

# 10 MUST ASK INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Presented by  
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To Avoid Hiring  
Nightmares

Growing your great idea into a small business can be as exciting as it is overwhelming. Now that your business is growing it is time to expand your team. Once you have completed weeded through the avalanche of resumes down to your short list of applicants for interviews. Now all that is left is to wait for them to arrive and beg for the job, right? Wrong. While you do want your new hire to be enthusiastic about the opportunity, hiring the most desperate candidate will often backfire. Use some or all the questions below to guide your interview along the path to ensuring that you hire the right person, the first time.

**1. What excites you most about this position?**

**Why this Matters:** Skills can be taught, but enthusiasm and culture compatibility cannot be. When an interviewee is genuinely excited about an opportunity, that typically translates into excellent work, eagerness to learn and greater longevity with your company.

**2. From everything you have learned about this role and our company, how do you feel you would contribute?**

**Why This Matters:** This interview question distinguishes people who have really prepared from those that have not. Prepared applicants will take this opportunity to stand out and demonstrate that they have done their homework.

**3. Describe a situation in which you worked as part of a team, but your team failed to accomplish the goal on time and within budget. What was your role? What did you learn?**

**Why This Matters:** This interview question identifies if the interviewee has the ability to take ownership of team failures and successes. Desirable applicants will demonstrate not only the taking personal responsibility for their role but also the ability to learn from shortcomings.

**4. What professional achievement are you most proud of?**

**Why This Matters:** Whether it is an award, a certification, or a big project that went exceptionally well, asking the interviewee what in their professional history they are proudest of will give you a better sense of where their strengths really lie.

**5. Tell me about the most difficult supervisor to whom you have reported. What would that supervisor say about you?**

**Why This Matters:** This question is designed to unearth potential problems, predominantly if the potential new supervisor has the same management style or

personality as the former. This can also give a peek into the level of professionalism that the candidate possesses.

6. **Tell me about the best and worst employee that ever reported to you. What might they say about you? How did you handle the worst and utilize the best?**

**Why This Matters:** This question provides a good reflection of the candidate's management style in dealing with both good, and difficult, staff; it also checks for a fit for your company management culture.

7. **What frustrates you?**

**Why This Matters:** When the candidate then talks about past frustrations, he reveals details about their personality, diplomacy skills and ability to work on teams. Does the candidate answer by discussing minor irritations -- or ways that he successfully resolved serious conflicts over time, budgets, or priorities? The latter are candidates who have positive intelligence.

8. **Why Are You Leaving Your Current Employer?**

**Why This Matters:** Here it is—yet another question that is sure to make every job seeker cringe. No one wants to seem like they are bad-mouthing a previous employer, which makes this one tricky for applicants to answer. However, posing this question will give you some greater insight into that person's professional history—as well as help you to identify any red flags (ahem, complaining endlessly about their boss, for example) that might indicate that candidate is not the best fit for your company.

9. **Describe one time that you failed. When you have failed to achieve your goals/quotas, what plan of action did you take to get back on track?**

**Why This Matters:** We have all heard the adage about “failure being the key to success.” The job interview is a good opportunity to capitalize on the value of a candidate's failure in a new role. Be wary of any candidate that is unable to list even one failure or anyone that blames others for their shortcomings.

10. **If you could start your career over again, what would you do differently?**

**Why This Matters:** Asking a candidate to explain the major decisions they have made, highlighting the positive and negative, reveals the person's ability to make calculated decisions based on past professional and personal experiences. It also lets candidates share their vision for the future and their ambitions.