



2025 National Conference in Sales Management

Embassy Suites Cincinnati RiverCenter
Greater Cincinnati, Ohio
March 19th— March 21st, 2025

PROCEEDINGS

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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-ninth volume of the Proceedings from the National Conference in Sales Management contains articles and abstracts of presentations scheduled at the 2025 Conference held March 19th—March 21st at the Embassy Suites Cincinnati RiverCenter in Covington, Kentucky/Greater Cincinnati, Ohio. 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 features sessions on the Best Sales Teaching Innovation and Competitive Research Awards, cutting-edge sales research, and dynamic special presentations, and panel discussions. As always, the 2025 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 2025 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 Schetzle** 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 and **Rhett Epler** from Old Dominion for serving as Competitive Sessions Chair; **Nicole Flink** from Weber State University for serving as Sales Education Track Coordinator; **Bryan Hochstein** of The University of Alabama for chairing the Doctoral Student Sales Research Program; **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, **Colleen McClure** from The University of Alabama at Birmingham, and **Ricky Ferguson** from Middle Tennessee State 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
Program Chair
Old Dominion University

David Locander
Proceedings Editor
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

HERITAGE OF LEADERSHIP FOR NCSM

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

2001	Michael A. Humphreys <i>Illinois State University</i>	Jon M. Hawes <i>The University of Akron</i>
2002	David A. Reid <i>The University of Toledo</i>	Jon M. Hawes <i>The University of Akron</i>
		Scott A. Inks <i>Middle Tennessee State University</i>
2003	David A. Reid <i>The University of Toledo</i>	Scott A. Inks <i>Middle Tennessee State University</i>
2004	Scott A. Inks <i>Ball State University</i>	C. David Shepherd <i>Kennesaw State University</i>
2005	Scott A. Inks <i>Ball State University</i>	C. David Shepherd <i>Kennesaw State University</i>
2006	C. David Shepherd <i>Kennesaw State University</i>	Mark C. Johlke <i>Bradley University</i>
2007	Mark C. Johlke <i>Bradley University</i>	C. David Shepherd <i>Georgia Southern University</i>
2008	Mark C. Johlke <i>Bradley University</i>	Ellen Bolman Pullins <i>The University of Toledo</i>
2009	Mark C. Johlke <i>Bradley University</i>	Ellen Bolman Pullins <i>The University of Toledo</i>
2010	Ellen Bolman Pullins <i>The University of Toledo</i>	Concha R. Neeley <i>Central Michigan University</i>
2011	Ellen Bolman Pullins <i>The University of Toledo</i>	Concha R. Neeley <i>Central Michigan University</i>
2012	Concha Allen <i>Central Michigan University</i>	Michael L. Mallin <i>The University of Toledo</i>
2013	Concha Allen <i>Central Michigan University</i>	Michael L. Mallin <i>The University of Toledo</i>
2014	Michael L. Mallin <i>The University of Toledo</i>	Scott M. Widmier <i>Kennesaw State University</i>
2015	Michael L. Mallin <i>The University of Toledo</i>	Scott M. Widmier <i>Kennesaw State University</i>
2016	Scott M. Widmier <i>Kennesaw State University</i>	Lisa R. Simon <i>California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo</i>

2017	Scott M. Widmier <i>Kennesaw State University</i>	Lisa R. Simon <i>California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo</i>
2018	Lisa R. Simon <i>California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo</i>	David E. Fleming <i>Indiana State University</i>
2019	Lisa R. Simon <i>California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo</i>	David E. Fleming <i>Indiana State University</i>
2020	David E. Fleming <i>Indiana State University</i>	Stacey Schetzlsle <i>University of Tampa</i>
2021	David E. Fleming <i>Indiana State University</i>	Stacey Schetzlsle <i>University of Tampa</i>
2022	David E. Fleming <i>Indiana State University</i>	Stacey Schetzlsle <i>University of Tampa</i>
2023	Stacey Schetzlsle <i>University of Tampa</i>	Aaron Arndt <i>Old Dominion University</i>
2024	Aaron Arndt <i>Old Dominion University</i>	David Locander <i>University of Tennessee at Chattanooga</i>
2025	Aaron Arndt <i>Old Dominion University</i>	David Locander <i>University of Tennessee at Chattanooga</i>

National Conference in Sales Management 2025 Reviewers

Conference Chair: Stacey Schetzle, *University of Tampa*

Competitive Papers Chair: Bruno Lussier, *HEC Montréal*

Reviewers:

Ali Anwar	<i>James Madison University</i>
Aaron Arndt	<i>Old Dominion University</i>
Melanie Bowen	<i>Justus Liebig University, Germany</i>
Nawar Chaker	<i>Louisiana state university</i>
Dayle Childs	<i>Bournemouth University</i>
Dawn Deeter-Schmelz	<i>Kansas State University</i>
Rhett T. Epler	<i>Old Dominion University</i>
Nicole Flink	<i>Weber State University</i>
Bryan Hochstein	<i>University of Alabama</i>
Selma Kadić-Maglajlić	<i>Copenhagen Business School</i>
Christine Lai-Bennejean	<i>EMLYON Business School</i>
David Locander	<i>University of Tennessee, Chattanooga</i>
Robert Peterson	<i>Northern Illinois University</i>
Colleen McClure	<i>University of Alabama-Birmingham</i>
Deva Rangarajan	<i>IÉSEG</i>
Greg Rich	<i>Bowling Green State University</i>
Laurianne Schmitt	<i>IÉSEG</i>

National Conference in Sales Management 2025 Agenda

Wednesday, March 19th

Start	Presentation Title	Author
1:00	Welcome	
1:05	Research: Session 1 (15-20 minutes each)	
1	Generative AI Technology Impact on CRM and Sales Performance	Michael Rodriguez & Dawn Deeter-Schmelz
2	Go to Market Strategy Scorecard	Tim Butler, Rhett Epler, Kaitlin Gravois, Bryan Hochstein, & Nawar Chaker
3	DEI in B2B Sales: A Comprehensive Review	Roberto Mora Cortez, Bruno Lussier, Deva Rangarajan, Ashwin J. Baliga, & Ann Højbjerg Clarke
2:05	Teaching Moment: Session 1 (8-10 minutes each)	
1	Bringing Sales Lessons to Life with AI- Generated Podcasts: Application of Notebook LLM in Sales Education	Michael Rodriguez & Kevin Trainor
2	The Emotion in Motion Activity	April Kemp & Timothy Butler
3	Considering Neuro-Sales Effects on the Sales Process Questioning Funnel.	Don Thacker
4	Handling Objections with AI	Scott Hachey
2:45	Research: Session 2 (15-20 minutes each)	
1	Championing Leadership and Its Effects on Role Stress, Trust, Job Satisfaction, and Performance	Karen Peesker, Avishek Lahiri, & Greg Rich
2	Stuck in the Middle: Understanding the Well-Being of Frontline Middle Managers	Colleen McClure, Dayle Childs, Nawar Chaker, & Bruno Lussier
3	The Use of Cognitive or Affective Empathic Salience Orientations During an Important Sales Encounter, Positive Perceptions of a Salesperson, and Individual Purchase Intention	Connie Bateman, Brent Baker, Brandon McAlexander, & Sean Valentine
4	Hedonic and Utilitarian Motivations in Simulated Role-Play	William Jones
4:00	PM Break	
4:15	Improv with Rob	Rob Peterson

5:30 **VIP Reception Sponsored by Carew with light hors d'oeuvres and drinks at Marriot Riverview Ballroom.**

Informal Dinner

Thursday, March 20th

Start	Presentation Title	Author
9:00	Welcome	
9:05	Teaching Moment: Session 2 (8-10 minutes each)	
1	Dr. Seuss "Green Eggs and Ham" Poetry Provides a Lesson in Professional Selling	Victoria Hailey
2	Work Hard, Décor Harder: Spotting Social Styles in the Office	Rebecca Dingus
3	AI in Action: Transforming Sales Education in 5 Minutes	Stephanie Boyer
9:35	Teaching Application: Session 1 (12-15 Minutes)	
1	A Start-Up Focused Sales Competition: A Teaching Application	Louis Zmich & Stacey Schetzslle
2	Data-Driven Selling: Less Spray, More Score	Stephanie Boyer
3	Life-Saving Lessons: How Finding a Kidney Donor Taught Selling Skills Through Student Philanthropy	Jose Saavedra & Laura Munoz
10:20	Research: Session 3 (15-20 minutes each)	
1	Two-way Relationship: Attachment Styles and Customer Loyalty	Selma Kadić-Maglajlić, Milena Micevski, Maja Arslanagić-Kalajdžić, Mohamed Sobhy Temerak, & Nick Lee
2	Understanding Student Perception of the Sales Field: An Exploratory Analysis	Benjamin Garner & Benjamin Britton
10:50	Lunch (on your own)	
1:15	Meet the Editor of the Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management: Brian Rutherford	
2:15	Best Practice in Research Panel Moderated by Rhett Epler & Aaron Arndt	
	Adam Rapp	
	Bruno Lussier	

Nawar Chaker

3:30 **Afternoon break**

3:45 **Round table working paper**

4:45 **Announcements**

6:30 **Mystery Dinner!**

Friday, March 21st

Start	Presentation Title	Author
9:00	Reading is Fundamental Panel	David Fleming & Ricky Ferguson
9:45	Teaching Application: Session 3 (12-15 Minutes)	
1	Why and How to Build a Professional Network	Peggy Benedetti Andrews
2	A Map for Sales Development - Meeting Industry Needs through Course Curriculum	Nicole Flink
10:15	Smartfox Special Session (20 minutes)	
10:35	Morning break	
10:50	Crowdsourcing AI-Best Practices for the Classroom, Student Use, and Sales Coaching	Rhett Epler, Brian Hochstein, & Colleen McClure
11:50	Lunch (on your own)	
1:00	The Value Proposition-Strengthening Corporate Partnerships special session	Frank Veltri & April Schofield
1:45	Research: Doctoral Session (15-20 minutes each)	
1	AI and the Modern Customer: The Role of Transparency in Marketing, Sales, and Firm-Level Strategy	Donovan Gordon
2	Driving Sales Cycle Progression in Videoconferencing	Nicole Boylan
3	Role Of Sales Coaching by Sales Managers in Service Failure and Recovery in B2B Markets	Siddharth Arora
4	Rethinking Sales Performance Metrics: A Moneyball Approach to B2b Revenue Success	Curtis Schroeder

- 3:00 Student Special Session (20 minutes)**
- 3:20 Closing remarks, Awards, Board Meeting Report and announcement of 2025 NCSM location**
- 5:00 Dewey's Pizza and Braxton Brewery!**

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2025 NCSM Research Papers & Abstracts

THE USE OF COGNITIVE OR AFFECTIVE EMPATHIC SALIENCE ORIENTATIONS DURING AN IMPORTANT SALES ENCOUNTER, POSITIVE PERCEPTIONS OF A SALESPERSON, AND INDIVIDUAL PURCHASE INTENTION

Connie Bateman (University of North Dakota), Brent Baker (Florida Gulf Coast University), Brandon McAlexander (Oregon State University), & Sean Valentine (University of North Dakota)

Abstract

The sales literature has long recognized the value of salesperson customer orientation as a critical relational influence in sales encounters. However, the literature on the relative effectiveness of various salesperson customer orientations (e.g., informational/needs/cognitive-based or emotional/caring/ relational-based) shows mixed results (Dawson, Soper, and Pettijohn 1992; Homburg, Wieseke, and Bornemann 2009; Mallalieu and Nakamoto 2008; Newell, Belonax, McCardle, and Plank 2011; Pryor, Mallshe, and Paradise 2013; Ramsey and Sohi 1997; Schwepker 2003; Sharma 1999; Swan et al. 1999). The prevalence of mixed results makes it difficult to confidently extend meaningful insights and/or inform sales training programs.

To advance the literature, this study introduces two forms of empathic salience (cognitive and affective) from the psychology and marketing literatures (Krämer, Mohammadi, Doñamayor, Samii, and Münte 2010; McBane 1995). The empathic orientation provides a new lens for studying professional salesperson orientations and how each may improve interactions in sales dyads. This study investigates how salespersons using cognitive empathic salience (CES) orientations and/or affective empathic salience (AES) orientations relatively influence sales outcomes. Specifically, how each orientation relatively impacts the relationships between buyer attitude toward the salesperson, buyer judgment about the professionalism of the salesperson, suspicion towards the salesperson, and subsequent trust in the salesperson and resulting purchase intention.

This study measures adult buyer perceptions of a professional salesperson during a positive sales encounter using a within-subjects experimental design featuring positive high involvement purchase sales scenarios. A convenience sample was used with usable response rate above 90%. with social desirability and order effects controlled for. Half of participants had over 4 years of college, full-time work experience, managerial experience, and sales experience. Cognitive Empathy (CE) and Affective empathy (AE) (treatment effect) conditions were adapted from Pilling and Eroglu (1994) and Singh and Koshy (2012) and used in a recent salesperson customer orientation study by Bateman and Valentine (2015).

Results indicated salespersons should authentically demonstrate AES during sales encounters to engender the most trust from the buyer. Sales organizations would benefit by emphasizing empathy in sales training and other guidance provided to sales professionals. Doing so will likely lead to increased levels of sales performance and more motivated buyers who trust salespeople when they make important purchase decisions. While the findings are promising,

the study has several limitations, including those use of mostly cross-sectional data that limits causal testing; however, the experimental design mitigates this concern to some degree. The external validity of the findings may also be low given the regional nature of the student sample. Future research should collect data from diverse populations using time-lagged designs. New studies should also focus on identifying other positive work and sales outcomes related to the practice of sales-based empathy, particularly in other contexts beyond the focus of this paper such as sales/service interactions between customers and frontline employees. Rapp, Baker, Hartmann, and Ahearne (2020) indeed note that elevated competition and service expectations have caused many organizational members to be tasked with both selling and service functions in their work roles.

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DEI in B2B Sales: A Comprehensive Review

Roberto Mora Cortez (Morehouse College), Bruno Lussier (HEC Montréal), Deva Rangarajan (IÉSEG), Ashwin J. Baliga (IÉSEG), and Ann Højbjerg Clarke (University of Southern Denmark)

Keywords: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI); Business-to-Business (B2B); Sales Management Practices; Professional Selling; Managerial Biases

Abstract

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are central for fostering a workplace culture that enhances employee well-being and performance. However, DEI in business-to-business (B2B) sales is underexplored. This paper examines the importance of DEI in B2B sales organizations, highlighting its potential to increase innovation and improve workplace dynamics. Through a systematic review of 54 articles, the authors identify key research gaps and propose a framework focusing on four areas: Hiring, Sales Management Practices, Sales Approaches and Customer Interactions, and Turnover. The findings aim to help sales leaders to effectively integrate DEI practices into their organizations.

UNDERSTANDING STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THE SALES FIELD: AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS

Benjamin Garner (University of Central Arkansas) and Benjamin Britton (University of Central Arkansas)

Abstract

Students in today's business classrooms have a negative stigma against sales careers and salespeople. Yet, there continues to be a strong demand for sales professionals in the industry (Peltier et al., 2014) that is not filled by college graduates. Sales jobs often are mentioned as one of the best paying jobs and even jobs that do not require a college degree (US News and World Report). Part of the reason why sales is not a popular choice for students is that they perceive it to be a career that is unethical and negative (Hartman, 2006; Peltier et al., 2014). This is in part due to overly negative portrayals of salespeople in movies and TV (Hartman, 2006). Other factors include a general lack of knowledge about this field (Peltier et al, 2014). The present research aims to explore these negative stereotypes that college students hold about salespeople to help understand this stigma and hopefully provide action steps for improving its brand image among incoming students. Students (N=115, M= 59, F=54, _{age} =19.6 years) were surveyed at a public university in the South. Qualitative and quantitative results will be presented, but key highlights included:

- Participants perceived sales professionals as extroverted
- Male students displayed a stronger intent to major than female students
- Sales knowledge and awareness significantly impacted the intent to major
- Participants perceive positive qualities in sales people being good a communication, persuasion, and having expertise.
- Negative qualities include being unethical, deceptive, greedy, and pushy.
- One of the most common sales roles mentioned was used car salesmen

These findings offer practical implications for sales educators recruiting and educating the next generation of sales professionals.

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HEDONIC AND UTILITARIAN MOTIVATIONS IN SIMULATED ROLE-PLAY

William Jones (Georgia Southern University)

Abstract

Sales training simulations increasingly rely on AI-driven role-play platforms; however, how trainees engage with and evaluate these systems remains underexplored. This study explores hedonic and utilitarian technology adoption motivations (Childers et al., 2001) to examine how AI-mediated sales training influences attitudes toward the training process. Previous research shows that hedonic (engagement, immersion) and utilitarian (efficiency, skill-building) motivations jointly affect perceptions of digital environments, often through fluency-based mechanisms. Given the known relationships between processing fluency drivers and attitudinal changes, we investigate whether ease of interaction and perceived effectiveness mediate these effects in AI-driven sales simulations. While data collection is ongoing, anticipated findings suggest that a balance of hedonic and utilitarian elements optimizes attitudinal outcomes, guiding best practices for integrating AI into sales education.

TWO-WAY RELATIONSHIP: ATTACHMENT STYLES AND CUSTOMER LOYALTY

Selma Kadić-Maglajlić (Copenhagen Business School), Milena Micevski (Copenhagen Business School), Maja Arslanagić-Kalajdžić (University of Sarajevo), Mohamed Sobhy Temerak (University of Surrey), & Nick Lee (University of Warwick)

Abstract

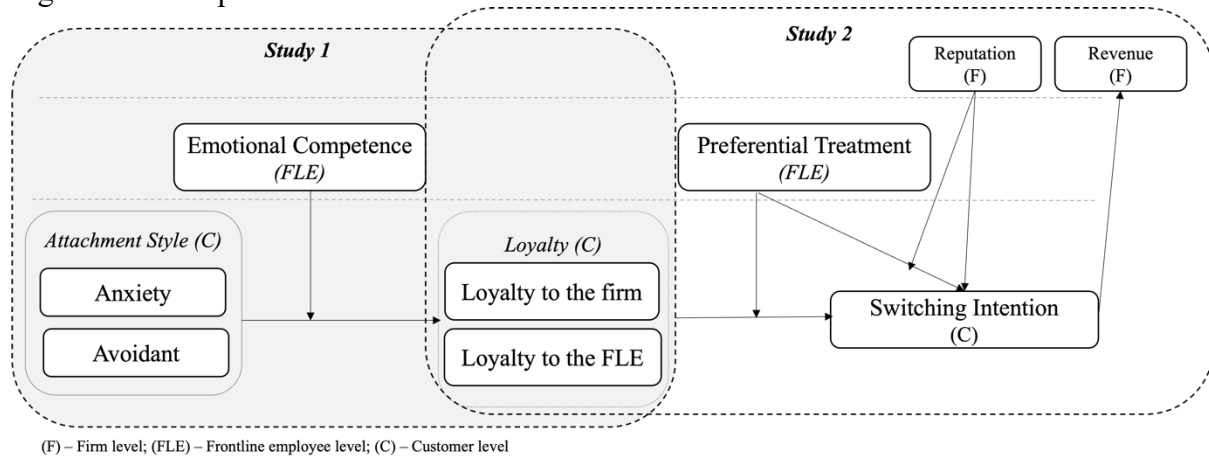
The work by Palmatier and colleagues (2007) was first to shed light on frontline employees (FLEs) as transmitters of loyalty interactions between customers and firms, inspiring a significant stream of literature that differentiates employee versus firm owned loyalty. This body of work emphasizes the characteristics and activities of FLEs (e.g., learning customers' first names and showing interest in their personal lives) as well as factors influenced by the firm (e.g., satisfaction with the company, brand satisfaction, and company WOM) in building the loyalty towards both the employee (e.g., Reynolds and Beatty, 1999; Bove et al., 2009; Palmatier et al., 2007) and the firm (Reynolds and Beatty, 1999; Bendapudi and Leone, 2002; Brexendorf et al. 2010). However, loyalty is in essence a dynamic relationship interaction concerning the attachment between two parties, in this case customers and either the firm or its employees. Thus, the assumption that it is the efforts of one side only (whether that be the firm or the FLE) that are relevant to building loyalty is unlikely to hold true for all customers, and particularly those that are not willing to form relationships with the FLE or firm (Beatty et al., 1996; Homburg et al., 2011).

To take account of the core role of the customer in the formation of loyalty, we here introduce to the study of customer loyalty the concept of customer *attachment styles*, psychological factors which serve to describe heterogeneity in customers' willingness to form loyalty bonds with firms and FLEs. To investigate the relationships customers develop based on their attachment style, we set up and answer the research question: *How do attachment styles determine the directionality of loyalty?*

It also stands to reason that firms are not powerless in shaping customer loyalty and its outcomes. On the contrary, firms leverage different relational benefits (Gwinner et al., 1998), such as psychological and behavioral, to facilitate these outcomes. For example, firms invest heavily in training of FLEs (Freifeld, 2024) to improve their emotional competence, a psychological relational benefit aimed at enhancing customer confidence, reducing anxiety, and fostering trust in service relationships (Goodwin, 1996; Delcourt et al., 2013). On the other hand, preferential treatment of customers by the firm is used as a behavioral benefit (Goodwin, 1996). Preferential treatment entails various special activities, programs, and treatments towards certain customers, with the aim of cultivating loyalty (Xia and Kukar-Kinney, 2014). Interestingly, while some studies have found evidence to support the benefits of preferential treatment (e.g. Lacey, Suh and Morgan 2007), others suggest that it does not consistently translate into positive outcomes (e.g. Xia and Kukar-Kinney, 2014). One possible reason for this inconsistency is that prior studies have not taken into the account the specific object of loyalty, whether it be to employees or the firm. Therefore, we model here both objects of loyalty, to help managers understand when their preferential activities can be most effective at reducing customer switching, to address the second research question (RQ2): *How effective are psychological (e.g. FLE emotional competencies) and behavioral (e.g. preferential treatment) relational benefits for customers who display loyalty towards the firm versus employees?*

Our research are based on the conceptual model (as per Figure 1) empirically tested in the context of financial services (Stremersch et al., 2022). Study 1 investigates customers' predispositions to develop one type of loyalty over the other, using a two level data-set of bank customers. Study 2 explores the consequences of loyalty to the firm and the FLE while also considering the influence of preferential treatment. Study 2 utilizes a three-level data set, using three different sources of data (customer survey data, objective performance data, and an independent secondary source of data).

Figure 1: Conceptual model



FINDINGS

Our findings are based on two multilevel, multi-source studies conducted in the context of financial services in a European country (Stremersch et al., 2022).

In study one, we demonstrate that, customers with an avoidant attachment style refrain from loyalty, irrespective of the object of loyalty, whether it is the firm or the FLE. However, interacting with FLEs with high emotional competencies even increases this tendency to avoid loyalty to the firm. Conversely, customers with an anxious attachment style exhibit strong loyalty to the FLE, and this bond is strengthened when interacting with an emotionally competent FLE. In study two we show that loyalty to the firm is associated with a reduction in customer switching behavior, while loyalty to the FLE is linked to an increase in switching behavior. Our findings also reveal that preferential treatment does not influence the switching behavior of customers who are already loyal to the firm, but it impacts those customers who are not loyal. This effect is more pronounced in firms with weaker reputations.

Taken together, our findings offer significant contributions to customer loyalty literature. First, we introduce attachment theory to the theory of customer loyalty and relationships, providing valuable insights into customer loyalty dynamics in the services. Moreover, our nuanced view of attachment-based loyalty underscores the importance of considering intrapsychic characteristic of customers in customer relationships, challenging conventional assumptions that loyalty is boosted primarily through factors under the control of the firm and FLEs. Finally, we enrich the understanding of relational benefits (Gwinner et al., 1998) that firms are offering to customers, such as FLE's emotional competencies and preferential treatment by demonstrating their varying effectiveness, which may not always be beneficial. The work presented here is supported by the Carlsberg CF24-0919.

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CHAMPIONING LEADERSHIP AND ITS EFFECTS ON ROLE STRESS, TRUST, JOB SATISFACTION, AND PERFORMANCE

Karen Peesker (Toronto Metropolitan University), Avishek Lahiri (Bowling Green State University), and Greg Rich (Bowling Green State University)

Abstract

In a qualitative study, Peesker et al. (2019) identified championing as leader behavior that intervenes on behalf of salespeople in a way that protects them from tangential and/or nonessential work tasks so that they can better focus on activities that are directly related to enhancing sales performance. Protection is central to this leadership approach. A sales manager can "protect" their team by taking actions such as handling administrative duties or delegating them to support staff, freeing up time for salespeople to focus on sales-related activities. This study builds on that foundation by being the first empirical sales study to measure championing and relate it to key work outcomes, developing a conceptual model that links championing to role ambiguity, role conflict, trust in manager, job satisfaction, and performance.

Although championing is not explicitly defined in leadership theories, its elements align with concepts in path-goal theory, servant leadership, transformational leadership, and ethical leadership. Path-goal theory explains championing as a form of supportive leadership that shields salespeople from distractions, fostering motivation and productivity (House, 1971; Hackman & Oldham, 1974). In servant leadership, championing reflects a leader's commitment to serving their team by removing obstacles and prioritizing their success (Greenleaf, 1977; Liden et al., 2008). Transformational leadership emphasizes individualized support, aligning with championing's role in advocating for salespeople and providing mentorship (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Burns, 1978). Ethical leadership further supports championing by highlighting leaders' responsibility to act with integrity and fairness, protecting their team's well-being while reinforcing ethical values (Brown et al., 2005; Schwepker, 2015).

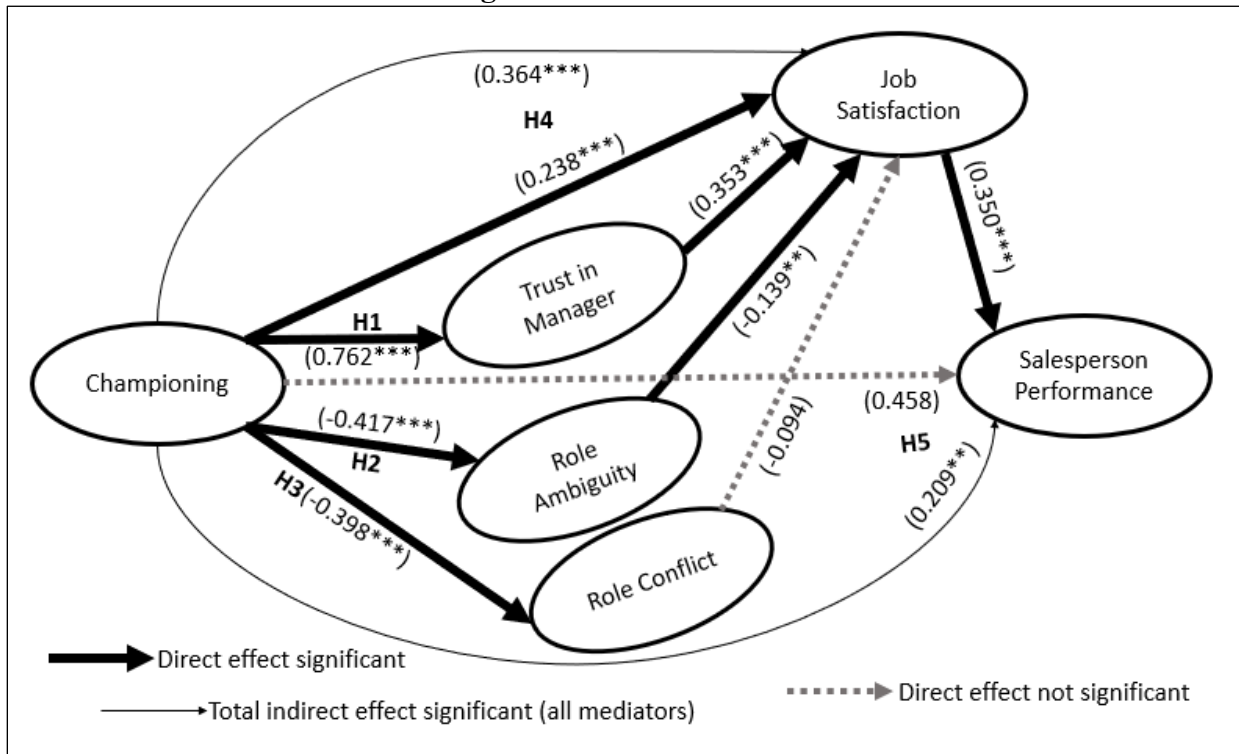
Building on a literature review, this study examines the impact of championing on key constructs in sales management, arguing that it enhances trust in managers, reduces role ambiguity and role conflict, and improves job satisfaction and performance. Championing fosters trust by demonstrating fairness, integrity, and support, reinforcing salespeople's confidence in their managers. It also reduces role ambiguity by clarifying job expectations and shielding salespeople from distractions, while minimizing role conflict by managing competing demands within the organization. Additionally, championing enhances job satisfaction by creating a supportive environment that prioritizes employee well-being, and it positively influences performance by allowing salespeople to focus on high-impact activities. These effects are also expected to be mediated by trust, role ambiguity, role conflict, and job satisfaction, providing a comprehensive understanding of championing's influence in sales contexts. The hypotheses are shown below in Figure 1.

An online survey was conducted with a sample of 254 U.S. salespeople recruited through Prolific. The study employed multiple measures to assess key constructs, ensuring strong psychometric

properties through a rigorous validation process. Championing leader behavior was assessed using a recently developed six-item measure by Rich (2024). The remaining constructs were measured using established scales. We confirmed the reliability and validity of all measures through confirmatory factor analysis, ensuring strong factor loadings and consistency.

Mediation analysis demonstrated support for all six hypotheses. Specifically (as shown in Figure 1), championing behaviors were found to have a positive direct effect on trust in the manager, role ambiguity, role conflict, and job satisfaction. Further, championing had a significant indirect effect on job satisfaction through trust in manager and role ambiguity. Although championing did not show a direct effect on salesperson performance, the leader behavior did influence performance indirectly through job satisfaction, suggesting a full mediation. Overall, the study highlights the importance of championing behaviors in improving job satisfaction and performance, with indirect effects playing a key role in these outcomes.

Figure 1 – Theoretical Model



In summary, this manuscript contributes to sales leadership literature by empirically testing championing as a distinct and valuable leader behavior for sales managers. The results show that championing, which involves actively supporting and advocating for team members, positively impacts salespeople’s trust in their manager, reduces role stress, and improves job satisfaction and performance. The managerial implications of championing are significant, as it is a leadership behavior that can be developed through education and experience to improve team dynamics and performance. Sales managers who embrace championing can create a more positive and supportive sales environment, leading to improved performance and a better overall experience for the sales team. The study also highlights several opportunities for future research, such as examining how championing interacts with other sales leader behaviors, identifying its boundary conditions, and

exploring its long-term effects. We encourage future studies to explore how sales managers can leverage championing to enhance team outcomes and provide deeper insights into its impact.

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GENERATIVE AI TECHNOLOGY IMPACT ON CRM AND SALES PERFORMANCE

Michael Rodriguez (East Carolina University) and Dawn Deeter-Schmelz (Kansas State University)

INTRODUCTION

GenAI, a novel branch of artificial intelligence, can generate new data that mimics human-produced content. Integrating GenAI with CRM systems can significantly augment productivity and improve efficiency across the sales process (*Salesforce.com* 2024). However, as of 2023, Gartner (2023) reported that only 12% of sales functions had invested in GenAI; moreover, the same study suggests that sales and marketing leaders lag their counterparts in general management, human resources, procurement, engineering, and IT in adopting GenAI-enhanced CRM systems. Our study aims to provide empirical evidence supporting GenAI use within CRM systems.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) provides a framework for understanding technology adoption and usage behavior within organizations (Venkatesh et al. 2003). Applying UTAUT, we posit that sales professionals' performance expectancy of GenAI—their belief that GenAI will improve sales performance—will positively influence their intention to use GenAI technologies. Effort expectancy is also relevant, as the perceived ease of integrating GenAI into existing sales processes may affect usage behavior. Social influence plays a role in how peers and management advocate for adopting GenAI while facilitating conditions, such as the availability of CRM systems that support GenAI functionalities, which can enhance actual usage. We use UTAUT to propose the following hypotheses:

- H1: GenAI use will have a positive effect on CRM use.
- H2: GenAI use will have a positive effect on sales process effectiveness.
- H3: GenAI use will have a positive effect on sales performance.
- H4: GenAI use will have a positive effect on performance with customers.
- H5: CRM use moderates the relationship between GenAI use and sales performance, so GenAI's positive effect on sales performance is stronger at higher levels of CRM use.

Research Methodology

We gathered data from respondents in sales roles directly involved with GenAI technologies and CRM systems to test our hypotheses. A total of 218 B2B sales professionals were identified as potential participants. Of the 218 responses, 197 were usable, yielding a 90% response rate. The survey instrument was developed with established scales and tailored to the context of GenAI and CRM use in sales. Cronbach's α met the threshold of .79 (Nunally 1978), and AVE exceeded the recommended level of .50 (Gefen and Straub 2004). Discriminant validity was also indicated, with each indicator's outer loadings greater than its cross-loading with other constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

The proposed hypotheses were analyzed using PLS to calculate weights and explained variance. We compared the results of two models, one with and one without the interaction construct (Chin et al. 2003). To calculate the significance of estimates (t-values), a bootstrap analysis was run using 5000 resamples. The results indicate that GenAI use positively correlates to CRM and all performance areas; therefore, H1- H4 are supported. Next, we examined the moderating impact of CRM by comparing the R^2 in the main effect model to the interaction effect model (Chin et al. 2003). Including the interaction of effect with a strong beta of 0.16 increases R^2 for sales performance from .093 to 0.164. Therefore, CRM significantly and positively affects the relationship between GenAI use and sales performance, and H5 is supported.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study offers several significant contributions to the existing literature on technology adoption in sales and extends the application of UTAUT. This study is among the first to apply UTAUT to the adoption and impact of GenAI technologies within the sales domain. By demonstrating that performance expectancy and facilitating conditions influence GenAI use and its outcomes, we validate the applicability of UTAUT in this emerging technological context.

The positive effect of GenAI usage on CRM use (H1) highlights the synergistic relationship between these technologies. This finding contributes to the literature by illustrating how advanced AI technologies can enhance the utilization of existing systems like CRM. It suggests that GenAI can act as a catalyst for greater engagement with CRM platforms.

The support for H2, H3, and H4 confirms that GenAI usage positively influences sales process effectiveness, sales performance, and performance with customers. The moderation effect found in H5 underscores the importance of facilitating conditions in UTAUT. Using CRM strengthens the positive link between GenAI use and sales performance. This suggests that using technology tools like CRM is important for getting the most out of GenAI.

Our findings resonate with the work of Venkatesh et al. (2003), who emphasized the role of performance expectancy and facilitating conditions in technology adoption. However, our study diverges by focusing on GenAI, a more advanced and less studied technology in sales. While prior research has examined AI's general impact on organizational outcomes (Singh et al. 2019; Paschen et al. 2020), this study provides empirical evidence specific to GenAI and its integration with CRM systems.

The positive results of this study have several practical implications for sales managers and organizations aiming to enhance sales performance through GenAI technology adoption. Managers should first communicate the tangible benefits of GenAI to sales professionals, emphasizing how it can improve efficiency, effectiveness, and interactions with customers and prospects. To address effort expectancy, organizations should invest in user-friendly GenAI applications and provide comprehensive training programs to accelerate adoption. Increasing CRM use among sales teams can strengthen the positive impact of GenAI on sales performance. This might involve updating CRM features, training, or incentivizing CRM engagement. Managers should ensure that adequate resources, support, and infrastructure are available.

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2025 NCSM Research: Doctoral Session Abstracts

ROLE OF SALES COACHING BY SALES MANAGERS IN SERVICE FAILURE AND RECOVERY IN B2B MARKETS

Siddharth Arora (Aston University)

Abstract

Keywords: Sales Coaching; Sales Manager; Salesperson; Service Failure and Recovery; B2B

Salespersons are often the key employees at the receiving end of the complaining customers who are adversely impacted by stress from service failure and recovery (SFaR) situations. Past authors have emphasized the need for adequate procedures and imparting ‘knowledge, skills and abilities’(or professional sales coaching) to help employees deal with SFaR situations. Through this exploration, the study intends to fill a critical gap in SFaR literature on the lack of focus on ‘employees’ as a recovery outcome by examining the role of sales coaching and measuring its impact on salesperson well-being and performance. A two-stage multi-method study, with Job Demand-Resource (JD-R) theory being proposed as the theoretical foundation.

AI AND THE MODERN CUSTOMER: THE ROLE OF TRANSPARENCY IN MARKETING, SALES, AND FIRM-LEVEL STRATEGY

Donovan Gordon (The University of Mississippi)

Abstract

Artificial Intelligence is constantly reshaping marketing dynamics within numerous industries. Drawing upon Knowledge-Based/Resource-Based View of the Firm, Cognitive Load, and Resource-Advantage Theories, this research takes a dual approach (i.e., customer interaction strategy and salesforce organizational strategy) at investigating AI's impact on customers and the firm. The article highlights how transparent communication in AI usage can significantly enhance customer perceptions and reduce cognitive barriers. Organizationally, the research explores how AI's integration into sales processes and information adequacy can increase sales performance and customer satisfaction. By providing empirical evidence, the article seeks to influence sales and marketing strategies in an ever-evolving landscape.

RETHINKING SALES PERFORMANCE METRICS: A MONEYBALL APPROACH TO B2B REVENUE SUCCESS

Curtis S. Schroeder (Oklahoma State University)

Abstract

Keywords: Sales performance, go-to-market strategy, metrics, revenue, key performance indicators (KPIs), sales efficiency, optimization

B2B sales organizations have long relied on traditional performance metrics – including revenue attainment, pipeline forecasting, and activity-based tracking – to assess team effectiveness and predict growth. However, these KPIs were developed in a different era of sales and may fail to capture the growing complexity of modern revenue generation. Inspired by the Moneyball revolution in professional sports, where data-driven analytics challenged long-held assumptions about player value and reshaped team strategy, this research will investigate whether emerging sales KPIs provide greater insight into revenue predictability and efficiency. Across two studies, I will explore, validate, and test alternative sales performance measures for the sales go-to-market function. Study 1 will employ structured qualitative interviews with 30 revenue and operations leaders to assess limitations in existing KPI frameworks and identify underutilized metrics related to core sales go-to-market functions, including territory management, quota effectiveness, and compensation structures. Study 2 will quantitatively evaluate the predictive power of these emerging KPIs using historical sales data from three firms across different industries (health insurance, SaaS, and life sciences). This research will contribute to sales performance theory by reframing how sales effectiveness is measured and by introducing data-driven, predictive alternatives to traditional KPIs. Managerially, it will provide sales leaders with actionable insights to improve forecasting, optimize sales resource allocation, and drive more efficient, sustainable revenue growth.

2025 NCSM Teaching Session Abstracts

WHY AND HOW TO BUILD A PROFESSIONAL NETWORK

Peggy Benedetti Andrews (University of Minnesota)

Abstract

Professional networking skills, and a healthy professional network are two elements of social capital every aspiring professional should possess, especially the aspiring sales professional. Instructors who teach professional selling courses and otherwise interact with students who hope to build a career in sales after graduation should be committed to providing students with opportunities to explore theory and engage in practice around networking skills. This fifteen-minute presentation will review the distinctive challenges first generation students face in building their professional network and describe how Hill & Linebeck's three-part operational, strategic and developmental model of networking is a useful framework for demystifying networking and implementing a methodical set of activities to develop these vital elements of social capital. Attendees will receive a complete description of a semester long networking assignment and teaching notes for implementing it. We will conclude with a discussion of student comments on the value of the assignment.

AI IN ACTION: TRANSFORMING SALES EDUCATION IN 5 MINUTES

Stephanie Boyer (Bryant University)

Abstract

This lightning session will demonstrate a quick, effective classroom activity that leverages AI to teach students how to craft and deliver elevator pitches. In just five minutes, attendees will experience how students create a pitch, use AI to receive immediate feedback, and refine their communication skills in real time. This engaging, tech-driven exercise offers a practical and scalable way to develop essential sales competencies while keeping students actively involved.

DATA-DRIVEN SELLING: LESS SPRAY, MORE SCORE

Stephanie Boyer (Bryant University)

Abstract

Successful sellers don't rely on guesswork—they use data to target the right buyers with the right message at the right time. This session teaches students how to move beyond outdated “spray and pray” tactics by using AI and analytics to personalize outreach, prioritize high-value prospects, and improve results. Through real-world examples, students learn how data-driven selling makes sales efforts more efficient, effective, and measurable.

WORK HARD, DÉCOR HARDER: SPOTTING SOCIAL STYLES IN THE OFFICE

Rebecca Dingus (Ohio University)

Abstract

This teaching moment introduces an innovative approach to teaching sales students how to assess and adapt to buyer social styles—Amiable, Analytical, Driver, and Expressive—through the visual cues present in office environments. While existing sales education focuses on the matrix of assertiveness and responsiveness by emphasizing verbal and behavioral indicators of social styles, this exercise goes deeper to explore the role of workspace aesthetics, organization, and décor in signaling an individual’s cognitive and interpersonal tendencies. By analyzing real-world office photographs alongside validated social style assessments, this session provides another way to help students identify a prospect’s social style—sometimes before even a word is spoken. Teaching students to “read the room” in this new way integrates environmental observation into the sales curriculum, further enhancing students’ ability to build rapport and tailor their communication in professional settings.

A MAP FOR SALES DEVELOPMENT - MEETING INDUSTRY NEEDS THROUGH COURSE CURRICULUM

Nicole Flink (Weber State University)

Abstract

As the sales industry continues to evolve, particularly in technical sales and SaaS career paths, there is a growing demand for collegiate graduates working as Sales Development Representatives (SDRs) and Business Development Representatives (BDRs) who excel in prospecting, lead generation, and early-stage sales engagement. Industry feedback has highlighted a gap in traditional sales curricula, which often heavily focus on preparing for the Account Executive role rather than providing additional practical application and experiential learning for the specialized skills required in SDR and BDR roles. This presentation explores the development of a course specifically designed for sales development that equips students with practical training in advanced prospecting methods, technology-driven lead generation, client pre-call research, and sales outreach strategies specific to SDR roles. Through hands-on learning, students gain the competencies needed to succeed in early-stage sales roles, ensuring alignment between academic preparation and industry expectations. This session will provide insights into curriculum design and examples of industry collaboration.

HANDLING OBJECTIONS WITH AI

Scott Hachey (California State University, Fullerton)

Abstract

Handling objections is a critical skill in selling, yet it can be challenging to practice with various student skills and other classroom constraints. This innovative assignment leverages Artificial Intelligence (AI), specifically a custom GPT (within ChatGPT) that has been created to bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical application. Designed for undergraduate students, the activity pairs course teachings on handling objections with an AI-driven role-play scenario and student critical analysis. After course teachings on handling objections, students will interact with an AI buyer based on a certain sales scenario to practice their handling of objections, such as price and supplier credibility. After interacting with AI, students will reflect on using AI as a sales training tool and their ability to handle the AI buyer's objections. The exercise comprises three parts: 1) classroom instruction on objection-handling techniques, 2) role-play interaction with an AI buyer on ChatGPT, and 3) student analysis of performance and AI as a training tool. This AI-enabled learning experience enhances skills in objection handling, critical thinking, and written communication, saving classroom time for discussion. By integrating AI tools, this assignment provides an engaging approach to sales education, preparing students for real-world challenges.

DR. SEUSS "GREEN EGGS AND HAM" POETRY PROVIDES A LESSON IN PROFESSIONAL SELLING

Victoria Hailey (Minnesota State University)

Abstract

Keywords: sales, trust, develop relationships, resilient sales, persistence, discovery questions, teaching moments, sales creativity, sales education, customer relationship management

Green Eggs and Ham by Dr. Seuss tells the story of Sam-I-Am who uses persistence to close the sale. In the book, Sam-I-Am persistently asks his client to try green eggs and ham in many ways to understand more about what his client likes. Along with handling the objections and delivering trial closes, Sam-I-Am creates trust with his client that further builds their relationship, a key to customer relationship management. In the end, the client likes green eggs and ham and appreciates Sam-I-Am in being persistent in asking to try them. In using this story, the teaching moment introduces students to five selling learning outcomes: 1) importance of an introduction, 2) discover client needs, 3) be resilient and persistence, 4) use trial closes, and 5) build trust and relationships.

THE EMOTION IN MOTION ACTIVITY

April Kemp (Southeastern Louisiana University) and Timothy Butler (Southeastern Louisiana University)

Abstract

Many college students are still developing their understanding of their emotions and how they influence their actions. They may also not have significant professional or personal challenges, such as empathy or conflict resolution, which can make it difficult for them to recognize emotional patterns or triggers. In this teaching moment, we discuss how to engage students in interactive activities, including an emotional intelligence activity to act out realistic scenarios designed to evoke a range of emotional responses. Through guided debriefs, students reflect on their performance, identify strategies that work, and explore areas for improvement. Hands-on activities not only enhance their ability to adapt to emotional dynamics in sales but also builds confidence in managing real-world client interactions with poise and emotional awareness.

BRINGING SALES LESSONS TO LIFE WITH AI- GENERATED PODCASTS: APPLICATION OF NOTEBOOK LLM IN SALES EDUCATION

Michael Rodriguez (East Carolina University) and Kevin Trainor (Marquette University)

Abstract

In today's digital learning environment, students face challenges engaging with static or traditional recorded lectures. They prefer flexible, dynamic formats like podcasts, which align with their multitasking habits. Professors, however, encounter time constraints when creating quality audio content, leading to a gap between delivery methods and modern learning preferences. The following teaching innovation "Application of NotebookLM in Sales Education" demonstrates how to utilize NotebookLM to generate AI-powered podcasts based on content created by sales educators. NotebookLM is an advanced AI tool that generates podcasts from text-based content. It supports educators in creating audio lectures efficiently and effectively. This tool is especially valuable for sales educators who need to convey complex concepts like the sales process, negotiation, and closing in a way that accommodates diverse learning styles. The approach enhances students' understanding of sales concepts like the sales process, objection handling, and closing techniques through flexible and accessible audio content. This innovative approach meets the needs of today's learners by transforming traditional lecture formats into portable and flexible podcasts, fostering deeper comprehension of essential sales concepts. By enabling educators to convert lecture or reading content into high-quality podcasts quickly, NotebookLM reduces preparation time while delivering an accessible, on-the-go format that resonates with students.

LIFE-SAVING LESSONS: HOW FINDING A KIDNEY DONOR TAUGHT SELLING SKILLS THROUGH STUDENT PHILANTHROPY

Jose Saavedra (Northern Kentucky University) and Laura Munoz (University of Dallas)

Abstract

Keywords: Nonprofit, Philanthropy, Sales Education, Experiential Learning, Consultative Selling

Sales education must evolve to prepare students for the complexities of modern consultative selling. This study explores how integrating the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project (MSPP) into an advanced Professional Selling course enhances student learning by applying Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory in a real-world nonprofit context. Over five semesters (Fall 2022–Fall 2024), students engaged with nonprofit organizations, conducting prospecting, needs assessment, and consultative selling to develop tailored solutions for social impact. Findings indicate that participation in the MSPP significantly increased students' community engagement, empathy, and self-efficacy—three key competencies in relationship-driven sales. Notably, students reported heightened confidence in their ability to execute core sales functions such as prospecting, pitching, and managing client relationships. These results underscore the value of service-learning in sales education, demonstrating how philanthropy-driven selling experiences cultivate client-centric sales professionals equipped with both technical skills and a sense of social responsibility. The study offers best practices for educators seeking to incorporate experiential, high-impact teaching practices into sales curricula and suggests avenues for future research on service-learning in professional selling.

A START-UP FOCUSED SALES COMPETITION: A TEACHING APPLICATION

Louis Zmich (University of Tampa) & Stacey Schetzle (University of Tampa)

Abstract

Overview of Challenges:

Existing sales competitions primarily focus on corporate sales environments, leaving a gap in preparing students for the entrepreneurial challenges of start-up sales. Start-ups require resourcefulness, creativity, and agility to navigate limited resources, brand awareness, and market uncertainty. This competition emphasizes start-up sales strategies, partnering with a local incubator/accelerator to provide authentic, real-world experiences.

Teaching Objectives:

Upon completion of this competition, students should be able to:

- Adapt creative sales strategies for entrepreneurial opportunities.
- Engage in experiential learning through workshops, role-playing, and pitching.
- Build connections with start-ups, corporations, and investors.

Outline of the Competition: The event is structured across two days:

Day 1: Learning and Networking

Workshops: Entrepreneurial sales fundamentals and resourceful strategies.

Dual-Purpose Career Fair:

- *Corporate Booths:* Companies showcase sales opportunities and scout talent.
- *Start-Up Booths:* Founders present business challenges, seeking partnerships.

Speed Networking: Students meet corporate recruiters and start-up founders to understand both markets.

Team Product Pitch: Participants present a start-up's mission, sales strategy, and market potential to judges, receiving critical feedback.

Day 2: Competition Day

Cold-Calling Challenge: Teams outreach to clients to securing a follow-up meeting.

Client Discovery Role-Play: Teams uncover market needs and align solutions.

Final Presentations: Top teams deliver pitches to judges, simulating investor meetings.

Outcomes:

Feedback from five years of collaboration with Embarc Collective highlights the demand for start-up sales education. Students developed greater adaptability in selling situations, and corporate recruiters value candidates with start-up sales experience.

2025 NCSM Special Session Abstracts

CROWDSOURCING AI BEST PRACTICES FOR THE CLASSROOM, STUDENT USE, AND SALES COACHING

Rhett Epler (Old Dominion University), Colleen McClure (University of Alabama-Birmingham),
and Bryan Hochstein (University of Alabama)

Abstract

The goal of this session is to introduce some new ideas as a foundation for a lively discussion of how AI is being used in sales and the classroom. We will give an overview of how AI is being used in sales, teaching and with prompt engineering. For example, AI software has been utilized to train salespeople and is now making its way into the classroom and helping to prepare students for role plays. Next, we will host a crowd-sourced discussion about AI in pre-sales, post-sales and from a customer perspective. Here, we will seek insight from the audience in how AI is impacting every aspect of the customer's buying situation and helping them to navigate purchasing. In summary, the results should include a wide range of new ideas, bound only by each group's knowledge and creativity. Overall, the idea is to harness the body of knowledge found in the NCSM audience to develop useful teaching and potentially research ideas for the entire group.

**READING IS FUNDAMENTAL: A DISCUSSION OF INTRODUCTORY SALES TEXT
READING CHALLENGES**

Moderators: J. Ricky Fergurson (Middle Tennessee State University) and David Fleming
(Indiana State University)

Panelists: Dawn Deter-Schmelz (Kansas State University), Jessica Ogilvie (Marquette
University)

Abstract

This panel will discuss textbook challenges for introductory sales courses. The goal is to engage authors of several of the textbooks commonly used in these courses and will focus on the fact that getting students to read the text can be challenging to say the least. One driver of that challenge may have to do with student reading ability. The authors will discuss about how they decide the reading level at which to write the textbook, how they structure the writing, the impact of the publisher/editorial process, and advice to get students to engage with the text.

THE VALUE PROPOSITION-STRENGTHENING CORPORATE PARTNERSHIPS

Frank Veltri (Boise State University) & April Shofield (Metropolitan State University of Denver)

Abstract

A strong corporate partnership is vital for enhancing a university's professional sales program. This corporate partnership is a mutual collaboration, aligning the goals of the program and its corporate partners. The partnership can benefit the university, students, and businesses. Professional sales program, the value centers around the opportunity to bridge the gap between academia and the business world. Corporate partnerships provide the program with real-world experts, this can be reflected through current industry trends and techniques.

Engaging with companies enables the program to offer experiential learning opportunities such as role-plays, case studies, and live sales competitions, which better prepare students for competitive sales careers. Additionally, these collaborations boost the program's reputation and attractiveness to prospective students and faculty.

From the corporate perspective, partnering with a sales program delivers access to a highly skilled talent pipeline. By engaging directly with students through mentorships, internships, or guest lectures, businesses can help shape the next generation of sales leaders while also identifying top recruits early.

- What are sales programs offering corporate partners?
- Tier levels vs. one level system
- What do corporate partners want from sales programs

Strengthening the professional sales program through corporate partnerships requires clear communication, shared objectives, and ongoing collaboration. By emphasizing mutual value—better-prepared graduates for companies and enhanced opportunities for students, these partnerships ensure sustained success for all stakeholders involved.