

IMPACT OF SOCIAL NETWORKING ON INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY SALES
COLLABORATION & LEARNING

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Dedicated to my wife, Ellen.

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ABSTRACT

In recent years the advent of social networking has exploded across the Internet. Online communities such as LinkedIn.com and Facebook.com have captured the attention of millions. These environments allow individuals to connect, communicate, and discover new virtual experiences with other people.

In the age of Web 2.0, Internet users are redefining the rules of social interaction by leveraging a range of new technologies to create and sustain virtual communities based upon common interests. Communications channels such as blogs and Wikis, amplified by collaborative technologies such as social networking, provide powerful tools for sharing information and sustaining relationships across geographic borders and common areas of learning. What is often referred to as ‘collective intelligence,’ the body of knowledge created by these social online gatherings of like minds, can easily produce a ‘sum of the parts is greater than the whole’ effect.

The purpose of this research is twofold: first, to evaluate how social networking impacts collaboration and learning within the high tech sales industry and; second to determine if a need exists for the development of an online social networking environment to address the particular interests of the Information Technology (IT) sales professional.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Serving as an IT sales professional is a rewarding, yet challenging career.

Traditionally, selling for high-tech organizations was viewed as a relationship development and transactional selling activity. The IT sales professional's primary goals were to sell the client on the value of the product he or she was offering and to become the customer's trusted advisor, making it easy to do business with the high tech supplier. In many cases, clients would openly accept, and even promote, the offering of gifts (dinners, travel, and golf outings) in return for making purchase decisions in favor of the supplier. However, to succeed in such a complex environment, the IT sales professional must become more productive, more knowledgeable and more creative.

The Changing World of the IT Sales Professional

Today, the IT sales professional's world is different. On rare occasions he or she will be involved in a simple transactional sale. Most sales are complex, require months to close, involving large teams of experts to meet the customer's needs. As a result, selling these complex solutions requires the IT sales professional to develop an in-depth knowledge of his or her employer's products, the client's organization, and the business problem at hand.

IT sales professionals deal with a completely different and more challenging work environment as compared to their colleagues just a generation ago. Dickie and Trailer (2008) provide statistics on the negative sales-related changes taking place in the high tech sales industry, which indicate a steady decline in the number of forecasted sales that actually close. In fact, only 48% of forecasted sales were won in 2007 and sales that were

lost as a result of the client's inability to make a decision had increased to 22%, from 20% just one year ago.

Another change producing negative effects is the fact that employment for life is no longer practical. Most IT sales professionals view their career and employment separately. Similar to the Free Agent program in Major League Baseball, these professionals will typically change employers multiple times, looking for the right fit that matches their skills and interests. Dickie and Trailer (2008) describe the significant loss in knowledge that occurs as a result of IT sales professionals leaving the company before reaching their senior level; 30+ years. They discuss the negative impact this change has had on a high tech sales organization's ability to provide the appropriate mentoring to younger sales professionals. They further describe how the collective knowledge no longer resides in just one organization but is spread across the entire industry, which negatively impacts the tacit learning opportunities for many of the less experienced sales professionals.

Management styles have also changed in the past twenty years from a hierarchical to a matrix structure in an effort to meet the complex, global, and evolving needs of high tech customers. However, the matrix approach requires more managerial and administrative support (Kearney, 2007), which increases the amount of time employees must spend to keep team members and management informed. Furthermore, a matrix structure increases the number of individuals assigned to a particular customer, complicating the vendor-supplier relationship.

Customer buying behavior is also evolving. Customers have redesigned the way they procure goods and services over the past several decades (Huthwaite Corporation, 2006). This shift has altered the way IT sales professionals interact with their clients as

they are forced to manage the growing complexity and time required to close each sales opportunity.

Conversely, the high-tech organization's view of selling still remains fixated on a 1980s style where sales management expects the IT sales professional to focus more on transactional selling activities such as cold calling, elevator pitches, and closing techniques. These outdated concepts are still taught in many sales training programs today, within large and small sales organizations alike (Majer, 2008).

Problem Statement

Although the objectives of any high tech organization are to improve sales performance and customer satisfaction, most lack the depth of understanding needed to accurately identify and solve the problems that prevent sales success including: (a) sales strategy development, (b) sales process improvement, (c) sales learning, and (d) sales collaboration. This research will address IT sales learning and sales collaboration.

Research Questions

This study seeks to answer the following questions:

- Is there a business need for developing a social networking environment for the segments of an industry, such as IT selling?
- How does social networking impact IT sales collaboration and learning?

Conclusion

The typical IT sales professional will change jobs multiple times throughout the duration of his or her career and will increasingly become more dependent upon a professional network for collaboration, partnering, and career development. This research will explore the impact and usefulness of social networking to improve IT sales collaboration and learning in a given market area; high-tech selling.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of existing literature on use of social networking as a means to improve IT sales collaboration presents a view into a new area of sales productivity improvement. To date, only limited research has been conducted which addresses the connection between sales performance improvement and Web 2.0 technologies, but none that focuses solely on the impact of social networking on IT sales collaboration and learning.

Social Networking Overview

The interest in web-based social networking has been growing rapidly for the past several years. Although the primary growth has occurred in the consumer space, the business community has been watching with interest and is now beginning to deploy internal solutions to create a similar sense of community for employees, partners, and customers. Leading-edge organizations seek to improve business efficiency, customer satisfaction, and revenue performance.

The origin of web-based social networking ties to earlier scientific studies of sociology that date back to the early 1800s. For almost 200 years sociologists have analyzed how individuals form groups based on common interests, social status, geographic location, and occupation. The author believes that of the many different topics associated with the way people interact in groups, Social Network Analysis, and Social Network Structures appear most relevant to the current day view of web-based social networking.

The study of Social Network Structures evaluates the makeup of social networks and looks at the structural influences on the individuals. As a central concept in sociology,

social structural analysis is a collective term that identifies social groups and how individuals interact within these social groups (Chew & Knottnerus, 2002). This concept is applicable to the web-based social networking environment from a structural perspective where interdependencies among members develop and stronger virtual relationships form. Social Network Analysis is a collection of multiple scientific disciplines including psychology, sociology, and mathematics. Social network analysis looks at the nature of how individuals operate within a given social group (Scott, 2000). Social network analysis also evaluates how individuals form and sustain relationships, which is valuable information from a design perspective, for web-based social networking sites.

In the early 1830s, Emile Durkheim began researching the social aspects of small group dynamics. Durkheim, one of the two founders of modern sociology, believed children learn through a process called *Socialization* by which the individual's view of norms and absolutes are established (Arora, 2000).

Georg Simmel, in 1908, focused his research on *Social Circles*, which evaluated how individuals worked in association with one another (Frisby, 2002).

In 1923, Jacob Levi Moreno, M.D., invented the concept of sociometry with his study of social structures. From 1932 to 1938, Moreno worked to ultimately develop the current working definition of a social network and early concepts of social network analysis. Moreno developed the Sociogram, which was a process for mapping social structures (Finlay, 1997). This structure would later be used by multiple researchers and created a way for scientists to visually depict the flow of information among group members.

According to Scott (2000), Ferdinand Tonnies conducted research on why individuals formed social groups based on interests, geographical location, social class, and occupation. He describes Tonnies as a German sociologist primarily concerned with macro-sociological issues of social groups.

In 1952, Alex Bavelas and several colleagues at MIT conducted research which created graphical representations and described communication patterns, (Whitaker, 2001). Bavelas also assisted in the further development of several social networking definitions, such as the concept of *Centrality* within a social network. Bavelas focused on communication patterns in the organization (Adams & Gill, 1998).

Harrison White, in 1963, while at Harvard, taught a course on social relationships and is viewed today as one of the key influencers in the initial design and definition of social network analysis (Knoke & Yang, 2007).

In 1967, psychologist Stanley Milgram, a leading expert on social network analysis, conducted research on the social communication effects among participants covering diverse groups and geographic locations. Although the majority of Milgram's attempts failed, he concluded that connecting to a person of interest typically required five intermediaries, which he ultimately named "The Six Degrees of Separation" (Blass, 2004).

The Growing Interest in IT Sales Collaboration

This literature review describes a number of business developments that are occurring throughout the high tech industry which may promote need for better collaboration and learning among IT sales professionals.

Since the early 1990s, off-shoring of highly skilled labor, or knowledge work, has become commonplace. Similar to the exportation of manufacturing jobs in the early 1980s;

this change has negatively impacted the lives of many knowledge workers across the country. Once thought of as export-proof, many types of knowledge work including human resources, information technology, and research and development, are now at risk.

Considering the depth of skills, large number of available resources, and attractive wages other nations can compete very effectively with U.S. based organizations. Improvements in electronic communications have furthered enabled the redistribution of labor globally in an effort to reduce costs. This strategy places greater burden on the IT sales professional from a collaboration perspective. As more high tech companies utilize global labor resources, the IT sales professional will need to find better and more efficient ways to collaborate.

The aging of America's workforce will soon become increasingly important as 75 million Baby Boomers (those born between 1946 and 1964) leave the workforce and only 45 million younger workers enter during the next 20 years. Organizations will be forced to embrace online collaborative technologies such as social networking in order to accommodate younger workers who have grown up using MySpace, Xbox, and YouTube (Salkowitz, 2008). The relationship of this event to IT sales collaboration is the recognition of the ongoing impact social networking will have as these young adults transition into the workforce, bringing their interest in using social networking tools into the work environment.

Today, the IT sales professional is expected to manage a larger number of customers, coordinate complex internal sales activities, and respond to urgent requests from the matrix of managers. The primary challenge is to develop a deep understanding of the clients' needs from an organizational and industry perspective and be able to identify previously unrecognized problems and offer unique solutions to solve these problems

(Huthwaite, 2007). Developing this level of knowledge requires a substantial investment of time with the client and using collaboration technologies that will maximize the IT sales professional's productivity. Dickie and Trailer (2008) state that most companies report doing an acceptable job of providing the IT sales professional with standard marketing materials, price lists, and play books but lack in providing tacit learning, knowledge that is transferred from one person to another via direct interpersonal interaction. This leaves the IT sales professional alone to develop his or her skills without the support of others.

Interestingly, as corporations merge, acquire one another, and outsource services, the number of people left to perform the work is dwindling. When a high tech company acquires another, IT sales professionals are forced to sell the increased breadth of products and services. Although sales teams are assimilated into the acquiring organization, these individuals, in many cases, are moved into other divisions of the organization or simply terminated. As a result, IT sales professionals are being pushed to sell a larger product line to a larger client base without the ability to learn and understand the products and services they are expected to sell. In this stressful environment the IT sales professional must have access to the appropriate resources and quickly develop the knowledge required to increase his or her potential of winning the sale. Ability to collaborate will ultimately improve the IT sales professional's ability to succeed.

Cisco Systems believes the next major improvement in sales productivity will result from improving the way people collaborate. In a 2006 white paper entitled "Productive Interactions: Building a Foundation for Interactions," Cisco Systems evaluates the evolution of business process redesign and discusses the importance of improving human interaction as a means of improving competitiveness.

In this white paper, Brad Boston, Senior Vice president and CIO of Cisco Systems, comments below on the growing interest in changing focus from process automation of transactions to improving the process of human interactions:

In business transactions where human intervention no longer adds significant value, automation has flourished. At this juncture, however, the opportunities for automating transactions to drive cost out of the business are diminishing. The result is a fundamental shift away from automating transactions toward a focus on cross-functional, human interactions. This is where the greatest potential lies for adding business value, such as increasing sales and improving customer satisfaction (p. 9).

Even though nothing in the above quote references social networking, it underscores the importance of how organizations are beginning to turn their attention from transaction-based process improvement toward improving the human side of the equation; collaboration.

Social Networking Industry Today

Social networking has become one of the fastest growing trends in business today, yet only a few external sites claim to offer services for the business professional and none for IT sales professionals.

Table 1

Overview of Current Social Networking Sites Offering Business Services

Site	Professional Focus	Industry Groups	Fee Based	Promotes F2F	Offers Learning
FaceBook	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
LinkedIn	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Plaxo	Yes	No	No	No	No

Meetup	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No
Spoke	Yes	No	Yes	No	No

Note. Information provided in the table above was the result of individual evaluations of each site by the author.

In the table above, the author lists FaceBook and LinkedIn as the best overall environment for professional users. Although FaceBook is presently viewed as a service for college students, the organization is aggressively re-branding the site to capture the professional market. Meetup offers a unique approach to the cast of social networking competition by motivating members to meet Face-to-Face (F2F). The site is designed around a concept of how networking organizations operate and only uses the Meetup website as a means to support networking in person.

Conclusion

Creating an environment where the IT sales professional has the ability to collaborate with others, access appropriate information, and quickly meet the needs of the client may improve his or her level of success. Furthermore, the use of social networking may serve as the catalyst toward achieving this objective.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

As indicated in the first chapter, the purpose of this study is twofold: first, to discover if there is a business need for developing an online social networking environment for IT sales professionals; and second, to discover how social networking might impact IT sales collaboration and learning. In order to determine the level of interest IT sales professionals might have in social networking as a means to improve collaboration, a survey instrument consisting of 48 questions profile information, sales skill development, sales training and sales collaboration were developed.

Participants

A total of 65 participants were randomly selected for this research project. Participants were identified based on a simple set of criteria including: (a) employment with a pre-determined high tech organization; (b) assignment within a particular geographical region, physical or virtual; and (c) occupation as sales representative, sales manager, or sales support specialist. Of the 65 participants, 50 completed and returned the survey; a 76.9% response rate.

Characteristics

Each participant was contacted via telephone and asked if they would be willing to participate in this study. Once participants gave their approval, the survey instrument was emailed to the participant. As the survey responses were received and the data was recorded in a spreadsheet, the associated emails were deleted.

The survey instrument was divided into three sections: (a) Profile Information; (b) IT Sales Development and Training; and (c) IT Sales Collaboration. The latter two sections

were then identified as Question Set #1 and Question Set #2 respectively. The profile information section asked questions regarding the participant's age, gender, years of employment, level of education, type of sales role, and amount of training the participant had engaged in during the past twenty four months. The second section, IT sales development and training, investigated the IT sales professional's beliefs regarding the potential lasting value of training and its applicability in the field. The third section, IT sales collaboration, evaluated the applicability of social networking tools as a means to enhance collaboration among IT sales professionals. Data collected from the survey instrument were entered into a spreadsheet that was structured in the same manner as the survey instrument. As the data were entered, a value was associated with each individual response in the following manner: (a) Strongly Agree = 1; (b) Somewhat Agree = 2; (c) Neutral = 3; (d) Somewhat Disagree = 4; and (e) Strongly Disagree = 5. The survey questionnaire was used as the primary instrument for this research.

Data Analysis

Once each response had been entered into the survey analysis spreadsheet, a second spreadsheet was created to record all cumulative responses for profile information. Spreadsheets were then created to accommodate analyzed data according the nine categories that make up the profile information. The collected data were then statistically analyzed to determine the participant's collective level of interest in the use of social networking tools for sales collaboration and to evaluate if there are any correlating factors between the participant's personal information and his or her response to a particular question or group of questions, as compared to other participants. The following quantitative analysis was performed:

Table 2

Data Analysis of Cumulative Survey Information

Question Set	Analysis Performed
Profile Information	Accumulated totals for each question and performed mean, standard deviation, and visual comparisons on the individual questions and their association with other questions.
IT Sales Development & Learning & IT Sales Collaboration	Accumulated totals for the entire question set based on the individual responses of each participant. The Likert response numbers were then totalled and evaluated against mean and standard deviation calculations. The data were then sorted against each of the nine categories of Profile Information, plus additional analysis was performed by cross sorting responses based on the initial evaluation of sorted data.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Survey results based on analysis of data described in the previous section produced adequate results from a quantity perspective, enabling a thorough quantitative evaluation of the outcomes. The data showed trends in consistency of responses which facilitated the following discussion.

Cumulative answers based on Likert scale questions for both question sets generated the following results:

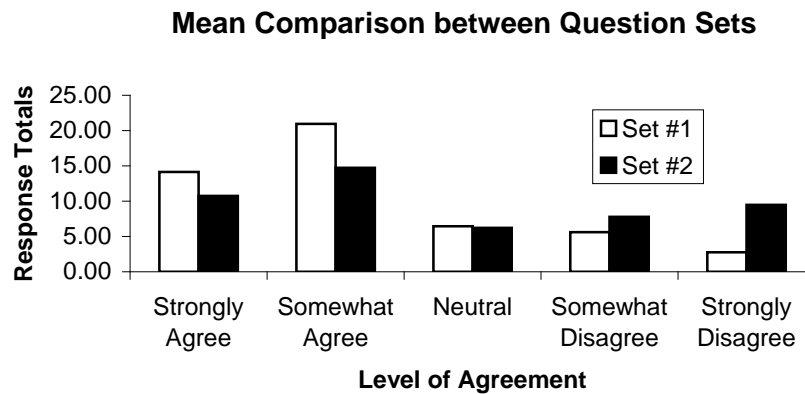


Figure 1. Evaluation of all responses from both Question Sets. Data represents the total number of responses according to the level of agreement.

Comparing the mean response based on age produced virtually consistent results per age group. No significant findings were identified as a result of evaluating the answers collectively. All participant responses were evaluated against both question sets as shown below:

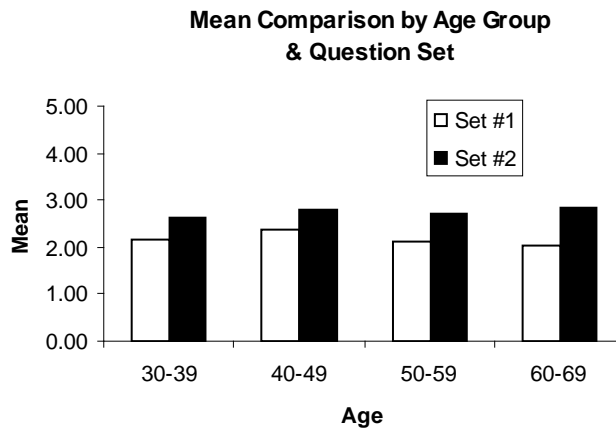


Figure 2. Mean comparison of age groups against each set of questions. The totals indicate an average answer for Set #1 (IT Sales and Training) as more positive (closer to 1.00) than those of Set #2 (IT Sales Collaboration).

Mean evaluation of responses based on level of education against both question sets produced the following results:

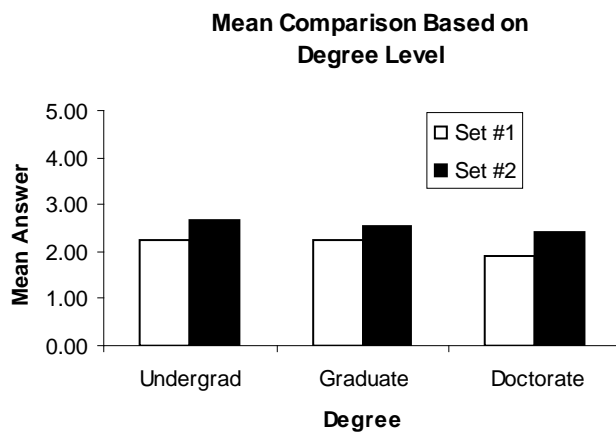


Figure 3. Mean comparison of degree levels against each set of questions. Participants respond in virtually the same manner as described in Figure 2 above. Individual cumulative results can be found in Appendix C.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This research effort produced better than expected results. The original goal behind the development of the survey instrument was to ask a series of questions regarding in two topics, IT sales training and online sales collaboration. In each category, approximately twenty questions were asked to determine the participants' level of interest in the topics, desire to improve their selling skills, and the use of social networking as an enabling technology to improve sales training and collaboration. The results confirmed the viability of the original research hypothesis and facilitated the answering of both research questions with a high degree of confidence.

Analyzing the survey responses quantitatively, such as calculating the mean, standard deviation, and averaging the results across all survey questions collectively or by question set, did not produce valuable answers. In fact, this approach did not provide any meaningful results other than confirming what was already know via a simple review of the totals. Only when a qualitative evaluation was performed against individual responses did the analysis begin to show interesting results that would ultimately lead to potential answers. As individual survey questions and the responses were evaluated, and then compared against other responses, the answers to both research questions began to form.

Explanation of Outcomes

A total of 48 questions were asked of each of the 50 participants. The response data collected clearly demonstrated the participants' beliefs regarding the importance of sales training to their career development, as well as, the use of social networking as an enabling technology to deliver sales training and facilitate collaboration among peers.

In order to answer the first research question, multiple survey questions were created to determine participants' level of interest in the use of social networking, as well as, their potential willingness to use such an environment for sales learning and collaboration. The analysis produced positive outcomes in support of the development of a social network environment.

Overwhelmingly, 88% of survey participants, regardless of position, background, or experience level believe social networking would make a positive difference in the way IT sales training and collaboration is provided. Importantly, the response was a cross representation of multiple age groups, genders, job titles, and education levels. Additionally, participants who responded more favorably to attending classroom based training versus online also responded in similar fashion to the use of social networking for IT sales training and sales collaboration purposes.

Participants were also asked to identify their level of interest in developing a social networking environment where they can improve IT selling skills and establish communities of practice to share ideas and collaborate. The response was also very positive showing 88% of participants supports this approach. This belief was further confirmed by evaluating four other questions where the collective participant response positively endorsed the development of a social networking environment including: (a) the IT sales professional's interest in sharing ideas on selling strategies online; (b) the use of external collaboration tools such as LinkedIn to improve collaboration; (c) the desire to use eLearning as a means of improving the participants selling skills; (d) the desire to interact, or collaborate with other individuals. Additionally, a number of other survey responses provided confirmation that on the surface might not draw attention but when evaluated

along with the previous responses, actually enhanced clarification of the participant's position. First, the participants' strong desire (84%) to use Instant Messenger indicates a willingness to adopt new technologies that truly make a positive impact on the daily activities of the IT sales professional. Second, the participants' lack of interest, a 12% response rate, in other new technologies such as creating and reading Blogs further underscores this point and indicates the participants were not willing to embrace just any technology for technology's sake.

The second research question is much more difficult to answer. Therefore, a combination of qualitative and quantitative evaluations was applied in order to arrive at a reasonable conclusion with supportive evidence.

Initially, a high level quantitative evaluation was necessary to understand the overall makeup of the responses from both question sets. Questions that determined the participants' level of interest in IT sales training looked at topics including general interest in sales training, level of satisfaction in classroom versus online training programs, and desire to improve one's skills. The results of this analysis consistently showed participants strongly support the value of IT sales training (question set #1) more than IT sales collaboration (question set #2):

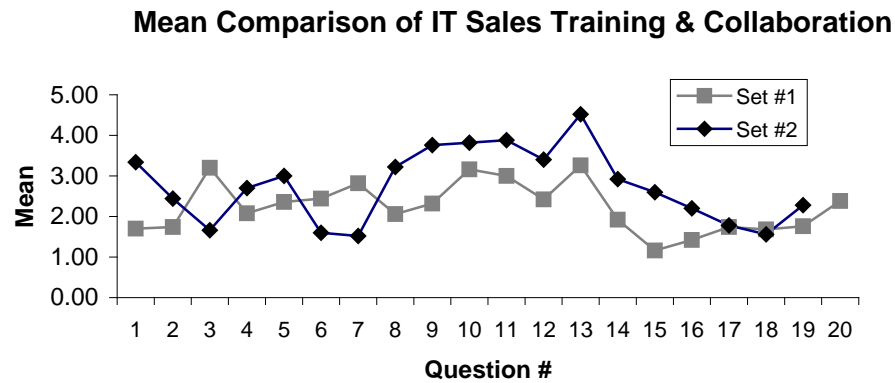


Figure 4. The total for each question was calculated. The mean was then determined for all questions and both question sets were evaluated.

Although this result is not surprising, it is an example of how the collective evaluation of data did not provide conclusive evidence. Alternatively, if each question set is evaluated alone, instead of being compared against the second set of questions, it provides some insight to the beliefs of the participants regarding IT sales training. However, from a qualitative perspective, a number of questions were asked for more specific information regarding the participants' view of certain topics that provide deeper insight regarding their need for access to IT sales learning, collaboration, and even mentoring services via an online social networking environment. Questions were also asked to determine the participants' self view once the training has finished and their perception of their ability to perform at a higher level as a result of attending the training session, either classroom based or online. As expected, these results were very positive as well.

The survey results showed an overwhelming interest on the part of the participants to engage in sales training activities that would ultimately improve their selling skills, as

well as, career opportunities. For example, 49 of 50 participants (98%) wanted to know more about their current skill level in IT selling and how to become more proficient. Participants indicated that they are willing to invest more time to improve their sales skills were also very high, reporting 48 of 50 participants. However, 84% of participants stated that they do not have enough time to engage in further learning activities because of their current workload. This contrast is very telling. When both responses are evaluated collectively, it suggests that although the typical participant is very interested in developing his/her skills, the reality is, participants struggle to fit formal training programs into an already chaotic schedule, especially when the IT sales training program is classroom based and requires the participant to travel. Additionally, virtually all participants (95%) strongly believe the development of sales skills via online training programs enhance their potential for success which coincides with other survey responses that directly link sales efficacy, the belief that one has the skills required to succeed, to the participant's success in selling. Finally, survey responses showed that the participants believed that sales training does increase sales performance in some quantifiable way; thus further demonstrating the importance of self efficacy and its relationship to sales performance.

The results listed above support the findings that the survey participants collectively support the investment in training to improve their selling skills, and simultaneously, believe online sales collaboration and learning, via the development of a social networking environment would serve as an enabling technology and would benefit the entire IT sales industry.

Implication of Results

The survey results provide strong evidence that enables the development of a definitive answer for both research questions. Although quantitative results were of less value than originally anticipated, they too helped in the creation of a picture that supports the efforts of this study.

Limitations

The primary limitation that surfaced as this research project progressed was regarding the second research question (How does social networking impact IT sales collaboration and learning?) The question structure and content created research challenges in two areas. First, answering the question “How” is very difficult based on the research approach and the survey instrument used. Second, attempting to determine the impact of social networking on two broad topics as sales collaboration and learning also complicated the research effort as part of the Literature Review as well as the development of the survey instrument. Another limitation of this research project was the small population size for the survey.

Future Research

The use of social networking in the business environment is just beginning to develop. Future productivity enhancements will come from improving the way IT sales professionals collaborate, not by enhancing the assembly line process (Cisco Systems, 2006). Using the social networking environment to improve IT sales collaboration and learning is a new topic area with no identified research performed to date. Therefore, further research is warranted to understand the dynamics among sales process

improvement, sales effectiveness, sales learning, and the use of social networking as an enabling technology.

CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY

Research to date regarding the use of social networking as a means to improve IT sales collaboration suggests a new area of sales productivity study has not yet begun to emerge. However, considering the challenges high tech organizations face to continually improve revenue performance and the constant pressure the IT sales professional must endure to succeed, the need for improved methods of sales collaboration will undoubtedly promote further research.

Although revolutionary changes have already taken place in the way customers procure high tech goods and services, the selling practices for most organizations have remained virtually the same for many years (Stewart, 2006). This is the primary challenge affecting IT sales performance today. It represents a disconnect between current buying behaviors and the way high tech sales organizations continue to sell.

Similar to the way Wikis and blogs are reshaping the way consumers collaborate online, social networking will change the way the IT sales professional interacts with colleagues and customers alike. Even today, social networking sites like LinkedIn are being used as information sources and are beginning to replace the need for third party information services like Hoovers.com (Social Media Today, 2007).

Improving sales performance is critical to the success of any high-tech organization. With the increasing amount of online information, high-tech buyers are smarter than ever about the supplier's product offerings, their delivery capabilities, and past experiences with other clients. Social networking will enable IT sales professionals to utilize an online environment to share ideas, respond to client needs, and jointly develop sales strategies that will improve the team's ability to win the sale. Some organizations are beginning to

recognize the importance of these issues and the direct and positive impact they will have on sales performance (Aberdeen Research Group, 2008).

Therefore, the ultimate goal is to find creative ways for the IT sales professional to (a) significantly increase the quality of his or her interactions with clients, (b) to reduce the amount of effort required to respond to client requests, and (c) to utilize shared knowledge in such a way which will enable the IT sales professional to develop previously unidentified solutions to solve customer challenges.

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APPENDICIES

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

Instructions:

1. Do not place your name on this survey
2. Please **highlight** your answer
3. Please email the doc to champ2883e@gmail.com

Profile Information:

1. Age
 - a. 20-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-49
 - d. 50-59
2. Years in the work force
 - a. 1-9
 - b. 10-19
 - c. 20-29
 - d. 30-39
3. Gender
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
4. Highest Level of Education Attainment
 - a. High School Diploma
 - b. Technical Training
 - c. Undergraduate
 - d. Graduate
 - e. Doctorate
5. Type of education
 - a. Business
 - b. Technical
 - c. Engineering
 - d. Liberal Arts
6. Title
 - a. Sales
 - b. Sales Management
 - c. Sales Support
7. Which IT Brand do you sell?
 - a. Hardware
 - b. Software
 - c. Services
8. Number of In-Person Sales Training Program in the past 24 months
 - a. 0 – 2

- b. 3 - 4
 - c. 5 or More
9. Number of eLearning courses completed in the past 24 months
- a. 0 – 2
 - b. 3 – 4
 - c. 5 or more

Sales Skill Development & Sales Training:

1. I enjoy developing my sales skills including: selling tactics, cold calling, relationship development, closing strategies.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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2. I believe my success in sales is based on developing a strong working knowledge of the products and services I sell.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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3. My interpretation of sales training is learning product/service capabilities.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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4. I personally benefit more from participating in an in-class training program than from an online class.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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5. I prefer to participate in external training sessions when possible to gain a third party view of selling rather than depending solely on the advice/guidance of my employer.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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6. The training tools my employer provides enables me to further develop my sales performance.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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7. I use external collaboration tools such as LinkedIn.com to improve my sales knowledge.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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8. After I have attended an internal sales training class, I'm able to apply what I've learned in the classroom environment.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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9. As a result of attending a sales training class, my sales performance has improved in some quantifiable way.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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10. As a result of attending a sales training class, I am now collaborating with my classmates on a regular basis.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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11. As a result of attending a sales training class, I am now learning from other classmates on a regular basis.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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12. I engage in eLearning courses as a means of developing my sales knowledge in an effort to improve my personal sales performance.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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13. After completing a sales training course, I usually remain in contact with my classmates and share ideas on applying what I've learned in class.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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14. After completing a sales training course, I will invest the time to apply what I've learned into my daily work activity.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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15. I'm interested in knowing why or why not I succeeding in sales.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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16. I'm interested in investing time on a regular basis to improve my performance.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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17. I believe engaging in a sales training program will positively impact my performance in my current sales role.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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18. I enjoy reading 3rd party material related to improving my selling skills externally to the resources provided by my employer.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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19. After participating in a sales training class, I feel more confident about my ability to sell effectively.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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20. I'm so busy focusing on attaining my quota and trying to please my customers that I simply don't have the energy to engage in another sales training activity.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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About Collaborating:

1. For me, collaboration is a face-to-face interaction between two or more individuals, not something that is done via the internet.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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2. I enjoy sharing ideas on sales strategies (not product knowledge) with peers online?

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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3. I enjoy sharing ideas on sales strategies (not product knowledge) with peers in person?

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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4. I actively engage in regular face-to-face networking activities, such as breakfast meetings, to share ideas with individuals in my industry who are not employed with the same employer.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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5. I use my internal sales portal as a starting point for all collaboration and learning activities.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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6. I enjoy interacting with peers who are working to resolve the similar sales challenges in order to improve my sales performance.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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7. I frequently use instant messenger as part of my daily collaboration with peers and external colleagues.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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8. I frequently use Wikis, as part of my daily collaboration with peers and external colleagues.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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9. I frequently use Slide-Share as part of my daily collaboration with peers and external colleagues.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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10. I frequently use Blogs as part of my daily collaboration with peers and external colleagues.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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11. I frequently use YouTube to learn about competitor's products and/or services

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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12. I read Blogs on a regular basis to learn about how others perform in their business environment.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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13. I have developed my own Blog to communicate my ideas externally of my corporate environment.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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14. I regularly attend professional networking sessions in my community in an effort to develop new relationships and find business.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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15. I use a social network tool that allows me to develop closer relationships with my employment colleagues.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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16. I use external social network tools to keep connected with colleagues in my industry.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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17. I believe there is a potential to use a social networking tool to improve learning within my industry.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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18. I believe creating an online environment where individuals can build communities of practice can share ideas and learning would provide educational, collaboration, or learning benefit for my career.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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19. I use a mentor/coach to help in developing my career or to gain insight to my strengths, weaknesses, or to address business issues.

1. Strongly Agree	2. Somewhat Agree	3. Neutral	4. Somewhat Disagree	5. Strongly Disagree
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Appendix B: Informed Consent Statement



INDIANA UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF RESEARCH ADMINISTRATION

Date: October 2, 2008

To: Dr. Joseph DeFazio
Computer Technology
SL 220D

From: Regina Winger
Research Compliance Administration, IUPUI
UN 618

Subject: IUPUI/Clarian Institutional Review Committee - Exempt Review of
Human Study

Study Number: EX0810-04B

Study Title: "Impact of Social Networking on IT Sales Collaboration and Learning:
An Investigation of the Business Applicability of Online Social
Networking"

Your application for approval of the study named above has been accepted as meeting the criteria of exempt research as described by Federal Regulations [[45 CFR 46.101\(b\), paragraph 2](#)]. A copy of the acceptance is enclosed for your file.

Although a continuing review is not required for an exempt study, prior approval must be obtained before change(s) to the originally approved study can be initiated. When you have completed your study, please inform our office in writing.

If the research is conducted at or funded by the VA, research may not be initiated until approval is received from the VA Research and Development Committee.

Please contact the Office of Health Care Billing and HIPAA Programs at 317-278-4891 for information regarding a Data Use Agreement, if applicable.

Enclosures: Copy of acceptance

Phone: 317-274-8289 • Fax: 317-278-8744 • Email: resrisk@iupui.edu • Website: <http://research.iupui.edu>

Appendix C: Question Set #1 Response Totals

Survey Response Totals by Question						
Question Set #1 – IT Sales & Training						
Question #	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1	27	17	1	4	1	
2	27	18	0	1	4	
3	3	16	8	14	9	
4	20	18	4	4	4	
5	12	17	16	1	4	
6	6	24	12	8	0	
7	8	17	6	14	5	
8	4	39	7	0	0	
9	2	34	10	4	0	
10	1	16	10	20	3	
11	5	15	13	9	8	
12	8	25	9	4	4	
13	6	9	10	16	9	
14	9	37	3	1	0	
15	43	6	1	0	0	
16	32	16	1	0	0	
17	18	28	3	1	0	
18	24	21	3	1	1	
19	18	23	4	3	0	
20	10	23	8	6	0	

Appendix D: Question Set #2 Response Totals

Survey Response Totals by Question						
Question Set #2 – IT Sales Collaboration						
Question #	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Neutral	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	
1	8	5	6	19	11	
2	7	27	5	4	6	
3	21	23	4	1	0	
4	6	22	6	8	7	
5	1	20	12	7	9	
6	24	21	2	2	0	
7	34	9	2	2	2	
8	3	17	6	9	14	
9	2	7	8	12	20	
10	3	0	11	15	19	
11	2	3	8	18	18	
12	5	11	6	10	17	
13	1	2	4	1	41	
14	4	17	11	10	7	
15	7	20	9	9	4	
16	14	19	8	6	2	
17	20	22	4	2	1	
18	29	15	1	4	0	
19	13	20	5	9	2	

Appendix E: Curriculum Vitae

Eric R. Decker
202 Westminster Dr.
Noblesville, IN 46060
eric@superthought.com

High Tech Sales Professional

High Tech business professional with 25 years of broad-based experience in developing trusted client relationships, managing complex engagements, and sales team leadership. Industry expertise includes Life Sciences, Higher Education, and State/Local Government.

Very passionate about improving high tech sales performance via process redesign, sales collaboration and learning.

Thrive in a work environment that requires extensive multi-tasking including consultative selling, customer relationship management, engagement management, sales team leadership, and internal issues resolution.

Sales Leadership

- Services Sales Leader for IBM - Responsible for the coordination and leadership of 9 services sales teams to develop and close integrated consulting engagements across industry sectors including Health Care, Government, Life Sciences, and Higher Education.
- Global Client Executive for IBM - Creating, pursuing, and winning multiple consulting engagements at a Fortune 500 Pharmaceutical, which includes business intelligence strategy & implementation, global security assessments, Innovation/collaboration jam, business continuity, customer relationship management, and document management.
- Serving as a District Sales Manager for Sun Microsystems, responsible for a 21 person sales organization including sales and support functions. Managed Fortune 1000 Accounts throughout the Ohio-Valley region generating more than \$58m in incremental revenue annually.
- Winning new business opportunities within the pharmaceutical industry including: clinical trials, ERP, HR, infrastructure, marketing, knowledge management, regulatory, medical systems, pharmaceutical manufacturing, and finance.
- Managing and motivating cross-brand sales teams to focus on a common goal that ultimately facilitating the win of large integrated solution opportunities.

- Consistently surpassing annual sales targets with signings and revenue performance ranging from 105% to over 200% in a given year. Very comfortable working in a sales environment where the typical annual sales goal (signings and/or revenue) range from \$5.0 to \$50.0 million. Specific goal and attainment information available upon request.

Engagement Management

- Successfully leading a three-year competitive sales campaign to win a Global SAP Infrastructure roll-out project with a Fortune 500 Pharmaceutical, this included the design and implementation of a Single Global Instance ERP strategy. This project ultimately generated over \$30 million in incremental revenue and services for Sun Microsystems during the 5-year agreement period.
- Responsible for managing the project definition, sourcing, contract negotiations, and management of on-going customer satisfaction to secure future consulting opportunities with the same client.
- As Services Leader with IBM - Sold and managed several security consulting engagements with a Fortune 500 organization that evaluated IT and business related vulnerabilities globally.
- Managing several international technology integration projects, which include consulting services, sub-contractor management, contract negotiations, export/import issue resolution, and global product distribution.
- Providing direction and advice to consulting/delivery teams and working closely with client to ensure a successful project and the attainment of project benefits.
- Managing the implementation of a global email outsourcing Initiative including migration of the application from the customer organization to third-party hosted environment and managing to customer-defined service level requirements.
- Successfully creating a vision of customer service and performance excellence among team members and inspiring enthusiasm, collaboration, and commitment to achieve a common goal.
- Developing, winning and managing a wireless-campus consulting engagement that evaluated the business impact of building a wireless community for students and faculty, which included a business assessment, interviews with university staff and community leaders, and a final presentation to the University President.
- Successfully managing a Call Center Infrastructure and User Interface assessment with national medical insurance provider, which evaluated both the application and underlying infrastructure to determine the business impact of the organization's ability

to respond quickly and accurately to the needs of their policy holders when filing medical claims.

- Providing direction and advice to consulting staff and working closely with client to ensure a successful project and the achievement of project benefits.
- Managing a Service Oriented Architecture (SOA) engagement at a Regional University to re-design multiple back-end mainframe applications instead of purchasing a new ERP application.

Selected Consulting Engagements

- Winning, negotiating, and implementing a state-wide economic development (indianaINTERN.net) on-line application project to assist college students in finding internships with Indiana based organizations, a \$2.3 million initiative to increase the number of corporate internships throughout Indiana. Project responsibilities included conceptual design, contract negotiations, application development and implementation, multimedia and web design, technology integration, sub-contractor management, and customer relationship management. The project was completed on time within budget and design specifications.
- Serving as an IT Sales and Leadership Consultant for several organizations to establish market presence and improve revenue performance. Activities included business performance assessment, sales strategy development and execution, sales team assessment and development, product development, competitive market analysis, marketing strategy development, and customer relationship management.
- County Recorder Imaging Integration – City of Indianapolis/Marion County Recorder’s Office Image Integration Project – Served in a partner capacity leading the competitive pursuit, contract negotiations, and implementation of a agency wide process optimization effort that deployed imaging technology, work flow, and business process redesign. After thirteen years in production, the Indianapolis/Marion Country Recorder is the only agency in both state and local government that is fully self-funded.
- Managed the response, negotiations, selection, and 18-month implementation of an \$8 million systems integration project with the Indiana Mental Health Agency, which placed technology, applications, and operational services at each of the Mental Health Institutions throughout the State of Indiana.
- Providing IT related consulting services to organizations including E-Learning, Knowledge Management, Internet-based application development, and project management.
- Re-Design of a Global Pharmaceutical Level2/Level3 IT support services engagement. Invested 18 months to overturn a failing project by working with both the IBM and the

client to clearly and calmly identify specific issues that were affecting the project and to resolve those issues in a timely manner.

- Designing and implementing a WAN solution for a national commercial real estate developer connecting six offices with email and application integration.
- Successfully managing large complex projects overseeing multiple teams and organizations by effectively establishing and managing project goals, fostering continuous and open communication, and helping the team envision the ultimate project value and resulting benefit to the organization.

General Business Management:

- As a business owner - Managing all business related operations including finance (P&L), marketing, corporate branding, contract negotiations, personnel recruiting and management, and business strategy.
- Developing, negotiating, and implementing worldwide sales and Master Service Agreements with Fortune 1000 organizations establishing the organization (IBM, Sun, and Wang) as the preferred technology partner.
- Successfully creating a vision of customer service and performance excellence among team members and inspiring enthusiasm, collaboration, and commitment towards a common goal.

Education

- B.S. Engineering Technology/Computer Sciences, Purdue University.
- Master of Science Candidate, Indiana University School of Informatics. Area of study, New Media, Graduation December 2008.
- IBM Client Executive Certification – An intensive certification program offered by the Harvard Business School for IBM Top Talent.
- Sales Education - Holden – Value-Based Selling at the Executive Level, Holden - Large Account Management, SPIN, Miller Heiman, and Sandler Sales Methodologies.

Other Accomplishments

- White paper for the IBM certification program that evaluated the influences and long term effects of developing partnerships in the pharmaceutical industry to more rapidly produce targeted health solutions.
- Masters Thesis: An analysis of social networking and its potential influence on IT sales collaboration and learning.

Employment History

- | | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------|
| ▪ IBM Corporation | Sales Leader & Client Executive | (2003 to Present) |
| ▪ SuperThought, Inc. | Business Owner | (1999 to 2003) |
| ▪ Sun Microsystems | District Manager & Account Exec | (1993 to 1999) |
| ▪ Wang Laboratories | Account Executive & Consultant | (1984 to 1993) |
| ▪ Oxford Development | Networking Consultant/Manager | (1983 to 1984) |