



Global 4000 Study Suggests Many Technical Sales Professionals Lack High-Touch People Skills

By Keith Martino

In a recent analysis completed on January 31, 2014, CMI Assessments found sales survey results differed dramatically among the five primary industries assessed and reviewed.

These previously unreleased findings were synthesized from among 4,000+ randomly selected Sales and Leadership Efficacy Surveys (S.A.L.E.S.) conducted globally by CMI Assessments over the past five years.

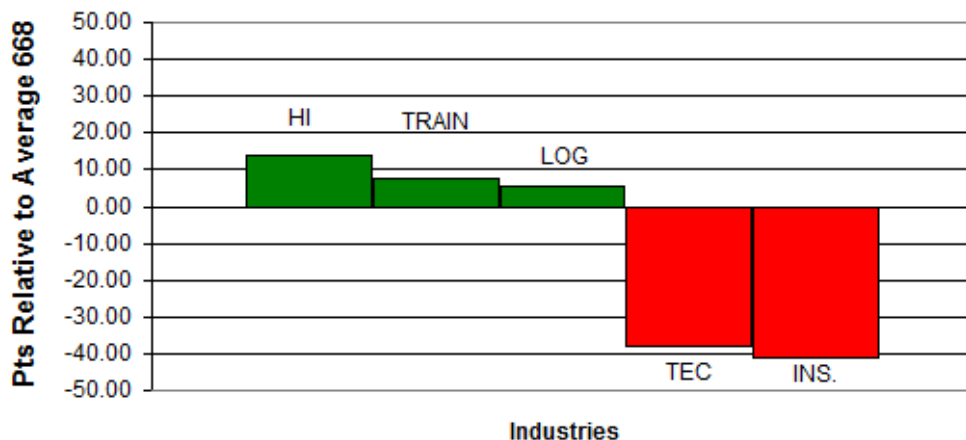
The industry-specific results were deemed significant in that they reveal a substantial variation in the go-to-market approach taken by sales professionals in key industry segments. The industries represented in this Global 4000 analysis included:

- 1) *Technology sales*
- 2) *Insurance sales*
- 3) *Training and Development sales*
- 4) *Logistics sales*
- 5) *Home Improvement sales*

Most notable among the findings is the apparent scarcity of high-touch attributes found among overtly technical sales professionals in both the I.T. and insurance sales segments.

While technology sales and insurance sales appear to be quite different at surface level, one clear parallel exists. Both groups demonstrate a fascination with technical product features and a demonstrated desire to promote these features as a competitive point of differentiation. This was spotlighted throughout assessments completed around the world.

Industries Above Vs. Below Average



What else did the study uncover?

Five Crucial Insights:

1) Logistics sales professionals capitalize on “change” as an opportunity for engaging the prospect. They also tend to provide a vision for what is possible.

Logistics sales professionals (while detail-oriented in many companies) scored above average in terms of discussing trends, big picture concepts, and demonstrating leadership skills. They also work harder at instilling trust and helping clients reach their goals than many other industry sales professionals.

On the flip-side, logistics sales professionals do not appear to focus enough attention on a disciplined approach to self-improvement. While they see their customers dealing with rapid change in their work environment, the study suggests that these same professionals do not spend enough time on their own professional development.

2) Home improvement sales professionals are bold. They present prospects with new concepts daily. They stand up for their ideas and seldom relent under pressure.

As many homeowners have come to appreciate, these sales professionals can be quite focused on their end game; which is why they often make a lot more money than one might suspect.

However, the results of the Global 4000 study also suggest Home Improvement Sales Professionals often miss opportunities to improve their position with prospects. Their single-minded inflexibility comes at the expense of lost opportunities when they fail to read the prospect accurately and shift techniques in order to be more effective. Home improvement sales professionals scored higher in many categories than any other industry sales professional. Their inability to pivot and change tactics is their Achilles heel.

3) Sales Professionals who sell training and professional development programs consistently scored among the highest in many of the leadership categories assessed by S.A.L.E.S.

Training Sales Professionals tend to show a high degree of respect for their prospects and customers. They also demonstrated a strong ability to get their prospects to think about old problems they've faced in a fresh light. Training-related sales professionals assessed by CMI seemed most able to relate to the individual needs of their prospects and provide solutions that match their unique requirements. This consultative approach was bolstered by strong scores in areas related to self-improvement and self-image.

Ironically, Training sales professionals often miss the impact their ideas might have on their prospects' senior management teams. They tend to avoid these high-level contacts to their own detriment. Courage is an area of opportunity for Training Sales Professionals.

4) *Technology Sales Professionals* tend to have a strong self-image which enables them to approach their prospects with confidence. In addition, their understanding of corporate objectives creates an opportunity for them to engage more senior-level contacts than many sales professionals will typically approach.

Many technology sales professionals are comfortable talking about how their solutions reduce cost, improve productivity and increase profitability. They understand the speed of change and know how they prefer to be managed. As selling in a leaner/meaner world opens the door for more executive contact, these sales professionals have an opportunity to connect at senior levels. In many cases, they will have the confidence to do so.

According to the results of the study however, technology sales professionals have a challenge qualifying their prospects. They are less likely to approach a prospect with a prepared list of questions. They also tend to be most inwardly focused on their technical solutions. Learning to read their prospects, size up the true potential and pursue those legitimate prospects with a complete business solution are the traits most technology sales pros need. The people skills mentioned earlier and the empathetic determination to help prospects reach their true potential is a mind-shift technology providers can embrace for competitive advantage. The old axiom, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care, still applies.

5) In the Global 4000 analysis, *Insurance Sales Professionals* post their highest scores in the areas of courage, integrity, and individual consideration. Much like *technology sales people*, they know how they prefer to be managed and want to be treated as individual producers. They are good at following through on promises made to prospects and clients.

Results indicate that Insurance sales professionals are cautious about presenting bold ideas with prospects and clients. They tend to focus on the features of their products and often miss the larger picture. Their products deliver great value for the senior-level executive in a company and the opportunity exists for them to do a better job reaching up in the organization.

Prospecting is an additional opportunity for Insurance sales professionals. Their responses on S.A.L.E.S. indicate they can achieve greater results if they learn to leverage their resources to identify and touch more prospects.