

I. Tips to Ensure a Useful Interview



A. Prepare:

1. Understand the job thoroughly.
2. Know which two to three skills are critical to getting the job done well.
3. Focus questions/probing on areas that directly affect the job.
4. Do not oversell the position or the company.
5. Have a pen and pad to list out the questions you plan to ask in advance for the specific job and write down the answers so you don't miss anything and can compare candidates later.

B. Things to Pay Attention to:

1. Listen for the energy your candidate brings to the descriptions.
2. Listen for details — how have the candidate's accomplishments impacted their organization as a whole?
3. Probe for specific examples. Do not oversell the position or the company.
4. Look for span of control and team leadership.
5. Get examples of the candidate's actual role, and the time and effort involved.
6. Tune in to interpersonal challenges and the candidate's strategies for dealing with conflict.
7. Listen for evidence that the candidate can successfully motivate others.
8. Look for job-specific competencies.
9. Ask for specific details in order to minimize exaggeration.
10. Anchor each major performance objective for the position with a past accomplishment of the candidate.
11. Listen for indications that the candidate expects to adapt easily
12. Look for past evidence that the candidate can contribute in a new environment.

II. Potential Questions to Ask:



The following are a series of potential interview questions organized based on the type of skill you are assessing:

How Decisive Is the Candidate? (Able to make decisions quickly on available information and take action; make commitment and not change decisions when challenged; deal with emergencies as necessary.)

1. Describe a situation in which you had to draw a conclusion quickly and take speedy action.
2. Tell me about a situation when you had to stand up for a decision you made even though it made you unpopular.
3. Describe a situation in which you had to take immediate action in a crisis involving human life or severe financial consequences.
4. Many situations at work require fast thinking and speed in making decisions. Give me an example of a situation in which you were especially skillful in making a decision quickly.
5. Many times it is important to be hard-headed about a decision you are making, particularly when others don't like it. Give me an example of a time when you stuck by a decision even though it was under attack by others.

How Well Do They Communicate?

Verbally (Able to speak clearly to present information through the spoken word; influence or persuade others through oral presentation in positive or negative circumstances; listen well.)

1. What types of experiences have you had in talking with customers or clients? Specifically, tell me about a time when you had to communicate under difficult circumstances.
2. Tell me about a time when your active listening skills really paid off for you — maybe a time when other people missed the key idea in what was being expressed.
3. What have been your experiences in making presentations or speeches to small or large groups? What has been your most successful experience in speechmaking?
4. Tell me about a specific experience of yours that illustrates your ability to influence another person verbally. Feel free to use an example that involves changing an attitude, selling a product/idea, or being persuasive.

5. Careful listening and effective communications go hand-in-hand. Tell me about a specific time when your ability to listen helped you communicate better.

Written (Able to write clearly and effectively present ideas and to document activities; to read and interpret written information.)

1. In some jobs it is necessary to document work thoroughly, in writing. For example, documentation might be necessary to prove you did your job correctly or to train another person to do it. Give me an example of your experiences in this area.
2. This job will require you to spend a large amount of time writing. Tell me about your writing experiences that you think will contribute to your ability to do this job well.
3. Describe the most significant work experience you have had in which you had to use reference materials, library information, manuals, etc. to get a job done. How much time was required? How did the reference materials help you the most?
4. Describe your experiences in editing manuscripts, articles, documents, or any other form of written communication. Be specific.

Can They Inject Positive Energy into Your Organization? (Able to create positive energy/motivation in both individuals and groups.)

1. Give me an example of a time when your positive attitude caused others to be motivated or energized. Be specific.
2. Give me a specific example of something you did which helped build enthusiasm in others.
3. Tell me about a specific time when your ability to reward and encourage others created positive motivation.
4. Tell me about a time in which you used competition successfully as a means of encouraging others to try hard.
5. At work it is sometimes desirable to use recognition to build motivation in others. Describe a time in which you were able to use recognition to create positive energy in another person.

Can They Analyze a Situation to Solve a Problem? (Able to use a systematic approach in solving problems through analysis of problem and evaluation of alternate solutions; use logic, mathematics, or other problem-solving tools in data or in generating solutions.)

1. Tell me about a time when you were systematic in identifying potential problems at work. Feel free to showcase your analytical skills.
2. Solving a problem often necessitates evaluation of alternate solutions. Give me an example of a time when you actively defined several

- solutions to a single problem. Did you use any tools such as research, brainstorming, or mathematics?
3. Give me an example of any time when you used tools such as survey data, library research, or statistics as important contribution to the definition of a specific problem.

Do They Set Goals? (Able to define realistic and specific goals and objectives; able to prioritize objectives.)

1. In an aggressive working environment, it is often necessary to prioritize goals to be sure that effort is allocated appropriately. Tell me about the most important time in your working history when you prioritized your goals successfully.
2. What important target dates did you set to reach objectives on your last job? How did you set the dates? Exactly what were they, and what were your results?
3. What have been your experiences in defining long-range goals? Tell me what specific goal was set, how it was set, and how successful you were in its achievement.

How Are Their Planning Skills? (Able to organize or schedule people or tasks; to develop realistic action plans while being sensitive to time constraints and resource availability.)

1. Planning is often more than thinking — it is also doing. Tell me what you have done with such tools as flow charts, production schedules, filing systems, or anything else to help you plan.
2. Give me an example of a time in which you were effective in doing away with the constant emergencies and surprises in your work climate. How did your planning help you deal with the unexpected?
3. Time management has become a necessary factor in personal productivity. Give me an example of any time management skill you have learned and applied at work. What resulted from use of the skill?
4. Pick any event in the last five years of your work that gives a good example of your ability to use forecasting techniques. Did you use statistical procedures or a gut-level approach? What was your biggest predictive triumph? How did you do it?
5. Getting results at work often entails spelling out detailed action plans. Tell me about how you used Management by Objectives methods to generate a plan leading to a specific goal. Describe the goal and the steps you used to achieve it.

How Are Their Leadership Skills? (Able to influence the actions and options of others in a desired direction; to exhibit judgment in leading others to worthwhile objectives.)

1. Organizations are built on the principal of delegation. Give me an example of the greatest success you ever had in the use of delegation. Take time to think of the best example you can and be specific in describing it.
2. Instead of simply using authority to include another individual, it is sometimes desirable to lead other person by setting a positive example for them to follow. Describe a work situation when your example served as a model for others.
3. Being able to change another person's behavior is both a skill and a responsibility. Tell me about a time when you were successful in this area — what kind of payoffs accrued to yourself, the other person, and the organization?
4. Individuals vary in their ability to use power or persuasion to influence others. Give me an example of a time when you used either power or persuasion to guide another person to a worthwhile objective. Be specific.

Other General Interview Questions:

1. What would like me to know about you that is not on your resume?
2. What are your long-term goals?
3. What motivates you to do your best?
4. What distinguishes you from all the other bright people we interview?
5. What is a common misperception of you?
6. What do you do for fun?
7. What is an example of how you have taken risks in the past?
8. How do you measure success in your life?
9. If you had a time machine, what would you be doing in fifteen years?
10. Describe the company you work(ed) for and what it does (did).
11. What's been your most significant accomplishment in each of your past two or three jobs?
12. One of our key objectives for the person who is offered this position will be to _____ (describe a top performance objective). Can you tell me about your most important comparable accomplishments?
13. If you were offered this position, how would you go about implementing _____? (Describe the top two or three performance objectives your organization has established for the position.)
14. What were the toughest decisions you have had to make, why did you made them, and how did they turn out?
15. What are the environment and resources available to you now and how did you make more resources available?
16. What are some of the biggest mistakes you've made?
17. What you would do differently if you could do it again?
18. What did you like and what didn't you like at your previous position?
19. Why were you chosen for the job?