

Are B2B Buyers and Sellers Cut from the Same Cloth? Comparing How Soft Skills Impact Performance in Buying and Selling Functions

Giang Dao

University of Twente/University of Münster

Klaas Stek

University of Twente

Agata Leszkiewicz

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

Holger Schiele

Cite as:

Dao Giang, Stek Klaas, Leszkiewicz Agata, Schiele Holger (2026), Are B2B Buyers and Sellers Cut from the Same Cloth? Comparing How Soft Skills Impact Performance in Buying and Selling Functions. *Proceedings of the European Marketing Academy*, 55th, (133875)

Paper from the 55th Annual EMAC Conference, Bath, United Kingdom, June 2-5, 2026



Are B2B Buyers and Sellers Cut from the Same Cloth? Comparing How Soft Skills Impact Performance in Buying and Selling Functions

Abstract

This study investigates how soft skills shape performance in B2B purchasing and sales roles across cost, innovation, customer relationships, and supplier satisfaction. Using survey data from 356 buyers and 318 sellers, it combines Necessary Condition Analysis to identify essential soft skills and regression analysis to examine their incremental effects. Findings show that buyers and sellers need different soft skill sets to achieve similar performance goals, and that these skills often act as minimum thresholds rather than performance enhancers. As the first empirical comparison of soft skill impacts across buying and selling roles, the study highlights their importance as boundary-spanning resources in B2B relationships and cautions that moving individuals between these roles requires aligning their soft skill profiles with role-specific demands.

Track: Business-To-Business Marketing & Supply Chain Management