

THE INTERNATIONAL

# Journal of Sales Transformation

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I look forward to welcoming you to the International Journal of Sales Transformation community.

**With best wishes,**

**Nick de Cent**  
**Editor-in-chief**

THE INTERNATIONAL

# Journal of Sales Transformation

JANUARY 2015 / ISSUE 1:0

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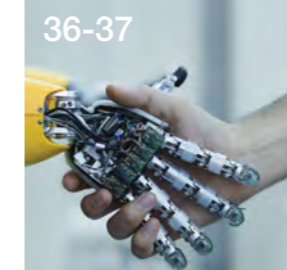
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*The assumption still persists of a prerequisite to be aggressive.*



# Simply the best

*In the male-dominated profession that is sales, women are still under-represented at the top level. We met three inspiring women at the 2014 Women In Sales Awards.*

Nick de Cent

## Top sales director

Nicky Robinson  
winner Sales Director category

“I am responsible for managing and inspiring a field sales team of over 320 people who all locally drive the performance of our soft drinks portfolio across the national supermarkets of Great Britain. Retail sales value for this channel is £1.4 billion.

“I initially started out in research and marketing but quickly learned that, when I understood what customers would like, I wanted to be the person who directly acted on delivering against it. I also love the responsibility of feeding back and inputting into all the functions based on customer feedback and market developments.

“I think there are fewer women in sales leadership partly because of perception and partly because of reality. The assumption still persists of a prerequisite to be aggressive and have the capacity to thrive in a cutthroat, long-hours working environment. This is far from the truth and I think businesses don't necessarily recruit with this in mind, and yet some women do not put themselves forward.

“However, as a business function, we are often not good at supporting flexible working requests. A lot of senior sales positions are still full time and require considerable travel when there could be flexing for job shares and part-time roles. For the right circumstances, I firmly believe that the cost of doing this would be more than offset by the benefit of retaining more women's perspective, capability, passion and experience.”

*Nicola Robinson is Director – Field Sales at CocaCola Enterprises*

## Standout salesperson

Serra Erelcin  
winner Best Woman In Financial Sales and “Most Distinguished Saleswoman of 2014”

“I began my career in business development at a venture capital firm in the US after my MBA. Upon my return to Turkey, I became marketing manager in one of the leading casinos. Transitioning from one trading floor to another, I landed on a trading desk in the banking sector. However, I quickly got recognised for my strong interpersonal and selling skills. I was usually chosen to be a harmoniser and problem solver for various situations internally or externally. Based on these traits, I was transferred to the bank's sales desk. All this experience has slowly but surely paved the way to join Thomson Reuters.

“I have been in Thomson Reuters Financial Sales for 18 years, responsible for a portfolio consisting of market-leader banks, asset management companies, investments banks and some big corporations. The portfolio is around 25% of the total revenue in Turkey. The day-to-day role involves keeping in close contact with the customer for retention of existing services while spotting opportunities for growth.

“Since 2010, I have also been acting as the Country Representative for Turkey where I manage all the operational details involved in running a legal entity and office in Turkey. Being an emerging country, Turkey is inherently volatile and relentlessly changing, so I am proud to say that I have been outperforming in both roles concurrently.”

*Serra Erelcin is Account Manager, Istanbul, Thomson Reuters*

## Media entrepreneur

Afi Ofori  
founder of the Women In Sales Awards

“As managing director of Zars Media, I oversee the day-to-day running of the company. My main responsibilities, however, are sales and marketing. We launched the Women in Sales Awards in North America and India earlier this year and also launched the Women In Construction and Engineering Awards and the Women In Private Equity Awards. We plan to launch these in North America as well.

“After I graduated, I applied for a position at Saatchi & Saatchi as a media buyer; however, I missed the deadline for the graduate programme and was asked to try the following year. Instead of taking a year off, I got a job selling advertising space; this was when I realised my ability to direct and influence the decisions of senior executives.... There was no going back after that.

“In my experience, women generally don't like sales. I have worked with a few women who were afraid of asking for the sale. They were uncomfortable asking the clients for money. You can't be in sales if you can't ask for the sale. My dream is that the Women in Sales Awards will help boost the number of women in sales roles by highlighting the fact that sales is one of the best platforms to help women get into senior positions and into board rooms.

“I believe women bring empathy to the table; they nurture a sale rather than go in straight for the kill, which in 21st century selling is a great skill to have.”

*Afi Ofori is Managing Director of Zars Media*



👁 Guest View

## Bridging the gulf between professors and practitioners

*As sales continues to develop at breakneck pace, business and academics need to open channels of communication.*

✍ Professor Neil Rackham



© Mark Green

For well over a century, there have been organised attempts to increase sales professionalism. The case for doing so is nowhere more engagingly expressed than in an editorial appearing in 1884 in the magazine of the Society of Commercial Travelers: "If we do not strive for the professional respect accorded to other occupations of substance and worth, then the world shall judge us no better than peddlers and rogues."

In the intervening century there have been many attempts to elevate sales into a profession of "substance and worth". Most of the earlier efforts focused on improving moral character, as all professions must be underpinned by an ethical code. The Order of United Commercial Travelers, for example, was founded to "improve character and instill temperate habits". And, here's an interesting piece of trivia, the Gideons, of hotel bible fame, were founded to "eliminate, gambling, drinking, dirty jokes, Sunday trading and other forms of temptation peculiar to traveling (sales) men".

### Certification

Professions, of course, require more than just an ethical code. They need standards and a process of certification that shows the world that practitioners are suitably qualified. This, too, has been the subject of many attempts over the years in the sales field, starting with John Patterson, founder of National Cash Register in the 1890s.

These attempts at professional certification had even less chance of

success than the Gideons' prohibition of gambling, drinking and dirty jokes. Before you can have a credible, certifiable sales qualification, you must first

“**For sales to become a true profession, we must find better ways to bridge the gap between theory and practice.**”

have a legitimate and systematic body of testable knowledge about selling on which certification can be based. Although there has never been any shortage of opinions on how to sell, objective, teachable knowledge has been harder to come by.

However, in the past 20 years or so, our knowledge of selling has advanced from seat-of-the-pants opinion to a corpus of well-researched and tested facts about every facet of sales. Whether it be compensation, recruitment, metrics, training or territory and pipeline management, each area has advanced significantly.

In 2000, John DeVincentis and I wrote a book on the future of selling, called *Rethinking the Sales Force*. We opened the book by lamenting that sales changed so slowly that a Rip Van

Winkle salesperson who had fallen asleep 50 years earlier could wake and walk back into a largely unchanged job half a century later. How different, we observed, from any other function of the organisation. Finance, manufacturing, even HR, had all altered unrecognisably. Selling, we predicted, was poised for a seismic change.

### Speed of change

It turns out that we underestimated the speed and extent of these changes. Selling today is moving so fast that it's hard to keep up.

So we can now claim to have an evolving body of knowledge that is more than enough to underpin a vibrant sales profession. On the whole, there's reason to feel optimistic about how sales has been growing up lately. But there is one glaring omission. Look at other successful professions like medicine and law. They have solid and effective mechanisms to link theory and practice, to put practitioners and academics together.

New ideas are communicated through professional networks; improvements in practice are codified and confirmed by academic research. Where are these mechanisms in sales? The answer is that they are just not there. Between theory and practice, there's a gulf – and it's in danger of getting wider.

The academic research literature in the sales area is starting to lose touch with practice. The 2012 Harvard Invitational Conference on Thought Leadership in the Sales Profession

recognised this state of affairs in the conference invitation with the warning, "Although the sales profession continues to grow and evolve, academic teaching and research have failed to keep pace."

On the other side of this chasm, there's equally bad news. If academics are in danger of losing touch, practitioners face the dangers of missing new developments and advances. I'm continually taken aback at how little senior sales management knows about the important advances in sales theory that have taken place in recent years. But then, I ask myself, where could they find these things out? Not from the popular sales press where old ideas are continually recycled and hopeful consultants pitch their wares.

So that brings me to the new *International Journal of Sales Transformation*. It will meet the increasingly important need to bring theory and practice together. It will give practitioners access to new concepts, models and methods. Equally vital, it will help academics and researchers to understand how the real world of selling is evolving and, in doing so, will help influence the future direction of sales research.

For sales to become a true profession, we must find better ways to bridge the gap between theory and practice. *The International Journal of Sales Transformation* is the most promising step that I've seen towards this essential goal.

<sup>1</sup> T. B. Spears. *100 Years on the Road: the Traveling Salesman in American Culture*. Yale University Press, 1995.

*Neil Rackham is Visiting Professor at four universities, including: Visiting Professor of Sales and Marketing, Portsmouth University; Visiting Professor of Sales Strategy, Cranfield School of Management; and Visiting Professor of Sales, Sheffield University. His current research looks at the integration of sales and marketing and at emerging issues in large complex sales. Three of his books have appeared on the New York Times best-seller list and his works are translated into over 50 languages. His classic book SPIN Selling is widely credited with starting the consultative selling movement.*

👁 Our View

## It's the start of something big!

*Sales is evolving into a true profession as corporations, practitioners and academics combine in the search for excellence.*

“**Today's business world is a far more complex place than it was even ten years ago: buyers are better informed, competition is fiercer and technology has empowered customers.**”

Welcome to the very first issue of the *International Journal of Sales Transformation*.

As salespeople, managers and leaders, we are rightly proud of the fact that we are in the front line of business, creating and facilitating exchanges of value and aiming to serve our customers with dedication, flair and integrity.

However, the sales function is singular in providing employment to so many – and being of such significance to business – yet having little in the way of any credible professional structure.

Today's business world is a far more complex place than it was even ten years ago: buyers are better informed, competition is fiercer and technology has empowered customers. In short, times have moved on: selling at the higher levels has become an even more complex and skilful role that we can only entrust to our highest-calibre people.

Nevertheless, our currency in many instances couldn't be lower: reputations have been tarnished by mis-selling and ethical scandals; boardroom surveys find that C-suite executives report that few

salespeople deliver what they require.

Forward-looking sales leaders are responding to these challenges. We are witnessing the birth of a movement determined to mould sales into a true profession – and are delighted to support both the Association of Sales Professionals and the Women in Sales Awards in their endeavours as part of this.

Large corporations are pursuing development best practice through their own academies in reaction to a paucity of established professional structures; academics are beginning to view sales as a fruitful field of research; and some of the best new entrants to the workplace are at last recognising that sales ability is a useful skill for ultimate career progression.

At the moment, this movement may seem fragmented, with emerging pockets of excellence, but this is where the new *Journal* comes in. We are called a "journal" for a very good reason: we wish to convey the very best thought-leadership, based on genuine research and academic rigour, but thoroughly grounded in the practical world of business.

### Inaugural issue

In this inaugural issue, you will find important research from established academics and Masters students – who are also senior practitioners – alongside contributions from leading journalists, commentators and consultants. We cover the crucial matters of ethics and diversity as well as more commercial issues from both the seller's and the buyer's perspective. We look at industries ranging from hi-tech to pharma, and we take a truly international stance, with contributions from the United States, Europe and the Middle-East.

Overall, we seek to be both interesting and practical. It's early days yet but do let us know if we are on the way to achieving our goal – and please don't hesitate to tell us how we might improve. This is, after all, your *Journal*.

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



# Powerful women celebrate achievements at Savoy sales awards ceremony

Thomson Reuters account manager for Istanbul, Serra Erelcin was recently voted "Most Distinguished Saleswoman of 2014" at the second Women in Sales Awards event at London's Savoy, where she also won the "Best Woman in Financial Sales Category."

Erelcin has been in Thomson Reuters Financial Sales for 18 years, responsible for a portfolio consisting of market-leading banks, asset management companies, investments banks and some large corporations; she is also Country Manager for Turkey.

## Award-winners

She was joined on stage by her fellow award-winners:

- **Best Woman Sales Director 2014** – Nicola Robinson, Director, Field Sales Home Channel, Coca Cola;
- **Best Woman Sales Manager 2014** – Pip White, Commercial Sales Manager, HP;
- **Best Woman In Field Sales 2014** – Kate Derrick, Gas Sales Development Manager, Npower;
- **Best Woman Sales Newcomer 2014** – Katie Glover, Regional Development Manager, Axa Insurance;

- **Best Woman In IT Sales 2014** – Diana Morales, Strategic Business Manager, Avention Inc;
- **Best Woman In Consumer Sales 2014** – Vicky Hughes, Customer Business Manager, PepsiCo; and
- **Best Woman In Telephone Sales 2014** – Emma Marriott Account Executive, Lincoln West.

A truly international event, the awards have attracted entries from across Europe and beyond. IT Sales winner Morales, who has an engineering background and an MBA, has worked in IT consulting sales for 15 years in the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, France and Colombia. "I have lived and studied in London and Paris and speak fluent English, French and Spanish," she tells the *Journal*.

## Big risk

She says: "I took a big risk to chase my dreams and left an established career in Bogota to start from the bottom in London. My proudest business achievement has been to become a top performer. It means that all the efforts and sacrifices I have made so far have been fruitful. It is a confirmation that I can achieve whatever I dream of."

Commenting on the fact that are fewer women sales leaders than men, Morales explains: "If a role needs ten key criteria, a woman could dismiss herself if she believes she only meet nine while men go ahead if they have only four! We need to be accountable for our own development, have confidence in our natural strengths and instincts and create a clear plan to get there."

She adds: "Companies should embrace female talent and realise the enormous advantages of using female skills such as listening, understanding, nurturing and collaborating to grow their businesses. However, it is our own responsibility to stand up for ourselves, provide results and therefore earn our own chair at the big table."

The success of the European awards has prompted organiser Afi Ofori, managing director of Zars Media, to launch similar events in North America – nominations close 27 March 2015, [www.wisawardsna.com](http://www.wisawardsna.com) – and India, where the awards will be presented in Mumbai on 20 February 2015 ([www.wisain.com](http://www.wisain.com)).

- **See "Upfront", pages 4-5 for interviews with some of the women involved in the 2014 awards.**



▲ Avention Inc's Diana Morales (right): "Companies should embrace female talent."

# Disrupt customers' learning journey says CEB

Corporate Executive Board (CEB) authors have trailed the follow-up to the hugely successful 2011 book *The Challenger Sale* in a post by on Matt Dixon, one of the authors and the firm's Executive Director, Financial Services and Customer Contact Practices.

Tentatively entitled *The Mobilizer Purchase: Forging Consensus Through Disruptive Insight*, the book is set to extend the Challenger franchise beyond the sales organization into marketing, customer service and product development, says author Brent Adamson, CEB's Managing Director or Advisory Services, who was speaking exclusively to the *Journal*.

Many of the ways that companies engage with customers are owned and managed by the marketing function. "The question then becomes not so much 'Are our sales reps challenging customers?' but 'Is our company challenging the customer?'" Adamson explains. "What customers are ultimately looking for is insight."



Corporate Executive Board

▲ Brent Adamson: customers looking for insight.

The book will set out to help organisations engage customers earlier in their learning journey by disrupting their thinking. "You need to do this through the marketing channels," Adamson says.

# Industry leaders launch UK sales body

The Association of Professional Sales (APS) is the only professional association run by sales professionals for sales professionals – that's one of the unique selling points for the new not-for-profit organisation setting out to represent sales professionals in the United Kingdom.

"The sales profession needs a body that has credibility with senior practitioners, employers and the UK public," says Andrew Hough, Chief Operating Officer.

Its founders say that the APS will be the public voice of the sales profession and will champion professional development whilst establishing a clear and authoritative presence on sales standards. A longer-term goal of achieving chartered status for the sales profession will be a cornerstone initiative that "will fundamentally change sales within the UK forever", they suggest.

Sales leaders from a number of major corporations have come together to launch the APS. They include representatives from EMC Corporation, Barclays Bank, HSBC, Arrow ECS, Banner Managed Communication, EY, SAP, Yodel, Rentokil, BT and AT&T.

"Salespeople understand how critical good selling is to the success of their company and also to UK Plc. The Association of Professional Sales is committed to enhancing professional standards and championing best practice for sales," says Hough, who is also Vice President Enterprise & Mid Range Storage, at IT-as-a-service giant EMC.

"Membership of APS will allow sales people to continue their professional development, whilst contributing to maintaining a credible and dynamic sales community," he adds.

The APS has evolved out of the Chartered Institute of Marketing's Sales Leadership Alliance initiative. The long-established Institute of Sales & Marketing Management also seeks to represent sales professionals in the United Kingdom and "be the body that represents professional sales people worldwide".

- **For information on joining the APS, visit: [www.associationofprofessional-sales.com/join-us/](http://www.associationofprofessional-sales.com/join-us/). See "My Journey" on pages 12-15 for an in-depth interview with Andrew Hough.**

# Toshiba development focus

In the crowded UK office equipment market, what are the chances a manufacturer could double sales through its dealer channel within five years? Not only is it a tough goal but it's one that Toshiba Tec UK expects to achieve a year ahead of schedule, according to the Indirect Division's sales director Carl Day.

Day attributes much of the success to the organisation's focus on learning and development, including time spent with the dealers training with the Royal Marine Commandos in Devon. "That's where I learnt that you can really do a lot by developing people, no matter what age they are," he tells the *Journal*.

That experience inspired a strategy, which now sees dealer principals engaged in a Masters in Sales Transformation programme along with plans to introduce a sales diploma in the New Year.

# On-demand teams opening European markets

Sales Force Europe has delivered 100% incremental sales during the past two quarters for customers expanding into European markets, the provider of on-demand sales professionals has announced. The business expansion specialist works on behalf of Silicon Valley clients in 27 countries and 14 languages and provides a team of over 65 sales experts stationed in key countries around the world.

SFE claims to have successfully introduced more than 100 technology companies into international markets and specialises in Enterprise/cloud, telecoms, consumer electronics and channel distribution.

Robb Miller, VP of global sales at long-term SFE customer Livefyre, says: "Sales Force Europe is the fastest way to scale tech sales in Europe, bar none. Their on-demand business model made sense for us both as we tested the market in different countries for our social apps technology among publishers and brands, and now as we double down on certain markets and grow the teams."

- **SFE is one of a number of sales outsourcing specialists listed on the new [Executesales.com](http://Executesales.com) beta site. The site acts as a "dating agency" for companies seeking an outsourced sales organisation, perhaps for market expansion or in a start-up context. For more information, see [www.executesales.com](http://www.executesales.com).**





# Leaders link ethics to performance

✍ Professor Mark Johnston

*What is the relationship between sales ethics and business performance?*

*Professor Mark Johnston takes us through the latest research.*

From Apple to Volkswagen, the axiom – ethical business is good business – is firmly embedded in today's corporate culture. While this ethical business model is driven at all levels and throughout the organisation, nowhere is it more important than the sales force. As the customer-facing representative for the entire organisation, the salesperson either reinforces or diminishes the customer's perception of a company's ethical business practices.

As a result, there has been a significant research focus on understanding the role of ethics in the sales process and the drivers of ethical

decision making at the company (sales force) as well as the individual level. One area of particular interest has been the role of leadership and its impact on the ethical climate (Demirtas, and Akdogan, 2014) and, more specifically, the impact of sales leadership on the ethical climate in a sales force. Not surprisingly, research suggests a strong positive association between the ethical role modelling of managers and organisational ethical climate (Brown and Mitchell, 2010).

## Performance

However, what has not been widely researched is the impact of ethical climate on actual sales performance metrics. Intuitively, managers and salespeople connect the organisational climate and more specifically ethical organisational climate with a wide range of salesperson attitudes and behaviours (Martin and Cullen 2006). Indeed, while the evidence for the positive impact of ethics on business practices has been demonstrated at the broad strategic

level (Savitz, 2014) there is far less empirical evidence on the impact of ethics on salesperson attitudes and, more importantly, critical behaviours such as performance metrics.

Couple this with the ongoing, even increased, pressure to enhance sales performance as well as the changing nature of sales objectives and the result is a lot of "belief" but not much real understanding. Consider, for example, that salespeople today are asked to be more a consultant than "salesperson", engaging the customer on a deeper, more strategic level than ever before. The result is the transformation of the salesperson from marketing message communicator to an integral part of the value proposition (Terho, Hass, Eggert, Ulala, 2012).

## Leadership challenges

Do these new relationships create ethical challenges for sales leadership, the salesperson and the customer? How, for example, does the salesperson

balance the needs of the customer for strategic product planning information with the need for confidentiality of company data? Or the inherent conflict between being an advocate for his or her company while also being an advocate for the customer?

**“**  
*When salespeople perceive their organisation's climate as ethical they are more willing to engage the customer in building stronger relationships and doing the little things to add value.*

At the same time, salespeople increasingly operate far removed from the company's ethical culture and climate making it difficult to know the "right thing to do". While company policies and procedures are easily accessible, the challenging ethical dilemmas faced by today's salespeople are often not so easily relegated to a company policy manual or online Q&A.

As a result, the sales leader takes on an important role as mentor and consultant in helping salespeople work through ethical challenges. If the salesperson perceives the sales leader is unwilling or unable to address the ethical issue, he or she is operating "in the dark". Even worse, if the sales leader's ethical practices are inconsistent with company's policies or the individual's own values, the salesperson is drawn into a "no-win" situation.

## Ambiguity

As a result, one negative outcome of these two phenomena – changing sales roles and salespeople operating outside the organisation – is a much higher level of role ambiguity, with salespeople increasingly asking themselves: "What should I do here?" Training and coaching can help mitigate many of the sales procedural questions but ethical ambiguity is more difficult to address, particularly when there is an ethical vacuum in sales leadership.

Recently, research has begun to shed light on these issues, reinforcing the widely held belief that the organisation's ethical climate and, more specifically, the individual salesperson's perception of the company's ethical

climate, does impact performance. Given the sales leader's primary role in creating the organisation's ethical climate a clear picture emerges of continued organisational emphasis connecting ethical business decisions with "good business" as defined by enhanced customer value and increased sales.

When salespeople perceive their organisation's climate as ethical they are more willing to engage the customer in building stronger relationships and doing the little things to add value. At the same time, the opposite is true, when salespeople perceive an unethical organisational climate they are less willing to create the added customer value that is so essential to increase sales performance.

## Equal enforcement

Critical to creating this ethical organisational culture is the sometimes difficult policy of equal enforcement, in other words, salespeople need to believe that ethical policies and codes of behaviour are applied equally across everyone in the sales organisation – even the "star" performers. Sales leaders are at the centre of enforcing the ethical policies of an organisation and it is now becoming clear that the manner in which a company addresses equal enforcement of ethical policies directly impacts performance.

Another benefit of equal enforcement of ethical policies is that it helps mitigate the ethical ambiguity that so often happens in the sales process. When sales leaders establish and then enforce ethical policies, salespeople have a clearer understanding of the company's ethical decision-making guidelines, which enables them to more effectively engage the customer, in effect, empowering the salesperson.

Customers are frequently asked – what are you looking for in a salesperson? One of the key success factors they identify is the salesperson's willingness to take personal responsibility for the customer relationship. The willingness to take responsibility for the customer relationship connects directly to the salesperson's understanding of the company's ethical policies and his or her belief that those policies are going to be enforced by their sales leaders.

So, in the end, sales ethics and performance are linked and the axiom is true – ethical business is good business. Equally true is that the sales leader plays an essential role in creating an ethical climate that encourages the salesperson to engage the customer and create the added value that is so critical to sales success.



**Professor Mark Johnston**

Mark W Johnston is the Alan and Sandra Gerry Professor of Marketing and Ethics at the Roy E Crummer Graduate School of Business, Rollins College, Florida, USA. Prior to receiving his doctorate from Texas A&M University he worked in industry as a sales and marketing representative for a leading distributor of photographic equipment.

His research has resulted in dozens of published articles in a number of professional journals such as *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* and many others. He is co-author of *Sales Force Management*, 11e, *Contemporary Selling* (4e), and *Marketing Management* (2e). His market-leading book, *Sales Force Management* has been translated into Spanish, Russian and Chinese.

Mark has been cited by the *Journal of Business Research* as one of the most important researchers in the area of personal selling and sales management. He continues to conduct research in sales and marketing ethics as well as sales force performance and motivation. He has been retained as a consultant for firms in the personal health care, chemical, transportation, service and telecommunications industries.



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*Leaders need to inspire that discretionary effort from the people around you.*

# You lead to serve

 Nick de Cent

*EMC vice-president and one of the driving forces behind the Association of Professional Sales, Andy Hough talks about leadership, career development and his aspirations for the sales profession.*

**Y**ou lead to serve – this key principle has guided Andy Hough throughout his career, and it’s one that he has sought to demonstrate right from the outset, even while participating in group workshops as part of the interview process for his first job.

“A lot of people make the mistake of going in and wanting to dominate situations and show that they’re the best, but you also need to bring others on and let their skills shine,” argues Hough, who is Vice-President Enterprise & Mid Range Storage at IT-as-a-service giant EMC. Active participation rather than domination is the name of the game. “And that’s what business is still looking for today, well-rounded leaders who can actually bring the best out of other people.”

For Hough, leadership is about balancing four things: revenue growth, profitable market share, employee satisfaction, and customer satisfaction. “It’s really hard to get the balance right. There are lots of cases where you can see people who do really well at one or maybe two of those, but it’s actually about balancing all of them.” Perhaps unusually for a sales specialist, Hough is a traditional university graduate. He read geography at Liverpool University and then pursued various employment options via the Milk Round prior to graduating in 1992. More predictably, though, a sales career was not a foregone conclusion: “I really didn’t know what I wanted to do at that particular point – it was management of some sort.”

## Spark and tenacity

The job search process did, however, bring out qualities that have stood him in good stead subsequently. At the time, the economy was emerging from another period of downturn and a lot of the banks were looking for the kind of skills Hough had – “that spark and tenacity to say I wanted to learn” – and he ended up in Lloyds Private Banking. “I had a passion to want to get on and I think, at that particular time, that wasn’t necessarily evident within a lot of students; I think a lot of people were of the viewpoint that ‘I’ve got a degree and a job will arrive’. And, just at that time, clearly the economy had changed and organisations were looking for something just a little bit different.”

What was that difference? According to Hough it’s the ability to “inspire that discretionary effort from people around you”. He declares: “That’s the difference between somebody who’s going to make it – and the organisation that’s going to make it with those >



leaders – and the ones who are just going to make up the numbers.”

Immersion in the principles of relationship management and marketing as part of a very small private banking team, as well as placements in Geneva and in a City trading environment, helped Hough to build his skills. A move to the then Barclays Asset Finance, joining a fledgling team in Manchester, helped to hone his capabilities, particularly in terms of managing his own profit and loss and mixing and matching a margin portfolio in the context of building a long-term business while also hitting short-term goals.

### Phone, car, desk and postcodes

“I was given a phone, a car, a desk, a set of postcodes, and I had to go and build that business myself. You effectively sold three times: you sold yourself to the customer; you then sold your products to the customer; and then you had to sell the customer’s risk to the internal underwriter.”

Of course, success was a team effort in that Hough was surrounded by experienced people – not least a “very strong” sales manager, who was “able to take those chances on me that probably others wouldn’t have seen”. In particular, he was “allowed to make a huge amount of mistakes” in a safe and controlled environment. “A lot of people forget that making mistakes is what a lot of people learn from.”

Subsequently headhunted by General Electric, which was looking to set up a joint venture with Sun Microsystems, Hough found himself involved in leasing solutions designed to help sell equipment, during the frothy early Internet days at the turn of the century and with the City as his lucrative patch. Once again, he needed to figure out very quickly what his business plan would be (“there wasn’t a manual”).

Although it seemed simple, as so often with joint ventures, the practicalities in the field turned out to be challenging. The business model sought to apply GE Capital’s traditional expertise in the copier market, with an average deal size of £10-20k, to the City’s requirements for major banking and storage and server systems costing £5-20 million. “That caused a lot of people to be very concerned about the decisions they were making. I very quickly realised that, in reality, the role was almost like oiling the San Andreas fault. You had a very rapid fast-moving organisation on one side and a very cautious, risk-averse organisation on the other.”

This tension sparked a new move to EMC as a financial salesperson, which



Nick de Cent

▲ Andy Hough: combining the vocational world of sales with academic insight is a priority.

had a “completely different proposition – a financing proposition, which actually becomes a sales enabler”. The new model saw a move away from a traditional back-loaded leasing approach

**“I very quickly realised that, in reality, the role was almost like oiling the San Andreas fault.”**

towards facilitating technology refreshes by rolling one lease into another. The new challenge again involved Hough in building his own portfolio and explaining to customers the new proposition – “which actually meant explaining to reps, who had those relationships with the customer, what you were doing”.

Indeed, the ability to explain the proposition to the reps turned out to be a key factor in the success of the venture: “They would sell you into the customer relationship.” However, that was not the end of it, because selling to the IT department was not the final goal; the finance department were the ultimate customers for the offering. “You had actually sold three times just to get to

the right user.”

Hough suggests that the process is all about confidence. If people have confidence in you as an individual and the things that you are saying – “it needs to be in a language that they understand” – then you can layer on more complexity and intelligence. However, it’s important not to layer on complexity right at the start as this simply scares people away.

He adds: “I don’t think much has changed; if you think about successful sales forces in the field, they are the ones who are most confident in their product.” Furthermore, you can’t fake confidence in a product.

Interestingly, EMC has an approach that doesn’t involve incentivising its reps to make such introductions; instead, they are simply very well paid and do it because it’s the right thing to do for the customer. According to Hough, when the company had tried an incentive approach in the past, it found that it paid out to the people who “would have done it anyway and the people who weren’t going to do it weren’t motivated by the financial uplift”. Trust and the right kind of relationship are the factors that actually make the difference.

Since then, Hough has risen to manage Europe and subsequently into a programme role for the entire

business as director, sales operations. This experience has taught Hough a huge amount about change management and offered a first foray into sales enablement working with people like Charlotte Campbell at EMC and Cranfield University. “Whilst I really loved being a salesperson and a sales leader, what I also enjoy is actually seeing people develop.”

### New professional body

As a prominent figure in the newly established Association of Professional Sales (APS), training is a particular issue for Hough, having “received some great training” from Barclays Mercantile, which even as an organisation of only some 300 salespeople had its own training establishment – a setup you would be unlikely to find today. “As larger organisations seek to recruit from those mid-size organisations, what they could have taken for granted isn’t there anymore.”

“The industry really does need to drop down and help these smaller

organisations in terms of how they can invest in their people, how they can therefore benefit from that investment in the short term and sometimes in the medium term; but help them also understand that life is a journey and they will lose good salespeople – salespeople do move on.”

For an organisation to invest in its salespeople is a real business cost, Hough acknowledges. “How do you get a return from that cost? I think there are a lot of areas where the Association of Professional Sales and other bodies can really start to engage these mid-to-small companies and help them by consolidating courses that are easily consumable for them and help them move forward to be able to really understand what’s out there as options that can benefit their business.”

Combining the vocational world of sales with academic insight is a priority for Hough. He contrasts the “sheer number of people practising sales and the completely disproportionately low number of qualifications that you can get”.

Hough sees it as the great sales paradox: “everybody does it so nobody thinks about it;” yet, at the same time “nobody wants to be seen to do it because of the negative connotations”. Hough is clear that there is a need for more professionalisation, qualifications and academic institutions to support the sales community, especially to help develop standards and ethics in selling, so it’s no surprise then that he is one of the prime moving forces behind the newly launched APS, which emerged from the Chartered Institute of Marketing’s Sales Leadership Alliance initiative.

He acknowledges that his “personal credibility is on the line” (along with that of others) but is heartened by the “desire to contribute and make a difference by senior people, thought-leaders, academics and practitioners”. And the ultimate goal? A drive towards chartered status for the sales profession in the UK, a set of standards, and ensuring that sales becomes a “destination career”.



Nick de Cent

**“Whilst I really loved being a salesperson and a sales leader, what I also enjoy is actually seeing people develop.”**



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I homed in on a technique that the CIA came up with after the Bay of Pigs, something called ‘classification of evidence on believability’.

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Atos



# The intelligent approach

Paul Myles

*Truly understanding the customer underpinned the success of this hugely complex mega-deal. We talk to William Mills of Atos about how information really is power.*

Succeeding in a sales environment sometimes means turning over long-cherished beliefs such as: all negative thoughts are destructive. It was this ability to embrace the problems when creating a bid for new business that enabled William Mills, vice-president Strategic Sales Engagements at outsourcing specialists Atos, to write a new chapter in bid tendering. And his unique approach helped land a \$750 million deal while up against a seemingly impossible deadline for a bid of mind-boggling complexity.

Yet Mills could draw on personal reserves honed in 15 years' commanding an armoured squadron in the army, a career that included senior roles at staff and NATO headquarters. Particularly relevant were his three positions in army intelligence during Northern Ireland's "troubles".

He tells the *Journal*: "Naturally, I can't talk too much about those roles but the experience helped me to recognise that, in sales, there is a mantra that says 'all favourable information is true, all unfavourable information is false or being negative'.

"I realised this was a totally incorrect way to look at information. I studied some of the disasters that happened with some outsourcing deals where they had been running on faulty intelligence. Gathering intelligence means assembling the facts and marshalling them into what is believable and what is not."

Still true to his military background, Mills sought inspiration from the CIA's approach to the problems of information after its botched invasion attempt on Cuba in 1961.

Taking up the story, Mills explains: "I homed in on a technique that the CIA came up with after the Bay of Pigs, something called 'classification of evidence on believability'.

## Tangible evidence

"This process talks about tangible evidence and testimonial evidence. In this way you can start to classify evidence into whether it is true or not, how believable it is, and then you can say how relevant it is. I felt a lot of deals were being misled by overly enthusiastic salespeople who would manipulate facts, or even half-truths, to ensure a positive spin was put on the deal. The result was a lot of the deals were not won simply because the intelligence was wrong.

"I preached to my teams that we have to go through this classification of evidence and I encouraged them to build intelligence maps, cross reference things and make sure that, if a piece of information is put on the table, there is some corroboration to it from an independent source. This is important

because procurement departments and boards of directors are becoming experts in misinformation because they want people to bid.

"By applying the classification of evidence to bids I could say: 'I want to see evidence qualification, not just hearsay.' For example, has the information appeared in a chairman's statement, is it mentioned in the company's annual report, is it in an email from a CEO of that company? And are there corroborating pieces of evidence to support those findings?"

And just like drawing up a battle plan, Mills argues that a potentially successful bid must rely on building up a map of believable intelligence especially in the minefield of an intensely complex deal. He says: "I use a little program called iThought, which creates a mind-map. I've put it together to build up a picture of a deal. These look like what they are – a spider's web of information. In one particular case, where naturally I don't reveal the company's name, I've broken the map up into customer segments; players of the customer's that we are dealing with; advisers to the customer; events that happen relevant to the bid."

## Pressure bid

The campaign to win the business was even more pressured because the Atos team had a very late invite to the bid process and had just days to construct and present its outsourcing solution for an intensely complex deal.

Mills explains: "We had two days' notice that we were being >





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If you sell something correctly using the right intelligence, you will reap the rewards afterwards.”

▲ William Mills: built a comprehensive intelligence picture.

considered for this deal. I was called on New Year's Eve 2011, arrived in the US on 3 January and had to submit a full proposal by the 7th. Normally this process would have taken four to six weeks even with a full team working on it. Yet we did it and I'm not joking when I say that people actually slept on their desks.

#### Entire company mobilised

"However, the quality was fantastic because almost the entire company mobilised for us and got behind the strategy of understanding the customer and all the different pieces of

information, and we were able to slot all these pieces into the overall pictures very quickly."

The intelligence Mills and Atos had to gather must have seemed like a mountain of information made more challenging still by the actions of the protagonists involved.

Mills says: "I had to try to make the correlations between the relationships, what their actions were, in conjunction with a deal diary that lets me look back and say, 'three months ago so-and-so said that and now they are saying something different'.

"In this particular case I had known leaks of information from

various different sources. I had CIOs (chief information officers) within different divisions of the company who had allegiances to other outsourcing companies who were, in one case, blatantly transmitting our prices 20-minutes after we had submitted them."

#### High-stakes game

But the effort was worth the potential win in what was becoming a high-stakes game of corporate warfare. Mills adds: "This was a major blue-chip American company going through a separation into two different entities – one was a

financial services entity and the other a massive education entity. So all eyes of the shareholders, the stock market, were on this company to make sure it did not fall apart in the middle of the separation. This was a company worth \$10 billion and we had to handle the separation, the transformation and takeover of staff, purchase of a data centre, working across 43 countries, which shows this was not a straight-forward transaction.

"There are lots of politics involved, lots of different players with lots of different angles so, unless you build up a comprehensive intelligence picture, you are going to be misled. And we found our competitors were being misled by their own deductions."

#### Additional revenue

Mills and his team landed the deal and, while price-cutting had reduced the contract's value from an initial \$1.2 billion to \$750 million, they still had plenty to celebrate. "Since we won the deal we have achieved more than \$180 million of extra revenue and projects because we understand the business."

He adds: "This is testament that, if you sell something correctly using the right intelligence, you will reap the rewards afterwards."

Mills suggests Atos's success is built on a solid foundation of understanding its customer's needs and core business goals. "One of Atos's strengths is that we are a very customer-centric company that tries to listen to our customers and this gels with intelligence. Because, if you listen to your customers and hear what they are saying and you listen to enough of them, you will get a consistent message back to build an accurate picture. If you then grade that information properly you can sift out the red-herrings, which can so often lead people down the completely wrong track and end up losing the deal.

#### Intelligence picture

"We won the deal I've referred to because we had our intelligence picture very well mapped out for a very complex situation and we were able to relate that back to the customer in a customer-centric way. We were able to say: 'We do understand your business; we do understand your drivers, here, there and everywhere.'

"I believe this was what gave the customer huge confidence in choosing us."

Mills concludes: "If you identify the problem positively by method rather than chance, then you will be head-and-shoulders above any competition and that's the value of intelligence."

#### 👁 The customer

- The customer is a blue-chip financial services and educational publishing company based in New York.
- Over 100 years old, it has a portfolio of major brand names including a ratings agency and market indexes.
- The company is also a leader in both printed and, increasingly, digital educational publications, being a familiar name in many schools, universities and colleges around the world.

#### 👁 What did the bid comprise?

- The bid involved full outsourcing of all IT, data centre, workplace, network, telephony and service desk.
- In addition, the process involved transition and separation to create two new entities: financial services and education. This process involved financial, logical and, finally, physical separation.
- The competition on the bid came from IBM, HP, CSC, Wipro and TCS (Tata Consultancy Services).

#### 👁 What was the value of the bid?

- The value of the bid started at circa \$1.2 billion and ended at around \$750 million.
- However, since then, the project work to separate the business into two entities has come to around \$200 million.
- Consequently, the overall value of the project is worth close to \$1 billion.

#### 👁 The bid team

- The bid team comprised some 50 people but was elastic during different phases of the process.
- Almost the entire Atos board was involved and supporting the bid.
- The bid timeline was extremely short: it kicked off on 3 January and the deal was closed on 30 June.
- This frenetic pace required the initial response to be created in just six days instead of the usual four to six weeks!

#### 👁 What differentiated the Atos bid?

- Mills reports that a "real understanding of the customer's business" was a key differentiator in the bid.
- The offer to purchase the customer's data centre and to take over its people – something that tends to be a rarity in the United States – provided a solution that demonstrated that Atos understood the risks for such a market-prominent organisation.
- The bidders were prepared to accept behavioural service-level agreements – that is, action first, questions later – and acted as though they were working for the customer rather than Atos.



# From KAM to commission

*Beth Rogers leafs through some recent Masters dissertations to see what has been exercising the minds of sales managers.*

One of the joys of running a course such as a top-up Masters programme for sales managers is that their learning is applied to their company, and both tutor and student can see the potential impact. One of the downsides is that dissertations are almost always company confidential. The specifics of the work produced in this academic year may remain under wraps, but the nature of the topics explored demonstrates some important trends in sales management.

Since the establishment of the MA in Sales Management at Portsmouth in 2002, key account management has been explored by many students. It is one of the successes of academic-practitioner interaction in the 1990s that key account management has progressed as a field of study and as a successful business activity. Companies are always keen to ensure that their account management programmes are leading edge. Research findings are instructive, but there are some gaps, both of which were picked up by this year's students. There are very few specific studies on KAM in developing economies, the application of KAM to channel partners is lacking, and the application of KAM to "specifiers" in the supply chain is also sparse.

Previous studies in the Middle East, China and Indonesia suggest that KAM is relevant, but needs to be positioned carefully with the personal network obligations of *guanxi* and *wasta*. While KAM in Western cultures is an objective business process designed to create value for objectively-defined strategic customers, in many developing economies with developing legal frameworks, personal trust is key to business success. Consequently, many key account managers spend a lot of time developing personal relationships, to a degree that might seem odd in the United States or United Kingdom.

A complication is that developing economies are sometimes characterised by high job turnover, and re-building personal relationships after a key account manager or key customer decision maker has moved on can be difficult. But, there is no alternative. Success in different cultures does require different resource allocation, and the extensive time required to build relationships must be recognised.

## KAM and the channel

US and European companies often enter markets they perceive as distant using third-party agents, but they are also common in manufacturing supply chains across the world. Can KAM be applied to third parties? Ideally, channel partners are carefully chosen for their partnership potential, and allocated relationship managers in a similar way to key accounts.

In much the same way as key accounts, the mutual value enjoyed between suppliers, channel partners and end customers

evolves over time and may become more transactional or even negative. Renegotiating or exiting channel contracts will be scrutinised within an industry sector, and even by the media. The risk of reputational damage means that channel partners can be more challenging than key accounts in terms of relationship management.

On the subject of tripartite KAM, in some manufacturing sectors and in construction, it is specifiers who hold the power in the supply chain. In some cases, a supplier may do no business with them but needs to treat them like a key account because they choose the components of a new train or a new building.

What then of the intermediary, who actually orders the goods and builds them into their project? They cannot be ignored. They still expect good relationships and suppliers who are easy to do business with. They cannot be proactively chosen by the supplier, as the specifier chooses them. Once again, investment in relationship management skills is critical.

What if the customer does not want to reciprocate the suppliers' effort to build a business relationship? Until recently, much research about customer portfolio management was focused on the strategic importance of the customer to the supplier, while in practice the customer's strategic supplier management has been driving many business relationships. Companies still have challenges in incorporating the purchasing strategy of customers into their resource allocation choices.

Sometimes customers are not forthcoming about sharing information, and some account managers are not coached enough to discuss the customer's analysis. However, it is also a matter of judgment for suppliers to determine when sales strategy should mirror what the customer wants and when challenges and new ideas should be introduced to initiate a change in the relationship.

## E-procurement and e-selling

Ultimately, some customers are willing to push all their suppliers on to e-procurement and focus on driving the cost efficiencies of buying online, which includes a perception that

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*In 2014 the nuances of undiscovered elements of KAM are being chosen as dissertation topics. I believe that this shows that we are indeed moving forward.*



MA Sales Management students: elite thinkers.

a huge amount of time is saved by not talking to salespeople. E-procurement will not go away; indeed it is increasing, especially in the public sector. Therefore, companies in supply chains driven by e-procurement and e-auctions need to hone their skills accordingly.

The sales literature explains why suppliers resent e-auctions. This kind of arm's length contract negotiation can drive transactional approaches, whereas partnership might result in more exchange of value.

E-selling is rarely mentioned in the current research. Attempts to replicate face-to-face selling online include avatars guiding enquirers around websites. Regrettably, there is little research on e-selling as an alignment with e-procurement. Barriers to supplier contact only start to ease after several rounds of providing requested information by requested deadlines. Companies are advised to pay particular attention to each customer's ground rules, while taking every opportunity to provide value-adding information and accreditation.

## Motivation

Whether salespeople are managing the whole sales cycle or not, many students over the past 12 years of MA Sales Management have explored motivation and remuneration. One student completely changed his mind from being an advocate of high

levels of commission to a critic, when he observed that the temptation to sell quickly using discount was incompatible with the company's service-oriented brand.

Another examination of the topic this year, in a completely different sector, also suggests that a focus on a behavioural approach to reward rather than outcome-based control is desirable. A major constraint on implementing such a fundamental change is the fear of losing salespeople who are highly money-oriented to competitors who continue to pay high commissions.

Detailed questioning of a broad sample of salespeople reveals that they have different motivations, and that their motivations change over time. Should companies consider managing multiple reward choices? Change is never easy, but the risks of not changing can be equally difficult to manage.

If related topics come up regularly, how far are we progressing as a field of study and as a profession? Studies of KAM in 2002 were generic. In 2014 the nuances of undiscovered elements of KAM are being chosen as dissertation topics. I believe that this shows that we are indeed moving forward.

MA Sales Management students are a self-selecting elite of thinkers, who are already doing their utmost to implement best practice. It is an honour to help them to leverage further competitive advantage from their studies.



# Re-imagining the hiring process to support growth aspirations

Paul Devlin



As part of his SAP Masters programme, Paul Devlin is exploring how sales transformation can be implemented within his team and wider organisation. Here, he discusses how he has used reflection, “action research” and “appreciative inquiry” to enhance the sales recruitment process.

## Background

I have spent 24 of my 28-year working career in sales. For the past 15 years I have been leading teams of salespeople in the pursuit of sales excellence. I have also been privileged to work for some of the largest and most respected software companies globally, with the opportunity to sell and lead teams in the United Kingdom, Europe, United States, and right now in the Middle East.

In all of these years, it always troubled me that, despite following proven sales methodologies and despite recruiting salespeople with proven track records, it has been unusual to find a company where more than 40-50% of the sales team achieved their annual targets.

Personally, I cannot remember a time when I have led a team where more than 70-80% of the team achieved their annual targets regularly. As a sales leader I was committed to having all of my team achieve target. As you can imagine, these

statistics never sat well with me. Accordingly, it has always been my belief that there needs to be more evidence sought from sales candidates during the recruitment process, beyond an ability to follow a methodology or for the individual to have been successful in a similar company or field.

My current thinking and experience is also heavily influenced by recent study around the Challenger sales methodology put forward by the Corporate Executive Board (CEB), which recently surveyed over 6,000 salespeople.<sup>1</sup> The research concluded that only one profile consistently outperforms in a complex sales environment, similar to the one that SAP sells in – “The Challenger”. The Challenger is a salesperson who pushes the customer, encourages the customer to think outside of the box, see new and different possibilities; and links this to their solution. This was recognition of an emerging breed of salesperson – 27% of salespeople – according to CEB’s research.

While excellent, this research did not go far enough in my view. Sure it is competency based, but where are the personal values? Successful salespeople, when I worked with them or interviewed them, always seemed to have values that drove them to go the extra mile for clients, for their company, for themselves and their families – personal values drove continuous learning and self-development. Personal values drive us to care enough about our clients’ success such that we would challenge their strategy and way forward – we set out to educate not just sell.

When looking at this aspect deeper, I came across research from Consalia, a global sales performance improvement

company – in particular a 2008 paper by Squire P, Hennessey, Prof D and Hurley, M.<sup>2</sup> Their findings, when implemented, had achieved significant success at Hewlett Packard, a company very similar in sales cycle complexity to SAP. Their research identified four characteristics or values: client centricity, proactive creativity, tactful audacity and authenticity. (I refer to these moving forward as the “four characteristics”.) Whilst I may have come up with different names for these characteristics, this research concurred with my own practical experience.

Meanwhile, SAP had made significant efforts to find a way to simplify its complex message, and enable the sales force to adopt and use this methodology. SAP embraced Stanford University’s well-tested Design Thinking<sup>3</sup> model used in Research and Development, using this to work with customers in identifying and exploring new approaches to the complex problems they face.

Within this context, my ultimate goal was to leverage my sales experience to develop a recruitment system for SAP MENA that would positively impact our growth aspirations.

## Current situation

I lead a sales team of 18. The SAP MENA teams and my annual growth targets are set at a minimum of 50% year-on-year software revenue growth until 2016. Never in my career to date has this growth expectation been set – this is very definitely a non-standard sales and, perhaps even more, a non-standard sales leadership journey.

My team is part of a larger team of 500 people who represent SAP in the Middle East and North Africa. This region is experiencing hyper growth. Today, SAP MENA delivers four times the amount of new software revenue compared with when it started five years ago. Of course, this required a huge effort in growing the teams to deliver against that market uptake. In the past year alone, we had recruited close to 250 new employees, and still have plans to recruit at least the same number over the next few years.

## Current challenges

Inevitably, as we grow, our organisation is also encountering various challenges:

- In any given quarter, we do not have the desired participation from the sales organisation as some will forecast no revenue for that quarter.
- Our average time to revenue for new salespeople is lower than peer best by 30%.
- SAP is continually launching new software solutions and areas of innovation for our clients and future clients. These new solutions can be complex to learn in their nature and, by definition, involve selling to many different departments in a company to be successful.
- The “talent pool” from which we can recruit new employees in MENA is traditionally weak in comparison with the United Kingdom, Europe or the USA. This issue is discussed in a November 2010 paper from Deloitte.<sup>6</sup>
- Not everyone in the team will achieve target this year.

It was clear that recruiting in the way we were – however well intentioned – was not bringing in the right talent, given the results described above. In consideration of these challenges, my project focused on how to recruit a new type of salesperson into our organisation.

## Methodology

I began to learn about the Gibbs Reflective Cycle (GRC), “appreciative inquiry” (AI), and “action research” (AR). These tools can also be used to help overcome future challenges.

Much of this learning came from classroom and further reading:

- Magruder Watkins J, Mohr B J and Kelly R, 2011, *Appreciative Enquiry: Change At The Speed Of Imagination*.
- McNiff, J, 2013, *Action Research Principles and Practice*.
- Gibbs reflective cycle (Gibbs 1988).
- Cooperrider D. and Whitney D, 2005, *Appreciative Enquiry: A Positive Revolution In Change*.

I decided to adopt the Lewin action-reflection cycle (Lewin 1946)<sup>7</sup> because it is simple and easy to explain, especially to those with no knowledge of AR.

I started with our human resources (HR) department and internal recruiters as they were doing the initial searches to find sales candidates. We held workshops during which I could share thoughts and ideas that originated from being challenged and guided during the Sales Masters programme. In this environment I could explain my reflections and was able to take on the team’s practical input. I also introduced and explained my ambitions for the potential outcomes of this project, the action-reflection cycle I wanted to use and, of course, AI.

We began by using the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D Cycle<sup>8</sup> and came to realise the following:

- What gives life to sales recruitment is the brief surrounding the candidate. The better the brief, the better the employed candidate tended to be. The more involved in the brief both HR and the hiring manager were, the more successful the candidate would end up being.
- The dream was to devise and implement a sales recruitment process that we could be sure, when complete, would deliver us the candidates most likely to succeed in our business and market. Furthermore, we wanted the process to be mandated for all sales recruitment, including all stakeholders from HR and internal recruitment through to the SAP MENA executives. We wanted the process both to be a true stretch and, at same time, enjoyed by those candidates whom we interviewed.
- We wanted to have a touch of “real life”. The ideal scenario would be a process that evaluated for the Challenger profile, the four characteristics and a person’s ability to utilise design thinking to simplify a message.
- We would ensure all stakeholders were trained in this new process, understood its value and were committed to its success in enabling their own and their team’s success, and in so doing, their client and SAP MENA’s success.
- As a next step, we agreed that we had five main stakeholders who could help us with this project:
  - HR/recruitment team
  - The current sales team
  - Partners
  - Clients
  - Sales leadership who were regularly involved in the recruitment process.

I would interview the recruitment team and HR to understand how we currently brought salespeople on board. I would also ask them to reflect on their current practice and how they could improve it. I would ask the sales leaders their views on current recruitment.

The recruitment team and I would interview up to 20 members of the sales team. We wanted to understand what consistent behaviours the successful salespeople had that the less successful did not. We also wanted to understand how many, if any, were: comfortable in challenging our clients and partners; could define values that aided success; and could use design thinking and could provide evidence. A pre-defined set of questions was asked of each salesperson. We also agreed on a questionnaire to go to our clients and major partners to understand their view of what made a successful salesperson and to see what correlation existed.

Finally, we passed all of this through our executive to ask for final comments, approval and ensure buy-in; except for a few minor changes, everything was approved. ▶



## Findings

### HR/recruitment interviews

- LinkedIn was the most used tool for sourcing prospective interview candidates.
- There was no defined competency/value-based process for recruiting salespeople, other than a psychometric test.
- Over 50% of our recent sales recruitment came from our direct competition.
- The recruitment team felt uninvolved in the sales recruitment process and, furthermore, that their recommendation of candidates was largely ignored by sales management. However, many members of this team had significant experience in recruiting salespeople and significant value to add.
- There was no evidence that psychometrics tests were used by sales management in any capacity to assess a candidate.
- Most salespeople received a job offer following one, two or three classical sales interviews – if the sales or country manager thought you could do the job, you were in. No competency-based questions or profiling or presentations were required.

### Sales team outcome

It was clear that the successful salespeople demonstrated at a high level the following. They:

- had elements of the Challenger profile;
- displayed many of the behaviours behind the four characteristics;
- were comfortable on a whiteboard and they used technology such as iPad to support sales cycles;
- kept up with market, industry and client trends;
- focused on ensuring their clients understood value, dealing with this early on in the sales cycle;
- had personal values, some of which were measured in being trusted by their customers and prospects;
- were consistent time after time;
- had a real focus on time management and ensuring internal stakeholder buy-in; and
- all stated they had a poor induction – however, they were proactive to find “buddies” who, given their knowledge of the company, could support them to be successful.

With regard to those who were less successful, it was clear that they:

- were much more short term in their thinking;
- could not provide evidence for much adherence to personal values other than client relationship building being important;
- typically left the software value discussions to the latter part of a sales cycle;
- would not use the talent of the business as a resource;
- did not spend the same amount of time in keeping their industry or solution knowledge up to date;
- had poor time management;
- had the same poor induction – however, they were not proactive in seeking out the information or understanding which they felt they lacked; and
- did not use technology or display creativity to the same extent through white boarding, etc.

In relation to the sales interviews that were conducted, we reflected as a team using GRC after each interview and also weekly. It became clear that my being part of the initial interviews (as a senior executive) was not achieving the desired results. The consensus was that perhaps candidates were telling us what I wanted to hear. Accordingly, we agreed HR would continue with the interviews. All subsequent interviews received much more detailed information.

It was also clear that SAP MENA needed to focus on a new

sales induction programme/formula as part of its recruitment process.

### Partner interviews

Our partners told us largely what we already knew. They want salespeople to:

- operate with honesty and integrity;
- work in partnership with them and to support them as they close contracts on behalf of SAP;
- understand them and their business/solutions;
- when they have committed to something, make it happen; and
- keep them up to-date with SAP solution knowledge and pricing policy.

### Client research

As a team we made a decision to use research from CEB and the Consalia paper discussed. There was also a recent *Harvard Business Review* paper (Adamson B, Dixon M, Toman N, “Dismantling The Sales Machine”, November 2013) calling for the sales process to allow room for discretionary judgement by today’s sales reps, to enable their creativity to shine through.

Reflecting upon this research, we accepted that our customers in MENA would be unlikely to differ in their responses and we could use it to design our new recruitment process. We also agreed we would revisit the situation with customer questionnaires in future and incorporate any new insights as necessary.

### Sales management feedback

Having discussed the challenges relating to the current recruitment process with members of the sales management team, there was a consensus that the sales interview process would significantly benefit from using insights derived from our research.

Prior to this, sales managers tended to recruit based on their own beliefs of what it took for a salesperson to be successful. It became apparent that our research needed to be shared and then tied into the recruitment process in a way that enables everyone to see the benefit.

### What have we developed as a result?

- A new recruitment process for sales candidates that has the Challenger profile, Design Thinking ability and the four characteristics at its heart. This process will also be taken through to the individual’s induction into the company. It involves all stakeholders from the start.
- We have increased the pool of companies we will target to include more niche vendors. We will also research those companies already using the Challenger profile to recruit.
- We will widen our search to include areas we would not traditionally recruit from, such as Asia, India and Pakistan.
- We will look to be diverse in our candidates, looking also at non-salespeople, people in other industries and early talent who, through evidence, can prove they meet the new criteria.
- Created an outline of a suggested induction programme. A different project is being set up to make this happen.
- Brought a culture of reflection, AR and AI – not only to my team, but beyond into HR and recruitment. This has succeeded in bringing teams together to create value.

We accept, given previous comments re the talent pool, not everyone we bring on board will be Challengers. However, by understanding the power of this profile and how individual values support success, we can ensure we look for it, recruit for it or close to it, and coach and support those already in the company to move towards it.

### Next steps (all achieved and being monitored)

- Convene with the MENA board to share findings and recommendations. Also seek approval to adopt new recruitment process and implement it as part of our MENA culture and standards.
- Seek approval to build a new induction programme that is much more goal oriented and from which we can measure impact on reducing time to success for salespeople.
- We will then begin a process of sharing our findings, research, recommendations and ways forward with all key stakeholders. We will train them in the new recruitment process and its benefits, and ensure buy-in, understanding and adoption. We are also willing to amend this if the process brings new insight.
- We will hold regular quarterly management reviews to ensure our time to success is being reduced and the positive aspects we expect to see from these candidates is being achieved. We will also review the recruitment process itself, every three months, to ensure adoption and fit.

### Learning takeaways

- Reflection using GRC, both daily and with teams is a very positive and non-threatening way to obtain the agreed situational analysis. It’s now part of my routine with my own team whenever we meet.
- Appreciating what we do well also helps us better understand the gaps; it gives positivity in moving forward.
- The combination of internal and external research, with reflection, has very powerful results in enabling a wider team to come to consensus, which can typically be difficult to achieve in MENA.
- Not only will SAP MENA recruit better candidates through this exercise, as a result of this research I feel a few steps closer to enabling SAP MENA to bring on board talent who will meet and exceed our growth aspirations as well as their own and those of our clients.

### Update November 2014

The programme has been receiving full sponsorship of the MENA executive leadership and has been implemented as the only way to recruit salespeople into SAP MENA. The initial results are already showing promising outcomes. SAP MENA is currently forecasting to achieve its most successful year to date. We have doubled the rate at which we convert opportunities into customers signing contracts. Whilst the new recruitment process cannot take all the credit for this, it has been surely a key contributor, acknowledged by all involved. The feedback from all sides – candidates, hiring managers and recruiters – is also overly positive.

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- 1 CEB is a leading member-based advisory company.
- 2 Squire P, Hennessey, Prof D and Hurley, M, “Could values underpin a new sales paradigm for global and complex sales effectiveness?”, 2008.
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- 4 Peer worst. When compared by our European Executive team SAP, MENA converted in Q3 2013, 16% of the

opportunities into signed contracts during that time period. Other similar countries in Europe would convert around 30%.

- 5 Time to success was the time it took a salesperson who joined the company to have their first customer contract signed. Again, peer worst and peer best is measured internally by SAP.
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### About the author

Paul Devlin is Head of Business Analytics and Database & Technologies, SAP MENA. He is responsible for delivering customer value through SAP’s latest innovations within the Database & Technology and Mobility portfolios. He brings with him over 15 years of business intelligence, analytics and data warehousing experience. He is currently studying for a Masters in Sales Transformation at Middlesex University and has also studied at Cranfield University in the UK and the Centre for Creative Leadership in Colorado, USA.





◀ Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg: when rivalry turns dangerous.

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# Can two stars ever shine together?

✍ Chris Alder

*Last year's spat between Mercedes Formula 1 team drivers has implications for the performance of business teams, a recent study suggests.*

**H**OW does a sales manager harness the abilities of two competing star performers in the sales team to best advantage?

The manager's skill at getting the best out of his team could have a significant impact on the fortunes of the company – but when there are two roosters in the same henhouse the individual performance of all the team members could be eroded, with inevitable consequences for the company's bottom line.

Now, the high-octane rivalry between top Formula 1 racing drivers has provided a telling insight into sales team dynamics, according to a new study.<sup>1</sup>

Dr Paolo Aversa, Lecturer in Strategy at the Faculty of Management at London's Cass Business School and the study's co-author, says research into Formula 1 racing drivers sheds light on

why some star performers may fail to live up to expectations. He says one reason could be the emergence of internal team conflict as two high-status employees compete for the same results.

But the race track isn't the only place where conflict arises. "This is a phenomenon that affects top managers at public and private organisations, leading scientists in R&D teams and rock bands," says Dr Aversa.

"In Formula 1 there can be two drivers going for the same goal, leading to conflict. In a sales team there may be two salespeople targeting the same customer, or there may be more than one star salesman selling the same product set, where both want to be the best. If there is just one prize they may not work together."

Dr Aversa, who has studied top racing drivers over a 30-year period, cites as an example the much-publicised

feud between Formula 1 team-mates Lewis Hamilton and Nico Rosberg; this spectacularly culminated in a collision at the Belgian Grand Prix last August and saw the championship fight between the Mercedes pair break out into open warfare.

Away from the race track, rivalry at the top of Apple provides another example, he says. "Somehow, despite Apple looking like a promising venture from the very beginning, Steve Jobs underwent serious conflicts with his associates and ended up leaving the company. His comeback was successful because he restarted as absolute leader and his "team" was focused on making the best out of his genius, rather than taking part in an internal rivalry between two over-talented leaders."

He says Formula 1 teams deal with the "two rooster" situation by either favouring one of the two drivers in order to avoid internal conflict, or by refusing to side with either driver, thus promoting internal competition.

"Neither option entails a positive outcome," says Dr Aversa. "The first option tends to demotivate both drivers, as the favoured driver tends to relax his rivalry, and the second loses his ambitions as he acknowledges that he will not be allowed to overtake his colleague."

Dr Paolo Aversa is Lecturer in Strategy at the Faculty of Management at Cass Business School, which is part of City University in London.



"In the second case where the team promotes internal conflict, the resulting antagonism often leads to the failing of any intra-team collaboration, and eventually triggers aggressive duels that can end with one or both cars crashing, as happened in Belgium this summer."

He adds that a second reason for the decline of individual performance in teams with two top stars concerns the inefficient use of resources. When two top performers enjoy similar status, teams might decide to split the available resources equally between the two stars, even when this decision doesn't maximise the team's likelihood of winning.

"Think of Pink Floyd as another good example. As long as Sid Barrett's creative leadership was not under discussion the team did not really face the risk of breaking up. When in 1968 Barrett left due to health issues, the creative leadership was shared between Roger Waters and David Gilmour. However, the band members soon started falling apart. Wright left in 1975 and Waters in 1985 despite having released some of the most successful albums of all time."

## Lesson for sales managers

The lesson for sales managers, says Dr Aversa, is to have a clear strategy for dealing with trouble within the sales team. "When teams employ two star individuals, they have to make their strategy clear from day one. Therefore, expectations are well defined and everybody knows the right thing to do in each situation."

So, do managers need more than one star, or do they go for a squad of reliable, average performers rather than several hard-to-manage stars who may also be mavericks? Dr Aversa says: "The problem is how to help the star achievers help others by sharing their expertise."

"Individuals can be incentivised to help others in the team so that the contribution of an experienced salesman is not just seen as selling more, but in helping others to sell more. Let us say there are two salesmen: a star whose sales area is Italy, and another less experienced selling across Spain. The Italy salesman could have a bonus based in part on the performance of the other, incentivising him to train his less able colleague."

"Companies and organisations often face the dilemma of how to assemble the best team. The typical mistake is considering the overall quality of a team as the mere sum of their individual's performance, and

thus assembling a team of superstars. "Teams' success is based on internal coordination and collaboration, and team members seldom work in isolation. This is why just assessing their individual value has little to say on how they will perform in team. Accordingly, when two talented professionals end up within the same organisation, they might turn what looked like a promising collaboration

into a fight for internal supremacy. "Salespeople appreciate being considered good enough to train others, but their ability to train is not often included in their performance measures. In sales teams, companies have the opportunity to multiply the prizes. F1 teams do not have that luxury. "The key aspect in teams of stars is to avoid self-interest as far as possible."

## You've got to have ground rules

**Andrew Dugdale, president, SalesAssessment.com.**

For Andrew Dugdale, a former sales leader in the IT sector and now heading a company that delivers online talent assessments for global corporates, managing a sales team is largely a matter of common sense.

He says: "Ask any CEO what they want from the sales organisation and they will tell you three things: more revenue from individuals and the team as a whole; a better return on investment in sales talent; and sustainable long-term growth."

"Salespeople, like everyone else, sit within a distribution curve. You need a balance of abilities to perform well. You don't only want average performers but neither do you want a sales team full of

superstars. The challenge is to manage that balance to avoid conflicts between higher and lower performers."

He adds: "Obviously sales managers will want superstars. They are the ones who will make the significant accounts sing and dance. We calculate these individuals can provide often double or more of the revenue achieved by their less-gifted colleagues. You can, of course, have more star performers providing the boundaries are clear. You also need those who are reliable to provide the bedrock for the team."

For him, the Mercedes team of Hamilton and Rosberg failed because of a lack of ground rules. "It seemed a perfect example of managers allowing anarchy, and the inevitable problems followed. In the end, it's a matter of plain common sense on the part of managers."

## One of the pair was a disruptive influence

**Andrew Hough, VP enterprise & mid-range storage solutions, EMC, Europe.**

Andy Hough comes at the issue from a slightly different angle. For starters, Andy, as the leader of sales programmes and execution via directors, sales teams and channels, thinks the term "sales team" is a misnomer.

"Sales collective would be a better description because members work for themselves rather than for the team. Each member has a territory and is tasked with achieving business goals by the sales manager that he or she must meet individually. Consequently, there is no real desire to share best practice."

"Sales managers like to share best practice, but rarely will you see salespeople helping each other out."

He says the Hamilton and Rosberg analogy is interesting "up to a point" in that there were two star performers in a team. "One of the pair was a disruptive influence. While they were racing for

the same team goal only one could win, whereas in a sales team members are racing for their own individual goals," he argues.

The key to success is for sales managers to take the time to look long and hard at the behaviour of individuals in their team and define what makes them stars. "When team members do well and do not display disruptive behaviours, then there will be few problems that can't be dealt with. It's when people start to behave less well that problems arise."

## Play fair

When colleagues don't play fair, that has a negative impact on the sales team and consequently the whole business. How people behave within a team is as important to the company and its brand as is the revenue they bring in."

• **What are your views? We'd love to hear.**

<sup>1</sup> Dr Paolo Aversa, Professor Gino Cattani (Stern Business School, New York University) and Dr Alessandro Marino (Management Department, Luiss University, Rome): "Why do high status employees underperform? A study on conflicting status within Formula 1 racing," paper delivered to the Strategic Management Society Conference in Madrid, 22 September 2014.





# Buyers are growing up too

Paul Myles

While most areas of business have changed in recent years, none has seen as dramatic a revolution as procurement and supply chain management, argues David Noble, CEO at CIPS.



Speaking exclusively to the *International Journal of Sales Transformation*, Chartered Institute of Purchasing & Supply chief executive officer David Noble explains that the profession has had to change dramatically to keep pace with the sheer complexities of modern business relationships. "I don't think there's another profession that has changed so dramatically over the last 10-20 years and I've worked 30 years as a professional buyer before taking over the running of the Institute."

He says: "It used to be a very cost- and results-driven environment. That's not to say that element is not there still but what really has changed are the complexities of the role and the degree of risk associated with it. Supply chains around the world have become far more volatile and people are far more aware and raise comments on malpractice in supply chains, particularly with the influence of social media."

### Strategic thinking

Noble stresses that the key weapon in the modern buyer's armoury is the strategic thinking necessary to understand how their actions can even influence the creation of new businesses. He says: "Today's role goes further because some activities we are now seeing include

**“Sales needs to recognise this profession is changing dramatically and, if it doesn't, it will catch a cold.”**

strategic procurement becoming heavily involved in setting up new companies by segregating their spend in the right way to encourage these start-ups.

To meet these growing challenges, business professionals have to look beyond the simple functions of buying and selling. "I'd say we've moved a long way from being just a tactical activity. I'm talking here about both procurement and supply chain management, which has line-of-sight across the entire enterprise. If you look at the trends in modern business, and certainly in the private sector, organisations are leaning far more towards partnerships than just attempting to do everything themselves. "This has to do with the influences

of flexibility, technology, speed and therefore the strength of your relationships in your downstream is fundamental to success in the upstream."

Naturally, with so much change in the buyer's world, the relationship with the sales professional is also under enormous pressure to change. "I do see the professional salesperson as a potential partner in all this. I have my own sales team here in the CIPS group because, while we're a charity, we sell corporate products to corporate buyers. I'm seeing the need for structured solution sales rather than widget sales.

"The purchasing profession is being driven upwards in terms of strategic intent because, frankly, tactical buying can be done by a computer now and that will increasingly be the case with smart multi-sourcing software.

"So we're training our professionals to work on the complexities of relationship building, something integral in our space because we have the core skills to do this. "It's very much a grown-up activity compared to what it was. And, because sales mirrors what we do, the need for it to have a relevance to that space is increasingly necessary.

### Talking the same language

"The successful sales relationships that I see in the procurement world are the ones where they are able to talk the same language, look to a long-term situation and are recognising economics. Sales needs to recognise this profession is changing dramatically and, if it doesn't, it will catch a cold."

CIPS is hoping to spearhead this drive for increased professionalism with a change in its Charter from January 2015, enabling it to offer Chartered Procurement and Supply Professional status for suitably qualified and experienced MCIPS and FCIPS members. Noble says it's time the sales

industry took steps to improve its own professionalism with the use of both stick and carrot. He explains: "While we've upgraded our profession, the first thing sales needs to do is to mirror this in terms of capability."

Noble emphasises: "The penalty for not doing this is quite extreme because professions will not survive if they don't adapt and evolve in the environment that we live in."

"Our Chartered grade and the ethics

test we've just brought in, brings us to the point that it's about understanding the need for standards of behaviour and not just about competency – doing the right thing. So there is a consequence or penalty for doing the wrong behaviour and I think this is something sales needs to apply to itself."

Noble says the stakes have never been higher for business in the current legislative environment, for instance the UK's current Modern Slavery Bill. "The

Slavery Bill that going through the House of Commons has just been amended to include supply chain accountability for all company managers in the future and so this could become a regulated activity."

Noble argues that the relationship between buyer and seller can only become a mutually successful partnership when both perceive each other as equals. "Sales needs to be more professional to cope with a huge ethical and compliance agenda these days."

## View from the aerospace industry

Today's buyer-seller relationship is like being in a marriage lasting decades, says Craig Osbourne, Procurement Agent in the Supplier Management function at a major aerospace company.

He says: "In today's environment, buyers can be 'married' to a suppliers for 30 years or more on long-term partnering contracts – these buyer/supplier relationships are longer than many people's own marriages!

"So the moment the relationship deteriorates into arguments, then it's game-over. You need to stare that person in the face, every day for many years and you can only truly deliver value by partnering and co-operating with them.

Osbourne explains that the demand for value-for-money is the mantra driving the two professions together. "Nowadays,

the end user wants and expects value for money. With an MoD contract, for example, the UK government is often constrained on budget, so they must drive affordability through their extended supply chain.

Customers now want more for less, and the only way to achieve this is to plan and work together with the supplier and minimise supply costs without necessarily reducing margins.

"If your supplier is charging £100 for something, consider how you can partner with them to develop their processes and reduce their costs. For example, in this approach the supplier's cost can reduce from £80 to £70 and the price to the buyer reduces from £100 to £90 – still maintaining the supplier's profit margins."



## Are relationships breaking down between buyers and sellers?

Technology is not helping improve the buyer-seller relationship and it's the salesperson who suffers most, according to Geoff Chalmers, director at GC Procurement Solutions.

He said: "The professional arrangement between sales and procurement is ever evolving with emphasis that ever-increasing sales are carried out online to the detriment of the sales professional who still relies on 'relationships' and meeting people to provide them with much-needed turnover."

Many buyers are also struggling with the lack of perceivable professionalism among some salespeople.

Chalmers explains: "The perception of salesperson as being 'shady' or dubious still exists within the professional procurement body just as, in the same way, the 'lowest price' is what the buyer wishes to seek is prevalent in the salesperson's world.

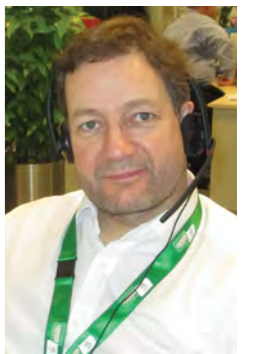
"Yet, procurement has taken bold steps in the last ten

years to be a legitimate professional body attracting the right personnel and this is reflected in the CIPS qualification, which many employers seek to involve in the supply chain within their organisations.

"Salespeople, in the mind of procurement personnel, are born – not generally trained in any capacity.

"All too often "professional" techniques are used to open-the-door to access the buyer with 'hard sell' being still way too common. This aspect of sales needs to change so the onset of a professional, trusting relationship is seen as an opportunity to enrich the buyer-seller relationship for both parties to succeed.

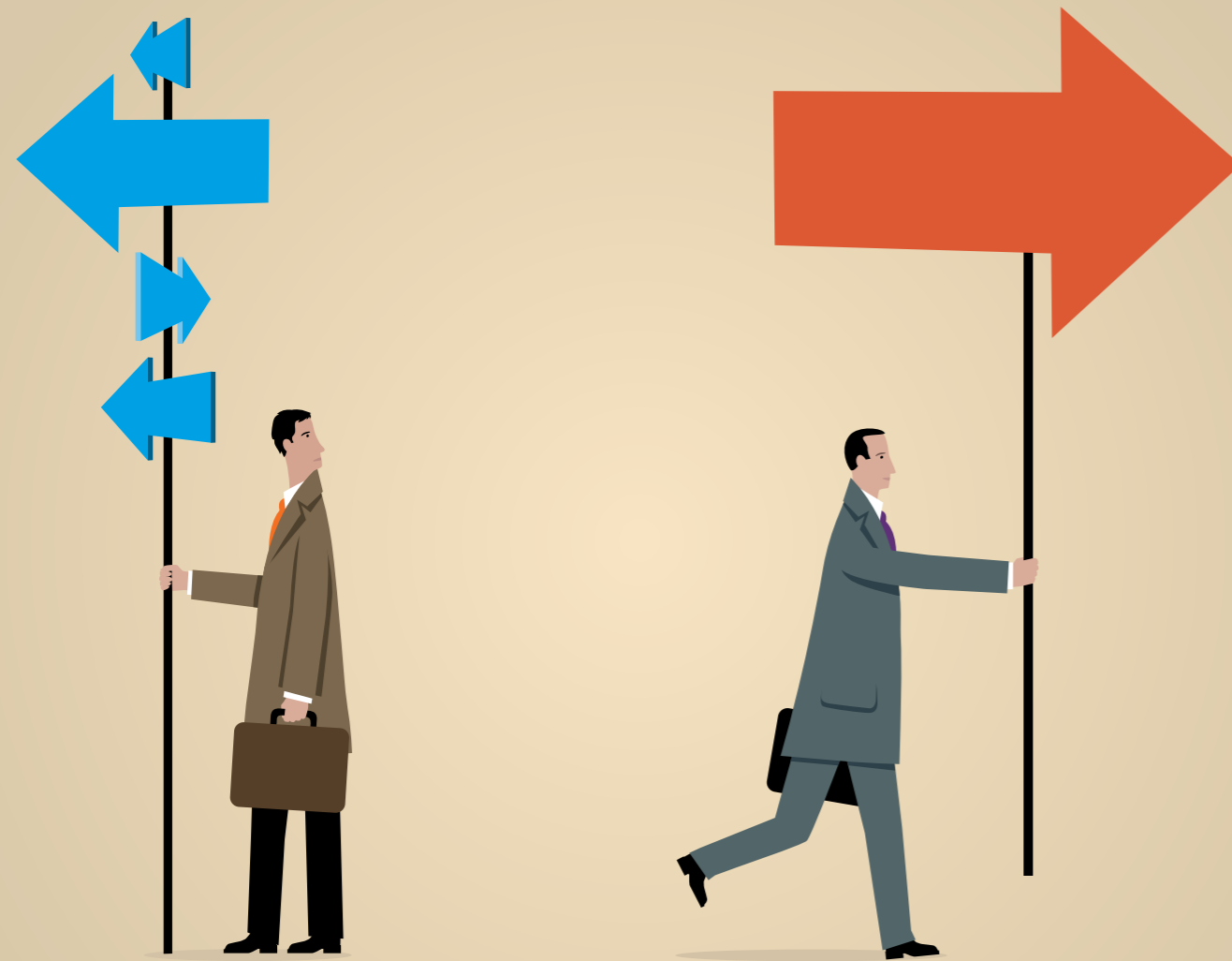
An interesting adage, I have been recently exposed to, reads: 'The bitterness of poor quality remains long after the sweetness of low price is forgotten'."





# Key transformational trends in selling

Dr Javier Marcos-Cuevas & Dr Philip Squire



*Organisations need to understand how selling is evolving and to involve sales leadership in developing strategies to thrive in the new environment.*

## Summary

Professional selling is undergoing significant and unprecedented change that, in turn, profoundly impacts the role of the professional salesperson. Change has always been part of professional selling; however, the scale and speed of that change has increased so substantially that for many to describe their response to market challenges simply as “change” would be to completely underestimate the degree of adjustment required.

Transformation is the new environment for many sales organisations.

Many factors can potentially affect sales organisations and their performance. These include: the macro environmental issues of politics, civil and military unrest; recession and lower growth rates in the economy; new competitors; new markets; emerging and disruptive technologies; and also internal issues relating to organisational change; acquisitions; and ever-shifting reporting structures.

We argue that future sales success will be defined, in part, by companies’ ability to understand these transformations and to develop action plans to address them.

In 2008, Cranfield initiated a study in collaboration with Consalia into the changing nature of the sales profession, of which the initial phase was concluded in 2013. The research revealed a number of transformations.

## 1. From selling products to customisable bundles of products and services

Over the past decade or more, companies operating in both industrial and consumer markets have embarked on growing their businesses by selling integrated offerings of products and services (“solutions”) rather than just products alone. In Western economies such as those of the United Kingdom and the United States, services accounted for 77% of GDP, with manufacturing representing just 22% in 2010. In terms of labour force, the service sector accounts for 75% of employment in the US and UK and more than 50% in Brazil, Russia, Japan and Germany. About 40% of manufacturing firms sell services as well as products and, in some cases, industrial companies operating in sectors such as aerospace or transport obtain over 50% of their revenues from services.

Service offerings and customer solutions are generating significant opportunities to create and capture value for customers and suppliers alike, having given birth to a trend often referred to as “servitisation”.

Examples of “servitised” companies can be found in various sectors. In telecoms, Ericsson and Nokia offer turnkey solutions to design, build and operate mobile phone networks. In transport, Alstom, Siemens and others can offer maintenance, upgrade and operation of trains and signalling systems. In aerospace, Rolls-Royce coined the concept of “Power by the Hour” where the customer pays for the servicing of the engines according to the number of hours the engines are in use. Xerox launched innovative document management services with a guaranteed fixed price per copy. One of the participating companies in this research, IBM pioneered the transition from a product-based company (hardware) to a world-class service provider.

The shift towards the provision of integrated services

means a change in the approach and the extent of the value proposition of many companies. Providers often evolve from supplying well-defined products or services such as IT systems, aero-engines or trains, to “data management”, “flying hours” or “transport availability”.

These complex value propositions require new contractual approaches, such as outcome-based contracting, that reshape the nature of B2B customer relationships. These approaches often require the supplier to take on a level of risk that is either higher or more unpredictable than when products and services are sold in a more transactional fashion, putting more pressure onto sales organisations to establish the “right” relationships and sell the “right” solution.

## 2. From discrete exchanges to dynamic relationships

Relationships have always been paramount in B2B selling. Most of us would recognise that establishing and developing relationships with customers will remain a key dimension of the role of professional salespeople. However, the nature and complexity of such relationships are rapidly changing.

Team selling is now standard in complex selling, and multilevel and multifunctional relationships are increasingly commonplace. Typically, sales teams comprise several specialists who interact with the customer to deliver integrated solutions. In most cases, an account manager takes charge of the required coordination of sales teams. There is a growing trend of serving transactional customers with online self-service portals, call centres and resellers.

In a context where sales organisations have to streamline their processes for transactional customers and to invest decisively in strategic accounts, the ability to implement coordinated customer approaches through different channels becomes essential. This in turn, requires managing customer expectations and implementing systems that bring together information about contacts from different functions across the supplier and the customer organisation.

Relationships between sales staff and customers are increasingly defined as “multilevel and multifunctional”: multilevel, to go beyond procurement departments to demonstrate value and make an impact at higher levels of decision-making; multifunctional, to enable a more enduring relationship with the customer, establishing different interaction points.

In a number of industries, supplier-customer relations are becoming more formalised and increasingly regulated, which poses a challenge to traditional relationship-building strategies. For instance, in the life sciences sector in some jurisdictions, salespeople are no longer able to develop personal relationships with their customers (usually physicians who prescribe medicines) by regularly visiting them, thus restricting the influence of personal contact in buyers’ decision making.

Sales professionals have to find new ways to engage the customer rather than the traditional path of simply building personal relationships – new approaches to influencing people, and different decision makers. Following the example above, pharmaceutical companies are having to develop a wide range of relationships with regulators (Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency in the UK), public bodies like NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence), and within healthcare centres with the physicians, pharma purchasing and hospital management functions. Orchestrating these complex relationships appropriately should enable stakeholders in the healthcare system to align the commercial interests of pharma companies with the agenda of healthcare institutions of providing better patient care and creating a more sustainable healthcare system. (For more on pharma sales models, please see pages 34-35 where editor Nick de Cent discusses KAM.) >



### 3. From product knowledge to customer business knowledge

Buyer behaviour in business markets has progressed as customers have become increasingly informed and more demanding, particularly in seeking to gain superior value from suppliers. A key precondition for providing compelling value is in-depth customer knowledge. Higher levels of customer understanding enable suppliers to define more effective service-delivery processes.

Since value has a perceptual component, a deeper understanding of the customer organisation and its internal relationships will help frame value propositions more in sync with customers' expectations.

Customer knowledge is recognised to be important, not only to deliver against current customer expectations, but also against future ones. The development of business with a number of customers depends on the seller's ability to anticipate and capture future needs and to develop novel solutions for those customer needs.

Sales-related knowledge, of which customer knowledge is a key component, has been identified as a key driver of sales performance. A recent study suggests that high-performing salespeople "challenge" the way the customer thinks about his/her buying decision. Only a deep understanding of the customer's business will ensure a meaningful and constructive conversation about the customer's needs and how a supplier may fulfil them.

Gaining in-depth customer knowledge is neither straightforward nor quick. It requires sales forces to spend time developing insights about the customer's strategy, its processes, its people and even the customer's customers. Sales management practices, in particular targets and incentives, may influence the extent to which salespeople spend time cultivating relationships that lead to customer knowledge generation. Furthermore, the sales leader's style will affect the extent to which professional salespeople develop knowledge-creation capability.

Customer business knowledge can be seen not just as an individual skill, but also as an organisational competence. As such, it requires linking internal processes and practices such as customer information systems, marketing-IT interfaces, senior management involvement, and employee alignment with the firm's strategy.

In best-practice organisations, salespeople are involved in "customer intimacy" workshops that are set up as mechanisms to find ways to improve customer service. Joint customer-supplier activities such as innovation meetings are organised to create new value propositions or enhance existing ones.

These practices are underpinned by a co-creation approach; in this model, value is created partly at least in partnership between customer and supplier, rather than in the traditional way where customers specify the "value" they want and the supplier delivers that "value" according to specification. At the heart of this approach lies the salesperson's knowledge of the customer business in addition to the offerings of his/her own organisation.

#### What are the implications of these transformations for sales professionals?

Imagine what it's like to be part of the transformation... in a organisation that, within six years, witnessed market share plummeting from 47% in 2007 to 3% in 2013 – such was the experience for Nokia. Consider the impact on every aspect of the sales process from account planning to opportunity management to negotiating strategies in a world where once you were the dominant player but now only a marginal one.

How different it is working in the banking industry today

compared with pre-2008 times where salespeople are now called relationship managers, sales commissions are curbed, and where the sales process is now forensically scrutinised by regulators.

Consider the impact of the transformation of merging two huge sales organisations such as Novartis and GSK that are currently undergoing massive structural changes as they create a new global consumer pharmaceuticals business.



**Traditional approaches to develop salesforce competence do not equip sales professionals with the approaches to handle transformation.**

Transformation is not just the remit of the board. The sales organisation plays a critical role in the execution of board strategy in the field and an emerging role in providing the board with insights gained from the field. Yet, a study by Forrester (2011) cites CEOs stating that the "sales force is always 12-18 months behind strategy".

Addressing the profound transformations in sales will rarely be done by tactical investment in resources such as CRM processes, sales force automation or superficial organisational changes. What is required is a change in mind-sets and core belief systems about markets, customers and one's own organisation. We argue that realising transformation at an organisational level will require high doses of personal transformation.

#### Implications

So what are the implications for sales professionals and sales leaders? Traditional approaches to develop salesforce competence do not equip sales professionals with the approaches to handle transformation. Knowledge and process is becoming less relevant in a world that changes so fast. What is required is fostering self-directed learning to enhance sales performance by helping salespeople develop their own competence though enhanced awareness and mindfulness.

The qualities to address such domains, underpinned by the right mind-sets, will be *de rigueur* in the future. In *Five Minds for the Future*, Howard Gardner eloquently sums up the requirements for future success: "For (sales) people to meet the world of the future – with its ubiquitous search engines, robots and other computational devices – will demand capacities that until now have been mere options... (Sales) people need to be well equipped to deal with what is expected as well as what cannot be anticipated; without these minds, the (sales) person will be at the mercy of forces that she or he can't understand, let alone control."

For sales leaders a new paradigm of sales management and sales leadership is required to manage complexity encompassing dimensions such as: managing ambiguity; innovative thinking; synthesis of insights and information; reflective practice and enhanced collaboration.

#### How to manage ambiguity

Decreasing prejudgement; learning how to let go the necessary; be inquisitive; challenging received wisdom and thinking; understanding your own values and belief systems; challenging the status quo and the processes that stifle creativity.

#### How to think innovatively

Developing the use of mind maps; considering design thinking techniques; listening to others particularly when in disagreement; adopting appreciative enquiry to problem formulation and to problem solving.

#### How to synthesise information

Seeking the facts beyond the anecdote; collaborating with others to seek patterns in data that otherwise would not be apparent; using software to map key words; developing critical thinking skills and learning the value of simplicity.

#### Developing reflective abilities

Spending more time white-wall gazing, more time with people and mastering reflective techniques.

#### Enhancing collaboration

Creating stronger stakeholder networks with highly competent people; teaching others how to think; being generous, open, recognise credit where credit is due, being humble.

#### About the authors:

Dr Javier Marcos is a Senior Lecturer in Sales Performance at Cranfield School of Management and an independent consultant. His areas of expertise focus on the development of sales and key account management capabilities, addressing issues of personal and team performance and sales organisations' effectiveness. He also has interests in organisational knowledge and learning and management education. He has co-authored two books: *From Selling to Co-creating* (BIS Publishers, 2014) and *Sales Management: Principles, Processes and Practices* (Palgrave, forthcoming).



Dr Phil Squire is CEO of Consalia and also the co-founder of the *International Journal of Sales Transformation*, as well as a Trustee of the Association of Professional Sales. Having worked in the banking sector with HSBC, he took a sales role in the financial services industry. He joined Mercuri Institute in 1981 and, in 1985, he left to set up a sales training and consultancy practice ITC Network Ltd. In 2006, ITC Network was merged into Consalia, a joint venture company with Praxi (Italy's largest HR consultancy group) and Development Systems (Spain and Latin America's largest HR consulting group). He is currently collaborating with academic institutions and sales leadership institutes to raise the levels of professionalism within sales, sales leadership and general management, through Masters programmes tailored to the specific roles of managers and salespeople.





# Does pharma truly understand KAM?



Nick de Cent finds that pharma thought-leaders are successfully adapting KAM models to their own ecosystem.

Not all big accounts are key accounts. That's one important lesson that the pharma industry has been learning the hard way. Another is that effective key account management (KAM) is more about finding effective solutions than simply flogging product in a more complex environment.

KAM has had something of a painful birth in the pharma sector. Touted as the saviour of the industry when its long-established "coverage and frequency" model became less effective in the face of increasing resistance from

organisations paying for drugs (payers) and general practitioners (prescribers), KAM largely failed to live up to its initial hype because the industry didn't fully understand the concept. In particular, it has taken pharma time to come to grips with the concept of value and to switch from a product-focused to a solutions-based approach.

Part of the problem, of course, was that pharma organisations needed time to understand how to adapt KAM to the complex commercial ecosystem in the healthcare sector where, on the one hand, many of the decision makers are traditionally physicians who make the choice over what product to prescribe but don't ultimately pay for it; payers such as insurance companies, governments and even individual patients, on the other hand, don't necessarily drive rates of usage but do foot the bills; and other policy-makers

such as government agencies, insurers and groups of GP practices, which may play a role in deciding which drugs are approved for national and local formularies.

Traditionally, pharma sought to get its drugs approved and then drive usage through "feet on the street" – large field forces of reps who would visit physicians to encourage them to prescribe their drug and, on occasion, switch from a rival brand. The key to this activity was to get blanket coverage of essentially a product-oriented message to the prescribers.

As with other industry sectors, this essentially transactional sales approach became less effective as the customers not only became resistant to the calls on their time involved in seeing reps but, crucially, became more empowered through greater competition – the rise of cheaper, generic brands – and the easy

availability of online information.

As it became harder and harder to push the mass-market product message and the influence of other stakeholders grew, pharma sought alternative go-to-market models by increasing the focus on selling to funding bodies, organisations managing a substantial budget and major healthcare providers such as hospitals chains; in some geographies, pharmacies and wholesalers also became important.

Crucially, however, many companies failed to appreciate the fundamental importance of having the right person in the right role – and also failed to identify which large customers warranted a true KAM approach. All too often, pharma companies simply rebadged existing reps from their field force and sent them to engage the newly designated key accounts.

**“The organisation needs to provide the right environment in which its KAMs can thrive.**

Inevitably, there was a mismatch: growing a business long term by crafting solutions for a complex organisation with multiple stakeholders was completely alien to salespeople who were used to a high volume of short visits to doctors who usually didn't hold the purse strings.

That said, not all high-value accounts actually require a true KAM approach. In many instances, the reps (as pharma has traditionally styled its salespeople) can be upskilled to embrace the greater complexity of engaging with a large account.

Talent specialists SalesAssessment.com argue that the KAM role<sup>1</sup> can only properly be delivered by "high-calibre individuals capable of delivering a complex mix of sales and business skills while operating comfortably at C-suite level" (see figure 1). Many successful KAMs have likened their role to that of the conductor in an orchestra, marshalling the resources of their company to deliver innovative solutions – that may be more or less tailored – to the individual needs of their customers.

In 2011, consultants McKinsey & Company took the concept one step further, by arguing in a briefing to clients<sup>2</sup> that effective key account management is less about process and account plans and more about entrepreneurship and hiring the right people for this

demanding role. This approach requires individual KAMs to operate with a mind-set primed to spot potential opportunities. Just as importantly, the organisation itself needs to provide the right environment in which its KAMs can thrive: a degree of autonomy, along with the necessary resources and support – not all organisations are set up for KAM. The consultants went on to suggest that pharma organisations could learn a lesson about KAM from the best FMCG organisations.

## Today's KAMs

So where are we now? In a series of interviews for the respected eyeforpharma.com website<sup>3</sup>, I talked to a number of KAMs who are enjoying considerable success in their roles. Among the market-leading KAM players mentioned by the executives were Novartis, Pfizer and Roche.

Anja Schmidt-Fink, Head of Key Account/Channel Management for Novartis in Germany acknowledges that, today, key account managers have largely moved on from the stage of being "super-reps" to much more of an entrepreneurial focus. However, she points out that their ability to be creative and craft solutions for the clients is also heavily constrained by regulation.

Her Novartis colleague Jan Schlüchter, Global Head of Key Account Management and Customer Model Innovation, emphasises that it is vital for an organisation to define which are its key accounts – not all large accounts will qualify as strategic key accounts. He bases his definition around three important principles:

1. they need to be important accounts, influential in the market with their decisions impacting a larger number of people;
2. accounts have to be sizeable enough to justify a dedicated KAM resource; and
3. they have to be governed, ie there is a formal group of stakeholders that holds central decision-making power, which is binding and followed through.

Alberto Navia-Osorio, Account Manager Team Leader for Pfizer highlights four key skills for effective KAMs:

1. the ability to identify useful insights around important drivers for their customers;
2. project management expertise aligned to the ability to qualify an opportunity – the KAM needs the ability to decide whether (s)he can help the customer at the first interview;
3. internal team-building skills to facilitate creation of the appropriate

4. the facility to display leadership without authority – a critical skill but one that often proves difficult to learn for most salespeople.

Hossam El Faramawi, the KAM lead for MSD (Merck Sharp & Dohme Corp) in Egypt, was at Novartis before his current role. His success with KAM has been instrumental in driving significant growth in his market: 74% in 2014, with 35-40% from a single project. A multidisciplinary approach to key account management has been essential to this success.

Win-win is the mantra we heard from all the successful executives we spoke to. However, they also suggested that the rest of the industry still has some catching up to do. For the majority of pharma organisations, there remains a need to embrace more of a partnership approach to key accounts rather than concentrating solely on traditional product-centric, sales-driven models, provided that they have the ability to deliver genuine value to the customer.

For the future, as we see non-traditional players enter the healthcare market, we can expect a move towards more co-creation of solutions and away from traditional negotiation techniques, especially those solely centred around rebates. However, we do have to be aware that it is not always possible simply to transfer techniques across from other sectors – for instance FMCG, IT or outsourcing – to the closely regulated and sometimes heavily politicised health sector.

<sup>1</sup><http://www.salesassessment.com/roles/>  
<sup>2</sup>Chinmay Bhatt et al, The Journey to Entrepreneurship – Key account management in pharma, McKinsey & Co, February 2011.  
<sup>3</sup>These interviews are available at [www.eyeforpharma.com](http://www.eyeforpharma.com).

## Figure 1: KAM role

"Key Account Manager (KAM) is one of the most critical roles for any organisation and offers long-term potential for delivering substantial revenue gains and maximising retention of the most important clients. Note that this proactive role is a significant step change from Account Manager, and can only effectively be filled by high-calibre individuals capable of delivering a complex mix of sales and business skills while operating comfortably at C suite level."



# Big data just got useful

Chris Alder

*From online shopping outfits to industrial conglomerates, airlines to pharmaceutical companies, businesses of all shapes and sizes are tapping into the immense resource that is business intelligence.*

Casey Stengel, the 1950s American Major League Baseball outfielder, famously said: "Never make predictions, especially about the future." Now, however, the science of business intelligence has evolved to the stage where predictions can indeed be made to provide forward-looking insights into markets and prospects.

No more do companies have to rely on out-of-date information on which to base key business decisions. Enterprises large and small are using complex business data to track brand reputation and shape business strategy – and in turn second guess prospective customers.

Social networks constitute a huge and growing source of consumer 'big data'. According to Business Intelligence Insights, the average global Internet user spends two-and-a-half hours daily on social media. What users do while visiting these social media sites is what companies are increasingly paying attention to. User activity on social sites reveals a lot about their interests and what makes them tick. It follows that the company that knows who it needs to be talking to can focus its energy on creating campaigns that will be more effective.

## Internet of consumers

The figures are mind-boggling in this new era of customer engagement. By 2020, according to Cisco, there will be 50 billion connected things – and behind every thing, every device, and every app is a customer. The dream is to connect everything together in this "Internet of consumers" to create one-to-one experiences with customers across every channel.

Analysts Enterprise Management Associates say a number of drivers are providing the processing power to handle this maelstrom of information, pushing

companies to rethink their sales and marketing strategies. Maturing users and applications, commodity hardware and low-cost storage and memory, advances in technology, such as in-memory computing and massively parallel processing, and new data sources such as social, machine-generated and sensor data are all playing a role.

As a consequence, speed and accuracy are ever more important in how efficiently a sales organisation can react to opportunities and trends.

## Unearthing insights

Big Brother seems not to be the bogeyman he once was. Take, for instance, pharmaceuticals intelligence gatherer Treato, which uses big data analytics to unearth patient insights about drugs and medical conditions from thousands of online health communities using the Hadoop open source distributed platform.

By bringing together the voices of patients and carers leaving comments on thousands of message boards, blogs, community forums and health sites across the web about their battles with



**No more do companies have to rely on out-of-date information on which to base key business decisions.**

disease, their experiences with drugs and their paths to recovery, it aims to enable drug companies using the service to monitor patient responses to their products.

The company says it analyses health-oriented web sites and claims to have qualified 2,000 sites, such as netdoctor.co.uk, Topix.com, Drugs.com and smaller condition-specific health sites. Thousands of different medications are listed on the company's web site, along with their side effects, effectiveness, whether patients switched to alternatives and more. The detailed insights it can provide are immense, including the ability to provide information on why patients and doctors are switching brands – intelligence of significant

interest to pharma sales forces.

Meanwhile, industrial giant GE is using Software.com's applications to give sales and operations employees working everywhere from Africa to Brazil to the Netherlands real-time customer insights, and to provide more than 7,000 call centre and field service engineers in its global healthcare division the complete customer views they need to provide real-time service.

Software.com recently launched its Salesforce Analytics Cloud to create sales, service and marketing analytics, either in packaged or custom forms, which can be read on desktop and mobile devices. The company says it is also possible to import third-party information from companies like Microsoft, SAP and Informatica, as well as machine-generated data.

## DIY data

And, in October 2014, home improvement giant B&Q, currently rolling out its 'omnichannel' business strategy, trumpeted the launch of what it claims is the most comprehensively stocked and most functionally advanced website of its kind in the UK. The company says the high-performance website is designed for easy access optimised for all devices, mobile, tablet or fixed. It will also provide a wealth of valuable user-driven information.

Mike Durbridge, Director of Omnichannel at B&Q said: "diy.com is the biggest category-specific home improvement website in the UK. The new site now offers our 3.5 million visitors an unrivalled range of home-improvement products, is more easily accessible for mobile users, is an amazing source of inspiration and advice, and in the coming year, lots more innovative content and services will be added."

Customers in some B&Q stores can log into the store's website on their smartphones and tablets using free in-store wi-fi. Shop-floor staff are being equipped with tablets to enable them to deal with customer enquiries quicker and more effectively wherever they are in the store. Kiosks containing a fixed tablet are also being trialled to enable customers to locate products faster. Customers can also scan product barcodes and be automatically linked to the product page on the website giving them access to product details, videos, reviews and other information.

Another rich source of customer

information, the store's loyalty app, has also now running for about a year with some 1.3 million customers signed up to the B&Q Club.

## Does upselling work?

But there's a warning for anyone wanting to use business intelligence for quick results by up-selling or cross-selling. Paul Dunay, global vice president of marketing for web optimisation and analytics outfit Maxymiser, says: "One mistake marketers often make is automatically tagging on extras, such as up-sells, options or accessory products, as their customers enter the booking funnel.

"The customer who already had a price in mind suddenly sees that number increase just as it's time to purchase, which is more likely to elevate annoyance levels than average sales. Don't be pushy up front; instead, leverage CRM and personalisation data to get the right offer in the customer's face at the right moment."

## Gather feedback

Gil Allouche, vice president of marketing at cloud-based data service developer Qubole, says now, more than ever, companies can gather feedback from numerous sources including social media, websites, phone calls, webchats, and of course sales reps themselves.

"With so much information at their fingertips, companies can really meet the needs of their customers in a unique way. Big data is revolutionising the way things are done and is increasing the overall effectiveness of the sales force, which comes back to benefit the company as a whole.

"For a lot of companies, leads often come from the marketing department more so than from the salespeople. Big data can improve the ratio from the salespeople. Big data also makes it much easier for companies to pinpoint areas with the greatest potential for success from past results.

"Companies can also use real-time monitoring to evaluate the selected areas and make quick changes if necessary. When the reps are in areas with higher levels of success, the number of leads also tends to rise. So, by being able to be more precise in where reps are sent, companies increase sales and leads."

He adds: "Both quality and quantity matter when it comes to feedback, and big data makes that possible. The market is always changing and, with real-time analytics, companies can keep on top of the changes and give their sales force the greatest chance for success."

## Case study: Flybe

Flybe, Europe's largest independent regional airline, wanted to develop a long-term strategy to improve customer experience across its digital channels and partnered with Maxymiser to improve customer experience. Flybe's marketing director Martin Smith said: "Digital channels are central to our commercial operations with 80% of bookings taken online. It's crucial that we optimise those channels to improve the customer experience and 'build consideration' to increase the likelihood of purchase.

"One of our key brand objectives is to communicate that we are a regional airline and to sow the seeds of consideration that Flybe presents a viable alternative to road and rail. The optimisation campaigns we are running with Maxymiser are systematically helping to improve conversion rates through enhanced customer experience."

The approach is working. The airline has seen a 6.9% increase in passenger numbers on scheduled UK flights – despite a 1.4% reduction in seat capacity – and has also enjoyed a favourable increase in passenger revenue per seat.

## Case study: Notonthehighstreet

For innovative, online-only retailers – without the benefit of bricks-and-mortar heritage – attracting new business and maintaining customer loyalty largely boils down to just one thing: the ability to deliver a superlative customer experience.

For Notonthehighstreet.com, an online department store of over 100,000 lifestyle products, the objective was to become a data-driven organisation.

Says Ollie Scheers, optimisation manager: "We're a growing business and we need to sustain that growth to move forward using customer experience optimisation and personalisation techniques. "It's not just about conversion – it's about improving the customer experience, helping to reduce calls to our contact centres or improving customer engagement.

"The key to any optimisation strategy is the level of segmentation you can get from your data and, during 2014, optimisation and personalisation campaigns have given us robust insights into what works for our customers, and what doesn't. These insights help inform any new products that we release."

## Case-study: AmerisourceBergen

Drug corporation AmerisourceBergen wanted to enable employees throughout the enterprise to quickly create visually rich analytics to explore theories, prove hypotheses or discover new trends that could change the trajectory of the business, so turned to data discovery company Qlik's QlikView and Qlik Sense products.

AmerisourceBergen, which has more than one million square feet of packaging production capacity in the US and the UK, has been using QlikView since 2012 across its US bioservices business. Now, with more than 13,000 associates globally, the company wanted to expand its use of analytics with a solution that was scalable and provided a seamless user experience.

Dale Danilewitz, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer said: "We wanted to provide better visualisation and to enable a much larger user-base to experience self-service discovery."



# Resources

Welcome to the International Journal of Sales Transformation's "Resources" pages. Here we aim to list sales-specific books, web resources, academic courses, consultancies – in fact anything of interest that could possibly inform a senior sales leader or academic. We want to make these pages as comprehensive as we can so, if you want to recommend a book or white paper, or highlight any suitable item for the benefit of other readers, let us know and we will aim to include it in the next edition. Please send listings information to [editor@journalofsalestransformation.com](mailto:editor@journalofsalestransformation.com).

## Books

We asked some prominent people to recommend books that have made an impression during their careers. Here's what they recommended.

**Carl Day**, Sales Director at Toshiba TEC UK Imaging Systems singled out



*Cracking the Sales Management Code* by Jason Jordan and Michelle Vazzana, which he read as part of the core reading in his latest Masters module. He says: "While it has split opinion in our group it is a good reminder

of all the pointless things we do in sales management and makes some good observations."

He also cites HBR's "10 Must Reads" series, adding: "While not directly related to sales the books have been very useful in my research."

**Dr Philip Squire**, CEO at Consalia says:

"The one book that provoked my early interest in sales was *How to Win Friends and Influence People* by Dale Carnegie, published in 1936. It's still a good read today."

He also mentions *The Trusted Advisor* by David Maister, Charles Green and Robert Galford; *Global Account*

*Management Creating Value* by David Hennessey and Jean-Pierre Jeannot for insights into customer centricity; and *Minds for the Future* by Howard Gardner which, he says, has helped influence thinking around mindsets required for successful selling.

**Andy Buck**, Sales and Marketing Director at CPM (UK) recommends two books he describes as "priceless". He explains: *The Hidden Agenda* by Kevin Allen, one of the original Mad Men, is a go-to book for me on a regular



basis. Allen's whole concept of knowing the clients' credo and shaping the story give you a real competitive edge when approaching new business pitches is invaluable."

He adds: "The other book I regularly re-visit is *How Not To*

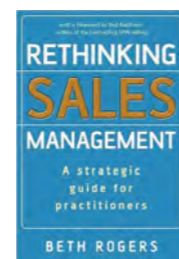
*Come Second: The Art of Winning Business Pitches* by David Kean. This book gives you the process and structure to test and improve your ability and likelihood to close the deal."

**Shekhar Varma**, managing partner at SDV Training, says: *Challenging Coaching* by John Blakey and Ian Day contains very useful models and ideas for anyone who coaches the sales force, and *Resonate*, by Nancy Duarte is a brilliant book about making presentations and storytelling."



He adds: "Although out of print, Neil Rackham's *Account Strategy For Major Sales* is still an unrivalled classic."

**Jeremy Noad**, Global Performance Transformation Expert in Customer Management, Marketing and Channels at The Linde Group, says: "I have two books on the desk at all times: *Rethinking Sales Management* by Beth Rogers; and *Brilliant Selling: What the Best Salespeople Know, Do and Say* by Tom Bird and Jeremy Cassell. "Previous favourites have included



*Building a Winning Sales Force: Powerful Strategies for Driving High Performance* by Andris Zoltners, and *Rethinking the Sales Force* by Neil Rackham."

## Academic courses

The US-orientated Sales Education Foundation, established in 2007, has adopted its mission to "elevate the sales profession through university education." Its goals include providing resources for universities that want to teach professional selling, enabling them to start a programme, developing recognised specialisations within the sales arena, and strengthening relations between industry and academia by hosting joint programmes and increasing communication. Portsmouth is the only institution in Britain recognised as a "Top University Sales programme" by the SEF, offering an MA in Sales Management. Courses are mentored by visiting Professor Neil Rackham, known globally for his latest thinking on sales performance. <http://www.port.ac.uk/courses/business-and-management/ma-sales-management/>

Other SEF-accredited schools across Europe include Athens University of Economics & Business; Dublin Institute of Technology; FH Wien - University of Applied Sciences; HAAGA-HELIA University of Applied Sciences; and University of Applied Sciences in Wiener Neustadt.

Visit <http://www.salesfoundation.org/> for more information and resources and a full list of accredited business schools and universities offering sales-focused courses across Europe and North America.

A selection of courses focusing

on sales offered by UK universities and business schools are listed below. Note that other courses, such as accounting and business studies, which may include a module of sales and marketing management, are not listed.

### Coventry University College

Strategic Sales Management BA (Hons). The honours degree in Strategic Sales Management focuses strongly on international sales strategy, strategic sales management and leading the sales function.

<http://www.coventry.ac.uk/course-structure/2014/cuc/undergraduate-degree/strategic-sales-management-ba-hons/>

### University of Wolverhampton

Postgraduate Certificate in Sales Management

<http://courses.wlv.ac.uk/course.asp?code=BU047P31UVD#.VHRjRNkWS0>

### Middlesex University London

MSc/ PgDip / PgCert Sales Transformation. The Institute for Work Based Learning delivers these programmes in partnership with Consalia. Two routes to gaining a Post Graduate Masters in Sales Transformation are offered. One programme is for sales leaders, the other for sales professionals involved in selling complex solutions, and focuses on applying world-class, leading-edge thinking and expertise in leadership and sales to participants' transformation goals in their own organisations. <http://www.mdx.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/sales-transformation>

### Cranfield School of Management

Offers a variety of sales-oriented programmes including: Marketing, Sales and Client Relationships; Key Account Management: Best Practice; Sales Directors' Programme; Sales Leaders' Think Tank; Customer Experience Strategy: Creating a customer-centric organisation. <http://www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/p13583/Programmes-and-Executive-Development/OEP-Home/Programmes/Marketing-Sales-and-Client-Relationships>

### Edinburgh Napier University

Marketing with Sales Management MSc full-time. An introduction to the theories and principles of marketing, but specialising in sales management. [http://www.courses.napier.ac.uk/Marketing-WithSalesManagement\\_W31429.htm](http://www.courses.napier.ac.uk/Marketing-WithSalesManagement_W31429.htm)

### University of Eastern Finland

MDP in International Business and Sales Management. This new Master's degree in International Business and Sales Management is designed for both Finnish and international students and

combines the newest theoretical findings with real life case exercises provided by the programme partners. Conducted in English.

<http://www.uef.fi/en/ibs>

## Professional and research bodies

### Association of Professional Sales

Developed through collaboration, with a group of Founding Fellows who are sales leaders at the forefront of the industry. It aims to fulfil a perceived need for the sales profession to have a body that has credibility amongst senior practitioners that will work to promote standards, build knowledge, enhance professional standing and promote excellence and best practice at all levels.

<http://www.associationofprofessionalsales.com/>

### Institute of Sales and Marketing Management

The ISMM claims to be the United Kingdom's only professional sales qualifications awarding body recognised by the Government regulatory body, Ofqual, with a full range of qualifications exclusively focused on sales, marketing and sales and marketing management.

<http://www.ismm.co.uk/>

### Academic Association of Sales Engineering

14 universities across Europe have come together to form a private network of sales engineers. Founded on 4 June by professors of the University of Aschaffenburg the AASE aims to develop the profession of sales engineer. Ludger Schneider Störmann, a professor at the University of Aschaffenburg, says: "We want to establish sales engineers who are practically trained for the distribution of technical systems.

"Sales Engineers sell technical products in companies. Until a few years ago there were no separate courses to learn the trade. Even today there are only a few universities that offer bachelor's or master's degree programs for the training of sales engineers." <http://www.f-ab.de/aase>

### The Global Sales Science Institute (GSSI)

An international network formed in 2007 by academics and practitioners involved in sales and sales management. Its stated aim is to unite the study and practice of sales and sales management around the globe, bringing together scholars and practitioners to further advance global collaboration in sales research, practice, and education. <http://www.globalsalescienceinstitute.org/>

### Cranfield Centre for Strategic Marketing and Sales

Sponsored by among others, BP, Hewlett Packard, Mercedes Benz and Royal Bank of Scotland.

<http://www.som.cranfield.ac.uk/som/p1075/Research/Research-Centres/Centre-for-Strategic-Marketing-and-Sales>

### Academy of Marketing Science

An international, scholarly, professional organisation dedicated to promoting high standards and excellence in the creation and dissemination of marketing knowledge and the furtherance of marketing practice through a role of leadership within the discipline of marketing around the world. Publishes the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* widely acknowledged as a premier marketing research journal.

<http://www.ams-web.org/>

### University Sales Centre Alliance

A consortium of sales centres established in 2002, USCA connects university faculty members with many different backgrounds and areas of expertise as an advocate for the continuing advancement of the sales profession through teaching, research and outreach.

<http://www.universitiesalescenteralliance.org/>

## Sales practice consultancies

*Global consultancies with a significant sales practice.*

### McKinsey & Company

Helps clients set their strategic direction, develop their marketing and sales capabilities, and connect their organization to realize the full potential of omni-channel opportunities with the aim of delivering above-market growth. [http://www.mckinsey.com/client\\_service/marketing\\_and\\_sales](http://www.mckinsey.com/client_service/marketing_and_sales)

### Capgemini Consulting

Sales-related capabilities include big data and analytics consulting, customer experience, business and technology innovation and digital delivery across a variety of industry sectors. <http://www.capgemini-consulting.com/marketing-sales-service>

### Deloitte

Customer transformation specialists in a global network of member firms offer advanced analytics to help clients acquire, mine and manage valuable customer data as well as CRM services and strategies that can help improve lead generation. <http://www2.deloitte.com/us/en/pages/strategy/solutions/customer-transformation-offering.html>

• Want to be listed? Email [editor@journalofsalestransformation.com](mailto:editor@journalofsalestransformation.com).



# Performance potential in the global talent pool

*A sophisticated self-administered online assessment of hundreds of individuals around the world provides us with a snapshot of the global sales profession.*

*Although salespeople tend to be lumped together in one group, sales is not a generic, one-size-fits-all activity; selling can actually be divided into various distinct roles, so it is important to hire and develop the right person for the right role. Here, we focus on the roles of account manager, application salesperson and solution salesperson, with individual performances analysed over the period between mid-2012 and mid-2013.*



Data supplied by SalesAssessment.com. Individual salespeople participated in SalesAssessment.com's online self-assessment process. The approach combines psychometrics with relevant skills and competency assessments to provide a read-out against behavioural fit for the specific role, critical reasoning ability, skills and motivators (what motivates the individual to perform). The results were compared with a global benchmark profile of a high-performer in each role.

## Account manager

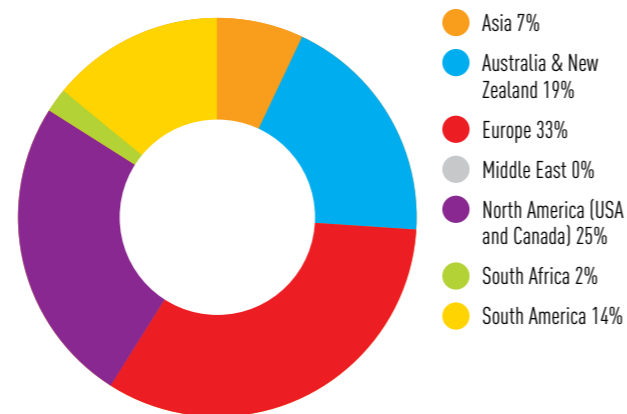
### Role definition

"The role of an account manager is to engage at C-suite level to proactively retain and develop existing client relationships and income from a portfolio of significant clients, and also to develop and grow new client relationships. An account manager is expected to manage a client portfolio in order to maximise the long-term mutual value of the relationship for both parties."

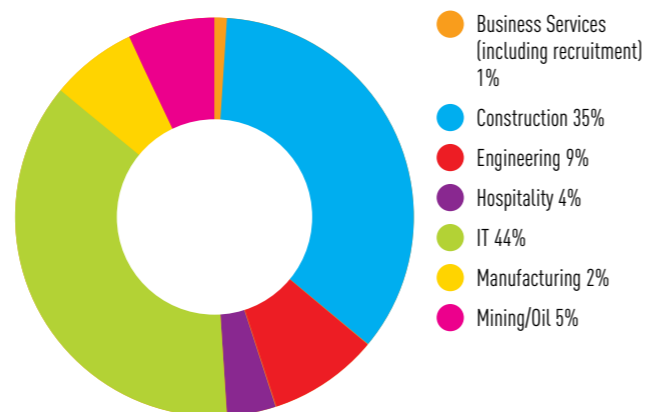
- 4% were among the top performers, demonstrating both high behavioural competencies and high skill.
- 55% demonstrated above-average behaviour and skill. In contrast, 45% were assessed for below-average behaviour and skill.
- 38% were assessed below average for behavioural competencies that indicate whether they are comfortable performing in this role.
- 24% were assessed to have below-average levels of skill (not even trained to average levels).
- 54% of account managers have critical reasoning below the level required to respond effectively to complex customer expectations.

### Data breakdown, n = 313

#### By geography:



#### By industry:



## Application selling

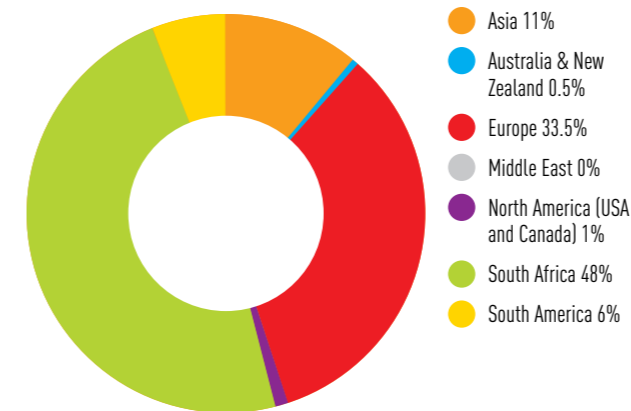
### Role definition

"Occurring at many levels within the customer, application selling is the ability to identify opportunities within which to position an existing, fixed-scope, yet configurable, offering that delivers a 'defined outcome' for the customer to meet a 'defined need'. This can be sold directly to the customer as a stand-alone application (eg an accounting system) or through others as part of a more complex solution (eg a just-in-time manufacturing solution)."

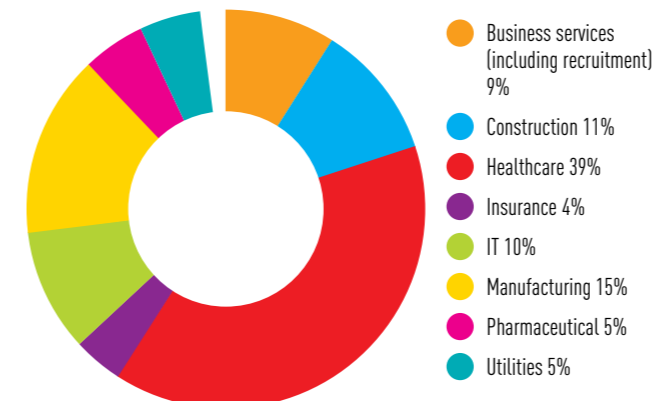
- 5% were among the top performers, demonstrating both high behavioural competencies and high skill.
- 54% demonstrated above-average behaviour and skill. In contrast, 46% were assessed for below-average behaviour and skill.
- 39% were assessed below average for behavioural competencies that indicate whether they are comfortable performing in this role.
- 22% were assessed to have below-average levels of skill (not even trained to average levels).
- 77% of application salespeople have critical reasoning below the level required to respond effectively to complex customer expectations.

### Data breakdown, n = 348

#### By geography:



#### By industry:



## Solution selling

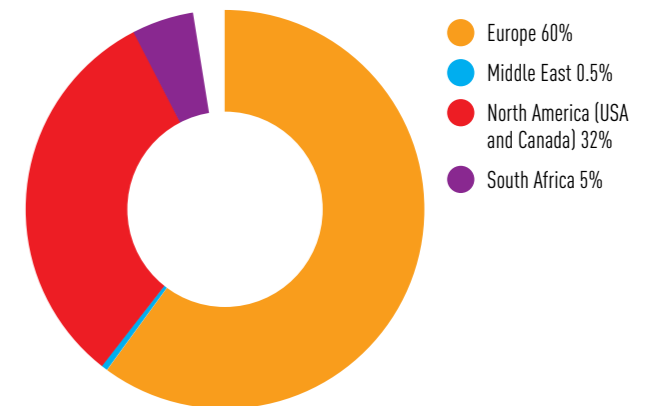
### Role definition

"Solution selling is the most complex form of reactive or customer needs-based selling. Operating at C-suite level, it encompasses the ability to craft for customers a complete, high-level and complex solution to meet a customer business need where the way forward for the business has already been determined by the customer."

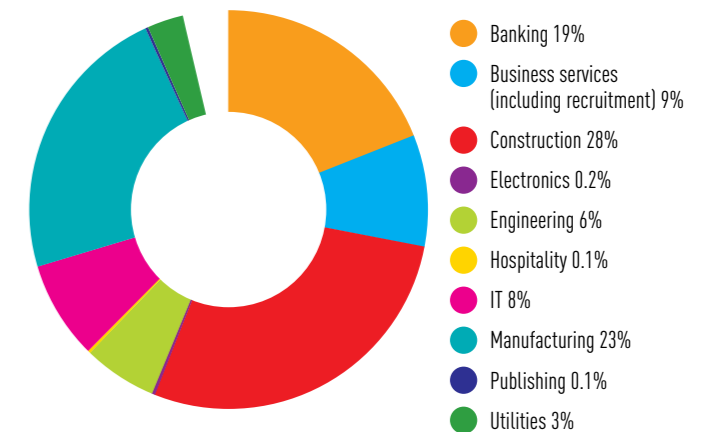
- 9% were among the top performers, demonstrating both high behavioural competencies and high skill.
- 49% demonstrated above-average behaviour and skill. In contrast, 51% were assessed for below-average behaviour and skill.
- 31% were assessed below average for behavioural competencies that indicate whether they are comfortable performing in this role.
- 37% were assessed to have below-average levels of skill (not even trained to average levels).
- 52% of solution salespeople have critical reasoning below the level required to respond effectively to complex customer expectations.

### Data breakdown, n= 377

#### By geography:



#### By industry:





## Is sales performance simply down to luck?

*Dr Beth Rogers reports from the 8th Annual GSSI Conference.*

Perhaps with some irony, the best paper of this year's Global Sales Science Institute (GSSI) conference was titled "From Managing Sales Activities to Managing Luck: Can We Attribute Sales Performance to Luck?" Author Joel LeBon, an accomplished sales researcher from the University of Houston, joined academics and industry practitioners at GSSI's 8th Annual Conference, which was held in the UK this year.

Any salesperson will know the feeling of relief when a "bluebird" order lands on the desk, especially if it arrives just after that almost certain order you promised the sales manager has backfired. Is this total luck? Some marketing activity or networking effort must lie behind every incoming enquiry. Gary Player's quote "The harder I practise, the luckier I get" and Louis Pasteur's "Chance favours the prepared mind" can both be applied to sales. As Joel Le Bon would put it, luck can be provoked.

Sales is starting to take off as a subject of study by business academics: the Sales Education Foundation now recognises 94 university sales study programmes worldwide. However, an educational field needs a body of research to sustain it. Like the *Journal*, GSSI's mission is to bring academics and sales professionals together to drive forward collaborations in sales research.

### New research

Besides presentations of academic papers, the conference encompassed contributions from senior practitioners, including Jeremy Noad of the Linde Group and Andy Hough from EMC. A field of study also needs to be energised by new researchers, and GSSI has always been welcoming to doctoral students: there was exciting new talent from Finland, USA, Canada, Belgium, Germany and the UK, alongside more established figures in the field.

True to its "global" remit, the conference opened with a session on selling in an international context, with contributions from Finland, France and Canada. These included thought-

provoking insights into the role of the personal brands of business owners and the importance of listening in intercultural selling.

The increasing role of knowledge in selling was also explored. CRM systems are becoming more useful and usable for salespeople, and the role of the salesperson in applying knowledge is becoming more critical as customers face information-overload from online sources. Contributions from the USA and the Netherlands explored sales professionals' formation and utilisation of networks, including a case study of a product diversification driven by the last major earthquake in Japan.

Networking was discussed in papers from Germany and Japan; also, during this session

Gerrard Macintosh from North Dakota State University in the US examined how use of social media and gender correlate with career success.

The balance of transformational leadership and transactional management is a fine one for sales professionals and there is now much more clarity about the importance of sales leadership for the performance of the sales function, demonstrated in the variety of studies discussed.

• **Further details about the GSSI 9th Annual conference in Japan can be found at <http://www.globalsalescienceinstitute.org/>**



**Dr Beth Rogers**

Dr Beth Rogers is Head of the Marketing and Sales Subject Group at Portsmouth Business School. The school co-hosted this year's GSSI conference with Florida State University.

### ▶▶ Forthcoming Events

#### Awards

**Women in Sales Awards India**  
20 February, Trident Nariman Point, Mumbai, India

**British Excellence in Sales and Marketing Awards**  
26 February, 2015, Lancaster Hotel, London, UK  
Organised by the Institute of Sales and Marketing Management.

**Women in Sales Awards North America**  
18 June 2015, Fairmont Copley Plaza, Boston, USA.

#### Breakfast briefings

**Sales Transformation**  
11 February, 2015, Dubai  
Middlesex University and Consalia are hosting a breakfast briefing with SAP presenting.

#### Conferences

**2015 Academy of Marketing Science Annual Conference**  
12-14 May, 2015, Denver, Colorado, USA

**Global Sales Science Institute 9th Annual Conference**  
12-14 June, 2015, Hiroshima, Japan  
Tentative conference schedule: 12 June – One-day tour of Miyajima and board meeting at the seminar house of Hiroshima University of Economics (HUE) in Miyajima. 13 June – First day of academic conference at Tatemachi office of HUE and dinner at a local restaurant in Hiroshima city centre. 14 June – Second day of academic conference at Tatemachi office of HUE and Gala dinner at "Sekitei" or other Japanese traditional restaurant.

**Academy of Marketing Science 18th World Marketing Congress**  
14-18 July, 2015, Bari, Italy  
Hosted by the Università degli Studi di Bari Aldo Moro.

**The National Sales Conference & Exhibition**  
8 October, 2015, Ricoh Arena, Coventry, UK  
Described as the UK's premier event for the sales profession, organised by Lincoln West and supported by the Institute of Sales and Marketing Management. This event will give delegates, visitors and exhibitors the opportunity to listen to keynote sales experts, as well as see products and services aimed at improving performance for sales professionals across the UK.

# THE. Women in Sales AWARDS NORTH AMERICA



\* dates subject to change

- Nominations open**  
25th September 2014
- Nominations deadline**  
27th March 2015
- Finalists announced**  
13th April 2015
- Judging day**  
14th May 2015 onboard the Spirit Of Boston
- Awards ceremony**  
18th June 2015  
Fairmont Copley Plaza

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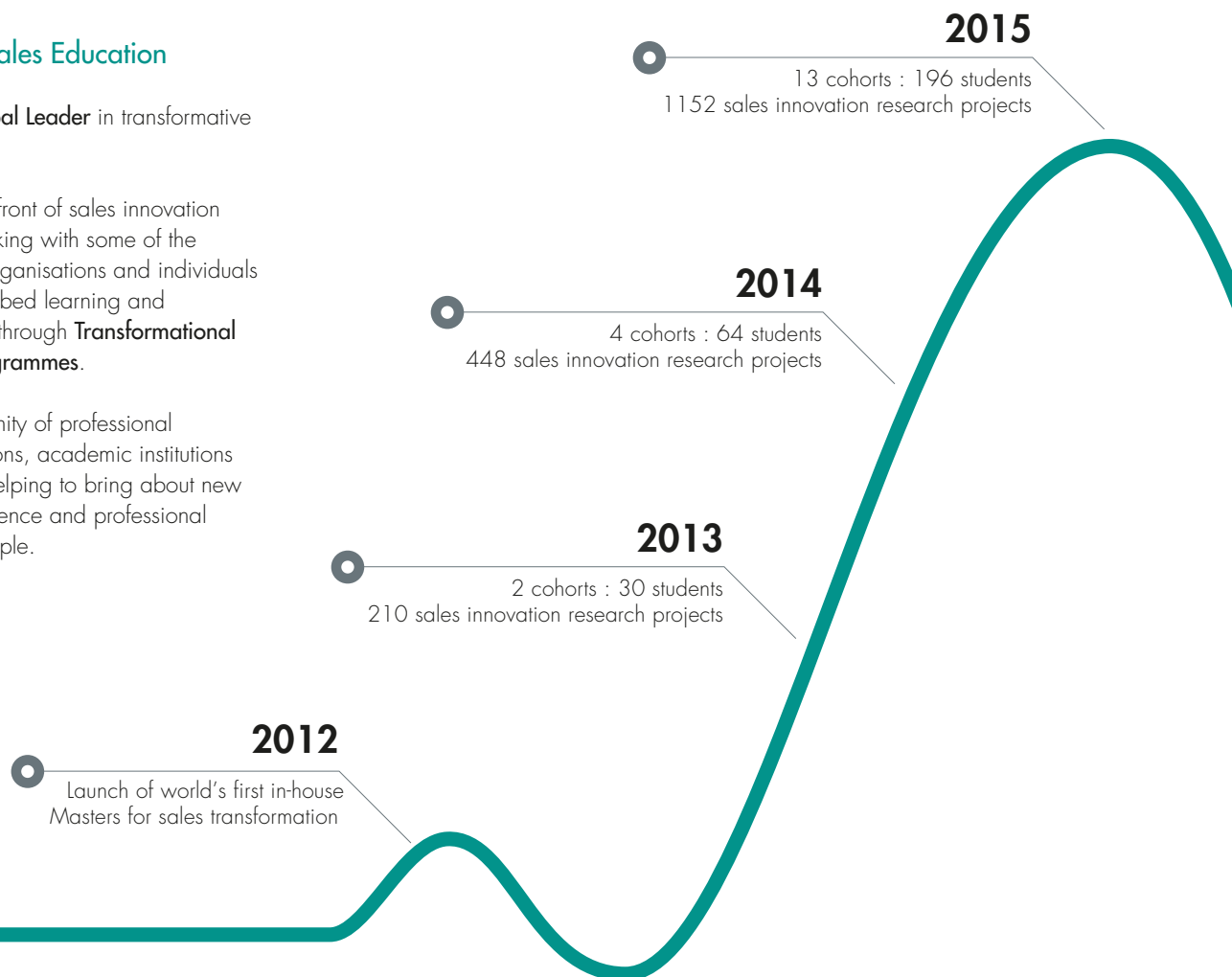
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To find out more about how we're growing sales together, contact us:

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