

How to crush your sales interview in 5 easy steps

For those that are interviewing for a sales job there are certain steps to take that will ensure interview success.

Preparation is key. Every effort must be made to make to in order to stand out in today's competitive recruiting dynamics. Candidates that are able to demonstrate their unique value proposition stand a greater chance of success.

There are numerous print and online resources to help candidates nail an interview. However, to make it easier and more obtainable, the most important steps are highlighted below. While not listed in any order of priority, each step is critical.

1. Research

Before a candidate walks into the interview room, they must be sure to be prepared to talk about a series of topics. Anything can come up in an interview. Topics can range from personal attributes to goals for the future and workplace philosophies. Past challenges can come up for conversation too. For those looking to go into a new sales role, it is imperative to do ample research on the potential employer and their products and services. Being knowledgeable arms candidates with ability to control the pace and direction of the interview.

A well-prepared candidate will be able to align their candidacy with the values and dreams of their potential employer. They must also be able to showcase how their knowledge, background and enthusiasm will help their potential employer with future success.

2. Dress to Impress

Sales candidates must make every attempt to stand out, be noticed and land the job.

An ideal candidate will head into the interview dressed appropriately. Get a feel for the dress code at your prospective employer. If they prefer suits, candidates must ensure that suits they choose are well fitted, and modern. Avoid busy patterns. Take the time to dry clean or press shirts, and make sure shoes are shined. Matching belts, combed hair and groomed faces make great impressions, too. If the prospective employer prefers business casual, then a smart casual outfit will do the trick. Candidates should never show up at an interview in street wear.

It is not just the outfit and the personal appearance that needs to be addressed. What candidates bring with them to an interview also speaks volumes. Make sure that there are enough cover letters, resumes and portfolios for everyone in the room. Bring collateral items to the interview in a professional looking binder or briefcase. Candidates must demonstrate a sense of order and professionalism from what is worn to what is handed out and presented.

3. Sell

Application materials and references alone are not sufficient to demonstrate a candidate's employability. Candidates must go above and beyond to sell themselves as the perfect option for the job. This begins with enthusiastically selling expertise. Sales professionals are creative, energetic and driven. It is important to stand out and showcase interest, personality, knowledge and long-term commitment.

During the interview, candidates must make sure to highlight their past, knowledge of the industry and enthusiasm for the future. Candidates must clearly communicate their credentials, but they also need to give the employer a good idea as to how they will interact with clients. After all, if an interviewee cannot sell their candidacy, how will they be able to sell the company's products and services?

4. Prepare a list of questions

Before heading into an interview it is a very good idea to compile a list of questions to ask. In almost all interviews, candidates are given time to ask potential employers questions about the culture of the company and anything that relates to the job.

Often times, candidates head into an interview with a handful of canned questions that end up getting answered during the interview. When the time comes to ask questions, they cannot think of anything else to ask. They potentially come across as disinterested in the job. Candidates must jot down enough thoughtful questions to avoid this from happening. Questions about the industry, the product, competitors, and unit economics should be part of a candidate's arsenal. Take time at the beginning of an interview to ask if note taking is okay. This helps cover any questions that might emerge while the interview is happening.

5. Follow up

Failure to follow up might mean that the job goes to someone else. It is always important to immediately follow up in writing to thank a potential employer for their time to reiterate your interest in the position.

A good follow up note will consist of a candidate letting the employer know how much meeting them was appreciated. It will then move into thanking them for their time and the opportunity to meet and discuss the role. The letter should then focus on the candidate's interest and a brief summary of their qualifications. Expansion on anything learned in the interview can also be covered. The letter should be closed by demonstrating your appreciation one last time. Showing appreciation and interest in the job via a written note is a great way to remind interviewers about a candidate and to make one final lasting impression.