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Keo Mony Sok, PhD, Phyra Sok, PhD, and Luigi M. De Luca, PhD

In today’s competitive sales market, it is no secret that clients expect results. Increasingly, clients demand sales professionals provide exceptional customer service that coincides with meeting those desired results. To have sustainable success in satisfying client’s demands, research shows attaining the proper motivation is key.

The need for fantastic sales professionals is greater today than ever before. Salespeople are increasingly experiencing conflicting demands on their time and abilities and must be successful at meeting each demand individually (Jasmand, Blazevic, & de Ruyter 2012). Recent developments in sales have led to an increasing need for sales professionals to provide exceptional customer service to the client, to fulfill the client’s desire for results, and to take advantage of cross- and up-selling opportunities which positively impact the bottom line (Jasmand et al. 2012; Yu, Patterson, & de Ruyter 2013). This combination of customer service and up-selling is known as service-sales ambidexterity and is widely recognized as a beneficial skill to increase sales productivity and client satisfaction.

Service-Sales Ambidexterity

To successfully achieve service-sales ambidexterity, sales professionals must understand and apply the proper personal motivation, which may include either can do or reason to motivations. Can do motivations are encompassed by the belief that I can do this, and research supports that can do motivations are positively related to service-sales ambidexterity (Jasmand et al. 2012). Reason to motivations are best understood as the why I do this, and the main contribution of our work is to indicate that reason to motivations are as effective as can do motivations to overcome the apparent conflicts of service and sales.

The modern sales professional should aim to be personally motivated in his/her work by reason to motivations, which include enjoyment of work and drive to work. If salespeople are able to find their service and sales tasks to be intrinsically enjoyable, they are highly likely to continue down the path of success by using service-sales ambidexterity. Equally, if salespeople have an inner feeling that they should or must utilize service-sales ambidexterity, they are highly likely to integrate service-sales ambidexterity into their sales approach.
Can-Do Motivations

Research suggests that the effectiveness of service-sales ambidexterity may be partially influenced by can do motivations, in which individuals pursue difficult and complex goals because of their perceived capacity to succeed in a task (Higgins, Kruglanski, & Pierro 2003). Individuals motivated by thinking I can do this task fall into two categories: locomotion-oriented and assessment-oriented individuals. However, the fact that sales professionals believe that they can accomplish a task does not mean they will understand the value in the task and adopt it.

A. Locomotion

Locomotion individuals are internally motivated to start their next task and complete it quickly so they may move on to the next task. Locomotion individuals jump right into a task with little time for reflection and pursue their goal of completion in a direct manner with little tolerance for procrastination or distraction (Kruglanski et al. 2010). To attain the greatest sense of personal achievement, locomotion individuals prefer performing and completing various tasks throughout their day, rather than a singular project that requires months of work to complete.

Locomotion orientation and the desire to accomplish multiple goals has a positive effect on service-sales ambidexterity. Locomotion-oriented individuals believe they are able to meet the client’s expectations for service while also pursuing their personal goal of cross- and up-selling. Further, those who are locomotion-oriented will desire to quickly complete the sale to move that item onto their list of completed tasks. However, risk exists that locomotion-oriented individuals may not grasp the value of ambidexterity, instead perpetuating old habits of completely a task quickly with little introspection.

B. Assessment

Assessment motivations are included within the category of can do motivations and differ from locomotion by critically evaluating each alternative prior to taking action. Assessment-oriented individuals prefer to do the right thing in every situation and contemplate each decision they make (Avnet & Higgins 2003). Thus, assessment-oriented individuals excel at detecting deficiencies in a plan and providing superior alternatives.

Due to deep contemplation, assessment-oriented individuals are likely to understand the benefits of pursuing service-sales ambidexterity. Assessment-oriented individuals have the proper motivation to successfully help clients solve the most difficult problems and will seize every opportunity to cross- and up-sell to better meet the customer’s needs.

Reason to Motivations

Our research indicates that reason to motivations have a greater influence than can do motivations in regards to accomplishing conflicting tasks such as service and sales. Rather than
finding motivation in a belief that I can do this, reason to motivators are based upon awareness of why I do this (Graves et al. 2012). Reason to motivations include the two separate categories of enjoyment of work and drive for work.

A. Enjoyment of Work

Enjoyment-of-work individuals are those who find their work intrinsically interesting (Graves et al. 2012). Enjoyment-motivated professionals become passionately involved in their work, and have a feeling that the reason they work is to fulfill their passion or calling (e.g., Bue lens & Poelmans 2004). Enjoyment of work is related to positive work outcomes and achievement.

Motivation from enjoyment of work has several positive side effects. Enjoyment is related to reduced work stress, enhanced emotional well-being, and voluntary assumption of tasks without coercion or reinforcement (e.g., Aziz & Zickar 2006). Motivation from enjoyment is found to have a positive effect on service-sales ambidexterity, enabling superior interpersonal relationships through service and improvement of sales skills. Yet, if enjoyment of work is low, the belief that you can accomplish a task (such as locomotion or assessment motivation) becomes insignificant. Enjoyment of work enables the sales professional to continue to move from task to task and/or think critically.

B. Drive for Work

In contrast to enjoyment of work, drive-for-work individuals are motivated by a sense of self-imposed obligation, a feeling that the reason to perform the task is that they should or must do this (Spence & Robbins 1992). Those who have a drive for work impose pressure on themselves to perform at a level that meets the expectations of others and often falls within the stereotype of workaholic (e.g., Aziz & Zickar 2006). Individuals motivated by obligation feel proud of their accomplishments when they perform well, yet feel guilty and self-disparaging when they perform poorly.

Counterintuitive to common sense, our research reveals that driven to work motivation results in a strong positive effect on adoption of service-sales ambidexterity. Drive for work can be positive in the short run because the individual will pursue multiple tasks at once with great effort. However, in the long run, their efforts may result in increased stress and anxiety which may temporarily impair their cognitive ability (Graves et al. 2012).
Service-Sales Ambidexterity for Real Estate Professionals

Real estate professionals recognize that their industry encompasses both a service and a sales focus. Some agents believe service is incommensurate with sales, yet a successful salesperson needs to possess the ability to not only sell a home to, or for, a client while also simultaneously providing excellent service.

Sales is a foundational element of the real estate industry and should be of equal importance to service in the mind of the real estate professional. Salespeople seek to meet the needs and wishes of clients for their new homes, or to sell their old. After all, the sales aspect is the primary reason a client hires a real estate agent to begin with.

To earn a client for life, the main goal of an agent should be to help the client find a home s/he wants at an affordable price, or sell the home at the price s/he desires. Yet, exceptional service is built upon showing your unique value to the client and establishing a relationship for the future. Providing great service is a must in modern times, where clients tell two people if they receive great service, yet tell thousands online if they receive poor service.

One way that agents may utilize service-sales ambidexterity is to self-promote and sell the unique service that they provide by showing clients their valuable service approach. Highlight your service by identifying your specific skill sets, knowledge of the area, and exclusive service such as unlimited open houses. To emphasize your sales ability, do not be afraid to discuss your past successes and experience. Regardless of how you differentiate your service in the mind of potential clients, it is important to show clients that you are in their corner by providing excellent service while completing the sale.

Motivation for Real Estate Professionals

It is important for real estate professionals to understand their personal motivations so they may be better able to utilize service-sales ambidexterity and ultimately succeed in meeting client’s needs. Person-job fit has positive outcomes for job satisfaction (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson 2005). If a real estate pro lacks the reason to motivations of enjoyment or drive, it may be difficult to achieve satisfaction in a service-sales industry. Although individuals with the can do motivations of locomotion or assessment are likely and able to use service-sales ambidexterity, they show potential for burn-out due to lack of passion and may never achieve full satisfaction in their careers. Sales professionals with enjoyment of work or driven for work often adopt service-sales ambidexterity, which results in increased productivity.

For managers and brokers of real estate firms, understanding the motivations of potential hires can be of great importance. Managers would benefit from hiring individuals who reveal the reason to motivations of enjoyment of work and driven for work. Agents who are passionate about their work or feel obligated to do their best will combine a service mindset with their sales
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desires. However, an agent with low drive and/or low passion is likely to experience little job satisfaction. During the training process and throughout the year, it is possible to stimulate employee’s motivations of enjoyment and drive. As discussed in Ahearne, Jelinek, and Rapp (2005), training and motivation are key to an organization’s success.

Conclusion

*Service-sales ambidexterity* enables sales professionals to improve productivity and achieve career success by pursuing the inherently conflicting task of service and sales. Professionals with a thorough understanding of their own internal motives are likely to have greater success in regards to achieving their sales targets and superior reviews for their customer service. By utilizing *reason to* motivations, sales professionals are better able to tap into their passion and/or drive to utilize *service-sales ambidexterity*, which results in higher productivity and job satisfaction.

Recommended Reading


References


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