

Appendix B

INTERVIEWING GUIDE AND HIRING DECISION SCALE

Below are questions to ask when you interview a candidate for a sales job. Read over the questions carefully and restate them in your own words so you are comfortable asking them. You may have some additional questions that have worked well for you in the past or that are specific to your medium and your type of sales job. If you have such questions, add them to or substitute them for the questions in this guide. Then, create a new personal Interviewing Guide that contains your reworded versions of the questions below and your additional questions. Also, include your own version of a Hiring Decision Scale at the end of the guide. Make copies of your personal Interviewing Guide and use it for all candidates you interview.

Make sure to follow a similar format as you see below and to have room to take notes on candidates' answers under each question. Also, remember to fill out your Hiring Decision Scale immediately after each interview. Finally, keep in mind that the reason you're developing an Interviewing Guide is because once you develop it, you will ask the same questions in the same order from then on.

Interviewing Questions - Salespeople

Candidate's Name: _____ Date: _____

<u>Phase One: Exploratory</u> <u>Question</u>	<u>What You're Looking For</u>
<p>1. (Put candidates at ease with a friendly welcome. Briefly explain your role in the structure of your company. Talk about the job position and the assignment, but not in too much detail. Then ask the following questions, giving candidates plenty of time to answer each one; pause and use silence to get them to expand on their answers.)</p> <p>A. "Tell me about yourself."</p> <p>B. "Where are you from?"</p> <p>C. "Where did you go to high school?"</p> <p>D. "Tell me about your family?"</p> <p>E. "Where did you go to college?"</p>	<p>You are looking for consistent, logical chronological order and conciseness, which are signs of intelligence. You are also interested in goal orientation—did they have early goals and try to achieve them?</p> <p>Location? Big town, small town?</p> <p>Probe on high school question to ask about extra-curricular activity and sports. You're looking for high-energy, active, competitive people.</p> <p>Be careful and don't ask about parents' occupation or race. But use silence to get candidates to reveal as much as possible. Ask about brothers and sisters. Birth order can give you some insight into their personality.</p> <p>If they didn't go to college, skip to Question #2 and don't be too concerned, as a lot of</p>

<p>F. “What was your major?”</p> <p>G. “What activities were you involved in?”</p> <p>H. What was your favorite course, and why?</p> <p>I. How did you finance your education?”</p>	<p>successful people didn’t go to college.</p> <p>You’re looking for interests and signs of intelligence. Did they get involved with the media early and did they have a lot of interests? Smart people generally have a wide range of interests. Their favorite course is a sign of early interests, too, and what they are probably good at (English, math, etc.)</p> <p>You want to know if their parents paid their way or if they had to work and finance it themselves or borrow money. If they borrowed, they might be highly motivated to pay it back. If they financed themselves, it shows they are probably hard workers and are goal oriented.</p>
<p>2. “What interests you about <u> (your industry) </u>?”</p> <p>A. “What is your favorite <u> (program, website, magazine, cable network) </u>?”</p> <p>i. “Why?”</p>	<p>The more passionate candidates are about your industry, the better they can sell it.</p> <p>Here, you’re testing the depth of their knowledge and commitment to your industry.</p> <p>The “why” question gives candidates the opportunity expand on their favorites, which will give you an indication of their intelligence and how articulate they are.</p>
<p>3. “Tell me about where you’ve worked.”</p>	<p>You’re looking for logical job progression. If someone has had a lot of jobs, if each one was a logical step up and a progression toward a career goal, that’s OK. Ask if they have a phone number for the last three places they worked. This is an implied threat that you will be checking references, which tends to keep exaggeration down.</p>
<p>4. “What three personal and professional accomplishments are you most proud of?”</p>	<p>Looking for a record of success and accomplishments, organization, and honesty. Probe deeply on each accomplishment to determine what specific actions they took. A smart candidate will answer in a SOAR format: Situation, Objective, Action, and Results. Or, what the situation was, what objectives they set, what action they took to accomplish the objectives, and what the results were.</p>
<p>5. “What do you want your next job to do for you that your last job didn’t?”</p>	<p>Looking for realism, maturity, and goal orientation. People who are goal oriented are achievers and are ambitious. Also shows growth and learning orientation and, thus,</p>

	gives some hint of coachability.
If the interviewee is not a viable, suitable candidate, wind up the interview at this point by asking the following question:	
“Give me three reasons why you want to work for this company.”	This is one of the most critical questions because it signals to you how much research candidates did. Are they well prepared for the interview? How much knowledge do they have of your company and the industry?
And then terminate the interview by saying:	
“I appreciate your taking the time to come see me. I enjoyed getting to know you better. However, (‘We don’t have an opening at this time, but I’ll keep your resume on file’ or ‘We’re looking for someone with both a different level of experience and skill set than yours, good as they might be, but I’ll keep your resume on file.’) Use whichever is true, but it is important to be honest with interviewees. Remember, you want them to feel good about your company and about the possibility of working for you.)	
<u>Phase Two: Specific Questions</u>	
6. “What did you like best about each of your previous jobs?” A. “What did you like least about them?” B. “Did any salespeople or employees ever do anything you didn’t think was right?” C. “To make a sale, did anyone do things that you felt weren’t right?” D. “Are there some things you wouldn’t do to get an order?” E. “How would you define ethical behavior for a salesperson?”	Looking for how to motivate people, positive attitude, optimism, locus of control, and maturity. Same as above. Be wary of overly negative people. If they knock ex-bosses too much, they will knock you behind your back. Beginning of several ethics questions. You’re looking for honest people who have the integrity not to break the rules to get an order.
7. INSERT A JOB-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE QUESTION HERE.	
8. “Review for me exactly what your job responsibilities were in your last two jobs.”	Review candidate’s resumes and drill down on what they did. Put on a little pressure.

<p>A. “Give me some examples of successes you had in these jobs.”</p> <p>B. “What are the three things that contributed most to these successes?”</p>	<p>You’re looking for specificity and consistency—did they exaggerate before? Are they claiming more success than they really had? Answers show how organized people are, and smart people use a SOAR format to answer.</p> <p>Are they giving credit to good managers and to their own good planning and organization? Looking for maturity, realism, discipline, and honesty. Narcissistic, self-absorbed, and selfish people claim it was all them. Mature people will attribute some of their success to luck, which is realistic.</p>
<p>9. “What do you want your next job to do for you that your last job didn’t do?”</p>	<p>Looking for realism, growth orientation, ambition, and coachability. Be careful of people who focus on money – if they come to you only for money, they will leave quickly for more money.</p>
<p>10. INSERT A JOB-SPECIFIC SKILLS QUESTION HERE.</p>	
<p>11. “Where do you want to be in three and in five years from now?”</p> <p>A. “What would be your ideal, your dream job eventually?”</p> <p>B. “How are doing toward achieving your career goals?”</p> <p>i. “What do you need to improve on?”</p>	<p>Don’t ask what job they want in five years; they might not want a job. They might be unrealistic and immature and want to be retired. Also, you learn about career goals. This is a stock question, so they should have a well-prepared answer. If they don’t, they’re not too smart.</p> <p>Looking for ambition, realism, maturing, and goal orientation.</p> <p>Looking for maturity, realism, and, mostly, coachability and self-image.</p> <p>Looking for honesty. No one is perfect and everyone can improve. So, if candidates say, “nothing,” they are lying and trying to hide something. Also, looking for the self-knowledge element of emotional intelligence.</p>
<p>12. “Tell me about your typical work day. When do you get up, when do you get to work, how do you organize your day?”</p>	<p>Look for signs that a person is a disciplined, well-organized hard worker. Remember, the early bird gets the worm.</p>
<p>13. “What kind of business day would be ideal?”</p>	<p>Looking for maturity, realism, goal orientation, and strong work ethic. Also looking to see if someone enjoys travel.</p>

14. INSERT A JOB-SPECIFIC SKILLS KNOWLEDGE QUESTION HERE.	
15. "Tell me how you go about prospecting for new business."	Looking for organization, planning, and discipline, plus sales skills.
16. "When you give a presentation for your product, how do you create value for it?"	Looking for sales skills and knowledge. Are candidates commodity-selling package monkeys or do they take pride in creating value?
17. "Who (company) is your biggest competitor and what do you say about it when you make a sales presentation?"	Watch out for people who sell negatively and who trash competitors. Don't hire them.
18. "Tell me about a buyer or customer you call on. What motivates him/her?" A. "What are his/her personality traits and needs?" B. "How do you sell him/her?"	Looking for emotional intelligence and understanding of people. These three questions are among the most important you will ask, particularly Question B. The longer, more detailed the answer is and the deeper the insight the better. Beware of short, simplistic answers. If anyone says, "I just give her the lowest price, which is what she wants," don't hire that person.
19. INSERT A JOB-SPECIFIC SKILL QUESTION HERE.	
20. "In all of the jobs you've ever had, who was the best boss?" A. "Don't tell me his or her name, but who was the worst boss?"	Looking for what motivates people, so if you hire them, you'll know what turns them on. Also, you want to learn if they might be too high maintenance and, thus, not prefer independence and autonomy. The worst-boss question will give you insight into self-image and defensiveness. If people take a bad boss personally ("He didn't like me"), beware, they might have external locus of control and self-esteem problems.
21. "What are the personality traits, characteristics of a successful salesperson?" A. "What are the personality traits, characteristics of (the	You are beginning a series of questions that indicate intelligence. Bright people organize their answers well, give long answers (a long list of traits), and see the connection between Question #17, 17A, and #18. Smart people will see the connection and give consistent answers. People who aren't too bright will

ideal job the interviewee aspires to in Question 9 A.)?”	not be consistent. In other words, won't give the same answer to #17 and #18.
22. “What are your personal strengths?” A. “Any more?” (Probe several times; some people have been socialized to be reluctant to talk about themselves too much, which might be considered bragging.)	This, along with Question #15 about what motivates buyers/customers and #18, about shortcomings, are the three most important questions you'll ask. Bright people have a long list of strengths that are not only the same as the answers to Question #17, but they also show their self-confidence and self-image. Absolutely believe what people say. If they have short lists that doesn't include, “I'm smart (or intelligent),” believe them.
23. “What are your shortcomings?”	Be sure to say “shortcomings” not “weaknesses.” The concept of a weakness is too pejorative and people are afraid to reveal weaknesses, but they will usually talk more openly about shortcomings. You don't care what the shortcomings are; you're not looking for weaknesses or negatives, you are looking for maturity, realism, and, above all, honesty. A mature, realistic, honest person will say something like, “I tend to be disorganized, but I have taken a time-management course and work hard to make a plan and stick to it.” Beware of people who say, “I'm too honest.” They clearly aren't, at least about their shortcomings.
24. “Tell me again why you left your last several jobs.” A. “What will your bosses in those jobs say about you when we call them?”	Put a little pressure on people. See if they become uncomfortable and give the same answers as before. The when-we-call question is an implied threat. Watch candidates carefully to see if they become nervous or seem to be afraid that you will call. You're looking for confidence.
25. “If you get his job, what are the first five things you will do on the first two days on the job?”	You're looking for organization, planning, maturity, realism, and goal orientation.
26. “What do you do in your spare time?”	You are looking to see if they engage in competitive activities or sports. Also, to see if they read a lot.
27. INSERT A JOB-SPECIFIC KNOWLEDGE OR SKILL QUESTION HERE.	
28. “What books have you read lately?”	Research indicates there is a direct

<p>A. “What good movies have you seen lately? Tell me about them?”</p>	<p>correlation between how much someone reads and how intelligent they are. Look for people who read a lot, both work-related and non-work related. Just because someone doesn’t read much, does not mean they are not smart, but their answers to other questions that are long, detailed, well organized, and chronologically consistent will give you clues about their intelligence. Ask candidates to tell you more about a book they have read or a movie they have seen. The organization, detail, length, thoughtfulness, and richness of their answers will give you insight into how verbally adroit they are, the breadth of their language, and how they express concepts, ideas, and qualitative things. In other words, how smart and verbal they are. If their discussion of a book or movie is brilliant, the chances are that their description of your product will be if they work for you.</p>
<p>Phase Three: Wrap-up</p>	
<p>29. “We only have a few minutes left, so I want to give you the opportunity to sell me on yourself. Tell me why you want to work here.”</p>	<p>Let them sell you. See how intelligent their pitch is. Look for people who want challenges, growth, and opportunity, not necessarily more money. People who will switch jobs just for money will move on for more money after you hire them, and there is never enough money to satisfy these people. You’re also looking to see how much knowledge they have of your company— have they done their research.</p>
<p>30. “Give me at least five reasons why I should hire you.”</p>	<p>Don’t hire anyone who can’t think of five reasons. Strongly consider hiring people who can give you 10 or more solid reasons – they are able to create value for themselves.</p>
<p>31. “Do you have any questions for me?”</p>	<p>Some candidates will ask how they did in the interview or will try to close you to hire them. Don’t make any commitments or tell them how they did until after they have seen other people in your organization. Answer all questions honestly.</p>
<p>32. “Thank you for taking the time to come see me today and to answer my questions.” A. (Tell candidates they will be seeing other people in your organization and give them the names, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of the people to call to set up appointments.) B. (Give candidates a project to do, but don’t give them a time frame.)</p>	<p>If you can set up another interview or two at this time, do so. If you are strongly in favor of hiring someone, you might want to sell a little here, but don’t make any commitments yet. Always give candidates a project or assignment and see how quickly they get back to you. The faster, the better.</p>

Hiring Decision Scale – Example

Below is an example of a Hiring Decision Scale. You should create your own Hiring Decision Scale in the Hiring Decision Scale Workbook and substitute it for the one below.

HIRING DECISION SCALE

<u>Attributes and Attitudes</u>	<u>Weight</u>	<u>(Candidate's Name) Rating</u>
1. Integrity	15	
2. Passion (Self-motivation) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Commitment b. Ambition c. Goal orientation d. Growth orientation 	14	
3. Intelligence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Problem-solving b. Practical c. Creative d. Emotional 	13	
4. Job-relevant knowledge	10	
5. Job-relevant skills	10	
6. Optimism/self-confidence	10	
7. Flexibility/coachability	10	
8. Chemistry and fit	9	
9. Maturity/realism	9	