

Considerations for Hiring a Salesperson

By Christopher K. Landis, CR, AIA

If your goal for 2016 is to hire a salesperson, here are some tips to help you prepare. Start with a clear and concise definition of the position. Are you seeking an experienced salesperson, or are you going to initiate the sale and then allow the salesperson to usher it through the design to production process? Are you willing to train an existing employee who is interested in selling?

It is also essential to assess any imbalance in your own team. Shore them up with your next hire. Think about neighborhoods that you'd like to expand into and find someone that lives in that area. Would someone with a design background or production experience bring an added layer to the sales team? Consider the benefits of a diverse sales team (ethnicity, gender, age, etc.).

The definition of the position should include sales metrics you will use to measure the hire's success: leads per week (company-provided and self-generated); proposals sent per week; sales and design close ratios; revenue goals for year one through year three.

In today's market, social media and online reviews are important to past customers when they are seeking a remodeling firm. Ask the salesperson to provide examples of reviews.

Independently check any of their social media profiles, especially LinkedIn and Houzz. Are they active users? Do they have many connections?

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SELLING STYLE

Salespeople should be sellers, so expect to be sold. Dig deep to expose all facets of the applicant's selling history and experience. Ask him or her for specific numbers on their past sales volume, income, client satisfaction and all of the metrics mentioned above. Based on these past metrics, do you think your pick for salesperson will meet the specific criteria in the position description? Should the salesperson reflect the values that your target clients have? Ask them for the reasons they are leaving their existing job.

Just like the old adage says, "Trust, but verify." For a top pick, a background check should be mandatory. This should cover civil, criminal and bankruptcy issues. Remember, this person will be representing your company to the public. At the beginning and end of the interview, check your gut — is this a person you would want to buy from?

Generate interview questions that will address if they fit your brand or company culture. If you sell green remodeling, ask if they are passionate about energy efficiency. If you are a design-build firm with an emphasis on design, ask if they feel strongly about the value of good design and to show you examples of their work.

SPHERE OF INFLUENCE

Ask the applicant for his or her sphere of influence. Active participation in community, professional and social groups means they can



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cast a wide net. How does this mesh with the percent of leads you want them to generate? Did they create a personal marketing plan at their last company? Does the applicant still have relationships with past clients or have raving fans? If they completed multiple projects with a client, this indicates they understand the importance of long-term relationships and are good at developing trust with clients. Remodeling sales are about relationship building, and the salesperson should view every client as a lifetime client. Ask about a noncompete clause they might have with their current employer.

LEVERAGING EXPERIENCE

Ask if they have formally studied the sales process and understand the systematic approach to generating sales? Have they trained in such systems as Sandler, Dale Carnegie or Franklin Covey?

Ask them to define your company's unique selling proposition (USP). This shows they researched your company and says they see the value of research in sales. What was their USP in the past?

Look for ancillary benefits to hiring this person. Do they have experience with design, production or estimating? In many cases, the salesperson has downtime while they are going through the onboarding and ramping up their sales. Can they use this time to help out in another department?

Happy sales! | QR