

Sales Benchmark & Behavioral
**INTERVIEWING
GUIDE**

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SECTION I

Drive

I. Need for Achievement

Burning need to achieve. Ambitious. Disciplined. Focused on advancement.

What kinds of sacrifices have you had to make to be successful? Looking for substantial past sacrifices for success at work (time, other pursuits, etc).	
Tell me about a few times where you exceeded expectations or went beyond the call of duty?	
How do you know when you've truly succeeded? (Is tough on self in judging accomplishments)	
What's the toughest goal you've ever set for yourself? How do you plan to top it? (Has accomplished a very challenging work goal. Has a plan to top it).	
What is the hardest you've ever worked to succeed in your job? How often do situations call for that kind of effort? How do you feel about having to work that hard? (Has a story about exerting a tremendous effort leading to a major accomplishment. Has done so regularly. Feels that such effort is simply par for the course.)	
What do you feel driven to prove? (Motivated to prove excellence. Wants to be the best or can rebound from any set back.)	
Which of your accomplishments are you most proud of? What about it makes you proud? (Takes pride in hard work, surpassing others or remaining persistent.)	

2. Competitiveness

*Hardwired to be #1. Always eyeing their peers. Always comparing their performance to others.
Out to win. Born to win.*

When was the last time you were competitive? Another time? (Has more than one recent example from work, home, sports.)	
Where do you rank on the sales team? May I have permission to contact your boss to ask about your rank? (Consistently ranks at or near the top of the sales team and gives permission to verify.)	
What is the most fun you've ever had winning a customer over? (Tells about enjoying the process of winning over a difficult customer.)	
How would your manager rank your competitiveness compared to your peers? What makes your manager see you as competitive? (Manager ranks candidate as among most competitive.)	
Tell me about the most competitive situation at work? How unusual was it for you? (Tells about a competition with co-workers or with competitors over a customer. Describes it as a common occurrence.)	

3. Optimism

Provides the body armor to withstand the inevitable rejections of selling. Credit themselves with success but do not take defeat personally.

What kinds of sales are easiest for you? (Pause) What kinds of sales are easiest?	
Tell me about the worst customer problem you have ever faced. How did you recover? (Quickly put the situation in perspective and got going on another sale. Came back strong after tough times.)	

Think back to the last time you lost a deal, what did you do to recover (Quickly put the situation in perspective and bounced back by working on another sale.)	
Tell me about a time when you persisted and others gave up. (Look for specifics. If you get a snow job or an answer that lacks specifics ask "Tell me about another time.")	
Describe a sale where your persistence really paid off. Another time. (Look for a history of substantial effort to secure a new customer.)	
Tell me about a sale that went wrong. What did you attribute this to? (Attributes a problem to a temporary unusual situation out of own control.)	
When was the last time a customer got under your skin? (Rarely gets upset by customers.)	
What gets you through a day full of rejections? (Can persist all day. Sees opportunity in every call.)	
When was the last time you held your ground with a difficult customer? (Not afraid to speak their mind when necessary.)	
When is your confidence strongest? When is it weakest? (Limited number of weak areas.)	
Tell me about your cold calling experience. (Substantial experience. Relaxed approach.)	
Tell me about a time when you got a result even though it upset someone. (Fearlessness, bull in the china shop.)	

SECTION II Selling Skills

4. Phone Selling Skills

Role play -- sell me this object. (Note: Answers here cover multiple sub-competencies such as closing ability, objection handling and negotiating.)	
Please describe your sales approach in detail.	
Tell me about a time when getting past the gatekeeper was particularly challenging. What did you do? What was the result?	

5. Closing Ability

Demonstrates traits of moving a sale forward to close. Establishes clear next steps. Gains commitment from buyer. Asks direct questions to advance the sale and to “know where they are” in the sale.

Did this candidate close any/all of the interviewers?	
Give me three examples of closing a difficult sale. What did you say?	

6. Negotiating/Persuasion Skills

The power to induce the taking of a course of action or the embracing of a point of view. History of winning as an essential ingredient in win-win negotiations. Demonstrates effectiveness in salvaging tense negotiations. Achieves agreement through discussion.

Describe situations in which your negotiation and/or persuasion skills proved effective and ineffective.	
Describe a situation in which you were most effective selling an idea or yourself.	

7. Time Management/Organization Skills

Plans, organizes, schedules in an efficient, productive manner. Focuses on key priorities. Effectively juggles multiple leads and opportunities. Pays appropriate attention to detail. Manages personal time well.

How do you organize your current workday? What should you do to be better organized?	
Everyone procrastinates at times. What are the kinds of things that you procrastinate on?	
Describe a situation that required a number of things to be done at the same time. How did you handle it? What was the result?	

8. Developing Initial Relationships

Professional in demeanor. Creates favorable first impressions. Puts people at ease. Does not turn people off. Not arrogant. Exhibits friendliness, sense of humor, genuineness and treats people with respect.

What have you done in the last 30 days to create relationships with new prospects?	
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9. Communication Skills

Communicates effectively, one to one, over the phone and in small groups. Demonstrates fluency, quickness on one's feet. Keeps people informed. Writes clear precise, well organized emails and proposals while using appropriate vocabulary, grammar and word-usage.

If we had a call recording of your most recent presentation, what would we hear?	
How would you describe your writing style and effectiveness in comparison with others?	

10. Listening

Tunes in accurately to the opinions, feelings and needs of people. Empathetic and patient. Lets others speak. Listens actively, playing back a person's point of view.

Tell me about a time when you were talking with a prospect and had to read between the lines to figure out what was important to that prospect.	
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SECTION III

Personal Attributes

11. Coachability

Takes manager's feedback and immediately implements. Open to and desires constructive criticism. Builds feedback mechanisms to minimize blind spots. Strong desire to improve through feedback of others.

How much feedback do you like to get from people and in what form?	
ETell me about the last time your manager approached you after you got off a call and gave you constructive criticism. What was the situation and how did that make you feel?	
During your last performance review, what are some of the things your manager said you needed to work on? What have you done to improve in those areas?	

12. Integrity

Iron-clad. Does not cut corners ethically. Remains consistent in terms of what one says and does. Earns trust of coworkers. Maintains confidences. Puts organizations interests above self. Does what is right. Fights fair. Does not play games with facts to win a point. Does not over-promise.

Describe a situation or two in which the pressures to compromise your integrity were the strongest you have ever felt.	
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<p>When have you confronted unethical behavior or chose not to say anything in order to not rock the boat?</p>	
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13. Self-Awareness

Recognizes not just one's own strengths but also weaker points and areas for improvement. Demonstrates the courage not to be defensive, rationalize mistakes or blame others for one's own failures. Learns from mistakes.

<p>Give us a thorough self appraisal beginning with your strengths, assets, things you like about yourself and things you do well.</p>	
<p>What would you say are your shortcomings, weak points and areas for improvement? What are you doing to address these shortcomings?</p>	

14. Enthusiasm

Exhibits dynamism, charisma, excitement, positive, can-do attitude.

<p>How many hours per week have you worked on the average during the last year? (Regularly shown effort beyond typical 40-hour work week.)</p>	
<p>How would you rate yourself and why in enthusiasm and charisma?</p>	
<p>What will references say is your general level of urgency?</p>	

15. Team Player

Reaches out to peers to tear down walls. Approachable. Earns a reputation for leading peers toward support of what is best for the company. Cooperates with supervisors (but not a “yes-person”) and establishes collaborative relationships with peers (without being a pushover).

Describe the most difficult person with whom you've had to work.	
Tell me about a situation in which you felt others were wrong and you were right.	
What would reference checks disclose to be the common perception among peers regarding how much of a team player you are? (Do they work cooperatively, building others confidence and self esteem?)	

16. Expectation Setting

Tell me about the last time you didn't do a good job in setting customer expectations? When was this?	
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17. Resourcefulness

Goes over, under, through and around obstacles to achieve success.

What sort of obstacles have you faced in your most recent job and what did you do? (Look for passion and effectiveness in figuring out how to surmount barriers to success.)	
What are examples of circumstances in which you are expected to do a certain thing and on your own went beyond the call of duty?	

18. Continual Learning/Education

Motivation to learn. Demonstrates ability to acquire understanding and absorb new information. Exhibits continuous learning through reading, seminars, networks and professional organizations.

Besides college and high school, what seminars and formal education have you participated in and when?	
Describe your reading habits. (Looking for books and articles that speak to business, speak to sales, speak to your industry.)	
In the past year, what specifically have you done in order to keep your selling skills sharp?	

19. Initiative

Seeks out and seizes opportunities. Goes beyond the call of duty. Action-oriented doer. Achieving results despite lack of resources. Do it now mentality.

How much supervision do you need or want?	
Tell me about a time when you took action without explicit permission.	
Provide an example of a situation where you had to work with minimal supervision.	
Tell me about a time you had to learn something new or difficult in a short amount of time. What created the situation? What did you have to learn? How did you do it?	
Tell me about a time you were not very pleased with your performance. What did you do about it?	

20. Adaptability

Adjusts quickly resulting from new priorities. Not rigid.

How have you changed in recent years?	
What sorts of organizational changes have you found easiest and most difficult to accept?	
When have you been so firm that you were perceived as being stubborn or inflexible?	