



OWNING THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

How to get more interviews and get short-listed into the second round of interviews

By Richard Harris

Owner of The Harris Consulting Group and Director of Training and Consulting Services at Sales Hacker

ADVICE THAT WORKS

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE ADVICE IN THIS EBOOK:



Matthew Gray • 2nd Senior Director | Vice President | Board Advisor | Angel Investor | Mu... 1w ...

Nice approach **Richard Harris™**, very well put. I think time and again this seemingly simple exercise of the initial interview is taken for granted. Now more than ever, candidates need to stand out to get the offer. This process exposes how the rep will work with the customer when they are working for you.

👍 · 1 Like | 💬 · 1 Reply



Dina Berger, Ph.D. Learning and Development Leader • 2nd Proven to transform people and organizations with passion and purp... 1w ...

I love this Richard Harris: it's bold. This method can be tweaked for a non-sales role too by positioning more broadly around business problems the hiring manager is looking to solve with this particular role. Great share, thank you!

👍 · 2 Likes | 💬 · 1 Reply



Slavyk Mayewski • 2nd Reducing manual work and eliminating dry runs for residential contra... 1w ...

Dropping straight 🔥🔥

👍 · 1 Like | 💬 · 1 Reply



Rob Jeppsen • 2nd Founder/CEO of Xvoyant | World's #1 Sales Improvement Platform | K... 1w ...

Richard this is money. Pure gold.

👍 · 1 Like | 💬 · 6 Replies



Kiran R. • 2nd Sales Enablement Specialist at UT Dallas | Business Honors Student 1w ...

As a student and in the midst of interviews, this is definitely helpful. I never thought of it in that way! Thanks for sharing.

👍 · 4 Likes | 💬 · 1 Reply



Amy Volas • 2nd Founder/CEO, 2X Entrepreneur | help startups hire sales lea... 1w ...

Richard, can I frame this and use this? Thanks for the super kind feedback and I'm grateful you shared this spot-on insight.

👍 · 2 Likes | 💬



David Roelke • 3rd+ Student-Athlete at Lehigh University College of Arts and Sci... 1w ...

Richard Harris™ Thank you! I'll be sure to let you know. As a 2020 grad hoping to step into my first full-time sales job, these questions will definitely help me vet the situation I'd be getting into a lot more effectively.

👍 | 💬

HAS THIS WORKED FOR YOU?

We want to celebrate wins with you. If you've found that the advice in this ebook helped you land your job or your in the middle of the interview process and you're seeing results, let Richard know [here!](#)

INTRODUCTION

My wife thinks I'm crazy for saying this, but I love the sales job interview process. And no, I don't mean interviewing candidates, I mean interviewing as a candidate. I love it so much that a close friend, [Scott Leese](#), SVP of Sales at Qualia Labs, and I often joke about how if we could make money just by landing job interviews, we would do it full time.

Landing, and of course, nailing job interviews is an invaluable life skill, and if you've ever had to wade through the job market, you probably know that your single greatest point of leverage is securing multiple job offers simultaneously. This puts pressure on employers to take you more seriously and make hiring decisions more swiftly. Therefore, the purpose of this ebook is not only to help score a job, but to help you score more job offers.

Note: While this guide is written from the sales perspective, I have given this advice to many friends in other industries, all of whom say it works flawlessly.

The following guide is structured with a sales funnel in mind. A sales funnel is the process which customers journey through before making a purchase. When you're searching for a new gig, you must journey through a similar funnel, one which leads you from job posting to job offer.

- Companies _____
- Jobs _____
- Outreach _____
- Interviewing _____
- Getting Offer _____
- Acceptance _____



PART 1: HOW TO GET MORE INTERVIEWS

STEP 1: UPDATE YOUR RESUME

1. Include real data.
2. Put numbers first.

Bad Example:

- a. Achieved 105% of goal Q4 2016
- b. Achieved 102% of goal CYE 2016
- c. Conversion rate of 75% from qualified to closed won

Good Example:

- a. 105% Q4 2016
- b. 102% CYE 2016
- c. 75% conversion rate



STEP 2: UPDATE YOUR LINKEDIN PROFILE

1. Use a professional picture (no party pics).
2. Update jobs and dates.
 - a. Ensure your LinkedIn timeline matches your resume timeline.
 - b. Ensure your LinkedIn metrics match your resume metrics.
3. Be sure to get recommendations (not endorsements) from colleagues. Nothing demonstrates your value more than testimonials from your own customers (or in this case co-workers).
4. Include your phone number in your contact info.
5. Follow Step 1 when it comes to mentioning your successes.

STEP 3: KNOW YOUR ICP (IDEAL COMPANY PROFILE)

1. Establish your ideal type of organization.
 - a. A Fortune 500 company? A start-up?
 - b. What stage? Early, expansion, growth, exit?
2. Determine what type of sales cycle you thrive under.
3. Define your ideal type of selling. B2B or B2C?
4. Identify your ideal position at your targeted company.



STEP 4: APPLY TO THE POSITION

Apply using the company's website when possible.

STEP 5: IDENTIFY THE HIRING MANAGER, OR THE PERSON MOST LIKELY TO BE THE HIRING MANAGER

1. Connect with them on LinkedIn.
2. Personalize the message using a variation of the following:

Hi _____,

I just applied to the open position on your website. Assuming you are the right hiring manager, what's the best way to get 15 minutes on your calendar to discuss? If you are not the right hiring manager, can you please direct me to the correct person?

*Sincerely,
XXXX*

3. If you are unable to connect, send them an InMail with the same message.

STEP 6: FIND THE COMPANY'S HEAD OF HR

1. Connect with them on LinkedIn.
2. Personalize the message using a variation of the following:

Hi _____,

I just applied to the open position on your website. I understand there is a process for applying, but I certainly want to do everything I can to make myself stand out from the rest of the candidates.

What is the best way to get 15 minutes on your calendar for an initial discussion?

*Sincerely,
XXXX*

STEP 7

PICK UP THE FRIGGIN PHONE!!!!

Call the potential hiring manager and leave a similar message to the one you sent on LinkedIn. Of course, feel free to be a little more creative.

Hi _____,

I just applied to the open position on your website. Assuming you are the right hiring manager, what's the best way to get 15 minutes on your calendar to discuss? I sent you a connection on LinkedIn as well.

Oh, and I promise I'm not stalking you, I'm just excited about the role and don't want to leave it all up to a single click on the "Apply" button on your website.

STEP 8

PICK UP THE FRIGGIN PHONE AGAIN!!!!

Call the potential HR person and leave the same message.

STEP 9

WASH, RINSE, REPEAT AFTER 48 HOURS

1. Be sure to keep it creative. Don't say you're following up or checking in on your resume submission. Spice it up.
2. Leave the following message for both the HR person and the Hiring Manager.

Hey, I know you're probably busy with 10 other things on your to do list. Would you do me the courtesy of letting me know where things stand so I don't have to keep bugging you?

Thanks again for your time. This is _____ and I am the one who sent you emails, left voicemails, and sent a LinkedIn request regarding _____ position. Here's my number _____.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

- 1 Why do all this?**

To prove you are more dedicated than the other 99% of candidates and because nobody else is doing it.
- 2 Should I mention that I am also reaching out to the hiring manager or HR department?**

No, let them do their own detective work. They can ask you about it in the interview if they want. You are then in the driver's seat. If they ask if you have reached out to others, then by all means answer truthfully. Keep your reply simple and brief. For example, "Yes, I have." Elaborate further and you will be at risk of "talking past the close." Remember, a magician never tells his secrets.
- 3 What if the HR person and hiring manager compare notes?**

They will agree that they appreciate the extra effort. They never compare notes (really, they don't). They will think it's overkill (and trust me you wouldn't want to work for someone who cannot appreciate your hard work).
- 4 Who else can I contact besides HR or the Hiring Manager?**

Someone on the Board.
- 5 What if I am not a 100% match?**

It doesn't matter. Apply for everything (within reason) and you may be able to network a bit, help someone else find a job, and in short, put out good karma in your job search. Stop creating a false belief system! Far too often people **do not apply for a job** internally at a company because they don't feel they meet the requirements.
- 6 Do you prefer email or LinkedIn?**

I prefer using all means necessary. I would even direct you to tweet them. You have absolutely nothing to lose. Below are a few LinkedIn examples that have worked.
- 7 Does all this really work?**

YES!

Your Inside Sales Manager Position

Richard Harris - SaaS Sales Leader
 InMail Feedback: ★★★★★
 Email: kelsey@opensdns.com
 To: Kelsey Duignan

Category: Job Inquiry
 Status: Responded
 Date: May 17, 2013

Hi Kelsey,

First off, congrats on your new position at OpenDNS. I know they are a strong organization.

I actually just applied to the opening you have for this role and feel my background with technology, security, and leading inside sales teams are a strong match for this role.

Can you please tell me who at the organization is the best person to speak with regarding the open positions? If it is you, can you tell me the best way to get 15 minutes on your calendar for a quick introductory call?

Sincerely,
 Richard Harris
 415.596.9149

Join my network on LinkedIn

Richard Harris - SaaS Sales Leader
 To: Alfred Lin
 Date: April 24, 2013

Hi Alfred,

Wondering if you can point me in the right direction at Achievers regarding the Director of Sales Development role there?

I recently completed this exact process for Mashery which was sold to intel last week for \$180m+.

Thanks for your time.

-Richard Harris
 415.596.9149

RE: Achievers

Richard Harris - SaaS Sales Leader
 To: Alfred Lin, Greg Brown
 Date: April 25, 2013

Thanks, Alfred!

Greg, nice to e-meet you. Can you tell me who I should speak to at Achievers regarding the Director of Sales Development role I see posted?

I am very interested in the role as it speaks specifically to my background.

Sincerely,
 Richard Harris
 415.596.9149

RE: Your Inside Sales Manager Position

Richard Harris - SaaS Sales Leader
 InMail Feedback: ★★★★★
 Email: kelsey@opensdns.com
 To: Kelsey Duignan

Category: Job Inquiry
 Status: Responded
 Date: May 22, 2013

Kelsey Duignan has accepted your InMail.

Richard,

Thanks for reaching out. I am actually the best person to talk to for this position. Let me know what time works best for you and I will give you a ring.

Thanks,
 Kelsey

Achievers

Alfred Lin - Partner at Sequoia Capital
 To: Richard Harris, Greg Brown
 Date: April 25, 2013

You replied to this message:

Hi Richard,

You asked for an introduction to Achievers, so I am connecting you to Greg Brown, Chief Revenue Officer.

Alfred

RE: Achievers

Greg Brown - Chief Revenue Officer at Achievers
 To: Richard Harris
 Date: April 25, 2013

You replied to this message:

Hi Richard,

I'll have the first call with you to discuss the opportunity. Let me know if you have time to speak on Monday or Tuesday between 3-5pm.

Greg

PART 2: HOW TO MAKE IT TO THE NEXT ROUND IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

HOW TO GET “SHORT-LISTED” IN THE INTERVIEW PROCESS

This section includes recommendations that I have been giving to people that are actually helping them get short-listed.

TREAT YOUR INTERVIEW LIKE A “ROCK STAR” DEMO!

It's a buyers' market for salespeople right now and you have to be better than “the other person”. Bad demos are easy to spot. Here are the steps you should remember:

1. Don't show up and throw up
2. Don't make your demo like a product training
3. Clicking on 1000 things to try and show them everything you think they want to see
4. The interview is your “demo”

HERE IS A SUGGESTION:

Email something like this to your hiring manager:

Dear _____.

Interviews are just like demoing your product, except this time I'm the product/service.

I have no desire to click on 1000 things and waste your time telling you every little thing.

I want to maximize your time to help you make the right decision in hiring me.

So, as I prep, here's what I would like to know:

- 1. What pains will this rep help you solve in addition to hitting revenue targets?*
- 2. What types of things does a rep do to bring out your best as a leader to support you and your goals?*
- 3. What stuff do you hate discussing in an interview?*

And yes, this is how I prepare when I am working with a prospect/customer too.

WHY THIS WORKS:

1. Rarely is anyone else doing it
2. It shows them you understand a process
3. It shows them you understand how to discovery the customers' pains

THE SECRET SAUCE

1. It helps you measure their leadership capabilities.
2. It helps you understand if they are the kind of leader you want to work for. Ask questions like:
 - a. What kinds of things can I expect to learn from you?
 - b. How do you help your reps get better in their careers?
 - c. How many people have been promoted from under you in your entire career?
 - d. My clincher for interviews that everyone should be asking: *“If you could snap your fingers right now and improve 3 things immediately, what would they be?”*

The answer is ALWAYS: *“That’s a good question. Probably ____, ____, and ____.”*

And it’s beneficial to go one question further and ask, *“Great, what’s actually preventing that from actually happening?”*

This helps you understand the internal politics at the org for making decisions, the level of juice this person has in making change, and ultimately whether or not you want to work for them.

If someone answers this question, “Nothing”, then that’s a red flag and you shouldn’t take the job. I’d even suggest calling bullshit on them, right there in the interview. Ain’t nothing that perfect!

Whether you’re applying to be a VP of Sales for a tech startup’s Inside Sales Team, or you’ve got your eye on a marketing manager position at a Fortune 100 company, following the above steps will guarantee you more interviews. And for those still unsure about this process, no, you’re not being annoying.

There’s something called Persistent Pestering, and with so much competition and ever-increasing standards, the only way to distinguish yourself from the masses is to step out of your comfort zone and digitally tap on a few shoulders.



QUESTIONS FOR REPS AND MANAGERS

INTRODUCTION:

Jobs are won and lost in the interview process. And mis-hires occur due to poor interview questions by leadership.

These questions are designed for both leaders and reps to make sure there is great alignment in management style, coachability, and sales team culture. Ultimately both parties want a good fit, but too often people dance around because they either don't know how to ask these questions, or don't understand the value of these kinds of questions. We hope this provides insight into both.



QUESTIONS FOR REPS TO ASK THEIR POTENTIAL SUPERVISOR

You win the job when it's your turn to ask questions. So ask these types of questions. Yes, they are specifically designed to put you on an even level with your potential new boss. They are designed so that you can display the level of confidence leaders want on their team. If a leader is taken aback by these questions and doesn't progress you to the next round, then it's probably a good thing, because it means they don't understand what real leadership means and worse, how to be a good leader.

Preamble by rep before asking questions:

Yes, I do have some questions. I hope you understand, just like you, I want to make sure this is a good fit for all of us. Also, I want you to hear these questions, not simply from the interview process, but I hope it shows you how I go about doing qualification and discovery.

1. Questions to understand their leadership style

- Aside from hitting the number, what else can a rep do to support you and your initiatives?
- How are your 1:1's structured?
- If I ask your team what how they feel you've contributed to their professional growth, what would they say?
- What was your turnover rate in 2019?
- From a leadership perspective, how do you differentiate between training, coaching, and micromanaging?

2. Onboarding Questions

- How do you differentiate sales training, product training, and process training in your onboarding?
- What is your expected ramp time?
- How many reps hit that in 2019?

3. Questions to understand internal company culture

- If you could change 3 things with the snap of your fingers, what would they be?
- Follow Up: What's happening internally that is preventing that from happening?

Preamble - My goal here is to make sure we find the right salespeople.

Sometimes that's based on experience, other times that's based on potential. When added together that helps us build the right culture.

1. Questions around coachability

- On a scale of 1-10, how coachable would you define yourself?
 1. Follow Up 1 - What's the difference between ___ and 10?
 2. Follow Up 2 - Can you provide an example in life where you've received feedback, implemented it, and how you kept using it?
- What kind of leader brings out the best in you?
 1. Typical answer will include "not micro-manage"
 2. Follow -Up How do you define micromanage?
 3. Follow Up - Do you have an example from a previous role where someone micromanaged you?
 4. Follow Up - Do you have an example from previous role where someone did not micromanage you?
- How much coaching do you like on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis?
 1. The goal here is for you as a leader to find out if it fits your company and style. Don't miss hire here.

2. Questions following a process

- What is something that is part of your regular routine?
- What bores you? How do you change it up?

3. Questions around aspirations

- If you could do anything, be anything, what would that be?
 1. (not looking for a sales-related answer)
 2. Follow Up - What's preventing you from pursuing that?

4. Questions around the internal senses of urgency

- How do you prioritize multiple things on your to-do list?
- Do you eat fast or slow?
 1. Slow indicates the ability to consistently follow a process
 2. Fast indicates the ability to move quickly from one thing to the next.

QUESTIONS FOR MANAGERS TO ASK THEIR REPS





HANDLING THE 30-60-90 DAY PLAN REQUEST

In the interview process, you have only a few tangible assets.

And handling the 30-60-90 day plan request is one of them. Remember, you are interviewing them as much as they are interviewing you. So this is your chance to explore their leadership style.

Obviously, every situation is unique. If you only have one interview on your horizon, or circumstances require you to take something you might not normally take, then this strategy may not be right at this time. Like many things, timing is everything.

The goal of this strategy is to keep getting yourself shortlisted. Showcase your ability to handle what many people feel is the uncomfortable part of negotiations in a live setting. Messaging is delicate in this scenario, so feel free to wordsmith to your own authentic voice.

Here's an example:

Hiring Manager - "Hey Richard, we would love to take you to the next step and see a 30-60-90 plan. Would you mind putting one together?"

Richard - "Sure. A couple quick questions:

1. Is one of the challenges for this role to teach the team how to better handle negotiations and the next steps around the proposal stage?

- If so, how often do you think that happens?
- What does the pipeline say?

2. How often are you hearing "they won't get back to me, they've gone dark" after sending a proposal?" (You have to make them commit to a number. So throw out, "More or less than 50% in your mind?")

Hiring Manager - "30%"

Richard - "Cool, so back to the 30-60-90 day plan, when can we schedule a time to walk through it?"

Hiring Manager - "Actually, can you send it over when you have it?"

Richard - "Well, that's interesting. In the interview process, a candidate only has so many specific assets, just like in sales, so my concern is that if I send it without a commitment, I might not get the next conversation. And you just said this is the part of the process where the team needs help. So I am trying to explain to you how I can teach the team to do this.

I respect the ask, but from my vantage point, it's just like a customer asking me to "email a proposal" without being able to walk them through it.

Might this work instead? I will bring it with me, walk you through it, and if we both agree its good, I am happy to hand it over. Is that fair?"

Now you wait. Other closing lines depending on your desire for the role.

"If I've offended you, maybe its not the right fit. But, I bet no other candidate has taken this approach. And if so, we should both be on your shortlist."

Closing thoughts...

If you have more than one company in your pipeline, then this is easier. If you have a company you LOVE and one that's "meh", then maybe you try this with the one that's "meh".

Just like all sales, your ability to close the offer will be based solely on your ability to walk away from the deal!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



MEET RICHARD HARRIS

Richard brings 20+ years of sales and SaaS experience working with companies like [Google](#), [Udemy](#), [Zoom](#), [Pandora](#), [Visa](#), [Pager Duty](#), [Gainsight](#), and others to the table when teaching about sales.

His passion is helping companies close the gap between the old school feature and benefits approach to focus on earning the right to ask questions, which questions to ask, and when to do it. Richard believes success comes when people stop talking about what they do and get them to start talking about the pains they solve. He ties all this together by focusing on a more relaxed conversational selling style that helps people go from strangers to acquaintances to trusted business allies.

Richard has been named a Top 25 Inside Sales Professional by the [American Association of Inside Sales](#) for the last 4 years. As well as a Top 10 Sales Development Leader as voted by Inside Sales and [Sales Hacker](#). He is also published in [Huffington Post](#), [Inc](#), and most recently [NBCNews](#).

Richard lives in Northern California with a wife, Cathy, 2 boys, Riley (9) and Bodhi (7), and their dog Lola.

Have questions for Richard pertaining to your own unique situation(s)?
Connect with him [here](#) or on social:

