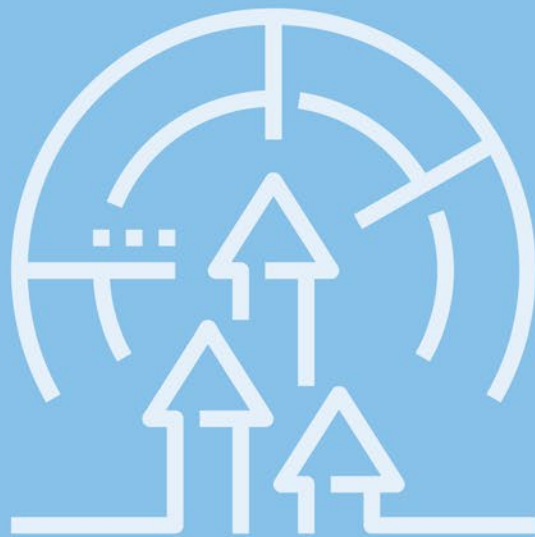




# FINDING AND KEEPING TOP SALES TALENT



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A WHITEPAPER BY THE BROOKS GROUP

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# Talent is your organization's most influential resource—it's the one thing that can clearly and consistently elevate your brand and set you apart from the competition.

Today, forward-thinking sales organizations seeking to make talent their competitive advantage take a holistic and strategic approach—focusing on acquiring, developing, and retaining top sales talent for the needs of both today and tomorrow.

They achieve success by securing a strong talent-mindset across the entire organization, and leveraging key technologies and best practices throughout the lifecycle of the employee.

But in order to source, train, and keep top sales talent, you have to know exactly the type of candidate you're looking for.

## Clearly Define the Type of Talent You Want

The desire to bring on board highly talented people is a goal that all organizations have in common, but the criteria used to define top talent will be uniquely determined by your specific sales position, selling environment, and company culture.

The first step in sourcing talent with the highest likelihood to excel in your organization is to understand the motivators, behaviors, attitudes, and competencies that the position requires—both today and into the near future. Intentionally defining the criteria through a process of [benchmarking](#) removes biases from the hiring process by providing an objective blueprint that candidates can then be measured against.

According to a recent leadership study conducted by UNC [Kenan-Flagler Business School](#), this “criteria-based approach” that articulates exactly what the organization is looking for, is the most sophisticated strategy for identifying high-potential candidates.



## Source Candidates that Fit Your Established Criteria

[Comprehensive assessments](#) provide an in-depth look into a candidate's personal and behavioral makeup, but boiled down there are four fundamental questions that determine a person's ability to perform at high levels within your sales organization:

1. **Can** this person sell?
2. **How** does this person sell?
3. **Will** this person sell?
4. **Why** would this person choose to sell?

Regardless of the products or services you offer, the same four questions will always apply; they never change. That's because there is a definitive set of factors for sales performance that correspond with each of the questions above. Those factors are:

- **Selling Skills**
- **Behavioral Strengths**
- **Attitude**
- **Motivation & Values**

**Can this person sell?** The answer to this question is determined by the level of selling skills and knowledge a salesperson possesses. Selling anything requires certain hard skills and a solid grasp of the knowledge and principles related to the science of selling.

**How does this person sell?** Any personality can sell, but different behavior styles are better suited for different selling roles. Is a particular salesperson "too pushy" for your selling environment? Too soft spoken? Are they organized and structured or do they prefer to perform off the cuff?

**Will this person sell?** This question is answered by evaluating a person's attitude, and is the real accelerator of sales performance. Is a person a self-starter or do you have to jumpstart their every effort? Do they deal well with rejection? How well do they handle stress? A person's attitude will directly affect their probability to succeed long-term in your selling environment, and the right attitude can even override a lack of selling skills and experience.



**Why is this person motivated to sell?** This is the single most important question in determining role fit. What a person is most interested and inspired by, they will choose to do—the more enthused, interested, and excited they are by the work required of them, the more diligently and consistently they will work at it. This is especially true of sales, where rejection is high, failure is a constant reality, work levels are demanding, and the requirements for success challenging.

The qualities needed for success will vary based on every unique sales position. That being said, there are some essential characteristics that are critical to sales success in a wide range of selling environments:

- **Belief in self and product**
- **Ability to challenge**
- **Product knowledge**
- **Time management skills**
- **Neat, contemporary appearance**
- **Ability to deal with rejection**
- **Strong problem-solving capacity**
- **Courage to ask for the order**
- **Empathy**
- **Balanced communication**
- **Conversation skills**
- **Strong ego**
- **Self-starting ability**
- **Tenacity**
- **Listening skills**
- **Emotional maturity**
- **High-energy**
- **Resiliency**
- **Strong interpersonal skills**
- **Optimism**



## Person Vs. Personality

Success at value-based, customer-focused selling requires deeper personality qualities than simply having a charming demeanor. Yet, personality is often mistakenly the key indicator used by sales managers when hiring new salespeople. The common belief is that if a person meets a certain personality profile, they will be able to sell.

Mastering the mechanics of value-based selling is easily within the capacity of most people, and there exist successful salespeople with a wide range of personality types. The key is finding candidates that are going to be successful in your sales environment, communicating with the buyer styles that predominantly define your qualified opportunities. It's critical to consider your product and audience when matching candidates to a specific role.

## Polish High-Potentials with Targeted Coaching

The foundation of a great salesperson lies more in their attitude and personality than their level of experience. Potential is based on whether the candidate has the motivation and the focus on values and results rewarded by the position—everything else can be developed with quality coaching.

Using talent management technologies such as assessments to identify high-potential candidates with “raw talent” reduces the chance for those candidates to slip through the cracks, and gives sales managers a guide for creating targeted development plans.

Recent research from [Aberdeen](#) revealed that Best-in-Class organizations were 79% more likely to use pre-hire assessments than their laggard counterparts, and nearly one and a half times more likely to use assessments post-hire.

[Whole person assessments](#) give a clear picture of someone's strength and improvement areas—allowing sales managers to create individualized coaching and development plans that both parties will benefit from. Sharing the results helps people use their new self-knowledge to grow by giving them perspective, and can help them understand why they connect easily with some co-workers, while others might drive them crazy. It also shows them that the organization has their best interest in mind, improving their engagement and willingness to be coached.



## Enhance Your Employer Brand in the Talent Marketplace to Attract Top Talent

Your organization's reputation as an employer is a vital component of attracting and retaining the talent to drive your business. Top sales performers are interested in developing their skills and progressing their career, so branding your company as a place that provides ample growth and developmental opportunities will help to attract and keep the talent you're looking for.

Sales executives who are intentional about cultivating a healthy [sales culture](#)—one that values salespeople and the impact they can make on their customers' lives—increase the appeal for talented people to join their team and become part of a company that is making a difference.

According to [Fast Company](#), employees who derive this sense of meaning from their work are three times as likely to stay at their company, while reporting 1.7 times higher job satisfaction and 1.4 times more engagement on the job.

Provide ample educational opportunities for your people to build on their skillset and an environment in which they feel valued for the meaningful work they do, and you will turn every team member you have into an ambassador for your organization.

That loyalty can be leveraged when you're looking to add new salespeople to the bench. Talented people are typically connected with other talented people, and as a team member they're already aware of the values and behavior styles that are needed to succeed in your organization's culture—making referrals that much more likely to be a good fit.





## Conclusion

The traditional notion of recruitment is usually limited to filling a job requisition. But the people you bring onto your sales team hold the greatest influence over the level of success your organization achieves, and should therefore receive a proportionate amount of time and attention. No matter how great the quality of your offerings, without a skilled and capable sales team behind them, they will never reach their full potential.

While anyone can be taught new skills, achieving long-term success in your unique sales environment requires the right person and the right methods for developing them.

Talent-focused companies invest in comprehensive assessments to identify the right people for the position and coach and develop them to maximum performance levels.

## Get a Free Assessment

Try a free assessment and debrief today and start optimizing your hiring and talent development processes now.

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## About The Brooks Group

Founded in 1977, The Brooks Group is an award-winning B2B sales training company focused on bringing practical, straightforward solutions to your sales force selection and training challenges.

The Brooks Group provides a suite of proven sales and sales management development programs, industry-leading reinforcement tools, and best-in-class assessments.

### **For more information**

The Brooks Group can be reached by phone at (800) 633-7762, by email at [Contact@TheBrooksGroup.com](mailto:Contact@TheBrooksGroup.com) or online at [TheBrooksGroup.com](http://TheBrooksGroup.com).





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