

# Sourcing Sales Talent with Non-Traditional Sales Backgrounds

Quality sales hires can be found almost anywhere, not just in candidates with direct sales experience. How are B2B sales organizations sourcing and recruiting non-traditional candidates for front line sales roles, such as those with no sales experience, no college degree, or large resume gaps?

The most commonly interviewed non-traditional candidate is one with no sales experience

Candidate reticence is a challenge for nearly half of sales leaders

A vast majority of respondents will increase their focus on candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds this year

Data collection: February 14th - March 14, 2024

Respondents: 50 Directors, VPs and C Suite executives whose organizations' recruitment funnel for B2B front line sales positions is inclusive of non-traditional sales backgrounds (e.g., no B2B sales experience, no college degree, large resume gaps, etc.)

## About Gartner Peer Community One-Minute Insights:

Gartner Peer Community is for technology and business leaders to engage in discussions with peers and share knowledge in real time.

Surveys are designed by Gartner Peer Community editors and appear on the Gartner Peer Community platform. Once the respondent threshold is met, survey results are summarized in a One-Minute Insight.

The results of this summary are representative of the respondents that participated in the survey. It is not market representative.

1 Minute Insights

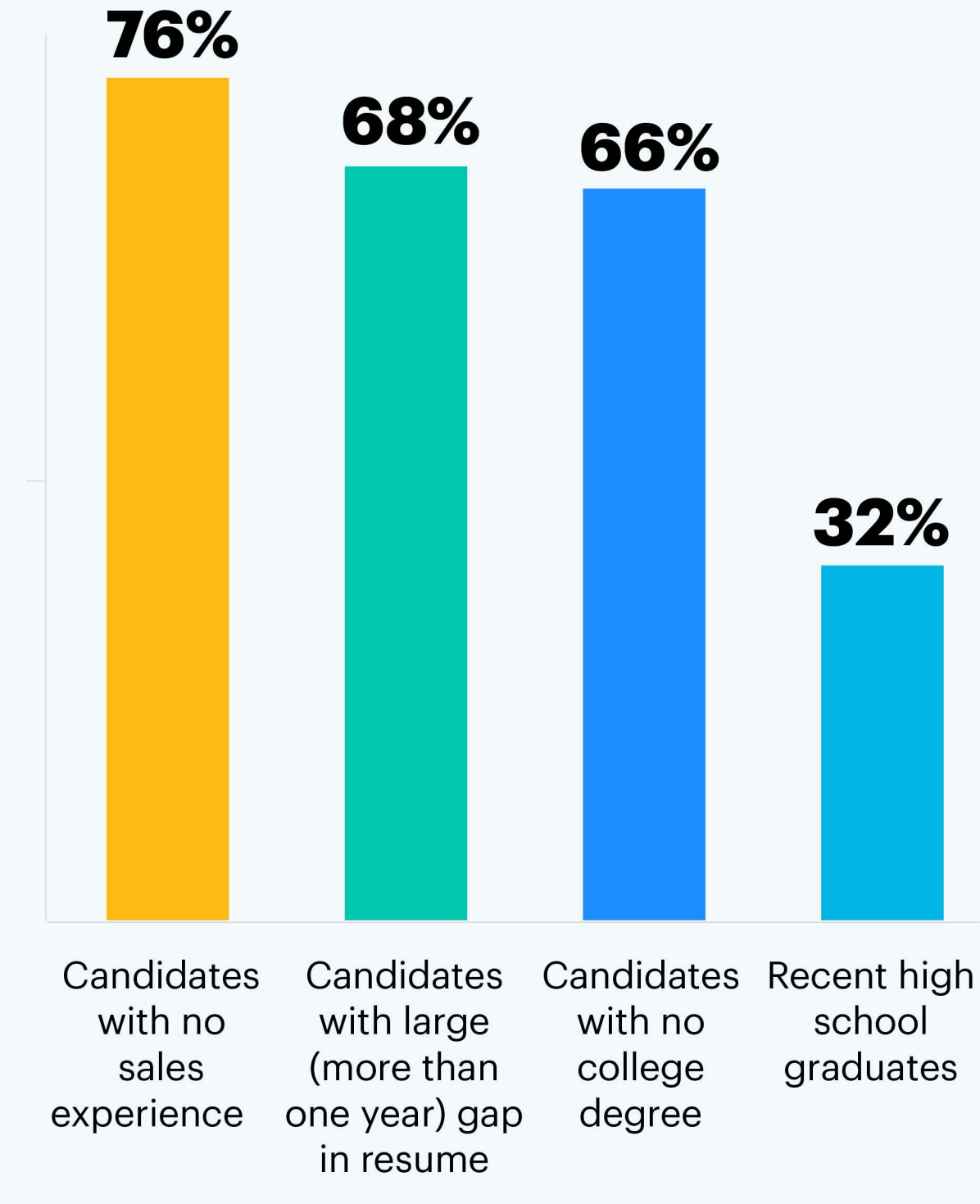
## Over the past year, sales leaders have been open to hiring candidates with no sales experience

The most common non-traditional sales candidates interviewed by respondents in the past year are candidates with no sales experience (76%).

Which of the following types of sales candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds have you interviewed in the past year? Select all that apply.

Unsure 0% | Other 0%

n = 50

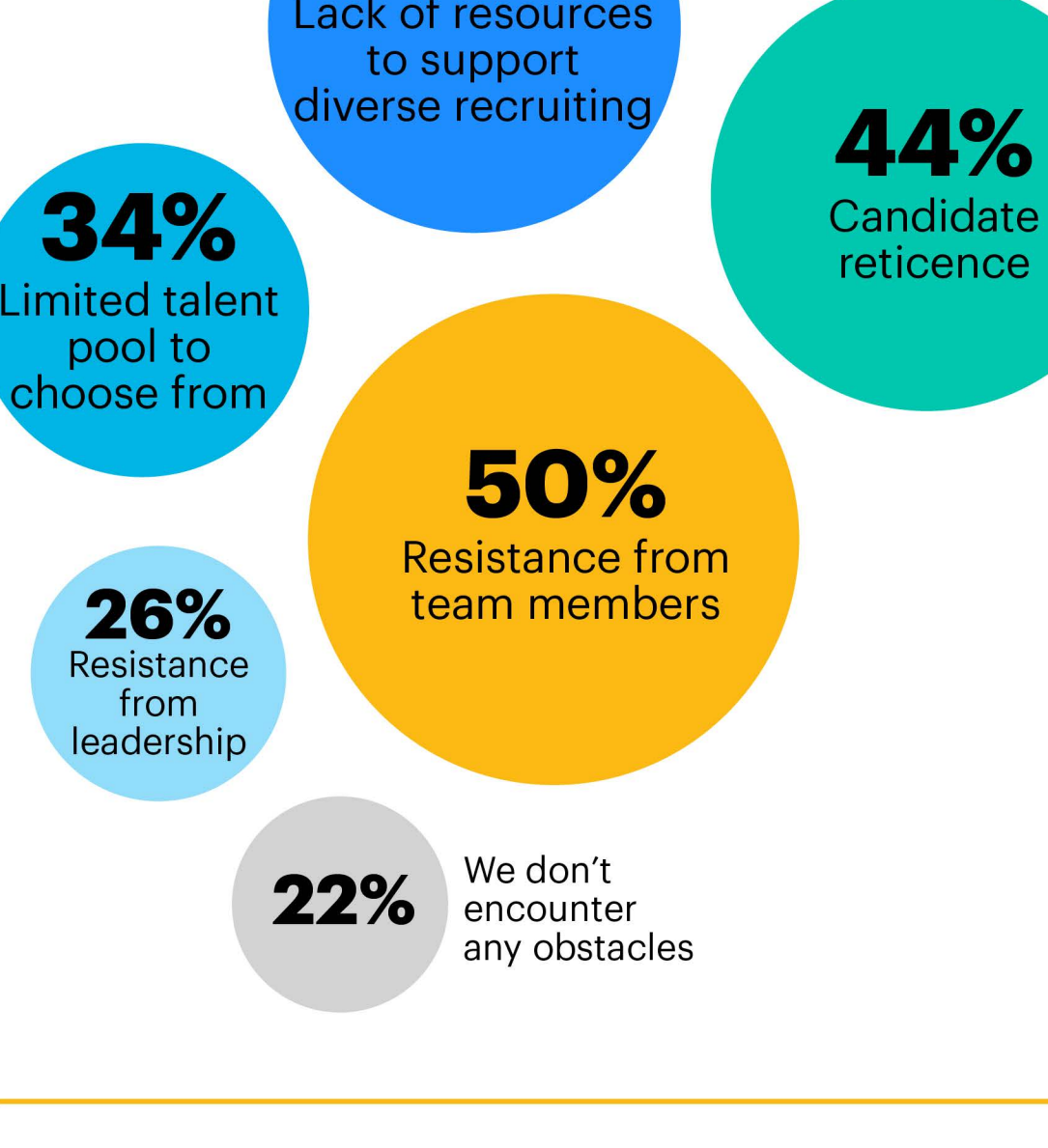


“Remember, some of the best sales people come from hospitality, or other industries, even teaching. They need to start somewhere in sales and giving them the opportunity is great for them, AND, you don't have to undo bad habits.”

VP, software industry, <1,000 employees

Question: What advice would you give another sales leader looking to increase their focus on recruiting candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds?

## Team member resistance and candidate reticence are typical challenges



“A key element is working closely with the recruitment agencies you use as it can be a challenge for them to consider putting forward candidates without strong sales backgrounds. We also look at marketing candidates that may be interested [in] sales. This is particularly relevant to us as we are moving ownership of the early parts of the sales cycle from the sales team into marketing.”

- C-suite, software industry, <1,000 employees

Question: How have you overcome obstacles (if any) you've encountered when trying to source candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds for front line sales roles?

Resistance from team members (50%) and candidate reticence (44%) are the two most common roadblocks faced by sales leaders when trying to source candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds for front line sales roles.

What are the most common obstacles you encounter when trying to source candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds for front line sales roles? Select all that apply.

Unsure 0% | Other 0%

n = 50

“Our interviews are tailored to the type of candidate we are considering. If we are interviewing a non-sales background candidate then this will be factored into the questions we ask and the expectations we have in terms of sales experience and skills.”

- C-suite, software industry, <1,000 employees

Question: What support (if any) does your sales team provide to sales candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds to help them have a positive application or interview experience?



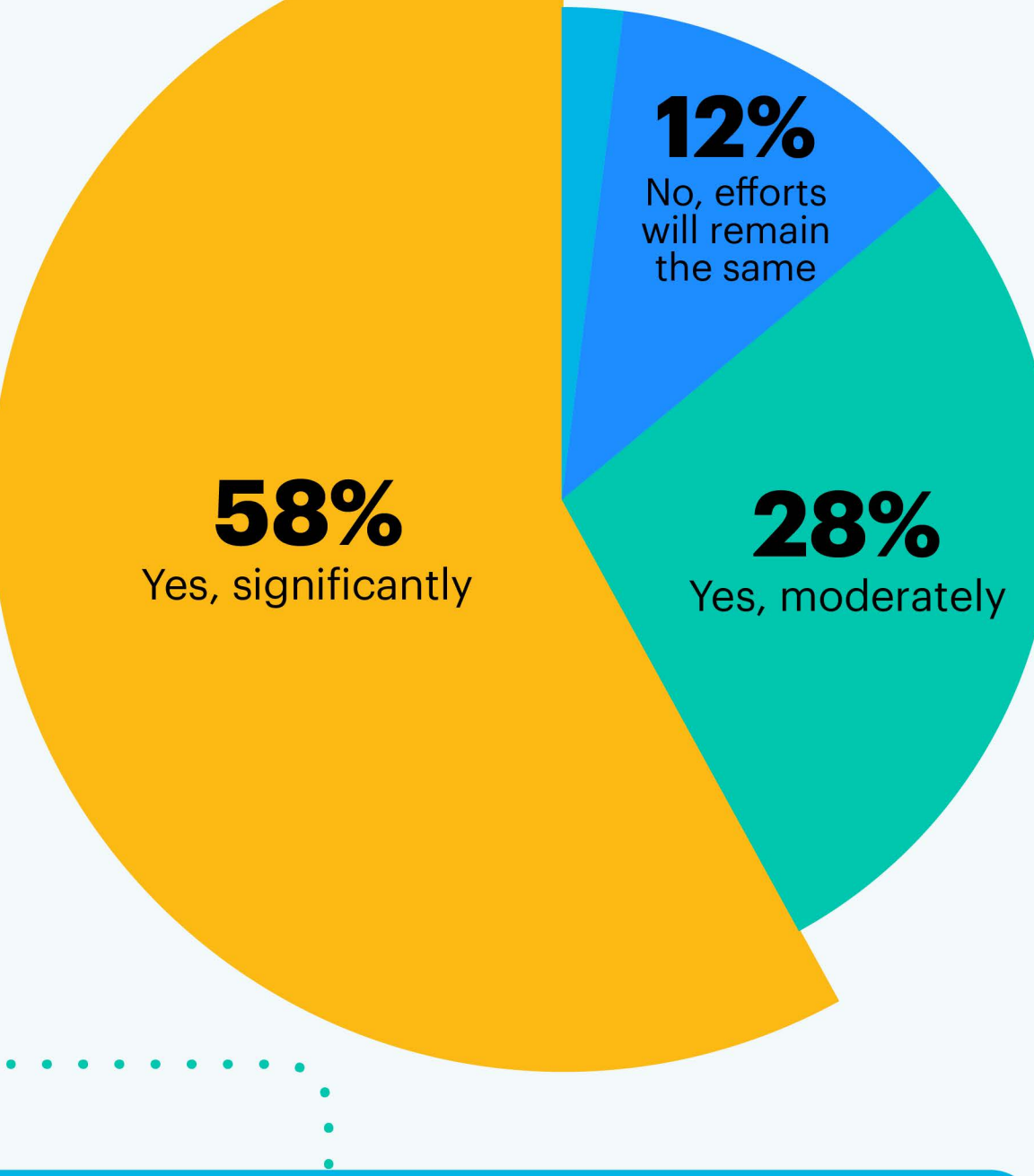
## In 2024, sales leaders will increase focus on sourcing non-traditional sales hires

86% of respondents will significantly or moderately increase their focus on recruiting candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds in 2024.

Do you anticipate increasing your focus on recruiting candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds in 2024?

Unsure 0%

n = 50



“Rigorous recruitment. The lack of background is irrelevant if you have a solid enablement program and you find the right candidate.”

VP, software industry, <1,000 employees

Question: What advice would you give another sales leader looking to increase their focus on recruiting candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds?

## In their own words...

“I believe that if trained in the right way, a non-traditional person can do wonders. So [the] focus should be on the right way of training.”

- C-suite, professional services industry, <1,000 employees

“Understand what core personality traits are successful in your company, with your clients, and in your culture. Combine those traits with relevant experience. The most successful candidates are those that have a high growth mindset. The most successful companies that hire non-traditional sales candidates have strong onboarding programs with hands-on practice and support for candidates.”

- C-suite, professional services industry, <1,000 employees

“The HR team coaches the candidate on how the business is run for them to get an understanding of the role and expectations, and also coaches the hiring manager to look at the ability and not experience of the candidate.”

- VP, professional services industry, 10,001+ employees

“Extend your search avenues, cherish a variety of competencies, and allocate resources to bespoke education efforts to smoothly assimilate candidates from non-standard backgrounds.”

- C-suite, professional services industry, <1,000 employees

Question: What advice would you give another sales leader looking to increase their focus on recruiting candidates with non-traditional sales backgrounds?

## Respondent Breakdown



Note: May not add up to 100% due to rounding

Respondents: 50 Directors, VPs, and C Suite executives whose organizations' recruitment funnel for B2B front line sales positions is inclusive of non-traditional sales backgrounds (e.g., no B2B sales experience, no college degree, large resume gaps, etc.)

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Source: Gartner Peer Community, Sourcing Sales Talent With Non-Traditional Sales Backgrounds survey

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