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Explore to what extent is
trust important when
applying the Challenger
Selling approach?

Student ID: 788649

Unit Code: U21242

Scott Waugh

Email:	scott.waugh@port.ac.uk
Supervisor:	Phillip McGowan
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This Dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the MA in Sales Management.
I declare that this Dissertation is the result of my own independent investigation and that
all sources are duly acknowledged in the reference list.

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Thank you all.

Abstract

Challenger Selling is a new selling approach that has become popular following an article written by Harvard Business Review in 2008. That article inspired Mark Dixon and Brett Adamson to publish the Challenger Selling book in 2011, which has since been adopted as a business-to-business selling practice by many organisations looking for a new selling advantage.

However, it seems that the Challenger Selling approach disregards 'trust' or relationship: Instead, the approach suggests that insightful conversation is sufficient for an executive customer to make wholesale changes to their business operations.

This exploratory phenomenological qualitative research employed semi-structured telephone interviews of 20 relevant participants disclosing their experiential reflections and opinions of trust in selling phenomena.

Applying the Braun and Clarke (2006) thematic analysis framework to the data corpus, interpretation of the findings deduce that the interdependence of trust and relationships in selling both aligns and contests the central premise of the Challenger Selling approach.

This research provides commentary to the Challenger Selling approach of Dixon and Adamson (2011) in that where it may be agreed that a pre-existing relationship or trust are not essential to influence a transaction, rather salesperson's knowledge, credibility and organisational reputation are offered as fundamental pre-requisites in positive vendor selection.

Contrarily, this research also found that trusted relationships are deemed necessary to sustain longer-term repeat purchases from the same customer, however it may be viewed a customer's prerogative to forge a dyadic relationship primarily based on their perceived value and commitment of the salesperson and competitive advantage obtainable from the supplier organisation's appetite to meet the customer's needs.

This research provides empirical contribution to the trust in selling phenomena and offers a conceptual model as a possible line of enquiry for further quantitative exploration.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

'The Challenger Sale' is a self-considered advancement in value-based selling (Dixon & Adamson, 2011). The Challenger Sale (hereafter Challenger) approach has seemingly caught the critical attention of the selling profession and academia (Rapp, Bachrach, Panagopoulos, & Ogilvie, 2014), primarily in its bold assertion that traditional Relationship Selling is redundant, in favour of knowledge-based selling approach centred upon three main behavioural constructs: "Teach for Difference, Tailor for Resonance and Take Control" (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011, p. 26).

Dixon and Adamson (2011) positions Challenger as a knowledge-based selling approach advancing Solutions Selling and reason that the buyer-seller dyadic relationship as the de facto measure of customer satisfaction is over-emphasised (Meehan & Wright, 2013). They contend that organisations that had adopted relationship-based selling programmes have failed to deliver as expected, resulting in programmes producing 'passive sellers' who avoid conflict – wrongly assuming it will damage the customer relationship, reducing customer satisfaction and sales performance (Zboja, Clark, & Haytko, 2016).

Instead, the supposed empirical research [not obtainable for reference] of the Challenger approach by Dixon and Adamson (2011), centres upon the main argument that a dyadic relationship is not required to generate value. Rather, such relationships are "a reward" (Foreword by Rackham, N M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011, p. xv) achieved by improving the customer's business through knowledge exchange based on convincing insights that promise wholesale business improvement, wherein the failure to inspire is a failure to add value (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011).

In agreement with transaction cost economic theory (Williamson, 1993) and Rackham (1999), the buyer's intrinsic value driver from a product or service is in efficiently securing the best market price and not in the salesperson's direct involvement (Rackham & De Vincentis, 1999, p. 88), reinforcing Dixon's (2011) central theme in Challenger that not all customers require a relationship with suppliers (Moncrief, 2017; Palmatier, Scheer, Evans, & Arnold, 2008): a logic that may fit transactional purchases, where buyers

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segment vendors into commodity categories judged on risk to buyer or supply scarcity (Kraljic, 1983). The salesperson's contribution is in communicating the extrinsic value embedded in the brand that defines offer boundaries and irrespective of the need for individual dyadic relationships (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Moncrief, 2017; Tescari & Ledur Brito, 2016).

In further support of Dixon & Adamson's (2011) view that the buyer-seller dyadic relationship is unimportant (Meehan & Wright, 2013), research shows that transactional buyers depend on competitive market pressures to drive innovations and choice (Ganesan, 1994), using objective purchase evaluation to negate perceived losses (Doney & Cannon, 1997) and extending institutional trust to the supplier's organisational brand and their ability to deliver the product/service at a sufficient quality to perform its required function (Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Compared with prior selling methods, the Challenger approach provides adopters with a fresh perspective and long view of the validity and credibility of the sales profession in a marketing period of uncertainty. Although, where trust *and* commitment are considered the foundations of relationships (L. Ryals & Davies, 2013; Spekman & Carraway, 2006), Morgan and Hunt (1994) recommend that commitment *and* trust form relationships. As such it may be considered that where there is trust or commitment, there is – by proxy – a relationship. Insofar as Dixon & Adamson (2011) claim a relationship is not required for the Challenger approach to be applicable, by definition, they declare that *trust* is equally non-essential.

While the research literature on trust in selling are well explained, there is seemingly minimal – if any – empirical evidence reporting the extent to which trusted relationships or organisational brand loyalty are required for the Challenger technique to be a viable selling approach. This suggests an exploration of experienced sales and procurement professionals could disclose new perspectives in this area.

1.2 Value of this Research

This qualitative study contributes empirical analysis through experiential reflection of trust in selling from 19 senior sales and procurement professionals, providing conclusions to current praxeological perspectives on trust in sales relationships for sales practitioners seeking the validity of the Challenger Selling approach and offering managerial implications.

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1.3 Research Aim and Objectives

By addressing these Research Questions, the aim of this study is to explore the role of Trust in the Challenger Selling approach and its viability as a selling method:

- RQ1: Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger approach.
- RQ2: Explore the applicability of the Challenger approach when pre-existing corporate reputation is present.
- RQ3: Explore the customer's perception of trust of known and unknown salespeople attempting to apply the Challenger approach.

2.0 Literature Review

This section provides a synthesis of almost 200 critically reviewed literatures on the theoretical basis of trust manifested in the art of selling.

Expectation of trust and dyad relationships are assessed according to typical selling approaches – from Transactional Selling, Solution or Value Selling to Organisational Selling or Key Account Management practice – and comparisons drawn with the Challenger Selling approach proposed by Dixon and Adamson (2011).

Focusing on peer-reviewed journal sources from reputable scholars – mainly published after 2003 – provides the author a credible foundation from which to build a balanced view of trust in selling phenomena.

[Appendix I](#) provides an overview of the theoretical basis of over 80 literatures specific to trust in selling and which are cited in this study.

2.1 Value in Selling

Currently knowledge is strongly considered the emerging competitive advantage, mutually valuable for both supplier and customer organisations realised through joint knowledge sharing in a mutually beneficial customer-oriented (CO), trust-based relationship as a consequence of bi-party investment in time and resources (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Hohenschwert & Geiger, 2015; Hughes, Le Bon, & Rapp, 2013; Jelinek, 2017; Millman & Wilson, 1995; Salomonson, Åberg, & Allwood, 2012; Terho, Haas, Eggert, & Ulaga, 2012).

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Akin to a manufactured product having value embedded in its potential utility as a Good and a Service being defined as a commitment to deliver an action (Ulaga & Reinartz, 2011), value-in-use is extracted by the user by benefiting from the intended function or promise of performance (Vargo & Lusch, 2008). Further, it is the user of knowledge that extracts benefit from the knowledge exchange (Arnett & Wittmann, 2014).

Means-end theory positions that customers remember and organise purchasing experiences that improves future vendor evaluation, which dictates their purchasing behaviour such that customers value working with suppliers demonstrating consistent delivery and product performance and knowledgeable salespeople (Gutman, 1982; Paul, Hennig-Thurau, Gremler, Gwinner, & Wiertz, 2009).

2.3 Relational Selling

The causal model of Wood, et al (Wood, Boles, Johnston, & Bellenger, 2008) projects that credibility and compatibility are contingent to the customer trusting the salesperson, and expertise is positioned as a significant contributor to trustworthiness alongside likeability (Dowell, Morrison, & Heffernan, 2015; Swan, Trawick, Rink, & Roberts, 1988), organisational reputation (Doney & Cannon, 1997), commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and capability to fulfil promised obligations (Plank, Reid, & Pullins, 1999).

Expertise is seen as an inherent component with which to gain customer attention (Rapp et al., 2014). The Challenger salesperson can utilise “credibility-building” (Zboja et al., 2016, p. 808) language to overcome knowledgeable buyers less trusting and highly sceptical of salespeople by orienting fact-based communications via consultative task behaviours to increase customer’s perceptions of expertise, and employ emotion-based communications via personal relationship behaviours to increase trust perception. Both approaches are advanced psychological skills reflective of the elaboration likelihood model (ELM), with which to develop relational quality through adaptive selling skill (Arndt, Evans, Landry, Mady, & Pongpatipat, 2014; M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Evans et al., 2012; Guenzi, De Luca, & Spiro, 2016; Kennedy, Ferrell, & LeClair, 2001; Newell, Belonax, McCardle, & Plank, 2011).

Intrinsic value is described as a benefit derived from resources belonging to one party that can be captured by another party even if a relationship is “non-collaborative” (Tescari & Ledur Brito, 2016, p. 485), signifying that value is present even in transactional purchases in the necessity for knowledge acquisition to be leveraged as organisational

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competitive advantage (Arnett & Wittmann, 2014). This notion supports Dixon and Adamson (2011) view that the intrinsic value of knowledge is in the Challenger salesperson's skill in teaching rather than in identifying an existing need and the extrinsic value is in the recipient's distribution and utility of new information either as marketing collateral or re-use in operational efficiency improvements; however, the information must be accurate and utilised by the recipients for it be valuable (Arnett & Wittmann, 2014; Hakanen, 2014; Liu & Leach, 2001; Verbeke, Dietz, & Verwaal, 2011).

Customers are increasingly self-sufficient in their ability to evaluate market options for purchasing selections and have extensive knowledge of their industry drivers (Sharma & Iyer, 2011), gathering information through Internet and social networking platforms (Adamson, Dixon, & Toman, 2012). This lessens their customer reliance on traditional goods-dominant salespeople who once provided extrinsic value through declarative product-specific "know-how" (Paesbrugghe, Rangarajan, Sharma, Syam, & Jha, 2017; Pardo, Missirilian, Portier, & Salle, 2011, p. 859; Payne, Storbacka, & Frow, 2008; Powers, Koehler, & Martin, 1988; Terho et al., 2012; Thomas R. Wotruba, 1991; Yang, Yu, Liu, & Rui, 2014, p. 304) to support buyer's knowledge gaps helping customers answer sourcing needs (Powers et al., 1988; Vargo & Lusch, 2004), and learning through sales interactions how products/services can be customised into solutions to provide the customer further competitive advantages (Grönroos, 2008; Verbeke et al., 2011).

Contrarily, Dixon and Adamson (2011) propose that the Challenger salesperson may leverage their expert domain knowledge as an industry consultant rather than a prescriptive seller through competence trust, thereby commanding the customer's attention (A. L. Dixon, Jeff, & Jr., 2018; Geiger & Kelly, 2014; Grönroos, 2008; Nooteboom, Berger, & Noorderhaven, 1997; Terho, Eggert, Haas, & Ulaga, 2015) an output of which can develop credibility trust which might manifest in the Challenger salesperson receiving voluntary disclosure of information or exhibited trust from the customer (Suh, 2017).

Similarly, trust and commitment develop customers' confidence in and opinion of the salesperson, thus reinforcing credibility and unlocking information sharing; a further trust outcome useful for conflict resolution and value co-creation (Arnett & Wittmann, 2014; Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Smith & Barclay, 1997).

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2.4 Customer Oriented (CO) Behaviours

Fundamental CO behaviours including benevolence – considered as altruism with adaptiveness (Guenzi et al., 2016) – credibility (Ganesan, 1994), expertise (Crosby, Evans, & Cowles, 1990; Doney & Cannon, 1997; T. A. Kaski, Hautamaki, Pullins, & Kock, 2017; Liu & Leach, 2001; Newell et al., 2011; Wood, Boles, & Babin, 2008), and goal alignment (Cuevas, Julkunen, & Gabrielsson, 2015; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Dowell et al., 2015; Ganesan, 1994), collectively support trustworthiness (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Newell et al., 2011; Wood, Boles, Johnston, et al., 2008) and customer satisfaction (Bateman & Valentine, 2015; Crosby et al., 1990; Dwyer, Schurr, & Oh, 1987).

Demonstrating CO behaviours is expected to stimulate the customers' trust propensity (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Wood, Boles, & Babin, 2008), though this does not automatically constitute a relationship (Ryals & Humphries, 2007). The commitment to a relationship can be identified through a set of combined values, system of common beliefs, or common goal alignment expressed through the salesperson's words and actions (Cuevas et al., 2015; Wood, Boles, Johnston, et al., 2008).

Expertise as a trust contributor is positioned as a fundamental characteristic of trustworthiness alongside likeability (Swan et al., 1988), reputation (Doney & Cannon, 1997) commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994) and the product and organisational capability to fulfil promised performance obligations (Plank et al., 1999).

Regardless of singular characteristics, it is asserted salespeople portray accurately their real motivations with "honesty, candour and reliability" (Wood, Boles, Johnston, et al., 2008, p. 267), so as to avoid exposing inaccuracies that would otherwise tarnish their credibility and doubt the buyers' perception of trustworthiness (Wood, Boles, & Babin, 2008) and affect relational quality (Dwyer et al., 1987; Moorman, Zaltman, & Deshpande, 1992).

2.5 Trust in Selling

Dispositional Trust theory postulates that man is predisposed to faith in humanity – viewing trust simply as optimism – considering each other reliable and pre-supposing a protection that the other person will not bring harm, and so inclined to lead with collaboration from first interactions (McKnight & Chervany, 1998). Further, it can be perceived that expertise, credibility and competence are interchangeable as trust propensity constructs in lieu of the customer-salesperson having a prior relationship

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(Dorsch, Swanson, & Kelley, 1998; Newell et al., 2011; Young-Ybarra & Wiersema, 1999; Zboja et al., 2016).

Further, trustworthiness antecedents that develop trust propensity can be negatively impacted by hidden prejudices, securing that 'first impressions count' for the Challenger salesperson from how they present themselves and their expertise (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; McKnight & Chervany, 1998). Exhibited trust such as friendliness, may increase trust propensity and customer loyalty (Newell et al., 2011; Suh, 2017), though is not to be confused with likeability (affect) – a strong CO attribute that supports trustworthiness – since it is difficult for people to like someone they do not perceive to trust (Guenzi et al., 2016; Swan et al., 1988).

Credibility, expertise and commitment supporting trustworthiness are considered the central CO behaviours required to establish trust (Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Wood, Boles, Johnston, et al., 2008). Besides, where sellers' actions and motivations are aligned with customers' needs (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014; Jelinek, 2017; Terho et al., 2015; B. A. Weitz, Sujan, & Sujan, 1986; Wood, Boles, Johnston, et al., 2008), and when salespeople use adaptive selling techniques to align the sales call to newly disclosed needs (Guenzi et al., 2016; Haas, Snehota, & Corsaro, 2012), commitment to the customer is demonstrated (Wood, Boles, & Babin, 2008), and the propensity for trustworthiness is positive (Blocker, Cannon, Panagopoulos, & Sager, 2012; Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Terho et al., 2015, 2012).

The best way to build trust is to support trustworthiness (Hardin, 1996; Wood, Boles, Johnston, et al., 2008). Whereas, willingness is not to be used singularly to define trust, willingness to trust is regarded as the attitudinal outcome of the presence of commitment and trust (Morgan & Hunt, 1994 citing Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

It is deduced that trust and commitment are intrinsic in relationship forming (Morgan & Hunt, 1994): Notwithstanding this deduction, it is deemed that trust alone is nothing, rather trustworthiness has value demonstrated in a person's willingness to expose their vulnerability and rely on another in whom one has confidence to deliver as promised (Luhmann, 2000; Moorman et al., 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Smith & Barclay, 1997).

Moreover, Friend et al (2018) indicate that customers with a high trust propensity, would have a cynical view of salespeople irrespective of whether the salesperson demonstrates CO behaviour, since the customer would doubt the salespersons' intentions, though a

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customer with a low trust propensity would expect salesperson benevolence expressed in their high adaptiveness (John, 1984).

Additionally, wherein trust and commitment are together the foundations of relationships (L. Ryals & Davies, 2013; Spekman & Carraway, 2006), commitment and trust form relationships (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), it can be considered that where there is trust or commitment, there is – by proxy – a relationship.

2.6 Knowledge-Based Selling

It is held by social exchange theory (Smith & Barclay, 1997; Young-Ybarra & Wiersema, 1999) that a relationship condition is necessary to promote procedural knowledge learning and develop the sharing of sensitive tacit knowledge within a trusted environment (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Hohenschwert & Geiger, 2015; Millman & Wilson, 1995; Salomonson et al., 2012; Terho et al., 2012). Research reveals that customers are more likely to share tacit competitive intelligence when satisfied with a salesperson in a trust-based relationship who demonstrates CO behaviours, countering the preposition by Dixon and Adamson (2011) that knowledge can be exchanged without a pre-existing, trust-based relationship (Arnett & Wittmann, 2014; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Hohenschwert & Geiger, 2015; Millman & Wilson, 1996; Salomonson et al., 2012; Van Rensburg, 2012; Yang et al., 2014; Zboja et al., 2016).

Nevertheless, knowledge takes many forms (Hakanen, 2014) and is not easily shared: Dixon and Adamson (2011) pre-supposes the customer is unaware of their business under-achievements, that which the Challenger salesperson exposes through their “trusted advisor” (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011, p. 44) vantage point, which emphasises the importance of the salesperson in spanning organisations to collect and distribute information for use as knowledge capital (Alamaki & Haaga, 2015; Grönroos, 2008; Ritter & Walter, 2012; Viio & Grönroos, 2016). The trust-based relationship is reified as knowledge exchange (Arnett & Wittmann, 2014; Dorsch et al., 1998; Hughes et al., 2013; Paesbrugge et al., 2017; Rapp et al., 2014) coupled with the cognitive ability to leverage adaptive selling and advanced listening skills to finesse information exchange (Bateman & Valentine, 2015; Friend, Johnson, & Sohi, 2018; Guenzi et al., 2016).

2.7 Cognitive Aptitude (Absorptive Capacity)

Organisations are encouraged to attract sales talent with cognitive aptitude (Newell et al., 2011) and fluency in adaptive selling to maintain cadence with their customer’s

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knowledge acquisition (Spiro & Weitz, 1990). Not all salespeople will have the mental bandwidth to master the adaptive skills required to assimilate the customer's dialogue and expose undisclosed business needs that contribute to the seller's solution design (Szymanski, 1988; Vargo, Maglio, & Akaka, 2008; Verbeke et al., 2011). Simply re-training existing transactional-biased salespeople would be ineffective (Rackham & De Vincentis, 1999, p. 269): Dixon and Adamson (2011) identifies that the Challenger target decision-makers are senior executives with authority to make wholesale organisational change and drive value co-creation (Payne et al., 2008; Román & Juan Martín, 2014).

Challenger approach requires salespeople with the cognitive aptitude to advance business discussions around a joint vision; ideally strong participants, matched intellectually and creatively with authority to remove obstructions, be vigilant of veiled customer procedural knowledge during customer interactions (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Grönroos, 2008; Hakanen, 2014; Jelinek, 2017; B. A. Weitz et al., 1986), and spark the imagination of the customer to co-create joint innovative solutions (Grönroos, 2008; Viio & Grönroos, 2014). The Challenger salesperson should be competent and have the confidence to expertly guide the customer in the sales journey and experienced in adapting to and managing customer objections by reinforcing the solution value (Arndt et al., 2014; M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Guenzi et al., 2016; Spiro & Weitz, 1990; B. A. Weitz et al., 1986).

2.8 Key Account Manager (KAM) and Cognitive Aptitude

Indeed, Liu & Leech (2001) supports Challenger in that to access Senior Executives with whom knowledge-based conversations are an efficient use of their time and who have authority to effect organisational culture change to implement knowledge-based solutions, specialised salesperson skills and expertise are required to assimilate the customer's exact requirements including a high cognitive aptitude and ability to communicate the customer's solution design inter-organisationally (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Liu & Leach, 2001; Tuli, Kohli, & Bharadwaj, 2007; Ulaga & Reinartz, 2011); a notion reinforcing the Key Account Manager (KAM) role as a suitable adopter of the Challenger approach, and replying to Verbeke (2011) requesting greater insight into the actions of salespeople's cognitive ability.

It is demonstrated that senior salespeople are likely to be degree-educated and as such expected to be motivated by learning, thereby more effective in procedural and tacit

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knowledge gathering and distribution (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014; Moncrief & Marshall, 2005).

Further, it may be argued that due to their capacity to absorb, assimilate and distribute procedural knowledge accurately, they are seen as cognitively capable to finesse the customer in committing to a business development opportunity that previously did not exist (Arnett & Wittmann, 2014; M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Hakanen, 2014; Jelinek, 2017; Verbeke et al., 2011).

Importantly, mainstream salespeople will need to access cross-functional resources to provide insightful collateral whereas the KAM is a function differing from the transactional salesperson role (Millman & Wilson, 1995, 1996; L. Ryals & Davies, 2013; Wilson & Millman, 2003): Fitting with the premise that as organisations agree to partner in value co-creation, the Challenger salesperson's role changes from behaviour influencer to conflict manager; common in buyer-seller relationships (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; B. Weitz & Bradford, 1999).

Typically, a dedicated KAM is assigned to manage the complexity of, and maintain the commitment to, the agreed long-term strategic vision of the partnership. Possessing interorganisational influence to corral and commit resources (L. Ryals & Davies, 2013; Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015), and maturity to reduce tensions and manage conflicts, the KAM mediates the key customer and internal stakeholders (Evans et al., 2012; Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Nootboom et al., 1997; Spekman & Carraway, 2006).

To have the required impact, it is advanced that Executive leadership are targeted: These are entrepreneurial, "change-oriented customers" (Ritter & Walter, 2012) appreciative of knowledge value and have the intellectual rigour with which to objectively evaluate – and perhaps subjectively appreciate – innovative ideas to improve their competitiveness, as well being open to confident salespeople who can lead a discussion assertively, which reduces trust-based decision-making uncertainty; though a moot point within the Challenger approach (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Gao, Sirgy, & Bird, 2005).

Also, the KAM needs to be personality-compatible to the key customer to develop sustainable, trust-based relationships mediated by trust, commitment and satisfaction (Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015), which are difficult for competitors to displace, concluding the KAM function is considered an organisational competitive advantage that has impact on sales performance and profit (Gopalakrishna Pillai & Sharma, 2003; Jelinek, 2017; Philippe Gosselin & André Bauwen, 2006).

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The KAM earns progressive relational trust (Doney & Cannon, 1997), iteratively gaining access to customer's tacit confidential information as a result of their commitment to the relationship by managing the relationship 'highs and lows' in transactional interactions (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Doney & Cannon, 1997; Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Grönroos, 2008; Nooteboom et al., 1997; Terho et al., 2015).

It is assumed that Challenger salespeople can gain an advantage when approaching customers with new information which fills tacit knowledge gaps, wherein the KAM role can bolster trust-based relationships with individual credibility and industry-specific domain "know-how" to re-identify as a technical authority or a "trusted advisor" (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011, p. 45), and directly influence the customer's organisational strategic direction (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011, pp. 59, 105).

2.9 KAM as Trusted Advisor

Salespeople meet customers' expectations, identifying themselves as "trusted advisors" (Hohenschwert & Geiger, 2015, p. 148; Sullivan, Peterson, & Krishnan, 2012, p. 171) – able to drive CO behaviours throughout their organisation, tailoring bespoke solutions to increase the customers' market performance, their competitiveness and profitability (Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Grönroos, 2008; Terho et al., 2012; Tuli et al., 2007; Ulaga & Reinartz, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Challenger recognises insights must be accurate, robust and credible to resonate with customers actual concerns maintaining that access to thought leaders is paramount, noting that organisational influence occurs in industrial forums among industry peers, academia and executives (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Hakanen, 2014; Liu & Leach, 2001), from which group knowledge sharing stems and social trust developed (Castelfranchi et al., 2015; Rapp et al., 2014; Terho et al., 2015) and where the Challenger salesperson may become recognised as a domain expert (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Tuli et al., 2007; Ulaga & Reinartz, 2011; Verbeke et al., 2011).

In categorising the knowledge-based Challenger salesperson, it seems that contributory characteristics include adaptable aptitudes to be cognisant of the customer conversation, provides an engaging selling experience, and is resilient and experienced in countering customer resistance with sensitivity and finesse. These characteristics largely align with

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the professional attributes of the KAM function (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Guenzi & Storbacka, 2015).

Where the empirical meta-analysis of Wood, et. al, (2008) did not find similarity between salesperson trust or organisational trust (Gassenheimer & Manolis, 2001; Wood, Boles, Johnston, et al., 2008), other research establishes that individual trust and institutional trust can be complimentary, and that the relational trust “has a bandwidth” (Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, & Camerer, 1998, p. 401) that can flex during the evolution of the relationship.

Further, other research empirically deduces that trust and relationships identically take time to build and as such may be substitutional of each other, and though there is little empirical evidence describing the length of time required to develop trust, it may be accepted that trust could be forged from an initial meeting irrespective of time spent (Bejou, Ennew, & Palmer, 1998; T. A. Kaski et al., 2017; McKnight & Chervany, 1998).

2.10 Supplier Oriented (SO) Behaviours

Counter to CO behaviours, supplier-oriented behaviours are those that serve the selling-oriented behaviours are fundamentally opportunism, short term gain, high pressure tactics, and a low regard for customer need (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014; Guenzi et al., 2016; Saxe & Weitz, 1982).

The self-serving motivations of SO behaviours may be considered unethical when the customer’s need is not the salesperson’s central motivation (Bateman & Valentine, 2015; Crosby et al., 1990) and demonstrated physically in ‘hard-selling’ the customer even when the sale does not fit the customer’s need (Guenzi et al., 2016).

Research demonstrates that “learning-oriented salespeople” (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014, p. 297) show less severe selling attitudes over time by re-aligning with customer needs, so reducing the effects of SO behaviour (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014).

However, opportunism and dependency have a significant impact on trustworthiness, and can manifest in both buyer and supplier (SO) behaviours (Bateman & Valentine, 2015; Evans et al., 2012; Friend et al., 2018).

2.11 Dependency and Opportunism

Following seminal Resource Dependency Theory (Gassenheimer & Manolis, 2001; Nootboom et al., 1997), buyer dependency increases when the perceived loss impact

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from any particular transaction is high, such as sourcing complex or expensive goods (Hesping & Schiele, 2016; Moncrief, 2017) where the buyer needs the salesperson's help to access organisational core competences and internally promote customization of solutions that serve to increase their competitiveness and profitability (Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Grönroos, 2008; Terho et al., 2012; Tuli et al., 2007; Ulaga & Reinartz, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). This is a view concurred by Hakanen (2014), wherein buyer dependency can increase when sourcing outcome-based solutions – synonymous with knowledge-based intensive services (KIBS) such as advertising – that are inherently creative and iterative by design, and purchasing teams may lack necessary sourcing skills and expect the supplier to possess the capability to lead the sales and purchasing processes.

Dixon and Adamson (2011) reflects that the knowledge-based Challenger approach moves control of the selling process to the salesperson, increasing the buyer's dependency on bringing to reality the Challenger's proposed solution (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The buyer, however, may view any increased dependency a reduction in purchasing power (Gao et al., 2005). Nevertheless, purchasing activities have become the strategic focus of senior-management level buying committees objective in evaluation and analysis of salespeople's promises (Vargo, 2008).

To this point, buying committees aim to negate opportunistic behaviours that may otherwise negatively impact the buyer (Hesping & Schiele, 2016; McKnight & Chervany, 1996; Rackham & De Vincentis, 1999, p. 66; Terho et al., 2012) using strategic partnerships limited to a few pre-qualified suppliers governed by mutual organisational reputation (Doney & Cannon, 1997) and rules of relational engagement (Cuevas et al., 2015), enabling the buyer to reassert their commercial power (Dorsch et al., 1998; Dwyer et al., 1987; Gulati, 1995; Hesping & Schiele, 2016; Paesbrugge et al., 2017; Ritter & Walter, 2012; Vargo & Lusch, 2004).

Although, Nooteboom (2007) counters that formal structures of self-protection do not support trust conditions, rather it is the benevolent intentions of both parties to commit to the goals of the policy and respect the confidentiality of shared information that is important in defining a trusted relationship (Nooteboom, 2007).

Since it is almost mandatory to involve procurement in the purchasing decision process (Paesbrugge et al., 2017), Challenger recognises the necessity to differentiate the

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customer approach, recommending salespeople recognise transactional buyers as gatekeepers and actively lobby their positive vote by simplifying internal processes for efficient, low-cost-to-buyer current transactions (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011), by not over-committing their organisation that would cause negative supply issues and by helping customers achieve their deliverables and career goals (Cuevas et al., 2015; M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Wood, Boles, & Babin, 2008). Through pseudo-benevolent behaviours aimed at building cross-departmental confidence in the supplier's capabilities, the Challenger salesperson expects reciprocity via upwardly promoting the Challenger to the customer's Senior Management when called upon to act (Alarcon, Lyons, & Christensen, 2016; Bejou et al., 1998; M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Vanneste, 2016). However, it is countered that non-relational buyers may refute this seller-oriented tactic as an unfair opportunistic behaviour (Sako & Helper, 1998) since the obligation to reciprocate the salesperson's seemingly customer-oriented behaviours become costly in unproductive meetings that generate limited immediate tangible value for the transactional buyer (McKnight & Chervany, 1996; Palmatier et al., 2008).

Buyers reducing their dependency on suppliers may encourage opportunistic buying behaviour manifested as 'pressuring' the vendor base into price submission, achieving short-term gains from passive organisational discounting policies, echoing the assertion that the Challenger approach should be reserved for customers seeking to develop buyer-seller relationships, rather than constrained to transactional purchasing orientation (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Terho et al., 2015, 2012).

According to Subjective Expected Utility theory (SEU), opportunistic behaviour may be evident in transactional buyers where the cost-benefit gain is greater than the respect for a relational outcome (Hawkins, Pohlen, & Prybutok, 2013). Hawkin (2013) further offers empirically that relationships do not decrease the likelihood of a buyer to behave opportunistically, rather it is the buyers' honesty and moral integrity honouring the rules of relational engagement of most importance, reinforcing the proposition that like-minded organisations with similar governance structures may be better suited to the Challenger approach (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011). Although, where there is buyer-seller relational respect, such guile would be unjustified on moral regard for the trust and commitment promised in the relationship, raising concerns that overly persuasive influencing tactics may be morally questionable by some if the seller-oriented behaviour is incongruent with the customer's end benefit (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Husted, 1998; Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

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Finally, it stands in trust theory (Gassenheimer & Manolis, 2001) that an element of relationship is present in even the simplest transaction: Trust is extended to the organisation via brand quality, enabling selling interactions to culminate in an economic exchange (Dwyer et al., 1987). Wherein, the fundamental function of the salesperson is to exert an influence on the buyer, otherwise selling would be an advisory and not an influencing function that which defines 'selling' (Zboja et al., 2016).

2.12 Persuasion in Selling

Further opportunistic behaviours include seller-oriented persuasion tactics, which may reduce customer satisfaction between the buyer-seller interaction and decrease a relationship to a transactional exchange by pushing the customer to commit to a decision (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011). This interaction is supported by research indicating that customers with a low disposition to trust would have a cynical view of salespeople and would doubt the salespersons' benevolent intentions regardless (Friend et al., 2018; John, 1984; Saxe & Weitz, 1982; Suh, 2017).

Dixon and Adamson (2011) emphasises the use of seemingly coercive sales-oriented persuasion tactics to gain customer commitment, such as creating emotional uncertainty and concern of continued financial losses, convincing the customer of the ramifications of making no decision and pressuring the customer to commit without evaluating other options. These tactics reflect the Challenger position that customer satisfaction has no bearing on the probability to purchase (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011), seemingly ignoring satisfaction as a central tenet of trust formation (Dorsch et al., 1998; Ganesan, 1994). Although research communicates that buyer commitment is reinforced by increasing customer satisfaction (Paesbrugge et al., 2017), this is countered since sales-oriented persuasion behaviour is acceptable when speed of transaction is critical and where there is no relational outcome required (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014; Rackham & DeVincentis, 1999).

Dixon and Adamson (2011) propose that Challenger salespeople use "constructive tension" (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011, p. 33) to disturb the buyers existing thought structures; an influencing tactic aligned with the "disrupt, reassure, and dedicate (DTR)" technique developed by Hohenschwert (Hohenschwert & Geiger, 2015, p. 139). Centred on the thought-disruption hypothesis of the psychologists Petty & Wegener (1999), it is considered that DTR behaviour is an acceptable influencing tactic, although perceived to parallel non-relational, transactional buying styles (Fennis, Das, & Pruyn, 2004).

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In contrast, Hohenschwert (2015) debates that the DTR technique may be a suitable influencing strategy to position a product or complex solution supported by a CO trust-based relationship and not to be used only as a stand-alone selling tactic as suggested by Challenger (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011).

Furthermore, following the Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) and paralleling Attribution Theory, the experienced buyer is well-trained to recognise and respond to sales pressure situations. When coupled with benevolent motivations, assertive selling behaviour is considered as acceptable persuasion when used benevolently (e.g. directing the customer to a better solution) by salespeople with long-standing relationship capital (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Friend et al., 2018; Guenzi et al., 2016; Wood, Boles, Johnston, et al., 2008; Zboja et al., 2016), though it is possibly viewed as manipulative for salespeople where there is short relational length (Gopalakrishna Pillai & Sharma, 2003; Guenzi et al., 2016). It is argued that such “directive sales pressure” (Zboja et al., 2016, p. 815) is empirically demonstrated to have no effect on buyer satisfaction or trust condition, cementing the Challenger argument that the “constructive tension” (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011, p. 125) technique may actually convince the customer to commit resources and overcome any fear in culturally changing transactional buying behaviour.

2.13 Organisational Selling for Challenger

The inherent difficulty of co-creating value is the increased risk of failure when advancing co-creation projects, it may be that only the largest organisations will afford to venture with Challenger and only if the project is mutually shared financially (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola, 2012).

Further, Challenger may be seen as an Enterprise-based selling approach, leveraging the whole organisation in alignment of core competences to provide customised solutions co-designed with key customers willing to collaborate (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Pardo et al., 2011; Rackham & De Vincentis, 1999, p. 75; Sheth & Sharma, 2008; Vargo et al., 2008).

It is empirically reported that size of supplier organisation is important in having the resources, capability, and brand reputation to offer customisation to the customer’s design, such is the perception that customers have higher brand trust toward larger organisations with the appetite to invest in co-creation of products and services (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

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It is this view that is supportive of the previously held perception that the most successful “Lone Wolf” (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011, p. 172) seller-types will in fact struggle to singularly harness the dimensions of knowledge required to provide insights, irrespective of cognitive ability, since the ‘solo rider’ attitude and narrow business acumen will not be sufficient to execute Challenger and likely reduce organisational credibility (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Moncrief, 2017; B. Weitz & Bradford, 1999), limiting the premise that Challenger as an organisational-based, strategic selling approach can be wholly applied by an individual consultative salesperson based solely on their ability to share knowledge (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Rackham & De Vincentis, 1999).

Challenger further requires the customer to be immersed in the solution design, to stimulate business unit ownership and accountability of innovation within their organisation, and reinforcing the value of co-creation as a corporate direction around a shared vision (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Guenzi, 2003; Jelinek, 2017).

Beneficially, a general manager may be more receptive to and patient of the adaptive salesperson, recognising the iterative design nature and production impact in delivering a bespoke customer solution than compared with the objective-biased Procurement Lead who would seek to tender the solution design for comparison prior to decision-making (Román & Juan Martín, 2014), and to which the Challenger approach cautions the salesperson to avoid having their insight tendered and devaluing their solution (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011).

Inasmuch, the trust bestowed on the salesperson from relationship commitment is reflected back to their organisation and precedes the opportunity to enter into co-creation, agreeing that trust is formed of the salesperson and of the organisation (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Millman & Wilson, 1995; Wood, Boles, & Babin, 2008), levelling with Dixon and Adamson (2011) that the salesperson is an extension of the organisational brand (Román & Juan Martín, 2014). However, where brand loyalty is considered similar to commitment (Morgan & Hunt, 1994), the salesperson is viewed simply as the representative of embedded value in proposed solutions, so negating the requirement for a relationship to advance a sale (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Román & Juan Martín, 2014).

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2.14 Summary

In summary, it would appear Challenger is diametric to the field-proven results of solution-selling, axing the necessity for relationship in favour of knowledge exchange as being sufficient to instrument wholesale organisational change (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Rapp et al., 2014).

Challenger positions that loyalty is earned from successful knowledge sharing (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011). However, Gambetta (1988) articulates that loyalty is akin to maintaining trust – applicable to an individual, a group or an organisation – suggesting that the use of the term provides a convenient supposition for trust.

Trust is an iterative process over repeated selling interactions (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust and commitment develop customers' confidence in and their opinion of the salesperson, thus reinforcing credibility and unlocking information sharing; argument central to the Challenger knowledge-based selling approach for joint value co-creation (Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Smith & Barclay, 1997).

Insofar as Dixon & Adamson (2011) claim a relationship is not required for the Challenger approach to be applicable, by definition, they declare that trust is not required.

It seems that literature is split in whether or not trust is mandatory for Challenger to be theoretically applicable (Goad & Jaramillo, 2014; Rackham & De Vincentis, 1999; Rapp et al., 2014). This study aims to identify whether the trust constructs presented in the literature support the notion that Challenger can be applied without a pre-existing relationship, and whether there is any behavioural and cognitively suitable salesperson type that can successfully apply Challenger.

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3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Aim

This research aims to close gaps in current research by qualitatively exploring that trust is an important consideration in the applicability of the Challenger Selling approach. Responding to the request for further research and improving upon the empirical content on influencing behaviours in selling (Hohenschwert & Geiger, 2015), adaptive selling behaviours, (B. A. Weitz et al., 1986), trust formation in selling (Friend et al., 2018), propensities for trustworthiness in selling (Alarcon et al., 2016) and the positive impact of CO behaviours (Saxe & Weitz, 1982) compared with the negative impacts of SO behaviours, specifically opportunism.

The aim of this study is to generate greater understanding of the social construction of trust and selling phenomena in a B2B selling setting.

3.2 Philosophical Position

The central topic of this study is the interpretation of trust phenomenon and its influence on selling outcome as described by relevant persons considered experienced in and exposed to these phenomena.

The researcher recognised an interpretivist ontological position: When people interact – whether dyadically or in group scenarios – there are multiple, socially constructed, subjective realities being formed, centred around personal “presence” in and “experiences” of worldly phenomena, as illustrated in the seminal work of Husserl (Giorgi, 1997, p. 236).

Phenomenological interpretations are as individual as a fingerprint ungoverned by law or rule (Cresswell, 2009). It is this unique intrinsic interpretation of an individual’s reflection of human experience that contains a wealth of data, affording the researcher a new lens through which to gain sense – or “noematic meaning” (Sheehan, 2014, p. 12) – of trust in selling phenomena (Guba & Lincoln, 1994); Saunders, 2009).

Extant research acknowledges that qualitative research interviewing is used to understand the experiential world view of interviewees aligned to the proposed phenomena being studied, accepting that telephone interviews are a popular and robust method to employ (Opdenakker, 2006 citing Kvale (1983, p.174).

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3.3 Sample Strategy

The researcher employed qualitative assessment of the in-depth, semi-structured interviews with a non-probability, self-selected cross-sectional sample population of 20 'relevant persons' from a selection of UK multinational corporations with sector experience in any of the Standard Industrial Classification categories (GOV.UK, 2007), which further increased cross-sectional data validity ([Appendix M](#)).

This produced a volume of quality-rich, authentic data, though cannot be representative of the wider population (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2009).

Data was collected using telephone interviews adopting an inductive exploratory questioning method ([Appendix F](#)), that produced non-numerical data from which systematic thematic analysis was employed to deduce empirical reflections on the trust in selling phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Cresswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Isaeva, Bachmann, Bristow, & Saunders, 2015).

To improve validity, all interviews were recorded electronically, transcribed verbatim and an interview memo was sent to all participants for review and comment, ensuring a thorough and accurate record of the findings was disclosed from participant interviews. This rigour reinforced the authenticity, credibility and reliability of the study phenomena being presented (Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2010; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

3.4 Sample Population

According with the research question, a sample frame was elected as four relevant purchasing-persons [Procurement Director, Managing Director, Finance Director, Operations Director] and three relevant selling-persons [Sales Director, Key Account Manager, Business Development Manager] with a minimum 10 years' experience.

A relevant person is in the sample frame and either experienced in B2B selling or in purchasing decision-making having had direct exposure to trust in selling situations from which to personally reflect. Participants displayed professionalism when sharing their experiential insights rather than their "personal attitudes" (Pardo, Missirilian, Portier, & Salle, 2011 citing Kumar, Stern & Anderson, 1993, p1634), adding validity to the data (Cresswell, 2009).

Using a major UK manufacturer's database of 600 UK Focus Customers, a total population of 4,200 potential participants was rationalised to 70 potentially relevant

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participants selected using a simple random sample method with which to decrease sample bias.

To produce a credible data set that answers the research question and aligns with the premise of the Challenger Selling approach, the researcher adopted a key informant approach identifying Senior Management as possessing substantial experiential knowledge and who could accurately and reliably represent the views of their organisation (Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014).

Further, it was accepted that one relevant person would provide equally credible cross-sectional data as would two participants from the same organisation (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Workman, Homburg, & Jensen, 2003).

Considering the short timeframe available for data collection, the researcher interviewed 20 relevant participants from 12 different companies, with experience in which provided a sufficiently rich variety of experiential empirical data (Cresswell, 2009).

The relevant sample population of 12 sales-relevant participants with combined professional experience of 332 years and eight procurement-relevant participants with 124 years' combined professional experience was achieved. One procurement-relevant participant was rejected for lack of experience.

In phenomenological exploratory research, there is no agreement on the exact number of interviews, rather the researcher should focus on to achieve data saturation – when data codes are exhausted – though using a variety of data sources is advised to increase research credibility (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013).

Interviews were axially coded concurrently for visibility of data saturation. It appeared most common findings were disclosed by the eighth interview, aligning with extant methodologist notions (Guest et al., 2006; Marshall et al., 2013). Thereafter, repetition of current coding and few additional contributions were presented. The researcher continued to interview all twenty participants to ensure coding exhaustion and obtain a rich, robust data corpus (Saldaña, 2009).

3.5 Data Collection Method

Self-selected relevant persons were invited by direct email to participate in a telephone interview. Aside decreased cost and flexibility in location and privacy, telephone interviewing was selected as this provided convenience and privacy of location that

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further safeguarded participant anonymity. This also aimed to relax the participant and improve interviewer-to-participant rapport by removing visual prejudices that may influence the data interpretation.

Irrespective of the view that possible loss of non-verbal cues may limit the overall picture of the interview and impact on credibility, the increased sensation from oratory discussion meant this medium demanded the interviewer maintained full concentration and replied to the participants responses with artful questioning techniques that encouraged participants to disclose valuable insight (Saunders et al., 2009; Siedman, 2006).

Further, where face-to-face interviews are considered the *de facto* standard for qualitative research in the belief that the non-verbal communications add to data quality, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that telephone interviewing data differs and there is confidence that the data is no more or less biased than if interviews were conducted in person (Novick, 2008; Opdenakker, 2006).

To this point also, it follows that telephone conversations naturally adopt open-ended questioning techniques to encourage caller participation and providing participant flexibility in questioning and answering, a view strongly similar with the semi-structured, open-ended questioning method of qualitative telephone interviewing (Cachia & Millward, 2011).

To achieve maximum disclosure, the interviewer skill was apparent in the ability to maintain participant stimulation in the conversation so that the participant was conversing for most of the interview duration, enhancing the participant's experience (Saunders et al., 2009).

The interviewer ensured only short gaps between topics to avoid an ebb in conversation momentum. Exclusively open-ended questions were asked with probing questions used to generate intensity and stimulate further, in-depth commentary encouraging a data-rich, fulfilling dialogue wherein several participants commented they enjoyed the interview (Siedman, 2006).

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Telephone interviewing afforded the participants anonymity and privacy with the opportunity to speak freely on essentially sensitive – or emotive – matters of trust, ethics and business conducts that some participants may not have contributed as fully in another interview method (Mealer & Jones, 2014).

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With respect to the ethical position of participants and creating researcher trust in telephone interviews, a Participant Information Sheet ([Appendix D](#)) was provided, fully describing the context and contribution of the interview. Clarification questions were used to verify all participants were experienced in the subject according with the sample population criteria ([Appendix G](#)).

All participants signed a Participant Consent Form ([Appendix C](#)) prior to the interview commencement. This described the participant's ethical position and participant data security and anonymity assurance according to the University's ethical policies ([Appendix B](#)) and limitations of liability in that they could exit the interview at any time without compromise or recourse and all data was stored electronically according to the University's data security guidelines to safeguard participant anonymity ([Appendix D](#)).

3.7 Interview Design

To improve reliability and authenticity in interview delivery, interview questions were designed following a quintamensonal plan following the logical questioning steps to encourage participants to think of their answers and suspend 'knee jerk' reactions, and probe for depth and clarity to add validity to the research (Gallup, 1947).

The aim of the question set was as much to align the study with the researcher's philosophical position as was to generate empirical participant data that would correlate with extant literature and provide answers to the research questions.

As it is asserted, research should be "phenomenologically grounded" (Giorgi, 1997, p. 248), an explication of the literature review identified phenomenological constructs and relevant theoretical positions from which open-ended, purposeful, thought-provoking qualitative questions were designed that sufficiently exposed the participant's lived experiences, "behaviours and attitudes" (Agee, 2009; Cresswell, 2009, p. 61).

Pilot interviews were conducted with two known participants to trial the question list ([Appendix E](#)). This allowed the researcher to gauge the accuracy and understanding of the interview process, assess the relevance and syntax of the questions and to understand the effectiveness of questions in answering the Research Questions (Siedman, 2006).

The pilot interviews were assessed and rationalised to use a core questions set – the remainder questions being used as probes ([Appendix F](#)) – generating a quality-rich data

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corpus that consequently increased credibility in the thematic analysis (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.8 Data Interpretation

Thematic data interpretation followed the Braun and Clarke (2006) six-phase guideline considered an acceptable method for disclosing the layers of meaning in phenomenological analysis and produce a verifiable and replicable research method; although this method makes no account for generalisability (Groenewald, 2004).

Data familiarisation was achieved through complete immersion in the data corpus, from conducting interviews to review of verbatim transcriptions of the recorded interviews to understand the essence of each participant's experiences of the phenomena (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Ideographic – or open – coding was applied to the data corpus using NVIVO CAQDA software to identify common phrases during the interpretation phase, modifying or merging phrases into 'codes' as appropriate to group open codes into basic thematic clusters where normal relationships in the data became apparent. A reflective memo ([Appendix M](#)) describing the essence of their interview and was sent to each participant for verification and acceptance for inclusion in the data set (Grbich, 2007).

Nomothetic coding was approached interpretively to create themes, suspending the researcher's own experiential view and bias and applying analytical rigour to identify most dominant themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Grbich, 2007).

Three rigorous thematic review phases accurately reflected the participant's experiential views, combining phrases and themes to create broad themes to communicate the collective common meaning from the data (Attride-Stirling, 2001). These broad themes were further refined to identify universal themes adding the researcher's phenomena experiences and linking the thematic interpretation to extant literatures, thereby contributing this research to the proposed knowledge gap in the field of trust in selling (Grbich, 2007; Appendix H).

The thematic analysis map in [Appendix L](#) describes the narrative of the empirical data to identify meaning from the interpreted themes, and offers credible conclusions to the research questions were presented (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman & Bell, 2007).

It is reported that inductive nature of phenomenological interpretation insists that theory creation cannot be ventured from qualitative origin (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Guba &

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Lincoln, 1994). To establish congruence, findings were triangulated with the extant literature to compare and contrast current perspectives of these phenomena with consideration to the findings supporting the “notion of theory falsifications” where applicable (Crouch & McKenzie, 2006; Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 107).

3.9 Bias, Reliability and Authenticity

Where the researcher was necessarily conversant with the phenomena in study to accurately interpret the data corpus, it is the inductive nature of this qualitative research that presents biases having exposure to new perspectives at every interview (Cresswell, 2009; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Here, the researcher suspended – or *epoche* – their own personal experiences, judgements or preconceptions that could have otherwise tarnished the participant’s responses during the interviews (Hycner, 1985; Moustakas, 1994).

However, during analysis the researcher employed “naturalistic generalisations” (Cresswell, 2009, p. 64 citing Stake, 1995, p. 86), drawing upon 20 years’ B2B selling experience and tacit professional knowledge to adequately filter the data corpus to identify patterns for thematic analysis and provide explanation of the data findings; this does not impinge bias on the data since the researcher is interpreting that which has been contributed and is not influencing the content (Cresswell, 2009; Groenewald, 2004).

During interviews, The researcher asked questions and allowed participants to answer fully, without interruptions or encouragement such that the depth and richness of opinion was captured, so improving validity of findings (Siedman, 2006).

Generalisability in qualitative research is largely unachievable and inappropriate (Cresswell, 2009; Eriksson & Kovalainen, 2010). Rather, the expectation of this study is to use dialectical analysis to identify credible relationships between the phenomenological experiences of individuals and existing theory to explicate participant insights that contributes “acceptable knowledge” (Isaeva et al., 2015, p. 2) to the existing empirical research in the trust and relational selling fields.

As trust phenomena may be particularly sensitive to etic influence, the researcher ensured all questions were sufficiently open to avoid leading the participant and allowing flexibility in their response, so increasing the uniqueness of the study data that would also increase credibility and authenticity (Isaeva et al., 2015).

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4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Purpose of the Salesperson

Participants were asked to describe the purpose and value of the salesperson and offered a combination of twelve common opinions ([Appendix K](#)).

Interestingly both participant groups agreed that salesperson knowledge, building relationships and trust, adding value or providing the customer a competitive advantage, to increase business volume and provide a point of contact or business interface for customers to access the supplier organisation.

Discussion on the relevant findings to each of these main themes follows:

4.2 Salesperson Knowledge

When asked, all participants considered the main purpose and value of the salesperson is their need to be knowledgeable to gain credibility and develop customer relationships: This includes tacit knowledge of their own organisation, being empathetic of their customer's business challenges and having extensive understanding of the industry they compete in:

Table 1: Participant Quotations: Salesperson Knowledge

Source	S/P ¹	Quotations: Salesperson Knowledge
30051C	P	<i>"Somebody has gone away and said "I've looked at your problem, I've come back with a solution, I've given you something that is innovative maybe or it'll do something that you hadn't thought about" and then that individual will be thought of again, if you go in as a fast pass you can't answer their problems you can't deliver things it becomes incredibly difficult to build that trust."</i>
0405VG	P	<i>"The response of the salesperson of course is to provide information - the relevant information - to those who are seeking that information, so for instance if I'm looking for a particular product that meet my need, then expect the salesperson to provide that information, however I know the salesperson also has a duty to provide alternative solutions and of course it all depends on that person how he is incentivised."</i>

¹ S=Salesperson Participant / P=Procurement Participant

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- | | | |
|---------|---|---|
| 1405IA | P | <i>"Knowledge-based and taking the time out to really understand fundamentally what to try and sell as opposed to maybe a complete portfolio they're actually being focused on the key aspects that add value."</i> |
| 1506FO | P | <i>"You need to be an expert, you need to have the right attitude and you need to have at the same time to be aware of what are the strategies of the customer. Understanding the business, be an expert what the business needs, be an expert in the market, understand and predict how the market will behave in the next five years."</i> |
| 1106SG | P | <i>"They have to understand what they're selling and their own organisation as well...we're always looking for the best fit, so we had some expectation from the suppliers that they understand what the solution is we looking for and so therefore they will provide the right product or solutions to meet those needs as opposed to providing products and solutions that meets their company's needs."</i> |
| 1705SMc | S | <i>"I think in those instances that that commodity-type salesperson has to have an intimate knowledge of the platform - the technology - and is able to be very, very credible... outside of the commodity sale it is very much about how you network, how an organisation works and how you get the large machine of a big organisation to deliver...employs Applications Specialist who often support their relationship account managers to deliver that type of commodity and technology approach and that's where the trust is built up in that aspect."</i> |
| 0106AM | S | <i>"I think the salesperson adds value, understands his business, able to compare what he knows what is going on in that industry sector with what he knows the competitors are doing and the values of his company and he can combine that and deliver that to the customer and therefore give him a competitive advantage."</i> |
| 1805RE | S | <i>"To align your solutions and services that enable the customer to better their end result, so whether that's to sell more of their product, to sell it more effectively, to make it at a lesser cost, it's demonstrating you have an ability to help make them be more productive, or profitable and/or sell more of whatever they are selling."</i> |
| 2505AW | S | <i>"Without really understanding where they're coming from then you'll never build that relationship or credibility because they're just like "OK I listened to you for</i> |

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half an hour and away you go", so understanding the customer, what they need, or what their pain points are we often talk about or what they're thinking about helps [build credibility]."

Complementing other research, customers value salespeople who take time to understand their business challenges and can intelligently listen and assimilate their needs into solutions. Drawing upon their industry expertise and experience to finesse information exchange, adapt their value proposition, and align relevant products and services can help develop their business and bring them a competitive advantage (Bateman & Valentine, 2015; Friend et al., 2018; Guenzi et al., 2016).

4.3 Knowledge of the Customer Organisation

There is agreement that where a trusted salesperson uses their relationship to expand their network in a customer organisation, the cross-department knowledge they collect from inter-company leakage (1105MD) can be useful in helping their 'corporate sponsor' to navigate their own organisation internally:

Table 2: Participant Quotations: Knowledge of Customer Organisation

Source	S/P	Quotations: Knowledge of Customer Organisation
1105MD	S	<i>"That's the whole point the more information and knowledge leakage that you have between the different parts of the organisation you're giving up competitive advantage you know so the sales team has a role to play beyond just the selling piece."</i>
1105AS	P	<i>"Whereas a good schmoozer can build relationship up and down the customer organisation dare I say it more easily than they can in their own team".</i>
1805RE	S	<i>"I actually told my customer the other day that they're trying to invent something three times and that actually I don't believe that's the right thing to do...and I've told them that I don't want to stem any innovation, but I want to make sure they get the best utilisation of their assets and people-time and the feedback from the senior director was, "wow we don't get many companies that tell us this, usually they would be very happy to have</i>

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us develop something three times in three of our different businesses and take the revenue three times”.

- 1105MD S *“This comes back to the Consultative selling because ... most people are very focused on upselling but perhaps what's needed is "we need to take this bit out of our standard package because you're going to be paying for stuff you don't need" or "you know I can see that the way we package this generally is going to make it more expensive for you" so if you can enter into that dialogue then you're able to demonstrate the knowledge that you have.”*
- 1805RE S *“I'm doing that again to build a level of trust because I'm saying, "this isn't right, ethically I don't like it, I think it's the wrong way to do it, by the way you need to be aware of this” and by sharing that back with them it shows them how their own business is behaving in maybe a less than effective way.”*

Seller oriented (SO) behaviours are considered unethical when the customer’s need is not the central motivation. Reducing the customer’s unnecessary purchase duplication or identifying poor business practices enhances the customer’s ethical perception of the salesperson, so increasing their confidence and trust in the dyadic relationship (Bateman & Valentine, 2015; Crosby et al., 1990).

4.4 Knowledge of Industry Sector

Customers are largely self-sufficient in collecting publicly available information and forming decisions. To remain relevant salespeople must bring new knowledge and discrete insights to customers to gain their attention and be regarded as an intelligent ‘thought leader’ in their industry:

Table 3: Participant Quotations: Knowledge of Industry Sector

Source	S/P	Quotations: Knowledge of Industry Sector
1506FO	P	<i>“Understanding the business, be an expert is what the business needs, be an expert in the market, understand and predict how the market will behave in the next five years.”</i>

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- 0405VG P *"It's about your own personal experiences because you know where the pain is and so if you're on the same level and you start talking about where you see trends that have caused problems in the past, and a supplier is saying I understand that we have got some solutions or a product which could help you, yeah absolutely that industry knowledge not only past present but also future, I think that's very insightful."*
- 0106AM S *"The salesperson understands his business so what he's able to do is compare what he knows is going on in that industry sector."*

Participants commented that salespeople could build credibility by empathetically sharing insightful conversations of industry trends and answering the customers challenges. Customers consider this valuable external source of rich information a competitive advantage, which Hughes, et al (2011), reference as "competitive intelligence" (p.91) that requires strong intellect, a solid relationship and adaptive skills to assimilate, utilise and gain advantage from declarative knowledge (Hughes et al., 2013).

4.5 Lack of Credibility

Participants commented that customers may perceive a lack of credibility where the salesperson does not demonstrate their knowledge and expertise – and especially where they make no effort to understand the customer's business – the customer will unlikely consider the investment in time to develop a salesperson relationship as there is no perceived value created (Wood, Boles, Johnston, et al., 2008):

Table 4: Participant Quotations: Lack of Credibility

Source	S/P	Quotations: Lack of Credibility
1106SG	P	<i>"I'd much rather the Exec said "that's really good you contacting me, have a word with our procurement person" rather than having that first meeting making a few promises they can't keep and then being lent on by a supplier saying "your CEO really likes me so you need to be buying from me" and that can be a real turn off then, so a lot of that has got to do with how our Exec treats that approach."</i>

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- 2505AW S *"In terms of building [trust] is that if you don't have knowledge or the credibility then it's very hard to get very far and you need support from a wider organisation perhaps and we can't know everything either, you've got to know enough to gain the trust of your customer."*
- 1105AS P *"I absolutely had no issue with wars being taken upwards but I would expect the courtesy of knowing who was being engaged and what was being probed upwards so that I can manage expectations internally but also, I'm not getting surprises when someone comes along and says "well why are we not interested in widget x?""*
- 1105AS P *"I would see that the more governance there is within a company the more likely and executive would say "yep I really like that idea, go and check with my team"."*
- 1805JH S *"Because [salespeople] they're money motivated to get the sale and not necessarily to others, so I think there's a lot to be said about getting the right measures of performance and reward... I'm a firm believer of "what gets measured gets managed" so if you measure or reward something in a certain way then you absolutely are driving those behaviours."*
- 1005LM S *"The younger, less experienced guys, because they wouldn't be able to articulate every aspect of what we do quickly and efficiently they might need several meetings to go away and find that knowledge and it takes away from that element of comfort that the client you're dealing with would want and that diminishes if you're umm-ing and ah-ing and worrying about the detail."*
- 0905VG P *"I think it's around what they're being incentivized, of course it could be that, at that particular time the orders may be low, that person has a target to meet, and at the end of the day it becomes about orders as opposed perhaps to a long-term engagement. So, I think those pieces can be important, it can send the wrong messages in terms of behaviours, if it's all about orders, then when I have a need for you I don't need to see that person, I can just send out an enquiry and that'll be it can be very transactional. If the behaviour of the salesman is a little bit more relationship-driven, then I think you're more open to have business development discussions."*

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2904AB S *“Trusting in somebody’s expertise is very important to us, that may be grounded in previous experience, but if somebody’s game was to try and sell us something that we took on face value, we purchased and we used that didn’t actually deliver what they suggested it would, then that would break down the trust definitely.”*

Salesperson credibility may be disadvantaged through opportunistic behaviours in the relationship, such as assuming to gain an influence by approaching higher authorities in the customer’s organisation, only to be redirected to the original customer contact. This lack of professional etiquette can test the customer’s confidence and stress the relationship; a perspective identified by Smith and Barclay (1997) wherein a temperate, measured, patient salesperson can be considered more trustworthy in the relationship.

4.6 Salesperson’s Reputation

Participants reflected that skilled, customer-focused salespeople who are well regarded can sufficiently make up for the organisations’ poor performance and maintain the organisation’s credibility:

Table 5: Participant Quotations: Salesperson’s Reputation

Source	S/P	Quotations: Salesperson’s Reputation
1105AS	P	<i>“I think it’s having the skill in the account team is important, but I think there’s potentially over-promising and delivering should be a result of a challenger selling if the organisation is not ready to back the guy.”</i>
2904AB	S	<i>“A company that was selling us products for quite a number of years and they changed, they weren’t delivering as quite as good a product, they weren’t advancing as well as some of their competitors, but we did carry on buying the product for a period of time because of that person, and that was enough really that that person had confidence and when that person then decided enough was enough and they shared their concerns about the product set and it’s unsuitability for our requirements, we mutually agreed that we wouldn’t buy the product anymore and that was fine on both parts, it really is that when somebody is honest with us that we will continue to work with that person.”</i>

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

1705SMc S *“I think there are very, very strong behavioural types in certain sales individuals who are extremely empathetic with people, they can build up rapport very quickly and they're not confrontational, even in times of extreme stress when somebody in an organisation is really hammering into them as to how their organisation is failing them or letting them down they sit they rationalise they listen incredibly well and then they agree a way forward to go and get them a solution.”*

Agreeing with a similar view of Doney & Cannon (1997) and Ganesan (1994) that should the salesperson's reputation be impinged, they will likely seek to represent an organisation better fitting their professional reputation, consequently attracting their customers to extend their loyalty to the salesperson and follow (Kumar, Sunder, & Leone, 2014; Palmatier, Scheer, & Steenkamp, 2007).

4.7 Organisational Reputation

Participants offered that where the salesperson is unknown to the customer, the supplier organisation's reputation – or brand trust (Rousseau et al., 1998) – can be extended to reinforce the salesperson's credibility through reference examples of other customers gaining from the supplier's core competences, such as access to technical expertise, insightful industry knowledge and project management capabilities:

Table 6: Participant Quotations: Organisational Reputation

Source	S/P	Quotations: Organisational Reputation
0405VG	P	<i>“When we talk about knowledge and experience, in my mind as long as you know who the right person to speak to is then that's fine you don't need to be an expert in everything. Then if you know in your company who is the right person to speak to, if you bring them in next time, or arrange calls or engage with them, I think then that's absolutely fine.”</i>
1106SG	P	<i>“So, we deal with a lot of small-to-medium sized firms and it's easier working, more integrity there than the big branded suppliers.”</i>
30051C	P	<i>“We work very much as a team across industries, so we focus in it so within that is the sales guy, will be the project delivery people, will be the site services people and will be the sort of if you like whole lifecycle team</i>

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so there you've got a whole group of people involved and who will be involved in that process."

- 1106SG P *"But not always not necessarily because if his company has promised to do something by next Friday and can't so let you down as a company, how the salesperson communicates that makes a big difference."*
- 1105AS P *"[laughs] ha I would put my faith in the challenger seller if I knew the organisation and I understood how the organisation ticked behind them, so I'd need faith in the person I wouldn't just do it because a Challenger Seller came along...a guy who has great relationships and worked his way up to the C-Suite but then are you actually getting product follow-up behind and it's actually then that an account team becomes really important because you shouldn't stop having a business development [team] because that's how you get deep market insights in that area and then you kind of need an account team in there to mop it up."*
- 2205JHa S *"[It] is quite important to be able to reference other you know trusted relationships...people are open to listen, they're building their evaluation of this supplier based on their track record."*
- 1705SMo S *"I think customers have to accept that we cannot be experts in everything we do but we can certainly be very gifted in delivering the message of value of some of the things that we've done."*
- 3005IC P *"We are known as probably the top-end of the market we are known for quality, we are known for reliability we are also known as a fact that the company who don't walk away from people when there are issues."*
- 1506FO P *"We want to believe that that person is going to propose to us innovation, somebody who should drive innovation that's why the biggest companies want to engage with the highest profile people, the people with more knowledge than people who just sell something off the shelf and the reason for that is because the businesses want to absorb the knowledge, the know-how, they want to understand what is the plan of that specific company that that salesperson is representing and how they can work together in a collaborative way in order to make both businesses better, and this is where the trust relies and the trust becomes."*

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Parallel to other research, it is agreed there may be a competitive advantage in customers having a relationship with an innovative organisation – irrespective of the organisation’s size – in accessing new technologies, knowledge, processes and technical expertise that complements their operations (Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015).

4.8 Reliability in Communication

When asked, participants offered that other intrinsic behaviours such as customer focus (commitment), reliability in communication, delivers promises (consistency), and professionalism (preparedness) are contributors to building the customer’s holistic perception of value in a salesperson and their ongoing relationship.

Both participant groups aligned that salesperson honesty, openness and ethicality were conditional behaviours for reinforcing customer confidence; important traits demonstrated largely through communication effectiveness – including delivering ‘bad news’.

Listening and adapting the value proposition to the customer’s needs and the ability to communicate the value of commercial offerings in an empathetic, unforced conversational style are considered good communication that increases the customer’s confidence in choosing to listen to the salesperson:

Table 7: Participant Quotations: Reliability in Communication

Source	S/P	Quotations: Reliability in Communication
1805JH	S	<i>“Increasingly I’m seeing in contract requirements they’re saying, “we expect you as a supplier or partner, to bring innovation to us” and I think trust is damaged if we end up not bringing that innovation, so the ability to continually improve, continually address the emerging challenges that the customer faces is a key part of that trust.”</i>
1705SMc	S	<i>“They are very adaptable, they have a cut-off switch, so they don’t allow themselves to get dragged into arguments where they are seen to be too forceful, too pushy, they can back it away, they can take a conversation in a different direction.”</i>
3005IC	P	<i>“Having the ability to listen to people and then to put your point across I think that’s really the skill.”</i>

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- 1106SG P *"You get a voicemail, "I've gone away for the weekend, talk to you on Monday" and you're stuffed so they [salespeople] have got to live up to their word, if they said they could only do it on Monday then fine, but if they said they were going to get it back to you on Friday then do it."*
- 1106SG P *"If the salesperson says, "we've got a problem in manufacturing, one of our machines has broken down, so then we're going to be delayed by three or four days" and lets you know as early as possible then you can accept that salesperson is doing the best for you as a client even though the company has let you down, so it's how the salesperson sells his own internal company's performance."*
- 0905VG P *"An adaptive behaviour: The salesperson listens to your requests, then acknowledges and understands, assimilates that information, and goes back to their organisation to make effect; they adapt; they come with a pre-scripted conversation and that completely changes, and they change with you so they don't just stay with their own fixed view."*

Such is the pace of innovation and its impact on customer competitiveness, there is increasing demand from customers for suppliers to communicate complex information accurately and expediently. Salespeople require the cognitive aptitude to listen for and assimilate customer procedural knowledge during discussions and adapt to the customer's evolving needs, thereby reinforcing the customer's perception of salesperson value and commitment of time to forge a dyadic relationship with the salesperson (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011; Grönroos, 2008; Haas et al., 2012; Hakanen, 2014; Jelinek, 2017; B. A. Weitz et al., 1986).

4.9 Building Trusted Relationships

The adage 'people buy from people' was mentioned several times by participants; this view may reflect how people naturally strive for a relationship and building trust over time is necessary to safeguard each other in their interactions, wherein the humanistic nature is that people are pre-disposed to help each other achieve success (Kang & Jindal, 2015; Nootboom et al., 1997).

In contrast, when events occur that stress or compromise the customer's trust perception, it is commented that the salesperson can rely on their strong trust-based

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customer relationship to “weather the storm” of organisational poor performance and may even strengthen the customer’s perceived trust through their adaptive skill and customer-focused approach (1106SG, personal communication, May 11, 2018).

Otherwise, it is suggested that by prolonging the customer’s stress is to diminish trust and salesperson confidence, a view that resonates with lack of credibility and subsequent loss of customer sponsorship for repeat business:

Table 8: Participant Quotations: Trusted Relationships

Source	S/P	Quotations: Trusted Relationships
1705SMc	S	<i>“Relationships build over time and it takes a lot of time and a lot of effort, there is the old adage that “people buy from people” still rings very true with me.”</i>
2505AW	S	<i>“My personal view is that “you buy from the people you trust”.”</i>
1805RE	S	<i>“The old adage “people buy from people” I think is very apt in our roles because you work out who you can trust in a relationship and I know this is all about how would you define trust? But it is that person-to-person contact over time that shows where your ethics lie.”</i>
2205JHa	S	<i>“You only get one chance don't you and if you abuse that trust you will quickly come unstuck and unlikely you'll get a second chance.”</i>
2505AW	S	<i>“You build trust by working with someone, understanding and responding to their requirements when they need them in a honest and direct way.”</i>
0106AM	S	<i>“But in many sales environment it's like, “oh the sales guy, can he be trusted, is he just going to sell me something just to get his sale?””</i>
1106SG	P	<i>“We're going to be delayed by three or four days and [salesperson] lets you know as early as possible then you can accept that the salesperson is doing the best for you as a client, even though his company has let you down, so it's how the salesperson sells his own internal company's performance.”</i>
3005IC	P	<i>“A lot of them [customers] really whatever they're buying from us it is a necessary evil, it's not something that's part of their prime business but it's something they have to do if they want to deliver their product, so if</i>

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they can build a good relationship with somebody to deliver the equipment the service and the support they're quite prepared to do that.”

2904AB S *“We do have certain suppliers that we don't really expect to have a deep and meaningful relationship with, they just supply us with the commodity items.”*

Interestingly, participant 2904AB specifically described the necessity for a “deep and meaningful relationship” (2904AB, personal communication, April 29, 2018) as unnecessary for commodity purchases, similarly Meehan and Wright (2013) report that customers do not differentiate the trust dynamics between strategic partner-relationships and transaction-specific relationships, perhaps reasoning that it is the delivering of professional customer service – from a professional organisation – that fundamentally cements a salesperson’s credibility and stimulates the repeat purchase, regardless of age or experience.

Controversially, the comments of the most experienced participant, 3105JD – supported by 2505AW – suggested there is limited understanding among salespeople as to why build customer relationships at all and questioning whether it is the relationship that guarantees a sale. This view strongly echoes the main theme of Challenger (Dixon, Adamson, 2011) – and supported by (Hohenschwert & Geiger, 2015) – that relationship selling is not effective in today’s globally competitive marketplace.

4.10 Supplier Dependency

Participant 1405IA describes the necessity to build a relationship especially where the customer is dependent on a supplier’s technology to safeguard exploitation and mutually manage the lifecycle of that technology installation. Interestingly, the findings of (Sako & Helper, 1998, p. 407) reflects on the supplier’s ability to control customer opportunism through dependency and consequent loss of power in the relationship, possibly explaining the customer’s motivation for supply chain independence:

Table 9: Participant Quotations: Supplier Dependency

Source	S/P	Quotations: Supplier Dependency
1405IA	P	<i>“[Interviewer] Did that dependency affect trust you extend to the seller and or the organisation? Did that swing the power balance? [Participant] No, I</i>

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think that's an example where you need the cooperation of both sides, to say "as soon as I get the opportunity I'll make the gap to replace this system", so it's almost like developing a strategy between you that "look I don't want to keep that dependency forever; we're going to create a plan that takes this dependency out of play; a joint plan because it can be uncomfortable for both parties", so that's where you need to go with that one."

1805JH S *"Trust can be destroyed overnight, so we might promise to give a scalable solution that is 100% available and the minute it trashes and people are without core financial systems for a weekend at a critical time, trust is damaged sometimes irreparably very easily...If you've got a good relationship and all parties are prepared to work together to solve it – the problem - then you can absolutely get yourself out of a hole."*

Further, where there is high dependency on a supplier's technology or knowledge – as is apparent in Knowledge Intensive Business Services (KIBS) such as financial services or advertising (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola, 2012; Hakanen, 2014) – the customer places greater responsibility on the salesperson to manage the customer's vulnerability. That said, the juxtaposition of maintaining a dyadic relationship due to dependency does not confirm that trust is central to this dynamic; it may be perceived as a 'marriage of convenience' rather than mutually beneficial, echoing Resource Dependency Theory where dependency can demand operational trust – forsaking a relationship – but it does not guarantee loyalty (Gassenheimer & Manolis, 2001; L. J. Ryals & Humphries, 2007).

4.11 Trust Takes Time

Though there is little consideration of the length of time it takes to build trust in a relationship; participants simply reference that "trust is built over time" based on the salesperson' reputation – trust over time – bolstered by their customer commitment to the customer's success, which develops into a trusted relationship:

Table 10: Participant Quotations: Time to Build Trust

Source	S/P	Quotations: Time to Build Trust
14051A	P	<i>"I think the biggest value is when there is a relationship, but that relationship needs to build over time."</i>

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1705SMc S *“Relationships build over time and it takes a lot of time and a lot of effort.”*

Interestingly, other research deduces that both trust and relationships take time to build and can substitute one another for time, so it may be accepted that trust can be formed quickly (Bejou et al., 1998; T. A. Kaski et al., 2017; McKnight & Chervany, 1998).

4.12 Brand Reputation as Trust

Brand reputation and salesperson credibility can be considered reflective, though not identical. Corporate values – described in policies and governance – are manifested in the attitudes, behaviours and ethical approach of the salesperson as the representative of the brand and will act accordingly (Román & Juan Martín, 2014 citing Schwepker and Good (2011)).

As well as a salesperson’s established reputation based on their credible behaviours, moral values and ethical conduct reflects positively to their organisation’s brand.

Furthermore, participants also suggested that while smaller organisations may be more flexible in delivering the customers immediate needs, and may have an interesting technology, it may be preferable to contract with larger organisations that are perceived to be more secure - evidenced in their market longevity – and have the resources to continuously innovate and offer bespoke services:

Table 11: Participant Quotations: Brand Reputation as Trust

Source	S/P	Quotations: Brand Reputation as Trust
3005IC	P	<i>“[Interviewer] What do you think really keeps them coming back is it just that you've got a good brand? [Participant] I think it comes back to can you deliver what you say you'll deliver on-time, is the quality there, is the reliability there, is the backup there? So, do you do what you say on the can, you will go out and look after this for life, you will give them that support.”</i>
2505AW	S	<i>“Example is the sales guy in the US [who] has to work very differently yeah because that brand trust isn't there in the same way, you've got to really promote that and build the trust of the brand by probably building your own credibility as well.”</i>

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- 3105JD P *"I think so depending on the size of the company but it starts with within your market people know that you can do what you can do...The website establishes brand and trust even more than it ever did, how it looks, how it feels, what it says, the messages that come out from the CEO, all those things start to establish trust and then of course you build up credibility."*
- 1705SMo S *"Potentially a smaller company erm might have an interesting bit of innovation, erm have they built the trust by being around in the sector for a long time, have they got proof cases of doing it before, it's distinctly possible [they can succeed] but at the end of the day we have siemens have the large organisation have the "you know we can't walk away from this" type attitude, we're not going to get bought, we're not going to go under, we're not going to get bought out, you know there's a little bit of that sort of longevity that might not be in a smaller organisation."*
- 1005MB P *"I've had companies in last year but I had never heard of them, but they are offering expertise in optical measuring equipment, so I guess I'll do some research and I'll go and invite someone in who claims to have a solution, and in that particular instance, the three companies that came in none of them did have a solution but we are not only talking to big brand name corporations that are well known."*
- 1005MB P *"If they [salesperson] came from a Company that I knew and I trusted and respected, then they would start from a good place, they would start from a level of trust that they can either improve on or otherwise, yeah, the company for me as a good starting point, then it's up to them to build on that."*
- 2205JHa S *"Maybe a salesperson's a bit pushy...reflects poorly on the brand, as I said you are the representative of your company, you are the company aren't you at the end of the day, people are the Company, so it is very important that you've got the you display the right behaviours and attitude to you know in everything that you do."*
- 1506FO P *"We want to believe that that person is going to propose to us innovation, somebody who should drive innovation that's why the biggest companies want to engage with the highest profile people, the people with more knowledge than people who just sell something off the shelf and the reason for that is because the businesses want to absorb the*

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knowledge, the know-how, they want to understand what is the plan of that specific company that that salesperson is representing and how they can work together in a collaborative way in order to make both businesses better, and this is where the trust relies and the trust becomes.”

Both participant groups emphasised the ability to exchange knowledge irrespective of supplier organisation size. Inasmuch larger organisations may be better resourced to deliver the promised outcome of an insightful conversation, a smaller-sized organisation with specialist capabilities can also compete based on their tacit knowledge and exemplary reputation (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

4.13 Confidentiality

All participants were asked about the impact of trust on confidentiality. Participants agreed that confidentiality is fundamental in protecting organisational intellectual property and a demonstrable behaviour in developing and maintaining customer trust:

Table 12: Participant Quotations: Confidentiality

Source	S/P	Quotations: Confidentiality
1106SG	P	<i>“If you lose the trust once, then you're done so if a supplier brings you something and says "look this is confidential, we're developing this, don't tell anybody" then you don't tell anybody because if you do and they find out then you've lost them, you're never going to have the same relationship with them, so here sometimes you do get pressure from internal...I'm saying "look well go and get it yourselves because we've got it in this manner and we're not using it to harm our supplier, so if you want to get it another way you can, yes I've got it on my shared drive, but no you can't have it".”</i>
0905VG	P	<i>“I suppose the ultimate is if sensitive information is divulged to others. I think once you've lost trust it is very difficult to rebuild it, extremely difficult... to me there is an understanding of what was being discussed is confidential, so both parties would not divulge that information and so that's the starting of the building of trust.”</i>
1106SG	P	<i>“We're working with them [suppliers] sharing our future opportunities and that's confidential and if it ever came out that one of our suppliers was</i>

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telling our competitors or even the market about what we're doing, we'd probably stop doing that."

- 1506FO P *"Trust is to be able to respect your employer all the time and to understand the boundaries and to understand what you can disclose and what you cannot disclose and it is not because you're not disclosing something because it is company confidential information that the trust will be endangered, you need to use that part of the ethical approach to build a higher sentiment of trust knowing that independently of the relationship between two companies there will be always and aspect of confidentiality, because that's what drives companies forward."*
- 1705SMo S *"We can't have a situation when a customer has got any hesitation in giving you some information because he believes that you may have that dialogue with one of his competitors. He may want to tell you "look we are thinking of building a new body shop for a car plant over in car park B in the next two years and you're in the frame but I shouldn't really be telling you that" and the next thing he gets is a load of information from your company from Marketing on body shop automation [laughs] you know it's absolutely critical is that trust."*
- 3005IC S *"If you've developed something and shared it with the customer which can give them an advantage well why wouldn't you give it to other people who can maybe listen to you, maybe take it and make themselves an advantage as well."*
- 1705SMc S *"If I'm open with them in a sales process and I share things with them about our organisation I don't expect them to take that and then use that against me... I believe a confidence is a confidence."*
- 2205JHa S *"That again is part of trust isn't it, confidentiality and confidence that sensitive information won't be shared as a part of trust but also increasingly transparency and collaboration are an important part of being successful... I think there's cases when it's the right thing to do and there are cases when actually - that's not about breaking confidentiality - but more about being clear if everyone's agreed that something's to be confidential that's fine, the difference is about still [being] ethical but agreeing you're going to share stuff."*

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Breaches of trust are suggested as basal precursors to diminishing trust (Nooteboom et al., 1997), wherein the customer will start to withdraw information and knowledge that the salesperson previously found insightful and valuable in its extended use internally in the supplier organisation. As the salesperson loses credibility, it is suggested the relationship erodes.

Likewise, the reciprocal expectation is that confidential information that salespeople share with customers is also respected also (1106SG).

4.14 Rapport

Rapport makes it easier for the customer and salesperson to connect, reinforcing the relationship communication and positively affecting repeat purchase likelihood (Paul et al., 2009):

Table 13: Participant Quotations: Rapport

Source	S/P	Quotations: Rapport
1005LM	S	<i>“Rapport helps to find a common ground and establish credibility between individuals, to feel whether a relationship could form; it is harder for less experienced and younger salespeople to establish rapport simply from lack of knowledge or experience.”</i>
1005IC	P	<i>“If you can get a good rapport with somebody it makes the whole process a lot easier, it includes listening.”</i>
1705SMc	S	<i>“Certain sales individuals who are extremely empathetic with people, they can build up rapport very quickly and they're not confrontational... they rationalise, they listen incredibly well and then they agree a way forward to go and get them a solution, they're the ones who are really successful.”</i>

Aligning with research by Paul et al. (2009) that reasons there to be several customer behaviours for repeat purchase, this research findings offers strong emphasis on the emotional aspects of vendor selection aside decision-making being only a calculative process (Newell et al., 2011).

According to Kaski (2017), salespeople need to develop empathetic customer focus when building rapport, which is demanding on the senses, energy consuming and

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intellectually challenging, which suggests a high degree of emotional intelligence is required to be effective (T. Kaski, 2017).

4.15 Trusted Advisor

With knowledge-based credibility, a reputation of consistency and benevolent customer motivation demonstrated through their trusted relationship, a salesperson may be considered a 'trusted advisor' who is invited to consult with and contest the customer's business perspectives by educating and helping the customer develop new profitable business:

Table 14: Participant Quotations: Salesperson as Trusted Advisor

Source	S/P	Quotations: Salesperson as Trusted Advisor
1105AS	P	<i>"Take "power-by-the-hour" that needs procurement to understand it and know the value then engineering are taking the view which is "well what is the manufacturer going to tell me that I don't know from learning it?" so I think there are barriers and is procurement ready to listen – no - I think is a procurement outfit ready to give it a good run for its money - yes - but it just might not be ready for it yet."</i>
1506FO	P	<i>"Try to understand and try to see what the gaps are and try to see where the requirement is, go to the right people, touch the right people, speak with the right people but don't come here to sell things that are not related with this industry if that's the objective then it's a nuisance isn't it, it doesn't make any sense."</i>
1005MB	P	<i>"So, you know nobody is an expert on everything. You might design the equipment but the piece parts you're talking to experts in the piece parts and equipment that can measure and detect and ultra-sonics and thermal imaging...that you might use but you're not an expert in them, so it's always great to have your knowledge challenged in the right way and learn something and that's where that relationship is really valuable up an above the equipment that you get provided with, you actually get service and educated at the same as you're buying the equipment, which is really good."</i>
0905VG	P	<i>"I can believe in this person because what that person is saying is what I have experienced, and I think that's also a big piece is about your own</i>

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personal experiences because you know where the pain is and so if you're on the same level and you start talking about where you see trends that have caused problems in the past, and a supplier is saying I understand that we have got some solutions or a product which could help you, yeah absolutely that industry knowledge not only past present but also future, I think that's very insightful."

1805RE S *"It's probably more on the Challenger side is actually providing an element of thought leadership in there, because your customer doesn't have all the answers and it's also challenging them to the way that they may be doing things in the current way they are doing them and saying, "actually there may be a better way of doing that"."*

2904AB S *"But if they were able to demonstrate to one of an organisation like ourselves another higher education authority or institution that has taken their advice and they've got some real great returns out of it, that would certainly influence the way in which we would talk to that partner; they could show that they understood our business and understood how that solution that they came up with for the other University might fit into ours and how it would further our goals, then yeah I think so but they will need that credibility behind them first."*

2505AW S *"I had a lot of good relationship skills, but it was always going to be hard for me just to open a door without any understanding or credibility to talk at the level the customer wanted me to talk at."*

0106AM S *"I think the salesperson adds value, understands his business, able to compare what he knows what is going on in that industry sector with what he knows the competitors are doing and the values of his company and he can combine that and deliver that to the customer and therefore give him a competitive advantage."*

Comments made by participant 1105AS parallels with findings of Hakanen (2014), which considers that Purchasing Departments may not have the skill to understand creative commercial business proposals and would need to depend on the trusted supplier guide them through the value proposition in an ethical manner.

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4.16 Salesperson Demographic

When questioned, participants responses were mixed with respect to the age difference between a young graduate salesperson approaching a mature Executive customer:

Table 15: Participant Quotations: Salesperson Age

Source	S/P	Quotations: Salesperson Age
3105JD	S	<i>“Clients would first think “who is this 25-year-old?” [then] they would accept what he said...He said, “you just have to prepare better and you have to say everything with confidence”.”</i>
1506FO	P	<i>“That person is representing an entity and we expect a professional attitude independent of gender or size or whatever [age], doesn't matter to us.”</i>
1705SMc	S	<i>“People have already built up an extensive career and their age demographic tends to be say mid-30s plus and have got ten years plus of experience of doing the ground work, understanding the platforms, the products and building up account relationships and understanding how organisations work.”</i>

That said, there is confidence that with thorough preparation and professional attitude there is no reason that demographic differences should be an issue, even it is reported that Millennials may find the intergenerational divide an opportunity to impress themselves and their skill to the customer (Pullins, Mallin, Buehrer, & Jones, 2011). Other than where human biases or prejudices are present – or “first impressions” – the human predisposition is to trust another regardless (Friend et al., 2018; Gulati, 1995; Wood, Boles, & Babin, 2008).

4.17 Diminishing Trust

Trust is diminished by unethical, pressuring, seller-oriented behaviours, where financial incentives and Sales Management target-driven behaviour is perhaps causal in salespeople demonstrating overtly pushy or opportunistic selling attitudes.

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Table 16: Participant Quotations: Diminishing Trust

Source	S/P	Quotations: Diminishing Trust
1506FO	P	<i>“What destroys trust is an attitude that doesn't deliver what the customer wants in the first instance but at the same time doesn't satisfy what the salesperson wants.”</i>
1005MB	P	<i>“If you've got a choice, then it's just human nature you go with someone that you respect, you trust, you get on with, because you get on with him you get that feeling that they're going to support you, if there is an issue they're going to come back and give you the support that they promised rather than disappear off the face of the Earth, so I think that's the Trust bit.”</i>
3005IC	P	<i>“I've also seen a little bit too much is where people have maybe tried to pressure people too quickly into a decision without them allowing them to arrive at their own decision or guiding them to that decision.”</i>
2905SJ	S	<i>“I think what you perceive with pushy people is they don't have much empathy for their customers or with somebody, and it is always important to have empathy for your customers and not to overstep the mark, not to be too pushy.”</i>
0905VG	P	<i>“However, I know the salesperson also has a duty to provide alternative solutions and of course it all depends on that person how he is incentivised...if he's incentivised for building a relationship, then for sure that's what he's going to do in my opinion, if he's incentivise for selling blue pieces rather than red pieces, then that's what they going to do, it does definitely drive a behaviour.”</i>
1705SMc	S	<i>“You should be right in your argument erm you shouldn't just be pushing and individual - let's say a buyer - just because you think you maybe have a future platform that would fit something in their organisation, if you push and push too hard you will get pushed back, but if you push for the right reasons especially in areas like closing negotiations they are really the times when you see the real strengths coming out and the benefit of a push.”</i>

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1105AS	P	<i>"I think it really comes down to every organisation has pressure on the buying side as you have pressure on the selling side I think those pressure have to be acknowledged and if there is lack of trust in how those pressures are described is probably a bigger issue to me than how their corporation behaves."</i>
2205JHa	S	<i>"Maybe a salesperson's a bit pushy, [which] reflects poorly on the brand, as I said you are the representative of your company, you are the company aren't you at the end of the day, people are the Company, so it is very important that you've got the you display the right behaviours and attitude to you know in everything that you do."</i>
1705SMc	S	<i>"If you can manage to take it through in any direction that you want and you can get a resolution that satisfies both parties then that trust is gained I think honesty and openness really is key for me and think if somebody is going to trust you they will trust you because you will go away and deliver results for them, you will not just promise them things and not hear from them again."</i>

This perception of the selfish salesperson 'out for a sale' also reasons that zero procurement participants considered the salesperson purpose to be an Influencer, since not showing primary consideration for the customer's business insists lack of credibility and trustworthiness (Doney & Cannon, 1997).

4.18 Paltering

Participants aligned that paltering was intolerable to trust building, which can have an immediate and irreparably negative effect on relationships:

Table 17: Participant Quotations: Paltering

Source	S/P	Quotations: Paltering
1005MB	P	<i>"I'd respect them a lot more if they say "well I'm sorry so I'm not sure about that you know let me just ring a colleague or I'll make a note of that and come straight back to you" or then that's fine but sometimes they'll I don't know make it up on the spot and if you know that they're making it up then that starts to put the question mark over it for me."</i>

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1705SMc	S	<i>“As long it's genuine so that people don't see it as false and that's the skill, if it's seen as false and it's seen as "this guy has just come in here to flannel me with a load of soft-soap, with a load of either bull" or he comes in and he says a load of promises that he can't deliver, then he's going to fail and that trust element will fail completely.”</i>
1005LM	S	<i>“Bullshit [diminishes trust], saying something that isn't correct, not delivering on a promise, handing off stuff and not being seen as the one coming back, so I think if you make anything up or just give a promise and don't deliver I think people just switch off straight away, if you say you'll do something you need to do it.”</i>

Quantitative research by Rogers, et al (2017) reports that paltering to be an immoral form of deception that absolutely echoes selfish behaviour, wherein the organisation may have policies to safeguard damage to their brand reputation from this irresponsible salesperson behaviour (Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino, Norton, & Schweitzer, 2017).

4.19 Salesperson’s Professionalism

Salespeople represent their organisation through their professional attitudes – or ‘doing the basics’ – and in motivating the supplier organisation to perform is very much considered a salesperson’s core value to the customer.

Both participant groups agreed that ‘delivering promises’ was an important salesperson deliverable required for cementing credibility and building customer confidence:

Table 18: Participant Quotations: Customer's Perception of Value

Source	S/P	Quotations: Customer's Perception of Value
0905VG	P	<i>“Absolutely they are a representative of their company so the way they act, the way they respond, the way they present themselves, is to me a reflection of their organisation.”</i>
0905VG	P	<i>“So, if they come in well prepared, they've done their homework, they understand who I am, what my role is, they've done some homework, they've already identified what opportunities may be for them, then that reflects to me a company that is a mature company, [but] an individual comes in and he</i>

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has no real idea, has pen and paper and just gathering information, then it has a different reflection from my perspective anyway.”

- | | | |
|--------|---|---|
| 1506FO | P | <i>“The confidence and the relationship between parties is broken down and the business won’t grow, the only way to grow business is based on personal relationships, based on professional attitudes, it’s the only way in my view...if you do something and you are on top of it and you have you invest time in a professional attitude then you will sell something.”</i> |
| 1105AS | P | <i>“I think is very much the role there of the developing consultative selling approach is probably professionalised a lot in the last ten or fifteen years as well.”</i> |
| 30051C | P | <i>“Where we’re coming in from a new customer perspective it’s really taking it as baby steps with them and sort of trying to understand what their aims and goals are and how they’re trying to achieve them and whether we can work with them to either accelerate that route, add value to the really guide them through the process quite smoothly and let them build their confidence bit by bit.”</i> |
| 1105AS | P | <i>“If I see anybody over thirty who has evidence of a stable career, evidence of internal relationship management and communication skills that gives us some confidence, I am then prepared to listen to that person and be challenged.”</i> |

Intrinsic value is described as a benefit derived from resources belonging to one party that can be captured by another party even if a relationship is “non-collaborative” (Tescari & Ledur Brito, 2016, p. 485). That value can be considered to be anything the customer chooses, it is in delivering this perceived value that the customer builds confidence in the salesperson; a pre-cursor to trust (Román & Iacobucci, 2010).

4.20 Increase Business Volume Through Repeat Business

Sales participants identified a core aim of the salesperson is to generate profitable business through their relationships. Ideally, repeat business may be a measure of success where the salesperson builds their reputation through the continued consistent delivery of service and value to their customer.

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Table 19: Participant Quotations: Repeat Business

Source	S/P	Quotations: Repeat Business
1005MB	P	<i>“When it is specialist equipment or service, then I guess it's more about meeting the requirements, so as soon as a salesperson has come on board and delivered on those aspects that would be the automatic choice for any repeat business.”</i>
1405IA	P	<i>“I think there's two things; I think it's the biggest value is when there is a relationship, but that relationship needs to build over time and I think that complimentary activity of understanding the business needs of both companies to make sure that you are adding value and that's what actually builds the relationship in my mind.”</i>
1005MB	P	<i>“They've proven themselves, you've built that relationship, then it's an easy cycle for you then? [Participant] yeah, exactly it's an easier [cycle] for me isn't it and I've got that automatic trust and warm feeling that they're going to do their best to you know deliver again.”</i>
1705SMc	S	<i>“In my opinion to be the face of the organisation to our customers, it's to be the key person who builds relationship, builds trust and works on behalf of the customer to deliver solutions in terms of applications within their organisation but it also it's very much a role that acts on behalf of SAG to protect their Company's interests with the customer and the marketplace.”</i>
1705SMc	S	<i>“If they want to work with you and they empathise with you and they see the benefits of what you're trying to deliver to them, I expect that they will trust me to deliver for them and they will trust that they will deliver back in their organisation for me, they champion for me internally.”</i>

Such it is that the salesperson aim is for repeat customer purchase, extending the relationship may fundamentally remain the customer's decision in their recognising value in the salesperson and the supplier organisation essentially as a 'means to an end' in gaining a market competitive advantage (Gutman, 1982; Paul et al., 2009).

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4.21 Salespeople Sell

Participant (2205JHa) supports this notion that salespeople must remember it is “honest and authentic” sales practice to ‘sell’ to a customer with a need: Two experienced procurement participants – 1005MB and 1506FO – echoed this in their acceptance for salespeople to drive the purchase process, since this demonstrates passion and confidence in bringing the customer the prescribed advantage:

Table 20: Participant Quotations: Salespeople Sell

Source	S/P	Quotations: Salespeople Sell
2205JHa	S	<i>“[The Buyer] said “on my card it says Procurement, purchasing, I’m here to buy stuff, I want to hear from you, you know don’t apologise for you know wanting to sell me something, there’s nothing wrong with that” because without sellers, buyers would be more constrained, wouldn’t they?”</i>
3105JD	S	<i>“[I] have people say, “well I have relationships with a lot people; that’s what’s necessary” and then I ask them to question “how many of those people you have good relationships with and they’ve never done any business with you?” Then there’s a pause and they realise “oh, too many of them”, so the relationship person who strictly focuses on relationships probably is not as successful.”</i>
2505AW	S	<i>“Just because your customer likes you doesn’t mean he’s going to buy from you, so you have to be careful with that, it can go too far.”</i>
1506FO	P	<i>“You need to engage with the right people, to be pushy to try to sell to try to understand and try to see what are the gaps and try to see where is the requirement, go to the right people, touch the right people, speak with the right people but don’t come here to sell things that are not related with this industry if that’s the objective then it’s a nuisance isn’t it, it doesn’t make any sense.”</i>
1005MB	P	<i>“If I thought he was trying to close the deal before I was ready, then that would annoy me, but equally I would want to get the deal done once we’ve agreed I’d be keen to get it ordered and get it delivered, so yeah, the right time, I would have to feel it’s the right time.”</i>

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- | | | |
|--------|---|---|
| 2904AB | S | <i>“A lesser salesman might just continue to get the sale when they can get it regardless of whether it's suitable for our business.”</i> |
| 0106AM | S | <i>“Well the ultimate role of the salesperson is to win business for a company.”</i> |
| 1805JH | S | <i>“[laughs] purpose ultimately, I mean the ultimate purpose is to land a sale isn't it?”</i> |
| 1005MB | P | <i>“Well it's looking at it from two sides obviously from his point of view, it's to make a sale and make a profit for his company and commission for him. But to me it is to provide me with the service or product that meets my requirements for the right price.”</i> |
| 1105AS | P | <i>“Where you know the skills of the salesperson of course listening and understanding but very much the internal diplomat and internal kind of sales to breakdown the organisational barriers as well.”</i> |

Where a dyadic relationship has mutual appreciation of each other's needs, trust may develop into loyalty and dependency, granting salespeople with the opportunity to 'sell' to a willing customer open to engage in influencing dialogue (Meehan & Wright, 2013).

The attractiveness to collaborate in joint sponsorship increases to drive sustainable repeat business and value-add services, governed by a combined entrepreneurial purpose that generates mutual competitive advantages to both organisations (Aminoff & Tanskanen, 2013; Pulles, Schiele, Veldman, & Hüttinger, 2016; Wilson & Millman, 2003).

4.22 Internal Sponsor

Interestingly, procurement participants felt it valuable to have the salesperson as a trusted point of contact who is skilful in navigating and motivating their own organisation to deliver consistently, such that both salesperson and supplier organisation reputations are reinforced:

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Table 21: Participant Quotations: Internal Sponsorship

Source	S/P	Quotations: Internal Sponsorship
1105AS	P	<i>“A salesperson's relationship management internally and ability to get things done behind the scenes, and to be transparent in what they are doing behind the scenes, I think that is the real value because that takes years of reputation building internally whereas a good schmoozer can build relationship up and down the customer organisation dare I say it more easily than they can in their own team.”</i>
1705SMc	S	<i>“The Purchaser needs to know "do you understand your commercial systems? do you understand how your commercial system flows from point of entry, who's the commercial team, who's the point of ordering, who's the delivery, who's the invoicing, understanding terms & conditions and contractual and legal stuff as well, it's a broad it's a very broad bag that they can go to that individual with, it's not just a technology sell.”</i>
1705SMc	S	<i>“I think if you look at the make-up of the individuals that are at that level who are being asked to provide true key account management, true insight and consultancy sales, those people have already got have built up an extensive career and their age demographic tends to be at the higher end let's say mid-30s plus and have got ten years plus of experience of doing the ground work, understanding the platforms, the products and building up account relationships and understanding how organisations work.”</i>
1705SMo	S	<i>“Right, it's again relationship management which you may argue that does our CEO sell to the CEO of JLR when they meet? Probably not, does he generate some form of trust and relationship, which will facilitate an easier discussion on sales further down the tree?”</i>
1105AS	P	<i>“I'd like that skill to sit within an account team so it's either a senior person naturally takes this style and that's good, but it doesn't have to be a senior person it can be the younger one against different peers, who's the one there to go and take an idea forward, work it up the tree and then use your senior members to be a top-cover or occasionally the lead in to allow that to happen. I don't think job title matters too much as long as</i>

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they're over thirty and some pedigree behind them that's probably enough."

Participant 1105AS speaks of salesperson "pedigree" and describes that a level of seniority is expected in the account team who can support younger sales members. A position aligned with Cuevas, et al (2015), outlining that before organisational partnership can be considered, it is essential to establish individual level boundary-spanning relationships that mobilise vertical decision-makers across the organisations to agree mutual business development strategies, highlighting the role of the experienced KAM as a potentially successful Challenger Sponsor (Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014) as researched to having greater customer empathy and being more culturally cognisant than other sales functions (Davies & Ryals, 2013).

4.23 Theoretical Contribution

Giving due consideration to the findings, the salesperson's main aim is to achieve repeat purchases from existing customers by delivering consistent performance that provides customer's a reason to continue to engage the salesperson and supplier organisation.

The customer's objective is to continue to receive perceived value from reliable, trusted salespeople.

There would appear to be three inter-related constructs to support this notion:

1. Value can be identified as anything the customer perceives to be valuable: An independent, temporal variable to Sponsorship (Cresswell, 2009).
2. Sponsorship may be where dyadic individuals establish trusted relationships and collaboratively sponsor mutually agreed business aims and personal goals: A dependent variable on Value moderated by Trust.
3. Trust is a phenomenon, the magnitude of which may moderate Value to Sponsorship. Annette Baier (Baier, 1986) elegantly describes the nuance of trust and distrust insisting the phenomenological importance of trust in influencing relational outcomes, confronting the Challenger premise further (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011).

The volume of trust directly impacts the sustainability of sponsorship in that if trust – or loyalty – is not diligently maintained, it is unlikely a customer will extend their vulnerability

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or reputation to support the salesperson relationship, dissolving the relationship and potential for repeat purchase.

Responding to Vanneste (2016) – though perhaps ambitious – this research may contribute to advancing the notion that dyadic corporate ‘sponsorship’ as a construct may align with Pillai (2003) and provide extension to the Enterprise Selling premise (Rackham & DeVincendis, 1999) in evolving the sales relationship process in elevating the mutual achievement of each organisation’s goals through collaboration by ultimately grounding the customer’s loyalty through perfection in salesperson service and organisational innovation (Vanneste, 2016).

The conceptual model in Figure 1 presents a parsimonious approach to theoretically explain the dynamic, omnipotent nature of trust in selling, proposing a continuation of this study combining a quantitative evaluation in a mixed-methods analysis.

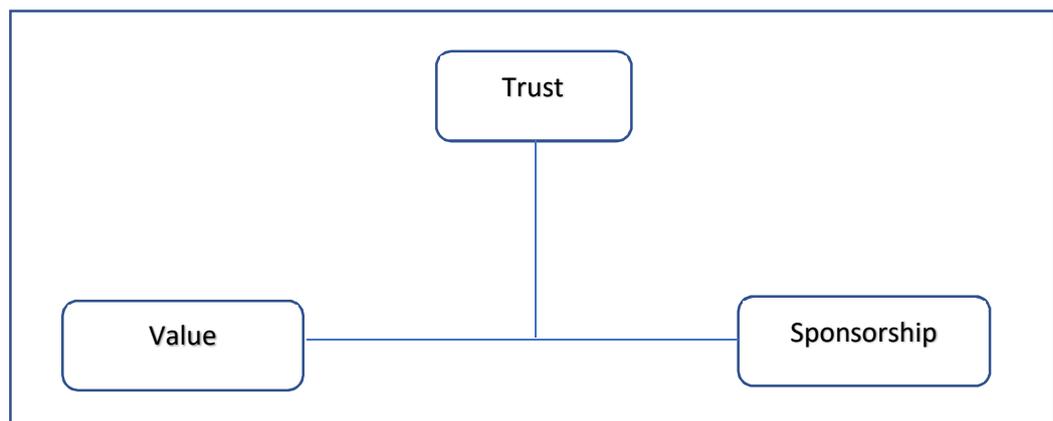


Figure 1: Conceptual Model

5. Conclusions

This research aims to generate greater understanding of the social construction of trust phenomena in B2B selling. It shines a light on the new Challenger Selling approach and its validity as a robust selling method, exploring whether the trust constructs presented in the literature support the notion that Challenger can be applied without a pre-existing relationship or dyadic trust and whether the supplier organisation's brand reputation influences the applicability of the Challenger approach.

The thematic map shown in [Appendix L](#) pictorially describes the themes generated from the findings and supports these conclusions:

Both participant groups – Sales and Procurement – consider that the advantages of having a dyadic relationship are in open communications, knowledge exchange and delivering a consistent service however, the relationship is not the central component in guaranteeing a purchase, agreeing with the position proposed by the Challenger Selling approach (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011) and supported by participant 3105JD (3105JD, personal communication, May 31, 2018).

Interestingly, participants collectively separate knowledge and relationship: Knowledge can be a component that contributes to salesperson credibility and consequently customer confidence, whereas relationship may be considered a construct that is mutually decided based on credibility and reputation of consistently delivering performance over time, which forms trust. This finding contributes to the Challenger Selling approach (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011) in that while knowledge is agreed to be important in establishing the salesperson's credibility, it also reinforces that the formalised relationship is not required initially to gain the customer's attention and advance a conversation.

Irrespective of the relationship, participants aligned that untrustworthy behaviours can cause relationships to break down at any time, potentially reducing the opportunity for repeat purchases. Likewise, unethical purchasing practices may cause the salesperson to reconsider their customer relationship and withdraw insightful knowledge sharing that previously provided the customer a recognisable competitive advantage (Hughes et al., 2013).

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Relationships simultaneously increase dependency between both parties, so to protect their vulnerability (Gao et al., 2005; Gundlach & Cannon, 2010) the customer may base this decision on their perception of the salesperson's commitment plus evidence of the supplier organisation's customer priority, which collectively act as antecedents to trust and over the long-term develop into a trust-based advocacy or sponsorship ([Appendix L](#)).

Contrarily, this research found that trusted relationships are deemed necessary to (Aarikka-Stenroos & Jaakkola, 2012; Grönroos, 2008) sustain longer-term repeat purchases from the same customer, though it may be the customer's choice to initiate a dyadic relationship due primarily to the perceived consequential competitive advantage, aligning with prior KIBS research wherein knowledge sharing may be advantageous for relationship building, and further supporting the main premise of the Challenger approach (M. Dixon & Adamson, 2011).

The data suggest that trust is formed over time based on the customer's perception of the salesperson's value – identified as anything the customer chooses to be valuable – and their long-term loyalty in contributing to the customer's business aims and personal goals. Reflectively, the salesperson's objective from a relationship is to achieve long-term repeat business through the tailoring of business solutions that complement the supplier organisation's core competencies (Grönroos, 2008; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Verbeke et al., 2011) and which may ultimately reduce operational costs of sales (Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015).

A 'value saturation' point may occur for customers if supplier innovation slows, making repeat purchases transactional over time. Nevertheless, with an established relationship manifest as dyadic loyalty – or "super trust" (1105IA) akin to a loyal marriage – there is value in even transactional relationships where the dyad operates to answer each other's needs naturally, making repeat purchases seamless and repetitive (Palmatier et al., 2007; Pulles et al., 2016).

Finally, this research provides commentary to the Challenger Selling approach of Dixon and Adamson (2011) in that where it may be agreed that a pre-existing relationship or trust is not essential to influence a transaction, rather that salesperson's knowledge, credibility and organisational reputation are offered as 'fundamental pre-requisites' in positive vendor selection.

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5.2 Managerial Implications

Managerial implications are offered as reflections to this cross-sectional study only.

This research offers that customers expect to work with ethical, reputable organisations and salespeople, so choosing to invest time in building relationships with likeminded salespeople with whom they find rapport and can exchange knowledge to mutually advance business goals with the security of organisational governance.

This study shows that customer confidence builds trust over time, which develops into a relationship that provides a competitive advantage for both customer and salesperson. To this, there is value and a tangibility in trust such that customers who perceive the salesperson – or the supplier organisation – to behave opportunistically shall diminish their potential to build the customer’s confidence and consequent trust.

It is further suggested that sales managers recognise the currency and value of trustworthiness and act as role models for their salespeople, emulating ethical business conduct to reinforce the organisational brand values that customers largely identify with.

There is empirical evidence to suggest that different behaviours, skills and competences exist between key account management function and the atypical salesperson role (Guenzi, Pardo, & Georges, 2007) and where the Challenger approach may better pertain to the KAM skillset, such identification may be of interest for sales management in redefining sales incentivisation to reduce the pressure burden of having to ‘make a sale’, which can increase customer stress to the detriment of potential sponsorship and repeat purchases. Suggestions may include aligning ‘Customer Team’ targets with organisational objectives and achievements and increase the professionalism and ethical conduct of customer-facing representatives.

5.3 Limitations

Irrespective of the contribution this study makes to the field of trust in selling, the exploratory nature of this research presents several limitations that may be answered through further investigation.

The results of this interpretative phenomenological study were collected from a limited sample of male-only participants from large UK-based industrial organisations operating in business-to-business selling environments, which collectively may present bias in the

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study. To increase reliability, it may be recommended to interview a mixed gender sample from a selection of multi-national and small-to-medium sized organisations.

5.4 Future Research

Though several participants commented that relationships require time to build primarily to develop dyadic knowledge and motivations with which to judge trustworthiness (McKnight & Chervany, 1998), this study does not measure the time-frame required for salespeople to establish either trust or a relationship. It may be that a longitudinal study could provide causal insight to how trust is formed and add clarity to this under-developed phenomenon.

Further, there would appear to be scant empirical research on the role of gender and trust in selling, to which this study may form a basis from which to expand this area of knowledge.

This research studied large, multinational organisations, which may further contribute to recent research on inter-organisational trust (Ekici, 2013).

The theoretical model offered in Figure 1 provides a thematic distillation of the research findings that may be assessed with quantitative analysis methods, perhaps adopting and adapting scales and measures from similar extant studies (Doney & Cannon, 1997; Gounaris & Tzempelikos, 2014; Morgan & Hunt, 1994; Toon, Robson, & Morgan, 2012; Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015).

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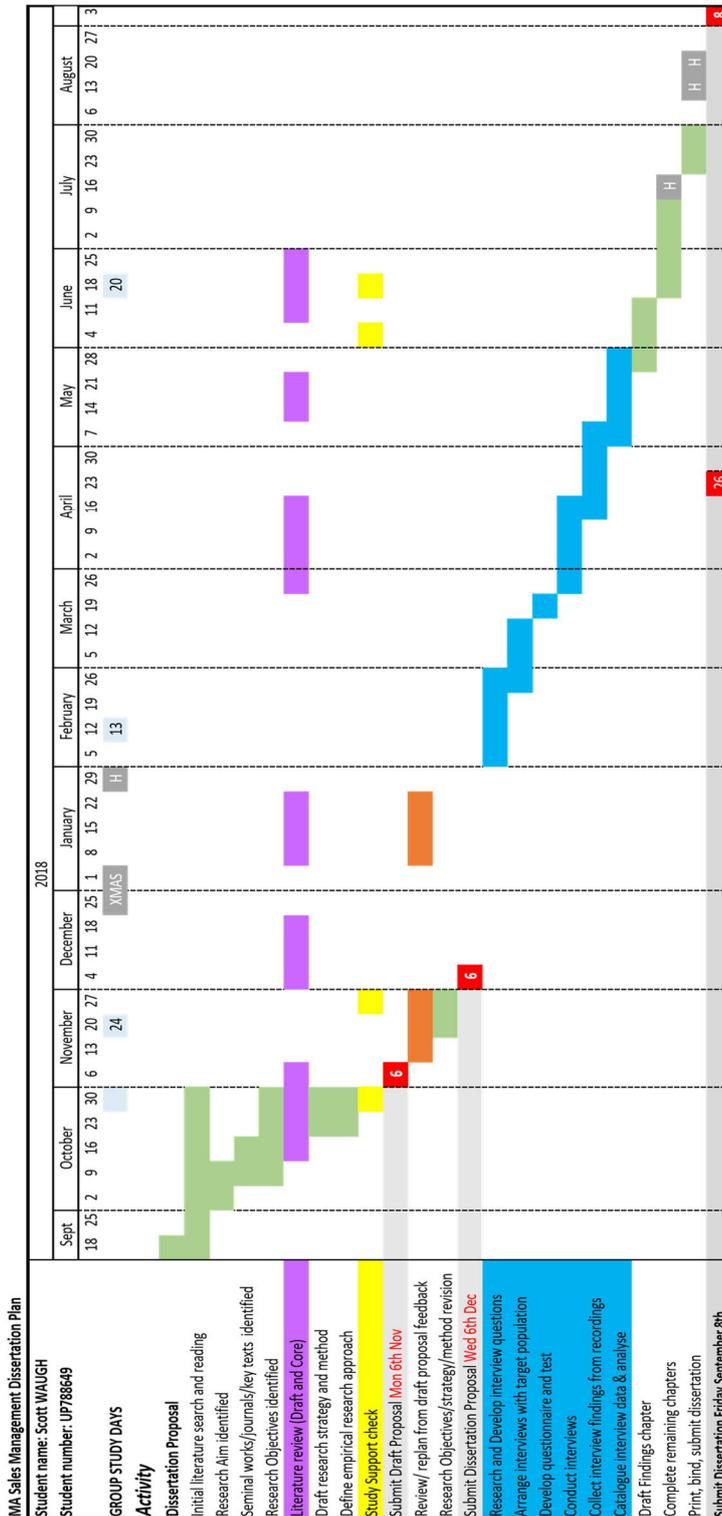
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7. Appendices

Appendix A: Research Gantt Chart



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Appendix B: Signed Ethical Consideration Form

BAL TAUGHT STUDENT ETHICAL OPINION FORM v.4.2 2017

Ethical opinion form for Faculty of Business and Law (BAL) taught undergraduate and postgraduate students (except MRes)

Instructions to student

This form should be completed by the student, referring to the Guidance Notes to accompany this form and the 'Research ethics – issues to consider' guide (also to be found as an appendix to the Guidance Notes). If you are not collecting primary data or data that are identifiable with individuals, then you should answer Qs 1-4, then Q11 and as many of the questions between Qs 12-20 as are relevant in your case. The completed form should then be passed to the supervisor prior to a review of the possible ethical implications of the proposed dissertation or project. Students should read the guidance that accompanies this form to help them complete it.

No primary data collection or recruitment of potential participants must be undertaken before a final version of this form has been approved.

If, following review of this form, amendments to the proposals are agreed to be necessary, the student should provide the supervisor with an amended version for endorsement.

If, following the completion of the review process, your supervisor and, where relevant, any independent reviewer is unwilling to grant you a favourable ethical opinion, you have a right of appeal to BAL Faculty Ethics Committee. If you wish to exercise this right, email the Faculty Ethics Administrator (email address available from your supervisor), stating your name, HEMIS no., the relevant unit and course, and briefly stating your grounds for requesting that BAL Faculty Ethics Committee review the decision. Attach your completed ethics form and any supplementary documentation and include any relevant correspondence about the case.

A final signed and dated version of this form must be bound in to however many copies of the dissertation you are required to hand in. The form MUST be signed and dated by both the student, the supervisor and, where required, any peer ethics reviewer. If the dissertation is submitted without a fully completed, signed and dated ethics form it will be deemed to be a fail. Second attempt assessment may be permitted by the Board of Examiners.

1. What are the objectives of the dissertation / research project?

Challenger selling and its Value in Key Account Co-creation?
• The profiles required to be able to co-create for value add. (buyer-seller)
• Evaluate the definition of Value and extent of co-creation Risk?

2. Does the research involve NHS patients, resources or staff? ~~YES~~ / NO (please delete as applicable).

If YES, it is likely that full ethical review must be obtained from the NHS process before the research can start. Please discuss your proposal with your Supervisor and/or Course Leader and consult the Guidance Notes for this ethics form.

3. Does the research involve MoD staff? ~~YES~~ / NO (please delete as applicable).

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If YES, then ethical review may need to be undertaken by MoD REC. Please discuss your proposal with your Supervisor and/or Course Leader and consult the Guidance Notes for this ethics form.

4. Do you intend to collect *primary data* from human subjects or data that are identifiable with individuals? (This includes, for example, questionnaires and interviews.) YES / ~~NO~~ (please delete as applicable)

If you do not intend to collect such primary data then please go to question 11.

If you do intend to collect such primary data then please respond to ALL the questions from Q5 onwards. If you feel a question does not apply then please respond with 'n/a' (for 'not applicable').

5. How will the primary data contribute to the objectives of the dissertation / research project?

To collect & correlate empirical research to support literature research data (secondary); validate my research hypothesis.

6. What is/are the survey population(s)?

1) KAM community in own organisation of c. 300. Number?
2) Buyer population in customer's organisation of c. 100.
3) Subject leading researchers in the field of A. I. C.

7. a) How big is the sample for each of the survey populations, and b) how was this sample arrived at? (Please answer both parts of this question.)

a) Sample size to be estimated between 7-12 participants considered to have sufficient expertise in field.
b) Shall consider this an adequate sample size to provide sufficient empirical data given the time constraints of the study.

8. How will respondents be a) recruited and b) selected? (Please answer both parts of this question.)

More detail on selection
a) Respondents need to be eligible (i.e. fluent in field of study/topic) and selected accordingly. Using Vol approved templates to inform respondents maintaining confidentiality & security and snowball sample. so (get a carrier sample

9. What steps are proposed to ensure that the requirements of informed consent will be met for those taking part in the research? If an Information Sheet for participants is to be used, please attach it to this form. If not, please explain how you will be able to demonstrate that informed consent has been gained from participants.

respondents will be informed in writing and consent to be agreed.

10. How will data be collected from each of the sample groups?

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BAL TAUGHT STUDENT ETHICAL OPINION FORM v.4.2 2017

- Questionnaire or interview (F2F) according to an approved data collection method and process.
11. a) How will *data* be stored and b) what will happen to the data at the end of the research? (Please answer *both* parts of this question.)
to password protected laptop computer; Cloud-based storage including secure backups on hard disk.
12. What measures will be taken to prevent unauthorised persons gaining access to the data, and especially to data that may be attributed to identifiable individuals?
password protection on controlled storage media.
13. What steps are proposed to safeguard the *anonymity* of the respondents?
Names of Respondents will not be necessary to complete any interview. Business names will not be referred to in any reference (Do not carry data tables forward).
14. Are there any *risks* (physical or other, including reputational) to respondents that may result from taking part in this research? ~~YES~~ / NO (please delete as applicable).
If YES, please specify and state what measures are proposed to deal with these risks.
15. Are there any *risks* (physical or other, including reputational) to the researcher or to the University that may result from conducting this research? ~~YES~~ / NO (please delete as applicable).
If YES, please specify and state what measures are proposed to manage these risks.
16. Will any *data* be obtained from a company or other organisation? ~~YES~~ / NO (please delete as applicable) For example, information provided by an employer or its employees.
If NO, then please go to question 19.
17. What steps are proposed to ensure that the requirements of *informed consent* will be met for that organisation? How will *confidentiality* be assured for the organisation?
18. Does the organisation have its own ethics procedure relating to the research you intend to carry out? YES / NO (please delete as applicable).

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If YES, the University will require written evidence from the organisation that they have approved the research.

19. Will the proposed research involve any of the following (please put a V next to 'yes' or 'no'; consult your supervisor if you are unsure):

- Vulnerable groups (e.g. children and adults unable to consent)? YES NO
- Particularly sensitive topics? YES NO
- Access to respondents via 'gatekeepers'? YES NO
- Use of deception? YES NO
- Access to confidential personal data (names, addresses, etc)? YES NO
- Psychological stress, anxiety, etc.? YES NO
- Intrusive interventions? YES NO

If answers to any of the above are "YES", please explain below how you intend to minimise the associated risks.

20. Are there any other ethical issues that may arise from the proposed research?

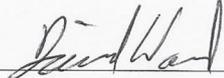
No.

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BAL TAUGHT STUDENT ETHICAL OPINION FORM v.4.2 2017

	Print name	Signature	Date signed
Student	SCOTT WAUGH		15/9/17

I / we grant a favourable ethical opinion:

Supervisor	DAVID WARD		15.09.17
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Peer reviewer (where applicable)	PHILIP MCGRAW		15.09.17
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AMENDMENTS

If you need to make changes please ensure you have permission before recruiting any participants and any primary data collection. If there are major changes, fill in a new form if that will make it easier for everyone. If there are minor changes then fill in the amendments (next page) and get them signed before the primary data collection begins.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Portland St
Portsmouth
PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Research Title: *To explore to what extent is trust important in applying the Challenger Selling approach – A qualitative study?*

Ethics Committee Ref No:

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet dated November 2017 (version 1.0) for the above study. I have had the opportunity to consider the information, ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.

3. I understand that data collected during this study, *could* be requested and looked at by regulatory authorities. I give my permission for any authority, with a legal right of access, to view data which might identify me. Any promises of confidentiality provided by the researcher will be respected.

4. I consent for my interview to be audio / video recorded. The recording will be transcribed and analysed for the purposes of the research. (Details regarding security and storage of recordings and transcripts are explained in the Participant Information Sheet).

5. I consent to verbatim quotes being used in publications; I will not be named but I understand that there is a risk that I could be identified.

6. I understand that the results of this study may be published and / or presented at meetings or academic conferences. I give my permission for my anonymous data, which does not identify me, to be disseminated in this way.

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7. I agree to the data I contribute being retained for any future research that has been approved by a Research Ethics Committee.

8. I agree to take part in the above study.

Name of Participant taking consent:

Date:

Signature:

Yours sincerely,



Scott
Researcher
University of Portsmouth Faculty of Business and Law

Waugh

Source: This form is adapted from, *Consent Form and Guidance Template*, David Carpenter, 2016. University of Portsmouth.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

Appendix D: Participant Information Sheet



UNIVERSITY OF
PORTSMOUTH

**PARTICIPANT INFORMATION
SHEET**
**(to be read in conjunction with the
Participant Consent Form)**

Portland St
Portsmouth
PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Research Title: *To explore to what extent is trust important in applying the Challenger Selling approach – A qualitative study.*

Dear Potential Participant,

You are invited to participate in a research study aimed at discovering the importance of trust when salespeople apply the Challenger Selling approach. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part or not. Thank you for taking the time to read this:

What is the purpose of the study?

Challenger Selling is a new selling approach that has become popular following an article written by Harvard Business Review in 2008. That article inspired Mark Dixon and Brett Adamson to publish the Challenger Selling book in 2011, which has since been adopted as a business-to-business selling practice by many organisations looking for a new selling advantage.

However, it seems that the Challenger Selling approach disregards 'trust' or relationship: Instead, the approach suggests that insightful conversations are sufficient for an executive customer to make wholesale changes to their business operations.

This research importantly interprets the relationship between trust and selling from the perspective of experienced Executives – such as you – to shine a spotlight on the new Challenger Selling approach and test its validity as a robust selling method.

It is your opinions that are credible and of value: You are selected based on your experiences as a recipient of salesperson behaviours, tactics and influences of your

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decision-making. Your views and opinions provide valuable empirical contribution to understand how important trust is in the interaction with salespeople.

The findings of this empirical qualitative research shall directly contribute to the academic gaps in knowledge within the social science field of trust and its applicability to professional selling.

Why have I been invited?

I would like to invite you to take part in a telephone interview. This is entirely your choice. You are selected based on your experience in purchasing decision-making, influencing and experience as the recipient of salesperson behaviours, tactics and influences. Your views and opinions are of value to this piece of research and all data collected shall remain secure, such that no bias, prejudice or vulnerability may be attributable to you.

Do I have to take part?

This is an entirely voluntary request. If you agree to participate, please can you sign the attached consent form, Participant Consent Form, dated November 2017, version, 1.0.

What will happen to me if I take part?

The interview can be via telephone and shall last approx. 45 minutes.

All information shall be held securely on an encrypted laptop/HD, accessible to me only.

Your privacy is most important: Your details shall be registered anonymously, and all collected data shall not be directly attributable to you.

Expenses and payments

No costs shall occur for the participant. Unfortunately, no incidental expenses shall be refunded.

For telephone interviews, the researcher shall arrange a call at a time that is preferred by you.

What data will be collected and / or measurements taken?

Data collected will be your subjective views on specific questions that relate to the research objective. There is no right or wrong answer. All views are confidential and stored in the aforementioned manner.

All data shall be transcribed verbatim and can be reviewed by you for amendment to maintain an accurate account of your experiences and opinions.

Data shall be analysed using NVIVO thematic analysis software, allowing relationships with existing research to be made and a research conclusion to be drawn.

What are the possible disadvantages, burdens and risks of taking part?

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By participating, it can be considered that your donation of time is a small inconvenience to the normal business operations only and no loss shall be incurred.

You may feel tired at the end of the interview.

Should you accidentally share confidential information, it is encouraged that you make the Researcher aware of this and that section of recording can be deleted or anonymised as you wish.

What are the possible advantages or benefits of taking part?

You will not receive any direct personal benefits from participating in this research, however there is a wider communal benefit to the social science of sales management and the continuous improvement to the Sales and Marketing professions through talent and skills development.

Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?

The anonymous data can be shared to others at academic conferences, or published as a project report, academic dissertation or in academic journals or book. It could also be made available to any commissioner or funder of the research. Anonymous data, which does not identify you, may be analysed by an appropriate research ethics committee. The raw data, that which can identify you, will not be distributed outside the study team without your written permission. Although, regulatory authorities can have the legal right to access the data for the purposes of conducting an audit or enquiry, though rarely seen. Agencies must also treat your personal data with complete confidence.

What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?

As a volunteer you can stop any participation interview at any time, or withdraw from the study at any time before, without giving a reason if you do not wish to. If you do withdraw from a study after some data have been collected, you will be asked if you are content for the data collected thus far to be retained and included in the study.

If you prefer, the data collected can be destroyed and not included in the study. Once the research has been completed, and the data analysed, it will not be possible for you to withdraw your data from the study.

What if there is a problem?

If you have a query, concern or complaint about any aspect of this study, in the first instance you should contact the researcher(s) if appropriate.

If the researcher is a student, there will also be an academic member of staff listed as the supervisor whom you can contact.

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If there is a complaint and there is a supervisor listed, please contact the Supervisor with details of the complaint. The contact details for both the researcher and any supervisor are detailed on page 1.

If your concern or complaint is not resolved by the researcher or their supervisor, you should contact the Head of Department.

Who is funding the research?

This research is self-funded. None of the researchers or study staff will receive any financial reward by conducting this study, other than their normal salary as an employee of Siemens plc.

Who has reviewed the study?

The University of Portsmouth maintains a stringent Ethical Commitment policy, such that all research involving human participants is reviewed to ensure that the dignity and well-being of participants is respected.

This study has been reviewed by the University of Portsmouth Business and Law Faculty Ethics Committee and been given favourable ethical opinion.

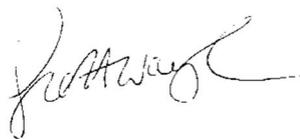
Thank you

Thank you for taking time to read this information sheet and for considering volunteering.

Please consult others opinion if you need: I can answer any questions if anything is unclear.

If you do agree to participate your consent is sought; please see the accompanying consent form, which is required prior to conducting an interview with you. A copy of this information sheet and your signed consent form, will be copied to you also.

Yours sincerely,



Scott Waugh
Researcher
University of Portsmouth Faculty of Business and Law

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Appendix E: Pilot Interview Questions and Interview Script

Interview Script

[Intro] Thank you for your time to participate in this interview. It is very much appreciated you taking time to help with this study.

It is your opinions that are credible and of value: You are selected based on your experiences as a recipient of salesperson behaviours, tactics and influences of your decision-making.

Your views and opinions provide valuable empirical contribution to understand how important trust is in the interaction with salespeople.

[Filter] Can you please describe your length of career?

[Filter] And what is your field of experience?

[Filter] Which industry sectors have you experience in?

[Filter] How many years' have you been interacting with salespeople?

[Filter] And your highest academic qualification?

[Intro] Thank you: To introduce the theme for you, *Challenger Selling* is a new selling approach that has become popular following an article written by Harvard Business Review in 2008(9). That inspired Mark Dixon and Brett Adamson to publish the *Challenger Selling* book in 2011, which has since been adopted as a business-to-business selling practice by many organisations looking for a new selling advantage.

However, it seems that the Challenger Selling approach disregards 'trust' or relationship. Instead, the approach suggests that insightful conversations are sufficient for an executive customer to make wholesale changes to their business operations.

This research importantly interprets the relationship between trust and selling from the perspective of experienced Executives, to shine a spotlight on the new Challenger Selling approach and test its validity.

TOPIC 1: Value

1. [CORE] What do you think the purpose of the salesperson is?
 - a. [probe] And can you describe the value of the salesperson?

2. [CORE] To what extent is there competitive advantage in having a relationship with a salesperson?
 - a. [probe] And what would you expect from a relationship?
 - b. [probe] How would that impact your trust perception?

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- c. [probe] How might you describe the value in an unknown salesperson?
 - d. [probe] Describe where a relationship with a salesperson might not be necessary to influence your purchase.
 - e. [probe] And where is a relationship mandatory to influence you?
3. [open] What is of value in the supplier's organisation brand?
 - a. [probe] What value is there from working with smaller and larger organisations?
risk vs flexibility vs responsiveness
 4. [open] To what extent is there value for a salesperson to be vertically connected in your organisation?
 - a. [probe] What do you understand to be multi-level selling?

TOPIC 2: Behaviours

1. [open] What would be your interpretation of trust in a salesperson?
 - a. Does age make a difference to your trust perception?
2. [open] Describe the difference in your expectation of a salesperson you know compared with a salesperson you have never met before?
 - a. [probe] To what extent do you have trust for an unknown salesperson offering you an interesting idea?
 - b. [probe] And how would you receive an unknown salesperson assigned to you from a recognised supplier brand?
 - c. [probe] What is it about the salesperson that increases your trust of them?
3. [CORE] Is confidentiality important to your perception of trustworthiness?
 - a. [probe] What might be the outcome if a salesperson was non-discrete with your confidential information?
 - b. [probe] What is the difference in the level of information you exchange with different salespeople?
4. [CORE] How important is it for the salesperson to behave ethically?
 - a. How would you respond to a salesperson who is overtly "pushy?"
 - b. How would ethical behaviours impact your perception of trustworthiness?
5. [open] Describe your expectations of the supplier organisation to perform
 - a. [probe] What are your thoughts about how your trust in the organisation (brand) could extend to the salesperson?
 - b. [probe] How does the organisation establish trust?

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SUBJECT 3: Knowledge

1. [CORE] Describe to what extent does the salesperson's knowledge affect your perception of trustworthiness.
 - a. [probe] And to what extent does salesperson's knowledge of your business
 - b. [probe] And to what extent does salesperson's knowledge of your industry

2. [open] Describe how might you extend trust to a salesperson with a limited knowledge of {their business/your business/your industry}?

3. [open] Describe when a salesperson's unique knowledge, expertise or competency specifically influenced your decision to purchase.
 - a. [probe] How long had you known the salesperson?
 - b. [probe] Would you have made the same decision of an unknown salesperson?
 - c. [probe] Describe when you might decide to purchase from a salesperson after only the first meeting.

4. [open] To what extent would you expect a salesperson from a recognised organisation be more knowledgeable?
 - a. [probe] What are your thoughts on whether there is a difference in brand trust between a small and a large organisation?

[clarification] With the subject in mind, is there anything else I should have asked you?

[clarification] Is there anything you think I have missed that could help me in future?

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Appendix F: Refined Question List After Pilot Interviews

	INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ASKED	RESPONSE	CATEGORY
1	What do you think the purpose of the salesperson is?		VALUE
3	What do you expect from a relationship (with a salesperson)?		VALUE
40	Is there a competitive advantage in having a relationship with a salesperson?	added after pilots	VALUE
6	To what extent is knowledge of your business - even within a commodity purchase - important?		KNOWLEDGE
7	Is knowledge more or less important than a relationship?		KNOWLEDGE
9	How might you describe your trust in a salesperson with limited knowledge of their business products your business and your industry. again is that reinforced by what you just highlighted?		KNOWLEDGE
10	Can you describe an instance when a salesperson's unique knowledge expertise or competency specifically influenced your decision to purchase?		KNOWLEDGE
14	So where are you say you've pre-selected in your own mind or you selected the organisation, then would you put some value and trust in the organisational brand?		ORGANISATION
19	Moving into a more of a behavioural question if you would, what would be your interpretation of trust in a salesperson if you were to get into a little bit more detail please.	good response	BEHAVIOUR
22	Let's go back to the fly by night and I think earlier on you mentioned about the North American approach working within your cadence or your momentum. could you think of an instance how would you respond to a sales person who is overtly pushy would you say?		BEHAVIOUR
23	And in that same vein, whether it's related or not so much, how important is it for the salesperson to behave ethically then?	good response	BEHAVIOUR
24	If there's a relationship between the salesperson and the salespersons organisation, would you take that reflection equally with the sales person and their brand, so if they, maybe a less ethical or pushy or tactically deviant salesperson was to see you, would you associate that behaviour with their brand also?		BEHAVIOUR
25	And to the same question, how would the organisation establish your trust?	good response	ORGANISATION
26	Maybe you've heard of multi-level selling, so with regards to account management you got levels of seniority throughout the relationship do all the elements of relationship and trust have to align or can it be mismatched in your opinion?	good response	BEHAVIOUR
28	How important is confidentiality of the salesperson to your perception of his or her trustworthiness?	good response	BEHAVIOUR
33	Is there anything else at all that you think I've missed that could help?		
38	Describe how does a relationship with a salesperson differ from the relationship you have with an organisation (brand)?	added after pilots	VALUE

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	PROBING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO USE IF NEEDED	RESPONSE	CATEGORY
2	And the value of the salesperson?		VALUE
4	Some people presume a relationship - Is there more to a relationship then?		VALUE
5	Could you describe where a relationship with a salesperson might not be necessary to influence your decision to purchase?		BEHAVIOUR
8	With regards to performance to deliver you say that you wouldn't work with people that couldn't even get you a quotation, how would that impact your level of trust?		TRUST
11	Do you think you would you have that same level of thought leadership trusted advisor trusted partnership with someone that you didn't know. would you make that same level of decision with that client?		KNOWLEDGE
12	Could you describe an example when in the past you might have decided to purchase from a salesperson - unknown - from the very first meeting?	poor response	
13	So you would say it's quite rare would you?	poor response	
15	Would you put the same amount of trust in a small versus a large organisation, would you say?		ORGANISATION
16	What extent would you say there is value in sales person being vertically connected within your organisation?		ORGANISATION
17	To what extent would you say there is value for you in having a salesperson vertically connected throughout your organisation?		ORGANISATION
18	You'd need that relationship basis to know that they are acting in your interests even when you're saying your project is the most important they've got to stay on topic you said, so that's delivering your needs first really isn't it.		BEHAVIOUR
20	With that same example of the man that you have dealt with for 15 years, has there been an instance where he might have managed to situation away have you just kept a clean sheet in your eyes or has there been an occasion when he's made a mistake or his organisation has let him down and he's shored up the relationship for you it's not been perfect right?	good response	BEHAVIOUR
21	Would you say at the age and the maturity of the salesperson is important compare The Fly by night with the 15 year master, is there an age differential there or do you think that's not so much relevant?	good response	BEHAVIOUR
27	Would you find it for example if the executive sponsor started to take on the selling role and maybe a bit pushy and maybe a bit expectant of the relationship. how would that affect your trust do you think?		BEHAVIOUR
29	You said you keep a lot to yourself, do you share a different amount of your tacit knowledge with those that you have relationship vs those that you don't know so well?		BEHAVIOUR
30	How long does it take for that knowledge share to start to loosen up would you say? is there a time frame in there?		KNOWLEDGE
31	Would you say that there's a difference in your holistic experience between male vs female salespersons?		VALUE
32	Just as a clarification really with the whole subject in mind that we've discussed there, is there anything else you think I could have asked you that would be beneficial to the Research?		
34	Is there an instance when a relationship is absolutely mandatory to influence your decision making?		BEHAVIOUR
35	When is a relationship absolutely mandatory before you would make a decision on a purchase?		BEHAVIOUR
36	To what extent is rapport building with the salesperson important in affecting your trustworthiness of the salesperson?	added after pilots	BEHAVIOUR
37	To what extent does the supplier organisation's governance policies affect your trustworthiness of the salesperson?	added after pilots	ORGANISATION
39	Describe the frequency with which you maintain contact with salespeople that you consider to be valuable to you/your business?	added after pilots	VALUE

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Appendix G: Interview Participant Details

Participant	Current Functional Role	Career (years)	Functional Experience (years)	Function (Sales or Procurement)	Gender	Current Industry	Industry Expertise
0106AM	OEM Account Manager	29	13	S	M	Manufacturing	Automotive Aluminium Rolling Food & Beverage Steel Processing Tyre Manufacturing
0905VG	VP Supply Chain Management	30	20	P	M	Manufacturing	Oil & Gas Nuclear Pulp & Paper Mining Pharmaceutical
1005LM	Head of IFA Sales	20	S	S	M	Investment Management	Finance
1005MB	Process Business Improvement Manager	25	20	P	M	Defence	Defence
1105AS	Senior Project Procurement Manager	24	14	P	M	Rail	Oil & Gas FMCG Rail
1105MD	Managing Partner	25	22	S	M	Management Consultancy	Oil & Gas
1106MDa	Global Category Manager	6	6	P	M	Pharmaceutical	Automotive Pharmaceutical Life Sciences
1106SG	Head of Project Procurement	25	25	P	M	Rail Automation	Rail
1405IA	Managing Director	35	30	P	M	Pharmaceutical Life Sciences	Life Sciences
1506FA	Contracts Manager Global Procurement	35	35	P	M	Oil & Gas	Automotive Aerospace Oil & Gas
1705SMc	Business Manager Process Industries	36	36	S	M	Oil & Gas Petrochemical Pharmaceutical	Chemical Pharmaceutical Oil & Gas Power Food & Beverage Aggregates/Minerals Water
1705SMo	Vertical Market Sales Manager	30	30	S	M	Automotive Aerospace	Manufacturing Automotive Logistics Aerospace
1805JH	Head of Strategy and Portfolio UK	36	36	S	M	IT Services	IT Services Manufacturing Warehouse Automation Pulp and Paper Media Transport Power Generation Financial Services

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Participant	Current Functional Role	Career (years)	Functional Experience (years)	Function (Sales or Procurement)	Gender	Current Industry	Industry Expertise
1805RE	Global Account Manager	30	22	S	M	Defence	Steel Automotive OEMs Defence
2205JHa	Sales Director	>30	>30	S	M	Manufacturing	All Manufacturing Industries
2404AB	Sales Manager	20	20	S	M	IT Delivery Services	Higher Education
2505AW	Head of Digitalisation and Innovation Pharmaceutical Business Segment	21	18	S	M	Pharmaceutical Life Sciences	Life Sciences Retail Industrial Software Training Telesales
2905SJ	Global Account Manager	36	35	S	M	Electrical Engineering Oil & Gas	Oil & Gas Chemical Power Generation
3005IC	Managing Director	>30	30	P	M	Pharmaceutical Fine Chemical Mineral Food & Beverage Nuclear	Pharmaceutical Fine Chemical Mineral Food Nuclear
3105JD	President	40	40	S	M	Management Consultancy	Management Consultancy

* Participant 1106MD was rejected from data thematic analysis due to not meeting the participant criteria (i.e. lack of experience).

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Appendix H: NVIVO Coding-to-Themes Visualisation

[R1] Perception of value	[S1] Salesperson quality	[V1] Trusted Relationships	[S1] Salesperson quality	[T1] Customer Sponsor (in customer org)	
[A1] VALUE of salesperson to customer	[B1] Salesperson's REPUTATION	[C1] TRUST of salesperson by customer	[D1] Salespersons CREDIBILITY	[E1] CUSTOMERS support of Salesperson (Sponsor)	[F1] Salesperson-Customer RELATIONSHIPS
Salesperson delivers promises (consistent)	Salesperson delivers promises (consistent)	Salesperson delivers promises (consistent)	Salesperson delivers promises (consistent)	Salesperson delivers promises (consistent)	Salesperson delivers promises (consistent)
reliable	reliable	reliable	reliable	reliable	reliable
Salesperson influential in own organisation	Salesperson influential in own organisation	Salesperson does not over-sell	Salesperson influential in own organisation	Salesperson influential in own organisation	Salesperson influential in own organisation
salesperson provides service (performance)	salesperson is objective	Openness	salesperson provides service (performance)	customer supports salesperson (joint strategy)	
Salesperson saves customer time	Easy to do business with	honesty (sincere)	salesperson expertise	Easy to do business with	Easy to do business with
Salesperson relationship is competitive advantage	trusted advisor (Involved in Business Development)	confidentiality	salesperson understands own business	Customer is receptive to salesperson knowledge	
information sharing (reliable)	adaptable or adaptive		Understand customer's business (Consultative)	historical experience with supplier	
Customer learns something new (knowledge)	credible	credible	Understand customer's industry	perception of supplier organisation	credible
Develop customer's business (their customer)	perception of salesperson	People buy from People	Develop customer's business (their customer)	perception of salesperson	
Creativity	salesperson aptitude (ability)	predisposition to trust (caution)	salesperson as subject matter expert (knowledgeable)	customer personal goals	
Salesperson as representative (conduit)	Customer focused (commitment)	Customer focused (commitment)	Customer focused (commitment)	Key supplier partnership	Customer focused (commitment)
Salesperson as business interface (Point of Contact)	Responsiveness	Salesperson listens (attentive)	Responsiveness	trust of the buyer by salesperson	
Interested in working with customer (engage)	expectation of salesperson	Customer comfort (confidence)	fairness	Reciprocal benefit	Reciprocal benefit
salesperson brings new knowledge (insight)	salesperson professionalism (prepared)	salesperson professionalism (prepared)	Interested in working with customer (engage)	Customer choice	
collaboration	ethical salesperson (integrity)	ethical salesperson (integrity)	empathy	collaboration	Time to build trust

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helpful (problem solving)	helpful (problem solving)	Time to build trust	take No for an answer	Trust (salesperson)	Trust (salesperson)
Salesperson adds value (mutual benefit from relationship)		Salesperson adds value (mutual benefit from relationship)	regard for customer's business (success goals)	Trust (organisation brand)	Trust (organisation brand)
		relationships (building trust)	Salesperson asks permission (respectful)	supplier dependency	relationships (building trust)
		salesperson authenticity	Salesperson Communication	reputation (salesperson)	reputation (salesperson)
		Two way communications	salesperson aptitude (ability)	reputation (supplier org)	Two way communications
		Salesperson attitude	Understand customer's motivations	Buyer's expertise	
		confidentiality	reputation (salesperson)	repeat business	confidentiality
		Rapport (friendliness or fit)	salesperson experience	loyalty	Rapport (friendliness or fit)

	[B2] ORGANISATION support of salesperson (REPUTATION)	[C2] No TRUST of salesperson (Diminishing trust)	[D2] Lack of CREDIBILITY	[E2] LACK of CUSTOMER support	[F2] LACK of RELATIONSHIP
	Salesperson's organisation (team support)	mis-sold	Salesperson not knowledgeable of own business	Purchase risk	
	meet customer's needs	opportunism (supplier agenda)	Does not want to understand customer's business	commodity purchase	opportunism (supplier agenda)
	organisation flexibility	confidentiality (breach)	No relationship	Supplier culture	No relationship
	Ethical Organisation (compliance)	Salesperson tells me what I want to hear	greedy salesperson	transactional selling	transactional selling
	efficiency	salesperson's agenda	salesperson's agenda	risk to organisation	salesperson's agenda
[A3] Reduced ORGANISATION support ??	Quality of offering or service	Pressure selling (pushy)	salesperson is tactical seller (short-termism)	Supplier qualification	risk to organisation
Ethical Organisation (compliance) lack of	References (use-cases)	Salesperson bullying tactics	Understand customer's industry <i>does not</i>	Customer resistant to change	
	Supplier Expertise (Value Add)	Salesperson's objectives targets (incentives)	sales focused only	customer culture	sales focused only
	innovative supplier	unknown salesperson			
		ethical salesperson (integrity) - LACK OF			

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Appendix I: Theoretical Position of Literature

COUNT	THEORETICAL TRUST BASIS	TOPIC	CODE
31	Cognitive trust; Competence Trust; Elaboration Likelihood Model	Trustworthiness: Expertise (Competency)	Texp
12	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Credibility	Tcred
7	Affective Trust	Trustworthiness: Likability	Tlike
35	Competence Trust; Goodwill trust;	Trustworthiness: Knowledge	Tkno
2	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Responsibility	Tresp
4	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Friendliness	Tfre
19	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Collaboration (shared goals/values)	Tcol
6	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Communication	Tcom
2	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Consistency	Tcons
1	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Discretion	Tdis
11	Social Expectancy theory	Trustworthiness: Honesty	Thon
13	Intentional Trust; Resource Dependency; Social Learning Theory; Dispositional Trust	Trustworthiness: Disposition / Propensity	Tdisp
12	Attribution Theory (Impression Management)	Trustworthiness: Propensity	Tprop
3	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Fairness	Tfair
2	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Sincerity	Tsinc
1	Hardin (1993); Gulati (1988)	Trustworthiness: Discretion	Tdisc
9	Social Expectancy theory	Trustworthiness: Reliability	Treli
8	Disposition-Related Trust; Game Theory	Trustworthiness: Mistrust	Tmist
14	Attribution Theory (Impression Management)	CO: Adaptability	COad
10	Social Expectancy theory; Behavioural Trust	CO: Benevolence	COben
15	Theory of Dependency (Emerson 1962)	CO: Satisfaction	COsat
12	Social Legitimacy theory	CO: Loyalty (long-term commitment/+trust)	COloy
14	Social Legitimacy theory	CO: Ethical (Integrity)	COeth
19	Commitment Trust Theory (Morgan, Hunt, 1994) ; Cognitive Trust	CO: Commitment	COcom
4	Social Expectancy theory	CO: Compatibility	COcop
5	Expectancy Disconfirmation Theory; Assimilation Theory	CO: Rapport	COrap
6	Transaction Cost Economics Reasoning; (Williamson, 1996)	Relationships: Transactional	RELtr
13	Transaction Cost Economics Reasoning; (Williamson, 1996)	Relationships: Trust Theory	RELthe
7	Transaction Cost Analysis (Anderson 1996)	Relationships: Risk	RELris
14	Resource Dependency theory (Emerson 1962); Social Exchange Theory	Relationships: Dependency / Reciprocity	RELdep
34	Commitment-Trust Theory; Resilient Trust; Regulatory Engagement; construal level	Relationships: Value (CLV/TSI/CompAdv)	RELval
13	Interorganisational Trust; Calculative trust	Organisation: Brand trust	ORGbra
7	Theory of Depedency (Emerson 1962) (Resource Dependency); Calculative Trust	Organisation: Dependency	ORGdep
13	Theory of Reasoned Action; Theory of Planned Behaviour; Theory of Cognitive Dissonance	Organisation: Influence / Commitment	ORGinf
11	Fragile Trust	Organisation: Perception (of Trust)	ORGper
10	Service-Dominant Logic (Vargo, Lusch, 2004; 2008)	Organisation: Service	ORGser
	Internalisation of Values; Calculative Trust	Organisation: Governance	ORGgov
	Exhibited trust	SO: Opportunism (Seller and Buyer)	SOopp
	Kraljic (1993)	SO: Purchase Importance	SOpur
	Transaction Cost Economics Reasoning; (Williamson, 1996)	SO: Relationship Length	SOrel
	Theory of Reasoned Action; Theory of Planned Behaviour; Theory of Cognitive Dissonance	SO: Influence	SOinf

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CODE	Kasi, Hautamaki, Pullins (2017)	McKnight, Chervany (1998)	Dowell, Morrison, Heffenan (2015)	Cuevas, Julkunen, Gabrielsson (2015)	Johnsen, Ford (2006)	Newell, Belonax, McCard, Plank (2011)
Texp			X			X
Tcred	X	X				
Tlike		X	X			
Tkno	X					
Tresp						
Tfre						X
Tcol				X		
Tcom						X
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon		X				
Tdisp		X				
Tprop						
Tfair						
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli						
Tmist		X	X	X	X	
COad						
COben			X			
COsat			X			
COloy						
COeth			X			
COcom			X			
COcop						
COrap	X					X
RELtr						
RELthe		X	X	X		
RELris						
RELdep						
RELval						
ORGbra		X				
ORGdep						
ORGinf						
ORGper						
ORGser			X			
ORGgov						
SOopp						
SOpur						
SOrel						
SOinf						

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CODE	Dwyer, Schurr, Oh (1987)	Moorman, Zaltman, Deshpande (1992)	Guenzi, Luca, Spiro (2016)	Plank, Reid, Pullins (1999)	Friend, Johnson, Sohi (2017)	Ganesan (1994)
Texp	X				X	
Tcred		X				X
Tlike						
Tkno		X	X	X		
Tresp						
Tfre						
Tcol						
Tcom		X				
Tcons					X	
Tdis						
Thon		X	X			X
Tdisp			X		X	
Tprop	X					
Tfair						
Tsinc			X			
Tdisc						
Treli				X		X
Tmist			X			
COad			X		X	
COben			X			X
COsat						X
COloy						
COeth					X	
COcom		X				X
COcop						
COrap						
RELtr	X					X
RELthe	X	X	X			X
RELris						
RELdep		X	X	X	X	X
RELval						
ORGbra				X		X
ORGdep			X			X
ORGinf	X					
ORGper						
ORGser						
ORGgov					X	
SOopp			X			X
SOpur			X			
SOrel			X			
SOinf						

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Bateman & Valentine (2015)	Donney & Cannon (1997)	Wood, Boles, Johnston, Bellenger (2008)	Wood, Boles, Babin (2008)	Pilla (2003)	Vaneste (2016)
Texp		X	X	X		
Tcred			X			
Tlike		X		X		
Tkno	X				X	
Tresp						
Tfre			X			
Tcol		X	X			
Tcom						
Tcons						
Tdis			X			
Thon	X		X			
Tdisp	X	X		X		
Tprop		X	X	X		
Tfair			X			
Tsinc			X			
Tdisc			X			
Treli	X	X	X			
Tmist						
COad	X					
COben		X	X			
COsat		X	X			
COloy	X		X	X		
COeth	X					
COcom	X	X	X			X
COcop		X	X	X		
COrap	X					
RELtr		X				
RELthe	X	X			X	
RELris		X				
RELdep						
RELval						
ORGbra		X				X
ORGdep		X				
ORGinf	X	X	X	X		
ORGper	X	X	X	X		
ORGser		X				
ORGgov	X	X				
SOopp	X	X			X	
SOpur						
SOrel						
SOinf					X	

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Suh (2017)	Crosby, Evans, Cowles (1990)	Liu and Leach (2001)	Morgan and Hunt (1994)	Hohenschwert & Geiger (2015)	Gassenheimer and Manolis (2001)
Texp		X	X	X		
Tcred			X			
Tlike						
Tkno	X		X		X	
Tresp						
Tfre						
Tcol			X			
Tcom			X			
Tcons				X		
Tdis						
Thon	X					
Tdisp						
Tprop						
Tfair						
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli		X				
Tmist						
COad						
COben						
COsat			X			
COloy			X			
COeth						
COcom				X		
COcop						
COrap						
RELtr						
RELthe		X		X		
RELris						
RELdep						X
RELval			X		X	
ORGbra						
ORGdep						
ORGinf						
ORGper						
ORGser		X				
ORGgov						X
SOopp	X					
SOpur						
SOral						
SOinf						

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Nooteboom et al (1997)	Young-Ybarra and Wiersema (1999)	Isaeva, Bachman, Bristow, Saunders(2015)	Jiang, Li, Gao, Bao (2013)	Harwood (2012)	Mandjak, Szalkai, Neumann-Bodi et al (2015)
Texp						
Tcred						
Tlike						
Tkno			X	X	X	
Tresp						
Tfre						
Tcol						
Tcom						
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon						
Tdisp	X				X	
Tprop						X
Tfair						
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli						
Tmist						
COad						
COben						
COsat						
COloy						
COeth	X					
COcom						X
COcop						
COrap						
RELtr						
RELthe	X					
RELris						X
RELdep	X	X				X
RELval						X
ORGbra						X
ORGdep						
ORGinf						
ORGper						
ORGser						
ORGgov	X					
SOopp						
SOpur						
SOral						
SOinf						

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Zboja, Clark, Hytko (2016)	Prahald, Ramaswamy (2004)	Guenzi, Storbacka (2015)	Plouffe, Bolander, Cote (2013)	Kaski, Niemi, Pullins (2017)	Alarcon, Lyons, Christensen, et al (2017)
Texp	X		X		X	X
Tcred	X		X		X	
Tlike						
Tkno	X	X	X		X	X
Tresp						
Tfre						
Tcol			X			
Tcom						
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon						
Tdisp						X
Tprop						X
Tfair						
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli						
Tmist						
COad						
COben					X	X
COsat	X					
COloy						
COeth			X			X
COcom			X			
COcop						
COrap					X	
RELtr						
RELthe						
RELris						
RELdep			X			
RELval	X	X			X	
ORGbra						
ORGdep						
ORGinf						
ORGper						
ORGser						
ORGgov						
SOopp						
SOpur						
SOrel						
SOinf	X			X		

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Rapp, Bachrach, Panagopoulos, Ogilvie (2014)	Rogers, Zeckhauser, Gino, et al (2017)	Corsaro, Snehota (2011)	Moellering (2002)	Mayer, David, Schoorman (1995)	Husted (1998)
Texp					X	
Tcred	X					
Tlike						
Tkno	X					
Tresp						
Tfre						
Tcol			X	X	X	
Tcom						
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon		X				
Tdisp						X
Tprop	X				X	X
Tfair						X
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli						
Tmist						
COad	X					
COben					X	
COsat						
COloy						
COeth		X			X	X
COcom						
COcop						
COrap						
RELtr						
RELthe						
RELris		X			X	
RELdep				X		
RELval	X					
ORGbra	X					
ORGdep	X					
ORGinf						
ORGper				X	X	
ORGser	X					
ORGgov				X		
SOopp	X	X			X	
SOpur				X		
SOral						
SOinf	X	X				

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Skarp, Gadde (2008)	Keraenen (2017)	Nilsson, Mattes (2015)	Valtakoski (2015)	Smith, Barclay (1997)	Zhang, Wu, Henke (2015)
Texp	X		X		X	X
Tcred						
Tlike						
Tkno		X	X			X
Tresp		X			X	
Tfre						
Tcol		X		X		
Tcom					X	
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon					X	
Tdisp						
Tprop				X		
Tfair						
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli					X	
Tmist						
COad	X	X				
COben	X				X	
COsat		X			X	
COloy	X					
COeth					X	
COcom	X	X				
COcop						
COrap						
RELtr						
RELthe						
RELris				X		
RELdep			X			
RELval		X	X	X		X
ORGbra			X			
ORGdep						
ORGinf			X			
ORGper						X
ORGser						
ORGgov						
SOopp					X	
SOpur						
SOrel						
SOinf			X			

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Kim, Ferrin, Rao (2007)	Bachrach, Mullins, Rapp (2017)	Spekman, Caraway (2006)	Ryals, Humphries (2007)	Palmatier, Scheer, Evans, Arnold (2008)	Blocker, Cannon, Panagopoulos, Sager (2012)
Texp	X	X			X	
Tcred						
Tlike						
Tkno	X		X		X	X
Tresp						
Tfre						
Tcol		X	X			
Tcom				X		
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon						
Tdisp	X					
Tprop						
Tfair						
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli				X		
Tmist					X	
COad			X			
COben						
COsat						
COloy					X	
COeth						
COcom		X	X		X	
COcop						
COrap						
RELtr						
RELthe						
RELris	X					
RELdep						
RELval		X	X	X		X
ORGbra	X					X
ORGdep					X	
ORGinf						
ORGper						X
ORGser		X				
ORGgov					X	
SOopp				X		
SOpur						
SOral					X	
SOinf						

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Tescari, Brito (2016)	Sako, Helper (1988)	Sullivan, Peterson, Krishnan (2011)	Meqdadi, Johnsen, Johnsen (2017)	Tzempelikos, Gounaris (2015)	Chang (2017)
Texp		X	X		X	
Tcred						
Tlike						
Tkno			X			X
Tresp						
Tfre						
Tcol				X		X
Tcom						X
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon						
Tdisp						
Tprop						
Tfair						
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli						
Tmist						
COad						
COben						
COsat					X	
COloy	X	X		X		
COeth						
COcom	X	X			X	
COcop						
COrap						
RELtr		X				
RELthe						
RELris						
RELdep		X				
RELval	X	X	X			
ORGbra		X	X			
ORGdep		X				
ORGinf						
ORGper			X			
ORGser					X	
ORGgov						X
SOopp		X				
SOpur						
SOral						
SOinf				X		

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Erevelles, Fukawa (2013)	Hakanen (2014)	Kennedy, Ferrell, LeClair (2001)	Vargo, Lusch (2017)	Pulles, Hartman (2017)	Goad, Jamarillo (2014)
Texp	X	X	X			
Tcred						
Tlike	X		X		X	
Tkno		X				X
Tresp						
Tfre	X					
Tcol					X	
Tcom						
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon			X			
Tdisp			X		X	
Tprop			X		X	
Tfair						
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli	X					
Tmist						
COad						X
COben						
COsat						X
COloy						
COeth			X	X		
COcom			X			
COcop					X	
COrap						
RELtr						
RELthe						
RELris						
RELdep						
RELval		X		X	X	X
ORGbra						
ORGdep				X		
ORGinf		X		X	X	
ORGper		X				
ORGser			X	X		
ORGgov						
SOopp			X			X
SOpur						
SOral						
SOinf			X			X

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Mahr, Lievens (2014)	Terho, Eggert, Haas, Ulaga (2015)	Kaski, Timo (2017)	Agnihotri, Gabler (2017)	Li, Zhang, Zhang, Zhou (2017)	Shannahan, Bush, Shannahan, Moncrief (2017)
Texp	X					
Tcred			X			
Tlike						
Tkno	X				X	X
Tresp						
Tfre			X			
Tcol	X		X			X
Tcom						
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon						
Tdisp						
Tprop						
Tfair	X					
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli						
Tmist						
COad		X	X	X		X
COben						
COsat	X	X		X		
COloy	X		X			
COeth						
COcom						
COcop						
COrap			X			
RELtr						
RELthe						
RELris						
RELdep						
RELval	X	X	X		X	X
ORGbra						
ORGdep						
ORGinf					X	
ORGper					X	
ORGser						
ORGgov						
SOopp				X		
SOpur						
SOrcl						
SOinf			X			

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Jelinek (2017)	Hesping, Schiele (2016)	Pulles, Schiele, Veldman, Hutteringer (2016)	Kang, Jindal (2016)	Jaakola, Frosen, Tikkanen (2015)	Wisker, Poulis (2015)
Texp						X
Tcred					X	
Tlike						
Tkno	X					
Tresp						
Tfre						
Tcol				X		
Tcom						
Tcons						
Tdis						
Thon						
Tdisp						
Tprop						
Tfair						
Tsinc						
Tdisc						
Treli						
Tmist				X		
COad						X
COben						
COsat			X			
COloy	X					
COeth						
COcom						
COcop						
COrap						
RELtr				X		
RELthe						
RELris		X				
RELdep			X			
RELval	X	X	X	X		X
ORGbra			X			
ORGdep						
ORGinf	X				X	
ORGper						
ORGser	X					
ORGgov	X					X
SOopp		X		X		
SOpur		X				
SOral						
SOinf		X				

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CODE	Kray, Kennedy, Zant (2014)	Arnett, Wittmann (2014)	Geiger, Kelly (2014)	Alamaki, Helia (2015)
Texp	X			
Tcred				
Tlike				
Tkno		X		X
Tresp				
Tfre				
Tcol				
Tcom				
Tcons				
Tdis				
Thon	X			
Tdisp				
Tprop				
Tfair				
Tsinc				
Tdisc				
Treli				
Tmist	X			
COad				X
COben				
COsat				X
COloy				
COeth	X	X		
COcom				
COcop				
COrap				
RELtr			X	
RELthe				
RELris				
RELdep				
RELval			X	X
ORGbra				
ORGdep				
ORGinf		X		
ORGper				
ORGser		X		
ORGgov				
SOopp	X			
SOpur				
SOral				
SOinf			X	

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

Appendix J: Interview Questions from Theoretical Position of Literature

CHALLENGER SELLING COMPETENCIES	Offers unique perspective	Drives two-way communication	Knows customer value drivers	Can pressure the customer
	Can identify economic drivers	Offers unique perspective		Is comfortable discussing money
	Knows customer value drivers			
CONSTRUCTS	KNOWLEDGE	BEHAVIOURS	VALUE	TRUST
1) Describe the impact of trust when attempting to apply the Challenger Selling approach.	Please describe an instance when the salesperson's unique knowledge, expertise or competency specifically influenced your decision to purchase.	Please describe how you consider salespeople influence you to make a decision.	Please describe how important is it that the salesperson shares new knowledge with you in your decision-making?	Please describe what would impact your perception of trust in a salesperson during a purchase negotiation
	Please describe how important is the salespersons industry/economic/commercial knowledge on your perception of trustworthiness.	Please describe how you regard salespeople that adapt their responses during the conversation.	Please describe what value do you gain from having a relationship with a salesperson? (p) How does this impact your perception of trust?	Please describe how a salesperson made you comfortable to discuss the commercial details of a purchase decision
	Please describe how important is the salespersons knowledge of your business in affecting your perception of trust.	Please describe an occurrence when a salesperson displayed specific behaviours that impacted your trust perception	Please describe your perception of trust of a salesperson who is vertically connected throughout your organisation.	Please describe how a salesperson has demonstrated their ethical position in the sales interaction (p) How would this behaviour affect your perception of trust

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CHALLENGER SELLING COMPETENCIES	Offers unique perspective	Drives two-way communication	Knows customer value drivers	Can pressure the customer
	Can identify economic drivers	Offers unique perspective		Is comfortable discussing money
	Knows customer value drivers			
CONSTRUCTS	KNOWLEDGE	BEHAVIOURS	VALUE	TRUST
2) Describe the impact of trust when attempting to apply the Challenger Selling approach.	Please describe an instance when the salesperson's unique knowledge, expertise or competency specifically influenced your decision to purchase.	Please describe how you consider salespeople influence you to make a decision.	Please describe how important is it that the salesperson shares new knowledge with you in your decision-making?	Please describe what would impact your perception of trust in a salesperson during a purchase negotiation
	Please describe how important is the salespersons industry/economic/commercial knowledge on your perception of trustworthiness.	Please describe how you regard salespeople that adapt their responses during the conversation.	Please describe what value do you gain from having a relationship with a salesperson? (p) How does this impact your perception of trust?	Please describe how a salesperson made you comfortable to discuss the commercial details of a purchase decision
	Please describe how important is the salespersons knowledge of your business in affecting your perception of trust.	Please describe an occurrence when a salesperson displayed specific behaviours that impacted your trust perception	Please describe your perception of trust of a salesperson who is vertically connected throughout your organisation.	Please describe how a salesperson has demonstrated their ethical position in the sales interaction (p) How would this behaviour affect your perception of trust

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

CHALLENGER SELLING COMPETENCIES	Offers unique perspective	Drives two-way communication	Knows customer value drivers	Can pressure the customer
	Can identify economic drivers	Offers unique perspective		Is comfortable discussing money
	Knows customer value drivers			
CONSTRUCTS	knowledge	behaviours	value	trust
3) Describe the buyer's perception of previously known and unknown salespeople attempting to apply the Challenger Selling approach.	Please describe how would you assess/judge the salesperson's knowledge during a sales conversation/sales pitch.	Please describe what are your reactions/feelings when salespeople act overtly "pushy"? (p) Can you describe an instance when it is acceptable for a salesperson is allowed to be pushy?	Please describe an occasion when you committed to purchase where there was no existing salesperson relationship (p) What was it about the salesperson that affected this decision?	Please describe how you would commit a purchase or decision with a salesperson you had never met before.
	Please describe how has an unknown salesperson demonstrated their industry/economic/commercial knowledge (p) How did this affect your perception of trustworthiness.	Please describe what your trust propensity is when newly introduced to a salesperson. (p) what impressed you the most of the salesperson	Please describe in what situations would a relationship be necessary	To what extent would you trust the information a new salesperson would share with you?
	Please describe how your trust perception has been affected by the salesperson taking a direct interest in your business need	Please describe how a new salesperson contact has impressed you enough for you to agree to a repeat meeting	Please describe how a new salesperson contact has impressed you enough to agree to a repeat meeting	To what extent is your trust of the salesperson motivated by the mutual sharing of knowledge?

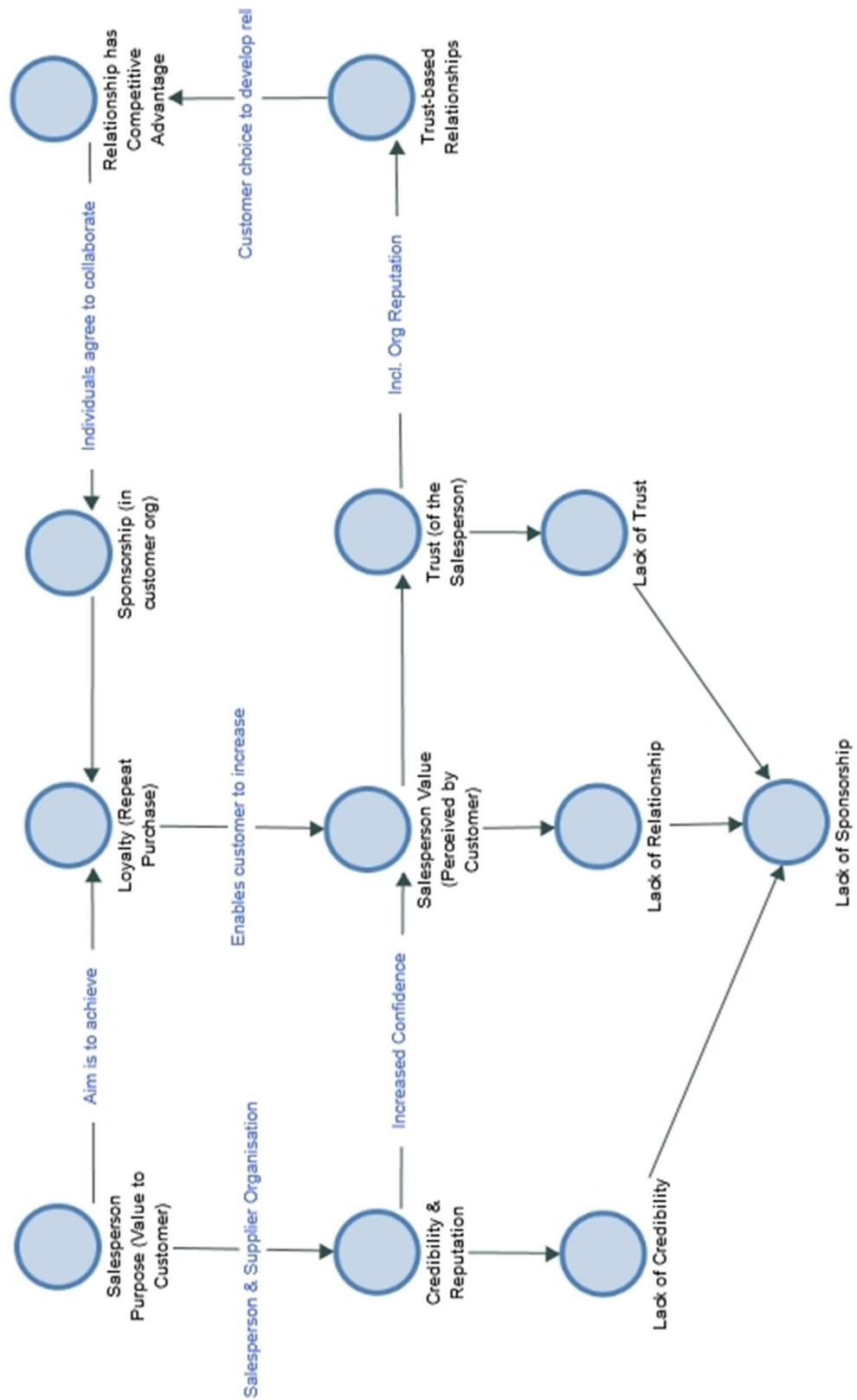
Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

Appendix K: Participant's View of Purpose of a Salesperson

COMMON DESCRIPTIONS	PARTICIPANT SALES	n=12	PARTICIPANT PROCUREMENT	n=7
Knowledge (Organisation, Customer, Industry) Info Sharing Insight	2205JHa; 3105JD; 1805JH; 1705SMc; 1705SMo; 2905SJ; 2505AW; 1805RE; 1105MD; 1005LM; 0106AM; 2904AB	12 100% 1 st	1506FO; 1405IA; 1106SG; 1005MB; 0405VG; 1105AS; 3005IC	7 100% 1 st
Builds Credibility Reliable	2205JHa; 3105JD; 1705SMc; 2505AW; 1105MD; 0106AM; 2904AB	7 58%	1005MB; 0405VG	2 29%
"Trusted Advisor" Authority Helps Customer Decision-Making	2905SJ; 1705SMo; 2505AW; 1805RE; 1105MD; 0106AM; 2904AB	7 58%	1405IA; 1005MB; 1105AS	3 43%
Provide a Service Responsive Delivers Promises	1705SMc; 2905SJ; 2505AW; 1005LM; 2904AB	5 42%	1106SG; 1005MB; 1105AS	3 43%
Add Value Creates Competitive Advantage Develops Customer Business	2205JHa; 3105JD; 1805JH; 1705SMc; 2905SJ; 1705SMo; 2505AW; 1805RE; 1005LM; 0106AM; 2904AB	11 92% 2 nd	1506FO; 1405IA; 1106SG; 0405VG; 1105AS; 3005IC	6 86% 2 nd
Point of Contact Interface Internal Influencer (Org Size)	1805JH; 1705SMc; 1105MD; 2904AB	4 33%	1405IA; 1106SG; 0405VG; 1105AS	4 57% 4 th
Representative	2205JHa; 1705SMc; 1105MD; 2904AB	4 33%	1106SG; 1105AS; 3005IC	3 43%
Communicates Value	2205JHa; 3105JD; 1005LM; 0106AM	4 33%	1506FO	1 14%
Influencer	3105JD; 1705SMo	2 17%		0 -
Achieves Targets	2905SJ	1 8%	1005MB	1 14%
Increase Business Volume Promotor Meet Business Needs	1805JH; 2905SJ; 3005IC; 1705SMo; 2505AW; 1805RE; 1005LM; 0106AM	8 67% 4 th	1106SG; 1005MB	2 29%
Trust and Loyalty Relationships Mutual Exchange Rapport	2205JHa; 1805JH; 1705SMc; 2905SJ; 1705SMo; 2505AW; 1805RE; 1105MD; 1005LM; 0106AM; 2904AB	11 92% 3 rd	1506FO; 1405IA; 1106SG; 1005MB	4 57% 3 rd

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

Figure 3: Braun & Clarke Phase 5 - Define Themes



Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

Appendix M: Participant Experience and Standard Industrial Classifications (SIC) Table

Standard Industrial Classifications (ONS 2007)	Participant Experience Count
A. AGRICULTURE, FORESTRY AND FISHING	-
B. MINING AND QUARRYING	5
C. MANUFACTURING	20
D. ELECTRICITY, GAS, STEAM AND AIR CONDITIONING SUPPLY	3
E. WATER SUPPLY; SEWERAGE, WASTE MANAGEMENT AND REMEDIATION ACTIVITIES	1
F. CONSTRUCTION	6
G. WHOLESALE AND RETAIL TRADE; REPAIR OF MOTOR VEHICLES AND MOTORCYCLES	3
H. TRANSPORTATION AND STORAGE	5
I. ACCOMMODATION AND FOOD SERVICE ACTIVITIES	-
J. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION	1
K. FINANCIAL AND INSURANCE ACTIVITIES	2
L. REAL ESTATE ACTIVITIES	-
M. PROFESSIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES	4
N. ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT SERVICE ACTIVITIES	-
O. PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND DEFENCE; COMPULSORY SOCIAL SECURITY	2
P. EDUCATION	2
Q. HUMAN HEALTH AND SOCIAL WORK ACTIVITIES	5
R. ARTS, ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION	1

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

Appendix N: Literature Review Tables

Links to original Excel tables of main trust and selling literatures reviewed for this study [not conclusive] and interview questions:



Trust Literature
Comparison Table .xls



Literatures Reviewed
(main).xlsx



Literature
Comparison List .xlsx

Appendix X: Interview Memos



PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW MEMO

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Andrew,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson wins business for the supplier organisation by understanding their business, and has knowledge of the customer's industry, to align products and services that provide a competitive advantage to the customer.
- Knowledge builds customer credibility and valuable to customers to agree repeat salesperson visits.
- Salesperson with knowledge and credibility means they can challenge customer's perspectives as a "trusted advisor", motivated by helping the customer develop their business.
- There is competitive advantage in customers having a relationship with an innovative organisation in accessing knowledge, processes and technical specialities that they don't have.
- The salesperson communicates information and innovation as one part of the organisational 'selling team' that builds customer trust in the brand; Lone salespeople can take insight to stimulate a new discussion.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- Salespeople are expected to maintain confidentiality in accordance with compliance processes [NDA]; if information is shared then it is correct to share it with others who could take advantage of the same knowledge.
- Self-serving, pushy salespeople lose credibility when they do not understand their customer's business; customers doubt their ability to support them through the sales process; some customers might enjoy the pushy style of salesperson; mirroring the customers' behaviour is thought to increase trust.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- It is important to look at the salesperson's drivers that affect behaviours; their organisational culture, sales management expectations and incentives contribute to pushy, pressure tactics versus a strategic sales approach.
- Salespeople who listen to the needs of the customer and understand the customer's business are more appreciated; a two-way communication that builds relationship – salespeople need to be customer-centric.
- Customer relationships can develop with salespeople who are easy to work with and there is a rapport; their motive has to be to bring advantage and value to the customer through their knowledge and business acumen.
- A young salesperson with knowledge can gain the customer's attention and create a conversation; they can use knowledge and take their time to build credibility with the customer.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Salespeople build customer confidence through their knowledge that develops trusted relationships and open to trust the information the salesperson brings; knowledge and relationship are related.
- Customers are naturally cautious to trust salespeople such that trust builds over time through relationships, perception of salesperson's knowledge, they are easy to work with and there is a rapport.
- Initially there is trust in an established, innovative brand that serves to gain the customer's attention, then the salesperson develops the trust from subsequent customer visits, then that reinforces the brand trust; lesser known organisations gain customer attention through identifying a niche that their innovation fulfils and that they have delivered this successfully – that can build a trusted relationship in time.
- To be double-crossed is to destroy trust; fairness is essential for the salesperson to maintain a good reputation.
- Salespeople who demonstrate fairness in their conduct can increase customer's trust.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Human bias also impacts how salespeople and customers interact; behaviours are born out of prior experiences that create judgements that drive behaviours.
- It is important the salesperson knows when to 'back down' from a sale, take "no" for an answer and re-evaluate their approach; the aggressive salesperson will only waste time in convincing the customer of the wrong solution.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Vince,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson should know their business, their industry and should prepare properly prior to meeting – rather than meeting to ask about vacant opportunities, knowing what opportunities exist for them prior to meeting and showing where their organisation can add value, reflects a mature company and a professional salesperson and is positive for the advancing the customer’s knowledge: This also applies to an unknown salesperson (prospect).
- The salesperson’s purpose is to provide relevant information to the customer acting as a knowledge conduit between both organisations and in doing so adds value to the relationship through this attitude of sharing.
- Though, it is not expected that the salesperson should intrinsically know everything: An Account Manager – for example – can be credible by knowing who and how to obtain knowledge from inside their organisation to correctly answer the customer’s questions.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson is a representative of their organisation and should demonstrate behaviours accordingly otherwise it reflects poorly to the customer and inhibits relationship building.
- Salesperson behaviour does largely depend on how they are incentivised, which reflects the organisations’ culture and maturity, and which directly impacts customer trust perception. Suppliers not listening to the customers’ needs and concentrate on upselling their technology regardless shall reduce relationship opportunities to only transactional purchases.
- A responsive and knowledgeable salesperson is most likely to build trust because Industry recognises it cannot know everything and as such depends on salespeople to educate them.
- A salesperson and organisation that stays with a customer through good times and bad will deservedly be rewarded with customer trust and more open business development conversations.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- Trust is earned over time, and two-way relationships are very important as the basis for trust to build.
- Relationships do not have to be social; they can also be professional relationships based on industry and product/services knowledge, reliability of both company and salesperson to perform, and 'going over and above' and keen to satisfy the customer, and willing to work to the customer's tempo, which feels like a long-term relationship and so increases trust: This is regardless of salesperson's age or years of experience.
- It is expected that the salesperson understands the requirements and adapts his offer towards the correct solution accordingly for the customer, rather than trying to sell what earns him the most commission; this attitude reduces trust.
- The salesperson must maintain confidentiality or trust is damaged and irrecoverable.
- An organisation can also establish trust in the quality of documentation and responsiveness (eg in preparing a proposal) where a poor quality bid would mean the customer has to do more work to qualify the supplier and be at a disadvantage.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- You would not expect the salesperson to tell you anything that might compromise another person - not even a competitor - as this would be considered a serious breach of confidentiality and thus trust.
- The salesperson should always compete on merit and their organisations' performance.
- The Buyer has a duty to always be updating their organisation of technology innovation and market trends, listening to supplier's solutions and to which salesperson relationships can enhance the customer's knowledge.
- It is rare - if ever – to have researched a salesperson you are meeting to avoid any unconscious biases which may affect your judgement of their proposal: It is important to remain impartial and unbiased when evaluating salespeople's proposals; this borders ethical buying.
- Strategic programmes must be designed such that all parties recognise benefit from the relationship and Supply Chain Management have a responsibility also to manage seller behaviours through expectation management.



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Lee,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson attracts new and retains existing business by adding value through the service they provide (eg: by solving operational problems and helping the customer improve his customer's business by bringing him new ideas and knowledge; Service is everything and is fundamental competitive advantage in FS selling.
- In Financial Services, it is more difficult to differentiate the proposal and the more knowledgeable and experienced salesperson can provide a more creative, tailored commercial proposal for their customer that which builds trust; this applies also to unknown salespeople (prospects) if the experienced salespeople can demonstrate their knowledge more readily than less experienced salespeople and build customer confidence quickly.
- FS Customers are less patient with inexperienced salespeople having to ask for help irrespective of the organisation brand; the business is all about providing a seamless service and salespeople need to have knowledge at their fingertips.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- Pushy sales tactics are not required, rather having a proposition in mind that is tailored to the customer's specific needs and conversation skills that help to guide the customer to this solution is the normal practice in FS selling.
- To ensure the salesperson thinks of the customer first, the organisational culture is hugely important in setting the bar for customer engagement and customer service to be perceived as a professional organisation and people.
- Make sure the customer is satisfied first then manage the internal operations to maintain this to a high level; reciprocally, it is assumed subconsciously the salesperson simply expects some transparency and honesty from the buyer by return, in being given the opportunity to make amends to operational errors over severing the relationship.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- If the salesperson enters a customer at Executive level, it is common to be passed to the correct level to evaluate the proposition; often there is need to have an internal sponsor to help the FS salesperson find the decision-makers.
- Rapport helps to find a common ground and establish credibility between individuals, to feel whether a relationship could form; it is harder for less experienced and younger FS salespeople to establish rapport simply from lack of knowledge or experience.
- Improved sales training is necessary to prepare salespeople for selling conversations that lead to a natural close rather than using tactics that are recognisable by and off-putting to the customer.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Trust is built and relationships develop over min two years, in which subject matter is most important and not delivering a promise will diminish trust, as well as not being truthful will have destroy trust.
- A relationship provides a bedrock of trust allowing the salesperson some leeway, though if trust is damaged the recovery must be quick and efficient to have a chance to re-establish trust.
- The pedigree of the organisation and prior references can support customer trust when accepting a conversation with an unknown salesperson; normally trust would need to be established before a sale can be made.
- Having a powerful brand can be positive though negative press can also work against the salesperson, meaning even smaller organisations can compete if they have something new to offer.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- FS is a regulated industry with ethics being central tenet to all business activities; there is no room for mis-selling, though FS salespeople are tarnished with historical problems, so making business more stringent.
- The primary focus is on selling appropriate services to customers in a correct manner; Corporate culture is an important element in governing salesperson ethical behaviour.
- Confidentiality is assumed and if that is broken trust is lost completely.



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Michael,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson is to make a profitable sale and earn a commission, but must provide the customer a service or product that meets their requirement at an acceptable price.
- The salesperson value is in offering their knowledge and expertise that fills the gaps in the customer's knowledge; especially true for technical purchases.
- You like to be inspired, educated or challenged to think differently, though this does not mean arguing with salespeople, rather helping shape the technical specification based on newly acquired knowledge.
- Commodity purchases are easier to define and Procurement is more self-reliant, so the salesperson is less intrinsic in the purchase decision.
- Having successfully purchased from a salesperson and formed a trust or "a warm feeling", it is easier for you to rely on that salesperson for the next purchase, so saving time in the decision-making process.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- Believe that the adage "People buy from people" holds firm; people can gauge within 5-10mins whether they will choose to develop a relationship with a salesperson.
- Salesperson too often focus on the sale, offering a "yes sir" answer to everything and should rather focus on the customers' needs first; that would build trust and the relationship.
- Salespeople that lead discussions with knowledge and will be better received than commodity salespeople.
- Pushy salespeople annoy you; they would very quickly lose your attention and any chance of forming a relationship; the sale evolves to a natural conclusion and the experienced salespeople know when to close without forcing it.
- You would have a bias meeting with younger salespeople presuming their lack of experience and commitment to your business, expecting them to sell you anything to earn a commission.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Relationships are built over time, though trust are quickly measured from early interactions based on how much the salesperson leads the customer on without seeking the knowledge or answer, so losing buyer trust.
- Trust and respect are related, though different; both can be lost if a salesperson tries to build up their capability.
- Salespeople from a recognise brand will benefit from the trust in the brand when they visit the buyer; this is trust also for unknown salespeople (prospects).
- Confidentiality is top priority in Defence industry; Preferred vendors are qualified and required to sign NDA to work with customers on technical developments, such that trust is de facto through this governance.
- Trust will be diminished if the salesperson's service drops where they neglect your project needs, their attention moving to other more interesting prospects.
- Trust can be damaged if a salesperson decided to meet your Manager without asking for an introduction; respect in the relationship is required to maintain trust, even if the answer might be 'no'.
- Trust works both ways between Buyer and Seller; when there is a sole supplier and the customer is dependent on the product or service, there needs to be a trusted relationship there to make the contract deliver successfully.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Unethical behaviours are not tolerated and suppliers can be "struck off" the list if in breach of confidentiality.
- The salesperson represents their organisation in their ethical conduct and behaviour; the buyer represents their organisation and should also conduct themselves accordingly to show respect for the visiting salesperson.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Andrew,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson is primarily the first line of customer contact and the representative of the supplier organisation's offerings; Direct Sales provide information on products and services; Account Managers provide relationship management align their customer to the right people and the internal diplomat to remove organisational obstacles.
- There is more expected of the salesperson today in providing knowledge and consultative approach in challenging the customer to think differently, however Procurement teams may not be ready to receive the Challenger approach.
- Procurement teams have a responsibility to be seeking innovative technologies that provide a competitive advantage, and here the Challenger salesperson could bring a new perspective on outcome-based business models.
- The value of the salesperson is to manage internal and customer-facing relationships; Having a salesperson that can navigate their own organisation is "very powerful"; a level of seniority is expected to be able to "get things done".

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson who listens and diligently replies having researched the correct response will gain the customer's trust; The salesperson is expected to learn the customer's business intimately and offer propositions tailored to your particular use-case rather than blindly hoping a product or service would be of interest.
- The salesperson who is transparent in their promoting of their customer into the supplier organisation gains customer trust and gains credibility from having built their own internal reputation, has a level of seniority and can be relied on.
- While you have no issue in a salesperson asking to be introduced to your Management, it is expected they respect your position and request your authority with this approach, or trust will be damaged;

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

this also applies to communications – the salesperson can earn your trust also by insulating you from surprises inside your organisation.

- Supplier organisations and corporate cultures have a responsibility for setting the salesperson measures which can consequently drive aggressive behaviours that will not be tolerated, and the relationship reduces to a transactional purchase and nothing more, so limiting the salesperson and their organisation to grow with the customer.
- Would welcome Challenger selling and expects the salesperson to be a combination of Hunter and Gatherer with the skill to adapt to different conversations and situations accordingly.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Relationships are required to build trust, though only with a small number of pre-qualified suppliers; relationships would need to be aligned beyond the salespeople to others inside the supplier organisation.
- You can have trust in a salesperson who can manage their organisation to provide the required level of customer service; Organisation trust or brand trust is reflective in how the organisation culture supports the activities and measurement of the salesperson - perhaps through quarterly targets - which potentially drives aggressive selling behaviour reducing trust.
- If the Account Manager has credibility inside their own organisation and can efficiently get things done, then this can be positive in the customer's trust perception of both the organisation and the salesperson.
- When a trusted salesperson proves consistent performance/service, they can be invited to join the customer in offering other solutions based on their positive track record.
- Even with trust, some complex purchases are too risk-laden to give ownership to a third party to take responsibility for (eg: bogey overhaul vs cleaning contract) and some purchases are easiest, lowest political risk for the Buyer to repeat with same poor supplier (eg Government contracts).
- Challenger might work well with commodity purchases where trust is in the product more than the salesperson.
- A younger salesperson could bring ideas and energy to the team, though will be seen as developmental until at least 30years old and would need "pedigree" behind them to start to earn trust with key account customers.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Corporate culture sets the ethical tone, though "faith in the individual" is also required for trust to form.
- Complex Purchasing decisions often involve a team of people; even approaching the Leadership directly would require the input of other decision-makers in the organisation – a part of corporate governance.
- Historical bad purchases get remembered and make the Procurement team cautious of new developments in technologies promising a fix-all (eg software).
- Challenger selling is ethical as long as it is not lying; Ethics is the supplier qualifier – any breaches will certainly reduce the relationship to a transactional function only on low-risk commodity purchases; nothing deeper [strategic].

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW MEMO

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Mark,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson can be a customer contact “touching base” day-to-day with volume of customer, but this definition is too coarse when there are fewer key customers requiring bespoke services and relationships from the sophisticated salesperson who can access and influence their organisation for the customer’s advantage.
- The salesperson is recognised as the go-to authority or subject matter expert through customer relationship building and expected to educate the customer with innovative answers to their business challenges.
- The salesperson is a representative of their organisation and a reflection of that brand reputation; Building rapport between buyer/seller improves the buying experience between organisations.
- Use references cases to demonstrate supplier organisation credibility where their unique expertise has proven to help another customer; Salesperson must understand the customer’s industry and their business drivers.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson is the front-line access to the supplier organisation and should be influential behind the scenes to guarantee service performance, which builds customer confidence and trust in salesperson and their organisation.
- Customers expect the salesperson to be reliable in delivering promises and responsive in crisis situations.
- The salesperson requires skill and aptitude to work with different personalities to essentially ‘give the customer what they need’; eg; efficiency in response, organisational understanding and accuracy of knowledge to first gain customer confidence the salesperson will deliver.
- Pressure tactics will close the conversation; Salesperson should follow the customer’s decision-making cadence to build trust over time; Trust increases when salesperson reduces the sale to meet the customer’s exact requirement.
- Honesty is most important: A young salesperson can still be effective if candid of their knowledge and experience; When things go wrong, it is respected to be accountable and then respond to fix the issue. This all increases perceptions of trust.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- Communication is very important; how the salesperson communicates is equally as important to the relationship (rapport) as what is said; The customer should also be frank and open so the salesperson can manage expectations.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Salesperson shall provide accurate and relevant information that is important to relationship building and trust.
- When confidence is built, trust can develop and the buyer/seller relationship builds to partnership where more confidential or company strategic information is shared in a mutual business development purpose.
- The individual seller and supplier organisation are reflective of each other's behaviours as perceived by the customer.
- Where there is rapport it can be considered easier to work with a salesperson, the salesperson shows greater commitment to the customer's success so increasing the likelihood to build a trust-based relationship.
- Organisations should be responsible for salesperson incentives and measures, which drive irregular and often aggressive behaviours that damage relationships and trust.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Selling is an intrinsic humanistic function and the psychological importance of the activity in influencing other's behaviours/decision-making means trust and ethical motivations are central to a positive experience for both parties.
- Confidentiality and honesty [integrity] are paramount in maintaining customer trust, such that trust can be recovered if the salesperson/customer conduct business openly, ethically and relationship-based in mutual agreement.



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Mike,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson understands the products and services of the supplier organisation and matches these to the customer's need;
- A key account manager considers the overall value of mutually growing business through the business relationship and is not driven by sales targets – measured using other service and performance related KPI's.
- There is a competitive advantage for both organisations to have a relationship;

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- Knowledge and relationships are inter-dependent, eg: a tactical salesperson adds value through knowledge of their products and services to support a customer in a transaction, where an account manager adds value via the relationship; technical support is available in the organisation whereas the relationship has to be developed.
- Whether the salesperson is known or unknown, the expectation is they do not sell the customer something they cannot deliver as this would significantly impact trust and relationship building.
- Customers expect salespeople to deliver their promises and are committed to the customer's business goals; though procurement has become largely compliance-based, there is still need for salesperson relationships.
- Pushy salesperson behaviour is usually driven by their organisation objectives and financial incentives, to which customers doubt their customer commitment and adjust the level of relationship they choose to have; bureaucracy dictates the speed that large organisations operate at.
- In a trusted relationship, the customer can recognise a salesperson adding pressure to the relationship and can support them in achieving the supplier organisation requirement so as to support the relationship; mutual help.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- Communication in a relationship is key and no hidden agendas support trust.
- A salesperson who bypasses the customer contact can raise tension in the relationship; better the customer sponsors the salesperson endorsing the message in a joint strategy to Management – like referred trust.
- A salesperson with limited technical knowledge can add value through their understanding of their organisation.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Trust is earned over time through the salesperson behaving according to their role requirement, to show commitment to the customer, deliver an honest, quality service - no surprises - and aim at developing a long-term trusted relationship based on proven reputation.
- Trust is built on a two-way communication between customer and salesperson; the customer has a duty to build trust in the perception of the salesperson to have the best representation into the supplier organisation.
- Whether the salesperson is known or unknown, the expectation is they do not sell the customer something irrelevant as this would significantly impact trust and relationship building.
- Salesperson confidentiality is essential in building trusted relationships and breaches would impact the level of information shared in future; insightful knowledge origin can be questioned in case of confidentiality breaches.
- The salesperson trust and the organisation trust are reflections of each other; an unknown organisation would need to build credibility via the due diligence process thus enabling the salesperson to advance a relationship.
- Trust can be referred to a salesperson if an introduction is made from someone the customer has existing trust in.
- Customers in strategic relationships require an escalation route to use when salesperson effectiveness is weak; the customer supports the salesperson into the supplier organisation.
- Rapport reduces tension in the relationship through open, honest communication; where there is a generation difference between customer and salesperson the rapport and credibility can build through professionalism.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Ethical conduct is important to trust; individuals align with corporate culture and social responsibility to conduct business ethically.
- “People do business with people”; different relationships develop between based on the individual values and ethical conduct that forms trust.
- Irrespective of the organisational culture, policies and processes, the salesperson will behave according their own value system; Corporate governance provides a security seen in large more than smaller organisations.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Stuart,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson represents the supplier organisation's products and services that can provide cost benefits that then give the customer a competitive advantage via the salesperson relationship.
- Salespeople bring their customers new sector-specific knowledge that keeps the customer up-to-date; the information shared is of value and suppliers are considered subject matter experts.
- Value can be described as the customer having more for the same cost or less cost for the same purchase; a competent, committed, innovative supply chain that can mutually benefit the customer to win new business.
- Customers can find smaller, less process-laden organisations to be more agile and the salesperson has more decision-making authority, which can increase trust in the relationship – same as trust in a larger organisations.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson is the single-point contact and has a trusted relationship with the customer irrespective of the organisation; deliver their promises or customer will escalate and possibly omit suppliers from their vendor list.
- Honest communication builds trust including sharing bad news and agreeing the limits of the suppliers' offering; this demonstrates reliable, professional and mature approach to building business.
- Rapport is essential in finding common ground and humanising the sales process; rapport makes it easier to do business together and having a known face to call when a favour is needed from both sides of the relationship.
- Unknown salespeople would need to follow the customer's due diligence process to become a credible vendor before a sale can be committed; knowledge can be used to create the customer's attention primarily.
- Salespeople need to appreciate and follow the speed the customer's organisation operates; pushy, impatient salespeople will be quickly dispatched.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- Customers recognise that Sales Management pressure and incentives affect salesperson behaviours in being more pushy; mature, experienced salespeople can manage this well to maintain the customer relationship.
- Salespeople that bypass Procurement to influence higher are normally unsuccessful; this can “turn off” the contact from supporting the salespersons’ message; respect and integrity is required to maintain the relationship.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Salesperson trust builds over time based on delivery performance and communication; the organisation supports the salesperson but the relationship is with the salesperson based on their professionalism.
- Salespeople who understand their customers organisation deeply can also increase their credibility through sharing internal customer knowledge with their customer contact; customers are often siloed.
- Trust and respect are required to build a mutually beneficial business partnership; it is based on two-way honest communication that drives new business development opportunities for both parties.
- Trust is destroyed when salespeople tell customers what they think they need to hear; Customers expect salespeople to be robust enough to deliver bad news.
- Trust can be referred by peers with existing relationships though the procurement compliance processes must still be adhered to natural conclusions; innovative ideas often come from company referrals from the CEO.
- A younger salesperson can build credibility through their knowledge and integrity in being well-prepared and professional; In contrast the experienced salesperson gets straight to the relevant information for the customer.
- An inconsistent salesperson that moves between companies too often reduces customer trust in “never having an in-depth product or market knowledge” they represent and “get written off”.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Salesperson confidentiality is most important and have a duty of care since shared customer information could be business strategic, confidential and sensitive; breaches are not acceptable and can destroy trust.
- Customers also must maintain confidentiality in their organisation so as to not expose the supplier; Procurement Management can receive information from salespeople that cannot be shared internally.
- Suppliers that copy technology are not considered innovative; customers need new technology and would work with suppliers to develop technologies that would bring a competitive advantage.
- A customer’s “word is his bond” much like a salesperson; relationships can flourish when based on individual’s ethical value systems - rather than by a process – and mature with experience.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
02392 488420
phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW MEMO

Dear Ian,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson is the business interface who has an intrinsic knowledge of the supplier organisation and represents the customer into the supplier organisation.
- The salesperson provides the customer access to new, industry-relevant knowledge that adds value to customer's operations.
- The salesperson relationship is built over time; the trusted relationship can improve supplier organisation performance when the salesperson manages the supplier's business processes to remove obstacles that affect responsiveness.
- There is a huge competitive advantage in having a collaborative customer-salesperson relationship;

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- Communication and knowledge are both important; the salesperson must manage accurate information exchange and be able to challenge the customer's specification if there is a better technical/commercial alternative available.
- Salesperson – in a trusted relationship - is expected to communicate bad news also; Reciprocally, the salesperson expects the customer to communicate so that any problem areas can be addressed responsively.
- Where there is a supplier dependency, the salesperson represents the interests of the customer – like a sponsor or ambassador - into the supplier organisation managing operations so as to avoid customer being made vulnerable.
- The customer expects that the salesperson demonstrates less pushy, tactical behaviour within a trusted relationship, rather focusing on improving customer's business operations and sales opportunities will become apparent in time.
- Benefit is seen in the Executive relationships providing a benchmark of behaviours lower down in both organisations.
- Pushy, pressuring selling is very bad for the trusted relationship;
- The supplier organisation Management should recognise the impact that selling incentives have on salesperson behaviours - and consequently trusted relationships - with key partner organisations; Key Account Managers should not be sales incentivised by quarterly deliverables.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- Key customers would prefer to interface with a smart Project or Programme Manager than a tactical salesperson, who can help customer to manage budgets, align project delivery resources and co-ordinate SME's for technical support.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Trust is built over time from an operational relationship; Trust is a two-way mechanism that ensures both parties are equally accountable and mutually beneficial through having a business strategy plan in place.
- Where there is trust in a salesperson's ability to influence their organisation to the customer's advantage, more of the minor issues disappear; There is an additional importance in providing service over selling, which increases trust.
- A trusted business-to-business relationship can benefit the supplier where the customer shares new knowledge and insights that could lead into new technology development or third party connections for the supplier organisation.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Ethics and confidentiality in a trusted relationship are inherent, and there is possibility that a super-collaboration relationship with Programme Management interfaces would enable the key supplier to access more confidential data and as such better manage supplier organisation expectations.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Fernando,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson creates a business need for the products and services available, by developing a relationship to build trust and understand the customers' business strategy the salesperson can satisfy the customer's need.
- The salesperson learns the customer's business strategy through a trusted relationship based on industry expertise, offering innovative ideas and services to achieve a competitive advantage for both parties.
- Customers want to work with the highest quality salespeople who bring their expertise and experience to propose innovative perspectives on business direction and work collaboratively to develop joint competitive advantages.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- Salespeople build credibility through their expert industry knowledge and in providing valuable market trend information relevant to the customer's business development strategy.
- The salesperson is expected to understand the customer's business drivers per purchase as an expert - or trusted advisor - to guide the customer through the sale to achieve these business objectives.
- The relationship is 'give-and-take': strategic supplier organisations will support customers to develop new technologies that create a business advantage; salespeople build the relationships to realise mutual benefits.
- A salesperson who brings knowledge is seen as valuable and this creates customer respect; relationship building is achieved with a personal and professional approach, fully prepared with agenda and have the right attitude.
- Confidentiality is also related to – either customer or salesperson - respecting their organisation, maintaining discretion of information, and be measured in business affairs to maintain also internal trust.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- A younger salesperson is also a representative of their organisation and should present a professional attitude and solid preparation; there is “no excuse for being a graduate”.
- Rapport is important to building trust, as well it is a measure of cultural sensitivity respect with globally-present multinational organisations; EI-mature salespeople take the important discussion data and avoid “scoring points”.
- There is a place for pushy salespeople in a relationship passionate to advance the decision, but not if the salesperson is trying to promote something the customer does not have any need for; Learn the industry.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- If trust breaks down, customers will quickly find an alternative supplier unless the customer has high dependency on the supplier when they will absorb the innovation and expertise, which is valuable to their business.
- Salesperson reliability generates trust; to understand their own business, products and services provides customer confidence that develops trust and repeat business; selling is engaging the customer’s senses.
- Trust is fragile and must be maintained; the right attitude, professionalism and a measured approach increase the customers trust in the salesperson; supplier competition is global, so salespeople need to be well-prepared.
- A collaborative approach can develop and maintain trust; it is bi-directional where the customer must trust the salesperson to deliver and the salesperson must trust that the customer will repeat purchase.
- Salespeople shall demonstrate commitment to following the customer’s needs, investing time to be up-to-date on market trends and to receive innovative products and services for mutual business development opportunities.
- Large organisations can have reputation for not providing good service, whereby confidence is lost, relationships collapse, and trust breaks down such that the customer seeks another supplier.
- Salespeople grow business through their personal trusted relationships based on their professional attitude.
- Trust erodes when both parties do not deliver to expectations and lack of salesperson presence to maintain the mutual relationship; customers need salesperson support, availability and influence in their organisation.
- An active salesperson with a professional attitude prepared to bring customers innovation and knowledge creates transparency which the customer can warm to; salespeople who do nothing do not create trust.
- A trusted relationship naturally has elements of confidentiality and diplomacy; even asking for sensitive or confidential information can negatively impact an existing relationship.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Salespeople and customers have to always behave ethically and professionally;
- Unknown supplier organisations shall be audited via a due diligence process to assess their legal commitment to global labour laws, codes of conduct, governance/compliance policies to safeguard the customer organisation.
- A salespersons’ ethical behaviour is perceived by the customer as how they conduct their business with other customers; customers are cautious that salespeople do not “trade secrets” and confidence is built over time.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Sean,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson is the face of the supplier organisation who builds the customer relationship, builds trust and represents the customer within their organisation.
- The salesperson is expected to function as the point-contact of an organisational team that delivers performance, service and adds value to a customer's business operations and competitiveness.
- Salesperson credibility by understanding their own business, the customer's business and their customer's industry are central to establishing trusted relationships and demonstrating value-add to the customer's business.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson is expected to represent the supplier organisation and protect their brand through their behaviour.
- It is said that "People buy from people" and there is evidence to support that where salespeople are not building relationships, the business decreases with customers that see value and benefit from working with salespeople.
- Experienced salespeople seem to better understand their organisation and the customer's industry, and as such more capable in aligning their offerings and guide the customer in their decision-making.
- Emotionally intelligent, empathetic salespeople that connect with the customer, listen well and extend the customer focus inside their organisation can be very successful in establishing trusted relationships;
- Rapport building in learning the customer's motivations and understanding their personal goals and organisational challenges; the aim is to be the customer's "trusted advisor" and included on future business discussions.
- Salesperson ability to adapt to the customer is important, and ability to 'switch modes' according the situation is seen as an advantage when building long-term, strategic business relationships with customers.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

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Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- The customer's perception of trust in the salesperson is reflective of the organisation (brand) trust and vice versa.
- Trust of salesperson is built through responsiveness and honest communications focused on solving the customer's business needs; trust is given until the salesperson lets the customer down badly and non-responsive to find a fix.
- It is important the salesperson communicates accurately the customer's needs vs suppliers offerings, such that trusted salespeople are considered by customers on repeat purchases.
- There is potentially a risk in salespeople being too candid and being exploited by a customer; reciprocal respect is required two-way between customer and salesperson for a relationship to be trusted.
- Small and large organisations can be trusted equally if they have something innovative/beneficial to offer a customer.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Ethical business is everything; it builds confidence and credibility in both salesperson and organisation brand; social selling is no longer an acceptable norm rather knowledge and competitive advantage are sought after by customers.
- Confidentiality is top priority; abuse of confidentiality can destroy trusted relationships.
- Sales Management should be aware of the impact that salesperson incentives and targets have on relationships with knowledge-seeking, strategically minded customers, and eliminate pushy, pressuring sales tactics.
- Telling the customer what he thinks he wants to hear will destroy a relationship; Better the salesperson is honest and open in their communications, knowledge and abilities to avoid mis-leading or mis-selling the customer.
- Cultural differences and diversity are increasingly important in the global role of sales, and this presents trust and relationship building complications; Salespeople must demonstrate social responsibility in managing diversity to develop trust across a wider cultural audience and age demographic.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Stuart,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson can be a tactical seller of products/services, and also an account manager responsible for developing and maintaining customer relationships to add value to their business.
- The salesperson is primarily there to influence a sale, though the account manager should not be a salesperson.
- Innovative organisations that understand customers industry - and can offer technology that can advance their business - are highly regarded; this applies also to unknown organisations and salespeople.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- It can be considered that salesperson behaviours are driven by their unit of measurement and incentivisation from Sales Management; this is acceptable in commodity selling but not in Key Account Management relationships.
- Focused on the customer business growth can potentially increase credibility and trust in the salesperson; there is a competitive advantage from having a relationship with knowledgeable salespeople who honour their promises.
- Adaptable and intelligent salespeople will be best placed to compete with new competitors in existing customers, and trusted relationships will be necessary to keep the customer's attention and have the opportunity to compete.
- The patient salesperson that guides the customer in the sale, provides subject matter experts and references of similar successful achievements, proves their capability and builds customer confidence in choosing that supplier.
- Pushy salesperson behaviour is not well-received and old-fashioned; the expected selling method is to share knowledge and reference cases of previous achievements where other customers have benefitted rather than pressuring the customer into buying something that may not fit their requirements.
- Salesperson attitude and communication style is important in rapport building; it is acceptable to be open and honest, though discretion and tact are also highly regarded by customers.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Executive-level engagements contribute to relationship-building behaviours lower down in both organisations (salesperson to customer) by setting the benchmark of the business-to-business trusted partners.
- Understanding the customer's personal aims, objectives and goals, as well their organisational deliverables and the challenges in the industry all support trust in the salesperson.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Ethical selling is hugely important in forming a trusted relationship with customer; trust is diminished if confidentiality is doubted.
- Salespeople are expected to manage confidential information as well inside the supplier organisation, and where conflicts of interest may occur across competitor companies the salesperson has relationships with; ethical selling and confidentiality are related.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear John,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson develops relationships with customers to learn their business challenges and provides a mutually acceptable profitable business exchange that helps the customer to improve their competitiveness.
- The salesperson should have internal relationships to access the necessary resources to tailor creative proposals that answer the customer's business needs.
- The salesperson should be sufficiently knowledgeable of the customer and their industry and use this expertise to convincingly communicate the sales proposal value so increasing the customer's confidence to buy.
- The new value-add for customers is 'knowledge' – to educate the customer – and that which is transmitted through the intelligent salesforce skilled in empathetic customer communication styles.
- Customers expect the salesperson to bring them innovation, relevant new technologies that will provide them a competitive advantage.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson shall be honest, open and ethical in their conduct throughout the sales supply chain; trust is most difficult to build if the salesperson is self-serving and "money-motivated to get a sale".
- The salesperson needs to be cognisant of evolving changes in supply chain (eg: commoditisation of services-based business such as public contracts) that impact the way in which solution business becomes commodity purchase.
- Using knowledge as a resource to stimulate unforced conversation, demonstrate credibility and communicate their organisation's innovation is a necessary skill for salespeople to be considered valuable and remain competitive.
- Rapport is important communication to understand the customer's business challenges and vis-à-vis learn about the supplier's capabilities, portfolio and operations such that organisation and salesperson trust is built equally.
- The supplier-buyer relationship is a two-way communication where a strategic, relation-building salesperson is a valuable "key asset" to the customer; though trust can be lost if the supplier organisation continuously underperforms.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Trust is earned over time; salespeople are increasingly seen as ‘colleagues’ and need to be trusted and easy to work with peer-to-peer inside the customer organisation over a period of time.
- People believe more that is ‘said’ than written; word-of-mouth references and salesperson reputation to deliver as promised is of paramount importance.
- Rapport-relationship is hugely important in building the quid pro quo exchanges necessary in building trust between customer and supplier that supports the relationship when things go wrong.
- Trust is destroyed if promises are not delivered, public criticisms of the relationship, and not showing commitment to the relationship; having a trusted relationship can allow poor experiences flex and recover lost trust.
- Trust can be reinforced through bartering with knowledge, where the salesperson can provide quid pro quo exchanges that builds customer confidence, credibility and trust prior to committing to a large value contract.
- Customers – and consumers – are likely to identify with trusted known brands in future; Sales profession should recognise that business consultants and analysts who are ‘technology agnostic’ as may be more trusted or unbiased.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- There is no room for pushy selling behaviours; customers want to connect with salespeople who can educate them, are responsible in delivering promises, professional and ethical in their business conduct.
- With increased attention on Digitalisation, automation, Artificial Intelligence and Virtual Reality platforms, there is greater importance for salespeople to be ethical and moral in deciding the limits that customer’s need technology.
- Born of lack of knowledge, salespeople telling the customer that their software or technology will “solve all your problems” reflects the opportunistic, dodgy-dealer types, so new salespeople must be cautious of over-promising.
- Customers and consumers will identify with socially responsible organisations that operate ethically and fairly - including the payment of taxes – and manage agenda that reflects emotively with people and society.



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Richard,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson facilitates relationships to increase customer loyalty in increasing business volume over time.
- Account Managers are different in that they use their industry knowledge and relationship as a trusted advisor to demonstrate their company's capability in satisfying their customer's needs through relevant innovative products and services offerings.
- The aim is for the salesperson to add value to their customer's business by understanding their business and help increase their productivity and market competitiveness.
- There can be advantage in having a mixed salesforce of younger, graduate salespeople and experienced account managers that address customers; younger people bring ideas and innovative approaches to latent challenges and present these in a new way to customers through 'proof of concept workshops' for example.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson builds trust with the customer over time through demonstrating their knowledge of the customer's business needs and how the supplier organisation can answer these with products and services.
- The salesperson uses their knowledge or 'thought leadership' to share insight with their customer, which challenges their current thinking and presents another perspective in doing business.
- In return, the salesperson expects the customer to sponsor their insightful information and communicate into their organisation where it can be beneficial to a wider audience.
- "people buy from people"; in a trusted relationship, the customer can support the salesperson – key account manager – in communicating the customer's needs into the supplier organisation.
- When there is a customer-supplier relationship it is acceptable for a salesperson to use pushiness though only if doing so is of benefit to the customer.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- It is important the salesperson maintains confidentiality and ensures sensitive information is managed responsibly.
- If the customer is in 'receive mode' they will be more open to accept the salesperson's insightful information and allow trust to form.
- Relationships take time to develop; the salesperson can use their thought leadership to build their customer trust through credibility.
- Customer trust is reflective in both the salesperson and the supplier organisation's reputation; it would be very difficult for an unknown salesperson to make an immediate sale without having developed a relationship.
- Multi-national and smaller organisations can compete equally for the customer's attention depending on the value they can contribute to the customer.
- Salespeople should be cautious when introducing other supplier companies to their customer; the salesperson-customer relationship and trust can be damaged if the referred organisation behaves incorrectly and reflects poorly on the salesperson.
- The supplier organisation can maintain brand loyalty through their innovative products and services that they develop; it is important for the salesperson to manage the introduction of new technologies to avoid creating new issues that hinder the customer's operation – advised not to sell at any cost to the established relationship.
- Salespeople should not just tell the customer what they think they need to hear; honest and candid communication from a trusted salesperson is more beneficial for customers.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Adherence to legal regulations and compliance policies are mandatory to maintain customer trust;
- Trust and ethics are identical; it is as much a personal set of values as is the organisational culture that determines how salespeople conduct their business.
- It is the person-to-person contact that builds the relationship through learning where other's ethical position that reinforces trust; experienced salespeople understand that competitors might have a better relationship with customers and that sometimes decisions can be biased.
- As an account manager understands the customer organisational behaviours across departments, trust increases when ethical behaviour is demonstrated, such as reducing duplication of spend where three departments all source the same product or service.
- Supplier sales management should recognise that pressuring the salesperson into using their customer relationship in coercive ways will diminish salesperson and brand trust.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Jim,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson is foremost the representative of their company and their customer and deliver value for both; they bring customer value through their empathy of the customer's needs, their understanding of the customer's business drivers and their industry knowledge, which with experience builds credibility, a precursor for trust.
- Salespeople can create a competitive advantage for their customer through creative and innovative commercial offerings built with specialist bid teams; the individual salesperson has a role to play in communicating the differentiated value to the customer.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson is the representative of their organisation and must behave accordingly such those values reflect the image of the company brand.
- The one-to-one relationship sale is now less effective because purchasing rules and compliance rules means more decision-makers are involved; the salesperson uses their integrity to gain client trust and move vertically in the customer organisation to more senior stakeholders though only with the correct customer-centric motive.
- Salespeople should remember that it is acceptable to sell to a customer; customers want to learn about new innovations that would be of value to them; it is honest and authentic to identify with selling practice.
- Candour should be used measurably such that a comment cannot be misconstrued that would affect trust.
- An unknown seller or organisation can develop customer confidence early in a sales conversation through their knowledge and referred trust through previous use-cases that reinforce their capability to deliver.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- Salesperson trust and brand trust are aligned one-in-the-same; inasmuch a pushy salesperson reflects poorly on the corporate brand trust. • Small companies can build trust through their agility, commercial creativity and increasing their customer's confidence that they can deliver a value-add through their know-how.
- Confidentiality is hugely important to trust, as is collaboration and transparency in communication between customer and seller to know what information is sensitive or confidential and agree that info which is acceptable to use.
- Authenticity, credibility, knowledge are all required for building trust; trust is earned over time.
- Salespeople cannot fluctuate in and out of trust; it requires continued maintenance.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- It is imperative that all salespeople conduct business ethically; they represent the corporate brand through their behaviour.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Andrew,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson ultimately makes money for their company by being an interface between organisations to maximise the benefit to their customer's business and earn loyalty through repeat purchases.
- The salesperson builds relationships with customers through providing customers with accurate information in a timely manner, so the customer can make an informed decision; this builds the salespersons' credibility.
- Salesperson credibility increases when they have the backing of the supplier organisation to respond accurately and timely.
- A customer-seller relationship can be a competitive advantage when the customer can access new knowledge from a trusted, credible salesperson supported by an organisation that provides good aftermarket service.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson should learn about the industry they are selling into; this builds knowledge, and a perception of credibility and then trust can build; industry knowledge has its language that might not be transferable to other industry sectors.
- Salesperson trust increases when they listen and respond openly and honestly to their customer requirements.
- Entertainment and dining together helps to build social-professional relationships by increasing familiarity and having rapport in finding common ground between customer and seller – this is especially true in other cultures.
- Salespeople need to do their research of their customer's requirements, offer relevant products/services and approach the right audience to avoid mis-selling that could reduce the opportunity to build a trusted relationship.
- It is acceptable to challenge the customer tactfully if they are factually incorrect when the salesperson has credibility; this approach is at a personal level and may not be a comfortable approach for all salespeople.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- The correct behaviours demonstrated in the sales process brings the customer to a natural decision that ends with terms and conditions clarification; there is no need to be pushy or aggressive in the deal closure.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- “People buy from people they trust”; Trust can be diminished if the salesperson was to leave an organisation and join a competitor since their credibility is reduced.
- Unknown salespeople bringing new knowledge to customers will still have to build trust as long as the customer is open to building a relationship; the knowledge gains the customer’s attention and builds credibility first.
- Knowledge also has a direct influence on trust building, especially for higher value and longer sales cycle purchases; Working together to deliver long cycle projects builds customer’s confidence of salesperson’s ability to deliver and consequently increases trust.
- Customers relate the trust they have in salespeople to their organisation; as well the organisation supports the salesperson in establishing credibility by trusting the salesperson to represent the organisation brand.
- Trust builds over a longer time in other countries compared with the cultural openness of English people; as well the social recognition of education and professions is more apparent, Eg. in France a Sales Engineer is an engineer that studied at engineering school prior to joining a sales role.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- The integrity of the salespeople who represent the brand, quality of communications, sales management competence and compliance processes can build the supplier organisation trust.
- Pushy, aggressive sales behaviours negatively impact trust building; Corporate selling culture ensures salespeople conduct business in an ethical and respectful manner.
- Large and smaller organisations can approach business equally ethically and with integrity; it is the sum of the behaviours rather than the corporate culture and policies alone.
- Confidentiality is an important responsibility; managing information shared with and by customers builds confidence in the salesperson to maintain discretion and increases trust.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Andy,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson needs to understand the customer organisation to offer suitable products and services that meet the customer's needs; this increases salesperson credibility.
- Salespeople should have internal influence to ensure their organisation delivers the expected level of customer service; working with responsive organisations saves the customer time and costs in their buying operations.
- A salesperson must understand the customer's cadence and operate to their speed/rhythm; a responsive salesperson is valuable in helping their customer can be responsive to their customer's requirements.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The customer will build relationships with trustworthy suppliers committed and motivated to developing the customers business; some commodity purchases require only a transactional relationship and not a long-term development.
- It is imperative the supplier organisation supports the salesperson as otherwise they may leave to another supplier to protect their reputation; a risk is that customers will also change supplier following the salesperson.
- Larger more bureaucratic organisations may be less flexible than smaller suppliers who can provide a more agile service; smaller suppliers often "go the extra mile" to impress the customer and are easier to do business with.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- Customers are loyal to reputable, known salespeople they have built long-term relationships with; there is competitive advantage working with fewer established salespeople.
- Knowledgeable, credible and trusted salespeople can be identified as "trusted partners" advising the customer on purchasing decisions; loyalty is built on the salesperson's consistency, reputation and customer commitment.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- A salesperson escalating to the buyers' senior management may be construed disrespectful and may reduce trust; there is advantage and value in the trusted salesperson communicating the strategies of other departments.
- Customers require a trusted relationship to be comfortable with the salesperson influencing internally though their needs are to be met primarily; customers require their relationship is priority.
- Trust is eroded if the salesperson demonstrates opportunism; if the customer is mis-sold, wrongly charged or when the salesperson "does not take no for an answer" will diminish relationship strength also.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Pushy, aggressive salespeople will not be tolerated as this would demonstrate lack of understanding of the customer's business cadence.
- Underhand tactics to create an opportunity will be considered opportunistic and unethical; the supplier's trust would be quickly eroded.
- It is hugely important to maintain confidentiality between salesperson and customer; "breaches are looked upon very poorly", where past bad experiences mean information is private until the salesperson proves themselves.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Steve,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson helps the customer make purchasing decisions and to achieve business for the supplier and in doing so earns bonuses for achieving targets.
- Customers may develop relationships with credible salespeople and may re-use new knowledge to develop their own kudos internally and develop a competitive advantage for the customer organisation.
- An account manager is assigned to a customer when a supplier recognises the potential and wants to increase the business volume; the customer accepts an account manager when they require a greater supplier service.
- The account manager aims to have a close customer relationship recognised as the first point of contact by reliably delivering their promise.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson uses their knowledge to prove their credibility and earn the customer's trust over time through building a relationship; first impressions do count in the customer's disposition to trust.
- The supplier organisation builds credibility through industry-specific reference cases of other customers adopting the supplier's products and services.
- Salespeople must be careful when using knowledge gained from other customer sources to avoid confidentiality issues that may diminish trust.
- Salespeople build relationships through knowledge of the products and services relevant to their customer, understand the customer's needs and understand their industry, establishing their credibility.
- Pushy sales behaviour is individual and it is considered the salesperson has little empathy for the customer; It is important not to overstep the mark that which causes relationship friction.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

- People are predisposed to trust others based on first impressions or biases.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- Salespeople build their credibility and then trust with customer through consistently delivering their promises and building rapport; rapport across generations is more difficult than between peers of similar age.
- The supplier organisation establishes customer trust through its reputation in the market; the salesperson establishes credibility through the customer-seller relationship and each is a reflection in supporting trust building.
- The salesperson that corrects things and influences the supplier organisation to perform when projects go wrong, can reinforce customer trust.
- Unknown salespeople can also gain the customer's attention with new innovative knowledge; the customer will weigh the risk versus promised value; trust would need to be established through the salesperson convincing the customer they can deliver.
- Short-term tactical selling behaviours can be negated when the salesperson develops a sponsor relationship with the customer, who can guide and support the sales communications to higher level customer stakeholders.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Supplier organisations that drive ethical business conduct via their governance and compliance policies that create a culture of transparency and honesty are considered more trustworthy and reflected to the salesperson.
- Customers do not expect to be over-entertained, rather identify with technically superior products and services that help them achieve business goals.
- Objective selling (technical selling) is considered ethical and subjective selling (Insurance selling) is considered less ethical.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear Iain,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson is the representative of the company, the customer's first point of contact and promoter of the supplier's wider capabilities;
- Salesperson value is established in their understanding of the customer's business needs and matching products and services to provide a competitive advantage for their customer.
- Price-driven customers that ignore salespeople as a knowledge source lose also product quality and service; salespeople communicate value in the customer's language, which they can use in their bidding processes.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- The salesperson learns the customer's business through building a trusted relationship and a rapport.
- A product salesperson can also deliver value if not self-centred to the sale, rather guiding the buyer through the sale with a robust proposal that benefits the customer and is accurately represented; surprises later in a contract will diminish trust; simulating the promised outcome has proven valuable in building the customer's confidence.
- Customers are open to forming relationships with salespeople who deliver their expected service and organisational support; salesperson relationships can provide customers a competitive advantage in efficiency gains and new knowledge of industry movements.
- A salesperson should expect the customer to agree to a Service Level Agreement that proves their commitment to the supplier for the longer term - to create future new build revenue and lower customers' ownership costs.
- Salespeople build trusted relationships who deliver their promises and have influence within the supplier organisation, are reliable and manage their organisation to provide a quality service – it is a team effort to deliver successfully, not only the salesperson.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- It takes time to build trust; customers are naturally cautious with sharing their information with salespeople.
- Proving their knowledge and bringing relevant information to the customer can support relationship building and develop trust; Smaller customer organisations may depend on the supplier expertise.
- Larger organisations may depend on the supplier's industry reputation in publishing technical papers, specialist lectures and industry trends or insight ('thought leadership'); industry expert salespeople gain credibility when they understand the industry language.
- Customers that join trusted organisations "on a journey" to develop an optimised process will deliver other business benefits from lower cost of ownership for example; Salesperson is committed to customer's success.
- Trust is two-way and the sellers' trust of the buyer is equally important in developing relationship;
- Customers expect to be kept updated of new technologies that could be an advantage to their business or trust can diminish; a strong relationship can support and quick response by the supplier can absorb such hiccups.
- Pressure tactics leading to incorrect selling will destroy trust; customers expect the salesperson to push somewhat to move the decision-making along, though usually with a trusted partner (relationship).
- Rapport is essential in making it easier to do business with a supplier; salespeople who listen and can communicate their point will gain the customer's attention and build a relationship.
- Younger salespeople may have difficulty in selling capital equipment without correct sales experience in building the customer's confidence they have selected the right option – trusted advisor.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- It would be seen as unethical for the salesperson to pressure the customer and then pressure their organisation to deliver accordingly;
- Managing confidentiality of customer information is most important to being seen as an ethical seller; boundaries span when the customer and seller have co-created knowledge – professionalism is expected from both parties.
- Due diligence processes on organisations ensures business is conducted in an ethical manner and which mirrors salesperson personal ethical values, which gains trust for the individual and the supplier organisation.

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?



**PARTICIPANT INTERVIEW
MEMO**

Portland St, Portsmouth, PO1 3DE

Researcher: Scott Waugh
Tel: 07921 247442
Email: up788649@myport.ac.uk

Supervisor: Mr Phillip McGowan
Tel: 02392 488420
Email: phillip.mcgowan@port.ac.uk

Dear John,

Thank you kindly for participating recently in the MASM Research Interview. Your time and contribution are recognised and your opinions will add credibility to the research.

Please can you review the below memo and acknowledge within five days that this is a true reflection of our conversation thereafter it is presumed to be acceptable for use.

When we discussed the purpose and value of the salesperson, you said:

- The salesperson must convey the value of their organisation, products, services to the customer such that they can interpret and assimilate that value as a differentiator and a customer benefit – the salesperson as Influencer.
- The salesperson used to be the source of information; all customers have access to the same publicly available information (Internet), so the salesperson now brings new knowledge, insight, discrete education that can improve a customer's competitive advantage.
- The role of the salesperson is evolving: customers require intelligent quality conversation to stimulate thought to be considered credible for a return visit.

When we discussed salesperson behaviours, you said:

- Customers need salespeople to understand their business - their industry - and align products and services to their apparent and undisclosed needs, build the customer confidence and guide them through the sale process.
- Confidentiality is very important; salespeople need to manage the information they learn from customers and not compromise their trust by divulging to customer competitors.
- Salespeople acquire knowledge of their customers business, their industry and apply this knowledge as insights to educate customers; salespeople are expected to know 'what keeps an Executive up at night'.
- Salespeople need "believability and credibility" to gain customer confidence to engage in discussion; this attitude further helps to 'push-back on price' or reducing value selling to a transactional sale from price-driven customers.
- A younger salesperson can gain credibility and customer confidence through being well-prepared, professional, articulate and demonstrate their unique knowledge such that a trusted relationship may build.

When we discussed Trust, you said:

Explore to what extent is trust important when applying the Challenger Selling approach?

- Salespeople can leverage a strong corporate brand to gain access to customers though this only serves as an opening to a conversation; salesperson confidence and credibility then support the development of trust.
- Professional procurement departments lead purchasing decision-making around compliant bidding processes that reduces the ability to develop relationships.
- Customers identify with reputable organisations as trustworthy – customer satisfaction makes profit in that order – the whole organisation has to believe in their business and deliver a quality service for their customer to build trust in the supplier.
- Salespeople may aim to be their customer’s “trusted advisor”, though need to understand the components of being perceived as such – credibility, reliability, intimacy, perception of self-interest.
- Trust has to be maintained diligently and can be destroyed instantly if mis-managed.

When we discussed ethics in selling, you said:

- Trust and ethics are essential in selling; there is greater demand for compliance and professionalism in business conduct including customer-facing sales activities.
- Where a supplier has created knowledge (Intellectual Property), they can share that as they wish; where IP has been co-created it is important to treat information sensitively to maintain trust between parties.
- Organisations – like salespeople – build brand trust by delivering their promises, be that to shareholders, being socially responsible and driving corporate cultures that demand ethical business conduct.
- Pushy salespeople “out for a sale” who do not believe in their offering - and not interested in relationships – have their ethics in question.