Leveraging Human Analytics for Strategic Partnerships and Sales Performance

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Abstract

Salespeople are a critical component of the workforce, and approximately one out of ten U.S. employees work within the sales domain (Hall 2016). Despite the important role that salespeople play in their organizations, one may question whether organizations grasp the broad range of elements that affect the performance of their salespeople. According to Bersin (2013), not only do organizations fail to grasp such, the deficiency in understanding these elements extends beyond the salesforce and is pervasive across organizations.

Currently, advanced analytics technologies, such as those that can provide insight in the areas of high-performance work systems (e.g., skills enhancement, motivation enhancement and opportunity enhancement) and human capital management (e.g., employee knowledge, skills and abilities), offer organizations substantive options to systematically increase the outcome of strategic decision making (Provost & Fawcett 2013). Although the management of human capital and high-performance work systems have been found to contribute to sustained competitive advantages across organizations, many organizations are grappling with the refinement of human resource (HR) analytics to enhance salesperson performance (e.g., Jiang et al 2012). Furthermore, organizations are increasingly recognizing HR mechanisms as antecedents to performance. Recent findings suggest that up to 71% of CEOs acknowledge that human capital is the most critical factor of economic performance, and 43% are prioritizing initiatives (e.g., HR analytics) related to human capital management (HBR 2013).

In light of the potential impact of sales performance on the organization and call for human resource professionals to adopt a strategic function within the organization (Ulrich et al 2013), it is necessary for research to evaluate how sales and human resource departments can establish a strategic partnership that can lead to positive salesperson outcomes. Leveraging human analytics for such may be particularly beneficial for such. The contribution of the current research will focus on the following questions: (1) Does the use of human analytics contribute to high-performance work system capabilities and human capital management? (2) How does the use of human analytics, through high-performance work system capabilities and human capital management, impact salesperson outcomes (job satisfaction, loyalty) and ultimately performance?

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