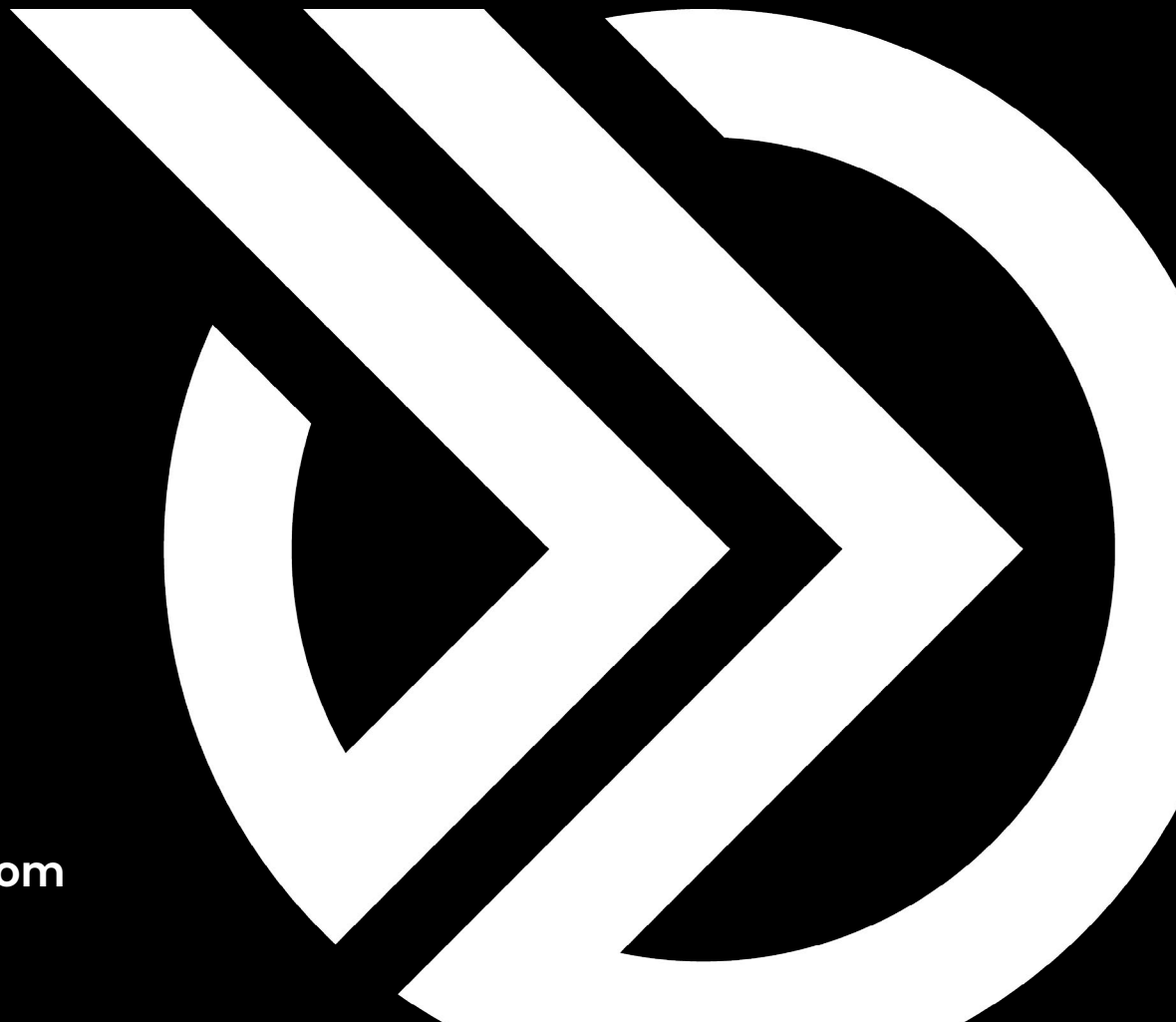
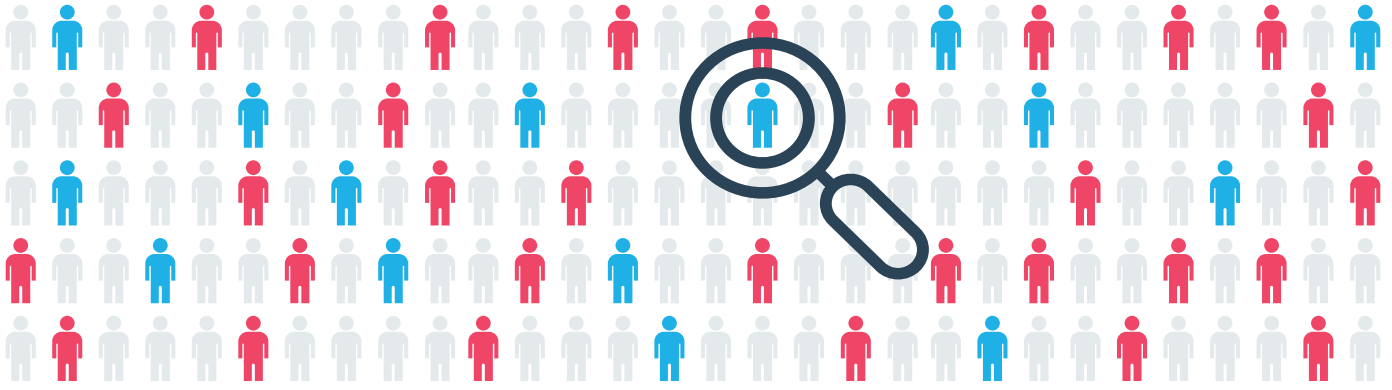


The B2B SaaS Sales Interview Guide

Get it right: 10 Key Traits and 30 Questions to Find Top Performers
(and avoid bad hires who cost you time, money and peace of mind)





As a Sales Manager, recruiting is a critical part of your job because it can make or break your career.

Most Managers employ people who present themselves well, are likeable and seem trustworthy. **How many times does a candidate's performance on the job seem very different from what you thought of them in the interview?**

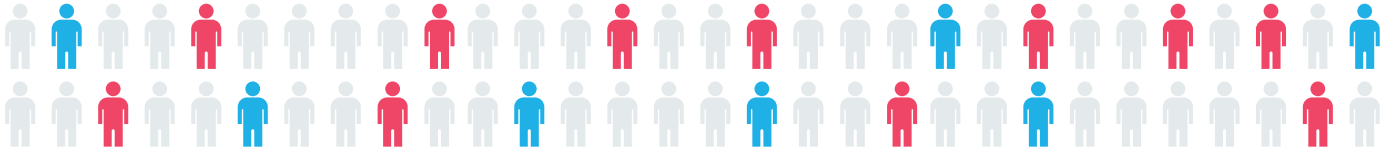
Making decisions about a candidate's sales potential is not an easy task. You will probably have to choose from a group of trained sales professionals who can 'sell' themselves to you, yet might not be able to deliver the results you want once the rubber hits the road.

This makes great sales interviews tricky – you are not making a decision based solely on past knowledge and performance, but also on anticipated future behaviour. This tool is meant to help you identify and assess the characteristics that will drive future performance, so that you can have good sales interviews and make great sales hiring decisions.



*Hiring decisions
are tricky!*





WHO ARE THE TOP SALES PERFORMERS?

A recent article in the Harvard Business Review, *'Motivating Salespeople: What really works*'*, talked about three categories of sales people that make up sales teams.

Here is a summary:

Stars



This is a small and elite group of over achievers. They can knock down doors, scale great heights and deliver great results. They can also be demanding, high maintenance and difficult to retain in the long run unless suitable challenges are provided. Without Stars, companies will not win 'marquee' accounts, achieve rapid growth with existing resources or make the national headlines for first-ever kind of deals. They are 'top sales performers' for their ability to be trailblazers and record breakers.

Core Performers



This is the clear majority in the best sales organisations. Like Toyota's cars, they are boringly consistent and reliable. They dread the extremes of feast or famine, more so famine. They could be overlooked by their Sales Managers, if the Manager was a Star sales performer. Those managers usually tend to pay attention to the Stars and might even consider the Core Performers as being in their 'comfort zone' or as being 'cruisers'. Without Core Performers, companies cannot make their targets consistently. In our experience, their average tenures at companies are 50% to 70% longer than those of Star performers. They are 'top sales performers' because of their ability to consistently achieve the targets set by the organisation.

Laggards



This is the group of people who are still finding their feet in the organisation, or are serial under-performers who impressed their way into the job with their fancy suits (and excessive use of hair gel!). Some of them are also former Stars and Core Performers who have simply lost their motivation. Laggards can drain their Manager's attention and resources, unless the problem is identified and resolved quickly. It stands to reason then, that it is probably easier to hire a Top Sales Performer than to train someone to become one.



10 TRAITS OF A TOP SALES PERFORMER

1. They are self motivated and goal oriented.

They usually have a high degree of intrinsic motivation. Top Sales Performers are driven and goal oriented and hold themselves to a high standard. They always compare themselves to people they perceive as their betters and keep striving to improve. They do not require micromanagement.

Sample interview questions:

A. Give me an example of a personal or professional goal you have achieved in the last three years and tell me about why you chose to pursue it?

B. What career goals have you already achieved? Why were they important to you?

C. What percentage of your sales targets have you been hitting over the last 12 months?

D. How has your success ranked with your colleagues' sales success?

2. They are organised and manage their efforts according to a Sales Plan.

They understand that to achieve goals, you need a plan. So, Top Sales Performers plan and usually think ahead of time. They use tools like CRM and task management practices to get through the day. They avoid unfruitful activities that do not get results or bring any returns.

Sample interview questions:

A. Tell me about your best sales results in a year, within the last three years? At the start, how did you plan to achieve them? What did you do to stay on track?

B. How do you develop a Sales Plan to achieve a new sales challenge? Give me an example from your current role or the one before that? What elements are essential to your success?

C. How do you prepare for meetings?

D. How do you manage your activities through the week?

3. They have a Sales Process. Most Top Sales Performers have a tried-and-tested sales process that works for them. This could involve a range of lead generation activities through to need-analysis, solution presentation and closure.

Sample interview questions:

A. What are the typical progression steps you might take with a sales opportunity?

B. How do you typically generate, develop and close sales opportunities? Give me a couple of examples of recent wins.

C. How do you keep track of all your leads, conversations you have, opportunities and competing forces and serve everyone in a timely manner?

4. They take responsibility and are action oriented.

They take responsibility for their actions and seek to influence, rather than be influenced. They don't blame others or the economy for the lack of results. Top Sales Performers perform a high level of meaningful sales activities in their day. They spot opportunities and seize them. This sets them apart from the sea of average and below-average performers within a team.

Sample interview questions:

A. Tell me about a time that you failed to achieve goals you set? What went wrong and how could this have been different?

B. How do you react when a client is angry because your company did not deliver on its promise?

C. What do you do when you have been trying an approach that just does not seem to be working?

5. They have a strong work ethic.

Because they are focused and motivated intrinsically to achieve their goals, their attention is on getting the meaningful and necessary task done in the day – regardless of how long this takes. Hard work does not scare Top Sales Performers because they have tasted the fruit of their labour repeatedly in the past.

Sample interview questions:

A. *Imagine we've just hired you. What's the most important thing on your to-do list on the first day of work?*

B. *What would you do if you got behind schedule with your part of a project?*

C. *How do you manage your workload when there are more tasks than the hours available in the day?*

6. They are persistent and don't give up easily.

Most sales people give up trying to reach decision makers within 2-3 attempts. Top Sales Performers make 4-6 attempts. This applies to every stage of the Sales Process, until they win. However, when they do fail, they bounce back and keep moving forward.

Sample interview questions:

A. *How do you build relationships with people who are inaccessible and unresponsive?*

B. *Tell me about a time in your life when something just did not work and had to keep trying?*

C. *What is your general approach to problem-solving?*

7. They value relationships.

Top Sales Performers understand that people buy from people they trust and like. So they continue to invest in building their network of friends, confidantes, advocates, coaches and clients.

Sample interview questions:

A. *What associations and clubs are you an active member of?*

B. *Tell me more about your relationship with your current or most recent management.*

8. They are good listeners!

Top Sales Performers know that it's not about selling but about understanding and helping others achieve their goals. This gives them insight into people's problems and enables them to become Trusted Advisors who can provide meaningful solutions. Advice for listening skills: Pay close attention to their responses and assess whether they provide all the information you require or leave evident gaps. Give them a post-interview task, to be sent to you via email within 48 hours.

9. They are continuous learners.

They understand that making mistakes and a degree of failure is inevitable, so they learn from these experiences to avoid future pain. Top Sales Performers also learn from their peers, coaches and mentors. Often, they invest time and money into their education and personal development.

Sample interview questions:

A. *What sales training courses/ workshops have you completed?*

B. *How has this sales training assisted you?*

C. *What are some of your most painful lessons you have learned as a sales professional?*

D. *Who has been the greatest influence in your professional selling career?*

10. They enjoy recognition and reward.

Having put in the hard work, they expect recognition - be it praise, a pat on the back, gifts, time-off and monetary rewards. While this varies from person to person, every Top Sales Performer has goals that are met through recognition and reward.

Sample interview questions:

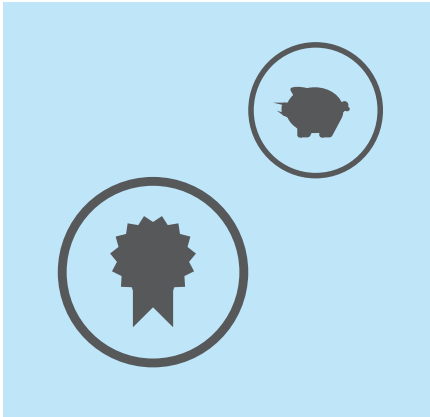
A. *How were you rewarded for your most recent sales achievements? How would you have liked to be rewarded?*

B. *What is your most cherished sales reward in your sales career?*

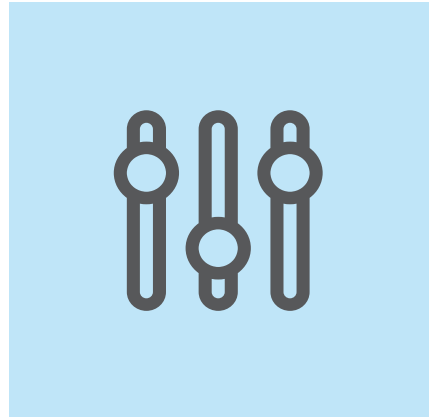
C. *Which incentive plan in your past few roles did you find most motivating? Important to remember: Not all candidates will get a high score on each characteristic. Usually, you will find Average, Above Average and Far Above Average responses on most criteria.*



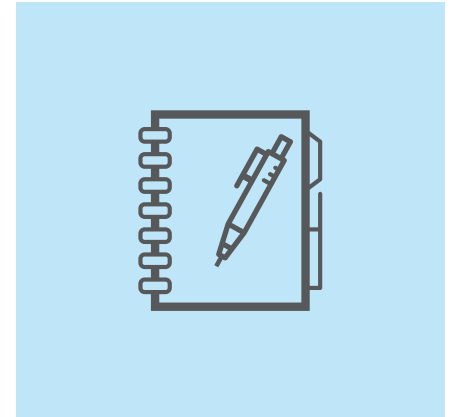
FIVE STEPS TO GREAT INTERVIEWS...



1/ Determine the type of salesperson you are seeking: 'Star' or 'Core Performer', right at the start of your interview process.



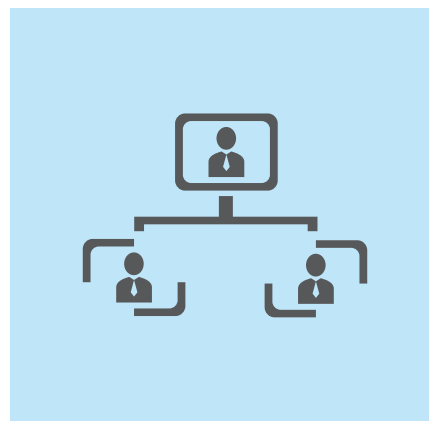
2/ Rate the importance of characteristics based on your sales culture and the challenges you seek to overcome through this role.



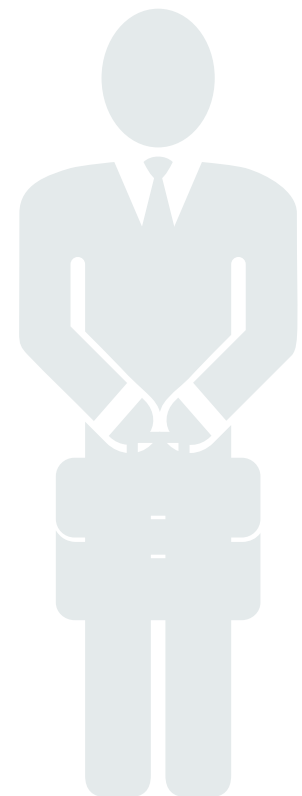
3/ Prepare an interview plan so that you can get the most information from the time available, to make the best decision.



4/ Score the responses at the interview and review the scores provided by other interviewers.



5/ Keep records and compare the results to refine your process and become a ninja level sales interviewer!





DON'T DEPEND ON YOUR RATINGS ALONE.

Use the traditional sources available to you and get them to rate these criteria as well.

1. **Have another person** rate this at the interview with you, for example a peer or a subordinate.
2. **Get the candidate back** for a second interview with a new group of people – a manager, peer or subordinate.
3. **Identify and consistently use psychometric tests** that best uncover these characteristics.
4. **Talk to references personally** to verify your ratings and seek explanation for any concerns you may have.
5. **Check social media sources** like LinkedIn to verify these ratings through comments and endorsements about the candidate.

Making the right decision is not easy nor are you guaranteed future results because there will always be an element of risk which is out of your control. However, you can make the most informed decision, using the approach provided here, which is controllable and will minimise the risk. Therefore, in our opinion, it is more important to make an informed decision which is within your control, rather than bear the stress of making the right decision everytime.



Making an informed decision...



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- Marketing Coordinators, Managers and Directors
- Channel, S.I & Alliance Managers and Directors

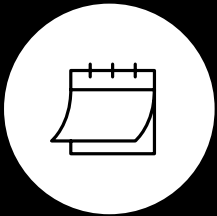
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- Cloud Platforms and Point Solutions
- SaaS, Services and System Integrators
- US, EU, APAC and ANZ Headquarters

The numbers



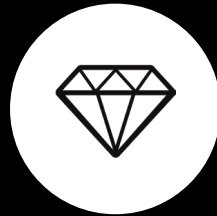
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25,000+
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10,000+
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300+
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