

HIRING TOP SALES TALENT

“Higher Expectations”



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Principles of hiring and recruitment



Hiring top salespeople is one of the more difficult skills for sales managers to learn and master. It's also one of the most important skills to master because getting the right people on the 'sales bus' is critical to your success in achieving consistent revenue goals.

You've got systems and processes for everything else at your company. Get a system for hiring and selection at your company. Stop making excuses that there are not good salespeople in the market. There are good salespeople--you just don't have a system for identifying and recruiting "A" players.

I know that hiring top sales talent is no easy task. More than one sales manager has been frustrated because he discovered he hired a terrific interviewer---not a terrific salesperson. There are several reasons for misfires on talent acquisition.

Avoid hiring mistakes by applying these three principles:

- 1. ABR.** Top sales managers consistently apply the "Always Be Recruiting" practice in their weekly and monthly schedules. Most sales managers recruit when they have an opening. As a result, they are often in panic mode because a territory is open and a quota needs to be hit. Great sales managers are like great sales people and they are always prospecting for great talent. They have a full sales pipeline of qualified sales candidates!



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2. Hire slow. Fire fast. Effective hiring is a process. When sales managers try to shortcut the process, they miss key steps that could uncover a potential candidate's weaknesses. It's just like running a great sales call. If you get in a hurry and miss key questions or selling stage, you are on your way to coming to losing business. In this case, you lose business because you hired the wrong person.



Even with the best hiring process, you might hire a salesperson that doesn't work out. Cut your losses. Too many sales managers hang on hoping the salesperson will change. Here's a reality check. You usually know after three months to six months if your new hire is the right hire. Admit the mistake and move on. Hope is not a good hiring strategy!

3. Combine subjective and objective data into your hiring processes. Subjective data is the interview process. Objective data is the use of assessments to profile your potential candidate. The combination of both eliminates personal bias in the hiring process. Salespeople are good at selling. Get objective data to back up the subjective data uncovered during the interview process.



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Create the Job Profile

Hiring mistakes are often made because sales organizations aren't clear about who or what they are looking for. It's important to build the sales profile because this is the foundational step for developing job descriptions, recruiting ads and customized interview questions.

Years ago, I attended a great hiring workshop offered by Target Training International. They showed participants how building a job profile is like building a robot. Think of all the components you'd include in the design of building a great sales robot. Here are five parts to consider when building your sales robot, your job profile.



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Hard Skills

Get clear on the hard skills needed to succeed in this role in your specific sales organization. What type of hard skills does your potential candidate need to possess? For example, in organizations that have a sales manager that devotes a lot of time to training and coaching, you might be able to hire a salesperson with less experience. Your sales manager has the time, patience AND skills to develop talent. On the other hand, if you don't have a full-time sales manager, you may need to look for someone that brings more years of sales experience to the position.

Do you want or need industry experience? Does your candidate need an engineering degree or accounting degree in order to effectively sell your product or services? Or, is your organization willing and able to teach them the hard skills needed to hold an effective conversation with prospects and customers? I have seen both situations work, as long as the organization is clear on what they need and what they can provide their new hire.



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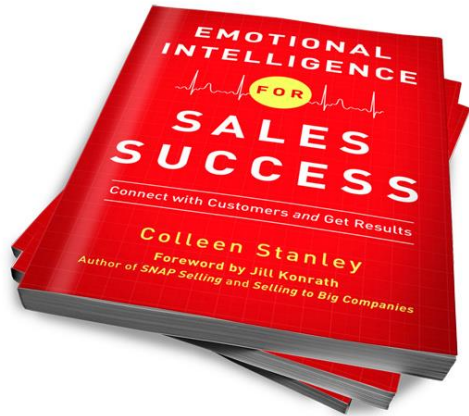
Emotional Intelligence Skills – Soft Skills

Let’s take a look at soft skills, emotional intelligence skills. This is an area that is often overlooked in the hiring process. Most organizations focus only on a salesperson’s hard skills, what I refer to as the Sales IQ. This is a person’s product knowledge, sales experience and industry experience. This knowledge and skill set is important for success in sales.

Equally important are the soft skills, emotional intelligence skills. Research shows that top performers possess high emotional intelligence. On average, they make \$29,000 more money each year than their lower EQ counterparts.

Here are a few emotional intelligence skills to consider in your next sales hire.

Emotional Self-Awareness – This is the foundational skill that helps salespeople execute hard selling skills, behaviors and activities. The self-aware salesperson is good at emotion management, both in themselves and others. Since they are tuned into their emotions and the emotions of others, they are aware of and manage the various triggers that allow them to respond in a productive manner to prospects, clients and colleagues.



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Assertiveness – Assertiveness is the ability to state what you need nicely, without becoming aggressive or abusive. The Corporate Executive Board’s research showed that one of the traits found in the top 40 percent of high performers is the soft skill of assertiveness. It takes assertiveness to ask for and get meetings with the right decision makers. It takes assertiveness to disqualify an opportunity, letting the prospect know that this isn’t a good mutual fit. This soft skills keep sales pipelines full of qualified opportunities.

Empathy – This is the ability to step into another person’s shoes and understand what people are thinking or feeling. This soft skill is a major influence skill. How can a salesperson influence another human being if they can’t see the world from their view? Empathetic salespeople are good listeners and are great at making emotional connections with prospects and customers.

For more information on soft skills that produce hard sales results, check out our [What’s Your Sales EQ quiz](#).





Behavioral Style – “Hunter/Account Manager”

I have been asked more than once, “What is the right profile for a great salesperson?” My answer is the same, “It depends on the position, the product you are selling and the type of customers you sell and service.”

Behavioral style is a salesperson’s natural approach to business and life. For example, one salesperson’s approach to work might be highly competitive. Her style is direct, bottom lined and results focused. This salesperson is often great at new business development. In sales language, they are sales hunters!

Another approach to work is equally successful. This salesperson is all about serving people. His approach to the job is systematic and methodical. He is patient and excels at service after the sale. He’s good at staying in touch with clients and listening for new ways to help the clients. This results in additional business, retention and repeat business.

Do you need a hunter or as we like to say in sales a farmer? Yes---it depends on the role.



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Vetting the Resume – Will Past Success Transfer to Future Success?

You've seen this movie before. In fact, you might have landed the starring role in this film. Sales manager hires new salesperson with high hopes that this individual is a keeper. The resume looks good, the interview went well, the references checked out and the offer for employment is made.

After the new hire "unpacks his bags," the sales manager begins to have her first set of doubts about the new superstar. The salesperson isn't producing new opportunities, however, he is producing plenty of excuses:

- *"If only I had more and/or better leads."*
- *"If only our pricing was more competitive."*
- *"If only our marketing material looked better."*
- *"If only....(Feel free to add to the list.)"*

The sales manager wants to be an effective leader and spends time and money on search engine optimization, revamping pricing strategies, and updating marketing collateral. More non-revenue producing months roll by and the sales manager reluctantly admits: **I hired a dud.** This movie does not have a happy ending.

How can you make sure you don't get stuck with a sales dud? Analyze whether your potential new hires past sales experience will translate to future success at your organization.

Here are a few areas to examine that can be gleaned from tighter vetting of the resume.



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#1: Lead generation. Your new hire actually did well at his old company—he wasn't fudging sales results or numbers on his resume. However, the reason for his success is because his former company had a robust marketing program. Leads were provided to him. He is a great producer---once the lead is generated.

Your company, on the other hand, requires the salesperson to source and find most of his own leads. You have a gap in your hiring process because you hired a salesperson with no experience in sourcing his own opportunities. His previous experience is not a match for success at your specific organization.

#2: Selling on value not price. Your new hire complains that she is losing business because your company's prices are too high. Remember, this salesperson achieved great success at her last company. So what's the reason she is not producing for your organization?

You didn't really dig in to discover how she won business. Your candidate has a history of sales success because her former company sold on price, not value. Her previous experience of winning business on price doesn't translate to sales success at your organization because your organization sells on value, not price.

#3: Brand, product or the salesperson's ability. You are a small company and have a great product. The problem is you are not well branded in the market. You decide it's time to hire a salesperson from a larger organization because of experience and sales sophistication.

One year later, you are scratching your head asking, "Why wasn't this salesperson successful?" The answer: your new hire was successful because her previous company was well known and respected in the market. It was easy to get in the door and just as easy for her to close business. There is an old saying in sales, "No one ever got fired for hiring IBM."

If you aren't the IBM in your industry, it's best to look for a salesperson's with a track record of success in selling an unbranded and/or unknown product or service.

*Hiring the best
is your most
important task.*

-Steve Jobs



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Past success is your best indicator of future sales results.



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What Core Values are Needed to Succeed in your Sales Culture?

Core values are the fundamental truths which guide a person and organizations thoughts, words and actions. They are the foundation of who you hire, the customers you serve and how you serve them.

When I am teaching our sales management courses, I like to start with a fun exercise called, “The Worst Hire I Ever Made.” There is a lot of humility along with laughter as sales managers share their hiring mistakes.

Once the exercise is done, I point out to my clients that I didn’t hear things such as, “The salesperson couldn’t close. He was reluctant to call on decision makers.” What I hear are things such as:

- She wasn’t a team player
- He lacked integrity
- Poor work ethic
- Bad attitude
- No desire to learn or improve

The above are core values and somewhere in the hiring process they were missed. Companies talk about core values on websites, in marketing collateral and in team meetings. They recognize core values are important, but many companies don’t interview the new sales hire to see if he or she possesses the core values needed to fit in and succeed in your culture.

Get clear on your core values and you will gain clarity on who will fit your sales culture.



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Write down your top five to seven core values at your company.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

Now, ask yourself the powerful question: would you fire a salesperson for not upholding these core values? If the answer is no, the answers listed above aren't core values. They are nice to have traits, not a need to have traits.

I will say it again. Get clear on your core values. Then you become clear on who deserves to be on your high performance sales team.



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Let’s Put Together Your Job Profile

Use this document in creating your job profile, your ‘sales robot.’ Once you have a vision of who needs to be on your team, then you can begin the work of creating behavior based interview questions that will test if your candidate possesses the hard skills, soft skills, core value and behavioral style needed to succeed in this sales position.

Hard Skills	Top 10 Ei Skills / Soft Skills
	Need to Have Job Experience
Behavior Style	
	Core Values



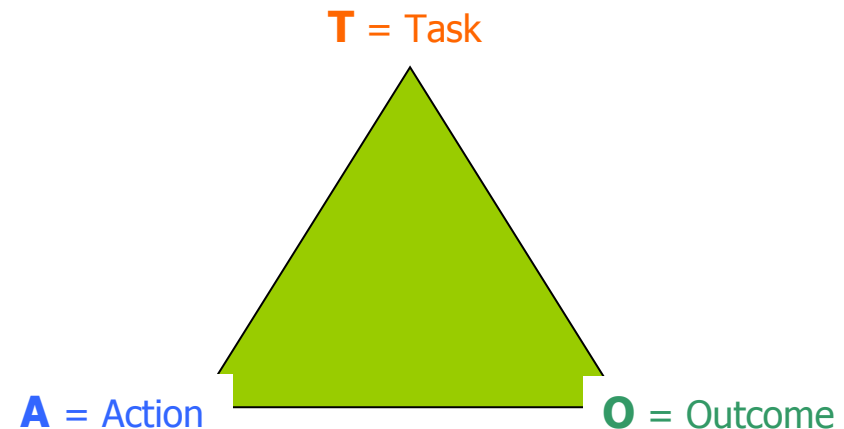
Behavior Based Interviewing Skills

You’ve built the job profile. Now you are ready to begin the interview process to test if your sales candidate can and will be effective at your sales organization.

A convenient way to conduct a behavior based interview is to apply the TAO methodology. This approach helps you conduct more effective interviews to test the competencies needed for success at your organization.

A. The definition of TAO:

1. **T**ASK
2. **A**CTION
3. **O**UTCOME



B. THREE ingredients must be present in the discussion of previous sales experience or accomplishments for the interviewer to fully understand a potential candidates fit for the job. The interviewer must know, understand and gain evidence of the following:



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1. The Task (responsibilities) leading to the applicant's action. *Your goal is to test competency without stating the competency.*
2. The specific Actions taken or not taken by the applicant. *Get the story. Get evidence of the competency. "Tell me about..." "Give me an example of..."*
3. The Outcomes caused by these Actions. *What changed? What happened? What did the candidate learn?*

When data given by your potential sales hire contains all three ingredients, the information is considered a complete behavioral example. Obtaining a complete understanding of a particular event in the applicant's past puts the interviewer into an excellent position to judge whether the actions taken will translate to success at their sales organization.

"In God we trust—all others bring evidence!"

On the next few pages you will see examples of TAO examples. I encourage you to create your own customized hiring manual. Yes, this takes time and diligence. In the world of emotional intelligence, it's called delayed gratification. It's the ability to put in the work. In this case, your hard work will earn you the reward of a well-run interview that results in a great new sales hire.

If you don't think you have the time, ask yourself this question:

**How many hours have you wasted on trying to work with,
coach and train the wrong hires????**



Competency: Resiliency (Self-Regard)

A. Task/Situation:

Tell me about a prospect that you called on and did not get the “deal” the first time. What did you do?

B. Action Questions:

- How did you do it?
- What steps did you take?
- Why did you keep going back? How many times?
- What did you do different to allow you to close the deal?

C. Outcome:

- What happened? Did the salesperson get the deal? How big and how long did he keep the new customer? Was it a one-time deal or a repeat customer?



Competency: Personal Accountability – (Self-Awareness)

A. Task/Situation:

We have all made mistakes. Give me an example of a big mistake you made and admitted to making.

B. Action Questions:

- What did you learn from the mistake?
- How have you applied those "lessons" going forward?
- What steps did you put in place to prevent the mistake from happening again?

C. Outcome:

- Was the candidate willing to admit a mistake or did they give a "fluff" answer?
- Did the candidate assume responsibility?
- Did the candidate learn and course correct for the future?



Competency: Prospecting



A. Task: Check the following competencies

- Let me hear your cold call. Let me hear how you get past gatekeepers.
- What is the most creative thing you have done to bring in business?
- How do you currently use the social media tools?
- Describe your current prospecting system.

B. Action:

- Clarify and redirect

C. Outcome:



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Thanks for downloading our e-book. I hope you gained great insights on emotional intelligence and on hiring top sales talent.

Our mission at SalesLeadership is to help CEO's, sales managers and salespeople change the way they lead and sell by leveraging the power of emotional intelligence. We know that soft skills integrated with hard selling skills accelerate sustainable sales results and build great sales cultures.

For more information, please check out our other resources at:
www.salesleadershipdevelopment.com



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