

Hiring for the Long Haul: Interview Qs to Gauge Fit, Performance and Potential

Hiring is difficult and stressful for most managers. It takes time, resources and even sales savvy. You do whatever it takes to paint your company in a positive light – and every candidate sitting across from you in the interview chair is doing the same.

The process isn't natural – it can feel forced or even fake at times. But hiring depends on finding the right match, and every company has to hire – and hire well – to succeed. Nothing is worse than going through a lengthy process only to discover the new hire is a mismatch.

Reader ROI

In this guide, you will learn strategic questions to ask candidates to:

- uncover more than mere job skills;
- learn about their behaviors, attitudes and cultural alignment to determine total fit; **and**
- ultimately make better hires.

Ready to get started?



Retention Starts With Recruitment

Nearly 40% of people who leave their jobs do so within six months of their start date – which means the person was not the right choice for the job from the beginning.

So, while salary, bonuses, perks, employee engagement and other retention efforts are all important to retaining a great employee, none of it matters if you're not hiring the right people.

Putting in the work to craft strategic interviews and well-designed questions can help you gain a 360-degree view of candidates and make well-informed hiring decisions.



Phone Screen Questions

Phone screens are an important first step in evaluating a candidate's potential fit. Typically, they consist of basic background questions and clarifying questions for anything that might have been unclear in the candidate's resume.

Include these questions to get a good feel for the candidate's fitness:

- Why do you want to work for our company in this role?
- Tell me about your background in (insert crucial skill for the role). How many years of experience do you have? On a scale of one to ten with one being a novice and ten being an expert, where do you fall?
- Tell me about a time you failed, what you learned, and what happened next.

These questions provide insight into a candidate's character, work ethic and their genuineness, which can help you determine who moves on to the personal interview phase.



Icebreaker Questions to Get the Ball Rolling

In-person interviews can feel awkward no matter how seasoned you are or how confident the candidate feels. Icebreaker questions help you learn a little more about who the candidate is, while easing the interviewee into the process.

You can get the conversation going by asking:

- Tell me about yourself.
- What caught your eye about this job posting?
- Tell me about your career path to this point. How did you wind up in your most recent position?
- Tell me something you are passionate about outside of work.



Questions like these are easy for candidates to answer, but they also provide you with important insights into whether the candidate has thought about the job, if their experience aligns with the job and whether they are people with passions or interests.

Questions to Uncover Soft Skills

Soft skills are arguably as important as technical skills when hiring for just about any role. No one works in isolation and the ability to communicate well, relate to others and demonstrate emotional intelligence are key factors for success.

Ask questions like these to uncover soft skills:



- ***Self-Awareness and Self-Regulation:***

- Tell me about a time your mood impacted your productivity.
- Describe a time you had to work with a dramatic, stressed-out co-worker in order to meet a deadline.
- Talk about a time when you had to work with someone who seemed to be going out of their way to push your buttons.

- ***Self-Motivation***

- Describe a time when you were feeling unsatisfied at work. How did you stay motivated?
- Talk about a situation in which you had to motivate others.
- Tell me about a time you felt burned out at work. What did you do to overcome it?

• **Empathy Questions**

- Tell me how you build rapport with a new co-worker.
- Describe a time when hearing someone else's perspective on a problem made you change your own mind or approach.
- Talk about a time you had to deliver difficult news to someone at work.
- How do you handle it when a co-worker comes to you with a problem but you are extremely busy?



• **Social Skills**

- Tell me about your preferred communication methods at work. Why do you prefer those?
- Describe your current relationship with your boss.
- What are some personality traits of people you typically clash with?
- What are some personality traits of people you typically work well with?
- Describe a recent conflict you experienced at work and how you resolved it.

Soft skills are all about the ways someone relates to others. Can they set their own feelings aside to achieve a goal? Do they focus on the task at hand or get caught up in office drama? Do they communicate well? These attributes will have a major impact on their long-term success.

Questions Uncover Attitude

People who complain a lot and have a generally poor attitude can bring down an entire team. Use questions like these to uncover how candidates interact with teammates, whether they can accept their own failures and their attitudes towards work.

- Tell me about a time you were asked to do something outside of your skill base or knowledge base. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time you were asked to do something that was beneath your skill base or knowledge base. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time you caused a conflict with a co-worker. How was it resolved?
- When was the last time you helped someone when it was inconvenient for you to do so?
- Describe a situation when you were tasked with something you felt was utterly impossible. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- When you're waiting on someone else to finish a task before you can complete your work, what do you do?
- Have you ever been blamed for someone else's mistake? How did you handle it?

No one is happy and positive 24 hours a day, but you're looking for signs the candidate tries to maintain a positive attitude and is willing to do what it takes to succeed – even when tasks are inconvenient, “beneath” them or difficult.

Behavioral Questions

Past performance is a great indicator of future performance, and behavioral questions are an important tool for assessing how a candidate might act on the job. The types of behavioral questions you can ask are limitless, but here are some you can use to create a good snapshot.

- Describe a situation in which you failed to reach a goal. Where did things go wrong?
- Tell me about a conflict you had with a co-worker that was impacting your ability to do your job well.
- Describe a time when you were asked to perform a task that went against your values. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you went the extra mile when it would have been easy to do the minimum? Why did you decide to go above and beyond? What was the outcome?
- Tell me about a time when you had to convince another staff member or leader to buy into a new idea or project? What was the result?
- Tell me about a time that a project looked like it was going to fail, but it ended up succeeding. What did you do to turn it around?

Make Sure to Mix It Up

When incorporating behavioral questions, make sure to use a mix of positive and negative scenarios that force the candidate to think about both successes and struggles. This forces candidates to open up about their shortcomings – because no one is perfect.

Questions to Uncover Cultural Fit



Hiring the right person for a role requires more than simply matching skills to the job. In order for employees to succeed and do their best work, they need to be aligned with the culture of the company. Use questions like these to determine whether a candidate is truly a cultural match for your organization.

- Describe the attributes you look for in a company before choosing to apply for a job.
- Describe your ideal role – a role where you would feel enthusiastic and able to make positive contributions.
- Describe a situation in which you were working under extreme pressure. How did you manage?
- Tell me about the best manager you ever worked for.
- How do you like to be managed?
- If your current employer offered you a raise to say with the company, would you take it? Why or why not?
- Whose job is it to help you build your skills and grow your career?
- Which of our core values as a company align most with your personal and professional values?

It's All About Alignment

Remember, there are not necessarily “good” or “bad” answers to these questions – it's really about determining whether the candidate's values and preferences align with the company values and its culture.

Questions to Throw a Candidate for a Loop

Throwing a curveball can be a great way to keep candidates on their toes, or to reel in a candidate who might seem a bit too big for their proverbial britches. Here are some unique questions to spice up the conversation and to further evaluate the candidate's cultural fit.

- I still have some reservations about your fitness for the role. Why do YOU think you are a good fit?
- When I call your last/present boss, what will they tell me about you?
- What are three of your biggest fears in life?
- Around here, everyone pitches in. Would you have a problem cleaning the toilets?
- Would you rather be liked or be feared?
- If you were an animal, what animal would you be?
- Every resume has one lie in it. Where's yours?

You're Not Trying to Trick Anyone...

These types of questions can catch a candidate off guard, but you aren't trying to trick them. It's really about how they handle curveballs – and whether they drop their guard and give you a peek into who they are. Watch how they handle these challenges and whether they are able to answer quickly, or if it seems as though they are trying to figure out what it is you want to hear.

Questions for Management Candidates

If you are interviewing people for management or supervisory roles, it is important to ask questions that relate to their management experience and style, so you can determine whether their style aligns with the overarching corporate culture.

- Tell me about your last successful project and your last failed project. Describe what contributed to the success or failure of each?
- How would you describe your management style?
- How would you establish credibility quickly with your new team?
- Tell me about a time someone on your team was not pulling their own weight. How did you handle it?
- Tell me about a time when you had to give someone difficult feedback.
- Tell me about the most difficult employee you've ever had to manage.
- What is your experience with hiring new employees? Letting employees go?
- If you had to tell the team that annual bonuses were being eliminated, what would you say to help protect morale?

Questions for Administrative Assistant Candidates

Administrative assistants are the backbone of any department. They need to be highly organized, they need to work well under pressure, and they also have to be diplomatic, as they are often gatekeepers for their bosses. Use questions like these to assess their attributes.

- **Confidentiality**

- What types of information do you personally classify as “confidential”?
- Describe a time a co-worker wanted you to share confidential information. How did you handle it?
- What steps do you take to protect confidential files, data and knowledge?

- **Communication**

- How do you turn down meetings on your boss’s behalf?
- Describe a time someone refused to take “no” for an answer.
- Your boss asks you to schedule a meeting with another exec who is notoriously difficult to catch. How do you make sure the meeting gets on the books?

- **Managing Workload Under Pressure**

- Tell me about the last time you felt overwhelmed at work. How did you overcome it?
- It’s 4:30 on a Friday afternoon and you are wrapping up, as you have plans at 5:30. Someone swings by your desk and wants something done immediately that isn’t an emergency, but will need to be completed. What do you do?
- You show up to work and find a project request from your boss. It must be completed in one day, but you were not given all the information you need to do the job accurately and on time. Unfortunately, your boss is unreachable for eight hours. What do you do?

Interview Questions for IT Candidates



Whether you're interviewing for the help desk or a lead developer, there are some important questions to ask every IT candidate who sits across from you to determine whether they are a great choice.

- What online resources do you use throughout the day to help you with your job?
- How do you keep your tech skills current?
- Pretend that I'm not a tech person. Please explain (pick a technology) in simple terms?
- What qualities do you think are most important for this role?
- What are your favorite tech products? Why?
- What are your least favorite tech products? Why?
- What are the pros and cons of working in an Agile environment? (If your team uses Agile methodology.)
- Tell me about a project you've worked on in your spare time.



Questions for Light Industrial Candidates

Light industrial interviews can often be rushed – especially under tight deadlines or when you're hiring for a major project or seasonal push. However, it is important to take your time and ask deliberate questions to uncover the right people.

- Describe your experience with (pricing, labeling, assembling, merchandising, etc. – whatever is relevant for the role).
- What is the biggest challenge you had at your last job?
- What was your favorite task at your last job?
- Have you ever witnessed an accident on the job? What went wrong?
- What do you do if your boss tells you to ignore safety procedures in order to hit a tight deadline?
- Tell me about a time you saw someone engaging in an unsafe work practice. What did you do? What was the outcome?
- What is the most difficult piece of equipment to work with? Why?



Questions for Marketing Professionals

Questions will vary based on the nature of the job, but it is important to ask some broad, yet marketing-specific questions to evaluate a candidate's abilities.

- What was the most successful project you've worked on in terms of ROI? Describe what went well and the end results.
- How do you stay on top of marketing trends?
- How do you build your own personal brand online?
- What do you do when you see a project is about to fail, go over budget, get pushed past the deadline, etc.?
- Tell me about a project you thought was a homerun but your boss or your client thought it was a dud. How did you handle it?



Evaluate the Questions They Ask You

It is also important to pay attention to the questions a candidate chooses to ask during an interview. Those questions can tell you a lot about their values, their approach to work and whether they have really thought about fitting in.

Look for signs the candidate has really thought about the job, rather than just printing of a list of questions they found online. Thoughtful questions touch on topics like:

- Team dynamics
- Leadership style of their future boss
- Long-term company vision
- Corporate culture
- Goals for the person in the role
- Challenges for the person in the role
- Training and development
- Potential objections you may have to their fitness for the role
- Next steps in the process

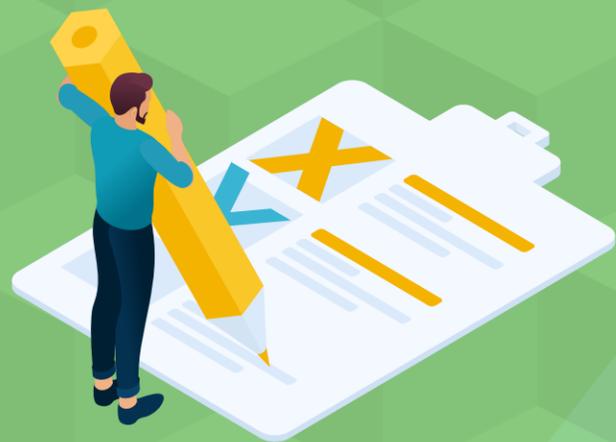
How Do You Really Know If You've Found the Right Fit?



Interviewing is **part science and part art form**. The biggest challenge is determining whether a candidate is being truthful, or if they are simply great at performing for an audience. Even if you ask all the right questions, it can be difficult to accurately assess whether your first choice really has what it takes to fit in and succeed.

The good news? There is a way to overhaul your hiring practices quickly and improve the quality of your new hires immediately.

Working with an expert recruiter is the **most effective way to improve your hiring practices**. A great recruiter will learn exactly what you need for the role and will quickly identify candidates who are a great fit today, tomorrow and into the future.



Contact us today to learn how we can help you hire for the long haul.