

A GUIDE DESIGNED TO HELP B2B STARTUPS

HIRING FOR STARTUPS

Making your first sales hire



ENTREPID
PARTNERS



About Entrepid Partners

Entrepid Partners helps early-stage B2B tech startups achieve rapid, sustainable growth. We work closely with founders and early sales teams to bring a level of focus to the go-to-market approach through aggressive goal setting and proven sales frameworks.

We provide a third-party evaluation of the go-to-market efforts, formulate a strategic growth plan, and help teams execute through our series of frameworks and methodologies. Some of the topics we tackle are around sales process, overall go-to-market strategy, messaging, sales hiring, lead generation, sales training, content marketing, and customer development. We have successfully worked with and advised more than 25 venture-backed companies such as Castle.io, Ironclad, Legion Technologies, AngelList, and Plaid, and we advise several First Round Capital portfolio companies.

Have specific sales or go-to-market questions for your business?

Reach out to team@entrepidpartners.com



About our team



TYLER GAFFNEY, FOUNDER AND CEO

Tyler founded Entrepid to help entrepreneurs build and scale their companies. He served as the VP of Sales at WePay, which was acquired for \$400 million by J.P. Morgan Chase, for more than four years, successfully leading sales, business development, marketing, support, and recruiting to grow the startup from \$0 to more than \$1 billion in payments volume. Prior to WePay, he worked at GE Healthcare, where he also completed GE's rigorous commercial leadership program. A graduate of Boston College, he is currently the Sales Expert in Residence at First Round Capital.



BRYAN HARRIS

Bryan was one of Tyler's early sales hires at WePay. He was consistently WePay's #1 sales rep and helped hire, train, and build the sales team from 5 to 30 people during his four-year tenure there. Before joining Entrepid, he has worked with several companies, including Castle.io, Legion, Ironclad, 42 Technologies, Binti, and Tesorio. Bryan is an expert at cold email campaigns and helping companies recruit their first sales hire. He has made seven first sales hire placements over the last 12 months. He graduated from the University of Southern California with a degree in Business.



CHELSEA ALLISON

Chelsea specializes in helping early-stage businesses find product-market fit through customer development, create compelling brands, and drive demand. Chelsea previously was Head of Marketing and Communications at financial technology infrastructure company Plaid, where she built the brand and marketing strategies, and at SaaS security startup Sookasa, where she helped reposition the company for acquisition by Barracuda Networks. Before focusing on marketing, she worked in Features at Vogue and in investment banking at Wachovia/Wells Fargo. She graduated from Duke University, where she was editor-in-chief of the student newspaper.

About this guide

Your first sales hire is the most important non-executive growth hire you will make.

Here's why:

- They'll dictate whether you make—or miss—your growth targets
- They won't just close deals; this person will touch the entire go-to-market approach
- They'll be the first impression customers have with your company
- They will build the foundation for the sales culture and how the team operates
- They will have to help lead and train the next salespeople you bring onboard

We created this guide to help founders of B2B startups find their first sales hire. We'll unpack what to look for in this key hire—and offer insight into how to find them. Using the 5W1H method, we'll break down the steps you need to take and arm you with a tactical to-do list to run a great hiring process and get someone in the seat in 45-60 days.

- **When:** When is it time to bring on the first sales hire?
- **Why:** Why is the first sales hire so important?
- **Who:** Who is your ideal candidate profile?
- **What:** What is the scope of the role?
- **Where:** Where should you source candidates?
- **How:** How to onboard and manage your sales team?

This is an approach we've used to find the first sales hire at many YCombinator, First Round Capital, and SV Angel portfolio companies—and ensure they're successful. But this guide isn't static. With each of the tactics we recommend, our team is happy to provide help. Just send us an email at talent@entrepidpartners.com.



When

When is it time to bring on the first sales hire?

Before someone new will be able to run the sales process at your company, you need to have some expertise of your own. Remember, you won't just hand over sales to your first sales hire; you'll work closely together to ensure success. Once you have successfully closed 5 to 10 deals or about \$100-\$200K in annual recurring revenue on your own, you're ready to hire your first salesperson. At this point, you should be able to roughly identify your ideal customers and define the specific market you're attacking.

Additionally, you should be able to answer most of these questions—all of which a candidate is likely to ask you:

- How long is the sales cycle (from first conversation to closed contract) on average?
- What is the typical deal size (in terms of ARR)?
- How is your product priced?
- Who are you selling to? (industry, titles, size of company, etc)
- What value are your customers getting from your product?
- What are the steps of the sales process?
- Who are your best customers and what are they paying?
- How do you define success in this role?
- How are you getting new leads and generating conversations?



Why

Why is the first sales hire so important?

As mentioned in the introduction to this guide, your first sales hire is the most important non-executive growth hire you will make.

Your first sales hire should not be a VP of Sales. In fact, hiring a VP of Sales as a first sales hire is the wrong move. You're looking for someone who is ready to be an individual contributor who will close business, run experiments, and improve the sales process. The goal is to build a process and team that attracts a fantastic VP of Sales to scale. You should think of this hire as the person that will help reach your goals for the next 12 months—not four years down the road. It's possible that your first sales hire will scale with the team, but that's not a requirement for a successful first sales hire. Make no mistake: If you're making this hire at the right time, the next 12 months will have a critical impact on the future of your company. In those months, this person will act as the face of your company—and become synonymous with the brand—to your early customers.

Your first sales hire is not a 100% sales-focused role. This person may also:

- Bring unbiased customer feedback to help the product and engineering teams develop the product
- Improve the sales process and determine opportunities to make progress
- Run experiments to determine the ideal lead gen strategy

- Create marketing collateral
- Lead the charge on sales operations by implementing a CRM and deciding on other sales tools to use
- Say no to early customers who are eager to buy, but are a bad fit with your ideal customer profile

In other words, you want someone who is invested in the mission of the company and cares more about the company's long-term success than their short-term monetary gains. But don't expect this person to come in and solve your entire go-to-market strategy. That's for you to guide. Remember, sales is a team sport and the founders must continue to be involved.



Your first sales hire is the most important non-executive growth hire you will make.

A bad hire can set you back 6+ months and will almost guarantee that you miss your revenue and growth targets for the year. But a mis-hire won't only hurt your hard costs (salary, benefits, recruiting fees); it can also have a negative impact on your company's reputation with customers and the industry.

So, how do you begin to find such a specific candidate?



Who

Who is your ideal candidate profile?

We're big fans of the "A method" approach to hiring, which focuses on finding A players and is described in *Who: The A Method for Hiring*, a summary of which can be found [here](#).

To start looking for your first sales hire, you need to understand who you're looking for.

You should start by defining the job requirements, which we recommend doing in three parts:

1. Mission
2. Outcomes
3. Competencies

1. OUTLINE THE MISSION

This is the north-star purpose of the role. The role mission should describe, in 1-3 sentences, why this position exists as well as the high-level expectations.

EXAMPLE:

The Sales Lead will help double revenue in 12 months by signing new customers for ACME Corp. He or she will setup a repeatable sales process, including an outbound email campaign to generate conversations with leads that fit our ideal customer profile.

To-do: Outline the mission for the role

2. DEFINE THE OUTCOMES

The outcomes should describe what success in this role looks like. You should list the 3-8 specific, actionable, and measurable objectives you want this person to accomplish.

EXAMPLES:

- Double existing revenue in 12 months
- Help raise our Annual Contract Value (ACV) from \$20k to \$30k
- Hire and train an SDR and AE by month 9
- Implement new software for sending outbound email campaigns
- Transition company to new CRM
- Help design a sales presentation to share with customers
- Create hunt list of the 100 top customers to target
- Travel to meet with customers in-person to negotiate contracts
- Upsell existing users on the “Free” plan to convert them to paying customers
- Work with customer support to create a “self-service” flow for low-value leads

To-do: Define 3-5 specific outcomes you want your candidate to achieve in their first 12 months



To start looking for your first sales hire, you need to understand what you’re looking for.

3. IDENTIFY CORE COMPETENCIES

Core competencies describe the inherent qualities or experience that will help you recognize a great candidate when you meet him or her. Before you get to work identify the most important behaviors, characteristics and competencies this person should have to be successful.

At Entrepid, the core competencies we recommend are:

- **Previous sales experience and success:** Comparable experience demonstrates they'll be able to get up to speed—and succeed. By comparable experience, most relevant is whether they've sold the same ACV and to the same type of customers. Industry experience isn't as important as having sold a similar deal size / sales cycle.
- **Culture fit:** If the candidate doesn't fit in with your early team, it's a non-starter.
- **Entrepreneurial instinct:** A lot of the early sales work won't just be selling. You want them to have a founder-mentality since they'll need to help on marketing, training other sales people, recruiting, product insights, and much more. Working as an early employee in another startup is a good sign that they may be entrepreneurial.
- **Coachability:** Look for someone who believes their abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. People with a personal growth mindset will be more successful than others in a fast-paced early sales role.
- **Grit + work ethic:** When your product and company is relatively unknown, you want someone who will claw and fight for your place at the table and get in front of the best customers.



A closer look: Grit + work ethic

Someone might not be a fit if they're not used to, or excited about, being the underdog and fighting for sales. For example, at many large enterprise software companies, sales reps are given warm leads by SDR teams; prepared on all possible qualification and objection questions by their product teams; and are given ready-made product demos and sales collateral by the marketing teams. They may be able to be gritty, but their current role hasn't forced them to do many of the things you'll need from them early on.

- **Preparation:** This salesperson won't be operating in a vacuum; they'll help define your early reputation in your market. Someone who does his or her homework is key.
 - **Reliability:** You need to be able to trust your first sales hire with a lot
 - **Curiosity:** You want someone who will wear many hats well. Plus, curiosity about customers makes the sales process more consultative and less salesy.
 - **Intelligence:** People who are sharp will get up to speed more quickly
 - **Strong belief in company mission, industry, customers or team:** In this role, it's especially important to find someone who wants to help the company succeed for reasons beyond their personal success
 - **Leadership ability:** Can and will they step up and lead others down the road? Is this something they're interested in doing in the future?
 - **Competitiveness:** You're looking for someone with a genuine desire to win and be the best. Plus, you want someone who is persistent enough to think creatively and add value in following up in order to build strong relationships.
- To-do:** Stack rank the most important competencies from above and add any that apply to your particular situation or culture.

From there, put together your mission, outcomes, and competencies for the first sales hire role, which you'll use to develop the job description.

The following page is an example of what that looks like.

ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE - FIRST SALES HIRE @ 123 SAAS

Mission: The first sales hire will close all new business by running the complete sales cycle for all deals. They will help scale the sales team and further establish an effective sales process.

Outcomes:

- Grow sales by bringing in \$1M of new revenue by Sept 1, 2017
- Design, lead and train the sales org
- Establish effective outbound prospecting process
- Lead the design of collateral to use during the sales process

Competencies:

- Previous sales experience in a similar capacity (sold to technical teams at companies over 1000 employees, closed deals between \$50k-\$250k, and are comfortable negotiating legal terms and pricing with procurement)
- Curiosity: You are interested in the product and our customers
- Product-minded: Ability to help mold the future of our product through customer feedback
- Work ethic
- Intelligence
- Persistence / competitiveness
- Coachability: You are willing to develop yourself through listening to those around you
- Entrepreneurial instinct: You are willing to do more than just sell. You will help with marketing, product, and training to help the company succeed
- Ability to follow through on commitments: You do what you say you will do internally and to customers
- Efficiency: Effective time management and ability to wear multiple hats.
- Ability to lead

To-do: Compile your mission, outcomes, and competencies for the first sales role.

Need sales help or personalized training?

Just send it to talent@entrepidpartners.com and we'll review.



What

What is a job description?

Once you've defined the role's mission, outcomes, and competencies, you can turn it into a condensed job req to post and start getting a flow of interested candidates.

The basic framework we recommend is below:

- **Title of role:** Account Executive, Enterprise Account Executive, Lead Account Executive, or Sales Lead (First Sales Hire)
- **Type of role:** Full Time
- **Location of role:** City, State
- **Mission of role:** We are looking to bring on our first sales hire to join our _____ (founding team, team of 6, etc) and _____ (what are you doing that is exciting?). Insert version of your Mission here.
- **About our company:** 2-3 sentences about what your company does, what types of customers you work with, and why candidates should be excited now.
- **Responsibilities:** These are the outcomes you want them to achieve.
- **Competencies:** 5-7 of the most important competencies outlined above. Be specific so you don't waste your time with unqualified or overqualified candidates.
- **How to apply:** Think through the process for candidates expressing interest. Do you want them to answer some questions about why they're interested in your company? Should they email a certain alias or simply apply through AngelList?



Application life-hack to save 10+ hours

Filtering through applications can be a full-time job. To help qualify candidates before you even look at their resume/application, put in a simple filter to the how to apply section. This will screen for people who are thorough and sweat the small stuff. Some basic filters might include:

- Email xxx with subject line: *Excited to join the team!*
- Please also attach a resume and LinkedIn profile link.
- Include 1-3 (max) sentences on what excites you about our company.

Don't waste your time with inbound applications that don't follow these instructions—just move on. Candidates who aimlessly apply to job after job every day aren't the people you want on your team, and this rule will filter them out.

From there, we'd translate that into a comprehensive job posting.

To-do: Put together a job req.

Want feedback on your job rec?

Send it to talent@entrepidpartners.com

The following page is an example of what a job req looks like.

ENTERPRISE ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE (FIRST SALES HIRE)

Role: Full Time

Location: San Francisco

We are looking for our first sales hire to join our founding team and help change the way retailers understand their business. The first sales hire will close all new business for 123 SaaS by running the complete sales cycle for all deals. They will help scale the sales team and further establish an effective sales process.

About us: We are a data analytics company that helps retailers better visualize their multi-channel sales data. We have been working hard to develop our product over the last 3 years and are ready to expand our list of customers. Current customers include National Handbag Company A, Leather Goods Company B, and Fashion Business C.

Responsibilities:

- Grow sales by helping 5x new revenue in 2017
- Establish effective outbound prospecting process. You will source, negotiate, and close all deals for 123 by working closely with our CEO.
- Lead the design of collateral to use during the sales process
- Desire to design, lead and train the sales org

Competencies:

- 4+ years of previous sales experience in a similar capacity closing complex, enterprise SaaS contracts in the \$50k-\$250k range
- Product-minded: Ability to help mold the future of our product through customer feedback
- Entrepreneurial instinct: You are willing to do more than just sell. You will help with marketing, product, and training to help the company succeed
- Ability to follow through on commitments: You do what you say you will do internally and to customers.
- Hunter mindset: You are coachable, competitive, and efficient
- Background in the retail or business intelligence space a plus
- Willingness to travel to clients up to 25%



Where

Where should you source candidates?

There are a number of ways to source candidates. Remember, like the sales process, any recruiting process should focus on building a healthy pipeline that ultimately leads to converting your first sales hire.

These approaches might include posting on recruiting sites and job boards; targeted cold or referral-based outreach; and hiring an outside firm for help. Here's a breakdown of the different tactics.

POSTING YOUR JOB

ANGELLIST

One of the first spots you'll want to post your job (assuming you are a technology startup) is on AngelList. Make sure your AngelList profile is updated with your current team, funding, investors, and other relevant information. This profile, like your presence on LinkedIn, will form the candidate's first impression of who you are and should get them excited about the position.

Cost: None

VC / INCUBATOR WEBSITES

Many incubators and VCs have job boards that get a ton of traffic. See if you can tap into their networks to start getting an inbound flow of candidates from a different source.

Cost: None

Job boards (LinkedIn, ZipRecruiter, Indeed, etc.) do not work for well for making your first sales hire. They are costly, and they are a very bad filter for quality candidates since great candidates are hard to come by, you will need to implement a successful outbound strategy and utilize AngelList. If you want to pay for hiring, reach out to Entrepid for recommendations.

- ❑ **To-do:** Polish your online presences and post your job to AngelList and relevant VC and incubator sites.

YOUR PERSONAL NETWORK

Reach out to the A players in your network and ask them if they know anyone who would be a good fit for the open role, even if they aren't actively looking for a job. Either get an introduction to these A players, or use them in outbound cold emails.

Here is a script:

“Hey Allie- Hope all is well. You seem to know a ton of great sales people and I'm curious if you know anyone who'd be a good fit to be our first sales hire? We are looking for someone just like you. Here is more about the role: [link]”

OUTBOUND COLD EMAILS

Outbound outreach will help you target specific candidates with backgrounds that you think would be a good fit. We like starting with a few companies in the industry or area that you respect and sourcing sales people from those companies. For example, if I am looking for technical sales people in San Francisco to join my seed stage company, I may look for sales people at mid-sized tech companies like GitHub, Docker, Okta, etc.

Here's how to get started:

- Make a list of 50-100 potential candidates.
- Identify potential candidates who have been an early sales hire before, candidates who have been part of a hyper-growth company (like Twilio pre-IPO, Dropbox) etc.
- If you are looking to outsource this, one service that we've used in the past is [RecruitLoop](#)
- Put all their public LinkedIn profiles in a spreadsheet

- Source their contact info through an email discover tool or by hiring contractors via UpWork
- UpWork hiring tip: Filter for contractors that have done LinkedIn email hunting or web research, 1,000+ reviews, and have high % of positive reviews. We recommend you use a [template like this one](#) and have the UpWork contractor fill in the columns A-G.
- Write the cold email
- Why you're reaching out and who you are
- Praise their background
- Context of the role
- Highlight the amazing, unique opportunity
- Ask a closing question
- Follow-up 2-4 more times and ask for referrals of friends in their network on email 2 or 3

Here's an example of an outbound email that we've seen work well:

Hi ____,

I'm one of the founders and CEO of X, a __ startup that does __ with the mission __. I'd love to chat with you about an exciting opportunity to lead our sales team.

I've done all of our sales to date, but given our high demand with customers like X, Y, and Z, we are now looking for our first sales hire to join our founding team. Your sales background is very impressive and you also seem like someone who could get behind our mission.

We are a fast-growing, __ stage company funded by __ Here is some more info on XYZ and the role:

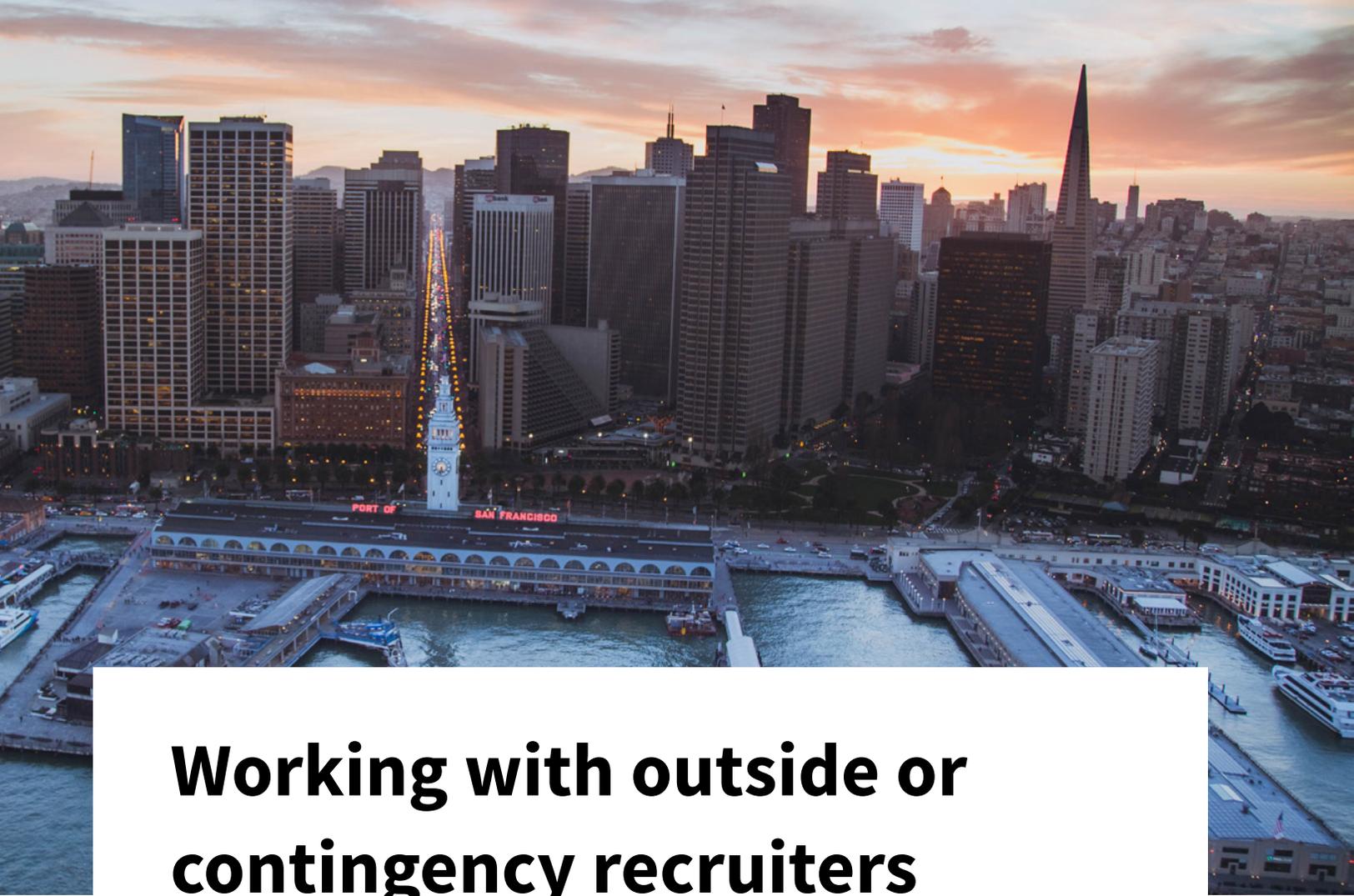
If this opportunity is exciting to you, I would love to set up time with you to chat soon. Let me know if you are free to chat or grab coffee in the coming week.

Talk soon,

To-do: Put together a list of candidates, source emails, and craft an outbound email.

Want more examples of successful email templates we've used to attract top candidates?

Shoot us an email at team@entrepidpartners.com



Working with outside or contingency recruiters

You might wonder why you should pay to use an outside recruiter rather than just posting jobs. While it's not for everyone, it has some benefits:

- **Speed to hire:** A good recruiter will fill the role in 60 days
- **Time savings:** Recruiters will save significant time screening and reviewing candidates, scheduling candidates
- **Expertise:** They are experts in the role. Not all recruiters are equipped to hire the first salesperson. Even some sales-focused firms are better at building out larger teams. We recommend looking for sale-specific recruiters rather than a generalist. Need help hiring your first salesperson? Contact the Entrepid team at team@entrepidpartners.com.
- **Networks:** Recruiters have large network of passive candidates that you won't find through job postings. The best salespeople aren't actively searching for new roles and recruiters will help you get in front of them.

That said, you can drive how well the recruitment works. In our experience, here's how to get the most out of working with a recruiter:

- **Set clear expectations.** Do not start working with a recruiter until you've outlined the mission, outcomes, and competencies. You need to be clear on the types of candidates you are looking for the recruiter can go find profiles with similar backgrounds. Also be clear on salary expectations.
 - **Screen recruiters effectively.** Just as you set clear expectations, you need to check that those resonate. Have the recruiter send over 5 profiles that they think will be a good fit to calibrate and ensure they get it.
 - **Give feedback.** As candidates start coming over, be very specific of what you liked and didn't like about each candidate.
 - **Push the recruiter to take work off your plate.** Make sure the recruiters are doing thorough phone screens before candidates get to you.
 - **Negotiate pricing.** Most contingency recruiters charge 20%-30% of the candidate's first year base salary. You should be able to push the recruiter's fees to ~20% of first year base salary, which is only paid to them if they successfully place a candidate. Recruiters should also agree to re-do the search if a candidate stays less than 3 months.
- **To-do:** Consider whether outside help in finding this specific hire will accelerate progress. Need some help? Reach out to talent@entrepidpartners.com

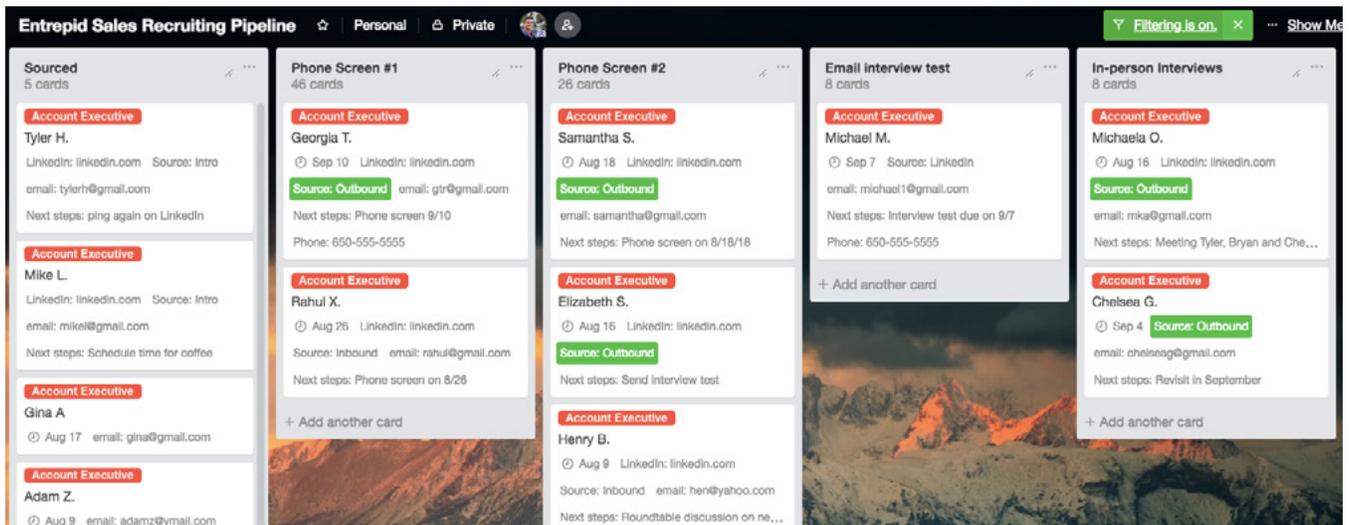


How

How do you run a great process and ensure your hire's success?

Before you start getting a flow of candidates in the door, you'll want to consider how to conduct a structured, scalable process that helps you identify your next great hire. Note that while it's ideal to have a uniform process, the ultimate goal is to make you and the team feel comfortable with the candidate. Adding extra steps and conversations may be necessary to ensure the right fit.

1. Resume screening
2. Successful phone screen 1
3. Successful phone screen or in-person meeting
4. Take home homework assignment
5. In-depth In-person interviews
6. Feedback and scorecards
7. Out-of-office get together
8. Back channel reference checks
9. Making the offer



Here is an example of a simple ATS we made in Trello to track candidates through the recruiting funnel.

STAY ORGANIZED

First, you'll want to keep track of your applicants and where they are in the process. Part of selling candidates—and staying yourself—is running a tight process. We recommend using the free ATS from AngelList, Track, to stay organized: <https://angel.co/track>

SCREEN RESUMES EFFICIENTLY

Don't take more than 1 minute per resume/LinkedIn profiles you look at. Most passive sales candidates won't have updated resumes, and you shouldn't expect them to build out one. That said, it's generally a red flag if they don't have a LinkedIn profile or their profile is not updated or polished.

The major indicators to look for are:

- 3-10 years of direct sales/closing experience
- 2+ years at prior companies; not switching jobs every year
- Similar experience—this might include industry, ACV, customers, company size, etc.
- Outstanding performance or accomplishments in prior roles
- Education
- Formatting, typos, or any other sloppiness

RUN A SUCCESSFUL PHONE SCREEN

The phone screen should focus on disqualifying candidates who wouldn't be a fit for the first sales role. You're looking for A players—no one else. Here's a framework we use for running a successful phone screen.

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1

Agenda and brief introductions

2 min.

2

What does the ideal next role look like for them and why?

3 min.

This should give you insight into what they actually want before you give them the rundown of the position. Do they want to lead a team in the future? Do they want to be a first sales hire? Do they want to work for a small company in your industry?

Be careful with candidates who change their mind on what they want after you describe the role.

3

Background and experience

5 min.

Walk me through your background as it applies to this role.

Look for sales experience in a similar capacity:

- Average/typical deal size in past roles?
- Average sales cycle in past roles?
- Who they were selling to?
- Inside sales or did they demo/meet in-person as well?
- How do the majority of leads come in?
- Who else supports them throughout the sales process? (Pay attention to how much they rely on SDRs, solutions engineers, account managers, marketing, sales operations, etc., given they won't have these resources when they join your company)
- Walk through a deal from lead source to close. Who was involved in the decision? What were the touch points? How long was the sales cycle? What was the deal size?

4

2 min.

Company knowledge/preparation

Before I give you an overview of our company, how much do you know about X?

Checking in on what they know about your company is very telling and signals they're taking the process seriously

5

5 min.

Sell them

Sell them on why the opportunity is exciting, company background, and what type of person you are looking for in this role

6

5 min.

Questions

They should have at least a few questions that highlight their interest and curiosity about the role, industry, product, team, etc. Again, this signals preparation and enthusiasm

7

Set next steps on the phone

Be direct if you already know whether you want to continue the conversation. If you do, schedule next steps for an in-person meeting on the phone. If they aren't a good fit, let them know and cut them loose.

“

Salespeople are great at selling themselves, so the interview alone is not enough to determine if the candidates is a great fit or not.

TAKE-HOME ASSIGNMENT

Salespeople are great at selling themselves, so the interview alone is not enough to determine if the candidate is a great fit or not. After you've narrowed down your pool of candidates, give them a take-home assignment to work on and send back to you to see if they can walk the talk. You may want to do this before you move to bring them on-site, or after an initial in-person meeting.

Some of our favorite assignments:

WRITE AN OUTBOUND EMAIL TO A POTENTIAL PROSPECT

When to use: *If you aren't generating inbound leads and need the sales hire to implement a successful outbound sales strategy.*

Given what you know about our product, please send me a series of 3 cold sales emails pretending that I'm a potential customer.

As you know a big part of this role is generating new conversations with prospects. This will require a successful outbound strategy and persistent follow-up with our opportunities.

Email interview test:

Given what you know about 123 SaaS today, please put together a cold email campaign addressed to me attempting to book an initial conversation about 123 SaaS (you can assume I am the buyer's title at company target).

Please send a total of 3 emails (1st cold email, 2nd attempt, and 3rd attempt) on the same thread to me by [2-3 days after I send the assignment]

Tip: See what the candidate makes of the assignment with vague instructions. Do they go above and beyond? How detailed are they? Put a 1-3 day time restraint on the candidate with a due date.

PRESENT SOMETHING TO THE TEAM ON A PHONE DEMO

When to use: *If product demos and interacting with customers over a screenshare are the most important part of the sales process*

Prepare a 15-minute demo of a product you've sold or a product you enjoy using and present it to the team on a 15 demo call.

- What to look for? Did they set an agenda? Did they ask questions and keep you engaged? Did they ask for next steps and ask any sort of a closing question? Did they put time and effort into the demo?

CREATE A 30,60,90 PLAN FOR THE FIRST 90 DAYS ON THE JOB

When to use: *This is something you need to have the hire do. This will give you a glimpse into how thoughtful they are being about their first 90 days on the job.*

- What do they need to learn? How are they thinking of becoming experts on your company, product, and industry? Is their plan realistic and well thought out?

CREATE A SALES STRATEGY

When to use: *When you are dealing with enterprise deals and longer, more strategic sales cycles.*

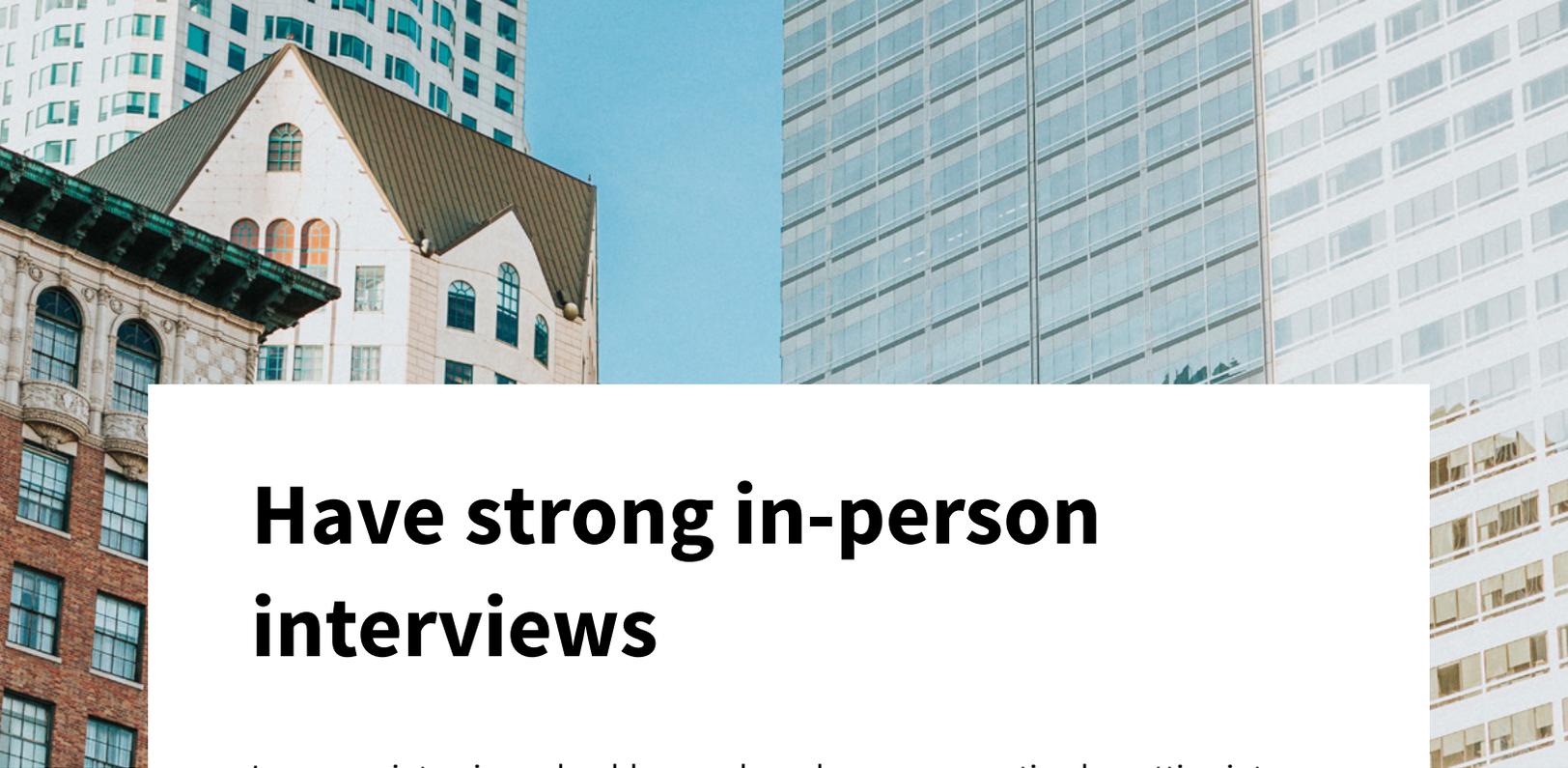
As a next step in the interview process, please pick one of the companies mentioned below and outline your high-level strategy for breaking into the account and winning a deal.

Our goal is to close an initial deal with one of these targets. The strategy should include why we should select the company you choose, who we should reach out to there, how we should reach out to them, and the overall strategy/sales process you'd recommend taking to ensure success.

Companies to choose from:

- 1- X (great fit customer)
- 2- Y (good fit customer)
- 3- Z (terrible fit customer)

A quick note on backchannel references: As soon as you start to really like a candidate, you should start to think about back-channel references.



Have strong in-person interviews

In-person interviews should expand on phone conversation by getting into more specifics. The candidate should also meet more members of the team. This will help you narrow down your candidates further.

- Culture fit and personality are key here
- Have a plan of what each interviewer is going to cover and what questions you want to ask
- Make sure to split up what you are looking for into the different team members interviewing the candidate.

We suggest having a minimum of 3 people within your company meet with the potential candidate and to make sure each person has an agenda for what they want to evaluate the candidate on. One good way to get more team members involved is to do a team lunch in or out of the office during the candidates interview. This is great for assessing culture fit. For example, one interview plan might be:

- **Interviewer 1 (Sales leader/CEO):** Evaluate for Sales process and ability, competitive/results-oriented, culture fit/personality
- **Interviewer 2:** Evaluate for Preparation, Strong belief in company mission, industry, customers or team, culture fit/personality
- **Interviewer 3:** Evaluate for Product minded/curiosity, entrepreneurial instinct, culture fit/personality

Here are things we recommend asking during in-person interviews to assess different skills:

Sales process and ability

- Tell me about a few deals you closed that you are proud of.
- How do you run an initial call with a new prospect?
- Pick one of the deals and walk me through the sales process from start to finish. How did you get the lead? How long was the sales process? Who were the decision makers? What was the size of the deal? What did negotiations look like? Who were the competitors?
- Tell me about an exciting deal you lost. What did you learn from it?
- If I were to give you a hunt list of potential customers on Day 1, how would you go about getting the deals closed?

Demonstrated comparable success

- What ACVs (annual contract value) have they successfully closed in the past?
- What was the sales process like in their previous roles? How did leads come in? How long was the sales cycle?
- What types of customers and decision makers have they sold to in the past?
- What was their previous quota and what % of quota did they achieve?

Entrepreneurial instinct

- What is the most exciting startup or new technology you've come across in the past 12 months? Why?
- Tell me about a time you've had to complete a task or job with little direction. How did you accomplish this?
- What other teams/departments have they worked closely with?
- What other projects do you need help with from this hire? Are they willing to work on these? Have they worked on these in the past?

Strong belief in company mission, industry, customers or team

- What is most exciting to you about this role?
- What are your biggest concerns with this role?

Preparation

- Who do you think our biggest competitors are and why? (did they do their research?)
- What do you know about our customers?

Product minded/curiosity?

- Have they asked about the product and your customers? Have they asked for a demo of the product (if they can't get a glimpse of this online)? Did they sign up for your product if it's self-serve?

Coachability and intelligence

- What was your favorite book you recently read and why? Or what are your favorite resources for learning? (are they curious about sales, learning, and self-improvement?)
- What was the last sales tactic that you learned? How did you apply it?
- When we ask your previous manager about you, what would he say is your greatest strength? Biggest area you can improve on?
- Who has helped you the most in your sales career? What is one lesson they taught you that's had an impact?
- Offer them feedback. How do they take it? Does their ego get in the way?

Competitive/results-oriented

- What are your goals for this year? What have you done to prepare to hit them?

Culture fit/personality

- What's your favorite new technology right now, that is useful?
- Best purchase under \$100 that has most positive impact on your life?

Follow-through

- How do they respond to getting told no? What happens when someone doesn't respond to them?
- Did they send follow-up emails post-interview?

Scratch your own itch

- What are the biggest challenges on sales you are currently struggling with? Give the candidate the situation during the interview and ask how they would handle these. This one is great because it leverages the interview process and the unique expertise of the candidate to help solve big problems.

Answer their questions

In addition to the questions we said you should expect in section 1, *When*, you should also anticipate the following questions from your candidates:

- How much funding do you have? How many months of runway do you have? When are you planning to raise your next round of funding?
- What is the current ARR/MRR?
- Who are the investors?
- What is the hiring plan for the rest of the Quarter or Year?
- What is the long-term company vision?

ASSESSING CANDIDATES

It's important to have the whole interview panel give standardized, unbiased feedback. The best way to do this is to have them fill out a scorecard immediately following the interview.

There are ATS systems like Greenhouse and Lever that do this, but at this point, you can build an easy scorecard using Google Forms.

The following is an example of a [Google form used at Entrepid](#), based on the outcomes and competencies you should have outlined above.

Sales interview scorecard

- | | |
|--|-------|
| 1. Ability to grow sales by bringing in \$1M of new revenue by end of the year | 1 - 5 |
| 2. Ability to establish effective outbound prospecting (lead generation) process | 1 - 5 |
| 3. Willingness to help design, lead and train the sales org | 1 - 5 |
| 4. Strong culture fit | 1 - 5 |
| 5. Pros, cons, and comments on the above 4 questions* | |
| 6. The craft of sales (persistence, competitiveness, ability to relate to customers, etc.) | 1 - 5 |
| 7. Sales experience (in a similar role, deal size, types of customers, similar quota, etc) | 1 - 5 |
| 8. Core competencies (intelligence, work ethic, efficiency) | 1 - 5 |
| 9. Leadership ability | 1 - 5 |
| 10. Market interest (industry and product excitement) | 1 - 5 |
| 11. Pros, cons, and comments on the above 5 questions* | |
| 12. Hire?* | |
- **Strong NO hire:** No chance that this candidate would be a good fit for this role. If anyone on your team gives this assessment of a candidate, they should not be hired.
 - **Weak NO hire:** Less than 50% confidence in the candidate being successful in this role. There are no maybes, so if you are on the fence or have hesitations, it should fall into the no category. If anyone on your team rates the candidate a “weak NO hire” you should not move forward with the candidate unless you can address the red flags.
 - **Weak hire:** You would be comfortable hiring this person, but there are still a few red flags or outstanding concerns.
 - **Strong hire:** Strong confidence that the candidate would be a good fit for the role.

That last question is key. Everyone on the team should make a hiring decision. Aim to get unanimous agreement that the candidate is a strong hire. Maybes indicate that the candidate is a weak hire and should be passed on.

* Required field

OUT-OF-THE-OFFICE GET TOGETHER

Lunch, coffee, or dinner with the CEO. It's important to get to know the candidate on a more personal level because you'll be working closely. Discuss what she is most excited about for the role and what her biggest reservations are.

CHECK REFERENCES

Don't regret skipping (or skimping) out on this step.

- **Official references:** Ask the candidate for 3-5 references of people they've worked with in the past. These references should be very enthusiastic about the candidate if they are the rockstar you believe they are.
- **Back-channel references:** You should also ask others about the candidate to make sure there are no red flags. Are you or anyone on your team connected to people she has worked with at previous companies? If so, ask them for 10-15 minutes to ask some questions about the candidate and cross-reference the things they have told you during the interview process. Are her strengths really her biggest strengths? Did she really lead the team in sales every year? If you aren't connected, reach out to previous managers cold and ask them to help on a reference call for 10 minutes.

Here are some key questions to ask in every reference call:

1. Tell me about your experience with the candidate.
2. Would you say the candidate is top talent? Why?
3. Rate the candidate 1-10.
4. Can you tell me about his/her work ethic?
5. What is the candidate really great at?
6. Where does the candidate need to improve?
7. Would you hire the candidate as your first sales hire?
8. Would you hire the candidate again?

MAKING THE OFFER

Once you've decided you want a candidate to join the team, you'll want to run a tight offer process. Always do this on the phone or in-person. For the verbal offer, ask for feedback to see whether this is in line with expectations, when you should expect them to make their final decision, and other details. Then send the written offer with exact details.

SOME NOTES ON SALARIES

General guidelines should have 50% base + 50% variable compensation. The combined will get you a candidate's on-target earnings (OTE), i.e., what they earn if they hit exactly 100% of quota, i.e., the target the rep has been allocated for the specific period. In general, the following bands can be helpful guides for Bay Area-hires:

- SMB sales: \$100-140K OTE
 - Deal size: \$10-30K
- Mid-Market sales: \$140-180K OTE
 - Deal size: \$40-100K
- Enterprise: \$180-250K OTE
 - Deal size: \$150K-1M+

It's important to set the expectation that they won't have a commission plan from day 1. Set up goals for the first 1-2 quarters and plan to pay out bonuses instead of commission. Even so, you have 4 levers to play with for negotiation: base salary, OTE (commission), quota, and stock.

GET THE TEAM INVOLVED

Get the team to welcome the candidate and show excitement after making the offer. It's nice to have each team member send the candidate a personal email welcoming them to the team and show them how excited you are to have them aboard.

ACCEPTANCE

Send the candidate something celebratory once they accept. T-shirt, flowers, champagne, or something else that goes above and beyond is a great touch to get them excited. Even if a candidate has accepted, you still need to keep them engaged and excited. There's nothing more disappointing than having someone back out before their start date.

You can also continue to get them bought in by beginning to prepare for their start date. This will pay off in ensuring their success.

Key example: Early on, Dropbox did a great job of getting sales candidates excited. They would have every member of the team send a congratulatory email to the candidate before they signed and then send a bottle of champagne along with some company swag to the candidates house the day the offer was made.

ONBOARDING AND THE FIRST 90 DAYS

The first 90 days are the most important to set the tone of expectations, work ethic, and more, so it's critical to do onboarding right. It's critical to bake in measurable actions so you know whether your hire is working out 60-90 days in. As part of the hiring process, you should address what success looks like, even including a plan for their first 90 days.

Good 30-60-90 day plans should detail:

- What actions do they need to take to be successful and ramp up quickly?
- Where are they spending their time becoming product and industry experts?
- How are they preparing to hit their goals?
- What do they to accomplish and by what date?
- How many customer calls should they listen to before they are leading their own?
- How many conversations do they need to lead, before you are comfortable with them taking all calls on their own?
- How are you measuring success?
- What are the priorities and expectations?



Beyond this guide

We've designed this guide to arm you with the tactics you'll need to bring on your first salesperson. But we're also here to help with this critically important hire—and making them successful. We've helped many companies find their first sales hire, and know many of the best talent.



Have questions?

Just reach out to talent@entrepidpartners.com

