

# **Selling Interviews: Strategies and Best Practices**

## **1. Introduction to Selling Interviews**

Selling interviews are defined as the management process by which people sell their organization through focused oral and written communication with prospective employees. A successful hiring outcome increases the importance of the selling interview. Every job interview is a "selling interview," with the winners being those who are best at presenting themselves as the most appropriate candidates. Salesmanship and interview communication skills are among the major determinants of the final interview rating. The ability to sell and adapt is required in both personal and professional settings, including interviews. The ability to sell should increase with career advancement, as interview candidates are increasingly required to focus on selling the uniqueness of their organization to potential employees. Job seekers should stack the odds in their favor by understanding the importance of the selling interview and how it conveys a more appealing, strategic, short- and/or long-term community service message.

Buyers of products or services are smart. Sales professionals, by and large, are promoted from the team that sold them. Candidates for the selling interview, as a component of the hiring process, have had success as consumers of hiring interview services or have otherwise learned hiring interview fundamentals. A selling interview should outline the meaningful possibilities, generate interest, and induce excitement that leads to a job match, creating a second meeting or follow-up call. The selling interview is a settlement agreement of "the answer is yes" resulting from the following segments: persuasion, product knowledge, characteristics of products, and buying signals. Adapt and sell in each setting. Use them sequentially through the interview process: Opening – Applicant spreads positive vibrations and alleviates anxiety with a familiar name. Area management sells you. Closing – Applicant clarifies the hiring manager's next move to sell off possible areas in section two or three management.

### **1.1. Definition and Importance of Selling Interviews**

A selling interview is an interaction in which one party, typically the salesperson, attempts to establish a relationship with another party in order to facilitate the exchange of value. These interactions are called "strategic dialogues" and their purpose is to gather information about clients and their needs. Unlike other types of selling interviews, selling interviews are conceptually divided into two categories: conceptually based selling interviews designed to help sellers understand client needs and investigate the feasibility of a project, and tactical selling interviews designed to help sellers obtain agreement with clients on the selection and specifications of desirable services or products. Before designing these interviews, it is important that a salesperson has these understandings.

The commencing skills of selling interviews have been found to have significant effects on customer satisfaction, trust, and cooperative behavior. However, the interview partner's competence, their ability to understand the customer's needs, suggest alternative solutions, handle potential conflicts, remedy complaints, generate client involvement, and communicate benefits are also required. The design of effective selling interviews is more successful if employees take an outside-in view—in other words, place themselves in the client's role to have the answers to questions such as what the client is expecting to achieve from this meeting and what they would regard as beneficial. Selling interviews can be either conversational or structured, and most organizations indicate whether or not they are supposed to include sales as one of the goals of the interview for each specific customer. There is an agreement that selling interviews are usually not one-off situations, but rather a series of sequential meetings involving individuals from both sides tasked with different responsibilities. Some firms use appointment qualifiers to clarify whether continued discussions are appropriate across different decision-making areas and invite clients to retreat if a specific meeting appears not to satisfy them. In light of these objectives of the selling interview, complete preparations for and client-specific agendas during these meetings are important competitive selling behaviors.

### **1.2. Types of Selling Interviews**

Selling interviews occur in many formats, and as new communication technologies are developed, additional formats will continue to emerge. This diversity underscores the importance of using the appropriate interview type, based on selling objectives and audience characteristics.

#### **1.2.1. Face-to-Face Interviews**

Physically sharing space with the customer is the most personal form of communication, and this opportunity for intimacy enables the highest degree of information exchange. Despite the advances in communication technology, many salespeople and organizations continue to believe that nothing can replace face-to-face selling. They believe that it is a critical component of the selling process, regardless of the audience and situation.

1.2.2. Phone Interviews Real-time voice interviews, conducted over the phone, are a cost-effective and efficient means of accomplishing sales goals. Additionally, interviews conducted by phone are viable with certain audiences to set up a face-to-face selling experience. Adequately preparing for and conducting phone interviews can more than offset concerns about the interpersonal distance between you and the person whom you want to sell.

1.2.3. Virtual Interviews Communication technology is providing salespeople and customers with new ways of communicating that offer advantages for each. Virtual commerce or business-to-consumer technology can reduce operating costs, improve productive efficiency, provide quicker customer service, and build brand equity. In relationships that salespeople maintain with key decision makers at customers' organizations, these technologies can have the same beneficial effects. Interview types conducted via letter, e-mail, videoconference, faxes, or a website can effectively differentiate products or services, provide quick and convenient access to important information, and help build personal and professional relationships. Overall, the potential exists for improved selling outcomes.

## **2. Preparing for a Selling Interview**

To stand out and effectively prepare for selling interviews, advanced research, selecting the right prospects, and setting interview objectives are essential. The more work conducted early on in preparation for an interview, the better the advantages to be enjoyed by sales professionals. Prospecting lists should be screened for necessary criteria such as possible need, possible budget, and decision-making authority. The preparation checklist is part of a successful pre-interview process that aims to improve a salesperson's chances of success. Stepping through the checklist presents a systematic approach to collecting needed intelligence to tailor the presentation and to identify issues impacting the purchase decision. By understanding the market trends in a particular customer segment, a sales professional can tailor customer benefits to specific customer situations and requirements and initiate a productive interaction.

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To best prepare, become fully knowledgeable of the companies with which interviews are scheduled. This involves understanding industries, management, market positions, product lines, and leadership. These selling professionals go beyond knowing whom they are calling for an interview. They research market conditions, stock performance, and product direction. In addition, they will have detailed information about the forces shaping the industry, including the other companies with whom they sell and competitively differentiate themselves. Selling professionals are completely familiar with both organizations, as well as the relevant history of their executives. They know whether the company is private or public; whether a joint venture, strategic alliance, or merger is planned or has recently taken place; and whether this is the first time these executives have worked in a particular industry or the nth time, and whether there is any history with the sales professional's company. The focal purpose is to collect useful information and develop a scheduled approach that is individualized to the interview's participants and their particular needs.

## **2.1. Research and Preparation**

Great selling begins with good research and doing your homework on a company, industry, and company representative. Your ability to talk their language will be well received. Knowing the other person's preferences or pain points can help build your credibility with words like "I talked to your people about..." Decision makers are highly attuned to someone who has done their homework. Talking to clients in "their language" helps in developing that all-important relationship. Given the wealth of resources available for background research in today's market, there is no excuse for failing in this area.

### **1. RESEARCH THE ORGANIZATION**

- Use electronic media of every kind to get published information. Surf to gain access to a wealth of information – company profile, bottom line details, and shareholder backgrounds. Social media is a great tool, in particular, to research individuals and their backgrounds. See company posts and comments. - Review your industry databases for details on possible outcomes of your product or service inside that account. Pay attention to current customer contracts. Take that to your discussion with the prospective client that while general market studies say one thing, actual contracts inside their company might indicate something else. Prove through knowledge of the organization's pain that you are serious about solving their

problems. - Read major publications in professional areas to gain insight into current industry challenges.

## 2. COMMON THEMES TO LOOK FOR WITH YOUR RESEARCH

- Management directions and client needs that indicate signature references by the company can be identified. Creating selling interviews and using the company timeframe to have higher dysfunctions person agree to the discussion lowers the barriers to the interaction. - Links between your messages and management issues and vendor/client collaboration. Your message can be an estimate of improvement in meaningful areas and the method available to reach those benefits. Your listening contract opens to discover if the issues, transformation, and improvement are something genuine with the individual you are interviewing. - Check company press releases and existing contracts - decide if it is the right time to meet. Are they looking for new partners, expanding, hiring – good time to offer services or products that can save time and money – help the company to meet their goals.

### 2.2. Setting Objectives and Goals

Activating the conversation requires setting objectives. This involves predicting the potential outcomes of the conversation, preparing plans, and then executing them. This focus on outcomes is central to the control of the sale through the use of planned questions and techniques to guide the conversation in predetermined directions. Ultimately, objectives can be thought of in two ways. Firstly, objectives are short-term and are focused on getting something accomplished within the conversation, such as securing a time for a follow-up meeting. Secondly, there are long-term selling objectives that focus on acquiring or closing sales.

Objective setting provides the seller with a target, a thread to draw in from start to end of the sales interview. This provides structure to keep the discussion on track. The very act of setting a goal can make starting the selling process easier; it provides a focus and a goal to be achieved. The goals set need to be 'SMART': Specific to what is to be achieved, Measurable so you will know when they have been met, Ambitious but Achievable, Realistic yet Relevant, and lastly, they should be Time-bound. This provides a step-by-step control or a 'tick sheet' for the selling process. Even if there may not be a sale involved, it still provides a clear path in terms of moving from one step to the next and how the conversation should flow. This can facilitate different outcome opportunities and can also complement the team consultative strategy. Establishing individual selling objectives will allow for more effective management

of client needs and wishes through interviews. These interviews can then be seen as opportunities to enter the process of influencing and decision-making within sales relationships. However, objectives can also serve as points for interview strategy and/or for previewing opportunities for a strategic negotiation technique. Another benefit of setting objectives is to help build strategy and ensure perception of the demands of the situation and atmosphere. Lastly, objective setting helps the salesperson to become confident. This, in turn, makes them more likely to be open to feedback and participation. It can complement and even promote communication and interaction techniques. After the objectives for the interview have been set, it is time for the salesperson to set their targets. The more information the salesperson can gather, the more accurate the overview of the situation can become. As long as objectives have been set, the salesperson will be more willing to change the type of questions asked in order to achieve the preset targets. Lastly, targets should be focused and ensure the conversation can carry on or encourage feedback from the other person. It relies on flexibility regarding the conversation and situation.

### **3. Conducting a Selling Interview**

Conducting a selling interview is the most important part of the sales process. No matter how successful someone is in the other parts of the sales process, selling comes in the interview. Several interpersonal strategies are essential in the selling interview. The first is building rapport. The best salespeople have the ability to establish trust with their clients from the very beginning. Trust comes from nonverbal behavior and commitments that we make. Building trust and rapport allows the seller to sense the level of emotion and trust the potential client is capable of having.

One of the most common reasons people do not buy from someone is if they do not like the salesperson; they simply won't buy from them. Therefore, it is crucial to establish a personable rapport. Once initial contact is made, the sales professional should learn how to "read" their clients quickly and know how to respond to their body language. One way to gain favor is through positive and effective communication. Communication is accomplished not merely through words, but through the use of body language. Seventy-five percent of what is communicated is done so nonverbally. Effective communicators are active listeners and should be attuned to body language, continually adjusting to nonverbal cues.

Every professional salesperson should also be an excellent questioner. A questioning salesperson feels confident and in control. It shows that they are interested in the answers. A successful sales process begins with the ability to ask customers what they would like, show that they are listening, and then give it to them. Allowing for open-ended questions is an excellent way to facilitate an interview. In a selling interview, open-ended questions reveal the client's attitudes towards sharing information. The process is more collaborative, building upon what is being said, showing genuine interest, and is evocative. The professional salesperson will key into verbal and nonverbal nuances of a conversation to pick up on the importance of what the client is conveying. The goal of the selling interview is to develop skills that will allow the interviewer to tune into these nuances proactively and lead the conversation where appropriate. Adapting to verbal and nonverbal cues is what makes a selling-influence conversation successful.

### **3.1. Building Rapport and Trust**

Section 3.1: Building Rapport and Trust A salesperson's genuineness and authenticity are key elements in establishing trust in the sales exchange. A salesperson should not attempt to manipulate trust by behaving in ways that are disingenuous; rather, the salesperson should reflect a vision of trustworthiness born of genuine care for their clients. A firm handshake, making good eye contact, and using the client's name are effective ways of establishing rapport. Salespeople should also mirror the body language of the client and sit in the same posture to demonstrate interest and understanding.

Verbal skills are also useful for conveying empathy and building rapport. Sometimes, clients just want to be listened to. Using empathy, such as confirming the client's statements with appropriate words, can help clients feel heard and valued. Prospects report that the majority of selling interviews do not provide anything of value to them. Salespeople should conduct selling interviews to demonstrate their genuine interest in the client. If the selling interview is to assist the client in solving problems, then the salesperson most likely has a helpful intent.

Active listening is a process of listening for the true meaning of the words a speaker is saying to comprehend the emotions and feelings behind those words. Good active listening strategies include demonstrating sincere interest in the speaker, maintaining good eye contact, nodding and smiling at appropriate points, avoiding interruptions, asking open questions, paraphrasing, reflecting, summarizing, and



using silence to encourage further dialogue. In a typical selling interview, exhibitors are trained to quickly establish their credentials or competence. Exhibitors are making unsupported claims regarding their organizations when they say, "we've been doing X for 50 years." This is a very common way in which exhibitors open their selling interview presentation. Finding a way to substantiate such claims can be very encouraging in creating credibility. Personal references from satisfied clients can also establish credibility and build trust. Prospects prefer to do business with salespeople they feel they can trust. Cynicism is a result of negative emotional stimuli and high empathy. The strategy of trying to identify and avoid cynics may not be productive. Placing blame for customer cynicism on the customer's personality is a sure way to build a dysfunctional company. Failure to acknowledge a customer's problems usually leads to an organizational change for the competition. Building trust through empathy is knowing the reason a prospect is cranky and then steering the conversation directly toward that preference.

### **3.2. Effective Communication Skills**

There are several critical skills that help to ensure that interviews are effective in achieving their goals. Most important are the communication skills that enable parties to understand and appreciate the needs and positions of the other parties better. Clear articulation and concise messaging are also key in communicating your value. Furthermore, best practice suggests that improving and enhancing capabilities in these areas will serve to improve the overall 'interview' with the client.

It goes without saying that effective communication is critical to anyone in a selling role. Essential communication skills in interviews are:

**Listening:** Effective listening allows you to get a complete and thorough understanding of the client's needs. Additionally, it projects a willingness to understand their situation. We communicate with words to clarify, but those same words prevent listening if we use them only to hear our own views. **Speaking and listening:** Beware! Most selling situations result in an imbalance of speaker and listener roles; we are talking too much and not listening enough. When preparing your questions, consider the balance – as long as you are listening 60-80% of the time, the relationship will be balanced and a better flow and pace will be maintained. **Reading tone, pace, and body language:** These are often said to be the important means by which we develop trust and rapport with people. However, in



practice, we can build a fast and strong rapport simply by listening to another person's tone, pitch, and language patterns and reflecting them back in the same way. In interviews, we need to be able to use this skill – particularly listening – to sell and communicate our services. Summarizing and paraphrasing: These techniques help to confirm that there is mutual appreciation of the points that have been made, and they help to move the communication flow forward. In doing this, the interviewee will also get a deeper understanding of their own issues. It provides a great mechanism for then 'qualifying' a client further by re-confirming their concerns.

#### **4. Handling Objections and Closing the Sale**

Handling Objections - No matter how good you are at selling interviews, you are, from time to time, going to face objections. This is to be expected. Answers to objections should seek to clarify, rather than convince. Remember, you are taking a conversational approach to the sale. Objections often represent new information to you. After an objection or question has been posed, avoid jumping to a quick response. You must first fully understand what it is your client is truly expressing. Active listening techniques, which involve empathy, can be very effective in encouraging a deeper dialogue. Refrain from using rehearsed techniques and phrases that could be perceived as insincere. Practice empathy.

Answers to objections should not only empathize with the client's point of view, they must also display your knowledge and experience. The more you know about your opportunities, the better you will be able to handle objections. Every seller should expect objections. Objections indicate a client's feelings, show interest, and the seriousness of the situation. The better you are at handling objections, the better you will be at closing more sales opportunities. • Find objection. • Isolate objection. • Uncover real reason. • Respond to objection. Closing Techniques. The close should come when you have answered all the client's concerns. If you get a gut feeling that your client is ready to sign up, then ask them to write the number of years that they want to purchase next to the combination they want, under the underlining.

#### **5. Follow-Up and Relationship Management**

Once the selling interview ends, it is important to follow up with it as soon as possible. Your clients should receive a warm and meaningful introductory message, ideally the same day as the interview. Add the client to your newsletter to guide

them toward what you think is important. Relationship management after the selling interview builds on ensuring that calls are ongoing. People buy from people they like, and professional beauty managers know how to maintain personal contact in a professional manner. Implement call center services that can keep in touch with clients over the phone until you return to your working area. This kind of service is often neglected, but it can bring dramatic results. Emails and social media are just some of the other strategies.

Re-interviewing clients after the action is a direct methodology that allows you to gather feedback from them. A smart seller asks their client how the interview went. Long-term relationship development means engendering repeat business and gathering referrals. The term "client relationship management" is used to marry information systems and client service to ensure ongoing repeat business and the additional sales growth anticipated from a firm's first database of satisfied clients, all of whom should be repeatedly and conscientiously "farmed and cultivated" over time.

## **6. Leveraging Technology in Selling Interviews**

We have leveraged technology in numerous ways to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of both the selling interview and ensuing interactions throughout an ongoing relationship. There are a multitude of tools and platforms that enable us to conduct both selling interviews and follow-up client meetings. More and more meetings with clients are conducted over the phone or through video chat, and tools make it easy for us to choose the best mode based on the needs of the client. We are able to make these meetings more engaging with tools that facilitate sharing of thoughts, drawing of pictures, and creation of word clouds. What's more, we have integrated our CRM of choice with a tool that enables us to conduct selling interviews from within the CRM, ensuring data capture where we need it, when we need it.

Furthermore, webinar tools and interactive presentation tools play an increasingly large role in the selling scan overview and in gaining data for the individual client. Tools can play a bigger part in gathering pre-meeting data with the use of heat maps, look-alike modeling, and mass personalization of new content. Once client data is integrated into a CRM, follow-up emails may be sent with a full caseload of leads powered by marketing automation tools. Emails are personalized based on the data in the CRM—digital duplication to approximate a handwritten note—to

provide clear instructions about what to do post-visit, now and in the future. Meetings slide right onto our calendar, and artificial intelligence is used extensively through CRMs to remind professionals to make a phone call, when to do it, why to do it, what to say, and what happens after it is done. Once the email and follow-up are complete, the cycle starts all over with dunning emails for those that did not provide the information necessary to conduct an impactful meeting. These 'touches' and notes are tracked within the CRM for future use and reminders. The technology and automation accomplish many of the selling scan hallmarks, namely ensuring coverage and frequency in touches with all clients and driving through dunning emails. In brief, the technology has made the selling scan an easier, faster, and a touch richer process.

Good customer relationships happen when we take the time to engage with our customers in a way that we would likely use if our customer were in front of us. They call these events touchpoints, and inside and outside sales teams must find as many ways to touch the human heart of the prospect as possible. Ways to leverage technology in the sales process to create the kinds of touchpoints you can take right into the customer or prospect's office in a variety of ways are listed. However, while technology will ultimately find itself an integral component in the sales interview process, it is balanced with the tried and true human beings that are in the sales process and need to take their human warmth to bear on the technology available.

## **7. Ethical Considerations in Selling Interviews**

An ethical, agency-oriented, and even perhaps moral perspective is integral to selling interviews. The term agency in this context refers to how well an organization effectively uses goodwill, integrity, and resource management to drive loyal interactions that deliver economic value at the same time it provides value for employees, customers, partners, investors, and society as a whole. Ethical behavior and good character are integral in creating long-term and valued agency with clients and other stakeholder groups. Integrity is the foundational principle for ethical behavior in sales and business. We define this as the consistency of actions with appropriate values, methods, measures, principles, expectations, and outcomes, even in the face of personal or professional costs or challenges. The Selling and Sales Management domain understands ethical selling as the responsible use of the marketing concept to discover and satisfy customer needs at a profit for the seller, and it relies on these four moral imperatives: serving and satisfying customer needs,

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balancing company sales and profit objectives, building long-term customer relationships, and ethical behavior.

This final principle requires that salespeople respect and satisfy customer preferences and honor the perceptions that others might have of a selling interview. Because there is an obvious economic interest for the seller in the outcomes of sales interviews that may align at times with those of the buyer, situations may occur where a salesperson may have an ethical dilemma. The Selling and Sales Management domain holds as paramount the ethical treatment of others, developing long-term value, and conforming to the spirit and the letter of all laws addressing facets of the selling and buying processes. Sales interviews must not ignore the ethical limits and constraints of applicable federal, state, and local laws, as well as regulations and standards promulgated by nongovernmental organizations. The Selling and Sales Management domain's moral imperative toward conformity with applicable standards and laws highlights the importance of preemptive education and training in the selling function on not only what is the right thing to do in a sales interview, but the education and rationale regarding why they should conduct the selling interview and decision-making process in such a manner. Since there are norms of behavior in a selling and buying interview, there should be an educational process to make students aware of the ethical considerations of those normative behaviors. Despite these influences, each selling situation must be weighed against the pros and cons of implementing the available alternatives. Each member of the selling team, therefore, must decide for himself or herself what are the right actions in differing selling situations in light of their morals, values, and ethics. Ethical training should give each salesperson the ability to reflect upon their choices when selling in decision-making processes with the long-term goal of creating a positive reputation for themselves, their firm, and the profession. (Alamäki & Korpela, 2021)(Rangarajan et al.2020)(Salonen et al.2021)(Böhm et al.2020)(de et al.2021)(Yi et al., 2021)(Mattila et al.2021)(Giovannetti et al.2021)(Rodríguez et al., 2020)(Epler & Leach, 2021)

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