



How to ask powerful questions in a recruitment interview

5 styles of questions to use

A true test of the skill of an effective interviewer is the way they choose, frame and phrase their questions

The objective is to find all the information you need to make effective recruitment decisions without simply relying on "gut instinct" or "I know how to choose them" attitudes

OPEN QUESTIONS

These allow you to gather information - these start with words such as *how, when, where, which, who, in what way*. The candidate simply cannot answer "yes" or "no"; they must provide information in response. This helps you judge both how articulate and how prepared a candidate is. Examples – *When did you decide to leave your current company?* - *Which do you feel are your three best qualities?* - *How do you feel you have developed your role within your department in the last year?*

CLOSED OR CONFIRMATION QUESTIONS

Using closed questions allows you to check or summarise the information you have. They can simply be answered by a "yes" or "no" - and can be used to confirm a fact. You can also ask one or two to judge whether the applicant is prepared to volunteer information. In general terms, don't ask too many closed questions during an interview. Examples – *Do you have to provide a month's notice with your current company?* - *Do you find that an acceptable way of behaving?* - *Have you a current, clean driving licence?*

SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS

Often used during recruitment interviews, these to encourage the person to volunteer information about themselves - this helps you to judge their style and personality. Examples – *What would you feel are your 3 greatest strengths?* - *If you could improve 3 things about yourself, what would you choose?* - *Which areas of your last job frustrated you most?*

PROBING QUESTIONS

Ones which explore and search for more detailed responses. A key skill of an interviewer is to probe answers until you find out what you need to know. Many people are reluctant to do this, particularly where personal areas (such as illness) may be involved. But it's your job to discover the candidate's suitability. You cannot achieve this without discovering such information. Key ways to probe include –

- repeating a key word of an answer: "*I **never** disagreed with my boss*" - "*Never?*" - "*Well not about policy. I mean obviously we...*"
- asking for more information: "*I have some sales experience*" - "*Tell me about it*"
- using their answer to create your question: "*I enjoy meeting Customers*" - "*Why, specifically, do you enjoy meeting Clients?*"
- using key words to ask for more information (words such as "specific" or "exactly" focus the answers): "*I often stand in for the boss when he's at meeting*" - "*When **exactly** did you last do this?*" - "*I am often asked to complete key projects*" - "*Give me a **specific** example of this*"

SITUATIONAL QUESTIONS

Here you aim to assess their reactions and experience - such questions must be based in an area where you can expect the person to have knowledge and ability. For example, if the position to be filled during a recruitment interview is that of Office Administrator - and the candidate currently undertakes such a role with another company, you might ask them how they would deal with certain relevant situations. For example – *What action would you take if a temporary member of your team suddenly started performing poorly?* - *How do you plan your day?*



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3 styles of questions to avoid

LEADING QUESTIONS

These suggest the answer you are seeking in the question itself. the candidate is likely to provide the answer you want! Example – *Would you say an ability to work hard is essential in this role? - Well, yes I would!*

LOADED QUESTIONS

Often provide clear evidence of your prejudices - and require no more than agreement from the interviewee. Example — *It's quite obvious to me that youngsters don't have the hard-work ethic nowadays. You agree, don't you?*

"MULTIPLE CHOICE" QUESTIONS

These either confuse the other person, or they simply choose the one question which they can answer most easily. Ask one question at a time, and listen to the answer. Examples of how not to do it – *Did you enjoy school? What was your favourite subject? How did you enjoy geography? - What action did you take? Did it work? What would you have done if it failed?*

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CONTACTING US

WEB: www.thevenworks.com
EMAIL: venworks@btopenworld.com
TEL: +44 (0)1665 714151
MAIL: The Venworks
18 William's Close
Amble, Northumberland
NE65 0GF United Kingdom

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