



HOW TO SELECT STAR SALESPEOPLE FOR YOUR BUSINESS

Find out how to identify top-performing sales professionals and choose the right Candidates to fit your business.

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SELECTION PROCESS OVERVIEW

Having a tight interview process is key when trying to select skilled salespeople. This document will walk you through the three stages of selecting top candidates.

STAGE 1: INTERVIEW PREPARATION

The first stage begins with preparing for the interview. This includes creating the job description, picking an interview team, and assigning key characteristics to interviewers to ensure coverage of critical skills and behaviors.

STAGE 2: THE INTERVIEW

The second stage describes the actual interview process. You will learn about what materials you need, how to create the right interview environment, and interview best practices. This eBook also includes potential interview questions based on 5 characteristics of top salespeople.

STAGE 3: MAKE THE DECISION

Finally, the third stage includes post-interview procedures and an “Interview Evaluation” form for the interviewers to complete. After all the interviews have been completed, the interview team should hold a group discussion where each interviewer will reveal their thoughts and comments about each candidate.



STAGE 1: INTERVIEW PREPARATION

Create job descriptions that will attract top-performing sales reps and learn how to use your team to help you make the best selection.

- Creating the Job Description
- Organizing the Interview Team
- Selection Systems Elements Matrix

CREATING THE JOB DESCRIPTION

Employers must create a job description that portrays the type of person that will thrive in your company environment and includes the criteria that interviewers will use to assess candidates.



SELLING THE OPPORTUNITY

Start by including information about your organization, any growth your company is experiencing, what is inspiring you to hire for this position, and how this role is critical to the business.



ICING ON THE CAKE

Talk about any perks you're going to offer and what benefits are available. If you have a pension plan, 401k, or car allowance, those should also be stated. Anything that would be added on to their current compensation, which in most cases should be a commission plan, should also be included.



CREATE UNDERSTANDING

Beyond company information, strong job descriptions make it clear what the job will be like for top candidates. For instance, what are key activities they will be doing, what they will be selling, typical clients, the territory, and any other high level details that a sales professional would find important when assessing the opportunity.



YOUR INTERNAL TEAM IS A CRITICAL AUDIENCE

It's key to make sure the job description is very clear on what the basic requirements and skills are so the people who are involved in the interviewing process understand the position and the key selection criteria.

ORGANIZING THE INTERVIEW TEAM

In order to ensure objectivity throughout the hiring process, you may want to consider using a team of interviewers and a selection systems matrix.

TEAM OF INTERVIEWERS

Using a team of interviewers is beneficial because it provides varying perspectives and helps to eliminate biases.

- It is the preferred method over individual interviews because interviewer accuracy is improved, first-impression biases are minimized, and it changes yes/no voting to evidence-based assessments.
- Your team of interviewers should be formed as soon as possible and should consist of at least three members.

UNDERSTANDING THE SELECTION MATRIX

A selection system matrix is a tool that lets you objectively compare an applicant's qualifications to a job vacancy's qualifications and functions, as well as compare applicants to one another based on established job-related criteria.

In order to develop a selection matrix, you and/or your interview team will need to analyze the position's qualifications and job functions. Next, you will assign each member of the interview team to a specific targeted dimension. The interviewer will then evaluate the candidate and ask them specific questions based on their assigned targeted dimension.

This tool is important because it not only lets you objectively compare a candidate's qualifications to the open position's requirements, but also to compare the candidates to one another based on the established criteria.

SELECTION MATRIX TEMPLATE

CANDIDATES NAME: _____

POSITION: _____

INTERVIEWER: _____

SELECTION SYSTEM ELEMENTS:

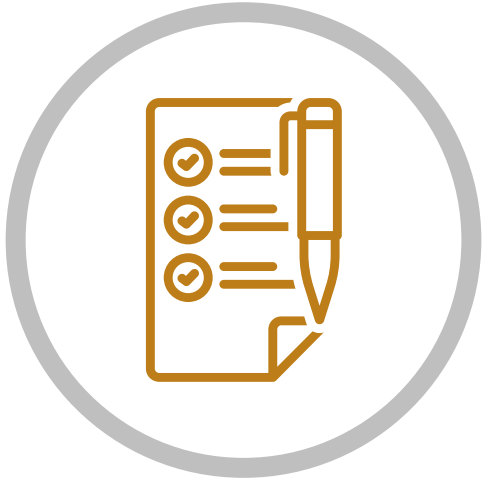
Targeted Dimensions	Interviewer 1	Interviewer 2	Interviewer 3	Interviewer 4
Learning Centered				
Self Management				
Goal Oriented				
Adaptable				
Character				



STAGE 2: THE INTERVIEW

Discover the 5 dimensions that will help you identify top sales reps that match your company culture and work environment.

- Interview Preparation
- Create the Right Environment
- Interview Best Practices
- 5 Selection Characteristics



INTERVIEW PREPARATION

1. All interviewers should have the following:

- Interview Schedule
- Candidate Resume
- Selection System Elements Matrix
- Job Description
- Interview Evaluation Form

2. Review the Job Description for content, requirements, and qualifications. Also, you can bring a copy of the job description into the interview for reference.

3. Review the Selection System Matrix and plan your time accordingly to cover your primary areas of focus. Make sure you know how your target areas relate to the open position's requirements and skills.

4. Make note of the questions you would like to ask to tap into your areas of focus. Arrange the questions in the appropriate order leaving room for notes.



CREATE THE RIGHT ENVIRONMENT

1. Greet the candidate giving your name and position. Put the candidate at ease and begin with low-key questions.

2. State the purpose of the interview. As an example, if you are interviewing for a management position and your focus will be on leadership skills, state that general purpose to the candidate. It will help establish the appropriate expectations for the interview.

3. Provide the candidate with the appropriate background information on the nature of the position.

For example, why it is open (growth, transfer, promotion, etc.) and the mission of the company, your department, and your team.

4. Explain the interview process. State that you will be asking questions and taking notes.

Let the candidate know they may take notes as well. Indicate that you will leave time at the end of the interview for the candidate to ask you questions.

5. Place your phone on "Do not Disturb."



INTERVIEW

BEST PRACTICES

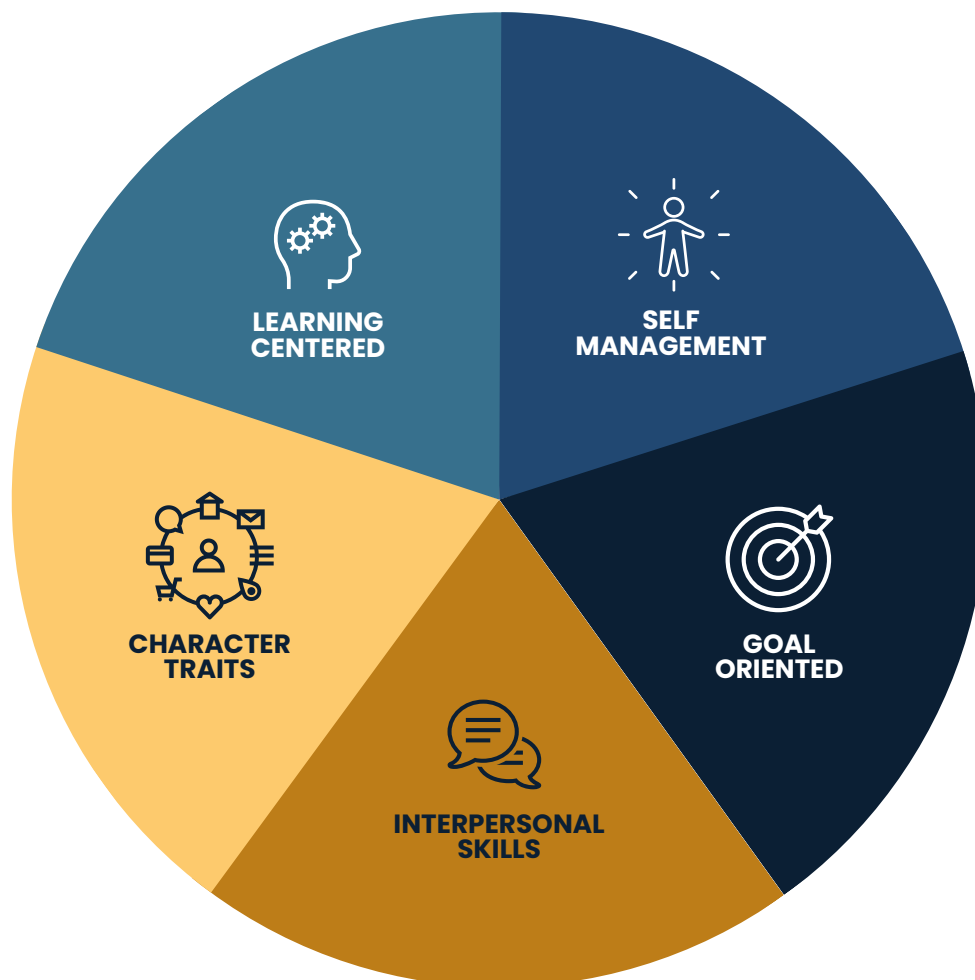
1. Stick with your plan. Cover the areas you have been assigned using the questions you planned to use.
2. Let the candidate do most of the talking. Use an 80/20 rule. You should only do 20% of the talking.
3. Use open ended, situational, probing and behavioral interviewing styles and questions. Your goal is to get the candidates talking in depth in all of the Selection System areas you have been assigned. You will see examples of these questions in the next few pages.
4. Avoid questions that have no relevance to the characteristics you are interviewing for.
5. Once you have covered your primary areas of focus you may cover any other relevant areas that you would like in the remaining time.
6. Give the candidate a chance to ask questions. This is a great chance to “sell” your company. Remember that making great hires is a two way process with both parties selling their strengths.
7. Try to remain on schedule. Escort the candidate to the next person on the agenda when you are finished. Thank the candidate for their time and wish them well.

SELECTION CHARACTERISTICS AND SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following section contains interview questions aligned with 5 characteristics most common in top performing sales representatives.

It is not necessary to ask every question under each area, but to select questions that best match the requirements of your position.

5 CHARACTERISTICS OF TOP SALES PEOPLE





LEARNING CENTERED

Professional Interest: Active pursuit of information in professional area

- To which industry or job-related organization do you belong? What is the extent of your participation? What do you get out of it?
- How do you keep informed on what's going on in the sales industry?
- What important changes are taking place in the sales industry? Do you consider them good or bad?

Career Ambition: The expressed desire to advance to higher job levels with active efforts toward self-development for advancement

- Why do you want a sales position? What type of self-development activities are you engaged in to obtain the necessary skills?
- In what areas do you lack qualifications? What are you doing about them?
- Have you taken any skills development courses recently?

Professional Self Development: Active efforts toward self-development in current position or within scope of responsibility

- How did you gain the experience (learn the skills) necessary to perform your present duties?
- How does your performance as a sales professional compare with other sales professionals in your organization? Why is your performance better?
- What steps have you taken to improve your performance?

Self-Development Orientation: Initiates actions to further improve skills and performance proficiency. Active efforts toward self-development

- What are your career goals in the next five years? What have you done to accomplish them?
- What skills development courses have you taken recently? Why did you decide to take them?
- What people or events have been most important in your self-development?



SELF MANAGEMENT

Self Organization: Ability to efficiently schedule own time and activities

- How do you schedule your time? Set priorities?
- What is your procedure for keeping track of matters requiring your attention?
- How much time do you spend getting organized on a daily basis? When do you do it?
- What were your objectives for last year? Were they achieved?

Management: Establishing a course of action for self and/or others to accomplish a specific goal

- Describe a typical day, a typical week.
- How have you determined what constitutes top priorities in scheduling your time? Give examples.
- What is the difference between activity and results? How do you personally define this difference?

Decision Making: Skill in identifying decisions which are better made after thought and deliberation.

- What were the most difficult decisions you made in the last six months? How did you formulate these decisions?
- On which decisions have you deliberated longest? Tell me about them?
- Describe the biggest calculated risk you have taken as a salesperson?

Attention to Detail: Total task accomplishment through concern for all areas involved, no matter how small.

- Can you give me some examples of times when you found errors in your work? How did you handle it?
- Describe your system for controlling errors in your work



GOAL ORIENTED

Work Standards: Setting high goals or standards of performance

- In your position, how do you define doing a good job?
- Are you doing a good job? How do you know?
- What are your standards of success in your job? What have you done to meet these standards?
- What personal factors do you consider most important in evaluating yourself or your success?
- Tell me about some times when you weren't very pleased with your performance. What caused the results to be less than great?

Behavioral Flexibility: Modifying behavior to reach a goal

- How have you gotten around obstacles that prevented you from completing projects? Describe the obstacle and what you did to get around it.
- Describe a situation in which your first attempt to sell an idea to your boss failed. Did you try again? What approach did you use the second time?
- Tell me about a time when you missed a deadline. What were the consequences? What did you do differently for your next deadline?

Tenacity: Staying with a position or plan of action until the desired objective is achieved or is no longer reasonably attainable

- What were the most difficult decisions you made in the last six months? How did you formulate these decisions?
- On which decisions have you deliberated longest? Tell me about them?
- Describe the biggest calculated risk you have taken as a salesperson?



INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Controlled Demeanor: Skills in maintaining composure and objectivity when confronted with personally defense-provoking situations

- When did you last lose your temper? Describe the reasons and the outcome.
- What was your reaction the last time a person lost his or her temper?
- Tell me about some situations in which you became frustrated or impatient when dealing with customers, colleagues, or boss?
- Give me a specific example of a situation where you had to develop a productive relationship with someone whose point of view was different from your own. How did you go about sustaining the relationship?

Adaptability: Maintaining effectiveness in varying environments and with varying tasks, responsibilities, or people

- Tell me about a situation in which you had to adjust quickly to changes in organizational priorities. What was the impact of the change on you?
- Which bosses have you worked most effectively for and why? Hardest to work for?
- Tell me about some situations in your job where you had to abruptly change what you were doing. What did you do? How did it affect you?

Tolerance for Stress: Stability of performance under pressure and/or opposition

- Under what conditions do you work best?
- What kinds of pressure do you feel in your job?
- What are the highest-pressure situation you have been under in recent years? How did you cope?
- What is the most stressful or difficult situation where you had to maintain your composure at work? What did you do to maintain the composure? If you had it to do over, what would you do the same? Differently?



CHARACTER TRAITS

Acceptance of Responsibility: A measure of the capacity to be answerable for personal actions

- Tell me about a time when it was necessary to admit to others that you had made a mistake. How did you handle it?
- Give an example of a situation where others had made a mistake and you had to take the blame for their actions. How did you feel about doing that?
- Give me an example of someone you know whose personal actions led to disastrous results. How answerable is that person for what happened? What advice would you give to that person?

Truthfulness: The ability to tell the truth and exhibit honesty in various situations

- If I call your references now, what would they say about you?
- Has a former boss ever asked you to tell a white lie? How did you handle it?
- If you saw a co-worker doing something dishonest, would you tell your supervisor? What would you do about it?
- In what business/work-related situation do you feel honesty would be inappropriate?

Integrity: Adherence to moral and ethical principles

- Describe your former boss.
- Describe a mistake you have made in the past and how you handled it?
- Do you have any professional regrets?
- Has there ever been a time when your work day was over but your tasks weren't finished? What did you do?
- Discuss a time when your integrity was challenged. How did you handle it?



STAGE 3: POST-INTERVIEW EVALUATION

Improve your chances of hiring the right sales rep by creating an efficient post-interview process and eliminate hiring bias by using the Interview Evaluation form.

- Post-Interview Procedure
- Interview Evaluation Form
- Group Discussion



POST INTERVIEW

1. As the interview wraps up, be very clear about when and how you are going to let the candidate know whether they received a job offer or not. If you are unsure of the specific date of when the hiring decision will be made, then give the candidate an estimated range.

Be sure to follow up with the candidate when you say you will. Not doing so is bad business and will make both you and your company look unprofessional.

2. Complete your interview Evaluation Form as soon as possible. Filling out the form directly after the interview will make sure you don't forget any important details or additional comments you want to remember.
3. The post interview evaluation is the time for all the interviewers to discuss their notes and advance the hiring decision.

Interviewers should be prepared to back up recommendations with specific examples and notes from the interview. Use this time to discuss who will be moving forward in the hiring process and what the next steps are.



GROUP DISCUSSION

When using a team of interviewers during the interview process, oftentimes there can be varied opinions and recommendations about whether to hire a candidate or not.

In order to avoid wasting time with a stalled hiring decision, follow these four steps.

1. Make sure the interviewers have a solid understanding of what they're evaluating the candidate against, both job related skill sets and behavioral skill sets.
2. Make sure there is an evaluation process that is based on rankings versus solely subjective thoughts and just feelings about a candidate.
3. Make sure evaluations are turned into one person that is leading the hiring process.

That person should be the hiring manager, human resources, or whoever has been facilitating the interviewing process.

4. Facilitate an interview recap meeting with all parties that are interviewed to discuss and make the final decision.

Whether it's in person, or a conference call, it's key to gather everybody in that recap meeting.

INTERVIEW EVALUATION TEMPLATE

CANDIDATES NAME: _____

POSITION: _____

INTERVIEWER: _____

DATE: _____

DEPT/MANAGER: _____

TITLE: _____

TARGET DIMENSION	Supportive Data/Additional Comments	RATING
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Overall Evaluation: The weighting of each evaluation factor in addition to the actual rating determine the overall evaluation rating.

OVERALL RATING: _____ **COMMENTS:** _____

RECOMMENDATION: OFFER NO CURRENT INTEREST

INTERVIEWER SIGNATURE: _____

RATINGS

- 10** - Clearly exceeds all position requirements
- 8** - Exceeds requirements in most aspects
- 6** - Candidate meets the basic requirements as listed, displays competent mid-level to junior skills
- 4** - Does not meet the complete requirement, not qualified for position on critical dimension unless entry level
- 2 or less** - Does not meet the complete requirement, not qualified for position on critical dimension unless entry level