

125+ Sales Hiring *Interview Questions* by RAIN Group

What follows is a compendium of sample questions, organized by attributes and skills, that you can draw from for your next sales hiring interview.

Attributes

GENERAL

1. How would you describe yourself? (Tell me a bit more about yourself.)
2. Give me a bird's-eye view of your career to date. How would you summarize your experience?
3. What are you most passionate about? Why?
4. What do you currently sell? What's it like? What's difficult about it? Describe your territory.
5. Tell me about what makes for a great day in selling. Describe a recent difficult day.
6. Why are you interested in working at our company? Why this role?
7. Why should we hire you? How would hiring you give us a competitive advantage? (Do you think this is a fit?) [Can ask this early and later in the interview process. Compare the different responses.]

ABILITY TO LEARN

1. How do you approach challenges you've never faced before?
2. How do you approach orienting yourself with a new company?
3. Tell me about the environment in which you think...
 - you would be most likely to thrive and be successful.
 - you would be least likely to thrive and be successful.
4. How do you seek out opportunities to grow in your industry? What does growth look like for you?
5. In what areas are you working on for professional development?
 - What is the next level for you professionally?
 - What do you need to learn or do differently to get there?

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CREATIVITY

1. When have you had to think outside of the box to solve a problem?
2. Would you describe yourself as a creative thinker? Why or why not?
3. What is your most creative project to date? How do you apply creativity in selling?
4. What have you done to attract or engage with a buyer that was above and beyond, or out of the norm?
5. If you could be any animal, what would you choose to be and why? Which would you say you are now?

PROFESSIONALISM AND INTEGRITY

1. What is your greatest strength? Weakness?
2. Have you ever been disappointed in yourself professionally?
3. Have you ever used personal pressure or heavy-handed tactics to close a sale? How did you approach it?
4. Do others consider you to be trustworthy? How do you know?
5. Have you ever faced negative consequences for doing the right thing? How did you handle the situation?
6. If you knew your boss was 100% wrong about something, how would you handle it?
7. When have you been disappointed in your boss? Your company? How did that impact you?

PRODUCTIVITY AND WORK STYLE

1. How would you describe your approach to daily work?
2. How would you rate your productivity compared to others?
3. What's your approach to being maximally productive?
4. How do you organize your time?
5. How do you avoid distractions and keep focused on your most important activities?
6. Think about a sale you lost that you thought you should have won.
 - What was it? Why do you think you lost it?
 - Looking back, what, if anything, would you have done differently?
 - What did you learn?
7. Describe a time when your workload was heavy. How did you handle it?
8. Describe a mistake you made at work and how you approached rectifying it. What, if anything, would you do differently in the future?
9. Have you ever received criticism from a coworker? Was it justified? What was your reaction?
10. What kinds of criticism spark a defensive reaction in you? Style? Content? Something else?

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WORKING INDEPENDENTLY

1. What working environment motivates you the most? Why?
2. Do you prefer to work independently or as part of a team?
3. What does "independent work" mean to you?
4. Tell me about a time when you had to solve a problem without assistance.
5. What is your communication style? Do you prefer constant, frequent, or occasional conversations with your manager? Your direct reports?
8. Do you consider yourself an expert in anything (non-work related)? Sports? Subject area? Hobby? Why would you consider yourself an expert?
9. What do you like about <sales, our industry, this critical business subject area, etc.>?
10. Tell me about the CRM tool you know most about. What's good about it? What's not?
11. Scan <this area> of our website. Then, leave me a voicemail that would get a potential customer to call back.
12. What's your ideal company to work for? Pick five points, no more.

WRITTEN SCREEN QUESTIONS FOR SALES CANDIDATES

1. Tell me about something you are very proud of. What is it? Why are you proud?
2. What's the best advice you've ever received, sales-related or not? Why?
3. What's your funniest or most interesting sales or business story?
4. What do you think about the <insert trend here> trend in our industry?
5. Give me an outline of a sale you made that went well.
6. Give me an outline of a sale that went terribly. Be honest.
7. If you could change any part of the hiring process, what would it be?

Skills

ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

1. How do you explore and identify untapped value?
2. Walk me through your account-growth planning process. How do you ensure client satisfaction?
3. If I were to talk to a few of your current clients, how would they describe their experience working with you?
4. At any given point in time, how many opportunities would you say you're working on simultaneously?

125+ Sales Hiring Interview Questions

BUSINESS ACUMEN

1. How do you build relationships with executives? How is that different from middle-level clients and customers?
2. You've been approached with a new idea. How would you determine its feasibility and possible success?
3. What are the typical business metrics your clients and customers try to achieve? Explain them to me in detail.
 - How do they work separately?
 - How do they all come together in the big picture?
4. Explain the business metrics of a company you've recently worked for. What are the key drivers of success?
5. What role does culture play in the success of a company?
6. Tell me about a time you used industry, buyer, or economic data to support a successful project.

PROBLEM SOLVING

1. What has been your greatest obstacle or life challenge? How did you overcome it?
2. What challenges have you faced in your current role? What have you learned from the experience?
3. Tell me about a time when you helped a coworker solve a challenging problem.
4. Describe a time when you identified and fixed a problem before it became urgent.
5. What is the best way to approach a professional conflict with a colleague? With a manager? A client/customer?

RESEARCH AND PREPAREDNESS

1. Tell me about what you've learned about our company and offerings thus far.
2. What about our business strategy, offerings, and marketplace positioning jumps out to you?
3. From your perspective, what are the key components of our solution? Give me an overview of our company and offerings as if you already worked in a selling role here.
4. Who do you think are our primary customers/clients? What is our target demographic?
5. Describe your research process.
6. Do you prefer qualitative or quantitative data? Why?

SALES MANAGEMENT

1. What makes a sales team successful?
2. Describe the best manager you've worked with. What made them successful?
3. Tell me about your management style (communication style, direction, collaboration, etc.).
4. Have you ever been in a position where you had to lead a group of peers?
 - How did you approach the situation?
 - Did any problems arise? Describe how you handled them.
 - What did you learn from the situation?
5. How does change management work? What are the keys to leadership success?
6. Have you ever managed remote employees? Tell me how this worked.

125+ Sales Hiring Interview Questions

Approach to Sales

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

1. How much time do you spend each day on the phone, emailing, or in non-selling tasks?
2. Tell me about a typical selling day for you.
3. Take me through your sales process.
 - What is your goal during the first call? How do you decide whom to call? What do you say?
 - What do you do on your first meeting with a prospect? What happens after the first meeting?
 - What takes place during the second meeting? What steps do you take after that to close the sale?
4. What would you consider to be advanced selling skills? Which do you apply? Why and how? Give me an example.
5. What is your average sales cycle? Average revenue generated per sale?

PROSPECTING

1. How do you prospect? What makes for successful prospecting vs. not-as-successful prospecting?
2. How has your approach to prospecting changed throughout your career?
3. Which channels and/or tools are the most helpful for connecting with potential prospects?
4. How do you know if you are working with someone with decision-making authority or the ability to buy?
5. How do you create a personalized experience for each prospect?

NEEDS DISCOVERY

1. What are the keys to a successful needs discovery?
2. Which tools/methods do you use to create a comprehensive scope of your buyer's needs?
3. Describe a time when a buyer's needs were difficult to identify. What led to success?
4. How do you determine which questions to ask?
5. How has your approach to needs discovery adapted based on your past experiences?

SOLUTION CRAFTING

1. How do you stay up to date on company offerings? Buyer/client needs? Industry trends?
2. Describe an example of a time you collaborated with a buyer or client to craft a solution. Why were you successful?
3. Walk me through your solution crafting process. <Buyer or client> is looking for a solution to <problem>.
 - How would you approach learning about and understanding our product?
 - How do you identify which solutions are appropriate for <buyer or client>?
 - What follow-up questions would you ask?

125+ Sales Hiring Interview Questions to Ask

SOLUTION PRESENTATION

1. When you are presenting, what tactics do you use to set yourself apart from other sellers in the minds of buyers?
2. What's the ROI case for your current offerings? Explain it to me in detail as if I were a CFO and I was going to look at the numbers carefully.
3. Give me an example of a successful solution you've presented to a buyer. What made it successful?
 - How did you prepare for it?
 - What, if anything, would you do differently?

NEGOTIATION

1. How do you manage your buyer's expectations and emotions? Your team?
2. Describe a time when you were unsuccessful in negotiating. What went wrong? What did you learn?
3. Tell me about any large sale where you've engaged in an involved negotiation.
 - What was your objective? What was the buyer's objective?
 - What were the steps taken during the negotiation? What was the outcome?
 - How did the buyer respond to the negotiation? What were the outcomes?

WINNING THE SALE

1. Have you consistently met your sales goals? How many sales do you need to close per month/quarter to succeed?
2. Can you tell me about a time when you leveraged industry (or company) knowledge to succeed?
3. Time is money. How do you create a sense of urgency for buyer action?
4. How do you overcome buyer objections to gain commitment?