31 EXPERT SALES HIRING AND COACHING TIPS

Hire, Train and Coach Your Sales Dream Team

ringDNA

Sales Acceleration

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GETTING YOUR SALES DRAM TEAM

Hiring competition for new sales reps remains fierce, and companies are hiring reps who are less experienced than ever (right out of college, in many cases). In this highly competitive climate, the idea of building a sales “dream team” might seem more like a pipe dream. But with the right approach, you can build a sales team that wildly exceeds your expectations.

Given such inexperienced candidates, it can be difficult to predict which reps will perform well. But a select group of sales leaders have discovered secrets that can help identify which reps have the potential to be A-players. They also know how to successfully onboard new sales talent, measure those reps’ success and provide the coaching they need to reach their true potential.

For this eBook, we surveyed top sales executives, authors and coaches on how to build a sales team that thrives. The result: 31 highly actionable tips that you can begin using right away to build your sales dream team.

Included:

- How to interview inexperienced sales candidates
- Hiring tests for SDRs and AEs
- Red flags to look for during interviews
- How to enable reps to reach their potential
- Insider approaches to measuring reps’ success

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HOW TO SPOT FUTURE ALL-STARS

How do you find the next LeBron James if your candidates don't have much - or *any* - experience? Here's what our sales experts told us.

LOOK FOR EVIDENCE OF BUDDING BUSINESS ACUMEN

If they're coming out of a university, I make sure they can show me some kind of proven track record. Maybe they started a business when they were in college, or maybe they held a paper route as a child. I want to see how they did year over year. Any type of track record is going to help show me the type of action plans they put in place and how they executed on those action plans. And then lastly, I look for evidence of budding business acumen. I am very cognizant of the type of questions they ask during interviews. I look for what their writing style is like when they're following up with me via email. I pay attention to what their conversation skill is like when they're on the phone with me or any of the leaders in my organization. Do they do something to truly set themselves apart, like send me a thank you note that's handwritten? These are the areas I look at first.

Ralph Barsi
Senior Director, Global Demand Center, ServiceNow
ServiceNow.com
@RBarsi

HIRE ATHLETES AND PEOPLE WHO HAVE OVERCOME ADVERSITY

At Datanyze, we have a handful of Division I athletes. That's a really good sign that someone is a team player, can take instruction from a coach and work really hard to be at the top of their game. If someone was able to become a top athlete, it's a really good sign that they might fit the type of mold and culture that we've built here.

We also look for people who have had certain obstacles in their life that they've overcome, whether they've come from a tough neighborhood, or moved from another country and had to deal with a lot of change.

Ben Sardella

Co-Founder and CRO, Datanyze

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SEEK OUT SUBSTANCE OVER STYLE

One of the greatest obstacles to hiring the right sales talent is overcoming an interviewer's infatuation with a job candidate. Salespeople by profession are gifted in opening relationships, establishing rapport, engaging people emotionally, and then selling themselves. It is way too easy for an interviewer or hiring manager to fall in love with a candidate's persona and fail to understand the person behind the persona. Which is why effective interviewers must look for the candidate's core qualities that underlie the attractive exterior, in order to add the right person to the team. My top characteristics or tendencies would be:

- The candidate had great substance to his or her answers to my questions. When I asked for examples of what a candidate had done that illustrated a competence or quality (i.e. behavioral interview question), I got a real example or two that made me comfortable he or she possessed the competence or quality.
- The candidate was highly adaptable. He or she was able to read the preferences of the interviewer and adjust the answers to the interviewer. I use a lot of group interviews to see if a candidate can adjust his or her answers to the person asking the question. If the interviewer asks a very detailed question, the candidate provides a detailed answer. If the interviewer asks a headline, bottom-line question, the answer comes back in kind.
- The candidate is resilient. He or she is not stopped by adversity, but has a reservoir of strength that enables him/her to overcome the adversity AND keep a positive attitude with humor and humility.
- The candidate is green and growing, in a state of continuous self-education and development, and not content with achieving a particular goal, objective, or status.

Hank Boyer
CEO, Boyer Management Group
boyermanagement.com
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SEEK OUT NATURAL STORYTELLERS

“We hire people who not only listen, but also have the ability to tell a great story. This requires the ability to listen to a prospect’s pain points, not speak over them, and then relate that information to the solution they’re selling in a really intelligent way. The ability to do that well is a sign of future success.

Howard Brown
Founder & CEO, RingDNA
RingDNA.com
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HIRE REPS THAT ARE CAREER-MINDED

> What I really love to hear is when somebody says they want to come into an environment that's going to foster their growth. Wanting to make the most money is less attractive to me than someone who is really looking for a team that's willing to invest in their career and build up their skill set. We want reps more concerned with finding a really good place to work than just getting a paycheck.

Ben Sardella
Co-Founder and CRO, Datanyze
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LOOK FOR TANGIBLE EXAMPLES OF PAST SUCCESS

> When hiring salespeople, I've found that top performers had very tangible examples of what they did to be successful. They could recount specific details on the issue, what they did and the outcome. I also love it when candidates share successes and demonstrate pride in their efforts.

Steven Rosen

Sales Coach and Author, *52 Sales Management Tips - The Sales Manager's Success Guide*

@StevenARosen

FIT SKILLS TO THE ROLE

When recruiting top sales performers, there are a number of things I measure (usually over a number of discussions and meetings together). First, I look at their culture fit for the business and their skill fit for the role. The most successful people I have hired and work with demonstrate and prove the following things:

1. A hunger and drive (a way of seeing this is through showing sacrifice in their lives)
2. Empathy and understanding
3. They know their numbers inside and out from previous success
4. They build rapport during the interview process
5. They communicate their current sales proposition extremely well
6. The right balance of ego and humility
7. They have recognised and learned from their past mistakes

Tom Lavery
CEO and Founder, Jiminny
@TomLavery7

ROOT OUT REPS' TRUE MOTIVATIONS

I often pose the question that if we were to offer you the job and the company downstairs offered you the same job/position/salary (all dynamics basically the same), why would you select our company? I want to understand what would set us apart from the other company. That gives me insight into their true motivation. Where do they want to be over the next couple years? Are they hungry? Do they really want to work here? We're interested in hearing about what reps are excited about.

Ben Sardella
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RED FLAGS TO AVOID

During the hiring process, you’re bound to encounter some reps that you definitely should not hire. We asked sales leaders to identify some of the top red flags they look for when interviewing sales candidates.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSONALITY PROFILING

When evaluating sales candidates, the three red flags which cause me to rule out an otherwise strong candidate are: a lack of attention to detail, a mediocre understanding of the value proposition of the solution we are selling and poor alignment with the desired results of a sales personality profile test. Of these variables, the most important ones are the ability to demonstrate great attention to detail as well as a personality profile that is tightly aligned with traits we typically seek. We utilize an interview process that allows us to adequately assess all of these variables and use data to more objectively assess candidates.

Matt Tortora
Vice President of Sales, Goby
GobyInc.com
@MBTortora

3 WAYS TO RULE OUT OTHERWISE GOOD SALES CANDIDATES

Three red flags that cause me to rule out an otherwise good sales candidate:

1. Inability to be specific about how they have achieved success (What I look for: past W2s, names of specific strategic deals, process for closing specific deals, how he/she leverages other team members)
2. Unable to persevere (What I look for: examples of past challenges and how they overcame them)
3. Lack of skepticism (What I look for: questions about company vision, strategy and roadmap, desire to meet with potential peers)

Alana Kadden Ballon

Principal, Inqune
Inqune.com
@AKBallon

MATCH CRITERIA WITH THE ROLE

When hiring, everything a candidate does or says should be observed very closely. They are at their best to impress and secure the job. There are many red flags that are often ignored, or worse, excused away that are indicators of how they will behave and perform after hire.

There are several universal red flags we look for when we help our clients hire: untimely follow-up, lateness, low energy, bad attitude about previous employers, lack of research on the company, lack of asking questions or being curious about more than pay, schedule, and benefits. We also look for their ability to communicate effectively in writing and on the phone.

There are also different red flags depending on the role. After you have identified the attitude and behaviors needed for the specific sales role, there are red flags when they don't exhibit the right attitudes, skills, and behaviors in those areas. For example: if the sales process is long and has many months of follow-through and the candidate doesn't follow-up with you in a timely manner, red flag. If the job involves a lot of emailing, then poor writing in messages to you is a red flag. If the job involves detailed proposals and calculations, typos in any correspondence are a red flag.

Candidates let us know who they are throughout the process. Focus on the actions, words, and attitude.

Nancy Bleeke
President and Chief Sales Officer, Sales Pro Insider
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03

HOW TO TEST SALES CANDIDATES

Once you think you've found a potentially great sales candidate, it's time to put them to the test! Here's how sales leaders test SDRs and AEs.

TEST THEIR APPROACH

We ask SDR candidates to do the following:

1. Identify a possible customer they'd like to bring to us, and explain in detail why they might be a good fit.
2. Identify who they would try to contact, and give a rationale as to why those contacts might be best.
3. Write a sample email and call script with the approach they have chosen.

While we look for overall excellence, the thought process evident in the approach is really the most important aspect of the exercise. You can tell a lot about the candidate when looking at the customer criteria they discovered in their research, as well as in the professionalism and creativity used in the approach.

William Tyree
CMO, RingDNA
RingDNA.com
@WilliamTyree

ASSIGN HOMEWORK TO ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES

“With AEs, we give them an assignment to study our product, study some of our materials and within a week they’re demoing to a group of us here at Datanyze. We then grade them on the demo. We certainly don’t expect them to be product experts, but we do expect them to know how to communicate and ask the right questions. We want to know what kinds of questions they’ll be asking prospects.

Ben Sardella
Co-Founder and CRO, Datanyze
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@BenSardella

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HOW TO ONBOARD REPS SUCCESSFULLY

Hiring reps with the potential to succeed is only the first step. Without the right training and onboarding process, even great reps might fail. Here are some tactics that can help you ensure that reps begin their journey on the right path.

MAKE SALES ENABLEMENT EVERYONE'S BUSINESS

"Sales enablement is everyone's business, whether it's sales, marketing or product. The entire team needs to be rowing in the same direction and doing everything they can to support new reps. It's so important within our organization for a sales team to be informed on your product, the marketplace and what's happening with customers. It's really up to executive leadership to create a culture where sales reps feel enabled by the entire company, both psychologically and in action.

Howard Brown
Founder & CEO, RingDNA
RingDNA.com
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TRAIN SDRS TO USE IDEAL CUSTOMER PROFILES TO SELL CONTEXTUALLY

"When training SDRs - start by learning the market you are serving, then how Ideal Customer Profiles receive value from your solution, followed by the buyer personas involved. Then review how to execute best practices for the SDR function.

It's vital to be personalized, timely, contextual and actually help people, rather than push your own agenda. Without understanding industry trends and Ideal Customer Profiles, SDRs will not be able to engage potential buyers early with insight, to help shape their journey with relevant education.

Brian Lipp
VP of Sales, Sales for Life
SalesforLife.com
@Lipp_Brian

PUT REPS THROUGH ONBOARDING BOOTCAMP

"With respect to the SDRs who are new hires, we put them through an actual onboarding camp, and we spend five dedicated days with them focusing on ideal customer profile, critical business issues, articulating the offering, etcetera. But I would say that the onboarding phase truly ends after the first four to six weeks in the role. That's when I'm seeing production and productivity start to happen.

Ralph Barsi

Senior Director, Global Demand Center, ServiceNow

ServiceNow.com

@RBarsi

START ACCOUNT EXECUTIVES WITH SMALL TERRITORIES

> When we bring in a new AE, regardless of their past experience, they are starting with the smallest territories that we have. They're focused on the smallest companies just to start, and usually those are less qualified. It allows them to have a lot more conversations in a quicker period of time. By doing this, we've even seen new AEs close deals in their first month.

Ben Sardella
Co-Founder and CRO, Datanyze
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MAKE SURE REPS UNDERSTAND THE LANDSCAPE BACKWARDS AND FORWARDS

"It's critically important that a sales rep not only understands the tool or service they're selling, but truly understands the entire competitor landscape. Reps should know the ways in which their solution exceeds competing solutions in order to best position themselves against other offerings.

Howard Brown
Founder & CEO, RingDNA
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05

HOW TO ENSURE REPS REACH THEIR FULL POTENTIAL

To truly build your sales dream team, you need to do everything in your power to help reps win. This means not only ensuring that they receive the coaching they need, but also the right tools to get jobs done. We asked sales leaders how to make sure that reps continue to improve over time.

LEARN FROM YOUR WINS

Post-win surveys are critical for us. At RingDNA, we do a lot of post-sales surveys, finding out how we won the deal, who we were competing with, and what it was that ultimately got the prospect over the line. Customers love answering our questions, and we learn a lot about our marketing, the quality of our support, the value that actually drove the deal over the line, and most of all, about how our sales team performed.

Aligning a sales team around where your company has won in the past will lead to future wins.

Howard Brown
Founder & CEO, RingDNA
RingDNA.com
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MAKE SDRS EARN THE RIGHT TO AUTOMATE

We've made it so that SDRs have to earn the right to have automation. They have to understand why they're sending that email to that person based on the persona, based on their company type and those sets of things. We've really backed away from automation and made it a privilege only after you've proven you understand how to personalize emails.

Ben Sardella
Co-Founder and CRO, Datanyze
Datanyze.com
@BenSardella

USE METRICS TO IDENTIFY COACHING OPPORTUNITIES

Don't just have metrics for metrics' sake. From a training perspective, sales metrics provide directional data that you as a manager can then take and make your reps more successful. If, for example, the data shows that there are people who have a lot of conversations but don't create a whole lot of opportunities, that's an opportunity to listen in and train reps to be more successful.

Howard Brown
Founder & CEO, RingDNA
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ASK REPS TO PERSONALIZE SALES EMAILS (OR IT COULD SET YOUR COMPANY BACK A YEAR)

I'm a huge fan of personalization. I know it's challenging to scale for a lot of organizations, but when you are sitting on the other side of the outreach effort and you get hit with clearly automated messaging, you get a bad taste in your mouth. There's a lot of information available on me, my company, our team and the marketplace. Yet when it's clear the SDR has not done their homework, it really sets that company back a year or more to get back into an account like ours.

Ralph Barsi
Senior Director, Global Demand Center, ServiceNow
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INVEST IN SALES COACHING

Entrepreneur-turned-VC David Skok says that the average sales rep returns 4x on their investment on training and hiring, but that for most companies, that rep will be ROI negative for 23 months until that happens. Waiting nearly two years to get your investment back isn't something I feel comfortable with. That's why it's so critical to spend a lot of time training reps at the outset, but don't stop there. You need to continue coaching reps as they continue to evolve in their role, offering continuous feedback in hopes of improvement. Without this, you could be looking at 23 months of negative ROI, and for most SaaS based companies, that's going to be hard to swallow.

Howard Brown
Founder & CEO, RingDNA
RingDNA.com
@HowardBrown

06

HOW TO MEASURE AND INFLUENCE SUCCESS

By tracking the right sales metrics, you can intervene early and often when reps aren't on pace to meet their goals. Here are some expert tips on what you need to measure in order to maximize sales ROI.

TRACK REPS' CAREER PROGRESS

The average tenure of today's SDRs can be anywhere from 12-24 months. I'm always taking a look at what their growth path is. Everyone wants to be growing and progressing and helping themselves move forward in their careers. It's really important for sales leaders to focus on that. Let's say you have a 24-month tenure of a sales development rep. Break it up into four 4-6 month chunks. Like freshman, sophomore, junior and senior years. On the first half of reps' tenure, they should really focus on mastering the craft of a sales development rep. While that latter half is going to really focus on becoming a sales rep that is responsible for closing business, carrying a quota, overseeing a territory and all the skills and competencies that go with that so you can help them reach career goals.

Ralph Barsi
Senior Director, Global Demand Center, ServiceNow
ServiceNow.com
@RBarsi

GET THE RIGHT DATA IN YOUR CRM

Measuring success starts with data. You can have the best CRM in the world and the best marketing automation platform in the world, but it's like having a Ferrari without fuel if you don't have the right data in it. Once you have the data, you can contextualize the conversations you're having.

Ben Sardella
Co-Founder and CRO, Datanyze
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IDENTIFY WHERE DEALS ARE GETTING STUCK

In what stage are deals getting stuck most often? For example, try analyzing the number of scheduled meetings vs. meetings that have actually taken place. If there's a large discrepancy, you might find that adding additional processes, such as meeting reminders, or being persistent in following up after no-show meetings, will realize dramatic improvements.

Also, look at sales-accepted opportunities. How many opps are over 50%? What is the time to close? What are the steps being taken to get deals over the line, and are best practices institutionalized?

Howard Brown
Founder & CEO, RingDNA
RingDNA.com
@HowardBrown

ENCOURAGE SDRS TO TRACK THEIR OWN METRICS

> I encourage all the sales development reps and sales reps to track their own individual metrics in dashboards. They do need to stay in their own lane in a lot of respects.

Ralph Barsi
Senior Director, Global Demand Center, ServiceNow
ServiceNow.com
@RBarsi

SET REALISTIC AND ACHIEVABLE KPIS

There are a few areas that are important to making sure you set people up for success both in setting KPIs and then in making sure they are realistic and achievable.

1. Use proxies - talk to peers in the industry and find out established benchmarks and then try to adjust for your business and its lead flow and sales cycles. For SDRs we see the following benchmarks for initial KPIs:

- Enterprise: 8-12 sales qualified leads per month
- Mid-market: 15+ sqls per month
- SMB: probably shouldn't have SDRs but if you do they need to produce a very high volume of leads to justify the cost over time 40+

These ranges are for outbound reps and the numbers are 1.5-2x for inbound reps. Usually they need to run about 1.5-2x the number of appointments to get to this SQL number as well. These are rough estimates based on our work with 100s of startups and what we have seen mid and top-level performers achieve.

Jake Dunlap
CEO, Skaled
Skaled.com
@JakeTDunlap

For AEs, setting quotas can be more difficult. In the early days you might be okay with a ratio of OTE (on target earnings = base + commission) to a quota of 2-3:1, but over time that number should grow. We see some early stage companies that are at 10:1 and that's not necessarily healthy either. It could mean that your reps have too many leads or that your expectations are too high. You may be able to have numbers like this in the short term but over time it will be better to spend more money to gain customers as penetration is more important than margins.

These are approximations that need to be adapted to your business but should be a starting spot for setting targets. Then you have to wait and see.

2. Don't be scared to say "I f^%#ed up and we need to adjust." Having a high quota that only 20% of people hit on a monthly basis is also not good for culture or moral. We've met founders and sales leaders who set targets like this and then wonder why they have turnover. It probably means that your numbers aren't realistic or your process has serious flaws. If it's the latter then it's your f*^% up as well for not setting them up for success.

Jake Dunlap

CEO, Skaled

Skaled.com

@JakeTDunlap

Don't adjust quotas for weak performers, but also be realistic that you may have made a mistake. Many founders that start hiring early set quotas based on what they did or their first few reps did which is completely UNREALISTIC. Why?

- The leads are worse! Yes, you and the first few reps you hire will naturally gravitate toward the low hanging fruit. That means less as you scale, so you have to set people up for success
- No one can get as passionate or emotional about the product as the founder. You can get people 80% of the way, and that's good, so don't expect to clone you. You can clone talk tracks which will help, but it still won't usually equal your energy.

Jake Dunlap
CEO, Skaled
Skaled.com
@JakeTDunlap

HONE IN ON EFFICIENCY METRICS

"If you are focused too much on the activities and not enough on the end results, then you have it backwards. As an example, let's say I put a quota on an SDR of getting two new opportunities a day that are qualified and sales-accepted. One rep sends 10 emails and hits their quota. And then, if on the flip side, another rep hits quota but he has to send out 150 emails, I know it means that rep might have gotten lucky and found some folks, but you've also just burned a lot of bridges.

Ben Sardella
Co-Founder and CRO, Datanyze
Datanyze.com
@BenSardella

FOCUS ON PIPELINE VELOCITY

Some leading indicators I look at include the number of booked meetings vs. the number of completed meetings. I see which of those meetings converted to opportunities. Then, I'll dive into opportunities. I'll take a very close look at opportunity age and stage. We don't want to be filling the top of the funnel and then having leads just sit there. So I'm always tracking days in stage and conversion by stage as well.

Ralph Barsi
Senior Director, Global Demand Center, ServiceNow
ServiceNow.com
@RBarsi

PERSONALIZE COMMUNICATIONS, BUT AUTOMATE DATA COLLECTION

As an industry, sales teams need to get away from things like automated email cadences, but they need to actually do much more in terms of automated data collection. Reps can learn so much from a simple metric such as "Conversations Per Day," which will show them how many actual conversations they're having (as opposed to just dials), or something like "Time to First Response," which shows inbound reps how long it takes them to respond to inbound leads by phone or email. Enable reps with metrics that matter, and they will rise to the occasion.

William Tyree
CMO, RingDNA
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ringDNA

More Calls. Smarter Conversations. More Revenue.

A brilliant inbound & outbound voice solution for inside sales teams using Salesforce

"RingDNA is our top sales technology investment, helping to drive 300% more revenue.

Dallas Hogensen
Head of Commercial Sales, Lyft

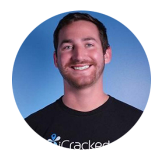
"Simply the best inside sales solution for Salesforce. With RingDNA, our team is reaching customers much more often and winning more deals.

Sean Whiteley
Founder, GetFeedback, a Campaign Monitor Company

"RingDNA is the best product we evaluated, helping us to be exponentially more productive and book 81% more meetings.

Kyle Coleman
Director, Sales Development, Looker

"RingDNA has made our reps 40% more productive and given us the ability to respond to leads much faster than ever before.



Evan Hanson
VP Sales, iCracked

Call us: 855.645.8028

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