



Inspiration for Sales Professionals & Sales

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If recruiting opportunities aren't knocking, install a doorbell!

by [Dan Weinfurter](#)

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1

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First level sales managers have a very tough job. In a typical scenario with eight direct reports, the manager has a couple people who are performing at a high level, a handful who are muddling in the middle, and at least one open territory with another person or two on the bubble. In addition, they are reacting to constant requests from the head of sales on the forecast, the status of certain product or service launches from marketing, customer service problems from operations, and finally if this were not enough, he or she is likely being harangued by finance for expenses being too high or contractual issues with clients.

Given all that first level managers must deal with, it is not a surprise that in an effort to be efficient, they engage in a specific pattern of behavior that over the long haul will make their situation worse. What most first level managers fail to do is to engage in a practice of continuous

recruitment. Instead, they default to the standard which most managers follow – they recruit when they have an opening. Not before. This is not wise.

My experience on this point is clear, if you do not somehow engage in a pattern of continuous recruitment, but instead recruit only when there is a need, you will surely end up with suboptimal hiring decisions. Just getting the right talent in your sales organisation can double revenue with same level of headcount. Each mistake in a typical business-to-business complex sale environment is likely to cost your firm over \$1 million – each mistake. Given the magnitude of the impact, recruitment should be among the most important things that managers do EVERY WEEK.



Good people can come from any number of sources, and you need to remain constantly on the hunt to find superior talent. True top-tier talent is rare; you have to be searching for it all the time. A number of years ago, I was making a trip to support a new manager who was running our brand new Los Angeles office. The manager picked me up at LAX, and in the car with her, was a young woman who was the newly hired office administrator, a person the manager had worked with at another company in a similar administrative role. On the way back to the office, I started asking this new hire about her background. Since we were driving on the 405 Freeway in LA, we had considerable time. It turns out she was a recent USC graduate, did very well there, and appeared to have, on the surface, most of the behavioral and personality criterion we were looked for in salespeople in our firm.

After consulting with her manager, we agreed to put her through the recruitment and assessment process we used at the time for business development/sales roles. She profiled beautifully. Shortly after that, we offered her the position and started the search for a new office administrator. By her second full year, she was in the top tier of the most successful business development professionals in the company.

If we had been limited by open head count (we had none at the time) our position description (candidate for a business development role needed a minimum of three to five years of successful consultative sales experience), this person never would have been considered for a role she was ideally suited for. The point here is that for sales roles, while experience matters, capability and potential matter far more. Recruiting for potential first and experience second will serve a firm well over time, more so if continuous recruitment is an expected duty of all first level sales managers.

Your organisation is only as strong as its people. As you build your business, and gear up for strong growth, a relentless focus on getting your hiring strategy right is the surest way to achieve your goals.

Most importantly, recognise that the acquisition, development, and retention of talent is the most important role for each manager and leader. Paying attention to this will do wonders to drive growth in your business.

By [Dan Weinfurter](#), CEO [GrowthPlay](#), a sales effectiveness firm that partners with its clients to drive revenue growth.