



# Contemporary Sales Competencies

(FMCG and related channels)

# 1. Introduction to “Sales Competencies”

## Competency Definition

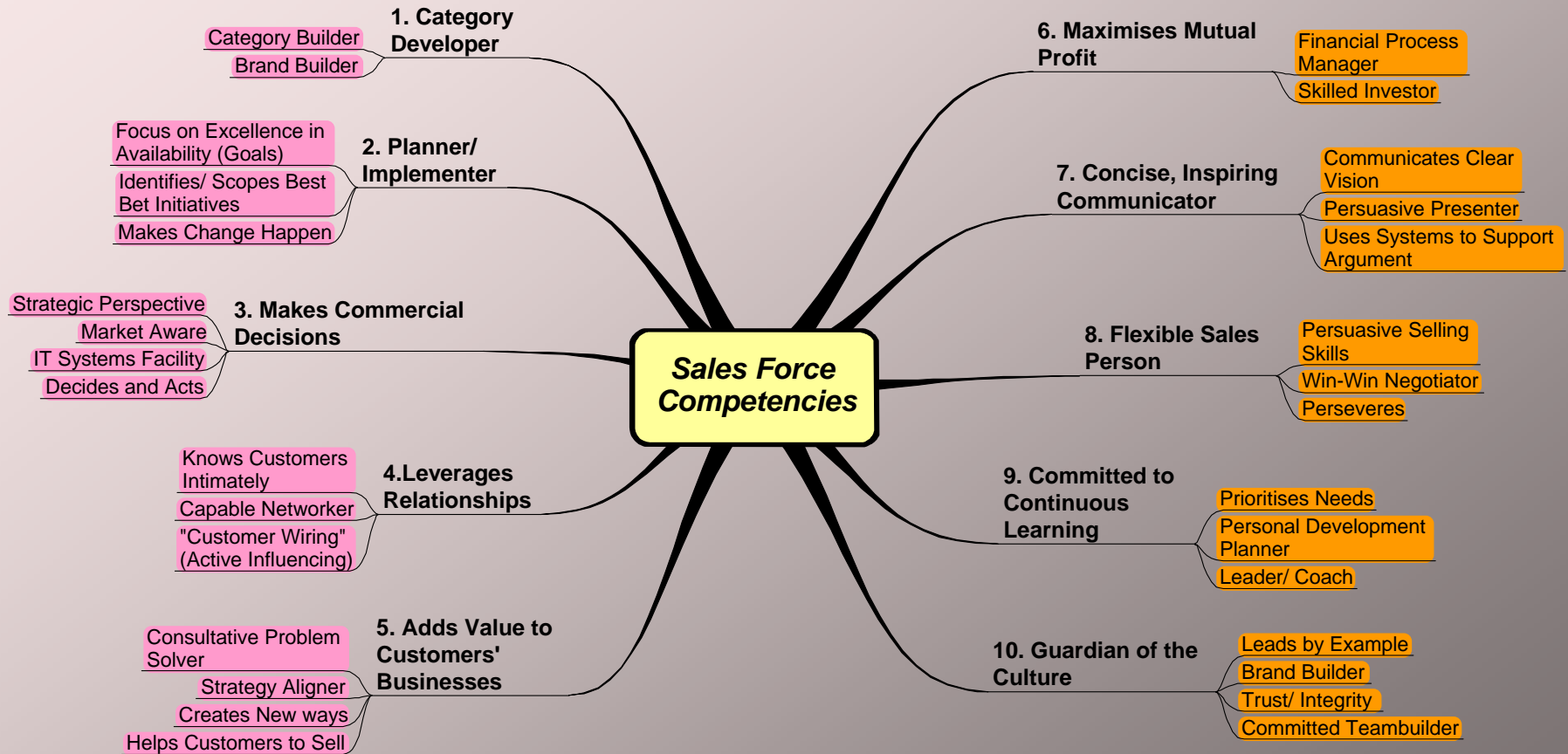
- *“A measurable characteristic of a person that is related to success at work. This includes behavioral skills, technical skills, attributes and attitudes”*
- *“The science of describing what differentiates an average performer from a superior performer”*
  - *“Not to describe the performance (WHAT). Rather the HOW superior performance is achieved”*

## Our Goal

*Our goal is to specify competencies in a way which:*

- Covers the basics, but emphasises how superior performers achieve
- Starts with a set of functional competencies for the sales force as a whole and links each key position to these (see other papers in this series)
- Goes beyond the traditional competencies of Customer planning, selling/ negotiation and supply chain management, to reflect today's market environment and challenges
- Expresses competencies in contemporary sales language
- Provides simple tools for competency assessment
- Suggests links between competency priorities and Sales Force Development Programs

## 2. Sales Force Competencies: "Top 10" Mindmap



### 3. “Top 10” Competencies: Definitions

<p><b>1. Category Developer</b></p>	<p>Emphasises category development with each customer and protects and grows company' brand franchises within a category management framework that is right for that customer</p>
<p><b>2. Planner/ Implementer</b></p>	<p>Singularly focused on Excellence in Availability when setting goals and SMART objectives. Able to create and implement those 1, 2 or 3 solutions (“best bet initiatives”) that will make change happen in each customer</p>
<p><b>3. Makes Commercial Decisions</b></p>	<p>Makes sound commercial decisions and acts on them, based on the ability to align strategies, identify emerging opportunities and use market knowledge and IT systems to construct a relevant, mutually beneficial business case with quantified outcomes</p>
<p><b>4. Leverages Relationships</b></p>	<p>Builds and leverages relationships with a network of decision makers and influencers in each customer in order to influence their individual and group decisions on category and brand development and supplier availability/ visibility. Networks internally to facilitate external success</p>
<p><b>5. Adds Value to Customers' Businesses</b></p>	<p>Identifies value adding products, services and processes, by customer, and exercises consultative problem solving skills to create new or customised solutions that will be rewarded by customers and their consumers</p>

**“Top 10” (continued)**

<p><b>6. Maximises Mutual Profit</b></p>	<p>Deploys all available resources efficiently and effectively to maximise both company ROI and customers' desired financial results</p>
<p><b>7. Concise, Inspiring Communicator</b></p>	<p>Uses all forms of communications (verbal, written, formal presentations and electronic) in a clear and precise way to convey a compelling and inspiring vision</p>
<p><b>8. Flexible Sales Person</b></p>	<p>Adapts the company's sales process to each size, type and style of customer; translates customer needs into mutually beneficial solutions; fine tunes (negotiates) win-win outcomes; perseveres in the face of setbacks, delays and ambiguity to achieve that success</p>
<p><b>9. Committed to Continuous Learning</b></p>	<p>Practices continuous learning and self-driven development. Creates and implements relevant Personal Development Plans for him/ herself and all direct reports. Acts as a leader/ coach</p>
<p><b>10. Guardian of the Culture</b></p>	<p>Leads by example in all of the above; maintains focus on brand building as the cornerstone of our success; demonstrates integrity and trustworthiness, internal and external; is a committed teambuilder</p>

## 4. “Top 10” Competencies: Dimensions

### 1. CATEGORY DEVELOPER

*Emphasises category development with each customer and protects and grows company brand franchises within a category management framework that is right for that customer*

#### **1.1 Adapts Category Management Processes**

Uses the appropriate mix of the industry 8 steps process when implementing a Category Management Project with any customer

#### **1.2 Uses Consumer Understanding**

Provides customer advice based on shopper research and trends and what these mean to each customer based on his/ her shopper profile

#### **1.3 Uses Category Understanding**

Provides customer advice based on a clear appreciation of category dynamics: performance, trends, supplier shares, research, shopping trends and what these mean in each customer

#### **1.4 Commitment to Brand Building**

Recognises that brand positioning and brand building are the source of company profitability and acts to sustain/ grow brands

## 2. PLANNER/ IMPLEMENTER

*Singularly focused on Excellence in Availability when setting goals and SMART objectives. Able to create and implement the 1, 2 or 3 solutions (“best bet initiatives”) that will make change happen in each customer*

### **2.1 Customer Planning**

Develops customer strategies and plans, consistent with company financial goals, sales strategies and category plans and well aligned with the account’s strategies, in order to increase probability of effective execution

### **2.2 Prioritises “Best Bet” initiatives**

Selects and develops “best bet” initiatives for each account to drive the plan: availability/ visibility/ promotional activity

### **2.3 Makes Change Happen**

Drives service delivery to the account, through all functions (including e.g. supply, Category Management and Field Sales) and monitors/ controls the effectiveness of both routine service and joint business building activities with primary contacts in each account

### 3. MAKES COMMERCIAL DECISIONS

*Makes sound commercial decisions and acts on them, based on the ability to align strategies, identify emerging opportunities and use market knowledge and IT systems to construct a relevant, mutually beneficial business case with quantified outcomes*

#### **3.1 Strategic Perspective**

Aligns the customer's category development strategies, systems and operating practices with ours, through a process of analysis, negotiation and learnings from joint initiatives

#### **3.2 Customer/ Market Awareness**

Generates and develops insights and ideas for mutually profitable joint category development with each account, based on an intimate understanding of market dynamics and the customer's market positioning, strategies (corporate and category), operating systems, decision processes, service needs, supplier partnering practices, policies and ability to execute programs at store level

#### **3.3 IT Systems Facility**

Is at ease with IT systems and is able to use them to access and find relevant data for the development of strategy and decision making

#### **3.4 Decides and Acts**

Willing and able to make decisions and act on them to make change happen



## 4. LEVERAGES RELATIONSHIPS

*Builds and leverages relationships with a network of decision makers and influencers in each customer in order to influence their individual and group decisions on category and brand development and supplier availability/ visibility. Networks internally to facilitate external success*

### **4.1 Knows Customers Intimately**

Develops and maintains customer profiles which cover a wide range of variables including (but not limited to) customer strategies, policies, processes, decision making, current initiatives, as well as our performance, penetration and terms relationships with the account. Identifies flexibilities and opportunities to improve working relationships and acts on these

### **4.2 Capable Networker**

Builds up a comprehensive range of contacts, across all functions, within the customer and internally. Is constantly aware of latest developments and can quickly identify the most relevant person with the whom to communicate and influence

### **4.3 Customer Wiring**

Actively influences decision makers to be engaged in mutually beneficial decision making

## 5. ADDS VALUE TO CUSTOMERS' BUSINESSES

*Identifies value adding products, services and processes, by customer, and exercises consultative problem solving skills to create new or customised solutions that will be rewarded by customers and their consumers*

### **5.1 Consultative Problem Solver**

Works with customers to identify current business issues, develop a range of potential solutions and decide on the most likely solutions. Is able to use various techniques to do this in a systematic way

### **5.2 Aligns Strategies**

Aligns the customer's category development strategies, systems and operating practices with ours through a process of analysis, negotiation and learnings from joint initiatives

### **5.3 Creates New Ways**

Questions current practice and exercises creativity and persuasion in finding new ways to operate together

### **5.4 Helps Customers to Sell**

Engages with customers in creating excellence in availability for their consumers (best seller focus/ range rationalisation, multiple display impact, more productive promotions etc.)

## 6. MAXIMISES MUTUAL PROFIT

*Deploys all available resources efficiently and effectively to maximise both company ROI and customers' desired financial results*

### **6.1 Financial Literacy**

Is able to understand and evaluate:

- Company financial processes and structures; understands ROI and market/ customer P & L and how sales division impacts these
- Customer financial goals, processes and how we impact these
- Productivity of trading terms and opportunities to improve these
- Promotional effectiveness

### **6.2 Financial Process Manager**

Operates with company systems and influences customer systems to “pre test” and “post test” the financial impact of initiatives

- Efficient use of Customer P & L's, promotional management system, planograms etc.

### **6.3 Skilled Investor**

Invests in activities that create mutual sales and profit and pays for performance

- Maximises incremental sales/ profit on promotions
- Optimises ranging to reduce both inventories and out of stocks

## 7. CONCISE, INSPIRING COMMUNICATOR

*Uses all forms of communications (verbal, written, formal presentations and electronic) in a clear and precise way to convey a compelling and inspiring vision*

### **7.1 Communicates a clear Vision**

Is able to convey in a clear and precise manner a vision of the future situation which is to be achieved. Is able to relate day to day activities to this vision in an inspiring way

### **7.2 Persuasive Presenter**

Presents using a variety of styles by recognising the different needs of individuals and groups within the audiences. Is able to communicate the message in a clear and memorable manner. Uses different media to maintain interest and involvement

### **7.3 Effective Use of Systems**

Is comfortable using internal and external IT systems where appropriate to convey and communicate information. Uses the most appropriate form of system to communicate different types of messages

## 8. FLEXIBLE SALES PERSON

*Adapts the company sales process to each size, type and style of customer; translates customer needs into mutually beneficial solutions; negotiates win-win outcomes; perseveres in the face of setbacks, delays and ambiguity to achieve that success*

### **8.1 Persuasive Selling Skills**

Understands and can demonstrate the company Selling Sequence and Process and has the ability to recognise the different people styles and to modify language and behaviour to reflect the individuals type. Uses structured questioning skills and active listening to identify customer needs and to deliver solutions which match those needs

### **8.2 Win-Win Negotiator**

Is able to demonstrate various processes and techniques that will be used during the negotiation process. Has the ability to recognise and calculate the cost/ benefit of various options during the negotiation process in order to achieve mutuality or win-win solutions. Has the ability to develop a series of options to be used during the negotiation process. Is able to “think on their feet” during the negotiation

### **8.3 Perseverance**

Understands that objectives are not always achieved easily. Will maintain a positive attitude towards failure and continue in their attempts to achieve success. Will review what worked and what did not work after each meeting and incorporates the learning into the next attempt

## 9. COMMITTED TO CONTINUOUS LEARNING

*Practices continuous learning and self-driven development. Creates and implements relevant Personal Development Plans for him/ herself and all direct reports. Acts as a leader/ coach*

### **9.1 Prioritises Needs**

Takes time to identify personal, individual and team development needs. Helps staff to take responsibility for the development of their functional and effectiveness competencies

### **9.2 Personal Development Planner**

Constructs and implements compelling Personal Development plans for the him/ herself and with direct reports, which address priority needs, stretch individuals, maximise current performance and transition easily to their next role

### **9.3 Leader/ Coach**

Knows the sales process well enough to coach it; demonstrates well developed and creative coaching skills

## 10. GUARDIAN OF THE CULTURE

*Leads by example in all of the above; maintains focus on brand building as the cornerstone of our success; demonstrates integrity and trustworthiness, internal and external; is a committed teambuilder*

### **10.1 Leads by Example**

Demonstrates the full range of sales competencies in practical application

### **10.2 Brand Builder**

Recognises that brand positioning and brand building are the source of company profitability and acts to sustain/ grow brands

### **10.3 Integrity and Trust**

Consistently behaves in a way which generates trust. Is seen to be a person who demonstrates the company's values in all situations

### **10.4 Committed Teambuilder**

Contributes co-operatively to team success, whether as a team leader or team member

## 5. Assessing Training Needs and Priorities

The example overleaf is from an active spreadsheet of the Field Sales role. It allows a weighted assessment of individual needs, but can be used as a quick reference for the team as a whole. The full spreadsheet has four separated tabs: 1. Sales Force (as a whole); 2. Field Sales Representative; 3. Account Manager; 4. Sales Line Manager

### Spreadsheet Description

**Column A** Lists the 10 Competencies and their multiple dimensions on the left

**Column B** Invites you to weight the **importance** of each competency/ dimension in your current market environment. Clearly, all competencies are important, but some will be more important to you right now than others, hence:

**3 = Vital**

**2 = Very Important**

**1 = Important**



Enter the number 3, 2 or 1 in the column

**Note:** Weight the “dimensions” first before making a judgement of the competency itself. The most important competencies are given the highest weighting.

**Column C** Invites you to rate the **current competency level**. Enter the number 3, 2 or 1 in the column

### 3. Developing

Understands the dimensions of the competency and the processes and skills required. Able to follow processes and practice the skills *with some guidance*.



## 2. Proficient

Skilled and confident in this area. Can act *without* guidance.

## 1. Expert

Able to train colleagues in this area. Able to contribute to the “state of the art”: refine processes, create new ways/ new initiatives

**Notes:** In this instance the “3” rating goes to the lowest level of competency. If you are making a “team” decision, you should rate each individual first, but the tool can be used for judgemental decisions of the team as a whole

**Column D** The right hand column (“**Strength of Need**”) is the sum of the two prior columns. Thus, 9 is the **maximum** result, indicating a strong training need (vital competency/ lowest competency level)

**Column E** Lists some of the Sales Development Resources which cover each competency. In this instance we have inserted **JSA On-Line Learning modules**.

Training Needs Assessment: Field Sales or Account Management (example)				
				Indicates initial priorities for this individual
"Top 10" Competencies and their Dimensions	(a) Importance	(b) Current Level	(c) Weighted Need	Sales Development Resources
	3 Vital	3 Developing	(a) x (b)	<i>(JSA Online Sales Training Examples)</i>
	2 Very Important	2 Proficient		
	1 Important	1 Expert		
<b>1. Category Developer</b>				
1.1 Adapts Category Management Processes	2	3	6	Introduction to Category Management
1.2 Uses Consumer Understanding	3	3	9	
1.3 Uses Category Understanding	2	2	4	
1.4 Commitment to Brand Building	3	1	3	
<b>2. Planner/ Implementer</b>				
2.1 Customer Planning	3	1	3	Account Performance Analysis/ Account Planning
2.2 Prioritises "Best Bet" initiatives	3	1	3	"Top 10" Store Development
2.3 Makes Change Happen	3	2	6	Customer Engagement
<b>3. Makes Commercial Decisions</b>				
3.1 Strategic Perspective	2	2	4	Understanding the Retailer
3.2 Customer/ Market Awareness	2	2	4	
3.3 IT Systems Facility	2	3	6	
3.4 Decides and Acts	3	2	6	Time Management is Self-Management
<b>4. Leverages Relationships</b>				
4.1 Knows Customers Intimately	3	1	3	Account Profiles and Customer Research
4.2 Capable Networker	3	2	6	Customer Engagement
4.3 Customer Wiring	3	2	6	
<b>5. Adds Value to Customers' Businesses</b>				
5.1 Consultative Problem Solver	3	1	3	Consultative Selling/ How Retailers make Money
5.2 Aligns Strategies	3	2	6	Account Planning/ Customer Engagement
5.3 Creates New Ways	2	3	6	
5.4 Helps Customers to Sell	3	1	3	Understanding the Retailer
<b>6. Maximises Mutual Profit</b>				
6.1 Financial Literacy	3	3	9	Introduction to Business Finance
6.2 Financial Process Manager	2	3	6	
6.3 Skilled Investor	3	3	9	Promotional Analysis/ Promotional Planning
<b>7. Concise, Inspiring Communicator</b>				
7.1 Communicates a clear Vision	2	2	4	Designing Customer Presentations
7.2 Persuasive Presenter	2	2	4	Effective Presentation Skills
7.3 Effective Use of Systems	2	2	4	
<b>8. Flexible Sales Person</b>				
8.1 Persuasive Selling Skills	2	2	4	Field Sales Series 1 (8 modules)
8.2 Win-Win Negotiator	3	1	3	Planning to Negotiate/ Negotiating for Profit
8.3 Perseverance	3	1	3	Performing Under Pressure
<b>9. Committed to Continuous Learning</b>				
9.1 Prioritises Needs	3	3	9	Continuous Self Development
9.2 Personal Development Planner	3	3	9	
9.3 Leader/ Coach	3	3	9	Field Coaching
<b>10. Guardian of the Culture</b>				
10.1 Leads by Example	3	1	3	The Role of the Sales Manager
10.2 Brand Builder	3	1	3	
10.3 Integrity and Trust	3	1	3	
10.4 Committed Teambuilder	2	2	4	Teamwork