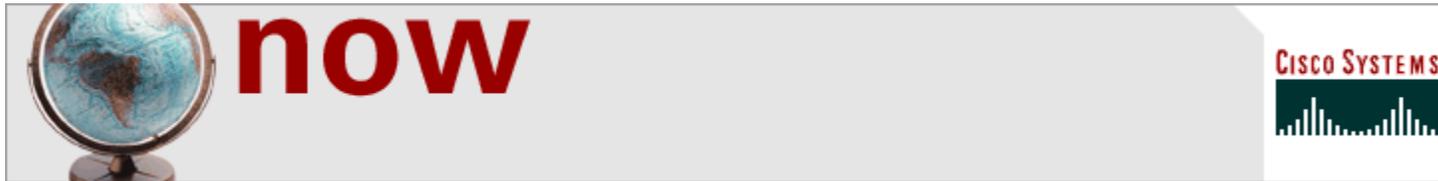


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## No Experience Necessary

**Hiring novice sales reps may save you money, but are they worth the time and effort?**

*Entrepreneur* magazine - December 2002  
 By Kimberly L. McCall

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Marx Acosta-Rubio built his \$6 million business with a sales force made up almost entirely of "green" talent--employees who were completely new to the world of selling. In 1998, Acosta-Rubio, 32, launched **One Stop Shop**, a Chatsworth, California, company that sells computer supplies and peripherals to businesses. His current sales force includes eight employees, seven of whom have no previous sales experience. "I'd rather have someone who's a good human being and who hasn't been poorly trained, and train them properly," explains Acosta-Rubio on why he prefers such hires.

He chose to adopt his company's no-sales-experience-preferred philosophy as the result of a former position where he was both salesman and trainer. "Those

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[new reps] with no experience 'got it' more quickly, so when I started my own company, I had already figured this out," Rubio-Acosta says.

Entrepreneurs are now discovering that fresh, untrained sales talent can be a powerful way to build a sales force. If you're considering hiring sales neophytes, you should first carefully weigh the ups and downs of going the tabula-rasa route.

**The Pros**

- **Willingness to learn new things:** Take someone who's been unfulfilled financially and intellectually in a dead-end job, give him or her a shot at real money in a profession that's got career legs, and you'll likely have an eager learner.

George Ludwig, CEO of George Ludwig Unlimited (www.georgeludwig.com), a Cary, Illinois, training, development and research firm, agrees: "Green salespeople tend to be more enthusiastic, with very little of the cynicism that seasoned reps often develop."

- **Lower salaries:** According to The Wall Street Journal's CareerJournal.com, the average sales rep working in Los Angeles earns \$42,170 yearly before commission. It's \$46,791 for a New York City sales professional, and Chicagoans average \$44,390.

Entrepreneurs may be able to easily entice new sales talent with a much lower salary than it would take to woo a more experienced rep. Just ask Ludwig, who once brought a high school student on board and taught him how to sell to save money on payroll.

- **The chance to create your ideal selling machine:** Acosta-Rubio thinks one of the top benefits of a newbie seller is malleability. "You can mold them, and they don't bring negative baggage," he says. "You don't have to deprogram them."

Terri Levine, president of [Comprehensive Coaching U Inc.](#), a business coaching and training company in North Wales, Pennsylvania, agrees. "Nonprofessional salespeople can be trained to learn a philosophy of serving vs. selling with more ease." Levine also thinks sales novices "aren't manipulative, don't have closes memorized and are more natural."

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*Take someone who's been unfulfilled financially and intellectually in a dead-end job, give him or her a shot at real money in a profession that's got career legs, and you'll likely have an eager learner.*

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## Potential Pitfalls

- **Time- and labor-intensive:** Training is a long process regardless of sales acumen, and instructing new hires may require much more of your company's time. "There can be a significant learning curve," warns Ludwig. "It can be very labor-intensive for the entrepreneur to establish proper systems for rookie hires."
- **Churn rate:** Folks who are completely new to sales may learn they're really not cut out for the job and decide to jump ship. A greater percentage of sales hires "wash out" when hired green, according to Ludwig, which could add up to a lot of labor lost on the search and development of talent.

If you're going to hire a sales novice, be sure to look for important traits, including: a positive attitude about the prospective position and about life in general, an obvious willingness and eagerness to serve people as well as sell products, and what Ludwig calls "OQ," or optimism quotient. OQ will determine how the rep reacts to the rejection, adversity and setbacks that all salespeople have to endure.

*Kimberly L. McCall is president of McCall Media & Marketing Inc. ([www.marketingangel.com](http://www.marketingangel.com)), a business communications company in Freeport, Maine.*

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- **George Ludwig Unlimited**  
(888) 999-4811
- **One Stop Shop**  
(818) 725-7126

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