

# The Interview Questions You Should Be Asking

*Get the most revealing answers from your candidates*



*Legendary Leader*



# Hi,

Welcome to the Legendary LeadHer community, where you'll learn how to confidently go from ambitious mid-level professional to kickass visionary leader.

I'm Rashell Evans, a career architect, personal branding guru, and LinkedIn expert.

I coach ambitious mid-to-executive level professional women in the nonprofit and social service industries on how to leverage their personal brands to lead like a legend at work.

I teach women just like you how to go from unfulfilled and underpaid to making some serious change (and not just impact, but money too).

This guide is designed to empower employers seeking to hire qualified candidates and career seekers interested in using their soft skills to transition into a new opportunity.

Let's get started.

## Introduction

Interviewing isn't easy, but the process isn't going anywhere.

A substantial amount of effort and expertise is required to spot a top performer in today's saturated job market. With over a decade of workforce and business development experience, we've determined some of the most revealing interview questions and answers.

If you're currently hiring or you're just looking to brush up on your interview skills, this guide is designed to get you to ask the right questions and analyzing candidate answers so you can hire the best person for the role.

***Why be Great, When you can be a Legend!***



# Top 13 traits

Learn to screen the top soft skills for each industry by asking the right interview questions and analyzing a candidate's answer.

Adaptable

Ambition

Approachability

Cultural Add

Curious

Customer-centric

Innovative

Integrity

Proactive

Relationship Builder

Storyteller

Takes Ownership

Team Player





# Top candidate soft skills

## *Adaptable*

A candidate should demonstrate an aptitude for critical and flexible thinking, as well as the ability to excel in a fast-paced environment where change is inevitable.

## *Ambitious*

Look for someone who has the drive to set goals and actually achieve them. Your ideal candidate should strive to exceed quota and meet business goals.

## *Approachability*

A readiness to teach and help others means a candidate has built a strong rapport with their team in the past, and that they're a good communicator.

## *Cultural Add*

Look for someone who can add to – and more importantly, elevate – your culture in order to foster inclusion and diversity.



# Adaptable

## SAMPLE QUESTION

**Tell me about a time when you were asked to do something you had never done before. How did you approach the situation? What did you learn?**

## SAMPLE ANSWER

I love that this industry is always changing and there's always something new to learn. When my company added a new client, I wasn't super familiar with their technology. So I took a couple of online courses well in advance of the project kickoff so I was up to date on the latest and greatest. I actually like taking on new types of projects – it gives me an excuse to keep learning!

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

A curious candidate is often a successful one. Listen for phrases like “keep learning” in a candidate's answer, because it shows their willingness to explore new trends, processes, and technology.

A candidate who is flexible and has the desire to continuously grow their skill set will be an asset to the team.

# *Ambitious*

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

**Where do you see yourself within our organization in five years?**

## **SAMPLE ANSWER**

In five years, I would like to be considered a mentor – not just on the team, but throughout the organization as a whole.

I'll also have taken the lead on a number of projects that helped your company succeed. I'd love to be the type of employee you benchmark future hires against.

## **WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

High performers should be able to list a series of accomplishments and achievements from their past, which will help you predict their future success. Look for candidates who align their goals with your organization's success and who treat this question as an exploration of ways they meet the job description.

# Approachability

## SAMPLE QUESTION

**Describe a situation where you had a positive effect on someone. What did you do? How did the other person react?**

## SAMPLE ANSWER

During a time of rapid growth in my last company, we were hiring people right out of college. At one point I noticed a young developer struggling with their workload. I didn't want to point out that their struggle was evident, but casually offered a few tips I'd learned over the years. Eventually the employee came to me on their own and I was able to assist in a more official capacity. Just a few months later, I was able to ask that same developer for help on another project.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Being approachable is essential in the role of a software engineer. You'll want someone who knows how to work well with others and offers assistance for the greater good of the company.

# Cultural Add

## SAMPLE QUESTION

**What's the most interesting thing about you that's not on your resume?**

## SAMPLE ANSWER

In my past life, I was an EMT. While my work took me a lot of places, one scenario I'll always remember is the time I had to administer emergency CPR at the beach while on vacation. A young girl was having trouble swimming and without a lifeguard on duty, I stepped into action.

This was luckily a one-time event, but I've always been able to stay calm during stressful situations, figure out solutions, and act quickly.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

A candidate's response should be confident and unique. Find someone who will add culture and flair to your team, not someone who fits the same mold as other team members.

Look for what gives them joy outside the 9 to 5. Be sure to identify underlying themes that can translate to the work setting: passion, tenacity, dedication, and creativity.



# Fact...

65% of hiring managers agree that a lack of soft skills among candidates limits company productivity. Though they're difficult to screen for, soft skills are central to many career roles. And with the right interview questions, identifying those skills will help you find a highly productive new hire.



# Soft Skills

## *Curious*

A willingness to embrace continuous learning is essential for successful candidate, because trends and technologies are always evolving.

## *Customer-centric*

Any question centered around process and customer management should shine a light on a candidate's strategy for working with customers. Focus on how they navigate a sales scenario, how they prepare, and whether they act like a strategic partner.

## *Innovative*

Every job comes with challenges, but someone who can think outside of the box to communicate, create, and drive results will be a valuable asset.

## *Integrity*

Successful employees focus on accuracy and radiate integrity. Determine whether a candidate has those traits by asking for a scenario where they stood up for what was right.



# *Curious*

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

**Do you have any hobbies outside of work?**

## **SAMPLE ANSWER**

Im a big believer in giving back, so I volunteer with a local nonprofit that helps the homeless. It gives me a better sense of working with all kinds of people and understanding that everyone has different needs and motivations

## **WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

Someone who has a hunger for exploration is eager to learn. A candidate with a curious mind is more willing to ask questions, and might be more engaged in the office. They could also bring new ideas, perspectives, or strategies to the business.

# Customer Centric

## SAMPLE QUESTION

**You've got a new product to sell. Walk me through your process.**

## SAMPLE ANSWER

I always begin by doing my homework. I want to know the ins and outs of how the product works. This means curating product datasheets, case studies, and various resources to make sure that I'm armed with the right information to share with prospective customers. I make sure to let the customer do a lot of the talking from the start so I can get a clear picture of what they need and where they can benefit from the product before I tailor the conversation around their particular challenges.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Look for an answer that indicates that a candidate knows how to position themselves as a strategic consultant who helps people solve their business problems, rather than just a salesperson.

# *Innovative*

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

**What is the most exciting project/ program you've worked on? What was your role and what impact did you have?**

## **SAMPLE ANSWER**

In my most recent role, I was a key member of the team who brought to market a new on-the-go dog treat. I was responsible for leading the external communication launch and packaging designs, and worked closely with a counterpart to handle the manufacturing and distribution. The product was purchased by 80% of mainstream retailers and has seen two new iterations.

## **WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

This candidate should highlight how they played an integral role in the project, as well as its successes and failures.

They should also highlight key insights that are sharp and grounded in methodology. It's important to articulate the pain point and consumer need.

# *Integrity*

## SAMPLE QUESTION

**Tell me about a time when you had to handle a tough problem that challenged fairness or ethical issues. What did you do?**

## SAMPLE ANSWER

A few teammates inserted language in a proposal that overstated product benefits relevant to business needs. I took steps to demonstrate why this language shouldn't be included, referencing internal product documents and even looping in product managers to get a second opinion. The decision to remove certain language wasn't welcomed by the entire team, but it was the right thing to do for the prospective client.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

This answer reveals the candidate's ability to solve problems in the face of adversity and actually influence the process. If the candidate doesn't present a specific experience or their scenario lacks complexity, it could be a red flag.

No candidate will be perfect, but one who demonstrates that they were willing to go against popular opinion reveals their transparency and trustworthiness. This should translate to someone who values the longevity of client relationships over a short-term sale.

# News Flash...

An employer will interview highly qualified candidates both before you and after you. What separates those who will succeed from those who won't are soft skills. Get an edge on the competition.



# Soft Skills

## *Proactive*

A strong candidate is one who values growth opportunities. Candidates who not only provide situational examples of failure, but also reveal how they learned from it, demonstrate high emotional IQ, curiosity, and leadership potential

## *Relationship Builder*

Strong candidates should be able to cultivate and foster relationships with everyone they work with, both internally and externally.

## *Storyteller*

In the digital age, effective candidates are glorified storytellers. Candidates should be capable of crafting a compelling story that educates, illuminates, and excites.

## *Takes Ownership*

Independent thinkers can provide unique solutions to problems and have the ability to recognize when they need to work independently and when the help of colleagues is required.

## *Team Player*

Great candidates know that no individual or team can make your company successful on their own. They realize the importance of working together for the greater good.





# Proactive

## SAMPLE QUESTION

**Describe a time when you received criticism or feedback from your manager or client. How did you react?**

## SAMPLE ANSWER

When I first got started in recruitment, I had the recruitment aspect of the role down, but I struggled to manage my time against the high volume of leads that were in pipeline. After a review with my manager that indicated she was aware of these issues, I was determined to figure out a systematic approach to staying on top of prospecting and nurturing my book of leads. First I defined the cadence of communications and used calendar tools to make sure I had reminders in place. That allowed me to follow through on daily tasks and ensure that I had time to complete all the necessary activities to be effective in this role.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Recruiters are accustomed to constant rejection, but they should be able to absorb criticism, analyze it, and take actions to constantly improve.

The best candidates are the ones who want feedback so they know what they can do to improve. They ask lots of questions, are accountable for mistakes, and take action to remedy the situation quickly.

# *Relationship Builder*

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

**Tell me about a time when you had to work with a difficult colleague. What did you do to build the relationship?**

## **SAMPLE ANSWER**

In my previous role, I worked with someone who had a particularly hard time communicating. I made a point to sync up with them outside of presentations – meeting them for lunch, organizing brainstorms beyond what was originally scoped for – until we finally got on the same page. It helped cut back on future rounds of creative presentations and ended up developing our partnership further.

## **WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

Candidates should be team players. Look for nonverbal cues that a candidate effectively collaborates with teammates.

# Storyteller

## SAMPLE QUESTION

**Give me a presentation on a topic you care a lot about.**

## SAMPLE ANSWER

Did you know that there are over 7,500 people living on the street in our community? I was shocked to hear this number, which is why I began volunteering with a local nonprofit. Along with accepting individual donations, the organization throws an annual fundraiser to help raise awareness about the plight of those who are unsheltered. And over the years, I've held various positions with the organization, which has allowed me to utilize my skills to support a cause I care about deeply.

## WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

Search for clues in an answer that make it clear this candidate is a natural conversationalist who can craft a story with a compelling framework that both educates and excites. Their answer should reveal some expertise, which will prove that they can passionately advocate for new projects.

# *Takes Ownership*

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

**Give me a presentation on a topic you care a lot about.**

## **SAMPLE ANSWER**

When my team realized our deadline could be missed, I opened up a dialogue with other stakeholders and quickly determined that the best course of action was to strip back some of the less crucial features to allow us to launch on time with a functioning product.

## **WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

This question allows you to identify whether the candidate can take control. Even if they generally work alone, it can help you understand their other skills, such as time and project management.

# *Team Player*

## **SAMPLE QUESTION**

**What distinguishes a great software engineer from a good one? Do you feel you have these qualities?**

## **SAMPLE ANSWER**

A great software engineer knows that they can't do everything, and that it takes a team of people to get the job done. I believe I have the makings of a great engineer, because I'm willing to ask for help when I need it. At the same time, I know what I'm good at; when I can, I offer my services in the places I excel. It's all about balance, really.

## **WHAT TO LISTEN FOR**

This question can provide insight into the thought process of a candidate. Look for an answer that shows initiative and communication skills, traits often overlooked for someone in an engineer role. This particular answer shows humility, since they're also willing to ask for help. A candidate who understands the difference between pragmatism and perfectionism will benefit your organization.

# Conclusion

Being a working woman in the hiring seat or in the interview seat can be a tough job. I believe in you. You got this!

## Leadership Coach in Action

I want to work with you. You're the CEO, CFO, and COO of your career. Discover how to identify your leadership style, and call in more opportunities. Use this diverse guide to start the preparation for an interview.

*Leverage your expertise*

Schedule a 1:1 coaching session to identify solutions to your most pressing interview challenges in a laser-focused, pinpointed strategy session which includes a mock interview.

My priority is your transition to a new opportunity.

### **BOOK A STRATEGY SESSION**



**After 1:1 coaching with me,  
some of my clients have...**

- Increased their base salaries by 35%
- Gone from no interest to executive-level job offers.
- Landed the job of their dreams, one that fills their passion and the communities they serve.
- Experience less burnout at work.