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SPECIAL REPORT:

**How to Consistently Hire
Salespeople That Perform**

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This special report is an excerpt from the book, ***How to Beat the 80/20 Rule in Sales Team Performance: A Step-By-Step Guide to Building and Managing Top-Performing Sales Teams***, by Alan Rigg. For more information, visit:

<http://www.8020sales.com/products.html#books>

Performance-Based Recruiting

Does your company struggle with 80/20 sales team performance, where 20 percent of your salespeople produce 80 percent of your company's sales? **Why is there such a big disparity in sales performance?** After all:

- Weren't all of the members of your sales team hired using the **same** recruiting process?
- Don't they work for the **same** company?
- Aren't they selling the **same** products and services to the same kinds of customers?
- Don't they have access to the **same** training and support resources?

If all of these things are the same, then why do salespeople perform so differently? Let's examine some of the components of a typical sales recruiting process to see if we can identify the problem(s).

Recruiting Ads

Many recruiting ads list "**knockout factors**" such as minimum levels of **education** and **experience**. The purpose of these knockout factors is to screen out undesirable candidates. The question is, **is there really a correlation between the chosen knockout factors and an individual's ability to sell?**

When my clients' recruiting ads include education and/or experience as knockout factors, I like to have a little fun with them. I say something like:

*(Name), imagine that I have two candidates for your sales job opening. One has both the college degree and the five years of sales experience that are listed as "minimum requirements" in your recruiting ad. The other candidate doesn't have a college degree, and she only has two years of sales experience. But, she has **relationships with dozens of C-level executives** that would be good prospects for your company's products and services. She could easily **book fifteen appointments during her first week on the job**. Which candidate would you like to speak with first?*

Which candidate would **YOU** like to speak with first? If you are like my clients, it's the woman with the relationships. Unfortunately, **now I have to deliver the bad news:**

*Unfortunately you will **never see** this candidate because she is being **screened out** by your company's knockout factors!*

Education

It is easy to rationalize why education might appear to be a reliable knockout factor. The thought process usually goes something like this:

"We sell a very technical offering. You really need to be an engineer in order to understand it. So, we should focus our recruiting efforts on individuals with engineering degrees."

Or like this:

"Our product line is constantly changing, and we have a rapid rate of new product introductions. Our salespeople need to be pretty sharp to keep up with all of the new product information. So, we should only hire people with college degrees because these people have proven they know how to learn."

These lines of thinking **seem** logical. But, are people with engineering degrees really the **only** people that can understand detailed technical information? And, how does someone's ability to acquire a college degree indicate whether they learn **quickly** or **slowly**?

Experience

Another common mistake is focusing recruiting efforts on candidates that meet certain minimum requirements for either amount or type of sales **experience**. This practice is usually based on expectations that **past** sales experience will produce **future** sales results, and that experienced candidates will not require a lot of (sales skills or product knowledge) **training**. This should enable them to become productive more quickly, which is why many companies are willing to **pay a premium** for experienced sales job candidates.

Unfortunately, **there is compelling evidence that hiring experienced sales candidates simply recycles mediocrity**. In their book, *How to Hire and*

Develop Your Next Top Performer, Herb Greenberg, Harold Weinstein and Patrick Sweeney compared results from hundreds of thousands of assessments that were conducted over several decades with actual sales performance measurements and concluded:

- **55 percent** of the people earning their living in sales **should be doing something else**
- Another **20 to 25 percent** (of salespeople) have what it takes to sell, but they **should be selling something else**

Based upon these statistics, **the practice of hiring experienced sales candidates will produce an unsatisfactory result as much as 80 percent of the time!**

A much better indicator of future success is whether your company's sales job candidates have the talents required for success in **your** company's **specific** sales job. Candidates that have the talents required for success **and** significant experience selling similar products or services are truly **ideal** candidates!

If you have to choose between an **experienced** candidate that **lacks key talents** required for sales success and an **inexperienced** candidate that **has all of the talents** required for sales success, which candidate should you choose? The **inexperienced** candidate! Why? Because a lack of experience can be overcome with training. A lack of the talents required for sales success cannot!

Resumes

Resumes are purely **subjective** documents. They are written with the specific intention of describing an individual's skills and experiences in the most favorable possible light, for the purpose of convincing you to invite the individual to take the next step in your company's recruiting process.

Do some people misrepresent their qualifications on their resumes? Absolutely! However, even when the information on a resume is completely accurate, how accurately does it predict that individual's ability to sell **your** company's **specific** products and services?

Interviews

What happens during an interview? Interviewees attempt to answer questions in a manner that makes the best **impression**. Meanwhile, interviewers form **personal opinions** about the interviewees' qualifications. What's the result? Far too often it is **hiring mistakes!**

The Root of the Problem: An Over-Reliance on SUBJECTIVE Information

What do recruiting ads, resumes and interviews have in common? They all describe tools and processes that rely completely on **SUBJECTIVE** information.

I don't mean to suggest that subjective information is useless. **Subjective information is a valid and valuable component of any "people decision"**. But, if your company is struggling with 80/20 sales team performance, clearly your recruiting process isn't working as well as you would like. Something needs to change.

Performance-Based Recruiting

If you want to improve the overall quality of your sales job candidate pool, shift your focus away from education and experience and toward **performance-based** measures.

Look at it this way – what would a new salesperson have to do to cause you to say, *“Man, that new person is doing a **great job!**”* How you will **measure** a new salesperson's performance during their first thirty, sixty, ninety days on the job? What **activities** will you expect them to perform? What **results** will you expect these activities to produce, and in what **time frame**?

Identify what you expect your new salespeople to achieve and candidly **share** this information with your job candidates **during every step** of the recruiting process... beginning with your recruiting ads!

Here is **a 5-step performance-based recruiting process** that will help you **consistently** hire top sales performers:

1. Write a Performance-Based Recruiting Ad: Before you write your recruiting ad, carefully consider the following questions and suggestions:

- What kinds of companies or organizations are **good prospects** for your company's products and services? Your ad could express a preference for job candidates that have **existing relationships** with decision makers at these kinds of companies and organizations.
- Who are the most productive **people (job titles)** for your salespeople to call on? Your ad could express a preference for candidates that have **existing relationships** with people that have these titles, and/or **a proven ability to prospect successfully** to people at similar levels.
- Which **prospecting activities** do you expect your salespeople to perform? Your ad could express a preference for job candidates that can **demonstrate a history of success** in performing these kinds of prospecting activities.
- What percentage of a salesperson's leads will be **self-generated vs. company-generated**? Make sure your sales job candidates know how much prospecting will be required to achieve their sales targets.
- Are you looking for salespeople who are **hunters, farmers**, or a combination of **both**? Make sure this preference is clearly stated in your recruiting ad.
- What is the **target income** for your sales position? Are earnings capped or uncapped?
- What **benefits** do you offer?
- Is there anything special about your company's **culture or work environment** that might help attract quality sales job candidates?
- What are some other **critical characteristics of successful salespeople** in your company? Examples include:
 1. Self-motivated
 2. Outstanding relationship manager
 3. Excel at sales opportunity qualification

4. Excel at maximizing account penetration
5. Excel at soliciting referrals

2. Scrutinize Resumes for Accomplishments: Successful salespeople know that **results sell**. When these salespeople prospect, they talk to prospects about the **results** their companies have produced. When these salespeople write resumes, they write about the **results** they have produced and other **accomplishments** (awards, recognition, etc.), **not just the duties** they have performed.

3. Conduct Telephone Screening Calls: If a job candidate interests you, schedule a **20-30 minute telephone screening call**. Focus this conversation on the **performance criteria** that are **most critical for success** in your sales position. This will enable you to determine relatively quickly whether the candidate warrants a full (in-person or telephone) interview.

4. Assess Qualified Candidates: For candidates that pass the telephone screen, the next step to gather **OBJECTIVE** information about their sales talents with **specialized sales assessment tests**.

Why is it important to gather **objective** information? According to Lou Adler, author of Hire with Your Head:

"More errors are made during the first 30 minutes of an interview than at any other time. Emotions, biases, perceptions, stereotypes, and first impressions are powerful human forces that profoundly affect individual judgment."

When I say "specialized sales assessment tests," I am **NOT** referring to **personality or behavioral tests** like Myers-Briggs or DISC. These types of "communication style" assessments are useful for personal development. However, they are **not effective for predicting whether or not an individual will succeed in sales**.

To accurately predict whether an individual will succeed in sales, an assessment test needs to extract information in the following three critical categories:

Cognitive (brain function)

- **How rapidly does the individual learn new information?** This talent is of particular importance if your company has a broad portfolio of products and services and you want your salespeople to sell the entire portfolio (as opposed to cherry-picking a few items and leaving the rest of the business for your competition).
- **How precisely and effectively does the individual communicate, both verbally and in writing?** When was the last time you read one of your salespeople's e-mails, proposals, or other written communications and it made you cringe? What kind of impression about your company do you think your salespeople's written communications are making in the marketplace?
- **How strong is the individual's talent for asking insightful questions, picking out important pieces of information from the answers, and using this information to construct additional questions?** This talent is critical for effective sales opportunity qualification, which in turn is crucial for maximizing your company's chances of winning opportunities while minimizing time and resource investments in "prospects" that can't or won't buy.
- **How strong is the individual's talent for learning how to manage effective return on investment (ROI) conversations with prospects and customers?** Creating a context for price discussions (as opposed to discussing price "in a vacuum") is critical for increasing close ratios.

Behavioral

- How **energetic** is the individual? How easy will it be for them to **consistently maintain the level of productive activity** required to achieve their sales targets?
- How effective is the individual at **convincing prospects and customers to "get off the dime" and make decisions?**
- How **sociable** is the individual? Do they enjoy interacting with others? Do they build **rapport** with strangers quickly?

- Can the individual **successfully direct his or her own activities**, or does the individual **require frequent input and direction** from a manager to stay on track?
- **How will the individual respond when things don't go their way?** Will they start to whine and complain, or will they be able to "shake it off" and maintain a consistent level of productivity?
- How strong is the individual's **desire to be liked?** Will they be able to maintain a "win-win" focus, or will they **give away the store?**
- How **competitive** is the individual? How **confident** are they in their ability to compete successfully?
- How **emotionally tough** is the individual? How do they respond to **rejection?**
- How **dogged and determined** is the individual in pursuing opportunities and overcoming roadblocks that arise during the sales process?
- Will the individual **follow through on all of their commitments**, or will they sometimes "drop some balls?"
- Will the individual **stay focused on the desired end result**, or will they allow themselves to **get bogged down** in details and other distractions?

Interests

An individual can have every talent required to achieve top sales performance. However, **if they don't ENJOY the activities involved in selling**, it is unlikely they will perform very well for very long.

Does this scenario sound familiar? You hire a salesperson that looks and sounds great. They seem to have all of the talent in the world. They hit the ground running and generate impressive results during their first few months on the job. However, **over time their performance starts to decline, and no one can figure out why.** Far too often the reason is **they don't LIKE selling!**

If you would like to learn more about specialized sales assessment tests that provide all of the Cognitive, Behavioral and Interests information described above, visit:

<http://www.MySalesTest.com>

5. Conduct In-Person Interviews: Now you are prepared to conduct a **thorough, performance-based interview**. After all, look at the quality of the information you have collected! For each candidate you are planning to interview, you should have in your hands:

- A resume that lists key **accomplishments**
- **Performance-based** information that was collected during a telephone screening call
- **Objective** information (collected via specialized sales assessment tests) about the **talents** critical for success in **your** company's sales job

Conclusion

If you ask performance-based questions and clearly outline your expectations for new hire sales performance, you should have **more productive communications** with your job candidates. You can even **include specific performance expectations in your offer letters!**

Here are two other key benefits that result from implementing performance-based recruiting:

- You should attract **fewer poor candidates**, as some will de-select themselves
- You should attract **more strong candidates**, as they will no longer be screened out by invalid "knockout factors"

What's the next step?

If you would like to learn more about **performance-based recruiting** and an especially effective approach to **sales assessment testing**, contact MySalesTest.com to **schedule a no-obligation sales assessment test**

demonstration. Our toll-free phone number is **(866) 531-3917**. Or, you can fill out a demonstration request form on the MySalesTest.com website:

<http://www.mysalestest.com/demonstration.html>

In either case, please be prepared to **suggest two dates and times** when you can be available for a 30-minute telephone conversation. Thank you!

About the Author

Sales performance expert Alan Rigg is the author of **How to Beat the 80/20 Rule in Sales Team Performance** and the companion book, **How to Beat the 80/20 Rule in Selling**. His **80/20 Selling System™** helps business owners, executives, and managers end the frustration of 80/20 sales team performance, where 20% of salespeople produce 80% of sales.

For more information and more **FREE sales and sales management tips**, visit <http://www.8020sales.com>.