

The 5 Core Interview Questions for Any Job

An interview puts a lot of pressure on both parties involved. The interviewee needs to prepare to put his or her best foot forward, and show the company they're the best candidate for the job. The interviewer must have a keen understanding of the job they are interviewing for and clear parameters on what it takes to be a productive member of the team.

As the interviewer, what questions can you ask that get at the core of the candidate and ensure a fit that goes beyond just skills?

1. What interests you most about this job?

Find out what interests the candidate most about the position. This will reveal what part of your company-messaging spoke to them. Their answer will expose what about the position motivates them or they are most comfortable with. This also opens a door into what they are most excited about and can give you an impression of what related strengths may exist. At SmartRecruiters we say, "Hire for aptitude over attitude."

2. In which work environments have you been able to best perform?

Do they describe your office? This question's answer illustrates cultural fit as much as in which atmosphere they will be able to best contribute. Their answer will tell the interviewer whether they work best in teams or alone. Do they thrive in remote work environments or in an office? If their answer doesn't match what your office is all about, can you accommodate them and are their skills worth it?

3. Tell me about a time you failed.

How a candidate defines a personal failure is important, as important as whether or not they are willing to admit one. Learning about a candidate's failure is not important because of the mistake they made, but how they recovered. A great candidate will tell you about a time things did not go as planned and explain how they learned from it, what they did to grow and improve.

4. How do you stay current in this field?

Does the candidate have an impression of what the day-to-day is like in this environment? Staying current is not exclusive to reading news and events, it means taking actions to improve technical skills when opportunities present themselves and advances in the field occur. If your candidate can give an example of the initiative they take to constantly be improving – that's a good sign. Plus, this can lead into a conversation about the industry at large, which gives you a chance to weigh their knowledge.

5. If you could have changed anything about your previous work experience, what would it have been?

This question will give you an idea of what the candidate perceived as a workplace issue. You want someone who is proactive, but also reactive in a positive way. Did they do anything to change their work environment or themselves to better deal with the issue? Understanding how the candidate responds to a problem is a telling indicator of the type of person they are.

Some could argue there's more at risk during an interview for the interviewer than the interviewee. Make a bad hire and you've spent thousands of dollars in time and resources on someone you will just need to replace, spending time and money all over again!

I'll say it again, hire for attitude over aptitude. Skills can be taught and are meant to be developed to the company, but attitude and enthusiasm are up to the individual. Be honest about what you expect from a candidate during the interview process, and ask questions that allow them to be honest with you. These five core interview questions will expose characteristics of the candidates, illustrating whether or not they are a good fit for your company.