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| Typical questions from a Top-grading interview guide. Rehearse answers in advance of interview and ensure you follow the differentiation points on page 2 of this prep guide.

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| **Top-grading Questions** | **Hint** |
| What was the name of the employer location, and dates of employment? | Be prepared to provide information on the organization by sharing about revenues, products/services, number of employees, etc. |
| What were the starting and final levels of compensation? | Be prepared to provide W2 information to validate income |
| What were your expectations for the job?  | Address your personal goals and desire to exceed expectations |
| What were specific quotas or goals for revenue growth, margins, acquisition of new customers, etc.?  | Assume that the potential employer will be contacting the former employers you provide info on |
| What did you find when you arrived? What shape was the job in— resources, problems? | Avoid bashing and share how you strove to leave the organization in better condition than you found it  |
| What were the most enjoyable or rewarding aspects of this job? What were the least enjoyable aspects of the job? | Speak about both the personal and professional rewards associated with the position. Least enjoyable can often mirror the most enjoyable, i.e. independence was great but sometimes lacked needed support |
| What major challenges did you face? | Be honest and share how you addressed the challenges and converted to opportunities |
| What were mistakes you experienced in this job? If you could turn the clock back, what would you do differently? | Share how you addressed the mistakes and bounced back |
| What circumstances contributed to your departure?  | Stay away from boss bashing or that you weren’t trained effectively. Give an ambitious answer  |
| What was your supervisor’s name and title? Where is that person now? Would you be willing to arrange for us to talk with him or her? | Be prepared to initiate these conversations with all supervisors in the past ten years |
| What is/was it like working for him or her, and what were his or her strengths and shortcomings as a supervisor, from your point of view? | Stay away from boss bashing or putting that person on trial. Better to tactfully steer clear of negative comments |
| What is your best guess as to what your supervisor honestly felt were/are your strengths and weak points? | Be straightforward with your answers. Ethical and moral responses should be avoided |
| What was the biggest victory in your first 12 months in your current role or last role if unemployed? | Speak about a financial metric, reference innovative efforts, perhaps something nobody else had been able to accomplish prior to you |
| When was the last time you had to make a major shift on an initiative you launched and what was the result?  | Share your ability to adapt and change; do you have “muscle memory” about absorbing change? |

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**Differentiators**

1. Be prepared to share earnings statements – W2s from your last couple sales positions.
2. If you offer your W2s for validation, then ask for the earnings statements – W2s for their top two performing sales reps and bottom two sales reps, this is referred to as a give-get in negotiating. You shouldn’t offer your W2s without getting something in return.
3. As mentioned above, prepare to arrange for conversations with your past supervisor or sales managers from the last couple of positions. One caveat, if currently employed and providing these names could jeopardize your employment, then don’t offer them.
4. Understand the cost of a mis-hire to the potential employer (see chart below). Reference the fact that you are points 1 and 3 above to help answer and address their risks in hiring.

**Mis-Hire Costs to the Employer**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assumptions** | **Amount** | **Percentage** |
| Hiring costs | $23,000 | 4% |
| Compensation | $151,000 | 27% |
| Maintenance | $14,000 | 2% |
| Severance | $25,000 | 4% |
| Opportunity costs | $250,000 | 45% |
| Disruption costs | $100,000 | 18% |
| **Total** | **$563,000** | **100%** |

Analysis based on typical composite example – base salary of $100,000 with a sales rep that lasted one year.

**Mis-Hire Costs to the Sales Rep**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Assumptions** | **Amount** | **Percentage** |
| Lost income | -$63,500 | 65% |
| Household expenses | -$24,000 | 25% |
| Disruption costs | -$10,000 | 110% |
| **Total** | **$97,500** | **100%** |

Analysis based on typical composite example – sales rep unemployed for 33 weeks (US Dept. of Labor. Number of weeks an average job seekers is out of work) with last salary based on $100,000 annually.

**Blog Resource:**

 [http://www.salesbenchmarkindex.com/bid/96407/Land-a-Better-Sales-Job-Quickly](http://www.salesbenchmarkindex.com/bid/96407/Land-a-Better-Sales-Job-Quickly?utm_source=blogtool&utm_campaign=blog03202013topgradeprep&utm_medium=worddoc)