

Challenger Interview Questions



Why Challenger Selling Interview Questions ?

In a world of ever-evolving consumers and consumer expectations, sales representatives at all levels of an organization need to examine themselves and their techniques with an eye to making drastic changes.

From a sales manager's perspective, it might mean searching for and hiring a different type of candidate – one who comes to the customer with deeper insights into their problems, one whose style underscores two-way communication, one who easily discusses the financial aspect of the sale. Sales managers might find themselves looking for candidates who fall into the challenger profile. The following set of questions will help sales managers determine a candidate's potential for Challenger behavior.

What you see

The table on the next page outlines each of the six areas of technique found in a challenger sales representative. You'll find those in the first column.

In the second column, you will see some red flags to be concerned about hearing in the candidates' answers to your questions.

The third column in the table provides samples of questions that would help indicate the challenger profile in someone who has funeral service industry experience, based on their resume or what you've learned about them.

The fourth column includes questions for those with sales experience in another industry.

Finally, the last column would help ascertain challenger tendencies in someone who has unrelated experience but who you believe could be a strong candidate.

What to do with it

1. Depending on the experience of your candidate, consider some combination of questions from the appropriate column.
2. Choose one or two from each of the six categories to ask your candidate.
3. Follow guidelines presented in the Recruiting unit to ensure your interviews are successful.



Key Characteristic	Red Flags	Industry Experience	Sales Experience	Unrelated Experience
Offers unique perspective – Reframes and challenges the way families view planning their final wishes (the way the customer thinks). Aligns insights to prospect's key priorities and ties those insights back to the provider's differentiators.	Too much emphasis on features and benefits. Insights do not align with prospect's priorities. Unable to articulate supplier differentiators. Rep fails to make mid-pitch adjustments.	Explain how you would open a preplanning conversation with a family and why.	Describe a time when you needed to initiate a conversation with a prospect who may or may not understand their need for your product or service.	Tell me about a situation that required you to begin a conversation designed to convince someone you didn't know of an idea or action. How did you begin?
		How would you adjust your preplanning visit content for different families	What did you do differently in those situations, based on the apparent needs and/or personality style of the prospect?	What would you do differently if it had been a friend or family member vs. someone you didn't know?
		Describe a time when you successfully got a family to think of their need differently.	What were the specific things you did to help your prospect see their need differently than they originally communicated to you?	Describe a time when you helped someone see their situation in a different light and helped them understand a different set of solutions.
		How do you know when a prospect is convinced by your line of thinking?	How did you know that your prospect was convinced by your solution?	How did you know that your argument had won over that person?
Drives two-way communication – Clearly articulates the provider's value proposition and engages families in jointly addressing priorities. Reads nonverbal cues and identifies unanticipated prospect needs. Can coordinate and secure buy-in from families.	Does not seem open and/or approachable. Inflexible, likes to have the last word. Cannot pick up on body language.	Explain how you get a family to talk about what is important to them.	Describe your process when introducing yourself to prospects.	Describe your approach when you walk into a room of people you have never met.
		What nonverbal cues do you look for during a visit with a family and how do you respond?	Explain a time you picked up on a nonverbal cue and how you handled.	Describe some nonverbal cues and how you would react to each in a sales situation.
		Describe your typical relationship with families you've served.	Describe your follow-up process with prospects.	Give an example of a question you would ask to get to know a prospect.
		How would you handle initial resistance when scheduling a visit with the family (ie; "I'm not interested" or "I don't have time"?)	Give an example of how you have handled a consumer objection to purchasing your product.	Tell me about a time you've tried to convince someone to do things your way, but they didn't want to try. How did you overcome their concerns?

Key Characteristic	Red Flags	Industry Experience	Sales Experience	Unrelated Experience
Knows customer value drivers – Has knowledge of death care industry and can discuss issues from multiple angles. Is comfortable talking to a wide range of decision makers. Successfully links provider capabilities to consumer goals to overcome barriers to purchase.	Unaware of the needs of all parties involved in the process. Uses the same “pitch” for all families. Relationships remain transactional in nature.	How do you decide what is and is not important to your families?	Describe how you determine what is important to your prospects.	Describe something you have done that required a process. How did you determine the steps to follow? What was the outcome?
		What process do you follow to gain buy-in from families?	What steps do you use to gain interest from your prospects?	Tell me about an instance where what your company had to offer did not exactly meet a customer’s needs and how you accommodated that person.
		Describe a time when your offerings did not match a family’s needs and how you handled.	Describe a time when your offerings did not match a prospect’s needs and what you did about it.	
Can identify economic drivers – Aware of industry activity and understands its implications to families. Educates community based on what is best for families and their location.	Does not possess industry knowledge. Has failed to create new opportunities. Cannot advise families’ based on the location’s value offering.	Give an example of a new opportunity you identified and pursued.	Describe efforts you have made to locate new client base.	Give an example of how you would find people to educate on the topic of prearrangement
		Describe a time you helped to shape or modify a family’s priorities and include the outcome you experienced.	Describe a time you helped to shape or modify a prospect’s priorities and include the outcome you experienced.	Pitch me as if I was a potential customer for your previous employer.
		Explain how you see the rise in cremation impacting the industry. What are you doing to circumvent this impact? What could you do to positively react to this trend?	Describe a modification/ trend that has occurred in your past value offering and how you handled.	Give an example of a change that occurred within a previous position and how you handled.

Key Characteristic	Red Flags	Industry Experience	Sales Experience	Unrelated Experience
Is comfortable discussing money – Knows how their location and competitors are priced and is aware of the consumer's budget. Clearly links the value of the location's offering with the family's selections to overcome pricing objections.	Cannot clearly justify price with value. Unaware of customer's purchasing ability. Frequently concedes on pricing and discounts.	What is your response to families who demand discounts?	Give an example of how you have handled a customer requesting a discount.	Describe how you would handle a customer asking for a discount in price.
		What is your reaction to a competitor who consistently undercuts your prices?	Describe a time when a competitor beat your price and how you handled.	Share a time in your professional history when you have had to ask someone for money.
		Tell me about a time when you successfully worked with a family who were clearly interested in the bottom line.	Share a time when your company charged a higher price than a competitor yet you earned the business	Explain how you might respond to someone who has just learned that your price is going up 10%.
		Talk about a time when you successfully worked through a price increase.	Talk about a time when you successfully pushed through a price increase.	
Can pressure the customer – Understands the decision-making process and has the ability to influence families. Preempts objections and pushes the prospect to a favorable outcome. Develops consumer advocates who sell on the agent's behalf.	Overly aggressive or passive with families. Finds it hard to build decision maker consensus. Exercises price concessions to end negotiations. Does not understand the value of a referral.	Explain how you have dealt with families annoyed by your approach	Explain how you have dealt with prospects annoyed by your sales approach.	We've all experienced someone's annoyance with us, personally or professionally. How do you respond in that situation?
		Describe an instance where you managed to progress a stalled arrangement.	Describe an instance where you managed to progress a stalled appointment.	Describe an experience you have had with giving/receiving a referral.
		Tell me about a time a family recommended you.	Discuss a time you convinced a prospect to sell on your behalf.	Tell me about a situation where you were able to convince multiple people to make the same decision. For example, consensus in a meeting or all family members agreeing to a vacation.
		How do you build consensus among everyone involved in the arrangements?	Give an example of how you have gained buy-in from all parties when multiple people are involved in the sales call.	

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