

THE 5 MOST REVEALING INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Your guide to analyzing candidates' responses



INTRO

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

In order to spot a top performer in today's saturated job market, we asked LinkedIn hiring managers how they screen candidates.

With their insight, we've determined the most revealing interview questions and answers for today's most in-demand jobs.

Whether you're hiring for sales, marketing, or product management, or you're just looking to brush up on your interview skills, this ebook is designed to get you asking the right questions and analyzing the answers so you can hire the best person for the role.



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For sales, marketing, and product management roles, we cover the following:

- 5 traits of successful candidates
- Most insightful interview questions to screen for those traits
- What to look for in a candidate's answers



SALES

65% of sales hiring managers agree that a lack of soft skills among candidates limits company productivity.

Though difficult to screen for, soft skills are central to a sales role. And with the right interview questions, identifying those skills – whether it's flexible thinking, emotional intelligence, and eagerness to learn – will help you find a highly productive new hire.

THE TOP 5 SALES TRAITS

SALES

MARKETING

PRODUCT
MANAGEMENT

1 / MOTIVATED

Motivation is critical to performance. In order to understand why this person has opted for a career in sales, you'll need to peel back several layers to ensure their goals align with your team's main objective.

2 / HONEST

Candidates should feel comfortable sharing a specific scenario in which they spoke up, even if it was controversial. This type of behavior will inevitably translate into an ability to close deals, build lasting relationships with both clients and internal partners, and bring new ideas to the table.

3 / ADAPTABLE

Search for keywords that show creativity. A candidate should demonstrate an aptitude for critical and flexible thinking, and the ability to excel in a fast-paced environment where change is inevitable.

4 / CUSTOMER-CENTRIC

Any question centered around process and customer management will 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.

5 / TENACITY

A strong candidate is one that values development opportunities. Candidates who are open to feedback and willing to learn from mistakes demonstrate high emotional IQ, flexibility, and ability to overcome obstacles.

1 / MOTIVATED



SAMPLE QUESTION

What motivates you as a sales professional?

SALES

MARKETING

PRODUCT
MANAGEMENT



SAMPLE ANSWER

My goal is to help clients solve a problem, even if they don't realize (or know) it's a problem yet, and make sure they understand how our product offers a potential solution to their business needs. Positioning the business as a strategic partner helps us build trust and grow our businesses together.

1 / MOTIVATED



SAMPLE ANSWER

My goal is to help clients solve a problem, even if they don't realize (or know) it's a problem yet, and make sure they understand how our product offers a potential solution to their business needs. Positioning the business as a strategic partner helps us build trust and grow our businesses together.



WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **A strong sales candidate has a genuine interest in helping their customers solve a business challenge.**
- ✓ **A good sales person is also able to clearly articulate the product complexities in a straightforward and simple way that is both engaging and educational. This creates a trusting relationship and extends potential long-term business opportunities.**

2 / HONEST



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 it shouldn't be included, including referencing internal product docs, and even looped in product managers to get a second opinion. The decision to remove certain language wasn't initially welcomed by the entire team, but they eventually agreed it was the right thing to do for the prospective client.

2 / HONEST



SAMPLE ANSWER

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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 a specific experience isn't presented, or a scenario lacks complexity, it could be a red flag.**
- ✓ **No candidate will be perfect, but one who demonstrates that they were willing to disrupt popular opinion reveals their transparency and trustworthiness; this will translate to someone who values the longevity of the relationship over a short-term sale.**

3 / ADAPTABLE



SAMPLE QUESTION

Tell me about a time when the policy, price structure, or product changed last minute and you already had a deal in the field. How did you handle the situation?



SAMPLE ANSWER

I immediately called my contact to inform them of the changes, but not before I thoroughly understood the implication for their business. During the conversation, I presented a few different options where I anticipated potential concerns because I wanted to focus on the solution rather than the problem. By flagging the change early and working with the customer to find a resolution together, I was able to maintain the trust in the relationship and secure the deal.

3 / ADAPTABLE



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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **An answer like this reveals a candidate who can think on their feet and shows creative problem-solving to overcome challenges.**
- ✓ **Look for signals that a candidate can keep a positive attitude even under high pressure or while in a stressful situation.**

4 / CUSTOMER-CENTRIC



SAMPLE QUESTION

You've got a new product to sell. Walk me through your sales 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 am 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 that 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.

4 / CUSTOMER-CENTRIC



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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **Look for an answer that indicates a candidate knows how to position themselves as a strategic consultant who helps people solve their business problems rather than just selling products.**

5 / TENACITY



SAMPLE QUESTION

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



SAMPLE ANSWER

When I first got started in sales, I had the sales aspect of the role down, but I struggled to manage my time against the high volume of leads that were in pipeline. After my manager identified the issue, 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 there was time for all necessary activities to be effective in this role.

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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **The best candidates are the ones who want feedback so they know what they can do to be better; they ask lots questions, are accountable for mistakes, and take action to remedy the situation quickly.**
- ✓ **Salespeople are accustomed to constant rejection, but they should be able to absorb it, analyze it, and take actions to constantly improve.**



MARKETING

Hiring a great marketer can be more ambiguous than hiring a great salesperson.

Marketing, as a role, tends to be amorphous. So while it's difficult to pinpoint specific metrics of success in this field, you can ask questions that help define the candidate's understanding of marketing strategies and how they might approach specific challenges.

THE TOP 5 MARKETING TRAITS

SALES

MARKETING

PRODUCT
MANAGEMENT

1 / COLLABORATOR

Marketing is a cross-functional role, so it's important to listen for cues of delegation, patience, and organization – traits that will define a strong leader and collaborator.

2 / STORYTELLER

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

3 / ADAPTABLE

Today's marketing landscape is ever-evolving, so flexibility is key. Answers that demonstrate self-motivation, curiosity, and a willingness to explore new trends, processes, and technology are crucial for corporate achievement.

4 / CREATIVE

Marketing leaders know how to get out of the weeds and focus on the bigger picture. Determine whether someone focuses solely on the nitty-gritty or shows they can expand their ideas on broader goals.

5 / CULTURAL FIT

Finding a candidate that'll fit in your company is crucial – 89% of hiring failures are due to poor culture fit. While “tell me about yourself” works, candidates often have an elevator pitch ready. Get candidates to think differently about themselves, and you'll get a more honest answer.

1 / COLLABORATOR



SAMPLE QUESTION

Tell me about a challenging project that you worked on that required cross-functional collaboration. What did you learn?



SAMPLE ANSWER

After the kickoff, it became abundantly clear that the project was lacking a clear objective. This was due in part to not having a clear owner of the project. So I stepped up to define the goals and get agreement from senior execs and the larger team. Then in a group session, we worked through the specific tasks and priorities, which was translated into a road map that included workstream owners. The most challenging part of a group-led initiative is getting started and securing initial alignment.

1 / COLLABORATOR



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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **Marketers must thrive in a group dynamic, while still having a clear focus on goals. Listen for cues that indicate that goals (and also how to measure impact) and priorities are established.**
- ✓ **The best candidates excel at organizing a clear project plan and are also comfortable delegating tasks to benefit the team.**

2 / STORYTELLER



SAMPLE QUESTION

**Tell me a story 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 individual donations, the organization throws an annual fundraiser to help illuminate the cause and raise awareness about the plight of those 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.

2 / STORYTELLER



SAMPLE ANSWER

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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **Search for clues in an answer that make it clear this person is a natural conversationalist who can craft a story with a compelling framework that both educates and excites.**
- ✓ **Find a candidate whose presentation reveals expertise, proving that they can passionately advocate for new projects.**

3 / 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 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!

3 / ADAPTABLE



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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **A candidate that is flexible and has the desire to constantly grow their skill set will be an asset to the team.**
- ✓ **A curious marketer is a successful one; listen for phrases like “it gives me an excuse to keep learning” in their answer because it shows their willingness to explore new trends, processes, and technology.**

4 / CREATIVE



SAMPLE QUESTION

If you had \$100,000 to market a new business of your choice, what would you do?



SAMPLE ANSWER

\$100,000 might sound like a big number, but in the grand scheme of things it might hardly scratch the surface. At my current company, we have a strong social team so I would utilize their expertise to create a series of social content pieces and then design a paid media campaign to promote them, with video as a core tactic. I'd also partner with essential influencers and leverage user-generated content as part of my promotional strategy.

4 / CREATIVE



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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **Experienced marketers know what it takes to run a successful campaign, not just creatively, but financially.**
- ✓ **Find a candidate who answers this question in linear fashion, where priorities are set and there's big-picture comprehension.**

5 / CULTURAL FIT



SAMPLE QUESTION

What are 3 words your manager would use to describe you? How about your best friend? Your parents?



SAMPLE ANSWER

Determined, creative, and enthusiastic. My friends have nicknamed me “little miss sunshine” for my constantly sunny disposition, and I think my parents – who had to listen to my one-woman shows – would say I’ve always had an artistic gene.

5 / CULTURAL FIT



SAMPLE ANSWER

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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **Does the candidate use default adjectives or are they unique? Do they go into detail about why these words would best be used to describe them?**
- ✓ **Make sure a candidate provides a specific example (or two) that sheds light on why they chose the adjectives they did.**

SALES

MARKETING

PRODUCT
MANAGEMENT



PRODUCT MANAGEMENT

Find a product manager that has strong leadership and communication skills, as well as initiative.

Ben Horowitz, co-founder and partner of the venture capital firm Andreessen Horowitz, [says](#) that “a good product manager acts like and is viewed as CEO of the product.” Often the most valuable teammates in this role have diverse, unique, and unconventional backgrounds.

THE TOP 5 PRODUCT MANAGEMENT TRAITS

- SALES
- MARKETING
- PRODUCT
MANAGEMENT**

1 / OPERATIONAL

A strong product manager knows how to streamline tasks to expedite deliverables. In essence, they can take a step back and review priorities with the bigger picture in mind – while still managing the daily complexities of each phase of product launch.

2 / PROFICIENT

Everyone is a consumer, but a good product manager is always thinking like a consumer. As a result, they craft product stories built around each unique audience and their unique set of problems.

3 / STRATEGIST

Good product managers have the unique capability to connect market dynamics with consumer needs. So they understand business opportunities today and what those might look like five years from now.

4 / ANALYTICAL

Financiers aren't the only ones crunching numbers these days; product managers should feel comfortable using metrics to show product comprehension.

5 / LEADER

A product manager should be confident enough to influence others while also initiating collaboration.

1 / OPERATIONAL



SAMPLE QUESTION

Tell me about a successful product you've launched.



SAMPLE ANSWER

It starts with defining the product vision based on the business goals and user needs. Then comes the fun, which involves presenting the idea to executive stakeholders, engineers, UX/design, etc., and getting them excited. Once I had buy in from the right resources, it was time to build a product road map, define all the features, and prioritize what was required versus what was nice to have in order to hit our deadlines.

1 / OPERATIONAL



SAMPLE ANSWER

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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **Listen for whether a product manager has shipped a product before. If they've made it through the process successfully, it's likely they can achieve it again.**
- ✓ **Do they talk about specific tactics used to execute and rally their team around an idea? Demonstrating the ability to excite and influence is critical to success.**
- ✓ **Pay attention to cues that they know how to prioritize and make trade-offs to keep momentum going.**

2 / PROFICIENT



SAMPLE QUESTION

Name a product you love that you think is exceptionally well designed. What makes it so great?



SAMPLE ANSWER

I recently needed a new desk lamp and quickly realized the sheer volume of “nothing special” lamps out in the market. But then I found this one with flicker-free lighting, which helps reduce eyestrain and makes sitting at a desk all day more bearable; controls to modify the brightness and color of the lighting, which allows you to personalize your light source; plus a sleeker design that’s curved to spread more light across the desk surface. They took a commoditized product that surprised and delighted.

2 / PROFICIENT



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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **The more they have to say about a product, the more you will get a sense for the level of passion they’re likely to bring to the job.**
- ✓ **Strong candidates think about an answer from the user’s perspective and the actual challenge being solved.**
- ✓ **Their response will also give you insights into their thought process. For example, do they organize an answer around a framework or just offer a list of what the product does well without any core principles driving their rationale.**

3 / STRATEGIST



SAMPLE QUESTION

What do you think about automated driving and its implications for the future?



SAMPLE ANSWER

In a generation's time, this technology will become obsolete, so much so that children's Soap Box Derby races will showcase kid-built self-driving vehicles made from household supplies, pushing engineers to come up with a new strategy (flying DeLorean, anyone?).

3 / STRATEGIST



SAMPLE ANSWER

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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **A strong answer will demonstrate a candidate's vision and creativity; the ideal candidate will go beyond the confines of what's doable tomorrow and look well into the future to see potential that other people may not have considered.**

4 / ANALYTICAL



SAMPLE QUESTION

Tell me about a time you used data to inform a new feature or product. What were the results?



SAMPLE ANSWER

First I defined the hypothesis that I wanted to prove. The next step was to decide the primary measure of success that would tell me if my theory was right or wrong. From there I designed an A/B test (to run against a control group) and analyzed the results to see which product feature had a greater impact, if at all.

4 / ANALYTICAL



SAMPLE ANSWER

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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **The candidate should understand how (and when) to use data to answer product questions.**
- ✓ **They should be able to clearly articulate what the data means to key stakeholders and justify why they focused on those particular metrics to measure success.**

5 / LEADER



SAMPLE QUESTION

Tell me about a time you disagreed with the engineers or designers on your team. What did you do?



SAMPLE ANSWER

Rather than spinning our wheels when we didn't have data to back up either of our hypotheses, we decided to build lightweight versions of both features and pilot each experience with a small portion of our audience – also so that we could compare engagement against a control. Then in six weeks, we reviewed the data to see which feature was showing the most promising results, which showed us where to invest our time. Rather than our team making the final decision, we let the customer speak for themselves.

5 / LEADER



SAMPLE ANSWER

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WHAT TO LISTEN FOR

- ✓ **Effective product managers are humble and know when to compromise so the entire team benefits from an open discussion.**
- ✓ **A good candidate knows how to adapt their approach based on the team they are working with.**

CONCLUSION

As a hiring manager, you've got a tough job ahead of you.

Finding a candidate that meets all the necessary criteria in a 30-minute interview is no small task. By providing today's most revealing interview questions and answers for jobs in sales, marketing, and product management, we hope we've helped make one part of the interview process a little easier. Use this as a guide in your own structured interview and you'll be on your way to finding that perfect fit.



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