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**SALES STYLES OF EXECUTIVES SELLING TWO AND FOUR WHEELERS**

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**ABSTRACT**

*Sales executives are the pillars of an organization and on them depends its success. For an organization to be effective, the sales approach to decision making, along with technological efficiency and facilities available for research and development, is very important. The distinctive way in which various functions such as sales goals, decision making, anxiety management, conflict management, and self management are used and managed comprises the sales style. Those styles, which have damaging effect on the overall health of the organisation, can be easily diagnosed and discontinued, with immediate effect. A diagnostic instrument with a scoring key helps the management to diagnose how far excellent and bad styles are practiced in their organisation so that the best style can be made use of and the bad ones avoided. The present study was undertaken with an aim of understanding and comparing the sales styles being used by executives at various levels in the showrooms of two and four wheelers in a district of Punjab in India. All the 26 salesmen and 13 sales managers working in these showrooms were studied for the sales styles being employed by them. The outcome of this process is discussed in this paper.*

**KEYWORDS**

Sales Goals, Decision Making, Anxiety Management, Conflict Management, and Self Management.

**INTRODUCTION**

 Sales executives are the pillars of an organization and on them depends its success. For an organization to be effective, the sales approach to decision making, along with technological efficiency and facilities available for research and development, is very important. The distinctive way in which various functions such as sales goals, decision making, anxiety management, conflict management, and self management are used and managed comprises the sales style. Those styles, which have damaging effect on the overall health of the organisation, can be easily diagnosed and discontinued, with immediate effect. Selling technique is the body of methods used in the profession of sales. According to Paul Eccher five prominent sales styles are

1. The Relationship Selling Style: This style is all about cultivating a close, personal rapport with the prospects and customers. Relationship sellers are known for their friendliness and outgoing personalities.
2. The Technical Problem-Solving Style: Sales professionals who are experts on their products and are able to educate their audience on the details of their offerings are practitioners of the Technical Problem-Solving style. These individuals tend to be quite analytical, and they excel at establishing technical credibility in front of their prospects.
3. The Account Servicing Style: Sales professionals who use this selling style focus on keeping existing customers happy while asking for more business. This service-minded style is built upon a foundation of responsiveness, proactive follow-up, and a strong commitment to doing what is right for physicians and their patients.
4. The Assertive Style: Assertive style sales professionals sell through strength of personality. Strong assertive style reps typically bring that difficult-to-train, "fire in the belly" approach to the work. They are extremely competitive, self-assured, intense, and assertive.
5. The Business Partnering Style: Sales professionals who establish a business consulting relationship with their customers employ this style. Business Partners understand strategic issues and market conditions that influence business practices. They excel in helping their customers "grow" their businesses. Successful business partners display excellent big-picture thinking skills, market knowledge, persuasive communication capabilities, and creativity.

**REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

Customers have matured in terms of how they buy, and consequently are changing their expectations of suppliers. Their demands are often for integrated total solutions to business problems (Blustain, 1992; Henke, 2000; Webster, 1992). In response, salespeople have gained considerable operating freedom at the buyer-seller interface (Del Vecchio, 1998). The salesman of today is more of a relationship manager working both sides of increasingly complex buyer-seller interfaces (e.g., Beverland, 2001; Cespedes, *et al.*, 1989; Dwyer, *et al.*, 1987).

Weitz (1981) offers a view of the sales role which starts to inform our thinking. His framework proposes that effective selling is a series of salesperson behaviors contingent upon: (1) the resources of the salesperson, (2) the characteristics of the buyer-seller relationship, and (3) the nature of the customer's buying task. Weitz's model is important because it captures the notion that adaptation on the part of the salesperson is an integral component of success. It also raises the issue of resources being important to sales success, with the unstated assumption being that many of these resources reside inside the salesperson's own organization.

Saxe and Weitz (1982) pointed out that the customer-oriented selling refers to the degree to which salespeople practice the marketing concept by trying to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy the customers' needs. This involves a more problem identification and problem solving approach.

Adaptive selling means that salespeople change their sales strategies according to the sales situation (Weitz, *et al.*, 1986) and leans towards customer-oriented models.

(Johnston, *et al.*, 1989; Jolson, 1999) concluded that factors inside the salesperson's own company are often responsible for poor performance — factors such as poor sales territory design, poor marketing support, and ineffective first-level sales managers. It may be said that salespeople who proactively manage these internal factors may be more successful than those who do not.

According to Churchill, Ford & Walker (1993) most selling techniques confirm to one of the four philosophical orientations: (1) the stimulus-response approach, (2) mental-state approach, (3) need-satisfaction approach, and (4) problem-solution approach. The first two approaches are salesperson-oriented, rather than customer oriented. The third one involves a two-way communication between the seller and the buyer and the fourth approach involves a healthy interaction for problem solving.

Marshall, *et al.* (1999) updated the original study of Moncrief (1986) and found that the activities salespeople perform have changed markedly in recent years. Some of these newer activities are internally focused—such as making the sale and then turning it over to someone else, and coordinating with sales support. This again signals the emerging importance of the salesperson's internally-directed selling behaviors.

**NEED OF THE STUDY**

Enormous research has been done in foreign countries as well as in India on sales styles of executives. But only a few have been conducted on sales styles of executives in companies of Punjab, India. Hence, the present study was taken up.

**OBJECTIVES**

1. To study the sales styles of the executives of showrooms of two and four wheelers in Moga city of Punjab.
2. To compare the sales styles of the executives of showrooms of two and four wheelers in Moga city of Punjab.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

For the present study both exploratory and conclusive research methods were used. The conclusive research method here is descriptive in nature and the research design is single cross-sectional. In this study primary data has been collected through survey method. The research was conducted with the help of a structured interview schedule based on a modified Sales Troika Styles (Pareek, 1997). According to this instrument the troika consists of the concern for product, customer and company. The original instrument has already been tested for reliability and validity and proposes the following styles:

- 1) 1,1,1 – Routine-sale oriented
- 2) 1,9,1 – Customer oriented
- 3) 9,1,1 – Product oriented
- 4) 9,9,1 – Solution oriented
- 5) 1,1,9 – Company oriented
- 6) 1,9,9 – Loyalty-relationship oriented
- 7) 9,1,9 – Company-product oriented
- 8) 9,9,9 – Creative-solution oriented
- 9) 5,5,5 – Technique oriented

In the present case the target population consists of salesmen and sales managers working in the showrooms of two and four wheelers in Moga city of Punjab state in India. The unit (Kotler, 1997) in the study includes the showrooms of two and four wheelers while the elements are the sales managers and salesmen working in them. All the nine sales managers and twenty six salesmen working in these showrooms have been covered in the study.

The respondents were personally administered the questionnaire and primary data was collected. The questionnaire consisted of two parts, namely, Part-A and Part-B. Part-A of the questionnaire consisted of solicited information about the profile of respondents like their age, designation etc. Part-B consisted of 18 questions based on Sales Troika Styles (relating to sales goals and decision making) proposed by Mr. Udai Pareek. This questionnaire consisted of 9 statements related to sales goals and 9 to decision making and the respondent had to answer on a five point Likert scale (Malhotra and Dash, 2010) in all the eighteen statements.

Analysis of data has been done by constructing suitable tables and by using other statistical techniques like mean, standard deviation, and z-test for proportions. Percentage method was used to analyze Part-A of the questionnaire. The percentage of respondents was calculated for each category of respondent's profile. Part-B consisted of 18 questions. The answer sheet for this questionnaire was used for scoring. Each question had five options and the respondent had to tick on one of them.

**TABLE 1: SCORES FOR DIFFERENT ANSWER CHOICES**

	Score
Strongly Disagree	0.5
Disagree	1.0
Neither Agree nor Disagree	1.5
Agree	2.0
Strongly Agree	2.5

**HYPOTHESIS OF THE STUDY**

The data was analyzed using the following null hypothesis (Bajpai, 2010).

**HYPOTHESIS**

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the proportion of agreement for a sales style for salesmen and those for sales managers.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant difference between the proportion of agreement for a sales style for salesmen and those for sales managers.

Formula used:

$$Z = \frac{(\bar{p}_1 - \bar{p}_2) - (p_1 - p_2)}{\sqrt{(p_w \times q_w) \left( \frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

where:

$\bar{p}_1$  = Proportion of sample 1

$\bar{p}_2$  = Proportion of sample 2

$p_w = \frac{x_1 + x_2}{n_1 + n_2}$  = Estimate of population proportion

$q_w = 1 - p_w$

$n_1$  = Size of sample 1

$n_2$  = Size of sample 2

$P_1$  = Proportion of population 1

$P_2$  = Proportion of population 2

**LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

To understand the research findings in their right perspective, it is necessary that limitations of the study be mentioned. The present study may have suffered from the following limitations.

1. Size of the sample selected for research may perhaps be considered as small, hence; the result of this study might not be fully reliable for generalization for the whole country.



2. Since the questionnaire is comparatively lengthy and the executives normally busy, there are chances that information obtained in some cases might have deviated from actual.
3. The respondents were asked to give their practical views and not the ideology, but the personal biases of the respondents might have affected the results.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The outcome of number of respondents has been categorized in categories such as age, educational qualifications, total work experience, and levels of management.

**AGE**

Age is the first and a very important factor to analyze the sales style of executives in different companies. In this study the age of respondents has been divided into four categories.

Table 2 indicates that the largest group for respondents belonged to below 30 (46.15 percent) while the smallest group is for 50 and above (05.3 percent) year categories.

Majority of salesmen, 69.23%, belonged to the age group of below 30 years while the rest are between 30 and 40 years of age.

In the sales manager category, more than two third belonged to the age group of 40-50 years.

**TABLE 2: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF EXECUTIVES IN TERMS OF AGE**

Age (Years)	No. of Respondents		Total
	Salesmen	Sales Managers	
Below 30	18 (69.23)	-	18 (46.15)
30-40	08 (30.77)	02 (15.38)	10 (25.64)
40-50	-	09 (69.24)	09 (23.08)
50 & above	-	02 (15.38)	02 (05.13)
Total	26 (100)	13 (100)	39 (100)

Note: The figures in brackets indicate the percentages.

**EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND**

Educational background is a very important factor, which affects the behaviour of an individual to a very large extent. Table 3 indicates a majority of respondents (61.53%) were found to be having an educational level of graduation and the rest were post-graduates.

Furthermore, among the salesmen around four fifth of the respondents were graduates and 19.23 percent were post-graduates. Among sales managers three-fourth of the respondents was post graduates and 23.08 percent were graduates.

**TABLE 3: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF EXECUTIVES IN TERMS OF EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION**

Educational Qualification	No. of Respondents		Total
	Salesmen	Sales Managers	
Graduate	21 (80.77)	03 (23.08)	24 (61.53)
Postgraduate	05 (19.23)	10 (76.92)	15 (38.47)
Total	26 (100)	13 (100)	39 (100)

Note: The figures in brackets indicate the percentages.

**TOTAL WORK EXPERIENCE**

The next important factor under study was the total work experience of the executives. On the basis of the total work experience the executives were classified into four categories, i.e.

- i) Less than 5 years,
- ii) Between 5 and 10 years,
- iii) Between 10 and 15 years,
- iv) Above 15 years.

Table 4 shows that a majority of the sales executives have an experience of less than 10 years.

In case of salesmen nearly 60 percent have an experience of less than 5 years and the rest being divided in the categories of between 5 and 10, and between 10 and 15 years.

At the sales manager level, over fifty percent of the respondents have an experience which is above 15 years; the rest being equally divided in the categories from 5 to 15 years.

**TABLE 4: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF EXECUTIVES IN TERMS OF TOTAL WORK EXPERIENCE**

Total Work Experience (Years)	No. of Respondents		Total
	Salesmen	Sales Managers	
Less than 5	15 (57.69)	-	15 (38.46)
5-10	07 (26.92)	03 (23.08)	10 (25.64)
10-15	04 (15.39)	03 (23.08)	07 (17.95)
Above 15	-	07 (53.84)	07 (17.95)
Total	26 (100)	13 (100)	39 (100)

Note: The figures in brackets indicate the percentages.

**LEVEL OF MANAGEMENT**

Table 5 shows that the number of salesmen is exactly the double of the number of sales managers.

**TABLE 5: FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF EXECUTIVES IN TERMS OF LEVEL OF MANAGEMENT**

Level of Management	No. of Respondents	Percentage
Salesmen	26	66.67
Sales Managers	13	33.33
Total	39	100

**ANALYSIS OF SALES STYLES OF EXECUTIVES**

**1. RANKING OF THE SALES STYLES BEING EMPLOYED BY EXECUTIVES**

Table 6 shows that 9,1,1 – Product oriented and 1,9,1 – Customer oriented are the top two styles for both the categories while the third rank for salesmen and sales managers are being taken by 1,1,1 – Routine-sale oriented and 9,9,1 – Solution oriented respectively .

TABLE 6 – RANKING OF THE SALES STYLES BEING EMPLOYED BY SALES EXECUTIVES BASED ON THE MEAN SCORES

Rank	Style	
	Salesmen	Sales Manager
1.	9,1,1 – Product oriented	9,1,1 – Product oriented
2.	1,9,1 – Customer oriented	1,9,1 – Customer oriented
3.	1,1,1 – Routine-sale oriented	9,9,1 – Solution oriented
4.	9,9,1 – Solution oriented	1,1,1 – Routine-sale oriented
5.	1,9,9 – Loyalty-relationship oriented	9,9,9 – Creative-solution oriented
6.	5,5,5 – Technique oriented	1,9,9 – Loyalty-relationship oriented
7.	9,9,9 – Creative-solution oriented	1,1,9 – Company oriented
8.	9,1,9 – Company-product oriented	5,5,5 – Technique oriented
9.	1,1,9 – Company oriented	9,1,9 – Company-product oriented

2. TWO-SAMPLE ANALYSIS RESULTS

HYPOTHESIS

**H<sub>0</sub>:** There is no significant difference between the proportion of agreement for a sales style for salesmen and those for sales managers.

**H<sub>1</sub>:** There is a significant difference between the proportion of agreement for a sales style for salesmen and those for sales managers.

(Variable 1: Salesmen, Variable 2: Sales Manager)

1) 9,1,1 – Product oriented

z-Test: Two Sample for Proportions		
Agreements for the style		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Proportion	0.884615385	1
Observations	26	13
Hypothesized Proportion Difference	0	
Estimated Population Proportion	0.923076923	
Z	-1.274754878	
z Critical two-tail	1.959962787	

**Result:** Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, so, do not reject H<sub>0</sub>

2) 1,9,1 – Customer oriented

z-Test: Two Sample for Proportions		
Agreements for the style		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Proportion	0.846153846	0.923076923
Observations	26	13
Hypothesized Proportion Difference	0	
Estimated Population Proportion	0.871794872	
Z	-0.677365137	
z Critical two-tail	1.959962787	

**Result:** Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, so, do not reject H<sub>0</sub>

3) 9,9,1 – Solution oriented

z-Test: Two Sample for Proportions		
Agreements for the style		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Proportion	0.615384615	0.846153846
Observations	26	13
Hypothesized Proportion Difference	0	
Estimated Population Proportion	0.692307692	
Z	-1.471960144	
z Critical two-tail	1.959962787	

**Result:** Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, so, do not reject H<sub>0</sub>

4) 1,1,1 – Routine-sale oriented

z-Test: Two Sample for Proportions		
Agreements for the style		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Proportion	0.769230769	0.692307692
Observations	26	13
Hypothesized Proportion Difference	0	
Estimated Population Proportion	0.743589744	
Z	0.518618855	
z Critical two-tail	1.959962787	

**Result:** Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, so, do not reject H<sub>0</sub>

5) 9,9,9 – Creative-solution oriented

z-Test: Two Sample for Proportions		
Agreements for the style		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Proportion	0.115384615	0.461538462
Observations	26	13
Hypothesized Proportion Difference	0	
Estimated Population Proportion	0.230769231	
Z	-2.418677324	
z Critical two-tail	1.959962787	

**Result:** Since the calculated value is more than the critical value, so, reject  $H_0$

6) 1,9,9 – Loyalty-relationship oriented

z-Test: Two Sample for Proportions		
Agreements for the style		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Proportion	0.192307692	0.461538462
Observations	26	13
Hypothesized Proportion Difference	0	
Estimated Population Proportion	0.282051282	
Z	-1.761326979	
z Critical two-tail	1.959962787	

**Result:** Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, so, do not reject  $H_0$

7) 1,1,9 – Company oriented

z-Test: Two Sample for Proportions		
Agreements for the style		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Proportion	0.076923077	0.230769231
Observations	26	13
Hypothesized Proportion Difference	0	
Estimated Population Proportion	0.128205128	
Z	-1.354730275	
z Critical two-tail	1.959962787	

**Result:** Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, so, do not reject  $H_0$

8) 5,5,5 – Technique oriented

z-Test: Two Sample for Proportions		
Agreements for the style		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Proportion	0.076923077	0.153846154
Observations	26	13
Hypothesized Proportion Difference	0	
Estimated Population Proportion	0.102564103	
Z	-0.746420027	
z Critical two-tail	1.959962787	

**Result:** Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, so, do not reject  $H_0$

9) 9,1,9 – Company-product oriented

z-Test: Two Sample for Proportions		
Agreements for the style		
	Variable 1	Variable 2
Proportion	0.115384615	0.076923077
Observations	26	13
Hypothesized Proportion Difference	0	
Estimated Population Proportion	0.102564103	
Z	0.373210014	
z Critical two-tail	1.959962787	

**Result:** Since the calculated value is less than the critical value, so, do not reject  $H_0$

### CONCLUSIONS

As is evident from the discussion, 9,1,1 – Product oriented, 1,9,1 – Customer oriented, 1,1,1 – Routine-sale oriented, and 9,9,1 – Solution oriented styles are being used primarily by the sales executives both at salesman as well as sales manager level whereas the most complete style i.e. 9,9,9 – Creative-solution oriented lies at the fifth rank for sales managers and at seventh rank for salesmen which is not a healthy trend.

The results of the z-test show that there is no significant difference between the proportions for the nine sales styles for executives working at salesmen and sales manager levels except for 9,9,9 – Creative-solution oriented style which is used quite less at salesman level.

The proportions are quite low for styles where there has to be a strong concern for the company i.e. (a) 9,9,9, (b) 1,9,9, (c) 1,1,9, and (d) 9,1,9.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The principal styles used by sales executives are 9,1,1 – Product oriented, 1,9,1 – Customer oriented which are NOT-OK styles so; it is required that suitable training is provided to the managers so that more of OK style of 9,9,9 – Creative-solution oriented is used. It has to be explained that all the three dimensions of product, customer and company need to be kept in mind while making a sale.
2. The scores for 9,9,9 – Creative-solution oriented style is quite low. An attempt for changing the behavioral patterns for such styles should be made.
3. The proportions for styles involving concern for company being low indicate that the executives at all the levels are laying less concern for the company. Suitable trainings stressing on this point need to be conducted.

### SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The present study was conducted on only the showrooms of Moga (Punjab-India). But, as the number of showrooms in the area is very limited, so, the study can be for more districts of Punjab or even in more states of India.

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