

PRATICAL GUIDE

# Recruiting the right salespeople: the complete guide!

EXPERT ADVICE & BEST PRATICES



# Editorial

## | Why this guide?

**A salesperson is not just a seller: they are the face of your company in the field.** Every meeting, every call, every exchange helps shape the experience that the client will associate with your brand. A solid sales pitch can convince a prospect, but it is often the quality of the human relationship that transforms that first meeting into a lasting partnership.

**Beyond signing a contract, salespeople are:**

- Ambassadors who embody your values and strengthen your brand image.
- Detectors of weak signals, attentive to market developments and client expectations.
- Growth catalysts who build loyalty, generate additional sales and encourage recommendations.

**Recruiting the right sales profile is therefore a major challenge.** It is not just a question of assessing sales ability, but of understanding how a candidate fits into your sales strategy, your culture and your market context.

A salesperson who executes well in one company may prove unsuitable in another, simply because the sales cycles, clients or operating methods differ.

In an increasingly digitalised and competitive environment, technical skills are no longer enough. Soft skills – curiosity, active listening, adaptability, perseverance – are now crucial to ensuring sustainable performance.

At PerformanSe, we are convinced that commercial success depends on the right alignment between a profile, a context and a corporate culture.

**Enjoy the reading, everyone!**

# Did you know?

60%



of clients say that their loyalty depends above all on the quality of their relationship with their salesperson (Salesforce, 2024).

70%



of sales managers consider soft skills to be more difficult to assess than technical skills (LinkedIn Talent Solutions, 2023).

40 à 60 jours



It takes an average of 40 to 60 days to recruit a salesperson, a costly process due to the complexity of the profile sought (Glassdoor, 2024).

# Salespeople profiles: what the data reveals

Are all salespeople extroverts seeking power? **We explored data from a sample of 13,548 people who took our psychometric tests on behavioural preferences, motivational drivers and relation to work.** The challenge was to identify what differentiates salespeople from non-salespeople in terms of behaviour. Statistical analysis of the sales function data revealed some surprises...

## What sets salespeople apart from other roles?

**PerformanSe observed that sales populations differed significantly in three main behavioural preferences:**

Extroversion, which translates into interpersonal skills and a great ability to express oneself in public.

- **Assertion** – self-confidence, a sign of high self-esteem.
- **Competitiveness** – a competitive spirit, reflecting an ability to surpass oneself and embrace challenges.

*“Analysis of our data shows that salespeople are more extroverted than average. They also display greater assertion, in other words, more self-confidence, and a combativeness that reflects a true competitive spirit,”* explains **Arnaud Trenvoux, Head of R&D at PerformanSe.**

In addition to these three traits, they also have greater self-efficacy (confidence in their skills), reflecting a typical profile where self-image is higher than among non-salespeople. In other words, salespeople have greater belief in their ability to succeed and overcome obstacles. This quest to surpass themselves is reflected in their approach to work.

## Some common misconceptions debunked

When we dig deeper into the statistical analysis, the profile of salespeople appears less uniform than one might imagine. For example, we often hear that salespeople must above all be attentive to their clients. However, our results show that, just as in the general population, some salespeople are very good listeners, while others are much less so. In other words, listening is not a characteristic of the sales profession as a whole: it is more of an individual trait.

*“Salespeople do not favour listening with emotion and empathy, but they are nevertheless able to listen in a more detached and analytical way, enabling them to accurately grasp their clients’ needs,”* **Arnaud Trenvoux** explains.

Similarly, qualities such as independence and perseverance are not significantly stronger in salespeople than in non-salespeople.

## What about the psychological contract?

One might think that salespeople operate within a logical transactional contract, i.e. a relation to work centred on the exchange of contributions for compensation (salary, bonuses, benefits). However, our data shows the opposite. The sales population expresses a strong desire for a relational psychological contract, i.e. a commitment that goes beyond a simple transaction.

**This means:**

- **strong identification with the company’s values,**
- **personal investment beyond formal tasks and the work environment,**
- **a long-term outlook, with a desire to contribute to the company’s success.**

This type of psychological relational contract illustrates the fact that salespeople are primarily looking for a lasting and trusting relationship with their organisation, rather than a simple report for discussion limited to immediate results. Another striking point reinforces this observation: salespeople, more than non-salespeople, attribute their successes and failures to themselves.

Contrary to popular belief, they do not shift the blame onto the product, the client or the team. On the contrary, they tend to consider that failures are their own fault and not that of their environment. This attitude reflects a strong sense of individual responsibility and a deep belief in their ability to influence the course of events.

### **In short...**

**Salespeople stand out for their strong belief in their abilities and their conviction that their results depend above all on their own actions.** This attitude fosters a competitive and confident profile, where a taste for challenge plays a central role. Beyond individual performance, they also express a desire to be part of a collective project, sharing the values and success of their company. It is this combination of personal competitiveness and long-term commitment that shapes the uniqueness of the sales function.



STEP 01

# Before recruiting : define your needs



# Before recruiting: define your needs

Recruiting the right salesperson is not about looking for a «universal» profile that would suit everyone. **It is about identifying the ideal profile for YOUR context.** This involves two steps: analysing your sales environment and then determining the right type of salesperson.

## What is your type of sale?

1

### Complex sales:

multiple decision-makers, customised solutions, long cycles. Here, patience, the ability to build trust and navigate complex organisations are essential.

2

### Project-based sales:

based on a specific need, co-constructed with the client, with careful monitoring until delivery. It requires coordination, adaptability and project management.

3

### Simple sales:

short cycles, quick decisions. Efficiency, responsiveness and the ability to close deals quickly take precedence over building a long-term relationship.

## What is your typical type of client?

- **The Explorer:** curious, eager for new things, attracted by innovation and differentiation.
- **The Relational:** attached to trust and authenticity in exchanges.
- **The Pragmatic:** makes decisions based on factual elements, ROI, comparative studies.
- **The Technical:** expects precise technical discourse and a demonstration of performance.

## What type of salesperson are you looking for?

### The Hunter :

Loves to conquer, constantly seeking new opportunities.

Competitive spirit

Curiosity

### The expert :

relies on strong technical expertise to provide accurate advice.

Methodical

Adaptable

### The farmer :

excels at building loyalty and anticipating client needs.

Trust

Listening

### The negotiator :

knows how to defend their position while maintaining a constructive relationship.

Perseverance

Assertiveness

**HR tip:** combining these three variables (type of sale, type of client, sales style) allows you to create a true map of your ideal profile.

# Key skills by profile

Assessment grid for technical and behavioural skills according to sales profiles

**Hunter**

- Sales prospecting
- Sales techniques
- CRM proficiency
- Proactivity
- Interpersonal skills
- Conquering spirit

**The expert**

- Product knowledge
- Client advice
- Teaching skills
- Methodical
- Analytical mind
- Observational skills

**The farmer**

- Market monitoring
- Portfolio management
- Client loyalty
- Active listening
- Interpersonal skills
- Anticipation

**The negotiator**

- Negotiation techniques
- Handling objections
- Closing
- Argumentation
- Perseverance
- Results orientation

**HR tip:** During the interview, look for specific examples where these skills have been put into practice, rather than general statements.

# 70 à 85%

of sales success is based on the salesperson's soft skills rather than technical skills.

*Source: LinkedIn Learning, 2023.*

## Key skills by phase of the sales cycle

The path to becoming a successful salesperson is not a series of improvised actions: it is a structured process where each step requires specific technical and behavioural skills. Understanding and assessing these skills is crucial to identifying the talents that will convert a prospect into a loyal client. **Here are the four essential steps in the sales process and the skills associated with them:**

# #1.

## Prospecting

| Finding and creating opportunities

**Prospecting is the first step towards sales success.** It involves identifying new potential clients and establishing promising initial contact. A good salesperson does not just wait for opportunities to come along: they go out and find them.

### Key skills to assess:

#### Market monitoring

ability to analyse the market, detect trends, monitor the competition and anticipate emerging needs.

#### Lead generation

knowing how to target the right contacts, generate interest, secure an appointment and quickly qualify a prospect.

### Why it's important:

A salesperson who is skilled at prospecting ensures a constant flow of opportunities in the pipeline. Without this skill, even the best sales pitch will have no one to convince.

**HR tip:** During the interview, ask the candidate to tell you how they identified their last big sales opportunity. Look for the subtle signs they were able to spot.

# #2.

## Discovery

| Gaining an in-depth understanding of the client's needs

**Discovery is the stage where the foundations of the relationship are laid.** This is where the salesperson must understand the client's motivations, constraints and priorities, beyond the expressed demand.

### Key skills to assess:

#### Needs gathering

Asking the right questions, rephrasing to confirm understanding and showing genuine interest in the client.

#### Analysing

Use the information gathered to identify priority issues and detect implicit opportunities.

### Why it is important:

Poor discovery often leads to irrelevant proposals. A good salesperson knows that selling is first and foremost about understanding.

| **HR tip:** during a role-play, play the part of a customer who is unclear about their needs. See how the candidate probes and rephrases before making a proposal.

# #3.

## Argumentation

| Convincing with relevance

This is when the salesperson transforms the identified needs into a clear and attractive proposal. The sales pitch is not limited to touting the merits of a product: it must respond precisely to the expectations that have been identified.

### Key skills to assess:

#### Consulting expertise

in-depth knowledge of the product, the market and the competition, ability to adapt one's pitch to the audience.

#### Persuading

ability to present arguments confidently, respond to objections and establish a constructive dialogue.

### Why it is important:

A relevant sales pitch turns the client's interest into a desire to buy. This is also the stage where differentiation comes into play.

| **HR tip:** ask the candidate to prepare a 10-minute sales pitch for a fictional product. Observe their ability to structure their ideas and adapt to your "client" profile.

# #4.

## Closing

| Converting the try

Closing is the decisive moment when you turn an opportunity into a signature. It requires a clever mix of persuasion, timing and diplomacy.

### Key skills to assess:

#### Competitive spirit

Motivation to achieve (and exceed) goals, ability to remain active and involved until the end.

#### Negotiating

Finding common ground while preserving margins and meeting client expectations.

### Why it's important:

Without a good closing, all the prospecting, discovery and pitching work can be reduced to nothing. This is where energy and rigour pay off.

**HR tip:** in a role-play situation, introduce a last-minute objection. Observe whether the candidate becomes tense or is able to bounce back with solutions.

# Key skills in the sales cycle

| Skills assessment grid according to the stages of the sales process

## 01. Prospecting

- Proficiency in prospecting tools
- Generates opportunities
- Market analysis and competitive intelligence
- Anticipation
- Curiosity
- Conquering spirit

## 02. Discovery

- Questioning techniques
- Understanding needs and challenges
- Ability to connect needs and solutions
- Active listening
- Analysis
- Observational skills

## 03. Argumentation

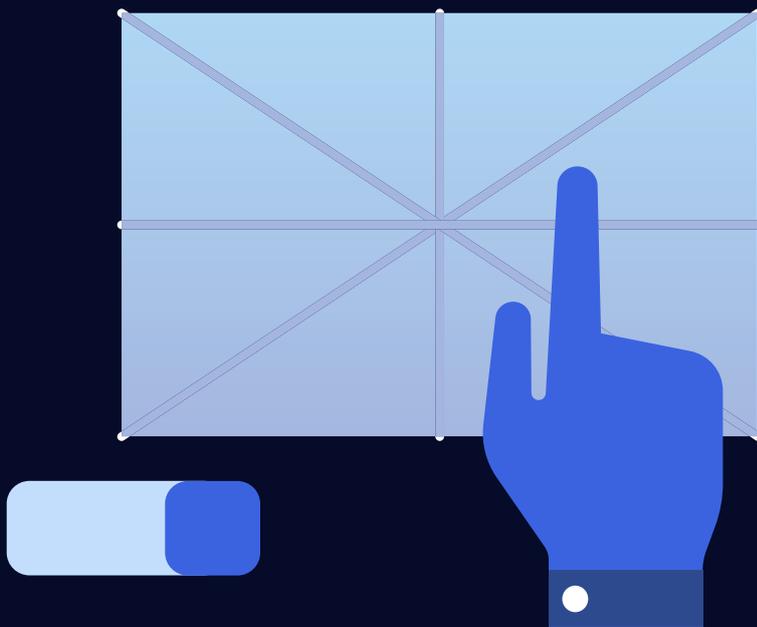
- Product knowledge
- Sales pitch structure
- Techniques for responding to objections
- Confidence
- Adaptability
- Constructive dialogue

## 04. Closing

- Mastery of negotiation techniques
- Management of contractual terms
- Knowledge of client decision-making levers
- Competitive spirit
- Resilience
- Perseverance

**STEP 02**

Rely on effective  
**assessment methods.**



## 02. Rely on effective assessment methods

Recruiting a salesperson cannot be based solely on a traditional interview or the overall impression left by a candidate. To get a complete picture of their potential, working style and development areas, it is necessary to combine several assessment methods. By combining objective, practical and behavioural approaches, you significantly reduce the risk of casting errors and increase your chances of finding the right profile.



### #1. Psychometric assessment

A standardised tool that assesses personality, motivations and aptitudes. With the **BOOST** tool, assess a candidate on behaviours that predict sales performance: identify whether they are cut out for sales, how they sell, and in which environment they will execute best.

| **Advantages:** concrete view of sales style and adaptability.



## #2. Role-playing

Simulating a client meeting or negotiation allows you to observe interpersonal skills, responsiveness and objection handling in real time.

| **Advantages:** concrete insight into sales style, adaptability.

| **HR tip:** in the role-play, introduce a last-minute objection. Observe whether the candidate becomes tense or is able to bounce back with solutions.



## #3. Assessment Centre

An integrated approach that combines psychometric assessments, practical exercises and structured interviews to assess aptitudes, behaviours and motivation. This is the most predictive method for sales success.

| **Advantages:** comprehensive and reliable overview of future performance, minimises the risk of recruitment errors.

# BOOST : sales skills assessment tool

BOOST allows you to assess a candidate or employee on behaviours that predict sales performance. You can quickly identify whether they are cut out for sales, how they sell, and in which environment they will execute best!

## 01. Sales profile

This section of the report presents the candidate's sales potential, expressed as a percentage, in order to assess their predisposition to succeed in a sales role. It highlights their personal qualities and aptitudes — whether they are a Hunter, Expert, Farmer or Negotiator — providing a clear picture of their natural approach to client relations and business development.

### Your sales profile

What kind of sales professional are you?

#### Sales potential

Refers to the personal qualities and traits that support success in a sales role.

# 56%

This profile highlights favourable traits for developing commercial activities.

Relationships form naturally and rely on steady energy and involvement. A understanding of one's strengths fosters a confident and consistent approach to sales goals.

#### Sales style

Reflects the way a person approaches sales and client relations. It conveys the preferred method used to reach their objectives.

# 57%

#### Hunter

People with this profile are driven by achievement. They work with determination, enjoy taking on challenges, and take initiative to come to finding new clients.

48% **Farmer**

People with this profile prioritise long-term relationships. They are attentive to client needs and in tune with market developments, they focus on building loyalty through close connections.

46% **Negotiator**

People with this profile know how to defend their position while remaining attentive to their counterpart's needs. They use a persuasive argument and show real ability to reach a discussion towards an agreement.

39% **Expert**

People with this profile draw on strong analytical skills and genuine expertise in their field. They provide distinctive advice, based on a deep understanding of the market.

## 02.

### Sales skills

The sales profession is based on a structured process, marked by stages that each require specific skills. This page allows you to assess their strengths and development areas according to the four key moments in the sales cycle.

## 03.

### Ideal sales environment

Sales performance also depends on the fit between a candidate's profile and their environment. This section of the report identifies the contexts in which the candidate is most comfortable, the type of sales that suit them, their preferred type of client and their day-to-day working style.

## Would you like to try BOOST?

REQUEST A DEMO

### Your sales skills

A closer look at the 4 key stages of the sales process

#### Prospecting

- 68 Market monitoring
- 53 Lead Generation

#### Closing

- 67 Competitive spirit
- 43 Negotiating



#### Strengths

- Assertive and impactful argumentation
- Anticipates through active monitoring
- Ambitious, seeks to go beyond expectations

#### Points for attention

- Lacks perspective on info
- Unclear or standardised o
- Unlensing somewhat scatt

#### Behavioural risks

- Stress management: Holds steady under pressure, but may sometimes lo
- Respect for methods: Intuitive organisation, sometimes scattered.

# Interview questions by sales profile

Interview questions tailored to the sales profile you are looking for. If you are looking for a profile...

## Sales hunter :

- Give an example of a time when you opened up a market or won over a difficult client.
- How do you stay motivated when results are slow to come?

## Expert :

- Comment adaptez-vous un discours technique à un interlocuteur non expert ?
- Racontez une fois où votre expertise a permis de remporter une vente.

## Farmer :

- How did you turn an occasional client into a loyal client?
- Give an example of a time when you anticipated a need before the customer expressed it

## Negotiator :

- Describe a difficult negotiation in which you reached an agreement.
- How do you handle a last-minute objection before signing?

# Interview questions

Guide to interview questions for exploring the results of a psychometric assessment

## Your sales profile

*Objective: Explore the candidate's dominant posture and natural style*

- How do you identify with this sales style?
- In what situations are you most able to express this approach?
- What do you think makes you effective in client relations?

## Your sales skills

*Objective: Bring out concrete examples and test awareness of strengths/weaknesses*

- Which stages of the sales process come most naturally to you?
- Is there a stage that you find more difficult to approach?
- How do you prepare for your client meetings? What do you rely on?

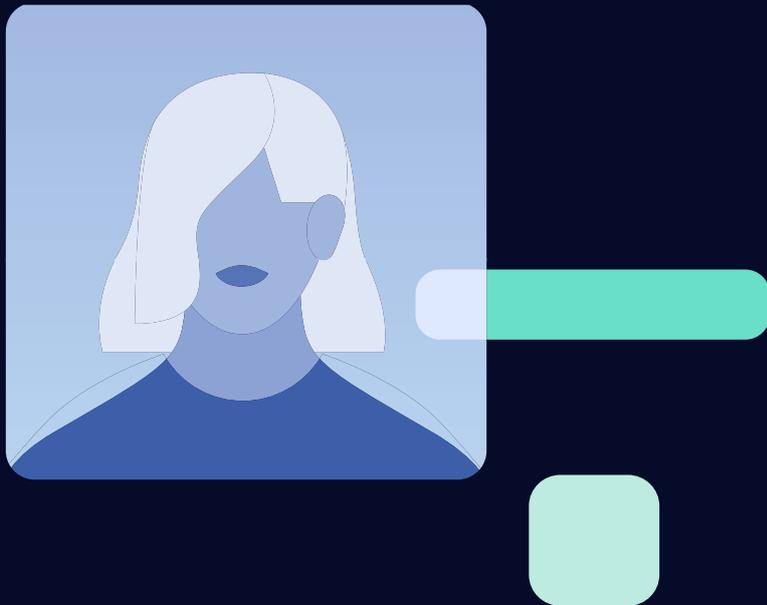
## Your ideal sales environment

*Objective: Identify the conditions for the candidate's success*

- What type of sales cycle motivates you the most: fast, relationship-based, strategic?
- How do you react to demanding interlocutors or unstable contexts?

**STEP 03**

# Successful integration: the key to performance



# 03. Successful integration: the key to performance

Recruiting the right salesperson is only the first step. To turn this recruitment into lasting success, integration plays a decisive role. Effective onboarding cannot be standardised: it must be tailored to the profile of the salesperson you have selected. Expectations, support needs and motivational levers differ depending on whether the person is a Hunter, a Farmer, an Expert or a Negotiator.

## Well-designed onboarding helps to consolidate the fit between:

- the chosen profile (Hunter, Farmer, Expert or Negotiator),
- the company's sales context,
- and the individual development areas identified during assessments

## Why personalise onboarding?

- **Accelerate ramp-up:** by building on existing strengths.
- **Reduce the risk of failure:** by anticipating the salesperson's areas of weakness.
- **Strengthen commitment:** by showing that the company recognises and values their working style.
- **Create a lasting relationship:** beyond salary and objectives, it is about building a relationship of trust and alignment.

In short, successful integration combines training, support and follow-up, but above all, it adapts to the style and needs of the recruited profile.

# Onboarding guide by sales profile (1/2)



## The hunter :

**Integration priority:** quickly give them the keys to the market and the offering so that they can start prospecting.

**Support:** field coaching on key messages, training in the use of tools (CRM, digital prospecting).

**Keep an eye on:** their natural impatience. Plan regular follow-ups to channel their energy and keep them motivated if results are delayed.



## The expert :

**Integration priority:** technical immersion (products, services, market benchmarks).

**Support:** mentoring by a senior profile, privileged access to technical and marketing teams.

**To watch out for:** his tendency to remain overly focused on expertise. Help him simplify his discourse to make it accessible to non-specialist audiences.

# Onboarding guide by sales profile (2/2)



## The Farmer :

- **Integration priority:** in-depth knowledge of the customer portfolio and internal processes (after-sales service, client follow-up).
- **Support:** pairing up for client visits, training in the use of customer data to anticipate needs.
- **To watch out for:** avoid limiting themselves to managing existing business. Encourage openness to new sales opportunities (upselling, cross-selling).

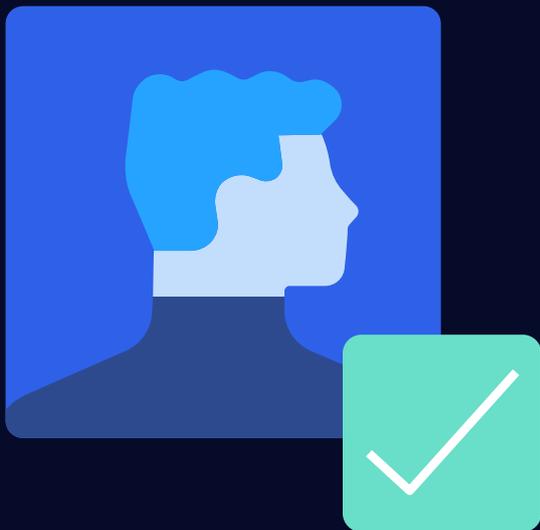


## The negotiator :

- **Integration priority:** practical workshops on negotiation and closing (role-playing).
- **Support:** observation during strategic meetings, detailed post-negotiation feedback.
- **To watch:** their tendency to «go it alone». Help them work in synergy with internal teams (pre-sales, support, marketing).

## HR TESTIMONIAL

# Good salespeople: a (very) rare resource!



# Good salespeople: a (very) rare resource!



Inetum, a European leader in digital services, has 27,000 employees in 19 countries. Driven by its ambition for growth and scale, Inetum generated revenue of €2.4 billion in 2024. Sales functions are strategic, and, as **Paul DOUCET, Recruitment Manager**, explains, the assessment of soft skills plays a central role in the recruitment of sales teams.

## **Recruiting salespeople is a major challenge for you...**

Absolutely! Because the group is growing rapidly and developing strongly. Sales are the lifeblood of the business, and sales talent is rare due to fierce competition to recruit them. All sales jobs are key to our organisation: junior and senior sales engineers, business managers, sales directors, etc.

## **What kind of profiles are you looking for within the group?**

The Group's culture, linked to the fact that we are both an agile company and a large international group, encourages

a high degree of proximity, freedom, responsiveness and innovation in the way we operate. We are therefore looking for candidates with a positive, entrepreneurial, pragmatic, responsive and open-minded mindset, who are able to adapt very quickly, and whom we attract with the very concrete promise of real autonomy and rapid career progression. We thus create career paths that everyone can tailor to create their own path, regardless of their job from assignment to assignment, and according to their technological or sectoral interests.

## **What soft skills are most important to you?**

Soft skills are essential in sales, which is why we now use behavioural trend questionnaires to support all our sales recruitment. For us, intellectual agility is a key skill, for example, as is the ability to go the extra mile, but also client focus, service orientation and the ability to understand clients' needs in order to better meet them.

## **How do you use recruitment assessments today?**

For a long time, we used assessments on an ad hoc basis, mainly when we had doubts about a candidate, to clarify their suitability. Today, we have generalised the use of PerformanSe assessments, particularly Perf Sales, as part of HR interviews. They enable us to assess candidates' sales skills and interpersonal skills in order to make our selection process more objective and to provide real support for decision-making. Modelling expectations based on a series of key skills has enabled us to standardise

approaches within the Group, ensuring that all successful candidates have a clearly shared set of soft skills.

## **What soft skills are most important to you?**

In general, the assessment results do not significantly change our perception of a candidate following an interview, but they do help us to refine our impression of them. They therefore provide an opportunity for open and constructive discussion with the candidate. For managers, the results enable us to better define, discuss and communicate the areas where successful candidates need to be vigilant and make progress, in order to facilitate their integration. They also help us to suggest talents that are different from those they are used to, particularly for more junior profiles or profiles that do not come from an IT background!

**« Soft skills are really the essence of sales work,  
which is why we now use behavioural trend questionnaires to  
support all our sales recruitment »**

Paul DOUCET,  
Recruitment Manager

**inetum.**  
positive digital flow

# Conclusion

## | Focusing on people to boost sales performance

In an environment where markets are changing rapidly and client expectations are becoming more complex, the sales force remains one of the most strategic pillars of the company. Recruiting the right salesperson is not just about finding a competent salesperson: it's about identifying a profile that will thrive in your context, build lasting relationships with your clients and actively contribute to your growth.

By clearly defining your needs, cross-referencing your analysis of the type of sale, type of client and sales style, and then assessing both technical and soft skills, you give yourself the best chance of making an informed choice. Combining a variety of methods—structured interviews, role-playing, psychometric tools, and even assessment centres—further enhances the reliability of your decisions.

But recruitment is only the first step. Continuous skills development, on-the-job support and regular follow-up are essential to maintaining motivation and performance over time.

By placing people at the heart of your sales strategy and relying on reliable assessment tools such as BOOST, you can transform recruitment into a real lever for long-term success. Because ultimately, a good salesperson is not just someone who closes sales... they are someone who builds trust, inspires loyalty and increases the value of your company.

**Would you like to  
try BOOST?**

[REQUEST A DEMO](#)

Un Smartphone ?



