

THE LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE **research**

THE MOST TRUSTED SOURCE ON BECOMING A BETTER LEADER

TITLE	The Effect of Birth Order on the Leadership Characteristics of Sales Professionals
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OBJECTIVE	This study investigated the impact of an individual's birth order on the leadership characteristics and attributes of that individual.

METHODOLOGY

Participants were sales professionals involved primarily in the manufacture and supply of industrial products used in the fabrication and converting industry. There were 60 respondents (43 men and 17 women). Half of the participants were in sales management positions, 25 in a sales function and the remaining 5 in a sales support function. They completed the Leadership Practices Inventory and provided demographic information. Twelve percent were only children, 25 percent were first-born, 35 percent were middle-born, and 28 percent were last-born.

KEY FINDINGS

The last-borns median score was higher than the other birth orders' median scores on the leadership practices of Challenging, Inspiring, Enabling and Encouraging. Only children had the lowest median scores in these factors. Only children had the highest median score in the Modeling leadership practice and middle-borns had the lowest median score on this practice.

Females had higher median scores than males on Challenging and Encouraging. Males had higher median scores than females on the leadership practices of Inspiring, Enabling, and Modeling. Managers had the highest median scores in all five leadership practices.

The results of this study, contends the author, "confirm that there is a noticeable difference in the birth order among sales managers in a business-to-business selling environment" (p. 56)." However, the study also "finds that first-born sales professionals did not have a higher percentage of respondents scoring at or above the LPI median in comparison to the other birth order groups" (p. 58).

"One conclusion from this study suggests that anyone has the ability to lead through the use of some or all of the five LPI leadership factors" (p. 58).

“Findings of this study show that this industry’s managers do not exhibit some of the necessary leadership skills found in the LPI and they may benefit from additional leadership training” (p. 59).