2026 National Conference in Sales Management

Norfolk Waterside Marriott
Norfolk, Virginia
March 25th—March 27th, 2026

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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 fortieth volume of the Proceedings from the National Conference in Sales Management contains articles and abstracts of presentations scheduled at the 2026 Conference held March 25th—March 27th at the Norfolk Waterside Marriott in Norfolk, Virginia. 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 devotes four sessions to the corporate-sponsored Best Sales Teaching Innovation award. This year included Special Sessions devoted to celebrating 40 years of excellence, where outstanding leaders were inducted into the NCSM Hall of Fame, and research and teaching presentations highlighted some of the Best of the Best. As always, the 2026 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 2026 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 – Aaron Arndt of Old Dominion University for his leadership and guidance as the Executive Director of the NCSM; Rhett Epler of Old Dominion University for serving as Competitive Sessions Chair; Emily Tanner of West Virginia University and Colleen McClure of Ohio University serving as Co-chairs of the Doctoral Student Sales Research Program; Nicole Flink from Weber State University for serving as Sales Education Track Coordinator; Ricky Fergurson of Middle Tennessee State University for serving as Special Sessions Coordinator; Billy Jones of Georgia Southern University and Muzi Liu of Marist University for serving as members 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 the contributors and supporters of the Conference who put their valuable time into making it 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-fifth event, this goal continues to be met.

Bryan Hochstein
Program Chair
University of Alabama

April Kemp
Proceedings Editor
Southeastern Louisiana University

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*
2002	David A. Reid *The University of Toledo*	Jon M. Hawes *The University of Akron* 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*
2023	Stacey Schetzsle *University of Tampa*	Aaron Arndt *Old Dominion University*
2024	Aaron Arndt *Old Dominion University*	David Locander *University of Tennessee-Chattanooga*
2025	Aaron Arndt *Old Dominion University*	David Locander *University of Tennessee-Chattanooga*
2026	Bryan Hochstein *University of Alabama*	April Kemp *Southeastern Louisiana University*

National Conference in Sales Management 2026 Hall of Fame

1 Ramon Avila, *Ball State University*

2 Stefanie Boyer, *Bryant University*

3 David Fleming, *Indiana State University*

4 Scott Inks, *Kennesaw State University*

5 Timothy A. Longfellow, *Illinois State University*

6 Michael Mallin, *University of Toledo*

7 Don McBane**, *Central Michigan University*

8 Rob Peterson, *Indiana University*

9 Ellen Pullins, *University of Toledo*

10 E. James (Jim) Randall, *Georgia Southern University*

11 Charlie Ragland, *Indiana University*

12 David A. Reid, *The University of Toledo*

13 Lisa Simon, *Cal Poly State University*

14 Dan Weilbaker, *Northern Illinois University*

15 Michael R. Williams, *Illinois State University*

***Posthumous Award*

NCSM Best of the Best Research 2026

Hao Wang	*Miami University, Ohio*
Ellen Pullins	*University of Toledo*
Colleen McClure	*Ohio University*
Michael Mallin	*University of Toledo*
Muzi Liu	*Marist University*
Grace Holyfield	*Louisiana Tech*
Donovan Gordon	*University of Mississippi*
Benjamin Britton	*University of Central Arkansas*
Nicole Boylan	*University of Alabama*
Jonathan Barnes	*Louisiana Tech*

NCSM Best of the Best Teaching 2026

Rebecca Dingus	*Ohio University*
Louis Zmich	*University of Tampa*
Barb Barney-McNamara	*University of Illinois Chicago*
Jeff Hoyle	*Central Michigan University*
Stefanie Boyer	*Bryant University*

National Conference in Sales Management 2026 Reviewers

Conference Chair: Bryan Hochstein, *University of Alabama*

Competitive Papers Chair: Rhett Epler, *Old Dominion University*

Reviewers:

Aaron Arndt, *Old Dominion University*

Stefanie Boyer, *Bryant University*

Benjamin Britton, *University of Central Arkansas*

Kristina Harrison, *Indiana University*

Michel Klein, *Grenoble Ecole de Management*

Christine Lai-Bennejean, *University of North Carolina-Wilmington*

Bruno Lussier, *HEC Montreal*

Colleen McClure, *Ohio University*

Deva Rangarajan, *IESEG*

Gregory Rich, *Bowling Green University*

Wyatt Schrock, *Michigan State University*

Emily Tanner, *West Virginia University*

Louis Zmich, *University of Tampa*

National Conference in Sales Management 2026 Agenda

Wednesday, March 25th

Start	Presentation Title	Author
1:00	Welcome	
1:15	**Research: Session 1** (Moderator: Muzi Liu)	
	Selling the Value of Student Sales Certifications	Ricky Ferguson
	Theorizing Relational Capabilities of Key Account Managers	Christine Lai Bennejean
	Following the Lead: How Salespeople Respond to AI and Human Recommendations	Melanie Bowen, Justus Liebig, Xiaohan (Hanna) Wen, Shinhye Kim
	The Jealousy Trap: How Organizational Commitment Can Enhance Job Stress and Unethical Selling in Sales Organizations	Tyler Hancock, Catherine Gilstrap, Michael Mallin, Ellen Pullins
2:15	**Teaching Applications: Session 1** (Moderator: Billy Jones)	
	Leading Through Questions: A Sales Management Teaching Application Using Goleman's Leadership Framework	George Talbert
	From AI Users to AI Designers: Teaching Sales Prospecting Through Repeatable Workflow Design	John Ploumitsakos
	Seeing Sales Through the Buyer's Eyes: Meta Glasses as an Immersive Tool for Nonverbal Skill Development	Louis Zmich, Stacey Schetzle
	Not Your Typical Book Club	Barbara Barney-McNamara
3:30	**Special Session** (Moderator: Ricky Fergurson)	
	The AI Sales Pitch Educators Need to Hear: Trends, Truths, and Tomorrow's Sellers	Jeff Tanner, Tim Pavolich, Stefanie Boyer
4:00	**Applied Improv in the Sales Classroom**	Robert M. Peterson
5:30	VIP Reception	

7:30 Improv, Pizza and Beverages

Thursday, March 26th

Start	Presentation Title	Author
9:00	Welcome	
9:05	**Teaching Moments: Session 1** (Moderator: April Kemp)	
	When to Use Traditional AI vs. Generative AI in the Sales Process: A Framework for Sales Education	Michael Rodriguez, Stefanie Boyer, Kevin Trainor
	The Persona Party: A Networking Simulation to Enhance Sales Discovery and Differentiation Skills	Rebecca Dingus, Emma Gibbons, Sarah Rist
	The Earned Relevance Framework: Starting a Sales Conversation in the Age of AI	Nicole Flink
	Teaching Sales Negotiations: Designing a Modern, High-Impact Sales Negotiations Course	Ellis Chefor
9:45	**Classroom AI Teaching Tools** (Moderator: Ricky Fergurson)	
	SmartFox	Phil Everhart
	QuantHub	Jason Rupert
	Copient	Josh Byrd
10:45	**Research: Session 2** (Moderator: Nicole Boylan)	
	The Moderating Role of Generative AI (GenAI) in CRM Utilization and Sales Performance: An Empirical Study	Michael Rodriguez, Dawn Deeter-Schmelz, Kevin Trainor
	Smart Selling: Understanding Where AI Adds Value in the Sales Process and Where Humans Still Matter	Kristina Harrison, Lei Huang
	Understanding the Servitized Salesforce: Cross-Case Insights and a Research Agenda	Ali Anwar, Colleen McClure, Deva Rangarijan, Silvio Cardinali
	Collaboration Across Deals: Mapping Collective Learning with Main Path Analysis.	Gabriel Moreno, Jill Kurp

11:45	Stukent Update	Darlyn Kirby
12:00	Lunch	
1:30	**Special Session:** Mapping the Sales Technology Landscape- Market Evolution & Trends	Howard Dover
2:00	**Teaching Applications: Session 2** (Moderator: Barb Barney McNamara)	
	AI Integrated Sales Pedagogy: Teaching Productive and Ethical AI Use Through the Sales Process	Andrea DiBernardo
	Preparing BDR-Ready Graduates: an AI-Enabled Teaching Application	Christopher A. Nelson
	Real-World Sales and Marketing Experience: A Group Project	Victoria Hailey
	Engaging Sales Students with AI Video Creation Using Sora	Stefanie Boyer
	Examining Student involvement vs engagement: analyzing experiential learning outcomes	Christine Summers
3:15	**Doctoral Research: Session 1** (Moderator: Colleen McClure)	
	Competitive - AI-Augmented Adaptive Selling: Balancing Automation and Autonomy in B2B Sales (*SEF/PSE NEF Grant Recipient)*	Grant Williams
	The Path of the Sales Bricoleur: The Cognitive Triad that Fuels Bricolage and The Power of Autonomy	Donovan Gordon
	No Interest for How Long? Message Framing of Consumer Financing and Its Implications for Retail Sales	Nicholas Mobley
	Supervisor Practices on Salesperson Mattering	Grace Holyfield
4:00	**Special Session:** Bridging the Relevance Gap (Moderator: Ricky Fergurson)	Dave Brauer, Jim Karr, Carissa Kim, Mark Leach, Stefan Sleep
4:50	Teaching Awards	
5:30	Hall of Fame Dinner Cruise	

Friday, March 27th

Start	Presentation Title	Author
9:00	**NCSM Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony** (Moderator: Aaron Arndt)	Ramon Avila Stefanie Boyer David Fleming Scott Inks Timothy A. Longfellow Michael Mallin Don McBane** Rob Peterson Ellen Pullins E. James (Jim) Randall Charlie Ragland David A. Reid* Lisa Simon* Dan Weilbaker* Michael R. Williams*
10:30	**Best of the Best Research** (Emcee: Bryan Hochstein & Referee: Rhett Epler)	Hao Wang Ellen Pullins Colleen McClure Michael Mallin Muzi Liu Grace Holyfield Donovan Gordon Benjamin Britton Nicole Boylan Jonathan Barnes
10:15	**Best of the Best Teaching** (Emcee: Bryan Hochstein & Referee: Nicole Flink)	Rebecca Dingas Louis Zmich Barb Barney-McNamara Jeff Hoyle Stefanie Boyer

11:45	**Best of the Best Awards**	
1:15	**Announcements and Board Meeting Report** Castleberry and Tanner: Selling: Building Partnerships" Best Conference Paper Hunt, Deitz, and Hansen: "Professional Selling" Best Doctoral Competitive Paper Chaker and Hochstein: "Sales Management" Best Doctoral Working Paper	
1:40	**Special Session: AI Insights** (Moderator: Rhett Epler) Frontline AI Getting to ROI: AI Agents B2B Buyer Reactions to AI Agents	 Sandrine Heitz-Spahn Benjamin Britton Daniel Bradbury
2:15	**Special Session: Special Issues & Topics** JPSSM "Twenty Years Later" JPSSM "International" Editor's Thoughts on "Hot Sales Topics" The Future of Sales Research	 Eli Jones Colleen McClure Brian Rutherford Eli Jones
3:15	**Doctoral Research: Session 2** An Exploratory Investigation on the Role of Sales Coaching in B2B Service Failure and Recovery	 Siddharth Arora
	What Makes B2B Salespeople Thrive? The Role of Organizational Culture, Meaning, and Resilience	Jonathan Barnes Walker Pearson
	Too Close for Comfort? Camera Distance, Psychological Reactance, and Sales Continuation in Virtual B2B Selling	Rajit Sharma
3:50	Closing Remarks	Bryan Hochstein

2026 NCSM Research Papers & Abstracts

AN EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATION ON THE ROLE OF SALES COACHING IN B2B SERVICE FAILURE AND RECOVERY

Arora, Siddharth

ABSTRACT

Salespersons are often at the receiving end of complaints from customers who are adversely impacted by service failure and recovery (SFaR) situations. Prior studies have emphasized the need for adequate procedures for imparting 'knowledge, skills, and abilities' in SFaR. The study probes this issue through qualitative interactions with senior sales professionals from business-to-business services markets. It explores the key characteristics of a sales manager as a coach and identifies six characteristics: big-picture thinking, empathy, relational capital, selling experience, adaptability, and involvement. It also identifies two sales coaching styles, directive and facilitative, and explains their coaching effectiveness with different salesperson types.

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

WHAT MAKES B2B SALESPEOPLE THRIVE? THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, MEANING, AND RESILIENCE

Barnes, Jonathan, & Walker M. Pearson

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how organizational culture shapes the experience of B2B salespeople through job meaningfulness, resilience, and sense of purpose. Grounded in Self-Determination Theory, the model proposes that clan and adhocracy cultures enhance job meaningfulness, while hierarchy and market cultures undermine it by emphasizing control and extrinsic metrics. Job meaningfulness is expected to foster resilience, with a sense of purpose strengthening this relationship. Proposing the use of survey data from B2B salespeople and covariance-based SEM, the research may offer guidance for designing sales cultures that move beyond compensation-driven models toward more sustainable, intrinsically motivating environments.

RELATIONAL DIMENSIONS IN KEY ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT: LESSONS FROM DEFINITIONS AND INTERNAL COORDINATION STUDIES

Bennejean, Christine Lai, Melanie Bowen, & Ying Yang

ABSTRACT

This research is a work-in-progress. It is designed to investigate how key account managers (KAMs) achieve internal alignment and orchestrate relationship resources within complex organizational environments. KAM context is conceptualized as characterized by high interdependence but limited formal authority, fragmented structures, and uneven communication flows. In such settings, effective collaboration relies more on relational capabilities. Building on network theory, we argue that relationship building involves deliberate actions through which KAMs initiate, activate, and sustain ties across internal and external actors. Addressing the lack of action-level theorization in prior research, this study aims to decompose relational work into specific practices of coordination and orchestration. Using a qualitative, two-stage design that combines analysis of recruitment data with in-depth interviews, we seek to develop an action-based understanding of how KAMs mobilize resources and navigate fragmentation in loosely coupled organizational systems.

FOLLOWING THE LEAD: HOW SALESPEOPLE RESPOND TO AI AND HUMAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Bowen, Melanie, Xiaohan (Hanna) Wen, & Shinhye Kim.

ABSTRACT

Salespeople have traditionally relied on managers or colleagues for sales coaching. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes how such coaching is generated and delivered. This research investigates how salespeople perceive and respond to recommendations from human and AI sales agents after the agent's initial failure. Drawing on the Stereotype Content Model, we argue that salespeople initially favor human experts; but after an inaccurate recommendation, are more inclined to follow advice from an AI than from humans. Through two experiments, we show that salespeople's willingness to follow subsequent recommendations is driven by perceptions of the coaching agent's warmth and competence.

Keywords

Human–AI collaboration; Stereotype Content Model; Sales Coaching

SELLING THE VALUE OF STUDENT SALES CERTIFICATIONS

Ferguson, Ricky

ABSTRACT

University sales programs are continually being tasked with providing high-quality sales students for industry sales jobs upon graduation. Additionally, the cost to industry partners for involvement in university sales programs drives these programs to find more ways to demonstrate that they are providing value to their partners. This research examines the role of industry-based sales certifications in university sales programs, aiming to provide value to corporate partners who recruit from these programs. The research consisted of two phases: first, to assess which certification methods are used in sales programs, and then to assess how corporate partners working with these programs view the various certifications. The findings indicate that while corporate partners do not have a specific preference related to which certifications students receive, it is of vital importance that the students be able to communicate effectively in interviews and demonstrate the skills they have developed as a result of those certifications.

THE PATH OF THE SALES BRICOLEUR: THE COGNITIVE TRIAD THAT FUELS BRICOLAGE AND THE POWER OF AUTONOMY

Gordon, Donovan

ABSTRACT

Salesperson bricolage refers to the dynamic capability of salespeople to creatively and intuitively orchestrate/integrate resources to co-create value while navigating constraints. The current research extends prior research by identifying the cognitive antecedents that enable salesperson bricolage, known as the cognitive triad. Drawing upon the dynamic capability framework, this research positions the cognitive triad as antecedents to salesperson bricolage, enabling salespeople to seize opportunities, reconfigure resources, and sense opportunities while navigating resource-scarce ecosystems. This research examines the boundary conditions under which salesperson bricolage is most effective by analyzing salesperson autonomy and the nature of the sales offerings (i.e., goods vs. services).

Keywords: Salesperson Bricolage; Bricolage; Dynamic Capabilities; Resources; Cognition; Sales; Salespeople; Systems Thinking; Cognitive Flexibility; Cognitive Styles; Autonomy; Services

THE JEALOUSY TRAP: HOW ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT CAN ENHANCE JOB STRESS AND UNETHICAL SELLING IN SALES ORGANIZATIONS

Hancock, Tyler, Catherine Gilstrap, Michael Mallin, & Ellen Pullins

ABSTRACT

This paper explores how salesperson jealousy influences job stress, leading to unethical selling behaviors and turnover intentions. Using conservation of resources and equity theories, we surveyed 211 salespeople and found that jealousy significantly increases job stress, which mediates relationships with both unethical behaviors and turnover. Organizational commitment moderates these effects, intensifying negative outcomes at higher levels. Results suggest sales managers should ensure equitable resource allocation and maintain open communication to prevent jealousy-driven stress, particularly among highly committed salespeople. By doing so, sales managers can better leverage committed salespeople and prevent the attrition of quality talent.

SMART SELLING: UNDERSTANDING WHERE AI ADDS VALUE IN THE SALES PROCESS AND WHERE HUMANS STILL MATTER

Harrison, Kristina, & Lei Huang

ABSTRACT

This paper examines how artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes professional selling by proposing the Sales Task–AI Fit (STAF) framework, a stage-specific model explaining when AI should automate, augment, or defer to human capabilities. While AI improves data-driven tasks such as lead scoring and forecasting, relationship-intensive stages, including rapport-building, objection-handling, and closing, continue to rely on human judgment, empathy, and ethical sensitivity. Integrating sales process theory, adaptive selling, human–AI collaboration, and service marketing, the framework identifies cognitive, emotional, and ethical task demands that determine optimal AI–human role partitioning. A two-phase empirical design, combining controlled experiments and field data from sales professionals, tests performance outcomes and customer perceptions across stages. Findings clarify where AI adds value, where human authenticity remains indispensable, and how hybrid collaboration can strengthen sales effectiveness.

Keywords
Artificial intelligence; Sales process; Adaptive selling; Human–AI collaboration; Sales ethics; Service marketing; Task–technology fit; STAF framework

SUPERVISOR PRACTICES ON SALESPERSON MATTERING

Holyfield, Grace

ABSTRACT

Managers are becoming increasingly aware that salespeople are seeking more than a paycheck from their jobs. As such, sales managers are seeking for ways to improve the well-being of their salesforce. The present research proposes that mattering may be the answer to this challenge. Mattering is a vital construct and a key psychological resource that is central to the human condition (Flett, 2022). The present research examines work mattering, which encompasses both interpersonal and societal mattering, and aims to identify the impact of supervisor practices on a salesperson's sense of mattering, and understand how mattering impacts important sales outcomes.

NO INTEREST FOR HOW LONG? MESSAGE FRAMING CONSUMER FINANCING AND ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR RETAIL SALES

Mobley, Nicholas

ABSTRACT

In recent years, literature on consumer financing has mirrored its tremendous growth within industry. Marketing literature has investigated this phenomenon from many different angles, forming sub-topics including retailer strategy, consumer response, and ethics. More specifically, literature on temporal reframing (e.g., Atlas and Bartels, 2018) has explored the impact of messaging aggregate amounts as smaller segregated payments (e.g., "$1 a day" compared to "$30 monthly"). Despite the increase in focus on consumer financing options within the literature, retailers have begun to manipulate messaging in new ways, which have yet to be investigated. Typically, financing terms have little to no differentiation between competitors, so retailers must get creative to maintain a competitive advantage. Consumer financing is commonly messaged as "0% financing for 36 months" (0% Interest) or "No Interest for 36 months" (Deferred Interest). In lieu of messaging consumer financing as "No Interest for 36 months" (duration frame), retailers have begun to message the same offer as "No Interest until October 2028" (date frame). Retailers have sent offers with a date frame for both 0% and deferred-interest offers. Existing literature has not explored the effect that manipulating the framing of time within consumer financing messaging has on retail sales. Although it is just a small tweak, messaging financing offers in date- versus duration-frame holds broad implications for retailers, particularly for their sales force.

THE MODERATING ROLE OF GENERATIVE AI (GENAI) IN CRM UTILIZATION AND SALES PERFORMANCE: AN EMPIRICAL STUDY

Rodriguez, Michael, Dawn Deeter-Schmelz, & Kevin Trainor

ABSTRACT

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) is rapidly reshaping business-to-business (B2B) selling, especially as vendors embed GenAI capabilities directly into customer relationship management (CRM) platforms. Unlike earlier AI applications that primarily classify, predict, or automate structured tasks, GenAI produces new, context-specific outputs (e.g., draft customer communications, summarize opportunity information, and propose next-best actions) that can reduce administrative burden and augment salesperson cognition. Yet, despite widespread managerial enthusiasm, empirical evidence remains limited regarding whether GenAI improves salesperson performance—and, critically, whether GenAI strengthens the performance benefits of CRM use.

To address this gap, we examine the direct and interactive effects of GenAI use and CRM use on two dimensions of salesperson performance: overall sales performance and performance with customers. Grounded in the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) framework, we conceptualize GenAI and CRM as technological job resources that reduce information-processing and administrative demands, enabling greater effort allocation toward selling activities. We further propose that GenAI and CRM can operate as complementary resources, particularly for execution-oriented outcomes, while complementarity may be more limited for relational, customer-facing performance.

TOO CLOSE FOR COMFORT? CAMERA DISTANCE, PSYCHOLOGICAL REACTANCE, AND SALES CONTINUATION IN VIRTUAL B2B SELLING

Sharma, Rajit

ABSTRACT

Virtual selling has become a permanent fixture in business-to-business (B2B) sales, yet there is little empirical evidence-based guidance for sales professionals on how to present themselves effectively on camera during virtual sales meetings. Drawing on proxemics theory and reactance theory, this working paper examines how camera distance, operationalized across three spatial zones (intimate, personal, and social) influences customers' willingness to continue the sales process. We propose that closer camera framing simulates interpersonal proximity violations, activating psychological reactance, which reduces the intent to continue the sales process, particularly among introverted customers and those who have high power-distance beliefs. We propose two experiments to test this moderated mediation model, with implications for virtual sales settings. By connecting spatial communication research with individual differences, this working paper intends to address calls for evidence on relationship and rapport-building mechanisms in virtual sales environments.

Keywords: *virtual selling; camera distance; psychological reactance; proxemics; power distance beliefs.*

AI-AUGMENTED ADAPTIVE SELLING: BALANCING AUTOMATION AND AUTONOMY IN B2B SALES

Williams, Grant

ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way business-to-business (B2B) salespeople find potential clients, learn about needs, and tailor interactions. This shift is noticeable in both their daily routines and their broader strategies. Yet adaptive-selling frameworks have not accounted for how human judgment evolves when AI becomes an active decision partner. This study draws on Adaptive Selling and Bounded Rationality to explore how salespeople integrate AI capabilities into their cognitive, communicative, and behavioral routines. Three interrelated constructs, AI-enabled adaptation, AI-assisted research, and AI-assisted messaging, capture distinct ways salespeople use AI to inform, personalize, and guide selling actions. These three core ideas are proposed as drivers of salesperson trust in AI. If salespeople trust the technology, they are more likely to leverage it and feel confident relying on it in real-life situations. The effects of these relationships are expected to vary by AI tool type, where general-purpose AI systems (ex. ChatGPT) and enterprise-specific systems (ex. Salesforce Einstein) shape trust formation differently. A mixed-method, two-phase design with qualitative interviews followed by a survey will test these relationships. Anticipated findings extend adaptive selling into AI-enabled contexts and position AI trust as a mechanism that enables adaptive behavior. They also provide managerial guidance for aligning tool type, training, and use to balance automation with salesperson autonomy in modern B2B sales.

2026 NCSM Teaching Session Abstracts

NOT YOUR TYPICAL BOOK CLUB

Barney-McNamara, Barbara

Lifelong learning is a critical skill for students to master. The traditional college student has been in school most of their life and is accustomed to being assigned tasks, accompanied by rubrics with strict direction and associated grades. While managers may direct the “what” in an assigned task, new graduates entering the workforce are often meant to figure out the “how.” Staying current with professional tools, skills, and mindsets is imperative for long-term success. This teaching application allows students to search for and find value in professional development opportunities. Along the way, they share their knowledge and learning strategies to build a community for success.

AI INTEGRATED SALES PEDAGOGY: TEACHING PRODUCTIVE AND ETHICAL AI USE THROUGH SALES PROCESS

DiBernardo, Andrea

The rapid adoption of artificial intelligence in professional selling has created a pedagogical challenge: students must learn to use AI productively while also understanding its relational, cognitive, and ethical limitations. This session presents an AI-integrated sales pedagogy embedded across multiple stages of the sales funnel, including prospecting, pre-call planning, approach, objections, and negotiation. Rather than treating AI as a standalone technology module, the innovation positions AI as a supporting tool that mirrors contemporary sales practice. The instructional design is intentionally dual-focused. First, students complete productivity-oriented AI tasks such as generating buyer research, drafting outreach, developing value propositions, and preparing negotiation strategies, demonstrating how AI can enhance efficiency and preparation. Second, students engage in ethics and AI-literacy activities that reveal AI's shortcomings, including hallucinated information, depersonalized tone, bias, and inappropriate automation. Through in-class exercises and take-home applications, students learn to critically evaluate AI outputs, maintain control over messaging, and prioritize human-centered relationship building. Preliminary outcomes indicate improved assignment execution, increased student confidence in discussing and utilizing AI in professional contexts, stronger ethical reasoning, and higher engagement due to the course's contemporary relevance. The approach is scalable and adaptable, suitable for a single sales module, an introductory or advanced sales course, graduate education, or corporate training. By framing AI as a tool that supports rather than replaces sales expertise, this pedagogy equips students with both technological fluency and ethical judgment required in modern sales environments.

THE PERSONA PARTY: A NETWORKING SIMULATION TO ENHANCE SALES DISCOVERY AND DIFFERENTIATION SKILLS

Dingus, Rebecca, Emma Gibbons, & Sarah Rist

This persona-based experiential learning activity is designed to enhance customer insight and adaptive selling skills during 1-2 class sessions in undergraduate Professional Sales courses. Students analyze detailed customer personas, then participate in a "persona networking reception," embodying assigned personas while engaging in simulated discovery conversations. The activity aims to improve students' ability to identify buyer motivations, anticipate objections, tailor value propositions, and differentiate communication approaches across diverse customer types. Pre and post-assessments will be shared of students' perceived competence, confidence, and understanding of customer heterogeneity. This exercise links marketing segmentation concepts to applied sales skills through persona immersion to reinforce adaptability in a modern, consultative selling environment.

REAL-WORLD SALES AND MARKETING EXPERIENCE: A GROUP PROJECT

Hailey, Victoria

Employers emphasize that students need stronger critical thinking, communication, and professionalism skills in preparation for their careers upon graduation. Further, they stress students gain skills such as team building, relationship building, active listening and problem solving. To address this need, I created a semester-long group sales and marketing project. In collaboration with a national marketing agency (Forward Minded Media), 10 local businesses volunteered to work with two groups of 4-5 students (total of 84 students, split between face-to-face and online) on a sales and marketing plan. The project addressed the aim of introducing, practicing, and refining the skills listed above. The uniqueness of the project was the businesses considered the student group as their sales team to provide a marketing solution plan that addresses their distinctive customer needs. As educators, we need to provide opportunities that prepare students for the real-world. This project achieves this goal; giving students a real-world experience that is very close to what an advertising, promotional, or digital marketing salesperson does day to day.

PREPARING BDR-READY GRADUATES

Nelson, Christopher A.

Agentic AI is rapidly reshaping business development roles, creating a need for sales graduates to master AI-enabled workflows. This Teaching Application introduces a sequenced, backward-designed set of modules that develop students' competence with AI tools used widely in industry. Using Apollo, students automate inbound lead qualification, meeting booking, and research preparation. They then apply consultative-selling principles through practice using Second Nature's AI-avatar simulations and structured in-class triads. Students additionally learn to craft follow-up communication that blends AI-enabled efficiency with human relational value. Authentic assessments, including an industry partner workflow competition, reinforce learning, with top performers advancing to a live needs discovery meeting. This approach offers a model for preparing students to succeed in human–AI collaborative selling environments.

FROM AI USERS TO AI DESIGNERS: TEACHING SALES PROSPECTING THROUGH REPEATABLE WORKFLOW DESIGN

Ploumitsakos, John

Entry-level sales roles are changing in meaningful ways. Increasingly, the most effective Sales Development Representatives are valued not for manual prospecting volume but for their ability to design and manage AI-assisted workflows. Sales education has been slower to adjust. In many classrooms, students use AI primarily to generate lists or draft messages rather than to structure and defend a repeatable prospecting process.

This session presents a 2–3 week teaching application that reframes prospecting as process ownership. In an undergraduate Fundamentals of Professional Selling course, students act as Sales Development Representatives for a fictional SaaS firm and are required to design a repeatable AI-assisted prospecting workflow. They define Ideal Customer Profiles, develop buyer personas, generate and validate real target accounts, and build a custom GPT tool that operationalizes their targeting logic. The tool must embed clear criteria and structured decision rules. It either guides users through the workflow step by step or executes structured prospect generation and qualification based on those constraints.

The project culminates in a simulated manager review conducted by a custom-built AI Sales Director avatar that questions students' assumptions, decision criteria, and replicability. Compared to prior prospecting assignments, students demonstrated greater consistency in targeting logic and stronger confidence when explaining their approach.

Attendees will receive clear implementation guidance and sample prompts using widely accessible AI tools.

WHEN TO USE TRADITIONAL VS GENERATIVE AI IN THE SALES PROCESS: A FRAMEWORK FOR SALES EDUCATION

Rodriguez, Michael, Stefanie Boyer, & Kevin Trainor

This teaching innovation introduces a classroom and experiential framework that helps sales students understand when to apply traditional artificial intelligence (AI) versus Generative AI (GenAI) across specific stages of the professional selling process. Using comparative examples and live AI demonstrations, students learn to differentiate structured-data analytical applications (e.g., forecasting, lead scoring) from creative, language-based GenAI tools (e.g., message generation, presentation tailoring). The activity prepares future sales professionals to critically evaluate and deploy emerging AI technologies to enhance productivity, personalization, and decision-making in B2B selling contexts.

SEEING SALES THROUGH THE BUYER'S EYES: META GLASSES AS AN IMMERSIVE TOOL FOR NONVERBAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT

Schetzle, Stacey, & Louis Zmich

This teaching application introduces Meta Glasses as an immersive tool to improve sales students' nonverbal communication, self-awareness, and confidence when training in the classroom. Research shows that recorded role plays and sales competitions enhance selling skills and interest in sales careers (Johnson et al., 2021). Meta Grasses captured role-plays from the buyer's point of view rather than using a fixed camera. Students completed a brief pre–post self-assessment, performed an elevator pitch while being recorded through the Meta Glasses, and then reviewed the footage using guided reflection prompts. Preliminary data from an introductory selling course indicate that students become more realistic and behaviorally specific in evaluating their body movement and perceived trustworthiness after watching their recordings. This application is designed as a supplement to current role-play technology and can serve as an extra tool to showcase non-verbal behaviors more naturally in coaching sessions with students.

LEADING THROUGH QUESTIONS: A SALES MANAGEMENT TEACHING APPLICATION USING GOLEMAN'S LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Talbert, George

This teaching application presents a simulation-based sales management assignment designed to help students develop adaptive leadership judgment through inquiry rather than instruction. Grounded in Goleman's Emotional Intelligence leadership framework, the assignment positions students as sales managers navigating ambiguous, real-world people management scenarios. Rather than seeking correct answers, students defend leadership decisions using theory, evidence, and contextual reasoning. The activity can be deployed as a single high-impact class session or as a multi-week thematic module within a Sales Management course. The approach strengthens students' tolerance for ambiguity, executive presence, and coaching mindset while maintaining rigor and relevance for sales educators.