Faster Hiring Means More Sales

How to Reduce Time-to-Hire and Speed Up Ramp Time

BY betts recruiting Skaled CONSULTING

What Are You Losing?

The sales team is the backbone of your operation. But hiring SaaS sales professionals can be a delicate process. Competition is fierce, and every day you go without a sales development representative (SDR), account executive (AE), or sales manager, you're losing money.

An AE with a $1 million annual quota will bring in about $83,000 per month on average. That means that having an open AE headcount for one month can cost your company around $83,000.

Assume there are 20 business days in a month, and that comes to $4,150 that a single open AE headcount can cost you every single day. The takeaway is clear: the faster you can hire your salespeople, the better. The same goes for onboarding. The faster you properly onboard and ramp-up a new salesperson, the faster you start generating revenue instead of losing it.

This creates an urgent mandate to minimize the time your company spends with open sales headcount. In this eBook, Betts Recruiting and Skaled Consulting collaborate to provide strategies and best practices for achieving just that.

In three important steps, we'll walk you through candidate profiling, interviews, and onboarding.

$4,150
A DAY

Cost of an unfilled headcount for an account executive with a $1 million yearly quota.

CONTENTS

01

Establishing The Ideal Candidate Profile

The first step to minimizing time-to-hire is coming to a strong understanding of the ideal profile for SDRs, AEs, and Sales Managers. Here are some key traits to look for when establishing these profiles.

SECTION CONTENTS

Sales Development Representatives (SDRs)

Characteristics of an A+ sales development representative

Growth mindset	Do they believe that with hard work and perseverance they can improve at anything? Or are they quick to give up?
Process-driven	A SDR's job can be repetitive. It largely consists of lots of calls and emails. Someone organized, who builds systems for all of their tasks, will be more likely to thrive in this role.
Resilient	SDRs inevitably encounter rude prospects and hear "no" a lot. It's essential that they're able to take rejection in stride and keep pushing forward.
Naturally curious	Do they stay on top of industry trends, read sales books, and run experiments?
Self-confident	SDRs need to have the confidence to chat with founders and C-level executives.
Self-motivated	SaaS sales is a tough job. SDRs need to be able to motivate themselves through the ups and downs.
Empathetic	An SDR's success relies on their ability to put themselves in their prospect's shoes and understand their needs and pain points.
Great listener	The best salespeople ask great questions to understand their prospects' needs and then help them find the right solution.
Talented communicator	SDRs need to be able to quickly and clearly identify their company and express the value props of their product.
Coachable	Do they seek out advice to get better at their job? Do they accept constructive criticism and use that to improve?

What experiences should they have?

Because the SDR position is an entry-level sales position, extensive work experience isn't usually necessary. However, some helpful experiences may include:

Bachelor's Degree: A college education is helpful in an office environment.

Competitive nature: SaaS sales is a competitive field. Experience in areas like organized sports can show that an SDR candidate is cut from the right cloth.

Prior sales experience: It's not necessarily a must, but some prior experience, whether as an intern or a full-time employee, can help.

Hear it from the experts

> **Sales development leaders: Focus on strategy, people, process, and technology - in that order.**

Ralph Barsi
Senior Director Sales Development, Achievers

Account Executive (AE)

Characteristics of an A+ account executive

Prior sales experience	Most account executives have considerable experience in sales, and often started as an SDR.
Savvy negotiators	They're well-versed in the psychology of sales and are comfortable negotiating high-stakes contracts.
Excellent listener	The best salespeople ask great questions to understand their prospects' needs and then help them find the right solution. They act as consultants who educate and inform their prospects rather than hard selling.
Great communicator	They're comfortable communicating on sales calls, leaving voice messages, writing emails, and giving in-person presentations.
Self-aware	The best AEs have high emotional intelligence. They're realistic about their strengths and weaknesses, great at building rapport, and empathetic.
Resilient	AEs inevitably encounter resistance and hear "No" a lot. They need to be able to take it in stride and keep moving forward.
Naturally curious	Do they stay on top of industry trends, read sales books, and run experiments? Do they take the initiative to solve problems?
Organized	Sales is a process. AEs juggle multiple priorities, whether they're working to close deals, managing existing customer relationships, or scouting new opportunities.
Self-confident	AEs need to be confident chatting with founders and C-level executives.
Self-motivated	Whether they just crushed their quota or just lost a big deal, they need to be able to stay motivated through the ups and downs.
Coachable	Do they seek out advice to get better at their job? Do they accept constructive criticism and use that to improve?

What experiences should they have?

A level above SDRs on the sales team, Account Executives are typically expected to bring more sales experience with them to their role. This experience may include:

SDR: Many AEs learn the ropes of SaaS sales from the perspective of an SDR before graduating to AE.

Junior Account Executive: Some companies have a Junior AE position as an intermediary between SDR and AE. If a candidate has this on their resume, it could mean they've taken more time to really hone their sales expertise. But be careful - it could also mean they fell short of being promoted directly to AE.

5+ years of experience: If you're looking for an AE to close enterprise deals, your best bet is to look for a candidate who has been in the sales space a long time.

Hear it from the experts

> " Account Executives need to be able to take constructive feedback, learn from that, and take it to whatever the task is. "

Daniel Barber
CEO, DataGrail

Sales Manager

Characteristics of an A+ sales manager

Evangelist	If the company is in its early stages, sales leaders are often major forces for increasing brand awareness. Your director or VP of sales should be able to channel enthusiasm and excitement for your product, and have strong social media savvy.
Architect	Managers on sales teams are leaders of the effort to build the team. They should have a clear sense of the company's sales needs, and be able to identify the traits of strong salesperson who will be able to help hit those goals.
Salesforce savvy	These leaders shouldn't just know selling - they should be skilled in sales ops as well. Today more than ever, that means being fluent in Salesforce.
Analyst	As the team member largely responsible for creating your sales team's KPIs, your director or VP should have the analytical capabilities to map out future success and troubleshoot prior shortcomings.
Confident communicator	It often falls upon sales leaders to propose strategy changes to the rest of the executive leadership team, and to be a key player during big moments for the company, such as IPOs. For success in these scenarios, they need to be persuasive, confident, and cool under pressure.
Strong sales record	Sales leaders will almost always have prior experience as a sales rep. For the ideal leader, that experience should include exceptional examples of success: hitting their quota even in slow quarters for the team, closing enterprise-level accounts, or generating a high volume of business at a small company.
Strong references	By the time someone becomes a VP or director on a sales team, they've been around the block, and have likely developed a robust set of business contacts throughout their career. Those contacts should hold this person in high regard. Follow up with them in search of any red flags.

What experiences should they have?

As the top members of your sales team, your managers should bring the following key experiences to the interview process:

Strategy: In addition to their experience closing deals, they should be able to point to instances in which they were involved in planning the sales strategy for their organization.

Prior sales roles: As the leaders responsible for managing the entire sales cycle, strong candidates will have experience in most or all of the associated roles: SDR, AE, account manager, and even sales operations manager.

Accounting: Candidates with experience managing finances may be better equipped to plan goals and KPIs for your sales team.

Hear it from the experts

"We were looking for [a sales leader] that could learn quickly and take charge of the team. It was very important that they had successfully built, or been part of, a team that had grown from a small group of salespeople into a team of many."

Jake Gasaway
Co-founder, Stitch Labs

Perfecting The Job Description

Sales professionals are vetting and interviewing you just as much as you're interviewing them. With the national unemployment rate hovering near a 50-year low, employers are experiencing the phenomenon of more unfilled jobs than there are actual job seekers (for over a year) for the first time since the **US Department of Labor** began keeping track in 2000.

Therefore, throwing up a job description on job boards like LinkedIn and Indeed is no longer, *if you post it, they will come.*

Your job description is a window into your organization and your first impression on job seekers. Here are a few best practices when writing your descriptions:

1
Start high-level and sell your company as well as the position.

Most job seekers today are looking for a culture fit as well as role fit. Give them a glimpse into your company and why other employees enjoy working there.

2
Be detailed but avoid sounding negative.

Be clear about task descriptions and expectations. Many job descriptions we see make one of two mistakes: (1) They are too vague about the role and try to sound too hip to get more applicants. (2) They want to deter unqualified applicants and end up coming off too negative and unfriendly.

3
Talk directly to the job seeker.

Effective job descriptions are professional, but also relatable and conversational. Assume job seekers are skimming your job description for keywords (the same way employers skim resumes for keywords).

4
Use a clear, attractive, formal structure.

The way you stand out from other companies is how you describe your company and the role, not by deviating from the information job seekers expect to see in every job description: Overview, Duties, Requirements, Employee Characteristics, Benefits.

5
Leave a little to the imagination.

Get job seekers excited about working for you by pumping them up about the work you're doing or the services you're providing. If they can't see themselves working for your company, they either won't apply or they won't be very passionate employees.

02

Instituting An Efficient Interview Process

Now that you've established the kinds of experience and qualifications that make great candidates for SaaS sales positions, it's time to start interviewing.

SECTION CONTENTS

The SDR Process

The AE Process

The Sales Manager Process

Cheat Sheet
9 General interview questions that reveal natural sales talent & goals

Step 2: Instituting An Efficient Interview Process

In this process, there's one essential principle to remember: **time kills deals**. Not only do you pay for every day you go with an unfilled sales headcount, as we established earlier - you also increase the chances of a candidate getting, and taking, an offer from another company the longer your interview process runs. That's why Betts Recruiting and Skaled Consulting recommend this golden rule for sales interviews:

The Golden Rule: No more than 3 days between steps.

This will keep your interview process concise, and your candidates engaged. Let's dive into the key components of the interview process for SDR, AE, and Sales Manager roles.

The SDR Process

SDRs: 2- to 3-step process with possible assessment
APPROXIMATELY 1 WEEK

Step 1

a. Phone screen or onsite with Hiring Manager.
b. Approximately 30 minutes.
c. Common interview prompts and questions include:

- Walk me through your background.
- Why sales?
- Pitch me your current company.
- Why do you want to work for this company?

Step 2

a. Many sales teams and hiring managers like to see candidates' skills in action during the interview process.
b. For SDRs, this usually takes two forms:

- **Mock call:** Have someone from the team play the role of a sales prospect, and have the candidate call in trying to book an appointment for a demo.
- **Mock email:** Have the candidate provide a sample email to a prospect, either looking for an appointment or following up on a call.

Step 3

a. Onsite involving decision makers.
b. Approximately 1-2 hours.
c. Objectives:

- Understand how the candidate has handled challenges or failures.
- Present the candidate with other hypothetical pitch scenarios not covered in the mock call.
- Get a sense of whether the candidate is a strong culture fit for the company.

Pro tips

1 If the candidate has timing pressure and the role play is a must, incorporate the mock call into the phone screen or onsite, as it shouldn't take more than 5 minutes.

2 Don't be afraid to give offers on the spot. SDRs move quickly, and on-the-spot offers show you're excited about the candidate.

The AE Process

AEs: 2- to 5-step process depending on seniority
APPROXIMATELY 1-2 WEEKS

Step 1

a. Phone screen or onsite with hiring manager.
b. Approximately 30 minutes.
c. Common interview prompts and questions include:
- Walk me through your background/sales experience.
- How did you perform against your number?
- Pitch your company
- Why do you want to work for this company?

Step 2

a. Onsite with the team (leaders and 1-2 key team members).
b. Either as a panel interview or 1:1 interviews of 30 minutes each (1-2 hours).
- Suggested interviewers: Hiring manager, fellow AE, marketer, or SE.
- For candidates with more than 2 years of closing experience, you may also want to introduce them to the founder/CEO of the company.
- If the candidate has more than 2 years of closing experience, try to get a sense of their track record of closing high-stakes enterprise deals.

Step 3

a. 30-minute mock demo.
b. Either the candidate's current company or your company.

Step 4

a. Final call with hiring manager, VP of sales, or CEO.

Step 5

a. References.
b. At least 1 manager and 1 peer.

Pro tip

1 Combine steps if the candidate has timing pressure. You can always combine the onsite and demo or demo and final call.

The Sales Manager Process

Sales managers: 7-step process depending on seniority

APPROXIMATELY 2-3 WEEKS

Step 1
a. Phone screen or onsite with hiring manager.
b. Approximately 30 minutes.
c. Introduce company and goal for role.
d. Common interview prompts and questions include:
  - Tell me about your background and management experience.
  - Describe your management style.
  - How do you motivate your account executives?
  - Why do you want this position?

Step 2
a. Onsite with 3 - 5 company leaders to get insight into specific past successes and determine culture fit.
  - Suggested interviewers: Hiring manager, members of executive leadership team, marketing director, and sales enablement professionals.
  - If the candidate has previous sales management experience, try to get a feel for their management style & how they support teams in building pipeline.
  - Ask candidate to prepare their 3/6/9 month plan for their next interview.

Step 3
a. Second onsite meeting with key stakeholders to present 3/6/9 month plan.
b. Followed by meeting with CEO to discuss strategy and company goals the role will support (30-45 minutes each).
  - Ask any final questions.
  - Get specifics on compensation expectations including the exact salary, percentage and equity shares, and benefits.

Step 4
a. Interview successful sales manager candidates with investors or board members—keeping everyone on the same page for your company's growth strategy.

Step 5
a. References
b. At least 1 previous supervisor, 1 peer, and 1 direct report.

Step 6
a. Verbal offer via phone by hiring manager—presenting details of the offer to see if the candidate accepts.

Step 7
a. Offer in writing presented following acceptance of verbal offer.
b. Allow candidate 24-48 hours to review offer, but follow up if you don't hear back by then.

Pro tips

1 Remember, sales leadership candidates are interviewing you as much as you're interviewing them. Make sure you're selling your company and the position.

2 As sales managers are more senior-level employees, this is one of the more lengthy processes in our guide. For extra efficiency, try to conduct steps in tandem with one another when possible. For example, you can seek out and follow up on the references while simultaneously scheduling interviews.

Cheat Sheet

9 general interview questions that reveal natural sales talent & goals

How do you remain knowledgeable on trends considering your target industry or audience?

Is meeting quota every time more important than ensuring your customers are happy?

When do you decide a prospect isn't the right fit?

What are you really good at professionally?

What are you not good at or not interested in doing professionally?

How do you handle objections?

If a deal is lost, do you ever ask the prospect why?

If so, what did they say?

What are your thoughts on collaboration within the sales team as well as with other teams?

What are your career goals?

03

Onboarding: Keys To Success

Even after the interview process is complete, the offer is accepted, and Day 1 rolls around, new sales hires still have to get through an onboarding process before they can start generating revenue for your company.

Before They Start

Week 1 - 6

Role-playing

Goal Setting And Expectations

Mentorship Program

Step 3: Onboarding Keys to Success
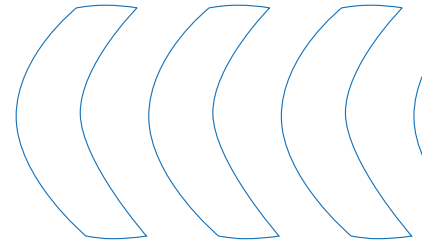
In a previous study (Hiring Superior Salespeople), we surveyed 100 CEOs and founders to better understand their hiring process, and we found that the largest percentage of responses indicated 3-4 months was their typical ramp-up time (44%).

Therefore, it's also crucial to be as efficient as possible during onboarding and ramp-up. Here are some best practices for efficient onboarding:

1. Before they start

Use the time between offer acceptance and Day 1 to clear as much of your work as possible, facilitate the paperwork, and set internal expectations.

a. Build a sales training program:
- Identify the key tools and systems the new hire will need, and find resources for them to self-direct their training and get help.
- Any new hire should get a holistic overview of your company. But do sales engineers really need in-depth training on the thought leadership topics trending in your industry? Invest in developing abbreviated training sessions for less relevant topics - it'll save you time in the long run.

b. Personal training plans:
- What do you want the new hire to know within 5, 15, and 30 days?
- Build those expectations into a personal learning plan that covers vital sales skills, industry and market insights, and SaaS sales methodologies.
- For SDRs, you might want them to make or iterate a cold email within days. For AEs, it may be relationship-building or research goals.

2. Week 1-6

Establish what's expected of them.

a. Create attainable goals that are tied to a work-relevant outcome.
b. Help them build a network of resources and people to find what they need.
c. Put this all in an onboarding calendar to set them up for success in their first 6 weeks. See appendix for Example Onboarding Calendar.

3. Role-playing with purpose

The fastest way to learn is to do. Role-playing is a great way to get your new hire up to speed in a non-threatening environment. Practice successful pitches but don't forget to derail them sometimes. Record it and have them watch it back - it's the fastest way to learn.

4. Goal setting and expectations

Set your expectations based on team data - for example, your calls to sales ratio. Set a relevant percentage for your new hire, tell them what's expected, and check in frequently.

Mapping out KPIs and Activities QoQ creates clear-cut expectations for salespeople during their ramp period and at full productivity.

5. Mentorship program

Implementing a one-to-one mentorship and learning culture allows new salespeople to shadow and get answers to questions on the job. It also takes away the pressure of new-hire reviews by providing a setting for performance, job adjustment, and professional growth day-to-day, week-to-week.

It can take an average of 8-12 months for new hires to get acclimated to their role. With a thorough onboarding process and mentorship program, that time can be cut down by 34%.

Remember that great goals are SMART:

Specific
Measurable
Attainable
Relevant
Timely

A good onboarding experience can set a salesperson up for success, make them feel valued, and accelerate their performance. Follow these tips and make it a great one.
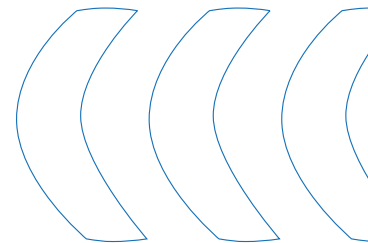
04

Appendix

Unfilled Headcount Cost Formula

Sample Onboarding Calendar

Unfilled Headcount and Slow Ramp Cost Formulas

It helps to see the impact of unfilled headcounts and slow ramp when you can put it in your own numbers. Use these formulas to forecast the cost of unfilled sales headcount and increased ramp time within your own organization.

UNFILLED HEADCOUNT COST FORMULA

$$\text{Year 1 Impact of missing headcount} = \left(\frac{\text{Year 1 expected contribution per rep} \times \text{\# of reps hired}}{\text{\# of weeks in th year (52)}} \right) \times \text{Weeks delayed in hiring}$$

SLOW RAMP COST FORMULA

$$\text{Year 1 Gain/loss per rep WITH RAMP CHANGES} = \left[\left(\text{\# of months in year (12)} - \text{Actual ramp time} \right) \times \text{Monthly quota AFTER RAMP TIME} + \text{Dollars expected during ramp} \right] - \text{Year 1 expected contribution}$$

You'll be able to approximately calculate the difference in revenue when it takes an extra month or two to hire the right sales rep or manager. And furthermore, the difference in revenue when it takes an extra month or two for your new sales member to ramp-up because of inefficient or slow onboarding.

DOWLOAD FORMULAS

Example Onboarding Calendar

It's important to be as detailed as possible in your onboarding calendar and set blocks of time for emails, prospecting, role playing, shadowing, market research, handling objections, daily debriefs, etc. Meeting with different people in the Sales and Marketing departments to understand their roles and responsibilities is important as well. There should be no gaps for the first six weeks of onboarding in the onboarding calendar. The below is meant to be a simplified example of the progression in responsibility of a new salesperson.

	WEEK 1	WEEK 2	WEEK 3	WEEK 4	WEEK 5	WEEK 6
	Mission & values	Product training	Pitch deck	Sales process	Training & practice	Training & practice

Time	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6
9 AM		EMAIL/PROSPECT RESEARCH	EMAIL/PROSPECT RESEARCH	EMAIL/PROSPECT RESEARCH	EMAIL/PROSPECT RESEARCH	EMAIL/PROSPECT RESEARCH
10 AM		ROLE PLAYING	ROLE PLAYING	PROSPECTING	PROSPECTING	PROSPECTING
11 AM				SHADOWING	OBJ. HANDLING / DISCOVERY/DEMO / OBJ. HANDLING / DISCOVERY/DEMO / OBJ. HANDLING	
12 PM	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH		LUNCH	LUNCH
1 PM				LUNCH		
2 PM		SHADOWING	PROSPECTING	PROSPECTING	PROSPECTING	PROSPECTING
3 PM						
4 PM					DISCOVERY/ DEMOS	DISCOVERY/ DEMOS
5 PM	DEBRIEF					

Getting Started

The cost of unfilled sales headcount is an often-overlooked threat to a company's revenue. But with efficient scouting, interviewing, and hiring strategies, your company can reduce time-to-hire and be ideally positioned to avert that threat. Partnering with sales-specialized recruiting and consulting firms can reduce time-to-hire even further. Betts Recruiting specializes not just in finding the right person but hiring them quickly - usually in about two weeks, compared to an average of six weeks when hiring internally - and Skaled specializes in helping companies implement programs that can accelerate the onboarding and ramp-up process even more.

If there's one thing to take away from this eBook, it's that when it comes to filling sales positions, that four-week difference can mean a lot. Contact **Betts Recruiting** or **Skaled Consulting** and learn how you can keep time-to-hire to a minimum and get your sales team up and running faster than ever.