

Level 10 Dealership Sales Interview Guide

Purpose

This guide helps dealership managers identify salespeople who earn customer trust, take initiative, keep commitments, follow dealership processes and continually improve. It explores Knowledge, Attitude, Skills and Habits, with particular attention to humility, drive, people skills, conscientiousness, CRM discipline and integrity.

It is a question bank—not a requirement to ask every question or conduct multiple interviews. Managers can select questions appropriate to the position and the time available.

This guide is meant to strengthen your judgment, not replace it with a formula. Better questions, specific examples and thoughtful follow-up give you a firmer basis for the decision. An optional score is available on the Candidate Interview Form if you want one.

I developed this tool after observing countless interviews that were rushed, lacked preparation and too often led to unsuccessful hires. Used as a reference, it can help managers move beyond first impressions and rehearsed answers to understand how a candidate actually works—and whether their habits fit the demands of dealership sales.

Be Careful of First Impressions

Within seconds, you may feel that you like or dislike a candidate. That feeling can influence how you interpret everything that follows. Appearance, confidence, charm or initial nervousness can distract you from the habits and abilities that determine performance. Before deciding, ask yourself: What specific evidence supports my judgment, and what evidence challenges it?

An optional brief phone conversation first removes appearance from the initial discussion and lets you concentrate on listening, clarity, preparation and relevant experience. It can also provide a sample of telephone communication. It does not eliminate first impressions: voice, accent and confidence can still influence judgment. Treat this as an option, not another required interview round.

Prepare Before the Interview

- Know the job. Review actual duties, schedule, compensation, product-learning requirements, sales process, CRM expectations and customer follow-up standards. Be ready to explain successful performance that leads to a positive outcome.
- **Choose questions in advance. Select approximately 10 to 12 main questions to initiate the interview after the 'dealbreaker' questions – it serves no purpose to continue and interview for 30-60 minutes when their responses have already shown they will not fit in based on your dealbreaker or initial questions. Include reliability, CRM use, coachability, customer judgment and integrity. Over time, your interview skill and judgment will improve if you use the same core and follow-up questions for candidates for the same position.**
- Review the application. Identify responsibilities, transitions and results to clarify neutrally. Do not decide in advance what a work-history detail means. I have found successful salespeople come from a variety of backgrounds, particularly hiring candidates with prior mobile phone salespeople/managers, telemarketers (no fear of the phone), door-to-door sales of any type, service technicians, and anyone else with personal RV experience. You are looking more for the attributes than prior RV sales experience.
- Prepare any practical exercise. Have a fictional customer scenario, notebook, company greeting, blank CRM note form and short product sheet available.
- Arrange uninterrupted time. Silence your phone and arrange coverage for immediate dealership demands.
- Confirm screening procedures. Use approved background, driving, licensing and drug-screening requirements at the appropriate stage. Ensure your dealbreaker questions are approved by your Human Resources department.

Conduct the Interview

Explain that you will take notes. Ask one question at a time, allow time to think, and listen without supplying the answer you hope to hear. Establish the situation, the candidate's responsibility, their personal actions, the result and what they learned or changed.

Useful follow-ups: Can you give a specific example? What did you personally do? How often? What happened next? How did you measure the result? What would your manager say? When it happened again, what did you do differently?

When a candidate says "we," clarify their contribution. Accept relevant examples from other work, education, volunteering or substantial personal responsibilities. An engaging interview is not proof of dependable habits; a thoughtful pause or less outgoing personality is not proof of weak sales ability either. In fact, I have found more times than I would like to admit, the most enthusiastic, allegedly capable and hungry candidates are often 'flashes in the pan'; immediate, short-term success followed by a collapse 2-3 months down the road. You might have uncovered warning signs by digging deeper—a pattern of short-term jobs without a clear explanation, inconsistent follow-through, weak daily routines, or an inability to describe sustained effort once the initial excitement wore off.

Take Useful Notes

Record evidence rather than impressions. Write "could not provide an example after two follow-ups" rather than "seemed lazy." Write "records next steps after each visit" rather than "very organized." Keep notes job-related and avoid speculation about health, family circumstances or unrelated personal characteristics. After performing several interviews, the real reasons you came away with a particular feeling will become hazy leading to either a hasty decision or a second unnecessary interview.

Manager Assessment using the Candidate Interview form

Ask questions of the candidate from the following bank of 100 questions. Use the separate Candidate Interview form to record their answers and scoring per your judgment.

Recording and Scoring Responses

On the Candidate Interview form, mark + for supporting evidence, - for a concern, or ? when more information is needed. Add a brief example supporting your judgment.

If scoring, use the same scale for everyone: 0-1: little or no demonstrated capability; 2: needs improvement; 3: satisfactory; 4: above average; 5: exceptional. Leave unassessed items blank — lack of information is not a zero.

Dealer Requirements, Dealbreakers and Initial Questions

Customize the dealbreaker questions for the position, following applicable local requirements and the dealership's approved procedures. Handle screening eligibility separately from your assessment of the candidate's attributes and sales skills.

Use the interview questions as a guide and record relevant responses, examples and concerns on the Candidate Interview form. Begin with approximately a dozen questions selected from across the sections. Ask follow-up questions when answers are vague or need clarification.

You may end the interview respectfully if the responses establish a clear, job-related reason not to proceed. Otherwise, return to the sections where additional questions would help you better understand the candidate's habits, capabilities or suitability for the position.

Interview Question Bank

Opening Conversation with the Candidate

"Thank you for meeting with us. We want to understand how you actually work, so please give us honest answers rather than the answers you think we want to hear. Specific examples, including mistakes, challenges and areas you are improving, are especially helpful.

"This role requires initiative, product learning, consistent CRM use, customer follow-up, and willingness to follow our sales process and respond to coaching."

"You do not need to be perfect. You do need to be candid about your current habits and willing to develop. If those expectations conflict with how you want to work, that mismatch will likely become apparent early and make success here difficult. An honest conversation now helps both of us decide whether this is a position in which you can succeed.

"I'll take notes so we can evaluate candidates thoughtfully and consistently. We will also leave time for your questions."

Ask the Dealbreaker Questions first from the Candidate Interview Form

Values and Self Awareness

Seek values supported by behavior. Evaluate admired qualities, not the fame or identity of the role model.

1. Who is someone you look up to, living or dead? It could be someone you know personally or someone you have learned about.
2. What specific character traits or habits cause you to admire that person?
3. Tell me about a time you demonstrated one of those qualities at work.
4. Which of that person's qualities is hardest for you to live up to? What are you doing to improve?
5. How would one of those qualities show up in customer follow-up or handling commitments on a busy day?

Humility and Ownership

Seek accountability, openness to correction and contribution without recognition.

6. Tell me about a mistake that affected a customer or coworker. How did you disclose it, correct it and prevent recurrence?
7. What is the most useful criticism you have received at work? What changed afterward?
8. Describe a time someone with less experience had a better idea. What did you do?
9. Tell me about a team success. What was your contribution, and who else deserves credit?
10. Describe necessary work you took on outside your usual responsibilities that was unlikely to earn recognition.

Initiative and Drive

Seek productive action without repeated prompting.

11. Tell me about a goal you pursued without your manager reminding you. How did you track progress?
12. Walk me through what you did during a recent slow period with few customers or assignments.
13. What work skill have you deliberately improved in the past year? How did you practice?
14. Describe a setback requiring sustained effort. What did you keep doing after the initial motivation faded?
15. Tell me about a time you were behind target. How did you identify the problem and respond?

Listening and People Skills

Seek curiosity, respectful communication and awareness of the effect of one's behavior.

16. Tell me about a customer whose needs differed from your initial assumptions. How did you discover that?
17. Describe a time you adapted your communication style to a particular customer or coworker.
18. Tell me about a difficult handoff between departments. How did you keep the customer from getting caught in the middle?
19. Describe a disagreement with a coworker. How did you address it, and what happened to the working relationship?
20. Tell me about a time your words or behavior landed badly. How did you recognize and repair it?

Purpose and Getting the Work Done

Seek willingness to act despite discomfort, status concerns or workplace distractions.

21. Tell me about an essential task nobody wanted to own. What did you do?
22. Describe a time admitting you did not know something helped move the work forward.
23. Tell me about an unpopular action you took to serve the customer or team. How did you handle disagreement?
24. Give an example of completing important work while others were distracted by blame, credit or workplace politics.
25. Tell me about a challenge to your approach. How did you decide whether to change course or stay with it?

Reliability and Conscientious Habits

Seek dependable systems and consistent execution, especially on routine work.

26. Walk me through how you organized your last full workday.
27. What system tracks your commitments? Describe a recent occasion when it prevented something from being missed.
28. Tell me about a repetitive task you performed accurately for months. How did you maintain consistency?
29. Describe a commitment you missed. When did you tell the affected person, and what did you do next?
30. When several urgent requests arrive at once, how do you prioritize? Use a real example.
31. Tell me about a small detail you caught that prevented a larger problem.
32. What do you check before considering a customer transaction or assignment complete? Use a recent example.

33. Describe a habit you changed because it hurt your performance. How did you make the replacement habit stick?

Anticipating Opportunity and Trouble

Seek early recognition, sensible initiative and judgment about involving others.

34. Tell me about a problem you spotted before others recognized it. What were the early signs?

35. Describe an overlooked opportunity you acted on. What resulted?

36. Tomorrow's delivery may be delayed by a repair or missing document. Walk me through your next steps.

37. Tell me about an assumption you questioned before it became a costly mistake.

38. Describe a time you had to choose between solving a problem yourself and involving a manager. How did you decide?

39. Tell me about a recurring customer problem you helped prevent rather than repeatedly fix.

CRM Discipline and Customer Follow Up

Seek actual routines, useful records, relevant outreach and ownership of overdue work.

40. Walk me through how you used a CRM or another tracking system. What did you record, and when?

41. Tell me about a time your notes helped someone else serve a customer without making the customer repeat everything.

42. Describe your follow-up process for an interested customer who is not ready to buy. How do you decide the next contact?

43. Tell me about a customer you reengaged after a long gap. What made your outreach relevant?

44. Describe a time your follow-up became overdue. How did you recover and prevent a repeat?

45. A customer leaves saying, "I'll think about it." Share with me the CRM note and next task you would create.

46. How would you make daily CRM documentation part of your routine, including on your busiest days?

47. Tell me about a required process or system you initially disliked. How did you meet expectations while working through your concerns?

48. Have you been exposed to AI at work; has it helped or hindered you?

Customer Care and Dealership Judgment

Seek accurate advice, coordinated service and ownership of the customer experience.

49. A customer asks a technical, financing or warranty question you cannot confidently answer. What do you say and do?

50. Tell me about a time the right recommendation for a customer reduced your immediate sale or reward.

51. A customer says another employee promised something missing from the records. How would you investigate and respond?

52. Tell me about a time pressure to meet a target conflicted with accuracy or a customer commitment. What did you do?

53. A customer is upset about a delay you did not cause. Demonstrate your opening response.
54. Tell me about a customer commitment you could not fulfill yourself. How did you make sure it was completed?
55. Which daily habit would your previous manager say we could count on, and which still needed improvement? Give examples.

Composure and a Positive Customer Presence

Seek recovery habits, warmth and attention. An outgoing personality is not the same as emotional discipline.

56. What do you do to stay positive and focused when facing distracting challenges? Use a recent example.
57. After a frustrating interaction, another customer arrives immediately. Tell me about a time you handled that transition.
58. What are your early warning signs that your energy or attitude is slipping? What do you do?
59. Walk me through your routine for being ready to greet your first customer of the day.
60. During repeated rejection or disappointing results, how have you maintained the quality of interactions and follow-up?
61. Tell me about a time someone told you that you came across as negative, distracted or unapproachable. How did you respond?
62. You have just lost a sale you worked hard on. A new customer arrives two minutes later. Describe your reset and demonstrate your greeting.

Early Responsibility and Work Habits

Seek initiative and responsibility wherever developed. Starting paid work young is context, not a requirement.

63. Tell me about your earliest experience earning money or taking on a regular responsibility. How did you get started?
64. What motivated you, and what kept you doing it when it became difficult or repetitive?
65. Describe an early occasion when you found a way to earn more, attract customers or make yourself more useful.
66. What did those experiences teach you about showing up and keeping promises? Give an example of balancing commitments.
67. Which habit from those experiences still helps you today? Show me how it appeared in your most recent role.

Measurement and Sustained Discipline

Seek targets, consistent action, honest measurement and informed adjustments.

68. Tell me about a demanding goal you chose that took several months or longer. Why did you choose it, and how did you define success?
69. What weekly habits supported that goal? How did you track whether you were on schedule?
70. Which performance numbers did you personally track in your most recent role? What were your targets and approximate results?

71. Tell me about a time your numbers showed you falling behind before your manager raised it. What did you change?
72. Which daily or weekly activities do you measure because they help produce results? How did you choose them?
73. Describe a period when you followed your plan but results disappointed you. How did you decide whether to persist or adjust?
74. Tell me about a long-term goal you missed. When did you recognize the problem, and what did you learn?
75. Sales are below target. You have lead volume, response times, contact attempts, appointments, shows and sales results. How would you diagnose the problem and measure improvement?

Reflection and Continuous Improvement

Seek performance review after successes as well as disappointments.

76. Think of a recent customer interaction. If you could do it again, what would you do better or differently?
77. Tell me about something that went well but that you still found a way to improve.
78. What routine do you use to review your performance? Walk me through the last review and what changed afterward.
79. Describe feedback you actively sought. What did you ask, and how did you apply it?
80. Tell me about a lesson you understood but struggled to apply consistently. How did you turn it into a habit?
81. What are you deliberately improving now? How are you practicing, and how will you know you are better?

Professional Discipline and Coachability

Seek willingness to follow sound practices despite awkwardness or personal preference.

82. When watching salespeople, what practices make you think, "I would feel awkward doing that"? Why?
83. Tell me about a work practice that initially felt unnatural. How did you decide whether to adopt it, and what happened?
84. We expect appropriate note-taking with customers. How would you feel about carrying a notebook or portfolio, and how would you introduce taking notes?
85. We require a standard company greeting. How would you make it warm and natural while keeping the required wording?
86. If you believed a required sales practice could be improved, how would you raise that while continuing to meet expectations?

Product Learning and Accurate Recall

Seek willingness to study, a workable method, accurate recall and useful application.

87. This role requires memorizing designated specifications and features. Give an example of comparable information you have learned.
88. How do you memorize detailed information? Describe a method, such as mnemonics, flashcards or self-testing, that has worked.

89. How do you test accurate recall and keep product knowledge current? Give an example.
90. How does product knowledge help you sell? Show how a specific fact could help a customer decide.
91. We expect relationship skills and mastery of designated product facts. How would you meet that expectation, and what would you do when unsure of an answer?

Integrity and Respect for Property

Seek truthfulness, respect for authorization, accurate records, protection of customer information and resistance to pressure.

92. Tell me about a time being honest cost you something or created an uncomfortable conversation. What did you do?
93. Your commission was overpaid. A coworker says, "They underpay us plenty of times; just leave it alone." What would you do?
94. A coworker takes dealership supplies home and says, "It's only a few dollars. Nobody cares." How would you handle that?
95. A customer leaves cash or a valuable item in a trade-in. A coworker says, "They signed it over; it comes with the car." What would you do?
96. You have not reached a customer, but a coworker suggests recording a completed conversation to satisfy the activity target: "It's just a CRM checkbox." What would you do?
97. You notice a charge not explained to the customer. Someone says, "They signed the paperwork, so it's no big deal." How would you respond?
98. A successful salesperson suggests exporting customer contacts to a personal account: "I built those relationships; they're my customers." What would you do?
99. A senior employee asks you to backdate a record or skip an approval to finish a sale: "We'll fix the paperwork tomorrow." Walk me through your response.
100. You see something that may be theft or falsification but do not know all the facts. How would you separate observation from suspicion, and what would you do next?

Integrity follow-up: What would you actually say? What if the person involved were your manager or the dealership's top salesperson?

Strong answers protect property, customer interests and accurate records; check facts and authorization; and use an appropriate reporting route. Clarifying unclear policy is reasonable. Rationalizing conduct because the amount is small, everyone does it or discovery is unlikely requires further examination. Listen for whether the candidate would actually act, or would go along to avoid friction with a coworker.

Answers cannot establish whether someone will steal. Do not treat nervousness, eye contact or one awkward answer as proof of dishonesty. Consider verified experience, references and approved screening alongside interview evidence.

Practical Exercises

Optional: choose exercises in advance and give candidates the same instructions, preparation time and criteria. Record exercise evidence separately, using the same scale if scoring.

Customer greeting and discovery

Provide the company greeting. Have the candidate greet a fictional customer, ask discovery questions and take notes. Assess warmth, listening, accuracy and willingness to use the process.

CRM entry and follow-up

Have the candidate write a customer note, create the next task and draft a follow-up message. Could another employee understand the customer's needs and continue the work?

Product learning

Provide a short fictional product sheet and equal preparation time. Ask designated facts and their relevance to a customer. Include one unanswered question. Assess recall, application and acknowledgment of uncertainty.

Improvement after feedback

Ask what the candidate would improve. Offer one specific coaching point and repeat part of the exercise. Observe whether the candidate applies the insight.

Close the Interview

"Before we finish, what would you like to know about the role, our expectations or how the dealership operates?"

"Is there anything about your experience or how you work that we have not covered and that would help us make a fair decision?"

Explain the actual next step and expected timing. Complete your assessment while the evidence is fresh.

About This Guide

This guide was developed from the author's decades of dealership experience. It draws on established ideas in teamwork, employee selection, personal accountability and continuous improvement, adapted for practical use in dealership hiring.