

Client/Hiring Manager Interview Guide

This guide provides information on:

- How to prepare for an interview
- Interview Structure Advice
- Questions to ask (and not to ask) during the interview
- The Golden Rules of Interviewing
- How to create a great candidate experience

Creating a Great Interview Experience

An interview is not only an opportunity for you to assess a candidate — it is also an opportunity for the candidate to assess your business, team and leadership. Strong candidates are often interviewing you just as much as you are interviewing them. A well-run interview should leave the candidate with a clear understanding of the role, the team and the opportunity, while giving you enough meaningful information to make an informed hiring decision.

The goal is simple: Create a professional, structured and engaging conversation that allows both sides to determine whether the opportunity is the right fit.

Before the Interview

Review the Candidate's CV

Take the time to review the candidate's CV before meeting them.

Identify:

- Relevant experience and achievements
- Career progression
- Areas you would like to explore further
- Potential gaps or questions
- Experience that particularly aligns with the role

Avoid asking questions simply because they are listed on the CV. Use the CV as a starting point for a deeper conversation.



Understand What You're Hiring For

Before the interview, be clear on the key capabilities required for the position.

Ask yourself:

- What are the **3–5 most important things** this person needs to be successful?
- What skills are essential from day one?
- What can be taught?
- What type of personality or working style will complement the team?
- What would success look like in the first 6–12 months?

Agree on the Interview Structure

If multiple people are involved in the interview process, agree beforehand on:

- Who will lead the interview
- Who will ask which questions
- What each interviewer is assessing
- Who will answer candidate questions about the business or role
- How feedback will be collected afterwards

Avoid having multiple interviewers asking the candidate the same questions or competing to lead the conversation.

Keep the Interview Panel Small

Where possible, we recommend having **no more than 2–3 people in an interview at one time**. Having a large panel can feel intimidating and can prevent candidates from showing their personality naturally.

An interview with six people, for example, can feel more like an interrogation than a conversation — particularly for candidates who are meeting the business for the first time.

A good approach:

1–2 interviewers: Ideal for most first interviews.

3 interviewers: Appropriate where there is a genuine reason for multiple stakeholders to be involved.

4+ interviewers: Consider whether everyone genuinely needs to be in the room.

If several people need to meet the candidate, consider splitting this across stages rather than putting everyone in front of the candidate at once.

Remember: **the candidate experience matters.**



Keep the Interview Process Reasonable

A lengthy interview process can unnecessarily frustrate candidates and increase the risk of losing strong talent.

For most positions, consider whether you genuinely need multiple interview stages. A process involving **3 or more interviews** should have a very clear reason behind it.

Before adding another stage, ask:

"What are we hoping to learn from this interview that we haven't already established?"

If the answer isn't clear, another interview may not be necessary.

A simple process could be:

Stage 1 – Initial Interview

Meet the hiring manager/team and assess experience, motivation, capability and cultural alignment.

Stage 2 – Final Interview

Explore any remaining questions, introduce key stakeholders and confirm mutual fit.

Stage 3 – Offer

Discuss the opportunity, expectations and next steps.

How to Structure the Interview

A good interview should feel conversational while still having enough structure to ensure you cover the important areas.

A suggested structure is:

1. Welcome & Introduction – 5 minutes

Start by putting the candidate at ease.

Introduce yourself and anyone else in the room, explain your role within the business and briefly explain how the interview will run.

For example:

"Thanks for coming in today. We'll start by giving you a little more context around the business and the role, then we'd love to hear about your experience and what you're looking for. We'll leave plenty of time at the end for any questions you have."



This immediately makes the candidate feel more comfortable and establishes expectations.

2. Tell Them About the Business - 5 minutes

Give the candidate some context about:

- The business
- The team
- The role
- Why the position is available
- What the team is working towards
- What makes the opportunity interesting

Don't spend 20 minutes giving a company presentation, but make sure the candidate understands what they're interviewing for.

3. Explore Their Experience - 15–20 minutes

Start with broad questions and then explore areas that are particularly relevant to the role. Focus on what they have actually done, rather than only what they believe they could do.

4. Behavioural & Situational Questions - 10–15 minutes

Use behavioural questions to understand how the candidate has handled situations in the past.

Ask for specific examples and probe where necessary.

5. Candidate Questions - 10 minutes

Give the candidate genuine time to ask questions.

Their questions can also provide valuable insight into their motivations, preparation and priorities.

6. Close the Interview - 5 minutes

Explain:

- What happens next
- Expected timeframe
- Who will be in contact
- Whether there are any further stages

Avoid leaving candidates uncertain about what happens after the interview.



Questions to Ask

The questions you ask should be relevant to the role and designed to uncover the capabilities you genuinely need. You don't need to ask every question below. Choose the questions most relevant to the position.

Getting to Know the Candidate

- Tell me a little about yourself and your career to date.
- Can you talk me through your current role and responsibilities?
- What have you enjoyed most about your current/previous role?
- What have you found most challenging?
- What achievement are you most proud of?
- What attracted you to this opportunity?

Experience & Capability

- Tell me about your experience in [relevant area].
- What experience do you have working with [clients/stakeholders/industry/specialisation]?
- Can you talk me through a project or piece of work you're particularly proud of?
- What do you feel are your strongest skills?
- What areas are you currently looking to develop?
- What type of work do you feel you perform particularly well?
- What experience do you think will translate most effectively into this role?

Motivation

Understanding why someone wants the role is just as important as understanding whether they can do it. Consider asking:

- What attracted you to this position?
- What interests you about our business?
- Why are you considering leaving your current role?
- What are you looking for in your next opportunity?
- What would make your next role a successful move for you?
- Where do you see yourself developing over the next few years?



Be careful not to assume that someone changing jobs is dissatisfied with their current employer. Keep the conversation open and non-judgemental.

Behavioural Interview Questions

Behavioural questions can help you understand how someone has actually operated in previous situations. Ask the candidate to provide a specific example and use follow-up questions to understand their role in the situation.

Communication

- Tell me about a time you had to communicate something difficult to a client or stakeholder.
- Tell me about a time you had to influence someone who initially disagreed with you.
- Can you give me an example of how you've built a strong professional relationship?

Problem Solving

- Tell me about a difficult problem you encountered and how you approached it.
- Tell me about a time something didn't go according to plan. What did you do?
- Can you give me an example of when you had to make a decision with incomplete information?

Teamwork

- Tell me about a time you worked with someone whose style was very different from your own.
- Describe a time you contributed to a successful team outcome.
- Tell me about a time there was conflict within a team. How did you handle it?

Accountability

- Tell me about a time you made a mistake at work. What happened?
- Tell me about a time you received difficult feedback. How did you respond?
- Can you give me an example of when you took ownership of a problem?

Adaptability & Learning

- Tell me about a time you had to learn something quickly.
- Describe a situation where priorities changed unexpectedly. How did you respond?
- How do you typically approach learning a new skill or area of expertise?



Use Follow-Up Questions

Don't be afraid to dig deeper. Often the most useful information comes from the follow-up questions rather than the initial answer.

Useful prompts include:

- What was your specific role in that situation?
- What did you do personally?
- What was the outcome?
- What did you learn from that experience?
- What would you do differently next time?
- How did the other person respond?
- How did you measure whether you were successful?

Assessing Cultural Contribution

Rather than asking whether someone is a "culture fit", consider how they will contribute to the culture.

Questions could include:

- What type of team environment brings out your best work?
- What do you value most in a workplace?
- What do you think makes a strong team?
- Tell me about a team culture where you performed particularly well.
- How do you contribute to a positive team environment?
- What do you need from your manager to perform at your best?

Avoid using "culture fit" as a reason to favour people who are similar to the existing team.

A strong team can benefit from different personalities, experiences, perspectives and working styles.

Questions to Avoid

Interview questions should be directly relevant to the candidate's ability to perform the role. Avoid questions that could unnecessarily introduce bias or relate to protected or personal characteristics. For example, avoid asking about:

- Age
- Marital or relationship status



- Children or plans to have children
- Pregnancy
- Religion
- Race or ethnicity
- Disability or medical conditions unless directly relevant and handled appropriately
- Other personal circumstances unrelated to the requirements of the role

Give the Candidate an Opportunity to Sell Themselves

Remember that candidates don't always know exactly what information you want. If someone gives a brief answer, don't immediately assume they lack experience.

Try:

"That's interesting. Can you tell me a little more about that?"

or:

"What was your specific involvement in that?"

or:

"Can you give me an example?"

This gives the candidate an opportunity to provide evidence before you make a judgement.

Give Candidates Time to Ask Questions

The candidate's questions are an important part of the interview. Give them enough time to ask about:

- The role
- The team
- Training and development
- Career progression
- The company's direction
- Culture
- Expectations
- What success looks like

Don't judge a candidate negatively simply because they don't ask a large number of questions. Some candidates may have already researched the business extensively or may prefer to focus on answering your questions first.

Look at the quality and relevance of their questions rather than the quantity.



Be Transparent About the Opportunity

The interview shouldn't be a sales pitch where only the positives are discussed.

Be honest about:

- The challenges of the role
- Expectations
- Workload
- Team structure
- Performance expectations
- Development opportunities
- Any aspects of the role that may not suit everyone

Being transparent helps both parties make a better decision and reduces the likelihood of an unsuccessful placement later.

After the Interview

Take Notes

Make notes during or immediately after the interview while the conversation is fresh.

Focus on evidence relating to the requirements of the role rather than subjective impressions.

Instead of:

"I really liked them."

Consider:

"Strong client management experience. Provided two clear examples of managing difficult client relationships and demonstrated a structured approach to resolving issues."

Evaluate Against the Role

Ask:

- Does the candidate have the capabilities required?
- What evidence did they provide?
- What are their key strengths?
- What are the potential gaps?
- Can those gaps be developed?



- Would they be successful in this specific role?
- What would their likely contribution be to the team?

Avoid "Gut Feel" Alone

Your instinct can be useful, but it shouldn't be the only basis for a hiring decision.

A structured assessment helps reduce unconscious bias and makes it easier to compare candidates fairly.

The Golden Rules of Interviewing

- **Keep it conversational**
Candidates perform at their best when they feel comfortable enough to have a genuine conversation.
- **Keep the panel small**
2–3 interviewers maximum is generally a good guideline.
- **Keep the process reasonable**
Every additional interview should have a clear purpose. Avoid unnecessarily long, multi-stage processes.
- **Ask for evidence**
Don't rely solely on hypothetical answers. Ask candidates to tell you about what they've actually done.
- **Listen more than you speak**
The interview is an opportunity to understand the candidate. Avoid dominating the conversation.
- **Don't make assumptions**
Explore answers before making judgements.
- **Sell the opportunity**
Strong candidates have options. Give them a genuine understanding of why they should want to join your business.
- **Be transparent**
Be honest about the role, expectations, challenges and opportunity.
- **Give candidates a great experience**
Even if someone isn't ultimately successful, they should leave the interview feeling that they were treated professionally and respectfully.



Remember

You are not just interviewing for a vacancy. You are introducing someone to your business. The best interview processes are structured enough to make a good hiring decision, but human enough for candidates to show you who they really are.

Keep it professional. Keep it conversational. Keep it fair. And keep it reasonable.

