

GET IN WHERE YOU FIT IN: HOW REALISTIC JOB PREVIEWS IMPACT SALESPERSON CONGRUENCE AND SATISFACTION

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Few managerial decisions pack as much potential risk and reward as salesperson recruitment. The interview process represents a critical opportunity for managers to establish expectations, filter qualified candidates, and discourage misfits from applying to the job. Surprisingly, only a paucity of research exists on the impact of realistic job previews in a sales context. Results in this paper suggest that providing an accurate depiction of the job does significantly improve salesperson values congruence, value commitment, and satisfaction. Moreover, salespeople whose onboarding-induced expectations are consistent with the realities of the job are likely to experience lower role conflict as a result.

“Every enterprise requires commitment to common goals and shared values. Without such commitment there is no enterprise; there is only a mob.” Peter Drucker, 1985.

INTRODUCTION

Few investments are as consequential to the integrity of a marketing organization as the cultivation of a mission-driven sales force. Salespeople interact with customers on behalf of the organization and their exchanges with customers are implicative of organizational consent. A troubling study by the Gartner Research and Advisory firm reports that 69% of employees do not internalize the core values of their organizations and a staggering 90% admit their behaviors often contradict organizational values (George, 2018). The report estimates that companies investing in training programs aimed at aligning employees with organizational values can expect a rise in annual revenues of up to 9%. Arguably, the return on investment may be even higher for salespeople, given their central role in driving revenue and profitability. At any rate, the onboarding process is a pivotal point of entry for any training program as it filtrates prospective trainees based on various criteria,

including fit with organizational values and mission.

Realistic job previews (RJPs) are candid job descriptions provided to applicants *before* formally joining an organization aimed at fully describing requirements and expectations of the job (Breaugh, 2008). RJPs offer a preview of job requirements and set the tone for entry and adjustment into the organization. As such, they are considered a major component of organizational socialization. Given the plethora of entry-level positions, increasing the quantity of applicants without considering fit may come at the expense of a cohesive sales force culture. One main purpose of this paper is to investigate whether an accurate, relevant, and thorough job preview can facilitate values congruence in salespeople and bolster their confidence in organizational values. Specifically, are salespeople more likely to internalize and commit to organizational values if due diligence is taken to represent the job accurately? Do these salespeople experience less conflict with role partners as a result? Finally, what are the ensuing effects on job satisfaction?

Recruiting employees for sales and services positions has become increasingly competitive. In fact, 67% of recruiters report it is harder than ever to recruit qualified and dependable talent (Thibodeaux, 2018). Due to this scarcity,

hiring personnel may be tempted to use puffery to frame jobs in a more positive light to attract suitable recruits. Turnover rates in the sales industry are on an unrelenting rise with the average rate in B2B sales teams climbing to around 35%, almost triple the average turnover rate seen in other professions (Beltis, 2019). Despite an abundance of literature in the management domain, RJPs have been surprisingly understudied in a sales context (Barksdale, et al., 2003). This paper contributes to the sales literature by examining whether and how an accurate and detailed job preview could (may) preemptively engender common values among new recruits and serve as a filtering mechanism to attract committed salespeople. Moreover, the paper integrates existing knowledge on RJPs from the management domain to sales management theory and suggests managerial interventions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

Due to its profound impact on organizational outcomes, salesperson recruitment and retention remain among the most enduringly studied topics in the sales literature. Several studies have shown that RJPs lead to lower turnover, increased job performance, and increased job satisfaction in the workforce (Haden, 2012; Barksdale et al., 2003; Phillips, 1998). Given the opportunity costs associated with vacant sales positions, recruiters may be tempted to modulate job descriptions for promising candidates to enhance recruitment prospects. Prior research cautions against this approach noting that embellished portrayals which ignore the harsher realities of the job may lead to feelings of resentment and dissatisfaction (Breugh & Starke, 2000). Conversely, RJPs provide applicants with a genuine representation of all relevant information, both positive and negative, and clearly summarizes the mechanics of the role and its responsibilities. Interestingly, RJPs have been shown to be an effective deterrent against counterproductive workplace behavior (Wathne & Heide, 2000). Contiguous research suggests that RJPs may be useful in syncing the behavior of newly hired employees to organizational protocol, while lowering intentions to quit (Breugh & Starke, 2000).

Organizational socialization theory proposes that norms, values, and expected behaviors essential for assuming an organizational role should be learned before participating as an organizational member (Louis, 1980). According to the theory, onboarding serves as an acculturation process by which employees are woven into the fabric of the organization by adhering to its principles and expectations. Socialization tactics such as RJPs, training, and mentoring are intended to familiarize and acclimate new hires to the organization's culture and mission. Socialization tactics are categorized along a continuum of institutionalized and individualized tactics (Jones, 1986). Organizations that adopt an institutionalized approach for new hires utilize a step-by-step process that methodically instills the organization's culture and norms into the onboarding process. In contrast, an individualized approach does not offer any organized training or presentations but rather employees are expected to learn the organization's culture and norms along the way. Clearly, the individualized approach presents significant challenges for standardizing organizational values within a salesforce.

Research suggests that effective socialization tactics increase workers' role clarity and self-esteem while reducing job-related stress (Barksdale et al., 2003). In turn, this sequence enhances job satisfaction and performance. Systematic socialization processes have gained popularity in organizations, given the rising investment costs of sales training and retention. U.S. businesses spend close to \$15 billion annually on sales force training and another \$800 billion on incentives (Sunder et al., 2017). Such high costs pose many problems for sales organizations both in the short-term and long-term. In the short-term, it may take months before an organization is able to recoup their investment from recruiting and training new salespeople. This may negatively impact an organization's ability to turn a profit on the investment, particularly in instances where the salesperson leaves before the break-even point is reached. In the longer-term, consumer trust may stagnate, since clients will inevitably be interacting with multiple reps over the course of the relationship. According to the State of Sales report by Salesforce (2019), 79% of business clients consider salespeople who are *trusted*

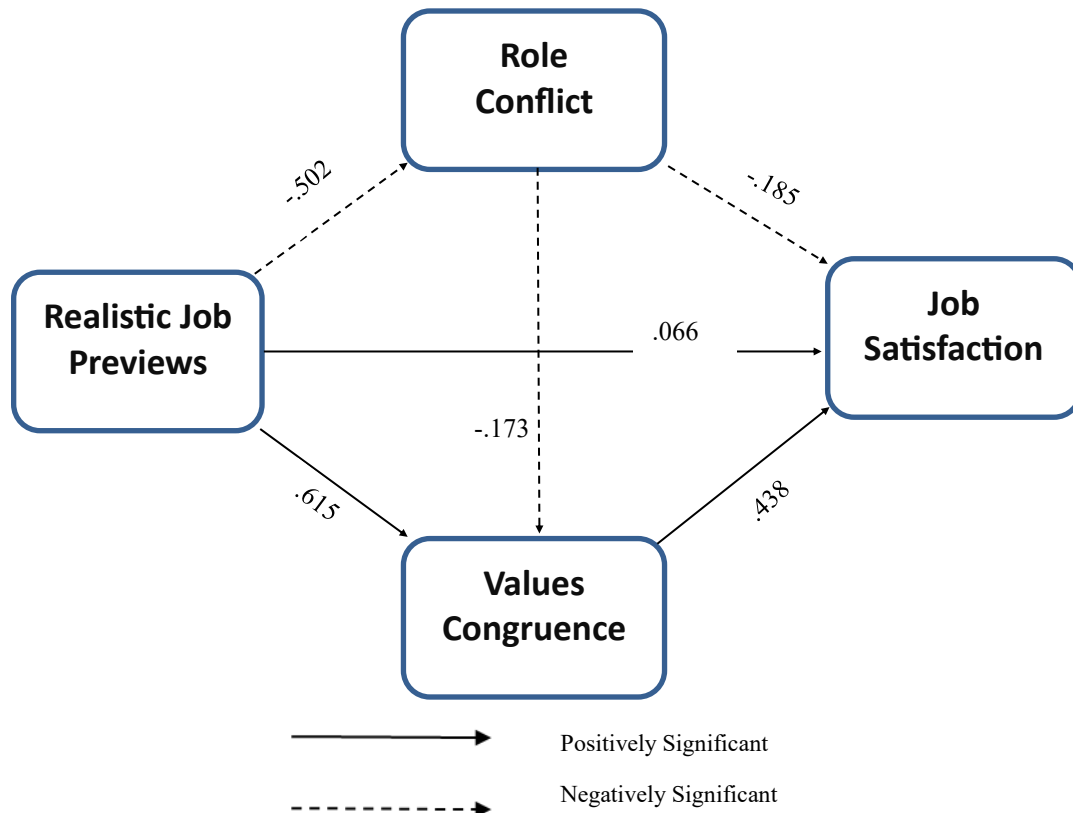
advisors to be a major source of value for their organizations. With current turnover rates, it may be difficult to ensure that salespeople are cultivating trust through the reflection of the organization’s mission and values. As such, there are clear benefits for organizations to implement and continuously improve socialization tactics.

Meta-analytic evidence from the management domain suggests that RJPs enhance performance and mitigate turnover intentions (Phillips, 1998). Positive effects may be due, in part, to the effectiveness of accurate job portrayals in attracting suitable applicants at the onset, rather than relying on acculturation through training. When job previews inform recruits about more subtle drawbacks of the job, such as the extent of job permeation into personal life, new recruits have time to institute precautionary measures to avert impending conflicts. Moreover, comprehensive recruitment messages have been shown to strengthen the positive relationship between

perceived corporate image and person-organization fit (Wei et al., 2016).

Consistent with the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962), research suggests that perceptual inconsistencies between salespeople and their managers are associated with nefarious individual and organizational outcomes (Evans et al., 2002). Specifically, salespeople with incompatible job expectations are likely to experience role ambiguity, lower performance, and satisfaction. Conversely, compatible salespeople are motivated to have more productive attitudes and customer relationships, as well as higher performance ratings (Herrbach & Mignonac, 2007). In addition, they are more likely to find their jobs meaningful and exert more effort as a result (Jaramillo et al., 2013). These findings suggest that increasing alignment between salesperson values and organizational culture should be an explicit goal of managers, especially when hiring new recruits. Figure 1 provides an overview of RJP model tested here.

FIGURE 1;



Values congruence refers to an inherent correspondence between an employee's enduring beliefs that guide attitudes/behaviors and an organization's culture (Rokeach, 1973; Cable & Judge, 1997). Compatible or not, salespeople are the manifestation of the organization to stakeholders and their interactions should embody its mission and values. Research suggests that salespeople who perceive their managers to be ethical and transformative in their leadership style are more likely to share the values of the organization (DeConinck, 2015; Mullins & Syam, 2014). Extending this logic, managerial interventions in the recruitment process may also be effective in transferring values to salespeople. Specifically, managers that present candidates with an accurate and in-depth assessment of the position during the recruitment process may engender congruence with organizational values. Longitudinal research suggests that online job postings with unambiguous HRM information are apt to reduce information asymmetry and promote positive attitudes toward the organization (Chang & Chin, 2018). Similarly, companies using Facebook to announce and describe job openings tend to experience more engagement and higher recruitment success (Golovko & Schumann, 2019). On the other hand, approaching salesperson recruitment with a 'numbers game' mentality may wreak havoc on the image and reputation of an organization. The onboarding process represents a critical juncture whereby salespeople develop first impressions of the workplace and begin formulating job perceptions. As such, it is our contention that managers may use this opportunity to preempt retention before it becomes an issue. That is, salespeople provided with frank and accurate depictions of the job beforehand will likely coalesce with the values of the organization more so than those receiving rose-colored depictions. As the preview becomes more realistic, congruence in values grows.

Therefore, we present below our first hypothesis:

H₁: RJPs will be positively related to values congruence.

As boundary spanners, salespeople are expected to juggle the often-conflicting demands of a wide array of constituents including, but not

limited to managers, customers, spouses, dependents, and community affiliations. Further complicating this balancing act is a turbulent sales environment fraught with evolving technologies and rising demands. Role conflict occurs as a result of at least two simultaneously opposing demands, such that compliance with one would make compliance with the other more difficult. Salespeople confronted with incongruent demands are often pressured to make judgment calls based on perceived importance (Park & Holloway, 2003). Although workplace characteristics like role ambiguity may lead to stress eventually, they are not inherently stressful. In fact, modest levels of role ambiguity and conflict may actually be conducive to performance, since salespeople are challenged to improvise high value solutions to satisfy all parties (Onyemah, 2008). However, the prevailing consensus among sales researchers is that high conflict negatively impacts productive salesperson outcomes (Boles & Babin, 1996; Netemeyer et al., 2004).

Among the many benefits of RJPs is a clear explanation or early 'walk-through' of job details that allows recruits to process the role and then calibrate themselves and their partners to impending demands (Bilal & Bashir, 2016). New research indicates that internships are among the most accurate RJPs, since they provide an experiential immersion in the job that is difficult to replicate by other means (Sekiguchi et al., 2020). Salespeople who are educated about how best to allocate their efforts and transition into the job may be better equipped to integrate the demands of existing partners into that equation. New recruits who are notified of impending long hours can make time adjustments and integrate work and non-work schedules. By the same token, salespeople in alignment with organizational values may be less likely to disrupt that equilibrium by ensuring their personal lives are in sync with their work roles.

RJPs are subject to divergent decision-making styles and variant levels of scrutiny from applicants that may impact perceived credibility of organizational claims (Liu et al., 2018). Research suggests employees with congruent values tend to process information and interpret environmental cues similarly when communicating (Dale et al., 2018). Dale and

colleagues (2018) suggest that effective managerial communication plays a vital role in diminishing role ambiguity, stimulus overload, and role stress. In addition, Sagiv and Schwartz (2000) suggest that when people's values in the workplace are congruent, they are more likely to clearly communicate the beliefs and role behaviors required to be successful. In contrast, the authors find that those who fail to assimilate to workplace norms may be ignored, alienated, or even punished. Ostracizing and punishment are likely to increase internal strife and negatively impact sense of well-being. As a result, individuals acculturate themselves to the prevailing value environment to avoid alienation and stress.

The use of value congruence as a predictor of occupational outcomes has been employed extensively in the organizational literature. A meta-analysis conducted by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005) examined the results from over one hundred studies involving value-based Person-Organization fit and occupational outcomes. Their analysis revealed that P-O fit had a relatively strong correlation with job satisfaction. These results demonstrate that although there is some degree of variability in its predictive ability, value congruence fit is appropriate as a means of explaining workplace attitudes and behavior.

Therefore, the following two hypotheses are proposed:

- H₂:** RJPs will be negatively related to role conflict.
H₃: Role conflict will be negatively related to a) values congruence, b) job satisfaction.

Previous research argues that inconsistencies between salesperson and manager expectations may adversely impact job satisfaction (Evans et al., 2002). Other research attributes the positive relationship between value congruence and job satisfaction to enhanced employee communication and trust (Edwards & Cable, 2009). Salespeople motivated to engage in customer orientation may also be tempered by their identification with organizational values (Thakor & Joshi, 2005). Gammoh et al. (2014) purport that salespeople with higher perceived congruence between their values and the sales company will experience higher identification

with the company and job satisfaction. Consistent with this research, we speculate that values congruence will enhance salesperson satisfaction. Thus, we put forth the following hypothesis:

- H₄:** RJPs and values congruence will be positively related to job satisfaction.

DATA AND TESTING METHOD

We compiled our data from responses to an online survey administered to a sample of salespeople obtained through the data services offered by Qualtrics in May 2019. All respondents were salespeople at least 19 years of age and not employed in a managerial role. Measures were selected based on established reliability and validity ratings. RJP was captured using a scale purported to capture the depth, accuracy, and relevance of job preview information (Pitt et al., 1995). The remaining constructs included value congruence (Netemeyer et al., 1997), role conflict (Rizzo, et al., 1970), and job satisfaction (adapted from Brayfield & Roth, 1951). Information about how long respondents had worked at their current organization, their job title, and the industry in which they work were also collected. Respondents (48.3% male) were all adult salespeople living and working in the United States, and, on average, were 41.2 years old (min = 19, max = 70, SD = 11.26) and had been working at their current organization for an average of 8.8 years (min = .75, max = 35, SD = 7.30). Job Satisfaction was measured using 5-point Likert scales; all other constructs were measured on 7-point Likert scales. All scales were anchored by strongly disagree to strongly agree. Moreover, two attention checks were used to ensure that respondents were careful in reading the items. Data cleaning involved checking for speeders and suspicious response patterns (e.g., responses from two CEOs in the "FG" industry who both completed the survey in the least amount of time). The final data set consisted of 151 observations, which exceeds the suggested sample size for covariance-based structural equations modeling with good communalities (CB-SEM) (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988).

We performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), using LISREL 10.2, to assess the fit and overall validity of the measurement model.

Initially, unusually high, disattenuated correlations between the dimensions of the RJP instrument (Depth, Relevance, and Accuracy) led us to investigate the possibility of strong multicollinearity among the RJP dimensions. A principal components analysis of these items extracted only a single component based on eigenvalues greater than one. Moreover, the determinant of the item-correlation matrix was approximately zero (.001; i.e., approaching singularity), indicating multicollinearity among the values in the matrix (Field, 2013). A closer reading of the RJP items revealed a degree of overlap in the content captured by the Depth, Relevance, and Accuracy dimensions, which is sensible from a theoretical perspective: job preview information that is in-depth and relevant must also be accurate. For the sake of comparison, we present in Table 1 the fit statistics from CFAs of the unidimensional and tridimensional RJP models. The fit between the two models is nearly the same ($\Delta CFI = 0.009$) leaving the fit comparison inconclusive. However, the 3-dimensional model produced disattenuated, inter-factor correlation estimates of 1.06, 1.05, and 1.1, which was deemed unacceptable. The unidimensional solution provides loadings ranging from 0.62 to 0.91, yielding an AVE of 58.5% and a composite reliability estimate of 0.93. Thus, given the strong performance of the unidimensional model, including high convergent validity, and the strong lack of discriminant validity in the three-dimensional model, along with the content of the items themselves, we move forward with a more parsimonious one-factor RJP.

TABLE 1:
Comparison of Model Fit Between One- and Three-Dimensional RJP.

One dimensional	$\chi^2 (27) = 53.4 (p = .002); CFI = .967;$ RMSEA = .083 [CI90 of .050 to .116]
Three dimensional	$\chi^2 (24) = 43.3 (p = .009); CFI = .976;$ RMSEA = .075 [CI90 of .037 to .111]

Notes: The fit statistics of the one- and three-dimensional models of the RJP construct are reported. Both models exhibit similar, but acceptable, levels of fit; however, our examination of the item content and loadings revealed the one-dimensional model to be more theoretically sound. These results highlight the potential danger of over reliance on fit statistics for judging construct validity.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS

The Measurement Model

The constraints corresponding to the theoretical measurement model (auxiliary theory) were imposed on the covariance matrix using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The resulting chi-square is 338.0 with 224 degrees of freedom (df) ($p = .000$), yielding a comparative fit index (CFI) of 0.949 and a RMSEA of 0.059. All suggest reasonable fit, given the model parameters (Hair et al., 2019). Further, the average variance extracted (AVE) for the factors ranges from 58.1% (role conflict) to 74.5% (values congruence). Similarly, the composite reliabilities range from 0.80 (role conflict) to 0.94 (values congruence). The results present evidence of fit validity and convergent validity. As can be seen in Table 3, discriminant validity is evident in that the AVEs for all constructs are greater than the between-factor correlations for all construct pairs. Thus, discriminant validity is sufficient to move forward with a structural analysis. Table 2 displays the standardized factor loadings, AVEs and composite reliabilities (CR) for each scale.

Acquiescence Bias

Given that all scales were administered in a like format, we explored the possibility of acquiescence bias attributable, in part, to the common scale type. To do so, the model constraints were modified to include an additional factor that related to all measured variables with a common effect (see Hair et al., 2019). In this case, the model allowing for common-method variance produced a chi-square of 341.8 with 245 df ($p < .001$). The chi-square difference of 3.80 with 21 df is not statistically significant ($p > .05$), suggesting that the model with the acquiescence factor provides a similar fit to the conventional CFA. The common loading estimate for the acquiescence factor on each measured item is 0.246 ($p = .028$). However, the previously estimated loading estimates and inter-factor correlations remain largely unchanged, suggesting the model is free of interpretational confounding. Nonetheless, given the significant loading estimate for the acquiescence factor, we elected to include the

TABLE 2:
Item Descriptions, Descriptive Statistics, and CFA Results.

Model Fit: $\chi^2(224) = 338.0$ ($p = .000$); CFI = 0.949; RMSEA = 0.059 [CI90 of 0.046 to 0.073]

Construct	AVE	CR	Item	Loading	Mean	SD
Realistic Job P review	58.2%	.93	DEP1. All of the issues about the intrinsic job facets such as variety, autonomy, and opportunity to use my valued skills were addressed in the information I received.	.76	4.60	1.45
			DEP2. All of the issues about the pay and promotion opportunities in the job were addressed in the information I received.	.78	4.66	1.72
			DEP3. All of the issues about the working conditions of the job were addressed in the information I received.	.71	4.62	1.51
			DEP4. I was told about all the positive aspects of the job before being employed.	.62	4.97	1.42
			REL1. All of the information I received about my job before being employed was relevant.	.72	5.11	1.22
			REL2. All of the relevant questions I had about working for this organization were answered during my employment process.	.84	4.72	1.54
			REL3. All relevant information about the job was addressed in the information I received.	.90	4.65	1.52
			ACC1. All of the information I received about the intrinsic job facets such as variety, autonomy, and opportunity to use my valued skills was accurate.	.78	4.74	1.48
			ACC2. All of the information I received about the pay and promotion opportunities in the job was accurate.	.72	4.72	1.63
			Role Conflict	58.1%	.80	RC1. I receive incompatible requests from two or more people at work.
RC2. I receive assignments without the manpower to complete them.	.771	3.84				1.80
RC3. I receive work assignments without adequate resources and material to execute them.	.901	3.89				1.78
VCG1. I feel that my personal values are a good fit with my current organization.	.84	5.12				1.43
Values Congruence	75.5%	.94	VCG2. My current organization has the same values as I do with regard to respect for others.	.91	4.96	1.66
			VCG3. My current organization has the same values as I do with regard to honest.	.93	4.95	1.65
			VCG4. My current organization has the same values as I do with regard to fairness.	.89	4.81	1.82
			VCG5. I really care about the fate of this organization.	.76	5.30	1.39
			Job Satisfaction	56.7%	.87	JS1. I am often bored with my job.*
JS2. Most of the time, I have to force myself to go work.*	.57	3.81				1.07
JS3. I definitely dislike my work.*	.88	3.55				.96
JS4. Most days, I am enthusiastic about my work.	.81	3.52				1.15
JS5. My job is pretty uninteresting.*	.73	3.54				1.03
JS6. I find real enjoyment in my work.	.81	3.54				1.03
Years at Current Organization	n/a	n/a				YCO1. How many years have you worked at your current organization?#

Notes: Loadings reported are standardized regression weights. Items with an asterisk (*) were reverse coded. # Not included in CFA given it is a single-item control variable.

acquiescence factor in the structural analysis. Also, given that years of experience (control) was unrelated to any other construct, we do not include it in the structural analysis reported below.

Structural Model

Further constraints were added to the model to represent the proposed theoretical structure and the SEM model was re-estimated subsequently. In this case, the constraints are structurally equivalent to the CFA model so the overall model chi-square remains 341.8 with 245 df ($p < .001$). The CFI is 0.959 and the RMSEA is 0.053. All structural parameter estimates are statistically significant ($p < .05$) and nontrivial, except for the RJP-job satisfaction relationship. Best practices suggest a comparison of one theoretical model against a plausible alternative. The model above proposes partial mediation of the RJP effects on job satisfaction. We compare the model to one that proposes complete mediation of the RJP effects on job satisfaction (through both role conflict and values congruence). Thus, the additional constraint to represent full mediation was imposed on the model and then estimated. The complete mediation model yields a chi-square of 342.1 with 246 df, a CFI of 0.935 and a RMSEA of 0.053. A chi-square difference of 0.3 with 1 df ($p = .58$) suggests that the added constraint significantly does not worsen fit and

lends support to the full mediation model. The indirect paths of RJP on values congruence (standardized effect 0.086) is relatively small ($p = .058$). In contrast, the indirect path of RJP on job satisfaction (0.40) is substantial and statistically significant ($p < .0001$). Thus, the results support, in particular, the role of value congruence in mediating the effect of RJP on satisfaction.

Post-hoc Analyses

Given the lengthy tenures of salespeople used in the sample (average 8.76 years), an independent sample t-test was conducted to ensure there were no differences between experienced salespeople as a group (tenure of 5 years or more) and more recent hires as a group (less than 5 years). No significant differences were found between salespeople for RJP, values congruence, and role conflict. However, there was a significant difference reported for job satisfaction; recent ($M=3.49, SD=0.83$) and experienced ($M=3.81, SD=0.80$), $t(149) = -2.41, p=0.02, d=0.39$. The effect size for this analysis ($d=0.39$) is less than Cohen’s (1988) convention for a medium effect. That said, respondents with prior sales experience at other organizations might have a better idea of what to expect in the onboarding process, which may impact job preview perceptions. Of the 151 subjects that were surveyed, 56 had prior sales experience before accepting their current

**TABLE 3:
Fornell-Larcker Test of Discriminant Validity Between all Constructs.**

	Realistic Job Preview	Role Conflict	Value Congruence	Job Satisfaction	Years at Current Organization
Realistic Job Preview	0.58	0.19	0.49	0.21	0.01
Role Conflict	-0.43 <i>4.90 (.000)</i>	0.58	0.18	0.20	0
Value Congruence	0.70 <i>5.57 (.000)</i>	-0.43 <i>-4.75 (.000)</i>	0.76	0.33	0
Job Satisfaction	0.46 <i>4.20 (.000)</i>	-0.45 <i>-3.68 (.001)</i>	0.57 <i>5.13 (.000)</i>	0.57	0.02
Years at Current Organization	-0.099 <i>-1.161 (.246)</i>	0.014 <i>.157 (.875)</i>	0.012 <i>.141 (.887)</i>	0.149 <i>1.68 (.093)</i>	n/a

Notes: AVEs are reported in bold on the diagonal. Correlations are reported below the diagonal and their associated t- and p-values are reported in italics. Squared correlations are reported above the diagonal.

position. An independent samples t-test was conducted to ensure sales experience had no impact on the RJP relationships. There was not a significant difference in the scores for Prior Sales Experience (M=4.65, SD=1.27) and No Prior Sales Experience (M=4.81, SD=1.05); $t(149) = 0.78, p = 0.43$.

TABLE 4:
ML Estimates and Confidence Intervals from Full SEM (95%)

	Estimate	LL	UL	Standardized Estimate
RJP-RC*	-0.38	-0.56	-0.20	-0.50
RJP-VC*	0.65	0.44	0.87	0.61
RJP-JS	0.05	-0.12	0.22	0.07
RC-VC*	-0.24	-0.48	-0.01	-0.17
RC-JS*	-0.19	-0.39	-0.01	-0.19
VC-JS*	0.30	0.14	0.46	0.43

Notes: Relationships marked with an asterisk (*) have $p \leq .05$.

TABLE 5:
ML Estimates and CI for Indirect Effects of RJP

	Estimate	LL	UL	Standardized Estimate
RJP - VC	0.093	0.000	0.185	0.086
RJP - JS***	0.302	0.138	0.468	0.397

Notes: Indirect effects confirmed using bias-corrected confidence intervals. Relationship marked with asterisks (***) has $p < .001$.

Managerial Implications

One contribution of this study is that RJPs may help align salespeople to organizational values and, therefore, enhance job satisfaction and reduce role conflict. Given the importance of RJPs, managers may utilize this knowledge to reinforce organizational bonds during and after the interview process. This research suggests RJPs may dispose salespeople to internalize and commit to core values, diminish role conflict, and increase job satisfaction. Few triumphs are more coveted by a sales manager than hiring and retaining a value-driven sales force. The results imply that managers may be able to edge closer to this nirvana by simply presenting a candid job appraisal. As competitive as the job market has become for recruiters, it can be just as overwhelming for sales recruits. It appears

that presenting salespeople with a forthright and objective depiction of the job promotes equilibrium with role partners and enhances solidarity with the values of the organization.

A recent survey by a global research agency reports that hiring and retaining extraordinary talent remains the paramount concern of CEOs worldwide (Conference Board, 2019). This concern is arguably more pronounced when it comes to salespeople. Salesperson interactions are a direct reflection of organizational image and have the potential to add or detract value from stakeholder relationships. Thus, it is critical that organizations emphasize the importance of adhering to organizational values, particularly when representing the company to external parties. Results suggest that an accurate portrayal of the job may culminate into favorable salesperson and organizational outcomes. Specifically, RJPs may positively influence values congruence and job satisfaction, while diminishing role conflict.

A primary finding of this study is that, based on the support for mediation, RJPs may help calibrate salespeople to organizational values and subsequently enhance job satisfaction. Given this, how can managers utilize this knowledge to reinforce organizational bonds during and after the interview process? Behavioral economists argue that managers can shape workplace behavior to align with organizational values by leveraging three powerful techniques: *prompts, incentives, and feedback* (White, Hardisty & Habib, 2019). Prompts refer to stimuli directed at salespeople that are intended to provoke a desired reaction. Incentives are intrinsic or extrinsic rewards that are used to reinforce these desired behaviors. Incentives ensure sustainable behavior and as such, should be used in moderation to avoid detracting from perceived value. Finally, feedback refers to information communicated to a salesperson to mold his/her thinking or behavior in a constructive way. The remainder of this section discusses techniques that managers can incorporate into hiring practices to optimize the selection process and align the sales force with organizational values. Table 6 provides a summary of these recommended initiatives.

Prompts

Despite the many perks and benefits associated with a successful sales career, it is not without its challenges. Expressing the downsides of a sales job on vacancy postings may help screen unqualified applicants and discourage misfits from applying. In addition, interviews that explicitly highlight the values of the organization and provide an honest and holistic representation of the role may also promote this aim. Since job postings are generally the first prompt encountered by new sales recruits, it is critical that these postings are scoped against the backdrop of organizational values. Job postings should provide applicants not only with an understanding of the job, but also a glimpse into the culture and values of the organization. Oftentimes, attractive aspects of the sales role, like earnings potential, ‘work from home’ benefits, and networking opportunities, are exaggerated at the expense of job stressors. Instead, a comprehensive appraisal of the sales position ought to be augmented with a brief synopsis of the company’s strategic vision to communicate the culture to prospective candidates. Moreover, applicants should be provided with the financial and nonfinancial metrics that help them evaluate their performance.

Organizational values should be converted into a functional checklist of behaviors that salespeople can use to evaluate and compare their performance with fellow reps. Potential candidates should understand how values impact the inner dynamics of the firm and dictate the flow of external relationships. Moreover, recruits ought to be made aware of the company’s social purpose and why it exists beyond just selling. On a functional level, this means aligning core values with corresponding sales behaviors and educating candidates about how certain procedures and administrative tasks impact the value chain. Investing in such an approach may accrue meaningfulness of work perceptions among salespeople and encourage conformity.

By design, salespeople are ideal candidates to utilize the productivity benefits offered by mobile applications. As such, companies should consider integrating a values scorecard into existing technologies that ties standardized

performance metrics with corresponding organizational values. For example, Patagonia’s core values are to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis while minimizing their carbon footprint. Like-minded salespeople may strive to minimize unnecessary commutes by scheduling more video or teleconferencing, while others may exert efforts to ensure qualified prospects have a strong connection to the brand purpose. Relevant indicators might include conversion rates of web-based client meetings or customer-based brand equity scores that could be tied to performance. Managers should encourage salesperson values congruence by prompting and rewarding behaviors that are “on brand.”

Incentives

Publicly endorsing and rewarding salespeople who behave in ways that promote organizational values may help steer internal perceptions. Salespeople that prioritize and functionalize organizational values should be exemplified for their efforts. One such opportunity is a competition whereby salespeople are rewarded for the most impactful application of organizational values. For example, salespeople could submit a brief smartphone video (about 1 minute) that describes how ‘living the brand’ has enhanced their lives and/or people around them. Submissions should focus on the unique ways that salespeople interpret and apply organizational values in their work and off-work lives. A voting process regulated from within the ranks would select winning salespeople based on creativity, impact, and/or other criteria deemed relevant by management. Organizations seeking a deeper connection with salespeople may contribute a designated amount to a charity or cause of the salesperson’s choice. Once a stream of submissions is compiled, a collage could be formulated as a recruitment tool to illustrate to new applicants how organizational values are being functionally implemented.

Alternatively, managers could solicit salespeople to submit a brief video describing the most formidable challenges and/or opportunities in their respective positions. After filtering for content, an assortment of the most representative videos could be compiled and

presented to applicants to provide a proper glimpse of realities on the job. In this way, prospects receive RJs, salespeople gain an opportunity to respectfully voice their concerns to management, and managers can stay connected to the pulse of the sales force.

New recruits often view the hiring process as a numbers game applying to a myriad of positions to 'see what's out there' and increase the pool of interviews. However, careful consideration should be given to the values and culture of the organization. Applicants should be wary of sales postings that do not take due diligence in explaining the requirements and/or challenges of the job, particularly when probed to do so. If possible, finalist candidates should be given an opportunity to attend a sales meeting as a preview of what to expect and to interact with active salespeople. Informational exchange with salespeople about day-to-day functions provides arguably the most accurate depiction of job realities for new recruits, and salespeople are more likely to mentor new recruits if they feel personally involved in hiring them (Brashear, Brooks & Boles, 2004). Recruits should be encouraged to ask open-ended questions about the job such as, "What sort of person would be unhappy in this career?" "What aspects of the job are experienced only after taking the position?" and "What is the most rewarding and/or challenging feature, financial or otherwise, of working at this organization?" Applicants that display common values in their work experiences and/or extracurricular activities should be given more consideration during the interview process, as they may be more inclined to mesh with the culture.

Companies must move beyond aspirational talk and put their money where their mouth is when it comes to allocating the resources necessary to promote core values. For instance, a company that prides itself on being a leader in innovation should be willing to absorb the expense of sending its salespeople to network at trade shows to gather insights on current trends and technologies. Similarly, a customer centric company should explicitly highlight that it values customer relationships by investing in software that streamlines administrative tasks for salespeople. Despite the increasing popularity of external recruitment services,

managers may benefit from boosting recruitment efforts from within the organization. Research suggests that inside referrals pan out more successfully than outsourced hires because referrers are more likely to take an active role in onboarding their referrals (Fernandez & Castilla, 2017). Therefore, it may be wise to distribute referral bonuses six months after the hire to ensure the referral is still there and performing as expected. Moreover, internal referrals should be gradually integrated into the recruitment process to avoid disrupting diversity in the sales force.

Feedback

A recent national survey reports that only one third of US companies objectively track the success of new hires (Cappelli, 2019). This is disconcerting given the potential reverberations of this oversight into performance and retention. Without an operational model driven by metrics, it is difficult to illustrate to salespeople what is expected. Required competencies listed on job postings should stem directly from performance metrics and salesperson feedback. As such, managers can determine what sales tasks are mission critical and display the metrics that will be used to evaluate performance in each of these tasks. Piercy, Cravens, and Morgan (1998) argue that behavior-based metrics (total number of calls made, client meetings scheduled, emails sent, etc.) provide a tool for simplifying the complexities of salesperson performance. Tracking behavior-based metrics may highlight the importance of certain selling activities over others and offer a source of information for job postings. If the role already exists, content should stem in large part from salespeople currently occupying the position. To further reinforce the screening process, new recruits could also be presented with sales-specific scenarios that compromise organizational values. Applicants may choose from a list of responses that would provide a glimpse into their instinctive reactions when organizational values are compromised.

Managers may also consider recruiting through atypical channels, such as brand communities, to harness the advocacy of their members. Swinberghe et al. (2018) argue that brand

community loyalists are more likely to educate and socialize new customers to the brand, overlook product failures, resist switching temptations, and actively participate in marketing research efforts. Social networks, such as brand communities, are an effective mechanism for attracting specialized and high-quality talent (Golovko & Schumann, 2019). Managers should consider leveraging this by posting detailed and accurate job descriptions to brand communities in order to gauge interest and/or referrals. Ultimately, the goal is to create a virtuous cycle of mission-driven salespeople that generate like-minded advocates.

Assimilating salespeople into an enduring value system is essential to an organization’s cultural integrity and requires constant vigilance. To stay ahead of potential integrity lapses, managers should constantly evaluate performance metrics of salespeople in relation to organizational values and objectives. As described earlier, salespeople should be reminded that their performance is not only being assessed for its financial impact, but also for its symmetry with organizational ideals.

Job previews should be informal and mission-driven in the sense that organizational values are systematically engrained into interview touch points, so as to embolden salespeople to ask questions and solicit guidance when confronted with ambiguity. Since salespeople are more prone to workplace stress (Mulki et al., 2008), new recruits should be primed to expect turbulence on the job. Given the growing concerns surrounding mental health, interviews should be anticipative and forthright about work stressors and offer possible interventions (counseling services, gym memberships, time/territory management workshops, etc.)

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

As with any cross-sectional research, a longitudinal assessment is needed to fully corroborate the relationships ascribed here. To our knowledge, there is only one study that utilizes longitudinal data to investigate RJPs in a sales context (Barksdale et al., 2003). Persisting on the methodological path pioneered by these researchers will contribute

**TABLE 6:
Recruitment Techniques to Promote a Value-driven Sales Force**

Prompts	Incentives	Feedback
Advertise undesirable features of the sales position to dissuade and screen unqualified applicants	Publicly reward salespeople that align their behaviors with organizational values	Derive required competencies listed on job postings from performance metrics and salesperson feedback
Create job postings that provide a snapshot of the organizational culture	Provide candidates with the opportunity to attend a sales meeting and interact with salespeople to promote mentoring opportunities	Solicit input from brand community ambassadors about recruitment practices to recruit on behalf of the organization or join the sales force themselves
Expose recruits to the financial and nonfinancial metrics used to evaluate performance	Encourage salesperson values congruence by prompting and rewarding behaviors that are “on brand”	Use solicited narratives from existing salespeople on how they “live the brand” to present candidates with an operational framework of how to apply organizational values on the job
Integrate a values scorecard into existing technologies that ties standardized performance metrics to organizational values	Incentivize salespeople to participate in recruitment efforts by providing referral bonuses, but only after the recruit establishes their performance has been	Collaborate with existing salespeople to clearly align performance metrics with organizational values and objectives
Expose recruits to the social purpose of the organization beyond just selling	Cultivate the growth of promising new recruits by investing in networking opportunities such as trade shows when feasible	

immensely to sales practice and theory building. A potential research limitation is that the measurement tool used for RJP was borrowed from the management literature. Future research should consider the development and validation of a sales-specific RJP measure with items attuned to the distinct responsibilities of a modern sales role. As such, item generation should be pooled from salespeople in a variety of industries and capacities to ensure content validity and generalizability of the scale. An additional future avenue of research could explore the impact of personal variables on the socialization process. It may be that emotional intelligence enhances the acculturation process, since a degree of perceptual awareness is needed to weave oneself into the fabric of an organization's culture. The average tenure of salespeople used in this sample is 8.76 years, which is worth noting as this may undermine recollection of the onboarding experience. Notwithstanding this possibility, we argue that the interview process is a key milestone in the work lives of salespeople and discrepancies between what was described and what was experienced are likely to be remembered, particularly when these discrepancies are ongoing. That said, the differences reported in job satisfaction between veteran salespeople and newer hires call for a deeper examination. Are salespeople who perceive they were misled during the onboarding process more likely to retaliate through counterproductive behaviors when hired? Similarly, do accurate RJP's lead salespeople to reciprocate through stewardship or organizational citizenship behaviors? Researchers should not view the paucity of sales-specific literature on RJPs as an impediment, but rather as an opportunity to extend sales management theory and practice. We hope this research serves as an additional spark to propel such inquiries.

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**SUMMARY STATEMENT
OF CONTRIBUTION**

A major contribution of this study is that RJPs may help align salespeople to organizational values and therefore enhance job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Given the importance of RJPs, managers may utilize this knowledge to reinforce organizational bonds during and after the interview process. Prompts, incentives and feedback recommendations are discussed to further help managers in this endeavor.