

Storytelling in salesperson-customer interactions: How salespeople leverage stories across the sales process

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Abstract:

Storytelling has been pointed out as a communication behavior frequently utilized by salespeople, but past research has focused on the use of stories as a persuasion strategy during the presentation stage. This study aims to establish a more comprehensive understanding of storytelling in sales by exploring the stages in which storytelling is used, its various purposes, and how stories are created. We interviewed 15 salespeople in multiple industries regarding their use of storytelling. Our thematic analysis revealed that storytelling is used across all stages of the sales process, including first contact, negotiation, and post-sales follow-up. Salespeople use stories not only to persuade but also to build relationships, establish a common ground with customers, and deliver negative information. While stories are created individually by salespeople rather than through formal training, they play an important role in helping salespeople interact with customers more effectively.

Keywords: Storytelling; Sales Communication; Personal Selling

Track: Sales Management and Personal Selling