

An OAD LLC Article

Sales Representatives Are Born, Not Made

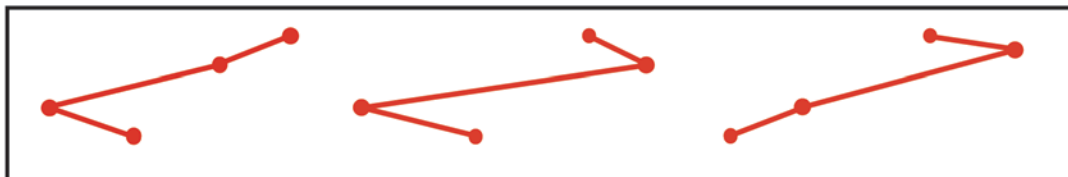
For 25 years we have studied clients' sales forces and have found consistent results. Outstanding Sales Reps possess specific traits that either they were born with or had developed by their late teens or early twenties.

First, let's define a Sales Representative:

- He or she spends the majority of his time outside the office.
- Their responsibilities include prospecting, qualifying, getting appointments with decision-makers, making a presentation, negotiating a sale, and closing.
- They are motivated by a commission on sales as opposed to strictly a base salary.
- Aside from handing in sales orders and expense reports, they dislike paperwork much to the exasperation of the office sales support people. Their focus is on making calls and do not like getting "bogged down" with paperwork.

An outside Sales Rep is not a Route Salesperson who primarily takes orders or restocks shelves - what we often term Outside Customer Service. Nor is he or she Inside Customer Service (unfortunately often called Inside Sales) who take orders, quote prices, check inventory, and handle minor customer problems. Finally, the outside Sales Rep is not a Telemarketer (truly Inside Sales) who uses the phone to find new customers for direct sales or arrange appointments for the outside Sales Rep.

In study after study we find a significant correlation between Sales Representatives' superior performance and Higher A and E and Lower P and D in the traits scale. The construct combinations result in three typical patterns - Pathfinder, Influencer, and Negotiator.



The similarities of these three personality types are that they are assertive, self confident, and hard closers (Higher A/Lower D).

They like variety and change, possess a strong sense of urgency, and get bored with routine or repetition. They prefer a territory as opposed to route or line sales. (Lower P).

Finally, and most importantly, these are extroverted (Higher E) personalities. Extraversion is a trait seen early in youth and is fixed by early adulthood. These are outgoing personalities who enjoy socializing and meeting new people. Their communication style is open, persuasive, and stimulating.

Introverts (Lower E), on the other hand, find it very difficult to prospect and develop new business. Their strength lies in thorough product knowledge and the customer service sector. In spite of all the sales training one cannot make an introvert an extravert. The most common mistake we see is management mistaking product knowledge with the ability to sell. Good customer service makes for poor outside sales particularly when the goal is to develop new business.

Finding qualified outside Sales Reps is difficult - nobody wants to lose them. Giving in to frustration, however, can bottle up a territory and kill off prospective new customers. Be patient and find the right personality.