

INTERVIEWING IN DEPTH

These are the best interview questions we've ever encountered. It's also the best structure for an interview. For key hires, using these questions and this structure ensures that you'll get the most out of the interview.

Introduction

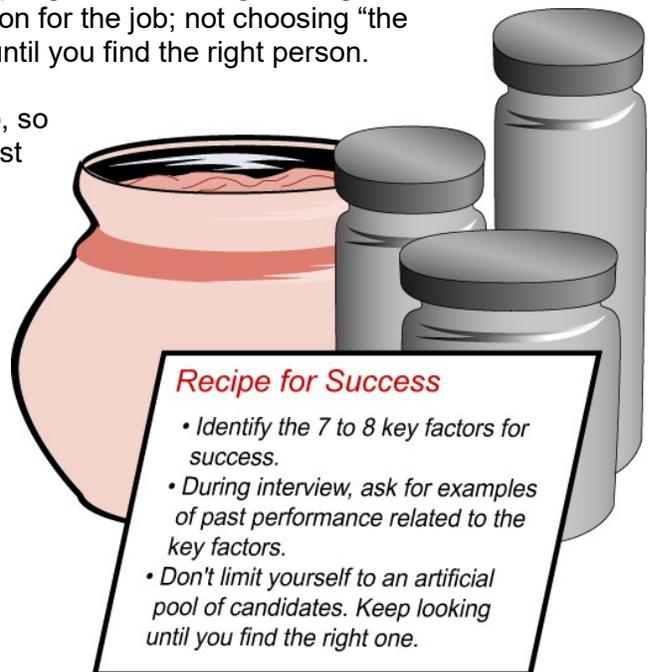
Before you conduct an interview, be sure you have identified the specific behaviors and competencies that are important to be successful in the position. Remember that the best predictor of future success is past performance.

Don't limit yourself to an artificial pool of people gathered through a single recruitment campaign. Your goal is finding the right person for the job; not choosing "the best" out of a limited pool. So keep looking until you find the right person.

Some people interview better than others do, so conduct thorough reference checks. The most valuable reference is someone you know who also knows the candidate.

Suggested interview structure

1. Introduction, small talk
2. Background questions
3. Success factor questions
4. Performance questions
5. How candidates think of themselves
6. Career goal questions
7. Honesty questions
8. Chemistry questions
9. Closing question
10. Respond to candidates' questions



The Interview

Background Questions:

- Tell me about your background. Let's start with your education. What did you enjoy most? Least? What courses did you do best in?
- Tell me about your career. How did you choose it? What would you have done differently?*
- Tell me about each job you did. (Probe for success factors)*

*Asterisk indicates questions we strongly recommend asking.

Success Factor questions:

Success factor questions are tied to the key activities the candidate needs to do in order to succeed. Be sure to develop the success factors in advance. A typical list might have 7-8 success factors. Then develop questions to probe the candidate's past performance.

Here are some examples of possible success factors:

- Organize a sales team.
- Build consensus among multiple stakeholders.
- Maintain positive working relationships up, down, and across the organization.
- Develop a new business that attracts outside funding.
- Meet tight timelines for yourself and your team.
- Manage communications successfully during a crisis.
- Develop a succession plan.
- Motivate people and teams to work across department boundaries.
- Build the overall intelligence of the organization.

For each success factor, probe for one or two specific examples of success. E.g.:

- Walk me through the steps you took to do this. (Tip: Look for thoroughness, research skills, creativity, and ability to draw on people's strengths.)
- How did you know you were successful? How did you measure it? (Tip: Look for creativity in use of analytical skills.)

Follow up with:

- What about that experience did you enjoy – and NOT enjoy?
- How would other people evaluate your ability to do this? What would they say you could have done better?

Performance questions:

- What characteristics of your present job do you like? What are some things you don't like?*
- How would you change your job if you had the power to do so?*
- Describe the importance of your job within the company's overall business plan?*
- What reasons do you have for seeking another position?*
- Do you feel appreciated in your present job?*
- Have you been in your current job too long? Why?*
- What are the top three accomplishments in your present job? How would others view them?*
- What are the most serious problems you've encountered in your present job? How did you overcome them?*
- Tell me why you left each of your jobs?*
- If you could change anything about your work career, what would you have done differently?*
- What do you think of your current employer?
- Name positive factors about your present company?
- Describe the personality of your present company?
- Which job was the most frustrating? The most rewarding or exciting?
- What bores you in your present job?*

*Asterisk indicates questions we strongly recommend asking.

- Do you feel you are being compensated appropriately for your position and responsibilities?*

Questions to uncover how candidates think of themselves:

- Give five adjectives to describe yourself.*
- What do you consider your greatest strengths?*
- What are your shortcomings? What have you done to overcome them?*
- What motivates you to be successful?*
- How would someone close to you describe you relative to your work?*
- Describe where your career is heading and the direction your life has taken. Are you pleased with where you are in life right now?*
- Do you find pleasure in your work? How so?*
- Have you considered another career? If so, what?*
- Name something you've really wanted to do but have never been able to do.*
- What are your personal interests?
- Is there anything about yourself that you are disappointed in? Why?*
- What things about yourself are you proud of?*

Career goal questions:

- What responsibilities do you want? What kind of results would you expect to achieve in your next job?*
- What kind of responsibilities would you like to avoid in your next job?*
- Where is your career leading? What are your long-term goals?*
- How do you expect to get there? Are you on the right track?*

Honesty questions:

- How do you feel about exaggerating or telling a white lie to sell a product?*
- In what situations in the business environment do you feel that total honesty would be inappropriate?*
- Give some examples where you haven't been able to meet commitments, perhaps because of someone else's actions.*
- If you saw a co-worker doing something dishonest, would you let your boss know about it? How would you handle it?*

Chemistry questions:

- What sort of people do you enjoy working with?*
- How do people in your work environment react to you?*
- How do your subordinates feel about you? What would they say are your strengths and areas to improve?*
- Give some examples of how you get people to accomplish projects? How do you motivate them?*
- What have been your most serious problems with people who work for you? How have you resolved them?*
- What have been your most serious problems with people you worked for? How did you resolve them?*
- Among the people you work for, whom do you admire most and why?*
- Have you had to fire someone? Why and how did you handle it?*

*Asterisk indicates questions we strongly recommend asking.

- Of people working for you, how many did you hire yourself? What were you looking for?*
- Give five adjectives that describe people who work for you.*

Closing question:

- We do a pretty thorough job checking references and background. It would be a cause of concern if we discovered any surprises. Is there any reason to think that we would uncover something which wouldn't square with what you've told me today?*

*Asterisk indicates questions we strongly recommend asking.