# The Utilization of Scripts in Business-to-Business Selling: an Assessment

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During past decades, scripts have received considerable attention in the sales literature. Much of this attention was expressed in positive tones–encouraging script usage. At present, however, the coverage is modest, possibly suggesting that scripts are no longer perceived to be of great significance. The authors propose that they are still very relevant and in some cases essential for B-to-B sales success.. This paper provides a rationale for scripts in the personal selling function and furnishes a discussion of script use, as an aid to Business-to-Business sales representative productivity. The paper indicates how scripts can be of value in selecting training and supervision coverage and generating individual scripts. Further it discusses the processes of devising and validating scripts and illustrates these processes through an example.

## INTRODUCTION

Scripts are not new to the personal selling field– they have been used in the United States and many other nations for numerous decades (Lee & Kathryn, 1998). Specifically, behavioral scripts –written sequences of sales representative expected behaviors–have been commonplace and were once frequently mentioned in the academic and professional personal selling literature. This extensive coverage suggests that scripts were once considered by those in the sales field to be highly valuable. In turn, this is reinforced by the fact that the bulk of the coverage of this sales tool uncovered by the authors is positive in nature.

In order to provide an overall gauge of perceptions on the significance of scripts in the literature, the authors conducted a brief telephone survey of contributors to that literature. Twenty marketing professors who had published at least one B-to-B personal selling article ten years or longer before the date of the study and one or more articles within six months of the date of the study were queried. They were asked: "Based upon your reading of the B-to-B personal selling literature, to what extent, more or less, are scripts studied through research reported in the literature, compared to ten years ago? Please provide your answer in estimated percentages in some multiple of ten. You might indicate, for example, that scripts are the focus of study in ten percent more articles than they were ten years ago. Or you could say ten percent or some other figure less. The percentages of change appear in Table One. It is clear that the respondents feel that scripts have been granted a reduced degree of emphasis.

In addition, a review of the overall, consumer goods, and B-to-B sales literature by the authors uncovered only sparse coverage or even mention of this treatment/device during recent years. Is this condition desirable for those who operate within the selling field? Is an important tool falling victim to neglect? Perhaps it is relevant to ask "Are scripts still perceived to be useful to practitioners and academics?" "If they are useful, how should they be employed?" "Should researchers direct more of their efforts to scripts, in order to improve their contributions?" This paper attempts to provide some insights into these issues through a discussion of the value and an examination of the potential and actual uses, applications, and development of scripts.

| Table 1: Increase or Decrease in Script Treatment Articles, Past to Present | |
|---|---|
| **Percent Change** | **Frequency** |
| Decrease 50% or More | 8 |
| Decrease 40% | 4 |
| Decrease 30% | 5 |
| Decrease 20% | 1 |
| Decrease 10% | 2 |
| No Change | 0 |
| Increase 10% | 0 |
| Increase 20% | 0 |
| Increase 30% | 0 |
| Increase 40% | 0 |
| Increase 50% or more | 0 |
| Total | 20 |

## DESCRIPTION OF SCRIPTS

Scripts are learned routines developed for specific situations (Pitt, 1998). They are stored memories about the behavior that is appropriate for reaching certain objectives (Mitchell, 1996). Essentially scripts consist of one's own expected behavior and the behavior of others in a particular situation. While there is not a considerable body of current research that focuses upon the use of scripts in sales training, the contemporary research gives indirect support for script applications, because they have been employed in a variety of fields, such as education, medicine, and biology (Lyons, 2006).

All individuals learn scripts for guiding their conduct. A consumer, for instance, is likely to employ a script for shopping at the supermarket. This may include attempting to park as near the entrance as possible and then locking the car doors. Following this, the consumer may enter the store, select a cart, proceed to the produce section, select preferred fruits and vegetables– and the script goes on. The consumer pursues a pattern of thought and activity whenever the task is performed, based upon past learning about attaining sought-after goals. The task in the example above is simply to acquire desired groceries. Most scripts that are brought into play in business are much more complex and comprehensive.

Likewise, B-to-B sales representatives can utilize scripts to accomplish their objectives. One script may be employed to handle customer complaints and another to demonstrate a new product. Others can be used for tasks such as prospecting, pricing merchandise, and closing sales. There are different scripts, then, for different situations and categories of prospects. And, since individual customers are more often the source of much of the B-to-B sales rep's revenues, there is considerable justification for designing scripts that are individualized for each customer or prospect.

## RATIONALE FOR UTILIZING SCRIPTS IN TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

Experienced and talented B-to-B sales representatives develop a stockpile of knowledge, based upon their past achievements and failures. Research has shown that much of this knowledge is generic–it can be applied to various different situations and it can be utilized by more than one employee (Brett & Okumura, 1998). It appears logical, then, that inexperienced and unsuccessful employees could benefit from learning and then applying what experienced high-performers have assimilated. The scripts which are relevant in this context are termed "expert based" scripts. Later sections of this paper focus on a different variety–termed "personal" scripts.

B-to-B managers can ask their more successful employees for descriptions of the scripts that they might employ in particular situations, such as closing sales. In turn, the written scripts can be studied and organized into meaningful categories. These categories represent methods, strategies, and tactics that have been effective. Logically, these are methods, strategies, and tactics that could be covered in training programs aimed at new recruits and established employees who need training to better their performance. They also can be covered by sales managers in the process of supervising sales representatives.

There are several advantages open to B-to-B sales managers who employ scripts in generating sales training and supervision programs (Mitchell, Smith, Seawright, & Morse, 2000). One is that the topics relate to what successful employees do (Mahajan, 2005)–they are founded on what really occurs when objectives are achieved. Scripts provide specific details on the activities which accomplished individuals employ to reach their goals, such as developing new products (Lyons, 2008; Lee, Lau, & Yu, 2005). The scripts are based upon facts, not abstract theories or subjective judgment. In addition, scripts can provide insights into successful employee emotions, as well as factual knowledge (Kahler, Klontz, & Klintz, 2007

Certainly, scripts are not unique to the sales field. Rather, they can be valuable for a variety of applications. Teachers, for instance, can employ learning scripts to facilitate collaboration with other teachers in integrating new pedagogical methods into their work (Hamalainen & Hakkinen, 2010).Artists can learn how to adopt new approaches and experiences to their own practices through scripts specifically designed for such learning (Jaffe, 2009). In biology, scripts

are employed to assist beginners in producing molecular modeling algorithms in an effective manner (Chaudhury Lyskov, & Gray, 2010). In the science field, scripts supply graphical means for creating models and thus to eliminate problems typical for modeling in a textual manner (Balicki & Szpyrka, 2010). Play writing scripts are sometimes formed, based on the works of successful writers and used to develop new plays and writers (Lane, 2010). For doctors, scripts furnish mental imagery to rehearse a surgical task symbolically, before actual performance (Arora, et al., 2010).

Previous years have witnessed considerable use of scripts in sales training and supervision programs. Leigh & McGraw (1989), for example, probed into passing the procedural knowledge of industrial sales personnel to trainees. Also, Troy (1998) has covered the use of scripts to promote sales of writing instruments to executives. Stern (1997) has probed into applications of telephone scripts. In turn, Brown & Brucker (1987) have examined script usage in generating sales leads. James (1999) has considered the employment of scripts in selling to drug stores. Further, Shepherd & Rentz (1990) have reported upon a technique for assessing the cognitive processes and knowledge structures of expert sales representatives, so that these insights can be shared with other salespersons. Ainscough & DeCarlo (1996) describe a methodology using behavioral rules ofmultiple expert sales representatives to develop a flexible and systematic sales expert system for use in scripts. However, the recent literature is relatively silent on scripts. Hence, this paper examines the modern day value of these devices for sales training and guidance.

## THE EMPLOYMENT OF SCRIPTS IN TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

The script creation process is firmly grounded in motivation theory that describes why and how the process is attractive to employees who have a need to improve their performance. (Lyons, 2006). Scripts have been characterized as a source of action for acquiring legitimacy and creating organizational identity and hence are very desirable to B-to-B sales representatives (Driori, Honig, & Sheaffer, 2009). Some companies that use scripts have benefitted from employee motivation research that emanates from psychologists (Rosa & Porac, 2002). This technique is based upon the premise that managers and employees can and want to learn through experience (MITRE, 2000). The scripts are generally developed from the encounters of expert employees (Burns & Light, 2007; Mitchell, 1996), and thus have established credibility Interestingly, various firms have found that this technique is especially useful when the company is going through periods of evolutionary or even radical change (Pitt, 1998).

Scripts have demonstrated potential for enhancing the effectiveness of training and supervision programs in a variety of areas. They have been productive for those who are preparing for increasing promotion productivity (Webster & Sundaram, 2009). In addition, use has been made of them in instructing individuals for entrepreneurship careers (Smith, Robert, & Mitchell, 2009). There are cases where scripts have provided effective improvement in writing skills (Conn, 2008; Sheldon & Willett, 2008). Also, this technique has been employed for learning negotiation skills with labor unions (Brett & Okumura, 1998).

Another application is training and supervision in creating new ventures. (Mitchell, Smith,

Seawright, & Morse, 2000). Further, they have been used for instruction in handling company crises, where incidents of success and failure can have a strong impact on company viability (Brown, 1997).In addition , they have focused on preparation for interaction with customers (Parker & Ward, 2000). A related training adaptation is for creating and implementing methods and procedures to be utilized by marketing personnel (Friedman, 1998). In terms of more specific applications, script training has been brought into play for instructing auditors (Choo, 1996), realtors (Halpern, 1996), and business researchers (Goodwin & Ziegler, 1998). In some cases, the scripts have been utilized in online applications (Bailin & Pena, 2007).

As was mentioned earlier, in recent periods, the B-to-B sales literature has neglected an examination of the use of scripts for selecting topics in training and supervision programs. The following discussion attempts to assist in filling this void.

## DETERMINING TOPICS FOR TRAINING AND SUPERVISION PROGRAMS

B-to-B sales managers can experience difficulty in determining what topics and activities to incorporate in their training and supervision programs. Necessarily, they cannot cover every possible responsibility, task, and difficulty that exists. Rather they must restrict their efforts to topics and behaviors which they perceive to be most important for company goal achievement. The task of selecting what to cover can be demanding, as many theories and opinions on needed instruction inputs may exist.

There are a variety of sources which can be helpful in determining what to cover. Current employees, particularly those who are especially

proficient, can be asked to describe the methods and techniques which have served them best. Managers who are responsible for the performance of the trainees can suggest favored topics. Other possibilities are to make use of consultants, relevant trade publications, and academic journals. All of these sources can be of value. Perhaps none of them should be neglected. Another possibility, that of using scripts, can have considerable merit.

Two distinct steps are required in engaging this tool. These are (A) devising, and (B) validating scripts.

## Script Devising for Training and Supervision

This section deals with expert-based script development. This process is based upon study of the cognitive processes and knowledge structures of highly skilled, or expert salespeople (Shepherd & Rentz, 1990).

In devising (initially creating) scripts, a sample of successful employees is selected for analysis. If the sales force is very small, the sample might consist of only one or a few employees. The successful employee or employees are provided with a written description of a typical undertaking, such as greeting customers and learning their wants. The description should be realistic and sufficiently detailed so that it requires the employees to apply their planning skills in much the same manner as they would for an on-the-job situation.

Each successful employee is asked to list the actions, thoughts and/or behaviors that he or she would undertake in order to successfully achieve the task. These elements are to be arranged sequentially, in the order of their occurrence. The script could be for the accomplishment of a complete task, such as obtaining an order from a customer, or for just a part, such as demonstrating the product.

After each successful employee has furnished a script for the situation, the mental activities and actions listed in them are grouped together into categories. One or several judges read the scripts and develop categories into which the activities in the scripts can be assigned. One category, for instance might be "introducing yourself to the customer", while others could be "discuss the needs of the customer" and "listen to prospect descriptions of needs.".

If an employee script read "I would talk with the customer about whether he favors a low price or better product quality", for example, the script action could be allocated to the "Discuss the needs of the prospect" category. On the other hand, if the script read, "Tell the customer that I am here to help him find what he wants" it could be assigned to the category "introduce yourself to the customer."

The categories are developed by reviewing each of the scripts under study and gaining familiarity with the actions contained in them. Careful study will usually reveal similarities between the actions of different successful employees, which can be generalized into categories. The category "making small talk with customers" for instance, might include actions such as "make comments about the weather", "discuss last night's football game," and "exchange opinions about the outcome of the election."

The following process is used if more than one successful employee is studied. If there is only one employee, the process is not needed. The number of sales representatives who mentioned each category item is tabulated. For example, five employees may have mentioned an action which belongs in the "introduce yourself to the customer" category. Ten may have mentioned

actions which could be categorized as "discuss the needs of the customer". This will make it possible to judge the popularity of each category.

Those categories which are mentioned by more

than 40 percent of the employees are termed "norms". These are items that are favored by a sufficiently large percentage of the sample that they should be considered for inclusion in the

| Exhibit 1: New Prospect Hypothetical Script | |
|---|---|
| **Action** | **Percentage of Total** |
| Introduce myself to the receptionist | 64% |
| Ask the receptionist for an appointment | 71 |
| Enter the prosepect's office | 87 |
| Compliment the prospect | 11 |
| Introduce myself | 97 |
| Shake hands | 93 |
| Wait for an invitation to be seated | 17 |
| Small talk | 59 |
| Agree on what topics to consider | 35 |
| Thank the prospect for his (her) time | 9 |
| Inform the prospect on why I am here | 74 |
| Obtain information about the prospect | 79 |
| Review past sales calls on this prospect | 13 |
| Provide information on my company's strengths | 31 |
| Provide information on competitor's weaknesses | 10 |
| Discuss problems faced by the prospect | 58 |
| Obtain information on the prospect's buying procedures | 19 |
| Discuss the prospect's needs | 82 |
| Suggest possible ways of satisfying the prospect's needs | 80 |
| Suggest one or more products to satisfy the prospect's needs | 91 |
| Provide information on company service policies | 63 |
| Give the prospect literature on the company | 39 |
| Ask for a second appointment with the prospect | 20 |
| Thank the prospect for the time given | 63 |
| Shake Hands | 93 |
| Greet the receptionist on the way out | 37 |

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training and supervision program.

Exhibit One sets forth a hypothetical script for sales representatives who are calling on new prospects. It lists actions mentioned by successful sales representatives and the percentage of the sales representatives who mentioned the actions falling into each category. Those percentages which are larger than 40 percent are included as norms.

Sometimes it is beneficial to determine the sequence of the actions that superior employees utilize (Mueller & Carter, 2005). If one action is performed at an earlier time than another, this may increase the probability of successful performance. On the other hand, it may be that the order of the actions is not important. If this is the case, the manager may choose not to arrange the sequence.

In turn, sequencing can be accomplished by examining the script of each individual employee and ranking each action in the script according to the order in which it appears. For instance, one employee may have listed "introduce myself to the receptionist" as the first action to be taken. This would receive a rank of one. This process would be undertaken for each action on each employee's script.

The average rank for each action is determined by adding up the ranks for all of the employees who mentioned that action and dividing by the number of employees. If, for instance, three sales representatives ranked "introduce myself to the receptionist" as the first action to be performed and three others ranked it as the third action to be performed, the average rank would be two. This would indicate that, for the group at large, "introduce myself to the receptionist" tends to be the second action in attempting to make a sale.

At this point, the manager who is doing the training has insights into what norms are most important and could be stressed in the training. Also, the manager may have done the sequencing and is aware of the best sequence of actions. The next step that can be taken is to validate the scripts.

## VALIDATING SCRIPTS

B-to-B managers may decide to validate the scripts, as a means of acquiring evidence that the scripts will in fact prove to be accurate guides to success in selling. This is not always necessary, however. Managers who feel that the scripts already provide an accurate reading of the actions needed for successful performance may decide that validation is not necessary. On the other hand, some managers prefer validation, so that they have more confidence in the scripts.

The process of validating scripts consists of appraising them to see if they hold true for a second group of superior employees. The second group is selected and is presented with a questionnaire. It provides the same description of the typical task (in the example making an initial call on a new prospect) as was given to members of the first group. The questionnaire merely lists the actions which the first group produced. It does not list the percentages set forth in Exhibit One.

Each member of the second group of employees is given a description of the task and asked to rate the actions on a scale running from one ("I would definitely not use this action") to seven ("I would definitely use this action"). Exhibit Two provides a sample questionnaire.

The scale values for each action are then added and divided by the number of employees who evaluated that action. The resulting figure represents the average for those employees who

| **Exhibit 2: Questionnaire for Script Validation** | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Directions:** The purpose of this questionnaire is to measure the extent to which you would use each of the following actions in calling on the new prospect described in your written description. The Ratings run from 1 to 7. A rating of "1" would indicate that you definitely would not use this action. A rating of "7" would indicate that you definitely would use this action. A rating of "4" (the mid-point) would indicate that you are indifferent. All of the remaining scales have corresponding weights. For example, if there is a good chance that you would use an action, you would mark the "6" scale and if there is a slightly better than average chance that you would use the action, mark the "5" scale. If there is a good chance that you would not use an action, you would mark the "2" scale and if there is a slightly better than average chance that you would not use the action, mark the "3" scale. | | |
| Action | Definitely would NOT use | Definitely would use |
| Introduce myself to the receptionist | | |
| Ask the receptionist for an appointment | | |
| Enter the prospect's office | | |
| Compliment the prospect | | |
| Introduce myself | | |
| Wait for an invitation to be seated | | |
| Small talk | | |
| Agree on what topics to consider | | |
| Thank the prospect for his (her) time | | |
| Inform the prospect on why I am here | | |
| Obtain information about the prospect | | |
| Review past sales calls on the prospect | | |
| Provide information on my company's strengths | | |
| Provide information on competitor's weaknesses | | |
| Discuss problems faced by the prospect | | |
| Obtain information on the prospect's buying procedures | | |
| Discuss the prospect's needs | | |
| Suggest possible ways of satisfying the prospect's needs | | |
| Suggest one or more products to satisfy the prospect's needs | | |
| Provide information on company service policies | | |
| Give the prospect literature on the compamy | | |
| Ask for a second appointment with the prospect | | |
| Thank the prospect for the time given | | |
| Shake hands | | |
| Greet the receptionist on the way out | | |

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did the validation. The higher the score the more likely that the employees taken as a group, believe that the action should be included in the task (the sales call in the example).

Those actions which both (A) possessed a frequency of forty percent or higher when the scripts were initially devised and (B) produced an average score of "5" or higher in the script validation study are called "validated norms". These are actions which were rated highly in both studies and therefore should receive emphasis in the training and supervision program.

The B-to-B manager may wish to validate the sequence (ordering in time of performance) uncovered in the first study. This, however, can be time-consuming and the manager may elect to simply employ the sequence employed in the first study.

If the manager does wish to validate the sequence, it is necessary to ask each employee in the second study to duplicate what was done for sequencing in the first study. The initial step is for each representative to arrange the actions under review in rank order of their sequence. The average rank is then computed by totaling the individual rank values and dividing by the number of sales representatives. The result is an average sequential rank. These can be compared with those of the first study. If the ranks are very similar, there is strong evidence that the sequence suggested in the first study is valid and should be followed. On the other hand, if the ranks differ substantially, caution is urged in employing the first study suggested sequence.

The example used in this article employed a script for making an initial call upon a new prospect. However, scripts can be employed for virtually every job and every task, including

preparing sales forecasts, prospecting, computer applications, overcoming objections, and closing sales. The process of devising and validating scripts described herein is essentially the same for all types of positions and tasks.

## DEVELOPING SCRIPTS–PERSONAL AND EXPERT BASED METHODS

Essentially, two methods, the personal and expert based, can be used to generate sales scripts. The discussion to this point has been on expert based methods used to determine content for sales training and supervision programs. Conversely, personal based scripts are founded upon past experiences of individual salespersons and are intended for their own personal use. In this case, individual sales representatives review their past experiences and seek any new knowledge that might benefit their sales presentations. Then they develop sales presentation models or configurations which can serve to guide the development of sales presentations for individual prospects. Most of the suggestions regarding their use come from recalled memories and written accounts of successful experiences–the clinical approach–rather than from structured research projects.

The suggestions which appear in the discussion below were derived from such clinical experiences, so readers are well-advised to consider adopting those which appear to be appropriate for them and rejecting the others.

## OVERVIEW OF EFFECTS

Sales presentations which are based upon scripts have certain strengths and weaknesses. Ordinarily, care should be taken not to view the script as a vehicle for the use of a memorized presentation. In turn, memorized presentations have disadvantages, as follows (Futrell, 2002):

**Weaknesses of the Memorized Presentation:**

1. It presents features, advantages, and benefits that may not be important to the buyer.

2. It allows for little prospect participation

3. It is impractical to use when selling technical products that require prospect input and discussion.

4. It proceeds quickly through the sales presentation to the close, which may require multiple closes.

5. This method offers no opportunity for the salesperson to tailor the presentation to the needs of the specific customer (Weitz, Castleberry & Tanner, 1998).

On the other hand, scripts do share some advantages that are also advantages of memorized presentations, as follows:

**Strengths of the memorized presentation**

1. It ensures that the salesperson gives a well-planned presentation and that the same information is discussed by all of the company's salespeople.

2. It both aids and lends confidence to the inexperienced salesperson

3. It is effective when selling time is short, as in door-to-door or telephone selling

4. It is effective when the product is nontechnical, such as books, cooking utensils, and cosmetics.

5. This presentation type brings new salespeople up to speed quickly and gives them confidence (Weitz, Castleberry, & Tanner, (1998).

6. The method provides suggestions as to how to answer objectives and close the sale (Lill & Lill, 2008).

In general, the use of a script does not require a memorized presentation. Scripted presentations do not necessarily share the shortcomings listed above that are associated with memorized presentations, but do share some of the same advantages.

In order to be effective, scripts should not be restricted to verbal communication. In addition, they can include listening and body language behavior. These may be equally or more important than verbal communication.

As for, personal based scripts, these ordinarily are not canned presentations that are read verbatim to a prospect. In fact, salespeople who utilize prepackaged materials are often not effective. The development process involves first reflecting on past experiences in search of specific words or phrases that are very powerful in educating, persuading, and convincing prospects (Karasik, 2003). Salespeople can keep logs of successful behaviors that can be repeated in the future. From sources such as these, the sales representative can create modules that can be personalized and organized flexibly to provide a blueprint that provides a structure for the selling process from beginning to end, as needed. Well-rehearsed lines can be produced that address questions that may arise. The goal is to set the stage for a sales call that is personalized for each prospect. Script procedures should be varied to meet the characteristics of individual target customers, in order to permit consultative selling.

It is a misconception that scripts are unnatural and kill spontaneity. Scripts sound natural when they are carefully prepared and rehearsed. Scripts can allow sales representatives to concentrate on their most important subject – prospects - and create modules that can work as openings, discussion points, and closings, and

then practice interchanging them, using colorful words and mental images that match the personality and style of the sales representative and the prospect (Karasik, 2003).

It is generally agreed that personal scripts do not require mimicking word-for-word messages, but need only consist of written dialogues or checklists of points and counterpoints to use while conversing with customers. "Without such scripts we can waste huge amounts of time repeating ourselves, rambling and ad-libbing–losing business along the way–Scripts can build trust with customers, clear a way to mystique of buying, and position the sales representative as a trustworthy and competent advisor" (Miller, 1999). It is recommended that scripts be adapted to one's own personality and style and that superlatives such as "phenomenal," "dynamite," and "fantastic" be avoided (Miller, 1999).

Another source suggests the following points to consider for generating a sales script (Comaford-Lynch, 2008).

- Start with your first, last, and company name and what you are selling.

- Continue with two compelling features of what you are selling

- Finish with a request for commitment by asking: Is this something you want?

The script should be 45 words or less and take about 30 seconds to enunciate. If the prospect does not answer your question, they were probably not listening, so repeat it. Practice your offer with a 14 year old. If he or she understands it, it's likely clear and concise enough.

McGall (2004) offers another set of guidelines for a personal script:

- Don't be too rigid–Make the script sound natural, not contrived and memorized.

- Get to the point-You have 20 seconds to reduce tension and create interest.

- Know the script cold to prevent fumbling from point to point. Practice reading it aloud.

- Research prospects in advance to avoid posing irrelevant questions.

- Skip trite language–substitute "Can you spare a minute?" for "How are you today?"

- Look for business beyond the call-build relationships rather than always looking for a sale.

- Encourage the prospect to talk–the sales call is a dialogue not a monologue.

## DISCUSSION

This paper has been concerned with the employment of scripts by B-to-B managers, as a means of selecting sales topics for training and supervision programs and for developing personal scripts by individual sales representatives for their own use. This paper has presented citation and logical support for the contention that scripts have potential for B-to-B sales managers and sales representatives, but their coverage in the literature has declined substantially.

The script creation process and supporting information give practitioners a considered view of some useful training and supervision applications and generally add to the toolbox of trainers and managers (Lyons, 2006).This being the case, researchers in the selling field are well-advised to consider scripts in their research and writing endeavors. Sales managers, trainees, and sales representatives would also be well advised

to consider scripts as important tools. The discussion above has embraced a generalized methodology for selecting relevant training and supervision topics and the application of scripts in this process. In turn, scripts were described and illustrated and a process for devising and validating these tools was set forth through an example.

Further, suggestions for personal script development were set forth. It is recommended that sales managers and sales representatives consider the utilization of this tool, as a means of enhancing sales productivity.

The training and supervision example used in this article employed a script for making an initial call upon a new prospect. However, scripts can be employed for virtually every job and every task, including preparing sales forecasts, operating machinery, computer applications, evaluating customer credit-worthiness, and company accounting procedures. The process of devising and validating scripts described herein is essentially the same for all types of positions and tasks.

The utilization of scripts as a means of selecting topics for B-to-B training and supervision programs appears to have considerable potential. Managers are well-advised to consider the use of this technique, as a means of enhancing employee performance.

The discussion also highlighted the use of personal scripts for the use of individual sales representatives. These individuals can employ these for their own use. In turn, sales managers can encourage the development and use of such scripts by their sales force members. It appears that these tools. have proven to be of value to a number of firms.

Overall, the discussion has made a case for the consideration of script use in B-to-B firms. The literature has been infrequent on this topic during recent periods, but the techniques appear to possess lasting merit. Continued research and writing in this area are recommended.

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