

Title:

How To Interview Sales People Successfully

Word Count:

910

Summary:

Since the dawn of free trading only two things have ever mattered; producing a quality product or service and the ability to sell it successfully. By successfully, I mean ensuring that you achieve maximum profit from the sale, while the customer is delighted with their purchase. In most cases the Business owner understands what they need to produce, but more often that not rely on someone with sales skills to sell it.

Would you know a good sales person from a bad one?

W...

Keywords:

marketing, sales, presentations, business, advice

Article Body:

Since the dawn of free trading only two things have ever mattered; producing a quality product or service and the ability to sell it successfully. By successfully, I mean ensuring that you achieve maximum profit from the sale, while the customer is delighted with their purchase. In most cases the Business owner understands what they need to produce, but more often that not rely on someone with sales skills to sell it.

Would you know a good sales person from a bad one?

While many company founders realize that they may not have the requisite sales skills, would they be able to recognize and hire someone who could sell? It is a recognised fact that four times as many business fail due to poor salesmanship, rather than poor products. Can you afford an other Sales person, based on the margins of what you intend to sell?

Thus hiring the right people to sell for you is one of the most important decisions most companies will make.

Unfortunately hiring is a bit like selling. First you must find prospects. These are the candidates that you will interview. To do this you must create a job spec. This will be your advert.

How to create a sales job specification.

Like marketing, this step must not be rushed. First understand exactly what you want the person to sell (Product Mix). Whom you wish them to sell to (territory) and how they should sell (Quota). You then need to ensure that you compensate them appropriately through a mix of base salary, Commission and Benefits.

Assuming you arrived at your targets, using an appropriate mix of sales history and market research, you will need to do a similar exercise on the cost of the sales person. In other words, can you afford them, based on the margins of what you intend to sell. It is also imperative that you offering a competitive package, if you want to attract the right level of person.

So now assuming you have advertised your position on the likes of www.salesjobs.ie or have advised an agency, what do you do next? You should partition the CVs that you get in, by sorting them into piles of "no" and "possibly". You may have an agency doing this for you, or you might have a stab at it yourself.

The First Interview - by Phone or in Person?

The next step is to telephone interview the "possible" candidates. I would select about 10 candidates to interview by telephone. At ½ an hour each, it is 5 hours well spent. The purpose of this step is to whittle down the number of applicants, to no more than 4 per position to be filled.

I have a telephone interview sheet, which I have refined after years of interviewing sales people, and it works pretty well for me. The key facts that you need to ascertain from the interview is as follows.

- Does the person have a good telephone manner?
- Did they research your company well?
- Why they are leaving their current role, what their package expectations are?
- Are they a strong performer as quantified by their results - how did they compare to their colleagues, how much money did they earn?
- Will they be a good fit with your company and prospects?

Do they understand what a good sales process is, and have they experience of using one?

- Can they generate leads for themselves?

This is a non-exhaustive sample, the key is to get score all of the answers they give - I do it from 1-5, and only when I have completed all of the telephone interviews, do I add up the scores and rank the candidates. You will be surprised how high your "gut feel" candidates rank. The reason behind this is

that you used a repeatable process with all candidates.

Does the P65 Really matter?

When bringing the final candidates to your premises for final interview, you should ensure that they bring with them their last 3 years P65. This will verify their "sales figures" and earnings - it is amazing how few potential employers actually check this out. In addition you should also ask them to supply the details of two referees. I like when these referees are previous or existing customers.

If you have not had professional help in interviewing up to now (the most cost effective is at the telephone interview stage), I would strongly recommend you get in someone who has been a sales manager who has hired and fired sales people in their career. There is an old saying that "It takes one to know one" - this basically says that sales managers can smell a rat a mile off that someone who has not had day to day contact with sales people might miss.

On the final interview day, I would suggest that you have all the people come down on one or two days, and have them meet at least three of the following, as well as yourself; the business owner.

- Some of who does marketing
- An existing sales person, if you have one
- Someone in Customer Support
- Someone in Production (or a consultant if you are a service company)

This way, all the people who could end up working with this new person will at least have a view. At the end of the day, you will have the final say, but it pays to hear other people's opinions.

Could luck, good hiring and most importantly good selling with great profit!