

# Commitment and Involvement: Assessing a Salesforce Typology

**Thomas N. Ingram**

*Memphis State University*

**Keun S. Lee**

*Hofstra University*

**George H. Lucas, Jr.**

*Memphis State University*

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*Varying levels of organizational commitment and job involvement generate a salesperson typology which is empirically assessed. Ten hypotheses are tested using a national sample of 235 industrial salespeople. Eight of the hypotheses are supported. Significant differences in salesperson effort, performance and turnover propensities are identified for four salesperson categories.*

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## INTRODUCTION

A decade ago, in a state-of-the-art assessment of research in sales management, Walker, Churchill, and Ford (1979) outlined an agenda which stimulated an increasing number of studies grounded in a common purpose. The heart of this purpose has been to examine numerous personal, organizational, and environmental factors in order to better understand salesperson performance, and other key job outcomes such as effort and turnover. An integral part of Walker, Churchill, and Ford's salesforce research platform was a call for the development of typologies of variables within the overall sales performance framework. Equally as important was the suggestion that additional variables, and alternative theoretical approaches, be explored to supplement the dominant expectancy paradigm.

As concluded in extensive reviews of empirical research (Churchill et al. 1985; Comer and Dubinsky 1985), unequivocal predictors of important salesperson job outcomes have not yet been identified. Thus, the exploration of new variables and typologies is especially critical to gaining a better understanding of how to achieve desirable outcomes from the salesforce.

Evidence of this expanding platform for research is apparent in the development, and empirical validation, of several typologies which facilitate sales management research and practice. For example, the salesperson career stage typology, conceived by Jolson (1974), has been refined and empirically assessed by Cron, Dubinsky, and Michaels (1988), Cron and Slocum (1986), and Hafer (1986). In a similar fashion, Moncrief (1986) developed a taxonomy of different types of sales jobs based upon his assessment of a sample of salespeople. Classification efforts such as these provide definitional guidance and foundations for future research (Hunt 1976), as well as suggest managerial action based upon the typologies.

The need for continued research is reflected in managerial assessments of current salesforce conditions. Greenberg and Greenberg (1990), having just concluded a study of 750,000 salespeople in 15,000 companies state:

Whenever sales and marketing executives get together, poor productivity and high turnover are invariably key topics for discussion. These executives are constantly seeking ways to reduce the incredibly high cost, in both time and money, of recruiting, selecting, and training salespeople, only to have the majority leave, be terminated, or, at best, turn out to be mediocre producers (p. 10).

Another survey of 500 sales managers and salespeople concluded that turnover is "an ongoing problem with no solution in sight" (*Marketing Times*, 1990). Yet another extensive assessment of large Canadian and U.S. firms found an average turnover rate of 27 percent, and that at a given point in time, 33 percent of the surveyed salespeople were on the verge of leaving their jobs (Learning International, 1989). When coupled with the high and ever-increasing costs of replacing salespeople (*Sales and Marketing Management*, 1989), the frequent occurrence of salesforce turnover and unsatisfactory effort and performance serve as a mandate for further investigation of these areas.

As sales management research progresses, the examination of additional variables continues to add depth to the still limited understanding of job outcomes such as salesperson effort, performance and turnover. Particularly noteworthy in this effort to fill gaps in the existing theoretical and empirical foundation has been the recent emphasis on various forms of work-related commitment (Chonko 1986).

The purpose of this study is to empirically assess a salesperson typology which incorporates the interrelationship between organizational commitment and job involvement (sometimes referred to as job commitment). Using these two variables, four types of employees were identified by Blau and Boal (1987). Each of these four types is examined in this study with regard to important sales management focal points: maximizing effort and performance, and retaining valued salespeople.

## A COMMITMENT/INVOLVEMENT SALESPERSON TYPOLOGY

Organizational commitment is defined as an employee's positive psychological identification with the organization and its goals (Blau and Boal 1987). It is thought to produce favorable employee attitudes and behaviors toward the employer. For example, high levels of organizational commitment have been linked with employee/employer goal and value congruence, strong desire on the part of the employee to remain as an employee (Angle and Perry 1981), and a willingness to exert significant effort toward organizational goals (Porter et al. 1974).

Employees with high levels of organizational commitment would be expected to go beyond the call of duty, that is, exert visible effort beyond what is traditionally expected in their jobs (Mowday, Porter, and Steers 1979). Some researchers have pointed out that extreme levels of organizational commitment may lead to undesirable outcomes such as workaholism and work-related stress disorders (Randall 1987). On balance, however, organizational commitment is generally viewed as a positive factor for both the individual and the organization (Romzek 1989).

Job involvement is defined as the extent to which employees identify psychologically with their jobs (Blau 1985). It has been positively linked with employee effort and performance (Chonko 1986), and negatively associated with employee turnover (Rabinowitz and Hall 1977).

In a salesforce setting, Cron and Slocum (1986) found a

relationship between job involvement and career stages. In the first three career stages, exploration, establishment, and maintenance, the levels of reported job involvement progressively increased. Respondents in the fourth and final career stage, disengagement, reported lower levels of job involvement. These results suggest that job involvement can vary over time, and that it may be a function of factors that can be at least partially addressed by sales management. For example, sales managers can have an important impact on a salesperson's skill level, motivation, and job satisfaction, all of which could affect the employee's psychological identification with the job.

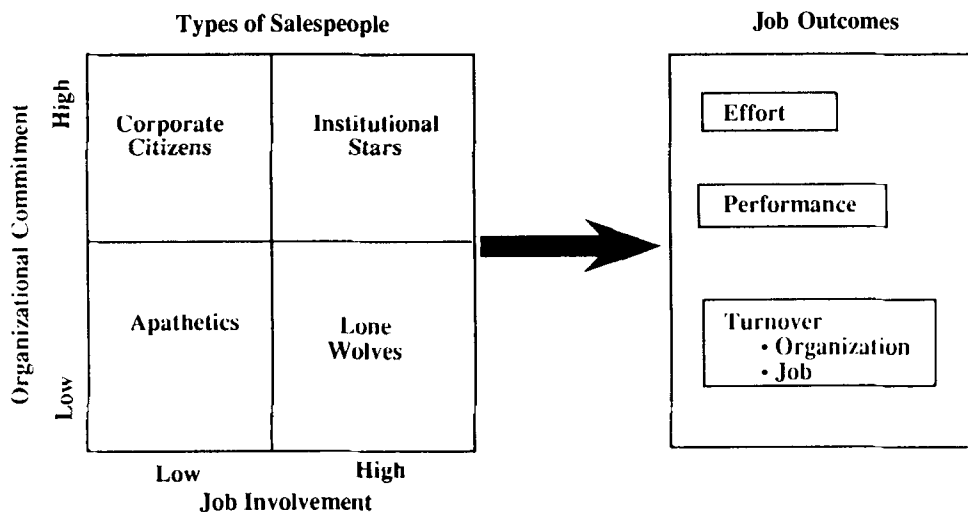
In addressing the ongoing challenge of improving employee performance and combating costly turnover, it is not surprising that organizational commitment and job involvement have received considerable attention in recent years (Chonko 1986; Cron and Slocum 1986; Hunt, Chonko, and Wood 1985; Hunt, Wood, and Chonko 1989; Johnston et al. 1987; Michaels et al. 1988; Sager and Johnston 1989). Although there are exceptions (e.g. Dubinsky and Hartley 1986), studies typically examine either organizational commitment or job involvement, rather than including both variables in the same study. Furthermore, no previous study has employed the two variables jointly to classify salespeople for the purpose of assessing their relationships with other job factors. Chonko (1986) has suggested, as a necessary condition for the advancement of salesforce research, that more than one type of commitment (e.g., organizational commitment and job involvement) be included in future studies.

While organizational commitment and job involvement have each individually been shown to be significant predictors of key job outcomes (e.g., Dubinsky and Hartley 1986; Dubinsky and Yammarino 1985; Sager and Johnston 1989), the complementary role of the two variables has only recently been considered in the literature. Blau and Boal (1987) proposed a typology based on the varying of employee levels of organizational commitment and job involvement. Using this typology, salespeople can be categorized into one of four types—institutional stars, lone wolves, corporate citizens, and apathetics.

As shown in Figure 1, institutional stars have high levels of both organizational commitment and job involvement. Lone wolves are characterized by low levels of organizational commitment and high levels of job involvement. Individuals with high levels of organizational commitment and low levels of job involvement are classified as corporate citizens. Apathetics are comparatively low in categories for both variables. The right half of this figure indicates that relationships exist between employee classification and the key behavioral outcomes of effort, performance and turnover (both organizational turnover and job turnover). The organizational turnover outcome is the only aspect of the model that has received preliminary empirical validation to this point (Blau and Boal 1989).

From a sales management point of view, institutional stars would be the obvious employees of choice. According to Blau and Boal (1987) these individuals tend to put forth high levels of effort, exhibit support for organizational goals and objectives, and help maintain work group har-

**FIGURE 1**  
**Job Involvement/Organizational Commitment Salesperson Typology and Outcomes**  
(Adapted from Blau and Boal, 1987)



mony. Briefly put, institutional stars identify strongly with their organizations and view their work as being extremely important.

Like the institutional stars, lone wolves can be expected to put forth high levels of effort on the job. They differentiate themselves from individuals in the prior category in that they are not highly committed to the organization. Rather, lone wolves are more likely to have important reference groups outside the organization. If lone wolves should become mentors in an organization, it is likely that they will relay positive information about the job itself, but they could be a negative influence on matters related to organizational norms and policies.

Unlike institutional stars and lone wolves, corporate citizens place little importance on the job itself. They do, however, manifest strong attachments to their employing organization (Bateman and Organ 1983). Their on-the-job interaction with others is likely to center on affiliating with co-workers in group settings. Positive mentoring roles are largely confined to organizational matters. Corporate citizens are not valued as much as institutional stars, and in cases where the focus is on outcomes (e.g., commission salespeople) they are not as likely to make positive contributions as are lone wolves.

Apathetic salespeople, for the most part, represent failure in one or more aspects of the sales management system. Included in this group are salespeople who are improperly matched to their jobs, inadequately socialized into the organization, and in need of rehabilitative programs to stimulate commitment and involvement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Based on previous research, salesperson effort, performance and turnover can be hypothesized to vary according to the four types of salespeople shown in Figure 1. In the

following sections, pertinent literature regarding the relationships between these key job outcomes and organizational commitment and job involvement will be reviewed, and hypotheses will be developed using the four typology categories.

### Effort and Performance

Research has shown various forms of commitment to be significantly related to both effort and performance measures. Dubinsky and Yammarino (1985) and Wiener and Vardi (1980) found that effort is related to the job involvement level of salespeople. Drawing on the previous literature, Hunt, Chonko, and Wood (1985) emphasized the positive relationship between organizational commitment and job performance as a central tenet in their model. The findings of Darden, Hampton, and Howell (1989) support such a relationship. Using the Blau and Boal (1987) classifications, institutional stars (being high on both organizational commitment and job involvement) would be expected to rate highest in terms of both effort and performance. Apathetic salespeople would be expected to rate lowest on both outcome measures.

Based on the characteristics of the Blau and Boal classifications, and the previous research considered, four hypotheses are presented for testing. Of the four salesperson types:

- H1A:** institutional stars will exhibit the highest level of effort.
- H1B:** apathetics will exhibit the lowest level of effort.
- H2A:** institutional stars will exhibit the highest level of performance.
- H2B:** apathetics will exhibit the lowest level of performance.

Due to the alternating high levels of organizational commitment and job involvement between lone wolves and corporate citizens, no significant differences are hypothesized between these two groups with regard to effort and performance. From the employer's point of view, the relative desirability of these two groups depends on whether the organization is focusing more on means (corporate citizens viewed more favorably) or ends (lone wolves viewed more favorably).

### Organizational and Job Turnover

Research has consistently shown that turnover indices (both actual and propensity to leave) are related to both organizational commitment (Johnston et al. 1987) and job involvement (Rusbult and Farrell 1983; Siegel and Ruh 1973). While this previous research has focused on the extent to which individuals leave, or desire to leave the organization, it has tended to ignore employees' desire to change their occupation. The work of Jackofsky and Peters (1983) highlighted this deficiency in the literature. This study drew conceptual distinctions between "inter-company" and "inter-job" movements in their assessment of turnover in retail salespeople.

The importance of considering both job and organizational turnover is highlighted by the following scenario. While salesperson A may have low propensity to leave the organization, he or she may simultaneously exhibit high propensity to leave the selling job. In such cases, if intra-organizational job transfers to non-selling positions are constrained, the sales manager may be saddled for an extended time period with an employee who is less committed and less productive than is desirable. Also, should salesperson A finally find a suitable position outside the company, the firm will have lost an individual who might have made a significant contribution to the success of the organization in some other capacity.

Using Blau and Boal's (1987) categorical framework, several relationships between both organizational commitment and job involvement can be proposed. By definition, institutional stars exhibit relatively high levels of commitment and involvement, and thus should be less likely than the other three groups to leave the organization or the sales job. At the other extreme, apathetic salespeople have a lack of identification with the sales job and the organization, which should make these salespeople extremely likely departures, if they are given the opportunity. A preliminary test of the model using insurance office workers supports this contention (Blau and Boal 1989). Such departures may represent what Dalton, Todor, and Krackhardt (1982) referred to as functional turnover. If apathetics are found to be poorer performers (**H2B**) their departure would represent the opportunity to fill the positions with more effective employees (Porter & Steers 1973).

While lone wolves may be highly interested in employment opportunities outside the organization, they are seen as being less likely to seek a non-selling position within or outside their current organization. Thus, if these salespeople change jobs, it is more likely they will leave their employers (organizational turnover) rather than the sales profession (job turnover). In contrast, corporate citizens should

display patterns in which they are more likely to leave the sales profession than to leave the organization to which they are relatively highly committed.

Based on the previous discussion, these six additional hypotheses are presented for testing. Of the four salesperson types:

- H3A:** institutional stars will exhibit the lowest level of organizational turnover.
- H3B:** apathetics will exhibit the highest level of organizational turnover.
- H3C:** lone wolves will exhibit a higher level of organizational turnover than will corporate citizens.
- H4A:** institutional stars will exhibit the lowest level of job turnover.
- H4B:** apathetics will exhibit the highest level of job turnover.
- H4C:** corporate citizens will exhibit a higher level of job turnover than will lone wolves.

## METHOD

### Sample

The data to test the hypotheses stated in the previous section were collected in two distinct stages. The first stage consisted of a nation-wide mailing to 250 industrial sales managers drawn from a commercial mailing list. In return for these individuals' participation in the study, they were promised a summary report of the findings from the proposed study. In response to the stage one mailing, 37 firms indicated a willingness to participate in the study. Industries represented included electronics, aviation, petroleum products, packaging, and technical publishing.

In the second stage, 402 questionnaires were mailed out to sales representatives through the cooperating sales managers. Respondents were guaranteed anonymity, and the completed questionnaires were returned directly to the researchers. Two hundred thirty-five questionnaires were returned, for a 58.5% response rate. Among respondents, 43.4% were in the 30-39 age category, while approximately 90% had received at least some college education (42.8% held bachelor degrees; 9.6% held graduate degrees). A majority of respondents were male (74.6%) and were married (71.8%).

Due to the difficulty associated with the identification of nonrespondents' characteristics in anonymous research, an alternative test of nonresponse bias was conducted. According to a procedure suggested by Armstrong and Overton (1977), non-respondents were assumed to have similar characteristics to late respondents. The sample was split into quartiles based on the chronological order in which the questionnaires were received. Early respondents (the first quartile) were compared with late respondents (the fourth quartile) in terms of demographic characteristics. A series

of chi-square tests did not reveal any significant evidence of nonresponse bias. This indirect assessment, when coupled with the comparatively high response rate, suggests that nonresponse bias is not likely to be a substantial concern in interpreting the findings from this study.

### Operationalization of Variables

The items for each scale are listed in the Appendix, along with the alpha coefficients for assessing scale reliability properties. The alpha coefficients ranged from .68 to .91, thus approaching or exceeding the .70 level recommended by Nunnally (1978) for this type of research.

#### *Organizational Commitment.*

Organizational commitment was measured using a fifteen-item instrument developed by Porter et al. (1974). Using Likert-type five-point statements, the respondents were requested to indicate the extent of their agreement (5 = strongly agree) or disagreement (1 = strongly disagree) with each statement. The respondents' scores for organizational commitment were the sum of their responses to all 15 items.

#### *Job Involvement.*

The extent to which a person psychologically identifies with his or her job was measured using a four-item Likert-type scale developed by Hall et al. (1978), and recently utilized by Cron and Slocum (1986) in a sales management setting. Each item was scored on a five-point scale using the anchors "strongly disagree" (scored 1) to "strongly agree" (scored 5). The job involvement score was calculated by summing the responses for all four items.

#### *Effort.*

A self-report measure of selling effort was obtained by using a five-item scale originally developed and used by Churchill, Ford, and Walker (1978). A five-point response scale (minimum effort = 1; maximum effort = 5) was provided for the respondents to use in evaluating these items. Each item also had a five-point importance rating (1 = unimportant; 5 = important). The effort by importance products were then summed to get an overall effort score for each respondent.

#### *Performance.*

In an effort to devise a performance scale suited to the variety of participating companies, depth interviews with 15 of the sales managers were conducted. The consensus of this group of participants was that any such measure should focus on the behavioral aspects of performance, due to the degree to which the salespeople can influence these dimensions. It was felt that outcome-oriented performance issues (such as quota attainment and dollar volume) were less appropriate due to the impact which extraneous influences might have on these outcomes across companies.

Accordingly, a six-item scale was developed. Two responses were required for each item. First, respondents indicated their ranking within their own company on the performance dimension in question (range from top 10% to bottom 10%). Next, the importance ranking for that behavioral performance dimension was indicated (1 = unimpor-

tant; 5 = important). The two responses were multiplied for each of the six items, and their products were summed to achieve an overall performance score for each respondent. The scale items correspond closely to the four behavioral dimensions of the Behrman and Perreault (1982) self-report salesperson performance scale.

The use of self-report measures can present a methodological concern in that the relationships tested may be susceptible to common methods bias. As a result, steps suggested by Podsakoff and Organ (1986) were taken to minimize the potential problem. The questionnaire was pre-tested, and the selected measures minimized item overlap.

As discussed by Darden, Hampton and Howell (1989), there are several positive aspects of self-report performance measures in field survey research. Self-report measures correspond highly with more objective measures of performance when respondents are assured anonymity, there is less halo error, and there is a lack of confounding with factors beyond the salesperson's control which may impact performance (e.g., economic conditions).

#### *Turnover.*

Propensity to leave has demonstrated strong predictive power in relation to actual job turnover (Johnston et al. 1987; Lee and Mowday 1987; Mobley 1982), and has been widely employed as a surrogate measure in empirical research involving this key job outcome (Busch 1980; Futrell and Parasuraman 1984; Lucas 1985). Further, actual turnover is an outcome measure which provides no insight into the reasons which underlie a salesperson's decision to change jobs. Given that this research is designed to tap attitudinal orientations toward two aspects of turnover (job and organizational), propensity to leave measures were utilized.

Consistent with most previous studies using propensity as a surrogate measure for turnover, a single-item measure of propensity to leave the company was used (Busch 1980; Futrell and Parasuraman 1984; Johnston et al. 1987). The question, "To what extent are you seeking to change organizations (go to another company)?" was responded to with an answer ranging from (1) to no extent, to (5) to a great extent. In addition, a propensity to change jobs (move from selling to non-selling) item was used as a proxy measure for job turnover (the same response alternatives were used for this item). The use of these items in tandem reduces the potential for ambiguity which may be present when the phrase "changing jobs" is used exclusively.

#### *Salesperson Typology.*

Using the method recommended by Blau and Boal (1987), salespeople were classified into one of four discreet job involvement and organizational commitment conditions. High and low job involvement and organizational commitment categories were created by using median values of organizational commitment and job involvement to split the sample. This allowed the identification of four salesperson groups (high/high, low/high, high/low, and low/low) as shown in Figure 1. Using this system, 105 salespeople were classified as institutional stars, 17 as lone wolves, 55 as corporate citizens, and 58 as apathetics. While respondents were present in all four salesperson types, only 7.2% were categorized as lone wolves. Due to

the posterior nature of the classification system, researchers do not have control over the proportion of respondents assigned to each cell. A similar situation was also encountered by Cron, Dubinsky and Michaels (1988) in their study on salesperson career stages, where one category contained only 19 respondents from a total sample of 168 salespeople.

**ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

Analysis of variance was utilized to test the ten hypotheses. The results of these ANOVA's, and the accompanying Scheffe contrasts to test for differences between the salesperson categories, are presented in Table 1.

The ANOVA results provide empirical support for the use of a salesperson typology based upon organizational commitment and job involvement, as suggested by the work of Blau and Boal (1987). As the results of the univariate *F* tests indicate, salespeople's effort, performance, and propensities to leave both the organization and the job are significantly different across salesperson types. Further analyses (Scheffe contrasts) provided significant ( $p < .05$ ) support for eight of the ten hypotheses tested.

**H1A–H2B (Effort and Performance)**

As hypothesized, institutional stars demonstrated the highest level of effort, while apathetics scored significantly lower than the other three categories on this outcome. Thus, **H1A** and **H1B** were supported. Institutional stars also reflected the highest performance levels, thereby supporting **H2A**. As hypothesized, apathetics were found to have the lowest reported levels of performance; however, they were only significantly lower than the salespeople in the institutional stars category. These results provide only limited support for the position that apathetics are the poorest performing category.

**H3A–H3C (Propensity to Leave the Organization)**

As hypothesized in **H3A**, institutional stars reported the lowest levels of propensity to leave their present employers. The other three classifications were all significantly higher on this turnover dimension. In contrast, apathetics were found to be significantly higher than the other three groups on propensity to leave the organization (supporting **H3B**). As indicated in Table 1, the third hypothesis in this set (**H3C**) was also supported, as lone wolves significantly exceeded corporate citizens on this measure of organizational turnover.

**H4A–H4C (Propensity to Leave the Job)**

As with the previous dimension of turnover, institutional stars exhibited the lowest level of propensity to leave the selling job. This result provides support for **H4A**. Apathetics were found to be significantly higher on this dimension when contrasted to the other three salesperson groups (supporting **H4B**). The final hypothesis, **H4C**, was not supported. Corporate citizens did not report a higher level of propensity to leave the job than lone wolves. In fact, lone wolves were higher on this turnover dimension, though the contrast did not achieve significance. Table 2 presents a summary of the typology categories for each of the four job outcome categories.

**DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The results of these hypotheses tests provide several interesting and useful insights for sales management researchers and practitioners. Salespeople categorized as institutional stars were shown to be hard workers and effective performers. In addition, these individuals were least likely to leave their present company or the selling job. Due to

**TABLE 1**  
**Relationship Between Salesperson Types and Behavioral Outcomes**  
**Analysis of Variance Results**

Dimension	Mean Values for Salesperson Types				Univariate <i>F</i> -value	Significant Scheffe Contrast ( $p < .05$ )	Hypothesis Test Result
	Institutional Stars	Lone Wolves	Corporate Citizens	Apathetic Salespeople			
Effort	84.71	78.59	74.05	62.78	11.22 <sup>a</sup>	I > L,C,A <sup>c</sup> A < I,L,C	H1A: Supported H1B: Supported
Performance	205.82	191.59	187.51	183.03	3.05 <sup>b</sup>	I > L,C,A A < I	H2A: Supported H2B: Partially Supported
Organizational Propensity-to- Leave	1.36	2.88	1.60	2.54	26.96 <sup>a</sup>	I < L,C,A A > I,L,C L > C	H3A: Supported H3B: Supported H3C: Supported
Job Propensity- to-Leave	1.36	1.94	1.62	2.38	14.35 <sup>a</sup>	I < L,C,A A > I,L,C NS	H4A: Supported H4B: Supported H4C: Not Supported

<sup>a</sup>Significant at  $p < .01$

<sup>b</sup>Significant at  $p < .05$

<sup>c</sup>Using Scheffe contrasts test, it can be interpreted that effort level of institutional stars (I) is significantly greater than that of lone wolves (L), corporate citizens (C), and apathetic salespersons (A). Hypothesized statistically significant contrasts are reported. "NS" indicates a non-significant contrast result.

**TABLE 2**  
**Summary of the Findings for the Typology Categories**

Category	Key Outcomes			
	Effort	Performance	Propensity to Leave Organization	Propensity to Leave Job
Institutional Stars Lone Wolves	Highest levels Higher than apathetics, lower than stars	Highest levels Lower than stars	Lowest levels Higher than stars and corporate citizens, lower than apathetics	Lowest levels Higher than stars, lower than apathetics
Corporate Citizens	Higher than apathetics, lower than stars	Lower than stars	Lower than lone wolves and apathetics, higher than stars	Higher than stars, lower than apathetics
Apathetics	Lowest level	Lower than stars	Highest levels	Highest levels

these characteristics, institutional stars are likely to be seen by most sales organizations as the most desirable type of people to employ and retain. Thus, the dual challenge for sales managers is to take steps to identify future institutional stars in the recruiting process, and to further develop individuals in the other three salesperson categories.

In the recruiting and selection phase, sales managers can take several actions which should ultimately contribute to having employees with higher levels of both job involvement and organizational commitment. First, it is extremely critical to select salespeople whose interests and skills are compatible with both the selling job and the organization. The opportunity for improvement in this area is illustrated in the Greenberg and Greenberg (1990) study, which concluded that in excess of 50% of the surveyed salespeople were ill-suited for their present position.

One suggestion for improving the success of efforts directed at acquiring individuals who are likely to be committed and involved is to address applicants' attitudes toward previous and present positions and organizational relationships. This can be done through assessment centers, selection tests, and during personal interviews with the applicants using questions derived from the involvement and commitment measurement scales. Questions of this type (e.g., what do you like and dislike about your present job and company?) are often used on an ad hoc basis during the selection process, and might be expanded into a structured approach for assessing applicants' tendencies toward involvement and commitment. The present typology provides additional structure and meaning to this process.

Another suggestion is provided by Dubinsky et al. (1986). They proposed that involvement and commitment can be positively influenced by providing realistic job previews which allow potential recruits to make informed employment decisions. Through this process, new recruits are better equipped to form realistic expectations about their jobs and their employers. As a result, salespeople should have higher levels of organizational commitment and job involvement when these expectations are met.

To underestimate the importance of providing realistic job previews is a serious mistake, as indicated in a recent article dealing with the perceptions of newly-hired salespeople (Bragg 1990). This article gives numerous first-hand accounts of disgruntled salespeople who report unanticipated job conditions such as excessive paperwork, ruthless

competition, and high levels of effort required just to meet minimum job standards. In recognition of the importance of providing realistic job previews, a large number of corporations are offering internships to allow potential salespeople to sample the job. Other firms such as Noxell, Bristol-Meyers, and the Dial corporation, use videotape in the recruiting stage to offer a realistic portrayal of the salesperson's job.

In addition to using realistic job previews to improve job involvement and commitment, management can provide new recruits with opportunities to build relationships with people in the firm prior to beginning the job. According to Kennedy and Lawton (1990), this will assist new recruits as they adjust their values, attitudes, and lifestyles to their future work environments. In turn, this process should contribute positively to job satisfaction and involvement.

For existing members of the salesforce, it may be possible to increase levels of involvement and commitment through sales training and supportive supervision. Training which is designed to give salespeople adequate knowledge and clear guidelines for action should have a positive effect on involvement and commitment (Kramer 1986). Without such training, salespeople may experience excess role stress, resulting in psychological withdrawal from the job (Fisher and Gittelsohn 1983; Walker, Churchill, and Ford 1972).

Another area deserving the special consideration of sales managers is the job-related, (i.e., task-specific) self-esteem of salespeople. This variable has also been linked to job involvement and commitment (Dubinsky et al. 1986). Enhancement in this area can be achieved through formal and informal recognition, and by encouraging salespeople to monitor their own performance. Further, salespeople may psychologically identify more strongly with their jobs and their organizations if positive reinforcement is provided through the use of slogans, rites of passage, and the use of mentors (Ashforth 1985).

While smaller firms have tended to shy away from mentoring programs, it is estimated that one-third of the nation's major companies (including Colgate, AT&T, and Johnson & Johnson) have established formal mentoring programs (Bragg 1989).

In addition to trying to select and develop institutional stars, sales managers must also recognize the practical difficulties of changing relatively stable dimensions, such as job

involvement and organizational commitment (Porter et al. 1974). Therefore, another reasonable alternative is to try to manage people with low levels of involvement and/or commitment. Salespeople classified as apathetics tend to be psychologically unattached to both their present company and occupation. It is reasonable to speculate that these people are seeking alternatives both outside the company and outside the selling field. As previously mentioned, this type of turnover is seen as an opportunity, as opposed to a true loss, by the employing organization.

In exploring the middle ground between institutional stars and apathetic salespeople, as expected, the lone wolves exhibited a higher propensity to leave their present organization than did corporate citizens. Surprisingly, the individuals in the lone wolf category were also found to have a somewhat higher level of propensity to leave selling than did corporate citizens. While this difference is not statistically significant, it may be an indication that lone wolves have strong entrepreneurial tendencies. If a sales organization wishes to nurture these entrepreneurial tendencies, sales managers must create work environments which encourage innovativeness, risk taking, and proactiveness (Morris, Avila, and Teeple 1990). This can be done by providing a strong link between performance and rewards, and allowing sufficient room for independence of action by the salesperson. Lone wolves appear to be highly attuned to finding opportunities to improve their present situation, whether those opportunities reside inside or outside the field of personal selling. Such salespeople show signs of being quite compatible with sales organizations characterized by outcome-based control systems (Anderson and Oliver 1987), decentralized operations where salespeople have significant amounts of autonomy, and where advancement opportunities are limited.

Corporate citizens could be highly valued employees in certain types of sales organizations. Many organizations look to the salesforce as a primary source of sales management candidates. Further, the best candidates for advancement into sales management may not be the top sales performers. In sales organizations which stress behavior-based control systems (Anderson and Oliver 1987), as opposed to outcome-based control systems, corporate citizens would appear to be strong candidates for promotion.

A final consideration stems from the fact that promotion is a highly valued reward among salespeople (Ford, Churchill, and Walker 1985; Ingram and Bellenger 1983). If promotion opportunities are made available to corporate citizens who have achieved acceptable levels of performance, they may subsequently perform at higher levels. This may be especially true for sales organizations that stress cooperative behavior, such as team selling (Blessington 1989).

While sales organizations will generally benefit from enhancing job involvement and organizational commitment, a caveat is in order. As pointed out by Randall (1987), excessive levels of organizational commitment can have negative effects on employee behavior. For example, salespeople may display a lack of creativity and resistance to change; feel high levels of stress; experience personal problems; and, in some cases, perform unethical acts in an effort to achieve organizational goals. In a similar vein, job involve-

ment taken to extreme levels could result in undesirable outcomes, such as job burnout and, ultimately, reduced effectiveness of the salesperson.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In an attempt to enhance generalizability, this study utilized cross-sectional data from a wide variety of companies and industries. Future studies with longitudinal data bases could analyze causal relationships, whereas this study was limited to determining support, or non-support, of research hypotheses. Such studies would allow an investigation into the dynamics of organizational commitment, job involvement, and important outcomes not included in this study, such as actual organizational and job turnover.

In an effort to identify potentially important variables for future research involving this typology, post hoc analyses were conducted using the following eight variables: education, age, tenure in the profession, tenure with the company, gender, company size, type of compensation plan, and income level. Using chi-square analyses, only company size and gender were found to be significantly different across the four salesperson categories. Lone wolves were not represented at all in the smaller corporations (i.e., those with sales of under \$5 million per year).

The most interesting finding from these post hoc analyses lies in the area of gender differences in the make-up of the categories. Females had a disproportionately high representation in the apathetic category, and a disproportionately low representation in the corporate citizen group. While approximately 25% of the total sample were women, only 13% of the corporate citizens were female. Over four in ten of the individuals with the least favorable outcomes with regard to effort, performance, and turnover propensity (apathetics) were women. Such a disproportionate representation of females in this category highlights the importance of research addressing the socialization of women into the organization and the sales profession. These post hoc analyses suggest that gender differences and company size should be investigated in future studies addressing organizational commitment and job involvement.

In addition to the classification variables mentioned above, it may be possible to examine a multitude of organizational, environmental, and personal factors by focusing on single companies or industries, rather than drawing from a large sample of firms and industries. Future studies might analyze the effects of several organizational factors, including: the nature of the recruiting and selection process, the content of sales training and development programs, the control system utilized (i.e., outcome based vs. behavior based), promotion opportunity rates, alternative career paths, and organizational climate issues. Job design factors such as skill and variety, autonomy, task identity, feedback, and importance could also be analyzed (Hackman and Oldham 1975). In addition, the research by Hunt, Wood and Chonko (1989) indicates that the degree to which organizations stress ethical values may be a major determinant of organizational commitment for some types of marketing personnel.

In terms of environmental variables, it might be produc-



tive to assess the effects of industry attractiveness and the company's relative position within the industry as they are related to the classifications and outcomes investigated here. Personal variables which warrant further scrutiny include: career stage, work alienation, facets of job satisfaction, and personality variables such as internal locus of control.

## CONCLUSION

Using organizational commitment and job involvement to classify salespeople shows substantial promise for gaining insights about key job outcome variables, such as salesperson effort, performance and turnover. With additional testing, the typology evaluated here should greatly enhance our understanding of the roles played by both commitment and involvement.

## APPENDIX

### Study Variables: Scale Items and Coefficient Alphas

#### Organizational Commitment (Alpha = .91)

1. I am willing to put a great deal of effort beyond that normally expected in order to help this company be successful.
2. I talk up this organization to my friends as a great organization.
3. I feel very little loyalty to this company.
4. I would accept any type of job assignment in order to keep working for this company.
5. I find that my values and the company's values are very similar.
6. I am proud to tell others that I am part of this company.
7. I could just as well be working for a different organization as long as the type of work was similar.
8. This company really inspires the very best in me in the way of job performance.
9. It would take very little change in my present circumstances to cause me to leave this company.
10. I am extremely glad that I chose this company to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.
11. There is not too much to be gained by sticking with this company indefinitely.
12. Often, I find it difficult to agree with this company's policies in important matters relating to its employees.
13. I really care about the fate of this company.
14. For me, this is the best of all possible organizations for which to work.
15. Deciding to work for this organization was a definite mistake.

#### Job Involvement (Alpha = .84)

1. The major satisfaction in my life comes from my sales job.
2. The most important things that happen to me involve my sales job.
3. I live, eat, and breathe my sales job.
4. I am very much involved personally in my sales job.

#### Performance (Alpha = .78)

1. Customer relations.
2. Controlling expenses.
3. Sales presentation effectiveness.
4. Providing information to and effective communication with the management.
5. Planning and management of time in carrying out selling activities.
6. Technical knowledge related to our products, competitors' products, and customers' needs.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Thomas N. Ingram** (Ph.D., Georgia State University) is Professor of Marketing and Holder of the Sales and Marketing Executives Chair in Sales Excellence in the Fogelman College of Business and Economics at Memphis State University. His experience includes six years in sales, product management, and sales management with Exxon and Mobil. He has been published in the *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Marketing Research*, and *Journal of Personal*

*Selling and Sales Management*. He is co-author of *Sales Management: Analysis and Decision Making* (The Dryden Press).

**Keun S. Lee** earned his D.B.A. degree from the University of Kentucky. He is Assistant Professor of Marketing at Hofstra University. Dr. Lee's research interests include sales management, channels of distribution, and cross-cultural marketing. His publications have appeared in *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *Industrial Marketing Management* and the conference proceedings of the American Marketing Association and the Academy of Marketing Science.

**George H. Lucas, Jr.** completed his Ph.D. in Business Administration at the University of Missouri-Columbia. He joined the Memphis State faculty as an associate professor in 1987, and has served as Interim Chairman of the Marketing Department since June 1990. Dr. Lucas has focused his research efforts on sales force turnover, retail strategy, and marketing-R&D interface. The *Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Product Innovation Management* and *Psychology and Marketing* are among the outlets for his research efforts.