

# 15 skills for success in sales and leadership careers

What they don't teach you about success at school, Trinity or UCD or Harvard

***Master these skills and watch your results grow!***

**Assess yourself and your team.**



# Sales & leadership skills assessment

Why are some people so much more successful than others? What makes them different? Why and how do the best leaders, best sales people, best entrepreneurs and best sports people inexorably rise to the top of their professions? Two words definitely spring to mind – “hard work”. Throughout my career, I have observed and learnt that, coupled with a strong work ethic, those with the most attitude, skills, knowledge and habits become the fast trackers in life. They just seem to have all the skills at the right time and right place. They are good at analysing, problem-solving, communicating, selling, adapting and leading and are hugely influential in ‘bringing’ people with them because of their interpersonal and intrapersonal skills.

**As Seneca (advisor and tutor to Cicero) observed;**

**“Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity.”**

If you want to increase the opportunities in your career then take this assessment for yourself and also apply it to your team. Raising your awareness of the skills gaps will allow you to close the gaps and dramatically increase your results quickly. The good news is skills are behavioural – they can be learned, and, under the right guidance, they can be mastered.

Start here to take the next step in your success. Invest 5 minutes to see where you stand?

I have described below 15 key skills for sales and leadership success. Mark yourself out of 10 for each skill – 10 meaning you are so expert you can comfortably teach it and 1 meaning you have a lot of scope to improve. Then mark your team (if applicable). This will give you a snapshot of you and your team’s current strengths and weaknesses and highlight the areas that need improvement. Success in sales and leadership is only possible when you become very competent in these 15 skills. This instrument is tried and tested.

## 1. Preparing (for sales meetings)

I systematically prepare for meetings. This time investment is a habit. Consequently, I am clear on the goals of the meeting, the possible objections that may come up and I feel prepared to add value.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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## 2. Listening

I want the prospect or customer to do most of the talking during the meeting. I am very aware of the 4 main types of listening and know how to practice active listening. I also monitor my listening skills and am aware of passive listening triggers.

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### 3. Questioning.

I understand that the best questions give me the information I need to sell. I am very clear in the differences between open, testing, probing, confirming and closed questions. I never start meetings with closed questions and understand the power of how and what, with a little why. I also review possible implication questions in advance of the meeting.

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### 4. Qualifying

I have a rigorous process for qualifying sales opportunities that saves me time money and effort during the buying cycle. There is no room for gut feeling in this process and it helps me to focus on opportunities that I have the best chance of winning. It scores opportunities.

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### 5. Objection Handling

I understand the psychology of objection handling and have a very reliable way to handle objections. I have some tried and tested favourites. I have built scripts for my most frequent and difficult objections.

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### 6. Closing

I have 8 different ways of closing and I have used them all in different situations. I know the pros and cons for each method and am able to use different closes for different stages of the buying cycle.

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### 7. Influencing

I know my influencing style, it is one of, tell, sell or involve. I am also well versed in Robert Cialdini's "6 principles " of influencing and their application for influencing sales. I also use the 4 critical skills of influencing.

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### 8. Presenting

I have a process that I use for preparing and delivering presentations. I always use a hook and have a method for handling questions. My presentations have a customer solution focus that clearly articulates customer benefits. I use stories appropriately.

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### 9. Sales Pipeline Management

My sales pipeline management process allows me to deliver predictable monthly revenues most of the time. I always deliver my number. It is governed by a series of rules that reflect typical buying stages in my industry. This tool helps me deliver.

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### 10. Learning

I always seek opportunities to develop my knowledge and skills. I take my professional and personal development seriously and make time to practice and refine new skills. I have read over 25 books on selling and I am familiar with 6 different selling models.

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### 11. Negotiation skills

I can articulate the difference between positional, principled and situational negotiations. I always have my BATNA, ZOPA and WATNA homework done in advance. I understand the importance of substantive, process and relationships outcomes in negotiations. I can use “car-parks” when negotiating. I use a negotiating template.

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### 12. Cold Calling

I know that this is where the best sales people “just do their job”. I am pro-active in blocking off time to prospect. I have a system to do this task. I see it as a priority even when I am very busy with buying customers. I may not like cold calling but I must do it to have a successful sales career.

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### 13. Lead generation

I have a multi channel approach to generating leads and understand the process. I systematically keep in touch with existing customers without annoying them and look to replenish my sales pipeline. I am a pro-active networker and adapt to changing buyer behaviours.

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### 14. Time Management

I am very selective with my time and use tools and techniques to help me get the most out of my day. I use lists and prioritisation. I always invest time in the most important activity every day. I am fully aware of the benefits of the Eisenhower time matrix and am very aware of the best uses of my time professionally and personally.

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### 15. Follow up and referrals

I habitually follow up with customers after delivery of the product and/or service and help with any outstanding issues. Usually, I can confidently ask customers for referrals or references.

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Q.1	Q.2	Q.3	Q.4	Q.5	Q.6	Q.7	Q.8	Q.9	Q.10	Q.11	Q.12	Q.13	Q.14	Q.15

### Scoring

Add up your scores for the 15 key skill areas.

100-120	Fantastic
80-99	Very good
60-78	Above Average
40-59	Average
Below 39	Below Average

**N.B.** You need an overall score of at least 80 to succeed at sales in today's challenging business environment. If you are giving yourself a score of below 7 on any of the above areas, ask yourself what you can do to improve this mark. Also ask yourself, what one skill, if you were brilliant at it, would help you the most to increase your sales or leadership effectiveness.

The writer accepts that leaders are also responsible for other functions and processes like, strategy, marketing, operations, HR, culture, change and finance.

The 3 lowest scores are the 3 biggest opportunities for improving my success:

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## ABOUT: RONAN McNAMARA, MBA



Ronan is Managing Director and founder of Cumara Performance, a successful specialist performance management organisation set up in 2004. He has also been a member of the Associate Faculty at the Irish Management Institute since 2007 and he designs and delivers a wide variety of programmes there.

A successful business development practitioner with over 25 years sales and management work experience primarily gained in Financial Services and IT sectors; Ronan's employment highlights include: share options granted due to excellent business development results in both GE Capital International and IBM Ireland.

Delivering interventions that transform individual and organisational performances, Ronan's methods focus on providing participants with tools, plans and ideas that are fit for immediate implementation in the workplace.

Ronan is a vastly experienced learning facilitator with over 2,000 days of training delivery facilitation and over 1,000 hours coaching across all levels of both national and international organisations. His training programmes lead directly to increased sales – among his notable successes are: over 25% growth in one organisation and over 33% growth in a declining marketplace in another.

In 2011, Ronan's book "Proven Selling Skills for Winners" was published in Ireland and in 2013 it was selected to be translated into Mandarin and published in China.

Ronan analyses, designs, delivers and evaluates learning and development interventions in a number of areas, including:

- Agile Negotiation Skills
- Change Management
- Communicating for Results
- Facilitation Skills for Leaders
- Managing for Success
- Key Account Development
- Leading and Managing People
- Master Trainer
- Managing Sales Performance
- Selling Skills for Winners
- Influential Presenting
- Various custom-designed programmes

Ronan holds qualifications in the areas of Management, Accounting and Finance, Training and Sports Psychology. He is married with 3 teenage children & 2 dogs. His professional passions are learning and development and his personal passions include cooking, rugby and golf.

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