

15 Behavioral Interview Questions to Ask Candidates

A resume offers a wealth of information into the professional history, skills and experience of a job applicant. However, this isn't everything that goes into making a person a great match for your open role and company. Culture and style vary widely from one company to the next, and a person who gave glowing performances with other companies may not be a great fit for yours. This is why businesses conduct interviews: to learn more about the habits, behaviors and work history of their candidates.

There are numerous ways to conduct an interview, but the most popular interview style consists of targeted behavioral interview questions. These questions invite the candidate to tell stories about their work history, which helps the interviewer learn about them. By selecting the proper behavioral-based interview questions, you can gain rich insight into the personal qualities of a potential recruit.

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What are behavioral interview questions?

Behavioral interview questions seek to estimate the future performance of a candidate by looking at their past behavior. They can revolve around interpersonal matters, questions of leadership, how a person acts under pressure and more.

"Once, I was working on a project for a client with a tight deadline when I realized there were two ways to interpret their instructions. By the time I could expect clarification, the deadline would be looming uncomfortably close. I solved the problem by partially completing both versions of the project. While it entailed a little extra effort, I was able to deliver on time."

2. Tell me about a time when you made a mistake. How did you handle this experience?

Mistakes occur in everyone's career at one point or another. Making mistakes isn't a personal failing as long as you admit your error and work to fix it. When assessing a candidate, you need to ask this question to make sure they're the kind of person who fixes their mistakes rather than hiding them. By asking this question, you're giving the candidate an opportunity to display their sense of accountability, humility and transparency.

Example Answer:

"When I got started in retail, I accidentally sold an item that we were supposed to hold for a specific customer. I was horrified for a moment, but then I realized I had to tell the manager immediately. Thankfully, the customer was gracious about my mistake and we were able to resolve everything."

3. Please share a time when you faced an unexpected challenge. How did you overcome this challenge?

This question is essential for understanding how a candidate turns a challenge into an opportunity. Unexpected events occur constantly in business, so it's important to know that your hires can handle them. By asking potential hires about how they've defeated unexpected challenges, you gain insight into several important

Skill-building is one of the most valuable processes for your hires to appreciate. Everyone you hire should ideally seek to grow their knowledge and abilities throughout their career. By asking this behavioral interview question, you learn about the value that a hire places on skill-building. Furthermore, discovering how they go about building new skills will be invaluable during the training process if you do hire the candidate in question. The ideal candidate will display an enthusiasm for learning, self-understanding and effective learning techniques.

Example Answer:

"When I first started writing product descriptions, I found them hard to wrap my head around. But I knew this was a valuable skill to have, so I spent all day studying good product descriptions and different styles for writing them. At first it was hard work, but with continued practice it eventually became second nature."

6. Please share a time when you had to share or pitch an idea to someone in a more senior position. How did you go about this task, and what was the outcome?

Many people struggle to speak to superiors. As such, the ability to speak frankly and confidently to a higher-up is invaluable in your subordinates. Furthermore, this behavioral interview question gives you an opportunity to assess their confidence, persuasiveness and communication skills. These qualities are vital for anyone taking a role in sales, customer service, client relations or management.

Example Answer:

"When working in hospitality, I saw opportunities for our hostel to improve the guest experience and make money through partnerships with other local businesses. Before talking to the owner, I spent a few days thinking through potential problems and built a solid pitch. When I suggested my ideas, the owner was impressed and gave me the

defensive. Of course, this isn't the case, and my first priority is proving this. Once I reassure a difficult client that their success is also in my best interest, it always becomes easier to resolve their problem."

• **9. Tell me about a time when you experienced conflict at work. How did you overcome it?**

It's important that potential hires can navigate disputes in the workplace. By asking this behavioral interview question, you'll get a sense for how candidates handle arguments and high tension. In the process, you'll also learn about their capacity for self-management, their temperament and their interpersonal communication skills.

Example Answer:

"After a really contentious election a few years ago, arguments in the office became more common and could become a bit heated. Eventually it started to go too far, but I managed to relieve part of the tension in the workplace by pointing out that even the opposing candidates had significant common ground. It didn't end the conflict, but it made it easier to let differences lie."

10. What's one thing you've done in your professional history that you wish you would have handled differently?

Many interview questions focus on a candidate's best traits and professional accomplishments. On the other hand, there's much you can learn about a professional based on their past failures or opportunities they missed. Asking this question gives the candidate an opportunity to demonstrate their self-awareness, ability to learn from past experiences and dedication to self-improvement.

Example Answer:

"When I was working as a restaurant manager, we were once badly understaffed for the lunch rush. There were long lines of customers waiting for their meals, and the kitchen staff were overwhelmed. It was just chaos. It wasn't easy to keep a cool head, but I managed to stay in control of the situation and we were able to keep up with customer demand."

13. Please share a time when you set a goal for yourself and achieved it.

A candidate who sets their own goals and adheres to their plan is typically ambitious, dedicated and determined. Goal-setting is also indicative of well-developed organizational skills and an interest in career advancement. Asking this question gives the candidate a chance to outline their process for setting goals and reaching objectives and helps you better understand what motivates them to do well.

Example Answer:

"As a copywriter, I found my greatest obstacle was myself. I was always a bit distraction-prone, so I resolved to increase my productivity by improving my discipline. I used website-blocking apps and rigid scheduling to get in the habit of working in a more focused, consistent way and ended up increasing my output by 50%."

14. Tell me about your proudest professional accomplishment and why this achievement is significant to you.

Asking behavioral interview questions about a candidate's accomplishments is helpful for a few reasons. First of all, it gives the interviewee a chance to discuss how they've applied their skills to achieve success. Second, it gives you insight into

1. **Be strategic.** You may not have time to ask all the behavioral questions on this list. To determine which questions are most important, consider which skills are most critical for the role and ask the behavioral questions most likely to help you uncover those abilities. Questions about leadership and dealing with failure become more important for managers and leaders in the company.
2. **Ask each candidate the same questions.** When it comes time to make a hiring decision, it's critical you're able to make a fair comparison. If you're consistent in your questions, it'll make this phase of the process much more manageable. Asking different questions to different candidates will complicate the hiring process and make it harder to exercise good, consistent judgment. While the questions you ask are a matter of personal discretion, you should only ask different questions to different candidates if you have a good reason. Consider implementing scoring sheets for interviews to help ensure your application process is as fair and objective as possible.
3. **Keep questions open-ended.** Behavioral questions are purposely thought-provoking, so it's important you keep them open rather than asking in a polar "yes" or "no" format. For example, instead of asking "Have you ever experienced conflict at work?" you should ask, "Tell me about a time when you experienced conflict at work. How did you overcome it?" By starting from the assumption that a person has experienced conflict at work, you'll get more interesting, honest answers to the question.

A behavioral interview is essential for learning how a candidate will perform tasks, handle challenges and interact with others within a specific job role. It also allows candidates to share previous experiences and provide examples of how they've applied their skills and knowledge throughout their career. By asking these behavioral interview questions, you can determine how an applicant will add to