

## **PART I**

# Finding, Keeping, and Releasing Salespeople

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# HIRING

*Vision Precedes Everything*

—John Klymshyn

I recently coached a salesperson over the phone, and I wanted her to understand the importance of knowing where she wanted to take her business. This is relevant to you, The Ultimate Sales Manager, because you buy and sell all day. You buy the corporate vision, and then repackage and sell it to your immediate reports.

You must start everything with a specific vision, and that must be in place and clear before you think about hiring. Do not look to fill out your head count.

Clarify and commit to a vision of your group, and hire to fulfill that vision. In this chapter and throughout this section, we talk about the employment cycle that people will have with you and your company. What do you want people to think of or speak about when they describe the environment you create on the sales floor or throughout the office? You create and significantly contribute to this environment: Know where you want the car to go before you start driving.

Some sales managers are interested in fostering healthy competition. Others want a fast-paced environment. Others are looking for their folks to show and offer mutual respect. You may think that all of these either characterize what you want or specifically describe what you have.

In my travels (I visit about 40 different corporations per year), I have developed an ability to sense the mood, environment, and culture of an office within 15 minutes of my arrival. I can tell if people are on edge, or if they are cocky. I can tell if people work together, or if they create and maintain fiefdoms.

Many of the contributors to this book have some of the best-run operations I have seen or experienced. You walk into their office, and from the first person you encounter, you know that the office is prepared, professional, and productive. Not only that, but the manager's personality is stamped on each person. People like to work for someone who knows where he or she is going.

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**Attribute 1: The Ultimate Sales Manager  
understands, and communicates consistently,  
that vision precedes everything.**

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## THE THREE Ps

Strong performers must exhibit these three characteristics consistently, they must be:

1. Prepared
2. Professional
3. Productive

The three Ps establish a foundation for how you, The Ultimate Sales Manager, will run your team. This concept will appear several times throughout this book. When the three Ps are arranged in any order, they communicate great advice, and they set you and your team up for consistent success.

I am more interested in your team being consistent over time than I am in you having a great first quarter, and then falling apart for the second. This concept, this group of words, is a way to lead and, as a result, manage salespeople. I am excited to share it with you.

Now, what really excites me (and you, and anyone with whom you share this three-word concept) is that the three-P formula is like an Escher lithograph.<sup>1</sup> You can rearrange the components of the formula in any way you choose, and it will always make sense. (It is so amazing and inspiring to me that Escher created things and experiences that were impossible in the physical world but not in his mind or art.) The formula's varied results are what make it intriguing and powerful:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Productivity} + \text{Professionalism} &= \text{Preparation} \\ \text{Preparation} + \text{Productivity} &= \text{Professionalism} \end{aligned}$$

With that in mind, let's talk about how you get to that wonderful place of having the team and environment that you want:

- ◆ Professional
- ◆ Prepared
- ◆ Productive

The great thing about this formula is that it allows for your personality and unique insight, and it requires those things to make the formula work.

*I'd much rather have an empty seat than an empty suit.*

—Thad Seligman

Translation: Don't keep people on board who are not fulfilling their commitments and quota. And when you hire, do not let an empty chair motivate you into hiring someone against your gut, or out of the profile that you will develop by the end of this chapter.

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<sup>1</sup>M. C. Escher, graphic artist and visionary. He created prints and lithographs of scenes and events that were impossible in our world. He drew water going up hill, or two hands drawing each other on a page—that sort of thing. I reference his work here because most of his work can be viewed from several perspectives and still astonish the viewer. I am a big fan.

The startling truth is that empty chairs are costly. Every commercial real estate sales manager I have ever spoken to knew exactly what his "desk cost" was. This is a number that is in his budget that he must somehow earn and cover to make the office profitable. It is especially relevant to commercial real estate people because they look at everything on a "use of square footage" basis. Retail store owners can tell you what a square foot on their merchandise floor must generate *per hour*.

You should identify what it costs you to have an empty seat, and weigh that drain on the profitability of your team against the cost of leaving it empty. If each space in your office costs X dollars, you divide that among the production your team is creating, and you know what that dollar cost is.

There is another drain that is hard to put into a numerical expression:

$$\text{Time} + \text{Effort} = ???$$

If you retain people who are not working out, everyone on your team (including the guilty party) knows that they are not working out. If there is a drain on the team, it is your job to get rid of that person.

But let's think about more fun and exciting things, like the path an employee takes with you and your company.



## THE EMPLOYMENT CYCLE

You, The Ultimate Sales Manager, must have the vision and foresight to know if someone is going to be a good addition to your team, if an individual is already a great contributor, or if an individual needs to be removed and allowed to pursue a career goal elsewhere.

The employment cycle for salespeople starts before they join you and ends after they have been hired somewhere else. In

today's competitive society, you will lose people to direct competitors, and you may find yourself being asked for an employment reference for someone who did not perform for you but who wants you to tell another employer how great an employee she was for you.

A positive aspect is that some employee's employment cycle can be as long as your tenure in your sales management position.

I have had the opportunity to read books, attend seminars, and speak directly with a lot of people about sales management. One thing that I find distracting is that I have been told many times that there are things I need to do "all the time" to be a successful sales manager. Let's agree that as a sales manager there are many things that I need to put effort into completely and consistently, but to ask me to do anything beyond breathing and thinking "all the time" is a bit ridiculous.

Now that we have that established, let's view the employment cycle that salespeople might have in your organization. In particular, let's talk about things that are going to be on your mind regularly—recruiting, interviewing, developing, coaching, measuring, rewarding, correcting, encouraging, measuring, warning, and firing.

It is tough and a bit cold to boil down the tenure of an employee to this list, but this list can save your professional life. Where are each of your folks on this list? What was the key content of the last conversation you had with everyone on the team? Warning: If you can't remember the last conversation you had with one or more of the folks reporting to you, it's time to put this book down and get to work.

Let's start with recruiting—the ongoing preparation and practice that leads to hiring.

## **Recruiting**

Often, the employment cycle begins with the practice of recruiting. Let's lay out the eight steps as a way to help us remember them, making it easier to put them into practice:

1. Write a business plan (who, what, when, and how).
2. Identify your head count (as well as budget for salaries, bonuses, commissions, incentives, and costs of acquisition).
3. Write a job description for your sales positions.
4. Recruit to those specific job descriptions.
5. Interview.
6. Interview some more.
7. Extend offers.
8. Agree on a start date.

Before you get to a start date though, you have to recruit. Recruiting can take many forms, and you have multiple options to attract talented individuals to your team:

- ◆ Internet advertising (e.g., Yahoo Hotjobs).
- ◆ Traditional newspaper advertising.
- ◆ Referral bonuses for current team members: They refer someone who they think you might want to hire. If you hire that person, and they stay on board for a specific period, the person making the referral earns a bonus.
- ◆ Direct recruiting from other companies: You may or may not want to recruit from the competition—speaking to employees of your direct competitor opens the door for them to speak to your folks.
- ◆ Headhunters: These professional recruiters are paid a fee. There are also retained search companies who are paid to do the research, regardless of whether you hire the recruit. Or there are contingency firms like the one I used to work for, to which you pay a significant fee for finding someone who actually comes to work for your company.
- ◆ Personal recruiting from other sources: You are always on the lookout for good talent, and you may ask a waiter, a retail salesperson, or anyone else with whom you come into contact if he has ever considered working in the greatest profession in the world, and for a great company like yours.



- ◆ Temporary to permanent (commonly known as Temp to Perm) opportunities: I have used this, and recommend it highly. The folks who run reputable, professional temporary staffing services in your area may be able to help you with this. The concept is, you define the job requirements, and you share them with your staffing vendor. You then come to an agreement that you will interview candidates, and then the ones from that pool whom you choose, will agree to a trial employment period. This allows both you and the candidate to determine if the position you are looking to fill is a fit for everyone involved. If *yes*, you pay a fee to convert that person to full time. If *no*, you are free to release her, without the burden of an exit interview, or a long corporate process of protecting yourself from consequences. The person understands that during her temporary employment, she is auditioning for the job, and vice versa. You are auditioning to be her employer. The reason this works is that candidates like to have choices. At the same time, you get to determine if she fits because, during this period, the candidate is making an income and learning a new job, yet the staffing firm legally employs her. Look into it. It is a great thing. For an idea of firms in your area, contact my good friends at the American Staffing Association, headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, or visit <http://www.americanstaffing.net/chapters/directory.cfm>.

Recruiting is an active pursuit of The Ultimate Sales Manager because you will always have an eye on the future of your head count. Salespeople may be promoted, move to other departments, or just leave.

Every seat in your office is a temporary station for your salespeople, and temporary could mean anything from a few months to many years. With an eye on the potential ebb and flow of people moving in and out over time, it is ideal to have some prospects in the wings at all times who could potentially fill an empty desk or to help staff a new branch.



Let's think of the employment cycle of salespeople as a timeline that looks like a bell curve. It moves from left to right, and each stage of the timeline takes more time and effort, so it is wider at the center (the time when the person is Prepared, Professional, and Productive). When you are recruiting, it is hard to get a sense of when the people you are most interested in will come on board, if ever. Many of the managers who I interviewed for this book had conversations with folks that they wanted to come work for them for months, even years.

Should the person work out and stay on board, she stays in the timeline's center, which is widest when she is producing. If someone is not working out, the line gets thinner because your investment of time and energy with that person diminishes. Your attention turns to documenting failures to comply or produce. Your time is involved in uncomfortable conversations about what must happen in order for the person to stay. You will have, by this time, a gut sense as to whether the person will ultimately stay and find a place on the team. When it is time to let the person go, the line thins. It could stretch out over time, however, depending on what steps and time period must be invested to satisfy corporate standards and state law before you can send employees on their way.

When we bring someone on board, it is wise to plan to spend a fair amount of time answering questions, making introductions, explaining basic procedures, and helping the new hire navigate the team and the overall company. You cannot expect someone to show up for work Wednesday, and start selling Thursday. But I am a big fan of starting people in the middle of the selling week. It allows them a few days to absorb a ton of information, followed by a weekend, before they have to get from Monday morning to Friday afternoon at a new job, in a new environment, with a new set of coworkers, and (most important) a new boss. Let them talk out the first few days with friends and family over the weekend, to make sure they come back the following Monday. That last statement is

delivered a bit tongue in cheek. I have been told stories of many salespeople who start work at 8:00 A.M. on Monday, go out to lunch at noon, and never come back.

Recruiting is also a plodding, potentially long-term investment. I was recruited into two separate sales management positions by people I had done business with or known for over a year each.

Recruiting is really based on you knowing what type of individual you want, and how those various individuals you either inherit or recruit will work together to create the tangible, reliable environment that you want. I have recruited waiters and waitresses. I have recruited people who came to my office to sell me something. I have recruited from competitors, and I have recruited from companies that had nothing to do with what I sold. I have even recruited people from other departments in a company.

I found recruiting to be fun, because every environment I have endeavored to create was upbeat, lively, and there was a lot of laughing going on during the day. People in other departments notice stuff like that, and it is very flattering (and made my job a lot easier) when someone sharp, driven, hardworking, and reliable would approach me to be considered for the next available position in my department. Imagine—he wanted to leave a regular-paying job to risk working for me and making more than he ever dreamed. I have taken people from customer service jobs, from delivery jobs, from operations and administrative jobs, and provided them with a platform to change their lives forever.

I do not want to appear sappy or overly emotional, but I unapologetically embrace and enjoy people who trust their own ability enough to risk everything on themselves. This is the true test of determination and character, and it is thrilling to be a part of, and often a facilitator of, that type of life experience.

Recruiting requires you to have a clear vision, to have your eyes and ears open, and for you to be able to say no. Sales is not for everyone, and if your heart tells you loudly that someone should not do it or try it, trust your heart.

It would be wonderful if The Ultimate Sales Manager never had to recruit—if we found a few great folks and everything was just peachy all the time. Unfortunately, that is not realistic. The hope and wish is that we get to retain strong individuals.

In Chapter 5, you learn an approach for classifying your existing team. When we operate under the assumption that *vision precedes everything*, we have a vision for what the team needs. We have to fill gaps and add where necessary. We have to recognize those who may be on their way out, and as a result, we have to be smart about what level of person to bring in. By understanding how to classify the various members of the team, we are clearer on whom to hire.

The goal of recruiting is to bring more productive individuals into your already performing team. Before I hire someone to be a contributing part of that team, I want to do everything I can to see if he is prepared, professional, and productive.



## Behaviorial Interviewing

Dennis Napoliello and I met when I sold him a half-day sales training seminar. At the time, he was a regional director for a wireless services provider. He now holds the title of senior director of sales for Equinox Fitness, a high-end gym and sport company based in New York. He and I come together on the hallowed ground of a shared passion: professional football. To avoid alienating anyone who is a fan of a team that may have beaten our team soundly, or to whom we might return the favor in the future, suffice it to say that we are rabid fans of a storied franchise, and leave it at that. Dennis supports Attribute 2 of The Ultimate Sales Manager.

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**Attribute 2: Listen and interview well,  
and know who you are hiring.**

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Dennis tells us:

The biggest challenge in hiring salespeople is that there is a portion of the population that is adept at interviewing.

I am a practitioner of behavioral type questions during the interview that will tap into someone's mind.

During my years in sales management, I have interviewed recent college graduates who did not even understand what the job was, and I interviewed people who have been selling for a while, who know what questions are typically asked during a sales rep interview. Once I saw that a few times, I decided that I would ask behavioral questions.

These are designed to find out what is important to people. By working with the managers who reported to me, I did a variety of different things to develop our collective ability at interviewing and finding the best candidates for our open positions.

As an example, I did an exercise with my sales managers, where I asked them to come to me with a list of the key skills that helped someone to be successful in our business. Not necessarily sales in general—we worked to identify the keys to our industry, and the people who were successful in it.

We came up with something called the Salesperson Characteristics Model. It had 25 key skills and or characteristics of the people who worked for us and who were successful. We rated candidates on a 3-2-1 scale. A ranking of 3 was above average, 2 was average, and 1 was below average.

First, I had the managers go back and grade their own people according to this scale, so that they could identify ways to work with their current employees to make them better, and then I asked them to employ this model of grading characteristics of every person they interviewed.

So that they could take a look at it, and tally it at the end—

Say someone was a 3 on persistence, a 2 on computer skills, and a 1 on industry knowledge, and you could have someone net out at a 2.79. This would not be a guarantee, but it was a benchmark for who would be a good candidate for us.

This gave us a specific picture of who would fit into the organization. We as sales managers should think about the people we sit next to, even if they were recently promoted, and identify the best of the best and their skills. This gives us a measurement about whom we should look to hire.

The most successful person I ever hired made the grade for us, and was hired because of a combination of our identification of those graded attributes, along with behavioral interviewing, for example:

"Describe a challenge you had persuading a certain individual or group to take a specific course of action."

"Think of a time when you identified a hidden agenda. How did you identify and work through that agenda?"

The goal is to ask a question that can be answered by anyone (say, a college graduate with limited experience to a journeyman sales representative). With recent graduates, you can tailor it to their experiences with study groups or group projects; with an experienced salesperson, it can be about winning a customer—the goal is to ask questions beyond "Where do you want to be in five years?"

All this question does is get us pat answers—too often people would give me rehearsed answers. I also stay away from questions like: "What do you think you need to work on?" or "What are your weaknesses?"

Behavioral interviewing means that I am looking for a response for when they actually exhibited the behavior that I asked about.

The Ultimate Sales Manager is looking for something other than the answer to stock interview questions. Often, the intent of these questions is to get the candidate talking so that the sales manager may learn more about the candidate.

Personally, I have never been a fan of questions like "What is your goal should you come to work with us?" or "Where do you see yourself in five years?" because often the response would be: "I want your job."

I like the fact that people interviewing for a position with my company have ambition, but this doesn't tell me anything about their character or how they think. These are key points of interest for me, now, and were throughout my tenure in sales management. I mentioned this to Dennis. His response:

Absolutely—I like questions or challenges like: "Tell me about a time that you are proud of, when you were able to recognize how another person felt, and what was the situation, and how did you handle it?"

I like this, because it is a way for us to delve into what is really important to people.

I remember at one point when I was in wireless services, and we were getting a lot of candidates from competitors. Many of those people were not necessarily the best for our team because they may not have measured up to our measurement criteria, as outlined in our Salesperson Characteristics Model.

There are many professional interviewers, and this question always helped me—the idea is to see if people can think on their feet. Many times, it brought a smile to people's faces, other times I got the response: "No one has ever asked me that before."

I ask, "Can you tell me about a time when you did something nice for someone?"

Talk about a way to get someone thinking during an interview.

There is a fine line between hiring someone who is like you, and someone who has similar habits and attributes.

I want people with different ways of looking at things, but you must find people who are consistent. As a sales manager, you want to minimize the ups and downs of the selling life.



## Developing

Dennis and I agree on many things, and most significantly on the usefulness of Attribute 3 of The Ultimate Sales Manager.

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**Attribute 3: Hire people you think will amaze you. Develop them into people who amaze themselves.**

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Very little of your day should be a surprise. Having to talk someone down after he lost a deal may happen at any time, and the fact that you know your salespeople well enough to be able to handle them individually in different situations will prepare you for more difficult conversations when situations arise.

You will recruit based on the hope that the individuals you hire will adhere to this formula. You will interview, screen in, screen out, make offers, then hire, and the employment cycle begins.

As you find them, or they find you, and you come to an agreement about their role, you offer them the growth and confidence they need to be successful, and they stay.

This is the ideal, and not entirely uncommon, experience for The Ultimate Sales Manager. Unfortunately, there is also a significant amount of time that sales managers will devote to tracking goals<sup>2</sup> only to then end the cycle of employment of salespeople.

So, if we look at the employment cycle from a linear, timeline perspective, we add a third dimension when the timeline is wider in the middle, with the most active, and hopefully productive, period of employment being represented by this widest part. This should be when the person is most prepared, professional, and productive. This also means that this should be when the person is making the greatest measurable contribution to the team and to your attainment of objectives.

There are just a few ways for you to acquire a team. You either build it from scratch (a lot of work, and a tremendous amount of fun), or you inherit an existing team.

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<sup>2</sup>Some companies call your expected revenue attainment your "budget." Others call it "goal," and another company that I worked for called it "plan." Personally, I prefer "goal." Not because I don't think that I will make it, but because "budget" sounds like I am limited to that number. You and I can get into a discussion of semantics and stuff when we meet, but for now (the duration of this book), let's use "goal."



If you are someone who has inherited a team, there will probably be an overwhelming desire to make some changes. In my sales management career, I inherited two separate sales teams (one large, one small) at two different companies. It is difficult to step in and manage a preexisting team because there is a social momentum (or lack thereof) when you as the manager come from outside the team. Both of these teams found ways to make my job challenging, however, I learned and implemented various techniques to create team synergy, and ultimately meet revenue goals.

Outside of inheriting a team, you may have the rare opportunity to hire a team from scratch. This is very enjoyable and rewarding because you are able to imprint your personality and style on the team from the beginning. I was asked to do this for a company called Tandberg Data, when it hired me to be its inside sales manager. It had allotted office space, designed a plan for what it wanted to sell, defined to whom it wanted to sell, and determined the price at which it should sell. All that was missing was a team dedicated to the goal, and someone to create the team. It was a dream opportunity.

Tandberg had a history as a tape-recording manufacturer, and in the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, it sold high-quality tape backup drives for computer networks. To give you an idea of how long ago this was, we were selling machines that were powerfully robust—they could back up an *entire* gigabyte of information, in less than an hour.

Now, you may smile when you read this, and yes, it dates the author a bit, but at that time, this was a hot little product. Tandberg Data was competing with several other manufacturers, and the exciting part of the assignment was that Tandberg's name was largely hidden from users because the bulk of its products were sold under the traditional original equipment manufacturer (OEM) model. This meant the products were manufactured in Norway under a contract to apply the brand name and label of Company A because Company A wanted to have consistency in the branding of the entire computer network that it would deliver to its ultimate end user (customer). As

an OEM, Tandberg sold the drives to IBM. Many IBM systems with a tape backup drive sold during that period had Tandberg's product, with IBM's name on the front.

Our job was different. We were to make the brand of Tandberg known to a different set of customers, on a smaller scale, yet still have enough sales to affect the factory, and pay for the existence of the department. These potential customers were called value-added resellers.

Because I had built a decent career up to that point of selling and teaching others to sell professionally over the phone, the folks at Tandberg felt that I was the best person to build the team. This is where I learned the thrill of building a team from scratch.

First, I had to define specifically what the job entailed. This meant defining my role as well as the jobs of the people who would work in the new department. I had to define what the measurement criteria would be (e.g., number of dials per day, number of contacts, number of quotes, number of trial units sent out, or number of specification sheets faxed). The measurement criterion is based on the ultimate goal but must allow you to accurately measure success, analyze areas for improvement, and track what works and what doesn't.

This is where I started to aspire to Attribute 4 of The Ultimate Sales Manager.

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**Attribute 4: Work to maintain high morale,  
through consistency, attitude, and compassion.**

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Establishing and inspecting measurement criteria would come to be a staple of how I taught, recruited, and managed for the balance of my career (see *Move the Sale Forward*—my book on selling).



## Validating

The only way I would feel confident in labeling this book as the "ultimate guide" would be if I was convinced that the ideas and

techniques offered here were proven. I feel that theory is a wonderful thing, but practical application is how things really find their validation.

In preparing for the various sections and chapters, I conducted over 30 hours of interviews with people (like Dennis Napoliello—smart, driven, sales managers or leaders with a successful track record) who you hear from in the following pages. It is my sincere hope that while you read this book, and in the future, you use much of the enclosed advice to develop your style, achieve your goals, and ultimately (you will see that word a lot here) recruit, train, and manage other sales managers.

Richard Warshauer is a career sales manager in the commercial real estate industry. Currently, Richard is the sales manager for GVA Williams, a highly respected New York City firm. Richard has interviewed thousands, and hired and managed hundreds, of sales professionals in his illustrious career. When I spoke to him about hiring, he told me:

The first step is to do your business plan: What sort of people are you seeking and what do you expect them to do? Write a realistic job description and forecast your head count. Sharpen your job description to the exact needs of your company at that time, but always look to the future.

Of course, you will always want to recruit candidates with certain personality traits and mental abilities that mirror your organization's core competencies. Appearance and communication skills are always critical, as well as the candidate's meshing with your corporate ethos. In addition to the basic passion and sales drive that we look for in every person, we also place great importance on integrity and team play.

Richard's advice is useful, because he makes us look at the continuum of what we described earlier as the bell-curve view of a salesperson's employment cycle. Mr. Warshauer admonishes us to prepare and be professional so that we can continue to be productive.

Ed Friedman, executive vice president and principal of Global Brokerage and Advisory Services, with Newmark Knight Frank, agrees:

We have to be introspective. A hire is not made in a vacuum. It should be tied to goals and objectives of an organization. Is your sales team (or force) mature in all markets?

Are you introducing a new product? Is the organization in a growth or contraction mode? Are you publicly traded? What is the structure (e.g., partnership or C corp)?

Hiring has a direct nexus to any organization's value proposition.

I ask everyone in our organization, after interviewing a candidate, to be able to come back to me with feedback and answers to the following:

- ◆ What initial feel do you get from someone on a visceral basis?
- ◆ What level of vocabulary, as well as general business acumen does he demonstrate?
- ◆ What type of financial skills does the person possess?
- ◆ Is that person able to speak with expertise about cashbook and tax issues?
- ◆ What is the quality of the persons' former representation assignments, and who did he represent?
- ◆ What role did that person play in those assignments?

And is the person likeable? Is this someone you could envision having a social relationship with, *or* if not you personally, would other people want that? Is this person someone who is fun to be around?

Ed and Richard address the tangibles and intangibles in their respective interviewing approaches. They both lead teams that are in the commercial real estate industry and they are both based in New York, the largest center of commercial real estate in the United States.

Not only are they both approached often, they both have a very specific approach to the hiring and interview process. Richard limits

the number of people currently on board at GVA Williams with whom a candidate will meet. Ed has the candidate meet a minimum of a dozen people at Newmark Knight Frank.

Ed tells us:

Art, science, gut, intellect, and experience each play a role in your interviewing and screening technique.

As such, we look for the following traits:

- ◆ Articulate
- ◆ Thoughtful
- ◆ Possesses a fantastic vocabulary
- ◆ Seems to be able to go with the flow

Ed feels that author and consultant David Maister “got it right.” Ed wants people in his organization who are “SWANS”:

**S**mart

**W**ork Hard

**A**mbitious

**N**ice

Ed says:

An organization is only as good as the transgressions it accepts. We do not want people who are just hitters, who engage in activities unbecoming, and who do not reflect our core values.

When you think about your business plan, the first point to be addressed must be head count. From there, you decide what the attributes are of the people you want to fill out that head count.

Ed, and many other people I interviewed, felt that identifying someone’s resilience and flexibility in an interview was essential to determine her potential as a successful member of the team.

You may not always have a choice as to who reports to you, and there have been stories of “raiding” productive sales teams in organizations to fill out the “plan” in other divisions. It is unfortunate, but it is a fact of life.

When you create a business plan, you get to draw a picture of what you want your selling year to look like and gauge your performance against what you anticipate it will be.

This leads us to the Attribute 5 of The Ultimate Sales Manager.

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**Attribute 5: Never ask a salesperson to do  
something you have not done or would not do.**

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This simplifies the process into specific tasks, which helps to divine action steps for the week, month, quarter, and year. The title of this chapter is not designed to oversimplify the process. Your skill and aplomb for this part of your job affects, impacts, and potentially defines every other minute of your sales management day. When you hire the wrong people, your team and the management of them is a burden. When you hire the right people, it is easier to perform the job you were hired to do.

When you are recruiting and preparing to hire, you must set the criteria in advance for people whom you want on your team. Driven, focused, humor-filled people do not fall into your lap every day, and you may have to try a few approaches, and (even more tiring) a few attempts, before you hit your stride. Recruiting is a skill that I learned over an extended period. Interviewing is just a part of it.

I spent time as a recruiter for the U.S. Naval Reserve before I did any corporate recruiting. This was during peacetime, and it was in an affluent area. My assigned goal was seven people enrolled per calendar month, and I was recruiting people who had fulfilled an agreement with any branch of the U.S. military. We referred to them as NavVets (navy veterans who had served active duty time and had received an honorable discharge) and OsVets (people who had completed an enlistment with *other* branches of the military, from the army and the marines to the air force and the coast guard).

Now (to make it more challenging), I was tasked with finding, recruiting, and enlisting people whose jobs were critical to the local mission of the U.S. Naval Reserve. This meant that I was expected

and required to attract people to the service who could commit to serving one weekend of every month and two full weeks of every year. We were even more specific, in that these people needed to have both skill and training that was narrowly focused. I am sure you see the parallel here, in how this prepared me to recruit performance-focused salespeople.

As a U.S. Naval Reserve recruiter, I was thrilled to have the job because it put me back in uniform, it gave me the opportunity to continue to serve (I had completed four years of active duty just 18 months prior), and I got to work in a pretty great environment. My territory was three California counties: Santa Barbara, San Luis Obispo, and Ventura. (I saw a fair amount of shoreline and ocean driving around these counties in my government vehicle.)

While it was exciting, it was hard, and it required a specific focus to my recruiting efforts. That the candidates were past military members was an initial qualifying criteria, but it was far from the *only* criteria. To make things more interesting, no one was obligated to sign up. All of these folks had served a full tour of duty or enlistment on active duty. It was strictly volunteer.

I won several awards as a U.S. Naval Reserve recruiter, and I believe it was because I was focused, diligent, and really wanted people to enjoy the benefits available.



## Hiring and Releasing

With all this advice, I must also include a caveat: If you recruit successfully and hire the person you were looking for, it does not guarantee his success in your organization. Make sure that if someone does not work out, you do not dwell on it. Use it, learn from it, *and move on.*

Imagine that you are a football quarterback who, during a game, will throw more than a dozen passes (maybe twice that). It is the second quarter of a tied game. You throw a pass right into the arms of a

defender, and he runs the ball back for a touchdown. You are going to be back on the field almost instantly, and you must learn from that error, and move on. You must take the lesson, internalize it, make it part of your armor for the future, and go on to the next task.

Having to release someone is difficult, and it can be an emotional experience for you. It certainly will be an emotional experience for some of the people you will have to release, and in Chapter 6, we discuss what leads up to, and occurs during, that dreaded conversation.

Some might say that we should have a different personality toward such events, but I never enjoyed letting people go, and do not know many professional managers who do. It is a necessary responsibility of the job.

As we examine the trajectory of the employment cycle of a salesperson, we notice that in the beginning, everything is upbeat and positive. Your endless wellspring of positive attitude and hope for the culture will assist you at this stage of your building a team. If you have inherited a team, you must still view it as a team that you will build because your company deserves the smartest decisions and actions from you throughout your sales management day and career. It has entrusted you with the welfare of the employees, the health of the department, and the image of the company as an employer.

Do not ever lose sight of the fact that everything you do, say, imply, or promote is being watched, absorbed, and evaluated at all times by both the people who report to you, and everyone else in the company with whom those folks come into contact.

With this as an intimidating fact, let's approach hiring from the most positive, prepared, and professional view, which will inform your actions and influence your results. Results are your ultimate measurement, but your employer and staff will be very aware of and sensitive to how you achieve your results.

Hiring is not something you can always do, but it is certainly a priority for you to plan and manage. (For the duration of the book, and for every conversation you have beyond this experience, remember that my personal definition of "to manage" is *to get the most out of*.)



The character, flexibility, and productivity of your team will be affected by every staff decision you make. Whether you add a top performer, or you release someone who does not fit into your scheme, you impact the overall team, if for no other reason than simple human dynamics.

Think about it this way: You sit 14 people in a room, and ask them to introduce themselves, one by one. One of these individuals might feel pressured because she does not like speaking in front of groups. Another might want to be the comedian of the group. Yet another might be wound so tight that he wants to say the exact right thing, with the exact right delivery all the time. This desire consumes his thinking so much that when it *is* time for him to speak, he has nothing prepared.

As soon as you get halfway through the 14 introductions, two people walk into the room. You do not acknowledge them but everyone knows they are there. The difference in the atmosphere is palpable. You see people exchanging subtle signs with each other about you, the new people, other folks in the room, and so on.

Take this scenario and amplify it. When a sales team hits its stride, and there is a healthy mix of good-natured competition, there are a few laughs, there are one or two heated exchanges over territory, time off, or some professional sporting event, and you have a definable environment.

Each time you add or subtract someone from that environment, you change that. You must be sensitive to this when you hire, when you fire, and when you discipline anyone on your team. A friend of mine, Mike Barrett, once wisely told me, "Words never stop traveling at the first pair of ears."

This image has stayed with me, and it informs a note I find relevant to our conversation about finding, keeping, and releasing salespeople. You do not lead, speak, interact, or cajole in a vacuum.

The industry you sell in may be relatively small. You could be in a similar situation to Bob Dean of Grubb & Ellis: His closest competitor in his market (Sacramento, California) leases an office in the *same building* as his office. I point this out, because there is a very real

possibility that the conversations he has with his people are relayed, translated, or recounted (at some level) with people who work for his (or your) competitor.

One of the places from which you will most logically recruit is your competitors. Here in the United States, we have become very fond of "noncompete" agreements. (Noncompete—a signed document entered into with the same faith and confidence as a prenuptial agreement. "I love you, and know that we will be together forever, but if you leave me, I want everything back, and then some.") It is not pleasant to lose people who are bringing in revenue, and the most logical place for them to go is to a company that sells the same thing you do. That is what competition is all about.

A common occurrence in sales organizations goes something like this: You run a business or a sales team, and that team is selling Gigabats (I like that word, because I made it up and it sounds hi-tech enough for the twenty-first century).

In selling these Gigabats, you learn that every so often, when someone on your team gets close to closing a deal, the account goes to a competitor at the last minute.

As a prepared, professional, productive sales manager—no, as The Ultimate Sales Manager—you have created contacts and sources that provide you with competitive intelligence on a regular basis. Tapping these sources, you learn that it is one particular salesperson who usually beats your folks out.

Oww. Stings a bit, doesn't it? You digest the information, talk to your friends, your spouse, and maybe even the person who cuts your hair about this fascinating fact, and someone says to you quite innocently, "Why don't you just recruit that salesperson, so your company can get those deals?"

It sounds devious yet brilliant. It sounds like you will have the opportunity to be a true competitor, because competing teams always want the best talent on their side. They want the strongest offense and the stingiest defense. And you want the revenue.

The first thing to think about is *not* the dollars, the awards and accolades, or the satisfaction of winning those next deals because you made a shrewd addition to your team. The *first thing* to think about is whether this person will strengthen, contribute to, and fit into the culture of your team, your company, and your approach to managing.

As The Ultimate Sales Manager, you are not hoping to be the most popular (although people will not continue to work for someone whom they do not like). You, The Ultimate Sales Manager, are looking to build a strong, winning team that will last more than one season.

As a result, you can rely on and relate to Attribute 6 of The Ultimate Sales Manager.

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**Attribute 6: Attract top talent, retain team players, appreciate the people you have, and do not delay in removing those people who do not fit.**

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So, I pose the following ethical question: "Is it okay to recruit talent from your competition?"

You and I can debate this when you attend one of our retreats, but you also need to wrestle an answer out of your circle of advisors and land on something not only that you are comfortable with but also that you do not feel as though you need to defend. Where will recruiting from the competition fit into your team?

So, if Tony T. is hitting it out of the park working for your competitor that is one thing. If he is taking deals away from your salespeople (and as a result your bottom line), then that is another story altogether, isn't it?

## VISION PRECEDES EVERYTHING

Let's work through the answer to the following: *What does your team look, feel, and sound like?*

There are a variety of colorful phrases and axioms for how you will be measured, examined, and critiqued. Dennis Napoliello told me that he always kept the following in mind:

As a sales manager, you are always going to be the topic of someone's dinner conversation. Either you are great because you stood up for someone today, or you are a creep because you had to redo a commission. Whatever the issue might be, you are out there, and you are going to be the topic of someone's dinner conversation that night.

With that in mind, here are some concepts and concretes to list, examine, and decide on:

- ◆ What is the *fun* quotient?
- ◆ What does it feel like to work for you?
- ◆ What kind of risks are your salespeople ready to take, and which ones do they feel you will support, regardless of the outcome?
- ◆ What do you ask them to do, at which you personally are adept?
- ◆ How do you attract talent (e.g., referral, recruiting, company reputation, or word of mouth)?
- ◆ What do you set out as the expectations for conduct, decorum, or conflict resolution?
- ◆ On what do you want your folks to focus?
- ◆ How do you want your folks to respond to competitive influence, overtures, and challenges?
- ◆ How do your folks think they are being measured?

All of these are part of how you are perceived in the market, because it is fascinating to me that regardless of what image I *want* to project, the image that people walk around with is the one that is the aggregate of their collected impressions of me and my company.

What they hear about how I manage, how I recruit, how I release people—all of this is out in the marketplace for all to absorb.



Thad Seligman is the president of NAI Horizon, a commercial real estate brokerage in Phoenix, Arizona. I respect Thad's opinions and ideas because he has proven his theories on the playing field, in several stints as a sales manager. Thad says:

The personality traits that are necessary for a salesperson to be successful are innate. The technical skills can be taught to anyone. If someone does not have a competitive, "fire is burning" desire to score the point to win (those are personality traits), they will never make a salesperson.

The person who traditionally identifies prospects, makes a relationship with them, and closes the sale or deal—that takes a certain type of personality—has the attributes of the sales personality, and some of those attributes are:

- ◆ Goal Oriented
- ◆ High desire to win
- ◆ Does not naturally delegate
- ◆ Likes to do it all
- ◆ Not much in terms of detail
- ◆ Lacks patience
- ◆ High levels of energy (works long periods of time or on multiple projects)
- ◆ People oriented
- ◆ Several (not all) opposite personality traits from a sales manager

Motivational interests are different between a sales manager and a salesperson. They have different ways to look at things. Salespeople are impatient; sales managers' ability to succeed is based on their patience with multiple personalities and people. Salespeople get satisfaction from scoring the point themselves, and they get little satisfaction from seeing someone else succeed. Sales managers cannot do that. Their success and sense of value come from seeing other people succeed. The sales manager is the director; the salesperson is the lead actor in the film.

This is why many successful salespeople who are promoted to sales manager seldom have the same success in that role compared to the success they had as salespeople. They don't have the tools to manage salespeople. They are frustrated, their needs are not being met—the salespeople are being overridden by someone who still wants to play the lead or score the point *themselves*.

Ed Friedman offers:

Sales managers must *never* hire someone like themselves—which may not be the role they are interviewing for—for the same reason that great baseball players may not make the greatest managers.

Hiring is the beginning of the climb up the mountain to becoming The Ultimate Sales Manager. It also outlines for us the importance of Attribute 7 of The Ultimate Sales Manager.

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**Attribute 7: Always know what makes each individual on your team tick.**

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Hiring is beyond essential for sales managers—it is one of the biggest determinants of success or failure.

Now that you know how to hire a good person, you need to know how to train him or her. We cover this in detail in the next chapter.