

Communication Alignment in Sales: The Role of Emotional Intelligence

Due to the current global COVID-19 pandemic, salespeople are increasingly reliant on technology to navigate the sales process because of restrictions on travel and in-person meetings. The success of the sales encounter is dependent upon the salesperson's ability to effectively select the appropriate communication platform. While literature surrounding task-technology fit has explored the degree to which technology supports the ability to accomplish a task, there has been little focus on whether salespeople are effectively adapting their technology usage to align with their customers' communication preferences. Not using the customers' preferred communication platform can lead to customer displeasure and alienation, ultimately causing a decrease in customer loyalty. In this manuscript, we propose a study that examines the relationship between a salesperson's emotional intelligence and the ability to select an appropriate communication platform that best aligns to the customers' needs. Expanding upon existing theoretical groundings in adaptive selling and task-technology fit, we propose that the ability of salespeople to recognize the need to adapt the communication platform used, based on customers' preferences, positively impacts customer loyalty and the B2B relationship.

Keywords: communication channels; emotional intelligence; sales; task-technology fit; customer loyalty; COVID-19