

HR Department Toolkit



Probing Interview Questions

For management, supervisor, and senior clerk candidates

Key: (a) = Attitude Towards Subordinates (c) = Collaborative (cr) = Conflict Resolution (csa) = Customer Service Attitude (d) = Delegating (e) = Ethics (f) = Foundation (h) = Honesty (i) = Initiative (in) = Introspective (ip) = Interpersonal (ips) = Intellectual / Problem Solving (o) = Organization (pv) = Personal Values (ra) = Relationship with Authority (s) = Self Esteem Health (wv) = Work Values

1. Please give me a quick summary of your personal and work experiences background? (f)

Try to determine some commonalities of their background and yours

2. Tell me what your duties were (or are) at your last (or current) job. What were you responsible for? (f)

Does what they're saying have a parallel with your tanning salon open position?

3. How many hours were you required to work at your last management job? (f)

Does their answer describe full or part time work and is that consistent with what they are applying for at your salon? If they worked part time at the prior job, did they have another job as well? If they did are they looking to work another job while working for you?

4. What did you like best about your last (or current) job? What did you like least? (wv)

Does their answer describe who you are as a potential employer? Sample answer: "It was nice working independently not having a supervisor stand over my shoulders all the time." Ask why working independently was so important?

5. Tell me why you decided to leave your last (or current) job. (f)

Does their answer comply with what you were told on a phone screen of the applicant? Sample answer: "Not enough hours and too low of a wage rate." Ask "How many hours were you getting and what hourly rate were you at?"

6. What suggestions for improvements did you make at your last job? (i, wv)

Sample answer: "I helped design a new parking system for employees." Probe further: "That's interesting. Can you share with me some details of what system there was in place and how your design altered what was being done?"

7. Tell me about the best boss you ever worked for and why you felt that way? (f, ra)

Probe further: "Can you give me details of why you felt that way?"

8. Tell me about your worst boss and why you felt that way. (f, ra)

Probe further: "Can you give me details of why you felt that way?"

9. What would you say is your greatest strength as an employee? (s)

Sample answer: "I'm very good with people." Probe further: "Can you tell me why you feel that way?"

10. In what areas did your prior employers say they would like you to improve? (s, h)

Probe further: *Were you able to improve in those areas?*

11. Did any of your prior employers use an evaluation system? If so what areas did they say were your work strengths? (h)

12. What have you done in your personal life or in your work life that you are most proud of? (s, pv)

Sample answer: "I had to take care of my Mom during her cancer until she passed away."

Probe further: "How did you find the strength to get through that?"

13. What annoys you most about work? (f, wv)

Sample answer: "Having my work interrupted." Probe further: "Can you give me an example of such an incident?"

14. Tell me how you handled an unsatisfied customer in your earlier work experience. (csa)

Probing hint: *Don't ask what they would do but what they did.*

15. If I could speak with your past co-workers or employees, what would they tell me about you and what you're like to work with or for? (c, ip, a)

Probe further: "What specifically would they tell me about why they liked working for you or with you?"

16. Do you think that work policies are always to be followed? (wv, e, i)

Probing: "What would you do if a customer was not happy with a visit to the salon but you could not get them to talk with your direct supervisor? What if the complaint was that they did not like the tanning bed they were just tanned in?"

17. How do you like to be managed by your immediate supervisor? (f, wv, c)

Probing: "Can you tell me why that would be better for you?"

18. Tell me about a work relationship that just never worked out for you or the other person and why you feel it did not end successfully? (s, c)

Probing: "Can you give me more details and what the outcome was?"

19. What do you know about our salon's business or about the tanning industry? (f)

Probing: "Have you been a tanner yourself and what was it about your experience that you liked or didn't like?"

20. Outside of any physical or mental disabilities, tell me about any absences or tardiness you had from your past work and why did those occurrences happen? (f)

Note: The Americans with Disabilities Act prohibits employment decisions based on real or perceived physical or mental impairments of workers perform the core job responsibilities of the position they are being considered for.

21. What were your grades like in school? (wv, ips)

Probing: "Why do you think you excelled in one subject and not others?"

22. Have you ever been convicted of a crime and if so what were the circumstances? (f)

23. Do you know of any reason that you could not physically do the required functions of the job? (f)

Hold this question until after you've described the job functions in a later step of the interview process.

24. Do you know of any reason why you could not be to work on time each day or shift that you are scheduled? (f)

The information you're seeking is to find out if they have transportation challenges, or if there has been a pattern in their past work life of absenteeism or tardiness. It also indicates your expectations that timeliness at reporting for scheduled work shifts is mandatory.

25. Why would you want to work at our company? (wv, i, pv)

Probing: "Do you see specific reasons other than just the benefits of free tanning and a paycheck?"

The following questions are best used when interviewing an applicant that may aspire for a management position in the company. They all require probing: "Can you give me specifics and how you handled them?"

26. Can you share with me a time when you had two employees that did not get along with each other and what you did to resolve the problem? (cr, ips)

27. Have you ever had an issue with an employee that involved the way they showed up for work dressed or where there was a general issue of hygiene? If so, how did you correct the situation? (cr, ips)

28. What was your greatest achievement in developing a subordinate? (wv, a, i)

29. Tell me about a time when you had an employee who was good with customers but couldn't seem to "get their act together" in other ways and what you did about it. (wv, a, i)

30. Tell me about an employee that was dishonest. What were the circumstances and how did you correct the problem? (wv, pv, i, ips)

31. Do you think that people gravitate to you? Are you an approachable person? Tell me why you think that is. (ip, c, cr, in)

32. How do you motivate employees? (a, i, ip, ips, c)

33. Tell me about some of your past employees and what personal passions they had in their life. (a, ip)

34. Was there a time when you just could not get an employee motivated and why you think that was the case? (s, in, a)

35. What was a managing mistake you made and what did you learn from it? (s, ips, in)

36. Tell me how you plan your employee meetings and what gets accomplished. (i, ips, o, d, a)

37. Tell me how you handled a situation in the past when you were short staffed and what you did about it. (cr, ips, a)

38. How do you get employees to work well together? (c, d, ips, cr)

39. What's the best way to work well with your bosses? (ra, cr, c)