

When Improvisation Pays Off for Salespeople: The Role of Age and Gender in Sales Performance

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Abstract:

In today's fast-paced and ever-changing business landscape, sales organizations increasingly rely on their salespeople's ability to swiftly adapt to unexpected market shifts. This adaptability—often driven by improvisational behavior—has emerged as a crucial skill for maintaining competitive performance. This study aims to explore the connection between salespeople's improvisational behavior and their sales performance, while also examining whether demographic factors such as age and gender influence this relationship. Data were collected through surveys from 245 sales professionals working across 50 export-oriented firms in Thailand. To reduce the risk of single-source bias, a multi-source data collection approach was employed. Specifically, salespeople self-reported their improvisational behavior, while their sales performance was independently evaluated by their immediate supervisors. The analysis revealed that the link between improvisational behavior and sales performance is not uniform across all individuals— it is significantly influenced by the salesperson's age and gender. Notably, older salespeople exhibited a stronger positive relationship between improvisational behavior and sales performance compared to their younger counterparts. Furthermore, male salespeople appeared to gain greater performance benefits from engaging in improvisational behavior than female salespeople. These findings contribute valuable insights into how individual characteristics can shape the effectiveness of improvisational behavior in sales contexts. They suggest that while improvisation is generally beneficial, its impact can vary meaningfully based on demographic differences. For sales managers and organizations, understanding these nuances can inform more targeted training, development, and support strategies to maximize the potential of diverse sales teams.

Keywords:

Improvisational Behavior, Sales Performance, Salespeople, Change Management.