

# Improved Sales Selection



Some companies consistently hire the right salespeople. They follow a disciplined process that leads to new hires ideally suited to each position. These companies follow three **steps**:

**First**, the sales manager defines the *type* of selling that is unique to the industry or the company's strategy, i.e., the *roles* the salesperson plays. In the chart below, check those roles that are most relevant. In some cases you might check both items in a pair.

The **second** step involves defining a short list of desired skills, based on these roles. Listed on the next page are 17 skills that our research shows are most predictive of sales success. Ideally, a sales manager will focus on the five core skills and 3 - 5 specialized skills. Note: research shows that Drive is the most important trait for sales success, regardless of roles. Sales managers should focus most heavily on the candidate's level of Drive.

The **third** step involves using the right kind of interview questions. We recommend "experience questions" that evaluate a candidate's past experience and behavior, rather than their ideas or philosophies. The best predictor of a person's future behavior is past behavior (or what they're doing right now). Experienced assessment psychologists spend the majority of an interview probing stories of what a candidate did in previous jobs, e.g., "tell me about a time when you . . ." Multiple interviewers can ask questions in different ways and increase the probability of making the right hire.

Selection success is *even higher* when you use *multiple methods* to assess candidates. Professional assessors use experience questions *plus* selected testing *or* role-plays. The more diverse the methods, the more accurate the assessment.

## Step 1 – Define the Roles the Salesperson Plays

<b>Hunter</b>	Develops leads and new business opportunities
<b>Farmer</b>	Aggressively develops and resells existing opportunities
<b>Individual</b>	Is solely responsible for account development and maintenance
<b>Team-based</b>	Works closely with others internally on the account
<b>External</b>	Spends a lot of time at client sites
<b>Internal</b>	Works almost exclusively from the office, via phone, etc.
<b>Short Cycle</b>	Quick or repetitive sales, usually under 2 months start to finish.
<b>Long Cycle</b>	Strategic sales, understanding customer's business, 4+ months
<b>Sell End</b>	Sells directly to the end user
<b>Sell Reps</b>	Motivates other representatives to sell products
<b>Simple Sales</b>	Commodity sales, price sensitive, off-the-shelf
<b>Complex Sales</b>	Sells solutions involving multiple components and customization

## Step 2—Define the Most Critical Skills

<b>CORE SKILLS – Essential in all sales positions</b>
<b>Drive</b> —needs to achieve; loves to compete and win; certain of success
<b>Confidence</b> —unfazed by rejection; will persist despite setbacks; inner strength
<b>Persuasion</b> —articulate; builds a good case, taking customer needs into account; closes compellingly
<b>Relationship</b> – easily establishes and maintains relationships with prospects and customers; service-oriented
<b>Organization</b> —disciplined; tracks opportunities & contacts; follows up; juggles multiple tasks
<b>SPECIALIZED SKILLS – Unique to your position</b>
<b>Problem Solving</b> —seeks solutions proactively and creatively, solves customer dilemmas
<b>Profit Priority</b> —understands business priorities, sells profitable business
<b>Independent</b> —self-starter, works well without external structure or supervision
<b>Listening</b> —patient; tunes in; will probe and clarify to get a real sense of customer needs
<b>Tact</b> —considerate; diplomatic; treats others with respect, even if opinions differ
<b>Detail</b> —patient/detailed/timely with necessary product knowledge, reporting, paperwork
<b>Analytical</b> —can dig into needs/problems effectively; adept with numbers
<b>Conceptual</b> —abstract thinker; grasps complexity of customer situation; develops complex solutions
<b>Strategic</b> —sees big picture and long-range implications; understands customers' strategies
<b>Technical</b> —understands customer's industry, products, and technology
<b>Executive Presence</b> —earns respect in the executive suite; appropriate image
<b>Motivator</b> —will teach, coach, motivate those who sell product to end user

### Step 3—Use “Experience Questions” in the Interview

CORE SKILLS
<b>Drive</b> —When was the last time you lost an order? How did you respond?
<b>Confidence</b> —Tell me about a time someone rejected you. What did you do?
<b>Persuasion</b> —Give me three examples of closing a difficult sale. What did you say?
<b>Relationship</b> —What have you done in the last 30 days to deepen relationships with key accounts?
<b>Organization</b> —When was the last time you felt overloaded, and how did you recover?
SPECIALIZED SKILLS
<b>Problem Solving</b> —Tell me about a difficult customer dilemma that you resolved.
<b>Profit Priority</b> —Tell me how you balanced volume and profit in your last position.
<b>Independent</b> —Tell me about a time when you took action without explicit permission
<b>Listening</b> —(This skill is best assessed by evaluating the candidate’s listening in the interview).
<b>Tact</b> —Tell me about a time when you had to deal with an obnoxious person in an argument.
<b>Detail</b> —Give me a detailed description of how you manage your paperwork and reporting to the company.
<b>Analytical</b> —Have you ever had to make a sale based on analysis of data? Describe the process in detail.
<b>Conceptual</b> —(This skill is best assessed by evaluating the candidate’s depth with complex questions).
<b>Strategic</b> —Tell me about a time when you had to adapt to a complex customer strategy?
<b>Technical</b> —Describe the technology of your most technically-complex customer.
<b>Executive Presence</b> —(This skill is best assessed by evaluating the candidate’s appearance/demeanor).
<b>Motivator</b> —When did you last have to motivate a Rep? How did you do it?