



LEVERAGING BOTH ART AND SCIENCE IN NATIONAL LEVEL SALES COMPETITIONS

SARAH OBERMEYER

AGENDA

1. BACKGROUND
2. BREAKING DOWN THE ART AND SCIENCE
3. PREPARATION AND EXECUTION
4. RESULTS
5. STUDY LIMITATIONS
6. QUESTIONS



BACKGROUND

Establishing a strong
foundation

PERSONAL INTRODUCTION



- Senior in Sales and Business Marketing Program.
- President of SBMA.
- Why this topic?
 - 2x Internal Sales Competition Participant.
 - 3x National Level Sales Competition Participation.
 - 2x National Level Sales Competition Peer Coach.

ABOUT WMU'S SALES PROGRAM

- Nationally ranked and recognized since 2007 by study.com and the Sales Education Foundation.
- Graduates receive **42 weeks** of hands-on sales training.
- Required class sequence of three courses gives students chance to role-play.
- Strong track record at national level sales competitions.



Photo from WMU Website, SBM Homepage (Sales and Business Marketing).

ABOUT SALES COMPETITIONS

- Universities all across the world host sales competitions.
- Chance to show skills and network.
- Formats vary based on university and sponsor preference.
- In 2021, the Sales Education Foundation named 22 major sales competitions worldwide.
 - Of these, NCSC is the oldest and largest competition.



ABOUT NCSC



Photo from NCSC Website (About Us).

- Elimination- style tournament.
 - 5 rounds of 20-minute roleplays.
- Selling the “Gartner for CIOs” Package.
- Started with **130+ competitors**, and **only 4** made it to the finals.
- To move on, you must beat others in your room.
 - Scoring is done by faculty coaches and employer sponsors.
- 7 categories are judged with various weights of importance.

BREAKING DOWN THE ART & SCIENCE

Where are the difference
makers?

WHY IS IT BOTH ART & SCIENCE

Sales being either an art or science has always been highly debated. There can be cases made for both perspectives in industry.



ART

- Competitors must catch the attention of the judges.
- Be energetic and entertaining as one fulfills scorecard criteria.



SCIENCE

- Competitors can only score points for what's on the rubric.
- Points are only awarded to items executed within the 20 minutes.

AREAS TO CONSIDER: ART



"SALES THEATRE"

- There is an almost "script" judges and students work from.
- Competitors must catch attention of audience (judges).
 - Intentional slowing of speech.
 - Preparing reusable phrases.
 - Having physical gestures match message.
 - Voice tonality that enforces emotion.



PRACTICING THROUGH CAMERAS

- Judges watch competitors through a camera.
- Virtual meetings require more focus for audience than face-to-face meetings.
 - Tone, non-verbal communication, and body language require more attention.

AREAS TO CONSIDER: SCIENCE



UNDERSTANDING CURRICULUM

- Repeatable models that WMU sales students learn align with rubric.
 - Engage, understand, connect, close.
 - Purposeful understanding.
 - Clarify, respond, confirm.



BREAKING DOWN RUBRIC AND TIMING

- Needs identification & product/service presentation is **50% of the possible points.**
- Most time spent in practices and in actual roleplays covering these topics.



What are we testing?

HOW TO WIN THE ROOM.

MY THREE AREAS OF FOCUS

COOL, CALM, AND COLLECTED

- Dr. Eckert told me “Cool, calm, and collected Sarah wins.”
- Remaining patient and calm.
- Practiced difficult objections to remain composed.



VOCAL INFLECTION

- Hoped to come across as an enthusiastic and confident individual
- Changed tone to emphasize certain points.
- Lowered voice when bringing up certain numbers.



SMART QUESTION TOOLBOX

- Creating smart launch and digging questions.
- “Buckets” of keywords/topics tied to a Gartner solution.





The hypothesis?

**COMPLETE THESE
SUCCESSFULLY = WIN.**

PREPARATION AND EXECUTION

How we were able to get
there!

TEAM SELECTION AND PRACTICES



- 1 junior competitor, 1 senior competitor.
 - Both competitors had previously competed at the University of Toledo Invitational Sales Competition.
 - Both had finished majority of sales curriculum at WMU.
- 2.5-hour practices twice a week for a total of three weeks.
 - Goal was to make team adaptable salespeople, not scenario memorizers .

SELF-EVALUTATION

I completed a total of three rounds of competitions and made it to the quarterfinals.

MANAGE THE CLOCK

- With difficult buyers, I struggled to remain in the time limit.
- Acknowledge that I was running out of time.
- Consider cutting out content.

CORRECTIONS ARE OKAY

- We are humans and not sales robots.
- I called a buyer by the wrong name and corrected it.
- Adapt to overcome the mistake.

CONSISTENTLY CRC

- It's a simple model that became an oversight.
- Slow down in the roleplay to properly and strongly overcome objections.

SCORECARD EVALUTATION

The most common themes on my scorecards were:

**Slow
down**

5 judges
commented on
this.

**Nonverbal
communication**

4 judges
commented on
this.

**Good
energy**

5 judges
commented on
this.

RESULTS

What was learned?

RESULTS AND FINDINGS



- Individual ranking: 5th / 134
- University: 11th / 67
- While reviewing my rubrics, self-evaluation, and results, we see my areas of focus were positively commented on by the judges.
- These findings show that I did find the appropriate balance between both art and science.



STUDY LIMITATIONS

TYPES OF BIASES



AFFINITY BIAS

When competitors share similar backgrounds with judges, it could impact scores. Judges know what schools competitors are from.



GENDER BIAS

Some individuals give men preferential treatment over women. Studies show that a man is 1.5x more likely to be hired over a woman.



HALO/HORNS EFFECT

If a competitor does something positive/negative at the start of their roleplay, their scores may have a direct relationship to this.



BEAUTY BIAS

Traditionally attractive people are viewed as more social, happy, and successful. Studies show that traditionally attractive people earn income.

OTHER LIMITATIONS

- I am only one person with my unique experience.
- Judges may have different ideas of what poor and quality execution of criteria look like.
 - Judges are industry and faculty coaches, bring unique experiences.
- **Ultimately, sales competitions are subjective.**
- A competitor could execute the rubric flawlessly and with style and still not receive earned results.



THANK YOU!

WHAT QUESTIONS
CAN I ANSWER?

PHOTOS USED

Sales and business Marketing. Western Michigan University. (2022). Retrieved March 11, 2022, from <https://wmich.edu/marketing/academics/sbm>

NCSC. (2022). *About Us*. The 2022 National Collegiate Sales Competition | Home of the Next Generation of Sales Leaders. Retrieved March 12, 2022, from <https://ncsc-ksu.org/>