**13 CEO’s Share Their Favorite Job Interview Questions**

Guest Post by Jeff Haden

Interview questions: Everyone has them.

And everyone wishes they had better ones.

So I asked smart people from a variety of fields for their favorite interview question and what it tells them about the candidate.

1. Why have you had X number of jobs in Y years?

This question helps me get a full picture of the candidate’s work history. What keeps them motivated? Why, if they have, did they jump from job to job? And what is the key factor when they leave?

The answer shows me their loyalty and their reasoning process. Do they believe someone always keeps them down (managers, bosses, etc.)? Do they get bored easily?

There is nothing inherently wrong with moving from job to job — the reasons why are what matters.

**—Shama Kabani, The Marketing Zen Group founder and CEO**

2. If we’re sitting here a year from now celebrating what a great twelve months it’s been for you in this role, what did we achieve together?

For me, the most important thing about interviews is that the interviewee interviews us. I need to know they’ve done their homework, truly understand our company and the role… and really want it.

The candidate should have enough strategic vision to not only talk about how good the year has been but to answer with an eye towards that bigger-picture understanding of the company — and why they want to be here.

**—Randy Garutti, Shake Shack CEO**

3. When have you been most satisfied in your life?

Except with entry-level candidates, I presume reasonable job skill and intellect. Plus I believe smart people with relevant experience adapt quickly and excel in new environments where the culture fits and inspires them. So, I concentrate on character and how well theirs matches that of my organization.

This question opens the door for a different kind of conversation where I push to see the match between life in my company and what this person needs to be their best and better in my company than he or she could be anywhere else.

**—Dick Cross, Cross Partnership founder and CEO**

4. If you got hired, loved everything about this job, and are paid the salary you asked for, what kind of offer from another company would you consider?

I like to find out how much the candidate is driven by money versus working at a place they love.

Can they be bought?

You’d be surprised by some of the answers.

**—Ilya Pozin, Ciplex founder**

5. Who is your role model, and why?

The question can reveal how introspective the candidate is about their own personal and professional development, which is a quality I have found to be highly correlated with success and ambition.

Plus it can show what attributes and behaviors the candidate aspires to.

**—Clara Shih, Hearsay Social cofounder and CEO**

6. What things do you not like to do?

We tend to assume people who have held a role enjoy all aspects of that role, but I’ve found that is seldom the case.

Getting an honest answer to the question requires persistence, though. I usually have to ask it a few times in different ways, but the answers are always worth the effort. For instance, I interviewed a sales candidate who said she didn’t enjoy meeting new people.

My favorite was the finance candidate who told me he hated dealing with mundane details and checking his work. Next!

**—Art Papas, Bullhorn founder and CEO**

7. Tell me about a project or accomplishment that you consider to be the most significant in your career.

I find that this question opens the door to further questions and enables someone to highlight themselves in a specific, non-generic way.

Plus additional questions can easily follow: What position did you hold when you achieved this accomplishment? How did it impact your growth at the company? Who else was involved and how did the accomplishment impact your team?

Discussing a single accomplishment is an easy way to open doors to additional information and insight about the person, their work habits, and how they work with others.

**—Deborah Sweeney, MyCorporation CEO**

8. What’s your superpower… or spirit animal?

During her interview I asked my current executive assistant what was her favorite animal. She told me it was a duck, because ducks are calm on the surface and hustling like crazy getting things done under the surface.

I think this was an amazing response and a perfect description for the role of an EA. For the record, she’s been working with us for over a year now and is amazing at her job.

**—Ryan Holmes, HootSuite CEO**

9. We’re constantly making things better, faster, smarter or less expensive. We leverage technology or improve processes. In other words, we strive to do more — with less. Tell me about a recent project or problem that you made better, faster, smarter, more efficient, or less expensive.

Good candidates will have lots of answers to this question. Great candidates will get excited as they share their answers.

In 13 years we’ve only passed along one price increase to our customers. That’s not because our costs have decreased — quite the contrary. We’ve been able to maintain our prices because we’ve gotten better at what we do. Our team, at every level, has their ears to the ground looking for problems to solve.

Every new employee needs to do that, too.

**—Edward Wimmer, RoadID cofounder**

10. Discuss a specific accomplishment you’ve achieved in a previous position that indicates you will thrive in this position.

Past performance is usually the best indicator of future success.

If the candidate can’t point to a prior accomplishment, they are unlikely to be able to accomplish much at our organization — or yours.

**—Dave Lavinsky, Growthink cofounder and president**

11. So, what’s your story?

This inane question immediately puts an interviewee on the defensive because there is no right answer or wrong answer. But there is an answer.

It’s a question that asks for a creative response. It’s an invitation to the candidate to play the game and see where it goes without worrying about the right answer. By playing along, it tells me a lot about the character, imagination, and inventiveness of the person.

The question, as obtuse as it might sound to the interviewee, is the beginning of a story and in today’s world of selling oneself, or one’s company, it’s the ability to tell a story and create a feeling that sells the brand — whether it’s a product or a person.

The way they look at me when the question is asked also tells me something about their likability. If they act defensive, look uncomfortable, and pause longer than a few seconds, it tells me they probably take things too literally and are not broad thinkers. In our business we need broad thinkers.

**—Richard Funess, Finn Partners managing partner**

12. What questions do you have for me?

I love asking this question really early in the interview — it shows me whether the candidate can think quickly on their feet, and also reveals their level of preparation and strategic thinking.

I often find you can learn more about a person based on the questions they ask versus the answers they give.

**—Scott Dorsey, ExactTarget cofounder and CEO**

13. Tell us about a time when things didn’t go the way you wanted — like a promotion you wanted and didn’t get, or a project that didn’t turn out how you had hoped.

It’s a simple question that says so much. Candidates may say they understand the importance of working as a team but that doesn’t mean they actually know how to work as a team. We need self-starters that will view their position as a partnership.

Answers tend to fall into three basic categories: 1. blame 2. self-deprecation, or 3. opportunity for growth.

Our company requires focused employees willing to wear many hats and sometimes go above and beyond the job description, so I want team players with the right attitude and approach. If the candidate points fingers, blames, goes negative on former employers, communicates with a sense of entitlement, or speaks in terms of their role as an individual as opposed to their position as a partnership, he or she won’t do well here.

But if they take responsibility and are eager to put what they have learned to work, they will thrive in our meritocracy.

**—Tony Knopp, Spotlight Ticket Management cofounder and CEO**

Now it’s your turn.

If you’re an interviewer, what are your favorite job interview questions to ask?  Or, if you’re interviewed, what are the best questions you have been asked?

JOB INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

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| **By: Alaina Rivas**  It takes a lot of work to get qualified job candidates in your door for an interview. But, that’s not always your toughest task. Developing interview questions that will give you the answers you need to make the best hiring decision for your business can prove to be much more difficult.  But there’s no need to walk into the interview room feeling unprepared (or to walk out feeling unsure about the candidate’s potential at your company). We reached out to the [Insperity® Recruiting Services](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=ad6564eac6&e=f8f9a9fe45) team for you to find out:  **What interview question do you always ask, and why?**  **Here are 16 questions they suggested you always ask:**  **1. Of your past work experiences, which was your favorite position, and why?**  The answer to this question lets you [know what your candidates are looking for](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=4adf5a824b&e=f8f9a9fe45)in their next employer or position. Plus, it can provide insight on whether they are committed to the position they are applying to now.  Lydia Marie Trevino | Senior Recruiting & Outplacement Specialist | Experience: 10+ years | Twitter: [@LydiaRecruits](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=734b73b234&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **2. Why did you apply for this particular position?**  I ask this for many reasons. It can help candidates relax a bit. It is open-ended, and I can learn more about them (as with behavioral questions). Sometimes, I can also see if they have done their homework by researching the company.  Kari Galloway | Recruiting Specialist | Experience: 7 years | Twitter: [@karigalloway1](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=c0628ddfc8&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **3. Tell me what your ideal environment feels like – tell me about the team, the space and your role within it.**  This question works best to give me some insight into the cultural fit of candidates and to show me how mature they are professionally.  Lara Selten, PHR | Recruiting Specialist | Experience: 4 years | Twitter: [@LaraSelten](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage2.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=69333bfab1&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **4. When you look at a potential company or a manager to work for, what could they offer you to help you be happy and successful during your tenure with them?**  Candidates give some great responses to this question, and it gives me an idea of how they may or may not fit in with the company culture or the manager they would report to. It might also tell me that I need to dig deeper or let them just have the chance to talk more.  Beth McElroy | Recruiting Consultant | Experience: 13.5 years | Twitter: [@BethMcElroy4](x-webdoc://E01E264D-5D11-44FF-BD5C-50F2A1D6A4D4/@BethMcElroy4)  **5. Why are you the best choice for this role? What separates you from other candidates?**  First, these questions tell me how prepared they are, if they have a summary of strengths, if they know their strengths, how organized they are, and if they’ve given thought on the subject. For example, a well prepared candidate will state, “I have good technical skills,” tell me why, and move to the next strength. I call it a two-minute drill – basically they should have a short summary of why you should hire them ready to go at the start.  Second, I’ll see if they’ve thought about the role and how they fit into it. I like hearing skills especially related to the job descriptions and examples from their work experience that relate. For example, if a candidate says, “I’m good with technology,” he should follow up by discussing the different software and systems he has worked with and any achievements he made while employed.  Greg Hawke | Recruiting Specialist | Experience: 7+ years | Twitter: [@greghawkes\_insp](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=962a372b70&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **6. Why do you want to work here? (Or, why do you want this job?)**  This question tells me tells me how well-spoken they are. More or less, it’s not what they say, it’s what they reveal in how they answer it. I want to know if they can explain how their skills, strengths, experience and goals relate to my open position.  Cheradan Nadzak | Recruiting Specialist | Experience: 2+ years | Twitter: [@cher\_jobs](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=7c7dd80c93&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **7. Why are you considering changing jobs at this time?**  When you find a really good candidates, it’s important to find out why they want a new job. Usually, people are either attracted by something outside of their current position (e.g., better location, different industry, etc.) or feel pushed out by something negative in their current job (e.g., boss that doesn’t respect them, not enough money, etc.).  Knowing the main driver of their job change helps you gain some control over the hiring situation. If for example, you make them an offer and they begin to reconsider taking the job, you can remind them of why they wanted to change jobs in the first place (and how your position can be an answer to that need).  **8. What are you looking for in your next position?**  This question tells me whether [candidates are looking to grow.](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=42df4dc773&e=f8f9a9fe45) It’s best to hire people who seem to be moving along a career path or have some advancement strategy in mind. In most cases, employees who are trying to achieve professional goals will be more motivated and productive than those without. There’s really no right answer, but it’s a bad sign if they say, “I’m not sure,” or, “I don’t know.”  Joshua Jones | Sourcing Analyst | Experience: 6+ years | Twitter: [@7Recruiter](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=5a19075d6d&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **9. For a managerial role: Have you experienced a policy change, department structure change or other significant change that was not very popular with the people it affected? If so, what was it and how did you remain flexible and productive through it?**  **Or, for a subordinate role: Have you experienced a policy change, department structure change or other significant change that you weren’t expecting? If so, what was it and how did you remain flexible and productive through it?**  The reason I ask these questions is because there is always change within every organization. To know how someone has reacted and stayed focused through change is a good indicator of future performance.  Stormy Mazzella | Recruiting Specialist | Experience: 5 years | Twitter:[@MazzellaStormy](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=f0854378c5&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **10. What was the best job that you have had, and why?**  The answer to this question can tell you a lot about the type of culture that your candidates respond well to as well as how they’re motivated to work.  **11. How do you like to be managed?**  The answer to this question is going to give you insight into the level of responsibility that candidates are comfortable with and will ultimately allow you to determine if your management style matches with their expectations.  Carrie Starr | Director, Recruiting Services | Experience: 15 years |Twitter: [@CarrieMStarr](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=50234d9c6a&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **12. What did you like most about [a job on their resume]? What did you like least about this job?**  It is very telling about candidates’ motivation, personality and potential cultural fit. If the job they least liked has similar qualities as the job you’re hiring for, then they’re probably not going to be a good fit and they won’t stick around for long, if you hire them.  Lila Holst | Senior Corporate Recruiting Specialist | Experience: 9.5 years | Twitter: [@lilaholst](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=b850504f40&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **13. Before we dive into your work history, tell me a little bit about you and what you are looking for in a company.**  I ask this at the beginning of my interviews for a couple of reasons. First, it helps break the ice with candidates. The more comfortable they are, the more relevant information we learn.  Second, it demonstrates that we care about candidates’ happiness and aren’t just worried about the right skill-fit.  Third, I can use the information they provide to sell them on the opportunity or company. For example, if a candidate says they’re looking for growth opportunities, I can point out that XYZ Company loves to promote and grow people from within.  Jennifer Maynard | Senior Recruiting & Outplacement Specialist | Experience: 18 years | Twitter: [@jennmaynard0325](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=291717c232&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **14. Are you willing to commute to [job location] on a regular basis?**  **15. What is your minimum salary requirement?**  Location and money questions are a must. If they’re not in range or if the location does not work, we do not like to continue talks and waste candidates’ time.  Rachel Shaw | Supervisor, Recruiting Services | Experience: 4 years | Twitter: [@rachshaw2222](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=327caf7e40&e=f8f9a9fe45)  **16. Why are you open to new opportunities at this point in your career?**  This question tells me [candidates’ motivation for exploring new opportunities](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=40df94e51c&e=f8f9a9fe45)and helps me uncover potential red flags. If they speak ill of their current employer, job responsibilities or co-workers, it demonstrates a lack of professionalism. It also helps me to understand if they were let go due to poor performance or if they’re simply looking for a new challenge in their career.  Emilie Diehl | Corporate Recruiting Specialist| Experience: 4 years | Twitter: [@EmilieDiehl](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=1521594be3&e=f8f9a9fe45)  Every interview and every hire is important. We understand that recruiting new employees while juggling your regular workload can be a challenge. [Insperity Recruiting Services](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=eeff731b91&e=f8f9a9fe45) can relieve some of the stress: [find out more](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=aa7fa5ec61&e=f8f9a9fe45).    **Alaina Rivas** has over nine years of recruiting experience and is currently the director, recruiting services at Insperity. Her focus is in recruitment talent identification, recruitment advertising, marketing and branding methods. This enables her to find the best talent using the latest recruitment strategies, talent attraction methods and technologies. She holds a B.S. in Management, Human Resources from the University of New Orleans. You can follow Alaina on Twitter:  [@AlainaRivas](http://leadingwithquestions.us3.list-manage1.com/track/click?u=4320a50bc672b2862b6f985c0&id=adc9d0ccaf&e=f8f9a9fe45) |

**BEST QUESTIONS A JOB CANDIDATE CAN ASK**

1. What do you expect me to accomplish in the first 60 to 90 days?
2. What are the common attributes of your top performers?
3. What are the one or two things that really drive results for the company?
4. How do you plan to deal with …..?

By Jeff Haden