

20 Sales Hiring Myths Debunked: Expert Insights from 20 Years of Success



About SalesDrive, LLC

Underperforming salespeople are perhaps the greatest cause of frustration to sales executives and financial loss to business owners. To make matters worse, many companies waste money by trying to train sales skills in people who will never improve.

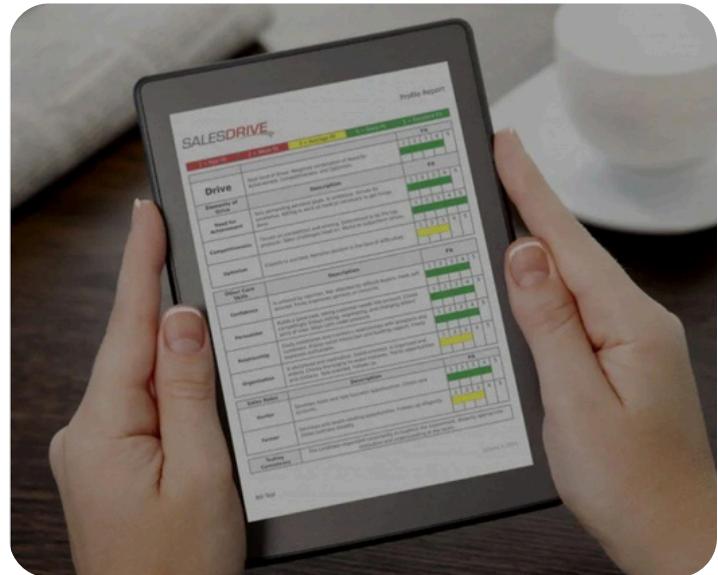
Dr. Christopher Croner set out to find a solution to the common problem of selecting sales candidates who perform poorly on the job, despite interviewing well. He discovered that the best way to evaluate sales candidates was to focus on identifying the personality traits that are common to high-performing salespeople: Need for Achievement, Competitiveness and Optimism, collectively referred to as Drive.

Unfortunately, Drive is one of the toughest traits for interviewers to rate and one of the easiest traits for candidates to fake during an interview.

To combat this problem, Dr. Croner developed the revolutionary DriveTest® sales assessment. The DriveTest is dedicated to measuring the three personality traits common to high-performers as well as other important teachable skills gives you the insight into your sales candidates' potential during the hiring process.

Avoid getting burned by candidates who say the right things in the interview but never live up to your expectations thereafter. Incorporating The DriveTest into your sales hiring process and never hire a bad salesperson again!

[Get started today with a free DriveTest assessment.](#)



Introduction

Sales hiring can be a complex and often overwhelming process. Over the past 20 years, we've debunked common myths that hinder the success of sales teams.

These insights will help you make informed decisions when hiring for your sales force.

MYTH #1

Anyone Can Be Trained to Sell.



While training can teach someone the technicalities of sales, success in sales requires Drive—a non-teachable trait that is essential for high performance. Drive encompasses three characteristics: Need for Achievement, Competitiveness, and Optimism. Only 20% of people possess high Drive. Salespeople without it may struggle to succeed, regardless of training.

MYTH #2

Salespeople From Big Companies Are Always Better.



Many hiring managers mistakenly believe that experience with a large company guarantees success. However, it's important to evaluate whether the candidate's success was due to a strong brand and inbound leads, or whether they were actively prospecting new business. Instead of focusing on company size, prioritize Drive and consider candidates with 2-3 years of experience in a similarly sized company.



MYTH #3

Experience is More Important Than Drive.

Experience can be tempting, but it's not always indicative of success in your specific environment. Candidates with a strong track record may fail to adapt or grow their book of business. The key is to assess Drive—the most important predictor of success. If a candidate has Drive, they'll quickly learn your industry and sales processes, often outperforming more experienced, but less motivated peers.

MYTH #4

Money is Every Salesperson's Top Motivator.

While compensation is important, hiring someone motivated only by financial goals can lead to burnout. Once they hit their financial targets, their motivation may plateau. High-Drive salespeople view sales as a game where they continually aim to increase their performance. It's their intrinsic drive to achieve—not just money—that keeps them striving for success.



MYTH #5

The Cost of Hiring an Underperformer Isn't That Bad

The costs of recruiting, training, and managing an underperforming salesperson are far higher than most realize. A bad hire can cost your business anywhere from \$50,000 to over \$1 million, factoring in lost opportunities, negative impacts on morale and replacement costs. Screening candidates for Drive before hiring is crucial to avoid costly mistakes.

MYTH #6

Hiring Based on Gut Instinct is Best.

While gut instinct can be helpful in evaluating cultural fit, relying solely on it for hiring decisions can be risky. Sales candidates often put their best foot forward in interviews, which may not reflect their true capabilities. Use a data-driven approach to assess both aptitude and past performance, in addition to gut feeling.





MYTH #7

Drive Can Be Easily Determined in the Interview.

Drive is one of the hardest traits to assess during an interview. It's easy for candidates to fake enthusiasm or likability in a brief encounter, but this doesn't provide insight into their ability to maintain high performance over time. A sales-specific assessment, combined with a behavioral interview, will provide a clearer picture of the candidate's true potential.



MYTH #8

Churning Through Salespeople is the Best Approach.

Frequent turnover can be tempting when you're struggling to find the right fit. However, this approach has long-term costs: it hurts client relationships, damages company culture, and impacts your bottom line. Investing in a strategic hiring process up front leads to greater success and stability in the long run.



MYTH #9

Settling for a Warm Body is Better Than Having an Open Territory.

When facing pressure to fill an open sales position, it might be tempting to hire someone who seems "good enough." However, hiring based on urgency rather than quality often leads to failure. Hiring a high-Drive salesperson may take longer, but the results will pay off. Don't settle for less than top talent.



MYTH #10

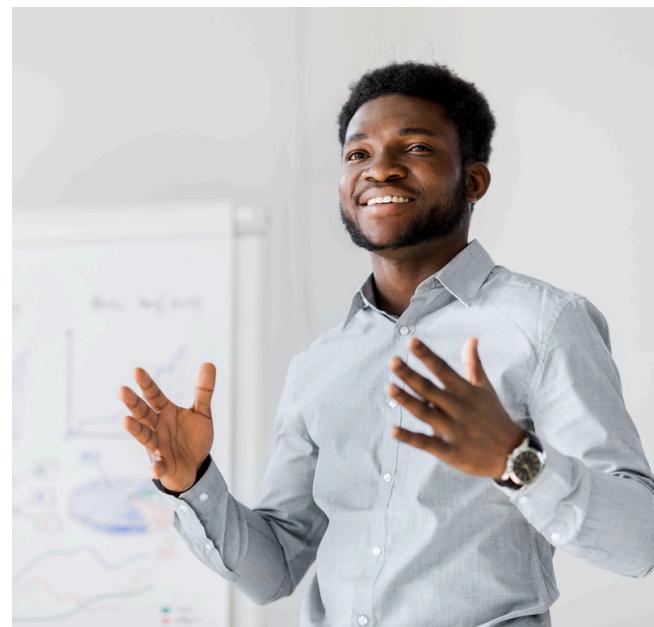
“What If” Questions Reveal Enough About the Candidate.

Situational questions (“What would you do if...”) can help gauge a candidate’s knowledge and philosophy, but they often allow candidates to provide ideal answers, rather than revealing their true approach. Instead, ask for examples from their past experiences, like “Tell me about a time when you wished you had been more persuasive.” Past behavior is the best predictor of future success.

MYTH #11

Sales Presentations During the Interview Predict Success.

A sales presentation in an interview can show how well a candidate prepares and communicates, but it doesn’t reveal whether they can consistently bring in new business. The ability to sell doesn’t always equate to the ability to succeed in the long term. Be cautious of candidates who deliver a perfect presentation but lack the consistent drive needed to succeed.





MYTH #12

It's OK to Hire Someone Just Like You.

While it's natural to be drawn to candidates who share similar values or qualities, hiring based on personal bias can cloud your judgment. When a candidate reminds you of yourself, you may overlook potential red flags. Regularly ask yourself, "What am I missing because I like this candidate?" Stay critical to ensure you uncover all potential weaknesses.



MYTH #13

If the Candidate Sold You in the Interview, They Can Sell Anyone.

Many sales managers love to be sold, but don't be fooled by a persuasive interview performance. The candidate's interview may be their best sales pitch, but it doesn't guarantee long-term success. Carefully assess their Drive and ability to sustain high performance over time.



MYTH #14

All Athletes Are Natural Salespeople.

While athletes often display competitiveness, it's critical to understand the nature of their success. Did they push themselves daily, or did they rely on external motivation? Sometimes, candidates who worked their way through challenges—like holding multiple jobs—may possess the Drive needed to succeed in sales. Understand the "why" behind their athletic achievements.

MYTH #15

General Personality Tests Can Be Used to Predict Sales Performance.

General personality tests may be useful for hiring in other roles but don't accurately predict sales performance. Sales-specific assessments, like the DriveTest®, are calibrated to assess traits that impact sales success. These tests are harder to fake and provide more reliable insights into a candidate's potential.

MYTH #16

A Cheap Assessment is Good Enough.

Low-cost personality tests may seem appealing, but they don't offer the detailed insights you need to make informed hiring decisions. Sales-specific assessments that are scientifically validated may cost more, but they provide a higher return on investment by helping you avoid costly mistakes in hiring.





MYTH #17

A Salesperson Should Not Make More Money Than Their Manager.

Some managers resist paying top commissions to top salespeople out of ego, but this can be a costly mistake. If a salesperson out-earns their manager, it's a sign they are driving business growth. Capping their earnings may push them to seek opportunities elsewhere. Embrace top earners—they grow the business and create opportunities for everyone.

MYTH #18

Motivational Speakers Can Increase My Sales Team's Performance.

While motivational speakers can temporarily boost morale, they can't change the fundamental characteristics of your sales team. Drive is a set trait that can't be altered through speeches. For lasting improvement, focus on skills training that targets your team's specific needs and helps them grow over time.





MYTH #19

Great Salespeople Will Make Great Sales Managers.

Promoting top salespeople to management positions is tempting, but it often leads to disappointment. Sales management requires a different skill set, including the ability to inspire and manage others. Before promoting, assess whether the individual has the qualities necessary for effective leadership in a managerial role.



MYTH #20

High-Drive Salespeople Don't Need Sales Training.

While high-Drive candidates have the natural qualities to succeed, they still need training to refine their skills. Think of them like athletes—without coaching, even the most talented players can't reach their full potential. Investing in structured training programs and mentoring ensures high-Drive salespeople perform at their best.

Conclusion

By focusing on these key insights, you can refine your sales hiring process, reduce costly mistakes, and build a team of high performers who will contribute to long-term business success.

Need help finding the right salespeople? Try the [DriveTest® sales assessment](#) today.

Thank You So Much!

Hiring Salespeople?
Let's Us Help!

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