

The Interview Questions Guide: Role and industry-specific questions to help simplify your hiring process



Introduction

When looking for great people to join your team, interviews often give you the best insight into whether the candidate will be a good fit — not only from a skills perspective, but also for your company culture.

While it's important for candidates to have the right skill sets, how they will relate to your culture should also be a key consideration; will they align well with your current culture, and will they contribute to the culture you want to keep building?

This guide contains questions in the following categories to help you assess candidates:

- » Behavioral
- » General skills-based
- » Interpersonal
- » Creative thinking
- » Managing change
- » Communication
- » Problem-solving
- » Managerial
- » Executive
- » Industry specific

But let's start with the phone pre-screen.



Getting started

PHONE PRE-SCREEN

- » What attracted you to this position?
- » Is the salary range we have set for this position within your acceptable range?
- » Why are you currently searching for a new position?
- » What are the top three duties in the job you now have or in your most recent job?
- » What are some typical decisions you make and how do you make them? Give some examples.
- » What strengths do you feel you would bring to this organization?
- » What are your long-term career goals?
- » Describe for me your ideal company.

BEHAVIORAL-BASED AND HYPOTHETICAL QUESTIONS

- » If someone told you that you had made an error, describe how you would react and what steps you would take to correct it.
- » If someone asked you for assistance with a matter that is outside the parameters of your job description, what would you do, or how would you respond?
- » You are a committee member and disagree with a point or decision made by another committee member. How will you respond? What actions will you take?
- » Tell us about a time you dealt with conflict in the workplace.
- » Tell me about a time when you were a part of a great team. What was your contribution and role in making the team effective?
- » Give me an example of a time when you had to deal with a difficult co-worker. How did you handle the situation?
- » Tell me about a personal or career goal that you have accomplished and why that was important to you.
- » What strengths did you rely on in your current or last position to make you successful in your work?

Skills-based questions

GENERAL

- » Could you share with us a recent accomplishment of which you are most proud?
- » What would you have liked to do more of in your last position? What held you back?
- » Tell us a bit about your professional background, and then give us a description of how you think it relates to our current opening.
- » What skills do you have that make you the best candidate for this position?
- » Why have you applied for this position?
- » What skill set and value do you think you would bring to this position?
- » Tell me about your present or most recently held job. Why did you choose it? Why did you/do you want to leave?
- » What was your primary contribution/achievement in this role? What was/were the biggest challenges you faced?
- » What are your short-term and long-term professional goals?
- » In what areas would you like to further develop? What are your plans to accomplish these/this goal(s)?
- » What do you know about our company?
- » Why should we hire you?
- » If the position required it, would you be willing to travel?
- » If the position required it, would you be willing to relocate?
- » If you were offered this position, when would you be available to start?
- » After learning about this opportunity, what made you take the next step and apply for the job?
- » Now that you have learned about our company and the position for which you are applying, what hesitation would you have in accepting this job if we offer it to you?
- » Tell me anything else you would like us to know about you that will aid us in making our hiring decision.
- » What questions would you like to ask me?

INTERPERSONAL

- » What are your strengths?
- » Describe how you like to be managed, and the best relationship you've had with a previous or current manager.
- » Describe what you see as your strengths related to this job/position. Describe what you see as your weaknesses related to this job/position.
- » Assume you are in a situation where you have to deal with a person very different from yourself and you are finding it challenging to interact with that individual. What would you do?
- » What methods do you use to make decisions?
- » Describe a difficult time you have had dealing with an employee, customer, or co-worker. Why was it challenging? How did you handle it? What was the outcome?
- » How would your co-workers describe your work style/habits?
- » What do you do when others resist or reject your ideas or actions?

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- » What do you think are the best and worst aspects of working in a team-based setting? How do you handle working in a collaborative environment?
- » Under what kinds of conditions do you learn best?
- » How would your past or current employers describe your response to hectic or stressful situations?
- » How would your past or current co-workers describe your work style or work habits?
- » If you were offered this position, when would you be available to start?

CREATIVE THINKING

- » What is the best book you've read in the last year? What did you like about it?
- » What was the most creative thing you did in your most recent role?
- » Describe a time when you had to think "outside the box" and how did you go about it?
- » Tell me about a time when you tried to solve a problem with a totally different approach than is normally used. What was the result?
- » Describe an ideal work environment or "the perfect job."



MANAGING CHANGE

- » How do you react when the demands of a job change frequently?
- » How do you handle stress?
- » Have you ever had to persuade a group to accept a proposal or idea? How did you go about doing it? What was the result and how did you feel about it?
- » Have you ever been caught unaware by a problem or obstacle that you had not foreseen? What happened?
- » How comfortable are you with change? Give me an example.

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

- » Give an example of how you consider your audience prior to communicating with them. What factors influence your communication?
- » Describe your communication style.
- » Tell me about a time when effective listening skills helped you in a problematic situation.
- » What do you do when you think someone is not listening to you?
- » Have you ever given a presentation to a group? How did you prepare for it? What would you do differently?
- » Describe a time when you were able to overcome a communication barrier(s).

PROBLEM-SOLVING

- » Have you ever solved a problem others around you couldn't? Tell me about it.
- » What was one of the toughest problems you ever solved? What process did you go through to solve it?
- » Do people ever come to you for help in solving problems? Why?
- » How do you begin to solve a problem that initially seems insurmountable?
- » What do you do when you are faced with an obstacle to an important project? Give me an example.
- » How do you analyze different options to determine which is the best alternative?

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

- » What type of projects have you managed in the past?
- » Have you had a non-productive team member on your project team? What happened and how did you handle this situation?
- » What was the last big project you worked on?
- » How did you start this project?
- » What were the deliverables?

What metrics do you use to measure ongoing project status?

- » What, if any, cost overrun issues did you have? How did you handle these?
- » What other obstacles did you overcome?
- » Were the deadlines met? (Why or why not?)
- » What would you have done differently?
- » Describe a specific project for this position.
- » How would you start this project?
- » Who should be on the project team? Why?
- » What are the three biggest risks for this project?
- » What control measures/techniques would you put in place to overcome these three risks?

PROJECT WORK

- » Have you ever solved a problem others around you could not fix? Give me an example.
- » Tell me about a time when a work problem was more extensive than it initially appeared?
- » Do people generally come to you for help in solving problems? Give me an example of when this has happened.
- » Have you ever managed anything where the people or units reporting to you were in different locations? Tell me how this worked.
- » How do you go about persuading and leading resources that are not under your direct control to get something completed?
- » When you design a process to get something accomplished, how do you line up the steps?
- » How do you react when you find yourself hung up in an inefficient process?
- » What are some of the most effective ways to keep tasks on track?
- » Tell me about a time when you organized and managed others on a complex task from beginning to end.
- » How do you get people not under your scope of authority to do work on your project?

Position-specific questions

MANAGERIAL

- » Why do you think a team of people – sports team, work team, may not work well together?
- » Tell us about your management style - people, teamwork, direction?
- » Describe your ideal supervisor.
- » What is your philosophy of management?
- » How have you participated in planning processes? Please give us an example.
- » Is it more important to be a detail-oriented person, or a big-picture person? Please explain your position.
- » What was the most challenging personnel issue that you have dealt with and how you handled it.
- » Describe for me a time when you have come across questionable business practices. How did you handle the situation?
- » A new policy is to be implemented organization-wide. You do not agree with this new policy. How do you communicate this policy to your staff?
- » Describe for me a decision you made which would normally have been made by your supervisor. What was the outcome?
- » Discuss and differentiate between remediation, corrective action, and discipline.
- » Explain, step by step, how you have handled an employee with performance problems.
- » What coaching or mentoring experience have you had? With groups or one-on-one? How did you determine the appropriate way to coach/mentor and what were the results?
- » Managing requires motivating employees as well as accomplishing tasks. Do you find it more natural to point out what is wrong so employees can competently accomplish tasks, OR to praise employees for their work and then point out what may need correcting?
- » Are you at your best when dealing with details and day-to-day operations OR with concepts, envisioning and planning for the future? Give me an example.

EXECUTIVE

- » Please describe your interest in becoming [title of position].
- » Tell me about your current position or most recent position and how you helped the organization accomplish its goals and mission.
- » What did you do for that company that made a difference and for which you believe you will be remembered?
- » Tell me about your experience in leading and managing an organization similar to ours.
- » Do you have a personal philosophy of management?
- » Tell me about your fiscal management experience: budgeting, reporting, cutting costs, building and maintaining reserves.
- » Have you ever had to champion an unpopular change? How did you handle it?
- » Have you ever faced a significant ethical problem at work? How did you handle it?
- » Tell me about your experience working with a board of directors. What approach and philosophy did you follow in working with boards?
- » What do you think is the role of the President/CEO in strategic planning for the organization?
- » Give me some example of how and when you were the spokesperson for your current or most recent company.
- » As our President/CEO, how would you proceed if the board of directors adopted a policy or program that you felt was inconsistent with the goals and mission of our company?
- » Tell me about your experiences with staff development. How do you think your current or most recent staff would describe you?
- » How do you stay informed of current ideas on management and the (industry field for the company/organization)?
- » Based on what you have read and heard, what ideas do you have about continuing and increasing the success of this company?
- » Are there any programs, policies, or actions of (name of company/organization) that you have heard of with which you have concerns or differences?
- » If you are hired for this position and are still with (name of company/organization) five years from now, how do you think the organization will be different?



Functional and industry-specific questions

ACCOUNTING

- » Describe some recent projects you were involved in to improve Accounting's efficiency/effectiveness. What did you do?
- » Describe for me a time when you have come across questionable accounting practices. How did you handle the situation? What further steps did you take?
- » Have you completed month end/year end closing? How much experience do you have?
- » Describe your most challenging encounter with month end/year end closing. How did you resolve the problem?
- » Describe your PL (profit/loss) experience.
- » What type of inventory audits have you been involved in? Describe challenges you've faced.
- » Tell me about your knowledge of commissions accounting.
- » What experience have you had with tax accounting?

ADMINISTRATIVE

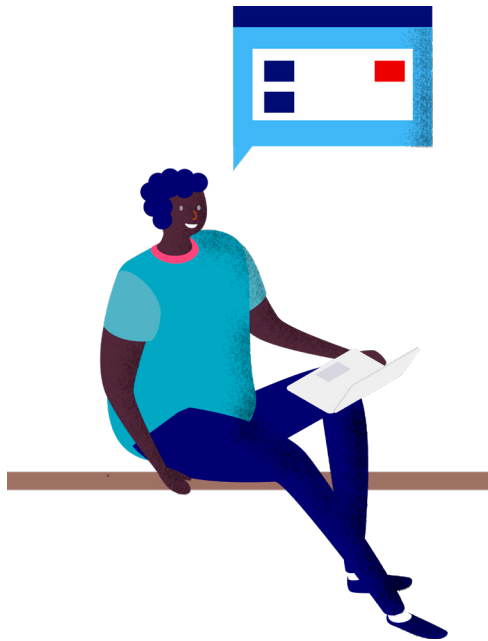
- » What do you like about working with customers/clients? What do you dislike?
- » Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult boss, co-worker, or customer. How did you handle the situation?
- » Give us an example of how you stay organized when juggling multiple tasks.
- » Have you worked under time constraints before? Can you give us an example?
- » Was there a time when you struggled to meet a deadline?

ADMINISTRATIVE (continued)

- » What is unique about your work style?
- » What do you know about the company?

Describe a time when you made a mistake at work? How did you deal with this situation and what was its outcome?

- » What is unique about your work style?
- » What do you know about the company?
- » What do you think your last boss would say about you and your work?
- » Each boss is little different, my management philosophy /style is _____. In what way do you think that your work style would complement mine? What do you foresee to be challenges or adjustments for us in this new role?
- » Describe your previous experience with travel planning and reservations.
- » What experience do you have scheduling meetings, conferences and ordering food and materials for meetings?
- » How would you describe your skills in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Access, and (other relevant software used in the job)? Beginner, intermediate, or advanced?



CUSTOMER SERVICE

- » What do you like about being in Customer Service? What do you find is the most difficult part of being in Customer Service?
- » Tell me about a time when you went out of your way to give great service to a customer.
- » Describe a process or system that you improved so customers would be better served.
- » Tell me about a time when you asked for feedback on your customer service skills from your manager or co-worker and then used that response to improve your work.
- » Tell me about a time when you knew that your customer might not get what they needed on time. How did you handle this?
- » Tell me about a time when you had to say "no" to a customer's request because it was against company policy.
- » Tell me about a time when you had trouble working with a difficult or demanding customer. How did you handle this?
- » Tell me about a situation in which you did not do your best with a customer. What did you do about this?
- » How do you go about establishing rapport with a customer? Give an example.
- » Describe a time when you exceeded a customer's expectations?
- » Describe a time when you lost a customer. What would you do differently?
- » When are policy exceptions to customers warranted? Not warranted?
- » How do you go about deciding what strategy to employ when dealing with a difficult customer?
- » What have you done to improve relations with your customers?

ENGINEERING

- » Tell me about a long-term engineering project for which you were responsible that required you to communicate with numerous people and departments.
- » Tell me about a time when you dealt with an engineering problem that tested your knowledge.
- » If we offer you this position, what one technical contribution would you expect to make during the first 3 months on the job?
- » Describe the most important written technical report that you had to complete.
- » The last time that you experienced a technical problem during your workday, to whom did you go for help? Why did you choose this person?
- » Tell me about a time when you solved a problem that appeared to be unsolvable.
- » Explain how you can keep from getting bored when dealing with routine engineering work.
- » Describe a time when you were instrumental in creating a good relationship with another department within your company.
- » We often work in teams. Tell me about a time when an engineering team project failed.
- » Think of a specific engineering project that you've completed. Were you successful in achieving the desired results?
- » What was the most interesting/challenging technical proposal you've ever written?
- » Give me an example of a time when you needed to help engineers learn a new skill set. What did you do?
- » Describe a time when you had to make a very important and difficult decision that affected everyone in the engineering department.
- » How do you keep your team from feeling overwhelmed when various projects in process are equally important?
- » Give an example of a time when you had to quickly change project priorities. How did you do it?
- » What means do you use to communicate step-by-step engineering processes when making a critical decision that involves other engineers?

HEALTH CARE

- » How will your work performance enhance (name of company/organization) in the healthcare arena as it is today?
- » How do you handle stressful situations?
- » Give me an example of a time where you worked effectively under pressure.
- » How do you ensure that you deliver the best care, for every patient, every time?
- » Talk tell us about previous collaboration efforts you've spearheaded with other provider organizations, physicians, businesses, or insurers.
- » How do you keep up to date on new laws and regulations to ensure compliance?

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

- » In your experience, what are the essential elements of an IT disaster recovery plan?
- » Describe the types of network security features you have implemented or maintained in the past.
- » When you have several users experiencing computer problems, how do you determine which users get help first?
- » Describe your decision-making process when selecting which IT certifications to pursue.
- » What software have you had the most success supporting?
- » What characteristics do you feel are necessary for success as a technical support worker?

HOSPITALITY

- » How would you define guest satisfaction?
- » Describe a time when someone failed to provide satisfactory service to you. How could that person improve their performance in that particular situation?

Give an example of one thing that is important in building repeat-customer business?

- » How would you define guest satisfaction?
- » Describe a time when someone failed to provide satisfactory service to you. How could that person improve their performance in that particular situation?
- » What types of behaviors do you find most annoying or frustrating in a guest? How do you handle those behaviors?
- » What specific process do you go through when a guest is dissatisfied?
- » Describe a time when you had to deal with a difficult guest-relations problem.
- » Tell me about a time when you needed to work as part of a team to satisfy a guest.
- » “Yes” is the word guests like to hear. However, if you had to say “no,” how would you do it?
- » How do you think previous guests would describe you and your work?

CONSULTING

- » How many active organizations do you currently represent?
- » What sizes of organizations have you worked in?
- » What industries?
- » Have you worked for any direct competitors (of this company)?
- » Do you have any exclusive or non-poaching (non-compete) agreements with any of these organizations?
- » Do you have an existing retainer with any of these?
- » What has been the average length of your assignments during the last year?
- » Depict the scope of work for a typical assignment.
- » What database or project tools are you familiar with, i.e., Access, Project?
- » What other tools are needed for the level of tasking requested?
- » What is your expectation of on- versus off-site work?
- » If additional assets are required to meet the Statement of Work (SOW), how would these be recruited and deployed?
- » Do you have a model agreement which you prefer to use and is it modularized for adding SOWs or tasking within an SOW?
- » Do any of your assignments feature early completion incentives?
- » What is your preferred compensation structure for tasking?

MARKETING

- » What qualities and skills do you think a successful marketing professional should have?
- » What non-marketing skills should a successful marketing professional have?
- » Tell me what type of relationship ought to exist between marketing and sales departments?
- » How about the relationship between marketing and sales and service departments?
- » Tell me about your experience in marketing research.
- » Which of the qualities and skills you named for successful marketing do you have?
- » Tell me about a marketing nightmare you were involved in. If you have had none, describe what you would consider a marketing nightmare.
- » Tell me about two marketing accomplishments that were very successful or that you are the most proud of.
- » What kind of training have you had in digital marketing?
- » What three things are most important to you in a marketing position?
- » How do you manage multiple, ongoing projects?

SALES

- » Describe the sales activities in which you were engaged in your last job.
- » What were your responsibilities throughout the sales cycle?
- » How would you rate yourself as a closer?
- » As a sales representative, what support, either administrative or sales assistance, did you receive?
- » Have you ever been engaged in team sales?
- » How would you describe your abilities as a business developer? As a business maintainer?
- » How were/are your incentives structured in your last/current job?
- » Did/do you have assigned quotas or targets?
- » How much of your time was devoted to sales vs. other assigned duties?
- » Describe the ideal sales job from your perspective.
- » How would your prior sales managers describe your sales capabilities? For business development? For enhancing existing customer business?
- » Describe the best sales incentive plan under which you have worked.
- » Describe the ideal sales support you would need to be most effective as a sales representative.



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