THE IMPACT OF SALES MANAGER CHARACTERISTICS ON SALESPERSON'S TRUST AND COMMITMENT TO THE RELATIONSHIP

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The role of the sales manager has become increasingly important to organization success due to rapidly changing business environments and greater salesperson autonomy. We know salesperson perceptions of their sales manager's behavior influence their acceptance of organizational objectives and their willingness to cooperate to achieve those objectives. The purpose of this study is to identify specific sales manager characteristics that impact the relationship with their salespeople. More specifically, we investigate how sales manager competence, dependability, and consideration impact the trust and commitment salespeople have toward their manager. Using a sample of B2B salespeople, the findings indicate that sales manager characteristics impact salesperson trust and commitment. Further, competence and dependability had a positive relationship with salesperson trust and commitment to the manager, while sales manager consideration failed to show an effect on trust.

INTRODUCTION

Managerial behavior and leadership play critical roles in inspiring perceptions of quality relationships (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Rich, 2001). In a sales context, salesperson perceptions of their sales manager's personal characteristics influence their acceptance of organizational objectives (Jones & George, 1998; Lams & Pucetait, 2006; Rodriguez, Perez, & Gutierrez, 2008). Sales managers who understand the psychological factors that enhance their relationships with their salespeople and who examine the experiences that tend to generate trust and commitment are better able to understand the behavior outcomes (Lams & Pucetait, 2006).

Many personal characteristics of managers serve to create value in relationships and help the managers develop positive working relationships with their subordinate salespeople (Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001; Korsgaard, Brodt, & Whitener, 2002; Perryer & Jordan, 2005). When the personal characteristics of the managers are perceived positively, the

relationships between managers and subordinates tend to be improved (Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001). These characteristics include such things as being open and honest during interactions, following through on what has been promised or expected, being knowledgeable in a management position, and demonstrating genuine concern for the well-being of their subordinates (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Lams & Pucetait, 2006). If sales effectiveness is influenced by social behaviors and interactions, researchers and practitioners must look beyond the salesperson to identify factors resulting in stronger relationships between sales managers and salespeople. The purpose of this study is to investigate how sales manager's personal characteristics such as competence, dependability, and consideration impact sales manager's trustworthiness and salesperson's commitment to the sales manager.

Although the importance of the manager's personal characteristic on the relationship between the manager and the subordinates is examined well in organizational behavior research not much research has been conducted in sales research domain (Brashear, Boles, Bellenger & Brooks, 2003; Deeter-Schmelz, Goebel & Kennedy, 2008; DelVecchio, 1998). This is especially relevant in the sales context

due to the fact that the relationship between the sales manager and salespeople have a significant influence on salesperson outcomes such as ethical conduct (Lagace, Dahlstromm, & Gassenheimer, 1991), job performance (Cunningham & MacGregor, 2000; Deery & Iverson, 2005; Rich, 1997), job satisfaction (Brashear et al., 2003; Cunningham & MacGregor, 2000; McNeilly & Lawson, 1999), motivation (Castleberry & Tanner, 1986; Dubinsky, Anderson, & Mehta, 2000; Morgan & Hunt, 1994), and cooperation (Deery & Iverson, 2005; Ferrin, Bligh, & Kohles, 2007; McNeilly & Lawson, 1999; Rodriguez et al., 2008; Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001). Although research has focused on the salesperson-sales manager relationship (Brashear et al., 2003; Castleberry & Tanner, 1986; Deeter-Schmelz, Goebel & Kennedy, 2008; DelVecchio, 1998, 2000), few have focused on identifying the impact of sales manager's characteristics on salesperson trust and commitment to the sales manager (Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001). This study contributes to current literature on salesperson-sales manager relationships by providing empirical evidence of how sales manager's personal characteristics influence salesperson's trust and commitment to the sales manager.

With rapidly changing business environments, greater salesperson autonomy, and geographic remoteness, the role of the sales manager has become increasingly important to organization success (Ingram, LaForge, Avila, Schwepker, & Williams, 2012). From a managerial standpoint it is imperative to understand the internal relationship salespeople have with their manager. Not only does this relationship impact various salesperson attitudes and behaviors, but sales managers are ultimately accountable for the performance of their salespeople.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Salespeople's Trust in their Managers

Generally interpersonal trust could be explained as the confidence one has of the other's integrity, ability, character and truth. Research suggests that interpersonal trust is built through the interactions between salespeople and their managers as they understand each other's goal and intentions (Deutsch, 1949). Trust is intangible, which makes it difficult to define and often has not worked the way it has been predicted in studies (Han & Wilson, 1993; Ganesan, 1994). Deutsch (1960) viewed trust as a confidence in the perceptions of an individual's capabilities and intentions. Other researchers have examined the characteristics and behaviors leading to trust (Hosmer, 1995; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995; Korsgarrd et al., 2002).Trust has been defined as the willingness to rely on an exchange partner in whom one has confidence (Branzei et al., 2007; Hulten, 2007; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Moorman, Zaltman & Deshpande, 1992), the belief that one's needs will be fulfilled in the future by actions taken by the other partner (Lages et al., 2008; Perry & Mankin, 2004), the expectation that another party member desires coordination, will fulfill obligations and will pull their weight in the relationship (Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987), and the belief that people's words or promises are reliable so that they will fulfill their obligations (Schurr & Ozanne, 1985).

Trust is an important element for developing and maintaining working relationships (Korsgaard et al., 2002). It reflects the security salespeople feel about their relationships and is often developed as salespeople seek and receive help from their managers. This study defines trust as the salesperson's willingness to rely on the words and actions of the sales manager (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). From this definition, trust is viewed as a belief or confidence in the interactions that build trustworthiness, which results from the partner's expertise, reliability, or intent (Korsgaard et al., 2002; Perry & Mankin, 2004; Lages, Lancastre, & Lages, 2008). In the present context it refers to the sense that managers will not betray their salespeople and that their actions will reflect good judgment so as to protect the self-interest of others.

Salespeople's trust in their mangers relies on the perceptions of their interactions with them.

It is created from their perceptions of trust-generating qualities of sales manager's dependability, competence, and consideration (Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Smith & Barclay, 1997; Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001; Korsgaard et al., 2002; Perry & Mankin, 2004; Branzei, Vertinsky, & Camp, 2007). Trust is generated when qualities of trust are perceived and when salespeople are confident that these qualities will be used in future interactions (Korsgaard et al., 2002; Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001).

Salespeople's Commitment to their Managers

Relationship commitment could be explained as the belief that an ongoing relationship between each other is so important as to deserve maximum efforts at maintaining the relationship. It has been defined as an implicit and explicit pledge of relationships between exchange partners (Dwyer et al., 1987; Lages et al., 2008), and as an enduring desire to maintain a valued relationship (Moorman et al., 1992), which will bring future value/benefits to the partners (Lages et al., 2008). This study defines salesperson's commitment to the sales manager as the salesperson's desire to continue the relationship and to cooperate to ensure that the relationship with the sales manager continues (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). In an organizational context, commitment refers to the attachment to or identification of an individual with an organization, and the willingness of that individual to exert additional effort to maintain organizational goals and values (Porter, Steers, Mowday, & Boulian, 1974; Perryer & Jordan, 2005).

Extending this to the relationship between salespeople and their managers, commitment refers to the attachment salespeople have to their managers. When salespeople are committed, they feel value in the relationship and look forward to working with their managers. Individuals who feel more committed to each other are more likely to cooperate and enjoy interacting with one another (Deutsch, 1949; Tjosvold & Field,

1983; Korsgaard, Schweiger, & Sapienza, 1995). Salespeople who are committed to their managers should attach more importance to their relationship and highly value it (Heide & Miner, 1992; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986). Therefore, commitment that salespeople feel to their managers is important in ensuring long-term relationships and cooperation (Schweiger, Sandberg, & Rechner, 1989).

Personal Characteristics of Sales Managers

For the purpose of this study, sales manager's personal character consists of how salespeople perceive their manager to have personal attributes such as competence, dependability, and consideration (Gabarro, 1978; Smith & Barclay, 1997). Managers reveal their personal characteristics on the job through their behaviors and interactions with others (Korsgaard et al., 2002). These characteristics provide salespeople with the information they need to develop an accurate perception of their managers (Korsgaard et al., 2002; Weitz, 1978).

Competence. Sales manager's competence is defined as the manager's ability and willingness to apply their knowledge and skills while performing their job (Brashear et al., 2003). Sales managers who know how to do their job (knowledge) and have the ability to apply that knowledge (skill) are perceived to be competent. In a sales context, competence refers to the sales manager's knowledge and skill related to a specific task and the expectation that the manager is capable of, and willing to, perform as expected (Brashear et al., 2003; Cook & Wall, 1980; Cunningham & MacGregor, 2000; Perry & Mankin, 2004). Typically, managers earn their positions based upon their practical knowledge, experience, and successful performance record. Salespeople expect their managers to demonstrate practical knowledge that is relevant to the sales objective. Competent managers have a wealth of experience, good business sense, and sound judgment. In addition, competent managers have a good grasp of the capabilities and needs of their team and understand how the sales

organization is connected to the big picture (LaFasto & Larson, 2001).

Dependability. As defined here, sales manager's dependability is the degree to which they are consistent and predictable in their interactions with their salespeople (DelVecchio, 1998). Characteristics of dependability include consistency and predictability, which indicate that the sales manager will always perform the same way when faced with similar situations (DelVecchio, 1998). Dependability has been found to be a crucial dimension of peer and employee evaluation (Barrick, Stewart, Neubert, & Mount, 1998; Antonioni & Park, 2001; Paswan & Gollakota, 2004). Consequently, dependability is likely to positively influence desired outcomes (Paswan & Gollakota, 2004). Based upon these reports, managers who are dependable are more willing to encourage productive behavior from their subordinates to accomplish sales objectives.

Consideration. Sales manager's consideration is defined as the degree to which the manager is concerned about the personal needs of salespeople (Johnston, Parasuraman, Futrell, & Black, 1990). Sales managers provide vision and guidance to the sales force through encouragement and consideration (Netemeyer, Boles, McKee, & McMurrian, 1997). Subordinates perceive their managers to have consideration when they appear to be concerned about their well-being, rather than acting from purely opportunistic intentions (Clark & Mills, 1979; Clark & Waddell, 1985; Rempel, Holmes, & Zanna, 1985; Clark et al., 1986; Eisenberger, Huntington, Hutchison, & Sowa, 1986; Holmes & Rempel, 1989;). Considerate managers recognize their salespeople as individuals having different needs, wants, and interests (Churchill, Ford, Hartley, & Walker, 1985; DelVecchio, 2000), and would therefore be able to behave in a way that displays concern about their well-being.

Personal Characteristics of Sales Managers and Trust

Researchers have determined various characteristics and behaviors that influence employees' perceptions of managerial trustworthiness (Erdem & Aytemur, 2008; Korsgaard et al., 2002). Research suggests that interpersonal trust is built through the interactions between salespeople and their managers as they understand each other's goals and intentions (Deutsch, 1949). Stemming from social psychology literature, trust is formed over time wherein the salesperson observes and interacts with the manager to achieve a degree of predictable behavior. Through these interactions salespeople assess the manager's personal characteristics. It is proposed that salesperson-sales manager relationships characterized by trust would be valued by the salesperson so that a desire to commit themselves to their managers would develop.

Trust is an important factor when developing relationships at work (Korsgaard et al., 2002). It reflects the security salespeople feel about their relationships and is often developed as salespeople seek and receive help from their managers. Salespeople's trust in their mangers relies on the perceptions of their interactions with them. In a sales context, salesperson's trust in their manager is generated from their perceptions of trust-generating qualities of sales manager's competence, dependability, and consideration (Branzei et al., 2007; Korsgaard et al., 2002; Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Perry & Mankin, 2004; Smith & Barclay, 1997; Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001). Trust is generated when qualities of trust are perceived and when salespeople are confident that these qualities will be used in future interactions (Korsgaard et al., 2002; Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001).

Sales manager's competence and trust. Salespeople who believe that their managers are knowledgeable and skilled and know how to apply them to do their job, competently trust their sales manager. (Cook & Wall, 1980; Erdem & Aytemur, 2008; Levin & Cross, 2004;). Based on social exchange theory, sales

managers who appear to be professionally competent would be viewed positively by their salespeople. In exchange for this professional competence salespeople will be more willing to cooperate with them. Therefore, perceptions of their manager's professional competence are likely to impact the trust that salespeople have in them (Powell, 1990).

> *H₁:* Sales Manager's competence will positively be related to salesperson's trust with the sales manager.

Sales manager's dependability and trust.
Dependability is an important influence on trust (Andaleeb, 1992; Butler, 1991; Gabarro, 1978; Johnson-George & Swap, 1982; Robinson & Rousseau, 1994). Based on social exchange theory, personal trust is based on consistency in the relationship (Erdem & Aytemur, 2008; Korsgaard et al., 2002). When assessing trust in working relationships, individuals consider the dependability of member behaviors (Cook & Wall, 1980; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Because of this, trust develops from the confidence that during an exchange the other party will behave in a certain way (Pearce, Branyiczki, & Bakacsi, 1994) or will be cooperative (Pruitt & Carnevale, 1993). Managers, who are dependable over time and in various situations, inspire confidence that they will act the same way in the future. Dependability thus reinforces the level of trust in the relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Korsgaard et al., 2002). Salespeople must perceive their managers to be dependable before they will trust the manager (McAllister, 1995). Therefore, trust is likely to be generated when salespeople perceive their managers as dependable (Mcknight, Cummings, & Chervany, 1998).

> *H₂*: Sales Manager's dependability will positively be related to salesperson's trust with the sales manager.

Sales manager's consideration and trust.
Trust is also developed when managers demonstrate concern for the welfare of their subordinates (Erdem & Aytemur, 2008; Korsgaard et al., 2002; Dooney & Cannon

1997, Mishra, 1996, McAllister, 1995). Consideration involves showing sensitivity for salespeople's needs, protecting their interests, and not acting in opportunistic ways. Leader's consideration regarding member's input helps communicate trustworthiness in the relationship (Korsgaard et al., 2002; Korsgaard et al., 1995). When salespeople are confident that their managers are treating them fairly and have their best interests at heart, they will be inclined to trust them (Dwyer et al., 1987; Konovsky & Pugh, 1996). Therefore, trust is likely to result when the manager shows consideration (Jap, 1999; Larzelere & Huston, 1980; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Smith & Barclay, 1997).

> *H₃:* Sales Manager's consideration will positively be related to salesperson's trust with the sales manager.

Personal Characteristics of Sales Managers and Commitment

Salespeople base the impression of their managers on the behaviors and characteristics that are under the manager's control (Flaherty & Pappas, 2000). As with organizational characteristics, personal characteristics of sales managers influence the level of commitment from their salespeople (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1982; Pierce & Dunham, 1987). Managers demonstrating specific characteristics create a platform allowing salespeople to personally identify with the manager (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Because commitment is viewed as an emotional attachment, salespeople are more satisfied with the manager demonstrating these characteristics and are more committed to the organization due to the manager's behavior toward them (Davis & Rothstein, 2006).

The quality of interactions salespeople have with the manager leads to commitment within organizations, which results in efficient business operations (e.g., High quality service - Wong & Tjosvold 1995). For the purpose of this study, commitment represents the personal desire to continue the relationship due to the affective dedication the salesperson has to the

manager (Smith, Carroll, & Ashford, 1995). More specifically, affective commitment to the manager expresses the salesperson's willingness to exert effort on behalf of the sales manager (Bakker, Albrecht, & Leiter, 2011).

Sales manager's competence and commitment. Considerable research has shown that the quality of the relationship between sales managers and salespeople is a direct reflection of how competent the salesperson perceives the manager to be (Busch & Wilson, 1976; Duchon, Green, & Taber, 1986; Kim & Organ, 1982; Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993; Wakabayashi, Graen, & Uhl-Bien, 1990). If sales managers demonstrate professional competence when performing their jobs, their salespeople are more likely to be committed to their leadership (DelVecchio, 1998; Duchon et al., 1986; Kim & Organ, 1982; Liden et al., 1993; Wakabayashi et al., 1990).

Sales managers appear to be competent when they are perceived by their salespeople as valuable resources in exchange relationships. This is particularly true when managers use their competence to support the overall sales goal/objectives and share their competence to support salespeople (DelVecchio, 1998). Competent sales managers build loyalty and commitment among salespeople. These are characteristics that are associated with higher quality relationships and cooperation (DelVecchio, 1998). Because of this, salespeople who perceive their managers to be competent would be more likely to commit themselves to them. This is because they believe that these managers attain objectives and share their knowledge with their salespeople.

> H_4: Sales Manager's competence will positively be related to salesperson's commitment to the sales manager.

Sales manager's dependability and commitment. Relationships are based on salespeople's confidence in the credibility of their sales managers and their confidence in the likelihood of them getting the job completed

successfully (e.g., Schultz & Evans, 2002). Social exchange theory would suggest that if sales managers are dependable in their interactions with their salespeople, in exchange their salespeople will be more committed to them. Dependable managers are consistent in their behavior, therefore salespeople expect them to behave in the future the same way as they have in the past. This suggests that there will be no misunderstanding about what the manager wants and expects, making the relationship more congenial. This is because when sales managers are dependable their salespeople are likely to perceive them as credible and predictable.

Research has found that quality relationships between key account representatives and their customers are frequently based upon their confidence in getting the job completed (Schultz & Evans, 2002). We would expect for this to carry over into a relationship between salespeople and their managers. Dependable managers communicate reliable and credible information and follow through on their commitments (Larkin & Larkin, 1996; Smith & Barclay, 1997). Therefore, salespeople are likely to be more committed to managers who display dependability.

> H_5: Sales Manager's dependability will positively be related to salesperson's commitment to the sales manager.

Sales manager's consideration and commitment. It is believed that sales managers who demonstrate considerate behavior toward their salespeople enhance their commitment to them. When salespeople perceive that their managers have a genuine concern for their personal welfare, they are likely to be more willing to support the quality of their relationships, commit to them, and to cooperate with them (Avolio & Bass, 1988; Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1990; Perryer & Jordan, 2005). This is because salespeople recognize that their personal and professional well-being will be served by their managers in future interactions. If sales managers are considerate, salespeople are likely to perceive that they genuinely care

for them and are concerned about their welfare and higher quality relationships will result (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & Fetter, 1990). Individual support of salespeople by their manager is likely to enhance the commitment salespeople have to them.

Consideration is the supportiveness, the desire, and willingness to help others succeed (LaFasto & Larson, 2001). Considerate managers figure out how to help them overcome challenges, rather than focusing on their struggles and failures. In addition, considerate managers are dedicated to the success of their salespeople and want what is best for them. More specifically, these managers are easy to work with, are willing to take on more responsibility to help their salespeople, and listen to salespeople while making them feel they are important both as individuals and to the success of the sales organization.

Consideration of salespeople by their managers has been found to enhance commitment

(Johnston et al., 1990; Flaherty & Pappas, 2000). If salespeople feel their opinion is valued and respected by their managers, and that their managers have their best interests in mind, they will feel more committed to them (Korsgarrd et al., 1995). Managers who behave consistently and are supportive of their salespeople impact the commitment of their salespeople (Flaherty & Pappas, 2000). Therefore, salespeople are more likely to be committed to managers who show consideration.

> H_6: Sales Manager's consideration will positively be related salesperson's commitment to the sales manager.

The Impact of Trust on Commitment

High levels of trust facilitate commitment (Nyhan, 1999). Relationships that are characterized by trust will be highly valued, so that both parties will want to commit

FIGURE 1:
Conceptual Model
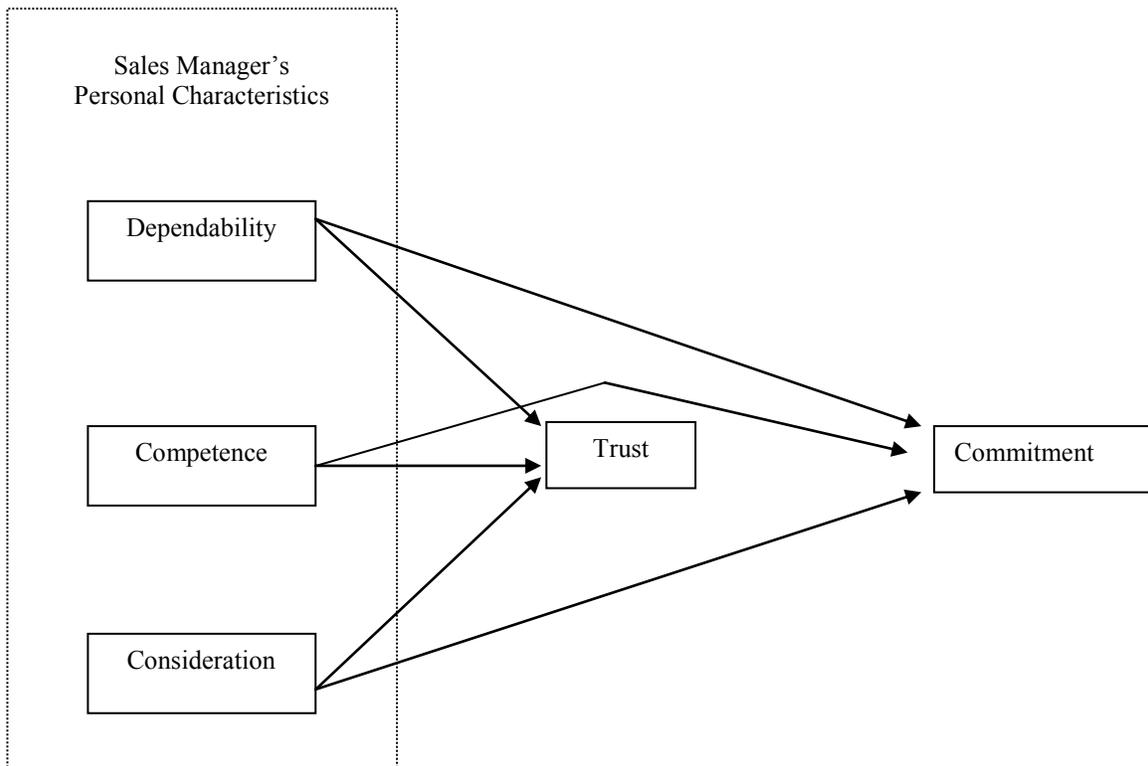
themselves to each other and to the relationship (Hrebiniak, 1974). Extending this to a sales situation, the level of trust salespeople have in their managers will impact their commitment. Sales managers perceived as trust worthy will evoke commitment from the salesperson. Managers considered to be trustworthy in exchange are more likely to received commitment from salespeople (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Nyhan, 1999; Yilmaz & Hunt, 2001; Herold, Fedor, Caldwell, & Liu, 2008; Bakker et al., 2011; Neves, 2011).

> H_7:   Salesperson's trust with the sales manager will positively be related to salesperson's commitment to the sales manager.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

An on-line self-report questionnaire was developed to collect the information from a sample of salespeople. On-line questionnaires provide a cost effective and timely way to collect information (Hair, Bush, & Ortinau, 2000). The questionnaire was available to respondents at their convenience. It included items designed to measure salespeople's perceptions of their sales manager's characteristics, their trust in their sales managers, and their commitment to their sales managers.

A total of 454 salespeople were invited to participate in the study; 284 responded, a response rate of 62.5%. A questionnaire was considered incomplete when two or more items were left unanswered. After discarding the unusable responses, the sample size was reduced to 254. Eliminating these questionnaires dropped the response rate to 56%.

Sample

The sampling frame consisted of business-to-business salespeople employed by an organization that manufactures equipment for many facets of the energy industry. Through

numerous mergers and acquisitions, the organization has become a leader in integrated energy technologies and services. An e-mail list of salespeople was provided by the organization.

The respondents were 90% male, which is consistent with the industry. The respondents ranged in age from 23-68 years, with a mean of 45.18 years and a median age of 44. Over 90% of respondents considered themselves to be White/Non-Hispanic. Thirty-one percent of respondents reported having some college

TABLE 1:
Sample Demographics

Demographic	Descriptive Statistics
Age (Years)	Years (mean)
Gender (Percent)	
Male	90%
Female	10%
Race (Percent)	
White/Non-Hispanic	90%
Other	10%
Married (Percent)	81%
Single (Percent)	19%
Education (Percent)	
Some College	31%
Technical/Bachelor's Degree	57%
Master's/MBS	4%
Geographic Location (Percent)	
North America	84%
Europe	7%
Asia/Pacific & Middle East/ North Africa	7%
Employment (Number of Years)	
Mean	8.42 years
Range	1-40 years
Number of Years in Current Position	
Mean	5.03 years
Income	
Median Range	$40,000-60,000
Straight Salary (Percent)	57%
Salary/Commission Mix (Percent)	43%

education, 57% received a technical or bachelor degree, and 4% received a Masters/MBA degree. The number of years employed as a salesperson by the company ranged from less than a year to 40 years, with a mean of 8.42 years (SD=9.14). Respondents had worked in their current position for a mean of 5.03 years (SD=5.20). The mean annual compensation ranged from $40,000-$60,000, which was based on 57% of the respondents on a straight salary and 43% of respondents on a salary/ commission mix. The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Measurement

Sales peoples' perception of sales manager's consideration was measured by an eleven item scale. The scale was initially developed by Churchill et al. (1974) and subsequently modified by Johnston et al. (1990). The original internal consistency was Cronbach's α=.91. Sales peoples' perception of sales manager's dependability was measured by a four item scale developed by Smith and Barclay (1997). The scale had an original internal consistency of Cronbach's α=.78. Sales peoples' perception of sales manager's competence was measured by a nine scale which has an original internal consistency of Cronbach's α=.86. The scale was developed by Smith and Barclay (1997). Salespeople's trust of the sales manager was measured by a three item scale developed by Morgan and Hunt (1994) which had an internal consistency of Cronbach's α=.947. Salespeople's commitment to the sales manager was measured by a three item scale developed by Morgan and Hunt (1994). The original scale was developed for organizational commitment by Mowday et al. (1979), and was modified to fit relationship commitment by Morgan and Hunt 1994. The original internal consistency was Cronbach's α=.895. All scales consisted of Likert-scale items ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

ANALYSIS

Preliminary Analysis

First a correlation matrix was computed of all 29 items. Based on the concept that items should be correlated if they are drawn from the same construct (Churchill et al., 1974), five items were deleted due to highly correlations as this would cause difficulties in determining the unique contribution of the variables to a factor (Field, 2000). Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used for the analysis. SEM is a flexible and powerful extension of the general linear model. Like any statistical model, it requires a number of assumptions to be met. These assumptions should be met or at least approximated to ensure trustworthy results (Joreskog & Sorbom, 1993). The key assumptions of SEM are 1) indicator variables with multivariate normal distribution, 2) large sample, and 3) continuous variables. All assumptions were met successfully.

A structural equation model was used to examine the underlying relationships among the empathy construct and other outcome variables. As suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988), a two-step procedure was used. The measurement model was first developed to examine the linkages between latent variables and observed variables. The measurement model was first estimated to confirm the validity of the employed scales. The structural model was estimated to evaluate the relationships among the latent variables. The structural model showed how the hypothesized relationships among latent variables are supported by the data.

Measurement Model

The measurement model was first validated with the AMOS 18 program. A total of 254 respondents were used to test the model which included 5 constructs and a total of 24 items. Results of the AMOS output suggested that the measurement model needed some modification. Using the modification indices from the AMOS output, items were identified which had high

TABLE 2:
Constructs– Factor Loadings, Reliabilities, and Correlations

Construct	Factor Loadings	Std. Errors	Compt Reliability	Item Reliability	Variance Extracted	Correlation Matrix				
						COMP	DEPD	CONS	TRU	CMT
Competence (COMP)			.896		0.674	1				
COMP3	.916			.839						
COMP5	.760	.052		.578						
COMP6	.872	.044		.760						
COMP7	.721	.052		.520						
Dependabil-ity (DEPD)			.847		0.745	0.746	1			
DEPD1	.885			.784						
DEPD2	.841	.049		.707						
Considera-tion (CONS)			.891		0.739	0.784	0.816	1		
CONS1	.885			.489						
CONS2	.841	.069		.547						
CONS4	.852	.134		.726						
CONS6	.799	.069		.638						
CONS7	.917	.141		.841						
Trust (TRU)			.821		0.629	0.753	0.802	0.755	1	
TRU1	.648			.420						
TRU2	.864	.113		.746						
TRU3	.849	.123		.721						
Commitment (CMT)			.813		0.655	0.651	0.796	0.791	0.735	1
CMT1	.980			.960						
CMT2	.902	.040		.814						
CMT3	.438	.073		.192						

cross-loadings. Once the items were identified with high cross-loading, construct reliability was checked to assess the impact of removing the high cross loaded items. If both modification indices and reliabilities suggested that an item should be removed from the model, the item was deleted. A total of 7 items were removed. After removing each item, the measurement model was run again to assess the actual impact of removing the item. After assessing a numerous AMOS out puts and

construct reliabilities, 17 items were used to measure 5 constructs. Results of the final measurement model suggested good model fit (DOF=207; Chi-Square= 505; RMSEA= .07; NFI=.914; CFI=.961; and SRMR=.041). The properties of the measurement model included factor loadings, standard errors, R^2, and internal consistency (Table 2). The factor loadings were interpreted as validity coefficients and the item R^2 as the reliability coefficients of the observed measures.

TABLE 3: Maximum Likelihood Estimates: Standardized Regression Weights						
			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P
Trust	ß	Competence (H_1)	.471	.203	2.321	.020
Trust	ß	Dependability (H_2)	.770	.227	3.398	***
Trust	ß	Consideration (H_3)	-.071	.330	-0.216	.829
Commitment	ß	Competence (H_4)	.495	.180	2.751	.006
Commitment	ß	Dependability (H_5)	.528	.253	2.688	.007
Commitment	ß	Consideration (H_6)	1.040	.271	3.834	***
Commitment	ß	Trust (H_7)	.998	.163	5.560	***

Structural Model

After the measurement model was validated, the structural model was used to evaluate the relationship among the latent variables. The structural model provided sufficient fit on Degrees of Freedom: 207; Chi-Square=505; RMSEA=.07; CFI=.958; and SRMR=.04 (Hair et al. 2000). The results are presented in Table 3.

Results

Considering sales manager's personal characteristics and salesperson's trust with the sales manager, the study found that sales manager's competence – H_1 (standardized regression coefficient=.471; z value=2.321; P<.05) and sales manager's dependability – H_2 (standardized regression coefficient=.770; z value=3.398; P<.001) had a significantly positive relationship on sales person's trust of the sales manager. Sales manager's consideration (H_3) failed to show significant relationship on sales person's trust of the sales manager.

Results showed that only sales manager's competence - H_4 (standardized regression coefficient=.495; z value=2.894; P<.05), dependability – H_5 (standardized regression coefficient=.528; z value=2.688; P<.05), and consideration – H_6 (standardized regression coefficient=1.040; z value=3.834; P<.001) had a significant positive relationship on salespeople's commitment to the sales manager.

Sales manager's trust with the sales person was found to have a significant positive relationship on sales person's commitment to the sales manager – H_7 (standardized regression coefficient=.998; z value=5.560; P<.001).

Discussion

Salespersons' perceptions of their sales manager influence their acceptance of organizational objectives and their willingness to cooperate to achieve those objectives. Cultivating strong relationships with salespeople develops over time as salespeople observe the sales manager's characteristics and believe these encompass the sales manager's behavior. Sales managers who lead with honest, knowledgeable, and considerate behavior, receive benefits of stronger relationships resulting in positive performance outcomes. Selecting sales managers with influential characteristics increases the relationship development with their salespeople. This study examined the influence of sales manager's personal characteristics on salespeople's trust and commitment to the sales manager. The findings of this study show that salesperson's trust was found to have a significant positive relationship on salesperson's commitment to the sales manager. When salespeople trust the words or actions of their manager, they tend to be more committed and attached to the sales manager.

Results show that sales manager's personal qualities such as competence and dependability

had a positive relationship with salespeople trusting the sales manager. However, sales manager's consideration had a negative insignificant relationship on salespeople's trust with the sales manager. An explanation for this could be that consideration is a characteristic that may influence salespeople's perceptions as having ulterior motives. Generally, sales manager's success and monetary rewards and compensation depend on the success of the salespeople. Hence, when a sales manager is offering a lot of support, guidance, and are overly concerned about the well-being of the sales people, salespeople could question the motive of the sales manager which could lead to mistrusting the sales manager.

Similar to organizational behavior literature, the current study showed that all three sales manager's characteristics, consideration, competence, and dependability, had a significant positive relationship with salespeople's commitment to the sales manager (e.g., Avolio et al., 2004; Mowday et al., 1982; Pierce & Dunham, 1987). Results of this study enable sales researchers to examine the manner in which a sales manager is perceived impacts the ability to achieve organizational objectives through the salespeople.

Managerial Implications

This study extends the knowledge about the relationship between salespeople and their mangers. Examining the ways in which sales managers display personal characteristics have a direct impact on the relationship with the salesperson. Recognizing these key characteristics presents an opportunity to train managers to know how to effectively demonstrate particular characteristics throughout the interactions and activities with their salespeople in order to foster salesperson's attachment to the relationship. Salesperson's commitment to the sales manager could have serious implications for organizational success because the sales manager is responsible for communicating organizational objectives and goals to the salespeople who will have the responsibility of implementing necessary

strategies and actions to achieve those specific objectives and goals. As a result salespeople are more willing to exert extra effort to achieve sales objectives when they are more committed to the sales manager.

Due to the nature of business-to-business sales positions, the amount of time salespeople spend with their manager is typically limited. Based upon these findings, managers should focus on the quality of the interactions when they are with their salespeople in building trust and commitment. The interaction should not be to the point of micro-managing, however, demonstrate ability to adapt to various situations (competence), demonstrate concern for the professional and personal well-being (consideration) of their salespeople and display actions that are consistently over time (dependability). These characteristics will assist salespeople to have a trusting and a committed relationship with the sales manager.

Companies spend time and money to train managers to be better role models and be superior leaders to head their organizations. During these training sessions, corporate educators and trainers need to focus on how managers could develop and communicate their competence dependability, and consideration, to the sales force. This would help managers to sell corporate vision and strategies to their salespeople.

Findings of the study failed to establish a relationship between sales manager's consideration and sales people's trust with the sales manager. Therefore, it might be prudent for sales managers to offer their support and concern but clearly provide a reasoning and justification for doing so, so that any doubts that may linger with the salespeople could be eliminated.

Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Dependability was measured by a two item scale as the other two items which constitute the scale showed high-cross loading with other

factors. Therefore, they were deleted. However, since the two items which were included to measure dependability was highly correlated (correlation coefficient = 0.79) and the scale consisted of sufficient reliability (alpha = 0.847) the scale is suitable for measuring dependability (Iacobucci & Duhachek, 2003)

The sample was composed of industrial salespeople, all of whom engage in face-to-face selling activities within a single company. The responses might not be applicable to other companies or other industries. Since most of their work is conducted in a relatively independent work environment, researchers might study the theoretical model in a team-selling context.

Another area for future research addresses the effects of a manager's leadership style and behavior. This may have a distinct impact on cooperation, especially in a team-selling context. The sample was composed of salespeople in the oil-rig industry. It would be appropriate to examine other industries and compare results.

Another possible area for future research concerns other possible constructs related to cooperation. For example, other possible constructs to be investigated in future research could include job satisfaction, managerial respect, organizational commitment, supervisory style, market orientation, and risk.

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