



## Sales Personality Study

The term "salesperson" has not been without its negative connotations. For some, it may bring to mind the image of a slick, devious person with a wicked smile (maybe even a gold tooth), and a pushy attitude that makes you feel as though your very life depends on buying his product. Others might think of those haughty, snobby salespeople who plaster on a fake smile and tell you in an equally fake voice how "amazing" you look in their product, when what you actually look like is a frumpy sack of potatoes. Times have changed however, and while there may still be some devious and dishonorable salespeople out there, the demanding field of sales requires more than a silver tongue - or a gold tooth for that matter.

PsychTests administered their "Sales Personality Test" to 2000 people from the general population, some of whom had experience in the sales field. Upon statistical analysis of the data, they found significant differences not only between experienced salespeople and the rest of the population, but also between men and women in the field.

Overall, salespeople in general seem to possess a certain pattern of traits that differentiate them from others - a profile, it seems, that may be the reason why some can survive in the often dog-eat-dog world of sales, and why others flounder.

According to PsychTests' analysis, experienced salespeople possess good interpersonal skills, are comfortable being assertive, and have a knack for public speaking and taking initiative. They are also much more confident, competitive, and mentally tough than their non-sales counterparts and, despite the notorious reputation of salespeople, also scored higher in integrity.

And that's just the tip of the iceberg. The statistics also revealed some surprising overall gender differences between men and women salespeople. While women tend to possess a higher level of integrity and are more helpful, attentive to detail, and organized, men were more comfortable with public speaking, more success oriented, and adaptable. They also outscored women on mental toughness and competitiveness. All that being said, what's the bottom line? Who makes the better salesperson, men or women? The best answer, it seems, is "it depends".

Over 60% of women who took the sales personality assessment possessed the profile of a "famer" type - people whose strengths lie in developing and maintaining relationships with customers. In fact, women seemed to possess more of the traits required for quality Customer Relationship Management. While 51% of men also filled the farmer's



shoes, PsychTests' statistics report a higher percentage of males (30%) who fit the profile of the aggressive, driven, cold-calling hunters. Only 21% of women fell into this category. Based on the results, one could suggest that companies looking for an

assertive, hungry, and determined salesperson may lean more towards a male candidate, while women would have a greater edge on dealing with existing clients. Research, however, doesn't appear to draw a line in the sand - although internet polls and blogs are not without their tug-of-war opinions.

It appears that while there may be the semblance of a pattern as to which area men and women would excel in terms of sales (finding vs. keeping customers), the sales world and the business world in general are not without their exceptions. Research and interviews by Gayle Letherby (2006) points to women who thrived for as long as 20-30 years as car saleswomen, arguably one of the toughest and most controversial area of sales. And a switch in roles (aggressive saleswomen and charming men) probably wouldn't be uncommon either. In fact, a study by Glick et al. (2008) uncovered that unlike men, women do not believe that the amount of cleavage a saleswomen exposes can sell a product - so it seems that women can and must do more than rely on charm and their feminine wiles to sell. PsychTests' statistical results showed that men and women with experience in sales possessed equally good social, listening, and networking skills, were both skilled in prospecting, and had a knack for being persuasive. While the men in their test population might take a more assertive approach and women take the kind, helpful route, the basic and probably only conclusion one could make is that men and women, can, and would likely be, equally skilled salespeople. It's all in the approach it seems. As William Clement Stone suggested, "Sales are contingent upon the attitude of the salesman..."

In addition to interesting gender differences, PsychTests' sales personality results also uncovered other tidbits. Older, experienced salespeople outperformed their younger counterparts on the sales personality test, while high achievers in school (those classified as attaining mostly A's) outscored those with average grades. While experience and achievement in school may not necessarily guarantee that a person will be a top salesperson, they appear to be variables that could be conducive to sales success.

The question of which traits make up a good salesperson, or whether aggressive sales tactics are better than using charm and "selling with kindness", is likely to stir up a long and drawn-out debate. It could very well be, or at least assumed, that car salespeople would need more of a hard edge, while those in retail would benefit from adopting a more sincere and helpful attitude. Whatever the case, it is clear that salespeople are a



separate entity. In a field that can either make you or break you, one would need to be quite special to be able to succeed in this area - gold tooth, fake smile, and cleavage aside.

Those who wish to learn more about their sales personality can go to <http://testyourself.psychtests.com/testid/2162/#>.

A more in-depth version is available to HR managers as a hiring tool, available on PsychTests' HR testing site, Arch Profile. For more information on the Sales Job Fit Test and other pre-employment tests PsychTests offers, please visit: <http://psychtests.com/>

A white paper concerning sales personality is available at: [http://psychtests.com/pdf/salesperson\\_article.pdf](http://psychtests.com/pdf/salesperson_article.pdf)