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Five Valuable Traits Interviewers Look For When Hiring

January 28, 2019 | Carlinda Lee



Whether you are applying for an extracurricular activity, internship or dream job, knowing what interviewers always look for is crucial to forming your experiences and responses.

Here are five traits employers are surely looking for during an interview:

1. Relevant Skills

Of course, relevant skills – both technical and soft. Employers want to ensure you can do the job and complete your deliverables in a timely manner. They are looking for individuals who can add value to the organization and solve its problems. Be sure to highlight these skills during your interview by providing examples and answering clearly using the STAR technique!

Common ways for interviewers to test this include:

- Asking for a portfolio, mainly for creative or technical roles
- An in-basket test
- "What are your strengths and weaknesses?"
- "How familiar are you with [relevant skill or platform]?"
- "Tell me about a time you exercised leadership."

However, if you don't yet have the specific skills for the job, be sure to put in the effort to learn. In this digital age, there are plenty of online resources like [YouTube](#) and [Lynda](#). Furthermore, there are websites created just for specific skills like [HubSpot Academy](#), for you marketing and sales fanatics and [Codecademy](#), for the aspiring web developers, app developers and more – the list goes on.

Next, display your skills through online certifications, a website, a blog, a YouTube channel, a portfolio or on LinkedIn. And if you're a student like myself, be sure to take advantage of extracurricular activities, case competitions, hackathons, mentorship programs, classes, and your school's co-op program. In fact, as an aspiring marketer myself, I found that joining a student union as their Director of Marketing gave me immense opportunities to execute graphic design, digital marketing, content management systems, email marketing and so much more. While competing in multiple case competitions allowed me to immensely develop my problem solving and public speaking skills through working with a fast-paced team.

Regardless, don't fret – you have transferable skills! That's where adaptability comes in!

2. Adaptability

The ability to adapt to different situations and be teachable is a highly sought after quality that showcases your problem-solving skills and ability to thrive in an ever-changing organization.

Common ways for interviewers to test this include:

- "How do you deal with conflict?"
- "Tell me about a time you overcame a challenge."

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- "Tell me about a time you had to complete a task under a tight deadline."
- "Tell me about a time you were given a task outside of your job description."
- "Tell me about a time a project didn't go as planned; how did you adapt to it?"

So, next time you're worried about not having enough relevant skills – don't worry, focus on conveying your transferable skills to showcase your adaptability. Plus, hackathons, case competitions, writing competitions and debate competitions are around, so be sure to use those opportunities to your advantage to prove not only your problem-solving skills but your ability to adapt in a fast-paced team environment.

3. Team Fit

Now, this is a tricky one. Employers want to make sure you can work well with the team and embrace the organization's culture. Team fit is important because a good, strong company culture means trust and support, which leads to efficiency, autonomy, commitment and therefore, higher performance. In fact, as shocking as it may sound, especially when it comes to long-term hires, the importance of team fit can override skill level. Why is this? Well, because even a highly talented employee can cause conflict and demotivate others. This shows that they may not have the needed soft skills for this team; in this case, the costs outweigh the benefits as technical skills can be taught, but it's harder to teach soft skills.

Common ways for interviewers to test this include:

- "What do you value most at work?"
- "What do you like most about working on a team?"
- "Who was your favourite manager and why?"
- "How do you give/respond to criticism?"
- "Tell me about a team experience that you found rewarding/challenging."

However, going into an interview, it can be tough to tell whether they're looking for someone more collaborative or independent.

So, here are a few ways to best assess whether you fit in with the organization:

- Attend a company networking event, ask questions and evaluate your interactions with their employees
- Read [Glassdoor](#) reviews
- Read the company and employees' blog
- If you're in the co-op program, read work reports from students who have worked there
- Access employees' LinkedIn activity and posts

But more importantly, be yourself! Authenticity is a great quality to have and it's to your benefit to work for an organization that you feel part of and motivated in.

4. Reliability

Reliability is a crucial skill to have as employers want a candidate who is punctual, dependable and can solve problems without a ton of hand-holding. They want to trust you with leading key projects and executing quality work. Someone who can work harmoniously with the team to improve the organization and act with common sense.

Common ways for interviewers to test this include:

- Questioning your references about your punctuality and dependability
- "How do you manage your time?"
- "Tell me about a time you solved a conflict between coworkers."
- "Tell me about a time stress pulled you away from work; how did you handle it?"
- "Tell me about a time you were unable to complete an assigned task; how did you handle it?"

However, if you're struggling to be punctual and follow-through, ensure that you sleep early, set your alarm and organize your calendar to ensure that you can complete your tasks within your promised duration, for the future. If this is your weakness, be sure to convey to your interviewer the steps you're taking to overcome this.

Regardless, interviewers are looking for more than reliability from a candidate; they're looking for ambition as well.

5. Ambition

Lastly, they of course look for a candidate motivated to complete their tasks and help the organization both grow and innovate. Someone who is confident and enthusiastic about the organization's goals and has ideas to both share and execute.

Common ways for interviewers to test this include:

- Testing your knowledge about the organization and the job itself
- "Why do you want this job?"
- "What are some goals and initiatives you want to achieve through this role?"
- "What motivates your best job performance?"
- "Tell me about a time you had to win over a reluctant person."

Also, be sure to ask your interviewer insightful questions like "What would the first week on the job look like for me?", to showcase your enthusiasm and motivation for the role, and that you've done your research. They will be taking note of this as well.

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These ways are key to verify that you're not an individual who does the bare minimum for a pay cheque but is interested in gaining value yourself, through this role, and adding value to the organization. Ultimately, the organization you're interviewing for should be fit for you too!

But more importantly, for any interview, be sure to practice answering common questions, research the organization and reflect on your experiences to ace your next interview. For an extra boost, ask for a referral from a likeable employee who works there, attend company networking events and be sure to try out our [mock interview service](#) conducted by experienced hiring managers within the industry!

Good luck!

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