





To Increase Sales, Change the Way You Sell

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Key Discovery

Herb Greenberg, Harold Weinstein and Patrick Sweeney report this very conclusion in their book, "How to Hire and Develop Your Next Top Performer". After correlating hundreds of thousands of assessments that were performed over several decades with actual sales performance measurements, they reached these startling conclusions:

55% of the people earning their living in sales should be doing something else.

and

Another 20% to 25% have what it takes to sell, but they should be selling something else

Wow! Those are some sobering statistics! They indicate that more than half of all salespeople are never going to make it in sales. Another quarter have some chance of accomplishing sales success, but only if they find the right job selling the right kind of product or service.

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Sales Drive: Does the individual enjoy presenting, persuading, negotiating, and motivating others? How much do they enjoy these activities?

Emotional Toughness: How rapidly does the individual rebound from rejection? Do they learn from their experiences and move on quickly? Or, do they suffer a sustained reduction in productivity?

Reasoning Ability: Does the individual ask good questions? Can they dissect answers and pick out the pieces that will help advance the conversation toward a desired end result?

Service Drive: How friendly and agreeable is the individual? How interested are they in building relationships and helping others?

Assertiveness: How self-assured is the individual? How effective are they at convincing others to take action?

Attitude: How positive is the individual's attitude? Do they perceive a glass to be half-empty or half-full?

Communication Skills: How precisely does the individual communicate, both verbally and in writing? Are their communications clear and effective?

Competitiveness: How competitive is the individual? How does their competitiveness manifest itself?

Energy: How energetic is the individual? Are they always "on the go", or do they need to be prodded into action?
Independence: How readily does the individual accept direction from others?

Learning Rate: How rapidly does the individual learn new information? What styles of learning are most productive for them?

Tolerance for Administration: How willing is the individual to perform administrative activities? How much attention do they pay to details?

Sales Assessment Tests

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The assessment test scores for the preceding characteristics can also be used to predict how effectively a salesperson or sales candidate will perform the following critical job functions:

- Are they a Hunter or a Farmer? Do they prefer to pursue new business, or do they prefer to manage existing customer relationships? Or, are they capable of performing both functions effectively?
- Are they Internally or Externally motivated? Internally motivated salespeople are capable of directing their own activities. Externally motivated salespeople require frequent direction and support from their manager in order to be consistently effective.
- How effectively will they Prospect? How aggressively (and consistently) will they pursue new opportunities?
- How willing are they to comply with Administrative Requirements? This may include updating records in your company's customer relationship management (CRM) system and providing timely and accurate forecasts and opportunity pipeline updates.
- Will they be a good Team Member? Will they work cooperatively with their fellow sales team members, as well as other departments?

How can specialized sales assessment tests help existing salespeople who are struggling?

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They can help in two specific ways. First, they can determine which salespeople should be in sales. If an individual doesn't have the talents required for success in your company's sales job, there may be other roles in your organization where their talents and interests can be applied to mutual benefit. If there aren't any such positions available, the kindest thing you can do is to let them go.

How can firing someone be kind? Because it is NO fun to struggle in a job that is a poor fit. If you share the assessment test results with these individuals, they can gain insights into their strongest talents and interests. The sooner they can migrate into roles that are compatible with their talents and interests, the sooner they will reap the benefits of improved productivity, motivation, and job satisfaction.

The second way these assessment tests can help struggling salespeople is by identifying their unique training needs. If you identify each salesperson's individual training needs, and you supply targeted training to address these needs, you can dramatically improve their performance. Here's an example:

Two fictitious salespeople, Beth and Bill, work for the same company. Beth is weak in Sales Drive, which makes her reluctant to ask for orders. Bill is weak in Emotional Toughness, which makes him sensitive to rejection and limits his prospecting effectiveness. If Beth and Bill go through the same sales skills training course, how much improvement in sales performance should they expect to see?

The answer is little or none. Why? Because Beth and Bill have completely different training needs that will not be addressed by basic sales skills training.

Beth would benefit most from attending an assertiveness training class. She also needs coaching to help her recognize that failing to ask for orders denies her customers valuable solutions to costly business problems.

Bill needs to learn to not take rejection personally. He might also benefit from attending a class that teaches positive thinking and other motivational techniques.

Unfortunately, unless these two salespeople are made aware of their unique training needs, and provided with targeted training to address them, there isn't much reason to expect their performance to improve.

Conclusion

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Many companies struggle with "80/20" performance disparities in their sales organizations. These disparities usually result from an over-reliance on subjective information when making salesperson hiring and coaching decisions. The proposed solution is to add objective information gathered via specialized sales assessment tests to the "people decision" process. This one change can help companies increase the proportion of top performers on their sales teams and improve the performance of existing sales team members.

Training

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There are a lot of different ways to approach sales, but they all tend to rely on the same skill set. Note that these are skills, not talents: talents are inborn, but skills are learned. Anyone can learn to be an effective salesperson, and good salespeople can become great ones by honing the following sales skills.



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