



# **CAPSTONE PROJECT**

## **Technical note**

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Help in recruiting a growth player:  
What are the main differences between a  
business developer and a sales representative?

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# 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In our ever-changing world, people are talking a lot about business developers as they are becoming more and more popular in the companies. Often confused with salespeople, their profiles/functions have points of convergence but they are far from being identical.

This report will help to understand the main differences between these two functions/profiles. It will also help young entrepreneurs to recruit growth players and provide answers to various questions such as:

- In the day-to-day of the company, how do the functions of business developer and commercial differ?
- What profile should my new recruit have if I want my startup to grow?
- What profile do I need in the immediate future: a strategic support or a sales force?
- During the job interview, how can I check that my candidate has the essential qualities that I am looking for?
- And so on.

At first, I will talk about the roles of the business developer and the commercial within a company. Then, I will develop the ideal profiles for these two functions. Finally, I will give practical advice for the job interview of a business developer and a salesperson.

In addition, I will answer some key questions related to the theme and give real examples based on my experience gained during my entrepreneurship year at HEC Liège. For the most curious, I will also add a last part, regrouping the different useful sources in order to further dig the subject. This part will gather the details regarding some key contact persons.

## 2. CONTEXTUAL SETTING

In general, in the world of startups, when an idea has been studied and the business model has been validated, the project is launched. However, young entrepreneurs are quickly realizing that it will be difficult to ensure growth by being alone. They thus have to engage.

Although, today, managers flatter the ego of their new recruits by granting them increasingly incomprehensible functions (Junior Category Manager, Associate Relationship Manager, Junior Business Engineer ...), we will focus here on the "growth" part of the company. This report is aimed at young entrepreneurs hoping to hire a **growth player**: a sales person or a business developer.

A few years ago, in his company, Mr. Hubert Brogniez discusses with his associates the evolution of the company. In the middle of the discussion, he announces that the company needs a commercial. Surprised, his associates answer him, "But Hubert, you are the commercial of this company. ". These words upset Mr. Brogniez who did not want to see his function limited to the role of the commercial. He claimed to be the business developer of the entity.

But what is a business developer? What are the main differences between a commercial and a business developer? What profiles do they have? How to know which of these two profiles should be hired?

Too often confused, these two functions are related, but not equivalent. That is why, through this work, I will answer the questions above in order to allow young and future entrepreneurs to better understand the subject. I will focus here on the world of startups in order to better meet the expectations of the target audience of this capstone: incubated young people and young entrepreneurs.

First, I will define the roles of the business developer and the sales person within a company. This will enable young entrepreneurs to better understand the main differences between these two profiles. Although at the beginning, it is the entrepreneur himself who will take on these two functions, it may be useful to dissociate them in order to understand more clearly. Moreover, in the event that the company grows up, these two functions would be ensured by

two different persons. It is therefore important to understand the divergences implied by these two positions.

Then I will define the ideal profile of a good business developer and a good commercial. Given that I cannot claim to know what a "good" commercial/business developer is, the content of this part will come from many very diverse sources (articles, specialized sites, videos ...) as well as various discussions with business owners. This will be particularly useful for young entrepreneurs when looking for the ideal collaborator. Indeed, they will be able to refer to this paper in order to know the different characteristics that have to be tested during the meeting with the candidate.

Finally, I will present the essential elements to analyze during the job interview of each of the two profiles and give some standard questions to ask. Once again, this part will be very useful for young entrepreneurs who generally have very little experience in recruiting a person. This point is mainly based on the past experiences of Mr. Gianni Ruggieri, CEO of the company "Oh! Medias". He has a degree in work psychology as well as extensive experience in recruiting employees. No doubt that this part will be very useful for young entrepreneurs. In addition, two typical job offers will be attached to the job.

I also completed this report with a section on questioning. It provides answers to various practical questions that young entrepreneurs might have. In order to ensure a good understanding of the theme by the reader, I have taken and explained two concrete examples to illustrate this one. For the most interested, I also added a part to further dig the subject (sources, contact persons ...).

### 3. DEVELOPMENT OF THE KEY LEARNINGS RELATED TO THE THEMATIC

#### a. The business developer

Nowadays, business developers are more and more sought after by startups as they allow them to acquire new market shares, new customers ... It is important to point out that in the majority of startups launches, it is the entrepreneur himself who assumes the function of business developer.

##### Role in the Company

The business developer's mission is to **establish a strategy** to find **new opportunities** and explore new markets in order to **expand the activities** of a company. Its function includes negotiation, marketing, project management, sales, networking, contract revisions ... The business developer has a **versatile** side. He will also determine **how the business will grow** and how it will achieve that growth. He therefore has a **long-term vision**, focused on new business and ensures a role of **explorer/opportunities hunter**. It should be remembered that he is also responsible for maintaining relationships with existing customers.

More specifically, the business developer will perform the following tasks:

- Search for new markets;
- Create business models;
- Look for new products/services to provide;
- Create innovative marketing strategies;
- Create concrete plans to reach new markets;
- Follow up on the strategic plan;
- Etc.

## Ideal profile

The ideal candidate for a business developer position should have many features given the diversity of his work. He must have strong **business skills**, that is, understand the business world and the contact with customers. He must also have **good knowledge of the industry in which his company operates** in order to understand the issues at hand. Let's not forget that a good business developer must also have **good resistance to stress** and know how to **make decisions quickly**. An experience abroad (Erasmus, language exchange ...) is an asset.

Regarding the soft skills, he must be **comfortable with people** and be good at **negotiating**. Indeed, he will be in regular contact with external stakeholders (customers, suppliers ...). The business developer must also have a good **team spirit** since he will have to work with many collaborators. Moreover, it is important that he knows **several languages** (depending on the targeted markets, English minimum), be **creative** and **pragmatic**.

There are profiles to avoid when recruiting a business developer in a young company. This is particularly the case for people with a marketing orientation and heading for these kinds of jobs by default, people who rely on their natural abilities when speaking with people, but who do not know how to listen to customers as well as people who never question themselves.

## Job Interview

The business developer occupies a very important position in the company. That is why it is essential to test some key skills during the job interview. Beyond the overall feeling that you will have with the potential recruit, here are some ideas to test some skills needed:

1. Stress resistance: ask the candidate to tell an anecdote where he was under stress and how he managed to get out and control his stress.
2. Customer contact: ask the candidate to send an email to a client for a sponsorship request (to test the “seller” aspect) and make a phone call to a prospect (to test the ease and fluidity on the phone). For face-to-face contact, you will quickly feel whether the candidate is suitable or not.

3. Questioning himself: ask several questions during the interview, such as "When you have to make a decision, are you a go-ahead guy or are you taking your time?" And "In case of failure, do you tend to assume and move on or are you trying to understand your failure? ". If the candidate converges in his answers, you will know if he tends (or not) to question himself.
4. Curiosity and understanding: since the business developer needs to understand what others are doing, it can be helpful to ask him if he is curious and prove it with anecdotes. It is also possible to ask him how he reacts when something does not interest him in a group discussion.
5. Quick decision-making: ask the candidate to tell an anecdote where he had to make an important decision quickly. Then, it is possible to propose three dilemmas one after the other. The candidate has 3 seconds to answer while you're counting down loudly.
6. Reaction in the event of failure: make the candidate solve an enigma that will inevitably put him in a situation of stress and analyze his reaction. For example, the following riddle "On January 1, Paul lays a water lily in a pond in his garden of 300 m<sup>2</sup>. The area of the water-lily doubles daily and it covers the entire pond on January 31. Knowing that the pond has an area equal to 40% of the size of the garden, on what date will the water lily cover half of the pond? ". The goal is to see if the candidate persists in searching for an answer or gives up.

You will find a typical job offer for a business developer position in annex n°1.

## **b. The sales representative**

Like the business developer, the sales representative holds an important place in the company because he's the one who will be in direct contact with the customer and generate revenue by signing contracts. Here again, the remark previously stated is applicable: at the beginning of the activity of a startup, it is the entrepreneur himself who assumes the function of commercial.



## Role in the Company

The commercial **prospects** and **approaches the customers** in order to develop a **long-term relationship** with them. He explains the company's products and services clearly and ensures the sale and **signing of the contract**. He has a **short/medium term vision** focused on a known business, unlike the business developer. He is the **representative** of the company, so it is essential to choose someone who adheres to the **values** of the company. The commercial puts in some way the strategy defined by the business developer in application. He takes his car and goes to "**push doors**" to meet customers. Let's recall again that in the case of startups, it is usually the entrepreneur who is responsible for performing this function.

More concretely, the commercial will perform the following tasks:

- The prospecting in order to bring new customers to the company: search for customers' data and set up of a prospecting strategy (phone calls and son on);
- The communication in order to transmit the information on the product/service to the targeted customers;
- Listening to the client and his remarks, his needs;
- The act of sale itself, that is to say the signature of the contract;
- The tracking and retention of clients, although in larger organizations, this aspect is managed by "key account juniors" or "key account managers".

## Ideal profile

Many people see the commercial as a soulless mercenary, thirsty for money and signing contracts. Of course, these kinds of profiles exist and work in some cases. Nevertheless, in a young company, it is essential to hire a person who knows how to listen actively to the needs of the client. It is not recommended to approach a prospect by directly pushing your product/service, but by listening to what it needs and, if possible, adapt your offer.

Aside from the essential quality of active listening, a sales person must have **easy contact**, be **organized, honest, empathic, optimistic** and **persistent**. Like the business developer, the sales person must have **negotiating skills**. He must also be able to **communicate effectively** (to be understood through verbal and nonverbal).

Here again, there are profiles to avoid when recruiting a sales person in a young company. This is particularly the case of a person too sure of her, on the edge of condescension (it exists, I met one in during my “right arm” mission). Similarly, a person who is more introverted and does not have easy contact will have difficulty fulfilling this function. In addition, a sales person who does not know how to sit down and listen to people will not achieve his goals.

### Job Interview

The mistake that is often made in large companies is not to make sure that the sales representative carries the values of the company. We even sometimes see large companies hire independent sales people with nothing more than experience in the industry. At the risk of repeating myself, a sales person must adhere and spread the values of the society for which he works. If not, what's the point of struggling to create a company that carries your values if they are not respected?

During the interview of a sales representative, there are several elements to test:

1. Easy contact: in addition to the general feeling you have, it is essential to test the contact with the customer by making the candidate make a phone call. It is appropriate here to be more focused on this exercise, more demanding (Is he dynamic? Does he have a smile in his voice? ...). Indeed, the commercial will have to make many calls as part of its function. Once again, it's interesting to have him write an email to see how he approaches the client (Is he polite? Does he have a catchy side? ...).
2. Organization: a sales representative must be organized so as not to forget his appointments, to arrive on time ... Simple questions can help to understand the candidate's organizational logic: "How do you store your library/filed on your computer? ". Then, just check if there is a logic behind his methods.
3. Active listening: it is essential to test the candidate's ability to listen actively. To do this, several exercises exist. For example, it is possible to perform a scenario. You are a car buyer and he is the seller. Give him 10 key features you want in your car and ask him

to repeat them after the fact to see if he understood your needs. The candidate has the right to write. In addition to that, there are various very simple exercises on the internet.

4. Values: since a sales person represents the image of the company in the outside world, it must share certain key values of the company. The candidate should therefore be asked what are its main values and check if they correspond with those of the structure.
5. Languages: depending on the region in which we are located and in which our clients are located, it is interesting to test the candidate's language skills. A simple discussion in English, Dutch, German (etc.) will give you an idea of the level of the person.
6. Perseverance: ask the candidate to narrate two situations in which he has shown perseverance. In addition, as for the business developer with the question of the pond and water lily, it is possible to put the candidate in a situation of failure to see if he is looking for a solution at all costs or if he gives up.

Throughout the interview, it is also important to analyze the candidate's dynamism. For the commercial position, an experience abroad is an advantage because it brings resourcefulness. In a second time, if the first interview went well, it may be interesting to go out to eat with the potential new commercial. Indeed, as Mr. Bakowski, operational director at Win (Nethys) says:

« We cannot imagine what we can learn about a person by going to eat with her at the restaurant ... The way she holds her cutlery, the way she talks to the waiter, the time she takes to choose a dish ... All this tells us more about the personality of the person. Moreover, it is possible to exchange a lot in relation to the life of the individual and thus, better understand our future collaborator. »

You will find a typical job offer for a commercial position in annex n°2.

### c. General summary

To sum up the difference between the two functions in one sentence, the business developer creates the company's development plan (new markets, etc.) and the sales person implements this plan by meeting new partners/customers. To be even more specific about the role of the business developer, let's take a sentence from Aurélie Bouleuc, a partner at the recruitment firm Edgar People:

« It is really the guarantor of the development of the turnover of a company, a market or a business unit. It is thanks to him that the company will grow, deploy. It therefore has a vital role for a society. »

As you will have understood, the business developer is a little more visionary and has a long-term vision while the salesperson has short/medium term vision.

Despite these differences, it is obvious that in a startup that is starting its activities, the business developer will fulfil a purely commercial function since the goal is to generate turnover as quickly as possible. In addition, let's remember one last time that in your startup, it will be your responsibility to ensure these two functions (and many others). Afterwards, the more the size of the company increases, the more you will see a separation between the different positions. This trend is due to the fact that the workload is increasing (since the activity is increasing) and that it is therefore impossible for a founder to manage all the aspects of a growing society on its own.

## 4. QUESTIONING

This section allows you to answer some more practical questions related to the theme of this work.

**Question 1 :** In what range is the cost of a business developer for a company? And the cost of a commercial?

It depends on the experience of the person and the size of the company that engages. However, as a general rule, when they start, commercial and business developers cost the same amount. In a startup, wages are capping lower than in a multinational. If you find a candidate motivated by the idea of growing the startup (and therefore accepting a slightly lower salary), its cost should be around 40k €/year.

**Question 2 :** How to hire at a lower cost?

It is interesting to know that financial aid exists for young companies. This is the case, for example, of the PFI plan (Training-Insertion Plan) available through FOREM. This plan makes it possible to reduce the cost of a person hired for a certain period of time with the obligation to hire the person under contract for a period at least equal to the duration of the PFI afterwards. You can find more information on the FOREM website or by contacting Mr. Baudouin Delangre (see part 5 below).

**Question 3 :** How to motivate a commercial? And a business developer?

According to Gilles Cain, business developer and former business trainer at Heytens, there is a general trend in terms of the motivation of these two profiles. A business developer is motivated by responsibility, likes to see the company grow and appreciates positive feedback. A sales person, on the other hand, is motivated by the pecuniary aspect and the bonuses. Remember, however, that this is a trend that is not generalizable to all commercial/business developers.

## 5. EXAMPLES AND ILLUSTRATIONS

### **a. Boss, business developer and commercial**

In “Schmetz SA”, active in the agricultural sector, the business developer is also the commercial and boss of the company.

When he wears his business developer hat, he is in his office analyzing market trends and determining the type and number of machines to order in order to create his stock. He is constantly analyzing the types of customers he will have to serve and the types of agricultural machinery that these customers will order. Since connected agriculture is born (drones, self-guided tractors ...), it has recently made the decision to hire a young electromechanical capable of understanding new technologies. He also bought machines with more advanced technologies that will indirectly allow him to grow his business by attracting new customers. These are business developer decisions.

When he wears his commercial cap, the leader goes to the various agricultural fairs and drinks beers until the wee hours with his potential customers. He goes to meet them and does what is necessary to adapt to his "good life" prospects and thus, to lay the foundations for a future collaboration.

### **b. Separation of Functions**

In the company EASI, active in the field of IT (creation of an accounting software, consultancy ...), the business developers are the "managers-partners" and the sales staff are young recruits in continuing education. The company is larger as it has about 200 employees.

During their meetings, managers define the new ways to be investigated and constantly challenge the current model. They play the role of business developers by seeking new sources of income and adapting to the market. The sales function is delegated to young employees who have to prospect and try to get face-to-face meetings with customers.

## 6. LEARN MORE

### a. Experts contact information

#### Roles/profiles of the business developer and the commercial in a company

- Gianni Ruggieri, Oh ! médias, CEO. Formation in work psychology and complementary formation in management. Tel. : 0496/90 69 61 / Email : [gianni.ruggieri@ohmedias.com](mailto:gianni.ruggieri@ohmedias.com)
- Gilles Cain, Oh ! médias, business developer, former business trainer at Heytens. Tel. : 0477/ 62 50 62 / Email : [gilles.cain@ohmedias.com](mailto:gilles.cain@ohmedias.com)
- Sébastien Menu, Broptimize, he engaged a business developer during 2017. Tel. : 0470/05 69 94 / Email : [s.menu@broptimize.be](mailto:s.menu@broptimize.be)

#### Hire at Lower Costs

- Baudouin Delangre, FOREM, responsible for the “Plan Formation Insertion”. Tel. : 04 254 57 23.

#### Soft skills/active listening

- Jean-Michel Compère, Coach in soft skills, Email : [jean-michel.compere@quasys.com](mailto:jean-michel.compere@quasys.com) ou [compere@quasys.com](mailto:compere@quasys.com)
- Sabine Denis, Coach in soft skills, Email : [sabine.denis@capplus.be](mailto:sabine.denis@capplus.be)

#### Sales and negotiation

- Didier Joris, sales and negotiation techniques, Email : [didier.joris@uliege.be](mailto:didier.joris@uliege.be)

### b. Themed bibliography

#### Roles of the business developer and the commercial in the company

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- Stepstone. (2017). Que fait un business developer? En ligne <https://www.stepstone.be/conseils-de-carriere/article/que-fait-un-business-developer/>. Page consultée le 3 avril 2018.

### Profiles of the Business Developer and the Commercial

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- Manna. (2004). Exploring the need for emotional intelligence and awareness among sales representatives. Emerald Group Publishing Limited. Bingley, United Kingdom.



### Hire at **Lower Costs**

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### Active listening

- CAD Communication. (2015). Test de l'écoute active. En ligne <http://cadcommunication.com/?TabId=142>. Page consultée le 8 mai 2018.
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### Job Interviews of a Business Developer and a Commercial

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## 7. APPENDICES

### **Annex n°1 : job offer of a business developer**

## Business Developer - Online Auction

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### **Description de l'entreprise**

Notre partenaire est une entreprise de courtage et de vente aux enchères en ligne de tout équipement professionnel d'occasion. Leurs services s'adressent à tout professionnel, chef d'atelier, responsable des achats, etc., souhaitant vendre ou acheter du matériel professionnel d'occasion. Bien plus qu'un site d'annonces, notre client veille à aller jusqu'au bout des transactions d'achat ou de vente. Ils sont attentifs à toutes les étapes de la vente, de la mise en ligne jusqu'à l'enlèvement, en passant par le paiement et la facturation.

Pour renforcer leur croissance, nous recherchons un Business Developer (H/F) pour la Wallonie.

Vous avez une mentalité entrepreneuriale et prêt(e) à relever un challenge ambitieux dans une structure en pleine évolution, lisez la suite !

### **Description de fonction**

- Vous êtes responsable de mettre en place des nouveaux projets: vous créez de nouveaux partenariats et ouvrez de nouveaux marchés.
- Vous gérez votre agenda en toute autonomie et faites preuve de pro-activité.
- Vous rencontrez les partenaires et établissez des collaborations à long terme.
- Vous rapportez au Sales Manager

### **Exigences de la fonction**

- Vous avez une expérience professionnelle dans la vente B2B de minimum 3 ans.
- Une expérience en vente d'équipements industriels ou de machines est un atout.
- Vous êtes dynamique, autonome et organisé(e).
- Vous maîtrisez l'art de la négociation et pouvez conclure aisément des opportunités.
- Vous vous exprimez parfaitement en français ou en néerlandais, vous pouvez communiquer professionnellement en français ou en néerlandais, et vous comprenez l'anglais.

### **Conditions de travail**

- Salaire compétitif
- Bonus variable lié aux objectifs
- Voiture de société, laptop, smartphone
- Vous rejoignez une société dans une phase de croissance très élevée.

## **Annex n°2 : job offer of a commercial**

### **Délégué Commercial (H/F)**

région Liège et le Luxembourg que nous cherchons.

#### **Votre journée chez Crown**

Vous assurez la **promotion active de notre gamme entière de chariots élévateurs** dans une partie de la région wallonne c.-à-d. Liège et le Luxembourg. Vous êtes responsable du **développement** et du **maintien des relations avec la clientèle existante** et de la **conquête de nouveaux clients**. Vous réalisez les résultats de ventes par :

- Des techniques de **gestion de comptes**;
- La **rédaction d'un business plan** pour visualiser et pour **analyser les opportunités** du marché en collaboration avec le Sales Manager;
- **l'Introduction des nouveautés** aux clients suite à un contact régulier et organisé;
- La **gestion complète** du trajet de **vente** de la **prospection** jusqu'au **suivi**, grâce à votre engagement et vos compétences;
- Vos rapports au Sales Manager à Kontich ;
- Votre déplacement (une fois par semaine) à Kontich pour participer à la réunion de notre équipe de vente en Belgique;
- Votre contribution à la réputation de Crown Handling.

#### **Nous cherchons un(e) collègue**

Ayant le sens du contact, la fibre commerciale et des aptitudes techniques. Vous êtes reconnu(e) pour votre sens de **l'initiative** et votre **détermination d'atteindre les objectifs**. Vous contribuez au succès de la société grâce à votre **positivisme**, votre **orientation vers les résultats** et vos fortes compétences de **communication**.

De plus, vous attestez :

- d'une connaissance approfondie orale et écrite du **français** et de bonnes connaissances en **néerlandais** et **anglais** ;
- d'une première expérience dans une fonction **technique** ou **commerciale**;
- d'une mentalité d'**entrepreneur** et d'**autonomie** ayant également l'**esprit d'équipe**;
- d'une manière de communication ouverte et sincère;
- d'une personnalité stable, axée valeurs.

#### **Nous offrons**

Un environnement professionnel et innovateur favorisant l'autonomie et la prise de responsabilités – un salaire attractif accompagné des avantages liés à une fonction commerciale.

Vous pouvez trouver plus d'informations sur [www.crownbelgie.be](http://www.crownbelgie.be).