SELLING THE EXPERIENCE: STUDYING THE IMPACT OF REAL-WORLD

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ON SALES KNOWLEDGE

A Dissertation

Presented to

the Faculty of the Graduate School

at the University of Missouri-Columbia

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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by

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DECEMBER 2022

The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

SELLING THE EXPERIENCE: STUDYING THE IMPACT OF REAL-WORLD EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ON SALES KNOWLEDGE

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a candidate for the degree of Doctor of Education,

and hereby certify that, in their opinion, it is worthy of acceptance.

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DEDICATION

I am incredibly grateful to have experienced the ELPA program with everyone in Cohort 12, especially my friends and team members Elise Bartley, Kari Gingrigh, and Sarah Traub. You made this journey much more enriching and enjoyable and your hard work inspired me to give my best.

This process has been challenging, especially as a mother and wife. There were many times that I sacrificed time with my family to work. Beckham, Mercer, and Hampton, I love you more than anything and I hope that one day watching me work toward this goal will inspire you to work hard to achieve your own. Ty, I cannot even begin to express my gratitude to you for all that you took on while I attained this degree. You are the best husband that anyone could ask for and I appreciate you and all you do for us. Thank you for supporting me through this process. I love you.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to Dr. Srinath Gopalakrishna and everyone in the Center for Sales and Customer Development (CSCD) for allowing me to undertake this study in the Personal Selling courses at the University of Missouri. I am also very appreciative of Dr. Wayne Keene, CSCD founder, who listened to my ideas about design and helped me to refine my study prior to his departure from the University of Missouri. I would also like to thank Dr. Peter Knight and Dr. Claudia Mich for allowing me to use their validated instrument to test sales knowledge.

I am especially grateful to Dr. Anthony Vatterott for allowing me to undertake this study in his Personal Selling classes and for his advice and guidance. Additionally, I am thankful for the partnership of Huhtamaki as a corporate partner and to Scott Stuckenschneider for agreeing to be a business partner, to Blake Hoover for filming the video and reviewing the student work, as well as Shannon Stegmann, Tyler Hodges, and Sydney Gerber for providing feedback to students.

Thank you to Dr. Marsha Richins, Dr. Brady Hodges, and Dr. Brad Curs for advising and supporting me in data analyzation. Finally, I want to express my gratitude to Dr. Pilar Mendoza, my committee chair, for her help and guidance through the proposal process. Thank you, also, to my committee members, Dr. Brad Curs, Dr. Brady Hodges, and Dr. Danna Wren, for your time and feedback.

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ABSTRACT

University sales programs play an important role in preparing graduates to work in sales roles. Corporations benefit from hiring well-prepared graduates through savings of training time and costs. Experiential learning activities, including role-plays, are a common method used by sales educators to train students in the classroom. They have been shown to increase sales knowledge which directly impacts sales performance. However, there are a lack of studies that explore the value of experiential learning activities developed with corporate business partner involvement. This article describes a study that used an experimental design to test the difference in sales knowledge measured through pre and posttest surveys between students that completed a client-based role-play developed with a business partner as compared with those that completed the same role-play exercise without revealing the identity of the business partner. A review of experiential learning in sales education is followed by a description of the study design and role-play assignments along with analysis of the results and implications for future teaching and research.

SECTION ONE:

INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION-IN- PRACTICE

Sales is a growing field and demand for qualified salespersons is projected to increase over the next decade (BLS, 2020; BLS, 2021). Even people that never expect to work in sales begin their careers in the field. Over 50% of all college graduates, regardless of major, take a sales job as their first after-college role (SEF, 2021). Currently, fewer than 200 universities in the United States and 20 abroad provide formal sales-education programs (SEF, 2021). Even as these programs are limited in scope, they have seen exponential growth, increasing by over 400% in the last 10 years (SEF, 2020). This increase is in response to the demand for well-trained sales employees to enter the profession.

Graduates of formal university sales programs are attractive hiring targets. They have lower turnover, faster ramp-up times, and save their employers over $200,000 within the first year of employment (Leasher & Moberg, 2008; SEF, 2020). However, companies are not the only ones to benefit from hiring sales graduates. The students themselves have higher job placement rates than their bachelor’s degree earning counterparts and begin their careers with starting salaries averaging almost 40% higher than college graduates as a whole (SEF, 2020; SEF, 2021; ZipRecruiter, 2021). It is beneficial for universities, companies, and students to ensure that sales graduates are prepared to add value to their firms as soon as they are hired. However, empirical data on the learning strategies used to best prepare these students is limited.

Background of the Study

Like formal sales programs, sales education research is also limited. Leading journals frequently call for special issues on sales education, as the *Journal of Global Scholars of Marketing Science* did in February 2021 (Call for Papers, 2021). Of the sales education literature that does exist, much of it is focused on the topic of experiential education. Formal sales programs commonly incorporate experiential learning activities to impart students with the sales-related knowledge needed to succeed in their careers post-graduation. In the most recent review of sales literature, Cummins et al. (2020) found that experiential learning was the most covered topic, accounting for over 30% of publications. Spiller et al. (2019) found similar results through a review of literature, surveys of professors, and review of sales course syllabi. Their study showed that over 55% of the literature published since Cummins et al.'s (2013) review covered experiential learning.

While most of the literature around sales education focuses on experiential learning, much of it is comprised of descriptions of case studies, role-plays, curriculum design, and other small-scale, finite uses of experiential learning. The limited research that does exist shows that experiential learning activities are a valid pedagogical tool. Experiential learning sales activities were found to positively impact students' critical thinking skills (Alvarez et al., 2015) as well as student confidence (Mich et al., 2014), knowledge (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Knight et al, 2014; Magnotta et al., 2018; Mich et al., 2002; Pierce et al., 2011; Saavedra Torres & Rawal, 2021), sales skills (Mantel et al., 2002), and perceptions of sales as a career (Hagenbuch, 2006; Knight et al., 2014; Mantel et al, 2002; Mich et al., 2014; Pelletier & Hopkins, 2018). Experiential learning has also been found to positively impact student success. Knight et al. (2014) found that both experiential learning and the number of sales courses taken had a strong positive effect on sales knowledge. The study stopped short of measuring the effects of different types of experiential learning activities on sales knowledge acquisition. Additionally, Knight et al. (2014) hypothesized a positive correlation between experiential learning and student self-efficacy. However, this correlation was only found once role-plays, the most common experiential learning exercise used in sales education were excluded.

In a survey of sales instructors, Spiller et al. (2019) found that 87.5% of professors teaching introductory sales courses utilized role-plays as did 100% of professors teaching advanced sales courses. Role-plays allow students to practice the selling skills that they will use in the field in a low-risk environment, and that is, the classroom. Role-plays enhance learning and improve student engagement (Magnotta et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2018; Shukor, 2021). Additionally, Sojke and Fish (2008) found that role-plays improve critical thinking skills. In a traditional role-play, students are paired with classmates where one serves as a buyer while the other serves as the salesperson. The students are given a scenario that simulates a real-life selling situation. They receive feedback from the instructor and sometimes classmates. Some scholars argue that this pairing of students in the same class does not do enough to replicate the real-life nervousness a salesperson feels when approaching an unknown buyer (Pierce, 2021; Rocco & Whalen, 2014).

One way to enhance real-life simulation is to introduce industry partners into the classroom. One pedagogical tool that marketing educators use to so is the client-based project (CBP). A CBP is a “an experiential learning device in which students are required to conceptualize and solve actual business problems with the application of appropriate theories and techniques" (Goodell & Kraft, 1991, p. 32). In these projects, students work to solve problems encountered by a real business. Students are exposed to the business through employees as opposed to a non-client-based project where students "limit their interaction to acquiring information about an existing business problem only, and [do] not develop any interaction or engagement with the hypothetical business" (Tofighi, 2022, p. 65). Student interest and satisfaction with CBPs is higher than with other types of learning tools (Bove & Davies, 2009; Lopez & Lee, 2005; Razzou et al., 2003). Moreover, CBPs increase student motivation (Goddell & Kraft, 1991; Jaskari & Jaskari, 2016; Lopez & Lee, 2005), skill development (Cooke & Williams, 2004; Tofighi, 2022), and confidence in academic ability (McKay-Nesbit & Zdravkovik, 2013).

Sales scholars agree that adding real-life context into the classroom is important. Knight et al. (2014) suggest that sales educators should include real-life sales activities in the classroom "giving the students opportunities to engage in real-life selling situations while receiving extensive feedback and coaching" (p. 165). Jaskari and Jaskari (2016) add that "client-based projects form a natural real-life context for students, bringing realism to the classroom and enhancing active, experiential learning" (p. 172). However, research on the use of CBPs in sales education is limited.

The most frequent occurrences of CBPs in sales education literature describe students working with clients to sell actual products. The most common product sold is advertising space in newspapers (Bussieré, 2017; Levin & Peterson, 2016). For example, Young and Hawes (2013) explained a project in which students sold ads for a charity golf event and Chapman et al. (2016) described how students sold coupon ads for Big

Brothers Big Sisters. Other examples include selling candy bars (Rippé, 2015), the sales program itself (Neely & Cherry, 2010), or working with a university entrepreneurship center to sell products created by fellow students (Lastner & Rast, 2016). However, in each of these cases, the partner clients were local or university-based entities and not large corporations.

As students prepare to enter the job market, exposure to large firms aids in networking and familiarizes them with entry-level positions. It is also beneficial for companies who understand the value of well-trained starting salespeople and find value in hiring from university sales programs (Agnihotri, 2014; Nielson & Cummins, 2019). However, literature about the value of sales-based CBPs delivered with a corporation in in the classroom is limited. Deeter-Schmelz (2015) published the only existing study examining a client-based partnership with a corporation in a sales class. In it, the author describes a partnership with Frito Lay that took place in a sales management course in which a Frito Lay employee wrote a case based on a real-world problem frequently encountered by corporate sales employees. Students performed three role-play activities over the course of the project. These activities were interspersed with in-class training from both the course instructor and a variety of Frito Lay employees. Students received feedback from the instructor and multiple employees after each role-play and ended the project by reflecting on the experience. The author used pre and posttest surveys to test students' perceptions of sales knowledge and found that students perceived a significant increase in sales skills after the corporate-sponsored activity.

Statement of the Problem of Practice

Demand for experienced salespersons is expected to grow and formal university sales programs designed to prepare students for those positions, though limited, are increasing in number. Though it is clear that experiential learning practices are effective at increasing student sales knowledge (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Knight et al, 2014; Magnotta et al., 2018; Mich et al., 2002; Pierce et al., 2011; Saavedra Torres & Rawal, 2021), it is not clear if there are differences in the effectiveness of different types of experiential activities. Sales knowledge, defined as an "individual's familiarity with sales practices and ability to perform these processes" (Magnotta, 2020, p. 7) is an important construct as it has a direct impact on sales performance (Verbeke et al., 2011).

Role-plays, the most common experiential learning tool used in sales education, are commonly implemented by sales educators as a useful learning tool. However, a richer understanding of the impact of different types of role-play activities on student learning would improve sales education. Most of the sales literature around experiential role-plays does not elaborate on the role-play content. Sales education textbooks include role-play exercises that simulate hypothetical business problems, but there is a lack of evidence that suggests sales faculty regularly utilize role-plays developed in partnership with businesses. Only two studies describe role-plays created with business partners and both found that student sales knowledge increased after completing the role-play exercises (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Magnotta et al., 2020). If sales faculty are armed with the knowledge that using client-based role-plays created with partner companies impacts students' sales knowledge differently than role-plays that feature a fictitious business, they could make better informed pedagogical decisions that would further prepare sales graduates to enter the workforce.

Purpose of the Study and Research Question

The purpose of this study is to fill existing gaps in the literature by studying the effects of experiential learning activities on student sales knowledge in a Personal Selling class using an experimental pretest-posttest design. This was done by analyzing a corporate-sponsored experiential learning exercise in four sections of an undergraduate Personal Selling course offered at an AACSB accredited business school in a large, Midwestern land-grant university to find out if there was a difference in sales knowledge gained by students that completed a client-based role-play developed with a business partner as compared with those that completed the same role-play exercise without revealing the identity of the business partner (and therefore making it appear as hypothetical).

The research question guiding this study is, is there a difference in sales knowledge of students in Personal Selling courses at a Midwestern university that participate in *real-world,* client-based experiential learning activities developed with a corporate partner when the identity of the partner is revealed to students versus when it is concealed?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of experiential learning by Kolb (1984) guided this study. Multiple definitions of experiential learning exist but the most cited was written by Kolb (1984) in his seminal work on the subject. He defines experiential learning as “the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience.”

Continuing, “knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience” (p. 31). Dahl et al. (2018) state that the simplest definition of experiential learning is “learning by doing” (p. 108). The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the largest accrediting body for business schools in higher education, adopted the term applied experiential learning in 1986 and defined it as “a business-curriculum endeavor which is interactive (other than between teacher and pupil) and is characterized by variability and uncertainty” (Dahl et al., 2018, p. 108). The AACSB’s standards in business education explicitly call out the importance of experiential education as a necessity for accreditation, listing the expectation that "The school’s curriculum promotes and fosters innovation, experiential learning, and a lifelong learning mindset” (AACSB Guiding Principles, 2020, p.37).

Kolb’s experiential learning theory underscores hands-on exercises as well as self-reflection by the learner as a means to provide understanding and includes four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Concrete learning and active experimentation are the “hands-on” stages of experiential learning, and they must be interspersed with reflection and abstract conceptualization. Ideally, the learner goes through all four stages in a cycle that allows the student to experience, reflect, think, and act (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009). Learning can begin at any point in the cycle, but deeper learning occurs when students complete all four stages (Young et al., 2008).

Cannon and Feinstein (2005) argue that experiential learning can be used as a tool to create dynamic knowledge or knowledge that can be manipulated and transferred to new contexts. Morris (2019) also observed the importance of context in experiential learning, stating that solutions to problems in the real world are context-specific and require a learning model that allows the student to apply previously learned knowledge to new situations. Kolb and Kolb (2005) refer to this process of building on prior knowledge and applying it to new experiences as a spiral of learning and stress that it is important to provide psychologically safe spaces to students in which this learning can take place.

Young et al. (2008) encourages educators to carefully plan experiential activities stating, “Designing experiential activities that explicitly incorporate all four stages of the learning cycle, as well as creating experiences that are intrinsically motivating to students, seem to be the foundation for stimulating the use of deeper cognitive learning processes and meaningful learning" (p. 36). Role-plays are the most common method of using experiential learning in sales education because they enhance student learning (Magnotta et al., 2018) and provide a verified means of incorporating all four stages of the experiential learning model in a psychologically safe space, the classroom. The role-play provides a concrete experience in which students can attempt a mock sales call playing the role of a salesperson. During the exercise, students are required to observe their partner and make decisions based on the other party’s actions. This embodies the reflective observation stage of the cycle. They then call on prior knowledge learned in sales courses which comprises the active conceptualization stage. Students are forced to use this knowledge which comprises the active experimentation phase of the learning cycle as they try a variety of strategies to succeed in getting the sale. Additionally, these exercises frequently happen in front of class members, allowing other students to observe and reflect on the performance their peers. Finally, students receive feedback from course facilitators on which they also reflect. These reflective observations are then integrated into the cycle in the abstract conceptualization stage when they perform future role-plays.

Design of the Study

This study utilized an experimental pretest-posttest control group design. In order to provide the same quality of instruction to students in all sections, role-plays were assigned that featured a real-life business scenario. However, the name of the corporation was revealed to one group and not to the other group so that the case would appear hypothetical in the latter. Additionally, an employee of the partner business introduced the client-based role-play in which the corporation was revealed. The course instructor introduced the hypothetical role-play. The use of identical cases except for the branding, company and logo usage, and assignment introduction was intended to minimize the potential inherent bias due to differences in the two cases.

Thus, student sales knowledge was the dependent variable and the experiential learning role-play activity was the independent variable. Though the study was limited to one Midwestern university, the results are applicable to sales students in other settings. According to Mertens (2020), research conducted in the outside world such as a classroom or other “messy, complex, often noisy environment in which the practitioner will attempt to apply the research results” promotes external validity (p. 137). This study was conducted in the sales classroom and findings can be applied in classes at universities with sales programs. I approached the study from the post-positivist paradigm. Mertens (2020) states, “post-positivists hold beliefs about the importance of objectivity and generalizability, but they suggest that researchers modify their claims to understandings of truths based on probability rather than certainty” (p. 12).

Setting

The study took place within the Center for Sales and Customer Development (CSCD) at the University of Missouri. Established in 2011, the CSCD is housed in the Trulaske College of Business. The mission of the CSCD is to "advance knowledge and prepare future leaders in the sales area by enhancing educational, research, and professional opportunities for MU students and faculty in collaboration with sales practitioners, consultants, and academic partners across the globe" (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.). The CSCD operates as a revenue-generating entity within the College of Business. Corporate partners pay a fee to support the center with commitments ranging from $5,000 to $25,000 annually. Partner companies serve as guest speakers in classes, sponsor role-play activities in the Personal Selling course, hold networking events that serve as a pipeline for hiring, and offer internships to students.

A hallmark of the CSCD is the Certificate in Sales and Customer Development. The certificate is available to students in any major to pursue. The certificate requirements include a 13-hour curriculum comprised of three required classes and two electives as well as an internship. The required courses are Personal Selling, Sales Management, and Advanced Professional Selling. Students must complete an approved business-to-business sales internship for a minimum of 1 hour of credit and 120 hours of work. When complete, the certificate serves as "tangible evidence of a strong background in sales for potential employers" (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.). In the 10 years since its inception, over 500 students have earned the Certificate in Sales and Customer Development. The center reports that "sixty-five percent of students reporting received an initial compensation offer of $65,000 or above" (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.).

Participants and Randomization

Participants in this study were seniors and juniors enrolled in one semester of Personal Selling classes at the University of Missouri. Many students that take the Personal Selling course are pursuing the Certificate in Sales and Customer Development, but the class is open to any student that has taken Principles of Marketing so there are a variety of majors in each section. The students in this class were chosen because it is the entry-level sales class offered in the program and it was posited that most students would not have experienced sales-related experiential learning exercises before enrollment in the course. Students in this study enrolled in four sections of Personal Selling taught in fall 2022. Enrollment in each section of the course ranged from 32 to 37 students. In total, 139 students were enrolled across all four sections.

All sections of the course were taught by the same instructor and utilized the same learning activities. Students were not aware of this research project when they enrolled. A randomized control trial design was used to assign students within each section to either the treatment or control group (Fink, 2017). Randomization occurred by using the course learning management system, Canvas, to randomly assign students to groups. Canvas randomly paired students into preset groups in each section of the course. Then, as students were already randomized, the first nine groups in each section were assigned to the treatment case and the remaining groups were assigned to the control case. Assignment settings were then created to ensure that each group of students only saw the assignment they had to complete, meaning that those in the control group had no way of viewing the treatment case to prevent bias or resentful demoralization (Mertens, 2020).

Making this role-play the first assignment that students created ensured that results were not skewed by previous learning activities.

Instrument

Sales knowledge was measured through the use of the survey by Knight et al. (2014) administered prior to students completing the role-play exercise and again once the assignment was complete. The pretest-posttest design allowed me to study if there was a difference in change in sales knowledge between the treatment and control groups. I received permission from the authors to use questions from their validated instrument in my study (see Appendix A for the original instrument, Appendix B for the pretest survey, and Appendix C for the posttest survey used in this study).

In their study, Knight et al. (2014) tested the impact of past sales education and sales experience on sales knowledge, self-efficacy, and career intention. They also analyzed the impact of a student having a family member or influencer with a career in sales on self-efficacy and career intention. As such, their instrument included constructs to measure self-efficacy and intention to pursue a career in sales. Though the focus of the present study was sales knowledge, constructs on self-efficacy and career intention were replicated on both the pre- and posttest instruments for possible future research. Knight et al. (2014) found that number of sales courses taken, participation in experiential learning activities, and past sales experience positively impacted sales knowledge. The pretest instrument in the present study replicated the questions Knight et al. (2014) used to collect information on number of sales courses taken, experiential learning activities, past sales experience, and having a family member or influencer with a career in sales to control for those variables when testing to find if a difference in pre- and posttest sales knowledge between the treatment and control groups existed.

Knight et al.'s (2014) instrument included between 3 to 14 measures for each measured construct). They established content validity through pretesting the survey on 51 upper-level sales students as well as consulting with sales researchers and using measures from previously validated surveys. In particular, they combined items from knowledge scales by Bottomley et al. (2000) and Mason et al. (2001) to create their own construct of sales knowledge. Knight et al. (2014) conducted their study by compiling data from students at 19 different universities. They established measurement invariance across the data from all 19 schools to ensure the scales measured consistent traits across all populations (Knight et al., 2014; Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). Overall, they found that participation in experiential learning activities positively impacted sales knowledge. They tested the reliability of the measurement scales through Cronbach's alpha statistics of scales (Knight et al., 2014, p. 160). The Cronbach alpha for the measures of sales knowledge was .941 which meets the .70 minimum recommended by Hair et al. (2005). The authors also created the measure to uncover experiential learning 14activities themselves (Cronbach's Alpha = .787). The experiential learning question asked students if they had ever completed specified types of activities in their sales classes and participants checked each activity in which they had participated.

The construct to measure sales knowledge included seven questions, each scored on a seven-point Likert scale. The questions included were:

- Overall, how familiar are you with the area of Sales as part of Marketing? (Not at all/Very familiar)

- Please rate your knowledge of Personal Selling skills and techniques. (Very little/Very high knowledge)
- Relative to people you know, how would you rate your knowledge of Personal Selling skills and techniques? (Very little/Very high knowledge)
- Relative to a professional sales person, how would you rate your knowledge of Personal Selling skills and techniques? (Very little/Very high knowledge)
- Based on your current knowledge of Sales, how comfortable would you be in working in a sales position? (Not at all/Very comfortable)
- Compared to other students, how much time do you spend learning about Personal Selling skills and techniques? (Very little/Very much time)
- How much information about Personal Selling skills and techniques have you been exposed to during your lifetime? (Very little/Very much information)
- How familiar are you with Personal Selling skills and techniques? (Not at all/Very familiar)

The experiential learning construct asked students to check each learning experience that they had participated in while enrolled in previous sales classes. It reads, “Have you ever done any of the following types of exercises in your sales classes?” The choices listed included selling to the community, role-plays, working with or “shadowing” professional sales people in the field, active in sales fraternity or club, interviewing or meeting with sales professionals, and none of the above. Two response choices were included in the present study in addition to those offered by Knight et al. (2014): completing real-world projects in class from local companies and completing real-world projects in class from corporations. As student completion of real-world projects is the focus of the present study and sales classes at the University of Missouri include projects fostered with businesses, it was important to add these choices to the experiential learning question.

Knight et al. (2014) also collected demographic information on respondents including major, sales qualification, age, gender, and the highest level of education attained by their mother and father. Those questions were replicated on the pretest instrument in this study. Where necessary, minor changes were made. Specifically, Knight et al. (2014) asked students' major and the choices offered on the pretest survey in this study reflected the most common majors of students taking the Personal Selling course. Sales qualification response choices were also updated to reflect the offerings at the University of Missouri to earn the Certificate in Sales and Customer Development given that there is not a major in sales offered at this institution. The survey used in the present study added additional choices beyond male and female to the question about gender identity and added questions about Hispanic origin and race as guided by the 2020 US Census demographic questions.

Description of the Experiment

Students in the Personal Selling classes regularly complete role-plays, most of which are provided by a corporate partner of the Center for Sales and Customer Development. Students read the prompt, prepare the role-play, and carry it out receiving feedback from both the instructor and the corporate representative. Students in the test and control groups were assigned a role-play exercise from Huhtamaki, a corporate partner of the Center for Sales and Customer Development; however, the real identity of the company was revealed to the test group only. Like Deeter- Schmelz's (2015) activity with Frito Lay, the treatment case depicted a real business scenario that had been faced by Huhtamaki's sales team. The control group received the same case as the treatment group, but the company information was changed to give the impression to students of a hypothetical organization. Thus, the content of both role-play exercises matched, reducing confounds and ensuring that both groups were exposed to the same business situation.

Corporate Partner

Huhtamaki was chosen due to the company's long-standing relationship with the CSCD. Huhtamaki is a global food-packaging supply manufacturer with international headquarters located in Finland. The company achieved sales of 3.6 billion Euro in 2021 (Huhtamaki, 2022). The North American headquarters is in De Soto, KS. Huhtamaki develops and sells the Chinet line of paper products in the consumer retail market and works with a variety of businesses to meet a range of packaging needs. North American revenue topped $1.2 billion in 2021 (Huhtamaki, 2022).

As this is the first role-play that students in Personal Selling complete, Huhtamaki was chosen because they offer a tactile product with which students are familiar. Many partners of the CSCD sell services, several of which students may not have consumed. Most students are familiar with paper packaging products and regularly eat at businesses that use Huhtamaki products, such as Chipotle, Taco Bell, or Subway. It was determined that the existing relationship, company size, and product range made Huhtamaki a suitable corporate partner to supply the treatment case for this study. Additionally, the company was willing to work with me to create and deliver this assignment.

Treatment Role-Play

The client-based role-play completed by students in the treatment group simulated a *real-world* problem commonly encountered by sales representatives at Huhtamaki (see Appendix D). Since the identity of the company and products were not masked, students were well aware they were dealing with a real case. Huhtamaki created the role-play which featured a selling scenario from a past interaction with an actual client. Huhtamaki regularly sponsors role-play competitions and this case was used previously at a sales competition held at Kansas State University. The sales scenario asked students to act as a Distribution Account Manager for Huhtamaki in the Midwest region preparing for an upcoming meeting with the Purchasing Director from LaMar’s Donuts & Coffee, a real client of Huhtamaki. A link to LaMar’s website was included in the directions. LaMar’s has 26 stores and was looking to replace their single-wall hot cup which is currently supplied by Solo. Students were provided with the key business objectives of both LaMar’s Purchasing Director and the Huhtamaki Distribution Account Manager’s supervisor. Additionally, possible objections that could be raised by LaMar’s Purchasing Director were included.

Supplemental selling information that could be used in the role-play included an overview of Huhtamaki’s values, sustainability goals, and a company overview. The top North American customers were listed, and students were provided with a page of selling information on the Huhtamaki Comfort Cup, the recommended product to meet LaMar’s needs. Links to websites with additional selling materials included the full Huhtamaki Foodservice Catalog, a list of associations of which Huhtamaki is a member, and a list of certifications that Huhtamaki plants and suppliers have attained. All information was provided to students via PowerPoint slides. The treatment slides were provided to me by Huhtamaki and each slide included the Huhtamaki logo. All slides were formatted with a gray background, except the title and conclusion slides which were navy blue.

A company representative of Huhtamaki, Blake Hoover, a Product Manager, recorded an introduction to the role-play for students in the treatment group. I provided a loose script for Blake to follow (see Appendix E), but wanted him to speak naturally to simulate a presentation that he would normally make in the Personal Selling class. It was important that students understand that they were simulating a real-life scenario of a practicing sales representative and his recording stated that information multiple times. Blake recorded his introduction via Zoom. He used a blurred background, and he wore a blue collared dress shirt with no tie.

Control Group Role-Play

The control group slides matched the treatment slides as closely as possible in both format and content (see Appendix F). Background colors, fonts, and photos matched between the two slide decks. Content changes on the control group slides included changing the company name from Huhtamaki to the hypothetical Food Storage Solutions. The client company was changed from LaMar’s Coffee & Donuts to Laura’s Coffee & Donuts. The treatment case included a link to LaMar’s website. As Laura’s was a fictional company, that link was deleted. Comfort Cup was changed to Cozy Cup, but all selling information about the product was identical to the treatment case. All other information in the sales scenario and business objectives sections of the case remained the same. I changed the title to company overview from Huhtamaki overview on the control role-play and cropped the photo about values to delete the text at the top as it identified Huhtamaki. On the additional selling materials slide I deleted the link to the full Huhtamaki Foodservice Catalog as that would identify the company but left all other affiliations and certifications.

The course instructor, Dr. Tony Vatterott, recorded the introduction to the control case. He also used Zoom to record his introduction, used a blurred background, and wore a blue collared dress shirt with no tie so that the two recordings would match as closely as possible to reduce potential bias. Both presenters shared the role-play slides and spoke while progressing through the slides. A script was also provided to Dr. Vatterott to ensure that information shared matched as closely as possible to Mr. Hoover's, while still allowing Dr. Vatterott to speak naturally and introduce the assignment as he normally would (see Appendix G).

Tofighi (2022) who found that students that complete CBPs perceive higher levels of intellectual growth and skill development than those that complete non-CBPs, discusses how non-CBPs differ from business-sponsored projects. "In non-client-based group projects, students offer recommendations and solutions to hypothetical problems or issues related to a real or hypothetical business" and 'limit their interaction to acquiring information about an existing business problem only, and not develop any interaction or engagement with the hypothetical business" (p. 67). In the present study, the treatment case featured a real corporation and client and provided the student with background information on both the sales organization and client that could be used to help prepare for and complete the role-play. It was clear to the students that the treatment role-play was a CBP, featuring a problem faced by a real business. Additionally, the treatment case was introduced by an actual employee of Huhtamaki, allowing the students to engage with a professional salesperson from the firm. As the assignment was administered virtually so that participants were not exposed to the alternate condition, this engagement was limited. However, students were told that employees of Huhtamaki would review their role-play assignments and provide them feedback, thus incorporating engagement as much as possible given the limitations of the assignment delivery method. The control role-play used the same scenario but was perceived by students as a non-CBP, featuring a hypothetical sales organization and client with no accessible background information on either firm. Moreover, the control role-play did not include any elements of engagement that Tofighi (2022) stresses are important in a CBP. Students were introduced to the case by only the course instructor and received feedback from only him as well.

Assignment Specifics

Directions for the role-play followed the selling materials on both treatment and control cases. Students were randomly paired with a partner and instructed to perform the role-play twice, once acting as a buyer and once acting as a seller. Requiring students to act in both roles ensured that all students were able to perform the selling role of the Huhtamaki Distribution Account Manager. Students were asked to record their role-plays and submit them to Canvas for grading by the course instructor. A 10-minute timeframe was given for each recording. Learning objectives were included on both cases. The course instructor wrote the learning objectives. Students were expected to gain experience interpreting information relevant to a product or service offering, determine appropriate products and services to complement the needs of potential clients, and advise, recommend, and promote the product or service with the goal of long-term client value creation once they completed this assignment. The only change in role-play directions between the treatment and control case was the inclusion of the statement on the treatment case that a representative from Huhtamaki would watch the recorded role-plays and provide feedback about performance once the role-plays were graded. Finally, the rubric used for grading was provided in both cases (see Appendix H).

Both role-plays were the first role-play assignments that students completed during the semester so that students that had not been enrolled in a sales course before were not biased by previous experiential learning sales activities. In this course, the initial role-play serves as a low-stakes way to practice this exercise with point values assigned lower than the role-plays students complete for the remainder of the semester. In this case, the assignment was worth 25 points, half the value of other role-play assignments.

The course instructor introduced the project in class to all students without noting that the test group received a corporate-sponsored role-play to reduce the risk of resentful demoralization (Mertens, 2020). Once the project was assigned, students had two weeks to complete the assignment. Students recorded their role-plays and submitted them to the course learning management system for grading. Students in the control group completed the hypothetical role-play and received feedback from only the instructor. Students in the treatment group completed the Huhtamaki case and received feedback from the instructor as well as representatives from the partner company. The instructor assigned numerical grades to all role-play assignments. The rubric used in the course to grade assignments was adapted from the rubric used at the National Collegiate Sales Competition (see Appendix H). Students received grades after the posttest survey closed to ensure that grading did not bias results.

Data Collection

Both the pretest and posttest surveys were created and administered using Qualtrics. The pretest survey was shared with students on the first day of class and remained open for students to access until the assignment was due. The posttest survey was shared with students on the day after the assignment due date and remained open for 10 days.

Student responses were linked between the pretest and posttest surveys to ensure that only responses from students that took both surveys were included in the data set. Responses were also validated by comparing the student ID provided by the respondents to the student IDs on the course roster. Any surveys completed by students that were not included in the course enrollment were deleted from the data set. In any instance where duplicate surveys were completed, the second survey was excluded from the data. Students were asked on the posttest to choose which company role-play they completed. Responses were cross-referenced to the assignment by student ID to ensure they were correct. Responses on the pretest and posttest were matched and validated with 112 students completing both surveys for a response rate of 80.6%. Of the responding students, 60 (53.6%) completed the treatment role-play and 52 (46.4%) completed the control role-play.

Ethical Considerations

All role-plays assigned in this class after the initial role-play were from corporate partners. Thus, students in the control group received the treatment multiple times through the semester, reducing any ethical issues stemming from completion of a role-play from a hypothetical company which may be less effective than the client-based role-play in acquisition of sales knowledge.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was received for the study. Both the pretest and posttest began with a confirmation of consent in accordance with IRB regulations. Students received five points of extra credit for completing each survey. As required by the IRB, an alternate extra credit assignment was offered to students that did not wish to participate in the research. No student chose this option. The survey links were shared via Canvas announcement and through a QR code that the instructor provided in class. All communication except for one announcement which I wrote, came directly from the course instructor. No survey information was listed or referenced on the actual assignment or recordings in any manner.

Data Analysis

A paired samples *t*-test was used to measure the difference in sales knowledge reported from all participants between the pretest and the posttest. Linear regression was used to measure the difference in the pre and post-test survey results between the treatment and control groups (Field, 2018). The categorical variable of the type of experiential learning activity to which the student was exposed served as the independent variable and the mean of the sales knowledge construct ratings served as the dependent variable. The use of linear regression allowed me to analyze the relationship between the two types of experiential learning exercises and the acquisition of sales knowledge while controlling for compounding variables (Field, 2018). Confounding variables considered included student sales experience, internship, number of previous sales courses taken, experiential learning activities completed in previous sales courses, and having a family member or other important influencer with a job in sales.

Limitations

The randomized selection of students to treatment and control groups eliminated selection bias. Randomization within classes, instead of randomizing at the course section level, negated the possibility that differences between sections that affect all students could lead to incorrect statistical conclusions (Wozny et al., 2018). However, the use of existing classes at one institution constituted a convenience sampling technique that will not yield results that are as generalizable as more robust sampling methods (Fink, 2017). The study was limited in scope as it was only completed during one semester of Personal Selling courses at a single Midwestern university. This limited external validity. Additionally, the small sample size of 112 participants, while greater than the 21 participants per group outlined as being sufficient by Gall et al. (2015) for experimental studies, is still relatively small and could result in type I or II error (Mertens, 2020).

One instructor taught all four sections of the Personal Selling classes. While this controlled for differences in pedagogical techniques, it is a limitation of the study. The control group received the same role-play as the treatment group and the two assignments had only minor changes in format and content. Every effort was made to ensure similarity between the videos and assignment slides, but minimal changes were necessary. The main differences between the client-based role-play and non-client-based project were that the role-play completed by the control group featured a hypothetical company and there was no interaction with company employees as in the client-based role-play. While this reduced confounds, there is a risk that the manipulation may not have been strong enough to produce the hypothesized difference in sales knowledge between the two groups.

As participants took both a pre-and posttest, they may have been "sensitized to the information to 'tune into' during the study" (Mertens, 2020, p. 132). This could have biased answers on the posttest survey. Additionally, the experiential learning intervention was given as the first exercise in the course so sales knowledge may have been limited as the survey was be given at the beginning of the semester.

The posttest was shared immediately after students submitted the assignment to the learning management system, hopefully decreasing spillover effects from students discussing results with peers. However, the survey stayed open for 10 days and it took repeated reminders for students to complete it. Students were asked if they discussed the role-play assignment with anyone currently enrolled in Personal Selling besides their assignment partner to identify interference. Thirty students (26.8%) reported that they discussed the assignment with someone other than their assigned partner. The control group did not receive the corporate-sponsored case study. Over 25% of students in the class discussed this project with classmates other than their partner. If participants in the control group heard that other students were assigned a different project provided by a corporate partner, resentful demoralization may have occurred (Mertens, 2020).

The use of an existing survey enhanced the internal validity of the study and only minor modifications were made to the instruments. The only meaningful changes to the instruments included updating the original experiential education questions to include a company or corporate sponsored activity, altering the question about sales concentration to reflect the curricular offerings of the university, adding the question to ask if students had discussed the assignment with anyone in Personal Selling outside of their role-play partner, and adding a manipulation check question to the posttest survey given to the test group to ensure they remembered they would receive corporate feedback. The planned modifications should not have altered the validity of the instrument. However, these minor changes could be seen as a limitation.

Significance of the Study

Sales is a growing field with a projected need for more qualified salespeople (BLS, 2020; SEF, 2020). Formal university sales programs are limited but also growing (SEF, 2020). Research to support the value of experiential learning activities is lacking. This study will be useful to sales education faculty and sales center administrators in designing curricula. Additionally, sales employers benefit from well-trained employees. The Sales Education Foundation reports that sales graduates save employers over $200,000 within the first year of employment (SEF, 2020). Research that uses empirical findings to help guide curriculum plans would be highly valuable to companies hiring sales program graduates.

Practice

The study will directly benefit students studying sales at the University of Missouri as well as the Center for Sales and Customer Development. Experiential learning exercises delivered with industry partners are already a de rigueur part of Personal Selling classes. Results of the study will inform future pedagogical decisions around incorporating experiential learning activities, including client-based projects, in sales courses. Additionally, research is routinely shared with industry partners of the CSCD, and results that measure the value of corporate relationships to student sales knowledge may help build future partnerships and further cement already existing relationships.

Scholarship

This study will add to the literature in sales education around experiential learning and its impact on sales knowledge (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Knight et al, 2014; Magnotta et al., 2018; Mich et al., 2002; Pierce et al., 2011; Saavedra Torres & Rawal, 2021). Though the impact of experiential learning has been studied widely, a study of the difference in experiential learning activities will supplement existing literature. Moreover, there is only one study that exists that analyzes the effect of client-based experiential learning projects on sales knowledge and it did not use an experimental design. Results of the study may help to build the research base to analyze client-based projects and encourage further investigation by other scholars.

Summary

Though sales is a growing field and formal sales education programs at universities continue to expand, there is still limited quantitative research on the value of sales education to student learning (BLS, 2020; SEF, 2020). Likewise, there is a lack of research on the impact of client-based experiential learning exercises developed or delivered with businesses acting as partners in the sales classroom and none use an experimental design. This study was designed to fill those gaps in the literature. Using a randomized control trial design, corporate-sponsored experiential learning exercises were studied in the context of Personal Selling classes at a single Midwestern university to find if partnering with a business to create and deliver a client-based role-play affects student sales knowledge differently than a non-client-based role-play that features a hypothetical firm. Not only will the results of the study inform pedagogical decisions in sales classes at the Midwestern university being studied, but it will also add to existing literature around experiential learning in sales education, provide empirical research to support experiential learning curricular decisions for sales faculty, and hopefully persuade scholars to further investigate the value of *real-world* business partnerships in sales education.

Definitions of Key Terms

Client-Based Project defined by Goodell and Kraft (1991) as "an experiential learning device in which students are required to conceptualize and solve actual business problems with the application of appropriate theories and techniques" (p. 32).

Experiential Education is the broader context in which experiential learning takes place. This includes the conditions that produce experiential learning including the educator's role in planning and delivery of experiences (Beard et al., 2018).

Experiential Learning defined by Kolb (1984) as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (p. 31).

Experiential Learning Cycle is the cycle through which a learner progresses to gain knowledge. The cycle contains four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984; Kolb et al., 1999, Morris, 2019).

Personal selling is the process of meeting face-to-face with clients in order to uncover and satisfy needs in such a way that both parties benefit (Knight, Mich, & Manion, 2014).

Role-Play a commonly used scenario given to students to simulate a selling situation. Role-plays usually include two parts, one for a buyer and one for a seller. Students play the roles of salesperson and buyer and try to come to an agreement on a fictional sale.

Sales describes the overarching field that addresses how people sell a product or service (Knight, Mich, & Manion, 2014).

Sales Knowledge defined by Magnotta (2020) as an "individual's familiarity with sales practices and ability to perform these processes" (p. 7).

SECTION TWO: PRACTITIONER SETTING FOR THE STUDY

This study took place within the Center for Sales and Customer Development (CSCD) at the University of Missouri. The Personal Selling class that served as a setting for the study is the first course that students must take to attain a Certificate of Sales and Customer Development. The CSCD is housed in the Marketing Department which is one of four academic units in the Trulaske College of Business at the University of Missouri. I will first examine the history of the CSCD and then analyze the center through organizational, leadership, and policy frameworks.

History

The University of Missouri is the largest public, four-year university in the state of Missouri. Founded in 1839, Mizzou was the first public university west of the Mississippi River (University of Missouri, n.d.). As a flagship, land-grant institution the University of Missouri educates a community of over 30,000 undergraduate and graduate students, produces research that has an almost $4 billion impact on the state economy, and provides programs and services to residents throughout the state of Missouri (University of Missouri, n.d.).

The Trulaske College of Business was established in 1914 as the Missouri School of Commerce at the University of Missouri (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.). In 2007, the school was named the Trulaske College of Business after Robert J. Trulaske who graduated from the college in 1940 (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.). The school was one of the first to be accredited by the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and it continues that accreditation today (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.). The college's primary offering is a Bachelor of Science in Business

Administration. Students pursuing this degree choose to specialize in one of three majors: finance, marketing, or management. Each academic specialty constitutes a department within the college. Additionally, Trulaske offers a five-year Master of Accounting Degree. The accounting program operates similarly to the other three departments but is officially called the School of Accountancy.

In addition to the BSBA and MACC degrees, the Trulaske College of Business offers the Crosby MBA which was redesigned as a fully online degree and launched in fall 2021, an ExecMBA, and a Master of Science in Business which is also a new offering that includes core business courses delivered online and a variety of stackable certificates delivered by the business school or other colleges at the University. Finally, the college offers doctoral programs in accountancy, management, finance, and marketing.

The Marketing Department has 14 full-time and five adjunct faculty members who teach a variety of subjects. Five faculty members are tenured, six are tenure track, and three are non-tenured teaching professors. The department's offerings include the BSBA with an emphasis in marketing, a Ph.D. in marketing, a graduate certificate in Marketing Analytics, an undergraduate certificate in Marketing Analytics, and an undergraduate certificate in Sales and Customer Development. The undergraduate certificate in Sales and Customer Development was the first certificate offered by the department. The current Dean has highlighted certificates as a potential area for revenue growth within the school so the additional certificate in Marketing Analytics was offered partly due to the proven success of the certificate model as evidenced by the sales certificate. Additional undergraduate certificates in Digital Marketing and International

Business are being developed and a potential graduate certificate in Sales and Customer Development has been discussed.

Center for Sales and Customer Development

The Center for Sales and Customer Development was established in 2011 with a mission to prepare future sales leaders through educational, research, and professional opportunities (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.). The CSCD works with 24 partner companies that support the center through annual donations at the $5,000, $10,000, $15,000, or $25,000 level. In return for financial support, the partner companies have access to research and data as well as potential sales employees. According to Nielson and Cummins (2018), this access to students is important as there is a shortage of well-trained sales candidates to fill empty positions in the growing field.

The CSCD's partner companies connect with students in a variety of ways. On the most basic level, they serve as guest speakers in a wide variety of marketing classes which provides value to faculty and students and allows students a brief introduction to the company and its entry-level positions. Additionally, some companies work with faculty to develop assignments or projects that students complete. This includes role-plays completed by students in the Personal Selling classes as well as a variety of other projects. In these instances, students get a real-world glimpse into the sort of problems the companies face and get to try to solve these problems in a low-risk environment. These projects sometimes also allow for company employees to give direct feedback to students so that students are reviewed on their work by someone other than just the faculty member. These deeper interactions can create a stronger bond between the student and employer. Nielson and Cummins (2018) found that "connecting recruitment and learning within the classroom can impact student intent to pursue employment" (p. 16). Finally, the CSCD organizes networking events for partner companies when they are on campus so that students can meet them and discuss employment and internship opportunities outside of the classroom.

The newest way that the CSCD connects students and partner companies is through the Inside Sales Lab (ISL). The goal of the ISL is “to promote partnership opportunities with leading companies for developing future sales leaders while providing students opportunities for hands-on learning” (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.). The ISL officially launched in 2020. Partner companies hire sales students as interns to work in a dedicated space in the Trulaske College of Business making and receiving sales calls for the company. Students are paid $15 an hour and trained by the partner company. This opportunity provides real-world experience for the student and value for the employer. All calls are recorded and the data from the calls is also used by marketing department faculty for research studies.

Since its inception in 2011, over 500 students have earned the Certificate in Sales and Customer Development. On average, students earning the certificate report initial compensation over $10,000 higher than their Trulaske College of Business peers (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.). There are currently 93 students in the certificate program and the required courses are full. The required courses are offered via four sections of Personal Selling, three sections of Sales Management, and two sections of Advanced Personal Selling. Students must also complete two electives which can be chosen from Consumer Behavior, Retail Marketing, Integrated Marketing Communications, Services Marketing, Procurement Processes and Analytics, AI and

Machine Learning Applications in Sales and Marketing, or Introduction to Risk Management and Insurance. In addition to the required and elective courses, students must also complete a for-credit internship working in business-to-business (B2B) sales.

Outside of the courses and work opportunities, students pursuing the Certificate for Sales and Customer Development can attend sales competitions. These competitions allow students from a variety of schools to complete in role-play competitions. Colleges and Universities with sales programs bring teams of students to compete. These competitions also provide students with additional career networking opportunities. Companies attend the competitions to search for potential employees so students that attend can display their sales skills directly to potential employers. The CSCD frequently fields rotating teams of students that attend the competitions. Before the pandemic of Covid-19, E&J Gallo, the center's largest financial benefactor, sponsored a competition that took place in the Trulaske College of Business.

Since its inception, the CSCD was managed by a team of two co-directors. The center was the creation of Dr. Wayne Keene who served as co-director from 2011 until 2021. Dr. Keene managed the partner relationships, recruited new partners, and managed most of the academic and administrative work. Dr. Syan Niladri was the co-director that managed most of the research activities. In 2021 Dr. Keene’s left for a new opportunity and Dr. Niladri stepped down. In their absence, the department chair, Dr. Srinath Gopalakrishna managed the center. In spring 2022, Dr. Anthony Vatterott was hired as a non-tenure-track faculty member and Director of the CSCD, the same role that Dr. Keene held. Like Dr. Keene, Dr. Vatterott teaches four Personal Selling classes each semester.

As the author of this study, it is important to disclose my affiliation with the CSCD. I am an Associate Teaching Professor in the marketing department. Though I do not teach any of the required courses for the sales certificate, I do teach courses that are counted as electives. These courses include Consumer Behavior, Retail Marketing, and Procurement Processes and Analytics. Additionally, I teach an independent study course for students that require the credit-bearing business-to-business (B2B) internship required for the sales certificate. Most students earn the credit for this requirement through the college's required BA4500 course which is the class that business students take when completing the internship required to graduate with the BSBA. Some students that pursue the sales certificate decide to do so after having completed BA4500 with an internship that is not B2B or come from other schools within Mizzou that do not require a credit-bearing internship. Those students take the Problems in Marketing course with me. This course requires that they send me weekly summaries of their internship activities and complete an evaluation of their work at the end of the class. Students taking the course for more than one credit hour also complete a business report specific to their internship. I do not serve in any administrative capacity with the CSCD and I do not have any affiliation with the Personal Selling course in which this study will take place.

Organization

University of Missouri

At the highest level, the Center for Sales and Customer Development is set within the University of Missouri. Bolman and Deal (2017) state that organizations, in general, are ambiguous, complex, and unpredictable. This can be observed in Manning's (2013) view of universities as organized anarchies. Manning states that they are "unpredictable though at times oddly rational, rooted in the past yet optimistically gazing into the future, traditional though educating many to anticipate change" (p. 11). Baldridge et al. (1977) also apply the organized anarchy term to university structure, citing ambiguity of goals like Bolman and Deal (2017), but adding vulnerability to the external environment and hiring of professional employees that demand autonomy and decision-making authority to the definition. Weick (1983) takes a similar view, defining them as loosely coupled systems. Birnbaum (1989) agrees, explaining that universities are loosely coupled because changes in one unit do not affect others. This structure allows the university to dictate multiple goals and direct the different subunits to achieve those goals. Manning (2013) makes the point that these differing goals allow the organization to be more adaptable. There may be competing agendas among the subunits but the loosely coupled nature of the organization promotes diverse views and allows the university to sense its environment and adapt quickly to a changing environment (Weick, 1983). This ability to adapt quickly is of utmost importance in today's quickly changing educational environment.

This loosely coupled structure can be observed in the operations of the University of Missouri. The University is divided into thirteen separate schools or colleges that operate independently of one another, one of Bess and Dee's (2007) hallmarks of a loosely coupled system. The Trulaske College of Business is the second-largest school (subunit) by enrollment. The University of Missouri frequently draws on its past in marketing messages and has many rituals and customs that help create a distinct organizational culture (Bolman & Deal, 2018). Even as the University embraces its past, its mission is to educate students prepared for the future. One of Mizzou's four stated values is discovery. The University's website states, "Discovery often fractures existing world views and requires acceptance of uncertainty and ambiguity" (University of Missouri, n.d.). Ambiguity is key to understanding the loosely coupled system (Baldridge et al., 1977). Manning (2013) states, "the fact that higher education institutions have unclear, contested, and often ambiguous goals makes these organizations profoundly different from other organizational forms" (p. 14). This structure means that the University deals with these ambiguous goals by assigning responsibility for their achievement to different subunits. Birnbaum (1989) posits that these subunits must be more structured than the University to achieve the goals allocated to them. He also stresses that links within the subunits are stronger than the links between subunits.

Trulaske College of Business

The stronger links present in the subunits dictate a more pronounced hierarchical structure. Though not all scholars agree that a bureaucratic lens is appropriate to apply to academic settings, Baldridge et al. (1977), list characteristics of colleges and universities that correlate to this categorization. Among those are a complex organizational structure, a formal hierarchy that communicates via formal channels, formal policies and rules, and routine decisions made by those assigned the power from authority at the top. Thus, acting as a subunit of the University of Missouri, the Trulaske College of Business can be viewed through a bureaucratic lens.

Power and authority are situated at the top of the hierarchy, rules are dictated by formal by-laws, and responsibility is dictated to faculty and staff in their areas of control. Mintzberg (1979) refers to those with leadership positions in the hierarchy as the strategic apex. In the Trulaske College of Business, the Dean and Associate Deans make up the strategic apex. They set the priorities for the college and communicate with all other levels in a top-down manner (Manning, 2013). The college adopted a strategic plan and mantra in 2019 to "Lead the Way in Business Education." The plan encompasses six distinct goals and each decision made in the college must directly support at least one of those priorities. This top-down direction-setting is a hallmark of a bureaucratic organizational system. Decisions made by leaders in the organization are not only made though a systematic process but must be approved as being supportive of the vision of those at the top of the hierarchy.

Furthering Mintzberg's (1979) classification of roles in the organization, staff support the organization's mission and make up the support staff and technostructure levels. The middle line serves as administrators that coordinate work activities and bridge the strategic apex with the operating core. Faculty members are part of the operating core, responsible for "carry[ing] out the basic work of the organization" (Mintzberg, 1979, p. 219). That basic work consists of teaching undergraduate and graduate students. However, Baldridge et al. (1977) note that in an attempt to deal with problems inherent to the organized anarchy structure present in universities, organizations hire expertly trained professionals, in this case faculty. The authors observe that professionals demand autonomy and tension exists between "professional values and bureaucratic expectations" (p. 130). As these professionals are clustered by discipline, this engenders an organization that is split by professionalism or academic area. Though bureaucratic decisions are made, and top-down authority influences those decisions, the autonomy required by faculty results in a governance structure that gives professional faculty more authority than most workers classified as the operating core.

Center for Sales and Customer Development

The Center for Sales and Customer Development is one of four centers present in the Trulaske College of Business. These centers function separately from the departmental and staff structure, but each is led by a tenured or non-tenure-track faculty member or members. The Center of Sales and Development is led by a non-tenure track Assistant Professor. The bureaucratic view espouses that while faculty are responsible for delivering the main output of the organization, knowledge to students, they do not have express governing power (Manning, 2013). However, the professional nature of the faculty as outlined by Baldridge et al. (1977) gives them increased authority to make decisions. Additionally, the concept of academic freedom means that faculty have the power to manage their curriculum relatively independently of the oversight of others. Faculty regularly make decisions about their own curriculum and teaching and through shared governance, serve on committees at the school and university level that address a variety of issues (Bess & Dee, 2012).

This holds true in the Trulaske College of Business. However, the bureaucratic nature of the college requires that decisions made by faculty must support one of the priorities of the strategic plan. That means that even curricular changes, which are put forth and approved by faculty, are vetted with these priorities in mind. A faculty member is free to make changes to existing courses, but new courses or radical changes must be approved by committees and faculty vote at the departmental and university level. The power to approve resides with the faculty, but the requirement of the changes to support a strategic plan initiative, reduces the power usually inherent to the professional nature of the job. Curricular changes to the Certificate for Sales and Customer Development must also support one of the six strategic priorities. Additionally, new sales offerings like a graduate certificate which is not currently offered, would need to meet the same criteria.

Though center directors are classified as faculty members, the director role adds an administrative function to their responsibilities, also making them part of the middle line (Mintzberg, 1979). The middle line report directly to the strategic apex (the Dean) and that means that the center directors are privy to top-down decision-making and limited authority (Manning, 2013; Mintzberg, 1979). As a non-tenured faculty member, that CSCD director has less power than his tenured colleagues. Tenure gives faculty relative job safety and non-tenured faculty have limited-term contracts and can be terminated at any time, further reducing power (Bess and Dee, 2012).

In addition to receiving top-down direction from the Dean, the CSCD director also receives outside input from an advisory board. Comprised of executives from the center's corporate partners, this board meets at least once a year and ensures that the center's offerings are consistent with industry needs. The advisory board's role is much less structured and cannot be viewed through a hierarchical lens, except that they provide guidance as a separate entity to the center. Finally, it is important to note that the center is a revenue-generating arm of the college. The sponsorships provided by the partner companies pay for center activities and sometimes also support departmental initiatives. Thus, monetary success may be perceived to weaken the power of the strategic apex in giving direction to the center director. If the center does not rely upon the college for financial support, that puts more power in the hands of the director to make decisions. However, it increases reliance on external parties, in this case, corporate partners (Bess & Dee, 2012).

The CSCD operates both within a bureaucracy as part of the Trulaske College of Business and an organized anarchy or loosely coupled structure under the University of Missouri. Both Weick (1983) and Manning (2013) propose that connections between people in a loosely coupled organization are linkages that hold the structure together. The linkages within the bureaucratic hierarchy are inherently stronger so that the Trulaske College of Business can work independently to achieve goals set by the University. Further, faculty in the college of business have the autonomy to make decisions under a shared governance structure, but those decisions must support the strategic priorities set by those granted hierarchical authority. The CSCD supports the achievement of both university and college goals by working with people within and outside the College of Business. The director is tasked with managing those relationships that bring in revenue and guide the curriculum that prepares students to enter the salesforce as career-ready employees. It is a nuanced position that requires both administrative duties as well as teaching. The center was developed and led by a very strong co-director who managed its operations for the last 10 years. Last year, he left his position which has left leadership in flux and presented a challenge for the incoming director of the CSCD.

Leadership

Since its inception, the Center for Sales and Customer Development has been led by two co-directors. The unfilled director position created a period of transition that led to an environment of change within the CSCD that has continued since the hiring of the new director. Additionally, the Dean of the Trulaske College of Business announced his departure, effective December 2021. A new Dean is not expected to be named until 2023.

This dynamic environment calls for flexible and adaptive leadership (Northouse, 2019; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010).

Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership, first developed by Heifetz and associates, focuses on changes people need to make in response to changing environments (Northouse, 2019). It is a leadership theory based on a process instead of focusing on skills, traits, or capabilities held by a leader (Northouse, 2019; Randall & Coakley, 2006). Yukl and Mahsud (2010) state that, “flexibility is required within the same position as conditions change for a leader, and flexibility is also required when moving from one type of a leadership position to another with different responsibilities and challenges” (p. 81). For the new director of the CSCD, flexibility will be paramount as he undertakes a new leadership position in an environment with changing conditions and multiple constituents.

A key tenet of adaptive leadership as proposed by Heifetz and Laurie (2011), is that leaders face both technical and adaptive challenges. Technical challenges are well-defined and can be solved in ways that have worked in the past by anyone with adequate expertise and knowledge (Northouse, 2019; Randall & Coakley, 2006). Adaptive challenges are not well-defined and cannot be solved by the leader alone. Adaptive challenges require the leader to recruit the help of multiple stakeholders, each of whom may have different opinions and beliefs (Heifetz & Laurie, 2011; Northouse, 2019: Randall & Coakley, 2006). Randall and Coakley (2006) state, “Leadership in today’s academia must take into account the needs and demands of various stakeholders, and include these major stakeholders in the change process" (p. 326). The director of the

CSCD can employ adaptive leadership to engage students, faculty, administration, and corporate partners of the center to solve problems and improve student sales opportunities. Additionally, the center itself is facing a time of change and this leadership theory can help to guide the director to ensure it is meeting the needs of this diverse set of stakeholders. Khan (2017) agrees stating, "Adaptive leaders focus on working with all members to elicit change for the greater good of an organization" (p. 180).

Yukl and Mahsud (2010) reviewed studies of multiple contexts that call for adaptive leadership, three of which apply to the CSCD. One stream of research into adaptive leadership focuses on managers that transition to different leadership positions. Though much of that research studies managers that are promoted within an organization, insights still apply to the transition of the new CSCD director from an outside organization. The most important takeaway is that managers must learn new skills and behaviors in the new position and that those that are unable to do so are more likely to fail. Yukl and Mahsud (2010) also state that diverse experiences enhance adaptive leadership. The director should be willing to learn new skills in this new position. Dr. Vatterott has a diverse background that will allow him or her to apply a new perspective at finding and solving adaptive problems that the center may face.

Another stream of research related to adaptive leadership focuses on the ability of this leadership model to help an organization respond to emerging threats and opportunities. Randall and Coakley (2006) state, "leaders at higher education institutions are confronted with increasing demands to transform these institutions, as stakeholders' expectations have risen and resources have diminished" (p. 325). Khan (2017) also cites changing demands in higher education, adding pressure for broader student access, technology changes, and globalization. Additional to these threats facing academia as a whole, the CSCD faces pressure to generate revenue, respond to the changing needs of corporate partners that want to hire career-ready students, ensure student success, and generate research. Yukl and Mahsud (2010) suggest that an adaptive leader must face these challenges through a process of “collective learning and collaboration” by many constituents in the organization (p. 86). This means that the CSCD director must engage students, companies, and faculty to solve problems and find opportunities instead of just relying on himself. He must bolster support for new initiatives and changes in strategy. This may mean finding those that resist change and advocate for his plans (Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). This can be a difficult task with multiple audiences.

These audiences inform the last stream of adaptive leadership research that applies to the CSCD, managing multiple stakeholders. Yukl and Mahsud (2010) posit that adaptive leadership is challenging when leaders must satisfy multiple stakeholders with competing values or when the leader is trying to pursue more than one objective. The director of the CSCD is tasked with growing revenue which means recruiting more corporate partners. The mission of the CSCD is to “advance knowledge” and “prepare future sales leaders” (Trulaske College of Business, n.d.). This mission illustrates the competing need to support faculty research and the need to ensure undergraduate students are mastering the skills needed to succeed in the sales field. The Inside Sales Lab is a pertinent example of these competing stakeholder values. Students get experience making sales calls in the lab, companies attain value from the students' work, and faculty use the recorded data for research. The director must satisfy all parties and ensure that one constituent need does not diminish the others. Adaptive leadership provides a framework for ensuring all parties are working together to achieve the organization's goals. Randall and Coakley (2010) state that adaptive leadership "should compel all stakeholders involved to work towards a solution through debate and creative thinking, identifying the rewards, opportunities, and challenges they will face” (p. 327). It is the job of the center director to facilitate that conversation. Yukl and Mahsud (2006) provide suggestions based on research for adaptive leaders in this situation. They suggest understanding differing stakeholder values and identifying ways to satisfy multiple objectives at once. The Inside Sales Lab is an example of how that may look in the CSCD.

Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) take a differing perspective of adaptive leadership, viewing it as part of a framework for leadership in organizations that concentrate on knowledge production. They propose a leadership framework called Complexity Leadership Theory (CLT) in which leaders influence the outcomes of organizations by employing different types of leadership. Administrative leadership includes managing the tasks required to “coordinate and structure organization activities” (p. 300). These tasks align with the hierarchical classification of an organization as a bureaucracy (Manning, 2013). Administrative leadership then would be important for the director to employ to achieve the tasks demanded by the bureaucracy in which it resides, the Trulaske College of Business, like generating revenue.

The second form of leadership proposed as part of CLT is adaptive leadership. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) draw on Heifetz and Laurie’s (1997) definitions of the theory but state that adaptive leadership happens in “emergent, informal adaptive dynamics throughout the organization” (p. 300). They continue, “adaptive leadership is an informal emergent dynamic that occurs among interactive agents ... and is not an act of authority”

(p. 305). Yukl and Mahsud (2010) agree that the ability to think about an organization as a complex system of interacting parts is an important skill of adaptive leaders. They state that systems thinking or "the ability to understand how various parts of the organization relate to each other, how changes in one part of the system will eventually affect the other parts, and how changes in the external environment will affect the organization” is an essential capability for an adaptive leader (p. 88). Thus, adaptive leadership lends itself to the loosely coupled organizational structure of the University of Missouri (Manning, 2013: Weick, 1983). This means that Dr. Vatterott should employ adaptive leadership techniques to think critically about how objectives sought by the center may affect the University system. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) suggest the way to manage the complex, interwoven bureaucratic, and loosely coupled systems is through enabling leadership, the final part of CLT. Enabling leadership allows the leader to balance the adaptive and administrative leadership techniques so that they work together to support the common goals of the organization (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). One way that this balance is apparent is through how the CSCD achieves its goals through the policy process.

Policy

The hierarchical perspective of the Trulaske College of Business as a bureaucracy with enhanced faculty power via professionalism is illustrated well through the way it creates and approves policy. Manning (2013) states that a hallmark of a bureaucracy is the existence of standard operating procedures. This is apparent in the way that curriculum is approved in the college. One objective of the Center for Sales and Customer Development is to ensure that students are well-prepared to begin a career in sales upon graduation. That means that curricula must sometimes be updated to include new courses that are designed to meet the changing demands of recruiting partners and also support the strategic priorities set by administration. Curriculum changes are created by and brought forth by the faculty and center directors. All curricular changes go through a rigorous process of approval at multiple levels of the organization. Manning (2013) states that this clearly defined process serves as a way to organize complex tasks, but that standardization can lead to increased time constraints which diminishes the ability of the organization to adapt quickly to needs. Multiple levels of faculty approval are needed at both the departmental and college level to approve curriculum changes. New courses, certificates, or programs also require approval at the University level.

Policy is a tool for meeting diverse stakeholder needs and the policy process is one method for which leaders can use enabling leadership or balancing the needs of adaptive and administrative leadership techniques. The policy evaluation process laid out in different forms by Anderson (2015), Fowler (2013), and Bardach and Patashnik (2020) give a frame for analyzing and evaluating policy. I will use Anderson's (2015) policy process to outline how curricular changes made by the CSCD transverses the bureaucratic structure of the Trulaske College of Business while operating in the loosely coupled system of the University of Missouri.

The first step that Anderson outlines in what he refers to as the policy cycle is problem identification and agenda-setting. This step deals with how problems are identified and put forth as important enough for the policy process to begin. This step began in the marketing department after center directors had worked with corporate partners to identify skills that companies looked for in sales graduates. The corporate partners exerted pressure that was central to the agenda-setting that resulted in curricular revisions. Companies identified skills with which CSCD graduates were not equipped. This resulted in a discussion among all marketing faculty about revising the Sales Certificate electives to include courses that impart these skills.

Anderson's (2015) second step in the policy cycle is formulation. This step includes "creation, identification, or borrowing of proposed courses of action" (Anderson, 2015, p. 3). During this step, the marketing faculty worked to refine the electives accepted in the sales certificate to include existing courses that included topics and skills identified in step one. Additionally, new courses were proposed to fill gaps in student knowledge that employers deemed important. Proposed courses were developed by the marketing faculty. Faculty creating the courses ensured that they also supported the strategic priorities set by the Dean. Once this was complete, the certificate was ready to move to the next step of the policy process.

Stage three of Anderson's (2015) policy cycle includes policy adoption and implementation. First, the marketing faculty voted to approve the revised certificate and proposed courses. Once approved, both the certificate and courses moved to the undergraduate curriculum committee in the college. Both were approved and next needed approval from the full faculty in the Trulaske College of Business. Once the revised courses received approval from the faculty, the adoption stage was over. However, new courses require approval by the curriculum committee of the University of Missouri. One reason for this is to ensure that courses do not duplicate offerings in other schools. This requirement speaks to the loosely coupled system of the University. Objectives are achieved in the hierarchical structure of the colleges but once achieved, it is important to ensure that they do not compete with the goals of other subunits (Birnbaum, 1989). The courses were approved by the curriculum committee and the certificate was amended.

Stage four of Anderson's policy cycle is implementation. Fowler (2013) states that "the success of implementation depends on motivating educators to implement the new policy and providing them with the resources to do so" (p. 18). Providing educators with resources meant sharing information about the new offerings and requirements so that they could share the information with students. It was also important to communicate the changes to advising staff within all schools at the University as students of multiple majors seek the sales certificate. Additional resources came in the form of changing teaching assignments for faculty that created the new courses. As they took on new classes, existing course loads had to be filled by other faculty or new adjuncts.

Finally, Anderson's (2015) final stage of the policy cycle is evaluation. The new courses are evaluated by teaching faculty that analyze the attainment of student learning objectives. Additionally, the center director will be tasked with analyzing the outcome of the certificate revision on an ongoing basis. This will be done qualitatively by speaking to partner companies to ensure graduates are better prepared when entering the field and quantitatively by reviewing course enrollments, the number of students getting the sales certificate, job placement numbers, and starting salary information.

Summary

The Center for Sales and Customer Development operates in the bureaucratic framework of the Trulaske College of Business and the loosely coupled system of the University of Missouri where it functions as a subunit responsible for achieving goals handed down from the administration. The center director is tasked with leading the

CSCD within this complicated framework that operates in a dynamic academic environment. The departure of a founding director and the Dean of the Trulaske College of Business has further complicated that environment making the choice of effective leadership techniques even more important. Adaptive leadership can be used to manage the adaptive challenges faced by the CSCD. This theory of leadership espouses engaging others to solve the organization's challenges and embrace opportunities. The multiple stakeholders invested in the CSCD should be utilized to prepare the center to embrace the future. This model has been used to develop curriculum in the past and has proven successful. Thus, finding new ways to engage others to better prepare sales leaders is an attainable goal.

SECTION THREE: SCHOLARLY REVIEW

Sales is a growing field and the Bureau of Labor Statistics expects that “sales workers in the services and wholesale sectors will continue to be in demand [through 2029] because these occupations remain critical in building and maintaining customer bases for businesses” (BLS, 2020). Well-trained sales graduates save companies time and money (Leasher & Moberg, 2008; SEF, 2021). Students that graduate college with formal sales training are valuable to companies that want to hire them, saving companies an average of $180,000 in training costs (SEF, 2021). However, as Nielson and Cummins (2018) state, "The problem for sales organizations is simple: there are not enough of these well-prepared students." (p. 4).

Literature on sales education has been growing in recent years. In their most recent literature review Cummins et al. (2020) noted that almost 70% of the articles included were published after 2013. Moreover, much of the literature that does exist is focused on the topic of experiential education. In their seminal review of the relevant literature, Cummins et al. (2013) found that almost 30% of articles covered experiential learning which was the largest category uncovered in their review of four primary sales journals. Likewise, Cummins et al.’s (2020) updated literature review found similar results. The 2020 review was expanded to five journals and encompassed sales literature from 2005 to 2019. Experiential learning continued to account for the most significant number of articles, encompassing 31.1% of publications. Spiller et al. (2019) also published an abbreviated literature review and found that experiential learning accounted for 57.4% of articles examined.

Though experiential learning is the most studied topic in sales education, there is a limited number of quantitative studies that research the impact of either sales education or experiential learning on students. There are even fewer studies that use an experimental or quasi-experimental design to test the impact on experiential learning between control and treatment groups. The research that does exist is saturated heavily with descriptions of case studies, projects, and curriculum design.

The wider marketing education literature, of which sales education is a subcategory, details the client-based project (CBP) as a specific type of experiential learning pedagogy. In CBPs educators partner with real clients to deliver learning activities in the classroom. While multiple studies detail real selling activities where students sell for an actual client, sales literature does not widely refer to these activities as CBPs. Few studies exist that refer to CBPs in sales (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Jaskari & Jaskari, 2016) and Deeter-Schmelz's (2015) is the only one to describe a CBP undertaken with a corporate partner instead of a local business. This review will first explore the broader framework of experiential learning (Kolb, 1984; Kolb et al., 1999; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Next, it will describe client-based projects and then analyze the existing literature on experiential sales education, categorizing studies by methodology and research design.

Experiential Learning

Multiple definitions of experiential learning exist but the most cited was written by Kolb (1984) who defines experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (p. 31). Kolb drew on the work of Dewey, Lewin, and Piaget in the conceptualization of experiential learning (Beard, 2018; Kolb et al., 1999; Morris, 2019). Though Kolb's model is the most cited and influential in experiential learning theory (Morris, 2019), Dewey's writing about the importance of experience in learning dates to the late 1800s. Dewey wrote, "I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference; namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience" (1938, p. 25).

As stated in chapter one, Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model includes four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Students have preferences for the order in which they spiral through the learning cycle. Kolb refers to these preferences as learning styles (Kolb et al., 1999; Kolb & Kolb, 2005). He created the Learning Style Inventory (LSI) to assess individual learning styles which fall into four categories: diverging, assimilating, converging, and accommodating (Kolb et al., 1999). The diverging style relies most heavily on concrete experience and reflective observation and people with this style view concrete situations from many points of view. The assimilating style focuses on abstract conceptualization and reflective observation and people with this style are good at logically synthesizing information. The converging style is strong in AC and AE and people with this style are good at solving problems and making decisions. The accommodating style prefers CE and AE and people with this style prefer hands-on learning and rely on gut feelings and others to make decisions. Kolb et al. (1999) noted five factors that affect learning style: personality, educational specialization, career, job role, and adaptive competencies. It is important to note that learning style preferences change according to situational context.

Dewey also noted the importance of context as well as social exchanges in the learning situation. He believed the knowledge is constructed through interactions with others and based on the experience of the learner (Roberts, 2003). However, Kolb's original model did not consider the importance of social interactions or context in the learning cycle. Kolb's later writings on mindfulness and deliberate learning did note the importance of context and uncertainty to enhance experiential learning (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009; Kolb & Yeganeh, 2011). The authors declared that experiential learning can become routine so incorporating mindfulness, or focusing on the present experience, can enhance learning. They also affirmed that "mindful learning places value on context, uncertainty, and doubt" (p. 3). Other scholars agree. Young et al. (2008) found that students that completed all four stages of the learning model achieved deeper learning. Cannon and Feinstein (2005) argued that experiential learning can be used as a tool to create dynamic knowledge that can be manipulated and transferred to new contexts. Kolb and Kolb (2005) talk about this through the lens of situated learning and discuss the importance of creating learning spaces that are psychologically safe for a spiral of learning to take place.

Morris (2019) also observed the importance of context to experiential learning, stating that real-world problems require a model that allows students to apply previously learned knowledge to new situations. Morris created a revised learning model after an extensive literature review on experiential learning. His new model expands on Kolb's original, and states "experiential learning consists of *contextually rich* concrete experience, *critical* reflective observation, *contextual-specific* abstract conceptualization, and *pragmatic* active experimentation" (p. 1064). His literature review found an underpinning theme of learner responsibility, that students must take responsibility for their learning. Young et al. (2008) found in an empirical study that the learner was key and that students who were more motivated to complete the experiential learning cycle had higher perceived levels of learning. Morris (2019) states, “In experiential learning, learners are involved, active, engaged, participants in the learning process. Learner participation is central, where “learning by doing” is a founding concept” (p.1067). His data collection resulted in five themes that are key to experiential learning: hands-on participation, situated in context, critical reflection, purposeful exercises that allow students to solve real-world problems, and incorporating risk so that students feel destabilized and are forced out of their comfort zone.

Young (2002) posits that experiential educators in marketing frequently promote hands-on exercises (experience/experimentation) at the expense of minds-on exercises (reflection/conceptualization). Like Morris (2019), he states that critical reflection is a key part of experiential learning that is sometimes overlooked. Young (2002) states, “Careful objective reflection and elaboration from a variety of perspectives helps the learner to dissect their experiences into aspects that can be integrated with other experiences and used in further stages of learning” (p. 44). One way of fostering reflection is through discussion. Kolb and Kolb (2005) encourage faculty in higher education to make space for conversation to encourage learning and Morris (2019) affirms that dialogue is imperative for critical reflection.

Finally, it is important to note that unless the facilitator of the experiential learning experience carefully designs the activity, it may not result in learning. Dewey (1938) noted that not all experiences are educational, explaining that mis-educative experiences can distort learning in the future. Young et al. (2008) urges educators to plan experiential activities that are motivating and incorporate all four stages of the learning cycle in order to promote the spiral of learning that Kolb and Kolb (2005) describe.

Client-Based Projects

One specific type of experiential learning exercise that increases student motivation is the client-based project (CBP). In CBPs, students work with companies to solve real business problems. These projects increase student engagement (Razzouk et al., 2003; Lopez & Lee, 2005) and give students the ability to solve real-world problems, situated in context through hands-on participation, aligning with the themes that Morris (2019) found are key to experiential learning. Lopez and Lee (2005) agree stating, "Client-based projects are a powerful pedagogical tool. The opportunity for students to apply their marketing knowledge to the needs of an actual client provides a rich, hands-on learning experience" (p. 172). Studies on CBPs are consistent with Young et al.'s findings (2008) that students who were more motivated to complete the experiential learning cycle had higher perceived levels of learning. Client-based projects enhance motivation (Goddell & Kraft, 1991; Jaskari & Jaskari, 2016; Lopez & Lee, 2005; McKay-Nesbit & Zdravkovik, 2009) and students that complete them perceive greater learning (McKay-Nesbit & Zdravkovik, 2009; Tofighi, 2022; Vinuales & Harris, 2017) as well as enhanced problem solving and critical thinking skills (Childers et al., 2020; Kennedy et al., 2001).

Most literature on CBPs in the field of marketing describes their use as projects in marketing research courses (Bove & Davies, 2009; McCale, 2008; Tofighi, 2022) or in classes where students create marketing plans (Cooke & Williams, 2004; Kennedy et al., 2001; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2009. Description of their use in sales education is limited, with only two studies describing the benefits that CBPs bring to sales students (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Jaskari & Jaskari, 2016). Jaskari & Jaskari (2016) found that participation in a CBP increased student motivation and ability to synthesize and analyze information and Deeter-Schmelz (2015) found that participation in a CBP increased student sales knowledge. However, neither study tested results against students that did not perform a client-based exercise.

In fact, studies that test the effectiveness of CBPs against non-CBP projects are rare. Tofighi (2022) tested the use of a CBP in a Marketing Research class and found that students that completed the CBP perceived higher levels of intellectual growth and skill development than students that did not work with business clients. She also noted that students in the CBP group had higher midterm and final grades than the control group. Vinuales and Harris (2017) tested the use of a CBP in a social media marketing class and found that students that worked with clients reported greater perceptions of learning and greater career confidence than those that did not work with a business client. Both these studies were designed so that conditions were split by class section and students were not randomized which results in clustering randomization and clustering of standard errors (Wozny et al., 2018).

Experiential Sales Education

A key role of formal sales programs is to impart students with the selling-related knowledge needed to succeed in a career. Though a lack of literature exists on the use of CBPs in sales education, many sales programs use experiential learning as one method of transmitting sales knowledge. Experiential learning is the most frequently published topic in sales education literature (Cummins et al., 2013; Cummins et al., 2020; Spiller et al., 2019). The value of experiential learning activities is widely accepted across all fields, including sales education. Experiential learning has been found to positively impact student perception of a career in sales (Hagenbuch, 2006; Knight et al., 2014; Mantel et al., 2002; Mich et al., 2014; Pelletier & Hopkins, 2018), sales skills (Mantel et al., 2002), critical thinking (Alvarez et al., 2015), confidence (Mich et al., 2002), and sales knowledge (Deeter- Schmelz, 2015; Knight et al., 2014; Magnotta et al., 2018; Mich et al., 2002; Pierce et al., 2011; Torres & Rawal, 2021). Experiential learning allows students to practice sales knowledge through a variety of activities and thus, increase self-confidence in their selling abilities. Knight, Mich, & Manion (2014) found that experiential learning and the number of sales courses taken had a strong positive effect on both sales knowledge and self-efficacy. Thus, students with formal sales education that includes experiential learning exercises graduate college with more sales-specific knowledge and more confidence in their ability to use that knowledge than their non-sales counterparts.

Curriculum Design

Sales knowledge, or an “individual’s familiarity with sales practices and ability to perform these processes” (Magnotta, 2020, p. 7) is an important construct. Verbeke et al. (2011) found through a meta-analysis of sales literature that sales knowledge has a direct impact on sales performance. Moreover, the authors found that sales knowledge can be trained which is an important implication for sales educators. How best to impart that knowledge is a key question and one that sales scholars have addressed. A significant number of studies in sales education review curriculum design. Curriculum design literature frequently describes course structure or program design (Healy et al., 2011; Marcos-Cuevas et al., 2014). While broader than the literature that describes only one project within a sales class, these articles are still limited in scope. Healy et al. (2011)

examined two professional selling classes through the lens of experiential learning and Marcos-Cuevas et al. (2014) described a sales class that used work-based learning to impart experiential experiences. Neither study tested the class design quantitatively or qualitatively but instead just offered a description that could be beneficial to other sales faculty.

A broader approach to curriculum design includes surveying sales faculty about the courses they teach and/or collecting syllabi to find common themes that are prevalent in sales education. Deeter-Schmelz and Kennedy (2011) surveyed both department chairs and faculty in sales programs to analyze sales courses and pedagogy at both US and international schools. Theirs is one of the few studies that includes an international perspective in sales. They found that sales was gaining importance in marketing education and that many schools use experiential exercises to prepare students for jobs post-graduation. Instead of surveying faculty, Loe and Inks (2014) gathered syllabi from faculty teaching advanced sales courses to analyze the key skills students should have after completing the class. The most comprehensive example of sales curriculum review was completed by Spiller et al. (2019) who completed an abbreviated literature review, surveyed faculty, and gathered syllabi to analyze sales education in the US. Their study gave examples of teaching innovations, reviewed teaching practices, and listed skills used by sales educators.

Of special interest were the curriculum design studies that moved beyond faculty input to gather feedback from sales professionals on curriculum design. "By developing course topics as a direct result of research with practitioners and potential employers, sales programs can not only provide substantial opportunities for professional employment but also advance key personal skills … useful for a lifetime" (Newberry & Collins, 2015, p.2). Lilly and Stanley (2016) gathered feedback from industry professionals before undertaking a program redesign and found that students and professionals rated the program higher after the changes were instituted. However, comments were subjective as they undertook a qualitative study and did not use a coding method to analyze the data from surveys or interviews. Liesen and Tippins (2004) conducted a focus group of business professionals who agreed that sales is the most important topic to add to marketing education. Hammond (2020) interviewed sales professionals to find the skills they believed to be most important in sales education and used those skills to craft a curriculum map. Newberry and Collins (2015) undertook exploratory qualitative research to gather practitioners' ideas about skills, content topics, and pedagogy that should be included in sales education. While the methodology was weak, professionals noted that experiential sales was a more valuable pedagogical tool than traditional lectures.

The smallest subset of curriculum-focused sales literature quantitatively analyzed the curriculum changes proposed. Raymond et al. (2006) surveyed sales managers and sales representatives to find important skills for hiring entry-level employees. They used confirmatory factor analysis to find skills and pedagogy professionals found to be important in sales education and used univariate *t*-tests to study if there were differences between the sales managers' and sales representatives' survey results. Experiential learning was found to be important to both sales managers and sales representatives when hiring entry-level employees. Rippé et al. (2020) posited that key selling techniques could be applied to teaching and found a correlation between some sales processes and improved student learning. Mantel et al. (2002) described a program redesign that included three separate classes and integrated a feedback loop as well as self-assessment, key parts of Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. They used pre and posttest surveys and analyzed data using *t*-tests and found significant improvement on 22 out of 24 skills tested as well as an improvement in students' attitudes about a career in sales. Finally, Pierce (2021) surveyed sport sales programs in the United States to uncover curricular differences between courses that used client-based experiential projects and those that did not. He found that almost 60% of sport sales courses used client-based projects in some form, with most of them having the students work with a client on an individual basis. Courses that employed client-based projects were more likely to use guest speakers and mock sales calls. However, he did not test for differences in student outcomes between courses with differing formats.

Role-Plays

These curriculum-focused studies show that experiential learning is a key component of sales education and it is prominent because sales requires specific skills that must be tested before use with clients. Businesses have long included role-plays in sales training and they make sense as a method to practice skills in a low-risk environment like the classroom.

> Role-plays in a personal selling course meet the criteria of experiential learning by creating a concrete experience through a buyer-seller interaction simulation fostering reflective observation by encouraging students to reflect on their experience, encouraging abstract conceptualization of how a salesperson should

behave in an actual sales encounter, and experimenting with applying specific selling techniques learned in class to the sales experience (Magnotta, 2018, p.75).

Of the exercises used to teach sales through an experiential learning pedagogy, role-plays are the most prominent (Alvarez et al., 2015; Carroll, 2006; Deeter-Schmelz & Kennedy, 2011; Healy et al., 2011; Lee, 2016; Loe & Inks, 2014; Mich, Conners, & Feldman, 2014; Pelletier & Hopkins, 2018; Sojke & Fish, 2008; Spiller, Kim, & Allen, 2019; Thomas et al., 2018; and Wood, 2020). They enhance learning and keep students engaged (Magnotta et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2018) and they develop communication and critical thinking skills (Sojke & Fish, 2008). However, some scholars argue that the benefits of role-plays are limited if they do not simulate the anxiousness felt by salespeople as they prepare to meet a buyer that they do not know (Pierce, 2021). Most role-plays are completed by students that are paired in classes as buyers and sellers so students are familiar with their classmates. Rocco and Whalen (2014) write, “the benefits to role-playing may be limited if the in-class learning experience does not replicate real-world sales” (p. 202). Some sales faculty have heeded this call and have created innovative techniques of matching students with people they are not already familiar with to replicate this real-world scenario. Innovative pairing methods include pairing students via sales competition (Magnotta et al., 2018), with an actor playing the buyer (Torres & Rawal, 2021), and pairing with students from a different college (Pelletier & Hopkins, 2018).

Project Descriptions

Though some faculty and scholars see value in replicating real-world scenarios in the classroom, the largest subset of literature in sales education consists of project descriptions. While these articles do have an experiential learning component, they simply describe a project, do not qualitatively test the results, and do not contain a scenario that allows students to perform real-sales activities where they sell to real clients or for an outside partner (Inks & Avila, 2008; Pellietier & Hopkins, 2018; Sojke & Fish, 2008, and Yarrington et al., 2016). Three articles explained a project and quantitatively tested the results. Hwan (2016) described a negotiation project that students rated higher than a traditional role-play. Thomas et al. (2016) explained a role-play that students found to be more engaging and perceived that it impacted their learning. Wood (2020) explained an experiential learning exercise and later surveyed students who took the class and found that it impacted their career performance. However, there was a limited sample size, no control group, and he did not use a validated instrument. Additionally, the statistical analysis was not described fully, and the author did not control for intervening variables. While helpful, these classroom-based projects are not as effective as projects that replicate working in the sales profession. Loe and Inks (2014) argue that "participating in real-world field sales calls, including the day-to-day activity of researching, prospecting, and qualifying prospects, provides students with essential experiential-based insight into the nature of the business-to-business (B2B) sales job and the requisite perseverance for success" (p.185).

Client-Based Selling

There is an increasing number of articles that detail students doing "real-selling" activities in which they work for an outside entity to sell a product or service. This subset of literature again explains the projects but does not quantitatively test the results and most of these studies do not draw upon the literature of CBPs. Real-selling activities included selling newspaper advertising (Bussieré, 2017; Levin and Peterson, 2016), coupon ad sales for Big Brothers Big Sisters (Chapman et al., 2016), the sales program itself (Neely & Cherry, 2010), candy bars (Rippé, 2015), a golf event (Young & Hawes, 2013), and products created by students in a university entrepreneurial center (Lastner & Rast, 2016). While most of these projects detail students in a professional selling course selling a product for an outside client, Chapman et al. (2021) described a project where sales management students coached professional sales students who were selling for outside clients. The sales management students received feedback about their coaching from industry professionals.

A smaller number of articles describe a real-selling project and test the results. Jaskari and Jaskari (2016) wrote about a client-based project that they found was motivating to students and encouraged analysis and synthesis of information via qualitative analysis of the data. However, no coding procedure was described. Hagenbuch (2006) described a service-learning sales project and after surveying students found that the project increased their attitude toward sales. The author used a mixed-methods approach but used quantitative analysis on one class section's data and qualitative analysis on the class from the next year. Additionally, he did not use a validated instrument or test the survey for reliability. Nielson and Border (2016) described a negotiation class where students were allowed to negotiate anything they chose and found that real-world negotiations resulted in an improvement of students' negotiation skills. However, the survey was not validated, and the independent variables had no conceptual link to the dependent variable of motivation. Finally, Shukor (2021) explained a project in which students in Malaysia sold insurance products and worked for outside agents.

Students self-reported that they gained confidence, increased problem-solving skills, and improved presentation skills. However, only descriptive statistics were used, and no testing occurred to measure differences between students that completed this real-world exercise and students that did more traditional learning activities.

Corporate-Sponsored Learning Activities

Even though there are many projects in the sales education literature that detail real-selling activities, only one exists that describes a partnership with a corporation. Partner “clients” described above were mainly university-entities or non-profit firms. As students graduate and look to attain their first sales job, they must make connections with companies during their time in school. Indeed, Agnihotri et al. (2014) posit that it is also important for companies to recruit in sales classes and proposed a two-stage recruiting process with multiple propositions for increasing student perceptions of the company. Nielson and Cummins (2019) tested part of Agnihotri et al.’s model and found that companies with high-quality, in-person presentations positively impacted student intent to work at the firm. However, companies can do more than present to sales students, they can collaborate with faculty to give students a real-world selling scenario to role-play and give students feedback about their performance. Only one example of this exists in sales literature. Deeter-Schmelz (2015) describes a corporate partnership with Frito-Lay in a sales management class that included role-plays and interaction with employees in the classroom. She used pre and post-test surveys and *t*-tests and found that student sales knowledge increased after the corporate-sponsored activity. The sample size was small, and it was not an experimental design with a control group, but the quantitative analysis was strong. She noted the dearth of research on corporate-sponsored experiential learning activities and called for more studies like hers.

Experimental Designs

The final subset of sales literature explains projects and then uses an experimental or quasi-experimental design to test the outcome between treatment and control groups. Two of these detail real-sales projects where students sold tickets for a professional sports team (Rocco & Whalen, 2014) or used sales skills to raise scholarship funds (Rocco & Whalen, 2016). In the 2014 study, the authors found that students that learned an improv sales technique sold more tickets than those that did not. In the 2016 study, they found that professional sales students that were paired with student managers performed better than those that had only the instructor to manage their sales process. However, the authors did not describe how the treatment and control groups were split in the 2014 study and they split the treatment and control groups by course section in the 2016 study. Other studies explain projects without a real-world component and test the results in a quantitative manner (Magnotta, 2018; Robledo et al., 2014) but three studies used an experimental design to test the impact of experiential learning exercises on student sales knowledge.

Magnotta et al. (2018) explained an intracollegiate sales competition in which students competed against others from their school in a role-play competition. Of special note is that corporate sponsors supplied the role-play scenarios. The authors used a quasi-experimental design with pre and post-test surveys and compared students that participated in the competition against those that completed a role-play from a textbook. They used Pelletier et al.'s (2014) scale to measure sales knowledge and found that students that took part in the competition had a significant increase in sales knowledge. Additionally, they found that students taking part in the competition were more engaged than those that participated in the textbook-supplied role-play. However, they did not compare the difference in sales knowledge gained between those students that participated in the competition versus those that completed the role-play from the textbook.

Pierce et al. (2011) conducted a study in which some students completed an experiential learning project while students in the control group did not. They found that students in the treatment group showed an improvement in their ability to open a sales call, show enthusiasm, and answer knowledge questions over those in the control group. This was a quasi-experimental design with a nonequivalent control group. The authors used a pretest-posttest design with validated instruments. The study had a limited sample size but the data analysis methodology was strong.

Finally, Torres and Rawal (2021) used an experimental design to test the difference in sales knowledge of students that completed surreal play experiences (SPEs) versus traditional role-plays. "Surreal play is conducted with students by providing them with some real-life situations and using a nonstudent/outsider as the buyer" (Torres & Rawal, 2021, p1). The authors used a pretest-posttest design and randomized sampling. They found that all students in the experiment increased sales knowledge but those that were part of the SPE groups were impacted more positively than those that completed the control group. The study had a small sample size but a strong methodology and data analysis.

Summary

Demand for experienced salespersons is expected to grow and formal university sales programs designed to prepare students for those positions, though limited, are increasing in number (BLS, 2020; SEF, 2020). Employers benefit from hiring well-trained sales students (Weilbaker & Williams, 2006) and students with formal sales education perform better in their early career than non-sales students (Bolander et al., 2014; Feldman, 2020, Leasher & Moberg, 2008). "Universities that … teach sales courses have a responsibility to make sure their students are set up to succeed in the field immediately (Nielson & Border, 2016, p. 8). Thus, universities need to understand how best to prepare students for a career in sales and studies that empirically analyze the effect of experiential learning activities on student knowledge can help sales educators design curriculum that includes proven strategies to increase graduate preparedness.

SECTION FOUR: CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Plan for Dissemination of Practitioner Contribution

I planned to contribute to practice by applying to present at the Sales Educators Academy, a conference sponsored by The Sales Education Foundation (SEF). The SEF was established in 2007 and is the primary organization to support sales education in the United States and abroad (Sales Education Foundation, n.d.). The non-profit organization works with colleges and universities as well as industry professionals to advance sales education. The organization's website features a knowledge center that includes resources for faculty, students, and businesses. In conjunction with Rollins College, Florida State University, and Aston University, the SEF also hosts an annual Sales Educators Academy (SEA). This academy is held yearly either in Florida, the UK, or online, and targets "sales educators that teach business school students" (Sales Educators Academy, 2021). The SEA was last held in June 2022 and dates are not yet planned for future sessions. The only proposal guideline available for the SEA is from the 2022 session and asks only for a 150-word proposal. I reached out to the SEF to ask if they could clarify the requirements and they said that more information would not be available until early in 2023. However, Marty Holmes, the director of the SEF, suggested that the National Conference in Sales Management would offer a good way to share my practitioner implications.

The National Conference in Sales Management (NCSM) is "the premier international gathering of scholars, instructors, and practitioners interested in professional selling and sales management research and teaching. The conference consists of double-blind review competitive paper sessions, research roundtable sessions, sales education sessions, and special sessions devoted to connecting academia and practice" (NCSM, 2022). The conference requests submissions for sales education papers. There is a track called teaching applications that describe projects that are more involved than one class period. If accepted, presenters are asked to prepare a handout and a 15-minute presentation on the subject and proposals are "evaluated on: ease of implementation, quality and clarity of instructions and material, beneficial in terms of value, uniqueness, and originality" (NCSM, 2022). The submission guidelines require a title page, an abstract of 150-words or less, and a three-page document that includes an overview of the assignment, the teaching objectives, description of the innovation including how it is novel, evidence of outcomes, instructions on how to implement it, and discussion on how to use it.

Rationale for the Contribution Type

Though the SEA is a viable target for presentation of this study, a 150-word abstract does not seem to be sufficient for inclusion in this DiP. The NCSM targets both scholars and practitioners and as this study can offer insights to both groups, it seems to be a better fit for my research. The project undertaken in this study could easily be replicated in other sales programs and once created, it easy to deploy in multiple semesters. The use of technology to feature corporate partners allows programs to expand their reach and work with partners outside of their immediate geographic area. I believe the project is innovative and novel and could even be considered for the monetary price awarded to the best teaching innovation. Additionally, the timeframe and specifics of the NCSM fit my proposed graduation as the deadline for submission is November 15, 2022.

Proposal Submission

Courtney Cothren

Associate Teaching Professor, Marketing

Trulaske College of Business

University of Missouri

Virtual Corporate Partner Role-play

Teaching Innovation

Abstract

Role-plays allow students to practice the selling skills that they will use in the field in a low-risk environment, the classroom. They enhance learning and improve student engagement (Magnotta et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2018; Shukor, 2021) and improve critical thinking skills (Sojke and Fish, 2008). Role-plays can provide added value to students if they are developed and delivered with business partner collaboration. However, corporate partner relationships can be burdensome to manage as they require careful planning and a reliance upon the continued willingness of a business to collaborate. Additionally, geography can be limiting. This innovation describes a study that used a virtual format to introduce and deliver a real-world role-play to Personal Selling students. The business partner recorded the case introduction which made it easy to deploy in multiple course sections and semesters.

Experiential learning sales activities positively impact students' critical thinking skills (Alvarez et al., 2015) as well as student confidence (Mich et al., 2014), knowledge (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Knight et al, 2014; Magnotta et al., 2018; Mich et al., 2002; Pierce et al., 2011; Saavedra Torres & Rawal, 2021), sales skills (Mantel et al., 2002), and perceptions of sales as a career (Hagenbuch, 2006; Knight et al., 2014; Mantel et al, 2002; Mich et al., 2014; Pelletier & Hopkins, 2018). Role-plays are the most common form of experiential learning activities used in sales classes and many instructors work with businesses to create role-play scenarios that feature business problems that replicate real-world scenarios. Students derive value from solving real business problems that they will encounter when they enter the field and from networking with companies before graduation. However, managing business partnerships can be time consuming and stressful for course instructors. Additionally, geography can limit the number of potential business partners that are willing to come to campus. Once a project is created, a business partner must be willing to commit to deliver it semester after semester for it to be used in future classes. For these reasons, developing a role-play assignment that is deployed virtually, using recorded videos, offers instructors a sustainable option that is easy to replicate year after year.

This role-play assignment was given to students in Personal Selling which for many, is the first selling course a student takes. Students are building their sales knowledge and were expected to gain experience interpreting information relevant to a product or service offering, determine appropriate products and services to complement the needs of potential clients, and advise, recommend, and promote the product or service with the goal of long-term client value creation once they completed this assignment.

The role-play utilized in this assignment was supplied by a corporate partner of our sales center, Huhtamaki. It simulated a real-world problem that their salespeople face. The sales scenario asked students to act as a Distribution Account Manager for Huhtamaki in the Midwest region preparing for an upcoming meeting with the Purchasing Director from a real client of the firm. A link to client's website was included in the directions. Students were provided with the key business objectives of both the Purchasing Director and the Huhtamaki Distribution Account Manager's supervisor. Additionally, possible objections that could be raised by the Purchasing Director were included. Supplemental selling information that could be used in the role-play included an overview of Huhtamaki's values, sustainability goals, and a company overview. The top North American customers were listed, and students were provided with a page of selling information on the Huhtamaki Comfort Cup, the recommended product to meet the client's needs. Links to websites with additional selling materials included the full Huhtamaki Foodservice Catalog, a list of associations of which Huhtamaki is a member, and a list of certifications that Huhtamaki plants and suppliers have attained. Directions for the role-play followed the selling materials.

Students were randomly paired with a partner and instructed to perform the role-play twice, once acting as a buyer and once acting as a seller. Requiring students to act in both roles ensured that all students were able to perform the selling role of the Huhtamaki Distribution Account Manager. A company representative of Huhtamaki recorded an introduction to the role-play that was linked to the assignment. The introduction allowed the representative to give background on the company and selling scenario and it served as a recruiting tool for the company. Students were asked to record their role-plays and submit them to Canvas for grading by the course instructor. As the recordings were digital, they were shared with Huhtamaki representatives who watched them and provided feedback. This allowed students to receive valuable feedback from practicing sales professionals.

This assignment was developed as part of a research study to uncover the impact on student sales knowledge from completing experiential learning exercises developed with business partner collaboration. The study used a randomized control trial design testing this corporate-sponsored role-play against the same role-play scenario but featuring a hypothetical company and was introduced only by the course instructor. While differences in sales knowledge between groups were not found, student sales knowledge increased significantly for all students in the class, no matter which role-play they completed, $t(111)=-1.689$, $p=.047$.

This assignment is easy to replicate. Once a business partner is identified, the instructor needs to work with them to develop a role-play that simulates a real-life scenario faced by company salespeople. A representative from the company then records a video introducing students to the case. Students are randomly paired and each pair records two role-plays, giving each a turn to act as buyer and seller. The recordings are viewed by the course instructor, who grades them and gives feedback. Additionally, the recordings are shared with representatives from the partner company who also offer feedback.

I used this role-play as the first assignment in the Personal Selling class. Because it was recorded, it took pressure off the student to perform live in front of business professionals or classmates. It also allowed them to receive feedback early in the semester that could then help them improve performance on future role-plays. The point value for the assignment was lower than later role-plays which also helped students view it as a learning experience. Because of the virtual format, it can be used in future semesters with less work and planning for the instructor or business partner. Company representatives will only need to commit to reviewing role-plays and offering feedback which can be done remotely.

Presentation Slides

BACKGROUND

- Role-plays enhance learning and improve student engagement (Magnotta et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2018; Shukor, 2021) and improve critical thinking skills (Sojke & Fish, 2008)
- Developed a role-play as part of a study
- Virtual role-play developed with a corporate partner

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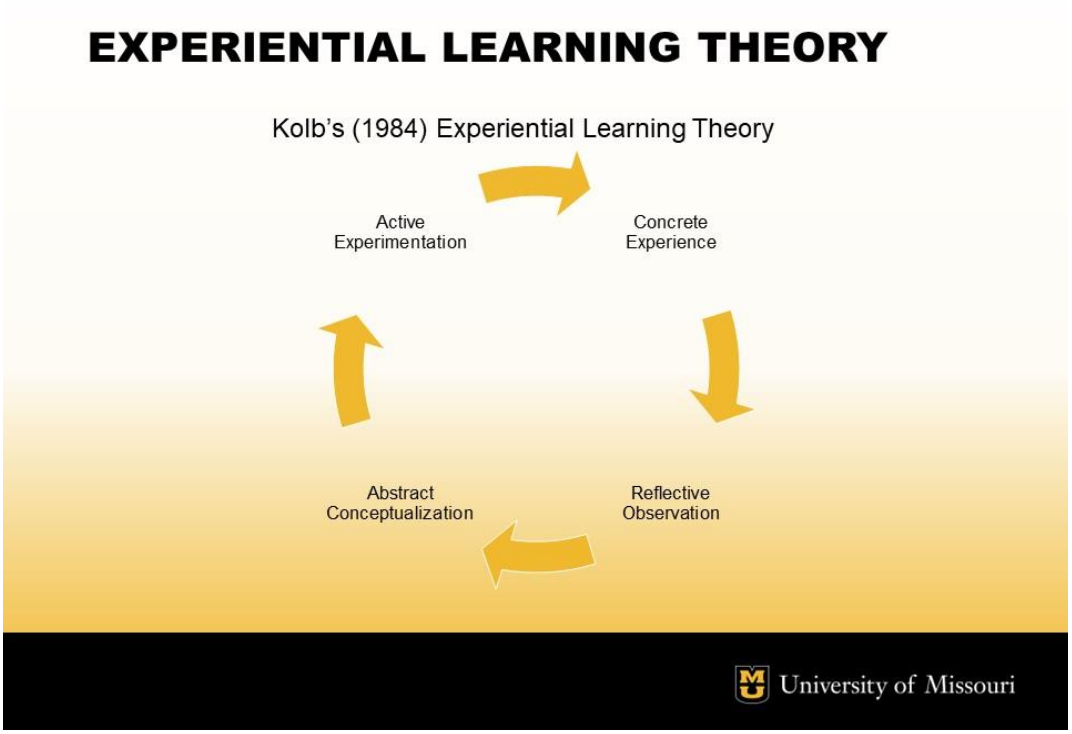
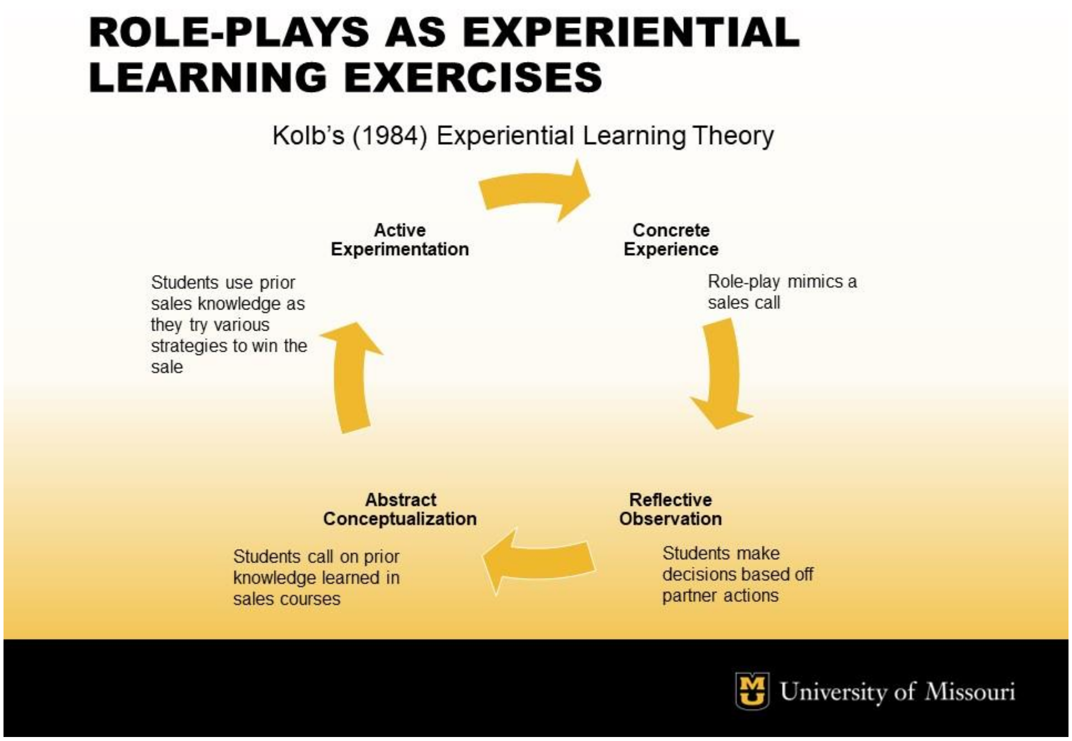
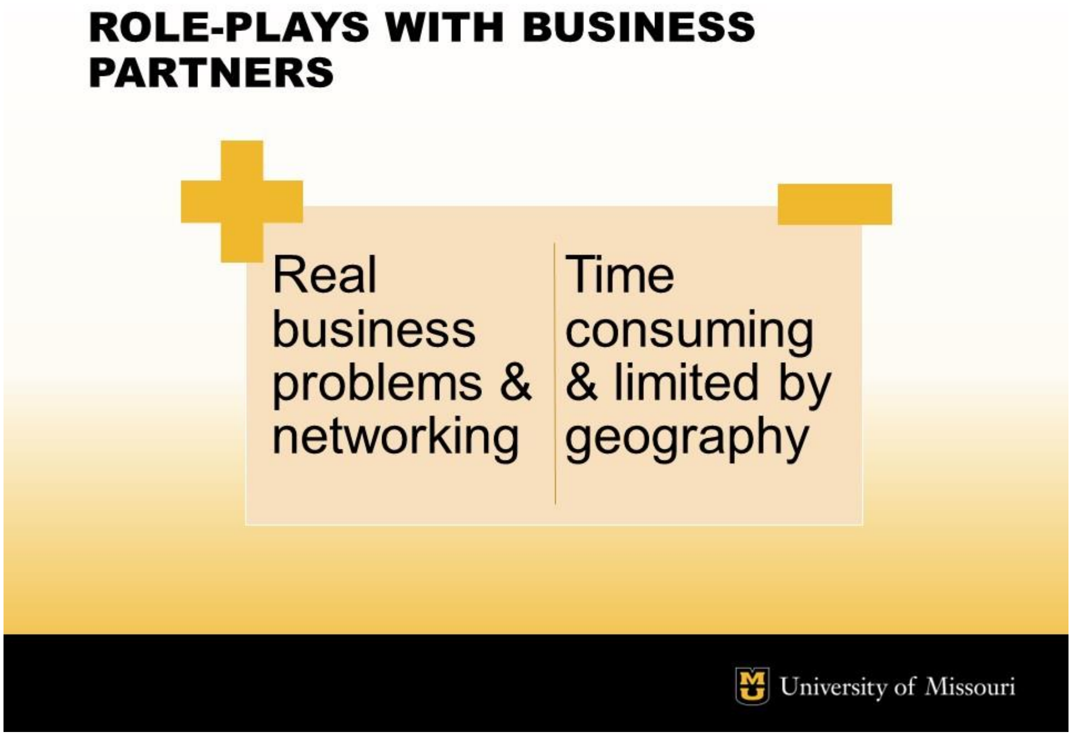
EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING SALES ACTIVITIES IMPACT STUDENTS'

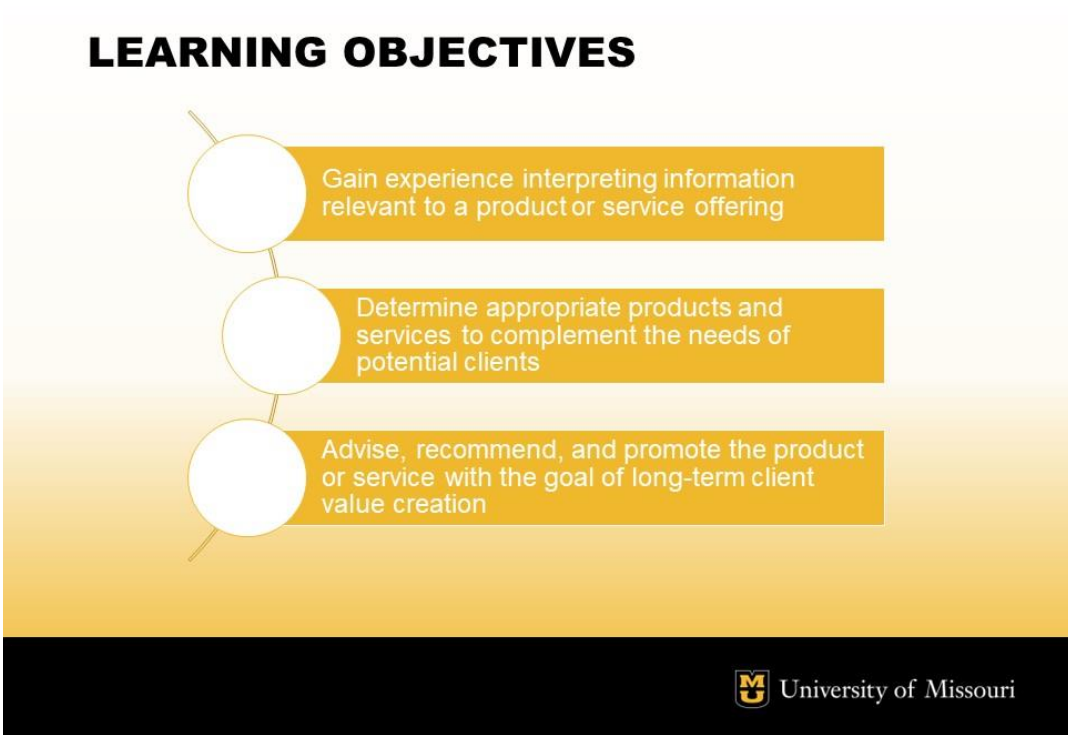
- Critical thinking skills
- Confidence
- Knowledge
- Sales Skills
- Perception of Sales as a Career

University of Missouri


EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING THEORY
Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory
Active Experimentation
Concrete Experience
Abstract Conceptualization
Reflective Observation
University of Missouri


ROLE-PLAYS AS EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING EXERCISES
Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Theory
Active Experimentation
Students use prior sales knowledge as they try various strategies to win the sale
Concrete Experience
Role-play mimics a sales call
Abstract Conceptualization
Students call on prior knowledge learned in sales courses
Reflective Observation
Students make decisions based off partner actions
University of Missouri


ROLE-PLAYS WITH BUSINESS PARTNERS
Real business problems & networking
Time consuming & limited by geography
University of Missouri


LEARNING OBJECTIVES
Gain experience interpreting information relevant to a product or service offering
Determine appropriate products and services to complement the needs of potential clients
Advise, recommend, and promote the product or service with the goal of long-term client value creation
University of Missouri

CORPORATE PARTNER

Huhtamaki

University of Missouri

THE PROJECT

University of Missouri

Table of Contents

Huhtamaki

Sales Scenario

You are a Distribution Account Manager in the Midwest region. LaMar's Donuts & Coffee (https://www.lamars.com/) is headquartered in Colorado. LaMar's currently has 26 stores across five states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Arizona). Huhtamaki has no prior sales history with LaMar's. You have been an Account Manager for four months and have a fantastic opportunity to secure new business. LaMar's is interested in hearing from you as to why Huhtamaki's Comfort Cup® is the solution to replace their current single-wall hot cups. They currently source their hot cups from Solo®. You will present your solutions to the Purchasing Director of LaMar's next week.

LaMar's Purchasing Director's key business objectives:

- Provide a high-quality hot cup
- Promote long-term sustainability for the environment
- Avoid a large investment when making the cup transition
- Competitive pricing

Your manager's key business objectives:

- Build rapport with LaMar's
- Learn LaMar's critical needs to position and sell a hot cup
- Gain commitment to buy Huhtamaki product

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Huhtamaki

Selling Objective

You have scheduled a meeting with the Purchasing Director of LaMar's in early April. You have reviewed internally, and your team has concluded the Huhtamaki Comfort Cup® is the best solution to offer in this situation. The buyer has asked you to come to their headquarters in Centennial, Colorado and present the solution you believe would be best for LaMar's within the Midwest region. As the Account Manager it is up to you to convince LaMar's of this. This is your chance to prove you are reliable and knowledgeable as an Account Manager, despite your lack of experience. You have worked hard to be creative and present a solution that will help LaMar's meet their marketing and functionality needs. You want to grab the Director's attention with your solution and gain a commitment from the Director

Possible Objections:

- Cost – Dart offers a very competitive price vs. the Huhtamaki Comfort Cup®
- Functionality – How insulated is this cup? How long can this stay hot? De-nesting capability? Leakage?
- Sustainability – Is this cup environmentally friendly? Recyclable?
- Trust – Who else do you sell to? What is your sales background? Why you?
- Scale / Volume – Can Huhtamaki match the scale and volume needs for LaMar's?

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Huhtamaki

Huhtamaki Overview

Our values help us make a difference where it matters

More than one hundred years ago in Finland, Heikki Huhtamäki established a sweets factory employing 60 people. Since then, his entrepreneurial spirit and values have helped Huhtamaki grow into a company of approximately 19,000 employees, globally.

CARE	DARE	DELIVER
We care for the planet, people, customers and partners	We dare to innovate, grow and have an impact on the future	We deliver on our promises, with integrity and as a team

Huhtamaki

Huhtamaki Overview

At Huhtamaki, we're global specialists in packaging for food and drink, dedicated to making every consumer experience enjoyable, consistent, and safe. We understand that packaging is about so much more than just what goes around a product. It's about building brands, protecting reputation, and opening new opportunities in new markets. That's why we're on hand, around the world, working as long-term partners with our customers as they develop and grow. Wherever we are, we adapt and deliver packaging that meets local demands. We work efficiently and with respect for the world around us, demonstrating our values every day – always providing quality products with reliable service. Helping great products reach more people, more easily.

Our 2030 sustainability ambition and related goals

Our ambition

First choice in sustainable packaging solutions

100% of products designed to be recyclable, compostable or reusable	>80% renewable or recycled materials	100% of fiber from recycled or certified sources
>90% of non-hazardous waste recycled or composted	100% renewable electricity	Carbon neutral production and science-based emission target

We offer the most engaging, motivating and safest workplace for our people

We ensure human rights are respected throughout our value chain

WE SUPPORT

We support the UN Global Compact and the UN Sustainable Development Goals

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Huhtamaki

Huhtamaki Top Domestic Customers

Retail

BJ's
Costco Wholesale
Sam's Club
Walmart

Consumer Goods

Baskin Robbins
Dean's
General Mills
McCormick
Nestlé
Unilever

Foodservice

Arby's
Church's Chicken
Louisiana Kitchen Popeyes
KFC
Subway
Wendy's
Taco Bell

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Huhtamaki

Huhtamaki Comfort Cup®

- With redesigned double-wall construction to keep drinks hot and hands comfortable, Comfort Cup® insulated hot cups and lids provide industry-leading performance for people on the move. The Comfort Cup® is manufactured and distributed from our state-of-the-art Batavia, Ohio facility.
- Stock print available to fit your coffee needs. Custom print is available if annual volumes exceed 1 million cups. Limited to four colors.

Huhtamaki prides ourself on minimizing paper waste. Throughout our plants we gather our engineered paper waste into bales and ship them to our molded fiber facilities to make plates. Doing so eliminates any of our paper scrap from ending up in a landfill. Huhtamaki requires our suppliers to sustainably source raw materials, often requiring certifications so we can pass along the same standard to our customers.

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Huhtamaki

Additional Selling Materials

Huhtamaki Foodservice Catalog

https://www.huhtamaki.com/en-us/north-america/foodservice/

Huhtamaki is a member of the following relevant associations:

FPI (Foodservice Packaging Institute) https://www.fpi.org/

- PCA (Paper Cup Alliance)
- PRA (Paper Recovery Alliance)
- PRG (Plastics Recovery Group)

Plant Certifications:

PEFC (Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification)

Our paperboard suppliers maintain the following certification programs:

SFI (Sustainable Forest Initiative)

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FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)

- .

Huhtamaki

Role-Play Directions

You will be paired with a partner and you will perform the role play twice so that each of you has the opportunity to act as the buyer and the seller. For each recording, one student will act as the Purchasing Director for LaMar's (buyer) and one as the Distribution Account Manager for Huhtamaki (seller). You should record both role plays and upload them to the assignment in Canvas for grading by Dr. Vatterott. Each role-play should last approximately 10 minutes. Please see the rubric on the next slide for grading specifics.

A representative from Huhtamaki will watch your recorded role-plays and give feedback about performance after the role-plays are graded.

Learning Objectives. Completion of this role-play will allow you:

- To gain experience interpreting the information relevant to a product or service offering.
- To determine the appropriate products and service to complement the potential client's needs.
- To advise, recommend and promote the product or service with the goal of long-term client value creation.

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Huhtamaki

Grading Rubric

Rubric also available on the Canvas assignment.

MKT 4410 - ROLE PLAY RUBRIC

	Points	Excellent → 5	4	3	2	Poor 1	Comments
Approach: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Professional introduction							
Salesperson gains prospect's attention							
Effectively builds rapport							
Smooth transition into needs identification							
Needs Identification: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Uncovered decision process (decision criteria, people involved in decision process)							
Effectively determined relevant facts about company and/or buyer							
Effectively uncovered needs of buyer (current problems, goals, etc.)							
Asked effective questions that brought to buyers' attention what happens to company or buyer when problems continue (helped convert implied to explicit needs)							
Gain pre-commitment to consider the product/service and smooth transition to presentation							
Product/Service Presentation: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Presented benefits based upon needs of buyer instead of only features							
Logical, convincing presentation (display a strategy to communicate and persuade; clearly understands needs "hot buttons" of prospects and concentrates on those needs)							
Used appropriate/professional visual aids							
Effectively demonstrated product/service							
Effectively involves the buyer in the demonstration							
Effective use of trial closes (follow-up to determine where buyer is in decision process)							
Overcoming Objections: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Initially gains better understanding of objection (clarifies or allows buyer to clarify objection)							
Effectively answers the objection							
Confirms that the objection is no longer a concern of the buyer							
Close: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Persuasive in presenting a reason to buy							
Asked for business or appropriate commitment from buyer, given the nature of the particular sales call							
Communication Skills: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Effective verbal communication skills (active listening, restated, rephrased, clarified probed for better understanding)							
Appropriate non-verbal communication							
Verbiage (clear, concise, professional)							
Overall: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Salesperson enthusiasm and confidence							
Product knowledge							
TOTAL GRADE	0						

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Huhtamaki

RESULTS

- Sales knowledge for all students increased
  - t(111)=-1.689, p=.047

University of Missouri

TIPS FOR REPLICATION

- Identify a business partner
- Record introduction video
- Students record completed role-plays
- Feedback from company employees & grading by instructor

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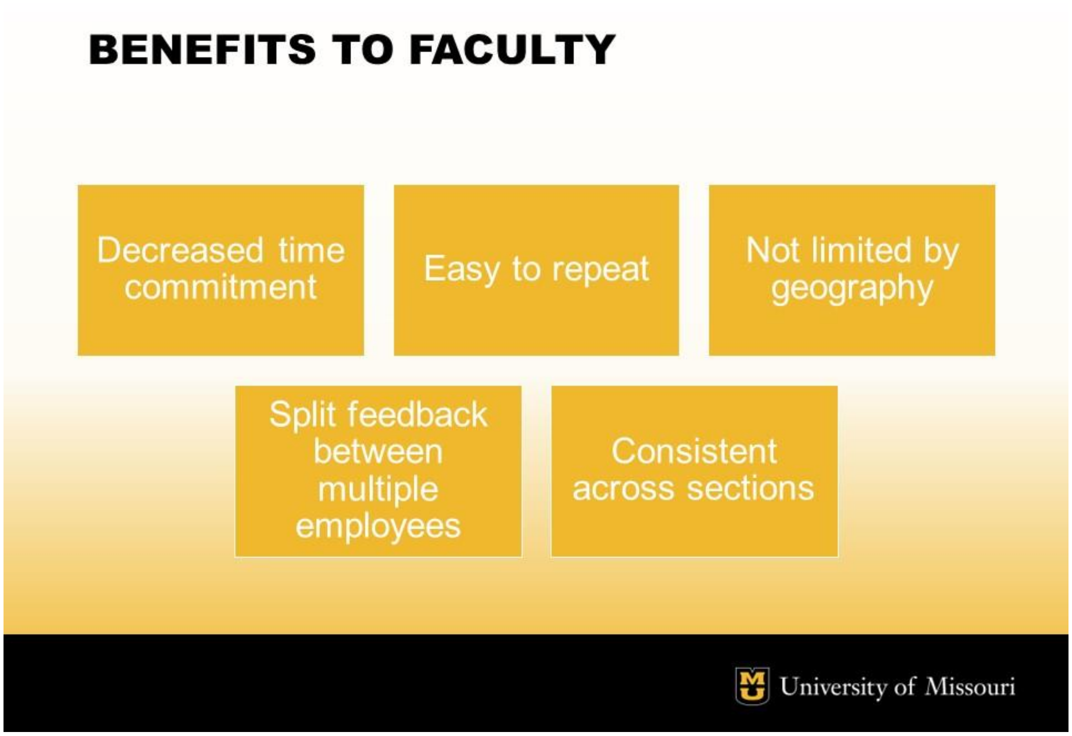
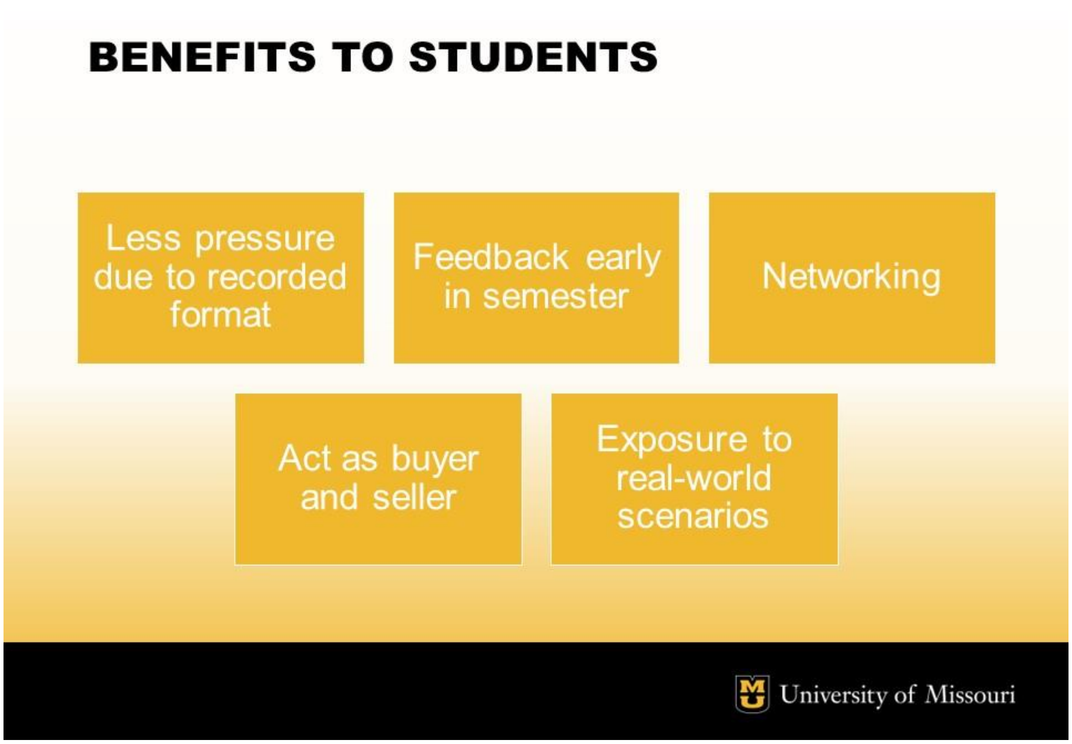

BENEFITS TO FACULTY
Decreased time commitment
Easy to repeat
Not limited by geography
Split feedback between multiple employees
Consistent across sections
University of Missouri


BENEFITS TO STUDENTS
Less pressure due to recorded format
Feedback early in semester
Networking
Act as buyer and seller
Exposure to real-world scenarios
University of Missouri

BENEFITS TO COMPANY PARTNERS

Recruiting

University of Missouri

THANK YOU

Questions?

University of Missouri

SECTION FIVE: CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Abstract

University sales programs play an important role in preparing graduates to work in sales roles. Corporations benefit from hiring well-prepared graduates through savings of training time and costs. Experiential learning activities, including role-plays, are a common method used by sales educators to train students in the classroom. They have been shown to increase sales knowledge which directly impacts sales performance. However, there are a lack of studies that explore the value of experiential learning activities developed with corporate business partner involvement. This article describes a study that used an experimental design to test the difference in sales knowledge measured through pre and posttest surveys between students that completed a client-based role-play developed with a business partner as compared with those that completed the same role-play exercise without revealing the identity of the business partner. A review of experiential learning in sales education is followed by a description of the study design and role-play assignments along with analysis of the results and implications for future teaching and research.

Keywords

Experiential learning, corporate-academic partnership, role-plays, experimental design, client-based project

Introduction

Sales is a growing field and demand for qualified salespersons is projected to increase over the next decade (BLS, 2021). Even those who never expect to work in sales begin their careers in the field. Over 50% of all college graduates, regardless of major, take a sales job as their first after-college role (SEF, 2021). Currently, fewer than 200 universities in the United States and 20 abroad provide formal sales-education programs (SEF, 2021). Even as these programs are limited in scope, they have seen exponential growth, increasing by over 400% in the last 10 years (SEF, 2020). This increase is in response to the demand for well-trained sales employees to enter the profession.

Graduates of formal university sales programs are attractive hiring targets. They have lower turnover, faster ramp-up times, and save their employers over $200,000 within the first year of employment (Leasher & Moberg, 2008; SEF, 2020). However, companies are not the only ones to benefit from hiring sales graduates. The students themselves have higher job placement rates than their bachelor's degree earning counterparts and begin their careers with starting salaries averaging almost 40% higher than college graduates as a whole (SEF, 2020; ZipRecruiter, 2021). It is beneficial for universities, companies, and students to ensure that sales graduates are prepared to add value to their firms as soon as they are hired. However, empirical data on the learning strategies used to best prepare these students is limited.

Experiential learning is a common subject of sales education literature and has been proven to be a valid pedagogical tool. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB), the largest accrediting body for business schools in higher education, adopted the term applied experiential learning in 1986 and defined it as "a business-curriculum endeavor which is interactive (other than between teacher and pupil) and is characterized by variability and uncertainty" (Dahl et al., 2018, p. 108). The AACSB's standards in business education explicitly call out the importance of experiential education as a necessity for accreditation, listing the expectation that "The school's curriculum promotes and fosters innovation, experiential learning, and a lifelong learning mindset" (AACSB Guiding Principles, 2020, p.37).

Experiential learning sales activities were found to positively impact students' critical thinking skills (Alvarez et al., 2015) as well as student confidence (Mich et al., 2014), knowledge (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Knight et al, 2014; Magnotta et al., 2018; Mich et al., 2002; Pierce et al., 2011; Saavedra Torres & Rawal, 2021), sales skills (Mantel et al., 2002), and perceptions of sales as a career (Hagenbuch, 2006; Knight et al., 2014; Mantel et al, 2002; Mich et al., 2014; Pelletier & Hopkins, 2018). Experiential learning has also been found to positively impact student success. Knight et al. (2014) found that both experiential learning and the number of sales courses taken had a strong positive effect on sales knowledge.

The most common form of experiential learning activity used by sales instructors is the role-play. In a survey of sales instructors, Spiller et al. (2019) found that 87.5% of professors teaching introductory sales courses utilized role-plays as did 100% of professors teaching advanced sales courses. Role-plays allow students to practice the selling skills that they will use in the field in a low-risk environment, the classroom. Role-plays enhance learning and improve student engagement (Magnotta et al., 2018; Thomas et al., 2018; Shukor, 2021) and they develop communication and critical thinking skills (Sojke & Fish, 2008). In a traditional role-play, students are paired with classmates, and one serves as a buyer while the other serves as the salesperson. The students are given a scenario that simulates a real-life selling situation. They receive feedback from the instructor and sometimes classmates. Some scholars argue that this pairing of students in the same class does not do enough to replicate the real-life nervousness a salesperson feels when approaching an unknown buyer (Pierce, 2021; Rocco & Whalen, 2014).

One way to enhance the real-life simulation is to introduce industry partners into the classroom. Knight et al. (2014) suggest sales educators should include real-life sales activities in pedagogical design “giving the students opportunities to engage in real-life selling situations while receiving extensive feedback and coaching” (p. 165). Healy et al. (2011) agrees, stating “Skills-oriented disciplines are best taught with methods that emphasize actively practicing the skills in situations and with exercises that approximate the way the skills will be deployed on the job" (p. 2).

Instructors achieve this in different ways, with some having students work with clients in the classroom. Client-based projects (CBPs), while frequently utilized in marketing education, are rarely covered in sales literature. A CBP is a “an experiential learning device in which students are required to conceptualize and solve actual business problems with the application of appropriate theories and techniques” (Goodell & Kraft, 1991, p. 32). In these projects, students work to solve problems encountered by a real business. Students are exposed to the business through employees as opposed to a non-client-based project where students “limit their interaction to acquiring information about an existing business problem only, and [do] not develop any interaction or engagement with the hypothetical business” (Tofighi, 2022, p. 65). Student interest and satisfaction with CBPs is higher than with other types of learning tools (Bove & Davies, 2009; Lopez & Lee, 2005; Razzou et al., 2003). Moreover, CBPs increase student motivation (Goddell & Kraft, 1991; Jaskari & Jaskari, 2016; Lopez & Lee, 2005), skill development (Cooke & Williams, 2004; Tofighi, 2022), and confidence in academic ability (McKay-Nesbit &

Zdravkovik, 2013). In sum, sales scholars agree that adding real-life context into the classroom is important. Jaskari and Jaskari (2016) add that "client-based projects form a natural real-life context for students, bringing realism to the classroom and enhancing active, experiential learning" (p. 172). However, research on the use of CBPs in sales education is limited.

The most frequent occurrences of CBPs in sales education literature describe students working with clients to sell actual products. The most common product sold is advertising space in newspapers (Bussieré, 2017; Levin & Peterson, 2016). Young and Hawes (2013) explained a project in which students sold ads for a charity golf event and Chapman et al. (2016) described how students sold coupon ads for Big Brothers Big Sisters. Other examples include selling candy bars (Rippé, 2015), the sales program itself (Neely & Cherry, 2010), or working with a university entrepreneurship center to sell products created by fellow students (Lastner & Rast, 2016). However, in each of these cases, the partner clients were local or university-based entities and not large corporations.

As students prepare to enter the job market, exposure to large corporations aids in networking and familiarizes them with the numerous entry-level positions for which these firms are hiring. It is also beneficial for companies who understand the value of well-trained starting salespeople and find value in hiring from university sales programs (Agnihotri, 2014; Nielson & Cummins, 2019). Though working with large corporations creates value for all parties, there is a dearth of literature about client-based learning activities created with corporate partners in sales education. Deeter-Schmelz (2015) published one of the few studies examining a university sales partnership with a corporation to deliver a CBP in the classroom. The author describes a partnership with Frito Lay that took place in a sales management course with repeated interactions between students and corporate employees that happened through the semester. Students completed client-based role-plays and received feedback from the instructor and corporate employees and the author used pre- and posttest surveys to test students' perceptions of sales knowledge and found that students perceived a significant increase in sales skills after the corporate-sponsored activity.

Experiential Learning in Sales Education

Many sales programs use experiential learning as a method of transmitting sales knowledge. Multiple definitions of experiential learning exist but the most cited was written by Kolb (1984) in his seminal work on the subject. He defines experiential learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience." Continuing, "knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (p. 31). Dahl et al. (2018) state that the simplest definition of experiential learning is "learning by doing" (p. 108).

Kolb created the experiential learning cycle which has become "the key theoretical model to express the nature of experiential learning" (Yeganeh & Kolb, 2009, p. 8). The experiential learning cycle contains four stages: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984; Kolb et al., 1999, Morris, 2019). Learners grasp experience through concrete experience and abstract conceptualization and transform experience through reflective observation and active experimentation. Concrete learning and active experimentation are the "hands-on" stages of experiential learning, and they must be interspersed with reflection and abstract conceptualization. Learning can begin at any point in the cycle, but deeper learning occurs when students complete all four stages (Young et al., 2008). Kolb and Kolb (2012) also point to the importance of students experiencing all four stages of the learning cycle, referring to this as the spiral of learning. They state that, “the cycle is not a circle but a spiral since each trip through the cycle returns to the experience with new insight gained by reflection, thought, and action” (p. 1212). Moreover, they stress the importance of providing psychologically safe spaces to students in which this learning can take place (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Young et al. (2008) encourages educators to carefully plan experiential activities stating, “Designing experiential activities that explicitly incorporate all four stages of the learning cycle, as well as creating experiences that are intrinsically motivating to students, seem to be the foundation for stimulating the use of deeper cognitive learning processes and meaningful learning" (p. 36).

Role-plays provide a verified means of incorporating all four stages of the experiential learning model in a psychologically safe space, the classroom. The role-play provides a concrete experience in which students can attempt a mock sales call playing the role of a salesperson. During the exercise, students are required to observe their partner and make decisions based on the other party’s actions. This embodies the reflective observation stage of the cycle. They then call on prior knowledge learned in sales courses which comprises the active conceptualization stage. Students are forced to use this knowledge which comprises the active experimentation phase of the learning cycle as they try a variety of strategies to succeed in getting the sale. Additionally, these exercises frequently happen in front of class members, allowing other students to observe and reflect on the performance their peers. Finally, students receive feedback from course facilitators on which they also reflect. These reflective observations are then integrated into the cycle in the abstract conceptualization stage when they perform future role-plays.

Purpose

Though it is clear that experiential learning practices are effective at increasing student sales knowledge (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Knight et al, 2014; Magnotta et al., 2018; Mich et al., 2002; Pierce et al., 2011; Saavedra Torres & Rawal, 2021), differences in attainment of sales knowledge from participation in distinct experiential learning exercises are rarely studied. Sales knowledge, defined as an "individual's familiarity with sales practices and ability to perform these processes" (Magnotta, 2020, p. 7) is an important construct as it has a direct impact on sales performance (Verbeke et al., 2011).

A richer understanding of the impact of different types of role-play activities on student learning would improve sales education. Most of the sales literature around experiential role-plays does not elaborate on the role-play content. Sales education textbooks include role-play exercises that simulate hypothetical business problems, but there is a lack of evidence that suggests sales faculty regularly utilize role-plays developed in partnership with businesses. If sales faculty are armed with the knowledge that using client-based role-plays created with partner companies impacts students' sales knowledge differently than role-plays that feature a fictitious business, they could make better informed pedagogical decisions that would further prepare sales graduates to enter the workforce.

The purpose of this article is to present the findings from a study that analyzed a corporate-sponsored experiential learning exercise in four sections of an undergraduate Personal Selling course offered at an AACSB accredited business school in a large, Midwestern land-grant university to find out if there was a difference in sales knowledge gained by students that completed a client-based role-play developed with a business partner as compared with those that completed the same role-play exercise without revealing the identity of the business partner (and therefore making it appear as hypothetical).

Study Design

The study utilized an experimental pretest-posttest control group. In order to provide the same quality of instruction to students in all sections, role-plays were assigned that featured a real-life business scenario. However, the name of the corporation was revealed to one group and not to the other group so that the case would appear hypothetical in the latter. Additionally, an employee of the partner business introduced the client-based role-play in which the corporation was revealed. The course instructor introduced the hypothetical role-play. The use of identical cases except for the branding, company and logo usage, and assignment introduction was intended to minimize the potential inherent bias due to differences in the two cases.

Participants in this study were junior and seniors enrolled in one semester of Personal Selling classes at an AACSB accredited land-grant University in the Midwest. The students in this class were chosen because it is the entry-level sales class offered in the program and it was posited that most students would not have experienced sales-related experiential learning exercises before enrollment in the course. In total, 139 students were enrolled in the class across four sections. All sections of the course were taught by the same instructor and utilized the same learning activities. Students were not aware of this research project when they enrolled.

A randomized control trial design was used to assign students within each section to either the treatment or control group (Fink, 2017). The course learning management system randomly paired students into preset groups in each section of the course. Then, as students were already randomized, half of the groups were assigned to the treatment case and the remaining groups were assigned to the control case. Assignment settings were developed to ensure that each group of students only saw the assignment they had to complete, meaning that those in the control group had no way of viewing the treatment case to prevent bias or resentful demoralization (Mertens, 2020). The role-play was the first assignment that students were given ensuring that results were not skewed by previous learning activities in the course.

Responses on the pretest and posttest were matched and validated with 112 students completing both surveys for a response rate of 81%. Of the responding students, 54% completed the treatment role-play and 46% completed the control role-play. Fifty-two percent of the respondents identified as male and the remaining 48% identified as female. The sample was very homogenous in terms of race with 92% of respondents identifying as white. Almost 45% of students were majoring in business with a marketing emphasis, 22% were majoring in business with an emphasis other than marketing, and all other respondents reported majors outside of business. This university does not offer a major or minor in sales, but 50% of respondents were attaining a sales certificate. Though it was expected that most students would not have had a previous sales class, 42% of respondents had already taken at least one sales course. Of the students that had taken previous sales courses, 62% reported completing experiential learning activities in those courses such as role-plays, working with, meeting, or shadowing sales professionals, selling to the community, or working with companies or corporations in the classroom. Respondents were also asked about their previous sales experience outside of the classroom. Thirty-two percent of students reported having a previous sales internship and 52% had worked in sales. Additionally, 61% reported having a family member that worked in sales and 38% had someone that was important in their life, outside of family, that worked in the sales field.

Assignment

Magnotta et al. (2020) studied the effect of participation in a sales competition and found the competitions had a significant positive effect on student sales knowledge. Corporate partners supplied role-plays for the competition in their study. The authors made a strong case for involving businesses in curriculum development stating, "Allowing corporate partners to provide the sales scenario and product for a sales competition creates opportunities for the development of multilayered, narrative-rich role-play cases that can be used in class" (p.12). This study took a similar approach, using a role-play that had previously been performed by students in a sales competition for the assignment.

The corporate partner chosen to supply the client-based role-play was Huhtamaki, a partner of the university sales center. A long-standing partner of the university's sales center, Huhtamaki is a global food-packaging supply manufacturer with international headquarters located in Finland. The company achieved sales of 3.6 billion Euro in 2021 (Huhtamaki, 2022). Huhtamaki develops and sells the Chinet line of paper products in the consumer retail market and works with a variety of businesses to meet a range of packaging needs. North American revenue topped $1.2 billion in 2021 (Huhtamaki, 2022).

As this is the first role-play that students in Personal Selling complete, Huhtamaki was chosen because they offer a tactile product with which students are familiar. Most students are familiar with paper packaging products and regularly eat at businesses that use Huhtamaki products, such as Chipotle, Taco Bell, or Subway. It was determined that the existing relationship, company size, and product range made Huhtamaki a suitable corporate partner to supply the treatment case for this study. Additionally, the company was willing to help create and deliver this assignment.

The role-play completed by students in the treatment group was a CBP that simulated a *real-world* problem encountered by sales representatives at Huhtamaki. It was presented to students through a PowerPoint slide deck (see Appendix D). The sales scenario asked students to act as a Distribution Account Manager for Huhtamaki in the Midwest region preparing for an upcoming meeting with the Purchasing Director from a real client of Huhtamaki. A link to client's website was included in the directions. Students were provided with the key business objectives of both the Purchasing Director and the Huhtamaki Distribution Account Manager's supervisor. Additionally, possible objections that could be raised by the Purchasing Director were included. Supplemental selling information that could be used in the role-play included an overview of Huhtamaki's values, sustainability goals, and a company overview. The top North American customers were listed, and students were provided with a page of selling information on the Huhtamaki Comfort Cup, the recommended product to meet the client's needs. Links to websites with additional selling materials included the full

Huhtamaki Foodservice Catalog, a list of associations of which Huhtamaki is a member, and a list of certifications that Huhtamaki plants and suppliers have attained.

Tofighi (2022) clarifies the difference between CBPs and non-CBPs stating, "In non-client-based group projects, students offer recommendations and solutions to hypothetical problems or issues related to a real or hypothetical business" and 'limit their interaction to acquiring information about an existing business problem only, and not develop any interaction or engagement with the hypothetical business" (p. 67). In this study, it was clear to the students that the treatment role-play was a CBP, featuring a problem faced by a real business. Additionally, the treatment case was introduced by an actual employee of Huhtamaki, allowing the students to engage with a professional salesperson from the firm. A loose script was provided to him. It was important that students understood that they were simulating a real-life scenario of a practicing sales representative and his recording stated that information multiple times. The introduction was recorded via Zoom. He used a blurred background and wore a blue collared dress shirt with no tie.

As the assignment was administered virtually so that participants were not exposed to the alternate condition, engagement with the company representative was limited. However, students were told that employees of Huhtamaki would review their role-play assignments and provide them feedback, thus incorporating engagement as much as possible given the limitations of the assignment delivery method.

The control role-play used the same scenario but was perceived by students as a non-CBP, featuring a hypothetical sales organization and client with no accessible background information on either firm (see Appendix F). Background colors, fonts, and photos matched exactly between the two slide decks. Content changes on the control group slides included changing the company name from Huhtamaki to Food Storage Solutions, a fictitious name. The client company name was also changed, and the link to the client company's website was deleted. Comfort Cup was changed to Cozy Cup, the link to the full Huhtamaki Foodservice Catalog was deleted, but all other supplemental selling materials remained unchanged. The control role-play did not include any elements of engagement that Tofighi (2022) stresses are important in a CBP. Students were introduced to the case by the course instructor and received feedback only from him. He also used Zoom to record his introduction, used a blurred background, and wore a blue collared dress shirt with no tie so that the two recordings would match as closely as possible to reduce potential bias. A script was also provided to the instructor so that the information shared would mirror that narrated by the corporate partner.

Directions for the role-play followed the selling materials on both treatment and control cases. Students were randomly paired with a partner and instructed to perform the role-play twice, once acting as a buyer and once acting as a seller. Requiring students to act in both roles ensured that all students were able to perform the selling role of the Huhtamaki Distribution Account Manager. Students were asked to record their role-plays and submit them to the course learning management system for grading by the course instructor. A 10-minute timeframe was given for each recording. Students were expected to gain experience interpreting information relevant to a product or service offering, determine appropriate products and services to complement the needs of potential clients, and advise, recommend, and promote the product or service with the goal of long-term client value creation once they completed this assignment. Finally, the rubric used for grading was provided in both cases (see Appendix H).

Instrument

Sales knowledge was measured through the use of the survey by Knight et al. (2014). In their study, Knight et al. (2014) tested the impact of past sales education and sales experience on sales knowledge, self-efficacy, and career intention. They also analyzed the impact of a student having a family member or influencer with a career in sales on self-efficacy and career intention. As such, their instrument included constructs to measure self-efficacy and intention to pursue a career in sales. Though the focus of the present study was sales knowledge, constructs on self-efficacy and career intention were replicated on both the pre- and posttest instruments for possible future research. Knight et al. (2014) found that number of sales courses taken, participation in experiential learning activities, and past sales experience positively impacted sales knowledge. The pretest instrument in the present study replicated the questions Knight et al. (2014) used to collect information on number of sales courses taken, experiential learning activities, past sales experience, and having a family member or influencer with a career in sales to control for those variables when testing to find if a difference in pre- and posttest sales knowledge between the treatment and control groups existed.

Knight et al.'s (2014) combined items from knowledge scales by Bottomley et al. (2000) and Mason et al. (2001) to create their own construct of sales knowledge (Cronbach's alpha = .941). The construct to included seven questions, each scored on a seven-point Likert scale. The questions included were:

- Overall, how familiar are you with the area of Sales as part of Marketing? (Not at all/Very familiar)
- Please rate your knowledge of Personal Selling skills and techniques. (Very little/Very high knowledge)
- Relative to people you know, how would you rate your knowledge of Personal Selling skills and techniques? (Very little/Very high knowledge)
- Relative to a professional sales person, how would you rate your knowledge of Personal Selling skills and techniques? (Very little/Very high knowledge)
- Based on your current knowledge of Sales, how comfortable would you be in working in a sales position? (Not at all/Very comfortable)
- Compared to other students, how much time do you spend learning about Personal Selling skills and techniques? (Very little/Very much time)
- How much information about Personal Selling skills and techniques have you been exposed to during your lifetime? (Very little/Very much information)
- How familiar are you with Personal Selling skills and techniques? (Not at all/Very familiar)

The authors created the measure to uncover experiential learning activities themselves (Cronbach's alpha = .787). It reads, "Have you ever done any of the following types of exercises in your sales classes?" The choices listed included selling to the community, role-plays, working with or "shadowing" professional sales people in the field, active in sales fraternity or club, interviewing or meeting with sales professionals, and none of the above. Two response choices were included in the present study in addition to those offered by Knight et al. (2014): completing real-world projects in class from local companies and completing real-world projects in class from corporations.

Knight et al. (2014) also collected demographic information on respondents including major, sales qualification, age, gender, and the highest level of education attained by their mother and father. Those questions were replicated on the pretest instrument in this study. Where necessary, minor changes were made. Specifically, Knight et al. (2014) asked students' major and the choices offered on the pretest survey in this study reflected the most common majors of students taking the Personal Selling course. Sales qualification response choices were also updated to reflect the offerings at the university where the research took place given that there is not a major in sales offered at the institution. Finally, the survey used in the present study added additional choices beyond male and female to the question about gender identity and added questions about Hispanic origin and race as guided by the 2020 US Census demographic questions.

Data Collection and Preparation

Both the pretest and posttest surveys were created and administered using Qualtrics. The pretest survey was shared with students on the first day of class and remained open for students to access until the assignment was due. The posttest survey was shared with students on the day after the assignment due date and remained open for 10 days. Students received five points of extra credit for completing each survey. The survey links were shared via announcement and through a QR code that the instructor provided in class. Institutional Review Board approval was attained prior to conducting the study. An alternate extra credit assignment was offered to students that did not wish to participate in the research.

Student responses were linked between the pretest and posttest surveys to ensure that only responses from students that took both surveys were included in the data set. Responses were also validated by comparing the student ID provided by the respondents to the student IDs on the course roster. Any surveys completed by students that were not included in the course enrollment were deleted from the data set. In any instance where duplicate surveys were completed, the second survey was excluded from the data. Students were asked on the posttest to choose which company role-play they completed. Responses were cross-referenced to the assignment by student ID to ensure they were correct. Responses on the pretest and posttest were matched and validated with 112 students completing both surveys for a response rate of 81%.

Results

A paired samples t-test was used to examine differences in sales knowledge means for all students. Consistent with previous research (Deeter-Schmelz, 2015; Knight et al., 2014), it was expected that students in both the treatment and control groups would report an increase in sales knowledge after completing the role-play exercise. This was supported. Sales knowledge for all respondents showed a significant and positive increase, $t(111)=-1.689$, $p=.047$. Survey results show that students in both the treatment and control groups perceived higher levels of sales knowledge on each question in the construct after completing a role-play except for two (see Table 1). The mean score was slightly lower on the posttest than the pretest for two questions:

- Overall, how familiar are you with the area of Sales as part of Marketing? (Not at all/Very familiar)
- Compared to other students, how much time do you spend learning about Personal Selling skills and techniques? (Very little/Very much time)

The pretest survey was shared on the first day of class and most students had not had a sales class before. The difference in question one was very minimal (pretest M = 4.60, SD = 1.248; posttest M = 4.57; SD = 1.380), but it would be expected that students would report increased familiarity with sales as part of marketing after three to four weeks of class than on the first day. When taking the pretest survey, many students had not yet spent any time learning about personal selling and techniques so they may have had a difficult time comparing themselves to classmates. When taking the posttest survey, students had a frame to compare themselves with classmates, including their role-play partner and perceptions of time spent on class decreased slightly (pretest M = 4.58, SD = 1.372; posttest M = 4.49, SD = 1.322).

Table 1

Knowledge Question Results

	Pre-test Survey		Posttest Survey	
	M	SD	M	SD
Question 1	4.60	1.248	4.57	1.380
Question 2	3.97	1.311	4.25	1.227
Question 3	4.51	1.356	4.56	1.374
Question 4	3.03	1.461	3.42	1.517
Question 5	4.39	1.673	4.42	1.653
Question 6	4.58	1.372	4.49	1.322
Question 7	4.19	1.398	4.38	1.296
Knowledge Mean	4.18	1.155	4.30	1.181

While students in both groups perceived an increase in sales knowledge after completing the role-play exercise, it was expected that students in the treatment group would perceive a larger increase in sales knowledge than those in the control group. However, this was not the case. Though the treatment group reported a slightly higher sales knowledge mean (M = 4.34, SD = 1.16) than the control group (M = 4.25, SD = 1.21) after the exercise, a regression analysis revealed that there was not a statistically significant difference in sales knowledge between the treatment and control groups R2 = .002, F(1, 110), *p* = .634, even when controlling for intervening variables of student sales experience through an internship or job, number of sales classes taken, previous exposure to experiential learning activity, or having a family member or important person with a sales job R2 = .080, *F(*7, 104) = 1.289, *p* = .263.

Discussion

As expected, sales knowledge for all students assigned a role-play increased. This is consistent with past findings that experiential learning exercises positively impact student sales knowledge (Knight et al, 2014; Magnotta et al., 2018; Mich et al., 2002; Pierce et al., 2011; Saavedra Torres & Rawal, 2021). There was a lack of research that examined potential differences between client-based learning activities and those that featured hypothetical companies in sales education. Deeter-Schmelz (2015) found that a client-based role-play increased sales knowledge, but did not test the difference between groups. Consistent with her findings, all students in this study reported an increase in sales knowledge. The intervention in this case was minimal in that students in both the treatment and control groups completed a role-play that featured the same, realistic business problem. The treatment group assigned the client-based role-play knew that their problem was faced by an actual company and were introduced to the role-play by a corporate representative. They had access to real product and company information. The control group was introduced to their assigned role-play only by the class instructor. The business was fictitious, but the case still included selling information reflective of the real-world business environment. Every attempt was made to ensure that the treatment and control role-play assignments matched as closely as possible to reduce inherent bias. This intervention may not have been large enough to produce a difference between the groups, especially given the relatively small sample size of the participants.

The other meaningful difference between the treatment and control cases was that students completing the client-based role-play understood that Huhtamaki employees would be watching their recorded role-plays and providing feedback. Deeter-Schmelz (2015) noted the importance of corporate employee feedback, incorporating it into her course design multiple times through the course of the project and Tofighi (2022) observed that engagement with the company is an integral part of the CBP. In this study, students took the posttest survey prior to receiving feedback to minimize potential bias from speaking with students in the class that were assigned the control case. A manipulation check question was included in the posttest that asked students in the treatment group if they were aware that they would receive feedback from a corporate representative from Huhtamaki. Over 80% of respondents understood that feedback was forthcoming, but they had not yet received it when completing the second survey. There could have a been a larger perceived difference in sales knowledge if they had already received feedback from the corporate representative.

The posttest survey was deployed to both groups immediately after the case was due, but students were slow to respond, and the survey was open for 10 days. This resulted in a lag in time between completing the assignment and filling out the survey for some participant. Additionally, it gave students time to talk to classmates and potentially discuss the role-play differences. Twenty-seven percent of students reported speaking to a classmate other than their assigned partner about the assignment. This could have biased the results.

This assignment was delivered completely online. Most role-plays that happen in the Personal Selling class involve a company representative visiting the classroom, presenting background about the company, and watching the students perform live and give feedback on the spot. That format was not viable for this study as it would expose students to alternate conditions. To overcome this challenge, the study was designed so that students watched video introductions and completed the role-play by recording and posting it to the course learning management system. This detracted from the engagement present in most CBPs (Tofighi, 2022). Young et al. (2008) found that students who were more motivated to complete the experiential learning cycle had higher perceived levels of learning. It may be much more motivating to see a corporate employee in the classroom rather than recorded on a video. Additionally, the virtual aspect of the assignment may have made students feel further removed from the context-specific business problem introduced in the role-play. This aspect could have altered the perceived benefit that students receive from interacting with company representatives face-to-face.

Client-based projects can be arduous for instructors to manage each semester (Bove & Davies, 2009; Goddell & Kraft, 1991; Parsons & Lepkowska-White, 2009;

Razzouk et al., 2003). It is also time-consuming for corporate employees to leave the field or office to spend time in the classroom. Many times, visiting classes to deploy these learning experiences for students requires travel and extended stays. One benefit of doing the role-play in a virtual environment is that it could be used in future semesters without requiring more time from the employees to launch the case. They would still need to devote time to watching recorded role-plays and offering feedback, which may not be as impactful as feedback given in a classroom setting. More research should be conducted testing the effectiveness of virtual experiential learning sales activities.

Though this study did not find a difference in student sales knowledge from students completing a case created with a business partner, there is still value to be found. This role-play was the first assignment in the Personal Selling class. Because it was recorded, it may have taken pressure off students to perform live in front of business professionals or classmates. Kolb and Kolb (2005) note that students should be offered a psychologically safe space in which learning can take place. Additionally, Kolb and Kolb (2012) stress that experiential learning is a spiral that allows learners to return to each new experience with insight gained from past trips though each stage of the learning cycle. Completing this role-play in a low-pressure environment early in the semester and receiving valuable feedback from practicing salespeople allows students to apply the knowledge they gain from the experience to future role-plays. It gives them ample time to reflect on their learning and hone their skills in the Personal Selling class and apply their knowledge to future sales courses, internships, or sales jobs. Additionally, the virtual format of the assignment allows it to be used in future semesters with less work and planning for the instructor or business partner. Company representatives need only to commit to reviewing role-plays and offering feedback which can be done remotely.

Scholars agree that there is a need for continued research into the value that corporate partners add to sales education (Cummins et al., 2020; Deeter-Schmelz, 2015). Moreover, while research supports the use of experiential learning exercises to increase sales knowledge, a lack of studies exist that seek to uncover the differences in value provided by diverse types of exercises, especially through an experimental design. Sales scholars should continue to study the value provided by corporate partners in the classroom to continue to uncover the benefit derived by students from interacting with sales professionals.

Limitations

The randomized selection of students to treatment and control groups in this study eliminated selection bias. Randomization within classes, instead of randomizing at the course section level, negated the possibility that differences between sections that affect all students could lead to incorrect statistical conclusions (Wozny et al., 2018). However, the use of existing classes at one institution constituted a convenience sampling technique that will not yield results that are as generalizable as more robust sampling methods (Fink, 2017). The study was limited in scope as it was only completed during one semester of Personal Selling courses at a single Midwestern university which limited external validity. Additionally, the small sample size of 112 participants, while greater than the 21 participants per group outlined as being sufficient by Gall et al. (2015) for experimental studies, is still relatively small. Future studies with larger sample sizes may produce different results.

Conclusion

University sales programs play an important role in preparing graduates for a career in sales, reducing costs for companies through lower training costs, faster ramp-up times, and decreased turnover. Corporations benefit from recruiting students while they are still in school and can provide value to sales programs through collaboration in the classroom. Experiential learning activities increase student sales knowledge. And though this study did not find a meaningful effect, further research should be conducted to measure the value of delivering experiential learning activities with corporate involvement in sales education (Cummins et al., 2020; Deeter-Schmelz, 2015).

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author declared no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

SECTION SIX: SCHOLARLY PRACTITIONER REFLECTION

Influence on my Practice as an Educational Leader

When I enrolled in the Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis program, I was seeking personal change more than professional change. I love my job and I am passionate about teaching, but working as a Teaching Professor surrounded by colleagues that are researchers sometimes made me feel inferior. I did not begin this program looking for a career change, but to feel like a more authentic leader to myself and my students. I view myself primarily as a leader in the classroom and I value my role in preparing students for their future careers. In order to be an effective educator, I believe I must be approachable and transparent to students. Authenticity is important to me and I utilize the principles of authentic leadership in my teaching practice.

Eagly (2005) defines authentic leadership as relational at its core and posits that two components must be present for authentic leadership to occur. The first requirement is that “leaders endorse values that promote the interests of the larger community and transparently convey those values to followers” (Eagly, 2005, p. 461). Second, followers must identify with those values and see them as suitable for the group. A common view of authentic leadership is that it can be developed throughout one's life and is impacted by life events (George et al., 2007; Northouse, 2019). I classify the completion of this dissertation-in-practice (DiP) as a life event that has greatly shaped my leadership. Luthans and Avolio (2003) state that “the authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and gives priority to developing associates to be leaders” (p. 243). I see associates as students and developing them to be leaders is a core part of my educational philosophy. Completing this DiP has increased my resiliency and required that I remain hopeful. Above all though, it has shaped me personally and increased my confidence.

Ilies et al. (2005) conceived a model of authentic leadership that contains four components: “self-awareness, unbiased processing, authentic behavior/acting, and authentic relational orientation” (p. 376). The ELPA program greatly honed my self-awareness through thoughtful reflection in assignments and discussions. The authentic relational orientation means that I share true feelings and motivations with others, in all circumstances (Northouse, 2019). Again, I saw growth in this ability during coursework through discussions with classmates, sometimes about uncomfortable topics. My professors and fellow students allowed me a safe space to explore my true feelings and I have tried to integrate that into my classes. Completing the DiP as a working mother of three children challenged my relational orientation in other ways. Finding ways to balance my research with work, caregiving activities, and family required me to be open about my needs and rely on others instead of being the person to take care of everything that needed to be done in our household. That was uncomfortable to me as a mother and wife, but resulted in personal growth.

George et al. (2007) take a practical approach to authentic leadership that mirrors some of the components of the theoretical approach put forth by Ilies (2005). In addition to the values, relationships, and self-discipline discussed by Ilies, George et al. (2007) adds heart and purpose. I am passionate about teaching and making a difference in the lives of students. This program has invigorated my purpose. I am motivated to improve my teaching with concepts I have learned and even improve student experience through my research. Though my study did not show the results that I hypothesized, it did find that there is value in experiential learning assignments. These assignments take a lot of work to create and deliver and I am motivated to continue providing these learning opportunities to students knowing that they positively impact students.

My increased confidence has impacted more than just my classroom leadership skills. I have found myself taking on more responsibility in my department and on university committees. I was recently asked to serve on the Executive MBA Reimagination committee that will work to redesign the ExecMBA program in our school. Previously, I may have been nervous to undertake such a large, public responsibility, but I now feel excited to take on this challenge and apply the concepts I have learned.

Influence on my Practice as a Scholar

My practice as a scholar has been even more deeply impacted by the ELPA program and the completion of my DiP. Prior to starting the DiP process, I did not see myself as a scholar. My title is Teaching Professor and my non-tenure track status cements that role. I did not embark on research or even fully understand the research process. This was the single largest contributor to my lack of confidence.

Iles et al.'s (2005) model of authentic leadership applies not only to my educational leadership role, but to my role as a scholar. The DiP built upon the self-awareness component as I found myself routinely reflecting on my study design and methods, deeply thinking about the implications of decisions on my research. Unbiased processing relates to one's ability to analyze information in an objective manner (Northouse, 2019). I came into this program with no real conception about empirical research and I have learned to explore multiple sources of valid information as well as multiple perspectives in my decision making. The literature review challenged me to make connections across hundreds of articles to find common themes to support my research. When asked to further clarify my study design by Dr. Mendoza, I had to embark on an additional literature review about client-based projects. I noticed how much easier it was to find relevant sources, synthesize information, and use that information to support my framework. I approached the task not with dread, but with some excitement about what I would find. I was excited to make connections and organize information using methods that I had previously employed. I was much more confident in my work the second time and I imagine that I will feel the same way if I undertake future research studies.

George et al. (2007) discuss the value of self-awareness to authentic leaders and emphasize that examining our experiences allows us to be vulnerable. I believe that vulnerability of the educator is key to forming a transparent relationship with students. Ettling (2012) agrees, stating that humility and sharing of our personal stories is an essential part of teaching for change. She says, “This requires that we work through our need to be *expert* in the learning situation, even when it is dramatically demanded of us through admiration or hostility” (p. 546). Completing the DiP and embarking on research for the first time required me to be vulnerable in many ways. Undertaking a quantitative study required that I ask colleagues for help. I had to be completely vulnerable to ask my tenured co-worker to help me with my statistical analysis. Being honest with about my vulnerabilities is something I can use to connect to students and hopefully inspire them. Showing my true self to students allows them to be vulnerable themselves and be open to rich learning experiences.

This experience has also taught me to be comfortable with ambiguity and that I cannot control all outcomes. I have been anxious at every stage of this study about my end result. After all my planning and work, the exact outcome that I worried so much about happened. I did not find an effect from my intervention. I had to accept that and look for the meaningful learning that took place anyway. I learned how to design a methodologically sound experiment. I received Institutional Review Board approval for the first time. I created and deployed pre and post-test surveys. I worked with business partners and other instructors to deliver valuable learning experiences to students. Though I did not get the outcome that I expected, I realized that learning is about the journey more than the destination and I have the confidence to say that my journey as an educational leader and a scholar is just beginning.

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APPENDIX A

Knight et al. Survey Questions

Survey Introduction

Selling is a part of everyday life, reflected in how we build and maintain relationships, convince others of our ideas, negotiate terms even in friendships (e.g., where to go for dinner), portray ourselves to others (e.g., an interview or first date), and may be part of our daily jobs.

This questionnaire assesses your current impressions of selling and sales people and has **no impact on your grade. Taking part or not taking part in this study is entirely your choice. All response information will be kept confidential and will be reported only at the aggregate level**.

This study is designed to gather new information that should help sales educators to better prepare students for sales careers.

Please note that the terms **Sales** and **Personal Selling** are used in the survey. The definitions of these terms are as follows:

Sales describes the overarching field that addresses how people sell a product or service.

Personal selling is the process of meeting face-to-face with clients in order to uncover and satisfy needs in such a way that both parties benefit.

Please contact the researchers, should you have any questions.

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Part 1: Attitude Toward a Career in Sales

A 7-point Likert scale was used for all questions. Part one questions will not be used for this study.

1. What is your overall attitude toward a career in Sales? - Not Favorable:Favorable
2. What is your overall attitude toward a career in Sales? - Dislike:Like
3. What is your overall attitude toward a career in Sales? - Negative:Positive
4. What is your overall attitude toward a career in Sales? - Good:Bad
5. What is your overall attitude toward a career in Sales? - Disagreeable:Agreeable
6. What is your overall attitude toward a career in Sales? - Pleasant:Unpleasant
7. What is your overall attitude toward a career in Sales? - Valuable:Not Valuable
8. I believe salespeople are: - Not at all likeable:Very Likeable
9. I believe salespeople are: - Not at all friendly:Very Friendly
10. I believe salespeople are: - Not at all kind:Very kind
11. I believe salespeople are: - Not at all helpful:Helpful
12. I believe salespeople are: - Not at all knowledgeable:Knowledgeable
13. I believe salespeople are: - Sincere:Insincere
14. I believe salespeople are: - Dishonest:Honest
15. I believe salespeople are: - Not manipulative:Manipulative
16. I believe salespeople are: - Pushy:Not pushy
17. I believe salespeople are: - Not trustworthy:Trustworthy
18. I believe salespeople are: - Biased:Not biased
19. I believe salespeople are: - Not credible:Credible
20. I believe salespeople are: - Not dependable:Dependable

21. I believe salespeople are: - Disreputable:Reputable
22. I believe salespeople are: - A disincentive to buy:An incentive to buy

Part 2: **Intention to work in sales**

All questions used a 7-point Likert scale worded strongly agree to disagree.

23. I would prefer to never work in a sales position.
24. I am willing to work in sales as an entry level position, but want to move out of sales into another field as soon as possible.
25. I am willing to work in sales to build my career, but would ultimately like to move into higher levels of management or start my own business.
26. I would like to work in sales throughout my career as a salesperson or sales manager.

Part 3A: Self-Efficacy

This section deals with sales related and general confidence. A 7-point Likert scale was used for all questions.

27. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to sell a product or service? - I am uncertain: I am certain
28. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to sell a product or service? - I am not sure:I am sure
29. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to sell a product or service? - I am not confident:I am confident
30. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to use personal selling techniques? - I am uncertain:I am certain

31. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to use personal selling techniques? - I am not sure:I am sure
32. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to use personal selling techniques? - I am not confident:I am confident
33. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to be successful in a sales career? - I am uncertain:I am certain
34. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to be successful in a sales career? - I am not sure:I am sure
35. Overall, how do you feel about your ability to be successful in a sales career? - I am not confident:I am confident

Part 3B: Self-Efficacy

Imagine that you are an entry level sales person. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements. All questions used a 7-point Likert scale worded strongly agree to disagree.

36. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.
37. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want
38. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.
39. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events
40. Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.
41. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort
42. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.
43. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.

44. If I am having trouble, I can usually think of a solution
45. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

Part 4: Sales Knowledge

This section considers your knowledge of sales. A 7-point Likert scale was used for all questions.

46. Overall, how familiar are you with the area of Sales? - Not very familiar:Very familiar
47. Please rate your knowledge of Sales skills and techniques. - Very little knowledge:Very high knowledge
48. Relative to people you know, how would you rate your knowledge of Sales skills and techniques? - Very little knowledge:Very high knowledge
49. Relative to a professional sales person, how would you rate your knowledge of Sales skills and techniques? - Very little knowledge:Very high knowledge
50. Based on your current knowledge of Sales, how comfortable would you be in working in a sales position? - Not very comfortable:Very comfortable
51. How much information about Sales skills and techniques have you been exposed to during your lifetime? - Very little information:A great deal of information
52. How familiar are you with Sales skills and techniques? - Not very familiar:Very Familiar

Part 5: Antecedent Conditions

Please tell us a little about yourself about your sales experience and sales experience of people in your life.

53. Have you previously held a job in Sales? (Choices: yes, no)

54. How long have you worked in Sales? (Choices: less than a year, 1 year but less than 2 years, 2-3 years, more than 3 years)
55. Check any of the categories below which describe your sales experience. (Choices: inside sales, retail sales, sales management, field sales, sales management)
56. How would you characterize your performance in those jobs? (Choices: Below average, average, above average)
57. Have you completed a sales internship? (Choices: yes, no)
58. How many internships? (Choices: 1, 2, 3 or more)
59. Check any of the categories below which describe your sales internship(s). (Choices: inside sales, retail sales, sales management, field sales, sales management)
60. How would you characterize your performance in these internships? (Choices: below average, average, above average)
61. Has someone in your immediate family held a job in Sales? (Choices: yes, no)
62. How long has that family member worked in Sales? (Choices: 1-5 years, 6-10 years, over 11 years)
63. Check any of the categories below which describe that person's sales experience. (Choices: inside sales, retail sales, sales management, field sales, sales management)
64. Has someone who is a strong influence in your life (other than family) held a job in Sales? (Choices: yes, no)

65. How long has that person worked in Sales? (Choices: 1-5 years, 6-10 years, over 11 years)

66. Check any of the categories below which describe that person's sales experience. (Choices: inside sales, retail sales, sales management, field sales, sales management)

Part 6A: This section deals with your Education, particularly Sales Education.

67. What is your Major? (Choices: sales, marketing, other)

68. What will your Sales Qualification be when you graduate? (Choices: one sales course, multiple sales courses, concentration, minor, major)

69. How many sales courses have you completed to date? (Not including this semester) (Choices: none, 1, 2, 3, 4, more than 4)

70. What has your grade average been in those sales courses? (Choices: haven't completed a course yet, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, below a C-)

Part 6B: Experiential Learning

71. Have you ever done any of the following types of exercises in your sales classes? (Please check all that apply)

    a. Role-plays
    b. Working with or "shadowing" professional salespeople in the field
    c. Active in sales fraternity or club
    d. Interviewing or meeting with Sales Professionals
    e. Selling to the community
    f. None of the above

72. Overall, how would you rate your performance in those exercises? (Choices: below average, average, above average)

73. Have you ever won an award at a National Sales Competition? (Choices: yes, no)

Part 7: Demographics

Finally, please tell us a little about you and your family.

74. I already have accepted an offer for a full-time sales position after graduation. (Choices: yes, no)

75. What is the highest level of education achieved by your Father? (Choices: High school, Associates Degree, Undergraduate Degree, Graduate Degree)

76. What is the highest level of education achieved by your Mother? (Choices: High school, Associates Degree, Undergraduate Degree, Graduate Degree)

77. What is your gender? (Choices: male, female)

78. What is your age? (Fill in the blank)

APPENDIX B

Pretest Survey Instrument

Sales Education Research Survey

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q43 You are being invited to take part in a research project. You must be 18 years of age or older. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop being in this study at any time. The purpose of this research project is to study the impact of different types of experiential learning activities on sales knowledge. You are being asked to complete this survey before completing an experiential learning activity that is part of the class in which you are enrolled, Personal Selling. It should take you approximately 10-15 minutes to take this survey. For your time and effort, you will receive 5 extra credit points for completing the survey. If you do not wish to participate in research and complete the survey, you may complete an alternate assignment for extra credit. The alternate assignment is to write a one-page double spaced paper about what you expect to learn from completing the role-play exercise that you will be assigned.

The information you provide will be kept confidential and only the research team will have access. You will be asked to complete an additional survey once you finish the learning activity. To link your responses between the two surveys and award your extra credit points, you will be asked to provide your student number. This number will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team and it will be kept in a secure location.

If you have questions about this study, you can contact the University of Missouri researcher at cothrenc@missouri.edu or 214-478-7771. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 573-882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. If you want to talk privately about any concerns or issues related to your participation, you may contact the Research Participant Advocacy at 888-280-5002 (a free call) or email muresearchrpa@missouri.edu.

You can ask the researcher to provide you with a copy of this consent for your records, or you can save a copy of this consent if it has already been provided to you. We appreciate your consideration to participate in this study.

By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand this information.

○ I consent, proceed to begin the survey (1)

○ I do not consent and do not wish to complete this survey (2)

Skip To: Q1 If You are being invited to take part in a research project. You must be 18 years of age or older. Y... = I consent, proceed to begin the survey

Skip To: End of Survey If You are being invited to take part in a research project. You must be 18 years of age or older. Y... = I do not consent and do not wish to complete this survey

Q1 Selling is a part of everyday life, reflected in how we build and maintain relationships, convince others of our ideas, negotiate terms even in friendships (e.g., where to go for dinner), portray ourselves to others (e.g., an interview or first date), and may be part of our daily jobs. This questionnaire assesses your current impressions of selling and sales people as well as your self-reported rating of your personal sales knowledge.

This study is designed to gather new information that should help sales educators to better prepare students for sales careers. Your responses are appreciated.

Please note that the terms **Sales** and **Personal Selling** are used in the survey. The definitions of these terms are as follows:

Sales describes the overarching field that addresses how people sell a product or service.

Personal selling is the process of meeting face-to-face with clients in order to uncover and satisfy needs in such a way that both parties benefit.

Please contact the researcher, should you have any questions. Thank you!

Courtney Cothren, University of Missouri, Trulaske College of Business, cothrenc@missouri.edu

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 7

Q42 Please enter your student ID. This is needed to award extra credit points and correlate your answers to future surveys connected to this project.

____

End of Block: Block 7

Start of Block: Part 1 -This question deals with your intention to work in Sales.Q4 Please choose the best answer for each statement.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I would prefer to never work in a sales position (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am willing to work in sales as an entry level position, but want to move out of sales into another field as soon as possible (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am willing to work in sales to build my career, but would ultimately like to move into higher levels of management or start my own business (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to work in sales throughout my career as a salesperson or sales manager (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Part 1 -This question deals with your intention to work in Sales.

Start of Block: Part 2 - This section considers your knowledge of Sales

Q9 Overall, how familiar are you with the area of Sales?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Not very familiar	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Very familiar

Q10 Please rate your knowledge of Sales skills and techniques.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very little knowledge	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Very high knowledge

Q11 Relative to people you know, how would you rate your knowledge of Sales skills and techniques?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very little knowledge	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Very high knowledge

Q12 Relative to a professional sales person, how would you rate your knowledge of Sales skills and techniques?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very little knowledge	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Very high knowledge

Q13 Based on your current knowledge of Sales, how comfortable would you be in working in a sales position?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Not very comfortable	o	o	o	o	o	o	o	Very comfortable

Q14 How much information about Sales skills and techniques have you been exposed to during your lifetime?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very little information	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	A great deal of information

Q15 How familiar are you with Sales skills and techniques?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Not very familiar	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very familiar

End of Block: Part 2 - This section considers your knowledge of Sales

Start of Block: Part 3 - This section deals with sales related and general confidence

Q5 Overall, how do you feel about your ability to sell a product or service?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
I am uncertain	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am certain
I am unsure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am sure
I am not confident	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am confident

Q6 Overall, how do you feel about your ability to use personal selling techniques?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
I am uncertain	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am certain
I am unsure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am sure
I am not confident	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am confident

Q7 Overall, how do you feel about your ability to be successful in a sales career?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
I am uncertain	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am certain
I am unsure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am sure
I am not confident	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am confident

Q8 Imagine that you are an entry level sales person. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I am having trouble, I can usually think of a solution (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can usually handle whatever comes my way (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Part 3 - This section deals with sales related and general confidence

---

Start of Block: Part 4 -

Q16 Have you previously held a job in Sales?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: Q20 If Have you previously held a job in Sales? = No

Page Break

Q17 How long have you worked in Sales?

- ◯ Less than a year (1)
- ◯ 1 year but less than 2 years (2)
- ◯ 2-3 years (3)
- ◯ More than 3 years (4)

Q18 Check any of the categories below which describe your sales experience.

- ▢ Retail Sales (1)
- ▢ Inside Sales (call center or telephone/internet contact of potential customers) (2)
- ▢ Field Sales (Visiting the potential customer's location) (3)
- ▢ Sales Management (4)

Q19 How would you characterize your performance in those jobs?

- ◯ Below average (1)
- ◯ Average (2)
- ◯ Above average (3)

Q20 Have you completed a sales internship ?

- ◯ Yes (1)
- ◯ No (2)

Skip To: Q24 If Have you completed a sales internship ? = No

Page Break

Q21 How many internships?

○ 1 (1)

○ 2 (2)

○ 3 or more (3)

Q22 Check any of the categories below which describe your sales internship(s).

▢ Retail Sales (1)

▢ Inside Sales (call center or telephone/internet contact of potential customers) (2)

▢ Field Sales (Visiting the potential customer's location) (3)

▢ Sales Management (4)

Q23 How would you characterize your performance in these internships?

○ Below average (1)

○ Average (2)

○ Above average (3)

Q24 Has someone in your immediate family held a job in Sales ?

○ Yes (1)

○ No (2)

Skip To: Q27 If Has someone in your immediate family held a job in Sales ? = No

---

Page Break

Q25 How long has that family member worked in Sales?

- ○ 1-5 years (1)
- ○ 6-10 years (2)
- ○ over 11 years (3)

Q26 Check any of the categories below which describe that person's sales experience.

- ▢ Retail Sales (1)
- ▢ Inside Sales (call center or telephone/internet contact of potential customers) (2)
- ▢ Field Sales (Visiting the potential customer's location) (3)
- ▢ Sales Management (4)

Q27 Has someone who is a strong influence in your life (other than family) held a job in Sales

- ○ Yes (1)
- ○ No (2)

End of Block: Part 4 -

Start of Block: Part 5 - This section deals with your Education, particularly Sales Education.

Q28 What is your major?

- ○ Business with a marketing emphasis (1)
- ○ Business with an emphasis other than marketing (2)
- ○ Health Sciences (3)
- ○ Journalism (4)
- ○ Other (5) ____

Q29 What will your Sales Qualification be when you graduate?

- ○ Certificate in Sales and Customer Development (1)
- ○ A few sales courses, but no focus in sales (2)
- ○ Just one sales course (3)

Q39 How many sales courses have you completed to date? (Not including this semester)

- ○ None (1)
- ○ 1 (2)
- ○ 2 (3)
- ○ 3 or more (4)

Skip To: End of Block If How many sales courses have you completed to date? (Not including this semester) = None

---

Q40 What has your grade average been in those sales courses?

- ○ A (1)
- ○ A- (2)
- ○ B+ (3)
- ○ B (4)
- ○ B- (5)
- ○ C+ or less (6)

Q41 Have you ever done any of the following types of exercises in your sales classes? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Role-plays (1)
- ☐ Selling to the community (2)
- ☐ Working with or "shadowing" professional sales people in the field (3)
- ☐ Active in sales fraternity or club (4)
- ☐ Interviewing or meeting with Sales Professionals (5)
- ☐ Completing real-world projects in class from local companies (6)
- ☐ Completing real-world projects in class from corporations (7)
- ☐ None of the above (8)

End of Block: Part 5 - This section deals with your Education, particularly Sales Education.

Start of Block: Part 6 - Finally, please tell us a little about you and your family

Q32 To which gender identity do you most closely identify?

- ○ Male (1)
- ○ Female (2)
- ○ Transgender male (3)
- ○ Transgender female (4)
- ○ Non-conforming (5)
- ○ Other, not listed (6)

- ○ I prefer not to answer (7)

Q36 Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)
- Prefer not to answer (3)

Q37 How would you describe yourself?

- American Indian or Alaska Native (1)
- Asian (2)
- Black or African American (3)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (4)
- White (5)
- Other, not listed (6) ____
- Prefer not to answer (7)

Q33 What is the highest level of education achieved by your Father?

- Graduate degree (1)
- Undergraduate degree (2)
- Associates degree (3)
- High school (4)
- Some high school (5)
- I prefer not to answer (6)

Q34 What is the highest level of education achieved by your Mother?

- ◯ Graduate degree (1)
- ◯ Undergraduate degree (2)
- ◯ Associates degree (3)
- ◯ High school (4)
- ◯ Some high school (5)
- ◯ I prefer not to answer (6)

Q35 What is your age?

____

End of Block: Part 6 - Finally, please tell us a little about you and your family

APPENDIX C

Posttest Survey Instrument

Sales Education Research Survey Posttest

Start of Block: Default Question Block

Q47 You are being invited to take part in a research project. You must be 18 years of age or older. Your participation is voluntary, and you may stop being in this study at any time. The purpose of this research project is to study the impact of different types of experiential learning activities on sales knowledge. You are being asked to complete this survey after completing an experiential learning activity that is part of the class in which you are enrolled, Personal Selling. It should take you approximately 10 minutes to take this survey. For your time and effort, you will receive 5 extra credit points for completing the survey. If you do not wish to participate in research and complete the survey, you may complete an alternate assignment for extra credit. The alternate assignment is to write a one-page double spaced paper about what you learned from the role-play exercise that you completed.

The information you provide will be kept confidential and only the research team will have access. You were already asked to complete a pretest survey prior to completing this exercise. To link your responses between the two surveys and award your extra credit points, you will be asked to provide your student number. This number will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team and it will be kept in a secure location If you have questions about this study, you can contact the University of Missouri researcher at cothrenc@missouri.edu or 214-478-7771.

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the University of Missouri Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 573-882-3181 or muresearchirb@missouri.edu. The IRB is a group of people who review research studies to make sure the rights and welfare of participants are protected. If you want to talk privately about any concerns or issues related to your participation, you may contact the Research Participant Advocacy at 888-280-5002 (a free call) or email muresearchrpa@missouri.edu. You can ask the researcher to provide you with a copy of this consent for your records, or you can save a copy of this consent if it has already been provided to you.

I appreciate your consideration to participate in this study. By clicking the button below, you acknowledge that you have read and understand this information.

○ I consent, proceed to begin the survey (1)

○ I do not consent and do not wish to complete this survey (2)

Skip To: Q1 If You are being invited to take part in a research project. You must be 18 years of age or older. Y... = I consent, proceed to begin the survey

Skip To: End of Survey If You are being invited to take part in a research project. You must be 18 years of age or older. Y... = I do not consent and do not wish to complete this survey

Q1
This study is designed to gather new information that should help sales educators to better prepare students for sales careers. Your responses are appreciated.

Please note that the terms **Sales** and **Personal Selling** are used in the survey. The definitions of these terms are as follows:

Sales describes the overarching field that addresses how people sell a product or service.

Personal selling is the process of meeting face-to-face with clients in order to uncover and satisfy needs in such a way that both parties benefit.

Please contact the researcher, should you have any questions. Thank you!

Courtney Cothren, University of Missouri, Trulaske College of Business, cothrenc@missouri.edu

End of Block: Default Question Block

Start of Block: Block 7

Q42 Please enter your student ID. This is needed to award extra credit points and correlate your answers to previous surveys connected to this project.

____

End of Block: Block 7

Start of Block: Part 1 -This question deals with your intention to work in Sales.

Q4 Please choose the best answer for each statement.

	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I would prefer to never work in a sales position (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am willing to work in sales as an entry level position, but want to move out of sales into another field as soon as possible (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am willing to work in sales to build my career, but would ultimately like to move into higher levels of management or start my own business (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would like to work in sales throughout my career as a salesperson or sales manager (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Part 1 -This question deals with your intention to work in Sales.

Start of Block: Part 2 - This section considers your knowledge of Sales

Q9 Overall, how familiar are you with the area of Sales?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Not very familiar	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very familiar

Q10 Please rate your knowledge of Sales skills and techniques.

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very little knowledge	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high knowledge

Q11 Relative to people you know, how would you rate your knowledge of Sales skills and techniques?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very little knowledge	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high knowledge

Q12 Relative to a professional sales person, how would you rate your knowledge of Sales skills and techniques?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very little knowledge	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very high knowledge

Q13 Based on your current knowledge of Sales, how comfortable would you be in working in a sales position?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Not very comfortable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very comfortable

Q14 How much information about Sales skills and techniques have you been exposed to during your lifetime?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Very little information	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	A great deal of information

Q15 How familiar are you with Sales skills and techniques?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
Not very familiar	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Very familiar

End of Block: Part 2 - This section considers your knowledge of Sales

Start of Block: Part 3 - This section deals with sales related and general confidence

Q5 Overall, how do you feel about your ability to sell a product or service?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
I am uncertain	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am certain
I am unsure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am sure
I am not confident	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am confident

Q6 Overall, how do you feel about your ability to use personal selling techniques?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
I am uncertain	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am certain
I am unsure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am sure
I am not confident	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am confident

Q7 Overall, how do you feel about your ability to be successful in a sales career?

	1 (1)	2 (2)	3 (3)	4 (4)	5 (5)	6 (6)	7 (7)	
I am uncertain	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am certain
I am unsure	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am sure
I am not confident	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I am confident

Q8 Imagine that you are an entry level sales person. Indicate your level of agreement with the following statements.	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Neither agree nor disagree (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Strongly agree (7)
I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough (1)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want (2)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals (3)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events (4)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations (5)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort (6)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities (7)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions (8)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If I am having trouble, I can usually think of a solution (9)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I can usually handle whatever comes my way (10)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Part 3 - This section deals with sales related and general confidence

Start of Block: Block 5

Q45 Did you discuss this assignment with anyone currently enrolled in Personal Selling besides your role-play partner?

○ No, I did not discuss this project with anyone besides my partner (1)

○ Yes, I discussed the project with other students in Personal Selling besides my partner (2)

Q43 Which role-play assignment did you complete?

○ Food Storage Solutions Role-Play (1)

○ Huhtamaki Role-Play (2)

Skip To: End of Block If Which role-play assignment did you complete? = Food Storage Solutions Role-Play

Q44 Are you you aware that you are going to receive feedback about your role-play performance from an employee of Huhtamaki?

- Yes, I am aware that I will receive feedback from an employee at Huhtamaki (1)
- No, I am not aware that I will receive feedback from an employee at Huhtamaki (2)

End of Block: Block 5

APPENDIX D

Huhtamaki Role-Play

Sales Scenario

You are a Distribution Account Manager in the Midwest region. LaMar's Donuts & Coffee (https://www.lamars.com/) is headquartered in Colorado. LaMar's currently has 26 stores across five states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Arizona). Huhtamaki has no prior sales history with LaMar's. You have been an Account Manager for four months and have a fantastic opportunity to secure new business. LaMar's is interested in hearing from you as to why Huhtamaki's Comfort Cup® is the solution to replace their current single-wall hot cups. They currently source their hot cups from Solo®. You will present your solutions to the Purchasing Director of LaMar's next week.

LaMar's Purchasing Director's key business objectives:

- Provide a high-quality hot cup
- Promote long-term sustainability for the environment
- Avoid a large investment when making the cup transition
- Competitive pricing

Your manager's key business objectives:

- Build rapport with LaMar's
- Learn LaMar's critical needs to position and sell a hot cup
- Gain commitment to buy Huhtamaki product

3

Huhtamaki

Selling Objective

You have scheduled a meeting with the Purchasing Director of LaMar's in early April. You have reviewed internally, and your team has concluded the Huhtamaki Comfort Cup® is the best solution to offer in this situation. The buyer has asked you to come to their headquarters in Centennial, Colorado and present the solution you believe would be best for LaMar's within the Midwest region. As the Account Manager it is up to you to convince LaMar's of this. This is your chance to prove you are reliable and knowledgeable as an Account Manager, despite your lack of experience. You have worked hard to be creative and present a solution that will help LaMar's meet their marketing and functionality needs. You want to grab the Director's attention with your solution and gain a commitment from the Director

Possible Objections:

- Cost – Dart offers a very competitive price vs. the Huhtamaki Comfort Cup®
- Functionality – How insulated is this cup? How long can this stay hot? De-nesting capability? Leakage?
- Sustainability – Is this cup environmentally friendly? Recyclable?
- Trust – Who else do you sell to? What is your sales background? Why you?
- Scale / Volume – Can Huhtamaki match the scale and volume needs for LaMar's?

4

Huhtamaki

Huhtamaki Overview

Our values help us make a difference where it matters

More than one hundred years ago in Finland, Heikki Huhtamäki established a sweets factory employing 60 people. Since then, his entrepreneurial spirit and values have helped Huhtamaki grow into a company of approximately 19,000 employees, globally.

CARE	DARE	DELIVER
We care for the planet, people, customers and partners	We dare to innovate, grow and have an impact on the future	We deliver on our promises, with integrity and as a team

Huhtamaki

Huhtamaki Overview

At Huhtamaki, we're global specialists in packaging for food and drink, dedicated to making every consumer experience enjoyable, consistent, and safe. We understand that packaging is about so much more than just what goes around a product. It's about building brands, protecting reputation, and opening new opportunities in new markets. That's why we're on hand, around the world, working as long-term partners with our customers as they develop and grow. Wherever we are, we adapt and deliver packaging that meets local demands. We work efficiently and with respect for the world around us, demonstrating our values every day – always providing quality products with reliable service. Helping great products reach more people, more easily.

Our 2030 sustainability ambition and related goals

Our ambition

First choice in sustainable packaging solutions

100% of products designed to be recyclable, compostable or reusable	>80% renewable or recycled materials	100% of fiber from recycled or certified sources
>90% of non-hazardous waste recycled or composted	100% renewable electricity	Carbon neutral production and science-based emission target

We offer the most **engaging, motivating and safest** workplace for our people

We ensure **human rights are respected** throughout our value chain

We support **the UN Global Compact** and **the UN Sustainable Development Goals**

6

Huhtamaki

Huhtamaki Top Domestic Customers

Retail

Consumer Goods

Foodservice

7

Huhtamaki Comfort Cup®

- With redesigned double-wall construction to keep drinks hot and hands comfortable, Comfort Cup® insulated hot cups and lids provide industry-leading performance for people on the move. The Comfort Cup® is manufactured and distributed from our state-of-the-art Batavia, Ohio facility.
- Stock print available to fit your coffee needs. Custom print is available if annual volumes exceed 1 million cups. Limited to four colors.

Huhtamaki prides ourself on minimizing paper waste. Throughout our plants we gather our engineered paper waste into bales and ship them to our molded fiber facilities to make plates. Doing so eliminates any of our paper scrap from ending up in a landfill. Huhtamaki requires our suppliers to sustainably source raw materials, often requiring certifications so we can pass along the same standard to our customers.

8

Additional Selling Materials

Huhtamaki Foodservice Catalog

https://www.huhtamaki.com/en-us/north-america/foodservice/

Huhtamaki is a member of the following relevant associations:

FPI (Foodservice Packaging Institute) https://www.fpi.org/

- PCA (Paper Cup Alliance)
- PRA (Paper Recovery Alliance)
- PRG (Plastics Recovery Group)

Plant Certifications:

PEFC (Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification)

Our paperboard suppliers maintain the following certification programs:

SFI (Sustainable Forest Initiative)

FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)

9

Huhtamaki

Role-Play Directions

Due: September 6 / 25 points

You will be paired with a partner and you will perform the role play twice so that each of you has the opportunity to act as the buyer and the seller. For each recording, one student will act as the Purchasing Director for LaMar's (buyer) and one as the Distribution Account Manager for Huhtamaki (seller). You should record both role plays and upload them to the assignment in Canvas for grading by Dr. Vatterott. Each role-play should last approximately 10 minutes. Please see the rubric on the next slide for grading specifics.

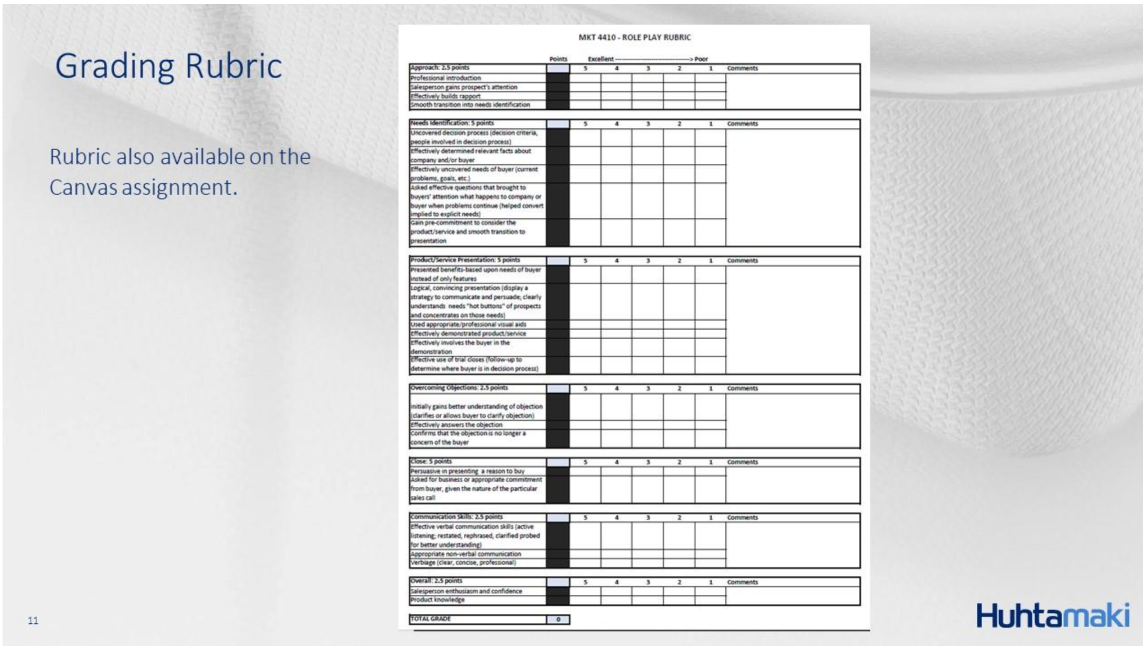
A representative from Huhtamaki will watch your recorded role-plays and give feedback about performance after the role-plays are graded.

Learning Objectives. Completion of this role-play will allow you:

- To gain experience interpreting the information relevant to a product or service offering.
- To determine the appropriate products and service to complement the potential client's needs.
- To advise, recommend and promote the product or service with the goal of long-term client value creation.

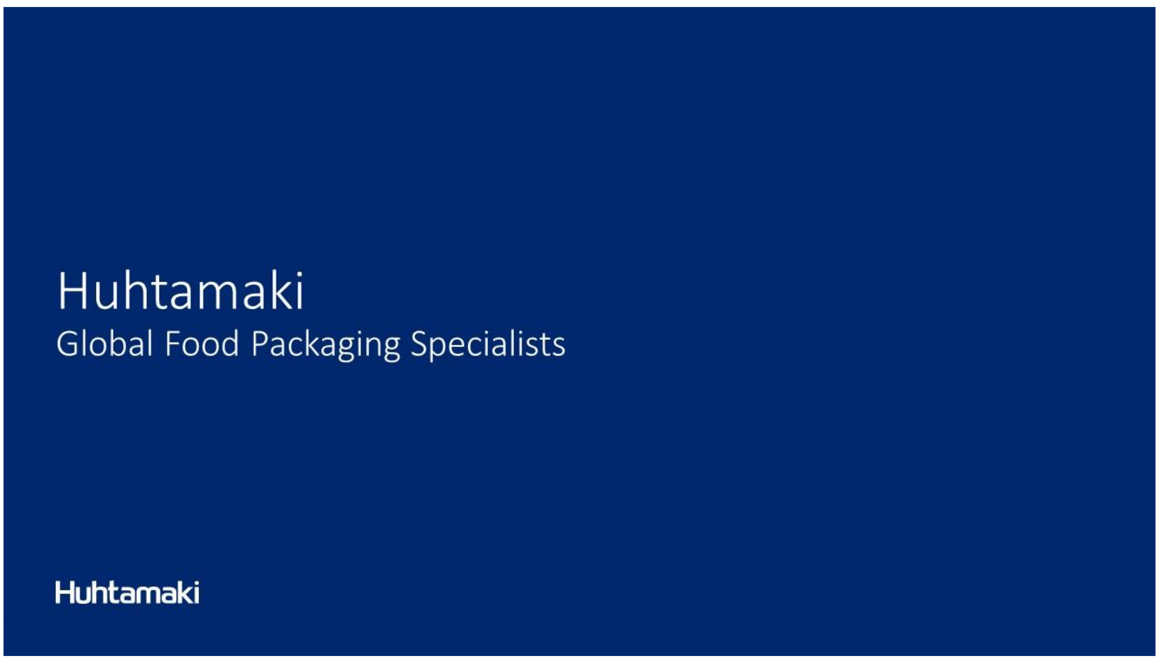
10

Huhtamaki



MKT 4410 - ROLE PLAY RUBRIC

	Points	Excellent	-------------------	-------------------	------------------>	Poor	
Approach: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Professional introduction							
Salesperson gains prospect's attention							
Effectively builds rapport							
Smooth transition into needs identification							
Needs Identification: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Uncovered decision process (decision criteria, people involved in decision process)							
Effectively determined relevant facts about company and/or buyer							
Effectively uncovered needs of buyer (current problems, goals, etc.)							
Asked effective questions that brought to buyers' attention what happens to company or buyer when problems continue (helped convert implied to explicit needs)							
Gain pre-commitment to consider the product/service and smooth transition to presentation							
Product/Service Presentation: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Presented benefits-based upon needs of buyer instead of only features							
Logical, convincing presentation (display a strategy to communicate and persuade; clearly understands needs "hot buttons" of prospects and concentrates on those needs)							
Used appropriate/professional visual aids							
Effectively demonstrated product/service							
Effectively involves the buyer in the demonstration							
Effective use of trial closes (follow-up to determine where buyer is in decision process)							
Overcoming Objections: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Initially gains better understanding of objection (clarifies or allows buyer to clarify objection)							
Effectively answers the objection							
Confirms that the objection is no longer a concern of the buyer							
Close: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Persuasive in presenting a reason to buy							
Asked for business or appropriate commitment from buyer, given the nature of the particular sales call							
Communication Skills: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Effective verbal communication skills (active listening; restated, rephrased, clarified probed for better understanding)							
Appropriate non-verbal communication							
Verbiage (clear, concise, professional)							
Overall: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Salesperson enthusiasm and confidence							
Product knowledge							
TOTAL GRADE	0						



APPENDIX E

Treatment Case Introduction Script

Use Zoom to record and pull up the slides for the role-play and narrate over them, showing your face with a blurred background. If possible, please wear a blue dress shirt and no tie.

Introduce yourself and your position with Huhtamaki. Give a brief introduction to the company. State, "I am going to introduce your first role-play of the semester. During this class, you will perform multiple role-plays. Each one will be slightly different, but for all of them you will simulate a selling situation and act as a buyer and/or a seller for a product or service. In this role-play, you will be paired with a partner and you will act out each role. This case is based on a real sales scenario that employees at Huhtamaki have encountered with an actual client. You will record both role-plays and submit them to Canvas where you instructor will grade them. You will also receive feedback from Huhtamaki employees after they are graded."

Please progress through slides and make the following points:

- Slide 1: Table of Contents. Briefly show the slide and state that this is the agenda for the directions. You do not need to read the slide.
- Slide 2: Sales Scenario: Read the sales scenario and business objectives.
  - Point out the link to LaMar's donuts and reiterate that this is an actual client of Huhtamaki. Tell them to look at the link for more information about the business.
  - Restate that each student will act as a both a buyer and a seller so the pair will perform the role-play twice.

    - State that is works best to prepare alone and come to the role-play without first practicing with a partner to realistically simulate the business scenario.
    - Emphasize that this is based on actual sales interactions that Huhtamaki reps experience.
- Slide 3: Selling Objective: Read this slide and emphasize that these are common objections given by clients. Try to always emphasize that this is a real-world scenario to connect to Huhtamaki.
- Slide 4: Huhtamaki Overview: use this slide as you would in class to talk about the company for introduction or recruiting purposes
- Slide 5: Huhtamaki Overview: same as above – use this slide as you
- Slide 6: Huhtamaki Top Domestic Consumers: state that in sales it is helpful for new clients to know who you currently sell to and that these are your top domestic competitors. Feel free to elaborate on the companies or
- Slide 7: Comfort Cup: State that the product that the sales member will focus on is the Comfort Cup and all necessary product information is
- Slide 8: Additional Selling Materials: point out link for catalog and briefly explain Huhtamaki's memberships and certifications and point out they
- Slide 9: Role-play directions: restate the directions and read the learning objectives. Explain that students can record via Zoom and upload the two separate recordings to Canvas or record one long video. State the due date is September 6 and that it is worth 25 points. Say that their instructor (Dr.

Vatterott) will grade the recordings and emphasize that a Huhtamaki employee will watch them and give feedback.

- Slide 10: Rubric: state that the rubric for grading can be found on the assignment and that this rubric is based on the scoring rubric from the National Collegiate Sales Competition.
- Slide 11: Thank you: please reach out to their instructor with questions and if you're okay with it – that he has your information for questions as well.

APPENDIX F

Hypothetical Role-Play

Personal Selling Role-Play

Center for Sales & Customer Development

Table of Contents

Sales Scenario

You are a Distribution Account Manager for a paper products company called Food Storage Solutions in the Midwest region. Laura's Donuts & Coffee is headquartered in Colorado. Laura's currently has 26 stores across five states (Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska and Arizona). Your company has no prior sales history with Laura's. You have been an Account Manager for four months and have a fantastic opportunity to secure new business. Laura's is interested in hearing from you as to why Food Storage Solutions' Cozy Cup is the solution to replace their current single-wall hot cups. They currently source their hot cups from Solo®. You will present your solutions to the Purchasing Director of Laura's next week.

Laura's Purchasing Director's key business objectives:

- Provide a high-quality hot cup
- Promote long-term sustainability for the environment
- Avoid a large investment when making the cup transition
- Competitive pricing

Your manager's key business objectives:

- Build rapport with Laura's
- Learn Laura's critical needs to position and sell a hot cup
- Gain commitment to buy Food Storage Solutions product

3

Selling Objective

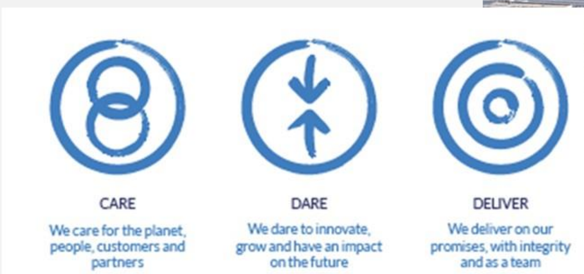
You have scheduled a meeting with the Purchasing Director of Laura's in early April. You have reviewed internally, and your team has concluded the Cozy Cup is the best solution to offer in this situation. The buyer has asked you to come to their headquarters in Denver, Colorado and present the solution you believe would be best for Laura's within the Midwest region. As the Account Manager it is up to you to convince Laura's of this. This is your chance to prove you are reliable and knowledgeable as an Account Manager, despite your lack of experience. You have worked hard to be creative and present a solution that will help Laura's meet their marketing and functionality needs. You want to grab the Director's attention with your solution and gain a commitment from the Director.

Possible Objections:

- Cost – Dart offers a very competitive price vs. the Cozy Cup
- Functionality – How insulated is this cup? How long can this stay hot? De-nesting capability? Leakage?
- Sustainability – Is this cup environmentally friendly? Recyclable?
- Trust – Who else do you sell to? What is your sales background? Why you?
- Scale / Volume – Can Food Storage Solutions match the scale and volume needs for Laura's?

4

Company Overview



Company Overview

At Food Storage Solutions, we're global specialists in packaging for food and drink, dedicated to making every consumer experience enjoyable, consistent, and safe. We understand that packaging is about so much more than just what goes around a product. It's about building brands, protecting reputation, and opening new opportunities in new markets. That's why we're on hand, around the world, working as long-term partners with our customers as they develop and grow. Wherever we are, we adapt and deliver packaging that meets local demands. We work efficiently and with respect for the world around us, demonstrating our values every day – always providing quality products with reliable service. Helping great products reach more people, more easily.

6

Food Storage Solutions Top Domestic Customers

Retail

Consumer Goods

Foodservice

7

Cozy Cup

- With redesigned double-wall construction to keep drinks hot and hands comfortable, Cozy Cup insulated hot cups and lids provide industry-leading performance for people on the move. The Cozy Cup is manufactured and distributed from our state-of-the-art Batavia, Ohio facility.
- Stock print available to fit your coffee needs. Custom print is available if annual volumes exceed 1 million cups. Limited to four colors.

Food Storage Solutions prides ourself on minimizing paper waste. Throughout our plants we gather our engineered paper waste into bales and ship them to our molded fiber facilities to make plates. Doing so eliminates any of our paper scrap from ending up in a landfill. Food Storage Solutions requires our suppliers to sustainably source raw materials, often requiring certifications so we can pass along the same standard to our customers.

8

Additional Selling Materials

Food Storage Solutions is a member of the following relevant associations:

FPI (Foodservice Packaging Institute) https://www.fpi.org/

- PCA (Paper Cup Alliance)
- PRA (Paper Recovery Alliance)
- PRG (Plastics Recovery Group)

Plant Certifications:

PEFC (Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification)

Our paperboard suppliers maintain the following certification programs:

SFI (Sustainable Forest Initiative)

FSC (Forest Stewardship Council)

9

Role-Play Directions

Due: September 6 / 25 points

You will be paired with a partner and you will perform the role play twice so that each of you has the opportunity to act as the buyer and the seller. For each recording, one student will act as the Purchasing Director for Laura's (buyer) and one as the Distribution Account Manager for Food Storage Solutions (seller). You should record both role plays and upload them to the assignment in Canvas for grading by Dr. Vatterott. Each role-play should last approximately 10 minutes. Please see the rubric on the next slide for grading specifics.

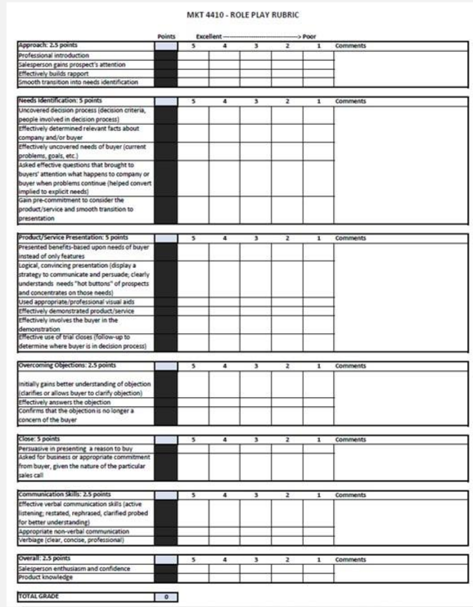
Learning Objectives. Completion of this role-play will allow you:

- To gain experience interpreting the information relevant to a product or service offering.
- To determine the appropriate products and service to complement the potential client's needs.
- To advise, recommend and promote the product or service with the goal of long-term client value creation.

10

Grading Rubric

Rubric also available on the Canvas assignment.



MKT 4410 - ROLE PLAY RUBRIC

	Points	Excellent	------->			Poor	
Approach: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Professional introduction							
Salesperson gains prospect's attention							
Effectively builds rapport							
Smooth transition into needs identification							
Needs Identification: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Uncovered decision process (decision criteria, people involved in decision process)							
Effectively determined relevant facts about company and/or buyer							
Effectively uncovered needs of buyer (current problems, goals, etc.)							
Asked effective questions that brought to buyers' attention what happens to company or buyer when problems continue (helped convert implied to explicit needs)							
Gain pre-commitment to consider the product/service and smooth transition to presentation							
Product/Service Presentation: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Presented benefits-based upon needs of buyer instead of only features							
Logical, convincing presentation (display a strategy to communicate and persuade; clearly understands needs "hot buttons" of prospects and concentrates on those needs)							
Used appropriate/professional visual aids							
Effectively demonstrated product/service							
Effectively involves the buyer in the demonstration							
Effective use of trial closes (follow-up to determine where buyer is in decision process)							
Overcoming Objections: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Initially gains better understanding of objection (clarifies or allows buyer to clarify objection)							
Effectively answers the objection							
Confirms that the objection is no longer a concern of the buyer							
Close: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Persuasive in presenting a reason to buy							
Asked for business or appropriate commitment from buyer, given the nature of the particular sales call							
Communication Skills: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Effective verbal communication skills (active listening; restated, rephrased, clarified probed for better understanding)							
Appropriate non-verbal communication							
Verbiage (clear, concise, professional)							
Overall: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Salesperson enthusiasm and confidence							
Product knowledge							
TOTAL GRADE	0						

11

Thank you

APPENDIX G

Control Case Introduction Script

Use Zoom to record and pull up the slides for the role-play and narrate over them, showing your face with a blurred background. Please wear a blue dress shirt with no tie, if possible.

Begin with an introduction by saying, “Hello, I am going to introduce your first role-play of the semester. During this class, you will perform multiple role-plays. Each one will be slightly different, but for all of them you will simulate a selling situation and act as a buyer and/or a seller for a product or service. In this role-play, you will be paired with a partner and you will act out each role. You will record both role-plays and submit them to Canvas where I will grade them. You can use feedback to help prepare you for future role-plays.”

Please progress through the slides and make the following points:

- Slide 1: Table of Contents. Briefly show the slide and state that this is the agenda for the directions. You do not need to read the slide.
- Slide 2: Sales Scenario: Read the sales scenario and business objectives.
    - Restate that each student will act as a both a buyer and a seller so the pair will perform the role-play twice.
    - State that is works best to prepare alone and come to the role-play without first practicing with a partner to realistically simulate the business scenario.
    - Emphasize that this is a hypothetical situation and both Food Storage Solutions and Laura’s Donuts and Coffee are phony business names.

- Slide 3: Selling Objective: Read this slide
- Slide 4: Company Overview: state again that this is a hypothetical company but these facts can be used to support the sales strategy
- Slide 5: Company Overview: no need to read this slide, just state that this is more hypothetical background information that can be used to support the sales strategy
- Slide 6: Food Storage Consumers: state that in sales it is helpful for new clients to know who you currently sell to so these are some well-known businesses you can use as hypothetical clients
- Slide 7: Cozy Cup: no need to read this slide. State that the product that the sales member will focus on is the Cozy Cup and all necessary product information is listed here.
- Slide 8: Additional Selling Materials: state that these are hypothetical associations and certifications that can be used in the sales pitch
- Slide 9: Role-play directions: restate the directions and read the learning objectives. Explain that students can record via Zoom and upload the two separate recordings or one long video to Canvas. State the due date is September 6 and that it is worth 25 points. Say that you will grade the recordings and give them feedback.
- Slide 10: Rubric: state that the rubric for grading can be found on the assignment and that this rubric is based on the scoring rubric from the National Collegiate Sales Competition
- Slide 11: Thank you: please reach out to you with questions.

APPENDIX H

Role-Play Rubric

MKT 4410 - ROLE PLAY RUBRIC

	Points	Excellent ----------------------------------> Poor					
Approach: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Professional introduction							
Salesperson gains prospect's attention							
Effectively builds rapport							
Smooth transition into needs identification							
Needs Identification: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Uncovered decision process (decision criteria, people involved in decision process)							
Effectively determined relevant facts about company and/or buyer							
Effectively uncovered needs of buyer (current problems, goals, etc.)							
Asked effective questions that brought to buyers' attention what happens to company or buyer when problems continue (helped convert implied to explicit needs)							
Gain pre-commitment to consider the product/service and smooth transition to presentation							
Product/Service Presentation: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Presented benefits-based upon needs of buyer instead of only features							
Logical, convincing presentation (display a strategy to communicate and persuade; clearly understands needs "hot buttons" of prospects and concentrates on those needs)							
Used appropriate/professional visual aids							
Effectively demonstrated product/service							
Effectively involves the buyer in the demonstration							
Effective use of trial closes (follow-up to determine where buyer is in decision process)							
Overcoming Objections: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Initially gains better understanding of objection (clarifies or allows buyer to clarify objection)							
Effectively answers the objection							
Confirms that the objection is no longer a concern of the buyer							
Close: 5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Persuasive in presenting a reason to buy							
Asked for business or appropriate commitment from buyer, given the nature of the particular sales call							
Communication Skills: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Effective verbal communication skills (active listening; restated, rephrased, clarified probed for better understanding)							
Appropriate non-verbal communication							
Verbiage (clear, concise, professional)							
Overall: 2.5 points		5	4	3	2	1	Comments
Salesperson enthusiasm and confidence							
Product knowledge							

TOTAL GRADE	0

VITA

Courtney Cothren is an Associate Teaching Professor of Marketing in the Trulaske College of Business. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Fashion Marketing and Management and worked as a Buyer and Financial Planner prior to teaching. She earned her Master in Business Administration and taught Fashion Marketing and Management at Stephens College for nine years and has taught at the University of Missouri for the past seven years. Though she does not teach required sales courses, she has a keen interest in the field of sales and developed the Procurement Policies and Analytics course to help prepare students with a career goal of selling to retail clients. She also teaches Consumer Behavior and Retail Marketing at the undergraduate level, Advanced Marketing and Management in the Executive MBA program, and International Marketing in the Trulaske Study Abroad Program in partnership with the University of Bergamo in Italy.