



The Desire to Succeed

It's the leading quality among successful sales reps

by: John C. Gordon, Gordon Document Products Inc.

A smile and a shoe shine. That's all you need to be a good salesman — if you believe Willie Loman in the memorable 1950s play, "Death of a Salesman," by Arthur Miller. The myth continues among many that a winning personality and the ability to tell a good joke are the qualities of a good salesman. While admirable qualities, they are not the qualities that make a great salesperson.

"I just really like people" is probably the most worn out and irrelevant line offered by many applicants. Instead, we are looking for professionalism, image, persistence, desire and self-confidence, among other qualities in potential salespeople. Not that it hurts, but "liking people" has little to do with being a great salesperson. Some of the best salespeople are not necessarily great "people persons."

For instance, one of our top producers has a very professional image, but he is no Brad Pitt. He has a moderately extroverted personality; I'll call him Andy. If good looks, charm and a sparkling personality are not Andy's keys to success, then what are?

This excellent sales rep scores high in each of 10 areas in which we evaluate candidates:

- (1) Honesty with good judgment;
- (2) Above average intelligence;
- (3) Desire to work independently;
- (4) Good sales awareness;
- (5) Professional image;
- (6) Strong work ethic;
- (7) The desire to compete, control and win;
- (8) Self-confidence;
- (9) An extroverted personality;
- (10) A burning desire to succeed!

Still, not unlike myself or anyone else I have ever interviewed, Andy is not perfect. He has varying degrees of these qualities. Most importantly, however, is Andy's level of No. 10 — "A burning desire to succeed!" It is the "desire" quality that distinguishes salespeople.



Desire. That's what sales success is about. Money motivation (second only to honesty) is the key for sales candidates. We look for candidates who are hungry, who express an interest in material things and who need a good income to educate children and support a family. Since joining our company, Andy has invested in a new automobile, bought a house and, along with his wife, is planning a family. Yes, Andy is money motivated as he approaches a six figure income with our company.

Andy also possesses the desire to get ahead. He is up for a promotion after just two years. A successful sales career lends itself to rapid advancement. And, as in Andy's case,

someone with the desire need only show three things for advancement — sales success, the ability to teach others and proven leadership. In today's climate, business owners in our industry need capable managers.

Finally, the least tangible quality, but still a common thread I've observed among top salespeople, is the desire to persuade. Every top salesperson I have had the pleasure of working with expressed it as Andy does: "I just love to hear 'em say 'yes.'" It is the "thrill of victory" concept. The desire to succeed must be stronger than the fear of rejection. And the knowledge that a "yes" may be earned on the next call sustains the good salesperson through the low points.

So, when you are interviewing your next sales candidates, listen for signs that they are competitive, need and aspire to have a high income, and are determined to get ahead. Then, if you can check off the other basics, you will know you have found a winner! ■

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