

Keller Center Research Report

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Making Tough Choices Today for an Easier Tomorrow

Ashley S. Otto, PhD, Joshua J. Clarkson, PhD, Nathanael S. Martin, PhD ABD

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INSIDER: Do the Hard Things First

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INSIDER: Think Like a Rocket Scientist

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Keller Center Research Report

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Making Tough Choices Today for an Easier Tomorrow

Ashley S. Otto, PhD, Joshua J. Clarkson, PhD, Nathanael S. Martin, PhD ABD



Consumers make countless decisions every single day, from the moment they wake up to the moment they go to sleep. The sheer number of decisions to be made forces individuals to determine the amount of effort they are willing to use to reach a decision. While some decisions take little effort, others require more effort and thought put forth prior to reaching a decision. Specifically, our research finds that there are two situations, driven by a motivation to

achieve cognitive closure, in which people will put more effort into the decision-making process: when similar decisions are expected to be made in the future and when credible options don't exist. Even though consumers typically want the quickest solution to a problem or situation, the motivation to achieve closure prompts one to put more effort in if it will simplify the process in the future.

Cognitive Closure

Cognitive closure is the fundamental desire to arrive at a decision that reduces openness and achieves resolution. In other words, individuals high in need of cognitive closure do not like uncertainty and ambiguity. These individuals make decisions that are traditionally associated with reduced effort investment. For some, the urge to achieve closure is so important that it causes physiological distress, such as an increase in heart rate when making decisions. While those seeking closure often jump at the first solution available, research shows that they will strategically invest more effort into deciding when one of two scenarios arise.

The first scenario shows that people will invest more effort when similar decisions are expected to be made in the future. In our study, a group of participants was instructed to identify an item on a menu that they would be interested in trying. First, respondents were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: they would make multiple decisions or they would only make one decision. Simultaneously, they were told that they could choose between picking on their own (high effort option) or having the menu item randomly selected for them (low effort option). After their decision, the participants were asked to recall as many menu options as possible. The results showed that those seeking closure showed greater reliance on their own choice when expected to make multiple (vs. one) decisions and also had a greater recall of menu items (an indicator of greater decision effort).

The second scenario occurs when people need to make a decision, but credible options do not readily exist. Credible options may include an expert's recommendation, a prior choice, or a favored option of others. Again, lacking a credible option prompts individuals seeking closure to invest greater effort in decision making.

Finally, in a repeat decision-making task, a third study demonstrates that upfront effort on an initial decision did indeed lead people to invest less effort on subsequent, similar decisions. By knowing and understanding the motivations and contexts under which individuals are likely to put forth decision effort, real estate professionals can boost their success with clients.

Real Estate Implications

Knowing that those who are seeking cognitive closure are more willing to invest effort into the decision-making process can be beneficial in the real estate industry. For example, an agent can more easily gauge a client's increased willingness to consider many options and features if they know the client is seeking cognitive closure. This knowledge may also help agents decipher which leads have already invested much effort into purchasing a property and which leads are casually browsing.

Additionally, an investor looking to purchase their first investment property may put more effort into the decision-making process than an experienced investor and conduct a more extensive search. Knowing the criteria that lead to more effort put into the decision-making process can also help with organization, time management, and more productively meeting client expectations. Some decisions can be harder than others, but knowing when to invest more effort in deciding can alleviate many headaches down the road as the client should be likely to revert back to their initial decision—such as sticking with their agent, current neighborhood, current city, etc.

Recommended Reading

Otto, Ashley S., Joshua J. Clarkson, Nathanael S. Martin (2022), "Working Hard to Take the Easy Way Out: How the Need for Cognitive Closure Shapes Strategic Effort Investment to Ease Future Decision Making," *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 32(2), 350-356.

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Dr. Ashley Otto (PhD – University of Cincinnati) is a consumer psychologist who conducts research on decision making and self-control. Her research has been published in various journals, including the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *Journal of Consumer*

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The Power of a Feminine Brand Name

Ruth Pogacar, PhD, Justin Angle, PhD, Tina M. Lowrey, PhD, L. J. Shrum, PhD, and Frank R. Kardes, PhD

A brand's name is often the first interaction a brand or firm has with a consumer, and it has more power than most individuals or companies realize. A brand's name can influence consumers by setting expectations and first impressions.¹ Although this may seem insignificant, everyone has experienced the impact of an exceptional or subpar first impression. This research shows that linguistically feminine brand names enhance attitudes and choice, and are even correlated with better brand performance. This work contributes to the current body of knowledge by showing how linguistically feminine names activate associations with “warmth” (good-natured sincerity) based on the stereotype content model, and how this affects brand outcomes.

Stereotype Content Model

This work draws on the stereotype content model to investigate perceptions of brands with feminine associations.

The stereotype content model is based on the idea that people evaluate others (including brands) based on two social perception criteria—warmth and competence—and these evaluations shape people's reactions both



emotionally and behaviorally.² Previous studies have shown that the determination of warmth is more important and is established before the determination of competence.³ Consumers are more likely to favor (and thus, make more purchases and retain brand loyalty to) brands that have warmer qualities. This research combines stereotype content model and psycholinguistics to show that consumers perceive linguistically feminine names as warm, which increases positive attitudes, choice, and is associated with better brand performance.

Impact of Perceived Gender in Brand Names

First, it is important to understand the methods used to quantify brand name gender. Three factors—length, ending sound, and stress—make a brand name masculine, neutral, or feminine.⁴ Feminine names generally have more syllables and end with a vowel sound, while masculine names are generally shorter and end with a consonant.^{5,6} Additionally, masculine names are more likely to begin with a single stressed syllable (ROB-ert) while feminine names typically stress the middle or later syllable (ro-BER-ta).⁷ Based on these three factors, Nestlé can be compared with Gap in terms of perceived gender, with Nestlé being linguistically feminine and Gap linguistically masculine.

This research showed that linguistically feminine brand names were correlated with positive brand performance. After compiling an annual list of top brands and analyzing the ratio of linguistically masculine and feminine brand names, linguistically feminine brands were associated with a higher rank on the list. It is important to note that this association showed correlation, but is not enough to demonstrate causality.

The second study examined whether feminine brand names are preferred because they are perceived as warmer, i.e., whether warmth mediated the effect of brand name gender on consumer attitudes. The results showed that feminine brand names are associated with warmth and positive attitudes, but these effects are again correlational and not enough to establish causality. The next two experiments provided causal evidence for the feminine brand name advantage by having participants make consequential choices about how to spend time and money. Results showed that feminine brand names increased perceived warmth, and warmth in turn increased people's choice of which media to watch and which products to take home.

Boundary Conditions of the Feminine Brand Name Advantage

After demonstrating the positive impact of brand name femininity, this research further qualifies the impact. Specifically, the feminine brand name advantage is greater for certain product categories but is neutralized for certain users.

The fourth study examined the impact of the type of product category on the feminine brand name advantage—specifically, hedonic or utilitarian products. Hedonic products are fun and enjoyable, while utilitarian products are useful, functional, and practical.⁸ This experiment showed that when a product was hedonic, the feminine brand names were favored even more, but when a product was utilitarian the masculine brand names were slightly favored. Additionally, when products were hedonic, feminine brand names increased warmth perceptions, which enhanced positive attitudes. Utilitarian products, on the other hand, did not receive a boost in attitudes due to perceived warmth.

The last experiment examined the interaction between brand name gender and typical user gender on brand attitude and warmth. When the typical user was male (i.e., men's sneakers), masculine and feminine brand names were equally well-liked. This is consistent with the successful brand performance of both Converse (linguistically masculine name) and Nike (linguistically feminine name). In other words, the feminine brand name advantage was neutralized when the typical user was male. When the typical user was female, the feminine brand name advantage remained intact.

It is important to note that this study was conducted on English-speaking participants, therefore, findings may differ in different languages and different cultural contexts.

Implications for Managers and Conclusions

Overall, linguistically feminine brand names were seen to have a positive impact on historical brand performance, and on consumers' attitudes via perceptions of warmth. Furthermore, this finding held in field tests with time and money consequences for the consumer. The feminine brand name advantage was increased for hedonic products, decreased for utilitarian products, and neutralized when the typical user was male.

Our research highlights factors that should be taken into consideration when naming a real estate brokerage or company. Do your clients value warmth, trustworthiness, and sincerity? If so, a linguistically feminine name—longer, ending in a vowel—may help communicate those qualities. However, you might also consider the type of properties do you plan to list. For example, commercial properties might be considered utilitarian whereas clients probably value hedonic qualities in a residential or vacation property. Each of these factors should inform naming decisions, which might lead to advantages in the real estate market.

Recommended Reading

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Why Marketers Fail to Understand Their Customers: The False Consensus Effect

Walter Herzog, PhD, Johannes D. Hattula, PhD, and Darren W. Dahl, PhD

Marketing is all about understanding customer preferences and providing solutions that match these preferences. However, marketers' perceptions of their target customers' preferences can be biased. We show that one of the most important biases in this category is the so-called *false consensus effect (FCE)*—that is, marketers tend to project their personal preferences onto customers.¹ Notably, we find that even highly trained marketing professionals are susceptible to the FCE and tend to confuse their personal preferences with the preferences of target customers. Overall, we conducted six studies with 714 marketing executives to investigate the FCE in detail.



The FCE from the Perspective of Marketing Practitioners

We first conducted two pilot studies to explore the role of the FCE from the perspective of marketing practitioners. One hundred marketing executives participated in our first pilot study. We found that 82.0% of the participating executives had an intuitive knowledge of the FCE. Of these participants, 92.7% witnessed that other marketers in their company had been recently affected by the FCE, 86.6% admitted that they themselves had been recently affected by the FCE, and 79.3% indicated that marketers should try to avoid the FCE. In addition, 79.3% stated that they attempt to avoid the FCE when predicting customer preferences. Of these participants, 75.4% indicated that they use a rather straightforward approach to avoid the FCE in practice—that is, they simply try to ignore or “suppress” their personal preferences when making customer predictions.

To provide further evidence for the managerial relevance of the FCE, we conducted a second pilot study with 64 marketers. We asked the participants to rate the importance of ten skills of marketing managers, including the ability to separate personal and customer preferences (i.e., the ability to avoid the FCE). Interestingly, we found that the ability to separate personal from customer preferences was rated as the most important ability on the list (see Table 1 below).

Table 1
Perceived Importance of Marketing Managers’ Skills (Pilot Study 2)

<i>Skills of Marketing Managers</i>	<i>Top-2-Box Score</i> (percentage of marketing managers who assigned an importance score of “1” or “2”)
Ability to differentiate between their personal, subjective preferences and the preferences of target customers	81.25%
Ability to pivot as new priorities emerge	70.31%
Creativity and innovation skills	70.31%
Natural leadership abilities	56.25%
Emotional intelligence	57.81%
Navigating ambiguity	42.19%
MarTech platform experience	39.06%
Financial acumen	32.81%
Curiosity	42.19%
Data science background	9.38%

Notes:

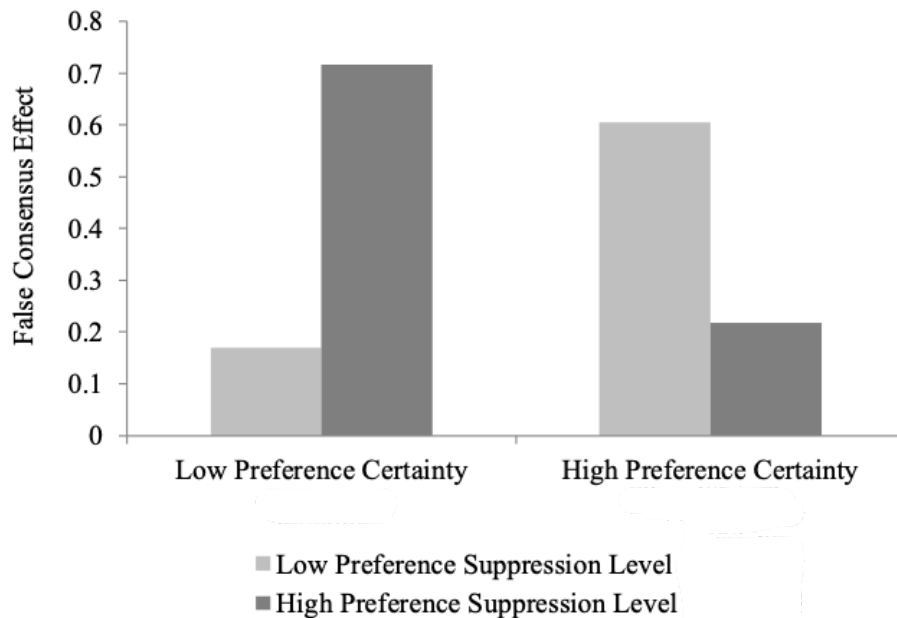
N = 64 marketing managers participated in the study. Participants were asked to rate the importance of ten skills of marketing managers (1 = skill is very important, 9 = skill is not important).

Can Marketers Avoid the FCE?

Overall, our pilot studies suggest that the FCE is an important bias in marketing practice and that marketers try to avoid it by attempting to ignore their personal preferences. A natural question arising from these observations is whether this simple tactic is indeed an effective remedy for the FCE. We explored this question in four additional studies with 550 marketers.

The studies consistently showed that the effectiveness of this tactic depends on marketers’ own level of preference certainty—that is, the extent to which their personal preferences are clear and held with conviction. The tactic was highly effective and reliably reduced the FCE for high levels of preference certainty. However, for low certainty levels, the tactic *backfired* and increased the FCE. The latter finding is particularly important from a managerial point of view, because marketers frequently predict consumer reactions to novel stimuli (e.g., new products or technologies)—a situation known to result in lower levels of preference certainty. Hence, our studies suggest that the way marketers attempt to avoid the FCE in practice may frequently backfire and increase the FCE when predicting customer preferences. Figure 1 shows the results of study 1. The remaining studies replicated these results in a variety of decision-making contexts.¹

Figure 1
Results of Study 1



Notes:

The figure shows whether attempts to suppress the FCE are effective. For low levels of preference certainty, attempts to suppress the FCE backfire and increase the effect. For high levels of preference certainty, marketers are able to effectively suppress the FCE.

Why do attempts to avoid the FCE backfire for low certainty levels? In this case, marketers’ preferences are fuzzy and not well-defined. Further, it is impossible to make a clear distinction between one’s personal and the target customer’s preferences if one’s personal preferences are not clearly defined. According to psychologist Daniel Wegner, such attempts are, by definition, futile and will only increase decision makers’ focus on their personal preferences, which in turn inflates the FCE.^{2,3} This is exactly what we observed in our studies.

Overall, our studies indicate that marketers’ general susceptibility to the FCE can be greatly reduced if they are advised to suppress their personal preferences for high, but not for low levels of preference certainty. Marketers following this advice were also able to predict the preferences of their target customers more accurately—their prediction errors decreased by more than 50%.

Implications

Our results have several implications for marketers and sales agents in the real estate business. First, they should keep in mind that the FCE may affect their perceptions in many contexts, such as their perceptions of clients’ housing preferences or the market value of property⁴ (see Hattula et al. 2015 for the impact of the FCE on pricing decisions). Second, real estate professionals should not think of the FCE as a useful heuristic. Our data clearly show that this tendency

reduces the accuracy of preference predictions. In other words, it is a “bias” that should be avoided. Third, based on their expert knowledge, real estate agents typically have clear personal housing preferences and thus, our studies suggest that they can easily avoid the FCE (without risking backfire effects). Hence, it is in the power of real estate professionals to steer clear of the FCE and avoid a self-referential perspective on their clients’ preferences.

Finally, our research indicates that the FCE causes marketers to use customer data in an unsystematic way.¹ Specifically, we find that marketers are more likely to rely on market research on customer preferences if the results are in line with their personal preferences. In contrast, they tend to ignore customer data that is not consistent with their personal preferences. In other words, marketers use customer data in an ‘egocentric’ way. This, in turn, has two implications: First, the current trend toward big (customer) data does *not* protect marketers against the FCE. Second, practitioners should keep in mind that the FCE can systematically bias their interpretation and use of customer data.

Recommended Reading

Herzog, Walter, Johannes D. Hattula, and Darren W. Dahl (2021), “Marketers Project Their Personal Preferences onto Consumers: Overcoming the Threat of Egocentric Decision Making,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 58(3), 456-475. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022243721998378>

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Dr. Walter Herzog’s (PhD – University of St. Gallen) research interests lie at the intersection of management and consumer psychology. In particular, he is interested in social inference processes (e.g., how do executives predict consumer preferences and interpret market data?) and social influence strategies (e.g., how can executives shape the preferences of consumers and

employees?). His research has appeared in various academic journals (e.g., *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Marketing*) and has been featured in the business press (e.g., *Harvard Business Review*, *Financial Times*). Moreover, he teaches courses on marketing and behavioral research methods and he has received several awards for his courses at WHU.

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Skill Discretion and Work Demands Impact on Salesperson Burnout and Job Satisfaction

Lucy M. Matthews, DBA and Brian N. Rutherford, PhD

Do different aspects of burnout matter when it comes to salesperson job satisfaction? Sales researchers have started to recognize the importance of studying the developmental nature of burnout using the three facets of the construct.^{1,2} Specifically, studies which examine salesperson burnout from a multi-faceted viewpoint often find that emotional exhaustion is not the only significant predictor of important outcomes.^{3,4} As a result, the majority of research on outcomes of salesperson burnout is underdeveloped and underreports the full impact of burnout. To extend the existing body of research on multi-faceted salesperson burnout, our team conducted this study with three primary goals. The first was to determine what impact do individual facets of burnout have on salesperson job satisfaction. Second, we sought to determine what impact do discretion and demands have on salesperson job satisfaction. The third goal was to determine whether burnout mediates the relationships between discretion and demands in relation to job satisfaction.



Background and Hypotheses

First, it is necessary to define the terms central to this paper, including burnout syndrome, skill discretion, hindrance demands, and job satisfaction.

Burnout Syndrome

Employee burnout research comprises three separate facets⁵—personal accomplishment, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion.⁶ Personal accomplishment is an employee’s feeling of competence and successful achievement on the job, which stems from feedback that suggests the employee is appreciated and effective.⁷ Depersonalization results from unfeeling and impersonal responses toward employees, and emotional exhaustion occurs when an employee becomes emotionally overextended and exhausted by work.⁷ Burnout is generally examined from a developmental perspective; however, salesperson burnout researchers view the developmental sequencing of burnout differently⁸, leading to our first hypothesis:

The burnout syndrome facets are related: personal accomplishment has a direct negative relationship with both (a) depersonalization and (b) emotional exhaustion. Further, (c) depersonalization has a direct positive relationship with emotional exhaustion.

Skill Discretion

Skill discretion is the degree that the job involves the variety, advancement, and use of an individual's special abilities.^{9,10} The capacity to use a range of skills on the job can be a strong buffer against the impact of burnout¹¹, leading to our second hypothesis:

Skill discretion has a relationship with burnout syndrome: specifically, it has (a) a direct positive relationship with personal accomplishment, (b) a direct negative relationship with depersonalization, and (c) an indirect negative relationship with emotional exhaustion.

Hindrance Demands

Hindrance demands have the potential to inhibit personal growth and goal achievement¹², which include role conflict, role ambiguity, organizational politics, and excessive bureaucracy. Hindrance-related demands are associated with undesirable work outcomes (increased job search, lower loyalty, and intentions to quit)¹³, decreased job satisfaction, decreased organizational support, increased turnover¹⁴, and increased emotional exhaustion¹⁵. Thus,

Hindrance demands have a relationship with burnout syndrome: they have (a) a direct negative relationship with personal accomplishment, (b) a direct positive relationship with depersonalization, and (c) an indirect positive relationship with emotional exhaustion.

Job Satisfaction

Salesperson job satisfaction is “all characteristics of the job itself and the work environment which [salespeople] find rewarding, fulfilling and satisfying, or frustrating and unsatisfying”.¹⁶ Sales force literature supports a relationship between emotional exhaustion and job satisfaction.^{17,18,19,2} Further, a positive relationship between personal accomplishment and job satisfaction is supported.^{19,2,20} However, the relationship between depersonalization and job satisfaction is inconsistent.

Burnout syndrome has a significant impact on job satisfaction: (a) personal accomplishment has a direct positive relationship with job satisfaction, (b) emotional exhaustion has a direct negative relationship with job satisfaction, and (c) depersonalization has an indirect negative relationship with job satisfaction.

Empirical studies investigating the relationship between skill discretion and job satisfaction are lacking. However, burnout is expected to mediate the relationship between skill discretion and job satisfaction.

Skill discretion has an indirect positive relationship with job satisfaction.

Hindrance demands have an indirect negative relationship with job satisfaction.

Research Findings

A sample of 238 salespeople were used for the study. Support was found for skill discretion and hindrance demands impacting burnout. First, skill discretion had the largest influence on personal accomplishment. Second, hindrance demands had the largest influence on depersonalization. Next, when examining the influencers of job satisfaction, personal accomplishment had the largest total effect and emotional exhaustion had the largest direct effect. Further, skill discretion had the largest indirect influence on job satisfaction, followed by depersonalization.

Real Estate Implications

Our study communicates the need to understand salesperson burnout. Within a real estate context, agents with higher levels of skill discretion have increased levels of personal accomplishment. However, as hindrance demands increase, agents will become less personal with clients and co-workers. In turn, both personal accomplishment and depersonalization will impact emotional exhaustion of the agent. Thus, leading to decreased agent job satisfaction.

Although the real estate market was booming in 2021, when the market has a downturn, understanding how to reduce agent burnout will be key in keeping agents satisfied and motivated within this industry. Real estate firms could focus on building levels of personal accomplishment, as personal accomplishment can be promoted through a number of organizationally controllable paths. This could include highlighting sales, either in number of units or dollar volume. This could also include promoting certain types of training and highlighting types of training that has been completed. Further, reducing tasks that do not directly lead to measurable outcomes for agents should be reduced, as these tasks will be seen as a hindrance to agents. Although the tasks may be necessary, finding ways to automate menial tasks or shifting the tasks to support personnel can be beneficial in reducing hindrance demands and, ultimately, increasing job satisfaction in salespeople. In times of a booming real estate market, the influence of burnout might be less of a concern, given the short real estate cycle (days on market). However, as markets slow, the importance of firms to manage agent burnout should become of heightened importance.

Recommended Reading

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Dr. Brian Rutherford (PhD – Georgia State University) has been the Editor of *Marketing Management Journal* since 2017 and is one of the Associate Editors of the *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*. Brian has published over 50 peer-reviewed journal articles. His research has won multiple best paper awards at the conference and journal levels. Brian's research covers an array of topics, including sales management, business-to-business buyers, and consumer-facing frontline employee management.

The Secrets of Social Media in Salesperson Performance

Melanie Bowen, PhD, Christine Lai-Bennejean, PhD, Alexander Haas, PhD, and Deva Rangarajan, PhD

Social media has become a core component of communication within our society, and as social media has positively impacted personal life, it has also positively impacted business.

Through the years, researchers have studied the positive impacts social media has on various aspects of business, from improving sales to customer relations. Although many studies have focused on the impact of



social media within the linear selling model,¹ few studies have shown the impact of social media usage within concurrent selling tasks, including how these concurrent selling tasks impact salesperson performance. Our study focuses specifically on the relationship between social media usage, key selling tasks, salesperson performance, and peer social media usage as a relationship moderator.

Impact of Social Media Usage on Key Selling Tasks

Our initial hypothesis stated that increasing B2B salesperson social media usage is positively correlated with three key selling tasks: value-oriented prospecting, adaptive selling, and proactive servicing.

Value-oriented prospecting reflects the idea that salespeople can utilize social media to better identify and understand prospective customers through constructing various customer profiles. These profiles would then allow the salesperson to focus on profiles that have the highest value potential with respect to sales or profits.

The hypothesis also highlights how social media provides the opportunity for salespeople to use *adaptive selling*, in which salespeople will modify their behavior in customer interactions based on customer characteristics and situations.² Social media provides a unique opportunity for salespeople to interact with customers and understand more about individual customers. Therefore, as salespeople use social media to understand their customers and prospects, they can also strengthen relationships with each customer by personalizing each interaction.³

Third, our hypothesis mentions how social media provides a platform for salespeople to take initiative in reaching out to customers in preparation for issues, providing guidance for usage of products, and receiving feedback from customer experiences.⁴ Not only does this *proactive*

servicing allow for salespeople to improve customer experience, but it also helps convey how customer needs are changing over time.⁵

Although each of these three selling tasks show positive effects resulting from the usage of social media, only value-oriented prospecting and proactive servicing showed significant positive effects. Previous findings suggest a relationship between social media usage and adaptive selling, but it is likely that salespeople often do not consider social media as a mechanism in which an actual sale could be closed. Therefore, social media would not have been instrumental in facilitating salesperson adaptability in direct interactions.

How Selling Tasks Impact Salesperson Performance

Our study hypothesized that these three selling tasks—value-oriented prospecting, adaptive selling, and proactive servicing—directly impact salesperson performance. Specifically, there is a positive relationship between value-oriented prospecting, adaptive selling, and proactive servicing on salesperson performance. Based on our study, each of these three selling tasks significantly and positively influence salesperson performance.

Increased value-oriented prospecting highlights high-potential prospective customers, allowing a salesperson to better utilize time and increase engagement with these individuals. This higher engagement with high potential prospective customers could, in turn, increase the possibility of the prospects becoming actual customers, leading to an increase in salesperson performance.

Similarly, the customized customer experience provided through adaptive selling is hypothesized to increase the likelihood of customer purchasing through increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty. Satisfied customers would, in turn, prompt customer loyalty which leads to additional sales over time and higher salesperson performance.⁶

Third, as salespeople employ proactive servicing, salespeople can directly assist customers to prevent or solve potential issues, leading to higher satisfaction and customer loyalty. Enhancing customer experience and satisfaction allows salespeople to increase prices or successfully sell products without the use of discounts.⁴ In addition, being proactive in listening to customer issues allows salespeople to discover new areas of possible sales.⁴ Together, these factors cause an increase in sales through proactive servicing and increasing salesperson performance.

Impact of Peer Social Media Usage

With previous components of this study discussing a salesperson's use of social media impact on selling tasks and sales performance, our study also highlights the idea of a moderating variable. Specifically, our study identifies peer social media usage—a salesperson's perception of their coworker's usage of social media—as a moderator between the individual salesperson's social media usage and the three selling tasks. That is, as more peers within the salesperson's network

utilize social media, the more beneficial it will be for the salesperson to engage with social media due to increased information availability.⁷ Increased peer social media usage can also help motivate salespeople through the competitive nature of sales and help provide more and better quality information.⁸ Our results showed a significant positive moderating effect from peer social media usage on the relationships between social media usage and value-oriented prospecting and proactive servicing. These results suggest that a peer's use of social media can amplify the impact that a salesperson's social media usage has on value-oriented prospecting and proactive servicing, which indirectly affects salesperson performance.

Implications and Conclusions

Our research solidifies the importance of using social media within the sales profession. Therefore, for managers who recruit and hire, we advise seeking candidates who understand how to best leverage social media. A company should seek to train salespeople in *how* to use social media for sales as well as *when* to use social media, specifically in the areas described in this study: value-



oriented prospecting and proactive servicing. It is also important to encourage your team to master various social media platforms, especially considering the positive impact peers can have on salesperson performance. As this is a new application of social media, managers can also incentivize their sales forces to interact, observe, and grow in their understanding of social media for boosting sales.

Social media usage positively impacts selling tasks like value-oriented prospecting and proactive servicing, which in turn, positively impacts salesperson performance. Peer social media usage also magnifies the positive effects of social media usage on selling tasks. So, as you look at how you manage a team of salespeople on a day-to-day basis, consider integrating social media usage strategies to improve salesperson performance within your business.

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INSIDER: Do the Hard Things First

Brandon Chenevert, MBA Candidate

It's time for a change. It's time to start winning instead of losing to the battle that has consumed your life—the battle against procrastination. The primary driving force behind procrastination is



the prioritization of short-term mood repair and emotion regulation over long-term achievement and wellbeing. In *Do the Hard Things First*, Scott Allan analyzes the bad habit of procrastination and teaches his audience how to reverse these practices to implement a new set of behaviors and develop a new identity. Allan is the author of multiple bestselling books that motivate readers to build life skills, inspire others, and take charge of their lives.

Procrastination is not a trait you're born with—it's learned through years of conditioning, avoiding tasks, and lacking confidence or self-control. To get out of this chaos, there are three major points to follow: breaking fear and big obstacles, taking practical steps for doing hard things, and scaling up five key areas. Executing change by reducing procrastination is important for success in personal and professional relationships.

THINK POINT #1: Breaking Fear and Big Obstacles

Breaking fear and minimizing excuses can be a great start to overcoming procrastination. There are five main areas of fear that one can find difficult to work through: the fears of commitment, failure/discomfort, the unknown, decision making, and criticism/negative feedback. It is very easy to avoid these fears because they challenge us to work outside of our comfort zones. Sometimes we feel overwhelmed or aren't motivated to start something new, because we have procrastinated on enough projects and are backed up now. The easiest way to deal with these fears is to discover your coping mechanism and stop making excuses. Start with the smallest step first, and be aware of your tendency to avoid or break focus from tasks. Complacency is mediocracy and if you don't take strategic risks to do the unknown or finish prior responsibilities, you can easily self-sabotage yourself with a bad snowball effect. Do the hard things first, then the easy things will seem like nothing. You might fail, but that's okay, because then you get right back up and try again. The only thing you should fear is procrastination itself.

Some of the biggest obstacles to navigate when trying to eliminate a bad habit or change behavior are negative conditioning, anxiety and overwhelming thoughts, and limiting self-talk. Self-awareness is the first and most important thing you need to learn before practicing these strategies. Try to sit in silence and practice deep breathing meditation. Once you are in complete

solitude, identify the repetitive negative thoughts and self-talk traps, the #1 priority at the time, and the positive things that are encompassing you. Practice doing this every morning and write it down. Once you are comfortable with emotional “check ins,” you can shift your self-defeating thoughts into a mindset that wants to be productive and successful. By understanding yourself, you can then help others reduce procrastination and create a healthy and collaborative environment to surround yourself.

THINK POINT #2: Practical Steps for Doing Hard Things

Allan composes 22 strategies for doing hard things that can cure your task avoidance addiction. Some of these practices may seem like common sense for some, but others may find a new method that will make their lives easier and more efficient. Many of these practical steps take place in different stages before, during, and after working on a project to be most effective at any given point in time for an individual. These 22 strategies range from making mental notes to taking physical actions to receive the most benefits of decreasing procrastination.

Prior to starting your day or a difficult assignment, you should prepare a strategy to set yourself up for success. Make a list of goals and decide you’re doing them...NOW. Prioritize your daily #1 item and identify your constraints. Put in on your calendar, write it down five times if you must, and time block five minutes to start doing it. Once you have visualized doing the hard things first and delegated tasks you don’t want to do or can’t do, you can take ownership for behavior change and are ready to start the day.

Now that you are fully equipped for success with little procrastination, it’s time to get to work. Begin with one small action and close your open loops. Don’t keep referring to other tasks that haven’t been done by trying to multitask, as this delays completing anything at all. Automate these repetitive tasks and train your brain to interrupt sudden “impulse snaps” or control your distractions. Tell someone that you’re busy so that they can hold you accountable. If you do all these things during your tasks, you can minimize procrastinations as best as possible. Allan suggests adopting the 80/20 principle, which means make 20% of your efforts produce 80% of your results. Taking these practical steps can only help you and make you more efficient in your commitments.

It's good to debrief at the end of a long day or week. Take your mind off work and reward yourself. Employ the premack principle, which states that engaging in a less desirable behavior can be encouraged by the subsequent opportunity for a more rewarding behavior. This principle is as simple as “if I get this long project finished, I can go do my favorite hobbies or eat that large slice of cake in the fridge.” Once you are content with your current situation, briefly think about the future. Schedule a one-hour weekly review session with yourself or someone else and discuss what went well and what could have been better. Set up new goals for the things that went well and try to beat previous records. For the things that need improvement, focus on practicing a different method to avoid making the same mistakes again. Go into next week by

revisiting these suggested practical steps, and continue to aim for success by doing the hard things first.

THINK POINT #3: Scale Up Five Key Areas

By now, you should know how to get in the right mindset and what steps work best for you when approaching difficult tasks. Have you thought about what aspects of your life need improving and how you can apply what you've learned to these areas? Allan observes five key areas that need attention while you are working through other obligations. These areas include your health, homespace, workspace, personal finances, and personal relationships. Particularly in the workspace, it's important to be organized and communicate well with your colleagues so that everyone is on the same page. Don't waste time by trying to learn new things or complete extra work that is going to distract you from completing your primary responsibilities. When you are overwhelmed with multiple hard things and don't know where to begin, try to identify the reason behind your resistance, delegate the work with which you are struggling, and focus on your strengths rather than weaknesses. By scaling up the five key areas mentioned above, you can declutter your life and have a positive impact on yourself and others around you.

Real Estate Implications

Whether you are an experienced manager who has been in the real estate industry for years or a new agent just starting to build a client network, procrastination is almost guaranteed to cross your mind at some point in your career. With Allan's suggestions taken into consideration, you can seriously improve the quality and value of your work by doing the hard things first. Show up every day to your office with a clean slate and adopt the "play now, pay later" mindset to take control of your life. Don't let procrastination win, and keep pushing forward. Remember that success isn't final, and failure isn't fatal.

Recommended Reading

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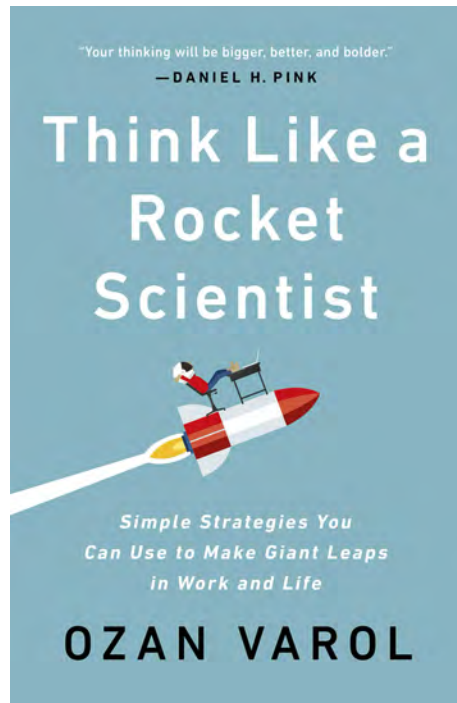
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Brandon Chenevert is graduate student from New Roads, Louisiana. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology with a concentration in Human Movement Science from Louisiana State University in December 2020. His work experience includes managing a new Baton Rouge restaurant, BRQ, and being the Founder and President of two LSU student organizations. Brandon is currently seeking an MBA with a concentration in Entrepreneurship and Corporate Innovation and plans to pursue a career in the management consulting industry.

INSIDER: Think Like a Rocket Scientist

Corrie A.H. Penraat, MBA

You don't have to be a rocket scientist to start thinking like one. Thinking like a rocket scientist is simply choosing to look at the world differently—as a puzzle to be solved rather than an insurmountable challenge. In Ozan Varol's book, *Think Like a Rocket Scientist*, he challenges readers to risk failure, question the status quo, and engage in critical thinking as he shares invaluable insights from some of the greatest triumphs and catastrophes in human history.



THINK POINT #1: Launch – Ignite Critical Thinking

The feeling of uncertainty is often far worse than what you fear. Ask yourself, what's the worst-case scenario and how likely is that scenario, given what I know? What's the best that can happen? Unless you consider the best-case scenario along with the worst, your brain will steer you toward the seemingly safest path—inaction. Absolute certainty does not exist. It's impossible to know what you should be doing if no one has ever done it before. There is no “right” way. Often, the path forward won't appear until you start walking. Make the most out of the uncertainty you face in your real estate career; where certainty ends, progress begins.

Varol explains that knowledge can make us slaves to convention. Research shows that we become increasingly rule-bound as we grow older. Therefore, as you move throughout your workday, ask yourself, “why are we doing it this way?” The answer, “We have always done it this way” cannot be your excuse! Do you own the process, or does the process own you? Challenge yourself to walk away from how it was done in the past and begin with a fresh canvas. Sometimes this means completely getting rid of or destroying the original process. A great way to do this is to engage in a “kill the company” exercise. Put yourself in the shoes of your real estate competitors. How would you destroy your company, idea, or product? This role play will be invaluable in beginning to uncover your own weakness.

Varol poses that the simplest way to create breakthroughs in your thinking is to shut off your phone, tune out distractions and simply think. Get bored more often! Some of the greatest minds in history including Einstein, Galileo, Newton, and countless others frequently participated in such thought experiments. Thought experiments are purposeful times of letting your imagination run wild as you ask big questions. Not every one of your big ideas will succeed, but even one success can put you far ahead of competitors who are continuing to rely on established routines.

Allow yourself the freedom to brainstorm without budgets, time constraints, etc. This type of divergent thinking has proven to increase creativity as you “discover innovative solutions and make new associations.” Once you have set aside purposeful time to let your mind run wild, you can begin switching from idealism to realism and asking the hard questions.

THINK POINT #2: Accelerate – Propel Your Ideas Forward

When, not *if*, you run into challenges along the way, avoid offering bold answers and instead formulate cautious hypotheses. In our desire to solve problems, it is common to charge into problem solving before fully understanding what we are trying to solve. Slow down, give yourself space to think, and reframe the obstacle at hand. Is the problem you are trying to solve really the problem? Identify your strategy before charging into action. It’s easy to get caught up in daily tasks and lose sight of why you are doing what you are doing. Keep your strategy at the forefront of your problem solving and day to day tasks.

Often, we see what we want to see and interpret data to confirm our preconceived notions. It is human nature to view the world through our own set of personal beliefs. Varol aptly states, “the more confident we feel about what we know, the harder it is to see what we don’t.” It’s easy to fall in love with our own opinions and feel personally berated when someone disagrees with us. An easy way to avoid this phenomenon is to begin eliminating “opinion” from your vocabulary and instead generating several hypotheses and presenting your ideas as “working hypotheses.” Instead of working to continually prove yourself right, try shifting your focus to proving yourself wrong. This new mindset will allow you to contest ingrained biases and be more open to opposing viewpoints.

THINK POINT #3: Achieve – Embrace Failure

It is normal to fear failure. From a young age we are often told that failure is not an option, but this mindset will not end up getting anyone very far. Behind every new big idea is the risk of failure. If you are taking risks, you are going to fail at some point. You cannot make progress within your real estate career or personal life without failure. Make it your goal to learn fast from your mistakes and failures. Get curious about your failure and choose to celebrate the lessons learned. Next time you fail, no matter how big or small, try throwing your arms up in the air and saying, “How fascinating!” Breakthrough is more often evolutionary than revolutionary. Create psychological safety within your real estate team, where agents are free to speak up, ask questions, and admit failure. The use of thought experiments and brainstorming are great ways to encourage creativity as well as failure in a low-stake setting.

Success can often blind a person or company to warning signs and a desperate need for change. We assume that when we succeed, everything went according to plan, forgetting that it is possible to succeed and at the same time having made mistakes or taken unnecessary risks. The moment we stop improving, we risk being overtaken by competitors. Varol suggests removing

the word “routine” from our terminology and instead treating every activity as a work-in-progress. Never fall into the mindset that you are number one. Research shows that success and complacency often go hand-in-hand; we stop pushing boundaries when we are succeeding.

Conclusion

You can’t expect to copy and paste what someone else did to achieve success and get the same result. Success does not follow a cookie cutter principle. Varol’s hope is to empower the individual to approach daily challenges like a rocket scientist being willing to question assumptions, stereotypes, and engrained patterns of thinking. You don’t have to become a rocket scientist to begin thinking like one. As you begin to imagine the impossible, you may find yourself solving the seemingly unattainable.

Recommended Reading

Varol, Ozan, *Think Like a Rocket a Rocket Scientist*, Public Affairs: New York, New York.

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