

WHITE PAPER

# Quality Hiring:

## Why Performance and Effective Retention Are Two Sides of the Same Decision

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*Beyond the Resume. Beyond the Interview. Into the Role.*

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## 01

## Redefining Quality Hiring

Most organizations define a good hire as someone who passes the interview and clears probation. By that standard, the bar is low and the costs are hidden. A hire who performs adequately but leaves in eighteen months. A hire who stays indefinitely but never reaches their potential. A hire who looks right on paper and is wrong in the role from day one.

The Performance Collaborative defines quality hiring differently. A quality hire produces two outcomes simultaneously: measurable performance in the role, and effective retention — meaning you keep the right people, not simply the people who haven't left yet.

***Quality Hiring = Performance + Effective Retention. One without the other is an incomplete equation.***

This distinction matters because the two failure modes are equally costly and equally preventable. Losing a high performer is visible and painful. Retaining a poor fit is invisible and corrosive. Both trace back to the same root cause: a hiring decision that was based on the wrong information.

**74%**

of employers admit to making a bad hire

*CareerBuilder, 2024*

**\$17K**

average cost of a bad hire — rising to \$240K at senior levels

*SHRM, 2024*

**80%**

of turnover is attributed to poor hiring decisions

*HumCap, 2024*

These numbers represent the floor, not the ceiling. They capture the visible costs — recruitment, onboarding, severance, replacement. They do not capture the invisible ones: the pipeline that went unworked, the customer who went unserved, the top performer who left because the person beside them wasn't carrying their weight.

# 02 The Effective Retention Problem

Retention is almost universally measured as a headcount metric. How many people stayed? But that question obscures the one that matters: which people stayed?

A sales organization with low turnover and mediocre performance is not retaining well — it is retaining comfortably. The people who are easiest to keep are not always the people most worth keeping. Effective retention means your best people are choosing to stay, and the people who are not performing are not quietly occupying territory that a better hire could be working.



The data reveals a troubling paradox: the people most likely to leave are the ones performing at the highest level. High performers have options. They know their value. They are the first to recognize when a role, a team, or a culture is not giving them what they need to grow. Retaining them is not a compensation problem alone — it begins at the point of hire, with whether the role was matched to what genuinely drives them.

**The two faces of the retention failure:**

Losing the right people
High performers leave for roles that better match their drivers
Muscle memory, relationships, and momentum leave with them
Replacement takes 3–6 months; full productivity 12–15 months
Pipeline, customers, and culture all suffer in the gap

Keeping the wrong people
Underperformers occupy territory and consume management attention
Team morale erodes as peers carry disproportionate load
The cost is invisible — no severance, no vacancy, no urgency
Culture gradually shapes itself around the lowest standard present

In B2B sales specifically, the cost of losing a high performer is compounded by time. It takes an average of 15 months for a new sales rep to reach peak productivity. That means every departure of a top performer represents not just a recruitment cost — it represents over a year of reduced output on a territory that previously generated revenue.

# 03 Why Conventional Hiring Fails

The conventional hiring process for sales roles follows a predictable pattern. Review resumes for relevant experience. Conduct interviews that assess communication and first impression. Check references. Make an offer based on gut instinct shaped by those inputs.

Each of these steps has value. None of them predicts performance. And the reason is straightforward: they measure who someone appears to be, not whether they are built to succeed in this specific role.

*The interview tells you how well someone performs in an interview. It does not tell you how they will perform in the role.*

### Personality vs. predictive assessment — a critical distinction:

Personality Assessment (Descriptive)	Role-Based Assessment (Predictive)
Describes who someone is	Predicts how someone will perform in a specific role
Reveals traits, preferences, and behavioral tendencies	Reveals whether key success factors for this role are present
Useful for self-awareness and team dynamics	Useful for hiring decisions and role fit evaluation
Same profile can succeed or fail depending on the role	Matched to the demands of the role — not personality in the abstract
Tells you someone is high in drive and low in patience	Tells you whether that profile fits a hunter vs. a relationship role
Descriptive: this is who they are	Predictive: this is how likely they are to succeed here

**Personality assessment is a valuable tool. It belongs in onboarding, coaching, and team development — where understanding who someone is helps them grow. What it cannot do is tell you whether someone will succeed in a specific sales role with specific demands, specific customers, and a specific performance bar. For that, you need something different.**

# 04 The Ideal Candidate Profile — Built on Role Fit

Before you can assess a candidate, you must know what you are assessing against. The Ideal Candidate Profile (ICP) is not a job description. A job description lists tasks. An ICP defines the success factors — the specific behaviors, motivations, and capabilities that determine whether someone will thrive in this role, in this environment, with these customers.

Critically, the ICP must be built at the role level, not the organizational level. What predicts success in one sales function does not necessarily predict success in another. A profile optimized for high-volume transactional selling will differ substantially from one built for long-cycle enterprise development or for deep account management. Using a single profile across all sales roles is one of the most common — and costly — hiring mistakes organizations make.

### How success factors differ by sales role orientation:

Role Orientation	Key Success Factors	Risk if Mismatched
New Business Development	Prospecting persistence, tolerance for rejection, competitive drive, comfort with ambiguity, ability to open doors without prior relationship	Hired into a role requiring patience and deep relationship management — will disengage quickly and damage existing accounts
Account Management & Growth	Relationship depth, consultative listening, problem-solving orientation, long-term thinking, internal collaboration	Hired into a pure new business role — will avoid cold outreach, over-service existing contacts, and miss revenue targets
Solution & Complex Sales	Curiosity, analytical thinking, ability to map complex problems to solutions, stakeholder management across multiple buyers	Placed in a transactional environment — will over-engineer simple deals and frustrate customers who want speed
Sales Leadership	Coaching orientation, ability to develop others, comfort with accountability conversations, strategic thinking alongside operational discipline	Promoted from top individual contributor without assessment — will revert to selling instead of leading when under pressure

Each of these profiles requires a distinct assessment — not because the candidates are categorically different people, but because the role demands are categorically different. A person who is ideally suited to one orientation may be genuinely unsuited to another. The assessment must be built against the role, not against a generic model of what a salesperson looks like.

## 05

**Predictive Assessment — The SalesPop Approach**

The Performance Collaborative uses SalesPop, developed by Self Management Group, as its primary assessment tool for sales hiring. SalesPop was built specifically for sales roles and is grounded in one question: given the requirements of this specific role, what is the probability that this candidate will succeed?

That framing — probability of success against role requirements — is fundamentally different from personality assessment. SalesPop does not produce a personality profile and then ask you to decide whether it fits. It produces a role-matched prediction, built on decades of validated research across thousands of sales professionals and outcomes.

***SalesPop doesn't describe who the candidate is. It predicts how likely they are to succeed in this specific role.***

**What SalesPop measures — and why it matters for quality hiring:**

- Role-specific success factors — assessed against the demands of the actual position, not a generic sales model
- Self-management capacity — the ability to maintain performance under pressure, rejection, and the daily grind of a revenue role
- Motivational fit — whether what drives this person aligns with what the role actually rewards
- Coachability indicators — how likely the candidate is to develop with good management and training investment
- Risk factors specific to the role — where misalignment is most likely to surface and when

The result is not a pass/fail verdict. It is a data-informed picture that supports better hiring conversation — one where the interview is designed around what the assessment surfaces, rather than conducted in the absence of any prior insight.

**15 mo.**

average time for a new sales rep to reach peak performance

*Xactly Insights, 2024*

**\$115K**

average total cost to hire, train and replace a sales rep

*DePaul University, inflation-adjusted*

When the cost of a replacement hire — including ramp time, lost productivity, and recruitment — exceeds \$100,000, the investment in a rigorous pre-hire assessment is not a cost. It is one of the highest-return decisions a sales leader can make.

## 06

## Closing the Loop — Retention as Validation

A quality hiring process does not end when the offer is accepted. It ends — or continues — when you examine who stayed, who performed, and whether the people you kept were the people worth keeping. Retention data, read through the right lens, is the most honest feedback mechanism a hiring process has.

If your top performers are leaving at higher rates than your average performers, your retention strategy is working backwards. If people who were predicted to succeed are succeeding, and people who were flagged as high-risk are the ones creating problems, your assessment is working. If neither is true, your ICP needs recalibration.

***Effective retention is not a reward for good culture. It is a signal that you hired the right people for the right roles.***

**The quality hiring cycle — how it compounds over time:**

- Build a role-specific Ideal Candidate Profile grounded in actual success factors
- Use predictive assessment to evaluate candidates against the ICP before the interview
- Design the interview to probe what the assessment surfaces — not to replace it
- Onboard with role fit in mind — accelerate what the assessment predicts will come naturally
- Track performance at 90 days, 6 months, and 12 months against ICP predictions
- Use retention and performance data to refine the ICP for the next hire

Each cycle through this process produces a more accurate picture of what success looks like in each role. The ICP gets sharper. The assessment gets more predictive. The hiring conversation gets more honest. And the people you bring in are increasingly likely to be the people who stay, perform, and raise the standard for everyone around them.

**82%**

improvement in new hire retention from strong onboarding aligned to role fit  
*Hubstaff, 2024*

**\$15B**

spent annually by U.S. firms training salespeople  
*Harvard Business Review*

**3×**

return on quality hiring investment vs. cost of a bad hire  
*SHRM benchmarking*

## About The Performance Collaborative

Founded by Tony D'Avino, The Performance Collaborative works with revenue leaders on the two decisions that determine everything else: who you hire, and how you lead them once they're in the room.

We bring predictive assessment to the hiring process — helping you build role-specific Ideal Candidate Profiles and evaluate candidates against the success factors that predict performance and retention. And we work with leaders on the quality of the conversations they convene — the pipeline reviews, one-on-ones, and team meetings where performance either develops or stalls.

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