

**Summaries of Selected Sessions from the  
2008 AMA Winter Educators' Conference  
(Austin, TX)**

**March 2008**

**Compiled and edited by Tom J. Brown, Oklahoma State  
University, [tomb@okstate.edu](mailto:tomb@okstate.edu)**

## 2.1 Selling and Sales Management SIG (Special Session)

### Sales Curriculum in the 21st Century-What are we doing? Where are we going?

#### Chair:

*Karen Norman Kennedy, University of Alabama at Birmingham*

#### Panelists:

*Dawn Deeter-Schmelz, Ohio University*

*Michael Ahearne, University of Houston*

*Greg W Marshall, Rollins College*

**Session Summary Writer:** David Gilliam, Oklahoma State University

Dr. Dawn Deeter-Schmelz presented a study that was an extension of the Kelleman and Hekmat article in JPSSM, fall 1989. She emphasized that the data analysis had just begun and the results were thus preliminary but very interesting. The survey of 858 business schools yielded 195 usable returns, 70% of which were AACSB accredited schools. 67% were public, 33% private, 92% located in the US, 6% Europe and 2% Canada. About 20% reported having a sales major or sales program, and 17.5% without a program were considering adding one, 70% because businesses requested it and 30% due to demand from faculty and students. Only 5% reported offering no sales courses at all. 45% offered personal selling, 39% had sales management and 39% offered a combination course. 12% offered an advanced sales course. 21% offered a negotiation class. 95% used role playing in selling courses. 33% were considering adding video for role playing. Important issues facing sales educators included: (1) lack of student interest, (2) lack of faculty to teach courses, and (3) difficulty keeping class sizes small. About 90% of course work is still conducted face to face. Only 7% believed that the courses could be effectively taught online.

Dr. Greg W. Marshall offered a “view from 30,000 feet” on sales education, indicating that courses in sales and global topics are the growth areas in business education. Relying on data from a H R Chally Group 2007 report, he offered several insights. Change is the central theme in selling and sales management, as exemplified by frequent new buzzwords like Customer Experience Management. Firms seek to be customer driven with people and processes aligned to deliver customer value. Customers are asking seven things from salespersons.

- 1) Be personally accountable for desired results
- 2) Understand our business – deep knowledge of customers business
- 3) Be on our side – salesperson as advocate in vendor firm
- 4) Design right applications via customization
- 5) Be easily accessible
- 6) Solve our problems
- 7) Be creative in responding to our needs

Dr. Marshall noted that the number of CSO's is growing. Firms are interested in:

- 1) Creating a customer driven culture
- 2) Recruiting and selecting sales talent
- 3) Training and development for the right set of skills
- 4) Segmenting markets in a meaningful way
- 5) Implementing formal sales processes
- 6) Developing enabling information technology
- 7) Integrating other business functions with sales for an ability to operate as organization members

Dr. Michael Ahearne discussed trends and best practices in the development of sales programs. He noted that there are 15 million salespersons in the US or about 11% of the workforce. About 75% of companies hiring at business schools are looking for salespersons. He sees a move away from sales/sales management combo courses, with greater focus on pure sales classes. In addition, he also sees more sales courses be offered in MBA programs. As a significant source of revenue for business schools, more

schools are starting selling programs. There is a pushback from administrators and educators who view sales as a “soft” area. There is a tendency to have retired adjuncts teach the classes. This causes problems as the adjuncts require assistance from the faculty to interface with the institution, recruiters and handle pedagogical impediments. There is a shortage of sales graduates from Ph.D. programs and he sees a need to recruit top students to the sales area. At the University of Houston, the business students now take a sales course instead of the formerly required public speaking course. This exposes hundreds of students each year to sales who might otherwise never have taken the course. Dr. Ahearne concluded by discussing the 30 corporate sponsors who support the sales program at Houston and the 180 student cohort program of 6 courses.