

Should I call or come by? How communication modes affect employee learning about the customer

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Abstract

Although understanding the customer is a well-known and central goal of frontline employees and although personality is a highly researched topic, the frontline employees' knowledge about the customer's personality, however, seems to be a neglected research area. In this research three lab experiments and an online experiment were conducted to explore frontline employees' knowledge about the customer's personality in different settings and formats. Personality knowledge is primarily transmitted through the voice (like in phone calls, video calls, in-person meetings). In negotiation situations, however, we find that face-to-face is the superior communication format to convey personality information. Our findings help to better understand the mechanisms behind frontline employee knowledge about the customer's personality leading to relationship building. Our results are useful for companies to establish effective CRM strategies to achieve frontline employee success.

Subject Areas: *Organizational Learning, Organization Relationships, Sales Force, Service Quality, Service Marketing*

Track: Sales Management and Personal Selling