



BEST PRACTICES

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How to hire sales professionals for maximum results

Among the many challenges companies have one of the more difficult ones is the ability to grow the contract base fast enough to offset contract losses — and add to the top-line sales at the same time. Many companies have considered hiring a salesperson for the first time or adding to the sales staff to increase sales. This often frustrates companies, though, because the salespeople have had a hard time producing results. Lack of success is generally attributable to not hiring the right people at the start.

Often salespeople fail to improve close ratios; they are not generating enough activity to sell enough work even if they are successful in what they propose. In essence, they are not results-oriented. The end result is the owners come down on them — or worse — give up on them.

When going through written advertisements for salespeople and looking at resumes, the focus is

usually on experience and education. Many resumes feature positions, responsibilities and, in a general way, accomplishments.

Some, however, feature results; when this happens, it should catch your eye — the failure or success of the salesperson is ultimately determined by results. If your company leaves the screening of resumes to your human resources team, remind them you are focused on *results*, or they might focus only on experience and education, job stability, etc.

Check the fit

These days, we see companies also focusing on “fit.” Will the prospective salesperson fit? To do this, they look at how well the sales professional’s personality meshes with the team. But tellingly, some of the best sales performers I have ever seen would not be considered a “fit” because they are focused on results. They are aggressive, results-oriented and make others uncomfortable because they speak their minds.

Another important part of finding the right salesperson would be to use a professional profile service specifically designed to help identify successful sales candidates. General profiles do not really give you what you want; they focus more on behaviors and are designed to help coach a person to understand how their behavioral tendencies affect their effectiveness. You want something that compares the candidate to other successful salespeople. Because salespeople are usually good communicators, they usually all interview well. A profile can help find potential chinks in their armor, which you can then probe.

There are many other important parts of an interview (see sidebar, left), but if you are looking for success measured by results, this part cannot be overemphasized. Take your time and make the right choice.

WEB EXTRA

For more sales hiring secrets, visit www.landscapemanagement.net/results.

INTERVIEW FOR RESULTS

Interviewing for results requires probing by the interviewer to the point of discomfort:

- ▶ What specific results were achieved by the candidate and how were they achieved?
- ▶ How did the candidate measure progress against expected results?
- ▶ When were the desired results first achieved in the last position? (How long before he or she was selling at the desired level?)
- ▶ Who developed the strategy to get these results?

- ▶ Whom can you talk to as a reference to confirm the results?
- ▶ How does the candidate relate relationship building to results?
- ▶ How does the candidate define a successful cold call?
- ▶ What is the candidate’s plan for getting results in this position?
- ▶ How does the candidate confirm whether he or she is on track to achieve results in this position?
- ▶ What obstacles does the candidate see to achieving results at a new company?