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# Communication predictors of sales effectiveness in the high technology industry

Bonnie Virginia Gonzales  
*San Jose State University*

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COMMUNICATION PREDICTORS OF SALES EFFECTIVENESS IN  
THE HIGH TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Department of Communication Studies

San Jose State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Bonnie Virginia Gonzales

May 2003

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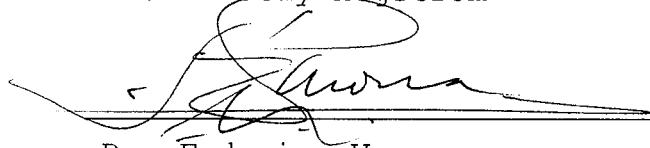
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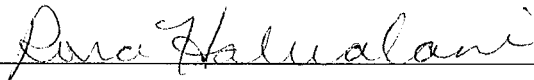
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Dr. Timothy Hegstrom



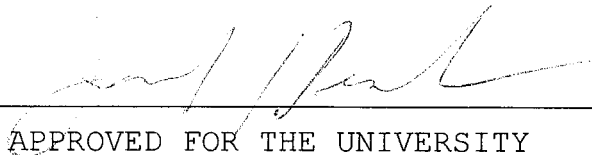
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Dr. Federico Varona



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Dr. Rona Halualani



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## **Abstract**

### Communication Predictors of Sales Effectiveness in the High Technology Industry

By Bonnie V. Gonzales

The purpose of this thesis was to provide communication profiles of the most successful sales personnel in the high technology industry. The communicative behaviors include nonverbal immediacy, measured through an adaptation of the Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy scale (Andersen, 1979), and other communicative factors for which Reinard (1997) developed scales. Two hundred two high technology sales managers completed a survey evaluating the best and worst sales candidates in their organization. Results indicated that all variables with the exception of *assertiveness* can significantly discriminate between the best and worst salesperson. However, a weighted combination of four variables could optimally predict effective salespeople: *Identification of Other's Needs, Ability to Close, Persuasiveness, Ability to Communicate*. Salespeople scoring high on these variables will tend to be the most effective representatives.

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## **Chapter I - Introduction**

Many studies have been done associating teaching effectiveness and the immediacy principle (Andersen, 1979; Andersen & Withrow, 1981; Frymier, 1993; McCroskey & Richmond, 1992; Richmond, 1990). This research has been instructive for the teaching community. The research has equipped teachers with strategies to use in the classroom to make the learning environment more effective. In addition to the teaching community, the immediacy principle has also been applied within the relationships of counselor and patient, supervisor and subordinates, and physician and patient. Nonverbal immediacy behavior and its usefulness to these contexts have sparked interest in the possible connection between nonverbal immediacy behaviors and sales effectiveness.

Andersen (1998) defines nonverbal immediacy behaviors as "messages that signal feelings of warmth, closeness, and involvement with other people" (p. 187). These messages may include any verbal or nonverbal communicative behavior that expresses these effects for example, the amount of eye contact used, leaning forward, using the word we instead of I. Sales effectiveness can be seen by the success rate of salespersons selling a product or service. Richmond and

McCroskey (2000) have proposed the "principle of immediate communication": the more communicators employ immediate behaviors, the more others will like, evaluate highly, and prefer such communicators, and the less communicators employ immediate behaviors, the more others will dislike, evaluate negatively, and reject such communicators (p. 86).

While doing an extensive search for research on nonverbal immediacy and sales effectiveness, no research was found that specifically correlates these two variables. John Reinard (1997) points out that research on sales communication is in its infancy in the field of communication. At the same time, a number of communication scholar consultants are being hired by organizations to train salespeople in persuasive communication. This is because a significant portion of the sales cycle is being able to successfully communicate about the product, the company, and self. The sales cycle can be defined as identifying the needs of your customer, and showing how your product or solutions can enable the buyer to solve their problems. Research suggests this by showing that being a good communicator is a trait shared by successful salespeople (Reinard, 1997).

One current trend in the sales industry is *solution selling*. Salespeople are focused on solving business issues such as lowering operating costs, increasing customer satisfaction, and improving employee productivity with the sole purpose of increasing revenue and shareholder wealth (Bosworth, 1995). What is equally important besides all these tactics is the way salespeople present themselves. Often a salesperson might have the best product, and have the ability to justify the largest return on investment (ROI). Yet even with these crucial competitive advantages, s/he may lose the deal because of a lack of knowledge regarding effective communication. For example, research shows that people are able to distinguish positive and negative attributes based on the nonverbal immediacy behaviors used. More nonverbal immediacy is seen as positive and less as negative (Koermer, 1993). Based on this research, if a salesperson is not using adaptive nonverbal immediacy behavior, perhaps the deal may be lost to another salesperson that is modeling this behavior. Weitz (1981) explains the importance of this knowledge when he states that: "The salesperson enters a customer interaction with a set of skills or abilities, a level of knowledge about the products and the customer, and a range

of alternatives that can be offered to the customers. These factors can amplify the effectiveness and/or constrain the range of behaviors in which the salesperson can act effectively" (p. 93).

There are many important facets of the sales decision, including price, product superiority and confidence in the company. The guiding research has shown that there are nonverbal immediacy behaviors that have a positive and negative result. It is also part of the conventional wisdom that sales communication makes a difference. Perhaps a lasting impression after a sales presentation could result from the use of more nonverbal immediate behaviors. An effective salesperson must be able to recognize the different communication styles of their customers. Salespeople who are able to adapt their communication style will have a competitive advantage over salespeople that may be using the same canned presentation each time.

The remainder of this paper will present the relevant research pertaining to this study, and argue that an applied study on the relationship between communicative factors and sales effectiveness is justified. In addition, this paper will also present the proposed method for

implementing this study, the results of this research, and finally a discussion of these results.



## **Chapter II - Literature Review**

There is a lack of applied research on the effects of nonverbal immediacy in the sales presentation. However, there have been many studies on the effects of immediacy in a number of contexts. These contexts are useful to review in order to gain a richer understanding of nonverbal immediacy. The most popular research shows how a teacher's nonverbal immediacy affects the motivation and learning of students. Similarly, there have also been a number of studies in the organizational context dealing with the supervisor and subordinate relationship.

Due to the lack of direct application of nonverbal immediacy to the sales presentation, this literature review will present what research has been produced on nonverbal immediacy and argue for further research in the area of sales communication. This literature review will delineate the concepts mentioned earlier to include general research done on the development and effects of the immediacy principle, nonverbal immediacy in the classroom, nonverbal immediacy in the organization, the research providing a link between nonverbal immediacy and persuasiveness, and finally the literature on sales effectiveness and communication. The review of this literature will

culminate with a specific rationale for an applied research study on nonverbal immediacy in the sales presentation.

### **Nonverbal Immediacy**

The concept of immediacy has developed over time, a review of that literature is provided here. It was originally introduced by social psychologist Albert Mehrabian (1969) to describe behavior patterns of people who like someone or something (Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). Immediacy can refer to the use of any of these fields of study, namely using any of these behaviors to establish a feeling of physiological closeness between two people:

1. Proxemics- the use of interpersonal space and distance including physical distance, body orientation, physical plane and forward lean
2. Haptics- physical contact
3. Kinesics- body movement including smiles, head nods, gestures, bodily relaxation, and open body position
4. Oculesics- messages sent by the eyes including eye contact, gaze, and pupil dilation
5. Vocalics- paralinguistic communication including pitch, tempo, and expressiveness
6. Chronemics- the meaning of time.

Part of the guiding research sought to determine the message that is conveyed by a specific nonverbal immediacy behavior. For example, Patterson's (1973) experiment studied proxemics by setting up an interview, with the confederate as the interviewer. Patterson wanted to research the stability of nonverbal immediacy behaviors. She performed two similar studies in which an interview was conducted. The interviewer was set up in a room, and upon entering the room, the interviewee was instructed by the interviewer to pull up a chair. The topics of the interviews were either about childhood experiences or college experiences. The self reports given after the interviews yielded these findings: interviewees who chose to sit closer to the interviewer reported feeling more at ease than those that chose to sit at a more distant range. The difference in distance also had an effect on eye contact. For example, the further the distance, the more eye contact between subjects, and conversely, the closer the distance the less eye contact was given. Other pertinent information was that, of all the immediacy behaviors observed, eye contact showed the only difference with regard to gender. Females exhibited more eye contact than did male subjects. Patterson's study offers guidance

about the general differences in gender with regard to eye contact.

Another example of a specific nonverbal behavior being studied is the amount of gaze used in an interaction. Burgoon, Coker, and Coker (1986) set up an experiment, in which a confederate interviewee manipulated the levels of gaze in an interview setting. Following the interview, the interviewer rated the interviewee's qualifications for a position using a Likert-type scale. Their research shows that the amount of gaze used does prove to have an effect on the credibility and attractiveness of the communicator. More specifically, the researchers showed that interviewees who averted their gaze sent a negative impression to the interviewer. These impressions included terms such as "nonimmediacy, nonaffection, nonreceptivity, lacking trust, and possibly dissimilarity and superficiality" (p. 513). This research study helps build the foundation that oculosics has proven to have positive results of attractiveness and credibility. What is of particular interest in the present study is to see whether these results are generalizable to the sales industry, for instance, does the amount of gaze used in sales presentations also show a positive result.

The principle of nonverbal immediacy has also been studied holistically within the interpersonal context. For example, Hale and Burgoon (1984) researched the reciprocity of nonverbal immediacy in an interpersonal conversation. Undergraduate students were put into groups (two undergraduates per group) with friends and strangers and asked to reach a consensus on topics dealing with social-moral issues. The confederate was a communication student and was given instructions about varying his or her nonverbal immediacy behaviors. This research study showed that high nonverbal immediacy elicits a reciprocal response in an interpersonal conversation, and even more so when the participants are friends. While this research showed an increase in reciprocity with an increase in nonverbal immediacy, the current research study should leverage this finding to determine the likelihood of whether this phenomenon takes place in a sales/persuasive context.

More recently, Richmond and McCroskey (2000) have proposed the "principle of immediate communication: the more communicators employ immediate behaviors, the more others will like, evaluate highly, and prefer such communicators, and the less communicators employ immediate behaviors, the more others will dislike, evaluate

negatively, and reject such communicators" (p. 86). The development of the immediacy principle has shown that not only does nonverbal immediacy show liking and physiological closeness, it has also been proven that the use of nonverbal immediacy behaviors are evaluated and assessed positively by receivers. The pursuit of the present study is to determine the likelihood of these results within the sales presentation.

Through its development, this principle has also been applied in both the classroom and the organization to elicit positive results. The next portion of this literature review will discuss some of the many benefits of nonverbal immediacy within classroom and organizational contexts. First, there has been an abundant amount of research linking the benefits of nonverbal immediacy in the classroom.

### **Nonverbal Immediacy in the Classroom**

Research has established a connection between teacher immediacy and positive student learning outcomes. One aspect of this research that seems most relevant to the sales context is the connection shown between immediacy and motivation. Virginia P. Richmond (1990) has done numerous

studies on communication in the classroom and has shown those nonverbal immediacy behaviors of vocal variety, smiling, and eye contact to be major contributors to student motivation. Richmond (1990) states:

It is probable that motivation and learning are mutually casual - those who are more motivated learn more and those who learn more become more motivated. If this is the case, The role of communication in the classroom is much more than simply the means of transmitting content and messages of control. It may be the primary means by which motivation can be increased and, as a result, learning enhanced. (p. 194)

Another study linking nonverbal immediacy with motivation was conducted by Frymier (1993). Frymier had students evaluate their instructors and found that teachers' immediacy had a positive impact on student's motivational levels to study. Nonverbal immediacy in the classroom has been proven to have positive effects. If nonverbal immediacy has been shown to impact the motivation of students, then it is possible that nonverbal immediacy will also motivate a customer to buy a product. Besides

its effect on motivation, nonverbal immediacy may correlate with student learning.

In another study, Andersen and Withrow (1981) researched whether learning through a video taped lecture would be enhanced by instructor nonverbal expressiveness. "Nonverbal expressiveness is conceptualized as the manifestation of those nonverbal behaviors which communicate animation, enthusiasm, interest, and overall expressiveness" (p. 342). The term nonverbal expressiveness has been used to refer to aspects of the immediacy principle. The researchers selected a lecturer who was a professional television broadcaster in order to make sure that the lecturer was comfortable in front of a video camera. The lecturer was videotaped using three different levels of expressiveness: low condition, moderate condition, and high condition. The results of this study suggested that lecturer nonverbal expressiveness had a significant positive effect on improving mediated instructional effectiveness. Nonverbal immediacy has been proven to show positive results in the classroom. The quest of the present study is to see whether the research on sales communication can show this same success.



### **Nonverbal Immediacy in the Organization**

Not only has nonverbal immediacy been beneficial in the classroom, research has also shown many benefits for some specific organizational contexts. Richmond and McCroskey (2000) studied the impact of supervisor and subordinate immediacy on relational and organizational outcomes. They found that supervisors who were perceived as high in nonverbal immediacy were also perceived as credible and attractive. They state that when supervisors are perceived as more credible and attractive, employees may perform better. They also found that when either the supervisor or subordinate exhibited nonverbal immediacy the other tended to reciprocate. These results are relevant to the present study in that a higher amount of exhibited nonverbal immediacy produced performance outcomes.

Not only is it important to know that nonverbal immediacy is reciprocal in supervisory communication, it is also important to note that nonverbal immediacy is identified positively by the receiver. Koermer, Goldstein, and Fortson (1993) set up focus groups to find out how supervisors communicated nonverbal immediacy to make subordinates feel or not feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, and closeness. When subjects were asked to

recall nonverbal immediacy behaviors, they were able to relate high and low nonverbal immediacy in positive and negative ways. This research showed that subjects could identify nonverbal immediacy and the lack of it. A greater understanding of nonverbal immediacy behaviors by supervisors may enhance the supervisor-subordinate relationship by identifying the behaviors that show belonging, acceptance, and closeness.

Other organizational research on nonverbal immediacy deals with relationships in the health care industry. For example, LaCrosse (1975) researched the role of nonverbal immediacy in counselor attractiveness and persuasiveness. LaCrosse had male and female counselors shown on a video both using highly attentive and nonverbal immediate behavior and the opposite of that. Subjects were asked to rate each counselor's attractiveness and persuasiveness. The nonverbal immediacy behaviors that were most recognized were eye contact, smiles and gestures. Subjects rated counselors that used the nonverbal attentive behaviors as more attractive and persuasive than counselors who did not use the behaviors regardless of the counselors' sex. This research showed how some professions also might benefit from training in nonverbal immediacy behaviors.

Another example of research that was useful to the health care profession includes the research of Conlee, Olvera, and Vagin (1993). They looked at the relationship between physician nonverbal immediacy and patient satisfaction. One hundred seventeen upper division education students completed a 13-item Patient Satisfaction with Physician Care scale and the Immediacy Behavior Scale. The scale had been originally designed for students, but the word "patient" was substituted for "student." This study confirmed that patient perception of physicians' communication immediacy behaviors affected their reported satisfaction with the care received from physicians. Other research in this area shows nonverbal immediacy to affect outcomes of treatment, such as compliance gaining from patients. If patients are satisfied with their physician, the likelihood of them seeking another physician is minimal.

Thus far, nonverbal immediacy has been shown to correlate positively with good perceptions of individuals in the superior role by individuals in the inferior role. However, due to the power differentials, there may be a great deal of difference between the perceptions that patients and students have of their doctors and teachers

than that of the perceptions that customers may have of salespeople. A salesperson does not always hold the position of power. Power may be related to the availability of the product or service from other suppliers. These studies have shown that nonverbal immediacy promotes a reciprocal response, is identifiable, recognized, and produces satisfaction in those receiving it. Further research should help us discover whether these same relationships hold in the sales context.

### **Nonverbal Immediacy and Persuasiveness**

While it is beneficial to point out the benefits of the immediacy principle within the classroom and the organization, the research on nonverbal immediacy and persuasiveness is even more pertinent. As we have shown, previous research suggests that nonverbal immediacy affects learning, motivation, satisfaction, and liking. Other research has linked nonverbal immediacy directly to persuasion.

Albert and Dabbs, Jr. (1970) performed a study in which they manipulated distance and friendliness in a persuasive presentation. The distances ranged from 1-2 feet otherwise categorized as *uncomfortably close*, 4-5 feet

categorized as *average*, and 14-15 feet categorized as *uncomfortably far*. Their research found that persuasion increased as the speaker moved further away, and also that 4-5 feet was the most appropriate distance for the situation. As one might assume, the friendliest speaker was rated as the most persuasive. They also found that close proximity was seen as pressure, and "one way to resist the pressure was to reject or not be persuaded by what the speaker had to say" (p.269).

This research relates to the present study in that it shows that proximity does have an effect on persuasion, and takes it one step further in determining a range for that effect. It is also interesting to see that this research equates closer proximity as pressure. The findings of this research are of particular interest, because they contradict Richmond and McCroskey's (2000) definition of immediacy: "the more others employ immediate behaviors, the more others will like, evaluate highly, and prefer such communicators" (p.86). In this case the most immediate in terms of proxemics was not the most persuasive.

In a related study, Burgoon, Birk, and Pfau (1990) conducted research to see what effects immediacy (vocalics, kinesics, and proxemics) had on persuasion and credibility.

Credibility and persuasion were both measured as the dependent variables with the nonverbal behaviors as the independent variables. The researchers hypothesized a correlation between the two dependent variables. Their study was conducted with students giving persuasive speeches, and persuasiveness was measured on a Likert-type scale with questions like "I felt the speaker was very persuasive." Their research concluded that as kinesics increases in the form of more eye contact, forward lean and facial pleasantness, persuasiveness increases. The Burgoon et al. (1990) study is relevant to the present study in that kinesics had a positive effect on persuasiveness in a speech situation. The research also showed a correlation between credibility and persuasion. This suggests that credibility should not be ignored in a persuasive situation because a lack of credibility, no matter what the nonverbal immediacy behaviors, will likely have an influence on persuasion. It may be interesting to see whether increasing one's nonverbal immediacy behavior might also help to establish one's credibility.

A similar study done by Mehrabian and Williams (1969) asked subjects to create different levels of persuasive speeches. These levels included neutral, moderately

persuasive, and highly persuasive positions. Mehrabian and Williams found that speakers attempting to be persuasive and speakers who were actually persuasive used more eye contact with their audiences, leaned back less or adopted closer distances, and used more affirmative head nods, gestured more and were more facially expressive. In another study, McGinley, LeFevre, and McGinley (1975) looked at the influence of a communicator's body position on opinion change in others. The researchers showed pictures of a female talking about her beliefs on a certain topic. The body positions were manipulated to show some slides of an open body position to certain subjects and slides of closed body position to other subjects. Communicators with an open body position affected more opinion change than those with closed body positions. While these studies looked at persuasive messages that were aimed at opinion change in others, what it does not contribute to sales communication research is actual action taken because of the persuasive message. The present study is not only interested in seeing what behaviors seem persuasive and influence customers' purchases, but more importantly what behaviors increase the effectiveness of a salesperson.

While it has been noticed that nonverbal immediacy behaviors are prevalent in the persuasive environment, there has been no research that correlates these behaviors in the sales presentation. It could also be argued that salespeople should know more about displaying other effective nonverbal and communicative behaviors that may also contribute to persuasion. It might be useful to discover and further the knowledge of these other variables in an attempt to equip salespeople with adaptive behaviors to use in a sales presentation.

### **Sales Effectiveness and Communication**

Although the above mentioned research was done in important contexts, no research was located correlating the principle of immediacy to the sales presentation. In fact, there has been minimal research produced in the field of communication pertaining to sales communication. John Reinard (1997) points out that research on sales communication is in its infancy in the field of communication. More research on sales effectiveness can be found in the business literature. This research suggests a number of different communicative behaviors that relate to sales effectiveness.



Empathy was a term alluded to in a number of articles. For example, Greenberg (1983) wrote an article about three important traits that a successful salesperson should master. These personality traits include empathy, ego drive, and ego strength. Greenberg is suggesting that these personality traits be taken into consideration during the hiring process of salespeople.

While there have been a number of studies that associate empathy with sales effectiveness, other research has debated this notion. For example, Dawson, Spoer and Pettijohn (1992) argued that previous research establishing a relationship between sales effectiveness and empathy "had not used the best instruments for measuring the construct of empathy" (p. 300). Their study contradicted previous research in this area. Their results showed that empathy is not related to sales performance. The question of a connection between empathy and effectiveness has become an issue.

It may also be of interest to determine the degree of emotional intelligence an effective salesperson has. Emotional intelligence refers to the capability of a person to adapt to the emotional needs of another person. A study by Verbeke (1997) tapped into a few nonverbal cues by

looking at the effects of emotions in the sales presentation. Salespeople that were capable of "infecting" others with their emotions using nonverbal cues, otherwise known as charismatic and empathetic people, were more effective sales people. Similarly, salespeople that are also sensitive to the emotions of others demonstrated high levels of sales effectiveness. Many of the behaviors that portray charisma and empathy would seem to be the same as nonverbal immediacy behaviors. This suggests that the connection between nonverbal immediacy and influence may well extend to the sales situation.

Other variables that link communication with sales effectiveness have been studied. Soldow and Thomas (1984) looked at relational communication, the form communication takes rather than the content of the message. They proposed that relational communication is a complement to the sales presentation. In addition, the success of the sale is determined by the relational interaction between the buyer and the seller.

Williams and Spiro (1985) performed another study alluding to the importance of this research. They pointed out "verbal and nonverbal aspects of communication are recognized as affecting the persuasiveness of the message

but have not been studied in the personal selling context" (p.435). They proposed that sales effectiveness is "dependent on behavior associated with the salesperson, the customer, and the dyad" (p.437). Their research suggested that communication style (task-orientation, self-orientation, and interaction orientation) affected sales outcomes.

Pace (1962) studied the use of voice, language, personal attitudes, initial impressions, body movement, quality of listening, and overall communication skills of door-to-door salespeople. The findings of this study showed that the use of language and overall impressions were significantly related to sales effectiveness. Pace also found that effective salespeople were more likely to use emotional appeals and dramatization in the sales presentation. Pace suggested that communication skills could be used to differentiate effective salespeople from ineffective salespeople. It would seem important to mention other variables that relate to effectiveness, such as personality traits.

Furthering the justification for the need for this type of research is Reinard's (1997) work. He pointed out "while there is widespread agreement about the importance

of salesperson communication skills, there is little research about communication dispositions that influence salesperson success" (p. 5). In his research, Reinard chose to focus on banking, industry, and trade sales. As a result of interviews within each of these industries, Reinard created an instrument that measures the communicative and non-communicative factors mentioned in the interviews. The communicative factors include: need to persuade, communication sensitivity to others, "people reading" ability, persuasiveness, ability to communicate, ability to close, assertiveness, outgoing/sociable, people oriented, nurturance, and willingness to receive criticism. He found that within industrial sales, there was more of an emphasis put on "communication elements" than in trade or banking sales. Hence, it is important to consider the economic sector when studying communication and sales effectiveness.

More recently, Booroom, Goolsby and Ramsey (1998) suggested that interaction involvement and adaptiveness related to sales effectiveness. Interaction involvement (II) is broadly defined as "the extent to which an individual partakes in a social environment" (p. 19). The following dimensions: attentiveness, perceptiveness, and

responsiveness comprise II. The article suggested that II was positively associated with sales effectiveness, and would be related to adaptiveness in the sales presentation. "Salespeople, with higher levels of II should be more likely to practice adaptive selling because they can effectively gather and understand information needed to convince customers" (p. 20). Therefore, the more adaptive a salesperson is, the more likely it is that s/he will achieve her/his performance goals. The results showed that "II plays integral roles in both adaptiveness and sales performance" (p. 23). All hypotheses were supported in their study, of particular interest to this research was that II is positively associated with sales performance outcomes. The researchers suggested in order to improve their II, salespeople should be trained in empathetic listening skills, in determining problems behind symptoms, and in how to propose flexible solutions (p.25). In the nonverbal communication literature, interaction involvement seems to involve the same nonverbal behaviors as immediacy (LaFrance & Ickes, 1981). To the extent that interaction involvement is related to immediacy, we might expect similar results.

These results show that there have been developments in the area of sales effectiveness, suggesting that there is still much to be learned in this area. Booroom (1998) states:

In particular, variables measuring perceptual skills (e.g. listening skills, nonverbal communication, and questioning) should be studied to determine their effects on salesperson information gathering, and development of procedural and declarative knowledge, and creation and execution of unique strategies. (p. 26)

Moreover, Miles, Arnold, and Nash (1990) showed that an effective salesperson must have an adaptive interpersonal communication style. The current research will determine the specific nonverbal immediacy behaviors and communication behaviors that prove most beneficial in the sales presentation. This specific information about communicative behaviors will benefit the adaptability of salespeople in a sales presentation.

This review of the literature identifies a range of behaviors and factors that relate to sales effectiveness. What the research has shown is that nonverbal immediacy behaviors have shown positive outcomes when immediacy is

used within the relationships of teacher and student, supervisor and subordinate, counselor and patient, and physician and patient. Certain nonverbal immediacy behaviors have also been shown to affect the persuasion of opinion change and perception. Variables that would seem similar to some immediacy behaviors have been connected to sales effectiveness.

Many of the nonverbal immediacy behaviors utilized in teaching and organizations could very well affect a salesperson's effectiveness. For this reason, it makes sense to investigate uses of nonverbal immediacy in the sales arena. As indicated above, Reinard (1997) has provided a particularly useful summary of other communicative factors likely to impact sales effectiveness. A portion of these will be studied as well. Sales managers will be used to evaluate the communication behaviors used by their salespeople because they are in the best position to judge the behaviors of their representatives. Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

### **Research Question**

RQ: Which communication variables (as judged by sales managers) discriminate between "best" and "worst" sales performers?

Immediacy behaviors include eye contact, smiling, gestures, body orientation, movement, body position, and vocal expression.

Other communication behaviors include assertiveness, people orientated, willingness to receive criticism, identification of other's needs, adaptability to other's, persuasiveness, ability to communicate, and ability to close (Reinard, 1997). The following communication variables that Reinard identified, that might be related to sales effectiveness, were not included in this study: need to persuade, communication sensitivity to others, outgoing/sociable, and nurturance. These variables were not included due to the redundancy of the questions in comparison to the other indexes, and because these variables were more trait-based than skills that can be taught. Every effort was made to decrease the size of the survey instrument to elicit a higher response rate.

This research question seeks to specifically provide communication profiles of the most successful sales



personnel, and information that could provide developmental help to sales personnel seeking to improve communication skills. It could also be used in the hiring and training of sales representatives.

## **Chapter III - Method**

This chapter will review the questionnaire, data collection, and data analysis used in this study.

### **Questionnaires**

#### *Immediacy*

In order to study the nonverbal immediacy behaviors and other communicative factors employed by effective and ineffective salespeople, two surveys were adapted from related studies. The nonverbal immediacy behavior survey was adapted from a study of teacher immediacy and effectiveness done by J.F. Andersen (1979) Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy scale (BII). As Andersen (1979) indicates:

The instrument operationalizes immediacy as those communication behaviors manifested and perceived when a person maintains closer physical distance, uses direct body orientation, is relaxed, uses overall purposeful body movement, gestures, engages in positive head nods, smiles, uses eye contact, and is vocally expressive (p. 546).

Andersen tested the reliability of this instrument by finding high correlation between reports of students

regarding their teacher's immediacy and the reports of trained observers. The survey was also tested in a pilot study prior to this study with 96 students enrolled in public speaking classes here at San Jose State University (alpha = .8574). In the present study an Alpha of .8743 was reported for the BII. The present survey instrument substituted the word "salesperson" for "student." Conlee et al. (1993) used this same adaptation in their research in which the word "patient" was substituted for "student" (See Appendix C for the BII).

#### *Other Communication Variables*

The communicative factors used in Reinard's (1997) study provide additional insight. Weitz (1981) pointed out that, "Few measures of sales behavior exist. Thus research must be directed toward developing measures of sales behaviors and moderating variables." (p. 98). Consequently, the questionnaire also includes Reinard's (1997) communicative factors: identification of other needs, adaptability to others, persuasiveness, ability to communicate, ability to close, assertiveness, people oriented, and willingness to receive criticism (See Appendix D for a list of Reinard's communicative factors). The inclusion of these other variables allows an assessment

of the relative importance of nonverbal immediacy in the sales context. It should be noted that Reinard used the indices for these variables in order to obtain self-reports. In this study, the indices were used to obtain sales managers' judgments.

Reinard tested all scales for reliability in each of the three industries he studied. Any scale that did not reach an Alpha of .60 was omitted (see Table 2). Reinard (1997) states "The actual reliabilities varied somewhat from one sales application to another - likely representing the fact that different dimensions are more meaningful in some sales settings than in others" (p. 23).

Not all scales showed a significant reliability in the present study. One such item was question 34 for persuasiveness, "This salesperson insists on having their own way in an argument" this question did not work with the scale and was omitted. As a result, the reliability estimate changed from alpha = .14 to .80. Table 2 reports the reliability estimate of each variable in the present study, and in Reinard's study.

**Table 1 - Reliability**

<b>Present Study (sales manager's ratings)</b>	<b>High Tech Sales</b>	<b>Reinard's Study (self-reports)</b>	<b>Banking Sales</b>	<b>Industrial Sales</b>	<b>Trade Sales</b>
Identification of Other's Needs	.90	Identification of Other's Needs	.79	.887	.85
Adaptability to Other's	.54	Adaptability to Other's	.659	.693	.788
Persuasiveness	.80	Persuasiveness	.74	.932	.823
Ability to Communicate	.92	Ability to Communicate	.63	.894	.856
Ability to Close	.73	Ability to Close	.693	.861	.743
Assertiveness	.40	Assertiveness	.828	.724	.808
People Oriented	.84	People Oriented	.743	.877	.759
Willingness to Receive Criticism	.82	Willingness to Receive Criticism	.662	.814	.67

Due to the repetitive nature of both survey instruments, the questions from the BII and Reinard's communicative factors were mixed in together. This also helped to ensure that each question was answered independently.

The questionnaires consisted of scales asking for the sales managers' opinions. Each statement, e.g., "This salesperson relates well to others" was followed by seven choices: *strongly agree, agree, partially agree, undecided, partially disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree*. These Likert scale items comprised indices that are commonly used in human communication research.

*Sales Effectiveness*

Sales managers responded to all scales for their "best" and "worst" sales representatives (See Appendix A & B). Thus the contrast between the "best" and "worst" constitutes the operational definition of sales effectiveness, the criterion variable in this study.

Table 2 shows a 2 x 3 crosstabulation matrix that was performed as a validity check on the criterion variable, sales effectiveness. Managers also provided information about whether the sales representatives tended to make their quotas.

**Table 2 - Crosstabulation**

		<b>Goes above quota</b>	<b>Makes quota</b>	<b>Does not make quota</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Best or Worst</b>	<b>Best</b>	155	42	5	202
	<b>Worst</b>	2	30	170	202
<b>Total</b>		157	72	175	404

Chi square analysis of the data showed that the cells differed from expectations to a statistically significant degree ( $\chi^2 = 306.67$ ,  $df = 2$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, the managers' assessments of who the "best" and "worst" salespeople are is closely tied to the very practical (and observable) concern about whether they make their quotas.

Every method contains its own advantages and disadvantages with regard to data collection. For example, while the use of questionnaires may be efficient in collecting data on a broad range of topics to a large sample, the richness of the verbal language is left out of the equation. Similarly, interviews may allow an in-depth perspective, justification, and further insight into the reasons and explanations about a particular behavior though the numbers may be limited. Taylor and Trujillo (1994) explain it best: "In sum, we believe that debates regarding which approach is "better" have become tiresome. After all, the worth of any theory is demonstrated not in debate, however clever, but in its utility for various communities or scholars and practitioners" (p. 167).

The present study uses questionnaires as a method because they can provide an overview of behavior and the capability of collecting and managing a lot of data rapidly. Sales managers were used for this study because they are in a good position to know the characteristics of the sales force. Although this method does not sample the actual behavior of sales people, every effort was made to account for the limitations of survey questionnaires. For example, sales managers were directed to fill out the

survey based on sales people in their organization that they had actually seen in a sales presentation. The instructions read "Please fill out this questionnaire by thinking about the individuals (whom you have actually seen in a sales presentation) that characterize the best and worst sales representative within your organization" (See Appendixes A and B for a copy of the survey instruments).

One cannot leave out the possibility that sales managers may have marked the survey with the answers they have been trained or socialized to believe is the most effective way to present in a sales presentation. For this reason demographic information such as years in position, gender, and age were asked at the front of the survey to ensure that the sales managers had an actual sales person in mind.

### **Data Collection**

Due to the limits of generalizability, this research project focused on one sector of the economy, the high technology industry, a locally important economic sector. The target group for the purposes of this study consisted of any sales manager in the high technology industry nationwide. The sample was obtained through Survey



Sampling Inc., a company that provides business samples to survey researchers. Eleven hundred nine records of sales managers were obtained including names, addresses, phone numbers, and Standard Industrial Classification Code (SIC) (See Appendix E). Survey Sampling Inc.'s selection procedures include calculating a proper sampling interval, using a random start and selecting each  $n^{\text{th}}$  respondent.

The packet mailed to the sales managers included the questionnaire, a cover letter with a brief description of the research and directions, and a self-addressed stamped envelope for the questionnaire to be returned in. These packets were mailed to all 1109 sales managers. First, the sales managers were asked to fill out the questionnaire evaluating the sales presentation and sales effectiveness of their best salesperson and their worst salesperson that they have actually seen in a sales presentation. Sales managers were asked not to include the names of the sales representatives in order to assure anonymity.

From the mailing, 33 surveys were initially returned. There may be a few reasons for the lack of response. Some companies on the mailing list were out of business due to the present state of the economy. Also, some sales managers were no longer with the companies due to

downsizing or lack of productivity. The lack of response may also be due to the role of sales managers in general. Sales managers in any industry are extremely busy attempting to reach quarterly goals and managing the sales force.

Due to the limited number received, it was decided to further pursue and follow up with these sales managers by calling all 1109 sales managers on the mailing list. This method was much more successful, sales managers were asked to fill out an email format of the survey that contained click, drop down, and text boxes in which respondents could easily click in their responses. The email versions of the surveys were created to elicit a higher response rate. Sales managers were more willing to agree to take an email-formatted version of the survey than a paper version. This may be due to a perception that an email version of a survey takes less time and effort on the part of the respondent. There were 375 emails sent out with 169 received, making 202 surveys in total. Thus, the final response rate was 202/1109 or 18%. Table 3 & 4 show the gender and age frequencies of the sales representatives evaluated in this study.

**Table 3 - Gender Frequency**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>Male</b>	309	76.5
<b>Female</b>	93	23
<b>Total</b>	402	99.5
<b>Missing</b>	2	.5
<b>Total</b>	404	100.0

**Table 4 - Age Frequency**

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
<b>18-25</b>	36	8.9
<b>26-35</b>	147	36.4
<b>36-45</b>	148	36.6
<b>46-55</b>	55	13.6
<b>56-65</b>	14	3.5
<b>66-75</b>	2	.5
<b>Total</b>	402	99.5
<b>Missing</b>	2	.5
<b>Total</b>	404	100

### **Data Analysis**

The purpose of this study was to determine which communication variables (as judged by sales managers) discriminate between "best" and "worst" sales performers. Due to the sample size being sufficiently large, multivariate discriminant analysis the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the data. This type of analysis determines which predictor variables among many were most useful for discriminating among groups (*SPSS® Base 10.0 Application Guide, 1999*), in

this case, the "best" and "worst" sales performers.

Communication behaviors were used as the multiple predictor variables, and the criterion value was the effectiveness of the salespeople. The book *SPSS® Base 10.0 Application Guide* (1999) states "The discriminant procedure identifies a linear combination of quantitative predictor variables that best characterizes the difference among groups (p. 243)."

In order to determine whether each predictor variable was different in the best and worst groups, a means analysis procedure was used. A "univariate ANOVAs" procedure was used to determine which predictor variables could significantly discriminate between the best and the worst salespeople. To determine the optimal equation for the discrimination analysis a stepwise method with a probability of F to enter .05 and F to remove .10 was followed.

## Chapter IV - Results

Table 5 shows the mean differences in classification between the best and worst representative for each predictor variable. The standard deviation shows how much the scores vary in dispersion from the mean score.

**Table 5 - Group Scale Statistics**

<b>Predictor Variable</b>	<b>Best or Worst</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>
<b>Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale</b>	Best	78.6238	9.5733	.6736
	Worst	58.5099	12.7386	.8963
<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	Best	18.3960	2.1903	.1541
	Worst	9.5297	3.5606	.2505
<b>Adaptability to Other's Needs</b>	Best	11.0891	2.2443	.1579
	Worst	6.8366	2.6085	.1835
<b>Persuasiveness</b>	Best	11.7723	1.8841	.1326
	Worst	6.4208	2.4467	.1721
<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	Best	36.9604	3.7995	.2673
	Worst	20.4455	7.0358	.4950
<b>Ability to Close</b>	Best	11.5347	1.9191	.1350
	Worst	5.8515	2.4409	.1717
<b>Assertiveness</b>	Best	13.0198	3.6048	.2536
	Worst	12.9851	3.6508	.2569
<b>People Oriented</b>	Best	18.6832	2.3026	.1620
	Worst	12.2624	4.3257	.3044
<b>Willingness to Receive Criticism</b>	Best	16.3267	3.5565	.2502
	Worst	10.1188	4.0440	.2845

The number of questions varies in each index making it difficult to differentiate the relationship of the mean differences between each index. Therefore, Table 6 shows each index equalized to the same scale.

**Table 6 - Equalized Group Scale Statistics**

<b>Predictor Variable</b>	<b>Best or Worst</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>	<b>Std. Error Mean</b>
<b>Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale</b>	Best	5.2416	.6382	.0449
	Worst	3.9007	.8492	.0598
<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	Best	6.1320	.7301	.0514
	Worst	3.1766	1.1869	.0835
<b>Adaptability to Other's Needs</b>	Best	5.5446	1.1221	.0790
	Worst	3.4183	1.3042	.0918
<b>Persuasiveness</b>	Best	5.8861	.9421	.0663
	Worst	3.2104	1.2233	.0861
<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	Best	6.1601	.6333	.0446
	Worst	3.4076	1.1726	.0825
<b>Ability to Close</b>	Best	5.7673	.9595	.0675
	Worst	2.9257	1.2204	.0859
<b>Assertiveness</b>	Best	4.3399	1.2016	.0845
	Worst	4.3284	1.2169	.0856
<b>People Oriented</b>	Best	6.2277	.7675	.0540
	Worst	4.0875	1.4419	.1015
<b>Willingness to Receive Criticism</b>	Best	5.4422	1.1855	.0834
	Worst	3.3729	1.3480	.0949

Examination of a test of equality of group means in Table 7 indicates that all variables with the exception of *assertiveness* can significantly discriminate between the best and worst salesperson. The task that remains is to determine the best combination of predictor variables that will optimize prediction.

**Table 7 - Test of Equality of Group Means**

	<b>Wilks' Lambda</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale</b>	.555	321.844	.000
<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	.307	908.662	.000
<b>Adaptability to Other's</b>	.566	308.499	.000
<b>Persuasiveness</b>	.399	606.637	.000
<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	.318	861.668	.000
<b>Ability to Close</b>	.373	676.736	.000
<b>Assertiveness</b>	1.000	.009	.924
<b>People Oriented</b>	.537	346.788	.000
<b>Willingness to Receive Criticism</b>	.600	268.412	.000

*Note.* (df=1,402)

When the stepwise method was used (see Table 8) results indicated that a weighted combination of 4 variables could optimally predict effective salespeople; *Identification of Other's Needs, Ability to Close, Persuasiveness, Ability to Communicate.* Salespeople scoring high on these variables will tend to be the most effective representatives.

**Table 8 - Variables Entered/Removed<sup>a,b</sup>**

Step	Variable Entered	Wilks' Lambda							
		Statistic	df1	df2	df3	Exact F			
						Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1	Identification of Other's Needs	.307	1	1	402	908.662	1	402	.000
2	Ability to Close	.262	2	1	402	564.341	2	401	.000
3	Persuasiveness	.249	3	1	402	402.637	3	400	.000
4	Ability to Communicate	.243	4	1	402	311.039	4	399	.000

- a. Maximum significance of F to enter is .05.
- b. Minimum significance of F to remove is .10.

Variables are removed in steps from the equation to determine which variables have the strongest correlation with the dependent variable. Then at each step, the variable that minimizes the overall Wilks' Lambda is entered. So, the best predictor of "best/worst" categorization is whether the salesperson identifies customers' needs. The next variable to account for the maximum amount of variance remaining is "ability to close." Then comes "persuasiveness" and "ability to communicate."

Table 9 and 10 accounts for the variables both left in the analysis and left out of the analysis. Of the variables that become a part of the discriminant function, all have a tolerance level sufficiently high to suggest



stability. In considering the variables not in the analysis one can see the amount of variance not accounted for if that variable is chosen as the next one to enter the equation. One can see at step four that adding the new variable to the equation will not make a statistically significant difference in variance accounted for so "ability to communicate" is the last variable to be used.

**Table 9 - Variables in the Analysis**

<b>Step</b>	<b>Variable</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>	<b>Sig. Of F to Remove</b>	<b>Wilks' Lambda</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	1.000	.000	
<b>2</b>	<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	.831	.000	.373
	<b>Ability to Close</b>	.831	.000	.307
<b>3</b>	<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	.689	.000	.293
	<b>Ability to Close</b>	.810	.000	.279
	<b>Persuasiveness</b>	.741	.000	.262
<b>4</b>	<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	.542	.000	.262
	<b>Ability to Close</b>	.753	.000	.263
	<b>Persuasiveness</b>	.669	.001	.250
	<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	.476	.002	.249

Table 10 - Variables Not in the Analysis

Step		Tolerance	Min. Tolerance	Sig. of F to Enter	Wilks' Lambda
0	<b>Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale</b>	1.000	1.000	.000	.555
	<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	1.000	1.000	.000	.307
	<b>Adaptability to Other's Needs</b>	1.000	1.000	.000	.566
	<b>Persuasiveness</b>	1.000	1.000	.000	.399
	<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	1.000	1.000	.000	.318
	<b>Ability to Close</b>	1.000	1.000	.000	.373
	<b>Assertiveness</b>	1.000	1.000	.924	1.000
	<b>People Oriented</b>	1.000	1.000	.000	.537
	<b>Willingness to Receive Criticism</b>	1.000	1.000	.000	.600
1	<b>Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale</b>	.864	.864	.000	.295
	<b>Adaptability to Other's Needs</b>	.776	.776	.038	.303
	<b>Persuasiveness</b>	.760	.760	.000	.279
	<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	.580	.580	.000	.272
	<b>Ability to Close</b>	.831	.831	.000	.262
	<b>Assertiveness</b>	.988	.988	.056	.304
	<b>People Oriented</b>	.701	.701	.157	.305
	<b>Willingness to Receive Criticism</b>	.831	.831	.016	.302
2	<b>Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale</b>	.844	.761	.009	.258
	<b>Adaptability to Other's Needs</b>	.771	.688	.204	.261
	<b>Persuasiveness</b>	.741	.689	.000	.249
	<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	.527	.527	.000	.250
	<b>Assertiveness</b>	.976	.813	.340	.262
	<b>People Oriented</b>	.695	.634	.568	.262
	<b>Willingness to Receive Criticism</b>	.820	.733	.177	.261
3	<b>Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale</b>	.794	.668	.136	.247
	<b>Adaptability to Other's Needs</b>	.761	.606	.460	.248
	<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	.476	.476	.002	.243
	<b>Assertiveness</b>	.970	.670	.577	.249
	<b>People Oriented</b>	.663	.582	.672	.249
	<b>Willingness to Receive Criticism</b>	.817	.611	.113	.247
4	<b>Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale</b>	.686	.411	.716	.243
	<b>Adaptability to Other's Needs</b>	.752	.470	.690	.243
	<b>Assertiveness</b>	.970	.476	.593	.243
	<b>People Oriented</b>	.584	.419	.115	.241
	<b>Willingness to Receive Criticism</b>	.783	.456	.336	.242

Table 11 shows the result of a discriminant analysis relating communicative behaviors to sales effectiveness. As explained previously nine communication variables were used to predict differences between those judged as "best" and "worst" salespeople by sales managers. These nine variables were behavioral indicants of immediacy scale, identification of other's needs, adaptability to other's needs, persuasiveness, ability to communicate, ability to close, assertiveness, people oriented, and willingness to receive criticism. The Eigenvalue shows a large ratio of between groups and within groups' sums of squares. The canonical correlation shows the relationship between the salespeople's discriminant scores and their grouping as "best" or "worst." Thus, our canonical discriminant analysis indicated a single significant discriminant function accounting for approximately 76% of the variance ( $R_c = .870$ ).

**Table 11 - Eigenvalues**

Function	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Canonical Correlation
1	3.118	100.0	100.0	.870

Table 12 displays the Wilks' Lambda statistic. This Wilks' Lambda shows what variance has not been accounted

for by the discriminant function. Twenty-four percent of the variance has not been accounted for by the linear combination of predictor communication variables. The analysis shows that there is a statistically significant difference between the centroids of the "best" and "worst" groups (on the communication variables considered simultaneously).

**Table 12 - Wilks' Lambda**

<b>Test of Function(s)</b>	<b>Wilks' Lambda</b>	<b>Chi-square</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
1	.243	566.165	4	.000

In Table 13 the weight of each variable in relation to the overall score is shown. The raw score can be used to compute the variable score for each case. The standardized score is found by multiplying the raw score by the estimate of its standard deviation, and it allows us to compare the relative effect of each variable in the equation.

**Table 13 - Canonical Discriminant Function Coefficients**

<b>Predictor Variable</b>	<b>Raw</b>	<b>Standardized</b>
<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	.143	.422
<b>Persuasiveness</b>	.105	.230
<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	.046	.257
<b>Ability to Close</b>	.165	.363
<b>(Constant)</b>	-5.699	

Table 14 shows the correlation of each variable with the canonical discriminant function ( $r$ ). The coefficient of determination ( $r^2$ ) is included to describe the amount of variance in the discriminant function accounted for by each variable. *Identification of Other's Needs*, *Ability to Communicate*, *Ability to Close*, and *Persuasiveness* have the highest correlation with the canonical variable scores.

**Table 14 - Structure Matrix**

<b>Predictor Variable</b>	<b>r</b>	<b>r<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Identification of Other's Needs</b>	.851	.724
<b>Ability to Communicate</b>	.829	.687
<b>Ability to Close</b>	.735	.567
<b>Persuasiveness</b>	.696	.484
<b>People Oriented<sup>a</sup></b>	.596	.355
<b>Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale<sup>a</sup></b>	.489	.239
<b>Adaptability to Other's Needs<sup>a</sup></b>	.476	.226
<b>Willingness to Receive Criticism<sup>a</sup></b>	.414	.171
<b>Assertiveness<sup>a</sup></b>	-.028	.000

**Note.** Pooled with-in groups correlations between discriminating variables and standardized canonical discriminant functions  
**Variables ordered by absolute size of correlation within function.**  
**a. This variable not used in the analysis**

Table 15 reports how many cases are properly classified, and misclassified. The cross validation estimates the success of this classification. Cross validation is done only for those cases in the analysis. In cross validation, each case is classified by the function derived from all cases other than that case. The

best sales people were correctly classified 98.5% of the time, while the worst sales people were correctly classified 90.1%. In the original grouped cases 94.8% were correctly classified. In the cross-validated grouped cases 94.3% were classified correctly.

**Table 15 - Classification Results**

			Predicted Group Membership		Total
			Best	Worst	
<b>Original</b>	<b>Count</b>	Best	199	3	202
		Worst	18	184	202
	<b>%</b>	Best	98.5	1.5	100.0
		Worst	8.9	91.1	100.0
<b>Cross-validated</b>	<b>Count</b>	Best	199	3	202
		Worst	20	182	202
	<b>%</b>	Best	98.5	1.5	100.0
		Worst	9.9	90.1	100.0

## Chapter V - Discussion

This research provides an interesting discovery regarding the communicative behaviors sales managers report effective salespeople using in a sales presentation. All variables used to distinguish effective from ineffective salespeople with the exception of *assertiveness* significantly related to the canonical variable. The traits that are most predictive of effectiveness in this research study were *Identification of Other's Needs, Ability to Close, Persuasiveness, and Ability to Communicate*. These four variables relate rather closely with the fundamentals of selling, in terms of the sales process. The sales process includes such concerns as: building rapport, probing for needs, selling to needs, overcoming objections, and closing (Balsley & Birsner, 1987).

By breaking the sales process down, we can see a connection between the predictive traits and the sales process. This is not to say that the predictive traits are only used in certain steps of this process, only that the predictive traits are noticed as skills used in implementing this process. The results show that the

predictive traits are continuous skills that should be used and are being used by effective salespeople.

The first step in the process is building rapport. This involves creating and maintaining a relationship based on trust and established credibility. It is helpful to note that previous research has shown that the immediacy principle has a positive effect on the credibility of the communicator (Burgoon, Coker, & Coker, 1986; Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). Soldow and Thomas (1984) allude to the importance of building rapport in their research. They show us that the success of the sale is determined by the relational interaction between the buyer and the seller. While a salesperson might not always have a solid company name behind them, a good salesperson can make the customer feel comfortable and confident enough to purchase from them. Having the *ability to communicate*, and being *people oriented* are key here.

The next step in the sales process is probing for the needs of the customer, or *identification of other's needs*. In order to offer a solution with their product or service a salesperson must know what the need or the problem is. This step also involves finding all the reasons behind this need or search for a new product. By listening and



interpreting the behaviors of the customer one is able to determine this need and offer a solution.

*Ability to communicate* also plays an integral role in this step. Layering your questions, and probing are critical in getting at the real pain or problems. It is crucial to know who is having the problems with what, why, and how. As stated early, listening is also dually important. A salesperson could be too focused on asking all the right questions, and they may forget to listen to evaluate the responses they are receiving.

Listening is a key trait of offering excellent customer service. The mere physical act of listening can boost self-esteem, but most importantly, it can make the customer realize that they are being assisted in a process rather than being sold to. As discussed in the literature review, the research on immediacy outside the sales arena concludes that it is evaluated and assessed positively by receivers. In the present study the mean differences between the best and the worst candidates showed that the best candidates did exhibit a higher level of immediacy. One could deduce that customers also evaluated and assessed this behavior positively, based on the effectiveness of the salesperson.

The next step in the sales process involves selling to the needs of the customer. *Persuasiveness* is a fundamental in selling, the ability to influence another to take action in a specific direction. While persuasiveness is a fundamental in this step of the process, its usefulness is necessary throughout the process. The literature has shown immediacy to enhance the persuasiveness of the sender (Albert & Dabbs, Jr., 1970; Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau, 1990; LaCrosse, 1975). This present study is consistent with the immediacy theory in this respect. The results indicate that persuasiveness is a key contributor to the effectiveness of the salesperson, and that immediacy also shows significance in relation to this effectiveness. Having the ego drive, as noted by Greenberg 1983 study, to influence people is an important characteristic of an effective salesperson. Not only should a salesperson sell to the needs of a customer, but he/she must also find and/or create a latent pain with that customer. In other words, bringing forward a need that the customer did not realize they had.

In persuading, a salesperson must know how to create urgency with the prospect. On the other hand, there is a fine line between being too pushy and being persuasive. It

is important to be able to facilitate a process, by knowing when and how to step in. In this economy, even if there is a budget approved for the sale, the prospect could be afraid to take such a big risk. In this instance, the need for *persuasiveness* is even more pertinent for taking the deal to the next level. Yet, another way to assist in motivating the customer to action is by exhibiting nonverbal immediacy. Nonverbal immediacy has been proven outside of the sales arena to enhance the motivation of students in a classroom setting (Frymier, 1993; Richmond & McCroskey, 1990). As determined by sales managers, we now have data to show that immediacy not only affects the motivation of students, it also motivates a customer to buy a product or service.

The *ability to communicate* also plays a vital role in this step. Being able to articulate what you are selling has proven to be an important commodity for an effective salesperson. Pace (1962) found that the use of language and overall impressions were significantly related to sales effectiveness. In fact Pace goes on to suggest that communication skills can be used to differentiate effective salespeople from ineffective salespeople. A good

salesperson will use their *ability to communicate* to paint the vision for the future use of their product or service.

Having the *ability to communicate* also relates to the ability to properly analyze your audience for the sales presentation. In high technology sales there are a wide array of positions involved within the sales process, such as a businessperson, a technical person, a finance person, and an executive person. There is undoubtedly a lot of technical jargon that may be used in the sales presentation. Being able to eloquently communicate with all of these levels while at the same time keeping their interests is essential.

Overcoming objections is the next step in the sales process. This step involves being aware of and overcoming any possible objections for your product or service, and being able to turn a negative into a positive. An effective salesperson, with the *ability to communicate*, is one that is able to put a positive spin on every objection while at the same time keeping composure.

Another way to excel at overcoming objections is being keen on the needs of others (*identification of others' needs*). Time is a valuable commodity in sales. One should be able to have a solid understanding of where the prospect

is at in the sales process and identify any hidden objections. For example, is the prospect negotiating, or are they just using your company as a "column fodder." A column fodder is a colloquialism used to describe a company that has regulations that require a certain number of bids to be taken before a decision is made. In a column fodder situation, a decision may have already been made. The result is unnecessary bids from other companies. In essence wasting the time and efforts of these bidding companies in order for regulations to be met.

"Always be closing" is a popular phrase in the sales context. While closing the sale is the last stage in the sales process, it is also a continuous strategy. Again as in persuasiveness, a salesperson runs the risk of coming off too strong or too weak when attempting to close the sale or agreement. Knowing when and how to step in is key here. In relation to the results of this study, closing incorporates all the other variables into play once again. Persuading, effectively communicating, maintaining awareness of the needs and possible objections of the customer through the end of the process will enhance this ability to close.

There are many obstacles that could stand in the way of a deal being closed. A salesperson with the *ability to close* has both internal and external procedures and courses of action lined up. For example, there are the legal contracts, the executive sponsors, proper technical support, and the finance department to approve the deal, having all these procedures prepared makes the closing run more smoothly.

Even if a salesperson has mastered all the behaviors of an effective salesperson, the bottom line is that they must be able to close the deal. A salesperson that cannot effectively close the sale runs the risk of losing the deal to a competitor that has successfully created urgency with the prospect. The results of this study show that having the ability to close is a crucial element in high technology sales.

As with most things, selling is a continuous learning experience. There are lots of varying situations and experiences to master. This study shows that an effective characteristic of a salesperson is their *willingness to receive criticism*. Greenberg (1983) reinforces this by suggesting that ego strength is one of the personality traits of a successful salesperson. Not all deals will be

won, but it is necessary that a salesperson have the resilience to stick with their motivation even when faced with continuous rejection, or criticism.

There was a lack of reliability obtained in the index for *assertiveness* ( $\alpha = .40$ ). The index may not have worked reliably due to the differences in method between Reinard's study and the present. The difference may lie in using the scale as a self-report versus an evaluation or it may reflect the uniqueness of high technology sales.

Reinard's scale was originally created for salespeople to rate themselves in terms of their personal characteristics as opposed to a sales manager's evaluation of them. "It should be mentioned that the instrument does not really examine sales behavior itself. Instead, it identifies tendencies that people have in describing their own dispositions and habits (Reinard, 1999, p.21)." In a self-report, a person can be more accurate about categorizing himself or herself as assertive, than when being evaluated by another person. Similarly, sales managers may have seen the items that measure *assertiveness* as negative characteristics rather than positive. When looking at the individual items that comprise *assertiveness* the lack of reliability obtained suggests that sales

managers don't see a direct person freely telling others what is thought to be done relating to speaking ones mind in a disagreement.

Although Reinard rates *assertiveness* as a fundamental in selling, *assertiveness* was the only variable that did not reach significance in relation to the canonical variable. Reinard's explanation for this:

Perhaps one major reason that simple notions of communication and sales success seem to provide desultory patterns of results is that sales settings differ widely. Moreover, with these differences, the types of communication that are important differ greatly as well (p.11).

This suggests that the communication behaviors required for effective selling vary widely from one economic sector to another. For this reason, more measures of communicative factors (i.e. Immediacy) should be included in survey research to determine which factors may show effectiveness in regard to the varying industries.

Another possible reason for the lack of significance obtained by *assertiveness* may be due to the demographics of this market. In high technology there are a lot of information technology people (IT) involved in the process



that are typically very controlling of their technology or applications. These are key people to contact because they are the ones that have to monitor and work with the new product the closest.

These prospects may not like to be sold to assertively. Rather they may like to feel as if they are being guided through a process. There is also a very fine line between being confident and being arrogant. Often people may portray *assertiveness* as arrogance. Especially in technology, if you are being assertive you are driving the buying process as opposed to facilitating it. This will make the customer feel defensive. This is not to say *assertiveness* is not important at times, but an effective salesperson has identified the needs of the prospect, and knows when to use it in the persuasive arena. Data from high technology managers, however, suggests that *assertiveness* may be a sales characteristic that does not generalize to all economic sectors.

In public companies, including the software industry, it is commonly known that waiting until the end of the quarter usually equates to a better deal. This is due to the fact that salespeople are eager to hit quarterly goals

and incentives. In this situation, *assertiveness* would be considered a moot point at the beginning of the quarter.

In general, there are a lot of people involved in the sales process in high technology sales. This can make the use of *assertiveness* nonproductive when the decision to purchase must include so many people and positions. Having a lot of people/positions involved in the sales cycle also draws out the length of the cycle making *assertiveness* a hard attribute to use.

It is often the case that a salesperson in the high technology industry is called an account manager rather than a salesperson. This title puts a positive spin on the focus of the position. An account manager is there to facilitate the buying process and to ensure that the customer is enjoying buying as opposed to being sold to. This is a much more attractive role to play. With the number of people involved in the sales cycle, the term account manager is more of a substantive shift rather than a linguistic shift. Sales representatives truly are managing the process.

While the predictive ability of nonverbal immediacy did not rate as high as the previous four, there was a significant mean difference between that of the best

candidates and the worst candidates with regard to this variable. It could also be argued that being effective at using nonverbal immediacy in a sales presentation would relate to their *ability to communicate*.

With that said, research shows that people are able to distinguish positive and negative attributes based on the nonverbal immediacy behaviors used. For example, more immediacy is seen as positive and less as negative (Koermer, Goldstein, & Fortson, 1993). Based on this research if a salesperson is not using the adaptive (*adaptability to other's*) communicative behavior, the deal may be lost to a salesperson that is modeling this behavior. Having this adaptability with ones immediacy behavior in a sales presentation may benefit the salesperson in terms of the positive attributes a customer will perceive of them.

The guiding research has shown that there are certain nonverbal immediacy behaviors that have a positive and negative result (Albert & Dabbs, Jr., 1970; Burgoon, Birk, & Pfau, 1990; Burgoon, Coker, & Coker, 1986; Conlee, Olvera, & Vagim, 1993; Frymier, 1993; Koermer, Goldstein, & Fortson, 1993; LaCrosse, 1975; Richmond, 1990; Richmond & McCroskey, 2000). This thesis has extended that knowledge

and taken it a step further into the sales industry. This research has proven that effective salespeople are using nonverbal immediacy behaviors and other communicative factors in persuading customers to buy a product or service. Although, there may be other concerns for salespeople to focus on.

Perhaps the predictive ability of nonverbal immediacy did not rate as high as the previous four due to the operationalization of the concept. In this study nonverbal immediacy was operationalized by Andersen's (1979) BII instrument:

The instrument operationalizes immediacy as those communication behaviors manifested and perceived when a person maintains closer physical distance, uses direct body orientation, is relaxed, uses overall purposeful body movement, gestures, engages in positive head nods, smiles, uses eye contact, and is vocally expressive (p. 546).

While this instrument measures immediacy as a reflection of closeness, it does not get at the friendliness and warmth that this concept implies. For example, Andersen's (1998) definition of nonverbal immediacy behaviors "messages that

signal feelings of warmth, closeness, and involvement with other people" (p. 187).

It is a possibility that given a different operational definition of nonverbal immediacy, the concept may have a higher rating on the scale. One way of doing this would be to include a generalized immediacy scale (Andersen, 1979). A generalized immediacy scale would provide the sales managers with a definition of the concept that is similar to Andersen's (1998) definition of nonverbal immediacy behaviors as "messages that signal feelings of warmth, closeness, and involvement with other people" (p. 187). After reading the definition, sales managers would be asked to rate their sales representatives according to how they fit this characterization on a semantic differential scale.

As stated earlier, there are many important facets of the sales cycle, including price product superiority and confidence in the company. If these were the only determining factors in what influences people to buy there would be little competition and very few companies competing. It is important to note that in the sales industry great salespeople with communication skills may overshadow his/her competitors' superior product. If this

is the case, one can see the economic value of learning the communicative traits of effective salespeople.

From the results of this research, it can be concluded that salespeople need to use more noticeable nonverbal immediacy behaviors and communicative factors. Weitz (1981) explains the importance of the knowledge of skills to use in the sales presentation when he states that: "The salesperson enters a customer interaction with a set of skills or abilities, a level of knowledge about the products and the customer, and a range of alternatives that can be offered to the customers. These factors can amplify the effectiveness and/or constrain the range of behaviors in which the salesperson can act effectively" (p. 93). According to the results of the structure matrix in Table 11, *identification of other's needs, ability to communicate, ability to close, and persuasiveness* have the highest correlation with the canonical variable scores. It is possible that salespeople that focus on implementing more of these variables will improve their overall success in the sales arena by leaving a lasting impression. Moreover, salespeople exhibiting these behaviors to customers may give them the notion that the salesperson showed them effective communicative and nonverbal immediate

behaviors, and as the results indicate, this could result in positive economic outcomes.

This research has brought attention to additional factors that could be included in the hiring and training methodologies of salespeople. Companies are able to survive with inferior products by having salespeople that are able to use training methodologies like *solution selling* as mechanisms that portray persuasive communicative behaviors. *Solution selling* is a more recent trend in the high technology industry. When using *solution selling* as a mechanism, salespeople are focused on solving business issues such as lowering operating costs, increasing customer satisfaction, and improving employee productivity with the sole purpose of increasing revenue and shareholder wealth (Bosworth, 1995). What is equally important besides all these tactics in terms of this research is the way salespeople present themselves. Often a salesperson might have the best product, and have the ability to justify the largest return on investment (ROI). Yet even with these crucial competitive advantages, s/he may lose the deal because of a lack of knowledge regarding effective communication. There will always be new training trends in this industry. The importance of this research shows that

there are fundamental skills that should not be ignored when creating new methodologies for training effective salespeople.

Perhaps this research has highlighted a concept to which little attention has been paid. For example, the research on nonverbal immediacy has been extended to the sales situation. It has illuminated the relative importance of different communication variables to the sales presentation, and more specifically within the high technology sector.

This research, and specifically the discriminant function obtained, provides a communication profile of the most successful sales personnel, complete descriptions and information that could provide developmental help to sales personnel seeking to improve communication skills and information that might be used in the hiring and training of salespeople in the high technology industry. This industry would benefit from focused training on the findings of this research. This specific information about communicative behaviors might benefit the adaptability of salespeople in a sales presentation.



### **Limitations**

One of the limitations of this study stems from its use of evaluations. As noted earlier, one cannot leave out the possibility that the sales managers may have marked the survey with an ideal sales presentation in mind, or what they have been trained or socialized to believe is the most effective way to present in a sales presentation. In addition, the questionnaire asks sales managers to evaluate their best and worst based on memory. By asking it in this way, reliability of the results relies on the memory of the sales manager to complete the questionnaire. If remembering proves to be a problem for sales managers, future research might ask managers to fill out the questionnaire immediately following a sales presentation. In this way, the presentation would be fresh in their minds.

Another limitation is the possibility that this data might be affected by the present state of the economy, specifically within the high technology industry. According to our sales managers, most "worst" salespeople have been weeded out due to these economic times. With the current economy, many companies have been forced to fold or downsize, making room for only the "best" sales candidates.

This factor may have accounted for only 9.9% of the worst sales people that were misclassified in Table 12.

Currently there are a lot of unemployed sales people in high technology. In order for these unemployed sales people to obtain jobs they have to be able to show a proven track record. Even in recruiting employers have the advantage and the capability of being selective in hiring.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

Reinard (1997) states, "Each type of sales is distinct and requires attention to key differences" (p. 11). For this reason, exploring the characteristics of effective sales people in a new industry lends itself to a quantitative assessment of a sales manager's opinion as to what constitutes sales effectiveness. The importance of considering the economic sector has been demonstrated in this study. Future research could extend this same study into other industries to determine the predictors of effectiveness. Perhaps there may have been other variables that constituted sales effectiveness other than what was tested. One example of this in the present study was the reliability of *assertiveness*. This item on the questionnaire did not prove as effective in this industry

as compared to banking, industrial or trade sales. This index did not hold up. Perhaps assertiveness is not an important factor of being an effective salesperson in the high technology industry.

The ultimate goal for future research in the sales context would be to show that the previous research on nonverbal immediacy could be extended into this arena. For example, previous research links this phenomenon to a reciprocal response, motivation, satisfaction, liking, performance outcomes, increased credibility, attractiveness, and persuasiveness. It is identifiable, recognized, and assessed positively by those receiving it.

Future research should also attempt to uncover the sincerity of nonverbal immediacy. Is there a limit to the amount of immediacy that one should show? For example, when is nonverbal immediacy seen as inappropriate? Is there a particular manner in which nonverbal immediacy should be expressed? Are there certain personality traits that prefer different magnitudes of nonverbal immediacy behaviors?

Future research should also attempt to determine if there is a reciprocal response to the amount of nonverbal immediacy behaviors one uses in a sales presentation? Does

increasing nonverbal immediacy behavior help to establish ones credibility in the sales arena? It may also be of interest in determining the gender differences in regards to sales effectiveness. Are there certain behaviors that are more persuasive when linked to gender? Are there limitations in the use of persuasive behavior with regard to gender?

Future research should study the effects of immediacy and sales effectiveness with a more controlled environment such as experimental research. To observe which types of behaviors, namely nonverbal immediacy and communicative factors had an effect on the participants. In addition to this experiment, a questionnaire could be distributed to the participants after the sales presentation to determine the participants' response to the controlled behavior. The interaction analysis could be compared to the questionnaire to determine any link between the analysis and the questionnaire results.

Another way to study results of these behaviors on sales effectiveness would be in an uncontrolled environment, such as video taping sales presentations at a trade show. Coders would then watch the video recording of the presentation and determine what immediacy behaviors

were used. Sales effectiveness might be operationalized by a purchase being made at the time of the presentation.

Another interesting study would be field research in the high technology sector. This type of research would look at the many positions and people that the account manager deals with in arranging and in the closing of a deal. A focus of the study could be on the relationships and the organizational structure of high technology sales.

There are also international concerns that could be studied in relation to high technology sales here in the Silicon Valley. Many sales representatives are required to travel to and even are located in foreign countries for business. It would be of interest to study the ethnic and cultural differences that impact these types of situation.

### **Conclusion**

The information attained through this study offers insight into sales and communication, particularly in the high technology industry. As stated earlier, it might specifically provide (1) communication profiles of the most successful sales personnel, (2) complete descriptions and information that could provide developmental help to sales personnel seeking to improve communication skills, and (3)

information that might be used in hiring and training sales representatives. In addition, the proposed research provides the field of communication with further insight into nonverbal communication within the sales context.

In conclusion, more research on sales communication in all industrial sectors could add to our knowledge. Hopefully this thesis is the first of many to open the door to discovering what communicative behaviors are effective in the sales industry. The research on sales communication might prove beneficial to communication consultants employed in industries that can see the economic value of educating salespeople.

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## Appendix A: Paper Format Questionnaire

Please fill out this questionnaire by thinking about the individuals (whom you have actually seen in a sales presentation) that characterize the best and worst sales representative within your organization. **DO NOT** put names anywhere on this questionnaire.

### Demographics

**Best Rep.**      **Worst Rep.**

\_\_\_\_\_      \_\_\_\_\_ How many years have these sales representatives been in this position? (Fill in a number)

**Gender of Best Sales Rep.**    \_\_\_ Male    \_\_\_ Female    **Gender of Worst Sales Rep.**    \_\_\_ Male    \_\_\_ Female

<p><b>Age of Best Sales Rep.</b>    ___ 18-25    ___ 26-35                                               ___ 36-45    ___ 46-55                                               ___ 56-65    ___ 66-75</p>	<p><b>Age of Worst Sales Rep.</b>    ___ 18-25    ___ 26-35                                               ___ 36-45    ___ 46-55                                               ___ 56-65    ___ 66-75</p>
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Please mark the following statements to indicate whether you; (SA) **strongly agree**; (A) **agree**; (PA) **partially agree**; (U) **are undecided**; (PD) **partially disagree**; (D) **disagree**; (SD) **strongly disagree**. Please record the letter/s of your response in the space provided beside each statement. There is no correct answer. Simply record your perceptions.

**Please evaluate your best and worst sales representative that you've actually seen in a sales situation by responding to the following questions. Some of these may seem irrelevant, but please answer them to the best of your ability.**

**Best Rep.**      **Worst Rep.**

- |       |       |   |
|-------|-------|---|
| _____ | _____ | 1. This salesperson is very good at people reading  |
| _____ | _____ | 2. This salesperson tends to tell others exactly what is on their mind when they disagree with them                         |
| _____ | _____ | 3. This salesperson acts in a people-oriented manner  |
| _____ | _____ | 4. This salesperson often asks people for constructive criticism  |
| _____ | _____ | 5. While in a sales presentation this salesperson engages in more eye contact with the customer than most other salespeople |
| _____ | _____ | 6. While in a sales presentation this salesperson uses a more tense body position than most other salespeople               |
| _____ | _____ | 7. While in a sales presentation this salesperson is less vocally expressive than most other salespeople                    |
| _____ | _____ | 8. This salesperson readily adapts to the approaches of different sorts of people   |
| _____ | _____ | 9. This salesperson has no difficulty overcoming others' objections to his/her suggestions                                  |

**(SA) strongly agree; (A) agree; (PA) partially agree; (U) are undecided; (PD) partially disagree; (D) disagree; (SD) strongly disagree**

- | <b>Best<br/>Rep.</b> | <b>Worst<br/>Rep.</b> |   |
|----------------------|-----------------------|---|
| _____                | _____                 | 10. This salesperson relates well to others   |
| _____                | _____                 | 11. This salesperson usually is an influential person   |
| _____                | _____                 | 12. While in a sales presentation this salesperson gestures more than most other salespeople                                      |
| _____                | _____                 | 13. While in a sales presentation this salesperson engages in less movement than most other salespeople                           |
| _____                | _____                 | 14. This salesperson is very effective at speaking to others during a presentation  |
| _____                | _____                 | 15. This salesperson is the kind of listener that can tell not only what people are saying, but also what they are feeling        |
| _____                | _____                 | 16. This salesperson is very effective at closing a sale or agreement with a client or customer                                   |
| _____                | _____                 | 17. This salesperson tends to rely on the indirect approach to get their points across  |
| _____                | _____                 | 18. This salesperson appreciates receiving constructive criticism   |
| _____                | _____                 | 19. While in a sales presentation this salesperson has a more relaxed body position than most other salespeople                   |
| _____                | _____                 | 20. While in a sales presentation this salesperson directs his/her body position towards the customer than most other salespeople |
| _____                | _____                 | 21. This salesperson takes whatever time is needed to get acquainted with people before they try to work with them                |
| _____                | _____                 | 22. This salesperson freely tells others what they think should be done   |
| _____                | _____                 | 23. This salesperson reacts to special circumstances by changing their normal behavior  |
| _____                | _____                 | 24. To be honest about it, this salesperson is not a very good listener   |
| _____                | _____                 | 25. While in a sales presentation this salesperson smiles more than most other salespeople  |
| _____                | _____                 | 26. While in a sales presentation this salesperson engages in less eye contact with the customer than most other salespeople      |
| _____                | _____                 | 27. While in a sales presentation this salesperson engages in more movement than most other salespeople.                          |
| _____                | _____                 | 28. This salesperson sometimes comes off too strong or too weak when closing a sales or agreement                                 |

(SA) strongly agree; (A) agree; (PA) partially agree; (U) are undecided; (PD) partially disagree; (D) disagree; (SD) strongly disagree

- | Best<br>Rep. | Worst<br>Rep. |   |
|--------------|---------------|---|
| _____        | _____         | 29. When someone is unresponsive to their ideas, they can almost always figure out why they are feeling that way.                   |
| _____        | _____         | 30. This salesperson has little trouble persuading people to do things  |
| _____        | _____         | 31. This salesperson has no difficulty being understood when he/she makes a presentation  |
| _____        | _____         | 32. While in a sales presentation this salesperson is more vocally expressive than most other salespeople                           |
| _____        | _____         | 33. While in a sales presentation this salesperson is more distant from customers than most other salespeople                       |
| _____        | _____         | 34. This salesperson insists on having their own way in an argument   |
| _____        | _____         | 35. This salesperson is not a very effective communicator   |
| _____        | _____         | 36. This salesperson is very effective at asking the right questions to find the needs other people have                            |
| _____        | _____         | 37. This salesperson after receiving constructive criticism, they try to change in ways that will improve their work                |
| _____        | _____         | 38. While in a sales presentation this salesperson directs his/her body position less towards customers than most other salespeople |
| _____        | _____         | 39. While in a sales presentation this salesperson gestures less than most other salespeople  |
| _____        | _____         | 40. While in a sales presentation this salesperson smiles less than most other salespeople  |

**Sales Effectiveness**

Mark only **one** spot for each sales representative

- | Best<br>Rep. | Worst<br>Rep. |   |
|--------------|---------------|---|
| _____        | _____         | This salesperson consistently goes above quota    |
| _____        | _____         | This salesperson consistently makes quota         |
| _____        | _____         | This salesperson consistently does not make quota |

Yes, please send me a report of the study results.

My email address is: \_\_\_\_\_



**(SA) strongly agree; (A) agree; (PA) partially agree; (U) are undecided; (PD) partially disagree; (D) disagree; (SD) strongly disagree**

**Best      Worst  
Rep.      Rep.**

Click Here Click Here 9. This salesperson has no difficulty overcoming others' objections to his/her suggestions

Click Here Click Here 10. This salesperson relates well to others

Click Here Click Here 11. This salesperson usually is an influential person

Click Here Click Here 12. While in a sales presentation this salesperson gestures more than most other salespeople

Click Here Click Here 13. While in a sales presentation this salesperson engages in less movement than most other salespeople

Click Here Click Here 14. This salesperson is very effective at speaking to others during a presentation

Click Here Click Here 15. This salesperson is the kind of listener that can tell not only what people are saying, but also what they are feeling

Click Here Click Here 16. This salesperson is very effective at closing a sale or agreement with a client or customer

Click Here Click Here 17. This salesperson tends to rely on the indirect approach to get their points across

Click Here Click Here 18. This salesperson appreciates receiving constructive criticism

Click Here Click Here 19. While in a sales presentation this salesperson has a more relaxed body position than most other salespeople

Click Here Click Here 20. While in a sales presentation this salesperson directs his/her body position towards the customer than most other salespeople

Click Here Click Here 21. This salesperson takes whatever time is needed to get acquainted with people before they try to work with them

Click Here Click Here 22. This salesperson freely tells others what they think should be done

Click Here Click Here 23. This salesperson reacts to special circumstances by changing their normal behavior

Click Here Click Here 24. To be honest about it, this salesperson is not a very good listener

Click Here Click Here 25. While in a sales presentation this salesperson smiles more than most other salespeople

Click Here Click Here 26. While in a sales presentation this salesperson engages in less eye contact with the customer than most other salespeople

(SA) strongly agree; (A) agree; (PA) partially agree; (U) are undecided; (PD) partially disagree; (D) disagree; (SD) strongly disagree

- | Best       | Worst      |   |
|------------|------------|---|
| Rep.       | Rep.       |   |
| Click Here | Click Here | 27. While in a sales presentation this salesperson engages in more movement than most other salespeople.                            |
| Click Here | Click Here | 28. This salesperson sometimes comes off too strong or too weak when closing a sales or agreement                                   |
| Click Here | Click Here | 29. When someone is unresponsive to their ideas, they can almost always figure out why they are feeling that way.                   |
| Click Here | Click Here | 30. This salesperson has little trouble persuading people to do things  |
| Click Here | Click Here | 31. This salesperson has no difficulty being understood when he/she makes a presentation  |
| Click Here | Click Here | 32. While in a sales presentation this salesperson is more vocally expressive than most other salespeople                           |
| Click Here | Click Here | 33. While in a sales presentation this salesperson is more distant from customers than most other salespeople                       |
| Click Here | Click Here | 34. This salesperson insists on having their own way in an argument   |
| Click Here | Click Here | 35. This salesperson is not a very effective communicator   |
| Click Here | Click Here | 36. This salesperson is very effective at asking the right questions to find the needs other people have                            |
| Click Here | Click Here | 37. This salesperson after receiving constructive criticism, they try to change in ways that will improve their work                |
| Click Here | Click Here | 38. While in a sales presentation this salesperson directs his/her body position less towards customers than most other salespeople |
| Click Here | Click Here | 39. While in a sales presentation this salesperson gestures less than most other salespeople  |
| Click Here | Click Here | 40. While in a sales presentation this salesperson smiles less than most other salespeople  |

**Sales Effectiveness**

Mark only **ONE** spot for each sales representative by clicking on the box

- | Best                     | Worst                    |   |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Rep.                     | Rep.                     |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | This salesperson consistently goes above quota    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | This salesperson consistently makes quota         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | This salesperson consistently does not make quota |

Yes, please send me a report of the study results.

My email address is:

**\*Remember to save this document and send it as a new document/email or else your answers will not be saved.**



## **Appendix C: Behavioral Indicators of Immediacy Scale**

### **(BII)**

Please evaluate your best and worst sales representative that you've actually seen in a sales situation by responding to the following questions. Some of these may seem irrelevant, but please answer them to the best of your ability.

#### **While in a sales presentation this salesperson...**

1. Engages in more eye contact with the customer than most other salespeople
2. Uses a more tense body position than most other salespeople
3. Gestures more than most other salespeople
4. Engages in less movement than most other salespeople
5. Has a more relaxed body position than most other salespeople
6. Directs his/her body position towards the customer than most other salespeople
7. Smiles more than most other salespeople
8. Engages in less eye contact with the customer than most other salespeople
9. Is more vocally expressive than most other salespeople

10. Is more distant from customers than most other salespeople
11. Directs his/her body position less towards customers than most other salespeople
12. Gestures less than most other salespeople
13. Engages in more movement than most other salespeople
14. Is less vocally expressive than most other salespeople
15. Smiles less than most other salespeople

## **Appendix D: Reinard's Communicative Factors**

Reinard's (1997) communicative factors consists of these questions (items with asterisks indicate reverse scoring):

### **I. People Reading Ability**

#### **A. Identification of Others' Needs**

1. This salesperson is very good at people reading.
2. This salesperson is the kind of listener that can tell not only what people are saying, but also what they are feeling.
3. When someone is unresponsive to their ideas, they can almost always figure out why they are feeling that way.

#### **B. Adaptability to Others**

1. This salesperson readily adapts to the approaches of different sorts of people.
2. This salesperson reacts to special circumstances by changing their normal behavior.

### **II. Influence**

#### **A. Persuasiveness**

1. This salesperson usually is an influential person.

2. This salesperson has little trouble persuading people to do things.
3. This salesperson insists on having their own way in an argument (*This item did not work with the scale and was omitted to improve reliability*).

**B. Ability to Communicate**

1. This salesperson has no difficulty being understood when he/she makes a presentation
2. \*To be honest about it, this salesperson is not a very good listener.
3. This salesperson is very effective at speaking to others during a presentation.
4. \*This salesperson is not a very effective communicator.
5. This salesperson is very effective at asking the right questions to find the needs other people have.
6. This salesperson has no difficulty overcoming others' objections to his/her suggestions.

**C. Ability to Close**

1. This salesperson is very effective at closing a sale or agreement with a client or customer.

2. \*This salesperson sometimes comes off too strong or too weak when closing a sale or agreement.

### **III. Assertiveness**

1. This salesperson tends to tell others what they think should be done.
2. This salesperson tends to tell others exactly what is on their mind when they disagree with them.
3. \*This salesperson tends to rely on the indirect approach to get their points across.

### **IV. People Oriented**

1. This salesperson acts in a people-oriented manner.
2. This salesperson relates well to others.
3. This salesperson takes whatever time is needed to get acquainted with people before they try to work with them.

### **V. Willingness to receive criticism**

1. This salesperson often asks people for constructive criticism.

2. This salesperson after receiving constructive criticism, they try to change in ways that will improve their work.
3. This salesperson appreciates receiving constructive criticism.

## **Appendix E: Standard Industrial Classification Codes**

- 3571 Electronic computers
- 3572 Computer storage devices
- 3575 Computer terminals
- 3577 Computer peripheral equipment
- 3579 Office machines apparatus
- 3661 Telephone and telegraph
- 3669 Communications equipment
- 3674 Semiconductor and related devices
- 7371 Custom computer programming services
- 7372 Prepackaged software
- 7373 Computer integrated systems design
- 7374 Data processing and preparation
- 7375 Information retrieval services
- 7376 Computer facilities management
- 7377 Computer rental and leasing
- 7378 Computer maintenance and repair
- 7379 Computer related services