

Identifying applicant skills: 50 great interview questions



In addition to giving job-specific tests, the best way to tell if applicants carry the skills to perform specific tasks is to ask very direct questions about how they've used each skill in the past. Here are some sample questions hiring managers can use to spot whether these 10 important "soft" skills are present:

Initiative

1. Give me an example of a time you did more than was required in your job.
2. What have you done to make your job easier or more rewarding?
3. Describe a situation where you found you had a serious problem. What did you do to solve it?
4. What do you do differently than other people in your occupation?
5. Tell me about an idea you generated. How did it work out?

Decision-making

6. What was the toughest decision you made recently? Why?
7. Describe a work-related problem you had to face recently. What procedures did you use to deal with it?

Communication skills

8. Describe when you had to pitch a proposal. How did you do ... and why do you think it went that way?
9. Have you ever given instructions and then learned he or she did it wrong? Why did that happen?
10. Have you ever done any public speaking? How did it work out?

Integrity

11. Do you feel some rules should be obeyed more stringently than others?
12. Did you ever have to deal with a co-worker who wasn't pulling his/her weight? What did you do about it?

Leadership

13. Have you ever had to introduce a new idea or process at work? What approach did you take to gain cooperation?

14. Tell me about a time you had to gain the cooperation of a group over which you had little authority. How effective were you?

15. Describe how you helped someone solve a problem. What did you do?

Persuasiveness

16. What was the best idea you've ever sold to a superior? How did you do it?

17. What was the best idea you ever failed to sell? What was the problem?

18. What strategies have you found work best when trying to sway someone to your point of view?

Planning/time management

19. Describe a typical workweek. How did you plan the week's activities?

20. How do you determine which activities have top priorities on your time?

21. How do you develop short-range plans for your organization? Long-range?

22. How many hours a week do you find it critical to get your job done?

Sales skills

23. Describe the primary types of people to whom you sell. What approach do you use for each group?

24. What's the best method you've found to obtain new prospects?

25. How do your selling techniques differ from those of others you know?

26. Describe your toughest sales experiences. Did you make the sale?

27. Describe a typical sales encounter. Exactly what would you say to convince a customer to buy?

28. Define your closing style.

Supervision

29. What have you done to make your group work more efficiently?

30. What is the No. 1 thing that distinguishes a superior employee from a typical one?

31. How do you stay in the information loop and monitor your staff's performance?

32. How do you confront subordinates when results are unacceptable?

33. Give me an example of your ability to facilitate progressive change within your organization.

Technical skills

34. How did you gain the technical knowledge you need to do your job?
35. Give me an example of an especially difficult assignment or project. What was your role? What did you do?
36. Have you received any commendations for your performance?
37. What is the most important development in your field today? What impact do you think it will have?
38. How do you keep informed about what's happening in your field?
39. To what job-related organizations do you belong? What seminars have you attended?
40. What job-related publications do you normally read?

Other good general questions

41. What skills do you enjoy using?
42. What is your greatest strength?
43. What's the greatest asset you currently bring to your company?
44. What is your greatest weakness, and what have you done to overcome it?
45. Why should I hire you?
46. What makes you stand out?
47. If you started tomorrow, how could you contribute right away?
48. Are you familiar with our corporate culture? How would you fit in?
49. How would you spend day #1?
50. What do you feel an employer owes its employees ... and vice versa?

For 150 more sample questions ...

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