

## Positive Reinforcement: A Conditional Link to a Functional Salesforce Behaviour

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### Abstract

When salespeople are not performing up to standards, the challenge may not be to fire them, but rather help them become productive employees. Often these salespeople have received extensive training and correcting the problem may be less expensive than replacing them. The study is guided by Reinforcement Theory of Edward Thorndike, which suggests that behaviours that are rewarded tend to be repeated. A sample of 350 salespeople and managers in selected multinational firms in Nigeria was determined using a mean. The hypothesis was tested using the Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) statistics to obtain the results that give high F-values and  $P < 0.000$ , indicating that the results generated are not due to chance, thus are correct and significant. Also with F-square values that are at least 0.793, a very strong relationship exists between the research questions. Having adjusted  $r$  – square values that are at least 0.791, it is determined that at least 79.1% of change is caused by the independent variable. Based on this, the null hypothesis is rejected, suggesting that linking the desired outcomes of a Salesperson such as pay, praise or a promotion to the performance of functional behaviours motivate a salesforce to perform the desired behaviours. Whenever possible, managers should try to use positive reinforcement for salesforce behaviours they want to encourage. They should also try to reduce undesirable outcomes associated with the behaviours they wish salespeople to exhibit. It is crucial for managers to choose behaviours over which salespeople have control. In other words, salespersons must have the freedom and opportunity to perform the behaviours that are being reinforced. Also, it is crucial that these behaviours contribute to organizational effectiveness. It is recommended that sales managers distribute outcomes to salespeople based on their performance of desired behaviours; use positive reinforcement instead of negative reinforcement whenever possible; when feasible, use extinction rather than punishment to curtail dysfunctional behaviours; when punishment is necessary, focus on the behaviour, not the person, and downplay the emotional element, make sure that good performer models are available for others to imitate, especially when someone is new to the salesforce.

**Keywords:** Positive Reinforcement, Salesforce Behaviour, Multiple Analysis of Variance, Multinational Firms, Poor Performance, Unethical Behaviour, Undesirable Outcomes.

### Introduction

Salesforce is often a company's largest single operating expense. This is a reason why it is important to understand the decisions in this area. Bad sales management decisions are costly in both lost sales and in actual out-of-pocket expenses. Every economy needs and uses many salespeople. In some Countries, one person out of every ten in the total labour force is involved in sales work. By comparison, that's about 20 times more people than are employed in advertising (Uduji, 2013). Any activity that employs so many people and is so important to the economy deserves study. Increasingly, the salesperson is seen as a representative of the whole company – responsible for explaining its total effort to target customers rather than just pushing products. The salesperson may provide information about products, explain and interpret company policies, and even negotiate prices or diagnose technical problems when a product doesn't work well. The salesperson is often the only link between the firm and its customer – especially if customers are far away. When a number of people from the firm are involved with the customer organization – which is increasingly common as more suppliers and customers form closer relationships – it is usually the salesperson who coordinates the relationship for his or her firm (Cross, Hartley and Rudelims, 2001).

As this suggests, Salespeople also represent their customers back inside their own firms. Recall that feedback is an essential part of both the communication process and the basic management process of planning, implementing, and control. For example, the salesperson is the likely one to explain to the production manager why a customer is unhappy with the product performance of quality – or to the e-commerce specialist how better other status information available on the website could help the customer save money. As evidence of these changing responsibilities, some companies give their salespeople such title as field sales manager, sales consultant, marketing specialist, account representative, or sales engineer (Uduji, 2013). The Salesforce can aid in the marketing information function too. The salespeople may be the first to hear about a new competitor or a competitor's new products or strategy. Salespeople who are well attuned to customer's needs can be a key source

of ideas for new products. Some salespeople are expected to be marketing managers in their own territories. And some become marketing managers by default because top management hasn't provided detailed strategy guidelines. Either way, salespeople may take the initiative to fill the gap. The salesperson may have choices about:

- What target customers to aim at
- Which particular products to emphasize
- Which middlemen to call on or to work with the hardest.
- How to use promotion money
- How to adjust prices

A salesperson who can put together profitable strategies and implement them well can rise very rapidly in a firm, because the opportunity is there for those prepared and willing to work. Even a starting Sales job may offer great opportunities. Some beginning salespeople especially those working for producers or wholesalers – are responsible for larger sales volume than many small companies. This is a serious responsibility – and the person must be prepared for it. Further, sales jobs are often viewed as entry-level positions and used to evaluate candidates for promotion. Success in this job can lead to rapid promotion to the higher-level Sales and marketing jobs and more money and security (Erffmeyer and Johnson, 2001). If a firm has too few salespeople, or the wrong kind, some important personal selling tasks may not be completed. And having too many salespeople, or the wrong kind, wastes money. A sales manager needs to find a good balance – the right number and the right kind of salespeople. This balance may change over time with other changes in strategy or the market environment; that's why many firms have been restructuring and re-positioning their salesforces. One of the difficulties of determining the right number and kind of salespeople is that every sales job is different. While an engineer or accountant can look forward to fairly specific duties, the salesperson's job changes constantly. However, there are three basic types of sales tasks. This gives us a starting point for understanding what selling tasks need to be done, how many people are need to do them, and how they can be motivated to have positive attitudes toward the jobs. The three basic sales tasks are order-getting, order-taking, and supporting. For convenience in this study, we'll describe salespeople by these terms – referring to their primary task – although one person may do all three tasks in some situations.

The sales job consists of a large variety of complex and diverse tasks. Because of this, it is important that salesperson's efforts be channeled in a direction consistent with the company's strategic plan. Therefore, the direction of the salesperson's effort is as important as the intensity and persistence of that efforts. The behavioural factors that relate to the individual needs and to the conditional links between performance and rewards and between effort and performance is examined in this study.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study is examined in the light of law of effect, which is formulated by Edward Thorndike, stating that behaviour that is followed by positive consequences will likely be repeated. (Thorndike, 1971). Probably, the law of effect can be regarded as one of the established principles in the social sciences. The law indicates that behaviours that are rewarded tend to be repeated. Reinforcement theory suggests that behaviour is encourage depending on the consequences. Goals are universal motivators. So are the processes of reinforcement, as behaviour that is followed by positive consequences probably will be repeated (Skinner, 1969). This powerful law of behaviour laid the foundation for countless investigations into the effects of the positive consequences, called reinforcers, that motivate behaviour. Organizational behaviour modification attempts to influence people's behaviour, and improve performance, by systematically managing work conditions and the consequences of people's actions (Hamner, 1974). According to Bateman and Snell (2002), four key consequences of behaviour either encourage or discourage people's behaviour as shown in figure 1.

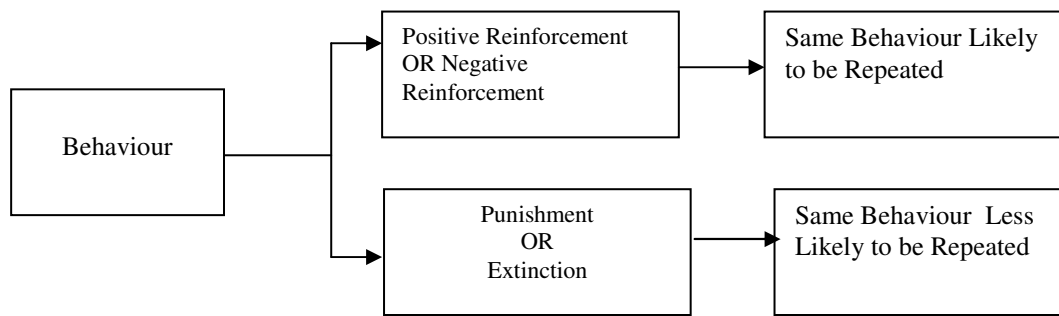


Figure 1: The Consequence of Behaviour

Source: Bateman, T. S. and Snell, S.A. (2002) *Management: Competing in the New Era*, New York: McGraw –Hill.

**Positive Reinforcement** is a pleasurable stimulus or reward following a desired behaviour that induces to continue the behaviour. This suggests that salespeople are likely to spend more time in the office if they feel it will help them earn promotions even though it may not increase either overall productivity. Withdrawing or failing to provide a reinforcer for behaviour reduces motivation, and the behaviour can be extinguished or discontinued (Weiss, 1990). **Negative Reinforcement** is the removal of unpleasant consequences associated with a desired behaviour, resulting in an increase in the frequency of that behaviour. This suggests that if salespeople feel that being creative at work will not lead to reprimands for not following procedures, they are more likely to try new ways of doing things and become more entrepreneurial (Bandura, 1976). **Punishment** is an aversive or unpleasant consequences following undesired behaviour. This lead to a decrease in that behaviour. However, their avoidance undesired behaviours through punishment does not mean that salespeople will engage in desired behaviours. This suggests that a sales manager who yells at salespersons for not performing may provoke salespeople to show little initiative in trying to meet their Sales target. In fact they resent at the sales manager and try to get even whenever they can. The threat of punishment for undesired behaviours is more effective than the use of punishment because punishment decreases undesirable behaviours only temporarily and may create anger and resentment, which hurt communication and undermine goodwill and personal initiative of salespeople (Uduji, 2013). According to Goldstein and Sorcher (1974), reinforcement theory indicates that managers can link desirables (such as pay raises or promotion) to the behaviours they want to encourage. They should also try to reduce undesirable outcomes associated with the behaviours they wish people to exhibit. For instance, providing day care facilities may prompt more women to accept job that require frequent travel and unpredictable schedules. **Extinction** is the withdrawing or failing to provide a reinforcing consequence. When this occurs, motivation is reduced and the behaviour is extinguished, or eliminated. Examples include not giving a compliment for a Sales job that is well done, forgetting to say thanks for a favour shown, or setting impossible sales performance goals so that the salesperson never experiences success (Davis and Luthan, 1980). The first two consequences, positive and negative reinforcement, are positive for the salesperson receiving them: the salesperson either gains something or avoids something negative. Therefore, the salesperson who experiences these consequences, can be motivated to behave in the way that led to the reinforcement. But the last two consequences, punishment and extinction, are negative outcomes for the salesperson receiving them: the motivation to repeat the behaviour that led to the undesirable results will be reduced. According to Bandura (1969), sometimes organizations and managers reinforce the wrong behaviour. The company that bases performance reviews on short-term result is reinforcing a short-run perspective in decision making. At the same time, it is discouraging behaviours that will pay off only in the long run (Gist and Mitchell, 1992 Uduji and Ankeleli, 2013).

Chonko, Leo and Roberts (2000), noted that programs that punish Salespeople for not meeting a particular sales target within a particular period may actually encourage them not to make further effort. Therefore, sales managers are suppose to identify the kinds of salesforce behaviours they reinforce and the ones they discourage when apply certain programs. Churchill, Ford and Walker (2000) remarked that sales managers should be creative in their use of reinforcers for salesforce management. Innovative managers can turn to nonmonetary rewards, including intellectual challenge, greater responsibility, autonomy, recognition, flexible benefits, and greater influence over decisions. These and other reward for high-performing salespersons, when creatively devised and applied, can continue to motivate salespeople when pay and promotions are scare (Uduji, 2013). The basic premise of learning themes as applied to salesforce management is that sales managers can increase salesperson motivation and performance by the ways they link outcomes that salespeople receive to the performance of desired behaviours in an organization and the attainment of sales goals. Thus, learning theory

focuses on the linkage between performance and outcomes in the motivation equation (Bandura, 1977). Reinforcement describes the processes by which factors in the work environment affect people's behaviour. Expectancy theory adds to that some of the cognitive processes that go on in people's heads (Luthans and Kreitner, 1985). The behavioural Science theories were proposed by researchers who used scientific methods in their study of people in the work environment. They centered attention on understanding individuals and their interpersonal relations. But they were further than the Human Relations group who were mainly social psychologist and had been criticized as over-emphasizing people management as the way to influence increase in productivity. The behavioural scientists do basic research by applying the techniques of science or use scientific method to collect information, measure, observe existing phenomena and perform experiment in efforts to understand human factors in work situations. But these scientists recognize that what they do is not exact science because of the wide range of variables and complexities of people. But they have contributed a lot to the knowledge about how and why people behave as they do, how their strengths and weaknesses can be evaluated, what their needs and wants are and how these can be considered in the performance of managerial functions especially of organizing and directing, as well as some aspects of planning in management (Stajkovic and Luthans, 1997).

Let us now turn to the general view of critics on the contributions of behavioural science theorists to management theory. James (1978) has summarized the view on the contributions and the limitations of the behavioural science school. He confirms the views that the school has made enormous contributions to the understanding of the individual in connection with motivation, group behaviour, interpersonal relationships at work and the importance of work to human beings. Their work and findings have caused managers to become much more sensitive and sophisticated in dealing with subordinates. The school continues to offer new insights in such important areas as salesforce management, leadership, conflict resolutions, organizational change and communication. They have contributed immensely in the understanding and the operation of the directing function of management (Bateman and Snell, 2002). Stoner (1978), however, adds that many writers, including some behavioural scientists themselves, believe that the potential contributions by the application of the behavioural science theories to management have not been fully realized. According to him, many managers resist the behavioural scientists' suggestions because they do not like to admit that they are unable to handle people without help. The tendency of behavioural scientists to use their own technical terms rather than everyday language in communicating their findings has inhibited the acceptance of their ideas. Again, because human behaviour is so complex, behavioural scientists often differ in their recommendations for a particular problem, making it difficult for Sales managers in particular to decide whose advice to follow (Uduji, 2013). In particular, the concept of collaborative effort between sales managers and salespeople in planning and organizing salesforce activities has not received a clear, positive, binding force and effective guidance. This is a gap intended to be filled by this study

### Research Methodology

The study involved 350 salespeople and managers in selected multinational firms in Nigeria. The Sample Size was determined using a mean formula of:

$$n = \frac{S^2 Z^2}{e^2}$$

Where n = the Sample Size

z = the level of confidence (indicated by the member of standard errors associated with it)

s= variability indicated by an estimated standard deviation

e = the amount of precision or allowance error in the sample estimate of the population.

Therefore: the formula determined the sample size simply by multiplying the squares of the variability (s) and the level of confidence (z) and divided the product by the square of the desired precision value (e) to arrive at:

$$n = 350$$

Since the study is concerned with specific predictions, narrations of facts and characteristics, a descriptive/diagnostic design was adapted. The research design ensured enough provision for protection against bias and maximized reliability, with due concern for the economical completion of the research study. Both secondary and primary sources were used to gather information for the study. Questionnaire was the principal source of the primary data; however, interview serves as complementary. In designing the data-collection procedure, adequate safeguards against bias and unreliability was ensured. Questions were well examined against ambiguity; interviewers were instructed not to express their own opinion. They were trained so that they

would uniformly record a given item of response. The data collection instruments were pre-tested before they were finally used for the study. To ensure that the data obtained were free from errors, the researcher closely supervised the research assistants as they collect and record information. Also, checks were set up to ensure that the data collecting assistants performed their duty honestly and without prejudice. A miniature trial survey of the study was carried out at Ilupeju Industrial estate and Agbara Industrial estate in Nigeria to test the validity, reliability and practicality of the research instruments and operations. Thirty salespeople and twelve sales managers of four multinational firms in the industrial estates were used for the test-run. The pre-test provided the researcher the good ground to train assistants for the main inquiry. It also provided the researcher with the opportunity to come out with the final version of the research instruments. The pilot survey enabled the investigator to estimate the cost component of the main study.

The stratified sampling technique was used to ensure a fair representation of the selected multinational firms, using proportionality ratio formula:

$$Q = \frac{A}{N} \times \frac{n}{1}$$

Where:

Q = the number of questionnaires to be allocated to each segment

A = the population of each segment

N = the total population of all the segments

n = the estimated sample size of the study.

The items were selected in the ratio of one sales manager to three sales people from each of the selected firms. This offered a good representation of all the segments in the population of study. Each respondent from the stratum was selected in order of their years of experience in the sales job. Data from the study were analysed using descriptive tools. For hypothesis testing, Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) statistics was used to judge the significance of the result obtained.

### Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

Scale:

**Definitely Disagree (DD) - 1**

**Generally Disagree (GD) - 2**

**Somewhat Disagree (SA) - 3**

**Generally Agree (GA) - 4**

**Definitely Agree (DA) - 5**

**Table 1: Positive Reinforcement as a Conditional Link to a Functional Salesforce Behaviour**

(n = 350)

Questions	DD (%)	GD (%)	SA (%)	GA (%)	DA (%)	Mean	Std. Dev.
Salesperson must understand exactly what they must do to get a particular reward such as pay, praise, or a promotion in order to perform certain functional behaviours	5 (1.4)	10 (2.9)	30 (8.6)	241 (68.9)	64 (18.3)	4.00	0.72
Salesperson must also believe that if they expend greater effort behaviours, it will lead to improved performance that yield their desired outcomes	7 (2.0)	10 (2.9)	17 (4.9)	227 (64.9)	89 (25.4)	4.09	0.77
By linking positive reinforces to the performance of functional behaviours, sales managers can motivate salespeople to perform the desired behaviours	13 (3.7)	16 (4.6)	25 (7.1)	187 (53.4)	109 (31.1)	4.04	0.95

source: Field Data, 2013

With 5 respondents (1.4%) definitely disagreeing, 10 respondents (2.9%) generally disagreeing, 30 respondents (8.6%) somewhat agreeing, 241 respondents (68.9%) generally agreeing and 64 respondents (18.3%) definitely agreeing as well as the mean response value of 4.00, the study respondents are of the view that salesperson must understand exactly what they must do to get a particular reward such as pay, praise, or a promotion in order to perform certain functional behaviours.

As put by 7 respondents (2.0%) who definitely disagree, 10 respondents (2.9%) who generally disagree, 17 respondents (4.9%) who somewhat agree, 227 respondents (64.9%) who generally agree and 89 respondents (25.4%) who definitely agree, and represented by the mean response score of 4.09, it is the view of the respondents that the salesperson must also believe that if they expend greater effort behaviours, it will lead to improved performance that yield their desired outcomes.

Having a mean response score of 4.04 and 13 respondents (3.7%) who definitely disagree, 7 respondents (4.6%) who generally disagree, 25 respondents (7.1%) who somewhat agree, 187 respondents (53.4%) who generally agree as well as 109 respondents (31.1%) who definitely agree, the respondents agree that by linking positive reinforces to the performance of functional behaviours, sales managers can motivate salespeople to perform the desired behaviours.

### Test of Hypothesis

*Linking the desired outcomes of a salesperson such as pay, praise, or a promotion to the performance of functional behaviours do not motivate a salesforce to perform the desired behaviours*

To test this hypothesis, the respondents' responses to the three questions presented in table 1 were tested using the Multiple Analysis of Variance (MANOVA) statistics.

**Table 2: GLM Between-Subjects Factors**

	Value Label	N	
By linking positive reinforces to the performance of functional behaviours, sales managers can motivate salespeople to perform the desired behaviours	1.00	definitely disagree	13
	2.00	generally disagree	16
	3.00	somewhat disagree	25
	4.00	generally agree	187
	5.00	definitely agree	109

Source: Field Data, 2013

**Table 3: GLM Box's Test of Equality of Covariance Matrices<sup>a</sup>**

Box's M	10.162
F	1.076
df1	9
df2	15040.606
Sig.	.377

Tests the null hypothesis that the observed covariance matrices of the dependent variables are equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + q3

**Table 4: Multivariate Tests<sup>c</sup>**

Effect		Value	F	Hypothesis df	Error df	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Intercept	Pillai's Trace	.984	10479.236 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	344.000	.000	.984
	Wilks' Lambda	.016	10479.236 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	344.000	.000	.984
	Hotelling's Trace	60.926	10479.236 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	344.000	.000	.984
	Roy's Largest Root	60.926	10479.236 <sup>a</sup>	2.000	344.000	.000	.984
q3	Pillai's Trace	1.040	93.470	8.000	690.000	.000	.520
	Wilks' Lambda	.103	181.789 <sup>a</sup>	8.000	688.000	.000	.679
	Hotelling's Trace	7.306	313.261	8.000	686.000	.000	.785
	Roy's Largest Root	7.111	613.322 <sup>b</sup>	4.000	345.000	.000	.877

a. Exact statistic

b. The statistic is an upper bound on F that yields a lower bound on the significance level.

c. Design: Intercept + q3

**Table 5: Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances**

	F	df1	df2	Sig.
Q1	680.375	4	345	.000
Q2	96.027	4	345	.000

Tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups.

a. Design: Intercept + q3

**Table 6: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects**

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	Q1	141.988 <sup>a</sup>	4	35.497	330.906	.000	.793
	Q2	179.693 <sup>b</sup>	4	44.923	583.506	.000	.871
Intercept	Q1	1393.141	1	1393.141	12986.962	.000	.974
	Q2	1460.122	1	1460.122	18965.448	.000	.982
q3	Q1	141.988	4	35.497	330.906	.000	.793
	Q2	179.693	4	44.923	583.506	.000	.871
Error	Q1	37.009	345	.107			
	Q2	26.561	345	.077			
Total	Q1	5771.000	350				
	Q2	6057.000	350				
Corrected Total	Q1	178.997	349				
	Q2	206.254	349				

a. R Squared = .793 (Adjusted R Squared = .791)

b. R Squared = .871 (Adjusted R Squared = .870)

The results shown in tables 4, 5 and 6 that gives high F-values and  $p < 0.000$ , shows that the results generated are not due to chance, thus are correct and significant. Also with r-square values that are at least 0.793, a very strong relationship is established between question 3 of the research instrument and questions 1 and 2. Having adjusted r-squared values that are at least 0.791, it is determined that at least 79.1% of change is caused by the

independent variable. Based on this, the null hypothesis is rejected. Hence, linking the desired outcomes of a salesperson such as pay, praise, or a promotion to the performance of functional behaviours motivate a salesforce to perform the desired behaviours.

### **Discussion of Research Findings**

The major finding of this study shows that salespeople learn to perform behaviours that lead to desired consequences and learn not to perform behaviours that lead to undesired consequences. Translated into salesforce motivation terms, it suggests that salespeople will be motivated to perform at a high level and attain their sales goals to the extent that high performance and goal attainment allow them to outcomes they desire. Similarly, salespeople avoid performing behaviours that lead to outcomes they do not desire. By linking the performance of specific behaviour to the attainment of specific outcomes, sales managers can motivate a salesforce to perform in ways that that help on organization achieve its goals. The findings suggests that positive reinforcement gives salespeople outcomes they desire when they perform their sales functional behaviours. These desired outcomes, called positive reinforcers, include any outcomes that a salesperson desire, such as pay, praise, or a promotion. The Sales functional behaviours are Salesforce behaviours that contribute to the overall Sales performance of an organization, such as meeting their sales targets and improve customer service. By linking positive reinforcers to the performance of salesforce behaviours, sales managers can motivate the salespeople to perform the desired behaviours. The true link between performance and rewards in a firm should be determined by management policies about how sales performance is evaluated and what rewards are conferred for various levels of performance by the salespeople. As a result, salespeople may concentrate on improving their performance in areas that are relatively unimportant to management; and they ultimately may become disillusioned with their ability to attain desired rewards. Besides the firm's compensation in policies, other organizational factors and the personal characteristics of salespeople themselves can influence both the magnitude and the accuracy of their instrumentality estimates.

The study further indicates that negative reinforcement also can encourage salespeople of an organization to perform desired or functional salesforce behaviours. Sales managers using negative reinforcement actually eliminate or remove undesired outcomes once the functional salesforce behaviour is performed. These undesired outcomes, called negative reinforcers, can range from a sales manager's constant nagging or criticism, to unpleasant assignments, to the ever-present threat of losing one's job. When negative reinforcement is used, salespeople are motivated to perform behaviour because they want to stop receiving or avoid undesired outcomes. Sales managers who try to encourage salespeople to sell more by threatening them with being fired are using negative reinforcement. In this case, the negative reinforce is the threat of job loss, which is removed once the functional salesforce behaviours are performed. However, this study strongly suggest that whenever possible, sales managers should try to use positive reinforcement. Negative reinforcement can make for a very unpleasant work environment and even a negative culture for the salesforce in an organization. No salesperson likes to be nagged, threaten, or exposed to other kinds of negative outcomes. The uses of negative reinforcement often causes salespeople to resent sales managers and try to get back at them. Even sales managers who use positive reinforcement (and refrain from using negative reinforcement) can get into trouble if they are not careful to identify the right salesforce behaviours to reinforce – behaviours that are truly function for the sales performance of the organization. Doing this is not always as straight forward as it might seem. First, it is crucial for sales managers to choose behaviours over which salespeople have control, in order words, salespeople must have the freedom and opportunity to perform the behaviours that are being reinforced. Second, it is crucial that these behaviours contribute to the sales performance and organizational effectiveness.

The study findings also show that sometimes salespeople of an organization are motivated to perform behaviours that actually detract from overall company's Sales performance. This suggest that all salesforce behaviour is controlled or determined by its consequences, but one way for the sales managers to curtail the performance of dysfunctional salesforce behaviours is to eliminate whatever that is reinforcing the behaviours. This process could be called extinction as shown in figure 1 of the theoretical framework. Now, suppose a sales manager has a salesperson who frequently comes to his office to chat – sometimes about sales-related matters but at other times about various topics ranging from African Politics to CAF championship football game. The sales manager and the salesperson share certain interests and views, so these conversations can get quite involved, and both seem to enjoy them. Then, suddenly, the sales manager comes to realize that these frequent and sometimes lengthy conversations are actually causing him to stay at work in the evenings to make up for the time he loses during the day. The sales manager suddenly realizes that he is actually reinforcing his salesperson's behaviour by acting interested in the topics the salesperson bring up and responding at length to them. To extinguish this behaviour, the sales managers stops acting interested in these non-sales related conversations and keeps his response polite and friendly but brief. No longer being reinforced with a pleasurable conversation, the salesperson eventually ceases to be motivated to interrupt the sales manager during working hours to discuss



non-sales related issues. This example shows when withdrawing or failing to provide a reinforcing consequences, motivation is reduced and the behaviours extinguished, or eliminated.

Sometimes, sales managers cannot rely on extinction to eliminate dysfunctional salesforce behaviours because they do not have control over whatever is reinforcing the behaviour or because they cannot afford the time needed for extinction to work. When salespeople are performing dangerous behaviours that are illegal or unethical, the behaviour needs to be eliminated immediately. Padding expense accounts is one type of unethical behaviour. But there are others – for example, recommending unnecessarily high product quality levels or inventory levels, selling out – or providing misleading information on competitors. Sales managers who overlook such unethical practices are asking for trouble. While the immediate consequences of allowing such behaviour may not seem too great, this practice will likely result in more serious long – term consequences such as lawsuits and negative publicity. Sales managers must take immediate action to put an end to unethical behaviour. The same extinction steps suggest for problematic behaviours should be taken to eliminate such unethical behaviour. Sexual harassment, for example, is another organizational dysfunctional behaviour that cannot be tolerated. In such cases, Sales managers often rely on punishment, administering an undesired or negative consequences to salespeople when they perform the dysfunctional behaviour. Punishments used by organizations range from verbal reprimands to pay cuts, temporary suspension, demotions, and firings. Punishment, however, can have some unintended side effects – resentment, loss of self-respect, a desire for retaliation – and should be used only when necessary. To avoid the unintended side effect of punishment, the following guidelines should be kept in mind:

- Sales managers should downplay the emotional element involved in punishment. Make it clear to the salesforce that you are punishing a salesperson's performance of a dysfunctional behaviour, and not the salesperson himself or herself.
- Sales managers should try to punish dysfunctional behaviours as soon after they occur as possible, and make sure the negative consequence is a source of punishment for the salesperson's involved. Be certain that other salespeople know exactly why they are being punished.
- Sales managers should try as much as possible to avoid punishing salesperson in front of other salespeople, for this can hurt a person's self-respect and lower esteem in the eyes of colleagues as well as make colleagues feel uncomfortable in the salesforce of the organization. Even so, making salesforce members aware of the fact that an individual who has committed a serious infraction has been punished can sometimes be effective in preventing future infractions and teaching all salespeople of the organization that certain behaviours are unacceptable. For example, when salesforce members are informed that a sales manager who has sexually harassed subordinates has been punished, they learn or are reminded of the fact that sexual harassment is not tolerated in the organization.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

When Salespeople are not performing up to standards, the challenge is not to fire them, but rather to help them become productive employees. Often these salespersons have received extensive training, and correcting the problem is less expensive than replacing them. Also, because of possible discriminations suits, it is prudent for managers to make sure that they have done everything within reason to help failing salespersons before firing them. Although many managers find it difficult to criticize their subordinates, it is often possible to correct a problem just by immediate feedback about the problem behaviour. This constructive feedback should take place as soon as the manager notices the performance problem. Managers should be very specific about what the behaviour is. Sales managers and salespeople alike often confuse negative reinforcement and punishment. To avoid such confusion, management should keep in mind the two major differences between the two. First, negative reinforcement is used to promote the performance of functional behaviours in organizations, second, negative reinforcement entails the removal of negative consequences when functional behaviours are performed, but punishment entails the administration or negative consequences when dysfunctional behaviours are performed. Effectively administering rewards and careful, judicious use of punishment are key strategies for sales managers to motivate their salesforce, as indicated in the major findings of this study. By linking positive reinforcers to the performance of functional behaviours, sales managers motivate salespeople to perform the desired salesforce behaviour. The positive reinforcement program should offer the salespeople the outcomes they desire when they perform the organizationally functional behaviours. The positive reinforcers (desired outcomes) should be integrated with the entire Sales management program. However, a good positive reinforcement

program for a Salesforce may not compensate for poor recruiting, selection, and training. But a salesforce positive Reinforcement policies should be a part of a well-planned and executed sales management program. Salespeople must believe that the rewards they received are based on the functional behaviours. The role of ambiguity and conflict often experienced by Salespeople sometimes should not make it difficult for the salespeople to understand management's priorities for the functional behaviours. Sales managers should ensure that salespeople know what is expected and understand what kinds of behaviours will lead to a desired outcome.

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