

# FROM VP OF SALES TO CHIEF SALES OFFICER: ARE YOU GOOD ENOUGH?



SALES BENCHMARK  
INDEX

## INTRODUCTION:

Vice Presidents of Sales have a problem.

There are thousands of Vice Presidents of Sales competing for a small number of Chief Sales Officer positions. This results in many VPs getting passed over for desirable CSO positions.

If you are a VP of Sales, who wants to get promoted to Chief Sales Officer, this eBook is for you. By reading this eBook, you will get 4 things:

- 1- An understanding of what CEOs are looking for when hiring a Chief Sales Officer.
- 2- A tool to self-assess your abilities against this spec.
- 3- A free objective assessment of your abilities, conducted by an expert at Sales Benchmark Index.
- 4- A benchmark comparing your potential as a Chief Sales Officer to that of your peers pursuing the same positions.

You do not have the opportunity to benchmark your abilities against your peers very often. This only happens when you are in an active interview cycle, which might be as infrequent as once per year. It also depends on the CEO, or the executive recruiters, ability to provide you detailed feedback. Unfortunately, this does not happen as often as it should.

In addition, you do not know what CEO's are looking for in a Chief Sales Officer. You do not have access to CEOs, in sufficient quantity, with enough frequency. How can you? You are heads down trying to make the number.



## WE HAVE A SOLUTION FOR YOU

The solution to this problem is to get:

- A clear understanding of what CEOs are looking for in a CSO
- An objective assessment of your abilities in comparison to what CEOs are looking for.
- A comparison of your abilities to that of your peers pursuing the same position.

### **Who are we? Why are we qualified to provide you with this solution?**

Sales Benchmark Index (SBI) is a sales consulting firm dedicated to helping B2B sales leaders “make the number”. CEO’s hire us to assess, select, and on board Chief Sales Officers. We literally wrote the book on this subject, “Topgrading for Sales”. In the last 7 years, we have assessed thousands of sales vice presidents and helped CEOs hire Chief Sales Officers. Patterns have emerged as to what works and what does not. Some of those are offered to you in this eBook.

Here is how to get the most out of reading this ebook.

1- If you already “get it”, skip the book and register for your assessment with an expert from Sales Benchmark Index. He will interview you, and benchmark you against your peers. You can register for this [here](#).

2- If you already “get it” but are not ready for one of our experts to assess you, perform this [self assessment](#). Self-assessments are not as accurate as objective assessments but they are better than nothing.

3- If you are not sure an assessment is worth the effort, read the short eBook in the pages that follow. What do you have to lose?

## 7 SHOCKING REASONS WHY THE CEO WON'T HIRE YOU

Interviewing externally is very different from the internal opportunity. When sales leaders interview for the Chief Sales Officer job at their current company, they have the following advantages:

- **Culture**— You know the culture. You can speak to it.
- **Strategy**— You know the strategy. You know why your predecessor was or was not successful in driving it through the sales force.
- **Influencers**— You know who carries the most weight and how to position yourself to each.
- **Results**— You have internal results that everybody can see. Nothing beats proof of field execution.
- **Politics**— You know how to get things done to make the number.



You don't have these advantages when you interview at a new company. You need to provide proof in your answers. You need to sell the way the customer buys. Your 'customer' is the CEO. Yes, his direct staff will be involved. But they will be your peers. Make no mistake about it, the CEO's influence trumps all else. Your ability to connect with the CEO is the single most important thing you do.

Our firm assesses 2,000-3,000 Sales VPs for Chief Sales Officer jobs each year. Below are some recent numbers:

- **34 candidates match the job spec, and are interested, for each spot. Market is flooded with candidates passively searching for new jobs.**
- **15 candidates make it through the first 50% of the process. This includes background, industry, compensation, experience, accomplishments. A lot of candidates appear to be a match.**
- **7 candidates make it to interviews with members of the executive team, including the CEO.**
- **85% of the time a single candidate is emerging as the only choice. 6 out of 7 candidates are deemed not ready. Some of the reasons why are shocking. The skill gaps would surprise you.**
- **On the next page are seven shocking reasons sales leaders get passed over. These are gaps that hold Sales VPs back from getting hired at a new company for the Chief Sales Officer job.**



## #1 - DEVELOP TALENT

**Why this matters—** You will get asked to describe your approach to hiring and developing winners. CEO's are constantly asking themselves "is my team good enough?". You need to be able to prove that you can address this question if selected.

**How to handle—** You need to share quantitative results on a qualitative subject. This will demonstrate mastery of a problem that every sales force has. For example, be able to clearly define A/B/C performance for each selling role. Be able to articulate the accountabilities and competencies for each. Come prepared with the *sales management promotion criteria* you developed and drove. CEOs know that the Chief Sales Officer needs to be an execution machine.

## #2 - TRUST YOU TO HIT THE NUMBER

**Why this matters—** CEOs have to keep the board happy. They want to know you have a track record of doing what you said you were going to do. If you say you will deliver a 200MM Q1 will you do it or will you surprise him with "I didn't see it coming"? A CEO does not have time to micro manage his sales leader.

**How to handle—** You need to show proof that you have driven relentless field execution. You deliver the number via repeatable process. You have a sales management cadence that you follow starting on Monday morning and ending on Friday. You conduct *field visits* through a defined methodology and teach your team how to do the same thing with their individual offices.

## #3 - ABILITY TO DRIVE NEW CAPABILITIES INTO THE SALES FORCE

**Why this matters—** CEOs have recognized that buyer behavior is shifting at an accelerated pace. They can't afford to have sales leaders that are not on the bleeding edge. You will get asked how you kept your sales force relevant through best practice execution.

**How to handle—** You need to drive at least three new initiatives per year. They must bring a new selling capability to the sales force. CEOs want to know how you have kept pace with a changing buyer landscape. Or what did you do to adopt social selling? How did you implement an effective inside sales team to respond to increasing cost pressure in the market?



### #4 - CONNECTING SALES STRATEGY WITH CORPORATE STRATEGY

**Why this matters—** You will get asked to lay out your approach to sales strategy. The executive team will want to know how you will design and execute a strategy that will deliver the expected revenue growth. These are skilled executives. Inside of 30 seconds they will know if you are full of hot air.

**How to handle—** Become an expert at problem diagnosis. You must be able to spot and solve the root cause causing sales productivity shortfalls. The way you develop this muscle is practice. In your current role, what are the big productivity problems and how have you tackled them?

### #5 - MULTIPLE BUYING PROCESSES

**Why this matters—** You will get asked how you have equipped your sales team to sell to multiple sets of buyers. How will you equip them to sell different products to different buyers?

**How to handle—** Invest in building buying process maps. A buying process map breaks down three critical things. The major steps a buyer takes from not being in the market to implementation. The second is the key buyer actions they take from stage to stage. Lastly, it delves into the micro questions they ask themselves. This will allow your sales force to spot their buyer and probably tailor their message.

### #6 - BIG DEAL STRATEGY

**Why this matters—** CEOs need to keep the board happy. A few big deals can save a quarter. On the flip side, you have a couple push out, the level of pain for your CEO is huge.

**How to handle—** Bring evidence of your big deal strategy. Artifacts. You should have copies of win/loss analysis and what your team did to win the big deal. You should have losses that had market feedback and how you adjusted the sales process via listening to the customers.

### #7 - PREPARING THE SALES FORCE TO SELL THE NEW PRODUCT

**Why this matters—** CEOs spend millions on R&D. They have resources and intense scrutiny on how well the new product sells. They have to report results to both analysts and the board. Failure can be career stagnation.

**How to handle—** You need to walk through a structured process you either drove or executed at your last job. Sales Enablement is the appropriate name. Walking the CEO through a detailed tactical execution plan will reassure him you know how to do this. He wants to know you can connect product, marketing and sales in a manner that ensures the new product revenue quota is made.



## NOW WHAT

**What Should You Do—** Do you have any of these gaps? Your initial reaction may be no. Does the market think you have these gaps? And if tested, could you prove you don't have these gaps when it counts? Your ability to listen to the market as a sales leader is critical. The market is the CEO's you want to hire you.

### 3 Things to Do Right Now

**1-** Take this self-assessment. It is 21 question test. Each question is in a yes/no format. If you score between 17-21 you are "in the neighborhood" and might land the next CSO job. If you score between 12-16 you might be good enough but will not be differentiated from your peers going after the same job. If you score between 6-11 do not take any CSO interviews. You will embarrass yourself and hurt your reputation. Fix a few things before you put yourself out there. If you score between 1-5 stay focused on performing in your current role. You are better served focusing on job security vs. getting promoted.

**2-** Schedule an objective assessment with an SBI expert. Self-assessing is never as good as an objective assessment. Our experts have the benefit of knowing what a CEO is looking for, and what you are up against from a competitor stand point.

**3-** Book some time with this expert to discuss how to land your dream CSO job. He will be able to help you close your gaps, if any exist. Plus, he may know of a current opportunity you would be perfect for.

## CONCLUSION

Chief Sales Officer positions pay 50% more than vice president of sales positions. A chief sales officer is one step away from becoming a CEO. This is why most sales vp's want this position.

The supply of candidates outstrips the demand for the position by an order of magnitude. Give yourself the best possible chance of securing the job by following the advice in this eBook.

