

Salesperson Ambidexterity and Customer Satisfaction: Examining the Role of Customer Demandingness, Adaptive Selling and Role Conflict

Raj Agnihotri, Colin B. Gabler, Omar S. Itani, Fernando Jaramillo
and Michael T. Krush

Executive Summary

As managers continue to strive to implement overarching corporate strategies that focus on both service provision and sales generation, salespeople are expected to shine in both sales and service.

Keeping in mind that sales and service goals can sometimes be at odds with one another, this study aims to examine the possibility of both positive and negative effects of sales-service ambidexterity, that is, performing both customer service provision and cross-/up-selling behaviors during customer encounters.

The authors developed a model that tests two main questions:

- 1) Does sales-service ambidexterity enable salespeople to better customize and tailor their interactions to customer needs?
- 2) Do these dual expectations results into an internal inconsistency or erratic shift of work focus?

Our research examines whether ambidexterity enables one of the most prized behaviors in the salesperson's arsenal (i.e. adaptability) yet creates the opportunity for discontent with one's role (i.e. role conflict).

Moreover, the study includes customer demandingness as a contingency variable to examine how customer expectations moderate the effects of sales-service ambidexterity.

Model was empirically tested using dyadic data (salespeople and their customers) across a wide range of business-to-business companies and industries.

Results suggest that sales-service ambidexterity positively impacts adaptive selling behaviors, but it also increases perceptions of role conflict among salespeople. Notably, customer demandingness strengthened the link between salesperson ambidexterity and adaptiveness and salesperson ambidexterity and role conflict. The demanding customers actually facilitate higher levels of adaptive selling techniques. Alternatively, the more demanding the customers are, the greater the role conflict experienced by the ambidextrous salesperson.

The downstream effects of role conflict on customer service are important to managers. The sales leadership therefore needs to understand how to equip their salesforce to meet the resource demands required by ambidexterity.

For the firms who expect greater ambidexterity from their salesforce, it is important to proactively consider the investment required for training their sales teams while acclimatizing their managers to the shift in strategic focus.

To view the completed, published research, please visit the Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management link: <http://www.tandfonline.com/eprint/EU5m8fXsSuPqHxcxPpk8/full>.