

Sales Industry Overview

Emerging Hiring Trends to
Keep Your Company Relevant



SALESDRIVE_{LLC}

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Introduction

The landscape of sales is always evolving. In recent years, practices in B2B sales have been altered more dramatically, incited by advances in telecommunication and internet resources. The 2020 global pandemic acted as a catalystⁱ, forcing businesses to focus on streamlining the costs of their salespeople, while also adopting flexible work environments, a more diverse workforce and a greater focus on wellbeing.

Hiring effective sales talent can be more challenging than hiring for other roles, especially due to the impact sales can have on the company's overall wellbeing. According to a PwC surveyⁱⁱ, 58% of HR leaders report that finding, attracting and retaining talent was one of the biggest human capital challenges facing their organizations.

Candidates who apply for careers in sales are increasingly creative at appearing to be well-suited for the job, but that is not always the case. Sales organizations are becoming more segmented as their clients' companies diversify their portfolios. And B2B sales infrastructure and manpower has been traditionally more expensive for companies to maintain than B2C sales.

In light of these challenges, sales organizations have responded in kind. There are many new trends emerging when it comes to hiring and retaining top sales talent. The key is to recognize when you are swimming against the current, so you can turn around and go the other way.

Top Sales Hiring Trends

A good understanding of the current trends throughout the sales industry can shed valuable insight on outdated practices you may be using, new hiring practices to consider and important practices that your competitors are likely using (that you should be using too).

To quote Marshall Goldsmith, “what got you here won’t get you there.” It is time to take a hard look at your current sales hiring practices and evaluate how to update them with the changing times.

Consider how the following current sales trends can influence your hiring decisions:

Virtual Recruiting is a Part of the New Normal

Some businesses may have explored video interviewing here and there with out-of-town candidates in the past. But when the 2020 pandemic sent everyone into lockdown, recruiting professionals were forced to establish fully virtual recruiting processes for the very first time.

And, just as many companies are forming hybrid work models, a hybrid recruiting process, including a blend of virtual and in-person steps, is likely to emerge as well. In fact, according to LinkedIn, “70% of talent professionals say virtual recruiting will become the new standardⁱⁱⁱ.”

Companies are embracing the cost and time savings that comes with virtual recruiting. It will be beneficial to develop a virtual recruiting strategy, if you have not done so already.



Remote Sales is Here to Stay

The pre-pandemic work environment has been forever changed. And while some employers remain certain that their employees will return to the office when the pandemic is behind us, some are already figuring out how to adopt more flexible, hybrid working models. According to a Willis Towers Watson survey^{iv}, “one in five employers are developing policies and providing resources for employees who may work remotely long term,” and “58% are making adjustments to the definition of the role of the workplace and what should be primarily done onsite versus remotely.”



As working remotely goes mainstream, hiring managers and recruiters need to identify candidates who will thrive without direct supervision, particularly when hiring salespeople.

Remote salespeople must remain disciplined and productive despite the natural rejection that comes with sales. To overcome this challenge, you must find candidates with one of the most important predictors of success in sales: Need for Achievement.

Finding High-Performance Talent is Increasingly Difficult

As the pandemic fades, 32% of companies plan to hire between July and September 2021. Yet, talent shortages are at a “15-year-high,” according to Manpower Group, with 69% of companies globally reporting talent shortages.

In the United States, 32% of employers reported difficulties filling jobs, with sales listed as one of the top five in-demand roles.

Finding high-performance talent has always been difficult, but in the midst of a talent shortage the search has become increasingly challenging.



Utilizing all the available resources and tools to hire and retain top talent will be key.

Assessment Technology is on the Rise

As talent acquisition becomes more and more difficult, companies are turning to technology to help give them a competitive advantage in 2021 and beyond. According to a PwC survey, 49% of HR's technology focus through 2022 will be on talent acquisition tools.

Companies want more predictability in their hiring processes so they are turning to pre-hire assessments. According to the Talent Board's *2016 Candidate Experience Research* Report, 82% of companies use some form of pre-employment assessment tests, and how they use assessments is evolving.^v

However, not all assessments are created equal and not all assessments will predict your candidates' sales performance. Therefore, it is critical that you incorporate the *right* assessment into your sales hiring process.

The DriveTest® is the only *validated* sales assessment on the market that measures the three *non-teachable* personality traits that make up Drive. And 90+ years of research shows that Drive is necessary for sustained sales success. Let us help you find qualified candidates with the Drive needed to develop new business opportunities and close new accounts for you.



82% of Companies Use Pre-Employment Assessment Tests – *Do you?*

The DriveTest® is a sales-specific assessment designed to help you identify whether your candidates have the core aptitude needed for sustained sales success. Give it a try on your next sales candidate.

[Get One Free DriveTest® Today!](#)

Rethink Previous Experience

The goal of acquiring new talent is to find people who are both intelligent enough to hit the ground running while digesting new product knowledge and are emotionally open enough to connect with clients. Less than 20% of salespeople have that overlap. Attracting experienced salespeople who harbor both traits is even more challenging, because they are typically the top performers in their environment and are treated well.

This is why companies are turning to outside hires to solve this problem. The pool of potential candidates is much larger, and competitors are less likely to focus on the same candidates.

Even more telling is that businesses are beginning to focus hiring efforts on those with the emotional capacity to connect. Figure 1 shows data collected by the CEB Sales Leadership Council, where hiring managers would classify more than 75% of their sales employees as displaying moderate to high emotional intelligence^{vi}.

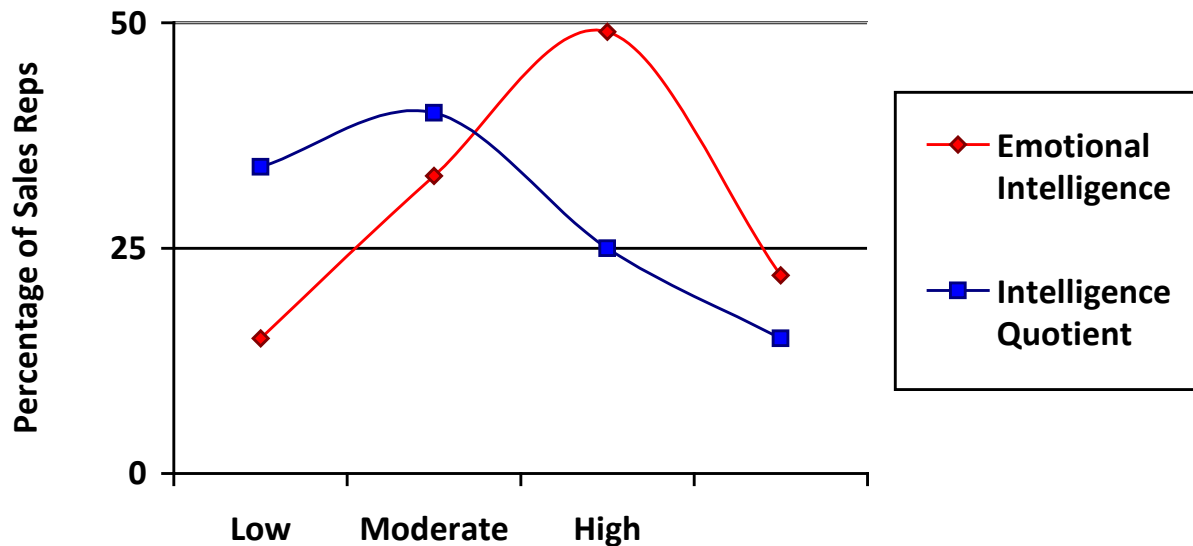


Figure 1. Comparison between emotional and intelligence quotient of sales reps.

Industry Changes to B2B Sales

Even in sales between businesses, customers have increased their demands. Depending on the industry, globalization and online resources have made it easier to switch business loyalties. There is a need for increased savvy. Inexpensive and easy transactions have become expected. Further, the requirements of each sale evolve, sometimes even changing day-by-day.

Small businesses have far greater access to larger businesses. Twenty years ago, companies needed external reps in company-issued cars to drive to remote locations and score new business. Now, with specific landing pages, email and video conferences, the costs of maintaining traveling salespeople (who were unable to readily respond to immediate needs) have often been slashed in favor of telecommunications and digital platforms.

B2B sales teams have three major challenges to surmount:

1. The need to develop adaptable, multi-sourced models that can handle any kind of transaction or cost as quickly as possible.
2. Participating in risk-sharing and service-level agreements to showcase company commitment to clients' needs. With the advent of online services, commodity traders can charge rates based on market indexes and throughputs instead of using daily rates.
3. Changing client needs are requiring effective salespeople who are emotionally intelligent with powerful problem-solving abilities. The increased complexity of modern B2B sales has ensured that simple one-size-fits-all templates are a thing of the past. To combat this change, many companies are layering their sales forces. The idea is to have your frontline salespeople handling all clients, and as the need arises, bring in the more specialized experts to handle specific questions and situations.

Conclusions

Trends in modern sales point to a preference for emotionally-open sales personalities working in a flexible environment, readily available to meet client needs. While delivering good service and effectively meeting client needs are two important factors of successful sales, businesses must also focus their efforts on developing a hiring strategy that is consistent with modern industry trends.

Furthermore, in the digital age it seems we are all craving more immediate attention to our business needs. It is increasingly important that companies are able to find sales representatives that understand buyer demands and find ways to make the most out of a potential connection. By finding a salesperson who can appeal to the personal value of a purchase, your company is almost twice as likely to land a sale, as if they have appealed solely to the business value of a purchase.

About SalesDrive, LLC

At SalesDrive, LLC, we help companies perfect the salesperson hiring process by offering a variety of tools, like a sales assessment, The DriveTest®, for vetting candidates, our book, *Never Hire a Bad Salesperson Again* and a sales psychology-based series called *Sales Psyched!*

Our online sales assessment leverages 90+ years of research in the personality traits of high-performing salespeople and is now used by more than 1,200 companies worldwide.



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Sources:

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ⁱⁱ PwC, “PwC’s HR Technology Survey 2020” (PwC Research 2019), <https://www.pwc.com/us/en/services/consulting/workforce-of-the-future/library/hr-tech-survey.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ Greg Lewis, “6 Recruiting Trends That Will Shape 2021” (LinkedIn 2020), <https://www.linkedin.com/business/talent/blog/talent-strategy/future-of-recruiting>

^{iv} Willis Towers Watson, “Actions to Restore Stability Survey” (Survey Report 2020), <https://www.willistowerswatson.com/en-US/Insights/2020/07/actions-to-restore-stability-survey>

^v Dave Zielinski, “Predictive Assessments Give Companies Insights into Candidates’ Potential” (SHRM 2018), <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/predictive-assessments-insight-candidates-potential.aspx>

^{vi} Nick Toman, “Sales: The Top Five Trends for 2014” (CEB 2013), <https://www.executiveboard.com>