

FIELD SALES MANAGEMENT CONTROL SYSTEMS: INFLUENCE ON SALESPERSONS' PSYCHOLOGICAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESPONSES

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ABSTRACT

This study proposes refinements to the conceptualization of field sales management control systems by examining the control concept at two distinct levels of analysis, namely sales managers and salespersons. Past research on sales management has revealed that various job related issues are characterized by perceptual incongruence between sales managers and salespeople, but the research on field sales management control systems has not taken this issue into consideration clearly. However, the scholars have tacitly discussed the difference between salespersons' perceptions of control and "controls-in-use" by the managers. Our model distinguishes between the role of control as they are exercised by the sales manager, and control as they are perceived by salespeople. The primary objective is to increase our understanding about the nature and influence mechanisms of the field sales management control systems. And more specifically, to compare the salesperson consequences of the managers' exercised control and salespersons' perceptions of control. It is asserted that sales manager's control behavior does shape salespersons' perceptions of control to some extent, but the perceptions of control are not necessarily accurate. So the effects of sales manager's control behaviors on salesperson consequences may be direct or (fully or partially) mediated by salespersons' control perceptions. The focal salesperson consequences in the present study are both psychological (i.e. organizational commitment, role ambiguity, and role conflict) and behavioral (unethical behavior).

An examination of the responses from 154 sales managers and 257 salespersons from Finnish field sales organizations indicates that the managers' exerted controls and salespersons' perceptions of control do indeed have differential effects on salespeople. The results of the study show that perceptions of control explain the psychological outcomes of salespeople (i.e. role conflict, organizational commitment) More specifically, salespersons who perceive that they receive greater amount direction from their managers experience less role conflict and are express higher levels of organizational commitment compared to those who perceive less direction. The behavioral salesperson outcome (i.e. unethical behavior) is predicted by the controls –in-use by managers. Salespeople behave less ethically when sales managers rely on evaluation of performance metrics. Sales managers' monitoring behaviors, in turn, are associated with more ethical selling behaviors.

References Available on Request