

Three Ways to Recruit Top Sales Talent. Even in Tough Times.

From what we see, the economy might be turning around. A lot of our clients are asking for our help hiring new, top-performing salespeople. It's work we enjoy. We're told they're having a hard time because two things are happening:

1. The best salespeople have jobs and aren't looking.
2. When sales managers start actively looking for candidates, they get a flood of weak ones. That means they need help separating those who will perform from those who won't.

In order to deal with these challenges, there are a few things sales managers should do.

Use an Assessment. Granted, we're biased because a significant portion of our work is spent providing clients with assessments to hire top-performing salespeople, but we stand by this point. An assessment should provide insight into the behaviors, values, skills, and attitudes of a candidate even before you spend your time interviewing them. In fact, a strong assessment ought to give you a clear picture of the likelihood of a candidate's success.

A key element in the successful use of an assessment is combining it with a job benchmark. It's important to objectively compare a candidate to the job you'll be asking them to perform. By comparing them, you can easily see how much difference there is between the two and determine whether the differences in skills are too great.

As an aside, [check out our whitepaper](#) on Hiring Salespeople (Safely Under the Law).

Always be Recruiting. Keep your eyes open for good, quality talent. Even in a down economy, don't stop looking for talent to bring into your organization. There's no telling who you might find in your travels. A great candidate might be lurking somewhere nearby.

Just as salespeople are encouraged to ensure that everyone around them is familiar with what they do (some call this the "three-foot rule" – everyone within three feet of you should know what you do), the same can be said of your role as a sales manager. Even if you have no plans to hire a new salesperson, make sure others around you know that you're always looking for talented salespeople.

Build a Strong Sales Culture. An organization with a strong sales culture is one in which the sales department is profitable, well-managed, and respected organization-wide. As a VP of Sales or sales manager, it's important for you to work on profitability and management. If you follow-through on those two, you'll be in a better position to garner the last, which is organization-wide respect.

Building a profitable, well-managed sales department involves the things we write about every month in this newsletter – being in the field, measuring the right things, and hiring top-performers. It's harder than it looks. We know that! But, it's up to you to make it happen.

In the end, recruiting top-talent in a down economy takes a lot of work. In many ways, it requires more attention, more focus, and more time than when things are good. But, if you do it well, it's worth it.