

How to find your next top sales performer

The hiring of effective salespeople has always been more challenging than the recruitment of general workforce positions, and it's an issue recognised by every size and type of organisation.

Recruiting for sales positions generally assumes a higher importance for many organisations, as successful sales people can have an almost immediate impact on revenue, profitability and market share.

There are several reasons for the difficulty in recruiting salespeople although what many employers *perceive* as the major challenge in sales recruitment (being “bluffed” by a polished performer) is in fact a much easier problem to avoid than some of the other challenges.

So exactly what are these challenges and how can employers manage these for success?

1. Scarcity.

In simple terms, good salespeople are scarce. That's because most of them are born and not made (more on this later). Scarcity means they are in high demand and can often choose who they want to work for. Providing you have interesting products or services to sell, you will need to ensure you can offer a competitive salary and know how to “sell” your benefits as an employer. This is a planning and preparation issue that will impact on your advertising (attraction) strategy. Be prepared before you get underway.

2. Qualifications.

While there are any number of short courses to learn the art of selling – or more correctly, teach the selling process and some of the practices required, most business managers would accept that you can't “create” a salesperson in the same way that you can create a carpenter or an accountant.

Sales success comes down to possessing several “soft skills” or attributes which can't be taught to any real extent. While we will discuss this in more detail later, the point remains that you can't advertise for a salesperson expecting them to show up with their academic qualifications to perform the job. On that basis, this area holds very little merit for the employer.



3. Confirming their track record.

This is where you – as the employer, begin to gain some traction in your ability to identify proven sales performers.

What we're talking about here is reference checking. While this would occur after the interview (refer next step) here are some key areas to focus on.

Firstly, it's critical to identify what amount of the "sales achievement" can be attributed to the individual salesperson. For example, ask questions that discern what their individual sales budget was and how the customer relationship was built and managed ie: did they find specific customers themselves, or were the customers already on-board. If it's the latter, the salesperson may be more of an account manager than a business developer. Be sure also to separate out any team effort and look for what amount of the sales performance they can rightly claim as their own.

Above all, look for proof that the salesperson built revenue and/or market share. Holding the fort isn't enough. If they don't have a proven record of growing revenue, there's cause for concern.

4. Interviewing and "bluffing"

This is where many of the hiring mistakes are made by business managers.

It is particularly the case where the hiring manager is from a non-sales background and therefore less familiar with the sales process.

Most salespeople present well, are better than average communicators, and can develop rapport quite easily. All of this provides them with an advantage in an interview situation (particularly where the interview is unstructured).

The main issue arises when the hiring manager is impressed by one or all of these factors and fails to look "underneath the suit" to see the real person.

So how does the employer remove these factors and look to what the real level of sales performance is likely to be?



5. The ideal skill set for selling.

There are several key skills (or attributes) that successful salespeople possess and qualifying these attributes is easier than you might think.

Many successful salespeople have a wide range of skills however the majority are known to perform strongly in two key areas. The first area may broadly be termed people skills, with the second area based on effort and output.

Looking at these two groups more closely, we find that successful salespeople are:

- Very sociable
- Influential
- Have good “people skills” – empathy, understanding and rapport building.

In addition, they also tend to be:

- Highly competitive
- Energetic
- Proactive
- Ambitious
- Conscientious

Continued next page...



6. Identifying real sales performers with a simple on-line test.

Much of the difficulty in qualifying salespeople is tied up in interviewing and confirming past performance. This problem is exacerbated when the hiring manager hails from a non-sales background.

With all these factors in play, using a psychometric test known to check for these critical sales attributes is a simple, fast and cost-effective way of qualifying shortlisted sales candidates.

It is recommended that preferred candidates are interviewed first, and the psychometric test is issued as the second step in your process.

Reference checking should be the third and final step in your recruitment process.

This article is © 2011 by Gary Costa, Managing Director of StaffMatcher®
To find out more information about the StaffMatcher® psychometric testing system and how it can help you recruit the best candidates, visit <http://staffmatcher.com.au>



Level 4, 99 Queen Street, Melbourne, Australia 3000

support@staffmatcher.com.au

Phone (+61) 1300 655 458 | Fax (+61) 03 9670 2380