

What Drives Sales Success? A Closer Look into Salespeople's Genetic Make-Up and Personality

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Abstract

Canvassing and closing – the beginning and the end of the sales cycle – are moments of potential rejection and involve significant amounts of stress for salespeople. Some salespeople react with procrastination and absenteeism, while others do not. Drawing on differential susceptibility theory and stress research, this study investigates which combinations of carrying the Serotonin Transporter Gene S allele (SERT S) and the psychological traits of sensation seeking and neuroticism are beneficial in sales contexts. Based on a rich sample of genetic information and survey data from 594 salespeople, the empirical results confirm the hypotheses that carrying SERT S only yields positive effects on canvassing and closing if sensation seeking is high. If neuroticism is high, the effect of carrying SERT S is negative. Thereby, the study contributes to psychological stress research and provides actionable implications for sales managers and HR professionals.

Keywords: *Serotonin Transporter Gene (SERT); Personality; Eustress*

Track: Sales Management and Personal Selling