

Hunter or Farmer ...

What's the Best Selling Style?



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Is a Hunter really the best selling style? Where does the Farmer fit in? You've probably never even heard of the Shopkeeper, Repairman or Handyman, yet you may have some on your team. Where do these various selling styles fit? Here's the definition of these styles and their relationship to the 18 *Sales Temperament Assessment* primary selling styles.




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I'm a big believer of trying to put the right person in the right job. I call that putting a round peg in a round hole. If the fit is good, things are likely to go well. On the other hand, a square peg in a round hole is going to cause grief for either the peg or the hole, or both.

There probably isn't a sales manager alive who isn't familiar with the terms Hunter and Farmer as related to salespeople and selling styles. But how many have heard of the Shopkeeper, Repairman, or Handyman? Not that many I suspect.

In fact, why does this even matter?



Don't try to plug a round peg into a square hole.

Because having the right person doing the wrong job is just as bad as having the wrong person doing the right job. Any time someone operates outside of his or her primary selling style, the person can become uncomfortable and less efficient. If a salesperson sells outside his primary selling style on a continuous basis, he is in danger of being unsuccessful.

In other words, if you want someone to hunt, you should be hiring a Hunter and if you want someone to farm, you should hire a Farmer.

Proactive vs Passive Salespeople

Proactive salespeople tend to fall into one of two categories — Hunters or Farmers (or Finders and Minders) — while passive salespeople fall into either the Shopkeeper or Repairman category.



There is also another category called the Handyman. These folks are basically non-salespeople who are best suited for behind-the-scenes support roles rather than being out on the sales firing line.

Hunters

Hunters thrive on seeking out new opportunities, opening new doors, and looking for the next opportunity. Their eyes and minds are always on the horizon looking for the next kill. As a result, even in good times, they'll miss opportunities lying at their feet. They often leave a trail of half-alive opportunities and blotched deals in their wake. Having said all that, they're good people to have when the sales larder is empty.

When times are tight and sales opportunities are at a low, the Hunter will forge into new sales territories and find new opportunities. Unfortunately, many of these opportunities will be of questionable quality because their thrust is quantity, not quality.

In poor times, Hunters need the freedom to hunt indiscriminately and to bring in anything they can find. Smart Hunters work with their sales managers to jointly determine which opportunities should be pursued and which should be given a decent burial.

Hunters loathe paperwork, don't keep detailed records, and generally come across as being poorly organized. In actual fact, they're usually on top of their opportunities but their sales managers and others are left in the dark.



In good times, Hunters need to learn how to harness their drive and energy so they farm their accounts and opportunities rather than always seeking out new prey.

Farmers

Farmers thrive on nurturing and maintaining accounts or opportunities. Once given a sales lead, these people spring into action, make contacts, burrow their way into the account, and work it. These people are at their best when times are good and the sales ground is fertile.

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When times are tough and these people don't have a real opportunity to work on, they tend to stand around, complaining about the sales drought and wishing for better sales weather.

Unlike the Hunter, Farmers are not galvanized into action by a sales slump. They are more inclined to hunker down and tough it out rather than go out and make something happen. Getting these people out of their barns is a challenge. They'd rather write letters, service marginal accounts, and make plans than start something new.

One way around this is for someone to act as a bush beater for them so the hunting is easier. Once someone opens the door and the sale, the Farmer will take it over and run with it. Smart Farmers realize this and will seek out assistance when their sales fields go barren.



Shopkeeper

The Shopkeeper has a pleasant personality and delights in helping people. Don't expect the Shopkeeper to uncover your needs but, if you know what you want, they can find it for you. These people like to be of service and helping others is their strong suit. They're more comfortable doing inside sales and can often be found in retail, catalogue sales, or inbound telemarketing.

Putting the Shopkeeper on the road is usually a mistake. They're used to being indoors and don't mentally dress for outside selling. They prefer to respond to others rather than initiate contact, which makes cold calling very painful for them.

Repairman

The Repairman is technical by nature, and is often an engineer, accountant, computer analyst, or other technical professional.

These people don't like to sell but they will talk "technical" to anyone who will listen. They're at their best when talking to someone in the same discipline that has a problem. This gives them an opportunity to display their superior technical abilities and "repair" the other person's problem.

As long as the Repairman is talking to another like-discipline person, everything will be okay and a sale may result. Put this person in front of a non-technical decision maker and problems

quickly arise. The two people will end up speaking different languages, often resulting in the non-technical person saying, "No sale."

Repairmen can be trained to sell but it's a stretch for them. They feel they shouldn't have to "sell" and the prospect should recognize the obvious technical superiority of what is being offered and just buy. Nice thought, but the sale doesn't always go to the more technically eloquent solution but to the person who knows how to "sell" it.

When they have to sell, they usually employ the Shopkeeper's somewhat passive approach to selling. That's because the Repairman is basically a technical Shopkeeper.

Handyman

The Handyman is basically a very nice person who enjoys helping people but shouldn't be put into a sales role, particularly a highly competitive or commission-based sales position.


Handymen are excellent at customer service or marketing support roles. These are the behind-the-scenes people who get the administrative part of the job done and done well. These people fit well into an incoming call centre where they are expected to offer assistance and do no selling.

It is not impossible, but it is rare, for a Handyman to have long-term success in sales.



Which Style is Best?

The best combination is the Hunter/Farmer or Farmer/Hunter. These salespeople have a rifle in one hand and a hoe in the other. They're at their best hunting and farming within an account. Once in the door, the hunter part goes deep, wide, and far within the organization. They leave no stone unturned in their quest for new business within an account. Once these opportunities are uncovered, the farmer part cares for them until they bear fruit.



The best combination is the Hunter/Farmer or Farmer/Hunter.

The Hunters/Farmers are the ones who, when leaving an account, look at what opportunities may lay on each side of the one they just left. If they visit an account in a multi-storey building, they check the building directory on the way out to see who else they might call on, and then do it. They're always prepared and willing to make one more call.

The Hunter that has learned to farm or the Farmer who has learned to hunt is the most versatile, as this combination of selling styles can usually adjust to the Shopkeeper and Repairman style as well when required.

So what do you do if you have a salesperson who isn't a Hunter or a Farmer?

Well, if he's a Shopkeeper or Repairman, be cautious about putting him in a situation where he has to do hunting and farming because that's not his bag.



If you've got someone who is a Hunter, help him develop his farming abilities. And if you've got a good Farmer, teach him how to hunt.

What if you've ended up with a Handyman? In this case, your best bet is to put the person in a support role and let other people do the actual selling. He can be the eyes and ears of the sales team but let others do the actual selling.

How Do You Tell Who's Who?

This is all very informative but the question remains, How do you tell who's who? How do you determine who's a Hunter, Farmer, Handyman, etc? Fortunately, help is available.

Thirty years ago, while co-owner of SalesForce Training & Consulting Inc, we developed a paper-based psychometric instrument which we named the *Sales Temperatment Assessment (STA)*. This instrument identifies the 18 selling styles (see page 10).

When we sold this company in 2006, we kept the instrument and started a new company — Salesforce Assessments Ltd — with the intent of turning the STA into an online, Internet-based instrument. We accomplished the project in 2008 and went live online that same year.

In 2011, Salesforce Assessments Ltd was acquired by Callidus Software out of California and the instrument is now offered by them as part of an online hiring solution. For more information about the STA and their service, visit www.SalesSelector.com.



STA Primary Selling Styles vs Hunters, Farmers etc

Here is a loose, but valid, correlation between the 18 selling styles we have identified in the STA (*Sales Temperament Assessment*) and the Hunter/Farmer/Shopkeeper/Repairman/Handyman concept.

STA Primary Selling Style	Hunter / Farmer etc Concept
1 - Relationship or Consultative	Farmer
2 - Versatile Relationship or Consultative	Farmer/Hunter
3 - Proactive	Hunter
4 - Versatile Proactive	Hunter/Farmer
5 - Very Proactive	Hunter
6 - Highly Proactive	Hunter
7 - Closing	Lone Hunter/Hunter
8 - Aggressive	Lone Hunter/Hunter
9 - Passive	Shopkeeper/Repairman
10 - Proactive Retail.....	Shopkeeper/Repairman
11 - Relaxed	Relaxed Hunter/Hunter
12 - Easy-Going	Easy-Going Hunter/Hunter
13 - Social.....	Social Farmer/Farmer
14 - Very Social.....	Social Farmer/Farmer
15 - Highly Social	Social Shopkeeper/Repairman
16 - Extremely Social.....	Social Shopkeeper/Repairman
17 - Congenial	Repairman
18 - Non-Sales.....	Handyman

Hopefully this document has given you some insights into the various selling styles that exist and highlights the challenges of making the proper match of the salesperson to the sales position.



Selling Style Lineage

- Blue boxes indicate Primary Sales Type.
- White boxes show name of the Sales Temperament Assessment selling style.
- Number in brackets correlates with the table on page 10.

