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Is Work-Family Balance Possible?

*Dawn Carlson, PhD, K. Michele Kacmar, PhD, Joseph G. Grzywacz, PhD,
Bennett Tepper, PhD, and Dwayne Whitten, DBA*

Do you have a balanced work and family life? For many, this question is difficult to answer because the definition of "balance" varies. Regardless of the definition, it is clear that the demands of work can impact an individual's quality of life and detract from time spent with family and friends.

Real estate professionals frequently experience this tension as they tailor work schedules around what is most convenient for clients. Often times, client meetings occur at the expense of nights and weekends. The daily "wear and tear" of an irregular work schedule can have a negative effect on productivity at work and the amount of energy left for family activities.

In recent years, work-family balance has emerged as a topic of increasing interest, but remains largely underdeveloped in terms of quantifying its effect on employees and organizations. It is becoming more apparent, though, that individual employees' work-family balance can influence the overall productivity of a company (Lazar et al. 2010).

Our study demonstrates a relationship between work-family balance and organizational citizenship behavior (unsolicited positive behaviors beyond one's normal job requirements), as well as positive affect (positive emotions) displayed in the workplace. Our work applies to the real estate industry in areas such as supervisor actions, workplace activities, and actions that propel organizational performance.

Background

Historically, studies on work-family balance have focused on the absence of work-family conflict (Greenhaus and Beutell 1985). Older studies suggest that if an individual is not experiencing a significant amount of negative interaction between work and family activities, he has obtained a reasonable work-family balance. More recent studies imply that work-family balance is actually the indirect mixture of work-family conflict as well as work-family enrichment, the ability of one role to improve the experience in another role (Greenhaus and Powell 2006; Grzywacz and Carlson 2007). Thus, the modern definition of work-family balance is defined as *the combination of conflict and enrichment, where an individual experiences more enrichment than conflict* (Frone 2003).

To examine work-family balance, we focused on how *organizational citizenship behavior* (OCB) and *positive affect* (positive emotions) shape perceptions and behaviors related to work-family balance.

OCBs are shown to increase the effectiveness of a company as well as contribute to employee performance. These behaviors are linked more closely with the attitudes of an employee because they describe deliberate actions taken that are not job requirements. An example of an OCB would be an agent noticing trash in the company parking lot on her way to a client call. An agent not displaying OCBs might leave the trash clean up to the custodial service, while an agent displaying OCB might recognize the impact of a "trashy parking lot" on the perception of her company, leading her to pick up the trash and throw it away.

When studying employee engagement and work place motivation, theory suggests that value is added to an organization when positive emotions are associated with the way people interact with their physical and social world (Fredrickson 1998; 2001). An agent who experiences positive interactions with his or her office environment is more likely to perform behaviors that reflect an engaged attitude in work activities. In fact, other studies have shown that autonomy has contributed to positive growth in worker engagement and employee retention (de Lang, Taris, Kompier, Houtman, and Bongers 2003).

Lastly, the positive display of emotions is shown in our study to be the method through which work-family balance increases organizational citizenship behaviors. Others studies have been conducted that show that those who exhibit work-family balance are more resilient to daily stressors (Grzywacz, Butler, and Almeida 2008). The positive emotions that are observable to others in a company are the most likely to create a positive spiral of engagement that ultimately benefits an organization (Fredrickson 1998; 2001).

Our Study

We surveyed 75 supervisors and 205 subordinate employees from a broad range of organizations. All candidates were college graduates from two business schools in the southern U.S. Participants completed a questionnaire concerning work-family balance, positive affect in the workplace, as well as organizational citizenship behavior.

We found that when greater work-family balance was achieved, supervisors reported a larger number of citizenship behaviors performed by employees as well as positive affect demonstrated by those performing the behaviors. When employees were found to have a greater amount of work-family balance, they also carried a more positive attitude in the workplace and were more apt to perform duties outside of their typical job functions.

Implications for Real Estate Professionals

Understanding how this research translates to the real estate industry is important, given the potential for an agent to lose control of work-life balance. Supervisors and managers play an integral role in the promotion of work-family balance in the work place. Consider an agent that is struggling to attract business. Traditionally, the agent's manager might suggest that she spend more time engaging in lead-generating activities to increase leads and, ultimately, closed deals. Instead of suggesting more work, though, try taking her out to lunch and investing time to better understand potential work-life issues she may be experiencing. The more you know about your agents, the better you can manage their wants and needs. Consider these questions to better understand your agents more holistically: *what is weighing on your mind most heavily at work right now? What motivates you and makes you feel most valued in our organization? What are your primary motivations for work: money, family, etc.?*

Another way to promote genuine work-family balance is to incentivize performance with rewards and events that encourage more family time. Instead of rewarding actions with a small pay bump, purchase a "family night" package for your employees that includes a gift card for dinner and a movie for the entire family. Also, work-sponsored events like picnics promote an informal environment to connect with peers and managers. Informal social events can enhance an employee's positive perception of work and family interaction. *When was the last time you encouraged your employees to spend time with their family? Are there opportunities for your employees to bring family members to company-sponsored events?*

Lastly, the promotion of work-family balance might be as simple as publicly praising an agent in a team meeting after observing positive teamwork behaviors with peers. Such a compliment might develop positive feelings and encourage further activities that are outside of that individual's job description. By rewarding desired actions, positive momentum is gained and organizational citizenship behaviors are more likely to occur.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study demonstrates that work-family balance can be an important piece in the overall effectiveness and productivity of an organization. For those managers in the real estate profession who are looking for ways to promote more organizational citizenship behaviors through positive affect, we believe the above suggestions are only the start of many ways you further engage your agents. As the trajectory of work demands increase, the importance of work-

family balance also increases. By focusing on activities that promote balance between work and family, an organization is able to achieve a more productive and positive work environment.

Recommended Reading

Carlson, D.S., K.M. Kacmar, J.G. Gryzwacz, B. Tepper, and D. Whitten (2013), "Work-Family Balance and Supervisor Appraised Citizenship Behavior: The Link of Positive Affect," *Journal of Behavioral and Applied Management*, 14(2), 87-106.

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Dr. Carlson (PhD – Florida State University) is the H.R. Gibson Chair in Management Development in the Hankamer School of Business at Baylor University. Her interests include work-family research and other workplace issues such as abusive bosses and working mothers. She has published over 50 articles in journals such as *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and *Journal of Applied Psychology*. In 2009, Carlson won both the Outstanding Professor in Scholarship and Distinguished Professor awards from Baylor University. She also was awarded the Elizabeth Moss Kanter Award for Excellence in Work-Family Research in 2008. In 2014, Carlson won the Brent Clum Outstanding Research award from Baylor University.

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Dr. Whitten (DBA – Louisiana Tech University) is a Clinical Associate Professor and Mays Teaching Fellow in the Department of Information and Operations Management at Texas A&M University. Dr. Whitten joined Texas A&M in the fall of 2005. Previously, Dr. Whitten worked as a programmer/analyst with Arkansas Systems, Inc., and as the Microcomputer Coordinator at Ouachita Baptist University (OBU). He later taught at OBU and Baylor University. His primary research interests are in the areas of IT outsourcing, IT security, and enterprise resource planning/supply chain management. He currently teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in computer networking and project management. Dr. Whitten's research can be found in *Harvard Business Review*, *Decision Sciences*, *Journal of Operations Management*, *MIS Quarterly Executive*, among others. Dr. Whitten is a member of the Decision Sciences Institute, Association for Computing Machinery, and Association for Information Systems.

Attracting Talent from University Sales Programs to Grow Your Real Estate Agency

Andrea L. Dixon, PhD, Raj Agnihotri, PhD, Leff Bonney, PhD, Robert Erffmeyer, PhD, Ellen Bolman Pullins, PhD, Jane Z. Sojka, PhD, and Vicki West, MBA

When looking to add new agents to your agency, finding individuals who can add value immediately is important. Additionally, finding the right person who will fit your job and your agency will increase the probability of positive impact for your agency's short- and long-term objectives.

The investment in hiring a new sales person can be daunting. Some research suggests that making the wrong sales hire can cost $150,000-$300,000. Making new sales hires directly from university sales programs changes the investment story. Such new hires reach financial breakeven points thirty percent faster and remain with their firms forty percent longer than untrained sales professionals (Fogel et al. 2012).

So how does a real estate agency interact with this qualified student population? How do you draw their attention to your available positions? How can your agency attract such individuals to your sales positions? And how can recruiting managers ensure the best job-person fit? Capitalizing on this attractive talent pool requires intentional activity from promoting awareness of positions through branding and recruiting efforts to engaging with university faculty. To gain a real foothold in this market, your organization will want to leverage students' networks and use their preferred methods for contacting the students.

In this article, we share highlights from our recently published article, "Developing a Stakeholder Approach for Recruiting Top-Level Sales Students," which was published in the April issue of the *Journal of Marketing Education*. Our research team comprises academic leaders from seven top university sales programs. We are delighted to share this information with the *Keller Center Research Report* audience.

Create Awareness for Your Opportunity among the Sales Student Population

To promote student awareness of specific opportunities within your real estate agency, you should focus your branding and marketing messages on the intangible benefits of your open positions, the level selectivity represented in your hiring practices, and the ethical standards and culture of the agency.

Several studies that our research team has conducted show that four of the top five job characteristics desired by sales students from these top university programs were the "intangibles." Such sales students expect that you will offer an opportunity that provides for a competitive compensation package. Therefore, these students begin to weigh the intangibles associated with various positions against one another. Amidst advancement opportunity, company financial stability, job security and fit with personal goals, compensation ranked third in terms of importance and was the only tangible benefit in the top five desired features and even still, was not number one. Leverage intentional messaging which emphasizes the advancement opportunity, stability of your agency or larger organization, and how your opportunity can fit with personal goals will create a lasting impression that resonates with these new sales professionals and increases awareness of your opportunity

Our research suggests that communicating specific activities experienced in a position strengthens awareness and recall of employer/recruiter messages more than communicating general company information or tangible benefits offered. Knowing that select sales candidates are sought for specific positions increases student awareness and recall of positions available.

A lingering stereotype of sales as a profession fraught with unethical practices is counterproductive to the recruitment of talented individuals for sales-related positions. Emphasizing social responsibility and ethical business practices will help build memorable and desirable employment brands among sales student populations.

To increase awareness of agency-specific positions, real estate professionals should include frontline employee experiences in development of brand messages and include peer-group experiences in the hiring process. Front-line or entry level agents will be best at communicating opportunity information in ways that are easily understandable and credible to student candidates. Firms who send only "older" representatives may miss opportunity when attempting to build such connections. Additionally, using group interviews or introducing candidates to peers already employed within the organization will significantly impact awareness of the opportunities available to students.

Higher student awareness of opportunities will be achieved if positions are publicized through the specific sales program or business school. A 2005 study found that frequency of interactions between faculty and company representatives had a significant correlation with job awareness among students (Chapman et al, 2005). Creating meaningful interactions with faculty will prompt faculty to publicize your opportunities. The key is to consider how to make such interactions meaningful for the faculty member.

Merely sponsoring an activity based on the campus or at your firm is insufficient to rise to the requisite level of interactions to compel this desired faculty response. Offering to speak in faculty members' classes does not meet the standard of "meaningful." (One of the most common

phrases that a faculty member hears from someone in industry is, "I'd love to speak in your class and share my experiences with your students.")

Instead of seeking to be interesting to the faculty member, engage the faculty member with a real interest in his/her work, classes, etc. Like any good sales call, do your homework, learn about the faculty member's research initiatives, see what classes might be listed by his/her name. Then, ask the professor, "what resources might be most helpful to you with respect to your research in XYZ area?" We teach our students to focus on being interested in others rather than attempting to be interesting where you draw all of the focus to yourself.

Recruit Sales Students in a Productive Manner

Recognize the Faculty Relationship

Active recruitment of individual students well matched to your agency positions relies heavily on the relationship students and recruiters have with university faculty. Sales faculty are perfectly positioned to bridge the relationship between recruiters and students. Faculty monitor the interactions between students and recruiters and encourage the right engagements while adjusting for information gleaned through various channels.

Nurturing relationships with university faculty promotes student awareness of available positions and student attraction to those positions. When faculty have a deep understanding of recruiter/manager's open positions, beyond merely that such positions exist, there will be an increase person-job fit for sales students and graduates.

For example, if you have updated your entry-level sales position's job description or changed the way your sales team works together, use such updates as an opportunity to engage your target faculty "just to keep them abreast." Such updates will be short calls requiring no action on the part of faculty, which are perfect encounters for relationship-building.

Agency leaders may want to consider sponsoring sales programs activities and then working closely with sales faculty during the program development and execution. Engaging faculty through their events gives agency leaders the opportunity to understand the sales program while also engaging directly with students. Driving awareness and top-talent interview opportunities requires publicized company involvement with the student population.

Working with university sales faculty to recruit sales students for internships will increase faculty understanding of your position's benefits and requirements. Additionally, faculty can be

instrumental in developing the internship programs by ensuring that the features of the internship align with student expectations given their sales program education. So, if you do not have a formal internship program, ask faculty from one of your target universities to provide advice for structuring your internship program. Engaging the faculty for develop creates early relationship-building opportunities for you. Finally, faculty are positioned to receive honest feedback from students regarding internship experiences, which can be relayed to recruiters in order to improve internship programs. Be sure to ask faculty for feedback about your internship program.

Contact and Connect with Students According to THEIR Preferences

How you contact and connect with students matters and directly impacts the efficacy of your recruitment results. Refining and aligning these strategies will lead to increased recruitment via increased position attractiveness to students and higher rates of job-person fit for recruits.

Students are influenced by many sources when it comes to their career-path decisions. These sources include family, friends, sales professors, family friends, alumni, and mentors. Real estate leaders can tap connections into these key influencers and leverage those connections to attract strong candidates for agency positions. Communication via networks of alumni-employees, faculty and staff, and parents, mentors, and friends results in higher attractiveness rates among sales students.

As mentioned earlier, internships nurture the recruiter-faculty relationship thus increasing strong student candidates and faculty endorsements. Internships also deepen the connections between strong student candidates and the leaders of the real estate agency. Students rate companies as more attractive who offer internship positions than companies that do not. Internships allow students to see the daily demands of the position first hand. Internships also allow for deeper connections between professionals from the agency and students long before full-time positions are considered. Additionally, interns become a credible source of company and position information to their peers at the university.

Not surprisingly, students are attracted to sales positions with companies that demonstrate a genuine interest in the students and which display a professional and positive attitude. A recruiter, for example, may be the first impression a student has of an agency and thereby serves as a positioning "vehicle" beyond initial brand awareness. It is essential that an agency's recruiter creates a positive first impression. Additionally, recruiters demonstrating a genuine personal interest in individual students will motivate such students to keep the real estate agency in consideration for the student's post-graduation job. Additionally, maintaining professionalism throughout the recruitment process is important. Based on the experiences across these seven universities, we find that recruiters can take on too casual of a demeanor in an attempt to relate to young candidates, which in turn creates more of a void than a connection as students perceive the agency as lacking in professionalism.

Students rate sales positions with companies as more attractiveness when those companies use in-person communication during the sales-student recruitment process. Interestingly, students prefer personal communication over less personal forms such as phone or Internet (Dixon & Adamson, 2012). Additionally, Robinson and Stubberud (2012) found that social communication forms used by university students were not the preferred methods for school and work activities. Face-to-face was most preferred for both work and school. Increasing the use of in person and personal email communication will increase the agency and positions' appeal to student candidates.

Conclusion

Real estate agency leaders may find attracting talent from university sales programs to be a viable strategy for growing the real estate agency. To recruit talented, impactful candidates from the pool of individuals graduating from university sales programs, the agency leader needs carefully formulated connection and contact strategies and intentional branding. Such activities enable managers to increase awareness of agency positions among these high-potential sales students, increase the attraction of such students to your agency's opportunity, and improve the selection of a candidate who truly fits your position and your organization. Hiring talented candidates with a strong understanding of the sales process will ensure that growth is in your agency's future.

For more information on university sales programs, please visit
www.universitysalescenteralliance.org

Recommended Reading

Agnihotri, R., L. Bonney, A. Dixon, R. Erffmeyer, E. Bolman-Pullins, J. Sojka, and V. West (2014), "Developing a Stakeholder Approach for Recruiting Top-level Sales Students," *Journal of Marketing Education* (April), 75-86.

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Dr. Andrea Dixon (PhD - Indiana University) has an industrial background in research, planning, and advertising, her research interests embrace behavioral issues related to sales, service, and client satisfaction. Andrea has published in the *Journal of Marketing, Harvard Business Review, Organizational Science, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Leadership Quarterly,* the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* the *Journal of Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, and several other journals. In 2002, Dixon's research published in the Journal of Marketing was selected as the award-winning research in the sales area. Prior to joining Baylor, Dixon was the Executive Director of the MS-Marketing Program and the Ronald J. Dornoff Teaching Fellow at the University of Cincinnati. She has co-authored the book, *Strategic Sales Leadership: BREAKthrough Thinking for BREAKthrough Results*, and multiple industry-wide research texts. Dixon serves on three editorial review boards and co-chaired the American Marketing Association's 2007 Winter Educator Conference. While serving as a faculty member at the University of Cincinnati (U.C.) and Indiana University-Bloomington (I.U.), Dr. Dixon taught an array of graduate and undergraduate courses. One of U.C.'s MBA EXCEL Teaching Award winners, Dixon was selected for a national teaching award by Irwin Publishing, as a distinguished professor by Indiana University MBA students, and for a university-wide award by her academic colleagues at I.U. In 2008, she was named the Academy of Marketing Science's Marketing Teacher Award winner. Prior to teaching at U.C., Andrea worked closely with GAMA International as the Senior Director of Product Development and Marketing.

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Since 1989, Vicki West has been a faculty member in the Department of Marketing (McCoy College of Business) at Texas State University (TSU). In 1994, Ms. West was named "Best Professor" in the College of Business. In 1999, she won the National Freedom Foundations Award for Excellence in Free Enterprise Education and the prestigious "Presidential Award for Excellence in Teaching" at TSU. In 2006, the TSU Alumni Association honored her with the Professor of the Year award for her body of work in both professional selling and free enterprise. In 2010, West was nominated for Sales Professor of the Year at the national level by the American Marketing Association – Sales Interest Group division. In 2002, the SIFE organization honored West with the Jack Kahl Award as the Sam Walton Free Enterprise Fellow of the Year in recognition for her work with the organization. She also received the "Golden Eagle" award for her work in Central America. In 2004, Ms. West was inducted into the SIFE Hall of Fame. In addition to her teaching, West has written numerous articles related to professional selling and free enterprise, and she regularly contributes to the sales textbook, *Selling: Building Partnerships* by Castleberry and Tanner. Prior to joining Texas State University, Ms. West was the Administrator of Coliseum Associates, a joint venture company between Hospital Corporation of American (HCA) and 120 physicians. She also serves as a speaker/consultant to numerous financial institutions, The University of Texas, IBM, Texas Women's Chamber of Commerce Annual Conference, Executive Women in Texas Government and other business and non-profit organizations in several states. In addition to her professional activities, West served as President of the Board of Directors of one of the largest regional museums in Georgia. She was also voted "Women in Business Advocate of the Year" by the Small Business Administration for the Austin, San Antonio, and Rio Grande Valley for her work with women in business. Vicki West holds a BBA-Marketing and an MBA from Georgia College and State University.

Unmasking the High-Performing Salesperson

Christophe Fournier, PhD (France)

One of a sales manager's primary responsibilities is to maximize retention, productivity, and overall performance of her sales team. In an increasingly global and competitive selling environment, salespeople are often driven to operate at a frantic pace, managing tasks and time across current clients and future opportunities.

Managers and salespeople in the real estate context experience these same pressures. This article is written to help "unmask" the qualities of high-performing salespeople in the context of task and time management preferences to help managers and agents achieve the greatest business outcomes. Additionally, understanding an agent's task and time preferences can help increase the agent's work-life quality by reducing role stress and enhancing sales performance.

The Attributes of Task and Time Management

Polychronicity is defined as an employee's preference for switching between multiple tasks within the same block of time. A real estate professional who can accomplish several projects simultaneously (e.g., engaging in client meetings, writing-up contracts, prospecting, all within the same time period) might be classified as *polychronic*. Conversely, a salesperson who prefers managing his tasks in a singular fashion (e.g., writing up a series of new contracts for an hour, then prospecting for hour, then spending the afternoon in client meetings) may be classified as *monochronic*.

If a manager does not fully understand his agents' task and time management preferences, he cannot manage their work most effectively. In light of the pressure put on managers and salespeople to optimize business outcomes, we sought to study the impact of task and time management preferences on role stress and job performance.

What Makes a High-Performing Salesperson?

Data were collected from a US-based sample of 166 account executives working in the broadcasting industry. A survey measured participants' task management preferences (polychronic vs. monochronic) and time management preferences (preference to work autonomously versus depending on someone else to direct work). Additionally, the survey measured salesperson performance and tension/stress related to his role as a salesperson.

Based on these data, we uncovered a couple key outcomes. First, we found that salespeople with a *polychronic* task management profile tend to perform better and experience less role stress in their work than their monochronic colleagues. Additionally, salespeople who prefer an *autonomous*, self-directed approach to time management and scheduling perform better and experience less role stress than those who are dependent on input/guidance from others.

Consequently, this empirical investigation underlines the critical impact that an individual's task and time profile has on his job performance and work-life quality.

Implications for Real Estate Professionals

Our research has several practical implications for real estate professionals who serve in managerial and/or agent roles.

- ***Find the Right Fit****.* Real estate firms (especially those managing teams with numerous agents) may have several positions or roles within the office. Some agents may be tasked with administrative work, some may serve in customer-facing roles, and others may fall somewhere in between. While there are places for employees with different task and time identities, understanding where to put your high performers (polychronic, autonomous) is paramount.

    Identify the responsibilities of the roles in your office and the profiles of your current employees and assign agents accordingly to achieve greatest performance and highest job satisfaction.

- ***Train for Success****.* Offer task and time management training programs to strengthen agents' abilities. While you may not be able to convert a monochronic individual into a polychronic individual, helping agents recognize the qualities of high performers can help set aspirational ideals among employees. Equipping agents with tools and resources to be most effective will help yield the outcomes you desire for your firm.

- ***Recruit and Select Judiciously****.* When recruiting new salespeople, have a clear picture of your job requirements and how job responsibilities relate to task and time management profiles. Use a series of questions or a short survey in the interview process to identify the applicant's time and task profile to help select a candidate that best aligns with the role (see Table 1).

Additionally, strong attention should be given to the way the job is advertised. Communicate expectations and job requirements clearly in terms of task and time management abilities to attract strong, qualified applicants and limit recruitment errors. Clear role definition and strong recruitment can have a positive impact on performance and turnover.

Table 1. Potential Questions to Ask in Job Interviews	
Polychronicity	*• Do you like to juggle several activities at the same time?* *• How frequently do you like to work on a single task or activity?*
Time Scheduling	*• Is staying on schedule important to you?* *• Do you get upset when you miss a deadline?*

Conclusion

Real estate professionals are under pressure to perform at the highest level in a global and competitive marketplace. Understanding the impact of an agent's task and time profile can help individuals and organizations perform to their greatest potential, while producing favorable job satisfaction among employees.

Recommended Reading

Fournier, Christophe, William A. Weeks, Christopher P. Blocker, and Lawrence B. Chonko (2013), "Polychronicity and Scheduling's Role in Reducing Role Stress and Enhancing Sales Performance, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 33(2), 197-209.

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Christophe Fournier is Professor of Marketing at Montpellier II University in France. Dr. Fournier focuses on direct marketing and e-commerce, and is strongly engaged in the field of sales force management. His research focuses on different types of populations such as commercial vendors, department managers in supermarkets, and telemarketers. Dr. Fournier's research has appeared in international journals, including *Journal of Direct Marketing*, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *Journal of Business & Industrial Marketing* and national journals, including *Research and Application in Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing*, and *Journal of Marketing French*.

Managing Consumer Resistance to Internet-Based Services

Athanasios G. Patsiotis, PhD (Greece), Tim Hughes, PhD (UK), and Don J. Webber, PhD (UK)

Internet-based applications are very commonplace within business and personal contexts. Online banking, chat-based customer service, and shopping are just some of the e-functions that permeate our day-to-day lives. Some consumers, though, show great resistance to emerging online technology. Driven by privacy concerns, security risks, a lack of knowledge of available technologies, and/or simply preferences for human interaction, some still resist Internet-based tools by either delaying adoption or rejecting the technology altogether (Patsiotis et al. 2013).

Such technological developments offer several benefits for real estate professionals and their clients. Internet-based applications provide both a communication and distribution channel to manage customer interactions. Cloud-based customer relationship management (CRM) databases allow agents to access customer information, even when they are not in the office. Web applications can also help automate marketing and sales activities, freeing up agents' time to engage in other value-adding activities for their clients. Knowing when to leverage technological interfaces versus providing in-person service is essential to maximize time and resources.

This article looks at the potential implications of consumers' adoption (or non-adoption) of Internet-based technologies within the real estate context. The profiles and preferences of four key adopter/non-adopter categories - *users*, *imminent adopters*, *late adopters*, and *rejecters* - can help agents understand how to leverage technology in sales and marketing processes.

Our Study

Extant research has traditionally concentrated on what influences adoption; consequently, little research has helped clarify the different types of *non-adoption* behavior. Our study examined how consumers engage with Internet-based applications in the context of Internet banking. Specifically, we sought to uncover the differences between consumers who actively utilize Internet-based technology (adopters) and those that do not (non-adopters). Thus, our study examined adoption from a different angle, looking at non-adoption behavior and the root causes for consumer resistance to adoption.

Participants in the study took a survey to assess the drivers and inhibitors of adoption behaviors. Survey questions were categorized along five key dimensions relative to Internet-based

technology applications: *interactivity* (timeliness, control of process, responsiveness, etc.), *knowledge* (awareness of benefits, usefulness, ease of use, abilities, experience, etc.), *human interaction/risk* (preference for human interaction, perception of risks, privacy/security concerns, etc.), *lack of trial* (ability to gain experience and/or test before use, etc.), and *emotive* (emotions, positive/negative elements of using application, etc.). The interrelationships and interaction of each of these factors determines the likelihood of adoption/non-adoption or later adoption/no later adoption.

Based on the survey results, we classified respondents into four categories: *users* (currently use, and will continue to use Internet-based technology – 29%), *imminent adopters* (do not currently use, but will likely use Internet-based technology within 12 months – 29%), *late adopters* (do not currently use, but will likely use Internet-based technology after 12 months – 16%), and *rejecters* (do not currently use, and will not likely use Internet-based technology – 25%).

Implications for Real Estate Professionals

Our results have implications for real estate professionals who engage Internet-based applications in their sales and marketing processes. Clients may not always be open to adopting sophisticated technological methods of service delivery. This means that real estate professionals may have to navigate different customer preferences within the service encounter to achieve highest satisfaction among clients. Early in the relationship, it will be helpful for agents to assess where clients fall on the spectrum of technological adoption. A simple survey (or more informal verbal questioning) can help agents identify which category includes her client(s). Therefore, she can begin to determine how much, if any, a client will want to utilize technology in the sales process.

Once an agent has categorized her client(s), she can engage technology most effectively to meet the needs and preferences of her customers:

- *Users* will likely be open to a variety of Internet-based applications in the sales process. In fact, users are likely to complete many search and analysis functions on their own. Virtual home tours and Web-based financing applications can make this client feel less reliant on you. To ensure the client perceives your value creation impact, leverage automated and electronic processes in your interactions as much as possible.

- *Imminent Adopters* may be open to a technology approach to the sales process, but will likely require additional personal interaction to feel most satisfied. Helping this client learn simple technological interventions early in the sales process can be perceived as value-added behavior. For example, helping this client set up a Pinterest board with photos of houses "still being considered" may cement this client's loyalty. Continue to provide additional interventions as you gauge his comfort and acceptance of the technology.

- *Late Adopters* will likely require more personal interaction than technological interaction, especially in a relatively short-term (0-6 mo.) sales process. While he may adopt a stronger technology approach in the future, he will likely respond more favorably to personal interaction. Bringing hard copy files and helping this client stay organized via verbal and written feedback may be key to this client believing in you.

- *Rejecters* will likely require an entirely personal approach to the sales process. Plan to make personal phone calls, face-to-face meetings, etc. the primary component of your interaction with this type of client.

  As an agent, you may well be more technologically sophisticated than your client, so it is important to keep your client's level of resistance to Internet-based services in mind.

Conclusion

Understanding your clients' inclinations regarding Internet-based technologies will help you manage his expectations most effectively. Whether your client prefers a technology-heavy approach (*user*), an entirely personal interaction approach (*rejecter*), or something in between, identifying when and how to leverage technology in sales and marketing processes can promote efficiencies and greatest customer satisfaction in the sales process.

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Appendix: Aspects of the Five Dimensions

Dimension	Aspects
Interactivity	- *bidirectionality*: two way direction, interaction, accessibility, accuracy, interdependence, mutuality, informality - *timeliness*: speed & frequency of delivery - *mutual controllability*: easy to manage the process, control of the process - *responsiveness*: a good conversation
Knowledge	- *benefits*: economic gains, time & energy savings, usefulness, ease of use - *awareness*: services offered & skills needed - *personal capacity*: abilities, experiences
Human Interaction/Risk	- *human interaction*: face-to-face contact with sales professional/agent - *perceived risks*: financial, other, reliability - *privacy concerns*: access by others to personal information - *security concerns*: software problems, others access by fraud
Lack of Trial	- *lack of trial*: opportunities for experience on a trial basis before use
Emotive	- *emotions*: enjoyable, pleasant, exciting, feelings of knowing other person & location - *perceived difficulties*: negative elements of using the application

For the detailed measures representing these dimensions, see Patsiotis et al. 2013

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Dr. Hughes started his career in brand management at Heinz and then Nestle, before moving on to the financial services sector. He established a marketing department at Skipton Building Society and then headed up marketing at Bristol and West Building Society. As a consultant, for six years, he worked on marketing issues for companies in the UK and overseas. Later, this included a number of projects relating to the complexities of customer engagement through multiple distribution channels. Following the completion of his PhD on the response of UK financial services companies to e-commerce, Dr. Hughes has published extensively in internationally excellent journals such as *British Journal of Management*, *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, *European Journal of Marketing*, and the *Journal of Marketing Management*. Current research interests include academic/practitioner engagement, the application of self-service technology to customer service and Service-Dominant Logic. Dr. Hughes regularly runs training programs with industry and other organizations, for example: IBM (Customer Management and relationships); Sainsbury's (Delivering Product and Service Innovation); NHS (Applying business thinking in the new marketplace). He teaches Delivering Customer Value on the MBA.

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Dr. Webber's research focuses on the application of quantitative and qualitative methods to social science issues from an economics perspective. He has written over 70 published journal

articles on topics such as the effect health on employment propensity, the inter-regional variation of productivity, and the impact of peer groups on students learning behaviors. Prior to joining University of the West of England, Bristol, Webber was an Associate Professor at Auckland University of Technology in New Zealand where he was honored with two faculty research awards: a member of the team that won the *2010 Award for Best Research Team* and the individual winner of the *2010 Award for Research Excellence* for outstanding research performance. He has successfully completed research contracts for various organizations including the UK Government's department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), the UK's Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), NHS Bristol Primary Care Trust, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, New Zealand's Department of Labor and the Welsh Government.

INSIDER: The Ambivert Advantage
Clint Justice, MBA Candidate

Are extraverts are the best candidates for sales positions? Despite the proliferation of this assumption in numerous sales organizations, studies have shown that there is a weak and inconsistent relationship between extraversion and sales performance. In fact, recent studies indicate that *ambiverts* (individuals falling in the middle of the extraversion and introversion spectrum) actually achieve the greatest sales productivity (Grant 2013).

With one-in-nine Americans working in a sales role (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics 2012), Western culture seems to hold a favoring bias toward extraversion (Cain 2012). Studies also show that extraverted individuals choose sales jobs more frequently (Barrick, Mount, and Gupta 2003) and are hired more often than introverted individuals (Dunn, Mount, Barrick, and Ones 1995). This bias runs deep in the real estate industry, as well, manifesting itself in the agency/brokerage setting where gregarious agents are perceived as the most likely to succeed.

The goal of this article is to encourage real estate managers and agents to rethink the "extraverted sales ideal" and to provide insights for agency managers in hiring and training processes.

The Root of the Extraverted Sales Bias

The bias toward extraversion is not an unsubstantiated phenomenon, but exists with the support of several studies. Three studies in particular support this notion, beginning with the idea that extraverts have the assertiveness and enthusiasm to effectively engage with a wider variety of clients. Extraversion empowers individuals to be outgoing, sociable, and comfortable initiating interactions with others (Furnham and Fudge 2008). In real estate, it can be difficult to generate productive leads, and many perceive that only the "fearless" can experience real success through cold calling.

Secondly, selling involves the persuasion of potential clients to purchase a product or service, and extraverts are more likely to display confidence and contagious levels of enthusiasm and energy (Vinchur, Schippmann, Switzer, and Roth 1998). In real estate, the demands of client prospecting may overwhelm an agent and appear to better suit agents who exhibit a large amount enthusiasm and stamina. For individuals who are not extraverted, the emotional demands surrounding prospecting can be a discouraging revelation, impacting motivation and overall performance.

Lastly, selling is dependent on convincing customers to change their attitudes and behaviors. Extraverts, more so than introverts, possess a firm and forceful approach when negotiating with clients, giving them an advantage to close pending sales (Stewart 1996). The assumption that aggression leads to success is a real deterrent for professionals who are naturally inclined to sell on the foundation of trustworthy relationships. In real estate, the "do whatever it takes" mentality often rewards agents who can close the deal, regardless of the relational outcome.

Despite its advantages, extraversion may also have some *negative implications* for buyer-seller relationships.

First, extraverted salespeople may focus more heavily on their own perspectives than on client perspectives. Recent studies show that extraverts tend to gravitate toward the spotlight (Ashton, Lee, and Paunonen 2002) and are more likely than introverts to dominate conversations. This behavioral pattern can lead to the inadvertent suppression or neglect of others' perspectives (Grant, Gino, and Hofmann 2011).

Secondly, extraverted salespeople may elicit negative responses from prospective clients. An extravert's confidence may be perceived as "over the top" (Ames and Flynn 2007; Judge et al. 2009) leading clients to believe that the salesperson is attempting to influence their purchase decision (Campbell and Kirmani 2000). The recognition of a salesperson's persuasion focus causes clients to protect themselves and resist the salesperson's influence (Friedstad and Wright 1994; Williams, Fitzsimons, and Block 2004).

Do Ambiverts Have an Advantage?

A recent study tests the prediction that ambiverts should achieve higher sales than introverts and extraverts (Grant 2013). A survey was taken by 340 employees of outbound call centers across the United States and assessed the "Big Five" personality traits: *extraversion*, *conscientiousness*, *agreeableness*, *openness*, and *neuroticism*. These traits were measured against the employees' monthly sales performance.

The data show that ambiverted employees in these call centers (i.e., those who fall in the middle of the "extraversion spectrum") are predicted to generate $151.38 per hour, compared with $114.96 for highly extraverted employees and $126.80 for highly introverted employees. Additional results suggest that ambiverts have a sales advantage over extraverts, regardless of their assessment relative to the "Big Five" personality traits.

Implications for Real Estate Professionals

The real estate industry has traditionally championed the extraverted agent, rewarding him for his inexhaustible effort, energy, and networking skills. Extraverted agents, as well as introverted agents, have the opportunity to reassess behaviors and work toward a more productive sales

experience. Ambiverts should feel confident to approach deals with the knowledge that *balance* on the extraversion spectrum can maximize productivity and results.

Managers also have an opportunity to reassess hiring and training processes to maximize the investment in potential sales leaders. Here are several questions to consider when identifying and training sales leaders in your organization: *Am I limiting my hiring to those that I have identified as extraverted? Do my training techniques and incentives align with my agent's strengths, regardless of personality type?*

Research is showing that one size *does not* fit all. If you are highly extraverted, you might ask yourself: *Am I truly listening to my prospective client's needs or am I only thinking about how I will reply? What non-verbal cues are clients providing in response to my confidence and enthusiasm to close a sale?* If you are highly introverted, you might consider: *What situations do I avoid because feel that extraversion is required for success? How can I stimulate a client's attention during the sale in congruence with my strength in active listening?*

Conclusion

If you are truly an ambivert, know that it *is* possible to achieve a successful sales career. And if you lean more towards introversion or extraversion, consider ways to achieve greater balance in your sales approach. With no perfect sales personality, a balanced perspective can pay dividends for real estate professionals looking to optimize sales performance and enhance client relationships.

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INSIDER: Sales and Marketing the Six Sigma Way
Natasha Ashton, JD/MBA Candidate

Efficiency, *process improvement*, and *value creation* are not just buzzwords in today's business world; they have become the foundation for real, sustainable competitive advantage. However, the path to achieving or improving upon these fundamental concepts is not always clear.

Real estate professionals seeking or employing a process-approach in their operations are probably not doing so in the context of sales or marketing. Most practitioners view sales and marketing as an art, consisting primarily of instinct and personality. This view can potentially impede opportunities for improvement, resource maximization, and optimal value creation.
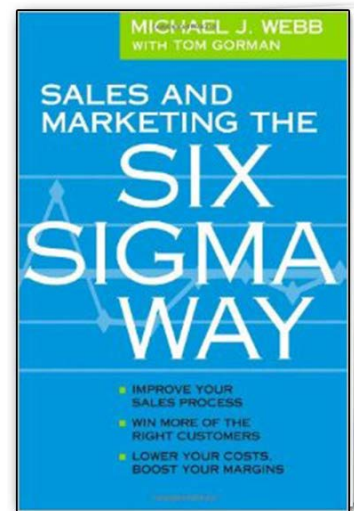
Sales and marketing are business processes. Just like any business process, these functional areas can and should be continuously improved with deliberate, informed, and measured standards and practices. In *Sales and Marketing the Six Sigma Way*, Michael J. Webb explains Six Sigma, an approach that is leading the process improvement movement, and how it can apply to sales and marketing. Six Sigma, if engaged correctly, can help real estate professionals maximize their sales and marketing efforts.

THINK POINT #1: What is Six Sigma?

Six Sigma is a process improvement method underlined by five principles: *creating value for customers*; *managing on data and facts*; *analyzing cause and effect*; *minimizing waste, errors, and defects*; and *setting the context for collaboration*. Specifically, Six Sigma is a process of defining measurements to identify operational errors and defects (variations), understanding their causes, and eliminating the roots of such variations to permanently improve performance. Six Sigma is often considered the most thorough and sophisticated process improvement approach available today and is applicable even in a sales and marketing context

THINK POINT #2: Sales and Marketing Should Not Be A Strictly "Numbers Game"

Sales and marketing functions may be viewed in the context of a traditional sales funnel: get as many leads as possible in order to close as many deals as possible. Said in real estate terms, the way for agents to sell more homes is to increase the volume of leads. However, accepting this funnel view can be limiting, as generating mass amounts of unqualified leads in the blind hopes of selling more homes can generate waste.

Consider shifting your sales and marketing paradigm beyond increasing sheer volume: sales and marketing are business processes that can be measured and methodically improved. Thus, real estate professionals can benefit from designing sales and marketing processes that create measurable value for customers, organizes resources efficiently, and measures the actions clients take. A process approach to your sales and marketing processes will help you identify bottlenecks in your real estate practice and the effects inefficiencies can have on your business.

THINK POINT #3: Applying the Five Steps (DMAIC) to Real Estate

In addition to the five Six Sigma principles previously outlined, Webb offers an acronym to outline the five main phases of Six Sigma improvement: DMAIC (*define*, *measure*, *analyze*, *improve*, *control*). These five steps have specific application for real estate professionals:

1. ***Define***. The problems facing a business must be stated clearly in order to identify a clear objective for the entire process improvement project. Defining the problem also ensures that the problem is qualified for a Six Sigma intervention. In other words, the problem must be real (not a pet project), manageable (not too big or contingent on other business issues), and solvable. Additionally, data regarding the project and resources to perform the project must exist or are capable of being developed. Most importantly, solving the problem must be of value to the business' stakeholders and customers.

In the sales and marketing context, business problems can be difficult to define. Webb suggests using tools to facilitate the *define* phase, including project charters, fishbone (or cause-and-effect) diagrams, process mapping, SIPOC (suppliers, inputs, processes, outputs, customers) diagrams, and/or FMEA (failure mode effects analysis). To help define your problems, also consider engaging in brainstorming sessions with colleagues.

> *What sales and marketing practices are you currently using in your real estate business? What issues are you facing in your sales and marketing? What results are you expecting from sales and marketing efforts?*

2. ***Measure***. When measuring business problems, real estate professionals should identify specific defects, opportunities, and corresponding metrics within sales and marketing processes. Agents should also develop a detailed process map and plan for collecting and presenting sales and marketing data, both for Six Sigma improvement and for future use.

Optimal areas to be tracking data include *reach* (the number of people you/your company can reach with content or marketing messages – accessed via email database, social media/blog followers); *revenue* (total dollar amount generated – measured monthly, quarterly, annually); *leads* (prospective clients); *leads converted* (prospective clients

converted to revenue-generating clients); *referrals* (number of leads generated by existing clients); and so on.

Webb emphasizes that data is one of the most important aspects of process improvement, and that a lack of data is very common in sales and marketing failures. Even tracking data points in a simple Excel document can be a starting point for you to capture meaningful data for your business.

Additionally, agents should measure business problem data by utilizing VOC (voice of the customer) descriptions and potential clients' concerns and hesitations. These qualitative tools can help agents identify specific client wants, needs, and concerns in ways that quantitative data cannot. These data can be collected via surveys, interviews, focus groups, comment cards, or even verbal complaints. Qualitative data (in addition to quantitative data) can be incredibly insightful and efficient for your business.

What activities are you currently measuring? What processes do you have in place to track/manage data in your business? How are you capturing qualitative data from your clients?

3. *Analyze*. Once data have been collected, the next step is to analyze the data. Initial data analysis establishes a baseline for performance from which agents can quantify improvements in later Six Sigma phases. Long-term analysis can help agents see growth or decline in specific areas of their business.

   Specific to Six Sigma, the analysis phase can also help agents identify value-adding and non-value-adding components of sales and marketing efforts. Determine key input variables from tools utilized in the design phase (project charters, fishbone diagrams, etc.) – for example, what are the current ways you are engaging in intentional sales and marketing activities? Direct mail? Social Media? Email/digital marketing? Web ads? Cold calling? One way to engage in meaningful analysis is to calculate the cost for each component of your sales and marketing efforts.

   You may find that additional data may be needed for meaningful analysis. To know how many revenue-generating sales came from cold calling efforts may require a bit of digging. If this information is accessible, though, agents can calculate costs associated with each activity, and therefore an ultimate value of that activity to the overall real estate business. These data, coupled with VOC data, can empower agents to determine which activities add value (or not) to the business, and how much money is spent (or wasted) to drive sales. With this type of analysis, a baseline and specific areas to improve can been specifically identified and developed.

How much time and resources are you investing in value-adding efforts? In non-value-adding efforts? What baseline performance metrics might you consider incorporating into your business activities? Where have you seen growth/opportunity in your sales and marketing efforts in the past year? 3-5 years?

*It is important to note that it is often appropriate and beneficial to go back and forth between the measure and analyze phases before moving on. Rigorous measurement and analysis can lead to more significant opportunities in later phases of the Six Sigma intervention.

4. ***Improve***. After measuring and analyzing sales and marketing data, real estate professionals are finally ready for DMAIC's improve stage. This stage involves planning and implementing solutions to address the business problems identified in the define stage.

   The Six Sigma improvement phase can involve brainstorming, selecting an improvement strategy, mapping new/potential processes, FMEA, planning for changes, and defining metrics for results. Each new strategy must be tested and each step must be measured (or projected) with before and after comparisons. This level of detail will allow agents to see which changes in the sales and marketing process directly impact desired results. If tests of the new strategy prove successful, agents can move on to the last phase. If the test/projections do not yield desired outcomes, the brainstorming and strategy selection process should begin again.

   What will a change in your sales and marketing strategy mean for your day-to-day responsibilities? How do you think your current customers will react to change in your processes? What timeline and specific metrics will you use to assess the effectiveness of your new strategy?

5. ***Control***. Agents should develop a specific plan to institutionalize any changes in sales and marketing practices. This plan should help the agent make sustainable improvements by clarifying outcomes and relevant metrics to evaluate the change(s).

   Webb suggests documenting each change, clearly explaining what the change entails and the reason behind the change. He also encourages practitioners to develop a response plan to initiate when any new change begins to stray from optimal performance. Consider also developing training procedures to help colleagues and managers effectively navigate and manage the change.

What change(s) will you make to improve your real estate business? How can you help your colleagues and clients manage these changes? How will you respond if you determine your changes are not achieving the results you expected?

Conclusion

Real estate professionals can improve sales and marketing performance by engaging Six Sigma tools. Agents should view sales and marketing as business processes that can be measured and methodically improved – not just a way to generate volume. By leveraging the DMAIC processes, real estate professionals can make purposeful decisions and actions to produce positive results in their business. Do not leave future results to chance; make decisions that are intentional and informed to achieve desired results.

Recommended Reading

Webb, Michael J. with Tom Gorman (2013), *Sales and Marketing the Six Sigma Way*, Atlanta, GA: Sales Performance Consultants, Inc.

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INSIDER: Changing the Sales Conversation

Susan Monaghan, MBA

Consumers' buying habits have changed. With unlimited and instantaneous access to the Internet, social media feeds, and mobile technology, consumers can access product information and reviews to make more informed and independent buying decisions.

This shift in information accessibility has deeply impacted sales professionals. Previously, providing information was a key way that salespeople created value for clients. Now, sales professionals must adapt the value creation process to address changing client needs by providing customized solutions. Real estate professionals have experienced this shift, as well, causing agents to rethink the way value is created in the home buying process.

In her latest book, *Changing the Sales Conversation*, sales consultant Linda Richardson helps sales professionals adapt to an information- and client-driven selling environment by offering insights about creating value and establishing connectivity among clients.

THINK POINT #1: The Conversation Has Changed

In the past, sales conversations were more of a monologue than dialogue. Salespeople had access to and shared information, forcing clients into a more passive role in the buying process. Salespeople had to know their product, but they did not necessarily have to know much about their clients.

Even in a real estate context, a one-way sales approach was sufficient when clients were only able to access listings and home information by hiring an agent. As we have seen, emerging technologies and Internet-based real estate databases like Zillow and Trulia have profoundly changed the way consumers buy and sell real estate. The way agents provide value today versus the way they provided value 20 years ago is significantly different.

If the conversation framework has not yet changed in an agent's sales process, she must shift from engaging in a one-way monologue to a collaborative, two-way dialogue with clients. By understanding why and how the sales conversation has changed, real estate professionals can find new and sustainable ways to create value in the sales process.

THINK POINT #2: Understand Your Clients and Provide Valuable Insights

Today, 80% of your clients will find you before you find them (Richardson 2014). And as you may have found, clients are often advanced in the buying cycle before they ever meet with an agent. Clients may have researched preferred geographical areas and may have even narrowed their real estate search to a few homes. Information has empowered clients to become active participants in the sales process, fundamentally shifting control from the salesperson to the buyer.

Of course, the earlier a real estate agent can enter a client's buying cycle, the more influence he can have in shaping the client's decision criteria and thought process to create value. Real estate professionals should strive to become invaluable in the clients' home buying process by anticipating issues, providing creative solutions, and helping clients achieve personal success by offering meaningful insights.

Social media can be an excellent resource for learning about clients and gaining insights for clients. Agents can use social media to network, prospect, and gather research. Agents can also monitor social media feeds to understand how clients think, buy, and act. The following social media tools can help real estate professionals stay connected, decrease non-selling time, improve the quality of sales conversations, and increase the likelihood of positive buying outcomes.

- **LinkedIn:** LinkedIn is a business-focused social networking site that empowers users to engage in network- and career-building activities. One way agents can use LinkedIn is to conduct client research. By learning about a client's career roles, interests, and organizational involvement, agents can gain knowledge to build rapport in sales conversations and to gain a more holistic view of the client.

  In addition to building and rekindling business relationships with colleagues, family, and clients, LinkedIn also can serve as a tool to engage new customers. Ask people you are already connected with via LinkedIn to introduce you to prospective clients. Leveraging the power of your connections' networks can expand your own network exponentially.

  By tapping-in to LinkedIn's business information community, agents can access extensive and up-to-date industry and client knowledge. LinkedIn is a wonderful tool to help real estate professionals manage business relationships.

  For more information on using LinkedIn for your business, check-out another article published in the June 2013 issue of the *Keller Center Research Report* – "LinkedIn for Business Development."

- **Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest:** Social media sites like Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest can allow agents to engage in more informal, social networking activities - even for business purposes. Sharing status updates on Facebook, Tweeting about a home that a client recently bought, or providing pictures of current listings via Pinterest can help

current and prospective clients gain personal and professional insight into your work as an agent.

By engaging in these social media platforms, agents can also build bridges to connect with clients in the social mediums that are most important to them. Encourage satisfied clients to Tweet about their recent home buying experience or share a positive review of your work on your Facebook wall. More informal, social media-based endorsements can build an agent's credibility and lead to a competitive advantage.

- **Hootsuite:** Additionally, agents may consider using a social media dashboard tool like Hootsuite to consolidate and manage social media activity. While managing multiple social media accounts can seem onerous, Hootsuite enables users to post to and monitor activity on multiple social networks from one website. With support for LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Foursquare, and even Wordpress blogs, agents can use Hootsuite to have a comprehensive view of their social networks to better manage current and prospective client relationships.

THINK POINT #3: Create an Emotional Connection

Creating collaborative, two-way sales conversations with clients is important. Richardson reminds us, though, that managing the emotional aspects of the sales relationship is just as critical.

A client's feelings and experiences are integral components of his buying process. If an agent can establish trust and connectivity in the relationship, she can gain short- and long-term benefits with the client. Real estate professionals who can successfully form emotional connections with a client make the business relationship more meaningful. A meaningful business relationship will increase the client's likelihood to purchase from you and recommend your services in the future.

Richardson encourages sales professionals to "put their heart(s) into the sale," shifting the salesperson from simply engaging in a *client*-centered approach to a more *human*-centered approach. Warm-hearted sales professionals show vulnerability and encourage open and honest dialogue with clients. Clients who trust their real estate agent are more likely to open up, listen, and engage with you.

Conclusion

Creating value for your clients is the one of the only sure-fire ways to capitalize on current business and create future business opportunities. Understanding that the sales conversation has changed, learning more about clients to provide greater insights, and creating emotional connections with clients will help agents maximize sales opportunities in your real estate business.

Recommended Reading

Richardson, Linda (2014), *Changing the Sales Conversation*, New York, NY: McGraw Hill Education.

About the Author

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Susan earned her Bachelor's degree in English from Vanderbilt University, her Master's in Curriculum & Instruction from the University of Houston, and her Master's in Business Administration from Baylor University. Before coming to Baylor, she taught first grade in Highland Park ISD in Dallas, Texas for eleven years. Susan has finished her MBA and plans to transition into a financial services or marketing role.

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