

# INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

**QUESTIONS FOR REPS AND MANUFACTURERS TO ASK WHEN INTERVIEWING**



**MANUFACTURERS' REPRESENTATIVES EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION**

*Building sales professionalism through certification*

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# INTERVIEWING GUIDELINES

Long-lasting relationships are beneficial for customers, manufacturers and reps alike. Use these guidelines to cover the basics when interviewing. The information exchanged will help each side understand the possibility of building a strong foundation, leading to an enduring relationship between the rep and principal.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK A MANUFACTURER

### CONTRACTS & TERRITORY

- Which territory is currently under review?
- How have you covered this territory in the past?
- Do you presently have a representative in this area?
- Has your current representative been notified of your intentions to change?
- Why did you decide to change representatives?
- What is your marketing philosophy relative to selling through representatives?
- Are you familiar with the benefits of using reps with CPMR and CSP certification?
- Is this an exclusive territory?
- Do you have any “house accounts”?
- Do you use distribution partners? If so, who are they?
- What is the run rate in the territory? (last five years sales averaged)
- What are your current sales in the territory?
- Does your company have a standard contract? Can we see a copy of it in advance?

### HISTORY

- Is the company incorporated? If yes, what kind of corporation?
- If a corporation, are you publicly traded?
- When was the company established? Where?
- Describe the organization and management of the company.
- What are your domestic sales?
- What are your international sales?

### DEMONSTRATION POLICY

- Do you provide demonstrators or samples at no cost to the representative?
- What are your shipping policies for demonstrators or samples?

### SALES SUPPORT

- What do you have in the way of sales support to the rep?
- Do you encourage factory marketing and technical people to make field visits to customers with your representative?

### TRAINING POLICIES

- What programs do you have for training?
- Do you pay expenses of salespeople attending training sessions at the factory?

- What is your program for keeping the representative informed of new product introductions?
- Do you share expenses of field training seminars?
- Do you provide training for any software programs required in any phase of representing your lines?

### COMMISSIONS

- What is the commission rate?
- Do you pay commission on shipment? Partial shipment?
- Do you have an incentive commission for pioneering a product line?
- How is quota established? Is there an incentive for exceeding quota?
- Do you have a split commission policy?
- What is your split commission breakdown for Design/Purchase/Ship? Is it weighted towards design efforts?
- Do you have the ability to track designs globally?
- Do you pay on Point of Sale?
- What is your policy concerning commissions if you are required to offer a discount?
- Do you have incentive programs that include direct compensation to our salespeople?

### EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

- What is your stock option plan for your representatives?
- Do you make stock available to representatives for purchase?

### REPRESENTATIVE-PRINCIPAL RELATIONS

- Do you have a Representative Council?
- Do you have representative-principal planning meetings?
- Do you have representatives on your New Product Planning Committee?

### TERMINATION PROCEDURES

- What are your terms of termination?
- Does your termination period increase with length of service?

### SERVICE POLICY

- What is your in-warranty service policy?
- What is your out-of-warranty service policy?

### MARKETING SERVICES

- Do you provide compensation to cover marketing related activities beyond what we normally provide? Normal activities include sales activities, market surveys, DTAM info etc.

### ADVERTISING

- Where is the bulk of your advertising emphasis placed?
- Do you provide advertising co-op monies for catalogs, flyers, etc. to distributors?
- Do you provide literature, in quantity, at no charge?
- Do you have a direct mail campaign?
- Do you qualify sales leads?
- Do you provide financial support and products for local rep shows?

### COMMUNICATIONS AND E-COMMERCE

- What special services does your website offer for reps? For customers?
- What hardware/software does the rep need to be compatible with your system?
- Do you have a rep intranet?
- Do you accept orders over your website? If so, is the rep compensated for shipments into their territory?
- How are reports generated, submitted and discussed? What special software programs are required and who supplies those programs?

# QUESTIONS TO ASK A REP

## HISTORY

- Are you a corporation, partnership, or sole proprietorship?
- If a corporation, what is the country or state (if US) where incorporated?
- When was the company established?
- Please provide a brief company history, resume, or brochure.

## MANAGEMENT AND PERSONNEL

- Who is actively engaged in the management of your company?
- What are their backgrounds?
- Is the management team active in sales?
- How many people are employed by your company?
  - How many outside? How many inside?
  - Please provide resumes or bios of your sales people.
- Does any of your management team have CPMR certification?
- Does any of your sales team have CSP certification?
- What other certifications do your personnel have?
- What are your succession plans?

## COMPANY GROWTH AND FUTURE PLANS

- Please describe your growth history.
- What are your growth plans?
- Do you operate on a sales plan and budget?
- How many lines do you currently represent?
- What lines do you currently represent?
- What lines have you added or dropped in the last twelve months?
- What were your sales without the added lines?
- Rank your current lines by importance based on percentage of income.
- How would we fit into that list?
- Are there any product conflicts with our line?
- Sales Forecasts:
  - Do you make sales forecasts, and how often?
  - Are the sales forecasts initiated by you or by the manufacturer?
  - Will you share your forecast with us?
  - How often do you review your forecasts?

## SALES PERFORMANCE

- How do you monitor sales performance?
- Will you advise us of performance if requested?

## MARKETING SERVICES

- Do you write quotations? Proposals?

## SALES PROMOTION

- Do you have a marketing program?
- How do you communicate with customers?
- How many people are on your contact list?
- Are they categorized by product interests?
- Do you have a company newsletter?
- Are there circumstances when you would expect us to participate in your marketing program?
- Do you have your own catalog?
- What other means do you use for sales promotion?

## TERRITORY COVERED AND MARKETS SERVED

- What geographic territory do you cover?
- Please supply a map describing your territory.
- Will you accept deviations from the territories you just described?
- What are your primary and secondary markets in terms of customer type?

## OFFICE FACILITIES

- How many offices do you have and what are their locations?
- Please give us your website, email address, and toll-free number.
- Describe your web presence.
- What special services does your website offer for principals? For customers?
- Describe your contact management and opportunity tracking.
- Do you use electronic data processing in your firm?

## TERRITORIAL COVERAGE

- What type of customers do you contact?
- Who are your major accounts?
- How do you cover key accounts?
- Are your salespeople assigned by account, geographical area, or line?
- Can you provide references from some of your key accounts?

## WAREHOUSING

- Do you have a warehouse?
- Do you currently stock items for resale?
- What manufacturers do you stock for?

## SERVICE

- Do your salespeople perform minor service, customer education or technical training?
- Will you service equipment from other territories?

## MEMBERSHIP

- Is your firm an active member of your industry association?
- What other professional organizations does your firm belong to?

## MARKET SURVEYS

- Do you conduct market surveys for your current manufacturers?
- What compensation do you think is fair for conducting these surveys?

## LOCAL SHOWS

- Do you participate in local trade shows?
- What support do you expect from us?

## VISITS BY FACTORY PERSONNEL

- What is your policy regarding visits to your territory by factory personnel?

## COMPENSATION

- How do you compensate your salespeople?
- Do you have
  - Incentive programs?
  - Profit sharing?
  - Pension plan?
  - Insurance program for your employees?
- Do you use employment contracts?
- Do you pay salespeople's expenses?
- What other benefits do you provide?

## MANUFACTURER-SPONSORED SEMINARS

- Will you send your salespeople to factory seminars?
- Will you send your salespeople to regional seminars?
- What expenses do you expect us to pay?

## REPRESENTATIVE-SPONSORED SEMINARS

- Do you conduct your own sales training?
- Do you have your own sales performance awards?
- Do you subscribe to any sales consultant or improvement programs?

## IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMS

- Does your company pay for professional development for your employees?
- What types of technological training do you provide?



**Manufacturers' Representatives Educational Research Foundation (MRERF)** is a charitable, education Foundation, supported by more than 30 rep associations. The Foundation is dedicated to advancing the rep function and enhancing the professionalism of reps throughout every industry. Formed in 1984, MRERF and its Institute for Professional Advancement (IPA) were created to provide education and certification to owners and managers of rep firms and the sales people they employ. The programs currently offered are:

- Certified Professional Manufacturers Representative (**CPMR**®)
- Certified Sales Professional (**CSP**)
- Manufacturer's Best Practices (**MBP**)



The Certified Professional Manufacturers Representative (**CPMR**®) is the professional designation for independent manufacturers representatives in any industry. Owners and managers of rep firms attend CPMR® class for five days in three annual sessions. Anyone maintaining the CPMR® designation has demonstrated their commitment to professional growth and adheres to mutual ethics standards. Each year, up to 360 individuals participate in the three levels of CPMR®.

*Find more information at [www.CPMR.biz](http://www.CPMR.biz)*

**Lori Mele, CPMR® Candidate of PLM and Associates LLC** says *"Extremely valuable and exceeded my expectations. Somehow we need to get more manufacturers supporting this program."*



The Certified Sales Professional (**CSP**) program is a three-day seminar that provides a thorough understanding of consultative selling. Intense and interactive, CSP participants report that the program will enhance their careers and change their lives. *Details at [www.CSP-USA.org](http://www.CSP-USA.org)*

**Rick Roedell, CSP from Brainard Nielsen Marketing** proclaims *"In the 20+ years I have been in sales, this is by far the best sales program I have ever been to. It is well worth the time and money."*



The Manufacturer's Best Practices (**MBP**) is a two-day program that meets the needs of both top and middle management and sales/marketing personnel at the factory level. Its goal is to enhance understanding of how to select, manage, evaluate, and profit from your rep network. *Visit [www.MRERF.org](http://www.MRERF.org) for details*

**One participant commented the Manufacturer's Program is "99% applicable. Value to be determined. Estimate = priceless."**

**FOR PROGRAM DATES, LOCATIONS AND DETAILS, VISIT [WWW.MRERF.ORG](http://WWW.MRERF.ORG)**



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