

# The State of Sales in Ireland, 2009



Compiled by [www.SalesJobs.ie](http://www.SalesJobs.ie)

## Introduction

Welcome to the 2009 Sales Survey results! Our survey is the largest survey of its type in Ireland and provides a powerful and fascinating insight into the minds of sales professionals in 2009.

The survey was launched in late October 2009 and was live for 4 weeks. Over 14,000 sales professionals across a broad spectrum of industries and roles were surveyed.

The survey contained 50 questions and covered all aspects of sales from remuneration through to sales targets to key motivators to work-life balance and everything in-between.

The survey was fully completed by 644 sales professionals and partially completed by a further 140. This has enabled us to provide a powerful insight into the 'State of Sales in Ireland in 2009'. The aim of the survey was to give us all greater understanding on how to manage and motivate our sales teams through tough financial times and beyond.

The survey was promoted across our sales job boards, sales forums and social networks.

We hope that you enjoy this report and find the data useful and we are happy for you to use this data in any way on the proviso that 'SalesJobs.ie' or [www.SalesJobs.ie](http://www.SalesJobs.ie) is cited as the author.

Happy selling,

Niall Kelly, December 2009

Niall can be contacted for comment on any elements of the survey by emailing [info@SalesJobs.ie](mailto:info@SalesJobs.ie) or calling 01 236 6636

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# Sales Survey 2009

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# Headline Findings

- One third of sales people when asked if the current economic climate has impacted on their sales performance replied they were either on or above target, encouragingly there are some healthy sales out there and it is not all doom and gloom
- The sales sector is not immune to the recession by any means with 40% of sales professionals stating they felt their current role is under threat of redundancy in 2009
- Sales Manager roles have suffered greatly due to the downturn with one in four of respondents currently unemployed previously working in the role of Sales Manager
- 70% of those unemployed had been recently made redundant
- Despite the economic situation 21% were given an increase on their 2009 targets
- 43% of employers did not take into consideration the wider economic downturn when setting targets
- Direct face to face sales meetings win hands down as the most effective form of selling
- 35% are willing to take a pay reduction to help their company get through the current economic crisis
- The IT & Telecoms and FMCG sectors come in equal first as employers of sales professionals. Noteworthy, although unsurprising is the total demise of sales representation in the financial and property sectors
- The two biggest motivators to keep sales staff (or what they'd look for in a new job) were i) opportunities for progression/career development, and ii) Their employer's products, reputation and competitive edge
- 53% were educated to higher diploma level or higher, of which 30% hold degrees or masters
- A majority 36% of respondents believe increasing sales & marketing budgets would best help their company deal with the current economic situation
- 'Aggressive and Dictatorial' were the most popular words to describe their line manager's style though this was thankfully followed by 'Supportive and Empowering'
- 66% felt they could perform their line managers role more effectively
- Motivation remains a key driving factor. The majority, 66%, would prefer the opportunity to *earn* €10,000 in commission than receive a straightforward €5,000 basic salary increase.
- Stress levels remain high. An overriding majority two thirds of sales professionals considered themselves to regularly work under stress levels of medium or higher.
- 71% state they work over 40-60 hours a week with one third of the total working in excess of 50 hours
- 60% are in contact with the office and check emails whilst on holidays or over the weekend
- Business owners and CEO's take note; 54% felt they did not receive enough training in their role and 32% had not received a single day of training in the last 12 months
- 'Increased Marketing' was cited as the single most important factor enabling success (2nd was 'Better management and direction', 3rd 'More competitive pricing'
- Maintaining an acceptable work/life balance wins over accepting a role offered with a 50% pay rise that would severely impact on their life. 52 % wouldn't accept the role.

# Gender

Of the 644 full respondents, 525 (82%) were male.

There is a greater female representation (22%) in Dublin compared to 18% in the South of Ireland

Pay remains vastly unequal, the proportion of women in high powered jobs is low and certain industries within sales were dominated by men. Although we may see gender salary inequalities even out due to the increasing level of females entering sales and as they may progress into higher salary brackets.

23% of males work in a sales management compared to 20% of females. This proves that women are taking leading roles in sales and are almost on a par with men.

The largest disparity of gender representation in roles is that of the field sales rep which represents 30% of males compared with only 18% of females.

Females take the lead in the education stakes with 38% of female sales professionals with a BA or masters degree whilst the male professional is running at 29%

Females are less likely to target sales as a professional career with 35% of women respondents to the survey hadn't planned to work in sales compared to 16% of men.

Women seem to be fairing better in light of the economic downturn.

- When asked about employment status, 29% of men answered that they were unemployed compared to 21% of women unemployed.
- 31% of men answered the reason for leaving their last job was redundancy compared to 25% of women.

Yet, based on this survey data men appear to be the hardest working gender!

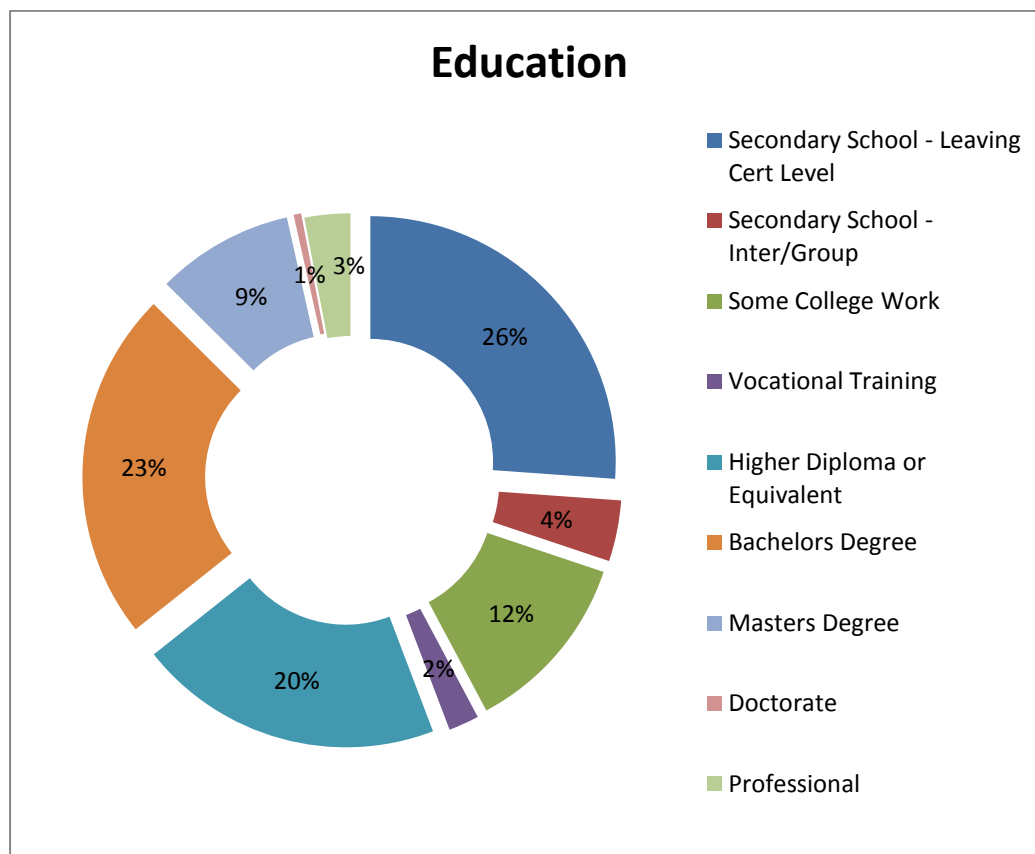
- Men are working longer hours. 26% of men said that they worked more than 50 hours a week, while only 17% of females answered that they worked over 50 hours.
- Almost double the amount of men, 13% answered calls daily compared to 6% of women whilst on holidays.

In spite of this, men appear to be the more positive sex when asked if they enjoyed working in sales, 96% of men said that they enjoyed working in sales compared to 90% of women

Although even stakes on how men and women rate their career out of ten. Both sexes scoring 16% rating their career either 9/10 or 10/10.

# Education

When it comes to education, a total of 51% respondents have completed diplomas or higher of which 30% were educated to degree level:



## Spotlight on ... Educated to 'degree level or above'

- Those with a masters degree are the least likely to be unemployed. 7% of respondents with masters were currently unemployed compared to 50% of unemployed respondents qualified to secondary level only.
- The highest proportion of those educated to 'degree level or above' now work as a 'Sales Manager'.
- 30% educated to 'Degree Level or above' stated they hadn't planned to work in sales and grew into the role.

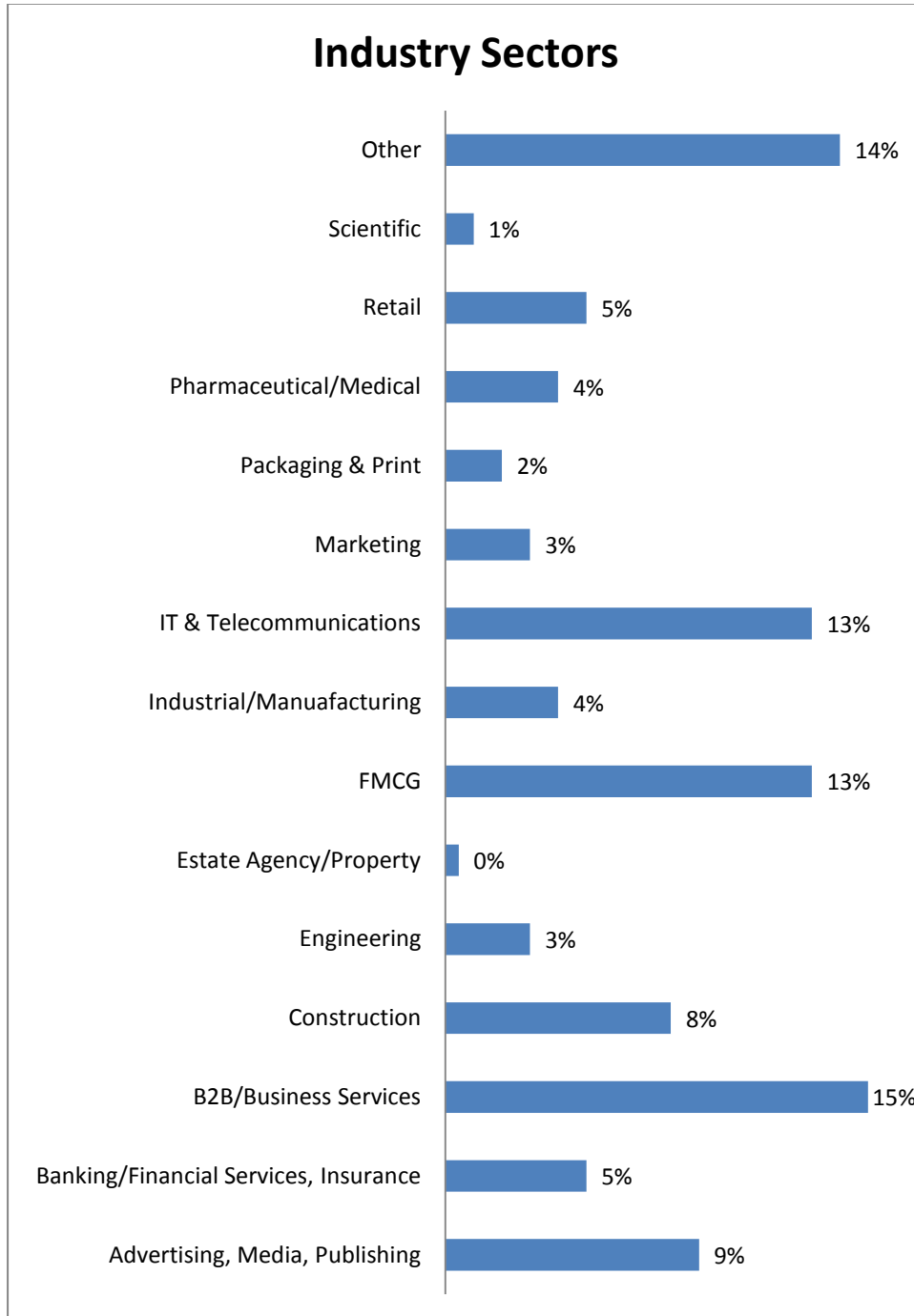
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# Industry Sector Variations

The survey had participation across a wide range of industry sectors as follows:



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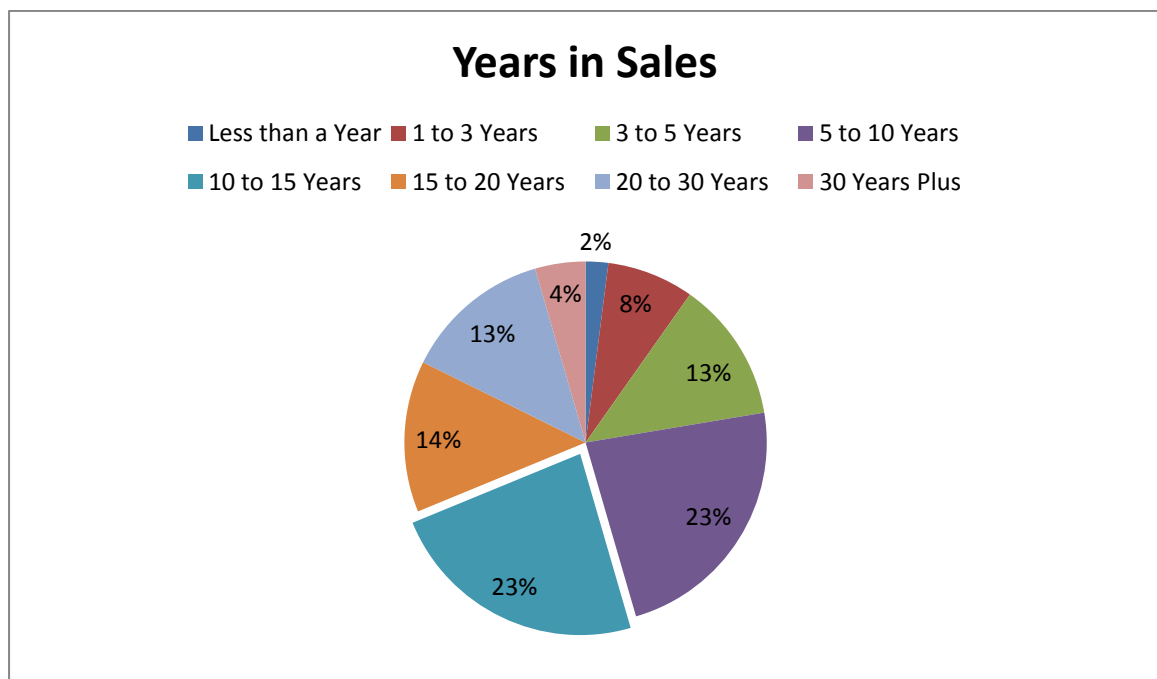
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# Length of Experience in Sales and Marketing

The survey was in the main completed by experienced sales professionals with 86% having greater than 5 years sales experience.

How many years have you worked in sales?



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# The Effect of the Economy

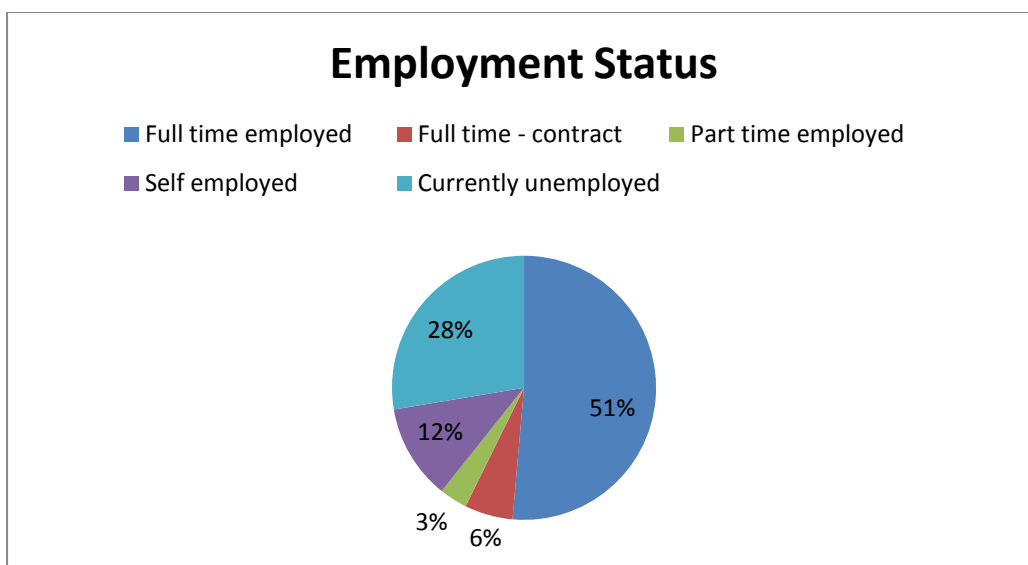
## Snapshot: Employment Status

28% of the respondents were unemployed. However we should place the caveat that as our candidate community are in the main looking for employment this will not be a fair reflection on the 'sales industry' as a whole.

Of those who were unemployed, 70% had recently been made redundant.

51% of respondents were in permanent full time employment, a further 6% were self employed or in contracted full time employment and 3% were employed part time.

The following facts emerged regarding unemployment in sales.



- There were no great disparities indicated on a comparative level between the national sales statistics and those of the unemployed statistics of gender, age or sector. Unemployment seems to have impacted all areas of the profession
- Although the Sales Manager role has been affected greatly due to the downturn, with one in four of those currently unemployed stating their previous working title was in the role of Sales Manager
- The highest rates of unemployment were found to be in Dublin, where 34% were unemployed, the South of Ireland, where 20% were unemployed, and the West where another 16% were unemployed. Although it must be noted that these figures were in line with the total percentage spread of sales professionals across these regions.

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## Snapshot: 2009 Targets

It is with no doubt that we state 2009 has been a tough year for all in business' due to the economic downturn. Business owners, sales managers and all of those in sales have had to motivate and stretch out of their comfort zones to maintain or achieve sales turnover in a tightening competitive market.

Despite the economic downturn, over a quarter of people surveyed had received a year on year target increase in 2009 (perhaps it can be argued that this is the right strategy in tough times!).

57% of people said that their company DID take the economy into account when setting these targets. 26% saw a decrease in targets compared to last year, 12% received same targets as last year.

The fantastic figure to report is that despite the economic downturn 3 out of 10 sales professionals were on or over target.

We now analyse the results of those who indicated they were up on target. Is there anything we can learn from these achievers in such difficult times, training given, management styles?

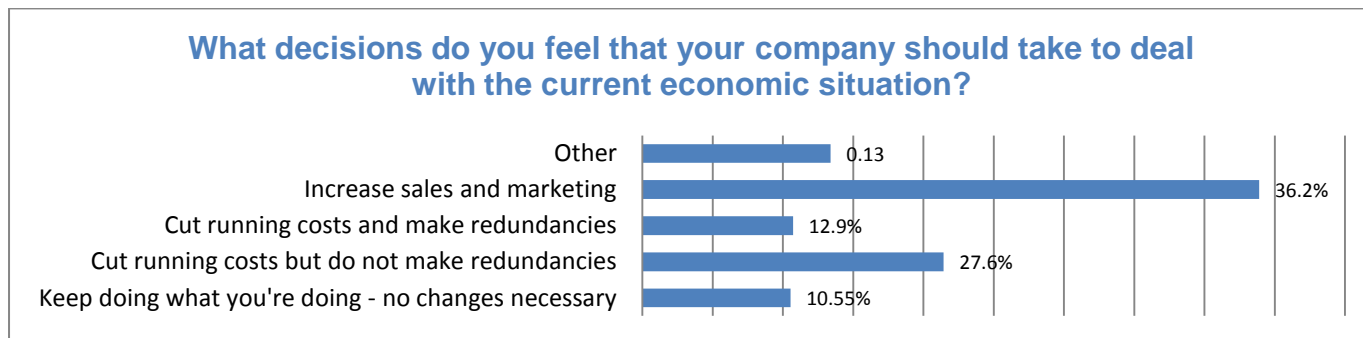
- The target achievers in 2009 were 90% male and 10% female
- The IT sector showed most growth with the highest percentage of target achievers working in IT. The FMCG sector came second
- 75% of target achievers in 2009 had an increase in target when compared to 2008
- They are least likely to feel their role is under threat of redundancy but it still factors at 20%
- Target achievers have received more training days when compared to the national level and by majority consensus they feel they receive enough training by 65% compared to 45% feeling they have enough training provided in the overall study
- Target achievers remain high earners even in the downturn with surprisingly 51% stating they now earn more than in 2007.
- Target achievers work longer hours than the national average sales person with a higher number falling into the 50-70 hours a week bracket
- Target achievers rate better management as the single most important factor enabling success
- The majority vote of 37% of target achievers believe their company should increase sales and marketing budgets to deal with the current economic situation



### Snapshot: Are you happy with how your company is dealing with the financial crisis?

Despite the upsurge in sales targets, only 10% of people are happy with how their companies are dealing with the financial crisis.

- The majority thought investment in sales and marketing should be increased in order to deal with the financial crisis.



### Snapshots: Pay cuts

- 36% of respondents had been asked to take a cut and a further 40% noted they had been asked to take a pay freeze.

### How happy is the Irish sales force?

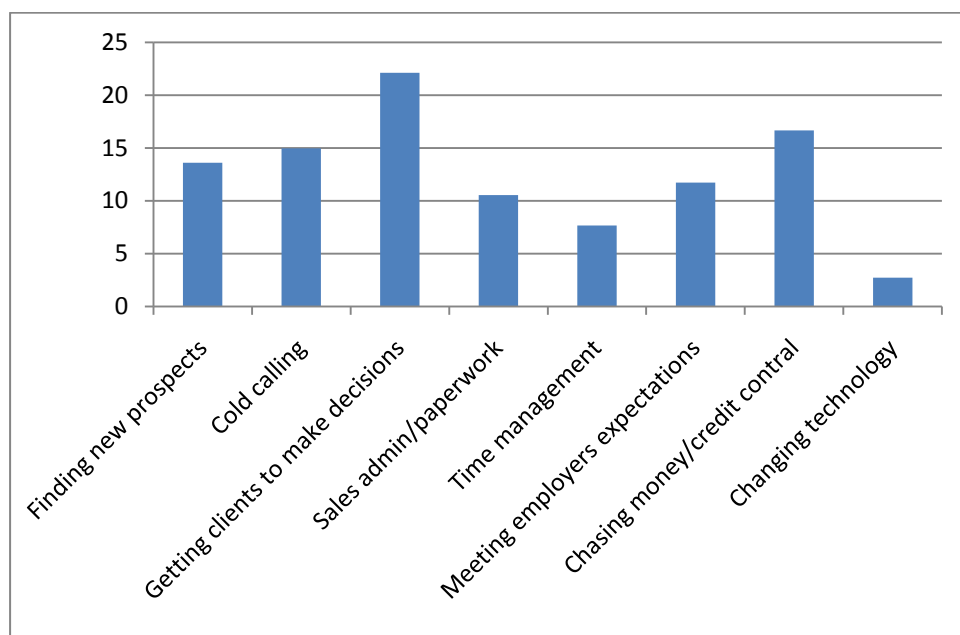
- Despite the bad news of the economic downturn, sales professionals seem to be extremely happy in their employment.
- Of the 644 sales professionals that responded to the survey a refreshing 95% enjoyed working in the sector.
- Half of those questioned did not plan a career in sales. 31% described themselves as growing into a sales role and 20% 'fell into the role.'

### Selling in a tough economy:

- 40% would take on additional responsibilities without additional pay to help their company get through the economic crisis.

### What is the most difficult aspect of the role?

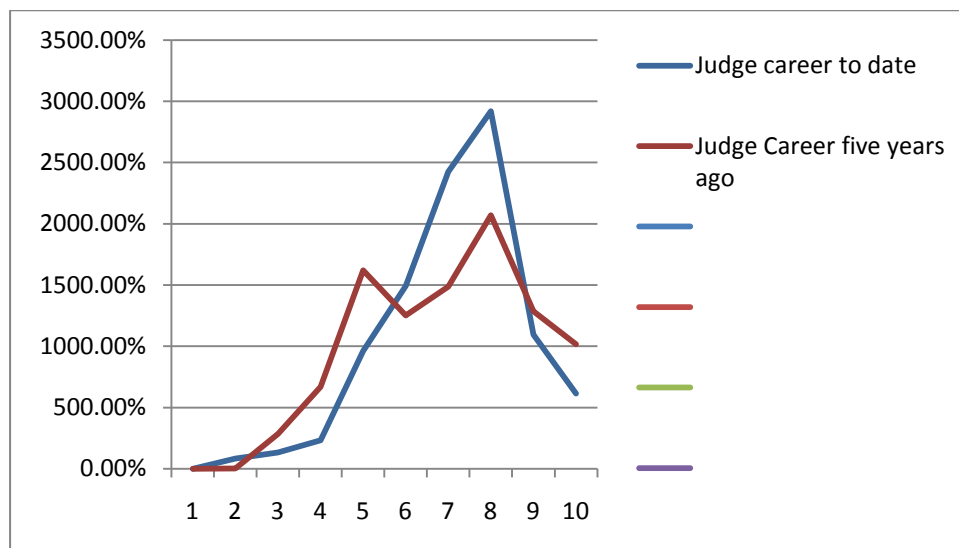
There was quite an interesting spread amongst what was deemed the most difficult aspect of sales, though somewhat unsurprisingly 'getting clients to make decisions' 23% was the leading answer!



Less than 3% are intimidated by changing technology and changing sales methodology. Despite the rise in social networking, viral marketing and non traditional sales methods this was a surprise.

### How do you judge your career to date?

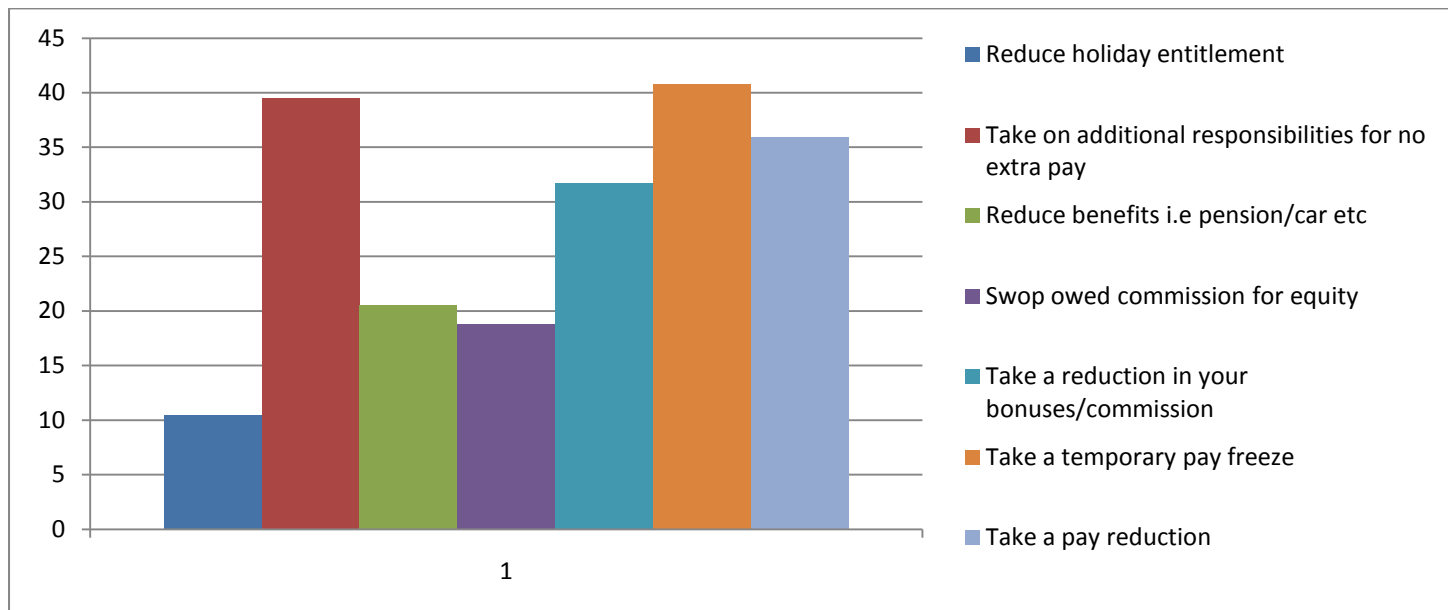
How happy are sales professionals. The respondents were asked to judge their career to date out of ten (1=low, 10=high) and then to judge their career five years ago on the same basis. Here are the results:



As a whole the 'sales industry' is mildly happier with the direction their career is going than five years ago.

## To help your company get through the current economic crisis would you.....

In the following bar chart respondents were asked the above question and were able to answer as many of the following potential solutions as they chose to do so



The following salient comments were made to this question:

1. Done enough already 33% pay cut. Cut costs in other places other than sales
2. I work for a corporation I would not accept any of these things
3. Pay reduction as long as it was fair and equitable and applied to all staff.
4. Take unpaid holidays in addition to annual entitlement
5. Reduce basic, increase commission
6. If you're bringing in the sales why take a pay cut. Companies, I feel are jumping on the band wagon and using the down turn to cut pay.
7. 26 counties to cover instead of 13 as of 1 month ago

# How has sales changed?

## How has technology impacted upon sales?

With advances in technology and more and more companies offering web demonstrations and online seminars we were surprised at the extent face-face sales is still deemed the most effective way to secure business.

When asked the question, a staggering 78% deemed face-to-face meetings to be most effective form of selling.

It will be interesting to observe the below statistics on the effect of technology and if it is beginning to change the way in which we sell. Only 3% answered that online meetings/webinars were the most effective form of selling, and a further 2% answered social networking was the most effective way of securing business. We will observe with interest if these statistics increase in 2010 as we slowly move towards a more digital way of conducting business.

## How often do you use the Internet at work for non-work related use?

Although the internet has become more popular in the last two years, it actually seems that sales people are using the internet reasonably infrequently in the work place for personal use.

- Over four in Ten answered that they use the internet for thirty minutes or less for personal use whilst at work

## How influential are Sales professionals within Irish businesses?

- The 'sales department' is retaining its status of being the most influential department within a business with 57% of respondents naming it as the most influential division within their current company. The next most influential departments after 'sales' were 'Accounts/Finance' (22%), 'Marketing' (7%), R&D 4%, HR 3% and 'others' at 6%.
- When asked whether the sales division had become less influential in the current economic crisis, 40% answered that it had.

## The most Effective ways of selling in 2009

The survey respondents were asked to put the following ways of selling and marketing into a rank order from 1 (least effective) to 5 (most effective). Here is the raw data and response in order:

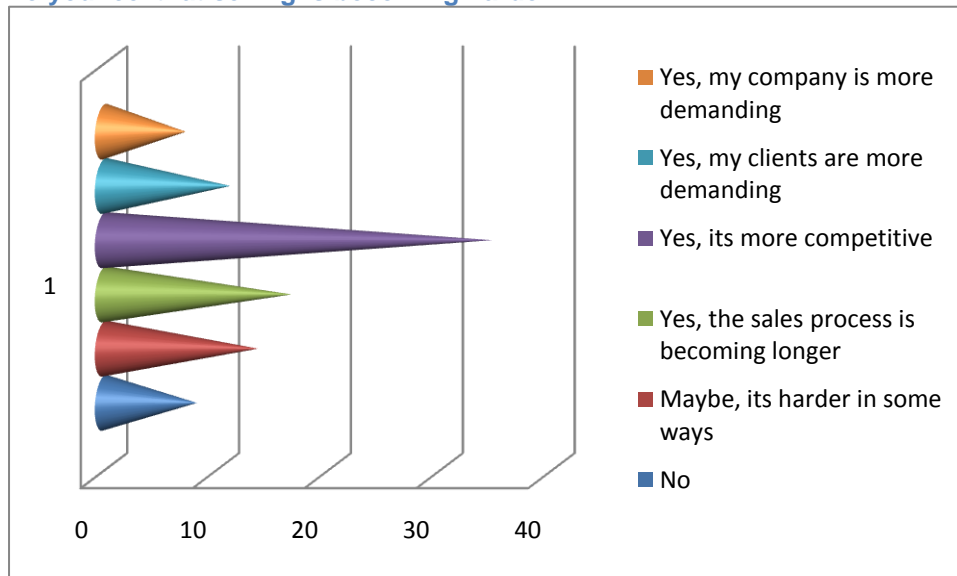
	1	2	3	4	5
Face to Face Meetings	3.21%	1.02%	3.05%	14.21%	78.51%
Exhibitions	9.79%	26.01%	36.47%	20.15%	7.49%
Telesales	12.31%	30.19%	30.96%	19.62%	6.92%
Networking Events/Seminars	9.46%	24.52%	38.8%	22.01%	5.21%
Marketing Campaigns (direct mail, email marketing)	11.75%	30.41%	33.21%	19.96%	4.66%
Online Meetings/webinars/Teleconferences	22.88%	34.52%	27.61%	11.44%	3.55%
Social Networking websites	34.06%	31.3%	22.64%	9.84%	2.17%

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### Do you feel that selling is becoming harder?

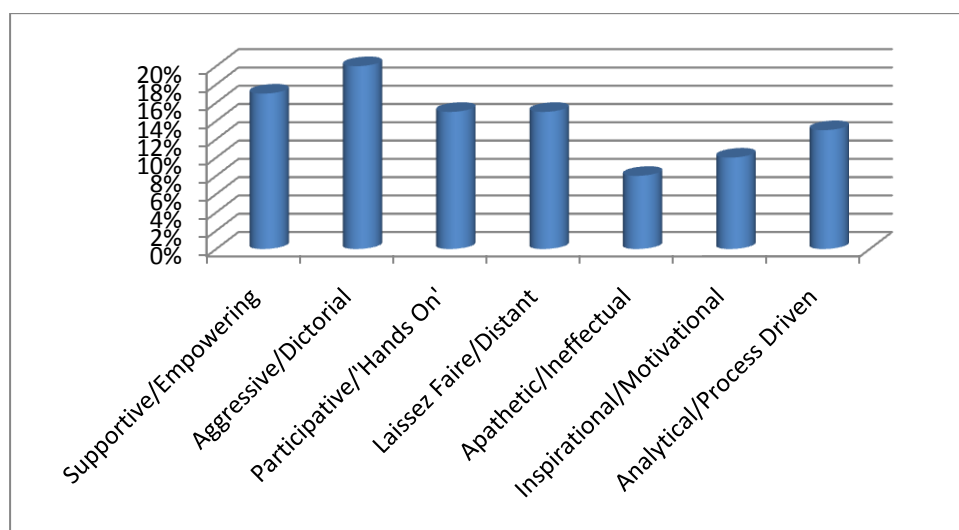


## How are our sales teams managed and directed?

### Do you feel that you could perform your line manager's role more effectively than them?

Yes	67%
No	33%

### Describe the management style of your line manager?



### Quick facts ...

The style of management most commonly experienced by the target achievers of 2009 was the supportive/empowering style with 'hands on' style coming in second.

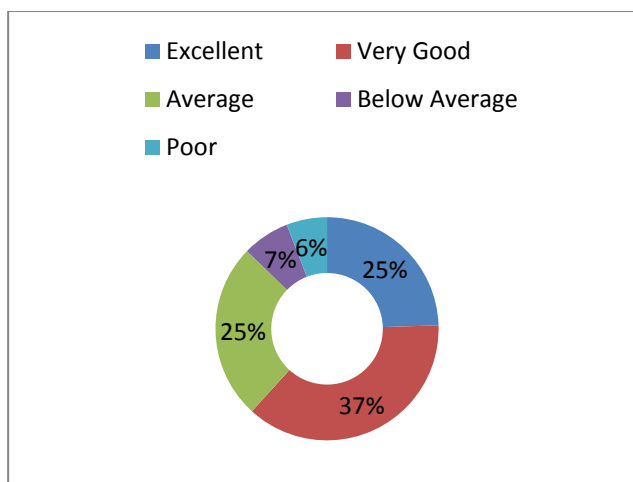
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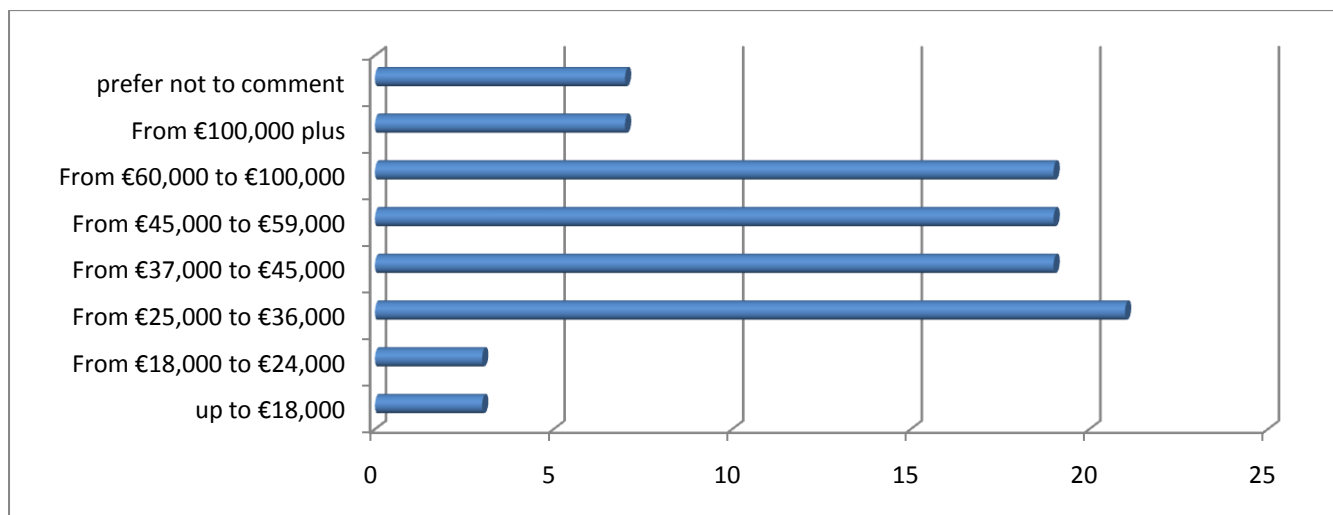
## How would you describe your relationship with your line manager?

Only 13% described their relationship with their line manager as below average or poor. Over half (62%) described their relationship with their line manager as 'very good' or 'excellent'



## Pay, Benefits, and Package

### Snapshot: Annual income of sales professionals.



### Snapshot: Despite the recession pay is still on the rise.

- 48% of respondents have had a pay rise in the last 2 years.
- 13% confirmed that they had received a pay rise in the last 12 months

### Snapshot: Sales People are not lazy and there to take the 'easy buck'!

Given the option of earning a potential 10K 'target related bonus' or a €5K guaranteed basic salary increase it was great to see that the vast majority (66%) opted for greater reward and risk.

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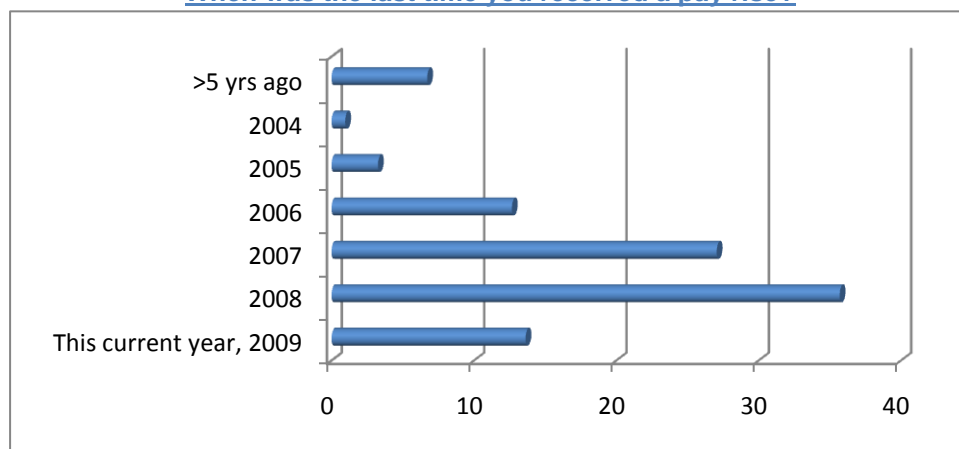
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### Snapshot: Minority of sales people would sacrifice their work/life balance for a 50% pay rise.

When we asked sales people whether they would accept a 50% pay rise even if it meant that it would severely impact on your work life balance 48% answered yes and 52% no!!

#### When was the last time you received a pay rise?



### Spotlight on ... 100K plus earners

- Of the 39 respondents that were '100K plus earners' a staggering 36 were male!
- 43% working within the broad 'IT and communications' sector
- The vast majority (71%) had ten years plus sales experience
- 61% were graduates
- 66% reside in Dublin with a further 16% stating East of Ireland
- 45% didn't plan a career in sales or 'fell into the role'
- 79% believed that face-to-face sales was the most effective followed by telesales, networking then exhibitions
- 33% thought their role could be under threat of redundancy
- 81% work at weekends, 49% work more than 50 hours per week
- 36% answered that they had a stress level of medium to high and 21% said they had a stress level of high.

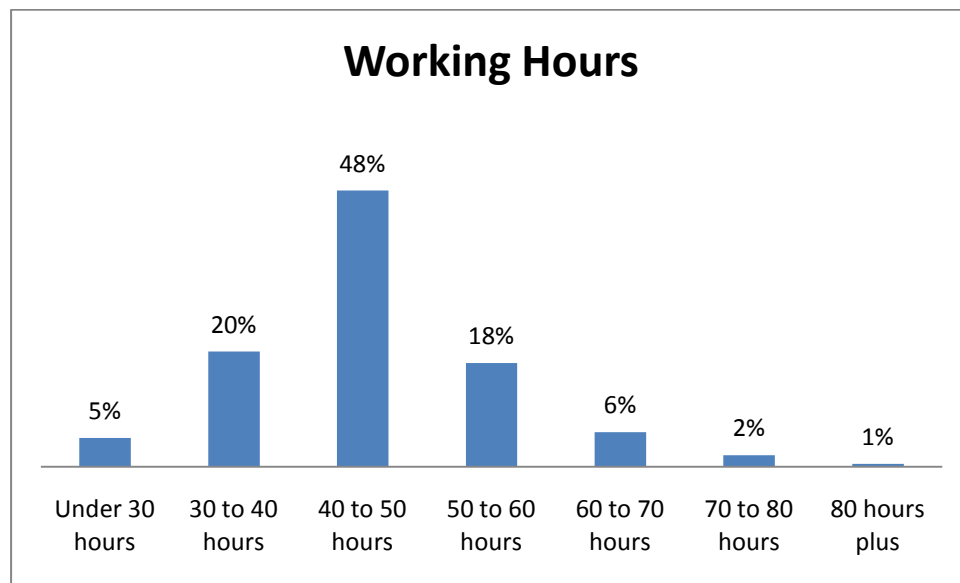


# Working Habits

## Snapshot: Sales People are hard working!

74% of all sales professionals work in excess of 40 hours per week.

## How many hours a week do you typically work?



## Snapshot: Some sales professionals never switch off!

12% of all sales professionals 'check e-mails and take calls' daily during their annual leave. A further 10% 'check emails every day but rarely call the office', and 8% 'call the office and access emails most days'.

The majority, 46% answered they will take the odd urgent mobile call and occasionally check my emails.

## Do you ever work/do your paperwork at weekends?

25% of all sales professionals regularly check e-mails and take calls at the weekends (and an additional 48% will take the occasional call.)

Only 12% of sales people surveyed have answered that they never work weekends.

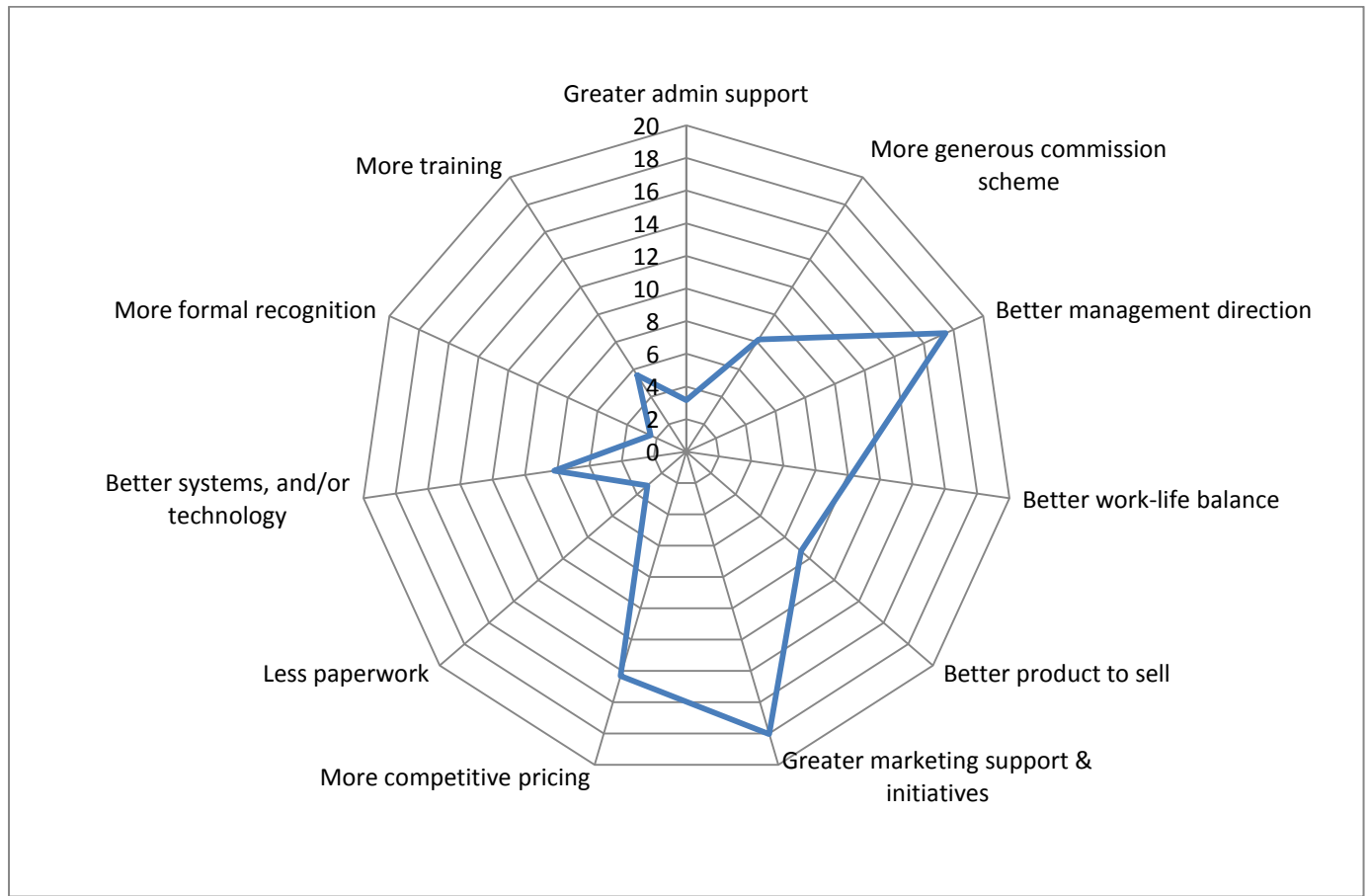
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# What would make Ireland's Sales Professionals more successful?

Which single thing do you feel would make you more successful in 2010?



## Snapshot:

- Slight majority vote towards greater marketing initiatives and support over management

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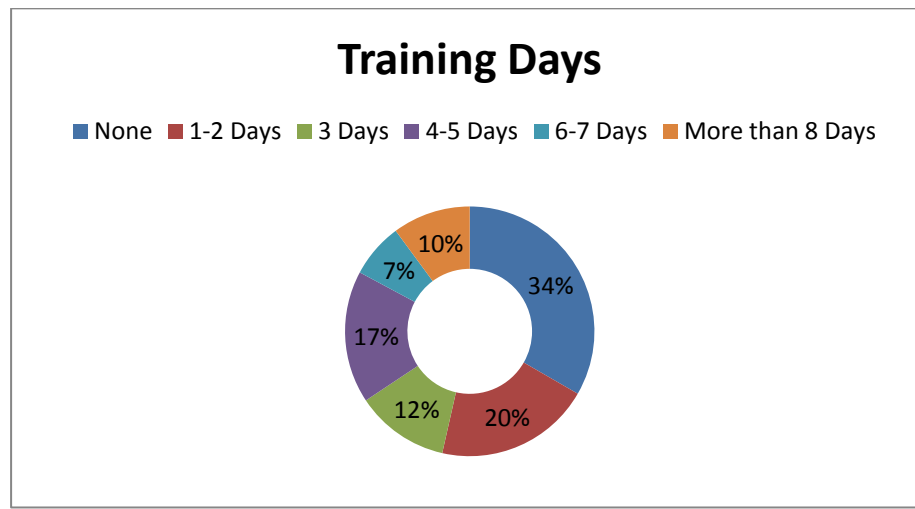


# Training and Development

## Are you happy with the amount of training you receive in a year?

Yes	45%
No	55%

## In your current role, how many 'training days' do you get per year?



## Snapshot: Lack of Training!

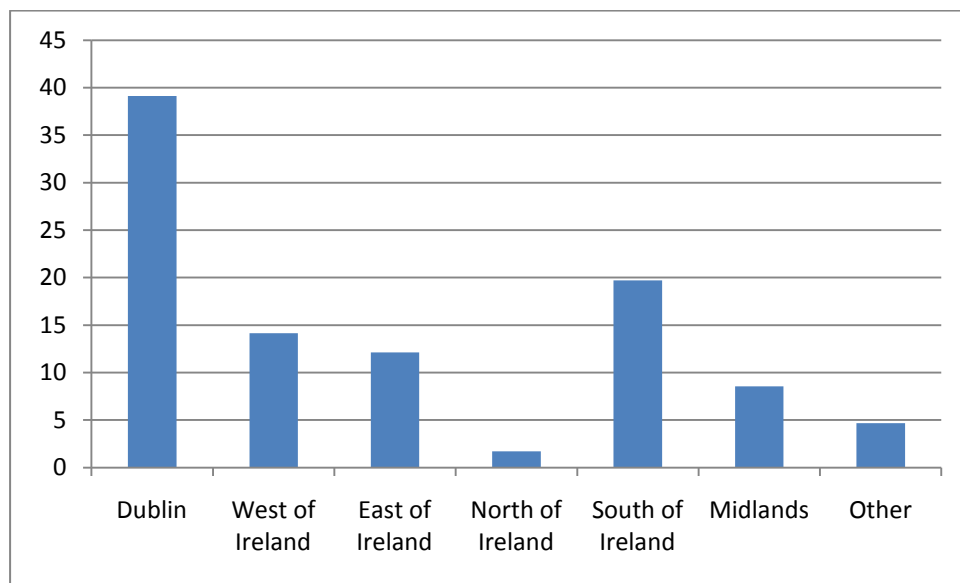
- 55% of people feel that they don't get enough training in their current role.

The survey highlights that the best way to motivate and retain your sales staff is to offer training and development together with opportunities for career enhancement. There is an undeniable and obvious link between 'training days received' and 'performance against target' with target achievers receiving more training compared to sales professionals in the overall results.

The top three training requirements cited were 'new business generation/cold calling' (19%), 'Time Management and Planning' (19%) and 'Motivational Training' (12%).

# Location – Geographic Variations

We have had responses from a very broad spectrum of areas across Ireland. The breakdown of where the respondents lived is as follows:



## Spotlight on ... South of Ireland

- Employer pay cut requests are higher in the Southern counties compared to a national level. 35% nationally have been asked to take a pay cut to help their employers through the current economic crisis, compared to the higher statistic of 41% have been requested to do so from the southern counties.
- There is a lower uptake in sales in the south of Ireland with only a 2% spread in the 18-26 age bracket as opposed to 9% uptake in Dublin in the same bracket
- The unemployment rate in the South was on par with the national trend.
- The FMCG sector employs the highest amount of sales professionals in the South of Ireland, 21% of respondents
- There is higher representation in the role of field sales in the south, showing 36% of all South Ireland respondents compared to 14% of field sales represented in Dublin
- The gift of the gab still rings true for southerners. We asked our sales professional respondents to name the single most difficult aspect of their role and one in four Dublin respondents listed Cold Calling. Whilst only one in ten in South of Ireland named Cold Calling as the single most difficult aspect.

### Spotlight on ... Dublin

- Job security is stronger in Dublin with 38% feeling their current role could be under the threat of redundancy compared to 46% of redundancy threat in South Ireland
- 20 % of Dublin sales professionals rate better management direction over greater marketing when asked which single thing would make you more successful in 2010
- There is a greater earning power in Dublin with 20% more professionals earning in the higher salary band brackets when compared with the national level averages
- 10% more Dublin sales professionals fall into the 40-50 working hours a week bracket when compared to a national level
- A majority of 18% Dublin sales professionals work in the IT sector with the Media sector coming a close second on 15% of Dublin respondents industry representation

### Spotlight on ... West of Ireland

- The West had the highest level of unemployment in comparison to other regions at 31%. 68% of people living in the West are either in full time or part time employment, or are self employed.
- Yet people in the West are among the least threatened by redundancy. Only 27% answered that they felt threatened – the lowest proportion by region.
- Fields sales is the most common sales role of the West, 45% are working in that role
- 20% more sales professionals in the West believe selling is becoming harder than the national belief
- Annual income in the West is below the general national trend. 14% of western sales professionals indicated earnings higher than €60,000 compared to 32% nationally

### Spotlight on ... Midlands

- The Midlands has the highest proportion of female sales professionals in Ireland than any other region.
- The Midlands had the highest number of sales professionals in full time employment at 56% with a further 10% working part time or on contract and 6% self employed.
- The construction industry are the second biggest employers of sales people in the midlands.
- 100% job satisfaction goes to the Midlands with all respondents replying they enjoyed working in sales.
- People from the Midlands report that they work under higher levels of stress than sales professionals from most other regions. 13% indicated they worked in the highest stress level compared to 10% for the Dublin region and the South were most chilled on 6%

### Spotlight on ... Northern Ireland

Considering the fact that less than 2% of respondent were from Northern Ireland, we decided that compiling a list of results would be inaccurate and biased.

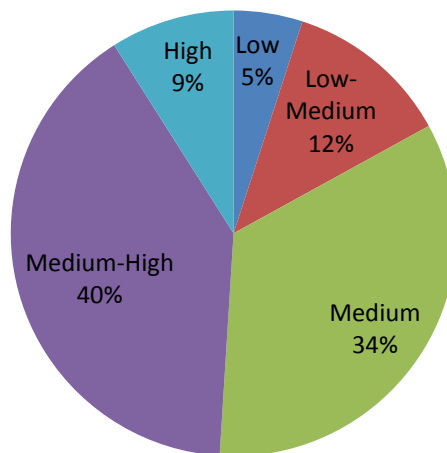
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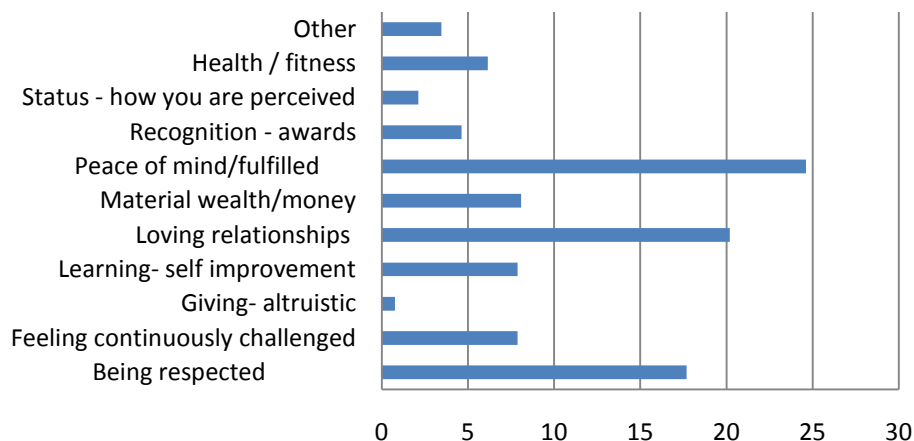
# Life in general

What level of stress do you consider yourself to regularly work under?



Which of the following defines success to you (which of these would you say is your single most biggest motivator)

## Success Definitions



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# The Recruitment Industry and Job seeking

## Spotlight on ... Respondents applying for jobs

58% of respondents were currently actively looking for a new job. Over a third of which are currently in full time employment.

A majority 30% only apply for 2 to 3 sales jobs at a time. This statistic decreases the higher you are up on the career ladder with sales directors and sales managers generally only applying for 1-2 roles at a time.

15% claim they apply for more than twenty jobs at a time, and 9% apply for more than 50.

## Spotlight on ... Online Job searching

- 85% of people found that the internet has made it easier to find a new job.

## Quick facts ... Why are you looking or why did you leave your last job?

- 30% are looking due to redundancy
- Career progression comes next with 14%
- Equally on 9% in third and fourth place is 'To earn more money' and 'New Challenge'
- Better company and/or product services comes in 5<sup>th</sup> on 7%

## Quick facts ... How do sales professionals find career opportunities?

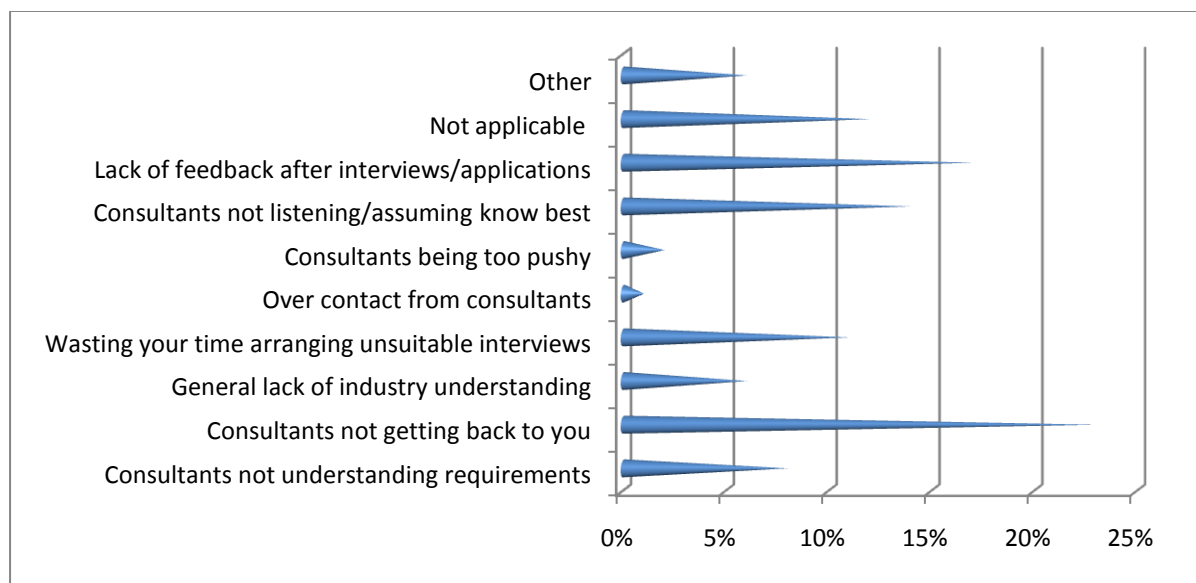
- Being 'headhunted' and 'word of mouth' are the most common ways people have found their current role. 24% sourced their job through being 'headhunted' and 21% due to 'word of mouth'.
- Specialist recruitment agencies was the third most effective way with 12% stating they sourced their current role in this way.
- Specialist job boards such as SalesJobs.ie comes in fourth with 11% sourcing their current role through the site.
- This vastly beats generalist job boards (non sales and marketing specific) through which only 3% found a job, and generalist recruitment agencies (5%).
- 5% sourced their job through national or local newspapers.

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## What is your biggest complaint about the recruitment industry?



In 2009 as the market moved from a candidate driven to a client driven market the highest complaint 23% falls into the 'consultants not getting back to you' is of no surprise.

More alarming to the recruitment industry would be the 14%, third highest complaint of consultants not listening or assuming they know best.

Of the 12% who named 'waste time arranging unsuitable interviews' the biggest complaint the majority were employed in the advertising media sector

## Comments

There were many comments posted in the 'other' section which we have listed below with a view to helping the recruitment industry improve on practices with constructive criticism. The most common complaint not listed in the above graph was agencies posting bogus roles.

1. I feel there is little regulation across the industry and the little that is, is not being imposed on people, this is giving those that are doing things properly are being tarred by the bad ones
2. Advertising jobs that don't exist
3. If you apply for a role which you believe you have the capability to do they should at least contact you to further explore the reasons why you applied
4. Recruiters looking for quick win, don't want to build relationships
5. Every application should be responded to.
6. Consultants not recognising transferrable skills
7. Agencies need to match better and treat applicants as clients
8. Inability of consultants to determine factors of consistent high performance. They "throw bodies" at jobs. employer takes all risks ...often untrained in how to assess applicants.
9. I would be quite happy with most agencies I have dealt with although there are a lot who do not get back to you

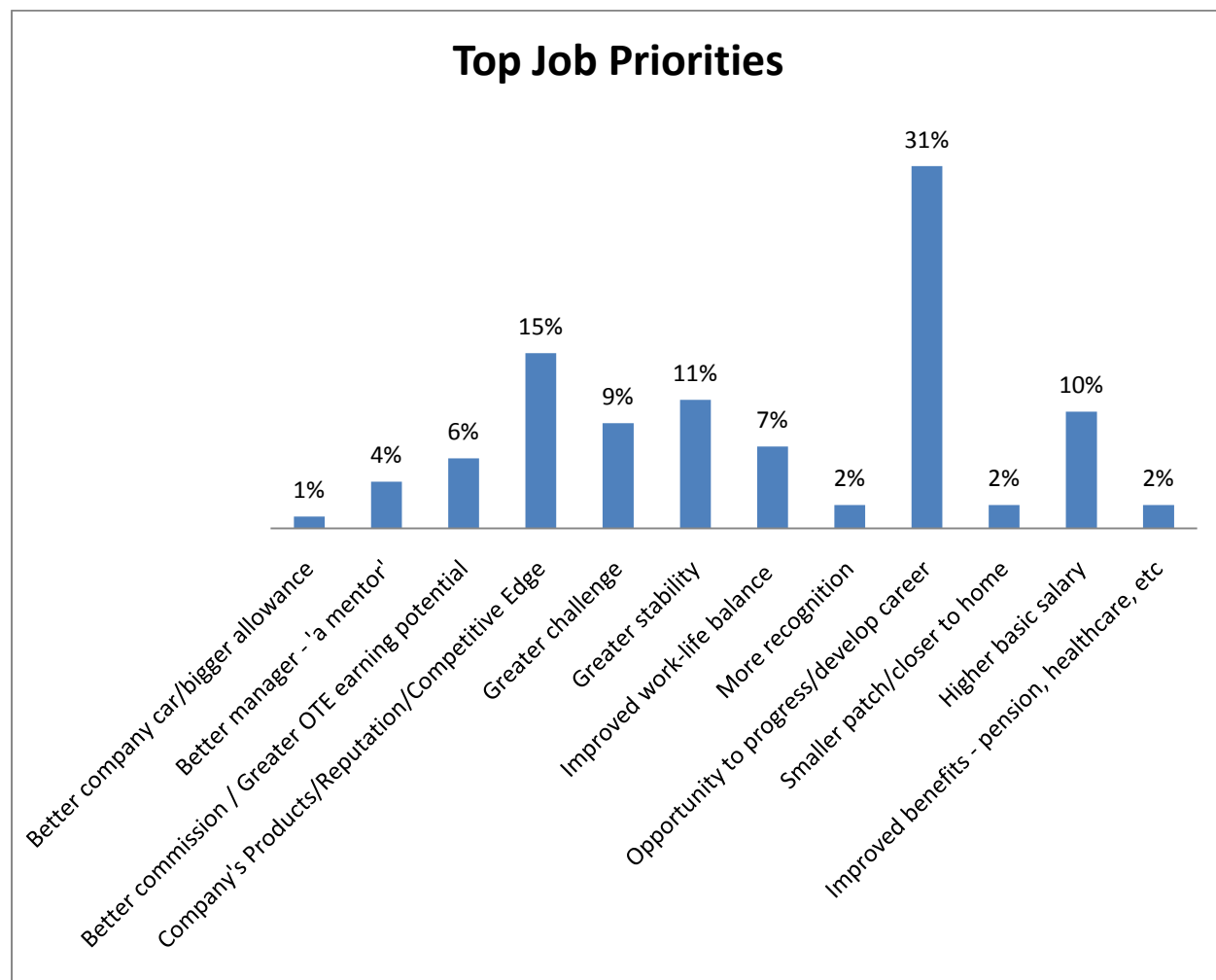
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### What one thing would you look for in a new job?



### How to retain your Top sales talent:

The survey highlights that the best way to motivate and retain your sales staff is to offer training and development together with opportunities for career enhancement.

# What Motivates Sales People?

Throughout our 2009 survey we have found sales people are not as 'mercenary' and 'materialistic' as their non-sales colleagues would often like to describe them. Of the many options which we gave for how employees within the 'sales industry' would measure their success, a huge 24% responded that they would measure their success on 'peace of mind' and how fulfilled they were. This compares to only 8% who value material wealth and money as an indicator of success.

## What Sales Professionals are looking for:

Sales professionals are hard working, looking for stability and looking for companies that respect the contribution that they make to their organisations. They are looking for reputable employers with good management and solid direction that offer good products/services that are backed by a genuine 'competitive edge'.

Sales people to a large extent have to be 'money motivated' to ensure they have the drive and purpose to put themselves on the 'front line' each day. However, for the majority it is the thrill of the sale and the achievement and recognition that they'll receive as much as it is about the reward.

To conclude, don't think that bonus and financial incentives are the sole way to motivate your sales teams. Rather invest in training for your sales staff, regularly appraise them and recognise the hard work and long hours that contribute to your business. Remember that a regular 'thank you' and the occasional 'slap on the back' of recognition costs little and go a long, long way.

## Survey Summary

Never has it been more pertinent to analyse the sales profession as in current times. Sales is core to business survival. We hope by bringing you closer to understanding the status, opinions, passions and motivating factors of the Irish sales professional it will enable business owners and sales managers to nurture their business' along with their staff. In publishing these key findings we hope to open doors of opportunities for business in 2010.

## About [www.SalesJobs.ie](http://www.SalesJobs.ie)

SalesJobs.ie was founded in 2003 and remains the number 1 jobs board to source sales candidates covering sales roles across all industries in Ireland. It is the only specialist sales job board of its kind in Ireland.

The website provides a cost effective medium for companies and agencies to advertise their sales roles to a targeted audience. The site attracts over 25,000 visitors per month and CV applications of a sales calibre from the Irish Sales Professional. Over 18,500 sales jobseekers have registered to date.

**Niall is available for comment on any aspect of this survey and can be contacted on 01 236 6636 or at [niall@salesjobs.ie](mailto:niall@salesjobs.ie)**

We would like to thank Rob Scott, founder and MD of Aaron Wallis Sales Recruitment a leading UK based sales recruitment specialist who has conducted many similar surveys of the sales market in the UK with his help compiling this survey. [www.aaronwallis.co.uk](http://www.aaronwallis.co.uk)

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