

**CASE 14.1**  
**Selling in the EU**  
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**1. What is relationship selling and how does its application differ among different cultures?**

Relationship selling refers to the development and maintenance of relational exchanges that focus on long-term outcomes for the relationship (Cravens, 1995; Jolson 1997; Beverland 2001). Salespeople create value by working with customers and develop solutions that enhance the profits of both companies. Relationship selling is a life-long process where immediate closings might be postponed on the basis of more effectively meeting customer needs and focuses on building mutual trust by delivering the anticipated, long-term added benefits to buyers (Scott, 1995; Weitz and Bradford, 1999).

Its application differs widely between cultures. In Greece, as per the case study, much of the relationship building (e.g., nurturing the relationship) happens in a social environment. Although this is true for most of the developed countries (especially when one considers that salespeople take their customers out for fishing, golfing etc.) as an attempt to nurture the relationship, it is seen more like a value added activity as opposed to being a requirement as it appears to be the case in Greece. Taken to the other extreme, in Japan, a salesperson cannot even start doing business with a customer unless he nurtures the relationship first.

**2. Are business relationships that are enhanced by social interactions better for global selling?**

There is no best way of enhancing a relationship. Some cultures lend themselves more to social interactions than others. What is critical to understand here is that, if buyers expect to socialise with key suppliers, then salespeople need to respond adopting the right attitudes and behaviours. Loyal behaviour in some cultures is inextricably linked with strong emotional bonding and emotional bonding is by far easier to be established in social environments.

**3. Would you agree that commitment and trust are qualities that can be sold in a similar way to that of products and services? If so, is “relationship selling” a selling from a relationship-building point of view, or is it simply a traditional selling activity?**

In a strict interpretation of the term, commitment and trust as determinants of relationship building and loyal behaviour can be compared, let us say, with quality and reliability as determinants of product acceptance. Consequently, commitment and trust could be sold in the same way as any product attribute. However, commitment and trust belong to behavioural functioning of both sellers and buyers, whereas quality and reliability to mechanical manufacturing of the supplying firm only. Therefore, selling from a relationship point of view requires a different approach. An approach based on establishing an atmosphere of trust, and ensuring your customers' commitment by being, amongst others, flexible, attentive listener,

adaptive and proactive problem solver. Goal congruency and compatibility in thinking, learning, communicating and decision making between buyers and sellers are requirements for establishing strong and lasting relationships. In conclusion, relationship selling is different from traditional selling because the buyer does not buy trust and commitment but becomes a co-creator of these relationship requirements.