

# For better sales, connect with coworkers

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Credit: Michigan State University

For successful salespeople, it's all about who you know - particularly within your own firm.

A new study, co-authored by a Michigan State University business scholar and published online in the *Journal of Marketing*, finds that developing strong internal relationships leads to a significant increase in sales volume.

The study of nearly 300 field salespeople is one of the first to investigate the effect of internal social networks on sales performance.

"Frankly, it's as important for salespeople to build internal contacts as it is for them to be effective in [customer](#) interaction," said Douglas E. Hughes, MSU associate professor of marketing.

In today's highly competitive global economy, salespeople essentially have become consultants who help clients solve problems. That job is easier if the salesperson can reach out to others in the firm, from engineers to marketers.

Successful salespeople use social network positions to their advantage, the study found. Political skill helps salespeople build relationships with co-workers who are well connected and influential. Extraversion helps salespeople serve as bridges among employees who are not well connected. This enables cross-fertilization of ideas and the generation of creative solutions to customer problems.

For firms, it's important to continue focusing on customer needs but also to foster connections among employees, Hughes said.

"As companies are hiring, training and managing salespeople, they can't ignore the importance of [salespeople](#) building these networks within the organization," he said.

His co-authors are Willy Bolander and Gerald Ferris from Florida State University and Cinthia Saturnino from Northeastern University.

Provided by Michigan State University

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