

Sales Recruiting – Three Common Mistakes and How to Avoid Them

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Critical Mistakes:

- 1. Domain Knowledge:** Don't assume a candidate is going to be perfect for the job just because they have numerous years of experience in your space. Some Sales Reps move around from company to company in an industry, but that doesn't mean they have the recipe for success.
- 2. Personality:** Don't assume a Sales Rep will be successful because he/she has a "Sales Personality". We've all hired Sales Reps based on impression. He/she came in and delivered a knock-out interview and was well-liked by the team. It's a no-brainer to hire that candidate, right? Wrong. A natural sales personality can be misleading. Make sure they have the foundation to be successful.
- 3. Wishful thinking:** Don't hire a candidate just because you are hopeful that he/she will be successful, when he/she hasn't had much success before. For example, you've been recruiting for months, you really want the position filled, and this candidate "seems" like they could be successful in this role. Sure they struggled at other companies, but they had good reasons for leaving and their references were great. You just need to spend time with them to make sure they are properly trained.....we've all been there. This is a recipe for disaster. Don't make excuses for candidates. You'll be better off prolonging your search and holding out for the right candidate. Your pipeline will thank you for it!

How to Avoid These Mistakes:

- Create a realistic job profile and stick to it.** The profile should include domain experience, related experience, education, and certification requirements. Consider how much time you will have to train this candidate, and factor that into your requirements. If a candidate doesn't have what you are looking for, keep looking.
- Check references thoroughly.** Ask tough questions, but remember references will lean towards positive responses, so ask in a non-threatening way. For example, "We can all improve, tell me what areas you feel I should work with Mr. Candidate on to make him more successful in this role?" Clarify the skill set and activities required of the role and see if that lines up with the previous roles the candidate held. For example, "What types of activities did Mr. Candidate do in his role with your company? What was expected of him? How did he perform against expectations?"
- Clearly explain job expectations up front.** Don't assume that the candidate understands the expectations of the job. Explain what a typical day

would be like, working hours, activities, level of participation, training, team activities, territory, goals, etc. Making sure the candidate understands the role clearly can help avoid the headache of finding out there is not a fit 6 months down the road.

Meet the family. Have the candidate meet other reps and other functions he/she would interact with before moving forward with an offer. Feedback from the team can help determine whether there is a good cultural fit. Be sure to guide your interviewers on what questions to ask to determine fit, but allow them flexibility to probe into other areas. For example, if you have your candidate talk to someone in field marketing, coach the field marketing person on the job profile, but allow them to see how the candidate would fit into field marketing activities.

Look at past success as an indication (NOT guarantee) of future success. On the other hand, if the candidate has never been very successful, don't assume your company will be the candidate's big breakthrough.

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