

Diamonds in the ROUGH



How to polish the next generation of salespeople

When it comes to company assets, top salespeople are prized jewels in the organization's treasury, to be guarded well (and given the occasional polish). In fact, according to Manpower Inc.'s 2008 Annual Talent Shortage Survey, sales representatives make up the second rated in-demand candidates across the globe.

In order to vie for those few prized gems, companies need to be vigilant in their search. "Employers need to continue their diligence in developing their employer brands and honing their talent strategies during 2008," says Jeffrey Joerres, Manpower Inc. Chairperson and CEO.

The current state of the economy isn't helping matters, either. "Even though we are walking into the midst of a recession and sitting on a 33-year low unemployment rate, it is extremely hard to find high-calibre sales talent," says Jeremy Miller, a partner with sales professional recruitment firm LEAPJob,

Miller says how a company grooms the next generation of sales talent, develops them and holds onto them is vital to a company's success. Any business should have a clear understanding of their identity, and instill a consistent brand message throughout the organization, says Miller. "It is not a best practice. It's a must-do to avoid crisis."

According to Paul Dodd, President of recruitment firm Head2Head, finding qualified salespeople is one of the biggest challenges an organization will have. "Good salespeople are the ones who make a difference," says Dodd. "It's important to establish what an organization is looking for in a sales force, modeling on their

existing competencies, and their leaders and champion. I think there is a misconception that an excellent salesperson must be an excellent manager."

Wayne Flannigan, Director of Sales Operations with ADP Canada, a provider of integrated business administrative solutions, offers key components to hiring and retaining top salespeople.

ADP recently extended its two-year in-house Associate Development plan to a three-year New Hire Orientation plan. A trio of building blocks include sales process and the mastery of sales skills; ADP processes, and their ability to navigate ADP's environment; and management accountability to creating and seeing through personal development plans. A blended learning approach combines E-Learning, classroom training and mentoring. There's daily interaction with managers, ensuring new hires adhere to their six-week Associate Development plan calendar. During the third year, program associates begin mentoring newer associates.


Sales School

For many students, a formal training process is the key to success, like CPSA's Professional Sales Certificate program, a post-secondary credit certificate designed to provide students with all fundamental skills and knowledge necessary for an entry-level sales position.

To some, however, the best classroom is the workforce itself. "There is no better way to showcase what you can bring to a company than to go in there, do a presentation in front of their executives, and assess whether or not you can do the job," says Dan Liska of research and advisory firm Info-Tech Research Group and the 2007 winner of the Ontario Colleges Marketing Competition (OCMC). Liska, who won the event which takes top students from sales and marketing programs and puts them into a real-life sales situation, can't

say enough about how OCMC helped him prepare for the real world. "Some people talk a good game at job interviews, but when it comes down to crunch time ... they're not real hard workers," he says.

Employers and salespeople should heed Liska's final statement. He says while talking with recruiters, he learned many were dealing with recent graduates who asked what the companies could do for them.

Indeed, sales professionals should also be asking, what can they do for their potential employers. It is, after all, a two-way road to success. 

For further information on this topic, the Canadian Professional Sales Association held a roundtable discussion on talent management and acquisition. A recording is available at www.cpsa.com/src/podcasts.aspx.

Grooming tomorrow's salespeople

Lisa Leitch, President of sales and marketing source Teneo Results, recommends five key points which she says will provide a clear path for grooming tomorrow's sales leaders.

- 1. Do they fit?** "Before you hire them, you need to make sure you are hiring the right people for the right jobs," says Leitch, who recommends CPSA's online assessment tool, Profile XT.
- 2. Know thyself.** Get to know your business first before you put salespeople out on the street to go out and get new business.
- 3. Training.** "I am a huge advocate of CPSA's Certified Sales Professional designation," says Leitch.
- 4. Coaching.** Get to know that person, what their goals are, and how to hold them accountable.
- 5. Just Rewards.** Leitch stresses the importance of rewards and compensation, in order to provide motivation for each salesperson