

How to find your Top Sales Reps: 20 questions - and the answers you want to hear.



Recruiting sales reps is easy. Recruiting top sales reps - not as easy. The interview is a crucial stage where you have the chance to determine whether the candidate is a solid fit for your team or not. That information, however, is only revealed if you know the right questions to ask your candidates.

So, what should you be sure to ask?

Here are 20 questions and the answers you want to hear!

Personal Questions

1

When did you start being interested in sales and how did your career in sales begin?

BACKGROUND

Many great sales people started with sales early in their life. This is a great first question to create energy and set a personal baseline for the conversation to follow.

ANSWER

You want to make sure that the candidate connects service and sales together. This is a good indicator that the person will remember to focus and listen to the customers' needs.

2

How did you come to the decision in your life that it's time for a career change?

BACKGROUND

Most candidates don't suddenly decide to apply for a new position. Instead, something usually spurs them to start searching in the job market. This question lets you know the "WHY" behind the candidate's move. The last thing we want to do is spend our time with candidates who are not interested in a change.

ANSWER

If that something cannot be articulated or if there appears to be no real reason why the candidate is engaging in the interview, then a red flag should pop up. Make sure that the candidate's "WHY" is connected to your "WHY" as an employer!

3

What qualities have you been told that your colleagues appreciate?

BACKGROUND

"Good traits" is usually a question the candidate is prepared for. If they instead have to think about recent feedback from their colleagues, it usually leads to a more honest answer.

ANSWER

Dig into the answer by asking more about certain situations "why? what? when?" in order to get an understanding of the candidate's strengths. If they have hard times to find an answer - ask what characteristics their partner or best friend likes with them.



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4 **Prioritize what motivates you to perform; money, feedback or personal development.**

BACKGROUND

A great salesperson will usually want to continue their personal development. When a salesperson is done self developing - they are also done with their sales profession.

ANSWER

Listen to make sure the candidate doesn't have money as their sole motivation. If money is the only thing that inspires and motivates them, you will not be able to keep them motivated for long.

5 **Have you reached the goals you have set and are you happy with your progress so far?**

BACKGROUND

This question lets you know if he/she is career-oriented or just going with the flow.

ANSWER

A candidate's ability to 'go with it' can have its advantages in the workplace. However, being too accepting of 'what is' and not carving out a more specific vision for future career goals may work against them in the interview process. Those with specific career goals are more likely to be receptive when a role comes along.

6 **Can you tell me about a time when you overcame a challenge at work? What were your learnings?**

BACKGROUND

This question is a popular one, and for good reason. It is under intense pressure and adversity that many qualities (often bad) are reinforced.

ANSWER

You want to understand how the candidate copes with and handles challenges at work. Focus on their learnings and how they would address the same challenge differently (depending on the situation).

7

How would you rate your sales results compared to your colleagues?

BACKGROUND

We all know that sales reps usually have great self-confidence, and all candidates will tell you that their results are good. Don't settle with "good" - you want to know how good they are and the context around the results.

ANSWER

Ask several questions in order to get all the information. For example, how many sales reps were on the team with you? Did everyone achieve good results and hit their quota (too low targets)? Eventually, you will get the entire overview of the candidate's actual sales results.

8

Who's been an exemplary leader of yours and why? How would you like to get coached?

BACKGROUND

This is a good opportunity to talk about how the person would like to be coached and what support they'd need from you. It is important to understand if this person will fit into your team and will work well with your leadership. Make sure to reflect upon your own expectations as a leader before the interview.

ANSWER

Match the candidate's answer with your own expectations and score the answer depending on how close it is to your team's leadership style!

9

What did your manager say that you need to develop during your previous performance review?

BACKGROUND

This is a different take on the question "your bad qualities," but with this approach you usually get more genuine answers than asking directly and getting pre-rehearsed responses.

ANSWER

You want to understand how the candidates approach personal development, if they are "coachable," and if they have a high level of self-awareness. Here you will find out if the person receives feedback in a positive or negative way.

10

When was the last time you made someone disappointed in your work life? How did you handle the situation?

BACKGROUND

It is a fact that reps will not always reach their quota. How does the candidate handle these situations?

ANSWER

You would like to hear how the candidate handles feedback; that he/she learns from mistakes and takes action to improve. A coachable candidate is a great sales rep!

11

Which sales performance makes you most proud?

BACKGROUND

It is important to let the candidate shine and be proud during the interview. This question is perfect for that purpose!.

ANSWER

Listen actively and check if the person highlights another person as well. This could be an indicator if the candidate is a team player or an individualist.

12

How do you find a good balance between work and private life?

BACKGROUND

As a sales rep, it's important to be available when the buyer is available to communicate. Time management is key to performance in sales!

ANSWER

You want to understand if the candidate has control of their calendar and have an organized mindset. How can the candidate find time to relax, while still having a high degree of accessibility?

13

How many emails do you have in your inbox right now?

BACKGROUND

Everyone needs to find their way of working, but it is important to keep control and to follow up.

ANSWER

If they work with the ambition of a zero inbox, it indicates a certain type of person with an ambition to always follow up. This is not the only way of working, however.

Sales process questions

14

Who is your role model in sales and why?

BACKGROUND

This question helps you find out if the candidate finds inspiration from famous salespeople or if they find it from colleagues in their everyday life.

ANSWER

Dig further into your questions to better understand what inspires the candidate and if he/she has these characteristics. You also understand if the candidate invests time in learning from other sales gurus.

15

Why would you like to sell (your product)?

ANSWER

You want to check if they have done any research, are they interested in the product. It is not important that they have the perfect pitch but they should be able to discuss and explain why, if not, they haven't really put in the time to do their research, are they even interested?

16

When was the time when you lost a deal, tell me about why you lost it and what you did?

ANSWER

If they haven't lost they haven't been selling. You want to understand if they have self awareness, do they just blame others like the product or the buyer then they are the wrong person. If they can not really analyze then also they could be too junior and would maybe need a lot of guidance

17

Describe the process of the biggest deal you ever closed!

BACKGROUND

It's easy to say that you have closed many big deals, but when you ask someone to declare the steps of how they did it, it's easier to assess the person's sales skills.

ANSWER

This question allows you to understand how the candidate handled all the decision makers and maneuvered around their pricing tactics.



18

Are you careful and slow or fast and careless?

BACKGROUND

Some people need too much information or do things too ambitiously, but within sales, the amount of activity is often the determining factor. By giving them two options, both including negative words, they are forced to choose their personality.

ANSWER

Many people do not want to talk about their bad qualities, but this question forces them to talk openly about them. The right answer would depend on your current team set up, since a mix of both creates a good team spirit.

19

What was the last sales tactic that you learned?

ANSWER

Are they developing, or just doing as always. Is it a person who is open for new things, especially in a world that are changing very quick.

20

I own a local movie theatre in a small town. Unfortunately, the theatre often stands half empty, and the economy isn't that good. What efforts would you put into place to triple my sales?

BACKGROUND

With a case question like this, you want to check the ability for candidates to think quickly on their feet.

ANSWER

Here you want to find out if the candidate can come up with a creative solution. For example, will they think about using the premises during the day, or use it for other concepts than traditional cinema?

Bonus Questions!

1

On a scale from 1-10, how would you rate yourself as a sales rep? How do you plan to hone your craft to develop into a 10?

BACKGROUND

You want to know the candidates' self-awareness. They should be aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, but more importantly, how to increase their own knowledge and skills.

ANSWER

A great answer would be an "8"; a person who is confident in themselves, but also knows that there is room for improvement. If anyone sets 10 you should ask if they think they can't improve (be hard). If they set below 8, be hard and say that we only hire 10s, and follow up with "what do you need to get to a 10?"

2

What are the three most important characteristics of a sales rep?

It's important to understand how far the person has come in their career. Do they understand the importance of different personal traits and sales activities?

ANSWER

Humble - The humble salesperson views themselves as a partner to the buyer, not superior, but an equal, a trusted advisor whose job it is to help that buyer make the best decision for their business.

Listener - to be a good speaker is great but what we often forget, especially in sales is that silence is golden. If you can ask the right questions and listen in to what the buyer really needs you will elevate as a sales rep.

Hungry - As a sales rep you have to be a fighter who wants to win. Not the same as going over dead bodies but you have to have the strive to always go that extra mile, take that extra call, do that extra for the customer to win the deal. or someone else will and there are no worse than second place in sales.

Once they have mentioned their 3 most important characteristics, you can continue by asking them if they believe they have those attributes - and dig further into the answer (how? what? why?)

3

Sell me this pen.

Classic, but we love it! Get your candidate to sell you (preferably) an unexpected item to understand if the person focuses on the customer's needs, analyzing the situation, or is more of a pitch seller.

ANSWER

You want to see that the person cares about your needs, is curious, and asks the right questions.

