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Employment: Recruit the Right Talent to Increase Sales Effectiveness

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The Employment section did not involve the reporting or the editorial staff of The Moscow Times.



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A strong sales team is essential to the survival of the business. That is why even during harder times, companies continue to recruit sales core representatives. After all, they are responsible for revenue inflow. Many organizations seek to hire top salespeople who, from day one, can open doors and close sales with minimal guidance and training.

Worldwide sales representatives consistently top ManpowerGroup's "hardest to fill jobs" list. One reason sales departments experience such high demand is because organizations are not placing the right people into the right jobs. Another is the loss of talent due to promotions. That is because selling and sales management require different skill sets and competencies for success. To recruit effectively — whether that is identifying talent internally or sourcing externally — organizations need to accurately pinpoint the qualities of a productive representative or sales leader so that success can be defined in advance and accurately predicted.

How do organizations define what makes someone a successful sales representative or sales leader in their company? How do they develop those competencies within their current sales force? By understanding the diverse requirements for each role, and putting programs in place to develop management skills, organizations can recruit effectively, accelerate leadership readiness and build the bench strength necessary for a high-performance sales organization.

Establishing a Profile for Success

To smooth the transition from superstar salesperson to effective sales manager, organizations need to clearly define the competencies and qualities required for the role and company culture. Does your organization require specialized technical knowledge? Do

representatives need prior experience? Have they participated in leadership development and training initiatives or have they managed others? By establishing a profile of success, organizations can then hire against it and consistently find those qualities in candidates. Establishing a profile of success also helps to eliminate unqualified candidates early in the hiring or promotion process so recruiters and managers spend time interviewing only best-fit candidates.

Whether the organization is seeking to fill the sales force with multiple entry-level hires or recruit an experienced sales manager, both behavioral and technique based competencies need to be assessed to determine organizational fit, and fit with the organization's sales methodology.

The Path from Sales to Management

According to ManpowerGroup survey, 50 percent of organizations search within their ranks for sales leaders. One reason is because promoting from within is less costly than recruiting externally, saving companies both recruiting and training costs. Rewarding employees with promotion opportunities also boosts employee morale, demonstrating that the organization has a career path for representatives.

While in-house employees may have the advantage of fitting in with the corporate culture, without leadership training, top producers often end up mediocre managers.

Effective sales leaders need to develop solid managerial skills such as articulating business priorities to the sales team, establishing sustainable processes in the sales continuum and knowing how to resolve conflicts, mentoring representatives, managing performance and ensuring sales targets are met.

While sales representatives, in general, can be categorized as competitive and motivated by individual rewards, a leader's incentive is typically based on the performance of their team. This makes sales unique as few other departments have this direct line of sight into their ability to shape their compensation.

Putting Training Programs in Place

Leaders who are not trained and given the opportunity to develop leadership skills are costly to the business. A poor management style can result in reduced employee morale, higher turnover, absenteeism and lower productivity.

Training should include establishing a strong foundation of understanding the company culture, its products, services and business practices; the marketplace; and basic skills and procedures. Leadership development programs should also include skill development in assessment, evaluation, motivation, coaching, problem solving and performance counseling. Some organizations have publicized their formal leadership development programs to challenge sales representatives and prepare them for future leadership positions. Curriculum includes rotational programs that expose representatives to various lines of business and sales-related initiatives such as point-of-sale programs or budget and data analysis.

In other organizations, after proving success with field accounts, representatives may have the opportunity to own their sales territory and amass proficiency in implementing sales strategies and tactics.

Putting greater focus on hiring right from the start and having training programs that build management capabilities support a productive "promote from within" philosophy that ensures organizations do not lose their top performers. While a good sales producer does not always translate into a positive sales manager, recruiting effectively and having the right training and development programs can improve skills, increase business acumen and improve leadership ability, resulting in improved sales performance for the organization.

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