

Following the Lead: How Salespeople Respond to AI and Human Recommendations

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Following the Lead: How Salespeople Respond to AI and Human Recommendations

Abstract

Salespeople have traditionally relied on sales managers, experienced colleagues, or external sales consultants for advice, noted as sales coaching. The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) reshapes how sales coaching is generated and delivered. This study investigates how salespeople perceive and respond to recommendations from human and AI-based sales agents after an initial failure of the agent. Drawing on the Stereotype Content Model, we argue that salespeople are initially more inclined to follow coaching from human experts; but after an inaccurate recommendation, they will be more inclined to follow a subsequent recommendation from an AI system than from a human expert. Through two experiments, we show that salespeople's willingness to follow subsequent recommendations is shaped by perceptions of warmth and competence of the coaching agent. Our insights help sales managers to strategically position AI, manage expectations, and integrate them successfully.

Track: Sales Management and Personal Selling