

HOW TO RECOGNIZE ROCKSTAR TALENT

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to Founders, Sales Leaders
& Teams



Your next generation of Rockstars *is* out there, I promise you. As a sales trainer, coach, and consultant I'm often engaged to help clients identify and develop these top 10 percenters, I know the needle-in-a-haystack feeling of trying to find them, but even in our current market they are there. The key is knowing them when you meet them.

After sixteen years of leading sales teams and seven years of serving clients and working with their sales teams, I've developed a very specific and somewhat unusual approach to finding these Rockstars and creating environments and cultures where they will grow and thrive.

In this workbook we're going to focus on questions I use to identify and then support, coach, and nurture potential Rockstars. It all starts with helping possible Rockstars figure out the "Four S's" that are rocket fuel for a Rockstar in the making - their Strengths, their Swim Lane, their Secret Weapon, and their Superpower.

Rocket Fuel for Rockstars - The Four S's

STRENGTH - Play to It

Not only will this help you know if they've got what it takes for the position they're in or the one you're hiring for, it will also tell you where you would start elevating their strengths and training them to eliminate any gaps.

SWIM LANE - Stick to It

This is an area of expertise or specialty they have. Maybe they're better at selling into a certain position or industry. Maybe they build rapport more easily in person than on the phone or a video call. Discover or help them create their swim lane, then put them in it and watch them succeed!

SECRET WEAPON - Drill It

This is a natural talent that you can turn into an unbeatable tool. It's like the backhand in tennis that no one can return. It might be a method of prospecting, or discovery, or closing, but it will work for them almost every single time if they practice it enough.

SUPERPOWER - Wield it

This is that trait that, when honed and developed, gives them a personal edge. Maybe it's charisma, or discipline, or instinct, but it's undeniably super powerful when deployed.

I'm going to let you in on one of my own "secret weapons" - the ability to ask unexpected questions and make astute observations. This secret weapon gives me insight into what I can expect from anyone I meet.

In fact, what I'm going to do is share some of those questions and the thought process behind them so that you can develop this as a secret weapon of your own. These questions work whether you're interviewing to fill a position or uncovering the rockstar potential of the players already on your team.



Take Them on a Journey Back in Time

Most people "discovered" themselves during their teen years. That's when they had enough freedom to do things they wanted to do as well as the opportunity to find out what they were good at and how they were viewed by their peers.

The following two questions will give you clues about all of those traits, talents, and preferences.

"Name 3 things you were good at while you were in High School – don't just think about school, think about that time in your life."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

"What did your peers expect from you? 'Your name' would have been voted most likely to ..."

Just those two pieces of information are a terrific starting point for identifying Rockstar potential. Because whatever they were good at, and what they were observed and recognized for being good at, tells you a lot about what came naturally to them and what traits and strengths were obvious to other people.

Pay Attention to Their Recent Choices

Now let's look at where they have chosen to invest in themselves and their abilities and what has motivated them to make those choices.

"What 3 skills have you spent the most time, money, and effort perfecting in the past 5 years?"

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

"Why have you chosen to perfect those particular skills?"

They just painted a picture for you. They told you what they are interested in, what they value, and what motivates them to take action and make an investment.

Really good information to have when you're looking for someone who aspires to that top 10 percent club and is willing to do what it takes to increase their value and create the career and life they really want!

The previous sections will have given you clues about their natural strengths, interests, values, and motivations. The next step is to let the information you've gathered help you identify their top 5 traits and determine if they are a match for the role they're in or are interviewing for, and if so, move on to validating your answers and deciding how to best hone those top traits.

Ask Them to Take a Look in the Mirror

I always say I can't motivate the unmotivated but I can inspire and train the self-motivated. To reach that top 10 percent status a rep must really know who they are and what they want *and* be committed to going for it.

Without that self-knowledge and commitment the best sales leader in the universe won't be able to train them, inspire them, or motivate them into the rockstar ranks. So perhaps more than any other trait to look for in your next gen Rockstar is that they are willing to be honest with themselves. They may already be pretty self-aware, but if they aren't they have to at least be brave enough and determined enough to get there.

Here are my quirky, but effective, questions for uncovering the rockstar traits they may not know they have.

Question #1

“If you miss your flight and end up at the airport hotel for the night, are you more likely to belly up to the lobby bar to meet new people and make some new connections, or will you head straight to your room and order room service?”

What I'm Looking For: Curiosity and Social Boldness

I believe curiosity and social boldness are traits that are either inherent or developed at a young age. I also believe that they are critical for hunters.

If they don't love learning about other people, aren't curious about other people's stories and situations, and aren't willing to take a chance to try to strike up a conversation, they won't excel at being a hunter and will have more success in another role, like farmer.

Questions #2 & #3

“Tell me the hardest decision you’ve made in the last few years.” Then, “Tell me the last time a friend said to you, ‘I can’t believe you just did that,’ and what was the circumstance that led them to say that?”

What I’m Looking For: Risk Profile

Both of those questions help me to understand what I call their risk profile. This will help you truly determine which job might be a fit and which could become a demoralizing disaster.

People with a high-risk profile are willing to start at zero every month, which is what a Hunter needs to know how to do. People with a low-risk profile are more likely to be a fit for an Account Manager or Customer Success position.

Questions #4 & #5

“Are you more likely to ask for forgiveness or permission?” Then regardless of the answer, “Give me an example of a time that strategy bit you in the ass.”

What I’m Looking For: Initiative and Manageability

A hunter will almost always say they’re more likely to ask for forgiveness while a Rockstar farmer would rather ask permission first.

But it’s the second question that matters even more. This tells me if they’re aware when something backfires, if they own it, and if they’re going to be a “Lone Wolf” who is likely to believe that asking permission is a waste of time and should never bite them in the ass at all. I’ve managed rockstars who were in the Lone Wolf category but they aren’t a fit for every organization and not everyone can manage them successfully.

Question #6

“What’s the craziest thing you’ve ever done to close a sale?”

What I’m Looking For: Creative Problem Solving and Determination

I need to determine their comfort zone (what do they consider crazy) and how far out of their comfort zone they’re willing to go to get the sale.

Being professionally persistent isn’t comfortable for everyone, and that’s why I ask the question. I’m trying to determine if they have a creative, no-fear attitude. This also helps me know a little about their desire to succeed.



You've now learned quite a lot that will help you predict this person's behavior and success.

If you're going beyond just listening to the words they give you and you're also observing body language (shoulders back and looking you in the eye, or slumped or slouching and failing to make eye contact) and also listening to voice quality and tone (confident and interested or uncertain and bored) then you've learned even more.

Time for an Initial Assessment

Let's do a gut-check now and see what traits you think this team member or candidate has that could be developed into rockstar quality.

Below are some of the traits I look for that I know can be polished, maximized, and leveraged into strengths or even secret weapons and superpowers. Don't overthink or analyze, just circle the five that you believe this person possesses that are most apparent and most appealing.

Which of these traits do you think best describe them? Circle no more than 5.

Strong Leader Self-confident Aspirational Driven Patient Disciplined

Strong Communicator Integrity Willingness to learn new things Responsible

Self-reliant Optimistic Passionate Creative Resilient Flexible Brave

Generous Action-oriented Confident Good Intuition Curious Dreamer

Enthusiastic Trust-worthy Friendly Supportive Strong work-ethic Risk-taker

Positive Mental Attitude High Self-Esteem Honest Funny Organized

Goal-oriented #ownyourshit Good Listener Positive person Gritty

Growth Mindset Structured Genuine

Rockstar Must-Haves

Any of traits you circled above can be an asset to a Rockstar rep. But there are also traits that every rep must have in order to have rockstar potential. Let's see if this person checks all the boxes.

CONFIDENCE: Not to be confused with swashbuckling arrogance. You're looking for calm self assurance and belief in themselves and their capabilities.

DISCIPLINE: There are no lazy Rockstars. They build habits, they practice, they follow through, they focus on what matters most.

GRIT AND RESILIENCE: Sales is always about the long game and it's high stakes and high rejection. It takes a combination of these two traits to stay in it long enough to make it to the top 10 percent.

ENTHUSIASTIC AND MOTIVATED: Rockstars know to "bring their own pompoms." They are their own best cheerleaders and consistently celebrate every win.

Rockstar Must-Haves - continued

REALISTIC AND OBJECTIVE: They are able to determine, without emotion, if a prospect really has a problem that their product or service can solve, if they will be willing to spend money to solve that problem, and if they really have the authority to make a buying decision. You need to have this ability to see things the way they really are and not how you'd like them to be if you're in sales.

FORWARD FOCUSED: I tell reps they have to have short memory for failure. Sales is rejection-filled sport, if they hold on to every "no" they won't last long. If there's a lesson to be learned, they make a note of it and move on to the next opportunity.

CHARISMA: That special something you can't put your finger on will draw people in. These people are great listeners and make other people feel important.

POSTITIVE MINDSET AND SELF CARE: Rockstars don't talk themselves down, they use their mind and self-talk to bring their game up. They also build habits that keep their mind, body, and spirit in top health.



Last Two Qualifying Questions

There are two more questions I ask every single interview. They'll yield a wealth of insight into what this person values and does habitually.

Since each of these questions will be answered by a list of three just think of them as your "three by three."

Their answers to these two questions should validate everything you've already heard, observed, and concluded about whether this person has rockstar talent and potential and if so, what traits are going to be their real superpower.

More than that, they'll tell you what this person does consistently, regardless of their job, their role, their life circumstances, or the mood they woke up in today, to make sure they are growing personally and professionally.

Question #1: "Name three activities or tasks you do, regardless of the job you have, that you think has led to your success."

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Question #2: "What are the three things you do consistently that ensure you're successful regardless of the position or company you're at?"

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

What's Your Plan to Support, Coach, and Nurture this Potential Rockstar?

Take another gut check. Do they check all the boxes for must-have rockstar traits? Do those last two questions indicate they're consistently investing in increasing their value (what I call a #sowtogrow mindset) and that they're building habits that will ensure their continual success in the role?

What about those five traits you picked earlier, do you still feel those are their most prominent traits? Which one of the five traits you picked do you think could be their Superpower? The ONE trait they have that if it were consistently nurtured and developed could set them apart from your co-workers and competitors, and help them become that top 10 percenter Rockstar rep.

Now decide where you're going to start building on that Rockstar Trait so you can magnify its effect and maximize their success, and yours.

#1 Rockstar Trait: _____

List 10 things you could do to further hone and develop their Rockstar Trait:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

Great, now decide which of those 10 things you're going to start doing and keep doing until you're ready to start on the next thing and the next. When you choose ONE trait to help them develop, then apply one practice after another to make that trait stronger and stronger, they'll be well on the way to turning it into a real "Secret Weapon" and fully actualizing their rockstar potential.



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As a 20+ year veteran of the sales world – in positions ranging from direct sales, sales management, and sales consultant, coach, and trainer – Kristie Jones has developed a “take no prisoners” approach when helping companies with everything from sales process and strategy to hiring and training Sales and Customer Success Reps.

She started Sales Acceleration Group in 2016 to help owners and founders increase revenue, reduce churn, and develop the strategy, staff, and infrastructure to scale more quickly. She has become the go-to expert for companies wanting to build, grow, or scale their Sales and Customer Success teams, especially in the SaaS space of founder-led VE/PE funded startups.

Just like her work with private clients, Kristie’s presentations as a speaker are high-energy and high-value, leaving audiences nodding and note-taking furiously. She is a regular contributor to Top Sales World Magazine, has been featured in multiple publications, and has had her own billboard on the NASDAQ building in Times Square. Her heart for sales professionals and her philosophy of #ownyourownshit and #ownyourownincome inspire a culture of accountability and respect in every client she serves.

