ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR IN SELLING: A DISCRIMINANT ANALYSIS OF THE EFFECT OF SITUATIONAL VARIABLES

CHARLES D. BODKIN, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte
THOMAS H. STEVENSON, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte

The theoretical literature regarding adaptive behavior in selling has grown very rapidly, but a void has developed in empirical testing of hypothesized models. It is the purpose of this paper to begin to fill this void by examining whether the differences that exist in situational sales variables lead to differences in the practice of adaptive behavior by salespeople. This knowledge could be used to strengthen the salesforce selection process and to provide direction for sales training efforts. The source of data for this study was a mail questionnaire. It was sent to institutional food distributors/wholesalers on the "Top 50" list of **Institutional Distribution** *magazine. The data were analyzed using discriminant analysis. The results indicated that there were significant differences in situational variables between salespeople using adaptive behavior and salespeople not using adaptive behavior. Some of the discriminating variables were: percentage of new customers, years of sales experience, percentage of salary based on bonus, and number of new accounts, for example. The findings have important implications for sales managers and others interested in the marketing management discipline. By being able to correctly classify salespeople as adaptors or non-adaptors, sales managers may be able to tailor training programs to the needs of salespeople that fit the non-adaptor classification. But to do so, it is important to determine the context in which salespeople should be adaptive, sales call planning or customer information gathering, for example. Finally, those interested in salesforce compensation should be aware that the compensation scheme employed may induce fewer salespeople to adapt behavior to meet the needs of their customers.*

INTRODUCTION

An important component of an effective marketing strategy is communication. Communication can be accomplished through numerous techniques including mass media, direct mail, sales promotions, packaging and personal selling, for example. But if the communication medium must be adapted to the characteristics and needs of each specific customer, personal selling is the only technique that allows for this adaptation. It is for this reason that many believe that personal selling is the most effective communication vehicle available to marketers (Spiro and Weitz 1990). Perhaps this is why academic researchers are focusing additional attention on the sales interaction, and why they are especially interested in the adaptive behavior component of this interaction. It is the purpose of this paper to add to the body of literature regarding adaptive behavior in selling.

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As the theoretical literature on adaptive selling has grown, a void has begun to develop in empirical testing of hypothesized models. This paper is designed to partially fill this void by empirically testing several theoretical concepts regarding the practice of adaptive behavior. Specifically, the paper will examine whether the differences that exist among situational sales variables (i.e., number of accounts, percentage of new customers, percentage of salary on bonus or commission, years of experience in sales in total and with the company, sales position characteristics, and degree of involvement in straight rebuys), lead to adaptive behavior on the part of salespeople. It is hypothesized that the situational variables among salespeople who adapt behavior are different from those who do not. If differences do exist, it would be possible to classify salespeople into one of two groups based on situational variables. Sales managers would then have a means to determine which salespeople are more likely to adapt behavior. This knowledge could be used to strengthen the salesforce selection process and to provide direction for sales training efforts.

BACKGROUND

The practice of adaptive behavior in selling is defined as "the altering of sales behaviors during a customer interaction, or across customer interactions, based on perceived information about the nature of the selling situation" (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). This change, or transformation of behavior, has been conceptualized frequently in the literature as either a change in behavior (Robertson and Chase 1968), an altering of interpersonal strategies (Spiro, Perreault, and Reynolds 1977), adjustments to behavior (Weitz 1978), or as adapting behavior to the interaction (Weitz 1981).

In the salesperson performance literature the concept of adaptation is based on the ability of a salesperson to match behavior to a given selling situation. Several early models suggest that adaptation is a result of "feedback loops" initiated after the interaction (Spiro, Perreault, and Reynolds 1977, Weitz 1981). Weitz (1979) suggested that a contingency framework is the key to understanding the relationship between the salesperson and the customer. A contingency framework takes into consideration the interactions among the characteristics of the salesperson, salesperson behaviors, and the characteristics of the situation (environment). Contingency-oriented selling postulates that "salespeople possessing a specific characteristic will be most successful if they engage in specific behaviors when confronting specific types of selling situations" (Weitz 1979, p. 108). This implies that success can be predicted when the relationships between salespeople characteristics and situational characteristics are identified.

In 1981, Weitz proposed a Contingency Model of Salesperson Effectiveness. The Contingency Model focused on the relationship between salesperson behaviors and effectiveness. Effectiveness in sales interactions was defined as the degree to which the salesperson's "preferred solutions" were realized across their customer interactions. Salesperson behaviors included adapting to the customer, establishing a base of influence, controlling the interaction, and utilizing influence techniques. Weitz (1981) postulated that effectiveness of salesperson behavior, across customer interactions, is contingent upon or moderated by three factors. The first, salesperson's resources, are a set of skills or abilities, a level of knowledge about the products and the customer, and a range of alternatives that can be offered to customers (Weitz 1981). The second, customer's buying task, was classified as new buy, modified rebuy, or straight rebuy. The third, customer-salesperson relationships, were characterized by relative power and level of conflict.

Weitz (1981) proposed that a contingency approach should be used in salesperson performance research because salespeople match their behavior to specific customer behaviors. In 1986, Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan addressed this issue in the development of the Adaptive Selling Framework. The Adaptive Selling Framework built upon the ability component of the Salesperson Performance Model by specifically addressing the salesperson's ability to adapt sales behaviors to various selling situations. Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan (1986, p. 174) stated that the ability to adapt component is "a crucial aspect because it indicates the degree to which salespeople are able to take advantage of the unique communication elements associated with personal selling." This view is gaining acceptance in the literature. For example, Weilbaker (1990) recently identified the variable "adaptability" as one of the most important selling abilities; it was considered a core selling ability by salespeople, sales managers, and customers. In addition, it was suggested that "adaptability" should be developed by salespeople early in the sales training program. Deficiency in this ability could lead to lower likelihood of success and the customer perception that the salesperson is less capable. Morgan and Stoltman (1990) provided a research agenda in which they indicated that the criteria for adjustment of behavior is a question that needs to be addressed in the adaptive behavior research.

The previous review indicates that adaptive behavior has been considered a key determinant in the development of sales models. While debate may exist as to which behavior is altered (e.g., sales strategy, information gathering), agreement exists as to the inclusion of the adaptive behavior construct. The Contingency Model (Weitz 1981) and the Adaptive Selling Framework (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986) provide a rationale for moving beyond the simple "feedback loop" conceptualization of adaptive behavior. In both models a duality in the adaptive behavior construct was recognized through the suggestion that salespeople may adapt behavior across and within the customer interactions. When adaptive behavior is examined across customer interactions, the focus of adaptive behavior rests on the salesperson's planning process. Differences in the planning process may include the degree to which the salesperson utilizes a sales planning process and the degree to which the salesperson gathers information concerning the customer or the competition. As research has expanded beyond the "feedback loop" conceptualization of adaptive behavior, consideration also

needs to be given to the creation of a new concept called "intention to adapt behavior." This "intention to adapt behavior" can be defined as the salesperson's likelihood and intention to adjust their sales technique during the customer interaction (Gwinner 1968). From the perspective of adaptive behavior literature, the construct "intention to adapt behavior" allows for exploration of the salesperson's ability to alter behavior based on the situation.

It is the purpose of this study to empirically examine the extent to which adaptive behavior across customer interactions and intention to adapt behavior during the customer interaction is impacted by situational variables. Specifically, adaptive behavior variables (i.e., sales call planning, company/customer information gathering, competitor information gathering and intention to adapt behavior during the interaction) and the situational variables (i.e., number of accounts, percentage of new customers, percentage of salary as bonus or commission, years of experience, sales position characteristics, and degree of involvement in straight rebuys) have been organized into hypotheses for testing. Prior to the statement of the hypotheses, the adaptive behavior and situational variables will be examined briefly.

ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR

When adaptive behavior is examined across customer interactions the focus of adaptive behavior rests on the salesperson's planning process that is tailored to each customer's needs. The planning process is one of the key determinants of sales success. Gwinner (1968, p. 43) states:

> Every selling situation presents a different challenge, and each situation must be analyzed on the basis of its own unique requirements in the establishment of a buyer-seller relationship. Planning is the key to the formulation of successful sales strategy. When based on a careful analysis of all the factors in a given selling situation, advanced planning and preparation can be the significant difference between success and failure.

The adaptive behavior components of the salesperson's planning process that were examined in this study are described briefly below.

Sales Call Planning

Sales call planning is defined as "the formal or informal process which includes those interrelated activities associated with a salesperson's preparation for interaction with a customer or a prospect" (Gwin 1979, p. 9). Gwin (1979) identified one factor, call preparation, that encompassed the essence of sales call planning. Call preparation focused on obtaining information from internal company records and planning the presentation.

Information Gathering

The second component of adaptive behavior is called "information gathering." In the development of the Sales Call Planning Scale, Gwin (1979) found that information gathering permeates sales call planning activity. The type of information gathering examined by Gwin (1979) focused on the use of company records to inform the salesperson about specific customer interactions. In the present study information gathering is given a broader context, including determining the client's needs and increasing one's knowledge of the competition.

Intention to Adapt Behavior During the Interaction

Grewal and Sharma (1991) suggest that salespeople need to be more adaptive in their sales presentations. Salespeople should adapt behavior based on customer expectations or perceptions of the salesperson or the salesperson's presentation. Training salespeople to categorize customers and recall a specific sales presentation would lead to adaptations in behavior (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). Recently, Spiro and Weitz (1990) developed the ADAPTS scale to measure the degree to which salespeople are predisposed to practice adaptive selling. Salesperson adaptive behavior must also include the possible deviations from the planned presentation that could occur during the customer interaction.

Gwinner (1968) suggested three communication theories that provide support for the concept that behavior would vary within the customer interaction. The three theories were: stimulus-response; AIDA; and need-satisfaction. If a salesperson uses a canned presentation, adaptive behavior within the customer interaction is not likely to occur. When the salesperson varies the sales presentation (uses an AIDA or need-satisfaction approach), adaptive behavior occurs within the customer interaction. In the present study, the degree to which the salesperson indicated a likelihood to change behavior during the interaction provided a measure of the salesperson's intention to adapt behavior during the customer interaction.

SITUATIONAL VARIABLES

Situational variables have also been given attention in the literature for their roles in affecting adaptive behavior. Situational variables cited as affecting adaptive behavior are numerous (Green and Tonning 1979; Weitz 1981; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986). In the present study, situational variables have been defined as characteristics of the selling environment that provide a salesperson with perspective or structure. The situational variables used as independent variables in this study were: sales position characteristics, degree of straight rebuy, managerial factors, and years of experience.

Sales Position

Sales position is defined as characteristics of the salesperson's role as a boundary spanner. Moncrief (1986) developed a taxonomy of sales positions (i.e., roles within the organization) based on ten different characteristics. Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan (1986) identified two of these sales position characteristics (i.e., sales call planning and information gathering) as key determinants of intention to adapt during the customer interaction.

In the Moncrief (1986) sales position taxonomy, one position (i.e., trade servicer) was ranked highest on both selling function activities (e.g., overcoming objections, sales presentation) and information management (e.g., feedback from customers, relaying information to management). In other words, trade servicers would be expected to utilize adaptive behavior and intend to adapt their presentations most frequently. They were the focus of this study.

Degree of Straight Rebuy

The three types of customer buying tasks include straight rebuy, modified rebuy, and new task buying. A straight rebuy situation is usually initiated by the user and is due to stock depletion (Doyle, Woodside, and Michell, 1979). Other characteristics of a straight rebuy include known buying alternatives, continuing requirement for product type, no new suppliers being considered, concern with delivery terms, prices, and terms of payment (Jackson, Keith, and Burdick, 1984), and little information being required by the buyer (Hutt, Johnston, and Ronchetto, 1985; Jackson, Keith and Burdick, 1984).

A modified rebuy situation is usually initiated by persons in the customer's firm other than the users, and may be due to a change in supplier's prices, a new product introduction, or a need for cost reductions (Doyle, Woodside, and Michell, 1979; Hutt, Johnston, and Ronchetto, 1985; Jackson, Keith and Burdick, 1984).

Modified rebuy and straight rebuy situations were used to examine the relationship between situational variables, adaptive behavior, and intention to adapt behavior during the presentation in the present study. To simplify data collection, the relative degree of modified rebuy versus straight rebuy was captured in a single measure, degree of straight rebuy. New task situations were not used in this study because in a new task selling situation the salesperson needs to develop an initial sales plan and meet with the customer for the first time. By definition, therefore, the salesperson is performing adaptive behavior.

Managerial Factors

Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1977, p. 157) made two assumptions concerning the use of compensation. First, they suggested that "monetary rewards are the primary motivator of sales effort." Second, they stated that the "pay package is the basic motivator whereas other financial incentives, such as bonuses and contests, operate only to induce effort over and above that produced by the basic compensation plan." Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan (1986) also indicated that motivational techniques were associated with the likelihood that salespeople would practice adaptive selling. One motivational technique which they cited was the type of compensation program. They proposed that emphasis on incentive compensation (commissions and bonuses) would reduce the desire to practice adaptive selling when the incentive was viewed as a means of controlling behavior because "there is a threat of losing income if one does not perform adequately" (Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986, p. 182). To examine the extent to which this was true, the present study examined the relationship between percentage of compensation as commission or bonus and whether or not that was a discriminator in the practice of adaptive selling.

A second managerial factor, workload, has been defined as the number of accounts in a salesperson's territory (Bagozzi 1978). In his study of salesperson performance, Bagozzi (1978) found that workload was significantly related to performance. In the present study it is assumed that an increased workload will lead to a reduction in the use of adaptive behavior. Conversely, a smaller number of accounts and relatively fewer new accounts as a percentage of all customers would

allow a salesperson to spend more time with each customer and to tailor individual plans to each customer. In other words, these circumstances would be expected to lead to greater use of adaptive behavior.

Experience

The last situational factor examined in relationship to the use of adaptive behavior was experience. Experience with the company has been defined as the number of years that a salesperson has been employed by the company (Spiro and Weitz 1990). It is expected that as the salesperson's knowledge of product lines, competitors' offerings, and customer's increases, his or her ability to adapt behavior should be enhanced (i.e., the salesperson will move away from stimulus response to AIDA or need-satisfaction based presentations). Similarly, as a salesperson's overall years of selling experience increase, he or she would also be expected to have the skills to practice adaptive selling. Thus, the extent to which experience is associated with the use of adaptive selling is examined in this study.

HYPOTHESES

Each of the situational factors discussed above provided the basis for specific hypotheses that were examined in this study. The overall research question was to determine if situational variables were effective in identifying salespeople who were more likely to utilize adaptive behavior. The specific hypotheses that were tested are as follows:

1. Situational variables discriminate between trade servicers having a high or low likelihood to use the adaptive behavior characteristic of:

   a. sales call planning,
   b. company/customer information gathering, and
   c. competitor information gathering.

2. Situational variables discriminate between trade servicers having a high or low intention to adapt behavior during the customer interaction.

METHODOLOGY

Data Collection

The institutional food wholesaler industry in the United States was selected as the source of data for this study. The sampling frame came from the "Top 50" listing of *Institutional Distribution* magazine's list of institutional food distributors/wholesalers. Data were collected from sales representatives using a mail questionnaire. Each questionnaire included a letter from the CEO of each organization endorsing the study. Companies that participated in the study distributed surveys to trade servicers in their company. For the current study, 530 questionnaires were mailed and 274 questionnaires were returned for a 52 percent response rate. Due to incomplete questionnaires, nonresponse, or missing data, 101 responses were utilized in this study.

Data Analysis

The questionnaire items that were used in combination with demographic data to evaluate salespersons' uses of adaptive behavior are shown in Exhibit 1. Since the purpose was to derive a linear combination of more than two independent variables that would discriminate between the previously defined groups discussed in the hypothesis, a discriminant analysis was used. The use of discriminant analysis provides for an examination of the statistical differences between the average score profiles of adaptors and non-adaptors. In addition, it determines which of the environmental factors account for the greatest difference in the average score profiles of the groups (Hair et. al. 1987). The stepwise computational method was used since the simultaneous method is more likely to produce biased results.

RESULTS

The analysis was conducted in four stages. These stages included examination of the means, derivation of the discriminant functions, examination of the independent variables, and examination of the classification matrices to determine the predictive accuracy of the functions.

First, the means of the sample population for adaptors and non-adaptors were examined across the independent variables (see Table 1). The results indicated that "sales position characteristics" was significantly different between adaptors and non-adaptors for three of the adaptive behavior variables (i.e., sales call planning, company/customer information gathering, and competitor information gathering). The variable, "percentage of new customers," was significantly different between adaptors and non-adaptors on sales call planning and company/customer information gathering. Lastly, the mean of "percentage of salary on bonus differed between adaptors and non-adaptors on company/customer information gathering.

Second, the discriminant functions for the four adaptive behavior variables were derived. The discriminant functions for "sales call planning," "company/customer

EXHIBIT 1
ITEMS UTILIZED IN FACTOR ANALYSIS

Sales Call Planning: (1 = Very Infrequently; 7 = Very Frequently)

1. Before I make a sales call, I evaluate the specific information needs of the buyer I will be meeting.
2. Before a sales call, I consider unique questions the buyer is likely to ask about my company or my products.
3. Before a sales call, I review the details of product line information which may have special interest or particular value to the buyer.
4. Before a sales call, I consciously try to anticipate the events which are likely to occur in the call.
5. In gathering information for a sales call, I reconstruct the details of the last call on the account.
6. Before making a sales call, I collect information on the account's past purchase patterns.

Customer Information Gathering: (1 = Almost Never; 7 = Almost Always)

I gather information concerning:

1. how my customers might react to my company's product.
2. how my customers might react to my company.
3. changes in prices of my customers' goods.
4. how my customers might react to my company's prices.
5. changes in my customers' product offerings.
6. changes in my customers' market(s).
7. my customers' expansion plans

Competitor Information Gathering: (1 = Almost Never; 7 = Almost Always)

I gather information concerning:

1. my competitors' distribution policies.
2. my competitors' sales force strategies.
3. my competitors' pricing strategies.

Intention to Adapt Behavior: (1 = Very Unlikely; 7 = Very Likely)

Once you have begun speaking to a customer, how likely is it that you would vary the following part of your sales plan?

1. the type of information presented to the customer.
2. how the information would be presented to the customer.
3. the type of influence used to get the customer to purchase your product.
4. the type of new information to gather from the customer.

TABLE 1
SUMMARY OF GROUP MEANS

Variable	Sales Call Planning	
	Non-Adaptors	Adaptors
Number of Accounts	80.07	73.52
Percentage of New Customers	7.96	17.73*
Percentage on Commission	64.71	50.25
Percentage on Bonus	1.40	2.29
Years of Sales Experience	11.66	12.03
Years of Company Experience	4.71	4.85
Sales Position Characteristics	4.75	6.18*
Degree of Straight Rebuys	5.64	5.64

Variable	Company/Customer Information Gathering	
	Non-Adaptors	Adaptors
Number of Accounts	74.79	67.45
Percentage of New Customers	9.42	15.07*
Percentage on Commission	58.09	56.22
Percentage on Bonus	3.94	1.90*
Years of Sales Experience	12.67	12.41
Years of Company Experience	4.74	5.15
Sales Position Characteristics	5.02	6.14*
Degree of Straight Rebuys	5.46	5.73

Variable	Competitor Information Gathering	
	Non-Adaptors	Adaptors
Number of Accounts	75.02	74.49
Percentage of New Customers	10.68	14.83
Percentage on Commission	55.18	57.32
Percentage on Bonus	3.02	1.71
Years of Sales Experience	10.57	12.17
Years of Company Experience	4.81	5.03
Sales Position Characteristics	5.22	5.87*
Degree of Straight Rebuys	5.48	5.68

Variable	Intention to Adapt Behavior During the Interaction	
	Non-Adaptors	Adaptors
Number of Accounts	67.15	83.66
Percentage of New Customers	10.22	14.08
Percentage on Commission	59.54	54.65
Percentage on Bonus	3.00	2.23
Years of Sales Experience	11.93	10.16
Years of Company Experience	5.45	4.20
Sales Position Characteristics	5.44	5.78
Degree of Straight Rebuys	5.54	5.56

* $p < .05$

information gathering", and "intention to adapt behavior during the customer interaction" were found to be significant ($p < .05$). The discriminant function for "competitor information gathering" was not significant ($p < .12$). The latter variable was dropped from further analysis.

Third, the independent variables that loaded heavily (i.e., greater than .30) on the discriminant functions were identified (see Table 2). The results indicated that salespeople could be grouped into the category of "sales call planning adaptors" based on percentage of new customers, years of sales experience, and characteristics of the sales position. Salespeople could be identified as "adaptors" for "company/customer information gathering" based on increases in percentage of new customers, percentage of salary received from commission, characteristics of their sales position, and reductions in the number of accounts and percentage of salary from bonus. Lastly, salespeople can be classified as "adaptors" for the variable "intention to adapt behavior across customer interactions" based on increases in the variable "sales position characteristics" and reductions in the variable "years of sales experience."

Fourth, Table 3 provides a comparison of the hit ratios for the hold-out samples to the proportional and maximum chance criterions. As indicated, the hit ratios for the hold-out samples were all greater than both the proportional and maximum chance criteria indicating that the discriminant functions correctly classified approximately 81 percent of "sales call planning" adaptors, 64 percent of "company/customer information gathering" adaptors, and 59 percent of the "intention to adapt during the interaction" adaptors.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study offer several implications for sales managers, their companies, and academics studying the marketing management discipline. First, the study suggests that a greater difference exists between adaptors and non-adaptors when sales call planning is the context in which adaptive behavior is examined (see Tables 4 and 5). For sales managers it is important to determine the context in which the salespeople should be adaptive (i.e., sales call planning, company/customer information gathering, or intention to adapt during customer interaction) and follow through with

TABLE 2

SIGNIFICANT STANDARDIZED CANONICAL DISCRIMINANT FUNCTION COEFFICIENTS FOR THE ADAPTIVE BEHAVIOR VARIABLES

Dependent Variable	Sales Call Planning ($p < .01$)
Percentage of New Customers	0.335
Years of Sales Experience	0.465
Sales Position Characteristics	0.880
Dependent Variable	**Company/Customer Information Gathering ($p < .01$)**
Number of Accounts	-0.428
Percentage of New Customers	0.499
Percentage on Commission	0.325
Percentage on Bonus	-0.985
Sales Position Characteristics	0.595
Dependent Variable	**Intention to Adapt Behavior During Customer Interactions ($p < .01$)**
Years of Sales Experience	-0.778
Sales Position Characteristics	0.864

TABLE 3
SUMMARY OF CLASSIFICATION MATRICES

	Sales Call Planning	Company/Customer Information Gathering	Intention to Adapt During Interaction
Hit Ratio for Analysis Sample	80.00%	78.43%	67.11%
Hit Ratio for Hold-Out Sample	81.03%	63.79%	59.42%
Proportional* Chance Criterion	50.62%	50.51%	50.00%
Maximum Chance Criterion	55.55%	55.05%	50.34%

* Percentages do not all equal 50.00% due to variations in sample size

an examination of the appropriate determinants of adaptive behavior.

Second, there exist recurring variables across the various types of adaptive behavior. Sales position characteristics was a significant predictor of salespeople who adapt regardless of the measure of adaptive behavior. The variable, percentage of new customers, was useful in identifying adaptors when adaptive behavior is defined as sales call planning or company/customer information gathering. Lastly, years of sales experience, discriminated between adaptors and non-adaptors of sales call planning; when the years of sales experience increased, salespeople were appropriately categorized as adaptors. It was interesting to note that years of sales experience did not create the same effect when intention to adapt behavior during customer interactions was utilized as the measure of adaptive behavior. In the latter situation, as years of sales experience increased, salespeople were more likely to be categorized as non-adaptors. One possibility for this finding is that as salespeople become more familiar with the various types of buyers they perceive themselves as not needing to adapt. A second explanation is that adaptive behavior has become so ingrained and subtle that more experienced salespeople are no longer aware that they are adapting. In future research consideration will need to be given to the inclusion of various types of adaptive behavior measures that address the composition of the salesforce.

Third, an important finding was the ability to correctly classify salespeople as being adaptors or non-adaptors. The models created in the study were better than chance probability, and could be useful in targeting salespeople who would benefit from training in the areas of sales call planning, information gathering, or customer interactions. It is important to note that the model most accurately classified adaptors and non-adaptors of sales call planning. Since sales call planning is often a subject of salesforce training, it may be possible to tailor the training program to the needs of those salespeople that best fit the non-adaptor classification.

Last, previous research has indicated that salespeople can be motivated to adapt behavior based on the compensation program. Indeed, both the percentage of salary from commission and percentage of salary from bonus were related to whether or not a salesperson was an adaptor or non-adaptor when company/customer information gathering was of importance. While percentage of salary from commission was a positive discriminating variable, percentage of salary from bonus was negative. In other words, as the percentage from bonus increased, it was likely that the salesperson would be classified as being a non-adaptor. In addition, the percentage from bonus variable possessed the highest coefficient (-.985) in the information gathering model. This suggests that risk may be the motive in the salesperson's decision to adapt behavior. As the percentage of salary from bonus increases, the salespeople may be less willing to adapt behavior and prefer to rely on techniques that have been prove to work for them in the past. Unfortunately, this compensation approach may be leading to fewer salespeople who will adapt behavior to meet the needs of their customers.

In conclusion, all research results must be interpreted in light of their limitations. This study was conducted in the food brokerage industry. While this sampling frame provided an adequate source of trade servicers, the generalizability of the study to other samples would need to be confirmed with research in additional industries. In addition, since the purpose of this study

was to identify adaptors and non-adaptors of behavior within the food brokerage industry, the items utilized in development of the variables are specific to the current study. Various adaptive behavior scales may provide differing results. Future research may be needed to expand upon the current conceptualizations of adaptive behavior through additional empirical studies. The current study focused on managerial variables (i.e., number of accounts, percentage on commission). Future research may need to examine the various personality characteristics (i.e., self-consciousness) that can provide additional insights into the broad construct of adaptive behavior. Other research could examine the utilization of adaptive behavior in the development of performance evaluations. Finally, another fruitful area for additional research could be the impact of gender and minority issues on the practice of adaptive behavior.

TABLE 4
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN DISCRIMINATING VARIABLES AND CANONICAL DISCRIMINANT FUNCTIONS

Variable	Sales Call Planning	Company/Customer Information Gathering	Intention to Adapt During Interaction
Number of Accounts	-.145	-.273	-.091
Percentage of New Customers	.349	.202	.235
Percentage on Commission	-.099	-.006	-.226
Percentage on Bonus	.033	-.516	.009
Years of Sales Experience	.275	.097	-.552
Years of Company Experience	-.172	.033	-.327
Sales Position Characteristics	.858	.464	.660
Degree of Straight Rebuys	.123	.206	.052

TABLE 5
GROUP CENTROIDS FOR ADAPTORS AND NON-ADAPTORS

	Sales Call Planning	Company/Customer Information Gathering	Intention to Adapt During Interaction
Adaptors	.851	.563	.402
Non-adaptors	-.972	-.969	-.390

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Charles D. Bodkin (Ph.D., Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University) is Assistant Professor of Marketing at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte.

Thomas H. Stevenson (Ph.D. at Case Western Reserve University) is the Charles E. Cullen Professor of Marketing at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte.