



THE INTERVIEW HANDBOOK

**YOUR STEP BY STEP GUIDE TO
WINNING THE INTERVIEW AND
LANDING YOUR DREAM JOB**

THE INTERVIEW **HANDBOOK**

What We'll Cover

- Overview
- Smart Researching
- Do's and Don'ts of Interviewing
- Selling Yourself in the Interview
- The Demo: Generally Specific to SaaS Offerings
- Closing the Interview
- Portfolio Requirements
- Thank-You Letter Writing
- Commonly Asked Questions
- Sample Resignation
- Betts Recruiting's Best Practices and Policies



*This guide has been tailored to address interview tactics in regard to sales roles, but there are tricks and strategies for any job seeker.

SMART RESEARCHING - DON'T WASTE YOUR TIME

You can waste a lot of time researching unnecessary information, so use this list to target your research.

STEP 1: TAKE NOTES ON THE COMPANY WEBSITE

Be sure to have an understanding of the following:

- What sets their product apart; be prepared to deliver a 30-second pitch
- How the company got started; usually there is an interesting story here
- Financial back ground, venture backed? Angel investors? Profitable, private or post-IPO?
- Who's in charge? A quick LinkedIn search can usually prepare you
- The role you're interviewing for, this may not be on the website, so ask your Betts recruiter

STEP 2: BEYOND THE COMPANY WEBSITE

Be sure to utilize more than just the company website. The press has already done most of the research for you. Search the company's Facebook and Twitter feeds, appropriate blogs and news outlets for articles and information. For tech start-ups, good blogs* to check include:

- CrunchBase
- TechCrunch
- Wired Blog
- VentureBeat
- Wall Street Journal Tech (may require a subscription)
- BusinessWeek Tech
- Forbes Tech
- Mashable

**If you know any good tech blogs that we missed here, please email tim@bettsrecruiting.com!*

STEP 3: BECOME AN INDUSTRY INSIDER

The next level of smart research is getting a handle on the company's industry. With this knowledge you can spot trends that are either opportunities or threats for your potential employer, and this is an effective tool for phrasing intelligent questions on your interview.

For the tech industry, use CrunchBase.com to identify competitors.

VALUE PROPOSITION POINTS:

Here are some helpful points when considering the company's product or service offering(s):

- Cost
- Quantity
- Accessibility
- Variety
- Quantity (of service and the product)
- Target Market/Audience
- Time (that the product will save you)
- Consumer perspective
- Versatility

OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEWING - THE BREAKDOWN

70% OF A SUCCESSFUL IN-PERSON INTERVIEW IS GETTING THE INTERVIEWER TO LIKE YOU

- Overdress
- Show up early
- Smile
- Stay positive (no one likes negativity, even if it's well-articulated).
- Ask well-researched questions
- Use eye contact
- If you don't know what to do with your hands, talk with them
- If you have trouble exuding energy, try a cup of coffee

20% OF THE INTERVIEW IS SELLING YOURSELF

- Do your research
- Explain your current company and what it does – never assume they know
- Articulate your sales process and relate it to the sales process of the company you're interviewing with
- Use specific examples rather than speaking in generalities
- Be able to explain why you are a good fit for their company and product

10% OF THE INTERVIEW IS THE CLOSE

- The interview is a sales call; you are the product
- Solicit and overcome objections
- If you feel that the interview has gone well, tell your interviewer that you want the job/to move forward in the process, etc.
- Your close should not be a question
- Promptly send a thank you note

BASIC DO'S AND DON'TS OF INTERVIEWING

Some bits may seem obvious, but be sure to mind your p's and q's.

BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Check in with your Betts recruiter to prepare for the interview – each interviewer has hot buttons
- Ask your recruiter what is appropriate to wear (90% of the time the answer is a pressed suit, even if you're interviewing at a casual office environment)
- Double-check the name of your interviewer, the location, the date and the time of your interview
- Research the company – feel free to bring notes, including 5-10 smart questions (see page 3)
- Print any record of your sales success - Salesforce.com printouts would be ideal
- Print multiple copies of your resume – assume they will not have them printed out (It's not a bad idea to do a big print session at Kinkos after you've edited your resume)
- Bring a pen and notebook to take notes before, during, and after the interview
- You don't need to bring a cover letter or a copy of references
- Arrive 10-15 minutes before an interview – take traffic, parking, and public transit into consideration
- Download a free trial of the company's product to play around with prior to the interview
- Be prepared for the interview. You'll never get a second chance to make a first impression
- Avoid: Smelling like smoke, perfume or cologne (no matter how much you think it makes you smell suave), chewing gum, bringing your own beverage, and make sure to take your sunglasses off your head!

DURING THE INTERVIEW

- Don't fib or flub your background. More often than not, employers will call "back-door" references
- Ask thoughtful, relevant questions about the position, company, and the interviewer, and take notes

- Use Feature/Example/Benefit selling to answer employer's questions (See page 8)
- Avoid asking questions about salary, commission, bonuses, vacation days, etc. Ask your recruiter instead
- Avoid mentioning your commute, impending vacations, or anything else that would hinder you from doing your job
- Watch that you don't get too comfortable. Remain professional, and remember that you are at a job interview
- Avoid negativity in all its ugly forms, especially when talking about past and present employers
- Close the interviewer on next steps: don't be afraid! (See page 11)

AFTER THE INTERVIEW

Call your Betts recruiter to provide feedback on the interview and strategize next steps. Email a thank-you note by the time you go to bed the night of your interview. Don't rely on snail-mail! We know you're busy, so we're happy to proofread these thank you notes before you send them off. You'd be surprised the mistakes senior executives and MBA graduates make on their iPhones.

SELLING YOURSELF IN THE INTERVIEW - EMPLOY EFFECTIVE EXAMPLES

We all ramble when we get nervous. It's only natural. Some people find it helpful to map out their thoughts before answering questions. Below are some formulas our candidates have found helpful:

FEATURE, EXAMPLE, BENEFIT:

FEATURE: a fact that sets you apart from other people (e.g. strong work ethic)

EXAMPLE: a specific, personal example that supports your fact (e.g. while attending college full-time, I worked 40 hours a week to finance my education)

BENEFIT: how your feature and example benefit the employer (e.g. I'm used to working hard in order to achieve positive results)

The same formula can be applied for difficult questions like “why were you laid off” or “when was a time you failed professionally?”

F: I was laid off.

E: I was laid off because I was disorganized in my prospecting and therefore was inconsistent in my performance.

B: While it was devastating to lose my job, I have taken the time since to study Salesforce and investigate different organizational tools. I am currently leveraging those tools to help me in my job search, and I am already seeing a huge improvement in my organization and follow-through.

There are some examples that are inappropriate for interviewing. Unless specifically asked, don't invoke a time that you were arrested or reprimanded for poor behavior. Always stick with a time that you aimed too high and didn't quite achieve what you set out to accomplish. Ask your recruiter to help brainstorm if you're having trouble coming up with examples.

THE DEMO - GENERALLY SPECIFIC TO SAAS OFFERINGS

In order to learn more about your technique, some companies may ask you to perform a demo of either your current company's product or theirs. (If you sense a company is on the fence about you, it can be smart to suggest a demo stage to sell yourself). The following are what a company will be looking for:

1. Understanding of the product
2. The ability to ask qualifying questions in order to assess potential customer pain points and determine motivating factors
3. The ability to tailor your presentation to your customer's needs
4. The ability to think on your toes - you don't need to know all of the answers, it's about how you handle objections while keeping your cool
5. The ability to close
6. The ability to take feedback – it's okay to ask how you did and where you could improve. This shows that you are coachable and ready to learn

THEIR PRODUCT DEMO

More often than not, the client will ask you to do a demo of their product. Make sure you clearly understand the interviewer's expectations.

Ask the coordinator if they have any materials for you – e.g. a sales deck or an explanation of the role-play. If you are doing a true demo where you show the product, ensure that you have time to do so. Prior to the demo, the client may provide you with access to the product. If so, be sure you play around with the product to gain an adequate understanding of its features. If they ask you to put together your own sales deck, ask approximately how much time you should spend preparing. There's a big difference between a one-hour and a ten-hour deck – be sure to clarify.

Most companies are looking to see how you ask questions to identify customer pain points and then run the demo specifically to address those points.

Often, the interviewer is happy to answer any questions you have in preparing a demo. If you are confused about their sales process or their pitch, **just ask!** They'll be impressed with your initiative, and it will show in your confidence and professionalism during the demo.

YOUR CURRENT COMPANY'S PRODUCT DEMO

If the company asks you to present a demo of your current product, it's likely because they want to see you in action. Be sure your deck is up-to-date, and if you're using WebEx, GoToMeeting, etc., make sure you double check your links before your demo. Don't leave anything to chance.

Always ask your recruiter for additional insight, and set up a time for a dress rehearsal of your demo in person with your recruiter.

CLOSING THE INTERVIEW - WHERE MOST INTERVIEWEES FAIL

Even if you completely messed up the interview: spilled your water on the CEO, left your fly down, called the company by a name of their competitor, told them that you just inherited a huge chunk of change and intend to go back to grad school in 6 months - fill in the blank – this is your chance to save yourself.

The following is a step-by-step guide to get you through closing the interview. Remember: The interview is a sales call and you are the product. If you don't close the interviewer on you, how can you expect them to visualize you closing a prospect on their product or service? Employers expect you to close. **Don't be surprised if they make it tough on you.**

After the interviewer has concluded his/her questions, proceed into your close by taking the following **4 SIMPLE STEPS**:

1. Ask smart questions

Prepare 10-15 smart questions for the interview. These questions are guidelines - use your research to improve them. Be creative – employers will quickly see through a memorized and over-rehearsed question. Many of your questions may have been answered during the interview, and you'll want to intersperse questions relevant to the conversation throughout your interview.

***Never ask a company about salary, equity, bonuses, sick leave, paid vacations, holidays or other benefits that allow you to get away from work unless you are getting an offer. Call your Betts recruiter for those details!*

Here are some sample smart questions:

- Who is your most successful rep? What makes him/her good at his/her job?
- If I am your top producer, where can I expect to be in 2 years with the company?
- What expectations do you have for the company in the next 3 years?
- How is performance evaluated?
- How are reps who exceed their quota rewarded?
- What separates your company from its competitors? (Know the competitors and have ideas)
- What is your company doing to gain market share? (Know their current market share)

- What is the territory currently producing? What goals do you have for the territory in the next 12 months? What do you think it will take to get the territory to those numbers?
- I saw on TechCrunch that you are rolling out a new _____. Have you seen that affect your business?
- How is your current _____ affecting your business?

2. Uncover Concerns

The purpose of a lead-in question is to identify if you did your job of selling yourself in the interview. If asked properly, these questions will put out objections/hesitations the employer has about you filling the position. Choose one of the following questions or create your own based on the examples given:

- How do you see me fitting in?
- How do I compare to other people you have hired?
- Are there any concerns you have about me filling the position? (If so, address them!)
- Can I count on your recommendation for the next step?

3. Overcome Concerns/Objections/Hesitations

If after you have asked your “concerns” question the employer has not set up the next step, there is still work to be done. The employer may still have genuine concerns or may create concerns to see how you handle the situation. Ensure you fully understand their hesitation by asking questions and repeating what you’ve heard, use FEB (see page 8) selling to overcome the objections, and be as genuine as possible.

4. Close for the Next Step/Job

Now you are on the home stretch. The good news is you are almost done! The bad news is that this is the most important part. It is absolutely crucial that you ask the following questions:

- **For initial interviews:** Where do we go from here? Can we set up the next step right now?
- **For final interviews:** Where do we go from here? Who’s approval do we need for an offer letter?

Don't forget, as you have practiced your close, the employer has spent many an hour thinking of ways to strike you out. Some "strike out" statements:

- I still have more people to interview
- I will touch base with Betts
- I will be letting you know in a couple of days

Beware of the smokescreens. DO NOT be fooled into thinking you will get the next step. If you don't set up the date and time of your next interview, it probably will never happen. As a rule of thumb, attempt to get the next step three times. You may have to refer back to "overcoming objections/concerns/hesitations" to achieve this goal.

**As with everything, there may be an exception to the rule. For some unknown reason, the interviewer may not have the power to set up the next step. At least find out if the interviewer will be recommending you for the next step and if they need someone else's approval, who that person is, and how long it should take for them to circle back with you.*

PORTFOLIO REQUIREMENTS - EXAMPLES OF PAST WORK AND PERFORMANCE

Depending on the type of role you're interviewing for, you may be asked to submit samples of your work, create a business proposal, or create a project relevant to the position. Often, if the client is unsure about the fit, it's a good idea to volunteer this information without their request. Check with your recruiter at Betts if you have any questions.

WRITING A THANK YOU LETTER THAT SELLS

Always ask for the interviewer's (each and every one) business card. A thank you letter should be more than a polite thank you. Besides expressing specific interest in the position and the company, thank you letters can reinforce, correct a first impression, or build on the relationship you've already established with the interviewer. Your thank you letter should be emailed well before you go to bed the night of your interview. While personal notes are a nice way to thank the initial point of contact or the final interviewer, never rely on snail mail since many interviewers will make their decision before the postal service can deliver your note.

The letter should be in a professional, business format. Below is a four-part structure to get more mileage from your message:

1. Tell the interviewer how much you enjoyed meeting him/ her and thank him/her for their time
2. Express your enthusiasm for the company and the position
3. Reiterate a specific selling point that was discussed in the interview
4. Establish your next point of contact

Sample Thank You Letter

Remember – it is very important to sound genuine and sincere which requires a personal touch. Here is a SAMPLE thank you letter: **(DO NOT USE THIS ONE WORD FOR WORD. WRITE ONE YOURSELF AS IT WILL COME ACROSS AS MORE PERSONAL)**

Dear _____ ,

Thank you so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to meet with me. I am very excited at the prospect of joining _____ as one of your results-oriented Sales Representatives.

I believe we have a good fit based upon my background and the job description. My sales ability, education, and high energy level will assure success, especially when partnered with _____'s strong market presence, continued success and steady growth through product/service diversification.

I look forward to talking with you again in the next few days. If any additional information will be helpful regarding my candidacy, please do not hesitate to call me.

Again, many thanks for the opportunity.

Sincerely,

Your name

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Most of us make two mistakes when we are being questioned in an interview. First, we fail to listen to the question. We proceed to answer a question that was not asked or to give out a lot of superfluous information. Second, we attempt to answer questions without preparation. Not even the most skilled debater can answer questions off the cuff without damaging his or her chances of success. Bottom line... **LISTEN AND BE PREPARED!**

1. Tell me about yourself

- Prepare a 90 second response by reviewing your background and practicing a narrative that suits the position. We've all had a lot of interesting experience, position yours as relevant and do not be long winded. If they want more detail, they'll ask for it.

2. What is your greatest strength? What is your biggest weakness?

- These questions can be tricky – make sure your strength is relevant to the position. Your weakness should be honest, but not entirely deterring. As cliché as it may sound, a strong example is something professional that won't be a deal breaker in getting the job (e.g. organization, too hard on yourself. Not punctuality or inability to meet goals.)

3. What are you looking for in a position?

- This should relate to the position and to the company. Work with your recruiter to understand exactly the position you're interviewing for and what it offers.

- Don't be tricked into saying that you really want another available position. A common interviewing technique is to try and identify whether this person really wants the role that they are interviewing for. Don't be swayed.

4. What do you know about your company? Why do you want to work for us?

5. Why do you want to work in this industry?

- If you aren't already passionate about the industry, make sure you're ready to talk about it like you are.

6. Why do you want sales?

- Review with your Betts recruiter to make sure you're ready to answer this question

7. Why should we hire you? What sets you apart from others?

8. What qualities do you think a top sales representative possesses?

- Be prepared to list three qualities.

9. Why are you leaving your current company? Past companies?

- This can be a tough question to answer, particularly if you've been let go from a previous position. Again, work with your Betts' recruiter to ensure you're confident in answering.

10. Where else are you interviewing?

- This is a good place to gain leverage, but you don't want to list off 15 companies that aren't relevant to the company you're interviewing with. That said, don't be afraid to tell them; it's a bit of a turn off to say I don't want to tell you.

11. Tell me about a time when you worked really hard for something over a period of time and did not get it.

- Employers believe that if you're an overachiever, you'll have tried and failed at something.

12. What would be your ideal job?

13. How do you define success?

14. How do you spend your time?

15. What books have you read recently?

16. Do you have a problem with commuting to work?

- If the job involves a commute that you aren't prepared to make, ensure you've communicated this with your Betts recruiter.

17. Did you ever work for a manager you didn't care for? What did you do about it?

- This can be tricky, so practice with your recruiter.

18. What is your sales process?

- This question can come across in different ways. Make sure you're ready to answer and aren't offended by the form the question takes.

SAMPLE RESIGNATION

If you are currently employed, your employer may try a guilt tactic or counteroffer of some sort to entice you to stay. In this market, it is not uncommon for someone giving notice to see counter-offers come in at **30-50%** increase from what you are currently earning – so expect it to happen. Don't be fooled though. Once you've given notice, loyalty has been lost and it only becomes a matter of time before the temporary financial band-aid wears off and you are ready to leave again.

Below is a concise, well-written letter of resignation. Before ever giving notice, talk with your Betts recruiter about how to prepare for your resignation. This is never an easy thing to do. Remember, this is just a **SAMPLE**:

To (Name of Supervisor):

It is with mixed emotions yet firm conviction that I write this letter of resignation from my current position at XYZ Company in San Francisco, CA.

My experience over the last X years with this excellent company and its many fine people has been a significant part of my professional and personal life. Please understand that I have made my decision after considerable deliberation, and only because an outstanding opportunity presented itself to significantly further my career and help me achieve my goals.

I am therefore resigning from my position at XYZ Company effective (End Date). This will allow sufficient time to complete current commitments prior to commencing with my new employer on (Start Date).

I hope that you will understand and accept my decision, and that I will have your support in making this change as easy as possible for the staff and department.

Sincerely,

Your Name

BETTS RECRUITING'S BEST PRACTICES AND POLICIES

Betts Recruiting is a great resource for job seekers to use, particularly those who are currently employed and too busy to research and interview on their own. Please use our services to help you identify, research, interview, and work for some of the top companies in the Bay Area.

Please keep in mind that we don't charge candidates to use our services. All we ask is that you treat your recruiter with respect by responding immediately, following up, giving honest and thorough feedback after each of your interviews, and keeping us posted on your interview process both with our clients and on outside opportunities.

1. Connect with your recruiter to get the necessary inside scoop
2. We can have more productive conversations with our client when we have your feedback
3. Let us know your level of interest as it compares to your other potential opportunities