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Customer-sales associate retail relationships

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Abstract

We examine one-on-one relationships between customers and sales associates, which we refer to as relationship selling to differentiate it from relationship marketing, using a qualitative research approach. We conducted observations of and interviews with a successful group of retail sales associates and a set of their "ocall customers." Based on our data, a relationship formation/enhancement model emerged, which focused on: (1) commitment and orientation to customer service by top management and employees, as well as a desire for a relationship by the customer; (2) augmented personal service and team playing by employees; (3) repeat customer-employee interactions based on trust, friendship, and functionality; and (4) development of customer loyalty to the sales associate and firm, and employee reinforcement and loyalty to the company and customer.



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