

Notes on Research Examining High and Low Sales Producers

February 2019

1—Many factors can contribute to success in sales given the differences in sales jobs and selling environments. However, a common factor for success across sales organizations and industries is the need for sales networking or visibility. Regardless, of products/services sold, there is a fundamental need for salespeople to engage in customer contact activities to develop new business with new and existing clients. Consequently, initiating customer engagement or *sales prospecting* is a core competency for success in sales. Once customer contact is made, other factors can become equally if not more important. However, initiating sales contact *comes first* in the sales process.

2—However, research has shown that most salespeople struggle with a fear of initiating sales contact, a condition generally known as *sales call reluctance*. Extensive studies have been conducted on sixteen distinct forms of call reluctant behaviors that are measured by the Sales Preference Questionnaire/Full Spectrum Advocacy (SPQ*GOLD/FSA) assessment. This assessment was developed from over 30 years of research, begun by behavioral scientists Dudley & Goodson. In addition to diagnosing call reluctance, the assessment also measures level of sales motivation and goal orientation. Studies have shown that approximately 90% of salespeople struggle with one of more forms of call reluctance, which can limit their ability to generate new business due to their limited customer engagement activity.

3—Current research was conducted to assess differences in SPQ*GOLD/FSA profile results and prospecting activity for salespeople across industries in the U.S. ($N=4946$). Individuals were categorized as low, moderate or high sales performers based on the level of self-reported contacts made. The amount of customer contacts initiated includes contacts made by phone and in-person visits. Such information may also be tracked via CRM systems.

4—Findings indicate a significant difference between high and low producers across each of the call reluctance types. The scales with the most significant difference between groups are the Telephobia and Yielder scales. The significant difference associated with Telephobia is to be expected given that most salespeople prospect by phone. The significant difference in Yielder scores, indicates that lower producers tend to be significantly less assertive, and default on opportunities to sell out of a fear of appearing pushy or intrusive.

5—There were also significant differences in levels of Motivation, Goal Level and associated scales. In terms of Goal Level, high and low producers, differed the most on **Goal Target**. In regard to Motivation, salespeople differed the most on Velocity, which measures level of urgency and lack of procrastination.

6—These combined results suggest that higher producers are most distinguished from lower producers due to their increased ability to set meaningful sales targets and their sense of sales urgency, along with a comfort of using the telephone and tendency to be assertive. By comparison, lower sales producers tend to be significantly less inclined to set meaningful goals and consequently lack a sense of urgency. Since lower producers tend to have significantly higher levels of Yielder tendencies, they may be more challenged to set meaningful goal targets due to a preoccupation with seeking to please others rather than determining what goals are meaningful to them personally.

Comparison of SPQ_FSA Scores for Hi and Lo Groups

AVEARGE Scores per Group				
<i>U.S. Sales</i>	Low (N=1423)	Moderate (N=2032)	High (N=1491)	Total (N=4946)
BRAKE	41	33	27	33
ACCELERATOR	59	67	73	67
DOOMSAYER	20	10	6	11
OVERP	52	43	37	44
HYPER	38	33	30	33
ROLE	39	32	28	32
YIELD	55	46	38	46
OPPOSITIONAL	19	16	15	16
STAGE	50	41	34	41
SSC	36	27	21	28
Friendshield	40	31	26	32
Famshield	42	32	27	33
REFER	41	31	26	32
TELE	45	31	22	32
ONLINE	42	30	23	31
COMPLEX	48	38	32	39
SALES_EXT	37	27	21	28
PAYMENT	50	43	36	43
MOTIVATION	56	67	75	66
FS_NET_MOTIVATION	31	42	53	42
GOAL_LEVEL	55	67	75	66
GOAL_DIFFUSION	59	49	38	49
GOAL_ALLERGY	45	35	27	36
INFO_BRIDGE	35	31	28	31
ROLE_SUPPORT	51	47	42	47
PRINCIPLES	71	66	59	65
EMBELLISHMENT	35	44	51	44
POSITIVE_POSTURE	41	48	58	49
HEDGING	6	5	5	5
PROBLEM_SOLVING	77	78	79	78
RESP_CONSISTENCY	94	94	94	94
RTQ	83	85	87	85

Note: There were significant differences across all scales ($p < .05$).

Note: The most meaningful or practical differences (*based on effect size statistics*) were Goal Target, Motivational Velocity, Telephobia and Yelder.

Note: The significant differences among the Motivation and Goal Level scales are consequently associated with significant differences in Net Motivation as well.