

Interviewing Questions

It's hiring season, therefore it's the time when sales managers interview prospective reps.

I've put together a list of interviewing questions to pose to candidates who sell energy software.

They cover these areas:

1. real-world selling ability into energy companies
2. energy-market literacy and software literacy
3. comfort with energy-sector buyer personas
4. analytical, technical, and commercial thinking
5. hunting instincts in a niche market
6. relationship-building and account expansion
7. resilience in a slow-moving, technical market
8. strategic thinking and domain positioning
9. coachability questions
10. "pressure-test" questions for energy-software reps

real-world selling ability into energy companies

No. Question

- 1 "During the last time you sold software to a retail supplier. What made the deal complex?"
- 2 "During the last time you sold software to a utility. What made the deal complex?"
- 3 "What's the longest software cycle you've encountered; how did you keep momentum?"
- 4 "When a prospect pushes back on software pricing. How did you defend your position?"
- 5 "How do you qualify whether an energy company is worth pursuing, given long sales cycles?"

energy-market and software literacy

- 6 "Explain how your product relates to market data (e.g. weather) and why that matters to buyers."
7 "How do you explain concepts like basis risk or hedging to a software-naïve stakeholder?"
8 "What's the most common mistake energy companies make when evaluating software?"
9 "Describe a time you had to educate someone about the limits of automation or AI?"
10 "How do you handle a buyer who says, 'We already built this internally'?"

comfort with energy-sector buyer personas

- 11 How do you approach a pricing director versus a risk manager versus an IT lead?"
12 "What's your strategy for selling into multi-state firms with fragmented workflows?"
13 "When operations and IT disagreed about your software. How did you navigate it?"

technical, and commercial thinking

- 14 What's the most complex workflow you've had to explain to a non-technical buyer?"
15 "Describe a time you caught an error in a data feed or pricing model during a sales cycle."
16 "How do you forecast your pipeline when software deals vary in scope and implementation?"

hunting instincts in a specialized market

- 17 "Where do you find your best energy-software leads — and why?"
18 "What's your approach to breaking into a new energy vertical (e.g., DER developers, solar)?"
19 "Tell me about a time you revived a stalled or dead software opportunity."
20 "What's your prospecting rhythm when targeting energy companies with long buying cycles?"

relationship-building and account expansion

- 21 "How do you keep energy customers engaged between renewal cycles or product releases?"
22 "Describe a time you expanded a small footprint into an enterprise-wide deployment."
23 "What's your strategy for preventing churn when a competitor undercuts you?"
24 "How do you handle a customer who only calls when something breaks?"

resilience and grit

- 25 "Tell me about a time when a long software evaluation stalled. What did you do next?"
26 "What's the toughest objection you've handled from an energy buyer?"
27 "Describe a time you had to rebuild your pipeline after a product delay or market shift."
28 "How do you stay motivated when deals take 6–18 months to close?"

strategic thinking and domain positioning

- 29 “How do you position software as a strategic advantage rather than a cost center?”
- 30 “What’s your approach to multi-year account planning in a sector with slow adoption cycles?”
- 31 “How do you identify cross-sell opportunities across modules (forecasting, analytics, CRM)?”
- 32 “What’s one insight about energy-software buyers that most reps miss?”

Culture-fit and coachability

- 33 “What’s the best piece of coaching you’ve ever received about selling technical products?”
- 34 “Describe a time you changed your approach because the market environment shifted.”
- 35 “What’s your philosophy on transparency when software has limitations or bugs?”
- 36 “What do you need from a manager to perform at your best?”

“pressure-test” questions

- 37 “Explain your product’s value to a retail supplier in under 60 seconds — as if I’m the buyer.”
- 38 “What’s the one thing you believe about selling energy software that most reps get wrong?”
- 39 “If I gave you a list of 100 energy companies, how would you prioritize them?”
- 40 “What’s the hardest part of selling energy software — and why?”

If you have favorite interview questions and want to share them, please pass along. I’ll create another mailing with those featured.