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SPQ*GOLD®

Validity of the Sales Preference Questionnaire



SPQ*GOLD® is specifically designed to assess attitudes and behaviors associated with sales prospecting (contact initiation with prospective buyers). It may be used in a variety of settings, from classroom to formal research. It is appropriate for anyone in a contact-dependent work setting, including veteran salespeople, new salespeople, sales managers, trainers, consultants, psychologists, human resources practitioners and others who are either in sales or may influence the attitudes or behaviors of individuals in direct sales.

When a salesperson is hesitant to initiate contact with prospective buyers they are less likely to realize their full potential for success in sales. This hesitancy is referred to as *sales call reluctance*®. Call reluctance is a special case of the *Inhibited Social Contact Initiation Syndrome* (ISCIS), which was originally postulated by behavioral scientists Dudley and Goodson in the 1970s. In-depth research into ISCIS and call reluctance led to the discovery of twelve distinct types of call reluctant behavior.

SPQ*GOLD® is a special purpose diagnostic instrument that exclusively measures the twelve types of call reluctance, in addition to three call reluctance "impostors," and three scales used to detect nonstandard attitudes toward completing the instrument. This instrument was first developed in 1980 and has since been the subject of extensive research aimed at establishing its utility when used as intended. These studies, many of which are proprietary to the sponsoring organizations, make SPQ*GOLD® one of the most validated applications in use today for assessing salespeople.

Criterion Validity

Research on the validity of SPQ*GOLD® focuses on criterion-referenced studies based on objective sales performance criteria, which is typically measured in dollars or units sold. These types of objective measurements represent hard criteria which impact profitability directly. Research conducted with SPQ*GOLD® in various industries has repeatedly shown a systematic link between lower levels of call reluctance® and higher sales productivity.

Content Validity

Cross-cultural studies have shown that the majority of individuals completing SPQ*GOLD® (approximately 90%) find that the test items are reasonably related to a career in sales. These results are statistically significant ($p < .0001$) and indicate that SPQ*GOLD® has good content validity. These studies further supplement the criterion validity studies that indicate a link between SPQ*GOLD® scales and sales production.

Construct Validity

Construct validity studies have shown that SPQ*GOLD® subscale scores correlate significantly in expected directions with scales on established mainstream psychological instruments such as the 16PF, NEO, MBTI, CPI, MMPI and others. Additionally, SPQ*GOLD® also has demonstrated significant discriminant validity between groups such as successful salespeople, university students, and technical non-sales personnel.

Universal Application

SPQ*GOLD® is particularly useful in providing assessment-based support to supplement selection, training, and career development applications. Professional standards, such as those described in the Uniform Guidelines on Employee Selection and Procedures (Code of Federal Regulations) and the Standards for Educational and Psychological Tests prepared by a joint committee of the American Psychological Association, were examined when constructing and validating the instrument.

This measurement tool has universal applications across industries and countries, regardless of the sales environment because success invariably requires generation of new business from prospective and/or existing clients. Therefore contact initiation is a core competency for salespeople.

Since other factors beside contact initiation also affect success in a sales career, it is not recommended that SPQ*GOLD® be the sole source of information from which the selection decision is made. Other factors become equally if not more important once first contact is made. However, contact initiation comes first. Research studies have shown that contact initiation behaviors, as measured by SPQ*GOLD®, serve as a leading indicator of future success in sales.

Norms

SPQ*GOLD® has been used in a series of studies with samples representative of many organizations, industries and countries. The result is an array of normative data from countries that include the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, the U.K., Italy, Spain, South Africa, and Canada.

Overall, SPQ*GOLD® is the most widely used diagnostic instrument for assessing sales call reluctance® in the world.

SPQ*GOLD® TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

PUBLISHER:

Behavioral Sciences Research Press, Dallas, Texas, USA.

DATE OF ORIGINAL COPYRIGHT:

1980

AUTHORS:

George W. Dudley and Shannon L. Goodson

PURPOSE:

To diagnose the presence, nature and extent of Inhibited Social Contact Initiation Syndrome in salespeople and personnel who influence salespeople.

SCOPE:

International; most widely used psychometric application for diagnosis of sales call reluctance® in the world. More than 300,000 applications worldwide.

DESCRIPTION:

SPQ is the abbreviation for Sales Preference Questionnaire™, the formal name of the test booklet. SPQ*GOLD®: The Sales Call Reluctance® Scale is the name given to the computer scored printouts of test results. For more information about the theoretical background of the device, see [SPQ*GOLD® Theoretical Foundations](#).

RELEVANT APPLICATIONS:

SPQ*GOLD® can be administered to anyone in a contact-dependent work setting. This includes, but is not limited to, veteran salespeople, new salespeople, prospective salespeople, sales managers, trainers, supervisors, outside consultants, psychologists, human resources practitioners and other groups and individuals, including senior management, who are either in sales or may influence the attitudes or behaviors of those who are in sales.

NORMS (AVAILABILITY):

Since 1980 SPQ*GOLD® has been used in a series of studies with samples representative of many organizations, industries and countries. The result is a formidable array of norms detailing differences both within and between groups of interest. Norms for age, gender, education and other demographic variables of interest have also been obtained.

NORM DATA (SOURCES):

Includes U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, U.K., Italy, Spain, South Africa, Canada and others.

SCORING:

At present, SPQ*GOLD® can be scored via ROSET™ (Rapid On-site Scores & Evaluations), a proprietary multi-assessment computer scoring platform for international use. Scores are reported as simple percents. However, transformed scores are also available in more complex and informative standardized formats such as "N-Stens." Full internet access and scoring will be available soon.

SPQ*GOLD® TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

RELIABILITY:

SPQ*GOLD® scales demonstrate good test-retest stability, averaging $r=.75$ over all scales (18 of the 21 scales were significant at $p<.01$, the remainder at $p<.05$). The stability of the Brake score, the overall diagnostic measure, is $r=.91$ ($p<.01$). Cronbach's alpha, one estimate of internal consistency, for the Brake Score is $r=.84$. (Coefficient Alpha can vary somewhat because research has shown that the sales profession is not unidimensional.) Radically dissimilar settings can exist within the branch offices of the same company, across companies within the same industry and across industries. In each case, the correlation of customer contact initiation to objective outcome measures can vary from extremely important (certain financial services companies) to considerably less important (some forms of retail sales). SPQ*GOLD® is most appropriate for growth-oriented organizational settings where first contact with prospective buyers on a consistent daily basis is needed and expected for new business generation.

VALIDITY:

SPQ*GOLD® has generated an extensive body of research results which have established good concurrent validity in a variety of disparate organizational settings, correlating significantly with objective outcome data (almost always measured in dollars). Some associations are best represented with simple linear models, while others have benefited from more complex non-linear explorations including some of the first neural network modeling completed for predicting (classifying) sales results ("very high producer" vs. "very low producer"). SPQ*GOLD® has also demonstrated excellent discriminant validity between groups such as successful salespeople, university students, and technical non-sales personnel as well as outplaced and retained accountants. Construct validity studies have shown that SPQ*GOLD® subscale scores correlate significantly in expected directions with scales on established mainstream psychological instruments such as the 16PF, 16PF (Australian version), NEO, MBTI, CPI, MMPI and others. Many additional construct validity studies using objective outcome data have been completed, including number of interviews obtained by outplaced non-sales management level personnel; and psychological barriers to the effectiveness of mentoring programs. SPQ*GOLD® scales have been shown to predict a range of behavioral choices, in directions consistent with the construct of Inhibited Social Contact Initiation Syndrome, which is measured by SPQ*GOLD®. For more information, see the [Research Section](#) of this website.

PRIMARY REFERENCES:

The Psychology of Sales Call Reluctance®, Manual for the Sales Preference Questionnaire™, Technical Supplement to Accompany SPQ*GOLD®.

NON-U.S./NON-ENGLISH VERSIONS AVAILABLE:

Yes

ALTERNATIVE INSTRUMENTS:

Meeting People Questionnaire (MPQ™), for measuring the same construct in non-sales settings;
Recruiting Power Measure (RPM™), for measuring the same construct in personnel expected to contact and recruit high level prospective staff.

AVAILABILITY:

From the publisher, or through an international network of professional associates.

SPQ*GOLD® TECHNICAL OVERVIEW

BSRP's Scientific Advisory Board helps to maintain BSRP's core scientific skill base and assists in positioning the organization for continued growth in the future. Board activities include reviewing organizational operations; working to identify, examine, review and critique competitors' products and practices; and forecasting near- and long-term psychometric assessment trends and technical opportunities.

"No organization, large or small, could want a more distinguished board," says BSRP President Shannon L. Goodson. "The members of this group are highly qualified. Each brings world class skills, accomplishments, scholarship, perspective and practical experience."

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