

HIRING GUIDE

Tom Stanfill
CEO



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INTRODUCTION

You already know the importance of hiring the right reps.

But did you know it might actually be the single most important function of your sales organization? That's right. When you consider factors like hiring cost, rep training, lost revenues, and the drain on management, the impact really adds up. The hiring process has the potential to affect the success of a sales organization as much as any other market variable. Ironically, it's one variable that is within your control. However, most organizations pay very little attention to it. This poses even bigger issues for telesales organizations and call centers.

Experienced reps are a valuable commodity.

Whether you need telesales reps, inside sales reps, or customer service reps, it's especially difficult to find people who not only possess the unique skills of selling exclusively over the phone, but who also have the personality to thrive in this phone-centric environment. In fact, since it's more difficult to sell over the phone, their skills are potentially more sophisticated than an accomplished outside sales rep. Plus, making or receiving 50+ calls per day, they must possess the patience of a factory worker who never leaves the assembly line. No wonder the turnover in most phone-centered environments is more than 30% per year.

So who is this mysterious telesales star?

What does he or she look like? How can you find the reps you need? Those are the questions we've been asking for over 17 years. And the answers are found in this guide. ASLAN Training & Development is a call center training and consulting firm that has been profiling call center stars since 1989. And now we're sharing the profile of a telesales/call center star, as well as a process for ensuring that you can identify them. In addition, this Hiring Guide addresses some of the unique skills and talents you'll want to look for if you hire customer service reps. You'll also find helpful information for recruiting and screening this special group of candidates.

THE JOB DESCRIPTION

If you aim at nothing, you will hit it every time.

Not all call center positions require the same skill set.

Therefore, the first step is to create a detailed overview of each job description. This should include roles and responsibilities, and required experience of the position. Taking this simple step will ensure you're focused on all the characteristics required for success.

To create a thorough job description, consider including the following information categories: position summary, sales responsibilities, sales objectives (e.g., productivity and revenue requirements), technical requirements, education, work experience and compensation. The Sample Job Description below will give you an example to follow.

As you consider the sales responsibilities, be sure to think through the types of customer interactions the reps will be conducting. Will they be "warm" calls to existing customers? Or will the reps be dealing primarily with "cold" prospects? This is a very important distinction. The skills required for converting cold prospects into customers are far more complex than selling existing customers additional products and services.

Sample Job Description

Position Summary	As an Account Representative, you will be working in our SMB division where your primary role is to consult with small and medium businesses about their need for our XYZ product line.
Sales Responsibilities	70% of your day will be spent responding to inbound inquires (following up on leads or receiving inbound calls) and 30% will be focused on calling new prospects or lapsed customers.
Sales Objectives	Revenue goals: \$250k/month Productivity goals: Twenty new contacts per day
Technical Requirements	Windows
Education	College Degree
Work Experience	Industry: Hardware experience preferred but not required Sales: One year of sales experience required
Compensation Base Salary	\$35,000
Incentive	5% commission on sales generated in your region

JOB FIT — THE FOUR Cs

Once you have established the Job Description for the position, you are now ready to create a comprehensive list of the characteristics of the ideal candidate for this position. These characteristics help determine if the candidate is the right fit for the job, and if the job is the right fit for the candidate, by examining four critical areas. First of all, is this job a good career fit for the candidate? Second, is the candidate a good cultural fit into the team? Third, is there a competency fit (does the candidate have the talent, skills and knowledge to be successful)? And finally, does the candidate have the desired character to be truly successful?

Fit

Career

Is this opportunity in the candidate's best interest?

Cultural

Will the candidate strengthen the team and become part of the "family"?

Competency

Does the candidate have the talent, skills, and knowledge to thrive in this position?

Character

Does the candidate have the work ethic and integrity to maintain an acceptable productivity level and reflect the values of the organization?

Next, we will analyze the traits of the most successful telesales/call center reps — inbound and outbound.

The objective of Career Fit is simply to determine if this career move serves the best interests of the candidate. Not can they do the job or will they do the job, but should they take the job.

Career Fit

Several years ago I was hired as a consultant to revamp an entire inside sales force. The assignment required recruiting and hiring about twenty telesales reps. One of the candidates was a successful car salesman who was convinced he needed to make a career change. He explained that the car industry was not good for him or his family. Although his income was substantially greater than the new job he was seeking, he was convinced he needed a new start and that this was the position for him. I could see that he was sincere. But something didn't add up. His old job not only provided him with a higher paycheck, but it also came with a lot of freedom and a totally different environment. I had my doubts.

So I pressed him. I communicated my concerns about salary and freedoms. He simply responded with a persuasive sales pitch, one that I'm convinced was sincere. Eventually, he sold me. He even agreed to make a one-year commitment, a move I invoked in an effort to shake his certainty. Two months later, the guy was back in the car business.

What was my mistake? I trusted the hiring prospect to assess his own candidacy for the job. Rather than rely on my own assessment, I deferred to his judgment to determine if it was a good career fit. And he made an error in judgment. I can't tell you the number of times I've talked to candidates who are convinced the job is a perfect fit, only to see them change their minds several weeks later. As management, you are responsible for the success of your team. Therefore, you are

responsible for determining if the job is the best career move for the candidate, and thereby for your organization. Candidates simply lack the objectivity to make that decision for you.

The Objective

The objective of Career Fit is simply to determine if this career move serves the best interests of the candidate. Not can they do the job or will they do the job, but should they take the job. In other words, given their personality, wiring, goals, and aspirations, will this position play an important role in the candidate's career and life? Or is it merely a temporary place to collect a paycheck while they continue to search? Or, like that car salesman, has desperation caused them to miscalculate their own career path?

To help you determine if the position is in the best interest of the candidate, consider these factors: their personality profile, experience, compensation requirements and their commute.

Personality Profile

Personality profile instruments should never be used as the predominant indicator of future job performance and longevity. However, they should be used to gain helpful insight into the candidate's job preferences. For example, it takes a certain personality type to thrive in an environment where repetitive tasks must be performed while sitting at the same desk all day. A personality profile instrument such as the DISC® will tell you whether this candidate needs predictability in their work environment or the variety of an ever-changing one. It can help gauge a person's propensity to thrive in an environment like yours. Feel free to contact ASLAN if you would like more information on DISC® Personality Profiles.

JOB FIT — THE FOUR Cs

Career Fit (continued)

Experience

Clearly, you should also consider their past work experience. Does this next step in their career path make sense? Are they advancing or taking a step back? If so, why? Do they have the background to truly assess what this position will be like? Human beings have the uncanny ability to see what they want to see and overlook the true realities of the job. If they have a call center background, they can assess what it is like to make a hundred calls a day. If they don't, it will be difficult (but not impossible) to determine if they will thrive in the targeted position. You may want to consider having the finalists spend a day in your call center.

“What if they don't have sales or call center experience?”

The best indicator of job fit and future performance is past performance. But there are many talented, inexperienced sales representatives that are looking for a ground floor opportunity. If you are interviewing an inexperienced candidate, focus on their desire to succeed and their willingness to make a hundred calls a day. They may be talented but unwilling to do what it takes to make it in sales. Additionally, be suspicious of an outside rep that wants to move to the inside. Very rarely will this transition be successful. Often, these candidates have underestimated the daily grind of a call center, or they were simply unsuccessful as a field sales representative. In either case, be suspicious... this is likely not a good fit.

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Compensation Requirements

For obvious reasons, this is a critical category. Simply stated, if the income potential is not enough to satisfy the candidate's monthly requirements, do not hire them. But how will you know? Ask. Phrase it this way—“I want to make sure that you will earn enough in the position to easily meet your financial obligations. Do you mind telling me what your minimum income requirement happens to be?” If this seems too intrusive, just offer the worst-case scenario and ask them if that will be enough. The key is to reveal that your motive is not to be nosy, but to make sure they will earn enough to make ends meet.

Commute

Finally, you should consider the candidate's commute. Depending on compensation, most call center reps will not consistently travel more than thirty minutes to work. This obviously varies greatly by location of the call center, compensation, and the local job market. But, it is imperative to study the relationship between longevity on the job and commute.

Sample Questions to Help You Assess Career Fit:

- » What is your three to five-year plan?
- » Describe the perfect job for you.
- » In the past, what jobs have you enjoyed the most? Why?
- » What roles/jobs have you had where you struggled to maintain your enthusiasm? Please explain.
- » Have you ever had a job where you looked forward to Monday? Please explain.
- » (If the candidate has previous work experience.) What was your income at _____? And _____? (Your goal is to determine financial trend or if there will be significant decrease in income.)

Again, in addition to the questions above, personality instruments such as the DISC® can be very helpful in determining job fit.

JOB FIT — THE FOUR Cs

Cultural Fit

The Objective

Once you discern that there is a Career Fit, the next category to consider is Cultural Fit. Will this candidate strengthen the team (family)? With Career Fit, you assess whether the position is in the best interest of the candidate. With Cultural Fit, you assess whether the addition of this candidate is in the best interest of the team.

Culture is a powerful force within your organization. It determines the type of candidates you attract and the overall motivation of the team. Therefore, assessing how a new team member will affect or even define your culture is a serious task. If one successful, productive rep poisons your culture, it can undermine the productivity of twenty team members. All too often, management will opt to keep a misfit rep out of fear of losing their production — even though it weakens the overall culture and production of the team. This is always a mistake!

Never sacrifice the production of an entire team to save the success of one rep. Yes, you risk losing the revenue being contributed by the counter-cultural rep. But in the long run, a successful, cohesive team will out-produce any single rep. To determine how the potential rep will affect your existing team, focus on the following areas: professionalism, philosophical alignment and team attitude.

Culture is a powerful force within your organization. It determines the type of candidates you attract and the overall motivation of the team.

Professionalism

First, determine a standard level of professionalism required for your team. Then ensure your potential candidates are within those guidelines. How they dress (in quality, not style), their language, hygiene, conduct, morals, etc. are all elements that affect their work environment. The goal here is not to merely judge a person, but to establish an environment of mutual respect for your team—a family of diversity, but not of conflict.

Philosophical Alignment

Most everyone has a philosophy on how to treat the customer, the best way to sell, how to conduct business, or how reps should be compensated. Some reps are passionate about serving the customer, being their advocate, meeting their needs, and ensuring an incredible customer experience. But many reps are only passionate about themselves — what they can earn and achieve. The key is to determine your culture — your sales and service philosophy. If the philosophy of the organization and the philosophy of the rep do not align, conflict occurs, team harmony disappears, and tension between the manager and rep emerges. Unless someone changes his or her philosophy, the rep's engagement level will always be low and they will never thrive in your culture. They must share the same philosophy... the same value system.

Team Attitude

When teamwork is required to reach your objective (as is the case with most call centers), it is imperative to assess whether the potential candidate thrives in a team environment. When reps work together, they can achieve more than when working alone. But not everyone excels at teamwork. In fact, people tend to fall into two categories: independent workers who prefer to be left alone, or team players who enjoy working with others to achieve the goal. This includes being willing to share information as well as credit for their achievements.

The desire to work independently is not a character flaw, but it can be counter-productive to team dynamics. It then becomes a cultural issue.

Sample Questions to Help You Assess Cultural Fit:

- » If the compensation and opportunity were the same, why would you choose one company over the other?
- » Describe the perfect work environment.
- » What is the best way to approach a customer? Why? What is your sales/service philosophy?
- » Have you ever worked in an environment where you had to depend on others to achieve your goal?
- » What did you like about that job? What didn't you like?
- » How do you handle conflict with other team members? With your boss?

JOB FIT — THE FOUR Cs

Competency

The Objective

Competency is the primary focus of most interviewers and hiring managers. It answers the question—“Does the candidate have the talent, skills, and knowledge to be successful in this position?” Understanding these three components of competency is critical to identifying the most qualified candidate. They are defined below:

Talent

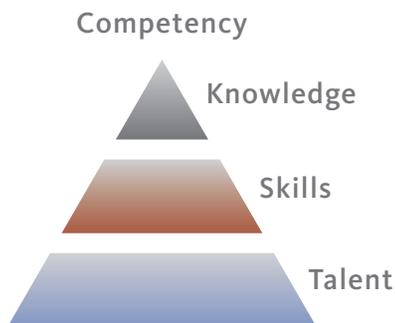
Abilities that cannot be taught:
WHO YOU ARE

Skills

Teachable behavior: WHAT YOU DO

Knowledge

Necessary information to be successful on the job: WHAT YOU KNOW



Talent is the foundational component of competency. Think of the relationship like this: Because Talent is the foundational component, and because the Skills and Knowledge components are more self explanatory, we are going to focus on Talent.

Talent cannot be taught, so you had better ensure that the candidate possesses the unteachable qualities before making a huge investment in that person.

Why Is Talent So Critical?

Because the success of your organization will largely be determined by the combined talent of your team members. Unlike the other two components, talent cannot be taught. Since a critical part of being successful in your organization cannot be taught, you had better ensure that the candidate possesses the unteachable qualities before making a huge investment in that person. Put simply, talent is the most important ingredient in determining overall competency.

Let me give you an example. In hiring for an inside sales position for our firm, I had narrowed the candidates down to two. One candidate (let's call him Ben), had all the right answers, was a good listener, asked excellent questions, understood the fundamentals of selling, demonstrated he knew the difference between features and benefits, and also possessed quite a bit of knowledge about a vertical market that would help him in his new position. In other words, he knew what to say to persuade me he was the right candidate.

The other candidate (let's call her Susan), didn't have a lot of sales experience. If I asked her about the secrets to successfully prospecting for a new client, she didn't really know the answer. She couldn't really explain how to build a relationship with people or her sales process. And she didn't have any industry expertise or knowledge that would help her in her new position. But, she outperformed Ben three to one. How? Ben had skills and knowledge, but zero talent. Susan had incredible talent, she just needed to develop new skills and learn her marketplace (knowledge).

Since Ben came highly recommended and I was desperate for help, I hired them both and learned an extremely valuable lesson. Talent is a non-negotiable. Although Ben knew what to say and what to do, he would never possess Susan's talent. She was extremely driven to achieve, she was a natural leader, and she spoke about things in a passionate, convincing manner. She had energy in her voice and could describe something with incredible imagery. She made people laugh; she made people believe her; and she made people like her. She had talent... the stuff you can't teach. All the other things — the difference between a feature and a benefit, the selling process — I could teach her over time.

The lesson I learned: when assessing a candidate's competency, focus on talent. You can teach skill. You can provide the necessary information to be successful — software, industry, customer—but you can't teach talent.

Does this mean we shouldn't assess skill and knowledge? Of course not. If you have equally talented candidates, the candidate with the superior skill and knowledge should be offered the job. But should you hire a candidate that demonstrates a higher level of skill or knowledge with very little talent? Absolutely not. Talent always wins.

JOB FIT — THE FOUR Cs

Competency (continued)

What about Past Performance?

A question I'm often asked is whether you should consider past behaviors vs. trying to figure out "who the person is" (i.e. their innate talent)? The answer is always "Yes, you should consider past behaviors." If they have a track record in the position you are filling, then by all means, focus on asking questions that will uncover the candidate's past successes and failures. This is simply an easier way to get at talent.

If a candidate has been successful in several different jobs, this is a strong indicator that they may have talent. Therefore, you can ask behavior-based questions that allow the candidate to demonstrate their talent. For example, if you are trying to discern if the candidate has that innate ability to deliver a very persuasive message, ask him or her to describe a situation where they demonstrated that talent. If this position is very similar to the candidate's past position(s), their past performance can be a strong indicator of future performance.

Unfortunately, a performance track record is often non-existent, and therefore cannot be called upon to determine talent level. Most of my clients do not have the luxury of hiring very experienced reps—especially reps that have worked in very similar positions. Even if the candidate has experience in a similar position, there can be many factors other than talent that contribute to a rep's success or lack of success. For example, market conditions, product demand, an inherited territory, etc. could all play a role in limiting or exaggerating past success. So, if the candidate has past experience, be careful. Do not assume past success ensures future success.

True sales reps enjoy leading. They love entering a situation that requires leadership and accepting that role. In fact, they become very frustrated if they are not allowed to lead.

Core Talents

In studying successful inside sales/telesales reps over the past 17 years, we have identified core sales talents that we believe cannot or will not be taught in a reasonable time frame. Following is a description of the eight most common of these core talents. (A complete list is available on page 14.)

1. Desire to Lead

Sales is all about leadership. In fact, sales is simply leading customers through a process of discovering their needs (perceived or unknown), and then recommending a solution. If you aren't comfortable leading, then you will not be successful in sales. A sales rep is (or should be) simply a consultant—helping customers determine how to reach their objectives and solve their problems. Most customers don't have the time or experience to completely comprehend their needs/problems and determine the best solution. That is the role of an effective sales rep. Can you imagine if sales people waited for customers to lead? What if they waited for prospects to call them, to ask the right questions, and to speculate how the product would meet their needs? Customers and prospects need leadership. They want it. In fact, if the rep doesn't lead, they obviously can't help the customer. Therefore, the desire to lead is a core talent that all successful sales reps must possess.

Desire is the key word. Applicants can exhibit leadership at any given time, especially in an interview. Still, they may not really desire to lead. True sales reps enjoy leading. They love entering a situation that requires leadership and accepting that role. In fact, they become very frustrated if they are not allowed to lead.

Pop Quiz: Is the desire to lead a talent or a skill? How do you know? There is a simple test to determine if a characteristic is a talent or a skill. Ask, "Can it be taught?" In this case, can you take someone who does not want to lead and motivate them to lead? Probably not.

2. Versatile

Versatility is the ability to read the customer's/prospect's mood, communication style, personality style, level of experience, etc., and to make quick adjustments to adapt to the customer. For example, if the customer is more task-oriented, a versatile rep will shift from their typical relational style and get to the point. That subtle shift can determine whether or not you develop a relationship with the task-oriented customer.

You could argue that versatility is a skill. Ultimately, most people can learn to adjust to the multiple customer styles. But do you have time to teach that skill? This is a high level skill that could take months or years to master. If you are willing to teach it, then consider moving "versatility" to the Skills category. But why not hire a rep that already possesses it and save yourself the trouble?

JOB FIT — THE FOUR Cs

Competency (continued)

For example, an ad rep for a trade publication was having difficulty selling ads in an upcoming issue that featured one of the largest trade shows in the industry. His task was to get small companies to advertise in the publication. But, most of them were spending their money on their exhibits for the show. So, this clever rep made his point this way: "Your potential customer walks onto the trade show floor and is overwhelmed by 500 companies all exhibiting similar products and services. How are you going to highlight your booth and ensure it stands out from all the others... Put an ad in our magazine and it will be like shining a huge spotlight on your booth so that everyone can see it." The spotlight visual clicked with his customers and resulted in more ad sales.

One pharmaceutical rep that sold generics had the challenge of competing with name brand drugs. So he learned to tell customers, "It's like getting a Mercedes — same engine, same leather interior, same warranty — for \$20k less because it doesn't have the Mercedes emblem." He made a great point, and it worked.

Candidates with this core talent will often use persuasive analogies and word pictures right there in the interview.

8. Interprets "Meta-Message"

Meta means "more than." Meta-message means "more than the message." In other words, message is the "word" meaning and meta-message is the "heart" meaning — what is implied. Research suggest that 90% of communication lies within the meta-message. So, what does that have to do with sales? Talented sales reps have the innate ability to read between the lines and interpret not what the prospect or customer actually says but what they are implying. Are they truly "not interested," or are they just hesitant about

Persuasive communicators have a unique ability to capture the listener with relevant analogies and word pictures that bring their point to life.

taking the risk? Do they really see the value, but are just fishing for a lower price? Are they holding information back? Are they really upset about a past order, but are not honestly communicating their frustration?

Understanding the customer's meta-message is critical to winning and maintaining customers, especially over the phone. Without the visual clues, this core talent becomes even more critical to the rep's success.

Sample Chart to Assess Competency Fit (for Sales Reps):

As stated, the core talents explored here are the most critical within the telesales organizations we train. But, your environment has it's own uniquenesses. After thoroughly evaluating the rep's job description, create your own list of required talents, skills, and knowledge. To help you in that process, we

have included a chart to help you evaluate the three elements of Competency. You will see that we have included some additional core talents to consider, a list of skills typically required, and traits that fall under the knowledge category. Use this format to create your own list.

Talent	Skills	Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Desire to lead » Versatile » Motivated to achieve goals (or close a skill "gap") » Proactively builds relationships » Persuasive delivery (e.g., natural unscripted communication style, proper diction, pleasant pitch and voice inflection) » Creative/Conceptual thinker » Uses word pictures, analogies, and stories to emotionally involve others » Interprets the meta-message » Professional » Speaks with authority & passion » Comfortable with gaining commitment (i.e., fearless to ask tough questions) » Multi-tasker » Strategic thinker (will not waste time on unqualified opportunities) » Establishes credibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Communicates relevant benefits » Listens » Empathetically acknowledges » Checks for understanding barriers to commitment » Effective questioning skills » Planning/time management » Treats others as special and unique (i.e. demonstrates they care about others) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Aware of communication styles » Industry expertise » Sales methodology » Product expertise » Customer expertise

JOB FIT — THE FOUR Cs

Competency (continued)

What About Customer Service Reps?

Because successful telesales reps are the most difficult to identify, we based the guide on a sales profile. And in most cases, the customer service rep profile would be very similar, if not identical for three of

The Four Cs. Some of the traits in the Competency category are likely to be a little less relevant. Below is a sample chart that will help you build a profile for the customer service rep's competency:

Sample Chart to Assess Competency Fit (for Customer Service Reps):

Talent	Skills	Knowledge
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Interprets the meta-message » Multi-tasks » Versatile » Proactively builds relationships » Natural unscripted communication style » Proper diction » Pleasant pitch and voice inflection » Professional » Demonstrates they genuinely care about the customer's needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Effectively neutralizes an angry or dissatisfied customer » Listens » Empathetically acknowledges » Checks for understanding barriers » "Drops-the-Rope™" (allows the customer to choose vs. pushy/telling the customer what to do) » Procedures for effectively handling key customer events (e.g., can't accommodate request, transferring a call, placing customers on hold) » Treats customers as special and unique » Data entry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Aware of communication styles » Industry expertise » Product expertise » CRM basics » Service methodology

JOB FIT — THE FOUR Cs

Character

Have you ever hired a rep that had all the talent in the world, but he simply would not work? Or she was just too stubborn to accept helpful advice on how to improve? What about the rep that is incredibly talented and hits every quota but whose attitude completely undermines your efforts to build a positive environment? What did you miss? You, like many with the responsibility to hire, missed the last category — Character.

The purpose of this final category is to determine if the candidate has the work ethic and integrity to maintain an acceptable productivity level and reflect the values of the organization. Arguably, of The Four Cs (Career, Cultural, Competency and Character), Character is the most important category. In other words, is the potential team member honest both with the customers and with the company? Will he say whatever it takes to get what he wants? Or is he a person of integrity—doing the right thing even when it costs him? Will he maintain the necessary effort to win even when it is difficult? Is he self-centered or other-centered?

Is Character Really That Critical?

What are the consequences of hiring someone who is perfect for the job, fits into the environment, has the talent and skills, but may lack in Character? What's the big deal? Isn't it acceptable business practice to spin the truth once in a while, or tell a "white lie" to help get the sale? Doesn't everyone expect an element of fudging in the cutthroat world of business anyway?

One mildly crooked rep can destroy a relationship with a customer. The mishandled customer can damage your reputation, and will most likely erode relationships with other customers and prospects. The greatest cost, however, is the impact a dishonest rep has on your team environment. Even if he is your star performer, he can suck the life out of your team and dissuade qualified candidates. Remember, in the long run, a successful, cohesive team will out produce any single rep.

In our 17 years of working with all types of organizations, we have seen that Character is the prevailing issue in determining the success of the sales or service organization.

Back to Character, it includes an attitude of integrity and professionalism in everyday situations. Reps who complain about the commission plan during team meetings, are unwilling to learn, or look for ways to manipulate the customer, bring the team down. And when such a rep is meeting performance goals, you have very little leverage to address the negative behavior. These reps seem to be masters at knowing just how far they can push the line without jeopardizing their position. Once they're on the team, it is very difficult to remove them.

Key Indicators of Character

In our 17 years of working with all types of organizations, we have seen that Character is the prevailing issue in determining the success of the sales or service organization. So let's look at some key indicators of a candidate's Character.

Desire to Serve Others

Sales and service is ultimately about helping people get what they need. Success in sales is not about manipulation. In the short term, you can experience limited success by manipulating customers to buy things they don't need. But over the long term, you will always perform below your potential. A rep with Character recognizes and embraces his primary role of meeting the needs of the customer. This must not only be an important value for the rep, it must also be his DESIRE. There are many values that compete for attention during the typical day of a rep. If serving others is not a priority, then it's just a matter of time before another value surpasses it. True Character means that the desire to

serve others will always win out over the desire to indulge a personal short cut. Reps who desire to serve others are actually fulfilled by helping others succeed. Deep down they find satisfaction in helping others get what they want.

Humble/Teachable

A teachable rep is willing to learn. Similarly, a humble rep is comfortable with being wrong — that is, he is not dominated by the desire to "be right." Even when a humble person is right, he seems to exhibit an understanding that he might be wrong. This rep is in touch with his own humanness. He is willing to consider another perspective on the situation. Humility is crucial because a rep cannot improve if he is not humble. Not to mention, from the customer's perspective, working with an arrogant rep—the opposite of humility — means the customer will always be wrong. And that is not an environment for developing authentic rapport.

Work Ethic

Everyone has a basic attitude about work. To identify a desirable rep, you must determine if the candidate has the discipline to continue working at the required pace—even when he doesn't feel like putting in the effort.

The work of sales is not always fun. It takes a tremendous amount of effort to be successful. And sooner or later, successful reps must rely purely on discipline to push past the instinct to quit, and get the job done. Frankly, very few people possess this ability. Everyone wants to be successful, but the rep you want to hire is the one who is willing to go the extra mile required to succeed.

JOB FIT — THE FOUR Cs

Character (continued)

Honesty

Honesty is perhaps the most difficult quality to discern. But in essence, honesty is the decision to be truthful for truth's sake. Dishonesty is often an attractive alternative. But an honest person values truth over these alternatives even when there are uncomfortable consequences. Sometimes those consequences include the possibility of losing a sale, or forfeiting an incentive. Sales reps are faced with these choices every day. And although dishonesty may appear to be insignificant, allowing dishonest behavior is like introducing a virus that will ultimately inhibit your team's success.

Positive Attitude

Positive people are not overwhelmed by the challenges in reaching their objectives. On the contrary, they seem to look right past them. Positive people are focused on what needs to happen in order to achieve the goal. While a negative person may be preoccupied with the potential for failure, the positive person is preoccupied with the potential for success. Neither is wrong, but both are contagious; and the side effects of a positive attitude make success even more likely.

Positive people are not overwhelmed by the challenges in reaching their objectives. On the contrary, they seem to look right past them.

Strong Ego/Self-Confident (i.e., can handle rejection and not become easily discouraged)

High self-esteem is critically important in sales because of the amount of potential rejection that is inherent in the job. Individuals with low self-esteem or confidence are overly affected by how others may respond to them, and fizzle out in a sales environment. People with a high degree of self-confidence have enough positive data in their bank to dismiss a negative response and overcome the numerous obstacles faced by sales reps on a daily basis.

Accepts Responsibility vs. Shifts Blame

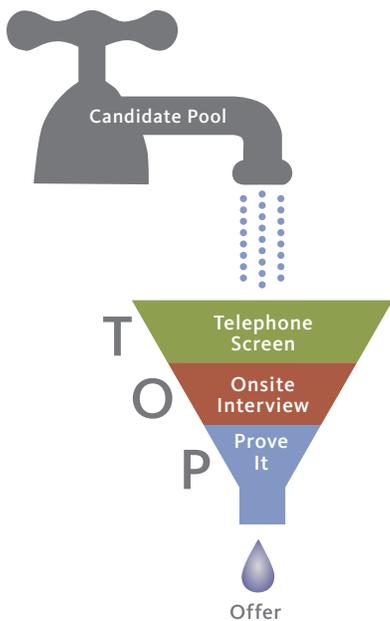
Accepting responsibility for success and failure is key for growth in any role. People who consistently blame others for their circumstances likely see themselves as victims rather than conquerors. They remain incapable of accepting fault and of the realistic self-assessment necessary to mature as a salesperson. The greatest consequence is that this person never grows or improves. If you are never responsible for the problem or the lack of performance, personal development is not required.

In Summary

These are the pieces that work together to identify a successful telesales/call center rep. Career Fit. Cultural Fit. Competency. Character. Doesn't it make sense to ensure these are present at the hire?

T.O.P. REP HIRING PROCESS

So far, we've discussed the importance of the Job Description and Job Fit. Now, let's look at a practical hiring process that ensures the best possible fit. The T.O.P. Hiring Process greatly reduces the time it takes to screen applicants in a telesales/call center environment. It is also the best method for effective candidate assessment. Below is brief description of each step in the process.



Purpose: T.O.P. REP HIRING PROCESS

- » Efficiently filter out unqualified candidates.
- » Ensure both the candidate and hiring manager accurately assess job fit.
- » Ensure final candidates can demonstrate competencies.

T – Telephone Screen

Since the candidates will be selling and managing customers exclusively via phone, the first step in the process should be a Telephone Screen. This initial step in the hiring process has two phases: voice mail screen and telephone interview. Let's look at the voice mail screen first.

You can't just give a candidate a doughnut and spend five minutes with them. It's likely you'll spend close to an hour. We have a different approach.

Phase I: Voice Mail Screen

Virtually every organization we've encountered has candidates respond to a job opening by completing an online application or sending in a resume. The manager then follows up with a phone call to conduct a brief phone screen. Or worse yet, he sets up an Onsite Interview for candidates who appear to have the qualifications desired. This is one of the most inefficient methods possible for quickly identifying a top telesales rep.

Think about the resources required to bring in just twenty applicants for an interview. Once they go to the trouble to come in, you can't just give them a doughnut and spend five minutes with them. So it's likely you'll spend close to an hour with each candidate. And only a handful of those will be qualified to move to the next step. We recommend a different approach.

To narrow down un-screened applicants immediately, simply setup a voice mailbox to handle incoming calls from applicants. Have a high-ranking officer of the company record a very professional outgoing message that invites the job candidate to provide some basic information. Instantly, you will get a feel for each candidate's innate talent, phone presence, self-confidence and many of the other key skills necessary to be a successful inside rep. Using this method, you will be able to screen forty or fifty applicants in the time it would take to conduct a single interview.

Sample Outgoing Message for Voice Mail Screen

Here is an example of what you could use as an outgoing message:

"This is Tom Rice, the VP of Sales for XYZ Company. Thank you for your interest in an inside sales position with our company.

The XYZ Company is the leading _____.

We are looking for sales representatives who will help create new accounts, as well as manage existing business. Instead of using impersonal applications or resumes, we would rather hear from you. So, please tell us a little bit about yourself and how we can get in touch with you. We will get back with you as quickly as we can.

Thanks again for your interest!"

As you think about crafting your unique message, keep the following keys in mind:

- » When introducing yourself, be personable and warm vs. scripted.
- » Be sure to provide a very brief overview of the company and the job opportunity. Make sure you highlight the key benefits of the particular job opening (e.g. opportunity to advance, highest paying, flexible schedule, industry leader). Remember, good people have options, and you want to make sure you communicate why it is in their best interest to join your organization.
- » Ask candidates open-ended questions that will help you determine Career Fit (e.g., "Tell us a little bit about yourself and what you are looking for in a job...").

The Objective of the Voice Mail Screen

While assessing the candidate's message, evaluate the following traits:

- » Diction
- » Professionalism
- » Confidence
- » Personable/Warmth
- » Persuasive Skills – Do they "sell" their qualifications as a fit for this opportunity?
- » Career Fit – Is this position a logical step in the candidate's career path?

T.O.P. REP HIRING PROCESS

T – Telephone Screen (continued)

Grading the Candidate

Once you have assessed the candidate, give him or her a grade of A, B, or C +/- . This will help you identify which candidates to follow up with first (see chart on page 38). You can decide how stringent to make your guidelines. In most cases, you will only need to follow up with your A and B+ finalists.

Phase II: Telephone Interview

The second phase of the Telephone Screen is the telephone interview. Once you have waded through the voice mail messages to determine your most qualified candidates, the next step is to set up a brief telephone interview.

The Objective

The objective at this stage is to better understand if there is a Career Fit and if the candidate has the basic Competency to succeed in this position. As with the voice mail screen in Phase One, there are some traits to look for during this initial telephone interview:

- » Career Trends – Are they negative or positive?
- » Career Fit – Is this position a logical step in the candidate's career path? Will it be a reasonable commute?
- » Diction
- » Professionalism
- » Confidence
- » Rapport Building – Are they proactively engaging you?
- » Understanding of how to position job history in light of your job requirements
- » Listening Skills

Sample Introduction for Telephone Interview

For a candidate who scored well on the Voice Mail Screen:

"Bob, this is ____ with XYZ Company. I am the VP of ____ . Thanks for responding to our ad. Why don't I first give you a little more information about our company and the position and then we will talk a little bit about what you are looking for to see if this position is a good fit for you."

The objective at this stage is to better understand if there is a Career Fit and if the candidate has the basic Competency to succeed in this position.

For a candidate who did not score well on the Voice Mail Screen:

"Bob, let me explain the next step. We are just beginning our search and once we have an opportunity to complete our initial screening of all the candidates we will be getting back to those candidates that are the best fit. Do you have any questions? Great! I hope we will be getting back with you. Thanks for your time."

Sample Questions for Telephone Interview:

Once you have set the agenda for the interview, here is a list of questions that are helpful at this stage of the process:

- » Tell me about your work history. (If they do not provide information on a previous sales position, ask if they have ever been in sales.)
- » How would you describe your perfect job? (Before you give them the job description in detail.)
- » Why are you leaving your current job?
- » Why are you interested in ____ (e.g. telesales)?
- » We are located in ____, is the commute a problem? How long will it take you to get here?
- » What other job options are you considering?
- » What are you expecting/needing to make in your first year?

Red Flags

To gain some perspective on this first interview, ask yourself these questions: Did the candidate sound lazy? Is there a downward trend in the work history? Are they over-qualified (e.g. outside rep)? Unstable? If they have past sales experience, be skeptical. Usually a top salesperson will "dig in" and be successful wherever he first lands. Was it just one of those unworkable circumstances or is he making an excuse?

Prepare For Onsite Interview

If you are fairly confident that it's worth spending an hour with the candidate, prepare for the next step — an Onsite Interview. While the telephone interview is still very fresh in your mind, analyze the candidate and identify the missing pieces of the "Fit" puzzle. You may be satisfied with Career Fit and Cultural Fit, but what about Character and Competency? Look back over your key traits in each category and prepare your questions for the next interview based on the characteristics in each category that most concern you. The best time to prepare for the next interview is right after the previous one. The most common mistake people make in the hiring process is entering an interview unprepared to discuss the candidate's specific qualifications. Here are a couple of tips for preparing for the next interview:

- » Define the missing pieces.
- » Develop questions to discover the missing pieces.
- » Mindset: "Prove to me that you are the candidate for the job."

The Application

The application is also another helpful Pre-Onsite Interview tool for determining job fit. When reviewing the application, it is helpful to focus on the following:

- » Inconsistencies – Does the application match the candidate's verbal description of employment history?
- » Persuasive Abilities (If interviewing for a sales role.) – Does the applicant understand how to communicate past accomplishments persuasively?
- » Intelligence/Education – If application or resume was developed on a word processor, there is no excuse for typos or major grammatical mistakes. If the application is filled out manually, pay attention to sentence structure and basic grammar.

T.O.P. REP HIRING PROCESS

○ – Onsite Interview

The second step in the T.O.P. Rep Hiring Process is the Onsite Interview. Let's begin by looking at the proper mindset for this interview.

Mindset

We all know the pressure of needing to fill a vacant spot on our team. There are a hundred thoughts pressing you to find someone: "You won't hit your numbers." "Your abandonment rate is high." "If you don't get the right people on your team, you'll lose your job." If we succumb to this pressure and allow our instincts to take over, the interview might sound like this: "So how long have you been in sales? Two months? Sounds like you have a lot of experience... When can you start?"

These pressures are real. And they are one of the primary reasons people make hiring mistakes. Rather than approaching the Onsite Interview with an unbiased perspective and carefully considering each candidate, our desperation tempts us to shorten the process by lowering our standards. Mentally, we can transform unfit applicants into timely solutions. Big mistake. The only thing worse than hiring the wrong candidate is repeating the process every four to six weeks. So here are three keys to preparing your mind to determine if the candidate is right for the job.

1. Picture the Perfect Candidate

Before the interview, it is important to create a mental benchmark to measure the candidates you are about to meet. Begin by picturing the perfect rep (or reps) in your mind. Who has been successful in your organization? Who works well in your environment? How does that person communicate? What is his energy level? What was his interview like? Grasping this mental picture will remind you of your standard and connect you to what you are looking for. Again, the pressure to fill the void is strong. So remind yourself of the target and stay connected to reality. Then you will be able to see a candidate's shortcomings before you are committed to living with them.

The only thing worse than hiring the wrong candidate is repeating the process every four to six weeks.

2. Will He Make it? Bet He Won't

To ensure you don't make the mistake of seeing qualities that don't exist, have a little talk with yourself prior to the interview. A moment of calculated self-talk can keep you grounded in the realities of the situation. Literally, tell yourself, "This is going to be a complete waste of time. Very few candidates are a fit and I'm sure this candidate will just be like all the others. Besides, the last thing I want to do is waste three months of time training a candidate who will eventually leave — it's a huge loss for me and a loss for them." Once you get in this mindset, the pressure is on the candidate to move you out of your pessimistic state. If he moves you to "wow," you know he's a potential fit.

A little more self-talk may be needed. Here's why—sometimes interviewers have difficulty assessing candidates honestly because they desire to help people. I often find myself emotionally attached to a candidate and I really want to help him succeed. Here's how I keep those emotions from leading us both astray. If I really care about the individual, I will assess his skills and talents without bias; then I will determine if this is the best job for him. What will help this candidate most? If I truly care about people, I won't put them in roles where they will fail. If I put someone in the wrong job with my company, I'm only distracting him from the goal of finding a job where he can blossom.

3. The "Halo" Effect

The "halo" effect refers to those candidates that win your favor, not because of their talents or skills, but because of something you share in common. For example, if someone is referred by a close friend, shares the same religious background, went to your school, or is a single mom like you, it's easy to develop a connection. But those factors have no bearing on job performance. They only serve to cloud the decision-making process. In the long run, that doesn't help anyone.

The opposite of the "halo effect" can occur as well. If you don't share a natural connection with the candidate, you might overlook someone with tremendous potential. Our prejudices can stem from past problems with employees or negative personal experiences. For example, your unspoken rationale might say, "People from that area of the country are always rude; I'm sure this guy will tick off our customers." Don't deprive yourself of quality employees because of personal biases. Interview candidates based on who they are, not the actions or behaviors of others. Our attitudes and emotions can play a powerful role in the selection process. Unless you are proactive and prepare your mind before each interview, you can make huge mistakes. And those mistakes can cost you months of time and negative emotional energy. Even worse, they can destroy your team environment. Leave your biases at the door.

T.O.P. REP HIRING PROCESS

The Interview

Now it's time to conduct the interview. An effective interview has six steps. Let's look at the key elements of each stage.

Step I: "Off Camera" Interview

The very first part of the interview, and maybe the most telling, happens when the candidate is unaware the interview has begun. We call it the "off camera" interview. It's the interview before the interview and it provides incredibly useful insight. An observant interviewer has a small window into the unguarded world of the candidate. Here's how it works.

As if the interview hasn't started, initiate conversation that has nothing to do with the interview or working at your company. (i.e., How long have you lived in Atlanta? I noticed you went to Georgetown. What was that like? I've never been to (hometown) what is it like? Etc.)

This open, relaxed conversation can take place in the lobby, walking down the hall, or while you adjust the blinds in your office. It feels like "down time" to the candidate, but it gives you a peek into his "off camera" personality. Is he relational? How comfortably and quickly does he build rapport with strangers? To assess these subtle cues, ask yourself these questions:

- » Does he "move" toward you — trying proactively to initiate a relationship (vs. waiting for the interview to start and demonstrating little or no desire to get to know you?)
- » Does he seem genuinely interested in you?
- » Did he answer your questions in detail vs. quick answers that convey an interest in getting on to the real interview?

In addition to the insight you gain while conducting the "off-camera" interview, ask the receptionist or administrative assistant to observe the candidate while waiting for the interview. This can also be extremely revealing.

Your job is to listen. A common pitfall when conducting an interview is talking too much. If you need to impress someone with your powerful position, save it for your next family reunion.

Note how the candidate treats the receptionist. Situations like this tend to reveal the candidate's true character.

Step II: Communicate Other-Centered Objective

At the very beginning of the interview, you want to establish an environment of honest communication. Communicating an "other-centered" objective is the quickest way to establish honesty and trust with the applicant. In other words, tell the candidate that the purpose of the interview is to help him determine if this is the best opportunity for him. I typically communicate, "Most people who come in for an interview believe that they do everything in their power to win the job—regardless of whether the job is right for the candidate. So, instead of communicating honestly, they try and twist all their answers to match what the company is looking for. My recommendation is that you answer as candidly as possible, and then it will become apparent if this is the right job for you. The last thing you want to do is take this job and realize next month you need to start the interview process all over again."

Of course some candidates are so desperate for a job, they would still rather have the wrong job than no job. But, if communicated properly, this technique will disarm the applicant and encourage sincerity throughout the interview. Not to mention, it makes you an attractive potential employer. Not many interviewers begin by expressing an interest in serving the needs of the interviewee. As we've said, great candidates have choices. If you're lucky, the candidate will actually be interviewing you to determine if he wants to work for you.

Step III: Overview of Career

The next step is to have the candidate provide an overview of his employment history. This step will help you discern two things:

- » Relevance – You need to assess the candidate's own awareness of how his skills fit the position. Does he communicate the most relevant details about his past experience? Or does he just ramble on about what he has done without any awareness of what might interest you?
- » Character – If the applicant seems concerned about following the resume, constantly referencing its dates and details, this could be an indication of a character flaw. There's something about integrity that enables a person to speak freely from the heart, unscripted.

Reminder: Your job is to listen. A common pitfall when conducting an interview is talking too much. There are two main reasons this occurs. First, I have a personal need to be heard and respected, and this poor candidate virtually has no choice but to act interested in what I'm saying. Second, I believe I need to sell the candidate on the job. Selling comes later. It hurts your credibility if you begin selling too soon. It makes you look desperate. People want a job that is difficult to get, not one where the position must be sold. Once you have thoroughly qualified the candidate, then it's time to market your company (see Step VI). And if you still need to impress someone with your powerful position and knowledge of your company, save it for your next family reunion.

T.O.P. REP HIRING PROCESS

The Interview (continued)

Brush Up On Your Questioning Skills

To ensure you talk less than 20% during this stage in the interview process, ask open-ended questions. Open ended questions encourage the candidate to talk and lead the conversation. For example:

- » Tell me a little bit about your job history. Can you walk me through that beginning in high school?
- » Can you tell me what you liked most about your previous roles? What have you liked the least?
- » You said you were one of the top reps at _____. Why did you excel in that position?

If these questions fail to generate significant information, or if the candidate is unable to communicate his points clearly and concisely, this is a clear indicator of how he will communicate to your customers and prospects.

Step IV: Focus on Experience and Past Accomplishments

Your candidates will fall into two categories: relevant sales experience or no relevant sales experience. Let's explore how to treat the two types of candidates.

Sales Experience (or relevant past experience)

When your goal is to assess the competency level based on past experience, use behavioral-based questions to allow the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate his or her abilities. For example:

- » Tell me about a time when the customer didn't see the value of your product/services and you were able to persuade them to buy (vs. "How would you sell our product if it is more expensive than the competition?")
- » What did you do on your previous job when you encountered an angry or disgruntled customer?

To ensure you talk less than 20% during this stage in the interview process, ask open-ended questions. Open-ended questions encourage the candidate to talk and lead the conversation.

- » If a customer was calling to buy ____ and you believed they might have additional needs, how would you uncover those needs?
- » When making outbound calls to new prospects, who did you call and how did you engage unreceptive prospects?

As you can see, these questions are specifically designed to uncover past behaviors. Past behavior is the best indicator of future performance.

You are more interested in what candidates have actually done than what they tell you they would do.

In addition, when asking about past performance, be very direct. Clarify all responses. Don't settle for "I was one of the top reps." Ask specifically, "What was your ranking? How many sales reps were in the company? How long were you ranked #____? What criteria were used to determine ranking?" Here are some other examples of questions to determine specific performance:

- » Are you good at selling? Rate from 1-10? Why not a 10? (This is a way to uncover weakness.)
- » What % of the time were you successful at ____? How did that compare with the rest of the sales force?
- » How much money did you earn in commission last year?
- » Your resume says you had one of the top producing territories. How long did you have the territory? What was the territory ranked prior to your taking over?

No Sales Experience (or relevant past experience)

If the candidate has no relevant experience, you are looking for raw talent. The undiscovered star may not understand selling theory, such as the five steps to a close or the anatomy of a successful account executive. So, look for other examples of selling skills and a natural ability to relate with others. This can be accomplished by asking candidates about their teen/college years or previous work experience:

- » What were you like in high school?
- » Give examples of projects/jobs that make you feel most like your true self. Explain your answer.
- » What is your fondest memory?
- » In college, you seemed very involved. Why?
- » How would your family and friends describe you?
- » What strengths do others notice in you?
- » What's your greatest achievement or what are you most proud of?
- » From your last job, tell me about some difficult people you had to work with and how you created a positive relationship with them.
- » Tell me about a time when you had to (or wanted to) persuade someone to change his opinion. What was your approach? Were you successful?
- » What are you passionate about?

T.O.P. REP HIRING PROCESS

The Interview (continued)

Does the Candidate “know thyself”?

“How well does he know himself? Did he have a hard time remembering? Was he comfortable? Did he give specific examples of leadership?” A good salesperson has a high level of self-awareness. He is very in touch with who he is and how he feels. That is why he can relate so well to other people. He can read a prospect’s feelings and moods and therefore empathize more effectively. So, if the candidate can easily describe himself in detail, you are on the right track.

Do I know him much better as a result of his answers? Did he get you emotionally involved with one of his stories? Does he describe himself as a fighter, a hard worker, a competitor? You should get a strong sense of confidence from his answers to questions about past performance.

Step V: Focus on Missing Pieces (what’s wrong with the candidate)

Now it’s time to ask yourself, “What’s wrong? What’s missing? Is it Character, Competency, Career or Cultural Fit?” Maybe you feel very confident that he can sell, but you’re not sure of his integrity. Perhaps he seems like a great person who fits well with the team, but you’re not convinced he has the drive to make eighty calls a day. I can guarantee you something is missing. There is no such thing as a perfect candidate. Your job is to find it and determine if you can live with the flaw.

Again, the key is to try to talk yourself out of a fit, not into a fit. Once you have a grasp of the potential gap, finish the interview by focusing on your concerns. If needed, you can schedule a second interview to include other team members and get another look.

If you are reasonably certain you want to pursue this candidate, it’s time to communicate the value of working at your organization.

Step VI: Market Your Organization

If you are reasonably certain you want to pursue this candidate, it’s time to communicate the value of working at your organization. Here are some ideas for marketing your organization:

- » Focus on what would be most interesting to the candidate. If there’s a growth opportunity, talk about potential advancement and the company’s expansion plans. If the advantage is income, focus on how the candidate can make the most money. If it’s the culture, take the candidate out to lunch with your team or have him meet some of the top reps.
- » Create an information package that communicates the positive things about your organization (e.g., career track, company vision and successes, rep and client testimonials, medical benefits). Be sure to include photos of fun activities and events that capture your positive work environment. Remember, people make emotional decisions about where they work, not financial ones.
- » Communicate your operating principles (e.g. your role as a leader/manager is to ensure the success of the sales team, absolute respect for the individual regardless of performance, etc.). This will give the candidate a window into your belief system.

In Summary

Six Steps to the Onsite Interview

- I. “Off-camera” interview
- II. Communicate other-centered objective
- III. Overview of career
- IV. Focus on experience and past accomplishments
- V. Focus on missing pieces
- VI. Market your organization

T.O.P. REP HIRING PROCESS

P – Prove It

Once candidates have made it through the Telephone Screen and the Onsite Interview, it's time to test their selling skills. This can be done in two ways: first, simulating a sales call or role-play and second, checking references.

Role-Play

One of the best ways for a candidate to "prove it" is to demonstrate the skills live in a role-play. Develop an easy to understand script where the candidate is calling a typical prospect to ask a few basic questions about their needs. If you work in a highly technical industry with a steep learning curve, create scenarios based on a very intuitive product or service (e.g., long distance/internet services, airline).

Once the applicant has had time to study the script, have him call you from another room in the office. If preferred, just turn your backs and conduct the role-play in the same room. It is important not to give the candidate a tremendous amount of help. You want to see if he understands how to sell and is mentally sharp enough to figure out the objective of the role-play. During the role-play, focus on the candidate's ability to:

- » Build rapport quickly. Does he know how to engage you on a personal level or does he just focus on getting through the exercise?
- » Think on his feet. This is a key skill in sales. Does he have the ability to quickly develop a response or a question that moves the sale in a positive direction, or will he have to be told exactly what to do in every situation before achieving any degree of success?
- » Conduct a natural conversation vs. sounding very uptight and scripted.

One of the best ways for a candidate to "prove it" is to demonstrate the skills live in a role-play.

- » Grasp objective of the campaign (e.g., main benefit or application). In other words, could he grasp and communicate the basic benefit of the product/service?
- » Sound and act professional when he is forced to communicate in an unplanned exercise.
- » Exude confidence. All candidates will be nervous. But some will be much more confident than others. This will help you evaluate his ability to lead and build credibility with your customers.

Check References

Most job references are not very helpful. The past employer may be afraid of litigation or simply doesn't want to hurt someone's career. There could be a number of reasons a reference simply will not give you the real "scoop." Here are some ideas on how to approach references:

- » Get the name of the applicant's immediate supervisor and his boss at the last two companies. Don't call the person the applicant tells you to call.
- » When calling a reference, ask very direct questions (subject to your HR policies, of course):
 - (After describing the position) Do you think the applicant would do well in this position? Why or why not?
 - What do you think are the applicant's strengths? Weaknesses?
 - How do you feel about ____'s character?
 - Would you rehire ____?
 - Did the candidate have a problem with drinking, sexual harassment, drugs, etc.?

Because the previous employer is probably not going to reveal his true opinions, judge how positively he responds. Notice the difference between an "I can't believe Bob left. He was one of the best sales people we ever had... you'd be a fool not to hire him!" and "Bob is a good man and I'm sure he will do a fine job for your organization."

T.O.P. Rep Hiring Process Summary

- » Employ the T.O.P. Hiring Process as a method to efficiently recognize "top" talent.
- » Assess the Job Fit of each Candidate to a well thought out Job Description using The Four Cs (Career Fit, Cultural Fit, Competency and Character).
- » Make the Offer!

HIRING TOOLKIT

This toolkit is designed as a companion to the Hiring Guide. It contains tools that will be helpful as you implement the concepts described in the guide. Some of the tools are ready for use; others are templates for your customization. You will find the following:

- A. Sample Questions to help you identify Job Fit (Categorize using the Four Cs).
- B. Strategy Matrix for identifying the key traits you'll want to discover during the early recruiting process.
- C. Template for Logging and Grading the Candidates who leave a voice mail message (Phase I in the T.O.P. Hiring Process).
- D. Scoring Guide for use in rating and then ranking your applicants.

Sample Questions (to help identify Job Fit)

Career Fit

- » What makes work enjoyable for you?
- » Describe a time when you _____. On a scale of 1 to 10, how well did you perform in that position? Did you enjoy your work?
- » What is your three- to five-year plan?
- » Describe the perfect job.
- » In the past, what jobs have you enjoyed the most? Why?
- » What roles/jobs have you had where you struggled to maintain your enthusiasm? Please describe.
- » Have you ever had a job where you looked forward to Monday?
- » (If candidate has previous work experience) What was your income at ____? And ____? (Your goal is to determine financial trend or if there will be significant decrease in income.)

Cultural Fit

Philosophical Alignment

- » What is the best way to approach a customer?
- » What was your customer service philosophy when you worked at ____? What was your goal? How did you accomplish that?

- » What are you typically thinking before you make a call or before you talk with the customer?
- » If you accepted this position, how would you describe your role as a ____?

Team Attitude

- » Have you ever worked in an environment where you had to depend on others to achieve your goal? What did you like about that job? What didn't you like?
- » Describe a conflict you've had. How do you handle it?
- » If the compensation and opportunity were the same, why would you choose one company over the other?
- » Describe the perfect work environment.

Competency (Talents)

Desire to Lead/Motivated to Achieve Goals

- » Do you set goals? Give examples.
- » How do you feel when you lose?
- » Do you feel more comfortable following or leading? Why leading? Give examples.
- » Do you work best supervised or unsupervised?
- » What do you do after hours to improve your performance?
- » What books have you read in the past year that would help you professionally? What books are you reading now?

Proactively Builds Relationships

- » What type of people do you get along best with?
- » What type of person do you think I am?
- » At your current position, how do you interact with the multiple types of team members you work with?
- » What type of customers are the most difficult for you to deal with? How do you respond?
- » Should you respond to all customers the same way? Explain. How in the past have you altered your approach?

Persuasive Delivery

- » How would you approach a customer that needed to dramatically change ____ and seems very unwilling to take advice?

- » Would you describe yourself as someone who sees the "forest" or the "trees"? Give examples.
- » Tell me about something you firmly believe in and why? (Could be something political, spiritual, etc.)
- » Where did you go on your last vacation? Describe it. Did you like it? Why?
- » Describe the last product you sold. What were the selling points?
- » Describe a difficult client that you converted.

Strategic Thinker

- » How will you make a decision about accepting a position at our company?
- » How would you ensure someone follows through on his or her commitments?
- » If you've done all you can do with a team member or customer and he simply will not change, how would you respond?

Establishes Credibility

- » On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being best), how would you rank your ability to ____?
- » Out of all the candidates I am interviewing, why should I hire you?
- » Do you like interviewing? Why or why not?
- » I'm not sure you would handle rejection very well. What do you think?
- » Aside from your accomplishments, who are you?

Character

Desire to Serve Others

- » Tell me about a time when a customer was frustrated and needed help. What did you do?
- » Describe a time where you had a problem with a customer. What was your thought process? How did you respond?
- » How do you respond when a friend is having a problem? Give an example.

Humble/Teachable

- » Tell me about your relationship with your managers (or teachers at school).
- » What is something you feel you are learning? What is something you would like to learn or think you need to learn next? Why?
- » What do you do outside of work to develop your skills/knowledge?

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Character (continued)

Work Ethic

- » Give example(s) of a task where you made yourself do something you did not want to do.
- » How many calls do you think you should handle per day?
- » What gives you a good feeling at the end of the day? How do you like to be managed?

Honesty

- » Have you told your company you are leaving? Will you give notice?
- » What has been your biggest career mistake?
- » When is a compromise acceptable? When is it not acceptable?

Self-Confidence/Accepts Responsibility for Failures

- » What do you know about our company?
- » Have you ever failed? What happened? How did you feel?
- » Tell me about a goal you recently accomplished?
- » Tell me about some challenges at ____? How did you deal with ____?

Strategies for Discovering Sample Competencies

Talent/Skill	Strategy	Desired Response	Red Flag
Desire to Lead	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Behavioral and challenging questions » Personality instruments » Create opportunity to demonstrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Passionate » Past performance » Plans for the interview » Body language » They interview you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Wait for others to solve their problems » Is not aware of the “gap” » Waits for you to lead
Proactively Builds Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Personality instruments » Observe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Successfully builds rapport during interview process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Lacks connection » You are doing all the work of initiating getting to know them
Persuasive Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Observe » Create opportunity to demonstrate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Speaks with authority and passion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Monotone » You lack emotional buy-in » Conscious effort to focus
Speaks with Authority and Passion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Past experience » Observe » Challenging questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Confidence: eye contact, body language » Knowledgeable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Nervous/uncomfortable » Unable to think clearly
Strategic Thinker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Behavioral questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Attempts to clarify next steps at the end of interview » Interviews you — asks tough questions to qualify opportunity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » “Let me know” attitude » Asks very few questions to determine job fit
Communicates Relevant Benefits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Challenging questions » Offer clues » Observe behavior » Personality instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Interprets the meta-message » Communicates relevant benefits (i.e. knows how to position response) » Thinks well on his/her feet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Slow response » Lacks relevance » Poor examples » Not “sold”/lack emotional buy-in
Questioning Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Behavioral questions » Offer clues » Observe behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Interprets the meta-message » Past performance » Acknowledges empathetically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » You don’t feel heard » Changes subject vs. pursuing a greater understanding
Trustworthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Open-ended, challenging and behavioral questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Positive relationship with past employer (gives notice) » Patient in the interview » Offers unprompted examples of how they have served others/customers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Trust your gut » Personal success philosophy does not include helping others

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Sample Interview Assessment Form

Name _____ Date _____

Applicant Trait	Weight	Rating (1-3*)	Score	Comments
Career Fit				
Experience	2			
Methodical	5			
Commute	3			
Flexible	3			
Personality style	2			
Cultural Fit				
Environment	2			
Philosophical Alignment	4			
Professional	3			
Team player	5			
Competency				
Versatile	3			
Builds Rapport/Relational	5			
Empathetic	5			
Pitch, Voice Inflection, Diction	5			
Proactive, Desires to Lead	4			
Uses Analogies/Word-Pictures	3			
Speaks with Authority/Passion	4			
Strategic Thinker/Gains Commitment	3			
Multi-tasker	2			
Listens	2			
Creative Thinker	5			
Character				
Accepts Responsibility	3			
Results-Focused	3			
Teachable/Humble	2			
Self-confident/Natural, Unscripted	5			
Desire to Serve Others	4			
Work Ethic	5			
Motivated/Desire to Succeed	5			

* 1 = exceptional 2 = acceptable 3 = below acceptable Total _____

About ASLAN

Since 1989, many of the world's leading companies choose ASLAN – again and again – as their preferred training resource.

Why such loyalty in such a fickle age? Among the reasons cited is our unmatched ability to bring relevant insight to their unique situations. That's because ASLAN was one of the first sales training organizations to specialize in sales and customer management by phone.

Thanks to this focus, not surprisingly, the changes we effect with our clients become part of their culture for months and years, not days and weeks.



1000 Parkwood Circle
Suite 810
Atlanta, GA 30339
770-690-9616

Just a few of the clients ASLAN
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