



# SALES SKILLS CANDIDATES CAN'T FAKE IN AN INTERVIEW



Planning on interviewing candidates for a new sales-focused role at your company? The right candidate could make a big difference to your bottom line.

To get to the in-person (or video call) interview you've likely followed a diligent, comprehensive process to ensure that, on paper, you'll be meeting with some super-impressive sales candidates.

But what can you do to ensure that the candidates are as great as their resumes claim? What measures can you put in place to test their credentials? How can you make sure that you're not duped in the hiring process?

In this CPSA white paper, we consider 6 key skills that a sales candidate simply can't fake in an interview.

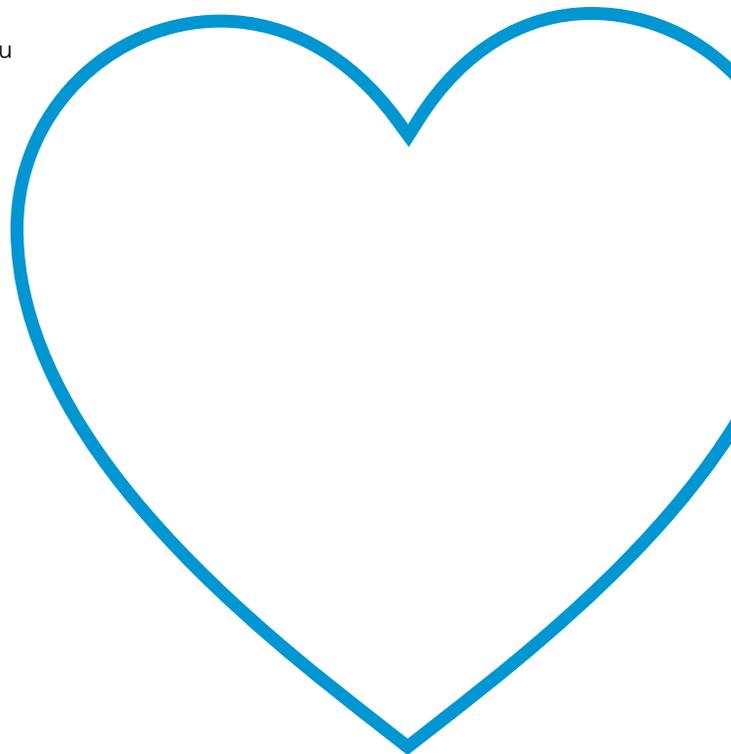
# 1. PASSION

Without having passion and a hunger to drive new business, there's little chance that the candidate will fit in a role which requires energy and that all-important go-getter attitude. **Real passion for a role means identifying a fit**; ensuring that the potential sales hire 'gets the company'.

In the interview situation, don't be scared to push the candidate on what they like about the company and when they're interested the sector(s) you work in. Let's face it, some of the best salespeople are actually more passionate about the monetary rewards than the employer brand or industry. Ideally, you can ask questions which reveal both a monetary motive as well as a genuine connection with (and knowledge of) your industry.

Consider testing their passion further by asking them to pitch to you. More usual in junior sales role interviews, a simple exercise where the candidate puts passion and imagination into selling you that paper weight or pen on the interview table, can tell you lots about the interviewee's personality and attitude.

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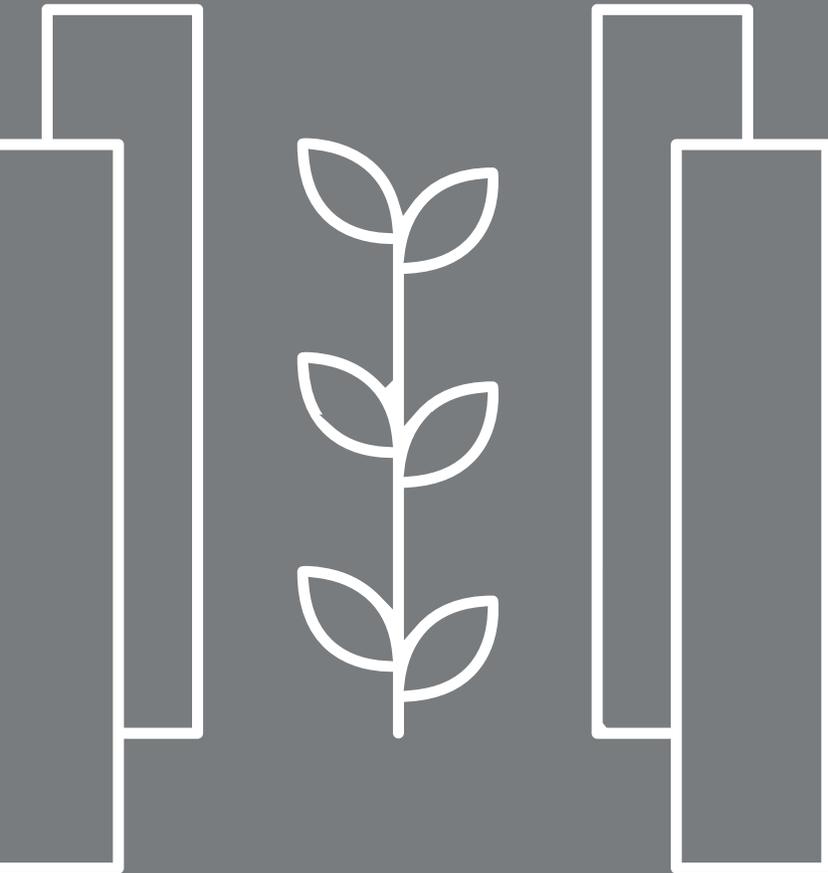


## 2. RESILIENCE

“Resilience doesn’t just happen, of course, when things are good and momentum is building.”

Determination to succeed and a will to win should go together with sales passion. The best salespeople can combine love for their job with a dogged determination to ‘bring home the bacon’; to achieve those sales and win their commissions and other forms of recognition.

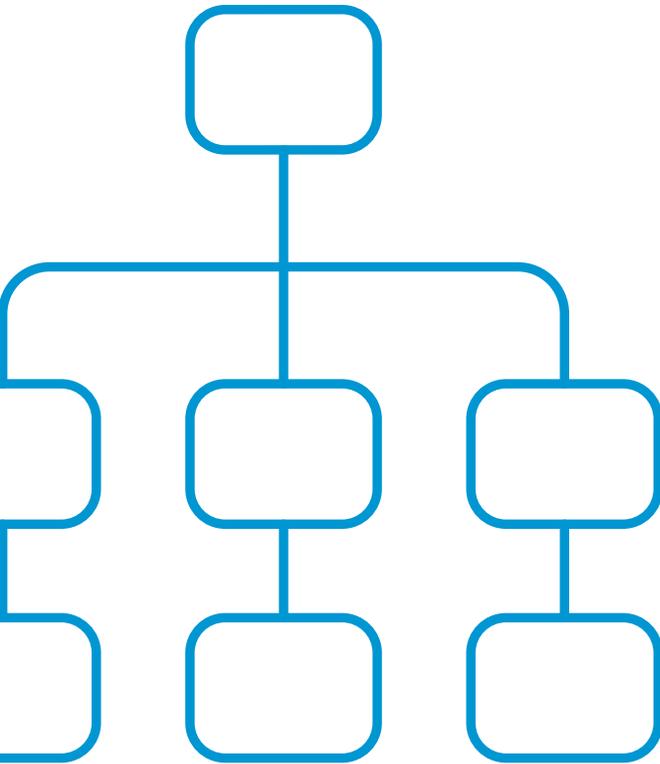
Resilience doesn’t just happen, of course, when things are good and momentum is building. It is perhaps an even more important quality when times are tough. If the economy takes a dip or the company encounters other issues such as new competition, it is vital that your sales hires have the personality to fight on through and stick at it.



### 3. ORGANISATION

The best salespeople are well organised. Now, we're not saying that most sales pros have this quality in abundance, rather that the top salespeople are able to use tools at their disposal – e.g. a company CRM – along with maintaining an ordered approach to drive more conversions. Organisation is even more important for salespeople who are part of team targets. If one of the team can't provide the details for that big team lead or another team member leaves the company without properly documenting the details of a prospect in your CRM, big problems can occur and opportunities will be missed.

In an interview, consider asking if the candidate can break down the labels offered to potential clients in a funnel. The stronger, more organised, sales pros can tell you the difference between a 'prospect' and a 'suspect'.



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## 4. TIME MANAGEMENT

**Time management** goes hand-in-hand with good organisational skills. When it comes to sales, it's especially important that any hire you bring on board will make time-keeping a priority. You want to make sure that if your new sales hire schedules a call, online demo or in-person meeting, that they'll be on time and not keeping the prospect waiting.

The growing numbers of remote workforces across Canada means time management is more important than ever. Remote workers, lacking the personal leadership and supervision of other sales pros, must have the skills and drive to work fluidly and with autonomous discipline.

Extra levels of complexity can be added if your remote team also works across multiple time zones. A remote worker could, for example, join meetings in UK time, prepare sales proposals in Eastern time before selling to markets on Pacific time or further afield! Understanding how to achieve a work-life balance which can ensure remote sales pros have the tools and time to maximise the potential of multiple time zones is increasingly vital for Canadian businesses.

During the interview, consider asking the candidate about how they have managed their time in spite of having a heavy workload or a long list of clients. Discover if they have a system to ensure things get done when they're supposed to and, if they'll mainly be a remote salesperson, the tools and autonomy to succeed.



“Time management goes hand-in-hand with good organisational skills.”

“Good product knowledge is the fine line between being able to close a sale and losing it.”



## 5. PRODUCT KNOWLEDGE

Simply put, salespeople **need to know the product or service that they are selling** Back to front! Your clients and prospects will not trust your salespeople if they cannot answer their questions.

Good product knowledge is the fine line between being able to close a sale and losing it. Today's online consumers have everything they need to get the essential info before ever picking up the phone or sending that chat note. If the sales executive can't even answer questions which could be found on the company's FAQ page, they really aren't likely to make a good impression. The best sales candidate can demonstrate deeper product and market knowledge and build trust with the prospect.

In the interview, consider asking the candidate the types of questions that are probably frequently asked about the product. If they struggle with their basic research in the interview, you'll know that their pre-interview preparation is poor and it's more likely that their attention to detail and product knowledge could be a problem.

## 6. MARKETING

Today's top salespeople are, to an extent, also marketing pros. As social selling and online buying continues to grow, so too does the need for salespeople to be marketing savvy enough to use the right marketing tools at optimal times to capture the attention of the largest possible audiences. The top salespeople in 2017 are an extension of the marketing team – providing invaluable frontline feedback and pushing the marketing team members to provide strong, more relevant information and sales resources.

The degree to which your company's sales strategy will be led by the marketing team or by the sales department will differ greatly based on the products and services you offer. SaaS models, for example, are usually heavily online and marketing budget-focused. Selling in to the energy sector, by comparison often is much more relationship-reliant. Probe your sales candidate on their understanding of tools to use in different marketing channels and the importance of client personas and market segments. Top salespeople will be able to reel off what has worked well for them at previous positions. The very best candidates will combine product knowledge with marketing and sales methods.

In the interview try to get a handle on how comfortable the candidate is with the most product-appropriate communications channels and ways sales and marketing could develop a two-way leads-data relationship with sales.

The next time you're preparing to interview candidates for sales-focused roles, consider these 6 factors. By probing the candidate about xxx you'll be more likely to determine if the candidate is really the right fit or a fake.

"The very best candidates will combine product knowledge with marketing and sales methods."



## ABOUT THE CANADIAN PROFESSIONAL SALES ASSOCIATION

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Contact us today at [MemberServices@cpsa.com](mailto:MemberServices@cpsa.com) or **1-888-267-2772** to see how we can help you and your team reach new heights in sales success.

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