

JOB FOR SALESPEOPLE CONTINUE TO GROW

By Alice V. Nelson

Love to sell? Know the product inside and out? Want to be a top salesperson that wins an annual trip to Hawaii or Costa Rica? Even with uncertain economic times looming on the horizon, companies need qualified ambassadors, otherwise known as sales staff, to sell their products.

Scottish-born British military intelligence officer and later a top advertising executive, David Ogilvy (1911-1999), gave his philosophy on selling: "In the modern world of business, it is useless to be a creative original thinker unless you can also sell what you create. Management cannot be expected to recognize a good idea unless it is presented to them by a good salesman."

And the jobs for top sales reps are out there. According to recent numbers published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), this field is expected to grow by 9 percent over the next eight years.

Salaries for talented, experienced salespeople can be outstanding. Kathleen Steffey, founder and president of Naviga

Business Services — a national sales/marketing recruiting firm that does business in every metropolitan area of the U.S., said those with experience can earn a six-figure income.

"If that person has five to seven years of sales experience, they can make \$100,000 to \$200,000 base income plus commission," Steffey said.

Steffey's company, in business for the past six years, recruits and screens cream-of-the-crop candidates before sending them on to a hiring company. And even through the process of screening dozens of prospective resumes, only the top one to three individuals are recommended for a business seeking that stellar candidate.

"For example, Clean Energy Fuels Corp. has a branch in Westchester County," Steffey pointed out. "They recently hired a sales representative to manage that territory. I received more than 2,000 resumes for that one job."

Out of the mass of paperwork, Steffey picked 30 for her recruiters to interview.

Manufacturers' and wholesale sales representatives held about 2 million jobs

in 2006, according to the BLS. Most, about 60 percent, worked in wholesale trade. The remainder was spread between technical and scientific products, as well as manufacturing, retail trade, information and construction-type industries.

Top salespersons get top jobs

Companies have moved past the "can you sell this pencil in one minute" scenario. The hard-charging salesperson is expected to know the product and the customer thoroughly, often spending days learning how a particular client operates their business.

"Sales people that are successful understand their customer," Steffey said. "They fill any gaps by knowing the product or the service they sell."

What grabs Steffey and her staff are those individuals that demonstrate an intangible: professionalism.

"What that means to me is that they are on time, or early; they don't talk over me during the interview; they have the ability to communicate their skills with confidence

careerdigest

Learn more:

- Manufacturer's Agents National Association: www.manaonline.org.
- Manufacturer's Representatives Educational Research Foundation: www.mrerf.org.
- Naviga Business Services: www.navigaswervices.com.



without being 'over the top'; and they ask intelligent questions," Steffey said.

In other words, successful sales candidates have studied a company well ahead of an interview.

"What strikes me about their resume right away is their track record," Steffey added. "The best indicator for future performance is what they have accomplished in the past. Have they worked for one company for several years? Were they a top performer? Did they belong to important organizations? I look for those indicators that let me know this person made money for his company."