

TECH SALES PLAYBOOK

The Tech Sales Interview Playbook

Scripts, answer frameworks, mock calls, role plays,
and final-round prep for SDR, BDR, and AE interviews.

TechSalesPlaybook.com

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THE TECH SALES INTERVIEW PLAYBOOK --- ### Scripts, Answer Frameworks, Mock Calls, Role Plays, and Final-Round Prep for SDR, BDR, and AE Interviews **By Tech Sales Playbook** --- *The complete interview system for breaking into tech sales and advancing your sales career.*

1. Promise Page

You have a tech sales interview coming up. First one or fifth — doesn't matter. What matters is this: **tech sales interviews are predictable**. Same questions. Same mock call scenarios. Same hidden tests. Same mistakes that disqualify 80% of candidates before the final round. Know the playbook the interviewer is running, and you can reverse-engineer the win. This book is that playbook.

PRO TIP: Every framework and statistic here is sourced from 25+ hiring managers, VP of Sales interviews, and industry benchmarks. Documented patterns from real interviews — not opinions.

1.1 What This Playbook Will Help You Do

#	Outcome	What That Means Practically
1	Tell a credible "why tech sales" story	A 60-90 second origin story connecting your past to this role — authentic, specific, believable.
2	Answer SDR/BDR/AE questions with frameworks	STAR for behavioral. PUC for "tell me about yourself." Feel-felt-found for objections. Structured answers, no rambling.
3	Handle mock cold calls and discovery calls	The 100-point rubric, word-for-word openers, objection handlers, and the "redo" test that breaks 70% of candidates.
4	Build a 30-60-90 day plan	Fill-in-the-blank template: diagnostic (Days 1-30), building/piloting (Days 31-60), scaling (Days 61-90) — with KPIs managers expect.
5	Follow up like a top candidate	Thank-you structure, LinkedIn cadence, and value-add follow-ups — including the tactic one rep used to win after a 5-month process.
6	Avoid mistakes that cost offers	Red-flag checklist: over-scripting, negotiating without leverage, unprompted final-round materials — 28 documented offer-killers.

1.2 Who This Is For

Profile	Your Situation	Your Biggest Risk	This Playbook Fixes It
Career Changer	From retail, hospitality, military, education, healthcare. You know tech sales pays.	Sounding generic. "I like talking to people" is what 100 other candidates say.	A unique origin story connecting your past to sales skills.
New SDR/BDR	Applying for your first SDR/BDR role. Fresh grad or early career.	The mock cold call. Most first-timers freeze when the interviewer says "not interested."	Scripts, rubric, objection handlers, and the "redo" test.
SDR Moving Up	Promoting to AE or Senior SDR. You have metrics but no offers.	Talking activity over outcomes. "I made 100 calls a day" doesn't impress AE hiring managers.	Frame every win as business impact. AE-specific structures included.
New AE Candidate	Interviewing for your first AE role. Need to prove full-cycle deal skills.	Treating the AE interview like a bigger SDR interview. AE tests discovery, deal strategy, quota fluency.	Full AE map: 2-person panel discovery, deal review questions, quota storytelling.

1.3 How to Use This Playbook

The 7-Day Prep Timeline

Day 1 — Foundation: Audit resume (every number defensible in two follow-ups). Read company website, About, Careers, blog. Find 3 competitors. Read 2-3 news articles. Study their product. Draft a 60-second "how I'd sell this" pitch.

- **Day 2 — Role Research:** LinkedIn: 3-5 current reps. Map sales process: inbound or outbound? What tools? Research each interviewer: career path, posts, connections. Write "tell me about yourself" and "why tech sales" answers.
- **Day 3 — Behavioral & Mock #1:** Write 5 STAR stories: adversity, failure, accomplishment, teamwork, influence. Practice out loud; record yourself for filler words. Mock interview #1: intro + 2 behavioral questions. Memorize your close: *"I've really enjoyed this conversation. Based on what you've shared, this feels like a strong fit. Would anything prevent you from moving me forward?"*
- **Day 4 — Mock Call Practice:** Write 15-20 second opener. Practice 5 objections: "Not interested," "Send me an email," "We're using a competitor," "No time," "Not a priority." Mock call #2: full role-play, recorded. Review tone, pace, fillers. Study feel-felt-found.
- **Day 5 — Questions & Pitch:** Prepare 8-10 questions: personal, research-based, sales metrics, needs-based. Draft 60-second company pitch. Mock interview #3: full simulation. Mental rehearsal: picture yourself confident, interviewer nodding.
- **Day 6 — Logistics & Setup:** Print 5 resume copies. One-page brag sheet with quantified wins. Test camera, mic, speakers, internet. Virtual space: lighting, background, camera at eye level. Prepare cheat sheet: facts, talking points, questions, close. Mock interview #4 under realistic conditions.
- **Day 7 — Final Polish:** Review all answers out loud — natural, not rehearsed. Power poses and visualization. Refresh company facts and "why this company." 8 hours of sleep. No cramming.

CALL OUT: Less than 7 days? Compress Days 1-2 into one 3-hour session, Days 3-4 into another. Never skip mock calls — candidates who do 3+ mocks significantly outperform those who do zero. More than 7 days? Stretch to 14 and go deeper on every task.

Next: Chapter 2. How tech sales interviews actually work — the full funnel, what each stage tests, and the hidden tests 80% of candidates never see coming.

2. How Tech Sales Interviews Actually Work

Here's the reality: **3% of applicants make it past the résumé screen.** Of those who get interviewed, **27% get hired.** That means roughly **180 people apply for every sales rep who lands the job.**

The companies winning the best roles run a five-stage funnel. It looks different at a 20-person Series A than it does at Salesforce, but the bones are the same. If you know the map, you can prepare for each checkpoint instead of walking in blind and hoping your enthusiasm carries you.

This chapter breaks down every stage, what each one is actually testing, how fast you'll move through it, and the hidden gates most candidates never see coming.

2.1 The Interview Funnel

2.1.1 The Numbers That Matter

In 2024–2025, the average SaaS sales role received triple the applications it got three years ago. Recruiters now process 300+ résumés per open headcount. The result: **brutal filtering at the top, increasingly structured evaluation once you're inside.**

Metric	Benchmark	What It Means for You
Application-to-interview rate	3%	Your résumé + outreach has to beat 97% of the field
Interview-to-hire rate	27%	Once you're interviewing, your odds jump to 1 in 4
Applicants per hire	~180	The funnel is narrow, not a lottery
Sales role time-to-fill	30–40 days	Expect 2–8 weeks from first screen to offer
Offer acceptance rate	69–84%	You have leverage if you're the one they want

Getting the interview is the hardest part. Once you're in the room, you're competing against a much smaller pool. Know what each room tests so you don't waste a single conversation.

2.1.2 The Five Standard Stages

Every tech sales interview funnel follows the same five-stage architecture. The labels change. The bones don't.

Stage 1: Recruiter Screen. 20–30 minutes. Tests phone presence, professionalism, salary alignment. 50–60% pass.

Stage 2: Hiring Manager Interview. 30–60 minutes. Tests coachability, resilience, product research, sales instincts. 40–50% pass.

Stage 3: Mock Cold Call / Role-Play. Highest-differentiation stage. Live selling under pressure. 30–40% pass.

Stage 4: Panel / Final Round. 60–120 minutes. Multiple interviewers, culture fit, often a 30-60-90 plan. 50–60% pass.

Stage 5: Offer & Comp Discussion. Verbal offer, negotiation window, 3–5 days to decide.

2.1.3 Funnel Map: Stage by Stage

This is your one-page reference. Print it. Tape it to your monitor. Every time you finish a stage, check the timeline and know exactly what's coming next.

Stage	What Happens	Duration	Pass Rate	What They're Actually Testing
Recruiter Screen	Phone or video call with HR/recruiter	20–30 min	50–60%	Phone presence, basic professionalism, salary alignment, genuine interest in <i>this</i> company
Hiring Manager Interview	Video call with your would-be boss	30–60 min	40–50%	Coachability, resilience, product research depth, do you try to close?
Mock Call / Role-Play	Live cold call (SDR/BDR) or discovery call (AE) with feedback/debrief	30–60 min total	30–40%	Can you sell under pressure? Objection handling, closing specificity, coachability on the redo

Panel / Final Round	3–5 back-to-back interviews with team, cross-functional partners, leadership	60–120 min total	50–60%	Consistency across interactions, cultural fit, would peers want to work with you?
Offer & Comp Discussion	Verbal offer call, written offer letter, negotiation window	3–7 days to receive; 3–5 days to decide	69–84% accept	Your negotiation savvy, decision speed, genuine commitment

CALL OUT: The mock call stage has the lowest pass rate for a reason. Most candidates wing it. The ones who prepare with scripts, practice with a friend, and study the company's actual product walk away with offers. This single stage separates tourists from professionals.

2.2 Stage Breakdowns

2.2.1 Recruiter Screen: The 20-Minute Gate

This is a filter, not an interview. The recruiter has a checklist and 15 other calls today. Your job is to **pass the checklist in the first 60 seconds**.

What they're testing:

- **Phone presence.** For SDR roles especially, they want to hear energy, clarity, and confidence through audio alone.
- **Basic professionalism.** Do you ramble? Use filler words? Sound like you're reading from a script?
- **Salary alignment.** Misaligned expectations kill deals here. Know the band before you get on the call.
- **Genuine interest.** "I want to get into tech sales" is a disqualifier. "I want to work at [Company] because [specific reason]" is the bar.

You'll hear: "Tell me about yourself," "Why tech sales?," "Why [Company]?," "What do you know about our product?," "What are your salary expectations?," and "Are you interviewing elsewhere?" Have tight, practiced answers for all six. We'll cover exactly how to answer each in Chapter 4.

Word-for-word close for this stage:

"[Recruiter's name], I've really enjoyed this conversation. Based on everything you've shared about the team and the role, this feels like a strong fit on my end. Would anything prevent you from feeling comfortable moving me forward to the next round?"

80% of candidates never close the recruiter screen. **Be the 20%.**

2.2.2 Hiring Manager Interview: The Real Filter

This is where the person who would actually manage you decides if you're worth their time to train. Hiring managers screen for **coachability over perfection**. They'd rather hire a raw, hungry rep who listens than a polished rep who thinks they already know everything.

What they're testing:

Competency	How They Test It	What "Good" Looks Like
Coachability	"Tell me about a time you got tough feedback. What changed?"	Specific example, no defensiveness, clear behavior change
Resilience	"How do you handle rejection?" / "Tell me about a time you failed"	Pattern of recovery, not absence of failure
Product research	"Pretend I'm a prospect. Describe our product."	Accurate, pain-point-oriented, not a feature dump
Sales instincts	Do you close the interview?	You ask for next steps before they do
Self-awareness	"What's your biggest weakness in sales?"	Honest, specific, with an active improvement plan

The "describe our product" test is the #1 reason candidates fail here. If you won't research the product you're interviewing to sell, you won't research prospects' businesses either. Spend 20 minutes on their homepage, pricing page, one case study, and a competitor. That's the minimum bar.

Close this interview. At the 45-minute mark, say:

"[Manager's name], I'm even more excited about this opportunity after hearing about [specific thing they shared]. I know I'd bring [specific strength] to this team. What are the next steps, and is there anything else you need from me to feel confident moving me forward?"

2.2.3 Mock Cold Call / Role-Play: The Money Stage

This is where offers are won and lost. Every other stage filters out obvious mismatches. **This stage differentiates between candidates who are good enough.**

SDR/BDR roles use a **mock cold call**. AE roles use a **mock discovery call**. Same scoring logic: can you sell under pressure, take feedback, and improve on the spot?

You get a brief 24–48 hours in advance with prospect persona, company info, and scenario. The call runs 10–20 minutes, followed by feedback.

The 100-point scoring rubric:

Category	Points	What "Good" Looks Like
Opener	15	Permission-based, under 10 seconds, earns 30 seconds of time
Discovery Questions	25	Role-specific, open-ended, builds on the prospect's answers
Objection Handling	20	Acknowledges the objection, reframes to pain, doesn't argue
Close / Next Steps	15	Specific ask with proposed date and time — not "let's chat sometime"
Tone & Rapport	15	Conversational, confident, uses silence, not robotic
Coachability	10	On the redo, applies feedback immediately, asks clarifying questions

Scoring thresholds: 85+ = ready for live calls. 70–84 = solid foundation with targeted gaps. Below 70 = fundamental issues.

The redo is the real test. Hiring managers stop you mid-call, give feedback, and ask you to redo a portion. They're not testing perfection on take one — **they're testing defensiveness vs. adaptability.** Say "Got it — let me try that again" and execute. Defensiveness is an automatic no-hire.

For AE roles, use this cadence: 2 minutes intro/agenda, 18 minutes deep discovery, 6 minutes tailored product overview, 4 minutes qualification and next steps.

2.2.4 Panel / Final Round: Consistency Under Pressure

By the final round, you've already proven you can sell. Now they're answering one question: **can multiple people stand working with you every day?**

Format varies by company size:

Startup (The "Beer Test"): 2–3 conversations with founder, peer rep, CS/marketing. Conversational. Culture-heavy. They're asking: "Would I grab a drink with this person after a tough quarter?"

Enterprise (Virtual Onsite): 3–5 structured 30–60 minute interviews back-to-back. Themed: values, grit, skillset. Each interviewer has a scorecard. They compare notes in a calibration meeting after you log off.

What they're testing across all formats:

- **Consistency.** Does your story match what you told the hiring manager? Panels compare notes.
- **Peer fit.** Would the existing team want you on their pod?
- **Pressure handling.** Multiple back-to-back interviews are exhausting. Do you maintain energy in round 5?
- **Vision.** Can you articulate where you're headed and how this role fits?

The 30-60-90 day plan presentation is increasingly required. Structure it like this:

Phase	Focus	Example KPI
Days 1–30	Learn and diagnose	Shadow 20 calls, document 5 common objections

Days 31–60	Build and pilot	Test 2 cadences, optimize messaging, run 1 experiment
Days 61–90	Scale and own	Own a segment, hit activity targets, contribute 1 process improvement

2.2.5 Offer and Compensation Discussion

Verbal offer typically comes within 24–72 hours of the final round. Written offer within 3–7 business days. You usually have 3–5 days to decide.

OTE structure:

- **OTE = Base Salary + On-Target Commission**
- Common split for SDR/BDR: 50/50 (e.g., \$60K base + \$60K commission = \$120K OTE)
- SDR/BDR OTE range: \$65K – \$110K
- AE OTE range: \$120K – \$250K
- Senior/Enterprise AE OTE: \$180K – \$400K+

Ask these six questions before accepting:

1. "What percentage of the team is hitting quota right now?"
2. "What was average quota attainment last quarter?"
3. "How is the ramp-up period structured?"
4. "Is there a non-recoverable draw during ramp?"
5. "What are the accelerators above 100%?"
6. "How often does quota reset?"

Red Flag	What It Means
High OTE, low base	You'll starve while you ramp; OTE may be theoretical
Won't share team attainment	Most of the team may be missing quota
No ramp period or draw	Full quota in month one with no support
Quota seems unrealistic vs. OTE	Rule of thumb: quota should be ~5x OTE

Negotiation rule: Know your minimum acceptable number before the call. Research on RepVue. If base is fixed, negotiate commission rate, professional development budget, PTO, or equity. **Always negotiate total comp, not just base.**

2.3 Startup vs. Enterprise: Two Different Games

The five stages exist everywhere. How they're executed changes by company size.

Dimension	Startup (Series A–C)	Enterprise (Public / Big Tech)
Timeline	1–3 weeks	4–8 weeks
Rounds	2–3	4–5+
Structure	Loose, conversational, adapts in real-time	Highly structured, standardized rubrics, themed interviews
Who interviews you	CEO/founder may interview directly; small team	Multiple layers: HR, HM, peers, VP, directors
Decision maker	Founder or VP — one person's gut call	Hiring committee, calibration meeting, scorecard majority
Culture test	"Beer test" — subjective, personality-driven	Structured behavioral interviews, STAR format, values alignment
Compensation	More negotiable, equity-heavy, variable base	Standardized bands, less room, but clearer structure
Mock call	Often more informal, may be skipped for culture fit	Always formal, always scored, always required
Feedback speed	Fast if they like you; ghosting if they don't	Slower but more predictable timeline

Startup strategy: Move fast, build chemistry. The founder is betting on *you*, not a résumé. Show enthusiasm, ask smart market questions, demonstrate you'd thrive without a playbook. Your edge is energy and adaptability.

Enterprise strategy: Prepare for structure. Every interviewer has a scorecard. Ask your recruiter for the format in advance — most will tell you. Your edge is preparation and consistency across 5+ interviewers.

2.4 Hidden Tests Hiring Managers Use

There are gates in this process that aren't listed on any careers page. Pass them and you move forward. Fail them and you're out without knowing why.

Hidden Test 1: The Thank-You Email Gate

Some hiring managers won't advance you unless you send a thank-you email within 24 hours. No thank-you = no next step. If you don't follow up after an interview, why would you follow up with prospects?

How to pass: Send within 4 hours. Reference something specific from the conversation.

Template: "Hi [Name], thanks for the time today. I particularly enjoyed our conversation about [specific topic]. Based on your feedback about [specific point], I plan to [specific action]. Looking forward to next steps. — [Your name]"

Hidden Test 2: The Coachability Redo

Hiring managers intentionally stop you mid-mock-call, give feedback, and ask you to redo a portion. **They're not testing perfection. They're testing whether you get defensive or adapt.**

How to pass: Say "Got it — let me try that again" and execute without arguing or justifying. Ask one clarifying question if needed. Curiosity beats defensiveness.

Hidden Test 3: The "Describe Our Product" Test

The #1 reason candidates fail: lack of preparation. If you won't research the product you're interviewing to sell, you won't research prospects' businesses either.

How to pass: Spend 30 minutes on their website. Know what they sell, who they sell it to, what problem they solve, one case study outcome, and a competitor. Frame around pain points, not features.

Hidden Test 4: The Close Test

Sales candidates who don't try to close the interview signal they don't know how to move a deal forward. **~80% of candidates never close.**

How to pass: End every interview with a direct close. "What's the timeline for next steps?" is weak. "I'm excited about this — is there anything preventing you from recommending me to the next round?" is strong.

Hidden Test 5: The Questions-You-Ask Test

Not asking questions is grounds for disqualification. Generic questions ("What does a typical day look like?") signal laziness.

How to pass: Ask specific, open-ended questions that prove research and strategic thinking. Examples:

"I noticed you expanded into the [specific market] last quarter. How is that shift changing the ICP for this role?"

"From your perspective, what's the gap between a rep who hits quota consistently and one who burns out in month six?"

"You mentioned the team is moving toward [specific strategy]. What does success look like for this hire in the first 90 days of that transition?"

Your Action Checklist

- I can name all 5 stages of the tech sales interview funnel in order
- I know the pass rate for each stage and where I'm most likely to be eliminated
- I have a word-for-word close prepared for the recruiter screen
- I have a word-for-word close prepared for the hiring manager interview
- I've studied the 100-point mock call rubric and identified my 2 weakest categories
- I know whether I'm targeting startups, enterprise, or both — and how my strategy changes
- I have a 30-60-90 day plan template ready to customize for each final round

- I have a thank-you email template ready to send within 4 hours of every interview
- I've written 3 company-specific discovery questions for any final round
- I know my minimum acceptable comp number and my 6 OTE questions

CALL OUT: Most candidates treat interviews like a series of conversations. Top candidates treat them like a pipeline with distinct stages, each with its own entry criteria and exit action. You close a deal one stage at a time. This is no different.

Next: Chapter 3 gives you the **SALES Story Framework** — the positioning engine that makes every answer you give in these five stages land with precision. Once you know the funnel, you need the message.

Chapter 3: The Core Candidate Positioning Framework

Most candidates walk into interviews with a resume. The ones who get offers walk in with a **story** — a positioned narrative that connects every dot from their past to the revenue they'll produce in your future.

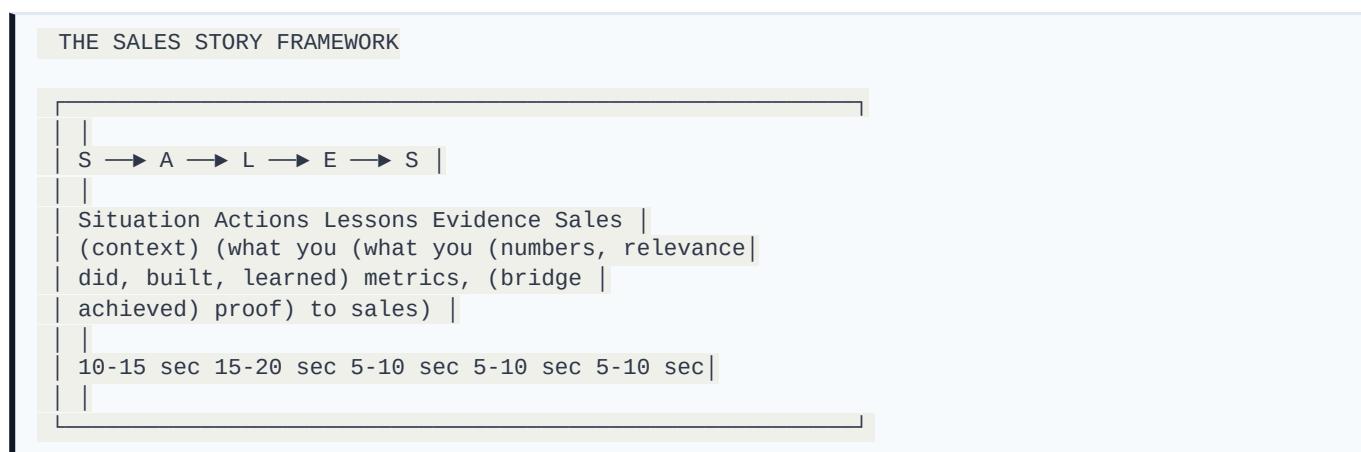
That's what the SALES Story framework gives you. It's the single most important tool in this playbook because every other script, answer, and pitch you deliver builds on it. The interviewer's brain searches for five signals: preparation, motivation, coachability, communication clarity, and grit. SALES delivers all five in under 90 seconds.

3.1 The SALES Story Framework

SALES stands for **S**ituation, **A**ctions, **L**essons, **E**vidence, **S**ales-relevance. It adapts the classic STAR method with one critical addition: the final S forces you to explicitly bridge your background to sales success.

CALL OUT: SALES replaces STAR's "Task" with "Actions," adds "Lessons" for coachability, and ends with "Sales-relevance" — the bridge most candidates forget.

The SALES Story Flow Diagram



Target: 60-90 seconds. Over 90 loses attention. Under 45 signals you haven't done the work.

3.1.1 S = Situation: Your Background Context in 1-2 Sentences

Set the scene in one sentence. The interviewer needs context, not your life story.

Weak	Strong
"I grew up in Ohio, went to Ohio State, and after college I worked a few different jobs before landing in retail."	"I spent three years as an assistant store manager at Target, leading a team of 12 and owning our daily revenue numbers."

Situation checklist:

- States role and scope (team size, revenue owned, customers served)
- Includes one number (years, people managed, dollars handled)
- Takes 10 seconds or less to say aloud

3.1.2 A = Actions: Specific Things You Did, Skills You Built, Results You Achieved

This is the heaviest section — 15-20 seconds of "I" statements showing what you *actually* did, not what you were *supposed* to do.

Weak	Strong
"I was responsible for customer service and making sure people had a good experience."	"I redesigned our checkout process after noticing 40% cart abandonment, trained the team on a new flow, and started tracking conversion by shift."

Lead with action verbs: built, implemented, exceeded, trained, launched.

3.1.3 L = Lessons: What You Learned About Yourself, Your Work Style, What Drives You

This is where you signal **coachability**. Self-awareness separates candidates who grow fast from candidates who repeat the same mistakes.

Weak Lesson	Strong Lesson
"I learned that hard work pays off."	"I learned that preparation beats charisma every time. The calls where I researched the prospect beforehand got responses at 3x the rate of the ones where I winged it."
"I learned to be a team player."	"I learned that I perform best when I own a number. Give me a target and the autonomy to hit it, and I'll figure out the process."
"I learned that communication is important."	"I learned that 'no' usually means 'I don't understand the value yet.' When I reframed my pitch around the customer's problem instead of my product, everything changed."

The lesson section should take 5-10 seconds. One crisp sentence is enough.

3.1.4 E = Evidence: Concrete Metrics, Achievements, Recognitions

Every SALES Story needs at least one number. If you can't quantify it, it didn't happen.

Type of Evidence	Examples
Revenue/Quota	"Hit 118% of quarterly sales target three quarters running"
Volume/Activity	"Made 80+ cold calls daily, booked 12 meetings per week"
Ranking	"Ranked #2 out of 15 SDRs on the West Coast team"
Process Impact	"Reduced average response time from 4 hours to 45 minutes"
Recognition	"Named Employee of the Month, selected to train 6 new hires"
Customer Outcomes	"Maintained a 96% customer satisfaction score across 200+ interactions"

No numbers? Use qualitative evidence: "My manager selected me to onboard five new hires." But find the numbers — estimates beat nothing.

3.1.5 S = Sales-Relevance: The Bridge to Sales Success

This is the component most candidates skip — and it's the one that wins interviews. The final S is your **bridge statement**: it ties everything you said directly to the skills required in the role you're interviewing for.

Bridge formula: "That's exactly what [sales skill] requires — [specific parallel]. I've already proven I can do it. Now I want to do it with real quota on the line."

Your Background	Bridge to Sales Skill
Teaching complex topics	"That's exactly what product demos require — making the technical clear enough that a buyer sees value."
Handling upset customers	"That's objection handling. 'No' isn't rejection — it's information about what the buyer doesn't understand yet."
Hitting retail sales targets	"I've already proven I can operate in a quota-driven environment where effort determines my paycheck."
Managing a restaurant floor	"That's multi-threading — managing competing demands while keeping every stakeholder satisfied."

The bridge should feel inevitable — the interviewer should nod because the connection is too obvious to ignore.

3.2 SALES Story Examples: Five Complete Scripts

Read them aloud. Time yourself. Then adapt using the template at the end of the chapter.

3.2.1 Career Changer: Retail Manager → SDR

Situation: "I spent three years as an assistant store manager at Target, leading a team of 12 associates and owning our daily revenue targets in a \$4M annual location."

Actions: "I built a morning huddle system where we'd review the previous day's numbers, identify which associates were above or below conversion targets, and role-play customer scenarios for 10 minutes before the store opened. I also created a simple upsell script based on the top three reasons people came into our store — not a generic 'can I help you find something,' but actual discovery questions."

Lessons: "I learned that my results weren't about my own selling ability — they were about how well I prepared my team before the customer ever walked in. Preparation creates consistency."

Evidence: "My location went from bottom-quartile in our district to top 10% within two quarters. I was asked to pilot a new associate training program that rolled out to 40 stores."

Sales-relevance: "That's exactly what SDR work is — researching before you reach out, preparing your pitch, and treating every touch as a chance to improve your process. I've already built the habits. I just need the tech sales playbook to apply them in a B2B environment."

3.2.2 New Grad: Business Major → BDR

Situation: "I graduated from UT Austin with a degree in Business Administration, and while I was in school, I led fundraising for my fraternity — a \$25,000 annual budget that supported 80 members."

Actions: "I segmented our alumni list by graduation year and giving history, wrote personalized outreach for each tier, and made the ask specific — instead of 'please donate,' I showed exactly what their \$500 would fund. I also tracked response rates by message type and iterated on what worked. When someone said no, I asked why and used that to refine the next campaign."

Lessons: "I learned that personalization at scale isn't magic — it's a process. The alumni who gave the most were the ones who got a message that showed I'd done my homework on them specifically."

Evidence: "We raised \$31,000 — 24% over goal — and I personally brought in 40% of that total from alumni who had never donated before."

Sales-relevance: "That's prospecting and outreach. Research, personalize, ask for a specific next step, track your metrics, and iterate. I know BDR work is harder — I'm calling strangers, not alumni who liked me in college. But the fundamentals are the same, and I've already proven I can build a system that generates results."

3.2.3 Retail/Hospitality Background: Server → SDR

Situation: "For the past four years, I've worked as a server at a high-volume restaurant in downtown Austin, managing 12-15 tables per shift during peak hours."

Actions: "I developed a system for reading tables in the first 30 seconds — are they here for a quick business lunch or a celebratory dinner? That changed how I approached the conversation, the pacing, and the upsell. I also tracked which recommendations had the highest acceptance rate and built a mental playbook of what to suggest based on what people ordered first. When someone sent something back, I treated it as data, not an insult — what did I miss about their expectations?"

Lessons: "I learned that the best 'sales' moments feel like recommendations from a friend who actually cares. People can smell a script. But if you listen first and match them to the right thing, they'll trust you with the check."

Evidence: "I averaged 22% tips in a market where 18% is standard, and my manager put me on the training schedule for every new server because my section consistently had the highest per-table revenue."

Sales-relevance: "That's exactly what I want to do in tech sales — listen to understand a prospect's real pain, match them to the right solution, and build trust fast enough that they'll take a meeting. I've been doing discovery and objection handling for four years. I just want to do it with a product that actually transforms how businesses operate."

3.2.4 Teacher/Customer Service Background: High School Teacher → SDR

Situation: "I spent five years as a high school history teacher, managing 120 students per semester across four class periods, each with different learning levels and engagement challenges."

Actions: "Every lesson was essentially a pitch — I had 50 minutes to make ancient history relevant to a teenager who'd rather be on their phone. I built a parent communication system where I scheduled individual calls, asked about their specific concerns, and created one-page guides showing how my approach would help their student. When the district adopted a new digital platform, I volunteered to lead the rollout — calling every parent personally, running demo nights, and addressing objections one by one."

Lessons: "I learned that 'I don't get it' is just an objection waiting to be handled. When I changed my explanation to match the student's worldview — not mine — comprehension doubled. That same pattern worked with parents, administrators, and skeptical colleagues."

Evidence: "My classes consistently scored 15-20% above the district average on standardized tests. The parent adoption rate for the new platform hit 87% — more than double the district average — and three other schools asked me to train their staff on my approach."

Sales-relevance: "That's sales. Discovery, objection handling, demonstrating value, and closing — I was doing it every day, I just wasn't calling it that. My background in education gives me a unique advantage: I know how to explain complex ideas simply, build trust with skeptical audiences, and stay patient through long adoption cycles. I'm ready to apply those skills where the scoreboard is revenue."

3.2.5 Current SDR Moving to AE: SDR → Account Executive

Situation: "I've spent the last 18 months as an SDR at [Current Company], where I consistently exceeded my quota and generated \$2.3M in qualified pipeline."

Actions: "I didn't just book meetings and move on. I listened to every AE call I could — probably 200+ by now — and took notes on what worked in discovery, how AEs handled objections, and what separated the deals that closed from the ones that stalled. I built my own qualification scorecard based on patterns I noticed, and I started sharing it with new SDRs during onboarding. I also volunteered to shadow two full-cycle deals from first meeting to close, which taught me more about the buyer journey than any training could."

Lessons: "I learned that top-of-funnel activity matters, but what matters more is the quality of the opportunity you create. An SDR who books 15 meetings with unqualified prospects is less valuable than one who books 8 with the right ones. I want to own that full picture — from first touch to signature."

Evidence: "I hit 128% of quota last quarter, booked 18 meetings per month against a 12-meeting target, and six of the deals I sourced have already closed for \$340K in ARR. My manager asked me to help design the SDR-to-AE handoff process we're rolling out next quarter."

Sales-relevance: "I've mastered the top of the funnel. I've studied the middle and the end. I'm not looking for a title change — I'm looking to carry a bag, run full cycles, and prove that the foundation I've built as an SDR translates into closed revenue. I know I can start contributing on day one while I continue developing my AE skill set."

How to Build Your Own SALES Story

Write it out. Read it aloud 10 times until it sounds conversational, not rehearsed.

Component	Template
S — Situation	"I spent [X] years as a [role] at [company], where I was responsible for [scope/responsibility involving a number]."
A — Actions	"I [specific action 1], [specific action 2], and [specific action 3]. I also [action showing initiative or extra effort]."
L — Lessons	"I learned that [insight about your work style or approach]. When I [changed behavior], [result]."
E — Evidence	"The result was [quantified outcome — percentage, ranking, dollar amount, recognition]."
S — Sales-relevance	"That's exactly what [sales skill] requires — [specific parallel]. I've already [proven skill]. Now I'm ready to [apply it in this role]."

CALL OUT: Practice until you can deliver it in 60 seconds without notes, and 90 seconds with more detail. Read the room — if they lean in, expand. If they check their watch, tighten. Adaptability is part of the test.

Pre-interview checklist:

- Written my SALES Story using the template
- Timed myself aloud (target: 60-90 seconds)
- Included at least one quantified metric
- Bridge statement connects my background to 2+ sales skills
- Customized the ending for the specific company
- Practiced 10+ times until it sounds natural

The next chapter puts your SALES Story into action.

4. "Tell Me About Yourself" Scripts

4.1 Framework Overview

This question gets asked in **nearly 100% of tech sales interviews**. It is not an icebreaker. It is a deliberate test of your communication skills, confidence, relevance — and your ability to sell yourself. A structured answer increases success rates by up to 38%. A rambling one kills your chances before the real questions start.

Every script here is built on the same architecture. Understand it once. Then plug in your specifics.

4.1.1 The Present-Past-Future Structure: 60-90 Second Target

The **Present-Past-Future (PPF)** structure forces you to lead with your strongest positioning instead of burying it in a chronological resume walkthrough. Most candidates answer like they're reading LinkedIn from bottom to top. **PPF flips the script**. You start with who you are right now.

Component	Content	Duration
Present	Your current identity + what you bring today	20-30 sec
Past	2-3 career highlights with metrics	30-40 sec
Future	Why this specific role is the logical next step	15-20 sec

Total target: 60-90 seconds. Over 90 loses attention. Under 30 signals you have nothing to say.

CALL OUT: Career changers: lead with **transferable skills**, not your old job title. Say "I'm a relationship-builder making a deliberate move into tech sales" — not "I was a teacher and now I want to try sales."

Present answers "Why should I care?" Past answers "Can you back it up?" Future answers "Are you going to stick around?"

4.1.2 Three Universal Principles

Principle 1: Lead with Relevance. The first sentence must connect you to the role. The interviewer is asking: "How does this background solve my hiring problem?" Answer it in sentence one.

Principle 2: Connect Transferable Skills Explicitly. Don't make the interviewer translate. If you were a teacher, don't say "I managed a classroom." Say "I built skills in capturing attention, adapting my message, and guiding outcomes — which maps directly to discovery calls." Draw the line.

Principle 3: End with Enthusiasm and Specificity. Every script closes with energy and a **specific, researched company detail**. "I'm excited about this role" is weak. "I'm excited about your mid-market expansion because I spent three years selling to that buyer" is strong.

Weak Close	Strong Close
"So yeah, that's my background."	"I'm excited about [Company] because [specific product launch/market move]. I can contribute [specific skill] on day one."
"I think I'd be a good fit here."	"My background in [relevant experience] maps directly to [specific need from JD], and I'm ready to prove it."
"I'm looking for a new challenge."	"The next chapter I want to write is helping [Company] grow [specific territory], and I have the [skill] to do it."

4.2 Complete Scripts

All eight scripts are **word-for-word ready**. Read them aloud. Time yourself. Replace [bracketed] sections with your specifics. Each runs 75-85 seconds at conversational pace.

4.2.1 Script 1 — No Sales Experience

"I'm someone who's genuinely energized by connecting with people and solving problems — which is what led me to pursue tech sales. In my background as a [previous profession], I developed three skills that translate directly to this SDR role. **First**, I built a track record of initiating conversations with people who weren't expecting to hear from me — whether that was [specific example: fundraising, canvassing door-to-door, recruiting volunteers]. **Second**, I got comfortable hearing 'no' and using it as feedback to improve my approach. **And third**, I learned to research and prepare before every interaction so I could add value in the first thirty seconds.

I spent the last [timeframe] doing [relevant work], where I [specific achievement with metric if possible]. What I realized was that the part of my job I loved most was [activity mirroring sales: persuading stakeholders, uncovering needs, building relationships from scratch]. I started researching what SDRs actually do day-to-day, [shadowed a friend in the role / completed a sales bootcamp / did self-study], and confirmed this is the right path for me.

What excites me about [Company Name] specifically is [specific product, market, or mission detail you've researched]. I'm not coming in expecting to be great on day one — but I'm coming in committed to being coachable, putting in the reps, and earning my place on the team."

Key tactic: The "three skills that translate" structure gives the interviewer a mental checklist to score you on. The coachability close addresses the experience gap without apologizing for it.

4.2.2 Script 2 — Customer Service Background

"I'm a customer-facing professional with [X years] of experience turning frustrated customers into loyal advocates — most recently at [Company], where I handled [volume: 50+ daily interactions] and maintained a [specific metric: 95% satisfaction score]. The part of that role I loved most was when I got to dig into a customer's problem, ask questions to understand what was really going on, and recommend the right solution. I realized over time that I was naturally doing consultative selling — I just wasn't calling it that.

What I've built in customer service maps directly to what SDRs do every day: **active listening, uncovering pain points, and guiding someone toward a solution**. At [Company], I [specific achievement — 'identified a pattern in complaints that led to a process change reducing churn by 15%']. I also got comfortable with difficult conversations — I view objections as information, not rejection.

I'm making this move into sales development because I'm ready to go from solving problems reactively to proactively identifying and connecting with people who have challenges our product can solve. I'm excited about [Company] because [specific product/market reason]. I know the SDR role is about persistence, preparation, and constant improvement — and those are all muscles I've already built."

Key phrase: "Consultative selling — I just wasn't calling it that" reframes customer service as sales-adjacent. The "reactively to proactively" line shows you understand the shift this move requires.

4.2.3 Script 3 — Retail Background

"I'm a results-driven retail professional who thrives in fast-paced, target-driven environments. For the past [X years] at [Company], I've been responsible for [key responsibilities: driving floor sales, upselling customers, maintaining relationships with regulars]. I consistently hit [specific metric: 110-120% of my monthly sales target] and was recognized as [specific recognition: top performer in my district three quarters running].

What retail taught me is that **sales isn't about convincing someone to buy something they don't need — it's about asking the right questions, understanding what they're actually trying to solve, and matching them with the right solution**. I got comfortable approaching strangers, building trust in thirty seconds, and handling objections like 'I need to think about it' or 'it's too expensive.' I also learned that my results are directly tied to my effort — the more people I engaged with, the more I sold, and the more I learned.

I'm making this move into tech sales because I want to take those same skills — prospecting, discovery, relationship-building — and apply them in a B2B environment where the impact and earning potential are much larger. I'm particularly drawn to [Company] because [specific reason you've researched]. I know the SDR role requires high activity, resilience, and constant learning — and I've already proven I can deliver on all three."

Key insight: Lead with metrics to establish credibility fast. The "effort-to-results" line signals internal locus of control — the trait that predicts who survives the SDR grind.

4.2.4 Script 4 — College Grad

"I'm a recent graduate from [University] with a degree in [Major], and I'm excited to start my career in tech sales because it's the perfect intersection of three things I love: **competition, communication, and constant learning**. While I was in school, I [specific sales-relevant experience: 'led fundraising where I personally raised \$X by cold-calling alumni' / 'worked at [retail/restaurant] where I had the highest upsell rate on my shift' / 'captained my [sports team] where I learned that preparation and repetition win games']. That experience taught me that I'm at my best when I have a clear goal, a process to follow, and the autonomy to figure out how to hit it.

I spent time researching what SDRs actually do — the prospecting, the cold outreach, the qualification, the handoff to AEs. **I know it's not glamorous every day, and I know I'll face a lot of rejection**. But what motivates me is the long-term path: start strong as an SDR, learn the fundamentals, prove myself, and eventually move into an AE role where I can run full sales cycles.

The reason I'm excited about [Company] specifically is [specific product, market, values, or growth trajectory you've researched]. I'm coming in hungry to learn, willing to put in the work, and ready to prove myself."

CALL OUT: Never lead with your GPA unless asked. One quantified achievement from a part-time job beats a 4.0 every time. Saying "it's not glamorous every day" proves you have realistic expectations — that scores points.

Major	Sales-Relevant Angle
Business / Marketing	Market research, customer insights, growth strategy
Psychology	Human behavior, persuasion, communication
Communications	Storytelling, messaging, audience adaptation
Athletics	Discipline, competition, process-oriented improvement
STEM	Technical aptitude for complex products
Liberal Arts	Research, critical thinking, communication

4.2.5 Script 5 — Former Teacher

"I'm an educator turned sales professional, excited to bring my expertise in communication, preparation, and measurable outcomes to a commercial role. For the past [X years], I worked as a [grade/subject] teacher at [School], where I was responsible for [X students], consistent lesson planning, and hitting measurable benchmarks set by my administration. What I excelled at was breaking down complex concepts into language anyone could understand — whether that was a struggling student, a concerned parent, or a skeptical administrator.

Teaching and sales have more in common than people realize. Every day, I had to capture attention quickly, adapt my message to different audiences, handle objections — whether it was 'I don't understand this' or 'why do we need to learn this' — and guide people toward a desired outcome. I also learned that results come from preparation and consistent effort. At [School], I [specific achievement: 'increased my students' test scores by X%' / 'piloted a new curriculum adopted school-wide' / 'built a parent engagement program that increased participation by X%'].

I'm transitioning into tech sales because I want to apply those same skills — communication, persuasion, structured preparation — in a role where the impact is directly tied to revenue and my earning potential reflects my performance. I completed [any sales training / certification / self-study] to build my product knowledge and sales vocabulary, and I'm excited about [Company] because [specific reason]. I'm confident that my background in education gives me a unique edge in building trust and explaining value — and I'm ready to prove it."

Key reframe: "Educator turned sales professional" is confident positioning. Classroom management, lesson planning, and stakeholder communication are direct preparation for discovery calls and demos. This script makes the connection explicit so the interviewer doesn't have to figure it out.

4.2.6 Script 6 — Recruiter / Customer Success to SDR

This script has two variants. Both leverage the fact that you're not starting from zero — you're building on a foundation that maps almost one-to-one to sales development.

Variant A: Recruiter → SDR

"I'm a recruiting professional with [X years] of experience in outreach, relationship-building, and pipeline development — and I'm making a deliberate move into sales development because the skills I've built map almost one-to-one with what great SDRs do. At [Company], I was responsible for [X outreach activities per week/day], sourcing and engaging passive candidates who weren't actively looking. I got comfortable with rejection — for every ten people I contacted, maybe two responded — and I learned that **personalization and persistence are what separate effective outreach from noise.**

What I excelled at was researching someone's background, finding a compelling reason to reach out, and starting a conversation that led to a next step. I used tools like [LinkedIn, CRM, sourcing platforms], tracked my metrics, and continuously tested my messaging to improve response rates. I [specific achievement: 'filled X roles in Y months' / 'reduced time-to-fill by X%' / 'built a pipeline of X qualified candidates'].

The difference between recruiting and sales development, as I see it, is that instead of matching people to jobs, I'll be matching prospects to solutions — and I'm excited about that shift because the impact is more immediate and measurable. I'm drawn to [Company] because [specific reason]. I know I can come in, apply what I've already learned about outreach and pipeline building, and start contributing quickly."

Variant B: Customer Success → SDR

"I'm a customer success professional with [X years] of experience ensuring customers achieve their desired outcomes — and I'm excited to move upstream into sales development because I want to be the person who identifies and connects with those customers in the first place. At [Company], I managed a portfolio of [X accounts], where I was responsible for adoption, retention, and identifying expansion opportunities. I developed deep product knowledge and learned to ask discovery questions that uncovered needs customers didn't even know they had.

The bridge from CS to SDR is stronger than it might appear. **I already understand our ICP's pain points, I know how to research an account before a conversation, and I've spent hundreds of hours on calls with customers learning what makes them buy, stay, or churn.** In my CS role, I [specific achievement: 'achieved X% retention rate' / 'identified expansion opportunities worth \$X' / 'turned X at-risk accounts into advocates'].

I'm making this move because I want to be on the front lines — identifying the right prospects, starting the conversation, and setting the foundation for relationships that I know from the CS side can become incredibly valuable. [Company] excites me because [specific reason]. I come in with deep customer empathy and product knowledge — I just need to learn the outbound playbook, and I'm ready to do that."

Key distinction: The recruiter variant hits the language SDR managers screen for. The CS variant positions customer empathy as a competitive advantage.

4.2.7 Script 7 — SDR to AE

"I'm a sales development professional with [X years/months] of top-of-funnel experience, and I'm ready to make the move into a full-cycle AE role where I can **own the entire sales process from first touch to close.** At [Company], I've spent the last [timeframe] as an SDR, where I [specific achievements with metrics: 'consistently exceeded my quota by X%' / 'booked X meetings per month' / 'generated \$X in pipeline']. I didn't just hit my numbers — **I studied what happened after the handoff.** I listened to AE calls, read closed-won notes, and shadowed deals whenever I could because I wanted to understand the full picture.

What I've built as an SDR is a strong foundation in the skills that make AEs successful: research and discovery, handling objections, building rapport quickly, and managing a pipeline. I also developed [specific skill: 'deep product knowledge in [category]' / 'expertise in [industry] accounts' / 'a repeatable system for multi-threading into large organizations']. I'm most proud of [specific accomplishment: 'a deal where I sourced the lead, stayed involved through the entire cycle, and helped the AE close a \$X contract'].

I'm not looking to jump into an AE role prematurely — I've put in the work to prepare. I've been studying qualification frameworks, practicing demos, and even [specific prep: 'shadowing our legal team on contract negotiations' / 'building my own account plans for territories I want']. I'm excited about [Company] because [specific reason — market, product, culture, growth]. I know I can come in, **carry a bag,** and start closing deals while continuing to develop my AE skill set."

Key signal: "I studied what happened after the handoff" proves initiative most SDRs never demonstrate. "Carry a bag" shows you understand the AE role is about revenue ownership, not a title bump.

4.2.8 Script 8 — AE Changing Companies

"I'm an enterprise sales professional with [X years] of experience selling [type of product] into [market segment: mid-market healthcare / enterprise SaaS / financial services]. For the past [timeframe] at [Company], I've been responsible for [territory/book of business], where I [specific achievement with metrics: 'consistently hit 120%+ of quota' / 'closed \$X in ARR last year' / 'grew my territory from \$X to \$Y']. My approach is consultative — **I focus on understanding the business problem first, mapping stakeholders, and building a case for change that gets multi-threaded across the organization.**

Before [Current Company], I [brief relevant background showing progression: 'spent X years at [Previous Company] selling into [market], where I learned [skill]']. What I've developed across both roles is expertise in [specific competency: 'complex sales with 6-12 month cycles' / 'selling to C-level executives' / 'navigating procurement and legal processes'] and a consistent ability to build pipeline and close revenue.

I'm looking to make a move because [positive reason: 'I'm excited about the shift to [Company's market/product], which is where I see the most growth' / 'I'm ready for a new challenge in a different segment' / 'I've been following [Company] and believe my experience in [specific area] maps perfectly to what you're building']. **I'm not looking for a soft landing — I'm looking for my next big number to hit."**

Key framing: Lead with quantified track record and frame the move as pursuit of growth — not escape. AE interviews screen for fit and motivation, not sales ability. They assume you can sell. They need to believe you'll bring the right mindset.

Reason for Leaving	Frame It Like This
Company instability / layoffs	"I'm looking for a company with strong product-market fit and clear growth trajectory."
No promotion path	"I've hit the ceiling where I am. I'm looking for a place where I can continue growing my skills and earnings."
Product or market shift	"I'm excited about [new company's market] because that's where I see the most innovation and opportunity."
Compensation ceiling	"I'm looking for a comp plan that rewards high performance with uncapped upside."
Culture mismatch	"I'm looking for a culture that [positive attribute of new company]."

CALL OUT: Never badmouth your current company, manager, product, or colleagues. Even if your departure reason is genuinely negative, frame everything forward-looking. One sentence of complaining undoes fifty sentences of credibility.

4.3 Customization Guide

These scripts are templates. The candidates who get offers invest the time to make their answer sound effortless and specific.

4.3.1 Three-Step Personalization Process

Step 1: Audit the Job Description and Extract the Language.

Print the JD. Highlight the top 3-5 skills they emphasize. If they say "prospecting into enterprise accounts," you say "prospecting into enterprise accounts" — not "finding new customers." It's **mirroring the mental checklist the interviewer is scoring you against.**

What JD Says	What You Should Say
"Prospect into Fortune 500"	"I've researched and engaged large organizations..."
"Generate qualified pipeline"	"I've built pipelines of qualified [leads/candidates]..."
"Consultative selling"	"I focus on understanding the problem first..."
"High-volume outbound activity"	"I thrive in high-activity environments..."

Step 2: Map Your Experience to Their Checklist.

For each skill the JD emphasizes, write one line that proves you have it: