

The Interview Questions You Should Be Asking

Get the most revealing answers from your candidates.



Introduction

Interviewing isn't easy, but the process isn't going anywhere.

To find out how to spot a top performer in today's saturated job market, we asked LinkedIn hiring managers how they screen candidates.

With their insight, we've determined the most revealing interview questions and answers for today's most in-demand jobs.

Whether you're hiring for sales, marketing, or software engineering, or you're just looking to brush up on your interview skills, this e-book is designed to get you asking the right questions and analyzing candidate answers so you can hire the best person for the role.



The top traits

Learn to screen the top soft skills for each industry by asking the right interview questions and analyzing a candidate's answers.

Software engineers

Ambition

Integrity

Adaptable

Proactive

Innovative

Team player

Approachability

Curious

Takes ownership

[65% of hiring managers](#) agree that a lack of soft skills among candidates limits company productivity. Though they're difficult to screen for, soft skills are central to any role. And with the right interview questions, identifying those skills – including adaptability, integrity, and ambition – will help you find a highly productive new hire.



Top traits of
Software Engineer.



Ambition

Sample question

Where do you see yourself within our organization in five years?

Sample answer

In five years, I would like to be considered a mentor – not just on the my team, but throughout the organization as a whole.

I'll also have taken the lead on a number of projects that helped your company succeed. I'd love to be the type of employee you benchmark future hires against.

What to listen for

High performers should be able to list a series of accomplishments and achievements from their past, which will help you predict their future success.

Look for candidates who align their goals with your organization's success and who treat this question as an exploration of ways they meet the job description.

Integrity

Sample question

Tell me about a time when you had to handle a tough problem that challenged fairness or ethical issues. What did you do?

Sample answer

A few teammates inserted language in a proposal that overstated product benefits relevant to business needs. I took steps to demonstrate why this language shouldn't be included, referencing internal product documents and even looping in product managers to get a second opinion. The decision to remove certain language wasn't welcomed by the entire team, but it was the right thing to do for the prospective client.

What to listen for

This answer reveals the candidate's ability to solve problems in the face of adversity and actually influence the process. If the candidate doesn't present a specific experience or their scenario lacks complexity, it could be a red flag.

No candidate will be perfect, but one who demonstrates that they were willing to go against popular opinion reveals their transparency and trustworthiness. This should translate to someone who values the longevity of client relationships over a short-term sale.

Proactive

Sample question

Describe a time when you received criticism or feedback from your delivery manager or client. How did you react?

Sample answer

When I first got started in the role, I had the noted down the deliverables, but I struggled to manage my time against the high volume of work. After a review with my manager that indicated she was aware of these issues, I was determined to figure out a systematic approach to staying on top of prospecting and nurturing my activities. First, I defined the cadence of communications and used calendar tools to make sure I had reminders in place. That allowed me to follow through on daily tasks and ensure that I had time to complete all the necessary activities to be effective in this role.

What to listen for

People are accustomed to constant rejection, but they should be able to absorb criticism, analyze it, and take actions to constantly improve.

The best candidates are the ones who want feedback so they know what they can do to improve. They ask lots of questions, are accountable for mistakes, and take action to remedy the situation quickly.

Innovative

Sample question

What is the most exciting project/program you've worked on? What was your role and what impact did you have?

Sample answer

In my most recent role, I was a key member of the solutions team who prepared the on the edge solution for new client. I was responsible for leading the design, test and launch, and worked closely with a counterpart to handle the client presentations and sales. The solutions and concept was accepted by the customer with open hands.

What to listen for

This candidate should highlight how they played an integral role in the project, as well as its successes and failures.

They should also highlight key insights that are sharp and grounded in methodology. It's important to articulate the pain point and consumer need.

Adaptable

Sample question

In what kind of environment do you do your best work?

Sample answer

There is something to be said for working in a large organization and the safety net that comes with being part of a big team. However, in my time working with a startup, I learned much more about what it takes to make a business successful, beyond just lines of code.

What to listen for

Look for candidates whose answer shows a real understanding of the demands of the role you are hiring for.

You want their answer to be realistic, but also demonstrate awareness to the expectations of your specific organization.

Team player

Sample question

What distinguishes a great software engineer from a good one? Do you feel you have these qualities?

Sample answer

A great software engineer knows that they can't do everything, and that it takes a team of people to get the job done. I believe I have the makings of a great engineer, because I'm willing to ask for help when I need it. At the same time, I know what I'm good at; when I can, I offer my services in the places I excel. It's all about balance, really.

What to listen for

This question can provide insight into the thought process of a candidate. Look for an answer that shows initiative and communication skills, traits often overlooked for someone in an engineer role. This particular answer shows humility, since they're also willing to ask for help.

A candidate who understands the difference between pragmatism and perfectionism will benefit your organization.

Approachability

Sample question

Describe a situation where you had a positive effect on someone. What did you do? How did the other person react?

Sample answer

During a time of rapid growth in my last company, we were hiring engineers right out of college. At one point I noticed a young developer struggling with their workload. I didn't want to point out that their struggle was evident, but casually offered a few tips I'd learned over the years. Eventually the employee came to me on their own and I was able to assist in a more official capacity. Just a few months later, I was able to ask that same developer for help on another project.

What to listen for

Being approachable is essential in the role of a software engineer. You'll want someone who knows how to work well with others and offers assistance for the greater good of the company.

Curious

Sample question

Do you have any hobbies outside of work?

Sample answer

I'm a big believer in giving back, so I volunteer with a local nonprofit that helps the homeless. It gives me a better sense of working with all kinds of people and understanding that everyone has different needs and motivations.

What to listen for

Someone who has a hunger for exploration is eager to learn.

A candidate with a curious mind is more willing to ask questions and might be more engaged in the office. They could also bring new ideas, perspectives, or strategies to the business.

Takes ownership

Sample question

Discuss one of your previous projects that didn't go smoothly. Explain how you dealt with those challenges to complete the project successfully.

Sample answer

When my team realized our deadline could be missed, I opened up a dialogue with other stakeholders and quickly determined that the best course of action was to strip back some of the less crucial features to allow us to launch on time with a functioning product.

What to listen for

This question allows you to identify whether the candidate can take control. Even if they generally work alone, it can help you understand their other skills, such as time and project management