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YOUR GUT IS WRONG:

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE
FOR ENSURING YOU HIRE
TOP SALES TALENT



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BUILD A SALES TEAM FILLED WITH TOP TALENT

Identifying and attracting Top Ten Percent sales talent is the key to building a world-class sales team. Not having a formal and documented hiring process will keep you from being able to separate the Players from the Posers.

Executing a top-quality interviewing process attracts A-players, helps you identify candidates who have traits that are important for success in the role, and will allow you and the candidate to become “educated buyers.” Having a consistent process will also keep you out of legal hot water.

This step-by-step guide is designed to help you build a process for attracting and hiring the Top Talent.



CREATE AN ICP (Ideal Candidate Profile)

- Analyze traits, experiences, and commonalities of successful sales reps currently or previously in the role.
- Define and document the ideal candidate that specifically fits the traits of a Top Ten Percenter.
- Be mindful that this is separate from the job description.

WRITE THE JOB DESCRIPTION

- Use your ICP document to create an accurate description of the candidate that best fits the role.
- List specific requirements of the position.
- Include expectations for performance as well as how and when the employee will be measured and held accountable – don't hold back!
- Use disqualifying statements...“Hate prospecting? This role isn't for you”.
- Run the job description through a gender decoder to make sure the verbiage is gender neutral.

FINALIZE THE QUOTA AND COMPENSATION PLAN

- Determine the ramp-up time frame and associated quota. You should take into consideration the average sales cycles and the amount of time needed to build an adequate pipeline to hit quotas when making this decision.
- Tie the compensation plan to the desired outcomes. The base should be determined based on the annual quota required.

Use these guidelines:

- Net New business job role: 50% base/50% variable comp.
- CSMs: 75%-80% base/20%-25% variable comp.
- SDRs: 75%-80% base/20%-25% variable comp.





POST AND PROMOTE THE JOB

- Post the job description on the company LinkedIn page and strategically promote it using LI paid ads to boost reach. Do the same with any additional hiring sites the organization uses.
- Include relevant qualifying questions at the beginning of the application process to help sort candidates who do not meet the basic qualifications.
- Add the posting to your career page on your website.
- Share the job posting via Slack channels and other forums that may target the desired audience.
- Ask employees to share and promote the opportunity to their networks via LinkedIn and/or other sites.

CREATE A SCORECARD

Develop a scorecard that serves as the guiding outline to ensure that each applicant is “graded” fairly and consistently.

Candidate Phone Screen Scorecard



Client: _____ Position: _____

Recommending Formal Interview: Y N

Areas to further probe during formal interview:

1. Compensation Structure _____

2. How you left the company better than you found it _____

3. Why you left or are deciding to leave _____

4. What questions did they ask? _____





RESUME REVIEW

- Set up the review process of sorting resumes as they are received by categorizing them as “Qualified”, “Not Qualified”, or “Not Sure”.
- Then, eliminate resumes that do not answer the qualifying questions from the job description in the manner needed by placing them in the “Not Qualified” category.
- Review any candidate who meets the qualifying questions from the job description and application process. If their experience appears to match that of the job requirements, further review the resume for more context. Those who fit the role criteria are placed in the “Qualified” category.
- Double-check “Qualified” resumes against their corresponding LinkedIn profiles in order to confirm consistent reporting of current and previous positions held.
- Email the potential ideal candidates, and invite THEM to schedule a 30-minute phone screen by including a calendar link in the email (Hoop #1 they must jump through).





PHONE SCREEN

- Include specific instructions in the calendar invite for the candidate to call you at the number provided on the day and time they chose. (Yes, this is to determine if they can follow instructions. Hoop #2).
- Structure the phone call to allow 25 minutes for the screener to ask questions, with a 5-minute opportunity for candidate questions.
- Use your scorecard to ensure a fair and consistent process and evaluation. Start with these primary questions regarding the candidate's current and previous positions from the last 2-3 years:
 - What is/was your compensation structure at previous roles?
 - This is NOT a salary question (which is illegal to ask in many states), but rather one to determine if they are accustomed to a similar base-to-variable ratio structure.
 - What contributions did you bring to the table that helped make a current/previous company a better organization than when you started?
 - What's causing you to leave your current and previous positions?

This question helps uncover evidence of intentional step changes that indicate the candidate is being proactive and intentional about their career path.
- Thoroughly document all answers given, questions asked, and any other relevant information offered by the candidate during the discussion on the scorecard so that you can share that information with the next person in the process.
- Rank candidates on a scale from 1-10. Candidates ranked as a 9 or 10 are moved to the first formal interview.



FIRST FORMAL INTERVIEW

- Conduct a face-to-face behavioral, one-hour interview in person or via Zoom that includes a supervisor, hiring manager, or someone at a hiring level from the company.

Structure of Interview:

- 30 minutes – Question the candidate on sales behavior, including current sales process, prior sales training provided, accountability, and past success. Dig deep here. You want to determine if their prior experience with process, average sales, sales cycle, and industry matches your current situation.
- 15 minutes – Ask any other questions of the candidate around other core competencies they'll need. ie - Team player, risk-taker, entrepreneurial mindset, strategic thinking skills, etc.
- 15 minutes – Allow the candidate to ask questions.
- Candidates should demonstrate they have researched the company, industry, and position.
- They should also be able to articulate what their buying criteria are so they can begin to discern if this role is a fit for them. Do they ask strategic questions? Have they done their homework? Do they probe deeper to learn information that will help them?
- Those who exhibit “A-player” traits move on to the assessment stage.





ASSESSMENT - Trust, but Verify

You want to ensure that what you think you have learned about the candidate so far is reality.

- The candidate should complete an online assessment that will reveal the ability to sell, strategic thinking skills, motivations, weaknesses, etc.
- Determine if the potential new hire continues to be the right fit for this specific role using the data from the assessment.
 - For those who move forward, conduct a 60-minute call to review the results with the candidate. Use this opportunity to probe further into areas you might not have identified in the previous interviews, as highlighted in the assessment results. Use any remaining time for the candidate to ask additional questions.
 - Focus on where the candidate's outcomes match with the role requirements and how expectations between the candidate and the people at the organization can be bridged.
 - Use this opportunity to begin selling the company to the candidate.
- For those who do not do well on the assessment, schedule a 15-minute call to review what was revealed. The goal is to help the candidate as they move forward on their job search.

SECOND FORMAL INTERVIEW

- Conduct a face-to-face, 30-minute or 1-hour second interview, in-person or via Zoom, with a C-level executive.
- The CEO, CRO, VP Sales, or the highest executive available should be on this call to meet the candidate and further assess them.
- This is an opportunity for the candidate to obtain a better understanding of the strategic business goals and get a feel for how the culture is driven by those at the top.
- The candidate should come to this interview with C-level questions.



HELP THE CANDIDATE BE AN EDUCATED BUYER

You want to make sure that a candidate who accepts your offer will have no surprises after they join. The best way to do this is to allow them to speak with others currently in the role or others in departments that will support them.

- Make an email introduction between the candidate and a team member from the potential team they would be joining, so they can schedule a mutually agreeable time to meet.
- Keep this meeting confidential between the two of them. This privacy allows the candidate to discuss the product, company, supervisors, tools, and the day-in-the-life of the role to gather as much information as they can.
- Inform the current employee that they are to be as transparent as possible so that the candidate obtains an honest view and optimal information.

VERBAL OFFER

- Prior to making a verbal offer, preface with the following or a similar request:
“We are ready to make a verbal offer. Before I do so, I need to know whether you are ready to accept or decline within 24 hours.”

Your candidate is interviewing with other companies, and you don't want them shopping your offer around to find a better one. Either they're ready to move forward with you or they're not. Do not make an offer until the candidate is finished interviewing with other companies and is ready to give you a yes or no within 24 hours.

- If “YES”, make the verbal offer and immediately follow up with an email containing everything in writing, including contact information and availability for any subsequent questions they may have.

Schedule a call for the next day at the agreed-upon time.

- If “NO”, discuss where they are in the process with other organizations with which they have been interviewing. Come to an agreement on when to follow up and perhaps, make the verbal offer then.



WRITTEN OFFER

- When the verbal offer is accepted, the written, formal offer follows.
- The candidate is required to sign and return the written offer within 24 hours.
- Thus, no offers are made on Fridays.

WELCOMING THEM TO THE ORGANIZATION

Buyer's remorse isn't just real for buyers, but also for candidates. 100% of candidates I've interviewed for clients in the past 2 years have also been actively interviewing with 3-4 other companies. This means there's a good chance that they might continue to interview after they've signed their written offer, or at the very least continue to be pursued by other organizations (Top Talent has choices).

So I recommend you do the following after the offer letter has been signed:

- Make sure everyone involved in the interview process reaches out to congratulate them.
- Send them a swag bag of company logo gear.
- Send them their new laptop (if a remote role) within a week.
- Share their onboarding schedule with them a few days before their start date.





CREATE A FORMAL ONBOARDING SCHEDULE

- Outline the dates for training and onboarding, listing hour-by-hour expectations for the candidate for the first two weeks. Do everything possible to stick to this schedule.
- Include the following training topic areas in your onboarding plan:
 - Industry
 - Product/Service
 - Sales Process
 - Sales Tools
- Each of these topics should have the following components:
 - Self-directed training (podcasts/website review/e-learning courses)
 - Instructor-led training from SMEs
 - OJT – on-the-job training (sitting on calls with prospects and customers/practicing on demo sites)
- Set a tight checklist of tasks both the new hire and the organization will take to ensure that the employee is integrated into the company as efficiently as possible.
- Hold your organization and the participating individuals accountable for their obligations in assisting and welcoming the new employee.
- Give your new Top Ten Percent achiever a Top Ten Percent experience with a Top-Notch introduction to your organization.





OTHER THINGS TO CONSIDER

- Keep the interview process moving along. Strive to have each step in the process take place every 48 hours. At this pace, you should be able to make an offer within 2.5 weeks.

It might seem like a lot of work to formalize and document your hiring process, but mis-hires are EXPENSIVE in more ways than one. Sales professionals sell themselves every day and are professional interviewees. As a result, you need to be more disciplined in your approach to ensure you find a true Top Ten Percent.



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HIRING HELP SERVICES:

THE RIGHT HIRE IN THE RIGHT ROLE = REAL REVENUE RESULTS

Sales and Success professionals are professional interviewees...Buyer Beware!

Too many founders, recruiters, and hiring managers struggle to tell the Posers from the "A" Players. They waste time sourcing, interviewing, hiring, and onboarding a Poser...only to have them fail causing them to have to start all over again.

Wasted Time. Wasted Dollars. Missed Revenue Targets.

We help you put the right person in the right job right away without all that waste.

We ask the right questions.

We identify candidates who possess the skills and confidence to be your next Rock Star. By gaining a thorough understanding of your culture, we choose candidates who will be a cultural **ADD** and not just a fit.

No stone unturned. No mis-hires. No lost revenue.

We remove the hassle from your life by doing the work you don't have time (or desire) to do.

- Reviewing resumes
- Phone screens
- Scheduling interviews
- Following up with candidates
- Sending Dear John and Dear Jane emails
- Making sure buyer's remorse doesn't set in after you make the offer.

We've been in your shoes and have the experience needed to identify and hire your next Rock Star. Hiring is a specific skill that not everyone is qualified to do. Don't rely on your gut, or an inconsistent or broken hiring process to choose your next hire.





Kristie K. Jones has spent 20+ years helping B2B SaaS startups eliminate anemic pipelines, build sales processes that demand discipline, attract Top Ten Percenters, and ensure a culture of accountability is in place. Kristie’s passion project was writing, “Selling Your Way IN”, published in 2024. The book was written for sales professionals wanting to reach their professional and financial goals by identifying their sales superpowers and secret weapons and using that knowledge to choose sales roles that allow them to play to those strengths so they can outperform and out earn their peers, leading them to be able to live the life they want and deserve.