



International Caterers Association

International Caterers Association - 3601 East Joppa Road
Baltimore, Maryland 21234 - (410) 931-8100



Peer to Peer Learning – ICA Roundtable

Sources for finding great new sales people

Jennifer Perna - June 29, 2015

Q: Sales and Sales Management. With reference to recruiting, expanding and developing your Sales team... what has been your best resource to finding great new sales people? Do you search on the outside or develop from within? And IF you have found great sales people on the outside- can you share your success and where you have found them?

A: Melissan Falcone- We are most successful when promoting from within or hiring based on a recommendation from someone we really trust. Our sales team consists only of internal promotions and recommendations!

Jennifer Watts Robinson- Right time, right opportunity. Keep an ear to the ground for good people looking for or unexpectedly needing a new job. Two of our best sales people came from a previous career in banking. High standards of customer service and sales expectations.

Suzi McMerty Shands- We have found promoting groom within works best for us. However we have had a couple great additions from outside, referrals.

Ken Barrett- We've had success with developing team members from our Production Assistants that have the skill set to make them a great sales person. By starting off in the operational side of the company, they actually know what and how they are to sell. We are just now experiencing it after having further developed the training and level of staff in our Production Team.

Margot Jones- We have gotten most of our employees from referrals or Craigslist. I hire production assistants and promote when I think the time is right.

Ken Barrett- Jennifer Perna and Margot Jones what do you think about a company that is growing so fast and needs more event planners (sales people) to answer and keep up with the inquiries? Do you think it would work well to hire additional Production Assistants for a high volume sales person so they can keep selling for the interim, with the understanding that the PA will move into sales within 6 months or so? Our reality has been to hire a sales person off the street and then some of them were complete

duds. This way the high volume sales person has the internal support to keep selling and you are training someone and can see if it will work.

Margot Jones- I think you are on the right track Ken Barrett. I hire PA's mostly because it is hard for me to train a full on sales rep! It is much better for me to hire PA's and have them help/shadow the sales rep for 6-12 months. Out of my 5 sales reps, 3 of them are former PA's. I have 2 PA's now that will move up (if I want them to) when I have a position open. I had one assistant that I thought would be great and she just couldn't take the stress, so she left. I really thought she was going to be great! I'm glad I found out in the assistant stage...

Jennifer Perna- Ken Barrett and Margot Jones- I agree. My experience has been very minimal success with hire salespeople off the street. In my 20 years of catering I have honestly hired two that have worked. All else has been promoted from within. As we know- there is so much to learn in off premise catering that a 1-2 year training time as an Event Producer (or PA as you call them) of learning all the venues, requirements of events and shadowing a salesperson has only resulted in better trained future salespeople. This has also been my way of growing the team more broadly and not being so reliant on a small group of salespeople to pull in the sales. I call this into to sales as our Farm Team!

Margot Jones- You always have to be cultivating....If not you will end up with someone leaving and not enough help with inquiries. That happened to us 2 years ago in the spring and then effected our wedding season the following spring because we were not able to get back to the brides in a timely manner. BTW-the one that left us high and dry was a seasoned catering sales rep who never embraced our way of doing things. We kept on hearing "Well at **** we did it this way." If I had a dime for every time she said that....