

Making Great Hiring Decisions

by Sean Kanan

One of the biggest problems sales managers make when they hire sales people is that they have inconsistent and inaccurate interviewing techniques. Studies have consistently shown that traditional unstructured interviewing is only 14 percent accurate, so it is important to get it right.

A high performing sales team is driven by good sales recruitment processes and decisions. There are some easy steps a sales manager can take to improve their recruitment outcomes:

- The key is to have an ongoing sales recruitment process, even if there are no openings as yet. That way, you can maintain a pool of approved candidates to fill unexpected vacancies as they arise.
- Interview a shortlist of approximately five candidates per vacancy.
- To assess your candidates, ensure you have objective, measurable characteristics that you would like your salespeople to have. For example, the number of years of sales experience required, specific market / industry expertise, their amount of professional sales training, etc. Everyone involved in your recruitment program, including external agencies, should be familiar with this profile.

Consistency in the sales recruitment process

Ensuring that you have a systemized process will go a long way to ensuring you have consistency in your sales recruitment decisions. Consistency has the added benefit of ensuring that you treat all your candidates the same, which in turn improves the fairness of the process, allows you to make meaningful comparisons between candidates, and yields valid information to help you make great hiring decisions.

This model can be used to help you systemise your recruitment processes:

- Construct a sales recruitment plan which documents each stage of the interview process, including who will participate. Ensure that those who participate in the process have interviewing experience and are familiar with the requirements of your sales job vacancy.
- Construct a clear position description which everyone involved in your sales recruitment campaign, including candidates and interviewers, have access to. Besides providing a clear description of what the job is all about, this position description incorporates the 'measurable characteristics' (discussed above) that can be used to guide your selection criteria.
- Incorporating proven sales assessment tools have been shown to improve the quality of your hiring decisions. This is where you may need to seek the advice and input of external consultants who can provide guidance on appropriate, validated assessment tools. These assessments provide objective measurements on everything from general intelligence, to attitude towards selling, to communication skills. Later down the track, the results of these assessments can also be used to coach and develop your successful appointee.
- During the recruitment interview, ensure that each member of your selection panel have copies of the following documents:
 - Your sales recruitment plan
 - The position description
 - A pre-prepared list of questions to ask, including a plan of who will ask what questions
 - The candidates' resumes
- You may even want to consider having a role play sales activity prepared for the candidates to undertake during the interview. For example, the candidate can be asked to conduct a sales presentation to the interview panel. If you do incorporate a role play

activity, ensure that you provide consistent instructions to all the candidates and have a marking key with which to assess them objectively and consistently.

At the conclusion of your sales recruitment campaign and by adhering to these processes, you will have available a considerable amount of information about each of your shortlisted candidates. By pooling and comparing this data, you will be able to make meaningful comparisons between candidates, and effective hiring decisions.

For more information on sales recruitment or to contact us, visit the website at <http://www.myfirstsalesjob.com.au>