

An ideal ad...

A CAREER IN MEDICAL SALES

Are you competitive, goal-orientated, with a technical or para-medical background?

Are you looking for an opportunity – a change of direction?

We are an international healthcare company selling highly regarded products, including market leaders, to the medical profession.

To maintain our plans for growth and progress we need four good people to join our medical sales team in LONDON, NORTH LANCASHIRE and AVON.

Are you:

- Educated to at least 'A' level or equivalent?
- Currently employed in a scientific, para-medical or selling situation?
- Holding a current clean driving licence?
- Resident in London, North Lancashire or Avon?

Our offer to you:

- Comprehensive 'in-house' training
- Continual support and technical back-up on territory
- A stimulating work environment
- A good salary, bonus schemes, pension and insurance benefits and a company car

Interested?

Phone John Smith, Sales Manager, on 01234 000000 between 9.30am and 5.00pm (reverse the charges) on 29th or 30th January.

Asking for a telephone response is vital. Research has indicated that 20 per cent of salespeople will not bother to respond to an advertisement if they cannot speak to the sales manager or sales director in person. After all, isn't that what they are trained to do? Let applicants talk to the decision maker! I've actually seen a sales recruitment advertisement with the magic words 'no phone calls accepted'. I wonder how many top-grade salespeople applied?

If you are a sales manager or sales director, are you now thinking: 'I don't have the time to take telephone calls'? You really do need to plan your time in order to accept these calls, as it is the most important job you could possibly have to do at that moment.

3 SCREEN

Have a ten-minute chat with the applicant, briefly explaining what the vacancy is, probing the caller's relevant career and technical capability, and listening carefully. If you like what you hear, invite them in for an initial 'scenting' interview within four or five days. However, make sure your receptionist knows how to handle the incoming calls and is prepared to telephone any applicants back immediately if you are on another call. Don't wait for the applicant to call you back – they may not be able to.

4 TEST WITH AN INITIAL INTERVIEW

This is where you finally meet with the applicant and talk through what they have told you on the telephone, explaining in reasonable detail what the job entails and what is expected of the successful applicant. At the same time, check any technical requirements you deem important, and get the applicant to sit any psychometric or occupational tests you may use.

5 INTERVIEW A SECOND TIME

Most recruitment decisions are made on initial impressions, backed up by a review of the applicant's track record. The funny thing is, we never fire anyone for these reasons!

A salesperson is usually lost as a result of three things:

- Their lack of ability to learn and to adapt quickly.
- Their temperament is not suited to selling – for example, they can't take the pressure.
- They display unacceptable character traits, such as a lack of maturity, or they are untrustworthy.

Testing can identify the first two traits, but only an in-depth interview can identify those hidden character traits that can cause you many problems at a later date. I would list the following as the major character traits to investigate, and these sample probing questions can help to investigate such areas:

- **Attitude and belief**

"Tell me about a time when you had to stay positive to get a project completed, despite obstacles."

- **Self-motivation**

"Can you describe a situation where you felt you went above and beyond the call of duty?"

- **Stability and persistence**

"How do you respond when others around you are not pulling their weight?"

- **Maturity and judgement**

"Sometimes we make mistakes. Can you give me an example of such a situation and tell me how you handled it?"

Think of these three areas – ability, temperament and character – as the three legs of a stool. If one leg is far shorter than the others, the stool is very unstable. If one leg is missing completely, it will fall over!

You should not automatically accept the first answer to any question you are given. That will be the prepared answer. Probe tactfully, yet deeply, for recurring patterns of behaviour. An applicant's behaviour over the past five to seven years is a very good indicator of how they will behave and what they are likely to achieve while working for you.

6 VERIFY

It would seem that most sales managers tend to trust what applicants tell them and, provided it sounds reasonable, very rarely verify facts or dates.

If it's relevant, check up. Some recent research by the Risk Advisory Group, conducted on 900 CVs reviewed during the last quarter, showed discrepancies in over 50 per cent of them. There was a 20 per cent increase in lies or inaccuracies about previous employment and an 86 per cent rise in false information about academic qualifications!

7&8 DECIDE AND OFFER

A decision, subject to satisfactory references and verbal offer, should be made on the evening of the final interviews. The longer you leave it, the more opportunities this quality person has of being offered a job with another company – possibly even one of your competitors. You train your salespeople to close for an order, so why not close the applicant for a decision? If the answer is 'no', you still have an opportunity to go back to the others on your shortlist if they meet your requirements.

Time scales

It amazes me when I hear sales managers tell me it can take six to eight weeks to make a recruitment decision, and then wonder why the best applicants have already taken other jobs. Research has shown that the top applicants start to disappear ten to 14 days after the advertisement was published.

The ten-day cycle featured on page 29 looks good, and it is not just a theory – it really works! If you plan your recruitment campaign properly, then use psychometric and occupational testing to dig below the façade, and interview for character traits in depth, you won't have to find time in another six months to repeat the exercise. ■

Check if your advert will work!

The author will assess your recruitment advert FREE of charge. See contact details below.



SPECIAL OFFER!



ROGER SUMMERFIELD FInstSMM has 40 years of national sales and sales management experience and is Principal Associate of Buckinghamshire-based Holst Group, the UK suppliers of the McQuaig psychometric and occupational testing systems.

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