

TALENT OR HARD WORKER:

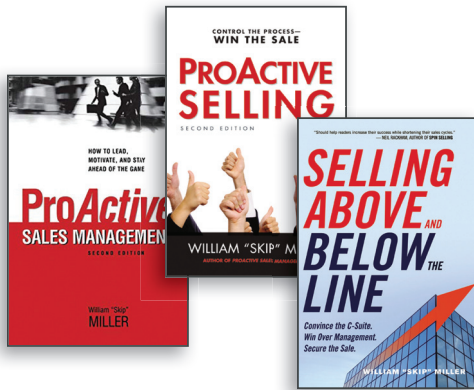
What Makes the Best Salesperson?



TALENT OR HARD WORKER: WHAT MAKES THE BEST SALESPERSON?

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We have heard it for many years:

“Salespeople are born not made.”

“Talented salespeople with no drive never reach their potential.”

“Hire smart people and teach them how to sell.”

So given the mixed messages, what is a hiring manager to do? Even better, what is a salesperson who wants to improve and close more deals supposed to concentrate on?

Given these questions, what is talent? What is that “distinct something”?

Talent can be defined as “a special ability that allows someone to do something well”. It’s an aptitude. It’s a strong leaning and a liking to. Well, there certainly are talents a good salesperson can have.

- **Good listener**
- **Energetic**
- **Handles rejection**
- **Quick learner**
- **Honest**
- **Good communication skills**
- **Comfortable with rejection**

You can list many talents or skills that great salespeople have. Of course, it depends on the sales job as well. Sales talent is very situational, based on territory, type of product, type of market factors, and product or service that is being sold, to name a few.

So let’s look at three things that we can discuss and utilize:

1. **Comparing talent and hard work**
2. **Given the need for talent and hard work...what should we interview for?**
3. **New skills and what to do next**



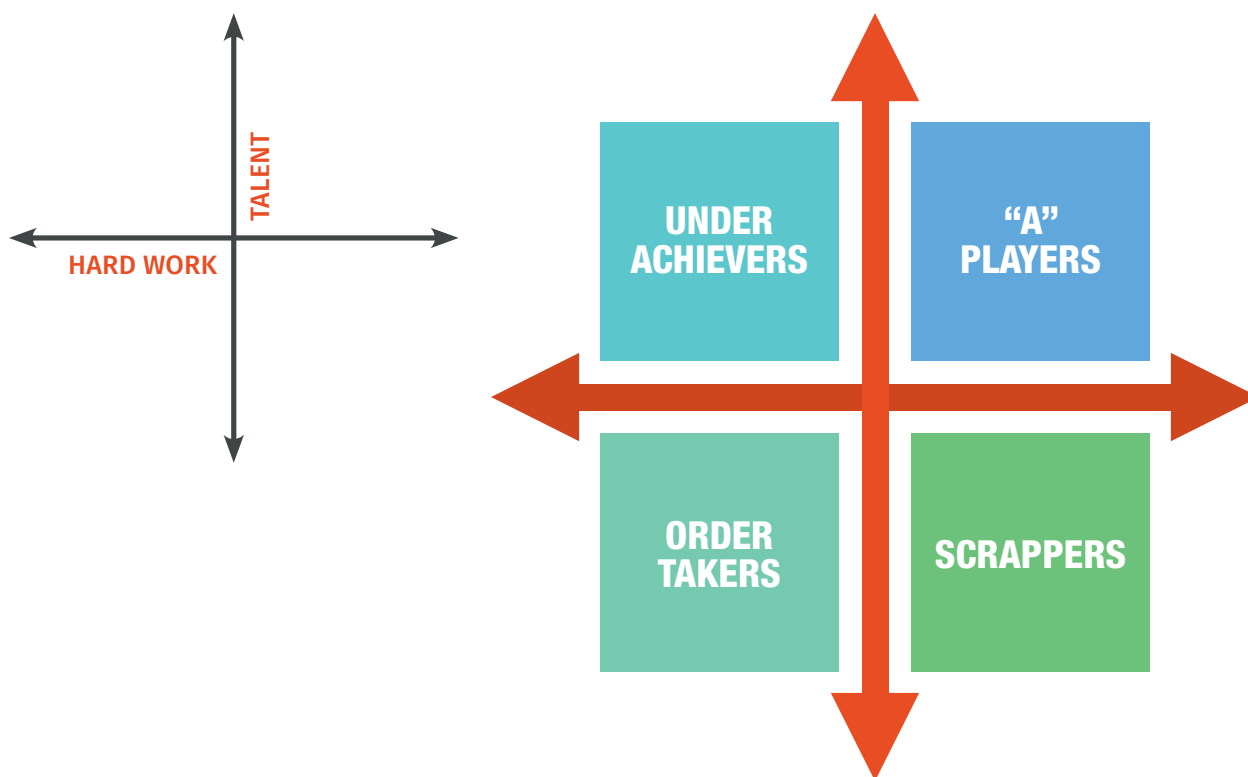
We can argue the talent of a successful salesperson in New York City wouldn't help them much in the city of New Orleans, and visa versa. A top SMB rep talents may not transfer to the Enterprise sales side of the house either.

In 20 years of teaching sales and sales managers how to do their job better, and how to coach A players to A+ status, we believe there really is a combination of talent and hard work that comes into play.

Without hard work, talent gets wasted. It atrophies and becomes a wasted resource. Motivation is a drive from the inner-self. It's really not up to the manager to get hard work out of the rep; the rep has to have the ability to self-motivate themselves on a daily basis.

Any motivation skills the manager employs with the rep to work harder will have a short-term effect of course, but in the long term, the behavior doesn't change unless the rep has the desire and ability to change their work habits.

FIGURE 1: COMPARING TALENT AND HARD WORK



HERE'S WHAT WE FIND IN EACH

LOW TALENT LOW HARD WORK

Needless to say, the order takers. Low cost and low risk. You can find these warm bodies almost anywhere. If you want someone to just answer the phones, ask a few questions from a script... These are you folks. If you want them to prospect, (not just pick up the phone and make dials), but get engaged and really try to sell, these are not the people you want on your team.

LOW TALENT HIGH HARD WORK

The scrappers. Always hovering around 100%. Give them a contest and they will beat the doors down. They make the number almost every month, but usually at 10:00pm on the last day of the month or quarter, and need substantial help in doing so. See all the sales manager's gray hairs or the anxiety attacks the last few days of the month? You need some ankle biters and high transaction people, where the pitch doesn't change much... These are your folks.

HIGH TALENT LOW HARD WORK

Can be very successful getting to quota, but then tapers off. They rely on their talent to get doors open, but won't go the extra mile to close a higher percentage, or fill the pipeline with more than what they need to make the number. They may have great listening skills, but if they only try to just get to their quota, what's the point? Are you in a situation where getting to a number and not exceeding it is the corporate philosophy? Here you go.

HIGH TALENT HIGH HARD WORK

Obviously, these are the best of the best. They are using all the skills and their disciplines to stay focused and go above and beyond. They don't allow quotas or beliefs to limit them. These are the top 10% of all reps. Need fast pace, high degree of change, calling on multiple buyers type of sales people? Look no farther.

SO GIVEN YOU NEED BOTH, TALENT AND HARD WORK, WHAT SHOULD YOU INTERVIEW FOR?

**1**

Most important; Take stock in what you need. No use hiring great solution oriented salespeople who can call high if you are selling a very transactional product. List out the talents you require for the job, and what work habits make salespeople successful in your current sales environment.

2

Look at past results, and ask how they did it, and what effort did it really take?

3

Ask them what is the hardest they have ever worked for something. Why did they really try?

4

Have them list out their strengths they believe they have, and look for talents and hard work attributes. Ask them to list what they want to learn. Look for the same. Great salespeople always want to learn and grow.

NEW SKILLS: AN EXAMPLE

In the book, “Selling Above and Below the Line”, we have outlined that most sales deals have 2 value propositions, one Above the Line (ATL), and one Below the Line (BTL).

ATL are the fiscal buyers. They have to get a ROI on the investment they are making. It has to make them money, lower their risk, or save them time on current initiatives the C-Level executive has on their desk.



BTL VALUE

- ✓ Easy to use
- ✓ Has the right features
- ✓ Great support
- ✓ Is within the budget
- ✓ Integrates with what I am working with
- ✓ Makes me look good

ATL VALUE

- ✓ Advances a corporate initiative
- ✓ Saves Time
- ✓ Lowers Risk
- ✓ Has a good ROI
- ✓ Gives us a competitive advantage
- ✓ Adds value to our company brand



BTL are the buyers who are going to use the product. Their value proposition is very different than the ATL buyer.



WHAT TO DO NEXT

Go teach this tool to your top reps. Explain it in detail and they will think about it. They will compare it to what they know, see where it makes sense and implement it. Great reps, when they see something they can use, will add tools to their tool box.

Salespeople who do not place the same passion and desire to learn and grow will see this ATL/BTL idea, and:

- **Say great, but it doesn't apply to them**
- **Say great and never use it or challenge their own paradigms**
- **Say they already do this (which they really don't)**

Is implementing a new sales tool and taking the risk of trying something new a talent or is it hard work? ...Probably a little bit of both.



SUMMARY

Great managers are always trying new things to keep the sales team motivated. Great salespeople are always looking at their work ethic and the talents and skills they have, and are always trying to work on them both. They apply “working smart” skills to their current hard working ethic. Interview for both, and you will increase your chances for success...exponentially.



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