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Fostering a Sense of Purpose in Salespeople

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INSIDER: Culture Built My Brand: The Secret to Winning More Customers through Company Culture

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INSIDER: Your Next Five Moves: Master the Art of Business Strategy

Carson Solley, MBA Candidate



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Fostering a Sense of Purpose in Salespeople

Valerie Good, PhD, Douglas E. Hughes, PhD, and Hao Wang, PhD

Most people think of extrinsic motivators like compensation when thinking about workplace motivation. Recruiters often emphasize salary, paid time off, and healthcare benefits with potential hires, and, while these factors may entice candidates to accept a position, most individuals also want to make a difference and contribute to society through their work.



Contributing to something greater than themselves—or feeling a sense of purpose—is a huge motivator for employees, which can drastically impact the value individuals bring to a firm and to clients.

In our research, employees with a strong sense of purpose and other intrinsic motivators such as autonomy, competence, and relatedness expended greater effort and outperformed their

peers who were more financially motivated. Moreover, managers who prioritize fostering intrinsic motivation in employees can save the firm money, ultimately improving the bottom line by avoiding overly investing in extrinsic motivators and short-term objectives. As a new generation is beginning to enter the workplace, it is important not to overlook the importance of intrinsic motivation when recruiting for entry-level positions. By doing so, a company can create a solid foundation that is primed for long-term success.

Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation

Extrinsic motivation is usually expressed as promises of increased base salary, commission, bonuses, contests and other incentives earned for performing at a high level. Companies commonly focus on extrinsic goals when determining the success of employees via sales quotas and other key performance metrics. While extrinsic motivation can and does motivate employees, it can also cause unintended side effects. Self-Determination Theory (SDT) suggests that extrinsic motivation can cause individuals to perceive their behavior as being controlled by others. This controlled motivation can make salespeople behave in ways they might not otherwise. For example, Wells Fargo incentivized employees by offering bonuses for every account secured. Rather than working harder to bring in more clients, employees created fake accounts, which ultimately led to the company losing millions. Even though this is a dramatic example of how extrinsic motivation can cost a firm, the result of providing financial rewards and putting systems in place to monitor employee behavior can lead to unintended negative results, even on a small scale.

Conversely, intrinsic motivation is a more cost-effective and longer-lasting form of motivating employees. Intrinsic motivation, in its simplest form, is when an individual is internally motivated. There are numerous ways in which intrinsic motivation can arise from a job: because the job is fun, it creates a sense of pride, or it gives the individual a sense of purpose. In fact, a sense of purpose—the belief that one is making a contribution to a cause greater than oneself—is found to be a significant motivator for employees and salespeople.

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness can also foster intrinsic motivation in employees, leading to a positive effect on the company's bottom line. Autonomy simply means giving employees freedom of choice by allowing them to determine the nature of tasks/problems and arrive at a course of action on their own. Autonomy can be granted to employees gradually, allowing employees the opportunity to prove themselves capable of managing their positions. Another driver of intrinsic motivation is a sense of competence, or the skills, know-how, and ability to perform a job. Managers can improve an employee's perceived competence through training, seminars, or other professional development opportunities. Managers can also foster intrinsic motivation through a sense of relatedness or belongingness. Relatedness is the notion that even when the work is not fascinating on its own, the employee is still willing to do the job because he or she is valued by others. Managers can improve employees' sense of relatedness by showing genuine care and concern for employees and through team bonding exercises. Understanding these three factors can help firms attract and retain talent.

Attracting Talent Across Generations

As young adults enter the workforce, it is important to understand what best motivates this particular generation. Most may be under the impression that younger generations are less concerned with intrinsic motivation until they become more financially stable. However, modern society offers credit, which may give a (potentially false) sense of financial security that makes higher-level needs emerge as more important. Because of stable compensation and benefits, companies should focus more on creating intrinsic motivation for younger generations through autonomy, competence, relatedness, and most importantly, a sense of purpose.

Real Estate Implications

Intrinsic motivation is a significant predictor of effort and performance in employees and salespeople. Understanding how intrinsic motivation is generated can help real estate agencies build a solid foundation of long-term success. When compared to extrinsic motivation, fostering intrinsic motivation is less costly and leads to more effort from agents and employees. Intrinsic motivation is also longer-lasting than extrinsic motivation. Financial incentives and other rewards may boost productivity in the short-term, but the effects diminish over time. On the other hand, our research shows that when real estate agents have a sense of purpose – if they believe they are benefitting society by helping their clients find their homes – they will put in the extra effort to help their clients and outperform their peers who are focused more on the

commissions from the home sale. Fostering intrinsic motivation and a sense of purpose on the part of agents will ultimately lead to happier and more satisfied real estate clients. This can increase repeat customers, positive word-of-mouth communication, and ultimately, the firm's bottom line.

Recommended Reading

Good, Valerie, Douglas E. Hughes, and Hao Wang (2022), "More than Money: Establishing the Importance of a Sense of Purpose for Salespeople," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 50, 272-295.

About the Authors

Valerie Good, PhD

Assistant Professor of Marketing, Grand Valley State University

Dr. Valerie Good (PhD – Michigan State University) is a well-published researcher with an active pipeline. Her dissertation was distinguished as the top in the field of sales, earning her the American Marketing Association Sales SIG Dissertation Award in 2020. She also received the 2023 Distinguished Early Career Scholar Award from Grand Valley State University and the 2019 Taylor Research Award from Michigan State University in recognition of research excellence. Her research has been published in *Harvard Business Review*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Service Research*, *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, and *Marketing Letters*, with several additional papers currently under advanced review in top-tier marketing journals. She is dedicated to research with practical impact, and media mentions of her research include *Harvard Business Review*, *Forbes*, *Thrive Global*, *Selling with Noble Purpose*, *The Conversation*, *EconoTimes*, the *National Interest*, *Broad College of Business News*, the *Sales Scholar* podcast, as well as additional newspaper and radio outlets.

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Dr. Douglas E. Hughes' (PhD – University of Houston) has a rich academic and professional background in marketing and sales. His well-cited research focuses on how firms may maximize performance through sales organization effectiveness and through the accompanying management of internal and external relationships. Hughes served as Editor-in-Chief of *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management* and Area Editor at *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* and has published articles in the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Retailing*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Marketing Letters*, *Industrial Marketing*

Management, Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, and Journal of Service Research. He was honored for the best doctoral dissertation (2009) and best published articles on a sales topic by the American Marketing Association (2011, 2016) and is also the recipient of the 2013 Withrow Emerging Scholar Award, the 2016 Emerald Citation of Excellence Award, and the 2021 and 2016 James M. Comer Award for the Best Contribution to Selling and Sales Management Theory. He was featured on the cover of *Top Sales Magazine* in 2015 along with an article about his research on salesperson motivation. Prior to his academic career, Dr. Hughes served as CEO of a business services firm, as a senior executive in both marketing and sales at Fortune 100/500 consumer products firms, and as a consultant to a variety of companies across multiple industries.

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When “Too Much” is Just Too Much

Lisa Beeler, PhD, Alex R. Zablah, PhD, and Adam Rapp, PhD

Brand attachment is defined as the emotional connection a person has to a specific brand. Salespeople are often indoctrinated to love what they sell. After all, if salespeople genuinely love the brand, they will likely put more effort into selling, tell more people about their product, and, in theory, become better salespeople.

Yet, this logic may not always be true. A salesperson who “drank the Kool-aid” could be perceived as annoying or pushy; too much enthusiasm from the salesperson may cause the customer to feel pressured and form a tendency to avoid the salesperson and the brand. While brand attachment is important in terms of salesperson effort and performance, it may be equally off-putting for customers.



About the Study

In the focal study, the authors argue that high levels of brand attachment can negatively impact the brand, when considering the customer’s perspective. They explore the direct selling industry, a \$35 billion dollar industry, that is known for building strong brand attachment amongst salespeople. In study one, the authors conducted 40 exploratory interviews with 20 salesperson/customer dyads. The answers from these interviews were used to build a survey to test a theoretical dual process model. The survey sample consisted of 98 paired dyads (i.e., salespeople and one of their customers)

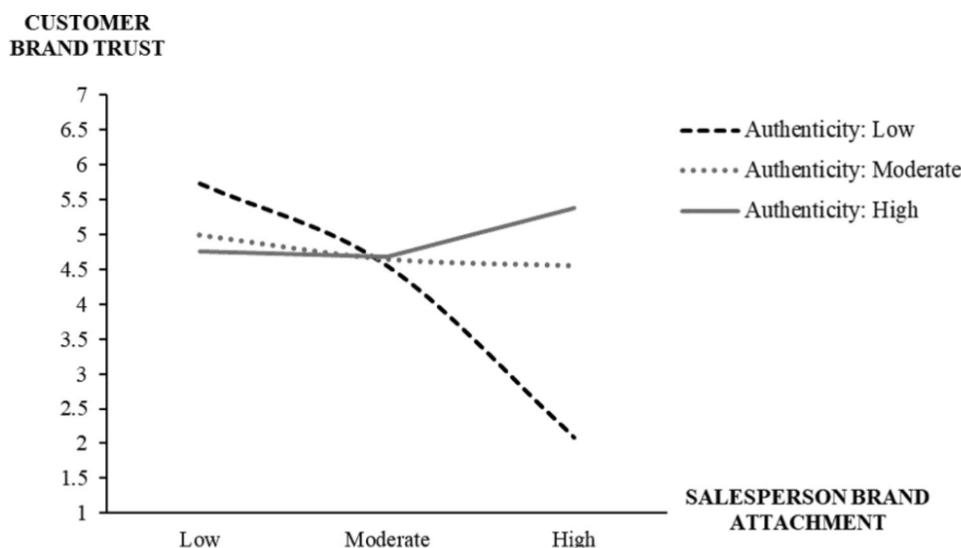
The authors propose that salespeople who have a strong positive relationship with a brand will put forth extra effort toward selling the brand, leading to increased current sales. However, they also propose that strong salesperson brand attachment may have a negative effect on a customer if the salesperson appears inauthentic in the act of selling. This negative effect will decrease customer trust and future purchase intentions (likely damaging future sales).

The Findings

The findings confirm that brand attachment can be both helpful and harmful to salesperson success, and this divergence is based on the salesperson’s authenticity. When strongly attached salespeople have low authenticity, they come across as pushy and unbelievable, decreasing customer trust and ultimately customer future purchase intentions. Conversely, a salesperson who is perceived as authentic can be strongly brand attached with no negative consequences (see

Figure 1). Customers of strongly attached salespeople build their brand trust perceptions (and future purchase intentions) on the authenticity of the salespeople, not necessarily the salesperson's belief in the brand alone. In sum, authenticity is the key to making the sale for strongly brand-attached salespeople.

Figure 1.¹



Real Estate Implications

Trust between a buyer and a seller is of the utmost importance in real estate. Clients are often making the biggest investment in their lifetimes, and they must be able to trust both the buyer's and seller's agents. Being an overly enthusiastic salesperson can negatively affect trust by calling into question the salesperson's motives and, hence, whether the salesperson is genuine and authentic. Consequently, the key to maximizing sales results is by being authentic. Customers want agents and firms they can trust, so train and encourage your team to be authentic in order to gain the buyer's trust.

While brokers and team leaders often emphasize brand attachment, they must also emphasize authenticity with agents. The trust that customers build with a brand through an authentic salesperson can lead to positive referrals, future purchase intentions, and revenue growth. Focusing on the long term and implementing authenticity for the sales team is critical for firm and agent success.

Recommended Reading

Beeler, Lisa, Alex Zablah, and Adam Rapp (2021), "Blinded by the Brand: Inauthentic Salesperson Brand Attachment and its Influence on Customer Purchase Intentions," *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, 41(3), 268-284.

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Dr. Lisa Beeler (PhD – University of Tennessee, Knoxville) is a professor, researcher, and consultant who explores how firms and managers can drive sales performance, especially within business-to-business industries. Her research, which often focuses on the critical seller-buyer dyad, has been published in numerous top marketing journals, such as the *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *Journal of Business Research*, and *Industrial Marketing Management*, among others. Her research is also shared at both academic and practitioner conferences and has served as the foundation for sales training she conducts across the nation. All of her experience informs the application-based learning approach she uses in her classroom to prepare students to be great salespeople, valuable co-workers, and good citizens.

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Dr. Alex R. Zablah’s (PhD – Georgia State University) research seeks to improve understanding of how frontline factors (organizational processes, employees, and technologies) influence the quality of customer-firm exchanges and, ultimately, firm performance. Alex’s research has been published in leading marketing, management, and information systems journals, including the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Information Systems Research*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. He currently serves on the editorial review board of six journals, including the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. Over the years, Alex has received several awards in recognition for his research endeavors, performance in the classroom, and service as a reviewer.

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Dr. Adam Rapp’s (PhD – University of Connecticut) research examines factors influencing the performance of salespeople, sales teams and sales organizations. He looks at how to improve salesperson performance and the knowledge, skills, abilities, and behaviors that can contribute to

becoming more effective. In the area of sales leadership, his expertise includes hiring, training, and motivating a sales force and training around how to be more effective operationally as a sales manager. Dr. Rapp has published in the *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Management Science*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *Journal of Business Research*, and the *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*. His work on sales teams has been highlighted by professional selling textbooks, industry magazines, and presented at Harvard University.

Dr. Rapp is an experienced corporate trainer in sales leadership, team performance, sales competency building, diagnostic selling, and customer relationship management technology. He has presented at premiere institutions including Harvard and Columbia, among others, and taught globally in Belgium, Greece, Colombia, Chile, China, and several other countries. Dr. Rapp also spent two years as a post-doctoral fellow at the University of Houston, where he researched and taught in the Sales Excellence Institute. Rapp has won teaching awards at the University of Houston and University of Connecticut, and he most recently won the Neil Rackham Award for Sales Knowledge Dissemination (2014).

From the Outside Looking In: Using Social Media to Improve Well-Being

James A. Roberts, PhD and Meredith E. David, PhD

Humans are wired to seek out social interaction, and the Internet gives people endless opportunities to connect. But, contrary to the goal of social media, which purports to bring people together, recent research links increased social media usage to loneliness and perceived isolation. People from all age groups are spending on average two hours and 25 minutes per day browsing social media. Over an entire lifetime, that is approximately five years and four months on social media. One may wonder how such rampant social media use impacts our well-being as well as whether and how this time on social media could be better spent, perhaps in a manner that may be more conducive to one's well-being.



Recent research suggests that it is not only how much time is spent on social media that impacts well-being, but another important factor is how that time is spent. The present research attempts to explain this apparent conundrum. Specifically, we studied social media use and examined whether it is *how* the social media is used (passively vs. actively) that determines its effects on users' perceived social

connection and well-being. This question is of particular importance given that the majority of social media use is passive in nature. The findings of this research can be used to improve individuals' well-being and social connection as well as to engage followers in a way that has a positive impact on their well-being.

Passive vs. Active Social Media Use

Our study sought to investigate the interaction between social media use/intensity and how social media is being used (passive vs. active), as well as its impact on or association with social connection and, ultimately, psychological well-being. Passive use is the most prevalent kind of social media use and involves browsing and consuming information about others' lives without actually engaging with others' profiles or posts. Conversely, active use involves some sort of direct interaction or engagement with others. Active users of social media "like," post comments, and share information with others on social media, whereas passive users simply scroll through their social media feeds with little interaction with others.

Our Studies

Our first study examined the relationship between social media intensity and type of social media usage (i.e., passive vs. active), as well as the interactive effect of both perceptions of social connection and subjective well-being. We found that passive usage of social media, or so called “creeping,” had a negative effect on one’s well-being. It appears that using social media without interacting with others is associated with a reduced sense of social connection and decrements in psychological well-being.

Our second study examined the robustness of the results from study one. The results of study two were consistent with study one, providing further evidence to support the hypothesis that social media can be harmful to one’s well-being, depending on how the social media is being used (actively vs. passively). If used in a passive way, heavy social media usage is particularly unlikely to help an individual foster his/her own well-being.

Study three manipulated both social media use (heavy vs. light) and type of use (passive vs. active) and then measured the resulting levels of social connection among test subjects. The results of study three further indicate that there is a significant negative relationship between the intensity of social media use and social connection when social media is used passively. The study also found that, when used actively, social media use is positively related to social connection.

Key Real Estate Implications

As an agent and social media consumer, consider the ways in which you utilize social media, be it for business or pleasure. Are you contributing to your well-being by engaging with your connections, or are you contributing to a lack of well-being by passively scrolling?

With increased social media marketing, it is also important to understand the impact of social media use on the customer. Agents and social media managers must understand the impact on the customer to drive positive impressions. From this study, we’ve found that social media engagement is key to improved social well-being and connection, and this information can therefore be used to optimize marketing strategies.

The key is to develop social media posts that fuel engagement. Ask questions. Create posts that get the customer involved such as, “Share this post for a chance to win!” By engaging followers in fruitful interactions, you can promote their well-being and reap the benefits of doing so.

Recommended Reading

Roberts, James A. and Meredith E. David, (2022), “On the Outside Looking in: Social Media Intensity, Social Connection, and User Well-Being: The Moderating Role of Passive Social Media Use,” *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science*, <https://doi.org/10.1037/cbs0000323>.

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Dr. Jim Roberts (PhD – University of Nebraska-Lincoln) has been a member of the Baylor marketing faculty since 1991. He has had approximately 80 articles published in numerous academic journals. He is also the author of two books, *Shiny Objects* (Harper Collins) and *Too Much of a Good Thing: Are You Addicted to your Smartphone?*

Dr. Roberts is a nationally recognized expert on consumer behavior. His research has been quoted and/or featured on The O'Reilly Factor, The Doctors on CBS, Time.com, *US News & World Report*, *New York Times*, *USA Today*, *The Wall Street Journal*, National Public Radio, *Cosmopolitan Magazine*, *Glamour*, and many other newspapers, magazines, websites, and television networks. Dr. Roberts has also appeared on the CBS Early Show, ABC World News Tonight, ABC Good Morning America, and NBC The Today Show. His current research interests include the pursuit of happiness through money and material possessions and investigating the antecedents and consequences of smartphone addiction and its impact on personal happiness and professional productivity.

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Associate Professor of Marketing, Baylor University

Dr. Meredith David (PhD – University of South Carolina) joined the Baylor marketing faculty in 2014. Her research focuses on marketing strategies with an emphasis on consumer behavior and well-being. Recently, her research has explored how new media technologies, including smartphones, impact personal and workplace relationships. Dr. David has also published research related to customized pricing tactics, interpersonal attachment styles, and the pursuit of health goals. Her research appears in numerous journals including the *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of the Association for Consumer Research*, *Journal of Advertising*, *European Journal of Marketing*, and *Psychology & Marketing*, among others. Dr. David is coauthor of Pearson's leading Strategic Management textbook (*Strategic Management Concepts and Cases – A Competitive Advantage Approach*, 18th edition) which is available in many languages and has been used globally for 32 years. Dr. David has been interviewed and quoted for her research in many national and international news outlets, including ABC News, *The Wall Street Journal*, Fox News, Oprah.com, *Redbook Magazine*, *Consumer Reports*, and *Health Magazine*, among others.

Calibrating Emotions to Increase Sales

Blair Kidwell, PhD, Jonathan Hasford, PhD, Broderick Turner, PhD, David M. Hardesty, PhD, and Alex R. Zablah, PhD

Emotional competence is so important that it is considered a key performance predictor for sales recruiters. To gauge emotional competence, people have historically looked at emotional intelligence (EI), the ability to perceive, understand, and manage emotions. New research shows, however, that considering emotional self-efficacy (ESE) is just as important. Emotional self-efficacy considers a salesperson's confidence in *how* he or she uses emotions. Coupling high emotional self-efficacy with high emotional intelligence leads to an emotionally calibrated salesperson who is well equipped to succeed in sales interactions.



Breaking Down Emotional Calibration

Emotional calibration is the intersection of emotional intelligence (EI) and emotional self-efficacy (ESE), and it is a strong indicator of salesperson success. Understanding emotional intelligence and emotional self-efficacy independently is an important part of understanding emotional calibration as a whole; however, understanding how the two interact under varying circumstances helps to fine-tune salespeople's effectiveness.

Emotional intelligence helps sellers interpret emotions, transfer those emotions to deeper thoughts, and then respond accordingly. Historically, emotional intelligence has been a focal point for sales recruiters. Salespeople with high levels of EI tend to have enhanced buyer-seller interactions. However, studies have found that simply having high emotional intelligence is not enough to be great at sales. Instead, it matters both how skilled one is at the ability to use, manage, facilitate, and perceive emotions and how confident they are in these abilities. EI alone is not a consistent indicator of salesperson success. Having the correct response, from high emotional intelligence, doesn't mean that individual has the confidence to appropriately convey felt emotions, and this is where self-efficacy comes into play.

Emotional self-efficacy refers to a salesperson's level of confidence in his or her ability to use emotions present in interactions.^{1,2} ESE is the doorway to effective interaction with clients. Emotionally intelligent salespeople who are also confident in their emotional skills are more

likely to display positive avoidant emotions. This means they are more likely to remain calm and relaxed when interacting with customers. This interaction of emotional intelligence and emotional self-efficacy is emotional calibration, and it may be a strong determinant of sales outcomes.

Emotional Calibration in Action

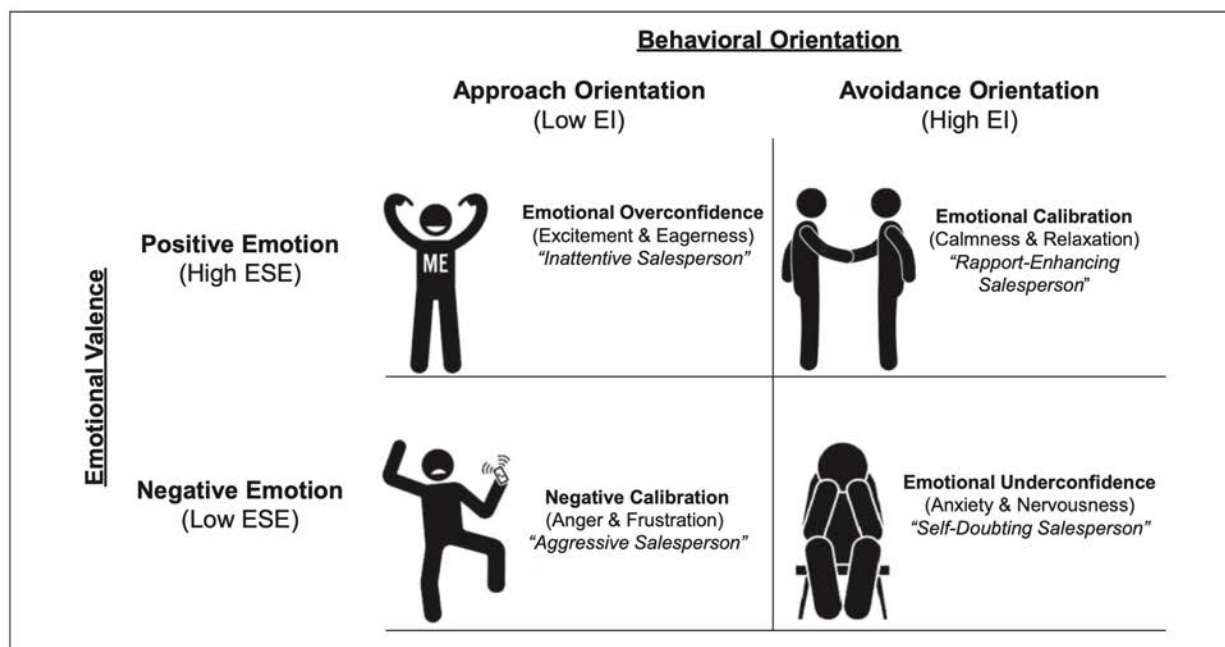
We performed additional tests to examine effects of miscalibration in the four possible conditions of emotional calibration, which showed that emotionally calibrated salespeople outperformed all others.

We found that salespeople with low EI and high ESE were “emotionally overconfident.” These salespeople may be seen as inattentive to their customers, and their display of “positive approach” emotions, such as excitement and eagerness, can be off-putting to customers, thus reducing sales success.

Salespeople with low EI and low ESE, are “negatively calibrated.” They are more likely to display negative approach emotions, such as anger and frustration when dealing with their customers. These salespeople are often considered aggressive by their customers, and compared to those salespeople that are emotionally calibrated have less success.

Those with high EI and low ESE display “emotional underconfidence.” These salespeople tend to exhibit “negative avoidance emotions,” such as anxiety and nervousness in their sales interactions. The combination of having high emotional skills but low confidence in those skills may also reduce sales performance compared with those who are emotionally calibrated.

Alternatively, individuals who are “emotionally calibrated”—that is their emotional skills and confidence in those skills are both high—perform significantly better than any of the other combinations of EI and ESE. These salespeople, earn an average commission more than 270% higher than salespeople who were highly confident of their emotional skills, yet lacked these skills (i.e., the “emotionally overconfident” salespeople who scored high in ESE and low in EI).



(Figure 2 from Kidwell et al., 2021)

Equipping your Sales Force

When building personal emotional sales skills or the skills of the sales team, managers need a balanced approach that addresses both EI and ESE. Expand your focus from emotional intelligence alone and focus on emotional calibration as a goal. With a tool we developed, managers may identify a salesperson's emotional skill level and their confidence in applying these skills to an interaction. Understanding both the skills and confidence a salesperson has can help managers in their hiring proves and can be used to develop the emotional calibration of their existing sales teams.

However, there are a few factors that can impact the effectiveness of emotional calibration. Work-related stressors and job tenure both play a role. The benefits of emotional calibration can be lessened in the presence of stress and strengthened when the longer one is at the same job. Sales managers can act accordingly by creating a supportive environment that reduces stress and one that holds onto salespeople longer. In these types of environments, salespeople who are both emotionally skilled and confident in those skills are likely to thrive.

Real Estate Implications

Real estate is the industry of relationships. It's less about what you know and more about who you know and how you interact with them. A salesperson needs to develop both the emotional skills and abilities to deal with customers and the confidence to deploy these emotional skills and abilities. Being able confidently use, manage, facilitate, and perceive can play a big role in the

outcome of the deal. Being the agent who builds rapport and communicates effectively with the clients can help you stand out among the rest.

Recommended Reading

Kidwell, Blair, Jonathan Hasford, Broderick Turner, David M. Hardesty, and Alex Ricardo Zablah (2021), “Emotional Calibration and Salesperson Performance,” *Journal of Marketing*, 85(6), 141-161.

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Dr. Blair Kidwell’s (PhD – Virginia Tech) research focuses on the area of consumer decision making with an emphasis on emotion and emotional intelligence, knowledge calibration, political ideology, and gender-based choices. He has explored these and other topics in the substantive domains of food, health and financial decisions, consumer sustainability, and buyer-seller interactions. Dr. Kidwell’s research has appeared in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, the *Journal of Marketing Research*, the *Journal of Marketing*, and the *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, among others. He was previously a faculty member at The Ohio State University and the University of Kentucky.

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Dr. Jonathan Hasford’s (PhD – University of Kentucky) research is primarily focused on how emotions influence consumer decision making. Specifically, Dr. Hasford has studied how emotions transfer between unrelated persuasion messages and how training emotional intelligence can lead to healthier eating. His research has appeared in the *Journal of Consumer Research*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, and the *International Journal of Research in Marketing*.

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Dr. Broderick Turner (PhD – Northwestern University) runs the Technology, Race, and Prejudice (T.R.A.P.) Lab (jointhetrap.com) and he is a Business in Global Society Fellow at Harvard Business School. His main research area focuses on the intersection of marketing, technology, racism, and emotion. His academic research has been published twice in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* and the *Journal of Marketing*. He and his fellow Trappers are pushing the boundaries on understanding how race and racism underlie many consumer and managerial decisions.

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Dr. Alex R. Zablah's (PhD – Georgia State University) research seeks to improve understanding of how frontline factors (organizational processes, employees, and technologies) influence the quality of customer-firm exchanges and, ultimately, firm performance. His research has been published in leading marketing, management, and information systems journals, including the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Information Systems Research*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. He has served on the editorial review board of numerous journals, including the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, and *International Journal of Research in Marketing*. Over the years, Alex has received several awards in recognition for his research endeavors, performance in the classroom, and service as a reviewer.

INSIDER: Culture Ate Built My Brand: The Secret to Winning More Customers through Company Culture

Alexa Mathias, MBA

If you are looking for a way to unleash your culture, motivate your team, drive better results, and attract more customers, then you are not alone. Aligning your culture with your brand to build a marquee culture can help launch your company's performance to new levels. In *Culture Built My Brand*, Mark Miller and Ted Vaughn provide a handful of practical ways to transform your internal culture to fuel success and performance.

THINK POINT #1: The Power of Aligning Brand and Culture

When defining a brand, people often start on the outside and look in; however, a brand is truly defined from the inside out, focusing on internal operations. For a brand, internal culture is the strongest strategy driver. The way people behave inside the organization defines the brand on the outside. There is a sweet spot that exists where culture and brand align, and the organizations that find this sweet spot discover what it takes to become a compelling brand that attracts customers and drives better results.

The sweet spot where culture and brand align is called a “marquee culture.” You know you have created a marquee culture when all you do expresses a clear and consistent brand identity. Once you have successfully aligned your brand and culture, you will see your customers turn into your brand's biggest supporters. People recognize a brand that stands out, and your marquee culture can help it do just that. At the end of the day, it will require consistent hard work and dedication, but it all pays off in terms of raving customers, loyal employees, and ongoing success.

THINK POINT #2: Build a Brand that Stands Out, Build a Marquee Culture

The six layers of culture include principles, architecture, rituals, lore, vocabulary, and artifacts. Aligning these six interconnected dimensions of culture is key to developing a powerful brand experience and competitive advantage.

1. **Principles:** Principles, based on behavior, are the foundational values that outline what is most important to your brand. Principles guide organizational standards, and they help convey the brand promise. Providing your employees with behavior-based principles that empower them to live out brand meaning is one way to elevate your organization. As a



leader, you must lead by example and remind your employees of what principles guide your organization.

2. **Architecture:** Architecture consists of the organizational systems and structures within your company. Budgets, hiring, decision-making, and other operations are all part of your architecture. These structures are there to support your team and brand and to deliver on the organization's promise. The architecture of your brand should be looked at as a framework to equip your employees to be their very best. Your architecture should also reflect and reinforce your principles. Not only should the architecture support your people, but it should also support your purpose. A consistent experience for employees creates a consistent and satisfying experience for customers.
3. **Rituals:** Rituals are activities and experiences offered within your organization that support and reinforce what is most important to your organization. Rituals are meant to be fun and engaging ways to empower employees and can help create a sense of ownership across the organization. When employees are energized, your brand comes to life!
4. **Lore:** Lore consists of the stories and legends floating around your organization. By listening to lore, you can learn how your employees experience the culture. Stories hold the good, the bad, and the ugly, and how everyone reacts to them says a lot. Use stories as an opportunity to listen to your people and find issues that need to be addressed or successes that need to be praised. Remember to constantly integrate the brand along the way.
5. **Vocabulary:** Vocabulary within your organization consists of the words and phrases used to help employees understand what is most important for the brand and the role they play in driving it forward. Vocabulary should be clear and inspiring, and it can also be used to fill gaps between other dimensions of culture. Using words and phrases clearly and concisely can help clearly deliver the message of what is important to your organization and to the brand positioning presented to the world.
6. **Artifacts:** Artifacts are the most tangible evidence of culture; they are the visible objects that reflect what is deeper inside. Artifacts are seen, touched, and interacted with daily by your employees. Examples of artifacts include brand swag and office furniture. Your artifacts should reinforce brand identity and create an atmosphere that connects people to your brand. Upgrade your swag, design your office with intent, and create a space that truly reflects who your organization is and what is most important.

Remember that a marquee culture starts from the inside and works out, which is why all six principles start with the people inside the organization and end with the outside reputation. By

integrating all six dimensions of culture you can successfully create an irresistible brand that draws people in and consistently delivers on the brand promise.

THINK POINT #3: Channel your Marquee Culture

Now that you have created your marquee culture, you must channel and sustain it. Integrating your brand across all six dimensions is challenging; sustaining it takes even more work.

Reminding yourself and others what matters most will be a daily task. Leading with compassion, empathy, and courage will help you go the distance. You may even be faced with hard decisions that will make it difficult to stay true to your brand. The hard work and effort you put in as a leader will pay off as you see your brand take off. You now have what it takes to create a marquee culture.

Real Estate Implications

Real estate is a very relational industry. Clients have countless options when it comes to choosing with whom they want to work, so it will be beneficial to create a brand that stands out and attracts customers. Creating a marquee culture at your firm (or for yourself as an independent broker/agent) is one way to win business and keep clients coming back.

Integrating the six dimensions of culture into your real estate organization can be done in many ways. Outline principles most important to your organization or yourself, and define behaviors that support them. Look at your internal architecture and make sure your systems and processes align with your guiding principles. If you are a broker, ensure that the procedures you have in place benefit your agents and clients in a way that reflects the overall brand. Real estate is relational, and one of the best ways to learn about the industry is through conversation. Take advantage of stories within your firm, and use these as an opportunity to communicate the brand. These are just a few ways you can support your brand; each of the six dimensions of culture can be integrated into your real estate business.

Recommended Reading

Miller, Mark and Ted Vaughn (2021), *Culture Built my Brand: The Secret to Winning More Customers Through Company Culture*, Amplify Publishing: New York City, New York.

About the Author

Alexa Mathias, MBA

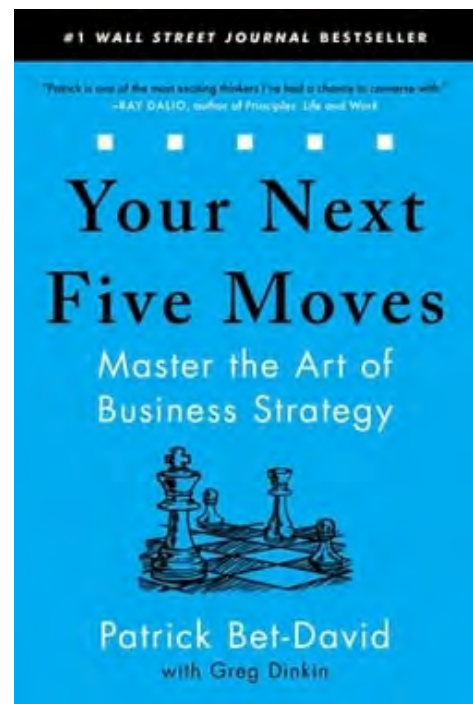
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Alexa Mathias earned her Master of Business Administration and Bachelor of Business Administration with a double major in Marketing and Entrepreneurship and Corporate Innovation from Baylor University. Alexa currently works as a Retail Associate at Endeavor Real Estate Group in Austin, Texas.

INSIDER: Your Next Five Moves: Master the Art of Business Strategy

Carson Solley, MBA Candidate

What if I told you there is a road map on how to be successful? Would you read it? *Your Next Five Moves: Master the Art of Business Strategy* is precisely that. In his latest book, Patrick Bet-David takes a deep dive into a practical methodology that can be applied to all areas of life, especially business. In just five simple moves, Bet-David lays out what you must do to differentiate yourself from the competition, attract and retain top talent, grow a company exponentially, and identify who you want to be and how you will get there. These moves are not talent-based, so a strong work ethic plus his five steps will prove to be transformational in your climb to the top.



Move #1: Master Knowing Yourself

The first step to mastering the art of business strategy is knowing yourself. The first question you need to be able to answer is, "Who do you want to be?" This is a crucial question for personal and business success. The first move is about knowing who you are, what you value, what your goals are, and what you are willing to sacrifice. These questions must be answered by taking a deep, truthful dive into your own life. You must be clear and confident in your story of who you are. In the journey of life, there will be tough times; in these challenging times, it is crucial to have these questions answered so you will not waiver in the journey set before you. You must find your competitive advantage in a world centered around success, so answering questions about yourself and fully understanding who you are as an individual gives you the competitive advantage you need to be successful in the workplace.

Move #2: Master the Ability to Reason

The second move is to learn how to solve problems. To effectively solve a problem, you must find the underlying issue and what is causing the problem. Once the issue has been identified, come up with costs and benefits for three different ways to overcome the problem. Once you have different options, compare and analyze the solutions and act on the most efficient solution. Once you start solving problems, you find ways to prevent them before they occur.

Move #3: Master Building the Right Team

Once you have the ability to know yourself and have learned how to reason, the next move is to build the right team. Behind every successful business person is a successful team. Surrounding

yourself with people who will help your business grow is crucial for success. Once you have a team, you must invest in those people, implement your values, and communicate your plan strongly. Everyone has different weaknesses, but with the right team behind you, those weaknesses can be minimized, which leads to success.

Move #4: Master Strategy to Scale

Leaders are constantly faced with tough decisions, but how one handles these trials is what separates good leaders from great leaders. When making decisions, it is important to make decisions in a strategic manner rather than an emotional one. Every action you take will have either a positive or negative impact on your business. Look for strategic ways to grow as a company, but also put yourself in the shoes of others. How will your decision affect clients? Your team? Your competitors? Take a step back and think about the ripples that will occur based on the decisions you make. Do not become greedy in your efforts to be successful, and be careful not to become your own worst enemy.

Move #5: Master Power Plays

Big moves are the most impactful ones. The times when leaders take a leap of faith can be some of the biggest moves in history. Be strategic when taking risks, find the big obstacle in front of you, and attack it head-on. Always find the leverage you can gain in any situation so that when the time comes to make a power play, you can execute the move. An excellent strategy for making power plays is to also look for ways to benefit your clients and your company. Find the Mount Everest in your field, and sprint toward it with the purpose of conquering it.

Conclusion

Bet-David's five moves can be directly applied to real estate. It is crucial to understand yourself in order to work toward the goals you have in place. As in any industry, problems will arise that you may not see coming, but having the skill to manage these issues will prove valuable. Surround yourself with like-minded individuals who will push you to be the best agent, and focus on having a strategic thought process. Do not be afraid to take a leap of faith; some of the biggest deals are made by taking a calculated step outside of your comfort zone. Finally, always look for leverage while keeping clients in mind. Bet-David explains that following these five moves is crucial in the journey to creating success.

Recommended Reading

Bet-David, David (2020), *Your Next Five Moves Master the Art of Business Strategy*, Gallery Books: New York, New York.

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Carson Solley is a graduate student from Decatur, Alabama. Carson earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. While at Samford, Carson concentrated in data analytics and sports marketing. Carson was the Team Lead for two projects with the New Orleans Saints and interned with the Birmingham Legion and the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame. After receiving his MBA from Baylor, Carson plans to work in finance.



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