

SPI

SALES PREFERENCE INDICATOR

Manuale tecnico

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The Sales Preference Indicator (SPI) was originally designed to measure 11 core dimensions of sales activity. These dimensions or 'factors' were conceived on the basis of a thorough literature review, an analysis of currently available sales tools, and quantitative performance data from our client pool.

Not all factors predictive of sales were included in this analysis as some variables were related more generically to the concept of 'performance' rather than selling (ie poor problem solving ability has been found to contribute to a drop in performance, including sales performance).

It was the intention of test authors to design the SPI as a supplement to more comprehensive personality tools such as the OPP and 15FQ which have also been found to measure aspects of sales performance. In particular, one's *locus of control* (Badovick, 1990) and *conscientiousness* (Barrick and Mount, 1991) have been well documented in the literature. Cognitive predictors such as verbal ability (Bagozzi, 1978) have also been excluded from the SPI.

The 11 dimensions of sales activity originally included in the SPI were:

Belief in Sales:

The extent to which an individual has emotionally bought into a career in sales;

Adaptive Selling:

(Spiro & Weitz, 1990)

The degree to which an individual is willing and able to adjust their selling style when dealing with different clients;

Emotional Objectivity:

(McBane, 1995)

The ability to empathise with the client and/or customer's situation without buying into their scepticism, distrust or any other negative emotion;

Customer Orientation:

(Sharma & Levy, 1995)

The ability to quickly develop comfort and trust with a client;

Customer Service:

The willingness to go the extra mile for a client and/or customer in the delivery of work output;

Handling Anxiety:

(Strutton, Pelton, & Lumpkin, 1995; Bagozzi, 1978)

The capacity to handle stressful situations and focus attention on positive outcomes and restrict negative self-talk;

Networking:

The willingness to use one's own personal and professional contacts to help open doors and advance opportunities;

Telephone Reluctance:

(Dudley, Goodson, & Barnett, 1995)

The degree to which a person will struggle when required to use a telephone as a prospecting tool;

Organisational Commitment:

(Brett, Cron & Slocum, 1995)

The degree to which an individual places importance on being supported by the organisation and their commitment to work colleagues;

Teamwork:

(Puffer, 1987)

The willingness to work with others, to share ideas, resources and generally assist others in their sales activity;

Social Desirability:

(Crowne and Marlow, 1964)

The extent to which a person has tried to present an overly favourable impression of themselves when answering the questionnaire.

Between 40-60 questions were generated for each scale of the original SPI. This number was then reduced to 10-16 items per scale, which were trialed with over 200 sales staff from a number of public and private sector organisations.

INITIAL ANALYSIS AND FACTOR ANALYSIS

An initial item and correlation analysis of the scales found that there were some scales which had quite high internal consistency such as Networking (Cronbach's alpha .87) while some were quite low (ie Customer Orientation at .49). On average, most scales had internal consistencies between .65 and .80.

Further analysis of the correlations between scales showed that many scales were not independent. For instance, the Networking scale correlated .48 with the Belief in Sales scale. It's correlation with four of the other 11 scales was also over .40. These results were highlighted by a principal component factor analysis with varimax rotation.

Looking at the results of the 11 factor solution many hypothesised scales came out as highly robust scales:

Networking, Social Desirability, and Emotional Objectivity presented the strongest factor structure, while scales such as Adaptive Selling and Teamwork loaded heavily on more than one factor. A few scales did not load particularly highly on any single factor such as Customer Service.

A number of other factor solutions were also investigated and a process of item reduction was then undertaken. Specifically, a range of factor solutions were analysed and items removed from the SPI if they loaded heavily on more than one scale or if they did not load on any scale over a number of factor solutions.

From this process the number of scales were reduced from 11 to 7 and the total number of items in the questionnaire reduced to 68.

The scales that largely remained the same with only minor changes were:

- Adaptive Selling
- Emotional Objectivity
- Networking
- Social Desirability

A number of questionnaire items loaded on more than one factor. These factors were renamed to take into account the changing nature of scale items:

Sales Persona:
included handling anxiety and customer service items;

Organisational Focus:
included organisational commitment and a few team working items;

Competitive:
included team working and a few handling anxiety items.

The Scales that were removed were:

Telephone Reluctance:
this loaded mainly on the Networking scale (correlating .48) and the Emotional Objectivity scale (correlating .42);

Belief in Sales:
did not hold as a single factor and correlated over .25 with five of the six SPI scales. In particular, it loaded highly on the Networking scale (correlating .46);

Customer Orientation:
did not hold as a single factor and loaded mainly on the Emotional Objectivity scale (correlating .62);

Customer Service:
did not hold up as a single factor with only four of the customer service questions making the final cut.

