

Recruitment & Selection of Sales Force

Right salesmen can help company achieve marketing objectives. Recruitment and selection are two important decisions in sales force management that concern with ensuring the right type (right qualities, right qualifications, and right experience) of sales personnel.

Recruitment involves searching for prospective candidates and encouraging them to apply for the job. Vacancies are finalized, advertised and applications are collected from interested candidates. Selection is concerned with choosing most suitable candidates out of many available or interested. Available candidates are scrutinized, tests and interviews are conducted to find out most suitable candidates.

Problem of recruitment and selection arises when:

1. Starting a new company
2. Resigning and retiring of existing salesmen
3. Death of existing salesmen
4. Suspending of existing salesmen
5. Growth and development of company's operations
6. Entering into new territories
7. Developing and introducing new products

Note that salesman is not only employee of a company, but he is its responsible representative; he is not dealing only with selling products, but also with goodwill and reputation of company. A right salesman can create positive effect on sales volume, profitability, customer satisfaction, dealer effectiveness, company's goodwill, promotional efforts, and so forth.

While recruiting and selecting salespersons, job analysis (consisting of job description and job specification) is to be made for better selection. Recruitment and selection are interdependent decisions. Let us discuss both terms separately.

Recruitment

Recruitment means searching for prospective candidates and inspiring them to apply for the post. Recruitment ends on the last day/date of receiving applications. Salesmen can be recruited through a number of sources.

Sources of Recruiting Sales Force

1. Former employees

Former employees are ideal recruitment targets. They walk in the door knowing the inner workings of your organization, cultural nuances, and sales expectations. They become productive quickly because ramp up time is minimal. You'd be surprised how many former employees might consider coming back. But you'll never know unless you ask.

2. Company website

Branding is important for any organization. Companies typically invest their marketing efforts on attracting new clients rather than new employees. But more emphasis can be devoted to recruitment marketing. When potential applicants come to your company's website, they'll usually check out the careers page.

If they see boring job descriptions that are tired and old, they'll just move on. Keep your sales job openings posted, interesting, and up to date. Well-written position descriptions outline the job function, skill requirements, and organizational culture. Using a friendly tone that's inviting and warm will help you attract potential applicants.

3. Job boards

There's a great deal of variation among job boards. Don't make the mistake of thinking they're all the same. You'll have to spend some time measuring results and learning which job boards work best for your sales openings. Results will vary by geographic location, level of position, and job function.

4. Sales recruitment agencies

Executive recruitment agencies specializing in sales candidates can be strong sources of sales talent. Like job boards, they should be tested and used for positions that match their areas of expertise. This will vary greatly among firms depending on the level of position, geographic region, market segments served, and more.

Moreover, recruiting agencies that specialize in sales can take a lot of the time out of the vetting process, present highly matched candidates, and shorten the time to hire. Build relationships with several recruiters so they get to know the types of sales candidates you're most interested in hiring.

5. Employee referrals

Employee referrals can be a strong source of sales talent when you're building a sales team. If you are under using this recruitment channel, you'll be impressed with the results it can deliver. The key is to put a system in place and execute the program with consistency. It will be important to educate employees on the referral process and set clear expectations about participating in the program.

Without clear guidelines, you risk spending too much time with the wrong applicants. Drive employee participation by affirming and recognizing employees who generate referrals. Thank employees who refer good candidate publicly, in memos, at meetings, and never let their referrals be a secret.

6. LinkedIn profiles

LinkedIn is not only a potential resource for sales candidates; it's the ultimate time saver. LinkedIn takes the mystery out of who you are trying to recruit and what types of skills the person has. It will prevent you from spending time with candidates who are less likely to be a strong fit for your organization.

You can quickly scan profiles and get a good idea if the person might be a high potential match. Join groups where sales candidates are members and post your openings on your LinkedIn profile.

7. Local & industry news

Keep your ear to the ground. Always be listening for layoffs, mergers, and acquisitions. Read local industry business news to stay current about local market happenings.

You're four times more likely to succeed when recruiting candidates whose circumstances have changed through an acquisition, executive change, or layoff than you are otherwise. Staying on top of the market will skyrocket your sales recruitment success.

Selection

Selection means selecting the fixed number of suitable candidates from those who applied for the posts. Selection process starts as soon as recruitment ends. Recruitment considers all applications received in a due date while selection considers only the required number of most suitable candidates.

There is no ideal selection process that most companies can follow. Normally, for selecting salesmen, the simple and short selection process is followed. However, some companies, when more salesmen are to be selected at time, also follow lengthy and systematic selection process. Selection process depends on types of salesmen, cost and financial position of company, time available, company's objectives, and so forth.

1. Application in blank:

Application in blank is a written formal application submitted by the person in quest of a job. The object of this application in blank is to get the candidate introduced to the interviewer so that he is in a position to prepare himself as to what kind of questions he is to ask to size-up the candidate. It enables the sales selection committee to weed out undesirable candidates at the very outset.

2. References:

The candidate is asked to give references of persons that guarantee of his integrity. The number of references may be two or three. The reference relates his character, educational career, past service or experience.

Here, the sales manager is to get confidential reports about the candidate and verify the statements made by the candidate and the referee or referees. To get first-hand and frank information about the candidate, the selection panel should have face to face telephone contacts, discussions and deliberations.

3. Preliminary interview:

Interview is, by far the most important part of selection procedure. The panel of experts decides the number of candidates to be called for interview and cards or letters are sent to the candidates well in advance. Interview is both a formal and informal talk and the conversation between the interviewers and interviewee.

Since, it is a crucial point in selection process; the interviewer is to be sympathetic, receptive, accommodative and interested in the problems of the candidate. The purpose of interview is to form the opinion of applicant's appearance, bearing, poise, voice, resourcefulness and the philosophy of selling.

4. Psychological testing:

Testing represents an additional tool in the kit of selection panel. The psychological tests operate on the common theory that human behavior can be well forecasted by sampling.

Tests create situations in which an applicant reacts and such reactions are considered as replica of his behavior in the work area for which he has applied. Divulging the weakness of candidate is the basic tenet of a test.

In case of selection, two types of tests are held namely, 'personality' and 'aptitude'. Personality tests gauge whether the candidate has good sales personality a congregation of physical, mental, character and social qualities.

On the other hand, aptitude tests measure his aptitudes in the field of selling such as self-discipline, sales motivation resistance to discouragement, acceptance and appreciation of criticisms, diplomacy, tact, controlled aggressiveness, emotional stability and so on.

5. Medical examination:

Confirmation of physical fitness demands that every promising or likely candidate to be selected is to undergo a medical test. Invariably, everyone in this world is suffering from one kind of disease or the other. The salesman's job needs physical fitness in addition to mental.

Normally, persons with high blood pressure, foot affliction, kidney and heart troubles, tuberculosis, cancer etc. are not selected. It is worthwhile to have outright rejection of such candidates than repenting at leisure.

At the same time, it is the moral responsibility of the candidate to disclose the facts of his health conditions before it is too late to do anything good for both the parties.

6. Final interview:

A candidate, who has crossed all the above hurdles, stands on the threshold of final interview or selection. The selection committee has, at its disposal, all the detailed information in terms of qualifications, references, physical and psychological test that helps to come to final decision.

The final interview is the milder one unlike the first which is bound to be wilder. Normal, yet crucial questions are asked as to his or her willingness to accept the job, his reliability as to continuity, if appointed. He might be asked questions as to how he plans his work and works his plans.

Finally, selected candidates are given official letters of appointment that gives the details of his remuneration, to whom he is to report, when and where. It also gives other conditions to establish contractual relations between the firm and himself.