

Interviewing For Leadership Competencies: Five Questions to Ask

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According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, total job openings in the construction industry are the highest they have been since 2001. While the majority of these vacancies are in the field, there will be a lot of leadership vacancies as well, due to the last of the Boomers approaching retirement age in the next few years, coupled with the wave of resignations every industry and company is experiencing.

If you are a construction industry leader, it behooves you to plan for these vacancies today so that your business is not negatively (or permanently) impacted. One way to be proactive is to look for leadership aptitude in the new-hires you are interviewing today. After all, today's scheduler could be a future branch manager or COO.

Interview Questions That Assess Leadership Potential

The following categories of questions ask the individual to provide an example from their own experience (aka behavioral questions). The response itself is not as important as the thinking behind it; therefore the responses don't have to be work-related, especially if you are interviewing a younger individual who might not have enough work experience to draw from.

COLLABORATION

A leader's work is only accomplished through others, so



listening for the inclination for collaboration as well as the maturity to appreciate other's contributions is critical.

Interview questions to ask:

- » Tell me about a person you've collaborated with or a project where collaboration was essential to the outcome.
- » Tell me about an achievement you are proud of and how you accomplished it.

Listen for the interviewee giving credit to other individuals or departments. Give bonus points if they express appreciation or gratitude, as in "Thankfully Luis, my PM, was really generous with his time."

CREATIVITY

According to the World Economic Forum's Future of Work

Report, creativity is in the top 10 necessary business skills for the foreseeable future.

Interview questions to ask:

- » When you are stumped – what do you do?
- » Tell me about a problem you were able to solve, and how you went about it.

Listen for the interviewee to mention something that would not be the norm, such as saying, “When I’m stumped I tend to put the problem aside for a day or two and let my subconscious work on it.” You may not want a worker who stops pursuing a problem, but you do want to hear an approach other than “I asked my boss for help.”

ACCOUNTABILITY

Unfortunately this is an industry rife with pitfalls, finger pointing, and lawsuits. While companies pay the price, individuals can ward off potential consequences by being confident enough to take responsibility when things go awry.

Interview questions to ask:

- » This is an industry in which it is easy to cut corners and not “get caught,” what are your thoughts on that?
- » Have you ever observed someone doing something you considered unsafe or unethical? What was your response? (Be sure confidentiality is preserved.)

Listen for the interviewee to express an allegiance to their intrinsic value system (“I wouldn’t be able to sleep at night”) or to the overall good (“That’s not fair to the owner.”)

BIG PICTURE

Leaders need to make decisions based on what is best overall, not only for an individual stakeholder or constituent. This often makes decision-making difficult because there are never decisions that will benefit or please all.

Interview questions to ask:

- » Many jobs in this industry can be done remotely, but equally as many cannot. What are your thoughts on the fairness or inequity of this dichotomy?
- » During the pandemic, many companies laid off or furloughed employees in order to conserve resources. What are your thoughts on that?

Listen for the interviewee to be able to articulate both sides or the gray area of the situation without anger or bias. Give bonus points if they acknowledge that these are difficult decisions with no “right answer.”


CURIOUS, THOUGHTFUL

Leaders should never be satisfied with the status quo. They should be questioning or challenging the current state in order to stay ahead of the competition or market forces and continually move the company forward.

Interview questions to ask:

- » In preparing for this interview, is there anything you’ve learned about our company that you’d like to clarify or have questions about?
- » In preparing for this interview, did you spot any opportunities for us as a company?

Listen for responses that show the person has done some research into the company, its competition, or its market position.

Whether or not a new hire will go on to lead others, it is helpful to screen for leadership-related thinking and behaviors during hiring interviews. If nothing else, employees are responsible for leading themselves and acting in the best interest of your organization. 



About the Author

Dr. Nanette Miner is a leadership development and workplace-learning strategy consultant. Through her firm, [The Training Doctor](#), she has revolutionized the way that individuals are prepared for leadership roles in their organizations. Rather than a chosen few, her process is aimed at ensuring everyone in the company has the skills and business acumen of a leader. This approach ensures both immediate and long-term return-on-investment (ROI) for an organization.

She has written articles for *Chief Learning Office magazine*, *Forbes*, and *MBA World* and is a frequent guest on workplace training and career podcasts and talk radio such as *Inc. Radio* and *America's Workforce Radio*.

Nanette regularly speaks at industry conferences and corporate learning events on how to integrate leadership capabilities throughout an organization. An author of eight books, her most recent is *Future-Proofing Your Organization*.

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