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## Hiring the Best Sales Athletes

The principal driver of sales productivity is the quality of an organization's salespeople. The best sales strategies slide into oblivion without strong salespeople. No sales management theory, practice or system can make up for having less than the best talent. But, having marvelous sales talent can moderate, for example, the problems caused by a flawed selling system.

Hiring the right salespeople is the most important task of a sales leader.

The best sales organizations invest significantly in, and are aggressive about, hiring sales personnel who are demonstratively goal-oriented, self-motivated and successful. They employ systematic and rigorous assessment and interview processes to ensure the right people are hired – often reviewing hundreds of resumes per hire and putting potential candidates through tens of interviews.

Successful sales leaders also seize every opportunity to hire competitors' superstars who can change the profitable revenue growth results in a territory, of an assigned group of customers, for a sales team, etc. They aren't discouraged by the amount of pay required to hire such an "impact player" because the combination of two dynamics creates a staff realignment opportunity:

1. Results delivered by one high performer will be more than those generated by two or three mediocre performers; and
2. Compensation cost of the high performer will be less than the total pay of the lesser performers.

High performance sales cultures employ results-oriented metrics that separate "winners" from "losers." The metrics identify, within the context of the time required for a typical salesperson to reach full productivity, whether correct hiring decisions have been made. Results versus sales goals are regularly and clearly communicated to individuals. In this setting, sales leaders are intolerant of below goal performance and aren't shy about replacing hiring mistakes. The metrics are also invaluable in revealing opportunities to accelerate the productivity of mid-level performers and leverage the productivity of high performers.

Employing superb sales athletes enhances an organization's ability to grow revenue profitably. It also creates a competitive advantage that is more sustainable than investments in facilities, machines or R&D. Why? Because the advantage gained from people who perform is more difficult to replicate.