



10 Key Questions to Ask BA Candidates

We know that designing a winning demo starts with one single factor: hiring the right Brand Ambassador. The quality of your BA can have the single most important impact to the bottom line on your investment. Therefore, you would be wise to spend some quality time preparing an interview process that will result in only GREAT brand ambassadors representing you.

But fear not! We've assembled the top 10 questions you can use to lead you to the path of the perfect rep.

1. “Tell me about my brand.”

The best advocates out there who are looking to land an amazing brand ambassador position will arrive and be completely knowledgeable about your brand and its mission. On the contrary, if your candidate arrives to the interview and doesn't know your brand mission, end the interview quickly.

You can only imagine how invested they will be in spreading the word about your brand during the demo if they didn't even care enough to read about it before the interview. Now, by all means. If you are looking for a warm body, go ahead and teach that rep to sell your brand's mission.

But if your mission is to spread the love for your brand, make sure that you are sending someone who will truly advocate for your brand. Working with agencies in addition to your own team? Ask your demo agencies to only send BAs who like your product. Offer to send free product for the reps so they can try your product for free, and you can more easily get the right person for the gig! Amazing demos happen when you carefully select a brand ambassador who knows and cares about your brand well enough to spread the (correct) word and mission.



2. “Tell me about your best demo ever, from start to finish.”

An experienced brand ambassador will know the rhythm of a successful demo, and be able to repeat it again and again. That tenured experience of a brand rep who has been in dozens of stores will pay you back dividends.

Why? Because the relationship between that ambassador and your store staff is a pivotal piece in keeping your store managers happy. Your BA will be the front line, the face they see and the attitude they remember when they recollect the interaction and your brand later. If your candidate isn't able to spout off the typical steps of a demo (sign in, check in with store staff, count inventory, setup table, etc.), they probably haven't had that many to speak of. Training is always an option, but take a note from Benjamin Franklin and remember that experience keeps a “dear school” and it will give your brand the elevation it needs to stand alone on the shelf and possibly even convert your store staff into brand advocates too.



3. “Describe a few ways that you measure your Demo Success”

Reporting from the field will make or break your ability to measure your program, so prioritize your data by ensuring your candidate can actually do it accurately! Hiring a metric-minded Ambassador to report back from the front lines will keep your product moving off the shelf and increase the overall effectiveness of your retail demo program.

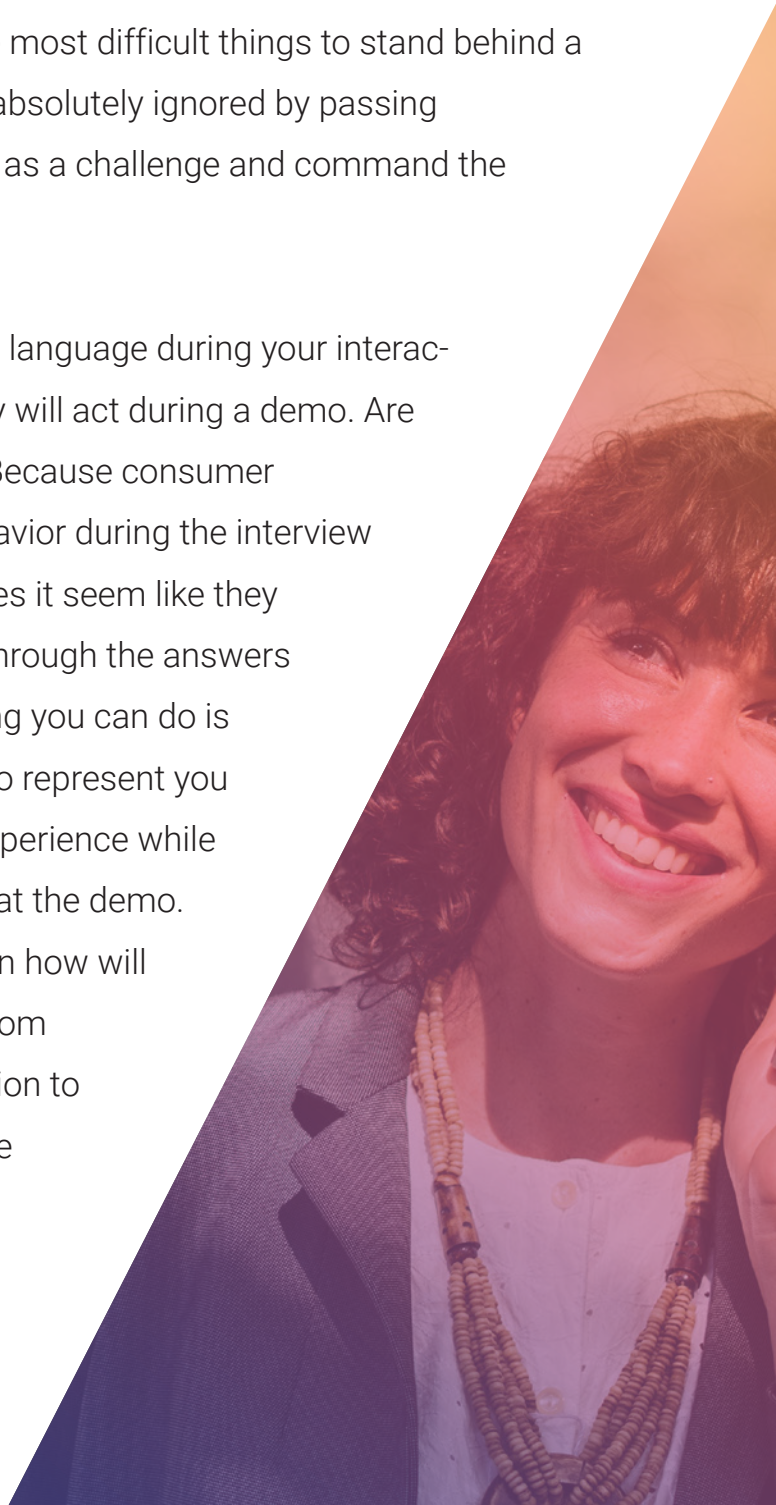
If your candidate doesn't know how to calculate sales or track sample counts by variety, you may want to keep looking. Do you really want to question the results of your data because one of your BA's couldn't handle the simple math of beginning and ending inventory? Data is everything, so making sure your BA can recognize consumer behavior and provide excellent feedback. You will be thankful when you can truly grasp the real story in-store (and not the ambassador's fairy tale).



4. “What tactics do you use to engage consumers?”

We all know those people who “light up the room,” so make sure your BA lights up your brand. As you interview your candidate, ask them to share some of the common ways they use to engage consumers. It’s one of the most difficult things to stand behind a table while trying to promote a brand and be absolutely ignored by passing shoppers. The right BA’s accept that obstacle as a challenge and command the attention with style and class.

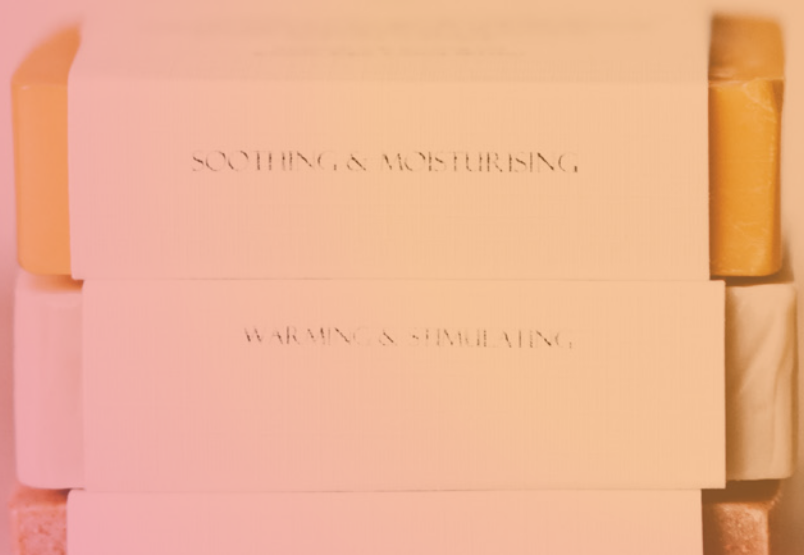
Keep an eye on the potential candidate’s body language during your interaction: it will give a strong indication of how they will act during a demo. Are they easily overwhelmed by your questions? Because consumer questions are bound to happen, and their behavior during the interview will be very similar behind the demo table. Does it seem like they want to talk to you, or are they trying to rush through the answers and get the interview over with. The worst thing you can do is hire someone with a low Emotional Quotient to represent you in the store. The interaction and feeling you experience while engaging with the candidate will be amplified at the demo. If they are nervous during your interaction, then how will they respond when consumers ask them random questions? Are they able to call positive attention to your brand, or are you risking your brand image with someone who won’t stand tall behind it.



5. “Why are you the best choice for my Brand?”

Before anyone can sell a product, they first need to demonstrate the ability to sell themselves. This is a simple and quite possibly the most effective way to measure a candidate’s self-confidence. Confidence is key to generating positive interpersonal interactions and educational engagement with consumers and store staff. Your best candidate will answer questions with a smile and be seen as a resource for the new fans they help draw into your brand’s mission.

They will win over those “on-the-fence” consumers and help them choose your product over your competitors. If the impact is strong enough, they will even create a repeat buyer for that location. If they can’t pitch the product they (should) know best, themselves, then they won’t be able to sell your brand either. The candidate should be able to demonstrate a passion for your brand in addition to being knowledgeable about it. If they pitch the right tune for your brand, it will create harmony for you and your brand’s reputation.



6. “Tell me how important it is to build a relationship with each retailer.”

This one element of every retail demo is often overlooked. You are sending a face in to represent your brand. That face, and the brain behind it, should understand that the store staff is everything. Maintaining a positive demeanor and polite behavior while engaging with store staff is the detail that truly counts at every demo. One interaction gone wrong could mean an angry call to the buyer and possible discontinuation of your product.

Make sure the rep you are looking to send in to advocate for your brand is going to keep that fact on top-of-mind with every interaction. The store staff will fall in love with your products when you send a rep who understands how to make their team feel supported.



7. “Tell me about your sales related experience.”

I see this time and time again. Hiring managers often overlook the fact that an experienced brand ambassador might not always know how to move the needle. You can have the experience, the self-confidence, the knowledge and know-how to increase brand awareness but still fail at the most important piece of your program ROI: sales. The best brand reps offer each consumer a clear call to action and inspire that impulse purchase. Generating that “wow!” moment is something an incredible brand rep does naturally and with little effort. They inspire the excitement with every interaction and they understand how to get people to say yes to your brand. You want to avoid that rep who gives you a pushy car-salesman feeling and opt for the one who will encourage engagement at their demo table. Ask them to tell you about their experience, and they will unveil the truth of their success (or lack thereof).

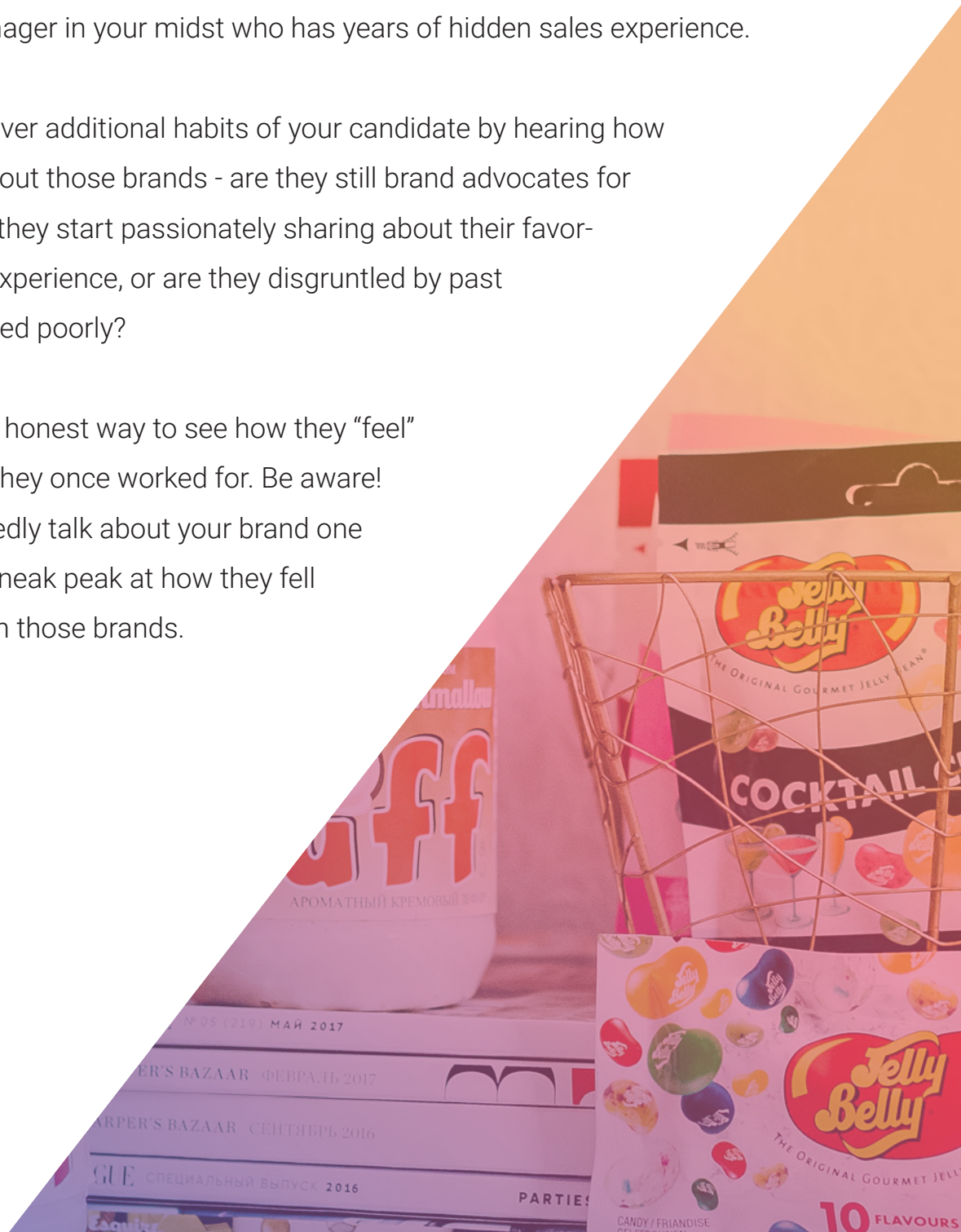


8. “Tell me about the other brands you’ve represented.”

This is another easy way to uncover the truth about your candidate’s experience as a brand ambassador and in product sales in general. You may find that you have a tenured sales manager in your midst who has years of hidden sales experience.

You will also discover additional habits of your candidate by hearing how they are talking about those brands - are they still brand advocates for those brands? Do they start passionately sharing about their favorite gigs and past experience, or are they disgruntled by past contracts that ended poorly?

This is a tricky but honest way to see how they “feel” about the brands they once worked for. Be aware! They will undoubtedly talk about your brand one day too, so get a sneak peak at how they fell in love (or not) with those brands.



9. “What supplies are you able to supply?”

Yes, you may be more than willing (and hoping) to provide them with the ultimate demo kit and table setup. But asking your advocate what supplies they already have can achieve 2 objectives:

a) Save your money! By not having to supply heavy items (Table, microwave, etc.), you can save a ton on shipping costs. An experienced brand ambassador will typically have those heavy and expensive items needed to sample amazing products. They might even have several tables, so why take the time and funds to provide them with items they already have?

b) It easily helps you understand their experience. The advanced and experienced ambassadors out there have been doing this for several years. They understand the ins and outs of a great demo, but they also have the big ticket-items that will make activating them easier. If you don't have to wait for weeks for the shipping department to send the demo kit, and that expensive table and microwave - you can get started with activating demos even sooner. Asking this simple question will be the tell-all to how many demos they are doing on a regular basis.



10. “How will you get to work consistently?”

This is a simple question but will save you a ton of headache in the long run. The answer that I once heard from the mouth of a candidate was that they could borrow a car. That meant no insurance, no ownership and no bus pass. I wish I would have known then what we know now: reliable transportation that is independent of others is one of the most important ways to separate the problematic BA's from the high-selling achievers.

Having a car isn't everything, and that's not the point. But being able to make a demo on time without anyone else pulling the strings can be the difference between a demo that starts on time - and one that has to be rescheduled. Why go through the planning and effort to book a demo and then have your Ambassador fail to show? It doesn't make a good impression with the store staff, or that buyer who placed a special order to support the lift in sales during that scheduled demo. That optimal time suddenly stopped being the right time for your brand, and instead is the most convenient time for your rep.

We hope these questions help you cut through the jungle of resumes and options you have to send in to each store. We would love to hear about your experience and other questions you have used to discover the best reps for your team!



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