

The Renaissance Network News

The Top 10 Qualities of a Successful Sales Leader

Introduction: Why Your Sales Leadership's Success is Fundamental to Achieving Your Growth Goals

Sales Leaders are responsible for the growth goals and revenue achievements of your sales team; their ability to promote success within your sales team—by hiring, coaching, and supporting their salespeople—ultimately will either help you meet your desired growth goals or impinge upon your success. A strong sales leader can attract talent, help build, refine, and execute your sales strategy, and lead your individual contributors in closing deals and driving your revenue growth; your success is contingent upon theirs.

As we work with our clients to build strong sales leadership teams, The Renaissance Network is often asked how to identify strong sales leadership talent and ensure that their sales team is managed by leaders with the appropriate skill-set, personality, behavioral traits, and experience. Therefore, in our April Newsletter, The Renaissance Network offers you: *The Top 10 Qualities of a Successful Sales Leader*.

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The Top 10 Qualities of a Successful Sales Leader

When building sales leadership for our clients within the Education and Technology space, The Renaissance Network has identified key competencies within strong sales leadership. Therefore, we are pleased to provide The Top 10 Qualities of a Successful Sales Leader:

- 1. Successful sales leaders continue to improve their knowledge of the education market and embrace change.** Strong sales leaders will have a deep understanding of the market within which they work. They will also embrace the reality of a changing Education market, adapt their sales strategy to the market, and help your sales team address the changes by providing additional education and training.
- 2. Successful sales leaders are strategy and performance driven.** A strong sales leader can help build, refine, and execute your sales strategy based on past experience, knowledge of the market, and best practices. In addition, your sales leader will identify the activities necessary to effectively execute the strategy that has been developed and put in place sales metrics to track progress. Simultaneously, a strong sales leader will stay true to the sales strategy without getting bogged down in processes and administrative tasks.
- 3. Successful sales leaders can communicate efficiently to senior management, individual contributors, and between departments.** A strong sales leader will know how to effectively communicate goals within and outside his or her department to receive the support necessary for his or her sales team to sell.

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Meeting Growth Goals in a Changing Education Market: The Role of Your Sales Leadership

The competitiveness of today's Education market is shaped not only by the increasing amount of strong content but also by the continued variety of platforms on which content can live.

As the transition from print to digital content continues to shape the way students learn at all grade levels and in all subjects, and the competition grows, more Education companies are hitting stumbling blocks in meeting their revenue goals. Only those companies that embrace the changing nature of the market and adapt to meet new challenges can achieve success.

Your sales leadership must address the changes within the Education and Technology market, adapt their sales strategy to address these new challenges, and encourage their sales team embrace the new changes. Many sales teams are reluctant to accept and address change, as change often means more work. Yet, a strong sales leader will build value into his or her requests to achieve the necessary results.

Identifying and Addressing the Sales Leadership Challenges that Affect Your Revenue

If your sales team is struggling to meet its quota, and your sales leader has been unable to address the challenges, determine if your sales leader:

- Is micromanaging his or her team or is too consumed with administrative tasks.
- Exhibits a sense of urgency when there are obstacles to overcome.
- Continues to interface with clients on a regular basis or has lost sight of your customers.
- Can still articulate the value of your products and service.
- Can balance his or her loyalty to upper management and to individual contributors.
- Earns respect or demands it.
- Dumps problems on someone else's desk or fails to delegate work, taking on too many responsibilities on his or her own.
- Motivates his or her team appropriately.

If your sales leadership continues to struggle, and you have offered additional training and coaching, your leadership may continue to cost you revenue and impact the moral of the rest of your sales team. Addressing the problem early can ultimately save you time and money. If you need a sales leader with the capacity to meet your needs, The Renaissance Network can help you find the best person to meet your growth goals.



The Top 10 Qualities of a Successful Sales Leader Continued...

4. **Successful sales leaders will be service-oriented, passionate, and committed.** A strong sales leader will be dedicated to growing and nurturing your sales and your sales team; he or she will have a passion for and commitment to his or her company and products, will balance loyalty to customers, his or her team members and to senior management, and will exhibit integrity in his or her own business practices.
5. **Successful sales leaders continuously interact with customers and continue to articulate the value of your products and services.** By maintaining relationships with customers while in a leadership role, he or she will be able drive your sales efforts by continuing to sell, will be able to actively show his or her sales team how to overcome obstacles, and can lead by experience.
6. **Successful sales leaders know how to make difficult decisions and cut their losses.** If the sales team is underperforming, and your sales leader has tried additional training and coaching, he or she will recognize the impact that an underperforming team member, or members, has on your revenue and will take the appropriate steps to make changes within his or her team.
7. **Successful sales leaders are growth-directed.** Your sales leader should know the importance of building a strong sales team and have the capacity to utilize all methods to find, hunt, vet, and close sales talent.
8. **Successful sales leaders can motivate their sales team through enthusiasm, recognition, and rewards.** He or she will build enthusiasm within his team and in between departments, with guidance, support, and continued encouragement.
9. **Successful sales leaders will manage and lead their sales team by example and delegate the work of the entire sales team appropriately throughout his or her sales team and to himself or herself.** He or she will distribute the workload fairly throughout his or her team and have an open-door policy when it comes to managing and supporting his or her individual contributors. By actively participating in the team's activities, he or she will encourage open communication and teamwork from all levels to overcome obstacles.
10. **Successful sales leaders will consistently train and coach their sales team, offering guidance, advice, and encouragement.** Upon hire and throughout an individual contributor's employment, a strong sales leader will train and coach his or her team members so that his or her team, as a whole, will continue to overcome obstacles when the market changes and new challenges occur. He or she will also respect individual strengths and weaknesses and tailor training and coaching to each individual contributor's unique needs.

Why Hiring Strong Sales Talent Can Challenge Even the Strongest Sales Leader

Your sales leader's ability to find, vet, and hire strong individual contributors is fundamental to achieving your revenue goals. Yet, even the strongest sales leader can have difficulty uncovering, recruiting, vetting, and closing strong sales talent. Here are 5 reasons why your sales leader may be struggling to build you a world-class sales team.

Your Sales Leader:

1. Has not clearly defined the competencies necessary to be a successful individual contributor, therefore, he or she does not know what qualities to search for or the benchmarks to evaluate candidates against.
2. Is including only active candidates in his or her candidate pool rather than hunting passive or hidden ones, limiting your ability to target all possible candidates.
3. Continues to hire within his or her network rather than from the competition, limiting your ability to capture market share from your competitors through your hiring process.
4. Has an unstructured, informal and under-practiced interview process, relying on conversations rather than on a strategic and consistent process for all candidates.
5. Does not use objective evaluation techniques, including behavioral-based interview questions, which ask candidates to describe past performance—a strong predictor for future performance—and an objective sales assessment.



The Renaissance Network

Sales Team Expansion Specialists



The Renaissance Network is an award-winning executive search firm, specialized in uncovering and hunting over-achieving sales and leadership talent in the Education and Technology markets. We strategize with our clients on their sales, marketing, and leadership teams' organization and compensation plans, we analyze the competencies necessary to be successful contributors to our clients' organizations, and then we aggressively hunt top talent within the industry. With a combination of efficient methodologies, knowledgeable team members, and the largest network of contacts within Education and Technology, The Renaissance Network offers its clients a trusted search partner, decreased search time, increased hiring success, confidence in hiring, improved internal interview effectiveness, and a rapid market impact.

- One of the first six search firms nationwide fully accredited by the National Association of Personnel Services (NAPS)
- Ranked as one of the top 25 recruiting firms in the Northeast by the Boston Business Journal
- President, Lisa Sacchetti, is a member of the Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA), a member of the SIIA Education Division Membership Committee, and was named one of Boston Business Journal's 40 under 40 Best Executives for 2008

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