



2014 Global 4000 Sales Assessment Results

Technical Sales Pros Exude Confidence -
But Often Lack the Leadership Skills to Succeed
By Keith Martino

Technology Sales Professionals radiate self-assurance.

This distinctive characteristic is confirmed among findings in a 2014 industry-by-industry sales pro analysis recently released by CMI Assessments of Dallas, TX.

A healthy self-image empowers many technologists to approach prospects with conviction. In addition, their understanding and appreciation of the corporate profit motive creates a natural dialogue for engaging senior-level contacts.

With this tailwind of intelligence, confidence and conviction propelling them forward, you might expect that technology sales professionals would score high among the leaders in a multi-industry sales pro assessment. Unfortunately, most technologically sophisticated sales professionals fail to capitalize on their own momentum.

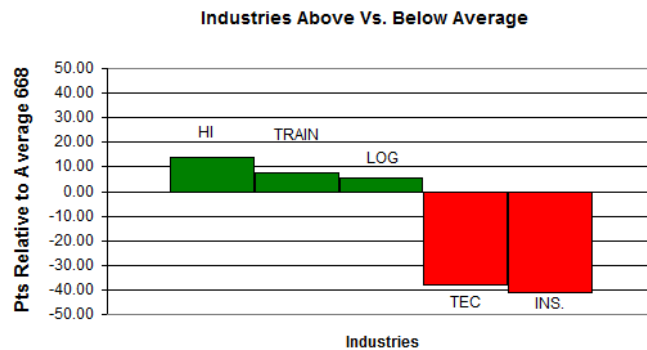
Often, technically-oriented sales professionals are most comfortable discussing product features. Some clearly articulate the ways their state-of-the-art applications reduce cost, improve productivity and increase profitability. But, is technical competence enough?

For years the sale of technical solutions has been evolving into a team endeavor. Regardless of whether the team is staffed with a combination of application engineers, project managers or pre-sale specialists, these strategic resources are people - not robots.

Their much-needed teammates want to be respected, valued and leveraged in the pursuit of high-probability (vs. long-shot) opportunities. They contribute their discretionary talent to the most well-intentioned, people-minded leaders.

In other words, leadership and positive influence are increasingly becoming essential for success in the technical sales game.

Yet the average technology sales professional ranked at or near the bottom in nine out of ten leadership categories studied in the Global 4000 S.A.L.E.S. report. Less technical sales pros in industries like logistics, training, and home improvement scored above average.



But leadership is not their only challenge...

Equally alarming, the results of this global study indicate technology sales professionals also have a tough time accurately qualifying their prospects.

Confident in their technical acumen, they are less likely (by their own admission) to approach a prospect with a prepared list of questions. They tend to be inwardly focused on their tech capabilities and less sensitive to their prospects' ultimate objectives.

Most technology sales pros need to learn how to read their prospects, size up their true potential, and pursue the right opportunities with a complete business solution.

An empathetic determination to help prospects reach their true potential is a mind-shift technology providers can embrace for competitive advantage. The old axiom, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care, applies.

Five steps you do to build a sales team that trumps your technical competition?

- 1) Talk with your sales team about the criticality of positive leadership. Explain how their personal leadership impacts the team, individual members, and the company.
- 2) Assess each member to develop a team baseline versus your industry average in each of the 16 key categories.
- 3) Introduce leadership training emphasizing character traits required to instill confidence and trust.
- 4) Teach your sales pros to ask the right questions. of prospects and teammates to ensure they are gaining buy-in along the way.
- 5) Replace customer-facing resources whose pride outpaces their performance.

In a recent analysis completed on January 31, 2014, CMI Assessments found sales survey results differed dramatically among the five primary industries assessed and reviewed.

These previously unreleased findings were synthesized from among 4,000+ randomly selected Sales and Leadership Efficacy Surveys (S.A.L.E.S.) conducted globally by CMI Assessments over the past five years.

The industry-specific results were deemed significant in that they reveal a substantial variation in the go-to-market approach taken by sales professionals in key industry segments. The industries represented in this Global 4000 analysis included:

- 1) **Technology sales**
- 2) **Insurance sales**
- 3) **Training and Development sales**
- 4) **Logistics sales**
- 5) **Home Improvement sales**

Most notable among the findings is the apparent scarcity of high-touch attributes found among overtly technical sales professionals in both the I.T. and insurance sales segments.

While technology sales and insurance sales appear to be quite different at surface level, one clear parallel exists. Both groups demonstrate a fascination with technical product features and a demonstrated desire to promote these features as a competitive point of differentiation. This was spotlighted throughout assessments completed around the world.

CMI Assessments, a Dallas-based sales performance firm began conducting new hire and sales organization effectiveness assessments in 2007.

Recent CMI partnerships include the creation and expansion of the Oracle Partner Leadership Program for North America and Eastern Europe. In addition, CMI helped launch the Safeco Insurance Leadership Acceleration Program and the Verizon Business Showcase.

The CMI signature assessment is the Sales and Leadership Efficacy Survey (S.A.L.E.S.) which was used to study these selling professionals. For more information on Business-to-Business and Business-to-Consumer sales professional new hire assessments, email: GetResults@CmiNetwork.com .