

The benefit of unrehearsed answers and how to get them in an interview

By the time a candidate is brought in for an interview, initial screening through a resume and frequently a phone interview, have already warranted them a good match for your company - on paper that is. The objective of bringing the applicant into the office for an interview, is to get a clearer picture of their personality, work ethic and values. To do so, you'll need to elicit open, honest answers from the candidate.

Any candidate that makes it to the in-person interview stage is capable of doing their research, preparing for questions and prepping answers they believe the employer wants to hear. While this demonstrates commitment of time and consideration prior to the interview, you also want to ensure that the potential hire can think on their feet.

As Nancy Halverson, general manager of franchise operations for MRINetwork explained, the best way to draw unrehearsed answers is to ask unanticipated questions. "A few standard questions may be necessary to equal the playing field among candidates," said Halverson. "However, asking targeted and unexpected questions during an interview can produce genuine, natural responses that are more indicative of the job seeker's true character."

Halverson recommends considering the following unanticipated questions to find top talent who are the best cultural fits for you and your company:

1. What were you doing on your very best day at work?

As Fast Company reported, Lori Goler, head of people at Facebook asks most candidates this question who interview with the social media giant. She explained that it's a question that reveals a candidate's strengths and talents, which can then be compared against the company's needs.

Required to think critically and dig deep, interviewees will likely land on a day when they were the last one in the office, solving a long-existing problem or making a crucial breakthrough on a project. These snapshots into their past work experience can provide insight on how they will contribute to your company's bottom line and succeed in their career. Keep in mind however,

that even non-monumental examples can be indicative of solid, consistent work ethic.

2. What was the most interesting encounter you've had in the past few months?

This unexpected interview question serves two purposes. First, you'll discover how the candidate responds and reflects on an experience that stood out to them. Was it an inspiring conversation with a homeless man? Or was it a tech discovery that unlocked a helpful shortcut? The encounter they choose, as well as their response, may demonstrate innovation, problem-solving or any other number of skills important to the job in question.

Secondly, the answer to this question will draw out creativity in top recruits. Important attributes for any successful employee, are creative thinking and the ability to ask questions, as CEO of the American Heart Association Nancy Brown told Fortune. Engaging in conversation and analysis is what she considers the "catalyst" to assessing all that might be possible.



3. What did you do on the day after Hurricane Irma or other major event?

Jodi Kantor, New York Times correspondent noted in Quora, that what you truly want out of any interview is the real-life experience of a person. When candidates can respond using true experiences they have been through, you will get the most telling and illustrative answers. A response to a natural disaster is telling yet not personally invasive, such as asking how the candidate spent the day after the 2016 election.

This targeted, straight forward question will elicit some of the most candid responses. As Kantor explained, hypothetical questions that have traditionally been common in interviews will not provide the answers you are looking for. Asking the candidate to describe their reaction to a major national or international event goes further than traditional "what if" questions.

"Again, asking the unexpected questions can help paint a full picture of your candidate," concludes Halverson. "From the way they think, react and respond, an answer to this kind of question conveys true character through spontaneity."