HOW TO INTERVIEW AND HIREIT SALESPEOPLE

Journey

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Journey Recruitment

How to Interview and hire IT Salespeople.

Introduction

Let's be clear about one thing that you need to agree with before you read any further; sales are won in interviews rooms, not prospect boardrooms.

In 26 years of sales recruitment, the single biggest reason sales hires fail is because the client hires the wrong person. Sounds obvious but companies make the same mistakes over and over and over again.

AI won't make it better; it'll make it worse.

The issue with AI will be exactly the same as in every other failed AI roll out; you won't have good enough data to feed AI because you haven't been recording it but, you do know how to do it.

These are the common mistakes companies make:

- Hire people who look right
- Hire the best person they can get for their money without understanding what *best* looks like
- Hire people who don't fit the company dynamics
- Hire people who sell in the wrong way
- Are too slow
- Are too quick
- Don't listen

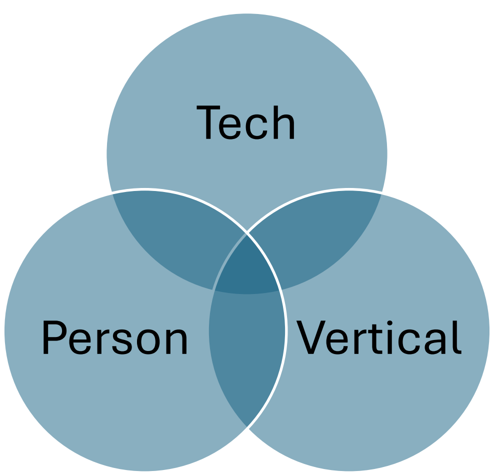
Yep, all of those mistakes you avoid in selling, you and they make in hiring.

Sit tight. I'll give you 26 years sales recruitment experience.

Getting the brief right

Getting the brief right is the most important part of hiring. I won't recruit for anyone until we've completed this stage and we're all working on a brief that works, is fillable, people will want to apply for and the candidate cohort has enough candidates.

The Venn diagram



I always talk to clients using the Venn diagram as a way to understand the brief.

There are lots of videos on my YouTube channel
https://www.youtube.com/@journeyrecruitment

All briefs have three parts

Person. What kind of person do you need? New business, sales leader, account manager, channel manager, alliance, etc.

Tech. What tech match do you need? ERP, data, CRM, automation, etc.

Vertical. What vertical markets do the person need to know?

Be mindful though, the narrower your requirement in each part, the smaller the circle. Then, if you're looking for an overlap of skills, it'll make the overall overlap smaller. The smaller the overlap, the fewer the candidates which will mean you'll either need to pay more or have a smaller cohort of candidates to target and thus a lower chance of filling the role.

We aim for a candidate cohort of 150 candidates per search.

Deciding what you need

Here's some food for thought (there are lots of things to consider!):

- What does good look like? Consider your best seller and what they do. Modelling the best seller is often the easiest way to figure out what good looks like.
- Your environment. People often confuse environment and culture. They are two very different things. You really, really need to find someone who can operate in your environment.
- The client base. Think about your ICP client and decide what the clients and prospects are like and hire someone who will suit the ICP.
- New business generation. Not all new business roles are the same. Primarily the leads are sourced in different ways.
- Vertical: Does someone really need to know your vertical? The days of a black book are gone. Could someone from a different vertical be successful in this role as their vertical has similar hallmarks and works in a similar way? E.g. could someone who sells the legal market, sell to the accounting market? Completely different end user cohort but the two markets are structured in exactly the same way.
- How important actually is the tech knowledge? So many companies say they sell to business needs on business benefits yet they still insist they need someone who knows the product.

> Those two requirements don't work together; either you sell by pitching the product or you don't.
> Understand how you sell and work on that basis.

And the questions go on. The key point is that if your addressable cohort is too small you're either going to pay too much or hire a loser from the competition.

Qualifying the candidate; should you meet them?

You should meet 6-7 candidates per hire. If you're meeting more than that and not hiring, your brief is wrong and if you're not meeting enough, your requirement is too narrow.

How to read a CV in under two minutes

If you spend more than 2 minutes reading a CV, you're spending too long.

I read about 10 CVs a day and sometimes hundreds of LinkedIn profiles.

Here's what I look for:

Track record

In sales, the track record tells you everything you need to know.

More than 3 employers in the last six years is too many. They've been fired or let go which, in sales amounts to the same thing; they didn't sell enough.

There are no exceptions to this.

The IT market has the most stable growth of any market in the World and whilst companies get bought and redundancies happen; they don't happen three times in a row. No salesperson is that unlucky.

Is the CV good enough?

If they have a good enough track record, a good enough CV is actually good enough. Decent font type, not too long an introduction and no more than two pages.

Overly worded CVs worry me. Top sellers just don't need them.

Sloppy CVs with typos and mismatched formatting worry me. There's simply no reason to produce a CV like that anymore.

Other things I look for

- Location: Do you really need to hire someone based in Cornwall? It's lovely but there are plenty of sellers in Reading who won't need to travel 3 hours before they hit a prospect base.
- Pictures: I'm ambivalent about headshots in CVs but each tell their own story
- Naming convention: 'Sam Smith V5" tells you it's the 5th time the CV has been amended. Why didn't they get a job with their first CV?
- Date 'till present' on their previous role: they just appended their CV from the last time they moved. It's just lazy.
- Too polished. As I said previously, top sellers rarely have overly produced CVs. They just don't need them.
- Performance data that stops a few years ago. I'll quite often see CVs that have patchy performance data. Either put it all in or not at all.

References

I'm in two minds about references. Personally, I wouldn't put my references on a document that lots of people would see simply because the kind of people you'd want references from won't want to get hundreds of references and therefore the references probably aren't that good.

The only exception to this is when someone has an ultra-stable track record and they're naive about the market, but that is also a red flag. Getting a job is just a selling process after all.

Understanding quota achievement claims

Most of the people you'll meet will claim to have hit or got to close to target. The reality is that few people who are on target will risk moving jobs and missing their OTE. People go to work for money and will rarely risk that.

Targets are very easily misunderstood. Some companies target ARR, some MRR, some TCV, some margin, some total deal value. Be careful that you understand the context surrounding the numbers.

Try to understand the time frame and sales cycle length when you meet them to get an understanding of the context.

The number of orders that make up the numbers make a big difference. Did someone hit their £1mn target with one lucky sale and then had to move because their pipeline is dry because they're in new business. They got an incoming lead and when they closed that, they had nowhere to go?

Be prepared to ask for proof. The two main things I always look for above and beyond anything else are track record and P60s so if someone says they're on £100k basic, £200k OTE and did 105% to target, I'd want to see a P60 that had £200k+ on it.

Preparing for the interview

Researching the candidate before they arrive

Researching candidates has never been easier.

Here are some very simple, very quick actions to take that will help you qualify quickly:

- Does the information on their CV tally with the information on LinkedIn?
- Google them. You'd be surprised what crops up.
- Who do you know in connection on LinkedIn? I don't advocate taking underhand references but if you know they worked for Sam Smith, what do you know about Sam and their management style and how will that fit into your sales model?
- How did their career start? I'm specifically looking for whether they're a career seller or not? If not, that's not a bad thing but I'd like to understand why they got into sales?
- Where do they live?
- How do they write, and would it suit your audience?
- How and what do they post on LinkedIn?

The three must have documents you must have ready before an interview

1 – Their CV with your notes added.

2 – Role scorecard. I'll talk about this in more detail later in *Scorecard Interviewing* but, in simple terms, stop comparing candidates with each other and start comparing candidates with your needs.

Conducting an interview; the soft skills

I don't have exact stats, but it wouldn't surprise me if 25% of interviews that are unsuccessful are a missed opportunity created by the interviewee and interviewer simply not communicating very well in an interview.

Afterall, how you communicate with them is not the most important thing. The most important thing is how do they communicate with your prospects and clients.

One of the most successful salespeople I've ever met is dull, but he sells to compliance managers in banks. His dull demeanor worked well enough for him to sell the biggest deal in their market for ten years when he closed a €10mn deal with Santander.

Also, it's the candidate's role to treat you as a prospect and get you engaged but it's a two-way sales process.

How to make the candidate relax and open in the first 60 seconds

Just be you. Be you at a barbeque or you sat next to a stranger at a pub quiz, swimming gala or any other social interaction. The days of being some stern pain in the ass dissapeared a long time ago.

Suggested interview formats

The whole point of the interview is to understand two things:

1. Can my team and I work with them?
2. Will they succeed?

It seems like an obvious question but so few people stick rigorously to these two points. If you only focused on these two points, you'd ask very different questions.

The most important thing you can ask in an interview will answer most of these questions. When you add that to *Getting the brief right*, you'll be in a very powerful spot.

Understand your needs and find out if the candidate has those skills. It really is that simple.

I'm going to talk you through my thoughts on some popular interview techniques.

30/60/90

For those who don't know, the 30/60/90 is where the hiring company asks the candidate to prepare a plan of what they'd do for the first 30 days, 60 days and 90 days of their employment.

In principle, this is a great idea. It answers the question, 'what would someone do when they join and would that work?'

You can then tell how close they are to you needs, how well they've researched and their thought process. These are all very valuable and very positive.

The huge issue is that this is a very well-trodden path and consequently you have the following problems:

- People are good at producing great material easily
- How do you know they'll stick to the plan?
- How do you know they're capable of sticking to the plan?
- You're asking them to create a plan to work for a company that they know very little about. You're asking them to guess and then you're going to decide on their guess work.

If I was considering a 30/60/90 as part of the interview, I'd do the following in this exact order:

1. Qualify whether they did a 30/60/90 day plan for their current role
2. Ask whether I could see it
3. Once I had it, I'd then ask to see their results in the first 90 days. If they created a plan and then hadn't stuck to it, you know there's a good chance they'll do the same for you.
4. If they hadn't done one, I'd ask them to do one now. A 30/60/90 plan virgin is a very different prospect to someone who's done lots.

Psychometric test

I find this interesting. We have a test that our clients can use for free. It's designed specifically for the IT sales interview. There's a link here
https://www.itjourney.co.uk/skillset

In preparation for the creation of the test, I committed to completing 30 different tests 30 days. That was fascinating and the most interesting outcome was the huge variance in the analysis. In some cases, it was poles apart.

I would only use psychometric tests if I was hiring inexperienced sellers and didn't have their background to drill into.

Also, let's not forget that interviewing is a two-way process and very few candidates like the tests. It will reduce your ability to hire.

Panel

The panel definitely has its place. It's not my favourite but I do understand why clients use them. Be careful that you all have the same measurement metrics and that you re comparing candidates to your needs, not candidates with each other. This is covered in more detail in *Scorecard Interviewing*.

Roleplay

Roleplay is a superb way to understand how people sell in as close to real life scenarios as you're going to find. The issue is that they're badly executed.

If you're going to use roleplay, consider the following ideas:

- Match the 'role-players' to the personas in your target client. CFO, CMO, CEO, etc.. That might mean you're only an observer and whilst you're desperate to give the candidate the objection you got last week, you've got to let it play out naturally.
- Your scenario needs to be realistic and clear, and you need to let them run it exactly how it would run in real life and if that means they're going to email and speak to people prior, you must let them do that.

Competency based

Lots of companies will ask competency-based questions. e.g., 'tell be about a time you were losing on price and what you did'.

They have a place, but they fall down for the following reasons:

- It's sprung on the candidate. You don't have to tell them the questions, but you should tell them in your confirmation prior to the interview (covered in *Setting the scene before the interview starts*).
- Few candidates like competency-based questions as they feel very false and sometimes accusatory with an interviewer giving the impression of 'I wouldn't have done it like that'. If you spring the competency style, it only raises barriers that needn't be there.

Deal review

This is the number one method and question and is covered in the chapter, *The most important question you will ever ask in an interview*.

As a 26 year veteran IT sales recruiter (time of writing is 2026), this is the main thing I start with. I'll pick a deal for their CV and ask them about it. If they don't have deals on their CV, I'll ask them about a deal.

Setting the tone before the interview starts

Email confirmation

Before you meet a prospect, you'll send them a confirmation of some kind. Maybe you'll explain what you're going to cover and what you hope to get out of the meeting. Maybe you'll ask them to have some information prepared to get the most out of the meeting.

Do that with candidates!

You only have limited time and often interviewers don't get the most out of a candidate or obtain all of the information they need.

Set the scene

Tell them what you hope to cover and what you hope to find out.

It won't take long and the benefits will be massive.

Include dress code. It'll make them feel more at ease meaning you'll get more out of the meeting and you'll set the tone of both the interview and how you are perceived as a potential employer to work for.

You need to give yourself every chance to hire someone and this will help you do that.

Don't make them feel like an inconvenience

Make them feel expected and valued, not just another thing in your diary.

We've all been there, sat opposite someone who looks at the phone or 'just quickly replies to a quick Teams message'. How did it make you feel?

You won't have ditched the meeting, but why take the gloss off the moment and risk losing someone further down the line?

Interview space

Remember, you're meeting someone who could be worth £1mn + in revenue for several years and that's likely more valuable than the next client you sign.

The efforts you make from an environmental perspective when you meet candidates should be as good, maybe better than when you meet a client. The candidate will bring you more value than the client, and they'll do it year after year.

This extends to meeting them online!

How to brief your interview panel

Just expecting your interview panel to turn up and read your mind is a mistake.

Sometimes interviewers will say that they want an unbiased opinion. I get it but....that's a mistake.

If you're the hiring manager, the panel should be there to back up your decision. You should be briefing them on:

- What you like. Are you right or have you misread it?
- What do you don't like. Are you right or have you misread it?
- What you're unsure about or haven't covered.

Panel interviews are a point of triangulation, just like a deal review.

The interview panel should have:

- Candidate CV
- Your notes
- The interview scorecard
- Your job brief (this is another section. *Getting the brief right is essential*).

Choosing the right interview format

The key method to interview salespeople is to ask them to talk you through a deal. You'll learn everything you need to know about their capability by doing this.

Your interview format should reflect how you win deals.

If you win deals with the following steps the your interview should reflect it:

1. Phone call qualification closed to web meeting
2. Web meeting closed to face to face demo
3. Face to face demo closed to pricing.

Your interview format should reflect it.

Your interview is about finding out whether people will be able to do the job you're interviewing for and won't upset your team (we'll talk more about this later but you don't need to hire people you like, you need to hire people who can do the job and won't affect your team).

The importance of same day feedback

One of the most important parts of recruitment is momentum and the main reason companies lose candidates is because they're slow.

Surprisingly, one of the main compliments I get from candidates is when I call them with feedback.

Sounds daft but it's true.

Look at all of the LinkedIn posts where people whine about ghosting. They infuriate me because I think that if candidates do well in interviews they won't be ghosted but that's a LinkedIn post someday!

Quick feedback:

- Keeps momentum
- Is respectful of other people's time
- Will save you more time than you lose
- Will increase the unspoken brand in your market

The most important question you will ever ask in an interview

The most important the thing interviewing companies want to know about the person sat opposite them is, 'can this person do the job?'. Sounds obvious but, when you think about it, that's the whole point of interviewing.

The number one way of doing this is asking them about a deal. I'd actually advise this is the only thing you should be asking. It's also what the candidate should be asking you.

This one question dispels the need for any other.

How did you get into the deal?

New business, account management, channel, from the vendor. It's all about leads and you should hire someone capable of getting a lead in the environment you have. Note I said, 'capable' not, 'has done before'.

New business particularly relies heavily on lead generation. I find new business has the biggest variation in lead source and actually this is what most companies get wrong. One company's 'boiler room' is another's ….. can't think of a film where sales leads are plentiful because there's no machismo attached to that!

Not all companies need a lunatic cold caller; very few in fact but you need to think about whether the person sat opposite you will be able to generate new business leads in the environment you have. If your complaint three months after they have joined is that the salesperson gets into too many new business opportunities, you won't be complaining.

Persona

"I need someone with a black book." This is a constant requirement in job briefs from hiring companies. It's lazy but I understand why hiring companies ask for it.

It's a lazy shortcut to two things:

1 – They want someone who bring leads with them. We all know this doesn't work.

2 – They're unconsciously mindful (sometimes consciously) that they want someone who'll suit their audience.

The 'black book' requirement narrows your candidate cohort (which as we know is a bad thing).

Data is ubiquitous and we can get more or less, any contact details for anyone. Also, the buying cycle has changed. Your prospects will now be more likely to engage if they've heard of your or your brand before a seller makes contact. That's the job of marketing.

Given these two points, you should still be hiring for people who'll fit your prospect audience but not necessarily people who've sold to those exact people before.

By using the deal example, you'll understand who the personas were that we're involved in different stages of the sale to understand whether the person sat opposite you fits your target persona.

Deal Complexity

There seems to be more status attached to deals with complex sales cycles compared to those with simple sales cycles. This is wrong in my opinion. The measure should be attached to how much you earn and how high a percentage you and your sales team achieve compared to target.

After all, if the target is £2mn would you rather close ten £200k deals of two £1mn deals? The pragmatist will always chose ten deals given the risk is split. The optimist might choose two deals given the reward for over achievement of closing three rather than two deals, but sales really is a marathon, not a sprint.

Once again, deal stores will explain whether the candidate is or isn't a fit.

The one point I'd be mindful of here is that sometimes people might close lots of small deals when your business closes a smaller number of big ones but that doesn't mean the small deal closer is incapable of achieving in your role.

How they manage a deal?

This ties in with deal complexity on one angle.

The second angle is that you need an insight into managing them when they have a pipeline.

- How will you add value and coach?
- Do they use a framework that fits with your business?
- Do they manage deals closely?

I don't, I focus on the top of the pipeline hoping the pressure at the top will make deals come out of the bottom. It's not perfect but at the time of writing, it's consistently worked, month after month for 26 years yet I think if a candidate said they just focus on the top of the funnel and don't manage deals closely, they'd be unsuccessful.

How they close?

Over the years, I've debated this point with lots of sales leaders and there are two ends of the spectrum.

There are those who obsess about closing plans of various kinds and being a good closer clearly has its place.

Alternatively, there are those who think that if you've got to close too hard, it's because the work at the start (qualification, needs analysis, targeting the correct ICP) is the most important and if you get this right and build value, deals close themselves.

For what it's worth, I sit very firmly in the second camp, but I have placed and worked with some very good closers who've had excellent careers.

How they differentiate

We all like to think we have the most unique offering in the market, but the reality is that in the eyes of the buyer, we all look the same and anyway, they don't care what any of us look like, they simply want to solve their problem.

You have to be honest with yourself on this point and in 26 years IT sales recruitment, I can only think of two IT companies who are truly unique.

So, with that in mind, when you're asking your candidate about the deal, ask them about this. Be open in your question and see what they say.

There will be lots of different opinions but normally, it's the people who understand the needs of the prospect in the most detail who'll answer this question with the most clarity.

Whether they create a need or sell to an existing one

This is very complex subject and probably warrants a book in its own right. It's also really important that you've understood your own need in good detail. The section on *Getting the Brief Right* is essential.

Simply though, it's a spectrum.

On the lefthand side, the prospect has a problem, know which products solve it and is out to buy. A bit like buying a TV; you know the size, you know the resolution and have a good idea of the brand. Ziz Ziglar wouldn't be able to change your mind.

On the right you have a prospect who just has a massive problem, and they don't know how to solve it. They have a problem but are miles away from having an established need.

Everyone else is somewhere in the middle.

When you ask about example deals, you should try to understand where their prospect was and honestly compare it to where your prospects are. Do you need a need creator or a need finder?

There's nothing wrong with selling an appliance with cost as your USP but it's a huge mistake worrying about the misperceived status of this and hiring someone from KPMG. They'll fail and not because either party is bad, just a misalignment of skills and needs.

Do they sell product or services?

The previous section was a warmup for talking about products vs services sellers.

There's a spectrum of services sellers. Sometimes the services seller sells very simple services like hosting or maintenance. The prospect has a problem, they know what it is and your company sells the 'right stuff'. That's on the left of our spectrum. Quite a lot of services are on the right; the prospect has a problem and doesn't know how to fix it and you're an advisor.

By nature, most people who work for product companies sit more to the left of our spectrum but there are plenty of product sellers, particularly those who work for big vendors who have a wide portfolio who actually sit more toward the right.

Take a Global Account Director who works for Microsoft. They are the biggest software vendor in the World but, if a seller had access to selling Microsoft's full portfolio, they would need to be a seller worthy of a right-hand spot on the spectrum.

Conducting an interview

I don't have exact stats but it wouldn't surprise if 25% of interviews that are unsuccessful are a missed opportunity created by the interviewee and interviewer simply not communicating very well in an interview.

Afterall, how you communicate with them is not the most important thing. The most important thing is how do they communicate with your prospects and clients.

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It's the candidate's role to treat you as a prospect and get you engaged but it's a two-way sales process.

How to make the candidate relax and open in the first 60 seconds

Just be you. Be you at a barbecue or you sat next to a stranger at a pub quiz, swimming gala or any other social interaction.

Money

I always talk about money very early on the in the process.

I want to know their package and what they've earned and tell them very clearly what the client's budget is, even if there's a range in the budget.

The longer you leave this, the bigger the elephant it becomes. You may lose people early on, but you'd only have lost them later anyway so you've saved each other time in the long run.

What to do if they won't tell you their package

You should not interview anyone if they won't tell you or you don't know their package before you meet them. It brings way too many problems further down the line. If you start a degree off course, you will miss your destination.

Scorecard Interviewing

It's rare that only one person is involved in the interview process.

They all have different roles, different perspectives and will inevitably value different qualities. Whilst that's very valuable, don't let it detract from the job at hand; figuring out whether the person sat opposite you can do the job.

The Process

Get the job brief correct covering all the aspects we've discussed.

Write the job brief and send it to all people involved in the decision-making process. Only start interviewing once everyone agrees on the brief.

Create a scoring mechanism

The scoring mechanism.

An Example Scoring Matrix

	Name	Sam Smith	Charlie Jones	Alex Bloggs
Attribute	Weighting			
Lead self gen	0.3	6	4	10
Quick deal cadence	0.2	7	8	6
Mutl DM sales process	0.2	5	7	2
Field Service management experience	0.1	6	10	4
Location	0.2	9	0	10
		6.6	5.2	7

As you can see, it's fairly simple but does provide an objective stance to compare one candidate with another.

I'd do this for second interview as well.

This is from a live client at the time of writing.

Selling the job

- "We've got the best comm plan."
- "We're the number one Microsoft partner on Earth."

- "Our software is the best."
- "We're top right in the Gartner magic quadrant"

None of these pieces of information is selling. They're all telling. Selling, as you well know is about understanding the prospect's needs and explaining how you meet them. The candidate is your prospect.

If you don't understand how to find out what the candidate's/prospect's needs are, this probably isn't the document for you.

Assuming you do understand that, let's consider some other universal reasons candidates do and don't want your role.

Before I go on, let's be very clear; if any of these following options don't meet their needs, they're not good tools.

Money

You could simply pay the more than they're on or your competitors are paying. It could be basic, benefits or a guarantee. All count.

It's not the most sophisticated of methods but it is very valid and a good option.

Position

Is your position more senior? If so, that's another good tool. Be careful with though; if you're offering them a more senior role, do they actually have the skills to do the role?

Lead gen

When clients brief me for new business roles, the first question I often ask is 'where do the leads come from?'

There's a belief that good salespeople should be able to self-generate leads and I wholly agree with this however, if a candidate has a choice between two new business roles and one is much better at generating leads than another, they'll always take the role with more support.

Be very clear. Some of my clients are able to convey a very clear structure of how leads are created, their quality and their close rate.

Even if one company provides fewer leads than another but is much clearer, they'll normally still win. Candidates are understandably scared of the unknown.

Company

Some companies are better places to work than others. They do have nicer cultures, more flexibility and a better position in the market. If you're going to use these as levers, you need to be able to be very specific.

"We've got a good culture" is an okay statement but without facts backing up the statement up, it's just another hollow, meaningless sentence.

Current team performance

In the same way that you should understand their performance data, they should ask to understand yours. Very few candidates seem comfortable asking for this data (which always surprises me) and you should be able to give a very accurate data set.

It doesn't matter if 90% of your salespeople missed target. It does matter that you're honest. Most companies will lie in their hiring process and if you want to stand out from them, the honesty of your current position will be much more powerful than you currently realise.

Account retention

I find that the decision as to whether salespeople get to keep the accounts they've won differs hugely. If salespeople win accounts and retain and grow them, this is often an excellent selling point.

Start date flexibility

Notice periods are often 3 months, 1 month minimum. When salespeople resign, different things happen and if you're able to offer some flexibility to bring the start forward of necessary, this flexibility will be welcomed.

Closing candidates

Let's be 100% clear. Your deals are won in interview rooms, not board rooms and whilst it's incumbent on the interviewee to sell to you, you'll need to sell and close the best candidates.

Closing

Verbal

I personally would always trial close verbally before I send an offer letter. This is where you'll find most of the negotiation points prior to the formal offer being sent.

Timescales

The offer letter should be with them within at least 48 hours of the verbal acceptance. This means form verbal offer to a signed contract should take no more than 5 days.

Offer letters

Hopefully, the person you want to hire will bring £1mn+ in revenue to your business. How good would your proposal be if you were bidding for a £1mn piece of business? We already know the answer to that and that's how you should think of your offer letter.

- It should be beautiful.
- It should reference the needs you've elicited from them.
- It should set the tone for the standards you expect of them.

Exploders

I personally would always add an exploder to an offer letter. i.e. 'this letter and contract is valid for three days from the date of issue'.

Contracts

Most offer letters will make reference to a contract. If you're going to make reference to a contract, include it. Decent salespeople will not sign an offer letter without the sight of a contract.

Some offer letters have in built contract details and that is fine too.

Commission plan

Again, I'd include the comm plan with the letter.

I sometimes see offer letters that don't even make reference to an OTE. That is amateur hour.

Contact

It's very likely that they will have some questions and you should make yourself and/or legal readily available for any questions they may have.

Summary

Closing is not one thing, much like your sales. Good salespeople are detailed in their nature and impossible to close if they don't have enough information. It's the accumulation of lots of small yet important steps.

Other parts

Stay in touch

Until the candidate you've hired has started with you, they're vulnerable to other offers. It doesn't happen often, but sometimes people will accept a role and then still keep talking to other companies.

For sure, if I speak to a candidate who has resigned and is waiting to start a new role, I'll talk to them about roles.

Non competes

In 26 years IT sales recruitment, I've never seen one upheld.

I'm not a lawyer but.....I've never seen one upheld.

Additional Considerations

Recruiters

To be clear, the recruitment industry is a murky world and most of the recruiters will know tricks you don't and they have some very sharp practices. This is one of the reasons so many people leave recruitment; they burn too many relationships.

Should you use a recruiter?

Personally, I'd say 'yes' (obviously) but hear me out!

A contingent recruiter (discussed later) should be motivated to find a better candidate that you can find yourself and if they do, you'll happily pay their fee.

Recruiter's fees

Do not pay a retainer. You don't need to and I don't think recruiters should ask for them. You're tying yourself to each other and they might end up being a poor recruiter and you might be a nightmare client. You both need to be able to walk away.

Use a contingent recruiter (i.e. they charge you a fee on the day a candidate starts and if no one starts, no fee). This will encourage the recruiter to only work with clients they truly think they can add value to. Clearly this isn't always the case, and I'm stunned by how many recruiters waste time in markets they don't understand. If you've not paid an up front fee, you can walk away.

How to use a recruiter

- Brief them well
- Give good feedback on candidates so they can learn
- Give clear timescales
- Use one recruiter for a period of 6 weeks
- Have some form of metric. We aim for a ratio of 6:4:1- CVs:interviews:offer. If those metrics are way off, we're either working with the wrong client of we've misunderstood their brief.

Candidate dispute

The question of introduction often arises.

What if you had the CV already? In that case, you should not pay an introduction fee.

What if you knew the candidate? This one's trickier and it really depends on whether you've already approached the candidate. If you haven't, more fool you.

There is a free product www.introduceme.me which has an introduction system that validates whether the candidate has already been introduced to the client and ends this dispute.

Things to watch out for

Lots of recruiters haven't actually spoken to the candidate before they send you the candidate's CV as they're in a rush to be the first to send you the candidate CV.

Even if you haven't signed their terms, the terms may well be attached and will say something along the lines of 'by interviewing our candidate, you accept the attached terms'. This will stand in court and the hiring company will normally lose, even if the candidate stands on the side of the company.

This has several problems:

- Is the candidate right for the role?
- You'll get fees you're not expecting
- They'll speak to people you were already talking to and the onus will be on you to prove that
- It is against GDPR to send a CV without the candidate's knowledge. This actually works in your favour because you could easily argue that given it's against GDPR, the fee is invalid.
- How do they know whether the candidate is right for your role?

AI

What if candidates use AI?

Personally, I don't have a problem with it as long as they use it in the right way. As far as you are concerned, you need to decide whether it would be in line with what would make them right for your role.

Should you hire candidates who understand AI?

Yes. The salesperson who has a good grasp of using AI will beat the one who doesn't in the sales process.

Conclusion

Recruitment is actually very simple as long as you:

- Understand your brief
- Interview against it objectively
- Are truthful and clear at all times
- Sell when you need to

Resources

We are constantly building a set of resources which are free to view with no download data capture wall. You can see them here:
https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLmyIGrQ2j56PCJ1DZTiu_1c_r1AtM6rnO