

THINKING GLOBALLY

Insights from Sales Managers Around the World



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It used to be that if college students wanted to learn about sales management from executives in different parts of the world, they would need to spend a few thousand dollars to go on a study abroad trip with an unthinkably generous professor who was willing to put in extra hours to design such an immersive experience. While these experiences are incredibly valuable, they remain cost prohibitive for a number of students who have other financial responsibilities (e.g., paying their way through school, supporting family). Of course, even this expensive option came off the table over this past year as travel came to a standstill in response to the COVID-19 Pandemic. This new, travel-free environment prompted a key question: is there a less costly way to expose our students to sales executives from around the globe?

IT TURNS OUT THERE IS.

As we—the 2021 Global Sales Science Institute (GSSI) / American Marketing Association (AMA) conference chairs—along with the GSSI leadership board, were planning for the virtual conference this past summer we decided to try to engage with sales executives in a new way. Specifically, we realized that we know sales professors from every corner of the world and wondered if these colleagues would be willing to coordinate with sales executives in their areas and conduct video recorded discussions on selling and sales management in their region of the world? We started reaching out to everyone we could think of, hoping that perhaps

ten would agree to join this project. To our surprise, twenty professors agreed to participate!

The result of this effort, what we now refer to as the GSSI/AMA Global Sales Executive Panel Project includes twenty panel discussion videos from places including: Asia Pacific, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, both English speaking and French speaking Canada, Chile, China, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, India, Italy, Mexico, Peru, Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These videos include over seventy sales executives from over twenty countries and add up to approximately twenty five hours of video content. Many were conducted in English, but those that were conducted in the region's native language have been fully translated with English captions added to the video. All videos are available at: <https://ama.marketing/globalpanels>.

While the conversations were free to develop naturally, we encouraged each professor to try to get to two key question areas. First, they asked foundational questions that allow for some “level setting” to gain a basic understanding of the region’s marketplace, their company’s approach to hiring and training salespeople, their typical sales process and methods, and the unique determinants of successful salespeople. Second, they asked situational questions that would address the effects of current events on their selling activities, including main challenges and opportunities, the impact of, and their response to, COVID-19, and what makes selling in their part of the world different from everywhere else. In sum, we hoped that this combination of general and specific topics would provide optimal insight from the cumulative effort.

NOW THAT THIS COLLECTION OF VIDEOS EXISTS, WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH THEM?

We have two suggestions for how you can make use of this content with your students. These suggestions will be fairly basic with the hope that you might embellish and personalize them to suit your specific needs.

First, you could create an individual assignment where students watch one or two videos per week and enter their thoughts on

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each video in an online discussion board for course credit. This type of assignment would be ideal if you want your students to keep thinking about global sales issues throughout the semester.

Second, you could create an assignment where groups of students are assigned perhaps four or five videos each to compare and contrast in a presentation. This type of assignment may be better if you want students to take a deeper dive into specific regions or issues.

We've even been able to test some of these assignments in our classes. Here's some feedback from a few of the students who've engaged with the content thus far:

"I found the panelists' insights helped me form a better understanding of the business to business sales process as applied in different parts of the globe. I also enjoyed how the last part focused specifically on my home country, and what makes it different."

"My biggest takeaway was the discussion of digital transformation for many companies. Covid catapulted companies that were on the fence about moving their company to the digital cloud. It is interesting to see how the pandemic accelerated this transition and the impact this has had on sales around the world."

"This was such an inspiring panel to listen to! Even sales students outside this class could learn a lot from these executives. It may really inspire more students to explore sales as a career or even entice them to join the sales leadership program!"

"I learned in sales classes that a big percentage of communication is non-verbal. I had the chance to observe the body language of the panelists and, while the discussion was in a language I don't understand, I was able to decode so many attitudes and styles."

We hope you find these videos useful as well! ▲