I am working as a software engineer. In this assignment I will be taking on the perspective of a project manager who is managing a team of software professionals.

**You have interviewed two potential team members for one position on the project. How would you select the most suitable based on: their existing work, skills, knowledge, understanding business and possible other things?**

For a candidate to be a suitable team member, they must have good knowledge of programming. Even before the interview, their resume has been analysed for their previous work. If they have claimed to have the skills that we are looking for, they can be invited to the interview. One great question you can ask during interview is “Can you explain your previous major project and what you did for it?” This open-ended question allows the candidate to show his understanding of a project and allows the interviewer to make specifying questions. The candidate’s answers will provide insight about their knowledge.

Another thing I would focus on is how the candidate performs in an environment where they must be able to work with the customer. In an agile organization, each team member will need to be able to present their work to the customer. They may also have to contact customers during a project if anything is unclear and clarification is needed. In the interview, I would be sure to ask a question that provides insight about this. The question can be for example “Can you tell me about a difficult situation you had with a client in a previous position”.

Third thing I would focus on during the interview is teamwork. We must make sure that the candidate can work in a team and their communication skills are sufficient. In our company, you must be able to inform people about your work status and problems that arise so we can quickly handle them. You must also be able to answer emails and attend meetings every day. I would try to gauge their abilities by asking questions like “Tell me about a time when you had to work with a person from a different department, like sales teams, to succeed in a project.”

All in all, I would try to get a picture of all the skills we need right now and pick the best candidate. It must be understood that not all companies have customer facing programmers and not everyone has an impressive background in programming. Low customer experience can be overcome by having the right kind of attitude and mentality during the interview or if we have the room for a junior developer, the candidate’s previous work does not need to be extensive.

**A team member is about to leave the team. What things could you take that you can ensure the knowledge of this team member to be transferred to the rest of team?**

Losing a team member is a great loss in knowledge. The first thing I would try to do is try to convince them to stay. I would offer a reasonable salary increase along with trying to consider, can we offer them the reason why they are leaving. The reasons why they are leaving may vary greatly but things like a promotion or a change in tasks can be considered. I would do all this knowing full well that most of the time, people leave anyway, and that is good and natural.

Another process that should be in place before people leave is documenting work. A 2 weeks’ notice is a short time, and the employee might not be the most motivated person to write documentation about his entire tenure in the company. Ensuring documentation is written as work is done, gives the best reference to people who inherit the project.

Given all the things above, a knowledge transfer plan should be made. In the plan, there should be a person who continues the work. The new and old person should have knowledge transfer sessions where as much practical information is transferred as possible.

It is also important to make sure that all the work is saved to the cloud when a person leaves. In software development this could be for example committing all code to a version control system.

Contracts can also be made that allow the employer to contact the leaving team member after the departure. This would cost some money but creates a lot of leeway in case some key information is lost.

**How can you detect that team members’ disagreements do not affect the team negatively?**

Disagreements occur naturally within projects. They are healthy when deciding how to approach projects and how our ways of working should be. We cannot all share the same opinions and often discussion leads to a better outcome for all. It is however important to keep the disagreements professional, even when things get a little heated.

Some ways a manager can ensure that disagreements are productive and don’t get out of hand include maintaining a healthy team dynamic. When we all feel like we’re in this together and all respect each other, even larger disagreements become much easier to handle.

Some practical ways to ensure positive team dynamics can be maintaining open communication policies and active listening. It is important to lead by example as a manager. Everyone needs to feel heard, and their opinions valued, even when it’s not the chosen way forward. Another way can be to directly ask a team member about how they feel about something during meetings. In other words, ensure everyone gets to speak out. The person shouldn’t feel like they’re put on the spotlight, but still gets a chance to talk.

Whenever things are starting to affect the team, the manager should be firm. They should react quickly to stop things from getting worse and take responsibility to shut any undesirable behaviour down. This can be done in a way that does not cause harm to the manager themselves, by setting clear expectations, being a beacon of expected behaviour themselves and having private conversations.

**Suppose that there is a junior team member in your team who is ignored by senior team members. How do you handle the situation that this junior team member could become an equal member in a team?**

Junior members need to be trained by the senior staff. If senior members are not giving the junior the time of day, we must first get a good feel of the situation. There could be many reasons a junior is not getting enough attention and we must find the root cause. It could be something related to senior members being overworked and have no time to help juniors, or it could be some issue with attitude. It could also be that expectations have been set in a bad way.

When expectations are not set correctly, it might be that senior members don’t even know they are supposed to be sitting with the junior member every once in a while, and giving him guidance. Likewise, it could be expected that the junior member themself asks for help when it is needed while they have just been waiting for someone to give this guidance on how to get started. In a case like this, the best option might be to set a clear way for both junior and senior members on how to help, and when to help.

If senior members simply do not have time to help newer members, it needs to be made clear that this is also a part of their job. Likewise, management also needs to understand that training junior members takes a lot of time. Senior members cannot be expected to provide the same throughput as before. Both parties need to be reach an understanding of what is expected.

In a situation where there is friction between the junior and senior members, private discussions could be held. If poor first impressions have been made, conflict resolution becomes key. We must be able to respect each other and work in a way that brings value to our customers. Setting clear expectations for the senior members is needed.

**Your team member is leaving a project. He or she has said negative things about the project which at least partly untrue. How can mitigate negative impact on your company/department?**

It is unclear if the employee is leaving the company as well as no longer participating in a specific project. I interpret the question so that they are willing to stay in the company but not the project.

When a team member is disgruntled and spreads false rumours as well as some unkind truths, it is important to separate the two. We must find out what is true and what is not. We cannot make adjustments and certainly cannot punish anyone based on false rumours. For example, if the employee is complaining about the project manager being incompetent, we cannot make changes if we do not know the full truth. If any concerns end up being valid, they must be addressed. In this example it could be further training for the project manager.

We must also address the situation with the disgruntled employee directly. There is no long-term benefit to keeping the issue quiet so open discussion must be encouraged. We must discuss what caused these issues to begin with. Often the issues can be in relationships with other project members. If they can be motivated to solve their problems, it is the best-case scenario for all people. Initial goal should be to convince the team member to remain in the project, because of the knowledge they have about the work. Even therapy during work hours can be used to solve these issues if they are between people.

If the problems cannot be resolved, some unfortunate action may be considered. It might be wise to consider moving the employee into a project better suited for them. This decision must made based on the information gathered. In a truly unfortunate situation where issues keep occurring around the same person, or if customers are dragged into the mess, the person may have to be let go.