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## **SalesForce Competency Development Model (Sales) in the Digital Age**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aims to analyze how the sales force competency development model (Sales) in the digital age. The research method used in this study is to use a qualitative method by conducting interviews with 2 subjects who are salespeople in a department store. Based on the results of research that has been done show that the sales force competency development model (sales) in the digital era has implemented the Generic Competency Model for Salespeople from Spencer & Spencer. This competency model consists of twelve generic competencies, namely: Impact and Influence, Achievement Orientation, Initiative, Interpersonal Understanding, Customer Service Orientation, Self-Confidence, Relationship Building, Analytical Thinking, Conceptual Thinking, Information Seeking, Organizational Awareness, and Technical Expertise. The suggestion from researchers is that as a salesperson who is the spearhead of the company, a salesperson is expected to be able to continue to improve their competencies, this can be done by transferring knowledge through training, or learning through other media that can support their competencies in doing so. product selling and increasing their performance.

**Keywords:** Competency model, Sales force, Digital age

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**BACKGROUND**

In the world of industry and organizations, intense competition between companies in the era of the global economy requires companies to always be at the forefront and the best in providing satisfying services to consumers. The competition that occurs is an inseparable part of the company because this competition is an important element in formulating the right marketing strategy so that it can provide positive benefits for the company in increasing sales volume and market share to win the competitive market. What's more, in today's all-digital era, many marketplaces have sprung up and of course, make it easier for individuals to buy an item. This of course also has an impact on shops, supermarkets, and even traditional markets which are starting to become quiet. Even some supermarkets began to close their outlets.

As for one company strategy that can be used as a way to support the successful sales of the company's products, namely quality human resources. In line with this, Seong & Hong (2005) stated that sales personnel or sales are one of the company's human resources who have a role in achieving company goals.

Sujan, et.al., (1994) explain that to achieve effective sales performance, it is necessary to have a sales force who has a high level of performance. Verbeke, et.al., (2008) also states that the salesperson's performance is controlled by the salesperson itself based on the salesperson's behavior and the results obtained by the salesperson. As an effort to improve sales force performance and competence, companies need to provide training to salespeople through education, management training, increasing product knowledge through media, and so on.

Rehme & Rennhak (2011) explain that sales training is often defined as a tool to increase sales force productivity, stimulate communication within and outside the organization, reduce inter and intra-departmental misunderstandings, improve supervision, increase sales force morale and reduce sales costs.

In line with this, Bielecki, Andre, Albers, & Mantrala (2012) explain that a salesperson's performance depends on the goal of a smart work pattern orientation (*working smart*) can be developed and implemented by salespeople by allocating and coordinating resources more effectively and efficiently. Further also explained that the process of adaptation taken from orientation pattern smart work (*working smart*) which in turn will direct the sales force for creative thinking and gain an advantage over their work (Bielecki et.al., 2012).

In the all-digital era today, as a salesman, *sales* are required to be able to master the use of the internet, especially social media. This is because based on internetlivestats.com data in 2016, Indonesian internet users were the 12th largest in the world with a total of 53,236,719 or 20.4% of the total population. Data from the market research institute eMarketer, Indonesia's *online* population amounts to 73 million people. Hootsuite and we are social services in January 2017 stated that Indonesia was in the top rank as a country with a growth rate of internet users, namely 51% since January 2016. In other words, the data above shows that 20-30% of Indonesia's population is internet users.

In connection with this data, the potential to get business profits from the internet every year is enormous. The use of the internet in business has changed from a function as a tool for electronic information exchange to a tool for business strategy applications, such as sales, customer service, marketing strategy without exception.

Marketing could be said to be the spearhead of a company's success. The increasingly fierce business competition requires companies to continue to survive and develop more

effectively and efficiently. Therefore, a salesperson needs to understand the main problems in his field and formulate strategies to achieve company goals and targets. Dalrymple, Cron, & Decarlo (2001) explain that to survive, the sales force needs a range of competencies that are thought to contribute to the overall success of the company. Suryanto (2007) explains that marketing is a business function that identifies consumer needs that must be satisfied by other human activities, which results in a means of satisfying needs in the form of goods or services. Marketing is one of the main activities carried out by entrepreneurs to maintain the continuity of the economy, to develop, and to make a profit.

On the other hand, technological developments make conditions more dynamic and require companies to move along with existing progress if they don't want to be left behind or want to compete with competitors in similar businesses. Associated with the economic principle where a person always wants as much profit as possible and always increases without losing the operational costs incurred. Therefore, in the current era of *new media*, many businesses that are developing in society have begun to switch and utilize digital media to market their business products, namely by using online media as interactive mass media compared to previous conventional media. Kovach, Tom & Rosenstiel (2006) stated that there was a cross between consumers and producers or prosumers. This situation is interpreted as a condition where social media users who publish marketing messages can be the target of marketing messages by other users.

In line with the explanation above related to technological developments as a means to develop marketing methods that can be used by Sales, it is necessary to remember that before the emergence of various social media, the marketing strategy used by *Sales* was through word of mouth, or directly offering the products they were selling. Beside consumers used to get information by word of mouth, newspaper advertisements, radio advertisements, and television advertisements with the nature of messages being sent one way. But now with advances in information technology that are reflected in the development of computers and the internet, consumers can get a lot of information by only using what is called a multimedia computer (Ustadiyanto, 2002).

Moreover, this time the Sales also be able to integrate the new media (new media) on the implementation of the marketing strategy. Social media, which is a product of new media, is an adaptive marketing tool in campaigning a product. Facebook provides easy access to several functional features as well as artificial intelligence that can deliver advertisements according to marketing targets. Advertising on Facebook is one of the best options in Internet marketing. There are no other social media features that can allow advertisers to specifically target their users like the surgery on Facebook. The public can also advertise for less than the cost of offline or print advertising with the same targeting. Even so, advertising using Facebook is not as easy as expected. Facebook ads work differently from banner ads or search engine click-through ads. Users respond to ads differently depending on demographics and social norms, some ads work better than others. The success of advertising on Facebook is dexterous monitoring, experimentation, patience, and creativity (Treadway & Smith, 2010).

Even now, product selling companies can also market their products through the marketplace or other social media such as Instagram, youtube ads, google ads, etc. The sophistication of the technology like this makes the Sales need to improve their competence.

The discussion related to the sales force (Sales) is very interesting. Especially now that we are entering the digital era, where everyone today cannot be separated from social media. They can even fulfill their daily needs by shopping through social media. Research related to salesforce (Sales) has indeed been carried out a lot, for example, related to online

marketing strategies (Asse, 2018), sales force performance (Hapsari, Soesanto, & Soegiono, 2017), and so on. However, research on the development of sales force competencies (Sales) in the digital era is still rare. Therefore, this research is expected to serve as a reference regarding how the sales force competency development model (Sales) is in the digital era.

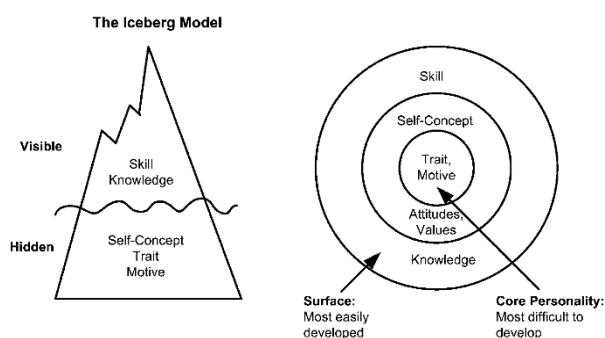
The salesforce is a human resource that has a role in achieving company goals (Seong & Hong, 2005). Salespeople (sales) work to offer or market goods and or services to consumers through various marketing methods or strategies.

Marketing can be said to be the spearhead of a company's success. The increasingly fierce business competition requires companies to continue to survive and develop more effectively and efficiently. Therefore, a salesperson needs to understand the main problems in his field and formulate strategies to achieve company goals and targets. Dalrymple, Cron, & Decarlo (2001) explain that to survive, the sales force needs a range of competencies that are thought to contribute to the overall success of the company.

### Competency Model

The competency model is a complete set of competencies and indicator behavior. Spencer & Spencer (1993) define individual characteristics related to the criteria of effective and/or best performance in carrying out a task or facing a situation. Competence is not only an innate ability, but competence can be obtained through learning and experience.

Spencer & Spencer (1993) explained that the characteristics contained in competency can be seen through the behavioral indicators (key behavior) that can be displayed. Key behavior) is a behavior needed to achieve excellent performance in a certain position? According to the iceberg model (Spencer & Spencer, 1993), competencies that contain knowledge and skills tend to be more visible and on the surface of human character. Knowledge and skills are relatively easy to develop through training. Self-concept, traits, and motives are more hidden (hidden), depth (deeper), and became the center of the personality. Motives and trait are the basic core of the personality so difficult to measure and developed. Self-concepts that lie in the middle of your life can be changed through training, psychotherapy, and/or experiences, but they can be time-consuming and difficult. The iceberg model can be seen in the illustration image below.



**Figure 1. The Iceberg Model (Spencer & Spencer, 1993)**

Competence is always composed of a personal characteristic, namely motives, traits, and self-concept that supports the use of knowledge and skill in the behavior (behavior) that latter can predict the job performance of a worker. The competency model according to Spencer & Spencer (1993) is a set of success factors (competencies) that includes key behavior which is a reflection of the skills and knowledge needed to achieve excellent performance in a certain position.

In this study, the preparation of the competence model salesperson (Sales) prepared by Generic Competency Model for Salespeople of Spencer & Spencer (1993). This

competency model consists of twelve generic competencies, namely impact and influence (the ability to influence consumers to buy products), Achievement Orientation (the ability to increase efficiency and effectiveness at work), Initiative (the ability to capture and use existing opportunities), Interpersonal Understanding (the ability to understand attitudes and needs of consumers), Customer Service Orientation (the ability to serve consumers), Self-Confidence (beliefs about one's own abilities), Relationship Building (the ability to establish good relationships with consumers), Analytical Thinking (the ability to think logically and systematically), Conceptual Thinking (the ability to recognize patterns and draw conclusions), Information Seeking (the ability to find as complete information as possible), Organizational Awareness (the ability to understand work mechanisms and organizational structures), and Technical Expertise (the ability to master the strengths and weaknesses of the company's products).

## METHODS

This research method uses a qualitative approach with a descriptive approach. This aims to describe and find out how the development of sales competencies in an all-digital era like today.

The data collection used in this study used direct and indirect interview techniques and was carried out in a structured manner, in which the researcher met the two subjects one by one to conduct direct interviews. The researcher also contacted the sources one by one to conduct interviews via video call and personal chat via WhatsApp to obtain additional relevant information.

NO	NAME	DESCRIPTION
1	Initial "A"	Sales force departement store, length of working 2 years
2	Initial "B"	Sales force departement store, length of working 3 years

## RESULTS

Based on the results of interviews conducted by researchers, the second subject in this study can adapt to using digital applications. Besides, based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers, especially social media, it has also been applied both in terms of sales initiatives and from the side of the company. From the sales side, the use of social media is used as a means to offer products and A to customers, while from the company side, they also have an online shop (marketplace), and implement the sending of shopping receipts to each customer's email which can be used as a database in the order to offer their latest product.

To carry out sales promotions, the second subject of this study also contacted their customers via Whatsapp and carried out promotions on their social media accounts using words that could attract potential customers. The example of the promotional sentence used is "free from home with 50% discount + free shipping". Besides, they also contact customers based on WhatsApp numbers that have been registered when customers make transactions (Subject Interview, 2020).

## DISCUSSION

Competence is closely related to the ability to manage work processes, human relationships and build interactions with other people, for example; leadership, communication, interpersonal relationships, and others. Spencer & Spencer (1993) through



the iceberg models, explained that the competency containing knowledge and skill tends to look more real (visible) and is located on the surface of the human character. Knowledge and skills are relatively easy to develop through training. Self-concept, traits, and motives are more hidden (hidden), depth (deeper), and became the center of the personality. Therefore, it can be explained that these competencies become a reference as a competency development model for salespeople in the digital era.

According to Spencer & Spencer (1993), it is a set of success factors (competencies) that includes key behaviors which are a reflection of the skills and knowledge needed to achieve excellent performance in a certain position. Preparation of a competency model in the sales force (sales) at one department store in the town of Kediri by using Generic Competency Model for Salespeople of Spencer & Spencer (1993). The competency model consists of twelve generic competencies, namely: Impact and Influence, Achievement Orientation, Initiative, Interpersonal Understanding, Customer Service Orientation, Self-Confidence, Relationship Building, Analytical Thinking, Conceptual Thinking, Information Seeking, Organizational Awareness, and Technical Expertise.

Impact and influence is the ability of sales to work to increase their credibility or to give a certain impression to customers through their behavior or speech based on facts, information and data so as to influence customers to buy Spencer & Spencer products (1993). Based on the results of observations and interviews with a salesperson with the initials "A", which explains that in interacting with customers, they tend to use a low speaking tone, besides that they also carry out promotions through their social media using words that can attract customers to ask about products. The example of the promotional sentence used is "enjoy the convenience of shopping from home with a 50% discount + free shipping". In addition, they also contact their customers based on the WhatsApp number that has been registered when the customer makes a transaction (Subject Interview, 2020).

Achievement Orientation is the ability of sales to measure their work performance which leads to actions that allow themselves to work as well as possible Spencer & Spencer (1993). Based on the results of an interview with a subject with the initials "I" explained that "as Sales Promotion Boy (SPB), they have certain targets that have been determined by the company if the target is achieved, they usually get other benefits besides incentives, namely being able to take leave during holidays (Saturday and or weeks), and salespeople whose department meets the target, they also get benefits in the form of being able to go home on time even on vacation together". From the results of the information presented by the subject, it can be seen that achievement orientation in the form of rewards given by the company can spur sales performance so that sales can be more motivated to make sales according to the targets set by the company.

The initiative is the sales ability to seize or use existing opportunities or to solve problems quickly and effectively without waiting for orders from Spencer & Spencer (1993). In this model, things that are done by one of the subjects with the initial "A", namely the subject call or greets their customers via WhatsApp messages, usually, apart from greeting customers, the subject also offers several products that are on promotion or have discounted prices. According to the subject, this is effectively done, in addition to selling in the offline store, the activity of offering products in the online store is also quite effective and can help the subject to meet sales targets. Although these initiatives are not carried out by all salespeople.

Interpersonal understanding is the sales ability to understand the attitudes, interests, needs, and views of customers by paying attention to their behavior, feelings, and moods. Spencer & Spencer (1993). Based on the results of interviews and observations made by

researchers, the subject helps customers when they are confused about choosing goods, usually, salespeople ask about the budget and general description of the products that are owned and needed by the customer, so that sales can offer the same product but with different prices and models. This behavior carried out by sales shows that interpersonal understanding has been applied, if reviewed based on the results of observations, this behavior is shown when sales weigh the budget and the needs of the customer with the goods to be sold and offered to the customer so that the customer can buy goods. according to their budget and needs without the need to be afraid of a low budget.

Customer service orientation is the ability of sales to serve customers as advisers in making important decisions Spencer & Spencer (1993). In this model, it is almost the same as the interpersonal understanding model, in which sales provide suggestions and considerations without forcing customers to buy their products. Besides that, with the advice given by sales, customers can still buy goods that suit their needs.

Self-confidence is sales beliefs about one's own ability to achieve company targets and self-confidence to accept challenges at work and be willing to take responsibility for problems or failures that may occur Spencer & Spencer (1993). Self-confidence model, seen when sales in one department do not meet the target, they accept that they cannot get the benefit. Also, every month the salespeople have personal targets, which can motivate them to work and meet their targets.

Relationship building is the sales ability to establish good relationships with customers and potential customers in gaining trust and convenience in selling products of the company Spencer & Spencer (1993). Based on the interview on the subject with the initials "A", obtained by the explanation that when held work from home, the supervisor of sales, ask the sales to contact the customer them every morning, to give the product offering and the ease of shopping from home and do advertising on the status WhatsApp them. This aims to attract customers who are afraid to leave the house during this pandemic, while still being able to shop safely from home. Also, on weekdays (outside the pandemic period) sales receive questions regarding products and complaints from customers via personal messages (via WhatsApp) so that the relationship between customers and sales can be built. Based on this explanation, it can be seen that the relationship-building model applied by sales in department stores can be seen when salespeople greet customers and offer their products, as well as the willingness of sales to keep in touch to receive questions about products and complaints from customers outside of working hours.

Analytical thinking is the sales ability to think logically and systematically about information and the impact or difficulty that can affect the achievement of the best performance of Spencer & Spencer (1993). In this analytical thinking model, if it is reviewed based on the results of observations and interviews, it can be seen when salespeople receive new items which they think will find it difficult to sell because of a shortage of enthusiasts in the market, but they still sell these products by thinking about the impact it will receive when selling products to customer. Of course, in terms of the company, they will also carry out a market analysis before making a product, so that the products produced can still be sold in the market.

Conceptual thinking is the ability of sales to recognize patterns or consistency in their interactions with customers and draw conclusions or decisions from problems and negotiations by Spencer & Spencer (1993). Based on the results of observations and interviews on the subject "A", it is explained that the subject will usually observe the conversation carried out with the customer, from the conversation, the subject can find out whether the customer intends to buy or discourage buying due to insufficient budget. So

that's where the subject can decide whether to offer another product or let the customer look for the product elsewhere.

Information seeking is the sales ability to seek as complete information as possible about the company's products, customers, potential customers, and customer needs, as well as about Spencer & Spencer (1993) competitors. This information-seeking model can be seen from the results of interviews conducted by researchers on the subject "I" which explains that when new goods arrive, salespeople have started looking for information related to product quality, product prices, the product uses, how to use the product, etc. So that with such information, sales can offer and determine what potential customers are in accordance with the product.

Organizational awareness is the sales ability to understand the working mechanism and organizational structure of the customer company and Spencer & Spencer (1993). Based on the results of the interviews, the organizational awareness model is reflected in the sales behavior that follows the procedures (SOP) made by the company. For example, the workflow when the goods arrive, the workflow when the customer returns goods due to damage, etc.

Technical expertise is the sales ability to master any strengths and weaknesses of the company's products, Spencer & Spencer (1993). This technical expertise is almost the same as the information-seeking model, in which salespeople learn about their trade products, starting in terms of quality, quantity, price, how to use, how to store products, etc.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that the Generic Competency Model for Salespeople competency development model from Spencer & Spencer (1993) has been applied by salespeople in one of the department stores in Kediri. This can be seen from the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers on 2 subjects who have applied the twelve generic competency models, namely: Impact and Influence, Achievement Orientation, Initiative, Interpersonal Understanding, Customer Service Orientation, Self-Confidence, Relationship Building, Analytical Thinking, Conceptual Thinking, Information Seeking, Organizational Awareness, and Technical Expertise.

Also, based on the results of observations and interviews conducted by researchers, the use of technology, especially social media, has been implemented both in terms of sales initiatives and from the company side. From the sales side, the use of social media is used as a means to offer products and interact with customers, while from the company side, they also have an online shop (marketplace), and implement the sending of shopping receipts to the e-mail of each customer which can be used at the same time. database to offer their latest products.

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