



COMMON SALES ROLES – What do these people do?

Let's explore 6 common 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. It can also be called selling through an alternative channel. Often, the seller is a manufacturer of commodity products with no in-house or dedicated sales force to service their customer base. Top indirect 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.

TERRITORY CONSULTIVE SYSTEMS SALES – Helping Customers with System Selection

This salesperson's chief responsibility is to do a thorough needs analysis and then help configure the system with appropriate options to produce a system with the most relevant benefit package to meet customer needs. The system is usually sold as a turnkey with installation and implementation the responsibility of the seller. These sales are typically to buyers with little previous experience with the product offering, so they need orientation and support to gain the maximum benefit. This installation and support is usually provided by specialists within the seller's organization who are responsible for keeping the salesperson informed of progress.

TERRITORY RELATIONSHIP PRODUCT SALES – Keeping Contact with the Customer and Their Supplies

This salesperson sells products, and consumables associated with them, to buyers who are reasonably expert at using them and deriving the maximum benefit from them. 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 needs analysis, uncover concerns, and seek referrals.

SYSTEM SPECIALIST – The Sales Engineer Serves as an Expert

This position is responsible for selling a specific system and is not usually bound by territorial constraints. The salesperson is the resident expert who develops extensive product and market knowledge in order to establish credibility and may work as a resource to the existing field organization to penetrate current customers with the appropriate set of business needs. Likewise, the salesperson may have direct account responsibility for customers and prospects with needs focused on the specific system being sold. The Sales Engineer or System Engineer is often required to obtain certification to demonstrate expertise. Since applications may vary across vertical markets, individual specialists may concentrate on serving customers in specific industries. These positions are common in selling computer and telecommunications systems.