

Interview Questions For Sales Candidates

Hiring Salespeople That End Up With Disappointing sales results?

Too many salespeople are quitting (often without notice) after you hire them?



Answering YES to either issue means it is probably a good idea to revisit the interview questions you have been asking. Likely, your candidate has already heard and prepared for most of the questions you are asking and will have generic replies already arranged.

To help you better assess the true potential of every candidate you interview, here is a list of unusual questions to ask. With this list, you should start noticing positive changes in the hiring process.

1. What motivates you to succeed at work?

In asking this question, don't worry too much about 'what' motivates the candidate to succeed at work. Instead, look for **signs the candidate is passionately motivated**, regardless of what in his life inspires him to succeed.

If something specific about his work situation drives him to succeed (laid-back leadership, for example), consider the fact that his motivator should be something that will be readily available should he accept the position. Or else he may not be a good culture fit and will likely end up becoming unmotivated at some point and then quit.

2. How have you overcome a significant obstacle in your career?

Being strong goes together with being motivated. For best results in the sales department, your candidate should possess both traits. They should be adaptable and be able to reassure you of a difficult situation they went through and how they overcame challenge

3. How do you handle customer objections?

A good salesperson will often have a proven method for every situation, and which includes handling objections from potential customers. When candidates describe a specific personal procedure and explains why it's worked for him, have confidence that he will successfully use that process when working for your company.

4. In 5 minutes or less, can you explain something complex to me?

Salespeople must be able to explain services to prospects who may be unaware of the benefits those services offer. So, asking a candidate this question is a great way to gauge their ability to convey a complex idea, plus, it helps you establish how charismatic a candidate will be when speaking to prospects.

5. What might you ask of a prospect to better understand his/her needs?

Success in sales has a lot to do with the ability to ask questions rather than bombarding prospects with self-promotional sales pitches. Today's sales philosophy usually does NOT include much "sales material" but rather, a series of questions to understand their pain. The candidate must understand today it's about the client – not about themselves.

6. Name one or two things you do to consistently advance your sales skills?

A commitment to continuous learning is a good sign the candidate cares about his future enough to invest in himself. You always want to be sure a candidate is invested in his career so ask this question. The ideal candidate will show he is excited to learn new sales skills and embrace a learning strategy.

7. Where do you NOT see yourself in five years?

Many interviewers will ask where a candidate sees himself in the future, but few will ask where he **does not** see himself in five years. While you are essentially asking the same question, re-wording it is a better way to uncover a candidate's true goals and avoid receiving a canned response.



8. What would you plan to accomplish in your first 30 days of working here?

A new hire should have a 'first 30-day' goal they can articulate. (It doesn't have to be elaborate – they should have a strategy and plan in mind). The ideal candidate will likely be able to explain what he plans to accomplish and how he plans to make his goals a reality. Their plan does not need to include detail – you just want to know they are a self-starter.

9. What are your top 3 values at work?

While drive is the #1 trait for a sales candidate, you must also be sure the candidate is a good culture fit by analyzing what he values most. Listen to him describe his values and why they are important to him, and carefully consider whether his values align with the values important to your business. When you ask this, you are more apt to confirm they are a good fit for the company.

10. What could our company do better?

When your candidate answers this question, it should demonstrate they have performed background research on your business. If his answer is insightful, you can assume he cares about the future of the company and possesses the creative problem-solving skills necessary. You are more assured they will help the company grow and succeed. **Every salesperson should know how to do research, and instinctively perform that at every occasion.**



When you hire a salesperson (or marketer), look for the following 16 traits:

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| 1. Need for Achievement | 6. Resiliency | 11. Patience |
| 2. Competitiveness | 7. Honesty | 12. Commitment |
| 3. Optimism | 8. Communication skills | 13. Imagination |
| 4. Confidence | 9. Computer skills – CRITICAL Today! | 14. Follow-through |
| 5. Networking skills | 10. Independence | 15. Tenacity |
| | | 16. Empathetic |

While you should avoid asking your candidate directly if he possesses these traits (because he may say yes regardless of what is true), your sales interview questions should indirectly help you understand if they possess them.

These sixteen non-teachable personality traits indicate how driven a candidate is, and drive is the main indicator a candidate will become a top sales performer.

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