

# An HR Person Asks: Why Does Everyone Our Sales Manager Hire, Look The Same?

Dear Stephen:

*I am a human resources executive for a large office furniture manufacturer, reporting to the vice president of HR and responsible for recruiting and onboarding new field sales people and for conducting exit interviews. I work at our corporate headquarters and will go into the field to work with our regional sales managers to interview as needed, to hire and (sometimes) fire sales reps and people working from our sales offices. To recruit candidates I use LinkedIn, I run help-wanted ads and even occasionally must hire a headhunter to help us find*

*people. I help the managers vet candidates, and I give recommendations, but the regional managers have the final say on their hires, combined with an outside evaluation we use, often referred to as "testing."*

*Here's the background to the question I have for you. In many of our sales regions I have noticed a similarity to what the salespeople look like. Yes, I said "look" like. I think this has been going on for a while, and I may*

*have just realized it. For instance, in our NYC office we have a combination of women and men. The women are all quite attractive, dress well and in shape, and the men all look like they live at the gym. It's not about age, sex, race or even sexual orientation — the common theme is that they all just look good. I asked one of the managers if he was worried about this pattern, and he claimed it did not even enter his mind. My concern is recruiting already takes*



You can send your workplace questions to Stephen at: [StephenSays@bellow.press](mailto:StephenSays@bellow.press)

Questions selected to be answered, will appear in this column. Please use the Subject: Stephen Says for all emails. Stephen Viscusi is a bestselling author, television personality, and CEO of The Viscusi Group, global executive recruiters located in New York. Follow Stephen on Twitter @stephenviscusi, Like Stephen on Facebook; and follow him on LinkedIn.

*long enough today. I think this manager arbitrarily dismisses candidates I think are qualified, even before testing them, always for some bogus excuse. Yet, I suspect it is based on image. The candidate evaluation test usually evens the playing field. My question is, what to do? I can shorten the hiring time if it was not just about looks, which I am convinced it is. What are your thoughts?*

Signed,

**Mirror Mirror on the Wall**

Dear Mirror Mirror:

Is the sales manager you are writing about making their sales goals? This is what I care about most, and I am sure your VP of sales does, too (the hiring manager's boss). What they look like may just be in your head. On the other hand, managers tend to like to hire people in their own image or an image they think represents the brand. That is hard to prove. If you can find the image and the experience, and it's a proven formula, too bad if it takes you longer

to find them because they all look the same. Excuse me, rather have the same image. Those salespeople will be successful along with everyone else up the food chain, and that even means you. I do know what you mean though. I have a friend who has a "look" he likes to hire. We say that the women who work there are all "Charlie's Angels" (except his name is not Charlie). But his team makes its sales goal. Sales results and customer satisfaction are what count most.

The main reason you have sales managers is to lead the sales team to meet and exceed sales goal. Sales managers tend to recruit, interview and select a team that your customers will respond to. However, the sales team should reflect the diversity of your customers, not look like one another. Field sales managers tend to lock onto a formula that is successful for them in hiring, and there's nothing wrong with that. That formula is different in every geography. Smart managers are often doing their own recruiting and need your feedback but let the manager lead the

charge. So, make sure everyone is playing by the HR rules and your companies code of ethics, but keep an open mind and do not think the worst. The manager is ultimately responsible for the hire. I'm sure you have a paperwork trail and always thoroughly check references, so when they push for a hire there is justification.

Diversity in hiring in the workplace is more important than ever today. Your sales force should reflect the same faces, personalities and gender that make up your customer base. I assure you, your customers are not all Stepford wives or Stepford husbands. People are more in tune with being authentic today. Some women are less likely to wear make-up, and the term dad-bod is very popular today. I hear from workers everyday who have tattoos, who don't wear socks, are transgender, gay and straight. The workplace is everybody. See that your company's hiring reflects that, or your customers will just stop buying from you.

Best,

**Stephen**