

Our 53 Best Interview Questions When Hiring Manufacturers' Representatives



Once you make initial contact with a list of manufacturers' representatives who are interested in representing your line, the interview process begins. The interview will probably happen in two phases: A phone interview to establish that there is serious mutual interest and an in-person interview at the representatives' place of business to help the manufacturer select from the top 2-5 finalists. Depending on your needs and preferences, some of these questions will be part of the phone interview, some will be part of the in-person interview, and some may not be applicable to your circumstances. (Manufacturers' representatives – these are the kind of questions you should be prepared to answer during an interview, so read on!)

1. Who are your most important customers? (If you have not yet reached the point where the rep is comfortable giving you names, ask for industries, products customer makes, product categories rep sells to those customers.)
2. How long has your rep company been in business?
3. Tell me about your line card.
 1. Which are your largest lines?
 2. Which lines are synergistic with my products?
4. What territory do you handle for most of your lines?
5. Tell me about the size of your firm.
 1. Office(s)
 2. Feet on the street
 3. Inside sales
 4. Tenure of employees
 5. Support staff
6. What can you share with me about your firm's overall business plan?
7. Would you work with me to create a business plan specifically for our product in your territory?
8. What have you done to invest in the growth of your company?
9. What can you tell me about your company's succession plan?
10. What plans do you have for your web site?
11. What is your company's business structure? (C Corp, S Corp, sole proprietorship?)
12. Other than just sales, what services does your company provide?
13. What kind of reporting systems do you use for your employees to report to you, and how would you communicate important news and issues from your territory to us?
14. Can you provide us with forecasts?
15. What kind of market research does your company do?
16. Can you share the educational backgrounds of your key employees?
17. What kinds of technology do you use now, and what kinds of technologies do you have plans to use in the future?
18. What CRM system do you use?
19. What kind of a rep agreement would you expect from us?
20. What kind of response time to RFQs would you expect from us?
21. When we send a request for information to you, what kind of response time should we expect from you? (Even if the final response required you to secure a response from the customer, will you at least respond that you are working on it and give us periodic updates so we know it hasn't fallen in the cracks?)
22. What is your sales philosophy?
23. How do you manage leads?
24. How do you compensate your salespeople, i.e. commission, salary, bonus, etc?
25. In what trade shows do you participate? Would those trade shows be good for our products, and what are your expectations of us regarding those trade shows?
26. How do you train your staff?
27. What kind of training would you expect from us?
28. Can you give me an example of how your company persevered to close a long timeline account?
29. How can we make our joint sales calls successful? What should we avoid to prevent them from being unsuccessful?
30. What are your expectations of us?
31. What should our expectations of you be?
32. To what professional associations do you belong?
33. How are your salespeople managed?
34. What activities or practices do you undertake to establish the professionalism of your company?
35. How do you define a successful rep/principal relationship?
36. How do you feel about our line? How do your people feel about our line?
37. What do you know about our products?
38. What do you know about the markets where our products are sold?
39. What lines have you lost, and why?
40. What would cause an agent to lose interest in a line?
41. How will you measure progress or success with our line?
42. Why will you be successful with our line?
43. Can you provide us with references?
 1. Customer
 2. Principal
 3. Distributor (if your product is sold through distributors)

In addition to the information you gain from the answers you get from the rep, these conversations also will give you an opportunity to gauge whether or not there is good chemistry between the parties at the table and whether or not there is a good likelihood that there will be overall good chemistry between the two companies. After Marcus Jackson of Engineered Machined Products, Inc. read our list, he sent us his "Top 10" questions to ask candidates to represent his company. Thanks Marcus!

1. How many products lines do you currently carry?
2. How many sales reps?
3. How are the customers divided up – regions, product lines?
4. How do you set up your go-to-market strategy including marketing?
5. What makes a product a good fit? (What makes the product attractive enough that it doesn't just sit on a shelf or become stagnant?).
6. What products stuck out when first reviewed EMP?
7. How do you work with customers – sale reps, sale engineers, technical support?
8. Give some examples of products/projects that your company has pushed through the OEM.
9. References
10. What is expected from the supplier?

Published on September 25, 2014

[Charles Cohon](#)

SHARE THIS ARTICLE: [f](#) [t](#) [in](#) [Like](#)

[< Why do so many reps love the rep bus...](#)

[Call Reports, Manufacturers' Reps, and In...](#)

Search

ABOUT

[About MANA](#)
[Message from Board of Directors](#)
[Antitrust Restrictions and Guidelines](#)
[By-Laws](#)
[MANA Code of Ethics](#)
[Member Testimonials](#)
[Sister Associations](#)
[What's New At MANA](#)
[Podcast](#)
[Rep Council Blog](#)
[Board of Directors](#)

MANUFACTURERS

[Manufacturers](#)
[Top Considerations When Hiring Manufacturers' Reps](#)
[Are You Ready to Work With Reps?](#)
[Benefits of Membership](#)
[FAQs for Manufacturers](#)
[Looking for a Sales Rep?](#)
[RepFinder®](#)
[FREE Info on Rep Agreements](#)

AGENCY SALES MAGAZINE

[About Agency Sales Magazine](#)
[How to Submit Articles to ASM](#)

REPS

[Reps](#)
[Why Independent Sales Agents Should Join MANA](#)
[FAQs for Agents](#)
[Looking For New Lines?](#)
[Starting a Manufacturers' Representative Agency](#)
[Establish Networking Chapter](#)
[MANA Online LineFinder®](#)
[Rep Members Are Hiring](#)

EVENTS

[Events](#)
[MANA Manufacturer Seminar](#)
[Webinars!](#)

ADVERTISE

[Free Digital Copy of Agency Sales Magazine](#)
[Advertise with MANA](#)
[How to Submit Ads](#)
[Premium Web Site Ads](#)

CONTACT

[Contact MANA Staff](#)

MANA

6321 W. Dempster Street, Suite 110
 Morton Grove, IL 60053

Phone **949-859-4040**
 U.S. Toll Free **877-626-2776**
 Fax **949-855-2973**

MANA@MANAonline.org