

Examining the Use of Sales Force Management Practices

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ABSTRACT

Arguably, the one and only academic research study to identify and examine the full range of sales management practices (SMPs) being used by sales managers was done by Dubinsky and Barry (1982)* over three decades ago. Since that time, the challenges facing sales managers have changed dramatically, yet research has not kept pace with these changes.

Consequently, the current study replicates and extends the research of Dubinsky and Barry (1982) for the purpose of identifying and understanding the SMPs that currently are being used by sales managers. Specifically, we examined the use of 68 different SMPs in the following eight key managerial areas: sales planning, organization, selection, training, sales compensation, supervision and evaluation, control of sales force performance, and sales technology.

To assess the use of the various SMPs, an online survey was administered to a sample of sales executives – all in managerial positions – from the database of *Selling Power* magazine subscribers. A total of 159 sales managers provided a comprehensive set of usable responses, which were analyzed via ANOVA.

Results indicate several interesting differences in terms of the extent to which sales managers use specific SMPs. For example, even though today's sales organizations have invested huge sums of money in high-tech CRM programs, a surprisingly small number of sales managers (less than 50 percent) reported regular use of technology. In fact, results indicate that many SMPs are not being employed or used as extensively as may have previously been thought. In addition, there are distinct differences in the use of certain SMPs by large versus small firms.

The results raise a number of important issues for sales managers to consider. Results are discussed and implications outlined.

*Dubinsky, A. J. and Barry, T. E. (1982), "A Survey of Sales Management Practices", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 11, pp. 133-141.