

**Have you ever hired or considered hiring a sales rep with a book of business? If you did hire the person, was it successful? If not, what made you decide against it?**

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Years ago I did. It's a double edged sword. They sell themselves more than the company they work for. Tend to move or leave when a better deal for their book comes along. Gives you a temporary boost to sales.

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I primarily only look for someone with a book of business and generally speaking, it's easy to verify.

With that said, I have taken a new approach with a sales person that has some experience but I feel I can train. The reasoning is that we have call in requests and house accounts that can be assigned to this individual as they build their own book of business. My expectation is to set goals with them and not budgets. These goals include identifying larger customers that they must identify the buyers and then get an appointment that I can go along and coach them through the process.

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We have hired several reps with an existing book of business in the past. Most have worked out. If you cut the amount of business they claim to have in half, you will most likely be closer to amount of business they can move. Some reps tend to inflate their sales and many clients will choose to stay with the reps current firm. If the rep reports a low sales volume and blames the current employer's pricing, I would run.

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I don't mean to be facetious, but I'm guessing the many have had similar experience to ours.

We have hired sales reps with a book of business with mixed results.

What we have learned is to take about half of what they claim will not come with the rep. And about half of the ones that come are low margin or bad accounts. So I factor about 25% of what the rep says will come.

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We have tried it a couple of times with mixed success. Typically we find that the book of business stays with the printer.

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It seemed to work much better years ago. We are no longer planning to hire that way, or at least all pay will be based on their ability to bring accounts over.

We had two reps we gave 1.4 years to bring it over before we let them go. One promised \$1,000,000 yr and ended up at \$250,000 yr, another \$800,000 yr and ended up with \$200,000 yr. They continued to call on the accounts they had, with little to no results, but were weak at attracting new business. Their current clients didn't have a broken relationship with the company they worked with.

The biggest challenge is if they are working for a good printing company, there should be loyalty, and probably involvement from a larger team meaning design, project managers and possibly the management of the company. Those relationships go beyond the sales rep, and are valuable in the company keeping accounts.

If the shop they are leaving closes, you have a better chance. If it's failing, it all depends on the rep, and can you bill what you need to be profitable.

Top level marketing and solid sales skills, the ability to speak too and work with top influencers in a company is key. Solid prospecting, preparation, and follow through are the key.

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We hired a new sales director who had contacts from a previous employer in unrelated areas to our business. She was unsuccessful at obtaining business from her previous clients. We had another candidate at a business directly related to ours who claimed he could bring most of those clients with him because he was the rainmaker and his new management did not know what they were doing. We decided against the offer because of possible problems with his departure and the competition with that employer to hold on to those accounts would be horrific.

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We've been down that path without good results. It's rare for a customer to simply leave their printer to follow a sales rep somewhere else, unless the printer is worth leaving. Don't underestimate the relationship of the printer as a whole i.e. the CSR, their community support, culture, owners, etc. You may capture "some" of the business, but don't count on the book of business promise unless the former printer is a well-known problem.

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I have and I am always in favor of it. When a sales representative has an existing book of business it gives foundation towards the fact the prospect actually has solid relationships and relevant experience within the industry category your searching. Unfortunately with todays business relationships and that even though buyers still buy from people (this percentage has decreased over the past years for various company buying process's) it doesn't mean the buyer will always follow the sales representative when they make a move. This type of loyalty just isn't what it used to be between the buyer and sales representative as much as it is with the buyer and company in todays world. The percentage of business that follows the sales representative cannot always be a guarantee so you just need to keep an open mind and do your homework the best you can towards identifying how strong the relationships really are between the buyer and sales representative your pursuing.

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We have tried this numerous times with no success.

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Hiring a sales rep with a book of business is a crap shoot. We've been successful about 25% of the time. Check W-2s for wages is my best advice.

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In the past this had been our SOP and an effective way to grow sales. In every case the rep stated they expected to bring "most if not all" of their business with them and in reality it was always about 50% the first year and then more the second and third years. Over the past several years we have gone away from this approach. Customers seem to be more loyal to companies than to individuals than in the past. The last few experienced reps we hired did not work out as business did not follow them.

Our approach for the last few years is to hire and train our own reps.

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Having an outside sales person can be a two edged sword since they are need to grow sales and maintain accounts but they are also often lured away by a competitor. Whether they take your accounts along with them may depend on your companies relationship with the customer including why would they leave with them such as was it price, turn around, quality or some other issue. I have never hired a salesman with a book of business but as a director of a Bank, the bank has done this quite successfully. In fact the Bank has found that it is much less expensive to lure away a good commercial lender "sales person" than buy a competing bank. There has been a lot of turmoil in the banking industry and I would also say the same for the printing industry. The one thing to consider is that bringing over these accounts does not happen right of way and depending on the relationship those accounts have with the printer they left, very few may decide to change printers. I would advise not to hire a sales person based on their book of business but on how good they are at their job as a sales person, the bank I mentioned has occasionally found that the lender they hired with this book of business really wasn't as good they hoped and ended up letting them go after it was clear they weren't a good fit.

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Of course. What a coveted opportunity. My experience is it is true 25% of the time and a bust 75% of the time

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We have experienced this both ways –

Sales People are hired based on a book of Business that they show over the past few years –

So have worked out –

And

Some have Not - -

So this is a 50/50 chance if we are to bring on that Sales Person –

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We considered hiring a sales rep with a book of business but we didn't go through with it.

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We have both hired and lost experienced Sales Reps. Our history shows that not much business follows the Rep any more. The relationship these days is more company to company than Purchasing agent to Rep. On top of that, it seems that experienced Reps are used to doing more account maintenance and not as much prospecting and the rejection of cold calling is not well received and building a book of business doesn't come as easy as they would like.

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We've had it go both ways. Generally, even when it's worked, they haven't brought as much as they thought they could. We've also have some bring essentially nothing despite being certain they could. Depends on the situation.

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Sales always exaggerate their book of business and you have to ask them, if you really have the work you say you do why are you looking for a new employer? Usually they lay waste to their former employer. Now you know what they may say about you.

Finally if you want to separate the fakers from the superstars offer them a fair commission on a draw plan. You will figure out pretty quick what they are made of. The fakers will usually turn it down and the superstars will say yes, no problem.

Draw plans can be structured in many ways but mostly they are "drawing a set weekly pay" against commissions earned and if the Commission Bank is big enough they get an additional "Commission" check at the end of the month on accounts paid in full. On the converse if the Commission Bank does not cover their weekly pay they are negative and get no additional check. So be careful on how much you agree to set the weekly draw at and how deep in the negative you are willing to let them go before some type of change will be made.

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