

Examine the nature  
of personal selling  
and the role of the  
sales force



Examine the nature of personal selling and the role of the sales force: Sales are an important part of a company's operations, for it is success in this department that enables it to reap profits. Depending on the nature and market for a particular product/service, the strategy of sales would also differ. Usually, salespeople acquire a dodgy reputation for being glib talkers and for selling products to customers when they really don't want them. But in contemporary corporate world, salespeople are a sophisticated lot. They approach their role with greater understanding of customer needs and try to create win/win situations for both parties involved. Most sales happen as a result of advertising. Advertising could be placed in mediums such as television, newspapers, billboards, internet web-pages, etc. These forms of sales employ one-way communication, whereby messages are communicated from manufacturer to end-consumer with no immediate feedback. Personal selling, on the other hand, differs from conventional advertising, in that salespersons of a company build and maintain a long-term relationship with their customers. They do this by directly interacting with customers via phone or web conferences or in person. Many companies include personal selling as part of their overall sales strategy, especially if they foresee complex selling situations. In this type of selling " salespeople can probe customers to learn more about their problems, and then adjust the marketing offer and presentation to fit special needs of each customer." (Kotler & Armstrong, p. 453) Even within personal selling, a wide variety of strategies are employed by managers. For example, while companies that sell only online or through catalogs do not need any salespersons, the ones such as IBM or DuPont do need a sales force. In companies such as Procter & Gamble and Nike, the sales force " plays an important behind-the-scenes

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role. It works with wholesalers and retailers to gain their support and to help them be more effective in selling the company's products." (Kotler & Armstrong, p. 453) Generally, " the sales force serves as a critical link between a company and its customers. In many cases, salespeople serve both masters - the seller and the buyer. First they represent the company to customers. They find and develop new customers and communicate information about the company's products and services. They sell products by approaching customers, presenting their products, answering objections, negotiating prices and terms, and closing sales. In addition, salespeople provide customer service and carry out market research and intelligence work." (Kotler & Armstrong, p. 453) Simultaneously, the sales force also represents customers to the company, acting on behalf of customer interests. They convey grievances and concerns articulated by customers to the management and make sure that such occurrences are minimized in the future. They also interact with other divisions and departments in the company so that the end product reflects the preferences of customers. So, breaking away from their conventional roles of making sales alone, contemporary sales personnel also contribute toward adding value to customers' money. Work Cited: Philip Kotler & Gary Armstrong, Chapter 16, Personal Selling and Sales Promotion, Principles of Marketing, Published by Pearson-Prentice Hall, New Jersey.