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**COMPARING CUSTOMER AND SALES REPRESENTATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF
CUSTOMER ORIENTATION: AN APPLICATION OF THE SOCO SCALE
IN AN INDUSTRIAL SERVICE COMPANY**

by

JOANNE HUNT, B.COMM (HONOURS)

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Management Studies

School of Business

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

January 3, 1990

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COMPARING CUSTOMER AND SALES REPRESENTATIVE PERCEPTIONS OF
CUSTOMER ORIENTATION: AN APPLICATION OF THE SOCO SCALE
IN AN INDUSTRIAL SERVICE COMPANY

submitted by Joanne Hunt B.Comm (Honours) in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of Master in Management Studies.

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January 19, 1990

ABSTRACT

This thesis provides an examination of the level of customer orientation exhibited by salespeople in an industrial service organization. To determine the level of customer orientation, the Selling Orientation - Customer Orientation (SOCO) Scale was administered to sales representatives and customers of Infotech Limited - the Canadian subsidiary of a multi-national supplier of business services.

In this thesis, analyses were conducted to examine the differences between the levels of customer orientation reported by the sales representatives for themselves and customers for the sales representatives. These differences were examined in the company overall as well as in an extended sample where sales representatives were matched with their individual customers. The results of this analysis were compared to previous research employing the SOCO Scale. Lastly, exploratory research was conducted with respect to the variables affecting reported levels of customer orientation.

Overall, sales representatives consistently reported significantly higher levels of customer orientation than their customers and the scores were found to be significantly different. The difference between the sales representative and customer scores was .87 scale points on a scale of 1 to

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9. As well, 20 sales representatives were matched to their customers and even here significant differences were found. On average, the sales representative scores were 1.16 scale points higher than their customers. In comparing the findings of this study to previous research conducted using unrelated samples, the scores of sales representatives and customers moved closer together in related samples (.87 differential) versus the unrelated samples (2.00 differential). However, significant differences were consistently reported between the sales representative and customer scores.

A number of factors also emerged as being related to the SOCO Scores reported. These included level of experience of the sales representative, level of interaction with customers, and management support of customer oriented sales efforts. The results of this research suggest that in measuring level of customer orientation, samples of both customers and sales representatives should be utilized since significant differences in their perceptions of customer orientation have consistently been found.

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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

For reasons of confidentiality, the name of the company participating in this research, its divisions and executives have been disguised. However, the figures and resulting analyses throughout the thesis have not been altered from their original form.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS	vii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF APPENDICES	xii
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES	1
The Research Problem	2
Purpose and Objectives of the Research	3
Contribution of this Study to Researchers	5
Contribution of this Study to Managers	7
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	9
Customer Orientation	10
Definitions	10
Background	12
Empirical Research	14
Roles and Selling Styles of Industrial Salespeople	19
Roles of Industrial Salespeople	19
Selling Styles of Industrial Salespeople	22
Managing the Sales Force	24
The Selling Orientation-Customer Orientation (SOCO) Scale	26
Conclusion	32

1985). It has been suggested that servicing the client base and becoming customer oriented is this strategic tool (Kyj 1987). Sales managers have recognized the importance of retaining the client base once contracts are initially obtained and the customer orientation of salespeople has become an important marketing tool for doing this. Therefore, customer orientation is seen as key for obtaining an advantage in highly competitive industrial markets.

The Research Problem

Many companies are adopting long-term client outlooks. As a result of adopting this orientation, managers have become more concerned with ensuring that their salespeople are not only generating new sales but also servicing the existing client base. However, measuring the level of customer orientation exhibited by salespeople is difficult. A search of the literature revealed that an instrument (the Selling Orientation - Customer Orientation Scale) had been developed to measure industrial sales representatives' perceptions of their own customer orientation (Saxe and Weitz 1982). In research using this scale, Saxe and Weitz measured the level of customer orientation of a random sample of sales representatives. The SOCO Scale was slightly modified by

CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS

Interaction Prior To Sale	82
Performance Rating	83
Management Attitudes Towards Customer Orientation	84
Percentage of Interactions Initiated By Customer	85
Status of Customer	86
Customer Perception of Infotech	86
Why Customers Purchase From Infotech	88
Relationships Among Selected Variables	92

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS 96

Reported Levels of Customer Orientation	96
Matched Record SOCO Scores	101
Sales Representatives' Evaluation of Other Sales Representatives	102
Comparison To Previous Studies	103
Relationships Between Selected Variables and SOCO Scores Reported	105
Sales Representative Level of Experience	105
Level of Interaction, Repeat Sales and Average Sale Size	107
Management Support of Customer Orientation	109
Customer Perceptions of Infotech	111

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION 113

Strengths and Limitations	114
Implications of this Study for Researchers	116
Implications of this Study for Managers	117
Future Research	120
Conclusion	121

REFERENCES 123

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. NUMBER OF SALES REPRESENTATIVES IN INFOTECH	38
2. NUMBER OF INFOTECH CUSTOMERS SAMPLED	43
3. SALES REPRESENTATIVE SELF-ASSESSMENT MEAN SOCO SCORES	55
4. CUSTOMER EVALUATION OF REPRESENTATIVES MEAN SOCO SCORES	56
5. T-TESTS BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES' SOCO SCORES AND CUSTOMERS' SOCO SCORES	58
6. SALES REPRESENTATIVES' EVALUATION OF OTHER SALES REPRESENTATIVES (MEAN OSOCO SCORES)	60
7. SALES REPRESENTATIVE SOCO AND OSOCO SCORES	61
8. T-TEST BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES' SOCO AND OSOCO SCORES	62
9. T-TEST BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES' OSOCO AND XSOCO SCORES	63
10. COMPARATIVE DATA USING THE SOCO SCALE	64
11. DIVISION A CUSTOMER SOCO SCORES	67
12. T-TEST BETWEEN DIVISION A SAMPLES	68
13. MATCHED RECORD SOCO SCORES	69
14. T-TEST BETWEEN SALES REPRESENTATIVE SOCO SCORES AND HIS/HER CUSTOMER SOCO SCORES	71
15. % CASES REPORTING A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE IN SOCO SCORES	72
16. SUMMARY STATISTICS OF SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS (P <.05) BETWEEN SELECTED VARIABLES AND SOCO SCORES	76
17. T-TEST OF REPRESENTATIVE GENDER ON SOCO SCORES	79

18.	T-TEST OF CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTIONS OF INFOTECH ON SOCO SCORES	87
19.	CORRELATION BETWEEN WHYBUY AND SOCO SCORES	89
20.	SOCO SCORES OF CUSTOMERS RANKING INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES IN FIRST PLACE	92
21.	CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SELECTED VARIABLES (P <.05)	93
22.	CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SELECTED VARIABLES (MATCHED SAMPLE - P <.05)	94

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix	Page
A. Sales Representative Questionnaire	127
B. Customer Questionnaire	134
C. Contents of Mailed Packages	139
D. Reminder Letter and Card	149

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The role of the sales team in an organization has traditionally included such tasks as prospecting for new clients as well as selling, servicing, and renewing existing clients. It has been very common for sales representatives to be charged with the task of new account development and also the responsibility for managing existing relationships with the client base (Narus and Anderson 1986; Deutscher et al. 1982). In recent years there has been an increased amount of attention directed toward the servicing of existing accounts in order to retain long-term client involvement. The increasing importance of "relationship management" is evidenced by the increasing number of National Account Managers (NAMS) being trained in industrial firms (Shapiro and Wyman 1981).

The reason often cited for this increased attention to long-term relationship management is growing competition in many industrial markets. Competitiveness has intensified the need for companies to find the tool that will give them "the edge" in their respective markets (Williams and Seminerio

1985). It has been suggested that servicing the client base and becoming customer oriented is this strategic tool (Kyj 1987). Sales managers have recognized the importance of retaining the client base once contracts are initially obtained and the customer orientation of salespeople has become an important marketing tool for doing this. Therefore, customer orientation is seen as key for obtaining an advantage in highly competitive industrial markets.

The Research Problem

Many companies are adopting long-term client outlooks. As a result of adopting this orientation, managers have become more concerned with ensuring that their salespeople are not only generating new sales but also servicing the existing client base. However, measuring the level of customer orientation exhibited by salespeople is difficult. A search of the literature revealed that an instrument (the Selling Orientation - Customer Orientation Scale) had been developed to measure industrial sales representatives' perceptions of their own customer orientation (Saxe and Weitz 1982). In research using this scale, Saxe and Weitz measured the level of customer orientation of a random sample of sales representatives. The SOCO Scale was slightly modified by

Michaels and Day (1985) in terms of applicable wording to measure customers' perceptions of the level of customer orientation exhibited by salespeople. Michaels and Day (1985) compared customers' perceptions of sales representative customer orientation with the Saxe and Weitz study (1982) of the perceptions of sales representatives regarding their own level of customer orientation. They found that sales representatives rated themselves as significantly more customer oriented than did customers (2 scale point difference). Michaels and Day (1985) concluded their paper with speculations as to why this difference was found. Possible upward bias in self-report was cited in terms of the sales representatives self-evaluation. As well, downward bias on the part of the customers was suggested in terms of overall negative stereotypical views of salespeople that may still exist. A combination of these factors may have resulted in the two scale point difference. The result may, of course, also have reflected no biases but rather existing differences between the sales forces being evaluated.

Purpose and Objectives of the Research

In view of the importance of customer orientation in today's selling climate, the measurement of customer

orientation is very important. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to eliminate some of the external effects in the previous research studies measuring customer orientation. This research replicates previous research conducted by administering the SOCO Scale to buyers and sellers. However, the buyers and sellers in this study consist of related samples of sales representatives and customers of one company in the industrial service sector. This research further extends the previous research by matching individual sales representatives to their specific customers to determine differences in reported levels of customer orientation.

Four research objectives were established for the research study. They are as follows:

1. To determine the level of customer orientation of the sales representatives in an industrial service company as perceived by sales representatives and customers (mean scores for the company and divisions).
2. To compare the mean scores of this study to the previous two studies conducted (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Michaels and Day 1985) .

3. To determine the correlation between SOCO scores of individual sales representatives and the SOCO scores given to them by their own customers.

4. To determine the relationship between selected descriptive variables and the SOCO scores reported by sales representatives and customers.

Contribution of this Study to Researchers

This research study was developed to extend previous research that had been conducted employing the Selling Orientation - Customer Orientation (SOCO) Scale (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Michaels and Day 1985). The two previous studies tested 1) a random sample of sales representatives to measure their customer orientation and 2) a random sample of purchasers regarding the level of customer orientation exhibited by the salespeople with whom they interact. It is possible that the significant difference in customer orientation reported by the sales representatives and customers could be attributed to two features of the earlier research: 1) the sales representative and customer samples were unrelated and ranged across many industries and 2) the studies were conducted during different time periods.

This research study replicated the previous studies in that the SOCO Scale was used to measure the customer orientation of salesperson and customer samples. However, this study was designed to allow an analysis of salespeople and their customers. Salespeople were surveyed regarding their perceived level of customer orientation. Customers were asked to report on the customer orientation of these same sales representatives. As well, both groups were surveyed during the same time period.

A further extension was conducted within one division of Infotech Limited. This particular division was analyzed in depth matching individual salespeople with a larger extended sample of their specific clients. Comparisons were made between the individual scores of the sales representatives and their own clients.

In summary, the research methodological contribution consists of 1) testing salespeople and the clients with whom they interact rather than two unrelated samples to determine the differences that exist in perception of the sales representatives customer orientation and 2) extending the research even further to compare the SOCO scores of individual sales representatives and their specific clients. Results will generate recommendations to researchers attempting to

measure sales representatives' customer orientation.

Contribution of this Study to Managers

The company that participated in this research study, Infotech Limited, is presently trying to become more customer oriented. To assist in this transition, Infotech initiated a customer orientation program in 1987 with the objectives of 1) formally recognizing individuals who are very customer oriented in their interaction with clients and 2) creating awareness within the company of the need to be customer oriented. However, senior management was uncertain about the existing level of customer orientation among sales representatives in the company, and they did not know how to measure it. A major purpose of this study was to determine the level of customer orientation of Infotech's sales representatives. As well, the results would be useful to other managers interested in methods available for measuring the level of customer orientation in other companies.

The sales representatives and customers were surveyed using the SOCO Scale. Customer surveys are useful to supplier organizations for a variety of reasons. It is important to stay in touch with customers to ensure that their needs are being met. Dubinsky and Staples (1981) stated that it is

useful to conduct surveys to determine whether or not the firm's salespeople are continuing to act in the customers' best interests.

The remaining chapters of this thesis will describe the research that was conducted. Chapter 2 will provide information regarding the present literature that exists concerning customer orientation and the changing roles of salespeople. Chapter 3 will detail the methodology employed for this study. Chapter 4 will present the findings of the study. In Chapter 5, the findings will be discussed and conclusions will be drawn. Finally, the thesis document will conclude with a brief summary and recommendations for future research in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature in the area of customer orientation is quite varied. Although a trend toward customer focus in industrial selling has been occurring over the last twenty years, much of the published literature has been normative in nature rather than empirical. However, during the last five years, researchers have begun to assess customer orientation empirically (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Michaels and Day 1985; Parasuraman et al. 1988).

The literature review will be organized into three (3) sections reflecting the type of literature that is available. First, customer orientation will be defined and discussed in detail through an examination of the more theoretical/normative literature. Substantive evidence will be provided regarding the trend toward customer service and its importance in sales force development. Empirical work on customer orientation will also be reviewed.

Second, there is abundant literature regarding the changing roles of industrial salespeople. Their specific roles will be briefly analyzed with respect to the tasks

performed daily, changing responsibilities, industry differences, and effects on the selling process. The changing role provides further evidence of the shift to customer oriented selling.

Third, the literature review will provide an in-depth analysis of the empirical work done by Saxe and Weitz (1982) and Michaels and Day (1985) in developing and testing a scale designed to measure the Selling Orientation - Customer Orientation of sales representatives - the SOCO Scale. The SOCO Scale has been utilized in the current study, therefore, particular attention will be paid to this research in the literature review.

Customer Orientation

Definitions

Selling has been defined as personal interaction for the purpose of facilitating exchange to mutual advantage (Enis 1979). The word "mutual" is used in this definition leading one to believe that there should be benefits obtained by both parties in the selling process.

Lalonde and Zinszer (1976) define customer service as:

"...a set of activities used by a firm to win and

retain customers. These activities can take place prior to, during or after the actual transaction."

Often in a relatively homogeneous market where there is little product differentiation, customer service is one of the only tools available to win clients. It is used extensively in many industries especially those that are unable to compete purely on the basis of price (Wagner and LaGarce 1981). The recognition that customer service is a key competitive weapon has led the drive towards customer oriented selling.

Customer oriented selling has been defined as putting the customer's interests ahead of the salesperson's or selling company's interests (Swan, Trawick and Silva 1985). Satisfying customers' needs is the requirement in this type of sales approach. Many companies have realized that by serving customers well, they serve themselves (Business Week 1984). Saxe provided the following definition of customer orientation:

"The term 'customer orientation' refers to a way of doing business on the part of salespeople. It refers to the degree to which salespeople try to help their customers. The aim of highly customer oriented salespeople is to help their customers make purchase decisions that will satisfy them. High customer orientation implies that salespeople take actions aimed at increasing the probability of

long-term customer satisfaction, and also that they do not take actions which lessen that probability."
(Saxe 1980, 11)

Background

If customer service is the goal for an organization, this must be conveyed through the salespeople. Salespeople operate in front line positions within the company and impressions left by these individuals will create the image as perceived by customers (Dowling 1986). Salespeople will convey the desired image to their clients based on direction received from management. A customer oriented philosophy needs to be projected from senior management through the ranks in an organization. Based on Lalonde and Zinszer's (1976) work on customer service, the first step in an overall customer service process is to have a written corporate policy statement in that regard. Kyj (1987) also found that firms in his study possessing formal policy statements regarding customer service assigned greater importance to customer service items identified.

Goals concerning customer service and long-term contract acquisition force sales representatives to become more interested in maintaining relationships established with customers. Hakasson and Wootz (1979) argued that

relationships between organizations could not be maintained or strengthened solely by exchanging goods and services. Further relationship management is required. In maintaining the relationship, the customer oriented salesperson may assume short-term losses in terms of sacrificing an immediate sale for the probability of future sales that would better meet the needs of the client (Saxe and Weitz 1982).

Sellers and buyers form the initial base for establishing relationships on behalf of the firms they represent. One way that companies have nurtured these relationships is through the development of National Account Managers (NAMS). These individuals target the largest accounts and provide them with special service in order to maintain the relationships and allow the accounts continued growth (Barrett 1986). Essentially NAMS make sure that their clients are aware of the range of services that are available and how they would benefit the buying organizations in terms of direct applications. It is important, at all times, to maintain the relationship in positive working order. These clients tend to provide the greatest amount of revenue to the selling organizations in the long run. The emergence of NAMS in the industrial market provides further evidence of the importance of customer orientation to the long-term growth of

an organization.

Inherent in this need to establish long-term relationships is the requirement for trust to be established between the buyer and the seller. In a business relationship this is sometimes difficult especially with the somewhat negative reputation that has long been associated with sales. However accurate or inaccurate, historical stereotypes are not completely forgotten (Weeks and Muehling 1987). If a client believes that a salesperson is trying to deceive him/her, the customer is less likely to trust the salesperson's arguments regarding the benefits of using a particular product or service even if the statements are true (Spiro and Perreault 1979).

Businesses can no longer afford "quick and dirty" approaches since long-term contracts will ensure the longevity of the company. The gratification of an immediate sale has been replaced by the need for a well-serviced clientele that will continue to bring money into the business in the years to come.

Empirical Research

Customer orientation has been examined empirically by researchers interested in determining which tasks performed

by salespeople are specifically customer oriented. Dubinsky and Staples (1981) conducted a study to identify various selling techniques used by industrial salespeople. They analyzed questionnaires from 181 salespeople in 42 companies representing 15 industries. The majority of the respondents were from manufacturing or service oriented firms. Sixty-one selling techniques were identified from the literature and were analyzed by the salespeople in terms of techniques leading to successful sales performances in their industries. Dubinsky and Staples found that:

"...salespeople seem to prefer selling techniques that help them identify correctly the needs and problems of their customers and to cater to their needs before and after the sale."

(Dubinsky and Staples 1981, 18)

Their results indicated that the industrial salespeople surveyed were indeed buyer oriented. This was evidenced in terms of the importance they attached to the customer oriented sales techniques. As well, since the salespeople were evaluating the techniques based on whether or not they would lead to successful performances, the salespeople basically affirmed that, in their opinion, customer orientation would produce the desired results. The

results were analyzed in terms of the various steps in the sales process ranging from prospecting to post-sale follow-up. At each successive stage in the sales process the salespeople remained buyer oriented. The findings may have a more positive bias towards buyer orientation due to the industries examined since service oriented firms comprised a large part of the sample.

Kyj (1987) also conducted a study designed to determine the extent to which customer service was utilized in the industrial market. He developed a list of 61 items of possible customer services. A completed sample of 169 respondents in manufacturing firms ranked the items on a seven point scale ranging from not important to very important in terms of the particular service's importance to their sales success. Regardless of industry, the respondents felt that they used customer service as a competitive tool. Within the various manufacturing industries, between 70% and 86% of all firms believed that they used customer service as a competitive weapon. However, these results were viewed somewhat skeptically and Kyj stated that:

"...customer service may be akin to motherhood and honesty - no one wants to be against it. Even though firms in this survey have overwhelmingly endorsed the use of customer service, questions remain as to how many actually implement a customer

service philosophy throughout the organization."
(Kyj 1987, 227)

Obviously companies believe that it is in their best interest to state that they are customer oriented especially for the sake of their corporate image. However, in order to be correctly perceived in this regard by a target market, a company needs to do more than just say that they are customer oriented. It would have been interesting for Kyj to survey the buyers who purchase products from the firms identified. Their perceptions of the service received would have provided another perspective and could perhaps have eliminated some of the cited "motherhood" bias.

Another study gathered data regarding customers' opinions of sales representatives. Williams and Seminerio (1985) were interested in determining salesperson attributes that provided buyers with the highest levels of satisfaction. To accomplish this, Williams and Seminerio analyzed data gathered by a trade journal called Purchasing. Each year, readers of Purchasing nominate top salespeople with whom they interact. The buyers provide information regarding three characteristics of the individuals nominated. Interviews are then conducted with both the top salespeople selected as winners in this competition and the individuals that nominated

them. The three most frequently cited characteristics identified by Williams and Seminerio were: (1) thoroughness and follow through, (2) knowledge of product line, and (3) willingness to go to bat for the buyer within the supplier's firm. Although all three characteristics are necessary to a customer oriented approach, the third item provides a clear statement regarding customer orientation. Williams and Seminerio also argued that salespeople can be taught to be more buyer oriented. This has managerial implications for the training of industrial salespeople.

Swan, Trawick and Silva (1985) conducted a study with 42 medical salespeople to determine how trust is established with their clientele. The salespeople in their study felt that:

"in order to gain the customer's trust it was necessary for the customer to feel that the salesperson was: 1) dependable and reliable; 2) honest/candid; 3) competent; 4) had a customer orientation (put the customer's interests ahead of his); and 5) was likeable/a friend."

(Swan, Trawick and Silva 1985, 2[^])

Thirty-seven of the 42 salespeople said that they tried to convey a customer oriented approach on the first sales call. They wanted the customer to know that they would

put the customer's interests ahead of their own. The need for trust was of paramount importance to the respondents in this study. In the medical and pharmaceutical industry, the need for establishing trust might be higher than in other industrial markets due to the nature of the products being sold. However, the salespeople in this study believe customer orientation must be conveyed in order to establish trust. Conversely, it may also be argued that trust must be established first in order to develop a customer oriented relationship. In either case, the two are interrelated in account management and service provision to the client base.

The increased importance of customer orientation has led to a redefining of the salesperson's role in the organization. This role has continued to change in content, style and importance. As well, roles are different within various industrial sales markets. The next section of this review will address the roles and selling styles of industrial salespeople in today's market.

Roles and Selling Styles of Industrial Salespeople

Roles of Industrial Salespeople

The salesperson is entrusted with the care and nurturance of a company's most valuable resource: its

customers and prospective customers (Spiro and Perreault 1979). Also, the salesperson is usually the first contact that another organization may have with the selling company. Sales representatives occupy a boundary position in the firm (Donnelly and Ivancevich 1975). There is a great deal of pressure placed upon salespeople not only to maintain relations with clients, but also to reach quotas and act as positive ambassadors of the company they represent. There are vast differences in the roles that salespeople play not only within the company where they are employed but also across industries. The literature regarding the roles of salespeople provides further information with respect to the increased complexity of this profession and its shift to customer orientation.

In as much as there are different industries, there are also many types of sales positions including trade, missionary and technical selling. There are telemarketers (inside sales representatives) and outside sales representatives. Their roles are continuing to change as well. Inside sales representatives are handling routine selling tasks more efficiently due to lower costs. The outside salesperson has become a marketing specialist given the responsibility of finding significant new business for

the firm (Narus and Anderson 1986). The roles of salespeople have changed from that of primarily order-takers to that of specialists working in conjunction with clients. There have also been changes in terms of contract procurement in some industries that now have complex competitive bidding structures and guidelines to follow (Slater 1987). These changes produce different types of salespeople trying to meet various client needs.

There has also been a shift over the last forty years in buying patterns. A more low-pressure sales approach is being utilized since it seems to be more suitable to buyers now making decisions on a more rational rather than emotional basis (Bursk 1947). This overall trend toward rational buying has led to the development of a more customer oriented approach. Salespeople tend to be staying away from emotionally oriented selling approaches though there are still individuals who appeal at this level. It appears as though the negative stereotype of selling has no place in the present market (Dubinsky and Staples 1981).

Over twenty years ago, Belasco (1966) provided a description of various roles that a salesperson performs including persuader, serviceman, information-gatherer, problem-definer, advocate, expediter, co-ordinator, traveller,

scheduler, and customer ego-builder. Magrath and Hardy (1987) also identified a role as teacher and a newly emerging role as a business advisor. Further, sales representatives are responsible for making sales, providing customer service, assisting with market analysis, advocating for their employer and their customer, and other diverse tasks (Dubinsky et al. 1986; Hayes and Hartley 1989). The complex role regarding the provision of customer service encompasses many of these diverse tasks.

In a study by Moncrief (1986), 121 activities were identified as part of a salesperson's job. These activities encompassed a broad spectrum of tasks that one would not normally attribute to this position. The large number of tasks sometimes conflict in terms of the orientation of the salesperson. Salespeople need to satisfy the expectations within their companies as well as the expectations of client firms. The expectations of these two groups may conflict.

Selling Styles of Industrial Salespeople

There are many types of selling styles exhibited by salespeople. Industrial buyers tend to see themselves as being collaborative in their interactions with industrial sellers (Perdue, Day and Michaels 1986). The collaborative

style aligns itself with the belief that both parties should benefit from the interaction and outcome. This is in agreement with the definition of selling as presented earlier in this paper.

However, different types of selling styles require different levels of experience, skills, and technical knowledge (Avlonitis, Boyle and Kouremenos 1986). Selling styles are related to the specific task at hand. To be adaptive at selling, the salesperson must have sufficient knowledge and training to select the selling approach that best satisfies the needs of the client (Szymanski 1988). There has been little research to examine the selling styles of industrial salespeople, and Moncrief (1986) has suggested that it would be beneficial to examine performance levels to see if different styles are linked to higher performance. Williams and Spiro (1985) have suggested that perhaps the successful salesperson is one who recognizes different customer styles and alters his/her style to better interact with the client. This may seem obvious to some but is, in fact, difficult to do continually on a day to day basis.

Much of the literature relating to selling styles is tied closely to customer focus. Being aware of the client's needs ultimately affects all areas of the sales process. This

involves not only being aware of product needs but interpersonal factors as well. Bonoma (1982) found that awareness of human factors produces higher percentages of completed sales and fewer unpleasant surprises in the selling process. Providing service to a client includes managing all aspects of the relationship including the interpersonal factors. Naturally, this type of servicing will vary across all industries and clients.

Managing the Sales Force

The shift to service oriented sales has altered the hiring and training process within companies (Reiser 1962; Spiro and Perreault 1979; Magrath and Hardy 1987; Slater 1987). In terms of sales management within a customer oriented sales force, the recruitment and selection process should include a method to locate individuals that show potential for problem solving and analysis (Williams and Seminerio 1985). The training programs should include instruction regarding communication and recognition of specific communication styles. Flexibility is also necessary in a customer oriented environment (Williams and Spiro 1985). Spiro and Perreault (1979) also suggest that influence use should be included in sales training.

Salespeople should have incentives to not only concentrate on key areas of importance in terms of profitability (Wagner and LaGarce 1981) but also the purchaser's requirements (Williams and Seminerio 1985). This is a difficult area to address since at times maximizing sales potential and concentrating on serving the customer's needs conflict. The level of customer focus that exists could be affected by the management policies and attitudes.

Different types of selling require different management practices across industries (Avlonitis, Boyle and Kouremenos 1986). Some sales forces require stringent reporting mechanisms and close supervision - both decrease the salesperson's flexibility (Teas 1983). Other sales teams have large amounts of freedom with few formal reporting systems. Management practices influence the salespeople in the way they manage their daily meetings and conflicts (Walker, Churchill and Ford 1975). Conflicts may occur between sales representatives or with clients. As well, some sales representatives experience personal conflicts over ethical issues and in other situations. The salesperson's perception of their supervisor's behaviour has considerable impact on the former's work attitudes (Kohli 1985). This can be said for other positions outside of the sales occupation,

however, the impact on a salesperson's performance is likely to be much more visible. In all positions there is management influence. The performance of sales representatives, however, is very measurable and can be linked to the direction received from their sales managers.

Because performance is not always a good indicator of a customer focus orientation, salespeople should provide feedback to their managers regarding the direction received. The representative needs to understand the sales orientation adopted in that particular organization, be it sales oriented or customer oriented. As well, the clients should be approached regarding their perceptions of the level of service received.

The Selling Orientation - Customer Orientation (SOCO) Scale

The SOCO Scale was initially developed because an instrument did not exist for management or management researchers to evaluate the customer orientation of salespeople. Robert Saxe developed, tested and refined this instrument for his Ph.D. Dissertation (Saxe 1980). The scale is composed of 24 items relating to customer orientation.

In developing the SOCO Scale, Saxe initially reviewed the literature and interviewed 25 salespeople and 5 sales

managers to investigate the concept of customer orientation. Based on these sources, 104 items were identified for the scale. The second step in his process was to provide a list of these items to expert judges (11 sales managers and 13 marketing academics) who assessed them for their content validity. The items were judged based on their representativeness of a customer oriented task. The set was narrowed down to 70 items. These items were consistently ranked by the judges as being "clearly representative" of customer oriented selling.

The 70 items were sent to a convenience sample of 470 salespeople in retail vehicle sales, wholesale food sales, retail clothing sales, industrial packaging sales, and retail salesclerks. The scale was further reduced to 24 items based on their responses.

A second survey was conducted by sending the scale to 133 sales representatives in 4 sales forces including a company selling electronic components to manufacturers and distributors, a dealer selling motor vehicles and a company selling computer services to business and government organizations. Ninety-five sales representatives (71%) responded to the items on a Likert scale citing ("Never" or "Always" at the two extremes) whether or not they performed

the task identified.

The questionnaire was readministered to part of the second sample to assess the reliability of the instrument. The coefficient alpha for the scale was .86 with the first sample and .83 with the second indicating a high level of internal consistency. In terms of validity,

"The use of a broad and representative range of items and a standard method of item selection provides a scale with adequate content validity. The items were rated very highly by expert judges. On average, 79% of the judges called an item 'clearly representative' of the concept of customer orientation."

(Saxe and Weitz 1982, 347)

The SOCO Scale was found to be a reliable measure of customer orientation of salespeople (.67 test/retest reliability measure reported). Overall, as measured by the SOCO Scale, the salespeople in the study reported themselves to be customer oriented in their interactions with clients. Using a nine point Likert scale, the mean scores of the sales representatives was 7.7 indicating that more than a "large majority" but less than "almost all" of the respondents were customer oriented. He also found that:

"The key concept, exemplified by the items with the highest corrected item-total correlations, seems to

be that a highly customer oriented salesperson will not sacrifice the customer's best interests to make a sale. This finding is not surprising, because the severest test of customer orientation is faced when salespeople must make a choice between their customers' satisfaction and their own short-term self-interest in closing each sale."

(Saxe and Weitz 1982, 347)

Customer orientation has short-term costs attached to it as it also takes more time to meet with clients to help them solve problems through specific product or service usage. The time may be spent fulfilling other short-term sales obligations. As well, customer orientation effectiveness is made possible when salespeople can tailor their offerings to the customer's needs. Some products/ services cannot meet this requirement.

Finally, Saxe and Weitz state that:

"...additional research is needed to further validate the scale. A study of the relationship of customer orientation and customer satisfaction should be useful in this regard."

(Saxe and Weitz 1982, 351)

In an extension of this work, Michaels and Day (1985) used the SOCO Scale to give buyers the opportunity to assess the customer orientation of the salespeople with whom they interacted. They felt it was more appropriate to use the

scale in this manner for they believed it was reasonable to assume that the buyers would be more objective than salespeople that provided self-assessed ratings. They altered the SOCO Scale only to the extent required to accommodate the differences in the sales situation in that the buyers would be providing their perceptions of the sales interaction rather than self-evaluation as in the case of the salespeople.

Their sample consisted of 3,216 names randomly chosen from the National Association of Purchasing Management. Thirty-one percent (1,005 responses) of the selected sample returned usable questionnaires. Their findings corroborated Saxe and Weitz's findings though, on average, the customer evaluations of sales representatives' customer orientation were approximately 2 scale points below the salespeople's self-assessed ratings (mean score of 5.7 reported by purchasers compared to 7.7 reported by salespeople). In this study, more than "about half" but less than "somewhat more than half" of the salespeople were customer oriented as rated by purchasers. Michaels and Day's intuitive explanation for this is that,

"...the discrepancy results from an upward bias in self-assessed ratings of the salesperson samples which was not present in the more objective evaluations of salespeople made by professional buyers. However, a variety of competing

explanations could be offered. One might argue that buyers are negatively biased in their evaluations of sales representatives. This notion seems to be counter to the widely reported trend toward long-term collaborative or integrative relationships between industrial buyers and sales representatives (Clopton 1984). It is possible that there are biases in both directions, upward for salespeople and downward for buyers."

(Michaels and Day 1985, 444)

The internal consistency reliability for this replication study was .91 and Michaels and Day tentatively concluded that "the SOCO Scale works as well with buyers as with salespeople" (Michaels and Day 1985, 445).

To date, there has not been a study that examines both the buyers and the sellers that interact with each other. The study conducted here will serve to broaden the base of knowledge regarding any differences between the two scores. If the mean scores are more closely aligned, then reasons for previous discrepancies may also include the fact that the samples were unrelated. In other words, previous samples were not assessing the same sales representatives. This research study allows an analysis of sales representatives' assessments of their own customer orientation and their customers' assessments of the sales representatives' customer orientation. This will provide important information regarding the upward and downward

bias since the buyers and sellers in this study will be providing assessments of the one sales force. Intuitive explanations were provided by Michaels and Day (1985) regarding this bias.

Conclusion

The literature reviewed indicates a growing interest in the customer orientation of salespeople. The theoretical/ normative literature provides further information regarding the definitions associated with customer service and customer oriented selling. The growth of National Account Managers also provides evidence regarding the importance of relationship management with clients. The long-term goals in many organizations include customer oriented philosophies for continued growth. The changing roles of salespeople are also of interest to researchers. The volume of literature in this area provides further data regarding the complexity of the roles assumed especially with respect to customer orientation.

Empirically, researchers have become interested in determining the various tasks and characteristics associated with customer oriented selling (Dubinsky and Staples 1981; Kyj 1987; Williams and Seminerio 1985). The majority of

research done in the field involves the ranking of various tasks in terms of their importance to customer oriented selling. These studies have been conducted with salespeople and buyers separately.

The SOCO Scale was developed to meet the growing need for an instrument that would measure customer orientation. The scale has been used in two previous studies and has been employed in this research.

The results of the research study examined in this document will serve to broaden this base of knowledge by providing a complete look at both the buyers and the sellers of one company in an industrial marketing setting.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In order to meet the objectives of this study, it was necessary to gather data regarding the level of customer orientation of the salespeople in one industrial service company. The perceptions of the level of sales representative customer orientation held by two population groups were sought: sales representatives and their customers. This chapter will outline the overall research design, sampling methodology, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, and present the major descriptive sample statistics.

Research Design

This section will provide a brief overview of the research study. Detailed information regarding each step of the research process is presented in later sections. In order to obtain data from a sample of sales representatives and their customers, the cooperation of an industrial sales company was essential. The company selected was Infotech Limited, a major provider of business services in Canada.

This corporation was selected for several reasons:

- 1) The researcher was employed at Infotech and would thereby be able to enlist the support of management;
- 2) Infotech had a sales reporting system that would provide the researcher with the ability to match specific representatives to their customers;
- 3) The researcher had a good understanding of Infotech, its market, products, sales representatives and customers; and
- 4) Infotech had recently expressed interest in obtaining information regarding the existing level of customer orientation and was very interested in conducting research in this area.

The study required that the company and researcher work very closely. Infotech was willing to cooperate because the researcher was employed within the firm and was bound by an agreement guaranteeing the confidentiality of client information. Because Infotech was interested in determining its current level of customer orientation (especially as perceived by its customers), it agreed to fund the research. Authorization to conduct the study was received from the President and Chief Executive Officer of Infotech in June 1988.

Once cooperation was obtained, meetings were arranged with the four General Managers of each division to explain the

research being undertaken and request cooperation. It was necessary to obtain the full cooperation of the Managers since sales representative and customer data were classified and proprietary to each division. Since each division had separate accounting and management structures, discussions were held with the General Managers of the four divisions to decide upon the best method for selecting the customer samples.

It was decided that customer information (including customer name, company name, address, and Infotech sales representative code) would be gathered from divisional sales tickets. Sales tickets are used in each division for sales record and billing purposes. The researcher was granted access to the divisional files and computer records so that customer samples could be selected from the divisional sales data. Sales representative data (including representative name, title, city location, average sale size, and performance rating) was provided by the General Managers. Detailed information regarding the selection of both samples is provided in the next section.

Data were collected from the sales representative sample using the SOCO Scales developed by Saxe and Weitz (1982); data from the client/customer sample were collected

using the SOCO Scale adapted by Michaels and Day (1985). A number of items were added in separate sections of the questionnaires to collect further information from both the sales representatives and customers.

The questionnaires were pretested with convenience samples of customers and sales representatives. The final data collection instruments were printed and mailed to the respondents. The questionnaires that were returned were keyed, quality checked and statistical analyses followed.

Sampling Methodology

Sales Representative Sample

Because Infotech employs only 110 sales representatives across Canada, it was decided to attempt to survey them all, i.e. to do a census. Table 1 provides data regarding the number of sales representatives in each division of Infotech.

TABLE 1

NUMBER OF SALES REPRESENTATIVES IN INFOTECH

Division	Number of Sales Representatives
Division A	25
Division B	63
Division C	13
Division D	<u>9</u>
Total Infotech	110

From the sales representative data lists provided by the divisional General Managers, names, titles and city location data were used to mail the survey questionnaires to the sales representatives through the Infotech interoffice mail system. These lists also included performance ratings and average sale size data for each sales representative. The performance ratings consisted of a management evaluation of each sales representative on a five point scale: Poor, Below Average, Average, Above Average, and Excellent. The ratings were based on sales volume and quota attainment. Specific formulas were not provided since each division had different sales goals/objectives and these evaluations were left up to the divisional General Managers. The dollar amount of the average contract sold by each sales representative was computed from the sales size data taken from the sales

tickets. The performance rating and average sale size data were used in subsequent analyses to study their relationship to levels of customer orientation.

Customer Sample

The customer population was defined as Infotech's current customers. Current customers were defined as any firm that had purchased products/services from Infotech Limited over the past one year period (dated back from June 1988). Contracts with Infotech do not extend longer than one year. Seasonality was not deemed to be a factor, therefore, a sample was selected based on contract dates. The months of May and June 1988 were selected.

Selecting these two months offered three advantages. The first advantage was that the customers received their questionnaires in the Fall of 1988 and, due to the short period of time between contract acquisition and receiving their survey questionnaire, employee turnover in the customer firms was limited. If the selection had been made randomly over a one year period, there would have been a greater turnover in personnel and locating the appropriate individual in the customer firm would have been difficult. Therefore, by selecting the May and June time period, the likelihood of

the research questionnaire reaching the appropriate individual increased.

Secondly, since current clients were selected, their perceptions of the Infotech sales representatives were more likely to be clear. They were in contact with their sales representative recently and the customers' ability to recall the interactions were greater than if they had been contacted after an extended period of time.

Lastly, the delivery period for Infotech products and services ranges from one to sixteen weeks. Since the contracts were signed in May or June and the questionnaires were received in November, the customer had the opportunity to evaluate the representative in terms of accurate product representation and after sales service. Therefore, when the survey questionnaire was received, the customer had all the information and experience necessary to rate the sales representative overall.

Sample Size

The sample size was subject to project funding constraints. Based on the allocated budget, a sample of approximately 1600 customers could be contacted. In examining the literature, a minimum 20% response rate was expected.

Methodologically this response rate would be sufficient for the resulting analysis.

The number of clients that had signed contracts in May and June was determined. In order to maintain a similar ratio of customers to representatives across all divisions and meet the sample quota already established (1600), a ratio of 15:1 was selected. Therefore, since there were 110 sales representatives, 1650 customers could be selected (110 representatives X 15 customers per representative = 1650 customers).

Once the sample customers were selected, an alphabetical data print-out was produced to determine if any companies had purchased from Infotech more than once during the given time period. Duplicate company records were then eliminated.

Extension Sample

In order to meet Objective 3 - to determine the correlation between SOCO scores of individual sales representatives and their client scores, it was necessary to be able to match a larger sample of customers with individual sales representatives. In order to remain within the allocated budget, it was necessary to select a subsample of

sales representatives and customers for this analysis. It was decided to do this analysis on all the sales representatives in one division. Therefore, a larger customer base in this division was required to obtain a number of customer's views of the customer orientation of each sales representative in that division. Division A was selected for this extended analysis for several reasons:

- 1) The researcher was employed in this division and would be given access to the sales tickets recorded in months other than May and June;
- 2) The sales ticket system in Division A was known to the researcher and building the matched file could be more easily accomplished; and
- 3) If data were missing from sales tickets, the researcher would be able to collect information from the managers and sales representatives to create as complete a file as possible.

For this portion of the study, up to 550 more customers could be selected. Therefore, all Division A customers that had purchased from Infotech during the months of January through April 1988 were selected. In these months, 463 additional companies were obtained (after duplicate records were eliminated). Therefore, the total Division A sample would consist of 728 customers who had purchased from January 1, 1988 to June 30, 1988 - representing a customer to

representative ratio of 29:1. Therefore, the total number of firms that received questionnaires was 1517 in Infotech overall.

Table 2 provides data regarding the final number of customers in each division that received questionnaires.

TABLE 2
NUMBER OF INFOTECH CUSTOMERS SAMPLED

Division	Customer Sample	Extension Sample	Total Mail-Out
Division A	265	728 (*)	728
Division B	478		478
Division C	195		195
Division D	<u>116</u>	<u> </u>	<u>116</u>
Total Infotech	1054	728	1517

(*) representing 265 May-June and 463 Jan-Apr customers

Data Collection Instruments

Sales Representative Questionnaire

The 24 item SOCO Scale employed by Saxe and Weitz (1982) was used to gather data from the Infotech sales representatives. Additional information was gathered from the representatives to attempt to determine what variables impact on SOCO scores (Research Objective 4). The additional variables were as follows: age, gender, education level,

length of time in sales, years in present sales territory, average sales size, number of meetings/ conversations with a customer prior to obtaining a sale, number of customers met with/talked to each day, percentage of meetings/phone calls with repeat customers, percentage of total sales with repeat customers, and the number of times repeat customers are contacted each year. These variables were selected on the basis of the researcher's own experience in sales and a general understanding of the literature on the subject. It is important to note that this part of the research was highly exploratory. Little theory exists positing the relationship of any factors with the level of customer orientation of sales representatives.

At the end of the 24 item SOCO Scale, a 25th item was added to measure the sales representative's perception of management support of customer orientation within the firm. This variable allowed for the testing of whether or not the sales representative's perception of management support of customer orientation had a correlation to the representative's SOCO score. Using the nine point Likert scale ranging from "NEVER" to "ALWAYS", the sales representatives responded to the following statement: I can count on management support in reasonable efforts to look out for my customer's best

interests.

The final section of the sales representative questionnaire examined their evaluations of other sales representatives in their industry. The issue of upward bias in self-assessment has been cited in both the Saxe and Weitz (1982) and Michaels and Day (1985) studies. Although the literature is scant in terms of suggesting ways to eliminate upward bias in self-assessment studies, it was decided to give the sales representatives the opportunity to provide their assessments of other sales representatives. Phrasing questions in terms of others has been found helpful in obtaining data on sensitive issues (Davis and Cosenza 1985). To explore this idea, the researcher randomly selected seven items from the original SOCO Scale (items 2, 6, 8, 10, 19, 21, and 24) and changed the wording to accommodate for an evaluation of someone else's sales actions. For example, item 8 in the sales representative's self-assessment was item 2 in the assessment of other sales representatives as follows:

Self-Assessment:

Item 8 - I try to help customers achieve their goals

Assessment of Others:

Item 2 - Other sales representatives try to help
customers achieve their goals

Four of the items in the assessment of other sales representatives were negatively stated and three were positively stated. The seven items were computed to provide an Others SOCO score or more succinctly, an OSOCO score.

By introducing this mini-scale evaluation of other sales representatives' customer orientation at the end of the questionnaire, the sales representatives would not recall how they had evaluated themselves. It was believed that they would quickly respond to the seven items at the end of the questionnaire without searching back for their corresponding self-assessments on these items. In fact, in discussing the questionnaire with five sales representatives after the questionnaires had been submitted, the sales representatives confirmed that they had not bothered to look for their corresponding scores and answered the last section without thinking about their own responses.

On the final page of the data collection instrument, the sales representatives were given the opportunity to offer any final comments that they had.

The questionnaire was pretested with a convenience sample of four former Infotech sales representatives. The researcher also tested the instrument with two sales representatives who had never worked with Infotech. The final

questionnaire was drafted incorporating slight wording changes with the additional items. The SOCO Scale remained unchanged. A copy of the final questionnaire is found in Appendix A.

Customer Questionnaire

The 24 item SOCO Scale utilized by Michaels and Day (1985) was used to gather data from the customers in the current study. Before responding to the SOCO Scale, background information (including the number of times they speak to/meet with their Infotech sales representative each year, the percentage of the interactions that are initiated by them versus their sales representative, whether they were a first time purchaser or repeat buyer, whether they perceive Infotech as being a sole supplier or having equal competition in the marketplace, and why they purchase from Infotech) was solicited. These variables were included to determine whether they were related to reported levels of customer orientation.

Following their responses to the SOCO Scale items, the customers were given the opportunity to offer any final comments that they felt were relevant.

The customer questionnaire was pretested with a convenience sample of five Infotech customers who had not purchased in the sample time period selected. The final

questionnaire did not require any modifications. A copy of the customer questionnaire is found in Appendix B.

Data Collection Procedures

Following the sample selection and questionnaire refinement, the research instruments were assembled for mailing. In each package, the sales representatives and customers received a number of items. First, a letter was enclosed from the President of Infotech on personal letterhead requesting cooperation, guaranteeing confidentiality and stating that Infotech was strongly supporting this research study. Second, a letter from the researcher was included on Carleton University letterhead explaining the study, guaranteeing respondent confidentiality and requesting full cooperation. The letter was written not as an employee of Infotech but as a Graduate Student of Carleton University. The questionnaire was included and in the province of Quebec, the questionnaires and letters received by customers and sales representatives were provided in both french and english. Return envelopes were also provided.

The return envelopes for the customers were postage paid to a post office box set up by Infotech. However, Infotech was not identified on the return piece. The

envelopes were returned directly to the researcher.

The return envelopes for the sales representatives were the official Personal and Confidential envelopes used in interoffice mail within Infotech. These envelopes were labelled by the researcher and were returned in the interoffice mail system of Infotech used across Canada.

A copy of the contents of each package is found in Appendix C.

The packages were assembled and mailed on November 18, 1988. The customer packages were sent via Canada Post and the sales representative packages were sent by interoffice mail. Two weeks after the initial packages were sent, a reminder letter was sent to the sales representatives and a reminder card was sent to the customers (Appendix D). Following the mailing of the reminder card, the researcher received approximately thirty calls from customers explaining why they could not respond, requesting new questionnaires or offering opinions and personal support. Eleven customers could not recall receiving a package. Therefore, these customers were sent a second package.

Questionnaires were returned over the following six weeks and the cut-off date for returns was December 31, 1988. Keying of the data began in January 1989 and the corporate

statistical evaluation was completed in May. A final report was submitted to Infotech on June 1, 1989.

Descriptive Sample Statistics

Sales Representative Statistics

Of the 110 questionnaires mailed to sales representatives, 90 were returned (82%) and 87 were considered usable (three respondents deleted their division code and therefore were not used). The response rates in each of the four divisions were as follows: Division A (100%), Division B (73%), Division C (69%), and Division D (78%).

Overall, 70% of the responding sales representatives were male and 30% were female. These figures closely approximate the company statistics of 72% males and 28% females. The average age of the representative was 33 years. The youngest sales representative was 23 years and the oldest was 63 years. Fifty percent of the respondents had a college/university degree while a further 29% had some college/university education. Fourteen percent of the respondents had high school education only and the remaining 7% had some graduate school education.

On average, the sales representatives had been working in sales for Infotech for 6 years. The minimum time frame

reported was 13 months and the maximum reported was 31 years.

Of the 87 sales representatives that responded, 77 respondents were solely outside sales representatives and 10 were primarily telemarketers. However, the majority of the telemarketers also attended some outside calls.

The average contract size differed across divisions. Infotech recorded an overall average of \$3,957. Division B recorded the largest average contract size (\$5,961). The average order in Division A was \$2,528. The average sales sizes in Divisions C and D were much lower at \$354 and \$807 respectively.

Customer Statistics

Of the 1517 questionnaires mailed, 571 were returned (38%) and 545 were considered usable (36%). In each division, the respective response rates were as follows: Division A (Jan-Apr 30%, May-Jun 38%), Division B (45%), Division C (34%), Division D (17%).

The demographic statistics of the customer respondents in this study closely approximated the overall Infotech customer statistics. Sixty percent of the respondents were located in Ontario and 21% of the respondents were from the western provinces. Fourteen percent of the customers were

located in Quebec and the remaining 6% were found in the maritime provinces.

Thirty-nine percent of the customers were businesses employing more than 100 employees. Thirty-four percent of the respondents had less than 50 employees. An additional 8% employed between 50-99 employees. Size of business data was not available for 19% of the firms.

Thirty-one percent of the firms were in the manufacturing sector and 23% were in the service sector. Nineteen percent of the firms were in the wholesale sector and an additional 12% were in the finance industry. The remaining 15% of the firms were distributed between the other six major industry groups in Canada including agriculture, mining, construction, transportation, communication and public utilities, retail, and government.

Overall, 26% of the respondents were first time purchasers and 74% were repeat buyers. In Division A, 41% of the respondents were first time purchasers versus 12% in Division B. The different product lines are conducive to on-going program involvement in Division B versus single program purchases in Division A. In Divisions C and D, the percentage of customers that were first time purchasers was 38% and 35% respectively.

The customers were almost equally divided in terms of those that viewed Infotech as being a sole supplier versus having equal competition in the market. Overall, 53% of the respondents felt that Infotech had equal competition. Division D customers cited equal competition in 63% of the cases while in Division A, this figure was 49%. Division B and C customers thought the divisions had equal competition.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH FINDINGS

Findings for each of the four research objectives will be presented. In the first section, the SOCO scores will be reported for both the sales representatives and customers. As well, the relationship between the sales representative and customer SOCO scores will be examined. Differences between divisions in Infotech will be presented. Next, the results of t-tests comparing SOCO scores in this study and previous studies will be reported. The third section will document the relationship between individual sales representatives and samples of their respective clients in terms of reported SOCO scores. Lastly, the relationship between specific variables and SOCO scores will be examined.

Objective One: Level of Customer Orientation of the Sales Representatives

Sales Representatives' Self-Assessment

The level of customer orientation of Infotech sales representatives was determined by calculating the mean SOCO scores reported by both the sales representatives and their customers. Sales representative self-assessment scores for

each division as well as the overall company score are presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3
SALES REPRESENTATIVE SELF-ASSESSMENT
MEAN SOCO SCORES

Statistic	Div A	Div B	Div C	Div D	Total
N	25	46	9	7	87
Mean	7.66	7.03	7.69	7.48	7.32
Minimum	6.25	1.46	6.21	6.79	1.46
Maximum	9.00	8.92	8.58	8.79	9.00
Std Dev	.769	1.074	.904	.661	.986
Skewness	-.057	-3.132	-.760	1.442	-2.365

As shown in Table 3, the highest mean SOCO score reported by the sales representatives was in Division C (7.69). The lowest mean score was found in Division B (7.03). The level of customer orientation recorded overall by the Infotech representatives was 7.32. The minimum score reported was 1.46 and the maximum was 7.69 (the 1.46 score was an outlier and the minimum score without the outlier was 5.33). Similar to the previous studies conducted, the scores were negatively skewed with the majority of respondents utilizing the upward portion of the SOCO Scale.

A oneway analysis of variance was computed to

determine whether differences existed between divisional mean SOCO scores. Significant differences were noted at the $P=.05$ level (F-Ratio=3.03). A tukey multiple comparison test was conducted showing a significant difference between Divisions A and B. Differences were not found between the remaining divisions.

Customers' Evaluations of Sales Representatives

Table 4 presents the corresponding divisional SOCO scores provided by Infotech customers. For the purpose of this analysis, the extension sample collected from Division A customers is not included.

TABLE 4
CUSTOMER EVALUATION OF REPRESENTATIVES
MEAN SOCO SCORES

Statistic	Div A	Div B	Div C	Div D	Total
N	101	216	67	20	404
Mean	6.67	6.24	6.60	6.94	6.45
Minimum	2.67	1.92	2.96	4.25	1.92
Maximum	8.88	8.87	9.00	8.22	9.00
Std Dev	1.316	1.326	1.359	1.105	1.334
Skewness	-.754	-.398	-.642	-1.320	-.542

The highest and lowest mean SOCO scores recorded by

Infotech customers were found in Divisions D (6.94) and B (6.24) respectively. Overall, Infotech customers reported a customer orientation score of 6.45. This represents a difference of 0.87 scale points compared to the sales representatives' self-report. Once again, the scores are negatively skewed with the majority of respondents utilizing the upward portion of the SOCO Scale.

A oneway analysis of variance was computed to determine whether there were differences between the means in each division. A significant difference was noted at the $P=.05$ level ($F\text{-Ratio}=3.93$). A tukey multiple comparison test was computed showing a significant difference between the Division A and Division B SOCO scores provided by the customers.

Differences in SOCO scores exist between Division A and Division B in both samples. Possible reasons for this will be discussed in Chapter 5. At this point, it is important to examine the implications of this for data analysis. The Division A sample comprised 29% of the sales representative sample and 23% of the customer sample. The Division B sample comprised 53% of both the sales representative and customer samples. These two divisions are large enough to pull the results in either direction depending

on whether or not they are included in a particular test. For example, comparing Division A to the remaining divisions in Infotech essentially compares it to Division B since Division B will pull the results of the other two divisions. In comparing Division B to the remaining divisions in Infotech, similar results will occur.

The scale point differences between sales representative self-assessed ratings and customers evaluations ranged from .54 to 1.09 scale points (with the customer ratings being consistently lower) on the Likert scale of 1 to 9. T-tests were computed to determine whether these differentials represented significant differences between the two evaluations. Table 5 presents the t-tests results.

TABLE 5
T-TESTS BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES' SOCO SCORES
AND CUSTOMERS' SOCO SCORES

Statistic	Div A	Div B	Div C	Div D	Total
Rep SOCO	7.66	7.03	7.69	7.48	7.32
Customer SOCO	6.67	6.24	6.60	6.94	6.45
Difference	.99	.79	1.09	.54	.87
T-Value	4.91	4.31	3.16	1.53	6.98
Degrees of Freedom	63	77	13	18	162
P=	.000	.000	.007	.144	.000

Consistent with the previous work using the SOCO Scale documenting significant differences between sales representative and customer evaluations ($P < .001$), significant differences between the sales representatives' self-evaluations and the customers' evaluations were found. However, these differences were less than the 2 scale point difference reported by Michaels and Day (1985). As reported in Table 5, significant differences were found in four of the five t-tests conducted ($P = .000$ to $P = .007$). Division D did not record a significant difference between SOCO scores which may have been due to the small sample size (7 sales representatives and 20 customers). Since only 20 customers responded, perhaps these were customers who were pleased with the interactions with their representatives and wanted to provide a response as a positive affirmation. Therefore, their scores would more closely approximate the scores provided by the sales representatives.

Sales Representatives' Evaluation of Other Sales Representatives

As discussed in the methodology section, sales representatives were asked to evaluate other sales representatives using seven items from the SOCO Scale. These seven items were tabulated to provide an Others SOCO score

(OSOCO). Table 6 provides the overall OSOCO scores recorded by the sales representatives.

TABLE 6
SALES REPRESENTATIVES' EVALUATION OF OTHER
SALES REPRESENTATIVES (MEAN OSOCO SCORES)

Statistic	Div A	Div B	Div C	Div D	Total
N	25	46	9	7	87
Mean	5.61	5.29	5.73	5.37	5.43
Minimum	4.43	1.29	4.43	3.29	1.29
Maximum	7.14	9.00	7.57	8.00	9.00
Std Dev	.783	1.291	1.061	1.597	1.165
Skewness	.385	-.391	.921	.394	-.287

The mean OSOCO scores ranged from 5.29 to 5.73 across the four divisions. The overall OSOCO score recorded by Infotech representatives was 5.43. The sales representatives perceived the level of customer orientation of other sales representatives as 1.89 scale points lower on average than their own SOCO scores.

Table 7 provides a succinct summary of the SOCO and OSOCO scores reported.

TABLE 7
SALES REPRESENTATIVE SOCO AND OSOCO SCORES

Division	SOCO Score	OSOCO Score	Difference
Division C	7.69 (1)	5.73 (1)	1.96
Division A	7.66 (2)	5.61 (2)	2.05
Division D	7.48 (3)	5.37 (3)	2.11
Division B	7.03 (4)	5.29 (4)	1.74
Infotech	7.32	5.43	1.89

As shown in Table 7, the highest to lowest SOCO and OSOCO scores remained in the same order. The highest SOCO and OSOCO scores were reported by Division C representatives and the lowest were found in Division B. The SOCO and OSOCO scores provided by Divisions A and D followed the same rank order as well.

T-tests were conducted to determine if significant differences existed between the representatives' evaluations of themselves (SOCO) versus their evaluation of other sales representatives (OSOCO). Table 8 provides the t-test results.

TABLE 8

T-TEST BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES' SOCO AND OSOCO SCORES

Statistic	Div A	Div B	Div C	Div D	Total
SOCO Mean	7.66	7.03	7.69	7.48	7.32
OSOCO Mean	5.61	5.29	5.73	5.37	5.43
Difference	2.05	1.74	1.96	2.11	1.89
T-Value	9.97	11.02	5.21	5.30	16.62
Degrees of Freedom	24	45	8	6	86
P=	.000	.000	.001	.002	.000

As shown in Table 8, the scale point differences between the two scores ranged from 1.74 to 2.11 with an average of 1.89. The t-tests showed significant differences in the self-assessed ratings and the evaluation of other sales representatives in all divisions ($P=.000$ to $P=.002$).

A second t-test was conducted to determine the relationship between the OSOCO score provided and a second score computed using the same seven variables as utilized in the OSOCO computation. Instead of comparing the 24 item SOCO score to the 7 item OSOCO score, the corresponding seven items from the representatives' self-report were computed and compared to their seven item evaluations of others. The seven items were extracted from the SOCO Scale and for analysis purposes was called XSOCO. Table 9 provides the results of

the t-test between OSOCO and XSOCO.

TABLE 9

T-TEST BETWEEN REPRESENTATIVES' OSOCO AND XSOCO

Statistic	Div A	Div B	Div C	Div D	Total
XSOCO Mean	7.40	6.64	7.27	7.12	6.96
OSOCO Mean	5.61	5.29	5.73	5.37	5.43
Difference	1.79	1.35	1.54	1.75	1.53
T-Value	7.39	8.48	3.86	4.73	12.70
Degrees of Freedom	24	45	8	6	86
P=	.000	.000	.005	.003	.000

As shown in Table 9, the differences in the seven item self evaluation (XSOCO) score and the seven item others evaluation (OSOCO) score ranged from 1.35 to 1.79 scale points. The average scale point difference was 1.53. The average difference in the previously reported SOCO score and OSOCO score was 1.89 scale points. The t-tests reported in Table 9 showed significant differences between OSOCO and XSOCO scores across all divisions (P=.000 to P=.005).

**Objective Two: Comparison of Infotech SOCO Scores
to SOCO Scores in Previous Studies**

Two previous studies were conducted employing the SOCO

Scale. The first study administered the SOCO Scale to sales representatives (Saxe and Weitz 1982) and the second study administered the scale to an unrelated sample of buyers (Michaels and Day 1985). Table 10 provides a summary of the results of the previous studies with comparative data provided from this research. The results of this study include data from the customers in the May-June sample and not the extension sample.

TABLE 10
COMPARATIVE DATA USING THE SOCO SCALE

Statistic	Saxe/Weitz Reps	Infotech Reps	Michaels/Day Customers	Infotech Customers
N	95	87	997	404
Mean	7.7	7.3	5.7	6.5
Std Dev	.75	.99	.92	1.33
Skewness	-.88	-2.37	-.34	-.54

As presented in Table 10, the mean SOCO scores for the two studies employing sales representative samples were 7.7 and 7.3 with the Saxe and Weitz score being slightly higher. The number of respondents were similar. The standard deviation in the Saxe and Weitz study was .75 and the corresponding figure in the present study was .99. Both

samples were negatively skewed indicating that the respondents utilized the upward portion of the SOCO Scale. The skewness in the Infotech study was greater than the reported figure in the Saxe and Weitz study. The difference could probably be attributed to the one outlier in the Infotech study reporting a SOCO score of 1.46.

The mean SOCO scores reported by the two samples employing customers were 5.7 and 6.5 with the current study recording the highest score. The Michaels and Day study reported a sample size that was more than double the size of the current study. The standard deviation was .92 in the Michaels and Day study and 1.33 in the Infotech study. Both samples reported a negative skewness also indicating that the responses were skewed to the upward portion of the SOCO Scale.

T-tests were computed to determine whether significant differences existed between the SOCO scores reported in previous studies and the current study. Significant differences exist between SOCO scores for sales representatives in the Saxe and Weitz study and the representatives in the Infotech study ($T\text{-Value}=3.63$, $P < .001$). As well, significant differences exist between SOCO scores provided by customers in the Michaels and Day study and customers in the Infotech study ($T\text{-Value}=11.23$, $P < .001$).

As noted earlier, the previous studies showed a 2 scale point differential between the sales representative evaluation and the customer evaluation of sales representatives. In the research conducted by the author, the differential was .87 scale points. Although the differential is not as large as previously reported figures, significant differences between the SOCO scores were still found. A further discussion regarding the differences is provided in Chapter 5.

**Objective Three: Matched Results of Customers With
Their Sales Representatives**

In the extension portion of this research, the researcher attempted to match sales representatives to their individual customers. In order to complete this analysis, the Division A sample was extended to include clients who dealt with Infotech during January to April as well as the months of May and June 1988. This was done in order to sample a greater number of clients per sales representative. SOCO scores were computed for each individual sales representative in Division A. As well, a mean score was computed for each representative's group of responding customers. The average number of customers for each sales representative was ten. The minimum and maximum number of responding customers per

sales representative were 2 and 27 respectively.

Before reporting these results, it is important to note that seasonality was not a factor in the customer sample selection. To test for seasonality, means were computed for the Division A sample in May-June and the January-April sample. A t-test showed that significant differences did not exist between these two groups. Descriptive data and t-test results are reported in Tables 11 and 12.

TABLE 11

DIVISION A CUSTOMER SOCO SCORES

Statistic	January-April Customers	May-June Customers
N	141	101
Mean	6.53	6.67
Minimum	1.04	2.67
Maximum	8.83	8.88
Std Dev	1.47	1.32
Skewness	-.809	-.754

TABLE 12

T-TEST BETWEEN DIVISION A SAMPLES

Statistic	Customer Results
Jan-Apr SOCO Mean	6.53
May-Jun SOCO Mean	6.67
Difference	.14
T-Value	.76
Degrees of Freedom	228
P=	.446

Twenty sales representatives were included in the matched analysis since these representatives received corresponding customer replies. Five sales representatives were excluded. They had been employed in Division A for a shorter period of time and therefore were not yet selling to a large number of clients. These five representatives had no responding clients. Table 13 provides overall SOCO scores for the matched records in Division A.

TABLE 13
MATCHED RECORD SOCO SCORES

Statistic	Representative SOCO	Customer SOCO
N	20	209
Mean	7.73	6.57
Minimum	6.25	1.04
Maximum	9.00	8.88
Std Dev	.833	1.418
Skewness	-.473	-.825

The SOCO scores reported in the extension portion of the research closely approximated the scores reported overall for Division A. The minimum and maximum SOCO scores reported by the sales representatives were 6.25 and 9.00 while the corresponding figures for the customers were 1.04 and 8.88 respectively. Once again, the respondents tended to use the upward portion of the SOCO Scale in the majority of the cases.

Similar to the overall Division A scores reported previously, there was a significant difference between the sales representatives and the customers in terms of their perceived level of customer orientation ($T\text{-Value}=11.03$, $P=.000$). As well, the SOCO scores reported by customers and sales representatives were positively related although the relationship was not strong as evidenced by the pearson

correlation coefficient (.16, $P=.012$).

The matched record data was analyzed for individual sales representatives to more finitely examine the relationship between the sales representative and his/her clients employing the SOCO Scale. Paired comparison t-tests were conducted to determine whether or not significant differences existed between the sales representative's SOCO score and the mean score reported by his/her customers. Table 14 provides the significance levels reported for each sales representative.

($P=.000$). The correlation coefficient reported by the customers was not quite as strong (.16, $P=.027$). The sales representatives with the most experience received higher customer orientation scores in both cases.

Average Sale Size of the Representative (AVGSALE)

The relationship to be examined in this case deals with the average size of contracts sold by the individual sales representatives. Do large contract clients receive more customer service than small contract clients? In Division A, this relationship did exist. The sales representatives with larger average sale sizes reported higher SOCO scores (.47, $P=.009$). In the matched sample, the correlation data was as follows: representatives (.52, $P=.000$), customers (.14, $P=.020$). No significant relationships were reported in the other divisions.

Interaction Prior To Sale (#TALK)

The variable #TALK examines the number of times a sales representative talks to a client before the sale is closed. In Division A, as the number of interactions increased prior to the sale so did the SOCO score reported by the representative (.41, $P=.023$). In the Division A matched

of cases that satisfy a significance level of $P < .05$ when the number of responding clients is taken into consideration.

TABLE 15
% CASES REPORTING A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE
IN SOCO SCORES

	1-4 Clients Per Rep	5-9 Clients Per Rep	10-14 Clients Per Rep	15+ Clients Per Rep	Total Sample
# Cases	4	7	5	4	20
# Cases P > .05	1	3	4	3	11
% Cases Significant	25%	43%	80%	75%	55%

Sales representatives who had less than five customers reported a significant difference in scores in only 25% of the cases. In Table 15, those cases having between 5-9 customers per sales representative reported a significant difference in SOCO scores in 43% of the cases. When the number of customers increased to 10-14, the percentage of significant cases increased to 80%. A higher percentage was also reported in the 15+ customer range relative to the total sample score reported. Perhaps in the cases with fewer customers, only the

more satisfied clients have responded thus more closely approximating the sales representative's self-assessment. When the sample size is increased, this response bias is lessened. It is evident, however, that in examining the results of the matched sample significant differences between SOC0 scores are still found.

Objective Four: Relationships Between Selected Variables and SOC0 Scores Reported

The following variables were examined in terms of their possible relationship to SOC0 scores:

- 1) % of the sales representative's sales that are with repeat customers (%REPEAT)
- 2) age of the sales representative (REPAGE)
- 3) sales representative gender (REPSEX)
- 4) level of education of representative (REPEDU)
- 5) length of time the sales representative has been in sales with Infotech (MONTHS)
- 6) average sale size of the representative (AVGSALE)
- 7) number of times a representative talks to a customer before the sale is made (#TALK)
- 8) performance rating of the representative provided by Infotech management (RATING)

- 9) representative's view of management support towards customer orientation (MGMTCO)
- 10) % of the interactions that are initiated by the customer (INITME)
- 11) status of customer- first time versus repeat customer (STATUS)
- 12) customer's perception of Infotech as having equal competition in the market versus being a sole-source supplier (PERCEIV)
- 13) reason why the customer purchases from Infotech (WHYBUY)

Data regarding items 1-9 were gathered from the sales representatives and were correlated with their self-assessed SOCO scores. Data on items 10-13 were solicited from the customers and were correlated with the evaluations they provided of their sales representatives. As well, all of the items were correlated to the representatives' scores and customers' scores in the matched extension portion of the data since the records were cross-referenced.

Pearson correlations were computed for %REPEAT, REPACE, REPEDU, MONTHS, AVGSALE, #TALK, RATING, MGMTCO, INITME, and WHYBUY with the SOCO scores reported by the sales representatives and customers. Correlations were also computed between the selected variables to determine inter-

relationships. Cross-tabulations and chi-square statistics were computed for the following variables: REPSEX, REPEDU, RATING, STATUS, AND PERCEIV. T-tests were conducted for the following variables: REPSEX, STATUS, AND PERCEIV. Table 16 provides an overall summary of the variables that reported significant relationships to the SOCO scores reported. The first nine variables were examined in terms of their relationship to the sales representatives' SOCO scores and the last three were examined in terms of their relationship to the customers' SOCO scores. All of the variables were examined in the matched sample in terms of both reported SOCO scores since they could be cross-referenced.

TABLE 16

**SUMMARY STATISTICS OF SIGNIFICANT RELATIONSHIPS
(P < .05) BETWEEN SELECTED VARIABLES AND SOCO SCORES**

Variable	Infotech		Matched Division A	
	Sales Reps	Customers	Sales Reps	Customers
%REPEAT		--	.49*	.20*
REPAGE		--	.38*	.25*
MONTHS		--	.68*	.16*
AVGSALE		--	.52*	.14*
#TALK		--	.36*	
RATING		--	15.69***	
MGMTCO		--	-.55*	
REPEDU	-.20*	--	-.44*	
			21.46***	
REPSEX		--	6.85**	
			32.38***	
INITME	--		.25*	
STATUS	--		2.62**	
PERCEIV	--	2.87**	2.48**	2.43**
		4.14***	8.34***	

* Pearson Correlation Coefficient

** T-Value

*** Chi Square

As shown in Table 16, few relationships were found to be statistically significant in the company as a whole. However, many relationships were found to be significant in the matched sample in terms of the SOCO scores reported by the sales representatives. Each of the variables will be discussed individually in terms of their relationship to the SOCO scores provided by the sales representatives and

customers. Divisional differences and company statistics will be reported. As well, the data will be analyzed for the matched sample.

Percentage of Sales With Repeat Customers (%REPEAT)

This variable was found to be significant in Division A only. The pearson correlation coefficient was .56 ($P=.003$) showing that those representatives with a higher percentage of repeat customers also had higher SOCO scores.

In examining the matched scores in the extension portion of the research, correlation coefficients were computed for this variable with the sales representatives' and customers' SOCO scores. The relationship between the percentage of sales with repeat customers and the SOCO scores reported by the representatives and customers were significant in both cases ($P=.000$ and $P=.002$ respectively). As the percentage of sales with repeat customers increased, so did the corresponding SOCO scores. However, the relationship was much stronger between the sales representatives' SOCO score and this variable as evidenced by the correlation coefficient (.49). The corresponding correlation coefficient for the customers was .20.

The percentage of sales with repeat customers was

not a factor in the other divisions. The sales process in Division A, as previously mentioned, is more complex and interactive. Repeat business is more difficult to obtain. In Division B, the renewal base is high, however, it is more automatic and does not necessarily rely solely on the work of the sales representative. Divisions C and D are also less interactive thus not resulting in a relationship between repeat business and SOCO scores.

Age of the Sales Representative (REPAGE)

Age of the representative was not a factor in Infotech overall. Division A and Division D reported significant correlations (.56, $P=.002$ and .79, $P=.018$ respectively). The correlation tests showed that the older representatives recorded higher customer orientation scores. Significant relationships were not reported in Divisions B and C.

The matched correlations tested the relationship between representative age and the representatives' and customers' SOCO scores. Both tests reported significant relationships. The representatives reported a correlation coefficient of .38 ($P=.000$). The customers also reported a positive linear correlation coefficient of .25 ($P=.000$). Therefore, the older representatives recorded higher levels

of customer orientation both in their self-assessment and in the customers' evaluations.

Gender of the Sales Representative (REPSEX)

A t-test was computed for the variable REPSEX to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in SOCO scores based on representative gender. The results are presented in Table 17.

TABLE 17

T-TEST OF REPRESENTATIVE GENDER ON SOCO SCORES

Statistic	Infotech Sales Reps	Matched Division A Sales Reps	Customers
Male SOCO Mean	7.27	7.51	6.52
Female SOCO Mean	7.44	8.14	6.65
Difference	.17	.63	.13
T-Value	.57	6.85	.64
Degrees of Freedom	31	202	147
P=	.570	.000	.524

The difference between the levels of customer orientation reported by the female and male representatives in Infotech overall was not large (0.17 differential). The t-test showed no significant difference. However, in

examining the matched record data, there was a larger difference between the SOCO scores reported by female and male sales representatives. The female scores were, on average, .63 scale points higher than their male counterparts' scores. A significant difference was found to exist ($P=.000$). The difference between the SOCO scores provided by customers of male and female representatives was .13 scale points and no significant difference was found.

Level of Education of the Sales Representative (REPEDU)

The level of education was found to be a factor in Division A and Infotech overall. An inverse relationship was found: the more educated the sales representative, the lower the reported SOCO score. In Division A the correlation coefficient was $-.48$ ($P=.008$) and in the company as a whole the relationship was slightly weaker ($-.20$, $P=.034$). In the matched sample, the results were similar to Division A sales representative figures ($-.44$, $P=.000$). It was thought that education level might be a descriptive statistic correlated with age. Correlations were computed controlling for age to test whether education would remain significantly related to reported SOCO scores. When the sample was divided into two groups consisting of those above and below the mean

age of 33 years, the correlations between education and reported SOCO scores were no longer statistically significant ($P=.088$ and $P=.177$). This relationship will be discussed further in Chapter 5.

Length of Time in Sales (MONTHS)

The length of time in sales had a significant impact in Division A (.67, $P=.009$). This test showed that the longer a person had been in sales within this division, the higher their SOCO score tended to be. This variable did not have a significant effect on the rest of the divisions in Infotech. Due to the complexity of the product offering in Division A, as the sales representative gained more experience and familiarity with the custom products that were possible, they would probably be able to design packages that would better meet their customers' needs. The less complex product offering in the remaining divisions would not require the same length of time for the representatives to become very comfortable with the packages offered.

The length of time in sales also impacted on the level of customer orientation reported by both the sales representatives and clients in the matched sample. The correlation coefficient for the sales representatives was .68

($P=.000$). The correlation coefficient reported by the customers was not quite as strong (.16, $P=.027$). The sales representatives with the most experience received higher customer orientation scores in both cases.

Average Sale Size of the Representative (AVGSALE)

The relationship to be examined in this case deals with the average size of contracts sold by the individual sales representatives. Do large contract clients receive more customer service than small contract clients? In Division A, this relationship did exist. The sales representatives with larger average sale sizes reported higher SOCO scores (.47, $P=.009$). In the matched sample, the correlation data was as follows: representatives (.52, $P=.000$), customers (.14, $P=.020$). No significant relationships were reported in the other divisions.

Interaction Prior To Sale (#TALK)

The variable #TALK examines the number of times a sales representative talks to a client before the sale is closed. In Division A, as the number of interactions increased prior to the sale so did the SOCO score reported by the representative (.41, $P=.023$). In the Division A matched

sample, the correlation coefficient was .36 ($P=.000$). Based on the product offering as previously discussed, if the client's expectations are accurate in terms of the final product that is to be received, their chances of being a satisfied customer increases. The complexity requires very clear communication between the representative and the customer. This variable was not a factor in the SOCO scores reported by the customers in the matched sample.

Division D reported an inverse relationship with respect to this variable ($-.75$, $P=.026$). The product offering is quite basic in this particular division. In most cases purchasing from this division would simply require a Yes/No decision on the part of the customer. The inverse relationship may result from increased interactions where the representative is trying to convince the customer to purchase even when interest is not expressed. In this case, the result would be a lower SOCO score. There were no significant relationships in the other two divisions.

Performance Rating (RATING)

The performance rating provided by the Managers in each division had no relationship to reported SOCO scores. In Infotech overall, the correlation coefficient was $-.03$

2

OF/DE

2

MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
(ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

($P=.383$). The matched sample correlation coefficients were .04 ($P=.274$) in terms of the relationship to the sales representatives' SOCO scores and $-.01$ ($P=.440$) in terms of the relationship to the customers' SOCO scores.

Management Attitudes Towards Customer Orientation (MGMTCO)

Two divisions in Infotech reported significant relationships between management attitudes towards customer orientation and reported SOCO scores. In examining the scores reported in Division A and Division C, the findings were opposite. A strong inverse relationship was found in Division A ($-.43$, $P=.016$) and a positive relationship was found in Division C ($.70$, $P=.019$). The researcher is not as familiar with Division C as Division A so reasons for the relationship in Division C can only be speculated. In Division C, representatives that believed their managers were concerned with their customers' best interests reported higher levels of customer orientation themselves. In Division A, the reverse was true. The Division A matched sample also reported an inverse relationship ($-.55$, $P=.000$). Possible explanations for the Division A results are reported in Chapter 5.

Percentage of Interactions Initiated By Customer (INITME)

Pearson correlations were computed for the variable INITME to determine the relationship between the percentage of interactions that are initiated by the client on his/her SOCO score. The percentage of interactions initiated by the customer did not have a significant effect on the SOCO scores reported by the customers. However, a significant relationship was found with respect to the sales representatives' SOCO scores. As the percentage of interactions initiated by the client increased, so did the sales representative's self-assessed rating (.25, $P=.000$). Perhaps sales representatives view increased customer initiation as an indication of positive interest and strong relations.

Intuitively one might think that if the customer is initiating a portion of the interactions that the relationship is two way and not always consisting of a sales representative constantly calling a customer. In this study, there was no linear relationship established. In further examining the SOCO scores for each division, the highest SOCO scores were reported in the 25-49% and 50-74% categories then decreased as the percentage increased beyond that level. Therefore, there seems to be an optimum at the midpoint level suggesting

a 50/50 relationship whereby half of the interactions are initiated by the customer and half by the sales representative.

Status of Customer (STATUS)

The mean SOCO scores reported by first time purchasers and repeat purchasers were the same (6.46). A t-test was computed to determine if significant differences existed between first time purchasers and repeat purchasers (STATUS). Cross-tabulations were also computed to determine chi-square statistics and significance levels. This variable was not statistically significant in any of the computations except with respect to the sales representatives in the matched sample (T-Value=2.62, P=.010). The sales representatives working with repeat customers reported higher SOCO scores.

Customer Perception of Infotech (PERCEIV)

This variable examined whether a customer perceived Infotech as having equal competition in the market or as being a sole source supplier. This variable was found to be statistically significant in both tests conducted. Table 18 presents the t-test results.

TABLE 18
T-TEST OF CUSTOMERS' PERCEPTION OF INFOTECH
ON SOCO SCORES

Statistic	Infotech Customers	Matched Division A Customers	Sales Reps
Equal Competition Mean	6.27	6.33	7.60
Sole Source Mean	6.64	6.81	7.89
Difference	.37	.48	.29
T-Value	2.87	2.43	2.48
Degrees of Freedom	394	185	194
P=	.004	.016	.014

As shown in Table 18, the difference between the two groups was .37 (with the sole source group being higher). A significant difference between the groups was noted ($P=.004$). In the matched sample, the differences between the customer scores and the representative scores were .48 and .29 respectively with the sole source group reporting higher scores in both cases. Both t-tests reported significant differences between the two groups ($P=.016$ for the customers and $P=.014$ for the representatives). Therefore, the perceptions of the customer in terms of viewing Infotech as a sole source supplier or as having equal competition related to the SOCO scores reported. Those that viewed Infotech as a sole source supplier consistently reported higher SOCO

scores. Since they perceive Infotech as being their only source in the marketplace, perhaps the higher SOCO scores can be attributed to a rationalization of their purchase.

Why Customers Purchase From Infotech (WHYBUY)

Lastly, the variable WHYBUY was examined in terms of its relationship to the customers' SOCO scores. Customers were asked to rank four variables from most important to least important in terms of why they purchase from Infotech. The variables to be ranked included quality of product/ service, price, customer service, and speed of delivery. The ranking of the four variables was correlated with the reported customer SOCO score. The spearman correlation coefficients and P values are reported in the Table 19.

TABLE 19
CORRELATION BETWEEN WHYBUY AND SOCO SCORES

Variable	Infotech Customers	Matched Division A Customers	Sales Reps
Quality	-.10 .026	-.10 .086	.03 .354
Price	.13 .008	.08 .159	.05 .278
Customer Service	-.16 .002	-.09 .108	.14 .035
Speed of Delivery	.13 .008	.12 .054	.15 .026

In Infotech, all four variables reported significant relationships to the customers' SOCO scores. Customer service had a significant inverse relationship meaning that as customers moved from ranking it first to fourth, the SOCO scores decreased (-.16, $P=.002$). In other words, those that ranked it as the primary reason for purchasing from Infotech also recorded the highest SOCO score. This variable provides a good check on the SOCO Scale itself. The researcher would expect the scale to corroborate the customer service ranking provided by the customers. In the matched sample, the sales representatives reported a positive relationship between the ranking of this variable and their SOCO scores (.14, $P=.035$).

As the customers moved from ranking customer service from most important to least important, the sales representatives' SOCO scores increased. Therefore, those sales representatives that viewed themselves as being most customer oriented were aligned with customers who ranked service as least important in terms of why they purchase from Infotech. Perhaps this is an indication of inflated self-assessment or it may simply mean that the most customer oriented sales representatives happen to be working with customers who are least interested in this service.

The quality variable reported similar results to the customer service variable ($-.10, P=.026$). The higher the rank of product quality, the higher the reported SOCO score. The rank of product quality was positively related to the level of customer orientation. Meeting the customers' needs in terms of the quality of the product is an important aspect of customer orientation and would, therefore, report similar results to the customer service variable.

Those customers that are very price conscious and ranked price higher tended to give lower SOCO scores. As they tended to rank price lower, their customer orientation scores increased ($.13, P=.006$). Price did not record a significant relationship in the matched sample results.

Speed of delivery reported similar results (.13, $P=.008$). If customers viewed speed of delivery as paramount, their SOCO scores tended to be lower. Customers that ranked these items higher would not be as concerned with overall customer service but the price of the product and how quickly the product can be delivered. Therefore, lower SOCO scores were expected in these cases. Similar results were found in the matched sample data ($P=.054$) As well, the relationship between this matched variable and the sales representative scores was also found (.15, $P=.026$).

Table 20 provides information regarding the first place selections of Infotech customers. The customers were grouped based on the variable that they selected as most important. SOCO scores were computed for each group ie. the customers who ranked quality in first place reported a mean score of 6.71.

TABLE 20

**SOCO SCORES OF CUSTOMERS RANKING
INDIVIDUAL VARIABLES IN FIRST PLACE**

Variable Ranked First	Customers SOCO Score
Quality	6.71
Price	5.71
Customer Service	7.06
Speed of Delivery	6.24

The customers who ranked customer service first in terms of the reason why they purchase from Infotech recorded the highest SOCO score (7.06). The customers who purchase from Infotech primarily due to price considerations recorded the lowest SOCO score (5.71).

Relationships Among Selected Variables

Correlations were computed to determine the interrelationships among a number of the thirteen variables discussed in this chapter. Significant relationships were expected among such variables as level of experience, age of the sales representative, length of time in sales, average sale size (assuming those with more experience produced larger sales), and percentage of repeat sales (representatives being in sales longer would have built up more repeat business).

Younger representatives were expected to have more education than older representatives. Table 21 provides data regarding variables that reported significant relationships.

TABLE 21
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SELECTED VARIABLES (P <.05)

Selected Variables	Selected Variables			
	%REPEAT	REPAGE	MONTHS	AVGSALE
REPAGE	.43			
MONTHS	.38	.66		
AVGSALE	.45	.54	.46	
#TALK		.25	.35	
MGMTCO	-.26			
REPEDU	-.25	-.51	-.44	-.24
RATING	-.34		-.25	

The older representatives had been in sales for a longer period of time (.66, $P=.000$), had larger average sale sizes (.54, $P=.000$), had more repeat business (.43, $P=.000$), and were less educated (-.51, $P=.000$). When these four variables were correlated with each other, significant positive relationships were found with the exception of the education variable which was negatively correlated in all cases.

In the matched sample, the number of correlated items

increased and their relationships were even stronger. Table 22 provides the correlation coefficients for the significant variables.

TABLE 22
CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SELECTED VARIABLES
(MATCHED SAMPLE - $P < .05$)

Selected Variables							
Selected Variables	REPAGE	MONTHS	AVGSALE	#TALK	MGMTCO	REPEDU	RATING
%REPEAT	.75	.86	.51		-.29	-.49	-.16
REPAGE		.78	.68	.54	-.16	-.47	-.13
MONTHS			.83	.60	-.41	-.45	-.20
AVGSALE				.71	-.31	-.35	
#TALK					-.24	-.22	
MGMTCO						.26	.17

Similar to the results reported for Infotech overall, the variables relating to level of experience (length of time in sales) were all positively correlated ($P=.000$) with the exception of education which was negatively correlated with these variables. As well, these variables were positively correlated with the number of times the representative speaks to the customer prior to the sale.

In the matched sample, the score given to management in terms of its support towards customer orientation was

negatively correlated to percentage of sales with repeat customers ($-.29$, $P=.000$), age of the representative ($-.16$, $P=.010$), the length of time in sales ($-.41$, $P=.000$), average sale size ($-.31$, $P=.000$), and the number of times a client is spoken to prior to the sale ($-.24$, $P=.000$). Therefore, older sales representatives, those who had been longer in sales, those with larger average sale sizes and more repeat business all gave management lower scores in terms of their perception of management support in customer oriented sales efforts. Sales representatives who received higher performance ratings from management gave management higher scores in terms of their support of customer orientation. As well, the representatives with higher levels of education (the younger sales representatives) also gave management higher scores.

The performance ratings provided by management were negatively correlated to the age of the representative ($-.13$, $P=.030$), the length of time the representative had been in sales ($-.20$, $P=.007$) and the percentage of repeat business ($-.16$, $P=.009$). The reasons for these relationships are examined in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Findings reported for each of the four research objectives will be discussed. First, the results in terms of the reported levels of customer orientation will be examined and then the results of the extension portion of the research in which representatives were matched to their specific clients. Next, the results of this research study relative to previous studies conducted will be compared and discussed. The chapter will conclude with an examination of selected variables in terms of emerging relationships to reported SOCO scores.

The first three objectives of this research study examine the differences between reported SOCO scores of customers and sales representatives in Infotech overall, in an extended Division A sample and as compared to similar studies using the SOCO Scale.

Reported Levels of Customer Orientation

Across all divisions, the SOCO scores reported by sales representatives were higher than the scores reported by

their customers. Although the scale point differentials between the sales representatives' self-assessment and the customers evaluations were smaller than that reported in the two previous studies (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Michaels and Day 1985), t-tests showed they were significantly different in all cases except Division D where the small sample size may have affected the t-test results. Despite reducing the "noise" in the methodology employed using the SOCO Scale by examining the responses of two samples evaluating the same individuals (the Infotech sales representative), significant differences between customers' and sales representatives' perceptions of the level of customer orientation were still reported.

It is interesting to examine the differences between the divisions in Infotech Limited. Based on the analysis of variance and tukey multiple comparison test, significant differences in SOCO scores provided by both the customers and sales representatives were found between Division A and Division B. These are the two largest divisions in Infotech. Further, Division B has been the backbone of Infotech since its inception and is the primary revenue producer. This Division, however, has experienced problems in the last year resulting in staff turnover, cancelled contracts, low morale,

and loss of revenue due to negative publicity received. As the problems mounted in Division B, Division A continued to grow in sales volume and profitability. Division A was becoming a rising star within Infotech.

Overall, Division B reported the lowest level of customer orientation of all the divisions in Infotech based on sales representatives responses (7.03) and customer responses (6.24). Upon receiving the final report on this study, the Infotech President commented that the low scores reported and comments received from the customers were an indication of difficulties that were to come. Determining that differences exist between Division A and Division B was not surprising considering inherent differences in these two divisions. Several factors may contribute to the differences in reported scores.

The product line of Division B is standardized and packages are available to clients in various formats. In Division A, the products differ substantially in terms of complexity and variety. The products in this division tend to be custom-made for the customer. It is likely that the diverse product characteristics contribute to the differences between Division A and Division B. The complexity of the Division A products would require more interaction with

customers in order to ensure that the product line is understood. In Division B, this level of interaction would not be required. Representatives in both divisions have ample opportunity to be customer oriented or sales oriented, however, the amount of interaction may have impacted on the perceived level of customer orientation. Greater interaction demanded by a more complex product offering in Division A may have produced higher customer orientation scores relative to Division B. Greater interaction may be equated by some respondents with a greater level of customer orientation. Saxe and Weitz stated the following about the conditions that allow a customer oriented approach:

One would expect that a customer oriented approach would be used when the benefits outweigh the costs. Such conditions are likely in the following circumstances.

1. The salesperson can offer a range of alternatives and has the expertise to determine which alternatives will satisfy customer needs.
2. The salesperson's customers are typically engaged in complex buying tasks.
3. The salesperson typically has a cooperative relationship with his or her customers.
4. Repeat sales and referrals are an important source of business for the salesperson.

(Saxe and Weitz 1982, 348)

Conditions 3 and 4 exist for both Divisions A and B. However, the range and complexity of the product offering in Division A is much greater than that in Division B. These two conditions may provide substantive reasons for the differences in these two divisions resulting in lower SOCO scores in Division B.

A final difference between the divisions existed due to the sales management structure. At the time that the sales representatives completed their questionnaires, Division A had been operating without a General Manager for six months. The General Manager usually dictates the way the sales force is to conduct business. In Infotech, although customer service was important, the General Managers were evaluated in terms of revenue and profit. The pressure exerted on salespeople in Infotech usually stemmed from Sales Managers who received their objectives from their General Manager. Since Division A was without a General Manager, it is possible that the pressure being experienced by the Division A representatives to sell was not as great as it would have been otherwise. The sales representatives remained accountable to their Sales Managers, however, the pressure was not as intense. Therefore, higher SOCO scores may have resulted due to the lessened pressure to be sales oriented with the absence of a

General Manager.

Matched Record SOCO Scores

In further reducing the "noise" by examining specific sales representatives and their customers (Division A extension sample), significant differences between SOCO scores were still found. The sales representative's self-assessments were consistently higher. This lends further support to the recommendation that the SOCO Scale be employed with the realization that consistently there has been a significant difference in the level of customer orientation reported depending on the sample utilized.

A recent study conducted in the industrial sector compared the perceptions of customers and management in terms of the customers' relations with salespeople. Using a Likert scale of 1 to 10, a 1.39 scale point differential was found with the management scores being lower (Kasper and Lemmink 1989). The literature regarding boundary spanning theory and on practical realities suggest that information should be solicited from both employees and customers when evaluating service organizations (Schneider et al. 1980). The current research provides further support for these concepts.

Research regarding the level of customer orientation

must take into account the responding sample. The purpose of this portion of the research study was to determine whether a researcher could, in fact, sample one population or another for an accurate assessment. In this study and previous studies, differentials ranging from .87 to 2.00 have been consistently reported and the sales representatives' scores have always been higher than scores provided by customers. Therefore, one could safely assume that in future studies sales representative scores will consistently be higher than scores reported by customers and will probably have a difference of 1-2 scale points.

Sales Representatives' Evaluation of Other Sales Representatives

OSOCO scores were calculated to determine whether the sales representatives evaluations of others would be significantly different than their evaluations of themselves. On average, there was a 1.89 scale point difference ($P=.000$) between their self-assessment and their evaluation of other sales representatives.

Even when a second variable was computed so that a direct comparison could be made with the seven variables used to assess other sales representatives, the scale point differential was 1.53.

The evaluation of self versus others seems to support the Michaels and Day speculation that upward bias exists in self-report. In examining the OSOCO scores relative to the two self-evaluation scores (SOCO and XSOCO), there is consistently a significant difference with the self-assessment being higher. Perhaps these results also show a downward bias in terms of a general assessment of others. When there is a scale point difference of 1.89 or 1.53, it is impossible to state that a certain percentage of the difference is due to upward bias and the remaining is due to downward bias. However, these results do provide support for a bias in self-assessment and evaluation of others.

Comparison To Previous Studies

The previous two studies conducted using the SOCO Scale (Saxe and Weitz 1982; Michaels and Day 1985) determined that there was a two scale point differential in the SOCO scores reported by unrelated samples of sales representatives and buyers. As discussed in the literature review, Michaels and Day (1985) provided an intuitive explanation for the discrepancy citing bias in evaluations, upward for salespeople and downward for customers. Further support of upward bias in self-report are provided by Grashof and Thomas (1986) and

Silk and Kalwani (1982). Downward bias on the part of customers would also be expected given that historical stereotypes are not yet forgotten (Weeks and Muehling 1987). In this study, attempts were made to eliminate some of the "noise" in the research design by using related samples to obtain accurate measurements employing the SOCO Scale.

In examining the representative data in the two studies, the Saxe and Weitz SOCO score was 7.7 versus the current study result of 7.3. The sales representatives in the current study tended to evaluate themselves slightly lower than previously found.

The customers' SOCO score in the Michaels and Day study was 5.7 and in the current study the SOCO score was 6.5. Therefore, the customers ranked the salespeople higher in the current study. The Infotech customers may have exhibited a more positive bias due to the service nature of Infotech overall (Dubinsky and Staples 1987). Since Infotech is a business service organization, higher scores may have been expected when compared to the random sample of Michaels and Day in which many types of businesses were included. Perhaps the Infotech sales representatives are simply more customer oriented than the average sales representative.

The overall results show that the sales representative

and customer scores in the current study reported a lower differential (0.87 versus 2.00). The sales representative scores were lower and the customer scores were higher. As the "noise" in the research design was lessened, the scores tended to move closer together. However, significant differences remain between what sales representatives and customers report even with directly matched samples. Therefore, although some of the upward bias on the part of the salespeople and downward bias on the part of the customers seems to have been reduced, researchers must recognize that in attempting to determine an actual level of customer orientation, these inherent differences must be taken into consideration.

Relationships Between Selected Variables and SOCO Scores Reported

Thirteen variables were examined in terms of their possible relationship to the SOCO scores reported by the sales representatives and customers. Highlights of the results will be discussed in this section.

Sales Representative Level of Experience

The age of the representative, length of time in sales, average sale size, and percentage of repeat business were all positively correlated to SOCO scores reported by both

the customers and sales representatives in the matched portion of the research. All of these variables relate to the experience of the sales representative. The relationships reported by all of these variables lend very strong support to the idea that more experienced sales representatives are better able to meet customer needs (Szymanski 1988). Also, the more customer oriented salespeople produce higher average sales and secure the most repeat business. It is difficult to determine the cause and effect but it is clear to see that these variables are intuitively appealing.

It was determined that the older representatives reported a higher level of customer orientation and these representatives tend to have less education. The education variable was found to be inversely related to the SOCO scores reported. The researcher did not believe that education was as much a factor in terms of the SOCO scores reported as the age of the sales representative (which also relates to the length of time the representative has been in sales). Correlations were computed controlling the age variable and in these tests no significant relationships were found between education and level of customer orientation. However, in these controlled tests, an inverse relationship was still found between education and age. The inverse relationship in

terms of education with SOCO scores seems to have emerged simply as description of older and younger sales representatives. The more experienced (older) sales representatives received higher SOCO scores from the customers ($P=.027$). Since level of education and length of time in sales are inversely related ($P=.007$), level of education (as a descriptive variable related to age) consequently is found to be negatively correlated to overall SOCO scores.

Level of Interaction, Repeat Sales and Average Sale Size

Significant relationships were found between #TALK, %REPEAT and AVGSALE and customer orientation in the matched sample. As the average sale size increased, so did the level of customer orientation reported by both customers and representatives. A similar relationship was noted for percentage of repeat sales. The relationship between these two variables was also strongly correlated (.51, $P=.000$). These relationships seem to support the idea that larger orders are obtained from repeat customers.

The number of times that a representative speaks to a customer prior to a sale is strongly correlated to the size of the sale obtained (.71, $P=.000$). Again, the cause and effect are difficult to determine. Does the increased level

of interaction produce a larger sale or does the larger customer requirement necessitate more interaction before the contract can be established? Because the number of times a representative speaks to a customer was not related to the SOCO scores reported by the customers, it seems that the latter scenario is more plausible.

The significant relationships were only noted in Division A. If a customer has signed a very large order with Division A, it is not simply because he/she wanted more units of whatever is offered. Large orders in this division are usually accompanied by complex requirements. The sales representative would be required to interact frequently with the customer to ensure that the details are correct. Larger orders, therefore, do not necessarily mean that the customer is receiving better service due to the monetary value of the contract. Larger orders may simply require more interaction and, therefore, a higher perceived level of customer service may result.

The variable #TALK was not significantly related to AVGSALE in the other divisions except in Division C where the relationship was reversed. These three divisions do not deal with product complexity comparable to Division A. If contracts are large in the other three divisions, it is

because the customer is requiring more units of an existing package or packages. An increase in volume does not necessitate greater levels of interaction on the part of the sales representatives. Division A was the only division that reported a positive linear relationship between these variables and the relationship may have been product related.

Management Support of Customer Orientation

Another result of particular interest is the relationship between the sales representatives' perception of management support of customer oriented sales efforts (MGMTCO) and the SOCO score reported. In the matched sample, there was an inverse relationship between the sales representatives' SOCO score and the MGMTCO score reported ($-.55, P=.000$). This result means that as the management score decreased, the SOCO score increased or more simply, those representatives reporting higher SOCO scores did not believe that management supported their customer oriented sales efforts. As previously reported, the relationship between the management scores and the age of the sales representative, the length of time in sales, average sale size, percentage of repeat business, and number of times a representative talks to a customer prior to the sale were all negatively correlated

($P=.000$ to $P=.010$).

The statement that was provided in terms of management support was "I can count on management support in reasonable efforts to look out for my customer's best interests". It becomes clear that the sales representatives who are most concerned with customer orientation do not feel that they have management support. The lower management assessments were provided by older representatives with more sales experience. As well, these representatives were obtaining larger average sales and more repeat customer business. These representatives also received lower performance ratings from management although they produce a very high percentage of the overall divisional sales. The representatives that are most customer oriented may be putting the customers' needs ahead of the company's interests (Swan, Trawick and Silva 1985) and may thereby receive lower ratings from management. Based on actual sales data, the performance ratings provided by management were found to be subjective evaluations of the individual sales representatives rather than strictly quantifiable.

It is important to note, however, that employee's perceptions of how they are treated will influence what they believe the company will do for the customer (Weitzel et al.

1989). Lower scores in terms of the sales representatives' perception of management support of customer orientation (MGMTCO) may have been provided based on how the sales representative feels he/she is being treated by management.

The younger representatives with higher performance ratings recorded lower levels of customer orientation and provided management with higher assessments in terms of customer orientation. The younger sales representatives were more sales oriented than the older representatives. This would allow management the opportunity to better reach their short-term sales performance goals. Management would, therefore, be more likely to give the more sales oriented sales representatives higher performance ratings (Bellizzi and Hite 1989). Lower ratings would be given to more customer oriented representatives who may assume short-term losses to better meet the needs of the client (Saxe and Weitz 1982). It is obvious that problems exist in terms of the overall objectives of the managers and the sales representatives.

Customer Perceptions of Infotech

Customers were asked whether they believed Infotech was a sole source supplier or whether they had equal competition in the marketplace. T-tests were computed between

the two groups and significant differences were found in Infotech overall ($P=.004$) and in the matched sample of customers ($P=.016$) and sales representatives ($P=.014$). Those that perceived Infotech as being a sole source supplier consistently provided higher scores. It was thought that those perceiving the company as being a sole source supplier would provide lower SOCO scores since they "had nowhere else to go". The differences between the two scores were not large (ranged from .29 to .48 scale points). The higher sole source SOCO scores could possibly be due to a purchase rationalization. Perhaps the customers did not appreciate the fact that Infotech was their only alternative but tried to rationalize the purchase by providing a positive assessment of the sales representatives.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

Brief conclusions based on the results and discussion will be presented in this chapter. A discussion of the strengths and limitations of the research will also be provided. Implications of this study for researchers and managers will be presented and recommendations for future research will conclude the chapter.

Unravelling the reasons for differences in reported scores of sales representatives and customers regarding level of customer orientation was of interest in this study. Differences could not be eliminated by correcting possible problems in previous research such as comparing unrelated samples and results of studies conducted during separate time frames. Even when these problems were eliminated, significant differences were still noted. As well, the process was taken one step further by only analyzing sales representatives and their specific customers. Even when the research became this narrow, significant differences in perceived levels of customer orientation were still found.

In this research, factors that may impact on perceived

levels of customer orientation were examined. A few variables emerged in terms of their relationship to the SOCO scores reported. The sales representative's level of experience seemed to positively affect the overall scores reported. The level of interaction between the client and sales representative also emerged as a variable positively related to SOCO scores. Again, this may be product specific in terms of interaction required for product presentation. In other words, a complex product offering may simply require more interaction and this increased interaction may be perceived as greater customer orientation. Lastly, management support of customer orientation seems to be critical. Even in companies formally endorsing customer orientation, questions remain as to whether customer service philosophies are implemented throughout the organization (Kyj 1987). This question was definitely raised at Infotech.

Strengths and Limitations

One of the strengths of this study is the analysis of the results of related samples. In previous research, problems existed based on the comparison of results of two unrelated studies. This study allowed the opportunity to not only examine the results of related samples but also directly

matched samples. Usually researchers are not given the opportunity to access such proprietary data from companies. In this case, an optimum situation existed where the researcher was employed by Infotech and was granted virtually unlimited access to confidential and proprietary data.

A further strength of the study stems directly from the company involved in this research. Infotech is a multinational corporation that has been in business since before the turn of the century. It is a highly respected internationally known firm that has seen many changes in sales force management over the century. The cooperation of such a well-established company is definitely an asset. As well, the results of this study are presently being analyzed and used by executives within Infotech and the results were to be shared with other Infotech Management teams internationally.

In terms of the results overall, a strength of the research was that it showed customer orientation could be measured in individual organizations as well as in broad-based samples. The questions that had previously been raised regarding how to measure customer orientation have been addressed by further use of the SOCO Scale. As well, the methodological issues regarding its use with sales representatives and/or customers have been thoroughly

discussed.

A limitation of the research is that the results may not be generalizable across industries. In this study, only one firm was analyzed. Although the difference in sales representative and customer scores was lessened, significant differences remained. One cannot say that the .87 scale point difference noted in this company would hold true for another industrial service organization. Each sales force is unique. However, based on this study and previous studies employing the SOCO Scale, one could conclude, with reasonable certainty, that in future studies a difference would be found and that the sales representative's self-assessment would be higher than his/her customers.

Implications of this Study for Researchers

This research study further validated the SOCO Scale with related samples of buyers and sellers. As well, it was used to evaluate individual sales representatives and samples of their specific clients. The research has replicated and extended previous research and has shown that differences between customers and sales representatives consistently emerge in terms of perceived levels of customer orientation. Future researchers must take into consideration the difference

in perceptions of buyers and sellers in this type of research. These findings must be considered in attempting to determine the level of customer orientation with a sample of only buyers or sellers.

The research conducted using the SOCO Scale has produced consistent results and relationships have emerged between selected variables and customer orientation. Researchers need to build on the data provided in terms of a theoretical framework. Causal relationships could be examined with survey instruments designed to more accurately measure the selected variables. The relationships between the variables could be examined to assemble regression models to account for the variance associated with customer orientation. This theory building would prove beneficial in determining the strength of the relationship between external variables and customer orientation.

Implications of this Study for Managers

Infotech was provided with a vast amount of information regarding perceived levels of customer orientation. Presentations were made to senior management regarding the results of this research and recommendations were offered. Information was provided regarding each

division within the company for specific use by the divisional General Managers. Additional information concerning the impact of selected variables was also provided. The study served to provide a large volume of background data on the sales representatives and customer base as well.

This information is presently being used to develop in-house training programs regarding customer orientation and to further develop the goals of the customer orientation program. As well, the information is being used as a basis for determining reasons for differences between salespeople. The study has provided the basis for a complete analysis of customer orientation within this firm.

In employing the SOCO Scale in one organization in this research study, it has proven to be a useful tool that can be utilized in many organizations. The scale is straightforward and easy to understand. The results are easy to quantify and compare across divisions and sales classifications. Certain selling situations can be evaluated and other variables can be examined in terms of their relationship to the reported SOCO scores.

This research shows that the SOCO Scale can be effectively employed by managers interested in determining the level of customer orientation in their organizations. As

well, the scale could also be employed in surveying sales managers regarding their perceptions of the actions of the sales representatives that they manage. It would be interesting to use the SOCO Scale to determine the difference in perceptions of customers, sales representatives and sales managers in one organization.

Customers approached in this survey were pleased that their opinions were being sought. Many appreciated the opportunity to provide an evaluation of their sales representative. Infotech's corporate image seemed to benefit directly from the research. Any company adopting a customer oriented outlook in their sales efforts should be encouraged to employ the SOCO Scale to determine the actual level of customer orientation attained.

In terms of management, which score should be recognized? There are gaps between what customers want and what they see being delivered versus what the company believes customers want (Powers 1988). Some have stated that it does not matter what the company believes the level of customer service is because customer service only has to do with what the customer believes is true (Davidow 1989). In this case, management should pay close attention to the customers' perception of the level of customer orientation.

Managers should also be aware that relationships have emerged between the level of customer orientation and the experience of the sales representative, amount of interaction between the sales representative and customer and management support of customer orientation. Determining key areas relating to customer orientation is important for sales organizations interested in maximizing competitive advantages.

Future Research

Although the SOCO scores reported by the two groups moved closer together in the related samples, significant differences were still found. These consistent results may be due to natural upward and downward biases, as previously cited. However, future research should endeavour to determine what factors impact on reported SOCO scores of both buyers and sellers.

Future research should be undertaken regarding variables such as level of experience of the sales representatives, level of interaction between sales representatives and customers, customers' perceptions of the supplying company, and management support of customer orientation. Some of the factors have been explored in this study, however, data collection instruments need to be

designed to accurately measure these variables and their relationship to customer orientation.

Management support of customer orientation has emerged as a very interesting variable in this study. Further research is required in terms of the management effect on customer oriented sales efforts. Besides the research showing that written corporate policies for customer orientation are necessary in order to project management support (Lalonde and Zinszer 1976; Kyj 1987), very little literature is presently available in this area. Research exploring the effects of management on the sales representatives' scores would prove to be quite useful to both academic and managerial researchers.

Conclusion

This study has served to replicate and extend previous research regarding the measurement of customer orientation. As well, this study explored factors that impact on the scores reported using the SOCO Scale leading to future research questions.

The research study was designed to further examine the differences between the perceptions of sales representatives and customers regarding customer orientation.

Significant differences continue to be found between these two groups. Future research in this area must heed these findings in terms of methodological design.

As companies continue to become more concerned with customer orientation, more attention will be paid to methods that can be used to measure it. This research shows that a useful measurement tool does exist and can be effectively employed in a sales organization.

In satisfying sales interactions, reaching the goals of both sellers and buyers is necessary not only to meet sales quota requirements but also to meet the needs of the customer. Through effectively monitored customer oriented sales efforts, these two goals need not be mutually exclusive.

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(*)All company name references have been deleted

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SALESPEOPLE

NAME: _____

TELEMARKETER ( )

TITLE: _____

OUTSIDE REP ( )

DIVISION: _____

PART A:

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. Approximately what percentage of your sales calls (meetings and/or phone calls) are with customers with whom you have had previous sales (repeat customers)?

|_|_|_| % of my meetings are with repeat customers

|_|_|_| % of my phone calls are with repeat customers

2. Approximately what percentage of your total sales come from repeat customers?

|_|_|_| %

3. What is your age?

|_|_| years

4. What is the length of time that you have been in sales:

a) Within ? |_|_| Years |_|_| Months

b) In Total (incl.) |_|_| Years |_|_| Months

5. What is the total length of time that you have spent in your present sales territory (or relatively same client/prospect list)?

|_|_| Years |_|_| Months

6. Sex: M F (Circle one)

7. Education: |_| High School |_| Some Graduate School
                  |_| Some College |_| Graduate Degree
                  |_| College Degree |_| Some Post-Graduate
                                                  School
8. What is the range of orders that you write?
From \$ |_|_|_|_|_|_|_| to \$ |_|_|_|_|_|_|_|
9. Within this range, what is the average size of an order you would most often write?
|_|_|_|_|_|_|_|
10. Approximately how many times do you talk with a new prospect before a sale is made:
|_|_|_|_|
11. About how many customers do you:
a) Meet with each day |_|_|
b) Talk to on the phone each day |_|_|_|
12. Think of a typical repeat customer. About how many times a year do you see and/or talk to him on business matters each year?
a) See him/her in person |_|_|_| times per year.
b) Talk to him/her on the phone |_|_|_| times per year.

PART B:

INSTRUCTIONS

The following questions and numeric ratings comprise the SOCO Scale, a statistical research instrument that has been employed by researchers since 1980. The SOCO process is a clinical tool which has been developed to analyze the relationship between customers and sales representatives and has not been altered in any way for . . . . The statements below describe various ways a salesperson might act with a customer or prospect (for convenience, the word "customer" is used to refer to both customers and prospects). For each statement please indicate the proportion of your customers with whom you act as described in the statement. Do this by circling one of the numbers from 1 to 9. The meanings of the numbers are:

- 1 - True for NONE of your customers (NEVER)
- 2 - True for ALMOST NONE.....
- 3 - True for A FEW.....
- 4 - True for SOMEWHAT LESS THAN HALF.....
- 5 - True for ABOUT HALF.....
- 6 - True for SOMEWHAT MORE THAN HALF.....
- 7 - True for a LARGE MAJORITY.....
- 8 - True for ALMOST ALL.....
- 9 - True for ALL of your customers (ALWAYS)

For example, if you circled 6 below, you would indicate that you ask somewhat more than half of your customers a lot of questions.

	NEVER								ALWAYS
I ask customers a lot of questions	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Please answer these questions HONESTLY. Results of this study will only be available at an aggregate level. Your individual responses will not be provided to anyone! Remember that your answers may not be solely a reflection of you or your sales ability but also management support, compensation plans, etc. Thank you for your co-operation.

	NEVER								ALWAYS
1. I try to give customers an accurate expectation of what the product/service will do for them.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. I try to get customers to discuss their needs with me.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. If I am not sure a product/service is right for a customer, I will still apply pressure to get him/her to buy..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. I imply to a customer that something is beyond my control when it is not..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

NEVER

ALWAYS

5. I try to influence a customer by information rather than by pressure..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. I try to sell as much as I can rather than to satisfy a customer.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7. I spend more time trying to persuade a customer to buy than I do trying to discover his/her needs.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8. I try to help customers achieve their goals.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9. I answer a customer's questions about products/services as correctly as I can.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10. I pretend to agree with customers to please them.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11. I treat a customer as a rival....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12. I try to figure out what a customer's needs are.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13. A good salesperson has to have the customer's best interest in mind...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
14. I try to bring a customer with a problem together with a product/service that helps him/her solve that problem.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15. I am willing to disagree with a customer in order to help him/her make a better decision.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
16. I offer the product/service of mine that is best suited to the customer's problem.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

NEVER

ALWAYS

17. It is necessary to stretch the truth in describing a product/service to a customer..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
18. I begin the sales talk for a product/service before exploring a customer's needs with him/her..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
19. I try to sell a customer all I can convince him/her to buy, even if I think it is more than a wise customer would buy..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
20. I paint too rosy a picture of my products/services to make them sound as good as possible..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
21. I try to achieve my goals by satisfying customers..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
22. I decide what products/services to offer on the basis of what I can convince customers to buy, and not on the basis of what will satisfy them in the long run. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
23. I try to find out what kind of product/service would be most helpful to a customer..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
24. I keep alert for weaknesses in a customer's personality so I can use them to put pressure on him/her to buy. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
25. I can count on management support in reasonable efforts to look out for my customer's best interests..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

12. The sales rep tries to figure out what my needs are.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13. The sales rep has my best interest as a customer in mind.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
14. The sales rep takes a problem-solving approach in selling to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15. The sales rep will go as far as to disagree with me in order to help me make a better purchase decision.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
16. The sales rep recommends the product/service best suited to solve my problems.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
17. The sales rep stretches the truth in describing his/her products/services to me.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
18. The sales rep talks first and listens to my needs later.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
19. The sales rep tries to convince me to buy more than I need.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
20. The sales rep paints rosy pictures of his/her products/services to make them sound as good as possible.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
21. The sales rep tries to provide for my organization's satisfaction....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
22. The sales rep makes recommendations based on what he/she thinks he/she can sell and not on the basis of my long-term satisfaction.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
23. The sales rep tries to find out which products/services would be most helpful to me as a customer.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

If you have any comments you would like to make regarding the interaction with your clients on a day to day basis or if there are any areas that I have touched on during the questionnaire that you would like to comment on, please feel free to do so.

Comments:

THANK YOU, ONCE AGAIN, FOR COMPLETING THIS QUESTIONNAIRE AND RETURNING IT AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. I APPRECIATE YOUR CO-OPERATION AND LOOK FORWARD TO SHARING THE RESULTS WITH YOU!

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR

CUSTOMERS

DUNS # : _____

SALES REP'S NAME: _____

DIVISION : _____

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. What is your title in the organization where you work?

_____

2. To be included in this study, you purchased a product/service from
in the last six to eight months.

Was this a ( ) first time purchase

( ) repeat purchase (please check one)

3. How many times a year do you generally speak to or meet with the
representative?

|_|_|_| times I speak with my representative

|_|_|_| times I meet with my representative

4. What percentage of these interactions are initiated by you and the
representative?

|_|_|_| % initiated by me

|_|_|_| % initiated by the sales representative

5. Are you able to obtain products/services equal in quality and price
from competitors or do you perceive
as being a sole supplier?

( ) Have equal competition

( ) Sole source supplier

6. Please rank the following items in terms of most important (1) to least important (4) as to why you purchased products/services from

( ) Quality of product/service

( ) Price

( ) Customer Service

( ) Speed of Delivery

( ) Other (Please specify) _____

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THIS SECTION

The following questions and numeric ratings comprise the SOCO Scale, a statistical research instrument that has been employed by researchers since 1980. The SOCO process is a clinical tool which has been developed to analyze the relationship between customers and sales representatives and has not been altered in any way for . The statements below describe various ways that a salesperson might act with you as a customer or prospective customer. For each statement, please indicate the proportion of times that your sales representative acts as described in the statement. Do this by circling one of the numbers from 1 to 9. Their meanings are:

- 1 - True for NONE of our interactions (NEVER)
- 2 - True for ALMOST NONE.....
- 3 - True for A FEW.....
- 4 - True for SOMEWHAT LESS THAN HALF.....
- 5 - True for ABOUT HALF.....
- 6 - True for SOMEWHAT MORE THAN HALF.....
- 7 - True for A LARGE MAJORITY.....
- 8 - True for ALMOST ALL.....
- 9 - True for ALL of our interactions (ALWAYS)

For example, if you circle 3 below, you would indicate that the sales representative asks you a lot of questions in a few of your interactions (meetings) together.

	NEVER							ALWAYS	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
The sales rep asks a lot of questions									

It is very important to answer these questions honestly as they pertain to and not sales representatives from other organizations. The statements below are quite definitive and you may not know the answer for sure, however, please answer the questions based on what you think is occurring during your interactions with the sales representative. This questionnaire should not take more than a couple of minutes of your time. Thank you for your co-operation.

The wording in the questionnaire will refer to the "sales rep". In this case, the specific reference is to the "sales representative".

	NEVER					ALWAYS				
1. The sales rep gives an accurate representation of what his/her product/service will do for me...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
2. The sales rep tries to get me to discuss my product/service needs..	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
3. The sales rep applies selling pressure even though he/she knows the product is not right for my company.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
4. The sales rep implies that things are beyond his/her control when they really are not.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
5. The sales rep tries to influence me through information rather than by pressure.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
6. The sales rep that calls on me is customer-oriented.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
7. The sales rep spends more time trying to persuade than trying to discover my product needs.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
8. The sales rep tries to help me achieve my purchasing objectives...	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9. The sales rep answers my questions about his/her products/services as honestly as possible.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10. The sales rep agrees with me only to please me.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
11. The sales rep treats me as an opponent.....	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

12. The sales rep tries to figure out what my needs are..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
13. The sales rep has my best interest as a customer in mind..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
14. The sales rep takes a problem-solving approach in selling to me. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
15. The sales rep will go as far as to disagree with me in order to help me make a better purchase decision. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
16. The sales rep recommends the product/service best suited to solve my problems..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
17. The sales rep stretches the truth in describing his/her products/services to me..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
18. The sales rep talks first and listens to my needs later..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
19. The sales rep tries to convince me to buy more than I need..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
20. The sales rep paints rosy pictures of his/her products/services to make them sound as good as possible. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
21. The sales rep tries to provide for my organization's satisfaction.... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
22. The sales rep makes recommendations based on what he/she thinks he/she can sell and not on the basis of my long-term satisfaction..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9
23. The sales rep tries to find out which products/services would be most helpful to me as a customer..... 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

24. The sales rep is always looking
for ways to apply pressure to
make me buy.....

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

If you have any comments you would like to make regarding the interaction with your sales representative on a day to day basis or if there are any areas that specifically interested you during the questionnaire, please feel free to provide your comments in the following space.

Comments:

Thank you, once again, for completing this questionnaire and returning it to me as quickly as possible. I hope that this study will allow to develop programs that will provide you with even greater customer service.

PLEASE RETURN THIS QUESTIONNAIRE TO ME IN THE ENVELOPE PROVIDED AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

Letter to Customers

Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6

November 18, 1988

Dear

Customer:

As explained in introductory letter, I am working part-time on my Masters Degree at Carleton University. I have chosen to study the relationship between customers and sales representatives for my Thesis.

In order to obtain my sample, I have randomly selected a small number of customers based on recent records. I have limited my sample size to keep my project costs down and am, therefore, hoping for your full co-operation.

I have selected the sample from sales records to obtain the names of companies and contacts. However, at times the person who signs the contract is not the person who interacts with the sales representative. If you are not the individual who meets with or talks to the sales representative, please forward this package to the correct person within your firm.

It will only take a couple of minutes to complete this questionnaire. Two minutes is not a long time but it is very important to this student who is patiently waiting for your response. I hope you will return this questionnaire because the data will surely benefit clients, yourself included, in terms of service provision.

Thank you in advance, for your help and co-operation. I look forward to the speedy return of your questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Joanne Hunt
Graduate Student

JH/gf
Encls.

Le 18 novembre 1988

Cher Client

Tel que précisé dans la lettre de _____, j'étudie, à temps partiel, dans le but d'obtenir une maîtrise à l'Université Carlton. Pour ma thèse, j'ai opté pour une étude sur les relations entre les clients _____ et les représentants des ventes.

Pour l'échantillonnage, j'ai choisi au hasard un petit nombre de clients _____ selon des dossiers récents. J'ai tenu à limiter le nombre en vue de minimiser les frais du projet. Aussi, je compte sur votre entière collaboration.

J'ai sélectionné les raisons sociales et les contacts de l'échantillonnage à partir des dossiers de vente. Cependant, il arrive parfois que la personne dont la signature figure au contrat n'est pas la personne qui communique avec le représentant des ventes. Si vous n'êtes pas la personne qui rencontrez ou parlez au représentant des ventes _____, je vous prie de bien vouloir acheminer les présentes à la personne visée au sein de votre firme.

Environ deux minutes suffiront pour remplir ce questionnaire. Deux minutes ce n'est pas long, mais cela est très important pour moi, l'étudiante, qui compte sur vos réponses. J'apprécierais que vous me retourniez le questionnaire dans les meilleurs délais. Les données qu'il comporte seront, sans aucune doute, avantageuses pour les clients de _____, dont vous-même, en termes de services fournis.

Je vous remercie à l'avance de votre aide et de votre collaboration, et je compte sur vous pour me retourner le questionnaire dans les plus brefs délais.

Veuillez agréer, cher Client, mes salutations distinguées.

Joanne Hunt
Étudiante de premier cycle

JH/gf

November 18, 1988

Dear Customer:

Enclosed is a questionnaire and letter from one of our employees, Joanne Hunt, regarding a study that she is conducting for her Masters Thesis. The subject she has chosen for her Thesis Research is the relationship between sales people and customers, specifically Sales Representatives and Customers.

I am writing to assure you that we are fully supporting Joanne in this endeavour. We are also eager to review the results of this study to determine if your needs are being met through the Sales Representatives that call on you.

I hope that you will help Joanne with this project, which will provide valuable information to and allow her to fulfill her Thesis requirements.

Thank you, in advance, for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Infotech President

Le 18 novembre 1988

Cher Client

Vous trouverez ci-joint un questionnaire et une lettre de la part de l'une de nos employées, Joanne Hunt, relativement à une étude qu'elle effectue en vue d'une thèse de maîtrise. Le sujet choisi pour sa thèse sont les relations entre les représentants des ventes et leurs clients, particulièrement entre les représentantes des ventes et les clients

La présente a pour but de vous assurer de notre soutien intégral apporté à Joanne dans son entreprise. De plus, nous sommes impatients de prendre connaissance des résultats de cette étude afin de déterminer si votre représentant des ventes répond à vos besoins.

J'espère que vous pourrez aider Joanne dans le cadre de cette étude. Les données obtenues seront précieuses pour . et permettront à Joanne de répondre aux exigences relatives à sa thèse.

En vous remerciant à l'avance de votre collaboration, veuillez agréer, cher Client, mes salutations distinguées.

Infotech President

Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6

November 18, 1988

Dear Representative:

As letter states, I am presently working on my Masters Degree at Carleton University on a part-time basis. The research topic that I have chosen deals with the interaction of sales representatives and their clients. The questionnaire specifically examines this area and other aspects of the selling process. It will be administered to all sales representatives and a sample of customers.

To meet stringent academic requirements, I need every sales representative to respond in this study. Because I have chosen the sales representatives at as my sample, the total number of respondents is not very large. In order to run the computations that are required of me, I need your full co-operation. The success of my Thesis Dissertation at Carleton University is dependent on each of you!!

I must reiterate that your individual responses will not be shared with anyone at . They will be kept strictly confidential. The only data that will receive is aggregate findings for the company. This information will be available to you as well. It is important for you to be completely honest. The SOCO Scale that I am using has been employed by academic researchers in the past and I will be conducting comparative analysis. Your honesty is really important.

It is also important to give some thought to the questions that are posed. Responding "ALWAYS" for every item in the questionnaire is often questioned by researchers. The survey will only take a few moments so please give it your serious consideration. What may seem unimportant to you is extremely important to me and to my Thesis results.

The questionnaire has a code on it rather than your name. This code will be used for response rate purposes. It will also allow me to link your questionnaire to the Division in which you work as well as your geographic location. The codes are being used as a further guarantee of anonymity. Please complete the questionnaire (without writing your name on it) and return it to me in the envelope provided.

Thank you, in advance, for your co-operation. I really appreciate your help and the speedy return of your questionnaire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanne Hunt".

Joanne Hunt
Graduate Student

JH/gf
Encls.

P.S. Questionnaires are considered unusable in my statistical analysis if even one question is left unanswered. Please answer every question. Thanks!

P.S. This will only take a couple of minutes of your time so please complete it right away and return it as quickly as possible!!

Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6

Le 18 novembre 1988

Cher(es) représentants(es)

Tel que le précise la lettre de _____, je prépare mon mémoire de maîtrise à l'Université de Carleton à temps partiel. Le sujet choisi traite des communications entre les représentants des ventes et leurs clients. Le questionnaire porte particulièrement sur ce domaine ainsi que les autres aspects de la vente. Le questionnaire sera adressé à tous les représentants des ventes ainsi qu'à un échantillonnage de clients _____.

Afin de répondre aux exigences rigoureuses de l'université, tous les représentants des ventes doivent répondre à ce questionnaire. Comme j'ai choisi les représentants _____ comme exemple, le nombre total de répondants est limité. Si je veux répondre aux exigences qu'on m'a fixées, je dois compter sur votre entière collaboration. La réussite de cette thèse de dissertation à l'Université Carleton dépend de chacun et chacune de vous.

Je dois vous rappeler et insister sur le fait que vos réponses ne seront communiquées à personne chez _____. Elles seront strictement confidentielles. _____ ne disposera que des conclusions globales. Cette information vous sera aussi offerte. Je vous demande de faire preuve de la plus grande honnêteté possible. L'échelle SOCO a été utilisée par des chercheurs dans le passé et je m'en servirai pour fin d'analyse comparative. Votre honnêteté est réellement importante.

Il est important aussi de bien réfléchir aux questions posées. Le fait de répondre "TOUJOURS" à chaque énoncé a toujours préoccupé les chercheurs. L'étude ne prendra que quelques instants alors je vous prie d'être le plus sérieux possible. Ce qui peut vous sembler non important peut s'avérer extrêmement important pour moi et pour mes résultats relatifs à la thèse.

Le questionnaire comporte un code à la place de votre nom. Ce code servira à la compilation des réponses. Il me permettra de plus de faire le lien entre votre questionnaire et votre division ainsi que votre situation géographique. De plus, les codes assurent l'anonymat. Veuillez remplir le questionnaire (en omettant d'y porter votre nom) et me le retourner dans l'enveloppe ci-jointe.

.../2

Je vous remercie à l'avance de votre collaboration. J'apprécie réellement votre aide et le fait de me retourner le questionnaire dans les meilleurs délais.

Sincèrement,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Joanne Hunt". The signature is fluid and stylized, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Joanne Hunt
Étudiante de
premier cycle

JH/BC/mb

P.j.

P.S. Les questionnaires seront considérés non utilisables pour mon analyse statistiques si même un seul n'est pas rempli. Prière de répondre à toutes les questions. Merci.

P.S. Le tout ne prendra qu'une couple de minutes. Alors je vous demande de le remplir immédiatement et de me le retourner aussitôt que possible.

November 18, 1988

Dear

Representative:

Enclosed you will find a questionnaire and letter from Joanne Hunt, one of our employees, regarding a study that she is conducting for her Masters Thesis. Joanne was on a leave-of-absence last year while completing the coursework for her degree at Carleton University. She has returned to on a full-time basis and is in the process of completing her research project.

Joanne will be using the data collected from the enclosed questionnaire to write her thesis for the University, and it is very important for her to get your full co-operation. I am writing to reassure you that the results will be kept strictly confidential. Each individual response will not be identified to me or to any of your managers. Joanne will be providing only aggregate results of Divisions within . Your names and responses will not be recorded on any documents provided to management.

I am personally supporting Joanne in this endeavour and strongly encourage you to give her your full co-operation.

Sincerely,

Infotech President

Chers (es) représentants (tes)

Joanne utilisera les données obtenues à partir du questionnaire ci-joint en vue de rédiger sa thèse d'université, et il est très important pour elle de compter sur votre entière collaboration. Je vous écris pour vous assurer que les résultats seront strictement confidentiels. Aucune réponse individuelle ne sera identifiée: ni pour moi ni pour aucun de vos responsables. Joanne ne communiquera que les conclusions globales quant aux divisions de . Vos noms et réponses ne figureront sur aucun document remis à la direction.

Sincèrement,

Infotech President

Reminder Letter to Sales Representatives

Carleton University
Ottawa, Canada K1S 5B6

December 6, 1988

Dear Representative:

I was hoping that I wouldn't have to send a follow-up letter but there are still a few people who have not returned questionnaires (You know who you are!!). I am therefore sending out second copies of the questionnaire and am, once again, asking for your co-operation.

I must reiterate that it is very important to receive a questionnaire from each person. This is vital to my statistical analysis and the final defence of my thesis at Carleton University. I am depending on you!

Please take a few minutes to fill in the questionnaire. It is not difficult and does not take a long time to fill in. Please return the questionnaire to me as soon as possible as I would like to have all responses assembled by Friday, December 16, 1988. Once again, be assured that YOUR INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES WILL NOT BE IDENTIFIED TO ANYONE.

I'm anxiously awaiting your response. Thank you.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanne Hunt".

Joanne Hunt
Graduate Student

Encl:

P.S. If you have already returned your questionnaire,
thank you!

ONE WEEK AGO A QUESTIONNAIRE WAS SENT TO
YOU. THIS IS A REMINDER TO PLEASE RETURN
YOUR QUESTIONNAIRE TO ME AS SOON AS
POSSIBLE. IF YOU NEED ANOTHER COPY, PLEASE
CALL ME. I AM ANXIOUSLY AWAITING YOUR
RESPONSE!

THANK YOU.
JOANNE HUNT
CARLETON
UNIVERSITY
(416) 963-6202

END

22/02/91

FIN