

# Inside BUSINESS

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## The Canterbury Sales®

### Hiring and educating the right vice president of sales Crisis for small and middle market firms

By Andy Gole

CEOs and business owners require a strong executive team. Since strong leadership is a limiting or catalyzing factor in business survival and growth, selection of executives is a critical top management function. Building a competent sales and sales management machine can boost your sales 10-20 percent.

It can take years to train a top executive. What about the vice president of sales, which is the lifeline of almost every business? Do you have an effective method for selecting and educating this key executive?

Conventional views on selecting the vice president of sales include:

- Promoting a strong salesperson
- Hiring a candidate from a competitor
- Hiring a candidate from another industry
- Moving an owner into the position

Choices A and D provide industry and organizational knowledge; the candidates are known quantities. Choice B offers industry knowledge but not the same level of loyalty. Choice C is expected to deliver professional sales management but loyalty is uncertain.

Are any other qualities needed in the vice president of sales, in addition to traditional management qualities?

Assume you are looking for true business development – opening new profitable accounts – and/or your key account management requires:

- Up-selling/cross-selling products/services
- Introductions to other departments/divisions
- Selling in a cutthroat commodity environment

In addition to traditional sales management skills, you need a sales department with strong entrepreneurial and business-development leadership skills. These consist of:

**Entrepreneurial Skills** – Managing uncertainty, acting on a “do-or-die” (vs. best efforts) basis. This includes forward-looking metrics to evaluate the sales pipeline and individual salesperson effectiveness. This is particularly important for evaluating new sales team members.

**Teaching Skills** – To impart the entrepreneurial skills to the team and bring new sales team members up to speed.

**Transformational Skills** – Typically needed for a cultural shift, to lead the team through value and behavioral changes – from social-selling to business-selling and from best efforts to “do or die.”

**Paradigm Building Skills** – To develop a standard sales call and a sales management system based on urgency.

To identify the best candidate for vice president of sales, it might be desirable to invite in special, short-term outside expertise.

A consultant can build the sales machine by:

- Designing the sales and sales management process
- Leading the sales team through a transformation

Once the machine is up and running, the vice president of sales can operate and tweak it. The consultant will mentor him or her through the change

process.

An ideal change process has seminars in week one, one-to-one discussion with each sales team member in week two, seminars in week three, etc.

This still leaves open the question of recruiting the candidate. Involving the consultant early in the recruiting process will help you identify the candidate who not only meets your management criteria but also is a fit for an entrepreneurial/business-development machine.

The consultant also can help you identify performance criteria for the vice president of sales, to support your management of the sales executive and mentor him/her, providing a school for vice president of sales.

If you define the vice president of sales assignment as operating the sales machine, you will have a much richer candidate pool, including internal candidates.

If you have the right sales executive in place, someone you have trained and trust, the consultant can complete the education.

It will be more costly in the short term to bring in special expertise. But the economic justification becomes clear when you consider the opportunity cost of lost sales and sales department turnover.



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Andy Gole has taught selling skills for 17 years. He started three businesses and has made approximately 4,000 sales calls, selling both B2B and B2C. He invented a selling process, Urgency Based Selling®, with which he can typically help companies double their closing or conversion ratio. Learn more about Andy's method at [www.bombadillc.com](http://www.bombadillc.com) or by calling him at 201.415.3447.