

The sales organization is generally regarded as the firm's revenue-generating function. Year after year, firms face extreme pressure to meet growth goals to please shareholders and combat competitors; salespeople feel the brunt of this pressure. Rather than growing the sales force, most organizations aim to reach growth goals through getting more out of each salesperson (i.e., higher quotas). Increasingly though, salespeople face a new pressure; their customers have become very knowledgeable and as a result, more demanding, which has increased the prevalence of salespeople's service-related goals (e.g., problem solving, satisfaction). These increasing service expectations provide a new problem for sales organizations to grow performance as previous solutions to increase salesperson outcomes (e.g., higher quotas, new technologies) are not appropriate for these customers. As a result, firms are asking salespeople to fulfill both selling (e.g., cross-selling) and service (e.g., service recovery) roles. This set of dual-role behaviors (termed sales-service ambidextrous behaviors, or SSA behaviors) can potentially offer more customer benefits along with a competitive advantage. A new study in the Special Issue on "The Interface of Service and Sales" in the *Journal of Service Research* explores how SSA behaviors lead to better financial outcomes, as well as insights on how to encourage salespeople to perform these behaviors.

How Balancing Sales & Service Roles Leads to Financial Success

Firms have been hesitant to expand employee roles as performing sales and service behaviors tend to require different skills, traits, and incentives while often lowering efficiency. Despite the potential downsides, customers increasingly prefer a single point of contact. Fortunately, results show that meeting customers' demands for employees to perform both functions creates perceived value. Specifically, customers were willing to pay more for the same offerings when salespeople performed SSA behaviors. Establishing the link between SSA behaviors and

customers' perceived value suggests a distinct advantage for adopting the dual-role sales force approach relative to structurally independent sales and service functions. This value-added approach also aligns with the increasingly competitive B2B marketplace where customers seek efficiency in both the resolution of service problems and the execution of the sales process.

The Driver of Balancing Sales and Service Roles: Polychronicity

The study also identifies salesperson polychronicity – preference for switching between multiple tasks within the same time period – as a key driver for enacting SSA behavior. This trait, unknown by most organizations, should be to screen and hire employees that are more likely to prefer sales-service roles. Polychronic salespeople find it easier to perform both activities and meet customers' demands for a single firm touch point.

When Sales Organizations Should Ask their Sales Reps to Balance Sales and Service

In complex work settings such as ambidextrous roles, salesperson behavior is often influenced by external cues. It is therefore important to identify task, social, and organizational cues that influence SSA behaviors. This study's results improve our understanding here, showing that the effect of salespeople's polychronicity on SSA behaviors is enhanced when they serve highly demanding customers, receive feedback from managers, and work within a climate for innovation.