ARTICLE IN PRESS
IMM-07407; No of Pages 13
Industrial Marketing Management xxx (2016) xxx–xxx
Contents lists available at ScienceDirect
Industrial Marketing Management

Getting business-to-business salespeople to implement strategies associated with introducing new products and services☆

Jeff S. Johnson [a,*], Ravipreet S. Sohi [b]

[a] University of Missouri-Kansas City, Henry W. Bloch School of Management, 5110 Cherry Street, Kansas City, MO 64110, United States
[b] Robert D. Hays Distinguished Chair of Sales Excellence, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, College of Business Administration, 512 N. 12th Street, Lincoln, NE 68588, United States

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 21 July 2015
Received in revised form 28 June 2016
Accepted 24 August 2016
Available online xxxx

Keywords:
Strategy implementation
Salesperson
Sales management
MOA theory
Survey

ABSTRACT

Strategy implementation remains a perennial challenge for firms. While several studies have examined implementation phenomena at the firm level, we know little about what firms can do to get their salespeople to implement strategies for new products and services. Understanding salespeople's individual-level implementation is of particular importance as salespeople are the frontline employees of the firm responsible for implementing strategies with customers. Drawing from motivation, opportunity, and ability (MOA) theory, this examination investigates factors impacting the implementation of strategies associated with introducing new products and services by the salesperson. We use a sample of 277 business-to-business salespeople to test our hypothesized relationships. The findings show both positive and negative moderation among the implementation MOA variables and also provide broad support for their proposed drivers. Additionally, the identified implementation facets of responsiveness and effort are found to positively impact implementation success.
© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

To achieve their goals, it is not only important for firms to develop good strategies, but also to implement them successfully. There are several incidences however, of companies formulating supposedly excellent strategies but running into problems with implementation (Bossidy, Charan, & Burck, 2002; Lorge, 1999; Slater, Hult, & Olson, 2010; Slater, Olson, & Hult, 2010). Salespeople can play an important role in implementing a firm's strategies as they occupy a frontline position within the company. Additionally, organizational initiative success can be predicated on the level of salespeople's acceptance or resistance (Zablah, Chonko, Bettencourt, Allen, & Haas, 2012). While some firms are very effective at getting their salespeople to implement strategies, others are not as successful.

Strategy implementation can be conceptualized as how a strategy is operationalized and enacted by the organization (Varadarajan & Jayachandran, 1999). The existing management literature has examined implementation at a firm level and advanced factors for improving organizational implementation, such as good communication, clear strategies, strategic focus, cross-functional integration, support from senior management, and strategic consensus amongst members (Beer, 1997; Crittenden & Crittenden, 2008; Dobni & Luffman, 2003; Rapert, Velliquette, & Garretson, 2002).

Despite its importance to the firm, strategy implementation remains an under-researched topic in the domain of marketing (Noble & Mokwa, 1999; Sarin, Challagalla, & Kohli, 2012). Scholars note that while the focus has been placed in many other areas germane to strategy in marketing, there has been "relatively little consideration of actual implementation" (Möller & Parvinen, 2015, p. 4). Recently, firm-level implementation inquiries in marketing have provided insight into such contexts as new product development (Matikainen, Terho, Matikainen, Parvinen, & Juppo, 2015) and key account management (Guenzi & Storbacka, 2015; Tzempelikos & Gounaris, 2015). However, scholars note that while these inquiries have added significant insight to implementation on a firm level, "the role of salespeople and their behaviors in the implementation of a firm's sales strategy have remained almost unstudied" (Terho, Eggert, Haas, & Ulaga, 2015, p. 12–13).

Salespeople are an important part of the implementation process as they often represent the primary interface between the selling firm and the customer (Johnson, Barksdale, & Boles, 2001). This boundary-spanning role places them at the frontline of the implementation process and makes their enactment of strategy critical to the organization. However, salespeople do not automatically enact strategies simply

☆ The authors wish to thank Penn State's Institute for the Study of Business Markets for their support of this research. Funding for this Research was provided by the Institute for the Study of Business Markets of the Pennsylvania State University. However, the contents of this research report reflect the views of the researchers who are solely responsible for the facts and the accuracy of the data presented herein. This article is based on the first author's dissertation research conducted at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln and the authors also wish to thank the Department of Marketing for their financial support. Additionally, the authors would like to thank Drs. Amit Saini and Scott B. Friend for their helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of this manuscript.
* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: johnsonjs@umkc.edu (J.S. Johnson), rsohi@unl.edu (R.S. Sohi).

http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2016.08.006
0019-8501/© 2016 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Please cite this article as: Johnson, J.S., & Sohi, R.S., Getting business-to-business salespeople to implement strategies associated with introducing new products and services, *Industrial Marketing Management* (2016), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2016.08.006

because they are instructed to do so. Partly this is because they see their role as strategy makers and implementers, rather than strictly implementers (Malshe, 2009). Additionally, they have to buy-in to a strategy and believe that the proposed strategy is appropriate and has merit (Malshe & Sohi, 2009b).

Some recent studies have examined the role of salespeople in strategy formation (e.g. Malshe & Sohi, 2009a) and implementation (e.g. Sarin et al., 2012). While this research has provided important insights into the salesperson's role in strategy development and execution processes, additional empirical work is needed to understand what drives salespeople to implement strategies. The purpose of this paper therefore, is to provide an understanding of the components of the implementation of strategies by salespeople, the factors leading to implementation, and the effects of salespeople's implementation behaviors on implementation success.

Consistent with both recent and seminal work conducted in the implementation domain, implementation models are tested in specific contexts. For example, Noble and Mokwa (1999) tested their model in the contexts of marketing information systems and sales promotions, while Sarin et al. (2012) used channel changes as the context of their study. For this study, we examine the implementation of strategies in the context of new product/service introductions. This is an ideal context for examining strategy implementation by salespeople, due to the pervasiveness of new product/service introductions, their impact on firm performance, and the important role that salespeople play in their introduction (Atuahene-Gima, 1997; Hultink & Atuahene-Gima, 2000; Wieseke, Homburg, & Lee, 2008). Considering new products are more likely to fail than to succeed (Ogawa & Piller, 2006), the salesperson's role in implementing the associated strategies is vital to success.

This study addresses several gaps in the literature. First, despite the importance of strategy implementation, the predominant focus of the literature has been on strategy creation rather than implementation (Lane, 2005; Noble & Mokwa, 1999). Our paper extends knowledge in this key area by examining salespeople's implementation of strategies associated with introducing new products and services. Implementing strategies associated with new products and services also helps capture a wider breadth of behaviors enacted by salespeople than the traditional conceptualization of new product selling. While the outcome of new product selling is certainly important, implementation of strategies requires salespeople to engage in behaviors that go beyond sales. As frontline personnel, they have to engage in intra-organizational interactions to coordinate activities necessary for implementation; they have to expeditiously respond to requests from multiple organizational units driving the strategies, and they have to allocate additional effort for performing activities necessary to implement the strategies. These implementation behaviors that go beyond selling are important to investigate because of their implications for strategy implementation and sales force management. We are able to provide layers of understanding between what is known on relationships between antecedents (e.g. training) and dependent variables (e.g. new product performance) by showing how antecedents affect implementation MOAs, which contingently impact implementation behaviors, which in turn affect implementation success. Second, the current literature has limited examinations of the individual salesperson's role in implementing strategies (Terho et al., 2015). Though the salesperson can be a critical component of the implementation process, little is known about their implementation behaviors. Pertaining to this research, we investigate three types of types of salesperson behaviors necessary for implementing strategies (responsiveness, effort, coordination), and show how they affect strategy implementation success. Third, this paper extends motivation, opportunity, and ability (MOA) theory to the strategy implementation literature, advancing understanding of the necessary components needed to facilitate implementation by the company's sales force. In this study, we examine the differential and interactive effects of the three implementation MOA components on salespeople's implementation behaviors. Fourth, from a theoretical and managerial perspective, it is important to understand what drives salespeople's motivation, opportunity and ability to implement strategies. In this regard, we examine the effects of several managerially-controllable variables that impact these three implementation MOA components. Specifically, we show that involvement in strategy development, role autonomy, and training are key drivers of salespeople's implementation MOAs. Finally, researchers note the absence of multi-company and multi-industry studies in related domains and call for research that is generalizable across contexts (e.g. Fu, Richards, Hughes, & Jones, 2010). This research transcends companies and industries to help generalize findings and also provides variance on organizational-level variables tested in the model.

The remainder of this paper is structured as follows. First, we discuss the theoretical foundations for our conceptual framework and develop the hypothesized relationships. Next, we discuss the methodology used in conducting the study including detail on the sample and measurement constructs. Subsequently we report the results of the analysis and tests of the hypotheses. We conclude by discussing the findings, implications, limitations, and avenues for future research.

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. Salespeople's implementation behaviors

Behaviors performed in implementation are contingent on the function of an employee in an organization and the implementation activity. Since salespeople act as organizational boundary spanners between the selling firm and the customer, a multifaceted conceptualization of strategy implementation behaviors by the salesperson is needed to capture relevant considerations. In our context, we examine salespeople's implementation behaviors when introducing new products and services. To identify these behaviors, we draw from sales management and organizational implementation literatures (e.g., Chonko & Jones, 2005; Fu et al., 2010; Hultink & Atuahene-Gima, 2000; Speier & Venkatesh, 2002; Steward, Walker, Hutt, & Kumar, 2010; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). To effectively implement strategies, three necessary factors consistently emerge from the literature: speed (Lamont, Williams, & Hoffman, 1994; Speier & Venkatesh, 2002), energy (Ahearne, Rapp, Hughes, & Jindal, 2010; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990), and interaction (Ahearne et al., 2010; Lamont et al., 1994; Lim & Reid, 1992; Möller & Parvinen, 2015; Speier & Venkatesh, 2002; Wooldridge & Floyd, 1990). Accordingly, we examine these elements, namely salesperson responsiveness, effort and coordination in implementing strategies associated with introducing new products and services.

2.1.1. Implementation responsiveness

Responsiveness is a well-established construct in the marketing strategy literature and represents the quickness of reaction to a given situation (Homburg, Grozdanovic, & Klarmann, 2007; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990). In our context of implementation, responsiveness reflects the extent to which the salesperson responds quickly when asked to implement strategies associated with introducing new products and services. As salespeople represent the front line of implementation and are the face of the organization to the customer, their responsiveness to strategies is of paramount importance and has been noted as an important driver of customer and organizational outcomes (Chonko & Jones, 2005). Conversely, when salespeople drag their feet and hesitate to perform important organizational strategies and initiatives as expected, the organization may experience adverse outcomes (Speier & Venkatesh, 2002).

2.1.2. Implementation effort

The allocation of selling effort at an organizational level has been examined extensively in the sales literature. How the sales force is deployed has significant ramifications on the performance of

دریافت فوری ← متن کامل مقاله

ISIArticles
مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات