

Research Article

Impact of Sales Experience and Training on Sales Presentation Skills between Industrial Salespersons

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Abstract: The purpose of this article is to examine the relations between important sales presentation skills and salesperson job performance. Data on each construct in the model was gathered and the relations analyzed using LISREL software. More sales skills need to be considered and salespeople in other industry and also in other than those in the business to business environment should be studied. Finding shows that one of the salesperson characteristics, sales experience, underlies all the sales presentation skills and that the other, training, is associated with all the sales presentation skills with the exception of active listening skills. Sales managers are urged to ensure their business to business salespeople develop their skills in adaptive communication and closing as one means to improve sales performance.

Keywords: Active listening, adaptive selling, closing, handling objections, negotiating, prospecting

INTRODUCTION

One of the most important issues in personal selling and sales management is the measurement of sales performance and it is of great interest to both managers and researchers. Salespeople are one of the major contributors to a firm's survival by virtue of their role as nexus between the firm and its customers. The actions and behaviors of salespeople will affect the relationships with customers and, even more, the performance of the firm (Kuster and Canales, 2011).

Sales managers often emphasize properly recruiting, training, and managing their salespeople, while sales researchers continue to focus their efforts on developing effective frameworks to explain and predict this most important of all salesperson job outcomes. For example, Walker *et al.* (1977) expectancy theory-based model was one of the earliest comprehensive efforts to describe sales performance. Weitz (1981) suggested a significantly different means to explain salesperson job performance in his contingency model that is based on salesperson and sales situation characteristics. While these two explanatory frameworks have inspired the greatest amount of subsequent research, other methods to explain sales performance, including (Plank and Reid, 1994) hybrid model and Teas and McElroy (1986) attribution-based theory, continue to be explored (Johlke, 2006).

Many sales professionals will tell you that while sales tools are becoming more technologically advanced, such as the use of laptops, voicemail, and

email, sales are still about your successful interaction with the client. The sales profession has not changed in that regard, but the customer expectations over time have dramatically changed (Manna *et al.*, 2004).

Following Churchill *et al.* (1985), Grant and Cravens (1999) and Roman *et al.* (2002), among others, performance signifies a result of behavior which is evaluated in terms of its contribution to the company's objectives and is determined by factors the salesperson can control, for example sales experience, active listening or adaptive selling (Kuster and Canales, 2011).

Churchill *et al.* (1985) note that while differing sales situations, market conditions, product types, etc., all likely affect which factors contribute to sales success, one of the most striking and important commonalities across differing explanations of salesperson job performance is the importance each ascribes to selling skill. Johlke (2006) the skills and efforts of salespeople impact on their individual outcomes as well as the effectiveness of their organizations. Since the sales force is ultimately responsible for implementing business and marketing strategies, an essential objective of effective salespeople is providing superior value to customers and enhancing the organization's performance. Behavior performance indicates how well salespeople perform various activities when carrying out their job responsibilities (Babakus *et al.*, 1996). The activities that compromise behavior performance include use of technical knowledge, adaptive selling, teamwork,

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making sales presentations, sales planning, and sales support (Babakus *et al.*, 1996; Weitz, 1981). This choice of specific behavior performance components varies across studies (Baldauf and Cravens, 2002).

It is interesting to note that while sales researchers have examined many of the relations proposed by these models, the nature and role of selling skills and their relations with job performance remain ripe for extensive further investigation. The purpose of this paper is to improve our ability to explain salesperson job performance by more fully explicating the nature and relative effects of a set of specific sales presentation skills that sales managers perceive to be highly important. Conceptual model illustrates the hypothesized relations among salesperson characteristics, sales presentation skills, and job performance. In this model, two characteristics of the salesperson (i.e., years of selling experience and quality of the sales training he/she has received) are held to be positively associated with each of the important sales presentation skills. The sales presentation skills used in the model consists of the salesperson's skill at using active listening, adaptive selling behaviors, handling customer objections, closing sales transactions, negotiating with customers, and identifying potential prospects. In turn, each of the presentation skills is hypothesized to be positively associated with sales job performance.

The hypothesized model contains two salesperson characteristics that may potentially underlie the entire set of sales presentation skills: amount of selling experience and the quality of sales training received. Johlke (2006) in describing the differences between high and low performing salespeople, Dwyer *et al.* (2000) report: The 2 groups of salespeople are primarily distinguished by their selling experience.

Regarding training, salespeople are often some of the most highly trained members of an organization, yet different salespeople with different firms likely receive varying quantity and quality of sales-related training. However, firms and salespeople engage in sales training precisely because they anticipate that it will increase the salesperson's performance related skills. Accordingly, these two salesperson characteristics will be included in the hypothesized model as potential antecedents to the entire set of sales presentation skills (Johlke, 2006).

Selling skill is described as a salesperson's learned proficiencies at performing job activities and describes two general types relevant to professional salespeople:

- **Vocational skills:** Job and company specific skills such as technical knowledge and vocabulary related to the firm's product line, the company, and its policies.
- **Sales presentation skills:** Skills related to effectively conducting the personal selling process (i.e., the series of inter-related steps that

salespeople commonly use to engage with and influence customers).

Moncrief (1986) observed that using sales presentation skills is broadly relevant and uniform across industries, products, and sales situations, while both salespeople (Chonko *et al.*, 1993) and sales managers (Peterson and Smith, 1995) report that sales presentation skills are necessary for sales success.

The particular skills widely held to comprise the sales process includes prospecting for new customers, arranging to meet with the potential customers identified, uncovering and understanding customer needs through proper questioning, developing a product solution based upon customer needs, presenting the solution back to the customer, handling customer objections and questions regarding the proposed solution, closing the sale, and negotiating the transaction. While some researchers have examined the relations between discrete selling behaviors and job performance (Brashear *et al.*, 1997; Boles *et al.*, 2000; Dwyer *et al.*, 2000), it is important to consider that just because a salesperson engages in a particular behavior (e.g., prospecting, negotiating, etc.) does not mean that he or she does so in a manner that contributes to improved performance. For example, while it is true that most salespeople prospect for new customers it is likely that only those who do so skillfully (i.e., in such a way that rapidly identifies a large number of highly qualified potential customers) enjoy improved job performance as a result. In addition, sales managers expend considerable time and effort towards improving sales presentation skills because they anticipate that increased skill will lead to improve sales performance. Because salespeople who are more skilled at completing sales presentation tasks are likely to perform at a higher level, research that focuses on sales presentation skills should therefore provide a better understanding and explanation of salesperson job performance. Recognizing the importance of sales presentation skills, Marshall *et al.* (2003) gathered and ranked sales manager perceptions of "success factors" that contribute to salesperson job performance. They report that managers feel that six specific sales presentation skills: listening, adaptive selling, handling objections, closing, negotiating, and prospecting (in descending order of perceived importance) are highly important to salesperson performance. Accordingly, this group of sales presentation skills will be used at the heart of the conceptual model.

In the hypothesized model the two salesperson characteristics of experience and amount of high-quality sales training received are seen as primary antecedents to the entire set of sales presentation skills. After reviewing and interpreting their results, it is concluded that sales experience may not be directly associated with job performance, but instead that the

relationship is probably affected by other related variables. Intuitively, sales presentation skills may very well serve in this role. The longer that salespeople work in the field the more chances they have to meet and interact with a variety of customer types the greater knowledge and understanding they develop (Mintu-Wimsatt and Gassenheimer, 2004). As salespeople develop this deeper and richer storehouse of knowledge and experiences it is likely that these enhanced schemas primarily serve to improve their sales presentation skills (Shoemaker and Johlke, 2002). Likewise, high quality sales-related training is also likely to be associated with improved sales presentation skills. While much research has assumed a direct relationship between training and job performance (Farrell and Hakstian, 2001; Roman *et al.*, 2002) the reported relationship between the two is usually small. Similar to the relationship between experience and sales performance, the relations between training and performance may instead be indirect, via another variable(s), such as presentation skills. More explicitly, increased amounts of high-quality sales training is more likely to improve the salesperson's presentation skills, which themselves, when utilized in the field with customers, are likely to directly impact the salesperson's job performance. Accordingly, the first two hypotheses describe relations between the antecedent variables and sales skills this way:

H1: Years of sales experience is positively associated with salesperson skill at:

- Active listening
- Adaptive selling
- Handling objections
- Closing
- Negotiating
- Prospecting

H2: Training quality is positively associated with salesperson skill at:

- Active listening
- Adaptive selling
- Handling objections
- Closing
- Negotiating
- Prospecting

Listening skills are critical for assessing a customer's needs and gaining information about the selling environment (Moghareh Abed and Haghghi, 2009). Beyond simply listening or attending to customer comments, as important as these activities are, salespeople are often encouraged and trained to use active, or effective, listening techniques. Shepherd *et al.* (1997) found that effective listening includes creating a

situation in which the speaker wants to share information, accurately adding meaning to the message being received, evaluating, the message, and providing feedback. It has been suggested that active listening consists of focusing on the speaker as well as the message, not being preoccupied, analyzing the message, avoiding interrupting the speaker, providing feedback, asking questions, recording what is being said, and responding. Marshall *et al.* (2003) found that sales managers rank salesperson listening skill as the most important skill of all, while Luthy (2000) reports that senior sales executives feel that listening skill is the single most desirable topic for sales training. Clearly, the salesperson's ability to actively listen to customer comments, feedback, and complaints is seen as key to improving sales performance, especially when it comes to developing long term buying relations with customers. Shepherd *et al.* (1997) observe that "a significant body of anecdotal literature suggests that effective listening skills can be learned through training and experience," and they found that listening skill is correlated with salesperson job performance. Therefore, the following hypothesis will be tested:

H3: Salesperson skill at using active listening is positively associated with job performance.

Since first the relationship between adaptive selling behavior and performance was posited, adaptive selling behavior has drawn growing interest in research and practice alike. Adaptive selling is conceptualized as the process a salesperson goes through to gather about the selling situation and use this information to develop unique sales presentations designed to meet the needs of the customer. The adaptive selling framework proposes that the proper use of an adaptive selling strategy can be critical to a salesperson's effectiveness (Goolsby *et al.*, 1992; Boorum *et al.*, 1998) which is defined "as the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction or across customer interactions based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation" (Weitz *et al.*, 1986). Weitz (1981) also defines adaptive selling as the salesperson's ability to alter her/his sales behavior when interacting with customers.

Weitz (1981) explicitly included adaptive selling in his model of job performance, and this skill is consistently associated with increased sales performance (Goolsby *et al.*, 1992; Blackshear and Plank, 1994; Keillor *et al.*, 2000). In addition, the salesperson's ability to engage in adaptive selling may be particularly important in building long-term relations with customers (Jolson, 1997) and so could be a particularly important skill for improving sales performance. Adaptive selling could also be important because it shows the amount of customization a salesperson is employing (Baldauf and Cravens, 2002).

Adaptive selling may cause a salesperson to sacrifice short-term sales to maintain customer satisfaction and increase the probability of future sales. High adaptation to customer needs and customization of the offer are usually considered important dimensions of an adaptive strategy. An extreme case of selling adaptiveness would be to use a unique sales presentation for each customer, whereas adaptiveness will not be present if salespeople use the same presentation for all customers (Moghareh Abed and Haghghi, 2009).

Weitz (1981) found that salespeople face unique opportunities to adapt to each customer and to each sales situation, such that the product or service offered for sale and the salesperson were presented in the most appealing manner. The communicator's adaptive style had a strong positive relationship with the preference for a relational message, suggesting that salespeople can work smarter by choosing approaches that are appropriate for particular customers, or by increasing their repertoire of sales approaches (Park and Deitz, 2006).

The notion of adaptive selling has been conceptually developed by Weitz (1981) and Weitz *et al.* (1986). Babakus *et al.* (1996) found a positive association between adaptive selling and outcome performance and sales organizational effectiveness measures. A positive association between adaptive selling and outcome performance and sales organization effectiveness has been reported (Baldauf and Cravens, 2002).

Marshall *et al.* (2003) report that sales managers rank the salesperson's ability to engage in adaptive selling skill as the second most important sales presentation skill (Johlke, 2006). Therefore, the following relationship will be tested in the hypothesized model:

H4: Salesperson skill at using adaptive selling techniques is positively associated with job performance.

Sales managers in the Marshall *et al.* (2003) study rank salesperson skill at handling customer objections as the third most important sales presentation skill. Schurr *et al.* (1985) describe objections as customer statements reflecting objection, indifference, or skepticism, while Hunt and Bashaw (1999) advise salespeople to be prepared to handle objection statements as well as counter-arguments to the claims they make. Regardless of their exact form, all salespeople will experience objections and reasons (both real and contrived) to not complete a transaction. Objections that are not handled to the customer's satisfaction remain as obstacles to completing a transaction, while salespeople who are highly skilled at handling customer questions and objections are able to remove these obstacles and so should perform at a higher level (Johlke, 2006). Accordingly, the fifth hypothesis states that:

H5: Salesperson skill at handling objections is positively associated with job performance.

A skillful negotiator adds to the financial performance of the firm by closing an important deal and decreases that value in the case of losing one. El-Shenawy (2010) Closing the sale is concerned with whether a prospect buys. Jolson (1997) described closing as "asking for, and obtaining, the order, as appropriate to the job." Put another way, closing simply refers to the salesperson asking the customer to buy. The ability to properly and persuasively ask for the sale is one of the primary strengths of personal selling, compared to other methods a firm may use to influence customers. It is interesting to note that the little research that has been conducted in this area suggests that closing is negatively associated with life insurance salesperson job performance (Brashear *et al.*, 1997) and purchasing agent trust in the salesperson (Hawes *et al.*, 1996). Regardless, these limited findings do not outweigh the fact that salespeople across industries and product types must be willing and able to not only give customer's reasons to buy but also properly ask them to do so. Wotruba and Castleberry (1993) report that national account salespeople consider their closing skill to be highly important to their sales success, while Jolson (1997) states that proper closing is an important part of proper relationship selling. Furthermore, Marshall *et al.* (2003) found that sales managers rank salesperson skill at closing sales as the fourth most important sales presentation skill (Johlke, 2006).

Therefore, the following relationship will be tested:

H6: Salesperson skill at closing is positively associated with job performance.

Almost all business interactions require a level of negotiation; therefore, skillful negotiators are considered valuable assets who are able to improve financial performance, customer relations and employee's satisfaction (El-Shenawy, 2010).

Negotiation is primarily concerned with striking a bargain. It is a means by which people with different interests can agree on how to reconcile them (Manning and Robertson, 2003). Negotiation provides a potentially useful mechanism for reaching agreement between parties with different objectives, arising from their power bases and the vested interests that they seek to protect. Manning and Robertson (2003) Negotiating is concerned with how the prospect buys. As a sales presentation skill, negotiating is often used simultaneously with handling objections and closing even though these three skills are clearly distinct. For example, customers will often provide objections in response to the salesperson's attempts to close the sale, so the two parties will engage in negotiating the

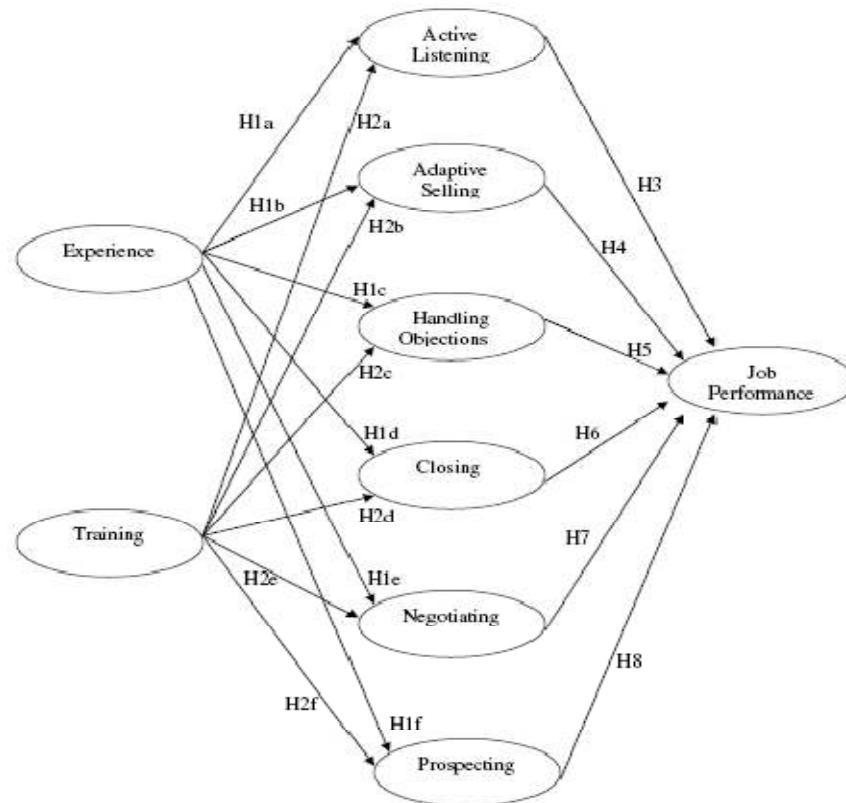


Fig. 1: Conceptual model

particulars of the potential transaction. Only if the salesperson can satisfactorily address the prospect’s objections and if the two parties come to an agreement via negotiating is the transaction likely to be consummated (Johlke, 2006).

Kozubska (1986) and Lidstone (1986) note that the salesperson’s ability to negotiate mutually beneficial solutions greatly impacts sales performance. Alexander *et al.* (1994) describe the coordinative negotiating strategy as “reliance on a problem-solving orientation, wherein the party is seeking to engender trust and mutual support. The focus is on seeking an integrative solution that is achieved via open and accurate informational exchange, mutual concessionary behaviors and mutual respect for individual goals, as well as to minimize the use of any deleterious influence tactics (e.g., threats, promises). This strategy clearly requires greater negotiating skill, and they found that its use is associated with greater negotiator satisfaction with the process as well as improved levels of agreement (Johlke, 2006). Lastly, sales managers (Marshall *et al.*, 2003) rank negotiating skill as the fifth most important sales presentation skill. Reflecting these findings, the following relationship will be tested in the proposed model:

H7: Salesperson skill at negotiating is positively associated with job performance.

The final sales presentation skill that sales managers rate as highly important is prospecting. Jolson and Wotruba (1992) describe prospecting as “a fundamental step in the personal selling process” that involves the salesperson identifying a sufficient number of quality prospects to be directly contacted. They also noted that its primacy in the sales process (i.e., that prospecting is often considered to be the first step in the sales process) denotes its extreme importance to sales success. Szymanski and Churchill (1990) report that more successful salespeople are better able to identify and classify prospects as more or less desirable. Likewise, Macintosh and Gentry (1999) found that higher performing salespeople are better able to focus on key characteristics of high quality prospects. Reflecting the importance of identifying potential customers, the final hypothesis is:

H8: Salesperson skill at prospecting is positively associated with job performance.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model illustrates the hypothesized relations among salesperson characteristics, sales presentation skills, and job performance. In this model, two characteristics of the salesperson (i.e., years of selling experience and quality of the sales training he/she has received) are held to be positively associated with each of the important sales

presentation skills. The sales presentation skills used in the model consists of the salesperson’s skill at using active listening, adaptive selling behaviors, handling customer objections, closing sales transactions, negotiating with customers, and identifying potential prospects. In turn, each of the presentation skills is hypothesized to be positively associated with sales job performance.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

We used a questionnaire to test the proposed hypotheses. The questionnaire contained one item to measure active listening skill, three items to measure skill at handling objections, three items to measure salesperson skill at closing, one item to measure negotiating skill, and four items to measure prospecting skill. Each of these items asked respondents to compare themselves to other salespeople and to rank themselves into one of five groups ranging from the “1st 30%,” “2nd 30%,” “third 30%,” “top 10%,” and finally the “top 1%” of salespeople. Selling experience was measured by asking respondents to report their years of professional selling experience. Adaptive selling was measured using the five items Sales presentation skills and salesperson job performance suggested by Robinson *et al.* (2002), and quality of salesperson training was measured using three items adapted from Roberts *et al.* (1994). Salesperson job performance was measured using six items adapted from Behrman and Perreault (1982). Items to measure these three constructs utilized seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). Face and content validity were conducted and necessary changes were applied.

To test our hypotheses, a survey was conducted in Iran and data were collected from a sample of industrial, business-to-business salespeople in IT Industry during Jan/Feb 2012. Sales presentation skills are most relevant to explaining industrial salesperson job performance so the applicable sample included only salespeople working in the business to business area. Johlke (2006) Of the 415 surveys mailed to industrial salespersons in IT industry, 365 questionnaires were returned within 3 weeks, for an overall response rate of 87%.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Profile of the sample: The responding sample (n = 365) consisted of 59.7% male and 41.3% female employees. About 47% of the respondents were aged 19 to 29 years, and 32.3% from 30 to 39 years. More than 33% had bachelor degree, 31% had diploma and associate degrees and about 29% had master degree. Few respondents (7%) didn’t finish high school. About 42.6% of respondents had 2 to 4 years job experience

Table 1: Factor loadings, AVE and construct reliability for the measurement model

Constructs	Std. factor loading	Cronbach’s alpha	Composite reliability	AVE
Job performance		0.83	0.82	0.72
Q1	0.86			
Q2	0.82			
Q3	0.85			
Q4	0.84			
Q5	0.79			
Q6	0.84			
Training		0.81	0.78	0.67
Q7	0.84			
Q8	0.85			
Q9	0.80			
Adaptive selling		0.82	0.76	0.64
Q10	0.79			
Q11	0.76			
Q12	0.79			
Q13	0.82			
Q14	0.82			
Handling objections		0.85	0.82	0.70
Q15	0.83			
Q16	0.87			
Q17	0.82			
Closing		0.76	0.77	0.63
Q18	0.81			
Q19	0.80			
Q20	0.78			
Prospecting		0.81	0.82	0.70
Q21	0.83			
Q22	0.80			
Q23	0.82			

whereas only 5% of respondents had been salespersons more than 6 years.

Instrument validity: Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is similar to multiple regressions but takes into account latent constructs measured by multiple indicators to model interaction, measurement error, correlation of error, and interactions. In the current study a model specification process was used to determine mediation. To test the hypotheses above, a model was tested using Lisrel 8.8. Before analyzing the proposed model using structural equation modeling we carried out tests of convergent and discriminant validities on our data. The purpose of this was to ensure that our measurement constructs were reliable and valid before testing the model. Reliability refers to the extent to which a construct is free from errors and yields consistent results. Cronbach’s alpha was used to measure the internal consistency of the multi-item scales used in this study. As shown in Table 1, the alpha values of all constructs were above 0.70. Moreover, as all the measures in the constructs had been used in previous studies, and the questionnaire had been validated by, the content validity of all the constructs was deemed acceptable.

Convergent validity refers to the extent to which two or more attempts to measure the same concept are in agreement (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). This was

Table 2: Discriminant validity analyses

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Job performance (1)	0.84					
Training (2)	0.43	0.82				
Adaptive selling (3)	0.29	0.20	0.80			
Handling objections (4)	0.41	0.33	0.41	0.84		
Closing (5)	0.23	0.19	0.31	0.39	0.79	
Prospecting (6)	0.32	0.14	0.44	0.43	0.39	0.83

evaluated using the two criteria suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981), namely:

- All the indicator factor loadings should be significant and exceed 0.70
- The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of each construct should be above 0.5

The AVE shows the amount of the average variance that is captured by the construct in relation to the amount of the variance that is due to measurement errors. An AVE value higher than 0.50, indicates that a substantially higher amount of variance in the indicators is captured by the construct compared with that accounted for by measurement errors (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988). To test the constructs against these two conditions, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted. The fit of the model was good:

$$\chi^2 = 429.2$$

$$NFI = 0.93$$

$$NNFI = 0.94$$

$$GFI = 0.90$$

$$RMSEA = 0.052$$

The full results of factor analysis are presented in Table 1.

As it is shown in the Table 1, the factor loadings of the all items exhibited a loading value higher than 0.70

on their respective constructs. Hence, acceptable item convergence on the intended constructs was achieved. Finally, the AVEs of the constructs were calculated. As shown in Table 2, all were above the threshold of 0.5. This indicated that the amount of variance accounted for by each construct was greater than that accounted for by measurement errors. Hence, both conditions for convergent validity were amply fulfilled.

Discriminant validity denotes the degree to which measures of different concepts are distinct. The correlation matrix of the data set is shown in Table 2. This enables us to examine all potentially overlapping constructs. If the items comprising a construct do not overlap much with others (i.e., if the AVE of a construct is larger than its squared inter-correlations with other constructs), then discriminant validity is assured (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). Table 2 shows that the diagonal elements (reporting the square root of the variance shared between a construct and its measures) are all higher than the correlations between target constructs without exception, which suggests all constructs, have achieved discriminant validity.

Following the satisfactory measurement evaluation, structural equation modeling with maximum likelihood estimation using Lisrel8.8 was performed to examine the integrated model. The structural model demonstrates a good fit empirically. The chi-square of the hypothesized model was 483.24, with 307 degrees of freedom. Hence the ratio of the chi-square (χ^2) statistic to the number of degrees of freedom (χ^2/df) was 1.57, which is lower than the recommended value of 3.0. All the goodness-of-fit indices, including GFI (0.90) and NFI (0.92) and NNFI (0.93), were above the accepted values of 0.90. The root mean square error of approximation of 0.058 was well below the recommended threshold of 0.08 suggested by MacCallum *et al.* (1996), and the other error index,

Table 3: The results of hypothesis testing

Hypotheses	Hypothesized path	Path coefficient	p-value	Conclusion
H1.a	Experience → active listening skill	0.73	p<0.01	Supported
H1.b	Experience → adaptive selling skill	0.46	p<0.01	Supported
H1.c	Experience → handling objections skill	0.69	p<0.01	Supported
H1.d	Experience → closing skill	0.68	p<0.01	Supported
H1.e	Experience → negotiating skill	0.71	p<0.01	Supported
H1.f	Experience → prospecting skill	0.59	p<0.01	Supported
H2.a	Training → active listening skill	0.09	N.S.	Not supported
H2.b	Training → adaptive selling skill	0.39	p<0.01	Supported
H2.c	Training → handling objections skill	0.28	p<0.01	Supported
H2.d	Training → closing skill	0.31	p<0.01	Supported
H2.e	Training → negotiating skill	0.29	p<0.01	Supported
H2.f	Training → prospecting skill	0.20	p<0.05	Supported
H3	Active listening skill → job performance	0.28	p<0.01	Supported
H4	Adaptive selling skill → job performance	0.24	p<0.05	Supported
H5	Handling objections skill → job performance	0.19	p<0.05	Supported
H6	Closing skill → job performance	0.23	p<0.05	Supported
H7	Negotiating skill → job performance	0.31	p<0.01	Supported
H8	Prospecting skill → job performance	0.28	p<0.01	Supported

Standard Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), was also lower, at 0.049, than the acceptable range of <0.05. The modification indices do not provide any indications of misfit in the model. Accordingly, the hypothesized model exhibited a good fit with the data collected. Table 3 contains the completely standardized estimates and corresponding t-values for each of the paths in the hypothesized model.

As it is shown in the Table 3, all paths are statistically significant except for route from Training to active listening skill. So it can be inferred that all hypotheses of this study are supported by data and only H2. a is not confirmed by the findings.

DISCUSSION

Results from analyzing the model shows that one of the salesperson characteristics, sales experience, underlies all the sales presentation skills and that the other, training, is associated with all the sales presentation skills with the exception of active listening skills. All the sales presentation skills are positively correlated with job performance. Unquestionably, many factors affect sales performance, both controllable (e.g., skill level, territory quality) and uncontrollable (e.g., environmental and customer factors, luck). However, the overall conclusion to be drawn from these results is that one means to directly impact salesperson performance is for managers to ensure that their salespeople are provided with experiences and training that develop appropriate closing techniques as well as flexibility in handling different types of customers across different selling situations. salesperson skills at using active listening, handling objections, and negotiating can instead be quite important in building relational factors (e.g., role performance, synergistic solutions) as well as the customer's perceptions of trust and credibility in that salesperson. Therefore, Training in these areas should be improved and that sales managers should search for additional means to improve their salespeople's skills in these important areas.

Because selling experience is very strongly associated with all of the presentation skills managers perceive to be important, sales managers may wish to emphasize retaining skilled salespeople as one of the most powerful means to improve sales performance. Besides creating a high-quality and supportive work environment, sales managers could also attempt to retain salespeople by offering them the type of pay plan, benefits, etc., that may serve to enhance their perceptions of the organization and the position itself. In order to more quickly build up relevant sales experience, especially among their newer salespeople, sales managers may wish to augment the number and range of sales experiences their salespeople encounter. In addition, sales managers could also assign salespeople to a wide variety of selling situations so to

similarly expand the salesperson's bank of experiences upon which he or she can draw when unfamiliar selling situations are confronted.

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