

Journal of Sales Transformation

OVER 20 PAGES OF RESEARCH-BASED INSIGHT, INCLUDING: WHY EVOLVE? MESSAGING FOR UPSELLING AND CROSS-SELLING... IMPACT OF EDUCATION ON SALES BEHAVIOUR... RETAINING HIGH-PERFORMERS: WHAT TOP SALESPEOPLE WANT... FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN DEVELOPING SALES MANAGERS AND HIGH-PERFORMERS + SALES RESEARCH ROUND-UP

WHY DIVERSITY IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS



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**SAMANTHA WESSELS,
DIMENSION DATA**

Deirdre Coleman

Invest in where the market is headed. Not where it's been.

Sometimes, that's hard to do. But it's what you have to do to succeed. And it's why, as a leading Sales and Service performance services company, we have invested in how training, technology and talent will get you where you need to go in the future. Because the truth is, your sales and service people see market trends first hand, so they better be ready to adapt and take advantage of them. So check us out, and discover all the new and innovative ways we can drive the future of your performance.



Themes

Diversity and inclusion plus practitioner research

Diversity and inclusion

It was International Women's Day on 8 March with activities taking place in businesses, schools, universities and sports clubs, in cities ranging from Dubai to Detroit. This edition of the *Journal* is very much focused on diversity and inclusion, exploring issues of inclusion around gender, race, background, culture and ability. You only have to look at the **Snapshot** column on the right to see how widespread unconscious bias in business is.

We also look at the issue in the wider context of organisations benefiting from diversity of thought, experience and ideas, while acknowledging that there is potential for messaging to become fragmented ("Guest View", pages 8-9) if there is no cohesion in the process. In sales, success will inevitably be driven by understanding customers' unique but diverse perspectives but also by encouraging them to embrace innovative approaches, where appropriate. In his column, **Bob Apollo** urges us to regard diversity of thought as a muscle that needs to be continuously exercised (page 12).

Michelle Charles is the Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion for SAP's sales organisation. She discusses the IT giant's D&I strategy that seeks to build a more inclusive workforce and better business results (pages 16-17).

Deirdre Coleman asks **Samantha Wessels**, SVP Group Sales Operations & Enablement, **Dimension Data**, why D&I is a business imperative (pages 18-23). She also reports from Consalia's 12th annual Global Sales Transformation conference in Singapore where D&I was top of the agenda (pages 48-53).

Research

Research continues to be a key area of focus for the *Journal* with 18 pages of original research content, in addition to **Jeremy Noad's** indispensable roundup of the latest sales research from the academic journals (pages 43-45).



There is brand new research from **Professor Nick Lee** of **Warwick Business School**, which has been facilitated by the *Journal* as part of our own research programme. In collaboration with **Tim Riesterer** and **Joe Collins** of Corporate Visions, Professor Lee examines the best messaging for handling upselling or cross-sell conversations (pages 25-30). The research investigates how best to sell more to an existing customer: for instance, in the context of needing to convince them to migrate to higher-value solutions and services, perhaps in the event of a significant upsell opportunity or due to a material change in a base product.

In the previous edition of the *Journal* we featured a number of research-based articles from academics. In this edition, however, we are concentrating on practical research by company executives and its interpretation in a sales context. Three highly successful sales leaders present the results of the research projects they have undertaken while participating in sales-related Masters programmes.

Carl Day, National Sales Director for Channel Sales at **Toshiba TEC UK**, investigates links between ethics and education, and sets out to evaluate the impact that longer-term education will have on individual sales behaviour (pages 31-34). **Sarah Edge**, General Manager, UK & Ireland for **HMD Global**, uncovers what high-performing salespeople want from their organizations and, just as importantly, what they don't want. This understanding is critical for organizations that wish to retain their best-performing salespeople (pages 35-38). **Simon Dale**, VP Sales, Asia-Pacific & Japan for **MapR Technologies**, considers why coaching, change management and stakeholder engagement should be considered more seriously in the development of sales managers and sales professionals identified as high performers (pages 39-42).

Snapshot

UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN EMPLOYMENT

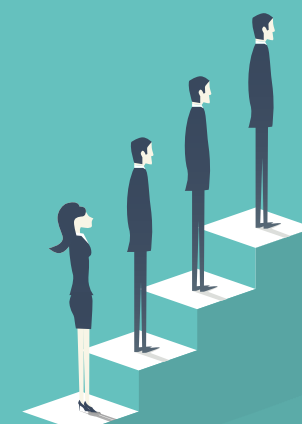
UNCONSCIOUS BIAS IN BUSINESS IS APPARENT ACROSS A WHOLE RANGE OF FACTORS, INCLUDING: APPEARANCE, GENDER, HEIGHT, RACE, WEIGHT, ACCENT AND AGE.

Fortune 500: average height of US men = 5'9"; the average height of US CEOs = 6'0". 14.5% of US men are >6'0"; 58% of Fortune 500 CEOs are 6'0"+.

IN FORTUNE 500 COMPANIES, ETHNIC MINORITIES HOLD ABOUT 7% OF BOARD SEATS; ETHNIC MINORITY WOMEN HOLD ABOUT 3.2% OF BOARD SEATS. HOWEVER, 36.3% OF THE POPULATION IS FROM AN ETHNIC MINORITY.

WOMEN BEGIN TO BE DISCRIMINATED AGAINST AS A RESULT OF THEIR WEIGHT WHEN THEIR BMI IS 27. IN CONTRAST, MEN ARE NOT AT SERIOUS RISK OF WEIGHT BIAS UNTIL THEIR BMI IS 35.

INFORMATION ADAPTED FROM THE "UNCONSCIOUS BIAS INFOGRAPHIC" PUBLISHED BY JALUCH. FOR MORE, SEE: WWW.JALUCH.CO.UK/UNCONSCIOUS-BIAS-INFOGRAPHIC/.



In this issue: Q1 2018



On the cover: Why diversity is good for business...
Diversity – in all its forms – is good for business but it also brings with it some challenges. Accordingly, in this edition we explore what diversity and inclusion means for the sales profession; why it is needed; what are the areas of focus – age, race, gender, ability, sexual orientation, religion, culture, class – but also diversity of thought, work experience and background; and what it will take for businesses to reap the rewards of a more diverse work force. At the same time, firms need to guard against the fragmentation of their messaging that can arise from multiple diverse inputs and meld these into a cohesive outlook. Sales is a notoriously male-dominated profession with a reputation for leaders “hiring in their own image”. Throughout this edition we have sought to provide ideas and examples to inspire a different approach.

3 Themes – Diversity and inclusion: The D&I debate is very current; in this edition of the Journal we examine multiple aspects of D&I through various lenses, including interviews with successful women sales leaders, the thoughts of D&I specialists and views from businesspeople around the world. Research: in the previous issue, we featured research from multiple academic sources; in this edition, we move closer to the coalface to focus on sales leaders who have conducted their own research as part of their participation in a Masters programme; in addition, we continue our programme of

original research in conjunction with Professor Nick Lee and Corporate Visions. **Snapshot** – An infographic adapted from UK HR consultancy Jaluch highlights how entrenched unconscious bias is in employment in terms of personal appearance – especially at leadership level.

6-7 Upfront – Winners of the recent Women in Sales Awards Europe talk to us about why it's important to celebrate the achievements of women in sales.

8-9 Thought-Leaders – Diversity also brings the risk of fragmentation, but the best



6-7 Upfront



16-17 Insight

companies are able to project a single voice by telling a consistently engaging story, argues author and researcher Tim Riesterer.

10-11 News – APS expands in Asia, progress on chartered status, key APS events, WISA winners, and the latest sales paper from McKinsey.

12-17 Insight – Bob Apollo explores the many dimensions of diversity. Professor Nick Lee dismisses the idea that “replicants” will replace salespeople and discusses where AI is today. Michelle Charles takes us through SAP's D&I strategy.

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18-23 My Journey

18-23 My Journey – “Hear my voice: lessons in inclusive leadership”: Deirdre Coleman asks Samantha Wessel, SVP Group Sales Operations & Enablement, Dimension Data, why diversity and inclusion is a business imperative. She explains why she is passionate about getting more women into sales, and specifically into technology.

25-42 Research – “Why evolve?": our research programme continues with a study from Professor Nick Lee and Corporate Visions exploring how best to handle upselling or cross-sell conversations. A trio of sales leaders, who have graduated from the Middlesex University-Consalia Masters programme, present the findings of their in-company research: Carl Day, National Sales Director for Channel Sales at Toshiba TEC UK, investigates “Ethics



35-38 Research

in sales: a novel approach to sales education”; Sarah Edge, General Manager, UK & Ireland for HMD Global, explores what steps organisations can take to retain their best-performing salespeople; and Simon Dale, who runs sales teams in the APAC region for MapR, finds out why the three topics of coaching, change management and stakeholder engagement should be considered more seriously in the development of sales managers and sales professionals identified as high performers.

43-45 Research review – Jeremy Noad rounds up the latest research of interest to sales leaders across four broad themes: sales performance, customer management, behavioural studies, and systems and tools.



48-53 Conference Report

47 Databank – “D&I snapshot”: Corinne Sim presents a snapshot of sales leaders’ thoughts on diversity and inclusion issues, captured at Consalia’s recent conference in Singapore.

48-53 Conference Report – ““The diversity advantage”: Deirdre Coleman reports on the discussion around D&I at Consalia’s 12th annual Global Sales Transformation conference in Singapore, with contributions from CEB-Gartner, LeanIn, and Hewlett Packard Enterprise.

54 What’s On – The fifth Sales Educators’ Academy in Birmingham this May is a “must attend” event for those teaching sales students; in addition, we round up the upcoming sales education events of significance from around the world.

Editorial board
Carl Day, Sales Director, Toshiba TEC UK; Nick de Cent, Editor-in-chief; Andy Hough, Chief Operating Officer, the Association of Professional Sales; Narendra Kumar, Senior Manager – Regional KOL & Medical Education, Asia Pacific-Japan at Allergan; Anna Kyprianou, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean, Faculty of Professional and Social Sciences, Middlesex University; Professor Nick Lee, Professor of Marketing, Warwick Business School; Dr Javier Marcos-Cuevas, Cambridge Judge Business School; Dr Jeremy Noad, Global Performance Transformation Manager, The Linde Group; Robert Racine, VP Global Sales Enablement, Wipro; Professor Neil Rackham, sales author; Dr Beth Rogers, Portsmouth Business School and the Global Sales Science Institute; Roger Scarlett-Smith, formerly Head of Global Categories, GSK; Todd Snelgrove, Global Manager – Value, ABB; Dr Phil Squire, CEO, Consalia; Philip R Styrlund, CEO, The Summit Group; Andy Tosney, VP Global Sales, Mondelez International; Professor Yong Joo Choi, Seoul School of Integrated Sciences and Technologies (aSSIST).

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Winning the award has given me a platform to start conversations around how we as a business can start to move the dial further on diversity in leadership and provide support for our female colleagues going forward.



Championing women in sales

We asked three participants in the 2017 Women in Sales Awards why it's important to celebrate the achievements of women in sales.

✎ Deirdre Coleman

The experienced salesperson

Amanda Kurylowski
Winner, Best Woman Sales Capability Manager

“I’ve spent the majority of my working life in one sales function or another. As a teenager, I landed my first sales job in the BHS Christmas department and since then I’ve worked in various sales environments from high street retail to travel, and more recently in FMCG.

“My goal during the awards process was always to best represent myself and what I have achieved but also what I have learnt along the way. I am particularly passionate about building stronger teams and supporting the development of others, so I ensured that the values that are important to me – which shape how I operate at work – came through very clearly in my conversations with the judges.

“I believe there are unique challenges for women in sales and these are things such as building effective support networks within the organisation, achieving a balance between career and family priorities, and being comfortable highlighting one’s own achievements. On these points, I think that both businesses and the women within them have a responsibility to drive momentum around organisational change to support the development of women and women leaders of the future. Winning the award has given me a platform to start conversations around how we as a business can start to move the dial further on diversity in leadership and provide support for our female colleagues going forward.”

Amanda Kurylowski is Category Strategy & Insights Controller, for Pladis Global.

The mentor

Ian Mills
CEO, Transform Performance International

“I have been privileged to present at the Women in Sales Awards and to mentor some of the winners. It is a humbling experience to be in a room with so many talented saleswomen and to make a contribution towards their further success.

“Whilst we should avoid generalisations, it is my opinion that women are better placed to meet the needs of buyers in a world that is coming increasingly VUCA – volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous. The extensive research that we did culminating in the *Salesperson’s Secret Code* leans towards behaviours that are arguably strengths of women: *guerilla* rather than *gorilla*, working *smarter* rather than *harder* are just two examples.

“There are so many exceptional woman in sales and, yes, some of them may now be CEOs and some might be successful entrepreneurs, but they still sell and they still believe in selling. I would encourage every saleswoman to identify someone who is amazing at something they wish they could do, go buy them a coffee, and work out how you might do what they do.

“For our book we interviewed Erica Feidner who according to Inc.com is one of the ten best salespeople of all time. Erica sells Steinway pianos and sell ten times as many as the average salesperson. She doesn’t see herself as a salesperson; she believes she is a piano matchmaker.”

Ian Mills is author of “The Salesperson’s Secret Code” and “100 Big Ideas to Help You Succeed”.

The newcomer

Emma-Leigh Waters
Most Distinguished Sales Woman of the Year

“In April 2016, I decided I wanted to change the direction of my career as I was unfulfilled in my credit control management role, and set about searching the internal jobs board for new opportunities. That’s when I came across the specialist sales manager role and it really sparked my interest, as it was so wildly different from what I was doing at the time.

“I was nominated by my sales director for Best Newcomer. I spent the next few weeks taking advice from my peers and women in the business who had been shortlisted for the WISA awards in the past. I also spent a lot of time reflecting on the first 18 months in my role, which I had not taken the time to do previously as I had been so focused on pushing ahead with my plans for the team. I was quite shocked when I realised all of the challenges we had overcome and the positive changes we had made in such a short space of time.

“The best thing about being a women in sales for me is knowing every day I go to work and make my voice heard and push myself to break down those barriers. I am supporting a message that is much bigger than me: women are amazing salespeople and sales leaders who have the skills, knowledge and gravitas to sit at the top table of any sales organisation.”

Emma-Leigh Waters is a Specialist Sales Desk Manager at Virgin Media Business. She was also judged the Best Woman Sales Newcomer.

Guest View

With diversity comes great story responsibility

Tim Riesterer

Diversity brings the risk of fragmentation, but the best companies are able to project a single voice by telling a consistently engaging story.

Today, an employee base with diverse experiences, skills and perspectives is one of your biggest organizational strengths. But like many good things, a diverse talent pool, for all the brainpower and energy and dynamism it adds to the mix, doesn't come without its risks. One of those risks is fragmentation – particularly as it pertains to creating a unified, overarching story that resonates with your customers, and that those same customers see as a coherent, consistent and powerful experience.

So how do you harness the range of inputs and experiences in your company so that you project “one voice” to the prospects and customers you need to attract and retain?

“You will be rewarded for creating a customer story that your employees lock into, and that your prospects and customers associate almost reflexively with the value and customer experience only you can provide.”

All about the story

It's about the story. That's what keeps the risk factors of fragmentation, rogue messaging, and inconsistent customer experiences at bay. Your story has to be something your employees can buy into, project with enthusiasm, and yet still make their own.

There is absolute proven value in having a consistent, high-quality value story that demonstrates how you impact the customer – clearly, coherently, and creatively. You will be rewarded for creating a customer story that your employees lock into, and that your prospects and customers associate almost reflexively with the value and customer experience only you can provide.

But actually assembling and fine-tuning that story, then promoting it internally and getting your team to master it and own the message, and finally executing that message deftly in hyper-competitive markets... well, that's obviously the hard part. But the effort is worth it. Because a great customer-focused voice told through a great customer-centric story can stave off fragmentation and become the most important driver of consistency and organization in your approach to the market. And, it will ensure that the diverse range of talent, experience and perspectives you've assembled will be moving in a common direction and maximized as a force for your success.

Story expert

One of the brightest lights I know when it comes to the power of storytelling is Jennifer Aaker, a professor at the Stanford Graduate Business School who has authored multiple books that explore what's essential to developing, delivering and amplifying great, unifying stories. According to her, there are three major impediments to

creating customer stories that generate momentum and drive the outcomes you need. With each of these obstacles, fragmentation of process and message lurks as a threat. Aaker says companies fail to grow and innovate through their story due to:

1. non-alignment between the stakeholders involved with creating and then executing against that story;
2. the problem your story seeks to solve not being identified; and
3. the story not being defined.

Overcoming the hurdles

Here are three ways to overcome these obstacles and rally your people behind the banner of a great story:

- **Non-alignment? Keep it cross-functional.** Marketers may be the stewards of the story within most organizations. But to really gain the kind of buy-in you need to create a shared vision people can rally around; you need to harvest input from a host of other departments—including sales, products and upper management. By committing to cross-functional message development, you ensure your team is moving with a common momentum towards the development of your story. The best part is that you won't be pulling teeth to get cross-company buy-in. That will develop organically, as a function of being involved in standing up the story.
- **Haven't identified the problem? Get customer-centric.** If your story falls flat and doesn't get enthusiastically adopted, it's time to ask some hard questions. Is it possible that what you *thought* was a customer-centric approach was actually more of a vendor-centric one? Is it possible your six-step sales process or “buyer's journey” is more a reflection of how you *want* prospects and customers to purchase from you, rather than how they actually make buying decisions as they encounter critical business

Our View

Time to fix the sales apprenticeship logjam

Teething problems and delays with the UK's sales apprenticeship programme are frustrating employers.

At the time of writing in early March, it is National Apprenticeship Week in the UK. This time last year – during the 2017 National Apprenticeship Week – there was considerable excitement that the standards for the first-ever degree apprenticeship in B2B sales would swiftly be approved. The aim was to have apprentices embark on their shiny new programmes by September.

What a difference a year makes!

Alarm bells started to ring as delays crept into the process. Eventually, the Institute for Apprenticeships announced the standard was approved, and by October there was renewed confidence apprentices would be starting programmes throughout 2018.

After the euphoria of last year, however, apprenticeships in the UK sales sector appear to have been derailed, albeit temporarily. And it is not just the usual teething problems: delays are being caused by a mixture of confusion about policy in government, employer uncertainty about how the system operates, and inexperience amongst some of the institutions involved in terms of providing programmes to corporate clients.

“Huge amount of frustration” with delays

One industry expert close to the situation explained that there is a “huge amount of frustration” with the current situation especially given the very substantial amount of interest among employers in sales apprenticeship schemes.

On 30 January this year, the Association of Professional Sales urged the government to act quickly to approve more apprenticeships. The call from the APS followed reports that a new system to boost the number of apprentices was falling short, with the number of training

starts last autumn down by almost 42,000 on the previous year.

Ben Turner, APS general manager, told the *Journal*: “There is no reason why the government cannot hit its target of three million apprentices by 2020, but not as things stand. The whole process needs to be sped up. The sales profession alone could add significant numbers to the apprenticeship training programme.

“We know of employers who have hundreds of apprentices lined up, ready to start work, but the apprenticeships are waiting for final government sign-off. For instance, degree-level sales apprenticeship have been approved by the government, but the budget has not been signed off, delaying employers and the start of apprenticeship learning and development.”

Blockages

So what are the blockages in the system that need to be cleared? Funding is one, with reports of government attempting to cut the cost of programmes by up to a third. In response, some providers have sought creative ways to start programmes despite the uncertainty. Dr Phil Squire of Consalia explained: “We have found a way forward to enable BT and Royal Mail to get started, which will allow their students to complete the B2B sales degree.”

Some other providers, however, have refused to start any programmes and will not do so unless they receive the full £9,000-a-year funding required for these relatively time-intensive programmes. Equally, however, universities have not been good at explaining their position to government, according to one source. At the same time, their inexperience of dealing with the corporate world – rather than individual students – has also led to teething problems.

The new apprenticeship programmes are essential for the continuing professionalisation and performance of sales in the UK. It behoves all parties to clear this logjam without delay.

- **To share your views, please email us via editor@journalofsalestransformation.com.**

challenges. If so, you might need to think about re-centering your company story so that it hinges less on some prescribed buying pathway and more on what challenges your customers need you to solve.

- **Your story isn't defined? Make it situationally fluent.** Traditionally, companies have relied on isolated product launches and messaging roll-outs to define an organization's story. But, this programme-centric approach to rolling out a story doesn't reduce message fragmentation – it can potentially make it worse: the one-size-fits-all approach could leave you telling the wrong story for the wrong situation. A better way, once you've asked and addressed some of the thorny questions above, is to take a problem-centric approach, defining your story according to the decision-making situations your customers face – ie the business opportunities, initiatives and problems you are uniquely qualified to help them respond to.

If you're bullish about the diverse perspectives and experiences you have at your disposal, but feeling fragmented in the way you're going to market, then it's time to get serious about fine-tuning your story. Doing so is the first step to standing up a customer story that's infectious, gets the internal buy-in you need, and projects a unified voice to the market.



About the author

Tim Riesterer is Chief Strategy and Research Officer, Corporate Visions.

APS launches Singapore chapter to kick off ambitious global expansion programme

The Association of Professional Sales (APS) launched its first overseas chapter on 1 March as part of expansion plans in Asia. Held at the Central Public Library in Singapore, the theme of the event was “Redefining the Sales Profession – Engage. Empower. Elevate”.

The packed programme was opened by Venkat Subramanian, Board Member and Director, Sales Effectiveness and Execution Excellence, Tripura Multinational. He explored “Redefining the Sales Profession – Why Now?” Martin Mackay, President and GM Asia Pacific and Japan, CA Technologies, followed with a discussion of “Sales as a Profession”, while Dr Philip Squire, APS Trustee & CEO, Consalia, explained why he supported the association with his presentation “APS – the chartered body for sales”.

Continuing the “Engage. Empower. Elevate” theme, a panel session saw Neelam Dhawan, Supervisory Board Member, Philips and Former VP, Global Industries, Strategic Alliances and Inside Sales, APJ, Hewlett Packard Enterprise,



Panel discussion: Engage. Empower. Elevate.

join Mackay and Dr Squire discussing three key questions:

1. In your own experience, how is the sales function viewed in organisations today, and in particular how are selling skills developed in the team?
2. Why have you chosen to support the APS and how do you think it will change things?
3. How do you recommend the audience starts to engage with the APS to improve the sales function?

Over 50 delegates attended this first event for the Singapore chapter and included representatives from Gartner, KPMG, Hewlett Packard Enterprise, Philips, SAP, and Juniper Networks.

A spokesperson for the APS told the *Journal*: “We are already attracting great interest from organisations in Asia and, in short order, the APS will be opening in India, Cambodia, Australia and New Zealand. We are also examining our growth options in Africa, Europe, and America.

Oracle's wise words

Steve Elsham, Senior Director at Oracle will be considering “Delivering more for less: a case study of increasing sales and improving the buying experience whilst reducing costs” at a live event on 25 April. It takes place 9.00-11.30 am BST at the Oracle Office, Moorgate 1 South Place, London EC2M 2RB.

As an enterprise software company Oracle pivoted to become a services business providing software in the cloud, and so its business model fundamentally changed. The volume of products and services offered to clients increased exponentially – and so did the volume of quotes and contracts the company had to manage.

At the same time, customer's expectations completely changed. No longer content with the traditional B2B buying process, they expected the company to operate with the transparency and speed of the best of the B2C e-tailers; and to get it right every time. To satisfy these rapidly escalating demands, Oracle was going to break unless the organisation reengineered its core business processes, and so it reimaged the customer journey from the customer's perspective

Early supporters to be granted Founding Fellow status

Early supporters of the Association of Professional Sales have the opportunity to be recognised as Founding Fellows of the APS, the organisation has announced. This unique offer is open until 1 July 2018.

An APS spokesperson said that the APS is looking ahead to a breakout year with a jump in membership and corporate supporters. “As we build on strong foundations, we are offering our early supporters the unique opportunity to be a Founding Fellow of the APS. As our Association looks forward to the backing of many thousands of members, we are inviting current fellows, and those interested in being fellows, to apply to be Founding Fellows of the association.”

Andrew Hough, APS CEO said: “Existing and potential Fellows of the APS will help us to build on our impressive growth and be recognised for doing so by being granted the status of Founding Fellows. This means you have the opportunity to differentiate yourself forever! This title will be retained for the length of your APS subscription and your



Nick de Cent

Andy Hough: Opportunity to differentiate yourself.

involvement in the association.”

- **Meanwhile, the APS has announced that Graham Davis, sales leader and director of Royal Mail Group, has accepted the role of non-executive director to the association's legal board to help it reach its goal of chartered status. Davis has already worked extensively with the APS to introduce sales apprenticeships. He led the independent trailblazer group, which created the first government-approved standard for a degree-level apprenticeship in sales.**



< The winners with their awards.

✓ Emma-Leigh Waters: announced as overall winner.

Sales newcomer wins saleswoman of the year

Virgin Media Business Specialist Sales Desk Manager, Emma-Leigh Waters won big at the 5th annual Women in Sales Awards Europe ceremony held at the Sheraton Grand Park Lane last December. She was voted Best Woman Sales Newcomer and Most Distinguished Sales Woman of the Year.

“I have come back from the experience feeling more inspired than ever before,” she told the *Journal*. “It's extremely important that we continue to recognise the most successful women in sales and acknowledge the strength and perseverance it takes to get to the

top of your game in a male-dominated industry.”

Waters was among 13 winners chosen from 70 finalists drawn from some 130 nominations across seven countries: Belgium, France, Germany, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the UK. Some 300 guests saw her receive her award.

The awards seek to encourage more women to consider sales careers, by recognising and celebrating the contributions they make. They recognise women in sales and revenue-generating roles nominated by their company. The judges looked for evidence of general sales ability, a track record in achieving and exceeding targets, and a good understanding of the implications of change on the wider business.

“After running the Women in Sales Awards for several years now I have been fortunate enough to see the fantastic female sales talent from around the world and I have seen the awards grow year on year,” says organiser Afi Afori of Zars Media. “If we want to build and maintain the pipeline of senior women leaders of today and tomorrow, we need to educate, motivate and guide young women and young men from the classroom to the boardroom.”

Mentor

Lorna Leck, a mentor for the awards for the past two years, adds: “Mentoring is often the surprise ‘value-add’ for the winners. Whilst many organisations have an internal mentoring programme there is huge value in having a mentor who can steer you from an external perspective. After the excitement of the event, the mentor provides that additional input to steer and guide the winner to their next destination. I'm passionate about Women in Sales and it shouldn't stop at the event – keeping momentum is essential. This is what we provide as mentors.”

To find out more, visit www.wisaawards.com

European sales competition

This year's European Sales Competition will take place in downtown Paris near the near Champs Elysees on 30-31 May. Hosted by Euridis Business School, the competition is open to students from 20 participating universities.

Bernard Hasson, General Manager at Euridis Business School explains that the competition distinguishes itself by featuring real buyers playing the roles of IT buyers on the Salesforce selling case – the cloud software company continues to support the event as the main sponsor.

In addition to the sales competition itself and the speed selling recruitment pitch, Euridis will add a serious online prospecting game based on the SKILLGYM software. In this way, recruiters will obtain a 360-degree view of candidates' capabilities in terms of investigation and negotiation on a complex sale, self selling, and cold-calling skills.

Euridis Business School has a unique model within Europe when it comes to sales education at the Bachelor and Master's degree level. This is based on apprenticeships only, where 100% of students spend one week at the business school and three weeks working a B2B sales job in a company. Tuition is funded by employers, and students have full day courses on sales, marketing, digital business, communication skills and management.

European Sales Competition, Les Salons Hoche, 9 Avenue Hoche, 75008 Paris, France, 30-31 May 2018. Further details available from: <https://www.eventbrite.fr/e/european-sales-competition-paris-sponsored-by-salesforce-tickets-42666148599>.

Boosting sales ROI

In a February 2018 paper titled “Boosting your sales ROI: How digital and analytics can drive new performance and growth”, McKinsey authors argue that driving sales growth today requires fundamentally different ways of working, as well as outstanding execution across large, decentralized sales teams and channel partners.

Advances in digital and analytics mean that sales leaders can drive and scale meaningful changes that pay off today and for the future, the authors claim. Companies that get this right typically see 5-10% revenue growth with the same or improved margins.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/marketing-and-sales/our-insights/boosting-your-sales-roi>.

👁 Bob Apollo on Building Scalable Businesses

The many dimensions of diversity

✍ Bob Apollo

If, as many successful scale-ups are, we are on a mission to challenge the status quo and to get our prospective customers to think differently about their critical business issues, we would be wise to ensure that we are accommodating diverse perspectives and experiences within our own organisations.

I'm not talking about the demographic dimensions of diversity – of age, sex, race, religion or the like – but about encouraging diversity in the way our teams think about the issues, challenges and opportunities that our organisation is facing both now and in the future.

The world in which we compete is changing too fast for organisations to embrace a post-Taylorist "One Best Way" approach that assumes that rigid thinking or processes are capable of delivering anything close to an optimal outcome.¹

Starts with hiring

It starts (or ought to) with our hiring processes. In an increasingly dynamic world, hiring primarily on the basis of experience seems to be an increasingly ineffective strategy, as evidenced by the number of sales leaders who have come to regret hiring someone who appeared to be a superstar when working for a direct competitor, only to fall far below expectations in their new role.

Thinking specifically of the sales roles with which I am most familiar, attitude, aptitude, creativity, curiosity and the willingness to embrace new ideas have seemed to be far more effective predictors of long-term success than experience alone.

And having attracted the right mix of talent, we need to make sure that we don't stifle their potential by restricting them within inflexible systems or processes that suppress their creativity and their ability to contribute fresh perspectives.

Lessons from the customer interface

In managing sales organisations that are competing in a complex buying environment, we need to think of our processes as skeletons rather than cages, as catalysts for creativity and as guides rather than mechanisms for enforcing a centrally dictated and often outdated view of how things ought to be done.

In times of change, learning from the centre is an inevitably inadequate response. We need to tap in to the real-time, real-world, diverse experiences of the people who are operating at the edges of our organisation: at the interfaces between our company and our customers.

This is where the real learning is going on: and our best, most creative salespeople are working out new solutions to new challenges in every significant customer interaction. We can't afford to waste these invaluable lessons by confining them to the individuals who happened to discover or experience them.

Keep exercising the diversity muscle

Of course, sales leaders need to promulgate best practice – but much of that best practice must inevitably come



In managing sales organisations that are competing in a complex buying environment, we need to think of our processes as skeletons rather than cages...



About the author

Bob Apollo is the founder of UK-based Inflexion-Point Strategy Partners, the sales process improvement specialists. Following a successful career spanning start-ups to corporates, Apollo now works with a growing client base of B2B-focused scale-up tech-based businesses, helping them to systematically establish their uniquely relevant value to their customers.

from recent experiences at the edge. Sales leaders need to be continually challenging their teams to think differently, to share positive and negative experiences and to collectively come up with better ways of applying them.

This ability to accommodate and harness diversity of thought can of course differ significantly between both companies and industries and often evolves as organisations progress from the start-up phase through the scale-up phase to becoming an established corporate.

If my experiences are anything to go by, there seems to be an increasing risk of group-think and acceptance of the status quo as organisations grow and feel the need to put systems in place – until some sort of shock to those systems causes them to recognise what has apparently worked well for them in the past is now unlikely to get them where they now need to go.

But if we let diversity of thought atrophy through neglect, we'll find it hard to restore it on a whim. It's surely better for us to think of diversity of thought as a muscle that needs to be continuously exercised. Let's not let it waste away!

¹ Robert Kanigel, *The One Best Way: Frederick Winslow Taylor and the Enigma of Efficiency*, MIT Press; New Ed edition (15 Feb. 2005).

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👁 Nick Lee on... Artificial intelligence in sales

Will replicants replace salespeople?

✍ Professor Nick Lee

“More human than human”: The motto of the Tyrell Corporation, from the 1982 film *Blade Runner*. Recently watching that movie again, in preparation for a showing of the sequel *Blade Runner 2049*, I was struck (as I often am) by the interesting differences in what we can imagine the future to be like for different technologies. Of course, *Blade Runner* was set in 2019, just one year from now.

The film's world contained flying cars, off-world human settlements, and virtually perfect human replicants; all things which we are many years from even being close to (despite Elon Musk's dreams). Yet, views from within those flying cars show almost laughably simplistic computer graphical displays and control systems, the likes of which the phone in your pocket is now generations beyond.

In some ways, I feel our current understanding of the potential impact of artificial intelligence on the future world, and by extension the future of the sales profession, is similar. Many are nervous, even downright scared, of how AI might change our world for the worse, creating vast social problems as it makes thousands of different human job roles completely redundant, without creating new roles.

Many in sales and similar sorts of roles that I speak with seem to be primarily concerned about AI somehow replacing them physically, with stories on “robot sales assistants” and the like appearing in the technological and business press. While I think there is some legitimacy to those concerns of course, I suspect we are not that much closer to a genuine AI “replicant” today, than we were ten or 15 years ago. Indeed, while I feel that AI will fundamentally change a lot of roles in the sales profession, I suspect that the changes we imagine today will – like the flying cars and replicants of *Blade Runner* – be significantly different to how things will

actually pan out in reality.

In order to be successful in the future, salespeople and sales managers need to understand exactly what this “thing” called “AI” actually is, and what it can do in the near future. I feel there are far more opportunities for smart sales professionals than there are potential costs – AI can be a massive enabler for the best sales forces, not something that will “replace” salespeople with robots.

Deep learning

So, if AI is not human replicants, what is it? Right now, what most people refer to as AI is actually just one aspect of it, something called “deep learning”. At its core, deep learning is simply a technique for finding patterns in large data sets. We feed in a large amount of inputs, and train the system to provide a correct answer.

This is best explained with examples, and one of the best is in the analysis of images. Deep learning methods are currently extremely popular for tasks involving the use of visual data to categorize images – for example as “cat or not cat”, or “cancerous or not cancerous” to take a medical example. For many reasons, deep learning methods significantly outperform humans at this kind of categorization task. However, this should not be misinterpreted as the AI “understanding” what the images actually are. This approach works best on problems where there are clear inputs and clear outputs, making them ideal for categorization.

Of course, if that sounds like a small thing, it really isn't. In fact, many of our current jobs have quite significant components of pattern analysis and categorization, or at the least can be rethought in such a manner. Indeed, from one point of view, all of our actual interactions with others can be cleverly represented as information-processing, categorization and decision-making tasks. For example, our brains are

constantly faced with multiple sensory inputs, which our brains categorize – at its most simple as a threat or not – and then decide on a course of action (eg approach or avoid).

Even our complex society today can be broken down into a similar sort of process. This is where the huge potential of deep learning comes from. However, AI in this form has significant weaknesses, and is certainly nowhere near what most of us think of when we use the word “intelligence”. Deep learning works well on specific tasks that it is trained for, but is dependent on the data used to train it, and is also poor at abstraction or inference – things humans are very good at. Obviously, technology will advance, but in most cases, we are far from the “replicant salesperson” right now.

Replacing sales-related jobs

The areas where AI is most likely to outright replace sales-related jobs are those where direct physical human contact is least important, and where tasks are most structured. In these kinds of environments, the tasks lend themselves ideally to deep learning capabilities, and our current lack of ability to create a convincing physical replication of the human form is unimportant.

Many sales and service call centre environments may find that AI agents can be used to service simple inbound and outbound call tasks. The trick will be in somehow separating out those calls most likely to be simple. In this sense, the AI agent will be in essence a real-time auditory chat-bot. Of course, many firms now use essentially the same technology to service online enquiries. The key to moving this to environments where voice is required is, of course, convincing voice synthesis technology – but this is not really an AI issue (just as the physical replication of humanity isn't really an AI issue).

Another question is that of ethics: as representations become more convincingly “human”, will it be required that customers are notified when they are not speaking to a human? Will that then become a point of differentiation for some companies, as for example the call centre location is at present?

Enabler for complex sales

In terms of high-value professional or solution selling, however, AI as it is now is much more likely to be a massive enabler than a replacer of salespeople. Deep learning technology is already hugely useful in speech recognition and transcription, enabling for example much simpler and quicker interaction with CRM systems by salespeople. Not exactly what most people think of as “AI”, right?

Further, deep learning techniques are already in some firms helping match the right leads to the right salespeople, and even coaching the interaction in real time, using speech recognition technology. While this is currently most easily implemented in a telesales environment (eg in so many software-as-a-service environments), it is not hard to see how technology can enable real-time coaching of face-to-face interactions using small microphones, earpieces, and even video glasses.

Again though, we must wonder if there are privacy and disclosure issues of importance here, if sales reps are being fed information about their clients in real time, and suggested conversational strategies based on their client's facial expression and the like. Even so, the potential is clear, and when one matches this to the stream of data available from wearable tech, we are far from exhausting the capabilities of even today's technology, let alone what may occur in the future.

Sales manager role

Indeed, it is the role of the sales manager that may actually see the most change in the future. Recently, with the rise of real-time AI coaching technology (based on analysis of successful sales calls, and suchlike), and the clear potential for deep learning to do many of the “technical” aspects of a sales manager's role, I have begun to wonder just what sales managers will be needed for in the future. This to me is one of the key challenges for sales professionals in the future.

The most valuable sales managers must offer something that AI cannot. Right now, a lot of that has to be about the “softer” skills of motivation, and understanding the core drivers, learning how to get the best out of them. The areas of the role that will be least replaceable by AI are those that require abstract thought, flexibility of connecting different inputs to make new outputs, and reasoning/decision making with incomplete data.

In fact, the large amounts of data needed to train deep learning algorithms may be a key limiting factor in some sales contexts – especially face-to-face solution selling as opposed to telesales and online sales where large data sets are often automatically created. Once we break a task down into input data and decision rules, and can collect big enough data sets to train the algorithms, deep learning is ideally suited to do this better.

The task for all of us is look at what we do, decide which parts of it can be outsourced to an AI to make us more effective at the other – more valuable – parts. In that way, we can help AI work for us, not replace us.

“

The most valuable sales managers must offer something that AI cannot.



About the author

Nick Lee is Professor of Marketing at Warwick Business School and the Honorary Chair of Marketing and Organizational Research at Aston Business School. His research interests include sales management, social psychology, research methodology, and ethics. He is Editor in Chief of the *European Journal of Marketing*, the Section Editor for Sales Research Methods for the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, and he serves on the review panel or editorial board of several other journals. Nick is an Honorary Fellow of the Association of Professional Sales where he directs their research activities. You can contact him via Nick.Lee@wbs.ac.uk.

Moving customers beyond bias

Michelle Charles

SAP's D&I strategy seeks to build a more inclusive workforce and better business results.

SAP is in an industry where the pace of innovation separates the winners from the losers, and a greater variety of insights and experiences leads to new ideas and innovations. We recognised this need and embarked on a strategy to ensure we were drawing on and growing the diversity of our organisation while creating a climate for that diversity to flourish and have impact.

The global effects of digitalisation are all encompassing and extend far beyond just business models and processes. Technological advancements such as machine learning and artificial intelligence along with shifting demographics have created major changes in the global workforce.

These changes reinforce the need for a more diverse and inclusive workforce to enable us to be more competitive. SAP's diversity and inclusion strategy is focused on four key areas to empower thinking that increases employee engagement, customer satisfaction, and our ability to innovate (Figure 1).

Sap's diversity and inclusion focus areas

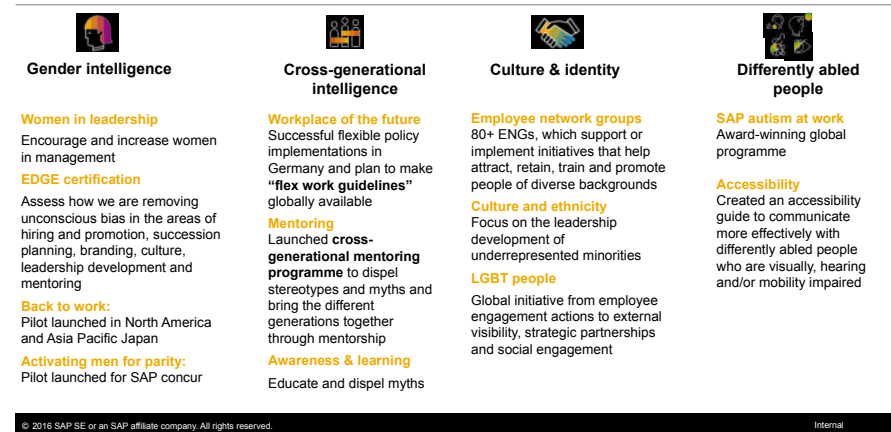


Figure 1: Four key areas of focus for D&I strategy.

- Powering our strategy was the recognition that:
- Many organizations want to work with companies that are leaders in diversity and inclusion. Among many firsts, SAP was the first global IT company to become EDGE certified. Our approach to diversity and inclusion is directly in line with our corporate purpose.
- Customers want to engage with business partners that understand and can relate to them, and that reflect their

own changing demographics and communities.

- The multicultural economy means that buying power is changing hands, and a diverse workforce will help us interact with and attract different cultures and diverse clients in a global market place.
- The increased focus on diversity is not unique to SAP and we found that many organisations faced the same challenges with some not knowing where to even start. We view this as an opportunity to understand what matters to our customers in diversity and help them achieve their goals:
- A diverse workforce generates positive business and economic impact, including higher revenues and profits, and greater employee engagement and customer satisfaction.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers's Annual Global CEO Survey, finds that 85% of organisations that have a diversity and inclusion strategy have seen enhanced performance.
- Attracting and retaining the best employees is more competitive than ever, and companies that think outside the box can find new, untapped sources of talent.
- Corporate practices are on display in an increasingly social and transparent environment.
- Countries and regions around the world have laws promoting greater workplace diversity, and stakeholder interest in inclusiveness is at an all-time high.
- Customers were using technology to measure diversity and inclusion, but not to directly influence action.

Knowing all of this, a few years ago we proactively set out to look at how we could collaborate with and support our customers by sharing and exchanging ideas on diversity and inclusion best practices, while addressing our mutual challenges. In doing so, our intent was to foster better engagement and partnership with our customers while providing solutions to reduce bias.

Using technology as a catalyst for change to reduce bias

We found that many companies have struggled to make lasting change in this area because they typically focus only on one aspect of the HR talent life cycle (eg. recruiting); they invest heavily in diversity programmes separate from day-to-day organisational functions and these lose steam over time; and they apply technology towards measuring and analytics, but not towards directly addressing the problem.

We wanted a comprehensive solution that went beyond analytics to also directly influence the problem where it lives – in the talent decision-making processes embedded within the human capital management (HCM) practices of an organisation.

Our vision and technology is based on the most current diversity and inclusion research, as well as collaborations with diversity professionals working for some of our

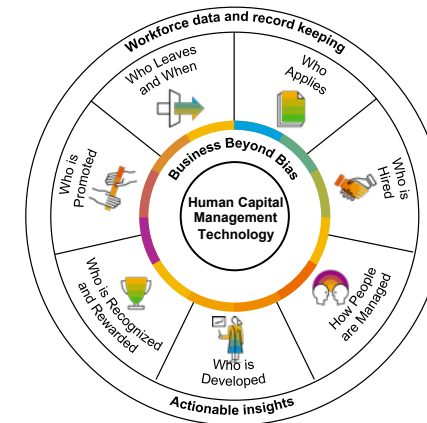
biggest customers. We also leverage experience from our own SAP diversity and inclusion team, which has driven some impressive outcomes for our company (for instance, our recent global EDGE certification).

Unconscious bias permeates every decision we take and every action we make. HCM technology enhanced with machine learning and artificial intelligence interrupts key strategy decisions and daily rote actions made by HR, executives, line

managers, and every member of the workforce.

SAP SuccessFactors (Figure 2) identified the nine key

Figure 2: SAP SuccessFactors.



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We had a five-point value proposition for participants:

- strategy accelerator** – help members kick start, prioritize, accelerate internal diversity and inclusion strategies;
- thought leadership** – learn and share thinking, best practices, local market challenges and implementation strategies;
- promote and strengthen** – diversity and inclusion within the local ecosystem;
- self-promotion** – as diversity and inclusion leaders, employers of choice, share success stories; and
- create transparency** in the marketplace.

We know that we have a long way to go on our diversity and inclusion journey but we believe teaming up with other organisations and incorporating our strengths will help us progress together.

Embarking on a diversity and inclusion strategy might seem a daunting task but a step-by-step approach to address the challenge will get you to your goals faster (Figure 3).

As we move towards 2020 our focus

decisions points where unconscious bias can hinder or help leaders to harness all the best and available talent. Here is a link to the SAP SuccessFactors e-book: https://www.successfactors.com/en_us/download.html?a=/content/dam/successfactors/en_us/resources/brochures/business-beyond-bias-ebook-v2.pdf.

Areas that it addresses include:

- HR analytics to measure and track diversity metrics;
- bias language prevention in job descriptions;
- calibration alerts which detect blind spots in identifying current and future talent; and
- mentoring matching.

Business Beyond Bias Customer Network

Unconscious bias and a lack of diversity hold organizations back from harnessing all available resources for innovation and growth.

In 2016, SAP launched a company-wide initiative to take our business beyond bias, using our core strengths to ensure a more inclusive workforce and better business results. The response was widespread and positive. We decided to turn that initiative into a movement to expand our scope and rally customers, partners, global influencers, and third parties to the cause, and so the Business Beyond Bias Customer Network was born.

This network is about giving companies a platform to exchange ideas and views on diversity without prejudice – to share best business practices and address challenges on specific topics in the market. We piloted this in Singapore in 2017 with three sessions and 20 customers, and the plan is to roll out to further markets in 2018.

We addressed topics that were of specific importance in Singapore such as how to measure and track diversity, women on boards, autism at work and an aging workforce.

Figure 3: Getting started with D&I.

How companies can get started Step-by-step approach

1. C-Suite buy-in	2. Focus on HR and eliminating bBias	3. Embrace inclusion
<p>Show how D&I can save money and boost revenue, and emphasise the long-term value (ie, talent shortage)</p> <p>Mine the data to identify and understand the issues</p> <p>Set goals for the organisation</p> <p>Enable your leaders to tell the story and the business to drive change</p>	<p>Align HR processes across the entire employee lifecycle from recruiting to retaining talent</p> <p>Create leadership and mentoring programmes for under-represented minorities to increase engagement</p> <p>Eliminate bias in decision making to attract and retain diverse talent</p>	<p>Create employee network groups to build a greater sense of community</p> <p>Encourage open dialogue and healthy discussion across your company</p> <p>Focus on career development for under-represented minorities and employee network group leaders</p> <p>Celebrate success by recognising significant achievements</p>

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will shift towards preparing for the workforce of the future, ensuring we continually innovate and support a purpose-driven culture. Our D&I strategy is even more targeted now towards advancing a culture of fairness and respect to ensure our employees have feelings of individual value and belonging, and therefore, the opportunity to be inspired by each other to innovate and create for and with our customers.

About the author

Michelle Charles is the Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion for SAP's sales organisation and is based out of Singapore. She has responsibility for driving SAP's diversity agenda across the sales line of business globally.



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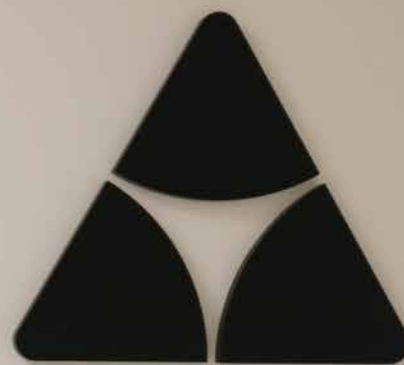
Singapore

Hear my voice: lessons in inclusive leadership

✎ Deirdre Coleman

▼ Samantha Wessels: sales can drive change.

dimension
data



For Samantha Wessels diversity and inclusion is a business imperative. Here she explains why she is passionate about getting more women into sales and specifically into technology.

Sales is at the forefront of the organisation, and can drive organisational transformation in the current era of disruption – that’s the view of Samantha Wessels, SVP Group Sales Operations & Enablement at hybrid IT services provider Dimension Data. “If we get the sales organisation transformed, if we get our talent pool transformed, our systems and processes aligned, we can evolve the organisation to be future-relevant; sales can drive that change.”

Over the past decade, forward-thinking organisations have worked hard to create diversity within their workforce and have seen the myriad benefits, including greater customer satisfaction, better market position, enhanced innovation and creativity, and a stronger bottom line. However, many organisations still struggle with making the environment inclusive and fostering a culture of belonging and connection that delivers performance and innovation.

“The business case for inclusion is simple,” explains Wessels. “Diversity in and of itself doesn’t necessarily guarantee high performance. When employees feel truly included, they will be engaged and perform better. Inclusion creates that link between diversity and performance. Many companies embrace diversity, but fail to build a long-lasting inclusive workplace environment because they focus too much effort on representation and not enough on integration.”

Leadership in the 21st-century demands that executives and their organisations move beyond diversity alone to capture the potential that comes from inclusion. “I don’t think companies are fully equipped to leverage the wealth of knowledge, insights, and perspectives in an open, trusting, and diverse workplace. Many companies will struggle to keep that talent and advance it to positions of leadership and influence.”

Sales operations

Previously Global Head of Sales for Cloud Business for Dimension Data, Wessels is currently settling into the new role that she took up over a year ago – and managing a diverse team well is high on her agenda. Owned by NTT, Dimension Data is a leading provider of hybrid IT services across infrastructure and applications with a turnover of \$8 billion. Headquartered in

♥ Wessels: “I don’t think companies are fully equipped to leverage the wealth of knowledge, insights, and perspectives in an open, trusting, and diverse workplace.”



“

If you haven’t mastered operations you’re going to suffer. Effective sales operations is an essential component for effective sales management.



▲ Wessels with colleagues Georgie Creaven, Global Communications Manager and Emanuele Naykene, Communications Co-ordinator.

Johannesburg, the global technology integrator and managed services provider employs more than 28,000 people across 47 countries.

“I wanted an opportunity to drive transformation on a larger scale and because I understand sales so well and I’m so passionate about it, I thought I could drive more transformation in a sales operations role,” she tells the *Journal*. Sales operations has been an underrated function within organisations for too many years, according to Wessels.

“The way things are moving with data-driven decisions and analytics and what systems are doing in terms of AI, if you haven’t mastered operations you’re going to suffer. Effective sales operations is an essential component for effective sales management.”

About Samantha Wessels

Current role: SVP Group Sales Operations & Enablement, Dimension Data

Previous role: SVP Group Sales Cloud

Major strengths: Leading transformational change, sales operational leadership, client satisfaction, managing and motivating globally diverse teams and driving market growth

Nationality: South African

How she got into sales

“My sales career started at 15. I spent every Saturday and Sunday working on a cosmetic counter at a large retail store. While my peers were playing sport, I was learning cross-selling, upselling, how to empathise and sell to people of all shapes and sizes and backgrounds. That’s where I first learned to carry a sales target and I learned that the customer is always right.”

On the importance of work ethic

“My mother was a nurse and worked until she was 70. She taught me to have a strong work ethic, to have discipline, take initiative and be a self-starter – all cornerstones of my life and instrumental in my success.”

On embracing challenge

“I always liked to take the road less travelled. I became a foreign exchange student and that taught me flexibility and adaptability, which are vital early lessons that set me on the path I’m on today. In sales, if you can’t course correct or change direction or pivot to the client’s needs or align yourself to the buyer very quickly, you’re going to lose. I always chose the harder path that no one else wanted as that’s where the greatest learnings stem from. When you put yourself in difficult situations and you put your hand up for the challenge, that’s stepping out of your comfort zone and it takes some foresight and emotional intelligence but it pays dividends.”

If sales is both an art and a science, then sales operations is very much the science of sales. Wessels’ role includes detailed forecasting, planning and modelling of the business, pipeline management, and oversight of global sales operation standardisation in addition to defining the sales compensation, budgeting and reporting for the sales organisation. A current project is revising the organisation’s remuneration framework in order to simplify it and drive the right behaviours.

“We used to pay everyone the same so, whether you were a hunter (responsible for new account acquisition) or a farmer (responsible for servicing and growing the account), you were on the same commission plan. That’s now changed. We want to pay our sales organisation for the activities that they are responsible for, which we hadn’t done before. We’re trying to simplify and reward the right behaviours to drive sales performance.”

An inclusive work culture is essential

Despite the correlation between gender diversity – particularly at managerial level – and better financial performance, women are still poorly represented in the tech sector, with less than a quarter of these roles being occupied by women.¹ Furthermore,

On sales being a profession

“When I did my first sales course, my mind was blown. For the first time, I realised that sales is not just about good relationships. It’s a profession, it’s very strategic and there is so much to master: dealing with buyers, understanding the business, budgets, the legal and political landscape. So many variables can go wrong.”

On lessons learned

“Sometimes you have to go backwards to go forwards. I remember cold calling all day every day for a year. I only made \$30 commission that year. But you have to sell your value. I ensured my boss knew I had carried out all the right sales activities and it opened up new opportunities for me.”

On being a woman in tech

“You have to be assertive and go after what you want but be authentic. Use your innate skills as a woman to connect with people and build relationships. To be equal you need to think equal and act equal. Women often look for reassurance and are naively honest – giving too much information away to the client. Hold something back. Think for yourself and act on your own. You need to be a student of your industry but there’s that art and science to sales and women are generally good at reading situations, collaborating, communicating, listening – all the skills of sales fit a female profile so I’d like to see a lot more senior women in sales and in technology. A lot of women are frightened by the word technology. I wasn’t technical when I started but I understood sales so don’t let that put you off.”

even fewer women are found in software development, technology leadership, or other key roles that have a significant influence on future innovation. Such patterns are especially troubling given ample evidence of the critical benefits diversity brings to innovation, problem solving, and creativity. Indeed, a solid body of research in computing and in other fields documents the enhanced performance outcomes and benefits brought about by diverse work teams.²

This gap simply boils down to not enough women choosing technology related careers. For Wessels it comes back to cultivating an inclusive culture. “It’s important to have a diversity programme but if you don’t have an inclusive culture a lot of people will leave as they won’t feel they belong in that organisation.

“The same people talk at meetings. If someone is shy or comes from a different background, they may not be comfortable in expressing themselves. Inclusive leaders will read that situation and pull that person in and get them to share their thoughts. Too often leaders don’t ask for different opinions and we go down the path of homogeneity leading to groupthink.

“A good leader establishes a climate that is conducive to expression of both feelings and ideas. I strongly believe we

Source: 1. Why are there so few women in tech? <http://www.womenintech.co.uk/why-are-there-so-little-women-in-tech>.
2 Women in Tech: The Facts https://www.ncwit.org/sites/default/files/resources/womenintech_facts_fullreport_05132016.pdf.

An inclusive culture is an incubator for innovation

In addition to cultivating a diverse workforce, we must also foster an inclusive work environment where creative ideas can germinate and grow. Common characteristics of an inclusive work environment include:

- **Belief** – Trusting and empowering employees to make a difference in continuous business improvements
- **Attitude** – Respecting a predisposition toward collaboration and diversity of thought

- **Knowledge** – Knowing how to think creatively to solve problems and capture opportunities
- **Behaviour** – Valuing and leveraging differences

Source: Proof That Diversity Drives Innovation, Diversity Inc. <http://www.diversityinc.com/diversity-management/proof-that-diversity-drives-innovation/>.



▲ Wessels: EQ foundational for success.

don't have enough inclusion and diversity of thought across the board".

Evidence suggests that workplace conditions, a lack of access to key creative roles, and a sense of feeling stalled in one's career are some of the most significant factors contributing to female attrition from the tech field.² A key initiative for Wessels that will encourage and retain female talent is strengthening networking and mentoring opportunities. "Women need to back themselves. They need to believe in their capabilities and competencies and, very quickly within an organisation, they need to find a sponsor and a mentor – that certainly helped me move forward in my career. If you don't have that person in your life, whether within or outside your organisation, you need to find them."

She in turn is now mentoring and sponsoring others. "It's a privilege and it's a responsibility that you need to take very seriously as you can ultimately change the trajectory of someone's life and that's what my mentor did for me."

The global workplace

For Wessels, long-term effectiveness requires interacting with others, building relationships, promoting collaboration and having the requisite resilience to deal with the inevitable obstacles that occur. "Increasingly, we are working across borders, cultures, and very diverse team members – driven by changing demographics and globalisation. These changes make EQ foundational for success. I can't over emphasise its importance. When you've got people in the organisation with EQ, it's a natural thing to be conscious of those around you and their opinions and what people need to succeed."

Managing diversity and inclusion in the global workplace is, in many ways, an unmapped territory. Inclusive leadership is the ability to draw strength from diversity and most importantly the diversity of thought that comes with it. Outstanding leaders

create a climate where multiple voices are heard, people are engaged, feel valued, are fully included in decisions and processes, and actively contribute new ideas and ways of improvement.

"Diversity today means more than race and gender. There's growing significance placed on creating environments where a variety of different voices are encouraged and heard. Diversity is fantastic but when you bring that talent in, we need to look at how you make them feel. How do we provide that psychologically safe environment for them to comment and not be judged for whatever they may say, transforming cultures to be inclusive and supportive? It's hard for people to notice culture if the culture's working well for them, and while we cannot completely rid ourselves of unconscious bias – personal and organisational blind spots – interrupting it is a skill that everyone can learn."

Diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance.

Verna Myers

www.declieinternational.com

Source: Diversity and inclusion expert, Verna Myers

“

Too often leaders don't ask for different opinions and we go down the path of homogeneity leading to groupthink.

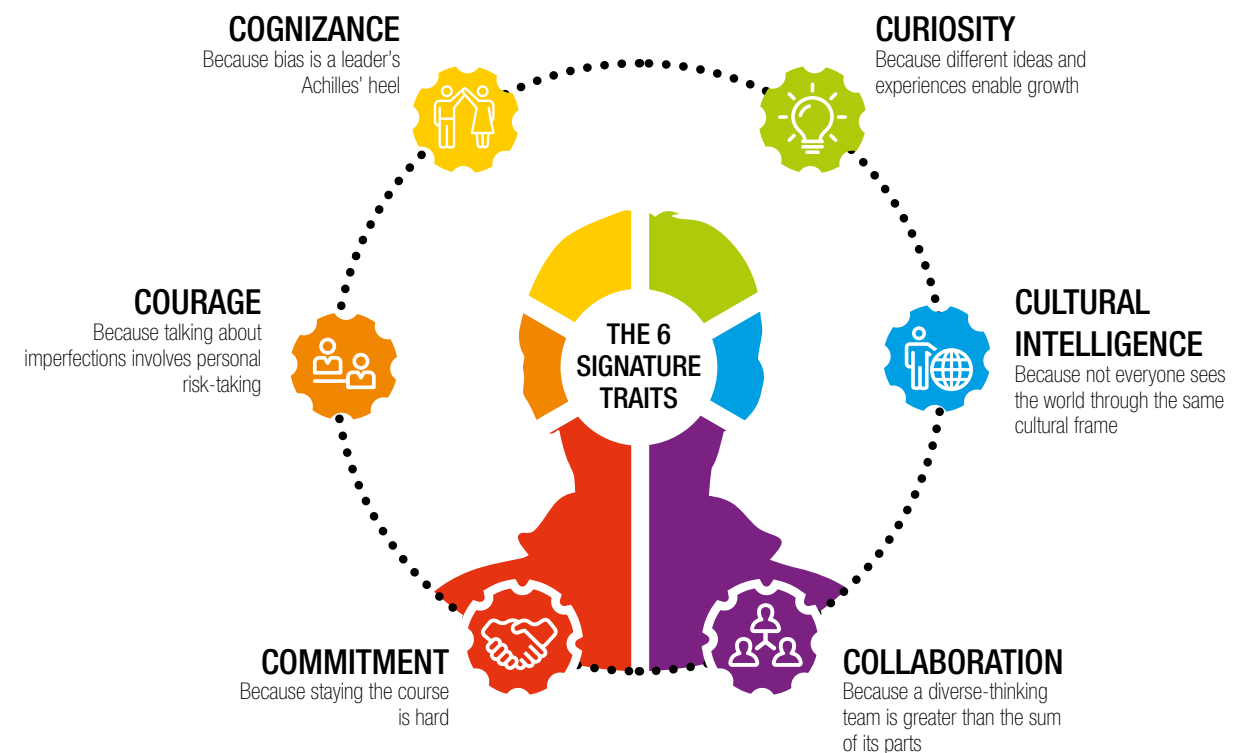
Design Your Workplace for Inclusion

1. **Get new hires to hit the ground running** – Ensure you foster an open culture where new hires can make their voice heard immediately. Get them involved early either by leading projects or facilitating meetings.
2. **Hierarchy and power structures** – Within your organisation, do people defer to the most senior person in the room, or the loudest voice or the person with the most tenure? An inclusive culture allows all voices to contribute to discussions – regardless of title, age, status, tenure or perceived competence. Creative ideas come from divergent opinion.
3. **Nature of Meetings** – Are the nature of your meetings centred around driving consensus and alignment or do you foster and encourage the expression of new ideas and diverging views? Don't fear constructive debate. The manager successful at fostering innovation figures out how to get different approaches to grate against one another in a productive process called creative abrasion.
4. **Awareness is key to unconscious bias** – We tend to associate with, listen to, hire and promote people like ourselves. You may not be aware of how your unconscious biases can affect your behaviour, but unchecked, this can have enormous impact in the workplace. Managing

unconscious bias is a vital step in building workplaces that are innovative, dynamic, and inclusive.

5. **A sense of belonging** – It's not enough to hire people of different nationalities, races, genders and sexual orientations; everyone needs to feel like they are truly welcome, safe and free to be themselves in the workplace. When people are comfortable and can express themselves in an authentic way, they are more likely to perform better, which increases engagement and contributes to the organisation as a whole. Provide that psychologically safe environment for them to comment and not be judged for whatever they may say.
6. **Connect with Employees** – One of the best ways to signal to your employees that it's OK to be themselves is to connect with them on a personal level. Find the common ground. Simple gestures like asking about "spouses" or "partners" (rather than assuming someone's sexual orientation and using gendered terms) can encourage LGBT employees to open up about their personal lives and feel included in non-work discussions. Give employees an outlet for connecting with others and sharing their stories.

SIX SIGNATURE TRAITS OF AN INCLUSIVE LEADER



30 minutes is all we need to assess over 50 selling skills



“

We found the USSA assessment to be of high validity and consistent with individual sales performance. The five modules covered almost all of the key areas in sales competency and the team reports offered a very clear comparison for both individuals as well as identifying team strength and weaknesses. It can be used for sales talent screening during both interview and personnel development processes.

RACHEL ZHANG, HR
DEPARTMENT MANAGER, VNU
EXHIBITIONS ASIA

”

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“Why evolve?”

Tim Riesterer and Joe Collins



New research identifies how best to handle upselling or cross-sell conversations.

“What about this selling situation?” That’s typically the first question we hear whenever we’ve conducted a study that sheds light on the buyer psychology of some critical moment in the purchase cycle. There’s always somebody waiting with the next question that needs to be run through the research gauntlet.

In our first article in this *journal*, we described the best message framework for telling a great “Why change?” story. This is the story you tell when you’re the outsider trying to displace an incumbent vendor, and you need to disrupt their status quo and convince them you’re different and better than what they’re doing today.

More recently we published the findings of a study to determine the best way to tell a “Why now?” story. This is the one you need to get executive buyers to take action sooner rather than later – decide rather than defer.

Those studies validated an effective message for when you’re trying to defeat the status quo. What it didn’t address is what to do when you *are* the status quo. What if you’re the “insider”? Do you still need to disrupt, or do you need to reinforce your position as the status quo? In other words, what is the best way to increase customer retention (“Why stay with you?”) and communicate a price increase to expand the per-account value of your partnerships (“Why pay more if I do stay?”)?

What this research revealed, in sum, is that the message you need to displace an incumbent (the “Why change?” story) is nearly the *inverse* of the message you need to retain them (“Why stay?”) and convince them to pay more.

It might’ve seemed only natural that these stories would oppose each other, given their very different aims. But, at a time when provoking and challenging the customer everywhere, all the time, is accepted as if it were a philosophical principle, it becomes essential to see research that clearly shows how buying psychology changes when you’re communicating with prospects as opposed to existing customers.

The big takeaway is that your message can’t be one dimensional – it can’t be a one-size-fits-all thing. Different situations across the buying cycle demand different messages and different skills, because what might work beautifully in one situation could well backfire in another.

A research gap identified: upsell/cross-sell

Despite what these studies uncovered about which messages work best in these key situations, there were still gaps in the research with respect to some other vital questions. One of them is this: *How do you sell more to an existing customer?* In other words, how do you best handle what are traditionally known as the upsell or cross-sell conversations, when, for instance, you might need to convince existing customers to migrate to higher-value solutions and services, either in the event of a significant upsell opportunity or due to a material change in a base product?

We’re calling this the “Why evolve?” story. And one reason it begs for a study is that it appears to be something of a hybrid between the “Why change?” and “Why stay?” stories, requiring techniques and skills that borrow from these two strikingly different situations. Another reason? More than 86% of respondents to a recent Corporate Visions industry survey said this moment is “important” or “very important” to their revenue success and their ability to retain customers. Nearly 60% of respondents, however, said they are only somewhat satisfied or worse when it comes to how well they convert customers to new

solutions – both in terms of how fast they convert them and how many are converting.

Convincing your customers to migrate to newer, superior solutions and services seems like it should be an easy ask. Too bad it seldom is. That’s because a whole range of hidden challenges and complexities that you might have underestimated in the beginning can rise to the fore, threatening to scuttle big opportunities to cement higher-value relationships with your customers.

Here’s what’s really on the line: If you’re successful in this moment, you can lay the groundwork for better customer experiences and longer-lasting partnerships, allowing your customers to take maximum advantage of the most impactful solutions and services you can deliver. But if you stumble at getting customers to evolve to higher-value services, your partnerships can stagnate. And when that happens, plateauing revenue isn’t your only problem.

If you aren’t offering your customers your most remarkable experiences, they become more susceptible to the overtures of your competitors, who can potentially disrupt you out of the equation with promises of better customer experiences that they can deliver. The problem isn’t necessarily that you don’t have those capabilities. It’s that you haven’t effectively seized the opportunity to provide them.

There’s clearly a lot at stake here. And, this situation is important enough that it shouldn’t be settled with educated guesswork or untested nostrums, but with actual research. That’s what we set out to do. The study, just completed, is covered below.

Researching the “Why evolve?” question

For this research we continued our collaboration with Professor Nick Lee at Warwick Business School. He has spent nearly 20 years drawing from social psychology, cognitive neuroscience, economics, and philosophy to develop insights into salespeople and selling. Our aim was to develop a study that responds to the most difficult challenges salespeople face when trying to sell higher-value solutions and services to existing customers.

The five key challenges of this situation are described below:

1. **Different enough?** It’s hard to overcome all the noise in the market and be seen as different enough to require action. So how do you create a message that’s not what the customer expects – that’s unusual enough to pique their interest?
2. **Important to success?** Part of selling is to create a buying vision in the minds of your prospects. You want to shape their vision of a future in which you and your solutions play a big role in their success. How do you craft a message that gets them to see your solutions as vitally important to all that?
3. **Personally convincing?** People look out for themselves first. So how do you craft a message that not only shows the value of their business, but also convinces them to become personally invested in doing something to propel their business forward?
4. **Willingness to change?** With many priorities and fires to fight, buyers need to be willing to take this on and be willing to move to a better solution. How do you craft a message that makes that case?
5. **Intention to purchase?** In the end, the only thing that matters in sales is whether they purchase or not. Even a 1% uptick in the likelihood of success is welcome. So how do you craft a message that increases the likelihood of your customer buying?

The best message condition for the “why evolve” moment is the one that’s most effective at helping salespeople overcome



these challenges and answer the questions they raise. Determining the framework for that message was the basis for the study itself, which was conducted online and included 426 participants whom we put into a business-to-business decision-making simulation.

Here’s how we set up the study:

At the outset, participants were randomly assigned to a range of different test conditions. They were told to imagine they were decision-makers in a discussion with a sales rep from their long-term software vendor, who is trying to convince them to upgrade from a legacy on-premise version of their business intelligence software to their new cloud-based business analytics solution.

The five conditions tested reflected the following message types, summarized below:

- **Product as the hero** – This was based on the type of message many companies deploy to announce new solutions. It’s product-oriented and heavily predicated on highlighting the new and improved product features and benefits.
 - **Relationship reinforcement and emotion** – In a nutshell, this message uses emotional language to lean into the idea that the company and vendor are partners. It’s unafraid to have a frank conversation about challenges and opportunities befitting a long-term partnership.
 - **Why change?** – This message has already been proven in our past research to be the optimal message for unseating an incumbent vendor and converting new prospects into customers. It’s provocative, a little edgy, and we wanted to test it in this “Why evolve?” scenario.
 - **Why stay?** – Our previous research confirmed this message is the most effective at convincing existing customers to renew at the end of a contract. We wanted to see how it would hold up in the middle of an existing customer contract, with an upsell hanging in the balance.
 - **Social influence** – This message was designed with the idea that peer pressure is a powerful motivator. It shows the buyer that many of their peers are taking action and making strides and that they can’t afford to get left behind.
- Participants only viewed one of the five message conditions. Afterward, they were asked to respond to a series of questions addressing the key challenges mentioned earlier, all critical to the selling situation at hand.

So which condition proved most effective in the areas of greatest concern to this scenario?

Study results: the best “Why evolve?” message

In a combined score reflecting the overall performance of each message across all 20 questions assessed in the study,

the message that performed best was the **relationship reinforcement and emotion condition**. In terms of overall performance across all positive areas in the study, this message outperformed the others by a range of 4.3–5.8% (**Figure 1**).

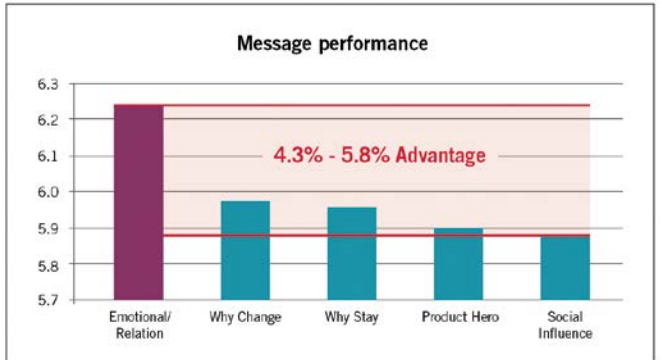


Figure 1: The relationship reinforcement and emotion condition outperformed the others.

Next, we wanted to look at the five key challenges highlighted earlier in this article, specifically with an eye towards the urgent questions they raise inside the upsell scenario. These questions include: how unusual your message is; how important you are to your customers’ future success; how convincing your message is on a personal level; how willing your customers are to take action as a result of your message; and, when all is said and done, how likely they are to actually make a purchase.

Once again, the relationship reinforcement and emotion condition consistently outperformed the other conditions across the most meaningful areas assessed in the study. The results are set out in **figures 2–6**.

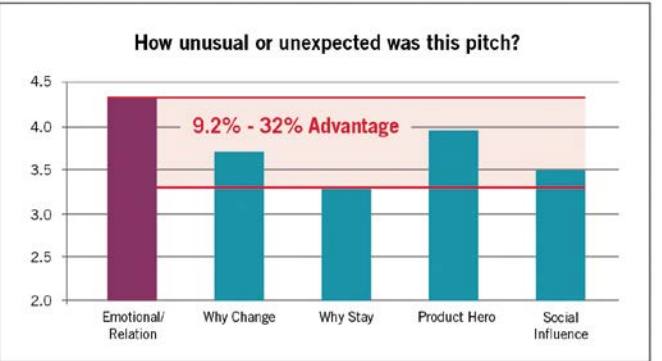


Figure 2: How unusual or unexpected was this pitch?

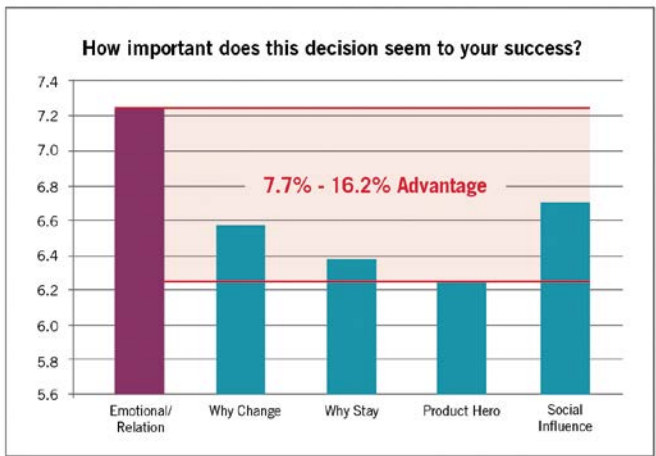


Figure 3: How important does this decision seem to your success

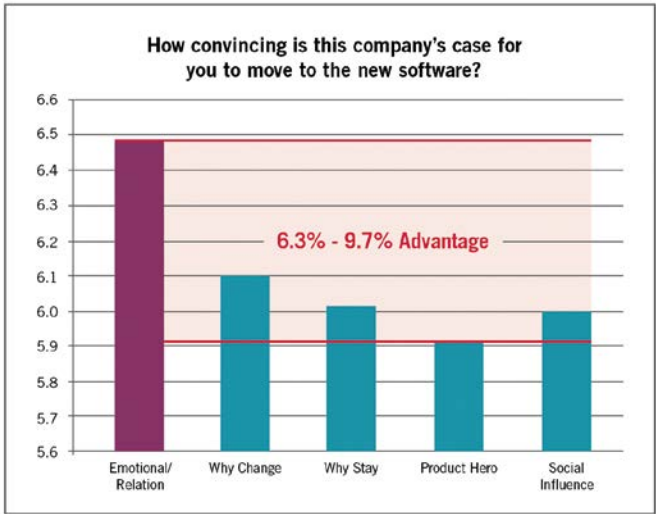


Figure 4: How convincing is this company's case for you to move to the new software?

Given the consistently strong performance of this message across these key areas, it appears this selling scenario demands a different kind of message than the product-oriented hero story, not to mention the strictly provocative story best suited to new customer acquisition (“Why change?”), or the status quo reinforcement story that’s optimal for handling renewals (“Why stay?”).

As you’ll see in the example below, the winning message borrows ingredients from the more disruptive “Why change?” approach and from the more protectionist “Why stay?” one. This strongly suggests that a hybrid message – not a message that strictly challenges their situation – is most appropriate for

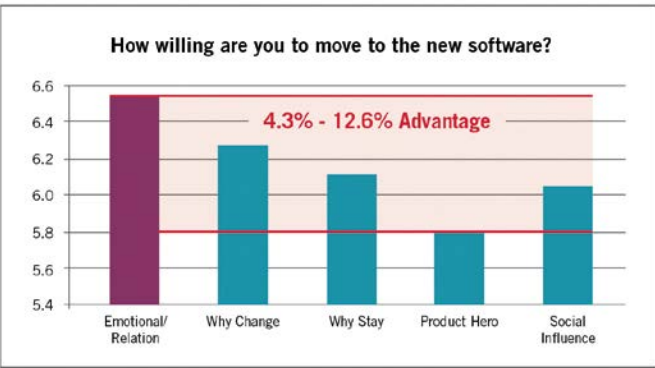


Figure 5: How willing are you to move to the new software?

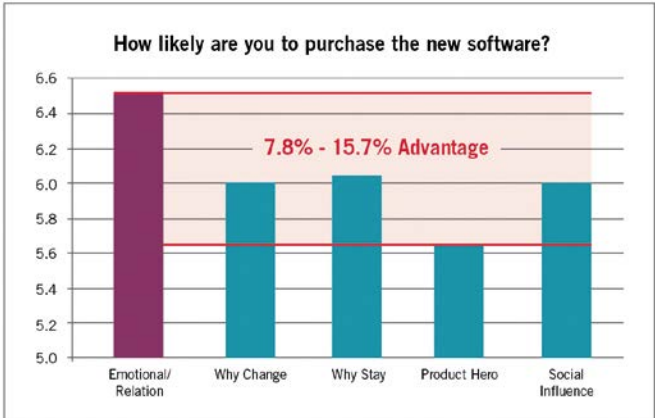


Figure 6: How likely are you to purchase the new software?

performing well in an upsell or cross-sell scenario.

After all, this message isn’t designed for driving big changes or getting a customer to renew. It’s about getting the customer to evolve, both in terms of their vision and their buying behaviours. This message ensures they don’t get complacent, lulled into the habit of using your old-guard solutions instead of your boldest and newest and highest-value innovations.

The research reveals that a winning “why evolve” message is based on a five-part framework, illustrated in the visual below:



“

What this research revealed, in sum, is that the message you need to displace an incumbent (the “Why change?” story) is nearly the inverse of the message you need to retain them (“Why stay?”) and convince them to pay more.

- (1) **Documented Results** – Quantify the tenure and impact of your partnership. Recap the goals you’ve helped them achieve to date.
- (2) **Highlight Evolving Pressures** – Describe shifting internal and external pressures as a logical progression or evolution, not a surprise or disruption.
- (3) **Share “Hard Truths”** – Describe the potential missed opportunities both internally and externally from your vantage point as a trusted partner.
- (4) **Risk of No Change** – Emphasize the potentially harmful risks and repercussions of not evolving or keeping up.
- (5) **Upside Opportunity** – Use personalized “you” language to transfer ownership of the solution and all of the internal and external benefits for making the change.

The winning “Why evolve?” message

Here’s an example of the “why evolve” message that performed best in our research simulation, with the components aligned to the pillars above.

[Documented Results] Over our nine-year partnership, we have worked together towards your goals of creating organizational efficiency, increasing customer satisfaction, and protecting and growing revenue.

[Highlight evolving pressures] As with anything, business needs change and technologies evolve. Externally, you face a customer base that wants personalized solutions and instant answers. Internally, you have a changing

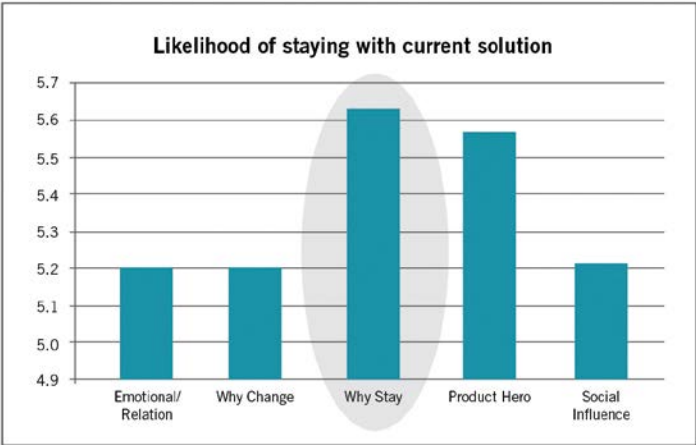
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The winning message borrows ingredients from the more disruptive “Why change?” approach and from the more protectionist “Why stay?” one.

Validating the “Why stay?” framework

When it comes to increasing customers’ likelihood of sticking with their current solution, it comes as little surprise that the “Why stay?”-oriented story proved the most effective message type. This is consistent with our past research into the customer retention moment, which found that reinforcing status quo bias – as opposed to introducing new or provocative information – is a major component of the optimal message for renewing existing customers.

That a “Why stay?”-like message was once again effective at getting customers to stick with their current solution further validates the power of these types of messages within a customer renewal context. As both studies show, these messages are effective at convincing customers to entrench themselves in their current situation. That’s great for customer renewals, but not so great for the demands of the up-sell and cross-sell scenarios you need to navigate in the “Why evolve?” moment.



Dr Nick Lee, Professor, Warwick Business School, comments:

These findings make good sense – but then, the best ideas usually do make good sense once you’ve discovered them! However, when you think about it, the “upselling” situation we are looking at here is one of those situations where it seems like many different approaches could work. The relationship reinforcement message that does come out on top here combines a number of key psychological tools that are likely to be the reason for its success. In particular, you’re building trust here in several ways: first, by creating the impression of a partnership, but also reinforcing that by taking what could be seen as a risk; and second, by laying out some “hard truths” about the existing situation. So you come across like you are “walking the talk” of being a genuine partner, interested in the customer as much as (if not more so) than yourself. It really removes the feel of a cynical “upsell”, and brings in the idea that you have the customer’s best interests at heart.



Dr Nick Lee, Professor, Warwick Business School



Ethics in sales: a novel approach to sales education

✎ Carl Day

workforce that wants the newest tools and greater work flexibility.

[Share “hard truths”] As partners, it’s tempting just to focus on all the positives, but the role of a good partner is to also share hard truths. The fact is, we’ve heard from your teams that they like our software, but they are frustrated at having to dedicate time consolidating data from different sources. Then once the data is consolidated in your system, they feel limited because your current version has a limited set of standard reporting views available.

[Risk of No Change] These areas of inefficiency can make it difficult for your hard-working teams to identify areas of waste, which means the organization continues to waste time. Not only does this make your employees frustrated and dissatisfied, but it can lead to clients becoming irritated that they aren’t getting the personalized information and immediate experiences they desperately crave. This frustration has the potential to lead to more employee turnover and less customer loyalty.

[Upside Opportunity] But you can ensure your team has the latest version of the software that is so critical to your business. By upgrading to our new cloud-based solution you’ll get faster, simpler and more flexible business management capabilities that allow you to acquire and analyze multiple data sources easily from a single app. You’ll also tap into the power of artificial intelligence and be able to produce more than 50 standard reports that can be customized to your business.

All this to improve the speed of your operations, the usefulness of your insights, while increasing both internal team and external customer satisfaction.

And that’s why we’d like you to allocate the budget for the one-time installation fee similar to what you paid for the original software install as well as the 20 percent annual maintenance increase needed to make the jump to our powerful, new BCS-18 business analytics solution.

In closing

Don’t guess when it comes to messaging for a customer conversation as important to your success as this one. The upside of the upsell is – needless to say – tremendous. It can

mean better customer experiences, longer-lasting partnerships, more satisfied clients, and a lot more revenue for you. The downside is also significant. The risk isn’t just that your customer relationships will stagnate; it’s that this stagnation will leave you vulnerable to the messaging of outsiders who can approach your customers with something materially better than the experiences you’re providing them today.

Don’t let that happen. Don’t leave this conversation to chance. By bringing some much-needed research and messaging rigour to the “why evolve” moment, our hope is that you won’t have to.



About the authors

Tim Riesterer is Chief Strategy and Research Officer, Corporate Visions and Joe Collins is Senior Consultant, Corporate Visions.

Completed in May 2016, this Masters project investigates links between ethics and education, and sets out to evaluate the impact that longer-term education will have on individual sales behaviour.

The aim of this research is to investigate if there is a link between the subject of ethics and education, and to evaluate the impact that longer-term education will have on individual sales behaviour in the office print industry, particularly with regard to ethical behaviour and how that manifests with regard to the client experience.

The dominant question in my research is the following:

- **To what extent can a values-based educational programme impact on the performance of salespeople in the office print industry?**

Subsidiary questions are:

- How will that potential change in behaviour impact on client perception and trust?
- How can education and development result in a more ethical behaviour of individuals?

The level of professionalism generally displayed by sales in the office print industry has long been a concern for me and, as part of the research for my final work-based project, I have become keen to investigate whether I was alone in this concern.

Relevance of my concern

There are many researched cases of institutional mis-selling and unethical behaviour: Baigrie (2012), Salz (2013) and Ericson & Doyle (2006) have all conducted research into the cause, impact and changes required to rebuild organisations that have been accused of institutional mis-selling.

However, limitations exist in terms of the time available to carry out a Masters research project on the scales they attempted. For that reason I am focussing on individual sales behaviour, ie when the salesperson makes the decision to mislead a client or behave unethically. For the purpose of clarity throughout this project I refer to this as “behavioural mis-selling”.

When you look at the office copier and print industry it is clear that unethical behaviour spans decades. In 1993 the *Guardian* reported that the Office of Fair Trading along with The

Federation of Small Business were to carry out investigation into malpractice in the photocopier industry, citing one particular case where an organisation had been charged over £1.5 million for eight photocopiers. As a result of increasing complaints the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) issued a warning to unsuspecting firms, of the extortionate charges that were hidden behind innocent looking photocopier contracts (*Guardian*: 1997).

Despite this warning it would appear that many organisations have fallen foul of the underhand tactics of some individuals; independent Canon reseller v Addenbrooke’s Hospital Trust (*Independent*: 1998) resulted in the government intervening over a disputed overcharge of £310,000 to the hospital trust. More recently the *Daily Mirror* (2015) ran an article exposing an independent Canon and Ricoh reseller, reporting a scam in which they preyed on schools and charities by charging three times the market rate for break-fix servicing.

These examples highlight a need for change in photocopier and print sales, not only for the long-term health of the industry but also for practitioners in the industry to be regarded as professional. The highlighted behaviour damages the reputation of global brands whose names are associated with their resellers. It brings into question not only the professionalism of the industry and its suppliers, but the professionalism of sales which is of particular concern to me.

Ironically in all of the cases I have researched to date, the damage to an organisation has followed a period of sales growth, which raises another very important question: can an organisation grow sales exponentially at the same time as behaving ethically?

It is clear from the research I have carried out that unethical sales tactics can influence short-term sales results and profits positively. For some who are under pressure to improve short-term results the temptation to employ underhand tactics seems too much to bear. Writing for the *International Journal for Sales Transformation*, Professor Mark Johnston (2016) argues that high performers in sales are afforded a different lens with regard to ethical violation and the longer-term damage to an organisation’s reputation as a result is extensive.

I have read extensively about ethics in sales and the need for long-term change, and there are various opinions on the reasons for behavioural mis-selling or what the future of sales as a profession looks like; for example, Tang & Lui (2012) suggests unethical behaviour is driven by individual greed, whereas Lee (2016) argues that often unethical behaviour is

driven by a lack of belief in one's ability to carry out a task. It is clear however, whilst researchers don't necessarily agree on the cause, all concur that education would have a positive impact on the current situation.

Methodology

I selected a qualitative approach because of the nature of my project. As a study into behaviour I wish to draw on experience and opinion of buyers and procurement specialists. The methodology approach I have selected as most appropriate is an ethnographic study, using Action Research to address any problems highlighted by the study.

To generate data from interview I selected representatives from procurement, sales and organisations who have been involved post-scandal transformation, using semi-structured interviews to gain insights from each of the participants. As Csordas et al (2010) advise, a semi-structured interview gives the ethnographer the opportunity to conduct a more social-based interview, offering more insight into context and experience. This strategy is opposed to a structured interview, which is more suited to interviews of a more medical or scientific nature.

Whilst survey isn't usually regarded as a method for collecting data in ethnographic study, I was interested in comparing survey data with interview data to analyse any difference from answers, particularly when respondents were offered a different environment to complete the questions. I have used literature extensively, not only to reinforce my argument but to obtain criticality, balance and the opinion of others. To increase my pool of ethnographic data, I have visited seminars on ethics in business, ethics in sales, emotional intelligence, sales transformation, coaching in sales and client engagement throughout my research for this project.

I have come to learn that there are many factors and contexts that determine ethics and trust in sales. Steare (2013), Saltz (2013), provide arguments that the large majority are addressable by education. I would make the caveat that some factors, such as economics, culture and politics are more complex and require change at a higher level.

I have identified two areas of weakness within the sales engagement process, addressable by better education and understanding. My research has identified that current sales behaviour in these areas often results in a perceived lack of ethics and a loss of trust between sales and buyer:

- lack of trust at first engagement with the client; and
- ethical decision making and the lenses that are used.

Focusing on these two areas I have attempted to create a less linear model for engagement (Ricks, Williams & Weeks: 2008), which involves the salesperson and client in a joint planning process designed to create transparency, trust and value through shared goals and objectives from the outset

I strongly suggest that the importance of demonstrating trust to a prospective client and the perception there is a lack of ethics are intrinsically linked, and are controlled by the salesperson's behaviour.

of their relationship.

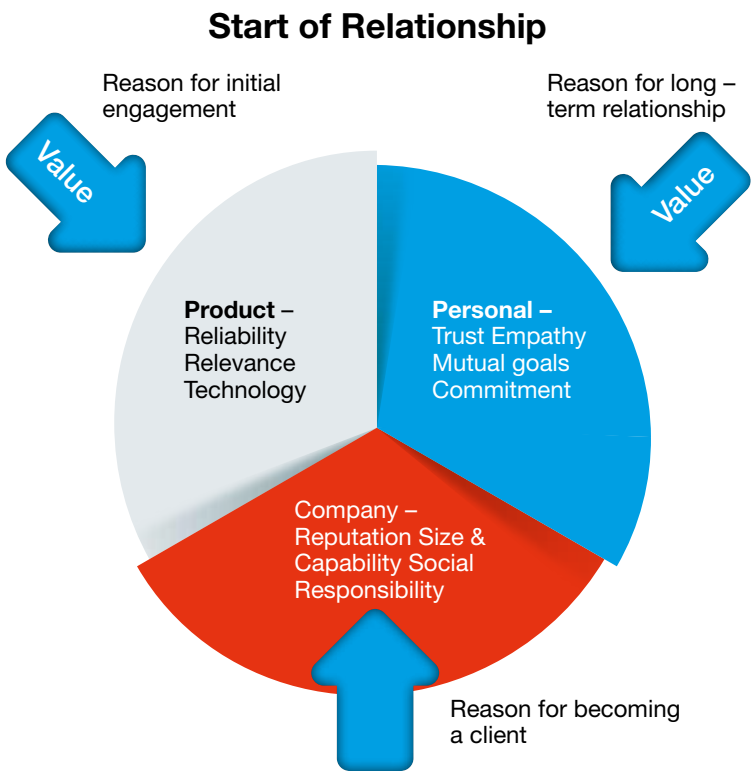
Gaining trust

My analysis identified that many buyers only start to trust a salesperson once their relationship is mature. Whether explicit in their comments or implicit in their actions, the buyer's position when engaging with a new salesperson is generally one of mistrust, and trust needed to be earned. Unlike other professions which are generally trusted at the outset, allowing both parties to focus on the task in hand, sales has not been predicated on trust. This mistrust often drives a protective behaviour in a salesperson, which can lead to a further loss of trust or a loss of opportunity. This is an area of behaviour that I felt could be addressed by better education and

understanding.

There are many ways to earn a buyer's trust; Powers and Wilkins (2007) researched the key factors that influence a buyer's decision to engage with a new supplier. The research highlighted the importance of demonstrating transparency and relevance to a client in order to gain trust and build long-term relationships. Using the data from Powers and Wilkins' (2007) research, I created a model (Figure 1) to highlight to my sales team the importance of values and behaviour, particularly in building long-term business relationships.

Figure 1: Model for personal differentiation.



The model identifies the factors that the salesperson needs to consider in order to create a long-term relationship. Powers and Wilkins (2007) point out that trust is important but not the key factor in a long-term relationship. My own research would suggest that their claim is not the case. Throughout my research, trust came up as the most important factor to the buyer in making a decision and maintaining a long-term relationship with a supplier. I have considered theories for this difference of opinion: Powers and Wilkins' (2007) research was in sales in general, not in a specific industry in which there could be less trust; secondly, their research was carried out in 2007 and as Buvik, Andersen & Gronhaug (2014) point out: the relationship between sales and procurement has seen significant change in the last decade due to technology and the increase in mis-selling. I strongly suggest that the importance of demonstrating trust to a prospective client and the perception there is a lack of ethics are intrinsically linked, and are controlled by the salesperson's behaviour.

Making ethical decisions

At an event hosted by Ernst and Young on business ethics, I had my biggest "eureka moment". Professor Steare was talking about the lenses we look through to make a decision, asking whom we consider when we make a decision and how many in the corporate world make decisions with different lenses when at work compared to at home or in our personal life.

During the event we were asked to form small groups and discuss a situation (real or hypothetical) that required a decision and then we were asked to discuss the process we would go through and the lenses through which we would look through to make the decision. To help illustrate this task, I created a hypothetical situation – albeit a situation that is very real in a sales environment for our group to discuss:

"Consider a situation where you're a salesperson who has not sold for three months – this means you haven't been paid and are at risk of losing your job. You are introduced to a charity that feels they need 500 new devices costing £500,000. Doing your job you realise that the charity could actually achieve what is required by purchasing 300 devices, resulting in a saving of £200,000. However, if you sell them the 300 devices, it would mean you still haven't hit your company's quarterly target and you won't receive any commission. What would you do?"

In our group there were five people, four salespeople and one student. All of the salespeople considered the position and answered after reasoning that they would more than likely take the deal of 500 devices. The student answered that he would discuss the situation with the charity and let them make the choice.

It occurred to me at this point that all of the salespeople had considered the situation, but only from a short-term sales and a personal perspective (lens) – we all failed to view it through the lens of the client, the beneficiaries of the charity or for the long-term health of our relationship. The student however, had a completely different perspective. This point hit me like a train: in the role of a sales professional, salespeople

We must look to educate future professionals in a way they can build long-term trusted relationships with their clients, delivering value through not only the products and services they sell but also in the way they sell them.

are empowered to make decisions on behalf of the organisations they represent. Those decisions have consequences for many stakeholders and are often judged from an ethical position, more often by their client.

When salespeople make a decision they have generally been educated to make a decision in a certain way. In their mind they are making a good decision, one that benefits them and their company. If however we were educated to make a decision taking on the lenses from other stakeholders would this assist us in making better ethical decisions?

Coming back to my initial research concern and question of "why does a salesperson whose organisation expects them to sell in an ethical manner cross the line and act unethically", I pose the

suggestion that it's because:

- a) They have been educated to behave this way.
- b) They believe they are making the correct decision ethically.

Reflecting on the interviews and conversations I had with salespeople, I believe now that their comments implied they believed that they acted both ethically and professionally. In the cases I observed, if you look through the lens of the salesperson, it is hard to argue against them. However, the disconnect is clearer when you consider the decision through other lenses. Ciulla (1997) suggests that better education and influence can improve the ethical decision making of future leaders. Ciulla's (1997) point regarding education resonated with me, particularly when I consider how my own sales education has lacked any focus on how I should make ethical decisions.

So what can be done about it?

When we consider that sales and procurement are both viewing the situation with different lenses it is clear to see how this situation has developed. Salespeople make decisions viewed through a sales-focused lens, believing they have made an ethical decision, whereas procurement view their position through a buyer's lens, often without consideration for the salesperson or their organisation. This situation can leave the buyer questioning the decision, often resulting in a loss of trust and a short-term relationship.

This realisation became the starting point of a sales engagement model that I have created applying the learning from my Masters research to date. Learning from the actions of sales, procurement and transformed organisations I have developed the **J-GOA process (joint goal, objectives & actions)** to provide a model of engagement for my sales team. The process involves using an engagement process template, which has been developed to address the trust and ethical issues that exist between sales and procurement highlighted by my research.

The objective of the J-GOA model is to create trust from the outset of a relationship by understanding the client's goals and using a cyclical process to build a relevant and transparent plan for both sales and procurement to follow. The benefit of the J- GOA process is it has been developed to create a "thinking relationship", first understanding what both parties expect and then to jointly create objectives and actions to

assist in achieving the clients goals. By working through the cycle, both parties can build on the objectives and create new actions in a transparent manner keeping the partnership trusted and valued.

In order to demonstrate the method in action I have created a training video, which can be viewed at <https://youtu.be/MHqtOqPcWSA>.

Early results, conclusions and what next

Throughout my Masters project I have held the belief that sales within the office copier and print industry can become a trusted and respected profession. However, to effect this change we must act and behave differently to how we have in the past. In order to achieve this goal we must look to educate future professionals in a way they can build long-term trusted relationships with their clients, delivering value through not only the products and services they sell but also in the way they sell them.

Early results and feedback from clients who have taken part in the J-GOA planning method have been extremely encouraging. One of our clients, who has taken part, has told us that it has provided focus for their business goals right across their organisation. The client has also requested permission that they be allowed to use the method for engagement with their own clients.



About the author

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Retaining high-performing salespeople

✍ Sarah Edge

Research findings uncover what high-performing salespeople want from their organizations and, just as importantly, what they don't want. Understanding both categories is critical for organizations and leaders who want to create affective commitment and ultimately retain their best-performing salespeople.

As a successful salesperson and a manager of salespeople, I am passionately interested in how high-performing salespeople can be engaged and ultimately retained by businesses.

High-performing salespeople are in short supply and high demand (Boles et al, 2012; Weber, 2015; Wren et al, 2014). Retaining this valuable resource is key to business success (McGrath et al, 2016), but this is a minimum objective. Employees need to be engaged and motivated to make their best contribution.

When conducting the interviews for this research, I realised that high-performing salespeople take a lot of personal pride in achieving. However, whilst these high performers consistently work hard, this doesn't mean that they are committed to staying with their employer. A recent study of US professionals by Indeed.com, the world's highest-traffic job website, claims that 91% of people are either openly looking or open to a new job (Fernández-Aráoz et al, 2016).

Affective commitment is defined as the employee's positive emotional attachment to the organization (Meyer and Allen (1991). There is a clear link between affective commitment and job retention, engagement and job performance (Boles et al, 2007; Eisenberger et al, 2010). It was for this reason that I made affective commitment central to my research..

Objectives and literature review

The fundamental question in my research is: **How can businesses retain high-performing salespeople?**

Organizational commitment and specifically affective commitment is at the heart of my enquiry, based on the principle that people who are committed to an organization are less likely to leave (Allen and Meyer, 1990). The questions that I address in relation to retaining salespeople are:

1. What are the key factors that create affective commitment?
2. Are there any trends in the hierarchy of importance of these factors?
3. What causes affective commitment to decline and is it possible to bring back lost affective commitment?

Cost of losing high-performing salespeople

A high-performing workforce should be viewed as a source of

competitive advantage in today's knowledge-based economy, particularly as other sources of competitive advantage are perhaps not so important as they once were (Pfeffer, 1994; Thomas, 2009). Working within the mobile phone industry, I have seen this first hand. Companies cannot innovate quickly enough and there is often little differentiation between competitors' products. As the competitive landscape becomes more challenging in many industries, retaining high-performing salespeople is becoming a significant cause for concern for leaders and HR professionals (Frank, 2004; Steward, 2009).

The cost of losing salespeople has not been fully evaluated, but there is wide spread acceptance that the costs are considerable, especially when factoring in the recruitment and training costs of the replacement employee (Boles et al, 2012). Richardson (1999) breaks down the costs as direct cost of sales losses, indirect dimensions of separation costs, replacement costs and training expenses. Griffeth et al (2000) estimate the direct costs associated with hiring and training an employee as 200% of salary.

Sales growth is also negatively affected as the replacement employee faces a learning curve (Batt, 2002) and takes time to "ramp up" (DeConinck et al, 2009). Studies also demonstrate that team morale and motivation are negatively impacted with the resignation of a key member of the group (Kwon et al, 2010; Lucas, 1999). Additionally, when high performers are lost to competitors, knowledge and often clients are taken with the salesperson (Cappelli, 2000; Pfeffer, 1994).

When salespeople leave, replacing them is also a serious concern for companies. Manpower, the US-based recruiting and workforce development firm, has consistently ranked sales as one of the hardest positions to fill (Fogel et al. 2012). Part of the challenge is that, within the technology sector, the sales approach needs to be analytical, creative and consultative. Salespeople need to create value for their customers, often by defining the problem that they are trying to solve and assembling a solution (Haas et al, 2012; Ladimeji, 2012). A far wider skill set is required from salespeople, and unfortunately for organisations, high performers have more employment options and are more likely to leave (Trevor, 2001).

Dysfunctional turnover

For most organizations there is an acceptance that functional turnover, where an unproductive or disruptive salesperson leaves, is a positive thing (Allen et al, 2010). It is also worth noting that some employees leave because of "shocks": significant events that greatly impact the individual. Lee and Mitchell (1994) explore this phenomenon in their Unfolding Model and suggest that more than 60% of voluntary turnover is because of the employee experiencing a "shock" event. Shocks can be expected or unexpected and can be the result of an event within a business (eg, negative interaction with a line manager), personal (eg the relocation of a spouse) or external (eg, a job offer from an external company). Some voluntary turnover is due to a "shock" that cannot be managed, but others

can be proactively managed if employees’ job satisfaction is already high (Mitchell et al, 2001).

Every organisation should want to prevent dysfunctional turnover, which is the loss of valued high performers (Chambers et al, 1998; Rath et al, 2015). Key to this is for organisations to provide an ethical work climate where sales teams are supported, trained and given fair sales targets (DeConinck, 2011).

Methodology

In an attempt to understand how organizational commitment is created, maintained and potentially renewed, I planned to investigate the importance and impact of the following factors on organizational commitment (Figure 1):

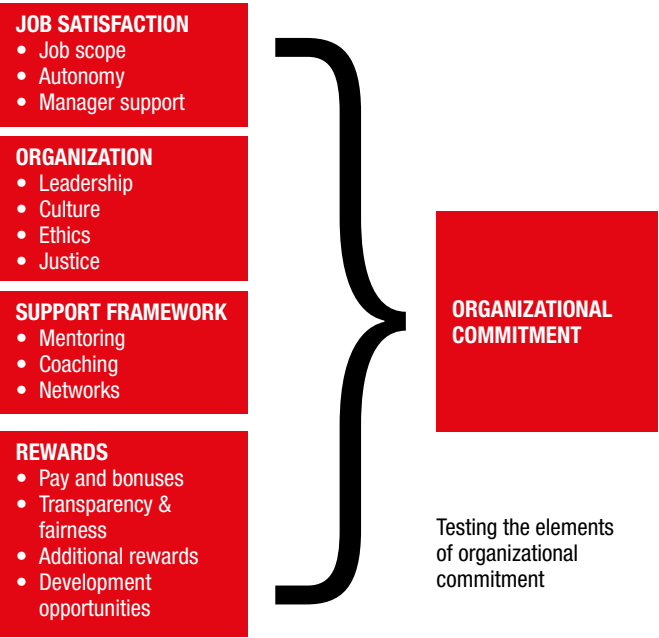


Figure 1: Factors in organisational commitment.

As far as I am aware, there is no current retention research that tests how these multiple factors link to organizational commitment in salespeople. Changes to organizational commitment over time is a topic that I also planned to explore in my research.

Bentein et al (2005) point to a shortfall in commitment literature for focusing on a static moment in an employees’ career. I agree that since the publication of Sheridan and Abelson’s (1983) research, there appears to be a gap in the research into the withdrawal process. Bentein et al (2005) believe that more research is needed to better understand the changing attachment to the organisation over time and the subsequent impact on employee behaviour.

The authors’ research demonstrates that a steep downward trajectory of change in organizational commitment significantly increases the risk of voluntary turnover with an increased likelihood that the employee leaves the organisation within nine months. Whilst I believe that the research has some limitations around the sample size and research duration, the study does successfully highlight that reducing turnover requires a sustained effort over time with particular emphasis during dramatic times of organizational change.

Research approach

I decided that a multi-research approach was the right one

for me. Qualitative research would be crucial in helping me to understand the emotional elements of organizational commitment and also key to understanding changing perceptions over time. However, as I wanted to investigate multiple elements behind organizational commitment, I believed that an element of quantitative data in the form of a survey would be useful in helping to validate the output of the qualitative research. I also hoped that this data would enable me to test the qualitative research, which might expose trends and ambiguities. As my sample size would be relatively small, I was conscious that my quantitative data in its own right might not be statistically viable (Grix, 2004).

I decided to use Grounded Theory (“GT”). The researcher goes out to the field and collects data and then analyses this before returning to the field and repeats this process as much as is feasible and necessary. Robson (2011:148) states that “visits continue until the categories found through analysis are ‘saturated’. Or, in other words, you keep on gathering information until you reach diminishing returns and you are not adding to what you already have.”

I planned to use a semi-structured interview style. I needed the interviews to help answer my research questions, but I didn’t want to adopt an overly structured style. The topic that I am researching is emotive in nature. To gain rich insights, I needed to allow for the interviews to progress organically (Grix, 2004).

As I planned to investigate multiple determinants of organizational commitment in relation to retention and voluntary churn, I decided that a survey would be useful when testing my conclusions from the interviews and to ultimately triangulate the results to ensure that they were as robust as possible.

I planned to use a self-completion Internet survey because of the ability to reach a wider audience in a timely manner. I distributed the survey to the same people that I interviewed to help with the triangulation of results. I also planned to email this to a wider group of salespeople from my LinkedIn network by selecting people who had started a new sales job in the past 12 months.

Literature was crucial in making my research credible. As turnover research is a highly researched topic, I needed to test and triangulate my findings against previous research.

Data sample

I originally sent my survey to 18 sales professionals: ten people responded and each survey was fully completed. I went on to interview five people who had completed my survey, together with a further five people who didn’t respond to the survey. Everyone I interviewed worked as a sales professional in the telecoms and technology sectors. Ten of the 15 people involved in the research also managed salespeople; 11 of the salespeople were British; the remaining participants were from Greece, Spain, Columbia and Germany. Out of 15 people involved in my research, three had recently joined new companies and a further nine expressed their intention to leave their current employer. Intention to leave is considered to be a conscious desire to leave and is considered to be the final part of a sequence in the final withdrawal cognition process (Mobley et al, 1978).

Conclusion

I set out to try and understand how businesses can retain high-performing salespeople. I specifically wanted to understand how affective commitment is created in sales employees, knowing that employees who have this state of mind are engaged, motivated and loyal to their organizations (Allen et al, 1990).

What are the key factors that create affective commitment?

I discovered that there isn’t one thing that accounts for creating affective commitment. I also discovered that the elements that impact affective commitment differ at the stage of one’s career.

The factors that I identified as particularly significant in creating affective commitment amongst high-performing salespeople are:

- Leadership
- Culture
- Manager support
- Career development
- Mentoring
- Salary
- Job satisfaction
- Belief

Are there any trends in the hierarchy of importance of these factors?

As my research progressed, the importance of belief increasingly stood out. I started to appreciate that belief is at the heart of affective commitment and is created from the connection of key elements. I have summarised this in Figure 2.

It was clear that the elements were interconnected and some were more important than others depending on the stage in one’s career. Whilst **leadership** wasn’t a driving factor of affective commitment for those at the early stages of



Figure 2: Importance of belief in creating affective commitment.

joining new companies, leadership soon becomes one of the key drivers of affective commitment, particularly as effective leadership drives the mission of the organisation, which in turn helps to shape the culture. It was also apparent that the more of these elements that are put in place, the higher the likelihood of creating affective commitment amongst the sales force.

Some factors which I set out to test and thought might be important to affective commitment were simply not that relevant to those that I interviewed and surveyed. In particular, **training** and **coaching** were very low down on people’s

agenda when discussing affective commitment. .

Mentoring featured far more strongly as a driver of affective commitment, which may have been because some salespeople had positive past experiences of being officially mentored.

Ethics also didn’t feature strongly in any of the interviews.

It was particularly interesting to discover that **salary** and bonuses were not driving factors for affective commitment once salespeople were established in their roles. However, compensation did feed into a need for people to feel that they were being rewarded fairly and that their contributions were recognised. Key also to this was that sales targets were fair and based on reality. This was also a significant contributor to job satisfaction and **job satisfaction** had a strong link to affective commitment.

Manager support and interactions were important for everyone whom I interviewed at all stages of their careers. Managers’ styles and support (or lack of) significantly impacted affective commitment. I also uncovered that managers of country regions were creating their own mini sub-cultures. The challenge with this is when certain manager’s styles are not in line with corporate values. I also discovered that some of the country managers were sharing their lack of belief in the future of the organization. This low supervisor’s organizational embodiment (Eisenberger et al, 2010) had a hugely negative impact on the affective commitment of those people reporting into these managers. This demonstrates the importance of educating managers about their responsibility to their people.

Culture was a central topic during many of the interviews and key to affective commitment. Corporate culture is shaped by leadership, purpose and people.

Regional differences also significantly impact corporate cultures (Hofstede, 1994). However, creating a culture that creates affective commitment and the resulting benefits to businesses is extremely difficult to define. Culture was one of the key elements that had prevented many high-performing people from leaving; however, issues with leadership and a lack of direction meant that a strong company culture could negatively change over time. The need for leaders to nurture and protect the corporate culture, particularly during challenging business times is crucial to retaining employees.

In summary, I have used a diagram (Figure 3) that I’ve adapted from Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs to demonstrate the hierarchy of importance of each of the

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core elements that create affective commitment. For those salespeople who are past the early stages of joining an organization, all had core needs that needed to be fulfilled by leadership, culture, manager support and compensation. All salespeople then needed to feel valued and esteemed by the organization, which is represented by career development,

Hierarchy of needs in creating organizational affective commitment

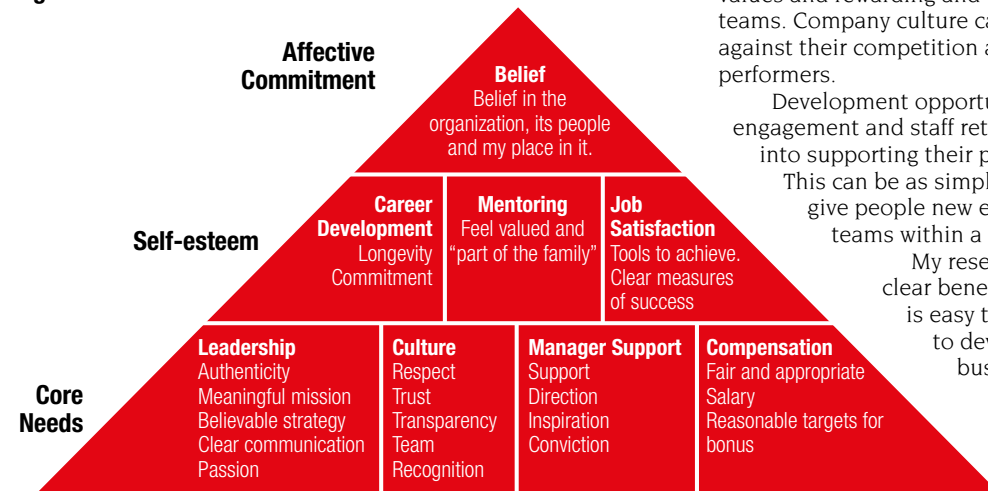


Figure 3: Hierarchy of needs in creating organizational affective commitment.

mentoring and job satisfaction. The outcome of these elements aligning was the creation of belief in the organization, its people and one's place in it, which is ultimately the definition of affective commitment.

What causes affective commitment to decline and is it possible to bring back lost affective commitment?

Once salespeople feel that some of the elements that create affective commitment are not working as they should, belief is negatively impacted and affective commitment is reduced. Once enough affective commitment has been eroded, people make a conscious decision to leave and it is then extremely difficult for organizations to retain these people.

I also discovered that many salespeople claim to be committed but in fact they aren't. Some of the salespeople whom I interviewed claimed to "feel part of the family" within their company which is a key measure in affective commitment (Meyer et al, 1997). They also claimed to feel committed most of the time. However, they still wanted to leave due to a loss of belief in the company's leadership and direction.

This discovery demonstrates the fragile nature of commitment in the corporate world and leadership's responsibility to make employees believe in the business and the direction for the future. This helps people to find meaning in their work, which is essential in creating affective commitment.

How the research can be used

The measure of success for any leader of salespeople is to have an engaged and high-performing team. The additional result of this is that salespeople will be more inclined to stay.

To create these teams, leaders need to ensure that they effectively communicate company goals and strategy and most importantly that they translate this into clear direction for their people. People need to understand what success looks like and

it is a leader's responsibility to empower their people by giving them the support and tools that they need to be successful. Salespeople also need their leaders to motivate them and this comes from a leader being passionate and delivering messages with conviction. My research demonstrated that leaders also need to be willing to listen to their people and to demonstrate integrity in order to be trusted and truly respected. . .

Company culture is an important motivator and leaders play a crucial role in personally demonstrating company values and rewarding and encouraging the same values in their teams. Company culture can truly help businesses to stand out against their competition and plays a key role in retaining high performers.

Development opportunities are crucial to long-term engagement and staff retention. Leaders need to put time into supporting their people to build development plans.

This can be as simple as assigning projects which help to give people new experiences and exposure to different teams within a business. .

My research shows that mentoring delivers clear benefits. This is a low-cost initiative that is easy to implement and it should be central to development plans for people who businesses want to retain.

It is crucial that salespeople find meaning in what they do and salary is only one small element of this. Finding meaning in the business mission, feeling personally respected and

adequately rewarded are all key in the creation of belief which ultimately creates affective commitment.

Leaders need to give all of these elements serious consideration when thinking about their people. For those who get this right, the rewards will be significant.

- **There is an extensive list of references to accompany this paper, which could not be accommodated due to space constraints. Please contact us via editor@journalofsalestransformation.com if you would like to receive a list of references.**

Nick de Cent



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Three often-overlooked topics to enhance sales practice

Simon Dale

Why the three topics of coaching, change management and stakeholder engagement should be considered more seriously in the development of sales managers and sales professionals identified as high performers.

Introduction

I identified three topics I considered to be important to sales that were not usually taught or self-selected by salespeople, and that I believed would help outperformance in the long term, as well as enhance their ability to manage others if they are on that career path. My project was centred on bringing the latest research and best practices in these topics to the attention of salespeople, with the key aim of encouraging them to engage on deeper learning journeys of their own in these topics, and improve their own practice as a result.

My first topic of **coaching** is a practice that is expanding and being used to help people in all industries and roles to improve performance. However, my own experience and investigation has found that it is poorly understood and not widely practiced properly in sales. The first aim of my project was to show salespeople that there is benefit in both applying and receiving coaching, and use this as evidence for others to learn from.

My second topic of **stakeholder engagement** is a crucial skill to practice in both complex B2B selling, as well as in a matrix organization. My own experience and observations have shown that this is an area that everyone can improve upon continually, especially in sales management roles. By introducing salespeople to modern best practices in this topic I aimed to encourage them to see this as another important topic to improve their own practice of both selling and getting their organization to support them in sales.

My third and final topic is **change management**. My inclusion of this was to show the salespeople that they should see change as a process, and map this both onto their own environment as well as sales opportunities. Doing this would allow them to better qualify a customers' readiness to change, and thus affect a purchase decision, as well as think more deeply how they could apply change management to their own

Summary

"Impacting salesperson performance by engaging them on their own learning journey to transform their own practice" is a project delivered by Simon Dale on 1 January 2016 while at SAP as part of a Masters programme run by Middlesex University and Consalia. The project is an investigation into the impact of intervening in a salesperson's learning with topics not usually explicitly covered in detail in traditional sales training: namely, change management, coaching and stakeholder management. Five volunteer salespeople, already identified as high performers and placed on the SAP Academy to Action training course, were taken through an additional lecture and discussion series, coupled with individual discussions on the merits of the topics. Coaching techniques were sometimes applied in these discussions as a way to help them think through the topics' value and applicability, and to identify ways of applying them in their own practice.

The impact of the project was investigated both via qualitative interviews with the volunteers, their managers, and an executive trainer, as well as via quantitative analysis of changes in their key sales performance indicators before and after the project.

Every volunteer expressed that they found the project of value – both directly to me and also indirectly via the executive trainer – and that they have put one or more of my topics into practice. Several of them also indicated that they were aiming to embark on deeper engagement with the topics, supporting my aim of achieving this. Finally, as a group their sales indicators improved measurably more than their peer groups, which allowed me to postulate theories on why this was so and how this information could be better utilised in future.

My findings are that my three topics resonate well with salespeople, and that my approach does encourage them to engage more with the topics than they would have without it. I also found that there can be improvements in the way SAP identifies salespeople for training, and that there are gaps in how salespeople learn from each other.

I recommend that my three topics be considered more seriously in the development of sales professionals who are identified as high performers, as well as sales managers. To support this I have developed a "Transform your Sales Practice" training guide containing the material I used as well as a guide to the process of applying it.

I also recommend that the selection of high-performing salespeople for development can be improved both by better qualitative analysis of their past performance relative to their peers, as well as an improved manager and individual selection process that engages them fully in the qualification of their needs. Finally, I suggest areas of investigation for SAP and other organizations that would enhance the way salespeople learn from each other, and how to more systematically measure the impact of sales training interventions.



managers to give me a wider range of data when engaged interactively. Towards the end of my project I scheduled a review interview with the managers, to determine if they had observed any specific change in practice, and provide me with two sets of data to analyse. For both interviews I developed sets of structured questions for consistency across the group.

My second set of data gathering was from my five sales volunteers, also in the format of interviews of two types, and nearly all via phone other than a few face-to-face thanks to coordinated travel opportunities.

Subsequent to each of my three lectures I planned to interview each volunteer individually to get their direct views on the content and their reflections on it and again developed structured questions for consistency. It was during these interviews that I applied coaching

practices, particularly if they moved into management roles.

My project investigates the impact of formal intervention into the learning journey of high-performing salespeople. It is my belief that good practice of my three topics is crucial to high performance in sales and sales management, and that it is not consciously recognized or prioritized in general by salespeople and sales management that they can develop deeper expertise in these areas through further study.

My key research question is “will high-performing salespeople find value in the three topics that encourages them to practice them, go on their own learning journey and improve their own practice and performance”. Secondly, I aimed to develop content that was reusable should it indeed prove useful, so that this could be used to scale out the impact of the intervention with others.

Methodology

Practically, my approach took the form of three methods:

1. desk-based research on my three core topics of coaching, stakeholder engagement and change management, specifically in the context of how they apply to sales;
2. formal lecture-style delivery of each topic to my sales volunteer participants; and
3. interviews with my volunteers as well as their managers at the beginning, during, and end of my project, with an additional cross-referencing interview of my volunteers by the executive trainer of the SAP Academy to Action.

Qualitative data

My first data gathering was from the five sales managers of my five sales volunteers, to set a baseline understanding of their current performance and competency in the three areas, if any. I chose the format of an interview in person or via phone depending on the manager location, in order to explore more deeply than just sending a questionnaire, as I expected the

techniques where the opportunity presented itself, in order to help the volunteer think through their own application of my topics. I also did a final interview with them to gather their feedback on my project approach and their intentions on engaging with my topics further.

Quantitative data

In order to bring a more empirical measure to my project, I decided to engage with our SAP sales operations team to analyse our CRM system data for my sales volunteers. SAP has standard KPIs for sales performance and working with our sales operations team I identified a set of these to work with, which would more likely be impacted by my intervention. Firstly, a baseline analysis of the volunteer’s current business was made, with their permission, by extracting a view of their CRM KPIs before my project started. In addition, a broader set of data for all sales individuals were also extracted to create a reference control group. These additional sales individuals were the peer group of my volunteers who were all identified as high performers, and received the same initial standard training course Academy to Action, as well as the wider cohort of salespeople in their relevant countries.

Project findings

Despite the short five month timeline of data available, there were distinct findings from the numerical analysis of the sales data that gave me reason to reflect on the impact of my project, attempt to validate this, and define further investigation.

Firstly, of my 11 focus performance indicators for analysis, my volunteer group averaged improvement in seven of them when compared with the wider Academy to Action group average. Furthermore, this outperformance was consistent when I compared the three Australian volunteers with their wider peer group of all sales in the same country. I chose to narrow down this last comparison to one country group

so that other potential influencing factors on performance such as the economic situation were normalized; thus any notable difference should therefore more likely be down to the individuals.

One particular indicator showed a significant difference in the reduction of the “average number of days per phase” – a measure of the time taken for an opportunity to progress along the sales cycle, or in other words the velocity of an opportunity. For three of my volunteers there was a significant reduction in this, and during my qualitative analysis those three in particular had expressed positive engagement with my topic of coaching.

As I had specifically expressed the value of practising coaching due to the multiplier effect and thus making more use of a wider team to progress sales opportunities, I theorised that there could be a connection between their improving practice and these results, and asked them for their views. One of them did agree that they had applied coaching and felt the results somewhat reflected this, whereas the other two did not agree that a connection could be made clearly.

I did not make any other strong causal connection between my three topics taught and the other indicators where my volunteers had improved more than the control group. However whilst reflecting on this I did postulate on how they as a group came to out-perform both the control group and their wider peer group.

A rewarding discovery from my final interviews was that every volunteer had found my project valuable in some way, and that they were all attempting to practice at least one of my topics. Everyone was reflecting more on their approach to stakeholder engagement, and several were attempting to incorporate more coaching into their practice.

Whilst two volunteers specifically expressed engagement with the topic of change management, it was on reflection no surprise that this was the least taken up as it is the most difficult of my three topics to map directly to improving sales practice. My proposition to my volunteers had been that understanding change as a process could help them to be more consultative with their sales approach, and better qualify if a customer is managing change well enough to support a sales engagement. As this topic did not get as much traction as the others it has led me to reflect on how to invest more time in developing a stronger connection with sales practice for future delivery of my artefact content, and the research I would need to do to support this.

The managers of my volunteers observed varying improvement in the practice of coaching in four out of five. All managers thought that my three topics were very useful to be taught, especially stakeholder engagement and coaching, validating again the importance of these in complex business to business selling.

Whilst all of my volunteers did find my approach and content useful, the more experienced stated that it was more a validation of their own practice rather than all new knowledge. However, an incidental benefit of my approach to them in

particular was the opportunity to hear from each other about relevant experience in these topic areas.

My intent of engaging my volunteers to embark on their own learning journey appears to have had impact. However sustaining this is a concern. The reading lists I provided were not utilised to the extent that I had hoped. Whilst some of the content was engaged with, the general feedback was that with the pressure of sales practice already at a high level, finding the time to read these was a challenge during the time of my project.

Conclusions and recommendations

My key research question is: “Will high-performing salespeople find value in the three topics that encourages them to practice them, go on their own learning journey, and improve their practice and performance.” I will now break this down and explain my conclusions and recommendations.

Are my three topics considered important and of value by high-performing salespeople?

With the evidence presented here, I believe that the answer is yes, to the extent that my volunteers and their managers expressed their belief in the value, and engaged more deeply with the topics. I therefore recommend to sales enablement professionals everywhere that these topics be considered more seriously in high-performing salespeople and manager education and development.

I believe that the combination of topics is more powerful in application when combined together in sales practice. However recognition of this was not evident in my volunteer feedback. I conclude that this may be as each topic was a relatively new concept to my volunteers, and thus their ability to also reach this conclusion at this stage may be a stretch. It may also be that my view is biased by (at the time of my project) being in a role more aligned to wide-ranged business



development than direct sales management, which requires such skills in more daily practice. I therefore conclude that the combination of topics may be more relevant to management levels and/or cross-regional roles than individual sales executives.

Have my three topics had a measured impact on sales practice?

Application in practice was validated by the volunteer’s feedback and observed by their managers as well as the academy trainer. Improvements were noted by a few, whilst others were still validating whether their attempts were generating results that they considered positive. I conclude that more time is needed to observe my volunteer’s practice in order to determine a measurable effect.

Have the three topics had a measured impact on sales performance?

My quantitative analysis showed that my volunteer group improved in performance as compared with their peers during my project. However, the direct link to my own intervention is tenuous, and I therefore conclude that my volunteers through their very self-selection into my project identified themselves as the highest performers. To further prove my conclusion I would need to analyse their performance over a much longer period – say two full years of sales – to determine whether such a correlation held over time and was statistically significant. I would also need to apply a much more rigorous methodology and statistical analysis techniques by involving other experts in such areas in my analysis.

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How can my project findings be better utilized to support sales enablement in the future?

Investigation with the sales enablement leader at SAP in Asia confirmed that the use of quantitative analysis to better target sales enablement interventions does not take place today. Thus I recommend that this approach be explored further as a way of improving on the current methods, so that the individual impact of training may be targeted and measured more effectively. My volunteers found the sharing of “war stories” during my group sessions very valuable, but expressed disappointment that this does not happen enough at SAP. Further reflection of this led me to plan to investigate further for my own practice and recommend to SAP the proper application of the “social” aspect of action learning sets (Revans, 1983) as a way to support sales teams developing together more effectively.

Finally, reflecting on the challenges of high performers’ learning (Argyris, 1991) as related to the challenge of engaging my volunteers more with my reading lists, I resolved to explore further the role of sales managers in the learning process of salespeople and determine a course of action to engage at their level in order to provide a better environment that would support individual salespeople’s learning journeys. This I would then implement in my own practice and recommend to other sales organizations.



About the author

Simon Dale has spent 17 years working across Asia Pacific and Japan, 16 of those with SAP where he set up multiple new businesses in the region as part of the regional management team. Prior to that he spent eight years working across Europe for software companies in pre-sales management roles. For the past year he has been at MapR, a pre-IPO fast-growth software company in the big data space, running the APAC region and a sales team in seven countries. Dale is an active coach and mentor to start-ups as well as women in tech via Lean In.

Research review

Edited by Jeremy Noad

These pages aim to keep readers informed of recently published research on sales related topics, by including abstracts of peer-reviewed academic research published in a range of journals. In this edition, we have grouped them into four broad themes: sales performance, customer management, behavioural studies, and systems and tools.

Sales performance

Value-based selling is critical for sales excellence

A value-based selling approach is critical to firms that wish to achieve sales and marketing excellence. Implementing value-based selling is challenging, but it has been seen to be a practical approach that delivers enhanced salesperson performance. This study identifies that to achieve success in implementing value-based selling, an organisation needs to equip salespeople with a different set of skills and provide dedicated organisational support when compared with alternative selling approaches. A salesperson’s learning orientation and networking skills are essential differentiators. The provision of selling tools and significant marketing support can compensate for a skills gap. Terho, Harri, et al, “Selling Value in Business Markets: Individual and Organizational Factors for Turning the Idea into Action”, *Industrial Marketing Management* 66 (2017): 42-55.

Managerial bias can impact value-based pricing

Value-based pricing presents organisations with a mechanism to

differentiate and leverage the value-based sales process. However, the potential benefits can be influenced by the negative biases of the management of the selling organisation. These biases can relate to a perceived lack of control, an aversion to ambiguity and egocentric fairness bias. The identification of the psychological biases presents organisations with opportunities to mitigate and therefore increase the success of their value-based pricing strategy. Kienzler, Mario, “Value-based pricing and cognitive biases: An overview for business markets”, *Industrial Marketing Management* 68 (2018): 86-94.

Understanding customer value

The definition of customer value and its conceptualisation can be complicated. There is a confusion in the term itself but also in the sequence of creating, quantifying, and capturing value. This study seeks to clarify the difference between these three steps of customer value management. It posits that customer value management needs to be a formal process in organisations and that this process needs to be formally managed as well. To do so, organisations need to focus on the development of customer value management capabilities across the three stages of the customer value management process: creation, quantification, and capture. Customer value is not just created; it needs to be managed. Liozu, Stephan M, “Customer Value Is Not Just Created, It Is Formally Managed”, *Journal of Creating Value* 3.2 (2017): 200-209.

Customers’ perceived value that is greater than the actual value

Perceived value by the customer is influenced by not only the actual value of the products and services provided but also by the selling organisation’s corporate reputation, perceived credibility and the quality of its relationship. These three elements

influence the outcomes regarding customer satisfaction and loyalty; the study found that corporate credibility and the relationship quality between the buying organisation and the seller played a significant role in delivering customer satisfaction and loyalty. Arslanagic-Kalajdzic, Maja, and Vesna Zabkar, “Is perceived value more than value for money in professional business services?”, *Industrial Marketing Management* 65 (2017): 47-58.

Tensions in value co-creation

The benefits of value co-creation are well documented. However, some negatives impact the potential benefits of a collaborative value co-creation approach. The tension created by disparities in both formal and informal communication networks of both parties negatively impact the selling outcome. Three types of tension were identified in the study: structural, emotional and behavioural. Any single one of these tensions can destabilise a relationship. This study identifies patterns that signal the presence of tensions, allowing managers to take corrective actions to mitigate any negativity impacting the value co-creation process. Tóth, Zsófia, et al, “Tension in a value co-creation context: A network case study”, *Industrial Marketing Management* (2017).

Customer management

Preferred supplier status-an opportunity or a burden?

Many organisations see being a preferred supplier as a sign of success and lead to future opportunities. The study finds that being a preferred supplier can be a dangerous move for some organisations. The study found that preferred suppliers incurred additional costs created by excessive buyer requests and this likelihood of excessive requests increases when the selling organisation is perceived as a preferred supplier by the customer. This negative

impact and potential unseen dilution of profitability can be mitigated by the salesperson maintaining a balanced view of the relationship and actively managing customer expectations and demands consistently and positively. **Hammerschmidt, Maik, Hauke A Wetzel, and Todd J Arnold, “The burden of rank: The impact of preferred supplier status on excessive buyer requests”, *Industrial Marketing Management* (2018).**

Knowledge of your customers is a source of product innovation

This study investigates integration mechanisms between channel members. Specifically, the research framework is built upon the buyer-supplier grey-box integration approach, knowledge-based view, and agency theory. This study identifies and compares the effects of two grey-box integration mechanisms, namely supplier task involvement and joint planning, on two kinds of knowledge acquisition. It finds that both supplier task involvement and joint planning positively influence manufacturers’ product knowledge acquisition and end customer knowledge acquisition. Supplier task involvement has a stronger effect on knowledge acquisition than joint planning. Both product and end customer knowledge lead to better product innovation performance. However, end customer knowledge has a stronger effect than product knowledge on product innovation performance. **Chang, Jeanine, “The effects of buyer-supplier’s collaboration on knowledge and product innovation”, *Industrial Marketing Management* 65 (2017): 129-143.**

Reducing the barriers to successful key account management implementation

Today, many firms develop and implement key account management (KAM) programmes to manage the relationships with strategically important customers. The implementation of KAM programmes requires the configuration of specific activities, actors, and resources dedicated to key accounts, which poses significant challenges for managerial practice. Firms often underestimate the fundamental

“**Perceived value by the customer is influenced by not only the actual value of the products and services provided but also by the selling organisation’s corporate reputation, perceived credibility and the quality of its relationship.**”

organisational change required for a successful implementation of KAM. The study identifies a four-step process model that links the concepts of embeddedness, differentiation, integration, and alignment. **Leischnig, Alexander, et al, “Mind the gap: A process model for diagnosing barriers to key account management implementation”, *Industrial Marketing Management* (2017).**

Procurement’s role in buying services

Procurement professionals are increasingly becoming involved in the buying process of services, leading to concerns that this will focus purely on cost and therefore reduce the value provided by salespeople selling professional services. The study identified that actively pursuing a relational contracting approach could mitigate the procurement department’s cost focus. The significant finding was that without effective partnering with procurement throughout the sales process will result in a cost-based interaction. **Lonsdale, Chris, et al, “Knowing the price of everything? Exploring the impact of increased procurement professional involvement on management consultancy purchasing”, *Industrial Marketing Management* 65 (2017): 157-167.**

Integrated sales and marketing selling centres

Sales and marketing selling centres occur when sales and marketing jointly interact with the customer. As organisations turn to the collective knowledge of the selling teams to manage increasingly complex customers and solutions, the need to understand team selling increases. The study identified that recognising the role of sales and marketing selling centres is an appropriate strategy to impact complex sales situations positively. **Johnson, Jeff S, Joseph M Matthes, and Scott B Friend, “Interfacing and customer-facing sales and marketing selling centres”, *Industrial Marketing Management* (2017).**

Behavioural studies

Building customer trust by the salesperson

As sales strategies continue to shift toward long-term partnerships, the influence of trust between buyers and sellers as a building block that facilitates relationship development is increasingly important. This study investigates the role of customers’ existing propensity to trust salespeople in newly formed business-to-business (B2B) relationships. It also examines the interactive effects of salesperson characteristics – relational customer orientation and adaptive selling – that moderate this relationship. Findings show a mixture of salesperson characteristics that accentuate and attenuate the association between customers’ pre-existing tendencies to trust salespeople and their actual trust in the salesperson. **Friend, Scott B, Jeff S Johnson, and Ravipreet S Sohi, “Propensity to trust salespeople: A contingent multilevel-multisource examination”, *Journal of Business Research* 83 (2018): 1-9.**

A cooperative salesperson

Previous research has shown that cooperation is vital to the outcomes of relationships in B2B selling. The study identified cooperation, for example, salesperson behaviour and effort, influence customer’s perception and likelihood to engage in a B2B relationship. Salespeople who possess a strong customer orientation create positive perceived cooperation with the customer as opposed to salespeople who have high sales efficacy. This high level of perceived cooperation

experienced by the customer results in a higher level of expertise being conveyed on the salesperson resulting in enhanced customer relationship outcomes. **Lussier, Bruno, and Zachary R Hall, “Cooperation in B2B relationships: Factors that influence customers’ perceptions of salesperson cooperation”, *Industrial Marketing Management* (2017).**

Going the extra mile by the salesperson creates a grateful customer

This research uses moral affect theory and literature on emotional contagion to examine the effects of salesperson gratitude and customer gratitude on downstream relationship outcomes. The findings of this work suggest that salesperson prosocial behaviours account for the positive association between salesperson gratitude and customer gratitude. These prosocial behaviours – information sharing and extra-role behaviours – combined with customer gratitude serve as explanatory mechanisms for the positive effects of salesperson gratitude on customer commitment, which is an essential result of buyer-seller interactions and an essential component of long-term relationships. Further, this research finds that salesperson extra-role behaviours and relationship length interact such that salesperson extra-role behaviours cultivate customer gratitude within developing and established relationships, but that these behaviours are particularly beneficial for less mature relationships. **Mangus, Stephanie M, et al, “Gratitude in buyer-seller relationships: a dyadic investigation”, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* 37.3 (2017): 250-267.**

Sales leaders have a role in reducing salesperson stress and unethical behaviour

The exchanges between a sales leader and their team members can affect the ethical ambiguity within the sales team. The quality of the relationship between the two parties can positively increase workgroup socialisation which can reduce role stress that the salesperson experiences and therefore limit any desires to engage in unethical intent by the salesperson. The study finds that leaders who promoted the social network of the sales team reduce both salesperson role stress and unethical intent. **Schwepeker Jr, Charles H, and Megan**

C Good, “Reducing salesperson job stress and unethical intent: The influence of leader-member exchange relationship, socialization and ethical ambiguity”, *Industrial Marketing Management* 66 (2017): 205-218.

Rapport building is still a sales skill

Customer acquisition is critical to growth. Building rapport with new customers contributes to establishing new relationships and facilitates engagement of customers in solution co-creation. The study showed that salespeople who initiated actions with the customer had little effect on rapport building. Having a collaborative approach to identify actions to address customers’ needs builds rapport more effectively resulting in positive outcomes. A lack of rapport can have both immediate and long-lasting impact on the relationship. **Kaski, Timo, Jarkko Niemi, and Ellen Pullins, “Rapport-building in authentic B2B sales interaction”, *Industrial Marketing Management* (2017).**

Systems and tools

ERP critical to CRM success

The study analysed the impact on the business value of enterprise resource planning (ERP) and customer relationship management software (CRM). It found that ERP was an essential aid to business, but CRM was not identified as being as important. When the two systems have integrated the impact of CRM is enhanced. Therefore, to maximise the benefit of the CRM system needs to be integrated with ERP. **Ruivo, Pedro, Tiago Oliveira, and André Mestre, “Enterprise resource planning and customer relationship management value”, *Industrial Management & Data Systems* 117.8 (2017): 1612-1631.**

Artificial intelligence in sales

Experts have suggested that the next few decades will herald the fourth industrial revolution.

“**Ensuing societal changes will have a profound impact on both personal selling and sales management practices.**”

The fourth industrial revolution will be powered by digitisation, information and communications technology, machine learning, robotics and artificial intelligence – and will shift more decision-making from humans to machines. The ensuing societal changes will have a profound impact on both personal selling and sales management practices. This study focuses on machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) and their impact on personal selling and sales management. It examines that impact on a small area of sales practice and research based on the seven steps of the selling process. Implications for theory and practice are derived. **Syam, Niladri, and Arun Sharma, “Waiting for a sales renaissance in the fourth industrial revolution: Machine learning and artificial intelligence in sales research and practice”, *Industrial Marketing Management* (2018).**

Articles featured in the research review are not available from the editorial staff or the *International Journal of Sales Transformation*. Readers wishing to find out more about a particular paper can use a simple search online using the author and paper title to find out more details on the paper. The copyright of the articles is acknowledged to the publishers and authors. Any correspondence regarding the Sales Transformation Research Review, including recommendations of articles for future issues, should be sent to the section editor: Jeremy.Noad@port.ac.uk.

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D&I snapshot

Corinne Sim

PRACTICAL MEASURES

What have you taken from today that you are going to apply back in the workplace?

- > Awareness and mindfulness
- > Intentionally Inclusive
- > Provide mentorship and support
- > Leadership – D&I starts with "I"

COLLECTIVE ACTION

What should we be doing as a group to improve diversity and inclusion in our profession?

- > Be Intentionally inclusive – educate/ create awareness
 - > Starts with recognition of the gaps
- > Collaborate with stakeholder to create an ecosystem:
 - > Establish a forum/community within sales around D&I
 - To share information on good D&I practices
 - > Check the data – research on diversity other than gender for sales
 - > Leaders to lead by example – start with "I"
 - Create policies and mentoring programme to promote D&I
 - Integration of D&I as part of organisations' culture
 - Influence hiring

BUSINESS CASE

What are the most compelling argument for the D+I business case in sales?

- > Revenue
- > War for talent – increase employee engagement
- > Increase innovation
- > Increase customer satisfaction

D&I FUTURE

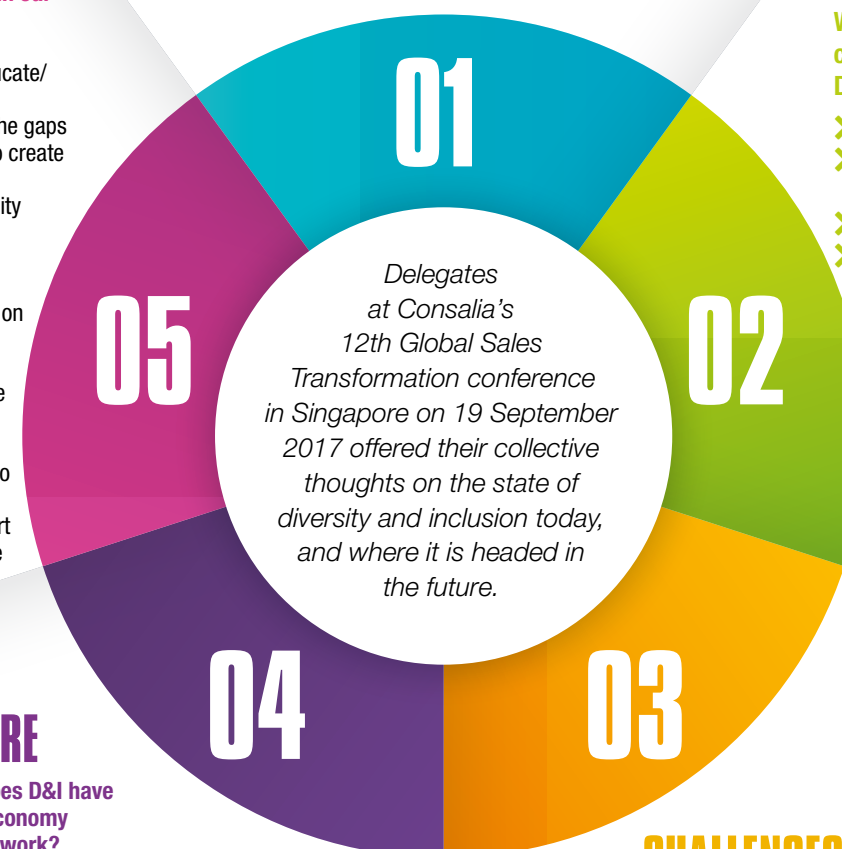
What impact does D&I have on the digital economy or the future of work?

- > The differences will blur
 - > Integrating global economy
 - > Opens up possibilities for more D&I
 - > More collaboration, less competition
 - > Creativity and innovation
 - More diverse communications and marketing tools and techniques/channels
- > Agile mind-sets required in digital economy
- > Customisation to individual needs

CHALLENGES

What do you think are the biggest D&I challenges facing our profession?

- > Gender bias – male dominance
 - > Culture
 - Stereotyped gender assumptions
 - Self-limitation of women
 - Unconscious bias
 - Women as women's enemy
- > Policies and programmes to support D&I
- > Sales culture – lack of executive support



The diversity advantage

✎ Deirdre Coleman

Despite evidence that diversifying leadership teams can increase both innovation and revenue, many organisations are struggling to make it a reality – and few appear to be making visible progress. What are leaders in this space doing differently and what are the critical interventions that work to drive tangible impacts? We report on the D&I findings from Consalia's 12th annual Global Sales Transformation conference in Singapore.

According to sociologist Cedric Herring, diversity in a business is one of the most important factors for predicting sales revenue. By analysing data on more than 500 US-based, for-profit businesses, Herring also found that:

- Companies reporting the highest levels of diversity brought in nearly 10–15 times more sales revenue on average than those with the lowest levels of diversity.
- Businesses with high diversity are more likely to report higher-than-average percentages of market share.
- Higher levels of diversity are associated with having more customers.

"It is likely that diversity produces positive outcomes over homogeneity because growth and innovation depend on people from various backgrounds working together and capitalising on

their differences," Herring writes.¹

Business case for D&I

Herring isn't the only who's studied this impact. Speaking at Consalia's Global Sales Transformation Conference entitled "Celebrating Diversity & Inclusion in Sales", Lee Baldwin said: "There is a lot of opportunity and gains from D&I and there is a whole lot of upside if we grasp the opportunity." Baldwin, who leads the APAC Professional Services business for CEB-Gartner, added: "Our research centres primarily on gender diversity but we're currently doing a study that focuses on ethnicity in the workforce."

Sales roles at all levels in the organisation are incredibly difficult to fill. The current selling environment necessitates more advanced sales skills, but finding sellers and sales leaders with these skills continues to be difficult. CEB Sales member organisations cite sourcing high-performing sales talent as their primary challenge: 35% of sales managers couldn't find qualified candidates for open positions, up from 24% in 2010. The root cause of this is not tapping into half the workforce. Currently, women make up more than half of all college graduates in the United States but, despite achieving equal or even higher quota attainment in some cases, women are underrepresented at all levels of the sales organisation. Women also bring critical leadership skills to their organisations, as substantiated by research that says women are more effective across the board according to their peers, direct reports, and managers. Another aspect companies are missing out on is the stabilising effect of women on the workforce and their role in promoting diversity.

Diversity at SAP

- 87% of SAP employees embrace workplace diversity
- 120 SAP colleagues employed via the Autism at Work programme
- 5 generations of workers creating a new dynamic
- 32.9% women in the workforce
- 150+ nationalities of SAP employees
- +88,500 employees in 150+ countries
- 25% women in management
- 378,000 SAP customers in more than 180 countries

Source: SAMP

- Women typically stay in their roles for one year longer than men, leading to lower attrition costs.
- Women build more diverse teams: on average, female-led teams are 50% female/50% male, while male-led teams are typically only 25% female.

Baldwin delivered findings on the financial impact of a gender-diverse sales force, citing Herring's research. "The mean revenues of organisations with low levels of gender diversity are roughly \$45.2 million, compared with \$299.4 million for those with medium levels and \$644.3 million for those with high levels of diversity." On average, despite having equal or even higher quota attainment, women are paid less across both base pay and variable compensation. "When we think about it, it comes down to the bottom line and money – what are we doing to further the bottom line of the organisations we work in through pursuing these initiatives. If we're not tying this into the business results that your senior leaders are going to be looking for then it's not going to work."

Baldwin outlined the approach that CEB-Gartner took to address diversity and inclusion within its own organisation. "You need to acknowledge that it will take effort to fix and you have to take specific action. When we were launching the Women at CEB global group a couple of years ago we started with focus groups – what people were annoyed at and what were easy fixes that we could implement immediately. It's vital to have executive-level support and look at everything from recruiting and hiring to developing and retaining talent. How are we talking about parental leave and how big an obstacle is it? Look at your hiring panels – that speaks volumes to incomers. We just hired a fantastic saleswoman who chose us over a competitor. Why? Because half the team that interviewed her were female and that made her feel that it would be an inclusive environment."

Baldwin advised the audience to look for female talent in less obvious places. "Look at websites that cater specifically for women. We found the Elevate Network and the website www.fairygodboss.com were great sources of talent for us." Citing a survey from Sally Krawcheck's book *Own It*,² Baldwin asserted that women place more value on ongoing learning and development. "If you're not investing in learning and development programmes or have good sales coaches you might be inadvertently putting off female employees who may go look for those opportunities elsewhere." A key retention tool is flexibility. "Make flexibility the default, not the exception. It's much easier to drive flexibility in sales and it substantially increases attraction and retention."

Qualifications build credibility

Simon Dale, Vice President, Sales, Asia Pacific & Japan MapR Technologies and Board Member of the Association of Professional Sales discussed the importance of becoming a certified sales professional in order to build credibility. "To be able to reach a level of certification and demonstrate that that has been verified by an independent body helps to mitigate against some of that bias that may creep in surrounding people's ability and qualifications. If you have a sales certification, it demonstrates that you want to develop yourself making you more attractive to employers." The APS has recently undertaken some research on diversity and inclusion in association with Ernst & Young: see the white paper, *Performance Leadership: How diverse and inclusive sales teams are seizing competitive advantage*.³

SAP's journey to move business beyond bias

Michelle Charles is Global D&I Head at SAP and responsible for driving SAP's diversity agenda across the sales line of business globally. Her focus is to model diversity as a business imperative by building and growing diverse talent to better understand the customers, innovate creatively and improve competitive advantage. As a strong supporter of women's career growth in the workplace, Michelle is a core member of the SAP Business Women's Network in Singapore, where she and the team have been instrumental in driving SAP's gender intelligence agenda with initiatives focused on empowerment, enablement, networking, policy changes, and CSR.

Outlining SAP's progress, Charles says they have set themselves ambitious targets and are continually mapping their advancement. "In the words of Peter Drucker, what gets measured gets achieved, and gender was the first area where we set up a KPI. In 2012, we set a goal of 25% women in management across the globe, which we achieved ahead of time in June 2017. The executive board have approved new diversity targets (based on 1% projected annual increase). These targets are 28% women in leadership by 2020, rising to 30% by 2022."

"For us the business imperative is clear: having a high percentage of female managers is positively correlated with disruptive innovation. If you do not intentionally include, you will unintentionally exclude. We introduced a Leadership Excellence Acceleration Program (LEAP) to help female talent rise to leadership positions – they have to be in a leadership

Voice of the diversity leader

Lee Chew Tan, Senior VP of Hybrid IT Global Sales, Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Female representation is notoriously poor in tech and the disparity grows as you move up the ladder – for instance, women accounted for only 11% of C-level executives in Silicon Valley in 2014.

Tan's advice is to be very strategic in your career and be bold enough to embrace a big vision of the possible. This, she says, will require courage to face challenges, take risks and put yourself forward for those stretch projects. "Robert Anthony defines courage as the willingness to be afraid and act anyway. You need to have the courage to be included and to want it. It's also important to have the discipline to take charge and make that vision a reality, and what makes a difference for that process is you need people on your team with the same passion; you need to have tenacity and you need to have a positive mind-set".

Sheryl Sandberg's book, *Lean In* proved influential for Tan. "I realised when I was offered a big career opportunity that my thought process as a female was completely different to how a male colleague would have processed that opportunity.

Women hesitate to take stretch assignments, as they're more concerned that they won't measure up. We can often overthink these chances and we don't always give ourselves that runway to take on new challenges".

She cited the quote from *Lean In*: "Women only apply for open jobs if they think they can meet 100% of the criteria listed – for men it's 60%."

Tan declares that you need courage to be included and you need to want to be included. It comes down to having self-confidence. Society does not view ambition as a trait in women as positively as in men.

"I wanted my team to be known for growth, for efficiency; we set a two-year plan and we had a collaborative leadership structure – we delivered double-digit growth. It was a scary journey and a scary commitment – but I placed a stake in the ground and to be successful you have to lay claim."

➤
Lee Chew Tan HPE's Senior Vice President of Hybrid IT Global Sales



role in order to drive change. We now have two women who have been appointed to executive board level. We were the first global IT company to achieve globalEdge certification, which looks at your HR practices and processes and ensures there's no discrimination."

For SAP, the business case centres on employee engagement, innovation and customer orientation. A bias-free workplace motivates, attracts and helps retain employees. Diversity of thought helps organisations to think differently; diverse teams are proven to be more innovative. Globalisation means companies relate to increasingly more diverse customers (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: The business case for diversity: Michelle Charles, SAP.

"We have done some research internally at SAP: if you increase employee engagement by as much as 1%, you improve your profit margin by €35 million to €45 million, so the business case is a no brainer. It's important to equate your D&I strategy to the overall mission of the organisation – ours is to help the world run better and improve people's lives. It has to make business sense in order to have credibility; it has to be owned by the business and supported but not owned by HR. In the words of our CEO Bill McDermott, "SAP wants to be the most open-minded and inclusive software company on the planet."

Diversity goes beyond gender equality. "We look at our D&I approach across four pillars: Gender Intelligence, Cross-Generational Intelligence, Culture & Identity and Differently Abled People. There are currently five different generations working at SAP. We introduced a cross-mentoring programme called Building Bridges in 2017 and we also have flex work. It's about having the right environment to ensure collaboration and engagement happens between these generations."

AP has a number of employee network and affinity groups such as the Business Women's Network, Black Employee Network, Pride@SAP and Cultures@SAP to bring people together so they can share and collaborate. Affinity groups contribute to business success through several means: recruitment and retention, product development, creating a

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positive and supportive work environment, and helping to deliver the commitment to diversity and inclusion to name a few.

SAP's Autism at Work programme is helping adults on the autism spectrum flourish in IT roles, bringing an untapped talent pool into the workplace and fuelling further innovation. The programme has been such a success SAP is currently working to expand it, with the goal of having 1 percent of its total workforce – approximately 650 people – fall on the spectrum by 2020.

"We have more than 120 individuals on the autistic spectrum in 22 different roles all over the globe. We're tapping into an underutilised source of talent, as 85% of adults with autism are unemployed. They prove a great match for technology and development-type roles. Over a billion people, about 15% of the world's population have some form of disability. We have to think differently about how we define talent and source talent," says Charles.

SAP partners with Danish firm Specialisterne, which hires high-functioning autistic adults and prepares them for IT careers, as well as Adult Resource Centers in Pennsylvania



“

Make flexibility the default, not the exception. It's much easier to drive flexibility in sales and it substantially increases attraction and retention.

What you can do

- View D&I as strategic planning
- Set numerical targets to measure success
- Flexibility is key

- Diversity from the top down

Source: SAP

“

In the words of our CEO Bill McDermott, ‘SAP wants to be the most open-minded and inclusive software company on the planet.’



▲ Samantha Wessels



▲ Deirdre Coleman

and with the Department of Rehabilitation in California, to provide training in social and collaboration skills as well as life skills – how to rent an apartment, how to access and use public transportation, opening a bank account and filling out human resource forms, and so on. These kinds of interactions and “mundane” details of everyday life that neurologically typical or neurotypical adults take for granted can be extremely difficult for those on the spectrum.

What’s really making autism register more with employers now is the huge demand for talent, particularly in areas such as IT, where many high-performing individuals on the spectrum excel. The impact of these initiatives can have a significant impact, not just on the lives of the people they hire, but on the overall cohesion of the teams. Companies stand to gain by gaining employees who are extremely hard-working, loyal, focused and dedicated advocates for the organisation.

Inclusion Starts with I

Uma Balasingam, co-founder of Lean In Singapore which has over 700 members, and the founder of Lean In Women in Technology Asia & Women In Technology Singapore Chapter spoke about the important role that Lean-In Circles provide to women. “Lean In is a global non-profit organisation dedicated to progressing women in the workplace, founded by Sheryl Sandberg. The concept of Lean-In Circles is that 8–12 women meet regularly, peer-peer and hold each other accountable against the goals that they set for themselves to challenge and celebrate each other.”

The combination of networking, motivation, education and support is impactful, encouraging women to embrace challenge and take risks in the workplace. Balasingam spoke on a panel about unconscious bias – ingrained beliefs – including doubts about our abilities that lead us to miss opportunities and so stop us from reaching the top. To begin a real process of change, women also need to look at their own unconscious bias and move away from these potentially damaging beliefs. Assumptions are internal; they come from within us and before any external change can be made in a company’s culture, they need to be understood.

Most people would not consciously decide to hire candidates based on whether they remind them of themselves. But one unconscious bias – affinity bias – may lead people to favour candidates who are like themselves, research shows (*especially in sales* – Ed). Affinity or similarity bias is where people seek out those who share their backgrounds, group membership, or experiences. If hiring managers and boards of directors are made up of mostly men who unconsciously engage in such bias, it stands to reason that more men than women will continue to be hired and promoted – particularly men who share the same background with current managers. This only serves to perpetuate the cycle of men outnumbering women in leadership positions. Gender targets, de-identifying CVs and structured interviews are but a few of the strategies that can

“

We need to be mindful of our own unconscious bias. We all tend to like like-minded people.



▲ Simon Dale

help eliminate such bias in recruiting employees.⁴

Research conducted by Jaluch this year⁵ revealed the extent to which societies are unconsciously biased: for example, 67% of the British public admits to feeling uncomfortable talking to a disabled person; gay and lesbian job seekers are 5% less likely to get an interview; and 80% of employers admit to making decisions based on regional accents. Unconscious bias doesn’t just negatively affect women – it can have a detrimental impact on any minority group.⁶

Balasingam spoke about the importance of building awareness of what women do to hold themselves back, what men can do to educate themselves and better support women, and what organisations can do to tackle unconscious bias. Lean-In Circles are a vital part of that support mechanism for women. Since the organization’s launch in March 2013 the LeanIn.Org community has grown to over 800,000 women and men and more than 28,000 Lean-In Circles in over 140 countries.

“Our Lean In Singapore community is made up of more than 1,000 women who come together to be inspired, educated and to support and collaborate. These women are mostly in full time employment (93%) and represent a broad age and nationality range. Past events and collaborations have been with companies such as Uber, Dimension Data, INSEAD, Cisco, NTUC, Lazada and Edelman and have covered topics on personal branding, unconscious bias and women in the work place.”

Inclusion often overlooked

For Samantha Wessels, SVP Group Sales Operations & Enablement, Dimension Data inclusion is often overlooked, leading to people leaving organisations as they don’t feel that they fit in.

“We need to be mindful of our own unconscious bias. We all tend to like like-minded people. How do you get everyone contributing, not just the loudest voice in the room? We have to make people feel psychologically safe and that they belong in the room.”

Creative abrasion is a phrase coined by Jerry Hirshberg, founder and president of Nissan Design International. It describes a culture where ideas are productively challenged. Creating an environment of diversity where opposing approaches grate up against each other is hugely successful in fostering innovation. It forces people to truly evaluate their approach and decision-making. Bringing more women into tech is vital.

“To be equal, you have to act equal and think equal. We don’t have enough women in tech. Women need to back themselves and believe in their abilities and find themselves a mentor and a sponsor. Know what you want and don’t be afraid,” she concludes.

Read more about Samantha Wessels as a global sales leader in her “My Journey” profile on pages 18–23.

- 1 Bob Marsh, “How Diversity Affects Sales Performance”, LevelEleven, 18 November 2015, <https://leveleven.com/2015/11/how-diversity-affects-sales-performance/>.
- 2 Sallie Krawcheck, *Own It: The Power of Women at Work*, Crown Business, 2017.
- 3 Performance Leadership: *How diverse and inclusive sales teams are seizing competitive advantage*, APS-EY, <http://associationofprofessionalsales.com/wp-content/uploads/APS-DI-Whitepaper-FINAL.pdf>.
- 4 Melissa A Wheeler and Victor Sojo, “Unconscious bias is keeping women out of senior roles, but we can get around it”, *The Conversation*, 7 March 2017, <https://theconversation.com/unconscious-bias-is-keeping-women-out-of-senior-roles-but-we-can-get-around-it-73518>.
- 5 Unconscious Bias Infographic, Jaluch, <http://www.jaluch.co.uk/unconscious-bias-infographic/>.
- 6 Kelly Long, “How to recognise and overcome your unconscious bias”, *Guardian*, 14 December 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/women-in-leadership/2015/dec/14/recognise-overcome-unconscious-bias>.

▶▶ Must attend

Birmingham to host 5th Sales Educators' Academy

Executives from Jaguar Land Rover and Aston Villa Football Club will be joined by researchers and academics from around the world in May as part of a wide-ranging programme at this year's Sales Educators' Academy. JLR executives will present a talk about the skills the company is looking for in sales graduate recruits, while Aston Villa Football Club will explore "selling soccer" and delegates will be able to enjoy a stadium tour at Villa Park if they wish.

Other speaker highlights include:

- **Tamara Schenk** from **CSO Insights** (Miller Heiman Group) will present on sales enablement. She will outline CSO's research and how this might be included in the classroom.
- **Howard Dover** from **UT Dallas** will deliver a session on digital disruption in the sales field, including a workshop on how to morph this into the curriculum.
- **Amanda Helm** from **Xavier University of Louisiana** will tell the story of a business code of conduct and a professional ethics code for students.
- **Kenneth Le Meunier-Fitzhugh** from the **University East Anglia** will talk about four selling interactions (Transactional, Relational, Collaborative, and Key Account) and how to most successfully teach them.
- **Philip McGowan** from **Portsmouth University** will speak on how to teach about sales failure.
- **Rushana Khusainova** from the **Aston** team will introduce the topic of "(Re)defining salesperson motivation: adapting the sales motivation research in the sales management syllabus".
- **Rodrigo Guesalaga** from **Cranfield University** will present "How executives (DO) learn, and how they SHOULD learn about sales".
- **Beth Rogers** from **Portsmouth University** will talk about work-based learning in sales.
- **Christine Eastman** from **Middlesex University** will discuss "Coaching from Selection to Success: What part can coaching play in dealing with contemporary recruiting and on-boarding?"
- **Javier Marcos** from **Cambridge University** will present "Teaching through real-life scenarios".

- **Wayne Slough** from **Virginia Commonwealth University** will consider "What's the customer looking for...?"
- **Carole Creque** from **University of Central Florida** will present "The Elevator Pitch Re-Visited".
- **Andrew Loring** from **Texas A&M** will discuss "Enhancing the Student Role-Play Experience".

Recent research reveals that 82% of all marketing majors and 66% of all college of business students are headed for a sales-related job – which makes the role of the sales educator even more important. The goal of the SEA is to help sales educators of ALL experience levels improve their ability to teach sales students the skills and knowledge that these students will need upon graduating from business school.

The 5th Sales Educators' Academy (SEA) will be held at the Conference Aston Marketing Suites (CAMS), Aston University, Birmingham B4 7ET, UK on 15-17 May 2018. It is hosted by Aston Business School in partnership with Florida State University. To book your place, please visit: <http://www.aston.ac.uk/aston-business-school/research/events/sea-conference-2018/>.



▲ Javier Marcos-Cuevas.



▲ Phill McGowan.



▲ Kenneth Le Meunier-Fitzhugh.



▲ Tamara Schenk.



▲ Aston Villa: stadium tour for delegates.

▶▶ Events

Awards

Women in Sales Awards – North America
28 March – nominations close
<http://wisawardsna.com>

Conferences and exhibitions

Sales Innovation Expo
21-22 March 2018, ExCel, London, UK
<http://www.salesinnovationexpo.co.uk>

2018 AMA International Collegiate Conference
5-7 April 2018, New Orleans, LA, USA
<https://www.ama.org/events-training/Conferences/Pages/AMA-International-Collegiate-Conference-2018.aspx?tab=home>

Pi Sigma Epsilon-PSE National Convention
9-13 April 2018, San Diego, CA, USA
<https://www.pse.org/national-convention/>

NCSM – National Conference In Sales Management
11-13 April 2018, San Diego, CA, USA
<http://ncsmweb.com/2018-ncsm>

5th Sales Educators' Academy
15-17 May 2018, Conference Aston Marketing Suites (CAMS), Aston University, Birmingham B4 7ET, UK
Hosted by Aston Business School in partnership with Florida State University.
<http://www.aston.ac.uk/aston-business-school/research/events/sea-conference-2018/>.

National Sales Conference 2018
29 November 2018, Ricoh Arena, Coventry UK
<https://www.nscconference.co.uk>

Sales competitions

First UK Universities Sales Competition
21-22 March 2018, Edinburgh Napier Business School, Edinburgh, Scotland, UK
<http://www.ukuniversitiesalescompetition.co.uk>

20th National Collegiate Sales Competition
3-6 April, 2018, Kennesaw State University, GA, USA
<https://www.ncsc-ksu.org>

Western States Collegiate Sales Competition
19-20 April 2018, California State University Chico, Chico, CA, USA
<http://www.csuchico.edu/cob/students/beyond-classroom/professional-sales/western-states-collegiate-sales-competition.shtml>

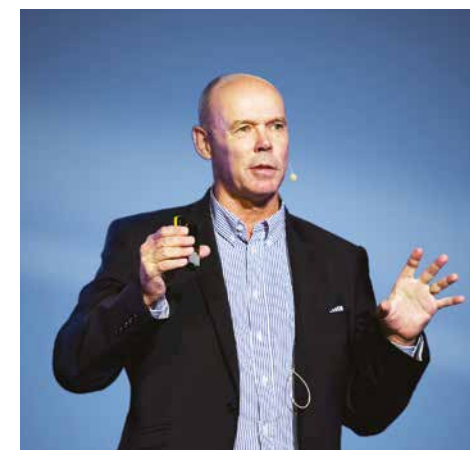
ESC – European Sales Competition
30-31 May 2018, Euridis Business School, Paris, France
<https://www.europeansalescompetition.com/esc-2018/>

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