



Analysis of Sales Representatives' profile in DellEMC Rio de Janeiro through the Challenger Sale model

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Dissertation written under the supervision of
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Dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of requirements for the IMSc in Management, at the Universidade Católica Portuguesa and for the Master in Executive Management, at the Escola Brasileira de Administração Pública, Fundação Getulio Vargas, April 2017.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank to my advisor, Professor Ana Paula Borges, for the constant support and guidance through the past months. Without her knowledge, interest and patience it would have been impossible to overcome all the difficulties that we faced.

I would like to thank all the professors from Catolica-Lisbon and FGV-EBAPE, who taught me not only Business Management, but also how to be professional and to demand more from myself. I will keep forever five amazing years as student of this University.

I wish to thank to all the members of DelleMC's sales department in Rio de Janeiro, especially to Rodrigo Gazzaneo, for accepting to work with me and for all the support, patience, and valuable insights. Without them, this project would have never been possible.

Sincere thanks to my exchange friends, especially those who were my family while I was in Rio, for always encouraging me, and for their true friendship. Also, thank you to my Portuguese friends for their friendship, and for being always there.

A very special thank you to my Parents, for all the effort to provide me the best education, love and support, and to my sister, brother in law and nephews. Also, to Carolina for always believing in me and be by myside, and for her love.

Finally, thanks to my aunt Maria, for all the days spent with her, and for being a true life example, and to my uncles Nuno and Ana for all their support.

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List of Abbreviations

ABES – Associação Brasileira de Empresas e Software

ADP – Automatic Data Processing, Inc

AWS – Amazon Web Services

CEO – Chief Executive Officer

CIO – Chief Information Officer

COTS – Commercially off-the-shelf

CRM – Customer Relationship Management

GCP – Google Cloud Platform

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

IaaS – Infrastructure as a Service

IDC – International Data Corporation

IT – Information Technology

R&D – Research and Development

RDC – Research and Development Center

RFP – Request for Proposal

UFRJ – Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro

Abstract

Sales panorama has been changing through the years and even more since the 2008 global crisis. Since then, companies started to demand more from the suppliers and their sales representatives; especially in more the complex sectors like Information Technologies (IT). Companies have been adapting their sales strategies to increase sales; however few have studied the sales representatives' behavior with the client. Based on the Challenger Sale model this project aims to study the sales representatives' profile in an IT market leader – DelleMC, Rio de Janeiro. The project was developed as a unique case study due to the leadership characteristics' of DelleMC, A questionnaire was developed and administered to DelleMC's sales department. According to the Challenger Sale model, DelleMC's sales representatives appeared to have characteristics from all the three model dimensions – Teaching for differentiation; Tailoring for resonance and Taking Control of the sale. However it was also recognized that some factors like organizational culture or market characteristics have an impact on the sales representatives' behavior. This project has no intension on generalization but to refine the Challenger Sale model theory and applicability to the specific case of DelleMC.

Resumo

O panorama de vendas tem vindo a alterar-se ao longo dos tempos, e mais ainda desde a crise de 2008. Com esta mudança, as empresas e organizações começaram a ser mais exigentes com os seus fornecedores, e por consequência com os seus representantes de vendas. Este facto verificou-se principalmente no sector dos serviços, nomeadamente nas indústrias fornecedoras de soluções mais complexas, como é o caso da indústria das Tecnologias de Informação. Deste modo, as empresas têm vindo a adaptar a sua estratégia de modo a serem mais competitivas comercialmente; contudo apenas algumas se focaram no comportamento dos vendedores. Este projecto foi desenvolvido como um caso de estudo único pelas características de líder de mercado da DellEMC no Rio de Janeiro, e procura estudar o perfil dos seus vendedores sob o paradigma do modelo de Venda Desafiadora. Para este estudo foi realizado um questionário, para ser respondido pelos membros da equipa de vendas da DellEMC, que aparentemente provaram ter características relacionadas com as três dimensões do modelo – Ensinar para a diferenciação; Personalizar para encontrar eco e Controlar a venda. Apesar de se verificar a presença destas características, foram encontrados outros factores críticos no comportamento dos vendedores como a cultura organizacional, ou as características do mercado. Este projecto não tem como objectivo a generalização dos seus resultados, mas sim o aprofundamento da modelo de Venda Desafiadora e a sua aplicabilidade no caso específico da DellEMC.

1. Introduction

Sales strategies have been playing a major role in IT companies, especially in B2B. The capability to efficiently convince and sell a specific product is very important for the company's success, especially in an industry where competition is growing every day.

Dixon and Adamson (2011) point out that today's clients are more informed, and have connections with different players that can help them solve their problems, at the lowest price. Sales representatives that in the past years have been investing in a close relation with the client, started to notice a different position from the client, which was now more informed and more demanding, putting greater emphasis on price. In the case of IT industry the situation was even more present, as different players try to differentiate their product portfolio, in order to gain market share, some companies started to struggle and sales started to decrease.

Although, some sales representatives were having low performance rates, a new profile of sales representatives emerged with extraordinary results. This new group of sales representatives, called "the Challengers" had specific characteristics that were able to demonstrate the value of the product and proceed through the sales process successfully. In order to understand what differentiated the average sellers from this new group of star performers, Dixon and Adamson (2011) developed a research with sales representatives from different fields, concluding that there were three dimensions influencing this new model of sales.

Therefore, based on the Challenger Sale model, this study aims to analyze the sales representatives' profile of DellEMC in Rio de Janeiro. DellEMC is a global company and a segment leader in the IT business in Rio de Janeiro; in fact its characteristics provided evidence to apply the unique case study methodology. The sales representatives were asked to answer an online questionnaire, in which the three model dimensions were assessed. Also, the answers and its findings were then discussed with the DellEMC sales manager in order to understand the results and make the final conclusions.

The paper is structured in different parts that apart from the introduction, includes a chapter about the relevance and justification of the theme selection, followed by a section in which both general and specific research objectives are exposed, as well as the research question. After that, there is the chapter about Literature Review that aims to expose and discuss different topics about Sales, focusing not only on its background, but also in specific theories

like the Relationship Selling. Also, the Challenger Sale model, being the object of study, is extensively exposed in that chapter, and discussed with the objective of providing a valuable knowledge about the sales concepts, crucial for the data analysis. Following the literature review, the methodology is addressed, explaining the case study research, as well as, the industry and company's characteristics, ending up explaining the research design, in which data collection methods are exposed. Finally, the data is analyzed and discussed, followed by the main conclusions and indications for future research.

2. Relevance and Justification of theme selection

I had my first connection with this theme during a summer internship in a Portuguese IT company, in 2012. From the interaction with the company's managers, I became alert to how difficult it was to capture the client's attention, and how the sales teams find it difficult to sell their solutions. Together with the marketing department of this company I started to study the Challenger Sale model (Dixon and Adamson, 2011), and had the first view of this new sales strategy. The model takes into consideration behavioral and selling techniques that the sales representatives should follow, but also draws attention to the business relationship scenario in the first decade of the 21st century.

Later on during my master degree, I had the contact with the work done in DelleMC, especially in the Research and Development Center (RDC) in Rio de Janeiro. Attempting to understand better the market needs and opportunities, DelleMC created the RDC to study specific areas of interest, in which technology could help their clients to solve their problems and be more prepared for the future. By working closely with the sales department the RDC assesses each area of the client's business, proposing solutions and looking for opportunities that can lead to client's sustainable growth.

Also, during my studies I acknowledged that a common sales approach for many business sectors is to rely on the relation between its salesforce and the client's procurement teams, to better understand the market and their customers. It is also common for clients to have close relationships with the sales representatives of different suppliers, in order to understand which one would be the best for solving their specific problems. Although this approach has been very well accepted among all, the availability of information by the development of technology, and the reduction of financial resources due to the world crisis of 2008, have brought about a change in the way customers buy from their suppliers.

The information technology's industry has been experiencing a major growth in the past two decades. Nowadays, all the companies, people and public services have an extensive array of technological devices and structures that facilitate their daily activities. This phenomenon was particularly good for IT companies that were the main suppliers of all the solutions that the market was looking for, which made the work of the sales teams somehow easier than in other sectors, since the demand was very high. However, with the development of internet, and digital technologies, companies started to have more access to information, as technological

solutions were able to predict customer and market behaviors and the bargaining power of customers increased.

As stated before, the global crisis of 2008 had also a big impact on the development of new management processes. Big consumers of IT solutions, like banks and insurance companies, were very affected during that period and their management teams had to act in order to be more competitive and efficient. As the internet access became extended, its ability to provide valuable information about new market trends and consumer behavior also increased. All these factors combined resulted in the preparation of internal teams to get access to information that in the past was provided by the sales representatives. This new and different customer behavior was a surprise to the IT suppliers, which have been investing on the relationship selling approach. Companies started to know more about their business and their needs, and became less dependent on the sales reps, which resulted in an increase of the bargaining power to reduce the prices.

Facing this scenario, companies and researchers started to study new ways to approach the client, aiming to discover a better way to succeed. Matt Dixon and Brent Adamson (2011), two executives from CEB Inc. developed a study about what were the differences between the best and the average sellers. The findings of the study resulted so enlightening that the authors decided to unveil it to the public.

The study explains that a certain group of star sales representatives understood that customers were more informed and more demanding, and so they developed a new approach to challenge the customer to buy. This new model has been implemented in several companies with positive results, which are mainly due to the ease of the training process, since the operational part of the company doesn't need to be affected or remodeled.

Companies operating in Brazil have also been affected after the number of players in the IT market increased. The adaptation process created market leaders and high performing companies in this sector, like DelleMC. The implemented processes regarding the company's sales strategy were crucial for the company to establish its leadership position and develop the areas and sectors where is present. Therefore, reveals to be interesting to study the company and its sales strategy from an academic perspective.

3. Research Objectives

3.1. Research Question

The research question that this project aims to explore is “What is the impact of the Challenger Sale model dimensions on the profile of DellEMC’s sales representatives in Rio de Janeiro?” This questions aims to understand what makes DellEMC and their sales representatives achieve better results, and how those factors can correlated with the Challenger Sale model. The purpose of this study is not to generalize the results to the Brazilian market, or IT sector as a whole, but to refine the theory in this specific context. From a business management point of view, this subject can be of interest for different areas, such as Marketing, Strategy and Negotiation.

With the knowledge already acquired and developed in management, there are today many opportunities to make businesses more efficient and productive. However, in a subject like sales, where the talent of each individual is still the most used tool, there’s a need for specific insights, so that the sales departments can improve their results.

3.2. General Objectives

The most important objective of this project results in answering the research question stated above: To understand and identify characteristics of a star performer sales representative, in the specific case of the Rio de Janeiro office of DellEMC. The study of this case will provide a useful insight to understand the reasons behind the actual performance of the sales department of the company, and whether it can be identified with the Challenger Sale theory or not.

3.3. Specific Objectives

Taking into consideration the general objectives, there are also specific objectives to this study. First, the identification of the specific behavioral characteristics, allows the researcher to adapt the Challenger Sale model to the sales department of DellEMC. Second, by analyzing the actual sales model of the company and the characteristics of its salespeople, the researcher can understand the stress points of its strategy and make an accurate analysis. Third, since the

concept of the Challenge Sale model is very practical, the study of this case also aims to be practical, so that the company can perceive its scope and implement changes more efficiently.

4. Literature Review

4.1. Introduction

Throughout the years many researchers have been debating about the role of salespeople, and how important is the sales force for gathering information about the market and the customers (eg: Porter 1980). The contact maintained by the sales rep with the customer generates a source of competitive intelligence that combined with the product or service that the sales rep has to offer generates a greater influential power (Hughes, Le Bon, Rapp 2013). Michael Porter (1980) developed intensive research to better understand how competitive intelligence can be used in situations of strategic decision making. Since Porter's approach, other authors had deepened the knowledge of competitive intelligence to better comprehend market orientation, and also to study its role in creating competitive advantage.

Competitive advantage can be created either by having a price competition, or differentiation. However, in the specific case of IT companies selling more complex products, the competitive advantage is more related to the approach of the supplier, than to the final price of the solution. Based on this, some suppliers started to suffer competition problems, because the customers were better informed, and were demanding more from their suppliers. Also the development of technology broadened the access to information to more people. Companies started to know more about their business environment and needs, and started looking for a new approach from their suppliers. These increasingly complex challenges that salespeople had to face have prompted the learning of new skills and competencies (Sheth and Sharma 2008). To the extent that salespeople cannot adjust and adopt this new approach, the risk of becoming obsolete increases, and the probability to succeed on the sales approach decreases.

The 2008 global crisis challenged not only salespeople but customers. Several companies had to reduce their investment budgets and suffered pressure from the executive board to become more efficient, and better understand all areas of business. Also governments prompted the implementation of transparency policies, and the disclosure of information that was not available in the past. Those changes generated an increase in the transactional power of the customers, but also raised difficulties for salespeople, which were required to have a deepened and more developed understanding of customers' needs and challenges prior to the sale call. Homburg, Wieseke, and Bornemann (2009) reported that the ability to detect the customers' needs was one of the most important skills of the frontline employees. Also, customer satisfaction and the proposal value are enlarged when salespeople have that skill more

developed, which turns to be more time demanding and involves a more complex decision making process (Jones et al. 2005).

In the past, sales reps were used to identify customer's needs and sell them "solutions". Usually, those "solutions" were presented to the customers as complex combination of products and services, after long discussions with the customer's engagement partners. However, as technology developed and information became more accessible, customers started to do their own research and to innovate their approach to the problems. This new behavior from the customers made them demand more from the sales reps, and avoid long meetings in which they would have to explain what would be the needs and difficulties of the company. Dixon and Adamson (2011) found in their research that customers consider seven attitudes as more relevant during the selling process: 1) provision of valuable insights about the market; 2) the help given in order to have a better look into the different alternatives; 3) the capability to give advice; 4) the help given in order to bypass potential threats; 5) the discussion about new problems or outcomes; 6) the facilitation of the buying/selling process; and 7) the organization' support to the supplier.

To facilitate the approach of salespeople to the customer, different theories have been developed. Some authors have been defending a more challenging and adaptative approach (Dixon and Tanner 2012; Jones et al. 2005; Homburg, Wieseke, and Bornemann 2009; Verbeke, Dietz, and Verwaal 2011; Franke and Park 2006) and others have been favoring a relationship-based approach (Blocker et al. 2012; Tuli, Kohli, and Bharadwaj 2007).

Also, companies like Automatic Data Processing, Inc. (ADP) have been developing methods, which corroborate the assumption that the old model of selling solutions to customer's problems is obsolete. Research has shown that customers have been implementing techniques to extract better deals from the suppliers, as today they can use the available information to unveil new trends and opportunities. In the old position of solution selling, sales reps invested more time developing good relations with the customer, which meant that sometimes they were a step back regarding what were the new opportunities that a specific industry could offer. Often those relations were focused on people, allowing unveiling important information; however, consensus building, and reaching a final conclusion were difficult (Dixon and Adamson, 2011).

4.2. Relationship selling

The Challenger Sale model has been proving that success can be achieved when dealing with big and complex sales. However there are also certain researchers that contradict the theory that creating a certain pressure between the supplier and the customer is not the best approach. Some authors (Blocker et al. 2012; Tuli, Kohli, and Bharadwaj 2007) consider the customer relationship as a critical factor for the creation of value and the sale's success.

Other researchers (e.g., Sujan, Sujan and Bettman 1988; Szymanski 1988; Weitz, Sujan, and Sujan 1986) find important that prior interactions between the customer and sales representatives are crucial to discuss insights and opportunities. Also, research reveals that customers that have a trustable and pleasant relation with the supplier's salespeople are more likely to share valuable information and to invite the sales reps to discuss insights (Hughes, Le Bon, and Rapp 2013). This aspect does not contradict the challenger sales model, since the Challenger model focus on a more direct approach, in which the sales reps promote the discussion of the latest trends and insights that can lead to a competitive advantage.

Several authors (Rapp et al. 2014) defended also that the role of the customer is very important for the success of the sale, and some customers are not interested about discussing insights with salespeople. In fact, the authors argue that the Challenger model is based on the assumption that the customer is willing to participate in the discussion, which is not always true. Also, the Challenger model bases its approach on customers providing and discussing information, which would need a change in the behavior of the buyers.

4.3. The Challenger sales model

The Challenger Sale is a model of sales training that has been developed by Matt Dixon and Brent Adamson. After recognizing that most salespeople were not having the success they use to have in the past, and that a new generation of sales reps were having better performances with different selling approaches, they decided to investigate what were the factors that were influencing the selling process. After collecting information from managers of 90 different companies, the authors concluded that there were five different profiles of sales representatives as well as different profiles of engagement partners (appendix 10.1; 10.2; 10.3). Each profile is characterized by certain attributes captured in the survey distributed to more than six thousand sales representatives. The main focus of the research was to discover

which attributes were critical to dictate the success in the selling process, and at the same time develop a model to train sales personnel to improve their performance.

4.3.1. Solution Sales Evolution

The sales panorama in the last years has been changing in all sectors. In the past, companies focused on providing a specific product to a specific market at a reasonable price. This selling approach was based on trust and availability aspects. But, with the increase on the supply of similar products, companies had to change their sales objectives. To get more of each transaction companies looked for ideas to differentiate their products and to get away from the pressure of commoditization. One of the options to maintain market share was starting to sell packs of products that often also included consulting or assistance services and sell them as a solution to the client's problem. With a sales strategy focused on selling more complex and expensive solutions, many suppliers manage to make higher profits. However, as the price increased, clients started to be more conscious during the purchasing process, and some sales reps that previously used to have a reasonable performance felt difficulties to adapt. The whole process was boosted by the economic crisis, that in 2008 raised a lot of questions about what would be the influencing factors during the sales process, and which steps should companies gone through, so that sales could increase.

As the solutions start to be more complex, the burden for the clients also increases, and so the way the clients engage when buying complex solutions changes. Based on the research done by the authors (Dixon and Adamson, 2011) the client's behavior revealed four new tendencies. First, the uncertainty of the buying process increases the need for consensus, meaning that, executives seek advice with their work teams, resulting in more influencers on the purchase. Second, as the contracts become more complex and expensive, clients tend to look more for the return on their investment, and are more risk averse concerning the solutions, and its implementation process. Third, clients are more demanding about the customization of those solutions. Since the contracts are more complex, clients want the solution to fit their interests. Finally the fourth tendency that is evident is the hiring of external consultants to advise clients about the purchase of new solutions, The words "Extract the highest possible value from the purchasing decision", in fact mean that those consultants would do as much as possible to reduce the price. These four conditions together became even more evident after the global crisis in 2008, and hampered the representatives' work.

4.3.2. *The Challenger Sale model*

However, while most salespeople might find it difficult to sell, a group of sellers were star performers. This group of individuals understood the need to have a different approach from their colleagues and started to challenge the customer in a different way. In the past, maintaining a close relationship with the client's procurement teams was considered to be the key to sell more. However, the research developed by the authors revealed to be contradictory, in fact, using the role of relationship builder is a losing approach. Sales reps that are relationship builders spend their time trying to understand client's problems to gain advantage when delivering proposals for new contracts. On the other hand, clients nowadays want their suppliers to be their business partners, and want to discuss with those partners new insights that might be relevant for their business.

To understand which attributes were more important to the representatives' performance, company managers assessed the behavior of the chosen representatives on four dimensions: attitudes, competencies, activities and knowledge, and compare those with their individual results.

Attitudes	Competencies	Activities	Knowledge
Commitment to solve difficulties	Commercial tact	Sales process adoption	Industry knowledge
Tolerance to risk of disapproval	Customers need assessment	Opportunity assessment	Product knowledge
Accessibility	Communication	Preparation	
Motivation to achieve goals	Use of internal resources	Lead generation	
Result oriented	Negotiation	Management	
Company loyalty	Relationship management		
Curiosity	Sale of solutions		
Own initiative	Team work		

Table no. 1: Partial sample of the tested variables
Source: Dixon and Adamson, 2011

By analyzing the data in a factorial way, the researchers concluded that the studied attributes were divided in five different profiles of sellers, each one corresponding to a specific group of characteristics. If a seller has a high score on a specific attribute of a given category it's expected that he has high scores on other attributes of that category.

As it's perceivable in appendix 10.1 and 10.2, the five specific profiles have certain characteristics associated, with some flexibility on the group variables. As the authors describe "deserts have intense heat and sand, but intense heat and sand are not only present in the desert", meaning that all the professionals show a minimum level of performance, which means that all have a minimum knowledge about the industry or the product they are selling.

From the five different profiles there is one that is the most controversial. This new group of sales reps focuses its approach on the debate of ideas with the client, and is not afraid to show their own points of view, even if they are controversial. Also the challenger sellers are assertive, and tend to challenge the client's mindset and pressure them not only with new insights but also regarding prices. As the researchers describe, there are four different ways to be an average seller, but there is only one to be an excellent one. From the 44 attributes tested, six of them describe the attitude of a challenger:

- Provides new points of view to the client
- Is very talented when communicating
- Knows what the customer values more
- Is capable of identify the economic trends for the client's business
- Is comfortable discussing money
- Is able to pressure the client

This group of attributes can be divided in three main categories that are crucial to describe the profile of the challenger: teaching skills, capacity to customize, and taking control. The challenger bases his approach on his point of view about the client's business, being able to create a big impact due to his talent to communicate, and ability to teach the client how to differentiate from the competitors. Also, based on the knowledge about the client's economic interests the challenger can catch the attention of the right person within the client's organizations. Finally, the capacity to take control of the sale is not only present during the bureaucratic process of the sale but also when it's necessary to discuss about money.

The Challenger is defined by having those three characteristics that influence the behavior of the seller. Although, the theory seems to be very simple, an issue has been raised by some executives "Do I need to be born a challenger, or may I become one?" The research revealed

that all the sales representatives that were studied had attributes in common with the Challenger, which means that sales representatives can work and develop those attributes, with the help of training, coaching, or by an adequate reward system. In fact, some organizations like SAP, Xerox or General Motors (CEB Case studies) proved that it was possible to implement the method, and that success was attributable to the combination of the three different competencies. This assumption is crucial to continue this study because if we assume that sales reps are born with certain characteristics, then the success of the company is dictated by how companies hire new personnel. However, if there is the possibility to transform the salesforce of a company to have a more challenging approach with the customer, then this theory is relevant and can solve a certain problem in a specific context.

4.3.3. Teaching for Differentiation

For many years companies based their sales strategy on a wrong approach. Many believed that clients knew their needs perfectly, and that the performance of a good sales rep would be measured by his ability to unveil those needs through a close relationship and good questioning techniques. The problem is that many times companies don't know exactly what they need, and even less know by which means they can overcome a given problem.

Of the three mentioned characteristics above the capacity to teach is what most distinguishes the Challenger from the other sales representatives. Dixon and Adamson (2011) developed a research to understand which drivers are the most representative of customer loyalty (See appendix 10.4). The first outcome of the research was the influence of brand identity, product features and customer service during the buying process, which accounted for about 38% of the drivers of customer loyalty. Common sense led executives to believe that those factors would have a weight at least of 70%. The old strategy of having the better product, and strong brand image is not enough to win a contract anymore. Also, customer service, which was for years of major importance, has been developed by the great majority of players, making it no longer an asset to increase sales volume. The researchers mentioned an example of a company that used to be stuck at a 65% level of customer satisfaction. The situation was a consequence of a bad customer service, so the company, for three years, invested in a plan that allowed customer satisfaction to increase to 95%. However, as they were pursuing the plan, their competitors pursued the same strategy, and in the end, the industry increased the customer satisfaction rates, but ended up having no return on the investment. The clients were very

pleased to receive a better treatment, but were conscious that they would get the same service by similar companies. Regarding price, it only represents 9% of customer loyalty. Discussing price is a usual approach to close a sale; however, clients might perceive that the value of the product is also lower. So, price might catch the first attention, but won't keep customers loyal.

On the other hand, attributes related to sales experience were pointed by sellers as the most important. From a group of 50 attributes related with customer loyalty, 17 of them were related with sales experience, and that reflect attitudes that stand out from the rest.

First, it's important to notice that executives nowadays seek more consensus than before, which means that the sales rep has to deliver a valuable proposition to all the actors involved in the process, and not only to the head of the procurement team. To accomplish that objective it is necessary to show that the sales rep is trustable and has the ability to be a partner of the client. The ability to teach the client about new and valuable perspectives and insights is crucial for the client to rethink its actual approach. At the same time, challengers adapt and personalize those ideas, and show the client, by being assertive, how that can solve a specific problem, or generate profit.

Second, it is important to make the client understand that the challenger and his proposal are better than the others on the market. The researchers call it "commercial teaching", because the teaching ability of the seller has to be able to challenge, but at the same time has to generate the actual sale. Otherwise the supplier is just giving free consultancy to its clients. This path requires four steps to be followed. Step number one is that the commercial teaching should be centered on the benefits that the supplier can deliver. The sales rep has to find a specific area where he can help, and actually point a solution; otherwise, the client will have another problem to think about. Also, the representative has to be sure about the true value of its proposition, so that he is coherent and be assertive while explaining why his company can do the job better than the competitors. Step number two is about challenging the client's mindset, which connects the insights given by the sales rep and the client. The objective is to face up the client's mindset in a completely different way, so that there's space for restructuring. In this step the sales representative looks for data and information from the client that might help demonstrate that the client would benefit from that change. The third step is related with the capacity to lead to the final agreement of selling the solution. It's particularly interesting to understand that unlike other salespeople, the challenger presents the topic not focusing on the product, but on the client's problem. That difference is relevant

since the product is proposed as an alternative that will generate a positive impact. Finally, the fourth step is related to the review of client segmentation, which involves a change in the sales rep organization, this aspect is particularly present in companies with small marketing departments. The challenger might have good insights and a deep understanding about the product he sells, but it's also important to standardize his customer portfolio. For example, instead of segmenting clients by geography or volume of sales, companies could divide its commercial department by customer needs or behavior, which would be much better for the sales representative to relate to everyone and adapt to their needs, due to their similarities.

4.3.4. Tailoring for Resonance

From the studied developed by Dixon and Adamson (2011), 53% of customer loyalty is determined by selling experience. So, it is important to know who is involved in the buying process, and who is going to make the final decision.

By analyzing the impact of the selling experience on the client's decision makers, the authors detected that the most important factor for the client was the widespread support of the supplier across his organization. The decision makers, even on C-level, look for advice with their teams and are afraid of signing a big contract without seeking other relevant opinions. This scenario puts a burden on the capacity of the challenger sales rep to engage the different influencers of the decision. The objective is to identify, and be closer to the main contributors in the process, so that, when the decision process ends the decision is consensus based.

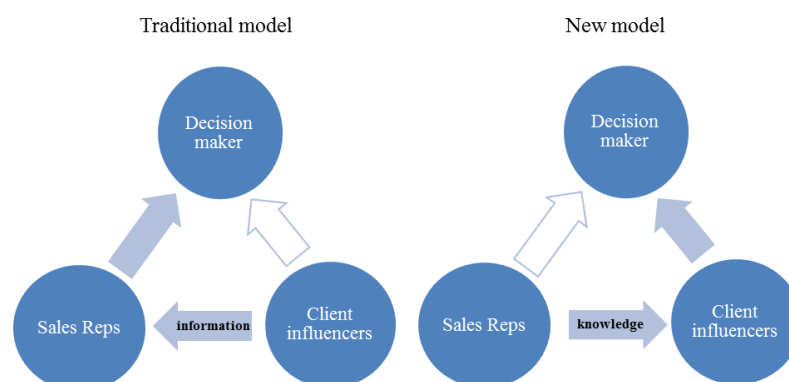


Figure no. 1: Sales interactions
Source: Dixon and Adamson (2011)

The sales cycle graph shown above demonstrates the interaction that exists between the client and the supplier. On the traditional approach, the sales representatives work to get information from their clients in order to adapt their speech when discussing with senior decision makers. The relationship that is maintained reveals a tendency of superiority of the client organization to the supplier, as the flow of information goes from the client executive to the supplier salesman. On the other hand, the challenger model works in the opposite way, the information flowing from the salesman to the client's engagement partner, thus equalizing the interaction between the two. Also, the challenger doesn't just use the direct approach of contacting the senior executive of the company, but also other members, in order to reinforce the advantages of the product and to get a widespread support from all the organization.

However, if there are more people involved on the decision, it is necessary to adapt the same message to the different people that the sales representative has to address. The authors, (Dixon and Adamson, 2011) mention that the customization of the message can be done in many ways. But a good way to start is by discussing a wider subject such as the client's industry and then specify into a more detailed subject. Using this approach, the sales rep can adapt his explanation to each person he is talking to. This strategy is very efficient but demands some work and research from the challenger, because it is necessary to have information about the market, competitors and trends. If the seller comes to the meeting with a prepared speech, which demonstrates that he knows how the sector and the client works, which is already a sign of message customization.

Many sellers find it difficult to tailor their communication skills to specific individuals, and this fact is related to the propensity of the sellers to believe that is necessary to have a deep and vast knowledge of many aspects such the personality, interests, position, etc. Therefore, the challenger uses two customization criteria: the values of the individual, and the economic interests of the company. So, the sales rep should adapt his conversation to the position and concerns of the individual he is talking to, and the objectives that those individuals want to achieve. There are many advantages of addressing the problem this way, since the objectives of the client's engagement partners can be predictable. In the specific case of this study if the sales rep can identify the concerns of the CIO's (Chief Information Officer) of some companies, he can predict the concerns of other CIO's in similar companies. Also each individual due to its position inside the company has specific objectives. So it's easier to

understand the dynamics of a specific company throughout the years, without changing that much the approach of the sales rep.

4.3.5. Taking Control of the Sale

The capacity of the challenger to take control of the sale is dependent on two different aspects: the capacity to pressure the client, and the willingness to discuss money. These aspects are related to other attributes such as the assertiveness and firmness during the selling process. From the perspective of the challenger, talking about money is not a problem because the proposed solution is based on the value it delivers to the client, and not on the final cost.

The behavior of the challenger is based on the seller's confidence, that the solution he is proposing is the best for the company problem. In the traditional approach, sellers based their speech on the confidence that their products and solutions were the best in the market. So, when clients argued that other competitors had similar proposals, the discussion about the price was a consequence. Also, traditional sellers basing their approach on building relationships with clients avoid saying which should be the next steps because they are afraid of damaging the good relationship they have, ending up losing control over the selling process.

Many challenger sellers are aware that several sales opportunities are just "verifying tricks", led by the client, when he already has selected a supplier but wants to understand if he got the best conditions in the market. On those cases, the client organizations select a junior member of the procurement team to open the bid and meet the suppliers. Many sales reps lose time meeting the junior members, hoping to get to a more senior level. On the other hand the challenger see this scenario as an opportunity to pressure for a more senior contact, in exchange for further explanation of his solution. Also, since the challenger understands that this situation can happen with the ideas he propose to the clients, it's usual to confront the client's executives with this possibility, to seek a commitment among all the people involved.

Also, an important stage in the buying process is when the challenger takes control of the sale. There is an established assumption from many sellers that the client is the one that defines the buying process. However, the research developed by Dixon and Adamson (2011) showed that, although clients know the standard procedures of a sale, this may not apply in the specific case of a unique and complex transaction. Relationship builders, for example, used to ask the client procurement teams what are the next steps of the buying process, or who should

be involved, frequently getting no clear answer from the client. On the other hand, challengers simplify the process. Instead of asking about the buying process, they use their experience in previous sales and adapt it to the client, showing who should be involved.

Another aspect that is related to this topic is the way the challenger sale representative pressures the client. By using the “commercial teaching” approach he is able to show other perspectives and his own way to face the future. In fact the challenger sales rep provokes the executives and is not afraid to reply to the client’s skepticism. This approach is absolutely the opposite of the relationship builder, who prefers to maintain a friendly dialogue. This specific characteristic reveals to be very helpful for the IT industry, since the progress of new technologies is a constant. Being an industry where research and development of new products is key, the sales reps and the clients can benefit from an approach in which the sales representative is assertive and strongly justifies his point of view.

The research addressed another interesting point about the behavior of salespeople, demonstrating that it’s very common to confuse the capacity to take control of the sale with aggressiveness. As it is presented by the authors there are three different ways of behavior that the sales rep might assume: passive, assertive and aggressive. The passive behavior can be identified when the seller give in for the client, doesn’t defend his position, or express his ideas indirectly, avoiding conflicts. The aggressive behavior is present when the seller seeks to reach his objectives by attacking others, being unreasonable, and using an antagonist speech that doesn’t promote an agreement. The assertive form of behavior is seen as a constructive approach, which allows the seller to express his ideas vigorously, putting some pressure on the client without being rude.

Finally, although the idea of being “aggressive” with clients is defended, the majority of sellers opt for passive behavior. Sales representatives consider that since the client has more power, they have no choice rather than accept the client’s requests. This aspect reveals that the sales professionals don’t recognize their own value to the client’s business, and end up devaluing their company’s assets, by overestimating the opinion and requirements of the client.

4.4. Limitations of The Challenger Sale model

The challenger sale model has been defended by some authors and sales teams of important companies. However, there are also some researchers (eg. Rapp et al. 2014), arguing that the creation of tension between the sales representative and the client is not the best approach to ensure a successful deal.

Homburg, Bornemann, and Kretzer (2014) highlight the importance of the relationship building process as very important for a modern view of the sales representative role. The authors disagree about the relationship selling being a losing approach, and consider that stating that represents an antithetical form of approaching a research problem. In fact, Dixon and Adamson (2011) characterize the relationship selling approach as the least effective, but also refer that is necessary to maintain an approach that should engage all the respondents in the sales decision making process. The position of the Challenger Sale model is based on the practical knowledge of the sales representatives, which generates a reliable source of information and accurate outputs (Rapp et al. 2014).

The other main limitation to the Challenger Sale model that critics point out is the consideration that solution sales are no longer a successful sales strategy (Adamson, Dixon and Toman 2012). Several scholars (eg. Tuli, Kohli and Bharadwaj 2007) state that customers' solutions are developed according to customer-supplier relation, and that considering a model where the client doesn't know what their emergent needs are is a misconception of the business reality (Rapp et al. 2014). Researchers accept that the role of the sales representative involves advising the client about emergent needs and proposed solutions for problems that the client might not be aware of. However, those researchers consider it as an exaggeration of the business reality, which has no research evidence. In fact, Dixon and Adamson (2011) explain why the Challenger approach is more effective, and why the "one size fits all" solutions are no longer the best approach to selling. The promotion of products that can easily be adapted to the customer's reality is defended by the authors and is focused on the assumption of specific sales scenarios, in which different aspects have to be taken into account. Probably the model is not so effective for repetitive sale contracts, or simpler sales transactions, but there is evidence that it is very effective in high margin contracts.

To understand any sales model it is necessary to comprehend the complexity of the sales process. It's very difficult to study all its aspects, since there are many influencing factors,

and some of them are very subjective to study. The Challenger Sale model focus its approach on the behavior of the sales representatives and its capacity to be more effective when dealing with clients and closing contracts. There are many other aspects that could be considered and studied in order to understand the factors that influence the sales process, but for the purpose of this research only the role of the sales representatives will be considered in its specific context.

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Approach

5.1.1. Case Study Research

The decision to make a case study of the Challenger Sale model proves to be very adequate because DellEMC is market leader, which proves to be a unique case study; and also because the Challenger Sale model is a recent theory, with little literature studies, and addresses a concrete problem with a relevant practical strand. In order to capture all the significance in the specific context of an organization, the case study seems to be a good option for finding if the sales strategy follows the model or not. It takes into consideration the existing theories about sales, and is able to deepen the knowledge about the theory and apply it to the subjective feedback of each sales rep.

Eisenhardt (1989) and Lee (1989) demonstrate in their studies that the case study method reveals to be most appropriate for subjects related to the IT industry. In fact, when using the method, the author also reveals the importance of the development of a scientific approach for research studies, demonstrating each task step by step. It's also defended that the case study method should be more than just a methodological tool, but it should reflect the interest of the researcher on studying a specific case (Stake, 1988). This means that in this situation the case applies to the Challenger model in DellEMC, in Rio de Janeiro.

Also, Kathleen (1989) and Bensabat et al. (1987) explained that the case study method was very useful, because it promotes discussion and the creation of new theories about a specific aspect, which might also be relevant in the context of this project. One of the authors (Bensabat et al. 1987) complements that statement by agreeing with other researchers that the case study method is the most appropriate to study specific theories in their natural environment, providing a deeper analysis that may prove to be important for the final conclusion of the project.

Yin (2009) discussed the importance of the case study method, and defined the concept as empirical tool that links the theory of a certain subject with the reality in a specific context. The author defends that research case studies is a preferable method when the concepts and the observations doesn't have strict boundaries, like the model studied (Challenger Sale model).

Yin (2009) defends that the research question is what influences the research strategy, and its ability to contribute to the advancement of knowledge. The author explains the scope of each of the five research strategies in the following table.

Strategy	Form of Research question	Requires control over behavioral events?	Focus on contemporary events?
Experiment	How, Why	Yes	Yes
Survey	Who, What, Where, How many, How much	No	Yes
Archival analysis	Who, What, Where, How many, How much	No	Yes/No
History	How, Why	No	No
Case Study	How, Why	No	Yes

Table no. 2: Research Strategies
Source: Yin (2009)

The author defends that the use of cases studies should be followed by questions like “how”, or “why”, with no control of behavioral events and focusing on contemporary events. He also states that the usage of a survey research strategy should include a research question including the words: “what”, “who”, “where”, and others. This method results has no control over behavioral events and focuses on contemporary events.

Several academics have also pointed out some limitations of the case study method being one of the most important, the fact that it is very difficult to generalize the results of the case study, due to the specificity of the study (Stake, 1988; Ventura, 2007; Yin, 2009). Stake (1988) argues that the case study is not supposed to represent a population, but a specific context, that should be addressed taking into account the context characteristics and limitations.

5.1.2. Case Study Selection

5.1.2.1. The IT sector

Information technology (IT) has been developing for many years, and its important role in the economy has been increasing tremendously in the recent years. Information has been stored, retrieved and communicated since 3000 BC in Mesopotamia, where Sumerians developed writing (Butler, 2012). However, the term “Information Technology” in its actual meaning was first used by authors Leavitt and Whisler in 1958, in an article published by Harvard Business Review.

During the second half of the 20th century the IT sector was responsible for a revolution both in company’s operations and in the personal life of the users, which challenged all the industries. The development of the computer and the mobile phone made a huge impact on a daily basis, and changed the way people communicate and do business. Its new features facilitate so many operations that soon became indispensable. Companies started to invest in new solutions that could bring competitive advantages, leading the final customers to new ways of working, like the email, ecommerce or data storage.

Nowadays, companies are more and more dependent on IT solutions to better serve their clients, and that dependence created great opportunities for the sector to invest in Research & Development. Also, the digitalization of business is happening very quickly and because companies have more capital to invest in IT solutions, the number of players increased competitive rivalry, changing the value negotiation to price negotiation. However, at the same time it is connecting different sectors and segments, improving operational variables. Autonomous vehicles, cloud storage systems and sophisticated data analytics are good examples of the presence and importance of the IT among different sectors.

Despite the economic crisis that Brazil has been facing in recent years, the IT sector has been relatively strong. Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro are the major technological hubs of South America, and the whole sector represents 8,7% of Brazil’s GDP, with a consolidated growth of 3% during 2016, according to Associação Brasileira de Empresas de Software (ABES). Brazil has been the major receptor of foreign investment with 45% of the IT investment in Latin America, which reveals the importance of the Brazil’s position in the IT sector

5.1.2.2. *The company: DelleMC*

The selection process to choose the company to study for this project used a non-probabilistic sample of the IT companies operating in Brazil. In fact the idea of the project is to understand, for a company like DelleMC, what is the impact of the Challenger Sale model dimensions on the sales representatives' profile. Also the company choice followed a convenience aspect for both the company and the researcher, which facilitated the process of gathering information, since the sales managers were available to participate and answer the surveys. On the other hand, DelleMC is a global company, having a strong market position, and good results over the years. Its presence in Rio de Janeiro can be noticed by the investment in the R&D center in Ilha do Fundão, where new solutions and products are developed.

These characteristics make DelleMC a good case to test and recommend the Challenger Sale model, since it is a company with a considerable capacity to train its sales personnel, with a sustainable market position, and that is present in the emergent segment of IT, that Brazil is developing more and more.

DelleMC is an American IT company operating worldwide. It was founded as EMC, by Richard Egan and Roger Marino in 1979 focusing on storing big data. In 1981 it created its first 64 kilobyte memory board for Prime Computer and through 1980's and 1990's centered its operations on the development of new memory boards, and data storage solutions. In 1992 Michael Ruettgers became CEO, until 2001, under whose command the company shift its focus to storage systems, and enlarged its network of partners and clients. This transition allowed the company to increase its revenues from \$120 million to \$9 billion in ten years and to strengthen its market position. In October 2015, DELL announced its intention to buy EMC for \$67 billion to position the company "into the most relevant areas where IT is moving" said the CEO, Michael Dell

5.1.2.2.1. *DelleMC - Operations in Brazil*

DelleMC has been focusing its business in three segments, each one covering the three main drivers for their clients: 1) development and adoption of cloud solutions, 2) managing big data to help make better decisions and discover new business opportunities, 3) protecting client's information and ensure trust patterns in IT. As it is stated in the 2016 annual report, among these three main areas, DelleMC is more focused on the data storage, especially in the

emergent segment of “Flash Storage” upon the success of the XtremIO. During 2016, DelleEMC developed a marketing strategy for this product, fostering the brand and its market share. Regarding the developed software, the company has been investing in solutions that can generate business leverage for their clients; an example of those are VMware and PIVOTAL, two software companies that are associated with DelleEMC, and that have been leaders in the development of software for Big Data and Cloud Applications.

The company has been operating in Brazil since 1996, headquartered in Rio de Janeiro, one of the main hubs for the Brazilian market. That position became even more consolidated with the opening of the R&D Center for Big Data in Parque Tecnológico da UFRJ, which results from the close relation with more than 90 Brazilian universities that have partnerships with DelleEMC, through the EMC Academic Program Alliance. These partnerships are also fostered with the objective to acquire talent and to develop the business and solutions according the new trends and innovations. The company in Brazil had approximately 600 employees, although, since the merger with Dell, and with the emergence of DelleEMC, the number increased to more than 3000 professionals. The office in Rio de Janeiro has approximately 60 professionals operating in sales and services, and around 30 professionals operating in the research and development center, giving support to their clients.

5.1.2.2.2. DelleEMC - Market Position

Prior to the merger with Dell, EMC competed in the market of corporate information infrastructures with big players, such as IBM, HP and Dell. With the merger of DelleEMC concluded in September 2016, its leadership position has increased in the main business segments. However, in some emergent segments, there are specialized competitors in different areas, which can be considered niche competitors. For example in the “Flash Storage” segment, the company PURE STORAGE is the main competitor, and in “convergent infrastructures” the company NUTANIX is also competing with DelleEMC.

Although, there are some niche competitors, the increasing adoption of corporate solutions of Public Cloud, like the ones from Amazon (AWS), Google (GCP) or Microsoft (Azure) represent the more urgent business risk for DelleEMC. With new solutions and systems in Data Center providers of Cloud Computing, the market of corporate information infrastructures potential to grow suffers. To account for that, EMC, and now, DelleEMC is betting on new

business units from its portfolio, such as the PIVOTAL, that is specialized in software development for cloud applications, or the VIRTUSTREAM, that provides cloud computing management software, infrastructure as a service (“IaaS”) and managed services for corporate systems.

EMC always tried to maintain its leadership position in the most strategic segments throughout the years. Independent consulting companies like Gartner and IDC positioned EMC, and now DellEMC has market leader in the segments of corporate storage, “Flash Storage”, data protection storage systems, virtualization software and corporate mobile devices management software.

As it was stated before, EMC had a leadership position in the Brazilian market that provided the opportunity to work with major companies in different sectors across the country. The main clients in 2015 and 2016 had a huge demand for information management services, which was the core business unit of EMC. Financial institutions, telecommunication companies and oil and gas were the main sectors that the company served in the Brazilian market. Right now, with the merger with Dell the capacity to reach other segments increased, being DellEMC now able to cover almost any business sector with dedicated, local or centralized data processing needs. Some of the most recent examples include companies like TerraBrasil, Honeywell or TGEN.

5.1.2.2.3. DellEMC - Sales Department

EMC has been following its own sales strategy for the past years, by taking into account the client needs and the market segments that it wanted to focus on. However, in 2016 EMC was restructured according to a business plan focused on big companies with an increasing demand for IT solutions. The sales representatives became directly responsible for certain regions and accounts, being organized by directories for specific regions (regional directories), and for big markets (Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro). Within each directory the sales teams are also segmented by industries such as, finance, telecommunications or government. The sales team, include 52 sales representatives and covered all the Brazilian market, with the support of a team of portfolio solution specialists and systems engineers, that were aligned with each of the business units of the company: data storage, data protection (backup), converged infrastructure, consulting, information security (represented by RSA

security, a subsidiary of DellEMC), virtual software (represented by VMware also aligned with EMC global strategy), and Big Data software (cloud and Analytics, represented by PIVOTAL). The whole support services team accounted for 300 professionals that used to handle all the sales and support sales in Brazil. With the merger with Dell, the number of business units increased, and also the number of clients, so the reach of the sales strategy had to be adapted.

Although EMC has been developing the market segmentation described above, the company has also adopted a methodology of sales based on certain practices developed internally. All the personnel were trained when hired by the company, and training sessions have been developed, in order to ensure knowledge update. The corporate sales management system, developed by Salesforce¹, also reinforces the control and management support mechanisms, by its capacity to deliver a consolidated view for sales predictions, and support elements for the managerial inspections.

The sales representatives respond to coordinators that are assigned according to each industry, and all the team is managed by the Sales director that manages all the projects and contracts, for a specific market. The sales department is responsible for the sale of new products and solutions, that might be customized or not, the maintenance and upgrade of the systems, and the training that is necessary to be given to the client.

The interaction between DellEMC and the clients is done in great part by the sales department, except when some technical expertise is provided by the development team. And, each sales representative is responsible for managing its client's accounts, including understand the client's value proposition, market position among others, and to manage the Request for Proposal (RFP). Although, the sales department has an integrated business model, in which the sales representatives can communicate and collaborate each other and their superiors. The company doesn't have a system to assess the sales representative's behavior and approach to the client. DellEMC, have been focusing their sales approach on the product and its capacity to respond to a wider spectrum of proposals; however, a behavioral action plan for sales representatives has not been developed.

¹ Salesforce is a customer relationship management service that provides an interface for case and task management, which allows companies to escalate important events and manage internal accounts. It facilitates the communication between the users, and provides tools to analyze data, like contracts or client information.

5.2. Research Design

To develop the research of this project a quantitative analysis was made for gathering data. The purpose of using a quantitative method is related to the fact that it allows to better explore the behavior of the respondents, in a more systematic and objective way. The decision to opt for a quantitative method instead of a qualitative method, or a mixed one is related to the little availability of the company's employees to attend interviews, but also, because it was the method used by Dixon and Adamson (2011) during their investigation. Moreover, the qualitative method research is more appropriate to understand motivations, and opinions, which is not the purpose of this study.

The quantitative research was developed using a survey experiment. In this experiment the subjects were selected according to their responsibilities in the sales department of DellEMC in Rio de Janeiro. The survey was conducted with the objective to expose to the respondents possible situations that they would face on a daily basis, according to the Challenger model three drivers. This strategy allows the researcher to identify possible match relations between the behavior of the sellers and the Challenger Model theory, discussed in the Literature Review chapter.

All the respondents were sent an email that included a brief explanation of the study and its purpose. The Qualtrics platform was used in order to facilitate the building and sharing process. The questionnaire was answered by all the 52 members of the sales department of DellEMC in Rio de Janeiro.

The data research adopts a descriptive approach, which helps to get a more detailed result, and at the same time to benefit the analysis of the final output. The data collection was made between February and March of 2017, with the purpose of understanding what would be the characteristics of the sales representatives and how those characteristics could be connected to critical factors of success. It's important for the consistency of the research to consider DellEMC a leading company, with proven success records in the Brazilian market. This fact reveals to have a major importance, since the study wants to assess the relationship between the company's success factors with the behavior of the sales representatives. As it was stated before, DellEMC presents all the conditions (company structure, market overview and sales strategy) to be considered a leader in the Brazilian market and to ensure the feasibility of this study.

Although, there was no possibility, due to time and resource constraints to run a market research in the Brazilian IT sector, it can be assumed that the Challenger model is a reliable approach to understand the characteristics of the sales team of EMC. The Challenger model is based on three strategic pillars, in which the challenger sales rep should base its sales approach, and the purpose of the questionnaire is also to understand if the salespeople from DelleMC follow the pattern of behavior described by the Challenger model.

Regarding the statistical method used, there was no reason to do a probabilistic sample, since all the sales representatives accepted to participate in the study. Also, since the project doesn't have the objective to extrapolate the results of the research to a broader universe, but instead compare the performance of DelleMC sales department of the office in Rio de Janeiro with the Challenger model approach, a descriptive statistical approach to analyze the data and conclude about the results was used.

5.2.1. Quantitative data collection

The questionnaire was based on the approach used by Dixon and Adamson (2011) for one of stages on the Challenger Sale study. The questionnaire structured is considered appropriate to use in this research project, since the questions address the three pillars of the Challenger model theory. Dixon and Adamson (2011) used other methods of research related to the different market sectors, clients, industries and cultures. Those methods were not considered in this study since the focus of the project is to understand the critical success factors in sales in the specific context of DelleMC Rio de Janeiro, and not investigate the role of the sales representative in broader perspective.

The questionnaire included 29 questions, being 11 related with the first topic "Teaching for differentiation", 9 related with the second topic "Tailoring for resonance", and 9 about the third topic "Taking Control of the Sale. The questions were developed based on the questionnaire model developed by Dixon and Adamson (appendix 10.5), consisting in 10 questions and complemented with 19 other questions, which were all related with relevant inputs of the Challenger theory. The fact that the questionnaire was based on another model, already tested by other researchers, enhances the coherence of the questionnaire and increases the results credibility. Those questions were based on sentences and behaviors described in The Challenger Sale book. In order to ensure the accuracy of the responses, the questions

were mixed, to avoid similar questions being presented consecutively. The development of the questionnaire was done using different four different methods: 2 questions 4 option multiple choice, 1 question using ranking order, 1 question using open text entry, 25 questions using a 5 point Likert scale slider, where 1 means “Strongly agree” and 5 means “Strongly disagree”.

For consistency reasons the questions were aggregated by type in two different question blocks, and a text entry was inserted before each block, so that the respondents were more comfortable and framed about the question type, and how they should answer. The final section of the questionnaire consisted in questions on respondents’ demographics, such as gender and age, in order to analyze any tendencies that might have. However, it might seem relevant to include a question about the role, or seniority level in the demographic section that was not included, in order to avoid a biased analysis. Dixon and Adamson (2011) explain that the role of the Challenger is not related with its seniority levels, or the job role, and that all the sales representatives can adapt its sales approach to different profiles. An illustration of the questionnaire is present in appendix 10.6.

Since the observation universe were all the members of the sales team of DellEMC office in Rio de Janeiro, and since the questionnaire was already tested, a pre-test was not developed. However, the questions and its process were discussed alongside with the executive briefing team of DellEMC, which contributed for a more coherent flow of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was conducted during twelve days by using the Qualtrics survey platform, and it was distributed by a web link to all the members of the sales department of DellEMC in the office of Rio de Janeiro, with the help of the Director of the Executive Briefing Center of DellEMC in Rio de Janeiro. The questionnaire was held in English and it was considered that all the members of the sales team were in similar circumstances when they answered the questionnaire. A total of 48 questionnaires were collected.

6. Quantitative data analysis

As it was described in the chapter concerning quantitative data collection, all the questions from the questionnaire had the purpose to confront the sales representatives behavior with specific ways of acting explained in the Challenger Sale model. A total number of 52 questionnaires were collected. However, four respondents left questions in blank or left the questionnaire page and didn't answer it until the end. To proceed with an accurate analysis, the questionnaires that weren't completed were not considered to the analysis, reducing the number of completed questionnaires to 48.

The purpose of the study is to study the profile of DellEMC's sales representative, and compare those responses were with the profile traits described in the Challenger Sale model ("Teaching for Differentiation", "Tailoring for Resonance" and "Taking Control of the Sale). Therefore, there was no need to proceed to a sampling methodology. Once the study is focused only on DellEMC's sales department, and doesn't aim to generalize the results, there is a positive impact of getting more reliable results.

Some research papers use non-probabilistic samples, which can bias the results and conclusions that come after the analysis. The usage of a nonprobability sampling, to extrapolate the results to bigger universe, assumes that the probability of selection cannot be accurately determined, which might lead to the presence of exclusion bias. In the specific case of this study, the data collection and analysis are critical to the final outcome of the project, so the presence of the exclusion bias would make the analysis unfeasible. The results given by the questionnaires have not the purpose to test the theory, but to verify if it applies in the specific case of DellEMC in Rio de Janeiro, which in the case of a non-probabilistic sample would jeopardize the analysis, making the sample invalid for taking conclusions.

Although the collected data doesn't suffer from the exclusion bias, the data collection method might have some other effects that could be considered for the data collection procedure. It was assumed that the respondents were all under equal circumstances, had all equal access to similar information, and had the same level of English proficiency (demanded by DellEMC). These aspects mitigate the possibility of having a non-probabilistic convenient sample. Also, the nonresponse effects were not considered influential to the analysis, since from a universe of 52 sales representatives, only four missed to respond the questionnaire. So, it was considered that the non-response effect was minimized by the number of accurate responses from the respondents.

Since it was not used a sampling method, the data was analyzed using descriptive statistics through Microsoft Excel to organize and explore the data results. The descriptive statistics have the intention to summarize the collected information (Mann, 1995), and are not based on probabilistic methods which is aligned with the analysis pursued in this study. In this context, two types of analysis were used. The first was univariate analysis, which focus on describing the distribution of a single variable, and multivariate analysis, which consists in combining more than one variable to describe relations between different variables.

6.1. Characteristics of the Respondents

By analyzing the number of respondents of the questionnaire, it is perceived that DelleMC sales department has a much bigger presence of salesmen than saleswomen. Since the questionnaire was distributed to all the sales representatives at the same time, it is perceivable that the number of women in the sales department of DelleMC is not equal to number of men. Of the total of 48 respondents, 40 were male, accounting for 83% of the total respondents and 8 were women accounting for 17%. The majority of the respondents, specifically 52% were aged between 35 and 44 years old, which can represent the middle executive level. The respondents aged between 25 and 34 years old accounted for 33% of the analysis. Finally the respondents aged between 45-54 years old represented only 15% of the responses.

Sex	Valid Percent
Male	83%
Female	17%
Age	Valid Percent
< 25 years old	0%
25-34 years old	33%
35-44 years old	52%
45-54 years old	15%
> 55 years old	0%

Table no. 2: Characteristics of the respondents

6.2. Results, analysis and Discussion

6.2.1. *Categorization into the Challenger Sale model dimensions*

As explained in the Literature Review chapter the Challenger Sale model comprises three dimensions. The questionnaire presented in appendix 10.6 was based on those three dimensions, which allowed understanding the sales representative behavior in each situation and establishing a relation between DellEMC sales performance, and the dimensions of the Challenger Sale model. Also, for each dimension of the model, each question was intended to test a specific behavior, or address a specific situation where the sales representative could show their way of interacting with the client.

Therefore, the answers given by the respondents were collected and compared with the basic metrics of the model. That analysis demonstrated if the sales representatives' behavior matched the model or not, and if there was a match, what was the level of correspondence. In order to assess the level of correspondence with the three dimensions, a qualitative ranking was designed to evaluate the correspondence between the behavior of DellEMC sales representatives and the model, which is connected with the percentage of responses given by the sales representatives.

After assessing the correspondence level of each behavior, a conclusive analysis was made in order to understand the relation between the correspondence level and the three dimensions of the Challenger Sale model. These correspondence levels were then used to establish relations between the dimensions, and to expose those results to DellEMC. Also, the discussion with DellEMC's sales manager made it possible to explain the results and connect those with the company's performance.

6.2.1.1. *Teaching for differentiation*

In order to understand if the first dimension of the Challenger model was present on the sales representative's approach, the results of 10 questions were analyzed. One of the main focuses of the Challenger Sale model is the ability of the sales representatives to provide new insights and ideas that can generate value to the customer. To assess this specific behavior, questions number 8, 16 and 20 were held to the respondents. On question number 8, around 83% of the respondents chose the option "Strongly agree", and the left 17% answered "Somewhat agree". To prove the results from question number 8, questions number 16 and 20 were analyzed and

both presented similar results, with around 71% of the respondents answering “Strongly agree” or “Somewhat agree” and only 10% answering “Strongly Disagree”. These results show that the DelleMC sales representatives use their knowledge about the clients market, and the technology where they are inserted, and are able to provide innovative solutions. This fact can be correlated with the close relation that both the sales team and the research and development team have, and also with the mechanisms that the company have to their disposal, like internal reports and platforms like the one from Salesforce. Another point that shows the sales representatives attitudes towards the client is presented on question number 9, in which 69% of the sales representatives consider that their ideas, insights and guidance can help the client to avoid possible pitfalls.

Question number 9 had the objective to understand if the sales representatives were true experts in the products and services they sell, and if that knowledge was superior to the purchasers. Around 56% of the sales team’s members agree that their knowledge about the products is superior to the purchasers, which is a sign that the sales representatives are confident when they approach the client and can be more effective about persuading the purchasers on how the clients business could improve. However, there are also some sales representatives (11%), who believe that the purchasers have a superior knowledge about the product, which can hinder the sales representatives to succeed on getting a deal with the client.

Although, there are some factors pointing that DelleMC sales representatives can be identified as “star performers”, there are also some others that demonstrate that the majority of the sales people lack the ability to challenge the customer and be bold and confident, especially when they are speaking to the client. Question number 4 demonstrates that DelleMC’s sales representatives should develop more their selling speech to gather more attention from the client. According to the Challenger sale model, a good selling speech should point out that the proposed solutions are “outperforming in terms of risk”, “leading edge and innovative” or that are “great and bold”, as contrary to a speech that points the product as “easy to implement”, “achievable and accomplishable”. According to the questionnaire’s results, 54% of the respondents considered that the most important aspect, to mention during the sales speech, about their products and services was the easiness of implementation. To corroborate this perspective, characteristics like being “outperforming in term of risk” and “great and bold”, were ranked as the less important, with a 4th and 5th

position, respectively. By analyzing these results with the sales manager, it was pointed that due to the nature of some products, sometimes is difficult to adapt the speech to demonstrate that the solutions would be outperforming or leading edge. So, sales representatives point out characteristics that are better perceived by the clients and that are easier to relate with the solution. It was also pointed by the sales manager that the product quality and innovation are well known in the market by DelleMC's clients. However, the sales manager also assumed that the company didn't have any special training specifically focused on sales speech, and that it could be an important point to invest in the future.

Other questions were developed to understand how the sales representatives manage their contact with the purchasers. The answers from question number 11 confirm the tendency to avoid taking risks when approaching the client. Only 10% of the respondents "Strongly agree" with the sentence: "I often risk disapproval in order to express beliefs about what is right for the customer", and around 67% "Somewhat disagree" (40%) or "Strongly Disagree" (27%) with it. From this analysis, it's perceivable that sometimes DelleMC's sales representatives opt for a more defensive contact with the client, which can benefit the client's position. When discussing the answers with DelleMC, the sales manager pointed that focusing on Brazilian culture, people foster agreement and doesn't risk the disapproval, because the client is not comfortable on those situations and sometimes the client gives a step back on those situations. The manager also gave examples on how that reality was different within different regions of Brazil, and how difficult it was for some foreign DelleMC executives to lead some projects, where the cultural background affected the negotiation. For example in the United States of America, sales representatives have a very direct approach with the client exposing the business downsides, its risks and opportunities. However, in Brazil, clients don't like that much the direct approach, and so, sales representatives have to find a way to explain the importance of the solutions in a different way.

Finally, another fact that is also present in some sales representative's behavior is their unwillingness to challenge the client's ideas and seeing their job as "problem solvers". According to the answers provided on question 26, 69% answered "Strongly agree", and only 15% answered "Strongly disagree" with the sentence: "Most of the clients already know exactly what their needs are, and my job is to understand those needs and look for solutions". Although, some sales representatives' job role is more oriented to "shelf-products", their sales mindset should be more directed to try to capture more value from the client, which would

benefit the client and also DelleMC, which can also differentiate its sales approach and stand out from its competitors. When discussing this issue with the sales manager, he explained that DelleMC has different products and services, and the majority of the products are supposed to solve specific problems. Those products are described as COTS (Commercially off-the-shelf), which means that they have specific features that are then adapted to clients specific requisites. Due to the presence of RDC, the company has been developing custom-made solutions for their clients and those solutions are more challenging. However, the number of custom-made solutions is not as significant, and those solutions are normally addressed by the senior sales representatives cooperating with RDC technicians.

6.2.1.2. Tailoring for Resonance

Regarding the second dimension of the Challenger Sale model, the answers got from the sales representatives demonstrate that apparently most of the sales team members of DelleMC have the right skills to address the right influencers during the sales process, and know how to coordinate their speech according to the ideas and insights provided to the client.

One of the characteristics of the “Challenger” seller is the ability to adapt his message to the specific customer he is addressing. In some cases the same solution can be presented in different ways, and address problems from different perspectives. For example a smartphone can be essential for businessman who work remotely and need to check emails, or have phone calls; but at the same time, a smartphone can also be essential to a student, who uses it to communicate through different apps, listen to music or take pictures. This means that different clients perceive the product differently, and the majority of DelleMC’s sales representatives demonstrate to have it. Questions number 10, 12 and 25 had the objective of testing this skill, and the results demonstrate that the majority of the respondents agree with the sentences (more detail about answers, see appendix 10.7). For example, on question number 25: “During the meetings with the client, I try to adapt my speech to the values of the person I’m talking to, and to the company’s economic interests.” 75% of the respondents answered “Strongly agree”, which reveals that sales representatives understand the importance of adapting their approach to the client and its importance to succeed through the sales process.

Another important aspect of the second dimension of the model is related to the capacity to make a precise sales plan and prepare the engagement moments with the client. On the

Literature Review chapter it was mentioned that the sales representative need to lead the client through the sales process and to do that, planning is key. On question number 14, 50% of the respondents favored the importance of preparing the meetings with the clients, and assumed to spend more time than their colleagues. However, 27% strongly disagreed with the sentence, which means that not all the members of the sales team agree on this subject. Question number 24, had also the objective to assess the capacity of the sales representatives to address the client and lead a conversation. On this specific question, 89% of the respondents answered “Strongly agree” (29%) or “Somewhat agree” (60%), which can be an indicator of how comfortable the sales representatives are to address the client on phone calls or personal meetings.

A third topic that is presented in the Challenger Sale model is the contact with the procurement teams and the tendency to conduct meetings in order to have access to important information, that is not always disclosed to all. Both question number 15 and question number 17 focused this topic. On question number 15, 44% of the respondents “Strongly agree”, and 33% responded “Somewhat agree” that often conduct meetings with the purpose of gaining access to important information. On the other hand, the remaining 23% “Strongly disagree” with the sentence, which means that 23% of DelleMC’s sales representatives don’t rely on the relationship with the client personnel as their primary approach to sales. On question number 17, the most recurrent answer was “Neither agree nor disagree” with 33 answers (69%), which makes it difficult to take conclusions about the sales representatives behavior regarding their relationship with the client’s procurement teams. Nevertheless, the answers on question number 17 don’t invalidate the answers on question number 15, because sales representatives might not foster a relationship with the client’s procurement team, but could use the interactions with those to have access to important facts about the client. The sales manager explained this aspect, assuming that sales representatives have to use business meetings to have access to information; otherwise they have no insight of the market panorama. It was also disclosed by the sales manager that in Brazil there is little access to information, and the one that is available is not always accurate. With this in mind, sales representative have to use their knowledge to gather information with all the parties, which might be clients, universities, governmental institutions; chambers of commerce, among others.

To conclude, there are a many characteristics from the second dimension that can be connected to the behavior of DelleMC’s sales representatives. The interaction with the client,

the capacity to adapt to different people and situations and the ability to plan and prepare in advance are important assets that can be associated to the Challenger Sale model, and justify some of the sales representatives' success when dealing with the client.

6.2.1.3. *Taking Control of the Sale*

About the third dimension, the results from the questionnaire revealed that most of DelleEMC's sales representatives act according to the Challenger Sale model, and are able to take a leadership position during the sales process.

One of the most important characteristics of the Challenger Sale model is the ability of the sales representatives to be comfortable about discussing money issues with the client. As it was previously explained, sales representatives are the main contact point between the supplier and the client, and to transmit an image of trust and decisiveness, the sales representatives have to be confident about discussing the main aspects of the proposal, especially pricing and costs. Question number 6 addressed that issue specifically, and 52% of the respondents "Strongly agree" that could effectively discuss pricing and costs with the clients, 31% answered "Somewhat agree", and only 16% "Strongly disagree".

Another important aspect of the third dimension of the model is the capacity to plan in advance and prepare the sales process. As it was mentioned in the literature review chapter, the majority of the client's procurement teams don't have any special knowledge about the sales process of more complex sales, which means that they tend to rely on the supplier for some guidance on that matter. According to the sales representatives answers on question number 21, 35% of the respondents "Strongly agree" and 21% "Somewhat agree", surprisingly 27% of the respondents answered "Neither agree nor disagree", which makes the analysis more difficult to interpret. Also on question number 23, the sales representatives revealed to have the leadership skills pointed by Dixon and Adamson (2011) regarding who determines how the sale should proceed. On this specific context, 23% responded "Strongly disagree", and 50% responded "Somewhat disagree" with the sentence: "The client is who determines how the sale should proceed", which confirms the results presented on question number 21.

Two other questions addressed another characteristic associated with the third dimension, which is the guidance given by the sales representatives during the client decision process. As

the sales process proceeds the client has to take some decisions in order to implement the solution. During this process, the sales representatives can actively help the client on how, when or where should those decisions be made. On questions number 5 (“In more difficult situations I feel comfortable influencing the customer to make a decision”), 35% of the respondents “Strongly agree” with the sentence and 19% “Somewhat agree”, there are also some contradictory answers, since 33% “Strongly disagree” with the sentence. However, since the sentence focus on sales representatives comfort levels in this situation, it might be difficult to understand the reason behind it. Question number 22 also addressed the acceleration of client’s decision process, in which 58% of the respondents answered “Strongly agree”, and 15% answered “Somewhat agree”, which corroborates that the sales representatives behavior can be linked with the Challenger Sale approach.

Question number 13 focused on how dependent is the sales representative to fulfill client’s needs by themselves, and solve any problems along the sale process, without having the need to discuss those issues with other people. On this specific case, respondents didn’t answer as expected and only 15% “Strongly agree” with the sentence. On the other hand, 69% of the respondents disagreed with the sentence, proving that on this specific characteristic sales representatives behave differently. The answers were discussed with the sales manager in order to understand the discrepancy with the model. DelleMC has an organizational culture that avoids the individualistic work environment, which was implemented to foster team work, knowledge exchange and personal development. Therefore, sales representatives are encouraged to discuss problems with the team in order to find the best way to solve them.

Finally, questions number 27 and 29 focused the role of the client during the sales process, and the influential power that it has during the sales process. Both questions demonstrated that clients have a high influential power during the negotiation process, making it necessary to give in on the some aspects. On both questions the respondents answered objectively to what is described in the model, with 0% of correct answers. These results show that the sales interaction between sales representatives and clients is totally different from the one exposed by in the third dimension of the Challenger Sale model.

7. Conclusion

Companies that have their businesses focused on “business to business” have more difficulties when measuring sales strategy success, since a great part of the work is done by the sales representatives, whose behavior is not easy to assess. However, as explained before, 53% of the client satisfaction level is determined by the sales experience, and the way the sales representatives lead the client through the sales process, which means that the most important factor to retain the client is difficult to measure.

Since the sales experience is the most important aspect for client satisfaction, it is crucial to understand which factors can leverage the sales representatives’ performance. From the different perspectives gathered in the Literature Review, the Challenger Sale model had the characteristics that seemed to be the most appropriate to the IT industry, and its approach encompasses three main dimensions - Teaching for Differentiation, Tailoring for Resonance and Taking Control of the Sale. These three dimensions were studied, adapted to the specific case of DelleMC, and presented to their sales representatives on the online questionnaire.

According to the research objectives, the study was able to analyze and conclude that DelleMC’s sales representatives meet the criteria of the Challenger Sale on the three dimensions explained by the model. However, some factors like company’s strategy, market environment, and cultural background proved to influence the sales representatives’ behavior. On the first dimension – Teaching for differentiation – the sales representatives proved to challenge the customer with new insights helping succeed and avoid possible pitfalls. However, cultural background, and characteristics related with the business had a negative effect on the correspondence level of this dimension. Also, the results seemed to show that sales representatives tailor their speech in order to get resonance on the client. The ability to adapt the speech with different people, and to plan in advance the meetings with the client indicates that there is a resemblance between DelleMC’s sales representatives and the Challenger Sale model. Regarding the third dimension, based on the responses, DelleMC’s sales representatives seem to have characteristics to take control of the sales process, namely the ability to discuss money issues, knowledge about the product and guidance through the sales process. However, organizational culture was also indicated as influence factor, and might have an impact on the ability of the sales representatives to take control of the sale.

It is important to mention that the conclusions of the study are only connected with DelleMC's sales representatives in the office of Rio de Janeiro, and there is no intention to generalize those to other cases.

8. Assumptions, Limitations and Future Research

8.1. Assumptions

It was assumed that DellEMC is a company with a leadership position in the Brazilian market, more specifically in Rio de Janeiro. Due to the company's global position, and the importance of the sales strategy for the business, it was also assumed that the sales department is developed and has all the important aspects necessary for this study, such as a significant number of sales representatives, customer relationship management tools, or training.

For the results confirmation, it was assumed that the Sales Manager had deep knowledge about the sales department, and was aware of the sales' methods used by the sales representatives. It was taken in consideration that the sales manager had knowledge about the IT sector, especially the Brazilian market and its main players.

8.2. Limitations

This study represents a unique case study of the sales representatives' profile of DellEMC, from their perspective of their interaction with the client. Since the range of DellEMC's clients is very big and geographically disperse, it was impossible to do further analysis to make a connection between the sales representatives behavior and the perception from the clients. Therefore, the intention of this study is not to generalize the premises of the Challenger Sale model, but to deepen the theory about it.

Also, the methods used for data collection were aligned with company's availability; the sales team has been on restructuring process due to the merge between Dell and EMC, which made it impossible to pursue any personal interviews.

8.3. Further Research

The Challenger Sale model was analyzed in this study only based on the sales representatives' perspective, and the company confirmation. To get a broader view about the impact of the model dimensions it would be beneficial to study the contribution of the client's procurement teams, and their perspective of the interaction between them and their suppliers.

Another potential research would be to connect the performance of the sales representatives and their profiles with the financial impact on sales. To make this analysis would be also beneficial to study the performance ranking of the sales department and connect it to the approach of each individual, which would generate an analysis based on three aspects: financial factors, performance factors and profile characteristics.

It would be also beneficial to evaluate the profiles of DellEMC sales representatives in different countries. The analysis would assess the culture influence factors on the interaction between the agents and at the same time assess the adjustments made to the sales strategy in the different countries.

Finally, to develop a research in different companies from the IT sector would allow the generalization of the model dimensions, which is a subject of high interest for the sales managers of the industry.

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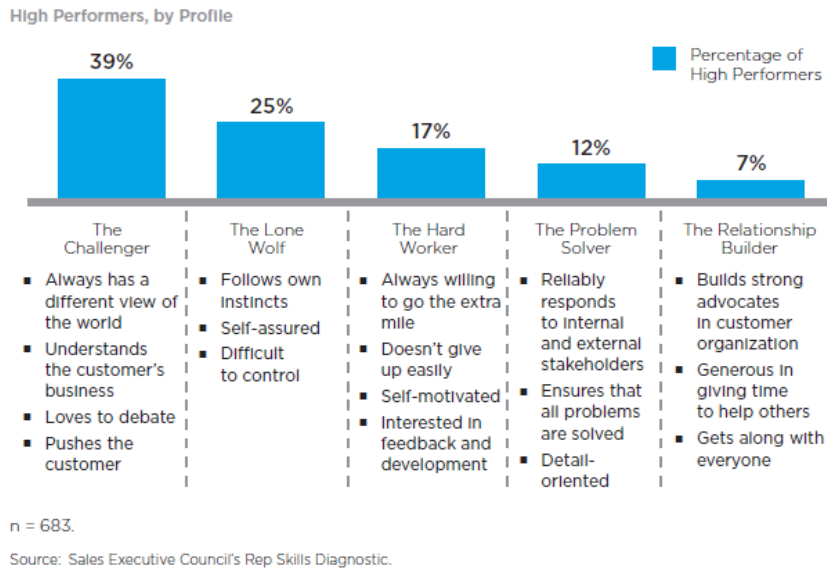
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10. Appendix

10.1. Performance per Profile of Sellers



Source: CEB Inc. – The Challenger Sale

10.2. Profile of Sellers

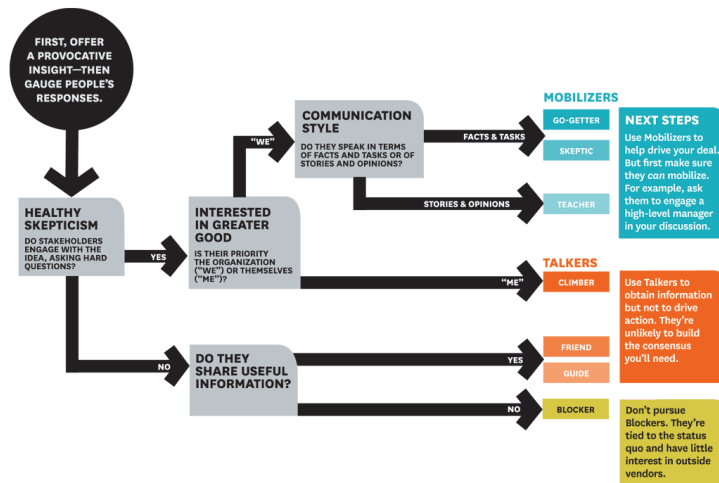
Profile of Today's Sellers

5 Behavioral Profiles Identified in CEB research of 30,000 sellers



Source: CEB Inc. – The Challenger Sale

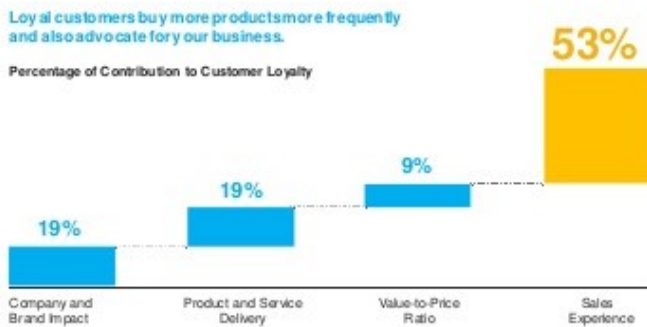
10.3. Engagement partner profiles



Source: HBR, The End of Solution Sales, 2012

10.4. Customer Loyalty Drivers

The Commercial Experience Is the Single Most Important Customer Loyalty Driver



Source: CEB Inc. – The Challenger Sale

10.5. Challenger – Self-Assessment

Quick Challenger® Self-Assessment

RATE YOUR CHALLENGER CAPABILITIES

Use the mini-assessment below to quickly assess your Challenger inclinations. The next page provides you with scoring parameters and questions you can use to strengthen your Challenger approach.

INSTRUCTIONS

Read each statement below. Using the 1 to 5 scale, score each statement according to your agreement with how well it describes your personal approach to selling.

1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Statement	My Score
1. I often form enduring and useful relationships with customers.	
2. I can effectively offer my customers a unique perspective, teaching them new insights on how my company's products and services will improve their business.	
3. I am a true expert in the products and services I sell, comfortably exceeding the knowledge that any expert purchaser might have.	
4. I often risk disapproval in order to express beliefs about what is right for the customer.	
5. When negotiating with customers, I understand what drives value with different customers and adapt my message accordingly.	
6. I can identify the key drivers of a customer's business and use that information to customize my approach.	
7. When it comes to fulfilling customer requests, I usually resolve everything myself.	
8. In more difficult sales situations, I feel comfortable influencing the customer to make a decision.	
9. I can effectively discuss pricing and cost concerns with my customers on their own terms.	
10. I am likely to spend more time on preparation in advance of any sales calls or meetings as compared to everybody else.	

Source: CEB Inc. – The Challenger Sale

10.6. Adapted questionnaire sample

INFO Principal Investigator: Miguel Nogueira Rodrigues, 152115172@clsbe.lisboa.ucp.pt

The following survey is part of the data collection for my Master thesis. The purpose of the survey is to analyze the profiles of the sales representatives when selling IT solutions, and study the behavior of sales representatives during the sales process. Please note that our studies are purely for academic purposes, and your data will remain confidential and will be treated anonymously. Thank you very much for participating!

1. From your experience, which group of people do you tend to interact within the client organization?

- Senior executives (1)
- Procurement team (2)
- C-level executives (3)
- All the above (4)

2. Which are the three attributes that most differentiate you from your competitors?

3. Which of the four drivers influences more the client, during the purchase decision process?

- Brand/company's impact (1)
- Product/customer service (2)
- Price/value relation (3)
- Sales experience (4)

4. How would you rank your selling speech with the clients, based on the way you proposed and describe the solutions?

- _____ Outperforming in terms of risk (1)
- _____ Leading edge and innovative (2)
- _____ Achievable and accomplishable (3)
- _____ Easy to implement (4)
- _____ Great and bold (5)

Next, it will be presented to you a set of statements. Read each statement carefully and using the 1 to 5 scale, score each statement according to your agreement, with how well it describes your personal approach to selling.

1 = Strongly agree 2 = Somewhat agree 3 = Neither agree nor disagree 4 = Somewhat disagree 5 = Strongly disagree

5. In more difficult sales situations, I feel comfortable influencing the client to make a decision.

6. I can effectively discuss pricing and cost concerns with the client on their own terms.

7. I often form enduring and useful relationships with client's employees.

8. I can effectively offer my clients a unique perspective, teaching them new insights on how my company's products and services will improve their business.

9. I am a true expert in the products and services I sell, comfortably exceeding the knowledge that any expert purchaser might have.

10. When negotiating with the client, I understand what drives value with different influencers and adapt my message accordingly.
11. I often risk disapproval in order to express beliefs about what is right for the client.
12. I can identify the key drivers of a client's business and use that information to customize my approach.
13. When it comes to fulfilling client's requests, I usually resolve everything myself.
14. I am likely to spend more time on preparation in advance of any sales calls or meetings as compared to my colleagues.
15. I often conduct business meetings, so that I can have access to important information about the client and its business
16. I like to challenge the client with new insights and ideas, despite it might raise some discussion.
17. I invest on having a close relation with the client's procurement teams.
18. I can have an advantage on the sales process, if I have knowledge about the client's buying process.
19. It's part of my job help the client to avoid possible pitfalls.
20. I look for information or ideas to present to the client, which will restructure the way it faces the business.
21. My job during a sale is to follow my plan, and achieve the outlined goals.
22. I try to promote the acceleration of the client's decision process.
23. The client is who determines how the sale should proceed.
24. I prefer to be the first to contact the client and to show my ideas, instead of being contacted by the client.
25. During the meetings with the client, I try to adapt my speech to the values of the person I'm talking to, and to the company's economic interests.
26. Most of the clients already know exactly what their needs are, and my job is to understand those needs and look for solutions.
27. The demands of the client make it necessary to give in some aspects of the sale proposal.
28. I use my work experience to demonstrate my points of view to the client.
29. The client has more bargaining power, which makes it more difficult to negotiate.

10.7. Questionnaire responses

10.7.1. Responses for question number 1

Senior Executives	Procurement team	C-level Executives	All the above
24	0	16	8

Note: Number of observations per scale category

10.7.2. Responses for question number 2

Product/ Portfolio	Product innovation	Market vision	Brand awareness	Local presence	Focus on customer needs	Support Service
33	7	9	22	8	11	19

10.7.3. Responses for question number 3

Brand / Comany's Impact	Product / Customer Service	Price / Value Relation	Sales Experience
10	23	0	15

10.7.4. Responses for question number 4

10.7.4.1. Ranking: Outperforming in terms of risk

1st place	2nd place	3rd place	4th place	5th place
8	6	0	34	0

10.7.4.2. Ranking: Leading edge and innovative

1st place	2nd place	3rd place	4th place	5th place
28	7	13	0	0

10.7.4.3. Ranking: Achievable and accomplishable

1st place	2nd place	3rd place	4th place	5th place
8	9	28	3	0

10.7.4.4. Ranking: Easy to implement

1st place	2nd place	3rd place	4th place	5th place
4	26	7	11	0

10.7.4.5. Ranking: Great and bold

1st place	2nd place	3rd place	4th place	5th place
0	0	0	0	48

10.7.5. Responses for questions number 5 to 29

Question	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree
5	17	9	6	0	16
6	25	15	0	0	8
7	24	16	0	0	8
8	40	8	0	0	0
9	0	24	8	8	8
10	24	8	0	8	8
11	8	8	0	19	13
12	20	11	0	0	17
13	9	6	0	17	16
14	5	19	11	0	13
15	21	16	0	0	11
16	24	8	8	0	8
17	8	0	33	0	7
18	34	7	0	0	7
19	32	0	0	0	16
20	24	8	8	0	8
21	17	10	13	8	0
22	28	7	6	7	0
23	13	0	0	24	11
24	16	27	0	0	5
25	32	8	0	0	8
26	24	8	0	8	8
27	23	8	17	0	0
28	32	8	0	0	8
29	8	40	0	0	0

Note: Number of observations per scale category