



Sales Needs Leadership

"World-class sales management starts with coaching excellence"
says Tom Chamberlain of MHI Research Institute

TOP SALES MAGAZINE

FROM TOP SALES WORLD

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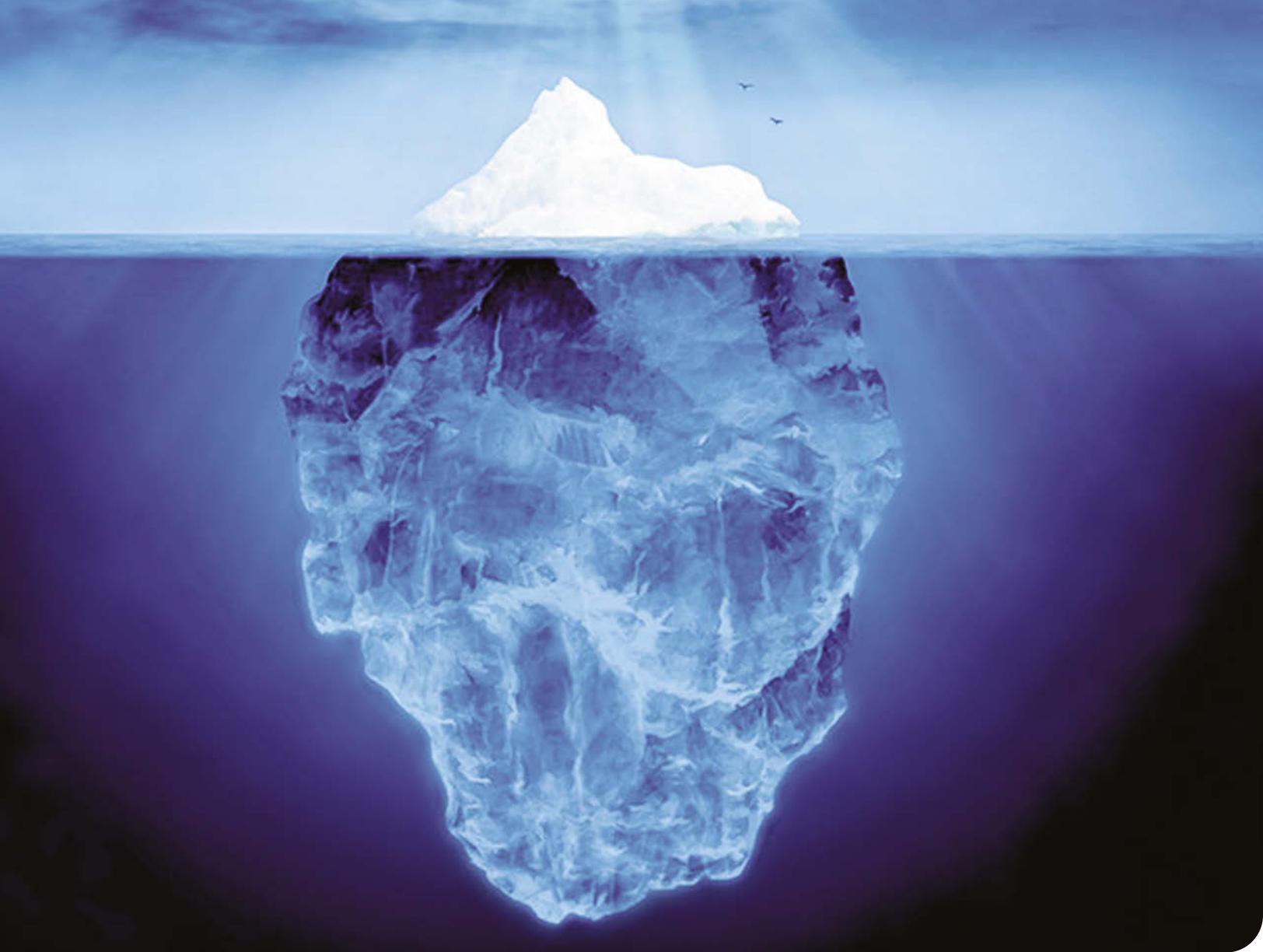
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Right Has Never Been
More Important

Jonathan Farrington interviews Dave Kurlan,
Founder & CEO of Objective Management Group Inc.

Catch Dave Kurlan on this week's Top Sales Academy



Getting Sales Selection Right Has Never Been More Important

I call Dave Kurlan “Ice-Berg Man” which has nothing to do with his disposition or personality, because actually he has a very warm and engaging personality. It is simply because what you see and hear is just the tip of his vast knowledge of the sales industry, and it is why he is one the top sales experts in the world. I have never shared that nickname with him, but he was bound to find out one day...!

In case you are unaware, Dave is, among other things, the Founder & CEO of *Objective Management Group Inc.* **the pioneer and industry leader in sales force evaluations and sales candidate screening.** OMG are celebrating 25 years of sustained success, and so this interview focuses on his work in that field.

JF: Why testing before hiring today?

DK: Getting sales selection right has never been more important. Selling is more difficult than ever before, and mediocre salespeople are having significant difficulty filling their pipelines, gaining traction, and getting deals closed. The proper sales assessment enables hiring managers to save time, interview only those salespeople who will succeed in the role, and make better decisions.

JF: With the slowing economy what is the market like today to find great salespeople?

DK: The economy may be slowing, but today it is a challenge to find any salespeople - never mind good ones... There is tremendous competition for salespeople, and companies must use sales recruiting processes, methodologies and tools to attract the right sales candidates into the pool, identify the right ones, and interview effectively for selection success.

JF: Why are average salespeople so good at interviewing like "A" players?

DK: It's not really that average salespeople are so good at interviewing, as much as it's that B and C sales managers are so bad at interviewing. When the sales managers do most of the talking, and the questions are predictable, even mediocre salespeople can nail the interview!

JF: Why do as much as 50% of top performers in one company perform like average salespeople in

the new company?

DK: That happens a lot, but it's not what it seems. In the company where they came from, the sales cycle was easier, the salesperson may have had established accounts and residual business. The salesperson moves to another company in another industry, and may have to start over, at a time when it is extremely difficult to reach new prospects by phone, supplant incumbents, and compete against low-priced competitors.

JF: What are the biggest mistakes you see companies make in hiring salespeople?

DK: This is an unfair question! There isn't a single biggest, there's a list longer than the 10 commandments! If I had to pick a single biggest though, it would be lack of patience – inability to wait for the right salesperson while rushing to fill the position.

JF: What are all the elements of a strong hiring program?

DK:

1. Identification of the role specifications (not a job description)
2. The Killer Ad (describes the ideal salesperson and their desired past experiences rather than the opportunity, company and role)
3. Online Application with role specific questions
4. Sales Candidate Assessment (OMG's is preferred)
5. Short 5-Minute Phone Interview with recommended candidates
6. 30-45 Minute Interview with the candidates who performed

best on the phone

7. Final Interview with 1-3 strongest candidates
8. Due Diligence
9. Job Offer
10. Formal 90-Day On Boarding

JF: Where are most companies strong and weak?

DK: Most companies are very strong at presenting, demos, proposing and quoting, with product knowledge and application, and with compensation and culture. Most companies are weak and inconsistent with sales selection, sales process, consultative selling, qualifying and messaging.

JF: Where does testing fit in?

DK: Evaluating the sales force provides companies with all of the reasons as to why their particular salespeople are struggling to meet and exceed expectations. The science behind a sales force evaluation provides insights that explain all of the results they are seeing with actionable steps to correct the issues that were identified.

JF: Who typically is doing the hiring of salespeople?

DK: In bigger companies, HR is doing the hiring while in smaller companies, it is often the sales manager.

JF: Who should be doing it?

DK: Hiring should always be performed by the manager to whom the salespeople will report, even though those sales managers often lack the skills to effectively identify the right salespeople for their roles.

JF: For the tests that you administer, when and how has the profile of a salesperson changed?

DK: In general, twice as many salespeople are now intrinsically motivated (by praise, recognition, love for what they do, mastery, being part of something bigger than they are) rather than extrinsically motivated (by things, money, rewards). This change began to take place in 2009. At the same time, we began to see more salespeople that are comparison shoppers, making them vulnerable and ineffective with prospects that wish to comparison shop.

JF: What are the new characteristics of salespeople that you have added?

DK: This is a difficult question to answer, because we are constantly going wider and deeper with additional findings that can help executives select better salespeople and develop their existing salespeople. We enhance our evaluations and assessments on a monthly basis and have been doing that since 1990! Just this month, we added the following additional findings:

- 6 internal preferences (i.e. love to win or hate to lose) that we can share with sales managers to help them understand how to more effectively motivate each salesperson
- 2 additional findings that can explain why salespeople aren't reaching decision makers
- An additional competency around Presentation that shows whether salespeople are

presenting the right things, to the right people, at the right time, and for the right reasons

- An additional attribute in the Hunting Competency that is predictive of a salesperson that will not prospect.
- Ideal Role Recommendations - In a larger sales force with multiple roles, we can now recommend the roles for which their salespeople are best suited.

JF: How important is it to customize testing for a particular industry? Company?

DK: It's crucial! Without customization, one size fits all, when we know that a salesperson who can sell in one industry, business, role, marketplace, competitive environment, may be unable to duplicate those results under a different set of conditions.

JF: How did your work in sales training influence your interest in testing?

DK: I loved working with underdogs, helping them outsell the stars. In doing so, I had a strong interest in learning what made struggling salespeople have such poor results compared to their more successful

colleagues. Since I was not, and still am not, a behavioural scientist, I did not have to interview 1,000 successful salespeople to learn what they had in common, because I knew that the lousy salespeople had the same traits, that those traits were not differentiators. So back in the 1980's, I identified 4 crucial success elements (Will to Sell), 5 major hidden weaknesses (Sales DNA) and 21 Sales Core Competencies, which, together, did differentiate the top from bottom performers. That led to the development of the very first sales specific assessment in 1990.

JF: Success story? ROI?

DK: Every sales force evaluation includes an opportunity analysis and ROI where we can accurately predict how much more revenue the company will generate by addressing the issues identified. Typically, these predictions run from 25-300%!!

JF: What does initiating a testing program entail?

DK: It's much simpler than it might seem. Whether it's a sales force evaluation or sales candidate assessment, a 1-hour phone call is usually enough to determine logistics, fees, expectations, timing, resources, configuration and customization.

JF: What are the innate sales characteristics you look for in most sales situations?

DK: Strong Sales DNA! Strong Sales DNA allows a salesperson to execute the strategies, tactics and skills they have learned, while weak

It's not really that average salespeople are so good at interviewing, as much as it's that B and C sales managers are so bad at interviewing.

Sales DNA will sabotage even their best intentions for execution.

JF: What are the learned and experience skills you generally look for in most situations?

DK: Depending on the role, we may be looking for Hunting, Posturing, Consultative, Qualifying, Presentation, Closing, Account Management, or Farming Competencies, as well as the existence of Intangibles.

JF: With the move to more and more telephone and on-line selling, how does that impact what you test for?

DK: We have configurations for Inside, Inbound, Outbound, Top of the Funnel, Account Management and phone-based traditional sales. So while sales forces take on a

different look, the evaluation and assessment of those teams are adapted to fit modern selling requirements.

JF: How do you customize for a particular industry and at the specific client level?

DK: We use 37 customizable variables to configure and customize the requirements for a salesperson to succeed in this role, at this company, in this industry, selling into this marketplace, calling on their targeted company and decision maker, with their price points, competition, requirements,

and expectations, given the corporate culture, and degree of sales management practices and intensity.

So now you can fully appreciate the science and the creativity that goes into ensuring OMG's remain the most accurate and the most sophisticated assessment tools available. I know this to be true, because Dave was kind enough to allow me to go through the process myself, and frankly I was stunned at the accuracy – and you will be too! ■

Dave Kurlan is the Founder & CEO of Objective Management Group Inc. Visit [here](#).



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