

Win



THE TALENT WAR

Attracting great sales talent takes more than posting an ad and throwing money at a promising candidate. Here's how to get top performers on your team



Jason Craik, co-owner of Vancouver-based Mac Marketing Solutions, found his top salesperson at a home show. Though the salesperson was selling \$3,000 cookware sets – a product entirely unrelated to Mac Marketing Solutions' business of marketing and selling new residential condominium developments – Craik recognized that this person had a great talent for gaining people's trust. And so he made him an offer to join his team, taught his promising new hire about real estate and started reaping the rewards. Last year, Mac Marketing Solutions was the largest seller of new condo homes in Canada, selling more than 2,000 units and an impressive \$640 million worth of property.

Craik demonstrates that you can find superstar talent from outside your industry, but the more important lesson is that employers who want to hire a star don't just sit back and peruse résumés that land on their desk. They get out in the world and actively look for great talent.

If you want great sales talent on your team – and who doesn't? – you've got to know how to attract stars. Sure, you'll find a salesperson by posting a job ad online, but not necessarily a heavy-hitter. After all, top performers that are doing well in their jobs and making tons of money likely won't be posting their résumés on Monster looking for another job. To land a top performer, you've got to employ a more sophisticated process and take an active role in the search.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Evaluate Your Needs

The first step involves figuring out what kind of sales star you actually need. Take a look at the role you want the person to fill, says Jeremy Miller, a partner at LEAPJob, a Toronto-based recruiter that specializes in placing salespeople. If it's new business development, you're looking for a "hunter" who is highly extroverted, competitive and persuasive; whereas if it's working the client base, you require a "farmer" who is structured,

accommodating and a calming force. Or alternatively, look at the kind of business you're in, advises Bill Greenhalgh, CEO of the Human Resources Professional Association of Ontario (HRPAO). A hunter is needed for activity-based selling, where the salesperson is constantly knocking on doors and selling many smaller-cost items; while a farmer is better for relationship-based selling, where the salesperson spends months cultivating a relationship to sell a big-ticket item, he expl

Companies will sometimes require their salespeople to do both roles, which makes hiring more of a challenge. However, it's better to separate the roles if possible, because few people are equally skilled at both.

Find Your Ideal Candidates

After identifying the kind of top performers you need, you have to find them. Where do you look? Start close to home. "We ask employees to look in their Rolodex to see



Promote Your Employment Package

You've got a great employment package, so how do you let sales stars know about it?

Always Be Selling ■ Candidates you want may not be ready to move, but by keeping in touch, you may nab them when the time is right. The CEO of Exosoft pursued Dwayne McKillop for eight years. He would take him out to lunch every six months, chat about opportunities, and ask if McKillop was ready to join the team yet. Fully aware of the attractive offer, McKillop joined Exosoft when the timing was right for him and now works as vice-president, global sales and marketing.

Get The Word Out ■ When you're speaking at a conference or a tradeshow or being interviewed for an article, remember to talk about your company's programs and the longevity of your salespeople, says Bill Greenhalgh, CEO of the Human Resources Professional Association of Ontario.

Use Employment Branding ■ Use employment branding on your Web site. Go beyond just posting job descriptions and include information about the company's values and mission, opportunities for employee development, and testimonials, such as a quote from an employee about the great work environment.

Introduce Them To Peers ■ In the interview, suggest the star candidate speak with a salesperson on your team. "A potential peer can give the candidate a sense of the organization's culture," says Richard Pett, vice-president of sales and marketing at Manpower Canada.

who they know directly and indirectly. Maybe their dentist has a brother who is a top salesperson at IBM. We've found good people through employee referral," says Dwayne McKillop, vice-president, global sales and marketing, at Exosoft Solutions, a Toronto-based company that provides customized data management solutions for the event industry. To encourage employee referral, Exosoft rewards employees with tickets to a Leafs game if a referral is hired.

Also take a look at the people you interact with – your partners and customers. Are there stars among their ranks? Maybe one of them would welcome a new opportunity. Though McKillop avoids poaching competition, LEAPJob's Miller points out that your competitors know your industry, which can make a difference if you're selling a highly specialized or technical product or service. Visit your competitor's booth at an industry trade show to see who's a standout or check a company newsletter or Web site to see who made the president's club.

You can also come across heavy-hitting sales talent at association functions and industry groups. "If you're on an association committee, you get to see how others work, the quality of their work, and whether they meet deadlines," says McKillop.

However, you don't have to hire from within your industry. "I go outside the real estate community to find sales talent. I'm looking for the right personality. We can train a good salesperson about real estate," says Mac Marketing Solutions' Craik.

Lure Them In

Having found promising candidates, you've now got to win them over to your team. How do you appeal to heavy hitters? Though the type of star you want may be different, many of the factors that motivate a top performer are similar.

The opportunity to make an impact in an organization is the number one motivator for a sales star, according to Steve Martin, who conducted research on this topic for his books *Heavy Hitter Selling* and *Heavy Hitter Sales Wisdom*. "This can mean working for an industry leader and changing the world [think Google or Microsoft], or being given the reigns to turn around a company that is in trouble or even having the clout to affect a company's operations," Martin explains.

Indeed many of Canada's top-perform-


ing investment advisors have left larger companies to join Winnipeg-based Wellington West Capital Inc. because of the opportunity to make an impact. "They became a small cog in a big wheel at their old job, whereas at Wellington West, they're given ownership," explains Doug Haydock, senior vice-president and national business development at Wellington West. The advisors own shares in the company and also sit on internal committees so they have a say in how the company operates.

The second biggest motivator on Martin's list is learning new skills. Great salespeople don't want a repetitive job; they want to be challenged. Why? Because learning new sales or technical skills is an esteem-based need, according to Martin. "It's associated with mastering particular tasks and becoming an expert."

When salespeople join Exosoft, they shadow a colleague. This not only helps new recruits get oriented, it also introduces the salespeople to best practices that get results. Similarly, at Mac Marketing Solutions, senior salespeople teach junior staff sales strategies and techniques. "At some other places, it's a shark environment where the senior people won't share their knowledge, but here it's about working as a team," Craik explains. That's very attractive to young sales talent who are eager to learn.

Compensation takes third spot. Obviously you need to compensate a sales star well – at the top of the range for your industry. You may want to tailor the package to the hire: higher commission for hunters, higher base for farmers, says HRPAO's Greenhalgh, but don't overcompensate as this will only attract a salesperson who is solely money-motivated.

Instead, build in a bonus for overachieving quotas. "Give the heavy hitter a chance to hit a home run," Martin says. (This, of course, means you need to set realistic quotas, because nothing is more demotivating than a quota that can't be met.) Richard Pett, vice-president of sales and marketing at Manpower Canada, also reminds employers to offer attractive benefits, such as a health plan and pension plan.

Finally, if you want to attract the best, it helps to be the best yourself. Top performers want to work with quality managers because they will inspire them and create a sales plan and environment that enables them to succeed. 



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