Interview Questions to Ask Candidate

Based upon the areas of concern, use the questions under the appropriate category. For example, if you are concerned about the candidate’s ability to manage their time well and reach sales targets, ask the candidate the questions under “Deadline Motivation”. Then, ask the candidate's references the questions under “Reference Check Questions” under the heading of “Time Management” and “Sales Production”.

Deadline Motivation

How do you rank yourself in your drive to set and reach deadlines?

What are some best examples of how you have used your time management skills in helping you reach your goals or sales targets? (Strong candidates will have several specific examples of goals/outcomes achieved. Weaker candidates will have difficulty being specific about goals/outcomes, or may admit they are not as good at managing their time well.)

What are some areas in your life where your lack of time management has kept you from achieving at your best? (Strong candidates will talk mostly about specific examples of how they manage their time well and will have a hard time coming up with an example of poor time management. Weaker candidates will admit that they struggle with time management.)

If I were to ask your best friend to describe your level of intensity to set and reach deadlines, on a scale of 1-10 would he/she describe you as laid back and easy-going or intense and impatient?

1_________5_________10
Independent Spirit

Think of a time in school, at work or at a retreat when you were put into a group. Describe your desires to get the group organized and moving forward. (High need for control candidates will describe themselves as eager to take charge and get things moving ahead. Low need for control people will speak of letting someone else take control and lead.)

Long-term, in your career, do you prefer to continue to work under a supervisor or eventually lead people?

Long-term, do you prefer the freedom and control of working independently, or do you like participating and cooperating as part of a team?

Assertiveness

How do you rank yourself in your confidence and assertiveness when you are dealing with people?

1_____ 5 _____10

What are some examples of how your assertiveness has helped you in dealing with people and in getting something that you wanted and felt was important? (Strong candidates will give several specific examples of situations where they have exerted their confidence in dealing with people. Weaker candidates will talk more about confidence in doing a task.)

What are some examples of when your lack of assertiveness has hindered you in dealing with people? (Strong candidates will have a hard time coming up with specific examples. Weaker candidates will make excuses and blame others or admit they are not as confident as they should be.)
Recognition Drive

Put yourself in this picture. We go to a chamber of commerce networking event where 100 people have gathered to network with each other. You see one of your best friends across the room. You do not know anyone else in the room. Your mission is to spend the next two hours in the room getting to know as many people as possible. At the end of the two hours, you and I meet to discuss your success.

(It is important that you simply read this paragraph. Additional details are not necessary. The candidate’s facial expressions will tell you a lot about their social drive. Do they wince at the thought of having to do this task, or do they get excited about it?)

How many people are going to remember meeting you?

How did you go about meeting the most people?

What are some examples in your life where you have been put into a new situation where you had to develop a lot of new relationships?

After a week in this new environment, what percentage of the new people knew who you were?

How do you feel about the recognition you get from winning a sales contest or being at the top of the sales board?

Analytical

Describe a big decision that you recently made. How did you go about making this decision? (High Analytical scorers spent time researching and took several days/weeks to make a final decision.)

If I spoke to your last boss, what would he/she tell me about your time management skills?
How do you keep track of things to do and of your appointments?

What tools do you use to keep track of things to do? What benefits do you get from using these tools?

May I see what you use?

Compassion

Who is your best friend? If I asked your best friend to describe you, what words would they use? (High Compassion scorers will use words like warm, sensitive, compassionate, good listener, caring. Low scorers will use words like hard worker, likes things - “toys”, organized, efficient.)

At work, are you more warm, expressive, and caring; or are you more private and reserved?

If I spoke to your last boss, what would he/she tell me about your time management skills?

Self-Promotion

(High Scorers on the SP trait will exaggerate strengths and downplay weaknesses. Be cautious of candidates who spin a strength as a weakness, for example, “I’m a workaholic, I’m too compassionate”. Low scorers will readily admit weaknesses and talk about ways to improve.)

Describe a time in your life when something went really wrong because of a decision you made, and describe the problem that was created.

What was your reaction, and what did you do to fix the problem?

What should you have done differently?
If I were to call your last boss...

   How would he/she rate your performance on a scale of 1-10?

   What would he/she tell me were your biggest strengths?

   What would he/she tell me were your areas for improvement?

   What was it like working with him/her?

   How did he/she react to you leaving?

   How would you rate, on a scale of 1-10, the positive impact you had on the organization?

   Describe the area where you had the greatest impact.

Belief in Others

   Describe your previous boss.

   Describe the person at your last job who was the hardest to get along with.

   Describe your boss in the job previous to your last job. *People who speak mostly negative about their boss and other people have a low belief in others and will most likely bring this same negative talk/behavior into their job with you.*

   Even if they know they won’t get caught, do you believe most employees will never take advantage of their employer, or do you believe that most employees will sometimes take advantage of their employer if they know they won’t get caught? *High scorers on the BO trait will say that they believe that most people are generally trustworthy even if they know they will not get caught. Low scorers will say that you can’t trust anyone.*
Optimism

Who has encouraged you the most, helped you feel good about yourself, and helped you believe you can accomplish anything you set your mind to? (People with low Optimism (low self-esteem) will most likely not name a parent. They will most likely talk about a teacher, coach, grandparent, etc. who influenced them later in life. People with high Optimism (high self-esteem) will most likely name one or both parents who have been a life long influence on them.)

Do you believe that most people control their own destiny, or do you believe that most people’s lives are controlled by random incidents or events? (Optimistic people believe they control their own destiny.)

Do you believe that nearly all the bad things that happen to people result in something positive, or that bad things happen to good people and when they do, the result is seldom, if ever, positive? (Optimistic people believe that nearly all bad things result in something positive.)

Do you believe nearly anyone can succeed in life, even under the most difficult circumstances, or do you believe that it is difficult for most people to succeed in life if they don’t get the right breaks? (Optimistic people believe that nearly anyone can succeed in life, no matter what their circumstances may be.)

What do you think has the greatest impact on a person’s success? (Optimistic People believe that their own hard work, efforts and decisions will have the greatest positive impact. Pessimistic people believe in lucky breaks and that success is in the stars.)

Describe where you see yourself in 5 years and the plan you have for getting there. (Optimistic people have concrete plans and goals. Pessimistic people talk in vague, general terms about goals. They appear to be floating through life with no direction.)
Interview Questions to Ask References

Based upon your areas of concern, ask each reference one or more of the questions listed under that topic. For example, if you are concerned about the candidate’s "Receptivity to Coaching", ask the questions under the heading “Accepts Responsibility/Receptivity to Coaching”.

Honesty

Can you trust everything ___________ tells you?

Would you describe ___________ as …

___ a very transparent person who always speaks with clarity and accuracy?

___ a pleaser who attempts to tell you what you want to hear so they don't disappoint you?

___ a person who tells you what you want to hear by embellishing to make him/herself look better?

Work Ethic

Describe the work ethic of ___________.

What is an example of his/her hard work ethic?

Concern for Others

How well does ___________ get along with others?

What is an example of a conflict ___________ had with you or another employee?

How did he/she react when you attempted to coach him/her past the conflict?
Accepts Responsibility/Receptivity to Coaching

How receptive to coaching is __________?

What are some areas where you have had to coach him/her?

How long did it take __________ to respond?

Time Management

How well does __________ manage his/her time?

What struggles does __________ have with getting too bogged down in details?

What struggles does __________ have with spending too much time on the phone either providing too much information or nurturing others too much?

Would you describe __________ as too chatty, or someone who quickly gets to the point and moves the conversation along?

What sales activity tracking tools did __________ use to help him/her be more productive?
Motivations

How competitive is ___________?

How money motivated is ___________?

Belief in Others

How long did it take for you/others to feel that ___________ trusted you/others?

When ___________ disagrees with something you say, does he/she...

___ become argumentative?

___ diplomatically discuss his/her disagreements?

When selling, does ___________ respond to objections with a ....

___ diplomatic tone that causes the prospect/customer to feel respected?

___ argumentative tone that causes the prospect to continue to argue and object?
Optimism

Would you describe __________ as ...

_____ the positive person that others go to in order to be encouraged and lifted up, and who would attempt to stop negative talk among the team?

_____ the person who would join in when others were talking negatively and complaining?

How would you describe __________’s outlook on life?

_____ positive and optimistic?

_____ mostly seeing the negative side of situations?

_____ someone who was on top of the world one day and down on the world the next day?

Describe __________’s self esteem. Did he/she see him/herself as ...

_____ rising to success and deserving of success?

_____ unworthy of success?
Sales Production

___________ told me that he/she was ranked # ____ on the sales team. At what level do you rank him/her?

___________ told me that their sales were _____ (dollars/applications/sales) per month. How many (dollars/applications/sales) per month do you think he/she produced? Is this information recorded somewhere, or is your answer based on your best guess?

What percentage of quota did ___________ average every month?

Describe ___________'s skills in pivoting to other products and closing the sale.

How many applications/sales per month did ___________ make from pivoting to other products? Is this information recorded somewhere, or is your answer based on your best guess?

What sales training or areas of coaching do you think ___________ needs in order to be more successful?

____ Closing the sale?

____ Rebounding from rejection?

____ Having more sales activities/time management?

____ Making an effective presentation?

____ Getting more referrals?

What advice would you give ___________ in order to help him/her succeed in this new position?
Learning Speed/Style:

How smart is ___________?

How quickly does ___________ learn new information and new tasks?

Is ___________ a...

_____ quick starter?

_____ medium starter?

_____ slow starter?

Additional Questions:

What about ___________ drives you crazy?