Understanding the Impact of Quota Participation and Difficulty on Sales Performance

By Roberta J. Schultz, Charles H. Schwepker, Jr., and David J. Good

Few aspects of sales quotas have been studied despite their major driving force in motivating and directing sales performance to maximize sales outcomes. This paper examines how quota participation and perceived quota difficulty affect outcome sales performance. Data were collected from 279 business-to-business sales professionals. The findings indicate that quota participation reduces perceived quota difficulty. Participation in quota setting leads to higher outcome sales performance. Importantly, perceived quota difficulty leads to higher sales performance which is contrary to previous research findings that indicated a perceived difficult quota might lead to concerns about achieving a quota and thus lower performance (Schwepker and Good 2012). Implications are proposed as to how these findings may be implemented by sales managers.

INTRODUCTION

From a practical perspective, sales quotas represent the individual and group objectives of the salesforce designed to ensure organizational survival. While other issues are often linked with sales quotas (compensation, employment practices, etc.), the fundamental purpose of sales quotas is to provide a critical directional and volume tool on which the entire organization relies. As a result, the importance of sales quotas, including how they are utilized, developed, managed, and implemented has enormous impact both within and outside the marketing organization. The depth of this importance is evident in academic research, where sales quotas have been identified as important antecedents of salespeople's work attitude, motivation, and performance (Oliver and Anderson, 1994), and as a result, have become critical factors in salesforce management research (Chonko et al., 2000; Fu, Richards, Hughes, and Jones 2010; Schwepker and Good, 2012; Zoltners et al. 2008).

Despite the importance of quotas, Williams and Plouffe (2007) discovered quotas to be among the least researched topics in a 20-year period (1983–2002), and Mantrala et al. (2010) recently identified sales quotas as an opportunity for impactful theoretical and empirical research. The consensus seems to be that managers continue to need a greater understanding of the impact of quotas to be able to compensate and direct (Incentive Insights 2010), as well as motivate their salesforce to improve performance (cf. Johnston and Marshall 2008). With proper quota oversight, management can address the important task of assigning and defining sales individual, team, and organizational targets that create the expectations required for obtaining sales achievement (Dunne 2010), and overall financial stability.

Quota research remains significantly underrepresented in the literature, at both the organizational level (e.g., role of assigning different quotas to salespeople), and individual domain (e.g., the degree to which a salesperson's perception impacts sales quotas). For this reason, this paper addresses one of these important issues by empirically examining aspects of the individual salesperson's actions and beliefs relating to quota on sales performance. Essentially, the question

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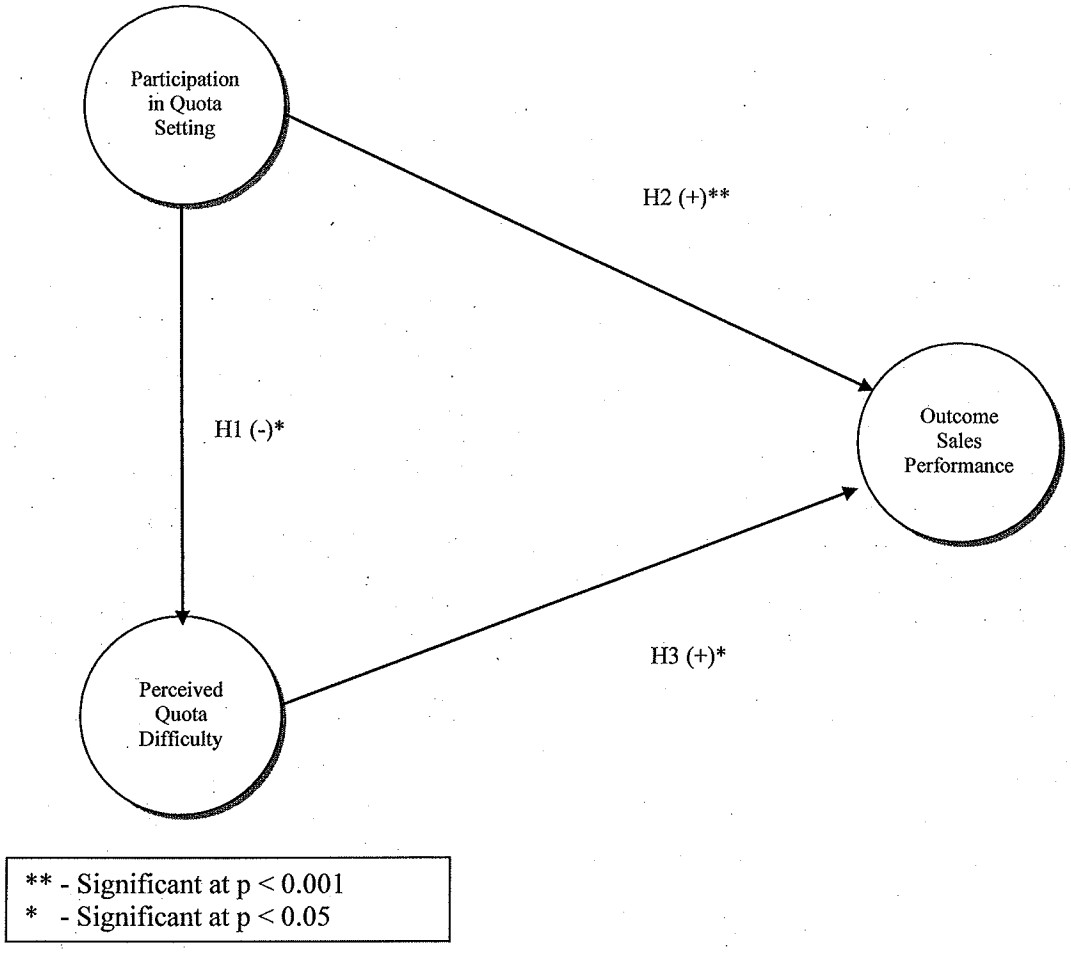
to be answered in this paper concerns how a key outcome control, in the form of quotas, impacts salespeople's performance. The findings have the opportunity to provide significant practical and research insights because while sales quotas remain the driving force in many sales organizations, their relationship to sales outcomes remains unclear. Additionally, a better understanding of quotas will contribute to goal-setting theory (Locke and Latham 1990) by explaining how sales goals impact sales performance, including a re-examination of connections between quota difficulty and outcome performance (Schwepker and Good 2012). Practically speaking, knowledge of how to improve salesperson perceptions of quotas and performance would be managerially beneficial in today's climate. This research investigates these relationships as outlined in the model in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Hypothesized Relationships Among Study Variables



The support from the literature for the proposed hypotheses is presented in the next section. This is followed by an explanation of the research method and results. The managerial and theoretical implications are then provided, before concluding with the study limitations and directions for future research.

RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Participation in Quota Setting and Perceived Quota Difficulty

Quotas are quantitative sales goals assigned to salespeople for a given time period; they can be specified in terms of sales volume or value, profit, expenses, or activities. Sales quotas are also used to specify performance targets and standards, communicate change of direction, and motivate the salesforce (Management Control Systems 2012). While actual goal setting techniques often vary by industry, it seems logical that shared goal setting (using a combination of bottom-up and top-down input) can be an effective process since the two parties are sharing in the goal development. In contrast, top down quota setting tends to demonstrate a lack of cooperation with the salesforce, and the degree to which sellers "buy into" accepting goals can be a major limitation to objective accomplishment. Being able to offer input and participate in quota development seemingly is more likely to encourage salespeople to follow the rules and expected behaviors of the company, and in turn, generate greater results. Still, since quotas are tied to compensation, there is a "self-serving" incentive for salespeople to select goals that are manageable and/or attainable to increase opportunities. Thus, providing self protecting input allows sellers to believe quotas are less difficult to obtain in an environment where sales managers are responsible for gaining salespeople's acceptance while closing the gap with desired company performance levels (Meisenheimer 2011).

There are conflicting findings in past studies as to how objectives are viewed. In one study (Latham, Mitchell and Dossett 1978), 76 engineers/scientists (not involved in sales) either participated in the setting of, or were assigned, specific behavioral goals. Participative goal setting resulted in more difficult goals being set than was the case when the goals were assigned. Perceptions of goal difficulty, however, were not significantly different in goal-setting conditions (Latham, Mitchell and Dossett 1978). Other research suggests that when individuals are allowed to set their own performance goals they tend to set more difficult targets in an attempt to signal competence (Ferris and Porac 1984; Frink and Ferris 1998; Huber et al. 1989). For example, students self-set more difficult goals for a video game task when observed by a professor compared to when no one was present (Ferris and Porac, 1984). Similarly, students who were told they would have to justify their goal choice to a team leader (i.e., be held accountable) selected significantly more difficult goals than students not held accountable (Frink and Ferris, 1998). However, as a limitation Webb, Jeffrey and Schulz (2010) note that in the Ferris and Porac (1984) and Frink and Ferris (1998) studies, no penalty/consequences for failure to achieve goals were present.

A positive association has been found between goal difficulty and performance (Webb, Jeffrey and Schulz, 2010). Employees who intend to engage in impression management select easier goals. This result is potentially problematic given that setting less challenging goals leads to lower performance. Thus, a desire to manage impressions by demonstrating competence through goal attainment may result in lower firm performance when employees can select their performance goals or influence the difficulty (Webb, Jeffrey and Schulz, 2010). As a result, a review of the literature supports the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a negative relationship between participation in quota setting and perceived quota difficulty.

Participation in Quota Setting and Outcome Sales Performance

Salesperson performance plays a critical role in the effectiveness of a sales organization, and is therefore of concern to sales managers (Cravens et al. 1993). The outcome-based sales control perspective focuses on objective measures of results. Outcome-based performance measures are designed for controlling and evaluating salespeople in a setting where the individual is held accountable for results (Anderson and Oliver 1987). The current study focuses on "outcome sales performance" comprised of seven important business-to-business aspects: 1) Contribution to company's market share, 2) Selling high profit margin products, 3) Generating a high level of dollar sales, 4) Quickly generating sales of new company products, 5) Identifying and cultivating major accounts, 6) Exceeding sales targets, and 7) Assisting supervising manager in meeting his or her goals.

As an outcome-based control measure, the sales quota directs selling behaviors. Importantly, however, it is not known the extent to which salespeople's participation in quota setting affects performance. Researchers have been interested in the factors that affect the difficulty of goals resulting from a participative goal-setting process (Locke and Latham 2002). In particular, accounting researchers have examined the positive and negative consequences of allowing employees to actively participate in setting their own performance goals (e.g., Dunk and Nouri 1998; Young 1985), and how best to structure incentive contracts to motivate employees to set (or accept) challenging goals (e.g., Chow et al. 1994). Webb, Jeffrey and Schulz (2010) examined factors that influence the difficulty of individuals' self-set goals and the consequences this has for performance.

Performance data collected six months after setting goals on 132 engineers/scientists revealed main effects for goal setting (Latham, Mitchell and Dossett, 1978). Only participative goal setting led to significantly higher performance than a "do your best" and a control group condition. While research in sales has not explicitly explored this relationship, it appears to be both important, and related to how many organizations share input (upwards and downwards) on objectives. As a result, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H2: There is a positive relationship between participation in quota setting and outcome sales performance.

Perceived Quota Difficulty and Outcome Sales Performance

There is an extensive literature in psychology (Locke and Latham 1990) on the use of performance goals as a motivational tool. One of the most robust findings of goal setting research is the positive association between goal difficulty and performance (Hirst and Lowy 1990; Lee et al. 1997). According to goal theory, the positive performance effects of goals are attributable to higher effort, persistence, and greater focus on the task characteristics that lead to success (Locke 1991, 2001; Locke and Latham 1990). Goals or quotas are expected to influence performance either by motivating employees to emphasize tactics or strategies most likely to lead to success or to exert more effort (e.g., be more persuasive or persistent). Also, because rewards are contingent upon goal attainment, employees have an incentive to perform at least to the level of their quota.

Some research finds a positive relationship between outcome control and salespeople's outcome performance (Cravens et al. 1993; Evans et al. 2007). Challenging quotas may presumably instruct salespeople to increase their effort (Evans et al. 2007). Challenging goals have been found to lead to greater performance than "do your best goals" (Locke 1968; Latham and Lee 1986). Sales jobs are more complex than the specific tasks performed in these studies. They require greater information processing to complete than simple tasks (Fiske and Maddi 1961; Gardner 1982). Webb, Jeffrey and Schulz (2010) suggest that having consequences are important in assessing the relationship between goals and outcomes. In a study of call centers of a financial services company, they found goal difficulty is positively associated with current period performance (Webb, Jeffrey and Schulz 2010).

Selling is a complex profession, in which rewards are typically in some context *individually* assigned and/or recognized. Sales professionals who perceive difficult goals understand that their financial compensation is based on the link between achieving their quota through performance. While sales is more complex (building relationships, anticipating client needs, serving multiple influencers and buyer needs, selling products, etc.) than a production line, there are likely to be similar ties between the perception of a difficult quota goal and outcome sales performance.

One experiment's results indicate when the quota level (QL) is increased, effort increases only up to a point, after which increases in QL may actually decrease effort (Chowdhury, 1993). Information about the level of task difficulty also influences the motivation to expend effort at the task. However, a specific measure of perceived quota difficulty was not used in this research.

Despite the literature support in psychology and marketing that projects a positive relationship between quota and performance, one study of business-to-business salespeople found the opposite result (Schwepker and Good 2012). The researchers proposed plausible explanations. This study will replicate that

portion of their model to examine if the relationship from the literature holds or determine if it was an anomaly as a function of the data collection time period, sample or other reason.

H3: There is a positive relationship between perceived quota difficulty and outcome sales performance.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and Data Collection

A leading national data collection organization was employed to carry out a nationwide Internet-based survey of business-to-business sales professionals. Sales professionals in this organization's database were sent an email inviting them to participate in our survey (see Table 2 for questionnaire scale items). This invitation impelled 2,655 individuals to access our electronic survey via the Web. The first question was used to screen out respondents who are not business-to-business salespeople. As a result, 2,331 respondents were eliminated, leaving 324 respondents to continue with the survey. A final sample of 279 remained after examining the data for incomplete responses. Results from a time extrapolation test that examined early versus late respondents ($F = 0.940$, significance of $F = 0.572$) imply that nonresponse bias is not a likely problem (Armstrong and Overton 1977).

The sample includes business-to-business salespeople who are predominantly male (58%) married individuals who average 47 years of age. Respondents' average company tenure is 10 years, with a majority (41%) having been with their company for 1-5 years, 25% 6-10 years, 12% 11-15 years and the remainder 16 or more years. On average, salespeople have 19 total years of sales experience. Most respondents (48%) have an undergraduate degree, and another 10% have received a graduate degree, while 32% have at least some college. Salespeople are compensated primarily via salary (43%), commission (21%) or a combination of salary, commission and bonus (36%). The bulk of respondents (46%) work for firms selling primarily physical goods, while 23% work for those selling mainly services, and the remainder (31%) work for those selling both. These salespeople sell for manufacturing (29%), wholesaling (26%), service (42%), government (2%) and nonprofit (1%) organizations in a variety of industries.

Operationalization of Study Variables

Participation in Quota Setting (PQS) was developed by adapting a supervisory participation measure developed by Ramaswami (1996), which previously demonstrated good measurement properties, including a coefficient alpha of .85. This three item measure determines the extent to which salespeople believe they participate in determining their quota. Salespeople responded to a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree". Higher scores suggest greater participation in quota setting.

To determine *Perceived Quota Difficulty* (PQD), salespeople were asked to respond to the following question using a seven-point Likert-type statement ranging from (1) "strongly disagree" to (7) "strongly agree": I believe my assigned quota is very difficult.

The measure used to assess *Outcome Sales Performance* (OSP) determines the extent to which salespeople achieve their sales targets (Sujan, Weitz and Kumar 1994). Salespeople were asked to rate their current level of performance by evaluating how well they believe they performed in various areas relative to other salespeople in their organization at the time of their last performance review. The measure consists of seven items in which respondents answer to each using a scale ranging from (1) "much worse" to (5) "much better". Higher scores indicate greater salesperson performance. Reliability and validity previously have been demonstrated for this measure with coefficient alphas ranging from .86 to .91 (Challagalla and Shervani 1996; Pettijohn, Pettijohn and Taylor 2007; Sujan, Weitz and Kumar 1994).

Measure Assessment

Cronbach's (1951) coefficient alpha was calculated to evaluate the reliability of each scale, with each demonstrating satisfactory reliability with coefficient alpha above .70 (Nunnally 1978). Descriptive statistics, reliabilities (along the diagonal) and intercorrelations for the variables used in the study are provided in Table 1.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics, Reliabilities
and Intercorrelation Matrix of Variables in the Study

	PQS	PQD	OSP
Mean	4.00	4.30	3.72
Standard Deviation	1.67	1.66	0.72
Participation in Quota Setting	(.91)		
Perceived Quota Difficulty	-.161**	---	
Sales Outcome Performance	.266**	.103	(.91)
**significant at 0.01			
*significant at 0.05			

Convergent and discriminant validity were examined by conducting confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS 16 (Arbuckle 2007). In Table 2, the statistically significant t-values (greater than 2.0) for the parameter estimates present evidence of convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). Additionally, convergent validity is established when the proportion of variation in the indicators captured by the underlying construct is higher than the variance due to measurement error (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The values of the average variance extracted (AVE) for each construct exceed a suggested critical value of .50 (AVE = 0.586 for OSP; AVE = 0.763 for PQS) (Fornell and Larcker 1981).

Table 2
Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results: Factor Loadings and t-Values

	Factor Loading	t-Value
Participation in Quota Setting (Ramaswami 1996)		
PQS1 I have a lot of influence in determining my quota.	.810	-------[a]
PQS2 My supervising manager usually asks for my opinion when determining my quota.	.913	17.59
PQS3 It is easy to get my ideas across to my supervising manager on issues related to determining my quota	.894	17.34
Sales Outcome Performance (Sujan, Weitz and Kumar 1994)		
OP1 Contribution to your company's market share.	.777	-------
OP2 Selling high profit margin products.	.711	12.32
OP3 Generating a high level of dollar sales.	.855	15.37
OP4 Quickly generating sales of new company products.	.758	13.29
OP5 Identifying and cultivating major accounts in your territory.	.744	13.01
OP6 Exceeding sales targets.	.809	14.37
OP7 Assisting your sales supervisor in meeting his or her goals.	.694	11.98

Notes: [a]constrained to 1.0; $p < 0.001$ for each factor loading
CFI = .974 , NFI = .955, RMSEA = .068, $X^2 = 789.05$, df = 34, p = .000

Evidence for the discriminant validity of the constructs is provided in that the average variance extracted by each construct from its indicators is greater than the shared variance between the two constructs (Fornell and Larcker 1981). The shared variance between OSP and PQS is 0.077. Moreover, given that the 95 percent confidence interval for the correlation between OSP and PQS does not contain the value of 1.0 (confidence interval = -0.063 to 0.217) it can be determined that the constructs are distinct (Anderson and Gerbing 1988).

The Harman one-factor method (Podsakoff et al. 2003) was used to test for common method variance. A factor analysis using the study measures was conducted producing a three factor solution each with an eigenvalue above 1.0. A total of 73.6% of the variance is explained with factors explaining 40.7%, 23.4% and 9.5% of the variance. Using confirmatory factor analysis, the single factor test was repeated. As evidenced by the poor fit statistics for this model (X^2 = 623.7, df = 44, p = .000, CFI = .659, NFI = .645, RMSEA = .218), all the measurement items do not load on a single factor. Since one general factor did not account for a majority of the variance in either test, common method variance should not be considered a serious problem. Furthermore, similar to Griffith and Lusch (2007), a partial correlation procedure was performed by adding a marker variable to the model (i.e., a variable expected to be theoretically unrelated to the variables in the model) (Lindell and Whitney 2001). The marker variable for this analysis, education, is not significantly related to any of the other variables, once more suggesting that common method variance is not a severe concern. Finally, the research design included several aspects (anonymity; physical separation of constructs on the questionnaire; ensuring respondents that there are no right or wrong answers; using different scale formats with unambiguous scale items; and not using bipolar numerical scale values) that diminish the potential of common method variance (Podsakoff et al. 2003).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Before estimating the hypothesized model, multicollinearity was evaluated by determining the variance inflation factor (VIF) for each variable. If the VIF, the inverse of $(1 - R^2)$, is close to 1.00 then little or no multicollinearity exists (Hair et al. 2006). VIF values of 10.00 or less are considered acceptable (Hair et al. 2006). The highest VIF occurs for PQS and QD (1.03, R^2 = .03), suggesting that little multicollinearity exists among the variables.

Structural equation modeling with AMOS 16 (Arbuckle 2007) was used to test the hypotheses. Given the characteristics of the sample and model, the fit statistics provided in Table 3 suggest that the model adequately fits the data (see Hair et al. 2006 for suggested fit statistics).

Hypothesis one suggesting the more salespeople participate in setting quota, the less difficult the quota is perceived to be is confirmed (β = -.152, p < .05). As anticipated in hypothesis two, sales outcome performance is higher when salespeople participate in setting quota (β =.302, p < .01). Hypothesis three is confirmed as perceived quota difficulty is significantly positively related to outcome sales performance (β =.152, p < .05).

Table 3
Hypothesized and Final Path Models
Structural Parameter Estimates

		Hypothesized Model		
Path	Hypothesis	Coeff.	t-value	R^2
PQS→PQD	H_1 (-)	-.152	-2.45	.023
PQS→OSP	H_2 (+)	.302	4.55	.100
PQD→OSP	H_3 (+)	.152	2.48	
Goodness-of-fit Statistics:		χ^2 = 95.49		
		d.f. = 42, p = .000		
		CFI = .969		
		NFI = .946		
		RMSEA = .068		

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The first hypothesis (H1) which proposes a negative relationship between participation in setting quota and perceived quota difficulty is supported. This significance adds to previous research that acknowledges the importance of involvement and participation in setting expectations. This is a critical finding because it underscores the degree to which salespeople are involved and participate in setting their individual goals reduces the perceived difficulty of accomplishing that goal (quota).

The rationale for addressing quota assignments with salespeople before finalizing assignments (i.e., participative management) should lend itself to less internal suspicion about critical sales assignments. One of the keys to successful quota assignments is a knowledgeable sales manager. For example, when a specific territory is high performing, this information should be incorporated into individual quotas, fostering more credible and successful assignments. H1 therefore indicates managers can unite salespeople's input to the quota assignment into how they individually visualize the sales objective (e.g., is it "reachable"?).

This study found sales performance was positively tied to participation in quota setting (H2). Consistent with previous benchmark goal setting theory (Locke and Latham 1990), salespeople who participate in their own goal formulation take ownership and have a more realistic view of their ability to accomplish the necessary sales level to achieve the quota that they helped create.

The finding from H3 that perceived quota difficulty was positively related to outcome sales performance identifies the important role of attitude in sales performance. These results are consistent with previous research in goal setting work (e.g., Locke and Latham 1990) where positive linkages were found between difficult goals and performance. While this study does not determine if the quotas are in fact difficult and if there was efficacy, the perception that they are difficult is an important link to performance that provides managers insight into how seller perceptions can shape outcomes. Although previous research has suggested such a relationship may be different when influenced by difficult economic times and demanding challenging quotas (Schwepker and Good, 2012), this study underscores the basic belief of many marketers, where accepting difficult goals does not diminish willingness to achieve performance, but instead enhances performance.

SALES MANAGER IMPLICATIONS

Few aspects about quotas have been studied, which is perplexing since they are a major driving force in motivating and directing sales performance to maximize sales outcomes. Through such an understanding, sales managers and sales organizations may be better able to create processes that have a direct and positive influence on quota attainment. While there are a number of factors that might influence quota performance (competitors, education of sellers, economic climate, etc.), this study specifically focuses on two issues that can be strategically directed and managed by sales managers (i.e., the impact of salespeople's quota participation and quota difficulty on their sales performance). This section will provide very specific suggestions based on the research as to what sales managers can do in their sales unit to maximize performance.

First, the results indicate having salespeople *involved* in setting individual goals satisfies a common need to have employees "buy into" expected performance levels. Managers who ask salespeople for their input about setting their own goals (sales quotas) can expect to obtain positive results from this communication exchange. This does not suggest salespeople should set their goals, or have final authority on the level of expected performance, but as will be noted below, *the active involvement* of salespeople in setting their sales quotas does affect important outcomes and perceptions that are under the control of the sales manager.

Important to sales managers, H1 and H2 are consistent with each other, in that as noted above, the participation of salespeople in setting goals (quotas) is an important *communicative process* that managers control. This study found sales objectives are seen as less difficult (H1) and salespeople are more able to obtain sales performance (H2) when salespeople are able to participate in the setting of their own goals. From a practical perspective, setting of objectives should therefore be seen as a key participative activity between sales managers and salespeople.

Managers need to create an environment where there is a shared responsibility in goal setting as part of a standard process. How can this occur? First managers need to create opportunities in which salespeople can actually participate in goal setting. For instance, several months before annual goals are assigned, managers could meet with salespeople to discuss issues in their territory that would likely impact quota assignments and performance the next year. This might include discussions of financial changes in customers, new products, and changing customer expectations. When quotas are assigned several months later, the manager should verbally include the previously discussed details with the salesperson as part of the assignment process. This could include reasons why quotas are at a particular level, or why some issues were not included as part of the final quota assignment. The importance of participation is a controllable managerial activity with considerable impact to the sales unit's success. Similarly to athletes who are seeking to increase performance to reach difficult goals, properly directed salespeople may also strive toward new levels of excellence. A "kick off sales meeting" might be a particularly useful time to position the upcoming sales quota as a difficult challenge that only the "best" sellers can achieve.

The importance of the communication process does not minimize the role of honesty in these discussions. For instance, if sales managers have discussions with salespeople about quotas, and they present an unreasonably high expectation for goals a month later, the entry of "unreasonable expectations" can be expected to negatively impact these meetings and outcomes. For this reason, managers may need to meet multiple times with salespeople to listen, and later present anticipated expectations (while still listening). Perceived arbitrary and disconnected often top down quotas can be a formula for failure in the sales unit (Meisenheimer 2011).

Finally, this study indicates that managers should be concerned about salespeople's perceptions of quota difficulty. Communicating with salespeople about the difficulty of the goals will affect performance. Instead of just distributing the quotas, sales managers could hold discussions with each salesperson to indicate the difficulty of the goal, but to help the salesperson see that it will be tied to higher performance. Managers who include the salesperson in the quota setting process may find as in this model that early participation and perceptions lead to higher outcome sales performance.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research offers significant opportunities for future salesforce examinations, although it also has some limitations. First, the model tested is only a portion of the possible influences. Other antecedents affecting performance are possible. Variables not yet tested may also be useful to add to this type of model. Second, the survey was limited to sales professionals having access to email and the Web. However, business-to-business salespeople generally have access to both tools, and it is commonly accepted that this sector of business will expect specific goals from salespeople. Finally, while socially desirable responses are always possible, respondents were offered anonymity in an attempt to reduce them (Randall and Fernandes 1991).

In terms of future research, several directions and extensions of this work are proposed. First, it would be interesting to collect both attitudinal and objective data from company records. Not included in this model is the provision in any quota set in advance to also have a mechanism for fair adjustments (up and down) that connect the reality of the business as it plays out. It would be useful to examine longitudinal data as done by Fu, Richards and Jones (2009) to assess the effect on these constructs in light of experiences in different and sequential quota periods. Ordonez et al. (2009) cautions that more research in this area is needed as the beneficial effects of goal setting have been overstated and that systematic harm caused by goal setting may have been largely ignored.

Goal setting is one of the most influential paradigms in the management literature. Hundreds of studies conducted in numerous countries and contexts have consistently demonstrated that setting specific, challenging goals can powerfully drive behavior and boost performance. Advocates of goal setting have had a substantial impact on research, management education, and management practice. This study has supported this theory in the sales area.

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