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The effect of trust in management on salespeople's selling orientation

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Abstract
In the following study, a sales rep hard-selling orientation is much more influenced by the hard-selling orientation they perceive senior management want them to adopt when (1) they trust senior management and (2) when their sales manager is perceived to take a similar position as senior management. Thus, a strong in-sync ethical signal is sent, either low or high. Trust plays no moderating role in senior management or sales managers' influence on a salesperson's level of customer orientation. This is because pursuing a customer orientation does not increase risk and vulnerability the way that pursuing a hard-selling orientation does, and trust is only an influential construct when there exists risk and vulnerability. In addition, no strong in-sync ethical signal effect was observed on sales rep customer orientation.

Keywords Trust in management · Vulnerability · Customer orientation · Hard-selling orientation · Sales manager senior management in-sync ethical signaling

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Ever since the invention of the handshake, trust in the promises made by both the buyer and seller has been a central issue in facilitating trading, selling, and marketing, from Neolithic times through the era of the merchant adventurer to today's global supply chains. For this reason, trust has been a focal construct in marketing scholarship, as evident in the many articles on trust published in academic marketing journals (examples include Ganesan & Hess, 1997; Guenzi et al., 2016; Rousseau et al., 1998; Schwepker & Schultz, 2013). While it might be surmised that there is little we can further learn from studying trust. It turns out there is, and it has to do with the very definition and meaning of the word "trust."

Marketing scholars who study trust in sales situations have come to define trust as a two-dimensional construct. The first dimension is the belief the party will keep its promises. The second dimension of trust is an expectation of benevolence: for example, that the seller is well-meaning, considerate, and kind (Ganesan & Hess, 1997). Around the same time, a consortium of trust scholars from the social sciences (Rousseau et al., 1998) attempted to resolve disputes about the distinctiveness of trust from other constructs, such as benevolence. To this end, they agreed to define trust as a high expectation that what is promised is delivered in a context where the trusting party is vulnerable.

In the following study, we demonstrate the importance of outcome vulnerability on the influence of trust in sales management, not between salesperson and customer but trust between salesperson and senior management. We find that salesperson trust in senior management does not moderate the relationship between their self-reported customer orientation (i.e., their predisposition to focus on meeting customer needs; see Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Thomas et al., 2001) and their perception of how much senior management is encouraging them to pursue a customer orientation. Trust in senior management does not moderate this relationship because there is little vulnerability in a sales rep following senior management's encouragement to discover customer needs and sell them what they need. In comparison, we observed that pursuing a hard-selling orientation (i.e., making sales purely for the sake of profit, regardless of the potential adverse impact on customers) makes the salesperson vulnerable: vulnerable because they run the risks of several very negative outcomes such as a confrontation with trusting customers, negative word-of-mouth, loss of reputation, loss of customer, loss of commission, and if made the scapegoat, even a loss of employment.[1]

Because of this vulnerability, trust in senior management significantly moderates the relationship between the sales rep's perception of how much management is encouraging a hard-selling orientation and their self-reported hard-selling orientation (HSO). A second finding is an additional levels-of-management, in-sync, interaction effect. When perceptions of senior management encouragement of a hard-selling orientation and perceptions of sales manager encouragement of a hard-selling orientation were both high, salesperson hard-selling orientation was significantly higher. The support of both is needed to pursue a hard-selling orientation.

[1] We also expected the social sanctioning of hard-selling as a vulnerability. This suggested subjects will be under the influence of a social desirability bias when they answer questions about hard-selling because dishonest hard-selling is socailly undesirable. We tested this and found it to be true.

An example of the moderating effect of trust on the effectiveness of senior management's encouragement of hard-selling is the Wells Fargo scandal (Glazer, 2016). Senior management pushed hard to increase the number of new accounts opened to impress security analysts with the bank's growth. The frontline salesforce started creating multiple new accounts for existing customers that they did not even know about and without their permission. When the salesforce believed that trusted senior management knew what was happening and was approving with a wink and a nod, this hard-selling practice snowballed. On the inevitable exposure of the scandal, senior management turned on their salesforce, blamed "rogue" employees, and denied any responsibility. The frontline workers were made the scapegoats. The result was that Wells Fargo ended up with a crisis of both low customer trust and low frontline employee trust. In the Wells Fargo case, it also appears that many sales managers were complicit. Their support of such a hard-selling orientation (tacitly indicated by their lack of questioning, looking the other way, and in some cases active support) increased the likelihood of bogus account creation across the bank's frontline salesforce (Glazer, 2016).

A skeptic might ask how common hard-selling is, such as exaggerating product performance and/or selling items that are unneeded or in the customer's best interests? Does it matter? Is it a rare phenomenon only of interest to academics and not worthy of consideration for practitioners? Yet, one study observed that 79% of managers had heard their sales reps make unrealistic promises, and 47% believed their sales reps lied on a sales call (Strout, 2002). While selling is surely dominated by a "serving the customer" orientation, a darker side of selling may be more common than many think. In B2B sales, hard-selling is likely to occur in order to meet short-term goals (Guenzi et al., 2016), such as when a product or service line's technology is superseded by company or competitor innovation, when obsolete inventory has to be cleared, when there is an end-of-the-month drive to meet salesforce targets, and when no future sales are expected from the customer.

1 Hypotheses

The adoption of a customer orientation by a salesperson is unlikely to involve any personal vulnerability. Has a sales manager ever received a complaint from a customer about a sales rep too concerned with understanding their needs and serving their best interests?[2] The adoption of a hard-selling orientation (henceforth, HSO) that consists of exaggerating performance claims and selling products and services that are not in the customer's best interests poses a very different risk and vulnerability for the salesperson. The risk is that these two behaviors (the two dimensions of HSO measured by Saxe & Weitz, 1982) can have severe consequences for the sales rep when found out.

[2] We acknowledge a possible vulnerability in pursuing a customer orientation encouraged by senior management. It can happen when the result is an unmet sales quota, even though customers are very happy with the sales rep's service. The sales rep's vulnerability is, however, much greater when upset customers conclude they have been subject to hard-selling exploitation.

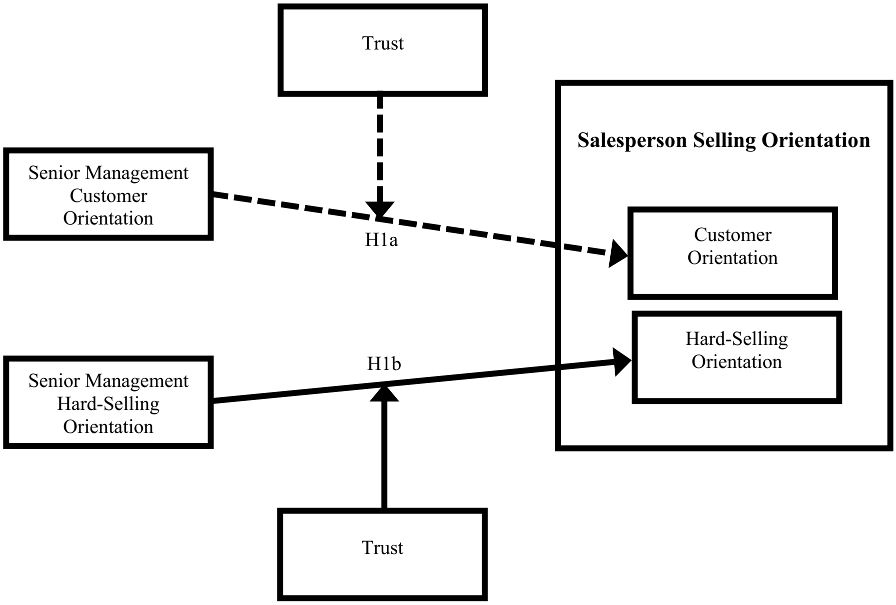

Fig. 1 Trust's moderation of senior management orientation. Note: Solid lines indicate significant relationships. Dashed lines indicate non-significant relationships

This behavior is highly likely to occur when the exaggerated performance promises are not met or when the customer discovers that the salesperson recommended and sold services and products that were not in their best interest. If this occurs, it is the salesperson who will be confronted and asked to explain. The personal trustworthiness of the salesperson is likely to be lost with the customer. The customer may switch part or all of its accounts to rivals eager to point out the competing deviant salesperson's performance exaggeration and the selling of products and services that were not in the customer's best interests. The indirect effect of negative word-of-mouth is likely to have additional deteriorating effects on other customers' trust.

The vulnerability inherent in their trusting of senior management is that despite the implicit and even explicit promise that encouragement implies of having the sales rep's back, to avoid their personal responsibility and consequences, senior management is likely to hold the salesperson responsible for the loss of the account. This is particularly true if the customer calls senior management to complain. The concern of the salesperson is: "Will things be OK if I am untrustworthy with my customers, and I am found out?" In sum, trust in senior management is important in pursuing a HSO because the salesperson is vulnerable to several possible consequential negative outcomes (Rousseau et al., 1998). Far less of this vulnerability exists when pursuing a customer orientation (henceforth, CO). We, therefore, hypothesize the following (illustrated in Fig. 1).

H1a: Trust in senior management will have no moderating effect on the effect of perceived senior management CO encouragement on salesperson customer orientation.

H1b: The greater the trust salespeople have in senior management, the greater the effect of perceived senior management HSO encouragement on salesperson hard-selling orientation.

In his review of selling orientation, Schwepker (2003) called for further investigation into the role sales managers have in influencing customer-oriented selling. Our interest is in the role sales managers play in influencing CO selling compared to influencing HSO. According to behavioral control theory (Oliver & Anderson, 1994), sales reps are under the command and control of both senior management and intermediary sales managers. When senior management is perceived to encourage a CO; then, such an orientation is likely to be adopted both in attitude and behavior by salespeople (Anderson & Oliver, 1987). The sales manager's perceived encouragement of CO by the sales rep will not add to senior management's encouragement of CO.

But what is the effect of the two levels of management when it comes to exploiting customers? What if one says, "Yes, say what you have to, do what you have to," and the other is not so sure? The latter could turn on the sales rep and say, "I never condoned that." The influence of sales manager HSO encouragement on the salesperson's HSO is not just incrementally additive. It is more than additive because its in-sync consistency with senior management HSO encouragement sends a more certain, reduced risk, and, hence, stronger signal to hard-sell. When both senior and sales managers' HSO are high, the effect becomes more than the sum of their additive parts because their in-sync consistency adds reassuring value. We, therefore, hypothesize the following (illustrated in Fig. 2):

H2a: The influence of senior management CO encouragement on salesperson CO will not be moderated by sales manager CO encouragement. The perceived encouragement by both levels of management is not more than the sum of its parts.

H2b: The influence of senior management HSO × trust on salesperson HSO is moderated by sales manager HSO × trust. The encouragement effect of both levels of management is more than the sum of its parts.

2 Method

2.1 Measuring Customer Orientation and Selling Orientation

We used the Saxe and Weitz (1982)conceptualization of HSO and CO and the short-form operationalization of the two constructs developed by Thomas et al. (2001) and presented in Appendix. According to Schwepker (2003), these 5-item scales have shown sufficient reliability and validity to replace the 12-item versions with little information loss.

2.2 Sample

A sample of 464 industrial salespeople was drawn from the Qualtrics Premium Business (QPB) panel that verifies the professional identity of panel members using

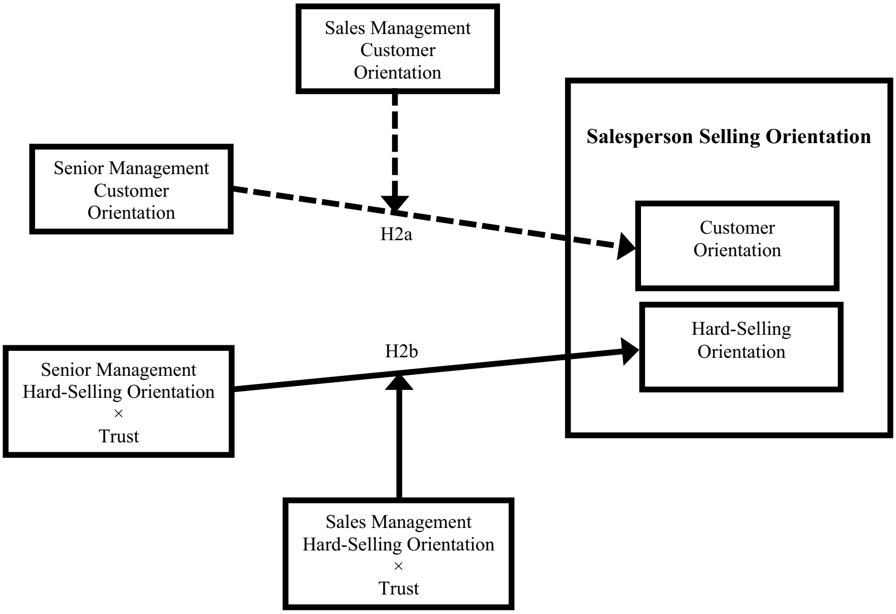

Fig. 2 The combined effects of sales manager and senior management encouragement. Note: Solid lines indicate significant relationships. Dashed lines indicate non-significant relationships

LinkedIn. The QPB panel is a highly respected business panel, used by industry market researchers. The quality system certifications and programs of the panel include *ISO 20252* management-system certification and *Marketing Inc. Media Ratings* Certification. Subjects were paid to complete the 10–15 min survey. The respondents were required to answer every question thus eliminating the problem of missing observations. A search was undertaken for response sets observable in the actual database, and two judges identified three obvious response sets (e.g., a sequence of 30 scores of 7 across 30 questions) in three different respondents that resulted in their rejection, reducing the sample to 461.

The sample consisted of three quota samples of US-based salespeople from small, medium, and large companies. The largest economic sector represented was manufacturing and distribution (41.0%) followed by information systems, software, and other high tech (18.9%). Salespeople from mid-sized companies, in high-tech industries, somewhat customized services, or who were female, or under 25 years of age, all reported statistically significant higher average HSO scores. Some of these differences are substantial, more than a scale point on the 7-point scale (for example, high tech 4.85 – primary production, construction, mining, energy 2.21). On the other hand, average CO across all subsamples was consistently very high, above six on the 7-point scale. A CO is almost universal. A HSO is less common and weaker.

As is now common methodological best practice, a self-presentation bias scale of five items was included (Ray, 1984). The purpose was to measure the respondents' proclivity to present themselves in a favorable light and thus control for a social desirability response bias in our study. The explanatory variance of a number of control variables (empathy, age, gender, customer relationship length, and self-presentation bias) was extracted from both the salesperson's HSO and CO measures, and the resulting CO and HSO residuals were subjected to the hypothesis testing.[3]

3 Results

3.1 Controlling for Self-presentation Bias

The correlation between the self-presentation bias scale with all the scales used in the study was tested. The correlations between self-presentation bias and self-reported HSO ($r = -0.294$) and perceptions of senior management and sales manager HSO encouragement ($r = -0.244$, $r = -0.225$, respectively) were significant ($p < 0.05$). Regression analyses were run on the HSO, senior management HSO, and sales manager HSO variables, and the raw residuals HSOrsp, SMHSOrsp, and MgrHSOrsp were used in all further analyses. Thus, this procedure controlled for the potential influence of self-presentation bias.[4]

Before proceeding, we address the distinctive dimensionality of CO and HSO. The salesperson CO scale score was correlated ($r = -0.173$, $p < 0.05$) with their HSO scale score. This relationship compares with a correlation of -0.34 observed in Goad and Jaramillo's (2014) meta-analysis.

3.2 Controlling for Individual Difference Effects

To control for the influence of individual differences on salesperson CO and HSO, salesperson gender, age, self-reported empathy, and the average years that the salesperson has known and served clients were used as predictors in a multiple regression. Only empathy was a significant predictor of CO. Salespeople who scored higher on empathy reported a higher CO. This finding is consistent with the literature that sales reps with high personal empathy resulting from nature and nurture are more customer oriented (Bagozzi et al., 2012).

Age and familiarity with customers were significant predictors of HSOrsp. Younger salespeople and salespeople with many years of experience serving the same customers reported a higher HSO. The lower HSO among older salespeople may reflect a difference in generational values or experience. It may also be that high HSO reduces career length in sales. Another related explanation is that older salespeople learn the negative feedback effect associated with HSO discussed later

[3] To increase the power of testing, we've removed variance explained by various demographics, from the error term but in reanalyzing the raw data (i.e., without removing the variances explained by control variables) the results remained unchanged.

[4] Older salespeople possessed a greater self-presentation bias, they scored significantly higher on the self-report self-presentation scale (8.9 vs. 7.9, $F(4,456) = 8.080$, $p < 0.05$) and salespeople working in the computer hardware and software industries scored significantly lower than salespeople in all other industries (8.0 vs. 8.8, $F(6,454) = 6.345$, $p < 0.05$). We accounted for this effect and the high-tech salespeople still scored highest on HSO.

in the paper. The positive effect of the number of years knowing the customer on HSO is hard to explain. Perhaps it is riskier to pursue a HSO with customers where the personal trading relationship is not longstanding, and the customer is more alert to its practices.

3.3 Hypothesis Testing

As predicted by H1a, when a senior management CO-trust interaction term was introduced into the simple relationship between salesperson CO and salesperson perceptions of senior management encouragement of a CO, it was not significant.

$$\begin{array}{llll} \text{COres} = & .410\text{SMCO} - & .074(\text{SMCOxTrust}) & (\text{adjR}^2 = .122) \\ & (t = 5.891) ** & (t = -1.067) & ** \; p < 0.01 \end{array} \tag{1}$$

As predicted by H1b, when a senior management HSO-trust interaction term was introduced into the simple relationship between salesperson HSO and sales rep perceptions of senior management encouragement of a HSO, it was significant, and the main effect of SMHSOrsp was not. Note that senior management encouragement had three times more influence on sales rep HSO than sales rep CO.

$$\begin{array}{llll} \text{HSOres} = & -.158\text{SMHSOrsp} & + .782(\text{SMHSOrsp} * \text{Trust}) & (\text{adjR}^2 = .396) \\ & (t = -.1.186) & (t = 5.872) ** & ** \; p < 0.01 \end{array} \tag{2}$$

To test the additive effect of sales manager encouragement of CO, the MgrCO and MgrCOxTrust terms were added to Eq. (1) above. The result was:

$$\begin{array}{llllll} \text{COres} = & .136\text{SMCO} + & .432\text{MgrCO} - & .079(\text{MgrCO} * \text{Trust}) & (\text{adjR}^2 = .211) & \\ & (t = 2.562) * & (t = 6.519) ** & (t = -1.164) & * \; p < 0.05 & ** \; p < 0.01 \end{array} \tag{3}$$

Adding sales manager encouragement of CO to senior management encouragement of CO increased explained variance from 12 to 21%, and it was additive, not moderated by trust in the sales manager.

To test H2a, the strong signal interaction term SMCO*MgrCO was added to Eq. (1):

$$\begin{array}{lllll} \text{COres} = & .475\text{SMCO} + & .705\text{MgrCO} - & .615(\text{SMCO} * \text{MgrCO}) & (\text{adjR}^2 = .217) \\ & (t = 2.835) ** & (t = 4.372) ** & (t = -2.203) ** & ** \; p < 0.01 \end{array} \tag{4}$$

The term entered as a suppressor effect as it was positively correlated with COres ($r = 0.429$) and yet entered with a negative Beta (−0.615) in the equation. According to recommended practice, it was removed from the model (Smith et al., 1992). H2a was thus supported. The in-sync consistency of the perceived CO encouragement of senior management and sales manager did not increase sales rep CO, over and above the CO encouragement main effects of senior management and sales manager.

To test H2b, the MgrHSO and MgrHSO*Trust terms were first added to the SMHSOrsp*Trust term that was observed to be significant in Eq. (2):

$$\begin{gathered}\text{HSOres} = .330(\text{SMHSOrsp} * \text{Trust}) + .284\text{MgrHSOrsp} + .095(\text{MgrHSOrsp} * \text{Trust}) \quad (\text{adjR}^2 = .446) \\ (t = 5.730)\ ** \qquad (t = 1.844) \qquad (t = 0.606)\end{gathered} \tag{5}$$

Neither term was significant. The main effect of sales manager encouragement of HSO approached significance, but its effect was not moderated by trust in the sales manager. The strong signal (SMHSOrsp*Trust)*(MgrHSOrsp) term was then added to the SMHSOrsp*Trust term.[5] If it is significant, it supports H2b:

$$\begin{gathered}c\text{HSOres} = .629(\text{SMHSOrsp} * \text{Trust}) + .110(\text{SMHSOrsp} * \text{Trust}) * (\text{MgrHSOrsp}) \quad (\text{adjR}^2 = .406) \\ (t = 17.499)\ ** \qquad (t = 3.072)\ ** \qquad p < 0.01\end{gathered} \tag{6}$$

Results supported H2b, but it is noteworthy how dominant senior management HSO encouragement, moderated by trust is in the model. In conclusion, all four of our hypotheses were supported. The two interaction terms predicted to be significant (H1b and H2b) were significant at $p < 0.01$.[6] Sales manager encouragement of CO was more influential than senior management encouragement, but sales manager encouragement of HSO was less influential than senior management encouragement.

The predicted moderating effect of trust on the relationship between SMHSO encouragement and HSO (H1b) can be also seen in Table 1. The important comparison correlations are italicized. When senior management is trusted, the salespeople's HSO shares a 0.750 correlation with senior management HSO encouragement, which is reduced to 0.262 when leadership is less trusted. On the other hand, trust had hardly any effect on the CO correlations.

We explored whether the moderating effect of trust on senior management's influence on salesperson HSO varied by industry by testing our primary hypothesis on the two largest business sector subsamples. The largest subsample was manufacturing and distribution ($n = 189$, HSO mean = 2.70, CO mean = 6.16) followed by information systems, software and high tech ($n = 87$, HSO mean = 4.85, CO mean = 6.35). The average HSO of the high-tech sales reps was significantly higher ($p < 0.01$) than the sales reps working in the manufacturing and distribution sector. The difference in average CO between these two samples was not significant. The influence of senior management encouragement moderated by trust on sales rep HSO was also significantly higher for high-tech salespeople compared to manufacturing and distributions

[5] Because MgrHSOrsp approached significance in Eq. 5 and MgrHSOrsp*Trust did not, the former was used in testing the in-sync interaction term.

[6] Our hypothesized independent variables were assumed to be in a monotonic and linear relationship with our dependent variable and we had no theoretical reason to believe there should be any non-linear effects in the relationships we tested. For example, we had no theoretical reason to predict that moderate levels of Senior or Sales Manager CO, HSO, interacting with trust would have a peak or valley effect compared to the extremes—i.e., low and high levels—when predicting salesperson CO and HSO (an inverted quadratic relationship). To test the robustness of our linear assumption we undertook a polynomial regression analysis (available from authors) and it revealed that the simple linear model provided the most parsimonious explanation of our effects. Higher order polynomial terms did not improve fit or explanation.

Table 1 Trust's moderation of senior management orientation correlation

	Salesperson CO_{res} Senior management is: Trusted[1]	Distrusted[2]	Salesperson HSO_{res} Senior management is: Trusted	Distrusted
Senior management CO	.360**	.338**	−.110	−.384**
Senior management HSOrsp	.279**	−.039	.750**	.262**
	$n=228$	$n=232$	$n=228$	$n=232$
	Salesperson COres Sales manager is: Trusted[1]	Distrusted[2]	Salesperson HSOres Sales manager is: Trusted	Distrusted
Sales manager CO	.374**	.468**	−.029	−.205
Sales manager HSOrsp	−.259**	−.089	.693**	.305**
	$n=280$	$n=181$	$n=280$	$n=181$

$^{**}p<0.01$ two-tailed

[1]Agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I trust senior management"

[2]Disagreed or only somewhat agreed with the statement

sector salespeople. The SMHSO*Trust term explained 25.7% of salesperson HSO in the manufacturing and distribution sample and 42.6% of salesperson HSO in the high-tech sample.

4 Discussion

Senior management encouragement of a hard-selling orientation (HSO) is more effective when senior management is trusted and when the sales manager is also on board. The sales rep feels they have their back covered for what they are being asked to do. They want their back covered because, for most sales professionals, what they are being asked to do runs completely counter to their training and long-term role, which is to build customer trust, trial, loyalty, and equity. Now they are being encouraged to exploit the trust and endanger the customer relationship. They know there is a high chance it will end badly for them: "You do my dirty work, and if it comes down to my job or your job, then what?" Their trust in senior management is being tested, and the longer the HSO encouragement goes on, the greater the risk of exposure, and as a result, the more their trust will be tested.

Added to this is the conundrum, how can you trust someone who believes in exploiting trust and asks you to do so? Senior managers encouraging HSO ask their salesforce to exploit the trust they have carefully nurtured with their customers, including personal trust. As the initial trust in senior management is questioned and doubted, senior management influence is reduced, sales rep HSO is reduced, and thus, the initiative ends up as a self-defeating negative feedback effect. Moreover, the residual loss of trust in senior management remains. This unintended consequence of lack of trust is that it may generalize and undermine senior management's general leadership.

One approach to consider is if senior management thinks it important to encourage a HSO, they should be open and honest in acknowledging what they are asking their sales reps to do and explain why it is so important that sales reps compromise their customer relationships and pursue a HSO. Exceeding analysts' quarterly expectations is probably an unconvincing reason.

Another rational approach is that if HSO is ever employed, it must be intermittent. If a HSO is detected by a customer but is found to be intermittent and specific to a few items, then that is one thing. If a sustained and systemic HSO is detected, then that is quite another. But even intermittency has its long-term problems. At best, it implies an "HSO is OK, now it is not OK, now it is OK again," which sends a swinging moral compass message to sales reps that is likely to be disconcerting and ethically degrading. At worst, there is a high probability that the effect of HSO encouragement on sales force trust in management will become a significant problem that has to be dealt with at the same time as dealing with the other significant problem, a loss in customer trust.

A summary of the study and results was presented to three very experienced sales managers, and they were asked to comment on our hypotheses and results. They agreed with the results and the explanation. Their comments presented in Table 2 provide further insights into when HSO occurs and sales rep susceptibility and vulnerability to HSO.

4.1 Limitations

There are many potential limitations that we must address. A frequent concern with a single method self-report survey is a risk that common method variance will spuriously dominate results. Common method variance is an evident problem when there is little variance in the size of the correlation coefficients across a correlation matrix of the independent and dependent variables in a study. It is not a problem when this variance is substantial. The correlations between our constructs, varied from − 0.17 between SMSO and trust in senior management up to 0.75 between MgrHSO and salesperson HSO, and thus provided no evidence of a common method variance problem. Second, if social desirability is conceptualized as a marker variable (its correlation with CO was 0.022 and with HSO − 0.284); then, extracting its explained variance before testing the hypotheses constitutes the use of the marker method of controlling for common method variance (Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Malhotra et al., 2006). Empathy is another marker variable whose explained variance we extracted before proceeding with our testing. Third, and most decisively, our hypothesis testing involved interaction testing. Common method variance cannot affect interactions tests as it is a main effect phenomenon. In fact, it has been demonstrated that common method variance works against finding interaction significance (Siemsen et al., 2010).

Table 2 Reactions to paper from three very experienced sales managers

Sales Manager A: HSO can be applicable when 1) the customer/product is more of a one-time lifecycle (like wedding rings and coffins). Customers are usually only in the market for the product once or twice in their lifetime, or, 2) there is a consistent and steady stream of customers, so it would be okay to "churn and burn" through the customer base because there are always enough new customers on the horizon, which is very rare. Even in these two instances listed, the sales team needs to be wary of negative word-of-mouth and social media, so there is not a negative impact on referrals
In a HSO culture salespeople can start to lose their souls and as they either burn out or start to feel bad about how they are conducting business they start to become expendable to the sales management team and the same "churn and burn" mentality management applies to customers can also start to be applied to the sales team
HSO creates an unhealthy competitive culture among the sales team where the salespeople begin to compete amongst each other and celebrate taking the biggest advantages from their buyers – with the goal of separating the customer from his or her money at the lowest possible cost
Sales Manager B: The correlation of HSO and vulnerability for the sales rep is evident and as your paper reflects, in most occasions the sales rep is the one paying the consequences. Mainly when he is working for an organization, he does not trust. The use of the wrong approach with the customer might backfire as it might bring up escalations by the customers all the way to the President or the CEO of the company
I believe professional sales representatives use a "Balance of Approaches ", meaning they mix and match CO and HSO depending on their particular situation and also depending on how they are doing as related to their sales performance. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive
Sales Manager C: The VP of sales and the sales manager can advocate a CO, but if the processes to set quotas and compensate salespeople are not in alignment, then the behavior of the salesperson will be dictated by the compensation/quota scheme, no matter how much CO is promoted. If I do not meet my short-term objectives, I may not have a long term with the company
A change in organizational culture due to changes at the top management level (CEO, Board of Directors) or a merger or acquisition; or a combination of both, might bring a dramatic change in the company's culture, which in turn might bring a change from CO to HSO in the entire organization

That there were no unanswered questions in the entire study and the fact that subjects were paid speaks to doubts about the care taken by the subjects and their motivation. All self-reports are subject to self-presentation bias, but this concern was addressed in our study by controlling for such bias. Its influence was detected and removed in our measurement of salesperson, sales manager, and senior management HSO.

Subjects who were prone to socially desirable self-presentation understated not only their HSO but senior management and sales manager encouragement of such an orientation. In other words, such encouragement is seen as socially sanctioned behavior. The fact that observed self-presentation bias was focused on self-reported HSO, perceived sales manager and senior management HSO encouragement, and no other measures (e.g., no overstating of CO) is itself a telling result. But whether we used the raw scores of these measures or the measures adjusted for self-presentation bias did not matter. The pattern of significant results remained the same.

Although the present study is not an experiment, we acknowledge that the use of self-reported scales in research is also potentially limited by demand artifacts: that is subjects guessing the relationships being studied and responding accordingly. Such a problem is not very likely in our study because while subjects guessing a main effect relationship between the variables measured is plausible, guessing an interaction is much less likely. Our study was also part of an omnibus survey that included many very different scales, thus making it difficult to guess the purpose of the study and the relationships being studied while progressing through the instrument.

We stand by the use of salesperson's perceptions of senior management and sales manager orientations rather than use senior manager and middle manager self-reported perceptions of their orientations, as done by Lam et al. (2010). Salesperson perceptions may be quite distorted (and this effect is itself of considerable concern and interest to management) but, distorted or not, it is these perceptions that shape their behavior and orientations. Nonetheless, future research might explore both managers' self-reported sales orientation perceptions and salesperson's perceptions of manager's orientations to further understand the manager-salesperson relationship and leadership's impression management, whether intended or not.

The attention demands of the survey mean that senior management and sales manager HSO, CO, and trust were measured with only three, two, and one item, respectively. If these crucial constructs had been measured by more items, then it is very likely this would have reduced measurement error and very likely increased the observed effects as the models' standard error terms would have been smaller (Aiken et al. 1991).

As for our study's representativeness, we sampled salespeople from a panel made up of all regions and economic sectors in the USA. In this sense, it empirically distinguishes itself from company convenience samples often used in sales research whose findings may or may not generalize because of the company's unique history that creates significant variance that goes undetected. Evidence of such variance is that we observed that the average HSO score varied across the economic sectors our survey subjects were employed in from 2.21 out of 7 (heavy industry sector) to 4.85 out of 7 (the high-tech sector).

4.2 Future Research

While we believe our findings to be generalizable, future research might explore sales rep trust and HSO using panels of salespeople drawn not only from different industries but also different countries, as it would be interesting to see how distinct cultural differences in management such as power distance or collectivism may further moderate the effects that we observed of trust. Another approach that could explore nuances in management signaling is to present experimentally manipulated scenarios to sales reps and task them to describe what the sales rep in the scenario is thinking, and their likely behavioral intentions. However, such an experimental projection methodology using verbal protocols may have difficulty in manipulating the subject's beliefs about the prior trust of the sales rep presented in the scenario.

An interesting applied question that merits further inquiry is why trust moderates senior management HSO encouragement but not sales manager HSO encouragement? Is it that senior management has a lot more influence on the consequences of HSO outcomes than sales managers; hence, sales reps are more vulnerable to senior management encouragement? Could it also be that trust in senior management is less certain? Sale reps average trust in their sales manager was significantly higher (5.51 vs. 5.15, $p < 0.01$) than trust in their senior management.

How does the sales manager view senior management encouragement of HSO? What moral dilemmas do they recognize, and how do they handle them? Are they also vulnerable? Is it a "we are all in this together"' support of the sales representative's story, or a "just do it" story? How is their trust in senior management affected? How does peer influence come into play on sales managers (and for that matter, also sales reps)? Can competitiveness create and foster HSO? It is a phenomenon mentioned by one of our interviewed sales managers.

5 Conclusion

Our results support the definition of trust that requires the presence of vulnerability for trust to be a meaningful and influential construct. A CO is fostered through sales reps' perception of senior management encouragement of a customer orientation. Trust plays no role in moderating this influence. When it comes to a HSO, a great deal depends on (1) trust in senior management, and, to a much lesser but still significant extent, (2) sales manager confirmation of perceived senior management's HSO encouragement.

Turning to the trust context that we studied, our results raise a number of questions about hard-selling in sales organizations that deserve exploration. There are no chapters on how to hard-sell in business school textbooks. It is a subject that is not talked about much in polite society. But it still occurs, and because of a scarcity of studies into its nature and consequences, it is a worthy, albeit less traveled path for scholars to explore.

Appendix

Survey Instrument Measures Used in Study

Start of survey

1. Which of the following economic sectors do you mostly work in?
   Healthcare
   Education
   Financial and professional services
   Information systems, software and other high tech
   Manufacturing and distribution
   Primary production, agriculture, construction, mining, energy
   Other

2. Please indicate your gender? female male
3. What is your age? _____
4. Think about the typical customer in your database. For how long (how many years) have you been selling to that customer? ____ years

In the following questions you are asked how much you agree or disagree with the statement about your work in sales: (7-point disagree-agree scale).

CO ($\alpha = 0.89$).

1. I try to figure out what my customers' needs are.
2. I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a service/product that helps solve the problem.
3. A good employee has to have the customer's best interest in mind.
4. I offer the service/product that is best suited to the customer's problem (specific needs).
5. I try to find out what kind of service/products will be most helpful to a customer.

HSO ($\alpha = 0.95$; Thomas et al., 2001).

1. I try to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy a customer.
2. Sometimes it is necessary to stretch the truth in describing a product to a customer.
3. I try to sell a customer all I can convince them to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy.
4. I paint too rosy a picture of my services/products to make them sound as good as possible.
5. I decide what service/product to offer on the basis of what I can convince customers to accept, not on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run.

MgrCO ($r = 0.71$).

1. My sales manager wants me to bring together a customer with a problem and a company service/product that helps solve the problem.
2. My sales manager wants me to try to find out what kind of service/product will be most helpful to my customers in meeting their needs.

MgrSO ($\alpha = 0.94$).

1. My sales manager wants me to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy my customers.
2. My sales manager wants me to try to sell a customer all I can convince them to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy.
3. My sales manager wants me to paint too rosy a picture of the products/ services we sell to make them sound as good as possible.

MgrTrust

1. I trust my sales manager.

SMCO ($r = 0.78$).

1. Senior management wants me to bring together a customer with a company service/product that helps solve the problem.
2. Senior management wants me to try to find out what kind of service/product will be most helpful to my customers in meeting their needs.

SMSO ($\alpha = 0.95$).

1. Senior management wants me to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy my customers.
2. Senior Management wants me to try to sell a customer all I can convince them to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy.
3. Senior management wants me to paint too rosy a picture of the products/ services we sell to make them sound as good as possible.

SMtrust

1. I trust senior management.

Empathy concern scale ($\alpha = 0.74$; Adapted from Davis, 1983).

1. When I see another person in pain/ discomfort I feel sympathy.
2. I am usually a compassionate when I hear another's problems.
3. I am happy when others around me are happy.
4. I am sad when others around me are sad.

Self-presentation bias scale (Adapted from Ray, 1984).

1. Have you sometimes taken unfair advantage of another person? Yes/No
2. I am quick to admit making a mistake? Yes/No
3. Do you sometimes try to get even rather than forgive and forget? Yes/No
4. I am always courteous, even to people who are disagreeable? Yes/No
5. I am always a good listener, no matter who I am talking to? Yes/No

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