



PRACTICALLY BRILLIANT WORDS OF WISDOM

ON HIRING A HIGH-PERFORMING SALES FORCE

SUE TIDSWELL

AN ACTIONABLE BUSINESS JOURNAL



Let's have a conversation about how the concepts
in this book can be applied to your firm.

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Practically Brilliant Words of Wisdom on Hiring a High-Performing Sales Force (Book Excerpt)

An Effective Hiring Process Is Essential to Your Sales Success

Sue Tidswell

THiNKaha[®]

An Actionable Business Journal

E-mail: info@thinkaha.com
20660 Stevens Creek Blvd., Suite 210
Cupertino, CA 95014

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E-mail: info@thinkaha.com



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Finally, I would like to acknowledge Roy, Laura, and Tom, who are awesome sales leaders and friends. I have been fortunate to watch their careers develop and to see the amazing people they have become.

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my family because they have been my raison d'être.

Nick, I am so proud of your accomplishments. You did it your way and I know you are going to outsell them all.

How to Read a THiNKaha® Book

A Note from the Publisher

The AHAtat/THiNKaha series is the CliffsNotes of the 21st century. These books are contextual in nature. Although the actual words won't change, their meaning will every time you read one as your context will change. Be ready, you will experience your own AHA moments as you read the AHA messages™ in this book. They are designed to be stand-alone actionable messages that will help you think about a project you're working on, an event, a sales deal, a personal issue, etc., differently. As you read this book, please think about the following:

1. It should only take 15–20 minutes to read this book the first time out. When you're reading, write in the underlined area one to three action items that resonate with you.
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Mitchell Levy, The AHA Guy at AHAtat
publisher@thinkaha.com

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Introduction

Selling today is highly complex. We are working in a world with sophisticated buyers who have as much access to information at their fingertips, or a call to Alexa, as we do. The salespeople we hire have to be disciplined in their processes, and they must seek to learn before they try to close a sale.

The characteristics of our new hires have evolved. Yes, they still need to be able to connect to people, but more than that, they have to be genuinely interested in the client and their business. They need to have the ability to engage, listen, understand, and create innovative solutions that truly bring value to the client.

Our salespeople need to be able to weave value propositions throughout their conversations with a potential client and not just deliver an elevator speech. A successful salesperson works in partnership with clients, allowing them to be coauthors of the solution and not just the recipient of a proposal. Finally, when hiring salespeople, they need to be team players. Whether it's with their peers or internal functions, they are not individual islands, and they will not have sustainable success over the long term if they cannot work with others.

Thinkables (a new Sue-ism) Prior to the Hiring Process

When thinking about sharing my sales leadership experience, my hope was that anyone reading it might learn a thing or two to make it worth their time. The biggest challenge was where to start. A wise person told me that I could not edit a blank sheet of paper, so I started with the beginning of the process: the hiring of great talent.

When do you know that you need to hire a salesperson? Is it when your goals are being increased, your existing team is at capacity, or you need to replace a non-performer? Before creating the job description for hiring a salesperson, I challenge you to answer the following questions:

1. Why do I need to hire a new salesperson?
2. Can this revenue be realized any other way?
3. When I find the right person, do I have the right opportunity for them?
4. Will this individual have the ability to grow revenue not only in the next six months and the next year but also over the next two years or more?
5. Is there a career of upward mobility, financially and personally, for the person? In a recent dialogue with a client, when hiring primarily millennials, the focus on the career conversation was key to keeping them engaged in the hiring process. So, make sure you have a career path that is mapped out that you can share.

Also, if you are seeking a replacement for non-performance, be sure to understand why the person failed. Be honest—get feedback from others if needed. Don't keep making the same mistake.

What experience are you looking for?

Entry-level positions: If hiring with minimal or no experience, make sure you have strong, hands-on leaders who can be in the field coaching and teaching. Remember that you get what you pay for, and it is not their fault if they fail due to lack of supervision. As for short-term goals, knowing the number they need to hit daily or weekly is a way to keep them focused and allows you to celebrate small wins. Motivate, motivate, motivate.

Experienced positions: The higher the goals and the margin, the greater the experience and the cost. So, think about the investment before you start the process. Payback may take longer, and the organization needs to be on board. People once given a well-planned-out onboarding program should be mostly self-directed, but they still need to be coached. Set up frequent communication sessions and pipeline calls to keep them on track and catch any challenges or issues early in their hiring. After three to four months, they should have built a strong pipeline with the ability to forecast future sales based on delivery and closing metrics.

What others are saying

When speaking with other sales leaders about hiring, we concurred that finding talent is becoming increasingly more challenging, especially since non-competes are in place to protect intellectual property, as in most industries. This often limits a company's ability to hire without restriction, except for states where a non-compete is non-binding. In addition, these people have a book of business on which they are being compensated, so how do you make the financial impact positive and not negative? My experience is to get creative without being unethical. It can and has been done.

In conclusion

Go slow to go fast in the hiring process. I have been put in the position to hire fast, but be assured you always repent in leisure. Do not be rushed to make the right decision; make sure that you have a 360-degree-view of the person, that you get that WOW factor after the interview, and that it is a cultural fit for them and you.

Sales is a number game; however, remember that quality is always above quantity and you need the art and the science. Achieve #SalesSuccess by having both hunters and farmers in your sales workforce. #EffectiveHiring



Sue Tidswell

<http://aha.pub/EffectiveSalesForceHiring>

Share the AHA messages from this book socially by going to
<http://aha.pub/EffectiveSalesForceHiring>.

Section I

The Value of Having a High-Performing Sales Force

Sales is what keeps businesses alive, and it's your sales force that drives sales for your business. Hiring high-performing salespeople is the key to your sales success. In *Good to Great*, Jim Collins describes getting the flywheel going in order to build momentum. In sales, you need to feel that every part of the team is effective and every new hire you make to your team will increase the velocity in which your team operates. In a high-performing sales force, you can feel the passion, the energy, and the excitement they bring as they move toward reaching their goals as individuals and as a group.

When hiring, you need to know what type of salespeople you need: do you need to hire hunters or farmers? You also need to determine the right match with your client, think of your clients first, and figure out what type of salesperson will connect with them the best. Once you know their needs, hire salespeople who will align to the criteria you have defined. By taking this step, you set the individual up for success, as they will more easily build strong relationships with your clients, and in addition, you set your business up for sales victory.

Watch this video:

<http://aha.pub/SalesForceHiringS1>



1

Your salespeople are the frontline of your brand to your prospects. If you want to close deals and achieve #SalesSuccess, hire a high-performing sales force to do the job. #EffectiveHiring

2

To achieve #SalesSuccess, think about the value that hunters and farmers bring to your company and who to hire when. #EffectiveHiring

3

Should you hire hunters or farmers? First, bring farmers to retain business. Once you've done that and have a secure base, you need hunters to grow the business.

#SalesSuccess #EffectiveHiring

4

Hunters love winning something new and are motivated by having new clients, while farmers love the relationship and are motivated by supporting a client. Which are you looking for in your next sales hire?

#SalesSuccess #EffectiveHiring

5

Retention by itself doesn't equal growth; the same goes for acquisition. You need both hunters and farmers to obtain growth, which equals the right amount of retention plus continued acquisition.

#SalesSuccess #EffectiveHiring

6

Sales is a numbers game; however, remember that quality is always above quantity and you need both the art and the science. Achieve #SalesSuccess by having both hunters and farmers in your sales workforce.
#EffectiveHiring

7

Today, clients are well informed and may know as much about your product/service as others inside your company. As such, your salespeople need to be more sophisticated to cater to the needs of your clients.
#SalesSuccess #EffectiveHiring

8

Do you want #SalesSuccess? Talk to your clients first: Find out who they buy from and why. Who has won more of their business, and what were the qualities that the salesperson presented? #EffectiveHiring

9

Have a clients-first-always focus. Being able to interpret and predict a client's needs is key. Business acumen should be one of the top things you consider when hiring. #SalesSuccess #EffectiveHiring

10

Do you want to achieve #SalesSuccess?
Build client relationships with your best-in-class sales
force that are so good, they lead to referrals.
Set yourself up for sales tomorrow. #EffectiveHiring

11

Sales is only part of the equation. It takes a salesperson
to sell the client, and it takes a team to keep them.
#SalesSuccess #HireEffectively

Appendix A

Coaching Them to Success

Hiring the salesperson is the first step in the process; ensuring their success is what comes next. Salespeople are like any high-performing athlete: they need to be coached, directed, mentored, and provided constructive feedback in order for them to meet and exceed their goals. It is important, however, to understand how a salesperson is best coached and to know how to maximize their potential. The easiest way to do this is to leverage the feedback from the Assessment Tool used in the hiring process. The investment made equips the sales leader and their HR partner with invaluable knowledge of how best to motivate and develop the salesperson. You will find that once hired, providing feedback and insight to the salesperson based on their assessment is a way to get them started and feeling that you are truly interested in them. I have yet to meet a salesperson who does not want to know what their assessment revealed.

There are various assessment programs in the market, but the three I have had the most exposure to are Wonderlic, Caliper, and HBDI (Hermann Brain Dominance Instrument). I select one of these based on the level of sales for which I am hiring and the length of the sales cycle. I segment sales into two categories:

1. Transactional Sales: The individuals hired for this type of business need to be comfortable with cold calling and making hundreds of connections, have a high rejection tolerance, are goal driven, have perseverance, and don't mind repetition. The sales cycle is typically short and commissions paid on a more frequent basis. For these roles, I usually use Wonderlic, as it is an efficient and effective tool and does not intimidate the candidate. <https://www.wonderlic.com>

2. Solution Sales: Solution selling requires greater relationship-building skills, problem solving, risk assessment, teamwork, and attention to detail. Sales cycles are longer and goals take longer to achieve and compensation slower to realize, but the reward is higher. Caliper probes deeper into the intellect and intelligence of the person; it takes longer and is more intense. Knowing more about this level of salesperson is critical for you to be confident that they can be successful. www.calipercorp.com

For coaching and development, HBDI is my go-to for knowing how salespeople prefer to think, how they receive information, what drives them, and most importantly, how they interface with others, especially clients. It is simple and based on using red, blue, yellow, and green colors to identify brain quadrants and a person's preferred way of thinking. All the teams I have led go through this process so I know how to coach them and how they will best work together as a team. I once had 125 salespeople wearing their preferred color badge at a national sales meeting, and it created more conversations than I ever thought possible. By the way, my most successful salespeople were a combination of yellow, blue, and red. <https://www.herrmannsolutions.com>.

My advice when using any of these applications is to ensure that your HR team is involved. First, you want to make sure that your approach and reasoning is well-thought-out. Second, as this becomes part of their ongoing development, the individual should know that the organization is investing in them and their future. If you are like me and don't have access to an in-house HR team, Abbracci Group is a specialized HR company that I use and recommend if you need further insight in making this part of your sales hiring and development process. <https://abbraccigroup.com/>

Feedback is a gift, and continuous learning and development of our salespeople and teams is priceless.

Appendix B

Green Flags

When You Know You Want to Hire This One

In his book, *Blink*, Malcolm Gladwell says, “Your unconscious is the world’s fastest filter of information,” and that our intuition is often right. In today’s world, with AI and information at our fingertips, we can use that amazing intuition and add data to make informed decisions faster.

Hiring a salesperson requires you to be intuitive but to also road test the facts. When I find a salesperson who feels right and can pass the Formula One test drive (aka the interview), then I know we are ready to go to the starting line together.

1. They know “your stuff,” not just “their stuff”

When it comes to knowledgeable salespeople, I appreciate those who have done their research on the company and the position in advance—they have done their homework. It shows that they have the right habits and tend to be better culture fits, come in with the right expectations, and be able to get ramped up more quickly.

An ideal salesperson shows up to the interview equipped with knowledge about the company and curious to learn more. It’s obvious when a salesperson has really done their research and taken the time to know who the company is before their interview. This demonstrates that they can be self-directed and are genuinely interested in the position.

Culture eats strategy for breakfast, and a salesperson shouldn’t just be knowledgeable about the hard facts of your business; they should also be knowledgeable about your company culture and whether it’s right for them.

2. They are excited and have positive energy

When you meet someone for the first time and they have an aura about them, an energy and enthusiasm, everything they say is positive and you know you like this person. It’s not just about what a salesperson says—it’s about how they say it. The right salesperson should be just as interested and excited about your company as your company is about them, and if you can see that in their body language and hear it in their voice, it’s a great sign.

3. They are open, honest, and have learned from experience

We are all searching for the ideal salesperson, but the truth is, no one is perfect. So, having a salesperson who is willing to identify their imperfections is great. When they

can share their weaknesses or identify an area of development, they are showing that they are willing to be open and honest and trust that you will not judge them. Examples of learning show character, and when a salesperson can share their losses, as well as their wins, and can “own” their results, you know that they are genuine.

4. They have a sense of urgency

One of the most challenging parts of hiring a salesperson is simply the coordination. Scheduling phone meetings, interviews, and presentations between so many different schedules is tough, especially if the salesperson does not have a sense of urgency. This ability is evident in the best salespeople, as they respond promptly and succinctly throughout the process because they are keen to close this deal too.

When you are recruiting for a sales role, the time is now and it is fast-paced, and if prospective candidates are unmotivated to respond quickly during the recruitment process, they are less likely to be responsive once they are on the job. A prompt response demonstrates their interest in the company and position.

5. You just had a great conversation

When you leave the interview thinking that you just had a great conversation and came away with all your questions answered, you know this could be the one.

An interview that goes overtime but no one is looking at their watch shows that the dialogue was mutually engaging and that all parties had something of value to say. If you left the room wanting to have another conversation with the person and felt that they really did “fit in,” this is a sure “green light.”

6. Plan ahead

When the salesperson turns up with a 30-60-90-day plan, you know that you have likely hit the jackpot, especially if all the other components are in order. Coming to the interview with concrete ideas of what they would do in the role shows that a salesperson both understands the work well and wants to contribute as soon as they can.

Finally, it's essential for a salesperson to have a plan or proven record of success, be a team player, and know how to have a great conversation, but they also need to be able to think out of the box. The special ingredient for me is “innovation.” Can they innovate and turn ideas into reality? When you have these six key ingredients, plus the special ingredient, you say *yes*.

Red Flags

When interviewing a sales candidate, you need to be tuned into the details because if they are good at what they do, which is sell, they might just try to charm their way into being hired. Don't be fooled—stay focused and make sure you are leading the conversation. Here are a few “red flags” to watch out for in the process.

Are they late for a very important date?

Did they arrive on schedule? (This is actually ten minutes before the interview in order to have enough time to collect their thoughts and breathe for a minute.) I look for a person who has a steady handshake, can smile, and start with a positive conversation. If they were late for you, how can you trust that they will be on time for your customers?

Did they dress to impress?

How was their appearance? Did they dress the part or were they disheveled? This is another big one for me; you do not get a second chance at a first appearance, and first impressions do count. Is what they wore acceptable attire for a prospective customer? If you have any doubts, the answer is no!

Were they ready to WOW you?

Did they come equipped with a pen and something to write on? Whether it's an old-fashioned portfolio or a new tablet, I don't care, but I do care that they take notes and have questions and information already prepared. Have you ever had someone arrive for an interview with a briefcase and just leave it closed? The better prepared they are, the more I love them.

Did they “go slow to go fast” on research?

I am unimpressed when a candidate has not taken the time to do the research and get to know the company. I have had experiences where I told recruiters that an individual didn't even know the name of our CEO and worse, didn't review the job description prior to the interview. The expectation is that they know the business—what they will be selling, their competitors, and what the role is—or how else will they know if they can be successful?

Can they tell it as it was?

I am always excited to hear clear examples of how they have been successful. Do they really know how to prospect, research, discover, problem solve, and close? If they cannot explain the how, what, when, and where, did they sell it or did someone else? Can they give a client as a reference?

Do they have "big ears?"

Today's successful salespeople listen more than they speak. They are curious, they are hungry to know more about their customer's pain, and they dig deep under the surface. Those who get a clearer understanding of what a customer wants are usually the most successful. A salesperson who just likes to talk is probably going to be mediocre at best.

Are they team players?

You are hiring an individual contributor, but are they a "team player?" I use Jim Collins's "Good to Great" analogy of having the "right people" on the bus and everyone owning a "Big Hairy Audacious Goal" to find out whether the person will work for their success, the team's success, and the business's success. It has to be all three or it will not work for anyone.

Do they love what they do or they just need to work?

Apart from professionalism, attitude, and level of preparedness, one thing I look for is a passion in what they do and what they know. Salespeople who are professional but have no other real tie to the position tend to leave or hide when things get tough. Those with passion come forward with great ideas, they are positive, and they want to contribute not only for their success but also that of others.

A final piece of advice: if they did not WOW you, if you did not feel that you could not let this one go, if you did not think that this one really knew how to win, DO NOT HIRE THEM!

About the Author



Sue Tidswell is a Sales Guru and Staffing Industry Expert, named in 2018 as one of the industry's Top Global 150 Women. Sue's impressive clientele list includes some of the world's largest companies, including Honeywell, Goldman Sachs, Bank of America, British Petroleum, and Pfizer. She has also worked for several Global Staffing Companies that include: ManpowerGroup, Volt, and Randstad and a long-standing career and relationship with RR Donnelley.

Sue's passion is taking her "Practically Brilliant" approach to retaining and acquiring a well-balanced client portfolio, aligning great talent with opportunity. She helps build sales organizations and transform recruiting agencies from mediocre to high-performing engines and increased revenues.

Her focus and business specialties are: creating and developing global and domestic sales teams, operations management, public relations, contract negotiations, revenue building, and client relations.

Sue's hands-on approach and constant contact with the client provides insight for both the customer and her business to win. She seeks out and thrives at accepting challenges, from turning around underperforming sales organizations to the opportunity of building a start-up and delivering groundbreaking results.



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Go slow to go fast. High-performing salespeople do their research and know their client before seeing them, to earn their client's respect.
#SalesSuccess #EffectiveHiring

High-performing salespeople don't sell; they show genuine concern about their client's business, and they get to know the person first and the business second. #SalesSuccess #EffectiveHiring

From the hiring process, work with HR to determine if they fit into the company culture. #360 #SalesSuccess #EffectiveHiring

When a salesperson has met others in the organization and has been embraced, they will want to work with you. #Inclusivity #EffectiveHiring

When you're hiring salespeople, do you know what the market rates are and what your competitors are paying? Understand what the total compensation the salesperson is interested in earning. When #ClosingTheDeal, it's the sales leader's time to sell. #EffectiveHiring

Measure results, not activity. Activity provides insight into trends and skills. #InspectWhatYouExpect. #EffectiveHiring



Sue Tidswell is a leader, coach, and business builder who uses her unique experiences to help the clients and companies she works for to achieve their full potential. Her twenty years as a Global Sales Leader enable her to bring new perspectives, innovation, and focus to sales teams, transforming them from average to high-performing sales engines.

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