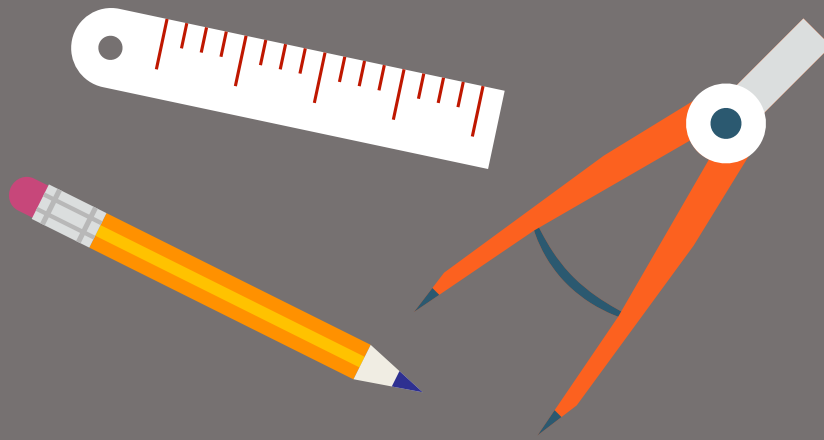


7 Interview Questions You Need to be Asking



PRACTICAL TOOLS

7 Interview Questions You Need to be Asking



In the ResourcefulManager Interviewing Framework, we saw that we want to walk away from every hiring interview with a pretty good understanding of the candidate's skills, intelligence, cultural fit and personal character. Depending on the importance of these factors in your environment, these are the traits that you will have likely put on your Scorecard to arrive at an objective evaluation of the candidates you and your team want to interview.

But how do you get at the real answers to those questions?

Any hiring interview is a bit of a fencing match. You're trying to learn the most about the interviewee, but they are trying to keep some things private – tell you only the good while hiding any possible negatives.

The classic "Tell me about your strengths and weaknesses" approach just won't cut it. Everybody's heard that question. You get rehearsed stock answers saying that their greatest strength is that they're a hard worker, and their greatest weakness is that they have a tendency to work too hard.

Here are 7 interview questions you may not have considered before to get at a candidate's **SKILL, INTELLIGENCE** and **FIT** and **PERSONAL CHARACTER**. A sampling is also provided of some of the worst – and some of the best – answers you may get to these novel questions.

SKILLS

1. This job involves _____ (assuming that you've given a fairly detailed description of what you're looking for, you should be able to sum it up briefly). Every company is different and every job is probably slightly different, but what's the closest thing to it that you've ever done during your career in a previous job, and how well did you perform at that job?

Bad answer: "I don't think I've ever done anything quite like it."

Good answer: Anything that shows the candidate is able to make the connection in his or her mind between the job duties you've outlined at your company and what they've done in the past. Anything that shows some creativity in making the connection will get extra credit.

Reason: They must realize that unless they can demonstrate previous relevant experience, they're not likely to get the job. Ideally, you'd rather not have to train someone from scratch if they have not yet acquired any relevant skills.

2. Every job involves some degree of problem-solving – the bigger the job, the bigger the problems. What are some of the biggest problems you have faced in previous jobs and how did you solve them?

Bad answer: "I was in danger of missing a deadline, so I asked for more time/more people/more resources to get the job done."

Good answer: Anything that shows the candidate made the deadline despite obstacles by exercising some creativity.

Reason: Anyone can solve a problem if they are given unlimited time, people and resources. You want to get people who can get the job done despite ever-present constraints. You want people who show accountability for tasks entrusted to them and the creativity to get them done no matter what obstacles are put in their way.

INTELLIGENCE

3. What do you like most about this job (after it's been described to them and after they've said they have a pretty good grasp of what will be required) and is there anything that still gives you pause?

Bad answer: "I like everything about it and nothing gives me pause."

Good answer: Any intelligent articulation of what they think they would like and be good at in the job, and some objection on a point they're not quite sure about.

Reason: If they say nothing gives them pause, they're lying. Changing jobs is a major life step and there are always butterflies in the stomach. You want people smart enough to admit that there always some remaining doubts, so that you can together figure out whether those doubts can be overcome or satisfied.

4. We've peppered you with a lot of questions for some time now. Turnabout is fair play. I'm sure you have some questions for us. What's on your mind? How can we help you figure out if we're right for each other?

Bad answer: "What's the pay?" "What are the hours?" Or "Where will my desk (or office) be?" Or, worse still: "No questions; you've answered everything."

Good answer: Any thoughtful questions about big-picture considerations showing there's some higher-level thought going on in the applicant's head. For example, questions about the company's mission, the specific goals of the job for which they are being recruited, and the company culture.

Reason: Letting them ask questions is an excellent way to find out what's really on their mind. If they're only worried about putting in an 8-hour day for a paycheck, that would be disappointing. It shows a very pedestrian kind of mind. And if they're only worried about the size of their office or cubicle, they may be into trappings and focused on the wrong things. You want people who focus on deliverables.

FIT

5. Everybody goes through a learning period. We do things a little differently. The ability to take and incorporate feedback from more experienced employees has proven to be essential to success here. Please give me an example from a previous job when you were told by a supervisor that some piece of work you had done was not good enough and had to be redone. How did you react? How did that criticism make you feel?

Bad answer: "I had an idiot supervisor and he did not appreciate my genius."

Good answer: Any thoughtful answer that shows the applicant recognized he did something wrong, appreciated the feedback, and was able to incorporate it to come back strong and deliver a better final product – even though they might have to admit that receiving the feedback at first didn't make them feel very good. You don't want them to deny normal human feelings – that would not be credible.

Reason: The best predictor of future behavior is past behavior. If the candidate shows he or she continually fought with his or her supervisors and showed defensiveness in the face of criticism, he or she is not likely to change their ways.

PERSONAL CHARACTER

6. After this interview, you're going to go home to your spouse/friends/family and they're going to ask you how the interview went and how you now see this opportunity. What are you going to tell them?

Bad answer: "That it went well. That I think I'm going to get this job."

Good answer: Anything that describes in their own words how they understood the job that you may be offering them, in words that show they were listening to you and can feed it back to others. Any intelligent articulation of the job's and the company's mission will get extra credit.

Reason: You don't want them to sound presumptuous – they should not have been told that they already have the job in the bag. The reason for the question is that people will be more honest to their immediate circle of family and friends and, in this way, you have a better chance of hearing from them how sold they are on the job. If they can repeat accurately to their friends what the job is all about, that also shows good listening skills.

7. What are you passionate about?

Bad answer: "My wife/spouse," or "My dog/cat."

Good answer: Any other outside interest, whether it be chess, bridge, baseball, stamp collecting, gardening or sci-fi movies.

Reason: People had better be able to muster some passion for something. The job may require them to be passionate about customer service, about writing effective press releases, about dotting the i's and crossing the t's in accounts payable, or about making sure the nuts are screwed on right on the assembly line. Whatever it is, they had better be able to be passionate about it. You don't want flatliners.