



Job Fit:

An Important Factor in Employee's Sale Success

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Today every organization needs highly productive salespeople to bring in more sales. Unfortunately not everyone hired becomes a high performer.

Months ago you may have hired what looked like the perfect candidate. Bright, articulate, past track record of consistent success in similar sales related positions and strong desire for sales in your industry. Unfortunately, he has not been successful and you feel you'll have to let him go because he's a drain on the company and has almost nonexistent productivity.

You can't understand what happened. You remember that he interviewed well and had great references. He even led his previous sales team a number of months. You felt everything pointed to his success.

You've heard "past job performance is the best predictor of future success" and people who've been successful in one job tend to be successful in another. You felt confident when you hired him.

He sailed through training, understood the technical aspects, easily developed rapport with customers, and got along well with everyone in the organization. When it was time to prospect and sell, it was a different matter. It just didn't work. Because of sluggish sales, now you're faced with terminating him after investing thousands of dollars in salary and training – not to mention your valuable time and lost sales opportunities. If you are wondering how you can better predict a candidate's sales success during the sales process, you're not alone.

The impact of selecting a sales candidate who turns out to be unproductive is devastating. It not only hurts those who emotionally invest in the candidate, it's also very costly to profits. Outlaw Group's studies and client's experience indicate that a salesperson who doesn't work out may cost the company as much as they pay a top salesperson each month in the first year and more after that. (You may calculate your exact cost with The Sales Turnover Calculator available by e-mailing info@outlawgroup.com with Sales Turnover Calculator in subject line.)

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While it may be relatively easy to hire for positions with observable skills or easy, learnable skills, both sales and management positions are much different since there is such wide variety of positions.

Even in the same company and selling the same product lines, there's a great deal of difference between positions. You probably understand that a salesperson who calls on small businesses and one who calls on major accounts have different personalities and attributes. Many people do well in one position, but fail miserably at the other position, even if the product and company are the same.

Expecting a salesperson to be good in all selling situations and positions is like expecting an athlete to be good at all sports. Shaquille O'Neal is a world-class basketball player but would undoubtedly fail miserably as a jockey in the Kentucky Derby. His physical attributes don't match the job requirements of the position. Michael Jordan, arguably the world's greatest basketball player, was at best a mediocre baseball player. Returning to basketball, a game where his attributes matched, he became a world champion again – proof that a person's attributes must match the job.

So how do you find if “what sounds and looks like” a great sales candidate will be a great sales success? Begin with Job Fit or Job Match. How well a candidate's attributes fit the position is one of the most important factors. You may say, “I already know attributes such as motivation, drive, communication ability and integrity are important.” They are critically important, but are not the only important ones to be considered.

A person's motivation for success may be strong, but if you consistently ask a highly introverted individual to make a high volume of new business cold calls, he or she will fail.

If you ask a highly extroverted person to sit at a desk to make a large volume of calls, he or she will soon find a way to stop frequent rejection and be with those more accepting.

We worked with a large Wall Street firm to determine the benchmark success attributes of top performing financial advisors. We found that for a person to be highly successful, the attribute of extroversion must be a moderate level.

Those who were high in “extroversion” would avoid cold calls because of fear of rejection. Those with low levels of “extroversion” would avoid cold calls because they felt uncomfortable with people they didn't know. Neither extreme was successful in prospecting to build a client base, but for different reasons.

Psychologists have known the importance of Match or Fit for years, but few business people have taken advantage of it. In 1980 Herbert M. and Jeanne Greenberg published a study of 360,000 salespeople in the Aug-Sept.1980 issue of *Harvard Business Review* entitled "Job Matching for Better Sales Performance". The article reported findings that 55 percent of those holding sales positions have little or no ability to sell, 25 percent have

ability, but are selling the wrong product, and 20 percent are doing precisely the job that is appropriate.

The Greenberg's study over 25 years ago validated a concept that we've instinctively known – attributes that make a person successful are largely invisible. Attributes commonly considered are integrity or value, behavior inherent and, very importantly, thinking style and interest. Those who were job matched consistently performed better and stayed longer.

Investing resources to select the right person for a sales position is a wise investment.