

Hiring Unproductive 'Sales Ghosts' Can Come Back To Haunt You Later

By: Alan Buhler

Have you ever hired a 'sales ghost'? A 'sales ghost' is a salesperson whose lack of skills, techniques, tactics and efforts continue to haunt you—one whose best sale ever was the one that got you to hire him or her.

Hiring top-quality salespeople can be difficult. While there may not be many 'perfect salespeople,' there are a number of really good ones out there. You simply need a way to identify them, develop them and retain them.

While there are many core competencies that a salesperson needs, the following are ten very important competencies that you should look for when hiring your next salesperson:

1. Written goals. While most people believe they should set goals, it has been estimated that only about 5 percent of the population actually does. A person with written goals will usually be a strong self-starter, and will be motivated to get results.

2. Follows a sales plan. Some salespeople will tell you they are so busy trying to make a living today that they don't have time to think about planning for tomorrow's sales. However, most top performers will tell you that each new engagement is strategically planned out using a systematic approach, which provides a road map for success.

3. Positive outlook. When candidates have a positive outlook, it means they feel good about most of the aspects of their life (e.g., job, company, home life, financial situation, physical appearance). Since the candidate is in the process of looking for a job, it's reasonable to assume that they aren't happy with his or her present employment, because of the company, manager, performance, lack of support, challenge or growth opportunity. When considering this, be certain that any outlook problem is related strictly to current employment situation and is not reflective of their overall attitude.

4. Takes responsibility. Good salespeople tend to recognize their own nonproductive behaviors and make the necessary changes. They don't blame the sales leads, the products, industry changes, their company's home office, etc., for their failures.

5. Strong self-confidence. Salespeople with strong self-confidence are always willing and excited to try a new and different approach to make the sale. They take calculated risks because they know these risks will help them grow mentally and emotionally. If they don't work

out, it is not a blow to their psyches. It is nothing more than a learning experience, a new way not to do something. They keep going until the desired results are achieved.

6. Supportive beliefs. Many salespeople exhibit certain predictable behaviors that get in the way of achieving consistent success. Procrastination, personal finance mismanagement and a tendency to blame others for poor performance are just a few examples. The list seems endless, and more than a little disheartening. Imagine how successful a company could be if every salesperson, every manager, every executive would drill down and confront the internal demons that are keeping him or her from optimal performance.

7. Controls emotions. When salespeople get emotionally involved, they lose control of the selling process. It is often because they are over-analyzing, worrying, panicking, getting excited or strategizing on the fly. This is often due to lack of preparation, and when it happens they tend to stop listening to the buyer and begin listening to the voices in their heads. A good salesperson can separate personal feelings from selling activities.

8. Doesn't seek approval from others. When a salesperson feels the need for approval from others, they will often avoid saying or doing things that could change how prospect feels about them. This includes the tough questions, legitimate confrontation, and the potential inability to handle rejection. The result is that this salesperson will develop what is known as pipeline bloat. In other words, prospects that remains in the pipeline with relatively few of them getting closed or eliminated.

9. Recovers quickly from rejection. Rejection is as much a part of sales as getting dressed in the morning. Successful salespeople place a greater emphasis on preparation and, above all, don't succumb to the fear of rejection.

10. Comfortable talking about money. A salesperson that is uncomfortable talking about money may be unable to uncover a buyer's financial position, have an unreasonable concept of the prospect's financial goals, or inappropriately offer discounts and waive fees due to this lack of awareness.

If the candidate you are interviewing for your open salesperson position has at least some of these 10 traits, you stand a much better chance of hiring a real winner -- not just another ghost.



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