

# How to attract and retain top sales talent

Recruiting good sales talent is at the core of almost every commercial business and, thanks to an advance in technology, the sales career landscape has changed in recent years as recruiters fish from a much wider pool of talent. So how do we find that sales diamond in the rough? Joanne Bushell, IWG MD for South Africa and VP for sales in Africa, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Belarus and Baltics shares her insights in recruiting and retaining sales talent in the group.



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“When you work in a business-to-business sector, it can be more challenging to build a reputation as an employer of choice for great talent,” explains Bushell. “In my experience, the best way to recruit brilliant people is through referrals. We rely a lot on our high-performing team members who recommend candidates who will perform as well as they do. That’s the talent that I want in my organisation.”

Many factors come into play when recruiting good salespeople, including understanding the product, problem-solving and teamwork. “For me, the most important part of the recruitment process is passion and honesty,” says Bushell. “I want everyone who joins IWG to be excited about the opportunities our company and the industry offer.”

## New technology in recruiting

In this tight labour market, companies need to have a clear plan in order to navigate the vast pool of candidates that technology enables us to choose from. For many years, a company’s approach to recruiting remained the same – employers posted job vacancies and wannabe employees answered them. But this approach relied on good timing and the right salespeople applying for the roles.

Today, there are easier ways to find the right people and, more importantly, to keep them. “Our employees are our best recruitment channel and I always think the best way to retain those fantastic people is to give them the space to be brilliant and the support to develop,” explains Bushell.

## Recruiting around the globe

As a global company, IWG's approach to recruiting needs to be adapted to different markets. "Referrals are a key channel for us globally," says Bushell. "However, in addition to this we use career sites, job boards and networking events. We have a brilliant team of people who are focused on approaching people directly through career and network sites. And once we get people in front of us, we can tell our story and they are hooked."

## **Successful traits to look for**

Compared to other roles, being right for a sales role often means more than just paper qualifications. "When I'm looking for salespeople, I look for people who love what they do. If you don't really love sales then you aren't going to be good at it," says Bushell. "More than that, I look for people who are enthusiastic, numerical and tenacious. I want people who want to provide a 'great day at work' for our customers from their first contact onwards."

## **How sales roles are changing**

Of course, as the world changes, so do job roles. "I think my role as the sales leader is moving closer to a chief operating officer role," Bushell explains. "Sales covers everything from making sure that the customer experience is exceptional, and the products and solutions are right to ensuring that they're priced appropriately. In a global organisation, you can't sell if you don't have these elements right."

"The most successful sales candidates are the ones who keep surprising me by walking the same path as our customers and assessing the journey through a customer's eyes, then presenting their view on what they need to improve to get from good to great."

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