



GUIDELINES FOR **INTERVIEWING** **SALES PEOPLE**

SALESFORCE
SEARCH

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What skills are needed to be a successful salesperson? Salesforce Search believes that the techniques and methods of sales are teachable to anyone who has the desire to learn. However, there are several skills that are of great benefit if they already exist within a candidate who wants to be successful in sales. Without these, success will take a longer time but it can still be achieved through training, coaching and mentoring. If there is no desire and dedication to learning or developing these skills, then the selling will be much more difficult and often very stressful.

With every sales person you meet, look for the following characteristics and take them into account when assessing their suitability for sales.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATOR

Communication covers a lot of territory. Superb orator skills are not mandatory here, but the ability to speak clearly and in a manner that is easy to understand, is. Sales is all about talking to people and getting them to understand what you are trying to help your audience achieve. Candidates should be able to articulate their point of view and speak in clear, concise sentences.

ABILITY TO LISTEN

Along with speaking, a great salesperson knows when to stop talking and listen listen. They never cut someone off while they are talking, because in doing so they would fail to hear a key element in identifying what that person's needs might be. Contrary to popular belief, great sales people are the best listeners. Top sales professionals have told us, the more their prospective client is talking the greater chance of a successful sale.

ASKS GREAT QUESTIONS

Salespeople are naturally inquisitive and know that in order to isolate what the real need or desire is in the buyer, they need to ask questions that will lead them to the answer. They naturally ask questions because they have a desire to help solve their problem. Listen to how they pose questions, ask follow up questions and acknowledge potential objections.

PROBLEM SOLVER

Another natural skill is the desire and ability to solve problems. Great salespeople are always solving problems. The ability to hone in on what the buyer's problem is and offering suggestions that will effectively solve the problem with respect to what products or services you sell, generally results with a sale.

WELL ORGANIZED

It's commonly known that this is a typical weakness among the sales community. While many sales professionals claim to have a method to their madness, their thoughts and process need to be well organized. Sales people have a keen ability to break things down into smaller steps and organize a plan of action. They know how to analyze what their goal is and in what order the steps need to be in order to reach that goal.

SELF-STARTER AND SELF-FINISHER

A successful sales person moves forward on their own. They never need anyone to tell them when it is time to go to work because they know that if they do not work they will not earn. They are also very persistent to finish what they start. They achieve their goals, even if they are small ones. Find out if your candidate(s) have a pattern of starting things but not finishing them.

POSITIVE SELF IMAGE

Having the attitude that they can do just about anything that they put their mind to is usually very common among sales people. They do not cower from meeting or talking to people or trying something new. They rarely allow negatives that are either spoken to them or about them to effect what they are trying to accomplish because they know who they are and what they are capable of doing.

WELL MANNERED AND COURTEOUS

The best sales people are very well mannered. Good manners are a way of showing respect for others. People are attracted to those that respect them and mutual respect is fundamental in building lasting relationships with people including buyers. Some clients have told us they even ask the Administrative employee who greets them at the door, on how the candidate interacted with them.

PERSON OF INTEGRITY

A salesperson without integrity will have many struggles which will often include hopping from job to job. Honesty in sales is so important and it is almost impossible for this skill to be taught. You or the person you are looking to hire is either a person of integrity or not. Be as analytical as possible on the evaluation of this skill. Ask yourself if you trust what this person is saying. Do they look you in the eye when they are answering a question? Use visual clues in addition to their answers to assist you in determining a candidate's level of integrity.



To uncover whether a sales candidate exemplifies the key characteristics we've provided 10 questions below. Feel free to combine any of these into your interview questionnaire. Salesforce Search keeps a library of questions to ask potential hires so contact us if you require more.

1. Tell me about your last week at work. Tell me how you structure each day from the time you get up until you go to bed.
2. How many initial prospect meetings do you have each week and how do you go about getting them?
3. How many rejections do you face in a week?
4. What type of sales cycle is best suited for your approach to selling? A long sales cycle for large deals or a more transactional sale and why.
5. How much time do you spend directly with prospects and customers throughout a typical day and what specifically do you do with them?
6. Describe 2 of the most challenging objections or rejections you've faced in a sale and how did you respond.
7. Tell me about a time when you took a creative approach to getting a sale.
8. What are the 3 best open ended questions you ask a prospect on an initial meeting.
9. Describe how you your process for qualifying a prospect. From initial call to sale.
10. Give me your 30 second elevator pitch.

The questions above will help you uncover a number of traits that are important to being a successful sales person or prepare you well for your interview with any company.

The answers to the questions will speak volumes about

- How resourceful the person is, which is critical to success in sales.
- Attitude. When they fail, do they get right back up and tackle a new challenge?
- Are they results driven? Do they overcome all obstacles to get the sale?
- Do they ask great questions in the sales process and do they listen to customers well?
- Are they well prepared? Sales people who are well prepared will be able to answer these questions with ease and tell you a lot about how they would interact when in front of a company.

If you use some or all of these questions already, great. If not, they will help you make better hiring decisions in the future.

FACILITATING THE INTERVIEW

In a recent survey conducted by Salesforce Search, it was revealed that the number one area of improvement a Sales Manager can make during the hiring process is running a structured, consistent interview. We've provided 3 points to keep in mind to help get you there.

- 1.** Begin by introducing yourself and your role within the organization. Next, let the candidate know what they are about to experience for this meeting. Will they be peppered with questions and then leave? Will they get a tour? Will they have an opportunity to ask their questions? Being professional and organized will set the tone for the interview, allow you as the interviewer to control the meeting and lastly, make a great first impression for the candidate.
- 2.** Begin by asking your applicants questions from your prepared list. Be as relaxed and informal as you can without being unprofessional. There should be no need to hurry through your interview

(take plenty of notes). Your applicant is most likely to be a bit nervous and keeping the atmosphere relaxed will make for a better interview. Why? Because a relaxed applicant will talk more and the more they talk, the more you will learn about them.

3. Thank your applicant for coming in to apply. Whether you have decided at this point to hire this person or not, it is always proper and respectable to follow up with either a phone call or written correspondence as to your decision.

HIRING PROCESS

Does your organisation have a defined sales hiring process? If not, are you confident that your organisation is maximizing the ROI of your sales program?

The reality is that top performing sales organisations across North America have a defined process and clear metrics in place to measure the success of their sales recruitment process; and more importantly the direct effect it has on ROI and the company's revenue. Here is a list of "DO's" to help you increase the bang for the buck in your sales hiring process.

DO HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING OF THE REQUIREMENTS

This will increase the probability that you'll find a small group of candidates that can hit the ground running, add immediate value to your organisation and that they'll stick around for the long term. For further information take a look at our blog: [How To Write An Effective Sales Job Description](#). Do not have requirements in the position description that may be eliminating potential top performers. Meet with other people in sales at your company, including front line reps, and make writing the requirements a collaborative effort. You'll thank yourself later.

DO BE PATIENT

When we mention patience, we're referring to the first 80% of the recruitment process. Think about something similar in your personal life. How well would you imagine it works out when you are rushed to buy a car or a house? Have your process in place and know your objectives. Don't try to staff a strategic position in

DO HAVE A COMPENSATION PLAN THAT MAKES SENSE

your organisation in one or two weeks. BUT... once you find the person that is a great fit, don't be afraid to pull the trigger. Delaying that part of the process is a recipe for disaster. We've seen it happen many times before as clients see candidates they want to hire, working for the competition because they delayed during the offer stage.

You have to make a distinction between a couple of things: are you looking for a sales person that meets your requirements OR are you looking for a sales person that meets your requirements AND is also a top performer? If you are looking to entice someone who is presently hitting their sales targets You have to make a distinction between a couple of things: are you looking for a sales person that meets your requirements OR are you looking for a sales person that meets your requirements AND is also a top performer? If you are looking to entice someone who is presently hitting their sales targets to leave their current role, you must have a compensation plan in place that will incent them to leave. If this is an important position at your organisation this is not a time to try to do more with less. Attract the top performer; it will be worth it in the long run.

DO USE YOUR TIME WISELY

Your plan should not be to have face-to-face interviews with 12 candidates. A more effective use of time would be to have 10 minute phone screens with 5 to 12 candidates and narrow that down to a manageable list of three for face-to-face interviews. Consider tasking the candidates with providing information to standard interview questions so you can begin to sort out the best fit for your role.

DO UTILIZE YOUR SALES SKILLS

Prospecting and hunting for talent is "sales". Your strategy for attracting top talent to your organization should be no different than landing a new account. Build a pipeline of candidates, enter them into your CRM (we'll call it Candidate Relationship Management) and set follow up tasks to inform them of your company's accomplishments, market presence, etc. Then, when you find a candidate that you like, treat every encounter with him/her like you

are selling them the job and your organisation. Part of your value proposition could be your culture, opportunity for growth, current market share or innovation, perks, compensation, etc. Promptly respond to voicemails and emails, as you would with potential clients. Top candidates need to be sold to; your competition is likely doing it, so you should be too!

NOW THAT WE HAVE COVERED THE “DO’S”, LET’S TAKE A LOOK AT THE “DON’TS” IN YOUR HIRING PROCESS.

DON’T ACCEPT QUOTA ATTAINMENT AT FACE VALUE

Yes, of course it is important that the person you are considering hiring has been successful before and has a history of hitting their quota. We won’t argue that. We’re simply saying don’t make the mistake of assuming that because a person hit their targets in their last job, that they’ll hit their quota with you. There are many contributing factors to consider as to why someone was previously successful. You need to probe to find out how their previous employers’ management style, work environment, culture, is defined. If in their last role they worked from home with complete autonomy and you’re considering bringing them into a heavily managed environment that may not work out.

DON’T FORGET TO ASK ABOUT VALUE PROPOSITION

A great salesperson should be able to articulate the value proposition of their current and previous roles with ease. If they can’t this is more than a red flag. Being convincing, well spoken and concise when describing your value proposition is arguably the greatest skill a top performer will have. And you can assess this quite quickly during an interview by asking this single question.

DON’T RELY ON ONE EMPLOYEE, EQUIPPED WITH A GENERIC INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

If you’re using the same interview questions for a sales role, as you would for an IT programmer. STOP. Your interview questions need to be relevant and meaningful. (See Chapter 4 for sample Sales Interview Questions). You also need to add several steps in your hiring process to ensure consistency of the candidate and buy in from your internal stakeholders. Salesforce Search’s in-

DON'T ACCEPT QUOTA ATTAINMENT AT FACE VALUE

Internal hiring process includes a detailed phone interview (a skill highly used in recruiting), multiple face to face interviews (from the hiring manager, to peers, to support staff, to an Executive), role plays (having the candidate run a successful client meeting), formal 3rd party assessments (helps validate our interview results and provide a common platform to compare candidates), and a completion of a candidate scorecard (combined assessment of intangible skill sets and reference checks).

DON'T HIRE BASED ON PERSONALITY

Fit is an important factor and yes, personality is very important, (not to be confused with Attitude as discussed in Chapter 1) but just because you like someone doesn't necessarily mean that they'll hit their sales targets and add value to your company. Make sure that personality isn't the top factor in making your hiring decision. It may sound obvious but a lot of people do it.

DON'T HIRE YOUR CLONE (at least not all of the time)

We have a natural tendency to surround ourselves with people that are similar to us. But hiring someone that has a different background, education, and brings a different way of thinking to the table may make your sales team stronger. Having people with a different approach and a different way of thinking will help your sales team come up with innovative ways of solving problems and creating value.

SALES RECRUITERS HELPING **COMPANIES GROW REVENUE**

SalesForce Search is a sales recruiting company which specializes in the recruitment and placement of sales professionals. We work in nearly every industry sector from financial services to pharmaceuticals and believe our Hiring Process can help you find the right sales person for your organization. Sales is the most critical component of every organization and hiring great salespeople is challenging. We help companies save time and money by finding the right sales person quickly and ensuring your organization hits their sales targets.

To start your search for your
next great sales professional today,



call **1-800-461-SELL (7355)**
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