







Executive Summary: Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling Annual Report

The Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling proudly presents its annual report, highlighting a year of remarkable achievements, partnerships, and growth. This year we continued our commitment to excellence in sales education, nurturing exceptional sales professionals, and fostering meaningful connections with our corporate partners.

Partnerships and Engagement

Our success is intertwined with our strong relationships with our esteemed corporate partners. This year, we celebrated collaborations with eighteen partners, each contributing to our dynamic learning environment. We were pleased to welcome three new partners – Dale Carnegie, Rush Enterprises, and Shamrock Trading Corporation – and extend our gratitude to all partners for their unwavering support.

Our commitment to mutual development was highlighted through initiatives like the Fastenal workshop, providing insights into university student recruitment practices and fostering growth for both our partners and the Center.

Curriculum and Academic Rigor

Our mission's heart is a curriculum combining academic rigor with practical application. Our Professional Selling program underwent a transformation, replacing the communication certificate with a LinkedIn Learning certificate, empowering students with refined communication and people skills.

Real-world application remained a priority with exercises such as "Getting the Appointment," allowing students to master cold calling and relationship-building techniques. The Advanced Selling Mentorship Program and CRM certifications further enriched students' learning experiences, equipping them with the tools needed to excel in modern sales environments.

Community Outreach and Student Recruitment

Beyond classrooms, our dedication extends to community engagement and the nurturing of future sales professionals. Director Thom Coats actively engaged in various events, enhancing the orientation experience for new students and extending our outreach to local community colleges.

IGNITE Events provided students with immersive experiences, fostering real-world interactions and applying their knowledge in practical scenarios. Our upcoming events, such as the LinkedIn Builder Checklist and Elevator Pitch workshops, continue to empower students for professional growth.

IGNITE Sales Practicum and Faculty Excellence

The IGNITE Sales Practicum program offered students hands-on experiences with our partners. These events bridged theoretical knowledge with practical skills, empowering students to excel in real-world sales challenges.

Our esteemed faculty, including Dr. Don Roy and Dr. Gaia Rancati, continued to lead in thought and expertise. Dr. Roy's publication on LinkedIn strategies and Dr. Rancati's research on the sales process and neuromarketing underscored their dedication to advancing sales education.

Conclusion

As we reflect on our journey, the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling remains committed to excellence, innovation, and growth. Our annual report is a testament to the combined efforts of our partners, faculty, and students, all contributing to our shared success.

Looking ahead, we embrace the possibilities that await. With continued support and collaboration, we are confident that our Center will continue to inspire, educate, and shape the future of professional selling. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each contributor to our journey and anticipate many more years of partnership, achievement, and shared success.

Warm regards,

Thom Coats



Introduction

Dear Esteemed Members of the Corporate Partner Advisory Board and fellow faculty,

It is with great pleasure and gratitude that we present the annual report of the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling. Reflecting on the past year, we are honored to share our growth journey, accomplishments, and unwavering commitment to excellence.

Our partnership with each of you has been instrumental in shaping our mission to empower the next generation of sales professionals. Your insights, guidance, and collaborative spirit have driven our successes, and we are excited to present a snapshot of our achievements.

In an ever-evolving landscape, the Center for Professional Selling remains dedicated to providing our students with a world-class education that aligns with academic rigor and industry demands. Our endeavors have been centered around creating an environment where academic excellence seamlessly intersects with real-world application. This is where your involvement has been paramount to the success of our students.

As we delve into the pages of this report, you will find a compilation of highlights that highlight the tangible impact of our partnership. From student achievements that affirm the value of our programs to faculty initiatives that contribute to thought leadership, every facet of our endeavor is a testament to our shared dedication to shaping the future of professional selling.

Our commitment to continuous improvement remains unwavering as we navigate the road ahead. Our partnership with you fuels our drive to adapt, innovate, and stay at the forefront of industry trends. Together, we are building a legacy of excellence that transcends academic boundaries and paves the way for the success of our students and the organizations they will serve.

This report celebrates the milestones we have reached together and envisions the path we forge for the future. Your ongoing support is appreciated and vital, and we look forward to many more years of collaboration, growth, and shared success.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling.



Mission and Vision

At Middle Tennessee State University's Center for Professional Selling, our mission is to elevate the standards of professional selling and sales management by delivering a world-class sales education and training experience to our students. We are driven by a vision to cultivate exceptional sales professionals who are not only well-equipped with knowledge but also armed with practical skills that empower them to excel in the dynamic realm of sales.

Our commitment to excellence is evident in every facet of our approach. We harness innovative sales technology and leverage the latest research to provide our students with a curriculum that transcends theoretical concepts and translates into actionable strategies. By bridging the gap between academia and real-world sales scenarios, we ensure that our graduates are primed to make an immediate impact in any sales organization they choose to join.

With 66% of all business graduates entering sales positions as their first jobs, the significance of professional selling cannot be understated. It is a field that offers many opportunities and possibilities, and our role is to equip our students with the skills and insights needed to thrive within it. Whether it is sales representatives, account managers, or sales managers across diverse industries, the demand for proficient sales professionals remains consistently high.

In Tennessee's dynamic landscape, professional selling is one of the most sought-after career paths. However, this demand has also brought to light a workforce deficit, resulting in a gap between available opportunities and the skilled professionals to fulfill them. As the Center for Professional Selling, we are committed to narrowing this gap by fostering a new generation of adept sales professionals poised to take on these roles with confidence and expertise.

Our mission and vision converge to create an educational experience that imparts knowledge and instills a mindset of adaptability, resilience, and innovation. We are shaping the future of sales by nurturing a talent pool that is not just proficient but exceptional – ready to contribute, lead, and elevate the field of professional selling. Through our collaboration, dedication, and shared vision, we are creating a pathway to success for our students and, in turn, enriching the landscape of the sales profession.



Achievements and Highlights

External Competition Success

At the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling, we believe that true growth results from determination, dedication, and the pursuit of excellence. Our students have consistently demonstrated their exceptional abilities and commitment to excellence in various external competitions, highlighting their skills and making us incredibly proud.



Fall 2022
State Farm Marketing and Sales Competition

In a fierce arena of talent, our Center took two students to the Sales Farm Marketing and Sales Competition. We are thrilled to share that our team earned a commendable fifth place. This achievement reflects not only their hard work but also their readiness to face challenges head-on and thrive.

Northeast Intercollegiate Sales Competition: A Triumph in Rhode Island

Venturing to Rhode Island for the Northeast Intercollegiate Sales Competition, our team of five students exhibited remarkable prowess. Their dedication paid off with outstanding results: one student secured an impressive third place in the Spanish division. The efforts of our team shone through as three students advanced to the semifinals, with one student ultimately achieving a remarkable first place. As a culmination of these successes, the MTSU team was awarded the prestigious first place overall. These achievements are a testament to the passion, preparation, and skill our students bring to every competition.





Spring 2023

Triumphs at Tractor Supply Case Competition and AMA Nashville

Regional Elevator Pitch Competition

Continuing the streak of success, our students participated in the Tractor Supply Case Competition in Brentwood, TN. The collaboration of five students, including three supply chain and two sales students, led to a well-deserved second place. It reflects their analytical thinking, strategic insight, and teamwork.

Additionally, we proudly share that one of our students emerged victorious at the AMA Nashville Regional Elevator Pitch Competition, seizing the coveted first place. This accomplishment highlights the precision and finesse our students communicate their ideas and passion.



As part of our commitment to providing comprehensive education, we empower our students with two distinctive credentials upon graduation:

Professional Selling Stole: A distinguished achievement awarded to a graduating Marketing senior with a concentration in Professional Selling. Students who have navigated the academic rigors and requirements will earn this esteemed Professional Selling Stole, symbolizing their dedication to the field.

Certificate of Professional Selling: Under the auspices of our membership in the University Sales Center Alliance, we bestow a Certificate of Professional Selling upon students who fulfill the academic prerequisites and the experiential requisites of the Center for Professional Selling. This certification not only highlights academic prowess but also a commitment to practical excellence.

In the current academic year, we are thrilled to announce that seventeen students have been honored with the Professional Selling Stole, a testament to their dedication. Furthermore, an impressive twenty-five students have earned the Certificate of Professional Selling, reflecting their academic diligence and real-world preparedness.

These credentials exemplify our dedication to nurturing well-rounded professionals who excel academically and practically. They serve as symbols of distinction and recognition within professional selling.



Collaborations and Partnerships

Fostering Excellence through Engagements and Partnerships

At the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling, our commitment to excellence extends beyond the classroom, shaping meaningful collaborations and partnerships that contribute to the holistic growth of our students. Through a range of competitions, networking events, and a comprehensive mentorship program, we are dedicated to nurturing well-rounded professionals who thrive in the dynamic world of sales.



Internal Competitions: Nurturing Skills and Confidence

The Pitch: Every professional knows the significance of a compelling elevator pitch. All Jones College of Business students are invited to craft and present their pitch in this competition. Jackson sales professionals

provide valuable feedback, and the top five students are recognized for their standout pitches.

Enterprise Sales Competition: Top MKT 3840 Professional Selling class students highlight their business-to-business selling skills in the Sales Lab. This roleplay event features Enterprise hiring managers as judges, guiding students to enhance their practical selling abilities. The top five students are acknowledged and receive a cash prize.

State Farm Business-to-Consumer (B2C) Sales Competition: All MKT 3840 Professional Selling students engage in this B2C roleplay event held at the Miller Education Center (MEC). State Farm professionals serve as judges, assessing students' sales skills. The top five students are celebrated, and they receive a cash prize.

Novatech Competition: MKT 4850 Advanced Selling students compete in the Sales Lab for this roleplay event, evaluated by Novatech executives. The top three students are recognized for their exemplary performance.



Into the Tank: MKT 3950 Business-to-Business Marketing students collaborate in teams for this hands-on capstone event. Students present their findings through strategic analyses and sales planning to Change Healthcare professionals, who judge the competition. The top team is acknowledged and awarded a cash prize.

Personal Selling Event: A platform for professional selling concentration students to highlight their skills, this mock-interview event challenges students to "sell" themselves to prospective employers. Held at the MEC and attended by fourteen corporate partners, each student engages with at least six companies, honing their selling acumen.



Networking Events: Building Meaningful Connections



Morning Networking Event: Designed to simulate reallife networking environments, this event invites corporate partners to engage with students, imparting valuable insights on networking strategies.

Lunch-n-Learns: Corporate partners host informative lunch-n-learns throughout the semester, answering student queries and presenting numerous opportunities. Professional Selling concentration students benefit from these enlightening sessions.

Business Etiquette Dinner sponsored by Jackson: An IGNITE event, this dinner sponsored by Jackson Financial imparts best practices for business dining settings. Students interact with corporate partner representatives, enhancing their professional etiquette.

Blue Raider Phone Blitz: In collaboration with the Blue Raider Athletic Association (BRAA), students gain experiential learning and relationship-building opportunities through this phone blitz to renew BRAA memberships.



Mentorship Program: Guided Excellence

Advanced Selling Mentorship Program: Our MKT 4850 Advanced Selling students experience the mentorship of sales professionals from corporate partners. Students engage in job shadowing, sales meetings, and one-on-one interactions throughout the semester, fostering practical learning and mentorship.

These collaborations and partnerships are the cornerstone of our commitment to nurturing exceptional sales professionals. Through dynamic engagements, experiential learning, and real-world interactions, we are shaping individuals who excel academically and thrive in sales.

Partner Enhancements and Engagement





Empowering Excellence: Fastenal Workshop

The spirit of collaboration extends to equipping our partners with insights and knowledge that foster mutual growth. During the summer, Fastenal held an enriching workshop in the SunTrust room of the BAS. This session, dedicated to refining university student recruitment practices, gave their managers a comprehensive understanding of best practices. Such initiatives reaffirm our commitment to mutual development and innovation as we continue collaborating.



Curriculum and Academic Rigor

Empowering Excellence Through Progressive Curriculum

At the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling, our commitment to academic rigor is deeply intertwined with practical application. We design our curriculum to reflect the dynamic demands of the sales profession, ensuring that our students are equipped with theoretical knowledge and hands-on expertise.



Professional Selling: Elevating Communication Proficiency

In our Professional Selling program, we have introduced a pivotal change. Instead of an outdated communication certificate, we offer a LinkedIn Learning certificate – "Develop Your Communication Skills and Interpersonal Influence." This comprehensive program, consisting of 6 hours of practical learning, empowers our students to refine their communication prowess and interpersonal finesse. This certificate proudly displayed in their LinkedIn profiles, is a testament to their dedication to professional growth.

Real-World Application: "Getting the Appointment" Exercise

The Professional Selling course immerses students in a hands-on exercise, "Getting the Appointment." Here, students master securing appointments by engaging in cold calling, crafting impactful voicemails and professional emails, and leveraging LinkedIn to network effectively. This immersive exercise culminates in the Blue Raider Phone Blitz, where students make outbound calls to sell sports tickets guided by our esteemed partners. This real-world application hones sales skills and imparts the nuances of relationship-building and persuasion.



Nurturing Excellence: Advanced Selling Mentorship Program

Our Advanced Selling course enriches students' experiences through a mentorship program. Each student is paired with a representative from our corporate partners, attending sales meetings, job shadowing, and culminating in reflective video presentations. This symbiotic relationship bridges academia with industry realities, nurturing well-rounded professionals with holistic sales proficiency.

Advanced Selling: Cultivating Holistic Sales Proficiency

In our Advanced Selling program, we proudly announce the integration of two coveted CRM certifications: "Accounts & Contacts for Lightning Experience" and "Leads & Opportunities for Lightning Experience." These certifications, embedded within our curriculum, give students a distinct advantage. By mastering these fundamental aspects of customer relationship management, students are better prepared to navigate the intricacies of modern sales environments.

Advanced Selling Capstone: "Sales Review"

In the Advanced Selling capstone exercise, students embark on a journey of comprehensive analysis, strategic thinking, and persuasive communication through the "Sales Review" exercise. Collaborating with non-profit organizations, students conduct SWOT analyses, craft buyer personas, perform territory reviews, and create 30/60/90-day sales plans. Culminating in PowerPoint presentations before a distinguished panel and non-profit representatives, this capstone highlights the fusion of theoretical knowledge with practical prowess.

As we continue to champion the fusion of theory and practice, our commitment to academic rigor is unwavering. The Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling stands as a beacon of excellence, empowering students to excel in the dynamic realm of sales.



Community Outreach and Student Recruitment

At the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling, our dedication to excellence extends beyond the confines of our classrooms. We understand that fostering strong relationships with our community and nurturing the next generation of sales professionals are integral to our mission.

Engaging with the Community

We believe in the power of collaboration and the value of contributing to our community. Throughout the year, our Director Thom Coats presents a compelling narrative of the Center for Professional Selling story and delivers impactful sales training at various events, including CLIMB Chamber training in Spring Hill, TN, Murfreesboro Noon Rotary, Rutherford Chamber Diplomat meeting, CABLE events, and Freshman Recruitment Sales Training. Thom Coats' participation on four MTSU Customs panels over the summer showcases our commitment to enhancing the orientation experience for new students.

In addition, our outreach extends to local community colleges such as Volunteer State, Motlow, and Nashville State. Our representatives, including Thom Coats and Dr. Don Roy, engage with these institutions to share insights about our programs and the opportunities we offer to aspiring sales professionals.

Empowering Students with IGNITE Events

We recognize the importance of nurturing students' skills beyond the classroom. Our IGNITE Events offer students a platform to immerse themselves in real-world scenarios and gain valuable insights. These events allow them to interact with professionals, apply their knowledge, and further develop their sales acumen. Plus, we





Empowering Professional Growth: Upcoming Events

LinkedIn Builder Checklist TEAMs Event: LinkedIn Builder Checklist, sponsored by the Center for Professional Selling, provides students with a comprehensive understanding of leveraging LinkedIn as a powerful storefront window in the town square of business. This session reviews the LinkedIn profile checklist and best practices for utilizing the platform to foster professional growth.

How to Write an Elevator Pitch: Elevator pitches capture attention and spark interest. This event, sponsored by the Center for Professional Selling, equips students with the skills to craft impactful elevator pitches. Participants will learn to summarize their identity, profession, and value proposition to earn follow-up meetings.



Morning Networking Event: This interactive event in the SunTrust Room offers hands-on learning of essential networking skills and strategies. Participants will gain insights into preparing for, attending, and following up on networking events, with the chance to interact with seasoned professionals and learn from their experiences.

The Pitch by Jackson: MTSU's premier elevator pitch competition occurs in the Mel Adams Sales Lab. Students can present their 30 to 90–second elevator pitches and receive feedback from experienced judges. The top three students will earn prizes sponsored by Jackson.



Business Etiquette Dinner: Elevate your networking skills and professionalism at our Business Etiquette Dinner. Engage with successful professionals, learn essential dining etiquette, and network in a formal setting. This exclusive event offers a unique opportunity to enhance your career and forge lasting connections.

New Hire Onboarding: Gain insights into the typical forms found in new hire packets at our informative overview event. While not providing legal advice, this session offers a comprehensive understanding of the forms often included in hiring packets.

Our dedication to community engagement and student development remains unwavering. At the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling, we are committed to nurturing connections, fostering growth, and igniting the potential of our students.

Expanding Horizons

Our commitment to community outreach and student recruitment remains unwavering as we look to the future. By fostering connections, sharing insights, and kindling the flames of passion, we elevate our institution and contribute to developing a vibrant and thriving sales ecosystem.

At the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling, community outreach, and student recruitment stand as testaments to our dedication to creating a positive impact that reverberates far beyond our campus.





Future Plans and Initiatives

At the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling, we are committed to continuous growth and innovation. We are excited to share our upcoming plans and initiatives that further enrich our offerings and provide valuable resources to our students and professionals.

LinkedIn Builder: Empowering Your Online Presence

Thom Coats, Director of the Center for Professional Selling, has developed an invaluable tool named the "LinkedIn Builder." This resource is designed to assist both professionals and students in enhancing their LinkedIn profiles. The "LinkedIn Builder" aims to provide guidance, insights, and strategies to optimize online presence and create impactful profiles. This tool will be offered as a free resource, aligning with our commitment to empowering individuals to showcase their talents and achievements effectively.

"Drink Coffee, Make Friends Podcast"

A Journey in Sales Education Launching at the end of August 2023, the "Drink Coffee, Make Friends Podcast" is poised to become an indispensable resource for sales professionals and students alike. The podcast follows the academic topics covered in our Professional Selling course, offering a comprehensive and informative journey through the world of sales. With a focus on broadening its scope to meet the needs of any new sales professional, the podcast will explore a wide array of subjects. Additionally, we will feature interviews with our corporate partners, man-on-the-street interviews during student events, and insights from industry experts.

"Drink Coffee, Make Friends Card Game": Elevating Networking Skills

Thom Coats introduces the "Drink Coffee, Make Friends Card Game" to aid in honing networking skills. Designed to enhance the art of "professional coffee" conversations, this innovative tool assists new professionals in mastering the art of asking and learning during crucial networking opportunities. The card game serves as a valuable resource, facilitating meaningful interactions and strengthening networking capabilities.



Networking eBook by Thom Coats: A Guide to Building Meaningful Connections

Thom Coats, a thought leader in networking, has authored a Networking eBook that is set to be published this Fall. This insightful guide offers practical strategies, techniques, and wisdom to foster the art of building meaningful connections. With an emphasis on developing relationships that truly resonate, this eBook will empower professionals to navigate the realm of networking with confidence and purpose.

Blue Raider Sales Experience: Fostering Alumni Connections

We are thrilled to announce the successful launch of our first-ever Blue Raider Sales Experience – a vertical networking event that connects our alumni community in the sales professions. This event marks the beginning of a series of quarterly networking opportunities, aimed at building a robust network of alumni who contribute to and thrive in the world of sales.

Empowering Lifelong Learning: Partnership with Energy4Sales

To reinforce our commitment to continuous education, we have partnered with Energy4Sales to offer comprehensive sales training for individuals and companies beyond the university setting. This partnership underlines our dedication to equipping professionals with the skills and knowledge needed for success in the sales industry. We are excited to announce that this initiative will include both Fall and Spring live face–to–face training days.

Virtual Sales Internship Fair: Expanding Opportunities

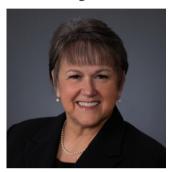
In response to the changing professional development landscape, we hosted our first virtual sales internship fair for our corporate partners. The success of this inaugural event has inspired us to hold similar fairs during both the Fall and Spring semesters. These fairs provide a platform for our partners and students to connect, offering valuable experiential learning opportunities.

As we continue to propel forward, the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling remains dedicated to innovation, education, and equipping our students and partners with the tools they need to excel in the ever-evolving sales field.



Faculty Excellence and Thought Leadership

Dean Joyce Heames Ph.D.



Middle Tennessee State University has named Dr. Joyce Heames Ph. D. as new dean of the <u>Jennings A. Jones College of Business</u> following a national search for the next leader of the award-winning college.

"They're just doing some phenomenal things at MTSU and within Jones College," Heames said. "So to step into a school that's already doing such wonderful things and is really on the cusp of taking it to a new level excites me."

- Heames

Mr. Thom Coats Director



Dr. Diane Edmondson Professor



Dr. Lucy Matthews Associate Professor





Dr. Michael Peasley Associate Professor



Dr. Gaia Rancati Assistant Professor



Dr. Ricky Fergurson Assistant Professor





Conclusion

As we reflect on the milestones of the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling, it's clear that our journey is one defined by growth, dedication, and a shared commitment to excellence. Our partnership with esteemed corporate partners, our faculty's expertise, and our students' passion have propelled us to new heights.

As we look toward the future, we are excited by the possibilities that lie ahead. Our commitment to nurturing exceptional sales professionals, fostering innovation, and bridging the gap between academia and industry remains unwavering. We are shaping the future of professional selling through collaboration, dedication, and the pursuit of excellence.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to each of our corporate partners, faculty members, and students for their role in our shared success. With your continued support, we are confident that the Middle Tennessee State University Center for Professional Selling will continue to thrive, inspire, and elevate the field of sales education.

Thank you for being part of our journey. Here's to many more years of partnership, growth, and shared success.

Warm regards,

Thom Coats
Director, Middle Tennessee State University
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