

Introduction

A Career in Sales:

- Sales play a crucial role in building trust and loyalty between a client and business. Sales are a personal interaction between a client and the salesperson.
- Benefits: limitless income, limitless opportunities for growth, job security, life-long learning and training, travel freedom, network growth, a wealth of accomplishments (Metler, 2017), and job satisfaction.

The Stigma of Salespeople:

- Salespeople are represented as pushing people to buy things they did not need, want, or afford. (Bookbinder, 2019)
- This stigma pushes some students not to want to pursue a sales career (Metler, 2016) as they think this stigma will make it hard to penetrate the market as a salesperson.

International Business (general business):

- International sales are essential to most businesses, as they are becoming a key component of business rather than just an option.
- Benefits: revenue generation, new sales, investment, diversity, cost reduction, and new talent recruitment. (Linton, 2019)
- Fundamental key strategies: understanding the language and cultural differences. (Salesforce, n.d.)

International Sales Importance (for students):

- Benefits: cultural awareness and a proper understanding of international business. ("Essential tips," 2017)
- Students who either speak more than one language or have a deeper understanding of cultural differences tend to be more sought after.
- Challenges: understanding customary and cultural differences. (Britton, n.d.)

International Business Education:

- With international business education exposure, students are becoming influential global leaders.
- Student are showing they value skills such as: diversity, adaptability, effective communication, and ambiguity. (Institute, 2018)

Technology:

- Virtual communication technology: Zoom, Teams, and Google Meet.
- Challenges: likeability, ease of use, and total functionality of virtual communication technology.
- There is currently not enough information or research on the student use of virtual communication technology.

Business virtual communication technology research:

- 87% of remote teams say they feel more connected to their colleagues now that they are using virtual communication. (Scott, 2020)
- 90% of people believe it makes collaboration more manageable and more attainable to make a point. (Scott, 2020)



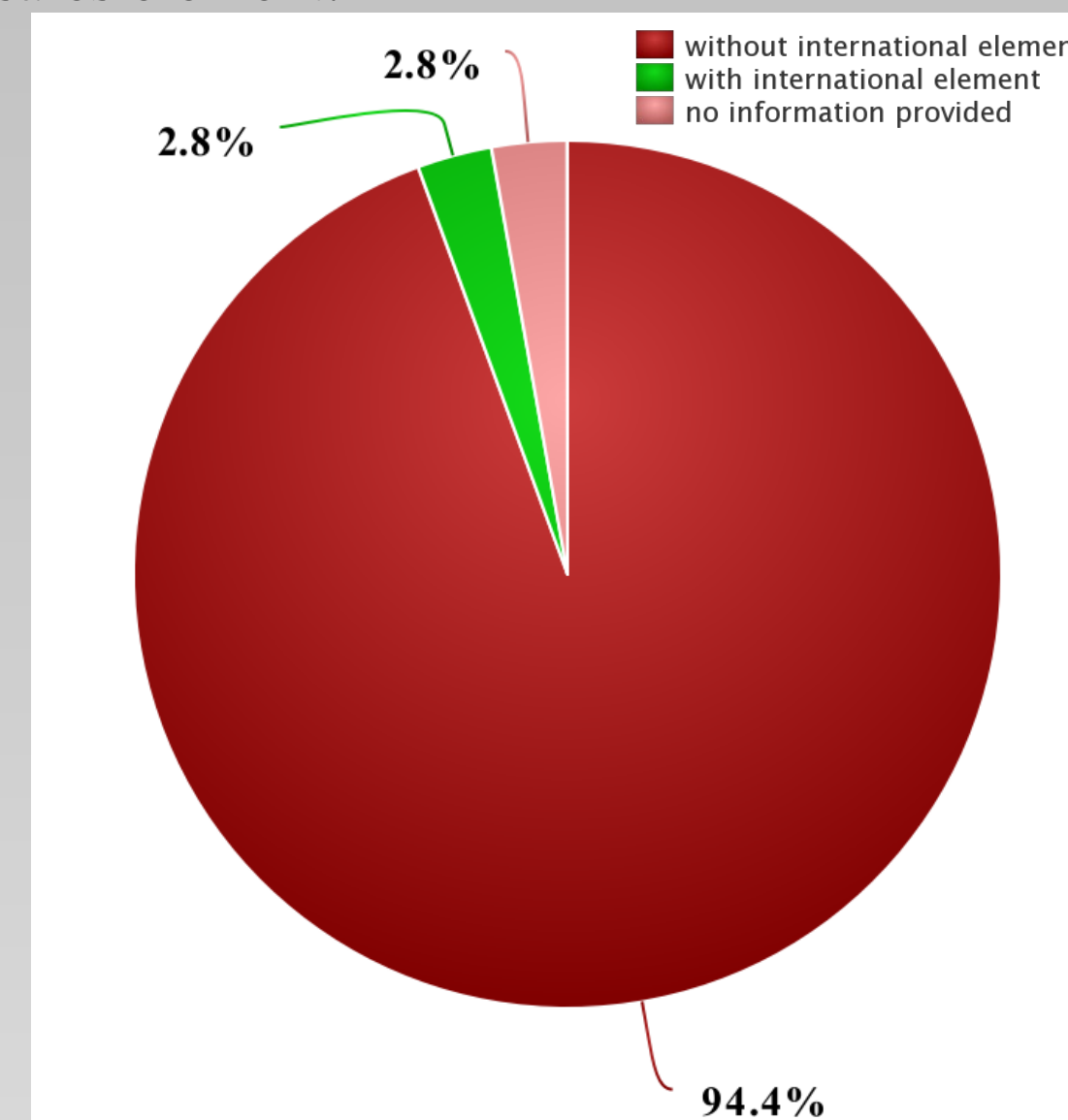
Goal of the Study

This study aims to improve international business backgrounds for students, broaden students' range of skills, add a standout factor to students' resumes, and implement new ways of learning for students. Furthermore, the benefits of these goals will allow students to grow their network, become globally diverse, expand their skill set, and increase hiring likelihood.



Results of Content Analysis

- There are 143 sales programs listed in the Sales Education Foundation annual magazine, these are schools in the North American region.
- Four schools with inconclusive data: Hodges University, Ryerson University, University of Denver, and the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh.
- Four schools with a relative international sales course or international element: Northern Illinois University, Sonoma State University, University of Toledo, and William Patterson University.
- The courses they offer: Professional Selling and Cultural Perspectives, Global Selling Perspectives, Cross-cultural Communication and Negotiation, International Sales Negotiation, and Global Perspectives in Sales.
- This leaves 139 with the opportunity to improve their current sales program curriculum with an additional international sales course or additional international sales element.



Challenges Associated with the Innovation

- There are a few challenges this innovation, including: setting up university partnerships, equal number classes and class sizes, providing enough time in the semester to adequately complete this added role play exercise, an easily understood scenario, global corporate sponsorship, and language barriers.
- These challenges have the opportunity to arise every semester.
- Student benefit: these challenges will lead to great discoveries about what companies face every day when trying to communicate in an international selling situation effectively.

<i>Setting up university partnerships</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understand who is responsible for the partnership decision making process as this could be done by the university itself, the sales program director, or left up to each sales professor using the professor's network. • Time span: by semester, by academic year(s), or if there will be interchangeable partners per academic year or semester.
<i>Class number and/or class size differences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there is an inadequate number of students from either university enrolled in Professional Selling classes, then the university with the smaller number of students may have to participate in multiple role plays in order for everyone to get a chance to participate. • If this is a consistent problem, then the university with the higher sales enrollment may have to solicit additional university partners. • Benefit: the ability for students to potentially role play with a more diverse international audience, especially if these partner schools are from different geographic areas around the world.
<i>Providing enough time in the semester</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both universities would have to dedicate an appropriate number of class sessions around this particular role play in order for it to be successful.
<i>Easily understood sales scenario</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is best if the international sales scenario is created collaboratively in order to help make sure it is suitable for all involved. • It is important that not only the scenario is created but also the potential buyer problems and objections, seller pricing, and an overall grading rubric be developed as well.
<i>Language barrier</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students must be prepared for the language barrier and understanding the lack of communication that can arise if using jargon, acronyms, or abbreviations. • Students must understand that specific words might either not be used or could potentially be seen as disrespectful if used in other cultures.

Innovation

- This international element would then be introduced in addition to the current role-playing process using a new international sales scenario.
- U.S. university will partner with an international university that offers a similar sales class. The instructors from the two schools can work together to develop an appropriate international sales scenario, preferably based on a multinational corporate sponsor.

International element implementation:

1. Students would be introduced to the international sales scenario and the partner school; via Zoom or previous recording.
 2. If a multinational corporate sponsor is used for the international sales scenario, then this introduction is also a great point to introduce company representatives to both classes.
 3. U.S. sales students would then be randomly assigned a student from the international university to be his or her role-play partner for the purposes of this international element.
 4. Students would be required to reach out to their partner via email to schedule their role-play using virtual communication technology such as Zoom, Teams, or Google Meet.
 5. Students would be required to record their role-play and then upload the recording into the course management system. In the role-play, it would be expected that the student utilizes the available virtual communication technology tools such as screen sharing to aid in the sales process.
- Benefits: learning effective communication with non-native English speakers, learning effective collaboration with international students, developing skills to carry out an international sales call, learning problem-solving skills related to international sales, and learning global competitive skills to stand out post-graduation.
 - Acquired knowledge: global issues, cultural misconceptions, and cultural generalizations.



The International Element would be in addition to the Current Professional Selling Role Play Process, which includes:

- Four role plays using a scenario based on a current U.S. corporate sponsor for the Sales Program.

 1. Role-play one begins with the approach.
 2. Role-play two includes role play one and needs-assessment.
 3. Role-play three includes role-play one and two as well as features and benefits.
 4. Role-play four includes role-plays one through three plus objection handling and closing.



Conclusion

- An additional international sales element will allow students great benefits. These benefits include globalization skills, situational-based learning opposed to case studies, enhanced problem-solving skills, effective global communication, and a greater understanding of international business sales processes.
- Students will be the pioneers in preparation for international sales; they will be more appropriately trained and more desirable for hiring with this background.
- Students will be able to break the stigma relative to salespeople. With this international element, sales students will start to understand the shift needed to overcome the current stigma about salespeople, and with a high-quality education.
- International sales are more about the relationships between partners than the overall sale being made.
- Students will have the opportunity to grow their personal network, understand virtual communication technology more in-depth, and improve their international background.
- Overall, this will impact the entire sales community. This innovation allows sales programs to stick out in an unsaturated market. Currently, only four schools are participating in international sales preparation. This allows for more schools to saturate this market and become the reason a particular sale program becomes a top contender for some students.



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