

YOU CAN ALWAYS SELL MORE ...

“You Can Always Sell More...By Asking Stronger Interviewing Questions”

by Jim Pancero

All sales managers eventually wind up needing to invest time and effort interviewing, hiring and training new members of their sales team. How effective are your interviewing skills and efforts?

The majority of sales managers don't interview and hire new salespeople on a regular basis so their interviewing skills tend to be weak or “underdeveloped.” How strong are your interviewing skills?

Most sales managers keep making the same four interviewing mistakes every time they interview new sales candidates. What can you do to avoid making these mistakes?

Sales Management Interviewing Mistake #1 - You do the majority of talking

How much time do you spend talking vs. listening when you're interviewing potential salespeople? As dumb as it sounds....the majority of sales managers tend to do most of the talking!

Most sales managers have never been formally trained on effective interviewing skills so they tend to “wing it” when conducting interviews. Most spend so much time “selling” the candidate on the benefits of working there that they have no time left to hear from the candidate.

What can you do to insure you do more listening than talking the next time you interview someone?

Sales Management Interviewing Mistake #2 - You are the only one interviewing potential sales candidates

Being the only one to interview potential sales candidates is the second major interviewing mistake made by sales managers. The goal of your interviewing process is to learn as much as possible about potential candidates as well as assess how they'll integrate and work within your selling culture.

The best way to fully assess a candidate's strengths as well as their weaknesses is to conduct an extensive interviewing process that exposes the candidate finalists to a variety of issues and challenges. The easiest way to gain this insight is to make sure multiple people from your company (or team) individually interview each potential candidate before making your final selection.

You also want to be sure and vary the tone and focus of each interview. Look at the insights you'll gain if a candidate has to demonstrate their persuasiveness and ability to handle pressure interviews that are rushed, hassled or outright challenging. Selling is not an easy job and any sales person hired will face challenging and stressful sales calls working for you and your company. Why not find out how they'll likely handle these stressful situations before you make them a job offer?

Sales Management Interviewing Mistake #3 - You don't check resumes and backgrounds before making a job offer

The third interviewing mistake made by managers is to not check resumes and backgrounds before making a job offer.

We're in a tough job market where candidates are fighting for the opportunity to interview....and be hired by solid companies such as yours. Today's hyper-competitive and aggressive market has caused a lot of otherwise honest candidates to exaggerate...or to outright lie about their education, military experience or prior job timeframes and responsibilities. Various studies have identified as many as three out of every four business resumes include some kind of fabricated listing or false achievement.

Lying on resumes has become so prevalent that a number of corporations as standard policy double-check all major claims made on candidate's resumes and conduct a police background check before any candidate is called back for a final interview.

What do you and your company need to do to insure you're hiring an honest member of your team?

Sales Management Interviewing Mistake #4 - You don't ask challenging enough questions during your interviews.

The fourth interviewing mistake made by managers is to not ask challenging enough questions during your interviews.

Selling is a tough job. How will you learn if a sales candidate can handle the challenges of selling if you don't push them during their interviews by asking the tougher questions?

What kinds of questions do you ask during an interview? Do you have any of your questions organized and thought out in advance?

Try asking some of the 20 questions from the 20 question sales evaluation on www.GreatSalesSkills.com. A way to word these questions is to say..."Give me an example of how you have demonstrated success with..."

Understanding The Technical Side Of Your Business

#1 - Your technical knowledge of your products/services and how they relate to your industry is...?

#2 - Knowledge of your competitor's products and their customer success stories are..?

Understanding the Fundamentals Of Selling

#3 - Your knowledge and daily usage of the steps of a sales call is...?

#4 - Your understanding of personalities and ability to identify, and then mirror your customer's communications style is...?

Understanding How to Manage Your Time and Information

#5 - Your personal "time and territory" organizational skills are...?

#6 - Ability to utilize technology to increase your productivity and effectiveness is...?

Maintaining and Growing Your Business

#7 - Your ability to proactively manage, control, and resolve customer's problems...?

#8 - Your ability to keep your existing accounts stable and under control is...?

#9 - Your ongoing new business prospecting process is...?

Managing Your Selling Process

#10 - Your ability to think and plan multiple moves ahead with each of your customers and prospects are...?

#11 - Your knowledge/understanding of competitor's pricing practices are...?

#12 - Your ability to utilize company support resources in your territory is...?

Maintaining and Controlling Your Customer

#13 - Your ability to communicate what your customers want to buy instead of just what you have to sell is...?

#14 - Your understanding of the political environment and decision process of each of your accounts are...?

Ability to Manage the Strategic Aspects of Your Selling Process

#15 - Your ability to communicate your competitive uniqueness and value is...?

#16 - Your knowledge of your competitor's strongest "value points" they use to sell against you is...?

#17 - Your ability to win business at a higher price/margin by communicating your stronger value is...?

Your Philosophy Toward Ongoing Personal Development and Improvement

#18 - Ability to represent yourself in a professional, truthful and ethical manner is...?

#19 - Your ongoing commitment and efforts to grow and improve your selling skills and awareness is...?

#20 - Your ongoing use of one or more coaches or mentors to help you get better is...?

By asking the tougher questions during a sales interview you'll increase your success attracting the best, and most qualified candidates...and you'll reduce the number of surprises hitting you once they are in their territory.

We know you're good....now...are you good enough to invest the extra time and effort to increase the strength of your sales interviewing process?

Jim Pancero