

Tracking the Sales Hunter

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Every sales executive dreams of having a stable of hunters – especially during a recession – yet how do you identify, motivate and keep them on board?

You could say there are two kinds of sales reps – hunters and farmers. Hunters live to uncover and seize new opportunities while farmers are better suited to up selling and cross selling to an existing client base.

While both are invaluable to a company, when it comes to surviving in lean times, the hunters are being hunted more than ever because of their ability to create new opportunities and see them through to profitability.

As a sales executive, you know you need to cultivate an environment that will enable the hunter to thrive, despite a challenging economic climate that presents fewer leads and has created slower sales cycles.

While experience and instinct has taught you what makes a good sales rep, it's not always easy to identify the characteristics that differentiate the hunter from the farmer.

Based on extensive research conducted with sales professionals over close to a decade, what follows are the 12 traits Talent Analytics has uncovered of the sales hunter.

Along with outlining the pros and cons of each characteristic, you'll also find helpful tips on how to manage and retain the hunter so that they are working to their full potential for their careers and your bottom line.

1. Hunters like to solve problems on their own and on the fly.

- **Pro:** the autonomous sales rep wants to close the deal with little handholding.
- **Con:** team collaboration can present a challenge.
- **Tip:** break down the responsibilities of the team to ensure the hunter is still able to own and drive part of the effort.

2. Hunters like to lead whatever projects are on their plates.

- **Pro:** they can successfully lead and execute sales initiatives.
- **Con:** they can present a challenge to the manager who is trying to lead the team.
- **Tip:** provide opportunities for the hunter to independently lead projects. Ask them to demonstrate the results in a public forum allowing the hunter to gain public recognition without usurping the role of the manager.

3. Hunters want (and need) to be around people because they thrive on the energy of others.

- **Pro:** they naturally gravitate toward meeting new people and initiating cold calls and are comfortable addressing a larger audience at the prospect's site.
- **Con:** if this hunter works from home or is based in a small regional sales office, they are likely to feel disconnected and are more likely to disengage.
- **Tip:** Find a reason to bring them into corporate headquarters several times a quarter and arrange for meetings and other interactions with colleagues and executive personnel. Also, be sure to regularly check in with them on a personal level as hunters appreciate and come to rely on their 1:1 personal connection with their manager.

4. Hunters like working on a variety of different projects at the same time.

- **Pro:** they can successfully manage more activities, clients, territories and service more clients.
- **Con:** they may interrupt existing processes and defined roles in their pursuit of juggling simultaneous activities.
- **Tip:** provide a wider, well-defined territory so that the hunter can tackle a variety of projects without negatively impacting other staff.

5. Hunters like change.

- **Pro:** they'll easily adapt to change whether it's ushered in by internal or external forces.
- **Con:** they will get bored with routine.
- **Tip:** include changes in the hunter's role every 12-18 months for renewed enthusiasm.

6. Hunters have a strong sense of urgency.

- **Pro:** they want sales to close quickly. No prodding required from their management team.
- **Con:** their patience is tested when it comes to deals that may require longer sales cycles.
- **Tip:** consider matching the length of the sales cycle with the "sense of urgency" of the rep - i.e. territory account sales rep with sales cycle of 2 weeks vs. global account sales rep with a sales cycle of a year and a half.

7. Hunters tend to bend the rules.

- **Pro:** hunters will *creatively* solve problems (and potentially bend some rules) to creatively progress with prospects -- typically leading to an increase in sales.
- **Con:** this trait can frustrate those responsible for enforcing the company's administrative and business processes.
- **Tip:** provide flexibility in the sales process -- enforce detail and process requirements only if absolutely critical.

8. Hunters dislike entering sales forecast data into forecasting software.

- **Pro:** they have an innate ability to hold a great many facts in their head. This helps to support their primary focus on active selling.
- **Con:** lack of accurate rep forecast data can impede management's ability to accurately forecast for the executive team and make critical business decisions.
- **Tip:** require only critical forecast data -- potentially sales operations or administrative support to capture and document rep conversations with regard to sales status and forecasts.

9. Hunters want to be paid -- and paid well -- for their high performance.

- **Pro:** greater profitability for everybody involved.
- **Con:** reps are highly motivated when paid immediately. If not paid well, they will leave and chase compensation elsewhere. A reps loyalty is to results and top compensation.
- **Tip:** work with your finance department and CEO to create easy to understand compensation plans that are tied exclusively to performance.

10. Hunters are naturally politically savvy.

- **Pro:** they are superb at recognizing power players inside of an organization and winning them over in the pursuit of their career as well as closing the deal. They love the game of competition.
- **Con:** they will thrive with visibility with senior leaders within their own company that may not always be available.
- **Tip:** establish mechanisms for the hunter to connect with senior leaders in your organization so that they are recognized publicly and privately for their efforts.

11. Hunters are systematic problem solvers.

- **Pro:** they are curious and ask questions making them the ideal consultative sales person.
- **Con:** they don't like to be told *how* to do something, even if they or the processes are new. They love the challenge of figuring something out on their own.
- **Tip:** encourage and reward questions from reps - as well as challenges from them when they seem to act as if they know everything.

12. Hunters love to learn and to teach others.

- **Pro:** they are highly useful to colleagues, prospects and clients in breaking down and explaining complex topics and ensuring that the team and client has the information to either succeed in their job and/or make an informed purchasing decision.
- **Con:** they can sometimes come off as a "know it all".
- **Tip:** provide an opportunity for the hunter to share their knowledge with their peers or with other departments (i.e. customer service, product development, marketing, executive team).

Many variables contribute to sales hunters being successful. Yet, these 12 traits appear consistently in sales teams of many sizes and industries.

Businesses spend money, time and effort training, coaching, changing compensation plans, redefining territories, changing sales management -- often without examining the what is arguably the most critical factor towards sales success -- the sales professionals themselves.

[Greta Roberts is CEO and founder of Talent Analytics, Corp.](#), Talent Analytics software platform, Advisor, rapidly collects and quantifies stable, innate human characteristics which can be directly linked to business performance. The platform is immensely scalable, able to be populated with an entire organization's data within minutes, and works seamlessly with today's lattice organizations.