



Does Your Hiring Process Get You The Results You Want?



Let's face it, we all want to hire well when adding to our sales team. If we consider our sales engine to be the driver of lead generation and ultimately the revenue generator for the company's existence, each and every new sales agent should be hand-picked, well-vetted and carefully on-boarded in order to assure their success.

However, what we find more commonly is a trend of hiring habits that may or may not serve us as the hiring manager or drive increases to the bottom line.

We need to hire for different reasons:

- Sales are strong and we cannot keep up
- one of our existing agents has given his/her notice.
- One of our agents is not hitting his/her numbers and needs to be replaced.

Regardless of the reason, the attributes we search for will likely be the same. When it comes to finding, interviewing and deciding on sales candidates, we are all looking for someone who is smart and can learn quickly, is driven and can work independently and, lastly, will "gel" with the rest of the team and organization as a whole.

As my sales management career launched many years ago, the approach I took in hiring was heavily focused on the skill and will of the individual candidate. I was looking for industry-specific sales experience with an emphasis on meeting or

exceeding sales goals. Yet the process for finding the right candidate to fill our needs was hit or miss... until I met Dave Decker. First of all, Dave did not fit into the mold of what we thought would make a sales agent successful. As a matter of fact, he was hard to interview and left the hiring team in a quandary as to whether he would perform well or not. But as it turned out, Dave was a selling machine.

First of all, Dave did not apply for the position because he liked the company or the people. He had done his due diligence on the product/service we represented and believed it was something he could get behind. He did not “WOW” us through the interview with his personality. In fact, he made it clear that he was there to interview us rather than the reverse.

Once Dave came on board, he did not focus on getting to know the other members of the sales team. He was cordial but not looking for new friends or individuals to go to lunch and shoot the breeze with over coffee. He was an individual contributor that spent his time researching the technical aspects of our product, examining the marketing materials that defined the features and studying the complicated pricing structure that would set him up for successful meetings with his prospects. From the start, Dave built a strong book of business meetings and then exceeded his goals with confidence and finesse.

As I began to observe Dave and all of his sales traits, I made a rookie sales manager mistake when I decided we were going to replicate him. We would set our focus in future hires looking for another Dave. This thinking was whole-heartedly approved by my CEO and COO, “Yes, I think you are on to something, just hire another Dave, and do it quickly!”

I don't have to tell you that this was not the answer. When we hired candidates who exhibited similar traits as Dave's, none of them proved to be effective agents. I slowly began to notice that what he did better than any other sales agent was to

communicate with his prospects. In particular, he was an incredible listener. In his initial meetings, he asked exceptional questions and then listened to learn what was on his prospects' minds. Sometimes this approach would uncover what issues were causing pain points and other times it would reveal information that proved to be incredibly important and could prevent the advancement of the sale. Without his patience and listening, this information would not have been disclosed. He did not interrupt with solutions and did not make a lot of small talk. As a matter of fact, he did little talking at all. Yet when he spoke, it was with purpose. His self-awareness allowed him to understand how others perceived him and gave him the ability to mirror their conversational characteristics. When he spoke, it was in relationship to what was significant to his prospect, rather than being focused on his own goals.

My approach to hiring soon changed with this new awareness. Once the basics are covered regarding skills and qualifications, I quickly move to assess a candidate's communication. What I have found through the years is that most candidates learn the technical aspects of your product/service if they are committed. However, only a certain percentage of candidates are willing to work on enhancing their ability to connect and communicate effectively with a variety of prospects.

The very definition of communication is “the process by which information is exchanged between individuals.” In sales, the exchange of important information is what permits a sale to move through the pipeline's various stages toward closing. If you Interview for candidates who have this ability or are willing to develop it, you will enhance the quality of your sales team and ultimately increase your bottom line, just like Dave. ■

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