

Sales Faculty Coaching and Organizational Culture in a University Sales Competition Team: A Case Study

By Stefan Sleep and Brent McCulloch

As sales competitions become more prevalent in the educational environment, faculty coaching has assumed a role that closely replicates and parallels coaching by industry sales managers. This case study examines how the combination of faculty coaching and student sales team organizational culture can have a positive impact on performance in sales competitions and organizational commitment. Using feedback, role modeling, and trust-building, faculty coaches drive desired behaviors while building a sales team organizational culture that instills values and beliefs. This case study provides one example of how faculty coaching is a critical component of sales competition success and exemplifies how building a positive organizational culture within the sales team can enhance the effects of coaching on organizational commitment and performance. These lessons are also relevant to industry sales managers and faculty coaches as a means to improve performance.

INTRODUCTION

At the undergraduate level, sales competitions are becoming an increasingly important component of sales education for students and employers. The largest events involve students from over 70 schools in multi-day competitions that evaluate the students' ability to perform a sales role-play based on a standardized sales process rubric. These university-sponsored competitions provide an experiential learning opportunity that requires a significant amount of faculty coaching to improve student learning and performance (e.g., Heinze, Lee, and Fortune, 2018; Inks and Avila, 2008; Widmier, Loe, and Selden, 2007). While the competitions typically only last a few days, they are the culmination of months of student preparation led by faculty coach(es).

The approach to faculty coaching examined in this case study follows a distinct process that emulates coaching by industry sales managers. We define coaching as: "A sequence of conversations and activities that provide ongoing feedback and encouragement to a salesperson or sales team member with the goal of improving that person's performance" (Corcoran et al., 1995, p. 118).

Rich (1998) further identifies three distinct components of sales coaching that provide the foundation of the competition preparation process: supervisory feedback, role modeling, and developing trust. Previous research shows that coaching can be delivered to focused selling teams, such as competition teams, and it prepares salespeople and students for their next career stage (Badrinarayanan et al., 2015).

Just as industry sales managers have multiple duties, coaching is just one of many faculty responsibilities; therefore, it is crucial to build a strong organizational culture that encourages peer-to-peer coaching outside of formal meetings and emphasizes functioning as a team, not as individual contributors. Moreover, culture is developed to recruit, socialize, and integrate new members to the sales team. This is largely driven by an organizational coaching culture among students that engrains specific patterns of behavior, values, beliefs, and assumptions to supplement and enhance faculty coaching (Jackson, Tax, and Barnes, 1994). In the case study presented in this paper, the combination of faculty coaching and a strong organizational culture has led to a high level of commitment to the team and successful sales competition performance.

This study contributes to the existing literature by extending the limited research into the role of coaching in sales education (Good and Swift, 1996) while incorporating the impact of organizational culture. From the faculty coaching perspective, this study encourages

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faculty coaches to incorporate coaching research into their team preparation process (e.g., Peesker et al., 2019; Rich, 1998; Shannahan, Bush, and Shannahan, 2013). It also supports building an organizational culture that drives practice and coaching behaviors outside of formal meetings. This unique culture, which has led to a sustained level of high performance, provides an example that can be used by sales education classes and industry sales managers.

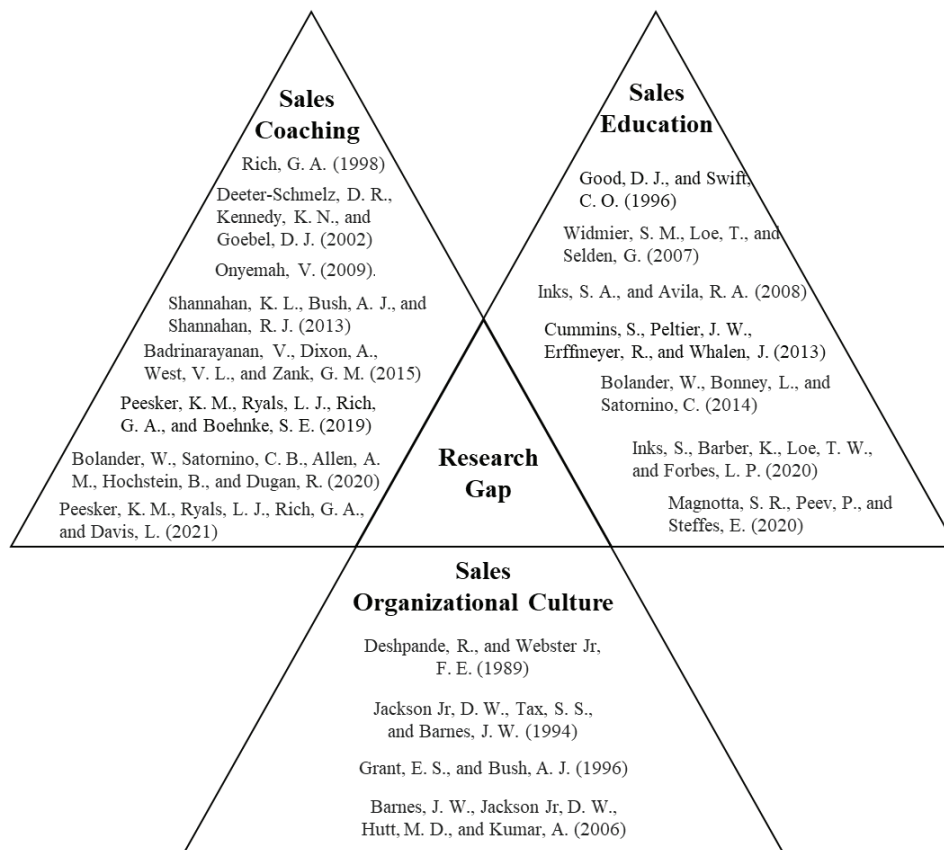
Through the lens of the existing sales management and organizational culture literature, this case study details the specific coaching steps taken to build a successful sales competition team and develop an organizational coaching culture. In the following sections, we will

review the literature on sales education, coaching, and organizational culture, briefly define our view of a sales competition team, detail coaching and organizational culture activities, and summarize the outcomes, contributions, and opportunities for future research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This case study falls in the middle of three important streams of sales research: coaching, education, and organizational culture. Each area has been examined in the sales literature, see Figure 1, but coaching as part of sales education is a distinct research stream that contributes to all three areas. In this section, we briefly review the existing sales research and identify the research gap.

Figure 1: Overview of the Literature Review



While sales coaching plays a significant role in developing salespeople and improving performance, academic research lags behind practitioner publications on the topic despite regular calls for more research (e.g., Badrinarayanan et al., 2015; Rich, 1998). Previous research shows that coaching plays an essential role in behavior-based control (Anderson and Oliver, 1987), which is important since the majority of faculty coaching time is spent on preparation and learning the sales process since the performance measure, the competition is a one-time, culminating event. In his seminal work, Rich (1998) defines the three primary constructs of sales coaching: feedback, role modeling, and trust. Later research has found that sales coaching plays an important role in salesperson development (Badrinarayanan et al., 2015; Deeter-Schmeltz, Kennedy, and Goebel, 2002; Peesker et al., 2019) by driving the right attitudes and behaviors (Onyemah, 2009). These aspects are important to sales team coaching since students have limited training and experience. Ultimately, coaching leads to increased levels of organizational commitment, intrinsic motivation, job satisfaction, supervisor satisfaction, and improved job performance (Deeter-Schmeltz, Kennedy, and Goebel, 2002; Onyemah, 2009). These benefits have not been specifically examined in the educational setting, so research on sales coaching provides the basis for faculty coaching.

Previous research in sales education primarily focuses on the benefits of experiential learning (e.g., Inks and Avila, 2008), sales competitions (e.g., Heinze, Lee, and Fortune, 2018; Widmier, Loe, and Selden, 2007), and formal sales education (e.g., Bolander, Bonney, and Saturnino, 2014; Bolander et al., 2020). The previously cited studies report that experiential learning and sales competitions socialize students to the business world and the salesperson role (Inks and Avila, 2008; Magnotta, Peev, and Steffes, 2020). Similar to sales coaching, formal sales education also leads to higher performance and a higher level of organizational commitment in the business environment, which increases revenues while lowering retention costs (Bolander, Bonney, and Saturnino, 2014). These research streams show that experiential activities and the benefits received in the educational setting are transferable to the business

environment, but existing research on the role of coaching in sales education is very limited (e.g., Good and Swift, 1996).

The third research stream is that of organizational culture, which is defined as “the pattern of shared values and beliefs that help individuals understand organizational functioning and thus provide them norms for behavior in the organization” (Deshpande and Webster, 1989, p. 4). Organizational culture can be viewed in terms of a group or subculture within an organization, such as the sales function within a corporation or the sales competition team within the business school (Schein, 1984; Wilkins and Ouchi, 1983). Deshpande and Webster (1989) originally examined culture at the marketing level, and later research specifically examined it within the sales organization (e.g., Barnes et al., 2006; Jackson, Tax, and Barnes, 1994). Research on sales culture shows that it starts from the top (Schein, 1984) and sales managers play a key role in creating a strong culture with shared values and beliefs and a common mission (Grant and Bush, 1996). By aligning the values of the individual to those of the organization (Barnes et al., 2006; Posner, Kouzes, and Schmidt, 1985; Jackson, Tax, and Barnes, 1994), salespeople and students are more likely to respond to group norms versus rewards (Chonko, 1986). This is important at the student level since the opportunities for rewards, such as successfully participating in sales competition, are limited in comparison to the preparation time required. Finally, previous research shows that a strong organizational culture is required to achieve and maintain a high level of performance (Apasu, Ichikawa, and Graham, 1987; Jackson, Tax, and Barnes, 1994) and leads to higher levels of organizational commitment (Barnes et al., 2006).

This case study fills a gap in the three literature streams previously mentioned. First, faculty coaching incorporates the core components of coaching in a sales organization, further enhancing student preparation for post-graduation employment and coachability. Next, the case study provides additional insight into how coaching can be applied in the sales education setting. Sales competitions continue to increase in size, number, and complexity providing a unique experiential learning experience (Heinze, Lee, and Fortune, 2018; Magnotta, Peev, and Steffes, 2020). Finally, we examine the role

of organizational culture in the sales team setting. A significant amount of peer coaching occurs informally outside the purview of the coach, and we add to the research on sales organizational culture and the coaching literature by detailing an example of how culture can develop commitment and improve sales team performance.

STUDY SETTING

This study utilizes the experience of the Kennesaw State University (KSU) sales competition team. The university was selected because it has a more than 20-year history of competing in national sales competitions in addition to hosting one of the nation's largest competitions. In this section, we briefly summarize the approach to organizing the KSU sales competition team that participates in multiple sales competitions during the academic year.

At the beginning of each semester, all students with an interest in sales are invited to join the sales team. There are no restrictions in terms of prerequisite classes, major, or year. However, students must commit to attending all regular meetings over the course of the semester and supporting team members by conducting product research and participating in practice role-plays outside of regular meeting times. Regular meetings are held twice a week and serve as coaching sessions for the entire team with a focus on product knowledge, the sales process, role-playing, and feedback. The sales team generally consists of 15 to 20 diverse student members with two faculty coaches. Competition participants are chosen by their peers and coaches based on their performance during the semester in team meetings and KSU-specific sales competitions. It is important to note that not all team members compete in external competitions; some serve in a support role by playing the buyer role in practices, serving as a product expert, or providing support in other ways.

SALES TEAM COACHING

[The coaches] invest a lot of time outside of teaching to prepare us to be the best we can be. They wake up just as early as we do and give us the knowledge we need to go into competitions, sell products, and hopefully come out with a win – KSU Sales Student

The objectives of the KSU faculty coaches are to increase product knowledge, enhance knowledge of the sales process, and improve student behaviors that lead to the development of skills outside of formal coaching meetings (Peesker et al., 2021). Faculty coaching of the KSU sales team incorporates the three constructs of sales coaching identified by Rich (1998): supervisory feedback, role modeling, and trust. While Rich (1998) is the foundation for the case study, the approach also incorporates components of more recent research on coaching, such as utilizing transformational leadership, engaging in discussion with individual team members, and providing support and encouragement (Kemp, Borders, and Ricks, 2013; Peesker et al., 2019; Shannahan, Bush, and Shannahan, 2013).

The overall coaching approach incorporates transformational leadership as a core concept. The focus is not strictly on providing feedback to students, but on creating a shared vision for the team, setting expectations of top performance, and responding to and empowering individual team members (Bass, 1985). This leadership approach increases coachability (Shannahan, Kirby, and Shannahan 2013) while providing the foundation for peer-to-peer coaching that occurs outside of regular meetings. The coaches also utilize a behavioral model that encourages students to integrate the coaches' values and behaviors into their preparation (Rich, 1998). In the following section, we expand on how these elements are incorporated into the faculty coaching process.

Role plays are as close as you can get to the real world, better than a book, better than a seminar or YouTube training. – KSU sales team alumni

Feedback, defined as praise or recognition directed at a subordinate salesperson (Jaworski and Kohli, 1991), is a regular part of sales team meetings. Students record their practice role-plays and the coaches and other team members provide feedback on the student's performance. Constructive criticism is provided immediately following the viewing of the role play, versus during the role play, with an emphasis on the positive aspects (Badrinarayanan et al., 2015). The emphasis on quick, positive feedback supports the students' development and increases their willingness to participate in both the role plays and

the feedback process. By using a humanistic approach that emphasizes active listening and realistic feedback (Berg and Karlsen, 2007), students are more willing to adapt and adjust in future role plays.

Additionally, feedback focuses on selling behavior and the selling process versus outcomes. The outcome, which is success in a sales competition, is not known until after the coaching is complete. Consequently, feedback focuses on the sales process and utilizes a positive approach that emphasizes support and encouragement (Peesker et al., 2019). Within coaching meetings, the coaches and teammates reinforce positive sales behavior, which can have a strong effect on the students' satisfaction with the process (Jaworski and Kohli, 1991) and lead to improved performance (Deeter-Schmeltz, Kennedy, and Goebel, 2002). Additionally, there is an open line of communication between the team and the faculty coaches. If students want additional role-play practice or feedback on previous performance, sales team members can reach out to the coaches at any time, which builds sales team morale (Deeter-Schmeltz, Kennedy, and Goebel, 2002).

[The coaches] have prepared us by having practice at 7am twice a week and being there for us whenever we need them. – KSU sales student

Next, role modeling, or leadership by example, is incorporated into faculty coaching. The first example of this relates to when team meetings are held. Meetings begin at 7:00 am twice a week, which is an abnormal hour for the typical college student. Meetings occur at this time to instill discipline and demonstrate commitment, and because the timeframe replicates what students can expect in the corporate sales environment. Faculty coaches arrive early in business-appropriate attire for each meeting, setting professional expectations and standards which are also required of sales team students. The sales team participants then model this behavior to new teammates, propagating the culture, while preparing students for their first, post-graduate full-time position.

Once the meeting begins, the faculty coaches further model appropriate behavior by demonstrating the sales process, consistently acting in an honest, concise manner, and listening to the team (Rich, 1998; Deeter-

Schmeltz, Goebel, and Kennedy, 2008). After the coach demonstrates the sales process, students are encouraged to ask questions and participate in multiple role plays. Faculty coaches listen carefully, encourage other team members to provide the initial feedback, and then share candid, relevant/honest feedback. The entire team discusses strategies and approaches to competitions with the best suggestions being implemented. This empowers the individual and sets common goals, key components of transformational leadership (Peesker et al., 2019). The meeting is not a lecture from the faculty member; rather, it models a real-world coaching scenario (Deeter-Schmeltz, Goebel, and Kennedy, 2008).

Coaches clearly state expectations for the team early in the process since most of the practice and preparation occur outside of the coaching meetings. Students are expected to attend all meetings on time in business dress, practice additional role plays with team members and faculty outside of meetings, socialize and mentor new sales team members, and work as a team. Setting these expectations develops the values of the sales competition team, which supports both the coaching process and the development of the organizational culture (Schein, 1984). In Table 1, we provide a summary of the specific activities undertaken by the sales team that align with Rich's (1998) seven categories of role modeling behavior.

Finally, the faculty coaches use multiple methods to build trust with the sales team. Previous research has shown the benefits of building trust between sales managers and salespeople in terms of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention (e.g., Brashear et al., 2003; Flaherty and Pappas, 2000). Because the KSU sales team is open to all students, participants vary from students who have been involved with the team for several semesters, taken classes with the faculty coaches, and developed coaching relationships, to students who have yet to take a sales class and are interacting with the coaches for the first time. For the students joining the sales team for the first time, trust is initially gained by faculty coaches demonstrating a level of competence and showing respect for all team members. The KSU sales competition team relies on two coaches, one who has over 30 years of business-to-business (B2B) corporate sales and management experience and five years of college-

Table 1: Faculty Coaches' Role Modeling Behavior¹

Role Modeling Behavior	Coaching Activities
Selling Technique	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop a standard rubric for all role plays - Critique students based on a standard rubric - Participate as buyers in role plays
Being on Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Both coaches arrive early for all meetings - Participate in scheduled role-plays outside of regular meetings
Ethical Conduct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Emphasize ethical conduct in meetings and role plays - Adhere to all competition rules
Physical/Professional Appearance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At a minimum, dress in business casual attire for all student interactions to model a professional standard
Listening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Involve the entire sales team in role-play feedback - Provide positive feedback in response to students' needs - Provide an open forum for discussion at all team meetings - Respond to and incorporate students' suggestions - Foster open communication via phone calls (cell phone number) and office visits (drop-ins/open-door policy)
Cross-functional Teamwork	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Incorporate faculty who are not coaches into role-play sessions held outside of scheduled meetings - Communicate sales team activities and successes to the department and school
Stated Expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Participate in meetings and additional role plays - Provide feedback - Team focus versus individual focus

¹ Rich (1998)

level teaching and sales team coaching, and a second with a doctorate, corporate experience, and coaching experience at other universities. Doing so builds trust and credibility with students, which is a key component of effective coaching (Peesker et al., 2019) and develops an ongoing relationship (Brashear et al., 2003).

Open communication is another important component of coaching and trust building (Deeter-Schmeltz, Kennedy, and Goebel, 2002; Onyemah, 2009). Students have access to the coaches' cell phone number and an 'open-door' policy exists for office hours. Students are encouraged to call or visit without scheduled appointments. Additionally, from day one, the coaches emphasize that while everyone is on the team and has an important role to play, not every individual will be selected to participate in external competitions. This clearly communicates expectations in terms of shaping

behavior for competition preparation and practice while reducing disappointment for team members not selected to compete. It is emphasized that every member plays a role on the team as a buyer, researcher, or competitor. Faculty coaches reach out to students not selected for competition teams to have an honest conversation about why they were not selected and discuss future opportunities to compete. The coach also builds trust by communicating that, like the students, participating on the team is a purely voluntary activity without additional compensation. This exhibition of open communication builds trust by demonstrating the coaches' commitment and willingness to help the team (Peesker et al., 2019; Rich, 1998).

Using the previous findings from sales coaching research creates a strong relationship between the team and coaches that increases commitment to the team and results in team success.

SALES TEAM: ORGANIZATIONAL COACHING CULTURE

The culture is amazing! Everyone is like-minded and wants to be successful in the future and ... now as well. We all prepare each other for competitions and classwork. It's a close-knit family group. – KSU sales student

The sales team culture parallels [our company] well. For example, we emphasize collaboration and support of each other while celebrating success on social media – Corporate recruiter

On its own, faculty coaching can provide a foundation for success in sales competitions. In our scenario, however, there are only two hours of formal coaching meetings each week and much of the practice and coaching occurs outside these scheduled sessions. Thus, the organizational culture is critical because it can prevent, reduce, or stimulate the impact of coaching (Lim and Morris, 2006). Developing an organizational coaching culture is crucial to the overall success of the team because it encourages student commitment, fosters a positive attitude, and facilitates participation.

Everyone is willing to help each other. This has prepared me because I know there is someone willing to role play with me at whatever hour. If it doesn't work for them, they will help me find someone or recommend someone. – KSU sales student

Because the time available for formal coaching sessions is limited and the practice time commitment necessary to succeed in competition is significant, the sales team creates an environment where students learn from each other through peer coaching (Peesker et al., 2021). The organizational culture is initiated by the examples of the faculty coaches, as described previously, and then it is adopted and implemented by the sales team. Coaching support provides a positive team environment that increases student motivation (Kemp, Borders, and Ricks, 2013). In the following section, we discuss the various components of how KSU developed an organizational coaching culture based on the three levels of salesforce culture identified by Jackson, Tax, and Barnes (1994). A summary of the examples at all three levels is presented in Table 2.

The first level of salesforce culture is to develop artifacts and patterns of behavior within the sales team (Jackson, Tax, and Barnes, 1994). This is essential in the educational setting because there is a regular turnover of team members, most of whom participate for two years or less. This section provides additional details about the components that have the largest influence on the organizational culture. First, a trophy case is prominently displayed in the hallway outside the sales center at KSU to showcase over 20 years of success in sales competitions. This sets an expectation of excellence for all sales team members. Next, the sales team has access to a dedicated lounge area. Alumni and corporate sponsors also make informal visits to the lounge on a regular basis. This builds a unique culture since it provides a sense of belonging and exclusivity while providing a space where students can communicate, build professional relationships, study, and practice between classes. Furthermore, students develop personal relationships in the lounge setting, which makes it easier to provide feedback to other team members because a relationship already exists. Finally, past KSU sales team participants are excitedly welcomed back to campus as alumni. There is a shared cultural experience that builds close bonds, and previous winners are recognized by current students, years after they have graduated.

As shown in Table 2, the values and beliefs largely focus on assisting team members, dedication, and working as a team. Peer coaching is the most critical component of assisting team members. The coaches rely heavily on the students to help each other by practicing and critiquing role-plays outside of formal meetings. Members selected to participate in competition will support each other, but they will also utilize the expertise and experience of other team members who are not competing. Coaches monitor peer coaching, via access to recorded videos, but they primarily rely on other students for feedback and coaching until just before the competitions.

Dedication consists of committing to attending early morning meetings and being willing to support and assist teammates outside of formal meeting times. Working as a team is essential because each competition consists of individual competitors. For the largest

Table 2: Three Levels of Sales Team Culture²

Level 1 – Artifacts and Patterns of Behavior	
Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trophy case is prominently displayed outside the Center for Professional Selling - Student lounge accessible exclusively to sales students and the sales team.
Jargon/Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Terminology, such as sales competition, role play, SPIN, WIIFM, and IDI, are regularly used and foreign to most other students
Myths and Stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Professionalism is the standard - Emphasize ethical conduct in meetings and role plays
Heroes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Previous winners are known by name for years - Visits to campus by winning alumni are important events
Rites/Rituals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early morning sales meetings, i.e., 7:00 am - Weekly informal social dinners among sales team members - Business attire is standard
Ceremonies/Celebrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Post-competition celebrations include the entire team, not just members who were competitors - End of the semester awards ceremony (Sale-abration)
Level 2 – Values and Beliefs	
Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Peer coaching - Experienced team members should guide and mentor junior team members - Dedication to the team - Preparation is a team activity versus an individual activity
Beliefs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Socializing and integrating new members benefits the entire team - Success for the individual is success for the team - Provide positive support of all team members
Level 3 – Assumptions	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team effort will lead to success - The team will be the best prepared at the competition - The team will outperform the competition 	

² Jackson, Tax, and Barnes (1994)

competitions, only two or three individuals out of a team of 15–20 participate. However, all team members participate in the competition preparation by providing positive reinforcement and support. When an individual succeeds at an event, the entire team celebrates and receives recognition for the competition's success.

If you are new, [current team members] will help you 100%. They will train you from not knowing anything to being one of the best – KSU sales student

The socialization process is one of the most important elements of building a cohesive team. As previously mentioned, there is a regular turnover of sales team members and the group's culture must be taught to new members (Schein, 1984). Current team members willingly socialize with new members by communicating freely, acting as mentors, and building relationships (Grant and Busch, 1996). They also encourage reticent students to join the competition team, regularly recruiting classmates, friends, and roommates. Current members communicate the difficulty in developing

sales skills, but support new members by sharing their expertise, improving their skills through practice role-plays, and including new members in the team through social activities (the student lounge and informal weekly dinners). This reduces the anxiety that comes with meeting new students, providing critical feedback, and performing role plays (Grant and Bush, 1996; Verbeke and Bagozzi, 2000).

These values and beliefs lead to a core set of assumptions that the team will work as a harmonious unit, be well prepared, and outperform its competition. The faculty coaches do not set specific standards for practice and teamwork outside of coaching meetings; these are determined by the sales team. In terms of competition performance, goals are not explicitly stated by the coaches or the team, but the assumption is that all participants will not only proceed to future rounds, but they will also become finalists. The organizational culture strongly supports faculty coaching.

OUTCOMES

The history of the KSU sales team has shown that this approach to faculty coaching, supported by the well-developed organizational culture, results in a strong level of organizational commitment and high-level competition performance. Committed individuals “act in a way that is consistent with the organization” (Hunt, Chonko, and Wood, 1985, p. 113). Sales team members exhibit this commitment by remaining with the sales team for multiple semesters, participating in meetings and role-play practice sessions, working as a team, and recruiting, socializing, and mentoring new members. These are the expectations of the faculty coaches and the sales department, and the students readily adhere to these responsibilities. Additionally, students carry these values and beliefs into the business environment, which leads to multiple job opportunities, career success, and a positive view of the entire sales program from corporate sponsors. Sales students have a 95% job placement rate and receive over three job offers per student.

The combination of coaching and culture are significant factors that have led to performance success. Over the past five years, a variety of individual competitors and the entire sales team have finished in the top 10 of multiple national sales competitions, including

winning a national competition. Performance in these competitions is the result of supportive faculty coaching and an organizational culture that stresses teamwork, responsibility, and a winning mindset.

While the focus of this case study is on coaching and culture, other factors, such as experience and institutional backing, also support the sales team’s success. First, the coaches’ familiarity and experience with sales competitions play an important role. Evaluating student performances and having access to rubrics from multiple sales competitions provides insights that can be incorporated into future coaching. Institutional support in terms of facilities, dedicated coaches, and internal sales competitions provide additional practice opportunities that can also influence performance.

CONTRIBUTIONS

Theoretical

To date, prior sales literature has explored coaching, education, and organizational culture, and the benefits of all three in terms of employee satisfaction, performance, and commitment (e.g., Onyemah, 2009; Bolander, Bonney, and Satornino, 2014; Barnes et al., 2006). In this case study, we applied all three streams, which is valuable because there has been minimal research on coaching in the educational setting (e.g., Good and Swift, 1996). Through our examination of the KSU sales competition team, we propose constructs that are significant to sales managers (e.g., Peesker et al., 2019; Rich, 1998; Shannahan, Bush, and Shannahan, 2013) can also be applied to the educational setting. Utilizing transformational leadership to provide positive feedback through support and encouragement, role modeling, and building trust can improve performance and commitment while preparing students for their future careers.

While previous literature has identified the positive impact of sales organizational culture (e.g., Jackson, Tax, and Barnes, 1994), it has not explored how coaching and culture can work together to improve outcomes. We believe that developing a strong organizational culture will encourage the sales team to develop peer-to-peer coaching habits within the team that positively support faculty coaching.

Finally, the lessons learned from the KSU sales team are applicable to industry sales coaching. Previous research has examined sales manager effectiveness and coaching and the positive impact of each (e.g., Deeter-Schmeltz, Goebel, and Kennedy, 2008; Deeter-Schmeltz, Kennedy, and Goebel, 2002). This case study contributes to the sales education literature by examining the positive impact of sales organizational culture on coaching. Coaching that instills a set of values and beliefs that are internalized by the salesforce can lead to improved commitment and performance.

Faculty/Managerial

This research contributes to sales education by showing how academic research on sales coaching can be applied to a sales competition team. In this example, preparing for a competition entails much more than practicing and critiquing role plays. The faculty coaches serve as mentors and provide positive feedback while encouraging the same from the members of the sales team. By creating a standard approach and rubric, arriving engaged and on time, dressing appropriately, and listening to and involving the sales team in discussions, the faculty coaches exhibit appropriate behaviors or role modeling. Finally, the faculty coaches build trust with the team by sharing their relevant experience, providing an open line of communication, and demonstrating their commitment to the team.

The KSU faculty coaches support the organizational culture through leadership activities and by matching their personal values to those of the organization. Highlighting the success of previous competitors, providing a dedicated space for informal gatherings of the sales team, and treating preparation and success as team accomplishments not individual accomplishments positively influence the organizational culture. Additionally, the culture enhances the socialization of new sales team members, which provides a steady stream of new students who can more rapidly respond to faculty coaching and successfully participate in competitions. The positivity of the group is a key factor in recruiting new team members and mitigating complacency—or worse, disengagement.

It parallels [our process] perfectly: high expectations, fun environment, and ongoing coaching – Corporate recruiter

Finally, the experience in the educational setting may also extend to the workplace. If sales managers can establish a strong culture, coaching may be more likely to occur informally and more frequently through peer-to-peer coaching rather than exclusively with the manager. Additionally, by emphasizing the team, salespeople will be more willing to support each other instead of functioning as individual contributors. Celebrating sales as team victories, sharing ‘war’ stories, engaging in social interactions, and creating a series of values and beliefs can improve the sales organizational culture and sales enablement throughout the organization.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Since this case study only examines a single instance of sales team coaching, there are numerous opportunities for future research. First, studies could empirically test a conceptual model that incorporates both sales coaching and organizational coaching culture. Survey data could be collected from sales faculty, students, or a combination of the two. A student perspective on the importance of several coaching constructs and organizational culture would provide insight into the similarities and differences in relation to the perspective of faculty coaches.

Exploring additional constructs in the sales coaching space provides another opportunity to contribute to the existing literature in the coaching and sales education areas. Common themes in the sales coaching literature focus on transformational leadership and trust. Examining the role of these constructs in the faculty coaching space would provide additional insight into the similarities and differences between corporate and faculty coaching. Researchers could also look more closely at specific components of different sales programs, such as their structure, level of peer coaching, and success measures beyond competition performance. Several faculty-specific variables could also be further examined, including years of coaching experience, financial support, sales team size, and annual competition participation. Finally, researchers could more closely examine the culture within the culture. The culture of the sales team may be different than that of the sales program as a whole. Since participation in the sales team is voluntary, factors such as high performance, work ethic, and competitiveness may play

a more significant role in the sales team culture than the overall program culture. Competitiveness would be very interesting to explore considering team members must balance cooperation with the competitive aspects of the team.

Another avenue for future research would be to expand on existing research on the impact of sales education on corporate success (e.g., Bolander, Bonney, and Satornino, 2014). Specifically, future research could examine participation on a sales competition team and the impact of faculty coaching. Collecting data from both sales managers and recent alumni would provide further insight into the impact of both corporate and faculty coaching and differences in organizational cultures. The corporate perspective would also provide access to a larger range of outcome variables around sales performance, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

LIMITATIONS

This study has some limitations. The most significant is that it discusses a single sales team and a single coaching perspective. While this approach may work for our specific team, other approaches may be equally effective or more successful at other universities. A discussion with coaches in other successful programs would provide additional perspectives on other approaches and best practices.

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