

The Renaissance Network News

The Magic of Headhunting: A How-to Guide to Hunting and Closing Top Candidates

Introduction: Why Do We Call it Headhunting?

Successful salespeople are driven, persistent, and busy; they are on the road or on the phone meeting with customers, building a pipeline, and closing deals. Success takes their skills, effort, and time. In the competitive Education and Technology market, having these kinds of sales people on your team is intrinsic to your ability to meet or exceed your revenue goals.

To continuously grow revenue year-over-year, Education and Technology companies will either have to sell more products/services to a current client base and/or close net-new customers; the most successful growth-directed companies will have an approach which does both. Driving sales and penetrating new markets will require an existing sales team to work harder than the year prior or will require additional strong sales people. The best hire will be the sales person currently capturing market share away from you for your competitors.

Finding and closing a top performing sales executive is no easy task for exactly the same reason your best sales person is successful: He or she is busy selling and closing your customers, just like your top performer. He or she is not spending time looking for jobs or posting resumes on job boards. Therefore, he or she needs to be hunted as a sales lead would, and that takes time, effort, and experience.

Contents

Page 1	Introduction: Why Do We Call it Headhunting?
Page 2	The Magic of Headhunting: A How-to-Guide to Hunting and Closing Top Candidates
Page 2	The Costs Associated with Headhunting On Your Own
Page 2	Key Numbers to Remember to Headhunt Effectively
Page 3	The Magic of Headhunting: A How-to-Guide to Hunting and Closing Top Candidates Continued
Page 4	Corporate Facts



The Magic of Headhunting: A How-to Guide to Hunting and Closing Top Candidates

As top performing sales executives are busy selling to your customers, they are more difficult to target for a new opportunity and must be hunted. At The Renaissance Network, we have 17 years experience hunting top performers for our clients; here is our step-by-step guide to identifying, hunting, and closing top sales executives:

1. Create an ideal candidate profile before you start hunting:

Developing an ideal candidate profile is fundamental to being able to identify who to look for in your candidate search. Sales executive will all have different skill sets: Some will be selling consultatively vs. transitionally; some will be selling into different markets (i.e. Higher Education vs. K-12; literacy vs. mathematics); some will be selling different products, hardware, print, software, blended learning. Each sales person will therefore have a different skill set, customer base, and approach to sales, and not all will translate into a new role. Creating your key qualifications, as well as behavioral traits, cognitive abilities, and cultural characteristics, will help you search for, identify, and evaluate candidates throughout your entire hiring process.

2. Identify Candidates and Build a Candidate Pool:

With a candidate profile determined, one can start to identify candidates who may be the right fit for the role. A substantial amount of research goes into identifying candidates who, on paper, have the right skill set and experience.

Key Numbers to Remember to Headhunt Effectively

Here are some key numbers associated with headhunting effectively gained from our experience:

- 100+ identified candidates
- 3-5 calls to each identified candidate
- A minimum of 3 interviews, including chronological and behavioral-based interviews for each strong candidate
- A minimum of 3 reference checks on finalists
- 5 finalists to make 1 hire
- 3 weeks to focus on one search
- A maximum of 5 searches per recruiter

The Costs Associated with Headhunting On Your Own

To effectively headhunt on your own, be aware of the following cost (both time and money):

- Costs for a Research Team
- Costs for an Internal Recruiter
- Purchase and Maintenance Costs for a Candidate Database System
- Fees for Premium Social Media Accounts
- Fees for Access to Job Boards
- Marketing Campaign Costs
- Research Time to Identify Candidates
- Recruiter Time to Evaluate Candidates
- Customized Sales Assessment Costs
- Candidate Travel Expenses
- Hiring Team's Time

If the process, time, or costs associated with headhunting seem daunting, or your hires are still not producing, consider partnering with the experts to hunt, evaluate, and close top talent.



The Magic of Headhunting: A How-to Guide to Hunting and Closing Top Candidates Continued...

Candidates can be sourced through competitor analysis, social media, conference attendance, etc.; when hiring for multiple positions in different regions, research must be done on each territory for every role. With the best candidates not actively pursuing job boards for new roles, their names and contact information can be much more difficult to find.

3. Develop a Marketing Campaign for the Role

Developing a marketing campaign for the role for which you are hiring can help build awareness of the role and entice a strong candidate to consider a new opportunity. Unlike marketing campaigns for your company (or the typical job description which shows a candidate the requirements and experience for which you are looking), a marketing campaign for an opportunity will be effective if it shows the candidate what he or she can expect to gain from the opportunity. If a candidate is successful in his or her current role, changing roles is a risk; what would outweigh the risk is the extra value that your role brings to the table, and a strong marketing campaign can build interest.

4. Hunt and Create Interest from Candidates with Selling Techniques

Top performers are on the road, having meetings with clients, getting in front of your customers; as they are busy, they may not pick up the phone the first time a hiring manager calls. As a result, they need to be treated like they would treat a lead: They must be cold-called, and then called again repeatedly until they can be reached live. Statistically, only 2 out of 10 candidates will pick up the phone.

Once you get a top-performing candidate live on the phone, the hiring manager or recruiter must present the opportunity in a manner that will interest a strong candidate. Top performing candidates should be told what additional value the opportunity could bring them. Would they have more-brand name recognition than with their current employer? Would they have better products or services to sell than what they currently sell? Would they be offered more of an opportunity to grow in their role?

Would they receive better compensation, bonus structure, benefits? A top performer will need to be sold on the role with the additional value, and it needs to be presented quickly so that a top candidate does not lose interest in the opportunity.

5. Continue to Evaluate Candidates for Performance, Abilities, and other Competencies

Once a top performer is interested in an opportunity, he or she still must be evaluated for specific competencies, and any other personality or cultural requirements the role. Candidates must be vetted through a systematic, scientific, and objective interview process, including behavioral-based interviews, which will determine if the candidate has the right behavioral, personality, and cognitive, and cultural traits to make them the right fit for your organization.

6. Move Aggressively Throughout Your interview process

A top performer will want to make to see that you are committed to your process and that you can run through it quickly; they want to see your efficiency, as it will translate to the rest of your company's ability to function. The more drawn-out a process is, the more likely that your top performer will move on to a different opportunity or be turned off by your process and no longer want to work for you.

7. Be Upfront about Compensation, Limit Your Negotiations, and Close

While a top performer may be enticing for you to hire, hiring outside of your compensation range can be detrimental to your growth. Be upfront about compensation at the beginning of your conversations; if the candidate is looking for a package much greater than you are able to pay, move on to your next candidate rather than waste time; if he or she is within your range, work to close them only within the range that you are comfortable.



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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