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### **A sales management survival tip: Stop interviewing candidates**

Chris Lytle, CSP, Author of *The Accidental Salesperson*

Have you ever hired a salesperson who performed better during the interview than on the street? "Validity" is the extent to which a prospective employee's rated performance on the interview is related to actual job performance. When an interview is valid, interviewer predictions of high job performance are subsequently followed by job performance at that level.

So, if you've ever interviewed someone you thought would be good but wasn't, the interview wasn't valid. You might just as well have taken all of the resumes submitted, shuffled them, then threw the stack into the air. You could have picked up the resume that fell closest to your chair, called that person, and offered him the job. That's called "The Random Luck" method of hiring.

Before you discount it completely, get this. A Michigan State study validating the efficacy of different kinds of employment methods confirms that interviewing the candidate only improves your odds of hiring success by two percent over The Random Luck method. And, think of the time you'll save if you employ The Random Luck method.

However, there is a way to increase your chances of hiring a person who can do the job. Require people to show you, instead of tell you, what they can do. Then make an informed decision.

### **Six assignments**

Here are six assignments you can give to prospective hires; these questions will give you more information than asking questions like "Where do you see yourself in five years?" This list came from more than 40 Sales Managers who generated ideas in two different workshops.

- 1) Give candidates a question or two to answer in writing. The answer is not as important as the organization, grammar, and punctuation. You are looking for the ability to communicate in writing and to organize thoughts.
- 2) Ask candidates to bring in last year's W-2 to confirm salary. You'll discover exactly how much they made and whether they can retrieve a document which they should have. You'll find out how organized they are and whether they're inflating earnings on their resume.
- 3) Have candidates bring in a written proposal they've made on a previous sales job.
- 4) Hand the candidate a copy of a very good or very bad proposal and ask for a critique. You want to determine if the person can express an opinion and give reasons for his thoughts. This skill will come in handy in sales.
- 5) Suggest that they call you early next week to schedule the next step in the hiring process. You'll see if they can follow up, and you'll learn what "early" means to them.
- 6) Give them a tour of your company and see how many questions they ask. Are they curious? Do they seem genuinely interested in your operation? Would you want them touring your client's businesses like they're touring your facility?

Make incoming quality control a priority. Your job is to find people who can communicate, persuade, follow up, and be organized. Getting people to show you what they can do will give you crucial information that an interview can't. Try this process during your next hiring cycle. Make sure you give each candidate the exact same assignments in order to increase validity.

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