



7 Things To Know When Working With a Sales Recruiter

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Executive Summary:

Sales recruiting is one of the fastest growing and most complex areas of talent acquisition. In this competitive talent market, it isn't enough to post and hope great candidates will find you.

In this white paper, you'll explore:

- Whether a sales recruiter is right for your company
- Evaluating sales recruiting firms
- Building a consistent sales recruitment process
- Developing practical sales candidate profiles
- Recruiting beyond the resume
- Creating an attractive employer brand
- Outlining competitive sales compensation



1. Why work with a sales recruiter?

All recruiting essentially involves connecting qualified people to great opportunities. So what makes sales recruiting different?

The answer lies in the nature of the job. Disciplines like accounting and engineering rely on hard skill sets and experience to qualify candidates, but success in sales is driven largely by soft skills. Industry experience, product knowledge, and specific sales experience (inside versus outside sales, for example) may still be required; the ability to market a company's products and close a deal is largely intangible, so hands-on sales experience is an important tool.

A strong sales recruiter, like any other recruiter, can quickly build a candidate pipeline within your vertical and local marketplace.

The difference between a sales recruiter and a generalist recruiter lies in knowledge of the sales process.

Often, the best sales recruiters come from a sales background themselves. By understanding how a company markets its products, how to build a pipeline of customers, how to overcome objections, how to close a sale, and how sales reps are compensated, a strong sales recruiter can accurately gauge a candidate's experience and fit for your company.

In other words, a sales recruiter helps you cut to the chase: the candidate's ability to sell.

2. How to evaluate your sales recruiting firm

If you haven't worked with a sales recruiting firm before, selecting a partner can be daunting. To streamline the vetting process, review the following areas.

Sales Recruitment Experience:

Not all recruiting firms specialize in sales recruitment. Sales recruitment specialists have an advantage over generalist firms thanks to a deep understanding of the soft skills that make up great sales people. When evaluating prospective firms, review the firm's annual placements in sales and the industries they cover. Look for placements within the last year. Discuss the methods the company uses to build talent pools and feed their internal databases. A strong talent network is critical to filling highly specialized positions. If a firm hasn't filled a position in your company's vertical in many years, likely they aren't an ideal partner and may not be able to present qualified candidates quickly.

Candidate Quality:

Recruiting for sales should involve more than a basic pre-screen to assess interest and experience. Look for depth of detail with candidate submissions, not just resume attachments. Your sales recruiter should be providing a solid interview recap along with recommendations about how the candidate may fit within your organization. In addition, your recruiter should follow up with you regularly on submissions and take your feedback into account.

Recruitment Volume:

Building a sales team requires different tactics from one-off placements. For high volume recruitment, look for timelines and scalability. How quickly can their team produce a pipeline of candidates? How does the firm respond to hiring scaling up or down? How does the firm measure performance? Key performance indicators should include a minimum number of submittals and placements per week, along with ratios for submittals to offers and submittals to placements. If your firm is experiencing turnover, hiring goals (and pipelines) should adjust to accommodate turnover so you're not constantly backfilling the same positions. Many sales recruiting partners will also consult on your recruiting process to ensure you aren't losing strong talent to a lengthy, inefficient process, especially if you're filling a high volume of positions.

Placement Guarantees:

Hiring guarantees can vary based the level of the position, as well as your company's turnover. Ask how your firm determines placement guarantees and how often they replace candidates.

The Candidate Experience:

Companies lose great candidates because of a poor hiring experience. One of the biggest complaints from candidates is a lack of communication throughout the search process. Don't let your recruiting process become another black hole. Recruiters should communicate transparently at all stages of the hiring cycle and make themselves available to answer candidate questions. A sales recruiting partner who actively communicates throughout the process can help humanize your employer brand and also present better-informed candidates.

Exclusivity:

This is another piece of the employer branding puzzle, especially for firms who are looking to fill a position as quickly as possible. While it makes logical sense to work with as many partners as possible to find the best candidate, this tactic often backfires. If you're recruiting within a specific market, likely your sales recruiting partners will be speaking with the same people. This may confuse candidates, damage your brand, and prevent you from hiring effectively. If you do wish to work with multiple partners, consider offering territory exclusivity to minimize confusion and keep your pipelines moving.

Client Care:

Just as you wouldn't want your sales recruiter to perform a 15-minute pre-screen with a candidate, you wouldn't want your recruiter to spend only a few minutes on the phone with you before taking the job order. Your sales recruiter should understand the position completely before beginning any recruitment efforts, and should be available to take questions and facilitate the recruiting process. Look for a partner with a team dedicated to your search, including an account manager and a recruiter.



3. Building a consistent sales recruitment process

A pre-determined sales recruitment process allows the company to set benchmarks and measure success. By consistently putting all candidates through the same process, you see accurate comparisons and make better-informed hiring decisions.

Behavioral Interview:

After the initial vetting stages, this is where a hiring manager can dig deeply into a candidate's experience and analyze overall fit. No matter the style of interview setting—individual, panel, or anything in between—craft interview questions that fully probe into the candidate's work history, experience, and skill sets. Stay away from hypothetical scenarios and instead focus on actual accomplishments and difficulties over the candidate's career. If you're working with a recruiter, request copies of their notes to compare your findings.

Ride-Alongs:

This step gives candidates a real-world job preview, and allows the hiring manager to evaluate candidates on the job. For speed, schedule ride-alongs for the day of your first interview, especially as candidates who may be working will need to take time off and these requests can delay the process. If the job isn't what the candidate expects, you'll know sooner rather than later.

Roadblocks:

Assesses what's holding up the process. For instance, is it difficult to schedule in-person interviews because decision-makers are traveling? Consider telephone and Skype interviews for your first vetting round, while coordinating in-person meetings for candidates that make it on to the next stage. This keeps the recruiting process moving, and strong candidates warm so you don't lose them to another opportunity.

Pre-Screen:

Pre-screening questions explore whether candidates meet the minimum requirements for the position, such as licensing or education. Often, these factors determine whether a candidate is ultimately hireable, so it's best to screen for these skills up front to save you and the candidate from embarking on a lengthy, fruitless interview process.

Phone Interview:

If your new employee will be working on-site, this may be an optional part of the process. However, it's vital for virtual roles or roles with heavy telephone work, like inside sales. A phone screen may help tip the scales and determine whether an in-person meeting is necessary.

4. Develop a sales recruitment profile

You can't build a great sales team without understanding the strengths and skills that work best for your organization. Recruitment efforts often stall because managers and their recruiting partners rely on stale job descriptions and rigid hiring requirements.

Forget the bullet points and focus instead on your current team: what are their strengths and weaknesses, and where you can capitalize on opportunities. Venture into the field to observe your sales team's day-to-day activities. This not only allows you to gauge your team's skill sets in a real-time setting, but it also provides insight into any potential retention pitfalls. With this information, you can better plan your hiring strategy to ensure that you aren't churning and burning hires, and provide them with the tools and training they need to sell and drive revenue.





5. Sales recruiting is more than a resume review

Keep an open mind while reviewing resumes. When revenue is on the line and you need a magic-bullet salesperson, it's easy to become hampered by a checklist of attributes your next superstar must have. While some skill sets may not be negotiable, rigid requirements may cause you to miss out on hiring some otherwise great candidates.

Think over the skills necessary to do the job and decide whether you're willing to train on them. The answer might allow you to expand your candidate pool and actually hire faster. If you're on the fence about a candidate, conduct a quick phone screening to see if he or she fits the bill and might be worth interviewing in person. You might be surprised by the experience or skill sets that aren't listed on the resume that may be valuable to your organization. And the faster you hire, the sooner your new salesperson can begin selling.

6. Building your employer brand to attract better quality talent

Employer branding reflects how others see your organization throughout the hiring process and employee lifecycle, and impacts your ability to attract candidates. With a strong value proposition, you'll be in a better position to hire and retain strong candidates.

To build a strong employer brand, start by asking tough questions about the hiring process. What's the company's employer reputation? Are employees providing a consistent stream of referrals? Are you an employer of choice or a last resort? How do candidates and competitors perceive the company? If the company's reputation is less than stellar, is it fixable? What steps can you take to repair and bolster your brand?

Another key piece of your employer brand is the hiring manager interview, which is one of the best places to showcase your company's strengths and unique selling points. Interviews are not only an audition for the candidate, but also for the company, so remember to sell the opportunity. Why should this candidate work for you? What does your company bring to the table that a competitor can't? How can you help take your new hire to the next level?

Apart from pay, reflect on what sets your company apart from competing employers. Why would a top candidate work for you? This is an opportunity to promote your company's culture, benefits, perks, and everything that makes you unique. Also, analyze your products and services. Why should a rep sell your product or service over a competitor's? What makes you different? Marketing doesn't only influence current buyers. Today's candidate (or employee) may be tomorrow's customer.



7. Structuring sales compensation

Compensation is more than commissions earned on sales, and a major selling factor for a sales position. Outline the earning potential over the first 30, 60, and 90 days of employment, plus the first year and beyond.

Start by studying compensation in your local marketplace in comparison to your company's offerings. This will also give you a better idea of where your company needs to improve in order to market your positions to attract better talent.

Explore the following questions as you build your compensation plan.

- What's the mix of new versus existing business your rep is expected to develop? Are leads provided or do reps have to go out and hunt them?
- How long is your typical sales cycle? A longer sales cycle may call for a base salary while reps are developing deals.
- Does the company offer health benefits or retirement accounts? What's the company contribution?
- What is the company's cell phone and car allowance?
- How are commissions paid out? Weekly? Monthly? Quarterly?
- Are there bonus opportunities in addition to commissions?
- Can sales reps start earning commissions from day one? If not, what's the ramp-up period?
- Do reps earn residuals on accounts they bring in, or only on new sales?
- How are territories assigned? Does the company offer protected territories or can sales reps sell anywhere?

Factor in work hours as you build your compensation plan. Commission-driven positions typically require more time than the average 9-5 job. Paint a realistic picture but don't oversell the potential.

ACA Talent develops targeted talent acquisition solutions that fuse our expertise in finding great talent with our proven process management methods.

Whether you need to build a team, or hire individual players, we design a solution that aligns with your objectives to deliver results. By continuously searching for process efficiencies, we're able to find better candidates faster, so you can be more productive, increase your revenues, and capture market share.

Recruitment Solutions

Sales Recruitment Optimization (SRO)[™]

High volume, recruitment process outsourcing (RPO) solution, specializing in sales and customer-facing positions

Professional Search

Conducting individual searches for candidates of all career levels, with a specialty in professional and executive search

Recruitment Events

Seasonal hiring projects or one-day recruitment events for clients experiencing rapid growth or fluctuations in typical hiring volumes

Recruitment Technology

Technology solutions cost-effectively driving recruitment brand awareness and improving hiring efficiency

Recruitment Services

- Sourcing and Job Board Optimization
- Prescreening and Behavioral Interviewing
- Recruitment Branding and Online Career Centers
- Applicant Tracking Systems
- Candidate Assessments
- Background Verification, Reference Checks, and Drug Testing
- Candidate On-Boarding
- Metrics, Reporting, and Compliance
- Post-Hire Surveys

To learn how we can help your organization achieve exceptional recruitment results, call us at **888-750-5627.**

Practice Specialties

- Accounting & Finance
- Business Development/Sales
- Engineering
- Human Resources
- Information Technology
- Marketing
- Operations Management
- Supply Chain
- Quality Assurance/Quality Control

Industries Served

- Cable & Telecommunications
- Consumer Packaged Goods
- Distribution/Logistics/Fulfillment
- Food & Beverage
- Healthcare
- Industrial Manufacturing
- Retail
- Security
- Technology

Fast Facts

- Based in Fort Lauderdale, FL
- Founded in 2000 as an Executive Search firm
- An Inc. 5000 honoree since 2011
- Client roster includes some of the world's leading brands
- North American recruitment focus
- Multi-lingual recruitment team