



The Most Important Thing to Know Before Hiring a Sales Manager

Cautionary Thoughts on Promoting From Within

We all recognize the well-known path of successful salespeople being promoted to sales manager. As is often the case, they then provide mediocre performance to the organization.

Top-flight salespeople often bring vision, momentum and energy to the enterprise' sales team. These leaders are initiators vs. implementors and inspire others to follow vs. commanding via position.

Now, with the one thing addressed, an obligatory note of caution when it comes to hiring from within for a sales management position. An all too common thought is if the person can sell successfully, he or she can manage salespeople with equal success. All too often what happens is the star sales rep is "promoted," resulting in lost sales and an average manager now on the team. Reversing the decision rarely works, as the manager leaves to join a competitor because staying has too much baggage. There are exceptions to this, but it requires having a good handle on the characteristics inherent in the sales rep being considered. This can be a compounding benefit, as it shows a career ladder to others on the team.

However, when the sales-management role is leadership-centric vs. management, the likelihood of success is greater. Conversely, they do much worse when the focus is management. Here's why:

There are four primary skills in the management role. Let's address each and how the leader is more likely to succeed than the manager.

1. **Influencing and Directing:** Executives and salespeople are statistically more adept than other groups in measures of assertiveness, aggressiveness and ego-drive.
2. **Building and Maintaining Relationships:** A primary trait that comes into play here; outgoingness which supports proactive networking and putting themselves into situations where there's new opportunity.
3. **Problem Solving and Decision Making:** Statistically, salespeople are much more like leadership than the management group. While senior-level leadership is stronger in this category, particularly idea orientation and reasoning ability, their style is quite like sales.





4. **Personal Organization and Time Management:** Neither leaders nor sales can claim to be strong in this area, contrasted to managers who usually rely on these strengths to succeed.

In short, leadership needs to understand what it is they want and need from a “sales manager”. And only then can success be expected when making the selection.

Credit given to the authors of *"How to Hire and Develop Your Next Top Performer"* as it's an excellent resource on this topic.

