

Advertorial

ASK THE EXPERT



IMPROVING SALES PERFORMANCE

Q I need to hire a sales rep. I have tried it before and failed. How can I make sure I make a good decision this time?

A Hiring sellers is a very difficult proposition. One reason is that sellers who are any good are able to put their best foot forward and hide the one that is scuffed. Plus they are selling their favorite product in the interview: themselves. There are some keys that can help you make a more confident decision. First, create an **Ideal Candidate Profile** that describes the attitudes, habits, experiences, skills and attributes of your ideal seller. Next, create interview questions that test for these key attributes. Don't ask if they have integrity. They will say they do. Ask them to tell you about a time in which their integrity was put to the test and how they handled the situation. Don't lean too heavily on your own intuition about the candidate. Bring other people that you trust into the process so that you can get their opinion on the candidate. And consider using some type of empirical assessment tool. I help a lot of my clients hire sellers and I always use the **DISC and Devine assessment tools** to better gauge the strengths and weaknesses of the candidate. The resulting profiles allow us to enter into a much more candid conversation with the candidate than would otherwise be possible.



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SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS AHEAD

Q I haven't hired anyone for about two years and we are looking at adding an Office Administrator. How far ahead should I start interviewing, so I don't miss out on the good candidates?

A You want to have it all wrapped up within 2 weeks, ideally. You want to place the ad or engage your staffing service, screen the resumes, pick the best candidates and then bring them in for a personal interview. Ideally have them meet other team members, and make an offer within 2 weeks. You don't want it to go any longer than 3 weeks because you lose your momentum. During the time period of the first interview and offer, especially, you want to get back to them within 2 days; otherwise they will think you are not interested in them as an employee and they will not be as excited about joining your company. If an unforeseen delay comes up, contact them and keep them



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LEAD NURTURE VS. LEAD GENERATION

Q Why is lead nurturing more critical to a company's success than lead generation?

A As marketers, we know that connecting with prospects is the vital first step. But what happens next has greatest impact on the potential to move someone from prospect to customer. Taking a lead and cultivating it until they are ready to buy is referred to as nurture. When you nurture a prospect into a customer you are being very deliberate about a basic human behavior - developing a relationship. Your job as nurturer is to make sure that the dialog is useful, relevant and compelling. To engage, educate and ultimately convert.

Effective nurture also requires tracking how the lead performs at each stage of the buyer's journey, and then optimizing the communications to most efficiently evolve the engagement.

Bottom line: Lead nurture done well accelerates the pipeline, turns your prospects into customers, but most importantly turns your customers into avid advocates.

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EMPLOYMENT LAW

Q Our generous leave of absence policy provides up to 12 weeks of medical leave. Can we terminate employees who can't return to work by the 12th week?

A No. Automatically terminating employees is too risky. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires an individualized assessment to determine if a particular employee needs a limited extension of medical leave as a reasonable accommodation. Medical leave beyond what your policy allows is a widely recognized accommodation. Having a "blanket" uniform policy that treats everyone the same (i.e., a policy that requires all employees to return at the end of the 12th week) is not the "individualized" assessment contemplated by ADA. If you know an employee needs more medical leave, enter into an interactive dialogue between you and the employee and/or the employee's physician, to determine if a limited extension of leave is reasonable and effective under the circumstances.

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