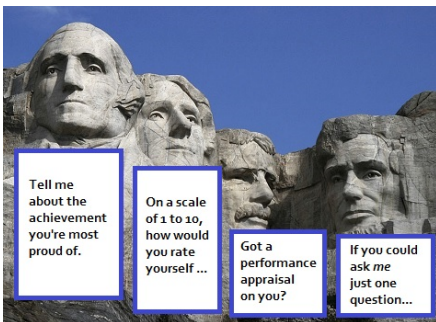


# Here's what the Mt. Rushmore of interview questions looks like

Hiring expert Mel Kleiman sat in on a job interview recently that demonstrated why it's so easy to break the process. A manager brought in an applicant and explained exactly what the job entailed and what was expected. He then said to the applicant, "So tell me a little bit about yourself."

Well, the person sitting in that chair was no dummy; she had listened carefully to what the manager had been saying, so she immediately recited qualities and attitudes that perfectly mirrored his needs. She described herself as dependable, reliable and conscientious, a wondrous match for the job she'd just spent two minutes hearing about. Gee, who'd have thought such a diamond would be discovered so quickly?

The manager had accidentally given up control of the interview, as so many do. Some allow interviewees to tailor their responses to the job description, while others allow them to simply confirm the abilities listed on their résumé. You can avoid this trap by digging deep with subtlety. In a July webinar, Kleiman revealed his four favorite interview questions, ones that will be as effective in 50 years as they are today:



**1. "Tell me about the achievement you're most proud of."** "It's not so much the achievement itself that matters," Kleiman told his audience, "it's how they did it." Get an applicant to relate the steps and the hurdles it took to accomplish that magic. Immerse them in that golden memory and they'll begin to expound without a script.

**2. "On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rank yourself as a ..."** Many managers will unwisely obsess over the number they hear. That number, though, is the least important part of the answer. What you're looking for is a sophisticated level of self-analysis and self-awareness. You want to know what's made someone a 6 or a 10. A good follow-up question is, "What do you think it would take to get your number higher in that area?"

**3. "Did your last company do performance appraisals?"** Ask how the applicant felt about the process and the final results. "In today's world," Kleiman explained, "it's almost impossible to get references," and this is your chance to attain what a former boss wrote down on paper. If you feel confident in scheduling a second interview, ask that a copy of a recent evaluation show up too.

**4. "If you could ask me just one question about the job or the organization, what would it be?"** This one's a bit of a trick. Kleiman said that "it doesn't matter what their answer is; your follow-up should always be the same: 'Wow, what an interesting question. What made you ask that one above all?'" The goal here is to reveal what the person's #1 true motivator at work is; if you listen close, it's likely to be in their response.