why and When	Rhett Epler and Bryan Hochstein
2	Improv Warm-Up Exercises as Role Play Preparatory Tools	Benjamin Britton
3	Heads Up Role Play Prep	Robert Peterson
4	Analytics Free-for-all: Diving into Data Using Tableau	Colleen McClure
2:45	**Research: Session 2 (15-20 minutes each) (doctoral papers)**	
1	Salesperson Commitment to Display Rules and Emotional Labor: A B2B Perspective	Jonathan Barnes and Grace Harris
2	Systems-Savvy Selling: A Paradigm Shift in Contemporary Sales Practices and Research	Donovan Gordan
3	Motivators of Gig-Sellers: Aligning Seller Goals with Distinct Individual Motivations	Christine Summers
3:45	**PM Break**	
3:55	**Stukent Special Session (20 minutes)**	
4:15	**Teaching Moment: Session 2 (8-10 minutes each)**	
1	Understanding Data with Legos	Colleen McClure
2	Explore, Identify, and Connect: Utilizing Generative AI as a Career Coach	Rebecca Dingus, Hulda Black,

| 3 | Unraveling the Sales Stigma: (re)Educating Students on Why Sales Can Offer a Fulfilling and Ethical Career Path | Benjamin Garner |

4:45 Announcements

5:30 Welcome Reception with light hors d'oeuvres and drinks

Thursday, April 11th

Start	Presentation Title	Author
9:00	**Welcome**	
9:05	**Research: Session 3 (15-20 minutes each)**	
1	Impostor phenomenon facing positive customer feedback: Impact on salespeople's burnout and turnover	Laurianne Schmitt, Romain Franck, Ellis Chefor, Bruno Lussier
2	Purchasing Agent Opportunity Recognition and Firm Value	Bryan Hochstein, Stephan Volpers, Alexander Haas
3	The Impact of Birth Order on Salesperson Behaviors	David Fleming, Annika Ehrlich, Kristina Harrison
10:05	**Teaching Application: Session 1 (12-15 Minutes)**	
	Self-Development in Professional Sales Classes: Growth, Change and Meaning	Rhett Epler and Bryan Hochstein
	Instilling Professional Development Practices in the Sales Classroom	Victoria Hailey and Chandu Valluri
	Restructuring Introductory Sales Courses. Real-World Application Meets AI Integration	Louis Zmich and Stacey Schetzsle
10:45	Morning break	
11:00	**Research: Session 4 (15-20 minutes each)**	
	Times of Change: The Effects of Bricolage and Customer Orientation During Organizational Disruptions	Ellen Pullins, Tyler Hancock, Michael Mallin, Katy Johnson
	Negative Effects of Value-based Selling on Performance? The Role of Buying Center Structures	Stephan Volpers
	A Social Identity Perspective on Social Capital in Salespeople's Cross-functional Ties	Ali Anwar, Maria Rouziou, Nicole Coviello, Riley Dugan

| 12:00 | **Lunch (on your own)** | |

1:15	**Improve your Research Game!**	
	Moderators: Adam Rapp and Bruno Lussier	
	Panel: Johannes Habel, Nathaniel Hartmann, and Ellen Pullins	

| 2:30 | **The Importance of a High-Quality Sales Journal: The Role of Authors** | |
| | Adam Rapp | |

| 3:45 | **Afternoon break** | |

| 4:00 | **Improv with Rob** | Rob Peterson |

| 4:45 | **Announcements** | |

| 6:30 | **Western Night!** | |

Friday, April 12th

Start	Presentation Title	Author
8:30	**Breakfast with Gartner**	
9:45	**50 years of women in PSE--Joint NCSM/PSE Session**	Moderated by April Kemp
	Panel: Ellen Pullins, Marie Ardom, Kelsey Keene, and Helen Brown	
11:00	**Teaching Application: Session 2 (12-15 Minutes)**	
	In-Class Discovery with Sales Center Partners	Nicole Flink
	RNMKRS Across the Curriculum Teaching Application	David Fleming, Kristina Harrison, Stephanie Boyer, Sarah Fleming
	Selling for Managers: A Semester Long Multipart Internal Sales Roleplay	Mark Groza and Charles Howlett
11:45	**Lunch (on your own)**	
1:00	**Announcements, Awards, and Board Meeting Report**	
1:15	**Research: Session 5 (15-20 minutes each)**	

	Let me tell you about myself! Salesperson Orientations, Self-Presentation, and Pathways to Performance	Deva Rangarajan, Vishag Badrinarayanan, Rajesh Srivastava, Geoffrey Stewart, Omar S. Itani
	Whether salespeople should be held responsible for late-paying accounts: an investigation into controlling customer-directed deviance	Muzi Liu

2:10   **Special sessions on Sales Technology in the Classroom**

	Smartfox technology	
	CRM in the classroom	April Kemp, et al.
	Mix Deck	Greg Smith

3:30   **Round table working paper**

4:50   **Closing remarks and announcement of 2025 NCSM location**

2024 NCSM Research Papers & Abstracts

A SOCIAL IDENTITY PERSPECTIVE ON SOCIAL CAPITAL IN SALESPEOPLE'S CROSS-FUNCTIONAL TIES

Ali Anwar (James Madison University), Maria Rouziou (Texas A&M), Nicole Coviello (Wilfrid Laurier University) and Riley Dugan (University of Dayton)

Cross-functional or intrafirm ties continue to receive attention in marketing and sales scholarship (Malshe et al., 2021). Indeed, strong cross-functional ties are considered necessary for organizational goals such as sales enablement (Peterson et al. 2021). However, although considerable attention is paid to the sales-marketing interface (e.g., Homburg and Jensen 2007), it is less common for studies to incorporate sales when studying cross-functional ties in firms trying to create value through innovation, where the marketing-R&D relationship is the focus of attention (Homburg et al., 2017). Excluding the sales function in research on cross-functional ties occurs despite the importance of its intrafirm relationships to performance outcomes (Bolander et al. 2015). In addition, Hartmann et al. (2018) argue that the sales function has expanded its organizational presence, with an evolved strategic role that is similar in scope to marketing.

Accordingly, we study cross-functional ties through a social capital lens, unpack the interplay between the dimensions of intrafirm social capital and OI, and incorporate the sales function (alongside marketing and R&D) in our analysis. We draw from social identity theory (Mael and Ashforth, 1992) and Nahapiet and Ghoshal's (1998) social capital theory to answer two broad research questions. First, *when does the organizational identification of sales employees enhance intrafirm structural social capital?* Given structural social capital precedes the development of relational and cognitive social capital because interpersonal network ties should foster high-quality relationships and shared cognitions (Tsai and Ghoshal 1998), we then turn to our second question: *What is the relationship between a) OI and b) relational and cognitive social capital for employees in sales, marketing, and R&D?*

To answer these questions, we conduct two studies. This *'Abstract'* focuses on the first of the two studies, and thus, the first research question. Study 1 applies network analysis to data from 202 salespeople in one organization to investigate the influence of their OI on the structural social capital associated with their intrafirm ties. Because the degree of similarity among subgroups plays a critical role in shaping the outcomes of OI (Polzer, 2004), we account for the influence of perceived similarity with others. This represents the concept of homophily and the argument that people tend to interact with similar (vs. dissimilar) others (McPherson, Smith-Lovin and Cook, 2001). Study 1's results establish a theoretical link between OI and social capital, showing that OI has a positive (negative) effect on structural social capital when connections are similar (dissimilar). Subsequently, Study 2 will further progresses our inquiry to examine the relationship between OI and (relational and cognitive) social capital.

Theoretical Background: Nahapiet and Ghoshal (1998) define social capital as the sum of assets and resources embedded within the network of ties an entity possesses. It comprises three dimensions: structural, relational, and cognitive. *Structural social capital* is the "overall pattern of connections between actors – that is, who you reach and how you reach them" (Nahapiet and Ghoshal 1998, p. 244). In the context of a function like sales, this may refer to the pattern of ties relevant to the salesperson-customer dyad (Hughes et al., 2013) or to

interactions with others (Tsai and Ghoshal, 1998). For instance, structural ties between sales and marketing are pertinent to customer management and sales productivity (Rouziès and Hulland, 2014). Also relevant to our study is the concept of social identity and specifically, superordinate identity. This is the degree to which members identify with a broader entity that transcends their functional unit (Sethi, 2000). One such entity is the organization, and superordinate identity may unify subgroups under a shared organizational banner (Ashforth et al., 2008). Kalaignanam et al. (2021) argue that intrafirm social cohesion should be studied vis-à-vis its relationship with employees' superordinate identity. Thus, we consider their organizational identification (OI), which is an individual's perceived oneness with the organization and it reflects how individuals view themselves in relation to their firm (Ashforth et al., 2008).

Theoretically, structural social capital precedes the relational and cognitive dimensions of social capital (Tsai and Ghoshal 1998), and therefore, we focus on salespeople's relational social capital in Study 1. When organizational subgroups exist, the "commonalities or differences between two subgroups may influence how members view the opposing subgroup" (Polzer 2004, p. 73). Therefore, we use the concept of homophily (McPherson et al. 2001) to argue that employees will establish ties (i.e., build structural social capital) with similar others.

In Study 1, we show how OI influences the structural dimension of social capital, and we establish the role of homophily in this relationship. We take the perspective of sales employees because although intrafirm ties are critical for their performance outcomes (Bolander et al. 2015), they are often socially isolated from other organizational functions and feel a lack of "informal learning, emotional support, camaraderie, and direct social interactions" with coworkers (Chaker et al. 2021, p. 269). We analyze sales employees' OI and its effect on structural social capital derived from their intrafirm ties with coworkers.

Initial Insights: Study 1 provides evidence for our hypothesis that OI influences the intrafirm structural social capital of sales employees. However, our findings also reveal the crucial role of perceived similarity in shaping this relationship. OI has a positive effect on structural social capital (measured by salespeople's intrafirm out-degree centrality) only when the salesperson perceives the potential contacts to be similar. In contrast, their OI has a negative effect on structural social capital when intrafirm contacts are perceived as dissimilar. This research provides insight on the social integration of sales employees with cross-functional colleagues. Such integration is managerially invaluable. Scholars emphasize the potential contributions of sales personnel to successful innovation (Homburg et al. 2017) and the importance of their social capital with other organizational actors (Hartman et al. 2018). We advance this literature by uncovering how such social capital develops.

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From Words to Sales – Storytelling Rhetoric in Buyer-Seller Interactions

Melanie Bowen (Justus Liebig University) and Christine Lai-Bennejean (EMLYON Business School)

INTRODUCTION

Over the years, interest in the concept of storytelling has grown steadily. Despite the growing interest, the role of storytelling in sales remains largely unexplored (Lacoste and La Rocca, 2015), which is surprising as contemporary buyers seek affective connections and authenticity in what is offered and communicated (Bartsch 2021).

The objective of this research is to delve into the effectiveness of storytelling in buyer-seller interactions, focusing on the impact of rhetorical persuasion (using the rhetorical elements of *logos, pathos, and ethos*; Aristotle, 1992) on buyers' perceptions and subsequent purchase intentions throughout the customer journey. We adopt a mixed-method approach, including two qualitative and one experimental study using AI generated videos. The first qualitative study informed the focus of the experimental study. The experimental study was conducted to examine the effects of the rhetorical elements on buyer perceptions during sales interactions across the customer journey. The second qualitative study (in progress) is designed to provide explanations of the experimental outcomes and identify considerations for future research in storytelling.

Literature Review

Within the sales domain, scholars have delved into the types of information that salespeople convey, encompassing aspects related to customers' challenges, priorities, as well as the advantages and features of the products and services they offer (Klarmann and Wouters, 2022). Moreover, researchers have explored the role and significance of influence strategies in the interactions between salespersons and customers (e.g., Garud et al., 2014; McFarland and Dixon, 2019).

There is a paucity of research on the significance of storytelling in sales (Boldosova 2020; Lacoste and La Rocca 2015). Boldosova (2020) investigates the content of smart service stories and how Big Data Analytics can inform storytelling. The findings indicate that storytelling can be regarded as a sensemaking and sense-giving process in which buyers and sellers contribute to the story development. Gilliam and Flaherty (2015) on the other hand, investigate salespeople and buyer storytelling motives and typical characteristics of stories told by salespeople. Their findings suggest that salespeople use stories to transfer information, establish credibility, persuade, get acquainted, build rapport, break tension, and make buyers more comfortable and communicative while attempting to build relationships. In contrast, buyers typically use stories for describing their needs.

Our research adds to the limited number of research on storytelling in sales. The findings of the first qualitative study inform that the stories typically entail different rhetorical styles depending on the current stage of the buyer in the customer journey. Rhetorical styles have been investigated in various disciplines, such as management (e.g., Flory and Iglesias 2010) and marketing (e.g., Huhmann and Albinsson 2012) but only rudimentarily in sales. Aristotle delineates three essential rhetorical elements: *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. *Ethos* entails establishing the author's credibility and character, aiming to convince the audience. *Pathos* involves invoking sympathy and creating a sense of shared emotions between the speaker and the audience to persuade. *Logos* relies on logical reasoning and evidence, employing factual information, statistics, analogies, and authoritative references. Logos emphasizes the rational

dimension of argumentation, seeking to convince the audience through sound logic (Caballero et al. 1984; Ruokolainen and Aarikka-Stenroos, 2016).

Hypotheses

We expect that the three rhetorical elements embedded in a salesperson's storytelling influence buyers' purchase intentions and satisfaction with the salesperson and that this positive effect can be explained by buyer's perception of the salesperson. Specifically, we focus on the mediating effect of perceived sincerity of the salesperson (i.e., related to perceived honesty, manipulativeness, and pushiness).

We propose that when the salesperson focuses less on product-related signals, the buyer may view the salesperson's storytelling as a persuasion tactic and finds the salesperson less sincere. We argue that this insincerity results from the customer's impression that the salesperson aims at selling a product by relating to the customers feelings and emotions instead of providing rational information on the product and showing why the product is the best option. Formally, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: The use of the rhetorical element logos triggers higher a) satisfaction with the salesperson and b) purchase intention than ethos and pathos.
H2: The use of the rhetorical element logos results in higher perceived salesperson sincerity than ethos and pathos.
H3: Sincerity mediates the effect of the rhetorical elements on a) satisfaction with the salesperson and b) purchase intention.

Further, we propose that the effect of each of the rhetorical elements depends on the buyer's position in the customer journey. We focus on the customer journey stages of awareness (e.g., buyer's first contact with salesperson), consideration (e.g., buyer's desire to deepen the product knowledge) and preference (e.g., buyer's formation of positive attitudes) (Lemon and Verhoef 2016) and argue that as buyers have different needs in different stages, the effect of each rhetorical element is contingent on the respective stage. Formally:

H4: Customer journey stage moderates the effect of the rhetorical elements on buyer responses (i.e., purchase intention and satisfaction with the sales interaction), such that a) the effect of ethos will be strongest during the awareness stage, b) the effect of logos will be strongest during the consideration stage, and c) the effect of pathos will be strongest during the preference stage.

Experimental Research Design & Methodology

Our experiment followed a 3 (rhetorical element: ethos vs. logos vs. pathos) x 3 (customer journey stage: awareness vs. consideration vs. purchase) between-subjects design. We developed scenarios depicting interactions between a salesperson and a buyer who seeks to purchase an insurance plan. We manipulated the three phases of the customer journey by providing information on the current decision making stage and the three sales arguments based on the rhetorical elements of ethos, logos, and pathos. The scenarios were pretested. For the main experiment, we recruited 300 participants from Prolific. Findings will be reported at the 2024 National Conference in Sales Management.

Contributions

This research contributes to both theory and practice by investigating the role of storytelling in buyer-seller interactions. First, despite the growing interests in storytelling across various domains, its role in seller-buyer relationships is scarcely examined. This study addresses this gap by examining storytelling in complex sales contexts, assessing the influence of rhetorical elements on buyer's responses. Differences are expected to appear in the relationship between the rhetorical elements and buyer's reactions. By utilizing the rhetorical elements to craft a compelling narrative, sales professionals can engage customers.

Overall, our findings are expected to empower sales professionals to adapt their narratives to better resonate with customer needs, ultimately ensuring a strong connection between salespeople and their customers. In addition, the research introduces a novel pedagogical approach of personal and entrepreneurial selling relevant for sales educators and professional trainers.

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Preparation Effort for Complex Sales Negotiations

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INTRODUCTION

In the realm of Business-to-Business (B2B) markets, buyers and sellers often find themselves negotiating across a spectrum of critical issues including pricing and markup, transportation costs, payment, warranties and indemnities, etc. According to Fells (1996), negotiation success depends largely on preparation. However, little is known about how salespeople prepare for complex negotiations. It is widely acknowledged that salespeople must be endowed with the authority to effectively represent and advocate for the interests of the selling firm across a range of negotiation issues (Boyer and Jap, 2022). Delegating negotiation responsibilities empowers salespeople to operate autonomously and secure favorable terms for each issue, aligning with their business objectives. While there exists a substantial body of academic literature on pricing negotiation within sales organizations (e.g., Alavi et al., 2018; Homburg et al., 2012), there is a notable gap in our understanding of how the delegation of negotiation responsibilities to the sales force, particularly in scenarios involving multiple issues. This raises the question: how do salespeople manage their efforts and navigate the complexities of negotiation when they are given limited authority and leeway amount? The aim of this research is to investigate the influence of delegation cause and the extent of leeway on the preparation efforts and concession-making strategies employed by salespeople when dealing with complex negotiations.

MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Delegation related to price negotiations has been extensively studied. Joseph (2001) highlights that providing salespeople with full pricing authority might lead to their reliance on discounts to secure sales, rather than putting in effort to target customers who value the product. Homburg et al. (2012) empirically demonstrate an inverted U-shaped correlation between pricing authority and performance. They find that greater vertical delegation benefits companies up to a certain threshold and suggest that full pricing authority is most advantageous when firms implement margin-based variable pay incentives, aligning the objectives of the salespeople and the company while reducing the tendency of salespeople to compromise effort for price discounts.

However, these studies about delegation have primarily focused on single-issue negotiations, particularly pricing. We argue that the level of effort salespeople put into negotiations is the function of given authority and the complexity of the negotiation. In B2B sales, whether in industrial production or services, single-issue negotiations are rare. While multiple issues offer the potential for achieving mutually beneficial outcomes, they can also introduce complications, particularly when individual negotiators are involved (Albin and Young, 2012). We argue that in the face of a complex multi-issue negotiation, limited delegation of authority to salespeople may exacerbate the significant costs associated with such complexity. This, in turn, can burden the negotiation process and diminish salespeople's motivation to invest effort in exploring alternative solutions and engage in deviant behaviors.

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Conversely, although salespeople may exercise the authority granted to meet customer's demands without too much effort in a single-issue negotiation, they are compelled to make substantial efforts to navigate the overwhelming complexities arising from limited time and resources in a complex multi-issue negotiation. When granted authority, they feel less constraints to make decisions or to renegotiate, thus, they are less likely to engage in deviant behaviors. Therefore, salespeople with authority are likely to invest effort in preparation for complex negotiations and less likely to engage in deviant behaviors. Thus, we hypothesize:

H1: In negotiations where complexity is high and authority is low, salespeople are likely to invest less effort in preparation compared to negotiations with high complexity and high authority.

H2: In negotiations where complexity is high and authority is low, salespeople are more likely to engage in deviant behaviors compared to negotiations with high complexity and high autonomy.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a 2 x 2 between-subjects experimental design, with the conditions: complexity (high vs. low) and authority to negotiate (low vs. high). The experiment used a written scenario design so that respondents could spend time planning their negotiation strategy. The study context was B2B sales, in which the respondent had the role of salesperson at a glass jar manufacturer and would be negotiating with a buyer at a food manufacturer. Complexity was manipulated based on number of issues to be negotiated. In the low complexity condition, respondents were asked to negotiate a single issue, price, and in the high complexity condition, respondents were asked to negotiate three issues, including price, shipping rate, and breakage percentage. Authority to negotiate was manipulated based on the reason for the negotiation. In the low authority condition, respondents were told that they tentatively negotiated an agreement with a customer, but their manager ordered them to renegotiate the deal. In the high authority condition, respondents were told that they tentatively negotiated an agreement with a customer but, because of an unforeseen market fluctuation in the cost of raw materials, the deal would now be a loss. The manipulations were pretested using a sample of 100 respondents from Prolific. The main study sample was purchased from Qualtrics and consisted of 139 U.S. salespeople/customer service agents who negotiate as part of their job duties. *Deviance* and *Planning intensity* were measured using existing multi-item Likert-type survey scales.

RESULTS

The two hypotheses dealt with preparation effort and willingness to engage in deviant behavior. The hypotheses were tested using a MANOVA. For preparation effort, the interaction was significant at the 5% level ($F_{(1\ 135)}$ 5.737, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .029$). The nature of the interaction is shown in Figure 1. As predicted by H1, respondents are less willing to put in preparation effort when they have low authority over the negotiation and the complexity is high but are more willing to exert preparation effort when they have high authority and the complexity is high. Conversely, the interaction was not supported for deviation so H2 is not supported. That said, it is worth noting that the direct effect of complexity did significantly increase deviance ($F_{(1\ 135)}$ 5.588, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .040$, Low complexity $_{mean} = 2.756$, High complexity $_{mean} = 3.364$). Hence, although authority did not impact deviance in our results, complexity did.

Figure 1

Preparation Effort
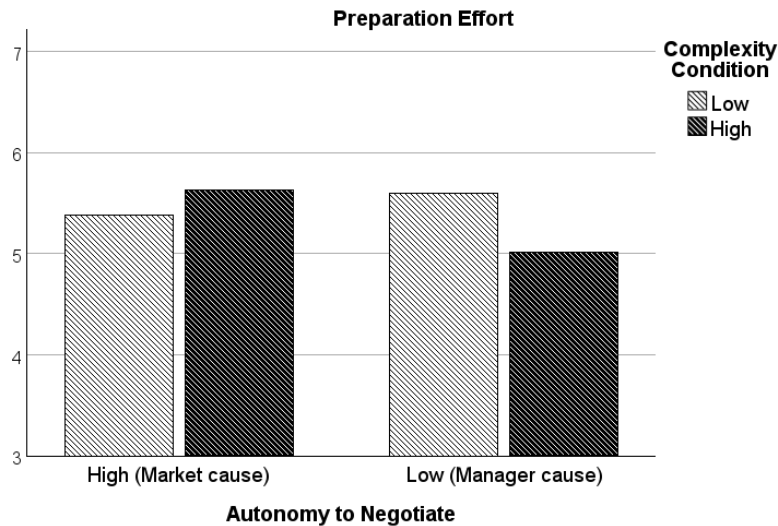
STUDY 1 DISCUSSION

The results of Study 1 shows that complexity does not automatically lead to greater preparation effort. Respondents exert less effort into preparation when they are given limited authority and greater complexity. This might lead them to make strategically inferior decisions in situations of higher complexity—exactly when they cannot afford to shirk on their negotiation. Although authority did not influence deviant behaviors in this study, negotiation complexity did. The most likely explanation for our findings is that respondents feel frustrated by higher complexity negotiations and are thus more likely to vent their frustrations to others outside of the organization, as well as look for short-cuts. In sum, the results of this study demonstrates that people prepare differently for complex negotiations than simple ones.

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THE IMPACT OF BIRTH ORDER ON SALESPERSON BEHAVIORS

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Researchers and managers continue to investigate what behavioral impact personality has on workplace activities, especially in sales where turnover is high as are its costs. Birth order is one method of understanding individual differences in workplace expectations, responsibilities, and personality due to where in the family hierarchy an individual falls. Key drivers of salesperson success such as organizational citizenship behavior (positive) and lone wolf tendencies (negative) are influenced by personality (Locander, 2021; Dixon et al. 2003). This research uses existing literature on birth order, personality, organizational citizenship behaviors and lone wolf tendencies to examine birth order effects on organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) and lone wolf tendencies (LWTs) in business-to-business sales as mediated through effects on personality.

Birth Order

Birth order theory was first published in *Characteristics of the first, second, and third child* (Adler, 1928), and has been expounded by many other researchers (e.g., Sulloway, 1999; Leman, 2009). This research looks at the personal and professional impact of where a child falls in the family hierarchy to explain consistently observed differences among siblings in the same environment. There are a multitude of variables that play a part in birth order including spacing between siblings, sex of each child, physical, mental, or emotional differences, sibling deaths, adoptions, birth order of the parents, the relationship between parents and their child, and blended families (Leman, 2009).

Firstborn: Firstborns are described as follows: "reliable and conscientious, they tend to be list makers and black-and-white thinkers. They have a keen sense of right and wrong and believe there is a right way to do things. They are natural leaders and achievement oriented" (Leman, 2009, p. 20). "The qualities of a firstborn: perfectionist, reliable, conscientious, a list maker, well organized, hard driving, a natural leader, critical, serious scholarly, logical, doesn't like surprises, [and] a techie." (Leman, 2009, p. 81). Oldest or firstborns often grow up being rule followers and want their siblings to follow the rules as well while taking matters into their own hands (White et al., 1997). They continue to push themselves and drive toward success in any of the fields they work in (Leman, 2009).

Middle Child: The secondborn or middle child relates and is most directly influenced by the firstborn, or the sibling directly older than them (Leman, 2009). According to Wilson and Edington (1981), middle children are more secretive than firstborn and lastborn siblings. Middle children often feel mistreated by not having a special space in their family, therefore they want a lifestyle that reflects fairness. They may also have a lower self-esteem compared to their siblings and often find jobs that replicate the role they played in their family: someone who is the peacekeeper and mediator (White, et al, 1997).

Last Born: Lastborn are described by Leman (2009) as "manipulative, charming, blames others, attention seeker, tenacious, people person, natural salesperson, precocious, engaging, affectionate, [and] loves surprises (p. 168)." Lastborns live for moments of praise and encouragement. The psychological youngest child has often felt like the weakest link in the family while having the feeling of being helpless. With these feelings youngest children have the need to be in positions of power (White, et al, 1997).

Personality

The use of the Big 5 personality traits has constituted the dominant framework of how birth order impacts personality traits (i.e., Sulloway, 2010; Sulloway, 1999; Paulhus, Trapnell & Chen 1999), however, the results are are inconclusive. Rohrer et al (2015) only found significant links between facets of openness and birth order position. Sulloway (2010 and 1999) conducted studies using independent ratings of personality by family members and found no birth order effects. Conversely, Bleske-Rechek and Kelley (2014) found support for links between birth order and each facet of personality using with-in family ratings of personality. White et al. (1997) found that birth order has an impact on career preferences, and career preferences have been shown to be driven by personality (Jia & Fleming, 2013).

Organizational Citizenship Behavior

"Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCBs) are defined as discretionary, extra-role behaviors on the part of a salesperson that have been shown to influence managers' evaluations of performance" (Posdakoff & Mackenzie, 1994, p. 351). There are three areas within OCBs that are looked at in sales: sportsmanship, civic virtue, and helping (Posdakoff and Mackenize, 1994). Kumar, Bakhshi and Rani (2009) expect that persons that score high on openness are more likely to show traits of organizational citizenship behavior. Firstborns exhibit attributes of list making and holding values. Lastborns are more inclined to exhibit high levels of creativity.

> P1. Firstborns and lastborns are expected to exhibit high levels of openness; and, therefore, higher levels of organizational citizenship behavior than middle children.

According to Bakhsi and Rani (2009), conscientiousness is positively related to organizational citizenship behavior. Firstborns are more inclined to have high levels of conscientiousness because of their need to be orderly, do their best, and not be lazy. Lastborns tend to do things their own way and are spontaneous (Leman, 2009).

> P2a. Firstborns are expected to exhibit higher levels of conscientiousness than any other position in the birth order and therefore, will exhibit high levels of organizational citizenship behavior.
>
> P2b. Lastborns are expected to exhibit lower levels of conscientiousness than any other position in the birth order and therefore, will exhibit low levels of organizational citizenship behavior.

People who show high levels of extraversion are more likely to show greater levels organizational citizenship behavior. (Bakhsi & Rani, 2009). Lastborns are the most outgoing of the birth order, most sociable, and excitable (Leman, 2009).

> P3. Lastborns are expected to exhibit higher levels of extraversion and, therefore, will exhibit high levels of organizational citizenship behavior.

Agreeable employees show high levels of interpersonal communication skills and competence (Witt et al., 2002). Secondborns exhibit high levels of agreeableness based on their tendency towards trustfulness, avoiding conflict, and loyalty towards peers (Leman, 2009).

> P4. Secondborns are expected to exhibit higher levels of agreeableness and therefore, will exhibit high levels of organizational citizenship behavior.

Neuroticism is found in the literature to be negatively related to organizational citizenship behavior. Firstborns have high anxiety leading to high levels of neuroticism. Middle children are more inclined to be self-consciousness and vulnerable and exhibit higher levels of neuroticism.
> P5. It is expected that lastborns will exhibit lower levels, than other positions, of neuroticism than the other positions in the birth order and thus will exhibit the highest levels of OCBs.

Lone Wolf Tendencies

Lone wolf tendencies (LWTs) are salespeople who are not enthusiastic about expanding their efforts outside of their job description to cooperate with others and dedicate little time to organizational events. "These agents are spatially separated from the organization they represent, do not perceive the need for coworker interaction, and believe that their accomplishments are based solely on individual initiatives and efforts" (Mulki et al., 2007, p. 25).
Openness, with its focus on imaginative and creative aspects, is expected be negatively related to LWTs. Traits of negatively related to openness in regard to lone wolf tendencies include narcissism (Locander, 2021). Lastborns exhibit the behavior of being charismatic (Leman, 2009).

> P6. Lastborns are expected to exhibit higher levels of openness and thus lower levels of lone wolf tendencies than other positions.

Conscientiousness includes adhering to norms and rules which runs counter to the LWT train and thus should be negatively related. Since firstborns are more inclined to have high levels of conscientiousness, they are expected to have lower levels of LWTs. Lastborns tend to have traits that align with LWTs in the realm of conscientiousness, such as blaming others (Leman, 2009).

> P7a. Firstborns are expected to exhibit higher levels of conscientiousness than any other position in the birth order and therefore, will exhibit low levels of lone wolf tendencies.
> P7b. Lastborns are expected to exhibit lower levels of conscientiousness than any other position in the birth order and therefore, will exhibit high levels of lone wolf tendencies.

Extroverts gain energy from interacting with others, it is expected that it will impact lone wolf tendencies negatively given that those high in LWTs do not want to develop interpersonal

relationships at work and do not want to expend effort cooperating with others (Mulki et al., 2007). Lastborns have attributes of extraversion, attention seeker, people person, natural salesperson, and engaging (Leman, 2009).

P8. Lastborns are expected to exhibit lower levels of lone wolf tendencies.

Agreeable employees can have an array of attributes ranging from communication skills and competence (Witt et al., 2002). Lastborns exhibit low levels of agreeableness due to their tendency towards manipulation (Leman, 2009). Secondborns exhibit the trait of agreeableness based on their tendency toward trustfulness, avoiding conflict, and loyalty (Leman, 2009). Agreeableness is negatively related to LWTs as agreeable personalities work toward social harmony and value getting along with others.

P9a. Secondborns are expected to exhibit higher levels of agreeableness and therefore, will exhibit low levels of lone wolf tendencies.

P9b. Lastborns are expected to exhibit lower levels of agreeableness and therefore, will exhibit high levels of lone wolf tendencies.

Neuroticism is related to feeling of anxiety, self-doubt and social isolation, all of which should be positively related to lone wolf tendencies. All positions within the birth order experience some level of neuroticism, some higher than others. Firstborns have high anxiety which leads to high levels of neuroticism and should result in higher levels of lone wolf tendencies. Middle children are more inclined to have self-consciousness and vulnerability leading to higher levels of neuroticism and thus exhibit high levels of lone wolf tendencies.

P10. It is expected that lastborns will exhibit lower levels of neuroticism and therefore, will exhibit low levels of lone wolf tendencies.

Conclusion

With the increase in employees job hopping and salesperson retention rates being low, it is imperative that companies use every advantage to make employees happy and efficient in their roles (Griffeth, Gaertner, and Sager, 1999). The Journal of Selling recently had a call for papers regarding the recruitment, support, and retainment of the next generation of sales professionals. This shows how pertinent it is to understand each individual and their organization's behavior. Birth order and its impact on key behaviors through personality is proposed to make a difference in how salespeople function within the organization and their likelihood of being retained. Knowing the facets within personality that are affected by birth order can help managers better connect and understand their employees, thereby raising retention rates.

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Available upon request.

PURCHASING AGENT OPPORTUNITY RECOGNITION AND FIRM VALUE

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As firms compete on value, the purchasing function and its actors are required to contribute value that exceeds mere costs reductions (Gray, Helper, & Osborn, 2020; Wouters, Anderson, & Wynstra, 2005). As an organizational performance outcome (Gray, Helper, & Osborn, 2020), value can take different forms such as return on sales, time to market or overall firm value (Chen & Paulraj 2004; Ataseven & Nair, 2017). In this respect, the role of purchasing has become more strategic (Chen, Paulraj, & Lado, 2004; Cheung, Myers, & Mentzer, 2010; Cao & Zhang, 2011), and - as a result - purchasing seeks closer collaboration with suppliers to add value (Flynn, Huo, & Zhao, 2010; Nyaga, Whipple, & Lynch 2010; Schoenherr & Swink, 2012). As a head of procurement states: "we really want to look together with our supplier where we can add value" (Paesbrugghe Rangarajan, Sharma, Syam, & Jha, 2017, p. 180). However, Tuli, Kohli, and Bharadwaj (2007, p. 6) observe that purchasing agents "frequently are not fully cognizant of their business needs." In a similar vein, Gray et al. (2020, p. 738) state that it is "difficult [for purchasing agents] to quantify differences between [identified] options."

Extant research often indicates that opportunities are an important way for purchasing agents to create value in buyer-supplier interactions. For example, researchers have recently suggested that purchasing's value creation involves identifying new supplier offerings (Jääskeläinen & Heikkilä, 2019), recognizing new solutions to existing business challenges (Schütz, Kässer, Blome, & Foerstl, 2020), or finding original solutions to support the buying companies' business goals (Paesbrugghe et al., 2017). Based on related research (Davidsson, 2015; Grégoire, Barr, & Shepherd, 2010; Wang & Netemeyer, 2004), we summarize such phenomena under the concept of "purchasing opportunities." Purchasing opportunities are new ideas generated by the purchasing agents in performing their job activities that could potentially lead to net benefits. From an individual actor perspective, however, the task of recognizing opportunities is as challenging as it is relevant (Grégoire et al. 2010).

Despite the importance and the associated difficulties, prior research has neglected to examine the effective management of purchasing opportunities (see Table 1), although the examination of purchasing opportunities would help to explain the difficulties in recognizing (Tuli et al. 2007) and assessing (Gray et al. 2020) them with regard to value outcomes. Adopting a focus on financial firm value would also add to the limited amount of research examining collaboration, information sharing and learning from suppliers in light of financial outcomes (e.g., Cao and Zhang 2011; Flynn, Huo, & Zhao, 2010). In addition, prior research resides on the firm level (see Table 1). However, the firm-level focus overlooks that it is on the individual level where purchasing activities take place and outcomes are generated. Ataseven and Nair (2017, p. 263) conclude: "the interactions mostly take place among the human actors of the organizations, and [the individual level] remains as an opportunity for future research in the supply chain management area." By examining purchasing opportunities on the individual level of purchasing agents and on the firm level, we address this call for research. Overall, we investigate the following research question:

How do purchasing agents recognize opportunities and how do these opportunities contribute to the value of purchasing agents' companies?

As firms compete on value, the purchasing function and its actors are required to contribute value that exceeds mere costs reductions (Gray, Helper, & Osborn, 2020; Wouters, Anderson, & Wynstra, 2005). As an organizational performance outcome (Gray, Helper, & Osborn, 2020), value can take different forms such as return on sales, time to market or overall firm value (Chen & Paulraj 2004; Ataseven & Nair, 2017). In this respect, the role of purchasing has become more strategic (Chen, Paulraj, & Lado, 2004; Cheung, Myers, & Mentzer, 2010; Cao & Zhang, 2011), and - as a result - purchasing seeks closer collaboration with suppliers to add value (Flynn, Huo, & Zhao, 2010; Nyaga, Whipple, & Lynch 2010; Schoenherr & Swink, 2012). As a head of procurement states: "we really want to look together with our supplier where we can add value" (Paesbrugghe Rangarajan, Sharma, Syam, & Jha, 2017, p. 180). However, Tuli, Kohli, and Bharadwaj (2007, p. 6) observe that purchasing agents "frequently are not fully cognizant of their business needs." In a similar vein, Gray et al. (2020, p. 738) state that it is "difficult [for purchasing agents] to quantify differences between [identified] options."

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B2B SALESPEOPLE CRAFTING THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OF THEIR KEY ACCOUNTS

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Abstract

Following business-to-consumer marketing practices, business-to-business (B2B) firms see relational marketing evolving towards a more holistic approach considering not only the relationship between the seller and the buyer but also the whole customer experience. As a result, B2B salespeople in charge of key accounts must adapt to new expectations and develop what we conceptualize as the key account experience. Based on a pilot study with open-ended questionnaires among 129 B2B salespeople and a qualitative study with 43 in-depth interviews, our research highlights that the key account experience, primarily cognitive and affective, is orchestrated by B2B salespeople mobilizing different internal and external stakeholders.

Keywords

Key Account; Customer Experience; B2B selling; Stakeholder theory

INTRODUCTION

Ensuring a positive customer experience is especially important when handling Key Accounts (KAs), as they are pivotal clients of strategic significance for firms (Ivens et al., 2018). Notably, the literature identifies several gaps that need to be addressed regarding customer experience, one being how firms can influence different touchpoints, outside their scopes, which would impact the customer experience (Lemon & Verhoef, 2016). An example, in a B2B context, is how to handle external stakeholders to generate a positive experience for customers. Furthermore, the KA management literature suggests further research to examine what is required to develop intrafirm cooperation (Lautenschlager & Tzempelikos, 2021). From the customer standpoint, B2B salespeople are still lacking to integrate new selling strategies (i.e., KA management) and rely heavily on traditional relationship-building strategies (Paesbrugghe et al., 2017). Although there are a few exceptions (e.g., Grewal & Sridhar, 2021; Homburg & Tischer, 2023), very little research has examined customer experience from a B2B angle. Our study aims to explore the KA experience by addressing the following research questions: (1) How can B2B salespeople and B2B firms enhance the KA experience? (2) Which stakeholders collaborate with the B2B salespeople to enhance the KA experience?

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

KA management was essentially developed to create and maintain relationships with KAs (Sandesh et al., 2023), thus emerging from the relational marketing trend (e.g., Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Guenzi et al., 2009; McDonald et al., 1997; Pardo, 1997; Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2013). However, KA management has evolved towards greater professionalization

(Hengstebeck et al., 2022), and while relational marketing remains prevalent, there has been a growing interest in experiential marketing and customer experience (e.g., Schmitt, 1999).

Stakeholder theory emphasizes the active management of stakeholder relationships (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). This involves engaging with stakeholders, understanding their needs and expectations, and incorporating their concerns into the firm's decision-making processes. A stakeholder is any individual, group, or firm that can affect or be affected by the actions, decisions, policies, practices, or goals of an organization (Freeman et al., 2010; Freeman, 1984). This includes both internal actors (e.g., employees and shareholders) and external actors (e.g., customers, suppliers, local communities, regulators) who have a stake in or are influenced by the decisions and activities of the organization.

METHODOLOGY

In this study, we used an exploratory qualitative approach (Zolkiewski et al., 2023). Since our study represents an exploration into the nexus between KA management and customer experience in B2B contexts, we deemed that it was necessary to investigate perceptions among various categories of B2B salespeople. We first conducted a pilot study using open-ended questionnaires sent to 129 B2B sales professionals (including sales representatives, sales managers and KA managers). This allowed us to evaluate the research design, data collection tool, and procedure, and eventually adjust. Next, we conducted 43 semi-structured interviews with B2B salespeople, handling specifically KAs, to gather more in-depth material.

To analyze our data a content analysis approach was adopted (e.g., Krippendorff, 2018). Following a meticulous review of all interview transcripts and iterative discussions within the research team (Dumez, 2016) and back and forth between the data and the literature, we discerned predominant themes and related categories. Utilizing these themes and categories as a coding scheme, we subsequently coded the units of meaning in the interview transcripts. Using these categories and themes as anchors, we then structured our data in a conceptual framework, ensuring a representation of the content's inherent meanings.

FINDINGS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Our findings illustrate that B2B salespeople can create a cognitive and affective experience for KAs at every step of the customer journey (i.e., the pre-purchase, purchase, and post-purchase steps). Moreover, we demonstrate that the KA experience brings together several stakeholders who all participate in providing a positive experience. In addition, we highlight that the one providing the experience can either be the salesperson or his/her firm and that both can join forces with the internal teams (direct colleagues, KA team, or other departments).

For B2B salespeople handling KAs or dealing with KAs, we suggest organizing comprehensive training modules that emphasize the importance of the customer experience, focusing on both the cognitive and affective aspects of the KA experience. Furthermore, salespeople handling KAs should have structured plans for deploying resources and should be empowered with autonomy for swift decision-making.

Establishing regular feedback loops with KAs via formal and informal encounters may help align with their evolving needs. We also suggest a cultural shift within organizations prioritizes the KA experience, backed by top management commitment. Internal stakeholders who champion this perspective should be rewarded.

It would be of some interest to meticulously chart out every internal and external stakeholder involved in the KA experience. Furthermore, we suggest organizing training sessions to acquaint -not just the salespeople dealing with KAs- but all internal stakeholders with the overarching importance of the KA experience.

We also suggest joint cross-functional meetings for strategic discussions and periodic strategic dialogues between top management of both firms align strategies. This would also aid in anchoring the relationship at an organizational level and would ensure it is not overly reliant on personal ties established by the salesperson handling the KA. Lastly, while personal relationships built by B2B salespeople are invaluable, it is vital to ensure they complement rather than overshadow organizational ties.

CONCLUSION

Our study explores the concept of the KA experience from the sellers' perspective building upon interviews with B2B salespeople. While the B2B salespeople strive to create a cognitive and affective experience for their KAs, multiple stakeholders including their firm, their teams, and the KA's employees play a crucial role in the development of the KA experience.

References available upon request.

TIMES OF CHANGE: THE EFFECTS OF BRICOLAGE AND CUSTOMER ORIENTATION DURING ORGANIZATIONAL DISRUPTIONS

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In the changing landscape of the business world, the sales profession is impacted by the digital transformation, changing buyer demands, economic pressure, globalization, increasing product complexity and increased competition, among others (e.g., Bonney, Beeler, and Chakar 2022; Cardy et al. 2023; Carlson and Ross 2022; Claro, Ramos, and Palmatier 2023; Good, Pullins & Rouziou 2022). These transformations impact sales resources, as well as the selling role. The concept of salesperson bricolage (using available resources to address challenges) has gained attention recently in sales. Bricolage is helpful to a salesperson in navigating disruptions (Epler and Leach 2021) in resource-constrained environments (Weerawardena and McColl-Kennedy 2013) and under rapidly changing conditions (Wu, Liu, and Zhang 2017). Little is known about the mechanism by which bricolage affects other outcomes or its potential dark side.

While existing research has focused on the antecedents and positive outcomes of salesperson bricolage, there remains a gap in understanding its potential negative effects and the mechanisms underlying its impact on various outcomes. Additionally, exploring moderators like customer orientation can offer insights into mitigating potential negative effects and enhancing positive outcomes associated with salesperson bricolage. First, we add to the emerging understanding of salesperson bricolage by considering additional consequences of salesperson bricolage. Second, we explore the potential for dark side effects of salesperson bricolage by looking at unethical selling behavior. Third, we explore a potential moderator of salesperson bricolage in customer orientation.

Background: Self-Determination Theory (SDT) distinguishes between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, with individuals varying in their predisposition towards one or the other. While intrinsic motivation stems from internal rewards, extrinsic motivation is driven by external incentives. Environmental factors can influence the focus of individuals towards either intrinsic or extrinsic rewards, impacting their behaviors. For instance, when operating with intrinsic motivation, salespersons are creative and more customer-centric (Hennessey 2000; Pullins 2001). Salesperson bricolage, relying on creativity and learning orientation, aligns with intrinsic motivation (Epler and Leach, 2021). However, in stressful environments, extrinsically motivated behaviors may prevail, creating tension (Fernet and Austin, 2014). SDT suggests that bricolage is most effective under conditions of intrinsic motivation, fostering adaptive behaviors like adaptive selling and polychronicity. Environmental constraints may prompt salespersons to prioritize extrinsic rewards, potentially leading to behaviors incongruent with building customer relationships, such as unethical selling practices. Customer Orientation (CO) may serve as a boundary condition, enhancing intrinsically driven behaviors like adaptive selling while possibly reducing extrinsically driven behaviors such as unethical selling (Saxe and Weitz, 1982; Patrick et al., 2007).

In times of organizational disruption, salesperson bricolage is expected to correlate with increased levels of polychronicity, adaptive selling, and unethical selling behavior. Research suggests that polychronicity, indicative of multitasking preference, is positively associated with

bricolage (Weeks and Fournier, 2010). Similarly, bricolage is anticipated to foster adaptive selling behaviors, as noted by Weitz and Spiro (1982). However, due to the simultaneous presence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations in disruptive environments, bricolage might also lead to increased unethical selling behavior. This aligns with the notion that intrinsic and extrinsic motivations can operate concurrently (Deci and Ryan, 2008). Customer Orientation (CO), emphasizing relationship building with customers, is posited to moderate these relationships, enhancing adaptive selling while mitigating unethical behavior. We hypothesize:

> H1: Under conditions of organizational disruption, salesperson bricolage is related to increased levels of polychronicity.

> H2: Under conditions of organizational disruption, salesperson bricolage is related to increased levels of adaptive selling.

> H3: Under conditions of organizational disruption, salesperson bricolage is related to increased levels of unethical selling behavior.

> H4a: Under conditions of organizational disruption, customer orientation positively moderates the relationship between salesperson bricolage and polychronicity.

> H4b. Under conditions of organizational disruption, customer orientation positively moderates the relationship between salesperson bricolage and adaptive selling.

> H4c. Under conditions of organizational disruption, customer orientation negatively moderates the relationship between salesperson bricolage and unethical selling behavior.

Methodology: To test the hypothesized relationships, a total of 122 salespeople were surveyed from an online research panel. Participants indicated they experienced some type of disruption in their company (e.g. layoffs, restructuring, pay changes, leadership changes). Participants were then asked to answer survey questions adapted from prior literature regarding bricolage (c.r. =.81; Epler and Leach, 2021), adaptive selling (c.r. =.78; Spiro and Weitz 1990), polychronicity (c.r. =.83; Fournier et al. 2013), unethical selling practices (c.r.=.92; Sridhar and Lyngdoh 2019) and customer orientation (c.r. =.78; Saxe and Weitz, 1982). All five variables showed acceptable composite reliability scores. Convergent validity was assessed by determining that the AVE for each construct was greater than .50. Discriminant validity was assessed among the constructs using Fornell and Larcker's (1981) criterion. Percent of salary from variable compensation and years with their company were included as control variables within the model.

Results and Discussion: H1, H2 and H3 are confirmed; bricolage positively influences polychronicity (0.41, t =2.92, p <.01) and positively influences adaptive selling practices (0.73, t =9.89, p <.01). Bricolage positively influences unethical selling behaviors (0.31, t= 2.81, p<.01). Thus, our study confirms that bricolage during disruptive events promotes adaptive selling practices and polychronicity, while also having a positive impact on unethical selling behaviors.

The direct effects of customer orientation on polychronicity (-0.32, t =2.16, p <.05) and unethical selling behaviors (-0.59, t =4.56, p <.01) were significant and negative, suggesting customer orientation makes it more difficult to manage multiple tasks simultaneously but does help prevent the pursuit of unethical practices. However, the direct effect of customer orientation on adaptive selling was non-significant (0.18, t =1.73, p =.08). The interaction effect for the

bricolage*customer orientation on polychronicity (-0.33, t = 3.53, p<0.01) was significant but in the opposite direction, failing to support H4a. This finding suggests that customer orientation reduces a salesperson's ability to engage in multitasking related to bricolage, possibly salespeople allocate more time to focusing on customer relationships. The interaction effect for the bricolage*customer orientation on adaptive selling (-0.01, t = 0.17, p=0.87) was non-significant, not supporting H4b. Finally, the interaction effect for the bricolage*customer orientation on unethical selling behaviors (-0.22, t = 2.71, p<0.01) was significant, supporting H4c, suggesting customer orientation reduces the likelihood of unethical behaviors related to bricolage.

Understanding how salespeople navigate evolving contexts remains crucial for managers and scholars. Constructs such as bricolage, polychronicity, and adaptive selling offer potential avenues for enhancing sales performance in dynamic environments. Our research contributes to the understanding of salesperson bricolage by highlighting its potential negative consequences, particularly unethical selling behavior, while also underscoring the mitigating role of customer orientation in offsetting these negative impacts. Surprisingly, customer orientation appears to diminish the effect of bricolage on multitasking, possibly due to the focused nature of being customer oriented. Additionally, the lack of support for customer orientation's moderation of bricolage to adaptive selling may stem from a reversal of the predicted relationship in disruptive contexts, as suggested by Franke and Park (2006). Furthermore, our extension of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to explain sales behaviors in disruptive contexts offers valuable insights, highlighting the interplay between autonomy and control. Moving forward, longitudinal studies examining the dynamics of these variables over time and across different levels of disruption are warranted, alongside further investigation into the mechanisms underlying the interaction between bricolage and customer orientation. Managers can leverage these findings to better anticipate salesperson reactions in changing environments, potentially informing recruitment, selection, and training strategies to cultivate bricolage among sales teams.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model
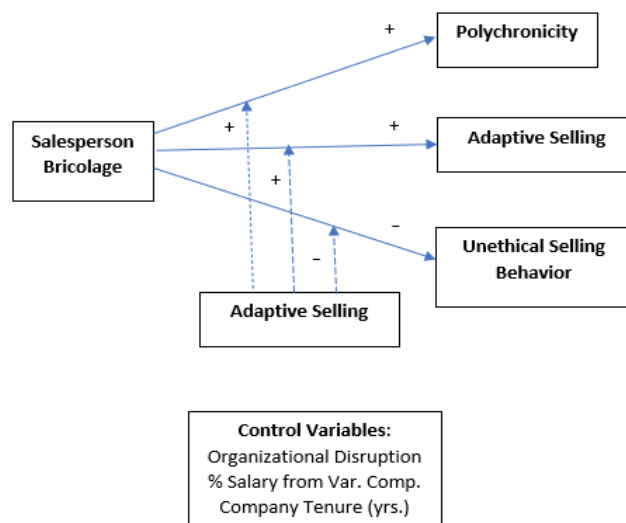
References: Available upon request.

LET ME TELL YOU ABOUT MYSELF! SALESPERSON ORIENTATIONS, SELF-PRESENTATION, AND PATHWAYS TO PERFORMANCE

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Abstract

Extant research in sales has established that effective interpersonal communication is fundamental to establishing and maintaining successful business-to-business (B2B) buyer-seller relationships. While most of the research in sales has focused on either rapport building by salespeople or the use of influence tactics by salespeople, communicating relevant information on personal characteristics (e.g., experience, knowledge, and achievements) which is critical for creating favorable initial impressions amongst customers is still relatively under-researched. In this paper, we particularly look at the impact of how salespeople present themselves to their customers and look at some antecedents and consequences of these presentation tactics. Using a sample of 303 B2B salespeople, we demonstrate that the selling and customer orientation of salespeople have different impacts on how salespeople present themselves to their customers and how the presentation tactics of salespeople further have an impact on their performance and emotional exhaustion.

Introduction

Effective interpersonal communication is fundamental to establishing and maintaining successful business-to-business (B2B) buyer-seller relationships (Johlke and Duhan 2001; Schultz and Evans 2002). Although various informational elements assume importance during salespeople's interactions with customers (Wood et al. 2008), communicating relevant information on personal characteristics (e.g., experience, knowledge, and achievements) is critical for creating favorable initial impressions (Henthorne, LaTour, and Williams 1992), cultivating a favorable image amongst customers (Wiener, Flaherty, and Wiener 2022), and, ultimately, engendering salesperson selection (Krishnan, Niculescu, and Fredericks 2018). Yet, a review of extant research reveals a scarcity of studies on specific communication tactics that could be employed by salespeople to represent their personal attributes during customers encounters and the question of *should salespeople be authentic in describing themselves or should they embellish their qualities* remains unanswered.

In the sales literature, several studies have explored the role of personal authenticity and have found that authentic communication is positively related to trust and quality (Matthews et al. 2020), sales performance (Schaefer and Pettijohn 2006), and positive transactional outcomes (Yoo and Arnold 2019). However, research also notes that self-enhancing communication increases salespeople's likeability and social attractiveness, especially in the contexts of job applications (Watts et al. 2021), interviews (Leathers 2013), and performance appraisal (Belen Bande, Otero-Neira, and Varela 2017). Thus, an investigation of the relative merits of specific personal communication tactics is warranted.

Drawing from the literature on impression management (e.g., Bolino and Turnley 2003; Bolino et al. 2008; Gardner and Martinko 1988; Fisk and Grove 1996; Johnson, Sivadas, and

Kashyap 2009) and self-presentation (Den Hartog, De Hoogh, Belschak 2020; Kim et al. 2022), this study develops and tests a theoretical framework (see figure 1) of the antecedents and consequences of salespeople's self-presentation tactics. Specifically, two research questions underscore the proposed framework: (1) what are the effects of self-presentation tactics on sales performance? (2) what are the effects of salesperson orientation on self-presentation tactics? Based on Kim et al. (2022), we focus on three self-presentation tactics, namely, (a) authentic self-expression, (b) authentic self-enhancement, and (c) exaggerated self-enhancement and propose differential effects on emotional exhaustion and customer satisfaction, which are critical pathways to sales performance. Further, we propose that salespeople's customer orientation and selling orientation have competing effects on self-presentation tactics such that customer (selling) orientation enhances (decreases) authentic self-expression and decreases (increases) both authentic self-enhancement and exaggerated self-enhancement.

Results from analysis of survey responses from 303 B2B salespeople lend support for a majority of the proposed hypotheses. From a theoretical perspective, this study is the first to extend the limited knowledge on impression management in the sales literature by drawing attention to the differential outcomes of various self-presentation tactics and well as to variations in adoption of such tactics due to salespeople's underlying orientations. From a managerial perspective, the findings (i) advocate the use of authentic self-expression and authentic self-enhancement, (ii) advise against exaggerated self-enhancement as it hampers performance by increasing emotional exhaustion and decreasing customer satisfaction, and (iii) encourage managers to customize training on self-presentation tactics based on salesperson orientation, especially since customer-oriented salespeople were found to use authentic tactics, whereas selling oriented salespeople were less likely to use authentic self-expression and more likely to use enhancement tactics.

Salesperson self-presentation

While Beeler, Zablah, and Rapp (2021) have studied the contingent role of authenticity in salesperson brand attachment and customer-brand trust relationship, it is more informative to examine the authenticity of a salesperson by examining it within the presentation of the self of a salesperson, specifically, authentic self-expression and authentic self-enhancement. At the same time, self-enhancement and self-presentation are assertive kinds of ingratiatory tactics that salespeople use to influence and persuade customers (Strutton, Pelton, and Lumpkin 1995). For that, it is important to distinguish between self-enhancing self-presentation tactics that salespeople use when with customers, specifically authentic self-expression, authentic self-enhancement, and exaggerated self-enhancement (e.g., Kim et al. 2023).

Authentic self-expression refers to a salesperson's extent of "being genuine and transparently revealing all aspects of oneself, including weaknesses" (Kim et al. 2023, 948). Salespeople use authentic self-expression to reveal aspects of themselves including their weakness sincerely and truthfully. Such a display of honesty and transparency can increase trust and allow for more meaningful connections with customers.

Authentic self-enhancement refers to the extent to which a salesperson genuinely showcases accomplishments and highlights strengths and talents, thereby promoting positive attributes without revealing any weaknesses (Kim et al. 2023). While this kind of self-enhancement is authentic, it lacks complete transparency since it does not reveal the salesperson's weaknesses. As a means of self-enhancement, salespeople "blow their own horn" to make sure that customers are informed about their successes (Strutton, Pelton, and Lumpkin

1995, 38). Salespeople attempt to nourish an image that will be perceived favorably by customers (Strutton, Pelton, and Lumpkin 1995).

Exaggerated self-enhancement occurs when salespeople "present a false image of themselves by exaggerating how good they are, taking credit for things outside of their sphere of control, avoiding blame, or denying responsibility for failure" (Kim et al. 2023, 949). In this context, salespeople aim to portray themselves to customers in a more positive light than is justified by overstating their expertise and pretending to be better than reality. Such exaggeration may also involve shifting blame to others and denying responsibility for any failures. Exaggerated self-enhancement is a deceptive tactic wherein a salesperson attempts to present a false and misleading image to customers, undermining their trust in the process.

SOCO and salesperson self-presentation

Customer orientation and selling orientation impact the way salespeople approach customers and work with them (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Itani, Chonko, and Agnihotri 2022) and also how salespeople self-present themselves when with customers as such self-presentation could impact customer decision-making and experience.

Customer orientation is based on the principle of satisfying the needs of customers, which signifies high concern for others while selling orientation is about securing sales as it is associated with low concern for others and high concern for self (Saxe and Weitz 1982). Customer orientation implies valuing customers more than sales (Zablah et al. 2012) and requires salespeople to avoid interpersonal conduct that sacrifices the interests of customers to make a sale (Saxe and Weitz 1982). Selling orientation drives self-interest temptations (Bagozzi et al. 2012) allowing salespeople to carry out misleading activities such as stretching the truth and painting too rosy a picture of what they sell (Saxe and Weitz 1982). This could also extend to how salespeople stretch the truth about their accomplishments and skills. Contrary to customer orientation, selling orientation forgoes moral conduct in order not to scarify possible sales gain (Itani, Chonko, and Agnihotri 2022). Salesperson authenticity is found to be negatively correlated with extrinsic motivation (Beeler, Zablah, and Rapp 2021) suggesting that monetary or financial motive is not a driver of authentic salespeople, and that why customer orientation is more to be aligned with authentic self-expression and less with self-enhancement.

On the one hand, we expect that customer orientation should drive salespeople to present themselves genuinely and transparently, even revealing their weaknesses. This approach leads to increased customer satisfaction and reduced exhaustion. On the other hand, a sales orientation is less likely to motivate salespeople to be genuine in representing themselves, including acknowledging weaknesses. Instead, they are more inclined to emphasize accomplishments and strengths, sometimes exaggerating their abilities without revealing vulnerabilities. Formally,

H1a: Customer orientation will positively influence authentic self-expression.
H1b: Customer orientation will negatively influence authentic self-enhancement.
H1c: Customer orientation will negatively influence exaggerated self-enhancement.
H2a: Selling orientation will negatively influence authentic self-expression.
H2b: Selling orientation will positively influence authentic self-enhancement.
H2c: Selling orientation will negatively influence exaggerated self-enhancement.

Outcomes of salesperson self-presentation

Authentic self-expression can lead to favorable assessments from others as it boosts perceptions of integrity and mutual trust within a dyadic relationship (Burke and Stets 1999; Kim et al. 2023; Mayer and Gavin 2005). While authentic self-expression has a positive effect on employees' trust

from coworkers, self-enhancement (i.e., authentic, and exaggerated) decreases such trust leading to lower job performance as perceived by their supervisors (Kim et al. 2023). Accordingly, we argue that the way a salesperson presents oneself can impact work- and customer-related outcomes (i.e., emotional exhaustion and customer satisfaction). As salesperson authenticity is negatively correlated with extrinsic motivation, in which the salesperson is motivated by monetary means and not by the selling job (Beeler, Zablah, and Rapp 2021), it is possible that self-presentation authenticity (i.e., authentic self-expression and authentic self-enhancement) is less likely to exhaust salespeople and more likely to increase customer satisfaction. Indeed, authenticity is more likely to be associated with positive emotions and emotional expression (e.g., Kim 2021; Yagil and Medler-Liraz 2014). For that, authenticity could decrease the level of experienced emotional exhaustion (e.g., Huppertz et al. 2020) and increase customer satisfaction (Grandey et al. 2005). Formally,

H3a(b): Authentic self-expression will negatively (positively) influence emotional exhaustion (customer satisfaction).
H4a(b): Authentic self-enhancement will negatively (positively) influence emotional exhaustion (customer satisfaction).
H5a(b): Exaggerated self-enhancement will positively (negatively) influence emotional exhaustion (customer satisfaction).

Emotional exhaustion is recognized for its detrimental impact on salespeople's performance, depleting their resources and diminishing motivation and resilience (e.g., Darrat, Atinc, and Babin 2016; Edmondson, Matthews, and Ambrose 2019). This state of exhaustion also leads to cognitive impairment, hindering their ability to think critically and make effective decisions (e.g., Brown, Locander, and Locander 2022; Kulikowski 2021). Conversely, customer satisfaction has been shown to bolster sales performance (e.g., Ahearne, Mathieu, and Rapp 2005). Satisfied customers are more inclined to make purchases from the salesperson, and heightened customer satisfaction contributes to the job satisfaction of salespeople (Zablah et al. 2016), thereby optimizing overall performance. Formally,

H6: Emotional exhaustion will negatively influence performance.
H7: Customer satisfaction will positively influence performance.

Method
Using the services of a market research company that manages respondent panels, data was collected through an online survey of business-to-business (B2B) salespeople. In all, 303 respondents completed the survey of which 46% (54%) were male (female), about 54% had 2 or more years of college education, and approximately 45% (55%) were predominantly engaged in selling B2B products (services). Established scales (seven-point; 1 = "Strongly Disagree" to 7 = "Strongly Agee") were used to measure all constructs included in the study. Salesperson self-presentation was measured using a scale from Kim, David, Chen, and Liang (2022), which included four items each for authentic self-expression, authentic self-enhancement, and exaggerated self-enhancement. Customer orientation and sales orientation were each measured with five-item scales borrowed from Thomas, Soutar, and Ryan (2001). Emotional exhaustion was measured with a three-item scale from Maslach and Jackson (1981), while customer

satisfaction was measured using a four-item scale from Rapp et al. (2006). Finally, sales performance was measured using a seven-item scale from Sujan, Weitz, and Kumar (1994).

Data analysis was performed using partial least squares – structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4. Following prescribed protocols (Hair et al. 2019), individual item loadings were scrutinized for item reliabilities, which resulted in one item each for authentic self-expression and customer satisfaction being dropped for low loadings. Cronbach's alphas ranged from .70 to .92, ρ_A ranged from .72 to .92, ρ_C ranged from .83 to .95, and average variance extracted (AVE) values ranged from .62 to .86, thus providing evidence internal construct reliabilities and convergent validity of each construct.

The path coefficients provide support for eleven (11) out of fourteen (14) hypotheses. Customer orientation was positively related to authentic self-expression (H_{1a}; β = .43; p < .01) and authentic self-enhancement (H_{1b}; β = .46; p < .01), but not exaggerated self-enhancement (H_{1c}; β = -.03; p > .05). In contrast, selling orientation was negatively related to authentic self-expression (H_{2a}; β = -.15; p < .01) and positively related to both authentic self-enhancement (H_{2b}; β = .12; p < .05) and exaggerated self-enhancement (H_{2c}; β = .68; p < .01). Authentic self-expression was not related to emotional exhaustion (H_{3a}; β = -.08; p > .05) but was positively related to customer satisfaction (H_{3b}; β = .28; p < .01). Similarly, authentic self-enhancement was not related to emotional exhaustion (H_{4a}; β = -.08; p > .05) but was positively related to customer satisfaction (H_{4b}; β = .25; p < .01). Interestingly, exaggerated self-enhancement was positively related to emotional exhaustion (H_{5a}; β = .17; p > .01) and negatively related to customer satisfaction (H_{5b}; β = -.22; p < .01). Finally, emotional exhaustion was positively related to performance (H_6; β = -.14; p > .05), whereas customer satisfaction exerted a positive effect (H_7; β = .32; p > .01). The results showed no variation across gender, education, product vs. service focus, the presence of customer satisfaction incentives, and % of quota achievement, thus lending robustness to the findings on the focal relationships. The findings are summarized in Table 1.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings from our research indicate that the way B2B salespeople present themselves to their customers has an impact not just on customers' but also has an impact on the level of emotional exhaustion experienced by these salespeople. Furthermore, customer orientation of salespeople is likely to have a more positive impact on customer attitudes as well as on the emotional exhaustion experienced by salespeople. While this is a useful first step, future studies could look into continuing this research in a longitudinal setup where the frequency with which salespeople practice self-expression, self-enhancement might have long term consequences into how customer relationships are built over time. Furthermore, getting customer perspectives on how they actually perceive the self-expression and self-enhancement tactics by salespeople would make for some interesting reconciliation of the key findings of this research, which is based on the perceptions of salespeople.

Framework
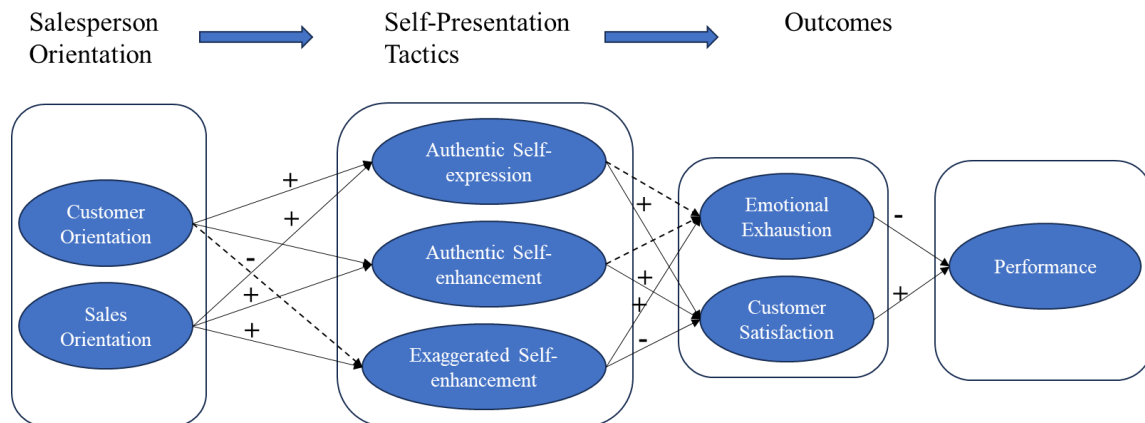
Note: + and – above solid arrows denote directions of significant relationships;
dotted arrows denote non-significant relationships

Table 1: Results of Hypotheses Tests

Hypothesis	Coefficient	T stat	P values	Result
H1a: Cust. Orien. -> Auth. Self-Exp	0.43	6.13	0.00	Supported
H1b: Cust. Orien. -> Auth. Self-Enh	0.46	6.39	0.00	Supported
H1c: Cust. Orien. -> Exagg. Self-Enh	-0.04	0.62	0.27	Not Supported
H2a: Selling Orien -> Auth. Self-Exp	-0.15	2.45	0.01	Supported
H2b: Selling Orien. -> Auth. Self-Enh	0.12	2.02	0.02	Supported
H2c: Selling Orien. -> Exagg. Self-Enh	0.68	14.50	0.00	Supported
H3a: Auth. Self-Exp -> Emo Exhaustion	-0.08	1.08	0.14	Not Supported
H3b: Auth. Self-Exp -> Cust. Satisfaction	0.28	4.20	0.00	Supported
H4a: Auth. Self-Enh -> Emo Exhaustion	-0.08	1.04	0.15	Not Supported
H4b: Auth. Self-Enh -> Cust. Satisfaction	0.26	4.39	0.00	Supported
H5a: Exagg. Self-Enh -> Emo Exhaustion	0.18	2.60	0.01	Supported
H5b: Exagg. Self-Enh -> Cust. Satisfaction	-0.22	4.63	0.00	Supported
H6: Emo Exhaustion -> Performance	-0.14	2.32	0.01	Supported
H7: Cust. Satisfaction -> Performance	0.32	7.12	0.00	Supported

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IMPOSTOR PHENOMENON FACING POSITIVE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK: IMPACT ON SALESPEOPLE'S BURNOUT AND TURNOVER

Laurianne Schmitt (IÉSEG), Romain Franck (Em Strasbourg Business School, France), Ellis Chefor (Illinois State University), & Bruno Lussier (HEC Montréal)

Introduction

The impostor phenomenon emerged from the psychological literature and entails several characteristics, such as a feeling of intellectual phoniness, the attribution of successes to external factors with the inability to derive pleasure from them, a lack of self-confidence over one's achievements, and the fear of other's evaluation as they might discover one's incompetencies (Clance & Imes, 1978). In the workplace, impostor feelings negatively affect firm performance, managerial decision-making, innovative work (Guedes, 2023). While the impostor phenomenon leads to negative emotions and states, we wonder how the phenomenon would affect salespeople, a population that has direct feedback from their customers, reducing the risk of wrong attribution of their successes. Therefore, our research questions are as follows: First, does the impostor phenomenon affect burnout and turnover in a sales context? Second, how do manager support and customer positive feedback moderate such relations? Building on attribution theory and a sample of 223 B2B salespeople, our study reveals that the impostor phenomenon increases all three dimensions of burnout (i.e., personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion). We further demonstrate that impostors with manager support reduce all negative aspects of burnout, while customer feedback among impostors lowers an early step of burnout (i.e., personal accomplishment) but increases the latter step of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion). Therefore, impostors would benefit from customer feedback in the initial stages of burnout but should not be facing customer feedback when they are already in a later and deeper stage of burnout. We further demonstrate that salespeople decide to leave the firm (turnover) when they reach a state of emotional exhaustion.

Hypotheses Development

Figure 1. Conceptual model
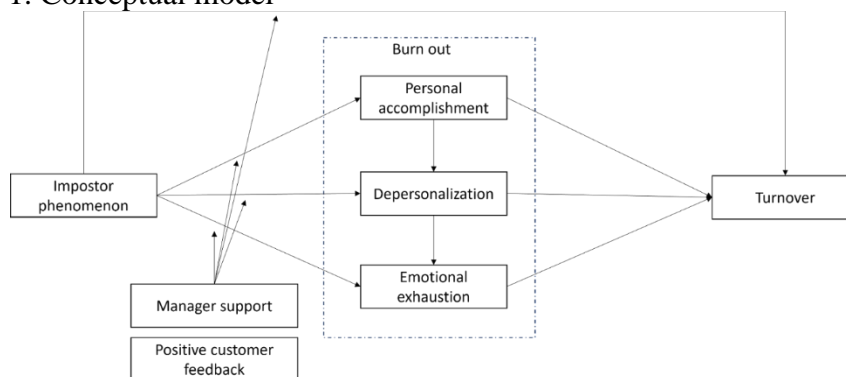
H1a: The impostor phenomenon is negatively related to personal accomplishment.
H1b: The impostor phenomenon is positively related to depersonalization.
H1c: The impostor phenomenon is positively related to emotional exhaustion.
H2: The effect of the impostor phenomenon on burnout (i.e., (a) reversed personal accomplishment, (b) depersonalization, (c) emotional exhaustion) is reduced when perceived sales manager support is high.

H2: The effect of the impostor phenomenon on burnout (i.e., (a) reversed personal accomplishment, (b) depersonalization, (c) emotional exhaustion) is reduced when positive customer feedback is high.
H3a: Personal accomplishment lowers depersonalization; b:depersonalization increases emotional exhaustion.
H4: The impostor phenomenon is positively related to turnover, and emotional exhaustion is a mediator between the impostor phenomenon and turnover.

Methodology

To test the hypotheses, a survey was conducted among B2B salespeople in France. The final sample is composed of 223 B2B salespeople. The respondents had an average of 37 years and an average of 10 years of tenure. The sample was 54.7% male and 45.3% female. The respondents worked in several industries. All measures were adapted from previous studies. The impostor phenomenon was measured using seven items adapted from the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (Clance, 1985). Perceived sales manager support was measured using four items adapted from DeConinck and Johnson (2009). Customer positive feedback was measured using Agnihotri et al., (2016) scale of customer satisfaction perceived by salespeople. Burnout was measured using three dimensions from Maslach, Jackson, and Leiter's (1996) burnout inventory. We used nine items for emotional exhaustion, five items for depersonalization, and seven items for personal accomplishment. We measured turnover using Jones et al., (2007) three items' measure. We controlled for gender and for sales experience.

To test the proposed model, we used partial least squares - structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). To assess convergent validity, we validate that the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeds 0.50 for each construct (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). To assess discriminant validity, we conducted the heterotrait-monotrait ratio test (HTMT) verifying that no value exceeded 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). Construct reliability was checked by evaluating that the composite reliability (CR) coefficients were higher than 0.7 for each construct (Hair et al., 2014). We verified that common method variance is not a major concern.

Results

Direct effects. The impostor phenomenon has a negative and significant effect on personal accomplishment (H1a) and a positive significant effect on depersonalization (H1b) and emotional exhaustion (H1c). Therefore, validating that it increases all dimensions of burnout. The burnout sequential steps are confirmed as personal accomplishment reduces depersonalization, which reduces emotional exhaustion. Our hypotheses are validated (H2a, H2b, H2c). Emotional exhaustion has a positive and significant effect on turnover (H4).

Moderating effect. Perceived sales manager support has a non-significant effect between the impostor phenomenon and the burnout dimensions (personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion) but it tends to reduce burnout, especially emotional exhaustion. Positive customer feedback reduces the effect of the impostor phenomenon on personal accomplishment (i.e., personal accomplishment remains high), but it increases emotional exhaustion when the impostor phenomenon is high.

Theoretical implications, managerial implications, and future research

We demonstrate that the impostor's feelings are positively associated with burnout. Therefore, we validate previous studies that have linked the impostor phenomenon to negative

well-being issues (Thompson et al., 1998). We contribute to the emerging literature on the impostor phenomenon in the workplace (Tewfik, 2022). Furthermore, as a general tendency, perceived sales manager support attenuates the effect of impostor feelings on burnout but has a non-significant effect. This finding highlights that managerial support is not enough to counterbalance the impostor phenomenon. However, salespeople experiencing the impostor phenomenon can use positive customer feedback to increase their accomplishments (lowers the first step of burnout). However, salespeople experiencing the impostor phenomenon and dealing with positive customer feedback will be overwhelmed by that feedback if they are already at a later stage of burnout (i.e., emotional exhaustion). Therefore, positive customer feedback should be controlled by managers, who should decide whether the salesperson is in a good place (i.e., low burnout) and can handle it, or if the salesperson should rather not get more stressed than he/she already is (i.e., high burnout). In a general way, salespeople experiencing impostor feelings will stay longer in the firm if they have positive customer feedback.

Our study has limitations. Our survey relies on self-reported measures, and therefore we could only gather subjective measures (i.e., turnover intentions, and perceived customer satisfaction). Second, in focusing on perceived sales manager support and positive customer feedback, other potential moderators were unexamined (e.g., control systems). Third, with our main focus on well-being, our research took the traditional way of considering the impostor phenomenon as a negative feeling impacting an individual's mental health (Sonnak & Towell, 2001). Recent research, however, develops the concept of "workplace impostor thoughts" focusing on the interpersonal aspect of the impostor phenomenon, and shows that it also develops other-focused orientation, which increases interpersonal effectiveness (Tewfik, 2022). Therefore, in a boundary-spanning role like sales, further research could open consider the positive consequences of impostor feelings.

References Available Upon Request.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF VALUE-BASED SELLING ON PERFORMANCE? THE ROLE OF BUYING CENTER STRUCTURES

Stephan Volpers (HEC Montréal)

Delivering value to customers has always played a dominant role in marketing and especially in business-to-business (B2B) marketing (Anderson, Kumar, and Narus 2008; Ulaga and Eggert 2006). Despite the dominant role, leading B2B marketing managers still emphasize that one of their biggest challenges is to help customers see the total value they deliver (ISBM 2012). Especially, selling value at the industrial sales force level remains a major challenge (Terho et al. 2017; Wiersema 2013).

Despite the need for studies to better understand how and why a value-based selling approach is related to selling performance (i.e. financial result of selling behavior), at least three important concerns with prior research limit our understanding. First, even though selling value has always been important in marketing, prior research has only recently conceptualized value-based selling behaviors (Terho et al. 2012), and therefore empirical evidence is limited (Terho et al. 2015; Terho et al. 2017). Second, as salespeople have difficulties to sell value and increase performance (ISBM 2012; Terho et al. 2017), negative or non-significant effects of value-based selling on selling performance must exist. However, the already limited empirical evidence of past research reveals only positive effects of value-based selling on selling performance (Terho et al. 2015; Terho et al. 2017), but does not supply evidence for negative or non-significant relationships that obviously exist in practice. Third, although prior research on the relationship between value-based selling on selling performance provides a clear indication of the relevance of contingency factors (Terho et al. 2012), relevant empirical research has not investigated the moderating effects of different buying center configurations. While salespeople evidently sell to customers organized in different buying center structures, the lack of understanding on how value-based selling is helpful limits abilities of sales managers and salespeople to boost selling performance.

The objective of this paper is to address these important theoretical concerns with prior research on the young field of value-based selling by investigating how and why the relationship between value-based selling and selling performance hinges on the different features of the buying center salespeople sell to. First, based on prospect theory (Kahneman and Tversky 1979; Tversky and Kahneman 1992), this research develops a conceptual model that includes the diversity and the size of the buying center as moderators of the relationship between value-based selling and selling performance. Second, this study tests the direct relationship between value-based selling and selling performance with dyadic data of 229 manager–salesperson dyads across various B2B industries. Third, this research investigates the extent to which the direct relationship between value-based selling and selling performance hinges on the different structures of the buying center.

Overall, this research highlights that successful value-based selling hinges on the diversity and size of the buying center. The first theoretical contribution is to provide empirical insights on the effects of value-based selling on performance. In general, delivering value has a key role for marketing and selling activities (Anderson, Kumar, and Narus 2008). Surprisingly, prior research started to investigate performance effects of value-based selling activities only recently (Terho et al. 2012), with limited empirical evidence (Terho et al. 2015; Terho et al. 2017). Thus, this research

contributes to this young research field by providing new empirical evidence on the managerial-rated performance effects of value-based selling across diverse industries.

As a second major contribution, this study provides empirical evidence that value-based selling does not necessarily increase selling performance. From a conceptual perspective, value-based selling should be positively related to selling performance (e.g. Terho et al. 2012), and limited prior empirical research supports a positive relationship (Terho et al. 2015; Terho et al. 2017). However, practitioners struggle to help customers see the total value they deliver (ISBM 2012) and value-based selling at the sales force level is a major challenge for business-to-business companies (Terho et al. 2017). Rather, results provide evidence that the assumption of a general positive effect of value-based selling on selling performance does not hold.

The third major contribution of this research is the theoretical conceptualization and the related empirical evidence that the relationship between value-based selling and selling performance hinges on both the diversity and size the buying center. Even though value-based selling has been identified as complicated task (Terho et al. 2017), prior research did not investigate to what extend the effect of value-based selling on performance hinges on buying center related aspects. Research has rather neglected the importance that the composition of the buying center plays for successful value-based selling. While it seems obvious that buying center size and diversity should affect each other, each aspect an idiosyncratic effect on the value-based selling – performance relationship. This provides evidence that value-based selling is an important but also challenging selling technique that should not be universally applied to all selling situations.

Sales managers should emphasize that salespeople should increase their value-based selling efforts when facing larger buying centers but should limit their value-based selling when there are many different roles in a buying center.

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2024 NCSM Teaching Session Abstracts

IMPROV WARM-UP EXERCISES AS ROLE PLAY PREPARATORY TOOLS

Benjamin Britton (University of Central Arkansas)

Abstract

The present manuscript details an in-class role play preparation activity that incorporates one of the most popular improvisational comedy warm-up exercises called "yes, and" as it is incorporated into a context where students must reply extemporaneously to comments made to them during a sales scenario. This role play exercise is used within an introductory sales course and the aim of this exercise is to: 1) make students think about issues relating to the sales profession, 2) enhance their ability to think quickly on their feet, and 3) to have fun and laugh a lot while doing so. Herein, I include responses to each of the six categories listed as requirements for Teaching Moment submissions, along with explanations and examples of the different role play techniques that are used.

EXPLORE, IDENTIFY, AND CONNECT: UTILIZING GENERATIVE AI AS A CAREER COACH

Rebecca Dingus (Ohio University) and Hulda Black (Illinois State University)

Abstract

In this exercise, we present an activity where students can utilize generative AI (e.g., ChatGPT) as a means for personalized career exploration and preparation for their job search. Specific prompts are provided to helps students learn about careers in their area of interest, identify specific opportunities and explore the required skills, and assess their own current fit for such roles. Additionally, guidance is provided in this activity to assist students as they update and align their resumes to match their dream jobs, and also for them to prepare for interviews. While the exercise is introspective and exploratory, it is also highly customizable for different students, courses, and career interests. Both qualitative feedback from students and empirical evidence of effectiveness and will be shared to highlight the unique capabilities of this exercise.

RNMKRS ACROSS THE CURRICULUM TEACHING APPLICATION

David Fleming (Indiana State University), Kristina Harrison (Indiana State University) Stephanie Boyer (Bryant University) and Sarah Fleming (Lockheed Martin (retired))

Introduction

With the increased use of Artificial Intelligence within both industry and education, it would behoove educators to incorporate the use of AI in hands-on learning experiences (Ma & Sun, 2020). Given the expansive capabilities and potential applications of AI, the sales industry stands to benefit from a comprehensive consideration of its effective integration. Although preliminary research has touched upon AI's role in sales coaching (Luo et al., 2021), focusing on the general efficacy of AI agents in training sales personnel, there has not been an in-depth study of AI throughout the sales process. The RNMKRS Virtual Sales competitions have revolutionized how many faculty are engaging students in sales training activities in the classroom. However, only a moderate percentage of sales programs have engaged in this free and easily graded experience of their students. This presentation will show how one school has incorporated the various RNMKRS across the various sales classes in a way that creates a consistent learning experience that cohesively reinforces their sales program learning goals without excessive repetition for the students.

Background

The significance of integrating AI into sales education cannot be overstated. Both practitioners and researchers recognize the significant role of AI-driven sales coaching in improving individual and organizational sales performance, as demonstrated by Nguyen et al. (2019). Sales coaching, when powered by AI, strives to equip sales professionals and managers with the essential knowledge, skills, and competencies required to attain sales-related and organizational objectives (Badrinarayanan et al. in 2015). The hallmark of exceptional sales managers lies in their proficiency in AI-backed sales coaching, setting them apart from their less effective counterparts (Deeter-Schmelz et al. in 2008; Marshall et al. in 2003). Groza, Zmich, and Rajabi's (2021) study shows that a more robust integration of AI into sales and the broader organizational context leads to heightened levels of organizational innovativeness, driven by salespeople's' intellectual capacities that have been coached by AI.

A growing number of enterprises are embracing the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to train their workforce, including sales personnel. AI, in this context, refers to the capability of machines to mimic intelligent human behaviors and cognitive functions (Carbonell et al. in 1983). The adoption of AI in sales education offers a plethora of advantages, one of which is its ability to analyze datasets and unveil patterns, which can be useful in coaching to increase effective sales behaviors (Davenport and Ronanki in 2018). An essential implication of AI training is its potential for acceptance among diverse demographics of salespersons, a facet that has received limited attention in existing literature (Luo, Qin, Fang, and Qu et al. 2021). Research findings suggest that less experienced sales professionals tend to excel in acquiring

new customers when compared to their more seasoned counterparts. Additionally, it is observed that advertising support and external incentives contribute to higher conversion rates among the more experienced salespeople in contrast to their less experienced peers (Gopalakrishna et al. in 2022).

There is also a growing stream of research that examines the use of AI in the classroom (Chen, Chen, and Lin 2020). While the findings show that AI improves students' learning experience, most of this research shows how educators use AI to grade, create curriculum content, and accomplish administrative tasks (Chen et al. 2020). There is little current research on AI-based games/apps for business student education. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how interactive AI "games" can be used to improve sales students' understanding and actual application of the sales cycle. Specifically, we show not only how repeated interaction with the RNMKRS app leads to improved performance in the AI-based role plays, but also how faculty members can effectively use the tool through offering easy-to-understand instructions of documentation.

Method

Presentation will share how to incorporate RNMKRS throughout the sales/marketing curriculum

Example structure

- Intro to sales: RNMKRS Standard
- Negotiations: RNMKRS Speed Sell
- Advanced Sales/Salesforce Management: RNMKRS Pro
- MBA Strategic Marketing: RNMKRS Speed Sell

In addition, the presentation will unveil new faculty documentation to make it even easier to signup and register classes for the various competitions that will be available from RNMKRS.

<div align="center">References</div>

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IN-CLASS DISCOVERY WITH SALES CENTER PARTNERS

Nicole Flink (Weber State University)

Abstract

Sales educators often encounter common challenges when striving to teach discovery calls to students, including lack of practical experience, fear of rejection, and limited exposure to real-world scenarios. Due to this, it can be difficult to provide sales cases that help students practice in a class environment and help them improve the correct skills needed for successful sales discovery. Thus, innovative teaching methods are needed to overcome these challenges and enhance student engagement. This presentation explores the partnership between a university's advanced selling class and an industry partnership to improve students' understanding and practice of discovery calls in the context of business-to-business (B2B) sales. The focus is on how to develop case studies or role-playing scenarios based on actual sales interactions encountered in the industry, allowing students to engage in simulated discovery calls in the classroom.

UNRAVELING THE SALES STIGMA: (RE)EDUCATING STUDENTS ON WHY SALES CAN OFFER A FULFILLING AND ETHICAL CAREER PATH

Benjamin Garner (University of Central Arkansas)

Abstract

Students are often wary of enrolling in sales classes because they perceive the sales field to be an uncomfortable, unethical, and unappealing career option. Students perceive that to be in a sales career they need to be what Hollywood has depicted as a successful salesperson: extroverted, pushy, unethical, and greedy – in short, the worst version of a hunter or closer role. However, in the advanced selling course I attempt to disrupt this one-sided view of sales, and instead teach students that modern sales approaches emphasize customer success, collaboration, long-term partnerships, and ethical decision-making. I use a variety of materials, including video interviews with sales professionals, to re-educate students about how successful salespeople approach customers in a today's contemporary selling environment. This presentation will illustrate my attempt to reframe the sales profession and open the door for reluctant students to consider a career in sales.

SELLING FOR MANAGERS: A SEMESTER LONG MULTIPART INTERNAL SALES ROLEPLAY

Mark Groza (University of Idaho) and Charles Howlett (University of Idaho)

Abstract

The imperative skill of effectively selling ideas, both within and outside the organizational framework, stands as a paramount attribute for managerial success. Recognizing this, the authors introduce a multi-part sales roleplay uniquely crafted for Master of Business Administration (MBA) students. This internal sales roleplay positions students in the role of a manager tasked with negotiating a promotion and raise for themselves. After the initial ask, the student's supervisor challenges them with advocating an idea internally to a diverse array of stakeholders, guiding them through a conceptual "internal sales process." Spanning the duration of a semester, this innovative project offers MBA students a dynamic platform to navigate and refine their sales acumen within the intricate landscape of organizational dynamics. The primary objective is to equip these future business leaders with a comprehensive understanding of the sales process, specifically emphasizing the art of persuading or selling internal stakeholders to embrace and adopt innovative ideas.

INSTILLING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES IN THE SALES CLASSROOM

Victoria Hailey (Minnesota State University, Mankato) and Chandu Valluri (Minnesota State University, Mankato)

Abstract

Sales industry practitioners emphasize that students require strong written as well as oral communication skills for sales jobs. Further, they stress student participation in role plays as beneficial to obtaining sales internships and entry into a sales career. The following paper describes three professional development practices (PDP) in the sales classroom. These teaching applications include: 1) student engagement with a social selling tool. 2) subject matter expert (SME) guest speakers, and 3) a B2B sales project with strong written and oral communication components.

UNDERSTANDING DATA WITH LEGOS

Colleen McCure (University of Alabama at Birmingham)

Abstract

Data in the real world is messy and complex. When students start jobs after graduation, they may be exposed to a vast amount of data, but not have any clue what to do with it or where to start. In my analytics class, I use Legos as an example of the data out in the world. Each student is given a bag of Legos and then we work through cleaning, organizing, and transforming the data prior to any analysis (building). Some of the datasets that the students have are missing data or have pieces from other data that they could utilize. I encourage the students to combine datasets together to fully optimize the data they have in front of them. This activity allows the students to understand data in a basic way and work with their hands before we get into Excel and Tableau.
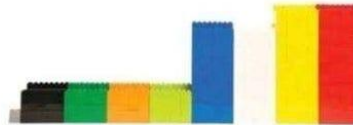
ANALYTICS FREE-FOR-ALL: DIVING INTO DATA USING TABLEAU

Colleen McCure (University of Alabama at Birmingham)

Abstract

In the world of analytics, there are times when a potential problem is brought to you and other times when it is up to you to discover the problems. In my Distribution Analytics course, we talk a lot during the semester about what business questions can be solved utilizing different analytic tools like cluster analysis, regression, etc. For the final project in this course, I let the students explore the data without much guidance and it is their job to discover different insights and trends.

Students are broken into groups of 2-4 and are given their own unique data set to use. The students have access to customer data, transaction data, supplier data, and salesperson data. They are free to use one or all of the datasets. Their job is to dig into the data and develop a dashboard of 5-6 different visuals that explain their findings. From these visuals, the students must then develop suggestions for improvement or next steps to present to the manager. My goal is to have them learn how important visuals can be when making decisions and how impactful visuals can be created.

I grade the students utilizing the rubric below.

	Points	Percent
Visuals	30	20%
Dashboard	15	10%
Explanation of Findings	30	20%
Suggestions for Distributor	30	20%
In Class Presentation	20	13.33%
Peer Evaluations	25	16.67%
Total	**150**	**100%**

Example of past dashboards:
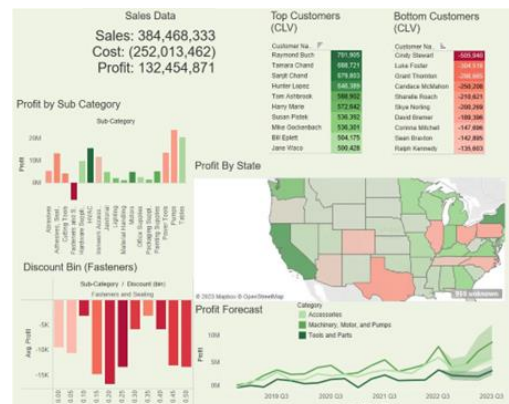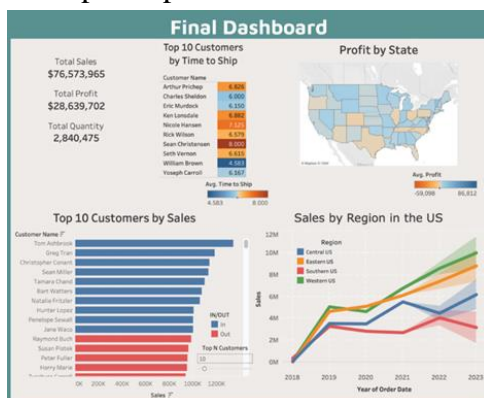
HEADS UP ROLE PLAY PREP

Robert Peterson (Northern Illinois University)

Abstract

Prepping for role plays is how you earn the business, but it can also be a rote exercise that bears little resemblance to reality. "Heads Up" is a game that most students have played and has been repurposed for this Teaching Moment. Students flip up the card to their head and the others will essentially hone their objection responses as they go around as each attempt a response. Students learn from each other versus all learning being mediated through the professor. The goal is practice, not the card holder guessing perfectly.

Teaching objectives
1. Use class time to bolster student ability to handle objections.
2. Have peers model best responses, fail together, be a sounding board for each other.
3. Have a laugh, make it fun, and evolve their replies.

Description of the innovation and how is it novel
Created 19 (not a magic number) pushbacks that are commonly heard from buyers:
1. Who is this again? (often students say their name as if it's a race).
2. How'd you get this number?
3. What is this regarding?
4. We have something already.
5. Not sure it's the right time to change.
6. This sounds expensive.
7. How would this truly add value?
8. Hmm, this sounds interesting. (are they listening?)

Instructions on how to implement the innovation.
1. Number cards in large font (ordering, pacing)
2. Form own group, next it's random
3. Hold card #1 to forehead - each person attempts to answer
4. Each person has their own answer.
5. At end, holder attempts to guess the actual pushback.
6. Goal is not the "guess", it's hearing each member attempt to reply.

RESTRUCTURING INTRODUCTORY SALES COURSES. REAL-WORLD APPLICATION MEETS AI INTEGRATION

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Overview of Challenges:
Artificial Intelligence (AI) will help students stand out in a competitive job market and provide skills necessary to work more efficiently in their entry-level sales jobs. However, Integrating AI meaningfully into the classroom is a challenge.

Teaching Objectives:
Upon completion of this course, students should be able to:
1. Leverage AI to identify job prospects, articulate personal selling benefits, and structure customer partnerships.
2. Develop an understanding and demonstrate how product features meet customer needs, creating effective presentations, overcoming objections, and successfully closing sales.

Outline of The Course:
The course is broken into five modules:
1. Personal Branding
2. Prospecting
3. Discovery
4. Solution Selling
5. Developing a Career Path

AI Platform Use Cases from Student Verbal Feedback:
1. **ChatGPT:** Resume bullet creation, condensing emails, creating presentation scripts, generating questions for buyers, and researching product specifications.
2. **DALL·E, Midjourney, Adobe Spark, Canva:** Logo generation, business card ideas, slide deck ideas, AI-generated formatting, auto-photoshopping images.
3. **RNMKRS:** Practicing elevator pitches and the discovery sales call in real-time.
4. **Quinncia:** Resume building, workshopping, wordsmithing, and mock interview practice. Micro-expression analysis post-interview, and critique of each question answered.

Outcomes:
Students found the AI resources useful when leveraged outside of class when instructor coaching was not available. Additionally, cooperate partners expressed more enthusiasm for events, and surprise at the increased level of student performance throughout the semester.