

## What makes a good salesperson

Every company has its own opinion of what makes a good salesperson. It might be someone with a deep understanding of the core product set, or someone who builds relationships well, or maybe someone who sees the big picture of the customer's business strategy. Very often, opinions of what the "right" salesperson looks like are formed over time, are not written down anywhere, and vary widely within an organisation depending on who you ask.

Many business leaders ask questions such as:

- do we use generalists who understand all of our products and have them work a relatively small territory?
- should we have multiple product or industry, product or activity specialists that each serve a larger customer base?
- do we need salespeople who are more technically expert or a solution salesperson who understands our customer's problems and how to solve them using our full range of product and service offerings?
- In surveys undertaken by LoganLea, we have found that salespeople are recruited against profiles that do not match the needs of the business. In a generally high turnover area where recruitment is often a constant process, it is even more important to define the right starting point.

### So what type of salesperson do you need?

In reality, most companies need a mix of personalities and skills across the sales organisation. The overall structure of the sales department, the current business climate, the needs of different customer segments and the business strategy all call for different sales competencies, and these might change from time to time.

Maintaining the right mix of salespeople needs a clearly defined combination of:

- organisation structure design
- role and responsibilities definitions
- competency frameworks

### Defining the organisation structure, roles and responsibilities

A sales department can be configured in any number of ways. There can be varying numbers of:

- internal salespeople
- field salespeople
- sales support staff
- account managers
- technical pre-sales
- product specialists
- industry specialists

...and many other roles.

The organisation structure specifies the number of each type of resource, how they are deployed, the accountability and reporting lines, the territory/market structure and other related issues. This ensures that the sales force is sized and managed appropriately to cover the customer base efficiently whilst maintaining sales effectiveness. The organisation structure should demonstrably map to the business strategy and the current operational targets (e.g. secure an additional 10 top legal clients, grow chemical sector sales by 40%, achieve revenues of £x and margins of £y from top 20 accounts).

What each of these roles does varies considerably between organisations depending on the particular market, customer base, strategy and current trading conditions. But what each one does and why in any particular company should be crystal clear. Each role needs a "Role and responsibilities definition" that details the objectives and duties, which shows how the organisation structure delivers the company's strategic and operational requirements.

## **Defining and using a competency framework**

The competency framework describes in further detail the skills, experience and personality attributes needed for success in each role. In the case of managers, this also needs to encompass soft skills, formal management skills, political and strategic awareness and so on.

By clearly and unambiguously setting out the “shape” of person needed in each role, the competency framework not only aids initial interviewing and hiring, but also assists ongoing performance assessment, training needs identification and evaluation for promotion. The competency framework does not need to be overly detailed, indeed it should be simple to use, but should nevertheless paint a picture of the ideal person to fill each role.

The role descriptions and competencies should be regularly reviewed to ensure they continue to fit with the overall business strategy, that they are delivering value and that customers' needs are being met.

## **About LoganLea**

LoganLea specialises in defining and implementing effective change within sales operations. Supporting business and sales leaders to manage, support and lead high performance sales teams and individuals. Our resource base consists of FTSE100 Sales Directors, sales change specialists and functional experts. Call us to discuss how we can help .