



How to Hire the Best Sales Reps

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HOW TO HIRE THE BEST SALES REPS

Written by Michael Mercer, Ph.D.

Sales is the most important job in any company. After all, until someone sells something, no one else has a job – and your company cannot exist. As such, hiring productive Sales Reps proves crucial to your company's growth.

To hire the best Sales Reps, start by making list of your "superstars." By "superstars, I mean Sales Reps who are both (a) highly productive + (b) low-turnover. You want to, in effect, "clone" them. – that is, hire people who have similar job-related qualities.

List biographical data (bio-data) your "superstars" have in common in their work histories, training, education, and compensation. Applicants with similar bio-data might be worth giving pre-employment tests.

1st Step = Review Application & Resume

Pay special attention to resumes that show applicant had experiences like your company's best Sales Reps. For example, if your best Reps earned B.A. degree + worked during high school + held two sales jobs for three years or longer, then you easily can see if resume says applicant had similar experiences.

2nd Step = 10-15 Minute Over-Phone Discussion

Do brief 10-15 minute over-phone conversation with applicant. Make applicant do 90% of talking, so you get sense of whether you want to consider the applicant.

3rd Step = Pre-Employment Tests: Personality & Intelligence Tests

Give work-related pre-employment tests to applicant who seems suitable in Steps 1 and 2.

Use two types of tests:

First, have applicant take Behavior or Personality Test – that predicts

- ◆ Interpersonal Skills
- ◆ Personality Traits
- ◆ Motivations

Second, also have applicant take work-related Intelligence Tests – to see if applicant possesses adequate mental abilities to learn job and correctly think on-the-job.

Such intelligence tests measure applicant's abilities in

- * Problem-Solving
- * Vocabulary
- * Arithmetic
- * Grammar, Spelling, & Word Use
- * Handling Small Details with Speed & Accuracy

Important = Before testing applicants, do fairly quick Benchmarking Study to help you pinpoint benchmark test scores of your superstars.

For instance, have your superstar Sales Reps take the personality and intelligence tests.

Then, use their typical scores as “benchmark test scores.”

Find applicants who get the same or similar test scores as your superstar Sales Reps.

For example, at one company where I conducted Benchmarking Study using work-related personality and intelligence tests, I statistically pinpointed the benchmark test scores of its superstars.

The test’s benchmarks included the following:

High Scores on

- ◆ Friendliness
- ◆ Teamwork
- ◆ Poised Reaction to Pressure
- ◆ Optimistic
- ◆ Fact-Focused
- ◆ Money Motivation – to make sales
- ◆ Power Motivation – to follow-up with customers
- ◆ Arithmetic Ability

Above-Average Scores on

- + Assertiveness
- + Enjoying Moving A Lot
- + Motivation to Learn
- + Problem-Solving Ability

Moderate Scores on

- * Flexible in Following Rules & Procedures
- * Helping People
- * Vocabulary Ability
- * Grammar Ability
- * Handling Small Details Ability

Low Score on

- Creativity Motivation

When the company has applicants take the pre-employment tests, it quickly can determine which applicants have personality and intelligence similar to the company's superstar Sales Reps.

Of course, a terrific applicant get the same or similar test scores as the company's superstars.

4th STEP = In-Depth Interview

If – and only if – an applicant does well in Step 3, Pre-Employment Test, should you conduct In-Depth Interview. Recommendation: Only spend your valuable time interviewing applicants who, scientifically, get the benchmark test scores that are same or very close to your company's superstar Sales Reps.

5th STEP = Role-Play & Realistic Job Observation

If applicant does well in Step 4, In-Depth Interview, you do active assessments using role-plays and realistic job observation. In sales Role-Play, have applicant play role of a

sales rep trying to sell you something, and you play role of prospective customer. Observe how well (or poorly!) the applicant uses sales techniques.

You also can do Realistic Job Observation (RJO). To do this, have the applicant tag along with one of your Sales Reps, observing the job being done. Some applicants will like what they see. But other applicants will decide they do not want to do that work or work at your company.

6th STEP = Reference Checks, Background Checks, Drug Tests

If you like applicant in Step 5, then it is worth your time to do other checks, including references, background, and drug tests.

7th STEP = One Executive Approves Each Hire or Not-Hire Decision

When Steps 1-6 rate the applicant highly, then the hiring manager probably will recommend hiring that person. Important = Have one executive examine all pre-employment test scores plus other info, and then decide if your company will make job offer. Usually, the executive will approve the hiring manager's choice. But, sometimes the executive will determine the hiring manager was too lenient in rating the applicant. In that case, the executive should (a) refuse to hire that applicant plus (b) tell hiring manager to assess applicants more carefully.

RECOMMENDATION to HIRE THE BEST SALES REPS

Hiring terrific Sales Reps proves crucial for every company's business growth. You can use seven steps explained here to help you hire the best. Importantly, assess sales applicants using the most objective, scientific methods available to you. This includes you using bio-data plus custom-tailored personality and intelligence pre-employment tests.

[Contact Dr. Mercer regarding Hiring The Best Sales Reps for your company.](#)

Michael Mercer, Ph.D., is creator of the 3 "*Forecaster™ Tests*" - pre-employment tests - and author of *Hire the Best & Avoid the Rest™*. He can be reached at www.MercerSystems.com.

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