

Hire Top Performing Sales People

How do we know if we are hiring top performing sales people? Have you ever intentionally hired an under-performing sales person? We all want a sales staff to perform at high levels, whether it is your first or your 100th sales person. Here are some tips for hiring top performing sales people.

Why is it important?

There are a couple of key reasons to focus on good hiring decisions for sales hiring. The first is the difference in revenue contribution between high performing and average sales people. We often find the 80/20 rule applies, 80% of sales are generated by 20% of the sales staff. What would the impact be on your business if you could improve or replace average sales people with high performers?



The other reason the hiring decision is important is the cost of turnover. Research shows the cost of sales turnover is often equal to a year's salary. You may pay the new sales person for 3 to 6 months before they are productive in the territory. It is often 6 months to a year before you can evaluate their performance. You may have wasted compensation and lost sales in the interim.

The hiring process

The first step is to clearly define what you are looking for. Are you looking for a "hunter" to bring in new customers or a "farmer" to manage and grow existing accounts? Consider your sales process. Is the prospect's decision time frame typically short or is it a long decision cycle? How complex is the buying cycle?

All of the above considerations are important when defining the characteristics of top performing sales people in your organization. Avoid the mistake of hiring a successful "farmer" into a sales job where you really need a "hunter".

See our post at <https://www.pdservices.com/6-step-hiring-process/> for a more detailed discussion of an effective hiring process to make sure you have a modern approach to hiring.

Characteristics of a top performer

You'll certainly want to consider the obvious things like education level, experience, sales skills, industry/product knowledge, etc. Those are the things that are easily found on resumes and applications. What is really important though, are the reasoning and personality traits that are below the surface. Reasoning and personality traits are drivers of job fit, which separates high performers from the also-rans. These are impossible to see through resumes and very difficult to see in interviews. Here are some examples:

Reasoning Ability - Reasoning ability is a cognitive trait that measures how quickly the candidate assimilates information, learns and solves problems. Many sales jobs are information intensive. A salesperson has to quickly understand requirements of different decision makers and influencers. They need to read the politics of the organization. Consider the strengths of your solution versus the competition. There may be a lot of information coming at the salesperson at one time. The more information intensive the sales job is in your organization, the more important it is that the salesperson has high reasoning ability. If they don't, they'll miss a lot of information important to the decision. This may be the most important trait to evaluate in a candidate.

Sense of Urgency - A candidate's sense of urgency tells us how impatient they are for results. If you have a quick sales process, high sense of urgency is important. However, if your sales process is slower and more complex, a candidate with high sense of urgency will become frustrated and may alienate customers by pushing too fast.

Take Charge - A candidate is high on take charge when they are assertive in controlling situations or people. Some sales jobs require high assertiveness while others need a more diplomatic approach.

There are other traits that are similarly important. The key is to pre-define a benchmark of which traits are important to success in your specific sales job, assess the candidate using a good job fit assessment, and compare the candidate to your job benchmark.

Value of assessment data:

Using a good job fit sales assessment will provide information on these traits. The assessment should show how the candidate's traits measure up with your benchmark and suggest interview questions to help you delve into traits where the candidate falls outside the benchmark. Our assessment goes so far as to interpret the results into sales behaviors like prospecting and closing so you can better understand the results. With this data, you are able to make an informed decision on the candidate who will meet or exceed your expectations.

Don't stop there! The same data will help you manage and coach your new sales person to help them be productive quickly and sell at a high level. A management report suggests

coaching and training actions that will help maximize the sales person's potential. Many of our clients assess their existing sales staff for this information alone.

Next Step:

Contact PDServices at info@PDServices.com or 740-326-4494 with questions or to discuss a trial of our sales assessment. You'll be happy you reached out!