

The Value of Intellectual Capital for Business-To-Business Selling

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Abstract

In B2B firms, salespeople often work in product silos and act as experts for a specific category. This type of organizational structure is useful for selling complex products which require a high degree of product knowledge, but it relies on salespeople effectively targeting opportunity types (customer acquisition, rebuy, and cross-selling) with their sales efforts. We examine how different types salesperson intellectual capital (human, social, and organizational capital) influences a salesperson's opportunity selection and conditional on opportunity type selection, the sales outcome (revenue). Utilizing data from a B2B paper-and-packaging firm, we find that salespeople do rely on their intellectual capitals when selecting which opportunity types to target and their sales success is dependent on the combination of intellectual capital the salesperson currently possesses. This provides evidence of the importance of aligning salesperson intellectual capital and sales opportunities.

Keywords: B2B Sales; Intellectual Capital; Customer Acquisition and Retention

Track: Sales Management and Personal Selling