How Microsoft Enabled Career Mobility for New Employees
Building Accessible Career Onramps

Inspired by his own experience as a restaurateur, Todd Minor recognized the opportunity to accelerate his vision for the Microsoft Sales Academy as a launchpad for a promising sales career at Microsoft for talent Skilled Through Alternative Routes (STARs).

Todd recognized that technical and sales skills could be taught, but grit, determination, and perseverance were key differentiating characteristics for individuals in digital sales, a key sales role for the company.

Giving new hires access to a sales academy enabled them to build on their existing skills and add to their skill sets, while fulfilling a key business need and driving up engagement and retention for a key part of the workforce. The academy model that Todd initiated in digital sales has become a replicable model for recruiting a more diverse talent pool into Microsoft, along with other inclusive-hiring programs at Microsoft.
Identifying potential and skill adjacencies surfaces talent that might otherwise be overlooked

Hiring managers should consider opportunities to bridge into their roles as part of their sourcing strategy, rather than default to industry hiring.

**INSIGHT #1**

Presumed overlap between frontline and next-level roles

Actual overlap between many frontline and next-level roles
Shift hiring manager mindset to screen in, not out

Early stages of the selection process enable candidates to select in, rather than be sifted out.

1. Recruiting team adopts a “screen in” posture, seeking candidates from origin jobs that conveyed customer service and other skills.

2. Candidates are invited to a job overview presentation.

3. Recruiters conduct six-point phone screen.

4. Hiring managers run batch-interview days.

5. Hiring managers conduct group preparation to align on success indicators.

6. Interviewers participate in group debriefs to ensure consistency.

Managers need training on inclusive-hiring practices and on setting clear, consistent expectations about the profile and qualifications of the candidates they’d be hiring.

“Don't underestimate the change management for interviewers on what it takes to assess people’s capabilities.”

—Mary Peebles, Senior Director and Sherri Slade, Senior Manager (Global Talent Acquisition at Github)
Adapt training to complement STARs’ skills

Workers who are Skilled Through Alternative Routes have a foundation of skills and experience to build on.

INSIGHT #3

Entering the Sales Academy, associates already possess:

✓ Service orientation
✓ Sales experience or customer interaction
✓ Learning agility
✓ Desire to be in a sales career path

Identify Additive Skills Needed

Emphasize skill translation where jobs overlap, target upskilling in practical ways where gaps exist

Job A

Job B

Tailor Curriculum Progression

- Start with business unit mindset, culture, and role-specific systems (e.g., CRM)
- Build skills focused on role-playing and end with calling real prospects
- Coach on behaviors such as autonomy
Dedicated academy managers ensure effective onboarding

Academy managers’ incentives are aligned with the needs of learners in the academy to get them through the program and transitioned to their sales manager successfully.

**Skills:**
- Instruction
- Mentorship
- Empathy

**Prior experience:**
- Prior sales management
- Mentorship
- Employee development

**Incentives:**
- Learner completion and placement
- Retention

**Skills:**
- Meeting sales targets (individual and team)
- Sales skill development

**Prior experience:**
- Sales experience

**Incentives:**
- Meeting quota
Focus on employee experience holistically

To realize STARs’ full potential in your workforce, continue to invest across the employee lifecycle.

**Talent Sourcing, Acquisition, & Onboarding**

*Success in role:* Relevant and complete onboarding and training, effective supervision and management, compensation and rewards, and wraparound supports.

**Retention & Total Rewards**

*Employment value proposition:* Workers know what the company has to offer them.

**Talent Development & Advancement**

*Internal upward mobility:* Clear opportunities and promotion criteria, as well as flexibility to explore multiple career pathways.

**Culture**

*Culture of inclusion:* Elevate, celebrate, and promote STARs.
Identify and resolve operational constraints

Organizational processes, structures, and systems may place unexpected limitations on your plans. Anticipating and resolving these challenges will speed progress.

Adjust planning and operations to accommodate investments in STAR readiness and surface these obstacles with business partners so they can be addressed structurally rather than on an ad hoc basis.

Examples include:

- **Budgeting restrictions** that under-resource onboarding and training
- **Headcount restrictions** that constrain hiring into programs such as internships or apprenticeships
- **Staffing ratios or other restrictive policies** that do not account for work-based learning models
- **Metrics and measurement approaches** that create disincentives to invest in STARs (e.g., short-term productivity metrics)
80% of associates who graduated from Sales Academy exceed their sales targets

8 cohorts of the program, including expansion to:
- New employees (not just existing employees)
- Europe, Middle East, Africa, and Asia
- New roles

“Potential does not have a persona.”
— Todd Minor, General Manager, MCAPS Academy, Microsoft
Microsoft Academy Associate Experience Framework

Mindset, mechanics, and experiences

APPENDIX

Onboarding
Phase 1

- Culture and essentials
- Self-awareness and habits

Learning While Working
Phase 2

- Complexity and challenges
- Empathy and communication

Transition and Placement
Phase 3

- Wellness and energy

Mindset

Organization
- Ecosystem
- Structure
- Solutions

Role
- Partners
- Sales org
- Expectations
- Compensation

Agile selling
- Discovery
- Design
- Demo
- Drive

Tools and operations
- Tools
- Processes
- Compliance

Solution training
- Technical skills
- Certifications
- Applications

Professional skilling
- Time management
- Communications
- Listening
- Personal branding
- Compliance

Role mastery
- Hunting and prospecting
- Sensing the deal
- Enhanced /complex solution training

Pre-transition, targeted experiences

Mechanics

Sustained internal community
- Cohort group
- Alumni experiences
- In-business networking

Team / Org dynamics
- Internal relationships
- Navigating other groups
- Partners

On the job
- Practical applications
- Activities
- Experiences

Coaching experiences, knowledge validation, & ongoing support structure through SA manager

Experiences

Onboarding
Phase 1

Learning While Working
Phase 2

Transition and Placement
Phase 3