

DEVELOPING THE BUYER-FRIENDLY TRANSPORTATION SALESPERSON: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF THE MOST IMPORTANT SELLER TRAITS AND BEHAVIORS FROM THE TRANSPORTATION BUYER'S PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The research reported in this manuscript provides several insights regarding the specific behaviors and traits of transportation salespersons as sought by a sample of shippers. Shippers in both manufacturing and non-manufacturing industries were asked to evaluate the importance of 30 potential salesperson characteristics. Overall, dependability, ethical conduct, honesty, provision of regular service, and solution selling were ranked as the most important (“must have”) characteristics. In addition to the overall rankings, t-tests were used to compare the manufacturing and non-manufacturing groups and ANOVA tests were used to compare the responses of shippers which were grouped by number of contacts from salespersons.

INTRODUCTION

What are the critical traits and behaviors that a salesperson should exhibit in his/her interrelationships with various customer groups? According to an interview reported in *Sales and Marketing Management* magazine, buyers seek salespeople who “exude integrity” (honest and trustworthy), who know their product, applications and industry (something of an expert), who listen and custom design a solution, conduct follow-up activities in a timely fashion, work for the benefit of both the buying and selling organizations, and who are excellent communicators (Kaydo 2000). Kaydo further contends that the common mistakes salespeople make include: not being knowledgeable of their product, failing to evaluate and understand the company with which they are dealing, focusing only on price, not following through on commitments, not making appointments, not having an agenda, and not working to fit into the consuming firm’s priorities. Based on the anecdotal evidence reported, it would seem that the key qualities of a “good” salesperson are: honesty, knowledge, ability to adapt to the customer’s situation, being dependable, allowing and encouraging customer input, and providing true solutions.

As Garver and Mentzer (2000) point out, in the area of business logistics, the sales “interface is becoming increasingly important.” Thus, it would seem that a listing of the traits and behaviors that are desired by buyers could be important for numerous reasons. First, one could reasonably assume that salespeople who possess the traits/behaviors most desired by their buyers would also be the ones with whom buyers prefer to work and interact. It could then be argued that this preference should result in more sales, higher profits, greater customer satisfaction, etc. Based on this premise, an identification of traits/behaviors of salespeople could also be valuable to firms as they engage in the selection process. For example, if product knowledge is identified as one of the buyer’s most critical factors, then selection decisions may be predicated upon the applicant’s ability and/or skills in understanding the product. Third, the

listing of critical skills may also be useful in the development of sales training and development programs. If, as stated previously (Kaydo 2000), the ability to custom design a solution is a critical behavior, then firms should train their sales forces in developing custom designed solutions. Finally, the development of a list of key skills/traits of salespeople may also be useful in the development of performance appraisal programs. It would seem logical that salespeople be evaluated on criteria that are critical to their buyers. Using this logic, one might argue that salespeople should be assessed on their ability to communicate solutions to their buyers.

However, while the information provided from interviews such as the one from *Sales and Marketing Management* (Kaydo 2000) is insightful, valuable, and may be useful in the selection, training, and evaluating of salespeople, it should be recognized that the definition and identification of “good” selling behavior/traits is probably largely dependent upon the perceptions and positions of the person listing the traits. One might find that different individuals identify different behaviors/traits as being critical to a sales position. Correspondingly, individuals in various industries may identify unique behaviors/traits as being important in their industries. Further, designing selection, training, and evaluation programs on the basis of a half a dozen interviews would seem tenuous. Based on these limitations, the purpose of this research is to evaluate the importance of alternative salesperson traits and behaviors from the perspectives of professional buyers in one selected industry, the transportation industry. The findings of this research may be valuable to firms that target this industry for their personal selling efforts. These organizations may use these findings to guide their sales force selection, training, and evaluation processes. Thus, businesses that are emphasizing personal selling as a significant portion of their promotional mixes may be better able to identify the critical factors that influence the effectiveness of their selling efforts and consequently improve their sales results by implementing the findings of this study.

RELATED LITERATURE

An assessment of the skills and traits required for successful selling can be made from numerous vantage points. From one perspective, it would seem that performance appraisal criteria would emphasize an evaluation of the skills/behaviors that would be required for success in the sales profession. This viewpoint might argue that salespeople should be “graded” on criteria that relate to successful performance. Jackson, Schlacter and Wolfe (1995) identified numerous criteria that they found were used to assess salesperson performance. Among these criteria were qualitative criteria (sometimes referred to as input criteria) which relate to the skills that may help a salesperson succeed. The results of their research provided the percentage with which specific skills were used by managers in their evaluations of salesperson performance. These sales managers stated that the following skills were used in their evaluations of salesperson performance: communication (88%), product knowledge (85%), attitude (82%), sales skills (79%), initiative (76%), appearance (image) (75%), competitive knowledge (71%), enthusiasm (66%), time management (63%), motivation (61%), and ethical behavior (59%). In a similar study, the importance of various criteria were evaluated (Taylor, Pettijohn and Pettijohn 1999). In terms of the traits/behaviors of salespeople, the results of this study indicated that sales managers believed that the most important factors (7 = most important, 1 = least important) were product knowledge (4.8), attitude (4.4), communication skills, (4.3), selling skills (4.2), initiative (3.6), and appearance (3.5). However, it may be noted that the Taylor, Pettijohn and Pettijohn (1999) study also found some differences in the perceptions of salespeople and their managers in terms of the qualitative criteria that should be emphasized in performance appraisals. The results indicated that salespeople rated the importance of the salesperson behaviors/traits in the following manner: product knowledge (5.2), attitude (5.3), communication skills, (5.1), selling skills (4.7), initiative (4.8), and appearance (4.9).

A second method that may be used to identify the critical salesperson traits/behaviors that relate to successful selling would entail an assessment of sales training topics. Firms that are interested in facilitating successful performance by their sales forces would logically provide training in those areas most closely aligned with sales success. Most research pertaining to training topics contends that the following topics are important: selling techniques, product knowledge, negotiation skills, interviewing, and competitive knowledge (Chonko, Tanner and Weeks 1993; Del Gaizo 1987; Kerr and Burzynski 1988). Others argue that the training focus should be more exclusively on selling skills and topics such as self-management and motivation, and sales planning (Johnson 1990; Smith 1991). In one study, salespeople were asked to identify the critical topics that should be included in a sales training program. The percentage with which certain topics were rated as being important by salespeople, which could also be perceived as being critical determinants of an effective sales presentation, included the presentation (88.3%), sales follow-up (80%), ethics (71.7%), relationship selling (63.3%), professionalism (60.6%), product knowledge (58.3%), and adaptability (48.3%) (Parker, Pettijohn, and Luke 1996).

A third method that may be used in identifying critical salesperson behaviors might entail asking salespeople to rate the importance of alternative behaviors. One study which evaluated the importance of alternative behaviors did so by examining alternative tactics in selling, from the prospecting stage to closing (Hite and Bellizzi 1985). The two topical areas that seem to hold the most relevance for the present study include the “presentation” and the “follow-up” sections. In the presentation section, industrial salespeople provided the following importance ratings (5 = most important) for various sales behaviors/traits: develop a “tailored” sales presentation (4.33), ask questions (4.26), help the prospect visualize the product offering (4.11), speak the prospect’s language (4.09), and demonstrate (4.09). With regard to the follow-up

section of the sales encounter, industrial salespeople provided the following importance ratings: periodic follow-up of customer satisfaction (4.54), customer training (4.37), serving as a consultant (4.22), and reassuring the customer (4.18). Chonko, Caballero, and Lumpkin (1990), used a scale to assess the salesperson's behavior in nineteen critical dimensions of retail sales behavior. Salespeople in this study were graded on aspects such as courtesy, customer focus, listening, product knowledge, availability, willingness to assist, use of questions, attempts to learn about the customer's needs, use of visualization techniques in the presentation, demonstration skills, willingness to customize solutions, and his/her general attitude.

Moncrief (1986) conducted an analysis of critical sales behaviors by asking industrial salespeople what they did on their jobs. Of interest to the present research, the findings identified the following behaviors: select products for sales calls, prepare sales presentations, introduce new products, help clients plan, correct orders, handle shipment problems, learn about product by working with technicians, make deliveries, train customers, provide feedback to employer, receive feedback from clients, read trade publications, provide technical information, and conduct social activities with buyers. A more recent analysis identified "critical success factors" in sales by identifying behaviors that separated "top" sales performers from the "bottom" performers (Dwyer, Hill and Martin 2000). Findings relevant to the present analysis showed that "helping the prospect visualize the benefits" was a behavior engaged in by top performing salespeople. Using "partially standardized sales presentations" was a behavior engaged in by the low performing salespeople. The research concluded that top performing salespeople tended to use a more personal and customer-oriented approach to selling. These top performers also engaged in more "customized" presentations that focused on the buyer's needs.

Conversely, the low performing salespeople tended to less personal methods for identifying and satisfying needs. The research argues that

"low performers" focus on product benefits and do little to alter their presentations to the specific customer needs in a given situation (Dwyer, Hill and Martin 2000). In a similar vein, qualitative research indicates that logistics buyers are seeking salespeople who have expertise in several areas, including in their product, their firms' logistics systems and in their buyers' businesses and operations. Further, buyers in this study indicated that their salespeople should be able to handle logistical procedures and understand their buyers' needs. Buyers were also described as desiring more of a "partnership relationship" with their sales representatives (Garver and Mentzer 2000).

It may be noticed that while some degree of overlap exists between the traits/behaviors described by buyers and sellers as being critical, the training topics included in the programs discussed, and the ways in which sales representatives are evaluated, some differences exist. One could argue that some differences should always exist, as many aspects of a salesperson's job may not be a portion of the buyer-seller dyad. However, it would also seem reasonable to assume that the behaviors that are deemed critical by the buyer would be topics that should also be emphasized in a sales training program and correspondingly in the performance review process. Reconciling these positions requires more than the anecdotal evidence garnered from an interview with six buyers (Kaydo 2000). In fact, it could be argued that an identification of salesperson traits that seem most significant to buyers should be completed through some form of empirical analysis. The purpose of this research is to engage in this process by surveying professional buyers of shipping services and identifying the relative levels of importance of the skills/traits that are possessed by the salespeople that contact them and their employers. As stated by Garver and Mentzer (2000), limited research has evaluated the relationship between logistics salespeople and their customers. This type of research may be valuable not only in the development and implementation of sales training programs, but also in the salesperson recruitment and selection processes. Indeed, an analysis of the buyers'

perspectives of the traits and behaviors of salespeople may provide the catalyst for evaluating the effectiveness of both sales training programs and individual salespeople.

METHODOLOGY

Literature was reviewed to identify characteristics of successful salespeople in a wide variety of industries. The results of the literature review were used to construct questions relating to salesperson characteristics which might be required of salespeople in the transportation and logistics industry. The reviewed research suggested that three categories of characteristics exist. First, intrinsic characteristics, which include concepts such as self-motivation, knowledge of one's goals, perseverance, a desire for continual training, and a willingness to take risks. Second, customer oriented skills, including characteristics such as the ability to listen, the ability to sell solutions, anticipation of the customer's needs, and building and improving customer relations. Third, personal selling characteristics, which include approach and involvement techniques, qualifying customers, presentation techniques, overcoming objections, and closing techniques.

The final questionnaire used in this study consisted of thirty questions covering the three previously mentioned categories, as well as several questions used for developing a demographic profile of the respondents. Respondents were asked to rate the importance of each characteristic on a five point Likert type scale with 1 representing "not important" and 5 representing "must possess." The questionnaire was then sent to a sample of shipping firms for evaluation and feedback purposes. Based on this feedback, the questionnaire was revised and then mailed to a list of 518 companies that used truckload shipping services. This list was provided by a major transportation company located in the Midwest. The shipping companies used in this study included firms involved in retail, manufacturing, services, and specialty providers. Of the 518 questionnaires sent, seven were returned as being undeliverable, thereby reducing the sample size to 511 shippers. A total

of 114 usable questionnaires were returned representing an overall response rate of 22.3 percent.

RESULTS

The results of this study are presented by evaluating mean responses to a set of 30 salesperson characteristics. While other studies have examined salesperson characteristics in a variety of industries, this study examines these traits from the perception of shippers presently using transportation services. The respondents consisted of 33 non-manufacturing firms, 79 manufacturing firms, and two respondents opting not to respond to this question. Respondents from the two types of companies were first asked to provide information on the number of transportation sales forces that contact their company on a regular basis. The response to this inquiry is shown in Table 1.

**TABLE 1
SALES FORCE CONTACT**

Type of Company	Number of Contacts		
	0-20	21-50	51+
Non-Manufacturing Firms	14	6	12
Manufacturing Firms	35	25	18
Total Contacts	49	31	30

Table 1 shows that 49 of the responding firms (42% of non-manufacturing respondents and 44% of manufacturing respondents) have regular contact with up to 20 firms. Higher numbers of contacts are reported by 31 firms (18% of non-manufacturing respondents and 32% of manufacturing respondents) who report regular contact with 21-50 firms and 30 firms (36% of non-manufacturing respondents and 23% of manufacturing respondents) reporting over 50 regular contacts with various sales forces. Based upon these responses, it seems reasonable to conclude that the companies involved in this

study have regular contact with a variety of different types of salespeople in their daily operations.

The respondents were asked to examine the list of thirty salesperson behaviors/traits, derived from the process described in the methodology, and to rate the relative importance of each behavior/trait using a Likert-type scale anchored with 1 representing “not important” and 5 representing “must possess.” Overall mean scores for each of the characteristics were then ranked in descending order from the highest level of importance (“must have”) to the lowest level of importance (“not important”) and are shown in Table 2. Additionally, Table 2 reports the mean scores for each characteristic as reported by both non-manufacturing and manufacturing respondents. These responses were then examined for significant differences between the manufacturing and non-manufacturing groupings.

The data reported in Table 2 indicate that the respondents regarded 13 of the characteristics (based on mean scores of at least 4.0) as being “importance” for a salesperson to possess, while the remaining 17 characteristics, with reported mean scores of below 4.0, were found to fall into the category of being “beneficial” characteristics for a salesperson to possess. When these characteristics are examined based upon the type of responding firm, the levels of importance varied slightly with non-manufacturing firms reporting 14 characteristics to be “important” and manufacturing firms reporting 11 characteristics as being “important” to the success of the salesperson. Four of the characteristics, Dependability of Salesperson (4.62), Ethical Conduct (4.54), Honest (4.53), and Provides Regular Service (4.44), were rated higher than the remaining characteristics. A sales manager may well draw the conclusion that these four characteristics would be critical characteristics for their salespeople to exhibit when dealing with either non-manufacturing or manufacturing firms.

Each characteristic was then examined through the use of t-tests to determine whether significant differences existed between non-manufacturing and manufacturing firms in terms of the importance placed on each characteristic. Table 2 reveals that six of the 30 characteristics (Dependability, Knowledge of Operations, Sincere, Expert on Offerings, Contact with customer, and Opens Discussions) were found to differ significantly, at the .05 level, while four characteristics (Sells Solutions, Flexibility, Risk Taker, and Persistent) were found to be significantly different at the .10 level. These findings indicate that a sales manager might be well-advised to consider the type of clientele with which the sales force will be interacting when designing sales training programs.

While the mean score ratings for each characteristic are useful in determining the overall perceived importance of each characteristic, they may not tell the entire story. For example, when each characteristic is examined in terms of the number of companies contacting the respondents, the perceived importance of several of the characteristics change. The mean scores for each characteristic as it relates to the number of contacts is shown in Table 3.

For those companies having 20 or fewer organizations whose sales forces contact them, 18 of the 30 characteristics examined were rated as being “important” characteristics, while those companies reporting 21 to 50 contacts found only 6 of the characteristics to be considered “important.” Of those companies reporting over 51 contacts, 15 of the characteristics were found to be “important” for the sales person to possess.

The top four characteristics (Dependability, Ethical Conduct, Honest, and Provides Regular Service), which were rated high in the overall ratings, were also rated high by each of the responding contact categories. However, after the top four characteristics, numerous differences in terms of the importance ratings were found based upon the number of contacts

TABLE 2
SALESPERSON CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	Overall Mean Score	Mean Score		t-test Significance
		Non-Mfg	Mfg	
Dependability of Salesperson	4.62	4.61	4.65	.019*
Ethical Conduct	4.54	4.52	4.54	.408
Honest	4.53	4.55	4.52	.409
Provides Regular Service	4.44	4.38	4.48	.231
Develops Solutions to Problems	4.09	4.03	4.12	.292
Communication Skills	4.09	4.00	4.13	.216
Sells Solutions	4.08	4.27	4.01	.056**
Listens to Customer Input	4.08	4.24	4.02	.079
Knowledgeable of Operations	4.06	4.27	3.96	.019*
Sincere	4.06	4.30	3.96	.008*
Expert on Product Offerings	4.05	4.33	3.92	.004*
Tailored Presentation	4.05	3.94	4.10	.395
Flexibility in Customizing Services	4.04	4.18	3.97	.076**
Resolves Concerns	3.98	3.94	4.00	.348
Maintains Contact with Customer	3.98	3.79	4.06	.005*
Self-Confident	3.98	4.00	3.95	.366
Positive Outlook	3.88	3.94	3.85	.263
Motivation or Drive	3.87	3.97	3.82	.185
Identify Needs	3.86	3.85	3.86	.471
Prepared	3.81	3.85	3.80	.388
Forecast Problems	3.80	3.94	3.73	.110
Looks for Participation from Customers	3.78	3.70	3.82	.228
Stays Informed of New Developments	3.77	4.03	3.96	.322
Enthusiastic	3.73	3.82	3.68	.190
Assertive	3.72	3.70	3.72	.426
Develops Supply Chain Relations	3.55	3.59	3.52	.357
Opens Discussions with Firm	3.53	3.79	3.42	.016*
Persistent	3.29	3.48	3.20	.068**
Risk Taker	3.16	3.36	3.05	.059**
Social Skills	3.11	3.13	3.09	.435

*Significant at the .05 level

**Significant at the .10 level

TABLE 3
IMPORTANCE OF CHARACTERISTIC BASED UPON NUMBER OF CONTACTS

Characteristic	Overall Mean	Number of Contacts			Sig.	Groups
		0-20	21-50	51+		
Dependability of Salesperson	4.62	4.73	4.42	4.70	.041	1-2
Ethical Conduct	4.54	4.59	4.26	4.73	.005	1-2, 2-3
Honest	4.53	4.51	4.48	4.63	.524	
Provides Regular Service	4.44	4.65	4.26	4.30	.019	1-2
Develops Solutions to Problems	4.09	4.04	3.97	4.30	.188	
Communication Skills	4.09	4.15	4.03	4.07	.808	
Sells Solutions	4.08	4.12	3.87	4.23	.181	
Listens to Customer Input	4.08	4.08	3.90	4.27	.162	
Knowledgeable of Operations	4.06	4.08	4.00	4.03	.884	
Sincere	4.06	4.16	3.77	4.20	.021	1-2, 2-3
Expert on Product Offerings	4.05	4.18	3.84	4.03	.131	
Tailored Presentation	4.05	4.63	3.43	3.73	.166	
Flexibility in Customizing Services	4.04	4.16	3.77	4.10	.045	1-2
Resolves Concerns	3.98	4.04	3.87	4.00	.615	
Maintains Contact with Customer	3.98	4.10	3.97	3.77	.192	
Self-Confident	3.98	4.02	3.81	4.03	.355	
Positive Outlook	3.88	4.10	3.61	3.72	.004	1-2
Motivation or Drive	3.87	3.96	3.61	3.93	.130	
Identify Needs	3.86	4.00	3.65	3.83	.161	
Prepared	3.81	3.98	3.48	3.87	.038	1-2
Forecast Problems	3.80	3.94	3.58	3.77	.148	
Looks for Participation from Customers	3.78	3.90	3.74	3.63	.361	
Stays Informed of New Developments	3.77	3.92	3.81	4.23	.048	2-3
Enthusiastic	3.73	3.90	3.65	3.50	.055	
Assertive	3.72	3.69	3.52	3.97	.019	2-3
Develops Supply Chain Relations	3.55	3.56	3.45	3.60	.825	
Opens Discussions with Firm	3.53	3.53	3.55	3.47	.923	
Persistent	3.29	3.45	3.13	3.17	.231	
Risk Taker	3.16	3.06	3.00	3.41	.193	
Social Skills	3.11	3.06	3.19	3.03	.818	
Group 1 = 0-20 contacts	Group 2 = 21-50 contacts	Group 3 = over 50 contacts				

experienced. For example, several characteristic ratings from those companies experiencing 51+ contacts were found. Specifically, the characteristics of Ethical Conduct, Honest, Develops Solutions, Sells Solutions, Listens to Customers, and Stays Informed of New Developments, were rated higher than in the overall ratings. An ANOVA technique was employed to examine each characteristic and determine if significant differences existed between contact groupings. If significant differences were found, the Bonferroni post hoc test was employed to determine which groups were significantly different. The results of this analysis are also shown in Table 3. As can be seen from this table, eight characteristics were found to differ significantly between the contact categories, with all differences being between either categories one and two or categories two and three.

While no single variable had an overall reported mean score of 5 (“must possess”), individual respondents did report that they believed that certain criteria fell into this area. Therefore, the perceived importance of each characteristic was examined based upon the specific type of industry reporting with the results being shown in Table 4.

The data reported in this table reveal that each characteristic was reported as being a “must possess” characteristic by several respondents. These “must possess” scores ranged from a high of 76 respondents or 66.7% for Dependability of Salesperson to a low of 8 respondents or 7% saying that a salesperson “must possess” the characteristic of being a risk taker.

It is interesting to note that respondents from each of the two types of shippers (non-manufacturing and manufacturing) represented in this study are very similar in their perception of most of the characteristics, they do tend to differ on several of the characteristics. For example, while 43.8% of the non-manufacturing respondents reported that “Provides Regular Service” was a must possess characteristic, 59.5% of the

manufacturing respondents reported it as being a must have characteristic. Conversely, while 42.4% of non-manufacturing respondents reported “Knowledge of Operations” to be a must possess characteristic, only 20.5% of manufacturing respondents found it to be a must have characteristic. Again, it is clear that differences between non-manufacturing firms and manufacturing firms must be considered when designing sales training programs.

CONCLUSIONS

Previous research which has examined the types of characteristics or traits which salespeople should possess has often been very general in nature. The results of these studies have revealed salesperson characteristics such as possessing communication skills, product knowledge, positive attitude, integrity, and sales follow up as being desirable. The present study broadens the body of knowledge in at least two areas. First, salesperson characteristics were evaluated in terms of their overall importance to the transportation industry. This examination revealed four characteristics which stand out as being considered to be more important than all of the other salesperson characteristics which were examined. These characteristics were Dependability of Salesperson (4.62), Ethical Conduct (4.54), Honest (4.53), and Provides Regular Service (4.44). This information should lead sales managers to evaluate their training procedures to assure that the company’s sales force truly understands the perceived importance of each of these characteristics. While being ethical and honest are harder characteristics for a training program to address, other characteristics such as the concept of providing the customer regular service, along with the other characteristics which also were rated as being “important” would fit nicely into most training programs. It is also important to note that these levels of perceived importance change slightly when the number of sales force contacts are considered. Again, it would seem that it is of importance to know and understand

TABLE 4
REQUIRED SALESPERSON CHARACTERISTICS

Characteristic	Company Type					
	Must Have		Non-Mfg		Manufacturing	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Dependability of Salesperson	76	66.7	21	63.6	55	69.6
Ethical Conduct	68	59.6	19	57.6	47	59.5
Honest	63	55.3	18	54.5	44	55.7
Provides Regular Service	61	53.5	14	43.8	47	59.5
Communication Skills	39	34.2	11	33.3	28	35.9
Sells Solutions	36	31.6	12	36.4	24	30.4
Listens to Customer Input	34	29.8	12	36.4	22	27.8
Develops Solutions to Problems	33	28.9	8	24.2	25	32.1
Expert on Product Offerings	33	28.9	16	48.5	16	20.3
Maintains Contact with Customer	31	27.7	6	18.2	25	31.6
Knowledgeable of Operations	30	27.0	14	42.4	16	20.5
Sincere	29	25.4	11	33.3	18	22.8
Resolves Concerns	29	25.4	8	24.2	21	26.6
Customizes Services	26	22.8	10	30.3	16	20.3
Self-Confident	26	22.8	8	24.2	16	20.3
Informed of New Developments	25	21.9	7	21.2	18	22.8
Prepared	23	20.2	7	21.2	16	20.3
Forecast Problems	22	19.3	8	24.2	14	17.7
Motivation or Drive	21	18.4	8	24.2	13	16.5
Tailored Presentation	21	18.4	6	18.8	15	19.0
Identify Needs	20	17.5	6	18.2	14	17.7
Looks for Participation	20	17.5	5	15.2	15	19.0
Positive Outlook	18	15.8	7	21.2	11	14.1
Enthusiastic	13	11.4	6	18.2	7	8.9
Develops Supply Chain Relations from Customers	13	11.4	4	12.5	9	11.4
Opens Discussions with Firm	13	11.4	7	21.2	6	7.6
Social Skills	11	9.6	5	15.6	6	7.6
Assertive	10	8.8	3	9.1	7	8.9
Persistent	8	7.0	5	15.2	3	3.8
Risk Taker	8	7.0	4	12.1	3	3.8

how many other contacts each firm might be experiencing.

The second area of contribution is in the area of providing information as to which characteristics are thought to be “must possess” characteristics. The perception of which characteristics a salesperson must possess is dependent upon the particular type of company the salesperson has targeted for his/her sales efforts. By understanding which of these characteristics each company type values, the sales manager is in a better position to either attempt to identify salespersons who possess these specific characteristics or to attempt to fine tune the sales force training programs to consider the type of company the sales force will be

contacting. As a result of this tailored training, the salesperson should be in a better position to become more effective by tailoring his/her sales presentation for the specific company type in question.

Finally, future research should focus on at least two specific areas. First, to address a limitation of this research, future research should attempt to survey a larger sample of shippers. While the study consisted of a survey mailed out to over 500 shippers only 114 were returned and usable. Second, future research should build upon the attributes and characteristics identified in this study and attempt to identify specific factors or constructs that could be utilized in a theory of buyer-friendly behavior.

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