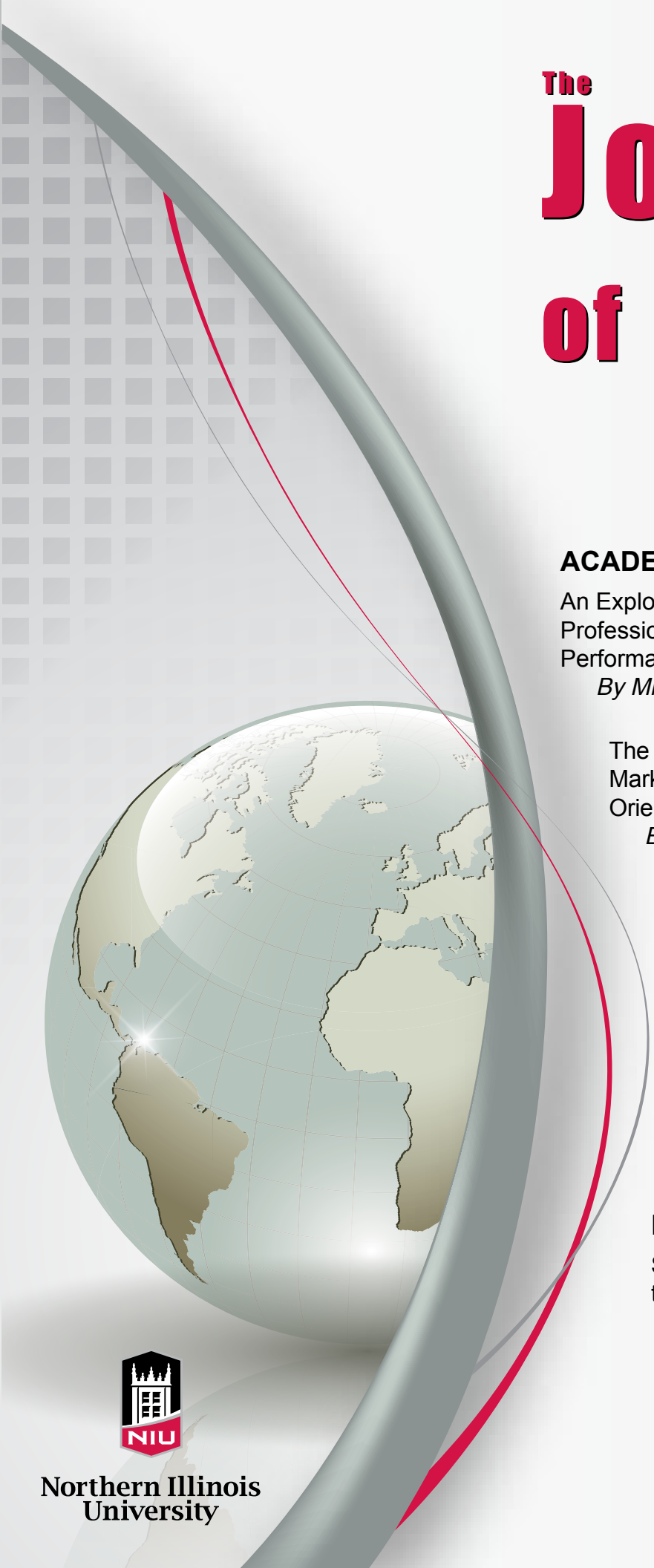


The Journal of Selling

Volume 16, Number 1

ACADEMIC ARTICLES:

APPLICATION ARTICLE:

PEDAGOGY ARTICLE:

Northern Illinois University

Department of Marketing
Northern Illinois University
ISSN 2329-7751

Contents

JS Volume 16, Number 1

Mission Statement

The objective of the journal is to foment collaboration between practitioners and academics for the advancement of application, education, and research in selling. Our audience is comprised of practitioners in industry and academics researching in sales.

 ISSN: 2329-7751

Manuscripts

1. **Articles for consideration** should be sent by email to Editor: Robert M. Peterson, Department of Marketing Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL 60115 peterson@niu.edu.
2. **Articles in excess of 6000 words** will not normally be accepted. The Editor does welcome shorter articles and case studies.
3. **A manuscript should be submitted via email** to the Editor in Microsoft Word format, with author's name(s) and title of the article. Contributors are advised to check by telephone that submissions have been received. Neither the editor nor Northern Illinois University, Department of Marketing accepts any responsibility for loss or damage of any contributions submitted for publication in the Journal.

   Biographical note - supply a short biographical note giving the author(s) full name, contact information, appointment, institutions or organization / company and recent professional attainments.

   Synopsis - an abstract of at least 100 words, but not exceeding 175 words should be included.

   Diagrams / text boxes / tables - should be submitted without shading although a copy of how the authors wishes the diagram to appear shaded may be submitted by way of illustrative example. These should be numbered consecutively and typed on separate pages at the end of the article with an indication in the text where it should appear.

   References - should be cited using the Chicago method. No footnotes should be used for references or literature citations. Wherever possible, full bibliographic details (e.g., volume number issue number or date, page numbers publisher year of publication) should be included.

   Footnotes - are seldom used and should be folded into the article text.
4. **Any article or other contribution** submitted must be the original unpublished work of the author(s) not submitted for publication elsewhere.
5. **Manuscripts should be formatted on 8 1/2" x 11" paper** with all margins of 1" and double-spaced. Font style should be Times New Roman in 12 pitch.
6. **An address for correspondence** (including Email address) should be supplied as well as a telephone and fax number at which the author(s) may be contacted.
7. **Authors undertake the responsibility** to check that the manuscript should be free of grammatical, syntax or spelling errors. The Editor reserves the right not to accept any manuscript in which excess alterations or corrections need to be made.

Permissions

Editorial and Administrative Staff

Editorial Board

From the Editor

Robert M. Peterson

Commencing with this issue of the *Journal of Selling*, we are actively accepting submissions for a new section titled "Pedagogy". Highly sought are empirical papers that help illustrate a pedagogy/training improvement when using a certain teaching idea/method/content/approach. The importance of teaching and researching in this domain is vital in order to help educators and trainers remain on the cutting edge of sales instruction.

The Pedagogy section will be the Journal's third sphere of influence. It joins the original mission of the *Journal of Selling* to publish articles that enhance best practices in the field of selling, broadly defined. This traditional rigor with relevance research domain is expected to contain managerial implications in each article. The other section of the journal comprises Application Articles: papers that are theoretically sound, but their main focus is sharing cutting edge understanding of marketplace behaviors, changes, benchmarks, etc.

In this issue, one will find three research articles with the first exploring how electronically delivered sales training impacts job performance and customer satisfaction with a sample of 248 sales professionals. The title is "An Exploratory Study of Sales Managers' and Sales Professionals' Perceptions of eLearning and Job Performance".

The next article is "The Effect of Perceptual Differences between Firm Market Orientation and Salesperson Customer Orientation on Salesperson Performance". This research centers upon the importance of assessing the perceptual congruence of firm market orientation and salesperson customer orientation.

The third article is "Writing Effective Prospecting Emails: An Instructional Guide" which outlines five key requirements for writing effective prospecting emails. The growing importance of this medium makes it vital to perfect when prospecting, or serving current clients.

The Application Section contains one manuscript outlining the "Principles and Success Factors of Effective B2B Sales Force Compensation". Many firms are challenged to devise and implement incentive programs that deliver results to all stakeholders. This paper provides guidance for both practitioners and researchers in the field of B2B selling as it regards compensation plans.

The Pedagogy Section kicks off with "Social Selling Index Score: Using LinkedIn to Build Social Selling Skills in the Classroom". While there is much written in the popular press regarding the importance of social selling, teaching and measuring outcomes are often mystic in nature. Using LinkedIn's Social Selling Index, a classroom exercise and results are shared on how to use this measure while students engage in social selling.

Carpe Diem,

Robert M. Peterson, Ph.D.
Editor, *Journal of Selling*

An Exploratory Study of Sales Managers' and Sales Professionals' Perceptions of eLearning and Job Performance

By Michael Rodriguez and Stefanie L. Boyer

This paper explores how electronically delivered sales training is expected to impact job performance and customer satisfaction, given the little data on the impact of online learning among salespeople. Data were collected from 248 business-to-business sales professionals and 66 sales managers in the automotive industry. Utilizing Partial Least Squares (PLS), this study identifies and analyzes three drivers of sales training effectiveness, as well as measures the relationship between training effectiveness and the two constructs, Job Performance and Customer Satisfaction. An examination of salesperson and sales manager perceptions are performed and implications are offered to organizations considering implementing eLearning training. Limitations and suggestions for future research are provided.

INTRODUCTION

Sales training is an important tool for organizations to both attract sales professionals and drive sales performance (Boehle, 2010). Sales performance is optimized by providing effective sales training that develops productive and successful sales professionals. The extant literature identifies training and development as key factors in achieving financial growth for sales organizations (Attia, Honeycutt, and Leach, 2005). In order to remain competitive in the marketplace, sales firms and their leaders must invest in sales training (Lassk et al, 2012) and select the most effective delivery options for that training.

With the growth of learning technologies, the delivery of sales training has transformed from traditional methods (i.e., live, face to face) to eLearning methods supported by Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) such as Webinars and online tutorials. eLearning is defined as learning that is delivered, enabled or mediated by electronic technology for the explicit purpose of training in organizations (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2009). Although there are mixed reviews of the results provided by online training, the convenience and cost savings of online alternatives are undeniable. More and more sales-focused organizations utilize online training programs in order to improve the bottom line. According to the Association for Talent Development (ATD), worldwide eLearning expenditures were estimated to total $49.9 billion in 2015 (www.td.org). Although billions are spent on eLearning annually, little research about the drivers of training and perceptions of training is available.

Utilizing the Sales Training Evaluation Model (STEM) framework (Lupton, Weiss, and Peterson, 1999) as the foundation, this paper seeks to assess eLearning sales training from the perspectives of both sales professionals and sales managers. We examine the drivers of sales training delivered online and its impact on two performance areas: Job Performance and Customer Satisfaction. Previous research efforts have focused on sales training content (Valentine, 2009), attitudes toward traditional forms of training (Pettijohn, Pettijohn, and Taylor, 2009), and sales training challenges (Lassk et al, 2012). Although little research measuring sales training's impact on performance as perceived by sales professionals and sales managers is available, understanding how eLearning tools impact today's sales professionals is important for sales organizations seeking to improve training programs. Therefore, the goals of this study are to: (1) identify drivers of eLearning sales training effectiveness; and (2) measure perceived online training's impact on job performance and customer satisfaction.

Michael Rodriguez (Ph.D., Stevens Institute of Technology), Principal, AMR Sales Consulting, Raleigh, NC, michael@amrsalescoach.com

Stefanie L. Boyer (Ph.D., University of South Florida), Associate Professor of Marketing, Bryant University, Smithfield, RI, sboyer@bryant.edu

SALES TRAINING CHALLENGES IN ELEARNING

Sales training is an important process employed to improve the competence of sales professionals. Yet organizations face challenges when it comes to investing in eLearning and understanding its impact. The first challenge is in achieving return on investment (ROI) for training. Historically, documenting the ROI of training has been daunting for sales managers (Lassk, 2012). While sales literature documents how to evaluate sales training, there is limited guidance on evaluating sales training's relationship with sales performance (Attia, Honeycutt, and Leach, 2005).

A second challenge involves the delivery options in which training should be provided. With the advent of eLearning technologies, many firms are looking at web-based learning for their sales team to provide cost savings and convenience; however, sales managers possess a less-than-complete understanding of training methods, and resources needed to measure training effectiveness are seldom available (Lupton, Weiss, and Peterson, 1999). eLearning sales training methodology typically falls under the category of self-study, which is defined as "any program of study using self-instructional approach…without direct supervision and usually working at their own pace" (Budd, 1987, p. 489). Ambient Insight, an international market research firm, describes eLearning technologies as self-paced courseware products. This includes off-the-shelf content, installed learning management platforms that can be delivered via software installed on an individual's computer or via the Internet (Adkins, 2014). Ambient Insight predicts a five-year compound annual growth rate of 7.6 percent and revenues of $51.5 billion by 2016 (Adkins, 2014). This growth, without evidence of success and clear comprehension of training methods, alarms both companies and academics, "incomplete understanding by sales managers about the relationship of different training methodologies available and the ability to measure effectiveness is problematic" (Lupton, Weiss, and Peterson, 1999, p. 74).

A third challenge is the growing shift in the sales force to a younger generation of workers (Rodriguez, Ajjan, and Honeycutt, 2014). "The Millennial Generation of salespeople is projected to become the heir apparent of top-end Baby Boomers who will retire at an increasing rate over the next five years" (Pullins et al, 2011, p. 443). In response to this situation, sales firms are increasingly looking to Millennials to replace retiring sales talent. Due to the Millennials' dependency on and affinity for technology, sales firms face a unique challenge in training a younger sales force. Since Millennials are exposed to collaborative technologies such as Web 2.0, today's new hires communicate differently from Gen X and Baby Boomer generations, and therefore, traditional methods of sales training may not be as impactful or effective. Given the shift to younger demographics is yet another reason for sales organizations to move away from traditional formal training (Lassk et al, 2012).

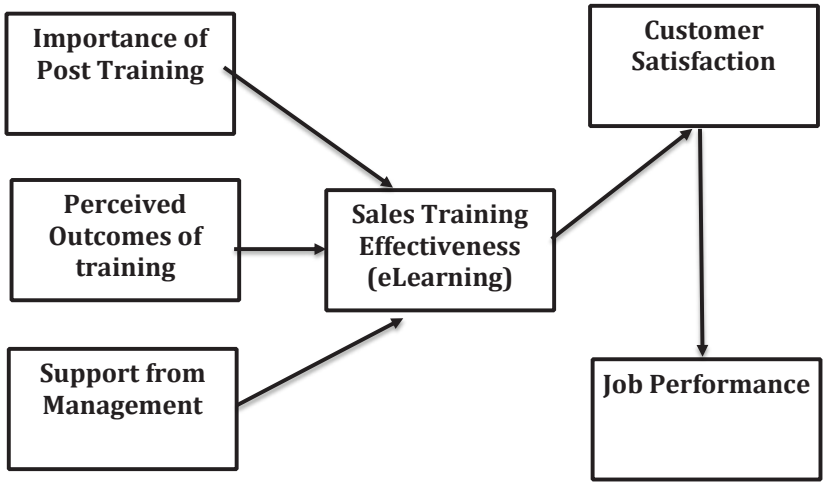
Sales Training Evaluation

The evaluation of sales training and its delivery has evolved over time. In 1959, Kirkpatrick developed a model to evaluate training programs at four levels: Reaction, Learning, Behavior and Results. Reaction is the easiest level to measure, but offers the lowest confirmation of effectiveness. Conversely, the results level is most difficult to assess but provides the greatest confirmation of sales training effectiveness (Honeycutt and Stevenson, 1989). Lupton, Weiss, and Peterson (1999) developed a sales training evaluation model (STEM) that extended Kirkpatrick's four-stage model by adding a fifth level, "other" evaluative approaches. The STEM model was improved by including the internal and external dimensions of sales training and enhancing the evaluation of sales training tools such as self-study, in the form of eLearning technologies.

Conceptual Model of eLearning Sales Training Effectiveness

Utilizing Kirkpatrick (1996) and Lupton, Weiss, and Peterson's (1999) research as a foundation, this study develops the following model (Figure 1) to identify some of the drivers of Sales Training Effectiveness and their impact on performance from an eLearning perspective.

Figure 1 - eLearning Sales Training Effectiveness – Conceptual Model



Sales Training Effectiveness of eLearning

Advancements in technology enable organizations to deliver sales training over different media. Due to rising travel costs, more sales organizations are utilizing self-directed learning approaches (Artis and Harris, 2007) by providing electronic delivery of training programs via the Internet or software-based programs. Technological innovation enables high-quality training to be distributed to sales managers and sales professionals and, as a result, saves time and lowers costs.

Sales training programs delivered through eLearning "are likely to be individualized, jointly determined, voluntary, tailored to fit mutual needs, and offered in various modes" (Cron et al, 2005, p. 124). This type of training is categorized as self-directed learning programs (SDLPs), which is "a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes" (Knowles, 1975, p. 18). eLearning technology can deliver an SDLP approach and improve sales performance, while at the same time, reduce training costs related to travel (Boyer and Lambert, 2008). A recurring challenge in sales training literature is the evaluation of training, whether in traditional or self-directed approaches. "… [T]here is clearly no one sales situation or one standard way to sell…this suggests that the generalizability of sales training effectiveness is restricted" (Lupton, Weiss, and Peterson, 1999, p. 78).

Measuring sales training is a challenge for both practitioners and researchers, and now, this challenge is compounded by utilizing eLearning methodologies, since the foundation is not well understood. "The measurement of learning surely ranks as one of the most perplexing and frustrating challenges confronting the trainer" (Currie, 1990, p. 534). Therefore, this study examines drivers of sales training effectiveness to begin to bridge the knowledge gap of sales training effectiveness. The following section discusses three antecedents that can impact sales training effectiveness: support from management, perceived outcomes, and importance of post training.

Support from Management

With any initiative, but especially training and development, it is important that management supports sales training, whether it is provided in a traditional or eLearning approach. Hunter (1999) defines support of technology initiatives as "the extent to which a firm provides support that meets salespeople's perceived need for information technology" (p. 20). Motivating sales professionals to utilize sales eLearning program media has been a critical concern for sales organizations (Santos and Stuart, 2003). Senior management's involvement, commitment, and support are crucial

to the success of eLearning sales training (Boyer, Artis, Fleming and Solomon, 2013). In innovative environments, the same is true given the positive correlation between executive management support and observed innovation behavior in organizations (Kimberly and Evanisko, 1981).

Support from management aids in providing an environment that encourages learning within the firm, (Boyer, Artis, Fleming, and Solomon, 2013). Santos and Stuart (2003) found that SDL doubled when managers encouraged their employees to train. However, investing in eLearning programs alone is not enough. Management must also provide resources to support sales professionals in their training efforts. To explain this, social exchange theory, a motivational theory, suggests that a basic form of human interaction occurs during exchanges of resources between individuals (Emerson, 1976). It posits that all relationships between individuals and supervisors are formed based upon a subjective cost-benefit analysis. If the benefits received from the relationship exceed the costs incurred, then the employee will opt to remain in the relationship.

Furthermore, the norm of reciprocity states that employees will feel obligated to repay favorable treatment (Dabos and Rousseau, 2004). That is, if a supervisor treats his or her employees well, then the employees will feel obligated to act in ways that are of value to the supervisor (i.e., meeting the supervisor's goals and objectives) and the organization as a whole (Boyer, et al., 2013). An employee may evaluate the level of support the supervisor provides through compensation and promotions, frequency and sincerity of praise and approval, and amount of job autonomy (Hutchison and Garstka, 1996) and in turn act in a way that will compensate the organization or supervisor for the amount of support provided. In this way, if employees feel supported by their managers when it comes to training, they should seek to get more out of the training and training should be more effective. It is from this logic we propose:

> *H1: There is a positive relationship between importance of support from Management and Sales Training Effectiveness.*

Importance of Post Training

The benefits of training are not realized until there is an opportunity to apply the techniques or until coaching and feedback are provided after training. Post-training resources can include follow-up meetings with managers, support from colleagues, or an evaluation process that assesses the skills in practice. Feedback from managers is important in helping employees apply skills learned during training and future development (Santos and Stuart 2003). Post-training support comes in the form of sales management feedback and coaching. "Sales coaching has long been cited by sales professionals as a critically important means used by sales managers to enhance the performance of their salespeople" (Rich, 1998, p. 53). Research on sales coaching and its influence is extensive in academic literature. Rich identified three core constructs in sales management coaching: supervisor feedback, role modeling, and salesperson trust in their manager (1998). In supporting technology initiatives such as eLearning programs, sales manager feedback is a critical factor in ensuring success of the skill learned in training. Management feedback is defined as superiors providing recognition to a subordinate on performance of a specific task (Jaworski and Kohli, 1991). Previous research suggests feedback and support from managers is crucial in positively impacting a sales professional's performance and motivation (Kohli, 1985; Jaworski and Kohli, 1991; Rich. 1998). Therefore, we propose:

> *H2: There is a positive relationship between importance of post-training support and Sales Training Effectiveness.*

Perceived Outcomes

Current sales literature offers various ways to measure training effectiveness. Evaluations include self-administered reports completed by training participants, increased sales performance results post training, achievements of learning outcomes, and comments about training by participants (Erffmeyer, Russ, and Hair, 1991). Yet, measuring the effectiveness of training can be extremely challenging, due the differences in comparing perceived effectiveness of training vs. the impact of training on sales performance. Past empirical studies measuring the impact of sales training are

inconsistent and at times contradictory (Baker, 1990; Chonko et Al, 1993). One factor that consistently affects sales training is the participants' attitude on the perceived impact of training. This is consistent with adult education literature, which suggests that adults learn more effectively when the training is realistic, practical, and perceived as relevant to the real world (Speck, 1996). Therefore, we propose:

H3: There is a positive relationship between perceived outcome of training and Sales Training Effectiveness.

Job Performance

Sales organizations invest in training in order to positively impact specific areas of performance: i.e., new revenue, client acquisition, shorter sales cycles, increased lead conversion, etc. The Kirkpatrick model (1967) evaluates the outcomes of training at four levels: reaction, learning, behavior, and results. Research on correlation of training and outcomes is well-documented in sales literature (Jantan et al, 2004; Pettijohn, Pettijohn, and Taylor2002), as well as the impact of technology (Ahearne, Jelinek, and Rapp, 2005) The discussion on the impact of training on financial performance has been ongoing and raises the question of whether training has an impact on areas such as revenue. Due to the cost savings of training delivered in electronic format (eLearning), the investment in training can be justified. Using technology to deliver training in a self-directed learning (SDL) environment can benefit an organization from a performance perspective (Boyer and Lambert, 2008). Therefore, we propose:

H4: There is a positive relationship between Sales Training Effectiveness and Job Performance.

Customer Satisfaction

The American Society for Training & Development (ASTD) training evaluation model recognizes that salespeople and sales managers play an important role in effectively maximizing customer value (Lassk et al, 2012). That value can be measured by having a deep understanding of customer needs and delivering a customized solution that meets those needs. Customer-oriented selling allows sales professionals to evaluate and focus on each customer's unique situation. Sales training focused on customer-oriented selling can positively impact sales behaviors, which link to customer satisfaction and increased market share (Ahearne, Jelinek, and Jones, 2007). Lassk et al's (2012) research on the future of training discusses the evolving service-oriented role of today's sales professional in increasing client retention. Salespeople, especially those less experienced, may not understand the value of delivering a customer-oriented selling experience. Training, in the form of eLearning, may provide that opportunity to learn more about the importance of service and customer satisfaction and its impact on sales performance. Thus, we propose the final two hypotheses:

H5: There is a positive relationship between Sales Training Effectiveness and Customer Satisfaction.

H6: There is a positive relationship between Customer Satisfaction and Job Performance.

METHODOLOGY

In order to examine the relationships among sales training effectiveness, job performance, and customer satisfaction, data were gathered from sales professionals and sales managers in the North American business-to-business commercial automobile industry. Data were collected using an email link to an online survey (Qualtrics) supported by two reminder emails. Two hundred forty-eight salespeople out of a potential 830 completed the survey, yielding a 30 percent response rate. Non-response bias was assessed by comparing the responses of early and late respondents (Armstrong and Overton, 1977). This process did not reveal any significant disparity between the means of the responding groups.

Measures

Survey participants responded to five-point Likert scales (1="strongly disagree" and "5 = strongly agree") for variables : Training Effectiveness, Support from Management, Perceived Outcome, and Importance of Post Training, which were utilized in past research studies conducted by Santos and Stuart on employee perceptions and training effectiveness (2003). Measures for Customer Satisfaction and Job Performance were newly developed for this study. Appendix A provides details of the items for each measure. Appropriate validation procedures were followed to evaluate both reflective and formative measures in the model. We

examined internal consistency, convergent validity, and discriminant validity to check the measurement validity of reflective constructs (Straub, 1989). Both discriminant validity and multicollinearity were examined for formative measures. Principle component factor analysis with varimax rotation was used to evaluate discriminant validity of the reflective measures. This approach examines whether the theorized items group together on appropriate constructs and discriminate across multiple constructs with minimal cross-loading among factors. The criterion used in the analysis was a factor loading greater than 0.45, and eigenvalues greater than 1.0. The results in Table 1 show that the items for the independent variables converge on three constructs as originally designed.

TABLE 1 - FACTOR ANALYSIS RESULTS: SALES PROFESSIONAL SAMPLE

Loading	**Component**					
Items	Training Effectiveness	Support From Management	Perceived Outcomes	Job Performance	Post Training Support	Customer Satisfaction
PERF1				.773		
PERF2				.856		
PERF3				.883		
PERF4				.930		
PERF5				.878		
PO1			.860			
PO2			.817			
PO3			.852			
PO4			.850			
PO5			.850			
PO6			.689			
PTS1					.885	
PTS2					.741	
PTS3					.794	
PTS4					.875	
PTS5					.894	
PTS6					.631	
SAT1						.877
SAT2						.915
SAT3						.862
SAT4						.910
SFM1		.910				
SFM2		.962				
SFM3		.969				
SFM4		.962				
SFM5		.954				
TE1	.900					
TE2	.815					
TE3	.802					
TE4	.922					
TE5	.888					
TE6	.854					

Notes: Principal components method was used for extracting the components and Varimax was the rotation method. All factor loadings below 0.45 were suppressed.

Confirmatory factor analysis in SmartPLS was used to validate the measurement model. The internal consistencies of the reflective measures were evaluated using Cronbach's alphas. All constructs had Cronbach's alphas values greater than 0.6, the recommended threshold for exploratory research (Nunnally and Bernstein, 1994). We also examined the convergent and discriminant validity of the reflective constructs. Convergent validity is supported as indicated by Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for each construct being greater than the recommended 0.5 in all cases (Gefen and Straub, 2005). Discriminant validity was evaluated by assessing the square root of the AVEs to ensure that it is greater than the correlation among the constructs. The higher AVE for a construct indicated that more variance is shared between the construct and its items than with other constructs (Fornell and Larcker, 1981).

Table 2 displays the Cronbach's alpha, AVE, square root of AVE, and composite reliability values for all the reflective constructs.

TABLE 2 - TEST AND MEASUREMENT RELIABILITY

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	AVE	Discriminant Validity Square Root (AVE)	Composite Reliability
Training Effectiveness	.933	.747	.864	.947
Support From Management	.974	.905	.951	.970
Perceived Outcomes	.922	.681	.825	.952
Importance of Post Training Support	.891	.654	.808	.921
Job Performance	.915	.750	.866	.951
Customer Satisfaction	.914	.794	.891	.945

Structural Model

To test the hypotheses in the proposed model and take advantage of the benefits offered by structural equation modeling, Partial Least Squares (PLS) regression was employed. PLS is similar to Linear Structural Relations (LISREL) in that both techniques model the structural relations in a set of constructs. PLS is the appropriate analytical tool for several reasons: (1) the model analyzes measures that are new and have not been previously tested and (2) the analysis studies the influence of a set of antecedent variables on specific outcomes and predictive-causal analysis is a condition for PLS. Before assessment, the model was tested for multicollinearity. Minimum multicollinearity existed; therefore, the model's structural relationships were examined. To obtain the significance levels, the bootstrapping option was run using 5,000 subsamples. Analysis of the path coefficient shows acceptance of all hypotheses. Table 3 summarizes the results and beta coefficients.

TABLE 3 – STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS

H	IV	DV	Path Coefficient	Supported
H1	Post-Training	Training Effectiveness	.348	YES
H2	Perceived Outcomes	Training Effectiveness	.188	YES
H3	Support from Management	Training Effectiveness	.141	YES
H4	Training Effectiveness	Job Performance	.142	YES
H5	Training Effectiveness	Customer Satisfaction	.458	YES
H6	Customer Satisfaction	Job Performance	.693	YES

PERCEPTION OF ELEARNING RELATIONSHIP ON PERFORMANCE SALES MANAGERS AND SALES PROFESSIONALS

Employing the identical survey, data were gathered via online surveys and questionnaires distributed to a total of 73 sales managers and compared to the results from sales professionals to assess whether sales managers and subordinates possess similar views. Sixty-six sales managers completed the survey, yielding a 90% response rate. Nonresponse bias

(Armstrong and Overton, 1977) was not present between early and late respondents. To analyze whether there were significant differences between path coefficients, PLS multigroup analysis was employed (PLS-MGA). This method was utilized since conducting pairwise group comparisons can result in family-wise error. "An optimal test for the differences between multiple groups in PLS path modeling framework should: (1) maintain the family-wise error rate; (2) deliver an acceptable level of statistical power; and (3) not rely on distributional assumption" (Sarstedt, Henseler, and Ringle, 2011, p. 206). \ Table 4 summarizes the differences in three comparison path coefficients estimates and shows the results of multigroup comparisons based on the parametric approach.

The results confirm the path coefficients were all significant for sales managers; therefore, all relationships were supported. A comparison of the two groups' responses revealed one major difference: the relationship between training effectiveness and customer satisfaction was higher for sales managers (beta=.710) vs. sales professionals (beta=.458). This suggests that sales managers believe that sales training leads to higher customer satisfaction than their sales teams.

TABLE 4 – STRUCTURAL MODEL RESULTS, SALES MANAGERS AND SALES PROFESSIONALS

H	IV	DV	Sales Managers (n=66)	Sales Professionals (n=248)	Diff
H1	Importance of Post-Training	Training Effectiveness	.339**	.348*	.067
H2	Perceived Outcomes	Training Effectiveness	.221*	.188**	.101
H3	Support from Management	Training Effectiveness	.343**	.141*	.032
H4	Training Effectiveness	Job Performance	.170	.142	.047
H5	Training Effectiveness	Customer Satisfaction	.710***	.458***	.231
H6	Customer Satisfaction	Job Performance	.671***	.693***	.052

*** p ≤ 0.01; ** p ≤ 0.05; * p ≤ 0.10

DISCUSSION AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Organizational investment in electronic sales training is expected to grow due to the increased convenience for sales professionals and cost savings for firms. This study endeavored to identify antecedents related to the effectiveness of online sales training (i.e., eLearning) and to analyze sales training's perceived impact on both job performance and customer satisfaction. The study found that three constructs--importance of post-training support of training, perceived outcomes of training, and support from management--were positively correlated to sales training effectiveness for both sales professionals and sales managers.

Whether it's the initial level of training provided to sales professionals or training offered as reinforcement, it is critical that participants receive pre- and post-training support from their organization, an idea supported by Social Exchange Theory (Emerson, 1976). In order to support the pre-training component, sales managers should set goals for trainees and encourage the sales team to participate in sales training. Prior to starting training, sales managers should clarify necessary skills and how they apply to sales team responsibilities, as well as monitor trainee progress and ensure that participants are on track to complete the training.

In order to support post training, sales managers should provide trainees with an opportunity to reinforce the knowledge and skills gained during training. This can be accomplished by scheduling follow-up meetings with sales team members to clarify the impact of the lessons learned, providing guidance on applying the online learning, and offering coaching to assist sales personnel in further honing their sales skills, which may help boost performance (Boyer, Artis, Fleming, and Solomon, 2013). Sales managers can enhance this further by selecting metrics to measure performance of applications of

training. For instance, if there is a module on prospecting or how to secure meetings with buyers, a sales manager can measure whether the number of sales appointments increased significantly after the training. Sales training investment, whether online or face-to-face, should support the sales team's professional development by providing coaching, feedback, and additional tools such as Webinars and training documents to reinforce post-training learning (Boyer, Edmondson, Artis, and Fleming, 2013). However, a major challenge for sales managers is determining the impact sales training has on the skills, knowledge, and abilities of individual salespeople.

Sales managers should understand the benefits of training--from both sales skills and performance perspectives, given that sales training can lead to improved performance, which leads to higher compensation, advancement, and improved job satisfaction for sales reps. As part of the pre-training support from management, potential benefits and outcomes should be communicated to participants. When performed effectively, this behavior will lead to greater commitment from the participants and increased overall value for the sales organization.

It is important to remember that effective sales training enables sales team members to successfully apply learned knowledge and skills during interactions with buyers. Training effectiveness is impacted by relevance of the learning experience, development of specific skills, positive sales behavior change, and increased organizational value. As a result, training should be assessed for its impact on job performance and customer satisfaction. The study found that sales training effectiveness had a positive relationship with both areas. The discussion by researchers and practitioners on the impact on sales training has continued for half a century. Sales managers want to increase revenue and increase customer retention through training efforts. The relationship of training's impact on those areas is harder to prove. Instead, sales managers should consider sales training, especially eLearning, as an initiative that helps change sales behaviors in a way that will positively impact sales performance. For example, an eLearning module on how to increase lead conversion or how to qualify prospects more efficiently can positively impact sales performance. Effective sales training was also positively correlated with customer satisfaction for both sales professionals and sales managers. The study found a stronger relationship between these two constructs for sales managers. Sales training, in the form of eLearning, can help sales professionals deliver customized solutions to buyers by educating them on areas of product knowledge, market knowledge, and needs identification skills. By providing sales training in these areas, sales professionals become more competent and confident. Increased skills and knowledge enable sales professionals to identify customers' specific needs and motivations. This research found that customer satisfaction was positively correlated to sales performance. Customers buy from salespeople who are confident and trustworthy. Buyer confidence and trust in the sales professional leads to customer satisfaction, which relates to increased sales performance.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are limitations associated with the current study. First, the construct for eLearning Sales Training Effectiveness is new, and universally measures the use of eLearning. Future research should consider measuring the impact of eLearning on specific firm objectives and strategy in order to better explain eLearning's heterogeneity. Second, the responses were self-reported by sales professionals. Future studies should include responses from the buyers' perspective to provide additional validity, as well as objective performance data. Third, the study provides a snapshot of eLearning use through cross-sectional data. A longitudinal study that assesses eLearning training's impact on performance, ROI, and associated training costs (i.e., monetary, resources, time) would offer a richer understanding of eLearning as it emerges into more prevalent use in sales training. Lastly, the constructs used in the model, while informative, are also limited. Future research should further examine the quality or effectiveness of eLearning, as well as additional factors influencing training effectiveness. While training effectiveness is difficult to measure precisely, it would be valuable to understand at what point electronic sales training pays off economically, what training modules are most effective, and where in the sales process sales training offers the best return on investment.

REFERENCES

Adkins, S. (2014), "2014 Learning Technology Research Taxonomy," *Ambient Insight Research*, (February), 1 – 25.

Ahearne, M., R. Jelinek, and E. Jones (2007), "Examining the Effect of Salesperson Service Behavior in a Competitive Context," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 35 (Winter), 603–616.

Ahearne, M., R. Jelinek, and A. Rapp (2005), "Moving Beyond the Direct Effect of SFA Adoption on Salesperson Performance: Training and Support as Key Moderating Factors," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 34 (4), 379–388.

Armstrong, J.S. and T.S. Overton, (1977), "Estimating Non-Response Bias in Mail Surveys", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 14 No. 3, pp. 396-402.

Artis, A. B., and E. G. Harris (2007), "Self-Directed Learning and Sales Force Performance: An Integrated Framework," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 27, 1 (Winter), 9–24.

Association of Training Development (2011, July 20), "Worldwide eLearning Market to Reach $49.9 billion by 2015" Available at: https://www.td.org/Publications/Blogs/ATD-Blog/2011/07/Worldwide-Elearning-Market-to-Reach-499-Billion-by-2015 [Accessed: 1January 2016].

Attia, A. M., E. D. Honeycutt, Jr., and M. P. Leach (2005), "A Three-Stage Model for Assessing and Improving Sales Force Training and Development," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 25, 3 (Summer), 253–268.

Baker, J.A (1990), How Video and Film Can Improve Your Sales Training Presentations, in *Sales Training Handbook: A Guide to Developing Sales Performance*, R. L. Craig & L. Kelly, eds., Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1990, 469–491.

Boehle, S. (2010), "Global Sales Training's Balancing Act," *Training*, 47 (January), 29–31.

Boyer, S., L., A. B. Artis, D. Fleming and P. Solomon, (2013) "Improving Sales Performance with Self-directed Learning," *Marketing Management Journal*, 22 (2), 61-75.

Boyer, S., and B. Lambert (2008), "Take the Handcuffs off Sales Team Development with Self-Directed Learning," *Training and Development*, 62 (November), 62–66.

Boyer, S., D. R. Edmondson, A. B. Artis and D. Fleming (2013), "Self-Directed Learning: A Tool For Lifelong Learning," *Journal of Marketing Education*, Vol. 36, No. 1, p. 20-32.

Budd, M. L.: Self-Instruction, in *Training and Development Handbook: A Guide to Human Resource Development*, 3rd ed., R. L. Craig, Ed., McGraw-Hill, New York, 1987.

Chonko, L. B., Tanner, J. F. Jr., and Weeks, W. A. (1993), "Sales Training: Status and Needs," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* 13(2), 83–97 (1993).

Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) (2009), "eLearning: Progress and Prospects," London (available at www.cipd.co.uk/subjects/lrnanddev/elearning/elearnprog.htm?IsSrchRes=1/).

Cron, W. L., G. W. Marshall, J. Singh, R. L. Spiro, and H. Sujan (2005), "Salesperson Selection, Training and Development: Trends, Implications and Re- search Opportunities," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 25, 2 (Spring), 123–136.

Currie, T. R.: Practical Guidelines for Measuring What Trainees Learn, in *Sales Training Handbook: A Guide to Developing Sales Performance*, R. L. Craig and L. Kelly, eds., Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1990, 550–553.

Dabos, G. E., and D. M. Rousseau.(2004), "Mutuality and Reciprocity in the Psychological Contract of Employees and Employers," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89 (1), 52-72.

Emerson, R. M.. (1976), "Social Exchange Theory," *Annual Review of Sociology* 2. Annual Reviews: 335–62.

Erffmeyer, tR. C., R. K. Russ, and J. F. Hair, Jr. (1991), "Needs Assessment and Evaluation in Sales Training Programs," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 11, 1 (Winter), 17–30.

Fornell, C. and David F. Larcker (1981), "Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18 (1), 39-50.

Gefen, D., & Straub, D. (2005). A Practical Guide to Factorial Validity Using PLS-Graph: Tutorial and Annotated Example. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems* 16(1) 91-109.

Honeycutt, E. D., Jr., and T. H. Stevenson (1989), "Evaluating Sales Training Programs." *Industrial Marketing Management* 18 (3), 215–222.

Honeycutt, E. D., K. Karande, A. Attia, and S. D. Maurer (2001), "An Utility Based Framework for Evaluating the Financial Impact of Sales Force Training Programs," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 21, 3 (Summer), 229–238.

Hunter, G. K. (1999), "Sales Technology, Relationship-Forging Tasks, and Sales Performance in Business Markets," Unpublished Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Hutchison, S. and Garstka, M. L. (1996), "Sources of Perceived Organizational Support: Goal Setting and Feedback," *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 26: 1351–1366.

Jantan, M. A., E. D. Honeycutt, Jr., S. T. Thelen, and A. M. Atria (2004), "Managerial Perceptions of Sales Training and Performance," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 33 (7), 667–673.

Jaworski, B and A. K. Kohli (1991), "Supervisory Feedback: Alternative Types and Their Impact on Salespeople's Performance and Satisfaction," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 28 (May), 190-201.

Kimberly, J. R. and Evanisko, M. J. (1981)." Organizational innovation: The influence of individual, organizational, and contextual factors on hospital adoption of technological and administrative innovations," *Academy of Management Journal*, 24: 689-713.

Kirkpatrick, D. L.(1996), "Revisiting Kirkpatrick's Four-Level Model, *Training and Development*, 50(1), 54–59..

Knowles, M.S. (1975), *Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers*, New York: Association Press.

Kohli, A. K. (1985), "Some Unexplored Supervisory Behaviors and Their Influence on Salespeople's Role Clarity, Specific Self-Esteem, Job Satisfaction, and Motivation," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 22 (November), 424-33.

Lassk F. G., T. Ingram, F. Kraus, R. Di Mascio (2012), "The Future of Sales Training: Challenges and Related Research Questions," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 32, 1, 141-154.

Lupton, R. A., J. E. Weiss, and R. T. Peterson (1999), "Sales Training Evaluation Model (STEM): A Conceptual Framework," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 28 (1), 73–86.

Nunnally, J. C. and Bernstein, I. H. (1994). Psychomteric theory (3rd Edition). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Pettijohn, C. E., L. S. Pettijohn, and A.J. Taylor (2002), "The Influence of Salesperson Skill, Motivation and Training on the Practice of Customer-Oriented Selling," *Psychology & Marketing*, 19 (9), 743–757.

Pettijohn, C. E., L. S. Pettijohn, and A.J. Taylor (2009), "Retail Sales Training: Activities and Effects on Job Satisfaction, Organizational Commitment, Turnover and Customer-Orientation," *Marketing Management Journal*, 19 (1), 46–57.

Pullins, E., M. Mallin, R. Buehrer and D. Jones (2011), "How Sales People Deal with Intergenerational Relationship Selling," *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing*, 26 (6), 443 – 455.

Rodriguez, M., H. Ajjan and E. Honeycutt (2014), "Using Technology to Engage and Improve Millennial Students' Presentation Performance," *Atlantic Marketing Journal*, 3 (2), 1 – 20.

Santos, A. and M. Stuart (2003), "Employee Perceptions and Their Influence on Training Effectiveness," *Human Resource Management Journal*, 13, 1, 27-45.

Marko S., J. Henseler, C. M. Ringle (2011),"Multigroup Analysis in Partial Least Squares(PLS) Path Modeling: Alternative Methods and Empirical Results", *Advances in International Marketing*, 22, 195 – 218

Speck, M. (1996), "Best Practices in professional development for sustained education change," *ERS Spectrum*, 14(2), 33-41.

Straub, D. W. (1989) "Validating Instruments in MIS Research," *MIS Quarterly*, 13:2, pp. 147- 169.

Rich, G. (1998), "The Constructs of Sales Coaching: Supervisory feedback, Role Modeling and Trust", *The Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 53-63.

Rodriguez, M., H. Ajjan, and E. Honeycutt (2014), "Using Technology to Engage and Improve Millenial Student's Presentation Performance," *Atlantic Marketing Journal*, 3 (2), 16-32.

Valentine, S. (2009), "Ethics Training, Ethical Context, and Sales and Marketing Professionals' Satisfaction with Super- visors and Coworkers," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 29, 3 (Summer), 227–242.

APPENDIX A – SURVEY ITEMS

ITEM	PERCEIVED TRAINING EFFECTIVENESS
TE1	With your ability to apply the knowledge and skills from the training on the job?
TE2	That you received at least one specific skill or tool from the online training available that will enable you to become more effective in selling products?
TE3	That you received at least one specific skill or tool from training that will enable you to become more effective in selling products?
TE4	With the training provided to improve your overall value to the customers?
TE5	That the total training offered is relevant to your developmental needs as a sales professional.
TE6	That the training currently offered has changed your behavior and enhanced your effectiveness in delivering value to your customers?

ITEM	PERCEIVED SUPPORT FROM MANAGEMENT
SFM1	My manager encourages and supports me to take advantage of training and development opportunities offered.
SFM2	My manager regularly discusses my training and development needs with me.
SFM3	My manager jointly sets tasks and development goals with me.
SFM4	My manager jointly reviews progress on tasks and development goals.
SFM5	My manager coaches and guides me effectively.

ITEM	PERCEIVED OUTCOMES OF TRAINING
PO1	Training leads to higher pay.
PO2	Training leads to higher job satisfaction.
PO3	After training, I feel more motivated at work.
PO4	Training improves promotion prospects.
PO5	After training, I feel valued by the company.
PO6	Training enables career progress.
PO7	Training helps me to grow as a person.

ITEM	IMPORTANCE OF POST-TRAINING SUPPORT
PTS1	To have a follow up meeting with manager after completing either online or instructor-led training.
PTS2	To have the opportunity to use new knowledge and skills to improve my job performance.
PTS3	That my Manager provides support and direction for my professional development through coaching and frequent feedback.
PTS4	To have my understanding of training material evaluated by my manager.
PTS5	To be evaluated by my manager on the use of training material on the job.
PTS6	Additional post-training activities, such as Webinars and online training would reinforce what I have learned.

ITEM	TRAINING ON CUSTOMER SATISFACTION
SAT1	Training enables me to deliver a total transport solution to the customer.
SAT2	The knowledge gained from training increases the customer's satisfaction with the sales process.
SAT3	The knowledge gained from training is a key factor in my gaining the customer's trust and confidence.
SAT4	Training enables me to more readily analyze the customer's needs and solve their problems.

ITEM	JOB PERFORMANCE
PERF1	Training enables sales people to increase revenue for the dealership.
PERF2	Training enables sales people to attain quota.
PERF3	Training gives sales people the confidence to close the sale.
PERF4	Training enables sales people to convert leads to customers.
PERF5	Training empowers sales people to actively prospect for new business.

The Effect of Perceptual Differences between Firm Market Orientation and Salesperson Customer Orientation on Salesperson Performance

By Subhra Chakrabarty and Robert E. Widing II

A national random sample of industrial salespeople was surveyed to examine whether a long-term profit focus should be a component of market orientation, and to study the effects of salespersons' perceptions of the differences between firm market orientation and salesperson customer orientation (DIFF) on salesperson performance. The results indicated that DIFF was unrelated to salesperson outcome performance, but was significantly negatively related to selling behavioral performance. Consequently, when firm orientation is not aligned with salesperson orientation, salespeople's selling behavioral performance, such as, utilization of technical knowledge and sales presentation quality suffers. The study underscores the importance of assessing the perceptual congruence of firm market orientation and salesperson customer orientation of salespeople. The managerial implications of these findings were discussed and several directions for future research were proposed.

Over the last two decades, the effects of market orientation (hereafter referred to as MO) have attracted a great deal of research attention. These studies have focused on the antecedents and consequences of MO (e.g., Kirca, Jayachandran, and Bearden 2005; Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Narver and Slater 1990), and the moderators or mediators of the relationships between MO and its consequences (e.g., Hult, Ketchen, Jr., Slater 2005; Kirca, Jayachandran, and Bearden 2005; Im and Workman, Jr. 2004; Grewal and Tansuhaj 2001; Han, Kim, and Srivastava 1998). However, two major gaps exist in the MO literature. First, researchers have not answered whether the conceptualization of MO should include a *long-term profit focus*, as originally hypothesized by Narver and Slater (1990). Second, the extensive body of literature on MO has been primarily developed at the organizational level with the respondents being top or mid-level managers. Although salespeople are responsible for implementing the marketing concept (Saxe and Weitz 1982), the effects of salespeople's perceptions of firm MO on sales performance have not been studied. Studies that did measure salespeople's perceptions of firm MO (e.g., Siguaw, Brown, and Widing 1994; Mengüç 1996) focused on its effects on role perceptions and job attitudes. Although a rich body of literature exists on the MO→performance relationship from managers' perspective (e.g., Hult, Ketchen, Jr., and Slater 2005), there is a need to study this relationship from salespeople's point of view.

In their boundary spanning role, salespeople represent the selling organization to the customers. That is, customers infer the customer orientation (hereafter referred to as CO) of the firm from the behaviors of salespeople who interact with them. Consequently, it is important that salespeople's CO matches the selling firm's MO. Highly market oriented firms need their salespeople to be highly customer oriented to successfully implement the firm's strategies. Although intuitively appealing, empirical studies show that there might be a lack of perceptual congruence between firm MO and salesperson CO, and the difference between firm MO and salesperson CO (hereafter referred to as DIFF) may affect salespeople. For example, Mengüç (1996) reported that as DIFF decreased, salespeople perceived less role conflict and role ambiguity, and reported higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Since role stress, job satisfaction and organizational commitment are related to sales performance (e.g., Onyemah 2008; Jaramillo, Mulki, and Marshall 2005; Brown and Peterson 1993), DIFF is expected to affect sales performance. The purpose of this study was to reconceptualize MO as

Subhra Chakrabarty (D.B.A., Louisiana Tech University), Associate Professor of Marketing, Department of Marketing, Cameron Hall, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Wilmington, NC, chakrabartys@uncw.edu

Robert E. Widing II (Ph.D., The Ohio State University), Dean and Albert J Weatherhead III Professor of Management, Weatherhead School of Management, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH, rew99@case.edu

a five-component model, and to examine the direct effect of DIFF on sales performance. Although past studies have identified several antecedents of MO, such as, top management emphasis and risk aversion, interdepartmental conflict, and organizational systems, such as, formalization and centralization (Jaworski and Kohli 1993), the current study excluded these variables since these antecedents are typically beyond the control of salespeople.

BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT OF HYPOTHESES

Market Orientation

As a business philosophy, the role of MO in sustaining long-term profitability has been discussed over the last four decades (e.g., Levitt 1960; Shapiro 1988; Webster 1988). A market oriented firm implements the marketing concept by generating, disseminating, and utilizing information on changing customer needs by engaging in behaviors that reflect a combination of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination (Kohli and Jaworski 1990; Narver and Slater 1990). Thus, highly market oriented firms attempt to outperform their competitors by utilizing market information to provide superior value to their customers.

In their seminal work on MO, Narver and Slater (1990, p. 22) hypothesized that "market orientation is a one-dimension construct consisting of three behavioral components and two decision criteria – customer orientation, competitor orientation, interfunctional coordination, a long-term focus, and a profit objective – and that each of the five can be measured reliably with a multi-item scale." In their study, the authors focused only on the three behavioral components since the measures of the two decision criteria were not reliable. The authors called for future research to determine "whether the two decision criteria in fact are two components of a one-dimension construct, two components of a second dimension, or neither."

The resolution of the factor structure of MO is important since the vast literature on MO has assumed that business performance, as measured by sales and profitability, is a consequence of MO. For example, based on an analysis of longitudinal data, Kumar et al. (2011) concluded that the positive relationship between market orientation and sales and profitability decreases over time. The authors concluded that market oriented organizations focus more customer retention than acquisition thereby rendering the role of MO as a failure preventer rather than a success producer. If a long-term profit focus should be modeled as a component of MO, studying the relationship between MO and profitability is conceptually redundant.

Scholarly research has attempted to address the dimensionality of MO. For example, Siguaw and Diamantopoulos (1995) explored the dimensionality of the original 21-item MO scale proposed by Narver and Slater (1990) and found that long-term profit orientation is a dimension of MO in addition to the behavioral dimensions of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination. Deng and Dart (1994) developed and validated a four component MO scale where profit orientation was one of the dimensions. The coefficient α of their 5-item Profit Emphasis scale exceeded 0.70. Finally, Lado, Maydeu-Olivares, and Rivera (1998, p. 34) expanded the domain of MO to include the extent to which "firms use information about their stakeholders to co-ordinate and implement strategic actions." Their results indicated that a distributor orientation and an environmental orientation can be included in an overall MO dimension. Consequently, empirical evidence exists for MO to include additional components beyond the three traditional behavioral components of customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination. In order to outperform competitors, market orientation needs to create economic wealth (profits) for the firm in the long-run, and therefore, the two decision criteria of a long-term focus and a profit emphasis should be closely related to the three behavioral components (Narver and Slater 1990). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

> *Hypothesis 1: Market orientation is a one-dimension construct consisting of five components, namely, customer orientation, competitor orientation, interfunctional coordination, a long-term focus, and a profit emphasis.*

Difference between Perceived MO and CO (Diff)

Although top management is responsible for developing a market oriented culture, salespeople are responsible for implementing the market oriented strategies. Since highly market oriented firms "effectively and efficiently creates the necessary behaviors for the creation of superior value for buyers" (Narver and Slater 1990, p. 21), salespeople representing these firms should be able to communicate and deliver these values to their customers. That is, salespeople need to be customer oriented to implement the strategies of market oriented firms.

CO refers to "the degree to which salespeople practice the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy customer needs" (Saxe and Weitz 1982, p. 344). According to Saxe and Weitz (1982), highly customer oriented salespeople implement the marketing concept by helping customer assess their needs, and by offering products that will satisfy those needs without using manipulative influence techniques or applying high pressure.

Past studies on the relationship between firm MO and salesperson CO has yielded different conclusions. Although firm MO should encourage market oriented behaviors (Homburg and Pflesser 2000), Farrell (2005) concluded that market-oriented values had no effect on salesperson CO. In contrast, Pelham (2010) reported that salesperson perception of firm MO indirectly affects salesperson CO. However, Jones, Busch, and Dacin (2003) found no relationship between salesperson perception of firm MO and salesperson CO. More importantly, Jones et al. (2003, p. 334) noted that sales manager's perception of firm MO was unrelated to salesperson perception of firm MO and concluded that "salespeople perceive the actions of the firm separately from the actions of the sales manager." More recently, Shoemaker and Pelham (2013) concluded that salesperson perception of firm MO moderates the relationship between salesperson CO and salespersons' retention rates of customers. Customer oriented salespeople were found to outperform their colleagues when their perception of firm MO was low. However, firm MO did not moderate the relationship between salesperson CO and percent of quota achieved. Consequently, it appears that researchers should focus on the effects of differences between salesperson perception of firm MO and salesperson CO since salespeople may or may not choose to align their own orientation with that of the firm.

The extant literature has claimed that for a variety of reasons, there may be differences in salespeople's perception of firm MO and their own CO. Siguaw, Brown, and Widing II (1994, p. 109) argued that as boundary spanners, "salesperson's loyalties can be divided when the policies and programs of the organization are perceived to be at odds with the needs and demands of his or her customers." Further, their separation from the home office and close proximity to customers may also make salespeople more loyal to customers than their employers. Consequently, salespeople may become more customer oriented than what the selling firm dictates by its level of MO, resulting in a difference or DIFF. Alternatively, DIFF may also result from salespeople taking advantage of a lack of close supervision and behaving opportunistically, thereby being less customer oriented than what is desired by the MO of the selling firm (Anderson and Oliver 1987). In either case, as DIFF decreases, the orientations of the selling firm and salespeople gets more aligned. Since employee perceptions of organizational market orientation significantly affect their information acquisition from customers (Celuch, Kasouf, and Strieter 2000), salespeople should be more successful in identifying and satisfying customer needs as DIFF decreases. This should result in higher sales performance. Formally stated:

> *Hypothesis 2: The smaller the difference between the market orientation of the firm and the customer orientation of the salesperson, the greater the salesperson performance.*

Control Variables

Regardless of the level of DIFF, salespeople are expected to expend effort to achieve their sales objectives. The expectancy theory of motivation argues that the "*level of effort* expended by a salesperson on each *job related task* will lead to *some level of performance on some performance dimension*" (Johnston and Marshall 2011, p. 217). Working hard refers to the level of effort expended by a salesperson, and conceptualized as the amount of time spent in trying to achieve sales goals

(Holmes and Srivastava 2002; Sujan 1986). As the expectancy theory of motivation predicts, working hard should result in greater salesperson performance. That is, the more time salespeople spend on various sales activities, such as, sales calls on present customers, sales calls on prospects, etc., the more they should sell. Empirical studies have supported the positive relationship between working hard and salesperson performance (e.g., Sujan, Weiz, and Kumar 1994; Rapp et al. 2006; Holmes and Srivastava 2002). Thus, working hard was included as a control variable.

According to the expectancy theory of motivation, working smart refers to the accuracy of salespeople's expectancy estimates. Therefore, "working smart requires that the salesperson have an accurate understanding of what activities are most critical – and therefore should receive the greatest effort – for concluding a sale" (Johnston and Marshall 2011, p. 219). While working hard refers to the level of effort, working smart involves deciding on what activities the effort should be expended. Scholars have often conceptualized working smart as the degree to which salespeople practice adaptive selling (e.g., Rapp et al. 2006, Holmes and Srivastava 2002; Sujan, Weitz, and Sujan 1988), and the extent to which they plan for the sales call (Rapp et al. 2006). Thus, even when firm MO and salesperson CO are misaligned, salespeople can achieve superior performance by working smart. Consequently, working smart was also included as a control variable.

The total sales experience of salespeople and the annual sales of the selling organizations were also included as control variables. Selling experience has been found to be positively related to sales performance (e.g., Giacobbe et al. 2006), and researchers have used selling experience as a control variable (Jaramillo et al. 2009). The annual sales was used as a proxy for firm size, as large selling organizations may have more resources for salespeople to implement the marketing concept than their smaller counterparts.

METHOD

Sample and Data Collection Procedures

The variables in the current study were measured from the salesperson's perspective using a self-report mail questionnaire as part of a larger study. The mailing list of a national random sample of industrial sales professionals was purchased from Dun and Bradstreet. These salespersons were employed at firms which fall within the Standard Industrial Codes (SIC) 20 through 39 representing industrial firms. Questionnaires were mailed to 3909 salespersons at their places of work. Along with the survey, a cover letter on University letterhead was included explaining the purpose of the study, requesting cooperation, and promising confidentiality. Four weeks after the original mailing, a postcard was mailed to all the salespersons urging them to respond to the survey if they haven't already. The mailing yielded 241 usable responses. After accounting for undeliverable envelopes, partially or uncompleted questionnaires, and ineligible responses, the response rate was 10.39% (Churchill 1991).

Non-response bias was unlikely to affect the results since a comparison of early and late respondents on the study variables yielded no significant differences (Armstrong and Overton 1977). Regarding subject characteristics, about 90% of the respondents were male, 46% of the respondents were college graduates, and approximately 24% attended and/or completed graduate school. The average age of the respondents was 47 years, and their average selling experience was 19 years. Consequently, the subjects were mature, well educated, and highly experienced.

Measures

The constructs used in this study were measured by multiple-item scales drawn from past studies. MO was measured by the 21-item scale developed by Narver and Slater (1990). The scale included five components, namely, a 6-item customer orientation, a 4-item competitor orientation, a 5-item interfunctional orientation, a 3-item long-term focus, and a 3-item profit emphasis. The endpoints ranged from 1 (This business unit does not engage in the practice at all) to 9 (This business unit engages in the practice to an extreme extent). CO was measured by the 24-item SOCO scale developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982). The scale anchors were 1 (True for none of your customers – never) to 9 (True for all of your customers – always). Working hard was measured by the number of hours per week salespeople spent on the job and in job-related

activities. Working smart was measured by the 5-item ADAPTS-SV scale developed by Robinson et al. (2002), and the number of hours per week salespeople spent on planning, forecasts, paperwork, and maintenance. The endpoints of ADAPTS-SV ranged from 1 (Very strongly disagree) to 9 (Very strongly agree).

Salesperson performance was measured by using the dimensions of the 31-item scale developed by Behrman and Perreault, Jr. (1982). Outcome performance was measured using the 7-item "sales objectives" dimension of Behrman and Perreault, Jr.'s (1982) scale. This dimension measured the degree to which a salesperson has achieved the overall objectives of the selling firm. Thus, outcome performance is directly attributable to salespeople. In addition, selling behavioral performance was measured by the 6-item "using technical knowledge" and the 6-item "making sales presentations" dimension of Behrman and Perreault, Jr.'s (1982) scale. Salespeople have more control over selling activities than sales outcomes and they spend "much of their time on activities directly related to generating sales" (Cravens et al. 1993, p. 50). For example, they use their technical knowledge to detect causes of operating failure of company products and they also spend time on troubleshooting system problems and conducting minor field service to correct product misapplications and/or product failures. These selling behaviors help generate sales revenues. In addition, the manner in which salespeople identify customer needs and make presentations to sell products that satisfy those needs also generates sales revenues. Consequently, both outcome performance (achieving sales objectives) and selling behavioral performance (utilizing technical knowledge and making sales presentations) are important for overall sales force productivity. The endpoints of these 19 sales performance items ranged from 1 (Your performance is very low compared to an average salesperson) to 9 (Your performance is very high compared to an average salesperson).

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The measures were purified by item analyses and confirmatory factor analyses. Each component of MO was analyzed and based on item-to-total correlations, one item measuring interfunctional coordination and one item measuring profit emphasis was eliminated. Table 1 presents the item-to-total correlations of the 21-item five component MO compared to the findings of Narver and Slater (1990).

As Table 1 indicates, the reliabilities of the three behavioral components (customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination) were comparable to that of Narver and Slater (1990). However, the reliabilities of the two decision criteria were superior to that of Narver and Slater (1990). After deleting one item with low item-to-total correlation (See Table 1), the reliability of Profit Emphasis was 0.61. Thus, hypothesis 1 can be tested with this data. Note that the same item, "all products must be profitable" was the poor measure of Profit Emphasis in the Narver and Slater (1990) study and the current study.

The measurement properties of the 24-item SOCO scale was assessed by confirmatory factor analyses with partial disaggregation (Bagozzi and Heatherton 1994). The scale consists of 12 items representing the selling orientation and the remaining 12 items representing the customer orientation of salespeople (Saxe and Weitz 1982). According to Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994, p. 47), "when more than about five items per factor are treated as individual measures of factors in a multifactor CFA, it is difficult to achieve a satisfactorily fitting model that is interpretable in an unambiguous sense." Following Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994), three composite indicators were formed for each dimension of SOCO (selling orientation and customer orientation) by randomly aggregating four items that relate to a specific dimension. Thus, the confirmatory measurement models of SOCO had three composite indicators for each of the two dimensions (selling orientation and customer orientation). The covariance matrix of these six composite indicators were input in LISREL 8.72, and a confirmatory factor analysis showed that the data fit the model very well ($\chi^2 = 5.63$, $df = 8$, $p > .10$, CFI = 1.00, GFI = .99, RMSEA = .00, SRMR = .02). The items used to form the composite indicators are displayed in the appendix.

Item analysis indicated that one item needed to be deleted from the 5-item ADAPTS-SV (Robinson et al. 2002) scale. The item "I try to understand how one

Table 1. Reliability Analysis: Comparison with Narver and Slater (1990)

Item[1]	Item-to-total Correlation[2]	Coefficient α (Sample 1/Sample 2)[2]	Item-to-total Correlation[3]	Coefficient α[3]
Customer Orientation		0.855/0.867		0.885
Customer commitment	0.702		0.774	
Create customer value	0.658		0.768	
Understand customer needs	0.671		0.689	
Customer satisfaction objectives	0.651		0.647	
Measure customer satisfaction	0.634		0.734	
After-sales service	0.579		0.603	
Competitor Orientation		0.716/0.727		0.669
Salespeople share competitor information	0.547		0.308	
Respond rapidly to competitors' actions	0.591		0.472	
Top managers discuss competitors' strategies	0.542		0.547	
Target opportunities for competitive advantage	0.361		0.511	
Interfunctional Coordination		0.711/0.735		0.678
Interfunctional customer calls[a]	0.409		0.183	
Information shared among functions	0.477		0.536	
Functional integration in strategy	0.662		0.510	
All functions contribute to customer value	0.506		0.545	
Share resources with other business units	0.317		0.416	
Long-Term Horizon		0.477/0.408		0.578
Quarterly profits are primary objective	0.338		0.444	
Require rapid payback	0.302		0.394	
Positive margin in long term	0.261		0.327	
Profit Emphasis		0.139/0.004		0.499
Profit performance measured market by market	0.102		0.389	
Top managers emphasize market performance	0.137		0.443	
All products must be profitable[a]	-0.346		0.148	

[1] Wordings of Narver and Slater's (1990) Table was retained to facilitate comparison. The actual items are displayed in Table 2.
[2] Narver and Slater (1990).
[3] Current Study.
[a] Item deleted based on item-to-total correlation.

customer differs from another" may not be construed by salespeople as reflecting altering their selling behaviors from one customer to another. A confirmatory factor analysis on the covariance matrix indicated that the data fit the 4-item adaptive selling construct very well ($\chi^2 = 0.85$, $df = 2$, $p > .10$, CFI = 1.00, GFI = .99, RMSEA = .00, SRMR = .00).

The measurement property of the 19-item salesperson performance scale was also assessed by Bagozzi and Heatherton's (1994) partial disaggregation approach. The 7-item "sales objectives" dimension was reduced to three item parcels, and the 12 items for "utilizing technical knowledge" and "making sales presentations" were reduced to four item parcels. This was accomplished by randomly aggregating two or three items within each performance dimension, as recommended by Bagozzi and Heatherton (1994). Consequently, salesperson performance was measured by seven item

Table 2. Path Estimates of the Measurement Models

Item	λ (t-value)
Market Orientation	
We constantly monitor our level of commitment and orientation to customers.	0.66 (11.14)
Our market strategies are driven by our understanding of possibilities for creating value for customers.	0.67 (11.34)
We respond rapidly to competitive actions that threaten us.	0.67 (11.33)
Top management regularly discusses competitors' strengths and strategies.	0.74 (12.78)
Information on customers, marketing successes and marketing failures are communicated across functions in the business.	0.68 (11.47)
All our managers understand how the entire business can contribute to creating customer value.	0.81 (14.66)
We share programs and resources with other business units in the corporation.	0.69 (11.73)
Profit performance is measured on a market-by-market basis.	0.66 (10.97)
Higher levels of management (to whom our management reports) require business-unit performance reports on a market-by-market basis.	0.64 (10.66)
Our primary objective is to maximize quarterly profits.	0.74 (12.78)
We require a rapid payback from investments in customer relationships.	0.49 (7.78)
Customer Orientation[1]	
COS1	0.82 (14.44)
COS2	0.89 (16.09)
COS3	0.77 (13.32)
SOS1	0.82 (14.37)
SOS2	0.76 (13.03)
SOS3	0.85 (15.14)
Adaptive Selling	
When I feel that my sales approach is not working I can easily change to another approach.	0.82 (14.66)
I like to experiment with different sales approaches.	0.71 (12.03)
I am very flexible in the selling approach I use.	0.86 (15.70)
I can easily use a wide variety of selling approaches.	0.81 (14.51)
Outcome Performance[1]	
OP1	0.79 (13.16)
OP2	0.81 (13.69)
OP3	0.72 (11.82)
Selling Behavioral Performance[1]	
SBP1	0.97 (18.45)
SBP2	0.82 (14.58)
SBP3	0.60 (9.92)

[1] See appendix for the actual composites.

parcels, three measuring outcome performance and four measuring selling behavioral performance. The covariance matrix of the seven item parcels was input in LISREL 8.72 and a confirmatory factor analysis yielded a measurement model with excellent fit statistics ($\chi^2 = 19.08$, $df = 8$, $p < .05$, CFI = .99, GFI = .97, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .04). One item parcel measuring selling behavioral performance was deleted based on standardized residuals. The item parcels are presented in the appendix. Table 2 presents the path estimates for each of the measures.

As Table 2 indicates, the path estimates for each of the latent constructs were significant ($t > 2.00$). Thus, convergent validity was established (Anderson and Gerbing 1988). To assess discriminant validity, the covariance matrix of all the latent constructs was input in LISREL 8.72, and a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted by specifying each item or item parcel to load on its respective factor. The fit of this unconstrained model was compared to a series of constrained models where the correlation between a pair of latent constructs was set to 1. The fit of each of the constrained model was worse than the unconstrained model and the $\Delta\chi^2$ for 1 df greatly exceeded 3.84. Consequently, the measures exhibited discriminant validity (Bagozzi and Phillips 1982). Table 3 presents the descriptive statistics of these variables.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Constructs	1	2	3	4	5
1. Market Orientation (MO)	1.00				
2. Customer Orientation (CO)	.26**	1.00			
3. Adaptive Selling	.28**	.19**	1.00		
4. Outcome Performance	.36**	.19**	.29**	1.00	
5. Selling Behavioral Performance	.34**	.41**	.15*	.45**	1.00
Means	5.74	7.81	6.59	6.83	7.46
Standard Deviation	1.25	.76	1.56	1.10	.92
Coefficient α	.78	.84	.85	.82	.82

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.
* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Hypothesis 1 was tested by a confirmatory factor analysis of the 19-item (two items were already deleted based on item-to-total correlations, as indicated in Table 1) MO scale, where all the items were specified to load on a single factor, as proposed by Narver and Slater (1990). The initial fit of the model was unsatisfactory ($\chi^2 = 569.94$, $df = 152$, $p < .01$, CFI = .92, GFI = .79, RMSEA = .11, SRMR = .08). The model was respecified by deleting items based on squared multiple correlations, standardized residuals, and modification indices. The final measurement model consisted of 11 items measuring MO, and included each of the five components. Therefore, hypothesis 1 was supported. As hypothesized by Narver and Slater (1990), MO is a one-dimensional construct with five components, customer orientation, competitor orientation, interfunctional coordination, a long-term focus, and a profit emphasis. This finding is very significant since most studies on MO did not include a long-term focus and a profit emphasis while measuring MO. According to Hattie (1985, p. 49), "that a set of items forming an instrument all measure just one thing in common is a most critical and basic assumption of measurement theory." Computation of a composite score of a multi-item scale is meaningful "only if each of the measures is acceptably unidimensional" (Gerbing and Anderson 1988, p. 186). Thus, while computing a summated score of MO, researchers should include all five components of MO, as proposed by Narver and Slater (1990). Past research on the DIFF variable (e.g., Siguaw, Brown, and Widing II 1994; Mengüç 1996) violated this rule.

In order to test hypothesis 2, the DIFF variable was created by taking the absolute value of the difference between the standardized MO score and the standardized CO score (Siguaw, Brown, and Widing II 1994; Mengüç 1996). Unlike past studies, the 11-item MO scale consisting of all five components was used to create the DIFF variable. Hypotheses

2 was tested by OLS regressions where outcome performance and selling behavioral performance was regressed on DIFF, hours/week spent on the job and job-related activities (working hard), and adaptive selling and hours/week spent on planning, forecasting, paperwork, and maintenance (working smart), annual sales, and total sales experience. The regressions results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Regression Results (One-tailed t-tests)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Standardized Coefficients (t-value)	Summary
Outcome Performance	DIFF	-.09 (-1.28)	Adj. $R^2 = .08$, $F_{6.180} = 3.56$, $p < .01$
	Working Hard	.10 (1.42)[c]	
	Adaptive Selling	.26 (3.56)[a]	
	Hours/week on Planning, etc.	-.004 (-.049)	
	Total Sales Experience	.14 (1.90)[b]	
	Annual Sales	-.001 (-.02)	
Selling Behavioral Performance	DIFF	-.24 (-3.28)[a]	Adj. $R^2 = .08$, $F_{6.180} = 3.65$, $p < .01$
	Working Hard	.05 (.71)	
	Adaptive Selling	.09 (1.30)[c]	
	Hours/week on Planning, etc.	.01 (.17)	
	Total Sales Experience	.20 (2.81)[a]	
	Annual Sales	.01 (.21)	

[a] $p < .01$
[b] $p < .05$
[c] $p < .10$

As Table 4 indicates, hypothesis 2 was supported since DIFF was significantly negatively related to selling behavioral performance ($\beta = -.24$, $t = -3.28$, $p < .01$). However, DIFF was not related to outcome performance. These results yield several managerial implications for selling organizations.

DISCUSSION

The stream of research on MO has virtually neglected Narver and Slater's (1990) call to examine if a long-term focus and a profit emphasis should be included in the measurement of MO. According to Narver and Slater (1990, p. 22), "a business cannot avoid a long-run perspective." Also, businesses need to be profitable to survive and profitability has been construed as a component of market orientation (Narver and Slater 1990; Kohli and Jaworski 1990). The results of this study showed that MO can be measured as a one-dimension construct with five components, as originally hypothesized by Narver and Slater (1990). Consequently, findings of the studies that limited the measurement of MO to the three behavioral components (customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination) may have been biased.

The results of this study also revealed the managerial relevance of including a long-term focus and a profit emphasis as components of MO. Saxe and Weitz (1982, p. 343) argued that "the marketing concept requires an organization to determine the needs of a target market and adapt itself to satisfying those needs better than its competitors." Since customer oriented selling involves "the practice of the marketing concept at the level of the individual salesperson and customer" (Saxe and Weitz 1982, p. 343), market oriented firms need their salespeople to be highly customer oriented to successfully implement the marketing concept. Thus, salespeople's perceptions of firm level MO and their own CO should match in order to satisfy customers in the long-run. The results of this study indicated that as the difference between salespeople's perceptions of firm MO and their own CO (DIFF) increased, selling behavioral performance suffered. Since this dimension of performance focuses on salespeople's behaviors while interacting with customers, the lack of a congruence between salespeople's perceptions of firm MO and their own CO may significantly reduce the productivity of salespeople in the long-run for two reasons.

First, although DIFF was unrelated to outcome performance, its negative effect on selling behavioral performance may indirectly undermine outcome performance since selling behavioral performance is expected to significantly positively affect outcome performance (Cravens et al. 1993; Miao and Evans 2007). In the current study, the correlation between outcome performance and selling behavioral performance was 0.45 ($p < 0.01$) (see Table 3). Second, since salespeople are not continuously supervised, sales managers may infer their selling behavioral performance from their outcome performance. However, as DIFF was unrelated to outcome performance, sales managers may fail to diagnose failures in selling behavioral performance, such as, using technical knowledge or making high quality sales presentations, if they relied on outcome measures alone. Over time, increasing levels of DIFF may seriously undermine the long-term productivity of a sales force.

The results of this study yield two key managerial implications for sales organizations. First, the perceptual congruence between firm MO and salesperson CO is important for how salespeople do their job, rather than for figuring out if they are working or not. Consequently, selling firms need to incorporate a long-term profit focus in their measurement of MO, and continuously assess the effects of DIFF on selling behavioral performance. The proper conceptualization of MO and the assessment of DIFF is highly relevant for sales organizations. Second, the lack of perceptual congruence between firm MO and salesperson CO may be construed as sales management's failure in internal marketing to bolster the organizational identity of boundary spanners. Since organizational identity of salespeople is significantly positively related to sales performance, sales organizations should ensure that sales managers exhibit "organizational identity-congruent" behaviors while interacting with salespeople (Wieseke et al. 2009, p. 139). By exhibiting market oriented behaviors, sales managers can minimize DIFF and encourage salespeople to sacrifice short-term gains for long-term success of the firm.

As expected, both working smart and working hard improved salesperson performance. This was consistent with past studies (e.g., Sujan, Weitz, and Sujan 1988; Rapp et al. 2006). However, it seems that working smart was more important since it affected both dimensions of salesperson performance. Apparently, salespersons' choices of activities to allocate efforts on is as much or more important than how much efforts they allocate. Thus, sales managers should be concerned with both the magnitude and the accuracy of salespeople's expectancies (Johnston and Marshall 2011).

Finally, the current study showed that selling experience improved both outcome performance and selling behavioral performance. Thus, highly experienced salespeople performed better despite their perceptual differences between firm MO and their own CO. Although past studies have theorized that sales experience may improve salesperson performance by encouraging salespeople to work hard and smart (Rapp et al. 2006), sales experience seems to have a significant main effect on performance. Thus, as Kohli (1989, p. 47) recommended, sales managers "should be cognizant of differences among their salespeople and engage in adaptive supervision."

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Although the purpose of the study required that data be collected from salespeople's perspective, measuring all the variables by self-reports may have introduced common method variance. To check for common method bias, the fit statistics of the measurement model was compared to a one-factor model, assuming that a single factor can account for all the variances in the data (Podsakoff et al. 2003). The fit of the single-factor model ($\chi^2 = 2642.02$, $df = 324$, $p < .01$, CFI = .69, GFI = .55, RMSEA = .17, SRMR = .13) was much worse compared to the hypothesized multi-factor model ($\chi^2 = 733.43$, $df = 309$, $p < .01$, CFI = .92, GFI = .81, RMSEA = .08, SRMR = .07) indicating that common method variance was unlikely to bias the results. However, since the response rate was low and a cross-sectional survey was used to collect data, caution should be exercised in inferring causality.

Future research should confirm the five component one-dimensional structure of MO found in this study. Narver and Slater (1990) recommended generating additional items to measure long-term focus and profit emphasis. If future studies confirm the five-component

measurement model of MO, past studies that used only the three behavioral components to measure MO may need to be replicated to ascertain the effects of not considering the two decision criteria – a long-term focus and a profit emphasis.

Future research is needed to identify the antecedents and additional consequences of DIFF. Since DIFF negatively affects selling behavioral performance, selling organizations should minimize DIFF. DIFF can be caused by a variety of factors, such as, a lack of clear communication between managers and salespeople, opportunism on the part of managers and/or salespeople, inadequate training of salespeople, etc. With regard to the consequences of DIFF, although Siguaw, Brown, and Widing II (1994) and Mengüç (1996) studied the effects of DIFF on role perceptions, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment, their results varied and both studies used the three-component measurement model of MO. Thus, more research is needed on effects of DIFF.

Finally, more research is needed to explore the relationship between DIFF and outcome performance. Salesforce control systems may shed more light on this relationship. For example, in outcome-based control systems, salespeople are evaluated and compensated based primarily on outcomes (Anderson and Oliver 1987). In such organizations, salespeople may be forced to achieve their sales objectives by any means, despite the existence of DIFF. In the current study, the relationship between DIFF and outcome performance was negative, though not significant.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Erin and Richard L. Oliver (1987), "Perspectives on Behavior-Based Versus Outcome-Based Salesforce Control Systems," *Journal of Marketing*, 51(October), 76-88.

Anderson, James C. and David W. Gerbing (1988), "Structural Equation Modeling in Practice: A Review and Recommended Two-Step Approach," *Psychological Bulletin*, 103 (May), 411-423.

Armstrong, J. Scott and Terry Overton (1977), "Estimating Nonresponse Bias in Mail Surveys," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14(August), 396-402.

Bagozzi, Richard P. and Lynn W. Phillips (1982), "Representing and Testing Organizational Theories: A Holistic Construal," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 27 (September), 459-489.

Bagozzi, Richard P. and Todd F. Heatherton (1994), "A General Approach to Representing Multifaceted Personality Constructs: Application to State Self-Esteem," *Structural Equation Modeling*, 1(1), 35-67.

Behrman, Douglas N. and William D. Perreault, Jr. (1982), "Measuring the Performance of Industrial Salespersons," *Journal of Business Research*, 10 (September), 355 370.

Brown, Steven P. and Robert A. Peterson (1993), "Antecedents and Consequences of Salesperson Job Satisfaction: Meta-Analysis and Assessment of Causal Effects," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 30(February), 63-77.

Celuch, Kevin G., Chickery J. Kasouf, and Jeffrey C. Strieter (2000), "The Influence of Organizational Market Orientation on Individual-Level Market-Oriented Cognitions," *Psychology and Marketing*, 17 (November), 935-954.

Churchill, Gilbert A., Jr. (1991), *Marketing Research: Methodological Foundations*, 5th edition, Chicago: The Dryden Press.

Cravens, David W., Thomas N. Ingram, Raymond W. LaForge, and Clifford E. Young (1993), "Behavior-Based and Outcome-Based Salesforce Control Systems," *Journal of Marketing*, 57(October), 47-59.

Deng, Shengliang and Jack Dart (1994), "Measuring Market Orientation: A Multi-factor, Multi-item Approach," *Journal of Marketing Management*, 10, 725-742.

Farrell, Mark A. (2005), "The Effect of a Market-Oriented Organisational Culture on Sales-Force Behaviour and Attitudes," *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 13(December), 261-273.

Gerbing, David W. and James C. Anderson (1988), "An Updated Paradigm for Scale Development Incorporating Unidimensionality and Its Assessment," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 25(May), 186-192.

Giacobbe, Ralph W., Donald W. Jackson Jr., Lawrence A. Crosby, and Claudia M. Bridges (2006), "A Contingency Approach to Adaptive Selling Behavior and Sales Performance: Selling Situations and Salesperson Characteristics," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 26 (Spring), 115-142.

Grewal, Rajdeep and Patriya Tansuhaj (2001), "Building Organizational Capabilities for Managing Economic Crisis: The Role of Market Orientation and Strategic Flexibility," *Journal of Marketing*, 65(April), 67-80.

Han, Jin K., Namwoon Kim, and Rajendra K. Srivastava (1998), "Market Orientation and Organizational Performance: Is Innovation a Missing Link?" *Journal of Marketing*, 62 (October), 30-45.

Hattie, John (1985), "Methodology Review: Assessing Unidimensionality of Tests and Items," *Applied Psychological Measurement*, 9(June), 139-164.

Holmes, Terence L. and Rajesh Srivastava (2002), "Effects of Job Perceptions on Job Behaviors: Implications for Sales Performance," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 31(August), 421-428.

Homburg, Christian and Christian Pflesser (2000), "A Multiple-Layer Model of Market-Oriented Organizational Culture: Measurement Issues and Performance Outcomes," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 37(November), 449-462.

Hult, G. Tomas M., David J. Ketchen, Jr., and Stanley F. Slater (2005), "Market Orientation and Performance: An Integration of Disparate Approaches," *Strategic Management Journal*, 26 (December), 1173-1181.

Im, Subin and John P. Workman, Jr. (2004), "Market Orientation, Creativity, and New Product Performance in High-Technology Firms," *Journal of Marketing*, 68 (April), 114-132

Jaramillo, Fernando, Douglas B. Grisaffe, Lawrence B. Chonko, and James A. Roberts (2009), "Examining the Impact of Servant Leadership on Sales Force Performance," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 29 (Summer), 257-275.

Jaramillo, Fernando, Jay Prakash Mulki, and Greg W. Marshall (2005), "A Meta-Analysis of the Relationship between Organizational Commitment and Salesperson Job Performance: 25 Years of Research," *Journal of Business Research*, 58(June), 705-714.

Jaworski, Bernard J. and Ajay K. Kohli (1993), "Market Orientation: Antecedents and Consequences," *Journal of Marketing*, 57(July), 53-70.

Johnston, Mark W. and Greg W. Marshall (2011), *Churchill/Ford/Walker's Sales Force Management*, 10th edition, McGraw-Hill Irwin, New York.

Jones, Eli, Paul Busch, and Peter Dacin (2003), "Firm Market Orientation and Salesperson Customer Orientation: Interpersonal and Intrapersonal Influences on Customer Service and Retention in Business-to-Business Buyer-Seller Relationships," *Journal of Business Research*, 56(April), 323-340.

Kirca, Ahmet H., Satish Jayachandran, and William O. Bearden (2005), "Market Orientation: A Meta-Analytic Review and Assessment of its Antecedents and Impact on Performance," *Journal of Marketing*, 69 (April), 24-41.

Kohli, Ajay K. (1989), "Effects of Supervisory Behavior: The Role of Individual Differences Among Salespeople," *Journal of Marketing*, 53(October), 40-50.

Kohli, Ajay K. and Bernard J. Jaworski (1990), "Market Orientation: The Construct, Research Propositions, and Managerial Implications," *Journal of Marketing*, 54(April):1-18.

Kumar, V., Eli Jones, Rajkumar Venkatesan, and Robert P. Leone (2011), "Is Market Orientation a Source of Sustainable Competitive Advantage or Simply the Cost of Competing?" *Journal of Marketing*, 75(January), 16-30.

Lado, Nora, Albert Maydeu-Olivares, and Jaime Rivera (1998), "Measuring Market Orientation in Several Populations: A Structural Equations Model," *European Journal of Marketing*, 32(1/2), 23-39.

Levitt, Theodore. 1960. "Marketing Myopia." *Harvard Business Review* 38(4):45-56.

Mengüç, Bülent (1996), "The Influence of the Market Orientation of the Firm on Sales Force Behavior and Attitudes: Further Empirical Results," *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 13 (3), 277-291.

Miao, C. Fred and Kenneth R. Evans (2007), "The Impact of Salesperson Motivation on Role Perceptions and Job Performance – A Cognitive and Affective Perspective," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 27(Winter), 89-101.

Narver, John C. and Stanley F. Slater (1990), "The Effect of a Market Orientation on Business Profitability," *Journal of Marketing*, 54 (October), 20-35.

Onyemah, Vincent (2008), "Role Ambiguity, Role Conflict, and Performance: Empirical Evidence of an Inverted-U Relationship," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 28(Summer), 299-313.

Pelham, Alfred M. (2010), "The Impact of Salesperson Perception of Firm Market Orientation on Behaviors and Consulting Effectiveness," *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, 17(2), 32-55.

Podsakoff, Philip M., Scott B. MacKenzie, Jeong-Yeon Lee, and Nathan P. Podsakoff (2003), "Common Method Biases in Behavioral Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies," *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(October), 879-903.

Rapp, Adam, Michael Ahearne, John Mathieu, and Niels Schillewaert (2006), "The Impact of Knowledge and Empowerment on Working Smart and Working Hard: The Moderating Role of Experience," *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 23(September), 279-293.

Robinson, Jr., Leroy, Greg W. Marshall, William C. Moncrief, and Felicia G. Lassk (2002), "Toward a Shortened Measure of Adaptive Selling," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 22(Spring), 111-118.

Saxe, Robert and Barton A. Weitz (1982), "The SOCO Scale: A Measure of the Customer Orientation of Salespeople," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 19(August), 343-351.

Shapiro, Benson P. (1988), "What the Hell is Market Oriented?" *Harvard Business Review*, 66 (November/ December), 119-125.

Shoemaker, Mary E. and Alfred M. Pelham (2013), "Does Salesperson Perception of the Firm-Level of Market Orientation Influence Sales Behavior and Performance Attributions?" *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 25(4), 381-400.

Siguaw, Judy A., Gene Brown, and Robert E. Widing II (1994), "The Influence of the Market Orientation of the Firm on Sales Force Behavior and Attitudes," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31(February), 106-116.

Siguaw, Judy A. and Adamantios Diamantopoulos (1995), "Measuring Market Orientation: Some Evidence on Narver and Slater's Three-Component Scale," *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 3, 77-88.

Sujan, Harish (1986), "Smarter Versus Harder: An Exploratory Attributional Analysis of Salespeople's Motivation," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 23(February), 41-49.

Sujan, Harish, Barton A. Wetiz, and Mita Sujan (1988), "Increasing Sales Productivity by Getting Salespeople to Work Smarter," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 8(August), 9-19.

Sujan, Harish, Barton A. Weitz, and Nirmalya Kumar (1994), "Learning Orientation, Working Smart, and Effective Selling," *Journal of Marketing*, 58(July), 39-52.

Webster, Frederick, E. Jr. (1988), "Rediscovering the Marketing Concept," *Business Horizons*, 31(May-June), 29-39.

Weitz, Barton A., Harish Sujan, and Mita Sujan (1986), "Knowledge, Motivation and Adaptive Behavior: A Framework for Improving Selling Effectiveness," *Journal of Marketing*, 50(October), 174-191.

Weiseke, Jan, Michael Ahearne, Son K. Lam, and Rolf van Dick (2009), "The Role of Leaders in Internal Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 73(March), 123-145.

Appendix

Construct	Composite Indicators
Salesperson Customer Orientation	Item Parcels Based on Bagozzi and Heatherton's (1994) Approach
COS1	I offer the product of mine that is best suited to the customer's problem. I try to get customers to discuss their needs with me. I try to figure out what a customer's needs are. I try to influence a customer by information rather than by pressure.
COS2	I answer a customer's questions about products as correctly as I can. A good salesperson has to have the customer's best interest in mind. I try to achieve my goals by satisfying customers. I try to find out what kind of product would be most helpful to a customer.
COS3	I am willing to disagree with a customer in order to help him/her make a better decision. I try to give customers an accurate expectation of what the product will do for them. I try to help customers achieve their goals. I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product that helps him/her solve that problem.
Salesperson Selling Orientation	
SOS1	I decide what products to offer on the basis of what I can convince customers to buy, not on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run. I imply to a customer that something is beyond my control when it is not. I spend more time trying to persuade a customer to buy than I do trying to discover his/her needs. I keep alert for weaknesses in a customer's personality so I can use them to put pressure on him/her to buy.
SOS2	I paint too rosy a picture of my products, to make them sound as good as possible. I treat a customer as a rival. I try to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy a customer. I begin the sales talk for a product before exploring a customer's needs with him/.her.
SOS3	If I am not sure a product is right for a customer, I will still apply pressure to get him/her to buy. I pretend to agree with customers to please them. It is necessary to stretch the truth in describing a product to a customer. I try to sell a customer all I can convince him/her to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy.
Outcome Performance	
OP1	Producing sales or blanket contracts with long-term profitability. Exceeding all sales targets and objectives for your territory during the year.
OP2	Generating a high level of dollar sales. Identifying and selling major accounts in your territory.
OP3	Producing a high market share for your company in your territory. Making sales of those products with the highest profit margins. Quickly generating sales of new company products.

Selling Behavioral Performance	
SBP1	Convincing customers that you understand their unique problems and concerns. Keeping abreast of your company's production and technological developments. Working out solutions to a customer's questions or objections.
SBP2	Communicating your sales presentation clearly and concisely. Listening attentively to identify and understand the real concerns for your customer. Using established contacts to develop new customers.
SBP3	Knowing the applications and functions of company products. Being able to detect causes of operating failure of company products. When possible, troubleshooting system problems and conducting minor field service to correct product misapplications and/or product failures.

Writing Effective Prospecting Emails: An Instructional Guide

By Jennifer L. Dapko and Andrew B. Artis

The massive and cumbersome amount of advice on how to plan and write effective prospecting emails from communications experts is condensed into an easy to use guide for salespeople. This guide offers specific instruction around five key requirements for writing effective prospecting emails: 1) grab and hold the prospect's attention, 2) instill trust, 3) communicate a call-to-action, 4) avoid perceptions of spam, and 5) fine tune your writing. Sales managers and instructors will find this "how to" guide especially useful in preparing novice salespeople and reviewing with veterans what are the best practices for using email to court new clients.

Effective prospecting is necessary for salespeople charged with discovering, qualifying and winning over potential customers, and this makes writing effective prospecting emails a critical skill. For example, Forrester Research reports that executives prefer salespeople contact them via email rather than by telephone (Santucci 2010). Emails allow executives to quickly scan topics for issues and route the email to the correct person (Santucci 2010). Many salespeople seem to understand the preference for emails: business professionals receive an average of 13 unsolicited emails per day (Radicati 2011). Unfortunately, unsolicited business-to-business prospecting emails are only opened by the intended recipient an average 9 to15 percent of the time and only 3 percent of the recipients, at best, are likely to learn more by clicking on a link provided by the sender (Gospe 2013). This means that as much as 91 percent of prospecting emails never even get opened. Hence, salespeople need to find ways to be more effective users of email as a tool for prospecting. Given the large amount of advice published on the "dos and don'ts" of crafting business emails (e.g., a single *Google* search yields more than 8,000 hits) it is often overwhelming for salespeople to master this important topic on their own. Therefore, we provide a condensed guide for salespeople by consolidating the best practices for writing persuasive emails reported by experienced sales veterans, marketing consults, and communications experts. Sales managers and instructors will find this guide especially useful in preparing novice salespeople who are about to enter the field, and reviewing with veterans how to craft more effective emails.

Jennifer L. Dapko (Ph.D., University of South Florida), Assistant Professor, Florida Southern College, Lakeland, FL, jdapko@flsouthern.edu

Adrew B. Artis (Ph.D., University of Tennessee - Knoxville), Associate Professor of Marketing, Muma College of Business, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, aartis@usf.edu

THINK BEFORE YOU WRITE

All business communications benefit when authors use strategic thinking (Chan 2005); therefore, it is essential to position the art of crafting prospecting emails within the larger strategic process of selling. Preplanning is very important when targeting an email at a prospect, and it requires that the salesperson understand three things: 1) the specific prospecting plan for the client, 2) the selling firm's value proposition for the client, and 3) the exact goal of the email (Hershkowitz-Coore 2012).

Review the Prospecting Plan for the Client

A well-designed prospecting plan for a potential client clarifies how the salesperson (and/or team) will implement the firm's sales strategy: identify the decision makers and their roles within the prospect's firm; set specific, measurable and attainable sales goals; identify how to use a mix of prospecting methods; document and evaluate client response; etc. (Johnston and Marshall 2008). When crafting the prospecting plan consider carefully how the different communication channels will be used in combination (e.g., email, website, social media, telephone, direct mail, etc.) to fulfill the information needs of the prospect, rather than focusing on how any single communication tool will be used by the seller (Shipley and Schwalbe 2008). Hence,

prospecting emails have to be married with the larger selling effort used to target a potential client.

Review the Value Proposition for the Client

Demonstrating value is a key component of selling whether communicating with customers face-to-face, over the phone, or in writing. This requires reviewing the prospect's "pain" points and then clearly communicating the product's corresponding benefits through a value statement (Ciotti 2013; Connick n.d.; Duistermaat 2013; Mann n.d.). Salespeople should not assume prospects will independently recognize why they should act on email sent to them (Ellis n.d.). Before writing prospecting emails salespeople should have a good understanding of their own firms' value proposition and the premier benefit their products provide to prospects. Premier benefits typically help prospects to: increase profits, drive revenue, or bolster sales; save time or money; and, feel good, look good, sound smart, have fun, experience less stress, be safe, feel secure and/or confident (Hershkowitz-Coore 2012). Hence, take the time to evaluate the prospect's unique needs and the selling firm's value proposition for better segmenting and targeting.

Review the Purpose for the Email

Once the salesperson is confident that an email is an appropriate tool for a given situation, specify the goal of the email and measure its success against this standard (Chan 2005). For example, if your goal is to simply get the prospect to visit your homepage then a "win" occurs if the prospect clicks on your URL link. Given the email-recipient's role within the firm (e.g., decider, initiator, user, influencer, gatekeeper, buyer, or controller) it is important to clarify if s/he has the authority and ability to act upon your request before drafting the email (Bonoma 1982). The email-recipient cannot answer the call-to-action if it is not within her/his power.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Our primary research objectives are to condense and categorize the large amount of over lapping advice on prospecting emails into a manageable number of themes that organize and explain the best practices used in the field. To accomplish this, two research methods were used in combination: a literature review was used to provide a subjective narrative overview summarizing previous work (Weed 2005), and then a qualitative content analysis was used to substantiate the reliability of the themes that arose (Kolbe and Burnett 1991).

Literature Review

A literature review of the works of nearly 50 authors and more than 1,000 pages from articles, books, book chapters, reports, blogs, and interviews were used to develop this guide. Following widely-used practices for qualitative research the first step was designed to gain reasonable coverage of the concept rather than maximizing sample size; thus, we continued to collect additional data until the advice was largely redundant or off topic (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Patton 1990). A well-constructed literature review helps the target audience make sense of a large amount of information. Hence, we review the extant information on how to write a prospecting email and consolidate it into digestible chunks for salespeople, sales managers, and sales trainers. In all, we catalogued, consolidated, and summarized 260 tips suggested by on-the-ground sources whose livelihoods depend on writing persuasive emails—from frontline reps to boardroom executives. The diversity of perspectives allowed us to include tips, ideas, and advice from a wide cross section of professionals who work as sales consultants, marketing strategists, corporate sales trainers, and more. Table 1 demonstrates the breadth of expertise of authors represented in the literature review.

Sample

What was revealed during the process of collecting the data was rather surprising: academic research related to email communication is sparse (an exception is Dapko and Artis 2014). Instead, practitioners have been pushing the boundaries of what effective email should and shouldn't include using intuition, past experience, and trial-and-error as their guide. This justifies the use of practitioner sources as the starting point for this research, and it identifies an opportunity for academic researchers to investigate why certain prospecting emails may be more effective. The catalogue of tips, ideas and advice were from the following sources:

TABLE 1: Description of Literature Reviewed

Author	Author Expertise	Publication Type	% of Tips in Master Database
Bellows 2012	Founder & CEO of Email Marketing Consulting Firm	Web Article	0.4%
Carlozo 2014	Columnist and Contributing Writer	Web Article	0.4%
Ciotti 2013	Development Psychology Expert	Web Article	6.6%
Colombo 2000	E-Business Expert and President of Influence Technologies	Trade Publication	1.5%
Connick n.d.	Sales Expert and Content Strategist for Nat'l Assoc. of Sales Professionals	Web Article	3.1%
Cuciniello 2013	Corporate Communications Trainer	Trade Publication	4.6%
Dalton 2004	Marketing Expert	Trade Publication	1.2%
Dapko and Artis 2014	Academics, Ph.D.s in Marketing	Trade Publication	0.8%
Duistermaat 2013	Marketer, Copywriter, and Corporate Trainer	Web Article	7.7%
Duistermaat n.d.	Marketer, Copywriter, and Corporate Trainer	Web Article	1.9%
Ellis n.d.	Journalist	Web Article	1.9%
Email Excellence 2012	Author Unknown	Web Article	1.9%
Fralic 2013	Business Development Expert	Web Article	1.2%
Friedman 2012	President of a Customer Service Training Company	Web Article	3.5%
FTC 2014	Author Unknown	Web Article	0.4%
Gardner 2013	Sales Consultant and American Marketing Assoc. Marketer of the Year Award	Web Article	0.4%
Hershkowitz-Coore 2012	Corporate Sales Trainer and Professional Speaker	Book	17.8%
Huppke 2014	Business Journalist	Web Article	0.4%
James 2014	Book Author, Professional Speaker, and Award-Winning Blogger	Web Article	1.9%
Kawasaki 2012	Book Author, Marketing Executive, and Professional Speaker	Trade Publication	3.9%
Krogue 2010	Book Author, Professional Speaker and Co-Founder of Inside Sales	Web Article	0.4%
Mailchimp n.d.a.	Author Unknown	Web Article	0.4%
Mailchimp n.d.b.	Author Unknown	Web Article	0.4%
Maly 2012	President and Co-Founder of Natural Persuasion Technologies	Web Article	1.9%
Mann n.d.	Business Writer	Web Article	1.9%
Marsh 2013	Human Behavior User Experience Design Expert	Web Article	1.5%
Martin 2011	Online Behavior Design Expert	Web Article	1.2%
Maslen 2007	Book Author, Sales Copywriter, and Consultant	Book	3.9%
Matz 2008	Marketing Expert	Trade Publication	4.6%
McLuhan 2007	Marketing, Digital Media, and HR Journalist	Trade Publication	0.8%
Michael 2008	Business Development Manager	Trade Publication	0.8%
Nielsen 2007	Academic, Inventor, Internet Usability Expert, and Consultant	Web Article	0.4%
Nordquist n.d.	Book Author and Academic with Ph.D. in English	Web Article	2.7%
Oliver 2006	Book Author and Advertising Copywriter	Book	1.9%
Price 2013	Professional Copywriter	Web Article	1.5%
Resnick 1997	Journalist, Author, Consultant, and Entrepreneur	Trade Publication	1.9%
Robertson 2013	Book Author	Web Article	0.4%
Rubin 2012	Technology Product Development Expert	Web Article	0.4%
Sales Insider 2011	Author Unknown	Trade Publication	1.2%
Sales Leader 2007	Author Unknown	Trade Publication	0.8%
Santucci 2010	Business Consultant, Advisor, Personal Coach, and Professional Speaker	Web Article	0.4%
Senior Market Advisor 2013	Author Unknown	Trade Publication	2.7%
Shipley 2008	Book Author and Journalist	Book	3.5%
Stolley 2010	Academic Expert of Digital Writing	Web Article	0.4%
Tyler 2013	Digital Marketing Strategist	Web Article	2.3%
Wolfel 2013	Sales and Marketing Consultant and Entrepreneur	Web Article	0.4%

- Thirty (30) open-access web articles found on search engines (*Google*, *Bing*, and *Yahoo!*) using "how to write a persuasive email to customers" as the query were identified.
- Twelve (12) articles from trade publications (e.g., newspapers, magazines, and trade journals) found in databases (*ProQuest* and *Business Source Complete*) were found. We broaden the query to "email" in the article title and "business writing" or "business communication" as subjects after getting no hits from the more specific one used with the search engines. There were 184 articles retrieved from this broadened search, but the majority of articles retrieved focused on email technologies, direct email mass marketing, and intra-organizational emailing, rather than one-to-one emails to customers.
- Four common press books on the topic of writing persuasive emails and copy were also included.

Content Analysis

We then employed a content analysis to consolidate, catalogue, and summarize the findings for greater objectivity and reliability. An expert on the topic and lead coder conducted the first pass through the data to consolidate the recommendations by eliminating duplicates: this step resulted in 125 unique email prospecting recommendations. The second pass was used to develop theme categories that could be used to organize all the recommendations. Five overarching themes resulted from an iterative process whereby the lead coder moved back and forth through the data looking for, editing, adding, and modifying categories (Boyatzis 1998; Kolbe and Burnett 1991; Miles and Huberman 1994).

For greater rigor and reliability, two additional independent coders were then used to check the results. Specifically, the template analysis method was used to provide additional coders with *a priori* themes. This method is especially useful when analyzing a large amount of data or when there are multiple coders involved comparing their perspectives for a particular topic (see Cassell and Symon 2004 for an in-depth discussion). The independent coders were each given a code book with the 125 recommendations and the five *a priori* themes with their operational descriptions. Each coder then worked independently to categorize each recommendation. There were few disagreements which attests to the accuracy of the five categories (Rust and Cooil 1994). Five recommendations where there were no pair-wise agreements (i.e., no agreement between any pair of judges: A-B, B-C, and A-C) had to be resolved. A discussion among the three coders revealed this was from too little context around the items (e.g., "tell a story") to clearly identify the meaning and/or one best theme. In those instances the coders went back to the source for contextual clarity and recoded the recommendations. This resulted in agreement with at least two of the three coders for each recommendation.

The inter-rater reliability was then calculated. The proportional reduction in loss (PRL) reliability measure, a "direct extension and generalization of Cronbach's alpha to the qualitative case" (Rust and Cooil 1994, p. 9) was calculated by dividing the total number of pair-wise agreements (n = 271) between the three judges (one lead coder and two trained coders) by the total number of potential pair-wise agreements (n = 375) for a total percentage of agreements (72%). The pair-wise percentage of agreements of 72% corresponds to a PRL reliability of .94 indicating the inter-rater reliability is more than adequate (Rust and Cooil 1994).

INSIGHTS

Measuring Email Effectiveness

The most commonly cited measures for email effectiveness were:

1. Opens – number of recipients who open the email to read it.
2. Click-throughs – number of recipients who click on a link provided within the email.
3. Conversions – number of recipients who respond to the email's call-to-action (e.g., calling/placing an order, signing up for a newsletter, donating, requesting more information, etc.).

MailChimp reports average open rates and click-through rates for almost 50 different categories of content based on emails deployed by seven million users from its

email software system. Average open rates range from 13% for daily deals-related content to 31% for hobbies-related content; and average click-through rates range from 1.58% to 6.65% (MailChimp n.d., a). According to Yesmail (2014) salespeople specifically sending business-to-business emails can expect open and click-through rates of about 18.7% and 1.5% respectively, based on its five billion emails deployed from Yesmail's email software system (Yesmail's analysis included emails to both current and prospective customers, so salespeople sending emails to prospects may see even lower open and click-through rates).

Improving Email Effectiveness

Communications experts cite many different ways to improve email effectiveness. First, executives won't read an email that isn't personalized or appears to be a generic email blast (Santucci 2010). Second, emails are less likely to be opened and responded to the longer they sit in an inbox. Therefore, salespeople should aim to send emails when their recipients are most likely to be checking their inbox. The best times are between 8-9 a.m. and at around 3 p.m. according to GetResponse's analysis of 21 million emails deployed from its email software system in 2012 (Andrzejewska 2012).

Across the board, however, communications professionals agree that content, more than anything else is "king." In order to increase email effectiveness content in prospecting emails should: 1) quickly grab attention, 2) build trust, 3) communicate a call-to-action for the recipient, 4) avoid spam perceptions and spam filters, and 5) be finely tuned for effective language choices, format, and length (see Figure 1). The Guide for Writing Persuasive Prospecting Emails is focused on these central content-related themes and suggests specific ways that salespeople can enhance their email effectiveness in each of these five categories.

FIGURE 1: Core Concepts in Writing Persuasive Prospecting Emails

GUIDE FOR WRITING PERSUASIVE PROSPECTING EMAILS

A list of techniques is provided, but which elements of the guide should be used will vary depending on the situation and the salesperson's objectives. At times different recommendations may seem to conflict. For example, when writing subject lines to grab the prospect's attention, salespeople should accurately reflect the content of the email but at the same time ensure the subject line is tantalizing enough to get the reader to open it. This is an unfortunate paradox when also combined with the recommendation to avoid words that trigger perceptions of spam (e.g., clearance, free, bargain, sales, call, etc.) because it is those words that are often the most tantalizing to readers. Therefore, while the Guide provides a variety of suggestions to improve email effectiveness, it is up to the salesperson to compare the choices available and pick the best for the situation.

1. Grab and Hold the Prospect's Attention

Effective prospecting emails require that the recipient do three things: open it, process the information, and then act as requested. It is the action taken by the recipient that is most critical, but the first two steps are essential precursors. There are a variety of ways to grab the prospect's attention. It is important to consider the email recipient's role within the purchasing process, and the personal profile of the prospect when choosing which ones to use. This allows the salesperson to tailor the message for maximum effectiveness. Here are suggestions for grabbing and holding attention. The email subject line, opening line, and postscript are three hot spots of email that require special attention (Kawasaki 2012).

Subject Line

The subject line is particularly tricky to craft: it has to compel the prospect and accurately reflect the message, while also avoiding spam filters and firewalls that flag email as "Junk" mail.

- Leave out trickery. Subject lines should always accurately reflect the content (FTC 2009). Do not use a ruse to get the prospect to open your email. Tricking the recipient into opening your email is shortsighted, unethical, and will damage you and your company's reputation. Every executive can tell a story of how they were duped into opening an email, but none tell how this led to an outcome that favored the salesperson. If the subject line says "important message" then it better be really important to the prospect (Colombo 2000; Cuciniello 2013; Maly 2012), but beware that "urgent" messages may be blocked as spam (Mailchimp n.d., b).

- Make the subject line highly relevant and tantalizing. For example, indicate what the reader will receive or how they'll benefit from opening the email; communicate a topic that means something important to the prospect (Ellis n.d.; James 2014; Nordquist n.d.).

- Slow down the reader by including numerals. Try using specific numbers such as an actual amount other customers have saved by using your product (e.g., "$4,570"), or "3 tips for cost-cutting" (Duistermaat 2013; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012). Eye-tracking studies have found that numerals tend to slow down readers and attract attention because they may be perceived as representing important facts (Nielsen 2007).

- Quantify the time commitment if possible. Try "3 quick questions" or "5 minutes could reduce costs by 5%" (Ciotti 2013; Duistermaat 2013; Friedman 2012; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012; Insider Sales 2011).

- Write your subject line to demonstrate your message is highly personalized, such as "I love your products," "Sue recommended I get in touch," "Ideas for [recent happenings with their company]," "Question about [recent happening with their company]," and "Have you considered [a recommendation]." Another option is to use your prospect's first name in the subject line such as "John, quick question for you" (Kawasaki 2012; Senior Market Advisor 2013; Tyler 2013).

- Have an important and time-sensitive subject line to instill urgency to respond such as "Webinar starts in 1 hour" (Senior Market Advisor 2013).

- Keep the subject line to a maximum of seven words or 50 characters. One consulting firm found that a two-word subject line is ideal for maximizing open-rates (Bellows 2012). Subject lines should be long enough to accurately describe the email content, but short enough so that the prospect can read the entire subject line when scanning it in their email inbox (Cuciniello 2013; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012). Although 50 characters may be fully readable from a computer, that length may be too long for some mobile phones so cut out unnecessary words. In fact, half of all emails opened occur from a mobile device (Experian 2014). When writing subject lines for mobile phone readers, capping the characters to 35 is ideal: although Android mobile phones wrap the subject line text to the second line, iPhone mobile phones cut off the subject line text at about 35 characters.

Opening Line(s)

- Tell a story that creates an emotional connection to gain interest. One way is to describe a customer's positive experience they've had with you. Retell their experience (in their own words) of how they *feel* when using your product or service (Hershkowitz-Coore 2012). However, don't use the customer's name or company name unless given permission.

- Avoid describing your product with vague adjectives. What exactly is "excellent service," "high quality," or a "beautiful assortment"? Help the customer create a mental image of what you're talking about—give specific details and concrete examples (Oliver 2006; Price 2013). For instance, rather than stating you offer a "high quality product" try stating what makes it high quality such as "indestructible carbon fiber".

- Focus on the prospect. Write about him/her, and avoid using "I" or "me" but instead use "you" and "your" (Duistermaat 2013; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012; Matz and Tier 2008).

- Encourage interactivity and ask a question as you would in a face-to-face meeting (Cuciniello 2013; Dalton 2004; Duistermaat 2013; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012). Ask a question your value proposition addresses which aligns with the prospect's problem. For example, you might ask: "Is reducing cost a priority?" or "Are you looking to acquire new customers?" (Tyler 2013).

- Demonstrate that the prospect was specifically chosen to receive your email. You can do this by communicating exclusivity and preferential treatment (i.e., not everyone is getting this email) or making them the first to know about something (Marsh 2013; Senior Market Advisor 2013).

Closing

- Close with a question (Resnick 1997; Wolfel 2013). For instance you might ask, "What additional information would you like me to include in my follow-up email?" This type of question lets the prospect know you aren't going away unless specifically told to do so.

- Clearly state your call-to-action and what you want the prospect to do next (Stolley 2010). For example, "Joe, by simply clicking on the link provided you can access our inventory and can compare our products to your current provider."

- Use a postscript (P.S.) to catch the prospect's attention. For example, give additional information that might get them to go back and view the email more carefully (Connick n.d.; Matz and Tier 2008).

2. Instill Trust

Prospects want to like and trust the people with whom they do business. Salespeople who are authentic and able to successfully signal credibility are more likely to be perceived as honest and trustworthy (Wood, Boles, and Babin 2008). There are several tactical solutions for instilling trust in a prospecting email.

Be Likeable

- Have good manners. Be positive, acknowledge they are busy, let the prospect know you will accept the burden of following up, say "please" and "thank you," be brief but not blunt, and show their response will be valued and appreciated (Cuciniello 2013; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012; Nordquist n.d.;

Shipley and Schwalbe 2008). Additionally, avoid saying "thank you in advance" as this may come off "as snotty and a command crudely cloaked in premature gratitude" (Shipley 2008, p. 130).

- Avoid requesting too much effort by the prospect before building rapport and agreement. Establish a connection with the prospect before presenting your call-to-action (Maly 2012). Consider excluding links to more information in the first email contact as it could be perceived as assumptive, pushy, and desperate (Ciotti 2013). Nobody likes to be told what to do, especially from a stranger. In some cases, such as when writing to a highly influential decision-maker, consider asking for nothing in the first email you send (Ciotti 2013). Use it as an opportunity to introduce yourself.

- Mirror the prospect's communication style if s/he responds to you. Match her/his email length; don't respond with one word to their very detailed message, and don't write a long message to their short one (Hershkowitz-Coore 2012). This is the equivalent of increasing likeability by mirroring prospects' nonverbal behaviors in a face-to-face setting (e.g., leaning forward and smiling per Kulesza et al. 2014).

Build Rapport

- Emphasize the connection you have with the prospect and what you have in common (Maslen 2007). Do your homework on *Google*, *LinkedIn*, and *Facebook*. Cite specific previous interactions you may have had, mutual connections, or similar interests (Ciotti 2013; Fralic 2013; Friedman 2012; Martin, Ngo, and Leung 2011; Shipley and Schwalbe 2008).

- Avoid fake rapport-building statements that lack personalization such as "how are you today?", "have a great day," and "happy Friday" (Hershkowitz-Coore 2012). Give a sincere compliment instead, or wish them luck on an important upcoming event such as a merger or new product launch (Ciotti 2013).

- Don't waste the prospect's time with irrelevant stories, jokes, and cleverness. Quickly get to the incentive on why s/he should respond right away (Ciotti 2013). Relevant customer stories are acceptable, but they should be applicable and concise.

Be Credible

- Support your claims. Prove what you're saying with testimonials, facts, studies, hard data, an explanations of how things work, before and after photos, etc. (Hershkowitz-Coore 2012; James 2014; Mann n.d.; Price 2013).

- Show your expertise by including commentary on recent news (such as a new discovery or a newly passed regulation) in the prospect's industry (Connick n.d.).

- Create a good reputation for yourself, not by stating it but by demonstrating it. Establish who you are by giving examples of how you've helped other customers. For example, describe a time when you went above and beyond what was expected of you rather than simply stating you're "highly reliable" (Marsh 2013). As with previous recommendations involving customer information, don't use the customer's name or company name when soliciting business from another unless given permission. If it's necessary to keep it generic rather than stating the customer's name and organization, you might say, "Last year I worked with a customer in a similar industry who faced the same challenges within her organization as you might be facing in yours."

Be Genuine

- Write with a conversational voice. Craft the email as though you are talking to your customers and let your personality come through by using words and expressions unique to you. An easy way to accomplish this is to call your own telephone number, leave a message as if it were for the prospect, and then transcribe it for your email (Connick n.d.; Duistermaat 2013; Gardner 2013; Maslen 2007; Robertson 2013).

- Use a closing statement that isn't pretentious or contrived. If you're not Italian then don't close with "ciao!" and avoid "take care" and "best of luck" as this may give the impression that you know something the prospect doesn't. Try "all the best," "warm regards," and "thank you" for less formal emails and "sincerely," "cordially," and "respectfully" for more formal emails (Hershkowitz-Coore 2012).

Demonstrate Confidence

- Concisely state why you've sent the email; confidence comes from precise writing based on a clear understanding of the problem being solved (Ciotti 2013).
- Address prospects by their first names, not last to avoid false respect for authority and to also convey you're at the same level (not below) your prospect (Marsh 2013). However, be cautious because this could backfire with some prospects who expect more formality. A good rule to follow when it comes to using the prospect's name in an email is to write what you'd normally say in a face-to-face encounter. If, for instance, you would address the CEO by surname in person, don't switch to the first name when sending email, and vice versa. With either approach, don't overuse the prospect's name in the email as it will sound too much like a call-center script (Duistermaat 2013).
- Don't overuse "please" and "thank you" as it may come across as begging or being desperate. So rather than write "please take a look at this…" try instead approaching your prospect with a mutually beneficial opportunity such as "You might enjoy reading this…" (Ciotti 2013).
- Anticipate and address their fears before they even think of them by addressing their top three objections in a natural manner (Maly 2012).

3. Communicate a Call-to-Action

Persuasive calls-to-action should be specific, clearly understood, and immediately actionable (Martin, Ngo, and Leung 2011). Hence, before writing prospecting emails salespeople should have a clear idea as to what they want the prospect to do. Some examples include replying back to the email, calling, subscribing to a newsletter, accepting an invitation to attend an event or participate in a meeting, visiting a website for more information, and buying now. The first step is to choose one goal for the email: what do you want your prospect to do and by when? Choose one goal otherwise you risk confusion (Ciotti 2013).

Your goal will drive the specific call-to-action that is communicated in the email as well as how the effectiveness of the email is to be measured. Measurement provides an understanding of what works and what doesn't and an opportunity for continuous improvement. For example, if the goal is to get the prospect to agree to a meeting, then the call-to-action should be an explicit request for a meeting; and the metric that is tracked is the number of meetings scheduled and/or completed. Well written calls-to-action are critical to measuring the success of your email prospecting efforts.

- Be specific about what the prospect should do next. Make your request direct and obvious by putting it on a separate line, not hidden within a paragraph (Cuciniello 2013; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012). If your call-to-action is to have the prospect click through to a web page, then emphasize that hyperlink with an action verb, such as "visit this web page for more information about [product xyz]" (Mann n.d.).
- Motivate the prospect to respond by providing a deadline for offers and incentives. Consider including a due date in the subject line (Cuciniello 2013; Duistermaat 2013; Ellis n.d.; Email Excellence 2012; Mann n.d.).
- When asking questions, narrow the range of options down to two or three and ask them to pick one such as "which day next week works best for you to meet: Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday?" or "which product are you most interested in: the entry model or the commercial model?" (Cuciniello 2013).
- Focus on next steps or reiterate a point you don't want to be lost such as a key deadline in the last closing sentence (Email Excellence 2012; James 2014).

4. Avoid Perceptions of Spam

It's important for salespeople to avoid spam filters when crafting attention-getting emails. Spam is the online equivalent of unwanted door-to-door solicitation. It is most often sent in mass distribution with little effort by the sender to segment the market or to personalize the message. Unfortunately, aggressive spam filters and firewalls may prevent legitimate non-spam emails from reaching the intended inbox. The best way to avoid spam filters is to understand what causes filtering.

Every spam filter and firewall is configured differently, but generally, emails will get flagged as spam when they attempt to gain attention by: talking about lots of money, describing a breakthrough, containing an urgent matter, and offering a money back guarantee (Mailchimp n.d., b). Additionally, writing in all capital letters, using too many exclamation points, and including sales-pitch phrases or generic terms like "Click here!", "Free Trial!", or "Once in a lifetime opportunity!" are also likely to trigger spam filters to dump emails into junk folders (Mailchimp n.d., b). Sales managers and instructors are encouraged to review *The Ultimate List of Email SPAM Trigger Words* provided by email marketing firm, HubSpot (available at blog.hubspot.com). However, note that while this list may be a helpful resource, HubSpot received quite a bit of commentary from email marketers, most of whom commented that spam filters are much more sophisticated and use more complex algorithms beyond simply word-scanning to identify spam. We encourage sales managers and instructors to at least be aware of potential trigger words, and for salespeople to avoid combining too many of them into a single email as a precaution against prospective firms using less sophisticated spam tools that simply scan key words. Additionally, to avoid legal penalties associated with spamming allegations, sales managers and instructors are encouraged to read more on this topic from the Federal Trade Commission (See *CAN-SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business* available online at www.business.FTC.gov).

Emails that don't get flagged by spam filters still run the risk of being perceived as spam by the reader. Prospects have learned to tune out fancy looking emails that look too "corporate," because they are an indication of spam or mass email (Krogue 2010), which is why some experts suggest keeping emails simple with text-only formatting and no artwork (i.e., colorful headers and footers). One research study comparing evaluations of the salesperson (i.e., friendliness, experience, knowledge, credibility, and trustworthiness) for low and high visually appealing prospecting emails reports:

> "While fancy emails full of graphics and photos may be visually appealing they are also not the best choice for an initial-contact email. Do not send highly visual initial-contact emails. Stick to text-based formats when possible…There is one exception to this rule. Including a company logo may signal credibility and thus should be used in situations where perceived credibility may be especially low" (Dapko and Artis 2014, p. 261).

In the Dapko and Artis study (2014) text-only email resulted in more favorable evaluations of the salesperson: the email with the visuals seemed like a generic-mass email whereas the text-only email seemed like a personalized one. Hence, salespeople should make a concerted effort to focus more on executing content-related tips offered in this guide and less on designing a glitzy email. To avoid perceptions of spam, do:

- Omit clever quotations, artwork, fancy headers and footers, photos, and social media buttons to avoid giving the impression you're sending a mass email (Ciotti 2013; Dapko and Artis 2014; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012; Nordquist n.d.).
- Avoid using words that are known spam-catchers (Rubin 2012). Included are: buy, clearance, order, cash, claims, cost, discount, free, money, bargain, investment, price, quote, profits, money, sales, call, and deal.

5. Fine Tune Your Writing

Finally, a persuasive email has proper formatting, an appropriate length, and precise language choices which aid in exciting and moving the prospect toward taking action.

Format & Length

- Avoid bolding, underlining, colors, yellow highlighting, and funky font styles to make your point. If you must use these formats then make

sure the emphasized words are important to the prospect (Duistermaat 2013; Duistermaat n.d.; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012).

- Avoid caps, especially with negative words, as it connotes shouting; however, "shouting" a word or two in joy or celebration is acceptable, such as "CONGRATULATIONS," "YOU MADE OUR DAY," or "HOORAY," but use them cautiously, carefully, and kindly (Friedman 2012; Kawasaki 2012; Nordquist n.d.; Sales Leader 2007; Shipley and Schwalbe 2008).
- Enhance readability by using bullet points for lists, adding spaces between paragraphs, writing short sentences, and separating out questions on to their own line or numbering them if you have multiple (Cuciniello 2013; Duistermaat 2013; Mann n.d.).
- Avoid using exclamation points because they may seem too dramatic. The proper cure for exclamation point over-use is to use more descriptive language to replace what would be conveyed with exclamation points (Huppke 2012).
- Avoid using the high priority flag and return receipt request functions (Hershkowitz-Coore 2012). An unsolicited prospecting email will rarely be urgent to the prospect and requesting a return receipt may be perceived as obtrusive. These email options should be reserved for established contacts only.
- Limit your recipients. The more people you send an email to, the less likely any single person will respond to it (Kawasaki 2012). Hold one person accountable by putting only one email address in the "To" line. However, if you must send the email to multiple recipients, then show respect by listing them according to their position within the company (Sales Insider 2011).
- When possible keep your email short, no longer than five sentences, and lead with the most important information (to them). If you find yourself typing "I'm sorry for how long this email is" then your email is too long. A simple guideline to follow is the higher within their organization prospects are, the shorter your email should be. The exception is when your email is mostly praise and you're asking for nothing, then a longer email may be acceptable (Cuciniello 2013; Duistermaat 2013; Fralic 2013; Kawasaki 2012; Martin, Ngo, and Leung 2011; Matz and Tier 2008; Michael 2008; Nordquist n.d.; Resnick 1997).
- Avoid attachments, especially large ones. If you must attach a file then explain its necessity in your message (Ciotti 2013; Colombo 2000; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012).
- Use hyperlinks to share additional information, but make sure the link text doesn't wrap to two lines otherwise the link may not work properly for the prospect (Ciotti 2013; Colombo 2000; Kawasaki 2012; McLuhan 2007). In addition, check to be sure the link works.

Language

- Eliminate outdated phrases (e.g., "as per your request," "attached please find," "in other words," "more than happy," and "please do not hesitate to call"), clichés and overused terms (e.g., "reach out," "touch base," "fast-paced," "thought leader," and "at the end of the day"), words that may make your prospect feel stupid (e.g., "basically," "obviously," "evidently," and "clearly"), and unfamiliar words such as industry-specific jargon (Cuciniello 2013; Hershkowitz-Coore 2012).
- Do use contractions (e.g., "you're," "you'll," etc.). Contractions will keep your language authentic and natural (Matz and Tier 2008; Nordquist n.d.; Shipley and Schwalbe 2008).
- Don't use abbreviations or texting acronyms (Matz and Tier 2008; Nordquist n.d.; Shipley and Schwalbe 2008).
- Write in the active voice. Replace passive verbs with action verbs to make your pitch come alive and your sentences active (Carlozo 2014; Oliver 2006; Matz and Tier 2008). For example, write "we're in the midst of planning for our off-the-charts annual blowout" rather than saying "there is going to be a sale coming up".

AFTER YOU HIT "SEND": TRACK, MEASURE, AND REVISE

Email tracking promotes an understanding of which email versions drive action and which ones get ignored. Prime areas for testing effectiveness include the subject line, the pitch (or value proposition), and the call-to-action; and the best time to test is when there's an opportunity to send emails in larger quantities: when sending information on sales promotions, holiday well-wishes, and major announcements about your company (e.g., product launches, customer acquisitions, hiring employees of substantial industry expertise, etc.).

The process for testing effectiveness requires creating two versions of the email, keeping them as similar as possible, and changing just the part you want to test. For example, if you'd like to test subject-line effectiveness, then send half of your prospects an email with subject line A, and the other half with subject line B. Create a spreadsheet or use your existing customer relationship management email system to note which prospects received which version. Then track which prospects responded to your email. Keep the subject line that resulted in more responses. Next continue this A/B testing for the pitch, and then for the call-to-action. Additionally, salespeople may also consider simply asking prospects what about the email caught their attention and make a note for future improvements.

Crafting compelling emails takes time. We recommend that salespeople first ask their sales managers or marketing departments if research has already been done within their company to understand optimal email performance, and craft emails around those findings first before starting from scratch. Tracking emails also takes time. If a system is not already in place to track and measure, we recommend Sidekick by Hubspot (see sidekick.com) or similar solutions. Sidekick easily integrates with Microsoft Outlook and Gmail and tracks who and what percentage is opening the email (i.e., open rate) and who and what percentage is clicking on hyperlinks within the email (i.e., click-through rate). At the time this article was written, the cost was free for 200 notifications per month.

Getting Started

Writing an effective prospecting email is a challenge. Yet in some sales scenarios, emailing may make for a better contact method than calling, such as when the message is complex and when going through a gatekeeper to reach the decision-maker is unavoidable (Michael 2008). Emails allow the message to be received in full by the intended recipient. It also enables prospects to digest the information on their own terms.

There is no one formula or rubric that works for every target audience. We readily acknowledge there are too many tips offered in this guide to be executed into a single email, and doing so may be frustrating. However, we encourage salespeople to carefully consider the goal for each prospecting email along with the specific characteristics of each prospect and apply some of the tips in this guide—then track results, adjust, and improve accordingly. For salespeople new to writing prospecting emails, we recommend the best way to use this guide is to organize the writing process into seven steps:

1. Start with the body. What is your 30 second "elevator pitch" you use in face-to-face settings? Write that down: explain the problem your product or service solves and give an easy to visualize example.
2. Add a personalized attention-getting statement as your opening sentence. If you've met the prospect before, say so, if not, tell them something interesting you just learned about their company or industry.
3. State what you'd like the prospect to do next in your closing sentence—call, email, click on a link—and that you'll follow up in a few days.
4. Add a respectful salutation: try "Hi John" or "Dear John."
5. Add a sincere sign-off: try "Warm regards" or "Sincerely" followed by your full name, title, company, and phone number(s).
6. Finish with the email subject line. It should accurately summarize your email.
7. Finally, compare your email draft to the Guide tips and correct deviations. For example: replace spam catching words and phrases with something else; try periods instead of exclamation points; and focus squarely on the prospect by rephrasing sentences that use "I" and "me" with "you" and "your."

SUMMARY

There are several practical uses for this research. For salespeople, our instructional guide allows them to quickly expand their knowledge of how to craft persuasive emails, without the hassle of weeding for hours through countless articles and books. The myriad of tips in the Guide offer something new to learn for all experience levels, whether it is a novice or experienced salesperson.

For sales trainers, the Guide is a good way to take mediocre salespeople and quickly boost their email effectiveness. Even for sales stars, the Guide is a good tool to help them fine tune their writing. We recommend trainers organize the training around the five suggested key concepts for writing persuasive prospecting emails (see Figure 1). Each concept can be reviewed separately, or combined, depending on the time allotment for the training and the needs of those being trained.

For managers seeking to hire new salespeople, the Guide could be used as a filtering tool. Sales managers could ask for email samples from prospective new hires and compare them against the advice offered in the Guide. Email samples exhibiting mostly "don'ts" might suggest a poor fitting candidate, especially for salespeople who will frequently use email for prospecting.

There are also academic uses for this research. We conducted a literature review to pinpoint major hot buttons for researching email effectiveness. In doing so we provided researchers with a five-pronged framework to investigate email effectiveness. More rigorous research needs to be conducted to better serve those in sales and in email marketing functions. The next step is for researchers to pay attention to the finer details offered here with the dos and don'ts and then test them.

Those who use this Guide will see favorable results from email prospecting: prospects will pay greater attention to the message, and will be more likely to respond to it, benefiting the salesperson, sales manager, and organization as a whole.

REFERENCES

Andrzejewska, Hanna (2012), "Best Time To Send Email [Infographic]." Retrieved from http://blog.getresponse.com/best-time-to-send-email-infographic.html.

Bellows, Matthew (2012), "Yesware Research on Sales Email Effectiveness," In *The Exchange* Blog, edited by Yesware, Inc. Retrieved from http://www.yesware.com/blog/2012/01/10/yesware-research-on-sales-email-effectiveness/.

Bonoma, Thomas V. (1982), "Major Sales: Who Really Does the Buying?" *Harvard Business Review*, 60 (3), 111-119.

Boyatzis, Richard E. (1998), *Transforming Qualitative Information: Thematic Analysis and Code Development*. Oakland, CA.: Sage Publications.

Carlozo, Lou (2014), "How to Turn Bland Text into a Persuasive Sales Email," In *The Exchange* Blog, edited by Yesware, Inc. Retrieved from http://www.yesware.com/blog/2014/04/04/turn-bland-text-persuasive-sales-email/.

Cassell, Catherine, and Gillian Symon (2004), *Essential Guide to Qualitative Methods in Organizational Research*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage Publications.

Chan, Janis F. (2005), *E-Mail: A Write It Well Guide, How to Write and Manage E-Mail in the Workplace*. Oakland, CA.: Write it Well.

Ciotti, Gregory (2013), "How to Email Busy People (Without Being Annoying)," In Sparring Mind Blog. Retrieved from http://www.sparringmind.com/perfect-email/.

Colombo, George (2000), "Polish Your E-Mail Etiquette," *Sales and Marketing Management*, 152 (6), 34.

Connick, Wendy (n.d.), "8 Tips for More Persuasive Writing," About.com. Retrieved from http://sales.about.com/od/salesbasics/tp/8-Tips-For-More-Persuasive-Writing.htm.

Cuciniello, Gina (2013), "Get a Response to Your Emails," *Training Journal*, 2013 (Apr.), 66-69.

Dalton, Tom (2004), "Selling with Email," Sales & Service Excellence 4 (9), 6.

Dapko, Jennifer, and Andrew B. Artis (2014), "Less Is More: An Exploratory Analysis of Optimal Visual Appeal & Linguistic Style Combinations in a Salesperson's Initial-Contact Email to Millennial Buyers within Marketing Channels," *Journal of Marketing Channels*, 21 (4), 254-267.

Denzin, Norman K., and Yvonna S. Lincoln (2005), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research*, 3rd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Duistermaat, Henneke (2013), "37 Tips for Writing Emails that Get Opened, Read, and Clicked," In *copyblogger* Blog. Retrieved from http://www.copyblogger.com/37-email-marketing-tips/.

Duistermaat, Henneke (n.d.), "How to Write Persuasive Sales Copy," Enchantingmarketing.com. Retrieved from http://www.enchantingmarketing.com/sales-copy/.

Ellis, Carole (n.d.), "How to Write Persuasive Emails," eHow.com. Retrieved from http://www.ehow.com/how_4480828_write-persuasive-emails.html.

Email Excellence (2012), "Free Writing Tools, Requesting Action," Emailexcellence.com. Retrieved from http://www.emailexcellence.com/free-writing-tools.cfm.

Experian (2014), "The 2014 Digital Marketer: Benchmark and Trend Report," Experian.com. Retrieved from http://www.experian.com/marketing-services/2014-digital-marketer-benchmark-and-trend-report.html.

Fralic, Chris (2013), "The Art of the Email Introduction: 10 Rules for Emailing Busy People," Forbes.com. Retrieved from http://www.forbes.com/sites/bruceupbin/2013/03/27/the-art-of-the-email-introduction-10-rules-for-emailing-busy-people/.

Friedman, Nancy (2012), "Loan Email Frustrations," *Origination News*, 21 (12), 28.

FTC (2009), "CAN-SPAM Act: A Compliance Guide for Business," Federal Trade Commission. Retrieved from https://www.ftc.gov/tips-advice/business-center/guidance/can-spam-act-compliance-guide-business.

Gardner, Lenann McGookey (2013), "Good News About Cold Calls!" *American Salesman*, 58 (11), 27-30.

Gospe, Mary (2013), "2012 B2B Email Response Rates and Best Practices," KickStart Alliance. Retrieved from http://www.kickstartall.com/resources/archives/emailmarketingtrendsresponserates_january2012/.

Hershkowitz-Coore, Sue (2012), *Power Sales Writing* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Huppke, Rex (2012), "Making a Point in Business Email. How the Exclamation Mark Made Its Way into Workplace Communication, and Is It Bad?" Chicagotribune.com. Retrieved from http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2012-07-30/business/ct-biz-0730-work-advice-huppke-20120730_1_exclamation-point-work-email-word.

James, Geoffrey (2014), "How to Write a Convincing E-Mail," Inc.com. Retrieved from http://www.inc.com/geoffrey-james/how-to-write-a-convincing-email.html.

Johnston, Mark W., and Greg W. Marshall (2008), *Relationship Selling* (2 ed). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill/Irwin.

Kawasaki, Guy (2012), "Effective Email," *Smart Business Chicago*, 9 (8), 5.

Kolbe, Richard H., and Melissa S. Burnett (1991), "Content-Analysis Research: An Examination of Applications with Directives for Improving Research Reliability and Objectivity," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 18 (2): 243-250.

Krogue, Ken (2014), "4 Quick Tips for Creating a Good B2B Marketing Email," Insidesales.com. Retrieved from http://www.insidesales.com/insider/lead-management/marketing-b2b-4-quick-email-tips/.

Kulesza, Wojciech, Zofia Szypowska, Matthew S. Jarman, and Dariusz Dolinski (2014), "Attractive Chameleons Sell: The Mimicry-Attractiveness Link," *Psychology & Marketing*, 31 (7), 549-561.

MailChimp (n.d., a), "Email Marketing Benchmarks," Mailchimp.com. Retrieved from http://mailchimp.com/resources/research/email-marketing-benchmarks/.

Mailchimp (n.d., b), "How to Avoid Spam Filters," Mailchimp.com. Retrieved from http://mailchimp.com/resources/guides/how-to-avoid-spam-filters/html/.

Maly, Scott (2012), "5 Keys to Writing More Persuasive Emails," In *NPT Weekly Trance-Mission* Blog, edited by Natural Persuasion Technologies. Retrieved from http://nptweeklytrancemission.wordpress.com/2012/05/26/5-keys-to-writing-more-persuasive-emails/http://nptweeklytrancemission.wordpress.com/2012/05/26/5-keys-to-writing-more-persuasive-emails/.

Mann, Nick (n.d.), "How to Write a Persuasive Marketing Email," Businessbee.com. Retrieved from http://www.businessbee.com/resources/marketing/email-marketing/how-to-write-a-persuasive-marketing-email/.

Marsh, Joel (2013), "How to Write a Persuasive Email," In *The Hipper Element* Blog. Retrieved from http://thehipperelement.com/post/47970417733/how-to-write-a-persuasive-email.

Martin, Andrew, David Ngo, and Wesley Leung (2011), "Applied Behavior Design: How to Write a Persuasive Email," Retrieved from http://www.slideshare.net/amartin3/3-principles-for-writing-persuasive-emails-10594275.

Maslen, Andy (2007), Write to Sell: The Ultimate Guide to Great Copywriting. London, UK: Marshall Cavendish Limited and Cyan Communications Limited.

Matz, Mark V., and Gary Tier (2008), "The Art of Generating Business with Email," *Debt Cubed*, 23 (3), 14-15.

McLuhan, Robert (2007), "Making Emails Count," *Marketing*, 2007 (April 4), 33-34.

Michael, Kim (2008), "Conquering the Fear of Cold-Calling Part II," *American Salesman*, 53 (9), 7-11.

Miles, Matthew B., and A. Michael Huberman (1994), *Qualitative Data Analysis: An Expanded Sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks CA.: Sage Publications.

Nielsen, Jakob (2007), "Show Numbers as Numerals When Writing for Online Readers," Nielsen Norman Group. Retrieved from http://www.nngroup.com/articles/web-writing-show-numbers-as-numerals/.

Nordquist, Richard (n.d.), "10 Tips on How to Write a Professional Email," About.com. Retrieved from http://grammar.about.com/od/developingessays/a/profemails.htm.

Oliver, Vicky (2006), Power Sales Words: How to Write It, Say it and Sell it with Sizzle. Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Incorporated.

Patton, Michael Quinn (1990), *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*, 2nd ed., Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Price, Jack (2013), "The '4 Ps' of Persuasive Email Copywriting," In *Email Marketing Tips* Blog. Retrieved from http://blog.getresponse.com/the-4-ps-persuasive-email-copywriting.html.

Radicati, Sara (2011), *Email Statistics Report*, 2011-2015, Palo Alto, CA: The Radicati Group, Inc.

Resnick, Rosalind (1997), "How to Write Direct E-Mail Copy That Sells," *Netguide* 4 (4), 59.

Robertson, Blair (2013), "Email Marketing - How to Write Persuasive Email Letters," *Ezine Articles*. Retrieved from http://ezinearticles.com/?Email-Marketing---How-to-Write-Persuasive-Email-Letters&id=1258561.

Rubin, Karen (2012), "*The Ultimate List of Email SPAM Trigger Words*," HubSpot, Inc. Retrieved from http://blog.hubspot.com/blog/tabid/6307/bid/30684/The-Ultimate-List-of-Email-SPAM-Trigger-Words.aspx.

Rust, Roland, and Cooil, Bruce (1994), "Reliability Measures for Qualitative Data: Theory and Implications," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 31 (1), 1-14.

Santucci, Scott (2010), "Technology Buyer Insight Study: Executives' Preferred Forms of Sales Contact," Forrester Research, Inc. Retrieved from http://uwsmc3.wikispaces.com/file/view/Technology_Buyer_Insight_.pdf.

Sales Insider (2011), "Use Email to Get Your Message Across and Make a Strong Impression," *Sales Insider*, 5 (104), 4.

Sales Leader (2007), "Why Your Important Email May Get Dumped Like Spam," *Sales Leader*, 13 (5), 5.

Senior Market Advisor (2013), "How to Make Your Email Stand out from the Crowd," *Senior Market Advisor*, 14 (2), 18.

Shipley, David, and Will Schwalbe (2008), *Send: Why People Email so Badly and How to Do It Better* (Revised ed). New York, NY: Vintage Books.

Stolley, Karl (2010), "Sales Letters: Four Point Action Closing," OWL Lab at Purdue University. Retrieved from https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/655/1/.

Tyler, Zach (2013), "The Anatomy of a Persuasive Email," In *Explorics* Blog. Retrieved from http://www.explorics.com/the-anatomy-of-a-persuasive-email/.

Weed, Mike (2005). "'Meta Interpretation': A Method for the Interpretive Synthesis of Qualitative Research," *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, 6 (1).

Wolfel, Chris (2013), "How to Close More Deals with Lean Email," Yesware, Inc. Retrieved from http://www.yesware.com/blog/2013/07/22/how-to-close-more-deals-with-lean-email/.

Wood, John. A., James S. Boles, and Barry J. Babin (2008), "The Formation of Buyer's Trust of the Seller in an Initial Sales Encounter," *The Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 16 (1), 27-39.

Yesmail (2014), "Q1 Benchmarks Overview: The Responsive Design Effect," Yesmail.com. Retrieved from http://www.yesmail.com/resources/email-benchmarks/q1-benchmarks-overview-responsive-design-effect.

Principles and Success Factors of Effective B2B Sales Force Compensation

By Tobias Kuntner and Johannes Voester

Performance-oriented incentive systems are an effective and widespread instrument to motivate and guide salespeople's behavior, particularly in B2B environments. In practice, however, many companies face substantial challenges in terms of designing and implementing incentive schemes. Among the major reasons are that incentives are not aligned with corporate goals, targets are set unrealistically, salespeople do not accept the incentive system, and target achievement is monitored insufficiently. As a result, sales force behavior may undermine, rather than support, objectives, which can lead to frustration among both managers and salespeople. With this situation in mind, this article presents crucial principles and success factors for designing and applying effective incentive systems. Combining consulting experience and recent scientific insights about sales force compensation, this article aims to provide guidance for both practitioners and researchers in the field of B2B selling.

INTRODUCTION

A company's sales force plays a pivotal role in creating and sustaining customer relationships (Krishnan, Peterson & Groza 2015). Therefore, a motivated and well-trained sales team is a valuable – if not vital – asset for B2B companies to increase sales and profitability (Coughlan & Joseph 2011). Most companies are aware of this fact and grant their salespeople considerable monetary incentives. It is no surprise that "sales force compensation represents the single largest marketing investment for most B2B companies" (Steenburgh & Ahearne 2012, p. 71). In total, US companies spend more than $800 billion on sales compensation and an additional $15 billion on sales training per year, which is three times more than their spending on advertising (Steenburgh & Ahearne 2012; Kumar, Sunder & Leone 2015).

To motivate salespeople, a performance-oriented monetary incentive system is a proven and widely applied instrument (Banker et al. 2000). In the US, approximately 40 percent of total sales force compensation is performance related (Zolters, Sinha & Lorimer 2012). The central idea is to make one part of sales compensation performance dependent (i.e. variable), and to specify in a system by which criteria and rules salespeople will be compensated. This concept may sound simple; however, research shows that many incentive plans fail to meet management expectations because they are poorly designed and implemented. The reasons for this are diverse, for example, incentives are not aligned with corporate goals (Colletti & Fiss 2001), performance targets are set unrealistically or lack differentiation (Steenburgh & Ahearne 2012), the new system is not accepted by salespeople (Gerhart, Minkoff & Olson 1995), or reporting and controlling is insufficient (Zoltners, Sinha & Lorimer 2006).

In light of the above, this article summarizes best practices in sales force compensation that provide guidance for both practitioners and academics. Drawing from recent scientific findings in the field of B2B selling, this work outlines the most important principles for designing and implementing an effective incentive scheme (see Figure 1). Utilizing profound consulting experience in sales and compensation plans, this paper highlights potential pitfalls and illustrates success factors for effective and practical implementation.

1. Target definition: Align incentives with corporate goals using the right metrics

The first fundamental principle is to ensure that the incentive system's objectives are consistent with corporate goals. Therefore, the system's targets need to be translated into sales-relevant metrics (Zoltners, Sinha & Lorimer 2012). Metrics, such as units sold,

Tobias Kuntner (M.A., Universität St. Gallen-Hochschule für Wirtschafts-, Rechts- und Sozialwissenschaften), Senior Consultant, Simon-Kucher & Partners, Munich, Germany, tobias.kuntner@simon-kucher.com

Johannes Voester (Ph.D., University of Bamberg), Manager, Simon-Kucher & Partners, Munich, Germany, johannes.voester@simon-kucher.com

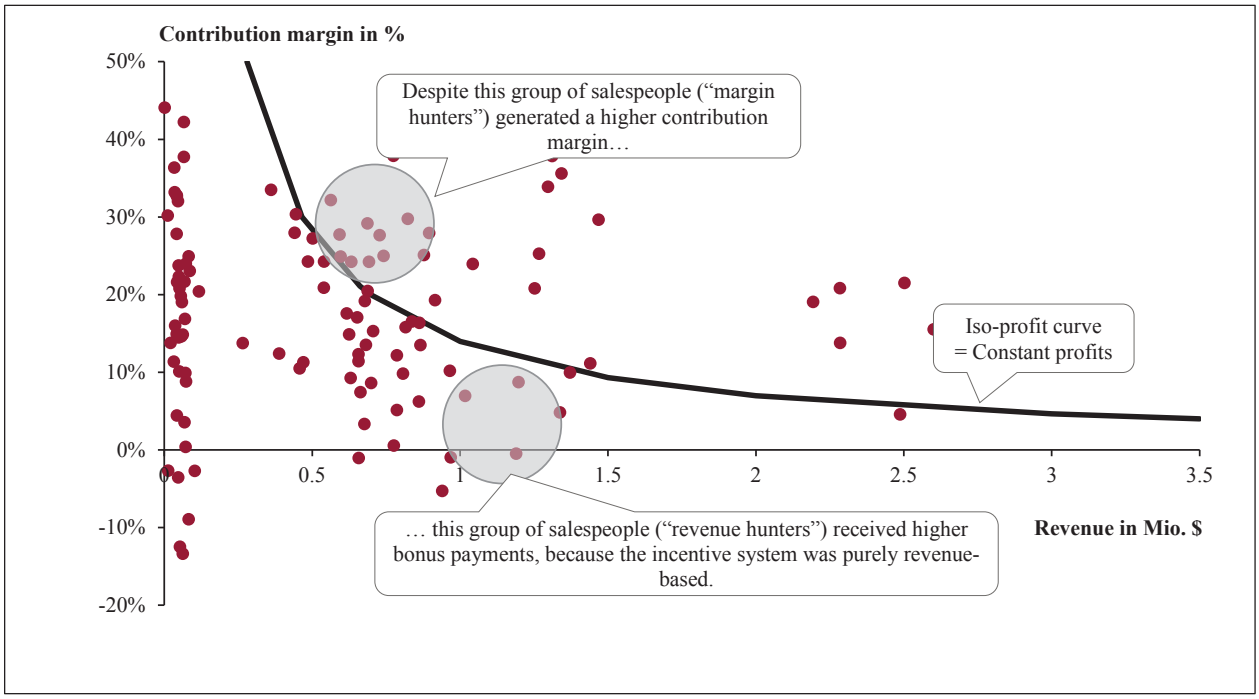
Figure 1. Principles and success factors for designing and implementing an incentive system

	Principles	Success factors
1	*Target definition*: Align incentives with corporate goals using the right metrics	▪ Ensure target conformity ▪ Integrate profit-oriented metrics
2	*Design*: Install a performance-oriented incentive system	▪ Avoid (too low) caps ▪ Apply no (or small) steps ▪ Set ambitious, but realistic goals ▪ Choose short payout periods
3	*Differentiation:* Adjust the compensation logic to seller types	▪ Ensure consistency ▪ Select criteria that can be influenced
4	*Communication*: Ensure acceptance through change management	▪ Integrate multipliers ▪ Communicate transparently, completely, and understandably ▪ Highlight changes and their impact ▪ Provide training
5	*Controlling*: Guarantee target achievement through reporting and controlling	▪ Report to the target group ▪ Report promptly ▪ Report cost-consciously ▪ Measure target achievement regularly ▪ Support target achievement ▪ Identify optimization potential

revenue, or market share, constitute the basis for setting and assessing volume-oriented goals, whereas metrics such as profit margin, target net prices, or sales costs focus on profitability goals. Moreover, non-financial criteria such as customer satisfaction, new customer acquisition rates or migration rates, can be used to improve the sales force's customer orientation, which in turn fuels the firm's long-term success (Coughlan & Joseph 2011). The following practices have proven effective in selecting the right business metrics:

Ensure target conformity. The metrics of an incentive system should support, not undermine, the overriding corporate goals. As obvious as it may sound, this principle often receives less attention than it deserves, as the project example shown in Figure 2 reveals: Although the management of an IT service provider listed profit as its number one corporate goal, sales force incentives were solely based on generated revenues. As a result, "revenue hunters" tried to raise their bonuses by granting high discounts while realizing low net prices. In contrast, "margin hunters", who generated higher profits but smaller revenues, were penalized with lower bonus payments. This apparent misalignment of corporate goals and sales incentives had two adverse effects: First, the firm did not reach its profitability target. Second, an increasing number of demotivated salespeople left the company. After integrating the realized net price level as the main component of the compensation system, profitability increased by several percentage points and employee satisfaction clearly improved.

Figure 2. Project example on "ensure target conformity"

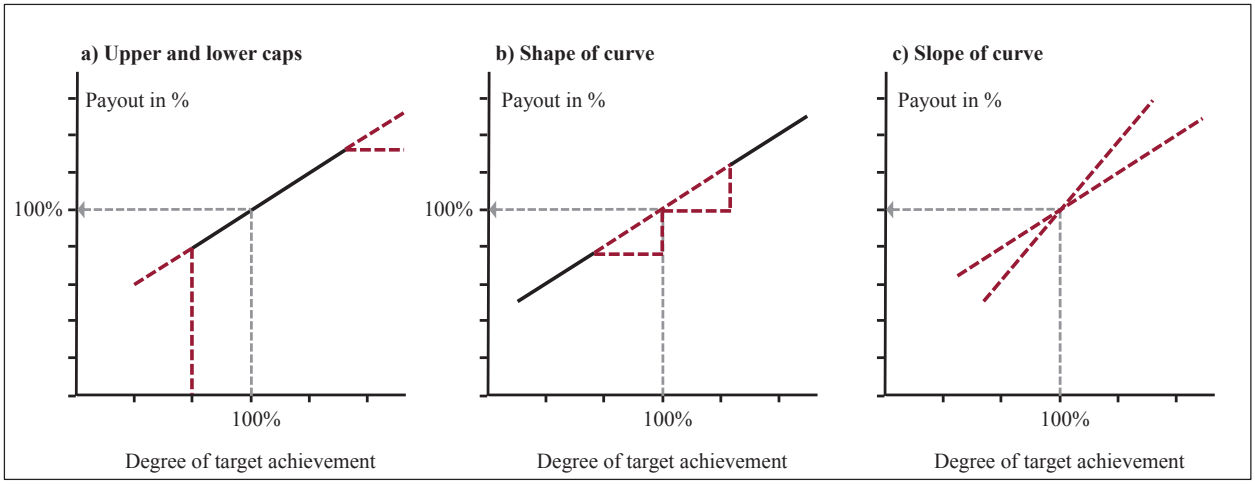


Integrate profit-oriented metrics. A healthy profit base is vital for a company's sustainable success. That's why profitability should be a major goal of every firm, at least in the middle or long term (Nagle, Hogan & Zale 2010). Profit-oriented metrics help to achieve this objective and should consequently be an indispensable element of every incentive system. In reality, however, incentive schemes are often based on purely volume-oriented criteria (Schmitz, Wieseke & Huckemann 2014). A key reason is that these types of criteria can be measured easily, promptly, and specific to individual transactions. In contrast, it is much harder to check the profitability of individual sales transactions in a timely and accurate way. Measuring price realization, for example, requires constantly updating list prices and trade terms (i.e. discounts and rebates) for all products. This is a particularly difficult task in B2B industries with non-standardized products. A practical way to solve this problem is to estimate profitability based on the fulfillment of a contribution margin target within a specific period. In this context, relative targets should be preferred over absolute targets to avoid low price realization from being compensated by higher sales volumes.

2. Design: Install a performance-oriented incentive system

The second principle involves designing a system that regulates sales compensation according to the identified and weighted metrics. Research on this subject distinguishes between commission systems and bonus systems (Kishore et al. 2013). In commission systems, sales force compensation is directly related to a specific metric. That is, a salesperson receives a certain percentage of the contributed performance (e.g. revenue or profit) as an extra payment. In contrast, bonus systems define employee-individual targets or a combination of multiple targets that need to be achieved within a specified period of time, for instance, monthly, quarterly or annual targets. Hence, bonus systems are also capable of integrating incentive components that individuals can influence only indirectly, such as customer satisfaction or targets on a team level (Coughlan & Joseph 2011). The salespeople's overall degree of target achievement is determined by their performance on a single target level. A payout curve then defines how overall target achievement translates into compensation (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Major decisions in designing a payout curve



In many cases, success depends on how well this compensation logic is defined, but it also poses a major challenge in terms of designing incentive systems. There are certain factors, however, that can help companies determine the system's payout curve:

Avoid (too low) caps. A major decision is whether and how the variable compensation should be capped (see Figure 3a). The main argument in favor of using caps is that compensation is limited to a certain amount if there is extraordinary growth. This mitigates the risk of incurring high personnel costs. On the other hand, caps are likely to dampen salespeople's efforts because they do not benefit from generating additional business. In fact, studies show that revenue can be significantly boosted if caps on compensations are removed (Chung 2015; Misra & Nair 2011). Furthermore, top performers in particular are demotivated by maximum limits and may leave the company (Chung, Steenburg & Sudhir 2014). Although omitting caps bears considerable advantages, the risk of excessive personnel costs should be mitigated. Therefore, the following rule applies: When there is an incentive to boost business (because caps were omitted), the resulting company profits must outweigh the additional costs (i.e. sales force compensation).

Apply no (or small) steps. A bonus system's payout curve can take a linear, declining, progressive or step-wise shape (see Figure 3b). Step-wise curves are popular in practice because they are easy to apply and communicate. However, their main disadvantage is that misplaced incentives may appear at step changes. Nearing a step change, a salesperson may try to generate higher sales at any cost just to reach the next compensation level. This often results in excessive discounts and unprofitable revenues. In contrast, if the next step seems unattainable, a salesperson may not feel motivated to work harder on their current level or manipulate the timing of orders (e.g. delayed selling). To avoid these situations, steps should be avoided or at least sufficiently differentiated.

Set ambitious, but realistic goals. Aside from its shape, the slope of the payout curve needs to be determined (see Figure 3c). The decisive questions are: how much of an increase in performance should be rewarded? Or how much of a decline in performance should be penalized? There is no rule of thumb for these questions. The decision depends on company-specific factors such as industry, culture or sales roles. However, there is one guiding rule: Each level of target achievement should be defined ambitiously, but realistically.

Choose short payout periods. Besides the design of the payout curve, the timing of the payment is an important lever in boosting motivation. A longer period offers employees more leeway to maneuver between the individual sales deals. For example, they may balance out periods of weaker performance with stronger periods. However, research shows that shorter

payout periods increase motivation, because employees directly sense the impact of their own performance (Chung 2015). Therefore, ideally payments should be made on time and several times a year.

3. Differentiation: Adjust the compensation logic to seller types

Once a basic compensation logic is defined, managers need to decide whether and how to adapt the compensation plan to the characteristics of seller types. According to a study by Schmitz, Wieseke & Huckemann (2014), 60 percent of companies currently do not use differentiated compensation systems. However, research shows that different compensation elements influence various types of salespeople to a differing degree (Chung, Steenburgh & Sudhir 2014; Ryals & Rogers 2005; Steenburgh & Ahearne 2012). Low-performing salespeople, for instance, are likely to increase their performance most significantly if they receive payments more frequently. High performers, in contrast, should not be demotivated by maximum limits (see principle no. 2). Instead, their loyalty to the company should be strengthened with the appropriate rewards. Finally, average salespeople, who traditionally account for the majority of a sales force, respond especially well to multi-layered targets or to sales competitions. In light of these considerations, the most important success factors in differentiating an incentive system are:

Ensure consistency. Companies need to ensure that the incentive system's metrics are consistent between the sales roles and hierarchical levels. If a sales manager's payout, for example, depends on price implementation success (i.e. profit), then the subordinates' incentive scheme should not be based on revenue targets.

Select criteria that can be influenced. When designing a differentiated incentive system, it is important to select criteria that can be influenced by the sales representative. For example, if a salesperson's discount decisions are often overruled by a superior, price realization should not be a component of the incentive system for this particular sales role. Few things are more frustrating for employees than not being able to personally influence their targets.

4. Communication: Ensure acceptance through change management

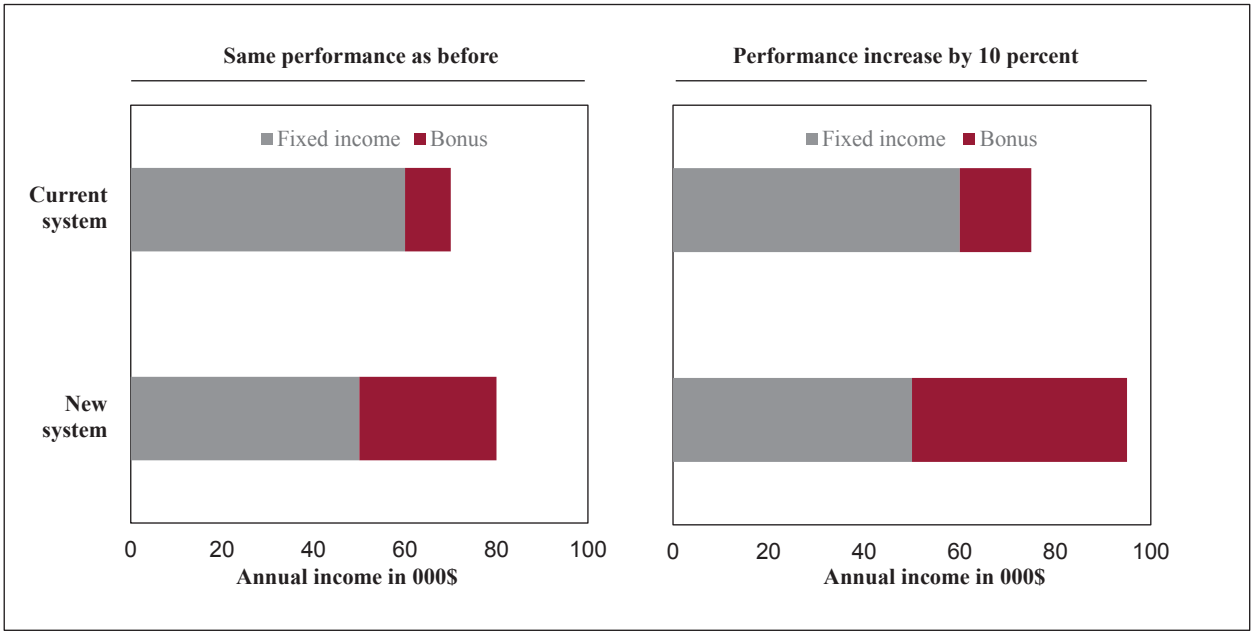
Even the best incentive system is ineffective if it is not understood and accepted by the sales force (Gerhart, Minkoff & Olson 1995). Thus, the success of a newly launched or adjusted compensation plan requires supportive change management to ensure sales acceptance (Colletti & Fiss 2001). Moreover, training can teach the sales force how to correctly apply the new system (Cron et al. 2005). The following success factors make it easier to:

Integrate multipliers. Opinion leaders, such as sales managers and workers' representatives, should be informed on time and be involved in designing and adjusting the compensation system process. These people function as ambassadors of the new system and create trust and acceptance among employees.

Communicate transparently, completely, and understandably. To ensure that a new system is accepted, it needs to be understood. If the sales team does not realize that the previous volume targets were turned into profit targets, they will continue to increase sales volumes with high discounts instead of aiming for margins. This behavior not only endangers company value, but it also lowers the salesperson's income due to missed profit targets. For this reason, the targets and compensation mechanisms of the new system need to be transparently communicated and comprehensibly explained.

Highlight changes and their impact. To avoid misunderstandings and ensure buy-in, managers should clearly demonstrate the changes associated with the new system. A proven way to achieve this goal is to conduct a before-and-after analysis to simulate the profit effects for employees and to point out the anticipated advantages of the new system (see Figure 4). If the goal of the compensation plan is, for example, to lower the fixed income share and to raise the variable bonuses, the company needs to ensure that the expected income for the same performance level is higher than in the former system. A lower or identical pay level will be perceived as unfair due to the increased income uncertainty.

Figure 4. Illustration of before-and-after communication



Provide training. Salespeople can only succeed in reaching corporate goals if they are trained in the new system, that is, if they are familiar with the system's levers and know how to practically apply them. Therefore, training needs to highlight and explain parameters that influence sales (e.g. price) and their impact on compensation-related outcomes (e.g. profit margin). Simple rules of thumb, such as "if the achieved price increases by x percent, the profit margin increases by y percent," help the sales force to understand how they can influence the outcome and thereby reach their goals.

5. Controlling: Guarantee target achievement through reporting and controlling

Once the new system comes into operation, salespeople need continuous support in the field. In this phase, sales controlling needs to give continual feedback on individual achievements to maintain motivation and ensure goals are achieved (Brown et al. 2005; Zoltners, Sinha & Lorimer 2006). Besides attained outcomes such as revenues or profits, a holistic sales controlling also needs to monitor salespeople's behavior to equip them with the right competencies to achieve their targets (Anderson & Oliver 1987; Cravens et al. 1993). Finally, regular assessments for optimization potential should be conducted, even if the system is running smoothly (Chung 2015). In this part of the process, the decisive success factors are:

Report to the target group. Various functional areas require varying degrees of detailed reporting. While sales managers need to supervise the performance of all sales team members and are evaluated based on the overall success, salespeople are primarily interested in their own performance and the resulting compensation. Reporting should therefore be differentiated and the relevant information should be prepared specific to the recipient.

Report promptly. The sales force should receive immediate updates on their performance level – just like in a computer game where players can always track their current score. Ideally, the impact of possible sales decisions should be displayed in real time, as the following project example shows: A service provider developed a software for its sales force's electronic devices. During negotiations with customers, this software directly showed the impact of different service offerings on company profitability and salespeople commissions. Recognizing the P&L impact, and

compensation effect in real time, representatives were able to comprehend when deals were still profitable to their organization, while still serving the customer's needs. As a result, the company was able to increase customer satisfaction and profitability by several percentage points.

Report cost-consciously. The costs of individual and immediate reporting should not exceed the benefits. Intuitive and understandable IT solutions, such as extended personnel and pay calculation systems (e.g. PAISY systems) or pay modules of corporate software (e.g. ERP systems) can address this issue. These computer-aided solutions not only help reduce the costs of individual and punctual reporting, but also facilitate their implementation through automation.

Measure target achievement regularly. Sales controlling's most important task is to identify deviations from targets and, if needed, take counter-measures. If a compensation system is not able to achieve management targets, it should be adjusted. Hence, a flexible design should be a high priority already when designing the incentive system.

Support target achievement. Sales controlling should not stop at identifying deviations but it should also provide salespeople with guidance on how to close potential performance gaps. Accordingly, prior research on selling suggests to complement outcome-based salesforce control systems with behavior-based control mechanisms (e.g., Anderson & Oliver 1987; Cravens et al. 1993). While the first mechanism is limited to detecting performance gaps by monitoring objective measures of outcomes (e.g., achieved revenues or profits), the latter mechanism is able to identify potential sources of underachievement by surveilling actual salesforce behavior (e.g., competencies, activities, or sales strategies). Knowing the underlying causes of underperformance facilitates the sales manager's task to bring low performing salespeople back on track, for instance, by providing them with appropriate coaching and training.

Identify optimization potential. While sales is an important revenue driver, it also represents an enormous cost that should be optimized. Optimization potential can be identified, for instance, by conducting experiments (especially A/B tests) or by analyzing field data (Anderson & Simester 2011). These empirical methods give insights into how adjustments in the incentive system affect important performance measures (such as revenues, costs and profits) through their impact on selling behavior. For example, a current study by Chung, Steenburgh & Sudhir (2014) analyzed the field data of a Fortune 500 company and discovered that the company could increase its revenue by five percent if it paid out commissions quarterly instead of annually. To avoid mistakes in conducting and interpreting empirical studies, management should involve experienced scientists with the necessary methodological expertise.

CONCLUSION

This article combines recent scientific insights and consulting experience in sales force compensation to provide guidance for both practitioners and researchers. Specifically, the paper outlines important principles and success factors to effectively design and implement monetary sales force incentive systems in B2B environments. While there are relevant, alternative motivational instruments such as non-monetary incentives (see e.g. Heyman & Ariely 2004), this article focuses on performance-oriented monetary incentive systems, because they represent a widely applied and very effective tool to manage sales force behavior.

As every practice-oriented study, this article is subject to several limitations. While the outlined best practices have proven to support a broad variety of companies to better achieve their objectives, they were primarily derived from project experience rather than from data analysis. Thus, further empirical evidence is needed to validate the presented principles and success factors. For example, analyzing and comparing field data of companies of different industries would be a promising avenue for future research. Furthermore, this article does not provide detailed information on how to tailor an incentive system to a company's individual situation. Due to varying market and/or company realities, designing and implementing the best possible incentive system may require a specific set of performance metrics, a precise communication approach, and a customized reporting and controlling system – all of which need to be defined in a dedicated project.

REFERENCES

Anderson, Erin, and Richard L. Oliver (1987), "Perspectives on Behavior-based Versus Outcome-based Salesforce Control Systems," *Journal of Marketing*, 51 (4), 76-88.

Anderson, Eric T., and Duncan Simester (2011), "A Step-by-Step Guide to Smart Business Experiments," *Harvard Business Review*, 89 (3), 98-104.

Banker, Rajiv D., Seok-Young Lee, Gordon Potter, and Dhinu Srinivasan (2000), "An Empirical Analysis of Continuing Improvements Following the Implementation of a Performance-based Compensation Plan," *Journal of Accounting and Economics*, 30 (3), 315-350.

Brown, Steven P., Kenneth R. Evans, Murali K. Mantrala, and Goutam Challagalla (2005), "Adapting Motivation, Control, and Compensation Research to a New Environment," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 25 (2), 155-167.

Chung, Doug J. (2015), "How to Really Motivate Salespeople," *Harvard Business Review*, 93 (4), 54-61.

Chung, Doug J., Thomas Steenburgh, and K. Sudhir (2014), "Do Bonuses Enhance Sales Productivity? A Dynamic Structural Analysis of Bonus-based Compensation Plans," *Marketing Science*, 33 (2), 165-187.

Coughlan, Anne T., and Kissan Joseph (2011), "Sales Force Compensation: Research Insights and Research Potential," *The Handbook of Business-to-Business Marketing*. Institute of the Study for Business Markets, Cheltenham, UK and Northampton, MA, USA: Edward Elgar.

Colletti, Jerome A., and Mary S. Fiss (2001), *Compensating New Sales Roles: How to Design Rewards that Work in Today's Selling Environment*, New York: Amacom.

Cravens, David W., Thomas N. Ingram, Raymond W. LaForge, and Clifford E. Young (1993), "Behavior-based and Outcome-based Salesforce Control Systems," *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (4), 47-59.

Cron, William L., Greg W. Marshall, Jagdip Singh, Rosann L. Spiro, and Harish Sujan (2005), "Salesperson Selection, Training, and Development: Trends, Implications, and Research Opportunities," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 25 (2), 123-136.

Gerhart, Barry A., Harvey B. Minkoff, and Ray N. Olson (1995), "Employee Compensation: Theory, Practice, and Evidence," *Handbook of Human Resource Management*, Oxford: Blackwell Business.

Heyman, James, and Dan Ariely (2004), "Effort for Payment: A Tale of Two Markets," *Psychological Science*, 15 (11), 787-793.

Kishore, Sunil, Singh R. Raghunath, Om Narasimhan, and George John (2013), "Bonuses Versus Commissions: A Field Study," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50 (3), 317-333.

Krishnan, Vijaykumar, Robert M. Peterson, and Mark D. Groza (2015), "The Effect of Sales People, Processes and Provisions on Performance: The 4P-Sales Management Model," *Ideas in Marketing: Finding the New and Polishing the Old*. Springer International Publishing, 12-12.

Kumar, V., Sarang Sunder, and Robert P. Leone (2015), "Who's Your Most Valuable Sales Person?" *Harvard Business Review* [online], available at: https://hbr.org/2015/04/whos-your-most-valuable-salesperson [accessed June 9, 2016].

Misra, Sanjong, and Harikesh S. Nair (2011), "A Structural Model of Sales-force Compensation Dynamics: Estimation and Field Implementation," *Quantitative Marketing and Economics*, 9 (3), 211-257.

Nagle, Thomas T., John E. Hogan, and Joseph Zale (2010). *The Strategy and Tactics of Pricing: A Guide to Growing More Profitably*. (5th ed.) New York: Prentice Hall.

Ryals, Lynette J., and Beth Rogers (2005), "Sales Compensation Plans - One Size Does not Fit All," *Journal of Targeting, Measurement and Analysis for Marketing*, 13 (4), 354-362.

Schmitz Christian, Jan Wieseke, and Matthias Huckemann (2014), "Vergütungssysteme im Vertriebsaußendienst," Acquisa Online [online] http://de.mercuri.net/sites/default/files/news/acquisa_online_2014_05_verguetungssysteme_im_vertrieb_huckemann_schmitz_wieseke.pdf [accessed June 9 2016].

Steenburgh, Tohmas J., and Michael Ahearne (2012), "Motivating Salespeople: What Really Works," *Harvard Business Review*, 90 (7), 70-75.

Zoltners, Andris A., Prabhakant Sinha, and Sally E. Lorimer (2006), *The Complete Guide to Sales Force Incentive Compensation: How to Design and Implement Plans that Work*. New York: Amacom.

Zoltners, Andris A., Prabhakant Sinha, and Sally E. Lorimer (2012), "Breaking the Sales Force Incentive Addition: A Balanced Approach to Sales Force Effectiveness," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 32 (2), 171-186.

Social Selling Index Score: Using LinkedIn to Build Social Selling Skills in the Classroom

By Howard F. Dover and Robert M. Peterson

The importance of social selling has been bantered about in popular press as the next generation of sales strategy. Yet, teaching this approach or measuring the outcomes has been elusive until just recently. Using LinkedIn's Social Selling Index, a classroom exercise and the results are shared demonstrating how to use this measure while students engage in social selling. The outcomes reveal that students can learn the nuances of social selling, some can become proficient at it, and all can be evaluated with a standard measure on the LinkedIn platform.

INTRODUCTION

Sales representatives, using social media, appear to be more effective than their counterparts, who do not use this new tool in the selling process (Guesalaga 2016; Moore et al. 2015; Marshall et al. 2012; Rodriguez, Peterson, and Krishnan 2012). Recent survey results show that over 70% of sales people and over 90% of top sales people use social selling tools, making these tools the most widely used technology tools in use currently (LinkedIn 2016). Previously, LinkedIn found evidence that social sellers using LinkedIn are 50% more likely to obtain quota (LinkedIn 2013). These findings show that sales people are using new methods to respond to the view that buyers are 57% through the decision process before they contact a company (Dixon and Adamson 2011) and that complex buying decisions involve, on average, 5.4 buyers in today's world (Adamson et al. 2015).

If social selling provides such a positive impact on sales performance and is widely used in practice, we have the following simple questions: Do simple LinkedIn exercises, provided in the literature (Peterson and Dover 2014; Dover, Peterson and Selden 2015), help our students develop measurable social selling skills? Do our existing networking efforts and advanced sales experiential projects develop measureable social selling skills? Most importantly, how can we measure the degree to which students are developing social selling skills?

In this paper, we show how two universities used a new measurement, called the Social Selling Index (SSI), to measure the degree to which these programs are effectively developing social selling skills using the LinkedIn platform. Using this SSI measurement, the programs were able to show substantial growth in SSI scores for their students, as they progressed through their programs. Additionally, the SSI score provides an objective benchmark for classroom pedagogy exercises, where the students and faculty can measure precisely the students' input activity and empirical outcomes.

EXISTING CURRICULUM AND SOCIAL SELLING INDEX

Some feel that "Higher education is painfully far behind, when it comes to preparing students for living in a 21st century world of hyper-connectivity, professional networks, technology and a new business sensibility that includes social enterprise and social mission" (McKenna 2015). However, there are many sales programs that use experiential exercises to teach their sales students and provide substantial networking opportunities for corporate partners to interact with them. Examples of these experiential lessons might include the use of sales role plays (Taute, Heiser, and McArthur 2011), evaluation of sales representatives (Howlett and Newman 2015), and ethical scenarios (Dingus and Milovic 2015). In fact, Peterson and Dover (2014) outlined how to specifically use LinkedIn in an introductory sales class to get students started using the world's largest social media platform

Howard F. Dover (Ph.D., University of Texas at Dallas), Clinical Professor of Marketing, Jindal School of Management, University of Dallas at Texas, Richardson, TX, howard.dover@utdallas.edu

Robert M. Peterson (Ph.D., University of Memphis), White Lodging Professor of Sales, Department of marketing, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL, peterson@niu.edu

for business-to-business professionals. Another article describes how students can use LinkedIn to develop their professional network and obtain informational interviews and mentors (Dover et al. 2015), as they build their social media presence.

Social media has been defined as *digital content* and *network based interactions* developed between people (Cohen 2011). Using this medium, one can "participate in social networks, which enabled them to create and share content, communicate with one another, and build relationships" (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010, p. 312). Social selling is emerging as a convergence of social media marketing and selling for both the firm and the firms' sales professionals. Social sellers augment the firm's social strategy by developing and disseminating content and engaging in professional conversations in the social ecosystem to develop and leverage their personal and corporate brand. Furthermore, social sellers use social media platforms to identify, research, engage, and deepen professional ties with other professionals, especially customers and prospects. Clearly, different segments of the consumer and professional markets exist with regards to their social media platform preferences and behaviors, with Facebook and Instagram popular with consumers and Twitter and LinkedIn with business professionals.

LinkedIn has recently developed an index that can be used to measure the degree to which an individual is using social selling on their platform. The "Social Selling Index" provides each LinkedIn.com user with a unique score based on four (4) equal components worth 25 points per component. Half of the components measure the degree of social marketing, as shown in Table 1, and include the 'Create a Professional Brand' and the 'Engage with Insights' components. The other half of the score is more related to traditional sales functions, including 'Find the Right People' and 'Build Relationships.' The SSI score ranges from zero to one hundred, and is dynamically determined on regular intervals via LinkedIn.com's private algorithm. If you have a LinkedIn account, you can do a web search for: "How to find my Social Selling Index Score," and you will find the site provided by LinkedIn for SSI scores.

Table 1

Social Selling Index (SSI) Components

Create a professional brand	Complete your profile with the customer in mind Become a thought leader by publishing meaningful posts
Find the right people	Identify better prospects in less time using efficient search and research tools
Engage with Insights	Discover and share conversation-worthy updates to create and grow relationships
Build Relationships	Strengthen your network by finding and establishing trust with decision makers

Source: Linked.com Social Selling Index page

DATA AND METHODOLOGY

To address our questions about the usefulness of the SSI, we collected SSI measurements

from three distinct groups of sales students at various stages of their sales curriculum at a southern U.S. university. The first group included 60 introductory sales students, who completed the network development project described in Dover et al. (2015). The second group included 30 advanced sales students, who participated in various networking and experiential exercises with corporate partners. The third group was a small account management team, who were given access to Enterprise Sales Navigator accounts, as they managed corporate relationships for the university's professional sales center.

The first group of 60 introductory sales students were from two classes. Students were asked to provide their SSI score at the start and end of the Spring 2016 semester. The students were asked to complete the network development project described in Dover et al. (2015). In short, they were asked to search and identify possible prospects from two selected industries, using their existing or newly created LinkedIn account. Their objective was to develop stronger network ties with these prospects by requesting informational interviews with the stretch goal to obtain mentors in their preferred industry (Dover et al. 2015). These activities, listed in Dover et al. 2015, directly line up with the sales prospecting component of SSI and, therefore, we would expect to see measureable improvement of SSI scores by completing this activity.

While these introductory class students experienced an end of semester networking event, their SSI scores were collected prior to this event. It is also important to note many of the students in these classes did not have a LinkedIn.com account at the start of the semester and, therefore, would have had an effective SSI score of zero. However, the start of the semester scores were collected after the students had created their accounts and started connecting with fellow students and other professionals.

The advanced sales class students were asked to report their start of semester and end of semester SSI scores. These students were involved in several corporate networking events and a class project that required them to contact, communicate, and close corporate clients to attend an end of semester event. During an average semester, students in this class will meet from fifty to seventy corporate contacts through their networking opportunities. While students are encouraged to connect with industry contacts who they meet through networking and coursework activities, the class does not explicitly grade their LinkedIn activity. Once again, these activities provide opportunities for students to exhibit measureable growth in their SSI scores via the sales components by finding the right people and deepening their relationships. The students are also encouraged to share content about events and the program as part of their project in the class, thus leading to potential increases in the SSI's sharing relevant content component.

The third group of students worked with the leads provided by the advanced sales class and the university's sales center on developing various sponsorships for the program. This group was given semester long access to the Sales Navigator Enterprise account, a LinkedIn product. Since these students were advanced students the previous semester, only their end of semester SSI's were reported. The Sales Navigator account provides enhanced tools that allow students to identify and search with advanced features. It also allows students the ability to send special e-mail via LinkedIn, called In Mail, to professionals who are not directly connected to their profile. Since these students have a quota and active accounts to work, we would expect to see increased SSI components in finding people, sharing content, and building relationships.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Our purpose was to use the SSI tool to measure the degree to which we could find evidence of social selling behaviors within existing experiential activities and specifically test how well LinkedIn exercises in the literature (Dover et al. 2015, Peterson and Dover 2014) increased measureable social selling skills. The results are very encouraging and show that the existing program is indeed developing measureable social selling behavior, as evidenced by increased SSI scores at different stages of the sales curriculum.

The results appear to show that the Dover et al. (2015) project assisted students in moving from an average SSI score of 11.9 to 23.2. We note that a second university reported similar increases in SSI from Peterson and Dover (2014) exercises. While both of these papers indicate that students obtain significant job prospects from completing simple LinkedIn exercises, we are able to show that the activities in these papers help students develop skills that are just below the U.S. national average SSI score of 27.3 (Derezin 2015).

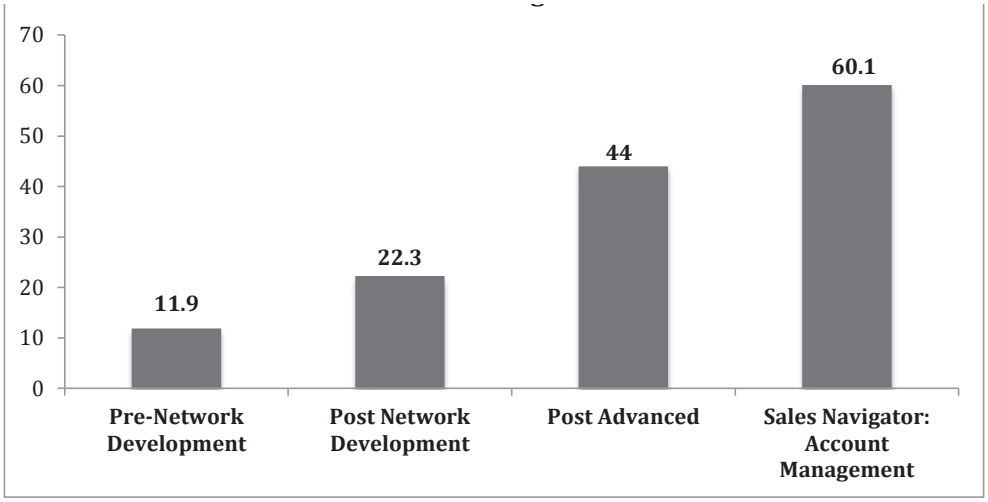
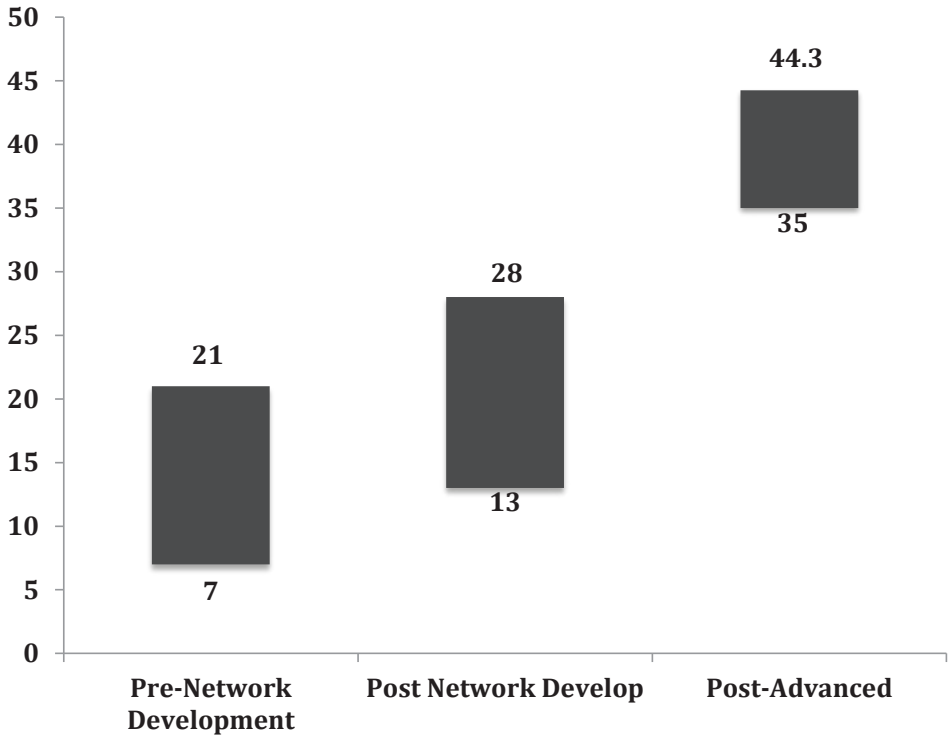


Figure 2
25th to 75th Quartile SSI Scores



Over seventy-five percent of the second group of students have a score over 35 (Figure 2), which substantially exceeds both the national average of 27.3 and the starting average score of just 23.2. With an average score of 44 (Figure 1), it is clear the existing advanced sales exercises create measureable social selling skills of prospecting and developing connections via the LinkedIn platform. It is important to note that the advanced students were not explicitly assigned tasks on the LinkedIn platform. While they were encouraged to connect with people they met during the semester, they were not asked to specifically report their connections and communications from LinkedIn.com to the professor.

The activities performed by the third group provide a substantial increase in SSI score from 40 to 60 (Figure 1). This is not surprising as this group was responsible for sharing content about the program, as well as connecting and communicating with accounts in the program, which appears to have had a direct impact on their SSI scores. The Sales Navigator Enterprise account not only shows the students their SSI score but also shows a team leaderboard, which showed the top team members' SSI scores. The additional features of the Sales Navigator tool could also be part of the reason these students engaged more with the tool and, thereby, improved their scores.

With these three groups, we are able to clearly observe that the Social Selling Index score provides an empirical measure that shows how students increase their social selling activities on the LinkedIn platform, as they progress through the focal program. Given the emphasis practitioners give social selling and social selling tools, this paper shows that sales programs and business schools can use the SSI tool as a useful curriculum metric. The value of this metric goes beyond benchmarking a student's skills to their own class or school, as it provides a metric that is calibrated worldwide!

For those programs that are not using LinkedIn currently in their program, we are able to show that using the simple exercise in Peterson and Dover (2014) or the network development project in Dover et al. (2015) will give a program a foundational start to developing social selling in their curriculum. It also appears that advanced sales classes that provide networking and live selling opportunities should see evidence of improved social selling skills.

LinkedIn's SSI score shows us the degree to which our students are engaging in social selling behaviors. These measures can then be used more intentionally to teach specific social selling activities and encourage students to measure their social selling score over time. When the Sales Navigator Enterprise edition is used, students and professors are able to consistently measure student SSI scores in comparison to their peers.

The purpose of this paper is to share how a sales program can use the new SSI measure as a tool in their class, sales program, or business school to measure how well students are using LinkedIn as a social selling tool to develop social selling skills. Like most learning exercises in a college classroom there will be variability and a chance for professors to determine on what they wish to focus. It can be merely a learning exercise or a part of a grade. We note that one student finished the introductory sales class with a score of 7 and after completing the advanced sales course the student attained a score of 9. Meanwhile, another student attained a score of 62. Clearly different outcomes and disparate learning levels were achieved, but this mirrors marketplace realities, as well as where decisions will be made that will affect all stakeholders. However, professors can use these scores to enhance the student experience in classes and in their overall program.

One can take a passive or an aggressive learning stance on what is to be expected from the student, as it regards social selling outcomes. One can merely inform the students that SSI scores do exist and their future job may certainly call upon them to have a "reputable" score. Or, a professor could post the self-reported SSI scores to the class and let natural competitive tendencies take it from there. An assignment might even include a precise minimum score tied to a certain percentage of the student's grade. Much of this is determined by the objectives set in a particular course and the approach the professor wishes to deploy. The procedure used in this case was somewhat passive for several reasons including, the SSI scoring offering was brand new to the marketplace; the current objectives of the courses

were set before a definitive measure was offered by LinkedIn; and a desire not to be too heavy handed given most students are new to more professionally oriented social media.

LIMITATIONS, EXTENSIONS, AND CONCLUSION

The Social Selling Index score provided by LinkedIn.com is only a measure of a student's activity on the LinkedIn platform and does not measure other social media outlets, such as Twitter, that could also be used in social selling. Not only is this a single platform measure, without the Sales Navigator Enterprise product the professor is reliant upon the student to self-report their number. The current website functionality allows users to 'share' their SSI score and send it to the professor, which reduces the concerns inherent in students' self-reporting their scores. We are also very reliant upon LinkedIn's algorithm to define the measurement of social selling. This reliance possesses two concerns: First, we are not able to explicitly understand the algorithm that computes SSI. Second, we are dependent on LinkedIn keeping the SSI score as a free service to its users. The basic LinkedIn account is free, but the Sales Navigator, which allows for much more sophisticated social selling capabilities, has a fee attached and it might be cost prohibitive for some classroom purposes.

SSI could be used in many sales and marketing courses to encourage social selling and social prospecting. Professors would have a potentially valuable measure of the degree to which students are engaging in assignments, as well as corporate networking. Again, the instructor could decide the level and intensity that any social selling exercise would entail. The SSI measure would allow the student, the professor, and the sales program to evaluate how refined the students' social selling skills are and what future curriculum adjustments might be useful when having students engage in these needed sales skills on the LinkedIn.com platform. This new tool gives professors a quantifiable measure of each student's progress in developing social selling skills, which should provide students with a competitive advantage in the marketplace.

REFERENCES

Adamson, Brent, Matthew Dixon, Pat Spenner, and Nick Toman (2015), *The Challenger Customer: Selling to the Hidden Influencer Who Can Multiply Your Results*. New York, NY: Portfolio.

Cohen, Heidi (2011) "30 Social Media Definitions," *Actionable Marketing* 101, retrieved from http://heidicohen.com/social-media-definition/.

Derezin, Mike (2015), "State of Social Selling," *Sales Connect*, Las Vegas, NV, USA.

Dingus, Rebecca, and Alex Milovic (2015), "Honor Among Salespeople: Using an Ethical Role Play and Code of Ethics Exercise to Develop an Ethical Framework in a Professional Selling Course," *Journal of Selling*, 15 (2), 5-10.

Dixon, Matthew, and Brent Adamson (2011), *The Challenger Sale: Taking Control of the Customer Conversation*. New York, NY: Penguin Press.

Dover, Howard, Robert M. Peterson, and Gary Selden (2015), "Developing Professional Social Networks: Student Outcomes Using Social Networking," *Journal of Selling*, 15 (2), 11-16.

Guesalaga, Rodrigo (2016), "The Use of Social Media in Sales: Individual and Organizational Antecedents and the Role of Customer Engagement in Social Media," *Industrial Marketing Management*, 54 (4), 71-79.

Hennig-Thurau, Thorsten, Edward C. Malthouse, Christian Friege, Sonja Gensler, Lara Lobschat, Arvind Rangaswamy, and Bernd Skiera (2010), "The Impact of New Media on Customer Relationships," *Journal of Service Research*, 13 (3), 311–330.

Howlett, Charles H., and Sonia M. Newman (2016), "How Sales Managers Evaluate Talent to Optimize Sales Results: A Classroom Case Study For Sales Students," *Journal of Selling*, 15 (2), 17-23.

LinkedIn (2013) "*Global Survey of 5,000 Sales Professionals*", https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/sales-solutions/global/en_US/site/pdf/infographics/achieving-social-selling-success-infographic.pdf

LinkedIn (2016) "*State of Sales 2016*", https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/business/en-us/sales-solutions/resources/pdfs/linkedin-state-of-sales-2016-report.pdf

Marshall, Gregory W., William C. Moncrief, John M. Rudd, and Nick Lee (2012), "Revolution in Sales: The Impact of Social Media and Related Technology on the Selling Environment," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 32 (3), 349-363.

McKenna, Colleen (2015), "Teaching LinkedIn, in the Classroom and Beyond," Intero Advisory, retrieved from http://www.interoadvisory.com/2015/09/teaching-LinkedIn-in-the-classroom-and-beyond/ [June 6, 2016].

Moore, Jesse N., Mary Anne Raymond, and Christopher D. Hopkins (2015), "Social Selling: A Comparison of Social Media Usage Across Stage, Markets, and Sales Job Functions," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 23 (1), 1-20.

Peterson, Robert M., and Howard F. Dover (2014), "Building Student Networks with LinkedIn: The Potential for Connections, Internships, and Jobs," *Marketing Education Review*, 24 (1), 15-20.

Rodriguez, Michael, Robert M. Peterson, and Vijaykumar Krishnan (2012), "Social Media's Influence on Business-to-Business Sales Performance," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 32 (3), 365–378.

Taute, Harry A., Robert S. Heiser, and David N. McArthur (2011), "The Effect of Nonverbal Signals on Student Role Play Evaluations," *Journal of Marketing Education*, 33 (1), 28-40.