



Hiring Top Salespeople Get the right salespeople on the revenue bus!

Where are the top guns in sales and why are they so difficult to identify and recruit? For one thing, most sales organizations do not have a well defined hiring process. As a result, they start believing there are no good salespeople left in the world and settle for mediocrity. Here are the top three mistakes and how to avoid:

Hire experience over talent.

Many companies still choose experience over potential because of decreased ramp up time and/or the possibility of bringing on a book of business. All good reasons, except many companies pass on sales candidates who possess talent that could take the company further than any transfer of business. Successful sales organizations look for talent. Talent is defined as the hard to train skills such as emotional intelligence, self-starting, personal accountability, problem solving and competitiveness. Experience is wonderful as long as it is accompanied by talent.

THE RULE: Hire what you can't train.

No defined competencies for success.

The question often asked is, "what is the perfect salesperson." The answer: depends on the life cycle of your company, products you sell, the climate you sell in and the prospect you sell to. Every sales position has some uniqueness and successful organizations have a well defined process that qualifies or disqualifies potential hires based on the specific competencies needed for success at their company. For example, small to mid size companies need salespeople who know how to uncover opportunities without a huge marketing budget or brand awareness. A complex sale requires a salesperson with excellent problem solving and critical thinking skills. A company with field reps need salespeople who get out of bed in the morning, plan their day, without a call from the corporate office.

No knowledge of behavior based interviewing skills.

Salespeople are great at derailing sales managers with stories of what they would or could do. Soon the interview turns into a full blown novel versus a fact based autobiography. Past success is the best indicator of future results. Use behavior based questions to determine whether your candidate possesses a key competency needed for success at your company. For example, "tell me about a time when you had to initiate a project with little guidance or resources." The answer tells you if this salesperson has initiative or if they wait for someone to hand them a plan.

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A final word of advice: don't wait. Some of the best sales managers make recruiting part of their monthly prospecting plan. Instead of prospecting for new business, they prospect for new talent!