Business Development Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for Business Development Manager roles usually mix commercial judgement with proof of results, since employers need to see both the numbers you've delivered and how you'll behave in front of a client. Expect the panel to test negotiation instinct as much as strategic thinking.

- **Behavioural:** Past examples of winning deals, managing accounts or handling a difficult negotiation, usually asked as 'tell me about a time'.
- **Scenario / judgement:** A hypothetical client or pipeline situation to see how you'd prioritise and respond under pressure.
- **Process:** How you actually run business development day to day, from prospecting through to closing and reporting.
- **Technical / commercial:** Questions on financial modelling, forecasting or reading a proposal's numbers, to check commercial literacy.
- **Client-facing:** Role-play or discussion of how you'd pitch, present or manage a relationship with a senior stakeholder.

Most BDM interviews open with a walk-through of your current pipeline and recent wins, move into behavioural and scenario questions to test negotiation and judgement, then close with a commercial or technical question and a chance for you to ask about targets, territory and support structure.

1. Tell me about a time you won a piece of business that looked unlikely to close.

Why they ask

Employers want evidence you can read a stalled deal, adjust the approach and still land the outcome, not just chase easy wins.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the account and why the deal looked unlikely, the action you took to shift the negotiation, and the result including what changed for the client relationship afterward.

Example answer

“A prospective client had gone quiet after three meetings, and my pipeline notes in Salesforce showed the deal was stalling on price. I went back to their finance lead directly rather than the original contact, reworked the proposal with a staged pricing model, and presented revised financial projections that addressed their budget cycle. The contract was signed within a month, and that account became one of the more reliable renewals in my portfolio.”

2. Walk me through how you build and manage your sales pipeline.

Why they ask

This checks whether you have a repeatable process rather than relying on ad hoc effort, and whether you can use CRM data properly.

How to structure your answer

Answer as a straight walk-through: how leads enter the pipeline, how you qualify and prioritise them, and how you track and report progress.

Example answer

“I source leads through a mix of market research, LinkedIn Sales Navigator and referrals from existing accounts, then qualify them against fit and likely deal size before they go into Salesforce. Each opportunity gets a stage and a next action, and I review the pipeline weekly to spot deals that are stalling. For reporting, I use Power BI dashboards so leadership can see forecast versus target without me having to pull manual figures each time.”

3. A key client tells you they're seriously considering a competitor. What do you do?

Why they ask

Tests judgement under pressure and how you protect revenue without over-promising or panicking.

How to structure your answer

Talk through your immediate response, how you'd gather information before reacting, and the trade-offs you'd weigh before committing to anything.

Example answer

“First I'd want to understand what's actually driving it, whether it's price, service or something the competitor is offering that we aren't. I'd arrange a direct conversation with the decision-maker rather than negotiating over email, and I'd check what flexibility I have on terms before I walked in. I wouldn't offer a discount as a first move; I'd rather understand the real issue and address it, since a price cut alone rarely fixes a relationship problem.”

4. How do you build a financial case for a new growth initiative?

Why they ask

BDMs need enough commercial and analytical literacy to justify proposals to leadership, not just enthusiasm for the idea.

How to structure your answer

Answer technically: name the inputs you'd gather, the method or tool you'd use to model it, and how you'd present the case for a decision.

Example answer

“I'd start with market and competitor data to size the opportunity, then build a financial model in Excel covering projected revenue, cost to acquire and payback period. I'd stress-test the assumptions with a couple of scenarios, best case and conservative, before presenting it. When I take it to leadership I keep the deck short and let the numbers carry the argument, with the detailed model available if anyone wants to dig into assumptions.”

5. Describe a negotiation that didn't go the way you wanted. What did you learn?

Why they ask

Shows self-awareness and whether you adapt your approach rather than repeating the same mistake.

How to structure your answer

STAR, but weight the reflection: what happened, what you'd do differently, and evidence you've since applied that lesson.

Example answer

“I once pushed too hard on price in an early negotiation and the client disengaged rather than pushing back, which I only noticed after they stopped responding. I learned that reading engagement matters more than holding a firm number, so in later negotiations I've built in more check-ins to gauge how the other side is reacting before I commit to a position. That shift has made my deals close faster and with fewer stalled contracts.”

6. How would you approach the first ninety days in this role?

Why they ask

Tests whether you understand the mix of relationship-building, pipeline review and strategy this role actually involves, rather than jumping straight to selling.

How to structure your answer

Give a structured plan by phase: what you'd learn first, what you'd assess, and what you'd start doing once you have that context.

Example answer

“I'd spend the first few weeks reviewing the existing account base and pipeline in Salesforce, meeting key accounts to understand the relationship history, and getting across the competitive environment in the target industries. From there I'd identify one or two underdeveloped opportunities to prioritise, and start building the proposals and financial cases needed to move them forward, while keeping regular pipeline reporting going so progress is visible from early on.”