Intercultural Interaction
Strategies and
Relationship Selling in
Industrial Markets

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The academic literature has convincingly noted the growing importance and impact that corporate culture has on the behavior of firms. Correspondingly, industrial sellers are increasingly relying on relationship selling as a key marketing strategy. In conjunction with these two issues, this article demonstrates how capitalizing on an effective understanding of the buyer’s corporate culture can be used by sellers to achieve a competitive advantage in developing and maintaining long-term buyer–seller relationships. The implications of this approach are also discussed. © 1999 Elsevier Science Inc. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Attempts to develop frameworks dedicated to understanding the dynamics of the buyer–seller paradigm have been abundant in the academic and practitioner literature. In conjunction with this continued interest in relationship selling, the need exists to revisit these buyer–seller frameworks to incorporate contemporary business practices/needs [1].

Relationship selling seeks to build upon the mutual benefits sought by buyers and sellers within the context of a single exchange into a network of transactions facilitated by buyer and seller intimacy (e.g., [2, 3]). Yet, despite advantages, business relationships are difficult to achieve and maintain due to changing buyer and seller
needs [4, 5]. For instance, manufacturers may change core business strategies, which in turn, threaten long-term relationships with established sellers/buyers. To respond to the changing nature of business-to-business relationship opportunities and to survive in volatile business environments, sellers must be able to identify where it is appropriate to build and/or adjust buyer relationships. In this setting, a key determinant of the seller’s success in establishing and sustaining these relationships is often his/her ability to understand and interact within the buyer’s organizational culture.

The process of establishing a buyer relationship can be likened to a stranger (salesperson) entering a foreign culture, with little knowledge of local buyer behavior, beliefs, activities, motivations, customs, or organizational nuances. For instance, a business forms salesperson may need to carefully navigate toward the key decision maker in the buyer’s firm while attending to organizational protocol. Lacking sufficient sensitivity to these cultural nuances could contribute to a breach of etiquette, which in turn, may seriously jeopardize the relationship. It is under this premise therefore, that this article seeks to address the influence of intercultural interactions on initiating and sustaining buyer–seller interactions [6–10]. Further, this article explores key issues relating intercultural interaction to relational selling, as well as strategies and tactics designed to encourage these interactions.

IMPORTANCE OF ADAPTABILITY IN INDUSTRIAL MARKETS

Relationship selling strategically creates value through the construction of close alliances between buyers and sellers. Relational selling requires extensive knowledge about the other party, as well as a commitment to such issues as trust and cooperation [11, 12]. The majority of the industrial salesperson’s time in the context of interorganizational relationships therefore, is devoted to working with the buyer in such activities as determining needs, co-developing joint plans and support, and matching client needs with seller abilities [13]. Consequently, the extent of the interpersonal/cross-functional interaction in relational sales contexts usually results in multiple members in the buying (e.g., finance, production, etc.) and selling functions (e.g., sales, manufacturing) participating in the exchange process. Importantly, these complexities suggest salespeople must adapt to changing conditions [14, 15], as they enter various buyer environments [16], while seeking to maintain and enhance client relationships [17]. For instance, conflict [18], altering priorities [19], changing environments [20], organizational restructuring [21, 22], and vacillation within and among individual needs [23], all may require modifications in selling practice that must comply with the organizational culture of the buyer [24, 25].

Yet, despite the importance of organizational culture in business-to-business relationships, contemporary frameworks do not explain how relational sellers strategically enter and/or adjust to transformations within the buyer’s organizational culture. For example, how should a sales representative of training materials access the account decision-making hierarchy, and what protocols for sales contact should he/she utilize? This article demonstrates that answers to these questions, in part, relate to the ability of sellers to understand and interact within the organizational culture of their buyers.
Bridging corporate cultures appears to be valuable.

THE CULTURE OF BUYERS

Corporate culture has received considerable general academic [26–31] and marketing attention [32–34]. Culture from an anthropological perspective focuses on the evolution, migration, and general characteristics of civilization. Further, while most of the cultural work in marketing has addressed international business strategy, surprisingly little attention has been directed toward understanding those factors that contribute to successful cultural excursions that are commonplace to the business-to-business salesperson. Analogous to international markets where buyers’ and sellers’ cultures can be quite different [35], domestic salespeople must work within the periphery of their own corporate culture and their buyers. As a result, understanding the issues involved in bridging corporate cultures (intercultural interaction) particularly in relationship selling situations [10], appears to be a valuable addition to the marketing and general business management literature, as well as managerial practices.

Organizational culture is a complex concept, that has been misunderstood and confused with “climate,” “philosophy,” “ideology,” “style,” and even management principles. Here, organizational culture is defined as “the pattern of shared values and beliefs that helps individuals understand organizational functioning and thus provide them norms for behavior in the organization” ([36], p. 4). General manifestations of a corporate culture are shared objects, talk, behavior, and emotion, while specific indications of culture include rites, rituals, legends, stories, values, and heroes [37, 38]. The influence of corporate culture [39] has been characterized as an informal, hidden force within a firm that affects the behavior and productivity of employees beyond the more formal influences associated with written policies and guidelines [40, 41]. It is this cultural context of the buyer that serves as the salesperson’s workshop. Salespeople enter these environments as strangers realizing that a successful excursion is in no small part dependent upon their ability to identify and adapt to the cultural demands of the buyer’s organization.

THE SALESPERSON: A “STRANGER” IN A FOREIGN CULTURE

Salespeople often enter the buyer’s environment as a stranger. However to achieve their objectives, particularly in relationship sales contexts, these sellers must obtain a cultural intelligence of the buyer’s organization beyond the knowledge of an outsider. For example, a seller of manufacturing equipment making a first visit with a potential buyer understands that the lack of an existing relationship with the buyer makes an imminent sale unlikely. To successfully engage in the early stage of the sales process, the salesperson must participate in a variety of activities (e.g., encouraging the buyer to share proprietary information). These activities must follow cultural protocols including such issues as who should participate in sales discussions, what information should be shared, and when information should be shared. In this setting, salespeople must become sufficiently culturally adept to comply with these interorganizational protocols.

As strangers, salespeople lose their advantage of physical proximity to the buyer if they remain culturally remote (e.g., due to different value and beliefs of “strangers”) [42]. Consequently, the challenge is for the salesperson to assume the role of a managerial anthropologist and identify appropriate behaviors for effectively operating within the cultural domain of the buyer’s organization [43–46] while moving beyond the stranger status that originally exists in a new selling situation.

Initially, as a stranger, relational sellers can be portrayed as a “newcomer,” “immigrant,” or “marginal person” [47]. In turn, each of these roles offers different buyer penetration levels, as well as required investments and commitments. The extent to which a given level of cultural penetration is desired depends upon the nature of
the relationship required to facilitate the buyer/seller exchange. Understanding the buyer’s status in this context provides valuable insight into how (if at all) the buying culture can be accessed by the seller. These roles are identified in Table 1.

A newcomer might be considered as a seller whose orientation the buyer views as positive. An example of this might occur when an established national account team or a just-in-time partnership is needed by buyers to accomplish their specific goals [48]. Because of the expectation by the buyer that this stranger (salesperson) can contribute positively to the goals of the buyer, the buyer is more likely to attempt to facilitate the seller’s introduction into the buying culture. In accordance with such a favored position, the seller can expect to find buyer support when constructing a relationship under this premise. Industrial sellers seeking this status therefore, must be positioned so that buyers value their participation. For instance, when a seller of manufacturing equipment is able to offer a product that uniquely satisfies the needs of the buyer, acquiring newcomer status is more likely. Hence, being a newcomer provides the greatest opportunity for cultural immersion, as buyers are motivated to expedite the seller’s cultural education. However, because the newcomer status depends upon favorable exchange conditions for the buyer, sellers must continue to offer sufficient value to maintain diplomatic privileges.

The immigrant faces ambivalent buyers, suggesting that previous sellers have been unsuccessful in entering the buyer’s culture due either to buyer or seller constraints. Because this stage suggests a level of indifference on the part of buyers, relational sellers desiring to enter these cultures must commit resources that offer sufficient net added value, or accept the ongoing stranger status. Visualize a company representative sent into an organization to introduce a new account to a new product application. As an immigrant the seller has neither a cultural past nor immediate clues of how to manage through the cultural milieu. Overcoming buyer ambivalence can be a critical step in establishing a buyer–seller relationship, as the time required for cultural immersion can be extensive, and opportunities to access the buyer’s culture are limited. To obtain cultural immersion however, the salesperson must increase the buyer’s motivation to invest in providing cultural education (e.g., getting buyers to accept the economic advantages of bringing the seller into the buyer’s cultural setting).

In contrast to the potentially positive returns of the newcomer or immigrant, the “marginal person” starts on the boundary of the buyer’s point of entry, and from there, attempts to negotiate beyond stranger status [49]. This role may arise due to a need to rebuild unsuccessful or partially successful past relationships, or to overcome negative cultural biases held by the buyer toward the seller. For instance, the buyer may have at one time purchased poorly performing products, creating tension with the seller. Thus, while the seller may require cultural immersion to design products/services to meet the buyer’s needs, the buyer may have determined that this seller will never become a “cultural insider.” Government purchasing characterizes this type of cultural integration where policies and procedures often dictate arms-length relationships. Hence, while the seller may obtain some minimal knowledge of the buyer’s culture, it will be difficult

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Roles</th>
<th>Conditions</th>
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<tr>
<td>Newcomer</td>
<td>Welcomed by buyers (positive reception)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buyers anticipate positive returns from relationship with sellers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Greatest cultural penetration of buying environment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Requires investment by sellers to maintain penetration opportunities</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Buyers/sellers jointly see rewards of exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>Immigrant</td>
<td>Ambivalent (indifferent) reception from buyer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sellers must emphasize buyer returns and opportunities to commingle cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sellers must “sell” advantages of further penetration to buyers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic investments by seller to become “newcomer”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Moderate penetration opportunities</td>
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<td>Marginal person</td>
<td>Unwelcome reception by buyers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Rebuilding of buyer relationships required</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Penetration of buyer cultures not likely (low)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Resources should be directed to more rewarding opportunities if client relationships desired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Minimal relationship opportunities</td>
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“Stranger roles” suggest buyer penetration levels, required investments, and necessary commitments.

to overcome negative biases or policies of the buyer that limit relationship opportunities.

As noted above, the buyer receptiveness (positive to negative) plays a major role in shaping cultural immersion by the salesperson (the stranger). The strategies to manage the varying levels of seller’s cultural competency and reception by the buyer are the focus of the following discussion.

INTERCULTURAL INTERACTION STRATEGIES

Acculturation is “the continuous process by which strangers are socialized into a host culture, leading toward a greater compatibility with or ‘fit’ into the host culture” ([50], p. 3). Theoretical and research support for the effects upon individuals acculturating into different cultures offers a variety of applications to the sales context [51, 52]. For instance, the interactions among buyer/seller corporate cultures may be frequent and pervasive, as salespeople range from being spectators (e.g., sales trainees) to being actively involved in, and part of the buyer’s culture (e.g., participants included in joint strategic planning). To obtain this cultural immersion, there are four modes of interaction that an industrial salesperson may adopt: assimilation, separation, marginalization, and integration [53]. Each of these modes are presented in Table 2.

As noted in Table 2, assimilation represents total integration, where an individual relinquishes his/her own culture and ultimately obtains citizenship within the new culture. Complete absorption into the buyer’s culture suggests that the salesperson loses his/her identity with the selling organization (the employer), which in turn may effect the quality of the seller’s advocacy on behalf of the selling firm. This strategy may be preferable however, when the selling goal is to become highly intermixed into the buying firm’s organizational culture. Much as a foreigner who becomes totally immersed in a new culture, the salesperson may seek citizenship in the new firm, disavowing primary responsibilities to his/her employer. The danger of this cultural immersion is particularly evident however, when selling firms strategically place their sales force in close, cohesive links with buying organizations (e.g., national accounts), and as a result, the loss of key sales personnel may be possible. For instance, AT&T had this problem for many years, as they strategically sought to place highly technical salespeople in close working proximity to buyers (often sharing offices). Impressed with superior technical knowledge, clients often allowed these salespeople to become assimilated for the purpose of gaining technical knowledge, and in turn, these clients frequently hired these salespeople for their expertise.

Separation reflects the desire to maintain and propagate one’s own culture and often exists in cases of dominant cultures. For instance, when a buying organization...
There are four modes of intercultural interaction for industrial sellers.

completely dominates the marketplace (e.g., Wal-Mart), the buyer may insist sellers honor all of their established procedures as part of the buying ritual. Consequently, the total commitment required to submit to a different culture suggests adapting firms must see significant benefits to accept this interaction. Typically therefore, separation is useful when one party dominates a market, and the second party (e.g., the sellers) is willing to accept being culturally submissive. However, when cultural domination is not desired by one of the parties, this can produce negative attitudes harmful to cultivating long-term relationships (e.g., resentment to being culturally dominated).

Marginalization occurs when an individual or group is out of cultural and psychological contact with both their own culture and another society with which they are seeking contact. This is evidenced when firms employ the services of the manufacturer’s representative to penetrate a new market. The representative operates outside his/her own culture and potentially outside the buyer’s culture unless capable of developing buyer cultural knowledge. By choosing to employ this sales strategy, the manufacturer must manage its marketing and business strategies recognizing the representative must be acculturated into the manufacturer’s culture, as well as the buyer’s, despite their independence. The merits of the representative’s cultural affinity with the buyer not withstanding, the manufacturer must accept as part of its strategic planning relatively high levels of manufacturer agent and buyer cultural uncertainty.

Integration is differentiated from the previous three strategies in that it suggests a balancing of both cultures (buyer and seller), with emphasis on the maintenance of one’s own culture (i.e., the seller’s) as well as active participation in the larger society (i.e., the buyer’s culture). Different levels of integration range from minimal to maximum interaction, as the salesperson seeks to become deeply acculturated into the buyer’s culture while still maintaining an identity with his/her own organization. For example, integration occurs when relational salespeople work within the distinctly unique demands of some clients, while satisfying different, and sometimes conflicting requirements of employers. This can be seen with sellers of industrial insurance, where each account often has highly unique needs. The salesperson must penetrate the buying culture sufficiently to construct a coverage program uniquely designed for the buyer, as well as be able to understand the culture of his/her own firm well enough to “sell” the conditions and benefits of this insurance package. The danger to this strategy however, is that the balancing of diverse cultures can cause problems. For example, large differences in types of buyer/seller management, criteria for success, buyers sold to, business standards, and philosophies of the firms, may all result in different cultural structures between the buying and selling culture, that in turn, cause internal conflict for the salesperson. Therefore, when integration is being used, and vast differences regularly exist between the selling and buying cultures, sales organizations need to offer mechanisms (e.g., systematic review of internally acceptable behaviors) to reduce conflict fostered through working in contrasting cultures. Thus, while integration is frequently a preferred strategy, sellers must invest resources to allow for dual interaction, intervening when interaction appears to be overly extensive.

While these four cultural penetration strategies offer different benefits, selling organizations need to oversee the activities of salespeople to ensure these strategies are consistent with managerial intentions. For example, integration may be the goal of the selling organization whereas the salesperson may be pursuing assimilation. Selling organizations need to recognize the importance of buyer cultural competency among the sales staff. Further, training and supervisory efforts should seek to foster these behaviors by focusing on appropriate reward mechanisms.

In addition to the strategic issues discussed above, a variety of seller and buyer characteristics that influence intercultural interaction are identified in Table 3.

As noted in Table 3, effective interface with the corporate culture of buyers is dependent upon the seller engaging in activities consistent with the desired strategy. For example, marginalization suggests salespeople will be
Intercultural strategies can encourage interaction.

separated from buying and selling cultures. Accordingly, the activities of selling organizations should include identifying markets of sufficient size where buyers prefer arms-length transactions. Should the manufacturer be using independent representatives, managing some level of periodic contact with representatives is essential to assure they understand the manufacturer’s program(s) to assure quality and customer service. Should the manufacturer’s representative not have continuous interaction with independent representatives, the manufacturer’s cultural commitment to product performance is lost among all the other firms the representative is handling (causing incorrect or insufficient communication of product information).

Thus, while industrial sellers participating in intercultural interaction should anticipate engaging in activities to cultivate a desired strategy, these strategies and their corresponding activities can also be influenced by several factors. Examples of these factors are discussed.

**Seller Characteristics Influencing Intercultural Interaction**

**Past Experience.** Past experience between the stranger (salesperson) and the host (buyer) will influence entering the host (buying) culture. Examples include the amount of prestige, and special skills sellers bring to the relationship. For instance, when a seller has offered significant benefits to the buyer, his/her acculturation may be expected to be easier than a salesperson who did not possess these attributes.

**Familiarity.** Degree of familiarity with the host culture prior to or during the initial period of adaptation will influence the interaction. Knowledge about the buyer’s norms, customs, social, economic and political systems helps reduce uncertainty and contributes to the seller’s intercultural interactive capacities. As a result, exposure to similar buyer cultures, as well as training about buyer corporate cultures, makes the cultural interaction by sellers easier, and more productive. For example, a seller of building furniture who had learned from previous interactions that upper management expected large purchases to be negotiated with an individual who was not obviously in the buying group would be more likely to have positive intercultural interaction than a less familiar seller.

**Contact with Other Sellers.** Contact with other sellers provides opportunities to interact culturally through sharing. For sellers, favorable conditions in intercultural contact include opportunities to make contacts with members of their own culture [7]. For example, if a seller is working with a second firm in providing a coordinated proposal, and the second firm has previously entered the buyer’s culture, the second seller can be used as a bridge into the client’s culture. Several contemporary business practices offer support for the salesperson behaviors. First, the trend toward team selling offers sales-

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<th>TABLE 3</th>
<th>Seller Activities Required for Intercultural Strategies</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strategy</td>
<td>Sellers Should</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assimilation</td>
<td>Focus all attention on buyer needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Utilize salespeople who prefer/enjoy buyer’s culture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(e.g., past employees)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tie salespeople’s rewards to understanding the culture</td>
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<td></td>
<td>of buyers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Place sales personnel in physical proximity to buyer</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Create mechanisms to ensure loyalty of salespeople to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>selling culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>Separation</td>
<td>Allow buyer to dictate conditions/terms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Assign salespeople willing to be culturally submissive</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and not combative</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Determine value of own culture (e.g., economic and</td>
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<td></td>
<td>human costs)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Develop knowledge of historical details of buyer’s</td>
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<td></td>
<td>exchange policies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marginalization</td>
<td>Develop buyers who don’t require culture intermixing</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ensure independence will not impact sales performance</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Support salespeople working in buyer/seller culture</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintain some buyer/seller cultural contact for salespeople</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td>Reward salespeople who maintain long-term</td>
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<td></td>
<td>client relationships</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reward salespeople who meet buyer and seller goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utilize salespeople comfortable in buyer’s environment</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Build buyer interest in using sellers who meet their</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>firm’s goals</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maintain internal processes to retain cultural balance</td>
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people and their organizations opportunities to share in the intercultural experience with others. If resources are available or justified for multiple member sales teams, sellers should attempt to capitalize on the advice and experience of other sellers who have faced either similar buyer corporate cultures or this particular culture. Second, and as noted in the example above, another option is to contact sellers from other non-competing vendors who share the need to penetrate into a buyer’s culture (this occurs most commonly when sellers interact with other vendors fulfilling complex buyer needs).

The Salesperson as a Cultural Anthropologist

To successfully use these intercultural strategies, information must be collected about the buyer’s culture. While a number of methodologies may be used to collect cultural information, the procedures designed by cultural anthropologists to understand foreign cultures may be particularly useful in a sales context. The similarities between foreign travelers and salespeople are noteworthy with respect to the needs to cognitively assess and develop effective coping strategies necessary to adjust to the foreign culture [6, 55]. For example, one method uses systematic observation and requires the seller to conduct in-depth, first-hand fieldwork and to prepare an ethnography (a description and analysis of a single culture) [56–58]. Similar techniques have been used to explore the viewpoints of technical professionals in Silicon Valley [59]. For national and/or key accounts these methods are often implemented to varying degrees by sales organizations as they seek more information from present and future accounts [10].

Anthropologists have employed methodologies that focus on comparisons and contrasts among different cultural groupings. This technique typifies cross-cultural researchers as they seek to identify conditions that support or refute a particular theory. Similarly salespeople seek to identify cultural characteristics in different companies, or for that matter branch offices of the same company, which differ and determine the extent to which these differences contribute to necessary changes in overall sales strategies and tactics.

As a stranger, the seller initially approaches the buyer without a working knowledge of the buyer’s nuances such as intraorganizational networks and politics [60]. As the salesperson begins the socialization journey [61], he/she becomes more immersed in the buyer’s culture and must overcome cultural barriers encountered along the way. One frequently investigated phenomenon in this context is the outsider’s tendency to categorize/classify...
observed events into preexisting schema [62]. In instances where the relative importance of the account does not justify extensive cultural exploration, salespeople may find it convenient to rely on these stereotypes assuming that the categorization heuristic contributes to constructive sales dialogue. By contrast, customers/prospects representing business opportunities of larger magnitude, demand the use of systematic information acquisition dedicated to identifying the cultural nuances that characterize the buyer’s purchase and use environment. In these instances, efforts to identify similarities (e.g., categorize) are displaced by investigation methods that seek to identify unique qualities the seller can operationalize into a differential advantage through successfully establishing an intercultural relationship.

**MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The examination of the buyer’s corporate culture and its effects upon the industrial salesperson offer numerous implications. In turn, these implications should be incorporated into many aspects of the selling paradigm (training, socialization, recruiting, etc.). For example, teaching salespeople to respond to changes in the culture of buyers requires the training and development of salespeople and managers to identify, understand, and integrate into a variety of organizational cultures. Salespeople and managers must therefore design prospecting and interorganizational methodologies that guide and direct the selling effort in a fashion that effectively identifies and strategically integrates the buyer’s culture into the selling effort. Hence, while relationship selling can be improved through the insightful understanding of buyers’ cultures, not all accounts demand a full-scale anthropological field study.

Recognizing that some type of categorical scheme is likely to be employed by salespeople when sizing up organizational culture related characteristics of the buyer, sales managers should seek to integrate in training and supervision categorization criteria that contribute to constructive assignment of lower priority clients. While reference has been made to the use of such schemes among salespeople when determining the customer’s buying style, there is no reason not to believe that a similar approach to cognitive processing might characterize assessment of the buyer’s organizational culture as well [63].

A number of potential advantages result from developing effective methods of investigating and using knowledge of buying cultures. For example, organizations dedicated to relationship selling may find it beneficial to develop pre-employment assessment methods to identify if salespeople are willing and able to integrate into other, often diverse, cultures. Conversely, the need also exists to identify salespeople who demonstrate personal qualities (e.g., a lack of flexibility) which are less effective in facilitating cultural integration within the buyer’s organization. Correspondingly, complete socialization within the buyer’s organization is not desirable as the salesperson may lose perspective failing to be an effective representative of the selling organization.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR RESEARCHERS**

The issues raised in this article assess an important but inadequately addressed topic in the field of marketing research. Exploring the impact of the buyer’s corporate culture on the seller offers numerous opportunities for future academic research. For instance, promising work has been performed in the area of quantifying corporate cultures through the use of competing means model [64]. This approach may be applied in comparing combinations of buyer and seller cultures in different contexts. It would also be useful to explore strong versus weak culture influences in buyer–seller interaction.

Other opportunities for future research include examining the proposed model in different contexts (types of sales positions, types of products, industries, types of relationships, effects on buyers and the buying center, etc.). This article focuses primarily on the performance of the process from the perspective of the industrial seller, however, the influence of the seller’s culture on the buyer would be a natural area of investigation. This would be particularly fruitful in long-term business relationship where buyer/seller integration is essential to successfully achieve the exchange objectives.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The impact on performance of the seller entering the buyer’s corporate culture raises several important questions. This article offers a unique perspective into “cultural” contexts that can influence buyer/seller interactions in the industrial sales environment. Throughout the sales cycle competitors will offer lower prices, new and improved products will be offered, the economy will vacillate, and various other events will challenge the buyer–seller relationship. Buyers and sellers who achieved a successful relationship, in part based upon mutual respect
and understanding of intra- and interorganizational cultural nuances, are more likely to weather these hailstorms.

This article therefore, attempts to highlight the importance of corporate culture as a performance moderator in the sales context. As a result, this approach assists sellers in understanding the impact of corporate culture on developing sustainable strategic advantage within the buyer–seller relationship [65].

REFERENCES


