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Guerrilla Sales & Marketing

## Are Salespeople Born or Made?

LORI TURNER

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“Are salespeople born or made?” It’s an age-old question for sales organizations. In my view, salespeople can be made. Selling skills can be learned, but the learning curve is shorter for candidates with key character traits.

The two most important core traits are empathy and drive.

The best salespeople believe they are fulfilling need vs. pushing product. They have an uncanny ability to identify a prospect’s need by asking probing questions, to affirm or – better yet – relate to that need, and to demonstrate how their product or service can uniquely address it.

If a sales rep doesn’t listen well or ask good questions, he hasn’t yet mastered the art of empathy. An empathetic salesperson shows his customers that he cares and understands, connecting with a prospect by the end of a call.

The drive to succeed is equally important. Driven sales reps have no fear of rejection, won’t hesitate to ask for the business, and are persistent at overcoming a prospect’s hesitancy to buy. They are self-motivated to attain financial targets.

This trait absent empathy, however, can result in lost customers and prospects. They walk away feeling you pushed a product upon them regardless of how it fit their needs.

Of course, there are other, more easily trainable, sales skills to watch out for when looking for sales talent or assessing the abilities of your existing sales team.

**Rapport Building** – The ability to quickly connect with strangers is an undeniable asset. While many salespeople do it naturally, others can be trained.

**Organization and Follow Through** – Great sales reps have exceptional organizational and follow-through skills enabling them to efficiently manage a territory.

**Preparation** – They prepare before making each sales call, familiarizing themselves with their prospect before walking through the door. Preparation allows them to map out their game plan ahead of time. Great sales people avoid “winging it.”

**Effective Communicator** – The best sales reps listen more on a sales call than talk. Pre-call preparation frees them from thinking about what they’re going to say. Instead, they concentrate on what the prospect is saying, catching important buying cues and uncovering a need they can solve. These salespeople ask thoughtful follow-up questions and are respectful of other opinions. They are also strong written communicators.



Lori Turner

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PROPERTY SALES	53	53	14,329
MORTGAGES	97	97	22,652
FORECLOSURE NOTICES	0	0	9,519
BUILDING PERMITS	0	0	38,144
BANKRUPTCIES	78	78	17,595
BUSINESS LICENSES	23	23	4,943
UTILITY CONNECTIONS	124	124	25,090
MARRIAGE LICENSES	27	27	5,167

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**Disciplined** – The best salespeople make time to prospect. They approach selling with discipline – setting a schedule they can commit to every day. Despite the freedom that comes with a sales job, they have figured out how to stay focused and generate results.

Lack of any one of these skills will have significant financial consequences for your organization. When assessing your existing sales team, identify skill gaps and address deficiencies immediately.

You can't afford a weak link in your sales force. Provide the training and one-on-one coaching your team needs. Rather than looking at it as an extra cost, consider it a smart investment with unlimited potential for returns.

*[Lori Turner](#) is managing partner of RedRover Sales & Marketing, [www.redrovercompany.com](http://www.redrovercompany.com).*

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