



STRATEGIC APPROACH VS. “GUT FEELING”: HOW TO HIRE THE PERFECT SALESPERSON FOR YOUR COMPANY

Sales is the hardest position to hire for, and with good reason - the typical day of a salesperson involves rejection, criticism, and very occasionally, a successful sale. Those shining stars who can take all of that and still come away as eager and passionate to do their job are a rare find, and few and far between.

While the job itself may be difficult, the process of hiring a successful sales candidate may arguably be harder. Many businesses, however, clamor to hire salespeople without pausing to think of the optimal way to streamline their hiring process. Often appointments are made on the basis of “gut feeling”, or simply liking the individual. This can be detrimental to both parties - the company wastes time and money, and the new hire is miserable and misplaced. The solution: Strategy should drive search and selection. Here are some key action steps HR and sales managers should complete before they start the recruiting and hiring process:

Develop a hiring profile

In order to professionalize your sales recruiting, you should establish a staff policy tailored to your strengths and weaknesses and your strategic objectives. A hiring profile defines the ideal candidate based on the sales role, client base, and industry and so on. This is a critical step in identifying the type of salesperson who will fit your business. The recruiter and hiring manager must find specific individuals with specific skills rather than generic “people who can sell.” E.g., generating new sales leads requires different skills than managing regular customers.

Analyze your product range

Different products or services require different skill sets. Selling complex solutions face-to-face to high-tech firms is not at all the same as selling lifestyle or mass market products. While both are “selling,” very different skills are involved.

Know your customers

Customer loyalty has become increasingly important to a supplier's long-term health. Sales performance thus depends on the ability to retain high-value customers, to up-sell at the point of sale and to expand the customer relationship through cross-selling. In B2B environments, transactional selling based on knowledge of product features, functionality and cost has become less relevant. Here, successful salespeople need consultative skills tailored to the customer's industry or business situation and must meet a customer's threshold for return on investment.

Assess your culture

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If you haven't assessed and documented your company culture, you should step back and do it before you start adding to your sales team. Look at your existing team. Who are your leaders? What can you expect from potential leaders? How do they fit into your culture? Even if you find a brilliant candidate with the perfect background, lack of culture fit could mean a struggle to fit in with the existing team and quick turnover. If you have a strong culture and a clear strategy in doing things that differ from your competitor, you may want to think carefully about whether you want to hire for experience or whether you want to hire people with less experience and invest more in training them in your model.

Focus on your prospect or client's needs and expectations

Knowing a buyer's needs and expectations is a fundamental building block in selling. Taking that understanding a step further demands that professional sales executives, intent on building strong, trust-based relationships, also explore and understand the buyer's fears and expectations and then help them find solutions that are exactly on-target and address their expectations with the least possible risk. Effective relationship-oriented salespeople possess the required emotional skills and work hard to understand what customers expect to happen when their needs are addressed.

Create skills assessment exercises

To truly assess how sales candidates work, how they handle ambiguity, and how they respond to changing requirements, we highly recommend creating a skills assessment exercise that is specific to the position. An effective assessment process must be able to surface a realistic picture of a candidate's strengths and developmental needs. What is important in today's workforce are the right competencies and personality factors.

In other words, effective hiring and selection in sales is about building the right portfolio of talent – a top challenge in business today. For small and medium sized businesses that don't have the resources of large companies the challenge is even more daunting. This is why it is important that you prepare in advance so when you do hire salespeople you and they hit the ground running. The sales experts of MFB Resultants will spend the time getting to know your business, its culture and the role you are recruiting for, and help you find people that will deliver value to your business.

MFB Resultant- We deliver results.