Seven Steps to Recruiting the Best Sales People

Does your company have a first-class sales person recruiting system?

It is axiomatic that, all other things being equal, a company with a great sales team will outsell one with an average sales team. Imagine if your sales force was comprised of "A" players from top to bottom, with everyone meeting their sales quotas, with low or non-existent turnover! Most people agree that would be fantastic. Yet, how do you go about recruiting the best sales team?

At Sales Productivity Institute we have been asked this question by many clients. Because of this demand we have developed a recruiting system/process that greatly improves your chance of attracting the best to your company. The system is simple and straight forward and includes many of the tools and processes our experience has shown are necessary to achieve excellence in this area.

Premise: employment decisions based on good, solid information are generally correct. Employment decisions bases on "gut feel" are more likely to be wrong.

- <u>Define the ideal candidate</u>-What does the ideal candidate look like? Be as specific as you can: education, work experience, demonstrated successes, industry knowledge, personality traits, energy, style, etc. Get it in writing and share it with the hiring team for their feedback before the interview process begins.
- <u>Position Description</u>-This document will include the title of the position, reporting structure, summary of work performed, specific duties, requirements (the "must-haves" for the person in this position), activity expectations (e.g., new prospect phone calls per week, new prospect meetings per week, surveys per month, demonstrations per month, customer meetings per month, training, other). The last item is critical to letting the applicant know exactly what is expected early in the interview process. It lets you make a "qualifying" decision about whether or not the applicant is willing or able to do the required work. Most of our clients had not been including this information until we started working with them.
- <u>Identify Likely Sources</u>-This may include existing employees, direct recruiting, internet job boards, employment agencies, recruiting firms, etc. Once the sources are identified, someone must be assigned responsibility for generating qualified candidates.
- <u>Sales Candidate Model</u>-This is an evaluation tool that lists the job requirements, and gives everyone who interviews the candidate the opportunity to "grade" the candidate on each requirement. Most importantly, this model gives the hiring manager a comparative ranking tool. Since it is so useful, most of our clients have adopted this or a similar model.
- <u>Potential Interview Focus Areas</u>-As Alice in Wonderland said, "if you don't know where you're going, any road will get you there", so it is with

interviewing. A plan for the interview improves your chances of learning what you want and, importantly, demonstrates respect for the candidate. What are you trying to accomplish during the interview? What questions will you ask to gather the data you need? Potential focus areas are: critical choice points (schools, major job changes), duties and responsibilities, measurable accomplishments/performance, relationships with people, likes and dislikes, self-evaluation, career interests/goals, hobbies and other leisure time pursuits, missing or incomplete information, etc.

> "A resume is a person's balance sheet with no liabilities"
> …Robert Half

- Candidate Interview Questionnaire-We have developed interview tools such as this for clients who are interested in getting feedback on key areas from everyone who interviews the applicant. Based on your requirements, you may develop questions aimed at assertiveness, judgment, people orientation, attention to detail, sale cycle management, stress management, etc.

> "Asking the right questions takes more skill than giving the right answer".
> …Carolyn Byram

- Check References-If you are under some time constraints there is a tendency to skip this all-important step. Don't do it. While a bad reference is as hard to find as a good employee, vital information can be gathered from a candidate's references or someone who a reference refers you to. We advocate two phases to the reference check. The first focuses on verifying key information such as education (Colleges and Universities are happy to verify the degree(s) of their graduates over the phone), employment dates, employment gaps, etc. If possible avoid past employer's Human Resource departments. In the second phase we encourage our clients to speak to past supervisors, peers, co-workers and to ask "Eight Tough Reference Checking Questions" that we supply. They are included in a separate SPI white paper.

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