

Enhancing Solution Effectiveness: The Role of Customer Adaptiveness: An Abstract



Victoria Kramer, Manfred Krafft, Sundar Bharadwaj, and Stefan Worm

Abstract Caused by increasing competitive pressure, more and more companies in B2B markets are turning from providers of products into providers of customer solutions. Solutions are highly individualized offerings consisting of product and service components that are specifically tailored to customer needs. The process of selling such offerings encompasses (1) a thorough understanding of customer needs, (2) developing and implementing the offering in line with these customer needs, and (3) support of the offering in post-purchase activities to generate positive outcomes for customers.

While much research has investigated solution selling from the supplier's point of view, the customer's perspective on solutions has received less attention in the literature. Because an understanding of customer needs is crucial for solution effectiveness, i.e. the extent to which solutions satisfy customer needs, close cooperation between customer and supplier is necessary to ensure that customers truly benefit from purchasing a solution. Customers need to be willing to engage and adapt throughout the relational processes associated with solution selling, e.g. by sharing relevant information and data. Thus, a central aspect that drives solution effectiveness is customer adaptiveness.

Building on previous research in the area of solution selling and Transaction Cost Economics, we develop a framework to investigate (1) the role of customer adaptiveness for solution effectiveness from the customer's point of view, and (2) customer-, supplier-, and relationship-related drivers of customer adaptiveness. We

V. Kramer (✉) · M. Krafft
University of Münster, Münster, Germany
e-mail: v.kramer@uni-muenster.de; m.krafft@uni-muenster.de

S. Bharadwaj
University of Georgia, Athens, GA, USA
e-mail: sundar@uga.edu

S. Worm
BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo, Norway

use data collected in 2021 by means of a large survey of different customer groups purchasing a diverse array of solutions from a large B2B supplier and supplement this data with objective secondary data from the supplier's databases. Our results provide valuable insights for industrial customers into how their adaptiveness facilitates the implementation of solutions and under which circumstances solutions are more or less effective. Furthermore, our results help suppliers to better understand the drivers of customer adaptiveness and assess customers regarding their solution suitability.

Keywords B2B marketing · Sales management · Solution selling · Customer adaptiveness

References Available Upon Request