

Wanted: Salesperson Who Can Sell Ice Like Hot Cakes – Key Traits in Top Salespeople

The tragically flawed Willy Loman, traveling from town to town and failing to make a living. The entire scope of venal characters in the film *Glengarry Glen Ross*. Serial failure Gill Gunderson on *The Simpsons*. Pop culture is full of references to salespeople, and most of them are not particularly kind.

The stereotypical view of salespeople is that they are pushy and greedy. Customers often describe them as descending like vultures as soon as they enter a store, spouting insincere offers to help, superficial compliments about how wonderful you look in something, or over-used, cringe-worthy sales tactics like “You know what would go great with that thingamajig? This new thingamabob – just arrived. Really good quality. I just bought one myself *wink*.”

In order to avoid hiring a bad salesperson, you need to understand what makes a good one. The most successful salespeople, regardless of what it is they sell, leverage all of their skills in order to drive business.



Some key traits that a good salesperson will have include:

- ❖ **Persuasiveness** – This means being persuasive without being pushy or incredibly blatant. Yes, part of it is charm, but being open to negotiating, really knowing your stuff and being sincerely willing to help someone find the best product (and not necessarily the most expensive one), draws customers in like flies to honey.

- ❖ **Networking Skills** – A good salesperson knows how to get in touch with the right people (“We don’t have this product in stock, but let me give one of our other stores a call.”), and has the ability to build relationships with customers...and takes pleasure in doing so.
- ❖ **Emotional Intelligence** – They can read other people well, and know how to ask the right questions to get the answers that will lead to uncovering a client’s needs. Sometimes this involves helping create a vision of the client’s wants or needs.
- ❖ **Listening Skills** – This is probably a salesperson greatest asset. You can’t figure out how best to service a client’s needs if you’re not listening to what those needs are in the first place.
- ❖ **Comfort with Rejection/Criticism** – A salesperson has to have a thick skin, and learn to take rejection in stride. Those who let this occupational hazard affect their sense of self (and don’t learn a lesson from it), are unlikely to succeed.
- ❖ **Adaptability** – Even the best laid sales plans won’t always pan out. A good salesperson is able to adjust his or her communication and sales style to match a customer’s vibe. Believe it or not, some people do like to be hard-sold, while others run screaming from anything but the soft-sell approach.

- ❖ **Goal-oriented** – A good salesperson not only sets expectations and goals for his or her performance, he or she also has the perseverance to achieve them too. Behind the desire to sell and get through difficult slumps is a strong goal orientation.
- ❖ **Integrity** – Dirty sales tactics just won’t cut it. A salesperson who really cares about a client’s needs and makes promises that he or she can keep will turn that client into a return customer.

These are just some of the traits that a good salesperson would need to be successful. So how do you choose the right salesperson? Part of the solution is doing the basics: checking references, finding out what sales experience the person has, and using interview questions to learn about his or her sales tactics. Look at the interview as an opportunity to see a candidate in action ... after all, this person is selling their services to you.

It may also be helpful, even before the interviewing process, to consider some of the tools available to evaluate character, work habits and personality, as is the case with PsychTests' online assessments. Salespeople have a distinct personality profile that differentiates them from non-salespeople, and PsychTests has developed their **SPPP (Salesperson Personality Profile)** to reflect this. ✂

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