

STARTING A SALES CENTER – DRAWING ON LESSONS FROM ACADEMIA AND INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT

Student interest in pursuing sales careers is fueling a growing interest among universities in starting sales centers. Such centers generally prepare students for sales careers, while stimulating interest in research in the field. Yet, there are many challenges in starting sales centers including limited interest on the part of administration and faculty, insufficient funding, and the lack of physical space. With an awareness of these challenges and drawing

upon their recent experience in starting a sales center, the authors discuss seven “lessons learned” garnered from their experience. Those lessons are: 1. Clarify your target audience(s) and value proposition, 2. Seek support from the “top,” 3. Write a business plan, 4. Beg, borrow and steal, 5. Leadership comes in many forms, 6. Understand the phases of development, and 7. Proceed aggressively.