

An Optimize White Paper



Sales Recruiting



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No sales management activity is more important than hiring quality sales and business development professionals. Despite significant investments made to hire great salespeople, many executives are unsatisfied with their results. Below are some potential considerations in your recruiting of top salespeople:

Define What Success Looks Like

Management should consider the following factors in weighing the success of their sales team:

- Does the company's value proposition resonate in the marketplace?
- Does the company invest in marketing and other activities that support sales?
- Do salespeople have the tools they need to succeed?
- Is the compensation plan rich enough to attract strong performers?

Prepare a Sales Profile

Before you begin your search, consider the variables that will influence the success of the salesperson:

- What is the nature of the products being sold – tangible, abstract or concrete?
- What is the order frequency – one time, or repetitive?
- Is the company low cost or premium?
- Is the sales approach consultative or generic?
- Is technical or field knowledge required, or can others support with such knowledge?

- Who is doing the prospecting? Are leads provided or is the salesperson expected to cold call?
- What is the point of entry with buyers – C-Suite, purchasing, other?
- How “hands on” is your sales management?

Rank and weigh the skill sets and behaviors you will look for in the successful candidate.

Develop Branded Recruiting Materials

In a competitive hiring environment, top companies create “employer brands”. Such companies are adept at developing messaging that answers the question “why would someone want to work here?” New hires (especially Millennials) expect interactive content including videos from existing employees that paint a picture about the employment experience. At least, having an employer webpage that explains why your company is a great place to work is a must.

Write an Effective Job Ad

Using the sales profile as a foundation, detail what the nature of the role will be in a meaningful job advertisement. If using job boards, make sure to embed useful links that guide recruits to your web page, videos and other content you have created.

Develop your Sales Recruiting Strategy

It is important to begin with a holistic view of the organization, your target growth rate, the role of salespeople and a sales budget before you begin the hiring process.

Once these principals have been defined, the company can assess various approaches to recruiting. Managers trying to fill roles quickly, such as in the case of a vacated position, will spend more money and will employ tactics (such as hiring a recruiter) that they may not otherwise. Haste in hiring can lead to bad hiring decisions.

If using a recruiter provides the best chance of hiring A-players, then that should be the strategy from the beginning. The contemporary approach is to be “multi-channel” using as many avenues as possible. It is important to know what your hiring costs are per hired salesperson, and create a strategy that yields the greatest return.

Cast a Wide Net

Sources for recruits include:

SOCIAL MEDIA is dramatically expanding the channels in which employers can source candidates. Sites such as Linked In have become the go to destination for executive recruiters and candidates.

EMPLOYEE REFERRALS are almost always the best source of candidates as both the referrer and the candidate are accountable to a successful outcome. In calculating the incentive to an employee, the employer should consider: what is my cost to find a successful candidate? Referrals can come from current employees, other candidates, vendors, or colleagues.

CAMPUS RECRUITING is useful for sourcing both new salespeople and sales manager trainees.

JOB BOARDS typically yield very poor results. There are just too many unqualified candidates and the success rate is very low.

LATERAL HIRING is a technical term for recruiting for lateral roles from other companies, including competition.

RECRUITERS tend to be more useful for senior hires. While the most expensive method for hiring people, good recruiters are often worth the investment. There are several pricing models employed (including contingency searches) that may apply, based on the clients needs.

Recruit All the Time

The best method for recruiting is to weave it into your DNA, and do it all the time, even when you are not hiring.

Recruit Around Behavior More Than Skill Set

Successful salespeople are a unique breed. They enjoy the chase and can face rejection. One approach taking hold is to build a custom behavioral profile for successful salespeople in your organization.

According to behavioral expert Dana Borowka of [Lighthouse Consulting](#), reasons to leverage such testing include:

TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADERS. An in-depth work style and personality assessment will give the sales manager and sales team a common language about how they like to interact. The assessments can help you train future managers on how to get the best out of the team.

KNOW HOW TO MANAGE DIFFICULT SALESPEOPLE. Face it, there will always be difficult people and flare ups on the job. Use an objective assessment to diagnose potential sources of workplace conflict. The best way to deal with a problem is to prevent it in the first place.

Use Automation if You are Hiring Many Salespeople

Applicant tracking systems provide great utility when hiring in mass.

Construct a Sales Compensation System with the End in Mind

The design of the compensation system is more important in sales than in other functional areas of business, as salespeople often choose the profession because of their interest in financial rewards. Be certain to incent against outcomes you want, such as growth in new customers, profitability, etc.

Be Purposeful About Your Interviewing, Hiring, and On-boarding Processes

Do not delegate hiring people strictly to human resources. For each candidate there should be a specific interviewing strategy (with agreed upon roles, and scoring system). Applicants pay attention to the rigor of your process. On-boarding procedures set up the salesperson to hit the ground running. Don't take these activities for granted.

The Best Way to Hire is to Retain the Salespeople You Already Have

To ensure success of your salespeople, have a qualified sales manager who supports the team and invests in their ongoing training and sales tools.

Common Attributes of Successful Salespeople Include:

ADAPTABILITY - The ability to pivot based on changing conditions with customers.

ASSERTIVENESS - Salespeople must have the confidence and willingness to persist with clients.

CONSULTING SKILLS - The ability to consult within their own companies and provide solutions to customers (assuming that is the business model).

EMPATHY - Good salespeople have genuine concern for the well being of the client and empathize with the complexity of their problems.

LISTENING - Perhaps the skill that salespeople need the most and possess the least.

STICK-TO-ITIVENESS - The ability to persist with clients.