

ABSTRACT

Individual Spirituality at Work and its Link with Relational Selling Aspects: A Study among Front-line Salespersons

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The competitiveness in the world of business is rising rapidly on a regular basis. In every industry, the number of players is increasing and it has become all more difficult to differentiate one offering from the other. The competitiveness of present day markets is further increased by the nature of customers - hardheaded, sophisticated and discriminating. Even with the onetime transaction oriented customers in professional sales, the high pressure selling approaches no longer seem workable. As the marketplace is getting more competitive and customers are tending towards rational buying, the emphasis in sales is moving towards relational selling which is customer-friendly compared to traditional selling and can better serve the mutual interest of customers and salespersons.

The present study attempts to examine whether spirituality in the salesperson and its expression at work leads to various aspects of relational selling (customer orientation, adaptive selling, service orientation and ethical selling). Being spiritual and the expression of spirituality at work define Individual Spirituality at Work. Spirituality is a rising phenomenon in business research, which is being looked at to re-establish organizational and individual integrity. A review of the sales, marketing and organizational literature reveals that there are no studies which assess the relationship between individual spirituality at work and relational selling. There are few evidences of salespersons becoming more spiritual and striving for meaning, purpose, self and peace at work. The aim of this thesis is to investigate whether individual spirituality at work is mutually beneficial to the customers and the salespersons.

Individual Spirituality at work is conceptualized as being spiritual at work and expression of spirituality at work in two ways: 1. Finding meaning in what one does, and 2. Belonging to the community at work.

A comprehensive framework that connects individual salesperson spirituality at work and relational selling aspects has been developed. Four relational selling aspects – customer orientation, service orientation, adaptive selling and ethical selling are used in this study.

The framework is to be tested in two phases. In the first phase, quantitative cross-sectional survey will be used for data collection from the front-line salespersons of a single firm. Concurrently, personal interviews will be conducted with front-line salespersons from the same firm. The outcomes from the analyses will be triangulated to get the final results. In the second phase, the framework will be tested with salespersons from multiple firms and different industries to increase the generalizability of results.

The expected outcome of this study will make salespersons able to better build, maintain and enhance customer relationships, and get even more referrals and repurchases in their job. Moreover, the results are expected to provide enough reasons to managers to facilitate the individual expression of spirituality at workplace.