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Keller Center Research Report

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Table of Contents

How Does Personal Identification with Supervisors Affect Salesperson Performance?

Michael L. Mallin, PhD, Tyler D. Hancock, PhD, Ellen B. Pullins, PhD, and Bashar S. Gammoh, PhD

Building a winning team is an integral part of being a successful sales manager in any sales environment. In a competitive marketplace, it seems clear that salesperson performance can be influenced by those around them, but more often overlooked are the sources and specific manifestations of those influences. Our research aimed to address one factor of this phenomenon, namely personal identification with supervisors.

Based on prior research, we define *personal identification* as "an individual's intrapersonal perception of oneness with another individual."[1] What makes this definition of personal identification different from other forms of social identification is that it does not necessarily have to reflect reciprocity. Salespeople could identify strongly with their supervisors based on personal characteristics, motivations, work ethic, or any of several other factors, but their supervisors need not feel the same way about them. Of course, as with most things, this type of identification may also be reciprocal. Our research focuses on how personal identification with supervisors affects individuals' motivation-performance relationship as well as the outcome-performance relationship and turnover intentions among salespeople.

Intrinsic motivation centers on salespeople's need for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, so that motivation is not induced by external factors but by the person's own internal drives to demonstrate expertise and success. Extrinsic motivation focuses on compliance with various factors in the environment, which would include supervisors as a factor in supporting various salesperson motivations for performance and achievement.

The Study

To address the aforementioned issues, we measure how salespeople's identification with their supervisors (or managers) influence salespeople's intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation, which in turn influence three key outcomes. These outcomes include salespeople's turnover intentions, outcome performance, and behavior performance. Outcome performance refers to such performance goals as hitting sales targets and profit margins. Behavior performance refers

to such accomplishments such as providing excellent customer service or writing high-quality sales proposals.

What we expected to find from the study was that salespeople's perceived personal identification with their supervisor would be positively related to intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation. We also hypothesized that intrinsic motivation would lead to greater outcome performance and behavior performance, while being negatively related to turnover intentions. But while we expected similar results from extrinsic motivation for outcome performance and behavior performance, we expected high-performing salespeople to seek better compensation/incentive plans, thus predicting higher likelihood of turnover intentions.

The Results

The results from our survey largely indicated that our hypotheses were correct. We found that higher levels of salesperson identification with their supervisor do in fact lead to higher levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In addition, we found that all our assumptions about the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on results variables (performance and turnover intention) held to be true, as well. Among the mediated effects that we tested for, the only one that lacked sufficient evidence was the mediating effect of extrinsic motivation on the relationship between identification with supervisor and turnover intention. This confirms that regardless of a salesperson's level of extrinsic motivation, their identification with their supervisor will not directly influence their turnover intentions. Our findings add important contributions to understanding how identification with supervisors can influence motivation levels, but also how this identification affects sales results directly.

Real Estate Implications

Especially within larger real estate organizations, it's important to take note of how well salespeople identify with their supervisors, as that relationship will necessarily impact their

levels of motivation and performance. Therefore, it could be helpful to staff salespeople under supervisors who share similar goals, worldviews, and motivations as themselves. Within independent real estate or smaller organizations, this impact can still be important to understand. For a smaller real estate firm, understanding personal identification may facilitate more informed hiring decisions that will result in better long-term success. Independent

real estate agents may think of themselves as their own boss but may also identify others to admire and learn from to help harness their own motivation.

Recommended Reading

Mallin, Michael L., Tyler D. Hancock, Ellen B. Pullins, and Bashar S. Gammoh (2022), "Salesperson's Perceived Personal Identification with Supervisor and the Relationship with Turnover Intention and Performance: A Mediated Motivation Model," *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management,* 42(3), 243-264.

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Wait Just a Minute: When to Ask for Online Reviews

Miyeon Jung, PhD, Sunghan Ryu, PhD, Sang Pil Han, PhD, and Daegon Cho, PhD

It is hard to overstate the importance of online reviews. In today's world where most product experiences start and/or end online, the experiences of others are more visible and more important than ever when a customer is determining which company (or agent) to give their business. According to a study conducted in 2021, 91% of respondents read at least one review before making a purchase decision and report that a high review score significantly influenced the purchasing decision.[1]

There is ample research demonstrating the effectiveness and necessity of online reviews and the use of reminders to prompt customers to complete them. Previous research has examined how asking for a review is influenced by financial incentives, consumers' memory, and the way in which reviews are requested. What has not been thoroughly researched, however, is the most effective time to ask customers for reviews following a product experience.

The Study

In this study, we conducted two different experiments, each seeking to answer the question: when is the optimal time after a product experience to remind customers to leave a review? Our hypotheses were that 1) immediate review reminders would decrease review posting likelihood and review quality based on customer perception of lost autonomy and that 2) delayed review reminders would increase review posting likelihood and review quality due to reviving intentions and to better customer recall.

For the first of the two experiments, we worked with a major online marketplace specializing in tours and activities that we refer to as "MyTrip." By utilizing an in-app push notification system, we randomly assigned whether customers would receive a review reminder or not, at varied time intervals, after their experience. The time intervals were next-day, 5-days, 9-days, and 13-days after the experience. Our total sample size was 8,123 consumers after six rounds of data collection, with 4,038 in the control group (not receiving notifications) and 4,085 in the treatment group (receiving notifications). The goal of this experiment was to determine in which time period the review reminders had the greatest effect.

Our second experiment aimed to replicate the results of the first as well as gain a more comprehensive insight into review quality with a larger subject pool. To conduct this experiment,

we partnered with a major e-commerce fashion company we refer to as "MyFashion." Like MyTrip, MyFashion uses push notifications as their primary method of feedback to customers, which is how we requested reviews throughout the experiment. For this experiment, our requesting time periods were after-16-to-30-hours, after-30-to-40-hours, after-7-days, and after-14-days. In total, we had a sample size of 291,954 customers divided between control groups (no reminder) and treatment (reminders) in those four groups.

The Results

What we found from each of these experiments is that immediate review reminders, contrary to common wisdom and practices, actually decrease the likelihood of review postings, whereas delayed review reminders increase the likelihood of review postings. In addition, we found that in highly experience-based settings (travel, entertainment, etc.) and among young consumers, quick reminders are particularly detrimental to the likelihood of receiving a review. Regarding quality, we found no evidence that an early review reminder decreased the quality of those received, but that a delayed reminder did slightly increase the quality of later reviews.

The exact time periods which constitute immediate and delayed review periods will vary depending on the business requesting reviews, but in general, it is safe to say that reminders will have a much more positive effect when delayed. It is important to note that consumers are still likely to post a review soon after their experience, but the delayed reminders are far more effective in increasing the proportion that write reviews at that point. We found in our second experiment that 7.78% of customers in the earliest review group that did not receive a reminder left a review, while only 1.32% of those in the latest time group did. For those who did receive reminders, we saw those numbers change to 7.31% and 2.16% respectively, reflecting a 63.6% increase in review posting likelihood at the latest stage and a 6% decrease at the earliest.

Real Estate Implications

The online review landscape is going to look a bit different for real estate professionals than it will for other industries. Since real estate is such a heavily service-based field, it will fall into a similar category as the travel company, where delayed review reminders were significantly more effective. Give your clients time to settle into their new homes, sit with their decisions, and reflect on their experiences, so they are more likely to leave an honest and high-quality review when asked.

As a real estate agent today, your online presence is your first impression, and client opinions are often formed before you even meet. A major component of your brand is your online feedback, and knowing when to ask for client reviews may be instrumental to your success.

Recommended Reading

Jung, Miyeon, Sunghan Ryu, Sang Pil Han, and Daegon Cho (2023), "Ask for Reviews at the Right Time: Evidence from Two Field Experiments," *Journal of Marketing*, 87(4), 528-549.

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Staying Remotely Engaged: Interruptions and Breaks During Remote Work

Sara Jansen Perry, PhD, Dawn S. Carlson, PhD, K. Michele Kacmar, PhD, Min (Maggie) Wan, PhD, and Merideth J. Thompson, PhD

Working from home has proven to be a unique challenge for many as companies have shifted toward remote and hybrid models of work in recent years. Frequent interruptions during work hours from spouses or children or frequent interruptions to family life from remote work can be significant causes of stress. Mental and emotional resources can be taxed by this overlap of family and work lives, resulting in a lower quality of work, greater stress, and lower overall satisfaction for the employee. Spouses may also experience stress from the employee's work arrangement, especially in terms of family overload. With this in mind, we conducted a study to see what types of breaks would best contribute to overcoming additional stress and resource drain while working remotely.

Challenge Stress vs. Hinderance Stress

In our study, we examined two different types of stress that employees face: challenge stress and hinderance stress. Challenge stress is associated with positive outcomes, as it encourages employees to work harder and improve at what they are doing. This type of stress typically results from doing work that employees enjoy and that challenges them in satisfying ways.[1,2] Hinderance stress is associated with negative outcomes and the attitude that remote work presents hassles, barriers, or threats to progress, which inhibit learning, growth, and/or goal achievement.[3] In order to measure and draw conclusions about these types of stress among remote workers and their spouses, we collected three complete online survey responses from 391 couples (two from employees, one from spouses) during the early part of the COVID-19 pandemic response. In these surveys, we asked the couples to think about how remote work had affected them with regards to: interruptions from family during work hours, challenge and hinderance stress response in remote work, their use of breaks, their satisfaction with their work arrangement, family overload, and work engagement.

Study Findings

Through our study, we found that employees who use breaks for non-work goals (such as household chores, making plans with friends, or caring for children) and self-care (meditation, getting a massage, reading, eating a snack, engaging in a hobby, etc.) exhibited better overall views of their remote work stress (higher challenge, lower hinderance) than those who used breaks for neither. We also found that for spouses, hinderance stress carries over from the remote worker, while challenge stress does not, meaning that a remote worker's negative work stress is more likely to affect the spouse and family life than the positive stress.

In addition, we found that interruptions from family during remote work tends to have a negative impact on the remote worker and that those who are best able to minimize those interruptions through the day tend to find remote work more satisfying. One way to minimize interruptions is through the very same types of breaks (used for self-care or non-work goals). For instance, if an interruption through the day is needed to care for one's children, it may be more beneficial to take a break to focus on taking care of them, rather than doing half jobs as parent and employee. For this reason, it is important for companies that have remote employees to educate employees on the benefits of taking breaks for self-care and non-work goals and set normal expectations about how and when these breaks should be taken.

Real Estate Implications

For real estate agents, working from home has been the norm for much longer than in other industries. Thus, many in real estate may already feel comfortable and productive working remotely. However, by understanding the types of stress that one can face from remote work, especially family interruptions and how to deal with them, it is possible to greatly improve productivity and job satisfaction.

Given that our research and previous studies support the idea that breaks make workers happier and more productive, it would also be beneficial for the vast majority of remote workers to take breaks regularly and deliberately. Previous research shows that two-thirds of remote workers take very infrequent breaks, and that half are working longer hours than they would in the office.[4] In an environment like real estate where there aren't likely to be strict limitations on working hours or styles, it is important to remember that breaks are a good thing and will improve the quality of work in the long run.

Recommended Reading

Perry, Sara Jansen, Dawn S. Carlson, K. Michele Kacmar, Min (Maggie) Wan, and Merideth J. Thompson (2022), "Interruptions in Remote Work: A Resource-based Model of Work and Family Stress," *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 38, 1023-1041.

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Surprising Syntax Sells!

Vineet Paidisetty, BBA

Memorable literature is known for beautifully constructed sentences, incredible choice of words, and innovative form. The same can be said for successful marketing campaigns such as American Dairy's "Got Milk?" or Nike's "Just Do It." Marketing messages can improve brand awareness, but these messages, regardless of their length, are not as simple as they seem. Their quality and efficacy depend on syntax, semantic content, and linguistic style, among other factors.

Syntax is the grammatical formulation of words in a sentence and is vital to the memorability and persuasiveness of marketing messages. The construction of these short phrases or sentences can determine the extent to which audiences will interact with the message. Our environments are constantly inundated with incredible amounts of information; thus, it is vital that firms, authors, and other creators project their messages effectively. Linguistic style can also affect the perceived sincerity of a message while language structure can alter how individuals understand and interact with literature.

In a recent *Journal of Marketing* study, "Creating Effective Marketing Messages Through Moderately Surprising Syntax," Dr. A. Selin Atalay, Dr. Siham El Kihal, and Dr. Florian Ellsäßer hypothesized that using messaging with a medium level of unexpectedness in the syntax, or syntactic surprise, would be effective in marketing messages. The authors believed that there would be an inverted-U relationship between syntactic surprise, the unexpectedness of the syntax, and the message's efficacy with low- and high-surprise being less effective than medium-surprise messages.

What Is Syntactic Surprise?

Language is processed word by word through sentence parsing. Within this process is the automatic assessment of syntactic relationships between words, allowing individuals to extract meaning. Since sentence parsing is mostly automatic, surprise is possible if the syntactic relationships between the words do not meet our expectations. This results in syntactic surprise: the unexpectedness of a syntactic element occurring given previous syntactic elements that were encountered in the sentence. Differences in syntactic surprise are not restricted to differences in grammatical accuracy, meaning that two sentences that are both grammatically correct could

have different levels of surprise and, thus, efficacy. Here is an example of two similar sentences that differ in syntactic surprise: "Apply today to join a great team!" or "Join a great team, apply today!" Although these sentences have the same meaning, the first is straightforward and, therefore, has a lower syntactic surprise, while the second sentence has a more unique sentence structure that increases its unexpectedness. Increasing syntactic surprise can be accomplished by revising versions of sentences until the adequate level of surprise is reached.

Innate to human learning is the attention-getting advantage of novel stimuli. People pay more attention to unexpected stimuli or, in this case, messages with more syntactic surprise. However, language with extremely high surprise can overload our working memory or our ability to process new information, reducing the impact of the message. Therefore, it is easy to see that surprise in excess is too much of a good thing, possibly reducing the efficacy of messaging. This understanding led to the authors to a belief in a positive relationship between syntactic surprise and attention and a negative relationship between syntactic surprise and processing ability. There is a sweet spot found within medium levels of surprise that create the most effective messages.

Study Background

Since the authors hypothesized a specific relationship between syntactic surprise and message efficacy, they also needed the ability to measure syntactic surprise. With this in mind, they developed a model to measure syntactic surprise that could work with a large variety of sentences and, thus, marketing messaging. The authors tested this model in real world situations simulated through six studies.

Research Study

Four primary studies were conducted to test generalizability and predictability of syntactic surprise. The results confirmed that syntactic surprise is applicable to multiple data sets, contexts, and text lengths, making it widely applicable. The inverted relationship between syntactic surprise and message efficacy was also confirmed—once again, indicating that medium-surprise messages are ideal.

Study 1 applied the developed model to the public Persuasion for Good Data set, which is a set of interactions between online individuals with one side trying to persuade the other side to make a donation. The model measured how the syntactic surprise of the persuasive messages influenced the success of the message in inciting donations. Results confirmed that syntactic surprise is most effective at the medium level in persuading viewers to donate.

Study 2 was similar to study 1 but in a different context. Thousands of Amazon reviews in the six largest product categories of books, movies & TV, electronics, CDs &Vinyl, Kindle Store, and Apps for Android were investigated. The authors compared each review's helpfulness based

on the ratio of helpful votes to total votes per review with syntactic surprise, once again finding that medium-surprise was the most correlated with the most helpful reviews.

Study 3 manipulated advertisements through Facebook advertising. Six versions of the same advertisement, each with a different level of syntactic surprise, were released to the public. Next, measurements of the number of interactions with each advertisement based on viewer clicks were collected. Results indicated that accounting for syntactic surprise improves the efficacy of marketing messages as determined by click-through rate. Additionally, this confirmed that the authors' syntactic surprise model is applicable to social media advertising. Study 4 expands on the results of study 3 with more versions of the same advertisement, increasing the number from six to 17. For this study, the authors partnered with a fashion brand to design the advertisements prior to use. Again, confirmation of the value of syntactic surprise for improving the efficacy of marketing messages was found.

Lastly, follow-up studies 5 and 6 paralleled studies 3 and 4. Copies of fashion brand advertisements on Facebook and Instagram were used with minor grammatical changes to alter the syntactic surprise to see how differences would affect consumer interaction. Once again, their hypothesis was substantiated with the middle syntactic surprise being the most effective at inciting interaction from viewers, while the higher and lower levels of surprise were less effective.

With these studies and results, a range of syntactic surprise was identified to be the most effective. A syntactic surprise value of 1.9-2.2 is optimal based on the studies referenced above. To identify if your messages are within this range, the authors developed a syntactic surprise calculator for public use at this link.

Conclusion

This research underscores the significance of various elements in crafting effective messages with language playing a pivotal role. Through the exploration of syntax and the development of a novel measure termed "syntactic surprise," the profound impact of this concept on message effectiveness was demonstrated across diverse contexts from advertising to product reviews. Notably, these findings confirm the hypothesis and reveal an inverted U-shaped relationship between syntactic surprise and message effectiveness, offering actionable insights for marketers to optimize their communication strategies. Moreover, the referenced study opens avenues for future research, suggesting the need to explore boundary

conditions and interactions with other linguistic features. Importantly, this work pioneers the integration of advanced natural language processing techniques into marketing research, providing marketers with scalable tools to enhance their communication efforts in an era of heightened consumer expectations. By leveraging these findings, practitioners can refine their messaging strategies to better meet the evolving demands of consumers, thereby achieving communication goals with greater precision and efficacy.

Recommended Reading

Atalay, A. Selin, Siham El Kihal, and Florian Ellsäßer (2023), "Creating Effective Marketing Messages Through Moderately Surprising Syntax," *Journal of Marketing*, 87(5), 755-775.

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The Power of Self-Oriented Competitiveness

Wyatt Schrock, PhD, Douglas Hughes, PhD, Yanhui Zhao, PhD, Clay Voorhees, PhD, and John Hollenbeck, PhD

Salespeople often have a reputation for being competitive. Indeed, many popular business press outlets identify competitiveness as a "personality trait of top salespeople."[1] The prevailing view might be that having a competitive spirit is suitable and favorable in sales domains that are inherently competitive.

However, a long history of research in areas such as philosophy, sports, and economics shows that not all people think about competition (or competitors) in the same way. Accordingly, in this paper, we examine how different competitive orientations affect salesperson behavior and performance in the workplace. Specifically, we focus on *self-oriented competitiveness* (SOC), defined as a "personality trait that desires and highly values the surpassing of one's own prior accomplishments or personal bests, independent of interpersonal comparisons." Our multi-study and multi-method exploration of SOC contrasts with a traditional measure of competitiveness (*other-oriented competitiveness*; OOC), defined in part as "the desire to win and be better than others."[2]

Study #1: Developing and Validating a Measure of SOC

The purpose of Study 1 was to develop a reliable and valid measure of SOC. Study 1a, which included the input of salespeople in the insurance industry, ultimately led to a 5-item scale that captured the essence of SOC. An example item is "*Achieving a new personal record (personal best) is something that is important to me.*" Study 1b ultimately showed that the newly developed measure of SOC is statistically different from OOC and several other personality traits, including a desire to learn ("learning goal orientation"), the need for achievement, independence, and perfectionism. Studies 1c, 1d, and 1e were all focused on the difference between SOC and intrinsic motivation. Study 1c showed that the measure of SOC and measures of intrinsic motivation capture statistically different aspects of personality. In Study 1d, we tracked the performance of salespeople from a mobile phone provider for 10 weeks. The findings showed that SOC had significant and positive effects on sales and gross profit; OOC and intrinsic motivation did not. Finally, Study 1e showed that SOC was statistically distinct from more "global" measures of intrinsic motivation (which capture the extent to which individuals are intrinsically motivated in life, not just in sales).

Study #2: A field experiment focused on sales contest design

Our second study was conducted to continue exploring the managerial relevance of the SOC measure. Given research on "person × environment" interactions, and the fact that most sales organizations use some form(s) of sales contests, we explored how salespeople with high levels of SOC and OOC might perform differently in different types of sales contests.

To do this, we partnered with a large company in the financial services industry that relies on hundreds of "inside" salespeople to generate revenue. Working with the company, we developed a one-week-long field experiment with two conditions (i.e., two different sales contest designs). In one contest design (half of the participants), a monetary prize was awarded to the salesperson who outperformed all other salespeople participating in the contest. In the other contest design (the other half of participants), the same monetary prize was given to the salesperson who "had the largest performance gain compared with his or her baseline week." Our hypothesis was that salespeople with high levels of OOC would perform better in the "compete with others" design and salespeople with high levels of SOC would perform better in the "compete with self" design. In total, 285 salespeople participated in the contests.

After the contest weeks concluded, we measured the performance for each salesperson (i.e., the number of "deals closed"). Our hypothesis was confirmed. In the compete-with-self contest design, salespeople with high levels of SOC realized greater performance lifts. In the "compete-with-others" design, salespeople with high levels of OOC realized greater performance lifts. In general, our findings from Study 2 indicate that competitive orientation (SOC or OOC) affects the way that salespeople respond to sales contest stimuli. The implications of this study are wide-ranging, given data indicating that firms continue to invest billions of dollars each year in sales contests, with an interest in sales contest ideas that work.

Study #3: Competitive orientation, job behavior, and leadership contingencies

Our third study examined the effect of SOC and OOC on three specific workplace behaviors. The first was "*working hard*" (or job effort), measured as the time that a given salesperson spent on the phone selling. The second was "*working smart*." This measure captured the extent to which a given salesperson plans, remains flexible, and adapts. The third was "*helping behavior*." This measure (rated by sales managers) captures how much a salesperson helps other salespeople in need and assists the company with tasks such as training. To see how these behaviors might also be a function of the salesperson's manager, we also measured the sales manager's "*achievement-oriented leadership behavior*" (AOLB). AOLB (rated by salespeople) captures the extent to which the manager sets challenging goals, encourages continual improvement, and lets salespeople know that they are expected to perform at a high level.

Our results showed that SOC positively predicted both working hard and working smart; OOC was statistically unrelated to these two behaviors. Interestingly, our results also showed that SOC

was positively related to helping behavior; OOC was negatively related to helping behavior. Importantly, working hard, working smart, and helping behavior were all found to be positive and significant predictors of salesperson performance (i.e., the number of deals closed).

Our findings related to leadership behavior (AOLB) were quite interesting. Specifically, we found that in general, AOLB and OOC interacted *synergistically*; the interactions between AOLB and SOC were more *antagonistic*. Our belief is that AOLB can help salespeople with high levels of OOC to focus less on social comparison and more on continuous improvement, high standards, etc. At the same time, for salespeople with high levels of SOC, we believe that this same leadership behavior could be deemed as redundant, unnecessary, distracting, frustrating, etc.

Real Estate Implications

Our findings suggest that SOC is an important trait that differentiates salespeople and significantly influences their behavior and performance (for the better). Thus, rather than solely targeting competitive salespeople who want to do better than other people, firms should also recruit those salespeople who focus on incremental achievements and being better than they were yesterday. Our data suggests that these salespeople will be more likely to work hard, work smart, and help others. Also, leadership efforts should be tailored based on salespeople's competitive orientation. Our data suggests that a "fit" between leadership styles and competitive orientation can create optimal behaviors and maximize performance. Specifically, our data suggests that high levels of AOLB may be more appropriate with salespeople who are focused on "beating others." Salespeople with high levels of SOC may not find AOLB particularly necessary or motivating.

Finally, our findings also suggest that financial incentives or sales contests can and should be tailored in a way that considers differences in personality traits. Differently competitive salespeople might be more or less interested in or enthusiastic about different sales contest structures. As such, we see our results as more reason for sales organizations to continue creatively experimenting with different sales contest designs. We expect that different designs will align with different preferences or personalities, and we expect that salesperson performance will be maximized when there is alignment.

Recommended Reading

Schrock, Wyatt, Douglas Hughes, Yanhui Zhao, Clay Voorhees, and John Hollenbeck (2021), "Self-Oriented Competitiveness in Salespeople: Sales Management Implications," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Sciences*, 49, 1201-1221.

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Dr. Wyatt Schrock's (PhD – Michigan State University) research interests include salesperson motivation, sales manager leadership, and brand management. His research has been published in *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, *Marketing Letters*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Business Research*, *Journal of Service Research*, *Industrial Marketing Management*, *European Journal of Marketing, Journal of International Marketing*, and the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. He has presented his research at several academic conferences in the US and abroad. He currently serves on the Editorial Review Board at the *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management.* Dr. Schrock's research has twice received the annual James M. Comer Award for Best Contribution to Selling and Sales Management Theory. He has also co-authored an academic textbook, *Professional Selling*. Additionally, Dr. Schrock has ten years of corporate experience in a variety of sales, marketing and analyst roles. He has worked for companies such as Procter & Gamble and Gannett. Dr. Schrock teaches Sales Management courses.

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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. Dr. 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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Dr. Yanhui Zhao's (PhD – Michigan State University) primary research interests fall within the domain of marketing strategy, including brand management, sales management, and inter-organizational relationships. His research has appeared in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science, Journal of Business Ethics, Journal of Service Research, Journal of International Marketing* and *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management,* among others. His research has been quoted multiple times by news outlets such as CNN Money and BBC News. He received the 2016 James M. Comer Award for the Best Contribution to Selling and Sales Management Theory.

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Dr. Voorhees' (PhD – Florida State University) research focuses on the explanation and management of the dynamics of social exchange and social influence. Within this theoretical umbrella, he focuses on projects related to customer experience management and loyalty, often in service contexts. His research has been published in the *Journal of Marketing, Journal of Marketing Research, Journal of the Academy of Science, Strategic Management Journal, Journal of Retailing,* and *Journal of Service Research*, among others. He currently serves as the Co-Editor for the *Journal of Service* Research. In 2021, Dr. Voorhees received the Culverhouse College of Business Board of Visitors' Research Achievement Award. In 2016, Dr. Voorhees received the Best Services Marketing Article award from the American Marketing Association, and in 2015, he received the Emerging Service Scholar award from the American Marketing Association's Services Marketing Special Interest Group. In addition, his research has received the 2011, 2012, and 2015 Industry Relevance Awards from Cornell's Center for Hospitality Research and has been featured in media outlets such as *Wall Street Journal, TIME Magazine,*

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Dr. John R. Hollenbeck (PhD – New York University) holds the positions of University Distinguished Professor at Michigan State University and Eli Broad University Professor at the Eli Broad Graduate School of Business Administration. He served as the acting editor at *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* in 1995, the associate editor of *Decision Sciences* from 1999 to 2004, and the editor of *Personnel Psychology* from 1996 to 2002. He has published over 100 articles and book chapters on the topics of team decision-making and work motivation. Within the Academy of Management, Dr. Hollenbeck has been awarded Fellowship status, and has won the All-Academy Distinguished Educator Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award from both Organizational Behavior Division and the Human Resources Division, as well as the Mentorship Award from both the Organizational Behavior Division and the Human Resources Division.

INSIDER: How to Listen with Intention
Andrew McElroy, BBA

Most people today are exposed to an overload of messages to which they are expected to attend and respond. For that reason, active listening is a valuable skill. With access to information instantly at our fingertips, we can find it hard to step back and really hear what someone is communicating. Patrick King's book, *How to Listen with Intention*, addresses this challenge and provides helpful strategies for improving skills as listeners, communicators, and conversation partners. He breaks the book down into five sections, each highlighting one aspect of being an effective listener.

THINK POINT #1: One Mouth but Two Ears

In the first section, King highlights our neurological desire to speak more than we listen. He explains that in order to validate our conversation partners and become more interesting and likeable, we must override that instinct and take an active interest in what people say. As the chapter title suggests, he recalls the old adage that we are born with "one mouth but two ears," and that we should be doing twice as much listening as talking. One of the ways we can do this is by using support responses during a conversation, as opposed to shift responses. A support response may be as simple as an acknowledgement that you heard the other person, such as, "that's great," or "uh-huh," or possibly a way to inquire further into what they're saying, such as asking, "What did you do next?" Alternatively, shift responses make the conversation about ourselves, and sound something like, "That's cool…anyway, the other day this thing happened to me…" Shift responses can be appropriate and an important part of keeping a conversation moving, but when both conversation partners are using more shift than support responses, it becomes a pair of dueling monologues instead of a dialogue.

King also discusses how to navigate listening to someone who you may think is boring. In those situations, the truth is, this person isn't boring at all! Every person you talk to has a unique perspective to offer—you just have to dig a bit deeper to find it. King suggests putting yourself in the shoes of a talk show host who is endlessly inquisitive and intrigued. For as long as a good talk show host is talking to a guest on their show, the guest is the funniest, most interesting, and most charming person in the world.
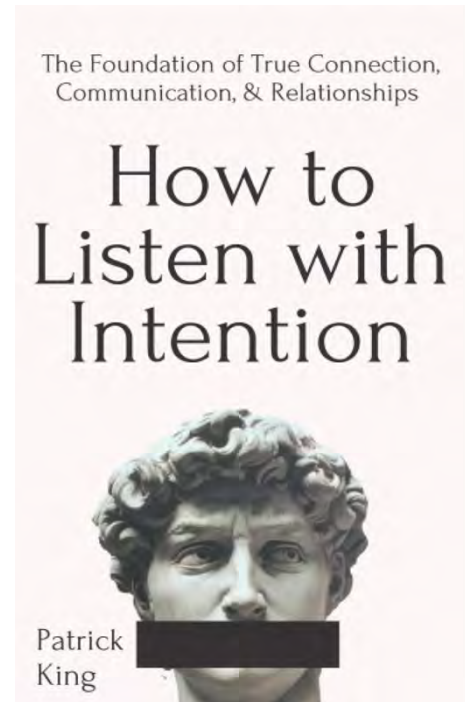
THINK POINT #2: Styles, Frames, and Levels

There are four conversational styles that King breaks down: people (emotion), content (information), action (to-do list), and time (duration and frequency). In order to effectively listen, one should recognize their own style and try to adapt to the listener's style. King reasons that when someone communicates with you outside of giving an order or organizing an outing, they are doing so to express an emotion.

Frames are a similar concept to style, but different in that they are much more fluid. A frame simply captures someone's overall goals and purpose for the interaction. A way that King suggests thinking about conversational frames is to think about actors in a scene, who are all working to achieve the same outcome from the conversation in order to convey a certain emotional payoff. It would be ineffective acting if they all thought the scene meant something different!

King also explains the five levels of listening as 1) ignoring, 2) pretend listening, 3) selective listening, 4) attentive listening, and 5) empathetic listening. The fifth level is ideal and describes a situation in which the listener truly listens to another with care and concern about how the speaker is feeling. Many people don't reach the fifth level often (if ever) and tend to get stuck in levels three and four during most interactions.

THINK POINT #3: The Tough Work of Hearing Someone

Listening to someone with intention is not easy work; in fact, it can be quite tiring. If it is, that generally just means that you're doing a very good job of actively listening to your conversation partner. If you feel that listening is an entirely passive activity, then you probably aren't listening well enough. In order to practice the skill of active listening and take a nonpassive role in the conversation, King recommends nine types of active listening responses: comprehending, retaining, responding, restating, reflecting, summarizing, labeling emotions, probing with leading questions, and silence. Each of these are slightly different techniques that you can use to show someone that you're not only listening to what they're saying, but actively trying to comprehend and digest it. By implementing these techniques, you can improve your conversations and find that both you and your conversation partner get more out of the conversation.

THINK POINT #4: I See You, I Hear You

Validating a conversation partner is an important part of effectively listening and making someone feel heard. King defines validation as "the act of showing respect and acknowledgement of people's intentions and emotions." Doing this can be as simple as nodding along or expressing outright that their feelings are valid. Emotions are not always rational but are always real, and, as such, it is important that people feel their emotions are validated by their conversation partner.

One pitfall to avoid is using invalidating statements that make you feel like you're helping. These can sound something like, "Oh you'll be fine," or, "You shouldn't feel that way!" While one party may believe these statements are comforting, they actually imply the conversation partner's feelings are irrational.

King's six steps for validation are to be present, accurately reflect emotions, guess emotions, understand emotions in context, affirm emotions, and then be honest. It's important to note that these strategies should not always be used or used in a specific order, but they can be helpful measures that facilitate good conversation and help validates what another person is trying to communicate.

THINK POINT #5: Read and Analyze

King focuses the fifth and final section of his book on emotional cues that can be used to better understand people and predict their emotional and rational states. Before diving in. however, King suggests that the most important step in understanding someone else is to first understand ourselves. King explains that emotional intelligence consists of self-awareness, self-management, self-motivation, and social awareness. He says that all of these things are important to understand, because once we know how many unconscious thoughts and motivations we have, we can start to understand that others have many that they may not even fully acknowledge. This way of thinking helps surface a significant amount of information from a small interaction.

It is also important to be aware of subtextual cues in a conversation, as they tend to be where most actual communication occurs. A mistake that most people make is to only respond to the overt words of a conversation and miss the hidden communication that can be quite revealing. A helpful way to practice responding to those covert cues can be to ask yourself, "Why did they say that, what are they feeling, and what could it mean?"

Real Estate Implications

In real estate, whether you are helping someone to buy or sell, it's really about making connections with and understanding your clients. People are going to have many feelings and may not understand them all themselves when buying or selling a property. Therefore, it is the job of a real estate agent to dig deeper into what clients are really looking for out of the real estate

transaction. The most important part of that process is being able to listen with intention, which means giving clients the floor and testing your own comprehension of what clients are saying,

asking clarifying and deepening questions, validating client feelings, and watching carefully for subtextual clues in words and mannerisms.

Recommended Reading

Patrick King (2020), *How to Listen with Intention: The Foundation of True Connection, Communication, & Relationships,* Big Mind LLC.

About the Author

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Andrew McElroy graduated with a BBA from Baylor University's Business Fellows Program in Management, Marketing, and Economics, with a minor in History and a Consulting concentration. During his undergraduate tenure, Andrew worked at Fidelity Investments in his native New Hampshire as a Business Analyst intern, where he gained experience with business reporting, data modeling, and more. Andrew currently serves as a Project Manager at Epic in Verona, Wisconsin, where he works to implement patient record software at hospitals across the country.

INSIDER: Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess
Jude Enajero, MBA/MSIS

In today's fast-paced world, understanding your own mind has never been more critical for well-being. Dr. Caroline Leaf's *Cleaning Your Mental Mess* serves as a guiding light through the landscape of mental health, offering readers a clear path to harness the power within each of us. This power allows us to shape our thoughts, emotions, and ultimately, our lives. Dr. Leaf offers a gentle reminder that self-blame for every negative thought is unnecessary. Instead, her guidance focuses on mastering the art of constructive thought control.

THINK POINT #1: Prioritize Mind-Management

A cluttered mind can have a negative impact on our lives and even our physical well-being. That's why it's crucial to learn the art of managing our thoughts effectively. Although no magic solution or one-size-fits-all answer exists, there are steps we can take to improve our focus and our effectiveness.
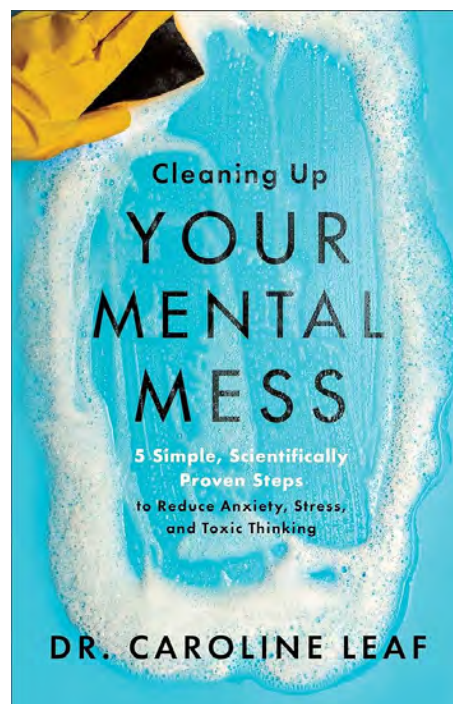
Dr. Leaf emphasizes that although we can't control everything life throws at us, we can control our responses by mastering the art of thought management. This goes beyond momentary mindfulness or quick fixes from self-help methods; rather, thought management is about developing a lasting skillset for effectively managing our thoughts and helping us stay on track.

THINK POINT #2: Harness the Neurocycle for Mental Well-Being

Dr. Leaf introduces the *neurocycle*—a process individuals can use to identify and address negative thought patterns that contribute to mental health issues. The neurocycle offers individuals a powerful means to reclaim control over their mental well-being by addressing a range of issues, including anxiety, depression, toxic thought patterns, poor concentration, irritability, exhaustion, and burnout. It transcends conventional mindfulness and self-help techniques, providing a sustainable and highly effective strategy for comprehensive mind management.

This approach recognizes that genuine personal transformation entails the rewiring of neural pathways and the establishment of new, constructive habits. As individuals progressively master the art of managing their thoughts, a holistic shift occurs within the brain state and biochemical structures, fostering a healthier equilibrium in the mind, brain, and body. The neurocycle's

structured methodology not only paves the way for enduring change but also cultivates a more balanced and resilient mental landscape. Through the empowerment of individuals to take charge of their thoughts and emotions, the neurocycle contributes significantly to an improved quality of life.

THINK POINT #3: Embrace the 63-Day Habit Formation Process

The author explains that it takes approximately 21 days to build a long-term thought and 63 days to turn it into a habit. Specific time points (day 7, 14, 21, 42, and 63) mark stages where changes can be felt, thereby motivating individuals during the process. During the initial 21days, one should actively work on the issue, and for the following 42 days, practice the changes made. This can be done by adding the reconceptualized thought to daily reminders, like phone alerts or sticky notes, and consciously practicing the new way of thinking. Dr. Leaf stresses that it's the daily, directed, and organized changes that cumulatively make the biggest difference.

To maintain motivation, Dr. Leaf provides tips such as setting a defined daily time frame (seven to 30 minutes at most for practice), finding an accountability partner, practicing self-compassion, making the process enjoyable with small rewards, and reminding yourself of the mental and physical benefits.

THINK POINT #4: Establishing a Daily Mind-Management Routine

Incorporating a structured daily routine focused on enhancing mental well-being is crucial. This routine places a strong emphasis on the critical moments right after waking, acknowledging the mind's vulnerability during this period. Instead of immediately diving into the world of social media or news, Dr. Leaf advocates for a purposeful approach to morning rituals, designed to prepare the mind for the challenges of the day ahead.

The initial component of a structured routine—Getting My Mind Ready for the Day— encourages individuals to invest the first moments of their day in mental preparation. This involves capturing initial thoughts and nurturing a positive mindset, stressing the significance of self-regulation and emotional control as the cornerstone for constructive thinking throughout the rest of the day. Subsequent components include brain-building exercises, short interludes for refreshing thinker moments, mindful eating, active reaches to solidify positive thought patterns, regular exercise, and a comprehensive sleep routine. Following this well-structured daily routine empowers individuals to effectively manage their minds, fostering improved mental well-being and paving the way for a day brimming with balanced and constructive thinking.

Real Estate Implications

In a field where every decision, negotiation, and relationship matter, the power of thought and emotion management cannot be overstated. Real estate professionals who embrace these

practices are better equipped to manage stress, make informed decisions, and foster lasting client relationships. By prioritizing mental well-being and applying the neurocycle, agents and brokers cultivate resilience and adaptability, ensuring long-term success in an ever-evolving industry.

Ultimately, in the world of real estate, mastering the mind is the key to not only professional achievement but also personal fulfillment. It's about elevating the entire industry through the art of thought and emotion management, paving the way for a brighter future where professionals thrive, and clients receive the exceptional service they deserve. As real estate embraces these principles, we can anticipate a landscape where excellence is not only achieved but sustained for the long haul.

Recommended Reading

Leaf, Caroline (2021), *Cleaning Up Your Mental Mess*, Baker Books: Ada, Michigan.

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Jude Enajero is a Personal Banking Associate at Citi Bank and an MBA Finance/MSIS graduate of Baylor University. He is experienced in excel modeling, financial statement analysis, risk modeling, project management, and market evaluation and has four years of experience in supporting the implementation of effective debt and equity programs for both private and listed companies. Jude earned his Bachelor of Finance (Honors) degree from the University of Lagos, in Lagos, Nigeria.

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