You're Hiring the Wrong Sales People

Customers' number one expectation of salespeople is that they have subject matter and solution expertise, whereas social and communication skills are way down the list. This is explained by Philip Kreindler and Gopal Rajguru in the April Issue of *Harvard Business Review*. Yet, the authors found that vendors mistakenly recruit *mostly* for social and communication skills (which are easy to pick out in an interview) and subordinate subject matter and solution expertise.

Ascendant's Take

Ask a salesperson what the most important job skill is and they'll say, "Building relationships. This is a relationship business." Too bad they're wrong.

After interviewing hundreds of sales people in industries from paper to proteomics we have yet to find a salesperson who doesn't value his or her relationships as one of the primary reasons s/he is successful. Yet buyers in those same industries have told us that their vendors' salespeople are completely replaceable.

Are relationships and social skills important? You bet! (After all, you only buy consulting services from someone you trust and enjoy working with.)

Just remember that no business, including yours, is a "relationship business." Your buyers go to social clubs for social relationships. They go to work to make money.

Therefore, when hiring sales people:

- First, make sure they know (or can learn) your business so well they can teach it.
- Second, require that they know how to present ideas and solutions which make money for your customers.
- Third, interview for industry/customer knowledge, professionalism and creativity.
- *Then*, look at the social skills.

For additional ideas about how to create explosive revenue growth, contact:

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