

**TOWARD AN UNDERSTANDING OF SALESPERSON DEVIANCE: A STRUCTURED ABSTRACT**  
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### **Introduction**

Marketing employees, and in particular professional salespeople, typically experience greater job autonomy than do many other employees. A free market characterized by competitiveness and varying consumer demands requires that salespeople and service providers adapt and change across many situations. At times, employees may go beyond the normatively prescribed routines and behaviors in going about their job. This particularly research develops and tests an instrument designed to gauge the proclivity of a marketing employee toward deviant work-related behaviors. The paper reviews and refines the concept of deviance and describes the procedures for developing and initially testing a scale that captures this particular employee trait.

### **Background**

The management literature devotes considerable attention to workplace deviance. Most deviance literature considers deviance an important construct with potentially harmful effects on the organization and employees (Scott and Jehn, 2003; Aquino, Galperin, and Bennett, 2004; Henle, 2005; Berry, Ones, and Sackett, 2007). After all, organizational norms, rules and values are generally assumed to promote positive organizational outcomes. Relatively little research captures the notion that some employee deviance may actually be prosocial and be motivated toward positive and indeed ethical outcomes. The proclivity to deviance scale contributes to the marketing and management literatures by explicitly considering this possibility.

Proclivity to deviance represents the general affinity or comfort level an employee experiences with workplace actions that violate organizational norms and procedures. These anti-normative behaviors are not limited to the familiar negative facet of deviance, but honorable, well-intentioned deviance is also included. Due to the dynamic nature of most marketing firms, it is extremely difficult to create an all-encompassing code of conduct for marketing employees. For this reason, the proclivity to deviance measure captures an employee's natural inclination or partiality toward engaging in unconventional behaviors in the workplace. As such, salesperson deviance and salesperson ethics are two separate constructs as ethical behavior addresses the degree to which a salesperson avoids harming consumers through exchange activities and does not directly involve organizational norms (Robin 2004). Previous scales fail to account for the potential that workplace deviance can be positive and rely on actual reports of deviant behavior. Prior research indicates that marketing employees are defensive when it comes to disclosing actual engagement in anti-normative behaviors (Darrat, Amyx and Bennett 2010). The proposed measure improves on previous attempts by: (1) allowing for the possibility of positive deviance and (2) avoiding self-reports of organizational norms.

### **Research Methods**

Scale items were derived from the literature and from unstructured interviews with individuals involved in the sales profession. A sample comprised of randomly selected salespeople was obtained from an online panel. The salespeople represent various industries and each was invited to participate in the survey and received a corresponding web link. A total of 406 usable survey respondents were obtained following the data screening process which illuminated invalid respondents.

The proposed measure is a projective instrument which gauges respondents' propensity to engage in unconventional behaviors which may or may not be negative in nature. The initial scale inventory consists of 15 items which range from traditionally harmful anti-normative behaviors to well intentioned or constructively oriented marketing behaviors.

Empirical analysis took place over two samples each formed by splitting the overall sample randomly into two portions comprised of approximately 200 sales employees each. The first sample provided an initial empirical examination of the scale including an opportunity to examine the dimensionality and purify the scale. The second allows a confirmatory examination.

## Results and Discussion

The data from sample 1 (n=200) are used first. Exploratory factor analysis provides initial insight into the scale's validity. Kaiser's rule was used to extract components resulting in three factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1. Table 1 displays the resulting varimax rotated factor pattern and loadings (loadings below  $|\ .35 |$  are not shown).

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

	Factor		
	1	2	3
P2. Ignoring a normal procedure because it restrains your productivity	.804		
P4 Using unconventional methods to enhance efficiency even if those methods are not consistent with organizational policies	.784		
P5 Breaking organizational rules when there is no way for managers to know about the violation	.775		
P1. Performing a behavior that breaks a written policy to better perform your job	.740		
P3. Advising another employee to ignore a company policy and do things his or her own way	.676		
P9. Disobeying organizational rules which seem unfair to you or fellow co-workers.	.611		
P11. Taking advantage of loopholes in company policy	.530	.494	
P12. Doing things in a certain way in part because it is not the way "it is supposed to be done"	.454		
P10 Giving about 50 percent effort in completing daily tasks		.776	
P15 Filing a routine report that is not entirely accurate		.699	
P13. Never deviating from the norms of behavior in your organization		.468	
P8 Exposing managerial behaviors that are inconsistent with organizational expectations			.817
P6 Exposing unethical organizational behaviors to external parties			.715
P7. Keeping a watchful eye over coworkers to ensure adherence to organizational norms			.502
P14. Telling my friends about unethical things that my company does			.394

The first factor contains items capturing the proactive dimension of deviance. These items express behaviors that are deviant, but for which the deviation is not aimed at any anti-social or unethical end. We label this factor proactive deviance. Items that indicate more traditionally considered deviance related behaviors such as a lack of effort or filling out incomplete reports. We label this factor shirking deviance. A third factor, which we label whistle-blowing deviance includes items indicating a proclivity toward exposing questionable workplace events to others. The coefficient alpha for the three scales .86, .62 and .56, respectively before any scale purification. Before employing confirmatory factor analysis on sample 2, we deleted a split loaded item (p11) and items with loadings below .5.

Table 2 displays confirmatory factor analysis results using the factor structure suggested by the results above. The initial 12-item CFA failed to adequately fit the covariances from sample 1 (Hair et al. 2009). The CFI and RMSEA both fall outside the guidelines for adequate fit. The residual covariances were examined to isolate variables responsible for the lack of fit. This examination led to the deletion of three additional variables. The remaining nine-items were fit into three factors and the model displayed improved fit ( $\chi^2 = 63.2$ ,  $df = 24$ ,  $CFI = 0.93$ ,  $RMSEA = .09$ ).

**Table 2. Fit Statistics for CFA Models**

	Sample 1	Sample 1 Refined	Sample 2
$\chi^2$	301.6	63.2	44.1
Df	87	24	24
CFI	0.77	0.93	0.96
GFI	0.84	0.93	0.96
RMSEA	0.11	0.09	0.064
P	0.0001	0.001	0.007

Validation proceeded using the sample 2 data employed to test the identical 3 dimensional factor structure. The fit statistics suggest adequate performance ( $\chi^2 = 44.1$ ,  $df = 24$ ,  $CFI = 0.96$ ,  $RMSEA = .064$ ). Table 3 displays the standardized factor loading estimates resulting from this analysis. All the factor loading estimates are statistically significant ( $p < .001$ ). The proactive deviance factor yields a variance extracted (AVE) 53.5 percent and a construct reliability of .85. Thus, the first factor displays adequate convergent validity. Both the shirking and the whistle-blowing factors present issues with convergent validity. First, item deletion reduced them to two-items when four items or more are recommended for latent factors (Hair et al. 2009). Second, the AVE for each falls below 50 percent (36.3 and 41.2 percent, respectively). Adequate discriminant validity exists as constraining the factor structure to a collapsed two or single item structure significantly worsens fit. The correlation estimates between each deviance dimension and other factors such as conflict, turnover intention and risk propensity among others, are used to assess nomological validity. The results are consistent with deviance as a coping mechanism in that all three dimensions are associated with lower conflict; the proactive dimension relates negatively (reduced) with turnover intentions whereas the two

negative deviance items display significant, positive relationships with turnover intention; and all three dimensions display significant and positive correlations with risk propensity.

Table 3. Standardized CFA Factor Loading Estimates

	Factor		
	1	2	3
P2. Ignoring a normal procedure because it restrains your productivity	.70		
P4 Using unconventional methods to enhance efficiency even if those methods are not consistent with organizational policies	.62		
P1. Performing a behavior that breaks a written policy to better perform your job	.78		
P3. Advising another employee to ignore a company policy and do things his or her own way	.66		
P5. Breaking organizational rules when there is no way for a manager to know about the violation	.87		
P10 Giving about 50 percent effort in completing daily tasks		.47	
P15 Filing a routine report that is not entirely accurate		.71	
P8 Exposing managerial behaviors that are inconsistent with organizational expectations			.81
P6 Exposing unethical organizational behaviors to external parties			.41

Summarizing, the results are encouraging with respect to the positive deviance aspect, proactive deviance. The dimension displays adequate construct and nomological validity. The two negative dimensions provide results suggesting more developmental work is needed to produce a scale that can be used with confidence in future studies. More qualitative research is underway to develop more exhaustive lists of behaviors that fit under the shirking and whistle-blowing elements. At the same time, the work is open to additional positive deviance items.

## References

References available upon request