



InterviewBit

# Engineering Manager Interview Questions



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InterviewBit

# Let's get Started

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Today, the term "engineering manager" is used across a wide range of industries and sectors. Managers in this career are all skilled at managing processes, projects, and people, whether they work in software development or product design and manufacturing. The engineering manager has the responsibility of managing the people, processes, and products associated with product creation and maintenance. A position like this entails a great deal of responsibility, so employers want to make sure they hire the right person. Mentoring, risk management, and prioritization: all are vital attributes of a great engineering manager. Yet, the question remains, how can you convince the hiring manager that you are the most qualified candidate for the position? Now comes the preparation. The better prepared you are, the greater your chances of impressing the hiring manager and moving forward in the process.

In this article, we will cover what is the role of an Engineer manager and some critical Engineering manager questions and answers often asked at interviews for candidates. Employers use these questions to find candidates who fit their culture, as well as to learn more about the candidates' management styles. By the end of this article, you'll know which attributes to look for in an engineering manager interview. The question has been categorized according to its level of difficulty, both for beginners and experienced professionals.

Let's now take a look at some of the most frequently asked Interview Questions for Engineering Manager.

## Engineering Manager Interview Questions for Freshers

### 1. What is the role of an Engineering Manager?

An engineer manager is someone who is responsible for planning and coordinating engineering projects, directing multiple teams in the development of new projects, and supervising their work. Engineering economics, human resources, industrial management, and financial management are among their areas of expertise. They supervise engineering teams and collaborate closely with architects and other professionals to ensure project success. Among the various roles of engineering manager are:

- Manages the process of designing, testing, and manufacturing products.
- Assigns tasks to engineers and technicians and manages the staff.
- Provides leadership to teams in the development of new products, processes, and solutions.
- Manages project logistics and resources.
- Improves efficiency, sustainability, and waste reduction in processes and products.
- Make sure teams are equipped with the resources to succeed.
- Engages in cost management strategies and creates and oversees project budgets.
- Keeps up-to-date with the latest developments in their field or sector and maintains high-level expertise.
- Provide progress reports on projects.
- Provide training to new employees.
- Make sure that processes are compliant with quality and safety guidelines.
- Work collaboratively with other team members and departments.
- Develops and maintains relationships with customers and suppliers.

## 2. What makes you want to become an engineering manager?

It is likely that you will be asked this question if you are considering a career change to engineering management. An interviewer can use this question to gauge a candidate's interest in the position. Additionally, the answers provide insight into what the candidate values most and his/her future goals.

### Tips:

- Describe your passion for engineering, as well as your business acumen.
- Include previous management experience if you have any.
- Describe how your experience as an engineer gives you the knowledge to build and coach engineering teams.
- Include your desire to oversee the technical implementation of a product or service from start to finish.
- You can also mention that you feel more satisfied when you reach a big goal as part of a team than when you achieve a small one on your own.
- Demonstrate your passion for learning new technologies and collaborating with others to solve problems.

### 3. How would you manage a team of 10 developers and control the project's progress?

An engineering manager must possess the skill of team management. Interviewers ask this question to assess your leadership skills and collaboration skills as well as if you follow a specific approach to your work. Successful engineering managers are aware of their team's strengths and weaknesses. As well, they are aware of what each developer is good and bad at, so instead of assigning everyone 10 tasks, they prefer that each developer complete one task but do it flawlessly. For example, many developers prefer Agile, while others are drawn to Kanban or other SDLC models.

#### Sample Answer:

*“As part of the performance improvement process, I will draw up a plan to get the engineers on the speed track. Will provide personal, 1-on-1 training when required. As a team, we will discuss progress and value each suggestion. Maintain a balanced team and ensure effective communication. Facilitate teamwork by using all available resources. Engage in team-building and celebration activities on a regular basis.”*

### 4. How and when should an engineer be promoted?

Engineer managers are responsible for evaluating their team members and placing them in positions where they are able to perform at the highest level. In asking this question, the interviewer is attempting to assess whether the candidate is competent enough to handle this role. Good engineer managers promote candidates based on their previous performance and potential to take on new duties.

**Sample Answer:**

*“As per Peter's principle, employees are promoted until they become no longer competent. Therefore, promotions should be given based on both past performances and future expectations. In lieu of just rewarding someone for past success, I will choose the person who is best suited for the role and has good previous performance.”*

**5. Can you explain why you would fire an engineer and how you would do it?**

People don't always perform according to expectations, and therefore, they need to be fired. An interviewer asks this question to determine how you decide whether or not someone should be fired, and what process you use. Underperforming individuals should be subjected to a formal process improvement plan. Employees are encouraged to perform better or to seek an alternative career path within the organization in order to improve their performance. Even if the engineer still fails to perform, the company has documentation that it supported him in every way possible. In order to comply with labour laws, this is essential.

**6. In what ways would you develop a tech lead?**

Technical Leads supervise the development of technical projects, usually software-related. A senior engineer should be designated "tech lead in training" and be trained and coached by managers, and be gradually given the following responsibilities:



- Architecture design
- Code reviews
- Quality assurance
- Assigning tasks to peers
- Providing coaching and training to new employees
- Directly deal with bad stuff
- Manage one-to-one meetings efficiently, etc;

## 7. Do you have any experience managing remote engineers?

Remote work has become a mainstream practice for many companies, so their engineering managers are expected to manage staff remotely. A tough transition can be faced by engineering managers when they are responsible for not only their own tasks but also for managing and supporting their teams.

### Tips:

- Even if you do not have experience with remote teams, emphasize the importance of communication, documentation, and project management tools.
- It is also a good idea to mention "Keep up the pace and energy of the meeting. Consider making a lighthearted joke about the situation during any pauses or silences".
- Also, you can mention "If someone on your team is having trouble adjusting to working from home, remind them that this is temporary, and working together will enable them to succeed."

## 8. Can you tell me how you anticipated and dealt with potential challenges in your last job?

An engineer manager should analyze situations ahead of time and devise proactive measures. This question is meant to discover how candidates approach challenges and overcome challenges with creativity, problem-solving skills, and critical thinking.

### Tips:

- Describe your strategies using an example from a past experience.
- Describe the process you used to solve the problem and the outcome you achieved.

## **9. If you are part of a large, complex project, how do you break it down for your team?**

As an engineering manager, you will be responsible for planning and executing complex engineering projects. Interviewers ask this question to gauge the candidate's potential for handling complex projects, their ability to initiate projects and direct their teams, etc.

### **Tips:**

- Demonstrate your ability to solve complex engineering problems.
- Describe how you delegate tasks, schedule timelines, and budget for development projects.
- Indicate the project management techniques you use, such as agile methodology, kanban system, waterfall system, etc.
- Mention the fact that you are capable of effectively managing conflicts between team members.

## **10. How would you integrate team-building into your workplace?**

Team building and collaboration activities are common among successful teams, and the interviewer may ask if you have experience developing and hosting such events.

### **Tips:**

- Provide examples of how you have implemented employee improvement plans.
- Stress the importance of effective communication within the team.
- Moreover, you can describe how you implemented engaging training programs and team-building events.
- Describe how you incorporate team collaboration into your daily work routine.

## **11. How do you ensure a project stays on schedule?**

Interviewers are interested in finding out how candidates respond to obstacles and challenges, as well as how they conceptualize software development. Using this question, the interviewer finds out how well the candidate prepares their team and projects for success, as well as what management style they engage in.

**Tips:**

- Emphasize the importance of reviewing the project's progress daily or weekly. Adjustments are best made this way.
- Furthermore, you can discuss breaking down the project into smaller tasks that can be completed daily and/or weekly in order to avoid being overwhelmed.
- You can discuss using an online virtual workspace for team collaboration and file sharing both remotely and in the office.

## 12. What are you looking for in your next role?

When it comes to hiring, one of the most important factors is who is the best fit for the role. In the event that your stated goals do not align with what the company is looking for, you will probably be out of the running. The answer you give will also aid the interviewer in determining whether the job you are applying for is a good fit for your skills and interests.

**Tips:**

- Describe the skills that you have that would be valuable in the role you're interviewing for.
- Describe what you are good at and what you enjoy.
- Be sure to research the company and the career path that you may forge there prior to the job interview.

## 13. How do you measure success?

In asking how you define success, employers are trying to determine the kind of employee you will be. This question can give interviewers insight into what candidates prioritize and find most important.

**Tips:**

- Share your proudest accomplishments. A concrete example of success can serve as a useful anchor for your definition of success and give you another opportunity to describe your achievements to the interviewer.
- Describe a time when you felt successful, and explain how it happened.
- You can mention that success is a process, like achieving daily, weekly and monthly goals. When success is viewed as a process, small accomplishments can help lead to bigger accomplishments.

## 14. What can you do to resolve tech debt?

Technical debt refers to the implicit cost of additional rework caused by choosing a faster and easier approach over a more efficient one in software development. It is inevitable that every project will suffer from tech debt at some point during the development cycle. It should, however, be managed and minimized. Test, refactoring, proper documentation, and engineer training are all ways to deal with tech debt in engineering.

## 15. When it comes to hiring top engineers, what are the best practices?

You will be responsible for recruiting new talent for your engineering team as an engineering manager. How you find talent and test its quality are the most important questions.

- **For finding talent:** Use personal network, referrals from current engineers, hiring/promoting internally, visiting industry job boards, connecting on LinkedIn, or contacting recruiters.
- **For testing talent:** Use phone screenings, culture fit analyses, whiteboard or computer-based problems, testing technical skills through sample projects, and structured interviews.

## 16. Why do you want to work for us?

Interviewers often ask this question, but it can be difficult to answer, especially when you wing it. You could lose out on a job offer if you do not prepare a solid answer to this question.

**Tips:**

- Tell them you like the industry and how the company solves problems.
- Be sure to mention that you are seeking a challenge and the ability to solve engineering problems that are interesting.
- You should explain that the skills you possess match the company's requirements perfectly.
- It will be helpful if you explain that you are attracted to the company's reputation and the opportunity to grow professionally.

**17. Can you tell me about the project management tools you are familiar with?**

The interviewer's goal with this question is to determine whether the applicant has a basic understanding of project management tools. Having experience with the project management tools the organization already uses isn't necessarily necessary, but it is a plus for candidates if they do. Engineer managers can utilize a number of project management tools to manage projects within their organizations. Below are a few of the best project management tools:

- Planview Clarizen
- Asana
- Trello
- Basecamp
- Wrike
- Kanban tool
- Monday.com, etc.

## Engineering Manager Interview Questions for Experienced

**18. When it comes to coaching your engineers, how do you do it?**

Engineers are coached to improve their performance. There is no special planning, skill, performance, or anything else required for coaching. It depends on the engineering team and on each individual engineer. It is likely that some teams would benefit from regular meetings and evaluations that emphasize feedback. Others may prefer workshops that involve problem-solving.

**Tips:**

- Discussing the importance of continuous and contextual communication to make coaching more productive and valuable for employees.
- Describe how you will evaluate the teams' and individuals' strengths and weaknesses and help them improve.
- Discuss holding one-on-one coaching sessions with every member of the engineering team, where you listen to understand their point of view, analyze what they're saying, and summarize it. It is a "pull" action, i.e. you are assisting them in solving their own problem.

## **19. Have you ever coached an engineer to be a manager/into a management role?**

By asking this question, the interviewer wants to determine whether the candidate has ever mentored a team member to advance into a managerial position.

**Tips:**

- Explain how you support strong team leaders.
- Describe how you recognize quality talent.
- In case you haven't had an opportunity to coach someone into a management position yet, discuss the coaching you've done, and how that has impacted their performance.

## **20. In what ways do engineering managers and tech leads collaborate?**

In smaller companies, the engineering manager should be the tech lead, but in big companies, the tech lead oversees the team's technical work. As a coach (engineering manager) and captain (tech lead), the relationship is similar.

- **Tech Lead:** Generally, a tech lead is focused on technology issues. As part of their role, they make design decisions and guide the development process. Some of their time is spent coding, and some are spent leading the other members of the team. Having a tech lead on your team can be an invaluable tool in helping engineering managers understand the people and projects they're managing and provide a unique perspective on enhancing future systems.
- **Engineering Manager:** Engineering managers focus on the people side. They assist people in growing and prospering. They work on hiring, career progression, and processes. They are constantly adapting and improving the way the team operates, which helps them to continue to improve as a team.

## 21. What are your strategies for handling engineers with performance issues?

Engineering managers must utilize the right approach when dealing with performance issues on their teams.

- Discuss determining and understanding the engineer's performance and the root causes of the issue in order to help him/her refocus on their career and their position on the team.
- Explain how you will create a performance improvement plan accordingly to get the engineer back on track.
- Mention the need for one-on-one coaching.
- Discuss the possibility of moving the engineer to a new team or a new position where their performance may be improved.

## 22. How would you feel if you were outperformed by an engineer?

In some aspects, managing people who are more talented than you can be challenging. It is essential for engineer managers to be charismatic enough to command respect from the whole team, even those who are superior to them in some areas. In asking this question, the interviewer seeks to determine if the candidate has dealt with such people before and how they dealt with them.

- Explain that it's perfectly normal for someone on the team to have more engineering skills. Mention that your role is not to be the smartest person in the room, but to create an environment that allows talent to be expressed and will make the whole team smarter."
- Additionally, mention that an engineering manager must possess the best social and business skills of all engineers.
- Explain that you prefer to step back and allow employees to do their jobs without meddling too much unless something goes wrong.

### **23. What are your thoughts on micromanagement?**

Micromanagement is the practice of controlling others through manipulation, intrusive observation, or extensive communication. Upon asking this question, the interviewer will be able to determine whether the candidate has a basic understanding of micromanagement and its disadvantages. Micromanaging can stifle motivation and creativity and often demonstrates a lack of trust in employees. Managing people this way can seriously damage their morale, productivity, retention, and ultimately, their health. That's why the interviewer is looking for a manager who isn't a micromanager, since micromanagement isn't an effective management technique.

#### **Tips:**

- Mention that managers are responsible for guiding and supporting their team.
- Discuss micromanagement's disadvantages and negative effects.
- Discuss how micromanagement can exacerbate employee turnover and make the workplace stressful.
- Discuss ways to avoid becoming micromanagers.

### **24. Have you ever had a communication problem with a software engineer in the past? What steps did you take to resolve them?**



The process of hiring IT talent can be challenging, especially when interviewers have to interview thousands of applicants, and none of them seems to fit the bill. Think about the interviewer who found the developer they were looking for after months of searching. Despite their outstanding talent, this person doesn't demand Silicon Valley salaries. The interviewer hires him without hesitation, only to discover later that he does not possess adequate communication skills.

This question is intended to gain insight into how the candidate has resolved a similar issue; for example, *whether they fired the developer and continued the intensive search or provided them with communication tools to improve their communication skills.*

## **25. When choosing new technology for a project, how do you make the right choice?**

As part of managing a project in a company, the engineer manager is often required to decide which technology to use in collaboration with his team. With this question, the interviewer can find out if the candidate has ever had to choose the appropriate technology for a particular situation.

### **Tips:**

- Discuss the importance of identifying and defining the problem. A team's ability to contribute their views openly and safely is also critical to accurately identifying problems.
- Describe how to try different technologies before choosing one. A problem can be of any size or shape, and so too should the methods you employ to solve it. Mixing up approaches can be effective if a single approach is not yielding results.
- Stress the importance of hiring the right people and managing the number of people on hand.

## **26. If your engineers disagree with your technology choice, what do you do?**

A manager will most likely face a situation where an engineer respectfully disagrees with them at some point in their career. In most cases, engineers are unhappy with the technical choices their managers make for them.

- Discuss how professional disagreements can be beneficial. Engineers are not paid to agree when they have reasonable grounds for disagreeing. Technically accurate advice and decisions are beneficial to projects and products.
- Explain the importance of preparing your case and presenting it in a neutral manner so that the facts and figures speak for themselves.
- Stress the importance of keeping your tone neutral and relaxed body language.

## **27. If your project is running behind schedule, what steps would you take? How would you communicate this to the other teams you are working with?**

Software development projects often run behind schedule. This delay must, however, be communicated to team members in the most effective way possible. It is important to communicate collaboratively. By asking this question, the interviewer seeks to determine the candidate's ability to overcome various obstacles and challenges, as well as how they conceptualize the software development process.

### **Tips:**

- Explain how to identify the underlying causes of the delay and formulate action plans to resolve them.
- Discuss the importance of considering, discussing, and utilizing other team members' input during meetings so as to minimize the possibility of future delays.
- Discuss ways to foster an environment where the team feels confident that every effort is being made to meet the deadline.

## **28. Do you have any experience with disagreeing with task prioritization when working with product or project managers? What did you do to resolve this issue?**

Interviewers ask this question to see how candidates will react to obstacles and challenges, and how they conceptualize software development. Typically, engineering managers should take into account the priority set by product or project managers when estimating the duration of a task. Alternatively, they may also consider protecting the team from changing priorities with a convincing explanation or supporting evidence. As soon as they have determined this, they should inform their team and assign appropriate resources.

**Tips:**

- Describe past industry experiences with prioritization.
- Describe how you will handle the situation and the consequences of changing task priorities.

## **29. Think of a scenario where you have to create a new interface for a web application. Describe your plan for achieving it.**

In this question, a candidate is basically (secretly) asked: On what basis do you prioritize your tasks? A good engineering manager should be able to prioritize and schedule tasks in a manner that will facilitate the creation of the final product, which is the web application interface in this case. This cannot be accomplished by simply assigning random tasks to the team and hoping for the best. Having a structured plan and system is essential, as well as knowing who is good at what in a team. Once they have developed a plan to accomplish this, they can start delegating tasks.

## **30. What would your previous team members say about you?**

The purpose of this question is to obtain an overview of how the candidate sees themselves with regard to their previous employment. A candidate is most likely to answer this question based on how they think they performed in their previous position.

**Tips:**

- You can mention that the engineering team you previously worked with found it easy to communicate with you.
- It may be helpful to discuss how your management style aligns with the organization.
- Discuss how your team believes you are capable of solving complex problems.
- It is also a good idea to mention how your team valued your knowledge of handy workarounds for solving problems.

### **31. Are you often willing to contribute to coding?**

Interviewers will gain a better understanding of candidates' management styles by asking this question. Getting a sense of whether candidates are more of a mentor, a transformational leader, or a servant leader will help the interviewer determine how they would fit into the organization.

This question cannot be answered with a yes or no. When a company seeks a manager who codes, it is attempting to fill the role of a TLM (Tech Lead Manager) rather than an EM (Engineering Manager). The answer to this question varies from candidate to candidate, depending upon the candidate's priorities and goals. Good managers know how to prioritize their efforts so that they can have the maximum impact.

### **32. While working in your previous role, what decision proved to be the most challenging?**

Answering this question will give the interviewer a sense of the candidate's ability to reflect and their decision-making process. An engineer manager must be able to make tough decisions when there is no right or wrong answer.

#### **Tips:**

- Discuss the importance of defining the problem, constraints, and thinking clearly.
- Describe what factors you considered when making that difficult decision.
- Describe what you learned and what impact the decision had.

### **33. When you have multiple high-priority projects to manage, how do you manage them?**

A large engineering team, especially one with several members, often needs to work on several projects at once. In order to achieve them all, a project management system and a leader who knows what is happening are essential. By asking this question, the interviewer is trying to determine how a candidate prioritizes projects and what methodologies they utilize to work on them simultaneously or according to specific goals and objectives.

#### **Tips:**

- Discuss preparing a project plan for every possible scenario and having contingency plans in case the project fails.
- Talk about using tools like project management tools and modern project tracking software so you can manage multiple projects at once.
- Describe your ability to prioritize tasks effectively.
- Stress how important effective communication is so that the team is aware of any potential problems and can discuss solutions before a major delay happens.

### **34. In your opinion, what are the most important skills for this position?**

An interviewer can learn a great deal about a candidate's behaviour and think by asking them many lead developer interview questions. Although it may seem simple, this question will provide insight into an engineering manager's role and responsibilities.

Project management, communication skills, decision-making skills, technical knowledge, delegation, etc., are all essential elements of this job, but the one's candidates emphasize during interviews are those they consider most important. Maybe it's a blend of soft and hard skills, or maybe it's just hard skills. However, this question indicates to interviewers whether a candidate's skills align with what they value most in a candidate.

### 35. What is the best way to explain the technical aspects of a project to someone who is not a technical expert?

Engineer managers supervise and work with a wide range of people across many departments and teams, including clients. Tech-savvy companies like Facebook, Google, and Microsoft rely on technical professionals such as engineering managers to inspire collaboration, express ideas and find solutions with their non-technical coworkers.

#### Tips:

- Show off your communication skills by describing how you simplify complex topics for non-technical professionals.
- Explain how sharing technical information would be more effective if you used examples and storytelling techniques.
- Discuss the use of visual content for explaining technical processes.
- Talk about the importance of avoiding technical jargon.

### 36. State difference between leadership and management.

Leadership and management differ in the following ways:



Leadership	Management
A leader is someone who leads a group of people and influences them to achieve a particular goal.	A manager is responsible for planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling the activities of an organization or project.
Leading entails having a strategic perspective, managing a team, being open-minded, and promoting innovation.	A manager must possess managerial skills, communication skills, organizational skills, problem-solving skills, and conformity to the rules.
A leader is more concerned about influencing and aligning people than with allocating tasks. Essentially, they assist individuals in envisioning the potential for future growth given their efforts in a broader context.	A manager, on the other hand, achieves his/her goals by coordinating activities and implementing tactical processes. Their work involves breaking down long-term goals into smaller segments and organizing available resources to achieve the desired outcome.
A leader creates circles of influence and inspires others.	A manager creates circles of power and leads by authority.
Leaders set directions for achieving goals.	Managers set instructions for completing projects.

### 37. What are the advantages of smaller teams over larger ones?

The advantages of smaller teams over larger ones are as follows:

- Small teams are best suited to quick coordination and efficiency. Team sizes of 5 to 10 people are easier to connect and respond to changes more quickly. They jump into tasks quickly, knowing their colleagues' activities and where the product is headed. A team of this type fosters open information and knowledge exchange, as well as mutual support.
- Small teams are more cohesive, empathic, and have better relationships. Whereas, a large group makes people lose track of each other. It takes a long time for new staff to adapt, relationships between members fade into the background, and there is less mutual support between members as the team grows.
- Managing a 5-to-10 person team gives the leader more opportunities to directly impact and motivate employees, which leads to more productive work. Leaders have a harder time evaluating the effectiveness of each individual in large groups, so staff participation drops. There is a lack of communication between large teams and their personnel does not share the values of the company.

### 38. What is your risk assessment process when starting a new project?

Engineering managers need to assess project risks in order to anticipate possible problems/errors. The risk assessment allows you and your team to prepare for any unexpected events that may adversely affect your project. The steps involved in performing a project risk assessment are as follows:

- Identify and analyze potential risks associated with the project.
- Estimating the odds/probability of a certain risk happening.
- Determine how each risk could impact the project if it actually occurred.
- Create a plan to mitigate the highest risks.
- Keep an eye on risks throughout your project by monitoring, tracking, and reviewing them periodically.



### **39. Can you recall a time when you transitioned between two teams of different sizes? What changes did you make to your management style?**

Managing teams of different sizes in an organization is a requirement, especially if there are several engineering teams of different sizes. Candidates must therefore know which skills are necessary for each team. As engineering managers try to ensure that all team members are on the same page, communication is extremely important, especially in a larger team.

#### **Tips:**

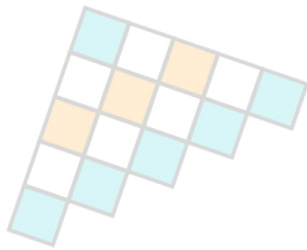
- You can emphasize that communication tools are an integral part of your management style when you are managing a larger team.
- Also, mention how video conferencing tools make the process easier-especially when working remotely.

### **Conclusion**

Considering today's competitive market, employers are seeking to retain developers, so a significant demand exists for competent, passionate engineering managers who are able to mentor their teams, foster a positive working environment, and ensure that projects are completed quickly, efficiently, and in a positive manner while maintaining good working relationships with clients. In this position, technical skills are certainly important, however, people skills, problem-solving skills, and communication skills are equally important. Prepare for the interview by brainstorming different scenarios, so you're ready to provide specific examples quickly.

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