

Here are Sales Managers You Shouldn't Hire

by Colleen Stanley

You're a business owner ready to hire your first sales manager, and you want someone who will help take your company to the next level. You begin the search process, study résumés and conduct interviews, looking for that special candidate that will build and lead a sales force.

You hire what you think is a top sales gun. Two years later, sales are stagnant, there is turnover on the sales team and the remaining members are average at best. You scratch your head, wondering where you went wrong.

In fairness, most people would agree that hiring, regardless of the position, is one of the more challenging parts of running a business. Hiring a sales manager is even more difficult, because you're interviewing people that are good at selling themselves and their ideas.

So for your first or next hire, here are tips on who NOT to hire for a sales manager. Look for clues during the interview process to see if your candidate falls into any of these categories.

- **The Attention Deficit Disorder sales manager** — He has the attention span of a gnat. He's addicted to his smart phone, iPad or anything that vibrates and rings. Technology is present at every meeting because this sales manager has the false belief that he is like a doctor — always on call.

One-on-one coaching sessions with members of his team turn into a juggling act. He takes phone calls, checks emails and does everything but the one thing he's supposed to do: Coach and pay attention to the salesperson and help her identify areas of opportunity or improvement. The ADD sales manager can't pay attention long enough to transfer knowledge and skills.

He doesn't build relationships with his team because his first love is technology, not people. As a result, selling skills, attitudes and behaviors don't change or improve, and sales remain the same or decline.

- **The Closer sales manager** — This sales manager loves to save the day. Instead of teaching her team how to close business, she dons her hero hat and rides in at the 11th hour to help the salesperson seal the deal. Everyone cheers, and she rides off to assist the next salesperson.

The lesson the team learns is, "You're good, but you're not good enough to get the deal across the finish line." This behavior might be acceptable for awhile. Problems appear when the company begins to grow. The closer can't get to every opportunity and the sales team doesn't know how to close. Sales slide and the team is beat by a better-trained sales force, led by a manager who has dismounted and given up the hero hat.

- **The Wing It sales manager** — This leader thinks that processes are for engineers and accountants. He doesn't document anything. That type of work takes too long, so he starts the training of every new hire from scratch. Ramp-up times are long, affecting cash flow and sales results.

He believes that well-designed scripts and talk tracks are too regimented. What he doesn't realize is that every salesperson has a script. Listen to a salesperson and you'll hear them start a phone call or a meeting the exact same way each time. She has a script. The problem is that the current script lacks good principles of sales and influence. The salesperson is doing the work and has little to show for it.

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This manager avoids role plays and skill drills during sales meetings because planning such activities take preparation. As a result, his team ends up practicing in front of their prospects instead of their peers.

- **The Friend sales manager** — She doesn't have enough friends outside of work, so she tries to find them in the office. She's more interested in the sales team liking her rather than respecting her.

She's also uncomfortable setting expectations for success. This sales team usually lacks key performance metrics on sales activity or sales results.

When she tries to set performance standards, she buckles at the first sign of push back. The good news is that her team really likes her. The bad news is that this undisciplined team produces sporadic sales results, doesn't follow up well with existing clients and eventually gets beat by a sales team led by a manager that DOES have enough friends outside the office.

A great sales manager can help a business achieve sustainable and profitable growth. Hire sales managers with focus. Look for leaders that desire to transfer skills and instill discipline into a sales team. The right sales manager will allow you to focus on your role as the CEO and grow your company.

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