

Building a high-performing sales team

An industry report on boosting the
top line for IT/ITeS.



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Introduction

The Indian Information Technology (IT) and Information Technology Enabled Services (ITeS) industry is breaking new ground every day. Its growing trajectory has fueled significant economic transformations that have altered the country's perception of the global ecosystem. Many pundits state that 400 of the Fortune 500 companies either have their centers in India or are currently outsourcing work to Indian technology companies.

However, the industry is only as strong as the sales teams that drive it forward. They are the face of their company within the sector, responsible for bringing in, retaining and nurturing customers. And recently, amid all the changes in markets globally, sales processes have transformed considerably. Be it due to the evolving buyers' personas, the onset of innovative technology, or the growing complexity of products and processes, selling has become trickier and a more uphill task for sales teams of all sizes.

This scenario undoubtedly mandates recruiting high-performing, technology-empowered, revenue-generating, information-rich sales professionals itching to redefine traditional selling processes. It is not just about academic laurels or technical qualifications but the ability to leverage skills and talent in times of uncertainty or unanticipated change and create a level playing field for the organization in a hypercompetitive business environment.

However, when building a sales team, many hiring managers either neglect such competencies or do not prioritize them. Either way, they need to refocus on competencies that are more important now in hiring the right talent, given the uncertain times.

Fortunately, there is an ideal way to find great sales talent and build high-performing teams.

The Mercer | Mettl playbook for the IT/ITeS industry identifies such sales-specific competencies vital for the success of an IT company. These are highly recommended, based on expert industry research and the assessments created by the company.

With substantial industry evidence, the report urges organizations of all sizes, from startups to Fortune 500 companies, to rigorously assess their sales hiring frameworks and adopt scientific methods to make appropriate and research-backed hiring decisions.

So, the question remains, how to build a high-performing sales team?

Let us run through a typical sales structure in an IT company.



An overview of a typical sales professional in the IT/ITes industry

Given below is an overview of the roles and responsibilities of a salesperson in the IT/ITeS industry. It includes a list of critical responsibilities expected from a sales professional, along with diverse types of sales that form the foundation of the IT industry.

Key roles and responsibilities of an IT sales professional

The role of a sales professional has evolved from creating traditional product pitches to delivering a more customized, highly tailored solution to its customers. The IT/ITeS sector witnesses a phenomenal flush of new products in the market every day. Thus, as a part of the job requirement, an IT sales professional is expected to keep pace with the market trends with technical and product knowledge to advise, guide and support customers when making purchases.

There is more to the tasks, duties, functions and responsibilities involved.

Listed below are a few dominant responsibilities recommended for an ideal IT sales role in an IT company. It is split into three vital categories for easy understanding:

1. Pre-sales

Involves identifying and sharing detailed information regarding technical specifications, often tailored to meet customer needs. Pre-sales is critical in winning prospective customers and renewing the existing ones.

2. Sales

Involves using technical and product knowledge to recommend an ideal hardware/software/service benefitting both the customer and company.

3. Post-sales (or after-sales)

Involves providing constant support related to hardware and software, enabling customers to get the most out of their purchase.



To deepen your knowledge about the role, below is a brief breakdown of an IT sales professional's job:

- An IT sales professional establishes and maintains positive customer relationships to identify and suggest the right technological hardware and software as per their needs and requirements. The role extends to maximizing product satisfaction and improving the experience by solving any issue promptly.
- Although it is not imperative to have advanced technical skills, it is beneficial if an IT salesperson has the basic technical knowledge and the enthusiasm to learn about new technologies and their uses to steer decision-making.
- Researching potential clients via deep data analysis and creating a lucrative package to meet customer requirements is also a part of a tech sales professional's job.
- The profile of an IT sales professional further includes conducting thorough product research that keeps him/her abreast of a particular technology and product updates.
- **Technology salespeople abide by two goals:**
 - 1) Promoting the products of their company
 - 2) Providing value propositions to the customers- An IT sales professional sells three broad categories of products and services.

Three kinds of IT sales include:



Hardware sales

Hardware sales include computers, switches, routers, hubs, monitors, servers, racks, etc.

- The hardware sales industry is mature and competitive. However, this has created a selling environment that yields minimal profits.
- Hence, the IT industry is gradually moving away from hardware sales as computers and phones become more compact.



Software sales

Software sales include selling programs and other operating information used by a computer.

- Software sales is a multi-billion-dollar industry in India. Moreover, a software sales professional is responsible for selling one specific type of software, often to a particular industry.
- It is expected that the sales professionals would know the software inside out to guide the customers efficiently.



Services

IT service sales focus on helping clients navigate their way through the world of IT.

- Services come in many forms. For example, it can be a simple service of running network cabling through a building or providing consulting services while virtualizing their data center.
- Services are the glue that holds the IT sales world together. Those in IT service sales sell hardware solutions, coupled with software often bundled with installation services.

This section advocates an appropriate strategy that will come in handy when creating a sales department in tandem with the future roadmap. However, all of this is incomplete without demystifying industry trends. Thus, the following section sheds light on some key findings on the current industry scenario and how those impact hiring of IT sales professionals.

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Key industry findings

There is no doubt that some IT/ITeS firms took a hit in 2020 and 2021 owing to the COVID-19 disruption. But since then, experts have observed recovery signs with some mega competencies they can focus on when hiring for sales roles. It paints a lucrative picture for industry stakeholders.

The current section decodes [six impressive findings](#) related to the IT/ITeS industry's development. It is followed by some key sales competency recommendations to help build a more dynamic framework for organization success.

Key finding 1

As per the research done by [Gartner](#), innovative technology buyers outside the enterprise will occupy a larger share of the overall IT market. This will open large swathes of buyers and buying segments for technology and service providers. Business buyers in enterprises, consumers of all kinds, retailers and distributors and many others will now look to use technology for various needs.

What does this mean?

- The IT industry is witnessing a digital transformation where the customers are no longer restricted to traditional technology buyers.
- There are new use cases that need regular assessment.
- Product mixes and services to satisfy new needs must be built.
- IT/ITeS organizations need to hire a sales force ready to be a part of this change and help organizations acquire and retain customers.



Recommendation for sales hiring

- IT companies should focus on assessing [business acumen](#) and [market awareness](#) to understand how aware candidates are of the changes happening in the industry.
- Along with this, [openness to learning](#) also becomes vital as sales professionals would need to constantly learn about new products and services offered by IT companies to service the new uses of various clients.

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Key finding 2

Technology use beyond the IT department into other business areas and consumers expands the scope of technology products, services and use cases they serve. These new users can have varying needs, consumption patterns, price sensitivity, engagement models, buying cycles and other nuances.

What does this mean?

- As the tech industry grows, it visualizes a new customer base and the use cases. This means the complexity of a sale has now increased manifold. The salespersons must understand how their products and services can fit rightly into the client's use case.

Recommendation for sales hiring

- To service the new use cases of clients and understand at what price they will purchase the product, organizations should hire candidates with good **problem-solving skills** and **commercial acumen**.



Key finding 3

As per the research done by [Gartner, by 2023](#), an "inside+" direct sales model using virtual interactions with prospects and customers will dominate sales strategies for 60% of vendors.

What does this mean?

- Going forward, customers would prefer virtual interactions. Sales leaders will need to embrace the new dynamics of virtual selling and lean on emerging technology. In addition, they would want the sales team to remain relevant in a rapidly shifting market while maintaining a competitive edge.

Recommendation for sales hiring

- Since it is crucial to have excellent communication over virtual channels, organizations should hire candidates with **effective communication** and **verbal and written communication skills**. They should also assess whether candidates are able to put across their thoughts and ideas clearly and succinctly by listening attentively and using appropriate language to engage the audience. It will create impactful and smooth conversations with global clients over digital platforms. The focus should be on assessing email writing and spoken English as these are prominent in ensuring that candidates have **English language proficiency** skills. However, companies should also assess whether candidates are able to assert their views and present appropriate information in a clear and concise manner. This can be assessed through behavioral skills. Hence, to evaluate the overall communication skills of candidates, companies should focus on testing both English language proficiency and effective communication.

Key finding 4

As per Mercer | Mettl data, an **exceedingly** small percentage of assessments created in the past for IT sales hiring assess competencies such as **Creativity and Innovation and Adaptability**.

What does this mean?

- Organizations are not emphasizing skills like innovation and adaptability when hiring salespeople, which can adversely affect the sales department in IT companies as they struggle to use innovative tactics to solve for their clients amidst increased competition. Such a situation will also result in a sales force that is not open to change and is most likely to crumble under the constant change and pressure it creates. With the changing landscape of the IT industry, companies are bound to experience increased competition with new products and services coming into the market regularly. The industry is already witnessing these changes in the types of customers who buy technology products and services. It is no longer just limited to traditional use cases anymore. Consumers now have different use cases and consumption patterns. The industry needs a focused sales force that can understand these changes and approach them through innovative channels.

As the scope of the IT industry increases further, new companies are likely to join the market. To stay ahead of the competition, companies need to develop sales tactics that can establish their dominance over competitors.

Recommendation for sales hiring

- Organizations should focus on assessing **creativity and innovation and adaptability** when hiring salespeople, ensuring that their sales force produces new and novel ideas to sell their products and services. It will also ensure that their IT sales force is open to changing circumstances and can perform well in ambiguous situations. These competencies allow salespeople to think out of the box for solving customer problems. Creativity and innovation allows salespeople to identify innovative solutions and try novel approaches to sell products and services. Not only this, salespeople who are creative can bring about a change in the way things are done to improve work processes. This helps organizations stay relevant with changing times. Similarly, ensuring salespeople are adaptable makes sure that they are open to change. This demonstrates that they are not resistant to change and can continue to work with equal enthusiasm when situations are dynamic in nature. This is especially important for the IT industry as changes are seen here on a regular basis.

Key finding 5

Customers are delaying purchases because the COVID-19 disruption, which hit the markets in 2020, has exacerbated an already uncertain global economy.

What does this mean?

- The uncertainty in customers will influence the sales cycle and duration in which a typical sale would be completed. This will then affect the revenue generated and many companies might lose clients.

Recommendation for sales hiring

- IT companies should hire salespeople who have excellent **analytical and problem-solving skills**. A salesforce that possesses these qualities will close deals faster and solve client issues quicker than others.



Key finding 6

As per Mercer | Mettl data, most of the assessments delivered for IT sales have tested candidates on cognitive competencies and skills.

What does this mean?

- Organizations believe that cognitive competencies are essential for their salesforce.

Recommendation for sales hiring

- IT companies should continue emphasizing cognitive ability as competencies like **commercial acumen, verbal and written communication and analytical ability and problem-solving** are extremely relevant cognitive competencies for sales roles.

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Does this section get you thinking about how well a candidate you hire knows about the current and emerging best practices associated with IT sales? Are they aligned with the company's overall sales strategy? Then it would be best if you headed over to the next section.

The above insights, along with Mercer | Mettl's stellar industry experience, intrigued the psychometric experts to deep-dive into the top competencies needed by top-performing IT sales professionals to deliver business goals while adapting to changing industry and customer needs. The following section is a sneak peek into the kind of position-specific competencies leaders need to look for when hiring high-performing salespeople.

Top sales competencies as per Mercer | Mettl experts

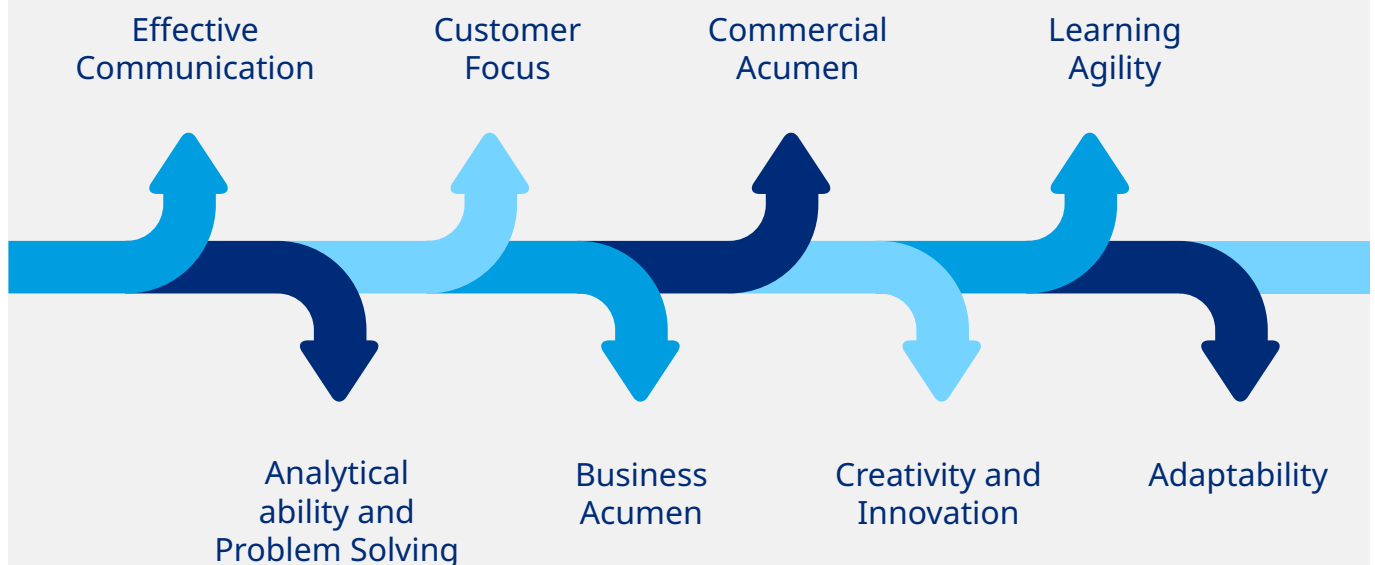
Leaders in the IT/ITeS must implement strategies and practices that perhaps no one else is forcing to be ahead in the race or to lead the pack. This begins with paying specialized attention to the key competencies that are a “must-have” when evaluating prospective talent. As a result, companies can gain mission-critical professionals who have the potential to regain and sustain their competitive footing. For instance, one of the few critical competencies expected in an IT salesperson is ‘customer focus.’ It means demonstrating expertise in reorienting offerings as per the modern consumers’ demands.

But how does an IT organization or a hiring manager know what sales competencies to identify?

Mercer | Mettl’s team of psychometric experts has found the last piece of the puzzle.

The team deep-dived into the performance bell curve of candidates through primary investigative research. They also conducted a strong secondary analysis. Through this, they arrived at the following competencies and sub-competencies that influence job performance and impact business success in the IT industry.

Must-have competencies in an IT sales professional are:



The above list of competencies is not exhaustive. It is an indication of what IT companies should now focus on given the changes being witnessed in the IT industry.

This means that scouting for a sales professional's behavioral and cognitive competencies in the IT industry is significant. Companies should focus on competencies that focus on evaluating how comfortable candidates would be with change and how they would perform under ambiguous circumstances. consequently.

By focusing on behavioral and cognitive competencies, hiring managers can gain a much clearer picture of the applicant's suitability for the role, regardless of the length of their resume or experience.

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Key competencies for job roles across IT sales categories

The must-have IT sales competencies from the previous section serve as an ideal foundation for a powerful hiring framework. However, to level it up further, one needs to consider the following vital factors:

- Demands of specific sales positions and job roles are unique.
- The uniqueness of the sales environment further varies across the three kinds of IT sales we elaborated on earlier- hardware, software and services.

Differences in sales categories that affect the roles and responsibilities of professionals in each domain

Differentiating factors	Hardware sales	Software sales	IT services
Presence of physical product	Yes	No	No
Knowledge requirement	In-depth knowledge of products and their features	In-depth knowledge of software and factors that make each software stand out	Vast knowledge of different technologies along with the ability to convince clients about the benefits of signing up for a service.
Pace of product updates	High	Extremely high	Industry segment specific
Sales cycle	Coordinated with prices (less expensive products have shorter cycles compared to expensive ones)	Longer when compared to hardware. Since customers take time to educate themselves about the software, sales professionals need to be ready with reference material like whitepapers, case studies, demo videos, etc.	Long. Sales personnel need to be constantly connected with the customer to ensure the effective functioning of a long-term relationship.
Pricing models	Simple, cost-based	Complex (With a rise in Freemium models)	Most complex (Professionals need to have strong negotiation skills to ensure a good deal)

The above table highlights the nuances of IT sales and the various skills required to sell assorted products and services in the IT industry. This also has an impact on the competencies required to perform and sell well in specific job roles in the industry.

What does this mean?

It is essential to recognize that the challenges faced by a sales professional can be very job specific. For example, the responsibilities of a sales professional at a retail store selling hardware can be quite different from that of an account executive selling software. Such differences are defined by the differences in responsibilities for each of these roles.



Delving deeper into the primary and investigative research on skills vis-à-vis performance, Mercer | Mettl's team of psychometric experts has identified role-specific competencies across the three IT sales categories.

Roles and competencies in hardware sales

For hardware sales, we have considered sales professionals who sell products at retail stores. Examples of such professionals would be salespersons found at approved stores of Apple and Microsoft, who help customers choose the right product for their needs. We have also dived deep into two levels of such roles to compare the differences in the competencies across these levels.

Retail store specialist/ customer advisor

Retail store specialists and customer advisors directly interact with customers and assist them with their hardware purchase decisions. Therefore, these roles require individuals who are:

- Adept at delivering great in-store experiences in an active environment.
- Excellent communicators with the ability to hold fruitful conversations in groups as well as with individual buyers.
- Passionate about technology or at least possess a strong interest in learning about the latest products and features.

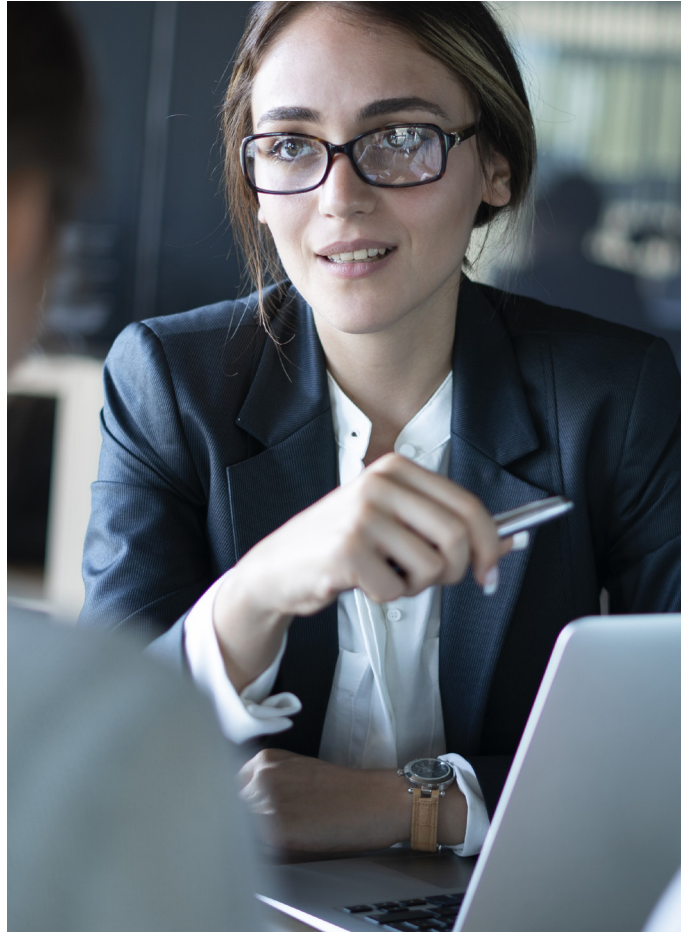


Responsibilities of a retail store specialist/customer advisor include:

- Present customers with complete and correct information about products
- Build customer relationships and pique their interest in new products launched
- Explain product value proposition to the customers to complete the sale
- Learn about the updated features in products and how they benefit the customers
- Learn how competitors' products are different in terms of price and features

Therefore, the must-have competencies for these roles are:

- Customer Focus
- Learning Agility
- Effective Communication
- Result Orientation



Retail store manager

Retail store leaders and managers usually operate behind the scenes by managing the teams at retail outlets. They are involved in the management, training and even recruitment of employees at the store. Therefore, these roles require individuals who can:

- Build and manage teams that can drive customer engagement and positive in-store experiences.
- Inspire teams to deliver measurable results for the business.
- Strongly communicate business goals and vision to the team.
- Analyze sales and financial reports to keep track of profits, sales metrics, etc.
- Analyze and work on customer feedback to ensure employee growth.
- Adapt to short-term as well as long-term changes in the business while balancing the diverse needs of the teams that they manage.
- Pivot powerful strategies to meet existing and changing business goals.

Therefore, the must-have competencies for these roles are:

- Customer Focus
- Commercial Acumen
- Effective Communication
- Adaptability
- Analytical Ability and Problem Solving
- Team Management
- Result Orientation

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Roles and competencies in software sales

For software sales, we have considered sales professionals who sell software to other businesses. Examples of such sales professionals would be those that get hired by companies like Microsoft, Oracle and SAP. We have also dived deep into two levels of such roles to compare the differences in the competencies across these levels.

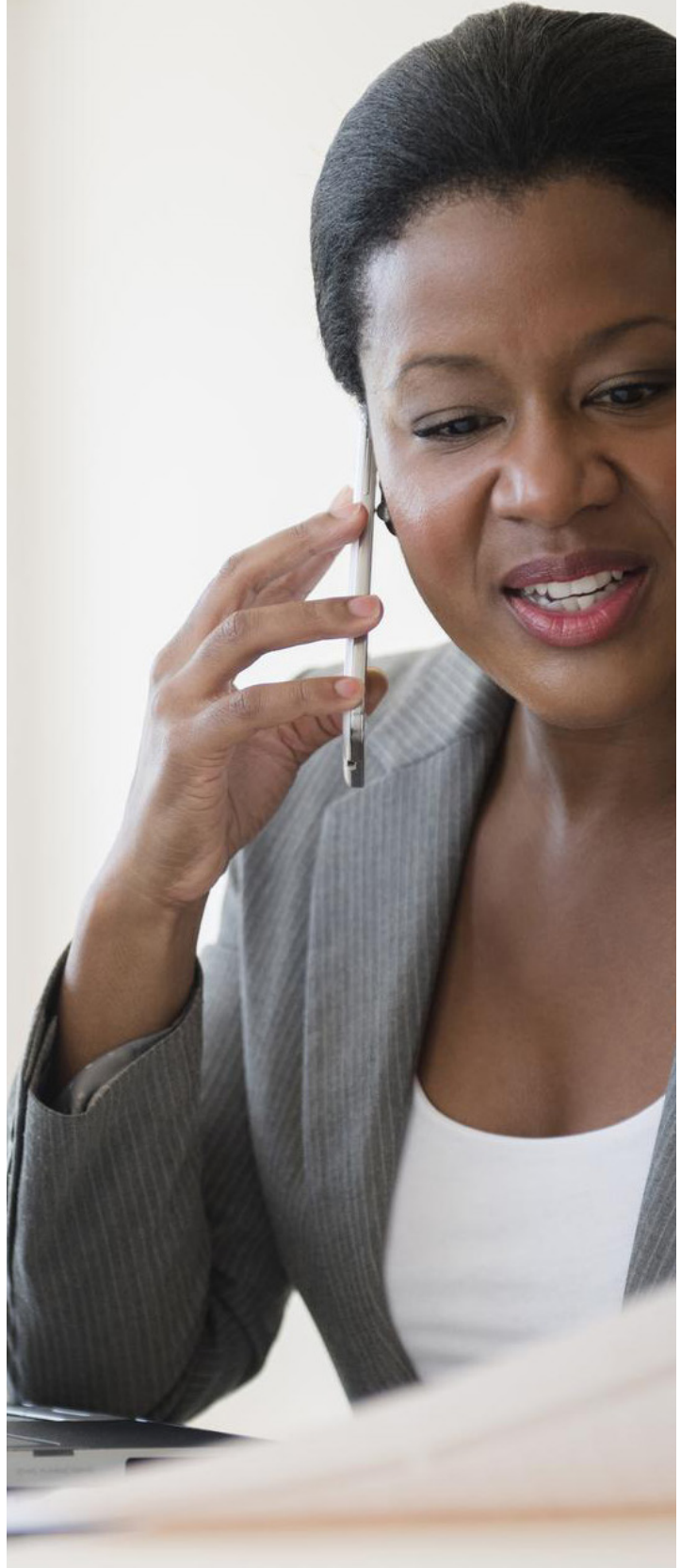
Account executive/ Sales representative

Software sales representatives or account executives help their companies grow by formulating strategies to find leads, closing deals and supporting the current customer base. **These roles require professionals who are adept at:**

- Understanding software market trends and customers' requirements
- Thriving in a fast-paced, results-oriented environment to achieve maximum sales profitability, growth and account penetration.
- Understanding product offerings and competitive issues to develop effective software sales solutions.
- Managing high volume sales leads via telephone, web or email

Therefore, the must-have competencies for these roles are:

- Stakeholder Management
- Effective Communication
- Business Acumen
- Analytical Ability and Problem-Solving skills
- Adaptability
- Learning Agility
- Planning and Organizing
- Result Orientation
- Collaboration





Account manager/ Senior Account Manager

Sales account managers partner with peers and sales and account services to facilitate top-of-the-line customer service, ensuring the success of software sales campaigns and strategies. The key responsibilities for this role include:

- Achieving weekly, quarterly and annual sales targets in collaboration with internal task forces and working groups.
- Driving strategic conversations and relationships to strengthen sales campaigns.
- Conducting regular business reviews with customers and software distributors to assist in the making of an accurate sales funnel.
- Forecasting decision outcomes and preparing recovery plans.
- Identifying key stakeholders to help drive business growth in a streamlined way.
- Managing performance and coaching team members to accomplish work objectives

Account managers should possess:

- Excellent communication skills, presentation skills and convincing power.
- The ability to operate with optimistic tenacity in tense team environments.
- A client-first approach

The must-have competencies for this role are:

- Stakeholder Management
- Collaboration
- Effective Communication
- Commercial Acumen
- Business Acumen
- Analytical Ability and Problem-Solving skills
- Strategic Thinking
- Team Management
- Adaptability

Roles and competencies in IT services

For IT services sales, we have considered sales professionals who sell services offered by their organization to other businesses. These services include consulting, product design, software development, system integration, among others. Examples of such professionals would be those who get hired by companies like Infosys and Cognizant. We have also dived deep into two levels of such roles to compare the differences in the competencies across these levels.

IT managed services sales executive

The role of an IT managed services sales executive is comparatively more challenging than of those working in hardware and software sales. Not only is there an absence of a tactile product but also, that of a digital asset. Besides, IT services reflect an ongoing association with the service provider. That means that the sales professionals need to be exceptionally efficient in establishing trust.

Hence, this role demands:

- Extraordinary negotiation skills and problem-solving abilities.
- The ability to articulate key selling points of a particular IT service.
- Unquestionable service knowledge and understanding of the IT service sector.
- Professional presentation and organization skills.

Responsibilities of an IT services sales executive include:

- Attaining sales quota and meeting goals established by the company.
- Developing a pipeline of leads and opportunities.
- Providing accurate deal probability and forecasts.
- Distributing marketing materials to prospects.
- Maintaining knowledge of solution pricing policies and sales initiatives.



Therefore, the must-have competencies for this role include:

- Stakeholder Management
- Collaboration
- Effective Communication
- Negotiation and Influence
- Business Acumen
- Result Orientation
- Analytical Ability and Problem-Solving skills
- Creativity and Innovation
- Planning and Organizing

IT services sales manager/ Client relationship manager

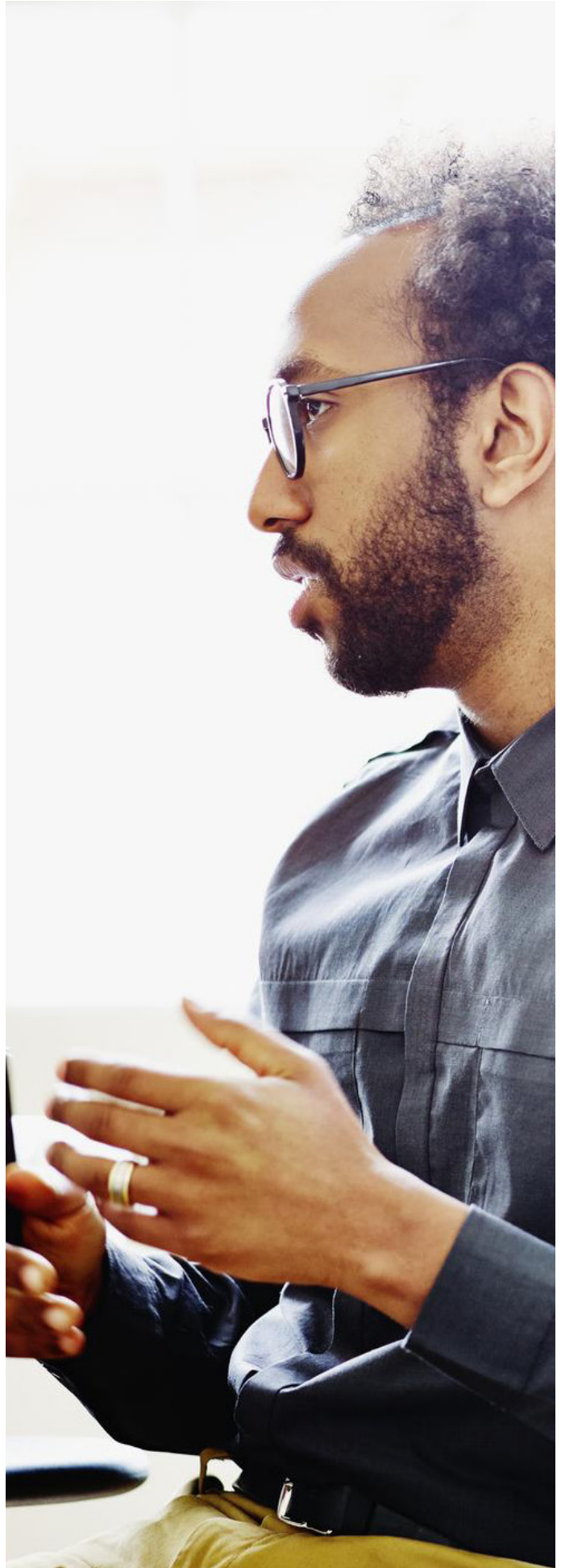
IT services sales managers or client relationship managers are responsible for building and maintaining customer relationships, identifying business opportunities, negotiations and closing business deals.

For these roles, companies prefer individuals who can:

- Identify people in one's network and build relationships to ensure significant business outcomes for effective pre-sales activities
- Drive growth of existing client accounts through their extensive understanding of the business, technology and services solutions domains.
- Collaborate intensively with internal teams and multiple service lines like innovation teams and business teams to formulate and execute business plans
- Ensure client satisfaction in all revenue portfolios within an account.
- Build and maintain relationships with others with the intention of gathering information and inputs to ensure organizational goals are accomplished efficiently.
- Manage diverse teams and guide team efforts to accomplish work objectives.
- Establish clear direction to ensure efficient management of work and coach them to achieve goals.

Therefore, the must-have competencies for these roles are:

- Stakeholder Management
- Collaboration
- Effective Communication
- Negotiation and Influence
- Business Acumen
- Creativity and Innovation
- Analytical Ability and Problem-Solving skills
- Strategic Thinking
- Team Management
- Commercial Acumen



Mercer | Mettl's IT sales hiring framework

Armed with insights using Mercer | Mettl assessment, leaders can develop and initiate appropriate sales hiring strategies to drive revenue, sales and business performance – creating a genuine competitive advantage in the industry.

Mentioned below is a suggestive IT sales framework recommended by the Mercer | Mettl team.

Recommended IT sales framework

Competencies	Definition	Tools
Customer Focus	Being able to meet customer expectations and requirements in a manner that provides customer satisfaction and leads to further opportunities to grow and develop the relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler • Situational Judgment Test
Learning Agility	Demonstrating a commitment to learning by proactively seeking out new information and opportunities to develop one's skills and knowledge.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler
Effective Communication	Being able to put across one's thoughts and ideas clearly and succinctly by listening attentively and using appropriate language to engage the audience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing Simulator • Speaking Simulator • Personality Profiler
Quality Focus	Demonstrating an ability to consistently focus on the quality of every deliverable by ensuring consistency and adherence to high standards as well as paying close attention to all the details involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler • Cognitive Ability
Stakeholder Management	Building and maintaining strong working relationships both within and outside the organization, to further the organization's goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler
Planning and Organizing	Establishing a systematic course of action for oneself by defining tasks and milestones to achieve one's objectives, while ensuring optimal utilization of time and resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler
Result Orientation	Demonstrating a strong will to achieve what one sets out to do. Focusing one's efforts on achieving set objectives and results efficiently in a persistent manner.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler
Adaptability	Being open to change and being able to adjust and adapt one's behavior or approach to changing circumstances and situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler

Competencies	Definition	Tools
Analytical Ability and Problem Solving	The ability to analyze the given information from different perspectives by breaking it down into simple components and structuring the information in a logical manner to arrive at a solution.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Ability
Strategic Thinking	Being able to understand and drive the organization's vision and strategy, while taking a long-term view of organizational priorities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler • Cognitive Ability
Team Management	Being able to effectively manage and guide team efforts to accomplish work objectives. Establishing clear direction and assigning tasks appropriately to ensure efficient management of the work.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler
Business Acumen	The ability to understand the workings and structure of the organization as well as the marketplace to take important business decisions and advance organization's goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler • Cognitive Ability • Functional Assessment • Behavioral Interview
Commercial Acumen	The ability to work with information in number-based format to make important business decisions and analyzing its impact on how good a decision is commercially.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cognitive Ability • Functional Assessment
Negotiation and Influence	Ability to persuade and influence others by using compelling arguments to reach outcomes that gain the support and acceptance of all parties.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler
Creativity and Innovation	Identifying innovative solutions and trying new approaches to deal with challenges to ensure the organization stays relevant with changing times.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler • Cognitive Ability
Collaboration	Working cooperatively and collaboratively with others to successfully achieve common goals and objectives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personality Profiler

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Recommended IT sales framework for specific job roles

Competencies	Hardware sales		Software sales		IT services sales	
	Retail Store Specialist (PL1)	Retail Store Manager (PL2)	Account Executive (PL1)	Account Manager (PL2)	IT Managed Services Executive (PL1)	IT Service Manager/Client Relationship Manager (PL2)
Customer Focus	✓	✓				
Learning Agility	✓		✓			
Effective Communication	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Quality Focus	✓					
Stakeholder Management			✓	✓	✓	✓
Planning and Organizing	✓		✓		✓	
Result Orientation	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Adaptability		✓	✓	✓		
Analytical Ability and Problem Solving		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Strategic Thinking				✓		✓
Team Management		✓		✓		✓
Business Acumen			✓	✓	✓	✓
Commercial Acumen		✓		✓		✓
Negotiation and Influence					✓	✓
Creativity and Innovation					✓	✓
Collaboration			✓	✓	✓	✓

Key observations

Mercer | Mettl experts have been closely monitoring industry trends and sales hiring patterns to recommend the most effective competency framework. The following observations further elaborate the rationale behind the six recurring, high-priority competencies.

- The necessity to constantly interact with and convince customers across various IT sales domains makes **effective communication** skills the top priority.
- Competencies like **customer focus** and **stakeholder management** are essential for sales executives and leaders to sell complex products and manage expectations.
- Since sales executives are expected to persistently meet their targets, **result orientation** is another vital competency, especially at a lower proficiency level.
- The requirement to keep up with product updates makes **learning agility** and **adaptability** indispensable competencies when hiring for hardware and software sales.
- **Negotiation and influence** are critical in IT service sales because of longer sales cycles and more complex price models.

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Conclusion

There is a significant difference between the way most companies think and how high-growth companies think about success. The IT sales framework is the critical differentiating factor that shapes how a high-growth company maps its succession in a fast-paced world. Interestingly, the talent canvas of the IT/ITeS industry is evolving with the sector. Hence, the profound insights in this handbook are set to empower forward-thinking leaders to focus intensely on specific competencies that can help build mission-critical IT sales teams in no time.

It is not rocket science to gauge that if companies utilize these insights to select the right sales professional, they can increase the probability of retaining the right talent, too. And if industry stalwarts learn from the scientifically validated projections and revise their competency framework, there is no denying that they can lead a company to new heights.



About us

At Mercer | Mettl, our mission is to enable organizations to make better people decisions across two key areas: acquisition and development. Since our inception in 2010, we have partnered with more than 4,000 corporates, 31 sector skills councils/government departments and 15+ educational institutions across more than 90 countries.

✉ mettlcontact@mercer.com

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