



E-book

Newsletter #8

# Interview Responses too Abrupt



Counting down my 10 most popular newsletters, here is #8.

A complete library of my newsletters can be found [here on my website](#).

## Introduction

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Before writing about a specific topic for *Sales Management Tips*, I set a goal of having the issue come up with at least three different clients. That way, I never showcased the problems of a particular client in any newsletter.

Having them feel certain they could speak confidentially with me was extremely important. Once an issue came up 3 times, I knew it was also relevant for a broader audience.

Most candidates for an open sales position do too much talking, not too little. When clients mentioned struggling with reticent candidates, I was surprised.

Finding top performing salespeople has always been a challenge. In this newsletter, I offered guidance on approaching the unforthcoming candidate from another angle to encourage longer, more informative answers.

Enjoy the eBook!

Suzanne



# Newsletter

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**A client asks, "A candidate that my company is considering for a sales position had a strong score on a pre-employment sales assessment, was impressive during the phone interview, and had professional experience that would be a good match for our company. During the in-person interview, however, they gave such brief answers that it was difficult to gauge whether or not to bring them back for a second interview. What do you recommend in a situation like this?"**

Though a candidate who gives brief answers can be a welcome respite from the candidate who gives long winded replies, too much brevity can leave you wondering about their fit for the position. You are right to feel hesitant. The purpose of a face-to-face interview is to see how the candidate presents themselves and interacts with others. Would this candidate give perfunctory responses to colleagues and customers who would have the right to expect acceptable answers to their inquiries?

A thoughtful, mature candidate should answer the question that is posed to them in a direct and forthright manner. Some answers will be briefer than others, but in all cases the answer should fully cover what the interviewer is trying to find out. An astute candidate will sometimes ask, "Did I answer that question to your satisfaction?"

Try this technique for handling this confusing situation:

During the interview, give them time to settle in to the process and don't judge them too harshly on the first few questions. Sometimes, out of nervousness, a well-meaning candidate can go on too long or be too brief with their answers. If, after 6 or 7 questions, they are not settling in and their answers are too short to be satisfactory, resist the urge to ask one probing question after another trying to elicit better responses. It is not your responsibility to pull information out of them.

Instead, I advise my clients to pause for a moment and then saying the following, "your answers to my questions are so brief that I am having a difficult time getting the information that I need to determine whether or not you are the right fit for our organization." Then pause again and see what they have to say. If they indicate that this is their interview style or feel that they have answered the questions appropriately, complete the remainder of the interview professionally. Do not ask them back.

If, on the other hand, they apologize and express a willingness to give more expansive answers, start the interview over from the beginning. Their answers should be noticeably longer and they should be asking whether or not you found their responses to be satisfactory.



A client of mine tried this technique and was told by the prospective candidate that his career counselor had told him to give very brief answers to the questions that he was asked. The candidate apologized for the difficulty this had caused and offered to answer any and all questions over again. My client thanked him for his candor, started the interview again and eventually made him an offer of employment.

Good salespeople are hard to find. If a candidate seems to have great potential, try this technique before you give up on them. They may be worth the effort, as one of my clients discovered.

## Additional Resources

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### **The Sales Leader's Problem Solver**

Chapter 2: Selling Only To Existing Customers

Chapter 13: The Mediocre Rep

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