This study develops a theory explaining how an employer can regain control over its salespeople. We posit that two forms of sales force control – exercise of control and influence activities – are the key sources of control loss. We theorise that an employer can regain control through a match of a formal control mechanism with an opportunistic salesforce behaviour. We test our predictions using data from 304 South Korean automobile dealers. We find that greater output control mitigates control loss when it is paired with salespeople’s influence activities, whereas it aggravates control loss when it is paired with salespeople’s influence activities. Conversely, greater behavioural control mitigates control loss when it is paired with salespeople’s influence activities, whereas it aggravates control loss when it is paired with salespeople’s influence activities. This research extends our understanding of CRM components and their impact on business performance and customer satisfaction. CRM also results in better corporate performance and innovation capability in a transaction-oriented environment. The study reveals that CRM practices have a positive and significant, though weak, effect on organisational performance and innovation capability of Iranian manufacturing organisations. Innovation improvement caused by CRM also results in better corporate performance. This empirical research has extended our understanding of CRM components and their impact on business performance and innovation capability of manufacturing firms when they have not been addressed together in previous studies. Also, the obtained findings offer the manufacturing executives and managers strategic insights about CRM implementation, CRM items and, more importantly, the most influential components of CRM on the manufacturing organisations’ performance and innovation. This paper aims to provide insights into salespeople’s ability to appraise emotions (EA ability) and its effects on job-related outcomes in a transaction-oriented environment. The study finds different effects of EA ability on sales performance in the firm’s transaction-oriented environment. On the one hand, EA ability motivates better salesperson customer service, which then increases their sales performance. On the other hand, EA ability enhances emotional exhaustion, which detracts from sales performance. Sales managers should consider the ability of new hires to appraise emotions when determining their fit with the job and the organisation. Training programmes that develop salesperson emotional skills should be comprehensive as it may be detrimental to be high in EA ability without the skills to regulate or use emotions.


**Systems and tools**

**CRM still has a positive impact on performance**

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2017: Buyers are changing faster than sellers

According to the latest study published by CSO Insights, The Growing Buyer-Seller Gap – Results of the 2018 Buyer Preferences Study, the challenge today is that buyers are changing substantially faster, and to a greater degree, than sales organizations. 2017 data showed that the percentage of quota plan attainment was 53% in 2017, down a full 10 percentage points from 63% in 2011 (see CSO Insight’s World-Class Sales Practices Study).

This prompted a study of 500 B2B buyers (executives who made purchases) working for medium to large-sized companies ($250m or more, who made purchases of $10,000 or more). Over half (65.2%) of study respondents said that they found value in discussing their situations with salespeople. 32.2% reported mixed feelings about their discussions with sellers: “Some are useful, and some are a waste of time.”

However, salespeople are less likely to exceed expectations. The survey found that buyers were twice as likely (61.8%) to say that salespeople met their expectations than exceed them (31.8%).

Moreover, salespeople are not buyers’ go-to sources of advice. Fewer than a quarter (23%) of buyers selected “vendor salespeople” as a top-three resource to solve business problems. Top of the tree were “subject matter experts from industry or third parties” – 43%; second was “past experience with vendor” – 35.8%; in third place were vendor websites, preferred by 35.4% of executives.

Buyers tend to see sellers as representatives of products, not solvers of business problems. Consequently, buyers tend to wait until they want to learn about a specific solution before engaging a seller.

So what did buyers say they wanted from seller? Four things (none of which are new but all of which salespeople could do better):

1. Understand the buyer’s business
2. Demonstrate excellent communication skills
3. Focus on post-sale
4. Provide insights and expertise

WHAT BUYERS WANT The report summarises:

What buyers want is straightforward. They value sellers who research their business, who facilitate mutual and compelling discussions, that respect buyers’ time and abilities, who focus on the longer term, and who provide perspectives and insights that help progress their process, change their vision and expand their expertise.

The authors of the report make four recommendations to vendors:

1. Grow the business acumen of the sales function to include a deeper understanding of financial insights.
2. Grow the virtual communication touch points of the sales function.
3. Foster the skills to better diagnose where a buyer may be in the buying cycle and resynchronize.
4. Ensure that point-of-contact representatives are managing both their actual ethics and their perceived ethics in the view of buyer companies.
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