

The Effects of Salesperson Mentoring on Multi-Faceted Job Satisfaction

Nathaniel Hartmann (MBA, Purdue University), Doctoral Candidate, Purdue University,
nnhartma@purdue.edu

Brian N. Rutherford (Ph.D., Georgia State University), Assistant Professor of Selling and Sales Management, Purdue University, brutherf@purdue.edu

Scott B. Friend (Ph.D., Georgia State University), Assistant Professor of Marketing, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, sfriend2@unl.edu

G. Alexander Hamwi (Ph.D., Georgia State University), Assistant Professor of Marketing, Missouri State University, alexhamwi@missouristate.edu

Abstract

This paper examines the impact of having a mentor on salesperson multi-faceted job satisfaction. The results of this study indicate that having a mentor is positively associated with protégé satisfaction with supervisors, overall job, company policy, promotion, pay, fellow workers, and customers. Further, results indicate that organizational mentors are positively associated with protégé satisfaction with supervisors, overall job, company policy, pay, and fellow workers. These results suggest that organizational mentors have the greatest impact on protégés. Managers are advised to develop a culture that fosters organizational mentoring.

Keywords: Mentor, Job Satisfaction Facets, Sales & Sales Management

A Manuscript Prepared for
The Annual GSSI Conference 2011
March, 2011

Firms spend billions of dollars every year to increase salesperson performance and reduce salesperson turnover (Wilson, Strutton, and Farris 2002). One method to increase salesperson performance and reduce salesperson turnover is to increase levels of salesperson job satisfaction (Sager, Varadarajan, and Futrell 1988). When trying to increase employee job satisfaction, the creation of mentoring programs is one option available for firms (Hegstad and Wentling 2004). Employee mentoring has been shown to have a positive impact on overall job satisfaction within various non-sales setting (Ensher, Thomas, and Murphy 2001; Underhill 2006). Mentoring has also been shown to impact employee absenteeism, turnover (Viator 1991), loyalty, organizational commitment (Mendleson, Barnes, and Horn 1989), and employee socialization (Chao, Walz, and Gardner 1992). While mentoring has a major impact on employees, mentoring programs also come with financial and human resource costs that firms must consider before implementing a mentoring program or deciding which type of mentoring program to implement.

Although the mentoring-job satisfaction association has received attention in non-sales contexts, the relationship has received minimal researcher attention in a sales context. While the non-sales literature suggests a significant relationship between mentoring and job satisfaction (Chao, Waltz, and Gardner 1992; Ensher, Thomas, and Murphy 2001; Underhill 2006), sales researchers have often questioned the generalizability of research conducted in non-sales contexts being applied to sales contexts because of the uniqueness of the sales profession (e.g. Hawes, Rich, and Widmier 2004). Given the differences in the sales profession compared to other profession, a gap within the literature exists assessing the impact of mentoring on salesperson job satisfaction.

To further compound the issues of the impact of mentoring on salesperson job satisfaction, much of the mentoring literature focuses on a single faceted or global measure of job satisfaction (Ensher, Thomas, and Murphy 2001; Underhill 2006). However, a growing body of literature in sales has examined both antecedents and outcomes of multiple facets of job satisfaction (e.g., Rutherford et al. 2009). Specifically, this literature puts forth that studies which examine a global or single faceted measure of job satisfaction fail to capture the true complexity of salesperson job satisfaction (Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1974). Hence, a second gap exists with regard to the impact of mentoring on the facets of salesperson job satisfaction.

Without a better understanding of the impact of different forms of mentoring programs on salesperson job satisfaction, firms looking to implement mentoring programs could be inefficiently utilizing financial and human resources by focusing on the wrong type(s) of mentoring programs. However, if they fail to implement mentoring programs where needed, they may be worse due to the neglected impact that mentoring has on the sales force. The purpose of this study is to provide a better understanding of the impact of mentoring on multi-faceted sales person job satisfaction. Specifically, two research questions are examined:

The Theoretical Basis of Mentoring

Within the sales literature, social exchange theory and social learning theory are used to examine the associations between mentoring and the outcome variables of performance, organizational commitment, and intention to leave (Brashear et al. 2006). Further, social exchange theory and social learning theory are both used in the sales literature to explain the antecedents of job satisfaction (e.g., Mulki et al. 2008). Social learning theory indicates that individuals learn through observing others' attitudes, behaviors, and the outcomes of such behaviors (Bandura

1978). Manz and Sims (1981) indicate that individuals learn vicariously through senior organization members by modeling their attitudes and behaviors.

Social exchange theory assumes individuals develop, maintain, or dissolve relationships based on the relationships' perceived benefits and costs (Emerson 1981). Social exchange theory has been the theoretical framework for mentoring research (Brashear et al. 2006; Ensher, Thomas, and Murphy 2001). Literature suggests that protégés benefit from a mentoring relationship by receiving career-related support, psychosocial support, and access to role modeling (Scandura 1992). Social exchange theory suggests that the benefits received by the protégé should lead to greater satisfaction with the relationship (Emerson 1981).

Background

Mentoring

Mentoring is an intense interpersonal relationship developed to enhance the protégés career growth (Kram, 1985). Levinson et al. (1978) proposed that the mentor relationship can be understood in its most basic form as a simple friendship between two individuals, one of whom is a little more experienced and may serve as a guide. Mentors may consist of supervisors, peers, other organization members with greater rank, and individuals from other organizations (Kram 1985). Some researchers, such as Levinson et al. (1978), have chosen to use a broad definition of mentoring so as to encompass all career-oriented relationships that support the protégé.

Mentors provide protégés with a wide variety of support including career-related support and psychosocial support (Kram 1985). Peluchette and Jeanquart (2000) suggest not all employees seek mentors from the same source. Employees seek out organizational mentors and mentors external to the organization (Peluchette and Jeanquart 2000) for different skill development reasons. In organizational mentoring relationships both individuals are employed by the same organization. In external mentoring relationships the protégé and mentor are not employed by the same organization. External mentorships are informal and are not overseen or recognized by the protégé's organization. Internal mentors may provide greater access to organization resources and accessibility in comparison to external mentors (Brashear et al. 2006). Internal mentors are assumed to be able to provide protection, sponsorship, and offer challenging assignments to their protégé. External mentors may offer greater interorganizational resources and provide greater mobility across organizations (Ragins 1997).

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction remains an important issue in sales research because of its impact on employee retention (Ladik et al. 2002). Job satisfaction, within sales contexts, has been defined as "all characteristics of the job itself and the work environment which industrial salesmen find rewarding, fulfilling and satisfying; or frustrating and unsatisfying", (Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1974, pg. 255). While salesperson job satisfaction is an important aspect to understand, much of the salesperson job satisfaction literature focuses on global measures of job satisfaction which fail to provide valuable information regarding the specific aspects of the work environment (Churchill, Ford, and Walker 1974). However a limited, but growing, body of literature has examined multi-faceted job satisfaction within a sales context (e.g., Rutherford et al. 2009). Organizational researchers have demonstrated that employees form attitudes towards

job facets such as work, pay, promotion, co-workers, company policies, supervisors and customers (Johnson and Johnson 2000). To provide insight regarding specific aspects of the work environment the present study assesses job satisfaction with the supervisor, overall job, company policy and support, promotion and advancement, pay, coworkers, and customers.

The Association between Mentoring and Job Satisfaction

The association between mentoring and protégé job satisfaction has received attention within a non-sales contexts. Research in a variety of settings, using a variety of mentor types, has provided support of a positive association between mentoring and job satisfaction (e.g., Chao, Waltz, and Gardner 1992; Ensher, Thomas, and Murphy 2001). Underhill (2006) confirms the positive association between mentoring and global measures of job satisfaction in a meta-analysis of the mentoring literature published between 1988 and 2004.

Using the non-sales literature as a foundation, one would derive that a linkage between salesperson mentoring and job satisfaction would be present. Further, considering that when sales research extends the global job satisfaction literature to a multi-faceted job satisfaction perspective, often all facets are hypothesized in the same direction as the global measure of job satisfaction (e.g., Futrell and Parasuraman 1984), the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Salespeople with mentors will exhibit higher levels of satisfaction with: a) supervisors, b) job, c) company policy, d) promotion, e) pay, f) fellow workers, and g) customers than salespeople without mentors.

Although the mentoring literature has examined global job satisfaction differences with respect to formal and informal mentoring relationships (Chao, Walz, and Gardner 1992; Ragins and Cotton 1999), the current literature has not examined the differences respective to the source of mentoring. Formal mentoring relationships are often initiated and managed by the organization. Thus, with very few notable exceptions, formal mentoring relationships will consist of both the protégé and mentor being within the sponsoring organization. In informal relationships, individuals spontaneously develop and maintain relationships without intervention from an organization (Chao, Walz, and Gardner 1992). These mentoring relationships may include but are not constrained to two individuals in the same organization.

Salespersons often work remotely from the organization and are involved in intense relationships with customers. Salespersons seek to serve the best interests of their organization and their customers' organizations. Thus, organizational mentors may provide salespeople clearer expectation of their role resulting in greater job satisfaction when compared to external mentors. Lankau and Scandura (2002) indicate that the role modeling function may result in greater job satisfaction through the influence of social learning effects on skill development. Due to proximity, salespersons with organization mentors have a greater opportunity to model the work behaviors and attitudes of their mentors than do salespersons with external mentors. We propose the following hypotheses:

H2: Salespeople with organizational mentors exhibit higher levels of satisfaction with: a) supervisors, b) job, c) company policy, d) promotion, e) pay, f) fellow workers, and g) customers than salespeople with external mentors.

Methodology

Data Collection

The data for this study was collected using an online panel. Respondents that worked in sales were recruited for this study. A total of 2,443 potential respondents entered the site where the questionnaire was posted. Given funding limitations within the study, an upper limit of 1,050 respondents was set for the questionnaire. Once this limit was reached the survey was no longer accessible to other potential respondents. Of the 1,050 respondents, 281 respondents failed to complete the questionnaire. Respondents who failed to complete the questionnaire were removed from the dataset. Respondents who did not acquire at least one year of experience at their current organization and as a salesperson were removed from the dataset. After these respondents were removed, 829 respondents remained. Respondents who indicated that they were an owner, CEO, or president of the organization were deleted from the dataset given the nature of the job satisfaction facets. Listwise deletion was utilized to remove respondents who did not provide complete responses to all of the needed questions, in which 182 respondents were removed from the analysis. The resulting sample size was 647; an effective usable response rate was 26.48%. Of the 647 respondents, 117 indicated that they had a mentor. Of the 117 mentored salespeople, 68 reported having an organizational mentor and 49 reported having an external mentor. To test for non-response bias, early responders were compared to late. No significant differences were found between the two groups indicating that nonresponse bias was not an issue.

Description of Sample

The average age of the respondents was 48. Fifty-six percent of respondents are female. Thirty-three percent of respondents reported having some college education; thirty-two percent reported completing a bachelor's degree, and approximately 18 percent completing an advanced college degree. Respondent's averaged approximately 9.75 years of sales experience and 9.16 years of experience with their current organization. Table 2 also provides a comparison of salespersons with an organizational mentor to salespersons with an external mentor with respect to demographic characteristics.

Measures

Job satisfaction was assessed using the INDSALES scale developed by Churchill, Ford, and Walker (1974) and subsequently reduced to 28-items (Lagace, Goolsby, and Gassenheimer 1993). The seven facets of job satisfaction were each measured using 4-items were respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). To assess mentoring, respondents were asked two questions. The first question asked respondents to indicate if they currently have a mentor(s). Respondents answered either "yes" or "no". Respondents who had a mentor(s) were then asked to identify if the mentor was currently within the organization and or external to the organization.

Analytical Approach

First, a measurement model was constructed using LISREL 8.54. The fit indices chosen to compare the confirmatory factor analytic model to the observed data are well established. When samples sizes are greater than 250 and the number of observed variables is greater than 12 but

less than 30, RMSEA should be less than .07 and SRMR should be equal to or less than .08 with CFI values above .92 (Hair et al. 2010).

Next, Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was used to test the hypotheses. The mentoring literature (Kram 1985; Scandura 1992) suggests that protégé perceptions of the mentoring relationship can be effected by protégé experience and demographic characteristics. Thus, an analysis of a number of plausible covariates was conducted. The analysis indicated that protégé gender, age, organizational tenure and education were associated to one or more job satisfaction facets. It is not the intention of this study to yield insight into the impact of each covariate on job satisfaction facets. Thus, the hypotheses were tested using gender, age, organizational tenure, education, as covariates regardless of their significance. The significance of the mentor effect is investigated respective to each case. However, the ANCOVA technique is robust (Tabachnick and Fidell 1996) and thus appropriate for the following analysis. The authors note where the assumption of homogeneity is violated.

Measurement Assessment

Results of the CFA indicated that several items loaded highly on one or more constructs and were subsequently removed from the analysis. Specifically, two satisfaction with pay items, one satisfaction with fellow workers item, and one satisfaction with customer item were dropped. After dropping these items, results from the CFA indicated good model fit (Chi-squared = 378.31, df = 231, p = 0.00, RMSEA = .030, SRMR = .026, CFI = 1.00). All loadings were significant and the average variance extracted exceeded the .50 level for all seven facets of job satisfaction (Hair et al. 2010). All items met the Cronbach alpha reliabilities suggested by Nunally (1978). Reliabilities were .94, .95, .94, .77, .89, and .88 for satisfaction with supervisor, overall job, company policy, promotion, fellow worker, and customer, respectively. Satisfaction with pay was reduced to a two-item scale; thus the reliability is not provided. However, the correlation between the two items was .61.

ANCOVA Results

Hypothesis one predicted that salespersons with mentors would report higher levels of job satisfaction on all seven facets than salespersons without mentors. Results for H1 are shown in Table 3. The means for all seven of the tested job satisfaction facets were significantly different for protégés and non-protégés and in the hypothesized direction, yielding full support for H1. Table 3 also provides adjusted and unadjusted means for comparison. The following means reported within this section are adjusted means.

Hypothesis two predicted that salespersons with organizational mentors would report higher levels of job satisfaction on all seven job satisfaction facets than those with external mentors. H2 was tested after removing respondents who indicated that they did not have a mentor; the effective sample size dropped from 647 to 117 for hypothesis two. Sixty-eight respondents reported having organizational mentors and 49 reported having external mentors. Results for H2 are shown in Table 4. Like the means reported for H1, the means provided in this section are the adjusted means. Table 4 provides adjusted and unadjusted means for comparison.

Insert Table 1 & 2 about Here

Discussion

Mentoring is used by organizations and employees for training and developmental purposes. The examination of mentor-protégé relationships in sales contexts has received sparse research attention (Brashear et al. 2006). The present study contributes to the sales literature by demonstrating the impact of mentoring on protégé job satisfaction in a sales context. Specifically, this study examined the impact of having a mentor on the seven facets of salesperson job satisfaction. This study also examines the impact of having an organizational vs. external mentor on the seven facets of salesperson job satisfaction. The findings of this study further the understanding of mentor-protégé relationships in sales settings and suggest a need for the further examination of mentoring in sales contexts.

Previous research indicates that protégés with mentors report greater levels of job satisfaction than protégés without mentors (e.g., Ensher, Thomas, and Murphy 2001). This study supports these findings and adds to the current literature in that it associates mentoring with a significant increase in satisfaction across supervisor, overall job, company policy, promotion, pay, fellow workers, and customer facets in sales contexts. The difference in mean job satisfaction facet scores between salespersons with mentors and those without reinforces the critical effect mentors have on protégé job satisfaction. These findings suggest that mentoring plays a significant role in the development of protégé job satisfaction.

The mentoring literature conducted in non-sales settings suggests that informal mentoring relationships are more favorably associated with job satisfaction than are formal mentoring relationships (Chao, Walz, and Gardner 1992; Ragins and Cotton 1999). However, the mentoring literature has not examined the association between the source of the mentoring relationship and job satisfaction. The results provide support for our hypothesis that organizational mentors play a more important role than external mentors in increasing salesperson job satisfaction. Specifically, this study associates having an organizational mentor with increased satisfaction across supervisors, job, company policy, pay, and fellow worker satisfaction facets.

Post Hoc Examination

While support is provided that mentoring has a significant impact on the job satisfaction facets, caution needs to be taken when assuming that all forms of mentoring have a significant impact on job satisfaction. Specifically, with organization mentoring having a significantly higher impact on five of the seven facets of job satisfaction, the differences between those with organizational mentors compared to those without mentors or external mentors is significantly different. Those with organizational mentors showed significantly higher levels of job satisfaction. However, an examination of adjusted means suggests that there may not be significant differences in satisfaction between salespersons without mentors and those with external mentors. To clarify if differences exist between those with external mentors and those without mentors, a post hoc examination using the ANCOVA procedure was conducted. The results of the ANCOVA analysis indicates that salespersons with external mentors do not significantly differ from salespersons without mentors on the supervisor ($F = .04$; $P = .85$), overall job ($F = .42$; $P = .52$), company policy ($F = .43$; $P = .51$), promotion ($F = 2.54$; $P = .11$), pay ($F = .69$; $P = .41$) and coworker ($F = .00$; $P = .98$) satisfaction facets. Salespersons with external mentors did report significantly greater levels of job satisfaction with customers ($F = 8.21$; $P < .005$) than did salespersons without mentors.

The results of this post hoc examination suggest that there are significant advantages for protégés with organizational mentors on the examined job satisfaction facets. Specifically, the protection, sponsorship, challenging assignments, greater clarity in role expectations, access to organizational resources, and accessibility of organizational mentors may provide protégés with organizational mentors (Brashear et al. 2006) a distinct advantage in developing job satisfaction.

Conclusions

This study indicates that organizations should encourage the formation of mentor-protégé relationships within the organization to increase salesperson job satisfaction. The present study set out to address two questions. The first research question addressed the impact of mentoring on the seven facets of job satisfaction. This study provides support for the association between mentoring and job satisfaction in sales contexts. The second research question addressed the differing impact of organizational and external mentors on the job satisfaction facets. This study found that organizational mentors played a greater role in increasing salesperson job satisfaction than did external mentors or not having a mentor.

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Table 1
Summary of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Mentor / No	Adjusted Mean	Unadjusted Mean	SD	F	p=	Conclusion
H1a	Supervisors	Mentor	5.41	5.42	1.46	10.24	0.00	Supported
		No Mentor	4.91	4.91	1.54			
H1b	Job	Mentor	5.59	5.59	1.55	20.36	0.00	Supported
		No Mentor	4.92	4.92	1.46			
H1c	Company Policy	Mentor	5.10	5.09	1.56	15.56	0.00	Supported
		No Mentor	4.46	4.46	1.60			
H1d	Promotion	Mentor	4.57	4.57	1.64	17.83	0.00	Supported
		No Mentor	3.93	3.93	1.45			
H1e	Pay	Mentor	4.69	4.71	1.90	4.78	0.02	Supported
		No Mentor	4.29	4.29	1.79			
H1f	Fellow Workers	Mentor	5.61	5.62	1.21	4.26	0.04	Supported
		No Mentor	5.35	5.35	1.21			
H1g	Customers	Mentor	5.31	5.30	1.17	12.58	0.00	Supported
		No Mentor	4.87	4.88	1.21			

Table 2
Summary of Hypothesis 2

Hypothesis	Dependent Variable	Mentor / No Mentor	Adjusted Mean	Unadjusted Mean	SD	F	p=	Conclusion
H2a	Supervisors	Organizational	5.78	5.74	1.29	9.69	0.00	Supported
		External	4.93	4.98	1.59			
H2b	Job	Organizational	6.00	5.94	1.20	12.45	0.00	Supported
		External	5.01	5.10	1.83			
H2c	Company Policy	Organizational	5.47	5.43	1.25	9.51	0.00	Supported
		External	4.56	4.61	1.82			
H2d	Promotion	Organizational	4.79	4.76	1.59	2.94	0.09	Not Supported
		External	4.27	4.31	1.68			
H2e	Pay	Organizational	5.17	5.13	1.76	9.61	0.00	Supported
		External	4.07	4.12	1.93			
H2f	Fellow Workers	Organizational	5.79	5.83	1.10	4.80	0.67	Not Supported
		External	5.36	5.37	1.32			
H2g	Customers	Organizational	5.47	5.25	1.13	0.18	0.67	Not Supported
		External	4.56	5.37	1.22			