

Should I Stay or Should I Go? Factors that Drive Salesperson Turnover and Retention in the Era of the Great Resignation.

Dr. Bryan Hochstein, Dr. George Deitz, Dr. Timothy D. Butler, Nicole Boylan, & Tongxi Wang

Executive Summary

Traditionally, being a great “sales company” to work for related to the opportunities to excel financially within the company based on selling products. Today, many employees are looking for *more* than just financial return. However, not all firms have adapted to this change. This study looks at organizationally controlled factors (i.e., product line strategy, inventory management, and receivables investment) that impact sales force positive and negative job stress.

Using Glassdoor salesperson reviews, data mining, and textual analysis software, the proposed study will capture actual salesperson feedback from a pool of hundreds of thousands of current and former salespeople. The text analyzed feedback, from current and former employees, is expected to offer results that will answer current-day questions of how the workplace environment affects employee turnover, as well as firm performance.

We combine the text analyzed review data with secondary firm performance data to assess the impact of company strategies on sales force stress. Our study highlights the impact of product line strategy (differentiated vs. vertically-integrated), inventory management, and receivables investment on sales force positive and negative stress. Positive stress is theorized to help retain sales force employees, while negative stress is viewed as a catalyst for turnover intentions.

In terms of *innovation*, this study offers insights into solutions to the challenge of retaining salespeople. According to Gallup, *voluntary* turnover alone costs U.S. businesses roughly \$1 trillion annually. Therefore, our study with a large sample size of actual salespeople has the potential to provide insights that help organizations drive down costs, increasing the efficiency at which business operates. These costs savings would make sales departments more profitable, driving better compensation and better work environments for sales professionals.

With respect to *practicality*, the study will not only make a strong contribution to academic knowledge but also will provide actionable data-supported direction for how organizations should evolve their salesperson employee retention strategies in a way that reduces turnover and its associated costs as well as increases efficiency and productivity. The core issue of this study is a common challenge faced by all organizations with salesforces, so it will be broadly useful to inform sales strategy. The implications and effects of the ‘Great Resignation’ are just beginning to be uncovered. A Google search of this topic produced 44.3 million results just under the News tab, the majority of which are from the last 2 years. Therefore, in terms of *dissemination*, the likelihood is very high that the results of this study would be widely circulated in a variety of outlets both academic- and practitioner-focused.

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