



Challenger™ Hiring Guide

Key Questions to Ask in the Interview



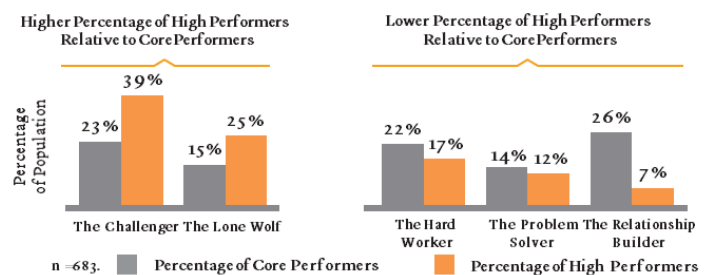
Sales organizations across industries are finding that a majority of their reps are not geared to succeed in this tough selling environment. In fact, some competencies that traditionally differentiated star performers from their peers are yielding average results at best. The future lies in a new breed of sales rep—the Challenger—who has the skills to succeed in the current economy and beyond.

Who is a Challenger Rep?

The research reveals that sales reps fall into five distinct profiles. Of these, the Challenger profile is the most likely to succeed in the prevailing business environment and beyond. Who is the Challenger? Someone who can:

- Teach customers unique insights about how to best compete in the marketplace
- Tailor messaging to each decision-maker across the customer organization
- Assert control throughout the sales interaction to overcome customer risk aversion

Core and High Performers, By Profile

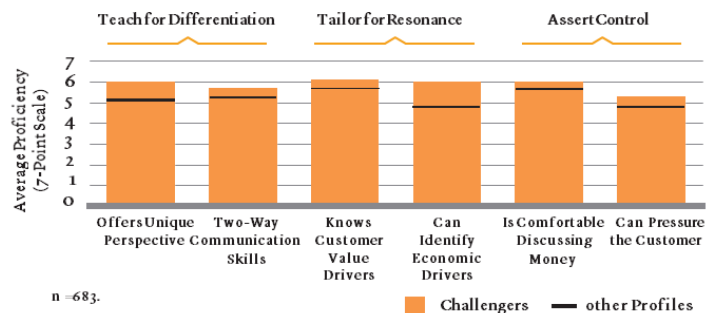


Why is it important to Hire Challenger Reps?

As shown in the chart to the right, 39% of high performers are Challenger reps.

In contrast, only 7% of high performers are Relationship Builders. Challenger reps have the right mix of skills and behaviors that customers value in the sales interaction. In particular, they perform far better than Relationship Builders, who are less likely to challenge customer assumptions and offer new insights.

The Most Important Challenger Skills



What Specific Competencies Distinguish Challenger Reps?

Challenger reps uniquely differ in their ability to build constructive tension in customer interactions to push the customer out of his comfort zone. Each of the competencies detailed at right equips Challenger reps with the necessary tools to succeed in a complex sales environment, distinguishing them from their peers.

The following pages provide a suggested interview guide for identifying, selecting, and hiring reps that demonstrate the Challenger profile.



Key Questions to Ask in the Interview

Competency	Offers Unique Perspective
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Reframes and challenges the way customers view their businesses.▪ Aligns insights to key customer priorities and ties those insights back to the supplier's unique differentiators.
Sample Interview Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How do you usually open a sales conversation with customers?▪ Describe a time you got a customer to think of their problem/need differently.▪ How do you decide what to include in your sales pitch?▪ How do you know that a customer is convinced by your line of thought?▪ Describe a time when your sales pitch fell flat. How did you react?▪ How do you adjust your sales pitch to different audiences?
Evaluation Guidelines	<p>Structures the sales pitch to highlight customer benefits before supplier strengths.</p> <p>Provides insights that are relevant to the customer's business and clearly tie back to the supplier's capabilities. Adapts the sales pitch based on customer reactions.</p>
Red Flags	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Sales pitch focuses on features and benefits▪ Insights do not align with customer priorities▪ Unable to articulate supplier differentiators▪ Rep fails to make mid-pitch adjustments



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Competency	Drives Two-Way Communication
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Clearly articulates the supplier's value proposition and engages the customer in jointly addressing business priorities.▪ Reads non-verbal cues and identifies unanticipated customer needs.▪ Can coordinate and secure buy-in from internal stakeholders.
Sample Interview Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ How would you describe your typical relationship with a customer?▪ How do you get customers to talk about their business priorities?▪ What non-verbal cues do you look for during sales interactions?▪ Describe a time when you proactively addressed an unstated customer need.▪ How do you handle gatekeepers to gain access to busy executives?▪ Discuss a time when you overcame difficulty in coordinating across functions.
Evaluation Guidelines	Relationships are based on rep ability to teach to customer pain points. Modifies behavior based on non-verbal cues. Has successfully coordinated across silos in response to complex customer needs.
Red Flags	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Does not seem open and/or approachable▪ Inflexible, likes to have the last word▪ Cannot pick up on body language▪ Finds it hard to balance multiple relationships



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Competency	Knows Customer Value Drivers
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Has a deep knowledge of customer business and can discuss issues from multiple angles.▪ Is comfortable talking to a wide range of decision influencers.▪ Successfully links supplier capabilities to individual goals to overcome barriers to purchase.
Sample Interview Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What process do you follow to gain buy-in from customer stakeholders?▪ How do you identify key decision-maker(s) and influencers?▪ How do you decide what is and is not important to the decisionmaker(s)?▪ Describe your research process to learn about the customer's business.▪ How do you track potential enemy advocates in customer organizations?▪ Describe a time when your offerings did not match the customer's needs.
Evaluation Guidelines	<p>Follows a structured process to identify key decisionmakers and their top priorities.</p> <p>Tailors the sales pitch to unique customer requirements. Successfully transitions the relationship from supplier vendor to a partnership in achieving customer objectives.</p>
Red Flags	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Unaware of all parties involved in the deal▪ Uses the same pitch for all customer contacts▪ Relationships remain transactional in nature▪ Is unclear on customer's business priorities



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Competency	Can Identify Economic Drivers
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Keenly tracks economic and industry activity and understands its implications on customer business, including potential new business opportunities.▪ Educates customers on industry trends and best practices adopted by peer companies.
Sample Interview Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Talk about a time when you successfully pushed through a price increase.▪ What is your response to customers demanding pricing concessions?▪ Describe a time when you successfully negotiated on unclear price guidelines.▪ What is your reaction to a competitor who consistently undercuts your prices?▪ Describe a time when you walked away from a deal because of price.
Evaluation Guidelines	Comfortable talking about price at any stage of the sales cycle and does not depend on absolute pricing guidelines. Gets customers to see beyond price and appreciate the supplier's unique differentiators. Has closed deals with customers at a significant profit.
Red Flags	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Cannot clearly justify price with value▪ Unaware of customer's purchasing ability▪ Frequently concedes on pricing and discounts



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Competency	Can Pressure the Customer
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Understands the decision-making process and has the ability to influence key decision-makers.▪ Preempts stakeholder objections and pushes the customer to a favorable outcome.▪ Develops customer advocates who sell and build consensus on the supplier's behalf.
Sample Interview Questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ What is the one thing customers would associate with or say about you?▪ How do you build consensus among everyone involved in the sale?▪ Describe an instance where you managed to progress a stalled deal.▪ How have you dealt with customers annoyed by your negotiation tactics?▪ Describe a time you compromised to close a deal. What did you offer?▪ Discuss a time you convinced a customer advocate to sell on your behalf.
Evaluation Guidelines	Is a skilled negotiator who understands the decision-making process and the priorities of different stakeholders. Generates consensus among stakeholders and independently closes deals. Primarily targets advocates rather than seniormosts to secure buy-in.
Red Flags	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Overly aggressive or passive with customers▪ Finds it hard to build stakeholder consensus▪ Exercises price concessions to end negotiations▪ Focuses exclusively on seniormost contacts