

## **TRUSTED ADVISOR: A KEY VARIABLE ON THE PATH TO CO-CREATING VALUE WITH CLIENTS**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Co-creation of value provides extensive benefits and competitive advantages to both buying and selling firms in business-to-business (B2B) relationships. Identified as an area for needed research by the Marketing Science Institute (2010), the ability to co-create value offers firms competitive positions and relational benefits that surpass basic buyer-seller exchanges. Inherent in this concept is the extent to which buyers trust sellers to engage in this process and are confident sellers act in the best interest of the customer firm. This level of trust is established through relationships in which buyers consider a representative of the selling firm as a trusted advisor (TA) who facilitates the co-creation process, while increasing the value of the relationship for both firms. Using transaction cost theory, the author will demonstrate that the value added to B2B relationships by a TA is a competitive advantage for firms operating in this domain, and will conceptualize and identify the reflective indicators of a trusted advisor.