



COMMON SALES ROLES – What do these people do?

Let's explore 7 Sales roles and what the jobs are like

ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT - The Farmer Manages Their Accounts

Account managers are responsible for optimizing sales to an assigned set of existing customers. This is usually accomplished by increasing current purchases as well as expanding sales. This type of sales person is proactive in strengthening customer relations and focuses on continually growing revenue by meeting customer needs and making it easy for them to do business with the company. Top account managers tend to be disciplined in their account planning process and set a contact schedule that reinforces their commitment to increasing customer satisfaction. They develop a network of internal support to facilitate special requests and quick problem resolution. These individuals gain career satisfaction with helping their customers by solving potential issues or pain points.

NEW BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - The Hunter Finds New Customers

New business developers are usually responsible for bringing in new business from larger accounts. Those who excel tend to be comfortable uncovering opportunities and continuously promoting their company in the hopes of uncovering a match. The position focuses almost exclusively on the prospect conversion process, and the salesperson typically does minimal post-sale contact. This type of position is used to develop a presence in a competitive stronghold or to expand sales coverage beyond the firm's current customer base. Most often, hunters sell products or services that are relatively new or, at least, represent a new approach to the potential customer. Hunters tend to be very opportunistic and look for novel ways to apply their products and services.

INDIRECT SALES - Selling through Channels

Indirect or Channel salespeople sell to end-users through a distribution network of distributors, agents, value added resellers, or manufacturer's representatives. Often, the seller is a manufacturer of commodity products with no in-house or dedicated sales force to service their customer base. Top salespeople are adept at capturing share of mind throughout the channel and helping their agents sell effectively and thus become more personally successful. They tend to develop extensive product and application knowledge so they can be a useful resource in developing individual salespeople and educating end-users when appropriate. They meet consistently to train and inspire their agents. They act as a resource to individual salespeople to model techniques and/or help close the tough or large deals.

INSIDE SALES (INBOUND) - Responding to contact from customers or prospects

This salesperson's chief responsibility is to respond to contact initiated by customers or prospects over the phone or via electronic communication. Sellers in these roles are typically expert at gaining an understanding of the caller's needs or requirements and quickly identifying the appropriate actions to move the opportunity towards a sale, meeting, or other relevant outcome. These types of roles may also focus on maximizing sales of products to existing clients by trying to cross-sell or up-sell.

INSIDE SALES (OUTBOUND) - Identify and contact potential customers

Those in outbound inside sales roles are responsible for initiating contact with prospects and customers to sell assigned product/service categories. Interactions typically occur via phone, email, and other electronic media. Sellers in these roles identify new business prospects and move those prospects along a defined sales process to an appropriate conclusion. In some organizations, there may be levels of specialization where inside sales deals with small customers that cannot be profitably serviced by the field sales force. Others may use these types of roles to cold-call to get appointments for outside salespeople. Still others may address their entire sales effort through the outbound inside sales force.

RELATIONSHIP PRODUCT SALES - Maintain and/or grow account sales

People in these roles sell products to buyers who are reasonably expert at using and deriving the maximum benefit from them. Any new customers are likely to be replacing or substituting for previously consumed products. The salesperson's major role is to work as an advocate to make it easy to do business with his/her organization, solve problems, and to actively work at strengthening the customer relationship. The salesperson accomplishes this with regular contact used to demonstrate interest, update their understanding of needs, uncover concerns, and seek referrals.

CONSULTATIVE SOLUTION SALES - Uncover needs and provide solutions

These sellers are responsible for maximizing sales within a market segment by finding new customers and servicing existing customers. They sell the full array of company offerings by proactively uncovering needs and positioning solutions to address business problem the customer doesn't know how to resolve. Their chief responsibility is to do a thorough needs analysis and then help configure the appropriate offering from the array of options to produce the system with the most relevant value proposition to meet customer needs. The sales cycle can be as long as 6 months to 1 year or more and it is common for there to be multiple buyers involved.