

The Development of Competency Models for Sales Manager Based on the Grounded Approach in the Retail Entities in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

The development of competency models in the sales management profession using the grounded approach in the retail entities in Zimbabwe indicates that sales manager's competence are key to of retail entities gaining the competitive advantage. With models of marketing evolving to respond to the open market, there are variations in the competency requirements and functions in which people must play for future success, resulting in the emergence of new kinds of sales professionals. Sales managers play a critical role in retail entities in conveying customer value addition, and the way they fulfill this role is directly influenced by sales managers, the most critical element in a productive sales force. The purpose of this research was to synthesize sales manager competency based on the grounded approach in the retail entities in Zimbabwe that can assist in improving, team, individuals and retail entities performance, and generate an acclaimed uses of the competency model that could serve as a guide for human resources management (HRM) initiatives to increase levels of sales force effectiveness. The study is premised on grounded theory which is molded by symbolic interactionism when entering a research setting and any research topic to get familiar with the specific behaviour at the symbolic and interactional levels. Finally, the paper will offer recommendation to the retail entities in Zimbabwe in a way, it can address the challenges of developing a competency model for sales managers based on the grounded approach in the retail entities in Zimbabwe.

Keywords

Competency Model, Sales Managers and Retail Entities in Zimbabwe

1. Introduction

Currently, human resource management (HRM) plays a strategic role in developing the core competencies of the retail entities and achieving a sustainable competitive advantage through people. Every company in business needs new innovative ideas to create a unique position and survive beneficially and therefore, it has to find ways and means to tap the potential intrinsic in its employees. However, Sales managers championing sales forces in the retail entities encounter complex cultural challenges that affect relationships, processes, and outcomes (Locke, 2001). The marketing and sales activity of a firm can involve synergy, and coordinated operations can't contribute to the success of the enterprise. However, the operations of the prior departments often depend on individual successes, which boost conflicts of interest and hinder collaboration (McLagan, 1997). The retail business changes ensue very fast and dynamic. The current state sends a message to business organizations in the 21st century to get ready for changes. The retail entities that cannot rheostat their business will be out of the competition. Receptive retail entities will be the winners of changes, while reactive business organizations will be the victims of changes.

There are commercial effects of investment in competence model for sales manager, providing incentive to both the organization and individual. An accumulative number of organizations such as Starbucks, Wal-Mart, Makro, Pick n Pay, OK stores Ubuntu P&G, IBM, and Dell in India, South Africa, Zimbabwe and Britain are realizing the role that the knowledge residing in their human capital such as sales managers plays in creating economic power and value. While some fields, such as marketing, training, finance and development have augmented to the competency challenge set forth, the sales managers have not kept pace with other occupations' advancement in human resource development (Lambert, 2009). According to the U.S. Department of Labor's, Bureau of Labor Statistics (2010), there are close to more than 12 million people working in sales, which constituted 11% of the United States workforce. The sales spawned by this labor pool are the revenue engine in for profit organizations, which powers the economy of the country. In the same vein, Becker's (1993) opines that the grounded approach focuses on capitalizing in a person's skills and knowledge which is similar and to business investments in equipment.

Overview of the Retail Sector in Zimbabwe

The Retail sector in Zimbabwe falls under the service industry that works hand in glove with the manufacturing industry to bring closes the goods and services to its clientele. The Retail sector in Zimbabwe is that they adhere to standard procedures and methods that guide the organization, which help reduce office and administrative costs (Terry and Franklin, 2015). In the case of national foods in Zimbabwe and Blue ribbon Zimbabwe their main decision-makers are housed at the company's head office or headquarters mostly in Harare and therefore, there is no need for deploying more departments and equipment to

other branches. The effectiveness of Retail sector in Zimbabwe is that, the organization does not need to incur extra costs to hire specialists for its branches since critical decisions are made at the head office and then communicated to the branches (Mukundu, 2018). The clear chain of command reduces duplication of responsibilities that may result in additional costs to the organization (Stoner et al., 2003). However centralization results in delays in work as records are sent to and from the head office. Employees rely on the information communicated to them from the top, and there will be a loss in main-hours if there are delays in relaying the records. It means that the employees will be less productive if they need to wait long periods to get guidance on their next projects (Burnes, 2000).

However, they have had been a shift from authoritarian hierarchical structures to flatter, more decentralized structures that devolved a lot of decision making powers to employees and line management such as the TM PICKN PAY in Zimbabwe. Pearce II and Robinson (2002) contended that this strategic shift in structure resulted from the shift of the world economy from industrial age to information age and the need for radical surgery on the structures to create room for building strong cross-functional capabilities (Stoner et al., 2003). The other reasons are to bring decision making closer to the customers or users for efficiency and empowerment of employees. However the retail industry in Kenya and Zimbabwe tended to centralize operations with all major retail entities creating positions in their head offices that cater for operations for all branches or service outlets and the centralized decision making becoming the norm (Burnes, 2000).

2. Literature Review

2.1. The Competency Model

The competency model in Figure 1 is demarcated in this research as the fruitful competency identification and written narrative of related competencies required for successful or exemplary performance for an identifiable group, such as a department or an occupation, a job category (Rothwell and Lindholm, 2016). A competency model offers assistance human resource departments in evaluating what training programmes are needed (Spicer, 2009) to reach short goals, medium goals and long-term goals to augment the effectiveness of the retail business. Thirdly, exhausting competency models can exterminate assumption on where to concentrates resources by differentiating the relevance to current developmental needs or requirements for the job (Rodriguez et al., 2002). Fourthly, a competency model can help align the sales manager in the retail industry and assistant's vision on what kind of development and training are essential to be effective in a specific job.

Competencies are expressed on the foundation of behaviour and can thus be used to generate a wide range of assessment tools when a job is thoroughly analysed and accompanied by a measurable set standard (Rao, 2019). Competency models focus on defining skills, knowledge, attributes and behaviour of successful

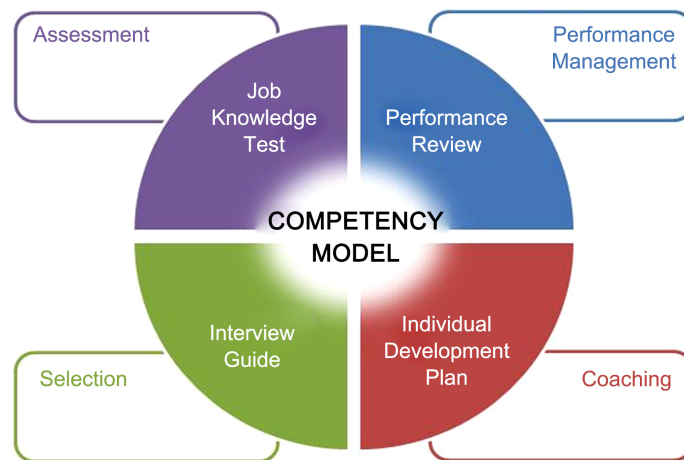


Figure 1. Competency model. Source: Anand and Khanna (2000).

employees (Teodorescu, 2006). Teodorescu (2006) elaborates that the desired outcome of a competency model is to replicate the competencies successful employees possess in less successful employees through hiring, assessment and development programmes. In Teodorescu's (2006) view, competency model results are a list of skills, knowledge, anticipated behaviour and attributes believed to be a prerequisite for realization in a precise job. Competency models are used to build evaluation hiring, training, and assessment programs. Involved in this is standing competencies in order of importance and to the desired level that needs to be attained.

Kogut (2011) stresses that training and ethical behaviors are of particular importance to sales managers in the retail entities and care should be taken to fully develop these competencies. This is predominantly significant in light of the study conducted by Managing Training and Development (MTD) (2005) that found that respondents cited the absence of skills as the major reason for a sales manager's leadership failure. An inter-functional mentoring programme may be one technique to advance relationship building skills and coaching. Principles training can be piloted in the traditional method using case discussions and/or role-plays with ethical dilemmas (Rao, 2019).

2.2. The Innovative Competency in Retail Entities

Schmitt (1999) argued that experiential marketing is one innovative approach that might provide a way to respond to society's and customers' needs in Retail entities. To maintain a competitive advantage, creating special and innovative customer value is necessary. Sales managers have to maintain and develop new competencies to continue to be competitive. Sundbo (2017) defined innovation as the creation of something new that has value for the consumer. He separated innovation into two types, incremental and breaks innovation, and stressed the significance of striking a balance between the two. Sales managers in Retail entities must have some innovative competencies to create new products, goods and service experience to surprise customers. They also need to assimilate and de-

termine new or groundbreaking knowledge, skills and the ability to do the job.

Birdir and Pearson (2000) classified research on sales managers in retail entities as research-focused and management focused on Wal-Mart Corporation. These two types of research chefs share some common competencies but differ in their basic competency. The research-focused on sales managers primarily develops new products, and strategies. The sales manager's retail entities have a substantial background in food products, machinery tools sauces and stocks, and various merchandisers (Rao, 2019). A total of 12 basic competencies were identified by the sales managers in the retail entities, which included knowledge of product demand, development and formulation of strategies ratios and the ability to work with a product development team. Meanwhile, the management-focused research focuses at sales manager as a person who represents their employer, does exhibitions and sells products. Eight basic competencies were acknowledged for these chefs, including ability to work with customers and skilled at product presentation. A total of 18 basic competencies were identified and applied to both research- and management-focused research such as knowledge of product, knowledge of flavors, and ability to distinguish levels of quality in products (Hsu and Wang, 2008) designations.

2.3. Overview of the Role of Sales Manager in Retail Entities

The sales managers in retail entities attribute, attitudes and behaviour, salesperson outcomes and, finally, sales in retail entities outcomes (Baldauf, Cravens and Grant, 2002). The sales managers' level of job gratification and understanding of the importance of a customer have been found to influence the level of "customer-focused helping behaviour" provided to that customer, which in turn influences the level of trust the customer has toward the supplier (Bradford, Crant and Phillips, 2009). The sales force the retail entities to schemes as to ensure expansion of effective relationship selling tactics (Raju and Srinivasan, 2017). Similarly, sales force organization strategies, including customer service, excellence standards, for example, would provide direction to the sales managers in retail entities regarding fitting levels of customer commitment and conflict control.

Moreover many retail entities in Zimbabwe are seeking to achieve competitive advantage and bring stability to their operations by forming strategic alliances with customers' (Millman and Wilson, 1995), often through KAM. KAM requires more than just superior relationship management. Manufacturer retailer relationships must provide partners with a source of competitive advantage, possibly resulting from access to resources superior to those available to competitors.

2.4. Competencies in Retail Industry

Raju and Srinivasan (2017), aver that customer access to high quality decision-making information, commoditization of products, and numerous sources of supply have combined to empower customers in retail entities. Currently customers are no longer willing to pay attention to the sales manager description

of how the marketing department defines value, actual sale. The role of sales managers in retail entities has evolved from communicating a predefined value proposition, to working with the customer to create their own unique value proposition, however most sales managers in retail entities have not made this transition. To endure and flourish in this new environment, sales managers in retail entities and personnel must recognize and accept that the customer not the marketing department defines the value proposition (Anand and Khanna, 2000).

Sales in retail entities is no longer about doing a good job of communicating features and benefits, It's about working with each customer to create value as defined by that same customer. In the current economic environment, clients are putting expenditures under the microscope (Black and Synan, 1997). They want to know what they are getting for their money. For organizations to succeed in today's competitive and complex environment, employees at all levels need to develop and demonstrate "the personal capabilities, underlying characteristics and behaviors that drive superior performance at work". Since their introduction two decades ago, competency models and competency based HRM and HRD processes have become the "best practice" foundation of high quality business focused HR for thousands of international business and public sector organizations (Hsu and Wang, 2008).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The research was particular on qualitative research and the researcher probed using a case study at retail entities in Zimbabwe. This research used the descriptive investigation design. Descriptive study affords a better appreciation of a state of affairs by defining the regularity things happening, by defining a population with detail to significant variables. Descriptive research increases the researcher's awareness of the problem under investigation (Lodico, Spaulding and Voegtli, 2006). This study scheme was selected since it was regarded as a vigorous approach in studies of interactions and scrutiny of occurrence (Chawla and Sondhi, 2010).

3.2. Data Collection

In collection data the structured questions were used. The researcher self-administered questionnaires to the participants and collected. The questionnaire was filled in environments favorable to the respondents such as office setup, home and their work place. These were collected after being filled in to assure all questionnaires were retrieved. The advantage of using this method was to secure a hundred percent return of completed questionnaires hence reducing bias to non-response. To intensify the response rate, the researcher made follow up using telephone. The researcher coined questions in simpler terms in order to entice the respondents to respond awesomely without hindrances of jargon and information overload.

3.3. Axial Coding

The study adopted the Axial Coding and the data were taken aside through open coding by ways of connecting categories. Axial coding focuses on specifying a class in relation to the condition that gave upward thrust to the event, the context in which it was set, the motion strategies in accordance to which it was once handled, managed and carried out and the outcome of these techniques (Lambert, 2009; Page, 2002; Le and Piercy, 2009; Martinez, 2013). Subcategories answer questions about the phenomenon (category) such as when, why, who, how and with what consequences, giving the thought better explanatory power (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The goal was to back track to character occasions with and in this case being the development of competency models in the sales management profession using the grounded approach in the retail entities in Zimbabwe.

The study adopted the Open Coding and in this stage to facilitate the open coding method, the investigator developed nine basic themes, and the thought borrowed from the method of thematic coding or template analysis. This provided guidance throughout the coding however allowed adequate flexibility turn out perceptive interpretations of the text. Moreover developing full competence sales competency model within the type of a tightly outlined planned list of a previous made codes, the method was used more flexibly during this study therefore restricted to the nine themes known. The connection the grounded approach with open coding process is that open coding is the part of data analysis that focuses on the conceptualisation and categorisation of phenomena through an intensive analysis of the data. One characteristic of grounded theory is that data collection, data analysis, and theory development are not successive steps in the research procedure but are intertwined and interdependent. Thus, action in terms of data collection and reflexion in terms of data analysis and theory development always alternate.

4. Results of the Coding Process

The open coding methods described in the past resulted in the identification of 438 activities deemed as being as doubtlessly relevant to the knowledge of sale managers in retail entities in Zimbabwe.

The smallest wide variety of activities identified for a single participant used to be 20 whilst the largest was 110. The principles have been grouped into 21 concepts as indicated in Table 1, which is ordered by way of the quantity of activities in every concept.

In Figure 2 and Figure 3, open coding concept, hierarchical by numbers of events per concept continuing with open coding, like-concepts were then further sorted into a decreased set of nine relationships groupings as shown in Table 2. Thought was given to more refinement of the groups due to the fact that the well-known opening coding processes then again such refinement failed to occur naturally thus this was taken because the cue to finish open coding in Table 3 with the nine category groupings.

Table 1. Opening coding concept.

Concept Code	Concept Name	Number of Events
D	Leadership skills	50
B	Financial literacy	40
A	Technical	38
E	Negotiation	36
F	Innovative	36
G	Interpersonal communication	34
H	Prospecting	32
C	Client relationships	32
I	Conceptual relationships	30
J	Expertise	18
K	budgeting	16
L	Team work	14
M	Problem solving	14
N	Presentation	14
O	Customer relationships	8
P	Initiating and building relationships	8
Q	Credibility	6
R	Dialogue	4
S	Motivating skills	4
T	Understanding own organization	2
U	Creating customer value and pricing	2

Total number of event = 438; Total group of concept = 21; The smallest number of credits for a single participant = 20; The largest number of events per a single participant = 110.

Table 2. Category grouping.

Category Code	Category Name	Concepts contained	Number of events
I	Leadership relationships	S, L, M, R, O	44
II	Technical relationships	N, J	32
III	Financial literacy	K, U	18
IV	Client relationships	O, Q, R	18
V	Interpersonal relationships	O, P	16
VI	Conceptual relationships	M	14
VII	Negotiation relationships	R	4
VIII	Prospecting relationships	T	2
VIV	Innovation relationships	U	2

Table 3. Data coding.

Codes	Category
Interpersonal relationships	1) Ability to initiate, construct and keep relationships with totally different customers, subordinates and superiors. 2) Recognizes and manages one's emotions and strong feelings beneath stress or once provoked; responds calmly; responds constructively and calms others. 3) Possesses confidence in one's ability to fulfill challenges and build a proper decisions; acts severally and rely on it very own ability.
Managing the Sales Process	1) Focuses on rising performance, meeting; goals, and producing results. 2) Tracks income performance; finds ways to enhance sales approach. 3) Sets measurable, challenging goals; focuses on worthwhile opportunities.
Leadership Relationships	1) Ability to influence, encourage and direct people and teams to attain organizational goals, mission or vision. 2) Recognizes patterns, analyzes and checks alternatives, creates options and managing the client Relationship.
Networking	1) Develops contacts and relationships to facilitate obtaining work done. 2) Ability to extend one's possibilities.
Customer Focus	1) Understands customers' wants and responds right now and appropriately; is seen as a valued partner. 2) Ability to ascertain rapport; produce a positive first impression and establish credibility with customer.
Conceptual relationships	1) Ability to suppose analytically and solve complicated issues. 2) Break down issues into their constituent elements and apprehend the implication of one downside to a different.
Technical Relationships	1) Ability to use specialize information and experience to operate particular tasks. 2) Prepare a tailored presentation for the consumer.
Innovative	1) Maintaining aggressive advantage. 2) Create distinctive and innovative client value and experimenting marketing.
Negotiations	1) Demonstrate sympathy, diplomacy, and respect. 2) Create surroundings to facilitate open communicate and establish basic shopping signals.
Prospecting relationships	1) Ability to know one's personal enterprise and its offerings. 2) Ability to spot the client's commercial enterprise challenges and consequently the characteristics of the market during which it operates.
Financial Literacy	1) The ability to know the relevancy of monetary statements as they relate to developing consumer intelligence. 2) Ability to see the product evaluation model.

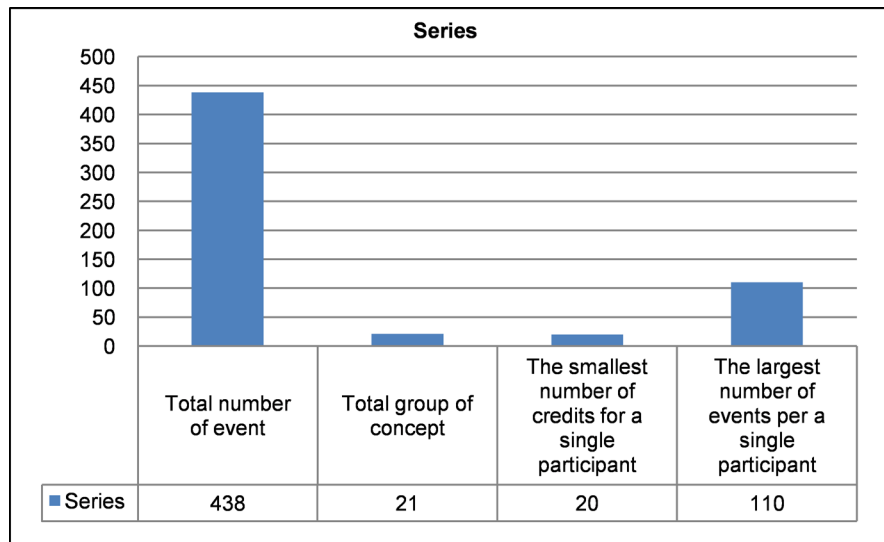


Figure 2. Seris.

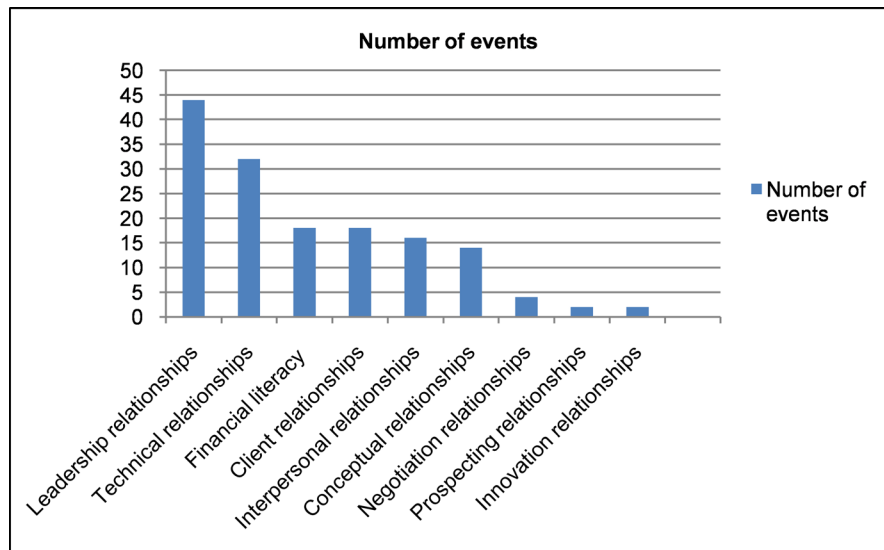


Figure 3. Number of events.

5. Summary

The study adopted a grounded concept and within the grounded principle approach, there's a necessity to undertake an appraisal of the literature before data collection. The speculation was grounded with the views of the participants of a study by means of inspecting themes and frequent categories discovered in observational information. The energy of grounded theory lied in its ways for understanding empirical worlds. Methods of grounded concept comprise simultaneous data collection and analysis, a two-step data-coding method, comparative methods, memorandum writing aimed at the development of conceptual analyses, sampling to refine the researcher's emerging theoretical ideas and integration of a theoretical framework. Although there can also be limitations to our study, we strongly consider that it can serve as a foundation for in addition re-

search. The purpose of this research was to synthesize sales manager competency based on the grounded approach in the retail entities in Zimbabwe that can assist in improving, team, individuals and retail entities performance, and generate an acclaimed uses of the competency model that could serve as a guide for human resources management (HRM) initiatives to increase levels of sales force effectiveness. The study is premised on grounded theory which is molded by symbolic interactionism when entering a research setting and any research topic to get familiar with the specific behaviour at the symbolic and interactional levels.

6. Recommendation

The following recommendations are made for further research in the area of developing a competency model for sales manager based on the grounded approach in the retail entities in Zimbabwe. A study should be piloted to regulate any link between management capabilities required for archetypal performance of retail entities sales managers as compared to front line managers. This might allow for determining leadership development priorities and programs for front line managers.

A furthers study should be conducted to examine what behavioral capabilities lead to archetypal performance in sales manager effectiveness competencies. This capacity will allow for predictive analysis in classifying and developing sales representatives for future sales management. A similar study should be conducted with other management levels, such as senior/top and middle, levels to regulate if there are consistencies among management levels regarding competency importance in retail industry.

A familiar analysis should be piloted in other countries to determine whether sales manager competencies required in different countries and cultures are similar to Zimbabwe. HRD practitioners could use the specific results of this study for organization development, training, performance consultation, and/or individual coaching, thus recommendations for practice in the area of sales manager competency are organized by performance, selection, and development.

7. Conclusion

The research was aimed at the development of competency models in the sales management profession using the grounded approach in the retail entities in Zimbabwe, the intention was to understand the function of sales managers in the retail entities in which it employs the frameworks by arranging knowledge and skill requirements into specific categories, such as personal effectiveness, technical, academic, industry, management, occupational and factory competencies. The purpose of this research was to synthesize sales manager competency based on the grounded approach in the retail entities in Zimbabwe that can assist in improving, team, individuals and retail entities performance, and generate an acclaimed use of the competency model that could serve as a guide for human

resources management (HRM) initiatives to increase levels of sales force effectiveness.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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