

The Five Qualities of Top Sales Performers

By **Marie Warner**

As a Vice President of Sales with experience spanning over two decades, I hired, trained and led over a dozen national, regional, strategic, telesales and industry sales teams. I now realize - and wished I had known then - that every top sales performer on my sales teams had *five key qualities*. These qualities cannot be determined by reviewing the candidates' employment history, industry contacts, or past performance.

Here are the traits I found:

- 1) Knows how to succeed.** Has a sales process and consistently follows it. Can give examples of how their sales process contributed to a closed sale, or salvaged a potentially lost deal.
- 2) Strong ego, but not egocentric.** Has the fortitude to overcome obstacles and learn from failure. Accepts criticism, and seeks ways to improve. *Doesn't make excuses.*
- 3) Works hard to win.** Personally competitive, but also a strong team player. Has the desire to be part of a winning sales team and successful company, not just an individual super star. Willing to extend the daily effort demanded to excel.
- 4) Keen and active listener.** Seeks first to hear and understand your customers' and prospects' issues, and then helps the customer understand how your company can help address those issues to add value.
- 5) High curiosity, credibility and honesty.** Eager to learn new markets, technologies, processes, and products in order to build personal proficiency. Delivers on commitments to you and to customers, and places highest personal and professional value on integrity and truth.

How many candidates for the sales team at *your* firm would you like to have these traits?

Finding and hiring the "right" sales talent - the individual most likely to not only excel in sales but also "fit" the culture in your firm - is not an easy task. Determining which candidates have the *ability, willingness, and manageability* to achieve results in your sales organization demands the following:

Thorough interviewing process, including questions to determine basic knowledge, sales maturity, stress tolerance, persistence and resilience;

Keen observation of candidate's responses and overall demeanor and attitude when being questioned, as well as in "general" conversation.

Conscientious reference checking to verify facts, and more importantly to add insight into candidate motivation, talent, effort and commitment.

Sales Benchmark Index Surveys show that the average turnover of professionals on a sales team exceeds **35%** annually. Disciplined and conscientious candidate qualification and interviewing can help your firm improve the sales rep turnover rate – and more importantly, increase a new rep's chances for success at your firm.

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About the Author

Marie Warner is founder and President of Warner Professional Sales, LLC. Warner Professional Sales helps companies achieve **sales force success through people, performance and planning**. Warner Professional Sales helps companies get more revenue growth from their sales force by *recruiting* the right sales staff, 2) *training and developing* those sales professionals to consistently exceed revenue goals, and helping management to define and implement the best sales "process" and tactics for sales cycle control, territory assignments and quota planning.

Marie brings to client engagements over two-decades of leadership in the sale of technology, consulting and financial products and services to the Fortune 1000 and major financial institutions. This includes nine years of experience as Chief Sales Officer, in both enterprise-level and start-up organizations.

Marie Warner has authored articles in ***Mass High Tech, SalesResources.com, SalesVantage.com, EyesOnSales.com, Software Sales Journal, SalesDoctors,*** and ***Women's Business*** addressing successful sales strategies and tactics. She is a member of NETSEA (New England Technology Sales Executives Association), WITI (Women in Technology, International), Human Capital Institute, The Commonwealth Group, NAPS (National Association of Personnel Services) and participates in numerous other entrepreneurial, technology and marketing organizations.

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