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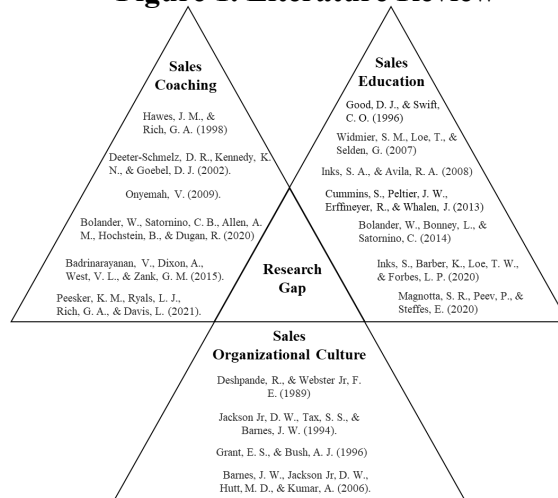
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

At the undergraduate level, sales competitions are becoming an increasingly important part of sales education for both students and employers. These university sponsored competitions provide an experiential learning opportunity that requires significant faculty coaching to improve student learning and performance (e.g., Widmier, Loe and Selden, 2007). While the competitions last only a few days, they are the culmination of months of preparation led by a faculty coach. We define coaching as: “A sequence of conversations and activities that provide ongoing feedback and encouragement to a salesperson or sales team member with the goal of improving that person’s performance” (Corcoran et al, 1995, p.118). Coaches also support a sales competition team (or sales team) organizational culture that encourages peer-to-peer coaching outside of formal coaching sessions. This is largely driven by an organizational coaching culture among students that engrains specific patterns of behavior, values and beliefs, and assumptions to supplement and enhance faculty coaching (Jackson, Tax and Barnes, 1994).

Our research falls in the middle of three important streams of sales research: coaching, education, and organizational culture. Each of these areas have been examined in the sales literature, see Figure 1, but research on coaching as part of sales education is a distinct research stream that contributes to the existing research in all three areas.

Figure 1. Literature Review



The objectives of the faculty coaches are to increase product knowledge, enhance knowledge and familiarity of the sales process, and improve student behaviors that lead to the development of skills outside of formal coaching meetings (Peesker et al, 2021). Faculty coaching of the sales team incorporates the three constructs of sales coaching as identified by Rich (1998): supervisory feedback, role modeling, and trust. The faculty coaches utilize a behavioral model that encourages students to incorporate the coaches' values into their preparation (Rich 1998).

Faculty coaching on its own can provide the foundation for success at sales competitions. In our scenario, however, there are only two hours of formal coaching meetings each week, and much of the practice and coaching occurs outside these sessions. As a result, the organizational culture is critical because it can prevent, reduce, or stimulate the impact of coaching (Lim and Morris, 2006). Developing an organizational coaching culture plays a critical role in contributing to the team's overall success while encouraging student commitment. The sales team creates an environment where they learn from each other (Peesker et al, 2021). The organizational culture is initiated by the examples of the faculty coaches and then adopted by the sales team.

The history of the sales team has shown that this approach to faculty coaching, supported by the well-developed organizational culture, results in a strong level of organization commitment and high-level competition performance. Over the past several years, the team has finished in the top ten of multiple sales competitions.

The sales literature to this point has explored coaching, education, and organizational culture, and the benefits of all three in terms of employee satisfaction, performance, and commitment (e.g., Onyemah 2009). By exploring all three at once, we fill a gap in the existing literature and contribute to each individual stream. Providing positive feedback, role modeling, and building trust can improve performance and commitment. This research contributes to sales education by applying Rich's framework to sales competition teams. When preparing for a competition, faculty coaches should provide positive feedback while encouraging the same from teammates. Faculty coaches can build an organizational culture that supports coaching through leadership activities and matching individual values to those of the organization.

Keywords: *Coaching, Sales Management, Sales Education, Sales Competition, Organizational Culture*

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Stefan Sleep (Ph.D., University of Georgia) is an Assistant Professor of Marketing at Kennesaw State University. He teaches classes in Professional Selling and Sales Management and is a coach of the sales competition team. Stefan's research focus is on marketing strategy with an emphasis on sales, intra-organizational relationships, and marketing's use of data. His research has been published in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *AMS Review*, and the *European Journal of Marketing*.

Brent McCulloch is the Associate Director of The Center for Professional Selling at Kennesaw State University. He has over 30 years of industry experience including sales, marketing, and management. He is a graduate of The University of Alabama and Faulkner University. In his spare time, he enjoys golf, woodworking, and family.