

\$5.00

VOLUME 11 • NUMBER 1 • WINTER 2008

CONTACT

FOR CANADA'S SALES AND MARKETING PROFESSIONALS



Around the Roundtable

Contact's second annual roundtable reveals the latest strategies and insights on attracting, retaining and managing top talent.

www.cpsa.com



Canadian Professional
Sales Association

AROUND THE ROUNDTAB

Our experts agree:
The key to building
an unbeatable sales
team is to treat your
top salespeople like
customers.



The Participants:



Vito N. Curalli, CSM is Managing Director of Sales for Hilton Hotels Corporation in Canada. He has worked with Accor and Ramada Hotels; his team drives revenue to over 2,800 hotels worldwide.



Paul Dodd is Co-founder and President of Head2Head Canada Inc., a leading provider of on-site technical and generalist recruiters, offering training, high-volume outsourced screening and consulting.



April Harvey is Incentive Analyst for Maritz Canada, which handles sales incentive and employee reward/recognition programs for several industries, focusing on program design, evaluation and ROI.



David Johnston is founder and President of Sales consulting firm Sales Resource Group and a former consultant to top sales organizations like HBC, CFIB, 3M and Bell Aliant Inc.

LE

By Sarah B. Hood

ON Tuesday, October 16, CPSA's second annual Roundtable took place in CPSA's Toronto boardroom. Participants were asked about best practices in **attracting, retaining and managing top talent**. While their advice covered a considerable range of topics, they kept returning to the same theme: a prized salesperson should be nurtured like a prized customer. This means selling them on your company, providing great service, building the relationship and keeping in touch when they leave the fold.

Attracting Talent

LEITCH (MODERATOR): So how do we attract gifted sales performers?

DODD: The most effective channel for bringing in A-performing people is referral. The second is "boomerang": employees who come back. One of our major clients has a program that makes three or four contacts within the first months after someone leaves the company. You work hard to regain a client; it's the same with employees. And you need to brand yourself as an employer of choice. Candidates want to know how you're going to help them get to the next level.



RYAN: Sometimes when you start an interview, you know within 60 seconds it's a bad candidate and you cut it short. I'd suggest you have to go further with that candidate, because communication among potential candidates is viral. If you cut them off, better candidates will hear about it and pass you by.

REEVE: We all have prospective customers that we want. The role of a senior person is to have the same relationship with prospective employees. Currently we have two or three people in our pipeline that we may not be ready for. Recruiting is a long-term thing; rather like dating.

LEWENBERG: Suppliers are a really great recruitment tool. They say "If someone leaves that place, I want them to go and work for you."

DODD: People in sales build social networks, and it's the same in recruitment. You may be counting on that candidate to be ready right away, but if you think they might be six months away, put them in the Rolodex and get back to them.

RYAN: Some organizations have a dedicated person who keeps those leads warm. We use employee candidate mapping; we want to know who's where, who's about to sit a certain exam, and the list evolves over two, three or four years.



PHOTOS: ELLIOT SYLIMAN PHOTOGRAPHY



David Lewenberg, BBA, is VP of Sales for leading Canadian promotional product distributor Genumark, serving clients like CIBC, Microsoft Canada, Sony Canada, Loblaws and Telus.



David Reeve is founder and President of Distribu-Tech. Formerly with IBM Canada Ltd., he leads the business end of his own company as it delivers document and marketing outsourcing solutions.



Jesse Ryan is Senior Customer Relationship manager for Head2Head. Previously with Microsoft Canada, MSN and WarrenShepell, he now focuses on account management and growth for Head2Head's Enterprise clients.



Moderator: Lisa Leitch, CSP is founder and President of Teneo Results, which specializes in connecting marketing and sales. She is a CPSA accredited sales trainer and an active member of the Canadian Association of Professional Speakers.

HARVEY: About 50 per cent of our people manage salespeople. Part of a sales manager's description has to be continuous recruiting. At Maritz, it's about solution sales, so we need a very diverse person. You develop a relationship and keep a dialogue with that potential person open.

CURALLI: A person might not be willing to move because they're expecting a payout. I will come right out and ask about it, and if they're waiting for something, I will wait and let them go through that process.

DODD: A willingness to jump ship may not be what you want to engage on your own team. On the other hand, some organizations run conferences in order to make contact with people working for other companies. I know one company that attracted a third of their competitor's sales force – which also disabled the competition. Conversely, when you hear that someone on your team is receiving calls, call the recruiter; these people have incredible intelligence and they can help you understand what you're trying to recruit against.

JOHNSTON: People think compensation is the main motivation, but you have to consider the whole rewards package. You'll attract different types of people depending what you're offering. The compensation package should communicate your expectations.

DODD: DDI (Development Dimensions International) out of the U.S. has a very deep understanding not only of interview templates and competencies, but of basing that assessment on what your top performers are doing. Every one of the top ten companies in the world builds full profiling and assessment into the process.

REEVE: An assessment tool professionalizes your recruiting. We probably would use it between the second and third interview.

RYAN: I would suggest using this kind of testing only at the end, as a tie-breaker. I would really caution against using it upfront because we're more complex than that. Also, in trying to give what they think are the "right" answers, a candidate can give you a graph that means nothing.

COPEMAN: If the candidate is trying to manipulate the score, you'll get a high distortion rating.

Management Styles/Talent

LEITCH: What's the best way to manage high performers from day to day?

CURALLI: I try to catch up with everyone on my team one-on-one for three hours monthly. We go to a Starbucks, because once they're out of the office, they start to relax, and for a salesperson that means talking. I don't ask a lot of questions; my job is to unstick any challenges they're facing. For a high-powered salesperson, that's one of the best things you can do.

Encouragement is key. I'm not standing in front of them or behind them; I'm standing beside them. Also, teach, teach and reteach. They

can be bombarded with tools, so it's my job to learn about all their tools and keep a priority list of what they should use.

DODD: It's all about relationship, whether with your clients or with your sales team. Salespeople are always listening to their clients and their brand managers venting. When they come back into the office, they need someone to listen to them. The salesperson is the trusted advisor to that client group. When you have that privilege, you get invited back. Similarly, when you're trusted by your employees, you get invited in.

LEWENBERG: I try to work on the areas where they want help, and from the beginning I ask them what those are. One salesman said he just wanted me to stay out of his way. After that, I worked out a holdup with a commission cheque; and about a year later he asked me to call a client he was having an issue with. Since then, we've become friends. So that's what I've found helpful: to give them what they say they need.

JOHNSTON: I'm a consultant, so I solve problems. People used to come to my office with their challenges, so one of my rules is that they must help me understand what they're looking for and why I'm critical to that. Now they're developing their consultative and problem-solving skills and coming to me with solutions. For a salesperson, this is critical, because they have to be able to listen to the customer's needs and come back with solutions. Also, you must tell people what you value most and least, and you should tell them where you want to put your effort. Is it new business? The biggest account?

HARVEY: Because we're very project-based we do a lot of celebrations. We have a big bell in our foyer and when someone has an important success, they ring the bell and thank everyone who was involved in the pitch. We have about 400 people, and they all come out to the foyer, so they all know what's going on. There's also a big deal luncheon: our CEO takes out everyone involved in that pitch as thanks for a job well done.

Retention Techniques

LEITCH: Now that we've attracted great people, how do we keep them?

RYAN: A lot of sales professionals feel trapped. They may be very high-performing, but you do not want to have someone in your sales force who feels trapped. You need to explore what else they can do besides selling; like put out a white paper, for example.

HARVEY: Some sellers are hunters and they don't want to do anything else. A common mistake is to promote that type of person into management; instead, have them go on a trip, or have them present at a conference so they can feel they're the best of the best. Trips are usually very popular, but some sales reps travel so much that the last thing they want to do is be away from their families. Offer time away with the family; the whole family will know that [gift] comes from the company.



CURALLI: I've moved to experiential day trips like spa visits. That speaks to them on so many different levels.

LEWENBERG: I'm a big fan of changing incentives, so they don't become routine. Right now, gift cards are popular. The challenge is they all believe they deserve to win it, and if they don't, it wasn't their fault.

HARVEY: Most incentives are designed to reward the top performers, but if you divide your force into A, B and C performers, the biggest potential is in your B performers. You need to design incentives to move a B to an A. Top performer programs can be expensive and miss the mark.

REEVE: Changing the compensation plan can be a big disincentive. At IBM, where one person was dedicated to keeping our figures up, the core plan for hunters was largely unchanged from year to year.

JOHNSTON: The key is that most organizations make these changes without explaining why. You should think in terms of revolution versus evolution. When something is broken and must be changed, that radical change is best done fast. If a company is not broken,

people need to understand where you are going, and why. Change must happen within a framework.

Looking to the Future

LEITCH: Will you be doing anything differently after this roundtable?

JOHNSTON: When I talk to sales executives, I'll be telling them "Your job is not to motivate people, but to create an environment where they can perform."

REEVE: Probably, spending more time, recognizing that salespeople have unique demands for personal contact.

LEWENBERG: I'm feeling good about what we do, but there's room for fine-tuning, to make sure we're not only addressing the top performers.

CURALLI: I think I'll institute those monthly one-on-ones.

HARVEY: The boomerang effect is very interesting to me; our employees often keep in touch with colleagues who've left, because our industry is very specialized.

LEITCH: It seems a key point is that we have to look at attracting employees just as we do our clients.

Recruitment Challenge by the Numbers

It's not just a feeling; it actually is becoming more difficult to attract and retain top talent, both in Canada and around the world. This is true for employers in general, but especially for those seeking talented salespeople. Here's a statistical snapshot:

- Manpower Inc. surveyed nearly 37,000 employers in January 2007. The resulting "2007 Talent Shortage Survey" results showed that "41% of employers worldwide are having difficulty filling positions due to the lack of suitable talent available in their markets, which is one percentage point stronger compared to last year's survey." (http://files.shareholder.com/downloads/MAN/183977228x0x87523/a49c96c9-cbfe-47ac-9207-476be0e84c20/Talent%20Shortage%20Survey%20Results_2007_FINAL.pdf)
- Also according to Manpower, across 27 countries and territories surveyed, sales representatives ranked number one on the list of jobs that employers are having difficulty filling. This situation is unchanged since February of 2006, when a similar Manpower survey of 33,000 employers – including 1,000 in Canada – named Sales Representatives, Customer Service Representatives/Customer Support and Engineer as the top three most difficult positions to recruit for. (www.manpower.com/investors/releasedetail.cfm?releaseid=188092)
- In August 2007, PricewaterhouseCoopers released its latest Business Insights Pulse Survey, titled "Insight into Building Value for Succession". It found that 62% of Canadian private companies say that the shortage of skilled workers is slowing the growth of their companies, with Alberta worst affected at 75% and Ontario least affected, at 56.8%. (www.pwc.com/extweb/service.nsf/docid/DAEBA8B1F5F4E50785257248006BE1FD)
- In the same PWC report, 85% of 277 private-company CEOs reported that they are taking steps to retain their skilled, trained workers.
- The PWC Pulse Survey of Business Insights for December 2006 showed that labour shortages and recruitment topped the lists of challenges to private companies for both 2005 and 2006. (www.pwc.com/extweb/ncpressrelease.nsf/docid/8D673C0251712D858525724800812941)
- In 2011, the first wave of Baby Boomers will hit the age of 65, and by 2030, they will all be over 65. (www12.statcan.ca/english/census01/Products/Analytic/companion/age/canada.cfm)
- The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) predicts that between 2025 and 2030, 12 million people a year will be exiting the global workforce. (www.lemarchedesseniors.com/telechargements/OlderWorkforce_Global_US_Letter.pdf)
- The latest release from Statistics Canada's Labour Force Survey (October 5, 2007) showed the Canadian unemployment rate at a 23-year low: in September 2007, it dipped 0.1 percentage points to 5.9%, "the first time since November 1974 that the rate has been below 6.0%". Meanwhile, employment rose by an estimated 51,000. (www.statcan.ca/english/Subjects/Labour/LFS/lfs-en.htm)
- The same Statistics Canada report shows that employment for older workers (aged 55 and over) is growing at a faster pace than for people in the core workforce age group, an indication companies are beginning to bring back talented retirees. 