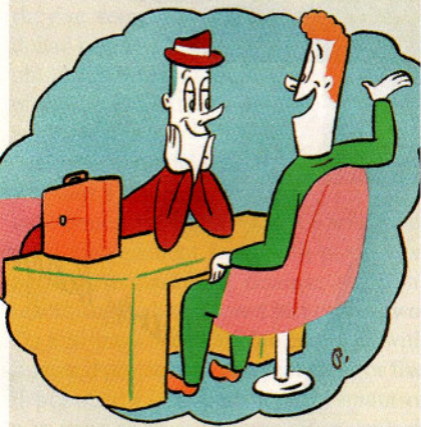


BY ANNE FISHER

## Willy Loman Couldn't Cut It

What makes a top salesperson? After studying sales stars at 70 large U.S. companies, the Ron Volper Group, a consulting outfit in White Plains, New York, concluded that the biggest difference between the solid and the so-so was an ability to listen. Top performers allow customers to do about 70% of the talking in a typical sales call. A few other findings from the study:

- Employers now ask salespeople to bring in business worth about ten times their annual salaries.
- The average cost of a face-to-face sales call is about \$400. On average, sales folk make eight 45-minute calls per week.
- Time available for actual selling is often short—as little as 1,400 hours out of the 8,760 in an aver-



age work year. Meetings and training chew up most of the rest of salespeople's time.

- It typically takes five sales contacts, by phone or letter, to get an appointment with a potential customer. On average, a salesperson makes six fruitless efforts to land a live one before giving up.
- Sixty percent of those interviewed say they plan to leave sales within three to five years, either to move into management or change fields altogether.