

Great Interview Questions



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Interviews can be a daunting experience for California managers and business owners. How can interviewers really get to know applicants and determine whether the relationship will be a good fit without running afoul of state and federal discrimination laws? The trick is to ask open-ended questions that encourage applicants to talk, while being creative enough to surprise them into being open, honest and vulnerable. Expand cliché questions (where do you see yourself in five years? what's your greatest weakness?) into something that lets your applicants tell a story, and think outside the box in asking your questions to see if your applicants can do the same in their responses. Here is a sample list of "standard" and "creative" interview questions, compiled throughout my 30 years of employment law experience as well as from a variety of third-party sources, that may turn your uncomfortable interviews into intriguing conversations.

Standard Questions

- What would your last boss say about you?
- What would your last subordinate say about you?
- What is your proudest achievement, on a personal level? Professional level?
- Tell me about the worst interpersonal problem you've had in the work place.
- Tell me about your most difficult client. How do you handle him?
- What is your preferred style of leadership/supervision?
- What was your best hire? Worst hire? Why?
- What interests you about this position?
- What interests you about this company?
- What's the nicest thing you've ever done for someone?
- What's the meanest thing you've ever done to someone?

- How do you compensate for your weaknesses?
- What would make you love coming to work every day?
- How would your boss get your very best effort out of you?
- What excites you the most about this job?
- What scares you the most about this job?
- Tell me about the worst decision an employer of yours ever made.
- Tell me about the worst business decision you ever made.
- Tell me about a subordinate's worst mistake. How did you handle it?
- What is the most important development in your field today? How do you think it will change your industry?
- What will you miss most about your current position?
- If I brought in three of your former supervisors, what would they say about you that you would say is not true?
- What would you do with an employee who is performing well but could do better?
- What would you do if you found out a co-worker was stealing?
- What experiences in your childhood prepared you for this position?
- What did you want to be when you grew up and how have you incorporated that into your current professional life?
- Where do you think this company should be 5-10 years from now?

Creative Questions

- Are you a forest person or a trees person?
- Do you think there is intelligent life in outer space?
- Is Elvis really dead? How do you know?
- Do you think some rules should be obeyed more stringently than others?
- Tell me ten ways to use a pencil other than for writing.
- If you could have a superpower, which one would it be and why?
- What was your favorite movie/book? Why?

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