

Hire the Best, Weed Out the Rest

A Guide to Recruiting Top Sales Producers

Hiring first-rate sales people is the key to accelerating your company's sales. Sounds like a no-brainer, right? Yet even if you agree with this, we all know from experience that finding and attracting high performance sales talent is anything but easy.

Introduction:

Making the right hiring decisions is a combination of both art and science, and requires a real commitment to excellence. In this Guide, you'll discover some of the secrets to making the recruiting process a winning success for your organisation – time after time. A recent survey showed that 53% of all sales recruiting efforts lead to poor hires. That means even if your company does an average job in sales recruiting, you have a 50/50 chance of making a mistake. To make matters worse, nowhere is this more costly than in sales.

Given the learning curve and sales cycle for a new recruit, it can easily take 6- 12 months before you realise the person you hired is incapable or unwilling to sell for your company. The costs can be staggering: tens of thousands in expense, hundreds of thousands (or millions) in lost sales and margin, and as much as 2 years of lost momentum and market share to your competition. With so much at stake for your company, are you willing to accept these outcomes?

Fear not. It is possible to avoid this scenario, as long as you recognise the potential pitfalls and work proactively to eliminate them.

Five Steps to Getting it Right. Here's a set of Best Practices that will help you in your quest for making top hires:

1 Define Your Requirements

Start by developing a clear job description that fully identifies the key skills and experience you're looking for, the selling environment, the ideal candidate profile (hunter vs. farmer), sales objectives and key performance metrics for the position. This sounds easy, but if you skip this step, chances are that you'll end up with nothing to match candidates against – and that's the start of a recipe for disaster.

The more you can define your job requirements prior to starting the recruiting process, the better your understanding will be of exactly what you're looking for. This will translate into more thorough candidate interviewing and information gathering, leading to a more informed hiring decision.



5 Steps to Getting it Right

(continued)

2 Know Where to Look For

Let's face it. In this economy, placing an ad in the local paper or on job boards is not going to attract top sales talent. Why? Because the best sales people are already working, and probably not looking for a job! If you want to source the best, you and/or your recruitment partner need to develop a highly targeted strategy.

Start by finding out the names of top sales performers who are working for your competitors, and make a direct approach or ask your recruitment partner to do this for you. The use of a sales recruitment firm is often a more effective means of getting the attention of your target candidates and protecting your company's anonymity. Continue by contacting everyone you know in your industry network (including your customers), to get referrals, since most great hires come through people you already know.

If these efforts don't yield results, target top sales operators in companies that are selling complementary products to your customer base.

3 Sell the Job

If you want to attract the best, make sure to spend time developing and promoting your own company's story. What's your vision for the company? What's your Unique Selling Proposition (USP)? What's your strategy to win in your market? What sort of growth

and advancement opportunities do you offer top performers? What makes your company a great place to work? Are you offering a job, or a real opportunity?

Understand The Skills & Traits of Top Performers
Many managers hire sales reps that epitomise the stereotype of a top sales performer. They mistakenly believe that if a person can sell himself or herself through the interviewing process, he or she must be good at sales.. Dead wrong. Probe deeply for these key skills and traits:

Traits	Skills
Motivation To Succeed	Prospecting
Ego-Drive	Probing
Empathy	Listening
Service-Orientation	Persuasion
Conscientiousness	Negotiation
Ego-Resilience	Technical
Detail-Orientation	Organization

Think of traits as innate qualities that a person possesses, whereas skills are learned by a person

and become habit. Whatever the case, a good sales person will usually demonstrate most if not all of these core competencies.

5 Develop a Rigorous Process, Then Stick To It

This is where companies often fall down: going too fast and skipping critical steps. Hiring great sales people requires lots of time, commitment and energy. To do the job right, make sure your hiring process includes the following elements:

- Build the right interview team, including different personality types from a cross section of the company (sales, marketing, finance and human resources). Train each interviewer on behavioral interviewing skills and assign different topics to people, so you make sure to cover the whole range of competencies for which you are screening.

- Once you've completed each candidate interview make sure to have each team member record their written feedback, without knowing the opinions of the others. Gather the written feedback first, then do a team debrief on each candidate.

5 Steps to Getting it Right

(continued)

• Use behavioral interviewing techniques, rather than asking closed- ended questions. Your job is to ask questions of each candidate that uncover his or her core character traits and skills. The best way to do this is by probing about past experiences, as opposed to asking "Why are you a good sales person?"
Sample interview questions include:

"Tell me about the most challenging major sale that you have won in your career. What was the situation"

What did you do? What was the outcome?"

"Tell me about the most difficult customer you ever had to sell to. What did you learn?"

"In your last sales job, how much prospecting was required?" What were the required metrics? What were your results?"

By using these types of questions, you'll be able to uncover useful information that will improve your chances of really understanding each candidate's traits and skills, and how they fit with your requirements.

• Be wary of candidate résumés that list percentage increases in sales results, as opposed to hard numbers. During the interview process, always collect a detailed sales achievement history from each candidate, by asking for a breakdown of their annual quota and results for the previous 3-5 years.

• This can be put together in a simple spreadsheet, listing the year, annual quota and actual achievement numbers. Top producers have this information and are proud to share it with potential employers. Underperformers will resist providing this information or claim they don't have it.

• Assign homework to each candidate at each stage of the interviewing process, and watch closely how well they follow-up -- and follow instructions. This is important, since candidates who don't listen and follow up are showing you how they will behave once they are representing your company, in front of your customers.

• If you don't hear back from a candidate after each round of interviews, discard them – they are telling you indirectly they are either not interested or not qualified to represent your company.

• Discard personal references, and insist on speaking to each candidate's past 3-4 immediate sales supervisors. If they're not listed, insist on talking to them anyway. If they can't produce them, you must assume they are trying to hide something. A top sales producer is always glad to have you talk to his or her previous sales manager!

When checking references, always verify sales achievement history data, along with any rewards and recognition received.

Don't Settle For Second Best

Hire the Best, Weed Out the Rest!

Conclusion:

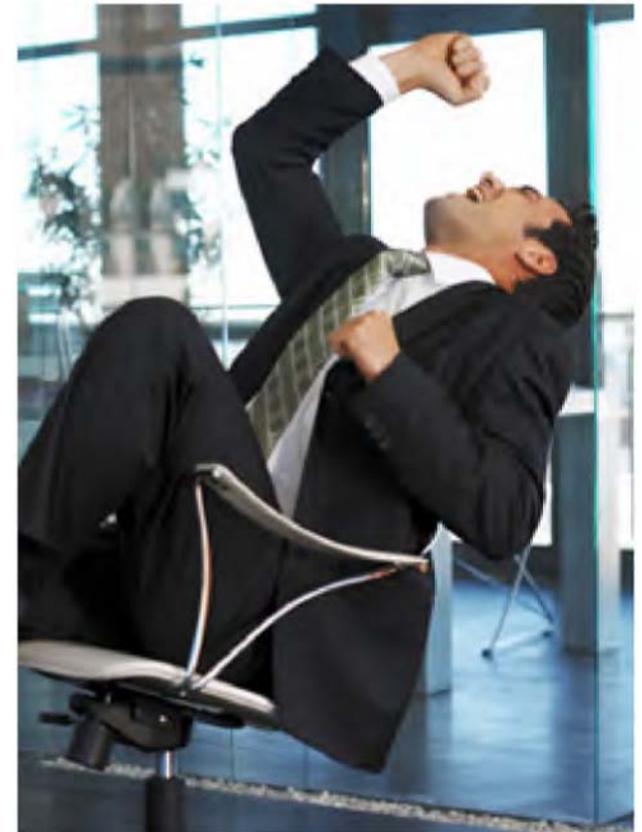
Hiring the right sales people is not easy, but no task is more important if you're committed to achieving your company's growth objectives. The difference between attracting top sales talent and average performers is like night and day, and will have a huge impact on your ability to grow your business.

By focusing on the above Best Practices, you will greatly improve your chances of hiring the right sales people the first time around, and reduce your hiring risk. Don't settle for second best – hire the best and weed out the rest!

About Sales Staff Australia

Sales Staff Australia provides fast, effective sales staffing solutions to some of Australia's best companies. From junior level sales staff to senior management, our experienced consultants have an exceptional eye for sales talent.

- Fast access to sales talent nationally
- Over 10,000 Pre-screened Candidates
- Refund Based Service Guarantee



Are you concerned about making a hiring mistake, unsure of how to get started or too busy to recruit sales people on your own? We can help. For more information, visit our website at www.salesstaff.com.au or call 1300 889 731 to speak with one of our consultants.



Hire the Best, Weed Out the Rest

A Guide to Hiring Top Sales Producers

Phone: 1300 889 731 | Fax: 1300 889 732

Email: recruitment@salesstaff.com.au

Visit us at www.salesstaff.com.au