



# REVIEW OF RESEARCH

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## A SALES PROCESS FRAMEWORK TO REGAIN B2B CUSTOMERS

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### ABSTRACT

*A comprehensive CRM process needs to also include reacquisition strategies. Yet few firms have formal procedures to guide reacquisition efforts. This gap in the sales process reflects the relatively sparse literature on B2B customer reacquisition models. This research aims to help fill this gap and creates a sales reacquisition process model whereby salespeople: (1) SEGMENT - lost customers, (2) ASSESS - reasons for loss, (3) DEVELOP- reacquisition activities, and (4) IMPLEMENT- reacquisition strategies. Using critical incident technique (CIT), this study conducted on primary and secondary research method along with B2B salespeople. Empirical insight is provided into each of these four stages in the reacquisition process.*



**KEYWORDS:** B2B Customer Reacquisition Framework, Sales Process, Win Back, Attribution, Justice Theory.

### INTRODUCTION

Sales executives perpetually look for opportunities to realize, retain, and grow business opportunities for his or her companies. However, in spite of how effective a company's sales method or CRM program is, inevitably, some customers can defect and switch to alternative suppliers though there are well-established sales processes and frameworks to guide salespeople once they exploit new accounts and maintaining client relationships, there are remarkably few studies or formal systems in situation. A lot of analysis exploring reacquisition methods and therefore the development of verified frameworks is required to supply salespeople the tools to judge reacquisition opportunities and execute reacquisition methods. Left without these frameworks and tools, salespeople could have interaction in reacquisition activities that are either ineffective or inefficient, or worse, they will participate in activities that run counter to the CRM goals of their sales firm. The lack of attention paid to reacquisition within the educational literature is additionally distressful given the potential importance of client reacquisition to a firm's implementation of a reacquisition strategy; sales executives will usually facilitate the creation of higher-value transactions, kind stronger bonds and redevelop extremely profitable relationships with these shopping for companies. A well-designed reacquisition framework may aid corporations to better perceive their market and competitive position. With the increasing levels of competition and client demands, properly integrated reacquisition programs give opportunities to boost companies' sales processes and facilitate guide their client relationship management efforts (Liu Reacquiring "lost" customers differs from exploit "new" customers in many key ways that. For example, sales organizations will usually leverage departed customers' dealing

histories (Thomas et al., 2004) that are untouchable with new customers. Whereas customers' relationship portfolios can typically embody data which will be leveraged, a number of the past experiences and relationships could also be deterrents to reacquisition. Consequently, salespeople might have to counter robust negative attitudes or repair a relationship before any reacquisition initiatives may be triple-crown. what is more, losing a client to higher rating or worth efforts needs a different reacquisition strategy than losing one when a service failure or alternative prejudicious challenge to the pre-existing relationship.

Most of all, reacquiring any lost client usually involves reactivating the customers' shift behavior. Since customers' selections to modify back generally need a reappraisal of a supplier's relative worth of the providing furthermore because the relative worth of past relationships, salespeople got to assess their windows of chance and persuade customers to "switchback" from the replacement provider. Contributing to the promoting and sales literature, this study intends to develop a B2Bsales method framework to facilitate the reacquisition of lost customers. Is one in the entire primary to through empirical observation investigate sales activities regarding reacquisition efforts in the results of this paper can give new insight and data to assist?

(1) consistently conduct client defection analyses by characteristic and segmenting styles of lost customers and critically assess defection attributions, and

(2) Style reacquisition efforts by choosing and implementing applicable ways and methods

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In B2B sales, each of the patrons and sellers' area unit engaged in a very worth co-creation method for economic exchange (Dixon and Tanner, 2012). These exchanges and sales processes area unit complicated dynamic, and perpetually evolving. Because the marketplace becomes additional competitive and customers more value-conscious, relationships and loyalty might not sustain. Also, changes in a very customer's price structure, personnel, getting motivations and goals, changes within the sales organization's personnel and method, and competitors' actions will strengthen or deteriorate a longtime relationship (Dwyer et al 1987). Since salespeople usually manage client loyalty in B2B relationships, salespeople play an important role in reducing client defection, restitution business, reconstruction worth, and repairing relationships (Palmatier et al. 2007; Johnson et al. 2001). CRM literature systematically demonstrates the advantages of client retention, as well as money, attitudinal (e.g., complete preference, positive WOM) and activity (e.g., repeat purchase and referral) (e.g., Reichheld, 1993; Page et al., 1996; Liu et al., 2005).the final word goal of CRM is to retain all profitable clients and expand the lifespan worth of every customer, organizations understand a "perfect retention" record is not possible. In response, a body of analysis exploring the reacquisition of lost customers has developed. Specifically, previous studies have examined competitive valuation, period, and SLTV (Thomas et al.,2004), relative social capital and regret (Tokman et al., 2007; Liu et al.,2012), attribution theory (Delela, 2009), justice perceptions (Homburg et al.,2007), and also the influence of cultural norms (Liu et al.,2012) to regain lost customers. Recognizing the many impacts of client defection on overall CRM goals, Stauss and Friege (1999) gift a framework for comprehensive client management for the prospect, existing, and lost customers. They determine 5 styles of lost customers (defectors) supported the example of the link dissolution as well as the bought away, force away, accidentally pushed away, moved away, and advisedly pushed away customers (see details within the abstract framework section). They stress the importance of characteristic profitable customers through two-way communications and segmentation information. Literature on service recovery has usually applied attribution theory, equity theory (Adams, 1963), and justice theory (Tax et al.,1998) to look at antecedents to recovery and client reactions (e.g., Hoffman and Kelley, 2000; Gonzalez et al.,2005). This literature has centered on customer attributions of service failure (e.g., Swanson and Kelley, 2001), failure typologies and recovery efforts (e.g., general and Hewa, 1997; Gonzalez, et al., 2010), recovery evaluations and techniques (e.g., Hoffman and Kelley, 2000), client protesting behavior (e.g.,Keaveney, 1995), and relationship merchandising and repair recovery management (Gonzalez et al.,2005; Gonzalez, et al.,2010). In general, justice theory and equity theory aim to match the input with the

result. Specifically, justice theory might facilitate assess the perceived fairness of win-back offers, reacquisition methods, and private interaction to make sure fortunate reacquisition implementation. e.g., al.,

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE REACQUISITION SALES PROCESS

One of the oldest and most basic models among the sales discipline is the seven-step commerce method (Michael R. Solomon, Greg W. Marshall, and Elnora W. Stuart, *Marketing: Real folks, Real selections*, 5th ed. (Upper Saddle stream, NJ: Pearson apprentice Hall, 2008), 450). Historically, this commerce method consists of (1) prospecting, (2) pre-approach, (3) approach, (4) presentation, (5) overcoming objections, (6) closing, and (7) follow-up activities (Dubinsky, 1980; 1981). Given the quickly ever-changing sales setting, there are various requires modernizing and enhancing this method. As an example, Marshall, Moncrieff, & Lassk (1999) determine new commerce activates stemming from technology used. Moncrief associated Marshall (2005) propose an updated commerce method that takes into consideration a relationship commerce approach centering on assessing and making worth whereas, utilizing databases to facilitate the sales method. Plouffe, Nelson, & Beuk (2013) argue that refinement of the sales method is most required within the later stages as competition becomes a lot of formidable and commerce cycles area unit extended. They develop and check a model that includes negotiation practices into the sales method. Whereas these studies all enhance our understanding of what today's salespeople do to facilitate sales, they solely examine a sales method that spans from prospecting to client acquisition, to account management. They are doing not examine lost customers, and therefore, the method of reacquisition. As a result of reacquisition activities area unit doubtless terribly completely different from acquisition activities, a comprehensive sales method must embrace the examination of reacquiring lost customers (Stauss and Freige, 1999). To the present finish, we tend to develop a framework of the reacquisition sales method. Integrating client defection, and repair recovery literature (Stauss and Friege, 1999; Gonzalez et al., 2005) with our vital incident interview findings, we tend to develop a reacquisition sales method framework this framework consists of two phases (i.e. the analysis part, and therefore, the Action phase), and four steps (i.e. phase defectors, assess responsibilities, develop reacquisition activities, and implement reacquisition strategy). The two steps within the evaluation-focused part need sales executives to conduct a client defection analysis to realize insights into United Nations agency the defector's area unit and why they left. The results of the primary two steps area unit later integrated into planning applicable reacquisition efforts. The two steps within the action-oriented part enable sales executives to project what reacquisition strategy to undertake and the way to implement activities to assist guarantee effective reacquisition efforts. These two phases and therefore, the ensuing four steps area unit shortly careful on below. The analysis part — Defection Analysis the most purpose of client defection analysis is to assist sales executives in consistently measures the patterns of defected customers. By classifying defectors into one among the five typologies, sales executives will objectively modify the lost client by specializing in a defection paradigm instead of the loss or reverse. What is more, by initial distinguishing the defection pattern, sales executives will a lot of objectively assess customer's reasons for deed. Since not all defected customers share equivalent issues, this objective assessment of defectors can aid salespeople to assign priorities and style effective win-back methods.

#### Step I: phase Defectors Base on Reason for a switch.

Recognizing the numerous impacts of client defections on overall CRM goals, Stauss and Friege (1999) develop a framework for analyzing lost customers of services. They recommend initial segmenting lost customers by the explanation for his or her defection. Integration Stauss and Friege's (1999) classification with findings from our vital incident interviews, we tend to determine and compare five varieties of B2B lost customers within the following section.

1. The bought away customer's area unit typically on the lookout for a less expensive value. As a result, they're prone to competitive valuation and rarely attempt to a long relationship. Since they will be simply lured away by competitor's lower costs, bought away customers can even be bought

back with competitive valuation. However, our findings recommend that the vital issue for the sales firm to think about once restoration this kind of client is: whether it'll keep around long enough to be profitable and if it's worthy to play the "price war" game with competitors. As such, to with success regain and retain business, it's necessary that the sales firm develop a program to lock in deal-prone customers.

2. The force away customers sometimes look for higher worth propositions from various suppliers and appearance for competitive offers with higher edges and/or lower prices. The force away customer's area unit strategy-driven and can collaborate with suppliers closely to co-create higher worth for the long haul. Though they will appear stringent or explicit, they're less deal-prone. Therefore, our findings reveal that the most issue to recapture shy away customers is to co-develop a worth proposition that's distinctive and property.
3. The accidentally pushed away customers departed thanks to practice or negligence. Sales executives should apologize for the mistakes to neutralize negative sentiments before creating amends. The accidentally pushed away customers typically toughened service/product failures, as such, several ways for service recovery together with compensations, reimbursements, and discounts area unit relevant and diagnostic to regain their business. However, findings from our analysis show that once customers toughened severe or perennial mistakes, a sales firm might have to attend for a client and/or internal personnel changes before restoration is feasible.
4. The enraptured away customers don't have any desires or now not see worth within the product/service offerings. The enraptured away customers might physically move to completely different areas that the corporate cannot serve, or they will in-source or internally manufacture merchandise. Many sales executives noted that though this cluster of consumers could appear lost permanently, ensuring relationships finish completely is very important for referrals and WOM.
5. They pushed away customer's area unit problematic, or unprofitable customers, and therefore, the company now not needs their business. Varied salespeople commented that the art of coping with this cluster of consumers includes rental them hearth themselves and leading them to competitors which will have a far better match for his or her desires. Again, positive relationship dissolution can facilitate sales corporations to maintain a positive complete image.

## Step II: Assess Responsibility and Reasons for Loss.

In addition to the five prototypes, once evaluating lost B2B customers, it's crucial to know why they left, and therefore, the specifics of matters that cause the defection. As such, a second step within the defection analysis is attribution in nature -- who/what is accountable, can it happen once more, and may its prevented? Though salespeople tend to form attributions of successes primarily to internal factors (DeCarlo et al., 2007), in failure things, employee attributions are found to be connected to each internal and external factor (Dixon, Spiro, and Jamil 2001; DeCarlo et al.,2007). Dixon and Schertzer (2005) notice that whether a salesman intends to beat failure by increasing effort, seeking help or ever-changing methods can rely on the attributions he or she makes. Attribution theory helps salespeople establish the cause related to client defection. This process involves the sorting through of assorting info cues associated ends up in an attribution. Integrating attribution theory, the attribution method involves a judgment concerning whether the case is some things internal or external (Gilbert, 1995), reoccurring or non-reoccurring, and controllable versus uncontrollable (Weiner, 1980). Attribution theory will facilitate inform the analysis of client defection. Analyzing causative inferences and interpretations of defection attribution will facilitate sales executives higher perceive some hurdles they will face with client recovery. Past literature suggests that salespeople build attributions concerning the causes and can work toward achieving a made outcome (Dixon et. al.,2001). Scientific attribution analysis can facilitate sales executives gain insights into the explanation customers defected. Specifically, findings from our crucial incident interviews show that the attribution analysis facilitate direct attentions to



**1. Source:** the accountable party might embody internal supply (e.g. the sales govt, sales firm), or external supply (e.g. customer, competitor, or environment). Once the supply of client defection chiefly came from sales govt or firm, indoor analysis needs to manifest itself to correct mistakes.

**2. Stability:** If the reason behind defection is probably going to reoccur (i.e., table), then it's vital for sales executives to develop solutions/schema and learn from matters.

**3. Controllable/Preventable:** If the reason behind client defection is manageable or preventable, sales got area unit probably to appear for cues from future events and take precautions. The Action part — Reacquisition Efforts Taking into consideration the explanations and causes of the client defection permits salespeople to develop and execute their reacquisition efforts. These efforts presumably need obtaining customers to appraise their previous call to go away, evaluate relative price among suppliers, and switch back from a replacement provider. As such, once designing their reacquisition strategy, salespeople should not solely have a full understanding of what activities, capabilities, assets area unit accessible to them, however, should additionally detain mind the method by that these are often leveraged to facilitate positive review by the client. Therefore, this part involves salesperson's determinative of the acceptable reacquisition activities and their potential effects on the prospective lost client. We tend to integrate justice theory together with 3 components: distributive, procedural, and interactive justice for effective implementation of reacquisition strategy (Tax et.al.1998).

### Step III: Develop Reacquisition Activities and Capabilities.

Depending on the kinds of service failures, service recovery literature suggests many effective recovery activities. This includes apology, price-related concessions (e.g. , is counts, compensations, reimbursements), and no action (Gonzales et al., 2005). Additionally, our findings show that the reacquisition method needs sales executives to re-approach and re-negotiate with defected customers. As a result, this method facilitates co-creation with and customization for consumers. Past analysis observes that the customization method permits the event of a lot of client-oriented products/services that leading to larger customer satisfaction (Saxe and Weitz, 1982) and a lot of favorable perceptions of service quality (Parasuraman eta988). This sort of customization method is additionally probably to evolve into boundary-open transactions permitting the client and vendor to re-engage and share feelings with each other (Mars and Nicod, 1984). As a consequence, higher communication, improved processes, and/or new capabilities and experience area unit developed, and relationships area unit re-energized. In addition, many sales executives reveal the importance of "active waiting" -- a process to re-engage with customers albeit they're not able to switch back. The aim of "active waiting" is to position the sales firm on the "consideration set" for the customer's next buying cycle. As vital, "active waiting" might assure customers come once the required supplier falls short on performance. Step IV: Implement Reacquisition Strategy. Justice theory is principally involved with fairness connected to the implementation of the associated acts, like getting activities. Perceived justice includes 3 components: distributive justice, procedural justice, and interactive justice, and suggests that implementing get efforts ought to take into consideration get provide, process, and therefore, the human interaction components (Tax et al.,1998).

**1. Get Provide** -- integration Distributive Justice focuses on the particular outcome of the firm's reacquisition effort. As such, the sales firm get provide might embody value discounts and product/service customization (Hoffman and Kelley, 1996).

**2. Reacquisition method** -- Incorporating Procedural Justice focuses on the method, procedure, and system that facilitate the ultimate outcome (Greenberg, 1990). Therefore, to effectively implement reacquisition methods, sales executives have to be compelled to take into account the rising method and management approach and develop capabilities and experience to adapt to the customer's desires.

**3. Human Interaction** -- Considering interactive Justice International justice involves social activities in delivering get provide and executing reacquisition methods (Tax et al.,1998). A sales executive's communication and relationship skills, angle and temperament to resolve matters (e.g., apology, “active waiting” will contribute to positive interactive justice.

**METHODOLOGY**

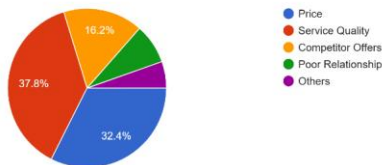
The goal of this research is to develop a framework illustrating how sales executives. Attempt to reacquire lost customers. In order to gain in-depth knowledge of the customer Reacquisition, we conducted primary and secondary survey. Critical incident technique (CIT) involves the use of specific stories and examples (i.e., incidents) that are content analyzed with the purpose of uncovering emergent themes, patterns and categories. As a qualitative Methodology, CIT has been found to be particularly valuable at identifying categories and typologies (Bitner et al., 1990). Respondents for this study are B2B salespeople identified from a convenience sample developed from a major sales (wholesaler) background. Therefore, our unit of analysis is a reacquisition incident.

We pre-screened respondents to ensure that appropriate and knowledgeable individuals were selected to participate in the survey (Johnston et al., 1999) We used CIT to investigate reacquisition evaluations by asking industrial salespeople to describe in as much detail as possible two incidents: an incident where they successfully attempted to win back a lost customer and an incident where they were unsuccessful. Probing questions followed to have respondents discuss the past working relationships, the reasons customers left, the processes and resources used to facilitate the reacquisition effort. Once the story was captured, we asked the respondents to reflect upon any aspects that helped or hindered the process and if they would have done anything differently. Finally, we asked respondents to compare the differences between winning-back lost customers and acquiring new customers. Following the guidelines of CIT, the number of interviews was not predetermined; instead, it was determined by emerging common themes and repetition of information (Bitner et al., 1990).

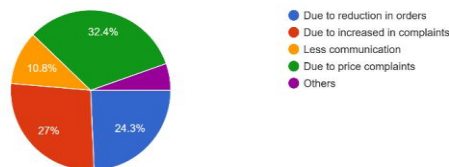
**FINDINGS**

**Sample Characteristics** A total of 37 salespeople was surveyed generating numerous critical incidents for evaluation. Seventy-six percent (76%) of respondents were male. On average, respondents were 50 years old and had over 20 years of working experience. Fifty- five percent (55%) of the sample had a Bachelor’s degree with 8% having a Master’s or higher. Forty-three percent (40%) of the respondents were selling a business service. Team Leader and Sales Promotion Executive. The framework represents what salespeople do when reacquiring lost customers. Practically, all scenarios provide strong evidence that salespeople assess reason for defection and strategically think through the best strategy to facilitate reacquisition. Given in the findings of the qualitative data (and for brevity’s sake in this paper), we present the following 5 examples corresponding to 5 types of defectors to illustrate how each step is adopted by the sales executives.

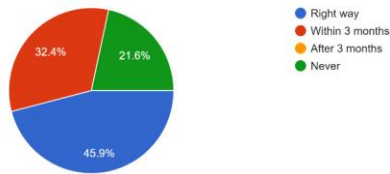
1. Why do usually customer not purchase any product?  
37 responses



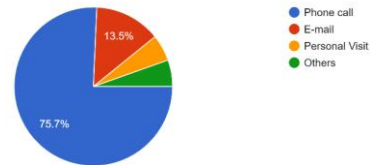
2.How do you know the customers not purchase the product?  
37 responses



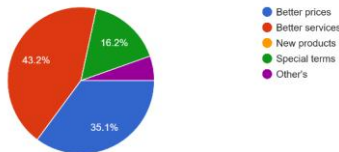
3. When do you contact lost customer ?  
37 responses



4. How do you contact them first?  
37 responses



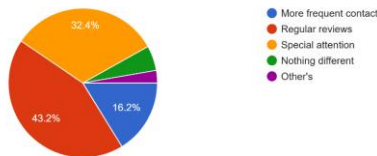
5. What do you offer to win them back?  
37 responses



6. What works best to win back customer's ?  
37 responses



7. After winning back a customer's what do you do differently ?  
37 responses



### Example 1: Bought Away Customers

#### Step 1: Particular segment defector is based on the reason for switching.

Competitors can buy many customers away by offering a better price our paper shows many of examples. For instance, the Director of a building supplies company recalled that he lost a major account mainly due to price competition. He stated: "The customer has left purely just based on price. I don't think we've let them down in terms of the product, the way we've made it, the delivery, you know I always felt that they were satisfied. And probably in the end, at a certain point, our price may have been a little bit out of kilter, our opposition might have had some cheaper timber...and all of the sudden they can beat you in the marketplace, and so I do think it's more to do with price than anything else."

#### Step 2: Evaluate who is responsible and what caused the loss.

The customer defection can be attributed to a competitor (i.e., external source). In a price-driven marketplace, such situations were likely to reoccur (i.e., stable source) and the competitor might decide a threshold to stabilize the price (i.e., uncontrollable/unpreventable). As such, the attribution analysis showed that the competitor threat was eminent and persistent.

#### Step 3: Develop reacquisition activities and capabilities.

As this was a major customer, the seller tried to win back the customer by waiting and researching the current trend. They devised their reacquisition by: "enough intelligence gathering information which came back to say, well, things weren't quite as good as they appeared to be to start

with...there have been few shortages and maybe they've been let down. We tried to figure out what's really going on and becoming their best friend again...it started with a phone call." Thus, this situation showed that the provider incorporated active waiting (by gathering information), and better communication to redevelop relationships and to improve processes.

#### ***Step 4: Implement reacquisition strategy.***

The sales executive implemented the reacquisition strategy by integrating the elements of procedural and interactional justices and focused on keeping in contact and becoming a best friend with the customer. Overall, "cost to serve" was additionally vital, as the sales executive stated: "...maybe in the time when he started to drift away, when he made his decision that he could save money by buying it differently, if we had been a little more attentive and promoted ourselves. But if you burn too much money promoting yourself, promoting... we've not got anything really new to offer, so it's just a matter of servicing that job."

#### **Example 2: Pulled Away Customers**

##### ***Step 1. customers may be enticed away by competitors' more affordable products.***

For instance, a sales specialist at a telecommunication service provider mentioned: "Customer was a tiny low business and antecedently left for a far better provide. About 12 months after that we started talking about what we needed to do in order to win them back."

##### ***Step 2. Further analysis shows that the cause of customer defection is due to competitor having better value proposition.***

The cause may likely to re-occur because of the technology advancement and better ways of providing service from the competitor. The attribution analysis shows that the customer is value-focused and strategy-driven. "And they had a bunch of technical requirements that needed to be met. The agreement was that if we tend to might meet these needs, they might provide their entire business back...we talked about it and after 2 or 3 meetings they came back... because we started to meet all their needs and did things as they wanted to happen... It wasn't difficult to meet requirements. In addition, customers may be attracted away by competitors' more affordable products.

##### ***Step3. Under this situation, the sales executive applied active waiting to re-engage the relationship.***

The sales firm also developed competence and modified services per the customer's wants and requirements.

***Step 4. The sales executive effectively employed the reacquisition strategy by adapting services to meet exact needs*** (i.e., distribution justice), enhancing the skills necessary for the client (i.e., procedural justice), and improving communication methods (i.e., interactional justice).

#### **Example 3: The Unintentionally Pushed Away Clients**

##### ***Step 1. There are conditions when the customers are involuntarily victimized or ignored.***

Such customers are unintentionally pushed away due to unforeseeable actions of the sales executive or the sales firm. Highlighting the mistreatment of a client, a Sales and Promotions Executive of a media company stated that:

"The customer departed as a result of a strategically planned and financially supported street activation at a retail establishment. never took place because of bad communication. This was the start of their summer activations and product sales. The issue ascended when the local area did not show up at the event with the activation and promotional staff. The information and booking were never approved onto the local region because our Network staff member was away sick..."



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***Step 2. Customer defection may be credited to the actions of the sales executive and the overall performance of the sales firm.***

The sales firm seemed to take the responsibility for the mistake, and wanted to ensure that such incident would not reoccur. The unfortunate cause of customer defection in situation like this was preventable, and firm usually had ability to control such events by due diligence.

***Step 3. The firm's win-back activities included apologizing and taking full responsibility of the event, in addition to offering the client a special customized offer.***

“As you could imagine, the client was less than impressed and stripped all promotional and marketing services with the company. However, due the strong sales/client relationships, we simply emailed, rang and apologized to the client for the mistake and took full responsibility...”

***Step 4. The implementation of win back in this scenario took into consideration the distributive and interactional justice elements.***

Clearly, the firm relied on the strong relationship with the client which helped in communicating the apology in the right manner acceptable by the client of their choice at no cost i.e. a make good (Human interaction), along with providing special offers to “make good” to resolve the problem. In an effort to restore the relationship, we proposed two additional on-site activations at a designated location.

***Example 4: The Move Away Customers******Step 1. There are often segments of customers who ‘move away’, either physically move away or start the manufacturing/service in-house.***

The sales process framework for customer reacquisition in such cases is quite different. For instance, a Sales Representative of a food-manufacturing firm described: “The customer felt it was more economical to make this product themselves at a time when they are more able to. They had the labor to and they could cut costs... By evaluating the size of the company and the amount of product we had been selling to customer and we felt like we’d taken quite a big hit. It was definitely worth pursuing them.”

***Step 2. The reason for the defection stemmed from customers opting to manufacture the products independently. Depending on customer's production capabilities, the customer may continue to create and produce the desired product as economically and efficiently. The attributional analysis shows that the customer has strong capacity for growth.******Step 3. Even though such “move away” customers are quite difficult to re-acquire, some may be major accounts (like in the present scenario).The sales executive was engaged in proactive communication with the client, anticipating future opportunities for reacquisition.***

The sales executive was actively waiting and interactive with the client for future reacquisition. “We offered them an alternative style, like a USP, they could sell. We couldn’t sell the product at a reduced price however. We still haven’t been able to win them back but they’ve left the door open. But there may be times in the future when they may need our Services and may look to us as their preferred supplier.”

***Step 4.This case also emphasized the importance of distributive and interactional justice in addressing the issue.***

However, since the situation is out of control of the firm or sales executive, all their efforts failed to reacquire the customer. On the positive note, they still left communication channels open, in case the client decided to out-source the production again in the future.

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**Example 5: The Intentionally Pushed Away Customers*****Step 1. There were few examples of companies trying to intentionally push away customers as well.***

For instance, Marketing Manager of a food complement manufacturer reminded that:

“The reason, which also will help explain why he left us, is because we were losing interest in him, and therefore trying to get rid of him in a certain way because he was such a small account, and very unpredictable with his orders, he was becoming more of a burden for the company, so I remember deciding to reduce the amount of advertising we would send him, and eventually the client just stopped ordering from us.”

***Step 2. Customer defection in such situation is mainly attributed to the sales organization, as they do not think that the customer is profitable enough in relation to the costs to serve them******Step 3. Rather than having a win-back strategy, in such situations company plans a termination strategy.***

The sales executive reduced the amount of marketing materials provided to the client, ultimately leading to a significant change. letting the client fire themselves.

***Step 4. The executive, despite the absence of a reacquisition strategy, prioritized interactive justice and allowed the client to terminate their own engagement.***

Although CRM literature historically emphasizes best practices/processes to acquire and retain customers, effective sales organizations must not only contend with customer acquisition and retention but also deal with lost customers and the process to reacquire them. To this end, the current study constructs a sales reacquisition process framework by integrating literature from consumer defection, attribution theory, service recovery strategies, and justice theory. The findings show that customer reacquisition is an integral part of customer relationship management and that analyzing and resolving customer defection is an important CRM issue. The findings offer substantial evidence in favor of the B2B sales reacquisition process framework, indicating that sales executives should approach customer reacquisition through a structured methodology. More specifically, findings from the critical incident techniques highlight the critical nature of accurately diagnosing losses to execute reacquisition efforts. The reacquisition framework illustrates that effective customer reacquisition requires systematic planning and execution; it consists of four important steps: segmenting defectors, assessing responsibility, developing reacquisition activities, and implementing strategies. This four-step reacquisition process allows sales firms to identify essential elements and establish protocols/policies to train and mentor salespeople to successfully re-approach and regain valuable lost customers. Specifically,

1. Step one - segmenting defectors – assists salespeople identify defectors’ characteristics and categorize defection patterns.
2. Step two - By demystifying the defection patterns, salespeople can better understand customers’ reasons for leaving. The purpose of step 2 is to assist salespeople objectively evaluate “who is responsible”, “can it be prevented” and “will it happen again”. This attribution knowledge may facilitate salespeople develop problem-focused solutions, rather than coping with the loss of customer or business. Additionally, by understanding the true cause of defection, salespeople may develop their reacquisition activities
3. Step 3 more strategically. Step 3 lays out various plausible reacquisition activities for salespeople to consider. By knowing there are combinations of options available, salespeople may be able to effectively re-negotiate and co-create customer-oriented solutions to regain lost business. Finally, to rebuild relationships with lost customers take more than just customer-oriented solutions to achieve substantiate outcomes (i.e., distributed justice). Often, what matters to customers is how

easy or difficult it is working with the sales firm and/or the sales team again (i.e., procedure justice); and mostly, how they perceive they are treated fairly (i.e., interaction justice). By integrating a sales reacquisition process framework into the existing CRM, we hope to provide guidance to sales managers to train and motivate salespeople to properly diagnose and recover lost customers. As such, we hope that this framework will be a valuable tool to aid sales executives to reduce inefficiency in the reacquisition process, increase sales reacquisition ratios, and effectively assess and reacquire lost customers.

### LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The qualitative and exploratory nature of this research brings with it accompanying methodological strengths and weaknesses. Although the qualitative critical incident technique allows for the capture of rich information fundamental to theory development, it is less effective at delivering findings that are highly generalizable and prescriptive. So while business Practitioners often highly value case-based and qualitative research (Batt, 2012; Johnston, Leach, and Liu, 1999), we acknowledge its limitations. However, this study can serve to stimulate interest and further research on this topic. Specifically, we hope that this initial study will stimulate further research examining the strategies and practices that salespeople use to reacquire lost customers. With further investigation, generalizable and contextual customer reacquisition frameworks and procedures can be developed that would allow for the effective training of salespeople and facilitate strategy development activities among salespeople and sales teams. The development of effective customer reacquisition sales processes would assist to demystify reacquisition efforts by allowing salespeople to more objectively and critically examine opportunities and implement tried and true reacquisition strategies. Further research examining salesperson resistance, fears, and attributions toward reacquiring lost customers is also warranted. Many of the sales executives interviewed for this study expressed having initial reservations about their attempts to reacquire a lost customer. This was particularly true if there was any negativity or dissatisfaction with the customer. This suggests that there may be psychological barriers that a salesperson must overcome when attempting to reacquire customers. These barriers are likely to vary with salesperson attributions about the customer defection (Dixon et al., 2001), and associated justice perceptions.

Literature on business-to-business exchange relationships and organizational buying behavior would also benefit from the examination of reacquisition activities. For example, several sales executives in our sample emphasized the importance of their ability to leverage past relationships within the lost customer organization. The existence and strength of positive relations shaped both their reacquisition analysis and efforts. Understanding the types of relationships and the position that both advocates and blockers within the buying organization play within the customer buying center may be critical to successful reacquisition efforts. In our study, we only examined reacquisition from the perspective of the selling firm. Understanding switching-back behavior from a customer perspective is equally valuable. Thereby, further investigation into the impact of buying center characteristics and dynamics on decisions to return to a terminated supplier is warranted. Lastly, we saw signs signifying the importance of competitive and market variables on the feasibility and success of reacquisition efforts. More specifically, the more competitive the market the more important reacquiring lost customers seems to become. Conversely, sales executives in rapidly growing markets seem less interested in the retention of lost customers as acquiring new customers is relatively easy. However, in our sample, most executives were in small and highly competitive markets; thus every potential customer was highly valued. Consequently, another area deserving of future research would be to examine differences in the reacquisition sales process across various market and competitive conditions.

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