



SALES

Structured Interview Guide

Introduction

The goal of a structured interview is to create an environment in which every candidate is treated equally. This is done by using standardized questions that are designed to assess the characteristics statistically shown to predict a successful employee.

Guide Content

This guide contains five dimensions that have been statistically shown to be indicators of success for Sales employees:



Behavioral



Dependability



Initiative



Integrity



Persistence

Each dimension is broken out onto its own page which includes sample questions and a rating list to assist in identifying high and low rated responses.



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Behavioral

Question List

- What is your definition of success as a sales professional? Follow-up: How are you measuring up? How will you go about achieving that goal?
- When customers get angry at you, how do you usually react? Can you provide an example?
- In previous jobs, what techniques did you use to get cooperation from other departments or areas, like operations or marketing? Give me an example.
- When was the last time you found yourself in a conversation defending your company's services or products? Why did you feel the need to do so?
- Thinking about your last job, tell me about a time when someone in a different area went out of their way to do something to help you. What did you do in return, if anything? Please, explain.

Rating List

High Rated Responses

- Eager to work on a team or with others.
- Helps others without being asked.
- Goes above-and-beyond in past jobs.
- Conveys sense of loyalty to past employers; critical but objective.
- Defuses conflict with others.

Low Rated Responses

- Has many complaints about past jobs or bosses.
- Not many examples of helping coworkers beyond what job called for.
- More "I" than "We" statements.
- In conflict, shuts down instead of engaging with others.

Interview Notes



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Dependability

Question List

- Give me an example of something you messed up or made a mistake with as a salesperson. What did you do about it? What did you learn from it?
- Tell me about a time when you took personal responsibility for your own poor performance. What happened?
- Describe the last time you had to cancel a meeting (or be late for one) with a customer. What was the situation? What happened as a result?
- You are about to leave for a meeting with a customer when another customer calls with a problem that needs to be dealt with right away. What do you do?
- Give me an example of how you prioritize things at your current (or last) job.

Interview Notes

Rating List

High Rated Responses

- Sees mistakes as learning opportunities.
- Doesn't shy from admitting mistakes.
- Goes out of their way to make things right.
- Adept at balancing customers' needs.

Low Rated Responses

- Admits to mistakes but learns little or nothing from them.
- Tends to blame others for problems.
- No real rhyme or reason in strategizing, planning or prioritizing.
- Knows how to "work the system".



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Initiative

Question List

- If you were hired for this position, what would you do in your first ninety days?
- What's something you taught yourself in your last job (or life, in general)? How hard was it to learn? How long did it take you to learn it?
- How much research do you do on a prospect before meeting with them? What kinds of things do you consider? Can you give an example?
- Tell me about a time when you had to show some enthusiasm and excitement at work when you weren't really feeling it. What did you do? What impact did you have on others?
- Describe a time when you took risk at work and succeeded, and then a time when you took a risk and failed. What was the difference between the two situations?

Rating List

High Rated Responses

- Quick thinker who jumps at opportunities.
- Always planning for the future and developing self for it.
- Can balance work and personal life but is ready to switch gears whenever necessary.
- Adjusts quickly to environment but does not let it define attitude and motivation.

Low Rated Responses

- No real plans for making use of time and resources available.
- Has little interest in developing new skills or abilities.
- "Checks out" at the end of the work day.
- Often relies on others to set direction and attitude.

Interview Notes





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Integrity

Question List

- What ethical guidelines for sales did you work under in your last job? Give an example of a time when they had an impact on something you were doing.
- When was the last time another salesperson asked you to “cover for them”? What did you do? Explain what happened.
- Have you ever been put at a disadvantage in a situation because you were playing by the rules while other salespeople were not? If so, what did you do?
- How often do you find yourself apologizing for not getting back to someone when you said you would? How do you recover from that?
- Tell me about the last time you had a sales-related expense rejected for reimbursement. Why was it rejected? What did you do about it?

Interview Notes

Rating List

High Rated Responses

- Gives examples of standing up for what is right.
- Shows a willingness to admit faults or when wrong about something.
- Understands there are ethical gray areas but more than able to explain the choices/decisions that were made.
- Avoids compromising positions.

Low Rated Responses

- Seems unaware of policies and ethical guidelines in past jobs.
- Gives examples of excuses and workarounds rather than addressing the main issues.
- Puts relationships with others above doing the right thing.
- Seldom takes responsibility.



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Persistence

Question List

- When do you stop pursuing a potential customer?
Give me an example.
- What was the worst “losing streak” you have experienced as a salesperson? How did you turn it around?
- How do you deal with rejection as a salesperson?
Please, give an example.
- Tell me about a time when you had to overcome many objections from a picky customer. Explain what did you do to persuade them.
- Describe what you did to try to change your boss’s mind about something you felt strongly about. Were you successful?

Rating List

High Rated Responses

- Tenacious in efforts to get the sale.
- Energized by rejection; knows bad luck doesn’t last forever.
- Very quick to overcome criticisms and objections people have.
- Good at learning what levers to pull in order to impact someone’s way of thinking.

Low Rated Responses

- Believes in “cutting bait” and looking elsewhere to fish if nothing is working.
- Claims not to be bothered by rejection but has many stories of being wronged unfairly.
- More pushy than persistent with people.
- Seldom tries to influence people unless it can be easily done.

Interview Notes