

Sales Interview Guide



Step up with confidence

What motivates you as a salesperson?

The interviewer wants to know what gets you up in the morning. Keep it high-level and think about what they are looking for from a salesperson. Examples might be; the opportunity to earn a bonus, the thrill of closing deals, meeting new perspective clients, and being recognised for doing a good job.

Why are you looking to leave?

This question is almost certain to come up and is one which must be handled carefully. Whilst you may be leaving because your boss is a total control freak or the business is being mismanaged, it is important to convey your reasoning in a positive way. Remember, more often than not, interviewers will affiliate themselves more with your previous boss than they will with you. Answers might include 'I've enjoyed working for the company but the strategic decisions being made are taking me away from what I enjoy doing' or 'I love my job but I haven't had the opportunity to use my skills in the way I wanted, so I'm looking for a new opportunity'. Be mindful that if your answer lacks depth it won't satisfy the interviewer.

What traits make an effective sales person?

A good salesperson is someone that can influence others. The interviewer is looking into your understanding of what's required to be influential. Write down a list of the traits you think the company wants to see based on the role and then think about the ones you have. Examples might be; strong communicator, good listener, resilient, goal-orientated, credible, ambitious, strong relationship builder, and approachable.

What challenges are you facing right now?

Think about specifics and how you'd address problematic or challenging situations. The interviewer is interested in your approach and attitude to overcoming problems. An example might be to explain how you're handling a difficult customer or breaking into a new account. Do your best to display a positive approach.



What sales skills would you like to improve?

This question provides insight into how you perceive yourself. Start with something positive that you are good at and then talk about an area you struggle with. This might include negotiation skills, account management or presentation skills. Interviewers want to see an acceptance that no one's perfect and you are willing to learn and improve. They're also looking for realistic self-awareness.

What sales targets are you accustomed to?

If you don't go into detail and are unclear, you won't be credible. You could talk about turnover, profit margins but also activity based KPIs such as meeting rates or number of calls. Know your figures!

What does consultative selling mean to you?

Consultative selling means different things to different people. There are many definitions depending upon where you look. Essentially though, it involves thorough questioning of a client in such a way that you lead them to clearly define their own situation and ultimately self-diagnose short comings in their set-up. You, the salesperson, then have an opportunity to present your solution in such a way that you address and satisfy their highlighted need.

Give me an example of when you've used your initiative to generate an opportunity?

First you need to think of an example and then break it down into three key parts: How did you find the opportunity? How did you get yourself into the frame? And how did you stand out from the competition?

“Have the questions you want to ask the company written down and have them in front of you during the interview. You can then tick them off your sheet as you ask them or if the answer comes out. This will show the hiring manager/interviewer your levels of preparedness for their interview.”

Dean Richards,
National Account Manager, BMS Performance

How would you describe your ideal sales manager?

This question is used to find out how a management team will get the best out of you, how you'll fit into their company structure, and whether or not you'll be difficult to manage. Do you need structure, or do you prefer to be more autonomous? How much support do you need in planning your week? What kind of behaviours does your manager need to have to get the best out of you?

What does a typical day look like in your current role?

You need to provide evidence of your ability to plan, organise and prioritise your time. Think about the steps you currently take and what the company might be looking for. Things to mention could include; how you prioritise what accounts you visit or call? How do you record information in your CRM to help guide your activity? Or, how do you organise your calendar so that you know what's next? They will also be looking for someone with the right attitude and self-discipline.

Give me an example of how you've handled a difficult client in order to get a sale and what did you learn?

A very common question at interview. The aim is to understand how you build rapport and empathise with clients as well as your ability to learn and adapt. An example might be; dealing with an awkward individual, a complex buying process or a situation where expectations are unrealistic. Outline what you did to bring them on side and what you've taken from the experience. If you can provide an example of where you've put these learnings into practice, even better!

“Consider the interview to be a sales meeting, with the interviewer representing the customer and you representing the product you're selling. You'll demonstrate the essential skills that the interviewer is looking for if you follow the classic sales cycle. Fact, find, sell, objection handling, and closing.”

Robert Coombes

Market Development Manager, BMS Performance

How do you define success?

They are looking into your attitude. There are many different ways to measure success including bringing in business, exceeding targets, greater recognition and managing a team. Focus on the positivity of the role and what they are looking for. For example, if the role is for an account manager you may define success as upselling to your existing account base and taking on larger accounts as you grow. Always provide a balanced answer that shows your ambition but is also inline with the growth of the company. You want to be regarded as being 'successful' within the confines of the role.

Why should we hire you?

The interviewer is looking to see if you understand what it takes to do the role. You want to be confident but not arrogant. Think about the job, company culture and the personalities of the people you've met. What skills, experiences and behaviours do you possess that make you a good fit for the role? Good examples include; specific account experience, product knowledge and experience or the right attitude to fit with the team and company. Ultimately you need to demonstrate your ability to add value to their business.

Where do you see yourself in one, three and five years?

Be mindful of who's interviewing you and also what the company can realistically deliver. Ambitions of becoming the next CEO or taking the job off the person interviewing you won't always get you the job; indeed it may sometimes cost you the job. They want to hear you're ambitious but that it aligns with the company success as well. Irrespective of what they can or can't offer in one, three and five years, you want to be regarded as a successful individual, a valued employee and someone they'll want to build around in the future.

Good Luck

If you need any help with your interview or are open to opportunities, call us on: 0800 060 8420

