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WHAT GOOD LOOKS LIKE FOR SALES



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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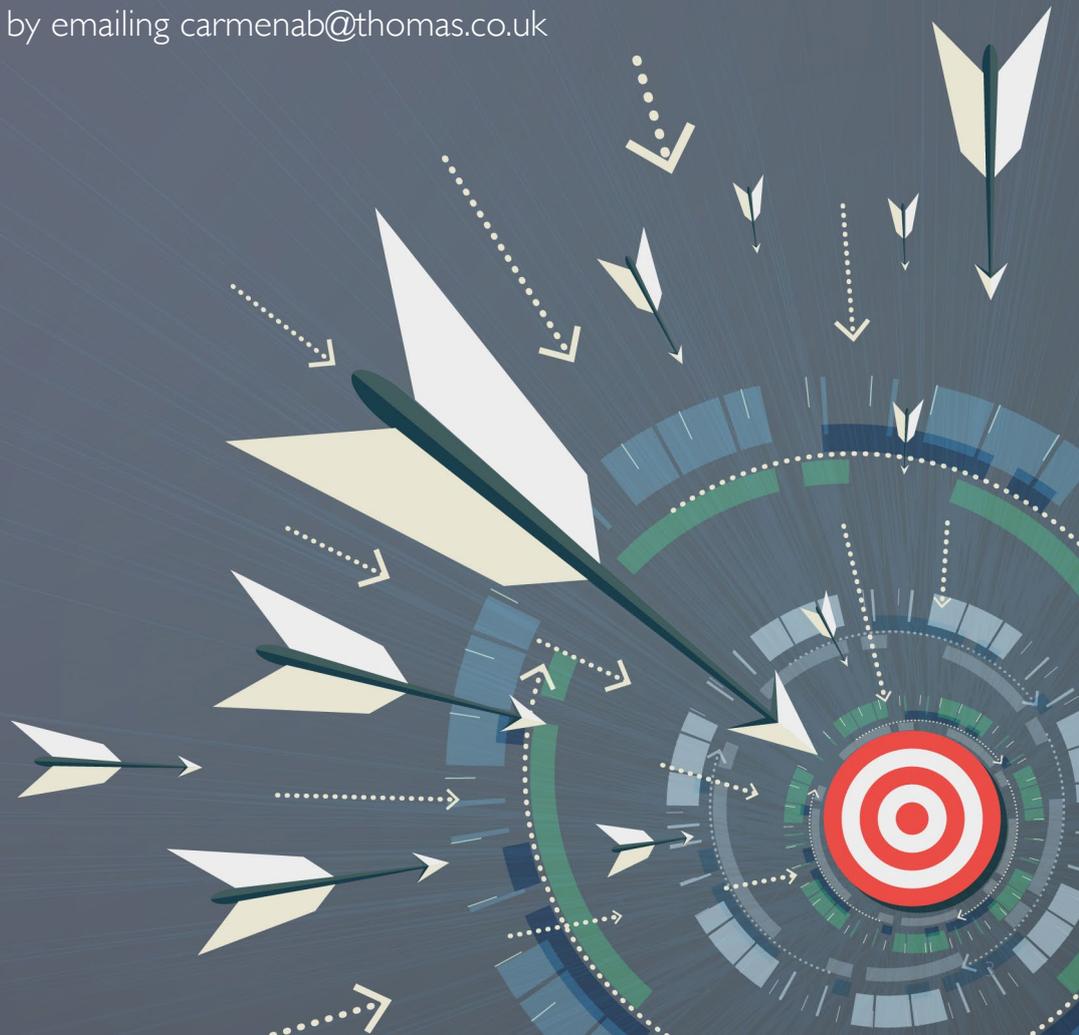
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Carmen has been a Business Psychologist in the global Psychology team at Thomas International since July 2018. She is responsible for designing psychometric solutions for clients both nationally and internationally, onboarding new global partners in their local languages and supporting the development and validation of existing and new products. Carmen has specific expertise in Emotional Intelligence and Employee Engagement as this was her main focus in her MSc thesis at University College London. Carmen is a registered member of the British Psychological Society, as well as the Association of Business Psychologists.



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Executive summary



57% of sales representatives **missed** their sales **targets** in 2017¹



Almost **20%** of hires are **“regretted decisions”**²



Having profiled over **156,000** salespeople in over **76** countries, we know what a **successful salesperson** looks like



Behaviourally, salespeople in general are:

- Self-starters
- Assertive
- Driven to achieve results
- Communicative, positive and persuasive
- Active, alert and restless
- Strong-willed
- Independent and persistent



Regarding Emotional Intelligence, salespeople in general:

- Have higher Emotional Intelligence than global averages
- Feel content and good about the present
- Feel positive about the future
- Deal well with change and new environments
- Fluctuate more in emotions
- Are frank and willing to stand up for their rights
- Can identify their own and other people’s feelings



Salespeople focusing on existing clients as opposed to new business also have different behavioural preferences, as well as different personality and intelligence profiles.



We can train our salespeople to be more effective with Emotional Intelligence training and by helping them to modify their behaviours.



Across countries, salespeople display different behavioural preferences, with the finding that salespeople prefer to behave in the same way that the general working population prefers to behave.



Using psychometrics can help you identify and develop your top performing salespeople to reduce time and costs in your processes.

¹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/shephyken/2018/09/02/77-of-sales-reps-missed-their-quotas-last-year/#72c537ca52e4>
² <https://www.ascendperformancecoaching.com/recruitmentsupport.html>



Introduction

Are your salespeople performing?

Did you know that 57% of sales representatives missed their sales targets in 2017? But why?

We spend so much of our time and money on recruiting the right salesperson. In fact, the average company in the United States **spends about \$4,000 hiring a new employee**, taking up to 24 days to fill a position³.

In today's demanding and competitive market, sales leaders are increasingly realising the need to recruit high performing salespeople. So how do we find those high performing salespeople?

At Thomas International, we know what a successful salesperson looks like. Having profiled more than **156,000 salespeople** in over **76 countries** since 2012, we've identified the key characteristics that our clients use to find high performing salespeople.



³ <https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/blog/calculate-cost-per-hire/>



Recruiting the right people

Despite all the time and investment spent on recruitment, recent research suggests that almost 20% of hires are “regretted decisions”.



For many companies, a typical recruitment process involves assessing a candidate’s CV, past job experience, competence in key areas, sending them to an assessment centre and then making a decision. But if so many have this whole process in place, why do they still seem to get it wrong so often? Well, they might be basing decisions on the wrong information.

It turns out that **past job experience only predicts 16%** of job performance⁴. On the other hand, personality and general intelligence **predict 31% to 65%** of job performance⁵. These characteristics can be easily measured using psychometric assessments, which can give you much more information, enabling you to make better and less costly decisions.

Measures	Ability to predict job performance
General Intelligence tests	$r = .65$
Personality assessments	$r = .31-.41$
Situational Judgment tests	$r = .26$
Job experience	$r = .29$

What do the numbers mean?

Correlations describe the relationship between two variables or measures and are scored on a scale from -1.0 to +1.0. A correlation of zero indicates no relationship between the two variables, whereas values further from zero indicate a greater correspondence or relationship. Correlations are measured using a statistic called the r value.

⁴ Schmidt and Hunter, 1998
⁵ Schmidt, Oh & Shaffer, 2016

What does a salesperson look like?

We have profiled the behavioural preferences of 148,210 salespeople globally since 2012.

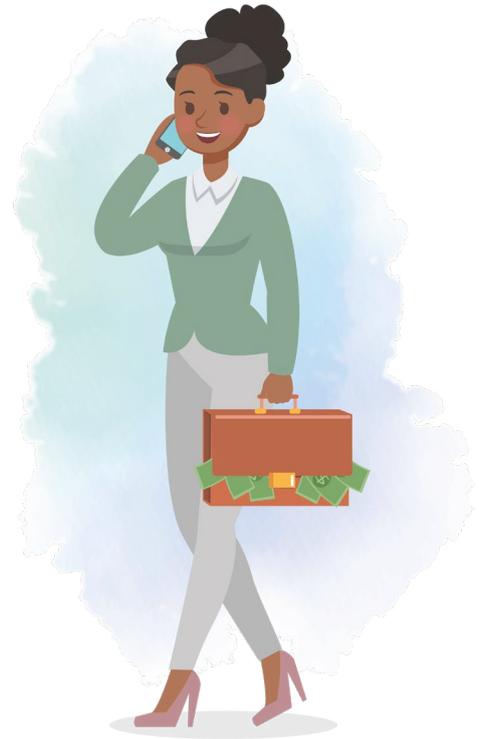
We have found that salespeople display stronger preferences towards being **self-starters, assertive** and **driven to achieve results**. They also display stronger preferences towards being **communicative, positive** and **persuading others to react favourably**. Salespeople also display stronger preferences for being **active, alert** and **restless** as well as for being **strong-willed, independent** and **persistent**.

These behavioural preferences make sense for salespeople as they need to initiate client meetings and sales often by themselves, communicate and persuade clients to buy their products, continuously be alert for new opportunities and be persistent in the face of adversity.

We have also analysed the Emotional Intelligence of **9,408 salespeople globally** since 2012. Emotional Intelligence relates to how capable we think we are in terms of our ability to understand, control and manage our own and others' emotions.

Our data suggests that salespeople **have higher levels of Emotional Intelligence** compared to the general working population. This means that salespeople feel they are more capable than others at understanding and managing their own and others' emotions.

When delving into different aspects of Emotional Intelligence, we found that salespeople also score highly in their comfort and ability to adapt behaviourally in social contexts as well as how much **confidence** and **self-regard** they have. These traits are beneficial for a salesperson as they are constantly required to meet new clients in different environments and also deal with rejection more often.



So, now we know what salespeople look like in general, but what if we are recruiting for **different types of sales employees?**



Not all salespeople are the same

What we often find is that salespeople may be suited to different types of sales roles and each type of salesperson has different behavioural preferences, personality and intelligence profiles. We recently conducted an extensive analysis focusing on which factors predict success in sales for existing clients (also known as Farmers) and new business (also known as Hunters).



Successful Farmers demonstrated much higher Fluid Intelligence than average, a preference towards active and alert behaviours, and a greater tendency to fluctuate in emotions by feeling the high highs and the low lows.

On the other hand, successful Hunters have a preference for competitive environments where they are recognised for their efforts, a tendency to remain stable in their mood and emotions, being able to change other people's emotions, being frank and forthright about their opinions, making quick decisions based on impulses, and behavioural preferences for driving to achieve results and being active in their jobs.



These findings show that it is **important for businesses to consider the characteristics needed in different sales roles**, as they can be different to the behavioural preferences, personality and general intelligence of the shortlisted candidates.

**So, now we know what different types of salespeople look like,
but what makes a salesperson successful?**



Identifying successful salespeople

At Thomas International, we not only investigated trends in sales, but we also used **statistical analysis** with some of the organisations we work with to see whether **certain behavioural and personality trends could predict sales success**. We call this type of analysis a **benchmark**.

We know what salespeople look like, but does that profile predict success as well? We have found that it does!

Predicting success in sales

Thomas International has also partnered with a furniture retailer to investigate what differentiated their high performing salespeople from their low performing salespeople. When we analysed their data, we found that the top performers tended to have **higher Emotional Intelligence**.

Specifically, top performers were motivated by an internal need for achievement rather than external rewards. This has been supported in academic research, so that when employees are intrinsically motivated by meaningful work, they are more dedicated in their work tasks and feel fully immersed and in the zone^{8,9}.

Moreover, top performers were more likely to look at the bright side of life, were frank and willing to stand up for their rights and could identify their own and other people's feelings. This makes sense as a salesperson would have to be optimistic when facing rejections from clients, stand up for their belief in the products they are selling and be able to interpret the emotions of others in order to know how to sell to that client.

Predicting success in new business

We recently researched the sales employees of a bank in North America. Our analysis revealed that their **salespeople achieved 49% more new business** when they had a **behavioural preference for inquisitive, assertive and competitive behaviours**. Moreover, salespeople achieved **15% more revenue** than their peers if they had **high Emotional Intelligence**.

Specifically, sales employees that felt content and good about the present, felt positive about the future, dealt well with change and new environments, were more task-focused and were more likely to be seen by others as passionate, **performed better**.

These findings are in line with past academic research which shows that **Emotional Intelligence predicts sales success**^{6,7}. This is because sales employees deal with other people on a daily basis, so have to be able to understand their concerns, manage their emotions, be influential and be resilient when facing rejection.

We also found that when looking at the speed of learning and mental capacity (Fluid Intelligence) of the salespeople, those who were more successful had higher than average levels of Fluid Intelligence.

Predicting success in sales management

We recently investigated what predicted success in a retail organisation's sales management population. We found that higher **Emotional Intelligence explained 25% of a manager's yearly sales**. Moreover, we also found that **Fluid Intelligence accounted for 11% of yearly sales**.

Emotional Intelligence and Fluid Intelligence also predicted the number of leads that managers generated, the proportion of those which they provided quotes for and the percentage of those which were converted to sales.

6 Ingram, Laforge, Locander, Mackenzie, & Podsakoff, 2005

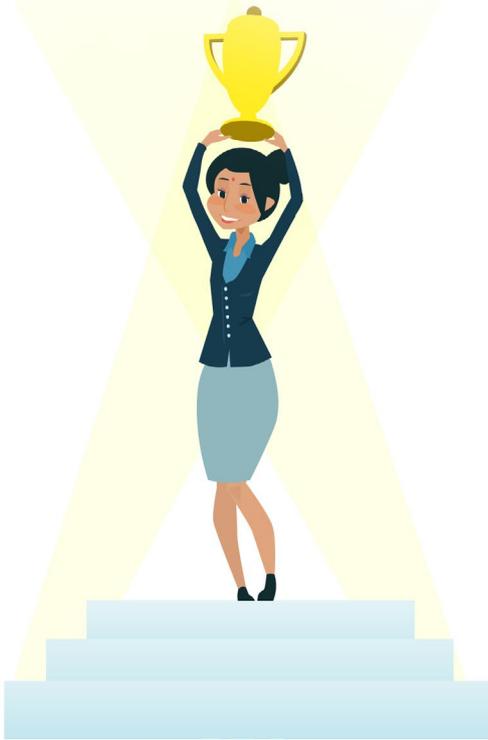
7 Shepherd, Lassk, & Ridnour, 2003

8 Vandenabeele, 2014

9 Mills & Fullagar, 2008



What can we take away from these findings?



Successful salespeople have:

- ★ Behavioural preferences for inquisitive, assertive and competitive behaviours
- ★ Higher Fluid Intelligence
- ★ Higher Emotional Intelligence scores with some examples of specific traits, including:
 - Feeling content and good about the present
 - Feeling positive about the future
 - Dealing well with change and new environments
 - Fluctuating more in emotions
 - Being motivated by an internal need for achievement
 - Being frank and willing to stand up for their rights
 - Identifying their own and other people's feelings

We can use this data in **recruitment and development processes** to **confidently** find and develop the most **successful sales employees** in organisations.

Can we train a salesperson to be more effective?

We now know what good salespeople look like, what different types of salespeople look like and which characteristics differentiate high performing salespeople. Now the question is, can salespeople be trained to be more effective? **Yes** they can! There are a few ways we can do this.

Firstly, **salespeople can develop coping strategies for key areas of their Emotional Intelligence**. Past research has shown that when middle and senior managers underwent Emotional Intelligence training, they were able to use their knowledge of their emotional characteristics to support their sales efforts significantly after only six months¹⁰.

It is possible to develop people's awareness of their behavioural tendencies and how and when they might need to modify these to be more effective at work. For example, a salesperson that does not opt for direct, competitive and assertive behaviours might have to learn to modify their behaviours to be more forthright. This salesperson could focus more on a specific goal and how to reach it and recognising that they might have to be more persistent to drive through projects or results.

¹⁰ Slaski, A.M. (2001). An investigation into Emotional Intelligence, managerial stress and performance in a UK supermarket chain (Doctoral dissertation, University of Manchester: UMIST).
Shepherd, Lask, & Ridnour, 2003



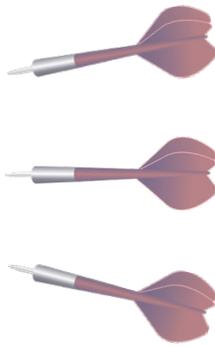
Conclusion

57% of sales representatives missed their sales targets in 2017. We now know that part of the reason is because we have been hiring salespeople based on the wrong information. If we implement psychometric assessments to assess behavioural preferences, personality and intelligence in our recruitment processes, we can confidently identify the higher performing sales employees.

Moreover, it is not just about recruiting those high performing individuals, but also about using psychometric data to take those that are performing on average levels to outstanding levels.

Action points

To find good salespeople, you can use psychometric assessments as a selection and development tool. In which case, you can:



Measure behavioural preferences
with the Personal Profile Analysis (PPA)

Measure Emotional Intelligence
with the Trait Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire (TEIQue)

Measure Fluid Intelligence
with the General Intelligence Assessment (GIA)

Using Thomas assessments will help inform your future sales recruitment decisions and create the ideal job profile. Taking it even further, you can benchmark your current successful sales employees to investigate what does good look like in your organisation?

Contact us to find out more about how we can support your organisation elevate the performance of your sales team across recruitment, development and management.



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your business. your people. but better

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