

Sales Interview Support

Sales, Business Development or Account Management interviews are all generally structured in very much the same way as all other interviews, however some of the questions and profiling will be focused upon previous success you may have had, figures achieved and personality traits that are all relevant to a job that involves sales and being able to sell. Although a Sales or Business Development Role varies from employer to employer you can anticipate likely the sales interview questions that will be asked by your interviewer by reviewing the knowledge and core competencies (skills and abilities) required for success in all sales jobs. The knowledge requirements will vary depending on the organization, the product or service, the scope and seniority of the sales job. However typical knowledge requirements for a sales job include:

- Sales and marketing principles, techniques, strategy and tactics
- Sales control systems
- Computer and software applications
- Administration processes
- Basic business principles
- Market knowledge
- Previous sales figures and achievements

Interview questions around the knowledge requirements for a sales job are answered by reviewing your CV as they refer directly to your qualifications, training and work experience.

Expect sales interview questions such as:

- *"Detail a typical sales cycle in your last position?"*
- *"How many appointments did you have in a typical week?"*
- *"How much time do you spend directly with a customer or prospect on an average day?"*
- *"What percentage of your targets did you achieve?"*

The sales interview will focus on questions that look for evidence of the core competencies needed to succeed in a sales job. You will be asked to provide specific examples of when you have previously demonstrated the required competency.

You should reflect on your past experiences, select appropriate examples and plan your response using the following structure:

- Describe the specific situation or task you were involved in
- Detail the action and steps you took in the situation
- Outline the results and outcome of your actions. What happened, what was accomplished, what did you learn?
- Go through the sales interview questions that explore these essential competencies. Use the answer guidelines to help you prepare your own excellent interview answers

Adaptability

Sales jobs involve dealing with a wide range of people, the ability to adjust your approach to the situation is an important job requirement.

"Tell me about a situation where your contact person changed at a key account, how did you adjust to the new contact?"

"Give an example of when you had to change your approach to a prospect because the initial one failed."

Answer Guidelines: Show how you maintain performance and your effectiveness in different situations and faced with different people. Include how you are able to adjust your approach to match different demands and challenges.

Resilience

Key to continued success in sales is the ability to handle disappointment and rejection.

"Tell me about a time you worked hard for a sale but didn't get it in the end, how did you handle the situation?"

"Give an example of when you had to overcome strong resistance from a customer."

Answer Guidelines: Describe how you have maintained enthusiasm and performance after disappointment and rejection. How you are able to take negativity in your stride and bounce back quickly. Include examples in your sales interview answer of persistence and determination in finding solutions to obstacles or challenges.

Persuasiveness

Sales interview questions will focus on your ability to persuade and influence others to accept your product or service.

"Describe a recent approach you took with a brand new prospect."

"Tell me how you developed your largest account."

Answer Guidelines: Describe how you determine customer needs and select the most suitable approach to demonstrate how your product or service meets those needs, deciding on the right interpersonal and communication style. Include how you are able to anticipate and overcome objections, and gain commitment from the customer.

Motivation

A strong sense of purpose together with the ability to maintain a high energy level are important contributors to sales success.

"Tell me about one of the most time-consuming sales you have made."

"What goals have you set for yourself this year, how have you ensured progress towards them?"

Answer Guidelines: Show how you set yourself challenging goals and put in high levels of effort and commitment to achieve results.

Negotiation

A core sales competency is the ability to reach agreement through successful negotiation.

"Describe a recent situation where you negotiated terms with a tough customer."

"Tell me about an important negotiation that failed, what went wrong and why?"

Answer Guidelines: Describe your ability to explore the needs and concerns of the customer, to determine areas of agreement and disagreement, to work out alternatives and solutions to reach a workable agreement for both parties.

Presentation Skills

Sales involves presenting information effectively and convincingly to potential customers.

"Tell me about successful formal presentation you made recently."

"Give me an example of when you had to make a presentation to an unresponsive audience, how did you handle it?"

Answer Guidelines: Detail your research and preparation of material for a target audience. Describe how you establish the importance of the presentation to the audience, your ability to organize the content in a logical way, how you read an audience's mood and interact effectively with them.

Self Motivation and Drive

Expect and prepare for sales interview questions that investigate your motivation and commitment, such as:

"What do you regard as the biggest challenge in a sales position?"

"What do you enjoy and what do you dislike about sales?"

"What attracts you to a career in sales?"

Answer Guidelines: Shape your answers around your love of sales, what gives you the biggest kick from working with sales and what will drive you to continue achieving and being successful for the forthcoming future and for them as a company too whilst working for them.

What Else You Need to Know for Your Sales Interview

Your ability to make an impact, to create a good impression and command attention and respect will be observed during the sales interview. Speak with a confident tone and make sure your posture indicates an attentive and open attitude. The way you communicate and your ability to actively listen will be assessed as you interact with the interviewer so speak clearly and concisely, choosing your words with care and using correct grammar. Listen closely to the interview questions and ask for further clarification if you do not properly understand something.