Sales Representative interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Sales Representative roles usually mix behavioural questions about past sales performance with scenario questions that test negotiation judgement and objection handling. Expect the interviewer to probe how you manage a pipeline day to day, not just how you close a single deal.

- **Behavioural:** Questions about past sales situations, targets met or missed, and how you handled specific client relationships.
- **Scenario/judgement:** Hypothetical client objections or negotiation situations where the interviewer wants to see how you think under pressure.
- **Process:** Questions about how you run discovery conversations, manage a pipeline, or use CRM tools like Salesforce day to day.
- **Client-facing:** Questions testing how you build and maintain long-term relationships with key accounts and referral networks.

Most sales interviews open with a short walkthrough of your current or most recent role, move into behavioural and scenario questions that dig into specific deals or objections, and close with a discussion of how you'd approach the employer's product, accounts or targets. Some employers include a short role-play, such as pitching a product on the spot or handling a mock objection.

1. Tell me about a time you missed a sales target. What happened and what did you do next?

Why they ask

Interviewers want to see resilience and accountability in a target-driven role, not just a story about hitting numbers.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation and the target, the specific action you took to understand the shortfall, and the measurable result once you adjusted your approach.

Example answer

“In one quarter I fell short of my new business target by a noticeable margin because a key account delayed a large order. I went back through my pipeline in Salesforce and realised I'd been spending too much time on low-probability leads. I reprioritised my week around higher-value prospects and increased my discovery call volume with existing referral contacts. By the following quarter I'd not only recovered the shortfall but closed two accounts that became repeat customers.”

2. Walk me through how you run a discovery conversation with a new client.

Why they ask

This tests whether you actually use a structured questioning approach rather than jumping straight to a pitch.

How to structure your answer

Walk through the process step by step: how you open the call, the type of questions you ask, how you listen for needs, and how you transition into presenting a solution.

Example answer

“I start by asking open questions about the client's current setup and what's not working for them, rather than describing my product straight away. I listen for pain points around cost, timing or service gaps, and I take notes I can refer back to. Once I understand their priorities, I match specific product features to what they've told me, rather than running through a generic feature list. I close the call by

confirming next steps and a timeframe, which I log straight into the CRM."

3. A long-standing client asks for a discount you're not authorised to give. How do you handle the conversation?

Why they ask

This is a judgement-under-pressure scenario testing negotiation skill and how you protect margin while keeping the relationship intact.

How to structure your answer

Explain the immediate response, how you buy time if needed, who you'd escalate to, and how you'd frame the outcome to the client either way.

Example answer

"I'd acknowledge the request and ask what's driving it, sometimes it's a genuine budget issue and sometimes it's just a negotiating tactic. I wouldn't agree on the spot if it's outside my authority. I'd explain that I need to check what flexibility exists, then go to my manager with the account's history and value to make a case either way. When I go back to the client, I'd frame it clearly, whether that's an approved discount, an alternative like extended payment terms, or a firm explanation of why the price stands."

4. How do you manage and prioritise your pipeline when you're juggling multiple accounts at different stages?

Why they ask

Tests practical CRM and time management skills, which matter for hitting monthly and quarterly targets consistently.

How to structure your answer

Describe your process for categorising leads, the tools you use, and how you decide where to spend time each day or week.

Example answer

"I keep my pipeline in Salesforce sorted by stage and likely close date, and I review it at the start of each week. I prioritise accounts close to closing or at risk of stalling, and I block specific time for prospecting so new leads don't get neglected while I'm chasing existing deals. I also flag any account that hasn't had contact in a set period so nothing falls through the cracks."

5. Tell me about a key account you grew significantly over time.

Why they ask

This checks your ability to manage relationships beyond a single transaction, which matters given the role's focus on referral networks and repeat business.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR, but focus more on the relationship-building actions over time rather than a single event, and be specific about what you did to maintain trust.

Example answer

"I inherited an account that was ordering inconsistently and seemed at risk of moving to a competitor. I set up regular check-in calls, not just when I needed something from them, and used those conversations to understand upcoming projects on their side. Because I understood their business better, I could recommend products ahead of their need rather than reacting to a request. Over time their order volume increased and they became a source of referrals into their supplier network."

6. How would you approach selling a product you have limited technical knowledge of yet?

Why they ask
Tests how quickly you can get up to speed on product knowledge and whether you're honest with clients rather than overselling.

How to structure your answer
Describe a practical plan: how you'd learn the product, how you'd handle a client question you can't answer confidently yet, and how you'd avoid overpromising.

Example answer

“I'd start by going through any product documentation and speaking with technical staff or existing clients who use the product, so I understand it from a user's point of view, not just a spec sheet. In early client conversations, if I hit a question I'm not confident on, I'd say so directly and commit to a specific follow-up time rather than guessing. Clients generally respond better to that than to a confident answer that turns out to be wrong.”