

# Vision Statement

## Do You Really Know Who Your Best Salespeople Are?

Data by **Lynette Ryals** and **Iain Davies**; visualization by **Open**

CEOs are investing more than ever in their sales forces, but results aren't improving. To understand this disconnect, we observed 800 sales professionals in live sales meetings. We discovered eight sales types. The bad news is that only three of them—accounting for a mere 37% of salespeople—were consistently effective. What's more, some of the behaviors of the remaining 63% actually drove down performance. But there's good news, too: The eight types represent behavioral tendencies, not set-in-stone personalities. Managers can effect changes in their current salespeople and recruit better team members in the future if they understand the eight types.

ONLY

# 9.1%

OF SALES MEETINGS RESULT IN A SALE, AND JUST

**1 out of 250** SALESPEOPLE EXCEED THEIR TARGETS.

# \$1,760

OF PROFIT PER SALE IS NEEDED JUST TO COVER THE COST OF FAILED SALES MEETINGS, ASSUMING THAT THE MEETINGS COST, ON AVERAGE, \$160.

### THE BEST

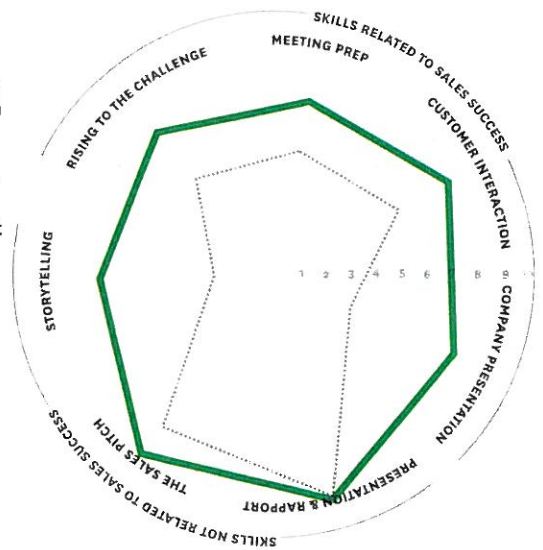
#### Experts

make selling seem effortless, keep customers happy, and consistently outperform their peers.

⑦ Should mentor up-and-comers, help less effective sales staff, and spread best practices throughout the company.

## 9%

of the salespeople in our sample were in this group.

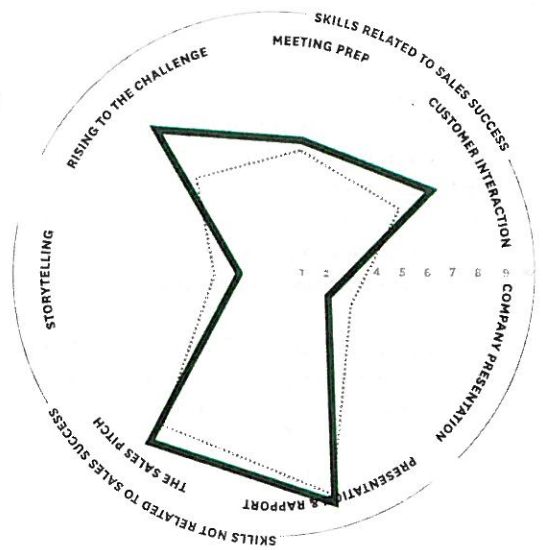


#### Closers

pull off some very big deals (typically in product sales rather than in service sales) and can effectively counter customer objections. But their smooth-talking style puts some customers off.

⑦ Need light-touch mentoring to improve selling of services. A strong motivation and reward system must be in place to retain them.

## 13%

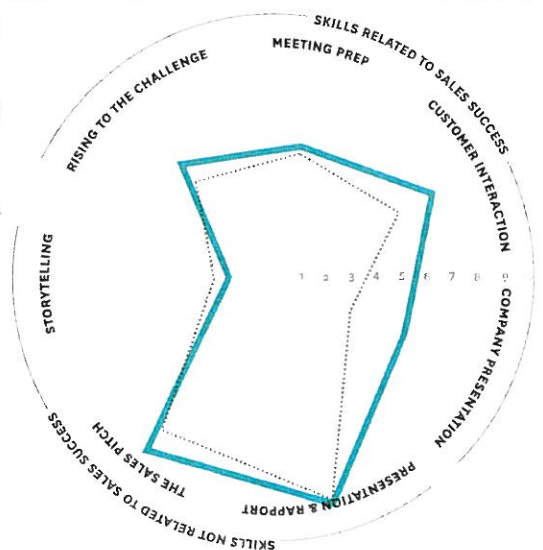


#### Consultants

listen well and are good problem solvers; they develop solutions that meet their customers' needs. But they tend to be one-dimensional and to forgo valuable case examples that could boost sales.

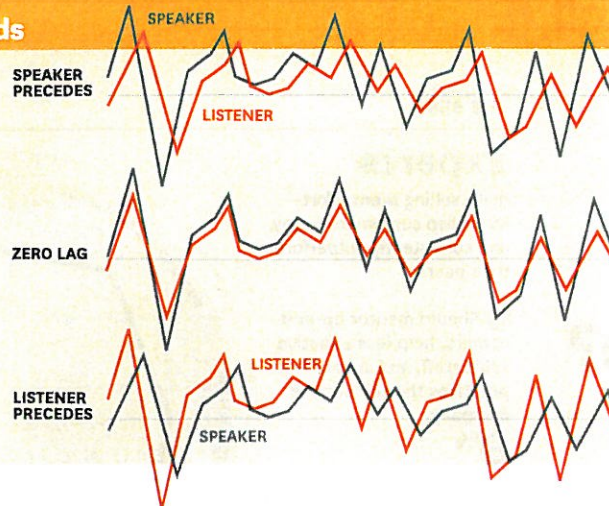
⑦ Need mentoring to integrate more dimensions into their approach and enrich customer interactions. Have the potential to become experts.

## 15%



## Meeting of the Minds

**When brains couple, listeners' brain activity becomes similar to speakers'. The less lag, the higher the listener's comprehension of what the speaker is saying. In cases where comprehension is highest, the listener's brain activity actually precedes the speaker's. These are cases where you might say that two people "just click."**



a rally once, and people in the audience were captivated. Is he somehow more capable of inducing similar brain responses across all listeners? What are the mechanisms that allow a listener's brain to couple or not? If you disagree with Obama's views, do you actively prevent your brain from coupling? Can I interfere with the signal? Why does miscommunication, or a lack of coupling, happen? How do children acquire the ability to couple brains? These are all questions we want to look at.

**Do you think some people are born with the ability to couple their brains with others'?**

There's probably a spectrum of abilities. On one end you have an autistic person who can't seem to transmit or pick up the

**There's nothing mystical about this. It's not a Jedi mind trick. This is what communication is. It is what humans do best, and it's unique.**

right information to have successful brain coupling. He can't click with others. On the other end you have people who almost seem to transmit a common signal and are very easy to connect with.

**Could understanding the mechanisms help us move along that continuum?**

Absolutely. That's an important way ahead for us. What if we could help the

autistic person click? What if we could test people's ability to transmit and receive these signals? Can we help people learn to lead better? Can we reduce miscommunication by increasing coupling?

**You use terms related to wireless communications—"coupling," "wave," "signal." Do you see the brain as a kind of wireless transmitter?**

That's precisely it. I'm generating a brain wave that generates a sound wave that generates a brain wave in you. There's nothing mystical about this. It's not a Jedi mind trick. This is what communication is. It is what humans do best, and it's unique and amazing.

**How?**

I don't want to get too philosophical, but basically, all brains are coupled to the external world. If I sat next to you in a movie theater and someone measured our brain responses, they'd see extremely similar patterns. We couple to external stimuli in the same way because as a species, humans have similar perceptions of the external world. All monkeys' brains respond to a banana in pretty much the same way. But humans can couple brains directly, without external stimuli. I can say "elephant" and you'll comprehend what I'm saying even if there's no elephant in the room. My brain conveyed the idea of an elephant directly to your brain. Not all animals can do that. But humans can.

**Honestly, this is all giving me a headache.**

Our brains must be out of sync. ♡

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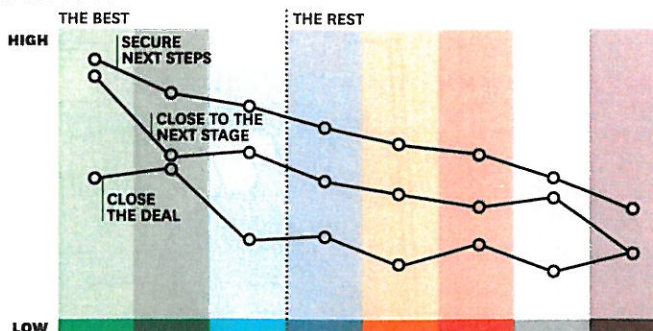
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**How to Read the Performance Charts**

Each circle has seven components of a sales meeting around its circumference. We rated salespeople on 23 selling skills related to these components and plotted their scores inside the circles, with 1 (worst) being closest to the center and 10 (best) the farthest out. (As it happened, not all of the skills affected success.) The larger the polygon connecting the scores, the more skilled the salesperson. The gray dotted polygon in each circle represents the average performance scores of all the salespeople in our sample.

**How the Eight Types Perform**

After categorizing the eight types of salespeople, we measured their performance in three important sales activities: securing next steps from customers, closing to the next stage of a deal, and closing the deal.



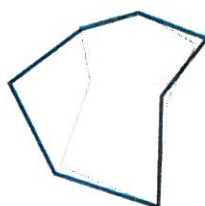
**THE REST**

**Storytellers**

are customer focused and love to provide case studies, but they often “talk through the sale” and waste time in long meetings that don’t yield results.

- Need training to focus meetings (for example, setting clear agendas and targets), to “read” meetings, and to become more aware of their behavior.

**7%**



**Aggressors**

approach sales meetings purely as price negotiations. They can score big wins, and they rarely concede too much; however, some customers dislike their combative approach.

- Need a broader repertoire of skills; should improve their market knowledge. May benefit from self-awareness training.

**7%**



**Focusers**

know their products cold and believe deeply in them, but they lack confidence. They often insist on detailing every product feature and may not hear customers’ needs.

- Need training in listening skills and must learn to use their technical savvy to meet customers’ needs.

**19%**



**Socializers**

may initially impress customers with their friendly chat about such things as children and cars. But they usually don’t get past this, and close few deals.

- Need training in transitioning to selling mode sooner; should have clear short-term targets. Must be closely managed.

**15%**

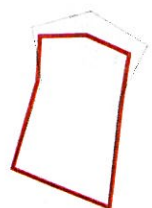


**Narrators**

know their offerings and the market but are overly dependent on scripts. They cling desperately to marketing materials and fail to respond adequately to challenging questions.

- Need basic instruction in questioning techniques and improvisation. Should shift their focus from PowerPoint and brochures to customers themselves.

**15%**



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