

FLIP YOUR ɃNIXNIH1

HIRE GREAT
SALESPEOPLE



xPOTENTIAL
— SELLING —

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HAVE YOU EVER HIRED A SALESPERSON WHO SEEMED LIKE THE PERFECT FIT?

They performed like a rock star in the interview, consistently hit quota at 100-110% in their last position, and are excited about joining your team. Fast forward six months later and they've failed to meet your expectations. They've only made 30-40% of their quota and you have no idea what went wrong. Here are five steps to help you hire a truly great salesperson that's a good fit for your organization.



1. DEFINE THE ROLE

FIRST, DEFINE THE ROLE.

DETAIL YOUR EXPECTATIONS – THE ACTIVITIES AND OUTCOMES REQUIRED FOR SUCCESS.

A common practice is to define the sales position by listing the characteristics you're seeking in a salesperson – energetic, good communicator, strong closer, etc. Those are not expectations of the role, but rather the type of person you want to hire. While creating a benchmark for the type of person you seek is important, be sure to separate the expectations of the role from the capacities of an individual during this process.

IF YOU'RE NOT SURE HOW TO DEFINE THE EXPECTATIONS FOR A ROLE, GRAB THE JOB DESCRIPTION AND EXPAND IT USING THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:

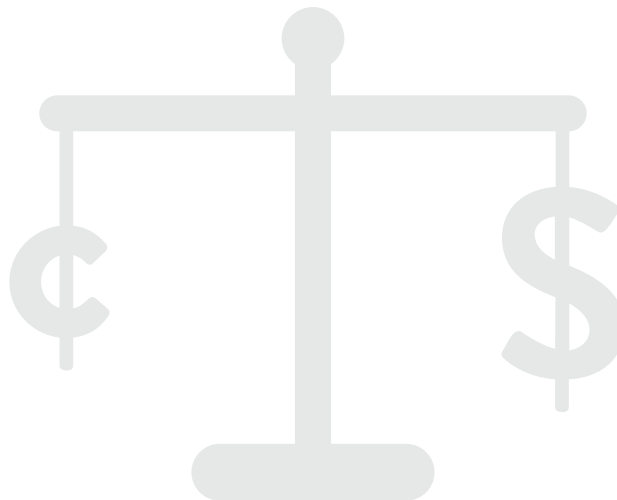
- What does success look like in the role?
- What are the annual/monthly sales goals (quota) for this role?
- What specific activities does the sales rep need to engage in on a consistent basis?
- What metrics associated with those activities are required to achieve sales goals? (# contacts, # appointments, # proposals, # closed deals)
- How much time should be dedicated to prospecting each week, if any?
- How is the compensation plan designed?



- Does the compensation equate to the level of effort that is expected by the sales rep?
- What type of sales support will be provided, if any?
- What type of marketing support will be provided, if any?
- What are the characteristics of your ideal customer profile that the sales rep should target?



- Where will the salesperson work – inside an office with team members and sales manager, satellite office with minimal management, home office with no management?
- Who are successful salespeople on the sales team that could help you define this role?
- What should be the average size of a transaction to achieve the given sales goal?



If you don't have an example of success, use an estimate. If you know your sales goals and price point, you have a great place to start to document quotas and supporting sales activities. But no matter what, know the role you're filling before you do anything else.

WHEN DEFINING EXPECTATIONS, BE SPECIFIC!



2. DEFINE THE PERSON

NOW THAT THE EXPECTATIONS HAVE BEEN SET, WHAT TYPE OF PERSON IS REQUIRED TO MEET YOUR EXPECTATIONS?

Some people are intrinsically wired to succeed in your sales role
and some would be better suited for other positions.

People are multifaceted creatures, so you need to take a multifaceted approach to looking at a candidate. If you know only one facet, it can adversely affect your judgment about the person. For example, an Outside Sales role may require a strong Type A personality. You may meet a candidate who is clearly Type A and may even score that way on a personality test. However, personality style is only one dimension of a complex individual. Don't be too quick to assume the other aspects of the candidate, like motivation, judgment, decision-making, and emotional control, fit your needs. All of these things need to be measured.

INSTEAD, discover the deeper characteristics of a person that many don't consider. What motivates your candidate? How sharp is their judgment and decision-making ability? Do they have a legitimate skill set to be successful in a professional selling role? Again, a salesperson may demonstrate on the outside a persuasive Type A personality, but on *the inside* they are unmotivated by a commissionable sales role, they struggle with following directions and they lack self-confidence. So much for sales, right?



HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU DEFINE THE BENCHMARK YOU'RE LOOKING FOR:

- Am I looking for more of an **introvert** or an **extrovert**?
- Do I need an **autonomous** sales rep or one who works well with a **team**?
- Do I need more of a **relational** or **analytical** person?
- Do I need a **yes-man** or a **challenger**?
- How much **listening** is required versus **talking and presenting**?

- What level of drive for **money** is required, keeping in mind the ratio of commissions to salary?
- Do I need an industry **veteran** or can I hire a **rookie**?
- Do I require more **persistence** or **patience**?
- Am I looking for a candidate who **follows directions** or who can **provide direction**?



3. ASSESS CANDIDATES

“Hiring is the process
of attempting to
predict the future.”

- Barrett Riddleberger, CEO, xPotential Selling

If you're going to attempt to predict the future, explore other resources that measure unobservable traits that can directly affect your hiring decisions. Interviews are a great opportunity for a candidate to portray something that they're not. Use an in-depth sales assessment that measures more than personality to help you reduce subjectivity in the hiring process and infuse greater amounts of objectivity. If you don't use an assessment, you're left to make a hiring decision based on a candidate's résumé, the interview, and gut instinct. All of which are important, but they still lack the depth required to make a well-informed hiring decision. Your goal is to "get behind the mask." Without using an in-depth sales assessment, how will you really know if your candidate can handle rejection, is a self-starter, or is unmotivated by the job?



HERE ARE SOME QUESTIONS THAT YOU NEED ANSWERED THAT RUN DEEPER THAN A TYPICAL PERSONALITY TEST:

- Do **commissions** drive this candidate or do they prefer a **straight salary**?
- Does this candidate desire **autonomy** or like working as part of a **team**?
- Is this candidate **coachable** or are they **resistant** to coaching?
- Can this candidate **handle stress** effectively?



- Is this candidate a **self-starter** or do they need **external motivation**?
- Does this candidate have a tendency to **discount** or **negotiate**?
- Can this candidate **handle rejection**?
- Can this candidate tell the difference between **prospects that will buy** versus **those that can't or won't**?
- Is this candidate actually **persistent** or **only appears to be**?
- Will this candidate **manage their emotions** or **act out their feelings**?
- Does this candidate sell on **price** or sell on **value**?

4. ASK GOOD QUESTIONS

IF YOU HAD TO CONDUCT A SURPRISE SALES INTERVIEW IN THE NEXT 15 MINUTES, WHAT WOULD YOU ASK?

Interviews for sales positions tend to include questions such as:



Q:

“Why do your customers buy from you?”



A:

“Because I’m very good at servicing my accounts. I listen, understand, and provide great solutions. I work hard to develop relationships with them and make sure they have everything they need. I’m a full service salesperson. They know they can call me about anything and I’ll handle it.”



NOTE: They didn't tell you anything. The answer is ambiguous. They didn't communicate what they specifically do to service their accounts well. Second, how do they define a vendor/client relationship? Not all clients want the same type of relationship. Finally, if the customer knows they can call the sales rep for anything, does that mean they handle customer service issues as well? Is that the role you want them to play in your company? Where does that leave your Customer Service Department or the Account Manager, if you have one?



Q:

“Whom did you call on in your last sales position?”



A:

“I called on executives at mid-sized and large companies. Mostly Operations and IT Managers.”



NOTE: Don't assume that they did a "cold call." Their answer does not imply prospecting.

Also, they may have customers whom they do call on, but that can mean they are conducting mostly account management. If new business development is required, then drilling down on how they acquired the accounts will be more relevant.



Q:

“How often did you make your sales quota?”



A:

“I exceeded quota every month for the entire year. Here are my numbers.”



NOTE: Even if you drill down on their sales numbers and customers, you could get a false read. A mediocre sales rep could have inherited a golden territory full of existing customers in their previous job. If your sales role requires prospecting, then their previous success cannot be duplicated at your company. An in-depth assessment will help you confirm the validity of those sales numbers and their capacity to meet your expectations.



Q:

“What would you do if a gatekeeper told you they already had a vendor?”



A:

“I would tell them about our products and services, some relevant benefits, and how competitive we are in our pricing.”



NOTE: In an interview, a salesperson may give you generic or non-specific answers that may actually sound good. When asking this question, role-play it with them. Have them actually “say the words” to you like you were the gatekeeper. Then you’ll know. Listen for word choice, delivery, and tone. Successful, experienced cold-callers are exceptional at this.



HERE ARE A FEW RECOMMENDED QUESTIONS TO INCLUDE IN YOUR SALES INTERVIEW PROCESS:

WHO WERE YOUR 5 LARGEST CUSTOMERS FROM YOUR PREVIOUS JOB?

- Salespeople love touting their marquee customers. Let them.
It's the next three questions where you'll get a clearer picture.



HOW MANY OF THOSE CUSTOMERS DID YOU INHERIT?

- If they say “none of them,” then proceed to the next question.
- If they say “some of them,” ask which ones.
- If they say “all of them,” you’ve probably got a Farmer instead of a Hunter.
- If they give you a long, complicated answer, they got the customer from an existing customer (referral), got it from their Sales Manager (team sell), or inherited it from the previous sales rep (inherit). Regardless, they may not be strong at cold calling.

STARTING WITH THE FIRST CUSTOMER YOU DID NOT INHERIT, HOW DID YOU GET THE LEAD?

- Listen for specifics. A good sales rep will showcase their cold-calling or networking skills, but still provide the point-by-point details of how they acquired the opportunity. Underperformers will give a more ambiguous answer.



HOW DID YOU GAIN YOUR FIRST APPOINTMENT WITH THE DECISION-MAKER?

- This is where good sales reps explain what they said and how they secured an appointment with the primary buyer.



WHAT IS A QUALIFIED PROSPECT TO YOU?

- Don't settle for product or industry-specific traits only. Listen for your sales candidate to list, define, and explain the characteristics they look for in a high-probability prospect.



AT WHAT POINT WILL YOU WALK AWAY FROM A PROSPECT AND MOVE ON?

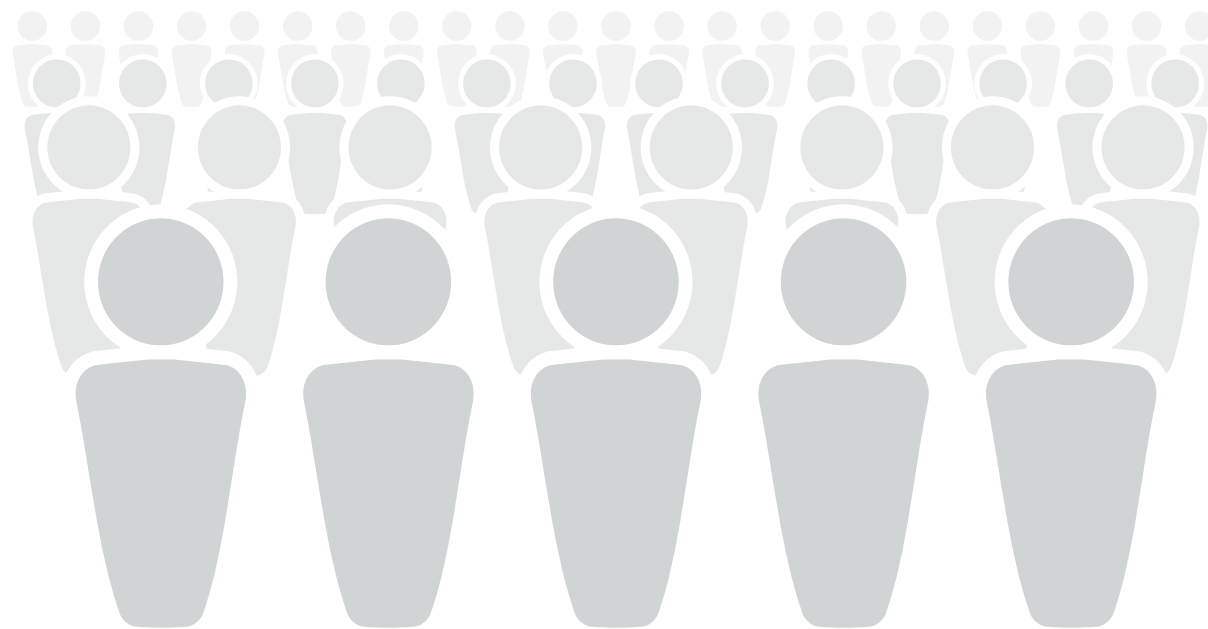
- If they say “never,” that’s the wrong answer. It means they don’t qualify and will waste valuable time being persistent with people who won’t buy. Good sales reps know that not all sales opportunities are good ones. They know how to quickly and professionally say “next” and move on.



5. BE MINDFUL OF HIRING REALITIES

You don't always have the luxury of selecting from a pool of premium sales talent. Keep in mind the following factors that can affect the success of your candidate search:

QUANTITY – The number of candidates applying for the position



How many people can you attract that fit your ideal candidate profile? The greater the quantity, the better the chance of finding the right fit. Here are some tips for increasing your candidate pool:

- Use social media to your advantage. LinkedIn is a collection of living, breathing résumés; use it to tap into your network.
- Take advantage of universities for candidate sourcing. If the sales role requires a certain level of education or degree, such as engineering, hire the graduate and train the skills. However, still assess for motivation and judgment. They may have a degree, but may not be wired for sales.

- Develop sales candidates from within your company. You may unknowingly have bench strength from which to draw capable sales candidates. Ideally, implement a succession plan or sales trainee program to develop individuals to move into sales roles.
- Product knowledge does not equal sales capacity. It helps to know your product, but that's only the tip of the iceberg. That's why technical experts typically do not make great salespeople. Instead, they can be great assets for product training and team selling.

QUALITY – The level of fit your candidates have with the job

Having a large pool of unqualified candidates isn't going to get you very far. It's important to attract the right people for the position.

WE COVERED THIS EARLIER, SO REMEMBER TO:

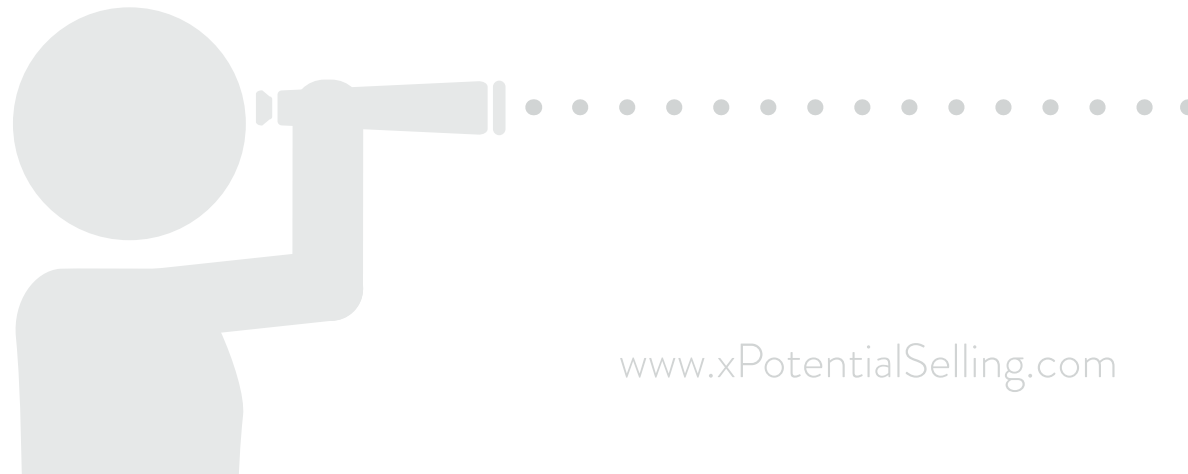
- Define the role and be able to communicate it clearly
- Define the ideal candidate profile
- Consistently use an in-depth sales assessment that measures more than just personality, such as a candidate's judgment, motivators, sales skills, and emotional control



URGENCY – How quickly you need to fill the sales role

HERE ARE A FEW RECOMMENDATIONS TO CONSIDER:

- When possible, always be looking for candidates, even when a position isn't available.
- Avoid desperation hires. If a candidate is not the right fit, you'll find yourself going through this again in a few months.

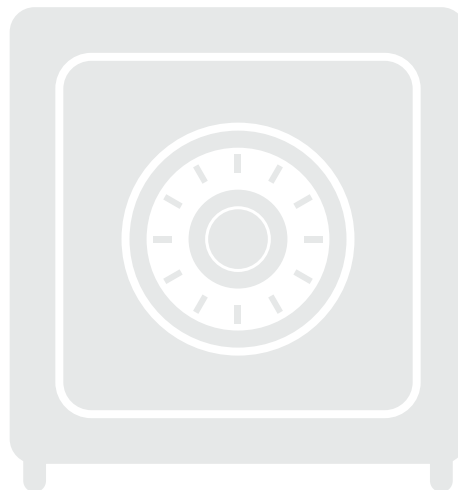


- When a sales role becomes vacant, it's important to have the new candidate “waiting in the wings” to take over. It's not always feasible, but try to make this one of your “hiring best practices.”
- Allow as much time as possible to hire right. Urgency can dramatically affect the quantity and quality of candidates.



INVESTMENT – The amount of time, effort, and money you’re willing to spend developing a less-than-ideal candidate after you hire them

You may not find a superstar in your pool of candidates. With that said, there’s nothing necessarily wrong with a “steady Eddie” who’s a really good “B” player. It’s important to decide how much time, energy, and effort you are willing to invest once they’re hired. You never want to set someone up for failure.



HERE ARE A FEW QUESTIONS TO HELP YOU CLARIFY YOUR PLAN OF ACTION:

- Are you willing to invest time and resources in a “B” player?
- How much time and resources do you have to invest in a “B” player?
- If the candidate has product knowledge only, can you provide sales training?
- Is there a sales manager or other sales leader who can act as coach for this player?



IN CONCLUSION:

- ✓ Define the specific expectations of the role
- ✓ Document the type of person with the greatest probability for success
- ✓ Use an in-depth, multifaceted assessment to remove the guessing game from the interview process
- ✓ Ask sales-specific questions to help you assess their knowledge based on their experience
- ✓ Remember to be flexible and realistic about the quality of your candidates, the amount of candidates available, how quickly you need them, and what support you're willing to provide

**FOLLOW THESE STRATEGIES AND YOU'LL BE WELL ON YOUR WAY
TO SELECTING THE IDEAL CANDIDATE FOR YOUR SALES TEAM.**



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