

Brightlights

Connecting technology companies with great people



A Monthly Newsletter With Leadership, Recruitment and Sales Tips for Small and Mid-Sized Technology Firms - January '09

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Quote of the Month

"Hire and promote first on the basis of integrity; second, motivation; third capacity; fourth, understanding; fifth, knowledge; and last and least, experience. Without integrity, motivation is dangerous; without motivation, capacity is impotent; without capacity, understanding is limited; without understanding, knowledge is meaningless; without knowledge, experience is blind. Experience is easy to provide and quickly put to good use by people with the other qualities."

Dee Hock

Founder of Visa

Hiring the Right Sales Manager

One of the most critical hiring decisions a company will ever make is the choice of the right Sales Manager. This applies no matter what the economy. A common pitfall is the all too common mistake of restricting the search to those with industry experience due to the feeling that the Sales Manager needs to come from "their" industry. The perception is that this is the only way that they will be successful in the role. I beg to differ.

Every company thinks they are in an industry that is so unique, and has so many nuances, that the hire must have industry background. The fact is, however, that product and industry knowledge are not the main drivers in a successful salesperson, nor is it the primary one for the successful Sales Manager.

A more prudent approach for hiring the right person is to look for a

candidate who comes to the table with the specialized skill set needed to be successful in this role. That is, to be both a leader and a manager. These are skills not usually developed in a vacuum but rather cultivated and developed through training and experience. Some of the elements that companies should be focused on when hiring the right Sales Manager include:

Recruiting skills

You want to understand the candidate's process for screening sales candidates. How do they prime the applicant pump? Can they develop a profile of the ideal salesperson and prioritize between required and desired attributes? What is their process for evaluating candidates against the profile? One of the main reasons companies miss their revenue targets is having unfilled slots on the team. Recruitment skills are key.

Onboarding

How quickly and effectively can the Sales Manager assimilate the salesperson into the organization? What is their strategy to minimize the new salesperson's non-revenue generating time? What is their plan to make them productive in the least amount of time? How do they measure whether or not the new salesperson is going to be successful?

Process

Many companies have one superstar on their team. That, however, isn't scalable. Scalable sales organizations are based on process and the entire team following the model based on a defined formula. Can this candidate create a process for the company? What experience have they had in doing so and what were the results?

Metrics

How does the Sales Manager utilize metrics in their approach? How have they used metrics to affect the performance of the team and what is their approach to scrutinizing the sales pipeline?

Compensation

What is the Sales Manager's approach to building or tweaking the right compensation plan for the company? How do they determine which behaviors to reward and when/how to do so?

Skill development

Does the Sales Manager have a skill development plan for his/her team? What is their approach for developing their team members? How do they inspire the overachievers to overachieve? How do they manage the underperformers and lead them to either perform or be removed?

Leadership

In addition to the above described skills is the element of leadership. Salespeople want to be successful for themselves but also for their Manager. How does this Sales Management candidate create an environment where others are inspired to follow them and their teachings? Leadership skills and sales force retention go hand-in-hand. Strong leaders keep their strong players on the team for the long haul.

If you take this approach you will end up developing long-lasting and fruitful sales marriages.

Make Your LinkedIn Invitation Work For You

I think LinkedIn is a great tool for building a network. It never ceases to amaze me, however, when I get an invitation to connect with someone with the following message: "Since you are a person I trust, I want to invite you to join my network on LinkedIn". Oftentimes I don't even know this person or, if I do, it's just barely.

The message was obviously created using a template and the sender put zero time, or effort, into writing me a personalized invitation or explaining how connecting might have value for him or me. The person may have affiliation with a company where I've worked or the chances are they're gathering information on people for their own benefit rather than fostering reciprocity and authenticity to building a relationship.

Here are some examples of other types of messages that might produce better results:

Create Common Ground

"Hi! I noticed that you and I are affiliate with the same company. Since you are a ____ (fill in the blank) and I am a ____ (fill in the blank) I think there may be ways that we can help feed each other's pipeline. I'd love to learn more about what you do and share some information about my practice as well. I'd love to connect"

Start an Authentic Relationship

If you and your invitee are both in the same industry try something like " John...I decided to skip the boring LinkedIn template and just introduce myself to you. We are both in the business of helping people do _____ (whatever you do) and I would be interested in sharing best practices with you. Do you have time to talk?"

Focus on affinity

"I've recently been reviewing the profiles of people who have worked for the same companies as me and I came across your information. While I know we've never met, I've found that people who have worked for the same employer can often benefit from sharing information and experiences. Would you like to connect through LinkedIn?"

Give something before you expect to get something

"I see from your profile that you help people who are in a job search. I work with many clients who would benefit from your expertise. By connecting on LinkedIn I can share more information about these clients with you."

Invest a few extra minutes in personalizing an authentic message and the results will be profound.

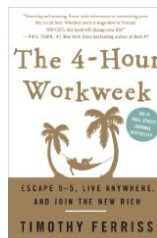
Video Clip of the Month

I was at a recent breakfast session with the new Consul General from India. She spoke eloquently of the recent terrorist attacks in Mumbai, the hopes that she has of establishing stronger business ties with Canada, and the built up potential in her home country.

The most telling comment was that 50% of the population in India is under the age of 25. As well, there are expected to be 350 million members of the Indian middle class in the next 20 or so years. Fascinating numbers and a seismic shift as compared to Canada, United States, and Western Europe.

Click on the title and take a look at this video put together by an organization called Shift Happens from a recent European conference. It will enlighten you on some of the opportunities and challenges that we face, especially when it comes to our education system and the future our children will live in.

Book of the Month



***"The 4-Hour Workweek"* by Timothy Ferriss**

This is an interesting book for a number of reasons. Although clearly Mr. Ferriss has no shortage of ego there are some wonderful ideas on how to promote your product, prioritizing what you need to do versus doing just busy work, and outsourcing that which is done better by someone else, thus freeing you up to be the best you can be.

There are some very good resources and contacts provided and as long as you take the book as some interesting food for thought, rather than gospel, you'll gain some worthwhile insights.

Brightlights

Brightlights recruits executives for small and mid-sized technology firms and helps these companies make the best of their people. If you have any questions around industry best practices within the technology sector, or particular challenges concerning your organization's people issues, please feel free to contact me.

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