

# The Promo Sales Hiring Guide



How to Recruit, Hire, Train, Motivate and Keep  
a World-Class Promotional Products Sales Team

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# Welcome

Welcome to *The Promo Sales Hiring Guide: How to Recruit, Hire, Train, Motivate and Keep a World-Class Promotional Products Sales Team*.

Your decision to grow your sales and profits by recruiting and hiring a sales team is one of the most important choices you will ever make in your business.

Why? Because it will set the stage for nearly every other decision you make going forward.

There is a huge difference between merely *selling promotional products* and *operating a business* that sells promotional products.

The former requires a focus on sales and marketing.

The latter requires a focus on finding and recruiting sales reps: Hiring, firing, training, motivating, managing and retaining.

So the person who grows his or her business primarily by hiring a sales team requires a *wider skill set* than those who grow primarily through their own personal sales efforts.

## **Vision, Structure & the Path to Achievement** **Bringing Your Vision to Life**

In every case, building a truly successful sales organization begins with your vision...

**“Without a vision, the people perish.”** *Proverbs 29:18*

Philosophy aside, as entrepreneurs, we can't create anything wonderful or sustainable in the world without first creating it in our minds.

It may begin with a nebulous idea about selling products or starting a business. We may have some initial notions about the types of clients we'd like to attract or the kind of business we'd like to build. As our vision starts to become clearer, we may form some thoughts about where the business might be located, what we want it to look like, who might be involved and where we'll find the people we need.

**1. Having a strong vision inspires us to take action.** Eventually, if our vision is strong enough, we will find ourselves taking the initial actions necessary to bring our vision to life in the real world. This is how businesses are created.

For example, we might do something as simple as choosing a name for the new entity or determining the corporate structure. Will it be a sole proprietorship, a partnership, a corporation or an LLC? Maybe we'll file the necessary paperwork, choose a location, rent some space or start looking at office furniture.

## 2. Each action we take begins to transform our vision into reality.

When we name it, it begins to feel real. When we file the paperwork, it exists as a separate entity. When space is allocated, it has a physical location. When we furnish it, it begins to look the way we envisioned it.

Then something strange happens: As we begin to see our vision start to take shape in the world, it creates a "new" reality. Instead of just an *idea* it's now an incorporated business, located in the chosen location, all furnished and ready to go.

**3. Our new reality expands our vision.** As we see the results of our actions, it tends to generate more ideas and motivate us to take even more action in order to turn our new *expanded* vision into reality.

And so it goes...



## Conveying Your Vision

Your vision -- that same vision that inspires you to take action to create a sales team -- will also be necessary to recruit, hire, train motivate and keep that sales team.

In fact, you will not recruit *a single salesperson* until you have the ability to effectively communicate your powerful vision for your business and *how they fit into it*.

Your new salespeople will have to be able to *read themselves into your story*. And in order for that to happen, your story will need to be extremely compelling.

- Where does this person fit in?
- How will he or she grow with you?
- How will they advance within your organization?
- How will joining your sales team be the very best action they could take?
- Why would it be better for them to join you than to:
  - Go somewhere else
  - Start their own business
  - Continue doing what they're doing now or
  - Do nothing

Without your vision, and without solid answers to these questions, it will be difficult if not impossible for you to recruit, hire and keep a world class sales team.

When a small organization hires a salesperson, it's relatively easy to see exactly where that new person will fit in. For example, in a five-person organization, each employee represents 20% of the workforce. That's pretty straightforward. But in *any* organization, large or small, every new hire must understand exactly where and how they fit in and *how they can excel*. How will you help them and support them? How will they avoid getting lost in the shuffle? They'll need to know this before they will join you.

For that reason, your vision has to be clear and compelling, not just to you, but to them as well. Every potential salesperson must be able to clearly see how (and where) he or she can fit in and quickly advance within the organization that you are creating.

That requires structure.

## Defining Your Structure

While your vision conveys the idea of what your business is (or could be,) it is the *structure* of your organization which determines how it will function in the real world.

Your structure is the framework that allows your salespeople to see exactly where and how they fit into your organization. It transforms the concept into the reality, the ethereal into the tangible. In other words, the structure gives life to your vision.

Think of it this way: If your vision defines *what and where you want your business to be*, the structure is what allows you to *get there*.

Your business structure is conveyed with tools like organization charts and documents like job descriptions, employment contracts, Independent Contractor agreements, no-compete clauses, confidentiality agreements, exclusivity arrangements, sales manuals, operations manuals, employee handbooks, order forms, purchase orders and invoices.

The tools and documents that articulate your structure are the things that allow you to *replicate your results* and *leverage other people* in order to fully bring your vision to the world.

Without structure, *no one knows what to do or when to do it*, what's expected and what's forbidden.

In any successful organization, clear expectations are key:

- **What does the employer expect from the employee?** Not knowing *exactly* what an employer expects of them is often cited by employees as one of the top reasons for job dissatisfaction. If you want to keep good people, be sure to let them know *in writing* what is expected of them.
- **What can the employee expect from the employer?** How and when do they get paid? To whom do they report? What are the vacation and sick day policies?

As soon as you have made the decision to grow your business by hiring others, your basic structure *must be established*. This can begin with a simple **organization chart** in which your name is in all the boxes. Then, as each new person is hired, your name is removed from one of the boxes and the name of the new person is added.

**Job descriptions** should be used to document what is required of each position. Don't let the fear that you might forget something keep you from creating an initial job description in the first place.

Think of these as living documents. They can grow and change with you as you establish "best practices" for your organization. Initially, be sure to incorporate a line into every job description which says "and additional tasks as assigned by management." This virtually eliminates the dreaded "that's not my job" excuse.

When it becomes clear that a particular task needs to be permanently added to an existing job description, just add it. Update your documentation and provide a copy to any employee impacted by the change. Have them sign a copy of the updated documentation to confirm that they received it and keep this in their personnel file.

Consider this: Without the structure of clearly defined job responsibilities, it is *impossible* to objectively evaluate whether or not someone is performing his or her job adequately.

Without documented job descriptions, it is difficult to reward outstanding performance.

Even more problematic is the fact that *it is nearly impossible to terminate any employee for cause if you have no documentation outlining what constitutes a "fireable" offense.*

This single oversight leads to expensive, frivolous lawsuits and costly unemployment claims paid out to disgruntled former employees who could have been terminated for cause if proper documentation had been in place to begin with.

One of the primary ways that my company helps distributors to protect their assets while recruiting, hiring, training, motivating and keeping a world-class sales promotional products sales team is with a complete, fully-customizable package containing the documentation, forms and manuals needed to operate a successful promotional products business.

## **The Path to Achievement**

Beyond vision and structure comes the path to achievement.

While it might not always seem obvious, most human beings are achievement-oriented. We are wired to accomplish the things that are most important to us. From meeting our most basic needs -- like finding food and shelter -- to more advanced desires like achieving a particular sales goal or income level.

To operate a successful business, it's important to make sure the path to achievement for your salespeople is clear.

- How does a salesperson advance within your organization?
- What are the most obvious benchmarks?
- How do they get from zero to \$100,000 in annual sales?
- How do they get from \$100,000 to \$250,000?
- Or \$250,000 to \$500,000?
- Or \$500,000 to \$1,000,000?

And how is your organization uniquely designed to help them get to the next level?

Salespeople *need to see congruency* between your vision & your structure, your promise and your execution. They also want that *clear path to achievement*. In our industry, this means providing ongoing help, support and training at *every stage of their development*.

Some organizations recruit people by painting a picture of a company that cares for its sales team and supports their efforts. But once inside, they discover that the organization actually focuses the bulk of its time and money on bringing in new people, rather than doing much of anything to help those they've already brought in.

While this practice is bound to leave a sour taste in the mouth of *any* salesperson, it is particularly offensive to top performers who actually take pride in their work and expect their company to recognize and support their efforts at every level.

Any disconnect between the vision you promote and the reality they experience will become obvious very quickly. That's why any organization truly committed to the enduring success of its sales team must demonstrate that commitment consistently with ongoing process training and support at every level (more in *Training* on page 15.)

## **Recruiting Salespeople**

### **The Myth**

Many in our industry think that recruiting salespeople is the primary cure-all for slow or insufficient sales.

And while bringing on new salespeople can be an extremely effective way to grow sales and profits when done correctly, it can also be the fast track to disaster when done poorly.

And unfortunately, poorly is often the way it's done.

As you can tell from the subtitle of this report, "How to Recruit, Hire, Train, Motivate and Keep a World-Class Promotional Products Sales Team," recruiting salespeople is just one step in the process -- and not necessarily the most important step.

Let's face it, you could go out tomorrow, start recruiting anyone with a pulse, and very likely be out of money (and possibly out of business) shortly thereafter.

Because ultimately, recruiting salespeople is just the beginning.

In order to really make it work, it's about:

- Recruiting *the right* people.
- Hiring them into your organization.
- Training them on the way you do business.
- Motivating them to stay engaged with your company and clients, then...
- Keeping your best recruits with you, so they don't wander off in search of a better deal (while taking a healthy portion of your client base with them!)

In order to keep your best recruits with you, you have to determine who they are. This means constantly *evaluating the performance of each member of your team* and *helping them to improve*.

It also means "pruning the branches," by removing any poor performers who cannot be helped. This is rarely pleasant, but it is *absolutely necessary* to the health and well-being of your organization. When you make a wrong hiring decision, recognize it as soon as possible and fix it immediately before it negatively impacts your whole team.

## **Two Methods of Recruiting**

In the promotional product industry, there are two primary methods of recruiting salespeople:

**The First is What I Call the "Steal" Method.** This happens when one person or company attempts to lure away or "steal" an established, experienced salesperson (along with their corresponding book of business) from another company.

**The Second is What I Call the "New Recruit" Method.** This involves recruiting people who are not currently selling in the promotional products industry, getting them up to speed on the opportunity, training them and turning them loose.

So let's take a closer look at each of these two methods...

### **The "Steal" Method**

The "Steal" or "Lure" is the most obvious method of recruiting established salespeople in our industry, as evidenced by ads in industry publications & websites, and email sent out via industry broadcast services. It happens in person at industry tradeshows and regional events, in online forums and networking groups.

Because it's so visible, many distributors think this is the best (or perhaps the only way) to go. However, it can be very difficult for a small distributor to compete with this method.

Virtually no one who engages in the Steal Method of attracting salespeople actually thinks of what they're doing as "stealing." And technically, since we're talking about *human beings*, it's not like anyone can actually "steal" another salesperson. The best you (or any potential suitor) can do is to "lure" the salesperson away by offering something that might be perceived as either a *better deal* or a *better fit*.

**Examples of a better deal** might include a more advantageous commission or bonus arrangement, faster pay, more consistent sales training at all levels, better marketing support, technology or research, additional administrative help or a more responsive support team.

**Examples of a better fit** might include more helpful or appreciative leadership, better recognition of accomplishments, a solid community of helpful support people, a more pleasant and productive work environment and a sense of camaraderie among coworkers.

Also, some people prefer the freedom of being a 1099 independent sales rep, while others prefer the structure of being a W2 employee. Since different people like different things, the methods of stealing or luring away salespeople from other companies are virtually unlimited and the decision often boils down to personal preference.

The upside to the "Steal" is that when an organization is successful at it, it gets salespeople who have BOTH industry experience AND an established book of business.

The downside is that it is extremely competitive. The large industry players spend enormous amounts of money each year to inundate the industry with advertising designed to attract and recruit anyone with an established book of business. This makes it very difficult for smaller companies to find, reach and recruit established salespeople without incurring major expense.

The "Steal" can also create something of a revolving door in some organizations, as some distributor companies publicly make a big deal of parading a new group of established reps through the front door, while existing reps may be quietly slipping out the back. It's a given that no company ever issues a press release to announce that they've *lost* a salesperson.

Also, absent legal safeguards, there is nothing to prevent a salesperson who was lured from one company to another from moving again if offered what he or she perceives a "better" deal.

By its very nature, the "Steal" doesn't always attract the most loyal salesperson. This means that unless you are *exceptionally good at it*, it can be like treading water.

I think of the "Steal" almost like recycling, in that it does nothing to create new jobs, replace retiring salespeople or sell a single new account. It just reallocates billing from one organization to another. So the losing company suffers, the winning company benefits, and the industry itself remains largely unchanged.



That said, it *is* possible for small distributors to pick up established salespeople, or even acquire other small businesses. Suppliers and multiline reps often know of salespeople interested in making a move. But recruiting requires *mastery* in the way that you convey your vision. They will need to feel fantastic about you, your corporate culture, what you bring to the table and how they fit in. This is usually best done “one-on-one” rather than trying to mimic the approach of large companies with enormous recruiting budgets.

## **The “New Recruit” Method**

The "New Recruit" method can be great for small distributors as well as large.

It is less noticed, however, because it often takes place quietly and targets those not already selling in our industry. For that reason, you may not even see it happening.

But the biggest advantage of the New Recruit Method is that any serious promotional products business can do it, if it is willing to take the time and provide the training.

Most employers know that it is much easier to teach a good person the technical skills of a job, than it is to teach someone with technical skills how to be a good person.

That’s a critical point, so let’s repeat it: *Most employers know that it is much easier to teach a good person the technical skills of a job, than it is to teach someone with technical skills how to be a good person.*

The New Recruit Method is about *finding great people* -- the kind of people you actually want to work with -- and then teaching them the technical skills of the job.

Advantages to this method are that:

- You end up working with people who are actually grateful for the opportunity and highly motivated to produce for you.
- You have a much larger pool of individuals from which to recruit.
- You create loyalty by pulling people out of dead-end jobs or unemployment.
- You can build a sales team quickly and train multiple reps at the same time.
- You are no longer at the mercy of prima donna salespeople.
- Once you have it mastered, you can create new salespeople for your organization essentially at will.

## **Finding New Recruits**

One of the most common questions I get is, “how and where do I find new salespeople?”

First off, successful salespeople are likely to be *working*. They rarely remain unemployed for very long.

So here’s how I found them:

- **Scouting:** As business owners, we should always be in scouting mode. This means we are always in search of individuals capable of impressing us. For example: I personally recruited a telemarketer who cold-called my home one evening selling chiropractic services. I recruited the branch manager out of a bank, the general manager of a car dealership out of a meeting at a social organization, a clerk out of an electronics store, and a customer service person out of a Spencer's Gifts.

None had industry experience. None had ever heard of my company. Most of them weren't even looking for another job. But they each had one thing in common. Each of them *impressed me*.

They were either nice, or personable, or professional, or funny, or attentive, or responsive, or *something* that you don't find in most people.

When I had my catalog business, I would troll the shopping malls (particularly near the holidays) looking for a good customer service experience. I could literally go from store to store and find myself completely ignored. I could find dozens, if not hundreds of so-called "salespeople" who were either unwilling or unable to do something as simple as *making eye contact*. Just finding a person who would smile, make eye contact and say "hello" was like striking gold.

Not surprisingly, those were the people I recruited. Why? Because it's much easier to teach people like that the technical skills of a job than it is to teach much of anything to the dullards, the drones and the disengaged.

Finally, scout people in customer service or support roles in our industry, including your own internal account reps. Some can be transitioned into sales positions.

- **Advertising:** Naturally, I've done help wanted ads in newspapers, circulars and online sites like craigslist and monster. Some people say these don't work very well or they complain about the types of applicants they get. There is certainly some validity to that.

If you're expecting to get the cream of the crop right off the bat, forget it. It's an unrealistic expectation. Have you ever heard the expression "you have to kiss a lot of frogs to find a prince?"

Recruiting salespeople via advertising is a lot like that. If you find one solid potential recruit out of ten applicants, *you're doing great!* Finding just one good salesperson in five, ten or even twenty is not failure. In fact, it is the very definition of persistence and success. Big difference.

- **Networking:** At our local Chamber of Commerce, the ambassador of the welcome committee was a woman who worked for an insurance agency. She was extremely bright and personable. The day we met, we talked about sales, marketing, prospecting and getting clients. We talked about the margins in the promotional products industry, what she was making in insurance sales and how much better

she could likely do in our industry. She seemed intrigued. Genuinely interested. I could tell she was actively considering it and I knew she'd be *fantastic*. She told me she'd speak with her husband about it that evening and get back to me. The next day, she turned me down. It turns out her husband also happened to be her boss. He was the owner of the insurance agency at which she worked. *Ouch!*

Despite the outcome of that story, networking events can be a great venue for finding sales talent, as many businesses send their salespeople there to make contacts. You just have to be willing to open yourself up to the possibility (or even the likelihood) of a "no" and keep going. So don't be afraid to ask. I've had a lot of experience with this and I can tell you that even those who say no are usually very happy and flattered to have been approached in the first place.

Just as in the scouting and advertising examples above, you'll discover a lot of frogs before finding your princes or princesses. But it's still well worth the effort.

- **Referrals:** Back in 1988, a tall, lanky, impeccably dressed gentleman walked into my promotional products business. He owned a local tanning salon, which explained his peculiar orange complexion. Turns out a friend of his worked in an envelope factory -- actually making envelopes -- and was interested in a sales job. He wanted to know if we were hiring.

Technically we weren't hiring (since I had absolutely no money to hire anyone,) but I knew I needed help, so I said "sure, send him in." We worked out a straight commission arrangement to start. Since then, the gentleman he referred and I have been working together on and off for more than 20 years, in several different businesses. So you just never know. You never know who will join you, and you never know who will stick.

## **Never Assume You Can't Afford Them**

Many distributors say, "no one will leave a paying job to come work for me on straight commission." But that is simply not true. *If they buy into your vision, they will come.*

The general manager of the car dealership that I mentioned above had a base salary, commissions, overrides and health insurance when I approached him. My wife assured me that he would *never* give all that up to come work for me on straight commission. I was tempted to agree, but fortunately, we were both wrong and he did exactly that.

Why?

There is only one reason (and it's pretty much the only reason that people do anything) so pay close attention: ***Because he wanted to...***

He *wanted* to leave that job and work for me because he *bought into the vision* of what my business would become with his involvement... *and it became that*.

We worked together for years. He became my general manager and eventually ended up buying the business from me.

*But none of that could have happened* if I had been too afraid to approach him or if I had just assumed that I couldn't afford him. So be sure to understand this extremely important concept: **People make their decisions based upon their own reasons and feelings, not ours.** So never assume you can't afford them.

## **Hiring Salespeople**

### **9 Steps to Hiring a Promotional Products Salesperson**

In the *Top Secrets Manual System*, we detail the nine steps involved in hiring a promotional products salesperson:

1. Identify What You Need
2. Create a Compensation Package
3. Decide Where You'll Look
4. Write A Recruitment Advertisement
5. Evaluate Resumes
6. Interview and Screen Candidates
7. Check References (Don't skip this!)
8. Decide Who To Hire
9. Make a Job Offer

In the early days of my distributorship, I didn't follow these nine steps.

I didn't identify exactly what I was looking for. I didn't have a documented compensation package in place. I just told them I'd pay them a certain percentage of the gross profit. This led to numerous problems whenever there was a question or misunderstanding about *anything*.

For example: *What constitutes gross profit? Does gross profit include setup charges? Does it include shipping? Does it include credit card fees? When do I get paid? Am I paid when I write the order? Or when the order is delivered? Or when the client pays? What happens if the client pays late? What happens if a client doesn't pay? Do I have to help with collections? What happens if I get paid but the client needs a refund?*

Without adequate documentation, every situation becomes a cause for confusion.

## Shortest Promo Career EVER

Bill was one of the first salespeople I hired after going into “full recruiting mode.” He interviewed extremely well. Good resume. Solid communication skills. Former military. Hair cropped “high and tight.” To top it all off, his family lived down the street from my grandparents, so I knew his mom, dad and sister when I was a child. I thought, “this is going to be great!”

Bill left for lunch at 12 noon on his first day of work and never returned.

Calls to his apartment were unanswered. Eventually we used “Caller ID Block” and he picked up, not knowing it was us. Turned out he just decided the job wasn’t for him, but he felt uncomfortable saying that, so he walked.

Here’s where following the 9 Steps to Hiring a Promotional Products Salesperson could have helped:

- If I had first identified what I needed, I might have realized *he wasn’t it*.
- If I had created a fully documented compensation package, I might have appeared more professional and he might have felt like he had more to lose by leaving.
- If I had explored all my options on where to look, I might have found more qualified people to begin with.
- If I had written better recruiting ads, I might have attracted better quality applicants.
- If I had thoroughly evaluated his resume (instead of just looking at it), I might have been better informed.
- If I had interviewed him more effectively and screened him more thoroughly, I might have noticed the warning signs.
- If I had actually checked his job references, which I ended up doing afterwards, it turns out I never would have hired him in the first place. Instead, I assumed he would be okay because I knew some members of his family. *Bad assumption*.

As a result: Nine steps to hiring salespeople. Not three. Not seven. *Nine*.

While the details about how to perform each of the nine functions above are beyond the scope of this report, the *Top Secrets Manual System* provides a *complete checklist of procedures* on how to perform each of these functions, along with compensation package outlines, template recruiting ads, interview questions, job descriptions and everything you need to start hiring immediately.

# Training Salespeople

## Who is Responsible?

For some in our industry, there is a Catch-22 when it comes to training:



- Some business owners act as if each sales representative should be entirely responsible for his or her own training.
- Some sales representatives feel the business owner should be entirely responsible for their training.

Bottom line: When *no one* takes responsibility and an untrained sales representative gets in front of a prospective client, it makes the salesperson look foolish, it makes the company look irresponsible and it gives our entire industry a black eye.

If you hope to benefit from bringing a new salesperson into our industry, *you need to assume the responsibility of training that person*. Whenever you bring in a new recruit, he or she will look to you for leadership, *so be sure to lead!* And yes, that applies to established sales reps as well, not just newbies.

While it is the responsibility of every reputable sales organization to provide ongoing training for its people, it is the responsibility of every reputable salesperson to fully accept and embrace that training, take it seriously and be sure to internalize the training before setting foot in front of a new prospect.

When a sales organization neglects (or refuses) to provide ongoing training to its people, the sales rep has two primary choices:

1. Take his or her book of business to a sales organization for whom the ongoing training and motivation of its sales team is important or
2. Find and invest in industry-specific training for himself/herself.

Naturally, lazy salespeople and those happy with poor selling skills will never question an organization that fails to provide ongoing training, as they are the least likely to take advantage of it. But the true performers will definitely notice and act accordingly.

## A Word About Free Training

There is a lot of “free” training available in our industry today, and much of it is worth exactly what you pay for it. That is to say... *Nothing!*

Some of the free tips, articles, newsletters and websites are harmless enough, passing along common-sense recommendations and meaningless platitudes in an effort to sell

advertising to suppliers. But none of it is a substitute for focused, structured, ongoing, industry-specific sales training.

## Training Events

Many large distributor companies hold live training events for their salespeople, and some of them are excellent. I have personally conducted live training sessions for many of the top



distributor companies in the world and at nearly all of the major industry tradeshows since 2001. While this type of training is sometimes offered free to attendees, event organizers pay professional trainers like myself, so that attendees can get the benefit of “paid training” without having to directly foot the bill themselves.

Training events are great for increasing knowledge and awareness at a particular fixed point in time. Normally, at the conclusion of any training event, audience awareness and enthusiasm for the topic are at their peak levels and attendees are excited to apply what they’ve learned.

However, without ongoing interaction, follow-up or consistent implementation, that knowledge, awareness and enthusiasm quickly diminishes.

## The Event Training Trend



It’s likely that we have all attended a training event that got us all fired up and ready-to-go while we were there. But then perhaps we attended a post-conference cocktail party and started killing off brain cells. Maybe we spent time at a trade show collecting

catalogs and samples as our training notes worked their way to the bottom of the trade show bag. So by the time we got back into our office a few days later, we may have been better off than when we started, but nowhere near the peak level of knowledge, awareness and enthusiasm that we reached during the training event itself.

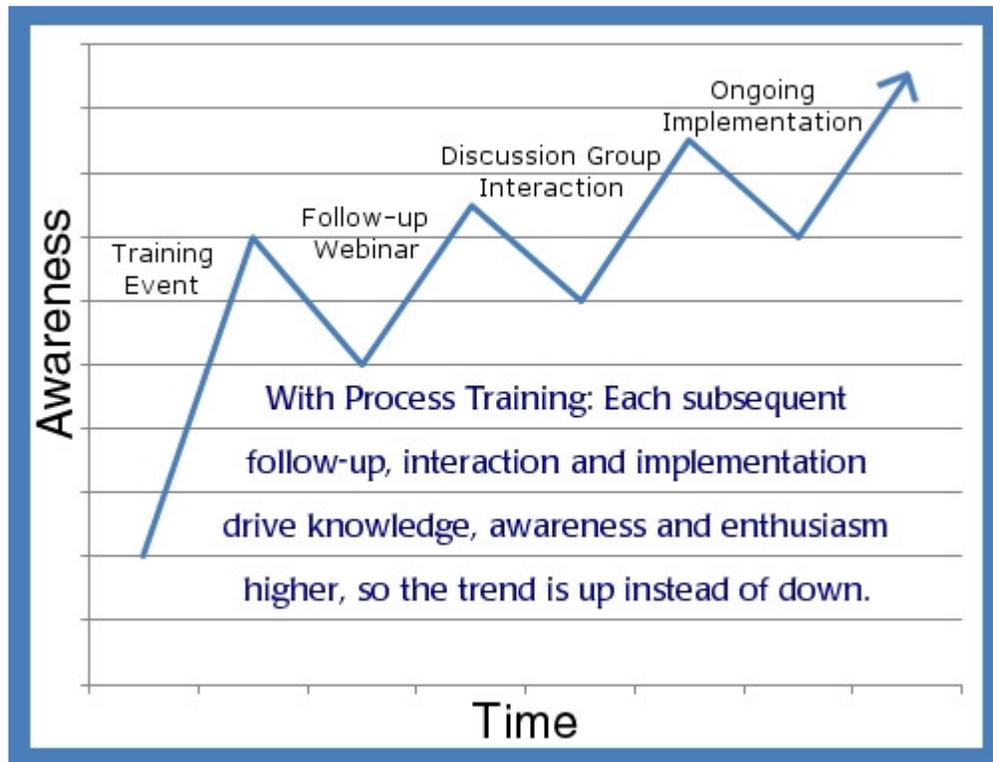
## Process Training

Process Training is the only acceptable method for true professionals, as any single training event can only ever be a start. Process training may incorporate live training, packaged training, webinars, teleseminars, online video and audio, email sequences, and digital or printed special reports like this one. It may involve interaction with a Discussion or Mastermind Group of distributors grounded in the same training materials in which you were grounded, sharing case-studies and implementation ideas on how to increase sales and profits using the knowledge gained during the training.

It may incorporate an online university, learning management system or online education resource. It may include group or one-on-one coaching and consulting.

With Process Training, each new element and each new implementation drives your knowledge, awareness and enthusiasm higher, creating an upward trend that continues for as long as your organization and your salespeople continue to participate.

## The Process Training Trend



Your process training needs to challenge learners at all levels, so that beginners can get up to speed quickly, while top producers can remain engaged and focused forward.

High achievers are “climbers” by nature. That means they are always looking for strategies and approaches designed to get them to the next level. So if you fail to put those advancement “ladders” in place, they will likely seek their challenges elsewhere.

In fact, one of the primary reasons successful salespeople leave an organization is that they feel they have “outgrown” it. When they begin to believe that the organization and management has little or nothing left to teach or offer them, they move on.

I have been creating process training and coaching for some of the top sales organizations and salespeople in our industry for more than a decade, and I’ve noticed that the most savvy companies use it as a **profit center** and **recruitment tool**, while those with limited vision simply view it as an unnecessary expense to be curtailed. In the end, the results speak for themselves.

## **Training as a Profit Center and Recruitment Tool**

Some businesses view any sort of training as an expense and treat it as such. They approach it as a cost to be cut, rather than a profit center to be exploited.

When short-sighted businesses cut training budgets, the *quality* of their training often declines. This reduction in training quality causes their results to decline. Then their poor results are used as justification to further reduce training expenses, creating a downward spiral until the training is either marginalized or completely eliminated.

Realistically, three types of training produce three different financial results:

- ***Poor training is an expense***, meaning that it *costs more than it generates* in terms of sales, profits and salesperson retention. Some simply cut expenses and eliminate poor training. But as you’ll see below, the better solution is to replace poor training with effective or excellent training, which more than pays for itself.
- ***Effective training is a Profit Center***, meaning that it *generates more than it costs* in terms of sales, profits and salesperson retention. If your training program doesn’t seem worth it to you, that means that it is either poor training (as described above) or perhaps it is effective training that is under-promoted and therefore underutilized. The best training in the world won’t help your people if they don’t know it’s there. So if you have effective training, start promoting!
- ***Excellent training is both a Profit Center and a Recruitment Tool for high performers***. Let’s face it, lazy, unmotivated salespeople are never interested in training. The only people who seek ongoing training are those who actually want to *improve themselves*. So if you want to attract lazy, unmotivated salespeople, spend *less on training* and more on pricey recruiting ads. But if you want to recruit *keepers*, you need to invest in the kind of training that actually attracts them.

## **Training Independent Contractors**

Some organizations hide behind the fact that their sales team consists of independent contractors (also known as ICs) to avoid investing in ongoing training for their salespeople. They say, “we can’t require ICs to take our training.” And while that is certainly true, it is a *terrible* excuse for failing to make ongoing training available to the actual *producers* in our industry who will want it and use it.

It doesn't matter if a sales representative is an employee or an independent contractor. If they are representing you, your company and your brand in the marketplace, you want to make sure they at least have solid industry-specific training *available*. Believe me, *the keepers*, (that is, the sales representatives you'll actually want to have with you for the long haul) will use it, appreciate it and produce more because of it.

## **Are You Training Future Competition?**

***Some people say, "What if I train my salespeople and they leave?"  
But the better question is, "What if you don't train them and they stay?"***

Many people in our industry are concerned that they'll bring in a new salesperson, train them on the industry, help them to develop a solid book of business and then have that person leave, take the clients with them and directly compete against their company.

Does this happen? Yes, but it is far less of an epidemic than people think, and it is far more preventable.

As you'll see below, this usually stems much more from feelings of isolation and neglect than from any premeditated plan to "steal business" (more about this later in the section on Keeping Salespeople.)

When your salespeople know you have their best interest at heart, recognize your contributions to their success and see your commitment to helping them with ongoing training and support, they are far less likely to steal clients and compete with you.

Ultimately, you can't control what others do, but you *can and should* control what your organization does:

1. Keep your salespeople engaged with your organization (not just with their prospects and clients.) Whenever a salesperson begins to feel alone with their client base and their suppliers, you become the scapegoat.
2. Promote ongoing training and coaching opportunities *at all sales levels*. Encourage them to participate. This demonstrates your ongoing commitment to their success.
3. Never let your salespeople fall off your radar. Extensive periods of silence are rarely a good thing.
4. Maintain positive dialogue with your salespeople and fix any communication problems quickly. Respond to their issues.
5. Make sure you have adequate legal documentation in place, in the form of signed employment agreements, independent contractor agreements, no-compete/non-disclosure clauses, etc.

The biggest mistake that many organizations make is ignoring their salespeople to the point where the person begins to feel the levels of frustration and resentment necessary to actually contemplate taking their accounts elsewhere and competing.

Can this happen even if the business does everything right? Yes, but it is far less likely and you'll find that in most cases, the handwriting has almost inevitably been on the wall for some time.

Address your salespeople's issues and attitudes as quickly as possible and have the proper legal documentation in place to avoid training future competition.

## **Motivating Salespeople**

### **The Truth about Motivation**

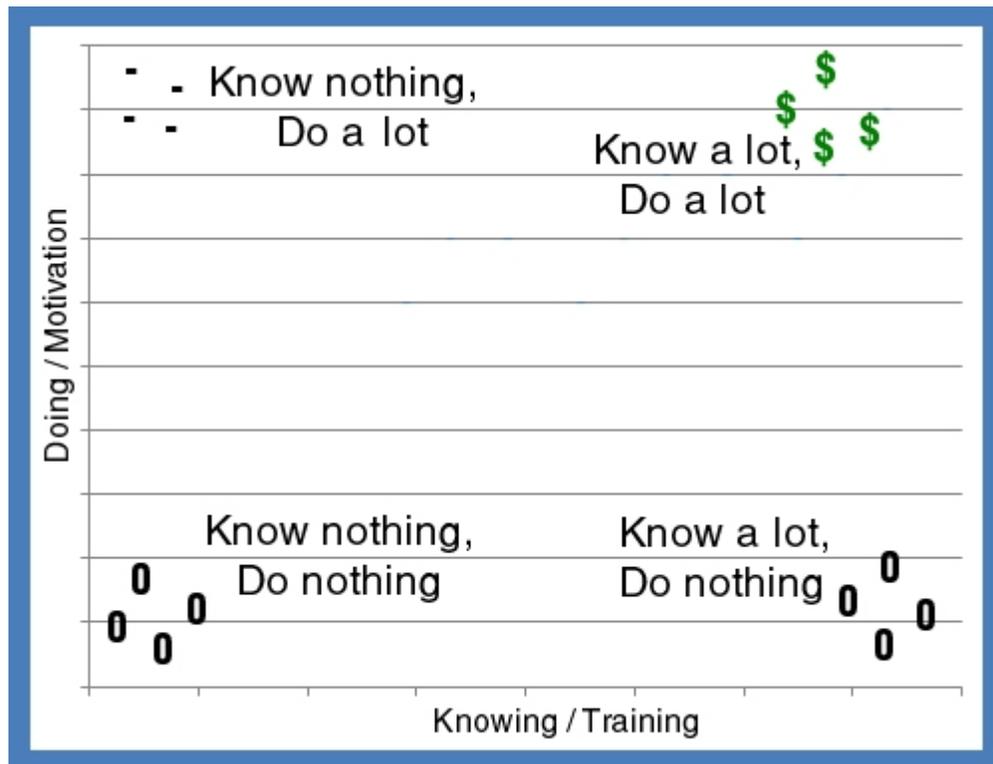
Since 2001, I have been speaking and training in the promotional products industry and occasionally, someone will refer to me as a "motivational speaker." But I never use that term to describe myself, for one primary reason:

***I don't believe anyone can really motivate anyone else. At best, we can only ever help others to find whatever motivation they have inside to begin with.***

Together, training and motivation lead to success. But one without the other will *never* produce the desired results. Need proof? Let's start with this:

- **Fact: Well-trained people know a lot.** More importantly, they know the *right stuff!* As Mark Twain once said "It ain't so much what we know that gets us into trouble. It's *what we know that just ain't so.*" Well-trained people know the stuff that *is* so. That's part of what makes them well-trained.
- **Fact: Highly motivated people do a lot.** Those who are unmotivated, tend to lie around without accomplishing much. But those who are highly motivated are constantly in action. Look around. They're easy to spot.

For further proof, let's take a look at the four most extreme points on the Continuum of Knowing vs. Doing:



1. In the lower left of the continuum are those who **know nothing and do nothing**. These are people who might have stumbled into our industry, never bothered learning anything and are too unmotivated to approach a prospect. They are depicted by zeros because that's what they produce. These people are completely harmless to the industry because no one ever sees them. The solution for them: **Get Trained and Moving** or **Get out**.
2. In the lower right of the continuum are those who **know a lot, but do nothing**. This is the undisputed realm of the know-it-all. They may read a lot, study often, and pontificate quite a bit, but when it comes time to sell something they are nowhere to be found. They are also depicted by zeros, because that's what they produce. The solution for them: **Get Moving**.
3. In the upper left of the continuum are those who **know nothing, but do a lot**. These people are most often new to the industry. They are excited about the opportunity. They are *all fired up*. They've had no industry training, so they don't know who to approach, how to approach them, what to say or how to say it, but they're just so excited that they get out there and do it anyway. Occasionally, someone like this may actually sell something, (if merely from a contagion of enthusiasm,) but they are depicted by minus signs in the continuum (-) because they do more harm than good to themselves and the industry. The solution for them: **Get Trained**.
4. Finally, in the upper right of the continuum are those who **know a lot and do a lot**. They are depicted with dollar signs, because this is where the money is. They have taken the time to learn what they need to know, and they are motivated and disciplined enough to *take action consistently* on what they know. The solution for them: **Keep Training and Keep Doing it!**

Realistically, very few people operate along the extreme points of the Continuum of Knowing vs. Doing. Most people cluster together around the center. Some know enough and do enough to make a reasonable living for themselves. Some know just enough and do just enough to keep themselves busy, but uncomfortable.

## **Where Do You and Your Salespeople Fall on the Continuum?**

Plot out the point at which you see yourself and your salespeople in the Continuum of Knowing vs. Doing. Determine which direction you want to go, and you'll know exactly what you have to do to make it happen. If you know a lot, but don't do enough, take more action to get to where the money is. If you don't know enough, but do a lot, that's exhausting. Take the time to learn what you need to know so that your daily actions produce more for you. And if you don't know much or do much, get learning and get moving. After all, what's the point of frustrating yourself?

Ultimately, when it comes to bringing out your own internal motivation and that of your sales team, I find that *money motivates. Engagement motivates. Knowledge motivates. Success motivates.* Whenever you or your salespeople receive the kind of training and coaching that *shows you the money*, inspires you to action or moves you even one step closer to your goals, you will often find your own internal motivation kicking in and pushing you forward to do whatever it takes next to succeed.

## **Keeping Salespeople Accentuate the Positive**

It says a lot about your organization when your best salespeople stick around.

If successful hiring is largely a function of excellent marketing and recruiting, then successful retention -- that is, keeping the good salespeople you have -- is largely a function of excellent management and systems.

Let's face it, the better you get at recruiting, hiring, training and motivating your sales team, the more in-demand each member of your team will become. At that point, others will try to steal them, so some of your focus must be on retention.

The way to keep good salespeople is to make sure they feel appreciated, challenged, valued, & empowered.

- Members of your management team have to constantly demonstrate that they care about your salespeople. If management seems negative, hostile or even apathetic, your salespeople will go elsewhere. That's because human beings will go a long way and endure much just to feel appreciated and valued.
- Your training needs to remain cutting-edge and world-class, so your salespeople won't feel like they've outgrown it. The best in any group always want to be challenged, stretched and pushed to new heights. So keep pushing.
- Your systems need to be solid, so your salespeople don't have to worry about things going wrong. When you find holes in your process, fix them fast!

As a business owner, you always need to stay at the top of your game, so your people don't feel like they're outgrowing you.

Good salespeople simply won't tolerate poor systems or poor management:

- They won't stay where they're not wanted or appreciated.
- They won't settle for inadequate systems or support.
- They won't sit still for delays in getting paid.

And the reason they won't put up with those things? ***Because they don't have to.*** Good salespeople are a positive influence. They are always in demand and everyone always wants them. So keeping good salespeople is critical to your success.

Plus, every good salesperson you keep is one less you'll have to recruit to stay even.

## **Eliminate the Negative**

If keeping good salespeople is important, then removing poor quality salespeople is equally important. This is particularly critical when it comes to those with an attitude problem.

Remember, each salesperson you hire represents you and your company in the market.

Have a poor quality salesperson meet with a good potential client, and that person won't blame the salesperson. They'll blame your company for sending someone like that in to see them.

A bad attitude is poison to your business. Worse yet, it's contagious and therefore nearly impossible to contain. For that reason, anyone with a poor attitude needs to be removed as quickly as possible, before he or she can infect others in your organization.

While it is relatively easy to train a person who possesses a good attitude, it is virtually impossible to train a person with a poor attitude. If you inadvertently hire someone with a poor attitude, don't wait: Cut the cord quickly and move on.

## **The Three Critical Components**

When you boil it all down, there are three critical components necessary to recruit, hire, train, motivate and keep a world-class promotional products sales team:

### **1. Documentation**

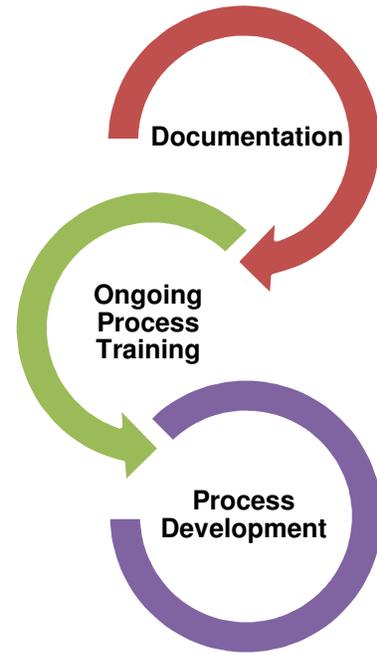
Without proper and adequate documentation, you will not be able to build the infrastructure necessary to operate and manage a successful business. You will not be able to hire and fire at will. You will not be able to maintain control of your accounts.

Consider this: If an employee walks out of a bank with \$250,000 that doesn't belong to him, it's called *Bank Robbery*.

But if an employee walks out of a promotional products business with a \$250,000 account that doesn't belong to him, it's called "a cost of doing business" ...unless you have the proper documentation in place.

Scary, isn't it? To think that someone could literally walk away with company assets of *a quarter of a million dollars or more* and face no consequences?

As mentioned earlier, if you need help with your documentation, visit [topsecrets.com](http://topsecrets.com) and get a copy of the *Top Secrets Manual System*. It provides the structure and documentation you need to recruit, hire, train, motivate and keep a sales team.



## 2. Ongoing Process Training

Pure and simple, if you want to recruit, hire, train, motivate and keep a world class sales team, you need ongoing, process training that will keep your top performers engaged well beyond the occasional "event training."

Annual, semi-annual or even quarterly training at a sales meeting or conference might give your sales team a brief and temporary boost in knowledge and excitement, but as we discussed, it won't last and it won't be likely to continue if you fail to provide *process training at all levels*. Keeping your people engaged and focused on their own growth and the path to advancement that you have outlined for them is essential.

There are three situations in which ongoing training is particularly critical:

1. **Getting Started.** When onboarding new salespeople, you need to get them up to speed on everything from industry price codes to consultative selling. If you do not have a complete, structured training program in place for new hires, you need one. My training program *Getting Started: How to Launch a Wildly Successful Career in Promotional Products Sales* provides that soup-to-nuts sales training for newbies.
2. **Getting Clients.** If you want your new salespeople to be successful, they'll need a proven system or process for bringing new clients through the door like clockwork. If you don't have such a system, your organization and your salespeople are at a distinct disadvantage. My *Top Secrets of Customer Acquisition* program gives you an elegant, proven six step process for getting new customers.
3. **Getting to the Next Level.** When your salespeople get to the point where they are producing at high levels, you need to keep them engaged. If you don't yet have advanced training and coaching in place for your top salespeople, *you need*

*it. My Top Secrets of Multi-Million Dollar Producers* training is perfect for the top performers in your organization.

All the ongoing training and coaching you need can be made available to your salespeople 24/7/365 via Promo Academy, our state-of-the-art, industry-specific sales training platform which covers all levels from total novice to multimillion dollar producer.

For larger organizations, complete, custom-branded, industry-specific online universities are available, which can incorporate any combination of your content and ours. For details on Promo Academy, call 1-800-494-2721.

### **3. Process Development**

The third critical component you'll require is process development. This is about creating the systems and procedures that will allow you to recruit, hire, train, motivate and keep your world-class sales team.

The way I see it, every business owner has three primary responsibilities:

1. Determine the tasks that need to be performed to run the business profitably.
2. Create systems for having those tasks performed correctly and consistently.
3. Delegate those systems to staff, then monitor & repeat.

The core of these responsibilities is process development: Having the ability to convert ideas into processes that may be delegated to others. It's the *only* way to grow and sustain a business that is not entirely dependent upon you to do all the work.

My Promo Academy Coaching Program provides business owners with one-on-one coaching and consulting, in which we'll work with you personally to help you create and refine the tested, proven processes you need to recruit good, solid, knowledgeable sales reps that pay for themselves quickly.

### **The Next Step**

If you've read this far, you already know whether or not you'd like to recruit, hire, train, motivate and keep a world-class promotional products sales team, and you probably also have a pretty good idea of whether or not you'd like me to help you with that.

This report will turn some people off to either (or both) of those ideas, and *that's a very good thing*. Because the sooner you know whether or not something is for you, and the sooner you know who you want working with you, the sooner you can take that first action.

Everything we discussed in this report is *serious business*. It is not for the squeamish. It's not for the dabbler, the hobbyist, the tire-kicker or the freebie-seeker. Some people are destined to build a world-class promotional products sales team. Others are better off selling for themselves or for another company. Still others need to *get out now* before everything folds in around them. *It's all fine*. The most important thing is to *make the call for yourself and move forward*. Speed of implementation is key.

Regardless of whether or not you and I ever work together, I hope you've found the information in this report to be of particular value. If you are serious about accelerating your results and willing to invest in yourself and your business, please contact me. I would love to hear from you.

You can reach us by phone at 1-800-494-2721 or 610-685-9700. You can also reach us online at <http://www.topsecrets.com> or email [secrets@topsecrets.com](mailto:secrets@topsecrets.com).

Here's to building your world-class promotional products sales team!

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David Blaise".

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PS Your comments about this report, positive or negative, are welcome. Just email [secrets@topsecrets.com](mailto:secrets@topsecrets.com). Thanks!