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Ultimate Guide:

Hire and Train Reps and
Build a Winning Field Team

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Personality and traits

A field sales rep will be the face of your brand and, for many people, they might be the first touchpoint with your brand and product.

These are traits to look out for:

- Engaging in face to face interactions
- Has common sense and initiative.
- Tenacious and hard to break. (They'll have to deal with a lot of rejection.)
- Independent and creative thinker who can come up with fun ideas to make an impact with people face to face.



Where to find people

Hire bar staff who are tired of working in the trade

- If you're going on visits, you'll get to know some of the staff on your route. These could be shelf stackers, bar staff or baristas.
- Be careful about poaching staff - you don't want to sour the relationships that you have with your customers. If possible, have a chat to the owner or manager. They might even know which staff are looking for a change!

Hire student ambassadors

- Lots of brands have student programs and ambassadors. See whether you can offer some of them full time jobs when they finish their studies.

"If you're wondering where to find these candidates, the best hires are school or university leavers who have loads of energy and are looking to hit the ground running."

Shani Higgs, Head of Sales
Perfect Ted



For this level of role, you'll want to recruit internally. You shouldn't be paying a recruiter when you're hiring on potential to perform in a junior role, but you should probably use a recruiter for more senior roles when you're hiring based on their previous experience and achievements.

Billy Maddock,
Director Mackenzie Jones



Create a great listing and job description

Make sure that your job listing stands out and grabs people's attention. Take a look at other job descriptions before you start writing yours to figure out what to avoid.

Don't fall into the trap of saying "You're a field sales exec and this is what you're responsible for".

Your job listing needs to grab attention, candidates are often screening lots of ads per day, and those looking won't waste their time with boring offerings.

Ask someone outside of the business to review your job listing to see if there's any language that's not easily understood by people who aren't familiar with the inner workings of your business.



Find the right person for your brand

In field sales, the rep is the personification of your brand. Bare in mind your brand values, and see if you can find someone who matches.

If you're allergic to peanuts, you're unlikely to understand what makes peanuts great, or where/why people tend to buy them.

Think about the decision makers you'll be targeting. Would they rather see someone in a suit, or jeans?

Have they got interests or experience in your product? Do they know how to keep a beer cellar in tip-top shape? Do they know what happens if you make espresso at the wrong temperatures?



The best kind of hires come from people that genuinely love the brand. I would always hire someone who has passion for the brand and is eager to learn over someone with years of experience but didn't embody the brand at all."

Shani Higgs, Head of Sales
Perfect Ted



Hiring Process

Create a Candidate Information Pack for applicants to view once they've been successfully screened. This is a detailed document, that shows people

- the structure of the team they'll be working in,
- what the team works on,
- their contribution to the business,
- where field sales reps progress to within the business/industry

Remember that candidates will be interested in your brand, possibly even fans and customers. Try not to leave a sour taste in their mouth during this process.

Spell out what's going to happen in their interview and what preparation is expected of them.

Interviewing field sales reps

- What makes this brand special?
- Who are the target customers for this brand?
- What do you like about field sales?
- Tell me about a time when you've had to overcome a challenge on the spot.
- Make sure that you give great feedback to candidates that you choose not to proceed with. Remember, this is a huge touchpoint with your brand, and you could destroy someone's relationship with your brand.

Their first day

Do you remember the first time you went into a venue? It's nerve-wracking.

Pair your new hire up with someone who's an old hat at this, and get their confidence up.

Nerves will settle once you get more visits under your belt, so get out there and do some visits in your first few days.

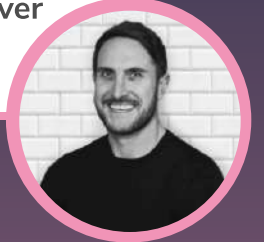
They can also get a lot of confidence through finding industry knowledge, figuring out who your competitors are etc.

Show them how they can find new venues on their own. Allow them to make mistakes too, this will help them build confidence organically.

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"Try to be as targeted as possible in your approach to driving new distribution and be clear in your own mind why you are targeting these venues. Be ready not only to communicate why your brand will work in their venues, but what specifically you will deliver for their business that other brands won't."

Kurtis Mcdade
Head of Sales at Signature Brew



Set super clear expectations, so they know what's expected from them in their first day, week and month in the role.

Billy Maddock,
Director Mackenzie Jones



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For On-Trade
and Off-Trade Reps



Show them how to find new venues on their own

Tell them which attributes to look for when creating a prospect list.

Show them the tools that you use to find prospects, and make sure they're fluent in them.

Get them to generate a list of targets and go through it with them.

Show them where you are listed and where other reps are trying to get into. This immersion will help their understanding immensely.

Bowimi's prospecting tool puts Google Maps front and centre, but gives you the functionality that every field sales rep needs to get out of the office, and onto the pavement. Learn more here.



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"Make a suitable & credible prospect list - don't just send those field sales soldiers out with one boot on! Think about the the right venues and drinking occasions and the right geographies and cities."

Jenny Mary Elliott, Founder JME
Drinks Consultancy



What does it take to go from first visit to a sale?

On average it takes 7 points of contact for you to get stocked in a venue.

Getting in front of people is the most important thing. In this industry, people rarely have time to check their emails or answer their phones, so you need to catch them in person.

When you're talking to them have samples with you to taste there and then, or leave behind.

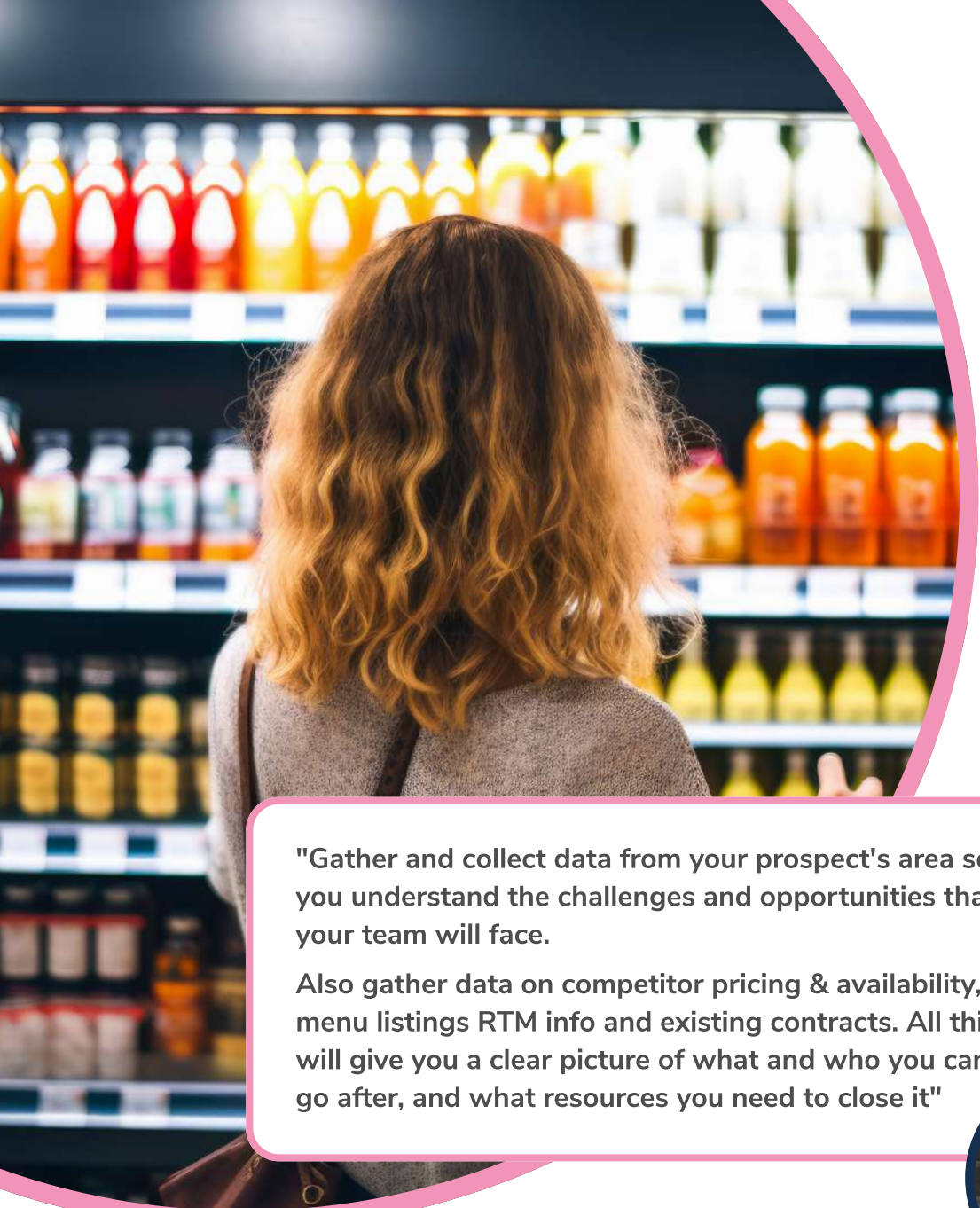
Then agree on next steps and make sure you stick to your word and send further information if required and follow up when you say you're going to follow up



"Often it's ourselves that get in the way of the 'extra' follow-up as we feel we are 'annoying. We forget that they are seeing 100s of other people, doing multiple tasks each day. Fundamentally, no one is thinking about your brand as much as you are. Consistent repetition pays off and shows your prospective accounts that you will be there for them."



Jenny Mary Elliott, Founder JME
Drinks Consultancy



"Gather and collect data from your prospect's area so you understand the challenges and opportunities that your team will face.

Also gather data on competitor pricing & availability, menu listings RTM info and existing contracts. All this will give you a clear picture of what and who you can go after, and what resources you need to close it"

Jenny Mary Elliott,
Founder of JME Drinks Consultancy



Get them to do their homework

There are three times when you need your reps to gather information.

- 1 When they're looking for new venues
- 2 Before they enter a venue
- 3 When they're talking to people in the venue.

What to look for before you visit

The obvious stuff:

- What time do they open?
- Does Google say when they're most likely to be busy or quiet?
- Where is it?

Does it fit your target venue?

- Does it suit the drinking occasion? Is it the kind of place you'd expect to see your product?
- What do the reviews and photos on google maps say about it?



What to look for before they start talking

- What does their decision corridor look like? Has another rep been here already?
- Do they do themed evenings? Do they have music on?
- Are they running any promotions? Can you see branded material on tables or in the loos?
- What do the staff wear? Have they got a strict uniform, or do they wear what they want?
- What do they sell already?
- Does this still feel like a good fit for the brand?

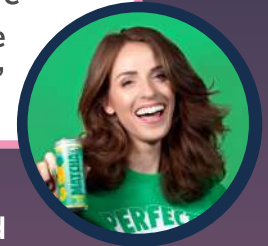


Things to ask a person in the venue

- What's their RTM?
- When can you follow up? Can I come before your opening hours?
- Who's the decision maker? What are their contact details?
- How often do they change their offering? Do they put a new menu out every month?
- What samples should you be sending? Do they want any POS material?

Staff training can really help to educate the sites on your product, what makes it different and any nuisances on how to serve your product. It's also a great opportunity to understand their perspective (What motivates them? Can you give them some merch? How can you make this process easier?)”

Shani Higgs,
Head of Sales Perfect Ted





Keep them motivated by bringing on exciting venues

Celebrate every win to demonstrate that the brand is making progress, and help your new hire understand their part in it.

What's going to make them proud of working with you? Are you getting stocked in a new supermarket? Are you doing a one-off brew for a specific venue or special occasion?

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For Grocery
and other
Merchandisers



Look for the right things

Before setting out, make sure you're looking for the right things. You might be running promotions in different chains this week, so make sure you're completely clued up.

Create different checklists for different stores, so you know what to correct, and what to celebrate.

What to win next? Can you make it into another area of the store?



A Typical Checklist for a chewing gum brand in major grocery

- ✓ Where are we in the store? Queue, Aisle etc
- ✓ Are SELs correct?
- ✓ Are promos correct?
- ✓ How many facings on entry? On Exit?
- ✓ Do we need to order in stock?
- ✓ Did you have to make any changes?



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For
Independents





Target the right places

Especially with independent stores, you can make a huge impact by forging relationships with the decision makers. This can get you preferential facings and help you nudge competitors out.

Think about what you can do for these shops.

Can you give them POS materials, or interesting things to put on their shelves that make their store stand out?

These sites give you a unique opportunity to showcase your brand and product. Unlike Grocery where things will get moved back and changed and fettered with, in independents you can bring your brand to life.

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Get personal

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