

**MIXED METHODS STUDY OF FACTORS INFLUENCING BUSINESS TO
BUSINESS (B2B) SALES PERFORMANCE:
THE ROLE OF DESIGN ATTITUDE**

by

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Dedication

For Dad, I miss you every day.

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Mixed Methods Study of Factors Influencing Business to Business (B2B) Sales
Performance: The Role of Design Attitude

Abstract

by

DONALD P. ST. CLAIR

Practitioner-scholars continue to search for effective approaches to improve sales performance. This is indicated by the fact that nearly 80% of U.S. companies make significant changes to their salesforce programs every two years or less (Zoltners, Sinha, & Lorimer, 2012). Additionally, the extant literature is limited in its ability to capture true antecedents to explain sales performance (Bolander, Saturnino, Hughes, & Ferris, 2015; Plouffe, Sridharan, & Barclay, 2010). Significant variance remains unexplained in the understanding of sales performance, which suggests the behavioral determinants of sales performance are not straightforward nor sufficiently understood.

This mixed-methods study provides empirical evidence regarding these gaps in the literature around measuring sales performance and its explanatory antecedents. This dissertation examines alternative explanations to account for sales performance variations. To this end, the salesperson's capability to relate, understand and generate genuine solutions for customers (what is called design attitude) is defined, and its antecedents and effects are explored across three empirical studies. Subsequent

integration of these studies provides new insights into how to better explain sales performance grounded in the principle of design attitude.

The first qualitative inquiry utilizes constructivist grounded theory to understand better what makes salespeople intrinsically motivated to pursue interpersonal relationships with customers. I find that they foster an identity of helping others by engaging in “systems-savvy selling.” Specifically, the study challenges the dominant logic by revealing that salespeople are not manipulating care and personal relationships to improve business outcomes. The system savvy-selling improves desired relational dynamics and fulfills psychological needs as salespeople view the selling process holistically and systematically.

A quantitative study extends this line of inquiry by examining knowledge dissemination and cognitive antecedents of sales performance. I measure the concept of systems-savvy selling defined as a cognitive approach where a salesperson apply design attitude (DA) to improve his or her sales performance. This study validates the hypothesized research model and reveals that systems-savvy selling forms a potential causal antecedent for internal knowledge brokering among salespeople as well as for sales performance.

The third study examines news way of measuring sales performance, which is better aligned with the complexities of contemporary selling tasks and processes. Design attitude is introduced as a critical antecedent to long-term sales performance. I also examine the mediating influence of value co-creation and sales technology use between design attitudes on long-term sales performance. My findings demonstrate that design

attitude has a significant and positive influence on long-term sales performance, which is also mediated through value co-creation and sales technology use.

Overall, the results of this dissertation suggest that role of design attitude forms strong predictor of B2B sales performance with significant explanatory powers, which is better than other predictors suggested so far. The research extends theories of the sales performance by introducing the joint role that cognitive and affective sales behaviors underlying design attitude have on influencing sales performance.

Keywords: sales performance; design attitude; passion; sales technology use; value co-creation incentives; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation; systems thinking

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Problem of Practice and Research Question

In Plato's *The Republic*, *The Parable of the Cave* tells a story of subterranean people mistaking the shadows on the cave walls for reality. In Plato's narrative, one individual discovers the truth about the source of the shadows and shares the source with his fellow dwellers. They rise up and murder him. Plato posits that we operate under partial and distorted data and that this data drives our perceptions and gives weight to opposing views (Hutchens, 1999; Plato & Lee, 1955). Are we all misguided cave dwellers? Is our understanding of motivation and drivers of sales performance constrained by prior beliefs and existing mental models?

U.S. companies spend more than \$900 billion each year on B2B sales force compensation, and an additional \$15 billion on sales training per year, which represents the single largest marketing expense (Cespedes & Wallace, 2017). A recent review by Zoltners and his colleagues on sales force drivers reveals U.S. spending on sales force incentives—traditionally utilized as the primary sales motivator—exceeded \$200 billion in 2010 (Zoltners et al., 2012). While there are studies that have identified the antecedents of selling performance (Churchill, Ford, Hartley, & Walker, 1985; Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal, 2011), the research is silent on the possible role of creative cognitive approaches ascribed by coalescing dimensions of design attitude and related behaviors.

Traditional response strategies are insufficient for addressing such complex sales problems (Pourdehnad, Wexler, & Wilson, 2011). In the digital economy, salespeople need to behave as “knowledge brokers” who transfer knowledge to the customer and back to their organizations (Verbeke et al., 2011). These complex challenges drive sales

professionals to focus on acquiring and developing new knowledge-based skills and competencies (Sheth & Sharma, 2008). Evans, McFarland, Dietz, and Jaramillo (2012) posit that as professional selling evolves, it is critical for marketing scholars to expand their research agenda and explore a new set of key factors that drive sales performance.

It is this problem of practice, coupled with the position that most sales managers fail to question their beliefs and assumptions as to what is driving sales performance, which makes this research compelling at this time. In the U.S., approximately 40% of compensation is tied to salesperson's performance (Zoltners et al., 2012). In the practitioner and academic literature, much effort is spent investigating performance-oriented incentive-based systems in hopes that they will motivate and guide salespeople's behavior differently to achieve desired performance levels. Yet, certainty concerning how best to use sales force drivers remains elusive, with nearly 80% of U.S. companies making significant changes to their sales force programs every two years or less (Zoltners et al., 2012). Is this uncertainty attributable to their failure to leave the cave? I believe there is an opportunity to help sales managers and salespeople shed orthodoxy and reshape their mental models of motivational, and performance drivers to take full advantage of the new world of sales.

The highly competitive, turbulent, and complex sales environment call for new ways of thinking, behaving and working. There is a gap in the literature as both sales scholars, and practitioners suggest there is a need to examine the process thinking skills that salespeople can apply to improve value-added and co-creation practices through innovative solutions (Dickson, Lassar, Hunter, & Chakravorti, 2009; Panagopoulos, Rapp, & Ogilvie, 2017). Moreover, Blocker, Cannon, Panagopoulos, and Sager (2012:

19) argue that as the selling environment becomes more complex, salespeople must participate in increased relational or transformational activities rather than transactional activities with their customers in order to fulfill both “expressed and latent needs.” This speed, size, and scope of change are collapsing and co-creating opportunities in new forms faster than ever before (Watkins & Wilber, 2015).

I propose this consequential shift is changing how organizations understand drivers of sales performance and establish performance metrics (Bolander et al., 2015; Evans et al., 2012; Plouffe, Bolander, & Cote, 2014). Accordingly, much of the sales research is contingent on limited and increasingly irrelevant models of sales performance (Jones, Brown, Zoltners, & Weitz, 2005) that draws upon transactional, mechanistic and linearity of contemporary selling processes (Dixon & Tanner, 2012; Dubinsky, 1981; Hartmann, Wieland, & Vargo, 2018; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005) and should evolve to relational, dynamic, holistic approaches that reflect the realities of the multifaceted and interconnected relationships among contemporary selling systems. Consequently, what drives sales performance (and understanding of what sales metrics to measure) requires significant revision in our thinking in light of the new demands of the marketplace (Evans et al., 2012; Jones et al., 2005).

Many practitioners and scholars are searching for fundamental answers related to sales performance domain. Both scholars and practitioners have been somewhat limited in their ability to explain sales performance (Bolander et al., 2015; Plouffe et al., 2010). Within the practitioner domain, as of February 2018, a simple online search reveals Amazon.com was selling over 6,000 books on sales performance (Amazon.com, 2018). The voluminous and diversified amount of information signals that practitioners are still

in search of sales performance drivers. The sales scholarship domain has been somewhat limited in its ability to explain variance (Plouffe et al., 2014) typical studies explain a modest 10 to 20% variance (Bolander et al., 2015). This suggests the behavioral determinants of sales performance are not as straightforward and insufficiently understood (Evans et al., 2012; Schrock, Zhao, Hughes, & Richards, 2016).

Therefore, I contend that these old measures and processes—especially considering these new challenges—can and need to be challenged. Empirical evidence is needed to fill these gaps around the best ways to measure sales performance while providing insight into the most relevant antecedents to performance. This dissertation seeks to address some of this challenge in that it examines alternative novel explanations to account for sales performance. To this end, I explore the salesperson's capability to relate to understand and generate genuine solutions to customers problem—what is called design attitude and related behaviors—and analyze to what extent they explain sales performance. Overall, the general goal of this research is to better understand current and novel drivers of sales performance in a world context defined by increasing complexity, deepening disparities in rising uncertainty whereby the imperative of connecting knowledge with action to create systemic change and achieve a more equitable outcome for both the buyer and seller is greater than ever.

The overall purpose of this research is to explore the role of design attitude, related behaviors, and mechanisms whereby sales performance improves. Given that most contemporary sales problems are multidimensional, have multiple solutions, multiple symptoms, multiple causes, multiple dimensions and involve multiple stakeholders, there is an urgent need to understand better the impact of design attitude

and its related behaviors on sales performance. Thus, the overall research question of this dissertation is: What is the role of design attitude in contemporary B2B sales performance?

Literature Review

The focus of this dissertation's inquiry: deepening our understanding of the role design attitude and related behaviors plays in the context of improving sales performance—call for my pursuing a multidisciplinary approach to theory generation which implied that I had to review a wide breadth of literature streams, some of which are not necessarily typically combined in sales, marketing, and management studies. By bringing some of these streams together by way of necessity—given the phenomenon I investigated in the empirical studies—represents one of the overall contributions of this investigation. B2B sales performance is a multifaceted phenomenon that warrants multiple theoretical lenses, borrowed from multiple disciplines, to understand the phenomenon more comprehensively. I distill and synthesize the bodies of literature and the principal theoretical foundations that anchored my research questions and informed my hypotheses.

The remainder of this section is organized as follows: 1) literature review on the history of sales performance drivers, incentives and motivation, sales performance, design attitude, and value co-creation; 2) identification of gaps in the literature and implications of theoretical adequacy to generalize towards future research.

History of Sales Performance Drivers

Companies have been utilizing incentives as the primary driver of sales performance since the late nineteenth century when wholesale houses enlisted armies of

salesmen to travel the country to sell and distribute their goods to shopkeepers and housewives. These salesmen (yes, they were all men) distributed various goods such as groceries, medicines, hardware and dry goods; and much, if not all, of their compensation, was based on pay through commissions schemes (Friedman, 2005). One of the first manufacturers to establish its professional sales force, National Cash Register (NCR), used incentive programs to drive sales performance. NCR's founder, John Patterson, who led the company from 1884–1922, paid his salesmen an extraordinarily high commission rate of 50 percent to demonstrate his belief in the power of incentives to motivate his salesmen (Friedman, 2005). This belief is consistent with many current sales leaders as the evidence suggests the pay mix trends are consistently skewed towards larger incentives. As of 2012, the average pay mixes across various industries, for salespeople is 60% salary / 40% incentive (WordlatWork, 2012). As of 2017, US companies spend more than \$900 billion each year on B2B sales force compensation; represent the single largest marketing expense (Cespedes & Wallace, 2017). A recent review by Zoltners and colleagues on sales force drivers reveals U.S. spending on sales force incentives—traditionally utilize as the primary sales motivator—exceeded \$200 billion in 2010 (Zoltners et al., 2012).

Moreover, incentives infiltrated the manufacturing ranks in 1911, after Frederick Taylor published *The Principles of Scientific Management* in which he outlined “initiative and incentive” management, which was designed to motivate better production by offering additional rewards to the individual worker who increased their output levels (Nelson, 1980). I posit “Taylorism” is culpable in many ways for much of the existing sales research on which performance metrics are founded and designed upon relatively

narrow and increasingly irrelevant models of sales performance (Jones et al., 2005; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005) that draws upon transaction orientation using a relatively mechanistic selling process (Moncrief & Marshall, 2005).

Incentives and Motivation

In professional selling, incentives are often used as if it were synonymous with motivation. Sales managers throw around the word “incentivize” in the verb form to mean, “motivate.” I claim motivation viewed in this sense implicitly denies action motivated by a sense of responsibility or intrinsic motivation—incentives in this sense, deprive salespeople of their autonomy.

Moreover, Deci and Flaste’s (1995a) experiments revealed people feel intrinsically motivated when they perceive themselves as competent and autonomous; “they need to feel they are effective and self-determining” (p. 87). Eden’s (1975) study identified a negative link between the perception of extrinsic incentives and the amount of intrinsic motivation among kibbutz workers. Deckop and Cirka’s (2000) research found merit-pay programs in a non-profit organization resulted in diminished feelings of autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Additionally, Shirom, Westman, and Melamed (1999) found pay-for-performance plans led to decreased well-being levels among blue-collar workers, especially for those who felt their duties to be uninteresting. Sauermann and Cohen’s (2008) research on the link between firm innovation and employee motivation uncovers that individuals engaged in innovative and creative activities have strong proclivities for intrinsic benefits, theoretically endowing such benefits high motivating “power.” Despite this, sales managers try to control salespeople through seduction and to

induce or pressure their people to do things they would not freely do with the use of incentives.

Churchill, Ford, and Walker (1979) suggest compensation is the most important lever management can pull to motivate salespeople. The expectancy theory of motivation (Vroom 1964), which is widely used in sales research on motivation to study both extrinsic and intrinsic factors (Tyagi, 1985)—asserts that motivation occurs as a product of expectancy (a behavior will result in the desired outcome) and instrumentality (a performance outcome will result in a valued reward). Compensation for salespeople is often a mix of salary, commissions, and bonuses—and while much of the early work on sales force compensation was theoretical, more recent research is more contiguous to this research as it relies on actual data collected from B2B firms (Chung, 2015). For example, Steenburgh (2008) used data from an office supply company to help debunk the long-standing theory that lump-sum bonuses do nothing more than motivate salespeople to play time games (trading off long-term business interests to achieve short-term quotas). Meanwhile, Ariely (2016) conducted experimental studies on the effectiveness of large bonuses and found that when the bonus became very large, performance decreased dramatically. In contrast, Misra and Nair (2011) used empirical evidence from the company's compensation database to recommend removing a cap on potential commissions earned by its salespeople, after which the Fortune 500 optical products firm realized increase annual sales of 8%, while revenues increased by 9% (Chung, 2015).

While much of the work on sales force compensation centers on discovering ways to leverage extrinsic factors, before Oliver's (1974) seminal work on intrinsic motivation, in sales research the topic of motivation itself was relegated to a subtitle status under the

headliner of sales force compensation (Pullins, 2001). Yet, at a very broad level, motivation is a component of human performance. Based on human performance studies in work, school, and physical domains, a recent meta-analysis of four decades of research demonstrate that intrinsic motivation has unique effects on performance above and beyond the effects attributable to extrinsic rewards (Cerasoli, Nicklin, & Ford, 2014). Yet, to underscore intrinsic rewards, sales managers need insights on the attitudinal and behavioral mechanisms through which intrinsic motivation produces results.

Sales Performance

Sales scholars have for a long with varying success studied factors that influence sales performance (Churchill et al., 1985; Evans et al., 2012; Verbeke et al., 2011). Generally, they have reached a consensus that selling related knowledge, degree of adaptation, role ambiguity, cognitive aptitude and work engagement are significant drivers of sales performance. However, context and buyer-seller interactions (static) were not considered when examining these determinants (Churchill et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). Extant sales scholarship has confirmed that frontline B2B salespeople's learning orientation (Sujan, Weitz, & Kumar, 1994), customer orientation (Franke & Park, 2006; Weitz, Sujan, & Sujan, 1986), adaptive selling (Weitz et al., 1986), hardworking (Brown & Peterson, 1994; Silver, Dwyer, & Alford, 2006), intrinsic motivation (Bodla & Naeem, 2014; Oliver & Anderson, 1994) and technical expertise (Verbeke et al., 2011) have a positive influence on sales performance. However, the research has failed to detect and account for new drivers for sales performance across complex selling contexts (Verbeke et al., 2011).

Moreover, the selling process is an inherently complex phenomenon because it ultimately depends on salespeople solving problems through personal exchanges (Leigh, DeCarlo, Allbright, & Lollar, 2014; Weitz et al., 1986). According to Weitz et al. (1986), “Salespeople, like other experts in problem-solving situations, operate in an extremely complex domain” (p. 178). However, this traditionally multifaceted endeavor has become even more challenging because of new developments in B2B markets in recent years. As a result of this shift, the old sales performance determinants do not work: a) they have focused on explaining short-term transactional performance and are no longer reflective of today’s selling realities; and b) they focus on the factors that influence customer reactions to selling (positive reaction to salesperson’s behaviors) but this is not enough as customers are better informed than ever, the problems are dynamic and shifting, and due to technologies salespeople need to add value in some other way than creating a transaction. Accordingly, the contemporary full-cycle B2B selling process places increasing emphasis on establishing collaborative relationships resulting in value co-creation where final solutions are developed jointly (Grönroos & Helle, 2010; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2016). This has decreased the significance and value of the traditional transaction-based selling process which involved brief interactions, and attempts to engage with mechanistic and one-size-fits-all solutions (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Delvecchio, Zemanek, McIntyre, & Claxton, 2004; Hunter & Perreault, 2007; Weitz & Bradford, 1999). Accordingly, this suggests salespeople are to be engaging in activities that are maximizing lifetime value (Bachrach, Ogilvie, Rapp, & Calamusa IV, 2016). Thus, the gap in performance metrics should be linked to the success of the customer and not the sales firm. Next, I will discuss in great detail design

attitude's learning framework and each of its attributes that lead to behaviors that drive sustained performance through integrating knowledge and solving difficult challenges.

Design Attitude

Given the importance of this theory or learning framework in this dissertation, I undertook an extensive literature review which informed and anchored my thinking (see Table 1). Herbert Simon's (1969) classic, *The Sciences of the Artificial*, argues that humans have a limited cognitive capacity for reasoning while seeking a solution (Boland & Collopy, 2004). He also classifies cognitive process of information search, (intelligence), design (alternative generation) and decision (choice) as the prime cognitive orientations to reach a solution. So far, the decision attitude focused on choice—not the design attitude focused on alternative generation—has dominated most management and selling practices. The perspective addresses business problems by offering means to make (rational) choices among alternatives and heuristics to reach a rational decision (such as purchase decisions). However, such analytic approaches share a weakness in that they assume that all alternative courses of action are already at hand (Boland & Collopy, 2004). In consequence, a decision attitude advances solutions that fail to see holistically latent customer needs by endorsing middle-of-the-road and short-term outcomes. I argue because decision attitude has a tendency to often rely on experience and is susceptible to biases like overconfidence this can lead to satisficing and sub-optimal outcomes especially in tailored selling situations. They can even lead to devastating consequences as they often fail to see unintended consequences of the proposed short-term solutions. Simon (1969) concludes that if we endeavor towards a design and search for alternative solutions with ultimate goals of ongoing improvement, this opens possibilities that would

not otherwise emerge (Boland & Collopy, 2004). Therefore, I posit that design attitude forms an inherent element of the sales function's cognitive orientation as it enables it to generate a wider range of solutions that can make sales more successful in the long-term (Wang & Netemeyer, 2004).

Design attitude is a multi-dimensional construct and outlines a cognitive framework in which salespeople bring certain expectations and cognitive orientations to customer related problem-solving (and seeking) by demonstrating passion to bringing those solutions to life (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Buchanan, 2008; Michlewski, 2015). Design attitude underlies a problem-solving process that remains "liquid and open" where basic assumptions are questioned, and new alternatives are celebrated in pursuit of developing a better solution for the customer (Boland & Collopy, 2004). Michlewski's (2008) study found that design attitude is the foundation of the individual's freedom to explore and pursue promising leads and ideas while staying true to the overall vision of the situation. Amatullo's (2013) study uncovered that design attitude involves techniques that promote a better understanding of how users feel affording salespeople the capacity to tap into latent needs. The research identifies five dimensions (see Figure 1) that underlie design attitude as a cognitive orientation: connecting multiple perspectives (systems thinking), creativity, passion to solve and serve, empathy and ambiguity tolerance. However, based on study three, I recognize that passion to solve and serve in combination with creativity and systems thinking better explain my qualitative research and drivers of B2B sales performance. Passion to solve and serve (affect) fuels motivational forces that drive a genuine desire to connect with customers on a deeply personal and emotional level through solving tough systemic issues with the ultimate goal

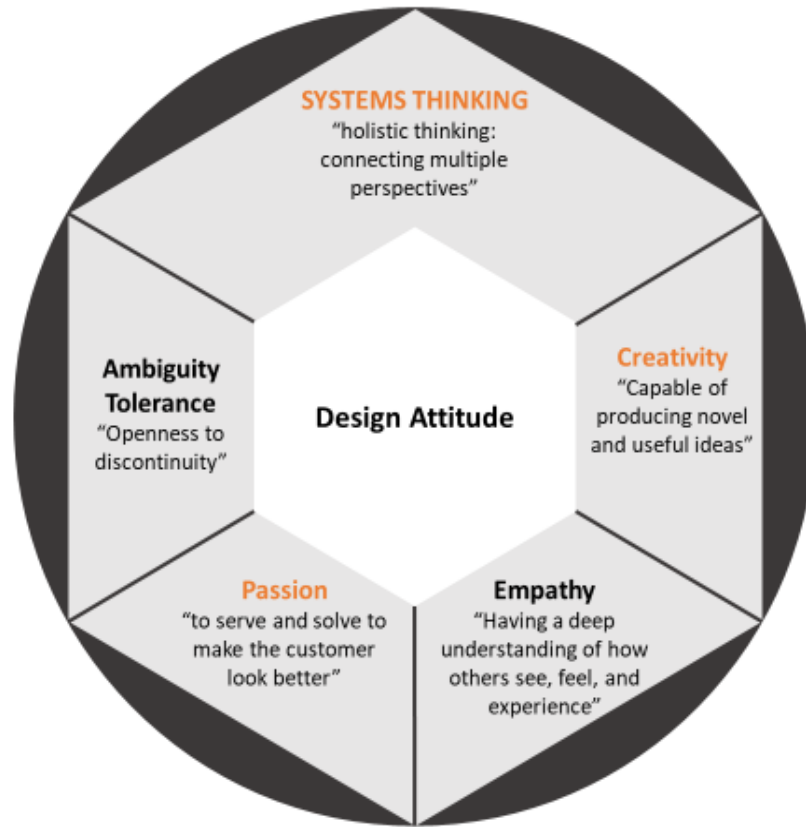
being to make the customer “look better”. Creativity encourages salespeople to identify novel approaches to meeting the needs of customers. Systems thinking involves seeing the situations holistically and dynamically bounded. This perspective opens new viewpoints and removes cognitive blinders for an innovative solution search. Moreover, these dimensions work in concert by engaging the salesperson in a “robust and recursive process of collecting and interpreting evidence, designing novel courses of action and testing multiple ideas” (Boland, Collopy, Lyytinen, & Yoo, 2008: 12). Since design attitude is about driving connectedness through human-centered approach, I will next discuss value co-creation.

Table 1. Design Attitude Conceptualization in the Literature (Amatullo, 2015)

DESIGN ATTITUDE	AUTHORS			
Construct conceptualization in the literature	Collopy, F., & Boland, R. J., Jr. (2004). <i>Managing as designing</i> . Redwood City, CA: Stanford University Press	Michlewski, K. (2008). Uncovering design attitude: Inside the culture of designers. <i>Organization Studies</i> , 29(3): 373-392.	Buchanan, R. (2008). <i>The design attitude</i> . (concept map adapted and revised from Michlewski, not published, see Appendix A)	Michlewski, K. (2015). <i>Design attitude</i> . Gower Publishing, Ltd.
Construct Definition	“expectations and orientations one brings to a design project”	Expands Boland & Collopy’s reference to design attitude as “means of creating products, services, and processes that are both profitable and humanly satisfying” and indirectly defines design attitude as the “character of a professional culture shaped by designers”	“abilities and capabilities” of the designer as cultural explorer	
Attributes and Items	Unique set of heuristics for decision-making that differ from management; emphasis on agency of the design approach: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liquid and open	Identifies 5 theoretical categories/dimensions that are in turn distinctively defined: 1. ‘consolidating multidimensional meanings [reconciling contradictory objectives;	1. willing to take risks without fully knowing the outcome [embrace discontinuity and open-endedness; embrace ambiguity and improvisation as	Makes slight revisions to categories for operationalization of the construct’s dimensions in the survey: 1. connecting multiple viewpoints

	<p>orientation to projects; invention of new alternatives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Questioning of assumptions • Resolve to contribute to human betterment 	<p>bridging approaches; swinging between synthesizing and analyzing]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. ‘creating, bringing to life’ [creative manifesting; rapid prototyping; working with tangibles] 3. ‘embracing discontinuity and open-endedness [allowing oneself not to be in control; linear process and detailed planning vs “let’s see how it goes”; freedom to think and behave differently] 4. ‘embracing personal and commercial empathy’ [concentrating on people; human-centeredness; transparency of communication] 5. ‘engaging poly-sensorial aesthetics [visual discourse; visual thinking; creative dialogue; aesthetics; beauty; taste; intuition; instinct; tacit knowledge] 	<p>essential to innovation; embrace change; brave and courageous in exploration; willing to avoid premature closure]</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. ability to empathize with the human side [concern for people; ability to communicate; feel empathy for customers as well as commercial interests; ability to balance ego and play in groups] 3. willing to visualize and explore all of the senses to seek solutions [appreciate the aesthetics of human experience; awareness of the visual can break creative deadlock and stimulate dialogue; possess a sense of beauty but recognize that beauty opens the door to function and service] 	<p>and perspectives</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. playfully bringing things to life 3. embracing uncertainty 4. engaging in deep empathy 5. using the power of the five senses
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Figure 1. Design Attitude Model



Value Co-Creation

The ability to co-create value in today's B2B selling hinges on the ability for the salesperson to gain access and an understanding of the customer's world in order to appreciate what truly matters to them (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Woodruff, 1997). In a service-centered model, dominating interactions around the knowledge and skills of customers have become the foundations of improved value creation—value is now created collaboratively within interactive practices between customers (Grönroos, 1994; Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2004, 2008). The customer is now a co-creator of the value and forms a vital link within the sales process that adds value—not anymore a passive recipient of value gained through the product being transacted. Consequently, the

B2B salesperson and the customer can co-create value through the application of approaches and techniques that enhance the joint search for better solutions—similar to those underlying design attitude. This results in jointly co-created solutions, which yield long-term returns towards jointly constructed relationship-based value propositions. One of the key drivers and consistent with design attitude is the salesperson's desire to identify with the customer as a solution provider. Therefore, I will discuss the summary of gaps in the literature and implications next and its applicability in the B2B selling world.

Summary of Literature Review (Gaps and Implications)

Much of the sales performance literature is rooted in short-term, transactional and mechanistic sales processes (Evans et al., 2012; Hartmann et al., 2018). Contrary to conventional wisdom that monetary rewards are the effective motivators of sales efforts and performance (Walker, Churchill, & Ford, 1977; Zoltners et al., 2012), non-financial factors are better at motivating the salesforce (Deci & Ryan, 2008). This gap is consistent with design attitude (and identity theory) in which salespeople were found to get extremely excited about seeking out challenges, to solve problems, learn and develop new skills and capabilities and improve the lives of their customers. Through adaptive selling and customer orientation, the sales research has made strides towards understanding better the needs of customers in this digital economy. However, both models are rooted in mechanistic and reductionist thinking. I posit these two models are rife with legacy thinking, do not solicit co-creation activities (Terho, Eggert, Haas, & Ulaga, 2015) and ultimately lead to suboptimal outcomes. A gap in how sales performance is being measured was identified. I argue sales performance metrics need to

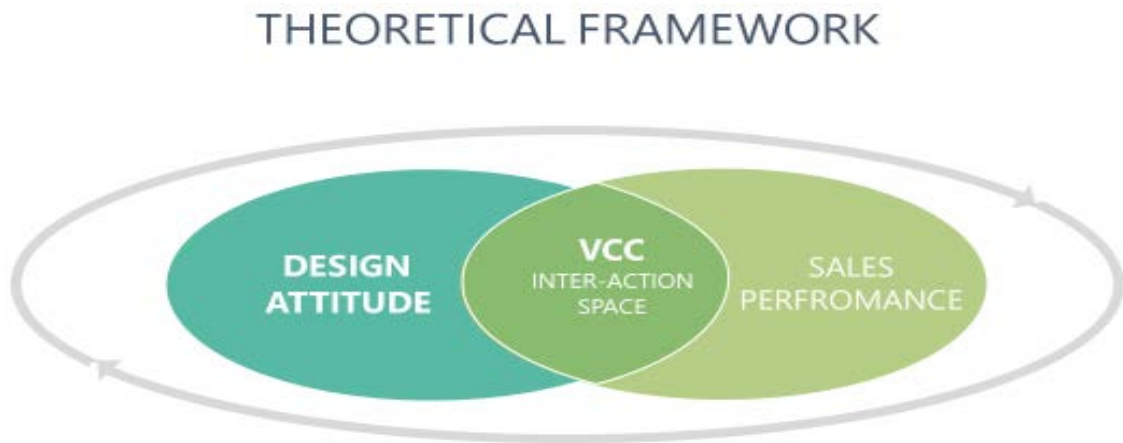
modernize to better reflect market conditions and be linked to customer success metrics. Technology advances (CRM platforms and other devices) and co-creation models encourage these activities. Couple these with design attitude principles in which the customer is invited into the process as a permanent partner to co-create value open-endedly makes how and what is measured critical to the success of this process. A gap was identified and referenced earlier about the lack of explanatory power of current sales models. I argue, based on the evidence across the three studies in this dissertation, design attitude (and related behaviors) can help improve the antecedents of sales performance in contemporary B2B sales.

Theoretical Framework

It is understood that through empirical research focused on individual needs and common goals that a paradigm shift could occur in the area of B2B sales performance. Personal work experience of over 23 years in this environment combined with emergent empirical evidence outlined in the next three chapters of this thesis demonstrates support through this theoretical framework (Figure 2) bi-directional, holistic, reciprocal or service orientated interaction (co-creation of value materially and symbolically through interaction space) between the buyer(s) and seller(s) in an effort towards improving mutually beneficial outcomes. While other theoretical lenses (role and identity theory) were utilized, design attitude and value co-creation will be used as the primary lenses from which this phenomenon will be explored. Specific to design attitude herein, I use it both conceptually and theoretically on which to view the B2B sales performance world. I find this consistent in which Kant emphasizes that concept formation and theory formation in science go hand-in-hand (Van de Ven, 2007). “The proper concepts are

needed to formulate a good theory, but we need a good theory to arrive at the proper concepts. The better the subject matters classified the better the theory. The better the theory the sharper the class of classification of the subject matter” (Kaplan, 1964). I posit my thinking to be harmonious with the former as conceptually, design attitude provides the ability to zoom in on the phenomenon and from a theoretical perspective to zoom out.

Figure 2. Theoretical Framework



Also, my thinking was based on the following quotation: “Tell me, and I will forget. Show me, and I may remember. Involve me, and I will understand” (Confucius, 450 B.C.). This framework provides the opportunity to create a successful, supportive, and collaborative relationship between the salesperson and the customer on which design attitude facilitates a holistic, cognitive and affective orientation to value creation activities. I hypothesize that while design attitude can improve sales performance independently, in combination with a value co-creation the understanding of B2B sales performance becomes much more transparent. I posit that our model points to the inadequacies of traditional sales models and processes based on static, mechanistic, linear, reductionist and firm-facing and dyadic metrics instead, I suggest these changes

went towards the need for a more robust theoretical foundation better explicates the processes in roles of B2B salespeople in today's marketplace. Design attitude can be defined as salespeople bring certain expectations, and cognitive orientations to customer related problem-solving (and seeking) by demonstrating passion to bringing solutions to life (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Buchanan, 2008; Michlewski, 2015). Design attitude is about the generation of novel alternative courses of action when interacting within the problem space to uncover the "what" and "why" it matters to the customer. Creativity and novelty are both critical to this activity as they help outline a careful methodological generation of alternatives to the customer's problems. Additionally, consistent with S-D logic (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Vargo & Lusch, 2016)—the customer is always the co-creator of value—I posit that the design attitude's creative cognitive orientation and related behaviors are congruent with S-D-logic and these specialized competencies (knowledge, skills, and behaviors) are operant resources and drive meaningful relational exchanges and co-creation. Moreover, design attitude involves solving problems but the problems that salespeople solve today are not analytical questions of optimality where the salesperson must use the appropriate analysis technique to solve a known problem. Rather, the shift from transactional to transformational selling requires the salesperson to deal with substantive, evolving and emerging questions with no definitive formulation and no final solutions (Buchanan, 1992; Checkland, 1981). Like this, design attitude is about keeping the problem space "liquid and open" and not closing it too early (Boland & Collopy, 2004: 9).

The theoretical underpinnings reviewed and discussed herein were to emphasize the complexity and dynamic nature of today's sales process on which sales performance

metrics should be based on customer success metrics. While situational, salespeople are equipped—through design attitude—with creative cognitive and affective sales behaviors to drive value co-creation within the customer’s problem space with the ultimate goal being to make the world better place. As highlighted earlier, there is a clear gap in the empirical literature that would be of value to be addressed by using the theoretical framework outlined in Figure 2 as no one has yet studied to this extent. While I understand value co-creation has been gained momentum in the academic literature since 2004 (Vargo & Lusch, 2004) at the organization level, the research is relatively silent on value co-creation at the B2B salesperson level of analysis. Additionally, this theory with my primary lens of design attitude offers a great deal of insight on how to drive sales performance in today’s tumultuous selling ecosystem. This work is an attempt to fill this shortcoming with a holistic approach that borrows work from the managerial, design, and marketing worlds in a support framework for discovering the role of design attitude in influencing B2B sales performance.

Specific Aims and Research Questions

The overall goal of this research is to bridge gaps in the literature through a series of three empirical studies that focus on understanding better the drivers of B2B sales performance in contemporary selling and the role design attitude and related behaviors within this context. Figure 4 shows the framework used to create the research design in order to integrate the relevant aspects to achieve this aim. Empirical data, presented in Chapters 2–4, provide a blueprint on how to assemble these aspects properly. It is from this framework that I can link the studies together that comprise this dissertation. The series of research goals and questions asked are as follows: Qualitative phase of the study

(Study 1): What is the experience of motivating B2B salespeople in contemporary and drastically changing markets?

GOAL 1: With a constructivist grounded theory approach, uncover a new mental model for understanding motivation in the context of solving complex problems in B2B sales.

GOAL 2: Uncover constructs to validate the qualitative findings.

Quantitative phase of the study (Study 2): What knowledge-based factors and creative behaviors influence B2B salesperson's ability to promote internal knowledge brokering and thereby sales performance?

GOAL 1: Conduct first empirical test of theorized individual level antecedents of design attitude, while linking to established sales performance metrics.

GOAL 2: Provide evidence that these knowledge-based factors and creative behaviors influence sales performance.

GOAL 3: Provide evidence from which the next study can build upon.

Quantitative phase continued (Study 3): How does design attitude, as mediated by value co-creation and technology use influence B2B sales performance?

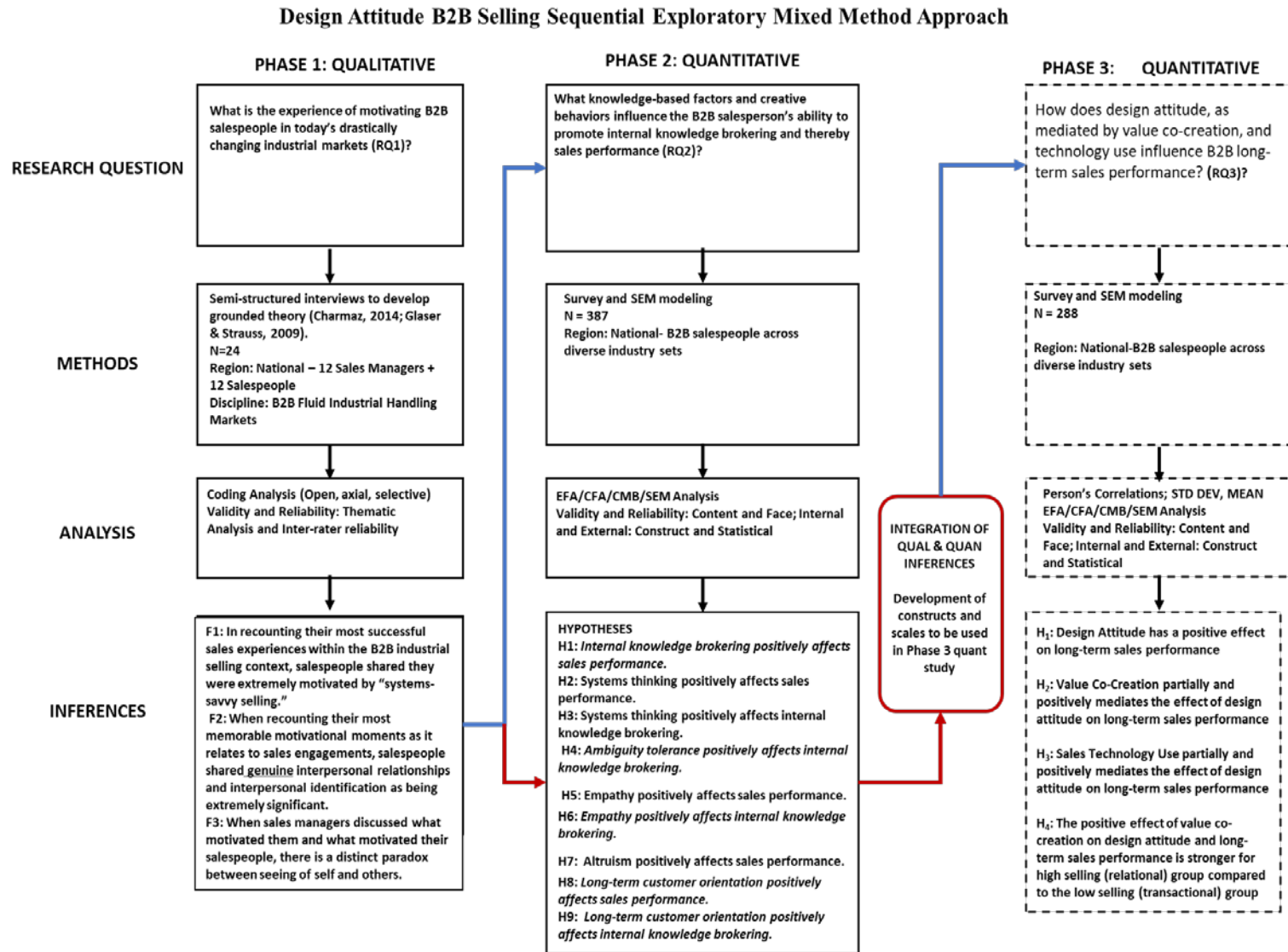
GOAL 1: Perform the first empirical test in sales of the direct relationship between design attitude and long-term sales performance.

GOAL 2: Test the mediating effect of value co-creation and sales technology use in this relationship.

GOAL 3: Provide a model with significant explanatory powers.

It is these research questions and goals arranged in this order that attempts to bridge the literature gaps described earlier as well as to extend a theoretical framework for this phenomenon. Details of the studies mixed methodology and design are below and summarized in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Design Attitude B2B Selling Sequential Exploratory Mixed Method Approach



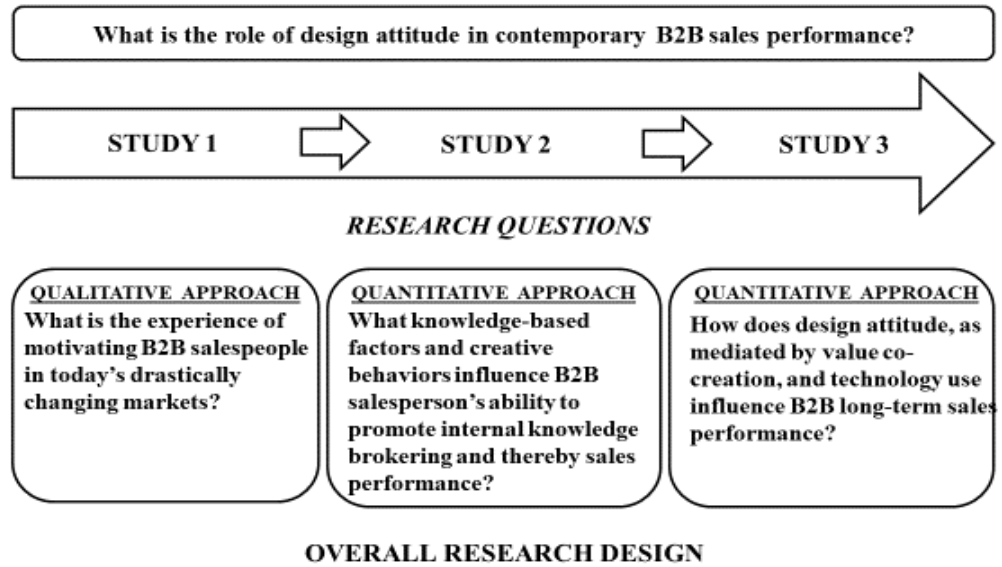
Research Design and Methodology

A research design is the arrangement of the conditions for the collection and analysis of data in a manner that reveals a strategy of inquiry that is relevant to the research purpose. This dissertation overall research design employs a sequential mixed methods (Creswell, 2009; Teddie & Tashakkori, 2009) exploratory approach carried over three interconnected phases to discover the factors that influence B2B sales performance. Given the gaps identified in the literature, and the inadequacy of previous sales scholarship to identify and understand the multidimensional phenomenon of sales performance drivers, the mixed method approach is deemed appropriate to attempt to answer the research questions. The perspectives and findings of each empirical study build upon one another, informing the subsequent phase of research design. Specifically, this research is a combination of mixed method designs begins with triangulation seeks the convergence of the results from different methods (Denzin, 1978). Triangulation is the vehicle in which the research moves from phase 1 (qualitative) to phase 2 (quantitative) and is what makes all three studies together.

Phase 1 of investigation (Study 1) begins with a constructivist qualitative grounded theory approach to examine the phenomenon on what motivates contemporary B2B salespeople. This method is carried out through semi-structured interviews of 24 individuals (12 sales managers and 12 salespeople) working with the industrial fluid handling market. I approached this initial investigation in “discovery” mode without assuming predisposed factors that influence motivation. This phase of inquiry produces constructs and theory that are used throughout this dissertation.

Next, a quantitative phase (Studies 3 & 4), informed by my findings in phase 1 (Chapter 2), and particularly by the central concerns to demonstrate that using unique methods, practices, and approaches, B2B sales performance could be improved. A series of hypotheses were developed that would advance my theoretical understanding of predictors of sales performance and to test, confirm, clarify and generalize the qualitative findings to a broader context as previously identified as a literature gap, I identified design attitude construct and related behaviors as a plausible conceptualization to move this phase forward. The quantitative studies investigated the role of design attitude in predicting B2B sales performance. To assess inter-relationship factors, the surveys instrument was rigorously developed and deployed nationally. Findings from the qualitative research were triangulated (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007), through the meta-inference to structure hypotheses and the survey. The surveys were pretested and piloted to a 24 panel of professional B2B salespeople. Results were triangulated after the completion of each study to further refine hypotheses for the next study and interpret the generalizability of the findings. The data confirmed, elucidated and substantiated assumptions and inferences while complementing and extending the qualitative exploratory findings in a larger population (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). The mixed method approach increases the validity and reliability (Silverman, 2011) of the data collected and interpreted for this dissertation. This rigorous empirical methodology is divided into two phases and three studies for this dissertation is depicted in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Overall Research Design



To begin my examination of uncovering the drivers of B2B sales performance, I will employ an exploratory constructivist qualitative study of industrial fluid handling B2B salespeople and sales managers. Interviews probing lived-experiences of sales managers and salespeople are expected to provide insight into experiences that drives motivating behaviors and consequently sales performance.

CHAPTER 2: SYSTEMS-SAVVY SELLING: A GROUNDED THEORY APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING WHAT MOTIVATES CONTEMPORARY INDUSTRIAL SALESPEOPLE

For decades of sales scholars have developed a compelling literature on motivating salespeople in business markets (Anderson & Oliver, 1987; Chowdhury, 1993; Walker et al., 1977). The generally accepted motivating factors that influence success for business-to-business (B2B) salespeople are extrinsic factors such as pay, bonuses and sales contests (Avlonitis & Panagopoulos, 2010; Franke & Park, 2006; Walker et al., 1977). However, due to changing economic conditions, markets, and ever-changing relational contexts (Arlin, Bauer, & Palmatier, 2017; Bradford et al., 2010; Jones et al., 2005), factors related to motivating B2B sales forces remain important and warrant continued investigation. U.S. companies spend more than \$800 billion each year on B2B sales force compensation, representing the single largest marketing expense (Steenburgh & Ahearne, 2011). As sales environments become increasingly complex (Jones et al., 2005), the task for sales managers to motivate salespeople becomes increasingly more challenging (Zoltners et al., 2012). Moreover, the role of the sales force and salespeople in B2B firms is changing dramatically (Bradford et al., 2010). Gone are the days when “feet on the street” and promised incentives will win the day (McGoldrick, 2014). Customers are better informed than ever and expect salespeople to be consultants, which is consistent with recent research findings that incentives distract from the creative problem-solving required for such consultative sales roles (Zoltners et al., 2012). While salespeople face an array of obstacles in meeting customer and organization needs and as the balance of influence shifts in buyer-seller relationships, it is imperative to reassess how motivation affects sales performance (Evans et al., 2012; McGoldrick, 2014). A

recent review by Zoltners and colleagues on sales force drivers reveals U.S. spending on sales force incentives—traditionally utilized as the primary sales motivator—exceeded \$200 billion in 2010 (Zoltners et al., 2012). Certainty concerning how best to use sales force drivers remains elusive, with nearly 80% of U.S. companies making significant changes to their sales force programs every two years or less (Zoltners et al., 2012). Given these economics and changes in roles and contexts, as Steenburgh and Ahearne (2011) assert, many sales managers are often looking to find more creative ways to motivate their sales force.

Yet, countless researchers and sales managers propose that monetary rewards and goal setting are primary motivators of sales efforts—and often explicitly rule out the consideration of motivation as an innate characteristic (Churchill, Ford, & Walker, 1976). Perhaps not surprisingly, many U.S. corporations employ programs to motivate employees by linking compensation to one or more aspects of performance (Kohn, 1993). Furthermore, but “more striking is the rarely examined belief that people will do a better job if they have been promised an incentive” (Kohn, 1993: 2). Also, goal setting paradigms are often overused (Ordóñez, Schweitzer, Galinsky, & Bazerman, 2009). Meanwhile, some companies have abandoned such sales incentives favoring salary compensation plans while citing the detrimental effects of such short-term economic incentives on the long-term relationship building organizational goals (Bradford et al., 2010). In the sales literature, such salary compensation plans accompany the ongoing restructuring of sales forces to center on delivering value to customers, dubbed a customer business development organization (Hunter, 2014). Thus, both sales scholarship and sales practices are ubiquitous on the topic of contemporary sales motivation.

The failure of B2B sales managers to motivate and manage a sales force effectively suggests that sales operations are suboptimal (Zoltners et al., 2012). Thus, the objective of this qualitative study is to understand, what can we learn from contemporary sales managers on motivating B2B salespeople to perform in today's drastically changing industrial markets? This study develops grounded theory about this phenomenon through semi-structured interviews with sales managers and salespeople. Resulting insights are driven by analyses of the lived experiences of the respondents. By probing into the "real worlds" of industrial sales managers and salespeople, this research uncovers the behaviors and practices that best create and hinder the conditions through which motivation occurs.

Literature Review

This section focuses on relevant literature regarding factors affecting the sales experience in contemporary selling environments, in general, and extant literature linking concepts to the idea of the dynamics impacting the efficacy of sales leaders to motivate their salespeople. Much has been written in these areas, and therefore summarization of key areas where gaps remain are important for establishing the background and need for the current study.

Sales Environment

Sales literature suggests there is a contextual progression in salespeople's behaviors, attitudes, and skill sets that result from dynamism and complexity in the marketplace. Since the 1980s, organizations have trained their salespeople to align a proposed solution to a recognized customer need and demonstrate its advantages over the competition's solutions (Adamson, Dixon, & Toman, 2012). However, Rackham and De

Vincentis (1999) argue, “generations of salespeople were trained to recite product advantages, to close hard and often, and to batter customers into submission through pressure and persistence” (p. 18). The typical salesperson model was “two parts personality and one part product knowledge” (Fogel, Hoffmeister, Rocco, & Strunk, 2012). The salesperson’s job was to get their foot in the door and sell the products’ features and benefits (Fogel et al., 2012). It is in the context of these tactics that salespeople often earned less than desired reputations with their customers and the general public.

From a role theory perspective (Behrman & Perreault, 1984; Kahn, Wolfe, & Quinn, 1964; Katz & Kahn, 1966), the sales role is ever-changing, and B2B sales managers often must function in roles as both salespeople and sales managers. Additionally, contemporary salespeople have become knowledge brokers (Sheth & Sobel, 2002) and use a portfolio of technology tools to operate remotely, often performing their roles outside the direct observation of their sales managers (Hunter & Perreault, 2007). Verbeke et al. (2011) assert that, as we evolve into a “knowledge-intensive and science-based economy,” salespeople will behave as “knowledge brokers” who transfer knowledge to the customer and back into their own organizations. According to Sheth and Sharma (2008), these complex challenges faced by sales leaders drive a professional focus on acquiring and developing new skills and competencies. Yet, the new knowledge required is not simply an understanding of the firm’s products.

Extant research reveals an emerging dichotomy between experts on the future direction of sales environments. McNamara, Vaaler, and Devers (2003) posit that today’s selling environment is much the “same as it ever was” and consequently, not any more

challenging than in previous times. On the other hand, Ingram, LaForge, and Leigh (2002) propose that the “sales function is in the midst of a renaissance—a genuine rebirth and revival” (p. 549). Unambiguously, Adamson, Dixon, and Toman (2013) posit that current selling environments have shifted from solution-based to insight-based. In contemporary selling, customers are newly empowered (Fogel et al., 2012). In fact, many targeted “companies are readily defining solutions for themselves” (Adamson et al., 2012: 4). This is even true in the context of healthcare consumerism, which is in stark contrast to the past. The customers are now more often making the rules for the exchange of goods and services.

Several scholars observe that business environments are more competitive and turbulent as a result of rapid changes on a global scale (Jones et al., 2005; LaForge, Ingram, & Cravens, 2009; Rackham & De Vincentis, 1999). According to Ingram (2004), the pluralistic approach of the bundling of products and services, addition of technology, rapid product life cycles, and more adaptations to meet specific customer requirements have all impacted the complexity of product offerings-market outcomes. Increasing customer expectations, a conceptual shift from tangible goods to services, and the impact of technology (especially digital technology) on business research and practice all present new challenges to the sales managers and, specifically, to the buyer-seller relationship (Hunter & Perreault, 2006; Hunter & Perreault, 2007; LaForge et al., 2009). Finally, LaForge et al. (2009) suggest, “excess capacities” are meaningfully transforming opportunities and impacting competitive landscapes.

The sales literature is replete with studies espousing the importance of creating boundless and superior customer value in the complex sales environment. The evolution

of buyer-seller relationships as a form of superior customer value is imminent and driven by increasingly complex and hyper-competitive, networked markets (Achrol & Kotler, 1999; Cravens, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). Doney and Cannon (1997) assert that the salesperson's primary goal is to establish trust with customers and demonstrate expertise in products and services to help attain desired business outcomes. Moreover, Blocker et al. (2012) state that as the selling environment becomes more complex, salespeople must participate in increased relational or transformational activities rather than transactional activities with their customers in order to fulfill both "expressed and latent needs." Vargo and Lusch (2004) believe that value is always co-created which suggests customer value is "inherently interactional" (Blocker et al., 2012) and value is not derived solely from a product, service, or offer itself. The shift from transactional to relational selling is indeed both recent and pervasive (Arlin et al., 2017).

Thus, this new sales context contributes to an extant need to address how the salesperson and customer can better co-create value through the effective application of creative approaches and techniques. These changes are so extensive, sales scholars need to revisit prior research findings on motivation and build new theory and empirical generalizations from this new context.

This study finds and proposes using an approach akin to that applied in design thinking. Such a conceptualization allows bundling resources into co-created solutions, which should yield returns to jointly constructed relationship-based, value propositions. Moreover, such a process is fast becoming a central resource in creating sustainable competitive advantage in the networked economy. These changes in the sales

environment drive new challenges for sales management which warrant scholarly attention.

Sales Management

The sales management literature on motivation provides useful insights on how to better frame these concerns. In particular, two theoretical frameworks provide a foundation for this research: agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1985, 1989) and Ouchi's (1979) study on organizational theory.

Agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1985, 1989) emphasizes the importance of alignment of goals between principals (companies) and agents (salespeople). Zallocco, Bolman, and Mallin (2009) explain that the central tenet of agency theory is that both actors (principles and agents) have divergent goals and frequently do not share the same information. Said differently, goal incongruence leads to a need for management to design models that meet the interests of both parties and to reduce uncertainty within the sales organization.

The second paradigm prevalent in sales management literature is Ouchi's (1979) organizational theory. The crux of this theory centers on the problem of obtaining cooperation from a group of individuals (e.g., sales force) who share partially congruent objectives (Zallocco et al., 2009). When the sales force produces a single output (sales), it is often difficult to uncover a method that would produce an equitable distribution of rewards at the individual level (Zallocco et al., 2009). Experiencing this, salespeople will adjust their future efforts, and inevitably the entire sales team will be negatively impacted (Zallocco et al., 2009). To combat the problem of measuring and evaluating sales force performance, Ouchi (1979) posits equality and efficiency are pursued when sales performance evaluation is based on market conditions of the selling environment (i.e.,

fair price, required service levels, acceptable quality, and so forth). As such, salesperson performance may be impacted by external organizational factors such as gaining and utilizing customer feedback, obtaining competitor knowledge and staying abreast of technological developments (Zallocco et al., 2009).

The literature posits sales managers and customers are challenged with increasingly complex work ecosystems (Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). Jones et al. (2005) argue it “also seems likely that the same types of change that managers confront today will present challenges for sales managers 20 and more years from now” (p. 105). Jones et al. (2005) attribute the complexity to interdependent changes in consumer buying habits and expectations. Additionally, Ingram (2004) and Tuli, Kohli, and Bharadwaj (2007) postulate that complexity is a result of customers demanding superior value at both the product and service levels, and that decision-makers are now better informed. Cravens, Le Meunier-FitzHugh, and Piercy (2011) do not see complexity as being an isolated phenomenon and note that increasing demands and expectations on salespeople are common across industries.

There is also a growing awareness among scholars that salespeople face escalating complexity inside their firms (Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). Dyer and Singh (1998) and Eisenhardt (2001) suggest internal complexity is the result of the firm’s efforts to adapt to, and in some cases, control, shifts in the external environment. Salespeople are “boundary spanners,” and their sales performance is determined by their ability to meet both internal and external customer needs (Stan, Evans, Arnold, & McAmis, 2012). Anderson (1996) states, “evolutionary and revolutionary forces are relentlessly heading our way that will irrevocably change the way that salespeople and

sales managers understand, prepare for, and accomplish their jobs” (p. 17). Anderson (1996) asserts salespeople and sales managers that learn to adapt will succeed in these tumultuous times. This work expounds that this-dynamism is a result of behavioral, technological, and managerial forces.

The firm’s sustainability is predicated on management’s ability to adapt to the new sales environment. The new dynamic business environment in which sales managers operate is complex, and they must adapt or be at risk of becoming obsolete (Chonko, Jones, Roberts, & Dubinsky, 2002). Similarly, Jones, Chonko, and Roberts (2004) further emphasize failure to respond to the changing environment will lead to the obsolescence of the sales force. Consequently, creating and sustaining value by developing and cultivating robust customer relationships is vital to a firm’s performance and longevity (Wang, Dou, & Zhou, 2012).

Several streams of academic literature propose the utility of management control systems and their ability to drive specific behaviors (Cravens, Ingram, LaForge, & Young, 1993; Miao & Evans, 2013). Thus, companies must create a framework that links “environmental context, control types, and consequences” that impact desired outcomes (Jaworski, 1988: 36). Wang and his colleagues (2012), stemming from the seminal works of both Anderson and Oliver (1987) and Jaworski (1988), suggest interplay of formal controls directly impacts salespeople’s customer-oriented behavior and subsequent organizational outcomes. Their framework is based on “behavior-and-outcome-based evaluation systems, in which behavior and outcome represent the two extremes of the same continuum, and a firm may choose an optimal emphasis on behavior and outcome” (Wang et al., 2012: 225). Ouchi (1979) suggests that organizations that do not harmonize

controls within the proper context are likely to fail. Wang et al. (2012) propose that management has the ability to design and implement a combination of mechanisms to motivate or demotivate salespeople's behaviors through understanding the complexity and interaction of various control elements.

Motivation

While a recent 40-year meta-analysis on motivation confirms that both intrinsic and extrinsic incentives jointly predict performance (Cerasoli et al., 2014), intrinsic motivation remains an under-researched topic in sales and a most important aspect in stimulating an individual's pursuit of a greater sense of self. Csikszentmihalyi (1975, 1997) uncovered intrinsic motivation—doing an activity because they find it interesting and derive natural satisfaction from it—to be rooted in creative behavior that is often characterized by a “flow state” where a person's skills are fully engaged in overcoming a challenge that is just about manageable, so it functions as an attractor for learning and developing new skills to tackle even more challenging problems. Specifically, “flow” is defined as a state in which a person is in a temporary psychological merger with the activity, which produces positive feelings such as enjoyment and enthusiasm (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). Ryan and Deci (2000) assert, “perhaps no single phenomenon reflects the positive potential of human nature as much as intrinsic motivation, the inherent tendency to seek out novelty challenges, to extend and exercise one's capacities, to explore, and to learn” (p. 70). A seminal research study identified intrinsic motivation to most closely fit with creativity (Amabile, Conti, Coon, Lazenby, & Herron, 1996). Conversely, Doyle and Shapiro's (1980) research argues extrinsic motivation—an instrumentality between activity and some tangible reward so that the activity is not the

source of motivation, but rather from some extrinsic consequence to which the activity leads (Gagné & Deci, 2005). It is most often rewards (e.g., incentives, commission, salary) and recognition that motivates the salesperson to increase the effort expended. Tyagi (1982) found organizational climate variables (e.g., leadership consideration, organizational identification, relationship building) strongly influence intrinsic motivation.

Moreover, Deci and Flaste's (1995a) experiments revealed that people feel intrinsically motivated when they perceive themselves as competent and autonomous; "they need to feel they are effective and self-determining" (p. 87). Eden (1975) identified a negative link between the perception of extrinsic incentives and the amount of intrinsic motivation among kibbutz workers. While Deckop and Cirka (2000) found merit-pay programs in a non-profit organization resulted in diminished feelings of autonomy and intrinsic motivation. Additionally, Shirom et al. (1999) found pay-for-performance plans led to decreased well-being levels among blue-collar workers, especially for those who felt their duties to be uninteresting. Sauermann and Cohen's (2008) research on the link between firm innovation and employee motivation reveals that individuals engaged in innovative and creative activities have strong proclivities for intrinsic benefits, theoretically endowing such benefits with a highly motivating "power." Historically, nothing has been more powerful toward motivating sales forces than incentive-based models.

Incentives

The literature on incentives is vast, diverse, and has grown steadily since the 1960s. The motivation literature emphasizes two schools of thought when it comes to on

incentive efficacy. The first idea is from a study by Churchill et al. (1979) which suggests compensation is the most important lever management can pull to motivate salespeople. While Farley (1964) aligns that compensation plans are motivational tools, his seminal work reveals the efficacy of compensation plans are based on paying a fixed percentage of gross margin on each item in a salesperson's product line. Farley (1964) argues that an optimal compensation model will motivate a salesperson to maximize her commissions and to allocate time among products while concurrently maximizing her profit contributions to the firm. Consistent with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory of motivation and several other studies on salesperson motivation, Lawler (1973) also sees the utility of incentives, but asserts contingency pay systems (e.g., bonuses) can be effective only if salespeople have aligned expectancy (behavior will result in the desired outcome) and instrumentality (performance outcome will result in a valued reward). Moreover, Berger and Jaffe (1991) found that "optimal commission rates depend upon the specific degree of risk aversion of the salesmen and the relative uncertainty of the sales response density from one product to another" (p. 323). Finally, Avlonitis and Panagopoulos (2007) found the greater the total remuneration the salesperson receives, "the higher the levels of organizational commitment, satisfaction with company policy/support, pay promotion, and customers; and the lower the role conflict and turnover intentions" (p. 772).

The second idea is manifested with Deming (1986a) who argues "employee incentives are not good motivators." Ariely (2016) conducted a study on the effectiveness of large bonuses and found that when the bonus became very large, performance decreased dramatically. Kohn (1993) further offers numerous studies conducted in

classrooms, laboratories, workplaces and other settings demonstrating rewards typically undermine the commitment to improved outcomes. Additionally, Herzberg (1966) posits just because too little money can displease and demotivate does not mean additional money will lead to enduring commitment and increased motivation. Collectively, social science research suggests incentives can motivate the desired results of simple tasks with clear objectives; yet once the work requires creative and conceptual skills, as with most modern B2B sales jobs, incentives can actually hinder performance (Zoltners et al., 2012). What's more, Glucksberg (1962) described that unless the answer was obvious, incentives diminish problem-solving capabilities. Finally, in other research on motivation, Condry (1977) suggests task-extrinsic incentives inhibit exploration. Thus, it seems that long-standing models of economics in sales activity do not provide comprehensive explanatory power for factors motivating salespeople. Integration of this literature indicates that salespeople seek the intrinsic rewards associated with solving customer problems as often as they seek to maximize their own personal rewards and gains. Correspondingly, there is tremendous value in understanding more about the ongoing evolution of motivating modern sales forces.

Methodology

Research Design

This style of research centers on generating extensive inputs from respondents in a manner that minimizes researcher bias and demand artifacts thereby allowing findings to emerge from insights generated from the respondents' shared experiences. Thus, the design is particularly suitable for developing detailed insights based on observations from a smaller set of respondents than would be required for statistical modeling approaches in

sales research such as those that rely on survey methods and structural equation modeling. To capture the lived experiences of sales managers and salespeople as they grapple with dynamic internal and external forces, the study employs a modified grounded theory approach (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). To better capture the aforementioned nature and complexity of sales roles and the emergent relational selling context, the approach differs from the original grounded theory methodology proposed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). Specifically, the interviews were recorded, the authors preliminarily reviewed the sales and motivation literature to identify potential frameworks and opportunities for contributions, and then used open plus axial coding to create emergent themes to comprise the findings reported herein. Additionally, to gather this rich inductive qualitative data, a semi-structured interview methodology centered on the experience of motivating B2B salespeople in today's industrial selling environment was chosen to develop grounded theory following established protocols (see Charmaz, 2014).

To leverage the capacity of this grounded theory approach, open-ended questions were designed and used to elicit detailed narratives (lived experiences) related to the research question (Charmaz, 2014). Consistent with grounded theory, the objective was to generate prolific material germane to this research for subsequent coding and analyses. Constant comparative analysis was used to produce theory concurrent with the data collection process, including the development of abstract categories and associated properties (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Sample

The sample consists of in-depth interviews of 24 sales professionals working within the industrial fluid handling market. Subjects included 12 sales managers and 12 salespeople from the industrial market sector yielding 24 complete and usable transcripts. These distributors support the sales and after sales functions of various manufacturers of fluid handling equipment. The intent was to keep the sample homogeneous. Specifically, by focusing on a single industry (industrial fluid handling) and a particular position in the value chain (distributor), the study controls extemporaneous factors that could impact or shape motivational factors. The interview participants were drawn from the first author's professional network and located throughout the continental United States. The sales managers were not chosen by title but rather conditioned on a need for those who had direct supervision/responsibility for outside salespeople. Salespeople were chosen strictly by two conditions: position (outside sales to business customers) and market responsibility (industrial fluid handling). No knowledge of salesperson performance was understood prior to the interviews. All salespeople and sales managers in the sample are males, and males do represent the overwhelming majority of those employed within this industry. The average tenure for sales managers is 28.3 years in sales, and all but one (91.6%) has a bachelor degree while only one had an MBA. As for the salespeople, their average selling experience is 24.6 years with 9 out of 12 (75%) holding bachelor's degrees. In addition, company size varied from 15 to 200 employees with a mean of approximately 30 employees.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred over a six-month period. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to surface rich narrative of lived experiences. See Table 1 for the approved interview questions. Each interview lasted approximately 60 minutes and was guided by an Institutional Review Board approved protocol with interview questions. These interviews yielded on average 22 number of pages per transcript. Protocol pretesting was utilized to develop process familiarity and content to understand potential clarifications or sensitivities. To validate the effectiveness of the interview protocol to elicit the desired narrative, a sample interview was conducted as a pilot for subsequent interviews.

Interviews were conducted face-to-face (80%) except in cases where the interviewee requested use of telephones. The interviews were conducted in environments chosen by the participant. Phone interviews provided similarly rich data to face-to-face interviews. This was evidenced by the lived experiences of the interviewees—whether the interviews were conducted by phone or face-to-face—were indistinguishable content-wise during the coding process. With the permission of the participants, all interviews were recorded with a digital recording device. Each participant was advised of the recording and informed of confidentiality protections. Participants were provided with an informed consent document to increase clarity and purpose of the research study (which, by design, avoids predevelopment of hypotheses) and the measures that would be taken to ensure confidentiality of any information shared. Upon completion of each interview, the recording was saved on a secure, password-protected, personal computer, assigned a file name, and secured. The recordings were provided to a highly reputable, professional transcription service for verbatim transcription. All printed copies of transcriptions were

stored in a secured location. Interview recordings were destroyed after two years and after all, data was de-identified in NVivo 10 coding software. Participants were not remunerated for participation.

Data Analysis

Collection and data analysis started with the first interview and continued throughout the data collection period and using an extensive, multiple processes coding procedure. Data analysis was iterative, ongoing and inductive. Line by line coding was initially employed to surface the ideas and concepts that might otherwise be undetected (Charmaz, 2014). Over 2,400 words and phrases were captured in the open coding process with openness to exploring whatever theoretical possibilities emerge and are discernable from the data (Charmaz, 2014). Initial coding was done with “*gerunds*, as it is a *heuristic* device to bring the researcher into the data to interact with them, and study each fragment with them” (Charmaz, 2014: 121). This information was used to inform the process for subsequent interviews. Throughout the process, researchers remained open to emergent ideas, codes, and themes from the data, repeatedly iterating between the data and the relevant literature to ensure a clear understanding of the concepts. After 22 interviews within this homogeneous sales sample, theoretical saturation appeared imminent. Two additional interviews which had already been scheduled were conducted—and confirmed that theoretical saturation had been achieved.

Validation of codes was facilitated by participating in a demanding hermeneutic process by which open codes were compared and contrasted, aggregating data back together into a coherent whole (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Axial coding was used to relate categories or groups to subcategories or subgroups, specifying the properties and

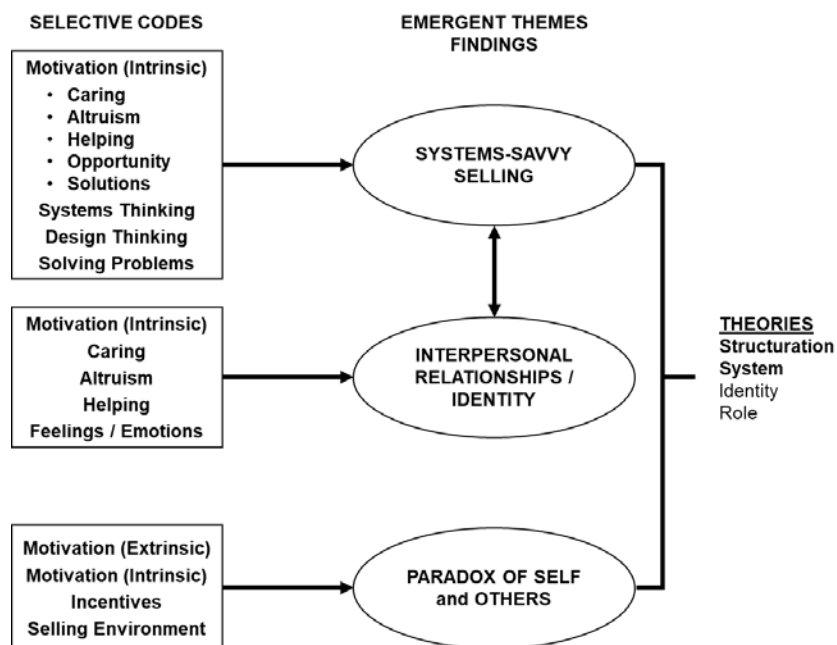
dimensions permitting the synthesis and reconfiguration of the data in emerging ways (Charmaz, 2014).

A second round of the hermeneutic process was used to compare, contrast, categorize and recategorize these codes to cultivate a better understanding of the data. Transcripts were listened to and re-read to augment a command of the data. Codes were further reduced to the selective codes and finally, the emerging themes that follow.

Findings

The interviews generated much data and information resulting in 516 pages of printed transcripts and over 1,304 minutes of recorded interviews. Overall, the sampling and coding process generated 2,456 coded words and phrases. However, as coding of the interviews continued in the constant comparison method, a number of selective codes or higher order codes began to emerge. See Figure 1 for the six most prominent selective codes. One of these selective codes, Feelings / Emotions had at least six sub-categories.

Figure 4. Emergent Selective Codes and Themes



During the coding process, the following quotation from Senge, 2006 appeared emergent, reflective, and resonate across the sample:

Once there was this rug merchant who saw that his most beautiful carpet had a large bump in its center. He stepped on the bump to flatten it out—and it succeeded. But the bump appeared in a new spot not far away. He jumped on the bump again, and it disappeared for a moment until it emerged once more in a new place. Again and again, he jumped, scuffling and mangling the rug in his frustration; until finally he lifted one corner of the carpet, and an angry snake slithered out. (Senge, 2006: 57)

Solutions that merely shift the problem from one area of the system to another often go unnoticed because, unlike the rug merchant, those who “solved” the initial problem are different from those who face the new one (Senge, 2006). This research focused on the experience of sales managers in motivating industrial, B2B salespeople in today’s dynamic marketplace and the findings are both fascinating and practical. The following section articulates how the findings or thematic codes emerged from the selective coding process.

Finding 1: Systems-Savvy Selling

In recounting their most successful sales experiences within the B2B industrial selling context, salespeople experienced shared motivation when practicing “systems-savvy selling,” a term coined and developed herein.

Throughout the interviews, salespeople discussed the need for a strong emphasis on a less mechanistic and more holistic process—an application of systems thinking. Thinking beyond the idea of a one-time interaction or relationship was a noteworthy and defining characteristic of this type of non-linear thinking which occurred between these “systems-savvy” salespeople and their customers. There were many cases where salespeople provided examples of understanding the organization as a system and

envisioning their buyer (customer) as part of that larger system. Unknowingly, they were applying what academic and practitioner literature refer to as systems thinking to not only solve tough problems (problems no one had been able to solve) but also to propose solutions that made their buyer (customer) “look better.” Additionally, the interconnection and interdependence of the findings lend well to an established systems thinking framework. Namely, systems thinking fits with such contexts that employ a complex adaptive system which includes feedback loops intricately built into a co-creation, solution development process. Because the system thinking perspective can provide a better understating of motivational behavior by holistically considering the relationship between structure and behavior, one can better appreciate how key motivational levers work within this context.

In sum, this type of thinking was pervasive and evidenced across the sample. Twenty-three (23) out of twenty-four (24) or 96% of the participants were motivated by “systems-savvy selling” forces to enhance their interpersonal and longitudinal relationship with the customer.

One salesperson shared the following powerful and motivational experience from the opportunity to solve a systemic problem no one else had been able to solve for more than 15 years. It also underscores the importance of effective improvisation advocated in professional selling contexts, particularly concerning the aspect of making your partner (business customer) look good (i.e., saving them millions of dollars):

“I went to see the customer originally on a pump and repair call, but after seeing all of the dead pumps— there were over 144 pumps and other pump skeletons up on shore— I thought, ‘There has to be a better way.’ Realizing that each repair would have been over \$5,000, I needed to understand what is going on with the system. Spending time looking at the system and how

the different components affect one another, I started to see things a little better. I explained to the engineers that redesigning the system would be expensive, but because everything had to work together, piping, pumps, nozzles, valves, etc., it was the best option for a long-term solution, and ultimately these changes would save them over \$8 million dollars. If they employed this design in their other five facilities, they would save \$40 million long-term. This was extremely exciting for our company and me, and when you see it is going to be better for the customer, there is a great reward in that as well.” Interview #2

Another salesperson exhibited systems thinking around various advantage points to improve a problem that nagged the customer for years:

“Every single day what drives me is solving a customer problem and seeing them profit from it. We look for an issue within a system, a customer with a headache, and do our best to assess the leverage points in order to improve their process, make them more money.” Interview #7

The same salesperson continued by sharing a specific system solution to a problem that had plagued his customer for a long period of time:

“We had a customer that was manufacturing an abrasive hand cleaner. As you can imagine, gritty hand cleaner is tough to pump and is extremely hard on the entire system (in particular, the pump). I evaluated the system and realized if I change a few things (as they were working against each other); I could construct a long-term solution. I came up with a replaceable liner to allow for quick changeouts of the pumps. The solution enabled the company to grow their sales four to five times over the last two to three years. The customer is ecstatic, and so are we. I get a charge out of that!” Interview #7

This data indicates the strong motivating factors for the salesperson. Repeatedly, the participants revealed a systems perspective that helped the salesperson uncover the relationship between structure and behavior. These were their intrinsic motivating factors and they were also driven by the salesperson’s caring, altruistic and helping behaviors while developing and proposing the solutions. The next quote comes from a salesperson who shares his drive for the courageous exploration of creative solution design and the resulting motivational byproduct:

“We can go in, and we can identify the problem, the system’s problem. It becomes more of sales by solving troubles, instead of walking in selling a commodity item. What really motivates me, what I love about my job is to not to reach the bar, but to actually set the bar in different industries.” Interview #1

Finding 2: Building Interpersonal Relationships and Interpersonal Identity

When recounting their most memorable motivational moments as it relates to sales engagements, salespeople shared genuine, deep and meaningful interpersonal relationship stories and experiences. These lived experiences outlined a sense of interpersonal identification as being extremely important to their sales process. Actually, 22 of 24 (92%) of the participants exhibited high levels of motivation driven by their pursuit of deeper personal connections with customers while cultivating interpersonal identities defined by helping others to broaden their own sense of self.

One salesperson shared that he felt many customers are good friends, and his motivation was not based in making money or making life easier; but instead, and in contrast to stereotypes of salespeople who manipulate customer to achieve business gains, he was more motivated by personal relationships with customers:

“I’ve gotten calls at 9:00 pm from customers asking me, “Hey, I’ve got this job offer. I know you have a business. I just wanted to pass it by you and see what your thoughts are?” Having that personal relationship means a hell of a lot more to me than business.” Interview #1

This person continued by sharing specific aspects of what made interpersonal relationships with customers important to him:

“It’s all about the relationship. Somebody who cares enough about you to call you on a personal basis, and to where their motivation is not about the money. This is not only flattering, but it’s very, very nice you can have those relationships. My customer generously gives me things, without me ever asking, just because he knows me and knows that I am passionate about certain things.” Interview #1

Another participant shares how rewarding it is for him to call customers “friends” and, how such interpersonal bonds strengthen customer business processes and outcomes.

“I have been doing this for twenty-six years and calling in the same territory; I find that a lot of people, that I had called customers, I now call friends. That’s very rewarding. The speed at which we can conduct business is so much better than it was, and no matter, it always comes down to the same thing. How do we get solid relationships? How do you get to the point where he trusts you? He knows that you’re going to make sure he keeps his job?” Interview #18

One salesperson explains that service ideology undergirds your persona and drives an intrinsic desire (and personal reward) to produce better business results for the customer through helping behaviors.

“You hear the word ‘serve,’ not only in our business but in other areas of our life. That permeates your business and persona as well. If you can try and do what you feel is going to be better for the customer, there’s some reward in that as well, as far as a personal feeling. That feeling of “hey I can trust this guy. I can talk to this guy. I can count on this guy to perform for me because he is a friend.” When you are a friend, you go over and above what is required.” Interview #2

As one salesperson shared the motivation for going above and beyond for his customers, the aspect of feeling needed when providing a solution is the “ultimate high:”

“I want to be needed. I need to be needed, and I do it obviously, pump sales, as an avenue to get what I want in life to take care of my family. Yes, money is important, but money is not the reason or motivation to do something. I get a high every time I walk out of a plant, and I’ve talked to somebody, and I feel that they’ve liked me, that I’m providing a solution, that I’m going to get another opportunity in that plant because of me, that’s the ultimate high.” Interview #17

One salesperson shares how emotional an experience had been with a customer and the role religious faith played in strengthening their interpersonal relationships which ultimately helped his sales organization achieve a key business outcome.

“I remember vividly, sitting at Applebees when he (customer) told me he was giving 100% of the business to my competitor. When I left there, I was

about in tears in my car. I called him up after our meeting and said, 'Before you make your final decision, at least come to our company and let me show you (customer) our new product.' I was just focusing on the future. The customer agreed. He visited the plant, and we went through the benefits of the new product. He was happy and told us we would have a shot at the future business. This is a guy I know very well. I know him on a personal level. We talk a lot about business, personal life, and religion. I couldn't believe it. Two days later I get a call from him (customer), and he said, 'I woke up in the middle of the night trying to think, that I just wasn't sure about my decision, so I prayed. I asked God for an answer, and he gave me an answer that said why not share?' He gave us half the business back right then and there! I felt so good not only because we got the business back but to know where the answer came from." Interview #15

The strong feelings of these salespeople toward their customers and vice versa were very compelling and go well beyond simply getting along with others. These strong interpersonal relationships center on finding shared factors in life which motivate the sometimes mundane activities of day-to-day professional selling. Simply put, going the extra mile and supporting and helping others to co-create integrative solutions in through which both parties gain provides a vital impetus to motivate salespeople. Moreover, the degree to which these stories emerged was evident in the respondents' tone which demonstrated how heartfelt these feelings were throughout the interviewing process. Indeed, the underlying heartfelt emotions associated with relationship building were concurrent and complementary with their shared lived experiences.

Finding 3: Paradox of Self and Others

Building on the previous finding, and going beyond the strong interpersonal relationships, were the additive effects of extrinsic motivation which often supplemented the intrinsic motivation garnered through the routine selling environment. The participants were seasoned salespeople and so acclimated to this type of environment that it had become an element of their sense of being or their sense of self. All sales managers

were actively engaged in both frontline B2B selling and managing their firm's sales force. Interesting, however, what emerged was that sales managers in discussing what motivated them and what motivated their salespeople was a paradox based on distinct differences originating from how one sees themselves as salespeople versus how they view themselves as sales managers. This was a surprising insight into the underlying mechanisms of the roles have more communality than divergence. As represented below and in Appendix A, the change in roles caused context-specific motivational blindness to occur where the in-role sales manager self-identity diverged from his in-role salesperson self-identity. Thus, simply by shifts in role identity, the same individual acted in these different sales roles discretely but was unable to incorporate both role identities concurrently.

However, ten (10) out of twelve (12) or 83% of the sales managers demonstrated a dichotomy between the understanding of motivational forces when in two distinct roles (selling and management). Sales managers, when in the selling role described motivational forces as:

“I love it when somebody (a customer) you worked with has some success as a result of what you had done for them...Heck, I am walking around 12 feet tall feeling like I just hit the game-winning home run!” Interview #18

However, in stark contrast to the above, the sales manager explains what is believed to be necessary to motivate salespeople.

“I do not like lengthy reports, but we do ask our salespeople for call reports that are time-stamped. That's really to motivate them. The hardest door to open as a salesperson is the car door in the morning.” Interview #4

How do these personas change depending on the role became an emergent theme early on in the coding that remained consistent throughout the interviews? The same sales manager continued by sharing another tool he utilized to motivate his sales force.

“One thing we do that is a little unique is we rank salespeople versus each other, versus their budgets. So, it’s really a competition you are in versus your fellow salespeople. That seems to be fun and motivating to our guys.”
Interview #4

The above quote is interesting because he clearly stated that it “seems” to be fun and motivating, but it also seemed unclear if this sales manager was able to place himself back in the shoes of his sales team to clearly understand that a paradox between the seller and the manager had emerged. A different sales manager shares how they manipulate incentives in order to affect motivation.

“...we decided we would add an additional 5% to their commission for selling more of the product.” Interview #19

It’s worth noting the stark contrast between this incentive and the previous findings of systems-savvy selling and relationship building. The above is purely an extrinsic motivational tool to encourage selling more product. It seems as though the sales manager ignores his own expressed motivational drivers (while using his selling identity) when considering what motivates his salespeople (while using his management identity).

Contrast this conceptually with another sales manager who shared his motivational experiences about selling which were squarely aligned with his relationship building experiences with the customer versus simply adopting a “pushing product” perspective as a sales manager:

“I like going out and interacting with people. My customers are all good guys. They are my friends. I really like making success stories. As you

know, it makes you feel really good to help others, so I'm going to keep doing this another...maybe, six to seven years. It still makes me feel excellent to go out and do that!" Interview #24

However, again, in clear divergence from the intrinsic qualities, the sales manager describes the extrinsic motivational forces inherent in their sales force compensation plan.

"Our commission structure works on a rising scale. You start at a flat rate based on gross profit. Once you've reached a certain point, it jumps about 5%, then another 5%, then another 5%. In addition, we will put bounties (or the manufacturer of the pumps will assign rebates) to drive certain sales. I believe they (sales force) are driven harder by these things." Interview #24

Imagine the interpersonal struggle for sales managers in working in a system that inevitably creates an atypical role conflict for their salespeople. Namely, one role sender—the sales compensation plan—signals “pushing product” in the short term while another role sender—the systems-savvy sales manager—signals building interpersonal relationships centered on forging long-term business relationships built on mutually beneficial outcomes.

Another sales manager shared a motivational sales experience where a large dollar sale was closed by getting people to look at things differently; it centered on getting the customer and others to apply a systemic lens to the opportunity resulting in a major shift in their approach. The sales manager when in the selling role, asks the “what if” questions and sees the multi-layers and interconnectedness of the systems. This example shows a culmination of the three major themes identified herein:

“We were recently approached by one of the big auto manufacturers about a complex cooling system being incorporated into one of their new facilities. The duty points really weren’t in our current strike zone of products and would probably be a better fit for one of our competitor's pumps. I explained that to our customer, and he said he didn't want to buy from anyone else except me and asked, ‘was there anything I could do?’ I

went through the advantages and disadvantages of how the system was currently configured and how the future systems could be improved if we changed some designs. Because we were doing it upfront, the outlays were nominal, but the long-term savings would be substantial to them. Additionally, I was able to go back to the pump manufacturers and help them design and manufacture pumping systems that would better support their (customer's) system's configuration and provide them with trouble-free service. We were able to take the original design from around the low 80% to over 90% efficiency. Our customer fell in love with the system. The initial order was for over \$500,000." When it comes together, and it doesn't always come together that way. When it does come together, it is better than money!" Interview #2

One of the sales managers shared that by having his salespeople focus on solving troubled systems, they could achieve both differentiation in the marketplace while motivating the sales team:

"We tell our guys (salespeople) to go after the very toughest application in the plant. If it's a new potential customer, we want the application that nobody else has been able to solve for them ... that's motivating. We encourage them to get those system opportunities to see if we can come up with that solution no one else has been able to create." Interview #7

However, on the other hand, that same sales manager demonstrates paradoxical thinking (extrinsic motivation) in the following comment:

"My experience in motivating is the almighty dollar. It really is. Our salespeople are heavily commissioned. They're going to put their time and effort into the products and promoting products with the greatest opportunity to make money, the highest gross profit product is where the good salesperson will spend his time, and figure out a way to take that product and use that as a problem solver. That's what a good salesperson does." Interview #7

Discussion

One of this study's most interesting and counterintuitive findings deals with its contrast with extant literature that salespeople need extrinsic incentives to motivate them to sell. The findings illustrate that there are deeper and more meaningful intrinsic motivations related to satisfaction from solving difficult problems at the systemic level to

help buyers (business customers) improve their quality of living. This converges with the idea that salespeople also have a sincere interest in building deep, meaningful and enduring relationships with customers. Interestingly, for sales managers, these two findings that systematic problem solving and a desire to build significant relationships motivate salespeople, ultimately conflicts with the finding that sales managers function paradoxically in their different roles as managers and salespeople. Sometimes, as salespeople, managers exhibit behaviors consistent with using systems-savvy selling to forge long-term relationships; yet, as sales managers, they hold salespeople accountable for “pushing products” and meeting financial goals. This discussion outlines frameworks to aid such queries as each of these emergent themes warrant management and scholarly attention.

The selling environment and the human endeavor are part of interconnected systems (Senge, 2006). As a result of the shifts in the selling environment, salespeople and sales managers must be concerned with the complexity and expectations demanded of their salespeople and firms. It is not just the “sale itself that is becoming more complex, but the seemingly endless demands for greater and greater concessions, and ever high service standards, all just to keep the business” (Rackham & DeVinentis, 1999). The [sales] environment and human endeavors “are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions” (Senge, 2006: 7). In other words, you can only understand the system by contemplating the whole, not an individual component (Senge, 2006). Richmond (1994) defines system thinking as “the art and science of making reliable inferences about behavior by developing an increasingly deep understanding of underlying structure” (p. 139). Kim (1999) states, “Systems thinking is a way of seeing

and talking about the reality that helps us better understand our work with systems that influence the quality of our lives” (p. 2). Senge (1987) describes the development of systems thinking as a broader process fostering new thinking tools and their application. He goes on to share the essence of systems thinking is reshaping one’s thinking from reactive to a creative orientation (Senge, 1987). In this study, I called this conceptualization design thinking on behalf of the salesperson that helped create new solutions for the customers.

There were many shared lived experiences where salespeople were applying what this research termed as “systems-savvy selling.” The idea of “system-ness” is a concept borrowed from Meadows and Wright (2008), in which the word is used to refer to the “integrity or wholeness about a system and an active set of mechanisms to maintain the integrity” (p. 12). In such selling contexts, the salesperson seeks a long-term interpersonal relationship with the customer by focusing on the customer’s needs rather than simply “pushing product.” This “systems-savvy selling” builds deep trust through demonstrating altruistic and caring behaviors. Thus, “systems-savvy selling” occurs when the salesperson experiences high levels of intrinsic motivation through meta perspectives into solving chronic, extensive and protracted problems. In this research, the underlying motivation appears to be a salesperson’s desires to enhance long-term interpersonal relationships with customers.

Additionally, the qualitative data indicated that motivational forces for both salespeople and sales managers are multi-dimensional, interconnected and interdependent. Salespeople demonstrated an affinity to dive into deep and meaningful interpersonal relationships with customers through the application of systems thinking.

Motivation was usually exclusively intrinsic as high levels stem from salespeople delivering solutions to chronic problems in a caring and altruistic way with the ultimate goal being high-quality bonds between themselves and customers. The systemic approach provides a different mental model from which to address difficult problems. Systems thinking and structuration theory gives form (or structure) and understanding to the motivational forces that impacted salespeople to interact in new ways. A more contemporary mental model complete with theory, concepts, and forces required for systems-savvy selling to drive relational building behaviors.

Systems and Structuration

Systems are independent components working together to achieve a purpose (Deming, 1984). Giddens (1979) and Senge (2006) both postulate systems are comprised of interactions between agency and structure. In the selling context, structuration suggests salespeople use “duality of structure” where agency and structure shape their actions. Giddens’ argues, “action and structure presuppose one another...” (Giddens, 1979: 53). Giddens further shares “...structural properties of social systems are both the medium and the outcome of practices that constitute those systems” (Giddens, 1979: 69). This duality of structure includes mandatory recursiveness (i.e., similar to feedback loops in complex adaptive systems) of social interactions practiced in social settings. In this description structure is both the medium and outcome of the reproducible practices (Giddens, 1979).

As such, a “system-ness salesperson” sees systems nested within systems and defines system purposes on tangible and intangible levels (Meadows & Wright, 2008). Systems thinking provides the framework for salespeople to see change as dynamic and

interrelationships at multiple levels rather than seeing just static “snapshots” (Senge, 2006). Macy (1991) posits that within systems thinking, the self appears as fluid, changing the structure, shaped through interactions between experiences in the world and interpretations of those experiences. Salespeople were found to be working on the system rather than merely in the system (Kim, 1999). This systemic thinking allows them to contemplate the whole system and to hone their abilities to understand parts, see interconnections, ask “what if” questions and be creative and courageous about system redesign using the insight to make a difference in themselves and customers (Meadows & Wright, 2008). Giddens’ structuration theory suggests that agents (salespeople) utilize structure (systems and interactions) to engage in the responsible creation of meaning (Boland, 1993), in an effort to enhance relationship quality and utilize those relationships to create reciprocal meaning for the solution. Salespeople were found to be constantly thinking about how to improve system problem(s) and how to make the customer look better as a result of improving system inefficiencies.

Giddens’ structuration theory is a hermeneutic theory in that it stresses the actors’ (salespeople) continual effort in sensemaking as the instantiation of social structure. Whether viewed as outcome or medium, “structure is only present during the hermeneutic, interpretive act” (Boland, 1993: 126). Systemic structures are the mechanisms that construct our day-to-day realities and give birth to new and reinforce existing mental models (Kim, 1999). These structures become instruments where action is translated into change and allows salespeople to reshape systems to serve better their customers as well as their interpersonal relationships needs.

Iceberg Thinking

Continuous interpretive acts allow salespeople to see and understand things more holistically. This “iceberg thinking” (seeing things above and below the waterline) motivates them to take on significant issues like a multi-year, multiphase replacement of the pumping infrastructure based on this new way of seeing how everything fits together. Ironically, in this role, the problem is bigger and demands new approaches to the multi-levelness; including an all-encompassing understanding of reality in terms of dynamics of flow and undercurrents inside the company. While it has become a much larger problem in terms of scope, scale, and expense, it becomes something that creates real value for the customer by resolving or ameliorating a tough systemic problem.

Opportunities develop at multiple levels and shifts into a relationship-building activity. The customer is unable to pass up the opportunity because different levels of the organization start to see, "Okay, the only way we're going to maximize the benefit here is to do the whole thing" (Interview #11). This provides salespeople with more exposure to organizational dynamics. This is a platform to “show-off” their expertise and create more internal value to the organization and external value to the customer. This dynamic is value added to the company while simultaneously building and leveraging their own skill-set to increase customer value. This builds a relational capacity (i.e., the development of deep and meaningful bi-directional relationships) between the customer and the salesperson generating increased success within the system (Cola & Wang, 2017). These are problems nobody else can solve that have lingered for years because these systems-savvy salespeople are motivated to attack problems that nobody wants to tackle. Experiences of tackling chronic problems demonstrate the significance of taking a

reciprocal causal approach. This approach to a problem emphasizes for the salesperson the importance interpersonal relationships.

Interpersonal Relationships and Interpersonal Identity

This study challenges dominant logic by revealing that salespeople are not manipulating care and personal relationships to improve business outcomes at the customer level; rather, they leverage care, compassion, openness and altruistic behaviors as part of the systems-savvy selling process with customers in order to improve desired relational dynamics and fulfill certain psychological needs.

Consistent with systems thinking, the research revealed an interdependence and interconnection between the salesperson and the buyer. Salespeople focused very little on the sale itself, but rather more strongly upon the needs of customers. Participants revealed that salespeople are highly motivated by securing interpersonal relationships developed between them and the customer and how the emotional, cognitive and social connection motivates meaningful relationships and sales outcomes (Ahearne, Haumann, Kraus, & Wieseke, 2013). Furthermore, salespeople were found to be using the efficacy-enhancing process to expand self which leads to the addition of new resources, perspectives, and identities that broaden the individual's ability to accomplish goals (Aron et al., 2004).

The theory that people are motivated by forming new interpersonal bonds is not new (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In fact, Maslow (1943) ranked "belongingness needs" in the middle ranks of his motivational hierarchy. Bowlby's (1969, 1973) attachment theory advances the need to form and maintain relationships. Sedikides and Brewer (2001) posit that the "relational self is achieved by assimilating with significant others. They went on to suggest that the relational self is based on personalized bonds of

attachment and can take on many forms such as salesperson to customer. This form of self-representation is dependent upon the reflected appraisal process and is connected with protecting and augmenting the significant other and maintaining relationships (Brewer & Gardner, 1996; Hazan & Shaver, 1994). Baumeister and Leary (1995) purport that “human beings are fundamentally and pervasively motivated by a need to belong, that is by a strong desire to form and maintain enduring interpersonal attachments” (p. 522). However, this study extends the research by suggesting salespeople are highly motivated by the pursuit of interpersonal relationships and expanding interpersonal identity with their customers.

Throughout the study, salespeople shared that what motivated them most was the opportunity to create long-term, caring relationships with the customers. As opposed to research suggesting buyer-seller relationships are asymmetrical (Levitt, 1986), this study found these relationships to have a free-flow of sensitive information, and high levels of signaling about relational quality were evident. Asymmetry was mitigated or resolved through the systems lens and by the salesperson’s practice of systems-savvy selling. Specifically, the salespeople actively engaged the customer in the solution process by encouraging the flow of information and fostering a deep trust in the process. Furthermore, findings indicate both linkage and reciprocal actions between securing these relationships (“belonging”) and salespeople attaining their emotional, cognitive, health and well-being needs. Salespeople demonstrated high levels of positive emotions once they were immersed in interpersonal customer relationships and allowed to create value for the customer through systems-savvy selling, including their display of caring and altruistic behaviors.

Further extending the understanding of salespeople's personal identification is important because interpersonal identification satisfies essential self-definition needs and acts as a strong motivator of salespeople's behaviors (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

Relatedly, in healthcare research, recent research shows that professional collaboration between physicians and scientists improves their ability to collectively address complex problems (Wang & Cola, 2016). These findings shape interpersonal identification as the scope of which an individual's belief (salesperson) become self-defining or self-referent (Kark & Shamir, 2002). Salespeople felt a sense of wholeness when they were able to create buyer-seller "friendships" and could do what they do best, which centered on improving their customers' quality of lives. This study's findings are consistent with Hughes and Ahearne's (2010) assertion that sales managers can enhance salesperson efforts by strengthening their identification with a relevant entity (in this research, with customers which provides an intrinsic reward), even in the face of control systems to the contrary (e.g. extrinsic incentives including potentially ill-fitting sales compensation systems).

Paradox between Seeing of Self and Others

The findings build upon extant literature by elaborating on key intrinsic factors that motivate salespeople in the contemporary B2B industrial markets. Sales managers in the study employed extrinsic incentives and other compensation mechanisms to drive sales outcomes. Yet, once the salesperson's lower order intrinsic needs were satisfied, extrinsic incentives and other forms of compensation had little to no influence on salespeople's motivation. All sales managers in the study had dual role responsibilities: to manage the sales force and to conduct front-line field sales. Even though selling was

“their first love” as described by most—consistent with the motivational forces of their salespeople—there exists a dichotomy as to what motivates salespeople when their work roles are switched from the selling role back to management role. The causality paradigm shifts from linear (predictable and mechanistic) to dynamic (interdependence and reciprocal) between cause and effect. In the sales leader role, managers see salespeople’s motivation as unidirectional ($A \rightarrow B \rightarrow C$) and consequently, employ carrot and stick (extrinsic) incentives to motivate and improve sales outcomes. In contrast, when selling, sales managers become active systems creators using design thinking within complex systems (social and manufacturing) and are motivated by intrinsic factors like “systemness selling” and interpersonal relationships.

In conventional wisdom, countless researchers, and sales managers propose that monetary rewards are the primary motivators of sales efforts (Burton, 1960; Churchill et al., 1976; Haring & Morris, 1968; Joseph & Thevaranjan, 1998; Slater & Olson, 2000; Smyth, 1968; Steinbrink, 1978; Winer & Schiff, 1980). In fact, “incentives tied to short-term individual sales performance remains the most popular means employed by companies to motivate and direct sales force effort” (Zoltners et al., 2012: 171).

Others suggest nonfinancial factors (psychological incentives) are better at motivating the sales force (Deci & Flaste, 1995a; Demirdjian, 1984; Herzberg, 1966). Deming (1986a), a quality expert, argues that incentives are not good motivators. Kohn (1993) and Deci and Flaste (1995a) offer numerous studies conducted in classrooms, laboratories, workplaces and other settings demonstrating rewards typically undermine the commitment to improved outcomes. Despite these and other findings demonstrating

that incentives are unable to provide any sustaining commitment to meeting sales targets or other company objectives, managers dismiss them.

Role theory improves our understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Role theory investigates behaviors characteristic of people within specific contexts or situations (Biddle, 1986). I argue, consistent with role theory, that sales managers demonstrate a different and distinct set of behaviors than in the selling role. My findings suggest sales managers are transitioning back and forth from salesperson to manager seamlessly, but changing from one role to another (Ashforth, Johnson, Hogg, & Terry, 2001). I posit that my findings uncovered that sales managers develop a set of cognitive blinders keeping them fixated on playing or performing the specific role at hand but preventing them from seeing outside role's scope. Though they had dual-roles, they displayed "single role occupancy" behaviors (Ashforth et al., 2001). Understanding that normative or expected motivational forces derive value and meaning from the role itself (Biddle, 1986; Parsons, 1951), and how sales managers define and identify with their roles (Solomon, Surprenant, Czepiel, & Gutman, 1985) is key to uncovering this paradoxical motivational puzzle. I look to structuration theory to better explain "simultaneous role salience" as role theory lacks the conceptual dexterity to explain specific motivational behaviors (Ashforth et al., 2001).

Structuration theory helps reveal that sales managers were producing and reproducing a different social structure when in management roles as opposed to when in sales roles as relational and self-identity automatically shifts with roles and responsibility. As the sales managers move between these two different roles (structures), schemas (mental models) change through the hermeneutic interpretive act between agency and

structure (Giddens, 1979: 5). Boland (1993) asserts “meanings of things change for us and meanings that endure do so because of a series of interpretations we have made to produce them and reproduce them over time (p. 125). This interpretive process forges sales manager’s meaning-making and subsequent behavior in which motivational forces and relationships take on a different meaning specific to job roles. This helps explain why “selling” managers see relationships as utilitarian and incentives and rewards as motivational instruments when managing the sales force. Furthermore, it also helps explain why relationships are meaningful and drive systemic action when in the selling role.

Future Research

Additional research should focus on why sales managers continue to try and motivate their sales force and drive profit maximization using models framed around financial incentives. More data is needed on value co-creation between the seller and the customer because models of pure extrinsic rewards appear to be ineffective and not sustainable as they exhibit diminishing returns with respect to satisfying the system-savvy salesperson’s intrinsic needs. Furthermore, a better understanding of how salespeople perform within environments that are not driven by incentives, rewards, and sales targets, but rather ones in which management addresses and understands the deeper and more meaningful relational needs of salespeople. Finally, a design thinking approach to relational systems-based solutions would be important to understand better in this context.

Limitations

While this study's sample was rich and carefully designed, containing both salespeople and sales managers within the B2B industrial distribution channel, it was relatively small even for qualitative inductive research. This was somewhat mitigated by the dual role that the sales managers played. A larger more heterogeneous sample might have allowed more nuances to be pulled out of the data. Additionally, the study relied on the lived experiences of the interviewees rather than direct observation of events unfolding around these experiences. This has the possibility to introduce selectively or skewed memories of previous events. However, this may have been offset by the consistency of results from interviewee responses.

Conclusion

People [salespeople] have an actualizing tendency within them which leads towards greater internal harmony and integrity (Maslow, 1943; Rogers, 1951). This motivation comes from within the person or internal to the self and is very powerful as the findings suggest. This study is important because systems thinking coupled with structuration theory provides sales managers a new lens from which to view motivation. These theories provided the tools needed to drill-down into the lived experiences of the salespeople to uncover what was percolating underneath the motivational top layer. Systems thinking, and structuration allows us to see what Senge (1996) calls the circles of causality. The sales process is not linear but in fact, made up of feedback loops with reciprocal flows of influence. In other words, every influence has a cause and effect (Senge, 1996). Feedback loops can be found throughout the selling process and are manifested through signaling between customer and salesperson about relationship state,

flow, frequency, and quality of bilateral communication, losing the sale, and securing the sale.

Sales managers need to shift their mindset in order to start seeing and supporting the selling process in new ways. Seeing the selling system as a bunch of interrelationships rather than a linear causal chain can significantly improve opportunities to create improved sales models. Having the understanding that salespeople in transformational selling environments are motivated by “systems-savvy-selling,” interpersonal relationships and interpersonal identity permit sales leaders to focus energy and resources on higher levels of development programs. Salespeople are seeking deep and meaningful relationships where there is no longer an “us” or “them” but rather a “we” (collaborative relationships). Sales managers need to transition their thinking into paradigms without incentives or sales goals where salespeople are encouraged to self-actualize, to grow vertically—to a new stage of consciousness. In this new world of B2B sales, sales managers need to decouple sales performance models derived from the share of the customer’s wallet to ones that foster the higher-order development of its sales force.

Findings revealed that sales managers utilized some form of incentives or rewards to drive the desired outcome. However, admittedly they saw little to no enduring changes to outcomes as a result of the application of incentives and rewards. In other words, creating bonus programs, sales contest and sliding scale commission structures to generate more sales was unsuccessful. This study found salespeople to be already highly motivated to maximize sales and optimize opportunity at the customer level. With that said, sales managers continue to scrap and reformulate their commission structures to

meet sales targets and other company objectives. This research provides managers with a better understanding as to what truly motivates the outside sales force. Blinder (2011), states, “Changing the way workers are treated may boost productivity more than changing the way they are paid” (p. 13). Consequently, managers need to shed this outmoded way of looking at salesforce motivation and look at alternative ways to drive change within their motivational models. Or, a better approach might be to rethink the entire motivational paradigm. Deci and Flaste (1995a) suggest the question [sales managers] should be asking is, “How can people create the conditions within which others will motivate themselves?” (p. 10). This study demonstrates the ineffectiveness of incentives and strongly suggests that sales managers need to shift resources and energy towards models that align better with what matters to salespeople. Sales managers need to create systems that feed purpose and promote self-actualization rather than trying to drive change through control mechanisms. Metrics, if required, should evolve from frequency and quantity of sales calls to quality of relationships.

CHAPTER 3: SYSTEMS-SAVVY SELLING: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY TO UNCOVER PREDICTORS OF B2B SALES PERFORMANCE

Introduction

“Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.”

— Albert Einstein

Several scholars have observed that the business environment has become highly competitive and turbulent on a global scale (Jones et al., 2005; LaForge et al., 2009; Rackham & DeVincentis, 1999). The pluralistic bundling of products and services, new technologies, rapid product life cycles, and market adaptations to meet specific customer requirements all increase the complexity of product offerings and present new challenges to sales managers and specifically, to the buyer-seller relationship (LaForge et al., 2009). This sets new types of expectations for salespeople and firms and conditions for sales performance are changing. Traditional response strategies are insufficient for addressing such complex sales problems (Pourdehnad et al., 2011). Salespeople need to behave as “knowledge brokers” who transfer knowledge to the customer and back into their organizations (Verbeke et al., 2011). These complex challenges drive sales professional focus on acquiring and developing new knowledge-based skills and competencies. Evans et al. (2012) indeed posit that as professional selling evolves, it is critical for marketing scholars to expand their research agenda and explore a new set of key factors that drive sales performance.

B2B salespeople have been found to improve their performance through innovative solutions (Dickson et al., 2009) which involve the application of creative cognitive approaches and new techniques as those denoted as “systems-savvy selling.” Vargo and Lusch (2004) posit, for example, that the ability of marketers to create and

drive superior value hinges on securing an in-depth knowledge about the *latent* needs of the customers. The sales role is now carried out through a multifaceted buyer-seller interface which increases the importance of a new type of sales account management and changes in incentives (Plouffe & Barclay, 2007). Consequently, it is essential for B2B sales managers to understand what are drivers for the contemporary sales performance across complex selling contexts (Verbeke et al., 2011).

In a recent qualitative study, I discovered several factors which are likely to drive sales performance in complex settings. These particularly covered creative approaches to knowledge creation and distribution. One of the major themes that emerged was “systems-savvy selling.” In such selling contexts, the salesperson seeks a long-term interpersonal relationship with the customer by focusing on the customer’s visible and latent needs rather than simply “pushing product.” The “system-savvy selling” builds deeper trust between the partners by demonstrating higher level capabilities and caring behaviors by salespeople. “Systems-savvy selling” occurs when the salesperson experiences higher levels of intrinsic motivation by adopting a more holistic view to solving chronic, extensive and protracted customer problems. Therefore, systems-savvy selling involves salespeople to engage a design attitude towards their customers and their problems. Design attitude can be defined as expectations and cognitive orientations where the salesperson’s “problem-solving process is liquid and open” (Boland & Collopy, 2004). B2B salespeople also need to be more courageous and learn to question and (re)frame basic assumptions underlying the problem (Boland & Collopy, 2004). They need to also apply more creative heuristics for problem-solving (Amatullo, 2015) that focus on ‘systemness’ of the problems. “System-ness” (Meadows & Wright, 2008) refers

here to the “integrity or wholeness about a system and an active set of mechanism to maintain integrity.” At the same time, salespeople need to become active agents in the firm’s internal knowledge brokering as to improve innovation (Auh & Menguc, 2013; Berg et al., 2014). Therefore, this research seeks to enrich our understanding of the linkages between internal creative cognitive activities and knowledge brokering and sales performance. By doing so, I seek to extend current literature of the knowledge-based antecedents of sales performance in contemporary selling. The research question under investigation here is: What knowledge-based factors and creative behaviors influence the B2B salesperson’s ability to promote internal knowledge brokering and thereby sales performance?

Theoretical Framing, Review of the Literature and Hypotheses Development

There are studies that have identified the antecedents of selling performance (Churchill et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). But no prior research has considered the possible role of creative cognitive approaches and internal knowledge brokering on sales performance.

As previously stated, salespeople operate in an increasingly complex world where their ecosystem is more disparate, dynamic, interconnected and volatile (Reeves, Levin, & Ueda, 2016). Researchers and practitioners have argued that companies should be viewed as biological systems or what is known as complex adaptive systems (Capra & Luisi, 2014; Reeves et al., 2016; Sinha & Conti, 2010). Mechanistic or linearity-based thinking fails to “see below the water line” in contrast to system thinking—discipline for seeing the wholes, recognize interconnections and identifying feedback loops—that helps salespeople see the underlying “structure” (complex condition) and provides a learning

framework from which to detect changes (emergent properties) within the selling environment (Senge, 2006). I look to provide an alternative to decision attitude-various techniques, methods, algorithms, and heuristics salespeople use to make choices—and provide an “attitude” or creative techniques and behaviors that look at problem-solving from a higher order approach—to step back and ask “What are we trying to do? Why does it matter?” and to not close the problem-solving space too early (Boland & Collopy, 2004). I also argue that thinking is not something that should be done exclusively in our head but through interaction with other people (Hutchins, 1995) as it enriches interpretations and contextual perspectives leading to enhanced problem-solving capabilities.

Therefore, the key constructs considered for this study are: systems thinking, empathy, altruism, ambiguity tolerance, long-term customer relationship orientation all of which I referred to as “systems-savvy selling”—in my study of sales performance. Here, systems thinking, or more precisely, guiding heuristics for holistic decision making during customer problem-solving, emerged as an antecedent of sales performance and long-term customer relationships. These are dimensions of design attitude that are fundamentally concerned with the generation of “new alternatives” by “questioning of assumptions” (Boland & Collopy, 2004). These are conceptually embedded in the concept of systems-savvy selling and will henceforth be applied in my conceptual development in explaining sales performance in complex sales settings.

In this regard, B2B salespeople are designers with a little “d.” Their focus is not on generating artifacts like a traditional industrial designer but rather delivering value through creating solutions for improved customer-based problem-solving. I maintain that

through cognitive design's qualities which Papanek (2000) articulates, B2B salespeople will be able to elevate their thinking to sense what lurks below the problem's surface and develop richer solutions by the questions they ask and (re)framing solution to their approaches.

I define design attitude as a holistic approach to problem-solving in which "each project is viewed as a new opportunity to create something remarkable and to do it in a way that has never been done before" (Boland et al., 2008). Design attitude underlies a problem-solving process that remains "liquid and open" where basic assumptions are questioned, and new alternatives are celebrated in pursuit of developing a better solution for the customer (Boland & Collopy, 2004). Michlewski's (2008) study found that design attitude undergirds the individual's freedom to explore and pursue promising leads and ideas while staying true to the overall vision of the situation. Amatullo's (2013) study uncovered that design attitude involves techniques that promote a better understanding of how users feel affording salespeople the capacity to tap into latent needs.

Sales Performance

For over a century, sales scholarship has sought to understand better factors that drive sales performance (Churchill et al., 1985). Despite decades worth of studies, the extant literature's ability to explain variance in sales performance remains somewhat disappointing (Plouffe & Barclay, 2007). Part of this situation may result from differences in operational definitions of salesperson performance, particularly the use of both outcomes and behaviors as focal constructs. Anderson and Oliver (1987) define sales performance as the evaluation of salespeople based on what they produce (i.e., sales outcomes) as well as what they do (i.e., sales behaviors). Since it is central for

management to have the ability to anticipate the antecedents of sales performance, it is important to understand sales performance drivers and how these drivers vary across different contexts (Verbeke et al., 2011). Churchill et al. (1985) in a seminal paper, employed meta-analysis techniques to develop and define the antecedents of sales performance. Churchill et al. (1985) and Walker et al. (1977) also developed a classification scheme of antecedents of sales performance including six predictive determinants to explain the marginal variance of sales performance (Verbeke et al., 2011).

According to Churchill et al. (1985), there is a strong association between performance and determinants of performance (Verbeke et al., 2011) including (1) role variables, (2) skill levels, (3) motivation, (4) personal factors, (5) aptitude, and (6) organizational/environmental factors. Recently, Verbeke et al. (2011) focused on developing contemporary sales performance drivers and the predictive abilities of the sales determinants across empirical research models. Their study utilized the classification system of Walker et al. (1977) and built upon the meta-analysis of Churchill et al. (1985). Their results reveal a different set of antecedents than those identified by Churchill et al. (1985) suggesting that academics and practitioners' understanding of sales performance antecedents have changed. Specifically, they identify (1) selling knowledge, (2) adaptiveness, (3) role ambiguity, (4) cognitive aptitude, and (5) work engagement. Extant research in the sales stream has traditionally focused on customer-directed behaviors (Brown & Peterson, 1994). Emerging research also suggests that salesperson performance is largely linked to their ability to maneuver and influence

others within their own firms (Gonzalez, Claro, & Palmatier, 2014; Üstüner & Iacobucci, 2012).

Social network theory (Burt, 2009; Granovetter, 1973; Tichy, Tushman, & Fombrun, 1979) provides additional theoretical support to my systems-savvy selling concept. I define social networks as a complex pattern of interpersonal ties representing some relationship (or lack of relationship) that serves as a channel for information and resource flow (Balkundi & Harrison, 2006; Brass, 2012). Marketing research has accordingly proposed that salespeople's internal networks are essential for providing information and collaboration that promotes sales (Plouffe & Barclay, 2007). Salespeople connected across more diverse groups are more open to unorthodox ways of thinking and behaving which form an advantage in detecting rewarding sales opportunities (Burt, 2010). The social ties can lead to what Burt (2010) dubs a "vision advantage" enabling new ideas to emerge. Further, the social ties allow the salespeople to create added value by leveraging and exploiting the organization's core competencies that can tackle customer's problems (Bolander et al., 2015).

In social networks, knowledge dissemination is interactional and never done unilaterally (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). The customer (i.e., internal and external) become a co-creator of the value and forms a vital link within the social network. Competitive advantage thus resides in higher order competencies such as knowledge creation that emerge from knowledge flows within the network (Hunt, 2000). I posit that internal knowledge brokering in social networks is, therefore, a significant driver in value creation that drives sales performance.

Internal Knowledge Brokering

Knowledge about an activity domain has been shown to have a considerable influence on performance in that domain (Bettman & Park, 1980). Sources of specialized expertise within the organizations, therefore, make individuals and units within the organization more dependent on knowledge sharing (Üstüner & Iacobucci, 2012). Yet, sales leaders struggle to find ways to motivate salespeople in sharing knowledge and gaining insights with and from their peers (Desouza, 2003; Ramaswami, Srinivasan, & Gorton, 1997).

The value-centered view of knowledge is rooted in resource advantage theory (Conner & Prahalad, 1996; Hunt & Morgan, 1995) and core competencies theory (Day, 1994; Hamel & Prahalad, 1990). These theories argue that core competencies are not physical assets but intangible processes and related “bundles of skills and technologies” (Prahalad & Hamel, 1994). These are composed of routines, actions, or operations that are tacit, causally unclear, and distinctive (Nelson & Winter, 1982; Polanyi, 1966). In this regard, salespeople are also boundary spanners of such bundles and related knowledge as they have access to diverse sources of knowledge, stretching from customers and competitors to suppliers (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). For this study, I focus on customer-related knowledge. I define customer-related knowledge as salespeople organized, structured, and validated information, expertise, beliefs, and understanding of different types of customers. This knowledge is also explicit in the sense that it can be disseminated to co-workers (Li & Calantone, 1998).

Several studies support this view. Berg et al. (2014) found that the salesperson’s exploratory orientation within their firm is important in developing the knowledge

needed for effective selling performance. Pass, Evans, and Schlacter (2004) found that many firms do not give their salespeople direction and encouragement to excel in internal knowledge dissemination. Liu and Comer (2007) found considerable variation among the salespeople's internal knowledge sharing. They posit that companies could improve intelligence dissemination simply by promoting and compensating for this activity. Consistent with these claims, I posit that (internal) knowledge brokering is a driver for sales performance as it improves customer focused problem-solving. Thus, I state:

Hypothesis 1. Internal knowledge brokering positively affects sales performance.

Systems Thinking

Salespeople and sales managers are faced with increased complexity and related customer expectations. The [sales] environment is now “bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions” (Senge, 2006). It is not just the “sale itself that is becoming more complex, but the seemingly endless demands for greater and greater concessions, and ever high service standards, all just to keep the business” (Rackham & DeVincentis, 1999). System thinking thus has become a critical component that enables new thinking and generates opportunities for new types of solutions search. System thinking here forms “the art and science of making reliable inferences about behavior by developing an increasingly deep understanding of underlying structure” (Richmond, 1994: 139). Ergo, you can only understand the system by contemplating the whole, not an individual component (Senge, 2006).

Systems thinking is a conceptual framework for problem-solving that enables salespeople to consider the problem-space in its entirety (Hall, 1999; Senge, 2006). Systems thinking, therefore, is viewed as a method of reasoning with the ability to lead to

rich solutions that would not have been discovered by linear or mechanistic thinking (Cavaleri, 2005). Systems thinking can enhance internal knowledge brokering through its ability to detect complex, dynamic process and thus improves understanding and the ability of internal knowledge dissemination to respond to the emerging needs of the learning organization (Schlange, 1995). Systems thinking facilitates knowledge creation activities through double-loop learning in which knowledge is learned and unlearned (i.e., emerges from the system), and feedback loops help synthesize the emergent properties-an adaptive system changes to respond to changes in the purpose of the system (Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1997).

System thinking provides a clarifying lens from which a salesperson can make broader informed decisions to customer problems such as a multi-year, multiphase replacement of all the pumping infrastructure based on this kind of new way of seeing how all this fits together. Ironically, this makes the problem bigger by demanding a new approach to deal with the multi-levelness of the phenomenon and a more well-rounded understanding of what's going on. While selling in this way has become a much larger problem in terms of scope, scale, and expense, it becomes something that can create real value for the customer as it helps resolve tough systemic problems leading to improved knowledge and thereby sales performance. Thus, I posit:

Hypothesis 2. Systems thinking positively affects sales performance.

Hypothesis 3. Systems thinking positively affects internal knowledge brokering.

Ambiguity Tolerance

Ambiguity Intolerance with B2B salespeople may be viewed as a tendency to perceive ambiguous information or situations as threatening (Budner, 1962; Frenkel-

Brunswik, 1948). Conversely, ambiguity tolerance infers that interaction with ambiguity is desirable. Though definitions intersect considerably, no communal definition has been accepted though most researchers shifted the theoretical perspective toward ambiguity tolerance as a basic psychological influence on the perception of circumstances and choice making (Furnham & Marks, 2013; Furnham & Ribchester, 1995; Madlock, Kennedy-Lightsey, & Myers, 2007; Van Hook & Steele, 2002; Yurtsever, 2001; Yurtsever, 2008). Further, English and English (1958) define ambiguity tolerance as a “...willingness to accept a state of affairs capable of alternate interpretations, or of alternate outcomes: e.g., feeling comfortable (or at least not feeling uncomfortable) when faced by complex problem sets in which opposed principles are intermixed. Low ambiguity tolerance is shown by the desire to have everything reduced to black and white...” (p. 24). I argue salespeople with ambiguity tolerance are apathetic to ambiguous selling ecosystems, which allows them to discern the dubious and imperfect information and to focus on understanding what is influencing one another, and why it matters to the customer (Senge, 2006).

I define ambiguity tolerance as a salesperson’s willingness to embrace uncertainty, be willing to take risks without fully understanding the outcomes, and be willing to drive deeper when faced with complexity (Furnham & Ribchester, 1995) (see also Amatullo, 2013; Buchanan, 2009; Michlewski, 2008, 2015). Moreover, Greco and Roger (2001) argue that there is a clear relationship between TA, decision making, and other related cognitive processes. Bardi, Guerra, and Ramdeny’s (2009) study found intolerance to be negatively correlated with openness. Another study found TA positively relates to novelty or seeking out knowledge (Rajagopal & Hamouz, 2009). Finally, Teoh

& Foo's (1997) research found TA highly correlates with better performance and knowledge seeking behaviors. I posit:

Hypothesis 4. Ambiguity tolerance positively affects internal knowledge brokering.

Empathy

Empathy is recognized by many research streams as a critical component in identifying and satisfying customer visible and hidden needs. The concept known as empathy evolved from the field of aesthetics, where it was established by (Lipps, 1906) as *Einfühlung*, which has been translated as "feeling into" (Szalita, 1976) or "feeling together with" (Buchheimer, 1963). I maintain that as the salesperson's ability to sense and anticipate customer needs improve, so should sales outcomes (McBane, 1995).

As salespeople face increasingly complex selling environments where customers' expectations and buying habits shift and are local they have a greater need for rich customer information and in particular, need to better understand the reaction to competitive offerings among customers (Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014). Such relational seller behavior is paramount to securing, developing and maintaining long-term customer relationships profitably (Ahearne, Jelinek, & Jones, 2007). Here, empathy has been touted as an important dimension in promoting such behaviors (Jones et al., 2005). In B2B selling, empathy has been found to secure knowledge that helps overcome setbacks and thus improve performance (Czaplewski, Olson, & Slater, 2002).

The extant marketing literature describes empathy mainly as an emotional trait (Agnihotri & Krush, 2015) i.e., as the salesperson's concern, understanding, perceptiveness, and thought processes (Smith, 2010). Ahearne et al. (2007) define empathy within the sales context as the "salesperson's demonstration of interest and

concern for the welfare of the customers' (p. 606). This calls for nurturing enduring and profitable relationships with customers. Therefore, empathy has been heralded as an essential trait for salespeople to possess (Homburg, Wieseke, & Bornemann, 2009). In this regard, Gerdes, Segal, and Lietz (2010) define empathy as a mental elasticity and perspective deriving.

In this work, I adapt Michlewski's (2007, 2008, 2015) notion of empathy, which suggests that personal empathy draws attention to a human-centered orientation within a buyer-seller exchange. Empathy comes with deeper listening and dialogue as a means of reaching towards the customer's latent needs (Michlewski, 2015). It also focuses on embedded emotional reactions that improve problem-solving capabilities. I see in the B2B context that such empathy relates to salesperson's ability to 'work out' what goes on in their customers' minds. This is different from affective empathy where salespeople share their emotional space with that of customers (New & Kimbell, 2013). Empirical studies in the design have found that problems tend to coevolve with multiple attempts to solve them (Dorst & Cross, 2001). This requires deep engagement with end-users of the system (New & Kimbell, 2013). De Lille, Roscam Abbing, and Kleinsmann (2012) suggest therefore that the ability to empathize with multiple stakeholders enables new kind of collaboration to advance knowledge. Empathetic orientation extends knowledge and allows the salesperson to relate to the customer and understand why the system or situation is so meaningful to the customer. Through the empathetic lens, a complex and iterative process of synthesis and transformation of knowledge takes place among the salesperson and his performance can be improved (De Lille et al., 2012). Further,

researchers in the sales domain have postulated a positive relationship between empathy and sales performance (McBane, 1995; Pilling & Eroglu, 1994). Consequently, I posit:

Hypothesis 5. Empathy positively affects sales performance.

Hypothesis 6. Empathy positively affects internal knowledge brokering.

Altruism

Altruism provides a lens from which to view additional cognitive and affective factors that help salespeople achieve their sales goals. MacKenzie, Podsakoff, and Fetter (1993) define that “altruism consists of those voluntary actions that help another person with a work-related problem (e.g., sharing sales strategies, voluntarily helping to orient new salespeople” (p. 71). A more customer-centric perspective that broadens the concept’s scope encompasses also caring, helpfulness, consideration of customer's feelings, sacrifice for customers and selfless concern for the well-being of customers (Axelrod, 2006). It seems unlikely that a salesperson’s intrafirm altruistic repertoire leads to better sales performance. Indeed, many scholars argue that altruism is “egoist” in nature and is a variant of the reciprocal model proposed by Axelrod (2006). However, MacKenzie et al. (1993) found that altruism forms an important dimension in organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) and correlates highly with how managers and colleagues evaluate a salesperson’s performance. Many managers are not strictly looking at objective metrics of sales productivity (sales volume and percentage of quota) (Churchill, Ford, & Walker, 1997); rather, a set of OCBs derived from prosocial affects (like altruism) which can enhance overall unit effectiveness and drive commitment levels among customers (MacKenzie et al., 1993). Researchers have indeed found that altruism can lead to a positive mood resulting in that the salesperson does more (in his role and

extra roles) for their customers resulting in improved sales performance (George, 1991; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Ahearne, 1998). I posit:

Hypothesis 7. Altruism positively affects sales performance.

Long-Term Customer Orientation

More than 90 years ago, Strong (1925) stressed that personal selling should focus on both securing customer's satisfaction and purchase orders. Accordingly, B2B salespeople must also participate in relational or transformational activities in addition to transactional activities with their customers as to fulfill their articulated and hidden needs (Blocker et al., 2012). Yet, many firms find their marketing mix and subsequent sales strategy to be bound by the production-oriented 4-Ps mix (Grönroos, 1994). Although the focus on the usefulness of the Four Ps as a general marketing theory is beyond the scope of this study, I contend that this thinking still undergirds many firm's sales strategies and has become what Grönroos (1994) calls a "strait-jacket" on their marketing efforts. Furthermore, Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) emphasize the need for firms to shift from transactional or outcome-based measures to a more relational marketing mix. Garbarino and Johnson's (1999) study moreover argues that organizations need to pursue both outcome (transactional) based and relational sales concurrently to help maximize performance as not all customers want or need the same working relationships (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987). Finally, Saxe and Weitz (1982) found that customer-oriented selling and the ability to help the customer are strongly correlated with sales performance.

The research of Jaworski and Kohli (1993) and Slater and Narver (1995) studies on customer value creation continue to dominate the marketing literature. They define

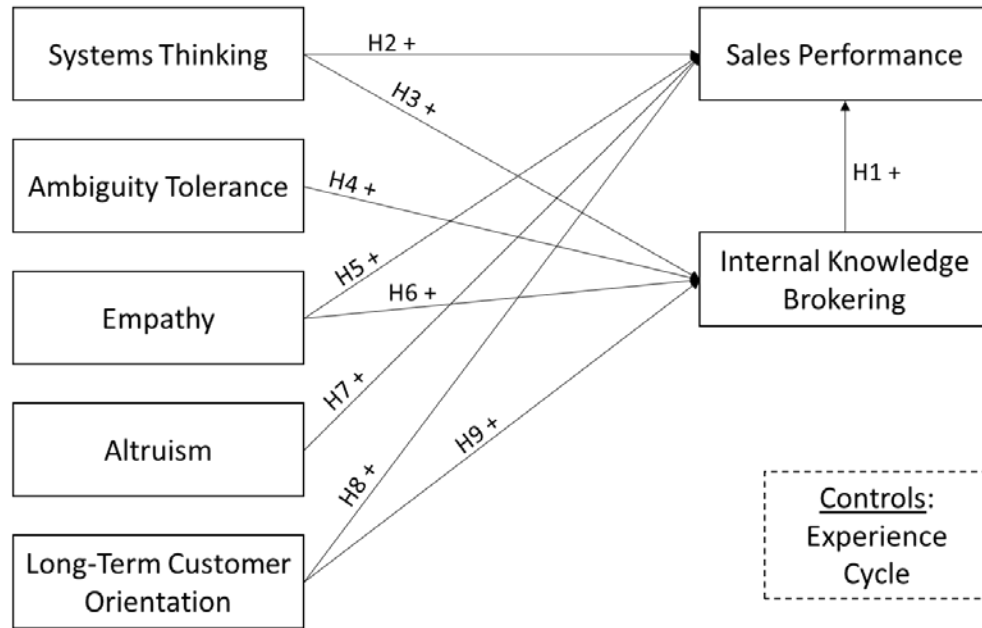
customer orientation as the salesperson's ability to create value that meets current and future needs of the customers. In this context, customer-oriented selling is a method of doing business on the part of salespeople and refers to the level to which salespeople proactively practice this concept to satisfy customer's hidden, expressed and future needs. Highly customer-oriented salespeople engage in high-level learning behaviors to overcome unique problems sets aimed at increasing long-term customer value creation and satisfaction (Chonko, Dubinsky, Jones, & Roberts, 2003). Vargo and Lusch's (Lusch & Vargo, 2006; Vargo & Lusch, 2004) service-dominant logic (SDL) informs our customer-oriented thinking by understanding that value is defined by and co-created with the customer rather than embedded in the product. I argue that contemporary's salespeople must apply these co-creation activities on external (e.g., supplier, customer) and intrafirm (i.e. internal customers) networks to improve sales performance and explication of internal knowledge. Traditional business models built on the premise that the firm creates value by the outsourcing of activities to customers or slight customization of products and services no longer satisfies today's consumers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2013). The preceding co-creation of value requires a new fundamental approach. According to Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2013), this method requires a sensitivity that involves understanding the individual consumer's specific needs. The co-creation experience (not the offering) is the scaffolding on which the unique value is based (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004). In a service-centered model, information and skills are the foundations of internal knowledge creation and hence, competitive advantage—value created collaboratively within interactive frameworks between [intrafirm] exchange partners (Lusch & Vargo, 2006).

I can form the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 8. Long-term customer orientation positively affects sales performance.

Figure 5. Hypothesized Model

Unit of Analysis is B2B Salesperson



Hypothesis 9. Long-term customer orientation positively affects internal knowledge brokering

Next, I articulate my methods to test the hypotheses above and in Figure 2.

METHODS

The research model presented in Figure 2 was validated using a quantitative survey study design. Data was collected from B2B salespeople across the spectrum of industries and markets.

Measures

The study employed validated measures and was modified to specifically detail and elicit the B2B salesperson perspective. For all reflective constructs, I chose to utilize and adapt, a 5-point Likert-type scale with response ranging from “1= strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree.” My survey consisted of 83 items: 72 were adapted from scales; 9 for demographics.

Systems Thinking (ST) (Reflective, 7 Items). The systems thinking scale was used because it captures that the sales environment and human endeavors “are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions” (Senge, 2006: 7). For the development of my scale, I adapted items to the B2B sales domain derived from a scale that was rigorously tested within the healthcare field by Case Western Researchers: the Systems Thinking Scale (STS) (Moore, Dolansky, Singh, Palmieri, & Alemi, 2010). An example of a scale item is “*I think proposed changes can affect the whole system.*”

Ambiguity Tolerance (AT) (Reflective, 6 Items; 1 Reverse Coded). My conceptualization of this construct is rooted in Amatullo (2015) and Michlewski (2008, 2015). I adapted Amatullo’s (2015) scale to the sales context; a sample of my scale is, “I am drawn to ambiguous selling situations.”

Empathy (DE) (Reflective, 7 Items). I again relied on Amatullo’s (2015) work which builds on both Michlewski studies (2008, 2015) where empathy is about deep listening and concentrating on the human-centeredness as the “ability of the individual to arrive at a deep understanding of how others see, feel and experience as well as sense other oriented feelings of concerns for others” (p. 143). I adapted Amatullo’s scale to the

sales context; an example item is, *“I appreciate the customer's experience, even if it is foreign to mine.”*

Altruism (AL) (Reflective, 6 Items). The altruism scale was selected as it encapsulates the level of caring, helpfulness, consideration of customer's feelings, sacrifice for customers, the practice of selfless concern and for the wellbeing of customers. I modified my scale items from MacKenzie et al. (1993) and Smith, Organ, and Near (1983) to measure the linkage between a B2B salesperson's selfless towards customers and sales performance. An example item for the six-item scale is, “I am concerned with making the customer look better.”

Long-Term-Customer Orientation (LTCR) (Reflective, 7 items). The SOCO (Selling Orientation-Customer Orientation) Scale developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982) was used to assess salespeople's behaviors and attitudes towards long-term customer orientation. I slightly adapted the scale to fit my context better but maintain it captures the development of long-term activities of which boundary-spanning employees who occupy a central role in relationship marketing undertake (Grönroos, 1994). An example from the seven items scale is, “I offer the product best suited to the customer's problem.”

Internal Knowledge Brokering (IKB) (Reflective, 5 Items). My conceptualization of this construct is that salespeople are sourcing, communicating knowledge and leveraging social networks to not only broker knowledge but as a vehicle to drive sales performance (Berg et al., 2014). I adapted my scales from Berg et al. (2014) to better elicit salespeople sourcing and communicating knowledge from and with colleagues about new ideas and customer needs. An example item from the five-item

scale is, “I regularly discuss with colleagues what the future could look like for our customers.”

Sales Performance (SP, Reflective, 5 Items). The Performance Scale (Sujan et al., 1994) was used to assess the respondent’s perception of their sales performance. In particular, I asked salespeople to self-evaluate, of their achievement of both quantity and quality sales objectives (Sujan et al., 1994). There is little consensus in previous scholarship whether job performance should be measured through subjective evaluations by managers, customers, coworkers or the salespeople themselves, objective data-based metrics, or a combination (Churchill et al., 1985). Although (Verbeke et al., 2011) calls for sales researchers to “develop and test theories about the conceptual multidimensionality of the sales performance construct” (p. 425), there is support for the appropriateness of using self-evaluations in assessing salespeople performance (Gonzalez et al., 2014). An example from the five-item scale is, “*I exceed sales targets.*”

Control Variables: Experience (5 ranges < 6 to > 21years); **Sales Cycle** (5 ranges <3 to >36 months). I included experience as salespeople with more experience are sometimes less likely to participate in sourcing and communicating knowledge from and with colleagues about new ideas and customer needs. I included sales cycle as salespeople in longer horizon sales tend to have deeper relationships that drive the need to leverage exploratory orientation within their firm to develop the knowledge required for effective selling performance.

Given the 83 items, I calculated that a sample size between 415 and 830 would be adequate for this study (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2010). I determined that I was sufficiently close with my final sample of 387 completed surveys to proceed.

Data Collection and Sample

My instrument was deployed nationally on two separate occasions both utilizing Qualtrics, a popular online research platform. On the first deployment, relying on my personal network, I distributed the survey to 3,286 B2B salespeople over a three-week period in November 2016. The population was selected based on respondents being a B2B salesperson and in the United States. A total of 214 participants (6.5%) completed the survey. Additionally, I employed a panel from Qualtrics of 200 additional participants using the criteria previously described. The second round of data collection took one week and was completed by the end of November 2016. To test for sampling bias, I conducted a Wave Analysis or Levine's Homogeneity of Variance Test and found the variance between groups to be equal or to have $p\text{-value} > .05$ (Levene, 1960). After merging the purchased panel of 200 and the collected 214 professional network data, the final sample was 387 after screening and cleaning responses. Table 2 is a summary of the sample demographics.

Table 2. Demographical Information of Sample

Demographic	Variable	# of Respondents (out of 387)	% of Respondents (out of 100%)	Range	Mean / SD
Gender	Male	261	67.44%	NA	NA
	Female	126	32.56%	NA	NA
Ages				24-71	45.21 / 11.59
Education	4-year degree	192	49.61%	NA	NA
	Some College	123	31.78%	NA	NA
	Master's Degree or +	72	18.61%	NA	NA
Hours Per Week Worked				20-90 Hours	47.62 / 9.84
Sales Experience				1-50 years	18.95 / 11.41
Total Compensation*		44	11.44%	\$50-59,000	NA
		88	22.70%	\$100, 149,000	NA
		85	21.90%	\$150,000 +	NA
Bonus as % of Compensation				0-100	19.83 / 26.13
Commission as % of Compensation				0-100	33.61 / 36.42
Sales Cycle	Time in Months			0-120	7.32 / 9.48

* Top three salary ranges are represented

I found my sample's demographic profile to be consistent with the contemporary marketing literature. While I take exception to the hours per week worked value of 20 as it is not congruent with a "full-time" B2B sales position, I decided to retain as there were less than 4 out of 387 that responded accordingly.

Data Screening

I used forced response and attention filters for the questions in my survey instrument. I added a speeding check mechanism (the median length of an interview was

7 minutes), measured as 1/3 the median taken at soft launch time—that automatically terminated those who were not responding thoughtfully. I next examined the normality of our data, beginning with identifying outliers. I removed 22 respondents as > 10% of the data was missing (Hair et al., 2010). Two additional respondents were removed for an abnormal Cook's distance (> 1) (Cook, 1979). I also investigated skewness, kurtosis, and variance for each of the items. I found 7 of our 23 items were skewed, and 8 items had kurtosis issues. I elected to retain and monitor these items. Finally, I investigated multicollinearity by testing the Variable Inflation Factor. The results showed all predictor variables were found to have VIF < 3.0 for both DVs; therefore, there was no multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010).

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

I used SPSS software, version 24, to perform an EFA using Principal Axis Factoring with Promax rotation (Hair et al. (2010). The dataset was adequate for factoring as evidenced by Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (KMO) of .856. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is significant at ($\chi^2 = 2314.275$; $df = 253$; $p = .000$) (Hair et al., 2010). The communalities are all above 0.3 threshold (save ST2 = .237) to support “sufficient explanation” based on a sample size of 350 or more (Hair et al., 2010). I generated a seven-factor model with the total variance explained 44.55%. All the factors loaded cleanly and within acceptable cross-loading thresholds. Each factor's average loadings rounded up 0.5 except for SP2 (.427). There are 0% non-redundant residuals with an absolute value greater than .05. The final pattern matrix is included as Appendix B.

I conducted a CFA using AMOS 24 software to validate the psychometric properties of the seven-factor model from the EFA. I deleted ST2 as its standardized regression weight to the latent variable was less than .50, and this was the one item in the EFA without sufficient communality value. The final proposed seven-factor model achieved adequate model fit (CMIN/df = 1.571; CFI = .948; TLI = .936; RMSEA = .038; PCLOSE = .991; SRMR = .051), as shown in Table 2.

The reliability and convergent and discriminant validity were evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), and Average Shared Variance (ASV) (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1989).

As shown in Table 2, reliability and convergent validity metrics reached acceptable thresholds on most factors except for systems thinking and ambiguity tolerance which do not meet the strict convergent validity thresholds. But since I found them to have strong reliabilities and they are theoretically separate constructs in the model I continued the analysis with them included. There was also an issue with discriminant validity for systems thinking as its MSV is greater than AVE. This will be noted as a limitation of my study.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics, Factor Correlations, Model Fit Indices and Reliabilities for CFA

Descriptive Statistics and Factor Correlations									
Variable	M	SD	IKB	SP	DE	AL	LTCR	ST	AT
IKB	1.131	0.860	0.769						
SP	0.898	0.884	0.448	0.766					
DE	0.534	0.808	0.452	0.420	0.752				
AL	-0.066	0.821	0.357	0.218	0.548	0.674			
LTCR	0.733	0.792	0.400	0.360	0.525	0.554	0.691		
ST	0.341	0.766	0.413	0.369	0.434	0.382	0.354	0.659	
AT	1.233	0.844	-0.256	-0.278	-0.310	-0.261	-0.131	-0.390	0.649
CFA FIT INDICES									
Metric	Observed Value				Recommended Value for N>250 and m ≥ 30				
Chi²/df	295.423/188				NA				
Cmin/df	1.571				Between 1 and 3				
CFI	0.948				>.900*				
TLI	0.936				>.900*				
RMSEA	0.038				<.700 w/ CFI ≥ .900*				
PCLOSE	0.991				>.500**				
SRMR	0.051				<.08 w/CFI > .92*				
Validity and Reliability of CFA									
	CR	AVE		MSV		MaxR(H)			
IKB	0.773	0.461		0.257		0.829			
SP	0.762	0.524		0.220		0.899			
DE	0.682	0.417		0.365		0.917			
AL	0.687	0.427		0.387		0.931			
LTCR	0.709	0.448		0.387		0.941			
ST	0.569	0.308		0.331		0.580			
AT	0.652	0.387		0.174		0.947			

N=387; Cronbach's alpha is reported on the diagonal

*Hair et al. (2010: 654); ** Byrne (2010: 81)

I conducted a common method bias test by adding both the common latent factor (CLF) and social desirability marker to the CFA results (Richardson, Simmering, & Sturman, 2009). The difference in regression weights with and without CLF and marker

were below the recommended threshold of 0.20 (Richardson et al., 2009) suggesting that the CMB is not a significant threat. However, I used imputed CLF corrected estimates in my structural model in the final analysis as they are likely to result in more unbiased estimation.

The hypothesized relationships for the structural model were tested with a structural model. The structural model achieved adequate statistical fit: (CMIN/df = 1.815; $p = .142$; CFI = .998; TLI = .978; RMSEA = .046; PCLOSE = .456; SRMR = .010).

Findings

For the model sales performance using independent variables systems thinking, ambiguity tolerance, deep empathy, altruism, long-term customer orientation, and internal knowledge brokering $R^2 = 0.41$. For internal knowledge brokering (independent variables are systems thinking, ambiguity tolerance, deep empathy, altruism, and long-term customer orientation) $R^2 = 0.36$. The model explains acceptable amounts of variance for the endogenous variables. Overall, seven out of the nine hypotheses are supported. The model demonstrates a positive and significant path between internal knowledge brokering and sale performance ($\beta = .29$; $p < .001$), which **supports H1**. A positive and significant relationship is observed between systems thinking ($\beta = .17$; $p < .001$) and sales performance as well as between systems thinking and internal knowledge brokering ($\beta = .39$; $p < .001$) (**H2 and H3 are supported**). Ambiguity tolerance was found not to have a significant impact on internal knowledge brokering ($\beta = .00$; NS) (**H4 unsupported**). Another significant finding is between empathy and sales performance ($\beta = .29$; $p < .001$) and empathy and internal knowledge brokering ($\beta = .15$; $p < .001$)

(**Supporting H5 and H6**). A hypothesis for altruism and sales performance (H7) was **not supported** ($\beta = -.46$; $p < .001$). In contrast, the relationship is significant but negative. Finally, both long-term customer orientation and sale performance ($\beta = .25$; $p < .001$) and long-term customer orientation and internal knowledge brokering ($\beta = .16$; $p < .002$) are significant (**H8 and H9 supported**). A summary of the hypothesis testing can be found in Table 3.

Controls

The analysis was controlled for experience and sales cycle. There was a negative significant relationship between experience and sales performance ($\beta = -.01$; $p < .02$). However, there was no significant relationship between experience and internal knowledge brokering and sales cycle and sales performance.

Table 4. Summary of Hypotheses

<i>Hypothesis</i>	<i>Standardized Estimate</i>	<i>p-value</i>	<i>Supported / Not Supported</i>
<i>H1: Internal knowledge brokering positively affects sales performance.</i>	0.29	***	Yes
<i>H2: Systems thinking positively affects sales performance.</i>	0.17	**	Yes
<i>H3: Systems thinking positively affects internal knowledge brokering.</i>	0.39	***	Yes
<i>H4: Ambiguity tolerance positively affects internal knowledge brokering.</i>	0.00	NS	No
<i>H5: Empathy positively affects sales performance.</i>	0.29	***	Yes
<i>H6: Empathy positively affects internal knowledge brokering.</i>	0.15	***	Yes
<i>H7: Altruism positively affects sales performance.</i>	-0.46	***	No (negative)
<i>H8: Long-term customer orientation positively affects sales performance.</i>	0.25	***	Yes
<i>H9: Long-term customer orientation positively affects internal knowledge brokering.</i>	0.16	**	Yes

R² Dependent Variables = Sales Performance 0.41 & Internal Knowledge Brokering 0.36

P Value *** ≤ 0.001 ; ** ≤ 0.01 ; * ≤ 0.05

N= 387

Discussion

Literature has advanced tremendously in the past three decades on sales performance (Brown & Peterson, 1994; Churchill et al., 1985; Verbeke et al., 2011). The previous attention on sales performance drivers has been focused on salespeople's direct customer-oriented behaviors. Despite over 30 years of sales performance scholarship, our ability to explain meaningful differences in variance is disappointing (see Churchill et al., 1985; Rich, Bommer, MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Johnson, 1999; Verbeke et al., 2011; Vinchur, Schippmann, Switzer III, & Roth, 1998). Generally, sales performance models explain about 10-20% of the variance (Plouffe & Barclay, 2007). Recent research has proposed that intra-organizational networks (Bolander et al., 2015), and internal knowledge brokering behaviors and its effect on selling new products and developing new business in the context of discovering whether a genetic link determines a salesperson's internal brokering qualities (Berg et al., 2014) would improve sales performance. While Bolander and colleagues' (2015) model was able to explain 26.6% of the variance in sales performance, broadening the prior models of customer-oriented behaviors, I argue there is still opportunity to explain more. I posit that my study extends the sales performance literature by addressing the gap(s) in the literature concerning creative cognitive approaches and behaviors coupled with internal knowledge brokering in sales performance.

My study offers strong empirical evidence that specific cognitive orientations and related behaviors of B2B salespeople explain 41% of their variance in sales performance. Most of the hypotheses were supported demonstrating that while customer-oriented approaches lack the explanatory power, systems-savvy selling related constructs emerge

as strong predictors and provide salespeople and sales managers with novel cognitive approaches and behaviors to improve sales performance.

This research supports that systems-savvy selling (an approach through which salespeople engage with design attitude) has predictive validity. This provides new and novel insights into effective selling behaviors that include internal knowledge brokering. I did not include all the design attitude dimensions into my model as my focus is on the cognitive orientation and related heuristics (Amatullo, 2015). Also, I want to understand better the causal relationships between internal knowledge brokering and sales performance. I found systems thinking to be a better construct than connecting multiple perspectives in explaining the problem-solving process in which the selling process remains “liquid and open” and problems are (re)framed, where basic assumptions are questioned, and new assumptions are celebrated in pursuit of developing the best solutions for the customers (Collopy & Boland, 2004). My effort here focuses on the cognitive and behavioral orientations that salespeople bring to problem-solving. Thereby this study contributes to the emerging sales literature by demonstrating the influence of design attitude’s cognitive and behavioral dimensions on sales outcomes.

This paper empirically confirms the relationships between systems thinking and design thinking as part of the same nomological network. Extending Amatullo’s (2015) work and augmenting Pourdehnad et al.’s (2011) effort, I inform the Design Thinking, Systems Thinking, and Sales community that when salespeople apply systems-savvy selling (think and behave like designers (little “d”) enhanced by systems thinking), there is a shift in perspective from parts to the whole where mental models shed their mechanistic, nonsystemic thinking allowing for the emergence of process thinking or

what Capra and Luisi (2014) describe as perceiving the world as an “interconnected web of relationships.” These findings suggest the systems-savvy selling lens facilitates the salesperson to see organizations as living systems in which the interplay between perspectives (holistic and parts) influences internal knowledge networks, and mobilizes knowledge resources to provide high-value services and solutions (Foote, Galbraith, Hope, & Miller, 2001). These findings provide empirical support that by tapping into systems-savvy selling’s constructs: empathy, systems thinking, and long-term customer orientation, salespeople have a better way to understand why the proposed product is meaningful to the customers as their understanding tap more likely into their latent needs. Salespeople are no longer left rudderless in a sea of sales complexity, but rather empowered with the tools to synthesize data differently (contextualize and bind problem-set) to navigate the turbulent selling waters. This study suggests by applying system-savvy selling salespeople will be able to get under the skin of the customers and feel the world as they experience it (Nussbaum, 2005).

Further, aligned with my expectations, the results confirm the positive effect internal knowledge brokering has on sales performance. This is consistent with Berg et al.’s (2014) and Plouffe and Barclay’s (2007) claim that a salesperson’s proclivity to perform intrafirm exploratory navigation is critical for securing heterogeneous information to advance effective selling performance. Whereas Berg et al.’s (2014) study focused on new product development and Plouffe and Barclay’s (2007) results were limited in that it was a conceptual contribution, I found clear and positive support of the impact that internal knowledge brokering on sales performance.

My study data indicates that systems-savvy selling enhances knowledge brokering with an internal audience as salespeople's view intra-organizational networks as systems of relationships embedded in larger networks of the organization from which to glean and leverage problem-finding and problem-solving information. For system thinking, context is everything (Capra & Luisi, 2014). For the system thinking salesperson, contextual thinking is that these internal relationships are key to gaining new insights and approaches to better selling outcomes. While my conceptual lens is augmented by system-savvy selling, my position is consistent with (Ryals & Humphries, 2007), that relationships and behaviors within a salesperson's organization—particularly as it pertains to internal knowledge brokering—may be even more important in determining sales performance than those outside the organization. My study now provides empirical support for this discussion.

These knowledge-based antecedents shift the selling paradigm from objective to an epistemic framework—the method of questioning—as salespeople see the sales environment as a web of relationships or as a living social systems self-generating networks of communication creating thoughts and meaning through which new emergent behavior, collective identity, and novel ideas surface as they use creative cognitive approaches to solving unexpected situations (Capra, 2004).

Interestingly, I found ambiguity tolerance to have no significant impact on internal knowledge brokering within my model. In contrast, I see that it has a high negative correlation with sales performance. This might suggest that salespeople who look at the selling system as a web of relations or from a multilevel perspective find ambiguity tolerance unimportant or inversely related to the function of intrafirm

knowledge brokering. Another possible explanation is that B2B salespeople possess what we dub as a “mental callous” to ambiguity tolerance as they operate within a world where problems are unclear, shifting and intertwined. Many sales processes are filled with incomplete, dubious and conflicting data. To resolve much of this confusion, salespeople create mechanisms or what Weick (1995) calls sensemaking giving focus to the uncertainty.

Finally, my study finds altruism, a congruent impact of empathy, to have a significant but negative relationship with sales performance. This contrasts with my conceptualization of this construct and with other studies that find altruism as an important dimension to OCB (MacKenzie et al., 1998; MacKenzie et al., 1993). I based my initial logic on my qualitative study (St. Clair, 2016) where high-performing B2B salespeople focused on the needs of their customers. However, this negative relationship could be caused by the fact that my sales performance measure did not include longer temporal horizon like customer retention rates, overall customer satisfaction and other quality of relationship metrics how altruism is factored into influencing those outcomes.

Practical Implications

All salespeople face an array of obstacles in meeting customer and organization needs. This research provides sales managers a novel approach to improving sales performance—an approach which is necessary as the boundary spanning functions of sales have evolved to knowledge brokering, solution generation and testing and related co-creation of value. Presently, there is a need to examine the process thinking skills that salespeople apply to improve their sales performance through innovative solutions (Dickson et al., 2009). This work empirically demonstrates that B2B salespeople can

better their sales performance through the effective application of creative cognitive approaches and techniques; similar to those ascribed to “systems-savvy selling.” B2B sales managers should develop their sales models around these behavioral dimensions. They should look to encourage their salespeople to become design thinkers (little “d”) to elevate their thinking to see a designer’s ability to continually (re)frame and (re)define the problem-solving space as a “reflective” practitioner (Schön, 1983), taking innovative leaps and generating multiple viewpoints to understand the customer’s visible and latent needs, combining strategic intent with value (Boyer, Cook, & Steinberg, 2011), considering issues holistically and seeing the world as a community of feedback loops (Meadows & Wright, 2008). These innovative techniques will embolden and equip the salespeople to *think differently* (new thinking), in which they question the way the problem is being represented (Collopy & Boland, 2004), by refining, articulating and delivering alternative courses of actions to problems and challenges to improve sales performance.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

As with all research, this study should be interpreted considering a few limitations. The design attitude psychometric scales used in this study, many of which are new, have never been used in this combination or this context. I acknowledge that some caution should be exercised with the measures, particularly, the AT and ST constructs as there were issues with convergent and discriminant validity. Furthermore, my sales performance construct focuses on shorter-term sales metrics (e.g., quickly generating sales of new products) does not necessarily capture long-term impacts of cognitive behaviors.

I call upon future scholarship to develop and test theories of the sales performance construct to include dimensions (e.g., high margin sales calls, customer retention rates, customer satisfaction, quality of customer relationships and value co-creation orientation) coupled with the more conventional outputs (e.g., achieving sales volumes and targets) to provide a more context-specific construct. Also, I would like to encourage future research to develop a better understanding of sales performance predictors across various sales context. For instance, in my study, I found a negative relationship between altruism and sales performance using short-term metrics. I suggest that if longer-horizon dimensions were to be added to sales performance, I might see altruism being a more positive predictor of sales performance. Future research may also explore mediating factors related to the constructs tested herein.

Conclusion

This research quantifies system-savvy dimensions and shows that they positively impact sales performance. Internal knowledge-brokering enhances salespeople's intra-organizational networks as relationships and behaviors. A salesperson's internal organization may be even more important in determining sales performance than those outside the organization. These unique contributions equip managers with new tools to thrive in today's world of sales in which complexity and turbulence are widespread. I am excited about providing salespeople and sales managers the opportunity to enhance their sales performance models through the application of the creative cognitive approaches and techniques this research has outlined. I encourage sales leaders to look to this study as I have empirically tested the key drivers of contemporary sales performance.

CHAPTER 4: THE EFFECT OF DESIGN ATTITUDE, VALUE CO-CREATION, AND TECHNOLOGY USE ON LONG-TERM SALES PERFORMANCE

Introduction

Sales process in the digital economy is shifting salespersons roles and tasks to understand and manage customer relationships in contrast to executing related transactions holistically (Hagel, Brown, & Davison, 2009). Several galvanizing events explain the change including globalization of markets, fast-changing technology, shifting consumer habits, and social media (Moncrief, 2017). The abundance of digitally mediated sales and customer information and multiple sales channels are also changing the roles and processes related to sales. As a result, sales personnel have become increasingly removed from transactional aspects of sales and have a less direct influence on customer's final purchasing decisions (Zoltners et al., 2012). The focus of the salesperson is moving toward following the customer, anticipating their concerns and pain points, and finding proactive solutions to their problems. This has also resulted in a shift from measuring a salesperson's performance in the short-term—based on transactions—toward capturing and rewarding sales performance in terms of long-term impacts reflected in customer loyalty, cumulative net benefit over the customer relationship, or salesperson's capability to retain and acquire new customers in the long term (Blocker et al., 2012).

This significant shift is also changing how sales organizations understand and evaluated business-to-business (B2B) sales performance and establish performance metrics for their sales workforce (Bolander et al., 2015; Evans et al., 2012). Much of the existing sales research on which actual performance metrics are founded hinges on relatively narrow and increasingly irrelevant models of sales performance (Jones et al.,

2005; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005) that draw upon transaction orientation using a relatively mechanistic seven-step idea of a selling process (Dubinsky, 1981; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005). Consequently, the understanding of sales drivers and related performance metrics requires significant revision, because sales process and tasks are moving towards creating interactions with long-term effects between the buyer and the seller (Jones et al., 2005).

In the recent decades, technology has become an integral part of the selling process. Particularly, technology usage among sales personnel has significantly altered methods and steps of selling (Rapp, Agnihotri, & Forbes, 2008): salespeople no longer sell a single set of products and execute related transactions. All these steps are either automated, customer based, or strongly technology-mediated. Because of this, salespeople need to focus more on value creation and curating customer relationships and draw on related and different kind technology support (Rapp et al., 2008). Research also suggests that these new sales technologies have a strong impact on how salespeople use information about their customers facilitating their understanding and anticipation of customer problems and concerns (Ahearne, Jones, Rapp, & Mathieu, 2008; Hunter & Perreault, 2006). However, we have little knowledge of the roles of sales technology use among the salesperson in influencing long-term sales performance.

Due to these changes, marketing scholars are now increasingly limited in their ability to explain variance in sales performance (Bolander et al., 2015; Plouffe et al., 2010). Most studies explain a modest 10–20% variance (Bolander et al., 2015; Plouffe et al., 2010) suggesting that the traditional organizational and behavioral determinants of

sales performance are not as straightforward as once believed and the true predictors remain poorly understood (Evans et al., 2012; Plouffe et al., 2010; Schrock et al., 2016).

I contend in this paper that the old measures and their explanations can and need to be challenged. The gap in how to well measure sales performance and explain its drivers needs to be filled with new explorations. This study seeks to address some of this challenge in that it examines alternative, novel explanations to account for long-term sales performance. To this end, I explore the salesperson's capability to relate to, understand and generate genuine solutions to customer's problems—what is called design attitude and related behaviors—and analyze to what extent they explain long-term sales performance. I also ask how design attitude drives value co-creation with the customer and salespeople's effective use of technology and to what extent these processes, when present, additionally improve sales performance. Overall, the goal of this research is to better understand current novel drivers of sales performance in the contemporary, complex, hypercompetitive, digital selling environment (Evans et al., 2012). The overall research question for the study is: How does design attitude, as mediated by value co-creation, and technology use influence B2B long-term sales performance? By addressing these questions I: 1) propose a new way of measuring sales performance that is better aligned with the complexities of contemporary selling tasks and processes; 2) introduce and unpack the design attitude construct and validate its significant effect on long-term sales performance; and 3) detect the mediating influences of value co-creation and sales technology use between design attitude on long-term sales performance.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. First, I review the key theories and concepts that underlie my key hypotheses that build up the research model.

Next, a detailed description of the survey research design including the analysis of measurement validity is discussed. Then, my findings are reported followed by a discussion of the results. Finally, I discuss the relevance of my findings to current research and practice with a review of limitations and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical Framing and Hypotheses Development

Marketing researchers have for a long time with varying success studied factors that influence sales performance (Churchill et al., 1985; Evans et al., 2012; Verbeke et al., 2011). Overall, they have reached a consensus that selling related knowledge, degree of adaptiveness, role ambiguity, cognitive aptitude and work engagement are significant determinants that drive individual sales performance. Prior studies have also confirmed that frontline B2B salespeople's learning orientation (Sujan et al., 1994), customer orientation (Franke & Park, 2006; Weitz et al., 1986), adaptive selling (Weitz et al., 1986), hardworking (Brown & Peterson, 1994; Silver et al., 2006), intrinsic motivation (Bodla & Naeem, 2014; Oliver & Anderson, 1994) and technical expertise (Verbeke et al., 2011) have a positive influence on sales performance. However, the research has failed to detect and account for new drivers for sales performance characteristic to contemporary complex selling contexts (Verbeke et al., 2011).

The selling process is an intrinsically complex phenomenon because it ultimately depends on salespeople solving problems through personal exchanges (Leigh et al., 2014; Weitz et al., 1986). According to Weitz et al. (1986), "Salespeople, like other experts in problem-solving situations, operate in an extremely complex domain" (p. 178). However, this traditionally multifaceted endeavor has become even more challenging as a result of new developments in B2B markets in recent years. As a result of this shift, the old sales

performance determinants do not work: a) they have focused on explaining short-term transactional performance and are no longer reflective of today's selling realities; and b) they focus on the factors that influence customer reactions to selling (positive reaction to the salesperson's behaviors) but this is not enough as customers are better informed than ever, the problems are dynamic and shifting, and due to technologies salespeople need to add value in some other way than creating a transaction. Accordingly, the contemporary full-cycle B2B selling process places increasing emphasis on establishing collaborative relationships resulting in value co-creation where final solutions are developed jointly (Grönroos & Helle, 2010; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This has decreased the significance and value of the traditional transaction-based selling process which involved brief interactions and attempts to engage with mechanistic and one-size-fits-all solutions (Crosby et al., 1990; Delvecchio et al., 2004; Hunter & Perreault, 2007; Weitz & Bradford, 1999).

As a result of this legacy, mechanistic and linear-based thinking has been and continues to be the dominant approach in addressing sales processes. de Lurdes Veludo, Purchase, and Macbeth (2001: 1) noted that “most empirical studies fail to catch complexity of business interactions,” and Lowe (2001: 1) criticizes that the majority of extant marketing research fails to address current reality because it “...involves reducing complexity to the atomized measurable, foundational certainties.” As a result, much of the measures seek to optimize the parts of the sales rather than the whole. This view also loses sight of the crucial components of the selling process as a system, the *interactions* between its constituent parts. Accordingly, processes of value co-creation—exchanges between the buyers and seller as collaborators to create unique value are easily overlooked. Sales organizations, therefore, need a lens to zoom in and out of the holistic

system as to understand better the role of different parts, their interactions and how the system behaves holistically in the long-term.

Long-Term Sales Performance

It has been and remains a challenge to measure appropriately the level of success in sales management at the individual level (Ingram, LaForge, Locander, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2005). The extant literature reveals many ways to measure sales performance. But there is limited agreement between academics and practitioners as to what matters in capturing the performance. Most metrics are based on the sales volume and quota levels and express short-term transaction based metrics. This is no longer adequate in the current sales environment in B2B settings.

All these measures assume a goods-dominant view where the product forms the primary unit of value exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2004). If we accept the premise that contemporary salespeople act more like knowledge brokers and focus on transforming heterogeneous information into value-laden customer solutions, then the temporal aspects and dimensions of sales performance need to align with the potential effects of such activities. Current dynamic disruption, where the customer is becoming not just connected but hyperconnected, indicates that sales metrics need to be aligned with such customer success metrics. The current disruptive environment demands salespeople (and managers) change the way they view and measure sales performance from transactional to relational based metrics which tap into to what extent salespeople can retain and acquire long-term satisfied customers. Therefore, I identify attitudinal and behavioral measures of customer satisfaction and loyalty as dimensions that capture long-term performance in customer relationships. I posit that a combination of customer satisfaction

and loyalty to be strong indicators of such performance. Satisfaction forms a fundamental gauge for the overall relationship performance (Oliver & Rust, 1994) and reflects the value of both economic and non-economic dimensions (Geyskens, Steenkamp, & Kumar, 1999) of the relationships (Lam, Shankar, Erramilli, & Murthy, 2004). Customer loyalty reflects a customer's long-term purchasing behavior such as repurchasing intention, contract renewals and the overall intent to continue the business relationship (Gustafsson, Johnson, & Roos, 2005). Accordingly, these dimensions in combination tap into key aspects of long-term value creation and value appropriation within customer relationships (Blocker et al., 2012) and ultimately reflect long-term sales performance.

Design Attitude (DA) (Independent Variable)

Herbert Simon's (1969) classic, *The Sciences of the Artificial*, argues that humans have a limited cognitive capacity for reasoning while seeking a solution (Boland and Collopy (2004). He also classifies cognitive process of information search, (intelligence), design (alternative generation) and decision (choice) as the prime cognitive orientations to reach a solution. So far, the decision attitude focused on choice—not the design attitude focused on alternative generation—has dominated most management and selling practices. The perspective addresses business problems by offering means to make (rational) choices among alternatives and heuristics to reach a rational decision (such as purchase decision). However, such analytic approaches share a weakness in that they assume that all alternative courses of action are already at hand (Boland & Collopy, 2004). In consequence, a decision attitude advances solution that fails to see holistically latent customer needs by endorsing middle-of-the-road and short-term outcomes. They can even lead to devastating consequences as they often fail to see unintended

consequences of the proposed short-term solutions. Simon (1996) concludes that if we endeavor towards a design and search for alternative solutions with ultimate goals of ongoing improvement, this opens possibilities that would not otherwise emerge (Boland & Collopy, 2004). Therefore, I posit that design attitude forms an inherent element of the sales function's cognitive orientation as it enables it to generate a wider range of solutions that can make sales more successful in the long term (Wang & Netemeyer, 2004).

Design attitude is a multi-dimensional construct and outlines a cognitive framework in which salespeople bring certain expectations and cognitive orientations to customer related problem-solving (and seeking) by demonstrating passion to bringing those solutions to life (Boland & Collopy, 2004). I identify three dimensions that underlie design attitude as a cognitive orientation: systems thinking, creativity, and passion to solve and serve. While each dimension is individually powerful in moving sales to addressing a broader set of solutions, in combination, they constitute a holistic cognitive and affective orientation to sales. Systems thinking as part of design attitude seeks out and secures multiple viewpoints; passion to solve fuels salesperson's intrinsic motivation and affect to uncover the "why" and "what" matters to the customer; while creativity promotes constructing and delivering novel solutions. These dimensions work in concert by engaging salespersons in a "robust and recursive process of collecting and interpreting evidence, designing novel courses of action and testing multiple ideas" (Boland et al., 2008: 12).

Systems Thinking

System thinking involves seeing situations holistically and dynamically bounded. The perspective opens new viewpoints and removes cognitive barriers for a novel solution search. Per Churchman (1968: 231), “the systems approach begins when first you see the world through the eyes of another” and forms “the art and science of making reliable inferences about behavior by developing an increasingly deep understanding of underlying structure” (Richmond, 1994: 139). In the sales context, systems thinking can be viewed as a mode of reasoning which opens space for richer solutions that would not have been discovered by linear and reductionist thinking (Cavaleri, 2005). Systems thinking enhances overall sales performance through its ability to identify complex, dynamic sales processes. It improves the salesperson’s understanding of the customer context and helps respond to their emerging and latent needs (Schlange, 1995). It advances knowledge creation activities that promote double-loop learning where knowledge is both learned and unlearned (i.e., emerges from the system), and where feedback loops create an adaptive system prone to change (in this case understanding the customer’s behavioral context) (Argyris, 1993; Argyris & Schön, 1997).

Creativity

The pursuit of novelty forms part of any successful solution search and thus affects positively long terms sales performance (Amabile, 1988; Csikszentmihalyi, 1988, 1997; Csikszentmihalyi & LeFevre, 1989). Research of the effects of creativity on sales has been surprisingly lacking (Evans et al., 2012; Wang & Netemeyer, 2004) though it has been found to be a significant antecedent to value creation and effective relationships management (Groza, Locander, & Howlett, 2016; Lassk & Shepherd, 2013; Miao &

Wang, 2016). Design attitude's questioning of given solution assumptions is a manifestation of creativity (Boland et al., 2008: 9). Consequently, as an element of design attitude creativity encourages salespeople to identify novel ways to meet the needs of a customer and to tailor related alternative solutions.

Creative behaviors are characterized by a "flow state" where a person becomes fully engaged in overcoming a challenge. The "flow" is a state where a salesperson is a temporarily psychologically merged with the activity because it produces positive feelings such as enjoyment and enthusiasm (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997). One reason for this is that creative behaviors attract new forms of learning and develop new skills to tackle challenges (Csikszentmihalyi, 1975, 1997).

Passion

Passion to solve and serve affect are the third dimension of design attitude. Passion fuels motivational forces (i.e., positive feelings) that drive salespeople to interact with customers with a deeper commitment to generate better results. The joy and excitement salespeople exhibit when designing, deploying, and supporting solutions that make their customers look better and improve their business is motivated by a salesperson affect derived from passion. When salespeople solve customer problems, they experience a positive affect which reinforces their identity as skilled problem solvers and caretakers (Burke & Fiksenbaum, 2009; Isen & Reeve, 2005). Such passion fuels design attitude's orientation towards improving the world which is now attached to salesperson's personal identity and commitments. The affect dimensions of *passion to serve* and *passion to solve* provide us with an account of motivational drivers that lead salespeople to engage in a search for systemic solutions. Salespeople who express

positive affect—(“I love solving difficult problems (Solve)...”; “I love helping customers look better (serve)...”)—while interacting with customers experience reinforcing feedback loop in their behaviors to engage more in similar behaviors. As a result, they will consistently approach customers through understanding “what” matters to customers and “why” (Crawford, 2016).

Value Co-Creation

In a service-centered model dominating interactions with customers knowledge and skills have become the foundations of improved value creation—value is now created collaboratively within interactive practices between customers (Lusch & Vargo, 2006). The customer is now a co-creator of the value and forms a vital link within the sales process that adds value—not anymore a passive recipient of value gained through the product being transacted. Consequently, the B2B salesperson and the customer can co-create value through the application of approaches and techniques that enhance the joint search for better solutions—similar to those underlying design attitude. This results in jointly co-created solutions which yield long-term returns towards jointly constructed relationship-based value propositions.

Sales Technology Use

When B2B salespeople are tasked with solution focused value generation, this encompasses a spectrum of information-intensive activities that examine and make sense of the customer’s business model and overall business environment. I define sales technology use herein as access, analysis and communication of information about products, sales calls, orders, sales, accounts, and the like which are likely to influence the salesperson’s selling behaviors and thus sales performance. Therefore, sales technologies

which support such information related activities are likely to be influenced by design attitude and also influence related customer interactions and therefore influence sales performance. Today, the professional salesperson have at their fingertips an array of communication devices and applications accessible through their tablet or smartphones including blogs, wikis, social networking sites, data warehouses and near-market technology capabilities (Limbu, Jayachandran, & Babin, 2014). Contemporary salespeople utilize a range of communication technologies including social media, mobile internet technology that go beyond the classical recording functions of CRM, and SFA and can potentially improve sales outcomes (Hunter & Perreault, 2006; Marshall, Moncrief, Rudd, & Lee, 2012). We know from past research that many forms of sales technologies can now be utilized to understand the customer better and forge stronger customer bonds (Hunter & Perreault, 2006).

Hypothesis Development

The Effect of Design Attitude on Sales Performance

Design attitude fosters deeper listening and dialogue towards the customer's latent needs (Michlewski, 2015). It is also grounded in emotional reactions to improve problem-solving capabilities. In the B2B context, such passion manifests itself in a salesperson's ability to better 'work out' what goes on in customers' minds and care for this. Design attitude also fosters salespeople's ambiguity tolerance and allows them to cut through the "noise" in an ambiguous selling environment. Salespeople can discern the dubious and imperfect information better and understand what influences customer's behaviors (Senge, 2006). Accordingly, salespeople are more likely to refrain from the myopic approach to push product features and benefits and to focus on grasping

customer's mental model as to determine what's important and to identify the highest leverage points that address customer's concerns (Boland & Collopy, 2004: 7).

Successful salespeople also take a "systems approach" to selling by framing customer problems in a "personal way" (Cross, 2011: 75). When salespeople act like designers, they are more likely to focus on creating novel value through more unconstrained exploration by combining their design-related skills, attitudes, and behaviors (Michlewski, 2008). Accordingly, design attitude offers a guiding heuristic to treat holistically customer problems and forms an antecedent of sales performance (St. Clair et al. 2016 & 2017). I therefore posit:

Hypothesis 1. Design attitude positively affects long-term sales performance.

The Mediating Effect of Value Co-Creation between Sales Performance and Design Attitude

A recent study found that dimensions of design attitude have a strong and significant effect on sales performance (St. Clair, Lyytinen, Hunter, & Cola, 2017). Additionally, several studies have demonstrated a strong connection between design attitude and value co-creation (Cooper & Press, 1995; Nussbaum, 2004; Press & Cooper, 2017). Conceptually, I posit that design attitude positively influences value co-creation by keeping the "problem-solving process fluid and open" between the salesperson and the customer leading to (re)framing customer's problem assumptions (Boland & Collopy, 2004: 9-10). This leads to novel and alternative approaches to explore the problem space. In turn, value co-creation has additional value-adding effects by improving the salesperson's ability to better sense customer needs, communicate and anticipate superior solutions, creating a long-term trust that enables a better understanding of actual solutions in order to improve long-term sales performance. Therefore, I propose:

Hypothesis 2. Value Co-Creation partially mediates the positive effect of design attitude on long-term sales performance

The Mediating Effect of Sales Technology Use between Sales Performance and Design Attitude

The design attitude seeks to reduce cognitive biases (Beckman & Barry, 2007). This can be fostered if salespeople have access and deploy sales technologies to access, analyze, and communicate customer related information whereby they can better understand the customer and his context and promote related solutions. Numerous studies demonstrate that sales technology use improve sales performance (Ahearne et al., 2008; Hunter & Panagopoulos, 2015; Hunter & Perreault, 2006; Hunter & Perreault, 2007). We also know that multiple forms of ST are utilized daily to generate value and forge stronger customer bonds. The information implied by design attitude will also improve sales performance. Sales is now largely data-driven, enabled by digital tools and advanced analytics (Colter, Guan, Mahdavian, Razzaq, & Schneider, 2018). The effects of these tools are strengthened by design attitude's call to uncover the what, why, and when of the customer. In turn, the interplay between sales technology use and design attitude reinforce continually questioning the taken-for-granted assumptions that underpin customer's mental models and behaviors to design the "right" selling process better. I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3. Sales Technology Use partially mediates the positive effect of design attitude on long-term sales performance.

Moderating Effect of Environmental Complexity on the Effect of Design Attitude and Co-Creation towards Sales Performance

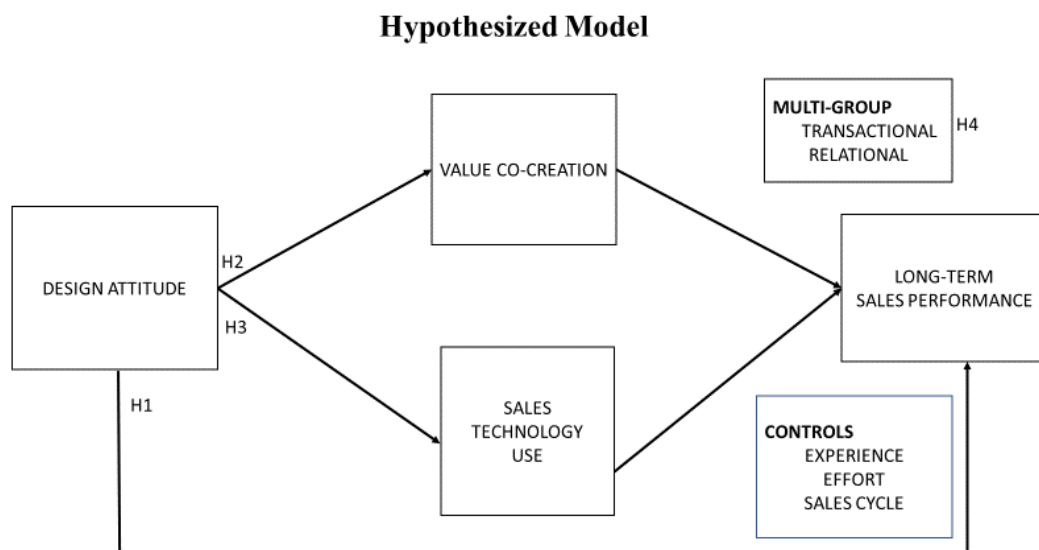
Salespeople have to respond to constant shifts in varying environments characterized by technological innovation, radical changes in buyer's preferences and

overall changing customer needs (Sharma, Iyer, & Evanschitzky, 2008). I, therefore, posit that the effects of design attitude as being mediated by value co-creation on sales performance will be stronger in complex settings. Blocker et al. (2012: 19) argue that as the selling environment becomes much more complex, salespeople must participate in more relational or transformational activities rather than transactional activities with their customers to fulfill both “expressed and latent needs” and drive long-term sales performance. Accordingly, I posit, in the homogenous and stable selling environments, the effects are smaller as design attitude does not have a similar effect on value co-creation, nor value co-creation on sales performance. I also posit then the mediating effects are no longer present as salespeople can sell products directly when the environment is simple (transactional). Thus, I propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4. The positive effect of value co-creation on design attitude and long-term sales performance is stronger for high selling (relational) group compared to the low selling (transactional) group.

I summarize the proposed mediated research model in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Hypothesized Model



Methods

I carried out a survey-based study to validate the proposed research model. Data was collected from frontline B2B salespeople across the spectrum of industries and markets (e.g., high-tech, industrial products, professional services, healthcare, insurance, finance, and pharmaceutical) using perceptual measures regarding their interactions with customers and related success. I wanted to make these results generalizable regardless of industries and markets and therefore controlled for such effects.

Measures

The study employed validated measures modified to elicit the B2B salesperson responses to specified constructs. All constructs were reflective constructs, and I chose to adapt a 5-point Likert-type scale with responses ranging from “1 = strongly disagree” to “5 = strongly agree.” My survey consisted of 65 items: 55 were adapted from existing scales; 10 were reserved for demographics.

Dependent Variable: Long-Term Sales Performance (LTSP, Reflective, 10 Items). The Performance Scales of Albinsson, Perera, and Sautter (2016) and Palmatier, Scheer, and Steenkamp (2007) were combined to assess the respondent’s perception of their long-term sales performance. I asked salespeople to self-evaluate, their ability to satisfy customers’ needs and to secure loyalty. There is little consensus in previous scholarship whether job performance should be measured through subjective evaluations by managers, customers, coworkers or the salespeople themselves, objective data-based metrics, or a combination (Churchill et al., 1985). Although Verbeke et al. (2011) call for sales researchers to “develop and test theories about the conceptual multidimensionality of the sales performance construct” (p. 425), there is support for the appropriateness of

using self-evaluations in assessing salespeople performance (Gonzalez et al., 2014). An example from the 10-item scale is “I believe customers are satisfied with the services provided.”

Independent Variable: Design Attitude. The latent variable of design attitude for this study was measured using the constructs of systems thinking, creativity, and passion. Systems thinking (SYS) (Reflective, 4 Items). The systems thinking scales captures that the sales environment and human endeavors “are bound by invisible fabrics of interrelated actions” (Senge, 2006: 7). For the development of my scale, I adapted items to the B2B sales domain derived from a scale that had been tested within the healthcare field for the same purpose the Systems Thinking Scale (STS) (Moore et al., 2010). An example of a scale item is “I think proposed changes can affect the whole system.” Creativity (CRE) (Reflective, 4 Items). I adapted Amatullo’s (2015) work which builds on both Michlewski studies (2008, 2015) where creativity is defined as “playfully bringing things to life” and Amabile et al. (1996) in which creativity is defined as the capability to produce novel and valuable ideas. I adapted Amatullo’s scale to the sales context; an example item is, “I am an out-of-the-box thinker.” Passion (PSEA & PSEAO) (Reflective, 8 Items). The passion scale was selected to capture the positive affects of B2B salespeople when they recognize that the needs of customers are understood through connecting on a personal level and proposing novel solutions aligned to customer’s needs. I modified my scale items from Crawford (2016) to measure the linkage between a B2B salesperson’s passion to serve and solve customers’ needs. An example item for the eight-item scale is “I feel excited when I create personal connections with customers.”

Mediators

Value Co-Creation (VCC) (Reflective, 5 items). Value Co-Creation was measured using the scale of Albinsson et al. (2016) was used to assess salespeople's behaviors towards value co-creation. I slightly adapted the scale to fit my context better but maintain it captures the development of long-term activities of which boundary-spanning employees who occupy a central role in relationship marketing undertake (Grönroos, 1994). An example from the five items scale is "I have many opportunities to share ideas with the customer about adding value to the service/product experience."

Sales Technology Use (TUSE) (Reflective, 3 Items). Sales Technology Use scales were adapted from Hunter and Perrault's (2007) bipolar adjective scales assessing the extent to which the B2B salesperson considers her use as routine, frequent, and emphasized along with the three purpose-specific uses of accessing, analyzing, and communication information to customers. An example item from the five-item scale is "Compared to other salespeople, my use of sales technology to (access, analyze or better understand, or communicate) information about products, sales calls, orders, sales, accounts, and the like is best described as..."

Multi-Group Moderator variable: transactional vs. relational with the environmental complexity context. Transactional vs. relational consists of a dichotomous variable coded as 1 for relational or higher complexity (112) and 0 for transactional (176) or lower complexity selling. I used market served as a proxy to assign an appropriate variable.

Control Variables: Experience (5 ranges < 6 to > 21years); Sales Cycle (5 ranges <3 to >36 months); Effort (ranges < 40 > 80 hours weekly). I included experience as

salespeople with more experience are sometimes less likely to participate in sourcing and communicating knowledge from and with colleagues about new ideas and customer needs. I included sales cycle as salespeople in longer horizon sales tend to have deeper relationships that drive the need to leverage exploratory orientation within their firm to develop the knowledge required for effective selling performance. Prior research suggests creativities cognitive orientation is related to work effort because a considerable amount of time and energy on the part of the salesperson is required for creativity to occur (Amabile et al., 1996).

Given 38 items total were used in the model, a sample ranging between 190 completed responses and 380 would be required for the study (Hair et al., 2010).

Therefore, the sample of 288 was considered adequate to test the model.

Instrument Development, Data Collection, and Sample

Pretests and sorting exercises were used to refine the adopted items and scales. An electronic Q-sort tool was carried out in which I mixed construct items and measured the predictor and criterion variables in different sections to create a psychological separation of measures (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011). The occurrence of cross-loadings was improved by adapting and removing items. After several iterations, the instrument was converged on the full set of items and achieved > 80% hit ratios for all items across the 10 participants (Bolton, 1993; Bolton & Bronkhorst, 1996). After completing the Q-sort, a pre-test was administered using an online survey to a six-person panel of professional B2B salespeople. The instrument, as well as the respondent answers, were reviewed to ensure their understanding of the questions matched my construct meaning. Several adjustments were made to improve clarity.

The instrument was deployed nationally on two separate occasions both utilizing Qualtrics, a popular online research platform. On the first deployment, relying on professional networks of the primary author, I distributed the survey to 2,826 B2B salespeople over a three-week period in November 2017. The population was selected based on respondents being a full-time B2B salesperson and in the United States. A total of 116 participants (4.1%) completed the survey. Additionally, a panel from Qualtrics of was employed for 200 additional participants using the criteria previously described. The second round of data collection took one week and was completed by the end of November 2017. To test for sampling bias, I conducted a Wave Analysis or Levine's Homogeneity of Variance Test and found the variance between groups to be equal or to have $p\text{-value} > .05$ (Levene, 1960). After merging the purchased panel of 200 and the collected 116 professional network data I came to 316; however, I removed 27 respondents because $>10\%$ of data missing, and 1 response set contained an outlier, the final sample was 288 after screening and cleaning responses. Table 5 is a summary of the sample's demographics.

Table 5. Demographical Information of Sample

Demographic	Variable	# of Respondents (out of 288)	% of Respondents (out of 100%)	Range	Mean / SD
Gender	Male	163	56.45%	NA	NA
	Female	125	43.55%	NA	NA
Ages				19-77	40.84 / 14.34
Education	4-year degree	124	42.58%	NA	NA
	Some College	116	40.64%	NA	NA
	Master's Degree or +	48	16.77%	NA	NA
Hours Per Week Worked				40-80 Hours	47.62 / 9.84
Sales Experience				1-50 years	14.13 / 12.76
Total Compensation *		50	17.42%	\$50-59,000	NA
		62	21.61%	\$100, 149,000	NA
		74	25.48%	\$150,000 +	NA
Bonus as % of Compensation				0-100	16.36/ 22.51
Commission as % of Compensation				0-100	27.84 / 37.27
Sales Cycle	Time in Months			0-120	7.34 / 9.48

* Top three salary ranges are represented

I find my sample's demographic profile to be consistent with the marketing literature in terms of sales experience, age, gender, education, and hours worked per week (Hunter & Perreault, 2007).

I used forced response and attention filters for the questions in my survey instrument. I added a speeding check mechanism (the median length of the interview was 7 minutes)—measured as 1/3 the median is taken at soft launch time—that automatically terminated those who were not responding thoughtfully. The data was examined for normality and found to be within acceptable parameters. There was one significant data outlier as identified by a Cook's distance test (> 1) (Cook, 1979) and this outlier was removed. Additionally, 27 respondent data sets were removed as $> 10\%$ of the data was missing (Hair et al., 2010). I also investigated skewness, kurtosis, and variance and found 2 of my 23 items were skewed ($> .3.0$), and 3 items had some kurtosis issues (> 2.0)

(Sposito, Hand, & Skarpness, 1983). I retained and monitored these items during further analysis. Finally, I investigated multicollinearity by testing the Variable Inflation Factor. The results showed all predictor variables had a VIF < 3.0 suggesting little threat of multicollinearity (Hair et al., 2010).

I performed EFA using Maximum Likelihood Factoring with Promax rotation (Hair et al. (2010). The dataset was adequate for factoring (KMO= .899; the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity significant $\chi^2 = 2314.275$; $df = 406$; $p = .000$) (Hair et al., 2010). The commonalities were all above 0.3 (save ST2 = .283) supporting "sufficient explanation" given the sample size (Hair et al., 2010: 117). I produced a final seven-factor model with the total variance explained 51.9%.; all factors loaded cleanly and within acceptable cross-loading thresholds; each factor's average loadings > 0.5 except for ST2 (.352) and 2% non-redundant residuals with an absolute value greater than .05. The pattern matrix is shown in Appendix C.

I conducted a CFA to validate the psychometric properties of the seven-factor model. I deleted CR4 because it reduced the average variance explained and imposed validity concerns. The final seven-factor model achieved adequate model fit (CMIN/df = 1.451; CFI = .968; TLI = .962; RMSEA = .038; PCLOSE = .976; SRMR = .0476), as shown in Table 2. The reliability and convergent and discriminant validity were evaluated using Composite Reliability (CR), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), and Average Shared Variance (ASV) (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1989). As shown in Table 6, reliability and convergent validity metrics reached acceptable thresholds on most factors except for Value Co-Creation (VAL), which do not meet the strict convergent validity thresholds. But since I found it to have strong

reliabilities and high interclass correlations and it is theoretically separate construct the analyses proceeded.

Table 6. Factor Correlations and CR, AVE, and MSV for CFA

Descriptive Statistics and Factor Correlations (2nd orders in bold)						
Variable	M	SD	PERF	VAL	DA	SLS TECH USE
PERF	0.000	0.922	0.951			
VAL	1.200	0.879	0.781	0.799		
DA	0.000	0.622	0.845	0.866	0.882	
SLS TECH USE	1.870	0.953	0.549	0.570	0.543	0.903
Validity and Reliability of CFA (2nd (in bold) and 1st Order Constructs)						
	CR		AVE		MSV	
PERF	0.950		0.904		0.714	
DA	0.912		0.778		0.750	
VAL	0.779		0.638		0.750	
SLS TECH USE	0.930		0.816		0.325	

N=288; Cronbach's alpha is reported on the diagonal

I analyzed the presence of common method by adding the common latent factor (CLF) to the CFA results (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2012; Richardson et al., 2009). The differences in regression weights with and without CLF and marker were below the recommended threshold of 0.20 in the final structural model (Richardson et al., 2009) suggesting that the CMB is not a significant threat. However, I used the CLF adjusted factor scores in the final structural model to attempt to correct for potentially biased estimates.

The hypothesized relationships for the structural model were tested with a structural model where the direct effects, controls, and mediated effects were added in a sequence. I tested the mediating effects using bootstrapping by running 2000 samples and using 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals (Preacher, 2015; Preacher & Hayes, 2008). The final structural model achieved adequate statistical fit: (CMIN/df = .582; $p = .745$;

CFI = .979; TLI= .969; RMSEA = .038; PCLOSE = .941; SRMR = .005)(Hu & Bentler, 1999).

Findings

A summary of the hypothesis testing can be found in Table 7. The final model predicted 53% of the variance in long-term sales performance, 50% for value co-creation, and 18% for sales technology. Overall, three out of the four hypotheses are supported.

The model demonstrates a positive and significant relationship between design attitude and long-term sale performance ($\beta = .41$; $p < .001$), **supports H₁**. Value Co-Creation was found to partially and positively mediate the effect of design attitude on long-term sales performance ($\beta = .602$; $p < .001$) (**H₂ is supported**). Sales technology use partially and positively mediated the effect of design attitude on long-term sales performance ($\beta = .462$; $p < .001$) and thus, **H₃ was supported**.

The results for multi-group moderation hypotheses indicated no difference between the two groups on this hypothesized moderation path ($b = .387$; $p = 0.001$ for the high selling group compared to $b = .362$; $p = 0.001$ for the low selling group). Thus, **H₄ was not supported**.

A comparison of these results indicates that the two groups are nearly identical when it comes to the impact of environmental complexity (based on effect size and probability) on the relationship between value co-creation on design attitude and long-term sales performance. Additionally, to verify that there was no difference between these groups, a chi-squared difference test was performed on the relational or high (1) versus transactional or low (0) complexity selling path models. On the model level, they were not different ($p=.945$). Subsequently, a chi-square difference test was

performed to determine which (if any) paths were significantly different between models. No pathways were found to be significantly different (Byrne, 2013; Preacher, Rucker, & Hayes, 2007). The analysis controlled for experience, effort and sales cycle. There was a positive and significant relationship through small effect between effort and long-term sales performance ($\beta = .008$; $p < .003$). However, there was no significant relationship between experience, effort, cycle on the other endogenous variables (value co-creation and sales technology use).

Table 7. Results of Hypotheses Testing

Results of Hypotheses Testing (N = 288)

Hypothesis	Direct Effects	Indirect Effects	Total Effects	Outcomes and Mediation Type Observed
H1: Design Attitude has a positive effect on long-term sales performance	.41***			Supported
H2: Value Co-Creation partially and positively mediates the effect of design attitude on long-term sales performance	.402***	.20***	.602***	Partial Mediation Supported
H3: Sales Technology Use partially and positively mediates the effect of design attitude on long-term sales performance	.402***	.06***	.0462***	Partial Mediation Supported
H4: The positive effect of value co-creation on design attitude and long-term sales performance is stronger for high selling (relational) group compared to the low selling (transactional) group	.387*** .362***			Not supported
Control Variables	CYCLE	EXPER	EFFORT	
Effects of controls on long-term sales performance	.05 (NS)	-0.018 (NS)	0.13**	
Squared Multiple Correlations for Endogenous Variables	LTSP	VCC	STU	
R2 values (% variance explained) p-value*** < = 0.001; ** < = 0.01; * < = 0.05	0.53	0.50	0.18	

Discussion

This research set out to understand sales performance in the new digital economy characterized by mounting performance pressures, constant change, perpetual disruption,

and increased complexity caused salespeople to transform how they understand and manage their customer relationships (Hagel et al., 2009). All these are shifting the concern from measuring short-term performance based on transactions toward longer-term impact reflected in customer loyalty, overall net benefit throughout the customer relationship, and capability to retain and acquire new customers in the long term. In particular, the complexity of the selling environment is forcing salespeople to shift from transactional behaviors to relational, knowledge-based solutions (Bettencourt, Ostrom, Brown, & Roundtree, 2002).

I contend that in the extant research, much of sale performance measures are poorly understood and limited in their explanatory power—typically 10–20% variance (Bolander et al., 2015)—because they are based on transactional sales models rooted in mechanistic thinking. I offer an alternative to these old measures that consider the challenges today’s salespeople face in the sales processes such as new technologies, new administrative duties, growing expectations from customers, increasingly complex customer relationships that unfold in a tumultuous marketplace.

The results support and demonstrate the importance of design attitude on sales performance. My study offers strong empirical evidence that value co-creation, sales technology use, and design attitude explain 53% of B2B salespeople variance in long-term sales performance 50% for value co-creation, and 18% for sales technology use. One novel and powerful explanation is the increased eminence of design attitude and related behaviors associated with sales, i.e., the salesperson’s capability to relate to, understand and generate novel solutions to customer’s problems. Thus, my study argues

that these are significant drivers of sales performance and account more of the sales performance than previous studies focused on short-term transactional antecedents.

Three of my four hypotheses were supported demonstrating a few key things. At a high level, the direct effect of design attitude on long-term sales performance highlights the importance of designer's capabilities as a distinct set of heuristics that deviate from linear aptitudes (Amatullo, 2015) for decision-making salespeople. Understanding that value co-creation (Blocker et al., 2012; Vargo & Lusch, 2004) and use of technology (Ahearne et al., 2008; Hunter & Panagopoulos, 2015; Hunter & Perreault, 2006; Hunter & Perreault, 2007) have aggressively infiltrated almost every aspect of selling, I theorize and demonstrate the importance of their joint effects with design attitude on long-term sales performance. Design attitude is even more effective in improving sales performance when influenced by the mediating mechanisms of value co-creation and sales technology use.

This reinforces my theory that design attitude's human-centered tenets promote collaboration and feedback loops (Argyris & Schön, 1997; Schön, 1983) between the seller and the customer to generate rich bi-directional value. My approach suggest when salespeople act as designers (big D) they work with what Rittel (1988) articulates as an "epistemic freedom" in which designers have the liberty to deviate from logic and reason and are comfortable with the unknown asking "right" questions and learning by doing (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Dewey, 1957) to improve the lives of customers.

I performed a multi-group analysis to understand "*when*" relational dynamics influence my model. I wanted to understand how the moderating effects of the partnership orientation (relational vs. transactional) would have on the link between

design attitude and value co-creation on sales performance. The chi-square difference test ($P=.742$) indicating the structural weights to be invariant between the two groups. This was surprising as these two groups by definition are different and as depicted in the relationship lifecycle (Dwyer et al., 1987) would behave differently especially regarding customer satisfaction loyalty and value co-creation.

Practical Implications

Faced with increased complexity, change and diversity, salespeople must look at the problem space differently. However, many have been peddled panaceas in the form of the latest selling fad away with “quick fix” solutions promised to win the day. While salespeople (and managers) quickly discover the *cost* of these relatively simple solutions, they are no closer to understanding the customer's needs than when they started. Fundamentally, simple solutions or quick and transactional solutions fail because they are not holistic or creative enough (Jackson, 2003).

Fads rooted in “best practices” stifle creativity and pander to the notion that there is a one-size-fits-all solution (decision attitude). In fact, sales scholars have argued that in today's highly competitive and turbulent business environment, organizations must take full advantage of their sales forces' creative potential to flourish and to survive (McAdam & Keogh, 2004; Rego, Sousa, Pina e Cunha, Correia, & Saur-Amaral, 2007; Wang & Netemeyer, 2004). This study equips salespeople (and managers) with a new way of thinking about sales performance.

As sales practitioners and scholars, we understand the sustained and differentiated value is no longer creative exclusively but rather through and with our customers. Thus, salespeople must think and behave differently. I offer that my model demonstrates the

importance of the professional buyer-seller relationships sharing of expectation, assumptions, and perceptions of trust, satisfaction, loyalty, and value. Value co-creation behaviors initiate and sustained engagement where the salespeople stay coupled to the customer to understand emerging needs, solution deployment and post-deployment requirements. My model does not suggest popular conventional sales models like adaptive or customer orientation selling (e.g. Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Weitz et al., 1986) are ineffective nor do I wish to supplant them. I do, however, argue that when dealing with emerging problems in which heterogeneous information is offered up by the complex DMUs (decision-making units), salespeople must have the ability to shift their focus from the parts to the whole, identify “what” matters and “why” it is important to the customer to generate novel solutions to customer’s problems. This research demonstrates the importance of salespeople approaching technology and value co-creation activities with the “right” mix (a specific learning framework) of cognitive affect and behavior characteristics.

Practitioners are spending billions annually by continuously upgrading and re-engineering (e.g., cloud-based or social CRM applications) the portfolio of sales techniques made available to salespeople to improve sales performance (Hunter & Panagopoulos, 2015). To achieve these outcomes, salespeople must find new ways to integrate an optimal set of technologies into a complex relational selling process (Hunter & Panagopoulos, 2015). My findings suggest that design attitude fosters the behavior mechanism in which salespeople embrace technology to communicate, analyze and better understand the customer’s needs to improve outcomes.

I contend that this study sheds light that B2B salespeople with high levels of design attitude are committed, question assumptions and contend with the organization and to their customers. These attributes lead to behaviors that drive sustained performance and generate value creation in a sustainable longitudinal fashion. Given that customer problems have become more challenging and required more customization, design attitude workers align well with challenges as they are internally motivated by their desire to search, connect and make an impact (Hagel et al., 2009). They focus their learning and achieving more on the opportunity to learn and their potential to improve rather than preset metrics or eternal rewards (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Hagel et al., 2009; Michlewski, 2015; Yee, Jefferies, & Michlewski, 2017). Design attitude salespeople are willing to tackle new challenges, step back and (re)frame the set approach to a specific selling task or marketplace. They simply take on new challenges that pull them, their teams and customers to new levels of performance as they attempt promising, though at times, challenging, ventures.

In today's dynamic marketplace, my findings suggest that it is time for management to realize that design attitude is a requirement to add value and deepen the customer relationship. Due to the close connection between the salesperson and the customer, it is only rational and appropriate for sales managers to encourage their salespeople to think like designers (big D) in which the customer is invited to help determine how to configure best and deliver the product.

Fifty percent of customers are lost every five years due to unfulfilled needs, shifting technologies that substitute for current products and services and competition (Bachrach et al., 2016) Additionally, salespeople that can reduce the desertion rate by as

little as 10–15%, can double profitability (Bachrach et al., 2016). What's more, it is six times costlier to secure new business than retaining existing ones (Bachrach et al., 2016). Additionally, loyal customers (or partners) have a propensity to spend five times more on products and services than indifferent ones (Bachrach et al., 2016). These remarkable statistics, offer strong support that the salesperson's (and customer's) goal should be to maximize lifetime value. I find my theoretical framework to be consistent with this thinking in that design attitude fosters deeper listening and dialogue as a means to reach towards the customer's unmet needs. It is grounded in emotional reactions to improve problem-solving capabilities through passion to solve. In the B2B context, such passion manifests itself in a salesperson's ability to 'work out' what goes on in customers' minds. Additionally, when mediated through value co-creation and sales technology use, the B2B salesperson and the customer can better co-create value through the effective application of design attitude's creative approaches and techniques—to package resources into co-created solutions which yield returns to jointly constructed relationship-based, value propositions and ultimately drives maximum lifetime value.

To my knowledge, design attitude on B2B sales performance has never been empirically linked. Thus, I shed new light on how design attitude influences sales performance through its cognitive and intrinsic motivational characteristic related to driving B2B salespeople to generate new ideas and novel behaviors, especially when linked to the mediating mechanisms of value co-creation and sales technology use.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

As with all research, this study should be interpreted considering a few limitations. The value co-creation psychometric scales used in this study, many of which

are new, have never been used in this combination or this context and were found to have discriminant validity issues. While I controlled for sample bias by introducing a latent variable and using the imputed data; sample bias could have been controlled further by introducing and using social desirability measures. Longitudinal and experimental designs could substantiate the causal model. Having salespeople self-report raise concerns that could be mitigated with a longitudinal study. However, again, I mitigated this by controlling for bias by introducing a latent variable in measurement and structural models.

Another limitation of my model is that I was unable to secure customer side data. While helpful, I suggest the design of a cross-sectional instrumental inherently limits the ability to capture the reality of today's buyer and seller interface. In other words, many salespeople are selling to DMUs where multiple individuals spanning many functions, responsibilities, and levels of an organization are involved in the buying process. This makes utilizing a cross-sectional instrument limited in what it can secure as its design lends itself more towards self and dyadic reporting. I call upon future scholarship to develop and test theories of the sales performance construct to include dimensions of design attitude as it relates to a performance from the DMU side of the equation. Future research could also examine design attitude's influence on sales performance on actors across various selling contexts (e.g., team selling, full cycle, account management).

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I provide background as to how this research journey began, a table summarizing the integrated findings, along with a summary of the key findings for each of the research questions outlines in Chapter 1 of this dissertation. Next, I will discuss these findings in the context of other research and outline contributions and implications for practice, limitations and future research considerations, concluding with final thoughts about design attitude and its implications on B2B sales performance.

Background and Summary

Being in sales and sales management for the past 23 years, I wanted to understand better what influences B2B sales performance. If you do a Google search for “books on B2B sales performance,” over 9 million results claim to answer this question. However, I know from professional experience and conducting empirical research for the past four years that understanding the factors that influence sales performance is challenging. In fact, these factors remain elusive and poorly understood by many scholars and practitioners alike.

The impetus of this research started over twenty years ago when I found myself leading a salesforce for a Fortune 500 multinational, diversified, industrial company. The sales force consisted of dozens of full-cycle (from finding customers through developing and creating tailored solutions) salespeople. I, along with colleagues in tangential sales leadership positions, attempted to drive performance through sales incentives programs—usually in the form of compensation. After all, these pay for performance (P4P) models on which I was weaned were pushed as the answer to all my sales performance troubles. Training seminars for sales managers, sales leadership texts and simply the pervasive

nature of these programs (and thinking) signaled in all sales organizations that these must be the answer to drive more sales. Moreover, since they were not working effectively for my team and me, maybe I am just not using these tools as intended? Irrespective of previous challenges, P4P plans had to be the answers to my sales performance challenges. While these incentives programs had marginal successes, the result in aggregate were minimal and fleeting. Nevertheless, failure of these incentives programs was never blamed on the plan or that incentives fundamentally (our thinking) did not work in this environment (collaborative / non-transactional). Consequently, the construction or alignment—not the ineffectiveness or the fact incentives distract from creative problem solving—were always to blame. Thus, incentives programs were tweaked, revamped and repeatedly reinstituted with similar results.

Was this it? Was I stuck trying to motivate my sales team with the carrot and the stick programs or was there something better? In my inductive qualitative research, finding three, which I will describe in detail below—paradox of self and others—helped me understand better the situation I had been in as a sales manager for many years. It shed massive insight that my thinking that there must be something “more” was validated in a sense, that salespeople and managers see and respond to motivational factors differently. Alternatively, do they? Table 8 summarizes the findings and implications of the three studies.

Table 8. Integrative Findings and Implications

RESEARCH QUESTION	FINDINGS	IMPLICATIONS
Study 1: What is the experience of motivating B2B salespeople in drastically changing industrial markets?	<p>Salespeople are motivated by systems-savvy selling: strong emphasis on less mechanistic and more holistic (thinking) process (solving problems no one else had been able to solve). High-levels of motivation driven by the pursuit of deep personal connections with customers (serving). Differentiated value is being created between these exchanges.</p> <p>Sales managers are holding salespeople accountable through “pushing product” and meeting financial goals through incentive use but paradoxically, when they are in the sales role, are motivated by the of holistic problem solving and the desire to build significant relationships with customers</p>	Provides better understanding of what motivates salespeople (not incentives), but rather through the ability to serve and solve the customer’s needs- “to make them look better.” These findings provided a new lens from which to view motivation and a new construct to test in the next study (Design attitude) and related behaviors.
Study 2: What knowledge-based factors and creative behaviors influence the B2B salesperson’s ability to promote internal knowledge brokering and thereby sales performance?	<p>Empirically supports that systems-savvy selling—the application of design attitude—dimensions improve sales performance. Specifically, salespeople were shifting their perspective from the parts to the whole. They were found using empathy to see through the customer’s eyes to (re)frame the problems.</p> <p>Counter-intuitive finding: altruism was found to have a negative and significant relationship with sales performance.</p>	Counter-intuitive findings led to the examination and evolution of the short-term performance metric to one better aligned with the customer’s needs. Re-examining the findings from the first two studies, and the corresponding literature, affect was not being captured. Thus, passion to serve and solve were added to the design attitude construct. A DA construct and overall model that better reflected the cognitive orientation and affect behavior found in study 1 & 2 was tested.
Study 3: How does design attitude, as mediated by value co-creation, and technology use influence B2B long-term sales performance?	Demonstrates that design attitude has a significant influence on sales performance metrics aligned better with customer’s needs, which is also mediated through value co-creation and sales technology use. Introduces and examines a new way of measuring sales performance that better aligns with complexities of today’s selling.	Design attitude (2 nd order) is introduced and confirmed to be a critical antecedent to long-term sales performance. This research suggests that sales metrics need to be linked to not only customers’ needs but to antecedents to drive the desired behaviors.
INTEGRATED MIXED METHODS: What is the role of design attitude in contemporary sales performance?	Suggest that design attitude forms a strong predictor of sales performance with significant explanatory power, which is better than other antecedents to date.	Research extends theories of sales performance by introducing the joint role that cognitive and affective sales behavior underlying design attitude have on influencing sales performance.

I start Chapter 1 by asking three research questions: (1) What is the experience of motivating B2B salespeople in today's drastically changing markets? (2) What knowledge-based factors and creative behaviors influence B2B salesperson's ability to promote internal knowledge brokering and thereby sales performance? (3) How does design attitude as mediated by value co-creation and technology use influence B2B long-term sales performance? In the next few paragraphs, I will share evidence for my research that provides some answers to each of these three questions.

Through this inductive qualitative research and theoretical review, I answered the first research question posed in this study: *What is the experience of motivating B2B salespeople in contemporary and drastically changing industrial markets?* Using in-depth interviews of 24 sales professionals (12 salespeople and 12 sales managers) and the interpretative tradition of qualitative research, analysis of B2B sales professionals' lived experiences indicates that this intrinsic motivation stems attitudinally from a need to foster an identity of helping customers, including strengthening their interpersonal identification with customers. I reveal that despite management's persistent application and implied preferences to use extrinsic rewards; salespeople are intrinsically motivated when pursuing genuine interpersonal relationships with customers and foster an identity of helping others (customers) by applying "systems-savvy selling."

I found 96% of B2B salespeople were motivated by systems-savvy selling: forces to enhance their interpersonal and longitudinal relationship with the customer. These B2B salespeople shared stories of solving systemic problems. They discussed the need for strong emphasis on a less mechanistic and more holistic process – an application of design attitude. Thinking beyond the idea of a one-time interaction of relationship was a

noteworthy defining characteristic of this type of nonlinear thinking which occurred between the salesperson and the customer.

There were many cases where salespeople provided examples of understanding the organization as a system envisioning their buyer (customer) as part of the larger system. Unknowingly, they were applying what is known as design attitude –to not only solve tough problems (problems no one had been able to solve) but also to propose solutions that made their buyer (customer) look better. With those who described their affect from personally connecting with customer and serving them, to “I get a charge out of saving the customer money...,” “I evaluated the system and realized if I changed a few things, I could construct a long-term solution”, and “every single day what drives me is solving customers problems and seeing them profit from it.” During the interviews, I could see the pride and satisfaction on their faces from making meaningful change in a customer’s life and by solving a problem, others were unable to solve. The cognitive and affective experiences of highly engaged B2B salespeople was surfacing and their focusing on solving problems and desire to personally connect with customers during these interactions suggested each of these roles have a strong affect and identity dimensions.

To further understand “what’s motivating” salespeople, the interviews uncovered that motivational forces were multi-dimensional, interconnected and interdependent. Salespeople demonstrated an affinity to dive deep into interpersonal relationships with customers through the application of design attitude. Motivation was usually exclusively intrinsic as high levels stem from salespeople delivering solutions to chronic problems in a caring and altruistic way with their ultimate goal being high-quality bonds between

themselves and the customers. Salespeople shared “I want to be needed. I need to be needed. I get a high every time I walk out of a plant...if they liked me and I was able to provide a solution...that’s the ultimate high.” That led me to uncover that the interconnection and interdependence of these findings lend well to design thinking lens context that employ a complex adaptive system which includes feedback loops intricately built into a co-creation, solution development process because the system thinking perspective can provide a better understanding of motivational behavior by holistically considering the relationship between structure and behavior, one can better appreciate how key motivational levers work within this context.

While solving and serving is not a new phenomenon in B2B frontline sales, the study challenges the leading logic by revealing that salespeople are not manipulating care and personal relationships to improve business outcomes. However, why was this happening? I spent a lot of time going back to the literature attempting to uncover what was driving this phenomenon. Initially, I uncovered and applied systems thinking (Jackson, 2003; Meadows & Wright, 2008; Senge, 2006). Soon after spending more time and conceptualizing this phenomenon realized systems-savvy selling was the application of design attitude. Design attitude’s dimensions (see Figure 1) best explain this phenomenon; however, based on the results, role and structuration theory gave additional insight and support. For example, I could now uncover that design attitude selling improves desired relational dynamics and fulfills psychological needs as salespeople view the selling process holistically and systematically after using both the systems and structuration lens. As structure is created by action and action creates structure. In other words, Giddens’ (1979) structuration theory suggests that agents (salespeople) utilize

structure (systems and interactions) to engage in the responsible creation of meaning (Boland, 1993), in an effort to enhance relationship quality and utilize those relationships to create reciprocal meaning for the solution. Role theory asserts that salespeople, using mastery within the problem-solving context, endorse a comprehensible set of behaviors and activities that are recognizable indicators of prototypical, easily categorized role identifiers (Arnett, German, & Hunt, 2003; Elsbach, 2004; Fiske & Taylor, 2013). Singh, Marinova, and Brown (2012) suggest as salespeople perform within their archetypal role identity (e.g., a friend), this validates and confirms a salesperson status in the customer's mind as someone who can be trusted to collaborate creatively.

However, with finding three, I discovered there are two faces of motivation for dual-role sales managers, who have roles to both sell and manage. When sales managers discussed what motivated them and what motivated their salespeople there is a distinct paradox between seeing of self and their salespeople (83%). I found during my qualitative interview with 12 B2B sales managers that all sales managers were actively engaged in both selling and managing their firm's sales force. Interesting, however, what emerged was that sales managers in discussing what motivated them and what motivated their salespeople, with a paradox based on distinct differences originating from how one sees themselves as salespeople versus how this view themselves as sales managers. For example, sales managers shared when in the selling mode they described motivation forces consistent with the salespeople above and as, "I love it when somebody you worked with (a customer) has some success as a result of what I had done for them...Heck, I am walking around 12 feet tall feeling like I just hit the game-winning home run!" However, in stark contrast to the above, the sales manager explains what is

believed to motivate salespeople, “My experience in motivating is the almighty dollar. It really is.” This was a surprising insight as the underlying mechanism of the roles have more communality than divergence. The change in roles caused “context-specific motivational blindness to occur where the in-role sales manager self-identity diverged from his in-role salesperson self-identity. Thus, simply by shifts in role identity the same individual acted in these different sales roles discreetly but were unable to incorporate both role identities concurrently. Imagine the interpersonal struggle for the sales manager and a working system that inevitably creates an atypical role conflict for their salespeople. Namely, one role sender—the sales compensation plan, signals “pushing product” in the short term while another role sender—the systems-savvy sales manager—signals building interpersonal relationships centered on forging long-term business relationships built on mutually beneficial outcomes. This finding provides important insight in the sales performance and motivation literature as sales managers are holding their salespeople accountable through “pushing product” and meeting financial goals through incentive use but paradoxically, when they are in the sales role, are motivated by the of systematic problem solving and the desire to build significant relationships with customers.

Post hoc analysis of this phenomenon (Finding 3) led me to uncover that attribution theory (Kelley, 1967; Kelley & Michela, 1980; Weiner, 1985, 1986) maps onto the two faces of motivation experienced by dual-role sales managers. Attribution theory explores how people tend to automatically conclude the cause of their own and others’ behaviors (Weiner, 1985). The theory investigates how people uncover the causes of behaviors and whether they are internal to the person (e.g., effort or ability) or external

to the person (e.g., example luck or task difficulty). In the case of finding three, sales managers would tend to automatically determine the cause of their own and their salespeople behaviors and then base their treatment of their employees on those causal attributions. In this study, attribution theory uncovers that sales managers tend to emphasize information that reinforces their general situation (Boland, 1979) while discounting or omitting environmental information about the salespeople while focusing on the individual factors as the causal drivers of performance. Mowen, Brown, and Jackson Jr (1980) suggest that sales managers tend to overemphasize perceptions of salesperson effort and underestimate task difficulty. I posit that sales managers in the study saw their job as demanding, multifaceted, complex, and ambiguous, and not amendable to simple or mechanistic, transaction-based thinking. Conversely and consistent with attribution theory in the sales literature (Johnson, 2006) sales managers make attributions about the cause of the salesperson's performance and these evaluations can influence managerial responses. Sales managers observe and make judgments that the salespeople jobs are simple, easy, filled with homogenous and concise information; and amendable to linear and mechanistic thinking—discounting task and environment difficulty. It is in this experience versus observation where intrinsic motivations make sense for the sales manager in the manager mode but sees extrinsic factors work in the observation mode or applicable to salespeople. Said differently, attribution theory could account for why in the study sales manager understood intrinsic factors motivated them but when observing or viewing salespeople, extrinsic drivers always surfaced as the motivating tool of choice. Attribution theory has proposed that causal inferences can be vulnerable to various cognitive biases such as fundamental attribution error in which people over-attribute

causation to the individual and omit environmental factors as cause (Ross, 1977). The answer to the next question is informed by these findings.

Research Question 2: What knowledge-based factors and creative behaviors influence the B2B salesperson's ability to promote internal knowledge brokering and thereby sales performance?

Using the grounded theory qualitative research study and integration of prior research, I defined and conceptualized "systems-savvy selling as the application of design attitude. While there was an abundance of theoretical work on design thinking and emerging works from Michlewski (2008, 2015) on design attitude based on the prior work of Boland and Collopy (2004), empirical research utilizing design attitude was limited. In fact, prior to my work, design attitude had not been applied in the sales and marketing domain. Fortunately, I found scales that when slightly modified to the selling context, fit the conceptualization of design attitude and related behaviors discovered through my qualitative effort.

This study sought to confirm the factors that influence sales performance and internal knowledge brokering while controlling for experience and sales cycle. I tested single dimensions of design attitude (empathy and systems thinking) on sales performance and found them to be significant predictors of sales performance. This results from this model show that systems savvy salespeople shift their perspective from parts to whole where mental models shed their mechanistic thinking, or what (Capra & Luisi, 2014) describes as perceiving the world as an interconnected web of relationships.

Additionally, during the qualitative phase, and in the context that as boundary spanners, B2B salespeople are knowledge brokers. Since there is rich research stream on

external knowledge sharing and little on internal knowledge sharing (customer related knowledge) (Berg et al., 2014), it would benefit my understanding of knowledge brokering as a driver for sales performance. This relationship was found to consistent with the qualitative work and the results “I spent the weekend thinking about how to improve the customer’s system. Many Monday mornings, I come in and consult with my manager and the inside engineers to ensure we have established the best solution(s) to meet the customer needs.”

Overall, this study supports and validates what I found from the qualitative research that the B2B salespeople are extremely motivated by this holistic and systemic approach to problems solving. The study offers strong empirical evidence that these specific cognitive orientations and related behaviors of B2B salespeople explain 41% of their variance in sales performance.

Research Question 3: How does design attitude, as mediated by value co-creation, and technology use influence B2B long-term sales performance?

Prior to outlining this research, I spent a lot of time going back into the prior studies and the literature to ensure I better understood what the data was telling me and what gaps need to be filled. Many things surfaced: first, there was a contextual progression in behaviors, attitudes and skill sets of individuals in sales that result from the dynamism and complexity in the marketplace. While I could safely argue many of the process thinking skills were being addressed in the prior studies, the impact technology had on the salesperson’s behaviors was not. Second, co-creation surfaced many times in the qualitative work and in the review of the literature as a necessity to create satisfied and ultimate loyal customer-which is the objective of any salesperson. Accordingly, co-

creation behaviors seemed to align well with design attitude principles in which both constructs are designed to uncover the customer's "real" needs and execute this through encouraging the customer to be engaged as an active participant of the buyer and seller exchanges. Third, I wanted to demonstrate in this study that sales performance models need to align better with the realities of contemporary selling by using a second-order construct derived from customer satisfaction and loyalty. Fourth, I felt by adding the dimension of passion to design attitude, it would improve our study in that passion uncovers the "what" and "why" it matters to the customer better than empathy. Additionally, passion to solve and to serve more accurately capture the cognitive and affective characteristics found in the qualitative study. Lastly, since study 2 provided evidence of design attitude dimension having predictive powers, I felt comfortable testing design attitude as intended: second-order construct (more details are in study 3 chapter four).

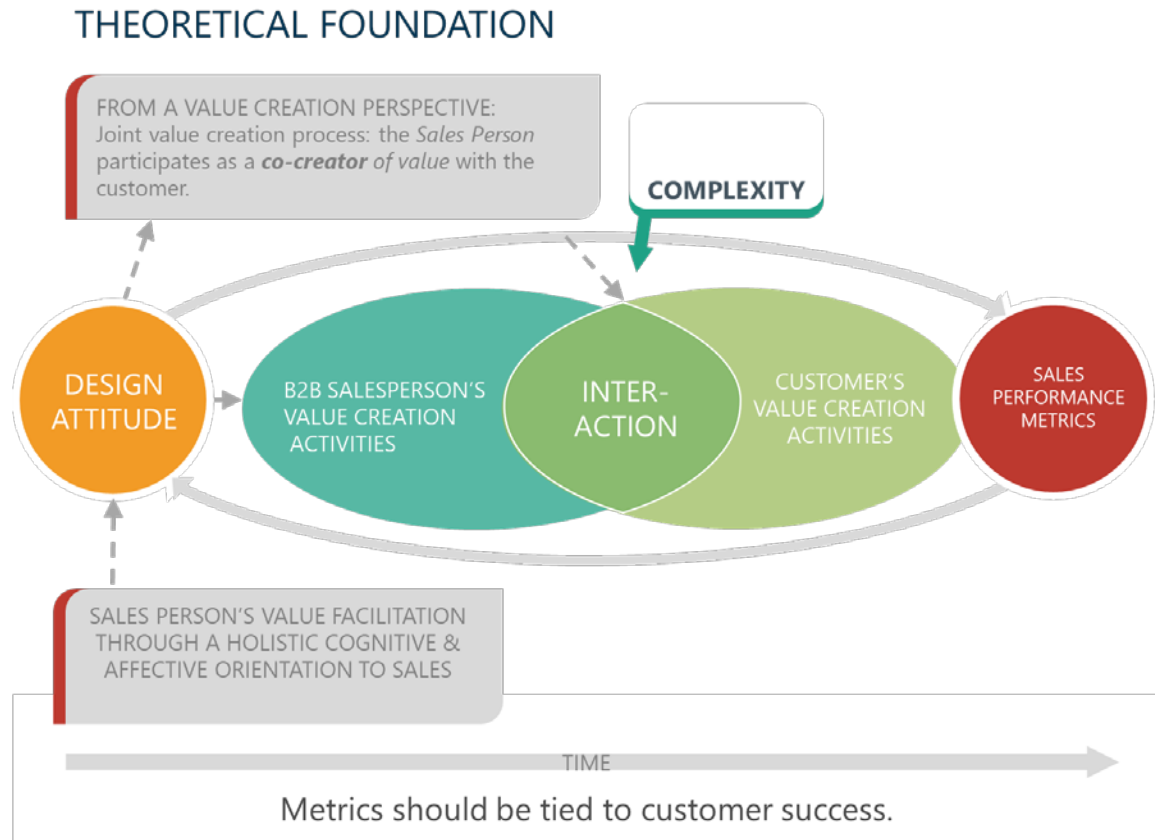
In extending previous results and in order to answer the third research question, I added two mediators (co-creation and sales technology) and a moderator (relational versus transactional selling) and tested the theoretical model. Based on the sales performance literature and personal knowledge, I controlled for experience, effort, and sales cycle. The results from this model show that design attitude has a significant and positive direct effect on long-term sales performance. This is consistent with the descriptions of B2B salespeople shared during the qualitative study about how they felt empowered when solving customers' problems creatively and the opportunity to serve customers' needs in order to make them look better. Based on mediation testing, value co-creation was found to partially and positively mediate the positive effect of design

attitude on long-term sales performance. Congruent with study 1, salespeople used systems thinking to navigate contexts that employ a complex adaptive system, which includes feedback loops intricately built into a co-creation, solution development process to improve outcomes. Next, I tested the second mediating hypotheses of sales technology use partially mediate the positive effect of design attitude on long-term sales performance. This relationship was found to be positive and significant. This supports the contextual progression happening in my own experience and the sales scholarship (Hunter & Panagopoulos, 2015; Moncrief, 2017). The main finding demonstrates that design attitude has a significant and positive influence on long-term sales performance, which is also mediated through value co-creation and sales technology use. Simply put, design attitude is a critical antecedent to long-term sales performance.

Figure 7 is a culmination of the three studies herein and depicts a design attitude selling process in which design attitude facilitates value creation through holistic, cognitive and affective orientation to sales. Salespeople operate as agents in relatively complex sales environments. Complexity in Figure 7 is defined as market complexity in which salespeople operate caused by increasing customer demands, technological advancements, competitive challenges and buyers having access to multiple channels of rich information (Hunter & Perreault, 2007; Jones et al., 2004; Lassk, Marshall, Cravens, & Moncrief, 2001; Schmitz & Ganesan, 2014; Sheth & Sharma, 2008). Most sales metrics are based on the sales volume and levels of transactions-based metrics. This is no longer adequate. Therefore, our model suggests these measures shift from a goods-dominant view where the product forms the primary unit of value (Grönroos, 2008; Hartmann et al., 2018; Vargo & Lusch, 2004) to one in which value is now created

collaboratively within the interactive practice between customers. The customer is now a vital link within the sales process that adds value. Consequently, as depicted in the model below, the salesperson and the customer can now co-create value through the application of approaches and techniques that enhances the joint searches for better solutions— analogous to those undergirding design attitude. Simply put, design attitude’s drivers engage the customer in a robust recursive process of collecting and interpreting evidence, designing novel courses of action and testing multiple ideas to improve collective outcomes. Design attitude’s cognitive orientation—systems thinking, creativity, and passion to solve and serve in combination—promotes securing multiple perspectives (i.e. customers within the interaction space), creating novel solutions and uncovering “what” and “why” it is important to the customer and seeing the world through the eyes of the customer. This reinforces my theory that design attitude’s human-centered tenets promote collaboration and feedback loops (Argyris & Schön, 1997; Schön, 1983) between the seller and the customer to generate rich bi-directional value. My approach suggest when salespeople act as designers (big D) they work with what Rittel (1988) articulates as an “epistemic freedom” in which designers have the liberty to deviate from logic and reason and are comfortable with the unknown asking “right” questions and learning by doing (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Dewey, 1957) to improve the lives of customers. Additionally, this model illustrates the feedback loop in which performance metrics link to input behaviors and behaviors to performance metrics. This linkage should help guide (control) the desired behaviors and performance levels while building sales knowledge, creative cognitive skills, and ability.

Figure 7. The Design Attitude Selling Process



Discussion

Practitioner-scholars continue to search for more effective approaches to improve sales performance. This is indicated by the fact that nearly 80% of US companies make significant changes to their salesforce programs every two years or less (Zoltners et al., 2012). Additionally, the extant literature is limited in its ability to capture true antecedents to explain sales performance (Bolander et al., 2015; Plouffe et al., 2010). Significant variance remains in the understanding of sales performance, which suggests the behavioral determinants of sales performance are not straightforward nor sufficiently understood.

This mixed-methods study provides empirical evidence regarding these gaps in the literature around measuring sales performance and its proper antecedents. The central argument I put forth in this dissertation is the role of design attitude forms a strong predictor of B2B sales performance with significant explanatory powers, which is better than other predictors suggested so far in the sales and marketing literature. Accordingly, this research extends theories of sales performance by introducing the joint role that cognitive and affective sales behaviors underlying design attitude have on influencing sales performance.

This research contributes a theoretical extension of the design attitude construct. As I discuss in Chapter 4, I cull from the two empirical studies to operationalize a second-order construct of design attitude to better capture the findings of the qualitative research in which B2B salespeople applied holistic behaviors to uncover customer's latent needs and to make the customers (serve) look better. This model demonstrates that while individually powerful in moving sales to address broader solutions, in combination, they constitute a holistic cognitive and affective orientation to sales. These results support and demonstrate the importance of design attitude on sales performance.

Moreover, this dissertation contends that in the extant research, sales performance measures are poorly understood and insufficient in their explanatory power—typical 10-20% variance (Bolander et al., 2015)—because they are based on transactional sales models based in mechanistic thinking. This research offers an alternative to these outdated measures that better reflect the realities of today. The focus of the salesperson is moving toward following the customer, anticipating their needs and pain point, and finding a proactive solution to their problem. This means managers must shift from

measuring a salesperson's short-term performance based on transactions toward capturing metrics that reflect the customer's success.

Another contribution of this dissertation is that extends the sale performance literature, as it is the first of its kind to introduce design attitude into the sales and marketing literature. This study confirms that when salespeople think like designers as defined in chapter 4's study, sales performance improves.

Significance for Practice

As practitioners and managers in the sales domain look for new ways to create the condition in which to motivate their salesforce, spark creative and accelerate innovative efforts towards driving sales performance, this dissertation presents many concrete findings that may guide them. This dissertation demands changes to the existing sales performance paradigms models as they are no longer able to fit the facts and cannot be solved by the existing thinking. So far, the decision attitude focused on choice—not the design attitude focused on alternative generation—has dominated most management and selling practices. The perspective addresses business problems by offering means to make (rational) choices among alternatives and heuristics to reach a rational decision (such as purchase decision). However, such analytic approaches share a weakness in that they assume that all alternative courses of action are already at hand (Boland & Collopy, 2004). In consequence, a decision attitude advances solutions that fail to see holistically latent customer needs by endorsing middle-of-the-road and short-term outcomes. They can even lead to devastating consequences as they often fail to see unintended consequences of the proposed short-term solutions. Simon (1996) concludes that if we endeavor towards a design and search for alternative solutions with ultimate goals of

ongoing improvement, this opens possibilities that would not otherwise emerge (Boland & Collopy, 2004). This set of dilemmas generated new approaches to thinking about sales processes, models and how to drive overall performance. I contend that design attitude along with ensuring performance metrics are coupled to customer success outcomes is the new paradigm.

I offer design attitude leads to generating the gestalt understanding: to view a system in ways that elicit questioning how we can do things better? Design attitude is not about a question of efficiency, or effectiveness but a question of how can we do this better? And sometimes, there will be trade-offs between efficiency and effectiveness as there is a struggle with or a pursuit to balance competing needs. This is not about the cost of doing “it” but rather, about getting back to fundamentals of what are we really trying to do here? It is about breaking the rules and challenging assumptions by constantly exercising one’s imagination to think how things could be different. How can we think about accomplishing what we want to accomplish in a better way? Design attitude is about taking a situation that is one state, interacting with it, and with other people, and materials, technologies, and creating a better world or at the very minimum a better situation / understanding. And that’s what I find drives salespeople—the opportunity to create better worlds for their customers.

Moreover, new sales processes must be collaborative and encourage salespeople to think holistically, creatively and to have the passion to solve and serve customers overt and hidden needs. The need for change in paradigm is further emphasized by the use of Einstein’s famous quote: “Problems cannot be solved by the same level of thinking that created them.” Much of the confusion we encounter in problem-solving today results

from our inability to employ methodologies that address the complexity that is the reality of contemporary selling environments. In other words, we are trying to use transactional-based models—that are based in mechanistic or reductionist thinking—to solve problems with emergent conditions, increased rate of change, increased complexity, and increased uncertainty. This dissertation provides sales managers (and salespeople) a new lens through which to see the selling world. This new lens and new “attitude” should provide salespeople the “what” and “why” it matters to a customer and thereby drive closer relationships, retention rates, symmetrical information flows, and ultimately sales performance.

The findings from this dissertation also illuminate the creation and appropriation of value have become central elements of the B2B buyer and seller exchange customers seek and demonstrate loyalty to sellers that are willing to participate in value co-creation. In this dissertation, design attitude facilitates an environment where the customer is encouraged and empowered to participate (“permanent” partner) in solution creation as this promotes an open sharing of information—salespeople now have access to emergent needs as they stay coupled to the customers as a trusted partner over the long-term.

This dissertation provides the importance of design attitude in driving sales in today’s complex selling world. Accordingly, sales managers can now create an assessment tool (profile) that measures current and future hires around design attitude capabilities and based on the assessments, help those individuals either develop their DA abilities or relocate them to where their skills are better suited.

While salespeople face an array of obstacles in meeting customer and organization needs—and as the center of gravity shifts in buyer-seller relationships—it is

imperative that sales leaders reexamine how motivation affects sales performance.

Countless researchers and sales managers propose that monetary rewards are the primary motivators of sales efforts. Perhaps not surprisingly, many U.S. corporations employ programs to motivate employees by linking compensation to one or more aspects of performance. Meanwhile, some companies have abandoned such sales incentives, favoring salary compensation plans while citing the detrimental effects of such short-term economic incentives on the long-term relationship building goals of the sales organization.

Simply put, take money off the table. In addition to my 23 years of B2B sales and sales management experience, my dissertation and many others have found P4P plans, and carrot-and-stick approaches led to decreased well-being levels and diminished feelings of autonomy and intrinsic motivation. While I agree simple selling tasks (transactional) require incentivizing, selling in today's B2B world requires creative and conceptual skills ascribed to design attitude. In this transformational B2B sales domain, incentives hinder performance and are the competitor of exploration. Sales managers should pay salespeople generously and equitably and do their best to ensure money is a non-issue. Please do not mistake this as an indictment of all extrinsic rewards. I have found they can be effective if used appropriately and are not linked directly to performance.

Promote **purpose** rather than bringing in XYZ Associates to help tweak, yet again, your sales compensation plan, focus on how to promote purpose. The first step to recovery is admitting you have a problem. This addiction to incentives is challenging, and stifles innovation and the cross-pollination of ideas. After all, we are indoctrinated

into this “if/then” thinking—like children. We bribe our children with rewards stating “if” they make their bed and mow the lawn (or other countless chores), ‘then” they will reap a reward. In doing so, we are attempting to control them. If you believe you need to pay salespeople more money to do their job or that, by paying them more, they will perform better over the long term, you – simply misunderstanding intrinsic motivation – are unknowingly creating unsustainable compensation models.

My dissertation elucidates that salespeople are intrinsically motivated by the challenging work and by the ability to improve their customers’ lives. In his book, *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*, psychologist Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi coined the concept of the “flow state.” My study uncovered intrinsic motivation (doing an activity because they find it interesting and derive natural satisfaction from it) to be rooted in creative behavior that is often characterized by a “flow state” where a person’s skills are fully engaged in overcoming a challenge that is just about manageable, so it functions as an attractor for learning and developing new skills to tackle even more challenging problems.

Specifically, “flow” is defined as a state in which a person is a temporary psychological merger with the activity, which produces positive feelings such as enjoyment and enthusiasm. I believe by employing design attitude principles; salespeople are more likely to achieve this flow state. In practical terms, this research revealed salespeople felt a sense of wholeness when they were allowed to do what they do best—help improve customers’ lives. Salespeople are seeking genuine relationships where there is no longer an “us” or “them” but rather a “we” (collaborative relationships)—we are all people seeking connection, a sense of belongingness. Sales managers need to transition

their thinking into paradigms without incentives or firm-facing, short-term sales goals and encourage salespeople to self-actualize—to grow vertically to a new stage of consciousness. In this new world of B2B sales, sales managers need to decouple sales performance models derived from the share of the customer's wallet to ones that foster the higher-order development of its sales force.

This dissertation provides sales managers with a better understanding of what truly motivates the outside sales force. Deci and Flaste (1995b) suggest the questions [sales managers] should be asking is, “How can people create the conditions within which others will motivate themselves?” The ineffectiveness of incentives highlighted above strongly suggests that sales managers need to shift resources and energy toward models that align better with what matters to salespeople—improving customers' lives! Sales managers need to create systems that feed purpose and promote self-actualization rather than try to drive change through control mechanisms. The dissertation provides a framework in which sales managers can create the environment in which motivation thrives. This dissertation suggests this is created through the promotion of design attitude principles and related behaviors. In other words, sales managers need to shift their mindset from mechanistic extrinsic based to a design attitude.

Finally, this dissertation elucidates that design attitude equips sales managers and salespeople with the greatly enhanced toolbox from which they can (re)frame the problem space and understand better unintended consequences and hopefully the highest leverage points in a system.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite the strength of the triangulation of the mixed method approach and the several original insights that emerge from its integrated findings, this dissertation has some theoretical and methodological limitations. Although great care was taken related to the qualitative and quantitative validity threats, there is always risk this threat will still be present.

First, the qualitative study relied on my analytic lens may have prevented me from interpreting data converging differently that could have led to other discoveries. However, this may have been offset by the consistency of results from interviewee responses.

The quantitative studies herein are cross-sectional, point-in-time collection. The value co-creation psychometric scales used in this study, many of which are new, have never been used in this combination or this context and were found to have discriminant validity issues. While I controlled for sample bias by introducing a latent variable and using the imputed data; sample bias could have been controlled further by introducing and using social desirability measures. Longitudinal and experimental designs could substantiate the causal model. Having salespeople self-report raise concerns that could be mitigated with a longitudinal study. However, again, we mitigated this by controlling for bias by introducing a latent variable in measurement and structural models.

Another limitation of our model is that we were unable to secure customer side data. While helpful, I suggest the design of a cross-sectional instrumental inherently limits the ability to capture the reality of today's buyer and seller interface. In other words, many salespeople are selling to DMUs where multiple individuals spanning many

functions, responsibilities, and levels of an organization are involved in the buying process. This makes utilizing a cross-sectional instrument limited in what it can secure as its design lends itself more towards self and dyadic reporting. I call upon future scholarship to develop and test theories of the sales performance construct to include dimensions of design attitude as it relates to a performance from the DMU side of the equation-metrics linked to customer success. Future research could also examine design attitude's influence on sales performance on actors across various selling contexts (e.g., team selling, full cycle, account management). This is important, as the salespeople need to continuously react to the emerging complexity of the selling environment.

Conclusion

This inquiry has sought to deepen our knowledge of the role of design attitude in driving B2B sales performance. Drawing on the insight of this mixed methods study, there is evidence that design attitude is a more effective approach to improve sales performance. This inquiry provides evidence that when salespeople are capable of relating, understanding, and generating genuine, holistic and co-created solutions for and with customers, sales performance improves. Overall, this inquiry extends theories of sales performance by introducing the joint role that cognitive and affective sales behaviors underlying design attitude have on influencing sales performance. Through offering a new mental model from which to understand the drivers of sales performance, sales managers (and salespeople) no longer have to be misguided cave dwellers.

Appendix A: Additional Comments from Sales Managers Demonstrating the Paradox between Seeing of Self and Others

Additional Comments from Sales Managers Demonstrating the Paradox Between Seeing of Self and Others
<p>Selling Role: <i>"Yeah, my personal approach is one that I want to make a difference to the customer or to the person that I'm building a relationship with because of the business climate and what I try to do now is how to think I can help this person make his life a little easier during this close of a day. That's the approach that I use. What can I do for them that lessens his load on his verdict?"</i></p> <p>Sales Manager Role: <i>"I think you give someone you're paying well and then if you can make another 15%, 20% of his base fixed salary, that's a good incentive. It strives them to make the extras where if he or she wants to buy a new watch or a dryer, or make some home improvements in his house, just tell as much as possible, "You know what, then I can get this amount of money then I can do it, and then it motivates him to try to sell more." Interview #8</i></p>
<p>Selling Role: <i>"I spend half of my time on thinking. I spend a lot of time in research, not only for my applications but for all our salespeople's applications. I try to thoroughly research because the last thing we want is our recommendation not to succeed. I try to gain a relationship with a customer, which is our ultimate goal, is to help the customer look good for their company."</i></p> <p>Sales Manager Role: <i>"We run some sales contests from time to time. Primarily if we're taking on a new product to represent we will usually incentivize through either a trip or gift cards. If a certain sales goal is met for a new product. The sales person that does sell the most of the new product for a time period say 6 months, with the new product. We have done that from time to time." Interview #7</i></p>
<p>Selling Role: <i>"I think that people like buying from friends better than suppliers or whatever. It doesn't always work out, but where we are friends with our customers and are basically friends, that breaks down a lot of walls and simplifies communication where you can really understand what's going on."</i></p> <p>Sales Manager Role: <i>"... Part of the success is the more people you stand in front of in a day ... There is a numbers game there, so that's one metric I like to look at it as the guy making six calls a day or 10 calls a day and is he actually meeting with them or is he just dropping business cards, because the other thing is I believe in appointments and all of that, so that's one metric." Interview #9</i></p>
<p>Selling Role: <i>"One of the engineers, his wife had open heart surgery, and it's not, "Hey, what do you need?" It's "Hey, how's the wife doing? What's going on? How's ... You ask about that. You get them involved in a personal relationship, and then it's, "Oh, by the way, what do you need?" Because you're more concerned about them than the business, and people are more concerned about their wife and family, because the family's first, before the business."</i></p> <p>Sales Manager Role: <i>"Yes, they're (salespeople) motivated because they're on a commission. They get a salary and commission. The more you sell, the more you make." Interview #6</i></p>

Appendix B: EFA Pattern Matrix

EFA Pattern Matrix^a

	Factor						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
ST3						.452	
ST2						.517	
ST4						.593	
ST5						.542	
DE2			.674				
DE3			.659				
DE5			.548				
SP2		.811					
SP3		.427					
SP5		.839					
LTCR1					.535		
LTCR3					.705		
LTCR7					.682		
AL1				.690			
AL3				.777			
AL5				.450			
IKB1	.589						
IKB2	.686						
IKB3	.633						
IKB4	.750						
AT1							.608
AT2							.599
AT3							.707

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

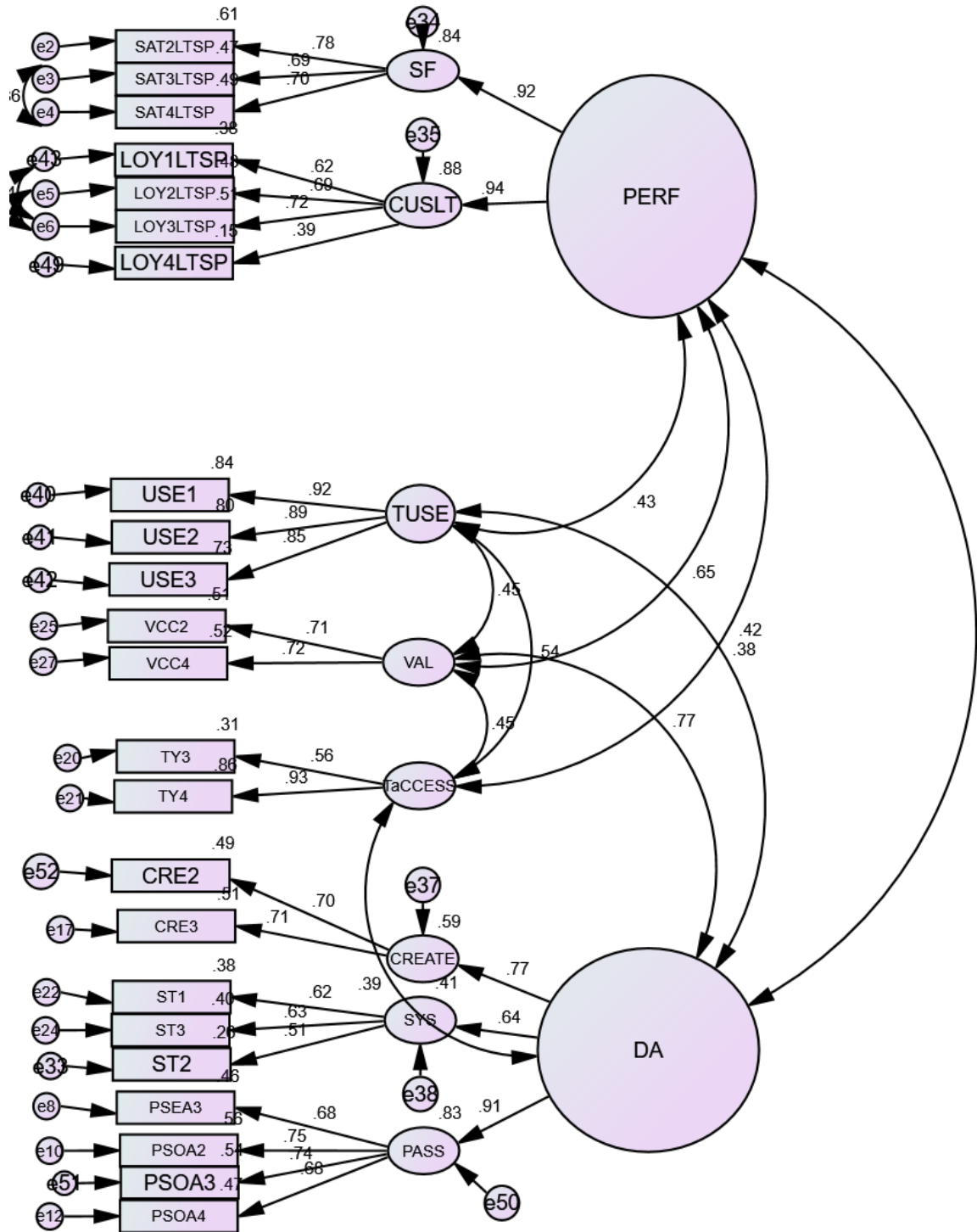
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

Appendix C: EFA Pattern Matrix

	EFA Pattern Matrix						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
AT2							0.651
AT3							-0.672
ST1					0.482		
ST2					0.364		
ST3					0.786		
CRE2				0.749			
CRE3				0.731			
CRE4				0.515			
PSEA2		0.559					
PSEA3		0.79					
PSEA4		0.74					
PSOA2		0.466					
PSOA3		0.48					
PSOA4		0.655					
VCC2						0.547	
VCC3						0.557	
VCC4						0.501	
SAT1LTSP	0.434						
SAT2LTSP	0.623						
SAT3LTSP	0.874						
SAT4LTSP	0.862						
LOY2LTSP	0.504						
LOY3LTSP	0.483						
TECHU1			0.91				
TEHCU2			0.907				
TECHU3			0.856				

Appendix D: 2nd-Order CFA Diagram



Appendix E: Interview Protocol (Study 1)

Interview Questions

Introduction (interviewer): *“Hello (name_____). Thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me today. I really appreciate it. Before getting started, there are a couple of things I would like to cover.”*

Purpose and Format for the Interview (Interviewer): *“As a current student in the Case Western Reserve University Doctor of Management (DM) program, I am interested in developing a greater understanding of the sales experience. I will ask you a series of open-ended questions about this topic, and I will also ask one or more follow-up questions as you respond. The interview will last approximately 60 – 90 minutes.”*

Confidentiality (Interviewer): *“Everything you share in this interview will be kept in strictest confidence, and your comments will be transcribed anonymously – omitting your name, anyone else you refer to in this interview, as well as the name of your current organization and/or past organizations. Your interview responses will be included with all the other interviews I conduct.”*

Audio Taping (Interviewer): *“To help me capture your responses accurately and without being overly distracting by taking notes, I would like to record our conversation with your permission. Again, your responses will be kept confidential. If, at any time, you are uncomfortable with this interview, please let me know, and I will turn the recorder off.”*

“Any questions before we begin?”

Initial / Background Questions:

1. Please tell me about yourself, both personally and professionally?
2. Please describe your current role and responsibilities?

Core Questions:

Sales Managers

- 1) Tell me about a time when you had a great experience in the sales process that resulted in a successful sales engagement involving the customer, your salesperson and you. Please be as detailed as you can in relating this experience from the initial engagement to completion of the sale.
- 2) Tell me about a time when you had a poor experience in the sales process that resulted in an unsuccessful sales engagement involving the customer, your

salesperson and you. Please be as detailed as you can in relating this experience from the initial engagement to completion of the sale.

- 3) Tell me about a time when rewards or incentives motivated your sales person to go over and above the expectations of the customer and resulted in a great sales experience.
- 4) From your experience, what or how has the sales environment evolved over the past 5-10 years?

Additional probing inquiries:

- (A) What do you think is contributing to these shifts or change?
- (B) How do you think this will evolve 5-10 years from now?
- 5) What incentives or reward structures are you currently finding work best to motivate your sales personnel to create great sales experiences?

Additional probing questions:

- (A) What changes have you seen in the past 5 years in what incentives or rewards work best?
- (B) What changes to the reward or incentive systems do you anticipate in the near future (say 5 years)?

Initial / Background Questions:

1. Please tell me about yourself, both personally and professionally?
2. Please describe your current role and responsibilities?

Core Questions:

Salespeople:

- 1) Tell me about a time when you had a great experience in the sales process that resulted in a successful sales engagement involving the customer, your sales manager and you. Please be as detailed as you can in relating this experience from the initial engagement to completion of the sale.
- 2) Tell me about a time when you had a poor experience in the sales process that resulted in an unsuccessful sales engagement involving the customer, your sales manager and you. Please be as detailed as you can in relating this experience from the initial engagement to completion of the sale.

- 3) Tell me about a time when rewards or incentives motivated you to go over and above expectations of the customer and resulted in a great sales experience.
- 4) From your experience, what or how has the sales environment evolved over the past 5–10 years?

Additional probing questions:

- (A) What do you think is contributing to these shifts or change?
- (B) How do you think this will evolve 5-10 years from now? Why do you think that?
- 5) What incentive or reward structures are most effective in motivating you to create great sales experiences in your current sales environment?

Additional probing questions:

- (A) What changes to the reward or incentive systems do you anticipate will we see in the near future (say 5 years)?
- (B) Why do you think that?

Additional Probes

Tell me more about that.

What did that mean to you?

Please, go on.

Can you please elaborate and give me a scenario of that?

Wrap-up

Do you have anything else you wish to share with me at this time?

May I contact you in the future if we have other follow-up questions?

Appendix F: Survey Instrument (Study 2)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in a research study conducted by Donald St. Clair, a doctoral candidate at Case Western Reserve University. The purpose of this research is to understand better how to improve selling outcomes. You have been selected to participate in this survey because you are employed in a full-time sales position.

Only the responsible investigator and the co-investigator will have access to your responses. The amount of time required for your participation will take an average of 15 minutes to complete. You are asked to complete the survey to the best of your ability.

There are no major risks associated with this research. Nothing asked is personally identifiable in nature. Be assured that we will not share any of this information with anyone. There will be no direct benefit of participation in the survey. However, indirect benefits may include a better understanding of the sales experience and sales performance.

The records of this research will be kept private. In any report the researchers publish, the researchers will not include any information that will identify a participant. Any information you provide will be kept in a secure password protected file and firewall protected from internet access. No one will ever know whether or not you were selected for this study, whether or not you participated, and how you responded or did not respond to the study's questions. The types of questions asked on the survey focus on the sales experience and sales performance.

Access to information will be limited to the researchers, the University Review Board responsible for protecting human participants, and regulatory agencies. Further, no identifying information will be included in the research findings.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw your consent to participate at any time. If you choose not to participate, it will not affect your current or future relations with Case Western Reserve University. You will not be penalized in any way should you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

The researchers conducting this study are Kalle Lyytinen, Ph.D., and Donald St. Clair. If you have any questions, you may contact Dr. Lyytinen at kalle.lyytinen@case.edu or Donald St. Clair at donald.stclair@case.edu. If the researchers cannot be reached, or if you would like to talk to someone other than the researcher(s) about; (1) concerns regarding this study, (2) research participant rights, (3) research-related injuries, or (4) other human subjects issues, please contact Case Western Reserve University's Institutional Review Board at (216) 368-6925 or write: Case Western Reserve University; Institutional Review Board; 10900 Euclid Ave.; Cleveland, OH 44106-7230.

After you are finished with the survey, if you voluntarily choose to, we would greatly appreciate it if you could repost the introduction to this letter and the survey link to your social media account

(Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), so your friends and colleagues can have the opportunity to consider taking the survey as well. Please note that you are under no obligation to re-post.

I have read, and understood, the above consent form and desire of my own free will to participate in this study.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Are you a business-to-business (B2B) salesperson?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Thank you. Now let's get started. I am good at selling.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

It is easy for me to get customers to see my point of view.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I know the right thing to do in selling situations.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

My temperament is not well-suited for selling.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am tolerant of ambiguous selling situations.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I dislike ambiguous selling situations.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am drawn to ambiguous selling situations.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am uncomfortable with unknown selling situations.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am confident exploring ambiguous selling situations.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I believe sales solutions gain from multiple viewpoints.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I seek many perspectives to improve customer's outcomes.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I strive to incorporate a diversity of sales perspectives.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I connect multiple perspectives when selling.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I believe best results engage multiple sales perspectives.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I think holistically.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I believe solutions are interdependent within a larger system.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I think of the sales challenge at hand as a component of a larger whole.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I think proposed changes can affect the whole system.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I think small system changes can produce important results.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I recognize system problems are influenced by past events.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I come up with new ideas to improve customer's processes.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I strive to create appropriate solutions to customer's challenges.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I delight in creative action.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am an out-of-the-box thinker.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I enjoy making novel things.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I find that empathizing with customers is essential to create optimum solutions.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I relate to the feelings of customers.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I put myself in the customer's shoes.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I appreciate the customer's experience, even if it is foreign to mine.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I relate to the aspirations of customers.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I make an effort to capture customers' aspirations in my process.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I have overcome selling setbacks to conquer important challenges.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

Selling setbacks don't discourage me.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I pursue finding a solution for the customer no matter how long it takes.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I finish whatever I begin.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I have achieved a sales goal that took years of work.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I contribute to acquiring a good market share for my company.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I generate a high level of dollars in sales.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I quickly generate sales of new products.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I identify major opportunities in the territory and sell to them.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I exceed sales targets.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I try to help customers achieve their goals.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

A good salesperson has to have the customer's best interest in mind.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I try to get customers to discuss their needs with me.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I try to influence a customer by information rather than by pressure.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I offer the product best suited to the customer's problem.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I try to find out what kind of product would be most helpful to a customer.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am strongly motivated by the money I can earn.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I sell more if there is some type of compensation associated with it.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I'm less concerned with the work I do than what I get for it.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I don't care if I enjoy my job, just how much I can earn.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

It makes me feel good to improve customers' lives.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I always try to put the customer's needs before my own.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I feel satisfied when I can make the customer's life better.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am concerned with making the customer look better.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am always willing to give of my time to help the customer.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I communicate with the customer to receive input on improving the service/product experience.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am interested in communicating with the customer about the best way to design and deliver a quality service/product experience.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I have active dialogue with the customer on how to add value in the service/product experience.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I let the customer decide how he/she receives the service/product offering.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I fully inform the customer about all of the risks stemming from product or service use.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I regularly talk with colleagues about what needs our customers have.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I always discuss with my colleagues how we best place a new product on the market.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I discuss with my colleagues alternative approaches for new accounts.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I regularly discuss with colleagues what the future could look like for our customers.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I sometimes go to other departments in my organization to gain new ideas.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I am always courteous even to people who are disagreeable.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I sometimes try and get even rather than forgive and forget.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

I sometimes feel resentful when I don't get my way.

- ☐ Strongly disagree
- ☐ Somewhat disagree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Somewhat agree
- ☐ Strongly agree

What is your annual salary?

- ☐ Less than \$10,000
- ☐ \$10,000 - \$19,999
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,999
- ☐ \$30,000 - \$39,999
- ☐ \$40,000 - \$49,999
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$59,999
- ☐ \$60,000 - \$69,999
- ☐ \$70,000 - \$79,999
- ☐ \$80,000 - \$89,999
- ☐ \$90,000 - \$99,999
- ☐ \$100,000 - \$149,999
- ☐ More than \$150,000

What percentage of your salary is from bonus and / or commission?

_____ Bonus as % of Salary

_____ Commission as % of Salary

How long is your typical sales cycle (in terms of months)?

_____ Months

What is your age?

_____ AGE

What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ☐ Less than high school degree
- ☐ High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED)
- ☐ Some college but no degree
- ☐ Associate degree in college (2-year)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree in college (4-year)
- ☐ Master's degree
- ☐ Doctoral degree
- ☐ Professional degree (JD, MD)

What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Total years of sales experience?

_____ Years

How many hours do you work per week?

_____ Hours/Week

Appendix G: Sales Performance (Study 3)

Introduction: Thank you for participating in a research study conducted by Donald St. Clair, a Ph.D. candidate at Case Western Reserve University. This study attempts to collect information about improving B2B sales performance. If you are not actively engaged in the B2B selling process, please do not participate in this survey.

Procedures: The survey will take approximately 10 minutes or less to complete and your responses will be anonymous. At the end of the survey, you will be asked to voluntarily provide the email addresses of three of your customers to provide their valuable perspectives on sales performance. Your customers will be asked to voluntarily complete a similar but shortened version (5 minutes or less) of this survey. This survey will be conducted online through Qualtrics survey tool. Please provide your email address at the end of the survey if you would like to receive the research results. We expect completion of the study by June 2018. Your email address will not be linked to your survey responses.

Risks/Discomforts: There are no known risks, harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

Benefits: There are no direct benefits to you, for taking part in this survey study. It is hoped that through your participation, researchers will learn more about the sales experience and sales performance.

Confidentiality: All data obtained from participants will be kept confidential and will only be reported in an aggregate format (by reporting only combined results and never reporting individual ones). All survey responses will be concealed, and no one other than the primary investigator and co-investigator listed below will have access to them. The data collected will be anonymous. The data collected will be stored on Qualtrics' secure database, only de-identified data will be download by the co-investigator listed below, after which it will be deleted by the co-investigator from Qualtrics database. Email addresses that you provide will be destroyed no later than February 2018.

Participation: Participation in this research study is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw at any time or refuse to participate entirely without jeopardy to you; it will not affect any current or future relations you may have with the University. If you desire to withdraw, please close your internet browser and notify the principal investigator or co-investigator of the emails listed below if you want to identify a specific reason or concern.

Questions about the Research: If you have any questions, you are welcome to contact the Principal Investigator, Kalle Lyytinen by email at kalle.lyytinen@case.edu or the Co-Investigator, Donald St. Clair by email at donald.stclair@case.edu.

Your acceptance below certifies the following:

- You are at least 18 years of age.
- You have read the information provided above.
- You have received answers to all of your questions and have been told who to call if you have any more questions.
- You have freely decided to participate in this research.
- You understand that you are not giving up any of your legal rights.

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)

Skip To: End of Survey If Introduction: Thank you for participating in a research study conducted by Donald St. Clair, a Ph... = No

End of Block: Block 1

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q3 Do you consider yourself a business-to-business (B2B) outside salesperson?

- ☐ Yes (5)
- ☐ No (6)

Skip To: End of Survey If Do you consider yourself a business-to-business (B2B) outside salesperson? = No

Q7 The following statements refer to activities that the salesperson perform during the process of improving sales outcomes.

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
I think small system changes can produce important results (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I believe solutions are interdependent within a larger system (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I think proposed changes can affect the whole system (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I come up with new ideas to improve customer's processes (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The customers I deal with use	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

information technology and expect me to as well (5)					
The customers I deal with encourage me to support my proposal with data (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy tackling uncertain sales problems (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My services meet the customer's expectations (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
I am tolerant of ambiguous selling situations (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I dislike ambiguous selling situations (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I delight in creative action (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am an out-of-the-box thinker (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I enjoy making novel things (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make an effort to capture customers' aspirations in many selling processes (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I relate to the feelings of customers (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I discuss with my colleagues alternative approaches for new accounts (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following:

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat agree (2)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
I think of the sales challenge at hand as a component of a larger whole (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I appreciate the customer's experience, even if it is foreign to mine (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel energized by knowing that customers need me (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I love the challenge of tackling different customer problems (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have an active dialogue with the customer on how to add value in the service product experience (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I put myself in the customer's shoes (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am uncomfortable with unknown selling situations (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am passionate about serving my customer needs (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q9 Please indicate the degree of your agreement with each of the following statements:

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)
I feel excited when I create personal connections with customers (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I always discuss with my colleagues how we best place new products on the market (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I get excited when I find creative solutions to customer problems (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have many opportunities to share ideas with the customer about adding value to the service/product experience (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel passionate	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

about solving customers problems (5)					
I use multiple channels of communication to encourage a greater exchange of ideas with the customer about the service/product experience (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I regularly talk with colleagues about what needs our customers have (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I communicate with the customer to receive input on improving the service/product experience (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Select "strongly disagree" for this question (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q6 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following:

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)
I love helping different types of customers (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am energized by resolving particularly challenging customer problems (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I regularly discuss with colleagues what the future could look like for our customers (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in communicating with the customer about the best way to design and deliver a quality service/product experience (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My customer believe it is good to do business with me (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My customers' allegiance make me feel 'special' (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My customers are extremely loyal to me (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The customers I deal with can't be satisfied unless I rely on information technology (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q8 Please indicate the degree of your agreement with each of the following statements:

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)
The customers I see value me using information technology to improve decisions (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

I believe customers are satisfied with the services provided (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall, my customers are satisfied with my service (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel my customers would recommend me to coworkers even if I switched firms. (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The customer and I work together as equals when it comes to making this service/product successful (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The more control I have over the service/product experience, the more responsible I feel for the success experienced (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm less concerned with the work I do that what I get for it (7)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm less concern with the work I do than what I get for it (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

28 Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following:

	Strongly agree (1)	Agree (2)	Somewhat agree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat disagree (5)
For this service / product experience to end successfully, both the customer and I must rely on each other (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The customers and I are both accountable for the results of the service/product experience (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am strongly motivated by the money I can earn (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My customers would do less business with my firm in the next few years if I were to leave (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I sell more if there is some type of compensation associated with it (5)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Select "somewhat agree" for this question (6)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q25 Compared to other salespeople, my use of sales technology (to access, analyze or better understand, or better communicate) information about products, sales calls, orders, sales, accounts, and the like, is best described as:

	Much higher (1)	Moderately higher (2)	Slightly higher (3)	About the same (4)	Slightly lower (5)
Using sales technology to access information (8)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using sales technology to analyze information (9)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Using sales technology to communicate information (10)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q11 What is your annual salary (total compensation)?

- ☐ Less than \$10,000 (1)
- ☐ \$10,000 - \$19,999 (2)
- ☐ \$20,000 - \$29,999 (3)
- ☐ \$30,000 - \$39,999 (4)
- ☐ \$40,000 - \$49,999 (5)
- ☐ \$50,000 - \$59,999 (6)
- ☐ \$60,000 - \$69,999 (7)
- ☐ \$70,000 - \$79,999 (8)
- ☐ \$80,000 - \$89,999 (9)
- ☐ \$90,000 - \$99,999 (10)
- ☐ \$100,000 - \$149,999 (11)
- ☐ More than \$150,000 (12)

Q13 What percentage of your salary is from bonus and / or commission?

_____ Bonus as % of Salary (4)

_____ Commission as % of Salary (5)

Q15 How long is your typical sales cycle (in terms of months)?

_____ Months (1)

Q17 What is your age?

_____ AGE (1)

Q22

Primary markets served?

Q19 What is the highest level of school you have completed or the highest degree you have received?

- ☐ Less than high school degree (1)
- ☐ High school graduate (high school diploma or equivalent including GED) (2)
- ☐ Some college but no degree (3)
- ☐ Associate degree in college (2-year) (4)
- ☐ Bachelor's degree in college (4-year) (5)
- ☐ Master's degree (6)
- ☐ Doctoral degree (7)
- ☐ Professional degree (JD, MD) (8)

Q21 What is your gender?

- ☐ Male (1)
- ☐ Female (2)

Q23 Total years of sales experience?

_____ Years (4)

Q25 How many hours do you work per week?

_____ Hours/Week (1)

Q23

Annual sales of the company you represent?

Q20 To improve our understanding of the role the customer plays in the selling outcome and the quality of our data, we encourage you to include three of your customers' email addresses (please separate by commas) in the following box. This will allow us to send them a quick survey (5 minutes) about improving sales outcomes. Your customers' information will remain anonymous.

Q24 If you would like a copy of the results of this research, please enter your email address in the below box.

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