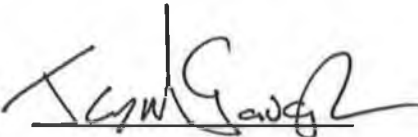


Declaration of Originality.

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Master of Business Studies is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my work.

Signed:



J. Cyril Gavaghan.

ID. No.:91701350 BSP

Date: 11 December 1995.

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ABSTRACT

The quality of industrial sales performance and its contribution to the corporate success of firms in the Republic of Ireland:
By; J. Cyril Gavaghan.

In the marketplace the salesperson is the eyes and ears of the company, an essential element in the success or failure of the business and in the perception of many customers the salesperson is the business.

Primarily this thesis attempted to establish the criteria of Irish manufacturing sector buying centre members in selecting suppliers, the relative importance they attach to various sources of information in choosing between alternative products, their opinion of the essential qualities of a good salesperson and their rating of the Irish sales force on the basis of twenty two personal attributes and selling skills identified from the literature as being of particular importance.

Buying centre members were classified as Professional Purchasers, and Other Buying Centre Members, made up of managing directors, production executives and production/design/maintenance engineers. Two independent samples (80 Professional Purchasers and 164 Other Buying Centre Members) were selected in order to establish whether or not a statistically significant difference existed between the opinions of the two classifications. Use of chi-square tests, t-tests and f-tests proved that, except in the case of a minority of minor issues, no such difference existed. This finding is contrary to the findings of much research cited in the literature.

The research established that the essential qualities of a good salesperson from the perception of buying centre members are product knowledge, personal impression and customer understanding in that order. The most important criteria used in selecting a supplier are product quality, price and delivery and the most important source of information in selecting a new product is the salesperson. In addition the research further established that Irish salespeople are perceived by buyers as being in particular need of improvement in follow-up, sales call preparation, customer understanding, appreciation of buyers time and technical competence.

CHAPTER 1

THESIS INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the 1990's many people who make their living out of personal selling do not use the terms "Seller", "Selling", "Salesperson", etc. in their job title. Instead their job is often described as "Sales Development Executive", "Territory Manager", "Accounts Executive" or other such similar term. The assumption of such synonyms is a symptom of the depreciation of esteem that personal selling suffered in the 1960's, 70's and 80's as a result of the development of marketing as a fully fledged academic and business discipline. Personal selling is often seen as the old way whereas marketing is seen as the modern way.

As business changed from a production, product, financial or selling orientation to a marketing orientation with the recognition of the importance of the customer personal selling lost its importance. Its roles and functions were replaced in the business mind set by new marketing terminology. Personal selling itself however has not been replaced. Like the other business functions it has merely adopted a new orientation with the needs of the customer as its focus. The depreciation of its esteem has however resulted in a lack of systematic development through a neglect of the subject and its functions in empirical research. Its recent development being largely dependent on the unresearched suggestions and hypotheses of various writers and theorists.

1.2 GAP IN THE KNOWLEDGE

The continued importance of personal selling in Ireland is undoubted. Irish companies employ 12,157 people in a commercial travelling capacity¹. It costs an average of £43,485 to keep each of these employees travelling². Personal selling (including non-travelling salespeople) accounts for up to 10% of the labour force^{3,4}. In 1991 Irish companies spent £529 millions on

personal selling⁵ compared to a through-agency advertising spend of £176.5 millions⁶. Twenty six per cent of all job vacancies advertised in Ireland are in a sales capacity⁷.

Yet, despite this obvious importance, the marketing literature in Ireland contains only limited accounts of up to date practical or academic research into personal selling relative to the other elements of the promotions mix or of the marketing mix. The research that is reported typically concentrates on quantitative descriptions of the sector⁸ or is confined to samples drawn from a population of large companies only⁹. While such research is important and makes a significant contribution to our knowledge it nonetheless fails to give a full understanding of the personal selling sector or fails to be sufficiently broadly based to be of statistical applicability to industry in general or to academia in particular.

In terms of Irish companies the word “large” often implies the employment of more than five hundred personnel or a turnover in excess of five million pounds. However the vast majority of Irish companies, or of companies in any economy, do not fit into that category. Therefore the available empirical evidence does not necessarily relate directly to their situation and circumstances.

It is this limitation in the existing body of research and the researcher’s own personal interest in the subject on which this thesis is premised. As its title: ‘The quality of industrial sales performance and its contribution to the success of firms in the Republic of Ireland’ suggests it attempts to establish the quality of personal selling in the Republic of Ireland through primary and secondary research. Its findings are based on a sample drawn from a population of all manufacturing firms in the Irish economy.

The research is exploratory in nature rather than the test of particular hypotheses and it aims to establish a foundation on which further research in the subject, by this or other researchers, might be based.

1.3 THESIS OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this thesis is:

To establish a profile of the Irish industrial sales force from the perspective of the industrial buying centre member so as to identify the inherent strengths and weaknesses in that body and to suggest how the strengths might be used most advantageously and how the weaknesses might be eliminated.

In essence it attempts to measure the quality of the Irish industrial sales force. Quality however can be regarded as a vague and ephemeral concept and like beauty can be said to be in the eye of the beholder. In the opinion of this researcher the most important beholder of the quality of the Irish industrial salesperson is the Irish industrial buying centre member and it is on this premise that the research is based.

Before quality can be measured the bases of its measurement must be established. The research therefore initially examines personal selling, salespeople and the qualities desirable in a salesperson as suggested in the literature. It then examines the industrial buying centre, its situation and behaviour, establishing the qualities it desires in salespeople and in selling organisations and the criteria it uses in making purchasing decisions. Finally it measures the buying centre member's opinion of salespeople in Ireland against these qualities.

The substantive research questions that will be addressed in the primary research are:

1. What are the essential qualities of a successful salesperson in the opinion of Irish industrial buying centre members?
2. Whether and how often Irish industrial customers formally re-evaluate their suppliers?
3. What are the most important sources of information used by industrial buying centre members in making a purchasing decision for an item not previously purchased by the company?
4. What are the most important criteria used by Irish industrial buying centre members in selecting a supplier for an item not previously purchased by the company?
5. How do Irish industrial buying centre members rate salespeople who call on them on the basis of a set of personal attributes applicable to personal selling?
6. How do Irish industrial buying centre members rate salespeople who call on them on the basis of a set of vocational skills applicable to personal selling?
7. What do Irish industrial buying centre members regard as the major areas for improvement with Irish salespeople?
8. Does the opinion of Irish industrial buying centre members regarding Irish salespeople vary in relation to the size of their employing company, the nationality of their employing company, the nature of the industry in which they participate, their specific functional position, the

length of time spent in that position, the member's age, or the number of salespeople calling on them.

The structure, content and phrasing of the questions on the primary research instrument are based on a literature review described in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of the thesis.

1.4 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The remainder of this thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2: Presents an extended description of the nature and role of personal selling. It examines the importance of the activity as a business discipline and serves as a backdrop to the remainder of the thesis.

Chapter 3: Reviews the pertinent literature to identify what other researchers and writers regard as the essential attributes required for success in personal selling. Its findings contribute to the design of the primary research instrument.

Chapter 4: Examines the literature to understand the behaviour of industrial buying centre members, collectively and individually, and assesses the implications of this behaviour for salespeople and selling strategy. Its findings will also contribute to the design of the primary research instrument.

Chapter 5: Details the methodology of the primary research undertaken to fulfil the research objectives of the thesis as delineated in Section 1.3 above. It explains what was done, why it was done, and how it was done. The final section of the chapter explains what the researcher regards as the limitations of the research conducted.

Chapter 6: Presents with commentary the findings of the primary research. These findings are presented in the order of the eight research questions identified in Section 1.3 above.

Chapter 7: Discusses the primary research findings, draws comparisons with findings of similar research from this and other countries, suggests the implications for various contingent groups and identifies areas in need of further or more in-depth research.

Throughout the presentation of this research the author has endeavoured to use the terms 'salesperson' or 'seller' to incorporate both salesmen and saleswomen. However at times for the sake of writing style it was convenient to use pronouns. In these cases the masculine pronouns were used but except where referring to a specific person he, him and his is fully interchangeable with she, her and hers. No discrimination is intended, no offence is intended. The author is well aware of the importance of women in the international sales force, and also in purchasing and materials management.

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CHAPTER 2

AN OVERVIEW OF PERSONAL SELLING.

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Few areas of business give rise to as much discussion as personal selling, from people both inside and outside the occupation. The reasons for this might be: (1) selling employs a large section of society, both directly and indirectly, (2) as customers and consumers we are involved in everyday interactions with salespeople and therefore are well aware of their occupational activities, and (3) the negative aspects of the selling activity are well known from their 'celebration' in plays, books and films. Yet despite this extensive discussion there has been limited practical research into the subject.

From the traditional view of the activity selling has a bad name. There is often an impression that selling is the case of a person having something they wish to get rid of at a profit, irrespective of the precise needs of their customer. In the modern marketing orientation of business marketing is often perceived as having replaced personal selling and personal selling is therefore no longer relevant. This notion is compounded when such an eminent writer as Peter Drucker suggests: "The aim of marketing is to make selling superfluous".¹

It must be accepted that selling has changed with the advent of the marketing orientation but it hasn't been made redundant. In line with the requirements of modern business it has adapted its orientation to the needs of the customer, assumed a greater degree of professionalism, and is still an intrinsic part of the company's marketing programme. As McCarthy and Perreault say: "You think of personal selling in terms of an old-time stereotype: 'a bag of wind', a big expense account and an engaging grin. But that isn't true anymore. 'Old-time salespeople are

being replaced by real professionals - problem solvers - who have something definite to contribute to their employers and their customers".²

This chapter defines personal selling and examines the role, functions and activities of the personal seller. In explaining the situation of personal selling its purpose is to act as the backdrop against which the remainder of the thesis is set.

2.2 PERSONAL SELLING DEFINED

In defining personal selling it is important that the mistake of giving it too narrow a definition is not made lest it be regarded as being synonymous with salesmanship. Salesmanship is one important aspect of personal selling but it is just that, one aspect of it.

Salesmanship as defined by Stills, Cundiff and Govoni is: "The art of successfully persuading prospects or customers to buy products or services from which they can derive suitable benefits, thereby increasing their total satisfaction".³

This definition of salesmanship importantly emphasises the need for customer benefit and satisfaction to be the result of a selling transaction, something which the traditional view of selling doesn't give the activity credit for. Its limitations in explaining personal selling is the fact that it fails to identify the activities that precede and succeed any act of persuading the customer. Before a customer can be persuaded to buy a product or service he must first be identified, his need for the product and the benefits he will derive from it understood, and the presentation of the salesperson tailored to suit the specific situation of that customer.

In succession to the activities of persuading the customer, personal selling must be involved in 'follow-up' activities to ensure the satisfaction of the customer and the building and maintenance of a long-term business relationship with that customer. The once-off persuasion of a customer to buy is seldom sufficient for the long-term prosperity of a business. The generation of repeat purchases is more cost-effective and therefore more profitable and is a major function of the personal selling activity.

The Stills, Cundiff and Govani definition⁴ also omits the need for mutual benefit and satisfaction in a sales transaction. A sale is an exchange where both parties to it derive benefit, usually a desired product/service in exchange for money.

Pride and Ferrell define personal selling as the: "...process of informing customers and persuading them to purchase products through personal communications in an exchange situation."⁵

This definition, while including the concept of the exchange, goes little further to explaining the term than Stills, Cundiff and Govani's.⁶ Though accepting that there is a process involved it fails to identify the beginning or end of that process but just concerns itself with the centrepiece, where the prospective customer and salesperson are face-to-face. It may adequately cover the selling situations where the customer finds the seller, such as in a retail situation, but gives limited insight into the range of personal selling activities of an industrial situation. It is therefore little more than a definition of salesmanship.

Jackson, Cunningham and Cunningham present a much broader definition. They suggest: "Personal selling consists of finding people who require your product or service, studying their needs, presenting your offering in such a way that your potential customers are convinced of its benefits to them, answering any objections they may have, asking for a commitment to close and following up to ensure that those who have bought from you are satisfied".⁷

They further add: "Truly professional selling is a process that fosters the development of a mutually beneficial relationship in which the buyer and seller alike both profit and benefit. This mutually beneficial arrangement leads to long-term relationships, repeat business and favourable word-of-mouth communications with other prospects or customers".⁸

This comprehensive explanation takes into account all the aspects of personal selling and gives a clear understanding of the role of the salesperson.

McCarthy and Perreault, in defining personal selling add a qualification to the effect that: "Good salespeople don't just try to sell the customer rather they help the customer to buy - by understanding the customers needs and presenting the advantages and disadvantages of their products".⁹

This qualification could usefully be added to any definition of personal selling. It gives a concise understanding of the modern customer oriented approach to selling. It is the application of this qualification of personal selling that creates the trust upon which long-term customer-salesperson/company relationships are built. Throughout the research for

this thesis it is presumed that this qualification applies as an essential ingredient of personal selling and it is against it that salespeople will be measured.

2.3 THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONAL SELLING.

The importance of personal selling can best be understood by examining its contribution to various aspects of a business's environment, at both a micro and a macro level.

2.3.1 Importance to the Customer

In attempting to influence the customer the marketer uses many means and media. However if the prospective customer doesn't fully understand what the product will do for him and how specifically it will help solve his problem he cannot ask the advertisement or press release for further information. He must talk to someone, either a representative of the company or an independent expert, friend, relative, etc. A common reaction is that he talks to a company salesperson. Wilkie and Dickson found from a national sample of American consumers that the salesperson was perceived as the most useful information source by a 3 to 1 margin over the next closest source.¹⁰ The salesperson can give more information than an advertisement, can inform the prospective customer more fully by tailoring that information to the specific needs of the prospect, and therefore is in a better position to alleviate the prospect's perceived risk. As Pride and Ferrell say: "Personal selling gives marketers the greatest freedom to adjust a message to satisfy customers' information needs. In comparison with other promotion

methods, personal selling is the most precise, enabling marketers to focus on the most promising sales prospects".¹¹

2.3.2 Importance to the Business

Personal selling affects every aspect of a business. As McDaniel and Darden say: "..... nothing happens until a sale is made".¹² There is no point in running a business unless that business is selling whatever it is producing. When sales are made there is now reason to produce, the purchasing department therefore must purchase materials, the distribution department has something to distribute and the accounts department has something to account for. If sales are not made this business chain breaks down.

This importance is substantiated in various pieces of research. Wilkie cites Udell's research which found that executives of industrial firms rated the sales function as five times more important than advertising in their promotions mix.¹³ An examination of the expenditure by companies also emphasises the importance that these companies place on the sales function: "In 1976, American firms spent approximately \$100 billion on personal selling compared with \$33 billion on advertising".¹⁴ Given that a large proportion of that \$33 billion would have been spent on the advertising of branded consumer goods the proportional difference in expenditure between personal selling and advertising in industrial marketing must be even more dramatic, though such figures are not available.

In an Irish context, while the absolute figures are somewhat smaller, the proportions are similar. Statistical Abstracts of 1992 classified 12,157

people as "Commercial travellers and manufacturers' agents".¹⁵ This figure does not include retail salespeople, or the owners/directors or other executives of small businesses who spend at least part of their time selling. Research in 1991 by Lambkin and de Burca suggests, conservatively by the authors' own admission, that it costs £43,485 a year to employ a sales representative.¹⁶

These two figures, albeit both conservative, gives a total personal selling spend in Ireland of £529 millions compared to a through-agency advertising spent of £176.5 million in 1991.¹⁷ That is essentially the same three to one ratio as experienced in the American economy.

In consumer marketing the company tends to maintain its link with its customers through its advertising and other publicity. This is not possible in industrial marketing, that responsibility largely rests with the sales force. As Kotler says: "The company sales force represents an irreplaceable ingredient in its marketing mix: a personal linkage to the customer. The salesman is the company to most of its customers".¹⁸ By representing the company in the marketplace the salesperson is largely responsible for the initiation and maintenance of exchange relationships with customers. In other words the salesperson is largely responsible for the success or failure of a company.

2.3.3 Importance to the Economy:

Personal selling is a major source of employment in every developed society. As of 1991 the work force in Ireland amounted to 1,125,100 people.¹⁹ Of these over 12,000 are classified as "commercial travellers".²⁰ This may be an underestimation of the real figure as it

only includes those whose full-time job is commercial travelling. McEvoy estimates that between 20,000 and 50,000 are employed in selling and selling related activities in Ireland.²¹

In the economy of the United States of America the proportion is even greater. It is generally accepted that about 10% of the labour force of 125,214,000 people are employed in sales.^{22,23}

Selling is an occupation that remunerates its members at a rate much higher than the average industrial wage. According to Lambkin and de Burca's research the Irish sales representative earns £17,750 on average as a basic salary. In addition to that 26% of earnings are made up of commission while bonuses account for a further 11.7%. That gives an average annual income per sales representative of £28,490²⁴ compared to the average industrial wage of £11893.²⁵

2.3.5 Importance to Employees:

In assessing the importance of personal selling to a company's employees a passage from Kurtz, Dodge and Klompmaker is sufficient: "One salesman keeps 19 other workers (production, clerical, inspector and so forth) employed, according to business statistics. Not long ago these statistics indicated that one salesman kept 17 other workers employed. Even with the growth of computers and many other technical advances that have been made, we in sales are more important than ever".²⁶

2.4 PERSONAL SELLING IN THE PROMOTIONS MIX

Webster and Wind identify three reasons why “..... the salesperson in organisational marketing is the key marketing resource”.²⁷

1. The salesperson can identify the individuals within a specific organisation who influence the decision process. This overcomes the inadequacies of generalising about a situation that inevitably varies from buying centre to buying centre and from buy class to buy class.
2. The organisational buyer requires specific information indicating how a supplier's products will satisfy his organisations particular needs. It is difficult and expensive, often prohibitively so, for any other element of the promotions mix to provide such specific information.
3. Personal selling has the distinct advantage of being able to provide immediate and direct feedback regarding the prospective customers.²⁸

Generally speaking as the value and complexity of a product increases and as the number and geographic dispersion of potential customers decreases the role of personal selling in the promotions mix becomes more important. The reason for this varying degree of importance is a function of the differences between personal selling and the other components of the promotions mix; advertising, sales promotions and publicity. McDaniel and Darden identified 6 main differential

advantages of personal selling over the other the other promotional components.

1. Personal selling gives a more detailed explanation of the benefits, uses and functions of a product. This is particularly important when the product is complex and needs a fuller explanation.
2. Personal selling allows for the demonstration of the product in conjunction with the presentation thereof. This is possible to an extent with television advertising, however personal selling uniquely can allow the prospective customer to participate in the demonstration.
3. In personal selling the sales person can give individual attention to the customer and tailor the presentation to the specific requirements of the customers situation.
4. As it is a two-way form of communication it not only allows the customer to question aspects of the presentation but gives the salesperson an opportunity to answer them, as well as being in a position to provide tailor made responses to any customer objections. The only objections an advertisement can attempt to counter are those which are pre-empted by the copywriter.
5. Because the market of the personal seller is better defined and more concentrated the selling message is directed only at qualified prospects. Money spent on other forms of promotion may be wasted because often many people in the audience may not be prospective customers.

6. Personal selling is the most effective method of closing sales because a company representative is there to guide the customer through the final stages of their decision making process.²⁹

Wilkie condenses the difference between personal selling and the other elements of the promotions mix into one sentence. He suggests that: "Sales influences are quite different because they occur close to the point of transaction".³⁰

Due to the nature of industrial buying personal selling tends to be of more important in industrial marketing than it is in consumer marketing. However the vast majority of companies, including those selling fast moving consumer goods, will need some element of personal selling in their promotions mix. As Hartley says: "Few businesses can escape the need for a sales forceadvertising can pave the way for salespeople, but it can seldom replace them".³¹

2.5 THE COST OF PERSONAL SELLING

"In absolute terms personal selling is the most expensive method whereby the producer can establish contact with the potential customer".³² In saying this Baker was writing of the situation pertaining in Great Britain. He drew on Lidstone's research to substantiate his claim suggesting that the average annual cost of maintaining a salesperson varies from stg£27,000 for a "manufacturers salesman selling to the retail trade" to stg£45,000 for a "capital goods salesman selling to end users".³³

In 1989 Donaldson presented an estimated breakdown of the average annual cost of a British salesperson irrespective of the nature of the job. He concluded that the total cost was £35,625 but his breakdown gives some important indications of the various cost-centres associated with employing a salesperson and their relative importance.³⁴ Donaldson's figures are shown in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: AVERAGE COST OF A BRITISH SALESPERSON

	<u>Annual Cost</u> <u>(stg£)</u>
Salary, commission.	17,250
Fringe benefits (pension, BUPA)	3,750
Company car	7,500
Entertainment	1,050
Lunch allowance	450
Telephone, postage	625
Accommodation	2,500
Sundry costs	1,250
Samples	<u>1,250</u>
Total	35,625

Source: Donaldson, Bill , Sales Management: Theory and Practice, (London: Macmillan, 1990) p.10

In an Irish context we can expect that given the relative costs of motor cars, motor taxation, petrol and personal taxation that it will be relatively more expensive to maintain a salesperson. The figures of Lambkin and de Burca, based on a survey of 321 of Ireland's top 1000 companies bear out this expectation. They found that the average cost of maintaining a salesperson in Ireland was £43,485.³⁵ This figure can be broken down as

shown in Table 2.2 though the researchers qualify it by identifying that: “The estimate is based on reasonably, conservative assumptions.”³⁶

Table 2.2: THE COST OF A SALESPERSON IN IRELAND

	<u>Annual Cost</u>
	<u>(Ir£)</u>
Basic salary	17,750
PRSI (12.2% of earnings)	2,355
Pension (10% of salary)	1,780
Commission / Bonus (20% of gross earnings)	4,440
Travel Expenses	7,500
Car Purchase & Tax	6,000
Car Insurance	1,500
Service and Repairs	500
Postage and Telephone	1,160
Training	500
Sundries	<u>500</u>
Total	£43,485

Source: Lambkin Mary and de Burca Sean, Profile of a Sales Force, (Dublin: Sales Placement Ltd/University College Dublin, 1991), p.16.

It would be invidious to make any direct comparison between the Lambkin/de Burca figures and those of Lidstone or Donaldson given the alternative categorisations of salespeople used by the researchers, the time difference between the various works and the natural relative cost differences inherent in the two economies.

The situation in America appears to be even more expensive than in Britain or Ireland according to the figures of Evans and Berman. They suggest: "The average cost of a single business-to-business field sales call is over \$250; and in some cases, it takes several visits to complete a sale."³⁷

2.6 SELLING POSITIONS

As Jackson et al. say: "There is no one classification that adequately describes all sales representatives or their activities. However, it is nonetheless useful to examine various types of sales positions in order to see the diverse nature of opportunities in selling".³⁸

In 1961 Kahn and Shuchman suggested that there were two sales positions; (a) sales development (or creative selling) and (b) sales maintenance.³⁹ These two basic classifications are still widely used but tend to be further broken down. The various positions occupied by salespeople range across a broad spectrum with developmental selling and maintenance selling being the two ends of that spectrum.

McMurry identified seven distinct positions on the selling spectrum.⁴⁰ Later with Arnold these seven positions were divided into two separate groups and a third group added.⁴¹ The basis of their categorisation is the level of creativity required to occupy a particular position. As McMurry says: ".....thinking particularly of creative skill, I find it useful to array salesmen in terms of positions requiring increasing amounts of that ingredient, from the very simple to the very complex.....".⁴²

Thirty years later McMurry and Arnold's categorisation of selling into nine distinct positions within three mutually exclusive groups is probably still the most comprehensive. This categorisation is as follows:

Group A. (Service Selling)

Inside Order Taker: The customers have already made-up their minds what they will buy, the 'salesperson's' function is merely to 'wait on' them; example:- Haberdashery salesperson standing behind the counter.

Delivery Salesperson: The 'salesperson's' job is to deliver the product; example:- bread, milk. In this position selling responsibilities are secondary though the level of service provided and the personal manner of the individual will enhance goodwill and may lead to additional sales.

Route or Merchandising Salesperson: The 'salesperson' operates as an order taker but does so in the field dealing with established, regular customers; example:- the soap 'salesperson' calling on retailers.

Missionary Salesperson: The 'salesperson' is not expected or permitted to take an order but calls to build goodwill or to educate the actual or potential customer or influencer; example:- the distiller's 'missionary man' calling on publicans or the medical 'detailer' representing an ethical drugs company and calling on doctors.

Technical Salesperson: The position emphasises the technical knowledge of the occupier; example:- an engineering salesperson who acts as a consultant to client companies.

Group B (Developmental Selling)

Creative Salesperson of Tangibles: Example:- The salesperson selling vacuum cleaners, motor cars, etc.. In this position the salesperson often has the dual role of first making the prospect dissatisfied with his existent appliance or situation and then selling his product.

Creative Salesperson of Intangibles: Example:- The salesperson selling insurance, advertising or such services. This type of selling is usually more difficult than selling tangibles because the 'product' is more difficult to demonstrate and more difficult for the prospect to comprehend.

Group C (Basically Developmental Selling. But Requiring Unusual Creativity).

"Political", "Indirect" or "Back - Door" Salesperson: The sale of big- ticket commodities or items, often with no truly competitive features, to industrial buyers, e.g. selling flour to baking companies. Sales are often consummated through the provision of personalised services to the key decision - maker in the customer organisation.

Salesperson Engaged in Multiple Sales: The sale of big - ticket items to industrial buyers. The salesperson will have to make sales presentations to several members of the buying organisation, either separately or as a committee. This amalgam of decision influencers

in the buying organisation is known as the Decision-Making-Unit. Each are likely to have different decision criteria depending on their functional background in the company. Often each can say "no" but only one can say "yes". Even after the sale is consummated the sales person must work with the full Decision-Making Unit to maintain it.⁴³

In 1973, Newton suggested that the McMurry classification system could be narrowed to just four types of salespeople.

- 1) **Trade Sellers:** Whose responsibility is to increase business from present customers by providing them with promotional assistance.
- 2) **Missionary Sellers:** Whose responsibility is to increase business from present customers by providing them with personal selling assistance.
- 3) **New Business Sellers:** Whose responsibility is to obtain business from new customers.
- 4) **Technical Sellers:** Whose responsibility is to increase business from present customers by providing them with technical assistance.⁴⁴

It should be noted that McMurry's, McMurry and Arnold's or Newton's proposals have not been empirically tested. Moncrief did research the situation. Through cluster analysis of responses from a sample of 2322 industrial salespeople from five American companies he found that salespeople could be classified into six clusters.

The cluster analysis resulted in the identification of six clusters of salespeople:

Cluster 1: Institutional Seller

Cluster 2: Order Taker

Cluster 3: Missionary Salesperson

Cluster 4: Trade Servicer

Cluster 5: Trade Seller

Cluster 6: Residual.⁴⁵

In comparing his empirically based classifications with the hypotheses of McMurry and of Newton, Moncrief says: "Despite some differences, this classification is strikingly similar to what Newton and McMurry hypothesized The Order Taker is virtually identical to what McMurry proposed in 1962. The Missionary salesperson is very similar to the category proposed by McMurry and also by Newton. The primary differences between the present classification and previously hypothesized classes are in the remaining three categories. The trade servicer is very similar to Newton's Trade Seller. The emphasis in these two groups is Service to Retail/Wholesale. A second trade group, the trade seller, attempts to make an initial sale by relying on bids, financing, and credit. The day to day account servicer is absent. The institutional seller not included by either McMurry or Newton, sells to an ultimate user, either manufacturers or institutions. The product is typically not resold to the public.

"The classification developed here does not have a "Technical" category. Products in general have become much more technical since Newton's work was published in 1971, and certainly since McMurry's was

published in 1962. Hence, technical sales activities are accounted for in several of the classes in this study".⁴⁶

2.7 SELLING ROLES

Irrespective of the salesperson's specific position within the sales force, that salesperson must fulfil numerous roles if he is to be effective. The importance of each role varies from one position to another but a list of them clearly illustrates the different aspects of selling.

Jackson et al. present a list of eleven varying roles the typical salesperson must fulfil: Educator, Change Agent, Problem-Solver, Innovator, Manager, Communicator, Researcher, Informant, Forecaster, Modifier, Psychologist.⁴⁷

These eleven roles are the hypothesis of the authors and are not based on any research findings. The value of dividing selling activities into general categories based on supposition is doubtful. While they do give an indication of the various activities a salesperson performs, they do not indicate how frequently an activity is performed, how much time is spent performing it or the relative importance of each activity. It should also be noted that salesmanship or selling is not included as an important role of the salesperson in the Jackson et al. listing.⁴⁸

Moncrief produced empirical evidence of the most frequently performed activities of an industrial salesperson. The ten most frequently performed activities are reproduced in Table 2.3 below.⁴⁹ For the full list of 121 selling activities and the frequency of their performance please see Appendix A to this thesis.

It should be noted that Moncrief's findings, while stating the frequency of performance of each activity, like the supposition of Jackson et al.⁵⁰ doesn't give the proportion of time spent on each activity or the relative importance of each activity. However those aspects were not part of Moncrief's research objectives.

Table 2.3. Sales Activities and Frequency of Occurrence

Rank	Activity	Frequency ^(a)
1.	Call on existing accounts	6.24
2.	Plan daily routine	5.81
3.	Plan selling activities	5.45
4.	Make a sales presentation	5.43
5.	IO potential decision making	5.23
6.	Read company literature	5.21
7.	Report on sales activities	5.15
8.	Phone to set up appointments	5.12
9.	Overcome objections	5.02
9.	Travel in town	5.02

(a) Each activity was coded on a 7 - point scale. If respondents did not perform the activity they were requested to code the activity 0. If respondents performed the activity, they responded from 1 to 7 depending on the frequency of performance during a months time, 1 being infrequently and 7 being frequently.

Source: Moncrief, William C. III., "Selling Activity and Sales Position Taxonomies for Industrial Sales Forces", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. XXIII (August 1986) pp.264 - 265.

In reporting on his research in 1986 Moncrief said: "Though lists of salesperson activities have been developed (Churchill, Ford and Walker 1978; Lamont and Lundstrom 1974) a thorough investigation of

published work failed to uncover a single empirically based sales Job Taxonomy".⁵¹ This author has likewise failed to uncover any taxonomy other than Moncrief's or any published work on research into the relative importance of various salesperson activities.

2.8 THE EVOLUTION OF SELLING

Like marketing, and most other areas of human activity, personal selling has undergone an evolutionary process to get to the professional form it is at today. Different eras of selling can be identified spanning several centuries and the evolutionary process can still be observed in the 1990's.

2.8.1 Selling Eras.

Four distinct selling eras are identified by Kurtz, Dodge and Klompmaker:

The Early Traders: The early traders normally manufactured the products they sold and fulfilled other marketing functions such as storage and distribution. They tended not to be held in very high regard, their goods were often shoddy and their sales claims exaggerated. This era lasted until the eighteenth century.

The Selling Revolution: The mid - 1700's saw the industrial revolution. Mechanised factories developed and industrialists could produce more in the same time at less cost. This created its own problem in that no selling organisation existed to move the increased volume from storage to the customers. A selling revolution took

place, similar in magnitude to that in industry and without which the industrial revolution would probably not have profited. New selling and negotiating techniques were developed in this era.

The American Peddler: So called because of his place of origin, this breed of salesperson was colourful but created an image that still haunts the modern salesperson. They sold their product features from a memorised sales presentation which was applied to each prospect irrespective of circumstances and specific needs. They created needs as much as they satisfied them. This era of salesperson assumed several names including "Greeter", "Drummer" and "Commercial Traveller".

The Professional Salesperson: By the mid-twentieth century the economy had changed from being a seller's market to being a buyer's market. The problems now became a lack of customers rather than a lack of products. The customer now had a choice and could shop around. The selling philosophy of necessity became a case of making what the customer would buy rather than selling what the company could make. This required a salesperson using professional practices to build up ongoing relationships with customers that were based on trust and mutual understanding.⁵²

The Gestetner Corporation summed up this new philosophy when they said: "We don't create needs, but we make prospects aware of existing needs and enhance their desire to satisfy those needs. The transition from relating benefits to mutually agreed upon criteria to closing is smooth and natural. We perform a real and

valuable service to our customers. We are proud to be professional salespeople".⁵³

Table 2.4 below summarises the differences between traditional approach to personal selling and the modern professional approach.

Table 2.4: Traditional Selling Versus Modern Selling

Traditional Selling	Modern Selling
Is sales person - oriented	Is customer - oriented
Creates needs	Discovers needs
Talks at customers	Discusses with customers
Makes sales	Makes customers
Is inflexible	Is adaptable

Source: Jackson, Donald W. Jnr., William H. Cunningham and Isabella C.M. Cunningham: *Selling: The Personal Force in Marketing*. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1988), p.7.

2.8.2 Trends in Selling

Several trends can be identified in the selling function of the 1980's and 90's. The following is not an exhaustive list of those trends but merely serves as an indication of some of the changes that are taking place.

Women in Selling: Women are playing an increasingly active role in selling, outside of their more traditional role of retail selling. Between 1982 and 1985 the number of women in the United States sales force went from 207,000 to 252,000, an increase of 22 per cent.⁵⁴ The

number in Ireland is still relatively small, 780 out of a total of about 12,000 "Commercial Travellers", but that too is rising.⁵⁵

The Telephone: The advent of improved, efficient telecommunications technology together with the increasing cost of maintaining a field sale force has meant that the single biggest growth area in personal selling in the last decade has been in telephone selling. It's greatest advantage is that the cost per sales call is so considerably less.

The Personal Computer: The Personal Computer performs two functions in modern selling. It facilitates the maintenance of an extensive data base for each salesperson, one which they can bring with them in the form of a laptop computer, and it allows direct access to head office by means of computer communications.

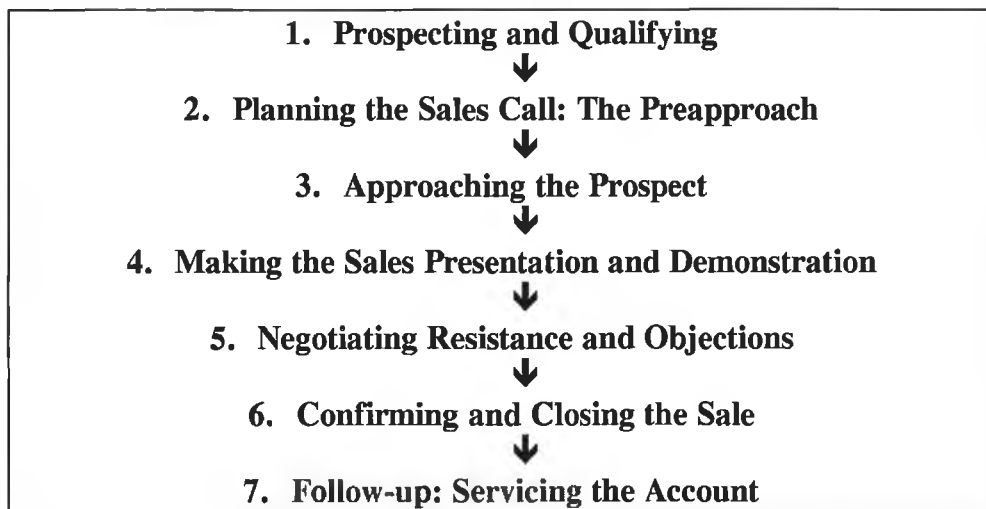
Improved Transportation: Improved transportation facilities in the form of better motor vehicles and better road systems means that the salesperson can get from one call to the next with greater speed and less hardship. This reduces the non-selling time a salesperson spends and therefore also reduces the cost of maintaining a salesperson.

People-Centred Training: Sales training in the past tended to give prominence to the product, to the company and to what the salesperson should say. Modern training seminars tend to assume a different orientation. They now tend to put greater emphasis on understanding people and on interpreting their action, words, and opinions. It has been recognised that in the Buyer - Seller relationship what the buyer says, thinks, and does, is at least as important to the successful outcome of a sales call as what the salesperson says and does.

2.9 THE PERSONAL SELLING PROCESS:

The selling process is the series of steps that the salesperson undertakes from identifying a potential customer to consummating a sale with that customer and ensuring post-sale satisfaction. It is the central part of any salesperson's function. Most writers agree that it approximates to a seven step process. Figure 2.1 below depicts that process.

FIGURE 2.1: THE PERSONAL SELLING PROCESS



Source: Adapted from: Anderson, Ralph, Essentials of Personal Selling: The New Professionalism, (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Inc. 1995) pp.12-14.

Step 1: Prospecting and Qualifying; This is the identification of potential customers and the qualifying of them to ensure that they have the specific need for the salesperson's product and the means and authority to buy it.

Step 2: Planning the Sales Call: The Pre-approach; The salesperson must obtain as much detailed information about the prospect. He must have a full understanding of the buyer and of the buying situation. Having acquired this information he must

then plan how he is going to approach the call in order to maximise the possibility of making a sale.

Step 3: Approaching the Prospect: This step involves the salesperson knowing how to meet and greet the buyer to get the relationship off to a good start and to give a good first impression of the company he or she is representing. This step covers both getting the appointment and the first few minutes of the meeting. These first few minutes are sometimes regarded as the most important of the meeting⁵⁶. They give the first impression and as with much of life this impression can be lasting.

Step 4: Making the Sales Presentation and Demonstration: The salesperson presents the benefits of the product to the customer relating them to the customer's specific situation. He also demonstrates how the product operates.

Step 5: Negotiating Resistance and Objections: The customer will usually pose some objection to buying the product. These objections may be logically or psychologically based. The salesperson must overcome these objections. A well handled objection becomes a reason to buy.

Step 6: Confirming and Closing the Sale: This involves getting the customer to commit to making a purchase.

Step 7: Following-up and Servicing the Account: The salesperson must ensure that the customer is satisfied with all aspects of the product and that the sales agreement has been fulfilled in all respects. This step should be regarded as the basis of a long-term, trusting Buyer-Seller relationship. While being the last step in one selling process it should be regarded as being the first stage of the next selling process with that customer.⁵⁷

2.10 SALES NEGOTIATIONS

In the modern buyer/seller relationship, where the aim is a long-term one, negotiations is the essence of the representatives of two companies mutually agreeing on what specifically is to be exchanged so as to optimise the benefit to both parties. Using a traditional viewpoint Lidstone suggests: "Selling is the means used by the seller to persuade someone to buy from you where initially your desire to supply exceeds the buyer's need to buy".⁵⁸

Negotiation on the other hand he says: "...occurs in the relationship between supplier and buyer where the desire to supply and buy is more or less equal but there is a gap to be closed covering the terms on which both sides will agree to trade with one another".⁵⁹

Webster defines negotiations as "... a process that attempts to maximise the value of interactions to both buyer and seller".⁶⁰

This definition illustrates the evolution of selling. It bases negotiations on a win/win concept. Both the buyer and the seller win or gain as a result of successful negotiations. Previously sellers viewed 'negotiations' as a win/lose situation. If one party won then the other must have lost. It was a short-term view based on the perception of the salesperson being in an adversarial or confrontational role, where the objective was to get an immediate sale. Negotiations that seek to maximise the benefit to both parties is a long-term view and creates the likelihood of a satisfactory long-term relationship based on mutual trust and understanding of each others position.

Webster offers advice to the salesperson entering the negotiation: “The salesperson must avoid the temptation to get the current order at almost any cost and must instead develop the long-term viewpoint that attempts to maximise his value as a supplier to the customer. The relevant questions are not 'What will convince you to buy?' but 'What are your needs and how can my company serve them best over the long run?' and 'How can I make my company and its offerings most attractive to you? What can we do for you?' A negotiation view of buyer-seller relationships has involved in it, implicitly, a willingness and readiness to adapt the selling company’s product offering to the needs of the individual customer. In other words the product is a variable, not a given, in a strategic (long-term) view of industrial marketing”.⁶¹

The act of negotiations can be likened to attempting to balance a see-saw on its fulcrum. A successful outcome is dependent on the position and relative weight of the two parties. If either party to the negotiations is to optimise the benefit to his company he must fully understand the position of the other party and his company, the extent of their need and the dynamics of any existing or possible future relationship between the two companies.

Harvey-Jones sets a standard that all would-be sales negotiators would usefully aspire to: “The main task of business is a long-term one. A fly-by-night approach to commerce is quite hopeless..... Our aim has to be to try to develop a sense of mutual interdependence”.⁶²

2.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examined the role and function of the salesperson. Its purpose is to act as the backdrop against which the remainder of the thesis is set. It defines personal selling as consisting of "...finding people who require your product or service, studying their needs, presenting your offering in such a way that your potential customers are convinced of its benefits to them, answering any objections they may have, asking for a commitment to close and following up to ensure that those who have bought from you are satisfied".⁶³

The importance of personal selling cannot be understated. It accounts for up to 10% of the labour force. In expenditure terms it exceeds advertising by a ratio of 3:1. In the promotions mix it tailors the message to fit the precise needs of the customer and is the only mix element in a position to provide immediate and direct feedback. In Ireland the average cost of maintaining a salesperson is Ir£43,485 per annum compared to Stg£35,625 in Great Britain.

The occupational positions occupied by salespeople can be categorised into nine distinct positions based on the required level of creative skill ranging from the very simple to the very complex.

In his day-to-day activities the salesperson fulfils many roles. Most notable among these roles are those of: Seller, Trainer, Researcher, Manager, Communicator, Problem-Solver and Change Agent. In the principle role, that of selling, the salesperson adopts a seven step process: (1) Prospecting and Qualifying, (2) Planning the Sales Call: The Preapproach, (3) Approaching the Prospect, (4) Making the Sales

Presentation and Demonstration, (5) Negotiating Resistance or Objections, (6) Confirming and Closing the Sale, and (7) Follow-up: Servicing the Account.

The foundational understanding of personal selling developed in this chapter will be built upon in Chapter 3 by an examination of the marketing literature to establish that attributes and skills required for success in the profession.

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CHAPTER 3

DESIRABLE ATTRIBUTES OF A SALESPERSON

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research objective of this thesis is to establish the quality of the Irish sales force as perceived by the members of the Irish industrial buying centre member. Before quality can be measured however a basis for its measurement must be established. This chapter examines the literature to generate a listing of what the various academic writers and researchers regard or have empirically established as the personal and professional qualities desirable in a good salesperson. This listing will become an essential basis for the development of the primary research instrument.

Practically every writer on personal selling presents some list of the attributes required if an individual is to be a successful salesperson. These listings are sometimes based on empirical research but as often as not are based purely on personal opinion. Through their research Churchill, Ford and Walker identified that: "The first published study, which examined the usefulness of vocational tests in selecting retail salespeople, appeared in 1918. Since then more than 400 studies have been published."¹

Despite this proliferation of studies, there appears as yet to be no universal agreement as to the physical and psychological requirements of the successful seller. Churchill et al. identified three possible reasons for the variations in the findings of these studies:

1. Different studies utilised different research methods and procedures.
2. Different types of sales jobs (as identified in Chapter 2) require people to perform different activities.
3. Different salesperson characteristics and abilities may be needed for dealing successfully with different kinds of customers.²

This chapter is subdivided into six sections and examines what the literature says about the attributes of a successful seller from six different perspectives:

1. attributes suggested from personal opinions.
2. attributes identified from research with sales managers.
3. attributes identified from research with salespeople.
4. attributes identified from research with sales trainers.
5. attributes identified from research with customers and
6. attributes identified from research into the dyadic customer/seller relationship.

3.2 ATTRIBUTES SUGGESTED FROM PERSONAL OPINIONS

In 1961 McMurry suggested: "It is my conviction that the possessor of an effective sales personality is a habitual "wooer", an individual who has a compulsive need to win and hold the affection of others".³

McMurry further suggested that "Along with the wooing instinct, several less glamorous, more pedestrian qualifications are important" and listed these qualifications as:

1. "A high level of energy"
2. "Abounding self-confidence"
3. "A chronic hunger for money"
4. "A well established habit of industry", and
5. "A state of mind which regards each objection, resistance or obstacle as a challenge".⁴

Williams presented a lengthier set of qualities. He asked the question: “Assuming that such a thing as a perfect person can exist, what human qualities should the ideal professional salesman have?”

He then answered the question as follows:

“Sensitivity	Creativity	Objectivity
Perception	Diligence	Prudence
Determination	Discipline	Self-motivation
Awareness	Control	Self-organisation
Articulation	Empathy	Intuition
Common sense	Initiative	Tenacity
Courage	Ambition	Integrity
Confidence	Intelligence	Physical fitness” ⁵

Gillam adds five further personality factors to this list: Enthusiasm, Reliability, Courtesy, Friendliness, Modesty.⁶

Gillam also emphasizes the importance of knowledge in a salesperson’s armoury and suggests that a member of the profession needs to have knowledge of: The Company; The Product; The Competition; The Trade; The Territory; and Human Relations.⁷

Additionally Gillam suggests that a salesperson also needs persuasive powers and judgment. He identifies three areas in particular where good judgment must be exercised:

1. The kind of sales arguments likely to appeal to individual buyers.
2. The methods of presenting different sales arguments.
3. The moment when it is opportune to ask for an order.⁸

Very little academic sales literature has emanated from Ireland so therefore few lists of salesperson attributes, with an Irish dimension, exist. One list from Burgess suggests that a good salesperson should be:

Persuasive,	Out-going,
Enthusiastic,	Competitive,
Energetic,	Inquisitive,
Able to command respect,	Empathetic,
Helpful,	Independent,
A business person. ⁹	

In looking at the aptitude for salesmanship Bolling examines the subject from the opposite perspective to those cited above. He identifies the characteristics that should be avoided rather than those that should be sought. Talking of the natural salesman he says: "His character and personal efficiency is not spoiled by common failings such as ill-health, bad habits, irritability or affectation. It is necessary therefore in selecting salesmen to beware of the abnormal and watch for failings which would make a man unsuitable for saleswork".¹⁰

Russell, Beach and Buskirk take a similar approach and argue that to be successful a salesperson should avoid:

- Criticism of others,
- Argumentativeness,
- Clumsy attempts at humour,
- Laziness, and
- Impatience.¹¹

3.3 ATTRIBUTES IDENTIFIED FROM RESEARCH WITH SALES MANAGERS

The problem with personal opinions is that they are just that, personal opinions. They have not been empirically tested to establish whether there is a statistical relationship between the characteristics cited and a persons sales effectiveness. In conducting research to empirically test the characteristics required several populations can be used. One obvious population is sales managers. Sales managers work with salespeople on a day-to-day basis and therefore from their experience of effective and ineffective salespeople are in a unique position to identify the characteristics that make a successful salesperson.

One such piece of research is described by Howells thus: "Under the section 'The personal qualities of a salesman', the following list is offered:

1. A capacity for enthusiasm,
2. Self-Management,
3. Dependability,
4. Integrity,
5. Knowledge of the product and its application,
6. Sincerity,
7. Initiative,
8. The ability to seize opportunities and accept responsibility,
9. Industriousness,
10. An understanding of the motives that make people buy,
11. Judgement,
12. Courtesy,
13. Determination,
14. Self-confidence,
15. Resourcefulness,
16. Persuasiveness".¹²

Churchill et al. presented the opinions of 44 top American sales executives from major manufacturing organisations. These executives were asked to rank in order of importance the characteristics they sought in new recruits. "Enthusiasm" was ranked as the most important characteristics by twice as many respondents as any other attribute. The full findings are presented in Table 3.1 below.¹³

Howells took a different approach in researching what sales managers look for in new recruits. He established that: "Five recent consecutive issues of the Daily Telegraph ran 690 advertisements for salesmen. Of these 76% expressed a need for experience as an essential part of the qualifications. Only 4.5% specifically said that no experience was required"¹⁴

Similar research was conducted by this author in an Irish context through the recruitment columns of the Irish Times on five consecutive Fridays, September 11 to October 9, 1992. The Irish Times was chosen as the data source because it is widely regarded as the main advertising medium in Ireland for business recruitment. The relevance of studying the advertisements on Fridays only was that the Irish Times carry its major recruitment advertisement feature in its Friday editions.

Over the five week period a total of 59 non-retail selling positions were advertised. The results of the research is presented in Table 3.2 below. The findings, though conducted over twenty years later, show remarkable similarity to those of Howell, with 73% of all advertisements for selling positions specifying the need for previous experience compared to 76% in the earlier study. In the Irish context only 2% of advertisements specifically excluded the need for previous experience.

Table 3.1: Importance ranking of ten indicators of sales aptitude by top sales executives in 44 major manufacturing firms

Attribute	RANK ASSIGNED BY RESPONDENT										Total Points
	1 (10)	2 (9)	3 (8)	4 (7)	5 (6)	6 (5)	7 (4)	8 (3)	9 (2)	10 (1)	
Enthusiasm	16	5	8	5	1	5	-	1	-	-	338
Well Organised	6	8	11	3	5	5	1	2	-	-	304
Obvious Ambition	8	6	5	7	4	3	2	3	3	-	285
High Persuasiveness	2	10	3	1	10	4	5	3	1	2	254
General Sales Experience	3	2	4	6	6	2	8	8	5	4	226
High Verbal Skill	2	3	3	6	2	7	7	6	4	1	215
Specific Sales Experience	2	4	2	8	6	1	5	4	4	5	214
Highly Recommended	1	-	1	4	3	3	7	2	7	2	149
Follows Instructions	-	2	-	3	4	4	2	9	9	8	142
Sociability	-	1	1	2	-	7	6	6	8	10	134

Note: The top numeral in each column is the ranking given by executives, with 1 being most important and 10 being least important. Numbers in parentheses are point ratings assigned to each rank. Numbers in the table show the number of respondents who assigned each rank to each attribute.

Source: Churchill, Gilbert A., Neill M. Ford and Orville C. Walker (1985) *Salesforce Management: Planning, Implementation and Control*, 2nd Ed., (Homewood, Illinois: Richard D. Irwin Inc.) p.337.

Table 3.2: Experience Requirements in Selling Positions.

	Frequency	%
Total selling positions advertised	59	100
Previous selling experience required	36	61
Previous related technical experience required	7	12
Experience not mentioned	15	25
Experience specifically excluded	1	2

This researcher readily accepts that neither of the latter two pieces of research cited are confined solely to the opinions of sales managers. The opinions of personnel managers, other senior company executives and recruitment agencies are also likely to be incorporated. It is to be presumed however, given the functional responsibility, that the opinion of the sales manager will have a strong influence on the job specification of a personal selling position.

Despite the unique position which sales managers occupy their opinions as to the ideal set of characteristics of a successful salesperson may be suspect. Churchill et al. criticised surveys of sales managers as follows: "One major weakness of such surveys is that their results merely reflect the perceptions of sales executives who responded. Although, those perceptions are based on years of practical experience, they may be biased or inaccurate. A more objective way to identify which personal characteristics are strongly related to sales aptitude is to examine a large cross section of salespeople".¹⁵

While the above criticism is undoubtedly valid it could be made of any survey research which of necessity is subject to the risk of random error and bias in its many forms. Nonetheless on the advice of Churchill et al.¹⁶ it is opportune to examine some important studies of salespeople.

3.4 ATTRIBUTES IDENTIFIED FROM RESEARCH WITH SALESPEOPLE

Mayer and Greenberg hypothesised that a successful seller needs two basic attributes, Empathy (which they defined as the “ability to feel as the other fellow does”) and Ego drive (which they defined as “the need to conquer”, that “which makes him want and need to make the sale in the personal or ego way, not merely for the money to be gained”). Later, through experience with more than 7000 salesmen they proved their hypothesis correct, though never statistically so.¹⁷

They further suggested that “experience” is not necessarily a sound basis in the selection of a salesperson. They say: “We have found that the experienced person who is pirated from a competitor is most often piratable simply because he is not succeeding well with that competitor”.¹⁸

Gellerman, through the observation of each member of a 25-person sales force concluded that the successful seller had 3 particular attributes: Discussion Focus; Time Management; and Staying Power.¹⁹

In 1962 Miner subjected 65 dealer salesmen employed by a major oil company to a battery of individual and group tests. He found that self-confidence, happiness, dependence and sociophilia are personal

characteristics positively associated with sales success while low aggression, a strong superego and sociophobia are associated with less successful performance.²⁰ The apparent weakness of Miner's research is in the nature of the cause-effect relationship. Attributes such as self-confidence, happiness and sociophilia in a successful salesperson could well be the effect of successful selling rather than the cause of it.

Lamont and Lundstrom tested the relationship between various personality and personal characteristics and sales performance of the sales force members of an industrial building materials company. Data on the personality constructs, personal characteristics and the selling activities of the sales force were collected by means of two self-administered questionnaires. Sales performance information was provided by sales management.

In discussing their findings the researchers say: "On the basis of the significant variables from the multiple regressions and the knowledgeable interpretation of the researchers, a tentative profile of the successful salesman can be developed:

- Tall, physically impressive and energetic,
- Good work habits; is perseverant, willing to work long hours, and enjoys solving problems,
- Seeks and enjoys recognition from others for selling accomplishments,
- Has a broad range of interests but is not extensively involved in civic and professional organisations,
- Not highly educated in a formal manner but intellectually capable,
- May be emotional and somewhat disorganised, but adaptable and flexible in work habits,

- Not overly sensitive or perceptive to the reaction and feelings of others,
- Views selling as a professional career and has little interest in achieving status beyond the selling position”.²¹

Lamont and Lundstrom’s findings to the effect that a salesperson “may be emotional and somewhat disorganised” and “Not overly sensitive or perceptive to the reactions and feelings of others” are at variance with, even contradictory to, the suggestions of all other theorists and researchers known to this author. At any remove one would suggest that a company’s representative in the marketplace needs to be objective, organised, professional and at least sensitive to others, if not empathic. The disorganised, emotional and insensitive individual profiled by Lamont and Lundstrom seems unlikely to create a good company image, provide good customer service or be capable of satisfying the needs of customers.²²

Likewise the suggestion that a successful salesman needs to be tall and physically impressive seems dubious at best. This researcher can see no reason why short, less than physically impressive people cannot be equally successful at selling. The job of personal selling surely requires all sorts of people just like buying is occupied by all sorts of people.

3.5 ATTRIBUTES IDENTIFIED FROM RESEARCH WITH SALES TRAINERS

Kerr and Burzynski are among the few researchers to have concentrated their studies of selling attributes on sales trainers. They asked 235 people directly responsible for sales training in their company to list the

characteristics of a successful salesperson. They described their findings thus: “We sorted the responses into 5 categories..... and found that almost half of these characteristics could be classified as attitude related. A salesperson skills comprised only a quarter of the characterizations while knowledge, track record, and other factors were cited less frequently”.²³

The full results of Kerr and Burzynski’s Research are presented in Table 3.3 below.

Table 3.3: CHARACTERISTICS OF A SUCCESSFUL SALESPERSON
 (% of all characteristics cited: multiple responses were possible)

Attitude:	Committed to quality and customer service, aggressive, persistent, self-confident	48 %
Skills:	Sales, problem-solving, communication, time management	25 %
Knowledge:	of product, industry, market	13 %
Sales Record:	Meets objectives	11 %
Other:	Completes paperwork, political acumen	4 %

Source: Kerr, Meg. and Bill Burzynski: “Missing the Target: Sales Training in America”. Training and Development Journal, July 1988, p.68

3.6 ATTRIBUTES IDENTIFIED FROM RESEARCH WITH CUSTOMERS

Arguably the most relevant person to opine on the necessary qualities of a good salesperson is the customer. It is the customer's “yes” or “no” which to a large extent dictates the salesperson’s level of success.

Even the industrial buyer, despite being characterised as rational, makes his buying decision on the basis of a myriad of personal and emotional reasons.²⁴ How he personally reacts to the characteristics of the salesperson across the desk is likely to play a large part in his decision, especially when similar products are available from competitive salespeople.

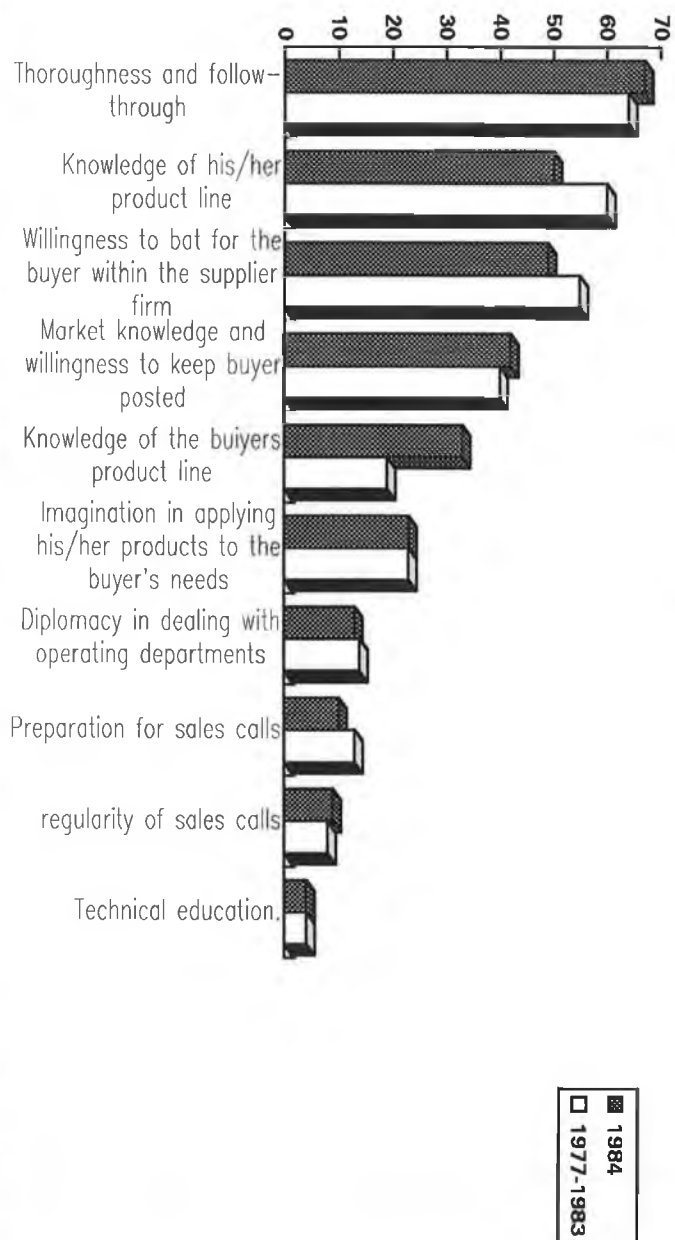
Equally McMurray argues that: "The qualities which will make an individual highly acceptable to one prospect may have a diametrically opposed effect on another. Just as each customer is unique in his appearance, manner, mode of expression, and personality make-up, so does he have a correspondingly unique potential to tolerate or to find distasteful any given qualities in others".²⁵

Despite its importance the literature contains few accounts of studies conducted to establish what the customer looks for in a salesperson.

Purchasing Magazine conducts an annual "Top Ten in Sales" competition where American buyers are asked to nominate their top salesperson and outline the qualities that makes their nominee top.²⁶

Figure 3.1 below outlining the results of the 1984 competition indicates that to the American buyer "Thoroughness and follow-through", closely followed by "Knowledge of his or her product line", and "Willingness to go to bat for the buyer within the supplier firm" are perceived as the most important qualities.

**Figure 3.1: What makes the magic?
(% mentions)**



Note : Percentages for 1984, and for 1977-1983, total 300 since respondents were asked to identify three outstanding characteristics.

Source: Adapted from Dowst, Somerby; "Compleat Salesmanship: That's what buyers appreciate", Purchasing, August 16, 1984, p.62.

Mc Daniel and Darden reported on a study conducted in 1985 which asked 205 purchasing agents what qualities they like in salespeople.²⁷

This study found "Reliability/Credibility", "Professionalism/Integrity" and "Product Knowledge" in that order to be the salesperson qualities most valued by the respondents. The summary results are shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4. Qualities Most Valued in a Salesperson by Purchasing Agents.

Reliability/Credibility	98.6%
Professionalism/Integrity	93.7%
Product Knowledge	90.7%
Innovativeness in Problem Solving	80.5%
Presentation/Preparation	69.7%

Source: Mc Daniel, Carl, Jnr. and William R. Darden, : Marketing, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon Inc., 1987) p.607

In 1991 Creative Management Limited commissioned a survey of buyers' perceptions of Irish salespeople. Though confined to a limited research population and further weakened through the use of a dubious sampling frame it nonetheless gives some indication as to the expectations of the Irish industrial buyer. One question on the questionnaire asked 208 respondents: "Thinking of your experience with different sales people, What, in your opinion, are the qualities you expect to find in a good salesperson?" Each respondent was asked to identify five qualities. 65% of all those surveyed suggested "Good product knowledge" as an important quality. That is two and a half times more than suggested any

other quality. The full results to this question are given in Table 3.5 though in drawing interpretations from the table it should be noted that:

- The sample consisted only of large and medium sized companies and it was deliberately stratified so that large companies were overrepresented.
- Only purchasing managers and purchasing officers were interviewed, rather than a cross-section of the purchasing decision making unit.²⁸

3.7 ATTRIBUTES IDENTIFIED FROM RESEARCH INTO THE BUYER/SELLER DYAD

Probably the most significant research conducted in relation to the buyer/seller dyad was that by Evans. In researching the unique relationship between the salesperson and the buyer Evans didn't specifically set out to identify the characteristics of the ideal salesperson, but that was among the results he achieved. His basic conclusion was that if a salesperson is characteristically similar to the prospect then he has a greater chance of succeeding. He says: "The more alike the salesman and his prospect are the greater the likelihood of a sale. This is true for physical characteristics, (age, height), other objective factors (income, religion and education) and other variables that may be related to personality factors (smoking, politics). It is also important to note that the perceived similarity for religion and politics is much higher and of greater importance than true similarity".²⁹

Evan's statement does have logic. Psychologically the human being who is comfortable with his own person is also likely to prefer people who are characteristically similar. However from a practical perspective the

**TABLE 3.5: WHAT THE IRISH BUYER EXPECTS IN A
GOOD SALESPERSON**

Quality	% of Respondents
Good Product Knowledge	65 %
Honesty/Integrity/Good Reputation	27 %
Reliability/Follows up on whats agreed	21 %
Isn't pushy/Isn't a pest	20 %
Good manners/politeness/courteous	18 %
Looks good/well groomed/neatness	17 %
Good personality/good character	16 %
Knows his job/Business/Market/Industry	14 %
Punctuality/Good time keeping	14 %
Confident/Articulate/can communicate	12 %
Clear and Concise	10 %
Has a professional approach	10 %
Directness/Decisiveness/Assertiveness	9 %
Makes an appointment	7 %
Comes prepared/does his homework	7 %
Good quality service/Good after-sale service	7 %
Understands customer needs	7 %
Good selling skills/salesmanship	6 %
Good listener/Not too talkative	5 %
Sincere/Genuine/Convincing	4 %
Other qualities	14 %

Source: Market Research Bureau of Ireland, "Buyers Perceptions of Irish and Overseas Salespeople", (Dublin: Unpublished Report for Creative Management Ltd, December 1991)

above conclusion must be of dubious value. It seems impossible for a company to be in a position to select salespeople who are characteristically similar to all buyers in the market place when those buyers in being human are themselves characteristically dissimilar from each other. Additionally Evan's research was based on a sample of consumers and therefore its industrial applicability may be questionable. Is an industrial buyer likely to make an economic industrial decision based on the fact that the salesperson happens to be about his age or his height? At the conscious, rational level it seems unlikely but then decision-making is a human activity and sub-conscious, irrational factors may well play some part in the decision-making process. In assessing Evan's suggestion it should also be noted that Woodside and Davenport largely substantiate his findings through their own empirical research, but like Evans they too concentrated on a consumer sample.³⁰

3.8 CONCLUSION

Taking the 17 citations above in composite, one obvious conclusion is that there is no such thing as an ideal set of characteristics for a salesperson. This however does not necessarily nullify the findings and suggestions of the various researchers and writers as presented above. It merely suggests that such lists are not exhaustive for each selling situation though they do give an indication of some traits that may be beneficial.

This is the point Russell, Beach and Buskirk make when they say: "One fact must be made clear at the outset: There is no such thing as one ideal sales personalitythere are many kinds of selling jobs and these require different types of sales people. But experience has indicated

clearly that the possession of certain traits greatly enhances one's chances for success in selling".³¹

Cognisant of the above it is the opinion of this researcher that the customer is the most important element in the marketing exchange process. It is the customer's "yes" or "no" that ultimately determines the effectiveness of the salesperson and the success or otherwise of the company. Therefore it seems logical that the opinion of customers be given pre-eminence in deciding on the ideal characteristics of a salesperson. In this respect "product knowledge", "follow-up" and "reliability" appear the most important qualities in the opinion of customers from the three pieces of customer-based research cited above.

3.9 CHAPTER SUMMARY

In this chapter we examined the attributes required by a salesperson for success in selling as identified in the academic and industry literature.

The examination was presented from six different perspectives:

1. attributes suggested from personal opinions.
2. attributes identified from research with sales managers.
3. attributes identified from research with salespeople.
4. attributes identified from research with sales trainers.
5. attributes identified from research with customers and
6. attributes identified from research into the dyadic customer/seller relationship.

From the writers cited who present personal opinions many varying characteristics were identified as important but there appears to be general agreement on the requirement for Self-Confidence, Energy,

Diligence, Empathy and Enthusiasm. Research among sales managers agrees with the requirement for enthusiasm and adds Persuasiveness, Self-Management and Experience.

Of the four pieces of research among salespeople referred to in this chapter no single characteristic was identified more than once and indeed in some cases the findings of different researchers was at times contradictory. Only one reported piece of research among sales trainers was identified and it suggests that 50% of the important characteristics are attitude related while a further 25% are skills related.

Research among customers was regarded by this researcher as the most significant and in such research there tends to be general agreement on the importance of Product Knowledge, Follow-up, Honesty, Integrity, Imagination and Innovation.

In terms of the attributes required for success in selling, Evans, in examining the Buyer/Seller dyad concludes that "The more alike the salesperson and his prospect are the greater the likelihood of a sale."³³

The findings from the literature reviewed in this chapter will be used as the basis for formulating the questions on the primary research instrument regarding the respondents' perception of the quality of salespeople in Ireland. In the following chapter the literature pertaining to industrial buying behaviour is examined to establish an understanding of the industrial buying centre member's interaction with salespeople and his requirements in selecting suppliers and products. These findings will also be an essential basis in the formulation of the questionnaire.

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CHAPTER 4

INDUSTRIAL BUYING BEHAVIOUR

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is concerned with establishing the quality of the Irish industrial sales force from the perspective of the Irish industrial buying centre member. To research this population's views effectively and efficiently however we must first examine the function and behaviour of the industrial buying centre member to achieve an understanding of that person's perspective.

This chapter is the result of a literature review of that area of marketing knowledge. Having established an understanding of the processes and procedures used in industrial buying behaviour and of the criteria used in choosing between alternative products and alternative suppliers its findings will form the basis for the formulation of several of the items on the primary research instrument. Its findings will also be used in determining the sample to be used.

4.2 WHAT IS INDUSTRIAL BUYING BEHAVIOUR?

"The effectiveness of marketing management does not depend solely on being able to offer competitive ranges of products and services, backed up, perhaps, by extensive publicity campaigns. For success knowledge of the many influences which affect buying preferences is called for".¹

The above words from Chisnall succinctly state the reason why we must examine industrial buying behaviour. If a company is to be successful in marketing its product to industrial customers it must do more than identify who its potential customers are. It must also identify who

within those organisations have responsibility for buying, how they approach their responsibilities and why they choose particular options.

Webster and Wind define organisational (to be interpreted in this case as industrial organisational) buying behaviour as: "... the decision-making process by which formal organisations establish the need for purchased products and services, and identify, evaluate and choose among alternative brands and suppliers."²

Lancaster and Jobber in writing on the issue from the personal selling perspective suggest a three element procedure for examining buyer behaviour:

- "1. **Structure:** The "who" factor - who participates in the decision making process, and their particular roles.
2. **Process:** The "how" factor - the pattern of information getting, analysis, evaluation and decision-making which takes place as the purchasing organisation moves towards a decision.
3. **Content:** The "what" factor - the evaluative criteria used at different stages of the process and by different members of the decision-making unit."³

These three examinational elements will be adopted in this chapter.

4.3 THE STRUCTURE

The buyer or purchasing officer is usually not the only person involved in a buying decision. Rather, that decision is likely to be made by a buying centre or decision-making unit (DMU) as it is often referred to. The buying centre consists of those organisational members who interact

during the decision-making process. Lancaster and Jobber identify five distinct roles in the buying centre though they refer to it as the DMU:

1. **Initiators:** Those who begin the purchase process.
2. **Users:** Those who actually use the product.
3. **Deciders:** Those who have the authority to select the supplier/model.
4. **Influencers:** Those who provide information and add decision criteria throughout the process.
5. **Buyers:** Those who have authority to execute the contractual arrangements.
6. **Gatekeepers:** Those who knowingly or unknowingly control the flow of information to and through the buying centre. For example secretaries who may allow or prevent access to a buying centre member, or a buyer whose agreement must be sought before a supplier can contact other members of the centre.⁴

Industrial Marketing Research Ltd. suggest that "The first step in a well conceived and well directed marketing campaign for industrial goods and services should be to ensure that the members of the DMU and their responsibilities are known."⁵

The identification of the individuals who will occupy each of these roles in a specific buying situation is not a simple task. Webster and Wind point out that: "It is quite likely that several individuals will occupy the same role within the buying centre (e.g. there may be several users) and that one individual may occupy two or more roles (e.g. buyer and gatekeeper). All members of the buying centre can be seen as influencers, but not all influencers occupy other roles."⁶

An effective marketing system may be in a position to identify the buying centre members but the salesperson in the field is surely in a better position to efficiently make the identification. The understanding of the responsibilities of each buying centre member is a more difficult problem and must become the individual responsibility of the salesperson. He is the only person who can get to "know" each company. Johnston and Bonoma comment on the situation as: "Apparently it is quite easy to identify buying centre participants in any given purchase situation, but quite difficult to understand their dynamics and power relationship".⁷

It is clear from Johnston and Bonoma that only the company's representative 'on the ground' can possibly be in a position to acquire an understanding of the dynamics and power relationships of the buying centre members. A marketing intelligence system that is removed from the sales field in a company headquarters cannot hope to acquire a lucid understanding of the market. The salesperson should be an intrinsic part of any well managed marketing intelligence system.

Industrial Market Research Ltd. add a further complication to the understanding of the DMU when they say: "it is necessary to be aware that members of the DMU will often be from outside the firm itself".⁸ Many phases in the buying process will have external influences. The professional consultant, such the architect, engineer, product designer and so on, will have an obvious influence. A buying centre member may also be influenced by the opinions of a trade associate or something that he saw, heard or read about in relation to a competitor. Alternatively a salesperson from another potential supplier may be particularly influential in a purchase situation, even without the

conscious awareness of the buying centre members themselves. The salesperson however must be cognisant of such potential influences and equally cognisant that no two buying centres will have the same structure or dynamics. Speaking of the variation between buying centre from different companies Webster and Wind say: "Each buying organisation is likely to be significantly different from every other buying organisation in the potential market in ways that may require viewing each organisation as a separate market segment".⁹

Bonoma offers the salesperson advice in how one might identify the source(s) of power in the buying centre. From an analysis of buying centres he distilled six behavioural clues for identifying the powerful members of the buying centre.

- "1. Though power and formal authority go together, the correlation between the two is not perfect. The selling company must take into account other clues about where the true buying power lies.

2. One way to identify buying centre powerholders is to observe communications in the buying company. Of course, the powerful are not threatened by others, nor are they often promised rewards. Still, even the most powerful managers are likely to be influenced by others, especially by those whose power is based on attraction or expertise. Those with less power use persuasion and rational argument to try to influence the more powerful. Managers to whom others direct much attention but who receive few offers of rewards or threat of punishment usually possess substantial decision-making power.

3. Buying-Centre decision makers may be disliked by those with less power. Thus, when others express concern about one buying-centre member's opinions along with their feelings of dislike or ambivalence, sellers have strong clues as to who the powerful buyer is.
4. High-power buyers tend to be one-way information centres, serving as focal points for information from others. The vice president who doesn't come to meetings but who receives copies of all correspondence about a buying matter is probably a central influencer or decider.
5. The most powerful buying - centre members are probably not the most easily identified or the most talkative members of their groups. Indeed, the really powerful buying group members often send others to critical negotiations because they are confident that little of substance will be made final without their approval.
6. No correlation exists between the functional area of a manager and his or her power within a company. It is not possible to approach the data processing department blindly to find decision makers for a new computer system, as many sellers of mainframes have learned. Nor can one simply look to the CEO to find a decision maker for a corporate plane. There is no substitute for working hard to understand the dynamics of the buying company."¹⁰

In attempting to identify the source of power in the buying centre Jackson, Keith and Burdick examined the relative influence of each department in selecting products and suppliers under various product

type categories.¹¹ Their findings are shown in Table 4.1 below. In examining the table it should be noted that it was the purchasing agent's perceptions of the relative influence of each function that was researched. It is therefore possible that the respondents exaggerated their own importance. The writers concluded that: "This paper confirms the complex nature of buying centres influence. The evidence suggested that the purchasing agents perceived themselves to be one of the most influential member of the buying centre, particularly for supplier selection decisions".¹²

Jackson et al suggest the following marketing implications of their findings:

- "The target audience of marketing efforts will depend upon who the more important individuals of the buying centre are. Findings suggest that the purchasing agent should be called on regardless of product type, but that engineering and/or manufacturing may also be important target audiences. For example, when selling component parts, marketing efforts should be directed towards engineering.
- Marketing effort will depend on which individuals of the buying centre are more influential for a given decision. Since engineering and manufacturing are more influential in product selection decisions, they may have to be sold on product characteristics. On the other hand, since purchasing is most influential in supplier selection decisions, they may have to be sold on company characteristics.

Table 4.1: Cell Means for Relative Influence Allocations.

		Major Capital	Minor Capital	Materials	Component Parts	Supplies
Product to Buy	% Purchasing	30.33	34.44	23.63	27.21	32.69
	% Manufacturing	20.11	20.27	20.48	15.82	19.04
	% Engineering	35.44	28.06	40.77	45.98	22.59
	% Management	11.33	8.47	6.65	6.72	5.13
	% Other	2.78	8.75	8.46	4.26	20.56
Supplier to Select	% Purchasing	50.52	60.69	70.06	64.61	63.48
	% Manufacturing	13.78	11.64	7.02	5.43	11.17
	% Engineering	26.22	18.61	17.42	24.02	12.69
	% Management	7.78	6.69	3.38	3.98	4.42
	% Others	2.00	2.36	2.12	1.97	8.43

Source: Jackson, Donald W., Jr., Janet E. Keith, and Richard K. Burdick (1984) "Purchasing Agents' Perceptions of Industrial Buying Centre Influence: A Situational Approach", *Journal Of Marketing* Vol. 48, Fall, p.79.

- Given that various buying centre members have different relative levels of influence, perhaps product development should incorporate features that will enhance the attractiveness of the product to the more influential individuals in the buying centre. For example, engineering personnel in customers' firms may provide significant insights into product features most desired in component parts".¹³

The absolute number of people who will make up the buying centre is another important variable. Chisnall notes that: "A pioneer study in 1958 by Dun and Bradstreet revealed that in the average firm no fewer than nine people influenced the buying decision.

"Research by Alexander, Cross and Cunningham revealed that in 106 industrial firms three or more persons influenced buying processes in over 75 per cent of the companies studied. In a special investigation of British engineering firms, McGraw-Hill found that there were more than five buying influences in companies with 400-600 employees; in companies employing over 1000, more than six people were involved in buying decisions. There is general agreement by these and other researchers that organisational buying almost always involves more than one individual."¹⁴

Despite being just one member of a sometimes large buying centre the buyer as an individual is nonetheless of special importance for several reasons:

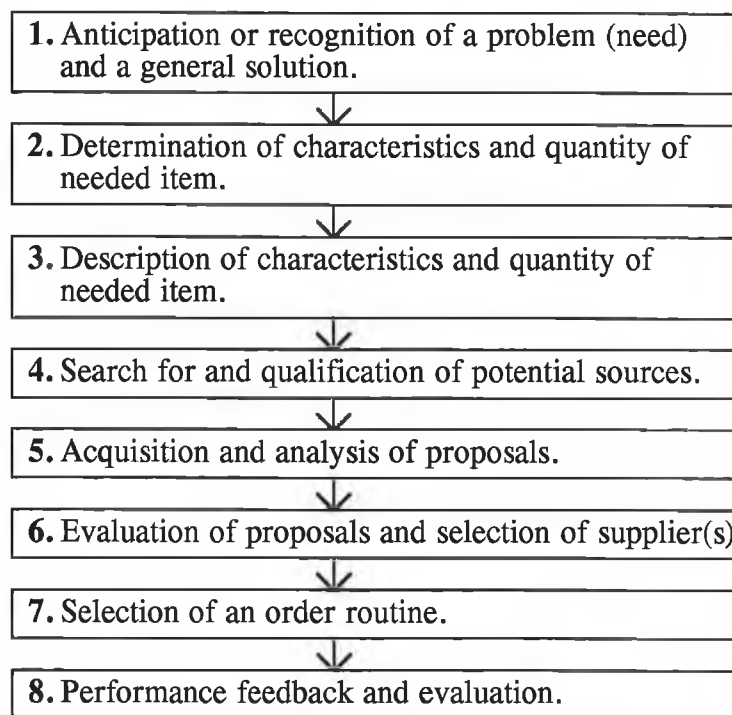
1. The buyer will be a member of the buying centre regardless of the buy class or of the product type.

2. The buyer has full knowledge of buying centre membership and this knowledge may be made available to the seller in the course of the sales interview thus giving the seller the opportunity to sell to the full centre. Likewise it is regarded as ethical selling practice to get the permission of the buyer prior to approaching other centre members. It is also sensible to get such permission as the buyer is likely to be playing the role of gatekeeper in future buying centres that the salesperson may be attempting to sell to.
3. The buyer is likely to be the first and most frequent person that a seller will meet in any buying centre and therefore may be in a position to decide positively or negatively at an early stage in the buying process whether a particular seller has anything valuable to offer to a particular buying decision.
4. The buyer, because it is part of his job to be informed of market developments is more likely to be receptive to meeting salespeople than other members of the buying centre.
5. The buyer may play many roles in the buying centre simultaneously and indeed in the case of items bought for the purchasing department may in fact play all the roles from initiation through to user.
6. Webster and Wind describe the buyer as ".....the person in the organisation with formal authority for the selection of sources of supply. Although this authority may be constrained in many important ways, it is in many cases the key terminal position of organisational responsibility for the buying decision. In other words, the buyer (or purchasing agent) is the final decision-maker, so that when other members of the buying centre attempt to exert influence, their efforts are directed toward him with the intention of constraining or otherwise influencing the choices available to him".¹⁵

4.4 THE PROCESS

Understanding industrial buying behaviour is easier if it is divided into stages. Probably the most widely cited buying process is the eight stage process developed by Robinson, Farris and Wind in 1967 and shown below in Figure 4.1.¹⁶

Figure 4.1: The Industrial Buying Process (Buy Phases).



Source: Robinson Patrick J., Farris Charles W., and Wind Yoram, *Industrial Buying and Creative Marketing* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, Inc. 1967). p.14.

The exact nature of the process will depend on the specific buying situation. If a company has a long standing relationship with a supplier of a basic raw material then many stages are likely to be bypassed as the buyer will simply recognise the need and select an order routine with the established supplier. If however it is a technically complex piece of

capital machinery that is being purchased for the first time then all eight stages are likely to be rigorously followed.

While it is useful to understand the buying process the salesperson must be cognisant of the variations that may occur in it. As Johnston and Bonoma say "No two buying decisions in any given company are likely to be exactly alike, nor will any two companies follow exactly the same procedures in even highly similar purchase situations."¹⁷

4.5 THE CONTENT

The content element of organisational buyer behaviour concerns the evaluative criteria that members of the buying centre take into account in examining alternative proposals with a view to selecting products and suppliers.

Lancaster and Jobber suggest: "These criteria are likely to be determined by the performance criteria used to evaluate the members themselves. Thus a purchasing manager who is judged by the extent to which he or she reduces purchase expenditure is likely to be more cost conscious than a production engineer who is evaluated in terms of the technical efficiency of the production processes he or she designs".¹⁸

Assessing the relative values of alternative product offerings often takes the form of Value Analysis. Webster describes value analysis as: "analysing a purchased product in terms of the function that it performs and the economic value of that function, as well as alternative methods of accomplishing the same function. The objective is to reduce costs

while maintaining the necessary levels of availability and product reliability. In other words to define 'the best buy'".¹⁹

Purchasing practices, such as value analysis, engaged in by the modern buyer re-emphasises the need for the salesperson to act in a consultation role if he/she is to sell to today's organisational buyer. As Cohen says: "Nowadays, purchasers look for salespeople who have a thorough knowledge of what their customers are producing, someone who can offer some powerful insights into helping them make things better, faster and cheaper. In short, purchasing agents want a salesperson who can act as a bridge between all the various departments at both companies, rather than just concentrating on a one-to-one relationship with a particular agent".²⁰

Other writers imply that buying companies will choose a supplier rather than a product but with the nature and quality of that supplier's product being an important variable in the assessment. Schoell and Guiltinan suggest seven specific criteria that might be adopted in such circumstances: Dependability; Product Quality; Cost; Vendor Production Capacity; After-Sale Service; Vendor Reliability and Integrity; and Reciprocity.²¹

Research by Sibley took cognisance of the fact that organisational buying influences come from various departments, each with their own functional values, perceptions and preoccupation's. This research clearly indicates the importance of product quality to the buying centre members in that six of the seven departments researched require that suppliers "regularly meet quality specifications". "Regularly" however is a nebulous and often dangerous word. Meeting quality specifications

on July 1 every fifth year is very regular but it doesn't do much for a company's production planning requirements. "Honesty in dealings" was also identified by Sibley's research as being an important evaluative criterion in selecting a supplier across the various departments.²²

Duncan, from a survey of 400 purchasing agents, as reported by Lee and Dobler found that the evaluative criteria used varied between the evaluation of suppliers of raw materials and suppliers of heavy equipment and that there was an order of importance attached. The findings of the study were as follows:

Raw Materials and Suppliers

- 1st. Reliability of Seller
- 2nd. Continuity of supply under all circumstances
- 3rd. Accessibility of seller
- 4th. Low prices
- 5th. Quick and reliable delivery

Heavy Equipment

- 1st. Reliability of seller
- 2nd. Co-operation of seller
- 3rd. Low prices
- 4th. Quick repair service
- 5th. Past services rendered in a satisfactory manner.²³

The early writers (e.g. Copeland, 1924, Tofte 1950) saw organisational buyers as being professionals who applied entirely objective criteria in making purchasing decisions. They indicated that this individual typified the rational or economic man whose objective was the minimisation of cost and the maximisation of utility. What these writers overlooked was that as personal consumers these individuals made decisions often based on highly emotional criteria.^{24, 25}

Later work by such writers as Webster and Wind recognised the importance of the individual's personal make up; his personality, evoked set, learning process, motivation, preference structure, as being the basic psychological processes that affect his response to buying situations and marketing stimuli. They further recognised that when the individual comes into the office as an organisational buyer that he does not leave his irrational, emotional personality behind and that that personality becomes part of his organisational purchasing decision-making.²⁶

4.6 INFORMATION SOURCES USED BY INDUSTRIAL BUYERS

In evaluating alternative suppliers and product offerings information is naturally an important resource to the buying centre member. Typical sources of information that might be used by members for the identification and evaluation of alternatives include: Memory and Experience; Trade Registers and Catalogues; Trade Journals; Supplier Catalogues; Purchasing Department Supplier Files; Other Purchasing Departments; Trade Shows and Exhibitions; Sales Representatives; Requests for Quotations; and Personal Contacts

In terms of researching, qualifying and evaluating alternative suppliers much research has been conducted to establish the sources of information used by buyers. One such piece of research by Webster and cited by Chisnall (see Table 4.2) is particularly elucidating.²⁷ This clearly shows that the salesperson is seen to be the most important source of information at each stage of the industrial adoption process with the exception of the awareness stage. Thus the importance of the salesperson's presentation to members of the buying centre, either collectively or individually, cannot be over emphasised. Such findings

add further credence to the argument that the salesperson is the most important part of the industrial promotions mix.

Table 4.2: Percentage of Respondents Finding Each Source Important, by Stage in “Buying Process”

	Awareness %	Interest %	Evaluation %	Trial %	Adoption %
Manufacturers’ Salesman	84	90	64	70	56
Trade journals	90	38	22	16	8
Buyers in other companies	18	22	28	16	8
Engineers in other companies	26	34	44	20	18
Trade associate	42	24	14	4	8
Trade shows	26	38	16	12	4

Notes:

1. Respondents were asked to indicate any source that was useful to them at each stage of the buying process.
2. No requirements were placed on the number of sources - it was possible for a respondent to indicate that all sources were important at all stages or that none was useful at any stage.
3. Out of a possible 30 responses (6 sources x 5 stages), the average respondent indicated 10.

Source: Chisnall, Peter M., Strategic Industrial Marketing, 2nd Ed., (London: Prentice Hall, 1989), p.77.)

4.7 FACTORS AFFECTING INDUSTRIAL BUYING BEHAVIOUR

Two sets of factors can be identified as affecting the behaviour, size and shape of the industrial buying centre. These factors are:

The Buy Class

The Product Type

4.7.1 The Buy Class²⁸

In studying industrial purchasing decisions Robinson et al. concluded that there were three distinctive buy classes: a "new task", a "modified rebuy" and a "straight rebuy".²⁹

New Task: The recognised problem is perceived by the buying centre as totally different from previous experiences and therefore it requires a significant amount of information in order to explore alternatives and choose between potential suppliers. As a result of this, the expertise and influence of more people will be sought thus increasing the size of the buying centre and as Hutt and Speh point out involving the buying centre in an "extensive problem solving" situation.³⁰

Straight Rebuy: The organisation is buying an item with a recurring requirement. There is substantial experience in dealing with the need and an established relationship with a particular supplier. The size of the buying centre is minimised (possibly only the purchasing officer) as the organisation is involved in "routinised response behaviour".³¹

Modified Rebuy: A recurring requirement for the item exists but sufficient change has occurred to require modification to the supply procedure. The modification may be the result of a negative reassessment of the existing supplier by the organisation or a lower price / higher quality / better service offer from an alternative supplier. "Limited Problem Solving"³² describes the buying

behaviour and the size of the buying centre will be somewhere between the two extremes suggested above.

Naumann et al. demonstrated how the involvement in the buying centre of the different functional areas of a business will change in relation to the buy class or type of buying situation. Their suggestions specifically concern the purchase of component parts and are shown in Table 4.3.³³

Table 4.3: Buying Center Influence Matrix for Component Parts

PHASE	NEW BUY	MODIFIED REBUY	STRAIGHT REBUY
Need identification:	Engineering	Purchasing	Production
	Purchasing	Production	Purchasing
	R. and D.	Engineering	
	Production		
Establishment of specification:	Engineering	Purchasing	Purchasing
	Purchasing	Production	Engineering
	Production	R. and D.	Production
	R. and D.	Quality Control	
Modification and evaluation of buying alternatives:	Engineering	Purchasing	Purchasing
	Purchasing	Engineering	Engineering
	R. and D.	Production	Production
Supplier selection:	Purchasing	Purchasing	Purchasing
	Engineering	Engineering	Engineering
	R. and D.	Production	Production
	Quality Control		

Source: Naumann, Earl, Douglas J. Lincoln and Robert D. McWilliams: "The Purchase of Components: Functional Areas of Influence", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol.13, 1984, pp.113-122.

As the buy class affects the number and type of people in the buying centre and the extent and type of information required by its members an industrial salesperson's selling strategy will also have to be adapted to meet the changing situation of the customer company. It will also be greatly affected by whether the company is an 'in' supplier or an 'out' supplier.

NEW TASK: In this situation Hutt and Speh suggest: " The industrial marketer..... can gain a differential advantage by participating actively in the initial stages of the procurement process. Here the marketer should gather information on the problems facing the buying organisation, isolate specific requirements, and offer proposals to meet the requirements.

"Marketers who are presently supplying other items to the organisation have an edge over other firms; they can see problems unfolding and are familiar with the personality and behaviour pattern of the organisation."³⁴

STRAIGHT REBUY: "The 'out' supplier faces a number of obstacles. The Non-supplier must convince the organisation that significant benefits can be derived from breaking the routine. This can be difficult because organisational buyers perceive risk in shifting from the known to the unknown. The organisational spotlight shines directly on them if an untested supplier falters. Testing, evaluations, and approvals may be viewed by buyers as costly, time-consuming, and unnecessary.

“The marketing effort of the 'out' supplier rests on an understanding of the basic buying needs of the organisation; information gathering is essential. The marketer must convince organisational buyers that their purchasing requirements have changed or that the requirements should be interpreted differently. The objective is to persuade decision makers to re-examine alternative solutions and revise the preferred list to include the new supplier”.³⁵

MODIFIED REBUY: Again Hutt and Speh suggest: “An 'in' supplier should make every effort to understand and satisfy the procurement need and move decision makers into a straight rebuy. The buying organisation perceives potential payoffs from a re-examination of alternatives. The 'in' supplier should ask why and act immediately to remedy any customer problem. The marketer may be out of touch with the buying organisations requirements.

“The goal of the 'out' supplier should be to hold the organisation in modified rebuy status long enough for the buyer to evaluate an alternative offering. Knowing the factors that led decision makers to re-examine alternatives could be pivotal.”³⁶

4.7.2 The Product Type

Products in the industrial market can be classified as:

- (i) Goods entering the product completely - materials and parts.
- (ii) Goods entering the product partly - capital items.
- (iii) Goods not entering the product - Supplies and services.³⁷

These three types of products can be differentiated on the basis of such factors as price, regularity of recurrence of purchase and importance to the success of the business. These factors are likely to affect organisational buying behaviour in two particular ways. First the number and type of people involved in the buying centre will change according to the product type. Senior management may be involved in the purchase of capital items or of materials and components when they are in the new task situation but is unlikely to get involved in the purchase of operating supplies and services. The design engineer is likely to be involved in the purchase of materials and components but not in the other two. Second, the speed at which the decision-making process is conducted will change. As the item value of a purchase reduces in terms of price and importance, the time spent on making its purchase decision is likely to also. The decision-making process is likely to be slower and more complex as the product type moves from:

Supplies and Services→Materials/Components→Capital Items.

The salesperson must take this variation in the make-up of the buying centre and in the decision making time into account in accordance with the product he is selling. A researcher of buying centre behaviour should be cognisant of the variation also.

4.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter examined the elements of industrial buyer behaviour of particular relevance to the salesperson and therefore to the design of the primary research of this thesis. It is generally accepted that if a

salesperson is to succeed he must first understand the structure, size and behaviour of the buying centre to which he is selling.

Up to six people may be involved in the buying centre. Each of these people fulfil one or more of seven distinct functions: Initiator, User, Decider, Influencer, Buyer, and/or Gatekeeper. The make-up of the buying centre will depend on what is being purchased and the nature of the purchase decision. Production, engineering, financial or senior management personnel may be involved in accordance with the nature and value of the item being purchased and whether or not a similar purchase has been made previously. The Buyer however will be an important member of all buying centres.

Though it is accepted that no two buying decisions are exactly alike it is also accepted that industrial buying centres go through an eight stage process in making a buying decision: (1) Anticipation or recognition of a problem and general solution, (2) Determination of characteristics and quantity of needed item, (3) Description of characteristics and quantity of needed items, (4) Search for and qualification of potential sources, (5) Acquisition and analysis of proposals, (6) Evaluation of proposals and selection of supplier(s), (7) Selection of an order routine, (8) Performance feedback and evaluation.³⁸

In choosing between alternative product offerings and alternative suppliers the criteria of most import to buying centre members seem to be: Dependability, Product Quality, Price, and Reliability. The primary sources of information that they use in their selection are salespeople and trade journals.

As with the literature review presented in Chapter 4 the information assembled for the purposes of compiling this chapter will form the basis for the formulation of several of the items on the primary research instrument. Its findings will also be used in determining the make-up of the sample to be used. The following chapter explains the primary research methodology employed and details the formulation of the questionnaire for the achievement of the research objectives.

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CHAPTER 5.

PRIMARY RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the primary research that was conducted to achieve the research objectives of this thesis. It delineates the research that was conducted and how, where and why it was conducted. The design of the research is based on the findings of the literature review presented in the preceding two chapters.

Given that this thesis is not concerned with the marketing of any specific good or service but with an aspect of industrial marketing in general, the researcher in approaching the primary research adopted the marketing research definition suggested by the Industrial Marketing Research Association as probably the most appropriate. They suggest that Marketing Research is: "The systematic, objective, and exclusive search for and study of facts relevant to any problem in the field of industrial marketing research".¹

5.2 THE MARKETING RESEARCH PROCESS

Practically all writers accept that the marketing researcher, in approaching a marketing problem, should follow a prescribed set of steps.^{2,3,4,5} Dibb et al. explain the purpose of such a process as: "To maintain the control needed for obtaining accurate information, marketers approach marketing research in logical steps. The difference between good and bad research depends on the quality of the input, which includes effective control over the entire marketing research process."⁶

McDaniel and Gates suggest the following research process as appropriate:

- Step 1.** Problem Recognition.
- Step 2.** Exploratory Research.
- Step 3.** Problem Definition (statement of research objectives).
- Step 4.** Research Request Approved.
- Step 5.** Creation of the Research Design.
- Step 6.** Choice of Method of Research.
- Step 7.** Selection of the Sampling Procedure.
- Step 8.** Collection of the Data.
- Step 9.** Analysis of the Data.
- Step 10.** Writing and Presenting the Report.
- Step 11.** Follow Up.⁷

In explaining the research process Dibb et al. offer an important caveat that researchers would do well to observe. They identify that the process steps: ".....should be viewed as an overall approach to conducting research rather than a rigid set of rules to be followed in each project. In planning research projects, marketers must think about each of the steps and how they can best be adjusted for each particular problem".⁸

It was with this caveat in mind that the research for this particular project was planned.

5.2.1 Problem Recognition

The recognition of the object problem of this thesis transpired through the researcher's own interest in personal selling. It was recognised that despite the importance of personal selling in a company's promotions mix (see particularly Section 2.3 of this thesis) the extent of research into the specific Irish situation has been limited. Practically all literature on

the subject of personal selling is from foreign writers, writing about foreign situations. This research attempts to take a preliminary step in redressing that balance. By addressing the general situation regarding industrial selling and salespeople in Ireland from the perception of the industrial buying centre member it establishes an up to date foundation on which further research may be based.

5.2.2 Exploratory Research to Define the Problem

In attempting to define the problem this researcher conducted extensive secondary research and literature review. The exploratory research provided an understanding of personal selling in general, of the job of the personal seller as an individual in particular and of the behaviour exhibited in industrial buying. In doing so it constituted the planning foundation of effective and efficient primary research as well as forming the basis of chapters two, three and four of this thesis.

A series of depth interviews were also conducted with a number of sales managers, salespeople, purchasing agents, and sales/marketing academics in order to get the broadest possible perspective of the problem definition and to establish the information that was necessary to collect in order to suggest relevant solutions to the identified problem.

5.2.3 Problem Definition (Statement of Research Objectives)

As Churchill suggests: "An old adage says 'A problem well defined is half-solved'. This is especially true in marketing research, for it is only when the problem has been clearly defined and the objectives of the research precisely stated that research can be designed properly.

"Properly" here means not only that the research will generate the kinds of answers needed but that it will do so efficiently".⁹ The statement of problem definition and primary objectives for this project set out in detail what the research aimed to achieve and acted as the signpost that gave direction to all other tasks in the succeeding stages of the research process. This statement of primary objectives read:

The purpose of this research is to establish a profile of the Irish industrial sales force from the perspective of the industrial buying centre member so as to identify the inherent strengths and weaknesses in that body and to suggest how the strengths might be used most advantageously and how the weaknesses might be eliminated.

In order to achieve this statement of primary objectives eight specific research questions were prepared. These eight research questions are as previously listed in Section 1.3 of this thesis:

1. What are the essential qualities of a successful salesperson in the opinion of Irish industrial buying centre members?
2. Whether and how often Irish industrial customers formally re-evaluate their suppliers?
3. What are the most important sources of information used by Irish industrial buying centre members in making a purchasing decision for an item not previously purchased by the company?
4. What are the most important criteria used by Irish industrial buying centre members in selecting a supplier for an item not previously purchased by the company?

5. How do Irish industrial buying centre members rate salespeople who call on them on the basis of a set of personal attributes applicable to personal selling?
6. How do Irish industrial buying centre members rate salespeople who call on them on the basis of a set of vocational skills applicable to personal selling?
7. What do Irish industrial buying centre members regard as the major areas for improvement with Irish salespeople?
8. Does the opinion of Irish industrial buying centre members regarding Irish salespeople who call vary in relation to the size of their employing company, the nationality of their employing company, the nature of the industry in which they participate, their specific functional position, their length of time spent in that position, the member's age, or the number of salespeople calling on them.

The research population of interest was defined as **buying centre members from the Irish manufacturing sector**. The chosen definition of population was arrived at on the basis that the buying centre members are the other half of the buyer - seller dyad. They are the people who decide to select or not select a particular supplier, to buy or not to buy a particular product offering. They are the people who ultimately determine the success or failure of the salesperson. The researcher therefore regards this population as the most appropriate source of opinion on salespeople.

The decision to concentrate on the manufacturing sector as opposed to spreading the research across the three main organisational sectors;

manufacturing, service and governmental/institutional, was made at an early stage of the research process. This decision to concentrate ensured that the primary research respondents would face broadly similar organisational and environmental conditions and would experience similar structure, content and process factors in their purchasing activities as examined in Chapter 4 of this thesis (see particularly Sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5). This broad similarity would therefore facilitate valid statistical comparison. It was deemed that the primary producer, service and government/institutional sectors were sufficiently different to make the comparison of cross-sectoral findings inappropriate and even uninterpretable.

The population of interest of this research therefore consisted of the buying centre members of the 6433 manufacturing establishments that existed in the Republic of Ireland in 1992^{10,11}.

5.3 PRIMARY RESEARCH DESIGN

5.3.1 Sample Selection

The initial decision in designing the primary research was to identify what member or members of the relevant buying centres should be selected as sample members. Ideally all members of the centre should be researched in order to get a complete picture but as Bonoma et al observed: "The complex, vague and often changing composition of the buying centre makes it difficult to ascertain empirically just who is involved in organisational buying"¹²

Consideration was also given to the views of Anderson et al. who suggest: "Surveying one member of the decision-making unit (DMU) is widely considered to give an incomplete picture however, collecting data from the entire DMU is so difficult and demanding of resources as to be impractical; indeed, the one published article to survey the entire DMU (Moriarty and Spekman 1984) required another article to describe how it was done (Moriarty and Bateson 1982). Further, once surveyed, the DMU apparently does not agree anyway".¹³

Cognisant of these opinions it was decided that a single member of a buying centre would be selected, thereby trading the insights of detail for the insights provided by generality and statistical testing. However because of the established special importance of the purchasing agent in the buying centre as established in Section 4.3 of this thesis it was decided to select two independent samples. One sample being made up of professionally qualified, purchasing agents, the other consisting of other (non-purchasing) buying centre members. This research strategy allows for a direct comparison between the opinions of those whose full-time occupation is purchasing and who are professionally qualified in the function with those who are involved in purchasing activities only as part of their full-time occupation in another functional department such as production or engineering.

Sub-population 1: Professionally qualified purchasing agents.

This sub-population was defined as professionally qualified purchasing agents whose full-time occupation is in the purchasing management and materials procurement function (**the research element**) and who work

with manufacturing companies (**the sampling unit**) in the Republic of Ireland (**the extent**).

For the purpose of selecting a sample from this population the membership list of the Irish Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management (IIPMM) was used as the sampling frame. This institute, according to its publicity material, is the only organisation of any description offering a professional qualification in purchasing and materials management in the Republic of Ireland and therefore its membership list was deemed to constitute an appropriate sampling frame. It is accepted by the researcher however that some graduates of the institute may not have retained membership and that purchasing agents who are not members of the IIPMM may have a professional qualification from a similar foreign institution and that this limitation may subject the sample to some bias. It is also accepted that purchasing agents who have no formal qualification, but who have acquired expertise through experience may be equally professional. The IIPMM have a total membership of 336, of which 215 are employed by manufacturing firms and therefore appropriate to this research. Out of this sub-population a sample of 40 per cent (86 elements) was selected.

Having numbered the list of population elements from 1 to 215 inclusive the sample was selected by using the random number generation facility of the Microsoft Excel software package¹⁴. As this facility allows the selection of a number (or in this case a sample element) independent of all other selected numbers and as therefore each member of the population had an equal, known, non-zero chance of being selected the sample can be regarded as a simple random sample.

The sample list, classified by geographic location and IIPMM branch membership, is included in Appendix B to this thesis.

Sub-population 2: Other Buying Centre Members.

This sub-population was defined as managing directors, production managers and engineers (**the research element**) who work for manufacturing companies (**the sampling unit**) in the Republic of Ireland (**the extent**). The definition of "other buying centre members" as being made up of managing directors, production managers and engineers is based on the research findings of Jackson et al.¹⁵ Their findings, cited in Tables 4.1 of this thesis, identified that other than purchasing agents these three functional types predominated the membership of the industrial buying centre. Engineers in this case includes production engineers, maintenance engineers and quality control engineers.

The chosen sampling frame was the list of manufacturing firms in Ireland provided by the Industrial Development Authority¹⁶ and Shannon Development Company.¹⁷ This list extends to 6433 units.

A probability sample of 164 companies (2.5 per cent of the population) was selected from the sampling frame, again using the random number generation facility of Microsoft Excel¹⁸ having numbered all companies on the list from 1 to 6433 inclusive.

This list of sampling units was then subdivided equally among the three functional types, managing director, production manager and engineer. The chosen sampling element in the first and every third company on the list thereafter was the managing director (or other equivalent title), the

chosen sampling element in the second and every third company on the list thereafter was the production manager (or other equivalent title) and the chosen sampling element in the third company and every third company on the list thereafter was an engineer (production, design, maintenance or quality control). In many instances, particularly in the case of smaller companies, situations arose where there was no person specifically employed as production manager or as engineer. In this event the person who fulfilled these functional responsibilities was selected as the sampling element. This often transpired to be the owner/managing director.

As the selection of a specific sample element - managing director, production manager or engineer - was dependent on the selection of the previous element this sample should be regarded as a quasi-random sample rather than a simple random one. Quasi-random samples however offer: "by far the most practical approximation to random sampling".¹⁹

Ultimately questionnaires were mailed to 92 managing directors, 45 production managers and 27 engineers. The names of the appropriate individual to contact in each company was researched through the lists provided by the Industrial Development Authority,²⁰ the Shannon Development Company,²¹ The Kompas Industrial directory,²² the Aspect: Top 1200 Companies²³ and telephone contact with a small number of companies selected in the sample.

The sample list, classified by geographic location, is included in Appendix C to this thesis.

The sizes of both samples were determined in accordance with the suggestions of Tull and Hawkins who identify six methods of determining sample size:

1. Unaided judgement.
2. All-you-can-afford.
3. Average size of sample for similar studies.
4. Required size per cell.
5. Use of a traditional statistical model.
6. Use of a Bayesian statistical model.²⁴

Cognisance was taken of methods 4, 5, and 6 though an inability to accurately predict the non-response from the mail surveys minimised their potential usefulness unless a particularly large sample was selected. Ultimately methods 2 and 3 predominated the determination of the sample sizes. Particular attention was paid to the sample sizes used by such researchers as Michaels and Day, and Swan et. al. who conducted broadly similar research, albeit on a much larger population of interest.^{25,26}

Though the sample sizes identified above may appear relatively small in absolute terms it is natural that an institutional sample will be smaller than an individual or household sample given that the sample will still comprise a large percentage of the population as the population itself is relatively small.

5.3.2 Data Collection method

The chosen data collection method was the structured direct interview using the mail survey technique. The choice of interview type was

largely directed by the decision tree developed by Tull and Hawkins and presented in figure 5.1.²⁷

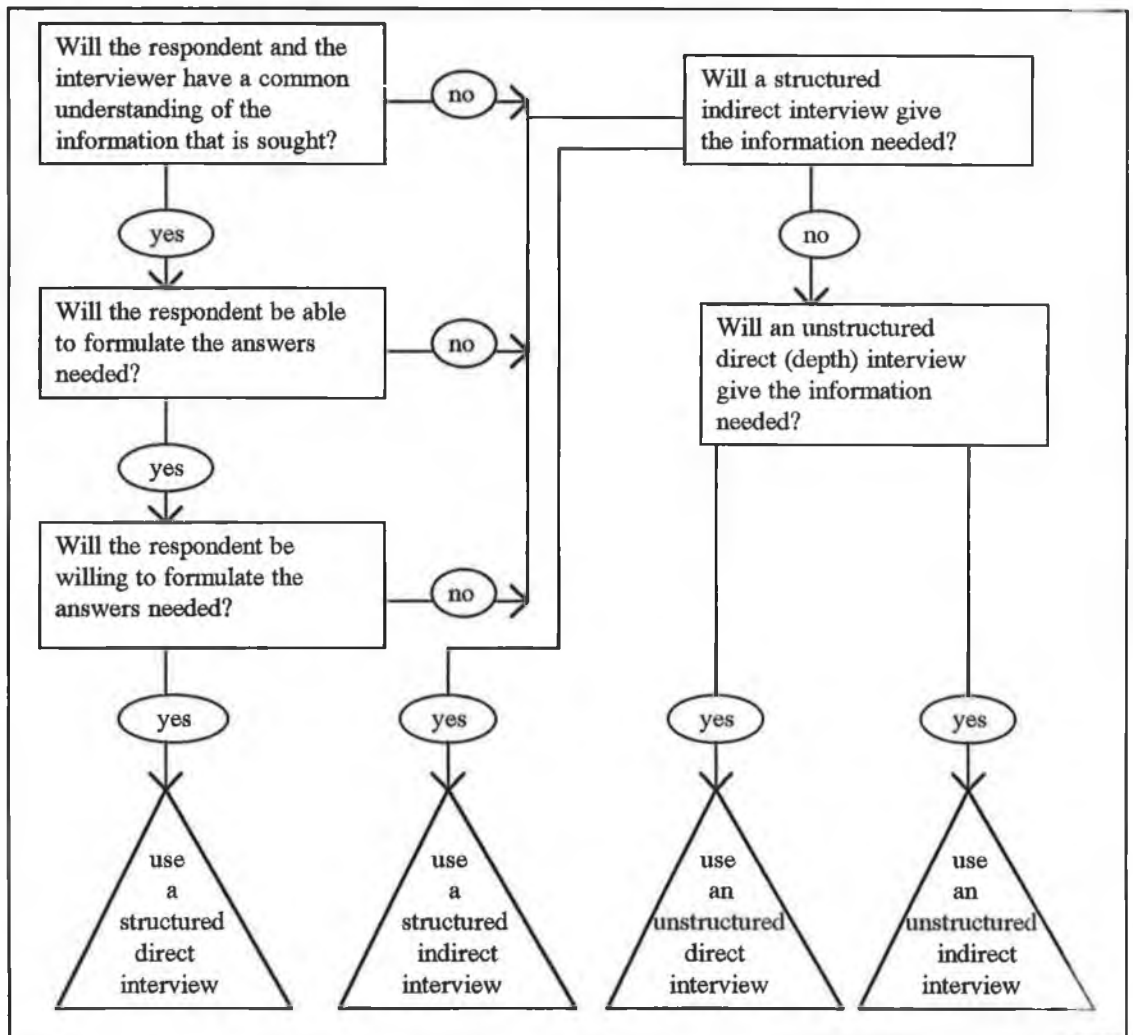
A structured - direct interview in the words of Tull and Hawkins is: "..... a prespecified set of relatively direct or obvious questions".²⁸ Given the nature of the information required by this research it was deemed that this was the most appropriate type of interview.

In choosing a data collection technique the following factors as identified by McDaniel and Gates were taken into account:

- Sampling Precision.
- Budget Available.
- Need to Expose Respondent to Various Stimuli.
- Quality of data Required.
- Length of Questionnaire.
- Necessity of Having Respondent Perform Certain Specialised Tasks.
- Incidence Rate.
- Degree of Structure of Questionnaire.
- Time Available to Complete Survey.²⁹

Having considered these factors it was concluded that the most appropriate data collection technique was the Mail Survey. It is generally accepted that the high rate of non-response and the attendant sampling bias is the greatest problem associated with this technique. The researcher was confident however that by using a well designed and well laid out collection instrument and an effective covering letter that this problem could be overcome.

FIGURE 5.1: FLOW DIAGRAM FOR DECISION ON TYPE OF INTERVIEW TO USE



Source: Tull, Donald S. and Del I. Hawkins: Marketing Research: Measurement and Method, 4/e. (New York: Macmillan, 1984), p.99.

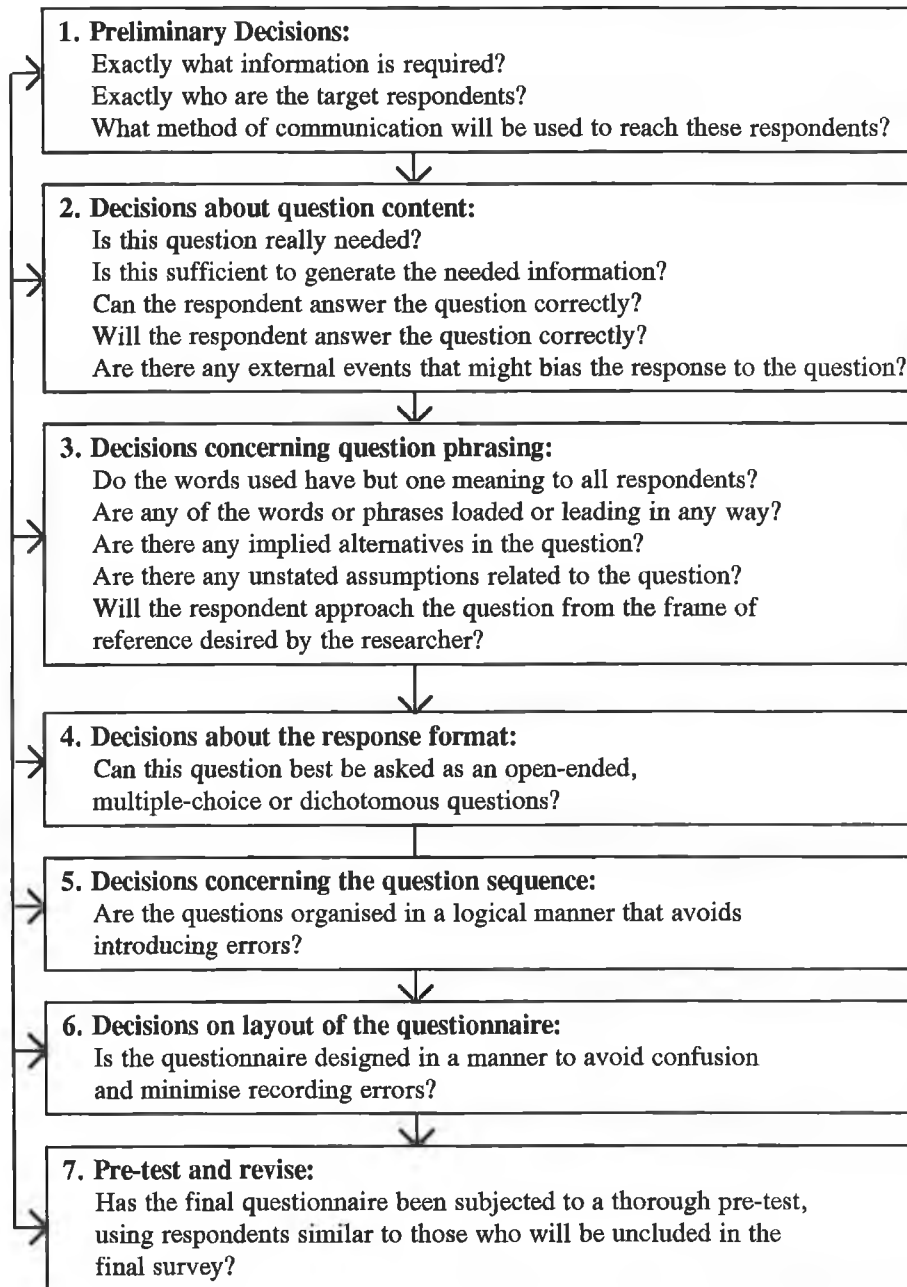
5.3.3 Questionnaire Design

The procedure used in designing the questionnaire broadly followed the process suggested by Tull and Hawkins and shown in Figure 5.2.³⁰

Taking the factors identified in Figure 5.2 into account a nine question questionnaire was designed with an additional section for the collection of cross-classification details. To standardise the responses and to minimise the possibility of researcher interpretational errors at the analysis stage, a structured questionnaire with mainly closed-ended questions was used. Simple ranking and scaling techniques were utilised and the questions were formed using words of common usage and free from jargon and technical terms.

The objective in designing the questionnaire was to arrive at a layout and wording format that would be understandable to potential respondents, would achieve an acceptable response rate and would fulfil the information requirement objectives of the research. The initial questionnaire was presented to a selection of marketing academics, including the researcher's academic supervisor, for their criticisms and recommendations. These criticisms resulted in several amendments. This amended version was then pretested on a group of purchasing agents, managing directors and production managers and their comments and criticisms were incorporated into the final questionnaire. A copy of the final questionnaire is presented in Appendix D to this thesis and the rationale behind the use and format of each question is explained hereunder.

Figure 5.2: QUESTIONNAIRE CONSTRUCTION DECISIONS.



Source: Adapted from Tull, Donald S. and Hawkins, Del I.; *Essentials of Marketing Research*, (New York: Macmillan, 1994), p.254.

5.3.4 Description Of Questionnaire

This section examines the rationale behind each question on the questionnaire:

1. From your experience of dealing with different salespeople who call on you at your office/premises what in your opinion are the five essential qualities of a good salesperson? (Please rank 1 = most important, etc.)

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

While it might normally be regarded as poor design to start a questionnaire with an open-ended question that requires effort on the part of the respondent it was decided that in this case such a question was an appropriate opener. It introduced the subject matter of the research to the respondent thus indicating that the questionnaire concerned a subject with which they were familiar. It was further important that this question be at the beginning as it sought the respondent's unprompted opinion as to the essential qualities of a good salesperson. It was felt that if the question was left to a later stage the respondent's opinion might be prompted by the closed responses of other questions. It is accepted that the respondent might read through the full questionnaire before answering any question and thereby be unavoidably prompted but in a mail survey this possibility could not be legislated for.

This question was designed to contribute to the resolution of the first research question identified in the thesis introduction and in Section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

2. About how many salespeople do you meet with in your own office/premises in an average week?
-

Question 2 sought to establish the number of salespeople a respondent meets in an average week. Its objective was to establish whether or not there was a difference of opinion between respondents depending on the number of salespeople they meet. The words "about" and "average" were used as it was established in discussions with potential respondents at the exploratory stage of the research that it would be difficult for a respondent to establish a specific number. "Your own office/premise" was used to eliminate retail salespeople, telesalespeople and other salespeople that the respondent might call to, from the respondents frame of reference as the research was only concerned with salespeople who call on the customer/potential customer.

This question was designed to contribute to the resolution of the eight research question identified in the thesis introduction and in section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

3. Does your company formally re-evaluate the efficiency of your existing suppliers on a regular basis?

YES

NO

If "NO" go to Question 4.

If "YES" approximately how often do you re-evaluate them:

- Every 1 - 3 months
- Every 4 - 6 months
- Every 7 - 9 months
- Every 10 - 12 months
- Other (Please specify) _____

This question sought to establish whether the respondents' companies formally assessed the efficiency of their existing suppliers and if so at what intervals did they do so. Its objective was to indicate the most appropriate time for an out - supplier's salesperson to present the alternative offering to the potential customer, as it is during the reassessment process that the in - supplier is most vulnerable, particularly if a competitive alternative is available. This was the only question on the questionnaire with a skip pattern.

This question was designed to contribute to the resolution of the second research question identified in the thesis introduction and in section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

4. From the following list please **rank** the 3 sources of information that are most important to you in making a purchase decision for **an item not previously purchased** by your company (please rank in order 1 = most important, etc.). Please feel free to add additional sources as appropriate.

- Trade Journals _____
- Manufactures/Distributors Promotional Material _____
- Trade Shows/Exhibitions _____

Manufactures/Distributors Salespeople	_____
Buyers from other Companies	_____
In-house Sources	_____
Trade Associates	_____
Others (please specify) _____	_____
_____	_____

This question sought to establish the sources of information that respondents use to acquire knowledge regarding an item not previously purchased by their company and to establish the importance of the salesperson as a source of such information. Respondents were asked to rank the three most important sources. Three was chosen because of the infrequent occurrence of the event, particularly in the case of established companies. It was felt that if the ranking list was extended beyond three that respondents might be required to force answers due to lack of familiarity. "An item not previously purchased by your company" was specified as an unspecified purchase type might cause confusion in the minds of respondents and consequently lead to inconsistency in answering thus making statistical analysis and direct comparison an invidious exercise.

The response was presented as an ordinal scale. The items on the scale were established from the literature review as cited in Section 4.6 of this thesis and from discussions with respondents in the pilot tests of the questionnaire.

This question was designed to contribute to the resolution of the third research question identified in the thesis introduction and in Section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

5. From the following list please **rank** the 5 criteria that are most important to you in selecting a supplier of **an item not previously purchased** by your company. (Please rank in order 1 = most important, etc.). Please feel free to insert additional criteria as appropriate.

Delivery	_____
After Sales Service	_____
Quality of Product/Service	_____
Price	_____
Reputation of Supplier	_____
Past experience of dealing with supplier	_____
Reliability of Supplier	_____
Competence of Suppliers Salespeople	_____
Possibility of Reciprocal Arrangement	_____
Others (please specify) _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

This question sought to establish the criteria that respondents use to select a supplier. Due to the ongoing nature of the activity it was regarded as feasible to ask the respondents to extend the ranked list to five most important criteria. The words "an item not previously purchased by your company" were used for the same reason outlined in the explanation to question 4 above. As with question 4 the response was presented in an ordinal scale, closed format. The scale items were established from the literature review as cited in Section 4.5 of this thesis.

This question was designed to contribute to the resolution of the fourth research question identified in the thesis introduction and in Section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

6. On the following list of **personal attributes** please rate the sales people who called on you in the past 12 months on the basis (1) excellent, (2) very good, (3) good, (4) fair, (5) poor, (6) no opinion. Please circle the appropriate number.

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Personal Appearance	1	2	3	4	5	6
Courtesy	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pleasantness of Manner	1	2	3	4	5	6
Dependability	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sincerity	1	2	3	4	5	6
Imagination	1	2	3	4	5	6
Technical Ability	1	2	3	4	5	6
Positive Attitude	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communication Skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Self Confidence	1	2	3	4	5	6
Enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5	6
Punctuality	1	2	3	4	5	6

Question 6 sought to establish the respondents' perceptions of salespeople who called on them on the basis of a list of personal attributes. "In the past 12 months" was used to create a frame of reference in the respondent's mind so as to achieve consistency among all respondents. The object of the question is to develop a profile of the salesperson in the Irish industrial market. The term "salesperson" was used to achieve a

profile of salespeople in general, irrespective of their nationality. It was felt by the researcher that in a mail survey it would be inappropriate to expect the respondents to differentiate between Irish born salespeople, salespeople who live in Ireland, salespeople who work for Irish companies, Irish salespeople who work for foreign companies and foreign salespeople. Based on this it was felt that if the term "Irish salespeople" was used that the validity of the responses achieved might be statistically suspect. It was regarded as being of particular importance that such a situation be avoided in what was one of the more important questions on the questionnaire.

It is accepted that the chosen approach of using "salespeople" and "in the last 12 months" will provide a composite picture of the average salesperson which might be a limitation. However the alternative of asking the respondent to rate salespeople of a particular nationality, to rate a specific salesperson or to rate the last salesperson he/she met would have been subject to halo-affect bias and potential statistical distortion. The chosen approach sought the insights of generality and statistical testing. Particular attention was paid to this question and to question 7 in the debriefing stage of the pilot test. It was found that the chosen format posed no significant problems for the respondents.

The response format was presented as itemised rating scales of the interval type. The personal attributes used were generated from the literature review presented in Chapter Three of this thesis. "No opinion" was included to overcome the potential problem of central tendency though it ultimately transpired that very few respondents chose this option.

This question was designed to contribute to the resolution of the fifth research question identified in the thesis introduction and in Section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

7. Using the same scale please **rate** the salespeople who called on you in the past 12 months on the following **selling skills**.

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Preparation for Sales calls	1	2	3	4	5	6
Knowledge of our company products and processes	1	2	3	4	5	6
Own product knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	6
Questioning to understand our needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ability to listen	1	2	3	4	5	6
Willingness to work with our technical people	1	2	3	4	5	6
Imagination in applying his/her products to our needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Diplomacy in dealing with operating depts.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Willing to keep me updated	1	2	3	4	5	6
Follow-up after order placement and delivery	1	2	3	4	5	6

Question 7 sought to establish the respondents perceptions of Irish salespeople based on a list of selling skills. Its phrasing, presentation and format being of the same nature as question 6 above. The list of selling skills used was also generated from the literature review presented in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

This question was designed to contribute to the resolution of the sixth research question identified in the thesis introduction and in Section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

8. Based on your answers to the previous questions what do you consider to be the three major areas for improvement with Irish salespeople.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

Question 8 was an open-ended question that sought the respondents unprompted opinion of the major weaknesses they associate with Irish salespeople. It was decided however that the word "weakness" might have an inflammatory affect and therefore "major areas for improvement" was used to overcome this potential problem.

The term "Irish salespeople" was specifically used in this question to achieve an understanding of Irish salespeople as distinct from foreign salespeople. In phrasing the question cognisance was taken of the potential problems associated with specifying a particular nationality as delineated in the explanation of Question 6 above. Particular attention was paid to this aspect in the questionnaire pretest and it was established that with Questions 6 and 7 creating a frame of reference in the mindset of the respondents that the difference in phraseology posed no interpretative problems for the respondents and therefore allowed for the achievement of the respective objectives of the questions.

This question was designed to contribute to the resolution of the seventh research question identified in the thesis introduction and in Section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

9. Please use this space to add anything further about Irish salespeople which you regard as important.

Question 9 was an open-ended question that asked respondents to add anything further about Irish salespeople that they regarded as important. It gave the respondent scope to express his/her opinion on aspects not necessarily covered in the preceding questions.

Rather than making a contribution to any particular research question this question in allowing the sample elements the opportunity to air their personal "pet subjects" or "hobby horses" presented the possibility of improving the overall response rate. It transpired however, not unexpectedly, that the question was subject to significant item non-response. Those who did use the space primarily did so to expand on their answers to question 8.

CLASSIFICATION DETAILS

Finally please complete the following details for the purpose of classifying the data already provided.

Type of Company:

Employment Size:	Less than 50	<input type="checkbox"/>
	50 - 100	<input type="checkbox"/>
	101 - 500	<input type="checkbox"/>
	500+	<input type="checkbox"/>

Ownership:	Foreign Multinational	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Subsidiary of Foreign Multinational	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>

Product(s) Produced: _____

Position Details:

Official Job Title _____

How many years have you held this position? _____ years

Your approximate age is:	< 20	<input type="checkbox"/>	40 - 49	<input type="checkbox"/>
	20 - 29	<input type="checkbox"/>	50 - 59	<input type="checkbox"/>
	30 - 39	<input type="checkbox"/>	60 +	<input type="checkbox"/>

The final section of the questionnaire was used to gather additional information in order to cross-classify the information gathered in the preceding questions. This section sought information regarding:

- The size of the company.
- The nationality of the company.
- The nature of the company's business.
- The respondent's position in the company.
- The respondent's experience in that position.
- The respondent's age.

This section of the questionnaire was designed to contribute to the resolution of the eight research question identified in the thesis introduction and in Section 5.2.3 of this chapter.

In addition to the information gathering items the questionnaire included the following header which introduced the nature of the subject matter:

QUESTIONNAIRE

To establish a profile of the Irish Industrial Sales force

and the following footer which thanked the respondent for his/her co-operation and assured his/her confidentiality.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION.

YOUR CONFIDENTIALITY IS ASSURED.

5.3.5 Cover Letter

The cover letter was designed with the objective of maximising the overall response rate, the researcher being conscious of the fact that mail surveys traditionally have poor response rates. It was constructed largely in accordance with the proposals of Erdos, shown in Figure 5.3.³¹

Figure 5.3: Contents Of Cover Letter For A Mail Questionnaire

1. Personal Communication.
2. Asking for a favour.
3. Importance of the research project and its purpose.
4. Importance of the research recipient.
5. Importance of the replies in general.
6. Importance of the replies when the reader is not qualified to answer most questions.
7. How the recipient may benefit from this research.
8. Completing the questionnaire will only take a short time.
9. The questionnaire can easily be answered.
10. A stamped reply envelope is enclosed.
11. How recipient was selected.
12. Answers are anonymous or confidential.
13. Offer to send report on results of survey.
14. Note of urgency.
15. Appreciation of sender.
16. Importance of sender.
17. Importance of senders organisation.
18. Description and purpose of the incentive.
19. Avoiding bias.
20. Style.
21. Format and appearance.
22. Brevity.

Source: Erdos, Paul L, Professional Mail Surveys,(Melbourn, Fla; Robert E. Kreiger Publishing Co. Inc, 1983), pp.102 -103.

The letter was personalised and made liberal use of the words "you" and "your". It emphasised the importance of the research, the importance of the sending organisation, the importance of the recipient's opinions, the ease of answering the questions and the scientific nature of the sample selection. It also incorporated a note on the requirement for urgency in response and an assurance of the confidentiality afforded to the respondent.

Despite incorporating so many disparate factors the letter was nonetheless brief and well laid out. A copy of the letter is shown in Figure 5.4. Although the researcher was advised to include an offer to send respondents a report of the survey findings as an incentive to encourage response it was decided for purely economic reasons to exclude such an offer. Like the questionnaire, the covering letter was also pretested. Expert opinion suggested some modifications but those typical of the final sample responded positively to its style and format and therefore the original version was used.

5.4 DATA COLLECTION AND NON RESPONSE

The questionnaires to the sample of purchasing professionals were mailed during the week beginning September 14, 1993 while the questionnaires to the sample of other buying centre members were mailed during the week beginning September 21, 1993. Responses were received over a nine week period up to and including the week ending November 1, 1993.

In total 250 questionnaires were mailed. 86 to purchasing professionals and 164 to other buying centre members. A total of 113 questionnaires were returned. 43 from purchasing professionals, a 51 per cent response rate, and 70 from other buying centre members, a 43 per cent response rate. These response rates compare favourably with similar studies such as Michaels and Day³² and Swan et. al..³³

Figure 5.4. Cover Letter

Cyril Gavaghan,
Business Studies Dept.,
Regional Technical College,
Clash,
Tralee,
Co. Kerry.¹⁷

Name,¹
Job Title,
Company and
Address of
Sample member.

6 Oct. 1993

Dear Mr Surname¹

Will you do me a favour?²

I am conducting a nation-wide survey³ among industrial executives and managers⁴ in the manufacturing sector. The purpose of the research is to develop a profile of the Irish Industrial salesperson and on the basis of the opinions of industrial practitioners such as yourself to recommend specific improvements that will increase the professionalism and efficiency of our sales force.^{3,7}

This research is being conducted as part of a thesis for a Master of Business Studies (Marketing)³ degree through Dublin City University¹⁷ I am concerned that the study be based on practical reality rather than academic theory. Your¹ opinions therefore are important to the success of the research.⁵

Your name¹ was selected in a random sample using the membership list of the Irish Institute of Purchasing and Materials Management.¹¹ You will notice that the questionnaire is not numbered and you are not required to give your name or that of your company. In this way you retain complete confidentiality.¹² I also enclose a stamped, addressed envelope for your convenience.¹⁰

It will take only a short time⁸ to answer the simple questions⁹ on the attached questionnaire, then please return the completed questionnaire to the above address at your earliest convenience.¹⁴

Your co-operation in this matter is much appreciated.¹⁵

Yours sincerely,

Cyril Gavaghan,¹

Note: The numbers refer to the corresponding items in Figure 5.3.

The particularly high response rate from purchasing professionals can probably be accounted for by these respondents' special interest in the subject matter.

Though the response rate is much higher than is normal for mail surveys the possibility of non-response bias is nonetheless a limitation.

Due to the anonymous nature of the survey, a factor employed to increase the response rate, it was not possible to contact a sample of the non-respondents to establish their reasons for not responding. However it may be surmised that the following factors may have been involved in a sample member's decision not to respond:

- Lack of time/Too busy:
- No prior notification of request:
- Difficult first question: The first question on the questionnaire was open-ended and required some thought. On the basis of "first impressions" this may have given the perception that the entire questionnaire was equally difficult and led to a decision not to respond. This situation could not be avoided as the research objectives sought an unprompted expression of the respondents' opinions regarding the qualities of a good salesperson. It was therefore necessary to have this question first so that the other questions would not prompt the respondent.
- Questions too difficult overall: This may have applied in particular to questions 1, 6, 7, and 8 which may have required considerable mental effort.
- Length of questionnaire: It was a relatively lengthy questionnaire and sample members could possibly not afford the time for its completion. In this respect however the words of Tull and Hawkins

should be noted. They suggest: "The length of the questionnaire does not appear to have a major impact on the response rate".³⁴

- No interest in subject matter: This may have applied in particular to the sample of other buying centre members as distinct from the purchasing professionals whose job of necessity involves considerable interaction with salespeople.
- Selected sample over-researched: Because of the relatively small number of industrial organisations in the Irish economy it is likely that their personnel, particularly their managing directors, are the recipients of many questionnaires from professional research organisations, academic institutions and other organisations. This inevitably leads such personnel to increasingly decline response.
- No repeat mailing to encourage further response: Under the circumstances this was not possible as the anonymous nature of the survey meant that it could not be identified who had or had not responded.
- Respondents were not offered a copy of the research results: For economic reasons sample members were not offered a copy of the research results as an incentive to respond. Tull and Hawkins suggest that: "Promises of a copy of the results of the survey do not appear to increase the response rates even among industrial respondents".³⁵ This opinion however is contradicted by many other research authorities³⁶ and may have been a factor in this research.
- No incentive offered for response: The decision to omit a monetary incentive, other than a stamped addressed envelope, was made on economic grounds. In this respect Tull and Hawkins say: "Prepaid monetary incentives appear to work with both commercial and general public populations".³⁷

Two of the returns from purchasing professionals sample were unusable as the respondents had changed positions within their respective companies and consequently as they were no longer dealing directly with salespeople they were regarded as unsuitable to answer the substantive questions on the questionnaire. The useable response from this sample was therefore 48%.

All responses from the "other buying centre members" sample were useable.

Both sets of responses were subject to item non-response whereby respondents failed to answer all or part of a particular question or questions on the questionnaire. The remaining responses on those questionnaires however were useable. The instances of item non-response are noticeable in the Primary Research Findings, Chapter 6 to this thesis, where the total response to a particular question is less than the total survey response. It is notable that the extent of item non-response is far more extensive among "other buying centre members" than among purchasing professionals. This may be because of the purchasing professional's greater interest in the subject matter. It is also notable that question 9 was the principle question not responded to. This is not surprising, nor indeed unexpected. As identified previously it was only included to encourage overall response by giving sample members a "soapbox" from which they might air their pet topics which might not have been specifically adverted to in the preceding questions. Naturally many respondents did not avail of the opportunity.

5.5 ENCODING THE DATA

With the exception of questions 1, 8 and 9 the questions were encoded, that is a numeric code was assigned to the various alternative responses, prior to the administration of the questionnaire. The numeric codes however were omitted from the questionnaire that was mailed to avoid any confusion among potential respondents.

Questions 1, 8 and 9, being open-ended necessitated alternative treatment. The responses to questions 1 and 8 were first listed. This listing was then consolidated because naturally many answers had essentially the same or a closely related meaning. This consolidated list of responses was then encoded.

Question 9 was not analysed statistically as such as those who responded primarily used the opportunity to expand on their answer to question 8 though a small number of interesting comments were extracted and are included in the findings.

5.6 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

All the data generated from the two samples were analysed using SYSTAT - The data analysis software package.³⁸

5.7. LIMITATIONS OF THE PRIMARY RESEARCH.

While every effort was made throughout the entire process to ensure validity and reliability the research is nonetheless subject to certain biases and other limitations. Being based on a sample survey rather than a

census this is inevitable. In addition to the weaknesses identified throughout the text of this chapter the author also draws the reader's attention to other potential limitations of the research.

Though the samples were scientifically selected using the simple random sample and quasi-random sample techniques respectively, logically the results are still subject to chance variations. While the sample sizes were deemed sufficient for statistical analysis, larger samples, though not eliminating this potential error, would at least have reduced it. Such larger samples would also have ensured greater applicability of the chi-square technique by reducing the proportion of spare cells in the marginal tables.

The frame used to select the sample of professional purchasers also gives rise to potential error. The one extensive list of professional purchasing personnel in Ireland identified by the researcher was the membership list of the Irish Institute of Purchasing and Materials Managers. This list was used as the sampling frame though the researcher accepts that there are many highly professional purchasers in the country who are not members of the IIPMM. However their identification and accessibility was not available to this researcher.

By virtue of the fact that a percentage of the samples did not respond the results must also be subject to non-response error. One must presume that there is a difference between those who responded and those who chose not to. Response bias is also a possibility, particularly in relation to questions 4 and 5 on the questionnaire. Being of multiple choice response format it was possible for the respondent to deem it more convenient to utilise the list of options provided rather than to undergo

the mental exertion of identifying and phrasing alternatives, even if those alternatives were the more accurate responses. Likewise in this regard for social reasons it might be regarded as difficult for anyone to suggest that "quality of product/service" was anywhere other than in the top five criteria used to select a supplier. This specific problem might have been overcome by the use of depth interviews rather than a structured mail survey.

The use of the term "salespeople who called on you in the last 12 months" in Questions 6 and 7 while using the term "Irish salespeople" in Questions 8 and 9 could give rise to potential interpretational problems on the part of respondents. The rationale behind the chosen design of each question is explained in Section 5.3.3 above. Particular attention was paid to this difference in phraseology during the debriefing sessions following the interviews pretesting the questionnaire. It was found that the difference posed no particular problem to the respondents and that therefore the researcher could depend on the statistical validity of the responses achieved.

In designing the sample and the questionnaire it proved impossible to take into account the fact that the make-up of the buying centre will vary depending on the product type being purchased. This limitation is particularly notable in relation to questions 4 and 5 on the questionnaire. These questions asked the respondent to respond in relation to "...an item not previously purchased by your company". It can be presumed that responses may vary depending on whether the item in question was a piece of capital equipment or an element of supplies and services. The additional problem is that respondents may have used alternative product types as references in responding to the questions. In addition it might

be accepted that the sources of information and the selection criteria used may vary depending on the buy class - new buy, modified rebuy, straight rebuy - whereas questions 4 and 5 specified a new buy situation. As a result of these two apparent deficiencies the responses to these questions should be regarded as generalisations rather than specifics. To overcome the deficiencies however would have required the development of an overly complex questionnaire thus increasing the possibility of non-response.

In light of the limitations and potential research errors identified above the researcher advises caution in the generalisation of the results of the survey to the full population and particularly to the non-manufacturing industrial sectors.

5.8 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter details the primary research that was undertaken to fulfil the research objectives of this thesis. The primary objectives were defined as:

The purpose of this research is to establish a profile of the Irish industrial sales force from the perspective of the industrial buying centre member so as to identify the inherent strengths and weaknesses in that body and to suggest how the strengths might be used most advantageously and how the weaknesses might be eliminated.

To achieve these objectives two independent probability samples were selected. The first sample was selected from the population of professional purchasers working for manufacturing companies in the

Republic of Ireland. The second sample was selected from a combination of managing directors, production managers and engineers (other buying centre members) also working for manufacturing companies in the Republic of Ireland.

These samples were researched by mail using a structured questionnaire containing direct questions. The literature review as cited in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this thesis were the basis of the framing of the questions. A total of 250 questionnaires were mailed, 113 of which were returned. This results in a total response rate of 45%. The returned questionnaires were analysed using SYSTAT.

Chapter 6 presents, with commentary, the findings of the primary research detailing the statistical tests used to analyse the collected data while Chapter 7 discusses these findings and suggests their implications for various pertinent groups.

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CHAPTER 6

PRIMARY RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the main findings of the primary research. The responses to each question, cross-classified by type of respondent are given. For convenience of presentation Professional Purchasers are sometimes referred to as "PPs" and Other Buying Centre Members are sometimes referred to as "OBCMs". Through statistical necessity the two respondent types are treated separately as the samples were selected independently. In the analysis stage all responses were also cross-classified by Company size, Ownership of company, Type of product produced, Job title, Age of respondent and Number of salespeople the respondent meets in an average week. These latter cross-classifications are presented only where significant statistical differences were identified as their statistical relevance is otherwise presented and examined in the type of respondent classification.

The succeeding chapter discusses the findings, draws conclusions and identifies the implications of the research for the various pertinent groups.

The survey data was analysed using SYSTAT - the data analysis software package. Chi-square, t-test and f-test analyses formed the bases of much of the hypotheses testing. In consonance with the relative size of the two samples these tests were primarily applied at the 95% confidence level.

6.2 RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

What Are The Most Important Qualities of a Successful Salesperson in the Opinion of Irish Industrial Buying Centre Members?

Irish industrial customers consider that by far the most important quality of a salesperson is that s/he has good product knowledge. Respondents were asked to rank in their opinion the five essential qualities of a good salesperson. From this, Table 6.1 lists the seven most important qualities identified. The qualities are presented in accordance with the total number of mentions each quality received irrespective of the rank order of the mention.

TABLE 6.1: Essential Qualities of a Salesperson.

	Professional Purchasers		OBCMs		Z Value
	%	Order	%	Order	
Product Knowledge	88	1	71	1	2.05
Personal Impression	49	2	58	2	0.82
Customer Understanding	49	3	41	4	1.04
Appreciation of buyers Time	46	4	36	5	1.01
Personality	44	5	54	3	0.92
Follow-up	44	6	26	6	1.95
Other	54	7	61	7	0.57
Respondents Nos.	41		69		
Chi-Square Value					5.01

Note 1: Each respondent was asked to rank the five essential qualities of a good salesperson.

Note 2: Where two qualities received the same frequency of mentions in the lists of five most important qualities, e.g. Personal Impression and Customer Understanding, they were ranked according to the frequency with which they were cited "most important". If these frequencies still coincided they were ranked according to the frequency with which they were cited "2nd most important", and so on.

Note 3: "Other" is a consolidation of several infrequently mentioned qualities such as authority, honesty, good general knowledge, dependability, etc..

The calculated chi-square value of 5.01 was arrived at manually using the formula for the chi-square test of two independent samples. Where the null hypothesis is that there is no significant statistical difference between the

opinions of the two groups regarding the essential qualities of a good salesperson the calculated value being less than the critical value of 12.59 (at the .05 significance level and 6 degrees of freedom) indicates that the null hypothesis cannot be rejected and it may be concluded that there is no significant statistical differences between the opinions of the two groups in this regard.

The t-test analysis was used to test the significance of differences between the proportions of the two samples who opted for the various qualities. The null hypothesis being tested was that: the two samples are drawn from the same population. As both samples were greater than thirty it was appropriate to use normal distribution (Z) rather than t distribution.

At the .05 significance level if the calculated value is less than the critical value (1.96) then the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. This was found to be the case in all but one instance in the series of calculated Z value statistics. The exception being the proportions of the two samples who identified product knowledge as an important quality of a good salesperson. The calculated value in this regard is 2.05 which is greater than the critical value of 1.95. Therefore the null hypothesis that the two proportions are the same can be rejected and it can be concluded that Professional Purchasers place greater importance on product knowledge than Other Buying Centre Members do.

The proportion of professional purchasers who opted for product knowledge was 88% while the proportion of other buying centre members was 71%. This difference can possibly be explained by the likelihood that OBCMs will have greater technical knowledge of products and components themselves than their purchasing colleague and therefore may perceive a lesser need for

such knowledge in the salesperson. It should be noted however that OBCMs still regard product knowledge as by far the most important quality of a salesperson.

6.3 RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

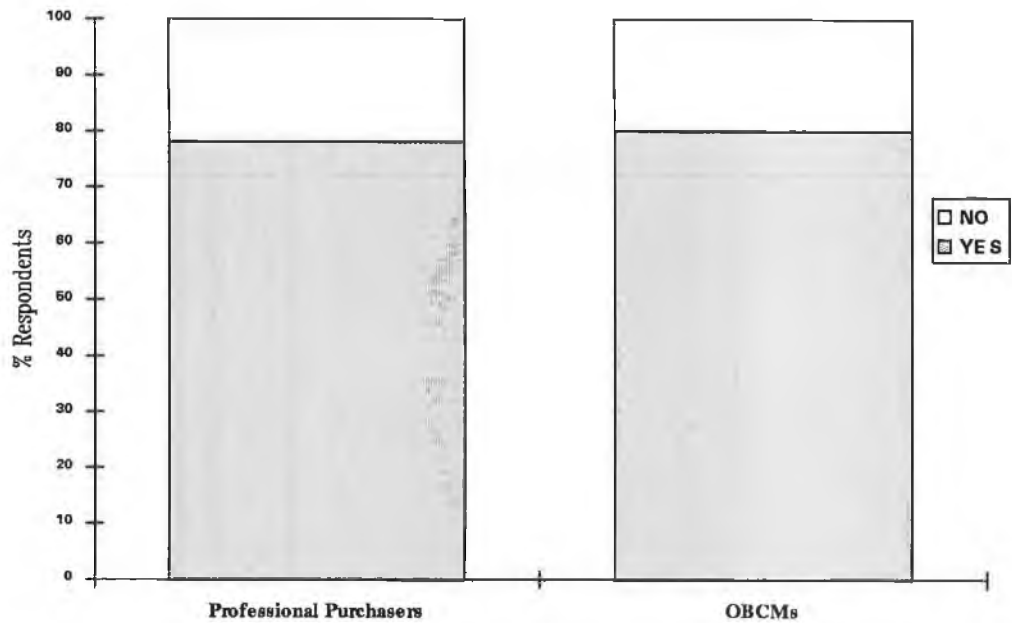
Whether and How Often Irish Industrial Customers Formally Re-evaluate Their Suppliers?

This section of the questionnaire was designed to establish whether respondents' companies formally assessed their suppliers on a regular basis and if so with what frequency did they do so. Its object being to establish when is the appropriate time for an out-supplier to re-present its offering to prospective customers.

Figure 6.1 over leaf shows encouragingly that the vast majority of respondents' companies formally assess their suppliers on a regular basis. The chi-square probability value of .807 (at the .05 significance level) means that the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the two groups cannot be rejected. In other words the presence of a professionally qualified purchaser in a company does not increase that company's propensity to regularly assess its existing suppliers.

Table 6.2 indicates how often existing suppliers are reassessed by Irish industrial customers. The table indicates a 10 - 12 month reassessment being the most popular. As more than 20% of the fitted cells in Table 6.2 are spare (frequency < 5) it was necessary to consolidate a number of the categories in order to apply the chi-square test of two independent samples. When 1 - 3

Figure 6.1: Does Your Company Formally Assess The Efficiency of Your Existing Suppliers on A Regular Basis?



Chi-Square Probability	.807
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Table 6.2: How Often Are Suppliers Reassessed?

	Purchasers		OBCMs	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Every 1-3 months	9	28.13	11	19.64
Every 4-6 months	7	21.88	12	21.43
Every 7-9 months	1	3.13	4	7.14
Every 10-12 months	12	37.50	21	37.50
Other	3	9.38	8	14.29
TOTAL	32		56	
Mean	7 - 9 months		7 - 9 months	
Mode	10 - 12 months		10 - 12 months	

months and 4 - 6 months are combined and likewise 7 - 9 months and 10 - 12 months and the chi-square formula applied, the calculated value is 8.36. As the calculated chi-square value is greater than the critical value (5.99) at the .05 significance level and 2 degrees of freedom the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the two groups can be rejected. This indicates that professional purchasers re-evaluate their suppliers on a more frequent basis than their non-purchasing colleagues.

6.4 RESEARCH QUESTION 3:

What are the Most Important Information Sources Used By Industrial Buying Centre Members in Making a Purchasing Decision For An Item Not Previously By The Company.

The findings regarding the most important sources of information to a buying centre member in making a purchase decision for an item not previously purchased by his company are presented in Table 6.3. The information is presented according to the total number of mentions each of a list of seven information sources received in the 3 most important sources as identified by each respondent.

The calculated chi-square value of 8.64 being less than the tabular value of 9.48 (at the .05 significance and 4 degrees of freedom) indicates that overall there is no difference between the two groups in the level of importance they attach to the collective information sources. However the calculated "Z" statistics from the comparison of the series of two sample proportions suggests that there is a significant statistical difference between the groups in terms of the importance they attach to various individual sources of

information. One Z statistic is greater than the critical Z (1.96) at the .05 significance level, while five others are greater than or equal to the critical Z (1.64) at the .10 significance level. In these six cases it can be concluded that there is a significant statistical difference between the two sample proportions.

Table 6.3: Most Important Information Sources for Product Selection

	Purchasers		OBCMs		Z
	%	Order.	%	Order.	Value
Salespeople	58.9	1	76.5	2	1.90
In-House Sources	48.7	2	29.4	5	1.99
Promotional Material	43.6	3	47.1	4	0.35
Trade Associations	38.5	4	17.6	7	2.40
Trade Journals	30.9	5	47.1	3	1.64
Trade Shows/Exhibitions	30.8	6	50.0	2	1.94
Other Company Buyers	25.6	7	26.5	6	0.02
Others	15.4	8	5.9	8	1.64
TOTAL RESPONDENTS		39		68	
Chi-Square Value					8.64
Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient					.524

Note 1: Each respondent was asked to identify the three most important sources of information "in making a purchase decision for an item not previously purchased by your company".

Note 2: Where two information sources received the same frequency of mentions in the lists of three most important sources, e.g. Trade Journals and Manufacturers/Distributors Promotional Material, they were ranked according to the frequency with which they were cited "most important".

From Table 6.3 it can be seen that professional purchasers attach a significantly greater level of importance to in-house sources and trade associations at the .05 and .10 significance levels respectively than their OBCM colleagues while OBCMs attach significantly greater importance to salespeople, trade journals and trade shows/exhibitions, at the .01 significance level. These differences are also reflected in the order of importance in which the two groups place the various information sources.

A further statistical difference exists between the two groups regarding 'other' sources of information. However because this is a consolidated category, made up of several infrequently cited, and in some cases unrelated sources, such a statistical finding has limited practical relevance.

The Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient largely confirms the Z statistics based conclusions. As the calculated coefficient (.524) is less than the critical value (.738) it can be concluded that the variations in the order in which the two groups placed the various information sources could not have happened by chance and that therefore there is a significant statistical difference between the opinions of the two groups. It should be noted however that both groups regard salespeople as by far the most important source of information.

6.5 RESEARCH QUESTION 4:

What Are The Most Important Criteria Used By Irish Industrial Buying Centre Members In Selecting a Supplier For An Item Not Previously Purchased By The Company?

The findings regarding criteria used by respondents in selecting a supplier for an item not previously purchased by his company are presented in Table 6.4 in

accordance with the frequency with which each criterion was cited in the 5 most important criteria of respondents.

Table 6.4: Important Supplier Selection Criteria.

	Professional Purchasers		OBCMs		Z Value
	%	Order	%	Order	
Price	97.5	1	94.1	2	0.81
Quality of Product	92.5	2	94.1	1	0.33
Delivery	90.0	3	73.5	3	2.00
After Sale Service	62.5	4	69.1	4	0.70
Reliability of supplier	52.5	5	44.1	5	0.85
Experience with Supplier	42.5	6	38.2	7	0.44
Reputation of Supplier	32.5	7	39.7	6	0.75
Other	15.0	8	14.7	8	0.04
TOTAL RESPONDENTS		40		68	
Chi-Square Value					1.75
Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient					.952

Note: Each respondent was asked to "rank the 5 criteria that are most important to you in selecting a supplier for an item not previously purchased by your company".

The calculated chi-square value of 1.75, being less than the tabular value of 14.07 (at the .05 level of significance and seven degrees of freedom) indicates that the two groups are very similar in the importance they attach to the various criteria and therefore the null hypothesis that they are the same cannot be rejected.

The calculated Z statistics, from the t-test to compare the series of two sample proportions, show that with one exception the two samples are drawn from the same population. The one exception being that Professional

Purchasers attach significantly more importance to "delivery" than OBCMs do. 90% of PPs mentioned it in their five most important criteria compared with 73.5% of OBCMs. In interpreting the significance of these figures however it should be noted that no PP respondent regarded delivery as the most important criteria in selecting a supplier.

The Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (.952) being greater than the critical value of .738 indicates a strong positive correlation between the two groups in how they rate the importance of the various criteria and largely confirms the Z statistics.

6.6 RESEARCH QUESTION 5:

How Do Irish Buying Centre Members Rate Salespeople Who Call On Them On The Basis of a List of Twelve Personal Attributes Applicable To Personal Selling?

Table 6.5 presents the respondents' rating of Irish sales people on a list of twelve personal attributes. Salespeople were rated on each attribute according to an itemised rating scale ranging from (1)Excellent to (5)Poor.

The table shows the mean rating of salespeople on each of the 12 attributes. The statistical differences between the means of the two sample were tested using the t-test technique. It was necessary to use the Fisher F-test in this instance also in order to establish the equality of the sample variances and therefore to identify the appropriate t-test.

As all the calculated Z values (it is appropriate to use Z critical as both samples are greater than 30 and therefore $t = Z$) were less than the critical Z value of 1.96 (.05 significance and two tail) the researcher concludes that in

each case the two samples are drawn from normal distributions having the same mean.

The Spearman's rank correlation of means coefficient of .986 (almost maximum positive) confirms the similarity of opinions of the two samples.

Table 6.5: The Irish Sales Force: Personal Attributes Rating

	PP.s Mean	OBCMs Mean.	F Value	Z Value	χ^2 Value
Personal Appearance	2.375	2.409	1.558	0.197	1.33
Courtesy	2.425	2.439	0.828	0.075	0.74
Pleasantness of manner	2.625	2.567	0.816	0.351	2.14
Dependability	3.175	3.242	1.257	0.364	0.12
Sincerity	3.270	3.328	1.052	0.317	0.43
Imagination	3.556	3.742	0.612	1.02	0.39
Technical Ability	3.125	3.197	0.725	0.355	0.67
Positive Attitude	2.575	2.694	0.665	0.049	2.43
Communication Skills	2.950	2.958	0.442	0.002*	7.66
Self Confidence	2.675	2.561	0.556	0.709	0.56
Enthusiasm	2.795	2.701	0.736	0.560	0.11
Punctuality	3.103	3.015	1.166	0.425	0.84
Spearman's Rank Correlation of Means				.986.	

* Communication Skills was the only variable where the calculated f value fell outside the acceptance range and therefore the Z value was calculated using the t-test for samples of unequal variance.

6.7 RESEARCH QUESTION 6:

How Do Irish Buying Centre Members Rate Salespeople Who Call On Them On The Basis Of A List Of Ten Vocational Skills Applicable To Personal Selling?

Table 6.6 presents the mean rating of Irish salespeople on a list of ten selling skills. Salespeople were rated on each skill according to an itemised rating scale ranging from (1)Excellent to (5)Poor.

Table 6.6: The Irish Sales Force: Selling Skills Rating.

	PP.s Mean	OBCMs Mean	F Value	Z Value	χ^2 Value
Preparation	3.025	2.955	0.918	0.371	0.19
Company Knowledge	3.667	3.606	0.749	0.280	4.36
Own Product Knowledge	2.800	2.727	0.855	0.368	0.42
Questioning to Understand Our Needs	3.425	3.197	1.098	0.972	6.51
Ability to Listen	3.400	3.284	0.955	0.616	0.79
Willingness to deal with tech. people.	2.395	2.677	0.798	1.680	3.05
Imagination	3.158	3.274	0.855	0.650	1.11
Diplomacy	3.000	3.111	0.661	0.635	0.60
Willingness to keep me updated	3.308	3.108	0.974	0.976	0.83
Follow-up	3.600	3.567	0.759	0.168	0.94
Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient:				.880.	

6.8 RESEARCH QUESTION 7:

What Do Irish Industrial Buying Centre Members Regard As The Major Areas For Improvement With Irish Salespeople?

Question 8 on the questionnaire, an open-ended question, asked respondents to identify the three major areas for improvement with Irish salespeople. The question used the term "areas for improvement" rather than "weaknesses", as "weaknesses" was regarded as potentially inflammatory. Additionally the word "weaknesses" might have inferred absolute deficiencies to the respondent whereas the researcher was also interested in areas where the salespeople may be perceived as "good", etc. but nonetheless in need of further improvement as the respondent seeks excellence. The question was subject to a relatively high rate of item non-response. Seven Other Buying Centre Member respondents failed to respond at all while 29 (41%) identified less than three areas. This relatively high non-response can be accounted for by virtue of the fact that as an open-ended question it required considerable thought, and therefore time, which the respondent may not have had available. Alternatively it could possibly be inferred that those who didn't answer the question were in fact suggesting that there are no major areas for improvement

Table 6.7 below shows the areas where salespeople are regarded by the two samples as being in greatest need of improvement. As the calculated chi-square value (21.56) is greater than the tabular value (18.3) (at the .05 significance level and 10 degrees of freedom) the null hypothesis that there is no significant difference between the two samples can be rejected. The researcher therefore concludes that there is a statistically significant difference

Table 6.7: Areas For Improvement With Irish Salespeople

	Purchasers		OBCMs	
	%	Order	%	Order
After Sale Service	38	1	43	3
Preparation for Call	35	2	6	10
Customer Understanding	33	3	46	2
Appreciation of Buyers Time	33	3	24	4
Dependability	25	5	22	5
Technical Competence	25	5	49	1
Ability to Listen	20	7	16	6
Imagination	15	8	11	8
Personality	5	9	14	7
"Management Responsibilities"	5	9	11	8
Others	25	11	17	11
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	40		63	

Chi-Square Value	21.560
Spearman's Rank Correlation Coefficient	.548

Note 1: Each respondent could have identified up to 3 areas.

Note 2: "Management Responsibilities" means that some areas identified should be regarded as the responsibility of sales management rather than of the sales person.

Note 3: "Others" is an amalgamation of several infrequently identified and often unrelated areas.

Note 4: The value labels are consolidations of several related responses to the open-ended question.

between the opinions of Professional Purchasers and Other Buying Centre Members. A visual examination of Table 6.7 or of the chi-square calculations clearly shows the aspects on which the two groups diverge:

1) Preparation for the call: 35% of professional purchasers perceive the need for improvement in this area compared to only 6% of other buying centre members. Preparation for the call is a consolidation of "preparation", "having appropriate trial products", "demonstration products and sample products", "having the authority to decide", and "having flexibility in pricing". One possible explanation of this divergence of opinion might be that relative to OBCMs, professional purchasers spend a large proportion of their working week dealing with salespeople and one means of improving the efficient usage of this time would be for the sales people to be better prepared.

2) Technical Competence: 49% of OBCMs identified this area as being in need of improvement compared to 25% of PPs. Technical competence is a consolidation of "technical knowledge", "technical ability", "product knowledge", and "attention to tolerances and material specifications". The variance in the above proportions can possibly be explained by the likelihood that the PP will have lesser technical competence than his/her buying centre colleagues and therefore is less likely to identify deficiencies in the technical competence of the salesperson.

Overall OBCM perceive the technical competence of Irish salespeople as being the area in greatest need of improvement compared to PPs of whom the highest proportion identified after-sale service as the area in greatest need of improvement.

3) Personality: a consolidation of "patience", "positive attitude", "enthusiasm", and "personality", the difference in opinion on this point is of a lesser statistical significance than either of the above. 14% of OBCMs perceive a need for improvement in the personality of salespeople while

5% of PPs do so. No obvious reason for this statistically significant divergence can be offered by this researcher. It is likely that in-depth psychological research would be needed to achieve a full understanding of the difference.

6.9 OTHER IMPORTANT ASPECTS

Question 9 on the questionnaire asked respondents to add anything further about Irish salespeople which they regarded as important. As expected the question was subject to a high incidence of item non response. The object of the question's inclusion was to encourage overall response from those who wished to expound on "pet" subjects or areas of a special interest.

Many of those who did answer the question used the space to further explain their answer to the previous question regarding the major areas for improvement with salespeople. The comments of those who used the space to introduce new ideas are categorised and paraphrased below. The interpretation of these comment categories should not be regarded as statistically conclusive but merely as a generalised indication of the responses. The achieved comments were not among the information objectives of the research.

6.9.1 CATEGORY 1: Irish Salespeople Vis a Vis Foreign Counterparts

"They are too laid back, lack technical ability and bluff more than non-nationals".

"Lack self assurance and technical competence vis a vis foreigners".

"UK salespeople do not rate as highly".

"Irish salespeople are not as pushy".

"Irish salespeople are as good as any".

"Irish salespeople are more down to earth than their European Counterparts".

"Irish salespeople are not as knowledgeable/informative as Europeans".

"A small proportion are not as professional as foreigners".

"I hold Irish salespeople in high regard".

"Europeans have better communication skills, more product knowledge and better follow up".

"By-and-large Irish companies are well represented by their representatives".

The above comments indicate that overall Irish salespeople are held in somewhat similar regard to their foreign counterparts. It is interesting to note also the frequency with which such phrases as "product knowledge" and "technical competence", are used in these generalised comments to further emphasise the importance of these factors in a salesperson's make-up and as a basis for comparison.

6.9.2 CATEGORY 2: Experience And Technical Ability Of Salespeople

"It would enhance their credibility if they had experience in other functional areas, particularly manufacturing, prior to entering sales".

"The best have worked on the technical end of things".

"Companies seem to select inexperienced representatives".

The above comments again re-emphasise the particular importance that members of Irish industrial buying centres attach to the requirement for good product knowledge and technical competence in the salespeople who sell to them.

6.9.3 CATEGORY 3: Other Comments

"Irish salespeople spend too much time knocking competitor's products rather than complimenting their own".

"Irish salespeople make poor use of the telephone in qualifying prospects and making advance appointments".

"Irish salespeople have less regard for "country" customers and small orders".

"Irish salespeople fail to realise that repeat sales are what count".

"Females tend to be better prepared for sales calls".

This final category acts as a "catch all" category for individual and unrelated comments. However if one person is saying it, how many more are thinking it? Salespeople and sales managers would do well to be cognisant of the tenor of the comments.

6.10 RESEARCH QUESTION 8:

Does The Opinion Of Irish Industrial Buying Centre Members Regarding Salespeople and Suppliers Vary In Relation To The Size Of Their Employing Company, The Nationality Of Their Employing Company, The Nature Of The Industry In Which They Participate, Their Specific Functional Position, The Length of Time Spent In That Position, The Members Age, Or The Number Of Salespeople Calling On Them?

In addition to the findings presented in the preceding pages where the substantive data was cross classified by the functional group of the respondent other cross classifications were also conducted. The cross-classification variables used were Number of salespeople met per week,

Nature of company ownership, Size of company, Age of respondent, Type of product produced and Position of respondent.

The findings of these additional cross-classifications are presented hereunder only where a significant statistical difference existed between the classification groupings. Where no significant statistical difference existed the information arrived at is therefore the same as that already presented.

In conducting these analyses it was necessary to treat the Professional Purchasers and Other Buying Centre Members as independent samples given that the two samples had been designed and selected separately. This decision was made despite the evidence of statistical similarity in the foregoing findings.

In each of the succeeding tables the chi-square statistics should be treated with caution given that in each case more than 20% of the fitted cells are sparse (frequency < 5). Therefore they should be treated as an indication of significant differences rather than a statistical certainty.

This information in this section is divided into two sub-sections: Information regarding Other Buying Centre Members and Information regarding Professional Purchasers.

6.10.1 Other Buying Centre Members

The findings shown in Table 6.8 indicate that the employee of the bigger company places greater emphasis on the importance of "product knowledge" as a salespersons quality than the employee of the smaller company. This

difference is significant at the .05 level. The smaller company's employees identify personality as the most important quality.

Table 6.8: Most Important Salesperson Quality By Company Size (Other Buying Centre Members)

	0 - 100 Employees	100+ Employees	All Companies
Product Knowledge	20.0%	64.7%	42.0%
Customer Understanding	5.7%	2.9%	4.3%
Personality	28.5%	8.8%	18.8%
Appreciation of Buyers Time	11.4%	8.8%	10.1%
Personal Impression	17.1%	2.9%	10.1%
Other	17.1%	11.8%	14.5%
TOTAL RESPONDENTS	35	34	69
Calculated χ^2:	15.78	Tabular χ^2:	11.05

From Question 7 on the questionnaire it can be seen that employees of Irish owned companies rate salespeople higher in terms of their knowledge of the customer company, than their counterparts in foreign owned companies as shown in Table 6.9. Given that the majority of salespeople working in Ireland are likely to be Irish it is understandable that an Irish salesperson might be more knowledgeable regarding an Irish company. Possibly more importantly however Table 6.9 indicates that insufficient research is being conducted by salespeople in Ireland on their prospect/customer companies. On average

respondents rate salespeople as something less than good in terms of their knowledge of customer companies.

Table 6.9: Rating of Salespeople's Knowledge of Customer Company by Respondent Company Ownership. (Other Buying Centre Members)

	Foreign Multi- National	Subsidiary of Foreign Multinational	Irish	All Companies
Excellent(1)	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Very Good(2)	28.75%	4.76%	32.26%	22.73%
Good(3)	7.14%	28.57%	25.81%	22.73%
Fair(4)	57.14%	23.81%	12.90%	25.76%
Poor(5)	7.14%	42.86%	29.03%	28.79%
TOTALRESPONDENTS:	14	21	31	66
MEAN:	3.43	4.05	3.39	3.61
Chi-Square Probability:			.008	

Respondents from Irish companies give a higher rating to salespeople's ability/propensity to "follow-up" than respondents from foreign owned companies do. Table 6.10 indicates that the employees of foreign owned companies in fact have a relatively low opinion of salespeople in Ireland in this regard. The majority rating them "fair" or "poor". This could also be alternatively interpreted as meaning that Irish companies have lower expectations of the salesperson's ability to follow up.

Table 6.10: Rating of Salespeople's "Follow-Up" By Ownership of Respondent Company (Other Buying Centre Members)

	Foreign Multi-National	Subsidiary of Foreign Multinational	Irish	All Companies
Excellent(1)	0.00%	0.00%	6.45%	3.03%
Very Good(2)	0.00%	14.29%	16.13%	12.12%
Good(3)	21.43%	33.33%	32.26%	30.30%
Fair(4)	78.57%	23.81%	22.58%	23.85%
Poor(5)	0.00%	28.57%	22.58%	19.70%
RESPONDENT Nos.	14	21	31	66
Mean:	3.79	3.67	3.39	3.56
Chi-Square Probability:			.018.	

Table 6.11 indicates that managing directors rate salespeople's personal appearance higher than production executives or engineers do.

Selling theory suggests that salespeople should dress appropriately. That is in a manner appropriate to the situation and to the person to whom they are selling. The style of dress of a managing director is often different to that of the production manager or engineer who of necessity are often working on the factory floor and therefore must dress in a manner appropriate to that environment. If a salesperson dresses appropriate to the managing director they may well be perceived as being over-dressed for the production manager or engineer. This is one implication that may be drawn from Table 6.11 below.

**Table 6.11: Rating of Salespeople's Personal Appearance By
Position of Respondent
(Other Buying Centre Members)**

	Managing Director %	Production Manager %	Engineer %	All Positions %
Excellent(1)	6.25	11.75	11.76	9.09
Very Good(2)	68.75	17.65	41.18	48.48
Good(3)	21.88	64.71	35.29	36.36
Fair(4)	3.13	5.88	5.88	4.55
Poor(5)	0.00	0.00	5.88	1.52
Respondent Nos.	32	17	17	66
Mean	2.22	2.65	2.53	2.41
Chi-Square Probability:			.049	

Managing directors rate salespeople's punctuality higher than either production executives or engineers do as shown in Table 6.12 below. This finding could imply that given the perceived relative importance of their respective positions that salespeople afford greater respect to the managing director's time than they do to that of the production executive or engineer. Alternatively the lower rating given by engineers and production personnel may be due to the technical person's innate requirement for precision and therefore the possibility of being more critical of any apparent tardiness on the part of the salesperson.

**Table 6.12: Rating of Salespeople's Punctuality By Position of Respondent
(Other Buying Centre Members)**

	Managing Director %	Production Manager %	Engineer %	All Positions %
Excellent(1)	0.00	0.00	13.33	3.08
Very Good(2)	45.45	11.76	13.33	29.23
Good(3)	24.24	76.47	33.33	40.00
Fair(4)	21.21	5.88	26.66	18.46
Poor (5)	9.09	5.88	13.33	9.23
Respondent Nos.	33	17	15	65
Mean	2.94	3.06	3.13	2.03
Chi-Square Probability:			.003.	

6.10.1 PROFESSIONAL PURCHASERS

The greater the number of salespeople that the professional purchaser meets per week the lower the rating they give to those salespeople regarding their knowledge of the customer/prospect company, product knowledge and willingness to deal with the customer's/prospect's technical people as shown in Tables 6.13, 6.14 and 6.15.

Respondents who meet more than eight salespeople per week have a particularly low opinion of those salespeople's company knowledge, rating them in the "fair", to "poor" category (Table 6.13). Purchasers overall rate salespeople's company knowledge in the "good" to "fair" category. That rating however is still towards the lower end of the rating scale provided.

**Table 6.13: Rating of Salespeople's Customer Knowledge by
Number of Salespeople met per Week (PPs)**

	0 - 4 Salespeople Per Week %	5 - 8 Salespeople Per Week %	> 8 Salespeople Per Week %	Total %
Excellent(1)	9.09	0.00	0.00	2.70
Very Good(2)	9.09	7.69	7.96	8.11
Good(3)	54.55	23.08	15.38	29.73
Fair(4)	9.09	69.23	30.77	33.84
Poor(5)	18.18	0.00	46.15	21.62
Respondent Nos.	11	14	13	38
Mean:	3.18	3.62	4.15	3.68
Chi-Square Probability:			.056	

Note: The statistical difference is at the .10 significance level.

In the case of product knowledge (Table 6.14) and willingness to deal with technical people (Table 6.15) the mean overall rating is in the "good" to "very good" category though nonetheless there is a significant difference in the opinions of the respondents when classified by the number of salespeople they meet per week with respondents who meet more salespeople having a lower opinion of those salespeople.

One possible explanation for the difference of opinion might be that the buyer's frame of reference is different depending on the number of salespeople s/he meets. A buyer who meets over eight sales people per week is, on the law of averages, more likely to meet some particularly good sales people than his counterpart who meets less than four, and will possibly judge each salesperson against the best that he meets.

Table 6.14: Rating of Salespeople's Product Knowledge by number of Salespeople Met Per Week (PPs)

	1 - 4 Salespeople Per Week %	5 - 8 Salespeople Per Week %	> 8 Salespeople Per Week %	Total %
Excellent (1)	9.09	14.29	0.00	7.89
Very Good (2)	36.36	7.14	30.77	23.68
Good (3)	27.27	71.43	46.15	50.00
Fair (4)	27.27	7.14	15.38	15.79
Poor (5)	0.00	0.00	7.69	2.63
Respondent Nos.:	11	14	13	38
Mean	2.73	2.71	3.00	2.82
Chi-Square Probability:			.084	

Note: The statistical difference is at the .10 level of significance.

The professional purchasers' opinions regarding the salesperson's ability to ask questions in order to understand the customers needs (Table 6.17) also varies according to the nationality of ownership of the employing company. Employees of foreign multinationals rate Irish salespeople's ability in this regard highest, in the "good" to "very good" category, while employees of both Irish companies and of subsidiaries of foreign multinationals rate them in the "good" to "fair" category.

In drawing any interpretations from the findings regarding the nationality of the company ownership it should be noted that while the respondent company may be foreign owned the respondent employee is not necessarily foreign. In this respect the researcher does not draw any specific interpretations from

Tables 6.16 or 6.17. In retrospect it would have been useful to ask the respondent for their personal nationality on the questionnaire.

Table 6.15: Rating of Salespeople's Willingness To Deal With Technical People by number of salespeople Met Per week. (PPs).

	0 - 4 Salespeople Per Week %	5 - 8 Salespeople Per Week %	> 8 Salespeople Per Week %	Total %
Excellent(1)	27.27	7.14	0.00	11.11
Very Good(2)	36.36	50.00	27.27	38.38
Good(3)	36.36	42.86	72.73	50.00
Respondent Nos.	11	14	11	36
Mean	2.09	2.36	2.73	2.39
Chi-Square Probability:	052.			

Note: The statistical difference is at the .10 level of significance.

Table 6.16: Rating of Salespeople's Pleasantness Of Manner by Ownership of Respondent Company (PPs).

	Foreign Multi- National %	Subsidiary of Foreign Multinational %	Irish Company %	All Companies %
Excellent(1)	8.33	0.00	0.00	2.5
Very Good(2)	33.33	18.75	16.67	22.5
Good(3)	16.67	25.00	8.33	17.5
Fair(4)	41.67	25.00	75.00	45.0
Poor(5)	0.00	31.25	0.00	12.5
Respondent Nos.	12	16	12	40
Mean	2.92	3.69	3.58	3.43
Chi-Square Probability:	0.047			

**Table 6.17: Rating of Salespeople's Questioning Of Needs by
Ownership of Respondent Company
(Professional Purchasers)**

	Foreign Multi- National %	Subsidiary Of Foreign Multinational %	Irish Company %	All Companies %
Excellent(1)	8.33	0.00	0.00	2.5
Very Good(2)	33.33	18.75	16.67	22.5
Good(3)	16.67	25.00	8.33	17.5
Fair(4)	41.67	25.00	25.00	45.0
Poor(5)	0.00	31.25	0.00	12.5
Respondent Nos.:	12	16	12	40
Mean:	2.92	3.69	3.58	3.43
Chi-Square Probability:			0.047.	

6.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the main findings of the primary research. It established that except in relation to some exceptional factors there is no statistical difference between the opinions of the two independently selected samples: Professional Purchasers and Other Buying Centre Members.

In relation to the eight research questions the primary research established:

1. The essential qualities of a salesperson are; product knowledge, personal impression, customer understanding, appreciation of buyer's time and personality.
2. Up to 80% of Irish industrial organisations re-evaluate their suppliers on average every seven to nine months.

3. Salespeople are perceived as being the most important source information to buying centre members in selecting a previously unpurchased item.
4. Price, product quality and delivery are the most important criteria used by industrial buying centre members in selecting suppliers.
5. On the basis of 12 personal attributes salespeople in Ireland are rated “very good” to “good” in terms of personal appearance, courtesy, pleasant of manner, positive attitude, communication skills, self confidence and enthusiasm. They are rated less than “good” in terms of dependability, sincerity, imagination, technical ability, and punctuality.
6. In relation to 10 selling skills salespeople in Ireland are rated “very good” to “good” in terms of preparation, product knowledge and willingness to deal with technical people. They are rated less than “good” in terms of customer knowledge, questioning ability, listening ability, imagination in applying products to our needs, diplomacy in dealing with operating departments, willingness to keep me updated, and follow-up.
7. The major areas for improvement with Irish salespeople are after sale service, preparation for call, customer understanding, appreciation of buyer’s time, dependability, and technical competence.
8. Bigger companies put greater emphasis on the importance of product knowledge, Irish owned companies rate salespeople higher in terms of product knowledge, managing directors have a better impression of salespeople’s personal appearance and punctuality than production managers or engineers.

A discussion of these findings and their implications is presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses what the researcher regards as the most salient findings of the research, compares and contrasts these findings with the findings and conclusions of researchers cited in the literature review and suggests the implications these findings have for the various sectors of the personal selling function. The chapter also offers suggestions for further research that needs to be undertaken in the area based on the findings of this research.

Unlike the findings of Silk and Kalwani suggesting that once surveyed the buying centre members do not agree anyway, this research finds that, in the Irish context, only in a small minority of cases is there a significant statistical difference between the opinions of professional purchasers and other buying centre members or between the opinions of the various sub-categories within those groups.¹

7.2 QUALITIES OF A GOOD SALESPERSON

Overwhelmingly the respondents agree that the single most important quality of a salesperson is product knowledge. This finding concurs with the finding of Woodside and Davenport who specifically looked at the effect of expertise on sales performance and found that the salesperson with the greater level of product expertise was more likely to consummate the sale.²

While it is invidious to make direct comparison with other published research because of the different definition of terms, grouping of factors, times, situations and cultures it is nonetheless notable that certain similarities exist between these findings and the findings of other researchers who

established the qualities of a good salesperson from research with customers. The three pieces of research cited in the literature review: Dowst (1984), McDaniel and Darden (1987) and MRBI (1991) all identify product knowledge as being in the three most important qualities.^{3,4,5}

It is also notable that other researchers/writers cited in the literature review of this thesis who established lists of seller attributes without reference to customers, but based on personal opinion or research with salespeople, sales managers or sales trainers, with two exceptions Kerr and Burzynski⁶ and Howells⁷ all entirely omit product knowledge as an important variable.

Product knowledge for its own sake however is almost irrelevant. The salesperson must be in a position to apply that knowledge to the needs and situation of his customer. Unfortunately this does not seem to be the case in the Irish context. Salespeople in Ireland do not appear to have mastered the two essential sides of the equation. Figure 7.2 indicates that though product knowledge is the skill on which respondents give salespeople the second highest mean rating that rating is barely above “good”, the mid-point on the scale) which does not auger well for their prowess in this essential skill. In the same figure it can be seen that salespeople are rated in the low end of the “fair” category in terms of customer knowledge and in Figure 7.2 are rated as only “good” in terms of ‘Imagination in applying products to our needs’. This indicates that the Irish sales force needs to greatly improve its product knowledge, its customer knowledge and its ability to apply products to customer situations if it is to sell benefits to customers and thus improve its own propensity to make a sale.

The major anomaly of Table 6.1, for this researcher, when compared with other findings is the low perceived importance of "follow-up". No

respondent from either sample rated it in the first two most important qualities. Though the respondents clearly identify product quality as the single most important criteria in selecting a supplier they don't seem as concerned with the quality of service they receive after the purchase is made.

Additionally it should be noted that 38% of Professional Purchasers (the highest proportion) identify "follow-up" as an area in need of improvement with Irish salespeople. If it is so important as to be one of the principal areas for improvement how come it is not perceived as having higher importance as a seller's attribute? One possible explanation might be that it is regarded by respondents as being in the same vein as what Frederick Herzberg referred to as hygiene factors.⁸ That is, it is such a basic requirement of a salesperson that if one fills that position they are presumed to possess it and that follow up only becomes noticeable in its absence or when major improvement is necessary.

7.3 MAJOR AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT WITH IRISH SALESPEOPLE.

It is useful to juxtapose this section with the above section on the essential qualities of a salesperson as there is a strong overlap between the two sections.

Table 6.7 shows the areas in which salespeople in the Republic of Ireland are perceived as being in most need of improvement. Its most notable aspect is that five of the six qualities identified by respondents as being essential in a good salesperson; "customer understanding", "appreciation of buyers time", "personality" and "product knowledge"(technical competence)

are also identified among the areas in which Irish salespeople are most in need of improvement.

It can be concluded from this that in the eyes of the respondent Irish buying centre members salespeople in Ireland are not very good, being in need of improvement on five of the six essential qualities of a good salesperson.

This conclusion is supported by the personal attributes profile (Figure 7.1) and the selling skills profile (Figure 7.2). These profiles indicate that in terms of "follow-up", "customer understanding", "appreciation of buyers time" and "product knowledge" that Irish salespeople are rated in the "good" to "fair" category. That is, on the lower half of the scale provided. "Personality" was not specifically measured but a composite personality of sorts can be established from the personal attributes profile using "courtesy", "pleasantness of manner", "positive attitude", "self-confidence" and "enthusiasm". Each of these are rated in the good to very good category and therefore it can be said that this is the personality rating of the Irish sales force. It can ultimately be concluded therefore that salespeople in the Republic of Ireland have considerable scope for improvement until a rating of "excellence" is achieved. In the competitive business environment of the 1990's excellence must be regarded as a reasonable objective for our highly expensive sales force.

Of the six essential qualities of a good salesperson identified in Table 6.1 only "personal impression" was not also identified as an area in need of improvement. "Personal impression": is a composite of "personal appearance" and "communications skills" and from the personal characteristics profile (Figure 7.1) it can be seen that personal appearance has the highest rating of all the twelve personal attributes.

7.4 SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Weitz suggests that: "personal selling is the most important element in marketing communications to most business concerns".⁹ The findings of this research suggests that this should indeed be the case as manufacturer's salespeople are clearly identified by both professional purchasers and other buying centre members as the most important source of information in the purchase of an item not previously purchased by the respondent's company. In interpreting this finding it should be noted however that this is a generalised finding concerning a nebulous "item not previously purchased", and may vary if the respondents were asked to address a specific product type such as capital equipment, materials and components, or supplies and services. Likewise the findings may vary if the purchase situation changed from new buy to modified rebuy or straight rebuy.

Table 6.3 in the previous chapter shows the relative importance of seven alternative sources of information to the respondent buying centre members. Chisnall's citation of research by Webster indicates broad agreement with those findings in relation to the perception of salespeople being the most important source of information.¹⁰ The notable difference between the two pieces of research is the absence from the American list of any indication of importance being attached to either "in-house" sources of information or to "manufacturers/distributors promotional material".

7.5 SUPPLIER SELECTION CRITERIA.

As indicated by the rank order correlation coefficient of .952 from Table 6.4 in the previous chapter, professional purchasers and other buying centre members are in agreement as to the importance of various criteria in

selecting a supplier for an item not previously purchased by the respondents company. This finding however does not agree with the findings of Kelly and Coaker whose research indicates that buying centre members often employ different criteria in evaluating suppliers.¹¹

Table 6.4 indicates that "product quality", "price" and "delivery", are the most important criteria for both samples in selecting a supplier. It must be noted however that the responses were made specifically regarding "selecting a supplier of an item not previously purchased by your company" and it may therefore be presumed that the importance attached to each criterion may vary with a more specific purchase situation.

"After Sale Service" appears in Table 6.4 as an important criteria with 63% of professional purchasers and 69% of other buying centre members identifying it in their five most important criteria, though out of the two groups only one respondent identified it as the most important criterion. Its relatively high position in the Table 6.4 also appears anomalous with the low relative importance attached to "follow-up" as a quality of a salesperson as examined previously. Though "after sale service" is much broader in definition than "follow-up" the two factors must nonetheless be regarded as closely related, albeit at the macro and micro levels.

The "competence of a suppliers salesperson" is not seen as an important criteria in selecting a supplier for a new product. Only 5% of professional purchasers and 10% of other buying centre members identified it as having any importance. Yet the respondents had previously suggested that those same salespeople were the single most important source of information in making a purchase decision for a new product. The implication of this might be that salespeople are seen as information providers whose influence

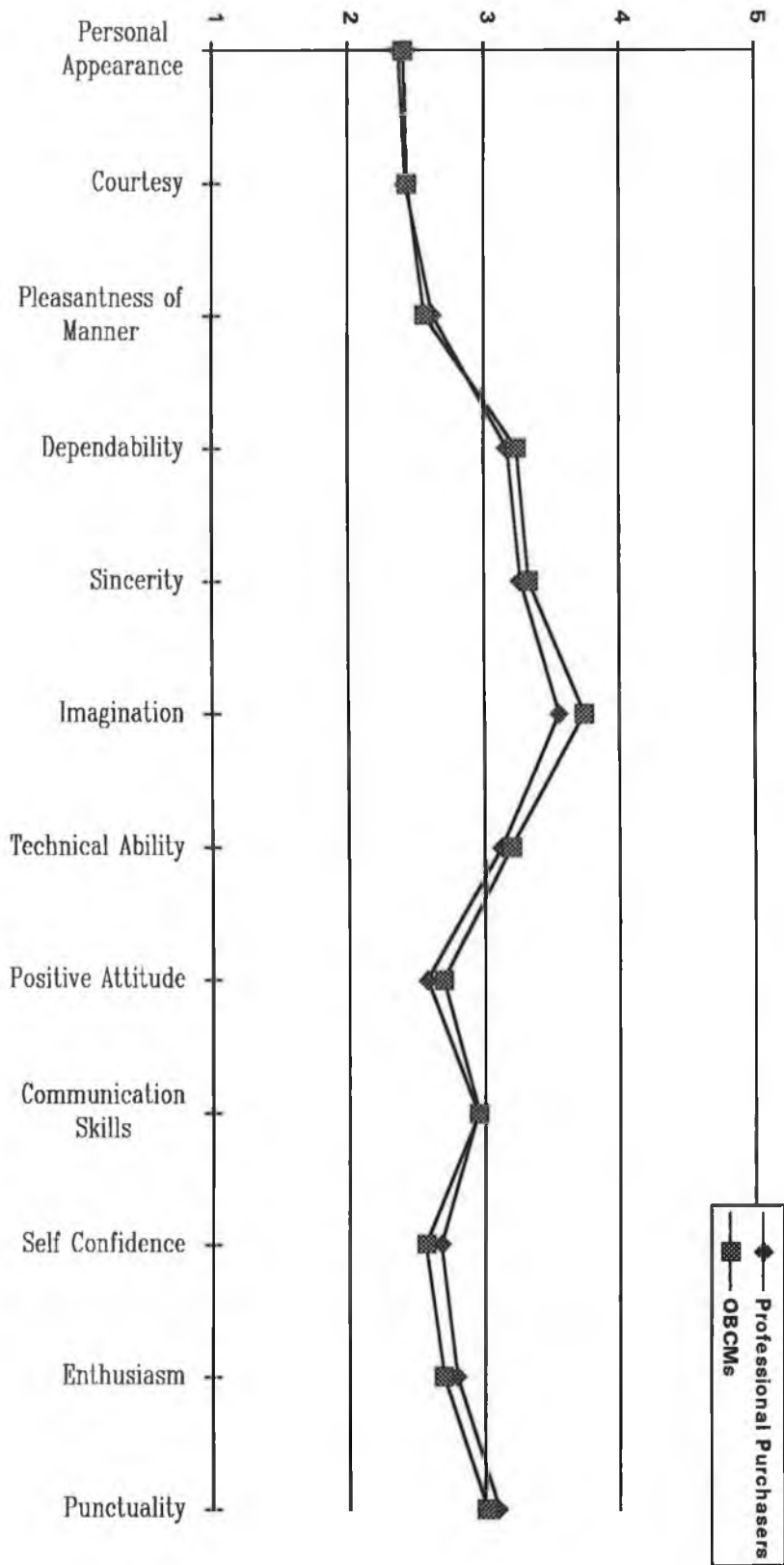
wanes once that information has been passed on. Presumably however the salesperson who is most competent in providing the information, particularly complex, technical information, will have a significant influence on the buyer's supplier choice. Therefore it can possibly be concluded that the extent of influence a salesperson has is not fully recognised by the respondents. Though in drawing this conclusion the poor overall rating that the respondents gave to salespeople in Ireland must be taken into account.

7.6 PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES OF SALESPEOPLE

The profile of salespeople in the Irish market, shown in Figure 7.1, based on how they are rated by respondents on twelve personal attributes does not augur well for the national sales force. The twelve attributes were identified in advance by the researcher as being of paramount importance from an extensive review of the relevant literature and from discussions with sales managers, purchasing managers and academics. Salespeople in Ireland however are not rated "excellent" or "very good" on any of the attributes and in fact have a mean rating of less than "good" on five of the twelve attributes ("dependability", "sincerity", "imagination", "technical ability" and "punctuality").

This profile of salespeople is particularly worrying as so many of the attributes also appear on the list of essential qualities of a good salesperson. It is not surprising that many of them also appear in the list of major areas for improvement with Irish salespeople.

FIGURE 7.1: PROFILE OF THE IRISH SALES FORCE: PERSONAL ATTRIBUTES



Notation: 1 = Excellent, 2 = Very Good, 3 = Good, 4 = Fair, 5 = Poor.

The attribute on which salespeople are rated highest by both professional purchasers and other buying centre members is "personal appearance". Though with mean figures of 2.345 and 2.409 respectively even this is significantly less than "very good" which would require a mean rating of 2.000.

7.7 SELLING SKILLS.

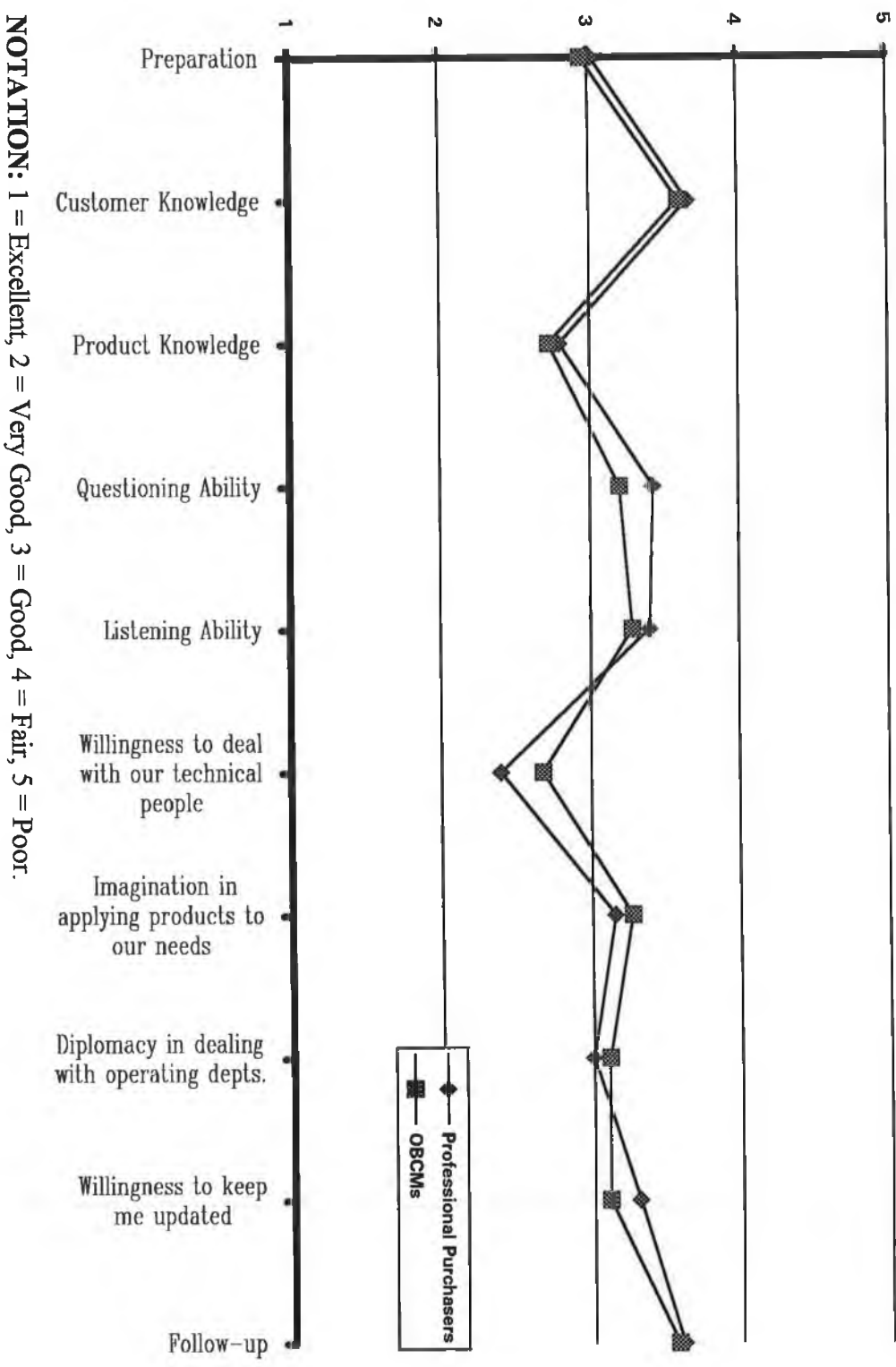
The selling skills profile shown in Figure 7.2 is an even greater indictment of the Irish sales force than the personal attributes profile. Of the ten selling skills provided salespeople in Ireland were rated "excellent" or "very good" on none and less than "good" on eight.

The one redeeming feature of this profile is that product knowledge is the skill on which both professional purchasers and other buying centre members give salespeople the second highest mean rating (professional purchasers: 2.800, and other buying centre members: 2.727). This is important as "product knowledge" is seen as the most essential quality of a good salesperson. However it should be noted that these two figures are just slightly above a 'good' rating and therefore allow scope for much improvement.

7.8 CALLING ON BUYERS.

The first point to be made in this regard must be that when "appreciation of the respondent's time" (making appointments/punctuality) is so important to both the professional purchasers and the other buying centre members then it must be concluded that cold calling and poor time-keeping is anathema to them and therefore should be so to salespeople also. In terms of punctuality as a personal

FIGURE 7.2: PROFILE OF THE IRISH SALES FORCE: SELLING SKILLS



characteristic, salespeople were rated less than "good", and appreciation of the respondent's time also appeared high up the order of need for improvement indicating weakness in this regard among Irish salespeople.

Along with making and keeping an appointment the salesperson must also establish the regularity with which he should call. For a representative of an in-supplier this can be established by mutual agreement with the buyer. For the representative of the out-supplier it is somewhat more difficult. While this research cannot make specific recommendations in this regard it can give generalised guidelines.

Initially, it can be taken as encouraging that 80% of Irish manufacturing companies formally reassess their suppliers on a regular basis, thus giving the out-supplier an on-going chance of pitching for the business. The call from the representative of the out-supplier must precede or coincide with this existing supplier reassessment in order that the company's offering can be in the evoked set of the buyer and can act as a reference point against which the competitive offering is reassessed.

The findings of this research indicate that the mean reassessment period is every 7 - 9 months. The actual frequency values however show that only a small minority of respondents identified this period and therefore a more appropriate measure of central tendency might be to take the mode of every 10 - 12 months.

In using this figure it should be noted that a three month band is quite wide and though it gives a general impression, each salesperson retains the responsibility of researching the specific requirements of each potential customer in his

necessarily the main decision maker and it might be more appropriate to ensure that a good impression is made on the buying centre member who is the main decision maker. The most important person in a company as far as the salesperson is concerned is the main decision maker, not necessarily the senior executive. It is beholden on the salesperson to identify this person as early as possible in the selling process. As cited in Section 4.3 of this thesis Bonoma offers advice to the salesperson as to how the major source of power in the buying centre can be identified¹². In addition to being observant for these behavioural clues the salesperson who is practised in the art of astute questioning will have a distinct advantage.

7.10 IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH.

As with all research, the findings of this thesis are rendered irrelevant unless they are acted upon. In this respect the foregoing research has particular implications for salespeople, sales/marketing planning and salesperson selection and training.

7.10.1 Implications for the salesperson:

- The research identifies from the buying centre members perspective that good salespeople need six essential qualities:

Product knowledge,

Personal impression (appearance/communication skills)

Customer understanding,

Appreciation of buyer's time,

Personality,

Follow-up".

It therefore behoves the salesperson to develop and enhance his competencies in these areas. Of the six, knowledge of the product and expertise in its technical aspects is perceived as being the most important. As said previously however knowing one's product is meaningless unless that knowledge can be applied to the customer's specific needs and situation.

- With the exception of "Personal impression" (that is Personal appearance and Communication skills combined) Irish salespeople are seen as being in need of major improvement in each of the above six factors in addition to "sales call preparation", "dependability", "ability to listen" and "imagination".
- The profile of salespeople in Ireland, in terms of a list of twelve important personal attributes and ten important selling skills indicates a perceived general weakness in the selling profession. To become an effective and efficient element of the promotions mix and to overcome the adverse, but apparently realistic, image of the selling profession held by society in general salespeople need to undergo rigorous and ongoing training. The salesperson who achieves excellence in the essential qualities of a salesperson, the areas in need of improvement and the salesperson profile factors (Figures. 7.1 and 7.2) will be seen as superior, if indeed not unique, in Irish selling. The consequential benefits of this superiority are also likely to accrue. It must also be remembered that "the essential qualities", "the areas in need of improvement" and the "profile factors" are all looked at from the perspective of the customer, the person who decides whether or not to buy from a particular salesperson.

- In preparing a sales presentation salespeople should be aware that there appears to be no major significant difference between the opinions, needs and criteria of the two sample groups: professional purchasers and other buying centre members. In fact in some cases there appears to be greater differences within the groups than between them.
- It appears to be presumed by industrial customers that salespeople and their companies will provide an effective after-sale service. The presence of such a quality in a salesperson is therefore not regarded as a major strength but its absence might be deemed a major weakness.
- Salespeople must recognise that the decision maker is the most important person in the buying centre and that the decision maker for a particular product type is not necessarily the senior executive. Salespeople receive a higher rating on most attributes from managing directors than they do from either production executives or from engineers. They must remember however that the managing director is not necessarily the main decision maker and therefore as a first task must identify who is the decision maker in any buying centre. This person must then be afforded the respect that befits the importance of their position
- "Product Quality", "Price" and "Delivery" in that order are the most important criteria to an Irish buying centre member in selecting a supplier for an item not previously purchased by the company. Therefore in making a sales presentation to such a company these are the aspects of the seller's market offering that the salesperson should emphasise.

- The research indicates that Irish industrial customers reassess their existing suppliers approximately every 10 - 12 months. This provides out-suppliers with an ongoing chance to pitch for the business. Each salesperson must ensure that their knowledge of the market and of each potential customer is such that they are aware when such reassessments are occurring. It is to precede or coincide with this time that the representative of an out-supplier should call on prospects to present his company's alternative offering and to create a frame of reference against which the company can assess the effectiveness and efficiency of its existing supplier.

7.10.2 Implications for Sales/Marketing Planning:

- The research indicates that the manufacturers/distributors salesperson is the most important source of information available to the buying centre member for an item not previously purchased. From this perspective it is apparent that the personal selling function should be afforded proportional importance in a company's promotions mix and promotional budgets.
- The criteria on which industrial buying centre members select suppliers: "product quality", "price", "delivery", "after sale service", are clearly delineated by the research findings and suggest to a company the selling points that should be emphasised in a sales presentation to a prospect or in other promotional messages to the market. They also suggest the aspects of its offering that a market driven company should constantly strive to improve in order that it be best positioned to satisfy the precise needs of its existing customers and of the market in general.

7.10.3 Implications for Salesperson Selection and Training:

- The salesperson is the link between the company and the market, presenting the company's offerings to the prospective customers. In a market oriented society that customer can be seen as the final arbiter of the success or failure of a company. In selecting a person to represent the company to the market, company management and/or the recruitment agency should be cognisant of the qualities that a buying centre member looks for in a salesperson and select a person who possesses these qualities or who demonstrates the facility, through training, to develop them.
- This and other research indicates that in many respects the salesperson is the most important element in the industrial marketing mix. The research also indicates a weak profile of the Irish sales force and therefore the consequential requirement for effective sales training programmes. Management should ensure that appropriate levels of resources are made available for such training activities. It is no longer acceptable to suggest that salespeople will learn on-the-job. Apparently members of the Irish sales force are not doing so.
- In identifying the qualities that an industrial customer looks for in a salesperson and the perceived weaknesses of the Irish sales force the research suggests the areas on which training programmes should concentrate:
 - Product knowledge,
 - Personal impression (appearance/communication skills)
 - Customer understanding,
 - Appreciation of buyer's time,

Personality,
Follow-up".

- Given that product knowledge and technical competence are perceived by buying centre members as being of such importance in a salesperson it is possible that a company would be best served by selecting a person with an appropriate technical background or technical qualifications and, through training, complementing these technical skills with appropriate selling skills.

7.11 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH.

This research exercise was undertaken in response to the relative neglect of selling as an academic and commercial research topic in Ireland and was based on the achievement of certain specific objectives, identified in the introduction and in the primary research methodology chapter. It did not attempt to identify solutions to all problems associated with selling and salesmanship. Throughout the course of the work the researcher identified several directly related topics on which research is required or which requires more in-depth study than the objectives of this exercise could permit.

The objectives of this research sought specifically to establish the industrial buying centre member's opinions of the essential qualities of a salesperson and their rating of the existing sales force as in the opinion of this researcher the buying centre members are undoubtedly the most important interest group in the marketing process. However it would be interesting to correlate these

perceptions with the opinions of sales managers and agency executives involved in the recruitment and selection of salespeople.

This research was dedicated to establishing the opinions of industrial professional purchasers and other industrial buying centre members in general to salespeople in general though it would be equally valid to classify both the respondents and the subjects: by broad industry sectors (agriculture, manufacturing, services), by specific industry sectors (electronics, chemicals, etc.) and by product types (capital equipment, materials and components, supplies and services).

A useful extension of this research would be to conduct similar, though more in-depth, research into the opinions of each member of a sample of buying centres to establish how the attitudes and opinions of each member might vary. Such research might also attempt to identify clues to the identification of the main decision maker in an Irish buying centre and to specifically establish how this person's opinions might vary from those of other members.

Finally it would be pertinent to research how the existence of the identified qualities of a good salesperson correlates with the sales performance of salespeople in the territories.

7.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter discussed the main findings of the primary research that was conducted to achieve the overall research objectives of the thesis. It identified that the findings, though particular to the Irish market, bear striking similarity to

findings from similar research conducted in other national markets such as the United States of America and Great Britain.

From the research findings the writer identified the following implications for salespeople, sales/marketing planning, and salesperson selection and training:

1. Salespeople should enhance their competencies in: product knowledge, personal impression, customer understanding, appreciation of buyer's time, personality and follow-up; the qualities identified as being essential in good salespeople.
2. Salespeople at present are rated as "good" or less on the basis of twelve personal attributes and ten selling skills. The seller who achieves excellence on these attributes and skills will be seen as superior, if not unique, in Irish selling and will derive the consequential benefits of that superiority.
3. Industrial customers presume that salespeople and their companies will provide effective after sale service.
4. Salespeople should cater for the main decision-maker in the buying centre rather than the senior member.
5. Product quality, price and delivery are the aspects of a market offering that a salesperson and his company should emphasise.
6. As salespeople are the most important source of information to buying centre members they should be afforded commensurate importance in the marketing and promotions mix.
7. In selecting and training salespeople cognisance should be taken of the qualities identified as being essential the to job holder.
8. In selecting salespeople companies might be best served in selecting a candidate with a technical background.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A.

**SALES ACTIVITIES AND FREQUENCY OF
OCCURRENCE**

SALES ACTIVITIES AND FREQUENCY OF OCCURRENCE^(a)

	Sales Activity	Frequency
1.	Make sales presentation	5.43
2.	Prepare sales presentation	4.37
3.	Overcome objections	5.02
4.	Call on potential accounts	4.51
5.	IO potential decision making	5.23
6.	Plan selling activity	5.45
7.	Leads for prospects	4.39
8.	Call on new accounts	4.46
9.	Make closure and obtain orders	4.28
10.	Products to take on call	4.17
11.	Presentation "aid"	4.12
12.	Introduce new products	4.47
13.	Co-ordination with existing lines	3.72
14.	Plan daily routine	5.81
15.	Study client's needs	4.33
16.	Help client's plan	3.59
17.	Demonstrate the product	2.97
18.	Predict closure dates	2.69
19.	Prepare visual displays	2.06
20.	Expedite orders	3.35
21.	Handle back orders	1.87
22.	Handle shipment problems	2.64
23.	Find lost orders	2.50
24.	Follow up client's orders	4.21
25.	Tailor to customer's needs	3.20
26.	Write up orders	3.98
27.	Keep track of invoices	3.32
28.	Give orders to support people	3.79
29.	Modify product	2.29
30.	Figure up bills	0.70
31.	Verify commissions	2.11
32.	Present during repairs	0.91
33.	Test product	0.98

34.	Supervise installation	0.89
35.	Perform maintenance	0.73
36.	Make deliveries	0.64
37.	Teach safety instructions	0.70
38.	Train customers to use products	2.20
39.	Order accessories	1.67
40.	Learn about product	1.40
41.	Order repair parts	1.09
42.	Examine prior to installation	1.34
43.	Practice using product	1.80
44.	Take clients on site	1.69
45.	Provide feedback	4.38
46.	Check in with supervisor	4.54
47.	Feedback from clients	4.81
48.	Fill out expense accounts	4.82
49.	Reports on sales activities	5.15
50.	Read company literature	5.21
51.	Read trade publications	4.40
52.	Phone office	4.86
53.	Provide technical information	5.51
54.	Co-ordinate activities	3.36
55.	Monitor competitor's products	4.33
56.	Provide information to salespeople	3.52
57.	Assist management surveys	2.35
58.	Travel with supervisors	1.88
59.	Take inventory for clients	2.14
60.	Point of purchase	1.53
61.	Stock shelves with product	0.75
62.	Handle local advertising	1.11
63.	Fill out purchase orders	1.96
64.	File	3.92
65.	Determine price by contact	2.33
66.	Submit price bids	2.87
67.	Sell to ultimate consumer	3.02
68.	Attend sales conferences	2.11
69.	Attend regional sales meetings	2.34
70.	Attend periodic training	2.23
71.	Work client conferences	1.67

72.	Fill out questionnaires	1.52
73.	Set up exhibitions	1.62
74.	Review new company products	3.55
75.	Appointments by mail	1.05
76.	Look for new sales representatives	0.56
77.	Train new sales people	1.33
78.	Travel with trainees	0.88
79.	Design sales plans	1.17
80.	Send out memos.	3.37
81.	Write letters	3.69
82.	Determine own price	0.32
83.	Determine legalities	0.99
84.	Make guest speeches	0.68
85.	Provide seminars	1.33
86.	Call on existing accounts	6.24
87.	Entertain clients	1.45
88.	Take clients to dinner	2.23
89.	Take clients out to drink	2.12
90.	Throw parties for client	0.54
91.	Take client to lunch	4.58

^(a) These figures are based on research conducted among the 2322 industrial salespeople of 51 American companies to establish the taxonomy of the typical sales position. Each respondent was given a list of 121 activities. Each activity was coded on a 7-point scale. If respondents did not perform the activity they were requested to code the activity '0'. If respondents performed the activity they responded from '1' to '7' depending on the frequency of performance during a months time, '1' being 'infrequently' and '7' being 'frequently'.

Source: Moncrief, William C. III: "Selling Activity and Sales Position Taxonomies for Industrial Salesforces", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. XXIII (August 1986), pp.264-265.

APPENDIX B:

SAMPLE LIST: PURCHASING PROFESSIONALS.

SAMPLE LIST: PURCHASING PROFESSIONALS.

<u>NAME:</u>	<u>COMPANY:</u>	<u>COUNTY:</u>	<u>IIPMM</u> <u>BRANCH:</u>
Martin J Crosbie	Kingspan Building Products	Cavan	Dundalk.
Martin P Smith	Gypsum Industries	Cavan	Dundalk.
Noel Bennett	Michael Lynch Ltd.	Clare	Limerick.
Majella O'Gorman	Tellabs Ltd.	Clare	Limerick.
John Cleary	Befab Safeland Ltd.	Clare	Limerick.
Con Lawless	Burle Industries	Cork	Cork.
David Kirk	Penn Chemicals B.U.	Cork	Cork.
Breda Holland	Liebert International	Cork	Cork.
Joseph Hunter	Glanmire Industries	Cork	Cork.
Noreen Meelan	Crestan Ireland Ltd.	Cork	Cork.
Martin Higgins	Elililly SA. Irish Branch	Cork	Cork.
Jeramiah Fitzpatrick	Western Digital Ireland Ltd	Cork	Cork.
Antoinette O'Neill	Swissco Ltd.	Cork	Cork.
John Finn	Bourns Electronics Ireland.	Cork	Cork.
Noel Daly	Tim Crowley Ltd.	Cork	Cork.
Brain Marshall	D and S Packaging	Cork	Cork.
Denis Lynch	Dairygold	Cork	Cork.
Edward Law	Irish Refining Plc.	Cork	Cork.
Leonard Godsil	Apple Computers Ltd.	Cork	Cork.
Michael McCarthy	Henkel Ireland Ltd.	Cork	Cork.
Vincent P. Weldon	Boss Trucks (Irl) Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Donal O'Gorman	Irish Cement Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
James J Morrin	Hallmank Cands Irl.Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Sandra Dulton	Microsoft (Irl) Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Patrick Norton	Shamrock Foods	Dublin	Dublin.

Peter Wiesner	Chesterton Industries B.V.	Dublin	Dublin.
Liam Pluck	Boelringen Mannheim Irl.	Dublin	Dublin.
Timothy Ryan	Irish Merchants Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
William A. Walsh	Claris (Ireland) Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Anne McCafferty	Arthur Guinness & Sons and Co. Dublin.	Dublin	Dublin.
Martin Thompson	Fujitsu Isotec (Irl) Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Martin D. McHugh	Clara Candy Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Conor T. Maguire	Hewlett Packard Irl. Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
James Mathor	Interbio Laboratories Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Timothy Whelan	Loctite (Ireland) Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Donal Donnelly	H.B. Ice Cream Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
John Donnelly	P.J. Walls (Dublin) Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Finbarr Duggan	The Irish Glass Bottle Co.	Dublin	Dublin.
Vincent Dunne	Munekata Plastronix Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
David B. Glynn	Colgate Palmolive Ireland.	Dublin	Dublin.
Liam Farrelly	Up-Right	Dublin	Dublin.
Paul Hurley	Ballymount Precision Engineering Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
James A. Fox	Premier Dairies	Dublin	Dublin.
Donal Crowley	Stratus Computers	Dublin	Dublin.
Michael Cullen	Reckitts (Irl) Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Aideen F. Carroll	Becton Dickenson & Co.	Dublin	Dublin.
Dennis Carvill	Oriflame Manufacturing Ltd.	Dublin	Dublin.
Martin Clancy	Connaught Packaging Ltd.	Galway	Galway.
William Douglas	Crown Equipment	Galway	Galway.
Nuala Fox	Precision Steel Components	Galway	Galway.
Maureen Melvin	Digital Equipment Inter.	Galway	Galway.
Elizabeth Casey	Klopman International Ltd.	Kerry	Cork.

Donal Conroy	Avon Arlington	Laois	Waterford.
Eamon Irwin	Interbalco A.G.	Limerick	Limerick.
Kenneth Browne	Essilon (Irl) Ltd.	Limerick	Limerick.
Mike Broderick	LMI Milton Roy.	Limerick	Limerick.
Michael Phayer	Howmedica International Inc.	Limerick	Limerick.
Michael J. Tienney	Golden Vale Food Products.	Limerick	Limerick.
Liam McCaffrey	Analog Devices B.V.	Limerick	Limerick.
Gerard Buckley	Aughinish Alumina Ltd.	Limerick	Limerick.
Mary Keogh	Thermo Disk	Limerick	Limerick.
Gerard Pearse	Interpro Systems Ltd.	Limerick	Limerick.
Bernard Keane	Kwik Lok Irl. Ltd.	Limerick	Limerick.
Anthony Culligan	AEG Servo Systems Ltd.	Limerick	Limerick.
Anne Fogarty	Basic Engineering Ltd.	Louth	Dundalk.
Patrick Finnegan	Harp Ireland Ltd.	Louth	Dundalk.
Patrick Gray	The Carrolls Tobacco Co.	Louth	Dundalk.
Kieran J. Hunk	Thorsman Ireland Ltd.	Louth	Dundalk.
John McGee	ABB Process Automation.	Louth	Dundalk.
Maureen Cameron	Allengan Pharmaceuticals	Mayo	Galway.
Margaret Canolan	Southborough Ltd.	Meath	Dublin.
Bart J. Cunningham	P.F. Doggett (Engineering)	Meath	Dublin.
Stephen McDonnell	Abbott Ireland Ltd.	Sligo	Galway.
Seamus Staed	R.V Chemicals Ltd.	Tipperary	Limerick.
William P.Davin	Bqusch and Lamb	Waterford	Waterford.
Michael Dolland	Milton Bradley Ireland	Waterford	Waterford.
George Hedgson	Ryan Plastics Ireland Ltd.	Waterford	Waterford.
Author Phelan	Nacanco Ireland	Waterford	Waterford.
Oliver Dempsey	Waterford Crystal Ltd.	Waterford	Waterford.
Patrick Dullaghan	Waterford Foundry Ltd.	Waterford	Waterford.
Mary Murphy	Wand International Ltd.	Westmeath	Westmeath.

Thomas O'Callaghan	L.M. Ericsson Ltd.	Westmeath	Westmeath.
Oliver Mahon	Cleary and Doyle	Wexford	Waterford.
Brian Walker	Sola ADC Lenses Ltd.	Wexford	Waterford.
Michael Sheehan	Avonmore Chemical Co. Ltd	Wicklow	Dublin.
Eileen Kennedy	Harris Calarific Ireland	Wicklow	Dublin.

APPENDIX C:

SAMPLE LIST: OTHER BUYING CENTER MEMBERS.

SAMPLE LIST: OTHER BUYING CENTER MEMBERS.

<u>NAME:</u>	<u>COMPANY:</u>	<u>COUNTY:</u>	<u>POSITION:</u>
A. Jestaedt	Braun Irl. Ltd.	Carlow	M. D.
P. Pollock	Cavan Irish Crystal	Cavan	Prod. Manager.
R. O'Reilly	Pouwels Trafo. Irl.	Cavan	Design Manager.
Pat. Shanahan	Tellabs Ltd.	Clare	M.D.
Roy. Benson.	Benson Box. Co.	Clare	M. D.
Eoin Goode	Chiefdale	Cork	M. D.
Michael Sullivan	Campbell Foods	Cork	M. D.
Ailbe Coffey	Pfizer Pharmaceutical Production Co.	Cork	Maintenance Eng.
Patrick Sheahan	Co-op Animal Health	Cork	General Manager.
Michael Murray	Murray and Sons Ltd.	Cork	M. D.
John Murphy	Silver Pail Dairies	Cork	Prod. Manager.
Nelius O'Flynn	Precision Component Engineering.	Cork	General Manager.
Michael Mullen	Golden Vale	Cork	Prod. Manager.
Phylis O'Meara	O'Meara Knitwear	Cork	Owner
S. O'Connell	O'Connell Knitwear	Cork	Prod. Manager.
Mary O'Shea	General Instrument Ltd.	Cork	Senior Production Supervisor.
Timothy Crowley	Timothy J Crowley	Cork	Owner.
J. Buckley	Tivoli Yarns Ltd.	Cork	Prod. Manager.
A. Bennett	Southern Electronic	Cork	M. D.
B. O'Gorman	Iprodex Manufacturing Ltd.	Cork	Prod. Manager.
D. Buckley	Med-Aid Services	Cork	General Manager.
P. Merrigan	Triaco Ltd.	Cork	General Manager.

S. Prickett	Alexis Associates	Cork	Prod. Manager.
A.F. Harrington	Harrington Confectionery Ltd.	Cork	Prod. Director.
W. Graingen	Grainger Sawmills	Cork	M. D..
M. Burns	Ardrahan Dairy Products.	Cork	M. D.
T. Sheehan	Harrington Goodlass Wall.	Cork	M. D.
Paul Sharma	Nena Models	Donegal	M. D.
Tadgh Gallagher	Gallagher Brothers.	Donegal	Prod. Manager.
Tom O'Keefe	Unigrain (I.A.W.S.)	Donegal	General Manager.
John Keou	Donegal Creameries	Donegal	Chief Executive.
F.T. Carr	Sellotape (Irl) Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.
J. Nelson	Neltronic Group	Dublin	M. D.
T. Mullan	Irish Industrial Explosives	Dublin	Factory Manager.
P. Mill	National Cash Register.	Dublin	M. D.
B.F. Healy	Computer Automation	Dublin	M. D.
P. Keogh	Wescan Europe Ltd.	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
Bill Colvin	Irish Roofing Felts.	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
T. Murray	R & A Bailey	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
G. Janotta	Semperit Ireland Ltd.	Dublin	Manufacturing Manager.
S. Griffith	Whessoe (Irl) Ltd.	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
D. Meehan	Ennis Handling Systems Ltd.	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
N. Kennelly	Capitol Spicers Ltd.	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
David Mayrs	David Mayrs Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.

V. Boyne	J.A. Hickey & Co.	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
M. O'Connor	Intel (Irl) Ltd. Engineering	Dublin	APCVD Manager.
Leonard O'Hogan	Gouldings Ltd.	Dublin	Operating Manager.
Paul Breen	Bimeda Chemicals.	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
Paul Burke	Savage Smyth & Co.	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
John Connaughton	C.K. Business Electronics	Dublin	Operations Manager.
B. Harrison	Rice Steel & Co. Ltd.	Dublin	Prod. Manager.
P. Marron	Nestle (Irl) Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.
R. Harris	J. Harris Assemblers	Dublin	Chairman.
J. Evans	Warrer Lambert	Dublin	M. D.
D. Scott	Jay/Mont Irl. Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.
P. Woods	B.M. Browne Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.
H.W. Bolger	Modern Plant	Dublin	M. D.
P. Kavanagh	Granby Ltd.	Dublin	Chief Executive.
M. Nally	Libra Designs	Dublin	Joint M. D.
E. Molloy	Redbro	Dublin	M.D.
J. Fields	J.J. Fields & Co.	Dublin	Owner/M.D.
D. Curry	C&C (Springs) Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.
T. Wright	Double Crest Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.
D. Cossgrove	Adapt Engineering.	Dublin	Technical Mgr.
B. McCarthy	AGB Scientific Ltd.	Dublin	Service Manager.
J. Eddie	Alpha-Laval (Irl) Ltd.	Dublin	Engineering Automation Mgr.
J.D. Hegarty	Allegro Ltd.	Dublin	Technical Mgr.
A. Harrison	ASEA Brown Doveri Ltd.	Dublin	Components Mgr.

J. Sexton	Berkel (Irl) Ltd.	Dublin	Technical Mgr.
G. Scully	Venture Packaging	Dublin	Quality Assurance Mgr.
A. Field	Tuchenhagen Ltd.	Dublin	Senior Production Eng.
P. McEvoy	Roankabin Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.
G. Bryan	The 1990 Tornado Perfumery Co. Ltd.	Dublin	Chief Executive.
D. Kavanagh	Pump Services	Dublin	Engineering Executive.
G.P. Kennedy	Plastronix Ltd.	Dublin	Engineering Mgr.
V. Ryan	Plateco Ltd.	Dublin	Technical Mgr.
T. Duncan	Knightsbridge Ind.	Dublin	M. D.
M. Donnelly	Lucan Tool & Mould	Dublin	Toolroom Mgr.
G. Kenna	Labsan Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.
J. Hannon	Roscrea Fresh Foods	Dublin	General Manager.
R.A. Murphy	Power & Chemical Plant Ltd.	Dublin	M. D.
S. Cunniffe	A.T. Cross	Galway	Engineer.
E.J. Fagan	Dubarry Shoes	Galway	M. D.
T. Clinton	J. Higgins Eng. Ltd.	Galway	Prod. Manager.
F. Quinn	Lisk (Irl) Ltd.	Galway	M. D.
H. Lydon	J. H. Lydon Ltd.	Galway	Owner.
Dympna Burke	Dympna Burke	Galway	Owner.
R. Wand	Western Automotion R & D Ltd.	Galway	Qual. Controller.
D. Dooley	Oran Pre-Cast Ltd.	Galway	Director.
John Fitzgibbon	Ard Ri Mantlepieces	Kerry	Prod. Manager.
Tommy Nealon	Nealon Joinery	Kerry	General Manager.

Sean Murphy	Kerry Algae	Kerry	M. D.
Vincent Regan	Klassic Socks Ltd.	Kerry	Prod. Manager.
Michael Moriarty	Swiss Wire Ltd.	Kerry	Engineer.
Conor Stack	GoblinIrl. Ltd.	Kerry	M. D.
B. Gibbons	P.D.M. Ltd.	Kildare	Head of Production.
M. McReynolds	Leaf Ltd.	Kildare	M. D.
P. Barry	P. Barry & Co. Ltd.	Kildare	Owner.
C.B. Kelly	Irish Bakeries Ltd.	Kildare	M. D.
J. Fenney	Lancer Laboratory Products Ltd.	Kildare	Quality Manager.
P.J. Bowes	Bowes P.J. Ltd.	Kildare	Principal.
A. McDonald	Ormonde Brick Ltd.	Kilkenny	Prod. Manager.
R. Lannen	Irish Hide and Skin	Kilkenny	M. D.
R. Lawlor	Industrial Computing Machines.	Laois	M. D.
Seamus Gallagher	Seamus Gallagher	Leitrim	Owner.
Robbie McAddams	Analog Devices B.V.	Limerick	M. D.
Chris Saunders	Kostal Irl. Ltd.	Limerick	General Manager.
Martin Dorne	G.T.I. Irl. Ltd.	Limerick	M. D.
Geoffrey McDonnell	McDonnell Eng. Ltd.	Limerick	Q. C. Eng.
D. Woods	Longford Textiles	Longford	M. D.
S. Butler	Butler Manufacturing Services.	Longford	M.D.
P. McConville	Anord Electric Controls Ltd.	Louth	Prod. Director.
J. McArdle	Laserform Irl. Ltd.	Louth	Technical Dir.
M. Cullen	Thorsman Irl. Ltd.	Louth	Prod. Manager.

R. Burtling	Accuracy Corporation	Louth	Engineering Supervisor.
C. Murray	Bab-Tech Ltd.	Louth	Engineering Manager.
P. Savage	Cuvilec Services	Louth	Technical Mgr.
M. Reilly	Reilly Bros. Furniture	Louth	Chief Executive.
G.T. O'Reilly	Butterly Provisions.	Louth	M. D.
K. Bowyers	Baxter Healthcare	Mayo	M. D.
L. Walsh	Popalan Linnes	Mayo	M. D.
J. O'Donoghue	AllFresh Bakeries	Mayo	M. D.
W. Duffy	W.J. Duffy (Ballina)	Mayo	Owner/M. D.
Sean Kelly	Sean Kelly	Mayo	Owner.
J. Joyce	Joyce Trailers Ltd.	Mayo	Owner.
T. Hamilton	Hanley Controls	Meath	Head of Production.
J. Connolly	Athboy Co-op Creamery.	Meath	Prod. Manager.
N. Keating	Keepak Group Ltd.	Meath	Chairman/Chief Exec.
C. Beckwith	Wellman Inter.	Meath	Chief Executive.
T. Barrett	Carney P. Ltd	Meath	Technical Mgr.
J. Conneely	Feldhues GmbH.	Monaghan	Prod. Manager.
B. Aughey	Aughey Screens Ltd.	Monaghan	M. D.
L. Ronaghan	RNR Pharmaceuticals	Monaghan	M. D.
R.S. Steel	SilverHill Foods	Monaghan	M.D.
S. Tynan	L O Intercom Ltd.	Offaly	Technical Mgr.
B. Passchien	Bopa (Irl) Ltd.	Offaly	M. D.
T. Farrell	Shannonside Milk Products.	Roscommon	Chief Executive

C. Finan	Ballintubber Enterprises Ltd.	Roscommon	Prod. Manager.
Bill Barr	Craftsman Press	Sligo	Prod. Manager.
Harry Monaghan	Reliable Plastics	Sligo	Prod. Manager.
Fintan Newport	Fintan's Manufact- uring Services.	Sligo	Prod. Manager
E. Colvin	Automat & Tooling	Sligo	M. D.
P.J. Carroll	Grants of Ireland	Tipperary	Factory Manager.
T. Briel	Schiesser (Irl) Ltd.	Tipperary	General Manager.
F. Spaight	Francis Spaight & Sons Ltd.	Tipperary	Owner.
B. Burke	Tech. Industries (Irl)	Waterford	Prod. Manager.
S. O'Gorman	Waterford Foods	Waterford	Chief Executive
P. Walsh	P. Walsh & Co.	Waterford	Owner.
P. Walsh	Arcosse Ltd.	Waterford	Works Manager.
M. Danford	Barb Dungarvan Ltd.	Waterford	Technical Mgr.
J. Power	Powerflow Electronics	Waterford	M. D.
M.F. Lucitt	Irish Cable & Wire	Westmeath	M.D.
T. Van Haut	Douwe Egbert	Westmeath	M. D.
L. Stronge	Strong D.L. & Co.	Westmeath	Principal.
J.D. Hyland	Cow & Gate Wexford Ltd.	Wexford	Prod. Manager
G. Schoepp	Schoepp Velours (Irl)	Wexford	M. D.
P.A. Walsh	Walsh Mushrooms	Wexford	M. D.
P. Kent	Kent Manufacturing Wexford Ltd.	Wexford	M. D.
S. Fuhrmann	Agricura Ltd.	Wexford	M. D.
K. Fitzgerald	Automatic Plastics	Wicklow	Prod. Manager.
Y. Hotori	Arklow Pottery	Wicklow	Prod. Manager.

A. Pratt	Arklow Handweavers Wicklow	Prod. Manager
R. Brierly	Brierly, Richard & Co Wicklow	M. D.
T. Johnson	Johnson Building Wicklow	M. D
	Systems (Ashford) Ltd.	

APPENDIX D

FINAL QUESTIONNAIRE

QUESTIONNAIRE

To establish a profile of the Irish Industrial Salesforce

1. From your experience of dealing with different salespeople who call on you at your office/premises what in your opinion are the five essential qualities of a good salesperson? (Please rank 1 = most important, etc.)

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

2. About how many salespeople do you meet with in your own office/premises in an average week?

3. Does your company formally re-evaluate the efficiency of your existing suppliers on a regular basis?

YES

NO

If "NO" go to Question 4.

If "YES" approximately how often do your re-evaluate them:

Every 1 - 3 months

Every 4 - 6 months

Every 7 - 9 months

Every 10 - 12 months

Other (Please specify) _____

4. From the following list please **rank** the 3 sources of information that are most important to you in making a purchase decision for **an item not previously purchased** by your company (please rank in order 1 = most important, etc.). Please feel free to add additional sources as appropriate.

Trade Journals	_____
Manufacturers/Distributors Promotional Material	_____
Trade Shows/Exhibitions	_____
Manufacturers/Distributors Salespeople	_____
Buyers from other Companies	_____
Trade Associates	_____
Others (please specify) _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. From the following list please **rank** the 5 criteria that are most important to you in selecting a supplier of **an item not previously purchased** by your company. (Please rank in order 1 = most important, etc.). Please feel free to insert additional criteria as appropriate.

Delivery	_____
After Sales Service	_____
Quality of Product/Service	_____
Price	_____
Reputation of Supplier	_____
Past experience of dealing with supplier	_____
Reliability of Supplier	_____
Competence of Suppliers Salespeople	_____
Possibility of Reciprocal Arrangement	_____
Others (please specify) _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

- 6 On the following list of **personal attributes** please **rate** the sales people who called on you in the past 12 months on the basis of (1) excellent (2) very good (3) good (4) fair (5) poor (6) no opinion. Please circle the appropriate number.

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Personal Appearance	1	2	3	4	5	6
Courtesy	1	2	3	4	5	6
Pleasantness of Manner	1	2	3	4	5	6
Dependability	1	2	3	4	5	6
Sincerity	1	2	3	4	5	6
Imagination	1	2	3	4	5	6
Technical Ability	1	2	3	4	5	6
Positive Attitude	1	2	3	4	5	6
Communication Skills	1	2	3	4	5	6
Self Confidence	1	2	3	4	5	6
Enthusiasm	1	2	3	4	5	6
Punctuality	1	2	3	4	5	6

7. Using the same scale please **rate** the salespeople who called on you in the past 12 months on the following **selling skills**:

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Poor	No Opinion
Preparation for sales calls	1	2	3	4	5	6
Knowledge of our company, products and processes	1	2	3	4	5	6
Own product knowledge	1	2	3	4	5	6
Questioning to understand our needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Ability to listen	1	2	3	4	5	6
Willingness to work with our technical people	1	2	3	4	5	6
Imagination in applying his/her products to our needs	1	2	3	4	5	6
Diplomacy in dealing with operating depts.	1	2	3	4	5	6
Willing to keep me updated	1	2	3	4	5	6
Follow-up after order placement and delivery	1	2	3	4	5	6

8. Based on your answers to the previous questions what do you consider to be the three major areas for improvement with Irish salespeople:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

9. Please use this space to add anything further about Irish salespeople which you regard as important.
