

# Groundbreaking Research on What's Inside of Top Sales Performers in the United States and Europe

By Bill J. Bonnstetter

Research studies of top sales people in both the United States and Europe confirm that top sales performance can be predicted. The most successful organizations in the world already know that hiring the right people has the potential of becoming the most powerful “secret weapon” in their arsenal of competitive strategies. What they don't know is that hiring the right sales people can be as simple as following a recipe based on recent findings from an international study conducted by Frank Scheelen of Institut for Managementberatung and Bildungsmarketing and myself, Bill Bonnstetter of Target Training International, Ltd. in Scottsdale, Arizona.

As a result of our twenty years of research, development and distribution of assessment tools to measure performance, we have been telling organizations that it is what's on the inside, not the outside, that counts, especially in sales performance. What we are fighting is the myth that hiring people who look and sound good leads to good performance. As global competition forces organizations to greater heights in key performance arenas such as customer service, quality and customization, aggressive organizations must be ever vigilant in the identification, acquisition, development and integration of innovative technology. This type of innovative technology is now available to select top performers.

Much of the research conducted in the past on top salespeople has been focused on behavior. Behavioral research has been popular because, like looking good and sounding good, behavior can be observed. Little, if any significant study has been focused on what goes on inside a top salesperson. Our groundbreaking research in the United States and Europe now confirms that attitudes far outweigh looking good, sounding good or behavior in distinguishing top salespeople.

Two of our most significant assumptions were confirmed by the two studies. (1) Top performing salespeople around the world are similar and, (2) Attitudes or values are more important than behavior in sales performance. (See Study 1 and Study 2 attachment)

In both studies, only top performing salespeople responded. In the United States study and a separate German study, top performing salespeople responded to two assessments. One was based on the internationally validated DISC behavioral model and the other was based on the Personal Interests, Attitudes and Values model, currently being validated internationally.

Note that in the United States study of 178 firms, top sales performers tended to be spread across three behavioral dimensions. In the German study, top sales performers tended to be spread across the same three behavioral dimensions. In view of these results, it is reasonable to conclude that salespeople can sell in most, if not all, behavioral dimensions.

However, when it comes to what is on the inside of top performing salespeople, both United States studies as well as the German study confirm it is hands-down, a Utilitarian Attitude.