

THE 5 WORST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND WHAT TO ASK INSTEAD

The interview remains a hiring manager's most effective tool for evaluating job candidates. Unfortunately, managers too often rely on a list of standard interview questions for which most applicants have canned responses.

The message: Ask generic questions and you'll get generic answers.

#1. Don't ask: "Can you tell me about yourself?"

This question will simply encourage job applicants to summarize their résumés, wasting precious time and preventing you from finding out any new information.

Instead, ask: "What professional accomplishments are you most proud of and why?"

Instead of asking for a laundry list, this question forces candidates to elaborate on the most pertinent aspects of their work history.

#2. Don't ask: "What are your strengths?"

This is such a common question posed by hiring managers that candidates usually trot out a prepared, vanilla response that teaches you nothing.

Instead, ask: "What is your greatest professional strength, and how have you used it to overcome a challenge in your career?"

This question compels candidates not only to describe a strength they possess but also to expand on how they've applied it in a real situation. It can be especially revealing when interviewing candidates for technical positions because it allows you to gauge whether they can explain their successes in terms anyone can understand.

3. Don't ask: "What are your weaknesses?"

Candidates typically come prepared with weakness-turned-positives—"I work too hard" or "I'm sometimes too detail-oriented"—that disclose nothing about their true shortcomings.

Instead, ask: "Can you describe a time when you didn't accomplish a goal and how you rectified the situation?"

Your goal is to find out how the candidate has dealt with adversity in the past. Did they solicit help from co-workers? Did they act right away? Did they take responsibility? This question can be especially helpful when interviewing management-level candidates.

#4. Don't ask: "Why do you want to work here?"

While this could help you find out how much the applicant knows about your organization, chances are you'll also receive praise about the organization that borders on insincerity.

Instead, ask: "What specifically attracted you to our organization?"

This question forces applicants to articulate why they view your organization as "unique" and "a good place to work." It allows you to assess not only their depth of knowledge about your organization, but also whether they truly want to work for the company.

#5. Don't ask: "Do you prefer to work alone or with a team?"

These days, employers need workers who can excel in team and individual roles, rendering this question obsolete.

Instead, ask: "Can you describe an example of when you worked with a colleague or group to solve a problem?"

Ideal candidates will be able to demonstrate that they can work effectively with people from different departments and at various levels in the organization.