Interview recording content

00:00 Speaker 1:
Is this okay? Do you think we need to talk separately?
00:04 Speaker 2:
We don't necessarily need to chat in this open format. What's the purpose of an open chat? Because it's like this, it helps us understand each other better. I joined Guangxi University in 2011, initially as a teacher. Then, I did research, served as a department head, assistant dean, and then vice dean. Our teachers have a trait of not distinguishing between work and life. The other day, I talked to Mr. Wang, and we discussed how salespeople also mix work and life. So, Mr. Lu, how long have you been with our Power Marketing Department? Just two months? What has been the most memorable experience so far? It's okay, Mr. Wang and I can see that Mr. Wang is very easygoing.
01:01 Speaker 4:
Mr. Liu might be...
01:04 Speaker 1:
... dealing with external work more, and has been here for a shorter time. No problem.
01:09 Speaker 2:
Just chat casually.
01:11 Speaker 1:
Relax and chat casually.
01:15 Speaker 2:
I've always told my graduate students during interviews and so on to relax. Mr. Wang also hopes his team members are easy to work with. Just talk about your most memorable experience.
01:41 Speaker 5:
The first time I helped, and they did something, but what was it? As the impact grew...
01:57 Speaker 2:
So you're involved in internal sales statistics, not yet interacting with customers. Do you find internal sales work tedious or require overtime? No? That's comfortable then. Did you find the internal sales role different from what you imagined about the marketing department? Any indicators? For example, like in our finance department at the school, they track the number of transactions, even though it’s not piecework pay. More transactions might mean a year-end award, similar to enterprise sales where the number of transactions is tracked.
03:31 Speaker 1:
You do get credit for effort, even if not for results, right?
03:34 Speaker 2:
Is the evaluation based on the number of transactions or qualitative assessments?
03:45 Speaker 1:
I’m not very familiar with that aspect yet.
03:49 Speaker 2:
So after working for two months, if you have any thoughts, you can talk to Mr. Wang. I often ask new teachers about their thoughts after joining. For example, we have a new PhD from the Netherlands who felt the assigned research topics were quite different from his expertise. Similarly, after working for a while, what difficulties have you encountered?

05:12 Speaker 5:
None so far.
05:14 Speaker 2:
Let me summarize. One of my students, who joined a company as a sales director, faced initial struggles. Despite challenges, she was diligent and competent, handling various sales statistics well. Can I describe your work in a similar way?
07:47 Speaker 1:
Let's compare to see if there’s a gap.
07:55 Speaker 2:
Can I describe it this way? She handled various documents from sales personnel efficiently. How do you communicate with managers like Mr. Wei or Mr. Li?
09:01 Speaker 5:
Face-to-face mostly.
09:05 Speaker 2:
Face-to-face is good. Do you use the phone more or direct face-to-face communication during work hours?
09:11 Speaker 6:
Mr. Long is relatively less involved in business lines.
09:13 Speaker 2:
So in business communication, do you use the phone more, or is it face-to-face during work hours and off work hours?
10:07 Speaker 1:
Is that okay?
10:10 Speaker 2:
I thought your role involved running the market, like engaging with customers.
10:20 Speaker 1:
We still lack boldness in our staffing, overly protective.
10:30 Speaker 2:
Your position should be more about understanding the business, even if not directly engaging in sales.
10:39 Speaker 1:
There’s a trend now...
10:42 Speaker 2:
Even support roles need to understand the business and what salespeople care about. I'll reflect this understanding in my report. Your internal staff should also have this business-oriented approach. I've discussed this with Xiao Ping. Although I talk more, it helps understand the position better.
11:40 Speaker 1:
Mr. Wei has been here long enough.
11:46 Speaker 5:
I joined in 2012 and have been in marketing for two years, not 21 years.
11:55 Speaker 1:
You've been in marketing since 2022, but you’ve been with the company for a long time, previously in production.

12:05 Speaker 2:
Which power plant did you work in?
12:10 Speaker 5:
I was at our headquarters, moving across several power plants in Guangdong.
12:12 Speaker 1:
In Guangdong, like Jiangmen and Yunfu.
12:16 Speaker 5:
Yes, several power plants.
12:18 Speaker 1:
In Jiangmen, Yunfu, etc. Did you relocate your family?
12:34 Speaker 1:
Still considering it.
12:38 Speaker 2:
In sales, you need to travel often.
12:43 Speaker 5:
To some extent, yes.
12:46 Speaker 2:
Before, you worked in various locations. Did your spouse accompany you?
12:53 Speaker 5:
When I was at the power plant, my spouse didn't live with me.
12:58 Speaker 2:
You recently got married?
13:02 Speaker 5:
Yes, last year.
13:03 Speaker 2:
In which year did you marry?
13:08 Speaker 1:
Our industry is tough because it's dominated by men, making it hard for men to find partners.
13:34 Speaker 2:
We should consider organizing social events to help with this.
13:41 Speaker 4:
Solving the issue of older unmarried colleagues.
13:45 Speaker 1:
Most employees come from production backgrounds and face challenges in marriage. After moving to marketing, which is often city-based, it becomes easier.
14:18 Speaker 5:
This broader interaction helps solve personal issues.
14:20 Speaker 1:
Interacting with more people helps expand your social circle.
14:31 Speaker 2:
Indeed.
14:33 Speaker 5:
Thank you, Mr. Wang.
14:34 Speaker 4:

You found this solution yourself.
14:37 Speaker 1:
This...
14:38 Speaker 2:
Do you have any comments? You've been with the Power Marketing Department for two years. What are the biggest differences and challenges between production and marketing?
14:56 Speaker 5:
The biggest difference is interacting with people. In production, we dealt with machines. In marketing, it's more about dealing with people, which requires higher skills.
15:27 Speaker 2:
Before joining marketing, what was your perception of it? Did you think it was all about running the market and entertaining clients?
16:12 Speaker 5:
There was this perception of socializing and drinking to close deals.
16:15 Speaker 2:
Eating, drinking, and chatting. Was it like that?
16:23 Speaker 5:
My understanding has changed. While socializing is important, the core business activities are crucial too. Initially, I avoided sales roles due to my limited drinking capacity but eventually found my way into this field.
17:19 Speaker 2:
I'd like to ask...
17:23 Speaker 3:
Especially in our business, like using WeChat...
17:27 Speaker 2:
How do you use tools like WeChat to communicate with clients?
17:35 Speaker 5:
We use it a lot.
17:37 Speaker 2:
How does WeChat help in your work?
17:48 Speaker 5:
It improves efficiency and communication. It's not possible to visit every client daily, so WeChat helps filter clients and manage communication more thoughtfully.
18:25 Speaker 2:
Finally, how has the transition from production to sales affected your personal growth or character the most?
18:44 Speaker 5:
I believe the biggest impact on me has been a shift in ideology. When I was working at the plant, my understanding and perceptions of the outside world, as well as my willingness to learn, were quite limited. I thought that as long as I mastered the technical aspects, I would surely gain recognition from the company, leaders, and colleagues, and I would progress. However, after transitioning to a marketing position, especially during a client reception with Mr. Wang, I realized a significant issue. During our conversation, I discovered that the client, although older by about 10 or 20 years, was already a leader or owner of a publicly listed or large company. The gap

between us was substantial. Throughout our conversation, I observed his extensive knowledge and deep insights. His ability to understand the essence through the phenomena was impressive. As we talked, I found myself struggling to keep up and could only look to Mr. Wang for support.
20:05 Speaker 1:
Mr. Wang is indeed very capable.
20:10 Speaker 5:
This made me realize that I need to enhance my understanding, broaden my horizons, and improve my information sensitivity. This realization came from my work in marketing and highlighted my deficiencies. This is one area where I have gained profound insights.
20:39 Speaker 2:
Indeed, transitioning to marketing is challenging. Mr. Wang's team includes core business members.
20:45 Speaker 1:
It's important to introduce them.
20:49 Speaker 5:
In marketing, it's crucial to be proactive and knowledgeable. Engaging with clients involves more than just socializing; it also requires discussions on current affairs, politics, history, and cutting-edge technologies. Nowadays, clients are well-informed, and it's no longer just about drinking and socializing. Engaging clients requires a broader set of skills and knowledge.
21:35 Speaker 2:
I have an example about Mr. Guo...
21:39 Speaker 5:
...with extensive experience.
21:40 Speaker 2:
For instance, students working in large companies like China Mobile as key account managers need to maintain relationships with major clients. They often organize activities like golf at Qingxiu Mountain to strengthen these relationships. For example, they might provide fuel cards to clients, or assist with personal errands. This level of service is essential for maintaining client relationships and achieving business success.
23:51 Speaker 6:
I have been employed here for two years, previously working in administration at a coal company.
24:03 Speaker 2:
Many tasks are reported to you and summarized by your department.
24:09 Speaker 6:
Our department is divided into two sections: market development and daily operations. I handle market expansion and external communications, while colleagues like Mr. Wei and Mr. Li manage the power transaction data and operational execution.
24:36 Speaker 2:
So you handle client demand while integrating with internal operations.
24:43 Speaker 6:
We work together on market development and power transactions, ensuring seamless integration between client acquisition and transaction execution.
24:56 Speaker 2:
I understand. Can you explain the differences between the marketing center and the transaction

center?
25:46 Speaker 6:
Our marketing center focuses on market development and client acquisition, while the transaction center handles the subsequent power transactions and contract execution. We create a closed-loop system where the marketing center acquires clients and the transaction center manages the technical aspects of the power deals.
26:15 Speaker 2:
So the marketing center is responsible for bidding and client acquisition, while the transaction center handles contract execution and client interface.
26:38 Speaker 1:
We implement contracts and ensure smooth execution.
26:42 Speaker 2:
Mr. Wang's department is at the core of our operations.
26:49 Speaker 1:
Marketing is crucial, as it drives our business growth and client relations. Although our new energy sector is still expanding, marketing will eventually become the leading force as we stabilize our production capacity.
28:57 Speaker 2:
Thank you, Mr. Wang, for the explanation. So Mr. Wei and Mr. Li handle the transaction center, and Mr. Lu assists with internal data management.
29:11 Speaker 6:
Yes, Mr. Lu is new and currently focuses on internal tasks like data and contract management.
29:29 Speaker 2:
Mr. Wei, you handle transactions but also contribute to market expansion.
29:35 Speaker 1:
Indeed, despite being part of the transaction center, understanding market operations is essential. Both internal and external roles must integrate seamlessly.
30:01 Speaker 2:
Our marketing team must engage in both internal and external tasks.
30:02 Speaker 6:
Yes, our marketing team needs to develop market opportunities and manage client relations effectively.
30:15 Speaker 1:
This is a transitional phase. Ideally, once we have sufficient personnel, clear delineations between roles will be established, reflecting the distinct functions and targets of each center.
30:51 Speaker 2:
We could implement a rotation system to ensure comprehensive experience across departments.
30:55 Speaker 1:
Yes, a rotation system allows employees to gain experience in different areas before specializing based on their skills and interests.
35:47 Speaker 6:
Our client base primarily consists of enterprises, so we focus on understanding their power needs and providing tailored services. This involves regular visits and engagement activities to build strong relationships.

36:28 Speaker 6:
Our product is straightforward—electricity. Understanding the core needs of our users and addressing them effectively is key to our operations.
36:41 Speaker 2:
Besides client visits, do you also organize team-building or collaborative activities?
36:59 Speaker 6:
Yes, we often organize social events and collaborative activities to strengthen client relationships. These include sports events and team-building exercises to foster closer ties with our clients.
37:48 Speaker 2:
Like the key account managers at China Mobile who deeply integrate into their clients' lives, do you also engage in such personal levels of service for procurement or executive clients?
38:11 Speaker 6:
We haven't done it so meticulously.
38:13 Speaker 4:
How to handle customers.
38:15 Speaker 6:
Picking up children from here is not necessarily the case.
38:17 Speaker 2:
For example, do you need to understand their background, family life? Do you need to understand such things?
38:26 Speaker 1:
It should be understood.
38:29 Speaker 2:
It might not be possible yet. What we will do next, as I will show you later, I have this dimension called learning and growth, which includes the customer dimension and also the internal business processes that Xiao Wu asked about. So it will be included. We may need to make some modifications because we divided it into two centers. When I initially designed this, I didn't follow the center structure. Do you travel a lot for work? Me?
39:01 Speaker 6:
Occasionally, but relatively less.
39:05 Speaker 2:
Why do they travel for work? Do you direct them to travel?
39:10 Speaker 6:
Many times, we also communicate with customers via phone. Many issues can be resolved over the phone.
39:15 Speaker 2:
For instance, I would like to ask about sales personnel. Do you think the evaluation should consider gender, taking into account male and female differences?
39:31 Speaker 6:
I think it should.
39:34 Speaker 2:
For example, in the future, these indicators for learning and growth, you could mention that the career development paths for men and women might be different. You may need to write this down because Mr. Wang has put a lot of effort into this. This is unique to our Guangxi branch of

CGN New Energy. Other companies may see this as a benchmark, especially since the state emphasizes a sense of gain. Women just recently had the March 8th proposals come out in the two sessions. What do you think?
40:25 Speaker 6:
From the company's management perspective, I believe it's reasonable to have the same work distribution mechanism for both men and women. However, from a woman's perspective, I would hope that work arrangements for women are more accommodating because they often have heavier family responsibilities, such as educating children.
40:58 Speaker 2:
Out of 10 people in a team, how many are women?
41:07 Speaker 6:
Currently, just two or three.
41:10 Speaker 2:
Are they all in the marketing center or the trading center? Both? For example, I have students at Yili Group, which operates across Yunnan, Guizhou, and Guangxi. Initially, they hired female students from us, but later wanted more male students for roles involving heavy lifting and driving for customer visits. This highlights the different evaluation criteria for male and female sales personnel, especially in customer-oriented roles where women have a natural affinity.
43:30 Speaker 5:
It's about.
43:31 Speaker 2:
Team collaboration between male and female colleagues. Director Guo, what do you think? Have you worked in sales before?
43:57 Speaker 6:
I started doing sales after joining CGN.
44:00 Speaker 2:
Previously at a coal company.
44:02 Speaker 6:
I worked in administrative management there.
44:04 Speaker 2:
Sales initially. What do you find the most challenging about sales?
44:15 Speaker 6:
I haven't found anything particularly difficult yet.
44:23 Speaker 2:
For example, when you receive performance targets from headquarters at the end of the year, the pressure can be intense, but our leadership is excellent.
45:03 Speaker 4:
Our development capabilities are strong, Mr. Wang is very capable, so in market development.
45:08 Speaker 6:
Even with large tasks from headquarters, under Mr. Wang's leadership, we always manage to meet our targets, so there is pressure but no major difficulties yet.
45:26 Speaker 2:
Alright, I think this discussion is quite good.
45:31 Speaker 4:

Understood.
45:34 Speaker 2:
Understanding our employees' thoughts. Manager Li, I noticed you seem very skilled in technical areas.
45:48 Speaker 4:
You could tell right away? Not really, I am not a programmer. Today I am wearing a plaid shirt.
45:55 Speaker 1:
Right?
45:57 Speaker 3:
Yes, I joined CGN in 2017 right after graduation. Initially in production, then transitioned to power marketing last March.
46:09 Speaker 1:
March of last year for some training.
46:11 Speaker 3:
Yes, working on power marketing.
46:13 Speaker 2:
What are the two most significant differences you noticed?
46:28 Speaker 3:
I agree with Manager Wei that production work is simpler, while marketing involves more complexity and a broader scope, requiring diverse skills.
46:50 Speaker 4:
Exactly.
46:51 Speaker 3:
Indeed, it involves various aspects.
46:52 Speaker 2:
We specifically left this question for Manager Li because it seems Manager Wei is quite experienced.
47:05 Speaker 3:
Asking Manager Li.
47:07 Speaker 2:
Previously, you worked in production, which required constant technical updates. As you age, it becomes harder to keep up with new standards, but in sales, building relationships becomes easier over time. Some successful sales managers prefer not to be promoted to management to continue leveraging their people skills. What do you think?
48:22 Speaker 3:
In the trading center, technical skills remain crucial alongside sales skills and customer interactions.
48:43 Speaker 2:
Does your company need to design price combinations or product combinations, like how telecom companies design service packages?
51:49 Speaker 3:
Yes, it involves developing pricing and trading strategies, which requires a lot of technical analysis.
52:07 Speaker 2:

Adapting to policies and supply-demand relationships, adjusting strategies accordingly.
52:36 Speaker 1:
Similar to market analysis in real estate, understanding consumption demand and purchasing power.
52:55 Speaker 2:
Looking ahead, what are your three main directions? A memorable experience, future outlook, and specific requirements for us.
53:48 Speaker 1:
There are many memorable experiences. For instance, handling on-site matters during the pandemic.
54:14 Speaker 1:
For example, during the peak of the pandemic in December, when everyone was sick, we still maintained customer connections, signing contracts worth billions despite high fevers.
55:25 Speaker 5:
Customer interaction is crucial in power marketing.
55:36 Speaker 1:
The most memorable experiences are often challenging situations where sales staff need to stay committed.
57:41 Speaker 2:
In sales, we often discuss team-based, coordinated approaches. Could you elaborate on future plans, specific to balancing work and personal life, and integrating new evaluation metrics like GPS tracking in sales visits?
55:43 Speaker 1:
So, basically, time isn’t really an issue. As long as your body hasn't completely given out, you still have to work, right? This is a feeling that marketing is different from other fields. Our production team works in shifts. Like Professor Kong might know, shifts in tutoring classes, three shifts in 24 hours, you hand over at 8:00, I take over at 8:01, and you go home without any further responsibilities. But marketing is different. Even after your shift, if something comes up, you have to handle it, right? Our working hours start at 8:30 AM, and while other industries might end at 5:30 PM, we might still be working the second shift, sometimes not getting home until 1 or 2 AM. This job involves a lot of unforgettable experiences. As you mentioned earlier, our major account managers for mobile customers might be busy picking up their kids. Unlike other sectors where you might take care of children during work hours, in marketing, even if you're sick, you have to look after clients in the hospital.
57:41 Speaker 2:
It sounds tough. Your team is essentially forged through constant struggle. Sales teams are often referred to as teams or legions. Now, about optimizing and alleviating work pressure, you mentioned integrating work and life. Some companies evaluate work–life integration, like tracking how many local stores you've visited using GPS. They also measure post-work interactions with clients. These evaluations, while not mandatory, could be included in performance reviews.
59:33 Speaker 1:
How would you quantify work–life integration? As mentioned earlier...
59:41 Speaker 2:
Employees report how much time they spend on work-related calls outside working hours. Some

companies even track this data, which can be quite stringent.
59:59 Speaker 1:
I'm not sure our company needs such mandatory evaluations. While it might yield better performance, it could be too rigid.
01:00:25 Speaker 2:
Maybe it could be an additional factor in the evaluation system, not a mandatory one. For instance, our head of party affairs mentioned that visits to industrial enterprises or party-building activities often happen outside regular hours.
01:01:03 Speaker 1:
I think it can be included as a non-mandatory item. It could guide sales personnel to achieve better performance.
01:01:16 Speaker 5:
It indeed has some motivational effects.
01:01:19 Speaker 2:
Alright, here are 55 items. You can modify and adjust the weights of these indicators based on your opinions.
01:02:19 Speaker 5:
I think...
01:02:22 Speaker 2:
Some suggestions from our discussion might be feasible, while others may not.
01:02:29 Speaker 1:
We need to build a framework first and gradually improve it, ensuring our marketing department...
01:02:44 Speaker 2:
We are honored to be the think tank supporting our marketing department.
01:02:51 Speaker 7:
Indeed.
01:02:53 Speaker 2:
We are privileged to have regular exchanges with our think tank.
01:02:59 Speaker 6:
Should we circle or cross out experts' opinions?
01:03:29 Speaker 2:
If you find an indicator inappropriate, you can cross it out and suggest a score.
01:03:41 Speaker 5:
Check your suggestions, then organize them as needed.
01:11:55 Speaker 5:
What phenomenon...
01:11:55 Speaker 2:
Questions should be asked.
01:19:20 Speaker 7:
Are there any other concerns you have? They might be included in the questionnaire. Which key indicators best reflect our sales performance?
01:19:58 Speaker 1:
Sales revenue and profit, right?
01:20:00 Speaker 7:

Yes.
01:20:03 Speaker 1:
Our trading and marketing centers have different indicators.
01:20:07 Speaker 5:
They differ slightly. Trading is like dealing with the stock market, with less direct client interaction, while marketing requires strong client engagement due to long-term contracts.
01:20:42 Speaker 7:
Do they use the same performance evaluation system? For instance, does the trading center have its own evaluation criteria, while the marketing center has theirs? And do employees have different evaluation dimensions?
01:21:17 Speaker 5:
The evaluation criteria are different based on their business focus.
01:21:27 Speaker 7:
So, they have different angles.
01:21:30 Speaker 5:
Yes.
01:21:31 Speaker 7:
I see.
01:21:33 Speaker 2:
Here, we measure sales revenue and core principles.
01:21:39 Speaker 1:
Profit. For marketing, it's market share, customer numbers, and sales volume.
01:22:05 Speaker 5:
And...
01:22:08 Speaker 1:
Sales amount and gross margin, and sales costs like travel expenses.
01:22:36 Speaker 2:
We measure sales revenue and...
01:22:42 Speaker 8:
Sales profit together. However, there are distinctions between trading and marketing centers.
01:22:55 Speaker 7:
The weightings can differ, but indicators can be similar.
01:23:04 Speaker 8:
That's feasible.
01:23:05 Speaker 1:
Financial indicators and quantifiable data might differ in weight allocation.
01:23:33 Speaker 2:
Sales revenue and expenses, like gross profit margin and costs.
01:23:39 Speaker 1:
For instance, sales contracts impact retail pricing, affecting profits and reflecting client engagements and market share.
01:25:21 Speaker 6:
Revenue also relates to cost control, right?
01:25:28 Speaker 2:

Focus varies—sometimes on sales revenue, sometimes on profit.
01:25:37 Speaker 5:
Future performance may emphasize different aspects.
01:25:42 Speaker 1:
A unified indicator set can work, including cost control.
01:25:47 Speaker 6:
Yes, that impacts revenue too.
01:25:50 Speaker 7:
Sales revenue affects our overall performance.
01:25:55 Speaker 5:
A holistic view considers sales revenue and cost.
01:26:01 Speaker 2:
Should profit be included?
01:26:04 Speaker 5:
Yes, as a reference.
01:26:07 Speaker 1:
That's acceptable.
01:26:10 Speaker 2:
Today, in two hours, we've covered a lot.
01:26:19 Speaker 1:
Thank you for your hard work here.